

*A newsletter for the descendants of
German speaking emigrees from
Eastern Europe, connecting them
with their unique heritage.*

Volume 16, Number 4

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

December 2008

AHSGR Calgary Chapter website : calgarychapterahsgr.ca

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

— by Bonnie Laing —

As we watched the leaves change colour and fall, we are reminded that Winter is in the wings. Can Christmas be far behind? The highlight of the fall programs were the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of our AHSGR Calgary chapter on October 4th.

Many members expressed appreciation for the souvenir booklet Susan Kuzima had put together as a keepsake of our Chapter's thirty years of history. Congratulations for a very successful event to; Program Chair Susan, ticket sellers, those who put up the tables and decorations, Greeters Linda and Joe Elder, Alex Seiffert for grace and our Calgary Chapter Executive.

The November meeting held on the 15th was well attended. Thank you to Dorothy Hunt who assisted with greeting members as they arrived. Special thanks to Bev Rayburn for selling raffle tickets, funds from these raffles are dedicated towards the 2009 Medicine Hat Convention.

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### **A Christmas Past**

— by Nora Schmidt, Editor —

Christmas eve 1963, we were sitting around Guy Gibson's fire chatting about Christmas' past. Always the story teller, that night the tale Guy told, was to stay with me forever.

A surrogate grandfather to me, Guy was born in England in 1883 and came to Canada with his parents to Symons Valley in 1891. In 1927 Guy settled on the Ghost River west of Cochrane.

But back to the tale.

"Heck, girl, we were only human." He was talking about the 24-hour truce held during the First World War. The only day 90 years ago when Allied and German soldiers raised white flags and remembered the birth of Christ.

"We sang a few carols, talked of old times and wept a few tears," he remembered.

"It happened on the main fronts on Christmas day. We exchanged candy, cigarettes and jokes in a brief, day-long halt to the war. It seemed strange..." he said.

No doubt, only a few short hours earlier they had been exchanging bullets and bombs.

"The brigadiers didn't like it," said Guy, "but was isn't good."

As a skilled axeman, Guy likely built close to 1,000 log cabins and 20 bridges in his lifetime.

He busted broncs with the best of them. Among cowboys of legend he called friends were John Ware and Guy Weadick. The 1914 Calgary Stampede saddle bronc champion, his niece Anne Wasson has the saddle to prove it. Guy was a modest man.

In muddy, wet and worn uniforms, in the middle of a battlefield, he and his fellow soldiers stopped to remember on Dec 25, 1917, what Christmas truly means - Peace on Earth!

At the age of 82 at the Colonel Belcher Hospital in 1965, Guy passed away. He is gone but not forgotten.

Nor is his memory of a Christmas day years ago, when for a brief moment, enemies united in the spirit of the season.

With warm wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Nora Schmidt, Editor

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Bible interspersed within the regular letter.

There were periods during these years when no letters arrived.

One aunt in the USSR, because she was widowed and childless, took on the responsibility of having all correspondence addressed to and from her address. This was a precautionary measure in case of interrogation or worse. She felt that without dependents she had the least to lose.

My own experience in writing letters

I began corresponding with a cousin in the late 1950's. All letters to individuals were placed in one envelope and addressed to the one aunt. Some restrictions that I remember were definitely nothing even remotely related to politics; no printed matter; black & white pictures only and as well rules as to what could be depicted on these photos.

The worse scenario would be to cause grief to the relatives. One never knew which letters would be opened and censored. Some were received in Canada with dark black lines obliterating the content. One of my uncles was employed as a chauffeur and interested in the new car my father had recently purchased. The purchase had been written about briefly in a previous letter. My father enclosed the little sales card with picture of the car in the next letter and of course noted this fact in writing as well. Many months later another letter arrived from the USSR stating that the card had been removed from the letter.

On a brighter side – The cousin with whom I corresponded is now living in Germany with her family. Most of the other cousins are residing in Germany as well. In 2003 we were able to make a trip to Germany and meet all of them personally. This was a joy beyond explanation. Never having met before this we discovered the depth of blood ties.

