

FAMILY HISTORY



This Family History is lovingly dedicated
...to my mother Clara Bitter,
...to my grandmother Minnie Boger Bitter
...to my great grandmother Anna Boger Nufer
...and to all of their descendants

Written by Jacqueline Claire DeVore
Daughter of Clara Bitter and Oney Smith
Granddaughter of Wilhelmina Boger Bitter and George Bitter
Great Granddaughter of Anna Boger and Christoph Boger
14419 Eastridge Ave. Baton Rouge, Louisiana USA 70817
charliejd44@gmail.com
Completed February 26, 1998
Revised November 18, 1999
Updated and revised June 8, 2007-2015
Completed June 15, 2015

“You can look ahead as far as you can look back. Indeed, we can see horizon to horizon on the path of life and as we continue living, the past continues to disappear. With this in mind, before it is too late, the connection with the past should be made. Time is that fleeting thing that never stops. Though yesterday is ever so near, it is only a memory. What is the use of the past? It has made us what we are today. Just as what we do in our age will make what becomes tomorrow.”

Lester G. Seibold

*No living atom comes at last to naught! Active in each is still the eternal Thought:
Hold fast to Being if thou wouldst be blest. Being is without end... - from Goethe,*

Every member of our family shares a common bond. We are the descendants of a people known as the Volga Germans. Ours is a proud and turbulent history and it is important for us to record as much as we know, before the visible signs of our family's past disappears completely. This document will attempt to trace our family ancestry as descendants of a woman named Anna Christina Boger Nufer. She was my maternal great grandmother. Today, Anna rests in a quiet cemetery in the province of Alberta, Canada in the city of Wetaskawin. A simple, white stone records a small detail... “Geboren in Rusyland”(born in Russia). These three words have made a distinct difference in the life of anyone who now shares her bloodline. It is impossible to stand upon Anna's resting place without realizing that the events of her life and the history of her time touch us even now. As we will discover, the known roots of our family's history go back farther than Anna Christina Boger Nufer; but until recently, those pieces were undiscoverable. Thanks to modern technology and genealogical research sites on the internet, our combined family history can now be traced to the early 1600's. As much factual information as possible is included in this document. It is based upon the records and research of many dedicated people and organizations. Additionally, it includes excerpts from oral accounts, letters and documents from friends and family members who have generously contributed their time, interest and a wealth of information. These special individuals have made the writing of this history possible. Gathered over a period of thirty five years, their unique accounts have helped to recreate a sense of the personal history of our people and how they lived their lives. This is their story...this is our story too. Let's us turn to our past and begin.

Our family origins can be traced back as far as 1609 with the birth of our earliest known Boger ancestor, Querinius Boger. He was born in the Protestant village of Stetten, Deutschland. Stetten is a common German place name, literally meaning places or sites. Over 60 locations are names Stetten in Southern Germany alone. Many Bogers can be found in the village of Stetten am Huechelburg. This place is located is within Schwaigern in the District of Heilbronn in Baden-Wurtemberg Germany. The village sits at the base of *The Huechelburg*. This is a hill that rises over 1,000 feet above the town and is the former site of a medieval castle. The name Stetten am Huechelburg means "under the Huechelburg". The village is very old and dates to the 9th century. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Stetten was an almost purely agricultural center; however, wine making and forestry production were also prominent. Trades were also an important part of sustaining village life as well. Some prominent trades from early times were butchers, barrel makers, roofers, brick makers, linen weavers, cabinet makers, millers, tailors, shoemakers, wheel makers, carpenters, bakers and cabinet makers. Our Boger family members came from a long line of linen weavers. (Leinwebers)

To better understand our family history, it is important to learn how the lives of our ancestors were woven into the context and fabric of old world Germany. In previous centuries, the map of Europe looked much different than it does today. Germany, as a nation didn't exist until 1871. For 900 years, the history of Germany was intertwined with the history of the Holy Roman Empire. Germany was its largest territory and at one time called the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. The name Germany is derived from the Latin word Germania, which, at the time of the Gallic War, (58–51 B.C.E.) was used by the Romans to designate various peoples occupying the region east of the Rhine River. The German-language, called "Deutsch" is derived from a Germanic root meaning "people". The German lands were called "Deutschland". The people there spoke neither Latin or early forms of the Romance languages. Therefore, the term Deutsch was employed to mark a difference in speech which also corresponded to political, geographical and social distinctions. The words, "German nation", did not refer to an established "nation" as we understand that term today. It referred only to the land estates of the Roman Empire belonging to dukes, counts, archbishops, electoral princes, and the imperial cities they ruled. By the use of the term "German Nation" or "Deutschland" the members of the imperial estates and especially their Lutheran clergy could distinguish themselves from the Catholic Curia of Rome.

It cannot be emphasized enough, how important the identification with a religion was to the people of Deutschland and to our ancestors. Even today, from the smallest village to the largest city, the local church dominates the central area of nearly every German settlement. Old German churches are often impressive architectural structures, which bear witness to centuries of faith and devotion. The areas surrounding the towns and villages are typically strewn with historical shrines and chapels. Lutheran churches were founded mostly in Germany. As is well known, the printing press was invented by German born Johannes Gutenberg (c. 1400–1468). A half century later, in 1517, Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation in Württemberg, Germany. His translation of the bible into the common speech of the low German dialect of Upper Saxony spread literacy throughout the German-speaking world. Important aspects of this public sphere were newspapers, literary journals, reading societies, and salons. From 1517 onward religious books and pamphlets flooded Germany and much of Europe.

At one time in its history, Deutschland enjoyed religious unity, but with the Reformation came serious religious, economical and political differences. The dominant powers of the empire then became fatally divided along religious lines, with the north, the east, and many of the major cities—Strasbourg, Frankfurt and Nuremberg—becoming Protestant while the southern and western regions largely remained Catholic. These differences developed into a series of sustained wars and conflicts between the territories of the empire. If the ruling Prince or Duke was Catholic and another was Lutheran, this was reason enough for a war. Our earliest ancestor, Querinius Boger 1609-1689 spent the first 29 years of his life living through one of the longest, most destructive conflicts in European history. The Thirty Years' War 1618-1648 saw the devastation of entire regions of Deutschland as war, famine and disease significantly decreased the population of the German and Italian states, the Kingdom of Bohemia, and the Low Countries of the Netherlands, Belgium and the low-lying deltas of the Rhine River.

Most of the fighting was in Germany. Soldiers and their camp followers tramped through the country spreading destruction and disease. These mercenaries, in the tradition of knight-warriors, still believed that they were superior in rank to the common peasants. Soldiers bullied and plundered the peasant population and the peasants fought back killing soldiers. Hunting witches predominated in prosperous villages spurred by both Catholic and Lutheran religious fervor. It reached a climax in Germany in 1620 with sadistic tortures used in forcing confessions. Around 900 are reported to have been burned to death at Würzburg and around 600 at Bamberg.

It was said that "The persecutions were done with Christian love to save those who stood on the brink of damnation." Being burned at the stake, it was believed, merely destroyed a person's body, while heresy killed a soul forever. Pogroms against Jews occurred in cities such as Frankfurt, Worms and Jena. The circumstances of the wars also led to the spread of disease. Bubonic plague and syphilis began to appear. The most dangerous and consistent disease was typhus which was endemic to the armies and spread by them throughout the countryside. Refugees from south-central Germany flocked into northern Germany by the thousands seeking refuge from the destruction.

The religious and political differences between Europe's independent states managed to exterminate three-fourths of the population of Deutschland. Most of the dead weren't killed in battle. They died in epidemics of typhus or plague or they were murdered by armies of the hired mercenaries. These soldiers were expected to be largely self-funded from loot taken or tribute extorted from the settlements where they operated. The soldiers on the losing side could flee but the villagers could not flee or they would starve. As these sadistic men poured into the farmlands, rape went without saying...murder was standard practice...famine and plague were guaranteed. Further, after the soldiers got bored, they invented unspeakable methods of torture to use on the helpless citizens. Sometimes, the inflicted cruelty was done as a pastime and sometimes it was used to get some poor peasant to tell where they had buried their food supplies. In 1631, one attacking Catholic army entered the German Protestant city of Magdeberg, Saxony killing 25,000 out of the city's 30,000 inhabitants in just one day! Many of these slaughtered thousands were women and children...even infants were not spared. For fourteen days charred bodies were carried to the Elbe River for burial to prevent disease. Violence was prevalent on both sides of the religious conflicts. Germany, it is said, had lost a third of its urban population and two-fifths of its rural people in the 30 Years War. Finally, settling differences through violence led to exhaustion. Negotiating differences was finally decided upon. The war, that people called the Great War, ended in 1648 with a negotiated settlement. The Peace of Westphalia was signed some thirty years after the war's inception; with France and Spain continuing to war for ten more years.

This is a list of the series of wars that many of our ancestors lived through before they left Germany. The later wars following 1760 were the fate of those who remained in Germany.

- The Thirty Years War (1618-1648)
- The War of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697)
- The Seven Years War (1756-1763)
- The French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802) (during which Wurttemberg fought on both sides)
- The Seven Weeks War (1866)
- The Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871)

The devastation of the war-torn countryside made agriculture all but impossible. The lands lay in ruin. It was only possible to farm in small, fragmented holdings of protected feudal estates. Wurttemberg, however, had a long history of rural crafts. They were produced in cottage industries, carried out in people's houses, not in centralized factories. The products they made were created using hand techniques and traditional equipment that had not changed a great deal since medieval times. A major industry in Wurttemberg was linen-weaving. Our Boger ancestors were linen weavers as well as farmers. Weaving was predominately a male occupation. The women were spinners. Linen cloth was woven for domestic consumption everywhere in the country, but from the seventeenth century on, it began to be produced for export markets. As dwindling land holdings and poverty increased in the countryside, more and more agrarian families began to sell their home-produced goods in marketplaces and export them to other areas. Until one realizes the impact of continual war in the region, it is difficult to understand the plight of the people, especially the women and children. Agriculture remained important to simply sustaining life; with as much as 80% of the people dependent on farming their own land for food, while simultaneously selling their craft goods in markets. Flax for linen weaving was commonly grown in a family's cottage garden. Throughout the eighteenth century, some twenty percent of young married men who stated an occupation were farmers; however, from the mid-eighteenth onwards, there was a dramatic rise in proto-industrial linen-weaving, and by the 1790s over half of all new grooms of select areas of Wurttemberg were practicing this occupation.

Clearly, history shows us that people had many reasons to be unhappy with their living conditions in Germany. The cost of the wars kept the common man on the brink of starvation and due to the high taxes imposed, poverty, malnutrition and unemployment were widespread. Additionally, many people were being persecuted for their religious faith. In the cities, industry and trade was critically disrupted. Generation after generation of Deutschland's sons were being sent to fight and die in war after war. Foreign as well as German armies marched through the states of Germany devastating farmland, destroying houses and killing families and livestock.

In the village of Stetten, the population was continually decimated by war, drastically reducing its heads of households. Further, more than half the village's 161 houses and barns were destroyed as a consequence of war or because of vacancy. Between 1643-1644, the village of Stetten was temporarily depopulated as its terrified citizens fled to the nearby cities Eppingen, Schwaigern, Stockheim and Heilbronn. It is likely that one of these families belonged to our ancestor Querinius Boger. Querinius, his wife Anna, his son Johann Wendel Boger and his wife Maria Katharina all died during one of these periods of destruction between 1684-1686. The grandchildren Maria age 20, Querinius age 19 and Hans Georg survived. Hans was only two years old and it is likely that he was raised by his siblings. It is through little Hans that the Boger bloodline continued.

Between 1762-1763 the Empress Catherine II of Russia opened up great expanses of land to foreign settlement. Tsarina Catherine II was a German Princess, born in Stettin in Pomerania, now Szczecin in Poland. She proclaimed open immigration for foreigners wishing to live in the Russian Empire on July 22, 1763, Catherine published her invitation in the newspapers of Germany. She followed her notice by sending German speaking agents into the German states where they found thousands of discontented people willing to listen to her message. Briefly, the invitation offered

1. Large tracts of free land, plenty of water, free timber.
2. Good opportunity to practice a trade or establish industries.
3. Interest free loans up to ten years.
4. Freedom from customs duties on goods brought into the country.
5. Free transportation to Russia.
6. The right to settle anywhere in the country.
7. Freedom from taxes for five to thirty years, depending on area.
8. No excise fees on new industries for ten years.
9. Exemption from military service for themselves and their descendants.
10. Local self government in colonies.
11. Full religious and academic freedom.
12. Free to leave again if they found Russia unsuitable.

In addition to the above named benefits, the Russian government also agreed to some help with transportation and settlement housing. We can only imagine what Catherine's manifesto meant to a struggling people. Among other things, it offered free land to those who had no hope of ever owning a single acre; freedom of religion to those who had been persecuted for their faith; freedom from military service to the war weary families whose sons had bled and died in continuing wars; freedom from taxes to those bearing the weight of heavy taxation. Catherine's message brought hope to those who dared not hope, and faith to those who dared not believe. And so began a great exodus.

People left Germany and other parts of Europe by the tens of thousands. From 1764 to 1772 alone, 30,623 colonists left to start new lives on the wild land steppes of Russia. Because of the large number of German settlements that were established along both sides of the the lower Volga River, these colonists became collectively known as the Volga Germans. Most of the immigrating families came from German speaking lands; although a small number came from other parts of Europe such as France, Italy, England, the Scandinavian countries, Hungary, Poland, and Austria. A great many Germans settled along the Volga; however, others colonized in Central and Southern Russia and later in the Crimea and Siberia.

The story of our ancestors journey out of Germany begins with the two sons of little Hans Boger. However, the Bogers eventual path to Russia led first to Denmark. A personal account of their story follows this section of the history. In the years before Catherine II issued her invitation to the German people to colonize in Russia, the two brothers and their families left Germany to begin a new life in a Duchy of Denmark. Johann Georg (1711-1768) and Matthias Boger (1716-1765) and their families were among a group of more than 4,000 immigrants from southern and southwestern Germany who first answered the call of Danish King Frederick V to colonize his lands. These families emigrated to an area known as Schleswig-Holstein. This region is part of the Cimbric Penninsula (The "neck") that connects present day Germany to Denmark. Schleswig-Holstein was considered to be a wasteland because of the poor soil and swamp-like conditions. King Frederick V initiated an agrarian reform program to bring this territory under cultivation and give relief to families from the war torn regions. Approximately 2,500 acres of the moors were drained and selected for settlement. With the prospect of a house, owning land and the promised help from the Danish government, the families were willing to endure the hardships. In April of 1761, the first groups from Wurtemberg began arriving in Schleswig.

