



# Chronicle Unserer Leute

Oregon Chapter of the American Historical  
Society of Germans from Russia

Volume 39, Issue 2  
March-April 2018



**Catherine II,  
the Great**  
Empress of Russia

## In This Issue

- From the Editor ..... 2
- Hochzeit and Sublimity ..... 2
- Upcoming Events ..... 3
- Far From Home: The search for a better life ..... 4
- Happy Birthday, Oregon AHSGR ..... 6
- Recipe Corner ..... 6
- Our Ancestors: John Traut ..... 7
- Member Q&A: Devon LaSalle ..... 8
- Growing Up On Borthwick ..... 9
- From the Web ..... 10
- A Typical Day at the CVGS ..... 11

# From the Editor

Hello, and welcome to the March-April issue of *Chronicle Unserer Leute*.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Michael Frank for his hard work and dedication to this journal over the past five years. I have some pretty big shoes to fill, but I look forward to putting my stamp on the legacy that Michael and those before him have created.

It is my goal over the next year to bring the rich story of our shared heritage to life – from our ancestor's brave decision to settle in an unknown land, to the fight for a better life in America. I want to delve into our history not only with words but with photographs, music, food and the other cherished traditions that keep this unique culture alive to this day.

If you would like to contribute a story, photograph, recipe or any other part of your German-Russian heritage with our readers, please feel free to contact me at [devon.lasalle@gmail.com](mailto:devon.lasalle@gmail.com).

I look forward to sharing this journey with you.



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## Hochzeit and Sublimity

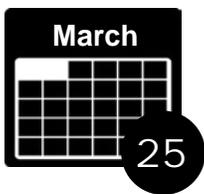


Andreas Schaab (b. 24 April 1890 in Semennovka) and Catherine Burghart (b. 3 Jul 1891 in Pfeifer) on their wedding day.

Andreas and Catherine were married at Saint Boniface Catholic Church in Sublimity, Oregon on 23 October 1910. The couple were married for 23 years and had 11 children.

A big thanks to Dee Schaab Moody for her contribution.

# Upcoming Events

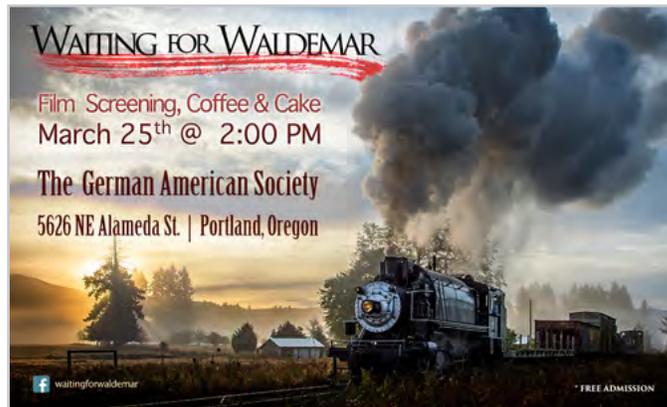


**Sunday, March 25 – 2:00pm**

**Film Screening: *Waiting for Waldemar* with Director, Eric Spoeth**

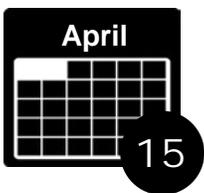
German American Society, 5626 NE Alameda Street, Portland  
(intersection of NE 57th Avenue and Sandy Boulevard)

First-generation Canadian filmmaker and director Eric Spoeth presents his latest docu-drama. *Waiting for Waldemar* tells the story of a Russian-German man's daring escape with his family from persecution on the Russian plains back to a land his ancestors hadn't seen in two centuries. "I made the film as a tribute to my grandfather, whom I never knew, as well as to the thousands of widows and children who spent the following 75 years living out their loss quietly, often in a land that had little sympathy for their suffering." For more information, visit: [www.spoeth.com/wfw.html](http://www.spoeth.com/wfw.html)



**Saturday, April 7 – 10:00am to 2:00pm**

**Oregon AHSGR Board Meeting**

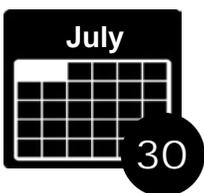


**Sunday, April 15 – 2:00pm to 4:00pm**

**Presentation: Growing Up On Borthwick with Author, Marilyn Schultz**

George R White Library & Learning Center  
Concordia University, 2811 NE Holdman Street, Portland

Written by native Portland author, Marilyn Schleining Schultz, Growing Up on Borthwick is an account of Schleining's life through fourth grade when her family moved to more affluent neighborhood. This compelling book tells of the family's struggles during the Depression and the impact of World War II on their lives.



