

**American Historical Society
of Germans from Russia**

53rd International Convention

“Roots of our Heritage”

*Explore the history, culture, and contributions of
Germans from Russia to Northern Colorado
and the world*

**August 3-5, 2023
Greeley, CO**

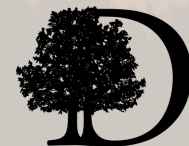
SPEAKER DESCRIPTION FLIPBOOK



**AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF GERMANS FROM RUSSIA**

Honoring our Past • Embracing the Future

ahsgr.org
402-474-3363



DOUBLETREE
BY HILTON™

Thursday Events

While there are no presentations scheduled for Thursday, August 3rd, the AHSGR Convention will have several other events available. Here are a few events occurring throughout the first day of convention:

9 am-12 pm; 1-4pm: Bookstore set-up or open

9 am-12 pm; 1-4pm: Research Room set-up or open

9:30-11:45 am: Beginning German from Russia Research Workshop

1:30-2:30 pm: Mike Meisinger, First-time Attendees Orientation

3-4 pm: Research Library Orientation

5-8 pm: Welcome Night-Centennial Village

For more information, including the full list of events, please visit our convention page at ahsgr.org/convention/ and click on the Convention Booklet link.

FRIDAY PRESENTERS

Presentation Times

9:45 - 10:45 am

11 am - 12 pm

2:15 - 3:15 pm

3:45 - 4:45 pm



Mark Sullivan

Friday 8 am

Opening Session, Keynote Speaker: "Why I am compelled to write Historical Fiction"

Find out his reasons when Mark joins us as the keynote speaker at the AHSGR Convention in Greeley, Colorado. His novel, *The Last Green Valley*, chronicles the Martels, Germans who have farmed in the Russian Empire (currently Ukraine) for more than a century. After living under Stalin's horrifying regime, should they run in retreat from the wolves they despise or search for freedom with the devils they don't know? Sullivan is the acclaimed author of eighteen novels, including the #1 New York Times bestselling Private series, which he writes with James Patterson.



Reinhard Nachtigal

Friday 9:45 am

The Protestant Church in Tsarist and Soviet Russia. A Survey on Communities and Churches

Catholicism in Russia, acquired mostly by the annexation of large parts of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth under Catherine the Great, never enjoyed such a respect and such privileges as Protestantism. My presentation aims at the lower level of Protestantism in Russia, their efforts and activities. Attention will be given to social infrastructures and, not the least, to church architecture, the most visible agency of Protestantism (PPT).



Tara Harris

Friday 9:45 am

Telling Your Family Story through Ethnographic Art

Tara Harris, a visual artist based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, explores history, gender, and cultural traditions. For more than two decades Tara has researched her Volga and Black Sea German ancestors and continues to draw inspiration from their lives. In 2023 she exhibited a collection of works inspired by Volga German traditions at Goddard College.



Ellen Laubham

Friday 9:45 am

The Historical Characters who Shaped Our Ancestors' Destiny

Ellen Laubham spent ten years researching the earliest German pioneers and writing "The Empress' Gift: The Volga Frontier," an historical novel released in 2022. Ms. Laubham's ancestors included Laubhans and Ehrlichs who helped settle Shcherbakovka colony as early as 1765, and farmed and owned flour mills there until approximately 1914.



Olga Litzenberger

Friday 11 am

German Traces on the Volga

An academic overview of large German settlements in the Volga region. This presentation will incorporate photos, stories, & legends to compliment the scientific report.



Kara Hefner

Friday 11 am

A Journey of their Lifetimes: Preserving the Zahl and Schissler Stories

Experience inspirational stories of village life, migrations, homesteading, and perseverance of the Zahl and Schissler families from Kara Louise Hefner's new biography and cookbook about her great-grandparents.

Northern Colorado Panel

Friday 2:15 pm

Eastside Germans from Russia

A discussion on the historic preservation of the East Side Neighborhood of Greeley where our Germans from Russia ancestors lived when they came to Colorado to work in the sugar beet industry. The panel will be moderated by Lauren Brantner.