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### **SCHMECKFEST September 6, 2008**

— by Susan Kuzina and Anne Stang —

Our first meeting of the 2008/2009 season was held September 6. It was very well attended with 56 members and guests enjoying a wonderful Saturday afternoon program. On behalf of the program committee, thanks to all who attended for making such a great showing. We are aiming to break the 50-attendee mark at each and every session; this meeting was a good start. We enjoyed a Schmeckfest potluck – do we or do we not have

great cooks in our group? All the dishes were wonderful!

Bonnie Laing conducted our program by describing the method of taking an oral history and then demonstrating it. Bonnie has written a book, available in our library, on the history of Bowness. She is very well versed in talking to people and in learning some of their history. She talked about the importance of ensuring the interviewee's privacy and of the documents necessary to do that. She also prepared a handout with suggestions for getting started, what documents are necessary for privacy concerns and a list of possible questions.

Alf Poffenroth graciously agreed to be Bonnie's "guinea pig" thereby offering us a great glimpse into the interview process. Bonnie and Alf, sitting in the centre of the tables, seemed oblivious to the onlookers which made for a very good presentation. Many thanks to both Bonnie and Alf for giving us their time for this interview. (Editor's suggestion When possible ask if there are funny or humorous memories.)

We would also like to thank Sig Schmidt for bringing two special guests from Argentina to our meeting. They were his sister-in-law Freida and her granddaughter Ashlynn. This was a special treat for those who got to visit with them; we hope they enjoyed their afternoon with us.

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HARVEST SUPPER October 4, 2008

— by Susan Kuzina and Anne Stang —

Our annual Harvest Supper was held on October 4, at St. John Lutheran Church. Again, we had an excellent turnout – 66 tickets sold with 64 guests in attendance. We received our charter in June of 1978 so we also celebrated this milestone at the Harvest Supper. The Chapter Charter and the awards presented to us at the international convention in Casper, Wyoming this summer were on display.

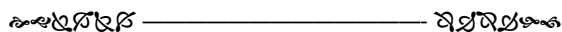
Tables decorated in autumn colours and members in their Sunday finery made the sausage and sauerkraut dinner prepared by the ladies of St. John Lutheran Church taste even better. A thank you to all of them, especially Dorothy who was so helpful in the months before the dinner.

Linda and Joe Elder, Mabel Kiessling, Anne Stang and Susan Kuzina greeted guests at the door. Bev Rayburn and Diana Rohl ably managed ticket collection and raffle sales. Bonnie Laing, our

President, hosted the evening and Alec Siebert said grace. Bill Benner and Elsa Unterschultz gave an informative overview of the history of the Chapter's 30 years. Bill described the special events throughout the years and Elsa took us on a more personal tour of her involvement with the society.

Our special guests were Dennis and Deanna Zitterkopf, members from Wichita, Kansas. Dennis is a Board Member at Headquarters in Lincoln, Nebraska and is also a member of five committees at Headquarters. He is the liaison with all chapters with regards to the Save Our Ancestral Records (SOAR) program. He recounted the history of the SOAR, the genealogical resources available to members and how to access this vast – and constantly growing – database. We would like to thank him and Deanna for making a special trip to Calgary and for participating in our annual supper this special anniversary year.

All in all, it was an evening to remember. Next year should bring out even more members as it will be a time to celebrate both the harvest and a harvest of memories of our success in hosting the annual convention in Medicine Hat in June, 2009.



How I became a member of A.H.S.G.R.

— by Elsa Unterschultz —

To start just a bit of my background. I was born in Calgary, just a block and a half from this church.

My father was Conrad Lahnert and my mother Marilus (Mary) Lautenschlager. Both were born in 1888 in Yagodnaya Polyana. In the Stump book listed among the names of the Germans who accepted Catherine's invitation to Come To Russia was the name Michael Lahnert. I am the 6th generation.

