

Chronicle Unserer Leute



Oregon Chapter of the American Historical
Society of Germans from Russia

Volume 45, Issue 4
October—December 2021



**Catherine II,
the Great**

In This Issue

President's Message.....	2
From the Editor.....	3
Upcoming Events.....	4
September Chapter Meeting Recap.....	5
Hop To It: Picking Hops in the Willamette Valley.....	6
You Better Watch Out: Pelznickel is Coming to Town.....	9
Recipes: Apfelkuchen and Grebbels.....	12
Membership Renewal.....	14

President's Message

Hello Everyone,

As I am writing this it is the beginning of September, and I can feel a hint of fall in the air. This is my favorite time of year. I love the cool nights, beautiful sunny days with a little crispness in the air. In Oregon some of our most beautiful weather is in early September. I love the excitement the kids have of going back to school. I love the sound of Friday night high school football games. I love to drive by the soccer fields on Saturday mornings and see all the young kids playing soccer with their parents watching on the sidelines. I love the Halloween decorations that seem to get more elaborate as the years go by. And I love knowing that Thanksgiving and Christmas are not far away.

When my family was young, I spent quite a lot of time in the fall canning. I canned cherries, peaches, pears, applesauce, pickles. I was very ambitious! And how proud I was of all those beautiful jars full of fruit that we ate all winter. I don't know that young moms do so much canning anymore, they are so busy with so many other things, but, I know that my mom canned, and my grandmothers canned. And, I'm quite certain that all their mothers before them did what they could to preserve food for the winter from what they grew in their bounteous gardens and orchards, whether they were canning, or freezing, or storing fruits and vegetables away in their root cellars. I'm sure they all had that same feeling of satisfaction knowing they were prepared for the winter.

I know our great-grandmothers were hard workers. Even though she died when I was only six, I am lucky enough to remember my great-grandmother, Elisabeth Schneider (born Traudt). Her family immigrated from the village of Norka, early—in 1876. She was only three years old when they arrived in the United States where they eventually settled in Hastings, Nebraska. She never had a chance to go to school as they needed her to work. She told my mother about washing dishes in a hotel and having to stand on a box to do so. She was always just a little bit of a thing, but hardy and strong. She married Henry Schneider in Hastings and raised a family of four big sons and a daughter. She cooked for all those big eaters plus the extra farm hands that came in the fall to help with the harvesting. She may not have been able to read or write, but she spoke both German and English perfectly and raised a wonderful family. Her oldest son, Bill, was my grandfather. Bill and my grandmother, Freda, with my mother as a little girl moved from Hastings to Portland in 1929. Elisabeth and Henry Schneider followed them in 1930. They owned a farm out in Forest Grove, and that was where I knew them. We spent many Sunday afternoons visiting the farm in Forest Grove. How I wish I could go visit there again! I am very happy that we will begin meeting together in person once more, and I look forward to our get-together on September 19. It will be so nice to see you all again after our long time apart. See you soon!

Fondly,
Carole



Carole with her great-grandmother Elisabeth Traudt Schneider in 1957. Photo courtesy of Carole Hayden

From the Editor

Well would you look at that, it's the rainy season again. I know I'll be singing a different tune after a couple months of rain, but for now I'm happy for an excuse to light a scented candle, put on a pot of tea, and turn on the oven. I know I can just turn on the heater, but I'd always rather be in a warm kitchen.

I know I don't speak for all of my generation, but I'd like to assure Carole (and the rest of you!) that some of us do still spend many hours this time of year putting up the last of the summer's bounty into jars, trapping that beautiful sunshine in glass as sticky fig preserves, sour dill pickles, and spiced pear sauce. People like me spend the summers toiling like Aesop's ant so that we may spend our winters lazing cozily like the grasshopper. Maybe it's a Generation-X work ethic, or maybe it's a German one. (I also grow my own hops, and this issue includes a little article about the old days of hops-picking in the Willamette Valley.)

