

# Northeast Kansas Chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia.



June / July 2007

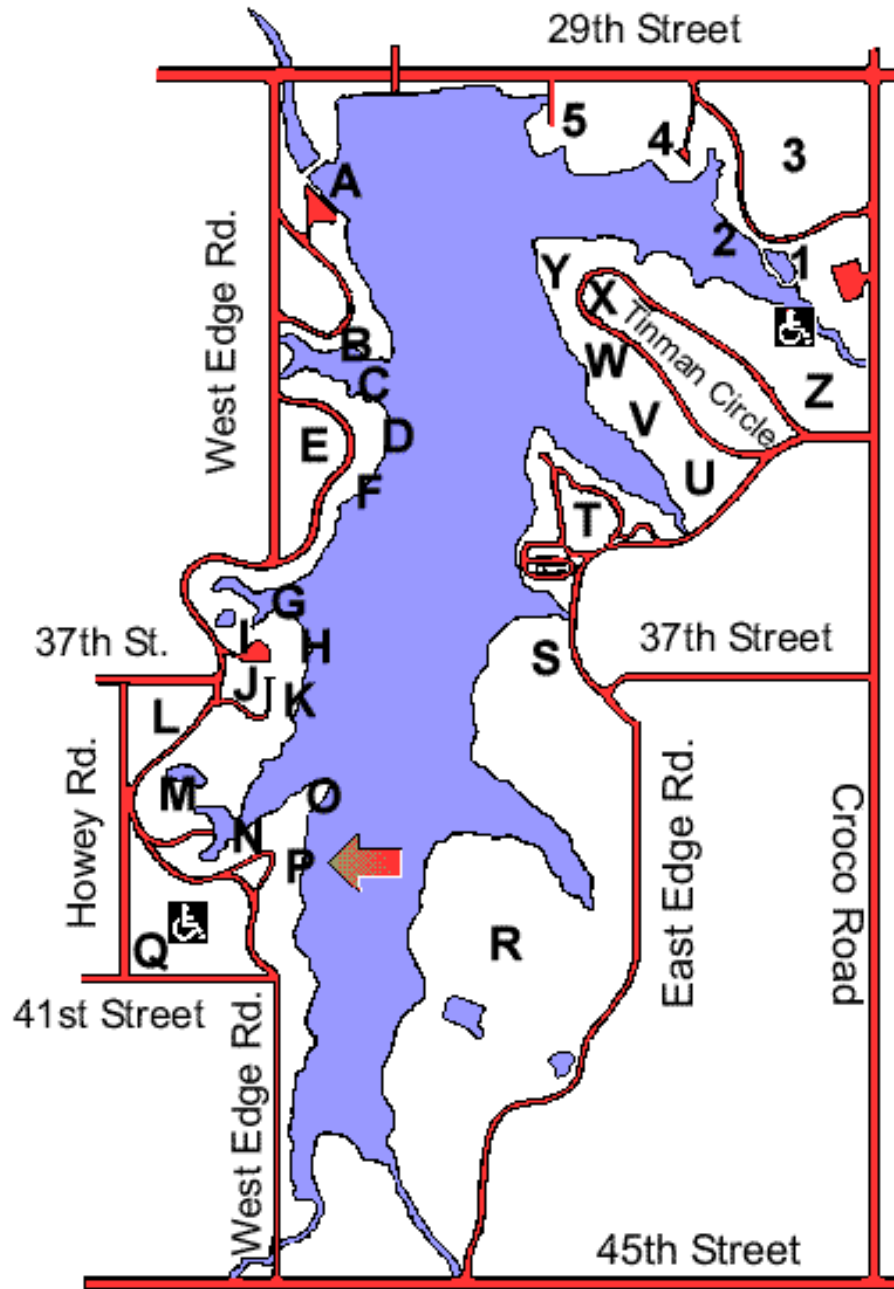


## Annual Chapter Picnic Sunday, Aug. 12

The annual picnic will be at Lake Shawnee Shelter House #3 (represented by the letter P on the map at right).

