

# Reifschneider Family NEWSLETTER

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF NEWSLETTER:

- Family History Depository
- Scanning Documents
- 1913 Carl & Katherine Reifschneider Coming to America
- Reasons for leaving Russia
- 100 Year Anniversary Reunion, Scottsbluff, Nebraska
- 250 Year Anniversary Reunion, Budingen-Leisenwald, Germany
- Update Mailing List

## WELCOME:

Welcome to the first issue of the **Reifschneider Family Newsletter**. The Reifschneider Family Reunion Committee has formulated plans to pursue collecting, assimilating, and creating a Depository of documents all related to Reifschneider family history, which we are calling the **Family History Project**. For the **Family History Project** to be successful, all six families are being asked to participate by making available their family photographs, any family documents that they wish to share, along with a brief history of each family. Financial contributions have been made by certain family members for the purpose of purchasing a laptop computer, a document and photograph scanner, genealogy software, along with a quality printer....all the necessary items to accomplish this special project. The most important and intrigal part of this Family History Project is to establish a Depository and a contact person(s) for the purpose of collecting and securing all the above defined items. By assimilating family photographs, documents, and the history's of each of the six children of **Johann Carl & Katherine (Amen) Reifschneider**...Margaret & George Sieb, Alexander & Anna Maria Reifschneider, Caroline & Henry Schwindt, Carl & Katherine Reifschneider, Katherine & Jacob Abel, and Henry & Mollie Reifschneider, it is the hope of the Family Reunion Committee that once all family documents are downloaded and properly assimilated, that the private publication of all collected data be considered and become a reality in the near future.

One of the most important tools in making this project a reality, is to provide the means by which to communicate with family members on a regular bases. This means is the **Reifschneider Family Newsletter**. As you read through this first newsletter, I hope you will enjoy its content and value its importance by which to communicate with all the descendants of Johann Carl and Katherine Reifschneider. As you may already know, many third, fourth and fifth generations of the Reifschneider, Sieb, Schwindt, and Abel families have very little knowledge of their ancestors, their history, and why they came to United States.

The **Reifschneider Family Newsletter** will serve many purposes. Descendants of Johan Carl and Katherine Reifschneider will be able to contribute, communicate, and have the opportunity to learn more of their family history. As our ancestors and immediate family members pass on, along with new generations moving to other areas and states, our ability to communicate with each other as been greatly diminished, and in some cases, actually ceased. Let us begin a new chapter in our family history by helping to make the **Reifschneider Family Newsletter** a new and special way to reach out and to stay in touch with relatives. Certainly, the results will be most rewarding and gratifying.

## Family History Project

The **Depository** location and contact persons are Mollie and Gene Siegfried, currently residing in Scottsbluff and Gering, Nebraska. Gene has in his possession a laptop computer, scanner, and printer. Upon receiving and or gaining access to each family's photographs, family documents and family history, Gene will download all data, using the Family Tree software. Mollie Siegfried and several other senior family members will be assisting Gene and also identifying members of family photographs that are not known. Obviously, the scanning of documents will be most important in assimilating the history of each of the six families. So how will family documents be scanned, assimilated, and returned?

**Firstly**, by hand delivering your family documents to Gene Siegfried, with all documents being returned upon the completion of the scanning process.

**Secondly**, by mailing your family documents to Gene's home. Gene Siegfried's address and phone number are the following: Gene Siegfried, 1675 D Street, Gering, Nebraska 69341, along with a self addressed prepaid postage return envelope. Upon completing the scanning process, Gene will return your documents to each of you by return mail.

**Thirdly**, by contacting Gene by mail or a phone call, Gene will travel to your home by appointment and scan all your family documents in your presence.

**Fourthly**, by you taking your family photographs and documents to your nearest Staples, Walgreen's, Wal-Mart, or Target, and have their photo departments scan all items onto a DVD, which can then be forwarded to Gene in person, by land mail, or by email. The cost of having Walgreen's scan your documents will be approximately \$12.00.

Anyone wishing to assist in the information gathering process would be most appreciated and welcomed. Projected deadline to scan, assimilate, and process all submitted documents is June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

## **FAMILY HISTORY:**

**Coming to United States from Russia**

**(Reprint of Family History.....Good Cookin' With The Cousins)**

In 1910, Carl and Katherine 'nee Amen Reifschneider with their children and first of their many grandchildren were among 552,207 colonists in Russia and by 1911 the first of their children emigrated to America.

