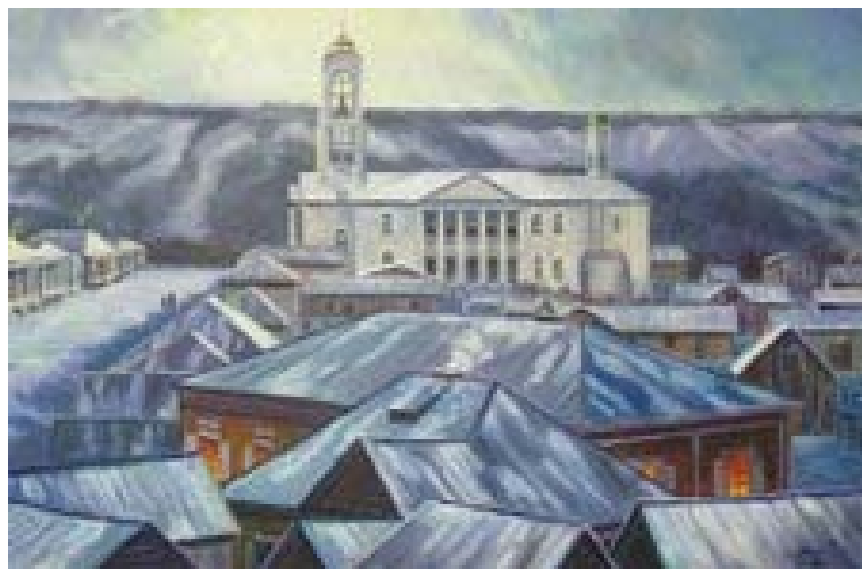


# **MARIENTAL CHASSELOIS LOUIS DAYS OF YORE**

**MARCH 2009**

**ISSUE TWENTY TWO**



**Mariental, Russia by Michael Boss  
Oil on Linen – 20" x 30"  
From the Collection of Signature Associates**

**TOPICS:**

**Editor's Comments**

**Feature Stories:**

**So We Will Know Them:**

**Denise & Mike Grau**

**Signature marks on baptismal documents**

**A Church in Russia**

**GR PROVERB:**

**Keep the secret – it stays a friend**

**Tell the secret - its then the weapon**

Welcome to all. I want to thank those who have sent me stamps and/or money to help me out with the expense of mailing the Newsletters to those unable to receive it via e-mail. I also want to thank all the kind words for the enjoyment you receive from reading my newsletter. As I have mentioned before, this is one of my favorite activities as a Village Coordinator, and the compliments are received by me as like “frosting on a cake”!

Some of my favorite URL's for those of you able to look at them:

<http://cvgs.cu.portland.edu/>     The Center For Volga German Studies

<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/archives/ethnical/german-russian/jubilee/german.shtml>

<http://volgagerman.net>

## July 2008 Trip to Russia

by Denise Grau



My husband's church, St. John's Lutheran church of Topeka has had a sister church relationship with St. John's Lutheran Church in Saratov for several years. This past July we were part of the first mission group from St. John's in Topeka to travel to Russia. Our purpose was to strengthen the relationship between the churches and to see first hand how the Topeka church can best assist the Saratov congregation, as well as other service activities. It was a great trip! We were met in Moscow by an American missionary who has been in Moscow for 5 years. He helped us negotiate to the train station

where we took the midnight train to Saratov (16 hours one way). Being able to sleep and nap off an on during that trip was a good way to refresh ourselves after the long air travel, and I enjoyed seeing the Russian countryside. **Picture above: Denise in the archway of the ruins of the Mariental church**



**Picture: Looking through the village of Mariental.**

In Saratov we were met by Pastors Olav Panchu and Alexander Furs of St. John's in Saratov, both of whom speak English well. They along with Pastor Fur's mother were our hosts for our trip. Pastor Furs and his mother are also Volga Germans, and it was interesting to talk to them about the history and tragedy of the treatment of the Germans under communism. The pastor's mother didn't speak English, but she spoke German and that was the language that allowed us to communicate, though I know very, very little. I was scolded for that. We stayed in an apartment owned by the church which was located next to the beautiful park area along the Volga river. It was interesting for us to see how Russians live. Hot water in Saratov is supplied centrally as a utility and was not working the entire length of our stay. "That's Russia," we were told.