Some of these families had been traveling for more than seven weeks. When people arrived in Schleswig, they met more Germans from Saxony, Bavaria and other places in Europe. The colonists were organized through three official check points. These offices were located in the districts of Gottorf, Flensburg and Tønder. The checkpoint for our ancestors was the Gottorf office which reported 21 colonies. Flensburg reported 19 colonies and Tønder reported seven. All the families had to be examined and undergo a review by Danish Royal officials. On June 20, 1761, the first applicants were sworn to uphold their loyalty to the Danish King Frederick V. The ceremony took place in the courtyard of the castle Gottorf. (Gottorf, Low German and Danish: Gottorp) After the swearing-in ceremony was over, a draw was held for the farmsteads in the colonies that were being served through the various check points. Unfortunately, all the houses that had been promised to the colonists were still not finished. Therefore, not all the families were given a farmstead in the draw and were classified as provisionally reserve colonists. These unfortunate families were housed in dugouts or makeshift dorms until houses could be built for them. Daily living expenses were to be given to the colonists from the Royal treasury. The per diem allowances were 6 shillings for each man, four shillings for every woman and two shillings for each child. A shilling in today's world would be worth about five pennies. They were also to be given wagons, tools, livestock and seed. The colonies, however, grew faster and larger than the Danish officials expected. Four thousand families tried to colonize here within a very short time. Further, the cultivation of the swampy moorland proved extremely difficult. The people who had come from the fertile and forested areas of Germany, did not like the moors of Schleswig-Holstein. The plan was fundamentally flawed as there was a shortage of fertilizer necessary for making the land productive. Consequently, the settlers could barely raise enough food to feed their families; let alone make the area into a breadbasket of agriculture. The colonists of Schleswig led a life full of heavy labor and deprivation and the government was unable to keep up with their needs. Monies in the treasury that had been set aside for the colonies were soon depleted. Crops failed and daily allowances were cut. These conditions caused many families to move on. Some people returned to their homeland; others, however, accepted Catherine II's invitation to join the the immigration to Russia. Many families from the settlement offices of Gottorf, Flensburg and Tønder left Denmark on the ship routes from Lubeck to Russia. They became the settlers on the Volga, the Don (Riebendorf), in Latvia (Hirschenhof), in Saint Petersburg and also to the Black Sea.

According to research done by Dr. Alexander Eichhorn and Dr. Jacob and Mary Eichhorn, and Gerhardt Lang, our ancestors were among the group of German families known to have first settled in Schleswig-Holstein before joining the large migration to Russia between 1762-1763. Worsening economic conditions in Schleswig caused groups of colonists to break their contract with the king and desert to Russia. Leaving without permission was illegal and led to imprisonment; however, getting permission was next to impossible. Four of our ancestors and their families were among a group of colonists who were discovered leaving Denmark without permission. They were arrested, held, tried and imprisoned for the offense. The following section is a more personal account of their interesting story and how it fits into the history of our family.

The Denmark Connection

(Anna Boger Nufer's Great, Great Grandfathers George BOGER and Peter Freymuller)

The families of **Johann Georg(George)** and Matthias BOGER were among the first of our ancestors to seek a better life in another land. Both were married. Johann Georg BOGER was married to a woman named Christina. Her maiden name is not known. Records indicate that George and Christina had nine children; however, only six children were recorded in their Schleswig arrival documents. Georg's brother Matthias was married to Maria Katharina Stoltzenthaler.). They had nine children but only four lived beyond infancy. Five children are recorded in their arrival documents. The brothers and their families emigrated from Germany to the Danish Royal Duchy of Schleswig-Holstein in 1761. With hope in their hearts, they prepared to leave their village and homeland. Before they could depart, all debts had to be paid. Arrangements would have been made for older family members staying behind. Decisions about what possessions to take and what to dispose of were carefully considered. Food and clothing for the long journey were made ready and packed in bundles. It would have been a time of much activity. There must have been an excitement in the air as they prepared for the journey but also a sadness, knowing they were about to leave everything they knew and loved behind. George was 50 years old. His brother Matthias was 46. The brothers had four sisters and a mother who stayed behind in Stetten. It is likely, they never saw them again. Their father, Hans BOGER, (little Hans Boger) was not living. He died in 1755 at the age of 71. Their mother, Katherina Haas BOGER died eight years after their departure. She died in Stetten in 1769. She was 81.

This journey for the Boger brothers and their families was long and difficult. Further, it was a time period that coincides with The Seven Year's War 1756-1763. It is likely the families traveled on foot across sometimes roadless land and large expanses of water. The distance the two brothers and their families traveled during this first emigration was more than 500 miles. It is likely that most of the trek was made on foot with crudely constructed hand carts or wagons. Families from southern Germany emigrated in one of two ways: overland on foot, wagon, or horseback; or down the rivers on boats, finishing the journey on foot by going overland to the appointed town where they were to meet with the colonizing agents and officials. For most families, the trip took seven to eight weeks. Some of the trips were guided and some were not. Traveling north from their homeland, the brothers and their families entered the the lands of the Danish Duchy at the town of Altona on May 30, 1761. Altona is located on the right banks of the Elbe River. By that time, the families would have covered a distance of nearly four hundred miles. Altona was one of the Danish monarchy's most important harbor towns. The brothers and their families would have continued from there either by land or river passage on the Elbe arriving in Schleswig City June 6, 1761. Their check point of entry was the Gottorf district office. Upon arrival, they would have been given provisional barrack style housing until their formal acceptance into the colony was completed.

It was a requirement for all emigrants to swear allegiance to King Frederick V. It is likely that the brothers attended the very first swearing in ceremony held on June 24, 1761. During that ceremony, 388 colonists (adult males only) were lined up on the courtyard in front of the windows of the royal castle at Gottorf. The colonists graciously swore two promises to the authorities. One, that they would not be miserly or neglectful in the care of the land they received; and two, that they would see to the education of their children in their divine service to God. At that point, the bailiff, Mr. Von Plessen, made a long oration about the duties and the rights of a citizen and about the generosity and notable wisdom of their ruler, King Frederick V. of Denmark. Then, the colonists spoke a long oath to God and to his most highness, the King. As the ceremony was concluded, the castle's military regiment fired their cannons 27 times. With drums beating and the trumpets sounding, shouts of jubilation filled the air. Now, the moment came for the drawing of the lots. Two hundred fifty farmsteads were distributed to their expectant holders. At the end of the day, the people were brought back to their quarters and refreshed with food, drink, music and dancing.

The lots the two BOGER brothers drew that day were located in a small colony called Prinzenmoor. Prinzenmoor was founded in 1761 and still exists today. It is now a small village situated on the Eider Eider River with a marina. It is located in the heart of Schleswig-Holstein. George drew lot #8 and Mathias drew #7. The joy the families felt while celebrating in Schleswig soon vanished. George and Christina's daughter Christina Barbara and her husband Johann Kaspar Seeberger had emigrated with the family. The newlyweds had married April 21, 1761 in Stetten, Germany. This would have been near the date the family's journey from Germany began. Immigration was difficult and fraught with many dangers. Immigrating people often died from illness or accident before ever reaching the colonies. Christina was one of them. She died in the colony of Hohn which is located only a few miles from Prinzenmoor. Christina Barbara and Johann Kasper may have drawn a lot for Hohn. He stayed there and remarried a year later. Other disappointments continued for the families. Upon arrival at their farmsteads, no building materials for the construction of solid houses was found. Instead, they were forced to camp in earth holes. (dug-outs) The cold and wet climate of the north country was miserable. Further, they lived among native people whose language and customs they did not understand. Everyone came to understand one thing...that on this terrible soil they had been given, nothing eatable would ever grow! It is interesting to know that George and Matthias were both linen weavers by trade; as their father before them had been. In 18th century Europe, weaving was a male occupation. It was learned by apprenticeship. Both women and men were spinners, but weaving was exclusively done by males. Later, the women took up the craft as the life in rural areas grew. It was easy to have looms set up in the home to work at in spare moments of time. The clothing worn by the family would have been made from hand-spun fibers and woven cloth. However skilled they were at their craft, most emigrants, regardless of their former occupations, were expected to become farmers. If they were lucky enough obtain a farm, the focus had to be on survival, with the priority on accumulating food to make it through the winter. Reports on the state of the colonists give evidence of great hardship. Most families did not possess draft animals and worked the land by hand. Many died or were laid up with illness or injury. The eventual houses were hovels constructed of peat with mud walls and floors. Resentment of their condition was commonplace and many families began to desert the colony and either return to Germany or attempt to emigrate to Russia.

Thanks to the work of Gerhard Lang, we have details of such a desertion attempt by our ancestors. Included here are both his translation of the event and also the detailed report originally written in German also sent to me by Gerhard Lang.

Unity of the Common Fate **Written by Gerhardt Lange**

*English translation adjusted for grammatical differences by Jackie Devore.

**Names of people and places known to be connected with our family heritage are in bold.

***Additional facts and photos gathered after this adjusted report are included

The first colonists of the village of **Prinzenmoor** drew their lots on July 24, **1761**. Only the colonists relevant to this essay will be introduced.

Plot 16/3: Philipp (Peter) Freymüller, his wife and two children

Plot 16/6: David Zoller, his wife and one child

Plot 16/7: Matthias Boger, his wife and five children

Plot 16/8: Georg Boger, his wife and six children

Plot 16/9: Johann Friedrich Behringer, his wife and four children

Plot 16/13: Johann Adam Nufer, his wife and two children

Plot 16/15: Joachim Friedrich Leist, his wife and two children

On May 17, 1763, additionally relevant colonists are as follows:

Plot 16/1: Jakob Sick, his wife and two children

Plot 16/4: Georg Scholl with his wife

Plot 16/10: Michael Steiger, his wife and four children

Plot 16/12: Nikolaus Eigenherr, his wife and two children

Plot 16/14: Georg Wanner, his wife and one child

These colonists were our main actors. They all had a role to play. Those involved were each colonist along with all their wives and children. The members of the Gottorf administration office connected with this story were Inspector Heldt, Magistrate/Bailiff Von Plessen, Dr. Erichsen and Johann Matthias Costenbader, Dr. Erichsen's assistant. (i.e. The story was originally translated from the accounts of these Danish officials.)

The trigger for this story is Hans Stahl, village schoolmaster, who was living with the family of **Georg Boger**. Hans Stahl was awakened by voices on the night of March 5, 1764. Curious, he wanted to find out what it was all about. As he stepped into the living room, he caught sight of four or five colonists, one with a rifle aimed directly at him. Challenging words sent him back to his room with an order to stay there. Toward morning, the house was unusually quiet. Stahl came out of his room to find the house empty. Surprised, he hurried over to a neighboring farm and told colonist Kröger of the desertion. Together they went through the settlement of Prinzenmoor and soon discovered that twelve houses stood abandoned. They were obliged to tell the authorities as quickly as possible.

The report was given to Dr. Erichsen, administrator of the Gottorf district office. His assistant Costenbader rode on horseback after the deserters, who in the meantime had been ferried over the Eider River. The colonists thought themselves safe from pursuit as they were in Dithmarsch which was considered a foreign land. However, a treaty between the ministries of **Gottorf** and **Dithmarsch** required all deserters to be returned. On the other hand, Gottorf had been a bit negligent in paying Dithmarsch expenses for returning the prisoners and so Constable Lowtzow of Dithmarsch, demanded that Costenbader be held as surety. (as security) Costenbader agreed to the arrangement. Inspector Heldt hurried back to Gottorf to get the necessary warrants. Meanwhile, officers looked for the deserters. They found six of the families in the town of **Tellingstedt** selling the things they had brought with them. The other six families were captured in **Wrohm**. All of them were taken to **Heide** and put in jail.

On March 9, the colonists wrote a petition to Constable Lotzow; maintaining, that they had been enticed to Schleswig with false promises and had no way of supporting themselves in the plots that had been assigned to them. After some letters back and forth between the various officials, the deserters were taken to **Süderstapel** on the **Eider** on March 15. Here, they were given over to the Gottorf authorities. Early in the morning of March 16, they returned the group to Gottorf Castle. The men were confined in the jail, the women in some nearby rooms.

The hearing and investigation of the escape took on a very difficult character. The leader of the insurrection could not be clearly determined. Punishment for the deed was decided upon in this way:

- Joachim Friedrich Leist was said to be the prime instigator because he scouted the situation in Dittmarsch and had composed a petition to the governor.
- Georg Scholl had known about the preparations yet never reported them.
- Johann Ludwig Behringer had also been exploring options in Dithmarsch and during his arrest, he had threatened Costenbader.
- Georg Wanner had aimed his rifle at schoolmaster Stahl on the night of their escape.
- Michael Steiger, Nikolaus Eigenherr, Jakob Sick, **Georg Boger, Matthias Boger, Peter Freymüller and Hans Adam Nufer** were found to be less guilty.

On April 3, 1764 the verdict and penalty orders from Copenhagen were read at Gottorf. They were carried out on April 6:

- Georg Scholl, Joachim Friedrich Leist, Johann Ludwig Behringer were given a prison sentence of two years
- Georg Wanner, David Zoller, **Matthias Boger, Peter Freymüller** were given a sentence of one year
- The less guilty Michael Steiger, Nikolaus Eigenherr, Jakob Sick, **(Johann)Georg Boger, Peter Freymüller and Hans Adam Nufer** were sentenced to three weeks in Bährenloch prison in Gottorf Castle. (The word means bear hole. This refers to an interior courtyard holding cell. (Basically, a dungeon)
- At this time, the women and children were quartered in villages. Mrs. Zoller bore a child while incarcerated. Elizabeth Steiger and Ludwig Behringer died in custody.
- On April 28, Michael Steiger, Nikolaus Eigenherr, Jakob Sick, **(Johann)Georg Boger, Peter Freymüller and Hans Adam Nufer** were released from prison. The men and their families were sent to a new farmstead in the district of **Flensburg**.

The wives of those deserters incarcerated in Rendsburg prison now began a campaign of letter writing, seeking pardon from the Danish king. (This indicates the level of literacy among the group.) Finally, in August, the wives' petition for clemency was approved and the sentence was reduced to one year's term.

This pardon cleared the way to freedom for all of them. Colonists Wanner, Zoller, **(Matthias) Boger** and **(Peter Philip) Freymüller** were pardoned and released in October. They too, were assigned new plots in the district **Flensburg**.

Finally on May 6, 1765 the fate of Leist and Scholl did improve. They were released from Rendsburg prison and exiled from the country. Both went to Russia, Leist went to Fischer on the Volga and Scholl to Riebendorf on the Don. The widow of Behringer married Johannes Neuwirth (foreman of the jury) and moved to Reinwald Russia with him and their combined family. With new records, The rest of these colonists were found again, all in Riebendorf. In the intervening months, widow Wilhelmina Eigenherr had married colonist Jakob Scholl in 1767. His wife, Eva Katherine died in 1765, most likely while he was in prison or shortly after he was released.

