



# Nation's Capital Area Chapter

American Historical Society of Germans from Russia

**AHSGR: 40 YEARS IN 2008!**

CHAPTER CHARTERED IN 1975

OCTOBER 2008

## Original St. Pete records online

You can now view original copies of the St. Petersburg records on line, by visiting this [website](#).

That link is directly to the St. Pete records, but back up to the home page for more information.

The window shows all the locations available.

You can still use the extraction database on the [Odessa](#) site to find the info for your family. That includes page number and item number, which will be helpful in finding a specific entry in these unindexed pages.

But now you can see the original pages on line, also.

Chapter member Tom Stangl writes that some years the records were by parish and not by colony.

So you may find some records in unexpected places because the FHL did not bother to try to separate these Parish records by colony.

### About our chapter:

The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia is an international organization dedicated to the discovery, collection, preservation and dissemination of information related to the history, cultural heritage and genealogy of Germanic settlers in the former Russian Empire.

Our chapter meets four times a year and features programs on subjects related to the mission of AHSGR.

We welcome new members and guests.

Further information is on the chapter page at AHSGR's [website](#). ([www.ahsgr.org](http://www.ahsgr.org))

The Nation's Capital Area Chapter newsletter is edited by Edie Adam. E-mail [ejadam@yahoo.com](mailto:ejadam@yahoo.com).

## Governor recalls his 'lessons about ethnicity' amid immigration debate

A few weeks ago, Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer gave an interview to the *Iowa Independent* and *La Prensa*, a western Iowa Hispanic newspaper. Here's an excerpt on his views about immigration reform. Read the entire article by clicking [here](#).

"I believe people that who want to work and raise a family and come to America built this country, and over the course of the last 150 years we've had waves of immigration.

I'm half Ukrainian and I'm half Irish. At the time of the turn of the century when the Irish were coming to homestead, the signs on the streets in New York said, 'Help wanted: Jews and Irish need not apply.'

Some say the derogatory term 'wop' actually stands for 'without papers' and that they referred to all of the Italian immigrants for a time that way.

Chinese immigrants who came here built our railroads. Japanese and the way they were treated during World War II, and the list goes on.

I'll just say that I learned my first lessons about ethnicity when I was just a youngster.

My father's family were homesteaders in Montana and they came from Ukraine but they were German speakers. They were so-called German-speaking Russians.

While his parents and their parents had never been to Germany, when World War I came around, they were discriminated against across this country and they passed the Sedition Act and made it against the law to speak or read in German in Montana.

My father served in World War II, but since German was his first language, there was always a concern about 'Is he a patriot or not?'

And my grandmother, she

never learned to speak English, only German. My parents, they kind of kept us away from her because they saw it as a detriment to be able to speak German.

Then, this is where it gets interesting.

My first day of school, I'm going to school, and my mother sits me down — and I just went to a little country school, nine kids in my class — and she said, because by this time it's 1961 and we are in the Cold War, 'If anyone asks you about the name Schweitzer, don't tell them we're Russian, tell them we're German.'

So it swings back and forth in this country, and it has for a long time.

I want to repeat the principle: Families who want to come to America, work in America, raise families in America ought to be welcome because that's the thread that has made this blanket so warm in this country. We need to have a system that allows people a path to citizenship. That's the way we've done it for the last 150 years."



[www.governor.mt.gov](http://www.governor.mt.gov)

**Gov. Schweitzer** of Montana, a descendant of Germans from Russia

## Chapter's holiday meeting to be in January

The Nation's Capital Area Chapter will hold its holiday meeting & luncheon in early January 2009.

This was decided at the September chapter meeting, when members agreed that trying to find time in December to gather was getting more difficult.

Instead, Charlotte Lindsay offered to host our luncheon celebration in her home in Arlington.

She'll let us know how the luncheon arrangement will work: whether it's pot-luck or cooked for us.

But in the meantime, mark your calendars for **Sunday, Jan. 11, 2009.**



Couple items from the date-book:

Fairfax Genealogical Society's 5th Annual Fall Fair takes place Saturday, Oct. 25 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire Station Bingo Hall. The featured speaker is award winning author John T. Humphrey, who specializes in German research at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and record repositories in eastern Pennsylvania and southwestern Germany. [Click for further information.](#)

Oktoberfest at Schifferstadt in Frederick, Md. takes place Oct. 18 & Oct. 19 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. You'll find not only the traditional German oompah band and locally brewed beer, but also a juried crafts show featuring over 30 crafters showcasing their own works. See demonstrations of traditions such as hearth cooking, blacksmithing, spinning and weaving or visit a colonial heritage garden ready for the harvest. \$3 adults. Children under 12 free. [Click for further information.](#)



The website, [www.germanfoods.org](http://www.germanfoods.org), has introduced a new site whose target audience is U.S. and Canadian schools with German language programs.

