



HEIMWEG

VICTORIA GERMANS FROM RUSSIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Beginning of VGRHS in Victoria, BC, On the 22nd anniversary year

In January 1996 I had just returned from a month in Alberta, where I was with my dear Mom who was dying of cancer. It was a rough time. Somehow it seemed fitting that a phone call came from a stranger telling me she was wondering about setting up a local chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia. To honour my Mom I could get involved with this organization and work on our family history.

Diana Dobson had been born in Calgary. Her grandparents had been Germans from Russia and had immigrated to Canada in 1901. During her 22 years of living in Calgary she did not know about her heritage. It was after she read a book "The White Lamb" that Diana began to get some insight into her heritage.

In 1995 her husband worked on contract in Russia. Near completion of his work, she went to Russia and was able to arrange a visit to the ancestral village of her grandparents. After her return to Victoria, Diana contacted AHSGR to inquire about starting a chapter here. Of the three names of members in Victoria, two of us were interested. Marilyn Gravel and I met at

Diana's on February 11th and decided to take on the challenge of developing a chapter.

We worked on a mission statement, which was developed at a later date and could be summarized as:

Our intention was to bring people together who share our common interest in the history and to form a local chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia.

Our second meeting was four days later to make plans for advertising.

Fortunately, Hillside Mall was hosting a Heritage Fair soon after. We were able to book and confirm our attendance. Diana had to go out of town, but designed the display. Marilyn and I took turns manning the table for the week. We received some interest, but it took a few years before we qualified to receive our Charter as we had to have ten members (paid AHSGR memberships.). We continued to advertise in local media.

Diana was voted president and served for ten years and members took turns filling the other positions. The library is of great value and the social aspect of the club was important. Most of the meetings were luncheon with members donating the food. It was at one of the early meetings we voted to have attendees donate

\$2.00 at each meeting to defray costs of paper, postage, etc.

The meetings continued to be held at Diana's for at least 12 years. Membership did not remain static and new members were always welcomed.

This organization owes its existence to Diana, who was determined to set up a local group, then dedicated many hours and work to ensure the Victoria Germans from Russia Historical Society continued for many years. We mourn her passing in March, 2012.

Helen Lane April 2018



Helen Lane

IN OUR LIBRARY

“The German Settlements in Bessarabia: A Study of the German Immigration to, Successful in an Ultimate Abandonment of Bessarabia” by Burkett W. Huey

The Selz baptismal and marriage records for 1831 through 1840 (19 indices in all) have been received and placed in our Library.

SGGEE CONVENTION

<https://www.sggee.org/> is being held in Calgary on July 27-29

2018 Eastern European Family History Conference <http://feefhs.org/>

25th Anniversary Conference

August 6-10, 2018

Plaza Hotel, Salt Lake City, Utah

\$150 — Early bird Registration (Ends July 1st)

\$200 — Regular Registration

FamilySearch Community Pages Update

As noted in February, FamilySearch has recently created a new FamilySearch Community where people can obtain free genealogical help from anywhere in the world. The geographic coverage of these groups continues to grow and now includes major Slavic countries in addition the Germanic countries previously announced. In these groups, you can ask questions about records, get translation help, learn about upcoming learning opportunities, and more.

FamilySearch is also calling for experts to participate in these community groups to help share information and answer questions about Eastern European countries in these community groups. If you have some expertise in research for any of the geographic areas, you are invited by FamilySearch to sign up and start sharing what you can to help others in their research. Those involved with FEEFHS are particularly invited to join the Central and East European groups, including the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany, Poland, Russian Empire, and Switzerland.

For more information about these Community Pages see the FamilySearch Genealogy Research Community article in the FamilySearch Wiki, where you will also find links to the individual community research groups.