As nearly as we can reconstruct the story, the first of our family to touch American soil was George Sieb in 1911. Margaret is the husband of eldest daughter Margaret. Margaret and children Caroline, Anna Marie, Amy, Matilda, Carl, Katherine and Natalie joined him in America in 1912.

Eldest son, Alexander, and Anna Maria 'nee Heimbeichner with children Marie, Edward, Carl, Natalie and Alexander, also in 1911, came first to Saginaw, Michigan, and to this area (Western Nebraska) in 1914.

On March 17, 1913, the Gering, Nebraska group was joined by Carl and his wife Katherine 'nee Hein, their children Suzanna, Carl Jr, Alexander and infant Henry. Traveling with them was younger brother, Henry.

At about the same time, also in 1913, Katherine and husband Jacob Abel, with son, Robert, arrived in the United States.

On June 5, 1913, they were joined by Caroline and her husband Henry Schwindt and their children, Henry Jr, Caroline, Katherine, Suzanna, Amelia and Carl. And parents of them all, Carl and Katherine 'nee Amen.

They were a close and loving family and each of these arrivals were no doubt met with joy and celebration.

However, the family circle would never be complete in as daughters Anna Marie and husband, George Keil and Anna Siegwart and family were never to come to America and youngest daughter Suzanna would be shot to death in here attempt to flee.

Nevertheless, this brave family continued in the long tradition of courage of determination of Love and of Faith.

They displayed all of the qualities by doing what needed to be done. They worked the fields, then bought the land and left to their children. They built the churches and served as its officers and filled the pews with their offerings. They learned the English language and adopted American customs, their children would soon excel. They wept with those who mourned and celebrated with those who rejoiced. The rest in peace – God Bless them all.

This is a story, this is a story of courage, of Love and of a deep and abiding Faith. This is your legacy – God Bless you all.

## **GERMAN RUSSIAN HISTORY:**

**Reasons For Leaving Russia....Research & Compilation by Gary D. Reifschneider)**

From the time of departure from Germany in 1765-68, and up until 1871, progress in all areas of life for the Volga Germans was quite notable and for the most part, very rewarding for most families. Even though the first fifty years from the time of their immigration from the Holy Roman Empire, now Germany, had been very difficult years as an ethnic group among Russians. Their success and forward progress became a thorn in the side of Pan-Slavic circles, who as a group were very much opposed to further expansion of German Colonies in Russia. The German minority was regarded as a foreign element from the very beginning of the creation of Volga Colonies and was seen as a threat to the national good of Russia.

On June 4, 1871, Pan-Slavic circles succeeded in bringing about the abrogation of the Codex of the colonists that had assured them of certain rights and privileges. The Codex Decree of 1871, as it was known, was issued by Tsar Alexander II, which in summary negated everything Catherine II's Manifesto had given them in 1765. In short, the Codex Decree of 1871 reduced their social status to that of a Russian peasant. The Decree in effect meant complete and total "Russification" of German Colonists. Soon, German children would have to learn and speak only Russian. In a short time, their German language would become a foreign language and lost forever.

One of the many rights granted by Catherine's Decree of 1765, was that all Volga German men were exempt from military service. This changed with the Decree of the 1870's. The Volga Germans received their disappointing news on June 4, 1871, which took away all their privileges, especially the privileges of home rule. Then, to add insult to injury, the Tsar issued a second Decree on January 13, 1874, thus subjecting all German colonist men between the ages of sixteen and forty years of age, to immediate call-up into the Russian military. News of the second Decree electrified the colonists. Morale, which was already low, sank even further, all of which heightened the ill-will towards the Russian government even worse. Their whole way of life was now being threatened and would be eventually taken away of them. The answer for many was to emigrate.....but to where? For many, they chose the United States, as well as Canada, Brazil and Argentina.

Early Volga Germans settling in the United States often recited four primary reasons for the immigration. **Firstly**, the abrogation of freedom from military service. **Secondly**, the "Russification" policies which took away home rule, which became a major moral issue for all colonists, which could be viewed as if suddenly all Americans found that the Bill of Rights had been repealed. **Thirdly**, the shortage of land. By 1914, the shortage of farm land remained at about five acres per farmer, with the Russian government unwillingness to provide more farming acreage to the German Colonists. **Fourthly**, great opportunities being made available to immigrants in the United States and elsewhere. Both United States and Canada made attractive offers of free and cheap land for the taking. The United States Homestead Act of 1862 was designed to beckon settlers to the vast Midwest of the United States. A tidal wave of emigrants from Russia and other Eastern European countries was started and continued until the beginning of World War I, in 1914.

