

Interview with Andrew Johs (AJ)

Conducted by Leo Johs (LJ)

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- LJ:** Today is November the 26th, 1999. I am Leo A. Johs of Fargo, ND, a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University Libraries at Fargo, ND. [It] is a pleasure to visit with my father, Andrew Johs, of Napoleon, ND, where the interview is taking place in his kitchen. We will now start. Today is November the 26th, 1999. Your name?
- AJ:** Andrew Johs, Napoleon, ND. Zip code: 58561.
- LJ:** Your phone number and area code?
- AJ:** 701-754-2645.
- LJ:** The date of birth including the month, day, and year. (Your Birthday.)
- AJ:** December the 10th, 1909.
- LJ:** The place of birth?
- AJ:** Logan County, Shelby Township, Napoleon, ND.
- LJ:** The name of the spouse, including your wife?
- AJ:** My wife's name was Marian Schmidt.
- LJ:** The date of marriage?
- AJ:** October the 25th, 1932.
- LJ:** Father's name?
- AJ:** John Johs.
- LJ:** Father's date of birth, including the month, day and year, and place of birth.
- AJ:** November the 3rd, 1879 in Klein-Liebental, Russia.
- LJ:** The mother's name and maiden name?
- AJ:** Johanna Schwartzenburg [sp?] Johs.
- LJ:** Mother's date of birth, including the month, day and year, and place of birth.
- AJ:** February the 20th, 1884 in Elsass, Russia.
- LJ:** The name of the village in South Russia, or Bessarabia, of your father's ancestors?

- AJ:** Klein-Liebental, Russia.
- LJ:** The name of the village in South Russia of your mother's ancestors?
- AJ:** Elsass, Russia.
- LJ:** Your occupation?
- AJ:** I was a farmer all my life 'til I retired.
- LJ:** Father's occupation?
- AJ:** A farmer all his life.
- LJ:** And mother's occupation?
- AJ:** A farmer's housewife.
- LJ:** Has a family history been published?
- AJ:** Yes.
- LJ:** Where can we get a copy of the family history?
- AJ:** Leo A. Johs. 1405 16th St. S. Fargo, ND
- LJ:** Do you play any musical instruments?
- AJ:** I used to play the drum, but when I was 14 years old and at that, and I haven't played since I was 16 years old.
- LJ:** Do you read notated music from notated bars and staves?
- AJ:** No.
- LJ:** Did you take formal lessons from home and how long?
- AJ:** I took note and band lessons from Martin Braun down by St. Anthony and for about two years.
- LJ:** Did you learn music by the ear?
- AJ:** No.
- LJ:** Did you perform mostly religious music?
- AJ:** No.
- LJ:** What were your favorites?
- AJ:** [German phrase, 39].
- LJ:** Did you perform mostly folk music and old-time music? What were your favorites?
- AJ:** Waltz and polka.
- LJ:** Did you have any musical instruments at home?

- AJ:** We had an organ. I could play a little, but my wife played all the time.
- LJ:** Did you take lessons and read music?
- AJ:** No.
- LJ:** Did anyone self-teach themselves common tunes?
- AJ:** My wife did.
- LJ:** What kind of music did you have? Hymnals and other church music, sheet music, traditional German tunes, and other.
- AJ:** Church music and German songs.
- LJ:** What music do you remember in school?
- AJ:** Don't know anything about it anymore.
- LJ:** Do you remember the names of any teachers who were good musicians?
- AJ:** Martin N. Braun, and Daniel Kuhn, and Pius Kuhn, and John W. Wangler.
- LJ:** What types of music was performed in church?
- AJ:** Catholic Mass songs by the congregation and by the choir.
- LJ:** Were there any musical instruments used during the church worship like a pump organ or a piano?
- AJ:** Pump organ.
- LJ:** Who played it?
- AJ:** Daniel Kuhn and Pius Kuhn and John W. Wangler and Tony Wangler.
- LJ:** Who directs the choir?
- AJ:** John W. Wangler.
- LJ:** Who [57] the choir and what musical instruments were played?
- AJ:** The pump organ, that's all.
- LJ:** Who sang in the choir?
- AJ:** Quite a few, about 15.
- LJ:** How often did the choir practice?
- AJ:** About once a month.
- LJ:** Did the choir sing during spring planting and harvest seasons?
- AJ:** Yes.

