

Chronicle Unserer Leute

Oregon Chapter of the American Historical
Society of Germans from Russia



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April – June 2022

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the Great**

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President's Message

Hello everyone!

I hope this finds everyone healthy and enjoying our warmer weather, all the blooming spring flowers, and at long last, an expected emergence from the covid-19 crisis after two long years.

I have spoken to a number of people who were unaware of their German from Russia heritage as they were growing up. That came as a surprise to me as I always knew that my family was German from Russia (or at least that we were half GR). My mom was very proud of her heritage and loved to tell us kids that her grandmother washed clothes in the Volga River. My grandmother, who we spent a lot of time with, talked about her parents and that they came from Russia. My mom and my grandmother occasionally would speak a little German together although they never made any effort to teach it to us. But, as is common with kids, we listened to what they wanted to tell us, but didn't ask a lot of questions. Now, when my mom and my grandparents are long gone, I have a lot of questions. But even though they are no longer with us I remember many things they talked about, and after all I have learned through the AHSGR and our local chapter meetings, I can see how neatly our family story fits into the broad narrative of the history of the Germans from Russia.

As a young child I knew all about the invitation from Catherine the Great to migrate to Russia. I knew that our people considered themselves German, not Russian, and that they came from Hesse. I knew that my grandfather's family came from the village of Norka, and my grandmother's family came from Frank. Both grandparents were born in Hastings, Nebraska, where their respective families had settled upon arriving in the United States, the Great Plains being the home of so many Germans from Russia. Hastings had a large population of our people, and it seems that they were a little bit clannish. My mom, who was also born in Nebraska, said that when she was a little girl in Hastings, if they saw a home that was a mess and not taken care of, my grandfather would say that family must be from Frank, but my grandmother would say no, they must be "norgera." My mom also told the story of her grandmother sitting at the kitchen table one day, crying because a relief package they had mailed to her family in Russia had been returned, undeliverable. Were they starving? Were they dead? No one knew.

My grandmother's family left Hastings for a couple of years to move to Scottsbluff, Nebraska, to "work beets" — that industry was full of our people — and in 1929 my grandparents, Bill and Frieda Snider (and my eight-year-old mother) left Hastings for the Great Northwest. They were headed to Seattle but only got as far as Portland. My Schneider great-grandparents followed in 1930, purchasing a farm in Forest Grove, and my Zeiler great-grandparents came in the 1940s and moved in with my grandparents. While they didn't live in the historic Volga German neighborhood in Albina, choosing to live in southeast Portland instead, they did attend German church there at the Zion German Congregational Church at NE 9th and Fremont. My grandmother and her parents are buried in the Rose City cemetery surrounded by many other Volga Germans.

There is so much more that I would like to know! I want them to tell me about making the decision to come to the United States; about the experience of getting to the ship, sailing across the ocean, and then the train ride to Nebraska. Who did they leave behind in Russia? My grandmother, who loved being a grandmother, told me many times that she missed out on having grandparents because hers had been left behind in Russia. And then, why didn't anyone teach me German?





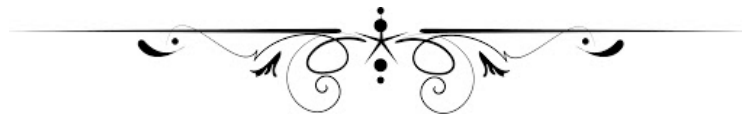
Dust storm approaching Hastings, Nebraska, in March 1935. Courtesy Nebraska Historical Society.

I, like my mother, am very proud of these Volga German ancestors of mine. They probably wouldn't describe themselves as being strong, courageous, and hard-working, but I do. And while I am doubtful that my great-grandmother washed clothes in the Volga River, she probably did wash clothes in the Medveditza River which runs through the village of Frank, and she still would have had to break the ice in the winter to do it!

I am pleased to belong to an organization like ours that is dedicated to preserving our heritage. I hope you feel the same way and that you have been able to discover, as I have, how your family's journey has been part of the big picture of the Germans from Russia.

Fondly,

Carole



From the Editor

After a few months spent in the winter doldrums, spring has finally arrived and boy, is it like a light switching on! Seemingly overnight, I have so much more energy for garden chores, and I just want to open every door and window of my house to let the sweet fragrance of daffodils and lilacs cleanse the air. The practice of opening windows even in the winter, or *lüften*, is a particularly German habit, this love of open windows — one that *Politico* recently reported is making it a challenge for Berlin to meet its energy-efficiency goals. As a dyed in the wool liberal, I'm all for energy efficiency, though anyone who lived through the energy crisis of the 1970s — and the ensuing push for airtight buildings — might remember the indoor air quality problems and respiratory ailments that followed. Turns out the old German ways might be right sometimes after all.