Obviously, there were many other reasons for leaving Russia and seeking new opportunities in the United States. However, in the case of Johann Carl & Katherine Reifschneider and their family members, we know that their son, Carl Reifschneider Jr. had already served a tour of military duty during the Japanese Russian War of 1904, and was about to be called up again, and at any moment, Carl's younger brother Henry was about to be drafted into military service. Certainly their thoughts were to seek a place of peace and harmony where sons, son-in-laws, and grandsons would not be subjected to ill fated wars that served no purpose. Their thoughts had to be centered upon a government that had taken away all their privileges, their language, and their German heritage. With no possibility to obtain more farming land, and the threat of war with Germany, which was ultimately declared in 1914.

The decision to leave their homeland in Russia, immigrate to a new country and adapt to a new culture, learn a new language, all of which was certainly weighed heavily by each of six family members. Their decision to come to United States and on to Western Nebraska was undoubtedly the most important decision of their lives. Thank God for their fortitude, their vision, their faith in God and their love of family. We all owe a great debt of gratitude to our very brave ancestors.

Plans are being made now for the special 100-Year Reifschneider Anniversary Reunion to be held in Scottsbluff, Nebraska on the first weekend of August 2013. This special reunion will be the celebration of the Reifschneider, Sieb, Schwindt and Abel families coming to United States. Special programming will be scheduled along with family history presentation of each of the six families. Mark your calendar now and join us for this very special reunion and celebration.

A special reminder and formal notice to all Reifschneider Family members of the 250-Year Reifschneider Anniversary Reunion to be held in Budingen/Leisenwald, Germany in July or August of 2016. Special plans are in the development stages now for this very special event. This reunion will mark the celebration of the 250 year anniversary of the six Reifschneider families who departed the Vogelsberg region in central Germany for Russia in 1766. Many of our Reifschneider relatives now living in Germany will be attending the anniversary celebration. The reunion will be a three day event with special speakers, programming and historical site seeing tours, all related to our Reifschneider roots. More information will be forthcoming in future Newsletters. Mark you calendar for this very special Reifschneider Reunion. Early reports from Nina Docenko in Germany are that many relatives in Russia are also planning to attend the reunion.

Again, a very special effort is being placed before family members to update our mailing list. If you know of any family member who is not receiving notices and reunion news, please make a special effort to forward names, addresses and phone numbers to Carlene Reuter, 2802 Dineen Ave., Scottsbluff, Nebraska 69361.

### **OLD NEWS:**

Forward your old news items to Gary D. Reifschneider in written format to the following address:  
Gary D. Reifschneider, C/O Julie Reifschneider Evans, at 5218 Pinon Valley Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80919

### **BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Forward items to Gary D. Reifschneider in written format to address above.

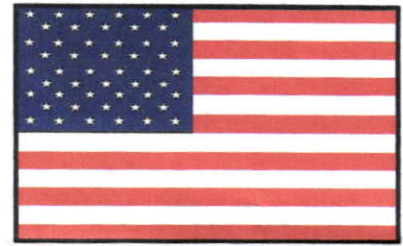
### **FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Forward announcements to Gary D. Reifschneider in written format to address above.

**CLOSING COMMENTS: A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL FAMILY MEMBERS AND COUSINS WHO MADE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE FAMILY HISTORY PROJECT. YOUR SPECIAL INTEREST AND GIVING HEARTS WILL MAKE THE FAMILY HISTORY PROJECT A VERY SPECIAL PROJECT IN RECORDING OUR REIFSCHNEIDER HISTORY. A PROJECT THAT WE CAN ALL BE PROUD OF. THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH. YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT IS MOST IMPORTANT.**

**ANYONE WISHING TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FAMILY HISTORY PROJECT AND ONGOING NEWSLETTER EXPENSES, CAN FORWARD CHECKS OR CASH TO GARY D. REIFSCHNEIDER. GENE SIEGFRIED, OR CARLENE REUTER. WE ALWAYS HAVE A NEED FOR FINANCIAL HELP TO COVER ONGOING PRINTING COSTS, MAILING EXPENSES AND OTHER FAMILY RELATED EXPENSES.**

**NEXT FAMILY NEWSLETTER.....FEBRUARY OF 2013.**



From Germany & Russia ... To the United States of America

Carlene Reuter  
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