The following is a conjecture about what happened following the difficult events in Schleswig-Holstein. It also offers an explanation of how the group may have worked with one another to leave Denmark for Russia. After the difficult events in Schleswig-Holstein, the Boger brothers and their families were assigned were farmsteads in Flensburg. Their plots are reported as deserted in 1765.

"...If we assume from the fact that the emigration departure date of May, 1765, is valid for Jakob Sick...it is also valid for the other colonists. Further, the dismissal of the colonists occurred on May 6, 1765. As another important clue, we have the marriage of the widow Behringer to the foreman of the jury Neuwirth on May 6, 1765 in Lübeck. It is highly likely that the other colonists were also in Lübeck for their departure to Russia. Unfortunately, no witnesses are registered in Lübeck; however, it is here that they would have visited with the Russian agent and then have waited for a ship passage to St. Petersburg, Russia." Gerhard Lang

All the farmsteads they were assigned are reported abandoned in 1765. Apparently, the group worked together to leave at the same time. It is likely they feared punishment for any of their group of colonists left behind. And so, they joined in *Unity of the Common Fate* to once again leave all behind in search of a better life....this time in Russia.

Translation of Denmark Incident

The following is a translation of the original copy sent to me by Gerhard Lang. The original document was written in German. It was very difficult for me to translate it; however, I did the best I could using various internet searches and applications. It took me weeks to piece the details of this story together...sometimes looking up single words and phrases. I believe this to be written in Middle Low German and some of the older dialect did not translate well. Also the grammatical structure of German is very different from English. I tried to truthfully translate the words in a way that would honor the people whose story can now be told over two centuries later. The details of their suffering show the cruel situation they endured during their arrest and imprisonment. The account was taken from the records of the officials and their bias is clearly in their presentation of the events; however, the actions and words of the women reveal indicate the truth of what transpired. Also, the words of the original translator are intermingled in the story as he reacts to the astonishing coldness of the officials involved and the cruelty of the 18th century prison system. I am including this in the history because it clearly shows the terrible circumstances that our ancestors endured during this ordeal.

Jackie Devore

Colonists Flee Prinzenmoor

From Clausen S. 419-425

On March 5, 1764, a family from Southern Germany and three local families were found sitting on a ferry on the Eider River crossing to Ditmarsch, Gluckstadt or Busem in order to reach a better place to leave Denmark by ship. They had secretly left their settlement Prinzenmoor, in Moorkaten (Schleswig-Holstein) Although the four families were trying to escape the law, they did not report (to the officials who found them) that they were a part of a group of 12 families (a total of 60 people) who were deserting the Danish colonies. The other families had been found in Ditmarsch and returned to the regulatory control of the districts of Gottorf,. They had been taken from Heide and Kiel under heavy guard to the office Gottorf (Gottrop). Here, they were to be punished severely, imprisoned or exiled. Dr. Erichsen's assistant, Costenbader, supported by Inspector Heldt and the Officer Möller had found all the deserters and brought them back with all their possessions...their cattle, seven horses and a wagon.

Although the colonists were traveling a road on foreign soil in the lands of the Grand Duke of Dithmarsch, it was the Moor of Schleswig from which the colonists had embarked. Costenbader had made the correct guess that it was from Gottorf District that the colonists had left. He and Inspector Heldt had traveled to the city of Heide and requested the help of the Bailiff Eberhard Lowtzow (Lotzow). However, the bailiff was reluctant to help because of the cost involved in going after the fugitives. The bailiff said that he would only cooperate in going after them if Costenbader would volunteer to be held in protective custody as security until the cost of this search and seizure of the Gottorf deserters was paid for.

Costenbader agreed to be held. The inspector Heldt then traveled quickly back to Gottorf to get the appropriate authority for the seizure of the colonists and their transfer back to Gottorf. Six families were encountered in Tellingstedt selling their things by auction. The other six families were found in the city of Wrohm. These families were taken to the city of Heide where they were identified as the sought deserters. The families were taken to the stockade in open wagons. There, a large crowd gathered. The Danish farmers who had driven the deserters to Heide were demanding their wages from the families who replied, "Since when do convicts have to pay wages?" Costenbader soothed the agitated crowd of farmers by generously paying them what they were demanding. The Danish farmers were happy about this. The colonist's belongings were taken to the poorhouse for safekeeping. Costenbader asked the colonists their names and was given in return shouts and curses. The women held the children to their breast with cries of vengeance on him; saying that every tear these children were crying should burn as a flame of fire on his soul. All of the women cursed Dr. Erichsen and Costenbader into the abyss of hell saying that they were equal to filth. They pressed hard on Costenbader, but the jailer was able to show them that he was being held as well. Costenbader was brought back to his quarters, where he was guarded by 2 people.

On March 9, the detainees lodged a petition to the Governor of Ditmarsch to support their families in this hopeless situation. They added to the petition a passport and a document containing the six promises of Moritz(Maurice of Anhalt-Dessau was a German prince of the House of Ascania from the Anhalt-Dessau branch. He was also a Prussian soldier and General Field Marshall) The petition stated that this document and passport showed "...that we were transported from Altona to colonize an uninhabitable moor where even the wild beasts cannot be fed from; much less reasonable people. We have now been here nearly 3 years in this country and the afflicted misfortunes seen by us and by our children have caused us to shed tears a thousand deep. Only, there's no explanation that can be given to our children through any human reason or view, why so little bread is received and they go hungry. We four parents fear that our children left alone after our death, will be cursing those of us buried in the earth crying "Why did you take us away from our natural place in our Fatherland to suffer so? We had fled to look for refuge in the beloved Empress. (Empress Catharine II of Russia) Someone had brought news of a commissary from Lübeck, advertising for colonists to come to Moscow. Several families are now being held in detention for trying. We humbly ask the bailiff to post a letter of our story on the street. We are not worse than the children of Israel who were challenged with hardship for trying to leave Egypt."

The detainees had no support from anyone in authority. No word or line in the entire volumes of written papers on this event talks of any sympathy nor intercession of any higher authority. Only the formalities were respected and the tax collector's office was certainly not neglected! This office deserved a lot of credit for the misery it had inflicted on the poor. The military guardianship demanded double meals money from the families. "8 β each soul, and more 60" They were also held for the cost of Costenbader and Heldt, who had commandeered a guard command of 16 riders and an officer. Costenbader and Heldt submitted bill amounts to no less than 431 r 27 β , i.e. the value of more than 40 cows!

This bill claims to have been decided as economical as possible and complains: "We were on horseback in a strange place where everyone looked forward to receiving from the hands of the Most High Royals full drawstring bags; as they would have high interest in the success of this venture and would not be stingy in their compensation. This desertion caused each of us not only anger and grief, but also high costs." (And for those who felt they had not earned anything from all the agricultural colonization...here was perhaps an opportunity!)

On March 15th, After all the correspondence had taken place between the cities of Heide, Kiel and Gottorf, the deserters were taken to Suderstapel under the strong military guard. This consisted of an officer who brought 2 non-commissioned officers, 20 horsemen, a "sticks servant" (someone with a whip) and the colonists riding in 10 guarded wagons. The last part of the road was extremely "...abysmal, that it seemed almost impossible to get through, and the horses fell at times in the bog holes in it, they wisely had to pull out with other horses. The prisoners remained on the wagon but relatively calm. In Süderstapel, the deserters surrendered the weapons that had been taken from them at Gottrof: 1 shotgun, one pocket pistol, 1 gun. They spent the night in the village on the Eider, broke early in the morning on the 16th and arrived around noon at Castle Gottorf . The men went with the palace guard, the women and children were detained in adjacent rooms. The Board (water board torture) was applied to the men in the MarketenderCastle. (the butchering place in the castle courtyard) Even though the debt was certain, they still wanted to find out who was the main instigator of escape. Also, they wanted to know why those left behind had concealed the flight. This was the reason they had been ordered to the castle on March 16th. All the men were interrogated on the same day. The interrogation lasted until late at night, and it was, according to report of the bailiff Von Plessen about the "board room," "tremendously difficult to get behind the originator of the flight". The investigation report found that Joachim Friedrich Leist could well be the instigator. He had previously been in Dithmarschen exploring whether it was possible to escape. He had also written two petitions to the Governor Lowtzow in Heide. These allegations in his petitions were seen to be full of untruths and malice, and should prove that he wanted to go to Russia. The charging bailiff thought Georg Scholl was indeed discouraged from the projects, but had then let it persuade him, rather than filing reports about it with the inspector. Therefore, he must be punished. Johann Ludewig Behringer encouraged this and acted even worse than the others. He was also in Dithmarschen exploring and he threatened Costenbader in prison at Dithmarschen. Georg Wanner is guilty as Leist and Behringer. He held the gun on the schoolmaster the night of the escape. David Zoller was transported with the others in their flight and had also restrained the schoolmaster; holding his arms behind his back. He is as guilty as Wanner. However, by contrast, Michel Steiger, Nicolaus Eigenherr, Jacob Sick, Georg Boger, Matthias Boger, Peter Freymüller and Hans Adam Nufer are among those who are in the lowest degree of crime and deserve less punishment. The punishment was left to the discretion of the pension collectors. (tax collectors) It was hard to find a just punishment that would apply to the women and children. Although they were not entirely innocent, they would have found it necessary to follow the lead of their husbands. Further, attention to the age of the children should be considered in applying punishment to the men. None of the prisoners should be allowed to remain in the country. Otherwise they may seek revenge on the schoolmaster or incite unrest among the other colonists. When the women and children were strip searched in Suderstaple things were found sewn inside unexpected places in their clothing.

Supplies used by the prisoners will be taken from the royal inventory and a pension(tax) charged for them. 4 cents a day for men and women and 2 cents for each child. Even the officials are demanding compensation for their assistance in finding and apprehending the families. They had to replace their horses. Boxes, furniture and other items are being stored and these too shall be charged storage fees. The schoolmaster wants something as he no longer has a place to live or a job. Things that were left behind by the deserters include:

- No. 4 Georg Scholl: 2 bellows, 1 push cart, 1 small Brande wine barrel*
- No. 1 Jacob Sieck: Zwey bellows, 1 reel, and 1 water Eymer;*
- No. 7 Matthias Bohr (Boger). 1 bladders, 2 chests, 1 push cart, 2 chairs, 1 butter churn, 1 old charger, 1 old box, 1 table, 1 old chair, 1 old cradle, 1 old pan, 1 birdcage, 1 beer barrel, hoe shovel and the like...similar to other places where this has happened*

The magistrate thinks that the cost of moving these few objects would be too high and indicates that they be left for new colonists to use.

On the same day were, as already mentioned, also those left behind: the schoolmaster Hans Stahl, the native settlers Johann Kröger (G 16/5), Claus Seehusen (G 16/2), Sievert Sievertsen (G 16/16) and the Upper German Christian Seibert (G16 / 11; in November In 1764 he was no longer there!) were all interrogated.

The school master testifies that he would have been hired in the fall to teach in the school. He had a private room in the house of George Boger #16 Prinzenmoor, Gottorf. He said that he was awakened on the night of March 5-6th by the sound of people talking in the next room. But no sooner had he opened the door to his room when four or five colonists took hold of him. Georg Waner held a long flint rifle on him and David Zoller restrained his arms behind his back. They told him to go back to his room and stay there or it would not go well with him. Thus, his love of life kept him in his room when he heard the movement of many people. The next morning about an hour before dawn, all was quiet and when he looked outside his room, the house was empty. He and his neighbor Johann Kroger awakened the neighbors and went through the colony. Twelve houses were deserted and the door of the church, where South German Christien Seibert had been staying, had been covered with a lot of potatoes. Seibert had not been at home during the escape as he had been working as a carpenter at the inn Kropper-Busch. His woman, who was sleeping in the hut had not heard anything and did not notice anything out of the ordinary. The potatoes at the door should prove that. Another colonist Seehusen lives alone and has not heard anything. Although colonists Kroger and Sivertsen live close to the colonists, neither heard or knew anything about the escape.

April 3rd, judgment was received from Copenhagen on the Gottrof case and the bailiff reported that these seven measures were carried out:

- By command, Georg Scholl, Joachim Friedrich Leist, Johann Ludwig Behringer, Georg Wannar, David Zoller, Matthias Boger, Peter Freymuller, were taken to Rendsburg prison.*
- Scholl, Leist and Behringer were given a 2 year imprisonment and after serving this sentence, must leave the "Royal Land."*

- *The others were to be imprisoned for one year. Afterwards, they were to be moved to another place. (Eventually, they were all assigned to the office district of Flensburg)*
- *It was stated to Boger and Peter Freymüller : "The latter two are the ones that threw the fewest eyes with the dice ". This meant that they threw snake eyes in this game of treachery and betrayal and where "God's judgment" would upon them prevail. In Germanic law is this judgment is tantamount.*
- *The remaining six: Michel Steigert, Nicolaus Eigenherr, Jacob Sick, Georg Boger, Hans Adam Nufer and Georg Boger's 22-year-old son Christopher were each to be held for three weeks in Bahrenloche prison and fed only bread and water and were not to be given so much as a piece of clothing from their possessions. (In other words they were to be held naked and chained.)*
- *An exception was made for the young son Boger (age 19) and Eigenherr who were just held.*
- *After serving their time, they were to be reassigned to Flensburg.*

Not only the men, but also their wives and children had been held in detention since their capture and throughout the pre-trial and trial period from March 6th to April 6th. The bailiff reads a report from pensioner at Gottorf: "All the women and children among the group have been given warnings to keep quiet, and since the arrest that has determined whether they and their children will see their meals. Each of the wives of Scholl, Leist and Behringer are the in solitary confinement. All other women and children are housed in Kleine-Dannevek with the colonist Busdorf. Each woman was given, with regard to the children, things she may need like a bed. These goods are given but are tax mandated to ensure that they are not sold. The Steiger children are motherless.(Elizabeth Steigert died during the detention) So Wanner's and Eigenherr's women are taking care of them since Eigenherr's woman is their aunt. David Zoller's woman has given birth to a child in custody. It is -thank God! - that they can now leave the prison and go back to others. Boger and Nufer's women are indeed more sick than healthy, but they would prefer to go with the others to the villages instead of staying at the castle."

The question is how it would be to keep up with the catering money for women and children, what they should do with the confiscated-78 thalers and the household goods. The bailiff proposes: "The money is the for the government. Checkout supply goods must be left to families assigned under the new ownership assignment and used again. The referenced out of the country colonists (relocated) families are not entitled to meal allowances and have to see on their own how they can get by in the two years to come. The rest received as before: women 4 SS, the SS 2 children daily. The 14-year-old sons are encouraged to earn their own living."