I've lived in Portland my whole life, so you'd think I'd be fairly used to life at the 45th parallel, but the older I get, the harder the winters feel. This year, not even a holiday in Hawaii could help — I just had to wait it out.



An early version of *Embroidery Woman* by Georg Friedrich Kersting, 1811. Like other 19th-century German artists, Kersting often painted his subjects in front of open windows.

Just like my backyard hens and my fig tree, I'm at the mercy of the photoperiod, and Mother Nature doesn't care how frustrating that is for me. Blessedly, the days are a little longer now, the sky is a little bluer, and the ground is a little greener. Let us all revel in this verdant season.

One of my favorite ways to honor the greening of the land is with German springtime foods. Asparagus, fresh eggs, and lots and lots of herbs start appearing in more of my dishes. I make the Hessian specialty *Grüne Soße* every year (and wrote last year about growing the herbs in my garden), and this year I've added a green borscht, or *Sieben Kräutersuppe* to my culinary repertoire. I've included my recipe in this newsletter so you can, too.

Now go outside and plant something, or at least take a moment to smell the clean air.

Warm regards,

Heather

p.s. Here's that *Politico* article: <https://www.politico.eu/article/germanys-energy-efficiency-open-windows-ventilation/>



In Memoriam

Norman Koch (June 17, 1934 – Feb. 10, 2022)



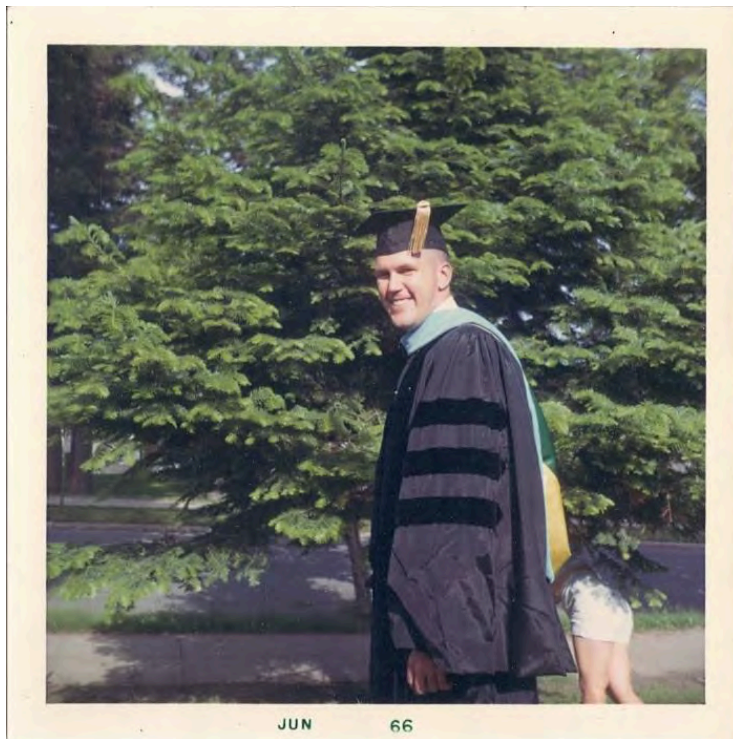
Norman and his wife Modeen in 2017

We're sorry to report the passing of our longtime member, Norman Koch. The following is his obituary, which was published in the *Polk County Itemizer-Observer* on February 16, 2022.

Dr. Norman Edward Koch was born on Father's Day 1934 to Peter Koch and Anna Marie Harding Koch, immigrants from the German Colonies along the Volga River in Russia. Little Normie joined big brothers Ray and Richie in the family home in Northeast Portland. The Koch family was active in the German-Russian community and congregational church. Norman attended Highland Elementary School (now Martin Luther King Jr.) and played trombone in the school band. Norman attended Jefferson High School in Portland until he and his parents moved to Kennewick, Washington, in 1950. At Kennewick High School, Norm played offensive guard on the varsity football team and graduated from Kennewick High in 1951.