FEEFHS 2018

Note from President: My Galician Germans were among the first groups settling in Josephburg and in Stony Plain, Alberta

The Galician German Settlement of Josephburg Alberta



On the Yellowhead Highway between Edmonton and Elk Island Park, alert travelers will notice a sign at Secondary Highway 830 indicating the turn-off to the hamlet of Josephburg. Founded in the late 19th century by German-speaking settlers from Austro-Hungarian Ukraine, this small community 6 kms east of Fort Saskatchewan once played a key role in shaping the history of Kalyna Country when the region was first opened to homesteading more than a century ago. The roots of Josephburg can be traced back to the 1887 immigration to Canada of George Becker, a native of the village of Josefsberg in the Habsburg crownland of Galicia. After landing in Halifax, the fifty-seven year old Becker made his way to the prairies, which impressed him with their vast and unsettled spaces. Writing home to family and friends in the Old Country, he encouraged his fellow

Galician Germans to follow him overseas to seek a new life in the Canadian Northwest.

Becker's appeal was timely, as many of his countrymen back home felt their horizons were severely limited in Galicia, a poor and overcrowded Austro-Hungarian province largely inhabited by Ukrainians and Poles. Germans had first started to settle in what is modern-day Western Ukraine when Galicia became part of Austria after the first partition of Poland in 1772. Many of them had come to east central Europe from Protestant communities along the Rhine River in southwestern Germany, an historic region known as the Palatinate. For a time, the German colonists had hoped that their fortunes would improve when petroleum, natural gas and other minerals were discovered in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in the early 1800s. However, by the mid-nineteenth century efforts to mine these resources were still small-scale, primitive and haphazard affairs that were dependent on the harsh exploitation of peasant labour and often resulted in losses for investors. Given the widespread poverty in Galicia and its dubious economic and political future, by the 1880s emigration was increasingly being viewed as an attractive option, notwithstanding the uncertainties and hardships that such a momentous decision entailed.

The village of Josefsberg was situated roughly 40 miles (64 kms) southwest of the city of Lviv, known in Austro-Hungarian times as Lemberg, Leopoldis or Lwów. In Ukrainian, Josefsberg was called Korosnytsia, rendered Korosnića in Polish. Josefsberg had been colonized by members of the Reformed Church in Germany, and was one of four parishes overseen by the Reformed Protestant Superintendent of Galicia. The Reformed Church practiced a form of Protestantism influenced by Calvinism, and was theologically similar to Presbyterianism. Other Reformed adherents lived in neighbouring Galician settlements, including the villages of Brigidau and Derzhiv (respectively located eight miles south and east of Josefsberg), and in the

nearby regional centre of Stryi (Stryj). Of course, there were numerous other German-speaking religious communities in 19th century Galicia, as well as in Tsarist Ukraine, Russia and the different parts of Poland. These included Lutherans, Mennonites, Moravians, Hutterites and a small number of Catholics – all whom eventually provided immigrants to Canada. Regardless, in 1888 George Becker's own family along with several others from Josefsberg and its sister communities departed from Galicia for Canada. While some in this initial group remained for a time in Winnipeg, others continued further west and eventually made their way to Medicine Hat in the district of Assiniboia, now southeastern Alberta. Filing for homesteads in the vicinity of Dunmore, 48 kms southeast of Medicine Hat, the settlers built sod huts, broke the land, and planted their first crop. However, their hopes were dashed when a hot and dry summer scorched their fields, which yielded only a meager harvest. Undaunted, they persevered for another year, during which time their numbers were increased by 40-50 families that emigrated in the spring of 1889 from Josefsberg, Brigidau and Stryi, as well as members of the original group in Manitoba. Other German-speaking immigrants from Galicia also settled near Dunmore, where immigration agents were working to promote the development of an ethnically cohesive bloc settlement. That same fall, a school district called "Josefburg" was optimistically organized for the growing colony, but once again the harvest proved to be a bitter disappointment. Although several unusually wet summers had given the area the appearance of being quite lush when the settlers first arrived, as soon as more normal dry conditions returned it became apparent that the treeless plains of southeastern Alberta would not easily lend themselves to cultivation.