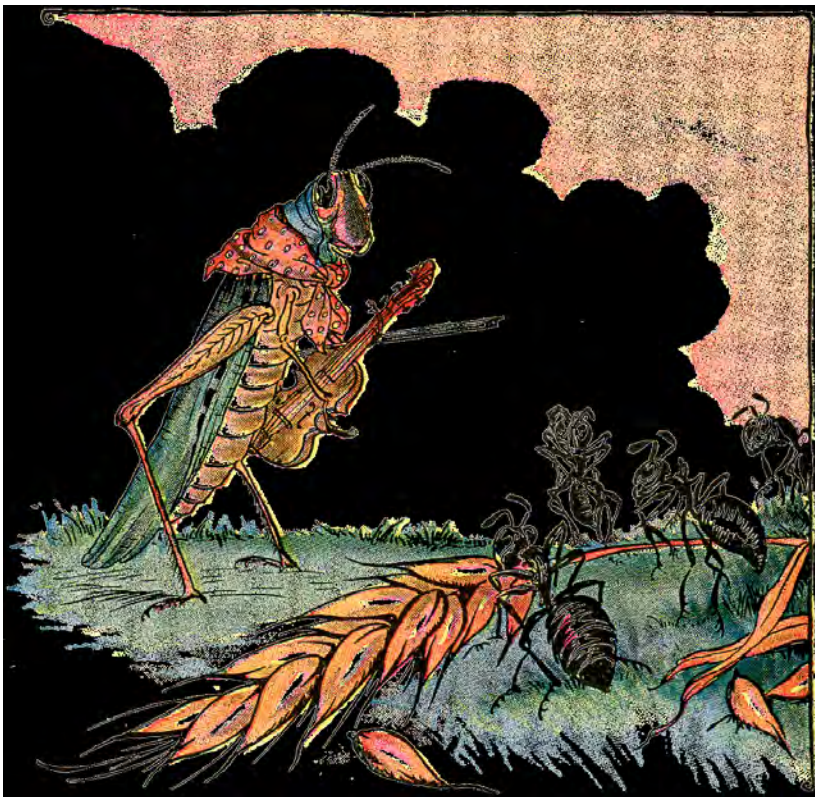


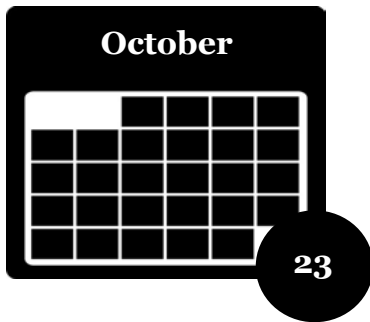
Illustration from Aesop's "The Ant and the Grasshopper," by Milo Winter (1919). Public domain, courtesy Library of Congress

Having just celebrated a small Oktoberfest among friends, I can say with some authority that Germans really know how to celebrate the harvest season. Roast pork and *rotkohl*, homemade plum schnapps, and plenty of *apfelkuchen* — including one I brought — graced the table that day. For brownie points (and because the host was a Black Sea German from South Dakota) I also brought a *Schwartzbeerenkuchen* made with the black nightshade berries from my garden. In this issue I'll share my recipe for *apfelkuchen* so that you may stay full of cake all winter long.

Since this is the final issue of 2021, I want to reflect on the holiday traditions of our people. I'll share Mary Weigandt's *grebbel* recipe (which was served at the get-together a few weeks ago), perfect for any special occasion, and include a story about Pelznickel — our people's version of Krampus (and who is as well-suited to Halloween as he is Christmas!).

Wishing you all a cozy season,
Heather

Upcoming Events



Speaker: Carolyn Schott — Black Sea Germans

Saturday, October 23, 2:00pm

*St. Michael's Lutheran Church
6700 NE 29th Ave., Portland, OR*

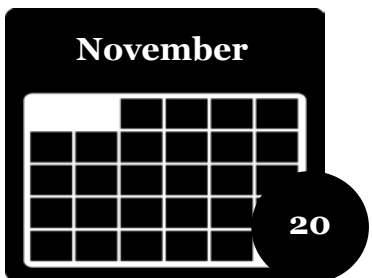
Join us to explore the history of Black Sea Germans (in areas that are now Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, and Georgia). We'll discuss the complex history of German settlers in this area, including the waves of migration to the region, as well as migration patterns and deportations that resulted in their leaving.



Did you know that a 10-mile distance between Black Sea villages can radically change the types of records available to find your Black Sea ancestors? We'll discuss why this occurred and some of the best resources to use in finding your Black Sea German ancestors.

