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Mission Statements

The **American Historical Society of Germans from Russia** is an international organization whose mission is to discover, collect, preserve, and share the history, cultural heritage, and genealogical legacy of German settlers in the Russian Empire.

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: A turn of the century photo of inside the Crown Mill. From l-r, John Greenwald, Sr., son Joe Greenwald, Carlos Salas, and Pedro Torres. Courtesy of Patrick Graves

Contents

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AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

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Norka (Staraya Norka, Weigand)
Nekrasovo today, Rayon Krasnoarmeiskiy, Region Saratov

By Dr. Olga Litzenberger
English Translation by Alex Herzog with editorial assistance from Dr. Nancy Herzog

Geographical location and administrative-territorial affiliation during the 19th and 20th Centuries.

The German colony Norka was founded on the right side of the Volga and on both sides of the riverlet Norka. It lay 65 *versts* [ca. 40 miles] from Saratov and 120 *versts* [ca. 75 miles] from the county seat Kamyshin and to the right of the postal road Saratov-Astrakhan. Until 1864, Norka was the center of the district Norkskiy. It included the administrative districts Norkskaya, Oleshkinskaya and Linyovo-Osyorskaya, Kamyshin County (the German colonies Huck, Hussenbach, Dittel, Seewald, Kauz, and Rothammel) as well as the colonies of Atkarskiy County (Walter, Korb, and Frank). From 1871 until October 1918, the locale was part of the administrative district Norskaya (Splavnoushinskaya), Kamyshin County, Saratov *Gouvernement*.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in the village of. Norka (1881). Drawing by Tatyana Bovina. 2010

Beginning with the formation of the Workers' Commune of the Volga Germans until the dissolution of the ASSR of the Volga Germans in 1941, Norka was the administrative center of the village soviet Norkskiy, Canton Balzerskiy (Golo-Karamyshskiy). In 1926, the village soviet included the village itself plus the hamlet Grundt.

Brief history of the settlement.

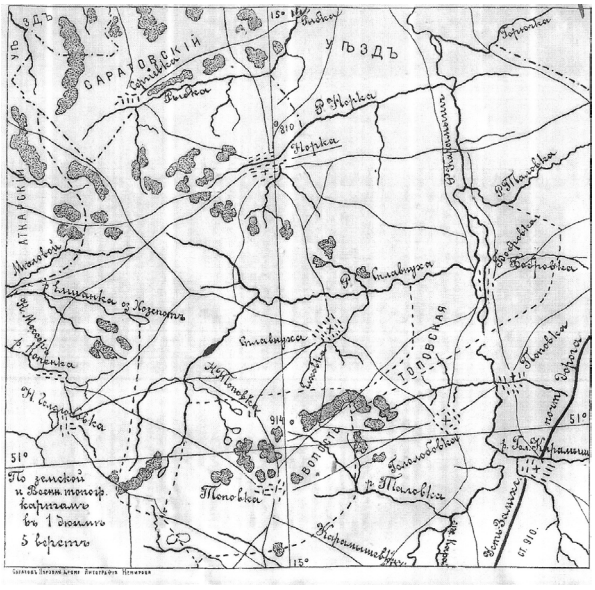
Norka was founded as a crown colony on August 15, 1767. The name of the place derives from the riverlet the colony was adjacent to. The edict of February 26, 1768, regarding the naming of colonies confirmed the original name Norka.

The colony was established by 212 families (753 persons). In contrast with other German colonies, the initial settlers came primarily from just one region of Germany, the princedom of Isenburg (today part of the federal "Laender" [states] Hessen and Rhineland-Palatinate). Such a common historical homeland was rare. It was also the reason that the economy flourished quickly.

The colonists stuck together. There was no conflict between people. The historian Jakob Dietz called Norka a "happy exception" and a "shining example" that settling of a community can occur with a measure of sensitivity."[1] The famous Russian and German universal scholar and academician Peter Simon Pallas, who visited the Volga colonies in 1773, likewise described the better economic situation of Norka and Splavnuchiy in contrast with other colonies, the existence of grains storage facilities, and even a regulated sale of grain in other settlements.[2]

Most of the 212 of the initial colonist families were Reformed. Sixteen families (57 persons) were Lutheran. Here, too, as elsewhere, in addition to the Protestants, a few Catholics, six settler families (20 persons) in this case, settled alongside.

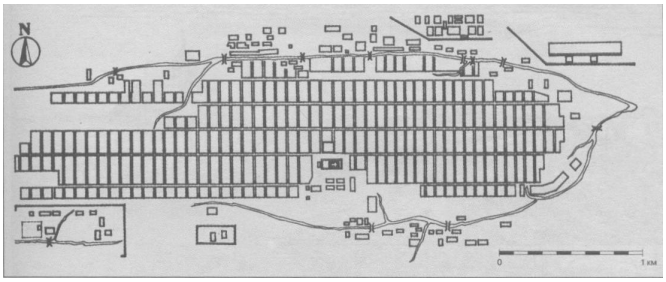
The Welfare Committee in Saratov provided to each of the first arrivals 25 rubles, a horse-drawn wagon, three *sazhen* [ca. 21 feet] of rope, one horse collar, a Krummholz [small-dwarfed tree], a saddle, five *sazhen* [35 feet] string for making reins, and two horses. Some colonists also received a cow.



Map of the Administrative District Norka (Splavnucha)

Most of the initial colonists grew grain, just as they had done in their old homeland. This corresponded to the Russia's goal that the settlers open up the virgin land agriculturally. Among the first 212 heads of family there were 65 guild tradesmen (non-agricultural occupational groups were designated as such in the lists of the initial settlers), four soldiers, three shoemakers, two weavers, one tailor, and one member of the rare occupation of teacher. However, being a Catholic, he was not allowed to teach the children of Lutherans.

The first leader of the colony was Konrad Miller, a farmer from Hesse. Not all the names of the settlement are preserved. Known only is that during the 1820s, a colonist named Nolde, and during the 1830s, a man named Hornstein were leaders of the settlement.[3] Leaders of the settlement, who were elected on the basis of self-administration granted to the colonists and were legally accountable to the village assembly, were often under the aegis of the Welfare committee. In one instance, when a settlement leader came into conflict with the colonist community and the Welfare Office found out, Commissar Ivanov, who investigated the matter and found the leader guilty, decided to punish the Norka residents themselves because they had protected one of their own.[4]

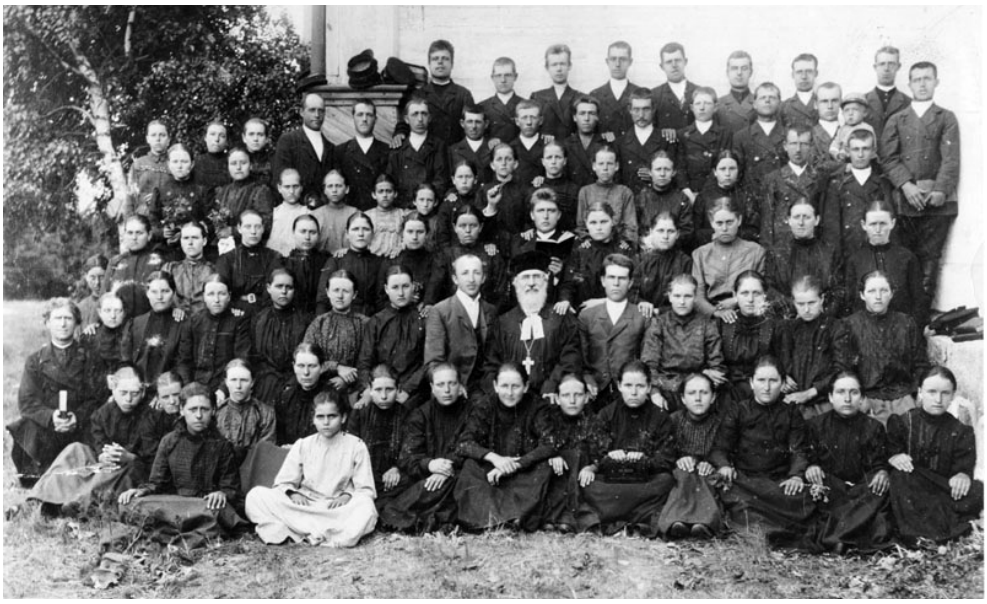


Evangelical Lutheran Church in the village Norka (1881)

In 1774, seven years after its founding, the colony was attacked by Yemelyan Pugachev.[5] The rebels also forcibly mobilized several colonists, burned down their homes, and took their horses and wagons. J. Dietz provides witness to the misfortune incurred by Johannes Wilhelm Stärkel (Starkel, great-grandfather of Pastor Wilhelm Starkel).[6] One colonist, chosen by lot, was forced by Pugachev's people to take their cache and bury it, after which he was to be hanged. But, as if by a miracle, Stärkel was able to flee, but still landed back in the clutches of the Pugachev people and then fought on the side of the rebels against government troops of General I. I. Michelson. He was wounded and tossed into the jail at Zarazyn. Again, he succeeded in fleeing along with other German colonists. Only after five more months was he able to return to his home village of Norka.

During the early years, the situation of the colony was unstable, not only due to the Pugachev attacks, but a failed harvest in 1775, losses resulting from an animal epidemic, damage from rodents, and frequent thefts of horses forced the village residents to ask "The Crown" for assistance. In their own words, they were no longer able to perform their agricultural work.[7] According to the 8th Census of 1834, the colony received 15 *desyatines* [ca. 35+ acres] for each recorded soul. In 1857, the 10th Census showed that each male owned 3.4 *desyatines* [ca. 8 acres] of land. For their own needs, people kept gardens with potatoes, cabbage, and cucumbers, melons and pumpkins to a lesser degree. In 1806, the Welfare Committee Office decided to stage "each week a bazaar, plus an annual market."[8]

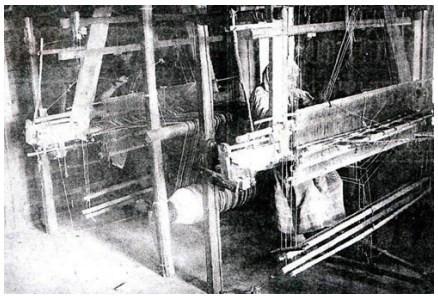
As early as 1810, the residents of the Hutterite colony Sarepta, which suffered from a lack of workers and from no possibility to obtain raw materials from the outside, opened a weaving operation in Norka. From then on, Norka became the center of cotton wool spinning for the manufacture of striped or squared cotton products (Sarpinka). Norka was where in the Volga area the basis for weaving was established.



Church choir in Norka

The weaving business was concentrated in the hands of the "Cotton Kings" Schmidt, Borel and Reinecke, who had factories in Grimm, Huck, Norka, and Gololobovka. Hundreds of Norka residents were involved in this home industry, in which children were included as of their 7th year of age. By 1894, around 250 people were engaged in cotton manufacture.