(The food list throws a shocking light on the family situation and the cruelty of former case-law to the children, even infants, who were put behind prison walls. Michael Steigerts wife died in pre-trial detention. She had with her 5 children aged 14, 9, 8, 5 and one year. Boger children who shared the prison with their mother, were 15, 13, 9, 12, 1 1/2 and 1/2 year. The Freymiller children: 13, 9, 3/4 year; Eigenherr's children: 7, 4, 1 year; Zoller's children: 5, 2 years, 13 days (born in prison!); Behringer's children: 14, 12, 10, 4, 1 1/2 years: And for all of these children's care, the mother received not a single penny! A total of 31 children under 14 years had to share the prison with their parents, of whom 14 were 6 years and younger, 5 even 1 year and younger, and 5 children were motherless in prison!)

On April 26th, the Gottorf bailiff met with with the bailiff of Tondern for the purpose of re-housing nine of the colonist families from Prinzenmoor., The bailiff under the land of Holstein wrote back on June 2nd. He had arranged, as their quarters, housing in the parishes of Enge and Stedes where there still were not settlers. "I have held before relevant", it literally means, "These troubled and malcontent people from those other colonists of Tondern and to isolate them, as far as possible so that their vicious dispositions or other unusual ways disturb the Tonderschen colonists ". (Some of the women and children will be sent to these places without their husbands and without resources necessary for them to survive)

On April 28th, the bailiff Von Plessen notified the pension chamber that he was releasing the settlers after they had served their three-week imprisonment. The Gatekeeper, Lorenz Hansen, was urged to give instructions concerning the payout of the debts owed. "To release them made us very happy. We have been oppressed by the families whose breadwinners had to remain in the fortress...and more we have throughout the year been chasing a petition from them and having to house part of the women in the emergency shelters and part of the men of the fort - but it is a mercy now that the detainees are prematurely released and they are leaving."

On May 5th, the women Maria Elisabeth Freymüller and Catharina Boger wrote to inform the King of their circumstances and ask for clemency. They stated that although the men were indeed justly punished, the women and children, by following their husbands, had also been punished and had suffered greatly by the absence of the men. "...therefore, if it please the king, let justice be tempered with mercy." The conclusion reads: "The Almighty will pour over Royal grace as many blessings, as the tears we and our children have shed." (The petition was filed in Copenhagen with the marginal note "shelved".)

On June 17th, fortress prisoners Wanner, Zoller, Boger and Freymüller sent an application for release to the bailiff Von Plessen. In it, they are thankful that the women and children were "pardoned with a place" to live, but they cannot "understand what the women without men of household and field work" should do. They regret their rash actions and assure at any time perform in the future as loyal subjects. They say that the bailiff may take the chains off of them. And if he would do so "We will always boast this grace", and they assert literally... "and call upon God fervently that he would receive our most gracious leader with heavenly life ever after."

On June 24, the women repeated the petition and turned it in to the Gottorfer bailiff saying they are grateful for the new assigned district (in Flensburg) but without the meager resources at the large number of children, but without money and resources they would not be able to go there without their husbands. By a flattering note, they added: "You are a gracious and otherwise mildest Lord. We ask for your mercy and request that you, as a civil servant intercede for us to the King. May God bless you for doing so."

On July 30, Boger and Freymuller women again wrote (through the bailiff Von Plessan) to the King, in which they write:

"Because of the adjudicated penalty, another untimely mishap has fallen upon our Baden husbands and yourself. You and they will have to tolerate and endure another year of punishment. A bad roll of the dice has sentenced the less guilty along with the more guilty. We beg you to kneel before the Royal Throne and ask the King to release the men or at least to limit the punishment to six months." (The Act provided in Copenhagen was filed...again with the margin note: "Even at the time to shelve".)

For the wives of the hard punished colonists Scholl, Leist and Behringer, the distress was of course the greatest, but the families enjoyed no subsistence allowance. They were to wait two years while their husbands were incarcerated, without having an idea of what was going to happen befall them because they were all being sent away out of the country.

In their pitiful condition, on August 1, they sent an appeal for clemency to the King.

"Your Royal Highness, we ask you graciously to allow the unhappiest women in all this world to kneel at your feet and beg of you one favor that will lift this heavy burden that has been placed on our hearts." They complain about the fate of their men who were to be held for 2 long years in chains, and they lament their own almost unbearable fate of being abandoned in a foreign country by all people and to have to do without having any money or resources.

"...and our uneducated children are crying and hungry. We have a duty as mothers to provide bread for these innocent babies. They do not own the tears they cry in such sorrow as they look in vain for food and there is none. We mothers think with regret of the time when gardens flourished outside our hut and we brought them into this world. Great Frederick, we ask your mercy for our husbands who, without malice, allowed themselves to be seduced to wrong for the sake of these babies. The long established people from Dithmarsch wanted the cattle and equipment and the colonist's places. All the accomplices have always worked to satisfaction faring gentle yet punished so hard. The tears of our poor children are begging for the salvation of their fathers. We hope for the King's mercy and want our places again, where we will pay the thanks with due diligence. As long as we live and breathe. Our lips will never be empty of praise for your Royal Majesty and the utmost gratitude to God almighty for our welfare." Eva Scholl vows sincerely that if her husband was not to be given a farmstead again, she promises that he would become an honest, hardworking craftsman; if only he could remain in the country with his wife and children. (He was a bricklayer)

In response, the pension chamber (basically, the court) demanded that the bailiff Von Plessen give a full report about the situation. On August 19th, Von Plessen replied to the pension chamber: "I am compassionate enough to explain my views for the pardon of these people. I believe the absence of the men is also punishment for the women and children. You have already held them for half a year and they have truly learned their lesson. So, I would like to say that it would be no weakness, Sir, if you would to suggest the same to the King and with his blessing give them their liberty and pardon them."

On August 28th, the pension Chamber outlined in a "Pro Memoria" briefly the facts. Von Plessen's soft intervention also adds to the final clemency appeal of the women can not go unmentioned. "They had to play the game among themselves and the unlucky people met the unlucky roll of the dice" The Act bears the marginal note "approved", and thus was the pardon for the colonists Wanner, Zoller, Boger and Freymüller after 5 months in prison - of which 4 months were spent in the prison in the Fortress Rendsburg. The pardon was announced but the men were not released at that time. That happened over a month later. They were freed on the 18th of October, 7 months after their seizure in Heide. They were set free after being cautioned sharply and the officials promised them that they would be arrested immediately if they did not follow the law and improve themselves. The men were were allowed to free their wives from the office in Tondern. They were being held in this district although it was not reported in 1765. They are all listed in the colonists offices of the Office Flensburg, i.e. away far from their former moor that hated them so.

Christian Heide was located at the Eiderwanner(F 8/7),

Christian Zoller at Hohe(F 18/1),

Matthias Boger Julianenanbau (F 15/2)

Freymüller after König Anbau (F 13/4).

Likewise, the Office Flensburg and not to Tondern the mildly punished colonists were sent:

Michel Steigert by Magdalena Heide (F 9/2),

Sieck by Friedrich Heide (F 6i3),

Georg Boger König Anbau (F 16/2)

Nufer Julianenanbau (F 15 / 1).

Because of incomplete declaration in the lists of Ladevögte it is also possible that Boger and Nufer came to Königshöhe after Julianenanbau. It is striking that, as a whole, the deserters who were formerly neighbors in a bog colony were now set far apart on the Flensburg Heide. And what about the three heavily punished? Ludwig Behringer died in imprisonment, leaving a wife and 5 children unprovided for. We wonder about them...especially their children, of whom the youngest was born in Hohner Moor district. A record of a passport was found for the return to their homeland Württembergische, which was approved for her on March 27, 1765. On March 19. 1765, Regina Leist and Eva Scholl sent an imploring pleading appeal directly to the Danish king. Our husbands have now been kept in chains almost a year, and the grief it is to see them in chains is unbearable. They are almost entirely consumed from starvation. The Behringer widow whose husband had died in the prison, is so wretchedly poor that she has been going door to door begging for food for herself and her children. They indicate by their words that their husbands will not would not survive the imprisonment. "The tears of our children beg for the salvation of their fathers, but we trust the generosity of a gracious king." The back of the case file the note of the decision of the king after the performance by the pension chamber: "Peace Castle, the June 5, 1765. "George Scholl and Joachim Friederich Leist whom you transported to Rendsburg, may be unleashed; but they are still said to be guilty. Immediately see to it that you send them out of our kingdoms never to enter our lands again." With this order, the last imprisoned refugees of Prinzenmoor were free. The escape attempt had brought them great suffering, a mother and a father - both in the prime of life - died during the detention. Small children were left unprovided for while their fathers were sent into a dark, miserable earthly existence in the confinement cell.

Emigration to Russia

In May of 1765, the Denmark group began their journey to Russia from the port of Lübeck. Lübeck was one of three departure points for emigrants from Germany to find passage to Russia. People would gather there until sufficient numbers could be grouped together for the long sailing trip to the Russian port city of St. Petersburg. It usually took 9 to 11 days to travel from Lübeck to Kronstadt; however, in bad weather it sometimes took six weeks. Furthermore, unscrupulous sea captains, who were paid for food and accessories, sometimes prolonged the journey to increase their profits.

After their arrival in Kronstadt (now a Russian naval base on an island off the coast of St. Petersburg), the colonists would have departed by sea to Oranienbaum, (now known as Lomonosov, a small port on the Baltic, 16 nautical miles west of St. Petersburg.) The original name was derived from German and meant "orange tree". Oranienbaum was the emigrant colonists' first disembarkation point in Russia. It was here that most of the people were quarantined. A large number of colonists spent their first winter in Oranienbaum. Most groups traveled to assigned land in the spring and summer of the following year. Although the families were provided with warm clothes and sheepskin coats, it often happened that some of the travelers became ill due to cold and hunger. Because of the often chaotic settlement procedure, the people, once again, found themselves disillusioned. In spite of the promise that they could settle anywhere they liked, the families soon learned that they would be transported to distant, desolate areas of the Volga River region and elsewhere in Russia. Moreover, these areas were to be selected by the government and everyone regardless of their background would be required to now become farmers. The families waited weeks, sometimes months, before word came approving their final move. During the delay, the immigrants had to live in shanties and barracks that were furnished for them. The accommodations were so unsanitary, and drafty, that many fell ill and died before the groups even left. Finally, when orders did arrive for a group of colonists to depart to the interior of Russia, the families were moved to St. Petersburg to prepare for the final journey to the land which had been chosen for them.

The emigrating groups took different routes but the description of their ordeal is typical. The overland journey was long and arduous. Women and children had to ride in wagons piled high with baggage, while most of the men had to walk along beside them.

The land was a wild frontier. On the west side (bergseite) of the Volga River through which they passed, the banks rose steeply to a wooded range of hills with many deep gorges. This area was a favorite hiding place for robber bands and runaway serfs. Many people died while traveling overland to their new lands and were simply buried on the roadside. The journey may have included some river crossings as well. During the river journeys on the Volga, more colonists were lost. For their burial, the ships stopped alongside the the river bank, a grave was dug for the deceased, and relatives hastily erected a rough-hewn cross. Some of the ships were damaged during such stops as they moved too close to the shallow river banks. Unfortunately, that too, caused long and unpleasant delays. This might explain the earlier or later seasonal arrival of a particular emigrant group to their destination. Of the 26,676 colonists dispatched from Oranienbaum, 3,293 (12.5%) died in route.

Riebendorf Am Don

Sometime late in the year 1765, the colonists received an order from Catherine II stating that 60 families were to be selected to leave immediately and settle in an area near Ostrogoshsk. This was a stockaded town (basically a fort) located at the confluence of the Tikhaya Sosna River. It was area about 750 miles south east from where they were. The brothers **Johann Georg(George)** and **Matthias Boger** and their families were among those selected to go. Once more the families were making hard sacrifices for their faith and freedom. The route taken by this group has not been clearly determined; however, they arrived in Voronezh Gubernia, in the city/district of Ostrogoshsk in February 1766. It was winter and the government officials were not expecting them. There had been no arrangements made for the care of the people. The officials questioned their arrival but when they inquired about the group, Catherine II repeated her order. Apparently, Prince Tewjaschew (Tevyashev.) was to take responsibility for the immigrants. He agreed to see to their care. The colonists were then escorted to his lands and estate. The lands of Prince Tewjaschew were in the region Rybnoje, located in a broad river valley, by the little river Sosna, a tributary of the Don River. The prince wanted farms established on the borders of his estate. Catherine II wanted this colony to be an agricultural model for the Russian peasants. Apparently, Prince Tewjaschew was a good caretaker and generous in his support of the new settlement. He helped the families set up tent shelters along the banks of the Sosna River and gave them the necessary food and supplies. From all accounts, he always treated them well. And so... it was there, in the middle of a Russian winter, in makeshift shelters and with limited supplies that the new colony of Riebendorf was established.

Riebendorf of Central Russia

Riebendorf was truly unique among the German colonies in Russia. It began as an isolated community in central Russia some four hundred miles west of the other German villages along the Volga River. Located in the broad valley of the river Sosna, (a tributary of the Don River) Riebendorf grew in the midst of native Russians with no connection with other German colonies. This gave it a unique character that demonstrates what people can do when bonds of faith, love and family life become the strength that nurtures and builds a sustainable community. Reports are mixed with regard to the places in Germany where the first settlers of Riebendorf originated. Thirty four of the 60 families who established Riebendorf were said to be from the village of Sulzfeld near HeilBronn in Wurttemberg. It is also reported that people from Saxony, Prussia and the Black Forest lived for a short time in Riebendorf. The family records of our Bogers say they were from the village of Stetten...also near Heilbronn in Wurttemberg. In any event, all the people of this mixture of origins were of Evangelical Lutheran confession.

The name Riebendorf is a combination name. Riebens from the Russian word Riebens which means "fish" & "dorf" a German word meaning "village"...literally, "Fish Village." The word *dorf* means more than just a village. A German *dorf* meant people who were socially integrated through the same cultural beliefs, customs, and religion. The German villages were all established along religious lines...Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, and Mennonite. Catherine gave the villages home rule to minimize disputes and encourage people of like nature to settle together. During the 150 years of the colony, the Russians and the Riebendorfers did not mix or permit much outside influence on their culture.

The Lutheran church, through its congregation, had control of many aspects of the colony's life. It was free to make its own decisions, subject only to the governor of the province. The church could, for example, decide to deny citizenship to individuals deemed undesirable. If someone wanted to sell out, he needed permission from the church to do so, and his land and business could only be sold to someone approved of by the church. The practice was to hand down property through the family. The church could also approve or disapprove of a couple's marriage. By these means, foreign influence was prevented from affecting the group, especially since this colony was not subject to the ruling system like the Volga colonies were.

