

Weddings

From Allan R. Lenhardt

I've enjoyed reading many of the stories people have shared here, and am hoping someone may remember something about inviting weddings.

I remember when my sister was married in the early 80's, my Grandfather and Mr. Sitzman (an old family friend), both born in Frank, Russia, started talking about, "Inviting the Wedding." Apparently, in the early 1900's, when a young couple was to be married, two of the bride's male relatives would go from house to house, carrying long staffs. When they entered a house, they would recite a special poem inviting the people to the wedding. After that, the woman of the household would tie one of her hair ribbons to the staff, offer the men something to eat and drink, and then the men would be off to the next house.

Does anyone know anything about this custom? Unfortunately all my relatives from this time are gone now, and none of my relatives remembers more than the details I've given here.

I would especially like to know the words to the poem, if anyone has them.

From John Marsch

The Mennonite folk in Wolhynia invited their wedding guests by using a wedding bidder (Chostibeddy). This worthy individual adorned with boutonniere and green ribbons and in his Sunday best, seated on a noble steed rode from yard to yard in the village. The forelock and mane of the horse were also bedecked with ribbons. At the front of each house he would crack a whip which he carried no doubt to attract the attention of the household. He would then proclaim his invitation as follows " The parents of both sides and the bridal couple send greetings and invite you to the wedding", then gave the date, which was always in the week. His duty done, he mounted his steed, cracked his whip and proceeded to the next house.

This is a somewhat paraphrased excerpt from an article to be found in *The Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia*, Spring 1978 Vol.1 No. 1, originally written by Jacob B. Janz.

From Gary Less

Since we are in the midst of a winter deep freeze in the Midwest, it brings back special memories of winters past. Here is another story from a former Northeastern Nebraska Cornhusker.

When my first cousin, Theresa (Less) Schoof, was married in January 1932, my Pa did something that I thought was neat and that I will always remember. This was a winter we had so much snow that all roads to town were blocked with drifted snow. Since we could not get to the wedding by automobile due to the closed roads, Pa

borrowed a sled that was equipped with a large conventional wagon box. He put a lot of straw in the sled box, loaded the whole family of six kids plus Ma and Pa in the sled. We took off for the wedding pulled by two frisky horses. Since the roads were impassable, we went across farmers fields with the horses and sled. It was seven miles to the church in Ponca, Nebraska and another three miles from the church to Uncle Ed Less's farm house for the reception. During the reception, neighbors and friends shivareed the couple with a loud serenade made with kettles and horns. The shivaree continued until the couple either agreed to pay them off or provide for a dance later in town. The weather was cold and crisp but it sure was a fun occasion.

From Lilly Buchwitz

My grandmother, Anna Horning, was married in 1938 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, to Nathanael Werner. She has told me how weddings in those days were 3-day affairs, with almost constant feasting and partying.

It began the day before the wedding, when everyone would gather at the home of the bride or groom's family (in my grandparents' case this was next door, so both homes were involved) where the women would prepare a large banquet-style supper for everyone. The next day, wedding day, the bride and groom walked to the church -- separately, with their entourages. After the ceremony, my grandmother describes walking through the village, giving out candy to children.

I asked her if she had bridesmaids, and she replied, yes, about twenty! Every unmarried woman at the wedding was considered a bridesmaid. So it was Oma and her "bridesmaids" who paraded through town, handing out candy. Then it was back to the farm for a reception dinner. The next day there was a breakfast party, and after that everyone returned home.

These people were poor, hardworking farmers, but they certainly knew how to have fun when the occasion warranted.