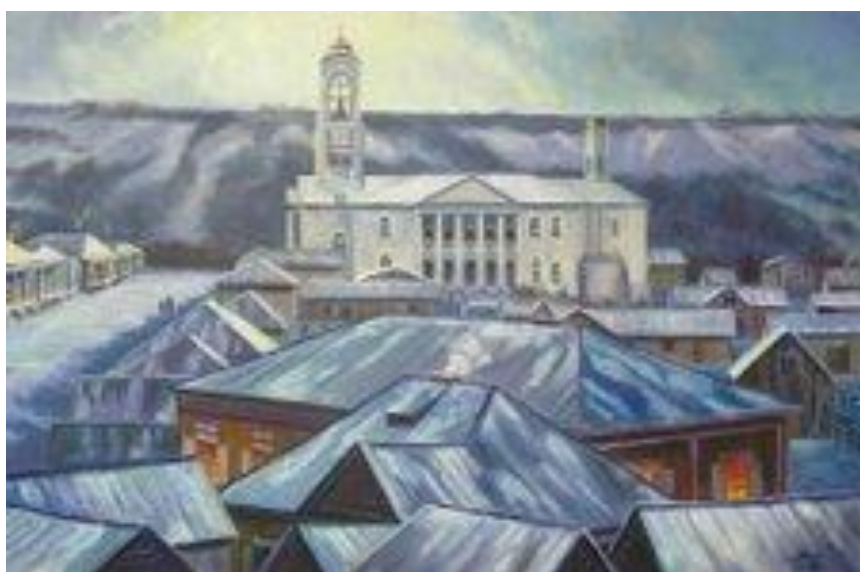


# MARIENTAL CHASSELOIS LOUIS DAYS OF YORE

**SEPT. 2010**

**ISSUE TWENTY-EIGHT**



**Mariental, Russia by Michael Boss**

**Oil on Linen – 20" x 30"**

**From the Collection of Signature Associates**

**TOPIC'S:**

Editor's Comments

Feature Stories:

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**GR PROVERB:**

Every road has a mud puddle

**Editor's Comments:** I have had a very upsetting month of August as my daughter, Theresa and I had our reservations made for the Convention, when I received a call from our Manager of the RV resort where we live in Arizona. Our Park Model had been broken into, robbed and trashed. We happened to be in Abilene, Kansas at the time, and after a night of tossing and turning, my husband and I decided to load up and leave for our Arizona home. You can see the photos on our son, Edward Mills Facebook page. So sadly, we had to cancel out our plans for the convention. We lost everything of value! They had broken in to 31 Park Models in our RV Resort. Wow, huh?

Below are a few of the "Letters to the Editor" – I love hearing from you all out there.

I must say I am amazed by my success the first couple months of this year in finding Family Clues. My All At Once Research approach is beginning to pay dividends. Of course most of the names I am finding are from the three Villages you follow. It appears no matter what Film I am looking at now I find information that I was not searching for in particular.

I really feel sorry for Individuals who are trying to find a single name because it most likely won't be where they think it is or they would not recognize it if they saw it. I just found the first evidence of the Zwinger family and even I was surprised how it appeared in the records.  
Good luck to all the Searchers – *Darrell Brungardt*

Dear Thelma,

Thank you for the June AHSGR Newsletter. As I read the Family History by Cornelia Schneider Eckett, my heart was touched deeply by the experiences she related. I commend her for the good work she has done and hope that she will succeed in finding ancestral information on her mother's side, the Schuler family.

The Song Book mentioned and pictures shown of the Song Book struck a note in my memory. When I ministered in Chelyabinsk, Russia, a city in Siberia, the Catholic worshipping Community used a Song Book containing the hymns all written in cursive handwriting in a regular lined notebook. All hymns were written in the German language. The song leader had the one available Song Book. Everyone knew the songs by heart. On our tour of the Volga Region, I had a chance to visit the Marienthal cemetery. Thanks for the pictures who brought back cherished memories. Thelma, I hope that you and your daughter will be able to attend the AHSGR Convention in August.