There were also other trade branches. In 1886, living in Norka were around 300 folks engaged in wagon transport, 78 wagon makers, 39 blacksmiths, 36 weavers, 28 furniture makers, 25 shoemakers, 20 shepherds, 19 millers, 19 tailors, 16 leather workers, 14 carpenters, 13 walking assistants, 10 saddle makers, 9 sheep skin tanners, 7 wood saw operators, 6 masons, 3 bookbinders, and one locksmith.



Process of making Sarpinka

Also significant toward the 18th Century was the growing of tobacco. Tobacco was one of the most important revenue sources for the colonists because the tobacco industry had been developing rather weakly in Russia. Buyers vended tobacco leaves at rather good profits in Moscow, Petersburg, Astrakhan, and in Ukraine. Norka and Anton were practically the only colonies on the right banks of the Volga that had tobacco growing areas to a large extent. But tobacco marketing became increasingly difficult. Selling prices dropped due to the monopolistic posturing of the buyers. Forty-eight Norka families who produced tobacco stopped further tobacco planting due to prices getting too low. Henceforth, tobacco growth served only private needs or would eventually be stopped entirely.

By the second half of the 19th century, Norka developed into the most-populated German colony on the right side of the Volga. While the first wood homes were built with state funding, as of the start of the 19th century colonists preferred basic planning and a careful selection of building materials for their private homes, while still preserving the old German traditions. In 1859, data from the Central Statistic Committee indicate the colony numbered 483 properties, 5 leather fabrics, 3 oil mills, and 21 other mills. From 1934 on, there was a "Feldscher" [a kind of medic]. In 1870 the population turned to the Welfare Office with the request to allow a public food dispensary in the village. By 1874, the "Chamber collegium" opened up a *Speisehaus* "in a shady place with an ice cellar."

Data from the *semstvo* census of 1886 indicates were 785 homes in Norka, of which 444 were made with stone, 336 with wood, and 5 with clay. In the village there were 54 trade enterprises (of which there were 6 windmills, 6 oil mills, 5 leather manufacturers, 7 carpentries, 11 shoe maker enterprises,

5 tailor shops, and 11 smithies) plus 5 taverns and food outlets, as well as 13 stores (of which there were 3 textile shops, 6 general stores, and 4 wine places).[9]

Church bell tower in the village of Norka

At the turn to the 20th Century, the town sported 26 rather superior homes, and "many equally ambitious start-ups."[10] According to data from the Statistical Committee of the *Gouvernement*, in the town there was a steam mill owned by F. Singer, there were carpentry shops, shoemakers, tailor shops, smithies, a rural postal station, a veterinarian, and a loan and savings organization.

High population growth and scarcity of land forced the colonists to establish daughter colonies. Due to that situation, between 1851 and 1852 some 520 people moved to the daughter colony Neu-Norka (today called Novaya Norka, in the Kotovskiy rayon and Volgograd region). In 1859, the daughter colony Rosenfeld (today named Rosovoye, Sovyetskiy rayon, Saratov region), and in 1860 the colony Neu-Hussenbach (today named Pervomayskoye, Krasnokutskiy rayon, Saratov region) were founded.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in the village Norka (1881)

Following the introduction of universal military service and the revocation of all colonist privileges per a decree dated June 4, 1874, in Norka and in Golyi Karamysh (Balzer, today named Krasnoarmeysk), a movement arose for paving the way toward Volga Germans emigrating to America. In June 1874, 100 families sent authorized representatives to the county authorities regarding the matter of emigration. Those authorities prevented emigration efforts with all possible means. They sent to the German population pen letters from emigrated colonists in which the poor situation of resettlers in Brazil was delineated. The Norka colonists met these letters with mistrust. Between 1874 and 1875, 89 families undertook passage to America—many more than from other colonies on the right banks of the Volga. As of 1876, another four thousand expressed the wish to emigrate.[11] However, the emigration wave waned after hundreds of impoverished Volga Germans returned from Brazil in 1879. But by 1886 the emigration wave swelled again.

During Soviet times, there was a cooperative store in the village, also a machine and tractor station, an electrical power station, a hospital, a reading room, a kindergarten and nursery, as well as a library. During the course of collectivization, four kolchozes were established. In September 1941, the Germans were driven out of Norka. During the 1960s, many families expelled from there tried to return. After permission to move there was denied, many had to settle with [the locale] Petrov Val in the Volgograd region, where a serious scarcity of workers existed.[12]

The School and the Education of the Children.

The first church-sponsored parochial "school" existed as of 1767, the year of the village was founding. Instruction of children as of age seven took place in private homes. The actual first (wooden) school and prayer house was built in 1771 under the leadership of Pastor Herwig. As a result of rapid population growth, the first private cooperative school, and later the *semstvo* [state-run public] school, were opened. By 1894 there were three schools: the church parochial school, the private cooperative school, and the government one.

The official government school was established in the 1770s, with the condition that the village community set aside a piece of land for it, that it undertakes the construction, that it employs teachers and custodians, that it pays the teachers and acquires living quarters for them as well as instruction and study materials. The ministerial office itself provided very little funding. But the school was opened, receiving exclusively local financing, yet remained a government institution, that is, it

remained under the control of the School Administrative Office, meaning the Inspector for Public Schools. Required subjects in this school included the Law of God, Writing and Reading, Russian, Penmanship. and Arithmetic. Teachers were permitted to introduce supplementary courses.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in the village Norka (1881)

According to statistical data collected by the regional ecclesiastical leader left of the Volga, J. Erbes, regarding the condition of the German schools in 1906, of 13,366 village residents there were 1,075 children required to attend school, ranging between 7 and 15 years of age. In contrast to other German settlements, at this school in Norka, attendance was nearly at 100 percent. The school had three classrooms. The church school had 443 boys and 482 girls, and seven teachers instructing them.[13] The church school had just one large classroom. Both schools were supported by the village community. During Soviet times, all three schools were closed and turned into two elementary schools and one middle school.

Religious Denomination of the Residents and its Characteristics.

A special aspect of Norka is that most of the colonists were members of the Reformed Church. In addition to this official church, in the villages (during the second half of the 19th Century) of the administrative district Norskaya, Kamyshinskiy County, *Gouvernement* Saratov, there were active denominational minorities such as the Dance Brothers. By 1875 there was a sect in Norka called the "Brethren and Sisters," designated "Ausgänger [departers or, in modern lingo, outliers]" with 26 members. And in 1879, Norka had 67 Baptists.[14]

The Parish.

The Lutheran-Reformed parish in Norka was established in 1767. The founding took place in the presence of the first Evangelical-Lutheran cleric in the Saratov colonies, Johann Herwig (1714-1782). He had come to Russia as one of the first colonists.[15]

Belonging to the Norka parish were the communities Norka and Huck (Splavnucha). Incorporated into the parish was Neu-Messer (Lisanderdorf) after its founding in 1863 as a daughter colony of Messer (Usty-Solichi).

At the end of the 18th Century, Norka [parish] had around 2,000 members from the colonies of Norka, Messer and Huck, and there were 600 Reformed and Lutherans from other nearby locales. By 1836, the parish had 6,234 members. During the same year, there were 332 births as compared with 125 deaths.[16] As of 1905.the Norka parish, with its 23,179 members, was the second largest parish of the Evangelical -Lutheran Church of Russia. Only the Frank parish (28,039 members) was larger.

Interior of the church in Norka

Date of the Construction of the Church and its Special Architectural Characteristics.

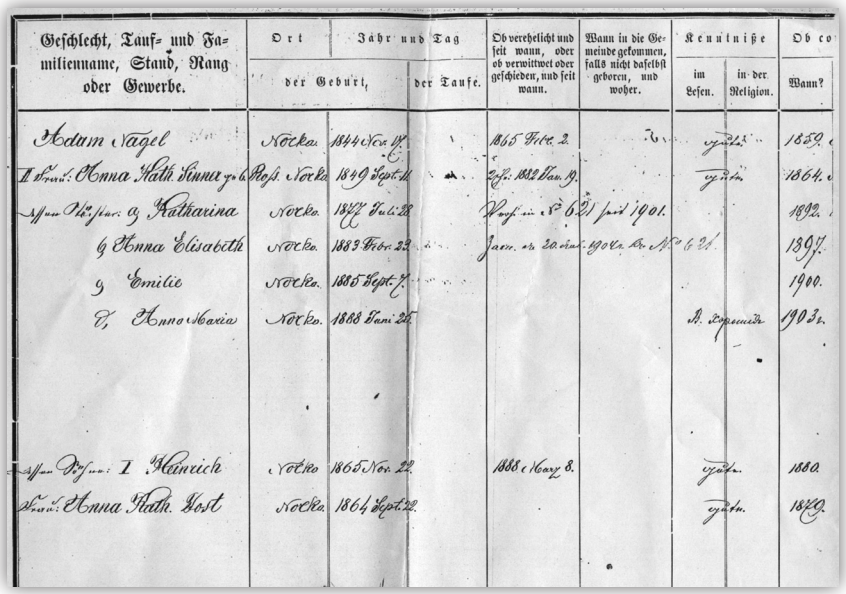
The exact date of the onset of construction for the first Lutheran church in the colony is not known. The only known fact in this regard is that during the founding of the German Volga colonies, the state financed the building of 24 wooden churches, corresponding to the number of initial parishes. A first small wooden church was built in Norka no earlier than 1768, and no later than 1770, funded by state moneys. It was a simple structure without any decoration, not a building intended to last an eternity. It was reminiscent more of a roomy home than a House of God. Locals built it in great haste. During the first years following the colony's founding, questions of architectural style receded into the background. For the colonists it was more important that a Protestant church might see the

Nekrasovo. The German power plant on the street Chapaeva. Photo by Olga Lizberger. 2010

cism merges with plain forms, had spread in the Volga region from the 1860s on. Russian church art was consequently observed by the German architects and colonist farmers in constructing the church. The influence of classicism was particularly noticeable in the inner and outer halls and the decorous ancillary construction of the Houses of God. Due to the relatively low construction costs and sufficiently available construction material, wooden churches were in the considerable majority in colonies. A German master of construction built this particular church certainly with no less care and with no less appreciation of art than those associated with stone churches.

light of day in the Russian steppe. It was intended not only for church services, but also as the center of village life. In 1791, an organ was acquired from the castle church of the small city Barby on the Elbe.[17]

The second community-funded wooden church was built in 1822.[18] It was considerably roomier than the preceding one, it was nevertheless also built at the cost of the community by the farmers and without an overall plan or cost estimate. At the start of the 1830s, the Welfare Committee commented, in its own words, "neither plans nor cost projections … were analyzed or confirmed. It was all left over to the community."[19]