For those interested in St. John's Lutheran church in Saratov, you can visit the English version of their web site at [http://www.saratovluther.narod.ru/en\\_index.htm](http://www.saratovluther.narod.ru/en_index.htm), or visit them while in Saratov. The church is located on German street below a restaurant and across the street from a casino. This facility was formerly owned and used by the Catholic church. A large sign marks the entrance and lists the worship times in Russian and German.

Our hosts and congregation members in Saratov showed us the local sites. We had wonderful meals and conversations, a boat trip on the immense Volga river, we even went wading in the river. Swimming would have been option had we brought our swimming suits.

Due to the nature of our trip, we were limited to only one day for visiting villages. Our first stop that day was at the Engels archive. Though the archive was officially closed, we hoped to see records or at a minimum determine if the records we are interested in are kept by the Engels archive. The then director of the archive, Elisabeth Erina did meet with us and discussed the difficulties faced by the archive in fulfilling research requests. Come back in September, she said. If only it were that easy! In answer to our inquiry as to whether they had certain records for villages we were told we could get that information from ASHGR in Nebraska. It was disappointing.

Next up was a trip to Mariental. This was a highlight of the trip for me. Mariental is the ancestral home for several of my family lines including Gassman, Rohr, and Herrman.

Our time in Mariental was short, but as you can see from the pictures there was much for us to see even in a short time. The church was magnificent though it is in a state of deterioration. How sad that such a beautiful place of worship to have been mistreated and neglected in such a way. Still, it was moving to have been in the church where my families would have worshiped, where they were married, celebrated baptisms and mourned the losses of friends and families. In the church, I could imagine the Kirghiz coming over the hill, the weddings, funerals and baptisms of our family. It is such a sad thing to see what communism did to religion. There is a new mosque directly across the street from the old Catholic church now. The mosque was one of the few new structures we saw in Mariental. That the church had survived this long at all was due to it being repurposed during the communist years as a "Soviet club" we were told. I've also heard it

described as a dance hall. It has not been used since a fire in the 1990s. One thing that puzzled me was a round area in front of the church where it looked as if something had previously stood there. Does anyone know what it might have been?

We brought along a copy of the 1941 map of Mariental from Thelma's Mariental web site. The layout of Mariental is little changed which helped us get close to the cemetery. The cemetery was large enough that we could have wandered around for some time without finding the German section, but a woman tending graves directed us to the right area. There weren't many German graves in the cemetery and most of them are from the 80s and 90s. There were only two old German grave markers that we found. One was a Hermann marker and the other was a partially destroyed cross without any names.

There was a memorial to the German founders of the village at the cemetery. I am very curious about its origin. When it was erected? Who erected it? Our Russian host was rattling off the names on the memorial faster than I could write them down, but I noted Younger, Dinkel, Merker, Pfannenstiel, Staab, Schoenberger, Gerber, Gross, Gerstner, Weigel, and Gassmann in my notes (these spellings are all mine as I am familiar with them). We also saw graves of Dinkel, Hermann, Ortmann, Klaus and others.

We also visited my husband's ancestral villages of Nieder-Monjou and Fischer, but unfortunately, by the time we reached his villages it was raining and continued to do so the rest of the day. Wouldn't you know, it was the only time it rained during our stay. No churches survived and no German graves. The only recognizable landmark was the schoolhouse in Nieder-Monjou which is still in use. Mike has a 1905 picture of the same building.

Anyone wishing to see more pictures from our trip to Mariental can visit <http://volga.germansfromrussia.org:8000/album/main.php?cmd=album&var1=Russia/&var2=1>

Denise (Gassman) Grau has been researching her family for more than ten years. Among her Volga German families and villages are Mariental: Gassman, Herrman, Rohr, Kreutzer; Louis: Quint; Schoenchen/Graf: Wasinger; Obermonjor: Niernberger, Seib; and Zug: Sauer. She is always interested in hearing from and exchanging information with others. She also serves as a Co-Village Coordinator for Schönchen.

Michael Grau is a Co-Village Coordinator for the village of Nieder-Monjou. Anschutz family from Nieder-Monjou and the Friebus family from Fischer are two of the Volga German families he is researching.

Mike and Denise have two children. Both work for the state of Kansas and are active in the Northeast Kansas Chapter of AHSGR in Topeka.