Carolyn Schott is the author of *Visiting Your Ancestral Town*, a result of her passion for genealogy and for travel. After numerous visits to ancestral villages in Germany, Ukraine, Poland, Moldova, and Hungary, she wanted to share with others how to get the most out of a trip to explore one's family roots.

She is based in Seattle, Washington.



Oregon Chapter Meeting

Saturday, November 20, 2:00pm

*St. Michael's Lutheran Church
6700 NE 29th Ave., Portland, OR*

Save the date for our November meeting — topic is to be determined but we're happy to report that St. Michael's Lutheran Church has kindly offered their space (located across the street from Concordia).

Treffen Tuesday

Last Tuesday of every month on Zoom (3:30-5:30pm Pacific Standard Time)

Join AHSGR's monthly speaker series on a variety of topics. For more information and to register for attendance, visit the Treffen Tuesday registration page (linked in the email every month).

September Chapter Meeting Was a Success



Francis Schmidt's sausages made for the first Oktoberfest held at Mt. Angel, Oregon in late September, 1966. Photo courtesy of the Mt. Angel Oktoberfest (via 1859 Magazine)

It was with great pleasure that we were able to meet together for our first chapter meeting in a year and a half! One of our long-time members (and past president), Lela Miller, graciously offered the use of her beautiful property near Battle Ground, Washington, where we were able to meet out-of-doors. After having enjoyed a lovely September, the weather this day was a mixed bag—sun, clouds, rain, thunder—a little bit of everything. But there was cover enough for all of us, and we were all fine. We were able to catch up with one another, share some Germans from Russia news, and eat some very fine snacks that everyone brought. The highlight was provided by a good friend of Lela's, Emily Schmidt, who made grebble right in front of us. It was delicious and there were several people who commented that it tasted like their childhood! A nice compliment indeed! [Note: the recipe she used is included in this newsletter —Ed.].) It was great to see everyone who came!

Hop To It

Picking Hops in the Willamette Valley



Hops postcard circa 1910. Courtesy of Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives

by Heather Arndt Anderson

(adapted from *Portland: A Food Biography*)

Oregon is famous for the quality of its beer, and the story of how this came to be is more than 150 years old. By the 1860s, there was already a steady crop of wheat and a robust population of Germans in the state — but by the turn of the 20th century the Willamette Valley had gone from being possibly-a-decent-place to grow hops to the "Hop Capitol of the World."¹

In the 1920s and 30s, many Volga German women and children took seasonal jobs picking berries, but after Prohibition ended in 1933 they more frequently worked picking hops. Several families would travel together, 30 miles south, to the German-owned hop fields in St. Paul on what they thought of as sort of summer retreats. They packed tents and two weeks' supplies with them: homemade roggebrod (rye bread), cured bacon and other meats, baking supplies and staples like potatoes and onions that traveled well.

The hop pickers' camps were tended by two or three women who were in charge of cooking and taking care of little ones, in addition to working a full day stripping fragrant hop flowers from their vines. Mollie Schneider Willman, an Albina woman, reminisced about the summers she and her mother spent picking hops in the 1930s:

The women cooked meals outside where wood-stoked cook stoves were situated, sometimes under an open-air shelter filled with picnic-style tables and benches. With no ice boxes available for cold storage, we would fill heavy bottles and containers with perishables (milk, for example) then seal them tightly and sink them in the creek. A truck from the local grocery came by every afternoon when the field work was finished, providing us with a veritable market on wheels. The driver sold fresh meat, eggs, and other groceries.²



Frank Ernst, second left, and wife, fourth left, with their family working on the Horst Hop Ranch near Independence. He is a carpenter; she is a nurse; they are vacationing. Kids are Johnny, 11 left; Alice Marie, 16, light shirt; Mary Ann, 13, fifth from left; twins Lue and Sue, 15; and Paul, 9, foreground right. Photo ca. 1950. Courtesy Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives.

Picking hops was backbreaking work, often in blistering summer heat, and the vines tore up one's hands unless they were protected by thick leather gloves. However, once the day's quota was met, the workday was done, even if it was only the middle of the afternoon. This was when children went splashing in nearby swimming holes and women picked fruit. Some hop field owners grew berries, grapes and fruit trees along the edges of their fields or in adjacent orchards, and some allowed their hop pickers to take fruit home at the end of the trip. Some started batches of blackberry wine, others canned peaches with the canning supplies and jars they brought along. Women also filled a spare pillowcase with hops to take home for brewing the family beer.



