



# Die Huckere

VOL. 3 NO. 2

AUGUST 1998

## DEAR FRIENDS:

First, I must apologize for being so late with this issue of Die Huckere that should have been out in June. I hope never to be this late again.

The next issue of the AHSGR JOURNAL will tell of the interesting sessions held at the Wichita convention. Very heart warming was the memorial service to John Denver (Henry John Deutschendorf, Jr.) and attended by his mother and other relatives. He was a German/Russian. The slide picture we saw of his Deutschendorf grandparents was as familiar to us as looking at our own grandparents early pictures. (see page 2)

Don't forget Wyoming will need our help next year. So, if you can spare one afternoon, a few hours, a day, please volunteer some of your time for this convention.

The morning session with the Village Coordinators was interesting but mostly pertained to computer use.

I'm pleased to tell you that the AHSGR publications mentioned in the March issue of Die Huckere were all mailed to one individual couple who wanted all of them. I was happy to pack them up and send them to J.B. and Marlene (Sack) Coats. I know they will enjoy them.

Are there any of you who are re-searching the HIXT surname that would be willing to share with me the cost of ordering this genealogy chart from Dr. Pleve? Please let me know.

## THIS ISSUE OF DIE HUCKERE

Starting on page 3 is a description of Huck which I obtained from the International office of AHSGR several years ago.

Pages 5,6, and 7 is a sad letter written to Conrad Frick in Montrose, Colorado from his brother Jacob Frick in Russia and the grandfather of Adam Kindsvater, who now lives in Germany. The letter was written in the year 1932.

Some of you were at the convention in Lincoln at Village Night when I presented the pictures and story of Sue Kottswitz and her 1993 trip to Russia and the village of Huck. Pages 9 thru 12 are the story and pictures. Sue now lives in Gretna, VA and is the editor of Jeruslan Nachrichten, a quarterly newsletter for descendants of the Wiesenseite daughter colonies along the southern Jeruslan River and comprised the Gradenthau Evangelical Lutheran Church Parish: Wiesenmuller, Friedenberg, Blumenfeldt, Morgentau, Kana, Strassburg, Frankreich, Weimar & Neugalka.

## SEND INFORMATION TO:

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# A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO JOHN DENVER

FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 1998  
11:00 AM - NOON

29<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF AHSGR  
THE BROADVIEW HOTEL  
WICHITA, KANSAS

\* \* \* \*

*"Henry John Deutschendorf, Jr. - The World Knew Him as John Denver"*  
Dr. Timothy J. Kloberdanz, Fargo, North Dakota

*Musical Selections (Piano and Vocal)*  
Jerry Deutschendorf, Tuttle, Oklahoma

*"Memories of John Denver"*  
Abe Deutschendorf, Lawton, Oklahoma

*Musical Selections (Vocal)*  
Dave Deutschendorf, Arva Deutschendorf, and  
Roger White, Newton, Kansas

*"Amazing Grace"* (Hymn by John Newton) [All are invited to join in]

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear,  
The hour I first believed!
3. Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.
4. When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
'Tis no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

\* \* \* \*

*Note: We in AHSGR are immensely grateful to the Deutschendorf family members of Kansas and Oklahoma for their cooperation and participation. Henry John Deutschendorf, Jr. (John Denver) was a talented singer, songwriter, actor, and international performer. But he also was a son of the Great American Plains and a proud descendant of the Germans from Russia. We mourn his loss and we extend our heartfelt sympathy to all his relatives and friends.*

**SPLAVNUKHA**, a creek in the north part of the Kamyshin uyezd; it begins at 51 degrees north latitude, with three sources, about 4 versts to the north-west from the village of Topovka (Bogorodskoye). It flows first to the north-east, then at 15 degrees east longitude from Pulkovo, it turns to the east and falls into the Karaman River, on the left side, opposite the village of Bobrovka. In addition to small rivulets, from the right it is joined by Yelkhovka Creek, on which is located the German colony of Splavnuks (Huck). The entire length of its flow is 27 versts. (Military-topographical map of the General Headquarters, published 1892. See the map at the word "Sosnovka Volost.")

