

# AJAKAJA

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ALBERTA ESTONIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY



# Alberta Estonian Heritage Society 2014

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) was formally established on April 23, 2005 to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Alberta's Estonian community, and to increase awareness of developments in Estonia.

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**Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) website: [www.aehs.ca](http://www.aehs.ca)**

## AEHS Membership Application

Membership applications can be completed on [www.aehs.ca](http://www.aehs.ca) website under Menu Option: **Heritage**. Membership queries and written applications can be submitted to Membership Director Lorne Hennel:

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## AjaKaja

AjaKaja is published semi-annually to inform members about Society activities and heritage topics. Publication and distribution costs are covered by membership dues.

Copies of AjaKaja can be ordered from [emcclung@shaw.ca](mailto:emcclung@shaw.ca). Non-members may purchase AjaKaja for \$5.00 by contacting Eda McClung.

Please submit articles, photographs and heritage-related items to Eda McClung at [emcclung@shaw.ca](mailto:emcclung@shaw.ca) or Dave Kiil at [adkiil@shaw.ca](mailto:adkiil@shaw.ca)

**Cover Design:** Aavo Kokk accompanied the Estonian Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Cluster during their Edmonton visit in September. He is a writer, editor and publisher, and management advisor. Cover photos are by Aavo, cover design by his daughter Helen Kokk.





# AjaKaja

Alberta Estonian  
Heritage Society

Issue Number 39

## From the Editors

Welcome to another 'weighty' issue of AjaKaja! The momentum of events, achievements and changes in our small community has resulted in another news-packed issue. We appreciate the abundance and quality of the material you have sent us.

We are pleased to bring you a message from Gita Kalmet, the first Estonian Ambassador to Canada, to reside in this country. We look forward to her upcoming visits. In the fall, Christine Robertson, Honorary Consul for Estonia in Alberta, hosted a group of 15 talented information and communication specialists from Estonia. We are delighted that Aavo Kokk, their spokesman, agreed to create our cover design. In the process, he unearthed some remarkable family roots which you can read about in this issue.

At the Annual General Meeting in Red Deer, members elected a new president, Ave Peetri, a recent arrival from Estonia. Her presidency will be an opportunity to formulate new, progressive goals to carry the Society forward for the next three years. AEHS may be at a crossroads, with its Heritage Project completed; however we as a group desire continuity. History has a place, ours is a culture of pioneers. How can we preserve and promote our multi-generational heritage? The Internet provides us with a vehicle to reach out to a global audience. From preserving our heritage to using Helgi Leesment's guidelines for accessing Estonian data bases of interest to persons of Estonian heritage, our website facilitates speedy online searches. Expanded connectivity through AEHS website will become a major focus. Bob Kingep's continued involvement as webmaster is much appreciated.

The reliable, 'ink on paper' AjaKaja has appeal as a material record of our past and present. We continue to receive fascinating and well-researched articles which bring to life diverse interests and pioneer history. What began as a community news leaflet decades ago is now a 48-page magazine. This issue has contributors from Tallinn to Texas. One third of our members reside outside of Alberta but want to retain ties to their Estonian heritage. Our community has extended itself beyond our provincial borders and now has a global reach.

The diplomatic importance of a new Ambassador and a local Honorary Consul highlight the opportunities to increase awareness of Alberta's Estonian community, elsewhere in North America and in Estonia. Let's look to the coming year as an opportunity to showcase and celebrate our unique, multi-generational heritage.

We thank all who took time to contribute articles for this issue! Best wishes for wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Eda McClung  
Dave Kiil

## In this issue

From the Editors	3
Estonian Ambassador's Letter	4
Honorary Consul's Corner	5
Presidents' Messages	7
AEHS AGM & Board meetings	9
Estonian House in Stettler	11
Youthful Face on Board!	13
Koots Century Farming Award	14
World Plowing Contest	15
ICT Cluster Visit	16
Kängsep & Kingsep	17
BHN Summer Camp in Estonia	19
LEP/ESTO 2013	20
In Memoriam: Ivar Ruus	24
Estonian Communards	25
Letter from Koit Commune	32
The Renne Story	34
The Peetov-Linderman Story	37
Alo Cafe Opens in Arizona	41
President Ilves & High Tech	42
2014 Song & Dance Festival	44
Start of Viking Age?	45
AEHS Membership List	46

## A message from the Ambassador of Estonia to Alberta's Estonians



*Photo: Välisministeerium*

***Ambassador of Estonia to Canada presents her credentials to Governor-General of Canada David Johnston in Ottawa, August 27, 2013***

I feel I should begin by noting that I have assumed the post of Ambassador to Canada during a very special year. In 2013, Estonia surpassed the invisible boundary where the restored Republic of Estonia surpassed the pre-war Republic in length. It is as if we have been freed from a decades-long obsession or that we have passed an exam and have been granted permission to go boldly forward into the future. This year also witnessed the first ever state visit of an Estonian President to Canada, which was built around a desire to thank Canada for its support of both Estonia and Estonians and to recognize the Estonian community in Canada for its efforts and success in keeping Estonian culture alive. In a way, the decision of Estonia to upgrade its diplomatic presence in Canada is a befitting addition to this series of events.

I have a great appreciation for the work of my predecessors, Riho Kruuv in Ottawa and Ambassador Marina Kaljurand in Washington. In my work as ambassador I

will try to build on their accomplishments. It is my desire to make use of all forms and forums of cooperation, be it through NATO, the European Union, Baltic and Nordic cooperation or cultural ties between the Finno-Ugric peoples. Yet I see the greatest potential is in increasing and intensifying cooperation with the local Estonian communities. However, this is something I cannot do alone. To do so, I need you, the communities in Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and elsewhere. You know Canada far better than I do, you have many professional contacts and I am sure you have many interesting ideas. Maybe one of these ideas is precisely what we need to give Estonian-Canadian relations a new impetus or a boost to the rather low volume of trade between our two countries. Perhaps one of your contacts could help us to organize an impressive exhibition of Estonian design or fashion, or maybe with your assistance we might find interest among provincial authorities for Estonia's X-Road. The Estonian Embassy in Ottawa is small – one of the smallest in Ottawa in fact – but together we could build an impressive network across Canada to strengthen ties between Canada and Estonia, the two countries that are so important to us all.

It is also reassuring to know that in Western Canada I will be able to rely on the experience and enthusiasm of our Honorary Consuls Christine Robertson and Harry Jaako in promoting Estonia's interests.

I look forward with great anticipation to my meeting with the Estonian community in Alberta. I truly hope this meeting will be the start of close cooperation and a strong friendship between us.

Sincerely, Gita Kalmet  
Ambassador of Estonia to Canada

## Honorary Consul's Corner



*Honorary Consul for Estonia in Alberta, Christine Robertson*

Tervist!

As Honorary Consul for Estonia in Alberta, I am pleased to provide updates to AEHS via AjaKaja.

On May 16<sup>th</sup> 2013, I was accepted as an Honorary Consul for the Republic of Estonia, meaning that I became the official representative of the Estonian government in the province of Alberta. This is not a paid position, but rather an 'honour'.

On June 10<sup>th</sup> I held a reception in my office for Mr. Riho Kruuv, Estonian Chargé d'Affaires from Ottawa. Thank you to everyone who attended this reception, as I know Mr. Kruuv was very honoured and appreciative. I was also honoured to receive the official plaque that Honorary Consuls for Estonia receive and warm wishes from AEHS! Mr. Kruuv has now moved back to Tallinn, Estonia and in August, Mrs. Gita Kalmet moved from Tallinn to Ottawa to become the first Estonian Ambassador to Canada to reside in Ottawa. I am looking forward to Her Excellency visiting Alberta!

In June there was an Alberta Government briefing for Consular and other Representatives

at Government House; I also attended a Planning Session for the Edmonton Consular Corps. The Edmonton Consular Corps meets monthly and is actively involved with government ministers.

In July, I attended the LEP/ESTO (West Coast Estonian Days) in San Francisco, where North American Honorary Consul's for Estonia came to attend a one day conference in Silicon Valley, prior to LEP. I had the opportunity to meet other Honorary Consuls. The day's agenda included a round table of discussions as to the role of an Honorary Consul, interesting requests HC's have received over the years, role playing, words from H.E. Marina Kaljurand, Estonian Ambassador to the United States, from Mr. Sten Schwede, Estonian Consul-General in New York, and presentations from H.E. Rein Lang, Estonian Minister of Culture, Mrs. Kristi Tiivas with Enterprise Estonia, and from Mr. Taavi Kotka, Estonian Deputy Secretary General at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. The conference concluded with a reception of the opening of the Estonian Honorary Consulate's office for Northern California and Silicon Valley.

Over the summer, I spent a fair bit of time organizing a three day trip for a 15 person delegation from the Estonian ICT Cluster with help from Vancouver's Honorary Consul Harry Jaako and with TEC Edmonton. They were here September 18-20<sup>th</sup>. It involved arranging their transportation and meals with help from Eda McClung and Ain Dave Kiil, having Külliva Kangur assist with hotel accommodations, and making appointments with various companies the cluster was interested in. This included some 'start up' companies, businesses and visits to our two research hospitals (University of Alberta and Glenrose Research Centre). I think the delegation was impressed with the ability of private enterprise to work with hospitals and researchers, and for our government's support. I truly believe that positive relations were established and that this is something that

Estonia can benefit from and will strive toward achieving themselves.

The hosts for this delegation included Eda McClung, Ain Dave Kiil, Ave Peetri and myself. At the 'hosted' dinner at The Keg, we also had Bob Tipman, Külliva Kangur, Kirsti Oja, and a special note from Helle and Jüri Kraav.

Just to recap, an Honorary Consul may be involved in the following:

- act as an intermediary between the Estonian Embassy in Ottawa and our province
- promote government relations between Estonia and Alberta
- promote cultural events
- participate as member of the Consular Corps in Alberta
- set up interviews as required in applying for an Estonian passport or ID card
- answer all manner of inquiries from Estonian citizens living in Alberta
- assist with inquiries from Albertans with an interest in Estonia
- help with translations
- attend other country's special events as invited
- notarize Estonian documents
- host visiting dignitaries when they come to Alberta
- host all notable visitors whenever the circumstances are appropriate

I look forward to the support of AEHS whenever an opportunity to promote Estonia in Alberta arises.

Her Excellency, Gita Kalmet, Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia, residing at the Embassy of Estonia in Ottawa, will likely be in Edmonton for consular duties in December. I will forward the exact dates and times to AEHS once it is confirmed.

In addition, next April or May, I will have the official opening of my office. I will work with H.E. Ambassador Gita Kalmet in securing a date

to have her introduced to the Alberta Legislature followed by a reception to honor her and officially open my office. AEHS will be notified once the date is confirmed. I would like to combine this with a trip to Calgary.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Honorary Consuls' Conference of the Republic of Estonia will take place July 2-4<sup>th</sup>, 2014 followed by the Song and Dance Celebration July 4-6<sup>th</sup> in Tallinn, Estonia. I plan to attend these events.

Season's greetings to everyone! Rõõmsaid Jõule.

Christine Robertson  
Honorary Consul to the Republic of Estonia in  
Edmonton  
780-890-1304 or 780-890-1303  
[crobertson@shellaero.com](mailto:crobertson@shellaero.com)



*Honorary Consul to the Republic of Estonia Plaque  
(Eesti Vabariigi Aukonsul)*

# Presidents' Messages

## Tere! Bob Kingsep

There is one undisputed constant in this world. Change. Our ancestors changed their old life and began a new one in Canada. As they progressed through the hardships and challenges of the era, they met and resolved their issues by implementing change. Change motivated the creation of the AEHS.

The frontier itself has changed from prairie isolation to population infusion and that presents a new set of challenges to our social and economic conditions. In that context we are no less challenged than our forefathers in our efforts to create and maintain a free and progressive society. We should never take for granted the efforts made to provide us with the opportunity to explore our interests and expand our horizons.

Few topics can conclude without mentioning timing. Our heritage and this organization are the products of timing. The circumstances of Canada's western territories, the pioneers, the post-war immigration, and the Alberta Estonian Centennial of 1999 are all critical components of the timing of the talents that came together to enable the AEHS and its milestone accomplishments.

We have pulled together fragments of previously vibrant communities and woven them into a new fabric of resilience that has consolidated the past and set the tone for the future. That is good; however these efforts are not without consequences. As our soldiers of the last series of projects crawl from the trenches, it has become apparent that we have borrowed from the energy

necessary to maintain our momentum. That is not so good.

We are, however, survivors of survivors with an inherent eye for opportunity. Through the reaches of our member website we recently garnered the attention of an energetic and capable new member who immediately impressed us. At our last AGM we were able to coerce her into taking on the role of leading us into our next phase of existence. She comes to us with organizational experience, leadership credentials and an all-important enthusiasm! Being new to our society, she has a viewpoint that is unencumbered by precedence. Our first President and my predecessor, Bob Tipman



*Ave Peetri and Bob Kingsep*

and I had the opportunity to spend an afternoon with her to present the perspective of the pioneer descendants. She weathered our barrage exceedingly well and appears to have digested the nuances of our multi-generational makeup. Like our ancestors and some of

our members, she is an Estonian who is new to Canada and she presents an opportunity for us to show that the pioneer spirit is alive and well in Alberta!

Today we turf the TV and begin another real-life story of survival. As our organization moves forward we must do so with the enthusiastic commitment of our pioneer and community leaders who understood the value of inclusion, respect and cooperation. This is our opportunity for a timely transition to

tomorrow! A fresh stamp of identity! This is very good indeed!

Fellow AEHS members, it is with great excitement and optimism that I pass the torch to our third President, Ave Peetri!

### **Tere! Ave Peetri**

It is with great honour and reverence that I assume the responsibility of the President of the AEHS. When I searched for Estonians in Alberta on my way to Calgary, I was looking for a support network to help us with settling into Alberta. With great pleasure, I found a well-organised society with so many active members and made friends who opened their homes in welcoming us. Having learned the history of Alberta Estonians, I realised that we had experienced what the first settlers had to create – a community that welcomes their kin in a new territory. This true Heritage of inclusion, respect and cooperation has passed on from generation to generation and creates the magnetism that keeps people engaged in the works of the Society.