Page of the metri1c book of the church in the village of. Norka. Copy

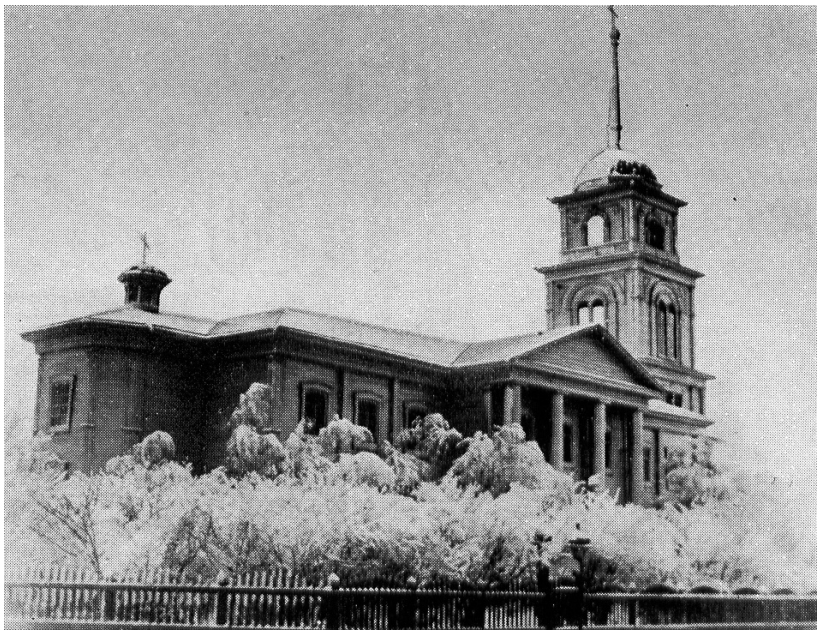
Between 1880 and 1882, the old church was replaced at the same site by an imposing wooden church and with an architectural style completely new for Norka. This style, forced on the community by the Welfare Office, in which Russian classi-

The church was placed atop a sturdy stone foundation, which reached somewhat above the ground surface. It was built with four corners and with impressive size, and it included a barely rounded apse. The two-level church had a four-tiered wooden tower, which was topped by a large dome and a cross. On each side of the church there were 20 windows and four exterior pillars, plus some pillars in front of the narthex. The interior of the church was partitioned into three regions: the anteroom, the center part, and the altar area. The altar was decorated with carvings. The center portion contained pews for 2,500 parishioners, plus the church pulpit. The church building was covered with a tin roof. It was surrounded with trees and a low fence. It was dedicated in 1881. The organ was installed by the well-known German firm Walcker[20] of Ludwigsburg. The organ was transported to Russia in 1891. Aside the church stood the wooden bell tower. In 1886, the pastor's home was built

of wood, not far from the church and atop a brick foundation.

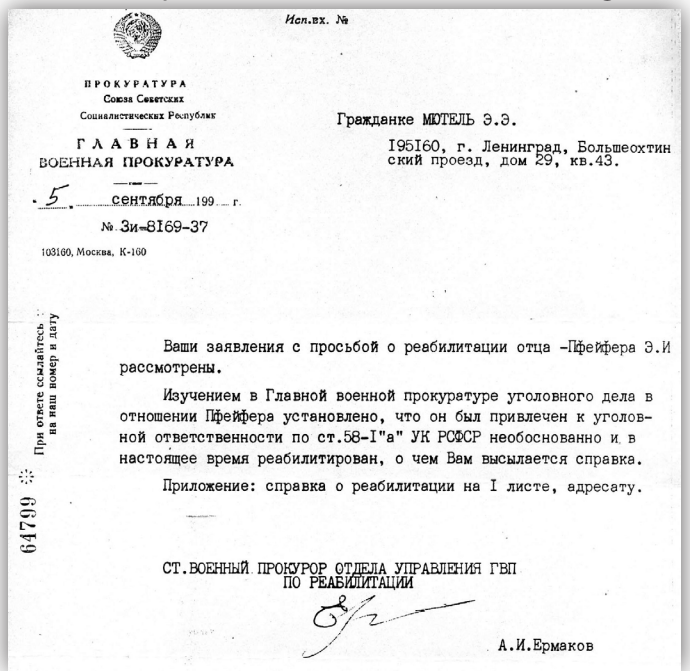
Population Numbers.

Norka was the most populated colony on the right banks of the Volga. In 1767, 753 foreign colonists were living in Norka; in 1773 the count was 957; 1,358 in 1788; 1,660 in 1798; 2,509 in 1816; 4,113 in 1834; 5,951 in 1850; 6,354 in 1859; and 7,641in 1886. Between 1874 and 1875, 89 persons emigrated to America.[21] According to a census of 1897, some 6,843 persons lived in Norka, of whom 6,815 were Germans. As of 1905, there were 13,500 residents in the village, and in 1911 the number was 14,174.[22]



Evangelical Lutheran Church in the village Norka (1881)

From 1917 on, the population number decreased steadily due to the Bolshevist policies and the result of the famines in the early 1920s and 1930s, of the dekulakization, of repressions, and of emigration. The Russian census of 1920 showed that 7,325 persons lived in Norka. The population in the Volga colonies were strongly impacted by the consequences of the famine in the early 1920s. In Norka, these consequences were not as catastrophic as in other colonies. In 1921, 307 births were registered versus 437 deaths. According to data from the Statistical Regional Administration of the Autonomous Region of Volga Germans, Norka counted 7,292 residents on January 1, 1922. In 1923, the number was 6,913 residents. Data from the All-Russian census of 1926 showed the number to be 7,466 persons (3,648 men and 3,818 women), of whom 2,307 were German. [Translator's note: given the rest of the figures in this paragraph, the latter number seems to be a misprint. The number likely is 7,307 Germans.]. There were 1,062 households, of which 1,057 were German.[23] In 1931, there were 7,707 village residents, of whom 7,693 were German.



Исп.вх. №

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А.И.Ермаков

Official document on the rehabilitation of pastor E.I. Pfeifer. From the personal archive of E.E. Mutel

From the History of the Church Community and the Parish.

The first pastor of the parish, Johann Herwig (1714-1782), traveled to various Volga German colonies. Numerous Lutheran and Reformed communities had requested that he perform services and other spiritual rites, because initially there were too few pastors. (During the early 1780s, there were fewer than ten clergy in all of the Volga colonies.)

Following Herwig's death [in 1782], the Norka community sent a recruitment letter to the Reformed pastor and doctor in Switzerland, Johann Baptist Catteneo (1746-1831), who subsequently, along with his wife and six children, arrived in Norka in 1784. The thoroughly educated and active church man soon became one of

Nekrasovo. Photo by Olga Litzenberger. 2010

the leading people in the emerging Volga German church organization.

At the request of parish members, and because of the scarcity of Protestant cleric, Catteneo performed services and other religious rites in other communities, among them Saratov, Pobotchnoye and Yagodnaya Polyana. As a recognition for his loyal service, son Luca Catteneo (1787-1828) was granted the right to study at the University at Dorpat, with support from the Tsar and his family. The pastor himself was provided with a golden tobacco container adorned with the autograph of Tsar Alexander the First. In 1817, at the age of 51, he ceded his post to his son Luca. He then dedicated himself to medical activities. In the German colonies, and even with the Kalmyks, Catteneo was known as an excellent doctor and surgeon. By 1819m he performed 16 hand, arm, and foot amputations and 277 cancer and other operations, as well as 8,000 inoculations against smallpox.[24] For his successful medical work, he was awarded the Cross on Vladimir Band. Thanks to his multifaceted knowledge, he was also able to help the colonists in their work with bees and plants and with their agricultural efforts.

In 1821, when Catteneo's son was sent by the Consistory to the Beideck (Talovka) parish, the by then 75-year-old pastor took over again his work in the parish. In his notes regarding a "Trip through Germany and Russia," he recorded his impressions of his work in Russia and described the Volga German settlements.[25] In 1925, Pastor Erbes published the memoirs of Catteneo originally written in 1786.

Born in Norka were not only Pastor Luca Catteneo, a superintendent and active in Norka, Beideck and Astrakhan, but also the well-known Lutheran clerics Superintendent Wilhelm Stärkel (1839 to a date after 1908); a missionary of the Basel order, who served not only in Norka and Eckheim, but also in the US; Emil Pfeiffer (1891-1938), who was subjected to repressions; and the publicly active Johann Schleining (1897-1961). Also, from Norka were the historian of the Volga Germans, author of *Unsere Kolonien* [*Our Colonies*], A. A. Klaus (1829-1887), as well as pastor and master of theology, Prof. Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch (1848-1925). The latter was part of a whole dynasty of Lutheran pastors. His father, Superintendent Christoph Heinrich Bonwetsch, a former shoemaker, missionary of the Basel order, served for a long time as pastor in Grusinien. He came to Norka in 1845 at the invitation of the colonists. As promised in their recruitment letter, they paid him a yearly salary of 171.43 rubles. They also provided him with living quarters. In addition, he received 150 pud [a pud is ca. 34 pounds] of potatoes. 18 measures of hay, and 55 *sazhen* [ca. 390 feet] of wood; plus a pud each of rye and wheat from each family. [Translator's note: from this sentence it is not clear how much of these quantities was due from each family. I assume the latter two quantities.] It is interesting to note the fees the colonists paid for religious rites: a baptism cost 15 rubles, 30 rubles for a confirmation, 60 for a wedding, and 15 for a burial ceremony.[26]

For some time, the parish Norka-Huck-Neumesser took on a special place among Protestant parishes. At the time, in the Volga area there were the Reformed parishes Usty-Solicha (Messer) and Balzer (Goliy Karashish). Confirmed by the Church Constitution of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church

of Russia, the General Consistory granted in 1832 the formation of two Probst [Superintendent] Districts in the Volga region. For that reason, as of 1832, the Reformed parishes were subordinated to a unified Consistory and were finally united with the Lutherans. The significance of Norka as one of the largest Volga colonies influenced church life as well. In 1865, Norka was granted the honor of hosting the 31st Synod of Pastors of the mountain side of the Volga. During the entire 19th Century, these synods had taken place exclusively in Saratov.

Nekrasovo. Club and village library on Chapaeva St. Photo by Olga Litzenberger. 2010 г.

After the Soviets took power, the former lively parishes became orphaned and for years had to do without pastors. During 1924, there was merely one preacher for every 4,000 parishioners on average. During that stretch, the Norka-Huck-Neumesser parish and its 23,000 faithful was without a pastor for nine years. The situation was no different in other parishes. The Lutheran Church of the Volga region was subject to the so-called "Executive Committee of Volga German Colonies." Members included many Lutheran pastors who, given the situation at the time, had simply been forced by the state organization imposed on them to enter the organization. Functioning as the chair of the Executive Committee was the regional superintendent on the right banks of the Volga, he of the Norka parish, Friedrich Wacker (1886-1838+). In the early 1920s, Pastor Wacker was very active in famine assistance and was coordinator of the National Lutheran Council, which was responsible for providing food in the Volga region. In 1925, he became Director of the priest seminary opened in September 1925. On October 15, 1930, Pastor Wacker was arrested and for three years sent off to the Dubinino Camp near Bratsk in East Siberia. Thanks to an intervention by the German Foreign Office, he was freed in 1933. However, he was no longer allowed to work as a preacher.