Members and guests are asked to bring one meat dish, one other dish and their table service. The chapter will furnish the refreshments.

The shelter will be available beginning at 5:30 p.m. Shelter House #3 is air-conditioned, has a rest room, kitchen and a large attached deck.



*The AHSGR Mission Statement "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 Russian Empire and their descendants."*



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## Personal Notes

**Congratulations** Gene and Mildred Collard who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on June 17.

Evelyn Huggins and Francis Stadler have been experiencing some health problems and difficulties in the recent past and we express our well wishes for a speedy recovery for them. Please remember them in your prayers.



## Membership

If you know someone with a Germans from Russia ancestry, encourage them to join AHSGR and our local chapter. Invite them as your guest to our next meeting.



## Library Notes

Library resources including books, videos, newsletters, audio cassettes, etc. are available for review during the meetings or may be checked out for more in-depth review. See Ike Appelhanz for more details. Donations to our library are always welcome.



## Mark Your Calendars!

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Aug. 12                     | Chapter Picnic, Lake Shawnee Shelter House #3, 5:30 p.m.   |
| Oct. 14                     | Regular Meeting, 2 p.m.                                    |
| July 28 -<br>Aug 3,<br>2008 | AHSGR Joint National Convention with GRHS, Casper, Wyoming |

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## Family Search Indexing

*Submitted by Mark Wills*

I'm sure most folks who have done even a little bit of genealogy / family history know (or have heard) of the large collection of genealogy records held by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS).

The LDS Church has been very busy digitizing those records (over 2 million rolls of microfilm) and others. These records will eventually be made available for free online, but what good will digitized records be if you can't find any of the information on them? That's where you come in. FamilySearch Indexing is a massive project designed to create indexes for all of these records, and you are invited to help. You can do this from the privacy of your home (sitting in your pajamas if you want), and it is really quite easy.

Simply visit <http://www.FamilySearchIndexing.org> to find out more information, or to volunteer. Various other organizations are also involved, including NEHGS, the Ohio Genealogical Society, the Indiana Genealogical Society, and the Black History Museum and Cultural Center.

The sooner these records are indexed, the sooner they will be available for all of us to use for free, so if you have a little spare time, or if you have friends or family who would like to help, visit the website above to volunteer.



## Mark Wills - New Member Spotlight

Mark Wills lives in Lenexa, KS with his wife and two boys. He became interested in genealogy at age 18 when one summer while visiting his grandfather in western Nebraska his grandfather had a heart attack. After being released from the hospital a number of visitors came to the house to visit with his grandfather and many of these people were unknown to him. It was then that he realized that as a child he had tunnel vision thinking the family line stopped at his grandparents - after all they were the oldest people he knew in the family. So as people came and went he began to learn that many of these people were siblings of his grandfather and that his grandfather had parents, aunts, uncles and even grandparents.

It was later that summer after returning home that he began to ask questions of his parents and began to record all of the information he could. To date he has a large collection of heirlooms, documents and stories to compliment his research. Both of his parents are Germans from Russia and settled in Kansas & Nebraska when arriving to this country. Mark is researching the Bisterfeldt family from Nieder-Monjou.

## Convention Notes

*Submitted by Frank Jacobs*

The Convention in Hays was a success. Gary Ubert and I did a presentation on Y DNA in searching family history prior to having access to governmental, church or family records. The presentation went off well and the feedback was enthusiastic and positive. We used the Nicholas Jacob and the Kamenka Reeb families as case studies, as they were readily available and demonstrated various principles as well as pitfalls. Things are not always as we believe they are, and the research frequently includes the surprise skeleton in the closet that the greatgrandparents never pass on.