[MyGermanFoods.org](http://MyGermanFoods.org) tries to provide in-depth information on food and healthy eating habits, as well as agriculture and culinary culture. There are also tools for the classroom such as the English-German glossary of food-related terms.

The new site is free and commercial-free and does try to make speaking German interesting and "cool."

In another similar effort, the German government is supporting a new initiative for the teaching of the German language in partner schools abroad.

It looks to expand the worldwide network of 117 German schools abroad and more than 450 schools with German-language departments offering the German Language Certificate.

In the United States, the initiative will encourage American schools to focus on German-language instruction and support existing German programs.



All of us who have struggled with reading old German records may be interested to know that it's official: That character known as the "Eszett" has been officially accepted as an upper case figure in the German alphabet by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).



## BTW By the way

The eszett represents a sharp double-s in German and until now, has only been a lower-case figure, causing all sorts of problems for journalists and advertisers who had to work around capitalizing the letter. (Not to mention the confusion it's caused for non-German speakers working in old church records!) But now it has official status as "special consonants found in western European languages."



Maybe there's a way to inspire the young historians in your family, especially if they have an interest in digital video. *The Washington Post* magazine reported in August on a woman who's made a business of recording family stories by using her experience in producing documentaries and public television.

Debbie Mintz Brodsky makes mini-documentaries that preserve personal history and become instant family heirlooms. "I was never a very good student of history," she told the Post, "But I love it now, because I'm seeing it through the eyes of these people."

Now that's inspiration for both preserving family memories and a career!



National Public Radio ran a three-part series in late summer on Fort Hunt, Va., not far from the Pentagon.

At the time, it was a top-secret center where specially recruited American servicemen interrogated high-value Nazi prisoners about war strategy and scientific projects. Some soldiers were recruited because they spoke German.

The Park Service is trying to find the veterans who served there in the hope of capturing the history of the then-secret effort, so secret many veterans never spoke about their time there.

Read and listen to the series [here](#).



The summer battles between Russian and Georgians have started a lot of talk about the security of other former Soviet republics, particularly Ukraine. *Der Spiegel* magazine in Germany has written specifically about the [future of Sevastopol in Crimea](#). *Der Spiegel* wrote, "Some in Russia would like the Ukrainian city to return to the Russian fold. Many fear that a spark here could quickly lead to a larger conflagration."



See the new entry at the [GRHC Blog](#) for stories about threshing, Chapter member Jan Stangl is among those shar-

ing stories. There are two black and white photos included including one "Threshing in the Glueckstal area, South Russia from Duane Bender of South Lake, Texas.



Ancestry.ca has launched the [Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935](#), which contains more than 7.2 million names, including 5.6 million of those who travelled to start a new life in Canada.

The collection includes passenger lists from Halifax, Saint John, North Sydney, Quebec City, Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria and even east coast ports in the US where many arrived before proceeding directly to Canada overland.

Also in Canada, for information on the Canadian National Registration of 1940, visit this [website](#).



A new self-described independent website, Georgia Daily, reports on news and views in the former Soviet republic. One recent commentary discussed the rise of a new cult of Stalin in Russia and its particular appeal to the young. Read the article [here](#).



Germany's ambassador to the U.S. spoke about two anniversaries in German-American history in his "message of greeting" marking German-American Day on Oct. 6, 2008.

Klaus Scharioth wrote of the German doctor who was present at the founding of Jamestown 400 years ago and the Berlin airlift 60 years ago. He also pointed out that 2009 will see the 20th anniversary of a reunified Germany. "Germany will be forever grateful for America's role in helping bring about German reunification," he wrote.



If you're looking for some old-fashioned, Germans from Russia fun, apparently our ancestors played a game called Bunnock — the game of bones. It was created in Siberia and brought to Canada by German Russians. The article, from the Northwest Territories Northern News Service, can be read [here](#).



Brent Mai, director of Center for Volga German Studies at Concordia University, announces the publication of a new book, *Catherine* by Sigrid Weidenweber.

The book is the first of a planned trilogy on the Volga Germans through the centuries. Proceeds from the sale of the books supports the Center.

For information on ordering *Catherine*, see the Center's [website](#).