- LJ:** What music do you remember from weddings, funerals, revival meetings, and so forth? Who performed these special types of music? Where was the music performed? The church, the home, the cemetery?
- AJ:** Well, the church and the cemetery.
- LJ:** Do you remember music at other events like barn dances and dances in town?
- AJ:** Barn dances and dances in town.
- LJ:** Who do you remember playing musical instruments and singing? What musical instruments were groups of instruments for use? Who do you remember playing musical instruments and singing?
- AJ:** The Wangler's, Gross', the Wahl's.
- LJ:** Was there a town band?
- AJ:** No.
- LJ:** What kind of music do you remember?
- AJ:** I can't remember any kind of music.
- LJ:** Do remember seeing silent movies?
- AJ:** No, never seen any.
- LJ:** Did your family have a record player or a gramophone?
- AJ:** A gramophone.
- LJ:** When and how did they get a music machine?
- AJ:** I wouldn't know that.
- LJ:** Did the music machine use wag cylinders or ten inch, flat records?
- AJ:** Ten inch, flat records.
- LJ:** Do you remember any of the records that were special to you?
- AJ:** No, I couldn't remember.
- LJ:** Did your family have a radio?
- AJ:** Yes.
- LJ:** When and how did the radio come into your home?
- AJ:** We bought it.
- LJ:** Was it electric or battery operated?
- AJ:** Battery operated.
- LJ:** What radio stations do you remember listening to musical programs?

- AJ:** WNEX, Yankton.
- LJ:** What kind of music did you listen to on WNEX?
- AJ:** The Lawrence Welk Show.
- LJ:** What is your name, your date of birth, and where were you born?
- AJ:** My name is Andrew Johs. I was born December the 10th, 1909 in Napoleon, ND.
- LJ:** What is your father's name and where was he born?
- AJ:** My father's name was John Johs. He was born in Russia.
- LJ:** If he was born in Russia, do you know the name of the village?
- AJ:** Klein-Liebental.
- LJ:** When and where did he die?
- AJ:** He died at his home in May 11, 1925 and is buried in St. Anthony's Cemetery.
- LJ:** What is your mother's name?
- AJ:** My mother's name was Johanna Schwartzenburg Johs.
- LJ:** Where was she born?
- AJ:** She was born in Russia.
- LJ:** If she was born in Russia, do you know the name of the village?
- AJ:** Elsass, Russia.
- LJ:** When and where did she die?
- AJ:** She died in the Wishek hospital on April the 25th, 1965.
- LJ:** Where is she buried?
- AJ:** At St. Anthony's Cemetery.
- LJ:** When and where did your mother and father marry?
- AJ:** They were married at St. John's Catholic Church at Zeeland, ND in 1904.
- LJ:** How many brothers and sisters did you have in your family?
- AJ:** Thirteen.
- LJ:** Can you give their names and order of birth?
- AJ:** Sebastian, Barbara, Velum, Andrew, Carl, Mary, Joseph, Michael, Thomas, John, Johanna, Eva, and Adam.
- LJ:** When did your family come to North America?

- AJ:** John Johs came in 1900 and Johanna Schwartenburg came in 1892.
- LJ:** Do you know why they came to this country?
- AJ:** To escape the army and better living conditions.
- LJ:** Do you know how they traveled to this country?
- AJ:** By ship. Johanna Schwartzenburg came to Canada and John Johs came to Ellis Island, New York.
- LJ:** Where did they settle?
- AJ:** Shelby Township, Napoleon.
- LJ:** Do you know where your ancestors came from in Germany?
- AJ:** Kandel, Rheinla, Gross, [sp?] Germany
- LJ:** When did they leave Germany and live in Russia?
- AJ:** The early 1800s.
- LJ:** Do you remember family stories your father and mother told about ancestral German villages in Russia.
- AJ:** Never heard any.
- LJ:** Did your grandparents talk about how life was in the villages such as social events, stories about other family members, and nicknames of people or villages?
- AJ:** No, never talk about it.
- LJ:** Did your parents or grandparents or other relatives ever say they wish they were back in the old country?
- AJ:** No, they never said nothing about that.
- LJ:** Do you recall your family receiving letters from relatives who stayed in Russia?
- AJ:** No, we never received letters from Russia.
- LJ:** What language did you speak at home?
- AJ:** All German.
- LJ:** Did all the family members speak German?
- AJ:** Yes.
- LJ:** Do you know the name of the dialects?
- AJ:** I don't know which one.
- LJ:** Can you still speak this language today?
- AJ:** Yes.

