

## **Out of the Volga Region - Chronicle of the Colony of NORKA**

By J. Preisendorf -- Fort Morgan, Colorado



On account of the manifesto of the Empress Katharina, the Second of Russia, many German people from Hessen, Insburger and Pfälzer, left Germany for Russia. They arrived in Norka on August 15, 1767. During that winter, they lived in huts made of earth; and after they were in a better position, they built better housing for themselves.

The first schoolmaster was Peter Pauli. As a second minister Lukas Kantani served in the year 1787. The first organ was purchased in the year 1791 for 304 ruble. The first forester's name was Jacob Huck. The second pastorate in Norka was built in the year 1803. Schoolmaster sexton Johannes Kaiser served until 1814. Mrs. Elisabeth Hergenräter attained the rare age of 100 years, without ever being ill.

From 1814-1815, Johannes Rameis served as schoolmaster. The grasshoppers ate everything these years. The first cemetery was established adjacent to the sand quarry. The second one at the Fabonsbridge and the third at the old church. The second church was built in 1822 and in that same year initiated by Johannes Hubert. Pastor Lukas Kantany, during his official service baptized 3,931 children, buried 1,373, married 655 couples and confirmed 1,675 children. On May 4, 1830, 50 ruble were stolen from the vestry of the church.

Christoph Heinrich Bonewetsch served as the fifth pastor beginning in 1847. Cholera raged in Norka in 1848 and demanded great sacrifices. It has been checked since 1849. On February 8, 1852, Ludwig Rosz suffocated from fumes in the windmill. In the year 1853, the fifteenth graveyard was begun. On August 26, 1856, Emperor Alexander, the Second, was crowned. For the second time, Norka was struck by a cholera epidemic. On account of that, Norka people settled on the other side of the Volga. During a hundred-year period, the settlers of Norka increased from 900 to 6,600 inhabitants. From 1870 to 1890, Johannes Rudolph served as schoolmaster in the lower part of the village. The largest fire in Norka took place in 1872. The four rows up to the end burned up. On May 7th, 1874, nine persons were deported to Siberia, whose names were not passed on to America. The first man's draft for the military was called-up in the year 1874. The sixth Pastor, our unforgettable Pastor William Sterkel was called to serve on February 2, 1878.

On June 2, 1880, the cornerstone for the third church was laid. Schoolmaster Karl Leonhard began his term in 1902 and he left Norka in 1919. Since this time, the schoolmaster is Alexander Leonhard who quit serving in 1929. Friedrich Wacker preached in the year 1913. The revolution broke out on April 17, 1918 causing Mrs. Heinrich Jäger's life.

On October 6th, 1880, the cross was placed on the third Norka church. At that time Pastor Sterkel spoke on 1 Corinthians 1-10, and Pastor Wietmehr spoke on St. John, Chapter 3, Verse 14.

The first church yard was situated on sandy ground; the second at Fabonsbridge, the third near the church. In 1921, the 4th lay adjacent to the

church and in 1926, the sixth was filled up. Pastor Sterkel was in Basler Missionshouse from 1862 until 1864. From here he was called to Wefield near Burlington, Michigan where he was employed a short time. Pastor Bonewetsch directed him to a position. Pastor Sterkel had strange dream, which is also written in the chronicle and reads, "I lay on my bed and thought about what kind of position I would get and fell asleep with those thoughts. From Norka came a young unknown woman and an elderly well-known lady. Each one brought me a butter knife; first the young woman came, then the older one; that's when I awoke. That implied two parishes: first, I would serve a small unknown parish then my wished-for Norka parish."

Well, one more mention about the building up of the church. On June 24, 1880, in the 26th year of the Emperor Alexander, the 3rd of Russia, the laying of the foundation took place. Pastor Samuel Bonewetsch from Dorpat, Estonia spoke about the significance of the laying of the foundationstone on the ground - 1 Peter 2, 4-9. Then Pastor Sterkel spoke on Psalm 5 and Pastor Jordan concluded the service with a heartfelt thankful prayer. The ceremony on the free place located the newly-created foundation of numerous meetings. Church officers were: Pastor Sterkel, George Gerlach, Heinrich Jost, George Scheideman, Johannes Krieger and Johannes Deines, Weber Deines. Two ranks of civic officers: Senior Administrator Henry Peter Sinner, district secretary John Georg Batz, Schoolteacher sexton, Adam Rudolf, J. P. Deines and John Rudolf.

John Henry Deines, Secretary