Sincerely yours,  
*Sister Mary Elise Leiker*

Hello Thelma.  
Vielen Dank für die Zeitschrift.  
*Adolf Exner*

**Thank You Thelma, I treasure my German Heritage. Love, Carol Rohr Malecki**

**Thelma, Thanks for an interesting and informative newsletter. Really enjoyed the article from the member born in Russia - Dennis**

## So We Will Know Them: Sue Simmons Kinderknecht



I am not a Volga German by birth, just by marriage!

I was born in Austin, Texas on December 6, 1955 to BF and Nora (Martinez) Simmons. I met my husband, Thomas Allen Kinderknecht, when he moved to Austin in 1978 to attend the University of Texas at Austin

We were married in Austin on July 21, 1979, and moved to Houston in 1980, where our two sons were born.

I got interested in genealogy in 2002. I wanted to leave a record for our sons. I started out in libraries, and talking to the family. We made

a trip to Hays, Kansas in 2002 because Tom's mother was born there, and his father was born in Ellis. I barely knew the questions I wanted to ask, but got some information from the Railroad Museum in Ellis, and from cemeteries all over the area. Now I am spoiled because of all the information that is on-line. I know a little more now, and my goal is to get back to Hays next year.

Tom's mother is Alice Befort, and her parents were Ignatius and Martha (Urban) Befort. Tom's father was Lavern Kinderknecht and his parents were Joseph and Caroline (Wasinger) Kinderknecht. Joseph's parents Peter and Emelia (Koerner) Kinderknecht. I have been able to connect with several of Tom's cousins, who have been generous with their time and their information.

I am attaching the census pages for Peter Kinderknecht for 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930. These are jpg files, which means they act like pictures. You should be able to see them OK, I think. If not, I can probably mail you something legible.

Peter arrived in 1899, and went to live with his brother, Anton in Catherine, Ellis County, Kansas. He is listed as "farm labor." By 1910, Peter was married to Emelia, and they had 3 children. They were living in Saline, Kansas, in Sheridan County. He is listed as a "farmer, general."

The only one of Peter's children not born in Kansas, as listed in the census records, was Mary, born in 1913 in Colorado. I don't know where in Colorado, but the family was moving around. In the 1920 census, they were living in Odin, North Dakota, in McHenry County. Again, he is listed as a "farmer, general."

In 1930, the family was in Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas, and Peter is listed as a laborer for the railroad. He is pictured with a group of other railroad workers in a picture we saw at the railroad museum in Ellis. He is listed as "Pete" Kinderknecht

My husband is Thomas Allen Kinderknecht, born May 26, 1956, in Amarillo, Texas. He is the second child of Lavern Joseph and Alice (Befort) Kinderknecht. His older sister is Brenda Jo (Kinderknecht) Matthews, born in Hawaii Territory (Lavern was in the Navy) November 4, 1953. Lavern and Alice were married in Hays, Kansas, May 12, 1952. They now live in Mesa, AZ.

Lavern Joseph was born December 31, 1928, in Ellis, Kansas. He is the second child of Joseph and Caroline (Wasinger) Kinderknecht. His sister, Doris, was oldest. Joseph and Caroline married April 13, 1926. I THINK they married in Ellis.

Joseph was born May 27, 1904, in Kansas. He was the oldest child of Peter and Emelia (Koerner) Kinderknecht. He died November 30, 1967, in Hays, Kansas. Caroline (Wasinger)

Kinderknecht died April 2, 1958. The story I heard from the family is that she had a heart attack while playing bridge. Joseph remarried, to a woman named Mary Romey. Mary's maiden name was Kinderknecht, and Lavern said she was "some sort of cousin" of his father's. There are a lot of Mary Kinderknecht's, but I believe that Mary Kinderknecht (Romey) Kinderknecht was his first cousin. I'm pretty sure her parents were Matthias and Catherina (Shuler) Kinderknecht, and they came over as a family in 1903 or 1907. The 1910 census says they came in 1907, but the 1920 census says 1903.

Tom and I (Amelia Sue Simmons) married July 21, 1979, in Austin, Texas. Our sons were born in Houston, Texas, Brian Scott on September 3, 1983, and Timothy James on October 14, 1985. Tim currently lives in Dallas. Brian married Karie Lynn Grams on July 22, 2006, in San Antonio, Texas. They have just moved to Fresno, CA. We moved to Fort Worth in 1991.