My husband and I have lived in four different countries including Estonia before coming to live in Canada, so we are familiar with making ourselves comfortable in new surroundings. We are quite social and have had our work networks to get us settled in a new country. Yet, there has always been this desire to belong to a group with whom you share a bit more than work or hobbies. People who understand the way you are brought up and share your culture and history. Referring to Bob Kingsep – when the previously vibrant communities became fragments there was this underlying desire to unite and create something bigger around the same values. Estonians came to Alberta at different times over the last three centuries, but there is still the common thread that unites us all.

The Heritage project that has been completed by the members of the AEHS has immense

value. It is something that can be studied to understand what it is that keeps Estonians together and what makes an Estonian. It probably is not just the sauna and the preference of dark bread over white. I see the Heritage Project as a cornerstone of AEHS and something on which the Society can build a long-lasting and viable future. No tree grows without roots.

I would like to use my time as the President of the AEHS to grow the tree. Keep alive the pioneer spirit, have the AEHS as a Society that is attractive to join and that extends its branches to many areas in Alberta and Estonia. Members would find it excellent to make contacts and get introduced to areas that they are interested in. There is a lot of combined wisdom and experience in all of the members. Let's have the AEHS as a safe place to follow your passion and help other members with it.

These are my initial thoughts. In every successful organisation and society, the members determine the content and the future. Therefore, I would like everyone who reads this wonderful magazine, to send me a note and tell me what you see as the future for the AEHS. Tell me, what has been valuable for you as a member and what would you like the Society to do more or less of.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Contact me via e-mail:

[ave.peetri@gmail.com](mailto:ave.peetri@gmail.com) or post: 804 3 avenue SW, Calgary T2P 0G9

*Editor's note: Ave Peetri has been working in Marketing roles in Estonia, USA, England and Belgium after graduating with an MBA from Norway. She worked for 10 years with the Coca-Cola Company. Now, in Calgary, she is coaching small business owners to find new clients by developing their own confident marketing style.*

# AEHS Annual General Meeting 2013

Helgi Leesment

Twenty-five members of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society gathered on Saturday September 14, 2013 at Red Deer for their annual general meeting chaired by outgoing president Bob Kingsep. Highlights of the meeting and of the past year are:

The AEHS Heritage Project is now complete, having started in 2006 with the gathering of materials from Albertans and ending with a documentary DVD, a book, a historical website, an Estonian Collection at the Provincial Archives of Alberta dedicated to the Estonian community and a six-panel display depicting the story of Alberta's Estonians. Presentations involving these items have been made in Toronto and Ottawa. The President of Estonia viewed the panels during his state visit to our nation's capital.

Other diplomatic events include:

- the AEHS received a brief visit from Marina Kaljurand, Estonian Ambassador to USA, Canada and Mexico.
- The government of Estonia appointed Albertan Christine Lepik Robertson as Honorary Consul of the Republic of Estonia for Alberta. Christine spoke enthusiastically about her new role and furthering ties with AEHS.

AEHS finances are in good shape. Our editors keep producing excellent issues of the magazine *AjaKaja* twice yearly. After two years of wrestling with details, the revised AEHS By-Laws have been accepted by members and formally filed with Alberta Registries.



***President Bob Kingsep, Vice-President Helgi Leesment, Treasurer Toomas Paasuke presiding at AGM***

Deane Kerbes reported that the Estonian House at the Stettler outdoor museum has suffered major water damage and requested donations to purchase supplies. He and others will arrange volunteer labour to complete the task. A total of \$10,000 is needed. The AEHS made a significant donation as this situation is in line

with the objectives of the Society. Martha Munz Gue keeps her extended family, originally from the Barons area, informed about AEHS activities.

The 2013-2014 executive members are: President Ave Peetri, Vice-president Helgi Leesment, Secretary Jüri Kraav, Treasurer Toomas Pääsuke, Membership director Lorne Hannel. The new directors: Rein Pääsuke, Kaidi Phypers, Martha Munz Gue, Eda McClung and Dave Kiil. Ex-president Bob Kingsep will be relocating to British Columbia in 2014 but plans to maintain his webmaster role with the AEHS.

With its major historical projects done, the Society is now looking forward to new directions under a new president.

# AEHS Board of Director's Meeting

Helgi Leesment, Calgary, Alberta

The newly elected AEHS Board held its first meeting on October 28, 2013 in Calgary. As the Board now includes two most welcome recent arrivals to Alberta - namely President Ave Peetri and Director Kaidi Phipers - all members introduced themselves telling a little about their background.



*L-R: Lorne Hennel, Ave Peetri with Martha Munz Gue on Skype, Kaidi Phipers, Dave Kiil present by Skype (Eda McClung also attended via Skype), Helgi Leesment, Toomas Paasuke, Bob Kingsep*

## **Present in person:**

President Ave Peetri  
Vice-President Helgi Leesment  
Membership Director Lorne Hennel  
Secretary Jüri Kraav  
Treasurer Toomas Paasuke  
Director Kaidi Phipers  
Past President, ex-officio member and website technical manager Bob Kingsep

**Present via Skype:** Martha Munz Gue, Medicine Hat, Eda McClung and Dave Kiil, Edmonton.

Unable to attend: Rein Paasuke.

The first item of business was a review of the Society's infrastructure as managed by the vice-president: the fulfilment of formal requirements by the Alberta Government Registries and maintenance of various Society internal documents. On display were several items owned by the AEHS, for example two large flags with poles and stands.

The board can make use of these items at future functions. In addition, the AEHS has available for sale copies of the DVD *Alberta's Estonians*, the book *Freedom, Land, and Legacy: Alberta's Estonians 1899-2009* plus lapel pins.

Next, President Ave Peetri led the group in a brainstorming session to determine the vision and

mission of the AEHS for the next three years. This quest will continue via email prior to the next meeting. It became evident that enhancing the website is a major requirement. A committee of six persons was established to address this issue.

AEHS summer plans for 2014 were briefly discussed. These may differ from the usual. Details for a July event will be announced at a later date.

The AEHS will print business cards for distribution to promote awareness of Alberta's Estonian community.

Recording and preserving historical materials about Estonians in Alberta has been a wonderful, vital activity spanning the first eight years of AEHS existence; however, board members were now happy to move forward to a new phase for the Society involving new goals and initiatives.

# Estonian history alive and well in Alberta

Katie Davis

Coronation ECA Review, September 12, 2013

Nestled in the corner of Northern Europe is the tiny Baltic nation of Estonia, a country whose heritage knows much struggle from times of Russian occupation and neighbouring European intrusion in decades of conflict.



*Estonian House at Stettler Town and Country Museum.*

Though mention of this land may not spring to mind an immediate connection with Alberta soil, Estonia has deep heritage in this province, extending as far back as 1899 when Estonian settlers came westward and settled here in search of a new life.

Perhaps most notably within the east-central region is Linda Hall - now a Community Centre within what was once the largest Estonian settlement in Canada - and the Estonian Heritage House in Stettler, a small but iconic wooden building by the old train station. They stand as reminders of a vibrant cultural influence that once brought many farms and people through these rural areas of Canada.

These landmarks have great personal significance for Deane and Irene Kerbes of Stettler. Deane comes from Estonian ancestry in the area - his grandparents and family emigrated to Canada in 1911 and homesteaded in the Kalev area near

Big Valley. Deane grew up on the family farm until 1973 and is the sole Kerbes who remained in the area with wife Irene, who is not Estonian by blood but immensely passionate about the culture.

“Most of the Estonians are all gone,” says Deane, “there are very few left.” The Estonian influence dissipated with intermarriages and travel, but the cultural connection to Stettler in particular remains strong, especially within the Estonian house at the Museum.

“The Estonian House is a reminder to people that the Estonian people settled here, and built similar dwellings in the area,” says Irene.

The house was built by Estonian native George (Juri) Tamberg in the 1920's and, after decades of use, was donated to the Museum in 1978 by Earl Bergman.



*Deane and Irene Kerbes*

The house has housed many artifacts donated by Estonian locals over the years, including paper documentation that piqued the interest of Estonian President Lennart Meri when he visited the Museum and area in 2000.

“There were some Estonians who lived in the Linda Hall area, and went to

Australia afterward,” recounts Deane, “Their grandchildren [visited Alberta] from Australia because they had heard about Linda Hall and they came to the Museum, and then they phoned our house.” Deane recounts how they traced their ancestry back through Stettler. The Museum in the area facilitated the pursuit of their lineage and helped them find the grave of their great-uncle at the Estonian cemetery.

Deane and Irene say the house is experiencing deterioration and they fear for its continued presence in the community.

“The back part of it got water inside,” Deane says, noting that the foundations were built between the wooden beams using mud. “The building beside had no eavestroughs and water came down and it soaked into the mud chinking and rotted some of the logs,” he said, “so we’re going to try and preserve that.” Alberta’s Estonian community is seeking donations to rebuild the interior.

Deane and Irene said that for them, keeping the Estonian tradition alive in Alberta is important for future generations of Estonian descendants and visitors to the area.

### **Estonian Heritage Exhibit Featured at Stettler Museum**

Arrangements have been completed to display the Alberta Estonian Heritage Exhibit at the Stettler Country and Town Museum from May 1 to Sept. 1, 2014

The exhibit tells the story of Estonian pioneers who settled in the province, including the Stettler and Big Valley areas, starting in 1899.

### **Funding Drive Underway to Preserve Estonian House at Stettler Museum**

The Estonian House at the Settler Museum is in critical need of funds for its restoration. Built by Estonian pioneer Juri Tamberg in 1920’s, and donated to the Stettler Museum in 1978, the 20’ x 24’ log and plank building has served as a repository for local historical Estonian artifacts. In 2000, it enjoyed a visit by Estonia’s President Lennart Meri who commented on its treasured book collection and original Estonian crafts brought by pioneers over a century ago. At present, these materials are in storage with a somewhat uncertain future.



*Estonian President Lennart Meri at  
Estonian House, 2000*

Recent estimates place the minimum cost of repairs at \$10,000 for materials with labour provided by volunteers. A full-scale restoration is not feasible. Plans are to repair the log house as close as possible to its original form, starting in spring 2014. A community-wide funding drive is underway to rebuild part of the structure.

When the matter was raised by Deane Kerbes at the recent Annual General Meeting of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society, members voted to contribute \$2,000.00 to cover part of the material costs of the repairs. Preserving this modest historical house is one way to preserve the heritage of Alberta’s Estonian pioneers.

Donations are tax deductible and payable to Stettler Town and Country Museum, designated “Estonian House Repair”.

Cheques should be mailed to:

Deane Kerbes

Box 1504

Stettler AB T0C 2L0

## **Kaidi Phypers: A youthful face on AEHS Board of Directors**

by Helgi Leesment



*Kaidi Phypers*

Kaidi Phypers is one of two very new members of the AEHS and its Board. She immigrated directly to Calgary in 2011 after marrying her Canadian fiancé Everett Phypers in Estonia earlier that year. The couple met at a church and related camp in Tartu and Tallinn where Everett was teaching English. Kaidi grew up on a farm 30 km from Rakvere along with 7 sisters and 5 brothers and later trained as a hairdresser.

However, her European qualifications are not recognized in Canada, so Kaidi is currently re-enrolled in a hairdressing apprenticeship practicum along with formal courses in Calgary. Her husband is also a student, pursuing a health sciences degree at Mount Royal University.

Upon first arriving in Canada, Kaidi did not have a work permit for this country. Among other subjects at school in Estonia, she had learned sewing, knitting, quilting, embroidery, etc. but did not care much for these skills. However, with time on her hands initially in Canada, she delved seriously into knitting, discovering she has a strong aptitude for these types of handicrafts. She continues to produce professional looking socks, hats, mittens, slippers, sweaters, quilted and other items; some in pop styles such ‘angry bird’, some involving stylized Estonian patterns. She has given much of her handiwork away as gifts, more recently selling a few items. Kaidi’s other hobby is looking after her pet rabbit called Jänku, meaning “Bunny” in Estonian. She and Everett will soon begin training a seeing-eye dog.



*Kaidi Phypers’ knitting*

Within weeks of finding the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society as her local Estonian contact, Kaidi attended its annual general meeting on September 14 this year, where she agreed to stand as a candidate for one of the five “Member-at-Large” director positions on the Board. As a much welcomed younger member of the Board, Kaidi would like to put her future efforts into bringing other younger members to the AEHS.

# Koots family of Eckville recognized for century of farming

Stuart Fullarton  
Eckville Echo, July 25, 2013



*Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development*

***Clarence and Aida Koots were joined by Honourable Diana McQueen (Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, MLA of Drayton Valley-Devon) and Mary Anne Jablonski (MLA of Red Deer-North) after receiving a Century Farm and Ranch Award in Red Deer.***

Excerpts from article:

“An Eckville-area family was recognized for its 100-year farming commitment during an awards ceremony at Westerner Days in Red Deer last Wednesday.

Clarence and Aida Koots, whose cattle farm is situated about 10 kilometres north of Eckville, were included among 18 families receiving Century Farm and Ranch Awards from the provincial government.

The awards were presented to Alberta families who have spent a century or longer farming or ranching on the same land.

“It’s nice to see that there are that many families that have stayed in farming that long,” said

Clarence Koots. “There are actually a number of other 100-year farms around here.”

The Koots’ farm has been in the family since 1903, when Clarence’s grandparents Paul and Aliide Koots arrived from Estonia in search of a better life.

The opportunity to own their own land provided enough motivation for them to make the move, despite the hardships that lay ahead of them.

“They went through a lot of tough times,” said Koots. “Getting started as homesteaders, it wasn’t an easy life, but they persevered, and persevered through the thirties as well, and here we are now.”

The plaque will be displayed on the farm’s laneway.”

# Estonians Compete at the World Plow 2013 in Olds

Ave Peetri, Calgary, Alberta

When flying home from Estonia this summer my husband and I sat next to a Norwegian who was going to a ploughing competition in Olds, Alberta. After talking for a bit longer, we found out that, it was not any old competition, but the World Championship in ploughing, held every year in a different country. When we asked whether there will be any Estonians and he said Yes most certainly! We made a decision to go and see it for ourselves.