**My heart cries for our ancestor's church Denise**

**(This is a wonderful view of the ruins – what a magnificent church it must have been in its day. And to think that my dad was baptized in this church, and possibly my grandparents were married in it also. Thelma Mills)**



**Catholic Church**



**Mike in the Apse**



**interior wall**





View from rear of church



Mariental cemetery



Monument to Founders



Gassman 2<sup>nd</sup> from bottom



Dinkel grave

Herrman 3ed from bottom



Dinkel grave



Herman grave



Herman grave close up



View from edge of town



looking back at town across the river



lonely battered iron cross



Mariental cemetery



Mariental church

## **SIGNATURE AND MARKS ON BAPTISMAL DOCUMENTS**

From Darrell Brungardt

**Again, my relative, Darrell Brungardt, has found these unusual documents from the 1600's. Many of you will remember, in my Newsletters of September, and December of 2007, I featured an artist's drawings which appeared in the center of the pages from the Catholic Baptismal Records of 1710 and 1689, submitted by Darrell. These drawings were a puzzle to me as they were not associated with the featured records in any way, but were delightful none-the-less.**

**Darrell has again submitted these three unusual documents he has found in his searching of old records in order to find the true origins of families he is researching.**

### **France's 1680 Signature and Marks on Baptism Documents**

**It is interesting the way Church Baptism signatures were applied to the documents. Attached are three copies that show Signatures as well as the different types of Marks the Father or sponsors used.**

**When you see signed Patina and a Mark, the name was written in by the person who is completing the entry, not the Sponsor or Father. Their Mark was their Signature. Now if you look close you will see some actually signed their names, but only a very few.**

**Darrell**

174. Nigai Schall Jan Baptist  
Johs Nigai Dns Mathias  
Anna Jindin die gottal

Johs 6 p...  
H... St. Mathias der...  
Cuzast...  
Mosele Moring... die gottal

Signum Rodolphi...  
1

Signum St. Patricii...  
4 1

Signum Mariam...  
3

Signum...  
H.

Signum...  
I

Signum...  
H

Signum...  
STO

110516 / ...  
Signum...  
H

Janus H...

Contra...

1684. Die 1. Mai

Dame Hermanns Schatz...  
Dietrich...  
Anna...  
in Gumbheim...

Uta me...  
Anna Maria...  
in Gumbheim...

Uta me...  
Rodolph...  
in Gumbheim...

Uta me...  
Maria...  
in Gumbheim...

Uta me...  
Anna...  
in Gumbheim...

Hodie Prima Mensis Augusti...  
a me...  
in Gumbheim...



Signum Patris Georgij p[ro]curatoris in  
 Signum Michaelis p[ro]curatoris Patris  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert

Carl Fr[anz] p[ro]curator  
 Anna Catharina  
 Signum Patris Jacob  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert

Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert

Signum Patris Christophori p[ro]curatoris  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert

Signum Patris Georgij  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert

Signum Patris Georgij  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert  
 Signum Mariae Catharinae Melchert

115. Anno 1697. Die 15 Augusti  
 Et me Hermannus Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina

Die 14. Augusti  
 Et me Hermannus Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina

Die 21. Augusti  
 Et me Hermannus Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina

Die 28. Augusti  
 Et me Hermannus Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina

September. Die 30. eundem  
 Et me Hermannus Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina

Die 1. Octobris  
 Et me Hermannus Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina  
 Catharina Schmitz Catharina

For Person



***Again, I will feature a beautiful church in Russia, along with its history***

## ***THE KIEV-PECHERSKY MONASTERY 'LAVRA'***



The Kiev-Pechersky Monastery (preserved as an ancient monument), stands on the green hills of Dneiper. Its sparkling gold cupolas can be seen from outside the capitol.

Built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the huge territory covers two big hills, and the valley between them. The highest hill is the site of the Higher Monastery (Lavra). The valley is occupied by the Near Caves with the whole ensemble of buildings of various kinds and the smaller hill is the location of the Far Caves, with their churches and other premises. It was these cave-like cells that gave the monastery its name *perchera*, being Russian for “cave”. It became the seat of ***Christianity*** in ancient Russia, and the stronghold of feudalism and the Princes power. It was also there that Chronicler Nestor wrote his famous *Chronicle of Past Days*.

The Kiev Princes who needed the backing of the church because its prestige lent divine authority to the existing feudal order, showered valuable gifts including land, on the monastery. That was the period of the birth of ancient Russian culture which laid the foundation for the cultures of the Russians, Ukrainians, and Bylorussians.