**SPLAVNUKHA**, *Huck* also, a German colony of the Kamyshin uyezd, Norka volost, ten versts to the south east of the colony of Norka. It is located on Yelkhovka Creek, near the Splavnuks River, from which it takes its name. It lies at 51 degrees 4 minutes north latitude, 15 minutes 3 degrees east longitude from Pulkovo. According to Klaus, it was founded between 1764 and 1766. According to information of the volost directorate, it was founded in 1764 by German Reform persons from various parts of Germany, in response to the invitation of Empress Catherine II. According to the register of foreign colonists of 1859 (Klaus, "Our Colonies,") the colony of Splavnuks belonged to the Norka okrug and had, according to the 5th revision, 1788 - 78 families, 282 males and 288 females; by the 6th revision of 1798, 87 families, 325 males and 318 females; by the 7th revision of 1816, 126 families, 592 males and 617 females; by the 8th revision of 1850, 228 families, 1752 males and 1739 females; by the 10th revision of 1857, 372 families, 2110 males and 2131 females. Land is occupied by separate households from other members of the community, for exchange or for cash, paying up to 5 rubles per soul. Privately owned land is rented on the metayage system. In their gardens, they plant, for the most part, cabbage and potatoes, then cucumbers, primarily for home use. The fields are in the three-field system [crop rotation]. They plow with iron plows. Various production facilities were, as of 1887, 470, and 107 males worked "on the side." The most developed trades were: cabinet makers -119, weavers 72 persons. Additionally, there were 35 smiths, 9 tanners, 34 wheelwrights, 1 paint maker, 31 millers, 1 oil press operator, 47 carpenters, 12 tailors, 55 shoemakers. The remainder were farm laborers, day laborers, shepherds, etc. Of the merchant and industrial establishments, in 1887, there were two shops selling manufactured goods, 1 variety store, 3 wine shops, 1 paint establishment, 1 sarpinka factory, 19 wind powered flour mills, 3 oil mills, 6 wheelwright's shops, 18 smithies, 1 tailor shop, 30 cabinet makers shops, and 6 tanneries (text of the provincial zemstvo, 1891, vol. XI).

In the List of Populated Places of the central statistical committee, published in 1862, the German colony of **Splavnuks/Huck**, is indicated along Yelkhovka Creek, 100 versts from the uyezd city of Kamyshin, and had in 1860 322 *dvory* [yards], 2184 males and 2144 females, totaling 4328 souls of both sexes, a Reform church, a school, 3 oil presses, 22 mills. According to the zemstvo census of 1886, in the colony of Splavnuks were 535 households, 2565 males, 2626 females, totaling 5191 souls of both sexes, German Reform villager-landowners. In addition, 172 families were permanently absent and 5 families totaling 25 souls of both sexes were "extraneous" [residing in the community without official permission.] There were 1457 literate males and 1519 literate females. In the 1880s many families moved from here to America. There were 440 residence buildings, of which 153 were of stone, 286 of wood, one of natural materials [sod?]. 129 were roofed with boards, 309 with straw, and 2 with earth. There were 78 industrial establishments, 3 taxed liquor shops, 4 shops. The villagers had 486 plows, 1863 working and non-working horses, 596 oxen, 1668 cows and calves, 5904 sheep, 987 pigs, 854 goats. In 1885, the annual taxes and collections from the community totaled 17,452

rubles, and an additional quit-rent of 760 rubles. Land allocation was 13, 165 desyatinas of arable land (including 8906 desyatinas of plowed land) and 4163 of non-arable land, totaling 17328 desyatinas of land. According to the notations, the colonists received 8906 desyatinas of tillable land, 226 desyatinas for homesteads, 316 desyatinas of hay lands, pastures of 2962 desyatinas, 528 desyatinas of forest, 214 desyatinas of scrub brush, 4163 desyatinas of non-arable land. For the most part, the soil is black earth. At the beginning, the land was allocated according to revision souls. Such an arrangement was in effect until 1874, but because the land allocation of several families fell into disuse during the course of time, and since other members of the community reached working age and did not have an allocation, they decided to divide the land according to individual persons without awaiting another revision. According to the agreement, those persons not engaged in farming could give up their land and property to other persons within the determined period of time. The allocation by individual persons was completed in 1875, for a period of 9 years, until 1883. That year, the land was re-allocated a second time, according to the number of individual males, for a period of six years. Before that, the land allocation was for three years, per three persons.