The last pastor of the Norka parish, Emil Ivanovich Pfeiffer (1881-1939), was also subject to repression. He worked in his position in Norka, Huck and Neumesser from 1925 until 1933. During his final years of service, not only was he under surveillance by the NKVD, but so were the active faithful in particular. During the time, the president of the Central Executive Committee of the ASSR of Volga Germans was receiving tips from the regional Commission for Matters of Religion, according to which the community had 3,954 faithfuls, of whom 110 were stripped of their civil rights (that is, they were persons without political rights). [27]

Due to constant impediments to his work by the state organs, Pfeiffer resettled to Saratov in the spring of 1932. From time to time, he still conducted services in Norka. In 1934, he was arrested for anti-Soviet activities and, by decision of the NKVD, sent into banishment. After his renewed arrest, the pastor was, via Article 58-1a of the StGB of the

RSFSR [?], sentenced to death by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Emil was officially rehabilitated on September 5, 1991.[28]

Following the arrest of the pastor, the Commission for Cultural Matters of the Central Committee of the ASSR of Volga Germans informed the Presidium of the ASSR of Volga Germans on August 28, 1934, that the prayer house in Norka had been closed, but that the faithful were still attending it. For that reason, the question of its [official] closing was to be dealt with separately. With several excuses, the above-named Commission turned to the religious community with a proposal that it repay within a week any outstanding debts and remit the building taxes from the previous five years. After that, the church would again be owned by the community. However, the community did not have the money since the tax rate amounted to 8% of the construction cost for the building. So, by October 3, 1934, by decision of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, the church was shuttered. In fact, the formal reason for the closure of the church was not the timely remittance of the taxes.[29] Rather, the Commission recommended that the church be used as a clubhouse.

Nekrasovo. The ruins of the German dwelling house made of "wild" stone. Photo by Olga Litzenberger. 2010

List of the Pastors of the Parish

Norka-Huck-Neumesser[30]

1769-1882 [1782] Johann Georg Herwig
1784-1831 Johann Baptist Catteneo
1817-1821 Pastoral Assistant Luca Catteneo
1828 Luca Catteneo
1831-1841 Friedrich Bo(ö)rner
1845-1876 Christoph Heinrich Bonwetsch
1875-1877 Pastoral Assistant Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch
1877-1908 Wilhelm Stärkel
1897-1901 Pastoral Assistant Woldemar Sibbul
1910-1913 David Weigum
1913-1925 Friedrich Wacker
1929-1934 Emil Pfeiffer

The Village Today. Current Condition of German Architecture.

Today the village is called Nekrasovo, rayon Krasnoarmeiskiy, region Saratov.

Today, the village remains the only community of the combined communities Nekrasovo (the rural community). According to data from the census of 2002, some 1,001 persons were living in the village, that is, fifteen times less than before the 1917 Revolution. The current population number is decreasing steadily. One can imagine only with difficulty that a hundred years ago the village surpassed cities such as Atkarsk, Balashov, and Krasnoarmeisk.

Practically nothing is left of the former greatness of the German colony. Of the former Norka, only a small part still exists in the center of today's Nekrasovo. At the edge of the place, the ruins of a mill built of stone and other German buildings are still visible. In the center of Nekrasovo one can still find

the typical German homes from the end of the 19th Century or from the early 20th Century, as well as wooden and stone structures. At one house, one can recognize the year of construction – 1913. Most remarkable is the building of the former electric power plant (today an apartment house on Tchapayev Street). On some homes one can see the old signs on which a spade or a fire brigade hook is pictured. Article 9 of the "Instruction regarding the inner order and administration in the Volga region" of the year 1800 prescribed for "old settlers" that "to make it plain at your properties who is to appear with whom at the source of a fire." For that reason, signs with images of a fire quelling apparatus appeared on all homes.

Nekrasovo. Ruins of the German school. Photo by Olga Litzenberger. 2010

The sublime building of the Lutheran church no longer exists. The place is now totally devastated. Still, Nekrasovo is one of the few former German villages where, through united efforts of the residents, of the clergy, of sponsors and building experts a Christian church has reappeared. In Sovietskaya Street, a small Orthodox church from the year 2007 has opened its doors. It is dedicated to the holy major martyr and healer Panteleymon. It is found in the former "ambulatory" of the hospital. Only a ruin remains of the German school which was situated right next to the church. As of 2010, in today's school in Nekrasovo, 76 pupils were instructed by 13 teachers.

Archival Sources.

State Historical Archive of the Volga Germans (Engels, Saratov region). 226 exhibit items. Collection of documents of the Evangelical-Lutheran church of Norka, county Kamyshinskiy, *Gouvernement* Saratov (1833-1915). There are three indexes; 81 archived materials, among them a copy of the Manifesto of Nicholas II at the time of his crowning as Tsar, concerning the dissolution of the First State Duma; edicts, orders circulars, and correspondence with the Moscow and the General Consistories, with pastors of the Evangelical-Lutheran parishes, notes by pastors and church elders concerning church matters; presentations by clerics, statistical data concerning the state of church schools, rolls of the faithful, notes regarding income and outgo of financials, notes concerning church properties, accounting books, data concerning church and school properties; tables and lists of pupils in church schools; a diary of a priest for the years 1878-1906. The inventory also contains birth registers for 1833-1906. Marriage records for 1833-1868, 1873, 1878-1911, and death registers for 1833-1872, 1883-1911; also personal books from Norka from the years 1834-1845, 1861-1875 and 1904-1905.[31]

State Archive of the Saratov Region (in Saratov). 637 exhibit items. Collection of several church books in the Saratov *Gouvernement* (1780-1917). Index 18, folders 157-158, 163, register of the Evangelical-Lutheran church in Norka for the timespans 1894-1902, 1903-1910, 1899-1919; index 2, folder 37, 1904.

An Interesting Archival Document.

Among lost happenings and records of the Welfare Office for Foreign Settlers, the State Archive of the Saratov region contains "a document regarding the hiring of a blacksmith in Norka" from the year 1828, and a "Document regarding permission for the woman colonist Glansi of the colony Norka to weave with a spool" from the year 1830.[32]

The "Instruction Regarding Interior Order and Administration in the Volga Colonies"[33] of September 16, 1800, prescribed the following: "In each colony, for various efforts and public purposes, there is to be a blacksmith so that everyone had the appropriate material needed for work ordered of him." The Welfare Office demanded not only special permission for performing trade occupations, but also facilitated the small trades in every possible way, "so that no resident enters into a state of idleness… and that the women are also busy with spinning of wool, flax and with weaving of linen and cloth, with maintaining poultry, making butter, and similar activities."[34] Additionally, the Instruction cited above recommended the leaders in the colonies "to take care that producers do not charge excessive and immoderate prices for their goods, but to be satisfied with prices acceptable to the community." County leaders, according to regulations from the Welfare Office, must "keep records, including lists of idlers… so that the diligent and honest residents might enjoy more trust, while the idlers are shown that a good opinion cannot be had of them nor be able to expect any advantages, and in addition, village authorities… should punish them with monetary penalties or feed them only bread and water, to force them to work, and to give them a specific task."

Remembrances of Norka by Edith Mütel, daughter of Pastor Emil Pfeiffer. Intercession before the start of sprint-time field work.

On the day when it was time in the spring to go out into the fields and to draw the first furrow, a prayerful intercession was conducted in the very early hours. Everything was ready for going out, the harrow, the plow and everything else necessary for working the fields, and the required provisions for taking care of the field workers was loaded onto the wagon.

It is still dark, and the bells are calling to prayer. The farmers, clad in festive clothing, hurry into the church, which is filled to the last seat. Quiet prevails. There is an expectant atmosphere. The pastor enters, the organ begins to sound, and the church attendees are singing. As always, our entire family went to church on this morning. Even though we had to get up very early, it was not difficult for us. I don't remember the content of the sermon. But how we prayed, that I remember.

All parish members collectively went on their knees. The pastor, kneeling at the altar, sent prayers to God in gratitude for the work of the farmers, with a plea to keep hail and frost from the seed, praying that the grasshoppers would not destroy it, asking for protection for the animals from any misfortune, to avert fire, and to protect the villagers from illnesses! Folks prayed that God may not forsake them, but to grant them strength and endurance to be able to conclude the field work successfully, to keep gardens, fields, and kitchen utensils clean, and to be able to bring in the harvest! They asked for strengthening of their faith in God and in Jesus Christ and to be spared from veering off the path of the Lord! In conclusion, they prayed the "Our Father!"

Everything was so festive, so honest, and so heartwarming, and it is no wonder that that prayer remains forever in the soul of a child. Following the festive intercessory prayers, the farmers went home, where breakfast was ready for them. Barely another hour passed, and the wagons, loaded with harrows and other farm utensils, left the village, not to return home before the autumn. This day was sacred.

Endnotes

1 Ditc, Ja. Istoria povolzhskih nemcev-kolonistov. Moscow, 1997. Pp. 83-84.

2 Pallas, P. *Reise durch die verschiedenen Privinzen des Russischen Reiches In den Jahren 1768-1773* [*Travels in Various Provinces of the Russian Emprie in the Years 1768-1773*] . vol. 3. St. Peters urg, 1771-1776, or the Russian edition – Puteshestvie po raznym provinciyam Russiyskogo gosudarstva. V3-h tomah. SPb, 1773-1778.

3 GASO. B. 180. V. 1. A. 12187.

4 Pleve, I. R., Nemeckie kolonii na Volga vo vtoroy polovine XVIII veka. M[oscow]., 1998. P. 251.

5 The rebels were led by Yemelyan Pugachev,

who started the farmers' war against serfdom, were fighting in the Volga steppes between 1773 and 1775. The plundering of German settlements by Pugachev's gangs weakened the colonies, but did not hinder their further development.

6 Ditc, Ja. Istoriya povolzhskih nemcev-kolonistov. Pp. 94-96.

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13 GIANP. F. 1831. V. 1. A. 299. Bl. 62.

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16 Petri, H. *Kirche und Schule in den ersten Jahrzehnten evangelischer wolgadeutschen Gemrinden // Ostdeutsche Wissenschaft. Jahrbuch des Ostdeutschen Kulturrates*, Band VII. [*Church and School in the First Decades of Evangelical-(Lutheran) Volga German Communities.* Volume 7] // Munich, 1960. P. 391.

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20 The Walcker company manufactured organs. It was founded in 1820 by the organ builder E .E. WaLcker (1794-1872). The firm attained European fame via the organ it built for the Paulskirche in Frankfurt on the Main. Following his death, his sons continued in the business. From 1820 until 1959, the by now world-famous firm built some 4,000 instruments in various countries, including Russia, where by 1917 more than 70 organs had been installed.

