



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Newsletter

December 2016

vic.grhs@gmail.com

President's Message

*Let us keep Christmas beautiful
without a thought of greed, that it
might live forevermore to fill our
every need, that it shall not be just
a day, but last a lifetime through,
the miracle of Christmas time that
brings God close to you.*

-unknown

***Merry Christmas
To All***



Directors

President

Jean Martyn

Secretary

Helena R.

Director

Linda V.

Vice President

Isidore V.

Treasurer

Anni B.

Library

Linda V.

* * * * *

Meetings are held:

Usually the 3rd Monday of each month at
1:00pm

In January, February, March, April, May
September, October and November

**Please contact our email address
vic.grhs@gmail.com
to confirm place and time**

CHRISTMAS EVE 1881

Author Unknown

Pa never had much compassion for the lazy or those who squandered their means and then never had enough for the necessities. But for those who were genuinely in need, his heart was as big as all outdoors. It was from him that I learned the greatest joy in life comes from giving, not from receiving.

It was Christmas Eve 1881. I was fifteen years old and feeling like the world had caved in on me because there just hadn't been enough money to buy me the rifle that I'd wanted for Christmas. We did the chores early that night for some reason. I just figured Pa wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible.

After supper was over I took my boots off and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Pa to get down the old Bible. I was still feeling sorry for myself and, to be honest, I wasn't in much of a mood to read Scriptures. But Pa didn't get the Bible, instead he bundled up again and went outside. I couldn't figure it out because we had already done all the chores. I didn't worry about it long though, I was too busy wallowing in self-pity. Soon Pa came back in. It was a cold clear night out and there was ice in his beard. "Come on, Matt," he said. "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight." I was really upset then. Not only wasn't I getting the rifle for Christmas, now Pa was dragging me out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that I could see. We'd already done all the chores, and I couldn't think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this. But I knew Pa was not very patient at one dragging one's feet when he'd told them to do something, so I got up and put my boots back on and got my cap, coat, and mittens. Ma gave me a mysterious smile as I opened the door to leave the house. Something was up, but I didn't know what.

Outside, I became even more dismayed. There in front of the house was the work team, already hitched to the big sled. Whatever it was we were going to do wasn't going to be a short, quick, little job. I could tell. We never hitched up this sled unless we were going to haul a big load. Pa was already up on the seat, reins in hand. I reluctantly climbed up beside him. The cold was already biting at me. I wasn't happy. When I was on, Pa pulled the sled around the house and stopped in front of the woodshed. He got off and I followed. "I think we'll put on the high sideboards," he said. "Here, help me." The high sideboards! It had been a bigger job than I wanted to do with just the low sideboards on, but whatever it was we were going to do would be a lot bigger with the high side boards on.

After we had exchanged the sideboards, Pa went into the woodshed and came out with an armload of wood – the wood I'd spent all summer hauling down from the mountain, and then all Fall sawing into blocks and splitting. What was he doing? Finally I said something. "Pa," I asked, "what are you doing?" "You been by the Widow Jensen's lately?" he asked. The Widow Jensen lived about two miles down the road. Her husband had died a year or so before and left her with three children, the oldest being eight. Sure, I'd been by, but so what? Yeah," I said, "Why?"

"I rode by just today," Pa said. "Little Jakey was out digging around in the woodpile trying to find a few chips. They're out of wood, Matt." That was all he said and then he turned and went back into the woodshed for another armload of wood. I followed him. We loaded the sled so high that I began to wonder if the horses would be able to pull it. Finally, Pa called a halt to our loading, then we went to the smoke house and Pa took down a big ham and a side of bacon. He handed them to me and told me to put them in the sled and wait. When he returned he was carrying a sack of flour over his right shoulder and a smaller sack

of something in his left hand. "What's in the little sack?" I asked. Shoes, they're out of shoes. Little Jakey just had gunny sacks wrapped around his feet when he was out in the woodpile this morning. I got the children a little candy too. It just wouldn't be Christmas without a little candy."

We rode the two miles to Widow Jensen's pretty much in silence. I tried to think through what Pa was doing. We didn't have much by worldly standards. Of course, we did have a big woodpile, though most of what was left now was still in the form of logs that I would have to saw into blocks and split before we could use it. We also had meat and flour, so we could spare that, but I knew we didn't have any money, so why was Pa buying them shoes and candy? Really, why was he doing any of this? Widow Jensen had closer neighbors than us; it shouldn't have been our concern.