Consequently, in 1890 about half of the settlers relocated with the help of the CPR to the Wolseley-Grenfell area roughly 100-150 kms east of Regina, where some of their relatives and kinsmen had chosen homesteads in 1888,

at the same time adopting the name "Josephsberg" for their small colony. Meanwhile, the remaining settlers near Dunmore decided to investigate agricultural conditions further north, and in the spring of 1891 sent a delegation of five young men to assess the lands in the Beaver Hills district north and east of Edmonton. When these scouts returned with a positive report, fifty-three families, comprising a total of 225-250 people, pulled up their stakes at Dunmore and made an eight-day trek to Strathcona by train and by wagon trail with their herds of cattle, horses, and other livestock – finally arriving between 26-29 April. Most were Galician Germans, but some were originally from North Germany. Along the way, a couple of families resolved to stay behind in Red Deer, and two more took land near Wetaskiwin. Once in Edmonton, the religiously diverse group divided along confessional lines, with roughly two dozen Reformed Lutheran families homesteading west of the city at Stony Plain and Spruce Grove, and five German Catholic families from Hungary settling in St. Albert. Still others moved to Leduc and the Peace Hills, while several Baptists from Volhynia eventually set down roots in the Rabbit Hill area southwest of the city, calling their district Heimtal.

In the meantime, a mixture of Reformed Church and "Old Lutheran" adherents picked the Horse Hill plain, southeast of Fort Saskatchewan, as their preferred location to make a fresh start. Nine of these families rented two farms in the Oliver and Horse Hill districts ten miles east of Edmonton, but filed for homesteads around present-day Josephburg, where they immediately began building log cabins on their future farms. Thanks to good weather they made rapid progress and were able to move into their modest homes (some were little more than shacks) by the fall of 1891, after which they continued to work digging wells, clearing brush and putting up fences. At this time, it was said that there were only two settlers living in the area between Fort Saskatchewan and today's village of Andrew – a couple of retired

Mounties who ran small herds of cattle in clearings in the parkland terrain.

Additional German-speaking newcomers reinforced these pioneers in subsequent years, both from Galicia as well as well as from Ukrainian lands within the Russian Empire. By the fall of 1893, the district boasted 390 German inhabitants, a thousand acres under cultivation, 600 cattle and 24 horses. That same December, a ratepayers association was organized to build a school that was named "Josephsburg," the spelling having being modified in the process of becoming Anglicized. This third Canadian "Josefsberg" proved to be the most enduring, and thus the name continues to be shown on road maps as a hamlet in north Strathcona County.

Although never very large, the Galician German colony established in 1891 at Josephsburg was to have a major impact on the creation of the Ukrainian bloc settlement started a year later with the arrival of the first two settlers from Nebyliv, Galicia. That is because in many ways the emigration of German Galicians helped to unleash the influx of Ukrainians who were equally frustrated by their hard lives of poverty and lack of opportunity. Indeed, the plight of Ukrainians was even more difficult because of the discrimination that they experienced under the Austro-Hungarian regime, which favoured the Poles even in places where they were only a minority.

It is generally recognized that the "fathers" of Ukrainian immigration to Canada were Ivan Pylypiw and Wasył Eleniak, who in September 1891 made an exploratory trip to the prairies to determine for themselves whether or not the country was suitable as a new home. The reason they came was Johan Krebs, a member of the Josephsburg colony, who spoke Ukrainian and whom Pylypiw knew from the homeland, apparently as a classmate. According to the author J.G. MacGregor, Pylypiw had written to Krebs because he had earlier expressed an interest in striking out for North America, but by

the time the letter reached him, Johan was already living with his family in southern Alberta. Although conditions at Dunmore were obviously not the best, Krebs is said to have written Pylypiw a very enthusiastic account about the great agricultural potential of Canada, mentioning the Josephsburg settlement in Saskatchewan and the rich black soil and timbered land that was available outside of Edmonton. The correspondence between the two men ostensibly became the catalyst behind the Pylypiw-Eleniak mission, which was to have far-reaching implications not only for the history of Kalyna Country, but for development of large parts of Western Canada during the pioneer era.