**Monday, July 30 to Thursday, August 2**

**49th Annual AHSGR Convention**

Hays, Kansas

# Far from Home: The search for a better life

This five-part series will examine the rich history of our Russian German ancestors, from the brave decision to leave war-torn Europe to building a legacy in a country 'whose streets are paved in gold'.

The year was 1763. The Holy Roman Empire had long been dissolved, and over 300 European territories and independent cities had been ravaged by three centuries of religious wars. Just 21 days after her ascension to the Russian throne, Empress Catherine the Great published a manifesto that would change the course of history.

By the end of the Seven Years' War, the Germans had experienced their fill of physical and emotional hardship. Extreme taxation, the constant threat of physical injury and property damage, and being forced into military service had taken its toll. Empress Catherine's manifesto promised those who chose to come to Russia vast tracks of land along the Volga River, the freedom to practice whatever religion they wished, and a waiver from military service. In addition, the manifesto promised settlers travel allowances and assistance with building their new villages.

While the Russian Government hired agents to sell the idea of settlement to those in Hesse and the Rhenish Palatinate, the opportunity presented by Empress Catherine was too appealing to pass up. After so many generations of strife, many of the colonists had become wanderers within the region due to the hardships they faced. This was the

beacon of hope the German people had long needed. Over 30,000 Germans responded to the call. In 1766, they packed up their belongings and families and set off for their new lives on the Russian plains.

The first stop along the 2,000 mile journey was the Hesse town of Büdingen. From there, families organized into travelling groups and made their way to the Port of Lübeck by land. Travelling groups arrived en masse in early spring with the intention of making the sea journey to Russia immediately thereafter. However, severe weather prevented the groups from further travel until mid-May and soon over 10,000 colonists

had temporarily settled around Lübeck.

It was a tense time for the colonists, who were not welcomed with open arms by the local villagers. City officials were fearful of the town being over-run by the colonists, so they built custom barracks to house the masses in the hope of keeping them out of the city.

Finally, the weather cleared and the travelling groups boarded ships to sail another 900 miles across the Baltic Sea to Kronstadt. Here, the colonists went through customs inspections and had their travel papers checked before being rowed to the mainland city of



A copy of the first page of Empress Catherine's 1763 manifesto.

Oranienbaum (modern day Lomonosov) on smaller vessels.

By this time, the colonists were exhausted and wary. Would they be welcomed by the villagers in Oranienbaum, or cast aside as they had been in Lübeck? Luckily, Oranienbaum proved to be a much better experience for the colonists. Here, the colonists settled for several months while they learned the language, laws and traditions in preparation for their journey south. Empress Catherine had her Great Palace in Oranienbaum and was said to greet the colonists in her native tongue from her balcony. While there was still a long road ahead of them, the time spent in Oranienbaum restored morale for many.

Prior to the colonists' arrival in Russia, Empress Catherine had hired teams of German-speaking military engineers and officers to survey the lands along the Volga River near Saratov and tasked them with the responsibility of designing the villages. They mapped out layouts for the villages, provided the government with recommendations for settlement and built barracks for the colonists until temporary homes could be built. Empress Catherine was determined to provide the best possible chance of success for her countrymen.

The colonists travelled mainly via boat through the Mariinsky System connecting St. Petersburg

to the upper Volga River at Rybinsk, and finally arrived in their new home in the summer of 1767. The Russian military engineers and officers teams along with local 'serfs' helped them built temporary 'wattle and mud' huts, knowing that it would take several years before permanent structures could be built. Colonists were provided with allowances and wagons, horses, cows, timber and the other essentials required to settle a new land.

Even with this assistance, life in the 'mother colonies' during these early years was very difficult. Droughts were common, the most significant of which hit the region in 1769. Deprivation led to disease epidemics that killed many people. Several villages were ransacked during the Pugachev Raids of 1774. All said, up to one-quarter of the original colonists of the Volga region died.