We came in from the blind side of the Jensen house and unloaded the wood as quietly as possible, then we took the meat and flour and shoes to the door. We knocked. The door opened a crack and a timid voice said, "Who is it?" "Lucas Miles, Ma'am, and my son, Matt, could we come in for a bit?"

Widow Jensen opened the door and let us in. She had a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. The children were wrapped in another and were sitting in front of the fireplace by a very small fire that hardly gave off any heat at all. Widow Jensen fumbled with a match and finally lit the lamp.

"We brought you a few things, Ma'am," Pa said and set down the sack of flour. I put the meat on the table. Then Pa handed her the sack that had the shoes in it. She opened it hesitantly and took the shoes out one pair at a time. There was a pair for her and one for each of the children – sturdy shoes, the best, shoes that would last. I watched her carefully. She bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling and then tears filled her eyes and started running

down her cheeks. She looked up at Pa like she wanted to say something, but it wouldn't come out.

"We brought a load of wood too, Ma'am," Pa said. He turned to me and said, "Matt, go bring in enough to last awhile. Let's get that fire up to size and heat this place up." I wasn't the same person when I went back out to bring in the wood. I had a big lump in my throat and as much as I hate to admit it, there were tears in my eyes too. In my mind I kept seeing those three kids huddled around the fireplace and their mother standing there with tears running down her cheeks with so much gratitude in her heart that she couldn't speak.

My heart swelled within me and a joy that I'd never known before, filled my soul. I had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it had made so much difference. I could see we were literally saving the lives of these people.

I soon had the fire blazing and everyone's spirits soared. The kids started giggling when Pa handed them each a piece of candy and Widow Jensen looked on with a smile that probably hadn't crossed her face for a long time. She finally turned to us. "God bless you," she said. "I know the Lord has sent you. The children and I have been praying that he would send one of his angels to spare us."

In spite of myself, the lump returned to my throat and the tears welled up in my eyes again. I'd never thought of Pa in those exact terms before, but after Widow Jensen mentioned it I could see that it was probably true. I was sure that a better man than Pa had never walked the earth. I started remembering all the times he had gone out of his way for Ma and me, and many others. The list seemed endless as I thought on it. Pa insisted that everyone try on the shoes before we left. I was amazed when they all fit and I wondered how he had known what sizes to get. Then I guessed that if he was on an errand for the

Lord that the Lord would make sure he got the right sizes.

Tears were running down Widow Jensen's face again when we stood up to leave. Pa took each of the kids in his big arms and gave them a hug. They clung to him and didn't want us to go. I could see that they missed their Pa, and I was glad that I still had mine. At the door Pa turned to Widow Jensen and said, "The Mrs. wanted me to invite you and the children over for Christmas dinner tomorrow. The turkey will be more than the three of us can eat, and a man can get cantankerous if he has to eat turkey for too many meals. We'll be by to get you about eleven. It'll be nice to have some little ones around again. Matt, here, hasn't been little for quite a spell." I was the youngest. My two brothers and two sisters had all married and had moved away.

Widow Jensen nodded and said, "Thank you, Brother Miles. I don't have to say, May the Lord bless you, I know for certain that He will."

Out on the sled I felt a warmth that came from deep within and I didn't even notice the cold. When we had gone a ways, Pa turned to me and said, "Matt, I want you to know something. Your ma and me have been tucking a little money away here and there all year so we could buy that rifle for you, but we didn't have quite enough. Then yesterday a man who owed me a little money from years back came by to make things square. Your ma and me were real excited, thinking that now we could get you that rifle, and I started into town this morning to do just that, but on the way I saw little Jakey out scratching in the woodpile with his feet wrapped in those gunny sacks and I knew what I had to do. Son, I spent the money for shoes and a little candy for those children. I hope you understand."

I understood, and my eyes became wet with tears again. I understood very well, and I was so glad Pa had done it. Now the rifle seemed very low on my list of priorities. Pa had given

me a lot more. He had given me the look on Widow Jensen's face and the radiant smiles of her three children.

For the rest of my life, whenever I saw any of the Jensen's, or split a block of wood, I remembered, and remembering brought back that same joy I felt riding home beside Pa that night. Pa had given me much more than a rifle that night, he had given me the best Christmas of my life.