Clarence Kissler



John Stencil



Lauren Brantner



Bob Brunswig

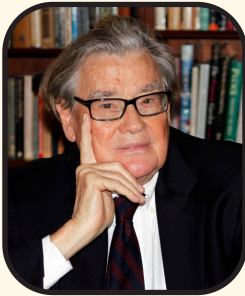


Anna Bartkowski

Friday 2:15 pm

The Art of Storytelling: Inspiration and Guidance for Family Historians

Everyone has a story to tell. Whether it is about your life, family, or ancestors, writing can be challenging to start and overwhelming to finish. In this session, you'll learn how to craft your story, and discover techniques to revise your draft to engage your audience and have them coming back for more.



Ulrich Merten

Friday 2:15 pm

Why did your ancestors leave their homeland and go to Russia?

I will examine the devastation caused by war, particularly in South-West Germany (the origin of most Germans from Russia) as well as the continuing expansion of the large estates at the expense of peasant land caused great poverty in rural Germany,, making emigration almost mandatory in order to survive. In the case the Mennonites who lived in West Prussia, mandatory military service for the Prussian King was the paramount issue.



Raymond Karlin

Friday 3:45 pm

The 1890 Census & The National Archives

What happened to the U.S. Census of 1890? What historical events moved the U.S. Government to develop the National Archives? Is information from the Census really lost or can I find it somewhere else? These and many more questions will be answered.



Wayne Garman

Friday 3:45 pm

The Story of the Holodomor 1932-1933: A Germans from Russia Perspective

For the Germans who remained in Russia by the 1930s, collectivization forced them to give up their farms to the state. This became yet another horror of communist rule. Unfortunately, more misery was to come, as the manmade crop failure and resulting famine killed millions of people in 1932 & 1933, including many Germans. I will tell the story of this tragedy and how it affected our German ancestors left in Russia.

SATURDAY PRESENTERS

Presentation Times

8 - 9 am
9:15 - 10:15 am
10:30 - 11:30 am
1:30 - 2:30 pm
2:45 - 3:45 pm



Karen Keehr

Saturday 8 am

Innovation with PastPerfect and Digitization Projects

AHSGR Archives is entering an exciting new era of digitization. Find out how we scan the photographs and documents in the AHSGR Archives, what our priorities are, and what the future holds. Learn how to access the new digitized images through our new PastPerfect Online portal. Karen will also offer a few tips and tricks on how best to digitize your own family treasures.



Karen Schutte

Saturday 8 am

We're Leaving!

Author will transport audience back in time via historical research and dialogue. PowerPoint of archival and personal family photos along with author's reading of select portions of great interest.



Maggie Hein

Saturday 8 am

Migration to the Volga Colonies in 1772-1773: Who? How? Where from?

If you are a Volga German descendant, you know that almost all of the colonies were settled between 1764 and 1767. But did you know that there were additional Volga settlers who arrived in Russia in 1772 and 1773? New information has been published about these later settlers, including details about their journey to Russia. This new information also provided hints about where in Germany these settlers came from. Maggie will discuss what drew her attention to this group and will demonstrate the process of documenting the exact German Origin locations of these settlers and related settlers in several Volga villages.



Olga Litzenberger

Saturday 9:15 am

The Bavarian Cultural Center of the Russian Germans (Nuremberg) and its work to preserve the history and culture of Russian Germans in Germany



Ronald Baesler

Saturday 9:15 am

Struck Down But Not Destroyed: The Story of Rudolf Heupel, a German Russian Immigrant

The story of Rudolph Heupel, based upon historical research, correspondence, interviews and personal experience. Born in South Russia, suffered the privations of World War I in Germany, arrived penniless in the US. For forty years he maintained a unique ministry as a rural pastor and healer for tens of thousands.



Russ Gunther

Saturday 9:15 pm

First Voyage of the Scouts to America

Five delegate scouts were elected from the GR villages in 1874 to explore prospects for emigration to America! (Did you know they weren't even going to see the United States?!) Hear about their voyage, their invitation from a king, the route, where they ended up and what they brought back!