It was the weekend after the Calgary Stampede, a lovely sunny day when we headed to Olds with Helle and Jüri Kraav, whom we had convinced to join in and even drive us to the event. Once in Olds, there were many signs showing us the way to the World Plow 2013 at the Olds College Campus. The parking lot was extremely muddy (it was right after the floods) and there was a tractor trailer taking us to the entrance from our car.

The grounds were enormous, lots of exhibitions of tractors and other types of farm machinery, some of which we had not seen before. They had vintage farm machines and horse drawn ploughs – contrasting history with modern machinery. We learned there were 60 participants from 30 countries competing and that they were competing in two different events:

grassland and stubble ploughed with reversible and conventional ploughs. It was also the 60<sup>th</sup> annual World Championship and it was 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Olds College. We went looking for Estonians.

The first thing we saw was the Estonian flag flying behind Jüri Lai who was ploughing. He had his wife and a fan club from Estonia, with small Estonian flags, sitting on straw bales for moral support.. We had a good chat with the fan club. It turns out that they follow their champions every year to a different country. Last year's Championship was in Croatia, next year's would be in Bordeaux, France. Jüri Lai,

competitor from Türi, Estonia, has been to five World Championships. They had arrived three days before the event and realized that their equipment might not make it because of the flood. Fortunately, the tractors and plows arrived in the nick of time, but then they could not practice the first day because it was still raining. Equipment was very important because it had been customized for the ploughman. The judges used at least eight different criteria; in addition, there were 24 pages of rules for the World Plow organisation. One of the Estonians was also a judge at the competition. We did not get to talk to him very long, as he had some judging to do.

The results for Estonian team this year were the following: Jüri Lai from Türi finished 14<sup>th</sup> in Reversible plough and Raivo Kunila from Jõgeva finished 20<sup>th</sup> amongst 30 competitors in both disciplines.



*Jüri Lai (nr. 46) and Raivo Kunila (nr. 10) represented Estonia in the competition. Helle and Juri Kraav, and Ave Peetri, represented Alberta Estonians.*

We stayed for the closing ceremony. The judges were still doing their job; the results had to be in by the gala dinner and the awards ceremony that evening which was going to be broadcast live on the web. Although the majority of the competitors were men – only two women amongst 60 men, one of them won the conventional plow competition and the

other came second in the reversible. Both women were from Austria; one of them 24 and the other 21 years old. They were also the first all-women team ever to compete in the plowing championships.

We had a great time visiting the World Plow 2013 in Olds. The weather was the best of the summer and we learned so much about ploughing and met many nice people. We told the Estonians who had come to the championship about Alberta Estonians and that the first ones came here to plough their own land. They said that the soil here in Alberta is much like that in central Estonia.

## **Estonian Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Cluster Visit Edmonton**



A group of Estonian entrepreneurs and managers, mainly from the IT sector, visited Edmonton between September 18-20, 2013. Alberta's Honorary Consul of Estonia in Alberta, Christine Robertson (sixth from left), is shown outside her office at the Edmonton Shell Aerocentre with the group. The delegation toured the Glenrose Hospital (Edmonton's Research Hospital), the University of Alberta's Machine Learning program, Edmonton Research Park, TEC Edmonton, and Yardstick - a successful privately-owned service-oriented company developing specialized software for Training, Learning and Exam Testing. The delegation was greeted by the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society's new President, Ave Peetri, and other local Estonians. The visit promoted business relations between Edmonton and Estonia, and new friendships were established. The delegation's mission is to promote technical education and research in Estonia through the universities, businesses, and the IT infrastructure.

# Kängsep & Kingsep

Aavo Kokk, Tallinn, Estonia

**Summer 1896:** A large, magnificent stable house is completed. It's built from rare white yellowish limestone that one can find in the south of Estonia neat Mõniste (there are larger deposits also in northern Latvia). The stonemason is carving into the cornerstone the initials of the owner, Jüri Kängsep. That man was my great grandfather. The place is Mõttuskonnu farm, just 3 kilometers from the southern tip of Estonia, a place where I spent summers as a youth. Part of our extended family still summers there.

**May 9, 1899:** Two Estonian brothers acquire 160 acres near Sylvan Lake, Alberta. As far as is known, they are the first permanent Estonians to settle in Alberta, if not Canada. Former teacher from Otepää Hindrik was the older, brother Kristjan the sailor was the younger. They soon started to use Canadian spellings - Henry and Christian.

The two stories have a common origin. Mõttuskonnu Jüri and the Alberta-bound Henry and Christian probably knew each other well. All were more or less the same age and from the same place - Linnamäe village, Urvaste parish. Their grandfathers were brothers:



*Aavo Kokk*

Jüri was born in 1806, Juhan born circa 1812.

Here is the story of how I discovered my famous relatives Henry and Christian Kingsep.

**September, 2013,** I was in Canada for the first time and spent a few days in Edmonton. Co-editor of AjaKaja, Eda McClung, knew that

I wrote art books and asked if I would design a cover for the Fall/Winter 2013 issue. I gladly agreed and upon returning to Estonia, started to look for ideas. I did not find a suitable art source. The October scene was changing, and nature turned from green to yellow and red. The cover photo was taken at our Mäenuki farm which is close to Otepää, less than 20 km. from Linnamäe where the Kingsep/Kängsep family comes from. My lovely wife Marge and I bought the farm 10 years ago and spend the summer months there.

I was fascinated by a young, yellow maple. But the weather was gloomy and the colors did not show well. So on my camera, I turned off all the colors except yellow and there it was. I also decided to include the old dump rake in the foreground.

If anything is symbolic of the mechanization of agriculture, then it is

the dump rake (also called revolving horse rake). Patented in the United States in 1836, this smart machine was quickly put to use all over the world. I myself have worked with it as a boy in the 1970's in Mõtuskonnu where I spent summers. Sometime this work took a dangerous turn. Horseflies could make the horse really mad, resulting in quite a ride over fields and through ditches.

Initially the yellow maple and the dump rake were just an idea. A few days later I was browsing through the AEHS book 'Freedom, Land, and Legacy', when I saw a familiar scene on page 76: pioneers making hay with horses and a dump rake. I knew then that the maple tree and dump rake are symbols I can use to connect Estonia and Canada.

My personal story got fascinating a few moments later as I came to page 70. There is a picture of a memorial headstone, set for the father of Hindrik and Kristjan. The sons called themselves Kingsep. However the father's headstone is carved "Horma Ott Känksep, 1838-1905", meaning 'Ott Kängsep from Horma Farm'. Why did I not think of this earlier! If someone is from Võru region, the family name cannot be Kingsep. The Võru language does not have that name. Kängsep, Känksep or other 'Ä' formats are the only spelling.

I had to investigate if there was a connection between the Alberta Kingseps and Mõtuskonnu Kängseps. And now you know I discovered that there is! I am grateful to Eda McClung who invited me to work with AjaKaja which led to my discovery of this fascinating tie to Alberta's settlement history.

## **About the Author:**

*Aavo Kokk is a writer and management advisor. Aavo has been editor in chief of "Eesti Ekspress", publisher of 'Eesti Päevaleht', head of taxation in Ministry of Finance, Management board member of Estonian Savings Banks. Now Aavo works for major Scandinavian real estate advisory company Catella. Aavo is also part of supervisory councils for several institutions including Estonian Arts Academy, Baltic Film and Media School, Audentes Private School, forestry group Lemeks, food processing company Premia Foods and media business Ekspress Grupp.*

*Married to Marge for 26 years, they have three children: Helen (25), Jaan (23) and Eliisa (8). Aavo's book projects are listed on [www.maastikumaal.ee](http://www.maastikumaal.ee).*



***Aavo Kokk and Bob Tipman at reception for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Cluster in Edmonton, September 18, 2013***

## Finding information and helping to create information: Baltic Heritage Network Summer School at Alutaguse, Estonia

Helgi Leesment, Calgary, Alberta

In July of 2013, the Baltic Heritage Network held a four-day session at Alutaguse, a small sports training centre/resort in north-east Estonia near Jõhvi. One purpose of the gathering was to introduce databases of interest to individuals seeking cultural heritage information from and about Estonians and Estonian communities beyond the borders of the country: in other words, for and about people like us of Estonian heritage in Alberta. Presentations were made by top level staff associated with the Estonian Literary Museum (which functions similarly to a national museum and archive), Estonian National Museum, Estonian National Archives, Estonian National Library, the Library of Tallinn University, Tartu University and the Immigration History Research Centre at Minnesota University in USA.

It is worth noting that the Estonian National Archives is in the early stages of developing a database that will in some way unify the contents of diverse Estonian-related databases located throughout the world outside Estonia.

The 42 BaltHerNet Summer School attendees represented Estonian-related organizations from various European countries, including Crimea, plus Russia, Australia and the United States. Canada had four delegates: two from Toronto organizations, including Piret Noorhani, founder of BaltHerNet and organizer of the July event; also Peter and Helgi Leesment as AEHS representatives. In some past years, Dave Kiil has represented the AEHS and made a major presentation at the 2009 multi-national session.

*The list of databases introduced at this BaltHerNet conference along with my brief guidelines pertaining to their use by English speaking people is available on our society website at [www.aehs.ca](http://www.aehs.ca), click on 'Links'. That listing forms the second part of my AEHS report on the conference.*

*Access is also available via BaltHerNet website: <http://www.balther.net/>. There are no usage*



*Attendees at BHN Summer School 2013*

[guidelines on that website, but it offers additional databases and links.](#)

The second of the two purposes of the 2013 BaltHerNet summer session was to demonstrate the historical value of ordinary correspondence, particularly letters sent among family members scattered in Estonia and elsewhere in the world. One set of such letters provides an insight into the everyday life of a particular person or family. That in itself has historical value. However, many batches of such letters form a solid historical base about a region in a certain period of time. Thus, the Estonian National Museum has issued a call for old letters written to or by Estonians whether located in Europe, Canada or elsewhere. The longer the time period covered by those letters, the better. Ideally, the Museum would like to receive both sets of letters, i.e. a set of letters and the responses by the other person. But it is happy to receive any correspondence. Handwritten or typed letters have further value in that 21<sup>st</sup> Century correspondence is immediately lost -- people send emails and delete them shortly after reading them. No paper copies are kept. This is a huge loss, historically speaking. Thus hard copy letters from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century are fast gaining greater historical value.

Anyone wishing to donate their family correspondence should contact:

Riina Reinvelt  
Estonian National Museum  
Veski 32, Tartu 51014, Estonia  
tel: +372-735-0406  
e-mail: [riina@erm.ee](mailto:riina@erm.ee)

On the final day of this summer's BaltHerNet event, the conference toured the nearby historical Kuremäe convent, the newly established Narva College branch of Tartu University and the City of Narva Museum. Back at Alutaguse, a pleasant final evening was spent singing with accordion accompaniment

# SAN FRANCISCO HOSTS LEP-ESTO JULY 2013

Janice Pääsuke, Calgary, Alberta

For many Canadians whose ancestors came from other countries, the features that made one's culture distinctive have vanished. They are blurred beyond recognition in the melting pot of Canadian life and the creation of a new culture until little remains that is unique. Therefore, I whose grand-parents came from Europe and who married an Estonian, always find it a wonderful experience to be included in the West Coast Estonian Days where we are immersed in all that makes Estonian culture come alive once again. While the name implies west coast, Estonians from several countries and regions came to participate as part of ESTO 2013. Many guest presenters were from Estonia. It was an opportunity to understand the importance of preserving aspects of Estonian heritage for our grandchildren, to enjoy expositions of various artistic works with a uniquely Estonian flair, to see how Estonia is making its mark in global endeavors and to celebrate it all with friends. There were several segments of this time that stand out as being particularly memorable.

The first day we went to Stanford University for a number of seminars related to preparing and preserving precious historical artifacts for archiving and the importance of such ventures. (See article by Rein Pääsuke). As the day progressed, it was apparent to me that the recent work of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society in preserving materials that now reside in the Alberta Archives in Edmonton was a significant leader in how this can be done in a most effective way. Our AEHS exhibit was to be on display at the main conference site but due to unfortunate shipping circumstances it did not arrive on time. That day closed at the Hoover Tower Rotunda for the opening of the exhibit "A Harsh Spring". Created by the National Archives of Estonia, it tells the story of March 1949.

For the OPENING GALA of LEP-ESTO 2013, we gathered at the Palace of Fine Arts for a wonderful evening of music and dance. Featured guests, the Estonian Youth Wind Orchestra, dancers of the Estonian National Ballet, pianist Hando Nahkur, vocalist Hanna-Liina Võsa, choreographer Tiit Helimes presented a full evening, showcasing the varied talents of these Estonian artists. Earlier in the day, the gallery of this venue featured several booths where Estonian business ventures had opportunity to show how Estonia, once constrained by communism, is at the forefront of "knowledge based" businesses in IT, design, finance, medicine and biotech sectors.

One of the large churches in San Francisco hosted the LAULUPIDU where the music of Estonia revolved around the theme "Ela hästi, mu kodumaa" / "Live well, my homeland." Various choirs, from the USA and Canada performed songs familiar and loved by all Estonians; compositions from various composers and poets whose unfaltering creative works have enriched the Estonian music culture, filled our afternoon with great pleasure.



*Choir performing during LEP/ESTO Festival, San*

Sunday afternoon, we found ourselves at the Yerba Buena Gardens Park for the TANTSUPIDU where the dance companies twirled and spun to develop the theme of "Piirideta Eesti" / "Estonia Without Borders". It was like being transported back to

the village green where families would gather for an afternoon of dancing and enjoying each other's company after a week of hard work in the fields. This sentence from the program sums up this afternoon so well – "Today we have gathered here from all corners of the globe to celebrate our heritage and recognize that in a way, Estonia is borderless and we are one big family".

What great family event does not include a RAHVAPIDU or picnic? We travelled by bus into the hot hills of Castle Rock Recreation Area, east of the city for a time of superb eating, drinking, games, hiking and swimming. It was a relaxed opportunity to visit with friends, both old and new and everyone went home dusty, tired but content.