The Russian crown built the colony's first church. It was a wooden structure. In 1816 a fire destroyed it along with thirty five houses and adjoining buildings. This first church was later replaced with a large stone structure that could seat 500 people. It had stone arches. The church was built with voluntary donations and a percentage of the proceeds taken from the sale of locally grown tobacco. The roomy stone church was built in the center of the village. Across the street was the parsonage. On the other side, the adjoining churchyard and the building of the public officials. Next to them were the dwellings of the Sexton and the Schoolmasters. The school was located deeper in the village. Riebendorf provided public schooling for the children and also made help available for its poor.

Russia in the 1760's was a primitive agriculture land. Most of its population lived in the central provinces surrounding Moscow. Vast stretches of fertile land lay uncultivated. The masses of the Russian people were cruelly repressed serfs working the lands of the nobility, the church and the crown. They were bought and sold like cattle and flogged for petty offenses. Kept this way, the people lived in ignorance, fear and superstition with limited skills. The colony of Riebendorf was established, with the support of the Russian government, to serve as a model for the local Russian peasants in developing gardening and agriculture. Each family originally received approximately 160 acres of land. The entire area consisted of nearly 10,000 acres. However, as the population of the colony grew, the land was periodically redistributed and eventually it was necessary to give even more land to the colony. This was not a solution for very long. The shares grew too small as the population increased creating families of landless sons who would later move from Riebendorf to form new colonies.

Riebendorf was on the right side of the Sosna River. On the left side was only a limited amount of farm land, meadows and forests. The colony, with its gardens, cattle pastures and hay meadows, lay in the broad valley of the River Sosna...a tributary of the Don River. When the river Don overflowed, much of the territory would flood; but the village and gardens were located on higher ground and thus were spared the ravages of floods. The cultivated farm land was on the other side of the river, and the bridge that forded the stream would be under water at flood stage. Thus, the people were cut off from their farmland. Each year, repairing the bridge and the long earthen dam along the village required a lot of the residents' time.

The Riebendorf colonists were resourceful people who made the most of opportunities that came their way. They were hard workers who would undertake or try almost any new venture that would help them materially. They are credited with introducing the cultivation of potatoes and hog farming to the region. The nearby oak forests and swamps provided summer and winter feed for the hogs. The villagers found good markets all the way to Moscow for their bacon, hams, and lard. The hams were especially well cured and were in great demand. The families raised food both for themselves and to sell in markets. They grew cucumbers, sunflowers, melons and watermelons, goose berries, currants, carrots, green beans, carrots, beets, cabbage, potatoes, onions and sweet turnips. When the competition for one trade became too keen, the resourceful Riebendorfers began to produce sunflowers on a large scale. The colony built a large horse powered oil mill and the sunflower oil business thrived for decades. Tobacco farming was one of the earliest cultivated crops in the colony. Riebendorfers also made a kind of Holland cheese, developed fruit orchards and tended bee hives. The silkworm industry was also pursued. The colony eventually grew large amounts of tobacco. Riebendorf tobacco was sold in Moscow, Charkow and St. Petersburg. The primary focus of the colony, however, was grain production. Riebendorfers were regional leaders in grain farming and are honored as pioneers in this field. They also earned wages by transporting goods to Woronesch. (Voronezh) In the early years of the colony, there were no railroads; so the goods were transported overland in the winter by wagon or sleds.

In the summer the families moved out to live on their land where they farmed. They lived in tents in the field. The babies that had to be nursed went to the fields with the mother. The small children too little to work stayed at home with grandma and grandpa in town. The children big enough to work in the fields went with the mother and father. In the summer the farm animals went out to a pasture where a herder watched all the animals. In the winter the animals were kept in town. The animals raised were cows, horses, sheep, hogs, ducks, geese and chickens. The women and their daughters of Riebendorf were industrious, energetic workers and what they could accomplish in a day was amazing. The young girls married early, usually between 18 to 20 years of age. The newlyweds often remained in the home of one of the parents until they could establish their own home and make their own way. Children were considered a blessing and there were many. The authorities encouraged and respected family growth and the Russian authorities gave recognition of this. In the years between 1815 until 1820 further distributions of land were given to the colony. This speaks well of the Riebendorfers.

Their industrious and energetic activities were recognized and appreciated. Since there were ample forests and swamps in the area, the dwellings and other buildings were constructed of heavy timbers nailed together. The outside walls were covered with bricks. Most of the roofs were covered with thatch...tall grass mixed with clay as a fire resister. The houses usually consisted of three rooms...one kitchen and one entrance room where the stoves were located in the winter. The rooms were tidy, warm and dry. The yards were surrounded with a tall fence with high gates that could be closed at night to keep out the wolves that would come in from the forests during the cold winter nights.

Fate followed in the dust of our Boger family's footsteps as they walked those long roads from Wurttemberg, Germany to Schleswig, Denmark to St. Petersburg Russia and lastly to the founding of the colony Riebendorf. The lives and journeys of the people of the Denmark group will cross with the path of our bloodline over and over in some very interesting ways.

Matthew Boger (1716-1765) died before ever seeing the land he fought so hard to reach. His wife, Maria Katharina had their last baby in 1766; a little girl named Anna Maria Katharina. She and the baby both died in 1766 in the new settlement of Riebendorf. The children they left behind were 18, 16, 15, 12, 5 and 3. They were likely raised by his brother Johann Georg and his wife Christina.

Johann Georg Boger (1711-1768) Johann Georg and his wife Christina lived to see the early beginnings of the Riebendorf colony. Hans Georg died in 1768. He was 57 years old. His wife Christina died in 1769. She was 59 years old. Hans Georg and Christina were to become Anna Boger Nufer's paternal great great grandparents. It is their son Johannes Boger who carries the paternal bloodline forward to Anna.

Johannes Boger(1748-)was 13 years old when the family originally emigrated from Germany to Schleswig Denmark in 1761. He was 16 during the prison ordeal and 17 years old during the family's passage to Russia in 1765. Records find him marrying a woman named widow named Jakobina in Riebendorf in 1769. He was then 21. She was 35 and a widow with 3 children. They had no children. He marries again in 1778. His wife was Justina d. Michael...no last name known. He was 30. She was 29. They had seven children.

At that time, Johannes and Justina were living on farmstead #49. One of the crops they were growing was tobacco. They had six more children over the next 19 years. Johannes and Christina were to become Anna Boger Nufer's paternal great grandparents. Their oldest son Wilhelm Boger is Anna Boger Nufer's paternal grandfather. Wilhelm was born in 1779.

Wilhelm Boger (1779-1840) was among the first generation of children to be born and brought up in the young colony of Riebendorf.. He married Magdalena d. Johann (1791-) in 1807. He was 28 and she was 16 years old. They had six children...four girls and two boys. One of the boys died at age 11. Magdalena died either during or shortly after the birth of their last daughter in 1828. By the dates of their birth, the children she left behind were ages 5, 12, 15, 20 and a newborn daughter, if she lived. Wilhelm and Magdalena were to become Anna Boger Nufer's paternal grandparents. Their son Michael was 15 when his mother died. He was to grow up and become Anna Boger Nufer's father. Wilhelm married again in 1830. His second wife was Christina d. Jakob (1792-). They had no children together but she was the children's stepmother and raised them. Wilhelm died ten years after they were married in 1840.

Michael Boger (1813-) Not much is know about Michael Boger. He spent his childhood in Riebendorf. He had four sisters and a brother. His only brother, Johann, died when the boys were growing up. Johann was eleven when he died and Michael would have been nine at the time of his brother's death. There is no evidence that the girls survived their childhood either and his mother died when Michael was 15. His father, William died in 1840 when Michael was 27 years old. It is likely that Michael left Riebendorf near that time for South Russia and the North Caucasus to establish a farmstead of his own. He married Elizabeth Kiebe (1824-1853) and they began their life together in a daughter colony of Riebendorf in about 1844. She was 20 years old and he was 31.

Elizabeth Kiebe (1824-1853) When Michael Boger married Elizabeth Kiebe the family history once again twists back to the Denmark families. Elizabeth grew up in Riebendorf. The Kiebe families and the Boger families were likely friends with one another. Their great grandparents had shared a deep connection in Denmark and the story of their ordeal was no doubt passed down in family stories. Peter Freymuller is the connection to Anna's maternal line.

Philip Peter Freymuller (1723-) One of the men arrested in the Denmark desertion event was a man named Philip Peter Freymuller.(1723-) Peter and his wife Maria Elizabeth (1725-) had three young children with them in Denmark. Their daughter Maria Saolomea Freymuller 1754-)was 10 years old during the prison incident. She grew up to marry Johann Michael Kiebe (1736-1754)

Johann Michael Kiebe (1736-) Johann Michael was twice widowed and although he was not involved in the Denmark incident, he lived in Flensburg/Tonder at the same time Marie Elizabeth Boger and her children were being held there by the Danish authorities. It is likely that Johann Michael Kiebe and his first wife Christina met Marie Elizabeth Boger and her children there in Tonder. His farmstead was also reported abandoned in 1765. Christina Kiebe died in 1766 after arriving in Riebendorf. They had one child Christina Kiebe who was born and also died in 1766. It looks as if she and the baby died during the birth. Johann Michael married his second wife in 1766 and she too died in 1766. Johann Michael Kiebe then married Maria Elizabeth Freymuller (1754-)in 1774. She was 20. He was 38. They had three sons and a daughter. Their son Johann Michael (1775-) grew up to send the maternal path toward the Boger bloodline.

Johann Michael Kiebe (1775-)married Eva d. Emanuel in 1798 in Riebendorf. He was 23. She was 19. Together, they had nine children over a 26 year span of time. All of them born in Riebendorf. Eva was 45 when the last child was born. Their second son Friedrich will become Elizabeth Kiebe's father. Johann Michael Kiebe ... Anna's maternal grandfather.

Friedrich Kiebe (1805-1848) Friedrich Kiebe married a woman whose name is lost to history. They had four children. Elizabeth (1824-1853) Katharina (1828-) Gabriel (1831- and Anna (1833-) Friedrich will die in the cholera epidemic of 1848 that took the lives of 12% of the population of Riebendorf. His brother Andreas and his sister Katharina and their families will help to establish the early daughter colony of Olgenfeld..

Elizabeth d. Friedrich Kiebe (1824-1853) Elizabeth d. Friedrich Kiebe married Michael Boger in Riebendorf in about 1844. Their first child, Magdalena was born in Riebendorf in 1845. Michael lost his mother, Magdalena, when he was 15; it is likely his firstborn daughter was named Magdalena in her honor. Their second child was a boy named Friedrich. He was born in Riebendorf in 1847. He, of course, was named for Elizabeth's father.

This is where fate twists again because Elizabeth and Michael's third child was Anna Boger Nufer and she was not born in Riebendorf.; however, the events of her life will find her returning to Riebendorf several times, keeping her connected with the people of this colony for the rest of her life. Both Anna's mother's and her father's bloodlines trace back to the Denmark families. Anna Boger Nufer's maternal line traces to Phillip Peter and Maria Elizabeth Freymuller and her paternal line traces to Johann Georg and Christina Boger. These couples were Anna Boger Nufer's great, great, great, grandparents.

Anna Boger Nufer (1851-1919) was born in Bethanien, Petigorsk in the North Caucasus region of Russia in 1851. Her story will begin to unfold from this point forward.

North Caucasus Daughter Colonies

The Caucasian Line describes one of the fortified frontiers established in Russia to guard and expand the borders of the empire. The Caucasian Line began in 1735 with the construction of a fortress at Kizlyar, near the Caspian Sea. In response to the 1739 treaty between Russia and Turkey, a series of fortresses were then constructed from Kizlyar eastward along the front range of the Caucasian Mountains eventually reaching the mouth of the Kuban River as it enters the Sea of Azov. As a result of the Russo-Turkish War (1768-1774), the Russians began expansion into the North Caucasus region. Count Pavel Potemkin, cousin of Grigori Potemkin who was a favorite of Catherine the Great, was named viceroy over the Caucasus and arranged for the expansion of the Caucasian Line. A number of German colonists were relocated to the Caucasus in settlements that were being established along the Caucasian Line. Being near established fortresses and Russian cities made this area more attractive for settlement.

Thousands of people who came from Riebendorf began forming other colonies in Russia. The earlier ones were located in the North Caucasus region. In general, many North Caucasus colonies were made up of Volga Germans who left their home colonies due to the unfavorable land ownership/inheritance system. The growth and success of the Mother colony helped to establish daughter colonies later on.

Other events also contributed to the decision to start new colonies. Riebendorf was spared the cholera epidemic of 1836; however, 12% of the colony died of cholera in 1848. In 1850, half the colony was destroyed by fire...78 houses and adjoining buildings. This fire occurred only two years following the cholera epidemic. It was not possible to rebuild enough houses to meet the needs of those left homeless and bereft at the loss of so many families and friends. It must have been a very sad time. Some people stayed to rebuild. Others left to form daughter colonies.

For this next section of the history, I am indebted to the Eckhardt family history. Their family journal shares this description of what early immigration of Germans to the North Caucasus region of South Russia may have been like. It was so well written that the following section was copied from their journal.

"The immigration to the daughter colonies to the North Caucasus caused those who were willing to go great hardships and trouble. The scouts or land-seekers (those who located the land for the immigrants), who for the most part were farmers, organized treks (wagon trains) which were loaded down with provisions (food), household goods, and farm equipment. The wagons were drawn by horses. On these covered wagons sat men, women, and children. Horses, cows, and the young animals were driven at the rear of the trek by the young people. The wagon trains resembled a wretched worm, that during the day, on virtually impassable routes, creaked slowly and tiresomely along, and in the night camped (rested) on the open steppe (prairie). Caravans of people wound their way across the Russian steppes, where the roads were often mere trails, in unending wormlike processions. The wagons were piled high with earthly possessions, on top of which sat the women and children, while the young men and boys drove the livestock on foot. Exactly how our Eckardt (and Boger) ancestors made the trip will never be known and can only be imagined. Often, the trip took weeks before the destination was reached. Some of the wagon trains were surprised by the onset of winter. The immigrants experienced cold weather and illness; and without the presence of members of the medical profession, they treated the illness as best as they knew...with folk medicine and prayer. In this manner, until 1875, Volga Germans from the middle Volga region and Black Sea Germans from the vast realm of South Russia traveled to the North Caucasus.

After 1875-76, when the Trans-Siberian railroad had been completed, the movement of goods and people was made easier. Then, the the newly-constructed trans-caucasus railroad could provide transportation for immigrants. The settlers were able to order railroad cars; which they loaded with provisions, household goods, farm equipment, and livestock...all of their possessions...and traveled in this manner to the North Caucasus. Although the trip with a train was faster than a horse-drawn wagon and more pleasant, the settlers, nevertheless, had to endure many inconveniences; such as waiting long hours in the train yards, cold nights which they had to spend in the unheated train cars, water shortages etc. Since the Russian government placed a large worth on settling the North Caucasus with farmers, the government guaranteed the settlers moderate costs for their transportation and freight. Once at their destination however, the settlers found no lodging on their newly acquired land. They were forced to erect temporary earth huts (semljanki) out of clay and earth in which they lived for a period of up to two years due to the lack of building materials.