Despite this, the strength and spirit of the colonists endured. Hardship was no stranger to these people. All they could do was hold onto the hope of establishing a better and more prosperous life in this strange new land.

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**Be sure to check out Part 2 of this series in the next issue, where we will explore what life on the plains was like for our ancestors.**



*Romanticized version of Volga colony life from a 1760s map.*

# Happy Birthday, Oregon AHSGR



Did you know that the Oregon Chapter of AHSGR is turning 47 years young next month?

While formally becoming an affiliate of AHSGR International in November 1971, the Oregon Chapter's roots started many months earlier.

Local members of the AHSGR International gathered at the Portland Federal Savings Building to organize the Oregon Chapter on April 25, 1971. About 75 members and guests attended the meeting, which was presided over by soon-to-be elected chapter president, Peter Koch.

For more information on the history of the Oregon Chapter of AHSGR, visit: [www.oregonahsgr.org/history.html](http://www.oregonahsgr.org/history.html)

## Recipe Corner: Butter Klösse (Butter Balls)

### Ingredients:

- 1 loaf white bread
- 1 cup Half and Half
- 3 eggs
- 1 stick butter (1/2 cup)
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice

### Instructions:

Remove the crust from the bread. Toast the crusts in the oven and let the middle part of the bread dry. Then, crumble the dry bread and toasted crust with a colander and rolling pin.

Heat half and half and pour over the bread crumbs. Add eggs, butter and allspice, mix and roll into balls.



Drop the butter balls into chicken noodle soup. Cook in soup until the butter balls rise to the surface. Serve hot with soup. Uncooked butter balls can be frozen for later use.

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Recipe contributed by Will Keller. Originally published on: [www.norkarussia.info/butterkloesse.html](http://www.norkarussia.info/butterkloesse.html)

# Our Ancestors: John Traut

by Carole Hayden

John Traut was born Johann Heinrich Traudt on March 14, 1842 in Norka, Russia.

He first married Elisabeth Hamburger (b. December 13, 1868 in Norka) when he was just 23 years old and she 20. He probably took her home to live with his parents as was the custom when young people married. She gave birth to a daughter one year later, and another daughter two years after that. Sadly, both little girls and their mother died in a small pox epidemic in 1868.

Soon after Elisabeth's death, John married her younger sister, Margaretha "Margaret" (b. February 6, 1850 in Norka). This marriage lasted nearly 50 years and produced 10 children who lived to adulthood.

After years of strife in Norka, John and Margaret made the brave decision to immigrate to America. John, Margaret and their five young children travelled in steerage class on the S. S. Oder along with 84 other families from Norka and the neighboring colony of Balzer. The ship had sailed from Bremen, Germany via Southampton, England, arriving in New York City on 8 July 1876 – just four days after the centennial celebration of the independence of the United States.

It is said that the family arrived in New York City with 50 cents in their pocket. Meeting them at the dock of Castle Garden at the southern-most tip of Manhattan was a German-speaking man, who provided them with bread, bologna, and other essentials. He assisted them as they left the ship and got on their way to their final destinations.

Some of their group went to Wisconsin to work in the lumber business, others to Kansas and Nebraska. Fewer than 20 families went to Wisconsin, but John and Margaret were among that number. It must not have been to their liking as by the next spring they all left Wisconsin and moved to Clay County, Nebraska, and John and Margaret settled their family in the Saronville/Inland/Harvard area.

It wasn't easy starting their new life in America. Their first home in Nebraska was a true dirt floor "sod shanty." Everyone had to work hard to make ends meet, and that meant that the children worked from a young age.

Times were hard. Farming the prairie land was challenging with occasional droughts and grasshopper infestations. To make ends meet, Margaret would walk miles into town, taking off her shoes to save them from wearing out, and wash, iron and clean for people – earning just 50 cents per day – then walk home again.