According to information from the provincial statistical committee for 1891, there were in *Splavmukha* 400 *dvory* [households] of 3688 males and 3696 females, totaling 7384 persons of both sexes, all inhabitants. According to information from the Norka volost directorate in 1894, the colony of *Splavmukha, Huck* also, was located along Splavmukha River and had: a wooden church roofed with planks and consecrated in the 1840s, a German church school founded when the village was founded, a zemstvo trade school opened in 1865.

In 1894, there were here: 387 *dvory* [households], 4 brick buildings, 150 of native stone, and 299 of wood. Four buildings were roofed with metal, 106 with planks, and 339 with thatch. In 1894, there were 3677 male inhabitants and 3632 females, totaling 7309 persons of both sexes, villager-landowners, German-Reform, comprising one *Splavmukha* community. The inhabitants are involved in farming; additionally there are: 7 tailors, 20 shoemakers, 32 carpenters, 6 stonemasons, 78 cabinetmakers, 27 wheelwrights, 1 cooper, 18 smiths, 1 bookbinder, and 184 weavers of sarpinka cloth. The land allocation consisted of 226 desyatinas taken by farmsteads, 8906 desyatinas of cultivated land, 214 desyatinas of scrub brush, 528 desyatinas of forest, 316 desyatinas of meadows, 2962 desyatinas of pasture, and 4163 desyatinas non-arable land, totaling 17,318  $\frac{2}{5}$  desyatinas of arable and non-arable land. It is 10 versts to the volost village of Norka, 5 versts to the Russian village of Topovka, and 10 versts to the Russian town of Topovka, 5 versts to the colony of Gololobovka, 7 versts to the Russian village of Bobrovka, 76 versts to Saratov, and 110 versts to the uyezd city of Kamyshin.

LETTER WRITTEN TO CONRAD FRICK IN MONTROSE, COLORADO, FROM HIS BROTHER JACOB FRICK IN THE U.S.S.R.

(Transliterated by Adam Kindsvater from longhand Gothic script into Latin script. Translated from German to English by R.G. Reider, April 1992, with annotations added in brackets, [])

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Today, the 17th of January [1932], Sunday.

Today, I must write a letter to my dear brother Conrad.

Dear brother, I live no more in Huck, but in Middle Asia, about 600 kilometers from Tashkent. I will tell you why.

I am here with my wife and the three youngest children, two girls and a boy. Because we have no money, no earnings, and no longer any property, there is not much to live for. But we are determined to make the best of it. We can do it if we try.

My second son Jacob came here earlier and has made a place for us. Here we must start all over again because we no longer have a home. We were deported on the 7th of December 1930 and arrived here on the 26th of December. We stayed with brother Johannes' wife for a whole week in Saratov. She did not come with us. We traveled on without her. I can tell you that I am lost without my home.

In the autumn of 1928 a letter was received from you where you said that you had sent \$5.00 to Johannes Michel that should be given to brother Georg. I was there when Michel received the money. He gave it to Georg, along with some produce. In the meantime, I have not lived in Huck.

We were driven out of Huck on October 1, 1929. We were sent to a barren land. This place, Erdhitten or Semljanka, was in a broad valley in our region. Here we had to find shelter just as our forefathers did when they left Germany to settle on the Volga [Jacob Frick had to dig a hole in the ground and cover it with wood and earth for shelter]. We were one of 15 families. Only seven stayed while the others fled. I can tell you who the remaining seven were.

1) The Ekkert-Kremer's two sons. Their parents died a long time ago. They did not stay long in Semljanka but soon went to other places to find work.

2) The second was Johannes Wilhelm. I can tell you something about the others. There was old fat Conrad (you remember him) and his oldest son Hanjech and his son Johannes. The son Johannes soon left and went somewhere else. The eldest Wilhelm lived here until Christmas [1929] and then went back to Huck to his youngest son's place. This youngest son had been permitted to remain in Huck.