Family of (possibly Volga German) hops pickers in 1935, at Riverside Hop Farm in Newberg. The farm was owned by A.J. Ray and Son, Inc. Copyright Thomas Robinson.

At the end of each day, pickers turned in their haul and were given a ticket to tally the weight of hops they had picked, and before heading home at the end of the trip, workers turned in their tally tickets for cash. Because of the late-summer season for hops, children often started school late, but Portland teachers were kind and lenient, understanding the importance of picking hops not only to the livelihood of Volga German families but to their culture as well.

By the 1950s, picking machines all but eliminated the need for human pickers, and the American palate for beer was becoming increasingly bland. In the 1970s and 1980s, the resurgence of small-batch beer — microbrews — brought hops-growing back to the region, and Oregon reclaimed its title of "Hops Capitol of the World."

Notes:

¹ Peter Kopp, "Hop Fever' in the Willamette Valley: the Local and Global Roots of a Regional Specialty Crop." Oregon Historical Quarterly Vol. 112, No. 4, pp. 405-433. Available: https://www.ohs.org/research-and-library/oregon-historical-quarterly/upload/02_ohq_112_4_Kopp_Hops.pdf

² Vickie Willman Burns, "Wire Down: Memories of the Hop Harvest," an oral history of Mollie Schneider Willman, Available: http://www.volgagermans.net/portland/docs/Wire_Down-Hop_Harvest.pdf



YOU BETTER WATCH OUT PELZNIKKEL IS COMIN' TO TOWN



Pelznickel is coming for you. Photo of unknown origin, ca. 1900s.

By Heather Arndt Anderson

While stories of Santa Claus may evoke fond memories of a jolly and generous bringer of toys — a children's hero — European children have some perspective that American kids may not get. You better watch out: Santa's evil twin is also coming to town.

Throughout the former Holy Roman Empire, Santa Claus is known to take up with a sidekick that provides the proverbial stick to Santa's carrot; to play bad cop to Santa's good cop. They also have a few things in common, like a penchant for carrying around lumps of coal, which honestly wouldn't have been such a bad gift, if it was December and your family lived before the advent of forced air heating. They all tend to take pleasure in issuing a whuppin' with some type of branch or bundle of switches, and typically carry around a kid-wrangling basket or sack. Whereas Santa Claus is derived from Christian Saint Nicholas, his terrifying companions are decidedly, universally Pre-Christian.

American children are told to be good if they want toys; French children are warned that if they misbehave, Santa's former child-butcher pal *Le Père Fouettard* ("the whipping father") will come for them. In the Netherlands, a soot-covered *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete) is thought to be the human embodiment of Odin's pet crows Huginn and Muninn, who eavesdrop into the chimneys of children's homes and then whisper into Odin's ear all their misdeeds. Alsatian youngsters have to fear Hans Trapp — the Christmas Scarecrow — who chops up, cooks, and devours little children. And if Austrian children act up, a horned, shaggy-haired demon named Krampus will throw them into a burlap sack and drown them in an icy river.



A 1900s greeting card that reads "Greetings from Krampus."
Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

German children— including those of ethnic groups like Pennsylvania Dutch, German-Brazilians, and Germans from Russia — had their own version of Krampus in the form of Pelznickel (or Belsnickel ("pelt Nick"), named for his hairy pelt. Stephen Schreiber writes on the Norka, Russia website:

"During the evening of Advent Sunday, outside on the streets there was a rattling of chains, ringing of cowbells, and shrill whistles which became louder and louder. From the dark shadows appeared a crowd of boys and unmarried young men. At the head of the pack was the large, black, shaggy shape of the Pelznickel (also Belznickel). The old tradition of the Pelznickel as a dark figure acting as a servant of Sankt Nikolas (St. Nicholas), was blurred with St. Nicholas, especially in Reformed faith regions of Germany where many of the original colonists had lived before settling in Norka.

If there were disobedient boys in the house, the Pelznickel

was often called in. The boys were frequently warned about him during the year. If they weren't behaving, they were told:

DER PELZNICKEL KOMMT *(the Pelznickel will come for you)."*

Some versions of Pelznickel dragged little ones out into the woods and made to pay for their misbehavior; others kidnapped children and never returned them to their parents. Pelznickel was usually a man dressed in a thick, black sheepskin coat and hat with a fake beard and felt boots; he'd come rattling his chains into homes with children, yelling and cracking his whip menacingly. He'd drag a kid out of their hiding place and give them the third degree to force confessions of misbehavior.