Colorado State University Panel

Saturday 10:30 am

Sugar Beet Industry and the German Russians in Colorado

Emphasis on the importance of the sugar beet industry, and the extremely important role played by Germans from Russia who became the laborers, and ultimately prosperous farmers in the irrigated valleys of Colorado. The State Agricultural University (later CSU), played an important role in crop development through its Experiment Station. The University Archives as a preservative repository for agricultural archives, including German Russian oral histories, and the Great Western Sugar Company.



Mark Shelstad



John Stencil



Kenneth Rock



Kris Jones

Saturday 10:30 am

Settling Indian Frontiers: Germans from Russia in the Americas (Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the US) 1880-1917

I examine the history of frontier relations between immigrant German Russian settlers and native peoples in the recently “pacified” plains territories of the US, Canada, and Argentina immediately after the Indian Wars. German Russians built on earlier experiences in Russia on the steppes to effect the transformation of pampas and plains from Indian territory into agricultural farmland. I argue that that the histories of the colonists and Indians between 1880 until 1917 are not separate fields of study, but rather a fruitful new area of frontier history.



Sharon Stahla

Saturday 10:30 am

Pay It Forward: Keeping the History Alive

How an interaction with a student introduced me to AHSGR and then led me to develop a presentation for third graders as they learned about their community. I include student interaction and other effects from my presentation. (Could/ would include a YouTube video that was developed during COVID and that is now presented each school year.)



Reinhard Nachtigal

Saturday 1:30 pm

German Views on Russia’s War in Ukraine - A Snapshot of the Situation in Germany

The declaration of a “turning point” (Zeitenwende) by German chancellor Olaf Scholz in spring 2022 ended a period of German “agreement” policy towards Russia. The global threat by illiberal and totalitarian regimes has sensitized German society and will, hopefully, foster the continued assistance to Ukraine, notwithstanding the bleak prospect of a long duration of the war. My paper tries to entangle various perspectives and attitudes within Germany.



Russ Gunther

Saturday 1:30 pm

WikiTree.com for your free Family Tree and Documented Sources

Learn about the world’s largest family tree with collaborative design, photos, links to resources and documented sources! WikiTree is free to view and use for your family tree, personal biography profiles, and global research assistance. Over 33 million biography profiles (11 million with optional DNA test connections) edited by nearly 1 million volunteers from around the world.



Nancy Lee Hendricks

Saturday 2:45 pm

Lizzie Schmidt, An American Puzzle

A 6-year-old immigrated from Alexandertal, Russia to Nebraska with her parents and sister. At the age of 18, she married in Washington and gave birth to 3 children. She and her youngest baby escaped an abusive relationship, with the help of her family who never heard from her again--until her future granddaughter-in-law found her story through extensive research.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Ronald Baesler - Dr. Ron Baesler, a native of New Leipzig, North Dakota is a retired pastor, missionary and seminary professor. He has served and lived in Fargo, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Madagascar and California. He is the author of five books. He is married, father of four, and grandfather of six.

Anna Dalhaimer Bartkowski - Anna Dalhaimer Bartkowski has traced her ancestral lines to her original settlers in Russia and their Germanic roots. She has uncovered many family stories along the way which she has transformed into five books to celebrate her heritage.

Lauren Brantner - Lauren Brethauer Brantner was raised on a sugar beet farm in Wiggins, Colorado. She earned an academic scholarship to the University of Northern Colorado and graduated in 1967. While her children were small, she worked for about eight years in several school districts as a substitute teacher, and later she helped support a family business. She then worked in higher education for 25 years at both UNC in the Monfort College of Business and at Colorado State University in the Lory Student Center. She served on a statewide Colorado Association of Public Employees Women's Task Force and a term on the Board of Education for her local school district. Lauren enjoyed working on the Bicentennial Commission for her community doing historical research in 1976. Throughout her life, Lauren has followed the roots of her heritage. She grew up studying and teaching accordion in Adolph Lesser's Studio in Greeley, Colorado. Playing polka music helped fund her education. She has participated in both oral history interviews with Georgia Wier, Folklorist for the City of Greeley, as well as the Public Television production Dutch Hop. Lauren has served as a Northern Colorado Chapter officer for over 25 years and has also been a member of the International Board. She has spent many years doing genealogy research for both her and her husband's family lines. She enjoys enriching the genealogy with the history that surrounds the people in the charts.