21 All data regarding emigrants to America during the second half of the 19th Century, here and below, are taken from: *NEmcy Rossii: naselyonnye punkty I mesta poselenya: yenciklopedicheskiy slovar' / Sost: V. F. Dizendorf*. M., 2006.

22 Nemeckie naselyonnye punkty v Rossiyskoy Imperii: Geografiya I naselenie. Spravochnik / Sost. V. F. Dizendorf. M., 2002. P. 116.

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31 Data for this article regarding the inventory of the personal registers that are contained in the state historical archive were prepared by employees of the archive.

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AHSGR RECORDS

AHSGR has a number of documents pertaining to Norka for research.

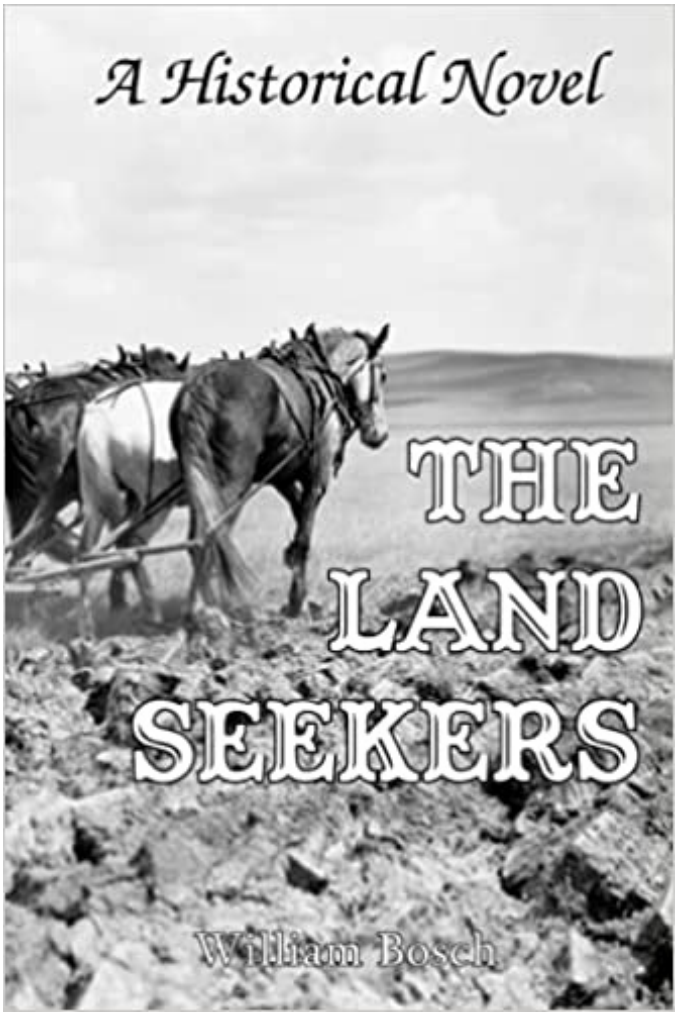
These records are:

- 1775 & 1798 Census
- 1811 Census
- Norka – A German Village in Russia
- Numerous Family Charts

The Land Seekers by William Bosch

Reviewed by Michael Brown

Most of us who had relatives go from the Germanic areas of Western Europe to Russia following Catherine the Great's invitation have only vague ideas about their personal experiences. We can imagine the experience based on stories we hear from the collective memories of other immigrants. My own family were among the original settlers of Bauer in 1764. The family left Western Europe as a husband and wife with four boys in tow. The wife, with a new husband 20 years younger, and her boys arrived in Russia with no record of her first husband. I'll never know the story of what happened. *The Land Seekers*, by William Bosch, is as close as I will get. His fictional historical novel follows the Fromm family as they decide to leave Western Europe in 1766 to establish a new village and make a life in Russia near the Karamysh and Volga Rivers. The story follows several generations of Fromms who eventually end up in the Dakota Territory. The story is quite compelling and easy to read. Bosch provides a level of detail that makes the story close and personal and makes it easy to connect with the characters. The story has a diverse set of characters with complicated personalities; we experience their successes and failures, and their joys and sorrows. Nothing is whitewashed and it is easy to sympathize and hope for the family's success. Bosch's level of detail along with his use of historical information makes it seem real. I was pulled into the story and enjoyed reading it. He re-creates many of the scenes we imagine our relatives experienced, and as the book progresses there is a sense of anticipation about what is to come for this family. Bosch does a great job of imagining the German Russian experience and I'm glad he has shared it with us.



Front cover of William Bosch's The Land Seekers

For Remembering

A Poem by Timothy J. Kloberdanz

"Krautburgers" browning in the oven,
Thin, buttery *Blinna* filled with lovin'.

Loaves of rye bread dusted with flour,
Garden cucumbers raw, sweet, or sour.

Garlicky bratwursts coiled in rings,
Dumplings fit for kings and queens.

A blackberry *Riwwelkuchen* rising high,
Just as scrumptious as an apple pie.

Twists of *Grebbel* swimming in hot oil,
Baby red "*Gadofel*" freed from the soil.

Coloring Easter eggs with onion skins,
Playing *Banock* and scoring some wins.

Bouncing little gigglers on the knee,
Singing "*Tross, tross, trillja*" with glee.

The fierce *Belznicke*l on Christmas Eve,
Kind *Christkindja* who makes him leave.

Shiny silver dollars at New Year's,
Rhymes and wishes to allay our fears.

Covering mirrors when a loved one dies,
Believing that death severs no ties.

Beribboned canes at engagement time,
Wedding bells that chime and chime.

Twelve onion slices on the windowsill,
And, oh, the exhilarating smell of dill.

[Word meanings in the poem "For Remembering": *Blinna* are Russian-style crepes; *Riwwelkuchen* is a coffee cake with streusel; *Grebbel* are crullers; *"Gadofel"* is a dialect word for *Kartoffeln* (potatoes); *Banock* is an outdoor game played with small horse bones; *"Tross, tross, trillja"* is a knee-bouncing rhyme; *Belznickel* (Furry Nickolas) is a male masquerader; *Christkindja* ("Little Christ Child") is a female masquerader; the "twelve onion slices on the windowsill" are used to forecast rainfall amounts for all twelve months of the coming new year.]

Author Bio:

Dr. Timothy J. Kloberdanz is an anthropologist and a writer who lives in Fargo, North Dakota. He published his first poem for AHSGR nearly fifty years ago. Dr. Kloberdanz reminds us that poetry has been a vital part of the heritage of the Germans from Russia since the earliest days of our people's history. Bernhard Ludwig von Platen, for example, was one of the founders of Hussenbach, Russia, in 1767. Von Platen was both a schoolteacher and a poet. He astutely predicted in an early poem that the future of the German colonists in Russia would be one of "grosse Noth, viel Arbeit—wenig Brod" (great need, much work, and little bread).

Two women prepare Grebbel *at an AHSGR convention. The woman at right cuts rectangular pieces of dough. The woman at left twists each piece of dough and fries it in hot oil. Photo courtesy of Rosalinda and Timothy J. Kloberdanz.*

Grebbel *(shown in forefront) traditionally are served at New Year's. Here two large pans of the twisted crullers are accompanied by* Schnitze Suppe *(a sweet fruit soup) and* Gallera *(jellied pork, seasoned with garlic, onion, bay leaves, and whole allspice). Photo courtesy of Rosalinda and Timothy J. Kloberdanz.*

The Crown Mill and the Greenwald Family

By Paul Harden

America's old flour mills were a distinctive part of Americana. However, few remain. The Crown Mill in Socorro, New Mexico is one of the few still standing in the southwest. This Socorro landmark was built by a German Russian immigrant family from Odessa. Their story, and the building of the mill, provides an interesting look into German Russian immigration and the family's role in helping build the American west.

The 19th Century

In the early 1800s, the United States was emerging as a world power and economy to rival that of Great Britain under Queen Victoria – the so-called prosperous Victorian era. In New Mexico, life was fairly stable under the Spanish throne. Supply caravans along El Camino Real kept New Mexican's well supplied with necessary household items, farming implements, tools, clothing and food from Mexico, Europe and Asia. There were a dozen villages and hundreds of fruitful farms along the Rio Grande in Socorro County. Life was good. Such was not the case elsewhere in the world. Europe, especially, was in constant turmoil, with countries like France, Prussia (today's Germany) and Italy still living under the rule of ruthless monarch families. When French ruler Napolean Bonaparte took control of Spain's wealth in 1808, the Spanish Empire began to crumble. Mexico gained her independence in 1821; New Mexico became part of Mexico in 1823.

The Prussian and Ottoman empires were also crumbling, leaving Europe in total disarray with no central government or leadership. Countless thousands had been killed, millions of acres of farmland sat destroyed or abandoned, leading to widespread famine and collapsed economies. Mass emigration began as starving Europeans, primarily French and Germans, sought a decent life elsewhere. Many fled to Russia, where skilled laborers were greeted with promises of employment and land ownership. One of those Germans in Russia was John Gruenwald.

The Gruenwalds in Russia

John Heinrich Gruenwald was born in Germany in 1793. He fled to Odessa, Russia, a growing port city on the Black Sea, at age 20. John was a locksmith. In those days, a locksmith did not just make keys, but the entire lock. A locksmith's shop usually consisted of a forge, lathe, and other tools for handcrafting the lock mechanisms. At 24 years old, John married another German immigrant, Agathe Shantz, in 1817. Over the following years, they had two daughters and four sons, the youngest, John junior, born in Odessa in 1842.

For twenty years, the Gruenwald's had a good life in Russia. However, by the late 1840s, life around Odessa went into decline. In central Europe, several years of poor harvests, rising food prices and continued unrest caused more emigrants to flood into Russia. By 1848, with over 60,000 Germans living in 200 settlements along the Black Sea, Russia could no longer fulfill its promise of employment, free land or housing. Unemployment and crime became rampant. Bloody revolutions spread across Europe.

John Gruenwald's eldest son, Gottlieb, and daughter, Regina Magdalena, were among the first to leave Odessa. Traveling to America, they settled in Ohio. No doubt their letters home to Russia about life in America began to sound very good. In early 1849, Ludwig Bette, one of the Odessa Germans, began to organize an exodus. He recruited some of his trusted friends, most with a measure of affluence, to pay for a ship to carry them to America. One of those families were the Gruenwalds. With the funds in place, Bette hired the sailing ship Constantia. The Constantia was a modest sized Norwegian barque, a three masted sailing vessel, used pri-

marily as a cargo ship. It is not known if the Bette's and Gruenwald's were aware of its relatively small size, but it would have to do.