I am a believer in Murphy's Law, that if something can go wrong it will, particularly in electronic digital technology. Well it did, but our heroine stepped forward to save the day and got the PowerPoint projector to work, even though the resident techie and this former radio repairman didn't have a clue what to do when our detailed visual presentation, appeared as a blank screen. Thank you again Denise for saving the day and getting the train back on the track.

We had numerous inquiries afterward about how a family could proceed in this research including Weigels, Glassmans, Stremels and ongoing research by Appelhanz, Zitterkoph, Klaus, Ubert, Reeb and others.

The caution in this research is that you may not get immediate results, for you are sowing seeds for a particular body of family research which may not yet been undertaken by other parties which have your common recent history, who may well start some such research in the future, or perhaps common researchers from German research organizations who are only recently coming on line and sharing data.

For those who are interested and missed the presentation, it will be presented in Topeka at the LDS Family Study Center on Saturday, Sept 22, 2007. The actual hour has yet to be finalized. This will be one presentation of a 9 am to 4 pm program at the Topeka LDS Stake Center, "Discovering and Preserving the Past for the Future" and will include a broad range of displays from photo, quilts, family trees and various ethnic research strategies.

As far as the rest of the convention, I was particularly pleased to visit with Mrs. Kessler, who lives in the same town with my cousin and hostess from my Argentina trip. It was delightful to see her and Tom Haas, a high school classmate of mine who has been selling tires to the old German farmers in Ellis County, carrying on an animated conversation in the common dialect, talking about all the nuts and bolts of daily life.

Another interesting tidbit was talking to Martha Issinghoff about sharing her family Russian visitation videos in our February Chapter meeting. These tapes do have English translations. Thank you Martha.

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## DNA, Fairy Dust and Breast Cancer

Submitted by Frank Jacobs

I had to smile when I recently heard of the new personal DNA tester one can purchase, tongue in cheek, for about \$14,000. I think that must rate right up there with the purchase of beta recorders. Buy a brand new piece of technology without a clear idea of its application or its limitations, as the field passes it by onto a later generation of technology. I think we have some shares in the Brooklyn Bridge we can also sell.

DNA genealogy has been in the news lately, particularly with regard to limitations, foibles and the perennial attempt to boost one's ego by establishing connection to an ancient famous or infamous historical character. The real application is more in extending the boundaries of known personal history just beyond known history or medical applications, rather than the very ancient connection to an ancient character in the distant past.

Richard Conniff writes an interesting article in the July 2007 *Smithsonian*, *The Family Tree Pruned*. Interesting points, "The temptation is to pay attention only to the good news, and look on the family lineage as a golden thread leading from some glorious ancestor straight down to the lucky modern-day descendants. But no family lineage is a single thread. It is more like a broad fan of a thousand, or more a million, threads coming together from all over the world to weave the fragile patch of material representing the generations of family immediately around us. And here's the curious thing about this ancestral fan: it doesn't follow the simple mathematical rule of doubling with each generation back in time. If it did, we would have between 4 billion and 17 billion ancestors at the time of Charlemagne, in A.D. 800, when there were only a few hundred million people alive on earth. Instead, because of intermarriage, the same ancestors start turning up in any lineage over and over."

Social scientists conservatively estimate that "misassigned" paternity occurs in about 10% of all human births. Seems a bit high to me, but go with the argument. Conniff continues, "Virtually all families practiced some degree of inbreeding, often without realizing it. It was the natural byproduct of marrying people who lived within walking distance." The elites did so by design, to consolidate and maintain power and wealth.

Conniff concludes, "when they (scientists) calculated the overlapping ancestry in both the paternal and maternal lines, they concluded that everyone on earth today shares a common ancestor who lived just 2,000 to 3,500 years ago".

OK, interesting points about ancient deep ancestry. Yet haplogroup migration does point to ancient migration patterns that appear more remote than the 3,500 figure. But for my purposes, recognizing that my humble "family crest" might include a farmer's or servant/ groom's tools or a chamber pot, I do recognize that the intermediate DNA search may define connectedness, just beyond the horizon of known history, the intermediate history, rather than a search for the the elusive ancient illustrious ancestor.