1900 Census – see Peter Kinderknecht in the middle of this page

[illegible]

1910 Census

[illegible]

1920 Census





## So We will know them –



**RAY ROHR**  
**48 Enderby Cres.**  
**St. Albert, AB**  
[rayrohr@telusplanet.net](mailto:rayrohr@telusplanet.net)

Ray Rohr is a member of the Edmonton, Alberta Chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia. His grandparents, Cecelia Herman and John Rohr, immigrated to Canada in 1908 from Mariental, Russia. They homesteaded in the St. Walburg, Saskatchewan district in 1910 where Ray was born and raised.

In 1958 Ray joined the Royal Canadian Air Force where he became a pilot and spent four years flying with an all weather fighter squadron. He spent his subsequent career in the aviation industry and today is the Director, Regulatory Affairs with the International Business Aviation Council.

Ray and his wife Jean have two children and seven grandchildren.

### **Visit to Mariental (Sovetskoye) Russia - April 2010**

By Ray Rohr

In April 2010 I had the opportunity to travel to Moscow to speak at a Russian Business Aviation Association conference and to conduct an aviation safety workshop. The assignment came up on rather short notice so planning was a bit hectic, but I was determined to capitalize on the opportunity and use it to visit the village of Mariental where my grandparents, John Rohr and Cecelia Herman, had lived prior to immigrating to Canada in 1908. They both were descendants of people included in the list of Mariental Founding Fathers.

John Rohr was a descendant of Matthias Rohr who arrived in Mariental in June 1766 from Busendorf, Lorraine, France and Cecelia Herman was a descendant of Nikolaus Herrmann who arrived in July 1766 from Luxembourg. They had left Mariental in 1908 to come to Canada with Cecelia's father John Herman and his family, plus a number of other families.

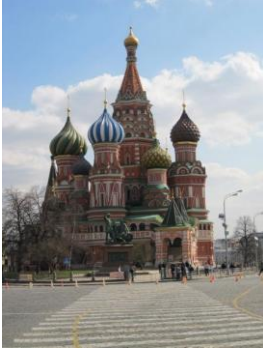
In 1910 they homesteaded in the St. Walburg, Saskatchewan district where they raised their family of Mary, Gabriel (my father) and John, and where I was born and raised. While growing up my grandmother told me stories of her home in Russia and the journey to Canada, but I did not develop an interest to go delve beyond these few anecdotes. It was only when my son did a school project on family history and the Herman Family had a reunion, that I became interested in learning more of my family history. Initially I had very limited success, but a few years ago I stumbled across the AHSGR web



Cecelia & John Rohr

site and a whole new world opened up to me.

While my wife and I were planning our visit to Russia we were fortunate enough to be able to meet with Tom Rohr of Chicago, who is a very distant cousin and had visited Mariental a few years ago. We were also able to get guidance from Yulia Tsymbal in the AHSGR office. Through them and their contacts, we were able to arrange for Lana Maximova to guide us in Moscow and Olga Panfilova to guide us in Saratov and Mariental. Ilmira Khamitova who has guided other groups in Saratov and Mariental, but was not available when we visited the area, also helped with our accommodation in Saratov and local transportation.



St. Basil's on Red Square

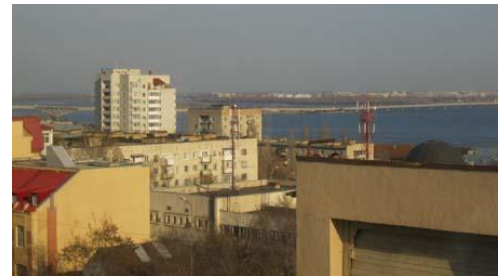


In Catherine's Palace, St. Petersburg

surprised by our Moscow – St. Petersburg flights with Rossiya Airlines. All of the staff members were very professional and the appearance of the relatively new aircraft was outstanding. We were as comfortable with the airline as with any other reputable western world airline. However, the

Moscow to Saratov flights were a different story. The YAK 42 of Saratov Airlines had seen better days and the entire experience reinforced the Russian airline stereotype that prevails in the West. However, once we arrived in Saratov our anticipated experience unfolded in the most pleasant manner. Ilmira Khamitova had arranged for her father, Kamil, to meet us at the Saratov airport and take us to the Pearl Hotel. We had an extremely large room overlooking the Volga River in a new, elegant hotel located close to Lipki Park and German Street.