- LJ:** Can you repeat a story, poem, or prayer, in this dialect?
- AJ:** Yes.
- LJ:** Is it comfortable for you to speak German in conversations?
- AJ:** Yes, yes.
- LJ:** If not, can you still understand it when spoken?
- AJ:** Oh yes, I can understand it.
- LJ:** Have you taught your children or grandchildren to speak German such as phrases, rhymes, or prayers?
- AJ:** The children can speak all German and the grandchildren, they understand some, but cannot speak German.
- LJ:** What were some of your childhood chores which you were responsible for?
- AJ:** Get the cows in the morning and harness the horses for the field work and help milking, feed the hogs, chickens.
- LJ:** Which ones did you enjoy and which ones did you not like to do?
- AJ:** I enjoyed everything.
- LJ:** Where did you go to school?
- AJ:** In Weigel Township. They called it the Smith School.
- LJ:** How many years did you go to school?
- AJ:** Eight years.
- LJ:** Did you go to school the full school term, or did you have to stay home at times and to help with work?
- AJ:** I went full time school.
- LJ:** Where there suits of other nationalities at your school?
- AJ:** There was a friend of the family and their kids went to school with me.
- LJ:** What are some special memories about your childhood school?
- AJ:** I don't know what to say now, but yes.
- LJ:** What are some playground memories such as games and recess times?
- AJ:** Played baseball and the wintertime, snowballs. Running around and had a lot of fun.
- LJ:** How did you travel to and from school?
- AJ:** With one horse and a small sled.
- LJ:** How far was it to school?

AJ: A mile and a half.

LJ: What memories do you have of your teachers?

AJ: Well, my first teacher was Vincent Wolf. I was about eight years old and he could talk German and my last teacher was D.W. Meyer, that was in 1926. And he only teach one year.

LJ: What type of discipline was used when someone did not behave during school?

AJ: Some of them had to stay after school, stand on the blackboard, put their nose in the blackboard.

LJ: In what language were the church worships and prayers?

AJ: The church service was in Latin and the prayers were in German. I believe it was in 1964 they switched from Latin to English.

LJ: How did your parents feel about this change?

AJ: Most of the parents didn't like to switch from Latin to English.

LJ: Can you tell me about when you were baptized and/or confirmed?

AJ: I was baptized – I was a baby. I didn't know nothing. When I was confirmed, I was 12 years old and I can't remember nothing much about it.

LJ: Was there any special festivities for these events?

AJ: No.

LJ: Did you have a framed certificate of these events?

AJ: We never had any framed certificates.

LJ: Were your parents and grandparents involved in finding a church or did they join a neighborhood church?

AJ: No, they were not involved. They joined the neighboring church.

LJ: How was Christmas celebrated in your family?

AJ: On Christmas Eve, we went on a midnight Mass. The next day we had a big dinner and everybody there did a present exchange. We had a good time.

LJ: Tell us about what Christmas was like during the war or depression times?

AJ: That's about the same.

LJ: What do you know about the [190].

AJ: About the [190]. I remember I was about eight, nine year old. [191] came and asked my dad if we were good kids and he said no and then the [193] put a chain around and took me out the snow pile and I was so scared. And I knew who it was.

LJ: Christkindle?

AJ: Christkindle. When chistkindle came into the house, then we all had to stand in a line and pray that our father. All was so scared, couldn't hardly say it. Then each got a small package with a few nuts in there, peanuts, few candies, sometimes an orange or a apple. That's it, yah. At Easter time, all of us kids, we made a nest outside the house and next morning we got up early and ran out to see what we got from the Easter bunny. Each had two dyed eggs. And we helped dye the Easter eggs the evening before, but it made us believe that we see. "There goes the Easter bunny," they said. They made us believed that and we believed it. And that Sunday, we went to the Mass, church.