*Folkdancers performing at LEP/ESTO*

Every day of this event, from early morning to late at night, was packed with things to do. Some of us took special pleasure in going to the Premier

viewing of “Üheshingamine”/ “To Breathe As One.” This film is based on the 2009 Estonian Laulupidu produced by James Tusty and Maureen Castle Tusty, who filmed the much acclaimed “The Singing Revolution.” It features a growing friendship between a teen choir from California and a teen choir in Estonia as they merge their voices in songs of unity. We returned another evening for the showing of a new Estonian ‘art’ film “Mushrooming”. Down the street from the theatre a few of us found a delightful restaurant that made our evening excursions complete. Of course there were other workshops, places to explore the works of various artists, the sights of San Francisco, lunches and drinks with friends and many other opportunities to be thankful for our Estonian heritage, even if it has only been acquired through marriage!

For those Canadians who have not attended one of these celebrations, there will be another opportunity as the 2015 West Coast Estonian Days will be held in the glorious mountains north of Vancouver at Whistler, B.C. Watch for details and begin to promote this exciting event to your family members.

## **ESTO VISITS STANFORD: A CONFERENCE ON PRESERVING OUR HISTORY**

Rein Pääsuke, Calgary, Alberta

The day before the official start of the 2013 West Coast Estonian Days (LEP-ESTO 2013), June 27, 2013, “A Conference Dedicated to Estonian Archives, Libraries, Museums and Research Possibilities Abroad” was held at Stanford University. Speakers came from Estonia, Canada and the USA. About 40 people attended. The organisers arranged for a bus to take participants from San Francisco to Stanford, a trip of almost an hour.

Michael Keller, Stanford University Librarian, welcomed us. He was followed by the Estonian Minister of Culture, Rein Lang, who talked about Estonia’s museums. A new Estonian Museums Act defines a “museum” as a non-profit, cultural and educational institution in the service of society. The Act in no way restricts the private development of museums in Estonia. One of the most important parts

of the Act is a requirement for clearly stated collecting principles. This will improve the quality of collecting principles and of the subsequent museum collections.

Museums should be seen not only as costly collections of artefacts as they also contribute to the tourism industry. Visits to Estonian museums doubled from 1.5 million in 2001 to over 3 million in 2012. There are 245 museums in Estonia, one third state owned, one third local authority owned and one third privately owned. Together they house some 8.3 million objects.

In recent years more emphasis has been placed on the communication function of museums. An electronic database offering an online gateway to Estonian museums – Museums Public Portal MuIS (Muuseumi InfoSüsteem, [www.muis.ee](http://www.muis.ee)) – has been

created enhancing access to previously inaccessible collections.

Museums in Estonia are of very high quality. KuMu, the art museum in Tallinn, was recently awarded a prize in the art museum category and the Lennusadam (Seaplane Harbour Museum) received the highest prize in Europe.

Tõnis Lukas, of the Estonian National Museum (ENM) in Tartu, is a former Minister of Education in Estonia. He talked about collecting and researching Estonian cultural heritage abroad. One of the tasks of the ENM is to collect material about Estonians living abroad. In the 1970s most material was collected from inside the USSR. Only after 1988 were artefacts from the west acquired, when the ENM started actively collecting material about the refugees of World War 2. The ENM would like items taken from Estonia by the refugees, items made in Displaced Persons (DP) camps and items made in the new countries of settlement. Items received to date are relatively few (some 2000 items from Estonians in Canada, USA, Australia, Sweden and Britain) and the ENM would like to receive more. One of the collecting principles of ENM is that it will accept only original material, not copies. It will make copies available digitally to all.

He said that Estonia is currently the only place so far where items of the Estonian diaspora have been systematically collected. Even VEMU (Väliseesti Muuseum – Museum of Estonians Abroad) in Toronto “has not yet begun to collect items extensively”.

Piret Noorhane discussed the Baltic Heritage Network (BHN). She is currently based in Toronto, working with VEMU, Tartu College, and the Estonian Literary Museum. The working group of Estonian archives abroad was established in Tartu in 2005 and was formalised as the Baltic Heritage Network in 2008. (Dave Kiil and Helgi Leesment have attended

subsequent meetings of the BHN, and AEHS is a paying member of the network.) The multilingual [www.balthernet.net](http://www.balthernet.net) was launched in 2007. The BHN has held three worldwide conferences on archives in Tartu in 2006, 2009 and 2012.

BHN is involved in working with Estonian and other Baltic groups, not only in the Baltic countries but worldwide. Ms Noorhane discussed the current state of Estonian archives abroad: for example, the Dr Endel Aruja Library and Archives (Toronto),

Estonian Central Archives in Canada (Toronto), Estonian Archives in the United States (Lakewood, NJ), Estonian Archives in Australia, Estonian Archives in Vancouver and Estonian Archives at the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton.



*Conference participants at Stanford University*



*Conference presenters, Stanford University, June 27, 2013*

She also talked about VEMU, which is designated as the repository of archives and artefacts from Canada, USA and other parts of the world, but concentrating on Canadian material. VEMU has received a donation of CDN\$450,000, and a new building is planned to start in the next 3 years.

Maarja Merivoo-Parro is a young scholar working with the BHN. In 2009 the BHN held a seminar for young diaspora researchers to bring together undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate

researchers of diaspora from several fields: history, sociology, cultural studies, literary studies, musicology and other fields. In the past four years this initiative has grown in uniting students and professional archivists and scholars. Teamwork among these young researchers is stimulated by the lack of funding for this kind of research. The Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota is home to the largest Estonian archival collection in the USA. There is great interest among young scholars in Estonian heritage, particularly in the diaspora, and there will be a great deal of research forthcoming in the next few decades.

Tiiu Kravtsev of the National Archives of Estonia said that the National Archives (Rahvusarhiiv) contains 8.8 million records. It has 11 million images on file which are available on the internet. There are 13,000 archival units of diaspora documents in 67 different collections. The audiovisual section contains 1900 movies/videos and 2600 audio recordings from the diaspora. It also contains records of Estonian statehood: information about statesmen, etc. It has acquired the original "Tartu Leping" – the agreement between Estonia and the USSR that ended the War of Independence on 2 February 1920 and set the border between the USSR and Estonia "in perpetuity", until Stalin changed it. This document had been taken to Sweden in 1940, and was returned after reestablishment of independence in 1991. Ms Kravtsev also mentioned a number of other less important collections. All of these may be accessed through the RahvusArhiiv website, [www.ra.ee](http://www.ra.ee).

Taavi Kotka was a young businessman specialising in e-commerce, who recently sold his business. Since he had a non-competition clause in the sale, he went to work at the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. He carried on almost all of his business electronically, said he had never seen a bank cheque, and signed all legal documents digitally. He completed the sale of his business snowboarding down an Alp. He described the development of the information society in Estonia, and emphasised that the future trend in business is in this area. Information has become more important than manufacturing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He pointed out that the real issue in an electronic society is control, not confidentiality. After all Estonians have

had 50 years of NKVD-KGB experience, with NO confidentiality.

Liisi Eglit of Stanford University Libraries organised the conference, and mentioned the interest of the Stanford Libraries in Estonian and Baltic history, particularly of the 20<sup>th</sup> century period. It had an exchange programme with Tartu University even before 1991. This collection has benefitted from endowment from the Kitsler-Risto Foundation.

David Jacobs of the Hoover Institution Library and Archives, housed at Stanford, mentioned the large collection of Baltic material held by the Institution. Herbert Hoover headed the American Relief Administration, 1919-1922, which provided relief to eastern Europe, including feeding 43,000 children in Estonia. A significant collection in the Archives is that of Kaarel Pusta who was Estonia's foreign minister in 1924-5, and subsequently was an important diplomat. A collection from the Cold War era has records of broadcasts on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, including evaluations of the effects of these broadcasts in Estonian. It also has a Konstantin Päts collection, DP camp documents particularly about Geislingen, and digital copies of 17,000 Estonian NKVD-KGB documents. It has more recently added material from the diaspora.

The degree of cooperation and sharing of material among all the museums, libraries, archives and research organisations is widespread, and the combined efforts of all these promise a vast storehouse material about Estonian history and culture both in Estonia and worldwide. As the material is digitised it will become available to not only scholarly and professional researchers but also to the general public worldwide. It became obvious that there are several common problems that all museums and archives have. The sheer volume of physical artefacts is so massive that storage space is inadequate for all that people donate and want to preserve. Cataloguing is a huge work for which there are neither enough qualified staff nor funding. Digitisation is ongoing. However, again there is a shortage of staff and money.

One theme that was repeated several times was that the work done by AEHS with our DVD, book and collection in the Provincial Archives. We are in the forefront of preserving our heritage, and are an example to others on how a small group can produce significant material.

## In Memoriam

### Ivar Ruus

January 27, 1931 Tallinn, Estonia, August 30, 2013 Calgary, Alberta



Ivar Ruus passed away peacefully on Friday, August 30, 2013 at the age of 82 years. Ivar was born in Tallinn, Estonia on January 27, 1931 and immigrated to Canada in 1949. In the summer he worked on a farm in the Barons, Alberta area and in the winter worked for the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration until enrolling in the petroleum engineering program at the University of Alberta in 1951. After graduating in 1954, he began his career in the petroleum industry and finished his career at Norcen Energy as Manager of Heavy Oil Operations. While working at Norcen, Ivar obtained a Management Diploma from the University of Calgary and was a member of the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta. Ivar was also a committed family man, dedicating many hours to coach his sons in their sporting activities and celebrating their many achievements. In 1986, Ivar retired from Norcen after which he worked as a consultant in the oil and gas industry for several years.

Upon Ivar's retirement from the oil and gas industry he led an active life of travelling, hiking, golfing and cross country skiing. He was also actively involved in the Norcen Seniors Club and a great supporter of classical musical performances in Calgary. But his main love was his family and he was keenly interested in their activities and accomplishments. He was a wonderful husband, father and grandfather and will be greatly missed.

Ivar is survived by his loving wife of fifty-seven years of marriage, Lea Ruus; his three loving sons (daughter-in-laws), Allan (Karen) and grandsons Michael, Garvin, and Gregory Ruus of Calgary; Mark (Sarina) and grandchildren Christopher, Marisa, Caroline, and Jonathan Ruus of Vancouver; Alexander (Lisa) and grandchildren Nicholas and Isabelle Ruus of Toronto; brother Allan Ruus of Calgary; and niece Kirsten Ruus of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

He was predeceased by his parents, Harry and Irma Ruus and sister-in-law Rosemary Ruus. A Celebration of Ivar's Life will be held at McINNIS & HOLLOWAY'S Crowfoot Chapel (82 Crowfoot Circle N.W.), on Saturday, September 7, 2013 at 2:30 p.m. Condolences may be forwarded through [www.mcinnisandholloway.com](http://www.mcinnisandholloway.com). If friends so desire, memorial tributes may be made directly to the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Alberta, 200, 119 – 14th Street N.W., Calgary, AB T2N 1Z6, [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca).

In living memory of Ivar Ruus, a tree will be planted at Fish Creek Provincial Park by McINNIS & HOLLOWAY FUNERAL HOMES, Crowfoot Chapel, 82 CROWFOOT CIRCLE N.W. Telephone: (403) 241-0044.

*AEHS extends its condolences to his wife Lea and the Ruus family. Ivar was a longstanding member of Alberta's Estonian community, and contributed ideas and inspiration to its events and programs.*

*Alberta Estonian Heritage Society*

# Out of the Ether: Medicine Valley's Estonian Communards

Susan Kenzle, Austin, Texas

This article chronicles the lives of two of the four Moro brothers—Medicine Valley pioneers—who disappeared into the ether of post-revolutionary Russia in the 1920s. Their story, which has only recently emerged via an international genealogical project<sup>1</sup>, provides insight into the varied reasons for early Estonian immigration to Canada and the motives behind re-crossing the ocean in a new pioneering effort. With the benefit of hindsight, we might question this decision now, but within the context of world events and Estonian history, the hopeful, idealist émigrés sought to contribute to the building of a new society. Their story takes us full circle: from Estonia under harsh, class-based Tsarist Russia and then back to Stalin's brutally repressive Soviet Union, with a brief interval in the wilds of western Canada.

Four of five brothers from the Southern Estonian Murro (Muro, Moro) family<sup>2</sup> immigrated from *Sõmerpalu, Võru* District to the Medicine Valley in the first wave of Estonian migration to Canada (1890s-1914), joining other Southern Estonians already in the Northwest Territories, later the province of Alberta. During this time—between 1903 and 1916—the Medicine Valley Estonian settlement comprised nearly 160 people in 45 households (Laaman, 2010). Karl and Mary Moro, and Johan (John) and Anna arrived in 1904 with their young families; Kristjan (Jaan) reached Alberta in 1905; and Hendrik (Henry), wife Anna Marie and children came in 1911 and 1912, respectively. The fifth and youngest brother Gustav stayed in Estonia, as did parents Hindrik and Liiso.

The first wave of migrants left Estonian out of dissatisfaction with the harsh economic, social, and political situation in Tsarist Russia (Russia ruled Estonia since the 1700s). Some were political refugees fearing reprisals for “revolutionary” beliefs and activities or retribution for the 1905 revolution (Palmer &

Palmer, 1985). Among this group was the well-educated, multilingual Henry Kingsep who was part of a radical student group at the University of St. Petersburg in Russia who plotted to overthrow the Tsar (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). Henry and his brother Kristjan came to Canada with their families in 1899, the first Estonians to arrive in central Alberta.

Other migrants sought to avoid lengthy, potential deadly conscription in the Imperial Russian military due to rumors of Russia's preparation for, or hint of possible involvement in, war (Tammaru, Kumer-Haukanõmm, & Anniste, 2010). All the Moro brothers fortunately survived conscripted service. Karl served in the Tsar's Household Infantry, but his brother Gustav—a lifelong Estonian citizen—served under the Tsar, but also fought for Estonia in the War of Independence and was in the Sõmerpalu Company of the Estonian Defence League, ultimately paying for his patriotism/nationality with deportation to a northern Russian concentration camp in 1945<sup>3</sup>.

Other early migrants pursued social and economic mobility denied to them by (1) powerful Baltic Germans who, endorsed by the Tsarist Empire, were the landlords and oversaw the governance of the population in Estonia; and (2) by state policy that favored filling jobs in the rapidly industrializing Estonia with non-indigenous workers over ethnic Estonians (Tammaru, Kumer-Haukanõmm, & Anniste, 2010).

