

Norka, Saratov, Volga 2011 Village Report for Norka

Four of us are actively involved in areas that assist Norka descendants in learning more about our ancestors who left Germany and established Norka as their home, including what life was like for the multiple generations who lived in Norka, reasons why our ancestors left Norka, plus information on the history and events affecting those who remained in Norka after 1910. Since 1990, a number of individuals and groups have been able to visit Norka and have shared information, stories and pictures. Additionally, some have traveled to Germany to visit their family's homeland villages, towns and areas and some have met with family members currently residing in Germany and they have also shared information, stories and pictures. We encourage you to become aware of what is available to you and to contact us with questions, suggestions, and contributions of your family.

The following information is provided by:

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Norka Website: <http://www.volgagermans.net/norka/>

New information was added to the Norka website during 2011. The new additions include:

A tabular summary of Population Statistics from 1767 to 1941 showing the number of males and females in the colony over the founding of the colony until the deportation in 1941.

A translation from "Geschichte der Reformirten Kirche in Russland" by Hermann Dalton (Gotha: Rudolf Besser Verlag, 1865). This extract pertains directly to the parish of Norka but includes information on other Volga German Reformed congregations. The translation was prepared by Bill Pickelhaupt in July 2011

A 1909 history of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Russia. This was an update to a church history from 1867 by G. H. Busch. This document was extracted from the portion of the 1909 book dealing with the Volga Bergseite (hilly side) in which the colony of Norka was located. The document was translated by Bill Pickelhaupt.

The First Christmas in Norka, Russia - a story of the lives of Johann Wilhelm Schreiber and his wife Anna Eva (her maiden name was Moritz) who were celebrating Christmas for the first time in Norka, Russia in 1767. More than a year earlier, they had decided to leave their home in Hessen for what they hoped would be a better life in a new land.

Many famine letters written in the 1920s and 1930s were added to the site. The letters were published in Die Welt Post, a German language newspaper published in the United States. The letters graphically tell the story of the severe famines in Russia during these time periods and have been translated to the English language by Hugh Lichtenwald.

A page about Norka goods that were exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition in London was added. The exhibitors were J. Deines and W. Spadi.

New satellite photos of Norka (Russian name = Nekrasovo) from Google have been linked to the website.

An extract from a "History of the Volga German Colonists" by Jacob Dietz, describing the Russian bandit Emelian Pugachev's march through Norka in 1774.

A description of the 1927 film taken in Russia by Heinrich Wacker (Henry Walker) was added to the site. Many of the scenes were taken in Norka. The plan is to complete the documentary on this film in 2012 and it will be available on DVD through AHSGR.

A Facebook page for Norka was created in December 2011. This page will complement the Norka Newsletter and Norka website as a community gathering place where people interested in Norka can connect and find answers to their questions.

The Following Information is Provided by:

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The Norka Database continued to grow in 2011 and contains over 29,000 individuals who have been entered into PAF (Personal Ancestral File – a computer genealogy program), created as a research tool for Norka descendants to assist them in finding their family members who lived in Norka. The database is a merged collection of Norka Pleve surname charts along with the “connecting links” of information on generations of Norka descendants who extend forward from where both the Norka census records and Norka Pleve surname charts end.

After starting the work on compiling the Norka database back in 2003, it was determined that a more inclusive way of assisting Norka descendants would be to combine more of the information being shared with me under the umbrella of the Norka Project. Norka Project items are stored on the Norka CD which is updated annually to coincide with the annual AHSGR convention. These items have been collected and added to the Norka CD for the benefit of all Norka descendants, especially those not having a computer or access to the internet. The Norka CD is not freely distributed or available to purchase; it is only available at AHSGR headquarters in Lincoln, NE and at the several AHSGR chapters (Portland, OR; Denver, CO and Fresno, CA) large enough to have computers available for researchers to use. If distance prevents you from going to one of these AHSGR chapter libraries, you can request information regarding your Norka ancestral family members by contacting Judy Curtis for look-ups in the Norka database and for copies of Norka 2011 convention handouts, or to Louis Schleuger, Norka Census Records Coordinator, for look-ups and assistance in Norka census records.

The Norka Project 2011 CD includes a wide variety of items including the following:

The Norka Database (searchable database of 29,445 individuals)

The Norka Census Records 1767 through 1857 (each a searchable database – see more information below)

Norka Census Cross Reference (Excel document) for 1767-1857

Articles of interest pertaining to German and Russian history at the time Norka ancestors were living there.