After stopping to see a German settlement at Langenberg, Saskatchewan, and also visiting the Grenfell area, Pylypiw and Eleniak attempted to come all the way to the Josephsburg colony that was in the process of being established east of Edmonton. However, since winter was rapidly approaching, they decided to turn back at Calgary – though they had learned enough by that time to become convinced that the lands east of Fort Saskatchewan would make an excellent location for the Ukrainian colony that they hoped to initiate.

Consequently, when the first Ukrainian settlers arrived in Edmonton in June 1892 as part of a group of twelve families organized by Ivan Pylypiw upon his return to Galicia, they immediately gravitated northeast of the city to the area being homesteaded by Germans from Josefsberg. Some of those who followed them found temporary shelter and work among their fellow Galicians at Josephsburg before taking their own homesteads further northeast, in the vicinity of Edna-Star. The fact that the trail leading from Edmonton to the Ukrainian colony that initially developed between Star and Wostok passed through German settlement, ensured that there continued to be frequent interaction between the two pioneer communities for many years afterwards. Thus, in some ways, the Galician Germans can be

regarded as the “godfathers” of Ukrainian settlement in Canada, having been the first to blaze the path that Ukrainian Galicians took in a swelling tide beginning in 1892.

As for the original Galician Josefsberg, it was to suffer a difficult fate over the tumultuous course of the twentieth century. The scene of heavy fighting in the First and Second World Wars, Josefsberg was largely destroyed in the latter and all that remains of it today is the hamlet called Korysnytsia, administered from the nearby village of Letnia. Brigidau, founded by German colonists in 1784 and known in Ukrainian as Bryhidan, in 1947 was renamed Lanivka and in the 1970s reported a population of just over one thousand. Its German residents had moved back to Germany in 1939 as part of a resettlement scheme arranged under the short-lived Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, but many of them returned to their old homes under the Nazi occupation. After the bitter conflict, most of the German inhabitants of Galicia were forcibly evacuated from Ukraine by the Soviet government in a process that saw large Polish, Ukrainian and German populations arbitrarily resettled from their former villages. The intention of this policy was to change the ethnic make-up of entire territories, especially in borderlands that had long been inhabited by people of different nationalities and were therefore regarded as being inherently unstable.

Today, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is finally possible for the descendants of immigrants to Canada who came from villages that had been closed to foreigners under the Communist regime, to travel freely within Ukraine to explore their ancestral roots. The creation of a democratic Ukrainian society is also allowing historians to examine and openly discuss both the happy and the painful legacies that are intertwined in the complex heritage of Slavic Eastern Europe, and are similarly part of the fascinating story behind the settlement of east central Alberta.

Researched and written by Jars Balan

German Given Names Traditions

There are two German naming traditions genealogists should know.

- The first is that German children were given two names, and the second name—not the first—is what you will find in records. This is because German boys almost always were baptized with the first name Johannes (or Johann, abbreviated Joh). German girls were baptized Maria, Anna or Anna Maria. (This tradition started in the Middle Ages.) This means a family could (and commonly did) have five boys with the first name Johann.

You can see the high potential for confusion until you understand that the first name doesn't mean a thing. The second name, known as the *Rufname*, and surname would be used in marriage, tax, land and death records. So in a family with boys Johann Friedrich, Johann Peter, Johann Daniel, etc., the children would be called by (and recorded as) Friedrich, Peter and Daniel. Usually, the name Johannes marked a “true John” who would continue to be so identified.

By the 19th century, more families gave children three names. Again, it was typical that only one of the “middle” names was used throughout the individual's life. Roman Catholics typically named their children using only the names of people declared saints, while most Protestant groups expanded the canon of names to include names from the Old Testament or even non-Christian mythology.