Robert Brunswig - Bob Brunswig (Ph.D.-University of Colorado) is Professor Emeritus and University Research Fellow at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC). His four decades as a professional archaeologist includes field research in Pakistan, the Arabian Gulf, Colorado plains and mountains, France, and Poland. He served as a Fulbright Scholar at Jagiellonian University (Krakow, Poland), was a European Union Wzorst Fellow at Nicolaus Copernicus University (Torun, Poland), and is a UNC Distinguished Scholar. He now directs site preservation and field archaeology programs at the African American historic townsite of Dearfield in southeastern Weld County.

Wayne Garman - I grew up on a mixed farm southeast of the town of Allan, Saskatchewan, Canada, a predominantly Germans from Russia town near Saskatoon in central Saskatchewan. Both of my parents were descendants of Germans from Russia. My father's family came from the villages of Elsass and Strassburg of the Black Sea, Kutschurgan region. My mother's family is Mennonite, and came from the Chortitza region, northeast of the Black Sea, from the village of Neu Chortitza. History has always interested me. Upon semi-retirement, I completed a Masters of History degree from Texas

State University. Historical research and writing is my retirement career.

Russ Gunther - Russ is a Brand Ambassador volunteer and Volga German sub-project coordinator of WikiTree's growing Germans from Russia project covering all Germans from Russia populations and colony villages. Russ studied Business and minored in German at Iowa State University, including a summer study abroad in Bregenz, Austria. Join Russ to explore one of the most exciting free resources for family connections and research that he used to root his family tree back to the 1600's!

Tara Harris - Tara Harris, a visual artist based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, explores history, gender, and cultural traditions. For more than two decades Tara has researched her Volga and Black Sea German ancestors and continues to draw inspiration from their lives. In 2023 she exhibited a collection of works inspired by Volga German traditions at Goddard College.

Kara Louise Hefner - Kara Louise Hefner is the great-granddaughter of Germans from Russia decedents and is the author of their biography "From the Steppes to the Prairie: The Germans from Russia migrations told by the Zahl and Schissler family" and "Gumma's Recipe Book." Kara enjoys preserving family history and making berock and kuchen.

Maggie Hein - Maggie is one of the AHSGR Village Coordinators for the village of Frank. Her current research project is to identify the German and French origin locations of all of the settlers in Frank and Kolb. When she isn't doing genealogy research, she is a tax accountant and co-owner of a CPA firm in the Chicago suburbs.

Nancy Lee Hendricks - Nancy Lee Hendricks joined AHSGR when she discovered her grandmother-in-law and her own step-mother were ethnic Germans from Russia. Working as a human rights officer in Tajikistan, she met ethnic Germans living in the former Soviet Union and began researching her father-in-law's ancestry.

Kris Jones - Kristine Jones currently consults as a Dissertation Coach after a career in Higher Education. She conducted research in Argentina, Chile, and at The Newberry Library Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies for her doctorate in Latin American and Native American History. She taught at several universities, most recently at The University of Chicago as Associate Director of the Center for Latin American History

Raymond Karlin - Raymond F. Karlin holds a BA degree in History with a minor in Classical Political Science, and a graduate degree in Education. He is a retired educator, writer, and genealogist with over forty years of experience. Mr. Karlin has given many history and genealogy workshops on an array of topics.

Karen Keehr - I have been in the Archives field for over 22 years and have specialize training in digital imaging and photograph preservation. I love what I do and am always happy to answer questions. Originally from Minnesota, I developed a taste for green chili while doing my graduate work at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. When I am not at work, I enjoy spending time with my husband and stepson.