Josephburg Ladies Aid Cook Book

(Old Family Recipe-as you can see they weren't big on instructions)

Coffee Cake or Kuchen

1 Fleischmann's yeast cake
1 cup scalded milk, cooled
1 cup lukewarm water
1 tbsps. sugar
7 cups sifted flour
6 tbsps. Butter
1 cup sugar 3 eggs
½ tsp. salt

Dissolve yeast cake and 1 tbsps. of sugar in warm water and milk, add 3 cups of flour and beat until smooth. Let rise, now mix butter and sugar well creamed and eggs beaten light and salt. Add balance of flour and knead until it does not stick to the sides of the dish. Let rise double in bulk (lemon or orange rind may be added). This make several kuchen, depending on size of pans. Take part of the dough and roll about ½ inch thick, depends on how thick you like the, and put into a buttered pan, brush dough with melted butter. When dough is all in pans, you can finish the tops with crumbs, apples, cheese or plums.

Apple Kuchen – Peel several apples, quarter and slice thick, lay side by side all over dough, sprinkle with sugar, then crumbs, let rise double in bulk and bake in moderate oven.

Editor's Note: Growing up this was one on my family's favourites. Whole milk usually used.

ANCESTRY AND (SHHH!) EASTERN EUROPE!

by Paul S. Valasek DDS

DDS Once again, it seems Ancestry.com is a bit over itself and making more, in my opinion, poor choices. Back in the January edition of Gen Dobry!, I wrote a commentary on Ancestry's recent move to discontinue Family Tree Maker in place of embellishing their "cloud" storage facility. A poor choice to me—and after many individuals, members of genealogy groups, protested, the life of the Family Tree Maker appears to have been saved and resurrected.

Now Ancestry has done it again. For the past few months, probably closer to a year, we see commercials for signing up to Ancestry.com to "discover" one's roots. Fine and good, but the choice of advertising scenarios is leaving much to be desired. How long do I have to hear about the middle-aged man who all his life was "German" (complete with lederhosen, bratwurst, and oompah bands—none of which I have any problem with) but now, thanks to Ancestry.com, finds out he's really Scottish! Really? It took a commercial company to correct the seemingly blatant mistake made by his family who, for 50+ years, told him one story and only to find out it's not true? Yes, I know, this has happened to many others. The only ones I blame are the ancestors who never knew the story themselves nor took the time to tell their children the proper family lore.

But what irks me the most is that after an entire life of being "German," he now must drop the garb and assume kilts and bagpipes. What becomes of a lifetime of mingling and sharing life's ups and downs with "other" Germans? And now we must assume our new identity and center on being Scottish! Conjure up the vision of covering those lederhosen with a kilt?

If that wasn't bad enough, there has been a subsequent commercial in that venue which irritates me more and in the trend of 21st century political correctness: I'm offended!

In this Ancestry commercial, we have a husband and wife standing in a more or less empty room talking about his ancestry, which he always assumed was Italian. (Time out for beaming on both faces....) The smiles go down and he concludes that he is not as much Italian as he thought. His wife hesitates and states in a quieter, almost embarrassed voice, whispers hesitantly, "He's ... (pause ... shhh!) He's EASTERN EUROPEAN! And she follows it up again with the hesitant "EASTERN EUROPEAN"! Wow. What a traumatic moment that discovery must have been for both of them!

All your life you were raised to follow one country through high and low (they didn't specify Northern or Southern Italian; that may have offended one side over the other, but Ellis Island made that difference for a number of years). Now you have to be one of a gazillion ethnic races, religions, origins, minorities, speaking untold languages, some not connected to any other language nearby, or even on this planet, with multiple alphabets. And thanks to Ancestry.com, he is now a member of, geographically, half of Europe. How's that for educating the public.

Not only did Ancestry.com make it worse for the man, BUT he and his wife have to be embarrassed stating so. If you look carefully and quickly, when he's accepted the title of being either EASTERN EUROPEAN, i.e. Finnish, Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Rusyn, Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Dalmatian, Greek, Turkish, Serbian, Armenian, Bosnian, Croatian, Slovenian, Volga Deutsch.... on and on... not to mention that now he has been grouped with the largest source of Jewish people this world has ever seen ... and the added potential for Christians (both Eastern and Western) Muslims, Mongols, Tartars, Gypsies (I don't use that derogatorily either, you can't beat their music and dance!) ... wait, I'm coming back to my point.... When he states he is now Eastern European, a small snippet of his ancestral chart shows up behind him on screen. I believe that one of the small flags is that of Croatia. It has a

red and white checkered emblem on a blue background. The only other ethnic symbol I am aware of which has a red and white checkered pattern is the body of the Moravian eagle (which is half of MY family history as told to me by my father and his parents and my aunts and uncles and a whole town of family back in (shhh! ... (dramatic pause ...hesitantly) ...