Another powerful driver of migration to North America was the Homestead and Dominion Land Acts in the United States and Canada. The promise of free 160-acre homesteads in Alberta was a powerful pull for the Moro brothers and others due to the shortage of arable land in Estonia. As the oldest, Karl would have inherited his father's *Willemi* farm<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Toomas Muru, Susan Kenzle, & others are collaborators in a Murro/Muro/Moro family genealogical project on Geni.com.

<sup>2</sup> “Moro” is the spelling used by the Medicine Valley branch of the family; hence, it is used hereafter.

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<sup>3</sup> Gustav's wife Elisabeth was deported from Estonia to Siberia in 1949. They both survived harsh concentration camp conditions, returning to Estonia in 1952 (Gustav) and 1956 (Elisabeth).

<sup>4</sup> Hindrik Murro purchased the Willemi Farm from landlord Friedrich von Möeller in 1874 with a loan which would have taken much of the farm's income to service.

on the Sõmerpalu manor in Estonia, but since it was not customary at this time to divide land among sons and heirs, Karl's brothers would have not shared in the inheritance. The small, often boggy, rocky or non-contiguous parcels purchased by Estonians like Karl's father from manor landlords were economically challenging.

Despite being essentially free, an Albertan homestead required much hard labor and capital investment to make a successful farm out of virgin woodland, and to gain title to the land<sup>5</sup>. Arriving in North America with little money, the immigrants took paying jobs where available, some near the Medicine Valley, others more distant. Henry Moro, for instance, followed his brother-in-law and other young Estonian men to the mines of Montana hoping, as Henry said in a postcard home to his wife, "to become millionaires one day."

By about 1910 most of the original settlers had sufficient financial means and stability to give more attention to the development of social, economic, and educational organizations (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). The first concern was their children's education; the Estonian School was completed in 1909 (Laaman, 2010). The Medicine Valley Estonian Association (MVEA) was established in April 1910 and became the focal point for community life with drama productions, a choir and band, and the completion of the Estonian Hall in 1918 (Laaman, 2010). The MVEA was also involved in adult education. It founded a library and hosted lectures on education, literature, farming, and politics given by community leaders (Palmer & Palmer, 1985; Aruvald, n.d.).

Many early activities of the Estonian society reflected the "left wing" political orientation of the community leaders<sup>6</sup>



*"Pioneers of the Commune "Koit." The first directorate (sic): com. Anna Muro, secretary; com. Henry Muro, assistant treasurer; con. Peter Koot, treasurer." Brooklyn, New York, March 23, 1923. Source: Geni.com Research Project - Venemaa põllumajanduskommuun Koit (Russian Agricultural Commune Koit).*

such as Henry Kingsep renowned for reading Karl Marx' *Das Kapital* (Capital) during a six-month period at the end of meetings (Palmer & Palmer, 1985). Community members were also regular contributors to and readers of *Uus Ilm* (New World), a New York-based left-wing weekly newspaper, that was published from 1909-1989. It was banned by the Canadian government during/after WWI because of its radical agenda (Palmer & Palmer, 1985).

Through *Uus Ilm* and other publications, Estonians in North America kept abreast of activities in their homeland and beyond. Of particular relevance to this story are the 6+ years of unrest and violence in Russia<sup>7</sup>, followed by the 1921 famine—events that culminated in economic turmoil (shortage of capital and skilled workforce), starvation, disease, and the death of millions. International aid organizations launched emergency relief operations in response to this disaster.

Socialist-oriented organizations in North America also responded to the situation by sending skilled workers and technicians, and by proposing the organization of hundreds of agricultural and industrial communes in the Soviet Union. These efforts were praised by V.I. Lenin in a 1922 letter titled "To the Society for Technical Aid for Soviet Russia" originally published in *Pravda* Oct. 22, 1922 and reprinted in North America in *Uus Ilm* and other publications. The organization of émigré farming and industrial collectives, planned in consultation with Moscow, was codified in decrees passed by the Soviet state in 1921-22.

Some in the Medicine Valley, including Jaan and Henry Moro, became proponents of this idea. Through their pioneering efforts in

<sup>5</sup> A \$10 registration fee was required, and title to the land was conditional on construction of a house and having 15 acres under cultivation after 3 years. Additional land was available for \$2.00-\$2.50/acre.

<sup>6</sup> Not all community members shared the political views of the community leaders and some of the more politically

conservative members (e.g., John Moro) withdrew from some Society activities (Matiisen, n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> The violence started in WWI, and extended through the Russian revolutions in 1917 and the Russian Civil War (1917-1922).

Alberta they had shown themselves to be ambitious, resourceful people who successfully used their skills and creativity to tame raw land. Their knowledge of technical innovations and experience in mechanized farming made them desirable immigrants to the new Soviet state. With the benefit of history it is easy to forget that, in the early days of communism, many were swept up in the heady excitement of building a new, more egalitarian society out of the ashes of Tsarist Russia. There was a serious desire to develop the first worker/peasant state, to make a contribution to socialist agricultural reconstruction (Maamägi, 1980). But what we know in hindsight and read from the accounts of participants such as Jaan Moro and Paul Mõttus, the reality was less than ideal. A brief accounting of their stories is told below.



*Location of Koit Commune, present day village of Kommunar, near Kushchevskaya, Russia.*  
 Source: Google Earth, 2013

Recruitment for and organization of the collectives was done by the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia (f. 1919) in New York, comprising local aid societies throughout North America<sup>8</sup>. It was responsible for purchasing the supplies, machinery, food, and clothing required by the Soviet state so that participants could run a collective farm or an industrial establishment without burdening scarce Russian resources (Kukushkin, 2013). The Society also arranged overseas transportation and visas for departing communards. The enterprise was funded through a \$500-per-family fee (today's value \$6,800) required by participants which they financed through the sale of their homestead land and buildings, and from other accumulated assets. The Medicine Valley participants departed from the Eckville railway station for New York on March 1, 1923 to form the *Koit* (Dawn) Commune. The party included Peter Koot, wife

<sup>8</sup> In 1922-3, Ukrainian-Canadians formed three agricultural collectives in the Southern Ukraine under this program.

Marie and daughters Amanda, Selma, and Ella; Henry Moro with wife Anna Marie, and children Oskar, Leopold, Eduard, Marta, and Lidia; Jaan Moro (left wife Katti in Eckville); and Paul Mõttus. Joining them from the Sylvan Lake Estonian settlement was Peter Herman. The small group left New York by ship on March 23, 1923, following on the heels of J. Anson and J. Smith (Smitt) who had gone ahead to scout potential settlement locations in Russia. Paul Mõttus, Oskar Moro and August Jakobson stayed behind in New York for machinery training, joining the others later in Russia.

After landing in the Latvian port of Liepaja<sup>9</sup> the group travelled by train to Moscow, and then on to the Kuban area. The chosen location for the *Koit* Commune was the former estate land of Hetman *Prilepski*<sup>10</sup>. This exceptionally rich agricultural land is in the present-day *Kushchevskaya* region of the *Krasnodar Krai* district of the North Caucasus, near *Rostov-on-Don* shown in the map.

Arriving on the estate in May 1923, communards found it in ruins; the only remaining building was a small sauna. Initially, the group lived in tents, but within a few months built a “big white house”, fixed the sauna and two “clay [adobe] houses” and, over time, built many dwellings, barns, stables, a silo, steam mill, a smithy, a school, and library. In the beginning, morale was high and everyone was excited to begin work.



*Adobe House, Koit Commune, date unknown. Source: Popov, 2012.*

equipment locally. They began cultivation almost immediately. Unfortunately, much of the machinery was in poor condition and broke

<sup>9</sup> According to Paul Mõttus, the ocean voyage took over two weeks. Liepaja was the main gateway to the USSR at this time for returning immigrants and communards (Kukushkin, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> A Hetman was the highest military office, and head of state, in Ukraine's Cossack Hetmanate. Noble estates across Russia were destroyed during the Revolution, including that of Hetman Prilepski demolished by peasants from nearby villages.



*Buildings and Machinery, Commune Koit, date unknown. Source: Geni.com Research project Venemaa põllumajandus kommuun Koit (Russian Agricultural Commune Koit).*

down constantly, requiring the use of oxen and horses to pull field equipment. Despite the slow pace and weather issues, the group managed to plant and harvest hay, corn, grain, sunflower seeds, vegetables, and honey on their 626 hectares of land. They also raised various livestock; Jaan Moro managed the pig farm for a while (Moro, 1934). The Soviet state set quotas that required the communes to produce and deliver certain quantities of meat, milk, eggs, vegetables, wool, etc. To meet the quotas *Koit* adult members often had to “tighten their belts” and regularly went without sufficient food (Moro, 1934).

Although it was possible to buy additional food and supplies from nearby towns, commune members did not receive salaries, so no one had personal funds; everything was shared in common and expenditures were decided by the commune’s board. Clothes and shoes were homemade or purchased by the board and distributed as needed. High prices in *Kusevka* limited the purchasing power of the commune (Moro, 1934).

Ultimately, the lack of adequate food, poor living conditions, long work hours, and stress caused many health problems. Many communards got malaria and required treatment at a nearby hospital, although the state of health services in Russia at this time was poor. In fact, Jaan Moro died at age 55 in 1934 from complications of appendicitis surgery at a local hospital, sadly predicting his fate in a letter to the Estonian American Journal *Meie Tee* (Our Way) before seeking treatment (see this issue). He left no known descendants.

Illness, poor conditions, dissatisfaction with the progress of the commune, and dissension

resulted in the departure of many of the original group, starting in fall of 1924 when Paul Mõttus and Henry Kinna returned to Canada. Others tried to re-emigrate to Estonia. A list of Medicine Valley commune members in 1924 with notation of departures is shown below<sup>11</sup>.

Kammuna liikumise nime kiri. 1924.	
1. J. Anson.	18. M. Fraks.
2. J. Smith +	19. H. Kinna +
3. F. Sulg.	20. H. Rasmussen.
4. A. Jacobson.	21. J. Parismos.
5. H. Moro.	naiste nimed
6. O. Moro.	7. A. Moro.
7. S. Moro.	8. M. Koot.
8. J. Moro.	9. J. Alp.
9. P. Mathies +	4. M. Smith +
10. P. Koot.	5. J. Peterson
11. A. Nõmm.	6. E. Sulg.
12. P. Harmon +	7. L. Kõrre +
13. A. Posti +	8. E. Rasmussen.
14. P. Alp.	M. Nõmm +
15. H. Alp.	11. Lõvi.
16. K. Peterson	
17. J. Kapite.	

*List of Commune Members, 1924. Notation “+” indicates departure from Commune. Source: P. Mõttus Journal.*

Despite the early losses and hardships, the situation was not always bad and some accounts reveal happy memories. The commune increasingly grew in membership. In 1926, members of an Estonian fisherman’s collective *Rõbak* joined *Koit* after their commune was dissolved. Estonians from other communes in the Soviet Union also joined, as did some local people. The commune was reorganized in 1928 into a collective farm (*kolkhoz*).

*“Illness, poor conditions, dissatisfaction with progress of the commune, and dissension resulted in the departure of many of the original group, starting in fall of 1924 when Paul Mõttus and Henry Kinna returned to Canada.”*

<sup>11</sup> P. Mõttus (1924), H. Kinna (1924), A. Posti (1924), J. & M. Smith (1927), & P. Harmon returned to Canada. Sursu and M. Nõmm also left. H. Muro (11/1/38) and F. Sulg (11/15/38) were both murdered by the NKVD.



*Koit founders, 1930. Image Source: Maamägi, V. (1980) Building a new life: Estonian minorities in the Soviet Union (1917-1940). Tallinn, Eesti Ramaat. Names added to image by Susan Kenzle.*

By 1930 the community had 500 people of various ethnicities (Estonian, Russian, Latvian, and Ukrainian). The photo above shows *Koit* founders at this time.

From 1928 to 1932 the formation of collective farms became mandatory. *Koit* changed from a *kolkhoz* to a *sovkhoz* (state farm) in 1934 and was renamed *Krasnaja Zarja* (Red Dawn) with additional land added in 1938.

Events in the 1930s affected commune life—during the Stalinist era, the political line hardened, ideological pressure intensified, and repressions heightened, especially for ethnic groups within the Soviet Union, particularly from 1936-1939 (Tuisk & Korb, 2013). Estonian language education and cultural life was banned (Tuisk & Korb, 2013). “The purpose of the repressions was to sway people into loyalty to the state...” (Tuisk & Korb, 2013). In 1938, Henry Moro (age 57), along with at least eight other *Koit* members, were arrested and then murdered in prison by the NKVD (the People’s Commissariat of Internal

Affairs) on fabricated charges against the state<sup>12</sup>. They were buried in the *Vsyevyatskoye* Cemetery in Krasnodar. Some Estonian settlements in Siberia and Volga region reportedly “...lost most of their male population between 20-40 years of age through execution by shooting” (Tuisk & Korb, 2013).

Despite the trials and tribulations, some original commune members lived and worked until the end of their lives in the commune and subsequent *sovkhoz* (known now on maps as *Kommunar*). Anna Moro and her five children all survived early life in the commune and became lifelong citizens of the Soviet Union. Anna’s son Eduard Moro stayed in the commune

<sup>12</sup> In the 1950s Henry’s son Oskar applied for, and received, a “rehabilitation certificate” for his dad. Typically the Soviet state did not issue these certificates without application. This document was an important inclusion to the personal questionnaire that affected almost every realm of Soviet life, from education and employment to residence and travel. Since this form pointedly asked about an applicant’s immediate family members, a “clean record” was important.

and died there in 1981. Leopold<sup>13</sup> and Oskar<sup>14</sup> Moro both attended Leningrad Polytechnic University and went on to have careers and families. Marta Moro studied at the pedagogical Technical School and taught elementary school. She died in 1979. Lidia Moro died young, is buried in Russia and she did not have a family.



*Anna Marie Muro and daughter Marta, Krasnodar Krai, Russia, date unknown. Source: Evgeni Denisov, Geni.com.*

The commune continued to grow and evolve through the 1940s and into the late 1950s. In the 1950s, the commune became part of a Soviet government *kolkhoz* consolidation scheme where several small farms were joined into one. Residents were provided housing in another village and gradually all moved from the commune site by 1963 (Popov, 2012).