My parents left Yagodnaya in the spring of 1912 with two young children. Adam aged 4 and Katherine 15 months old. They boarded the ship Cassandra at Glasgow and sailed to St. John New Brunswick in April. They came to Calgary Alberta to this district of Bridgeland, where some of their friends were.

In 1954 they heard of another Conrad Lahnert who lived in Loveland Colorado. They were related and had known one another in Yagodnaya. My Father made plans to visit them in the spring of 1955 after the crops were seeded. Unfortunately in January my Father passed away.

I kept in touch with a daughter and a few years later

I went with my Mother to visit them. They talked about mutual friends back in Russia. At that time I was not too interested.

In 1968 my Mother heard from her sister in Omsk. That led to hearing from my Father's youngest brother in Pavlador. These letters continued for only four years. I still have them. This also led to taking two trips to Russia and later to Germany where some had moved to.

After my Mother's death in 1977 I visited Conrad and daughter Emma again. She showed me her cook book "Kuche Kochen". I flipped thru the pages and noticed recipes that sounded familiar.

"Blinn, Glace, Kuchen, Grebble. "Wow" I said, "these are things my Mother made and had no recipes." I could almost smell the Kuchen and taste the Blinn father made Sunday after church.

"Emma," I asked, "where did you get this book I'd like one?" She made a phone call and said "We'll pick one up tomorrow." It's so well used, here, all I have are the covers.

Emma showed me a notice about an upcoming picnic for Germans from Russia at nearby Greely. This is where AHSGR started. I told Emma we have many of them in Calgary too.

I told my sister about this and a few months later she read me the notice that appeared in the North Hill News. It was about an upcoming meeting of Germans from Russia. We decided to go.

We were welcomed by Victor and Isabel Bohnet. We found out a Chapter had been formed just months before. They received their charter in June of that year. (1978)

Victor asked me to keep the minutes as very few attended. Shortly after I told Alf Poffenroth about this and he was interested. We passed the word to our friends and many started to attend. In time we had to find new meeting places. It was difficult as we had no money to pay rent

At this time my sister Helena and I lived in Varsity Villa and were able to book the party room free. We were responsible to clean it after use. Other places we met were Alexander school, Calgary Public Library. One of our members always brought a friend along who was a member of the Moose Lodge in Hillhurst. She was able to book it for us also at no charge. While there we invited Richard Schuerman to speak to us. We had over a 100 folks attend. He brought along a case of his book "Pilgrims on the Earth". They were all sold I had to wait for mine.

Richard came as a guest a number of other times

and we always had a great turnout .Later we got involved with the Multi- Cultural Center. Several of our members worked at the Bingos for them and that helped with our rent.

After Pastor Gutsche accepted the call to St. Matthew, since he was a member of AHSGR he suggested we get permission to have our meetings at the church.

The request was made by Alf Poffenroth, a member at the church and a good contributor they could hardly refuse. After so many moves it was great to have a home.

In June 1984 at the convention in Regina four of the Calgary members received their Life Memberships, Victor and Isabel Bohnet, Marie Poffenroth, and myself #514. I'm very proud of that.

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THE CALGARY CHAPTER AHSGR ANNIVERSARY SUPPER

— by Bill Benner —

A Harvest Supper was held on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Calgary Chapter of the AHSGR on October 4 2008 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Calgary.

A very few people seem to know how our Chapter really got started. It appears that in February 1978 Victor Bohnet was in a Church Genealogy Seminar and discovered that out of 28 members in the German Research Class 24 of them were Germans from Russia.

In February 1978 he suggested that these people become members of the A.H.S.G.R .and use it for help in their research. Then he suggested that they form a branch of the Association here in Calgary.

The enthusiasm was great at the first meeting and they formed an executive and chairmen of several committees .Twelve members were present at the first meeting. They named it "The Calgary and District Branch of the A.H.S.G.R". They decided to meet once a month and at the next meeting they drew up the by-laws and the Constitution.