Norman attended Oregon State College (Oregon State University) and was a proud member of Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity. In 1955, Norman and his girlfriend Billie Ann Morgan had daughter Jane (Williams) whom they gave up for adoption. Norman transferred to Central Washington College (Central Washington University) in Ellensburg, Washington, graduating in 1956. He taught elementary school in Vancouver, Washington, and in Burien, Washington, before returning to Central Washington College where he was conferred the degree of Master of Education in 1958. That same year he married Jane Ann Rapp and they moved to Kennewick, Washington, where Norman began teaching at Eddison Elementary, later becoming principal of the school. Norman's Kennewick years also brought the arrival of daughters Johanna Marie Koch and Gretchen Lee Koch.

In 1964, Norman moved his family to Eugene, Oregon, where he began doctoral studies at the University of Oregon and was conferred a Doctorate of Education in 1966. Norman immediately accepted a teaching position at Washington State University and the family moved to Pullman, Washington. In 1967, Snake River Freemont "Monty" the Black Labrador Retriever joined the Koch family in Pullman providing Norman with years of companionship and bird hunting adventures. Norman moved the family to Monmouth, Oregon, in 1968 where he began a long career at Oregon College of Education (Western Oregon State College, Western Oregon University).



During his time in Monmouth, Norman served as the official timekeeper for all OCE, WOSC and WOU Football home games for 30 years. For his timekeeping tenure he received the NAIA Award for Meritorious Service. Norman was a proud member of the Craven Street Drinking Society. Norman was a life member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks (BPOE), Independence Lodge and served as Exalted Ruler 1978-79. Norman and Jane divorced in 1979.

Norman was a member of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons Ainsworth Lodge, Scottish Rite and the El Kader Shrine in Portland. He enjoyed shooting trap at the BPOE Gun Club, handball and summer softball with his OCE buddies. And ran in the 1983 Monmouth-Independence Mini Marathon. Norman was proud of his German-Russian heritage and was a member of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia.

In 1985, Norman married Modeen Snedaker and acquired three step-children: Laura, Kristi and Scott, all of Salem. Norman's tenure at WOU extended 28 years until his retirement in 1996 as the Chair of the Division of Elementary Education.

Norman and Modeen enjoyed many years living on Stat's Lake in Keizer, Oregon. During Norman's retirement, the couple had many travel adventures along the west coast including the Alaska Highway. Norman and Modeen enjoyed trips to the southwest, Lake Tahoe, Hawaii and many national parks. Norman loved Stat's Lake and served as chair of the Inland Shores Homeowners Association for many terms. Norman is preceded in death by parents Peter and Anna Koch; brothers Dr. Raymond P. Koch and Dr. Richard A. Koch; many aunts and uncles; daughter Jane Williams; bird hunting companion Monty; grandsons Jacob Thompson and Joseph Thompson.

Norman is survived by wife Modeen Koch; children Johanna Koch (Bob Dillard), Gretchen Koch, Laura Snedaker (Greg Wilke), Scott (Teri) Snedaker, and Kristi (Rob Becker); grandchildren Ricky Dillard, Henry Thompson, Margaret Jesse, Emilie Becker, Nathaniel Becker, Jeremy Becker and Claire Snedaker.

A memorial will be held at a later date.



THE AHSGR NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS



WANTS YOU

AHSGR is seeking members who are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, and there is presently an opening for someone from Oregon/Southwest Washington as our current representative, Ed Wagner, is stepping down. Ed, from our Oregon Chapter, has been filling this position for some time and is ready to hand this responsibility on to someone else. He would be happy to talk with any interested persons about what his experience has been. Feel free to give him a call at 971-282-6435.

The AHSGR board members are expected to participate in board meetings which are typically held three times a year in the Fall (October), Spring (March/April), and at the Annual Convention (July). Board members are also assigned to participate on a committee of their choice. Since the covid pandemic, many meetings are conducted virtually. The level of participation varies with some members taking a very active role and others with more limited involvement beyond the Board and Committee meetings.

Volunteering helps AHSGR accomplish its goals of collecting and providing access to our available resources, and it can be rewarding and enjoyable. Sounds like it might be fun!

Updates



In Case You Missed It:

An Introduction to DNA – Herb Femling (March, 2022)

Our brains were exploding with information by the end of our presentation by long-time chapter member Herb Femling. He has a lot of experience with using DNA to extend and study his ancestry, in some cases connecting with relatives going back many generations. He explained how we inherit our DNA and how to compare it to others. The bottom line? He highly recommends that everyone have their DNA mapped and encourage your relatives to do it too. There are several companies that offer this service, and they often offer discounts.