3) Also here were brothers Georg and Philipp Niederhaus and their wives. They both were Feuerphilipp [a nickname] in their younger days. Their grandfather was an old Ostwalde-Hanesche [a nickname].

4) Then there was me, my wife, and three children.

5) Also there was the son of Peter Schwabauer, but he did not stay and went elsewhere to find work.

6) Here also was Philipp Leichner, the son of old Konrad Leichner.

7) Then, there was your brother-in-law Loren [Lorenz, who married Anna Maria, a sister of Eva Elizabeth Niederhaus Frick]. He did not have a house. He was arrested but came back on October 18. I offered him a place to stay. His wife died there in February [1930].

In early March 1930, 70 families from Huck were gathered together in a great troop to begin their departure to unknown places, at which time they were driven out of Huck as kulaks. Your brother-in-law Lorenz did not go because he owed money to banks in Balzer and Frank. So he was detained the whole summer in Huck and then in Perewosinka. As I understand it, he then was taken to the area of Tula [south of Moscow] to work on the railroad.

I also was not involved in this deportation because I no longer owned a house. Later, in April 1930, 12 additional families were gathered together and deported, including my son Johannes. My wife, three children, and I would have been included at this time, but we were held back because I became sick. We stayed with my oldest daughter Eva Katarina [Kindsvater] who was allowed to stay in Huck. We stayed with her family.

Now [in 1932], everything has been taken from us, our business siezed, and we have been forced to move. We have been taken here [to Kasachistan] along with many other Germans in an area having a circumference of 350 kilometers. We have work and enough to eat.

Now I must tell you that our sister Cristine [Weber, born Geier from the first marriage of Oswald Frick's second wife] died in the autumn of 1929. She was sick for only three weeks. She was buried on November 19th. I attended the funeral alone.

I will now tell you where everyone is. Brother Georg [Johann-Georg] was sent to Siberia. Brother Philipp is somewhere in Russia. Johannes is here where I am. He had four children, all well educated and good children.

Sister Lilis [Leolora-Elizabeth, or Lolis] and Georg-

Heinrich [Koch] are no longer together and Johannes was taken to Moscow. Lilis lived with her oldest son and then the youngest son. The oldest son went looking for work. When I was in Saratov, I learned that his son Philipp needed help because he had no money and was sick.

So, I will close my letter. I can tell you that one cannot be happy in this new home because of all that we have been forced to undergo. I myself have become sick and hope again for better times.

The greatest of love from all of us. Also Johannes sends his love. I have also given your address to Johannes so that I can write you again. Also a kiss from Peter and Johannes with their families.

In the old days one wished for peace. In the life such as we now find ourselves, without a home, one desires only to leave this world. I know many old people who long for their homeland as their final resting place. That reminds me of a saying which we learned as youngsters, Prediger, Kap. 12-1 [Lesson, Chapter 12-1], "Think of your creator while you are young, before the days and years pass by. Then you can say, whatever happens to me does not matter."

Here is my address [in Russian], the same as my son Jacob.

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Annotations added by Adam Kindsvater, April 1992:

This letter was written by my grandfather (Ellervoter as they would say of the elders in Huck) on the 17th of January. The year is not given. I think it was in 1932, the same year that he died. The letter is very hard to read and one must guess a lot. There are many persons mentioned whom I do not know. But this letter, which you have sent to me and which I now return to you, is a great joy to me.

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Additional note by R.G. Reider:

A check of a "Perpetual Calendar" reveals that January 17, 1932 was indeed a Sunday. Therefore, the letter was written in that year.

## HUCK 1993

In July 1993 I traveled to Russia and visited the former German villages: Beideck, Huck, Norka, Grimm, Brunntal, Marianburg, Wiesenmuller, Gnadenthau, Katharinstadt, and Engels.

As we left Saratov and headed west I was struck by how much the countryside reminded me of western Nebraska and Kansas. Rolling prairie with trees dotted along infrequent creeks. No fences; village animal herds are tended by shepherds. Paved highway gave way to dirt roads.