In April 1978 the membership had grown to 17 members. On Thursday April 6, 1978 they presented the By-laws to the membership in Calgary. These were then sent to Headquarters in Lincoln for approval after which they would receive their charter. Memberships were set at \$5.00 each at that time and invitations were sent to surrounding areas to encourage participation. Their goals were primarily Genealogy ,but also to gather historical

material of mutual interest to everyone. At this time Victor Bohnet was elected as the first president of the Calgary Chapter.

On Thursday April 6, 1978 the by-laws were presented to the membership of 17 people for approval. They were then sent to Head quarters for review and acceptance, and on June 6 1978 the Charter was received. The following is a list of the people who pioneered this project:

Victor Bohnet	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Gates
Darlene Klemer	Myron Schmidt
Isobel Bohnet	Carol Halstead
Howard Kromm	Gerald Sieb
Beverly Fischbuch	Mr. & Mrs. Reubin Huber
Howard Krushel	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Sutz
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Foote	Jean Ketter
Betty Lang (Ohlhauser)	Max Wiebe

In 1992 , the Chapter with 28 members decided to publish a Newsletter .They applied for and received a grant from the Federal Government. Roy Kaiser served as Editor from 1993 to 1995 In 1996 Lorraine Reppon became the Editor and Fritz Kiessling did the graphics and the final keying in and printing.

We have reached out to other Chapters in Canada with the Canada District Council Meetings held in Calgary every year. The purpose of which is to support and exchange information with other Canadian chapters.

And as they say," the rest is history". Many names can be mentioned that were and are valuable to our very existence. It also requires a lot of work and many volunteers. Our mission statement remains the same. "To discover, collect, preserve and disseminate information related to the history, cultural heritage and genealogy of Germanic Settlers of the Russian Empire and their descendents. Also to honour our forebears who came to Calgary over 100 years ago. Their struggles are not forgotten.

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Apron Show And Share November 15, 2008

— by Susan Kuzina, (Anne Stang – away in Argentina, back in December)

On November 15th we held a general meeting at St. Matthews. All participants enjoyed a lovely finger food potluck and a short program. We had approximately 40 members and guests in attendance, which was very good considering we were competing with the Stamps semi-final – Go Stamps!

Our program was a show and share and once again members came through with lots of items and stories to go with them. The subject was "aprons" and we had quite a number. There were three aprons from the 1930's, lots from the 1950's and some from other decades as well. There were plain and serviceable, frilly and fun, some done in crochet, some done on gingham. Of course, there was great representation showing the frugal nature of our ancestors – aprons from flour and sugar sacks, curtains and shirts. There were patterns, kitchen towels, a tea cloth and more – most enjoyable fun for all.

Al Muise Benner and Nora Schmidt were the winners of two aprons donated by Anne Stang as door prizes. Anne made one, frugally using some of her stash, and one was made by one of her sisters in Saskatchewan. Thanks Anne. We also had a raffle and the prizes were fun – plants, a Sunnyside gift certificate and a box of Bernard Callebaut chocolates – now why wasn't my number drawn. We have to say a thank you to Bonnie Laing our President who has taken on the job of ensuring we hold our raffles in accordance with the laws of Alberta. Thank you Bonnie.

Well, we've had three successful meetings this session. Now, we need you – looking forward to seeing you on December 13th at our Annual Christmas Program.

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## LIBRARY NEWS

— by Mabel Kiessling —

The Chapter would like to thank Al Muise Benner for donating a used computer monitor, hard drive and keyboard to the library. Hopefully it will be usable with the excess printer that was given to us by the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta. And thank you to Norm and Marge Fox for the donation of two comfortable office chairs. We have also received the Newsletter files and assorted other papers from Lorraine Reppon's family and thank them for bringing them to our library.

For anyone that has Saskatchewan GR roots, the Saskatchewan German Council publishes their newsletter "Postillion" on line at their website [www.saskgermancouncil.org](http://www.saskgermancouncil.org), click on "Membership" then "Newsletter". The latest newsletter of "User Leut vo Jagada" Fall 2008 notes that they may not be able to publish in the future as their funds are running low. Hopefully, many of our members that enjoy receiving a personal copy of this publication will endeavor to see that it continues. It would be a great loss if it ceases publication.