My career has taken me to virtually all parts of the world and has given us the opportunity to live in places like Sri Lanka and Lebanon, but we had never spent time in Russia, so we were eagerly anticipating our visit. We were not disappointed. Moscow and St. Petersburg were spectacular. Being a career aviator and being fully aware of the reputation of Russian airlines, we had a bit of trepidation with our flights in Russia. We were very pleasantly



View from our hotel room



Volga German Archives in Engels

On our first day in Saratov Olga Panfilova took us to the Archives in Engels where Yulia Tsymbal had arranged with the archives to search for records of my grandparent's marriage and any other related information. Elisabetha Erina and her staff had searched the Mariental family records and while they had assembled considerable Rohr and Herman family information, they were unable to locate the marriage record that I was seeking. While we were there we were treated to a tour of the archives where we were able to view the very large collection of documents and related material from the Volga German villages.

Many of the documents are very fragile and hopefully the Archives will be able to obtain the sadly lacking equipment and resources that are needed to convert the material to electronic records.



The morning of the second day in Saratov we were off to Mariental with Kamil Khamitova as our driver and Olga Panfilova as our guide. The first part of our journey took us past an enclave of dachas outside of Saratov. As most city dwellers live in apartments, many of the dachas are summer cottages owned by families who use them as a summer get away and a place where they can have a garden and grow vegetables etc. However some are the



Dachas near Saratov

permanent homes of retired people. While most have electricity many are without running water and sewage systems. The first few miles of our journey were on a high quality highway - and then we turned onto the main highway to Kazakhstan. It was very different. This highway has a high volume of heavy truck traffic and it had been reduced to simply a mass of potholes. Much of the time we were traveling under 50 kilometres per hour and at times Kamil drove along the edge of the ditch in order to avoid the worst potholes. Along the way we saw vehicles with flat tires and some with broken axels. I was in constant fear that we would hit a pothole that would do damage to Kamil's car. If that would have happened I would have felt a great deal of responsibility for having asked him to take us on this journey. Fortunately, we made the trip without suffering any damage to the car. It appears that there currently is a disagreement between the local government and Moscow as to who is responsible for maintenance of the road.

As we drove to Mariental we were struck by the topography. The wide open grain fields with heavy black soil looked very similar to the very productive grain lands in North America. As it was early spring there was not a lot of agricultural activity underway, but the equipment that we did see in the fields was the large modern type.



Mariental village sign

After traveling about 40 km on this difficult road we turned onto the access road to Mariental, or Sovetskoye as it is called today. Following a short drive through an area of expansive grain fields we arrived at the edge of the town. Our first sights were



Grain storage facility from Soviet era

large set of abandoned cattle shelters and an abandoned grain storage facility which we believed to be remnants of a Soviet area collective farm.

As we entered the village we saw the police station so Kamil decided to stop there and ask about any historic sites there. We noticed a memorial in front of the police station that was dedicated to the communists who were killed by the German farmers in the revolt of 1921.



Memorial

The plaque in the memorial reads:

*"Here communists perished from the hands of kulaks during the kulaks' revolt in 1921 are buried: Bekker, Bersh, Volle, Gasman, Gosniz, Herman, Zalsman, Kesler, Sander Shterzer, Shuller."*

In the 1920s and later in the Soviet time, the well-off farmers were known as kulaks. In this case and as in most instances, the victors write the history of wars, so this perspective is slightly different from what we understood.

It was suggested that we visit the library where there were books on the history of the village so our next stop was the center of the town where we saw the ruins of the Catholic church plus a number of other buildings of varying age. We were told that houses with unpainted wood siding and the light brown brick

buildings were from the German era. There were also buildings from the Soviet era, plus a few new ones such as the bakery and café. Construction was also underway on an Orthodox church.

While I have no way to be certain, it would appear logical that my grandparents John Rohr and Cecelia Herman were married in this church in about 1904. From what we have read it was a remarkable building but today only the shell of the building remains.