The modern day ghost town of *Koit* Commune is a physical reminder and testament

<sup>13</sup> Leopold Muro worked in a Siberian pork factory; was an engineer-inspector for the Russian Ministry of Agriculture in Tallinn after Russia occupied Estonia (1941); was in an airfield repair unit during WWII; and ended up with his family in Moscow working in an electromechanical plant and an auto factory. He died in 1977. He and his wife had a son and a daughter.

<sup>14</sup> Oskar Muro attended Leningrad Polytechnic University. He worked at the Gorky Automobile Plant in Moscow. His daughter and son both live in Nizhny Novgorod. Oskar died in 1964.

of the efforts of generations of occupants and particularly its founders. This hardy group of Central Albertan Estonians risked all their New World gains in an attempt to build a new society in the fertile Russian steppes. The story of this North Caucasus collective, including Jaan and Henry Moro, is only now being gradually assembled through scattered and still fragmentary information. Despite these obstacles, the recovery of this history has been overcome in part to a freer flow of information through the unsealing of Iron Curtain archives and the advent of the internet, but most importantly to the efforts of communard descendants, relatives, and other interested parties. Consequently, the incalculably valuable story of the Moro brothers and other nameless individuals of *Koit* Commune does not end with their deaths but rather carries forward until today.

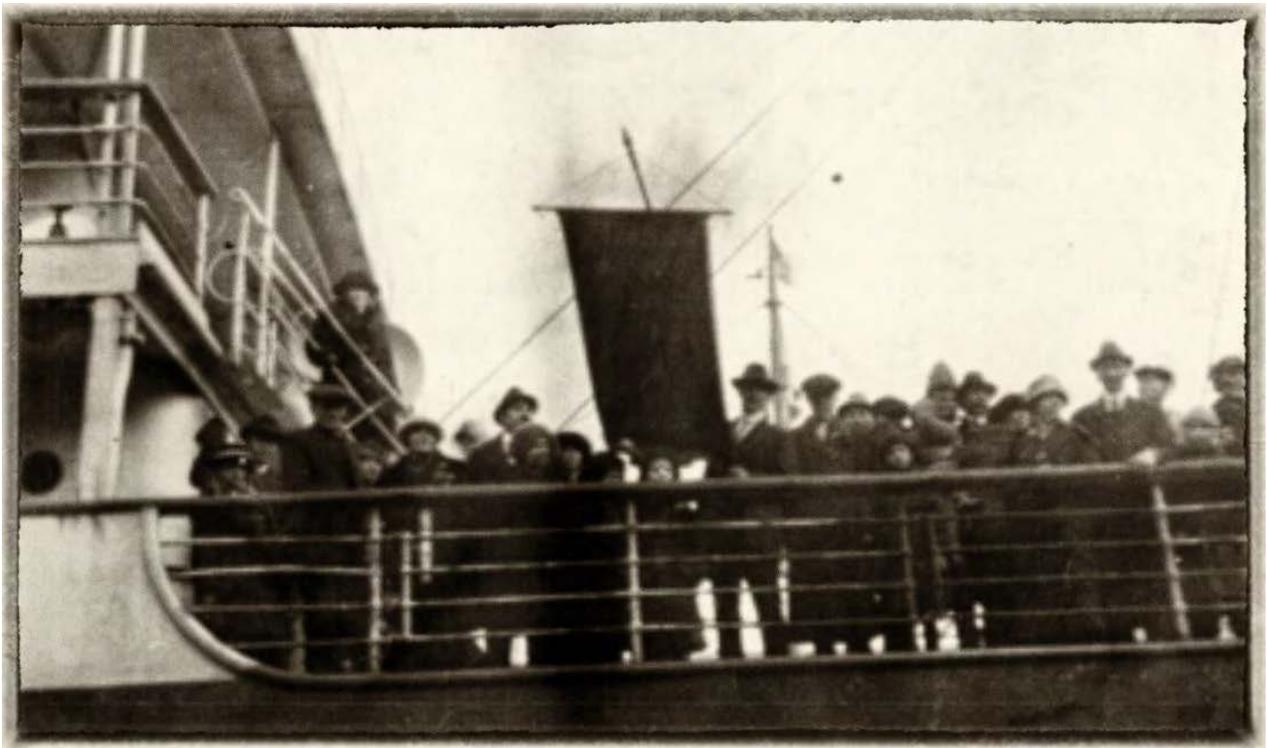
*Susan Kenzle is a Landscape Architect (Master of Landscape Architecture, Utah State University), former Archaeologist (M.A., University of Calgary), and an advocate of historical literacy. She was born in Edmonton, but spent a few childhood years in Eckville before her family moved Calgary. Her early childhood exposure to Alberta's history and wild lands sparked her interest in the past and in nature. She has a profound appreciation for the role that her parents (Alice and Calvin Kenzle) and grandparents (August and Lilly Moro, Wilfred and Ida Kenzle) played in igniting and encouraging her lifelong interests. Although Susan and her husband currently live in Austin, Texas, she will always be an Albertan at heart.*



*Cover photo of a 1956 Edition (25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary) of Meie Tee Magazine, a monthly Estonian American Journal. The cover photo is of a demonstration against the Soviet invasion of Hungary.*

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First group of Estonians leaving for Agricultural Commune *Koit* onboard MS *Abkhazia* departing Brooklyn, New York, March 21, 1923.

# Meie Tee (Our Way)

## Magazine for American Estonians

Meie Tee (Our Way) was published by Estonians in New York City from 1931-1983. In the 1930s, the magazine published news and articles about Alberta Estonians. Following World War II, circulation of Meie Tee was not allowed in Estonia. Some Estonians from Medicine Valley in Alberta and United States left New York on March 1, 1923 to establish an agricultural commune *Koit*, later known as *Krasnaja Zarjaa* in Russia. Kristjan (Jaan) Moro was one of the Estonian pioneers who left Medicine Valley. Kristjan wrote a letter to Meie Tee in which he described his life in *Koit*. He provides a picture of working life and overall living conditions in Russian communes.

### Letter from the Estonian Commune *Koit* in Russia

by Kristjan (Jaan) Moro

Published in Meie Tee, 1934

*The Estonian commune 'Koit' is in the Northern Caucasus, close to the Kusevka railway station. Several Estonians from Canada and the United States settled in the commune in 1923. Here is a description of the life and working conditions in the Russian communes by one of the Estonians.*

“ I had worked for several years as pig farm manager with no vacation and half starved until this year , when I was awarded a vacation of a couple of months. I sold my bed and spent the money for travel to the vicinity of Leningrad where the climate was cooler. I joined a commune run by Finns who had come from America. I became a lumberjack, was well fed and lived in a regular house. I enjoyed the Finnish sauna and my health improved in the more familiar northern climate. In the Leningrad area, whoever works is properly fed and can even buy bread at seven roubles a kilo. In comparison, a worker receives 200-500 grams of bread a day at *Koit* and the soup has the consistency of tea water. Still, life in *Koit* is better than in collective farms, where people often die of malnutrition. In *Koit*,

*Editors note: Rubles were domestic currency only. Approx. conversion in 1932 was 1 USD=15 rubles*



*Cover page of Meie Tee (Our Way)  
January, 1934*

three people recently died and were buried in a common grave wearing their street clothes.

Before leaving for my holiday, I put the paperwork for the pig farm in care of a member of the audit committee. The income from the pig farm in 1932 was 92 thousand roubles, whereof the net profit for the commune was 80 thousand roubles.

Then I received a letter from *Koit* stating that there were 30 pigs missing in my accounts and asking me for an explanation. I was advised of a second problem in the same letter. I had brought with me from Canada a couple of partly tanned calf pelts and bought an additional pelt. These pelts I had made into a fur coat for myself. It came to the notice of others and someone started a rumour that the pelts were stolen. That is why those at home asked me to return. They were afraid they might be

asked to leave the commune. I asked them to send me 85 roubles for the return ticket which they did. I returned and found the mistake had been made in the office where 30 pigs were missing from the list by negligence of the accountant. The question of the fur coat has not arisen since the originator of the rumour has been sent to Siberia for ten years as punishment for theft of seed grain.

## July

I have been back in *Koit* for a month and a half. In the beginning I plowed with oxen and then seeded a thousand hectares a day with sunflower seeds and corn. Now I work in a haying brigade. I work from dawn to dark with a 3 sector machine. The horses are not good, the hay in places is taller than the horses.

The prices in Kusevka are sometimes higher than in Moscow: 2 roubles for a liter of milk, 1 rouble an egg or 30-40 roubles a kilo, 50-80 roubles a kilo for pork fat, 120-200 roubles for 14 kg of flour. These are free market prices. Because of a shortage of grain, pork is rarely available. At these prices the present pay scale does not allow a worker to feed himself.

The Torgsin shops are meant for foreigners and there it is possible to buy food with foreign currency. A kilo of pork fat can be had for 85 kopeks, a kilo of butter for 1 rouble 25 kopeks, raisin bread for 34 kopeks a kilo, sifted flour for 36 kopeks and cloth for 60 kopeks a meter (6 roubles on the free market).

In the Finnish commune close to Leningrad it is possible to buy two days worth of food for a dollar, and material for a suit for ten dollars.

## October

Weather is turning cool. The leaves are falling. There is still a lot of vegetables to harvest which we hope to accomplish in a few months. 906 000 kg of grain has already been delivered to the government before the deadline. The quota was not quite filled.

Delivery of seed grain was postponed until next year. We still owe the government 115 200 kg of sunflower seeds. Meat, milk, eggs, vegetables, wool, etc. have been delivered. 450 hectares of grain remain to be treshed, so there remains little grain. It may be necessary to tighten our belts until the next harvest.

The grain grew well in *Koit* this year.

There was so much rain that it was difficult to use the rickety machinery. The machines were often out of order so oxen had to be used to pull the machines which made everything very slow.

We have four old tractors that are used elsewhere. The government-owned estates are supplied with the best equipment but they are the most disorganised. Help for their harvest was recruited from *Koit* and other collective farms because the government estates have problems keeping workers due to poor housing and food. Idle workers are apprehended and forced to work. Five hundred beehives in *Koit*, yielded nine thousand kilos of honey. Two to three men were working, so there was no need to plow or seed. The price of honey is 15 roubles per kilo. The only cost is providing for the hives, winterizing and supervision.

I am again unwell. I will have to undergo an appendectomy very soon. I fear I will not return from the hospital since this is a disease that kills most citizens in the USSR.

*Editor's note: We extend a special thank you to Livia Kivisild for her assistance with the translation of the Moro letter.*

4. augustil 1933. a. suri Venemaal Rostovi linna haiglas operatsiooni tagajärjel

### KRISTJAN MORO

Sünd. Sõmerpalu vallas, Eestis, 1875. a.

Rändanud Canadasse 1905. a. ja sealt Venemaale, kommuuna "Koitu" 1923. a.

Puhka rahus, sinu vaeval on lõpp !

Mälestavad sügavas kurbuses  
Abikaasa, kaks venda ja sugulased Eckvilles  
ja Peace Riveris, Albertas ja mujal Canadas ja Eestis

*Editor's note: According to church records (Urvaste maakonna meetrikaraamat), Kristjan (Jaan) Moro was born on August 4, 1878*

# The Renne Family Journey from Estonia to Eckville

Colleen Renne-Grivell and Kathleen Renne

The Renne family's migration to Canada began with a dream. Literally. This auspicious dream happened around the year 1934.

Constantin, Julie and their two young sons, 12-year-old Adolf and two-year-old Toomas were living on a farm in the Vaivara parish, near Sinimäe, in northeastern Estonia.

Hitler had recently come to power in Germany and, as Adolf recalls, the "clouds of war" were already brewing. He even remembers seeing Estonian soldiers placing dynamite near bridges in preparation for a battle many people over there knew was coming.

Both Adolf's parents knew war – and its warning signs – all too well. Constantin had served with the American Army in World War One and had sustained a wound while fighting in France. Julie was working in Russia during the Russian Revolution and witnessed the downfall of the Romanov dynasty and the violent chaos that surrounded it. As the Renne boys remember their parents saying numerous times, neither wanted to live through war again. So, when they read the temperature in northeastern Estonia in the mid-1930's, and saw it leaning towards conflict, the Renne parents started to think about moving once again.

They were no strangers to long journeys, having already lived in the United States. In his later years, Constantin was known to inform others, rather proudly, that he had crossed the Atlantic seven times. As a young man, he had left his dual homes of St. Petersburg, Russia and Estonia



*Renne family's Passport photo, 1936. L-R: Constantin, Adolf (back), Toomas (front), Julie*

for the golden promise of America, where one of his four sisters had already settled. (As family legend has it, Constantin took off for America around 1911, because he was tired of having to change his collar twice a day in the furniture store in which he worked in St. Petersburg.)

Once in the United States, he was

something of an itinerant labourer, working on farms and ranches throughout the northern United States.

World War One came and, once the United States entered the fray, Constantin was drafted into the 164<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. (The shrapnel wound he received in his shoulder while serving overseas would later net him a small disability pension from the US Army, money that came in handy when times were hard farming in Eckville, Alberta.)

Upon his return from World War One, Constantin decided to head back home to Estonia in search of a wife because, according to family legend once again, he wasn't interested in the "powder pots" he encountered in America. His mission was successful. He married Julie Solman, 13 years his junior, who hailed from Estonia's northeastern region.

Soon after marriage, the couple migrated to Buhl, Idaho, where Constantin's sister and her husband owned a farm and where the Renne couple would rent one. And that is where their elder son, Gustav Adolf, was born in 1922.

Ten years later, homesick for Estonia, they traversed the Atlantic once again and purchased

a farm outside of the village of Perjatsi, a small inhabitation Adolf recalls as being populated with relatives “from one end of town to the other.” And it was there that the younger Renne son, Toomas, was born.

Adolf remembers the few years the family spent in Estonia before coming to Canada as particularly golden ones. They owned their own farm and were surrounded by friends and family. Adolf believes that had the clouds of war not loomed menacingly over Europe, it’s unlikely the Renne family would have left Estonia again. However, once the necessity to move was on the proverbial table, the question arose as to, “Where to?” Julie did not enjoy Idaho’s heat and had no interest in returning there. Adolf recalls that Australia came up as one possibility. He also recalls his father mulling over what sort of work he could obtain overseas, ranging from labouring on a farm once again to being a longshoreman on New York’s docks.