About 1882, John moved his family in to Hastings. It took some time, but the family began to prosper. John became a dealer in fuel, feed, and seeds. He



*John and Margaret Traut (standing) with John's brother, Nicholas Traut of Ohio.*

**DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK — PORT OF NEW-YORK.**

*C. List* Master of the *S. S. Oder* do solemnly, sincerely and truly *swear* that the foregoing list of Manifests, subscribed by me and now published by me in the Office of the Collector of the Customs of the District of New-York, is a full and perfect list of all the passengers who have been taken on board of the said *S. S. Oder* at *St. Petersburg* since she was certified, and that she and her crew is truly designated the age, the sex, and the occupation of each of said passengers; that the said facts the number of said passengers who have been taken on board of the said *S. S. Oder* and the occupation of each of them who died, since she left this *Port of New-York* on the *10th* day of *July* 1891.

*W. List* No duty was levied

List of Manifest of ALL THE PASSENGERS taken on board the *S. S. Oder* in Month of *July* 1891.

165	Johannes Traut	34	m	farmer	✓	4
166	Margaret Traut	27	f	none	✓	4
167	Philip Traut	6	m	none	✓	4
168	Margaret Traut	4	f	none	✓	4
169	Elisabeth Traut	3	f	none	✓	4
170	Conrad Traut	2	m	none	✓	4
171	Louise Traut	6	f	none	✓	4
172	Infant	3	m	none	✓	4

S. S. Oder Passenger List showing the names and details of the Traut Family: Johannes Traut, 34, farmer, Margaret Traut 27, Philip Traut 6, Margaret Traut 4, Elisabeth Traut 3, Conrad Traut 2, and Louise Traut 6 months.

owned a coal yard along the Burlington Railroad tracks on N. Colorado Avenue. Along with that valuable property, he also owned a number of residential properties along Minnesota Avenue. He had realized the American dream.

Although Margaret was eight years younger than John, she died first on July 13, 1917 at age 67. John survived her by nine years, passing his last few years in the home of their youngest daughter, Emma. He died of a stroke on April 3, 1926 at age 84.

John and Margaret are both buried in Parkview Cemetery in Hastings where many of their children are buried, as well.

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Would you like to share your ancestors' history with our readers? Feel free to send your story and pictures to Editor, Devon LaSalle at [devon.lasalle@gmail.com](mailto:devon.lasalle@gmail.com).

## Member Q&A: Devon LaSalle

### Why is our new editor an Aussie?!

Haha! I'm Australian by location only. I was actually born and raised in Springfield, Oregon and moved to Melbourne when I was 21.

### What is your connection to the German-Russian heritage?

My great-grandparents on my mom's side were from Norka.

### When did you become interested in this unique culture?

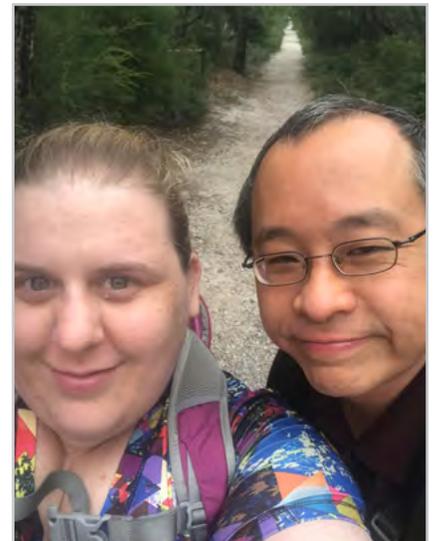
Like many budding genealogists, the passing of a loved one inspired me. I heard the occasional mention growing up of my ancestors coming from Russia but not actually being Russian but never thought much of it. When my grandfather passed away in 2013, he left behind his memoirs with information about his heritage. Reading through these pages, I was instantly intrigued and set to work. I quickly found the Oregon Chapter of AHSGR, where I met some amazing people who helped me truly fall in love with this side of my heritage.

### Speaking of cultural influences, what's your favorite tradition?

Food has always been the big thing in our family. I grew up enjoying several traditionally German-Russian dishes that have been passed down through the generations without even realizing it!

### What do you do when you're not collating the Oregon AHSGR newsletter?

By day, I work in communications and media at a local nonprofit. In my not-so copious amounts of free time, I can usually be found researching my genealogy, doing home improvements, or hiking.



Devon and husband, Jeff exhausted mid-hike!