On July 12, 1849 (July 1 on the Russian calendar), twenty one families, consisting of 87 persons, boarded the Constantia at Odessa. The ship's manifest shows Ludwig Bette boarded with wife Anna, two sons, and a brother and sister. John Gruenwald, now 55 years of age, boarded with wife Agathe, daughters Agathe and Elizabeth, sons Henry, William, and John, and 24-year-old housekeeper Frederica Bader. Nothing is known about the voyage or any ports of call along the way, except that 87 people spent week after week on a small cargo ship, which turned into a miserable voyage.

The Greenwalds in America

After 101 days at sea, the Constantia arrived in New York City on October 22, 1849. Ellis Island was not built until 1893, such that these early immigrants registered through the Port of New York. As was typical of European immigrants, they changed their names to more "English" sounding names. Ludwig Bette became Lewis Beatty and John Heinrich Gruenwald became John Henry Greenwald. After the voyage from Odessa, the Constantia returned to light cargo service. Records are sketchy, but it appears she sunk in July 1868 while in the Nahoon River in East London, near Cape Town, South Africa.

Most of the German immigrants from Odessa at this time moved to Ohio. Lewis Beatty and family settled on Kelley's Island in Lake Erie and became successful wine makers. John Henry Greenwald joined his son, Gottlieb, and daughter Regina. By 1850, he owned a 350-acre farm and operated a flour mill near Fredericksburg, Ohio. In 1853, his wife Agathe died. John Henry, nearly 60 years old, married 28-year-old Frederica Bader, the housekeeper who came with the family from Odessa, which angered some of the family.

John Jr., as a young teen, moved to live with his sister, Elizabeth, in New York City. When the Civil War broke out, 20-year-old John Jr. enlisted in Company L, First Regiment of the New York Mounted Rifles as a private. He was later promoted to corporal. Greenwald's company soldiered around Norfolk and south into the swamps of North Carolina. In 1864, they participated in the year-long siege of Petersburg and Richmond in Virginia. John Greenwald, Jr. was mustered out of military service in June 1865.

The Long Road to New Mexico

Upon discharge following his Civil War service, John Jr. returned to Ohio and worked in his father's flour mill. By 1871, he was in St. Louis, Mo. working as a miller at the Postel Milling Company. He married Mary Alice Racine the following year. In 1873, John's father, the locksmith from Odessa, died at 80-years of age (**Insert Figure 1 about here**).

The 1872 wedding photo of John Greenwald, Jr. to Mary Alice Racine. They moved to Socorro, New Mexico, and built the Crown Mill in 1892. Courtesy of Patrick Graves.

John Greenwald, now the senior John Greenwald in the family, began to suffer from the hardships and diseases he encountered during the Civil War. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis. John decided to move west for a better climate and hopefully better health.

By 1880, John was working as a miller at the Quaker Milling Co. in Pueblo, Colorado, the largest mill in the region. The 1880 census lists the family as consisting of 38-year-old John, wife Mary, and four children.

Working as a Miller was seldom a year-round job. The mills often sat idle during the winter and spring months. Like many men of this era, John spent his "idle time," with a touch of gold fever, prospecting in Colorado and New Mexico. In the early 1880s,

one of these trips brought him to Socorro, New Mexico, and the mining camps at Magdalena and Kelly, west of Socorro. From John's memoirs, written later in life, it appears he made more money grubstaking others than from mining himself.

The Los Chavez Huning Mill

While John had only limited success as a miner, he apparently enjoyed good health in New Mexico. John moved his family to the Territory in the mid-1880s. It was here that John met Louis B. Huning, a local merchant building a flour mill at Los Chavez, near Los Lunas south of Albuquerque. Like the Greenwalds, the Hunings were also German immigrants that had fled the turmoil in Europe. Brothers Carl and Frantz became successful merchandisers in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. By the 1870s, Louis, and brother Henry, owned the L&H Huning Mercantile store in Los Lunas. Louis also developed trading posts along the wagon road to Arizona and owned large cattle ranches in the area. By 1886, Louis Huning decided to build a flour mill to add to his portfolio of businesses. He hired John Greenwald to be his master miller and run the business.

The Hunings have been a long prominent Los Lunas area family for generations and remains so to this day. The Huning and Greenwald families became good friends due to their common German heritage and language, and perhaps the reason Greenwald was hired. Though by now, John Greenwald was a master miller and well qualified to run a mill in his own right.

A turn of the century photo of inside the Crown Mill. From l-r, John Greenwald, Sr., son Joe Greenwald, Carlos Salas, and Pedro Torres. Courtesy of Patrick Graves.

The Huning Mill was water powered, as were most in the region. To ensure a reliable water source, Huning had a seven-mile-long ditch dug to build up proper pressure to power his Los Chavez mill. The canal remains today, called the Huning Lateral, between Los Lunas and Los Chavez.

Greenwald made a good living as the millwright of the Huning Mill. Additionally, keeping a grain mill running required constant maintenance. When one of the wooden gears or shafts broke, a new one had to be crafted. When a metal component failed, a new one had to be fashioned. John became a skilled carpenter and mechanic from repairing the milling machinery.

Greenwald attempted to purchase the mill on a couple of occasions. However, Louis Huning did not want to sell his profitable business.

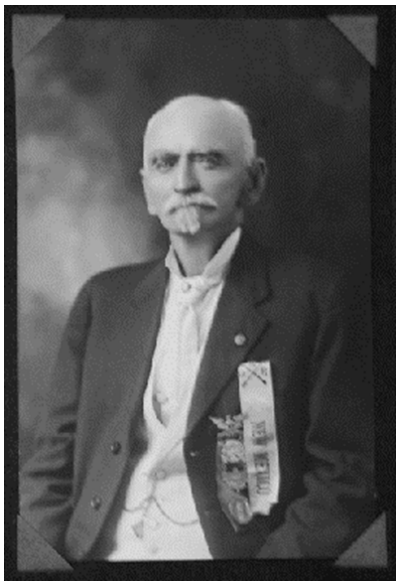
According to Valencia County history in Socorro, competition between the various flour mills along the Rio Grande, from Albuquerque to Belen, became fierce around 1890. Cut-throat deals and constant legal disputes over water rights, with alternating years of floods and drought, fueled the growing scorn among mill owners. The Huning Mill, with its successful operation and guaranteed water flow, was seen with envy by the other mills. In early 1892, someone torched the Huning Mill. The burning structure sent flames high into the night sky. It was no match for the dozens of neighbors and friends attempting to extinguish the fire with a bucket brigade. By morning, the once famous mill was only a few smoldering embers. A mill owner in Belen was suspected of setting the blaze, though no historical information of an arrest was found.

Louis Huning had lost his flour mill business. John Greenwood had lost his livelihood. No doubt there were discussions to replace the mill, but in

the end Huning decided not to rebuild. John was suddenly out of a job. Knowing that the mill was set ablaze by vindictive neighbors, John and his family looked for a less hostile community in which to live. They looked south to Socorro.

Grist Mills in Socorro

Grist is an old-world term for "grain" and a mill that processes the raw wheat or corn into the meal or flour is called a grist mill. A miller or millwright is the person who runs the mill. A grain mill could be a profitable business. Typically, the miller would hold back a portion of the milled grain in lieu of pay, usually around six percent. The miller would then sell his collected portion at market. With a good customer base and processing plenty of grain, this could be a handsome profit for the miller.



John Greenwald, Sr., builder of the Crown Mill. He was a proud delegate to the Grand Army of the Republic honoring Union soldiers in the Civil War. Courtesy of Patrick Graves.

John Greenwood and family arrived in Socorro shortly after the Los Chavez fire in 1892. Investigating the potential for building a mill, he noted there were only two dominant grist mills operating in Socorro. One was the Abeyta flour mill powered with water from Socorro Springs that flowed on its way to an old stone reservoir that stored Socorro's water. About a quarter mile north was another mill that had closed earlier. Another spring, called the Vigil Spring, turned the water wheel and millstones at the mill built by Manuel Vigil. The Vigil's built this first mill in the area in the 1850s. However, the water flow from Vigil Springs became very sporadic during the 1870s and the mill was closed. The other operating mill was the Zimmerly mill.

The Zimmerly Mill

When John Greenwald arrived in 1892, he found the largest grist mill in Socorro to be the Zimmerly Mill, built by Samuel James Zimmerly. Zimmerly came to New Mexico with the California Volunteers during the Civil War and discharged from Ft. Craig and married a local woman and stayed in the area. They built a mill at the foot of the mountain at the abandoned Vigil Mill and spring in the mid-1870s. Zimmerly built a rock and mud dam to store water from the meager Vigil Spring. In later years, he dug a shaft into the spring to increase the water flow - and dug a nearby well. These measures gave Zimmerly an almost endless supply of water and kept his water wheel and millstones turning almost constantly. In 1887, Sam Zimmerly became quite ill and died the following year. When John Greenwald arrived in Socorro in 1892, the Zimmerly Mill was still the most productive in the region, now being run by Sam's widow, Pablita, and their son Juan.

The Crown Mill

In spite of other flour mills in Socorro, John Greenwald decided to build one of his own. It was his life's wish. With nearly 30 years of experience as a millwright, he knew how to build a mill.

The largest problem was finding a reliable source of water to power the machinery. Spring and river water was unreliable. When the water flow became weak, the water wheels and millstones ground to a halt and sat idle until adequate water flowed again.

Greenwald decided his millstones would be powered by steam generated by a coal fired boiler. He also decided to build his mill along the new tracks of the Santa Fe Railroad line running to Magdalena. He located his mill, not only along the train tracks, but where the Camino Real entered Socorro from the south. After all, the railroad was great for getting flour to market while the local farmers still used wagons, using the Camino Real, to bring their grain to the mills.

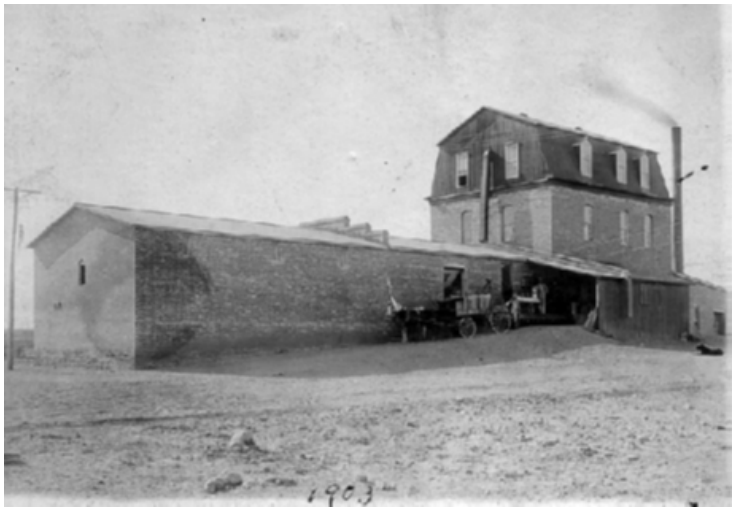
Construction of Greenwald's mill began in late 1892. By the spring of 1893, the mill was completed, and the Crown Mill opened for business. The steam powered mill quickly proved to be a tactical advantage. A well next to the mill provided the water for the boiler and required only a fraction of the water needed by a water-powered mill. This first Crown Mill was a single-story brick building, not the three-story mill one sees today. While the

steam engine powered the millstones, all other operations were done by hand. The hundreds of pounds of grain milled each day were laboriously moved from one machine to another by shovel and hoe. Still, the Crown Mill operated around the clock trying to keep up with demand and made John Greenwald a decent profit.

