Schwartzwalter Reunion Held

Medora, Explore It. Adore It! A perfect location for the 2016 Schwartzwalter Family Reunion. On August 5-7, 2016 136 relatives and friends gathered at the beautiful Badlands Ministries Campground 7 miles south of Medora. Friday afternoon was registration at the Retreat House. Friday evening included the Pitchfork Fandango and Medora Musical. Different colored bandanas were worn by family members to associate what family we belonged to! Schwartzwalter is a name derived from a region in Germany called the “Black Forest”. “Schwarz” is black and ‘walter’ forest. Every one of us attending this reunion with Schwartzwalter blood in our veins is a descendant of people with that name from that region in Germany. Three more spellings of Schwartzwalter were discovered: Schwarzwalter, Schwartzwalter, Schwarzwalter when doing the research. It had been 20 years since the John Sr. and Christina (Schauer) Schwartzwalter descendants had enjoyed time together celebrating their family heritage. That reunion had been held in Moorhead, MN in July of 1996. Also in 1988, the group met at Aberdeen, SD. Many relatives have passed on in 28 years, but were remembered this year in tributes. Many young people have replaced the old and hopefully “the torch” will be passed on to the next generation for future planned reunions.

Merna Bredwick and Donna Ruff were the 2016 co-chairmen of the Schwartzwalter Reunion Held in Aberdeen, SD in July of 1996. Also in 1988, the group met at Aberdeen, SD. Many relatives have passed on in 28 years, but were remembered this year in tributes. Many young people have replaced the old and hopefully “the torch” will be passed on to the next generation for future planned reunions. Merna Bredwick and Donna Ruff were the 2016 co-chairmen of the reunion. Surprisingly, checking records, the registration figure has always been in the 130-140 numbers for all three reunions. Thank you to the previous planning committees for sharing your records. It takes a lot of enthusiasm and energy to plan an event that tries to make our relatives feel ‘family special’. Thank you for your support and appreciation.

The JJ and Mathilda Schwartzwalter family have reunions every two years. The Eisenbeis family has reunions every three years. This year the 2016 hosts to their younger siblings: the Mary and Adolph Eisenbeis family, the Eva and John Graff, the Walter and Christine Schwarzwalter family and the Esther and Emil Wieland family. Two siblings representing the Lydia and Jake Bitterman and Adam and Bertha Schwarzwalter families, were not present this year, hopefully next time. Two more sister’s, Emelie Schwarzwalter and Martha Schwarzwalter Bitterman had no children.

All siblings were born and raised west of Streeter except for my grandfather, John Jr. (JJ) Schwartzwalter, who was the oldest child. He was born on May 27, 1895, about 10 miles northwest of the village of Leif at the Ferdinand Boughner farm. After baby JJ’s birth, his parents, John and Christina Schwarzwalter moved northwest of what is now Streeter. The villages of Leif or Streeter had not been established at that time (1893), it was only the wide open prairie called the Dakota Territory. Those communities were established in 1898 and 1905 respectively. Dawson and Kulm were the closest towns to get supplies and get their wheat ground into flour. An eleven generation history of our Schauer/Schwarzwalter cousins was presented by 26 JJ Schwarzwalter cousins after Saturday’s breakfast. Our history started in Pommern, Prussia with the birth of Johann Wolfgang Schwarzwaelter in 1750, we called him Generation 1. His son, Johann Friedrich Schauer was born in 1770, immigrated to Wurtenburg, Germany. Then years later, in 1808 his first family immigrated into Neudorf, Odesa, South Russia. The most popular male name was Johann, Johannes and then John for the men, and the name Anna was the most popular name for the females. (Gen 7) Anna (Eisenbeis) Schaffner, from CA is living on her own in an assistant living apartment at the age of 99. She was named after her great grandmother, (Gen 4) Anna Marie (Knecht) Schauer. The name of Dorotha was also the second most popular female name.

My great grandfather, Andreas Schwarzwalter, (Gen 4) was born in Russia. His occupation was listed as ‘farmer’. After his wife Dorothea Elisabetha (Lipper) Schwarzwalter died in 1891 in Neudorf, SR he, at the age of 64 came to North Dakota in 1892. Three other passengers on the SS Lahn were his two younger sons: (Gen 5) John, age 18 and John’s wife (Gen 5) Christina Schauer, age 19, and his youngest son, (Gen 5) Friedrich Schwarzwalter, age 16. They arrived in New York on April 7, 1892. Friedrich later moved to Yakima, Washington. The older children of Andreas Schwarzwalter (Gen 4) had previously come to ND. They were (Gen 5) Jacob Schwarzwalter and his sister (Gen 5) Carolina (Mrs. Christian Waltz). They both were born in Reed, ND. (Gen 5) Catharina Schwarzwalter (Mrs. Jakob Schauer) the oldest child settled in Grand Forks, Another daughter, (Gen 5) Dorothea (Schwarzwalter) and John Graff were the last (Gen 5) family to come to the US in 1898. They were farmers and settled south of Dawson. The Graff’s attended Friedens Country Church. Dorothea was the first person to be buried at the Friedens Cemetery. She is located on the northwest corner of Row 1: Birth date: March 3, 1859 & death date: June 11, 1929. Her younger brother, by 4 years, John Schwarzwalter, Sr. (Gen 5) was the next relative buried in Friedens 2 years later: 1873-1931. I am still searching for the grave site of Andreas Schwarzwalter. Two leads say he lived with his oldest daughter, Catharina in Grand Forks and died in Grand Forks in 1905. Another lead says he died in 1900 and is buried in German township. This is on my bucket list. A total of 33 first cousins belong to generation 7. At the reunion, Leona (Onie) Nenow gave a memorial tribute to her 22 first cousins that