Ruins of the Catholic church in Mariental

After a brief look around the center of the village Olga took us to the library. There we met the librarian and her two assistants.



German era houses



Once they learned that my grandparents had lived in the village they were eager to show us the books and other documents that they had on the history of the village. Of course they were in Russian and German, and unfortunately I cannot read either language. They told us that there was one German woman who still lived in the village but she is in her 90s and very frail, so it was not practical to visit her. They did, however, suggest that we go to the school and visit one of the teachers had done a project with her class on the history of the village.

When we arrived at the school we were introduced to Vera



Village bakery and cafe



Clements Rohr (on right) and his class

to the 1941 eviction of Germans from the Volga region. As well as being a school teacher in Mariental he won several awards for his music.

After the teacher had given us a full briefing, she offered to take us to the village cemetery where a few German grave markers still exist. Most of the German grave markers are gone but the two that we saw were interesting. The first one is in German and the top name appears to be a Herrmann.

The second one is in Russian and is dedicated to five Ortman's. Maria Ortman's maiden name is Rohr. The text on the bottom of that marker reads "*Hero of war with the army of Denikina and survived wounding three times*". We are not sure to whom it refers, but Denikina was the general who lead the armed Forces of Southern Russia (White army) against the Bolsheviks and the Red Army in 1918 & 1919.

We capped off our day in Mariental with a quick lunch in the bakery & café and then made our way back to Saratov.



Markers in the Mariental cemetery

The following day Olga took us for a tour of central Saratov and the Folklore Museum. In the museum, as well as an interesting display honouring one of Saratov's favourite sons, Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, we found the display of the history of the Volga Germans. The display included information on the migration to the Volga region in the late 1700s plus artefacts and photos from the 1800s and early 1900s. We were impressed with how tastefully it was done given the turbulent history of those times.

After viewing another restored Orthodox church Olga took us to the Victory Park and then to German Street adjacent to our hotel. Victory Park overlooks Saratov and the Volga River and is dedicated to those lost in

World War I and II, plus Russian military history. The horrendous loss of lives that Russia suffered in WW I and WWII and the economic and social costs of the Cold War are deeply embedded in the Russian psyche. German Street is the street where many of the German businesses were located as well as the main Lutheran and Catholic churches. Today the street is home to many upscale shops and restaurants as well as the Conservatory of Music. A movie theatre stands where the Catholic Cathedral once stood.



Volga German farmers in the late 1800s



The bottom line is that the visit to Russia was a very profound. The visit to Mariental was a unique opportunity. Everywhere we went we were treated with outstanding hospitality and people went out of their way to help us. It was a fantastic experience.

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## **We Search for the Origins of Volga Germans by Darrell Brungardt**

Many of the Volga Germans of today are inquisitive about their ancestor's origins prior to Russia and in their process of questioning where their ancestor's namesake came from and why they came to Russia, they isolate that name and attempt to locate that namesake.

What has become evident to me is that, for those names I am looking at, is that we are talking about groups of families, not just individuals. I am asking myself the question, "What was the size of the area, in the early 1700's, that these people moved about in and were they aware of the other inhabitants of the area?". We can't glean this from baptism records because most baptisms occurred within a day of birth and so the sponsors had to be right there. We see more diversity when we look at the marriages. The biggest percent of the marriages occurred between families from different villages. The question arises as to how did the groom know that in a distant village there was a women of the same age that was ready for marriage. Even more interesting is how does a individual, who has small children, recently widowed, become matched to a recent widow in another community. What were the lines of communication among the villages of the area? Was the Church a instrument of communications?

All this brings me back to the "groups of families" rather than individuals. In doing research when we discover the location of that namesake we attempt to follow the surname of the namesake and also the surname of the spouse, backwards. If we are lucky we will discover the father and mother of both individuals and hopefully the names of their parents . With a little bit of luck you could be following 6 to 10 different family names. We have no idea when we start, what names, in addition to the namesake, we are looking for or who they might be associated with. These names could be in many different villages.