Because of the dampness and unfamiliar climate (living conditions they were not acclimated to) the majority became ill with the so-called "Klimafieber" (malaria) and many died. In order to guard (defend) against the illness, the settlers had to alter their living quarters between the lowlands and the healthier uplands. Flies and other pests tormented man and animals. Mice caused considerable damage to crops in the field. Grasshoppers destroyed newly-established orchards and vegetable gardens, and recently emerged seedlings of grain crops. Numerous surprises came from the native people living in the Caucasus causing fear and terror to develop among the settlers. The villages lost a large number of their cattle (livestock), which the settlers so badly needed for their agricultural enterprises. The thievery, which was a daily occurrence in some settlements, was gradually stopped by establishing self-defense procedures. Additionally there were crop failures in the early years, which increased the distress and poverty among the settlers. Under these circumstances, some of the new settlers lost their zeal for settlement and returned to their old homeland. By and large however, the majority stayed in the area and on their place of settlement. Other people have reported more favorable conditions. One Mennonite lady who lived in Canada, told that it was a very beautiful area, with vast fields of poppies. There were all sorts of animals, like the ostrich. The weather was very much like California. It didn't snow much and didn't get very cold in the winter. You could see the snow-capped Caucasus mountains.

On the other side of the mountains were very adventurous treks. It was rugged with deep gorges, and was densely wooded. Pete Geyer's daughter told of how they had to take their grain to town or to another village where they sold their grain in caravans for protection. She told of how the Cossacks (Russian military units) would ride through town on their horses shooting wildly, aimlessly, and how the lack of law and order was similar to the old West. There was not necessarily punishment because someone shot another."

The German colonies of the North Caucasus were all daughter colonies. People from the mother colonies began to move into the North Caucasus around 1840 and even much earlier. In 1853, Riebendorf sent its sons to the Jeisk region along the Sea of Azov to found Michaelstahl. Michaelstahl was near the mouth of the Sea of Azov. From this came Olgenfeld, Ruhethal and Marienthal 1866-1867. The largest new settlement took place in 1878 with Peter-Paul, Neu-Hoffnung and the Dreiling Chutor. Eigenheim began in 1879 and Balbanowka in 1888. The last of the daughter colonies of Riebendorf was established in 1908. It was the Peterfeld colony in Siberia in the province of Petropawlosk. Riebendorf itself, had a population of 1,270 in the year 1905 after having contributed 2,941 people toward its many daughter colonies.

Bethanien, Karras, Pyatagorsk

Although there are formally recorded dates for the formation of the daughter colonies in the Jeisk, and Taganrog parish records, there were pioneering efforts in the new areas of South Russia much earlier. Records for these early movements are not as easy to trace. The village of Bethanien is one example. The establishment of Bethanien, Petigorsk in the North Caucasus where Anna Boger Nufer was born remains somewhat of a mystery. Apparently, this village was one of the earlier settlements of the region and was founded by Germans. People settled there illegally in the 1830's but the colony wasn't officially established until 1836 when the government renamed it Konstantinoyka in honor of the heir to the throne. However, Germans have always referred to the settlement by its older first name, Bethanien, even to this day. It is also referred to as Bethany No. 4. Family records say Bethanien was a part of the Pyatigorsk parish and the village was located about 3 miles east of the city of Pyatagorsk.

Alexanderdorf was founded in the North Caucasus near the Nalchik Fortress in the Pyatigorsk District by Volga German colonists in 1843. So it is possible that the village of Bethanien was a part of this early settlement. Mennonite families also moved to the area in the 1860s; however, Bethanien retained its Lutheran heritage and still kept their confessional independence. The Lutheran Pastor who led the parish was rarely in the community so the Mennonites and the Lutherans often joined for prayer meetings especially during the holidays. One can travel to Bethanien today where a museum has collected a lot of information and relics from the early German settlements. Remains from early cemeteries were found when the town excavated for the new school. These remains were relocated to the current cemetery. It is touching to know that citizens from the town held a special ceremony for this relocation and has created a monument there to honor the early people.

Another exception to even earlier settlement in the North Caucasus was the colony Karras which was also near Pyatagorsk. This colony was established by the Moravian Brethren in 1804, and whose residents, in part, came from Scotland. Karras was unusual in the fact that it was not founded by Germans but by Scottish missionaries. However, Germans settled in and around Karras beginning in 1815. It is likely than Bethanien was connected with one of these settlements. Because Bethanien and Karras were located very near to one another and both near to Pyatagorsk, we can use information about both Karras and Pyatagorsk to help us understand and imagine what life was like for our ancestors who were living there. A descriptive report of Karras appeared in the Russian newspaper *Novoye Slovo*, published in New York by a Mr. Ushakov, entitled "Out of the Past," in which the unique colony Karras is featured. It is interesting to hear something of this kind from a Russian who knew the German colonies from personal observation. The historical facts he mentions are taken from a book by F. Batalin, entitled *The Pyatigorsk Region and the Caucasian Mineral Springs*, which appeared in 1861. The following descriptions are pieces from the Ushakov report:

"In the government of Stavropol near Pyatigorsk, at the foot of the Beshtau Mountain, there lies the Scottish colony Karras, a former mission station of Scottish missionaries, which is today inhabited principally by Germans. Karras lies midway between Shelesnovodsk and Pyatigorsk and is known locally simply as Shottlanka (Scotlandia). It was the second railway station from Pyatigorsk and lay close to the railway line, surrounded by dense forests, meadowland, and mineral springs. For this reason the founders called the place "Carus," meaning dear, beloved, valuable, but the word was later corrupted to "Karras."

In 1802 the Scottish Missionary Society asked the Russian government for permission to establish itself at Pyatigorsk for the purpose of spreading Christian teachings among the Caucasian peoples, particularly the Circassians and Tatars. The same year the leader of the mission, Henry Brunton, with one aide, arrived at Pyatigorsk. A decree of the Czar, in 1807, gave the Scottish colony a land grant of 7000 dessiatines. The Scottish settlers were also given the privilege of buying slaves from the Circassians and other mountain peoples, on condition that they would free these slaves after a few years.

Around 1815 Germans began to come into the village and were soon the dominant element. We have no definite information regarding the origin of these Germans. An old lady living in Pyatigorsk told me, "We always called them Volga People." It is very probable that Volga Germans, as well as Black Sea Germans, came here relatively early. By 1856 the population of the village was 307, of whom 153 were male and 154 female. The majority by this time were Germans, but there were ten baptized Kabardinians. It is interesting to note that the Scots succeeded in establishing a Christian community in this area at a time when the mountain peoples of the region were still making raids on the Russian frontier towns Shelesnovodsk, Pyatigorsk, and Kislovodsk.

Karras developed very rapidly. The soil was fertile; the forests provided building lumber and wild fruits and sheltered numerous wild animals: wild boars, bears, deer, foxes, wolves, rabbits, pheasants. All types of people were accepted in the village, so long as they were prepared to live according to community ordinances. As early as 1856 intermarriage among the ethnic groups was common: Scots married Germans, both married Kabardinians and Circassians, the Kabardinians and Circassians married German girls. Gradually Russians, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Poles also settled here. There was room for everybody. Land was apportioned to all at no cost; fishing and tree-cutting were open to all. The majority of the population was evangelical in faith. A large church of white stone was built. Among others there served here as pastor for a time an Armenian who had perfect command of Russian, German, and Armenian languages.

Economic progress was clearly visible. A lime and brick factory and a tannery were erected and large vineyards and orchards were established. In the vineyards there grew several varieties of grapes, but especially the muscadine.

The orchards had the best types of plums, apples, pears, cherries, apricots, and peaches. There were usually also a few Greek nut trees. The finest potatoes were cultivated. The colonists' farms provided the towns of Pyatigorsk, Mineralny Vody, Shelesnovodsk, and Kislovodsk with an abundance of produce: butter, eggs, milk (sweet, sour, skimmed, and raw), cottage cheese, sheep cheese, goats' milk, meat, chickens, ducks, geese.... They also supplied a variety of sausages and hams and several types of drinks. In every farmyard there were 200-300 chickens, five or six pigs ready for slaughter, and twenty or thirty young pigs.

The Germans were also known for their love of flowers. From early spring to late fall they offered flowers for sale: snowdrops, violets, lilies of the valley, and various kinds of lilacs, all lovingly wrapped in fern leaves so that they would last longer. In June the linden, chestnut, and acacia trees were in bloom. Great swarms of bees constantly hovered about them. Several varieties of honey were marketed: acacia honey, linden honey, buckwheat honey, and flower honey. In the fall many varieties of roses and chrysanthemums were sold. Tasty preserves were prepared from rose petals."

Pyatigorsk is located in the South of Stavropol region in the middle of the Caucasian Mineral Waters area. The name of the town means "Five Mountains Town". This place is a famous Russian mineral water resort and even during the time of the tsars the nobles would come to drink, bathe and relax in mineral waters of Pyatigorsk and recover their health. Pyatigorsk is one of the oldest spa resorts in Russia. The city was founded at the foot of Mt Mashuk in 1780. The health resort provides unique medical resources, and its underground wealth supplies 50 different mineral springs of 5 different types. One of the most effective spas of Russia, it has been developed on the basis of the local curative springs, medical mud taken from Lake Tambukan located 10 km from Pyatigorsk, and the mild climate of the area. It is one of 116 historical towns of the Russian Federation. The history of Pyatigorsk is rich with bright, significant events, and now it is the cultural center of Stavropol region as this land preserves the memory of one of the greatest poets of the world Mikhail Lermontov.

Anna Christina Boger Nufer (1851-1919)

Anna Christina Boger was born on December 26, 1851 following the joyful celebration of Christmas. Anna's parents were Elizabeth Kiebe (1824-1854) and Michael Boger (1813-). Anna had a sister named Magdalena (1845-) and a brother named Friedrich (1847-1857) Anna was born in the village of Bethanien. (Konstantinovske). This village was located about 3 miles east of the city of Pyatigorsk in a region of Russia northeast of the Black Sea about 300 miles from Sea of Azov. It is located alongside the Caucasus Mountain Range. The name Pyatigorsk means *Five Mountains*. Pyatigorsk (Russian spelling) is a beautiful city even today and is enjoyed for its warm climate. The black soil of this land is among the richest in the world.

Life for Anna's family must have been a complicated mixture of happiness and tragedy. Villages of that time were often hit with diseases such as cholera. Whole families, indeed large parts of villages, could be wiped out within a few days. Because of the nearby swamps, malaria was also common. It may have been one of these diseases that took the life of Anna's mother in 1854. Elizabeth was only 30 years old when she died. She left behind three small children; Magdalena was 9, Friedrich was 7 and Anna was 2 1/2. Apparently, the children lived with their father until 1857. The boy, Friedrich, died that year. He was 10 years old. Information in family letters say that after Elizabeth died, Michael returned to Riebendorf and left Anna and her sister in the care of relatives. It is a strong probability that Michael Boger was a part of the creation of the daughter colony of Michaelstahl following his wife's death. He may have returned there to develop his property and increase his land ownership. After the fire that destroyed much of colony in 1850, many Riebendorf families had already begun to emigrate to the Kuban.

The Kuban is a geographic region of Southern Russia surrounding the Kuban River, on the Black Sea between the Don Steppe, Volga Delta and the Caucasus, and separated from the Crimean Peninsula to the west by the Kerch Strait. An administrative province of the Russian Empire, the Kuban Oblast was created in 1860 and is generally referred to as the North Caucasus. This first daughter colony of Riebendorf was founded in the Kuban Province by 30 families. Built on the crown land of Count Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontzov in 1852, it was first called Vorontzov.(Woronzowka). It has also been referred to as Michaelsdorf, which means Michael's farmstead. In 1861 the colony was renamed Michaelstahl at the request of the residents. The conflicting dates for the founding of this colony which may have to do with its name. Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov was a Russian prince and field-marshal, renowned for his success in the Napoleonic wars, and most famous for his participation in the Caucasian War from 1844 to 1853. His vision and progressive plans for the region made him much loved by both the Russian and the German people. The name Michaelstahl was likely chosen in his honor.

Located on the east coast of the Sea of Azov, Michaelstahl began as a collection of five farms: the Lechner farm, the Boger Farm, the Semke farm, the Deutsch farm and the Scharf farm. (During the soviet collectivization period in 1930, the three farms (Boger, Lechner and Scharf) were converted into one.) It is very likely that Michael Boger owned the Boger farm. Family letters explain that Michael had a large amount of land. His property was rented out to relatives and was to be held in trust until the girls were of marrying age.

Anna was left in the care of Magdalena and Gottfried Kehl. Nothing more is known about Anna's sister Magdalena or what happened to her. For a long time it was also unclear who these relatives were. However, after many years of searching through genealogy records and websites for people whose generation and lineage would connect with Anna, a married couple was found who are a strong possibility. Anna's father, Michael Boger (1813-) and Magdalena Stoll Kehl(1814-1881) were second cousins. Michael's father Wilhelm Boger (1779-1840) and Magdalena's mother, Sophia Boger Stoll were first cousins. So Michael Boger and Magdalena Stoll Kehl were related. It is likely that they both grew up in Riebendorf. Something else seems to support the idea that Magdalena Stoll Kehl was indeed Anna Christina's surrogate mother. Magdalena Kehl was living in Olgenfeld at the time of her death in 1881. Anna's family was also living in Olgenfeld at that time. Olgenfeld was a colony established by families from the mother colony of Riebendorf. In 1866 fourteen founding families of Michaelstahl bought the estate Schibbeliwka and organized the colony of Olgenfeld. Michael Boger may have been one of these fourteen families. That same year, more colonist's bought more estate land and founded Ruhental. In 1871 Eigenfeld was organized the same way. These three colonies were located on or near the River Don. They were about 49 miles southwest of Rostov, a port city on the Don River. Rostov lies about 20 miles from the Azov Sea.

It is not known what happened to Anna's father; however, Michael Boger left instructions for Anna to be left in the care of the Magdalena and Gottfried Kehl until her confirmation; at that time she was to marry and inherit her father's estate. Unfortunately, the system only supported legal transfer of land through a male line. The ownership of the land that had been in Anna family was negated by her relatives who claimed that under Russian law women could not rightfully own land. As an adult, Anna applied for her title to the land but it would become entangled in the quagmire of the Russian court system for over thirty years!