Upon our arrival in Huck we were told there was only one German family living there now. Maria (family name KOCH) was born in Huck in 1925. She lived in a former German home on the edge of Huck with her daughter, son in law, and their children. When our van pulled up, her daughter was in the side yard hanging laundry to dry. Maria was inside packing. Several huge bundles - sheets tied up - of their possessions were already prepared. It was a scene straight out of history books - of the "peasants" with their bundles and trunks entering Ellis Island. Maria and her family were preparing to leave for Germany and were due to depart in two days. In spite of all that she needed to do, Maria graciously became our guide.

Maria told us that she is related to the Kindsvater family. (Just how was never made clear.) August 29, 1941 they heard of the evacuation (exhile). On September 18, 1941 all in the village Huck were moved. They were loaded in cargo (cattle) train cars and set off for Siberia. When they arrived they found nothing and had to start from scratch. The Huck men worked in the forest and the coal mines. Almost all died of hunger and cold. There were many mass graves. From 1942 - 46 Maria was at a work camp in the Urals. She worked in the forest and the cement factory 12 hours per day. There was little to eat and it was very cold. From 1946 through 1956 they were still held in Siberia. In 1956 some were allowed to move back to the Volga. In 1958 Maria married her current husband (Russian) and in 1980 they came to Huck.

We found the home of the aunt (Lydia STRAUSS) of one of our tour members. Lydia STRAUSS was a teacher. This house is at least 90 years old. A Russian family living in it now let us tour the house. A very typical German house, but definitely Russian standards of cleanliness in 1993 and very delapidated condition. Most of the homes still standing in Huck were of German origin, however Maria estimated that fully half of the original village was gone.

In 1913 the first election was held in the old church. In 1933 the Government closed the church. It later became many things including a dance hall (which brought bitter tears to Maria's eyes as she related this to us). It burned in 1980. The Kino Theater now stands just behind the site of the church- built 8 years ago. Some of the old churchyard fence still stands, but the site of the church is nothing more than a parking lot.

The old German prayer house/school still stands and is used by the Government. Next door is the old schoolmaster's house. We saw the "old school" where the teachers once lived. It was built in 1910 and later enlarged to use as classrooms. Now it is the office of the Sovhkolz.

As you know, Stalin had the granite and marble cemetery monuments of the German villages removed to Moscow to build the Metro (subway). The Russians are burying their dead on top of our unmarked graves. Huck was the worst of all we saw.



The yard of the cemetery is rolling waves... where our ancestors rest . When Russian spades hit the bones of our people they simply keep right on digging and fling the bones to the four winds. The cemetery at Huck is littered with our bones. This was very hard to accept, especially because I have family buried there.

This summarizes what it left of Huck. We saw very few people and little activity. Most of the men were out in the fields. With Maria's departure to Germany, there are no longer Germans living in Huck to my knowledge. Russian families live in the German houses, many of which are falling down around their ears from lack of upkeep. I was filled with incredible joy at walking the streets of my Great Grandfather's birthplace. Yet the joy had to struggle to overcome the feelings of despair and sadness I felt as I witnessed the tragic hand that fate had dealt our Huck.