Back in 2004 I discovered the location of one of my ancestors, the Auer Family, which led me to a number of other names. Now at the end of 2010 I am back to the same records because of the discovery of the Mariental Zwinger name. Following the above process backwards on both sides of the Family the family names bring me back about 50 years to the birth of a Zwinger Ancestor and I find that the godmother is a aunt of the Auer namesake who went to Russia.

There are many, many of these associations in the groups of families that went to Russia.

Darrell



***AN INTERESTING SEARCHING ADVENTURE SENT IN BY DARRELL BRUNGARDT:***

If someone is just interested in the obtaining the date and place of their named ancestor birth then they will be missing so many interesting situations and facts. Here is a example:

Starting out with information in Pleve's Louis First Settlers List we see # 7 Nicolaus Laurent age 41 and his wife Anna Maria age 42.

When we discover a Nicolaus Laurent in the Church records we don't know if we have the correct one so the search begins. We discover a child named Anna Catharina, great, because Nicolaus had a daughter age 10 in the FSL. Then two months later comes the death of that Anna Catharina. Well this might not be the right Nicolaus. Another problem is this wife is not named Anna Maria but Elisabetha.

We keep looking through the records and we come across a Son Andreas born in 1761 to Nicolaus and Elisbetha. Now it just happens that the Louis Nicolaus Laurent had a son age 7 in the FSL. Further investigation of the records we come across another daughter born in 1759 and was also named Anna Catharina. Now we are back on track but the mother is still named Elisabetha. Another daughter named Margaretha is born midway through 1764.

**I MUST POINT OUT THESE RECORDS ARE SPREAD ACROSS 6 DIFFERENT TAPES.**

Now another problem arises because Nicolaus Laurent family in FSL does not show a Margaretha but a Anna age 2.5.

What happened to Johannes (first son) Margaretha and mother Elisabetha??? I don't know if the answers are in the records or not because I haven't finished the 6 films. Of course we now know that the wife listed in the FSL was not the mother of the Children except maybe 2.5 year old Anna.

Now, working backward to the extended family we find the marriage of Nicolaus and we run into some other interesting records. We find that Nicolaus age 28 is married on February 13. His brother Phillip age 22 is married on February 20 and his brother Mathias age 25 was married on February 23. How interesting that all married within ten days.

In these records we also find out that the mother was married twice and that one of her sons from a first marriage was a *witness* at all three marriages. Another oddity was that the Godfather of first son born was his maternal godfather. Completing this family history will probably turn up numerous other surprises. Darrell

## WHISPER:

### THE CENSUS TAKER

It was the first day of census, and all through the land;  
The pollster was ready ... a black book in hand.  
He mounted his horse for a long dusty ride;  
His book and some quills were tucked close by his side.

A long winding ride down a road barely there;  
Toward the smell of fresh bread wafting up through the air.

The woman was tired, with lines on her face;  
And wisps of brown hair she tucked back into place.  
She gave him some water ... as they sat at the table;  
And she answered his questions ... the best she was able.

He asked of her children ... Yes, she had quite a few;  
The oldest was twenty, the youngest not quite two.  
She held up a toddler with cheeks round and red;  
his sister, she whispered, was napping in bed.

She noted each person who lived there with pride;  
And she felt the faint stirrings of the wee one inside.  
He noted the sex, the color, the age ...  
The marks from the quill soon filled up the page.

At the number of children, she nodded her head;  
And saw her lips quiver for the three that were dead.

The places of birth she "never forgot";  
Was it Kansas? or Utah? Or Oregon ... or not?  
They came from Scotland, of that she was clear;  
But she wasn't quite sure just how long they'd been here.

They spoke of employment, of schooling and such;  
They could read some and write some ... though really not much.

When the questions were answered, his job there was done;  
So he mounted his horse and he rode toward the sun.  
We can imagine his voice loud and clear;  
"May God Bless you all for another ten years."

Now picture a time warp ... it's now you and me;  
As we search for the people on our family tree.  
We squint at the census and scroll down so slow;  
As we search for that entry from long, long ago.

Could they only imagine on that long ago day;  
That the entries they made would effect us this way?  
If they knew, would they wonder at the yearning we feel;  
And the Searching that makes them so increasingly real.

We can hear if we listen the words they impart;  
Through their blood in our veins and their voices in our heart.

-- Author Unknown