The New Crown Mill

During the winter of 1898-1899, Greenwald greatly expanded his operation. The Crown Mill grew from a single-story brick building to today's three-story landmark building. The old mill was completely gutted. At great expense, Greenwald purchased the best motor-driven milling machinery available at the time. Gone were the heavy millstones, replaced with motorized metal grinders and other machines.

The May 5, 1899, issue of *Socorro Chieftain* reported on the progress: "The Crown Mill is making substantial improvements to their already very complete plant. A large warehouse is nearing completion which will have a capacity sufficient to store grain enough to keep the mill running for several months at a time." What John Greenwald built is known as a gravity-feed mill. Arriving grain is carried to the top floor by conveyor belts where it first passes through a separator to remove the chaff, then washed and dried to make a clean grain. The washed and dried grain falls by gravity to the second floor where machines grind the grain, then another machine called the "bolter" sorts it into the different desired meals. Course milled grain is used for animal feed; intermediate grade, the "middlings," are most commonly used for cereals and whole wheat, and flour is made from the finely ground meal. The final product is again dried and cooled, to keep it from being sticky, before being sacked.



A 1903 photo of the new 3-story Crown Mill and new warehouse addition on the left. Courtesy of Socorro County Historical Society.

A skilled miller would roll the finished product between his forefinger and thumb to judge the quality of the grain, ensure the sorters, screeners and sifters were properly set, and if any of the machinery needed adjustments. This is where the term "rule of thumb" came about. A new and larger coal-fired steam engine on the ground floor was installed to power all of the new machinery, driven by large leather belts running to the second and third stories. The new mill was almost fully automatic, eliminating most of the hand work required by the older mill – and that of Greenwald's competitors.

So how well did Greenwald's new mill work out? The July 21, 1900, *Socorro Chieftain* gives us a hint by reporting, "The Crown Mill is running day and night and turning out about 10,000 pounds of flour daily." In 1900, with the new Crown Mill in full production, John Greenwald was 58 years old. Shortly thereafter, he semi-retired and turned over operation of the mill to his two sons, John Oswald Greenwald and Joseph Greenwald. The name of the mill was changed to the Golden Crown Mill.

In 1912, the Crown Mill incorporated with retired John Greenwald, Sr., President. John Greenwald, Jr. handled most of the outside work of the mill while Joe served as the miller and in charge of the inside work. Stretching back to the 1700s, the Greenwalds, once the Gruenwalds in Odessa, set a tradition of naming their sons John. The builder of the Crown Mill was locally known as John Greenwald, Sr. while the younger John was often called "junior." John Greenwald, Sr., and son Joseph, both died in 1923, leaving operation of the mill to John Osmond Greenwald, or junior. By then, John Osmond also had a son named John Lewis Greenwald. Two more generations of Johns followed, making a total of six John Greenwalds since emigrating from Russia. Five of those John Greenwald's lived in Socorro.

A turn of the century photo of inside the Crown Mill. From l-r, John Greenwald, Sr., son Joe Greenwald, Carlos Salas, and Pedro Torres. Courtesy of Patrick Graves.

No mention is found in the old issues of *Socorro Chieftain* about the Abeyta mill after 1900, suggesting it had closed, no doubt unable to compete with the Crown Mill's 10,000 pounds a day. The Zimmerly mill, however, continued to operate for a while by Dr. C.F. Blackington who was elected sheriff in 1899. Then the mill reverted back to Pablita and Juan Zimmerly who operated the mill until 1913. By 1922, the *Chieftain* reported that the Crown Mill was shipping 160 railroad carloads of flour each year – a respectable yield by any measure.

The Crown Mill was one of Socorro's shining businesses for many years and considered the dominant mill between Albuquerque and El Paso into the 1930s, when business began to decline. The great flood of 1929 was the first blow. This flood destroy the town of San Marcial along with thousands of acres of farm land along the Rio Grande. Socorro County farmers were decimated. It took several years for some of the inundated farmland to again support agriculture. By then, the United States was feeling the pain of the Great Depression. In 1933, the Crown Mill reverted to seasonal operation, milling grain only during the harvest season.

The final blow to the Crown Mill was the changing business of milling. In the 1880s, there were about 23,000 grist mills in the United States. Most of these were "neighborhood mills," like the Golden Crown Mill, providing grains for local use. Nearly every community had a local grist mill. In the early 1900s, local mills were becoming a "thing of the past." By the 1930s, General Mills, Pillsbury Flour Mills, and Northwestern Consolidated Milling Company, all located in Minneapolis, Minn., controlled 97 percent of the nation's flour production. This literally forced thousands of mills out of business inside of 20 years. Socorro's Golden Crown Mill, one of the last operational mills in the Southwest, filled its last bag of flour in 1938.

Golden Crown Lumber

John Osmond Greenwald converted his flour mill into a hardware, lumber and coal distributing business. A year later, World War II brought an immediate halt to new construction and rationing of the wartime materials. Like most Socorroans, John struggled for the duration of the war. John Osmond's son, John Lewis Greenwald, worked for his father during the last days of the mill and the early days of the lumberyard. John Osmond Greenwald operated his hardware and lumber business until his death in 1965, bringing a 73-year era to an end. The coal boilers, milling machines, and the saws of the lumberyard, have been silent for many years, but the old Crown

A 1965 photo in El Defensor Chieftain shows four generations of Greenwalds, all with the first name of John, with the caption, "From left are John Greenwald, Sr., of Socorro, who is the third John Greenwald in the family to live in the United States; the sixth John, held in the arm of his father, John No. 5, who is with the Bureau of Land Management in Montana; and the fourth John, who lives on Bullock Avenue, Socorro." Courtesy El Defensor Chieftain archives.

The Crown Mill in 2011. The deteriorating 3rd story walls, sidings, and roof have been rebuilt. Photo by Paul Harden

Mill remains as one of Socorro's most notable historic landmarks, and one of the few remaining in the Southwest.

Crown Mill Today

Following the death of John Osmond Greenwald, the mill served as a carpentry, woodworking and finishing business for years which only used the ground floor portion of the mill. The top two floors, containing the old milling machinery, was left untouched. The building has since been abandoned.

In 2003, a local family, the Savedras, purchased the old mill determined to stabilize the building and to minimize further decay. In 2011 preservation began with the third story, constructed entirely of wood, which displayed the most weather damage. The structure received a new roof, and the wood framing and siding was strengthened to protect the structure. While the future use of the building is unclear, the family wants to preserve it as a local historic landmark. Inside the mill, most of the old machinery is still in place, making it a true historical gem. It is considered one of Socorro's historic landmarks, visible from the south side of town as well as from nearby Interstate 25. It is also a testament to the legacy of German Russian immigration and the six generations of Greenwalds who made America home and significantly contributed to their community.

Some of the references used in this article:

Archive issues of the Socorro Chieftain and Valencia County News-Bulletin; "The Greenwald Story," El Defensor Chieftain, July 20 and 22, 1965; Germans From Russia Heritage Society; Valencia County Historical Society; and field work by the author. A special thanks to John Greenwald's great grandsons, Patrick and Terry Graves, now living in Louisiana, for family information and photographs, and Edward Saavedra for access to the building.

Paul Harden lives in Socorro, New Mexico, and serves as the Secretary for the Socorro County Historical Society.

Beet Field Summer: Windsor, Colorado

By Harold Stoll

Editor's note: The following is a reprint of an article first published in the spring issue of the Journal *in 1992. It recalls the early experiences of Harold Stoll growing up German Russian in Windsor, Colorado, and working in the beet fields. Herold Stoll was a charter member of AHSGR, served on its first Board of Directors, and was active in the Northern Colorado Chapter. Born in 1920 in Windsor, Colorado, Mr. Stoll worked in grain and feed milling in four states until his retirement to Greeley, Colorado, in 1989., Mr. Stoll's parents came from Doenhof in the Volga region as did many other residents of Windsor. Herold Stoll passed away in October 2021 at 100 years old.*

In 1929 my father agreed to furnish all the hand labor required to produce a sugar beet crop from twenty-six acres on a farm owned by R. S. Dickey, which was leased to Jacob H. Jacoby and was located just over two miles from Windsor, Colorado. For this my father would receive $20.00 per acre, or a total of $520.00.

Of course, he didn't do all the labor himself. In mid-May that year, when I was eight, we moved the entire family— my parents, Peter and Katherine (Bechthold) Stoll, my sister Pauline, 13, brothers Reinhold, 7, and Albert, 4, and baby sister Ruth, 8 months—from our home in town to a beet shack on the farm. We took with us only the barest of household necessities: a kerosene stove, a kerosene lamp, bedding, kitchen utensils, and a few miscellaneous items. My part of the moving operation consisted of leading our family cow to the farm, where she was corralled with Mr. Jacoby's animals. As I recall the event, it was like going on a camping outing.

As soon as we were settled, we began working the fields which Mr. Jacoby had planted in late April. Most of what we thought of as "our beets" were planted in a twenty-plus acre field that had been in pinto beans the year before and apparently had not had very good cultivation, because the field was badly infested with weeds. It was especially weedy where the bean straw pile had been, but what made it particularly disagreeable were the many sand burrs with barbed stickers that clung to everything and were painful to remove.

Thinning

The beets were planted in rows 22 inches apart. When we arrived, the soil between the rows had just been tilled with a four-row cultivator equipped with discs set about 2 inches apart and "duck feet," triangular chisels set horizontally between rows to cut off weeds just below the surface. In those days fanners planted whole beet seed. Six or more seedlings sprouted from each whole seed, and enough was planted to provide a dense row of plants. Hoes nine inches wide were used to "block" or chop out the unwanted plants, leaving a cluster of perhaps 10 to 15 beet and weed seedlings approximately every 10 inches. The thinners, usually crawling on hands and knees, came along behind the blockers to remove all but one of the beet plants. We were instructed to leave only the hardiest beet plant—talk about decisions!

My brother Reinhold and I thinned the rows that were blocked by Father, who left rather larger clumps standing than Mother, whose rows were thinned by Pauline. Mother exercised more care and was so deft with the hoe that she could frequently leave just a single beet plant, and my sister could nearly always be found ahead of Reinhold and me. But when she arrived at the end of her row, she had to help us finish ours so that we could start the next rows all even again.