However, one night, Julie had a dream. She dreamt she was attending an international food fair. She came across a booth for Canada. The next morning, Julie recounted her dream to her husband and, subsequently, Canada became a possible destination.



***L-R: Aado Annus (cousin to Julia), Adolf, Thomas, Julia and Constantine Renne, Eckville, 1954***

Upon further investigation, the Rennes realized the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was selling plots of land at reasonable rates to immigrants who would farm them. So, it was decided.

In 1936, the Rennes sold their farm in Estonia and purchased a quarter section of land from the CPR. Needless to say, leaving Estonia was painful for the family, particularly for Julie, as it meant probably never seeing friends and relatives again.

During those final couple of days in Estonia before leaving, never to return, Adolf recalls making the tearful rounds visiting grandmothers, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Julie’s uncle, August, took the foursome to the Vaivara train station, and they were off. The train wound its way through Latvia, Lithuania, Germany and the travellers then took a boat to Hull, England. From there, they went to Liverpool and embarked upon their trans-Atlantic voyage aboard the Duchess of York.

Adolf recalls the ship was full of European immigrants. Travel highlights for the then teenager included seeing icebergs and watching a shipboard screening of the film “The Scarlet Pimpernel”.

Eventually, the train docked in Montreal, where the Renne family boarded a train and headed West. Toomas recalls his parents saying, many years later, “We arrived here with two trunks and two boys.”

Interestingly, as Adolf remembers, the Renne family did not settle in Eckville because it was an Estonian community. It was more a result of happenstance, what land the CPR offered them. Initially, the CPR suggested a fruit

farm in St. Catharines, Ontario, but Constantin turned that down as

he didn’t know anything about fruit farming. The CPR then presented a farm in the “dustbowl” of Manyberries, Alberta, another offer Constantin refused. The family was then offered a piece of land near Eckville, which Constantin accepted, though the land was not cleared and it would take much hard labour to make it suitable for farming.

Like many European immigrants, the Rennes were somewhat dismayed at the lack of settlement in the Eckville area. Julie had even

purchased a new pair of high-heeled shoes for use upon her arrival in her new home. Adolf remembers the heels continually getting stuck in the gaps between the boards that formed the sidewalk in Eckville, and the heels being stripped of their leather. Not a good introduction for Julie to her new home!

Once in Eckville, the Rennes stayed initially at a hotel and, as luck would have it, they met up with the man who owned Eckville's grocery store, Mike Sestrap. He offered them lodging at his farm for a couple of months until the family moved to their own quarter section.

Those early years on the farm – with its little log house infested with mice – were spent clearing the land and selling the logs for firewood at \$2.00 a load. The Rennes also bought some animals early on, so they earned money selling cream. By the mid-1940s, they were able to purchase a second quarter section of land from a neighbour and also moved to a slightly larger home.



*The Renne farmhouse in Eckville, 1950s*

Even though life was hard on the farm, the Rennes made the best of it and enjoyed the support and company of their neighbours such as the Sibelins, the Bromlings, the Pihoojas and the Smiths. Many hours would be spent helping and working with these neighbours on such activities as chopping wood and other farm chores. However, there was time to socialize as well, and Toomas recalls that there was always a pot of coffee on the stove ready for when someone would drop by for a visit. In addition, there were the gatherings to attend at Estonian Hall, such as the turkey suppers. He also remembers often going over to the Sibelin's to hear the world news and events on their radio (something not everyone had on the farm), such as the September 18, 1946 World Heavyweight Championship boxing match between Joe Lewis and Tami Mauriello. In addition, they would often make use of the sauna that Mr. Sibelin had, carrying on an Estonian tradition.

However, especially at the beginning, Julie, in particular, was homesick. That was until, as

Adolf recalls, war came in 1939 and she was thankful to have made it out of Estonia in time. Toomas remembers his father saying, proudly, that he left Estonia with a passport in hand.

Sadly, however, save for one of Julie's cousins, Aado Annus, who escaped Estonia following World War Two and came to Canada in 1948, the Rennes never saw the rest of their family again. Constantin died in Eckville in 1966, and Julie passed away in Calgary in 1970, never having the chance to return to their birthplace. However, two of their granddaughters, Colleen and Kathleen, have been fortunate enough to travel back to Estonia, and Colleen had the opportunity to make connection with some family members who are descendants of those her Grandparents left behind.

Both Adolf and Toomas went on to take further education after completing their schooling at Wolfe School in Eckville. Adolf became an Industrial Accountant and worked both at the Baker Sanatorium in Calgary for many years as well as for the Alberta Government in both Edmonton and Calgary. Toomas completed his high school first through correspondence and then by attending high school in Red Deer. He then went on to attend the University of Alberta, obtained three degrees and then worked as a math and physics instructor at both William Aberhart High School in Calgary and later at SAIT. Adolf and Toomas continue to live in Calgary, although they still own their family farm in Eckville and make periodic visits back. However, both are thankful to this day for the dream their Mother had that brought them to Canada.

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### Author's biographies

*Kathleen Renne lives in Calgary where she works as a writer and arts reporter for CKUA Radio, FFWD, and the Calgary Herald Neighbours section. She has a passion for making jewelry and reading and has aspirations to finally learn Estonian!*

*Colleen Renne-Grivell resides in Canmore with her husband Nathan. She is an Urban Planner by profession and currently works for The City of Calgary. In her spare time, she enjoys the recreational amenities life in Canmore has to offer and continues to pursue her interests in singing and genealogy.*

# Rosalia Peetov Linderman

## Searching for Mom's Roots in Crimea

Anita Linderman Madill, Calgary, Alberta

A shared glass of Crimean wine enjoyed in our Calgary home on a warm September evening in 2012 was a salute to end the long journey to the Crimean home of my mother, Rosalia Peetov Linderman. It would not have been possible without the insight, persistence, and personal mission of Estonian translator Helgi Leesment, Calgary.



*Rosalia Peetov Linderman*

Our heritage quest began in earnest in 2007 when my sister Lea Sepp found a few old letters addressed to our mother. Our immigrant parents, Robert Linderman from Estonia (in 1905) and Rosalia Peetov (who left Crimea in 1920), worked hard to integrate into southern Alberta's English speaking community and to make a living on the dry prairie soil in the Foremost area. While Lea spoke Estonian until starting school, my arrival five years later was into a primarily English speaking community. We needed help and were fortunate to find Helgi Leesment who not only translated letters, but more importantly, added

pertinent information with her personal insights, painting a vibrant picture of life of Estonian Crimeans.

One day in September 2008, the phone rang with exciting news. As an informal liaison for Estonians, Helgi had been corresponding with Meeri Nikolskaja, organizer of Crimean Estonians, who asked if by chance she might know of Meeri's relatives in Canada, identifying us all by names. The Meeri whose letters we had been translating was our cousin in Simferopol! Thus began the project of reuniting the Canadian-Crimean Estonian families with Helgi as the lead communicator.

On the tattered, time worn envelope of the first letter we requested for translation, is a note in Rosalia's handwriting, "Mother's last letter from Crimea, splashed with tears". Written in November 1935 to her daughter in southern Alberta, Miina Peetov tells of her failing health including "eyes fading into darkness, like seeing through a hole in a spider web in front of the eyes." She sends "Lots of hugs to the little girls. Oh, I would so love to see them. I often get tears in my eyes." How sad it must have been for our mother who left Crimea 15 years earlier, expecting to be away for only a short time until things settled in Russia. Instead, she was living the life of a southern Alberta pioneer farm wife with daughters Lea (7) and Anita (2).

Eighty year old Rosalia tells the story of her childhood as she sits in her comfortable room in Calgary's Trinity Lodge.

*"I was born in the southern part of the Russian peninsula of Crimea on the Black Sea in 1901. We lived on an estate where dad was manager as well as part owner. Our house was the first sandstone building with a tile roof. It was a nice place by a lake with a big orchard full of all kinds of fruit trees. Climate in Crimea was warm and sea water was warm. In summer we almost lived on the nice sandy beaches of Eypatoria. And then in 1914 the First World War broke out and Russia was in bad shape - she lost a lot and finally in 1917 the Revolution*

*broke out. After killing the Czar's family, the Red Army was taking territory in opposition to the White Army, the remnants of the Czarist army. In 1920 we heard that White Army commander Gen. Wrangel lost hope and released soldiers who wanted to go home including boys from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Life was getting very hard. Almost everything was rationed. Meat and butter were seldom seen in the shops. Lucky, we had lots of fruit to eat. Our situation was becoming worse with general anarchy in the streets and shortages of food. "*

Rosalia's story continues augmented by a lengthy letter received from Pauline Sinberg Snieckus in 1985 entitled, "Here I will try to tell you about your Mother's way to escape from Communists to Free World". The Sinberg and Peetov families were good friends in Evpatoria, Crimea where Estonian families gathered to provide better education for their children.

young people were expected to return soon when the fighting settled down, so only belongings necessary for a short trip were packed. They were joined by a few young Estonian men who had been fighting in the Russian Imperial Army as Russian citizens.

July 2, 1920, nineteen year old Rosalia Peetov, Pauline Sinberg and fellow travellers waved good-bye to a crowd of relatives and friends gathered at the Estonian settlement of Samruk (now known as Beregovoye) where horse drawn carts were loaded with suitcases for the trip to the port city of Sevastopol. Returning to the homeland of their grandparents, this group used trains and boats organized by the Red Cross. The two month trip traversed Romania, Hungary, Austria, Germany and the Baltic Sea with many stops for immigration control and fumigation. Although crowded into one boxcar, with no washing or sanitation facilities on board, the excitement of seeing the world



*Johan and Rosalia Peetov in front of their home in Dzaga-Kustsu, ca 1914*

The elders in the Estonian settlement, concerned with the political dangers and social disruption in Russia, decided to send a group of 15 young people to safety in Estonia. It was possible, but challenging, to obtain Estonian passports as the League of Nations had declared independence for the Baltic States after World War I. The

overrode the discomfort. However, Rosalia would never again see her mother or return to her beloved home.

Destination Tallinn, where Aunt Amelia operated a hat shop. In 1920, Estonia mandated compulsory school in the Estonian language for

children 6 to 16 years old. Prior to Estonia's independence, many 16 year olds had never been to school. There was a shortage of teachers because of the war and mom got a job right away in the village of Hageri, a 38 mile train trip from Tallinn. She enjoyed teaching the Estonian curriculum, gymnastics and music which were important at the school. There was a school choir, teachers joined the community choir and were invited to local weddings and activities. Rosalia spent one Christmas with distant relatives in a village not far from Tallinn. There, she was told of their young relative Robert Linderman who had emigrated to Canada in 1912 and was urged to write to him.

London, November 1924. Rosalia boarded the ship that would carry her across the Atlantic to Halifax, and then the train to cross the vast snow-covered country called Canada. She must have wondered, "Who is this stranger I am about to marry? Am I making a big mistake?" But the iron-curtain had clamped down tight. No one could go in or out of Crimea. She couldn't go home.

Foremost, Alberta, December 1924. The local Grand Matron tells the story of mother's arrival in town.

*"We had heard about this young lady from across the ocean arriving in Foremost by train so we were out on our doorsteps to get a good look when we heard the steam whistle and the engine pull into the station. We watched as handsome bachelor Bob Linderman from south of town, dressed in his best suit driving a matched team of high stepping blacks, hitched up to a snazzy buggy, arrived at the train station. The glamorous lady from Europe with her long blond hair and stylish clothes made quite a sensation as the couple drove south through town. I wonder how she felt arriving in this prairie town as she was well dressed and probably had lived in a city."*

Rosalia Peetov and Robert Linderman were married January 6, 1925 in the farm home of Robert's uncle and aunt, George and Minnie Mursa. We have no record of guests. There were no wedding pictures but the couple posed in wedding dress for a summer photo. The marriage was a happy one.

And who was Robert Linderman? Born in Assamala, Estonia, he was 16 years old in 1912

when parents John Linderman and Anna Meer Linderman sent him to live with his maternal grandfather Otto Meer in southern Alberta. Grandparents Otto and Mai Meer were part of the Estonian migration to Crimea in the 1860s. They continued to move to South Dakota towards the end of the century and then to southern Alberta in 1910 to take up homestead land. When granddad Otto passed away shortly after his arrival, Robert was on his own in the new frontier. Ambitious and enterprising, dad herded cattle, worked on farms, in Washington lumber camps, and with cousin Alex Meer as custom threshers. Coming from Estonia where much land was owned by feudal lords and later confiscated by the Russian communists, dad understood the importance of owning land. He saved money and shortly after his 18th birthday filed on his first homestead. Together, Rosalia and Robert continued to build up their farm which supported the family through good and bad years. Dad said, "Never sell the land". The Linderman farm, including a Stone House (AjaKaja Winter 2009 Issue) remains in the family as our heritage.



***Meeri Nikolskaja, President of Crimean  
Estonian Cultural Society***

It was always mom and dad's dream to visit their homes in Estonia and Crimea. By 1971, the Russian borders had opened up enough for them, as senior citizens, to travel home. However, travel was restricted. They

could stop only in major cities of Tallinn and Simferopol and for limited time. They could only meet relatives at their hotel. Mother had so hoped to see her childhood home but that was not to be.

In July 2012, our family contingent set off for Simferopol, Crimea to find relatives and to explore Rosalia's roots. Unfortunately, my sister Lea Sepp had passed away but her daughters Stephanie and Danita Sepp managed the organizational details of the trip. Along with myself, senior citizen Anita, were children Megan (6), Talia (5), Keigan (3) and Danita's partner John. We were thrilled to meet cousin Meeri, who had corresponded with mom bringing family news all those years. A warm, caring person, she is devoted to preserving our family history as well as Estonian history and language in her capacity as president of the Crimean Estonian Cultural Society. Cousin Ljudmila met us at the airport while English speaking cousin Daria, not only gorgeous but totally dedicated to our well being, showed us important sights. We were warmly welcomed into their homes.