# Growing Up On Borthwick

The following is an excerpt from Growing Up On Borthwick by Marilyn Schultz. You can find out more about this remarkable book at a special presentation by the author at the George R White Library & Learning Center, Concordia University on Sunday, April 15 from 2:00pm to 4:00pm.

My grandfather lived on 13th Street in Portland for forty-six years. He was fluent in the German language, knew some Russian, but never learned to speak more than a few words of English. He was, however, completely capable of handling United States money.

In 1907 Conrad Urbach, my grandfather's brother-in-law, owned a lot and small house on 13th Street (Block 9, Lot #12). By 1911 he had acquired the abutting lot to the south and had built a larger house on the first property to accommodate his growing family, which ultimately included six daughters. My grandfather, meanwhile, owned the two properties to the north, where the small house was first built (lot #13), then a larger house was built in 1914 on lot #14 (now 3827 NE 13th Avenue). Spanning my grandfather's two properties at the rear was a wide barn and stable, built in 1912, which later became a four-bay garage. The 1930 U. S. Census lists the value of the "big" house as \$5,000, the most expensive house on the street.

In the early years the outbuilding (garage) sheltered cows and horses, and chickens lived in a coop behind the big house. The barn, or maybe the big house's basement, held the whiskey still, which, during Prohibition, helped supply the German neighborhood with illegal liquor and my grandpa with extra cash. Because of his experiences in

Russia, Grandpa Schleinig did not trust any government or the banks, and when the stock market crashed in 1929, Grandpa's money was safely stored in a metal box under his bed. Consequently, he had cash money at a time when many others did not.

During the Great Depression, he converted much of his savings into real estate holdings. Grandpa bought about a dozen rental houses in North and Northeast Portland for very cheap prices - sometimes just the payment of their back taxes. One of these purchases was our house on Borthwick, which he bought in 1931. He offered to rent it to my parents for \$10 a month when my mother was pregnant with my older sister Shirleen. My family lived there from 1935 until 1947, when we moved from the neighborhood and Grandpa sold the house.

With little formal education and no real ability to speak English, Grandpa's primary source of income was always garbage collection. When he first arrived in Portland, Grandpa worked briefly as a laborer, then started hauling junk with a horse and wagon. (The 1920 U.S. Census lists his occupation as "scavenger.") In the 1920s he converted his business to trucks and developed residential and corporate accounts. Grandpa was an early (charter?) member of the Garbage Trick Drivers' Union #220, founded in 1915, which, in the early



years, wrote its meeting minutes in German. All the Schleinig boys, starting at about age ten, worked on the trucks. Many of the other German boys in the neighborhood dropped out of school when they were able to earn money for their families, but the Schleinings, following their father's orders, picked up garbage in the very early hours, then went to school. Grandpa was a formidable-looking, stocky man, with blond/gray hair and piercing blue eyes. He usually dressed in black clothing. With one leg shorter than the other, he wore a thick-soled shoe and walked with a limp. He worked hard and expected others to be as diligent. He was a stern and demanding father and boss, but he called me his "kleine madchen."

Grandpa did not appear to be a particularly religious man, although, like his neighbors, he was a member of the Ebenezer German Congregational Church at Northeast Seventh and Stanton Streets. The church had been founded in 1892 by Reverend Johannes Koch, who formerly was a schoolteacher in the German colonies in Russia and who later received theological training.

At Ebenezer, all religious services were conducted only in German, and there was great effort to maintain the familiar beliefs and practices that had been an integral part of the congregants' lives in the Old Country. All babies were baptized in the church (my father was baptized on Aug. 4, 1912), and older children were expected to attend religious classes in order to be confirmed.

One of the Reverend's many duties in Portland was to assist newcomers in filing United States citizenship applications. To become a naturalized citizen, no classes, tests, or English language proficiency were required - just paperwork, payment of a fee, and swearing under oath that the immigrant would renounce any allegiance and fidelity to "...every foreign Prince, Potentate, State and Sovereignty ... of whom he was before a subject."

My father was born Mar. 24, 1912, on 13th Street, in the little one bedroom house that had an outhouse in back. He was the fourth of six surviving children, five boys and one girl. Most of the children were not given a middle name, but nicknames were common. There was George (Skib), who was born in Russia, then Adam (Ad), Amelia, Theodore (Tee), John (Barney or Corny), and Edward Henry (Eddie). They slept in shifts, three in the bed at a time, but construction of the big house was underway.