Clarence Kissler - Clarence was born in Greeley, Colorado on June 26, 1935. He attended the Greeley schools and the University of Northern Colorado, earning a B.A. degree in Business Education and a Master of Arts degree in Educational Administration. He is married to Donna Lee (Davidson) Kissler. They have three sons, Gregory, David, and Thomas and five grandchildren. Upon graduation, he was employed by Los Lomas High School in Walnut, Creek, California. After three years, he accepted a teaching position at Torrejon Air Force High School in Madrid, Spain from 1960- 1965. Upon return, he accepted a number of educational positions, including the Director of Personnel, St. Vrain Valley School District in Longmont, Colorado. Later, he decided to make a career change and accepted a position with Uniroyal, Inc. as the Personnel Development Supervisor

at the corporate headquarters in New York City. I also became a Kepner Tregoe, LLC, Uniroyal corporate management instructor, teaching seminars throughout the United States and Canada. From 1993, retiring on July 1, 2000, I was the Finance Director for the City of Commerce City, Colorado, and earned a number of national awards for outstanding financial accounting.

Ellen Laubhan - Ellen Laubhan spent ten years researching the earliest German pioneers and writing "The Empress' Gift: The Volga Frontier," an historical novel released in 2022. Ms. Laubhan's ancestors included Laubhans and Ehrlichs who helped settle Shcherbakovka colony as early as 1765, and farmed and owned flour mills there until approximately 1914.

Olga Litzenberger - Prof. Dr. Olga Litzenberger was born in the city called Saratov (Russia) into a Russian-German house-hold. She studied history at the Saratov State University, law at the Volga Academy of Public Administration and philosophy at the University of Cologne. She received her doctorate with a thesis on "The Evangelical Lutheran Church and Soviet Power" and her habilitation on "The Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Russia: a Comparative Analysis of Interrelations with State and Society" (18th to early 20th century)". Olga Litzenberger worked for several years as a university lecturer, professor and prorector in Saratov. In 2017 she moved to Germany. She is married and has three children. Since May 2019, she has been employed as a research assistant at the Bavarian Cultural Center of Germans from Russia. Olga Litzenberger has written about 300 scientific publications (including 15 monographs, articles in encyclopedias, scientific articles), published in Russia as well as in Germany, the USA, Italy, Finland and other countries.

Ulrich Merten - The author was born in Berlin, Germany and came to the United States as a small child before the Second World War. Mr. Merten grew up in New York City and after the war, returned to Europe, studying at the University of Zürich, Switzerland and the University of Zaragoza in Spain. He subsequently earned his BA degree at Columbia College, Columbia University and M.A. at the Graduate Faculties, Columbia University. In his professional life he was an international banker, a senior executive of the Bank of America, working almost exclusively in Latin America and the Caribbean, over a period of 38 years. His book, *Forgotten Voices; The Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe after World War II* was published in 2012 by Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey. In (2015) a companion history was published by the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Lincoln, Nebraska, entitled *Voices from the Gulag: The Oppression of the German minority in the Soviet Union*. Mr. Merten's most recent book, *The Gulag in East Germany: Soviet Special Camps, 1945-1950* was published in 2018, by Teneo Press, Amherst, New York. The author lives in Miami, FL.

Rosalie Kurtz Moore - Rosalie was born in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and her family moved to Greeley, Colorado while she was in the second grade. She lived in Greeley from grade school all the way through college, where she earned her BA at Colorado State College (now called the University of Northern Colorado). She married Jerry S. Moore, a native of Greeley. She held many positions in the school system until her two children, Jeffrey and Karleen, were of school age. She then joined her husband's commercial real estate appraisal firm in Fort Collins, Colorado for the remainder of their working lives. Rosalie is a member of the Northern Colorado Chapter of AHSGR and a life member.

Reinhard Nachtigal - Reinhard Nachtigal was born in Freiburg, Germany and studied history, English and Slavic philology at the universities of Münster in Westfalia, Edinburgh in Scotland, and Freiburg im Breisgau. He wrote his doctoral thesis on Central Powers' POWs in World War I Russia and published a book on the construction of the Murmansk Railway in Northern Russia with the help of POW forced labor. He is the author of a study on the Russian Germans in the Don Cossack area and on the creation of communications in the 19th century Caucasus. He is a research fellow of the Collaborative Research Center 948 "Heroes - Heroizations - Heroisms" at Freiburg University, where he researches heroization processes of Russian historical personalities (field-marshal Alexander Suvorov and cossack rebel Pugachev) in Russia. The history of Germans in European Russia has become an integral part of his historical interest.