Sue Kottwitz



THE 1897 HUCK SCHOOL

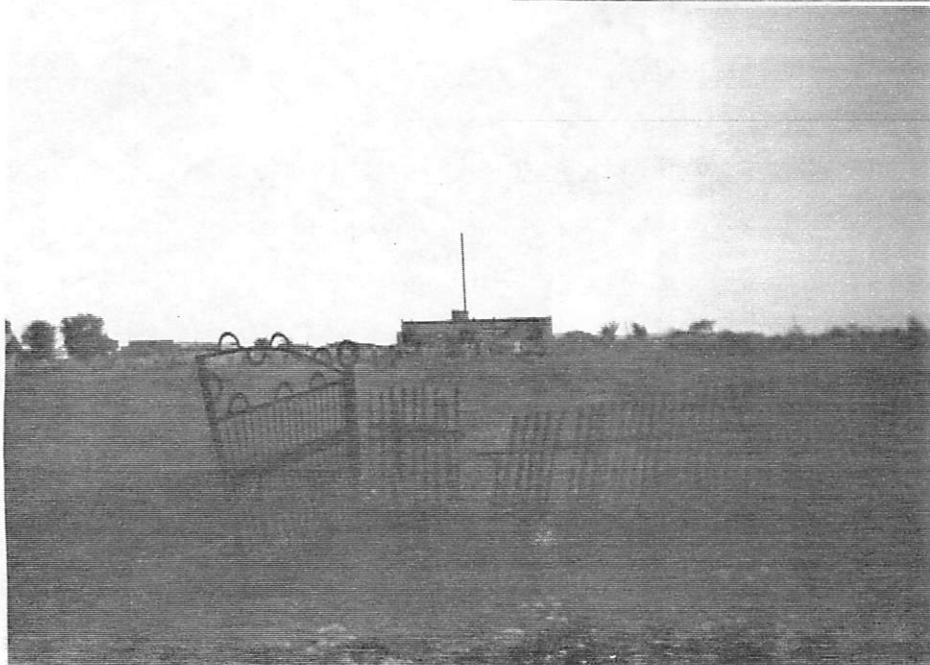
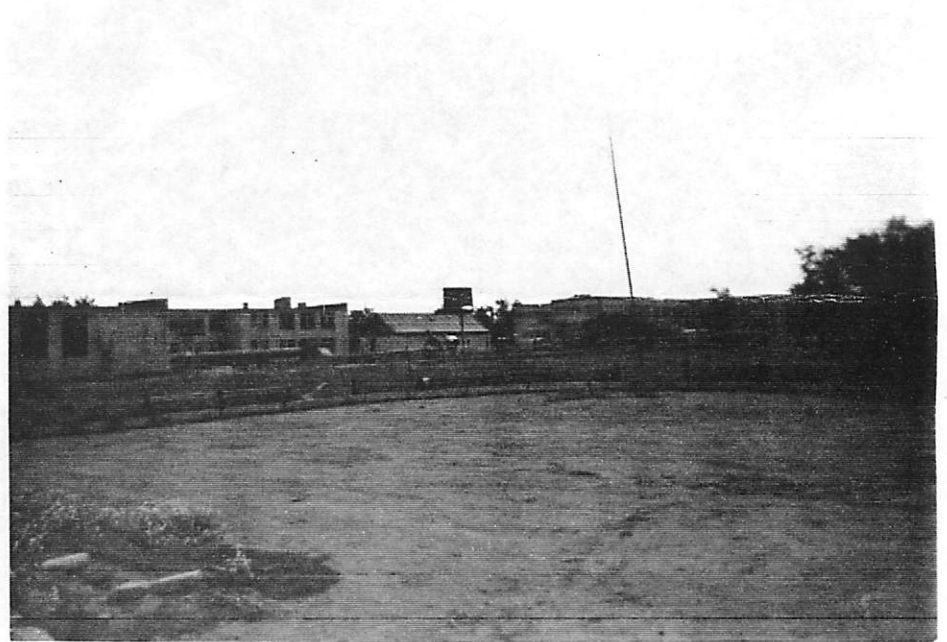
WHERE THE TEACHERS LIVED  
BUILT IN 1910  
MARIA KOCK IS IN THE  
LOWER RIGHT HAND CORNER





THE KINO THEATER AND  
WHERE THE CHUCH ONCE  
STOOD

ANOTHER SITE OF WHERE  
THE CHURCH ONCE STOOD



THE HUCK CEMETARY  
GERMAN MOUNDS IN FORE-  
GROUND, RUSSIAN GRAVES  
IN BACKGROUND



A PRE-REVOLUTIONARY  
HOUSE AND WHERE ONE OF  
OUR MEMBERS, IRMA ICHHHORN'S  
AUNT, LYDIA STRAUCH, A FORMER  
TEACHER LIVED

ENTRANCE TO HUCK WITH  
SIGN SPLAVNUKHA  
THIS PICTURE IS FROM  
IRMA ICHHORN