The Germans from Russia in Portland, Oregon – **Steve Schreiber** (February, 2022)

We had a good number of people join with us for a showing of the DVD “The Germans from Russia in Portland, Oregon.” This documentary-style program was created by past president Steve Schreiber several years ago. It tells the broad story of the Germans from Russia and then the more specific details of how so many of our people ended up in Portland and other parts of the Northwest. It is very well done, entertaining and educational. Ken Burns had better watch out; he’s got some competition! There was time at the end for questions and comments, and it was fun to hear so many people talk about their memories of attending church services in the Volga German churches that dotted northeast Portland years ago. The supply of DVDs that we had available sold out, but it may be possible to create more if there is interest.



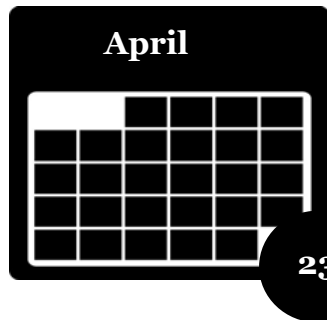
Tracking Down Info for Kautz and Merkel Village – Michael Frank (January, 2022)

One of our own members, Michael Frank, who is the Village Coordinator for the villages of Kautz and Merkel, presented an interesting program on what this position entails and his experiences with gathering documents, records, photos, etc. He’s acquired an extensive collection of records, particularly from the village of Kautz and is anxious to share what he has with other researchers. He showed us the work he’s done on Google Earth plotting the position of all the Volga villages, zooming in on them via satellite, and how to colorize and animate old photos. Email him for more info: dm48@comcast.net.



Upcoming Events

Note: programs are subject to change because of COVID. Please check our website, Facebook page, or email/call a board member to find out about any changes.



Trudy Walter Carlson: *No Country No Home* Book Lecture

April 23, 2022, 2:00 pm

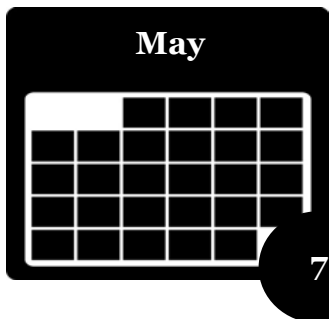
St. Michael's Lutheran Church, 6700 NE 29th Ave, Portland, OR

Trudy Walter Carlson is from a Besserabian family that eventually ended up in Portland. Trudy will discuss her memoir about her family's journey and the process she went through in writing it. Here's a blurb:

"Spanning three generations, this book recounts the story of a real German family who endured WWII, overcame poverty, and embraced an opportunity to come to a new country. Sadly, after surviving one of the most horrific events of world history, generations of decent, hardworking German people were affected by a societal prejudice and distrust for their culture. Nevertheless, their story exemplifies the resilience and perseverance of the human spirit. A compilation of personal histories, the book recounts the journeys of individual family members, often in their own words, and it proves that the struggles and victories of our ancestors can impact generations to come."

Books will be available to purchase at the event, or can be ordered in advance at

<https://bookstore.dorrancepublishing.com/no-country-no-home/>

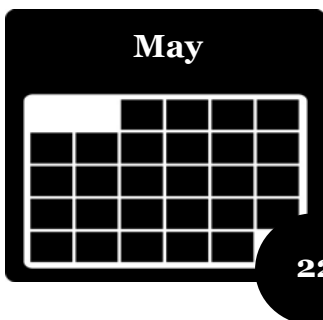


Maifest at Stammtisch

May 7, 2022 All Day

Stammtisch, 401 NE 28th Ave., Portland

Join Stammtisch for its annual Maifest celebration! There will be seasonal food specials on the menu and a selection of traditional German springtime beers on tap, including Ayinger Maibock, as well as Maiwein with real imported Waldmeisterbowl (woodruff syrup). Dancing around the Maibaum TBD. (*Your newsletter editor has a plaque on the wall here with her name on it. Come find it! —Ed.*)



Maifest with GROW

May 22, 2022 All Day

German American Society, 5626 NE Alameda, Portland

Our sister organization, GROW (Germans from Russia of Oregon and Washington), has invited us to join them for a celebration of Maifest. This traditional German spring festival is similar to Oktoberfest celebrated in the fall. This will be a fun celebration with lots of great German music and an opportunity for some dancing! Come join us as we celebrate all things German!

Treffen Tuesdays

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).