EASTERN EUROPE!

Actually, Moravia is in Central Europe, well, Eastern Central Europe; Eastern Central Slavic Europe; on the eastern half of the current Czech Republic; formally the middle of Czechoslovakia; a Margravate in the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; but not to be confused and grouped in with “those” Northern Moravians, as mine inhabit a region called Slovacko or Moravian Slovakia because it lies on the border (forget political lines on a map) between Moravia, i.e., Czech Republic, i.e., Czechoslovakia, i.e., Czecho-Slovakia (yes, the hyphen DID make a difference and had to be wrangled away in Parliament), i.e., the Austrian Empire ... and Slovakia ... i.e., Upper Hungary ... i.e. Hungarian Empire!

And yes, one could take any of their ancestral homes, not just (shhh! ... dramatic pause ... EASTERN EUROPE), and illustrate how not to group any one person along with half a continent!

So after many decades of excellent contributions to genealogy, Ancestry.com (watched very closely by the Family History Centers), has stepped in the primordial ooze and got their shoes stuck in 21st century “political correctness.” I prefer the ooze; at least that can be cleaned off.

If you’re wondering, Yes, I’m offended—and I just saw this commercial again today (on the 4th of July holiday). And can say that since its first appearance, it has been “edited” from the original, but ... wait for it (shhh!) ... the EASTERN EUROPEAN faux pas is still in there!

Wait, wait! I just thought of it. I can use French, as after the Thirty Years War, 1618–1648, the landscape around my Moravian ancestral home was devastated and the vineyards had to be repaired by imported French vineyard workers and many French names still exist in the area. And who planted those grapes....wait for it... LOUDLY with BEAMING ... the ITALIANS, the Roman Garrisons from the Roman Empire’s northern expanse. Hmm, maybe I’m Italian more than I thought!

Written by Paul S. Valasek DDS

Hallersarmy@aol.com

Previously published by Gen Dobry!, Vol. XVII, No. 7, 31 July 2016, PolishRoots®:

Lazy Daisy Cake

(another family favourite)

-Beat 2 eggs, add 1 cup white sugar gradually
-Sift 1 cup flour with ½ tsp. salt and 1 tsp. baking powder, add to the above with 1 tsp. vanilla.

Heat ½ cup milk with 1 tbsp. butter, add to flour mixture and beat.

Bake in moderate oven for 30 mins. When cake is done put the following icing on which has been boiled for 2 mins. And then set cake back in oven to brown icing.

Icing

5 tbsps. Brown sugar

3 tbsps. Butter

2 tbsps. Cream

½ cup coconut

Editor’s Note: this cake without this icing was used as a base to make all different occasion cakes; strawberry shortcake as an example, but is very good with the icing noted.

Milk used was whole milk usually.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

The Carpathian Connection

<http://www.tccweb.org/index.htm>

Russia Online Genealogy Records

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Russia Online Genealogy Records](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Russia_Online_Genealogy_Records)

Bessarabian Germans Association

<http://www.bessarabien.de/>

Cindy's List

<http://www.cyndislist.com/eastern-europe/>

In the Midst of Wolves

<http://www.inthemidstofwolves.com/>

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ostdeutscher

Familienforscher

<http://www.agoff.de/>

Volhynia

<http://www.volhynia.com/>

Austria (see also Galicia, Kresy)

Archives

- [Austrian Archives](#)
- [AustriaGenWeb](#)

Geography & Maps

- [Austria-Hungary Maps](#)
- Directories
- [Gazetteers of Austria-Hungary](#)

Other

- [Austrian Military Recruitment in Galicia](#)
A town by town list of where regiments recruited by year.
- [Austrian Military Garrisons in Galicia](#)
- [Galician Federal Representatives](#)
To the Government in Vienna from 1907

Germany

Archives

- [Compact Memory](#)
A project to digitize German Language Jewish Periodicals
- [German National Archives](#) (Bundesarchiv Deutschland)
- [Germans in Poland](#)
- [Germany GenWeb](#)

Geography & Maps

- Directories
- [Gazetteers of Prussia](#)
- [Maps of Prussia](#)

Other

- [Prussia On-line](#)
- [Prussian Education](#)
- [Resources for Jewish Genealogical Research in Posen](#)
- [Silesia Club-USA](#)
- [Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe](#) (A Volhynian Genealogy Group)

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in 2017