Unidentified belsnickels in Singers Glen, Rockingham County, c. 1910. (Courtesy Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society)

Pennsylvania Dutch Belsnickels in the western Shenandoah Valley of Virginia

After the children cried and promised to be good, memorize their Bible verses, or perform some song and dance to entertain the old creep, Pelznickel slinked back into the night, and all the parents of the land presumably enjoyed a nonsense-free household (with helpful, obedient children) for the rest of the month.

Notes:

¹Stephen Schreiber, "Christmas and the Advent Season," Norka website. Available: <https://www.norkarussia.info/christmas.html>. Accessed: October 4, 2021.

Recipe: Apfelkuchen

There's no better balm for a cold and rainy day than a warm slice of custardy kuchen with a cup of coffee. While lots of kuchen recipes yield a result more similar to a cake or quick bread, this style of kuchen is like a pie — but with an enriched, yeasted bread dough for the crust. For this kuchen, it's best to use a crisp, tart-sweet apple variety like Honeycrisp, Pink Lady, or Braeburn. Feel free to substitute with 2 cups of blueberries or huckleberries (thawed and drained if using frozen); Schwartzbeeren (aka Wonderberry) also make beautiful kuchen, in case you needed a reason to grow them in your garden. Makes 2 kuchen.



Recipe and photos by Heather Arndt Anderson

INGREDIENTS:

Dough

¾ cup milk
¼ cup sugar
4 tablespoons butter
1 tsp yeast
2 ¾ cups flour
½ tsp fine sea salt
1 egg (room temperature)

Custard

4 eggs
1 ½ cups heavy cream (or 1 cup cream + ½ cup sour cream)
1 cup sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract (or 1 tsp vanilla + 1 tsp almond extract)
½ tsp fine sea salt

Crumb Topping

½ cup flour
½ cup almond meal (or omit and use 1 cup flour)
½ cup sugar
4 tablespoons butter, cut into pieces

Fruit

4 apples, 2 cups of berries, or a combination

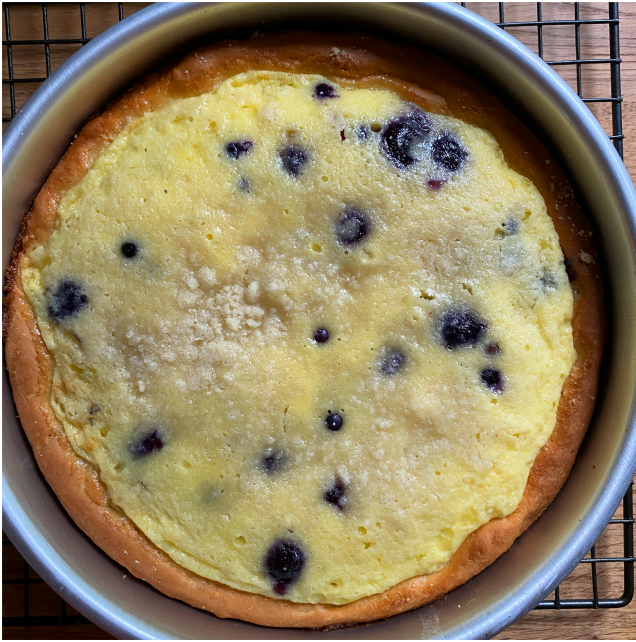
INSTRUCTIONS:

Make the dough: Bring the milk to a boil, then remove from heat and stir in the sugar and butter. Cool to lukewarm, then pour into the bowl of a stand mixer. Add the remaining ingredients and mix with the dough hook attachment on medium speed for 8-10 minutes, or until a soft dough forms. (Alternatively, combine the ingredients in a large bowl and then knead by hand for 10-15 minutes, until a soft dough forms.)

Place the dough ball in a greased bowl, cover, and set in a warm, draft-free place until doubled in size (approximately 1 ½ hours). Punch down, then divide into two balls. Place each ball in a greased 9" pie pan or springform cake pan. Cover and return to the warm place for another 30 minutes.