In the News

Concordia Campus New Home for UO Children's Health Institute

Many people have been interested in what would become of the Concordia University campus, as the former home of the Center for Volga German Studies (CVGS) and the home for our Oregon Chapter of the AHSGR for many years. It came as a great shock to us when Concordia closed its doors just as the pandemic was getting underway. Good news: it was recently announced that the campus will become the location for University of Oregon's new Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health. The funding will come from a more than \$425 million donation from Steve and Connie Ballmer. (Steve is a former CEO of Microsoft.)

The institute plans to partner with K-12 schools statewide, starting with Portland Public Schools. U of O says the new institute will bring together university research programs, public schools, and community groups to create and deliver "intervention and treatment programs" for K-12 students. The Ballmers' desire is to support efforts that help families and their kids.

Old Church Gets New Life

On March 1, *The Oregonian* reported that a historic Black church, the Allen Temple CME (Colored Methodist Episcopal) Church, that had just finished being reconstructed after a 2015 fire had badly damaged the building. Most people in Portland think of the Albina area of Northeast Portland as a historically Black neighborhood, but few today realize that before it was a center of Black Portland it was predominantly European, having been built by Volga German, Irish, and Scandinavian immigrants. The church itself was built by Volga Germans (established as the Second German Congregational Church, and the article did mention that the church was originally built by "German immigrants." Located at 4236 NE 8th Avenue, the building was built in 1913 and maintained by our community over the years.

Catherine: Empress of Vaccines

April 20 marks the 235th anniversary of Catherine the Great's letter to Ukraine's governor-general Piotr Aleksandrovich urging him of the importance of inoculating the public against smallpox. Last December it sold at auction for \$1.3 million.

"Count Piotr Aleksandrovich, among the other duties of the Welfare Boards in the Provinces entrusted to you, one of the most important should be the introduction of inoculation against smallpox, which, as we know, causes great harm, especially among the ordinary people," wrote Catherine. "Such inoculation should be common everywhere, and it is now all the more convenient, since there are doctors or medical attendants in nearly all districts, and it does not call for huge expenditure."

Catherine was the first person in Russia to undergo variolation, 20 years before her letter to the governor-general. The procedure involved making small cuts in the skin and inoculating them with pus from a smallpox lesion. A percentage of people still died from smallpox using this technique, though most only contracted a mild version of the disease and survived unscathed and immune. A longtime fan of science, Catherine called anti-vaxxers "truly blockheads, ignorant or just wicked."



Recipe: *Sieben Kräutersuppe*

(Seven Herbs Soup, aka Green Borscht)



Recipe and photo by Heather Arndt Anderson

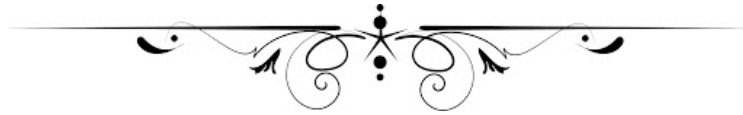
This soup is another traditional German springtime/Easter dish, celebrating the survival of another cold winter and the emergence of tender green things. While it's typical to use the mix of seven herbs traditionally used for *Grüne Soße*, any of your favorite combinations of greens and herbs will do here — and feel free to sprinkle on edible flowers for full vernal fairyland effect. Serves 6-8

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp minced shallots
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1 cup chopped white/green or Savoy cabbage
- 2 medium Yukon gold potatoes, diced
- 4 cups homemade chicken stock, low-sodium chicken broth, or vegetable broth
- 2 spring onions or 3 scallions, finely sliced
- 3 cups finely chopped mixed greens, sorrel, nettles, spinach, salad burnet, arugula, cress, orache, dandelion, chicory, endive, and/or chard
- 2 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp finely ground black pepper
- 1 cup finely chopped mixed herbs, such as parsley, chives, chervil, dill, and/or lovage
- 1 cup cream (optional)
- Sour cream for garnish
- 2 boiled eggs, finely chopped, for garnish
- Crusty rye bread, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Melt the butter in a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Add the shallot and garlic, and saute for a few minutes, stirring, until glossy and fragrant. Add the potato and broth, bring to a boil, then cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 10 minutes.
2. Add the spring onions, mixed greens, salt, and pepper, and bring the heat up to medium. Simmer for 5 minutes, until the potatoes and greens are tender.
3. Add the cream and herbs (reserve a few pinches for garnish), then simmer for 1 more minute, until heated through. Add salt and pepper as needed to suit your palate.
4. Serve the soup with a dollop of sour cream, a spoonful of chopped boiled egg, and a sprinkle of herbs on top and thick slices of buttered bread. *Guten appetit!*



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,

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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 quarterly 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
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