Various ports in America where our GR ancestors arrived.

Maps of Germany, Russia and America useful in tracking GR history.

Pictures of Norka and other nearby Volga villages, villages/towns of Germany where GRs gathered before leaving for Russia, and some pictures of both Germany (towns, cities and areas where Norka ancestors emigrated from) and Russia (in or near Norka) taken in the last 20 years.

The German Origins Project, available on the AHSGR website, has entries for Norka that have been consolidated into Word documents that are updated each year on the Norka CD.

The Center for Volga German Studies at Concordia University (Portland, OR) website: http://cvgs.concordia.edu/colonies/russia/mother_colonies/colony_norka.html. Norka articles, reports, updates, etc. are available in Word documents on the Norka CD.

Family folders that contain articles, stories, family histories, pictures, copies of family documents of all types, and other family treasures---whatever Norka descendants have provided to share with others as well as having a place to preserve the contents of these family folders.

Family histories and stories preserved on the Norka CD as a Word document, many that also appear on the Norka website: http://www.volgagermans.net/norka/norka_stories.html

Norka 2011 Convention Handouts:

AHSGR Norka 2011 – Village Inventory

AHSGR Norka 2011 – Surname Charts on Website

Norka 2011 Surnames – Preferred Spelling and Variations

Norka 2011 – What’s Available for Researchers

Norka 2011CD – Listing of Folders, Articles and Databases

If anyone has items to add to the Norka CD, please send copies (you keep the originals) either electronically as an attachment to an e-mail to Judy Curtis at tnjcurtis@aol.com or by snail mail to Judy Curtis, 9026 S. Dateland Dr., Tempe, AZ 85284. Remember, this is a way to share with others as well as to preserve what you have.

The following information is provided by:

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Based on comparing Norka’s censuses information and the various Norka family surname charts researched by Dr. Igor Pleve listed in the Norka Database, errors were noted on Dr. Pleve’s charts and within the censuses which resulted in many corrections and linkages of family members and updated notes were made to Norka’s

censuses databases.

The cross referencing all of the families listed in Norka's 1767-1857 Censuses is progressing slowly, but well. In this cross referencing effort, errors were noted on Dr. Pleve's charts listed in the Norka Database and within the censuses concerning family members' marriages, number of children and their linkages with other families. Part of the linkage effort includes the lineage of females when they married since Dr. Pleve did not include that lineage on his charts.

The research by many other Norka descendants is being included in this effort, which results in a much more complete family chart from 1767 to the current year. For example, research conducted by Donna McCoy on the Hinkel family and research by the Norka Project members of the Norka Database and Norka's censuses resulted in linking many of the Hinkels' and in establishing a Hinkel database with 1,433 individuals (still a work in progress). Also, based on a current request by a member of the Urbach family, research is in progress by the Norka Project members of the Norka Database and Norka's censuses to compile an Urbach family lineage (so far 733 names entered into an Urbach database).

All available Norka census records have been entered into PAF (Personal Ancestral File), each as an independent researchable computer database research tool. Additionally, the Cross Reference (Excel document) includes all of the Norka individual family members listed in the Norka 1767-1857 census records as explained above:

- Norka 1767 Original Settler's List (searchable database of 833 individuals - 279 marriages)
- Norka 1775 Census Record (searchable database of 1,091 individuals - 301 marriages)
- Norka 1798 Census Record (searchable database of 2,297 individuals - 666 marriages)
- Norka 1811 Census Record (searchable database of 1,464 individuals (males only))
- Norka 1834 Census Record (searchable database of 4,848 individuals - 1,275 marriages)
- Norka 1857 Census Record (searchable database of 7,443 individuals - 1,950 marriages)
- Norka Census Cross Reference (Excel doc.) for 1767-1857

The following information is provided by:

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2011 marks the end of the sixteenth year of the publication of the Norka Newsletter. The newsletter was begun in 1996 by John and Marcella Wark of Menlo Park, California. Late in 1997, the Warks regretfully announced that they would be unable to continue the work. I contacted the Warks about taking on the responsibility of publishing the newsletter. Thanks to their help and encouragement we were able to continue the Norka Newsletter without serious interruption.

The Norka Newsletter is a quarterly publication, and goes in the mail in February, May, August and November. Each issue of the 8-page publication includes articles on life in Norka, genealogical data, and the stories of men, women, and families who left Russia, crossed the Atlantic, and built a new life in North and South America and Canada. For a sample copy of the Norka Newsletter, contact me at norkanews@gmail.com.