Kenneth W. Rock - Kenneth Rock is emeritus professor of History at Colorado State University. He is a native of Abilene, Kansas. He has a BA degree from the University of Kansas, and an MA and PhD from Stanford University. Dr. Rock's teaching and research at CSU focused on Central and Eastern Europe, European biography and the Germans from Russia Immigration experience. His articles and essays have been published in the Austrian History Yearbook, the Colorado Magazine, in the book, *Germans from Russia in Colorado*, and in the AHSGR Journal. Ken is a co-founder and oral historian for the Germans from Russia in Colorado Study project at CSU in the 1970's. From 2006-2017, Ken was an associate at the Center for German Russian Studies at CSU.

Karen Schutte - I am a second-generation Volga German - my grandmother was born in Russia. I was born in Wyoming; I graduated with a B.A. from the University of Wyoming in interior design and practiced in the field for 25 years. I began writing historical fiction 20 years ago and have written 6 books, all based on German heritage. I'm a mother of four sons, grandmother of 10 grandchildren, and have great-grandchildren twins.

Mark Shelstad - Mark Shelstad is Head of Digital and Archive Services at Colorado State University, where he has worked since 2015. He has degrees in history from the University of Minnesota-Morris and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He previously worked in archives and special collections at the University of Wyoming, the Wyoming State Archives, and the University of Texas at San Antonio. His areas of expertise include archives and records management, digitization and metadata, digital preservation, and systems administration.

Sharon Stahla - I am a granddaughter of Germans from Russia. I am a charter member of AHSGR. I have a Bachelors Degree from the University of Northern Colorado and a Master's Degree from the University of Colorado-Denver. After 31 years of teaching at Platte Valley Elementary School in Kersey, Colorado, I retired. I currently write poetry, work on scrapbooks, and enjoy the great-grandchildren.

John Stencel - John grew up on the family farm east of Greeley, being very active in his church, St John's E & R Lutheran Church, the 4-H and FFA. He is a graduate of Colorado State University, a Vietnam veteran and past President of Rocky Mountain Farmers Union. After serving 23 years as RMFU President, he was appointed Deputy Administrator of the Farm Service Agency at the US Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. Stencel retired in 2007 after 42 years of service to family farmers and ranchers. Stencel served on many boards during his working career. One of the most cherished was the State Board of Agriculture, the governing body for CSU, USC and Fort Lewis College. One of his many accomplishments while on the Board of Agriculture was the creation of the First Generation Scholarship Award program, the first in the nation. Following his two trips to many GR villages on both sides of the Volga River, he worked with the CSU administration to create the International Program for German Russian Studies at CSU, a joint venture between CSU and Saratov State University. Stencel also served one term on the International Foundation board of AHSGR, two years as its Treasurer. John and his lovely wife, Marian reside in Brighton and have been married almost 60 years. They have two children, Matt and Amy, spouses Denise and Kevin and five grandchildren.

Mark Sullivan - Mark Sullivan is the acclaimed author of eighteen novels, including the #1 New York Times bestselling *Private* series, which he writes with James Patterson. Mark's bestselling novel, *The Last Green Valley*, chronicles the Martels, one of many families of German heritage whose ancestors have farmed in Ukraine for more than a century. But after already living under Stalin's horrifying regime, the family decides they must run in retreat from their land with the wolves they despise to escape the Soviets and go in search of freedom. Another bestselling novel, *Beneath a Scarlet Sky*, is based on the true story of a forgotten hero, Pino Lella. It's the triumphant, epic tale of this young man's incredible courage and resilience during one of history's darkest hours during World War II in Italy. Mark has received numerous awards for his writing, including the WHSmith Fresh Talent Award, and his works have been named a New York Times Notable Book and a Los Angeles Times Best Book of the Year. He grew up in Medfield, Massachusetts, and graduated from Hamilton College with a BA in English before working as a volunteer in the Peace Corps in Niger, West Africa. Upon his return to the United States, he earned a graduate degree from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University