Anna Boger married Christoph Boger January 4, 1870. She was nineteen years old. He was 23. Christoph was born in 1847 in Riebendorf and it was likely that the young couple grew up knowing one another and either married and lived in Riebendorf, Michaelstahl or Olgenfeld. It is likely that Anna's marriage was arranged by her relatives and the church. This was a common custom of the time. Marriage decisions were made by parents or guardians and the church. Evidently, her father did not live to see her married. The weddings of that time, and especially the wedding feast, involved a large group of family and friends and in some cases whole villages. It was customary for the parents of the groom to host the wedding reception which in some cases, lasted three or more days.

It is curious that Anna was born a Boger and married a Boger but not unusual. Several explanations are possible. During that time, when much death and tragedy were a common occurrence in closed communities such as Riebendorf, families often intermarried. Christoph Boger and Anna Christine Boger were, in fact, were third cousins. Christoph's father, also named Christoph Boger, was born in 1815 and his mother, Magdalena Walter, was born in 1822. They had five children: Christina 1844, Christoph 1847, Johann 1852, Michael 1854 and Christina 1855. (family letters say that Christoph's brother, Michael, was still living in 1892 and record reflect that Michael BOGER was listed as a householder in Olgenfeld in 1894) Christoph's lineage traces back to Johann Christoph Boger. (1740-) This man was imprisoned for three weeks during the Denmark incident. Anna Christina Boger's lineage traces to his brother Johann Boger (1748-) who was 13 at the time of the Denmark ordeal. He was one of the children held in confinement with his mother during the Denmark incident. This means the couple shared the same great great great grandparents. Johann George and Christina Boger.

Anna and Christoph followed the tradition of being *Kinderrich* which was common among the Volga Germans. The number of children per family averaged from ten to fourteen. Anna and Christoph's first child, Christina, was born on November 28, 1870. On October 26, 1873, twins arrived. The boy died. The girl, Amalia, lived. The third child, Magdalena, arrived July 2, 1876. Katherine was born on November 13, 1878. Paul arrived in 1881. In a culture which put such a premium on boys, his birth must have been celebrated with great joy.

Family letters say that after Paul was born, Christoph and Anna moved to Olgenfeld. The climate there was milder and Christoph was ill. It may be that the move was for his health. It is also likely they lived on her father's land. Their last child, Wilhelmina, was born in Olgenfeld on February 26, 1884. Christoph was ill for about five years. He died in Olgenfeld in July of 1887. Anna was thirty-six. She was now a widow with six children. It was a desperate situation. The children's ages were: Christina 17, Amalia 14, Magdalena 11, Katherine 9, Paul 6, and Wilhelmina 3.

Anna returned to Riebendorf to live with relatives. She and the older girls worked to support the family. More than likely, it was cleaning, cooking, laundry, and garden work. It was during this time that Anna began to be courted by a man named Christoph Nufer. He came from a well established family in Riebendorf. The Nufers along with the Bogers are listed among its founding families. Christoph Nufer's lineage connects with both the Boger and the Nufer bloodline. It also traces back to one of the men held in the Denmark incident...Hans Adam Nufer. Christoph was a widower. His wife, Susanna Scharf, had died, leaving six children. Their names were Katherine(16), Leah(13), twins, Martin and William(11), Fred(7) and Alex(5).

Anna and Chris Nufer married on November 1, 1890. Anna's oldest daughter, Christina, was already married to Matthew Kehl and was living in Odessa. Amalia was 17, Magdalena 14, Katherine 12, Paul 9, and Wilhelmina 6. When she was a grown woman, Wilhelmina remembered the wealth of the Nufer household. They had servants to do the housework and cooking. She also recalled servants scrubbing the steps outside the family home. The family was driven to church in an open carriage.

The first summer in the Nufer home, Paul came home one morning and asked if he could go swimming. It was a hot, July day. It was customary for the local boys to swim in the river which ran through the town. Anna told him he could not go. Paul disobeyed her and went anyway. During the noon hour, a message came to the home that her son had drowned. He was only 10 years old. Anna went to the river and brought his body home. The shock of losing her only son was a heavy tragedy to bear and it is likely that she was pregnant at the time. Chris and Anna had a son, John, born later that same year.

Family tragedy and a worsening situation in Russia made Anna and Chris begin to dream of immigrating to America. Chris' sister Susanna, and her husband Dr. John Deutsch, shared the same dream. So, in 1892, the two families prepared to leave Russia for a new homeland in the United States. The party included Chris and Anna and their ten children, Susanna and John Deutsch and their daughter Antoinette. Traveling with them also was Frederich Deutsch, his wife Louisa and their three children, Christina, Johnathan, and Anna. Anna's oldest daughter Christina and Chris' daughter Katherine were already married with families of their own. They stayed behind in Russia. At the time of immigration Chris was 44 and Anna was 41. The children's ages were: Amalia 19, Magdalena 16, Katherine 14, Wilhelmina 8, Leah 15, Martin and William 13, Fred 9, Alex 7, and the baby, John, was 1. The group left Marianthal in southern Russia, on March 17, 1892. They traveled back through Germany and sailed from the port at Bremen on the ship Weser on March 24th. The trip across the Atlantic Ocean took seventeen days. They arrived in New York on April 10th, 1892. This was the first month that the Ellis Island station opened and the group immigrated through it into the United States on April 14, 1892.

After three days of continuous travel by train, they arrived in Russell, Kansas. They were met by Victor Graff who had immigrated the year before. He may have been a family friend or related to the group somehow. In any event, the families stayed with him for three weeks. Then, they all looked for farms and settled three miles northeast of Hoisington, Kansas. There, the twins Elizabeth and Louisa were born. When the babies were only nine months old, they contracted pneumonia. Elizabeth, the larger and stronger twin, died. She is buried somewhere on that first farm. Amalia and Magdalena were now marrying age. Magdalena married Phillip Popp and moved to a farm in the Hoisington area. Amalia married John Schneider. She died in 1900 during childbirth at the age of 27.

After three years of failed crops and losing the money they had invested in land, the family was forced to move on. Chris, Anna, and the remaining children, John Deutsch and family, and Victor Graff and his family left the Hoisington area in 1895 packed in a *hooligan* wagon. They headed for Missouri in search of better opportunity. Victor Graff and his family settled in Lawrence County. The rest continued on their journey. After six weeks of traveling, the group finally reached their destination which was Hickory County, Missouri. It was August of 1895. Here, they took up farming again but the first crop was flooded out. They replanted, but it was too late and the second crop was killed by an early frost.

After two years of failed crops, they moved to the Walker farm in Arcadia, Missouri. This was in Crawford County on the border of Kansas and Missouri. The families stayed there for one year and in 1898 returned to Kansas and rented the Schilling farm near Mulberry in Crawford County. In December of the same year, they moved to a widow's farmhouse and lodged with her until spring.

In March of 1899, the group moved westward and took up farming on the Winschen farm near Brazelton. Here they joined up with John Ochs who had married Katherine Boger the year before. In this place, the families had a large orchard. Chris Nufer, John Deutsch, and John Ochs went on an expedition to Oklahoma to take up homesteads. Finding good land, they returned to bring their families to Oklahoma. In 1901, the party arrived in Guthry, Oklahoma. They spent three weeks resting on the banks of the Cimmaron River. Eventually, they took up farming near Baker, Oklahoma. The house they lived in was described by John Deutsch as "...forsaken by God and men and the environments were a kingdom of snakes and reptiles." In January of 1902, the group leased a quarter section of land in Indian territory five miles northeast of Avery, Oklahoma. There, the families worked for three years in the cotton fields trying to establish themselves. Finally, discouraged and low on funds, the families sold everything by auction sales and made preparations to emigrate to Canada. They left Avery, Oklahoma in March of 1905 and arrived by train in Calgary, Alberta four days later. The party rested in Calgary for three days and then went on to Innisfail. Innisfail was the point of immigration into Canada. It was there that the group parted ways. The Deutsch family stayed in Innisfail renting a large house overlooking a lake. John Deutsch and John Ochs wanted to try homesteading again. Chris and Anna left for Wetaskawin. They were joined by John and Katherine Ochs later that same fall. It must have been a difficult period of time. The thirteen years of travel and hard work while trying to establish themselves in a permanent place was discouraging. Chris and Anna were often homesick and talked many times of returning to Russia. Chris had brought his inheritance to America but had lost much of it in the various land purchases.

During the moves from place to place across the prairies of Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma, much of the travel was done in covered wagons. The families had camped along rivers and lived in Indian territory. As an adult, Wilhelmina later recalled hearing Indian drums at night and seeing young braves riding their horses across the grasslands and near the creeks.

Sometimes, the family made trips back into Kansas to visit Wilhelmina's sisters Magdalena and Amalia who were still there. It was during one of these trips that Wilhelmina met a young man named George Bitter. (George was also born in Russia in the Volga village of Lauwe in 1882) Wilhelmina...called Minnie by her family.. had grown into a beautiful young woman with long black hair and bright, blue eyes. She also had a happy nature and an independent spirit. One Sunday afternoon, George and a friend rode their horses out to the Popp farm where Minnie was staying with her sister. He was *smitten* as they say. There wasn't time for a proper courtship because the Nufer family was making plans to immigrate to Canada. George told Minnie of his feelings and said that if she would agree to marry him, he would send her the money to return to Kansas. Minnie didn't give George her answer but agreed to write to him from Canada.

Minnie left with her family for the immigration to Canada in March of 1905. For a time, Wilhelmina worked as a waitress in the old hotel by the railroad station in Innisfail serving the railway passengers. The town of Innisfail has preserved this hotel and the railroad station. They are on display there today. Minnie had made up her mind to marry George but her step-father and her brother-in-law had other plans. They did not believe that George was a suitable choice for a husband because of his poor health. George had a serious asthmatic condition and was often ill. They had chosen another man for her to marry. He was a wealthy bachelor who had a large farm. However, Minnie was writing to George in secret and had accepted his proposal of marriage. He wired her the money to return to Kansas. Minnie confided in her mother and Anna agreed to help her escape the loveless marriage that had been planned for her. They packed all of Minnie's belongings and gathered what they could in the way of a dowry. This consisted of linens which were sewn inside of potato sacks. Minnie got on the midnight train in Innisfail and returned to Kansas to marry George. Later, her sister Katherine would shake her head and talk about "...poor Minnie... arriving penniless and with that bundle to marry into a bunch of in-laws who were well established in farming." But, time in a new land with new freedoms had begun to bring changes to family customs and traditions. Anna must have learned during her lifetime the value of love over a chosen marriage. Her courage and determination to help her daughter set in motion the freedoms and choices we enjoy as women of her bloodline today. Anna was a strong woman with much resolve. She worked for years to retrieve her inheritance. When at last, her battle with the courts of Russia settled in her favor, Anna used the money she received to help her daughter Christina and her family immigrate from Russia to Canada.

Wilhelmina (Minnie) Boger and George Bitter married on May 18, 1905. The ceremony was held at the old schoolhouse District 90 north of Susank, Kansas. The Reverend Westphal presided over the ceremony. As was the German custom, the wedding festivities lasted for three days. Minnie stayed at her sister Magdalena's house until the day of the wedding. On the morning of the wedding, George arrived in a wagon to pick her up. The bed of the wagon was lined with handmade quilts and the wheels were decorated with paper flowers and streamers. The horses manes and tails as well as the whip were braided with ribbons. Uncle Siegfried Bitter drove the wagon while the bride and groom rode in the back all the way to the schoolhouse. Musicians were standing on either side of the steps playing music. As the young couple arrived, the people began to sing *Jesus Geb Forn Auf der Lebensbor* (Jesus Lead On) Minnie broke down and cried as she realized that her only family present was her sister Magdalena. Everyone was a stranger to her and she was wishing her mother and other family members were there. They delayed the wedding for about twenty minutes while she composed herself. Then the wedding continued. After the ceremony, the festivities began. George came from a large family and preparations for the wedding had been taking place for weeks. The celebrations of food, games, music, singing and dancing were held at the home of George's parents Heinrich and Susanna Bitter. People came and went between chores that had to be done on their farms. The fun lasted far into the night. There were so many guests in the house that the young couple had quite a surprise when they withdrew from the festivities and went to their room. George's younger sister was asleep on the floor beside the marriage bed!

The young couple lived in Hoisington for awhile but George was not well and his illness forced them to move in with his parents for a time. Their first child William (Bill) was born in that house on March 21, 1906. Pauline arrived December 15, 1907. In August of 1908, the young family moved to their own place...a farm northwest of Hoisington, Kansas. It was there that their other six children were born. Solomon...July 17, 1909, Paul...January 22, 1911, Daniel (Dan)...January 15, 1913, Esther...June 18, 1914, Samuel (Sam)...November 24, 1915, and Clara...September 1, 1918. The cultural tradition of being *Kinderrich* continued in America. Minnie and George had eight children in thirteen years. When the last child, Clara, was born, George was 36, Minnie 34, Bill 12, Pauline 11, Solomon 9, Paul 7, Dan 5, Esther 4, and Sam 3. All the children were born at home and delivered by midwives. Wilhelmina had the assistance of a doctor with the last child Clara, who was delivered by Dr. Brown.

As life was beginning for Minnie and George, it was ending for Anna and Chris. Minnie had not seen her mother since leaving Canada to marry George in 1905. Anna was very sick, so Minnie took the baby Clara and went to Wetaskawin, Alberta by train in the spring of 1919. The sisters Katherine, Christina, Magdalena, and Wilhelmina gathered at the bedside of their mother. They did what they could to ease her suffering. The daughters had a special dress made for Anna knowing the end was near. Wilhelmina and Magdalena returned to their families in Kansas. Katherine and Christine waited for the inevitable. Anna passed over from this life on July 11, 1919. She was 67. In August, Chris wrote to the Magdalena and Wilhelmina of Their mother's death. The text of this letter is heartbreaking. He loved Anna very much. After her death, Chris was overcome with grief and loneliness. He talked of selling out and moving back to Russia but it was not to be. Chris contracted cancer which began in his foot. In his letters, he writes of his pain and misery without Anna. Chris Nufer died October 27, 1920 in Winnipeg. His body was returned to Wetaskawin for burial. He lies beside Anna in an unmarked grave in the old cemetery west of the town of Wetaskawin along Highway 29. She has a headstone but for some reason he does not. The marker for their plot is #74.