Prepare the filling: Meanwhile, make the custard by whisking the custard ingredients together until fully combined. Make the crumb by stirring together the sugar, flour, almond meal (if using), and salt, then cut in the butter with a food processor or fork until it resembles fine crumbs.

Assemble the kuchen: Place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 350o . While the oven is preheating, gently press each dough ball to the edges of the greased pan and up the sides an inch or two to make a shell. Set the two pans on a rimmed baking sheet and loosely drape a tea towel over the pans while the oven heats up.



When the oven's hot, place the fruit in the dough shells as decoratively as you like (or not), then sprinkle half the crumb topping (divided across the two pans) over the fruit. Carefully pour the custard over the fruit and crumb, then top with the remaining crumb.

Bake the kuchen for 35-40 minutes, or until the center is just barely jiggly. Allow the kuchen to cool on a rack for two hours before slicing. Store any leftovers in the refrigerator and they'll be good for up to a week.

Grebbers for the Holidays

At our September gathering at Lela Miller's house, Lela's friend Emily Schmidt fried grebbels for the crowd à la minute (ahem, *auf die Minute*) and they were a smashing success. If you'd like to make your own for your holiday gathering, Emily has graciously shared the recipe she used.



BUTTERMILK GREBBLES Mary Weigandt

3 eggs, lightly beaten
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cube butter or margarine, melted
1 cup buttermilk
3 cups unsifted flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ t. baking soda
 $\frac{1}{2}$ t. baking powder
1 t. salt
1 t. sugar

Only one bowl is needed. Beat eggs lightly, add margarine and buttermilk. Put flour right in on top of liquid. Add other dry ingredients on top of flour. Mix with a fork and then with your hands. Let set a few hours at room temperature. Roll out on floured board to about $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. Cut into rectangular shape. Make a slit in the center. Twist one end through slit, then fry in very hot oil (deep). They will brown quickly. Turn them over, and when they are light brown on other side, remove from oil. Place on tray lined with a paper towel. Sprinkle with sugar. Makes 24.

AHSGR Oregon Chapter Membership Renewal Form

Membership fees are for a calendar year that renews each January 1st. Annual dues for the AHSGR **Oregon Chapter** membership are \$25.

Membership Year 20____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

I want my Oregon Chapter newsletter delivered electronically. Yes _____ No _____

I want to receive my Oregon Chapter newsletter in the mail (paper copy). Yes _____ No _____

In order for us to serve our membership more effectively, please list all of your German-Russian family surnames and all of the villages that you believe your ancestors are from:

Villages

Surnames

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Annual Dues: \$25.00

Annual Donation: \$

Total Enclosed: \$

Please make all checks payable to **AHSGR OREGON CHAPTER** and send your membership dues and application to:

AHSGR OREGON CHAPTER

P.O. Box 55218

Portland, Oregon 97238-5218

You can also send dues and donations electronically via PayPal to our chapter email address:

oregonahsgr@gmail.com

The Oregon Chapter of AHSGR is a tax-exempt non-profit organization organized under the Internal Revenue Code 501 (c)(3). As such, your dues are tax deductible to the extend allowed by law. (Federal Tax ID # 93-1313164)

PLEASE NOTE: Additional dues are required for membership in the AHSGR International Organization. (See www.ahsgr.org/membership.htm for current International membership levels and dues.) Please remit International dues directly to AHSGR Headquarters at: 631 D Street, Lincoln,

AHSGR OREGON CHAPTER

P.O. Box 55218

Portland, Oregon 97238-5218

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City

Chapter Officers

President:

Carole M. Hayden
cnees@comcast.net

First Vice President:

Vacant

Second Vice President:

Ed Wagner

Secretary:

Marilyn Schultz

Treasurer:

Jim Holstein
503-367-1757
jimholstein@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Heather Arndt Anderson

Directors

Bob Thorn

Joan Porter

Donna Tetrault

Vacant

Vacant

Vacant

The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia is an international organization dedicated to the discovery, collection, preservation, and the dissemination of information related to the history, cultural heritage and genealogy of Germanic settlers in the Russian Empire and their descendants.

The Chronicle Unserer Leute (Chronicle of Our People) is published bimonthly by the Oregon Chapter of AHSGR. Keep up to date with the latest news and events from the Oregon Chapter of AHSGR on our website: www.oregonahsgr.org
Follow us on social media: facebook.com/groups/AHSGR.Oregon