Our Chapter would like to extend congratulations to Michael Miller of North Dakota State University for being named 2008 North Dakota Librarian of the Year as director and bibliographer of the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. Michael has expressed a desire to see our Calgary Chapter library in June of next year.

The publisher of "Wandering Wolhynians", Ewald Wuschke, passed away in Vancouver, BC on November 7, 2008. He grew up in Mossbank, SK where he will be buried. Mr. Wuschke donated an extensive collection of genealogical material to the Historical Society of Germans from Poland and Volhynia. The collection is housed in Trinity Lutheran Church in Edmonton, AB.

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Techi-Bits — (Aspect Ratio)

— by Fritz Kiessling —

As we prepare to take the all important family photos for the upcoming Christmas Season there is one consideration that is important. A question that should always be asked, when you take a picture is: Where will the picture be displayed, and at what size?

It is important to ask the question, because the answer is needed to correctly configure your digital camera. There usually is a setting called "Aspect Ratio". This is the relationship between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of the picture. Usually there are a number of choices, and they correspond to the configuration of the media where you want to display the picture. Here are the common ones:

- ◆ 4:3 refers to your (older) TV
- ◆ 3:2 refers to 6"x4" photograph paper
- ◆ 16:9 refers to your (newer) wide-screen TV

For now, choose the right setting for where you want to display your pictures. Next year you will find Techi-Bits in this newsletter that will help unravel some of the mysteries of digital pictures, such as computer file size, printing them or getting prints from the store, and finally scanning your pictures.

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Merry Christmas  
To All

**FOOD DEMO & DISCUSSION  
"KUCHEN"  
January 24 , 2009**

Library open, Demo @ 11:10 a.m., Lunch – Finger Food Potluck @ Noon

Program @ 1 p.m. and then "Sampling & Tasting"

Sampling after lunch and discussion

SCHMECKING GOOD FUN – BRING YOUR MEMORIES & STORIES, YOUR RECIPES, AND YOUR TASTE BUDS FOR A FUN FILLED PROGRAM!

**LIBRARY HOURS**

**4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

Members may use the library free, but non-members will be charged \$2.00.

THE MONDAY NIGHT LIBRARY WILL BE HELD  
IN THE CHURCH OFFICE BUILDING NEXT TO THE CHURCH  
"NOT" IN THE CHURCH BASEMENT

|         |          |    |
|---------|----------|----|
| Monday, | December | 8  |
| Monday, | January  | 12 |
| Monday, | February | 9  |
| Monday, | March    | 9  |
| Monday, | April    | 13 |

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
**February 28, 2009**

Details Coming Soon

Doors open at 2:00 p.m., Meeting @ 3:00 p.m., Dinner @ 4:00 p.m.

Times and Menu being finalized. Check you e-mail in February for details.

Tickets will be available at January 24th meeting for dinner. Cost being finalized.

**SPECIAL NOTE:**

All mail to AHSGR Calgary Chapter should be addressed to:

AHSGR Calgary Chapter  
Box 31043 Bridgeland RPO  
Calgary AB T2E 9A3  
Canada

**CHRISTMAS PARTY**

**Saturday — December 13, 2006**

PLACE: St. Matthew Lutheran Church  
66 - 7th Street N.E. Calgary

Lower Level Entrance from East Parking Lot; no stairs!

TIME: Doors open at 11:00 A.M. -- Light Lunch at 12:00 P.M.  
Sandwiches provided by the Chapter

Program @ 1:00 p.m., Library not available today

Donations to Bake Table or Dessert Table Welcome

Raffle – if you have something to Donate, Thank You

Come to sing a little, laugh a little, eat a little – enjoy a lot!

**Program includes Carol Singing,  
Reader's Theatre – Santa's into Genealogy and more**