Ruth was kept in the baby house, a two-wheeled affair that was moved along as we progressed down the field. It was Albert's duty to look after

Ruth, but he strayed away once and fell into an irrigation ditch coursing with running water. If not for the alertness of William, one of the Jacoby boys, Albert would surely have drowned. Needless to say, after the chastisement he received, Albert never wandered away again.

We worked long hours in the hot sun—we were usually in the field by 6 A.M. and never left before 6 P.M. At midmorning and mid-afternoon, we stopped for a short rest and refreshments of sandwiches and home-made cookies. We kept our drinking water in a canvas bag hung on a nail on the shady side of the baby house. The canvas was always wet on the outside, and evaporation kept the water nice and cool. Shortly before noon. Mother would pick up the baby and go to the shack to prepare our lunch.

The beets had all been planted at about the same time, so that when we started thinning, they were hardly more than four-leaf seedlings. By the time we were finishing, they had grown much larger and were much more difficult to remove. I think we must have averaged about an acre a day, so it probably took us about three weeks to complete the thinning. As soon as we were finished, we went over the fields with long-handled hoes to remove any weeds that had been overlooked and to eliminate any beet "doubles." This required frequent stooping to pull out beets or weeds growing too closely to a wanted beet plant; to attempt that with the hoe meant possibly reducing the stand.

The Great Western Sugar Company had contracted the crop for purchase, and they sent a crew of agricultural agents who measured and inspected the fields. We were told that if our work did not meet the field boss's approval, we would not get paid. I still remember the dread and apprehension we felt when the inspection took place. The agents carried 100-foot tape measures to make random sample tests to determine if there was an average of 120 beets in each 100 feet. The sugar company awarded certificates of merit to those families that did exceptionally good work. Some families worked the beets on a yield basis whereby they were paid according to the tonnage and sugar content of the beets produced. In this arrangement the beet workers took a risk on natural perils such as hail or insect damage to the crop, so no matter how well they performed their work they might end up taking home less than per-acre agreements like ours provided. Naturally, in the case of a better-than-average crop, there was a commensurate reward.

More than just Beets

When we were not required in the beet fields, we frequently found other farm work such as hoeing beans or potatoes or stacking hay. One of my favorite jobs was driving the horse team that operated the overshot hay stacker that was in common use. The team was hitched to a rope that traveled from a base pulley on the ground, up and over another at the top of the tall stacker, and down to a large fork on which we piled the hay. I'd drive the team away from the base, pulling the hay fork up the steep ramp of the stacker to the top where it flipped its load over onto the growing stack.

But our other work didn't mean that we could neglect our garden. Most farmers provided a garden plot for their beet workers. It was usually located in some remote corner that could not be irrigated by gravity, making it necessary to bail and carry water from the nearest irrigation ditch. Watering was nearly always done after spending the entire day in the field. I think I hated that part of my beet-working experience more than any other.

As I was the oldest son in the family, it was only natural that the cow-milking chore would fall to me, Of course, milking was always done both before breakfast and before supper. Tears still come to my eyes when I remember walking up to that cow with my hands and wrists aching from a hard day in the field. I think she was the biggest Holstein in the county, but she had the shortest, hardest teats of any cow I ever milked. She could produce up to six gallons of milk per day, so we had not only enough for ourselves, but also had extra milk to supply or barter with a few neighbors—such as for haircuts. When it was time, I simply filled a gallon can with milk and went down the street to be shorn by Dave Bechthold (a distant relative whose parents had also come from Doenhof). I think I was fifteen before I had my first store-bought haircut.

Weekends in Town

On weekends we stopped working at noon on Saturday and proceeded into Windsor, where we also had a garden that required attention. While we boys were washing the car, mowing the lawn, and taking our weekly bath, Mother was busy baking, cooking, mending, darning, washing, and ironing. The laundry in the summer kitchen consisted of two tubs, a washboard, a copper boiler, and a small woodburning stove to heat the water. Mother even used her own homemade soap. I still marvel that she could do all that work, even with help from my sister, and still attend to a nursing child.

Sunday mornings we were permitted to sleep late. Because the cow was out at the farm, I was relieved of milking chores—one of the Jacoby boys took care of that. Immediately after breakfast, Father would get out the Sunday School lesson book and carefully go over the lesson for the day with us. After we were dressed in our best clothes, he lined us up for inspection like an army drill sergeant. It seemed there was always one or more pairs of shoes that needed polishing and some missing buttons that needed replacing. In any case, after one final hair-combing we were marched off to church. I never understood why it was necessary for us to go when we already had the lesson deeply engraved in our minds. After Sunday School, which was conducted entirely in German, we attended church services, also held in German.

Our Sunday dinner after services was often followed with a dessert of Jello topped with whipped cream. Sometimes we made ice cream in a hand-cranked freezer with ice supplied by Mr. Jacoby from his ice cellar. As soon as the table was cleared, there was another bustle of action as we picked up fallen leaves in the yard, or washed the car windshield again, eagerly anticipating our Sunday afternoon swim. The bustle was make-work activity, really, whatever Father could think of to keep us busy for a half hour or so, for it was his theory that swimming too soon after a heavy meal contributed to cramps.

We, however, could hardly wait to be on our way to Seeley's Lake! After the exhaustion of swimming for an hour or more, we were famished. I have never tasted popcorn as good as that sold by a vendor at the lake. This was our entire reward for having performed diligently for the week. Usually, right after Sunday supper we would go back to the beet shack on the farm to prepare for another week of work.

Summer School, Fall 'Vacation'

School began about the first of August. In Windsor, the school census of the period indicates that slightly over half of the children were from beet-worker families. Because they had to stay out of school at harvest time, it was decided to provide schooling in the summer, from 7 A.M. to 1 P.M. A reduced faculty made it necessary to double up most of the classes; while one class was reciting, the other was supposed to be studying. I always tried to get a seat at the aisle that separated my class from the next higher class and had to be frequently reprimanded for offering answers to questions posed to them.

As soon as school let out for the day, we hurried home for a quick lunch, then headed for the beet fields to pull weeds. Because we had done such a good job at the hoeing, this normally only took a few days. Many of the remaining afternoons would find a number of us boys at the Windsor Lake or at a swimming hole in the Number 2 ditch just north of the lake. Swimming at the lake was co-ed, making swimsuits necessary; because so few of us had suits, we did most of our swimming at the "ol' swimmin' hole."

When the regular school term began for me town kids around Labor Day, we went on fall harvest "vacation," except for my brother Reinhold, who had started first grade that summer. His teacher told my mother that he would most likely not pass to the second grade unless he were permitted to take the first term over again. In my family there was simply no question about it; Reinhold was sent back to school that fall and only helped in the harvest work before and after school.

The rest of us had plenty of work. There were quite a few potatoes and onions grown in the area which required much hand labor to harvest. That first year we picked about 15 acres of potatoes. After they

were dug from the ground with a horse-drawn digger, we shook the vines to separate them from the potatoes, which we then picked up in baskets. The filled baskets were carried to a potato sorter mounted on a sled that Father operated. The sorter was much taller than I, and at eight years old, I couldn't lift my basket that high, so Father had to empty it for me.

Beet Harvest

Shortly after the potatoes were harvested, the beet harvest began, usually after the first of October. It is hard to describe how much incredibly hard work this entailed. The beets were pulled from the ground by a one-row, horse drawn lifter with two J-shaped blades facing in towards each other. The blades straddled the beets and cut under them, lifting a row of earth and beets. We pulled the beets by their tops out of the loosened earth, beat them together to remove as much clinging dirt as possible, and placed them in pile-rows spaced four beet rows apart. A horse drawn, V-shaped sled was pulled the length of the rows and back to make a relatively smooth surface. We would walk the pile-rows, cut the tops off the beets like topping a giant carrot, and stack them on the smoothened ground in piles every 10 or 12 feet.

Topping was accomplished with a knife like a small machete that had a hooked spike at the far end, sticking down from the blade edge. To pick up a beet, the knife was swung so the hook was buried in it. Then the beet was grasped and held in one hand while the other hand chopped the top off with the knife. This was usually done in one swift motion, but if one had a very large beet, it often required several passes with the knife to trim off the tops without taking too much of the beet crown. Beets too large to hold in one hand were rested on the knee. The hook at the end of the knife was a lethal weapon, forcing one to be constantly on guard to avoid burying it in one's shin, rather than the beet - not to speak of the ever-present danger of chopping off a finger with the knife itself.

The beets were loaded by fork from the piles onto wagons. In the evening, beet piles that had not yet been loaded had to be covered with tops to prevent them from freezing overnight. In the morning we had to remove the tops, heavy with frost. I always thought this was a terrible waste of time and work, but it was the way it was done, and there was no use complaining.

The Beet Dump

Mr. Jacoby had two grown sons, Jacob Jr. and Henry, who loaded and hauled the beets to the Avery beet dump located on the C & S Railroad siding across the road from the farm. A beet dump consisted of two sloping ramps mounted on trestles which rose to a height that permitted loaded wagons to be dumped into open hopper cars on the rails below. It took a very good team of horses to pull a loaded wagon up the ramp. The down ramp was much shorter and consequently much steeper than the up ramp.

The sugar company furnished three empty rail cars each day during the harvest. These were quickly filled with beets from early arriving wagons that had been loaded the day before. The rest of the day's deliveries had to be forked off by hand onto a long pile that grew to be ten feet high. The company hired pile bosses who vied with each other to see who would have the neatest and smoothest-on-top beet pile. Later, after the harvest was complete and loaded wagons stopped coming in from the fields, the beets that had piled up by the dump were loaded by hand back onto wagons, hauled up the ramp, and put into hopper cars for transport to the sugar factory at Windsor.

Many beet-worker fathers left the harvest to the mothers and children and worked instead in the sugar factory during the processing campaign. This lasted for three or four months, and the twelve-hour shifts provided much-needed cash income. At the factory the cars were moved up an incline and the beets were dumped over a flume that was covered with boards. As the boards were removed, the beets fell into the running water below and floated into the factory. This was not only an economical way to move them, but also washed the beets clean of any dirt still clinging to them. My father "flumed" for fourteen campaigns.

The Big Freeze

Nineteen twenty-nine was not only the year of the great crash on the financial markets, but it was also "the year the beets froze in." It was not unusual to have a snowstorm at harvest time, but normally harvesting could be resumed after a few days, when the fields had dried somewhat. That year, however, we had a late October snowstorm, and then it turned unseasonably cold. The cold held so long that the ground froze solid and beets that were still in the ground had to be abandoned. There was simply no way to remove them.

When the snow started, we still had about an acre left to harvest. We asked Mr. Jacoby to hitch up another puller to try to get that acre of beets out of the ground. With much difficulty we succeeded in getting them all out and stacked in pile rows. Around Thanksgiving time we went back and managed to salvage those beets, even though they were frozen solid. There were very few farmers who did not lose some acreage that year, and for some it was an economic disaster from which they never recovered. That harvest, though, produced our family's proudest boast: "We got ours out!"

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