Furnishings at my grandparents' house were austere. Heavy pieces were constructed of oak and upholstered with leather or horsehair. There certainly were no toys available for the amusement of visiting grandchildren. However, a stuffed maroon velvet frog with beige piping and pop-eyes sat stoically on a green wooden stand in a corner of the living room, and I sometimes played with it while the adults chatted in the kitchen. Sixty years later I found that frog packed away in a box in my mother's basement.

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## From the Web

Prairie Public Broadcasting has produced a fantastic documentary called *The Germans from Russia: Children of the Steppe, Children of the Prairie*.

The documentary runs for just under one hour and provides a detailed account of the history of our Russian German ancestors.

You can watch this documentary on YouTube at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vbKf9vyB9E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vbKf9vyB9E)



# A Typical Day at the CVGS

by Roger Burbank (Burbach)

On a daily basis, we receive emails from all over the world – Russia, Germany, and Argentina to name a few. We have had visitors from several different countries. All these visitors agree on one thing: The CVGS Library is second to none.

The materials that have been amassed for the Center are nothing short of incredible, and how they are cataloged and shelved makes the CVGS a user friendly library for research.

As a lifelong researcher I have never seen a Collection like this and to have it all in one place has put the CVGS on the Map with genealogical researchers around the world.

Last Thursday, two sisters – one from Idaho, the other from Eugene, Oregon – made an appointment to visit the Center to research their Volga German heritage. We started with the Russian Census reports for the Volga German colonies. With only these documents we found information taking their family lines back to 1798. From the Census reports, we moved to the First Settler books the library has acquired. These are books that list the Germans who made the journey from Germany to Russia in 1765 to 1767. In these books, we found the sisters Paternal and Maternal lines coming to Russia in 1766. Several of the listings name German origins, towns and cities, which was an added bonus.

The sisters are speechless by now. After the information we had from the First Settlers books, I thought let's come forward in time. We moved into our large Volga German Obit catalog. In this collection we found three generations of Obits for their family, some listing up to three generations of family in one Obit. Gold mine of information.

The point I hope I have conveyed here is that the CVGS Library gave these sisters information on their family, all in one afternoon, that in my prior research for my family would have taken me decades to acquire. This is a valuable resource for families interested in discovering their heritage and

the path of their ancestors across the world to the United States.

To have this collection housed at Concordia University is an added bonus to the community. NE Portland is where the original Volga German immigrants settled. It is amazing to be doing research and find people here in Portland that you are related to. Many families moved out of the original 'Roosian Town' and lost their connections to each other as Portland changed in the 1950's. As people discover their heritage, the Concordia Library gives them a place to connect once more to the extended families that still live in the area. An added bonus is that Portland and Concordia University are close to many other Volga German communities in the Pacific NW. Walla Walla and the eastern Washington Palouse Country reminded settlers of the Volga region. Many Volga Germans settled in this region and today still grow wheat as they did in the old country.

On a personal note: As a child growing up, I knew that my grandfather came from Norka in Russia. That is all that I knew. After finding Concordia's Volga German Library and the group of people associated with it, I was pleased to find out that I was related to many of these people by marriage and as long lost cousins. It is silly, but it gives you a place in the world, with more family than you started out with. It is reassuring to have community in this busy non-personal world. Concordia Library helped me find that.

These kinds of events happen on a regular basis at the Center.



# March

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 Film Screening: Waiting for Waldemar	26	27	28	29	30	31

# April

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Oregon AHSGR Board Meeting
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Presentation: Growing Up On Borthwick	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

# 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
Additional Donation:	\$
<b>Total Enclosed:</b>	<b>\$</b>

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 nonprofit organization organized under the Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3). As such, your dues are tax deductible to the extent 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](http://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, Nebraska 68502-1199.

**AHSGR OREGON CHAPTER**  
**P.O. Box 55218**  
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Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City

State, Zip

---

## Chapter Officers

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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 bimonthly by the Oregon Chapter of AHSGR.

Keep up to date with the latest news and events from the Oregon Chapter of AHSGR:



[www.oregonahsgr.org](http://www.oregonahsgr.org)



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