- The second meaning tradition involves nicknames, often called *Kurzformen*, meaning “short forms.” In English, most nicknames are created by dropping the last syllable of the given name (for example, Christopher and Christine become “Chris”). Germans, however, often shorten a given name by dropping the first part of it. Some of the many examples (using more authentic but understandable German spellings) are: Nicklaus becoming Klaus, Sebastian becoming Bastian, Christophel becoming Stophel (and Christina becoming

Stin or Stina), Katharina becoming Trin. It's important to note that these familiar forms are used in church or other records, even though by today's standards we might expect full or formal names to be used.

Naming Patterns

Researchers often hope that a naming pattern will provide clues about the given names of previous generations. In German-speaking areas, children were almost always named for one or more of their baptismal sponsors. The most common pattern would be for sons to be named in this order: first born, for father's father; second born, mother's father; third born, father of the child; fourth born and on, uncles of the child. The same pattern applies to daughters but using the mothers' names (father's mother, mother's mother, mother of child, aunts). Given names for children who died young (a common occurrence in centuries gone by) were reused by the family for children born after the deaths. There are even some documented instances where families used the same name for two children who both survived.

German Surnames

Most German commoners acquired their surnames in the Middle Ages, sometime around the 1300s, and for most areas (with the conspicuous exceptions noted later in this section) those surnames were fixed from one generation to another, disturbed only by variations in phonetics. Most of the surnames adopted came from occupations, geography, characteristics or patronymics:

- **Occupational Surnames:** Occupational names, most of which are distinguished by the endings *-er* or *-mann*, are very common in German and therefore are often more difficult to trace (the joke among German genealogists is that everyone has at least one "Johannes Mueller"/John Miller ancestor). A few examples of this type of surname are Schneider (tailor), Schmidt (smith) or Fenstermacher (window maker).

- **Geographic Surnames:** Geographic names can be fairly specific or general. A Marburger probably has an ancestor who was living in the German city of Marburg when surnames were adopted. A Schweitzer either was living in or a descendant of a family from Switzerland. Dieffenbach simply means "deep creek," of which there are many in Germany.
- **Characteristic Surnames:** Characteristic names run the gamut from presumably complimentary to, well, not so complimentary. They include names such as Lang (long), Schwartzkopf (black head), Weiss (white), Klein (short), Altmann (old man) and Dick (fat).
- **Patronymic Surnames:** Many Germans have patronymic names—surnames derived by combining the father's given name with some form of *Sohn* (the German word for "son"). Examples are Hansen and Jacobsohn. Some areas of Germany used changing patronymic surnames into the nineteenth century. This means the surname could change with each generation as the children of the new generation took the name of their father as their surnames. For example, Jacob's son, Robert, has the surname Jacobsohn and Robert's son, Johannes, has the surname Robertsohn, even though Robert's surname is Jacobsohn. The areas that used changing patronymic surnames were Ostfriesland and Schleswig-Holstein, which is not surprising because these are the areas of Germany closest to Scandinavia, where patronymics also survived into the 1800s.

Another complication to be aware of are so-called *Hofname* (translated as either "farm names" or "house names"). This happened most often when a farm owner's daughter inherited the land and her husband took on the farm name as his own. Children born prior to the inheritance were baptized under the father's original surname, then changed their names later; those born after the inheritance used the farm name from birth. The *Hofname*

surnames were most common in the border area between the German states of Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) and Nordrhein-Westfalen (North Rhine-Westphalia) though they've been found in other place, too.

Evolution of a Surname

Many German surnames had *Umlauts* that affected the pronunciation of vowels in ways that confused English-speaking record keepers. The spellings found in documents from the mid-1700s through the nineteenth century are filled with attempts at reconciling German phonetics with English spelling rules, which results in several "standardized" spellings for descendants today.

A Swiss-German name that was usually spelled in Europe as Schürch and was pronounced roughly as "Shoo-air-k" evolved in the following way:

<u>Original</u>	<u>Early American</u>	<u>Modern Day</u>
Schürch	Scherrick	Shirk
Schüerch	Sherrick	Sherk
	Tsherrk	Sherick
	Shurrick	