And the medical applications are astounding. Last week (June 2007) the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published an article pointing to DNA mutations which suggest that half of women's genetic breast cancers are inherited from their father, rather than the mother. Failure to recognize this has caused the insurance industry to withhold the \$3,000 genetic testing which would identify these at risk persons. The study linked breast and ovarian cancer in their study controls.

This became very personal to me, and moved far beyond genealogy for ego alone. On my paternal line, I have an aunt and her daughter who both died of ovarian cancer, another first cousin suffering from ovarian cancer, and a sister who died of breast cancer. Further back in this paternal tree I note a female second cousin, once removed, who died of cancer (possibly stomach?) and her daughter who was recently diagnosed with ovarian cancer. This genetic testing will be pursued with my granddaughter as well as my various nieces and female paternal cousins .

**Contributions to the newsletter**  
are appreciated!

Send write-ups on German-Russian customs, anecdotes, photographs, interesting web sites, upcoming events, questions for members, etc.

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## Texas Seaport Museum

*Submitted by Mark Wills*

This year unlike many years past my family took a vacation to Texas as the kids wanted to go to Sea World and the Alamo. It was during the planning of this trip that my children also showed a huge interest in wanting to see and swim in the ocean. Being a genealogist I thought this would be great, not only could I get the kids to the ocean, but I could also get the chance to tour the Texas Seaport in Galveston where many of my ancestors landed.

So at the end of May we took off and headed south stopping in San Antonio for several days to see Shamu at Sea World and the Alamo. I must say it is very humbling to stand on ground that was once riddled with hundreds if not thousands of dead men fighting for what they believed. Although most of the Alamo is gone the church and a small portion of the barracks still remain.

After several days in San Antonio it was time to get on the road and head south towards the water at Galveston. When my kids saw the ocean for the first time it lured them in as if it was calling their names. They could not wait to change into their swimming trunks and not only walk on the sandy beach but to be nudged by the waves as they came into the shore.

The next day we headed for the Texas Seaport Museum located on the bay in Galveston where we saw not only many historic downtown buildings but a large number of shops and restaurants. We must have drove around the block three times trying to figure out where Pier 21 was until it was finally spotted on a small sign between a restaurant and a gift shop. So we found a parking spot and headed towards the sign. Once inside we learned that we could not only take a tour of the museum and look at the immigration database for a small fee but also for not much more we could tour one of the oldest active sailing ships (Elissa) built in 1877 and take a boat ride out in the bay.

We began our tour of the museum and after a short period of time we had completed the first floor of the museum which had a small number of pictures and a few items from the immigration era of 1844 to 1954. I did however learn that by 1899 Galveston was the world's foremost cotton port and the fifth most important port in the United States. Next we headed upstairs where I was sure to see something much more interesting including the immigration database which should have much more detailed information than one has seen before in publications or on the internet. As it turns out, the upstairs was even smaller and displayed only a handful of immigration pictures while a large percentage of the gallery was devoted to information and displays about harvesting shrimp. At the back of the room sat two computers that allowed you to look up your ancestors. So I sat down and pulled up two of the records I knew existed for my ancestors only to find out that the information did not only look the same but had the same database that can be found on the internet for FREE. Needless to say I was extremely disappointed and left the museum feeling cheated as the database had nothing more to offer and neither did the museum.

Once back outside I looked for any kind of sign of a dock that may have existed during the time my ancestors were there. After searching the landscape and coming up with nothing I concluded that time marches on and that any sort of structure that existed there 100 years ago is gone. Across the street I did see a number of old buildings to which I wondered if my ancestors saw as they got off the ship.

Below is a link to the online database for the Port of Galveston.

<http://tsm.pearland.com/login.htm>  
ID = texas