Chris and Anna's journey in time spanned seven decades and two centuries. Geographically, their journey crossed two continents. Because of their courage and determination, the destiny of their bloodline reached freedom in a new land. Their children and family members achieved a life of pride and independence rather than one which ended in Russia with torture, starvation, death, destruction and revolution. The sacrifices they made to make this dream a reality should be remembered and honored by their descendants today. Members of the bloodline who stayed behind in Russia have been lost to history. There is a story in our family that during the revolution family members residing in America were corresponding for a time with family members who remained behind *the old country*. As the letters arrived, the relatives kept asking about the stamp collection. It was a puzzle to George and others who were reading the letters until someone thought to look under the stamps. It was then that they found a note saying, "Please help us we are starving." Historical records concerning the fate of the Volga Germans report that many people ate the dead to survive. Trainloads of our people were forced into unheated cattle cars and shipped out to Siberia in the middle of winter. When the trains were unloaded, the bodies of the dead were stacked like cordwood beside the tracks. Over three million Volga Germans lost their lives during this terrible time. Overall, six to eight million people in Russia starved during the war torn/famine decade of the 1930's.

George and Minnie's family continued their life in Kansas. The family farmed wheat and raised livestock. They gardened and grew enough vegetables for their own use. They also raised chickens for meat and eggs. The food for the chickens had to be kept simmering on the back of the family's wood stove. It was a mixture of soaked wheat, other grains and red pepper. The chicken house was kept extremely clean. It was sprayed and treated with white powder to control lice. Life on the farm was very hard work with long hours; but there were still some times for fun and relaxation. Neighbors would gather at different homes on Sunday evenings for supper. There was always music, games like post office and musical chairs and singing of German songs. Sometimes there would be trips into town to see *picture shows*. The children loved Abbott and Costello and Lum and Abner.

As it had been in Russia, the church was a large part of family life. The children were all given a strong faith to live by and were brought up in the Lutheran tradition. They attended church school on Saturday mornings. The family rode to church in horse drawn buggies or wagons. In the winter, the wheels would make cracking sounds on the frozen crust of the snow. Everyone was kept snug and warm in the back which was coved with quilts and covers made of cow hides. Hot bricks were tucked at the feet to keep them warm. The men sat on the right side of the church and the women sat on the left. The women all wore hats or scarves on their heads. Christmas was a special time in the church. It was lit with candles and Santa Claus would bring sacks of candy and an orange for all the children.

The school was one and a half miles away from the farm. The children took a horse and kept it at school in a small barn. The teachers were very strict. They frowned upon using German instead of English. Clara later remembered that she cried everyday for weeks when she started school because she didn't know any English. At home, only German was spoken and at school only English. It was very confusing for her but her brothers and sisters helped and gradually she began to understand. The children made their own fun at school. Sometimes they would play baseball using hedge balls and sticks. It was a one room schoolhouse and all eight grades attended in the same class. The children sat on benches or at wooden desks with inkwells. They wrote on slates and had few books of their own. Most of the family stopped going to school after eighth grade or before.

Chores on the farm were shared by all the children from oldest to youngest. There was never a lack of work to be done. All the cooking was done on a large wood stove.

Bread was baked several times a week and large meals were prepared everyday for the family. Milking chores included taking care of the stock and cleaning the stalls. The milk was carried to the milk house to be processed and to separate the cream. All the utensils had to be cleaned with boiling water and the cream and milk were cooled and lowered into the cistern or put into the cellar to keep it fresh. Butter was churned every Thursday...some sixty pounds weekly. Sometimes the family made cottage cheese. Butter, eggs and milk were sold or traded for flour, sugar, syrup, or store bought items. The family liked corn flakes and oatmeal so these were sometimes purchased. All the cows and horses had pet names. There was a special team of horses trained to pull the threshing machines during harvest.

Harvest was very hard work for everyone whether in the fields or around the farm doing chores and cooking for the harvest hands. Men who wanted to be hired on as harvest hands would sit on the streets of Hoisington waiting for the farmers to come into town and pick them up. George hired four brothers that came every year for five years. The barn loft had bedding in it and that is where the hired men slept. Huge dinners were prepared at the noonday meal and lemonade and donuts were packed and taken to the fields for treats during the day. George owned a threshing machine and he would hire out to thresh wheat for other farmers. They harvested with a header barge and wheat binder run by horses and a steam engine. Stackers were needed to stack the wheat, oats, and barley.

Wash day began early. Dried cow chips collected from the fields were used to build a hot fire under the built in black kettles in the wash house. All the clothes were rubbed on a washboard with homemade lye soap. Fat was saved during butchering time and was used to make the soap. Water was heated to boiling and the clothes washed in a wooden tub with a handle that was pushed back and forth to agitate the wash. An alarm was set for five minutes and if the clothes need more time it was set again and the agitation continued by hand. The clothes were washed in rotation...whites and finer things first, bedding and towels, then socks and underwear and overalls. After they were washed, they went through several tubs of rinse water. Then everything was rung out by hand and hung out to dry. Rags were dried on the fence behind the wash house and the leftover water was used to scrub all the sidewalks and the outhouse. The farm did not have a high producing well, so water was never wasted. The clothes were brought into the house after they were dry to be folded and put away. Sheets, men's overalls, and towels were sat on to press them flat. Any mending was done right away and the finer things were pressed with a sad iron heated on the wood stove.

After electricity came to the farm, the family used Delco batteries which were stored in glass containers in the wash house. Later, George fitted the washer and the cream separator with an engine that worked off of a pulley system.

The wash house had a secret room which was used during prohibition to make whiskey. Inside this room was a copper kettle which was used to cook the grain and it was set up to distill the alcohol. On whiskey making days, the children had the job of watching the road for cars coming down the hill to the farm. If strangers were coming, they would run and tell their father and he would walk out to the road to meet them. The smell was strong during the cooking process and everyone was glad when the wind was blowing away from the yard. George did not sell the whiskey but made it for the family's use which was mostly medicinal. George used it for controlling the symptoms of his asthma and it was also used for toothaches and other things.

Once a week, all water had to be hauled and heated for baths. Everyone bathed in the same water in rotation...usually oldest to youngest. Sometimes, the boys would take dips in the pond which was also used for skating in the winter. The upstairs of the house had no heat and during the winter everyone slept in featherbeds under heavy layers of blankets and quilts. Hot bricks were wrapped and put into the beds for warmth. George and Minnie had a hobby together which they enjoyed. It was quilt making. In the evenings George would sometimes help Minnie cut out the geometric shapes from old clothes and other materials. Then Minnie would sew them together into quilt tops. George also enjoyed reading, writing and working in stamp books. Minnie had not received much schooling. Reading and writing were difficult for her... especially in English. But she loved reading the German bible and her German prayer book. Minnie especially loved Easter and would stay up late after the younger children had gone to bed to dye dozens of Easter eggs. She used natural materials like onion skins and red cabbage for the dyes. The eggs were put in a large wooden butter bowl and they would be on the table when the children woke up the next morning. As a special treat for the younger children, she would hide some of the eggs outdoors in small grass nests that the children had left by the pond. Clara especially liked to leave nests there and Minnie would always fill them with special surprises. One time, Clara found a paper mâché egg filled with candy in one of her little nests.

Time passed and the young family grew up. One by one the children began to marry and start families of their own. In 1935, George and Minnie and Clara left the farm and moved into Hoisington leaving the farm in the care of their son Solomon. These were the depression years and Clara worked as a waitress in the local cafe to help supplement the income of the family. They lived in a small house at 372 W. 5th Street. In 1941, George and Minnie bought a house at 414 N. Main. George's health was gradually deteriorating. His bouts with asthma often left him weak and tired. Clara had moved away and married in 1940. Now George and Minnie were alone. They did some traveling but more often George's poor health kept them near home. Both George and Minnie delighted in their family which by now was growing with grandchildren. There were many family gatherings over the years...especially at Thanksgiving and Christmas. These times were full of laughter and fun and a bountiful harvest of delicious German foods. Many wonderful recipes from Russia were prepared in the large sunny kitchen and the family home always had a comforting fragrance of mixed spices and seasonings.

George began to require more and more medical interventions. He spent long days in bed and frequently had to be hospitalized. A special bed was set up in the family home and nursing care was arranged. His condition worsened and at last, the family was summoned to his bedside. George died June 1, 1948. He was sixty six years old. As was the custom of the time, visitation was prepared in the family home instead of at a funeral home. His casket was placed in the living room of the home on Main Street and people came to the house to pay their respects. George was mourned greatly by his family and friends. He had been a firm but loving father and a man of known integrity and honor.

Minnie was now alone. She continued to live in the home on Main Street and was a central figure in the lives of her children and grandchildren. Family dinners and reunions were held regularly over the years, building unforgettable memories for everyone...especially her nineteen grandchildren. Minnie loved to travel and was able to travel to Canada and visit with her sister before Katherine's death in 1966. Magdalena had passed in 1942 and Christina in 1958. Minnie once said that the hardest thing about living to an old age was to witness the passing of friends and family one by one. Minnie was able to keep her health and vitality even after suffering a stroke which left her partially paralyzed. She worked hard to rehabilitate her strength and regain partial use of her hands and legs.

Minnie continued to travel and she spent extended visits with her daughters Pauline in Missouri and Clara in Arizona. She was able to remain largely independent until she was almost ninety years of age. At that time, the family home was sold and Minnie moved into a nursing home in Russell, Kansas. There, she was near her daughter Esther who was able to ease the loneliness of those days with loving care and attention. Sadly, Minnie lost her sight from Glaucoma and was blind for the last years of her life; but she retained her memory and mind to the end. Everyone that knew Minnie loved and admired her good humor and sparkle of sweetness. When she died on June 2, 1983, Minnie was ninety-nine years of age. She was preceded in death by her son Paul. Minnie and George left a legacy of eight children, nineteen grandchildren, forty-nine great grandchildren and twelve great-great children. This legacy continues to grow to this day. Minnie's funeral was held on June 5, 1983 and she was laid to rest beside George in the Hoisington Cemetery.

Why do we study the history of our family? Why is it important? When I began this project over twenty-five years ago, it felt like the solving of a mystery. My mother had told me many wonderful stories of her childhood and I wanted to know more. It began as curiosity and a romantic sense of imagining the past but evolved into much, much more. As I grew up and moved away from home, I had the sense of the familiar unraveling and disappearing. Change was happening at such a rapid pace and I wanted a clearer sense of what was important to remember. I did not want to lose our family's personal history. My family and I made several trips back to Kansas to gather stories, pictures, and documents. I traveled to Canada. I wrote letters to people asking them to share with me what they knew. As the Internet developed and genealogy research sites became available, more pieces began to flow together. Piece by piece and bit by bit, the mystery of who we are as a family became clearer. From this research I learned many important things. I discovered the values which sustained our people in difficult times and I gained strength and encouragement from their stories. I found their lives to be filled with simple truth and beauty. These lessons have allowed me a glimpse into another kind of world where life had meaning and purpose beyond the collection of material possessions and power. Our people knew how to live in harmony with the natural world and be sustained by its gifts. Everyday life was a ritual and a blessing built upon what had gone before and upon a strong sense of spiritual faith. Community was important. Connection was important. Family was important. The fabric of life was woven with attention to detail and tended with loving care. It is an empowering inheritance.

This document has taken countless hours of study and undergone many revisions and corrections. When I began, my children were eight and thirteen. Now they are grown and I am a grandmother. My own parents are gone and most of my aunts and uncles. I give this account of our family willingly to be copied and shared with whomever finds need of it. I hope that you may be inspired to add your own family strand to this document as a gift to your children and grandchildren. Only you know the inspiring stories that they need to hear. If you do not record them, they will be lost forever. I am grateful beyond words to the people who helped me piece this history together as accurately as possible. A list of their names follows this document. Without the generous contributions they made, this account of our family history would not have been what I hoped it could be. There are many audio tapes, letters, diaries, books, papers and photographs that are not included at this time. They remain among my records and among yours. I am willing for anyone in the family to copy anything that I have. If there are any corrections to be made or things to be added to this writing, please contact me. I only ask that you do not change what I have written. Also, if you have any document, letter, journal, diary or photograph in your possession or a special memory which pertains to our family's history please allow that to be known and share it with all of us....particularly with the children to whom this account of our history is also dedicated.

“The child will multiply our race, he will replace all those who have gone before.”
Rigoberta Menchu

Contributors...

Minnie Boger Bitter (daughter of Anna Boger Nufer)
George Bitter (husband of Minnie Boger Bitter)
Elizabeth Rotter (daughter of Katherine Boger Ochs)
Pauline Hammond (daughter of Minnie Boger Bitter and George Bitter)
Esther Krug (daughter of Minnie Boger Bitter and George Bitter)
Clara Smith (daughter of Minnie Boger Bitter and George Bitter) (my mother)
Oney Smith (husband of Clara Smith)(my father)
Bill Bitter (son of Minnie Boger Bitter and George Bitter)
Hulda Bitter (wife of Daniel Bitter)
Joetta, Marilyn, Donald, Norma, Lois and Monte Krug (children of Esther Krug for all the wonderful memories we share)
Virginia Lee Thompson (daughter of Pauline Bitter Hammond)
Laverne and Barbara Bitter (son and daughter in law of Bill Bitter)
Gene Bitter (son of Bill Bitter)
Marvin Bitter (son of Solomon Bitter)
Brenda Bitter (daughter of Marvin Bitter)
Rachel Nuss (daughter of Magdalena Boger Popp)
Pauline Meir (daughter of Magdalena Boger Popp)
Manuel Kehl (son of Christina Boger Kehl Herdt)
Bill Setzkorn (grandson of John Boger who was a cousin of Chris Nufer)
The diary and journals from the Boger, Bitter, Nufer, and Deutsch families
Emma Job (another descendent of Germans from Russia and translator of the German documents into English)
The American Historical Society of Germans From Russia & ancestry.com
Curtis Boger and bogperfam.net John Boger Diary
Karl Stump (author of the Immigration of the Volga Germans)
The City of Wetaskawin, Alberta (archive division)
Rex Nufer (great great grandson of Chris Nufer). nufer.net
Joyce Guinn (granddaughter of Susanna Boger Nufer and Johannes Deutsch)
John Deutsch (brother-in-law to Chris Nufer) (his journal was a valuable resource)
Gerhardt Lang for his email support and his wonderful records of Riebendorf and the Denmark connection

Lastly, I am so grateful for my family... John, John David and Wesley Anne whose steadfast love encouraged me to complete this document...
And for the sweet blessing of my beautiful grandchildren
Aubrey Page, Nelson James and Alexander Judah (A.J.)
May they always remember how much they have been loved and by that be guided to follow love's footsteps into the future.
You are always in my heart, Jackie DeVore(Charlie, mom, mama, Nana, GiGi)

Wisdom From The Ancestors

So live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about their religion; respect others in their view, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life.

Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people. Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide. Always give a word or a sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, even a stranger, when in a lonely place. Show respect to all people and grovel to none.

When you arise in the morning give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself.

Abuse no one and no thing, for abuse turns the wise ones to fools and robs the spirit of its vision.

When it comes your time to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled with the fear of death, so that when their time comes they weep and pray for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way. Sing your death song and die like a hero going home.

Chief Tecumseh (Crouching Tiger) Shawnee Nation 1768-1813