With van and driver and translator Sasha Sichkarenko, our little group visited several sites highlighted in the 2011 Estonians in Crimea 150th Jubilee. In the Estonian village Novestonia, we stopped at the little house that was home to my grandmother Miina and family after they had been forced to leave their Evpatoria homes. Several family members were buried in the graveyard there. Ironically, Lenin's weathered statue continues to stand guard over this Estonian village. The Estonian settlement of Kontshi-Shavva (Krasnodarka) was a highlight of the 2011 Jubilee featuring the construction of Estonia House - a small museum and a monument to the early Estonian settlers. The museum was closed when we arrived, so Meeri walked across the open field to the home of curator Rita Kadilkina. Rita quickly arrived to open the museum for us and then graciously invited our group to her home for tea, kvass and cakes. In the museum, we were excited to see a photo of the 1916 confirmation class of Estonian girls - the same treasured photo among the very few our mother had retained from her childhood. She often talked about her train trip to Kontshi-Shavva where Estonian girls spent several weeks taking confirmation lessons.

The most amazing experience was finding Rosalia's home in the little village of

Okhotnikova, formerly Dzaga-Kustsu. We had stopped at the village library/town office to try to locate records of the Peetov family but were told that old records were archived elsewhere. However, when shown a photo of the Peetov home, the village secretary suggested this looked like a building called "the teacher's house" which had been partially destroyed by fire a few years ago and directed us to the location. There we explored the house where Rosalia had lived for 19 years. It was so exciting to see the building, later extended for multi-residences and now in a ruinous state, the little out-building which must have been the 'summer kitchen', and the lake just a few yards away where the children used to play. The fruit trees and beautiful garden mom remembered were gone.



*Peetov home, 2012*

But we felt the spirit of Rosalia Peetov Linderman. Yes, Mom, we were able to 'go home again'.



*Anita Madill and Helgi Leesment toasting completion of Mom's journey home*

# Euro-Style Breakfast and Lunch Cafe Opens in Scottsdale's Charles Miller Square

Laura Hahnefeld , Phoenix New Times , Oct. 8, 2013



*Alo Café, Scottsdale, Arizona*



*Chef Michael, Alo Café*

Got a hankerin' for South African biscotti, a Cuban sandwich, or an Estonian *roosamanna*? You'll want to check out Alo Cafe, the globally inspired breakfast and lunch spot in downtown Scottsdale.

Courtesy of husband-and-wife team Hilja and Steve Martinez, who have roots in Estonia, Alo Cafe, named after Estonian composer Alo Mattiisen, is located at 6960 East First Street, in an expanded 1960s-era garage in downtown Scottsdale's historic Charles Miller Square. Estonian foods include Estonian meatballs, pirukad, rhubarb kissell and kringel.

*Courtesy of Liia Herman*

## Alo Mattiisen

Alo Mattiisen was an Estonian composer most known for his patriotic melodies, several of which became a staple of the Singing Revolution. He died in 1996.

Alo's daughter Mariita and mother Helmi bequeathed a selection of his memorabilia to the Alo Café, including five musical scores of his songs of the Singing Revolution and a book about his life with the inscription "For the nice people of Alo Café."



# Estonian President Explains His Country's Tech Boom And Why America Is Falling Behind

Adam Taylor



*Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves*

Estonia, the tiny Baltic state that holds fewer people than San Diego, has been praised recently for both the apparent success of the country's austerity policies (and President Toomas Hendrik Ilves' very public defense of it against Paul Krugman) and the country's remarkable emergence as an Eastern Europe technology hub.

Speaking at the Concordia Summit at New York's Grand Hyatt Hotel on Friday, Ilves was on hand to discuss the latter. The feisty, perpetually bow-tied head of state outlined two clear factors in Estonia's technological success — and made a convincing argument that the United States wasn't doing either well.

First, let's go over how successful Estonia has been. According to the Economist, the country has the most

startups per person, and Skype — programmed by Estonians and funded by Danes and Swedes — became an international success story after it was sold to eBay for \$2.6 billion (it was later sold to Microsoft for \$8.5 billion). That's a situation that many European countries would like to be in.

So how did Estonia — population 1.3 million, GDP per capita \$22,100 —

do it?

Ilves points back to 1991, when Estonia became a sovereign state after 50 years of Moscow-led Communism. The country was, in Ilves words, a "small, dingy, backwards former Soviet republic." The end of Soviet rule, however, provided a blank slate for new infrastructure, Ilves says, and the country was able to capitalize in two ways:

## **1. Teaching children to code**

Soon after the end of the Soviet era, Estonia showed remarkable foresight by pushing computer studies in schools. Now the country offers programming lessons to children as early as 1st Grade.

Ilves was at this point Estonia's Ambassador to the United States of

America and Canada, living in Washington D.C., but he was still able to help, working with education minister Jaak Aaviksoo on the Tiger Leap initiative to computerize and connect all Estonian schools online.

Estonia's emphasis on computer studies was a big gamble that would really take fifteen years to pay off, Ilves says.

"Basically, if you want to transform a society, you have to start with the young people, and give them the kind of education that will allow them to handle the future," Ilves says. Teaching kids a programming language is actually easier than teaching kids a human language, he adds, as it is "far more logical."

The president's interest in computers actually began when he was a teenager living in New Jersey, where, unusually, a teacher taught him to code." This showed me kids can learn how to use computers," Ilves said, though he concedes his own coding skills are uselessly outdated.

Except for these rare exceptions and a handful of Silicon Valley experiments, however, most U.S. schools don't do anything with coding.

## **2. A government infrastructure that embraces technology**

With little government infrastructure left after so many decades of Soviet rule, when Estonia moved to create its infrastructure in the 1990s, it decided to skip paper records and go straight to an electronic system. The result of that, Ilves says, 98% of bank transfers are done online and 25% of people now vote online.

This has a real effect on the startup world, the Estonian president argues. It

takes just fifteen minutes to register a company, he says, with digital signatures and the ability to perform background checks instantly. The system has also helped Estonia escape the corruption that has plagued other similar states. "You can't bribe a computer — it just won't take the envelope."

To do this Estonia had to create a very secure Internet, and Ilves asserts that the country has "solved the dilemma of Internet security versus freedom." One example of this is the use of identity cards in the country. These cards include a chip that includes a key pair, which allows the owner of the card to put a secure electronic "signature" on digital documents. The system uses 2048-bit encryption, and Ilves says that even the N.S.A. can't crack it.

Again, Ilves feels that the U.S. and the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world falls behind here. He points out how in U.S. online purchases identity is established by using a credit card and a three digit CVC number on the back. "I can't believe you guys do that," he says. "That is not a secure identity."

The factors named by Ilves both call for a level of public-private partnership that is unappealing to many Americans. And, of course, Estonia is a very different country than the U.S., and there's a reasonable amount of skepticism that the country's startup boom can continue.

It'd be hard to deny there's a logic to Ilves comments, however, and he is a pretty tech-savvy guy himself — just look at how he used Twitter for the now infamous Krugman-spat.

*Source: Business Insider, September 27, 2013*

# Estonian Song and Dance Festival to Take Place in Tallinn, Summer 2014

Welcome to the 26<sup>th</sup> Estonian Song Celebration and 19<sup>th</sup> Dance Celebration “Touched by Time. A Time to Touch,” Tallinn July 4-6, 2014. Song and dance celebrations are an old and very important tradition for Estonia and Estonians.



*Song Festival Grounds in Tallinn*

Have you ever heard 18 000 voices in song? This emotional experience can be felt during Estonia's Song Festival, which occurs once every five years in Tallinn.

On this occasion tens of thousands of Estonians gather in Tallinn to take part in the Song and Dance Festival.

The Song Festival is an enormous open-air choir concert held at the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds with the participation of hundreds of choirs and thousands of singers. The number of participants in the

Song Festival can reach 25 or 30 thousand, but the greatest number of people is on stage during the performance of the joined choirs. Their powerful song touches even the most frigid Nordic disposition.

It's not too early to start making plans to attend Estonia's next Song and Dance Festival.

**Ticket sales will begin early 2014.**

**Further information about tickets:**

[laulupidu@laulupidu.ee](mailto:laulupidu@laulupidu.ee);

[laulupidu@piletilevi.ee](mailto:laulupidu@piletilevi.ee)

*Source:Internet*

## Did the Viking Age start on Saaremaa?

According to historians, the Viking Age began in 793 AD on the small island of Lindisfarne off the coast of northern England. The “heathen men” were Viking warriors who sailed from Scandinavia across the European continent and beyond in fast-sailing ships. Yet the story of these fierce warriors is not well documented.

A recent article in *Archaeology* magazine reports that the discovery of two ships on the Estonian island of Saaremaa in the Baltic may enable archaeologists and historians better understand how the “saga” of Viking warriors developed. The two boats contain remains of dozens of men. In the larger vessel, 33 men, stacked four deep, were buried in a neat pile, together with their weapons and animals. According to Curry (1), “the site seems to be a hastily arranged mass grave, the final resting place for Scandinavian warriors killed in an ill-fated raid on Saaremaa....” It is believed that the men died in battle some time between 700 and 750, perhaps as much as a century before the Viking Age officially began.”



**Map of Saaremaa showing location of Salme village**

Scholars seem to agree that the largest of the two sailing ships, Salme 2, is the oldest sailing ship ever found in the Baltic. It was about 17 metres long and 3 metres wide.

Archaeologists Konsa of University of Tartu and Peets of University of Tallinn, who worked on the excavations, believe the dead men were Scandinavian, probably from what is now

Sweden, about 240 km away across the Baltic Sea. The men may have been “lured across the Sea by booty, to collect tribute from the locals, or to settle a grudge”, only to meet a “formidable foe on this isolated beach” near present-day village of Salme on Saaremaa’s Sõrve Peninsula.



*Liina Maldre, University of Tallinn*

### ***Remains of warriors found in one of the two ships discovered at the Salme site***

The Salme finds suggest that the historical view of the Viking Age as a sudden phenomenon needs a radical adjustment. It is clear from the remains that Scandinavian princes were organizing war parties decades or more before the 793 AD raid off northern England. Peets says “the elaborate swords are clearly connected to people of higher status”, including a warlord. The Saaremaa excavation provides a powerful scene of a voyage gone badly wrong, but the full story will never be known.

On October 31, 2013, an International Conference “Salme-Myth or Reality,” involving Swedish, Norwegian and Estonian archeologists and researchers, was held in Kuressaare to discuss this unique discovery.

Sources:

- 1). Curry, Andrew, 2013. *The First Vikings, Archaeology Magazine, July/August, 2013.*
- 2) Saarte Hääl, November 1, 2013.

Dave Kiil

# Alberta Estonian Heritage Society

## List of members, November, 2013

Allen	Dianne	Spruce Grove	AB
Andrekson	George	Medicine Hat	AB
Boehrsen	Sylvia	Calgary	AB
de Launay	David	Peterborough	ON
de Launay	Geoff	Kanata	ON
Clark	John	Denver	Col
Derksen	Colin & Linda	Edmonton	AB
Dinning	Shirley & Leonard	Edmonton	AB
Erdman	Ann	Ottawa	ON
Erdman	Evelyn	Calgary	AB
Erdman	Karl	Vancouver	BC
Erdman	Sandra	Lethbridge	AB
Erdman	Thomas	Barons	AB
Franchini	Karen	Burnaby	BC
Gue	Anita	Yellowknife	NWT
Gue	Brian	Edmonton	AB
Gue	Kevin	Hornby Isl.	BC
Gue	Lisa	Ottawa	ON
Gullickson	Barbara	Barons	AB
Hall	Gwen	Ashmont	AB
Hempstead	Shelly	Wadmalaw	SC
Hennel	Daryl & Gloria	Myrnham	AB
Hennel	Lorne & Anne Marie	Calgary	AB
Hennel	Rodney & Liz	Stettler	AB
Hennel	Ron W. F.	Stettler	AB
Herman	Liia	Inisfail	AB
Jaako	Harry	Vancouver	BC
Kalev	Tiiu	Eckville	AB
Kaljuste	Truuta Kai	Montreal	QC
Kalvee	Willy G.	Calgary	AB
Kenzle	Alice	Creston	BC
Kerbes	Deane & Irene	Stettler	AB
Kerbes	Richard	Saskatoon	SK
Kiil	Dave & Betty	Edmonton	AB
Kiil	Lisa	Edmonton	AB
Kingsep	Bob & Annette	Redwood Mdws	AB
Kivisild	Livia	Calgary	AB
Kotkas	Perry&Karen	Calgary	AB
Kotkas	Ken & Joyce	Waterton	AB
Kraav	Jüri & Helle	Calgary	AB
Krasman	Leslie	Champion	AB
Kroll	Nicole & Mike	Edmonton	AB
Kruuv	Riho	Ottawa	ON

Kuester	Matt F.	Edmonton	AB
Kuutan	Marlene	Toronto	ON
Leesment	Peeter & Helgi	Calgary	AB
Leilop	Aino	St. Albert	AB
Leffler	Edna	Manson	WA
Maddison	Anneliese	Edmonton	AB
Madill	Anita & Wallace	Calgary	AB
Matiisen	Arne	Calgary	AB
Marshall	Silvia	Vancouver	BC
McClung	Eda	Edmonton	AB
McElroy	Elve	Camrose	AB
Moro	Bonnie	Victoria	BC
Mottus	Brian	Whitehorse	YT
Munz Gue	Martha	Medicine Hat	AB
Nicklom	Otto & Gladys	Stettler	AB
Oja	Kirsti	Edmonton	AB
Ojamaa	Peter & Tina	Calgary	AB
Pääsuke	Elizabeth	Edmonton	AB
Pääsuke	Mark	Vancouver	BC
Pääsuke	Rein & Janice	Calgary	AB
Pääsuke	Toomas	Canmore	AB
Pallo	Jack Henry	Red Deer	AB
Pastewka	Astrid	Calgary	AB
Peet	Ethel	Edmonton	AB
Peetri	Ave & Kevin	Calgary	AB
Pihooja	Ralph & Nella	Whitecourt	AB
Pilt	Shirley	Edmonton	AB
Robertson	David & Christine	Leduc	AB
Ruus	Ivar & Lea	Calgary	AB
Saar	Rein & Patricia	Calgary	AB
Schuler	Kelly	Calgary	AB
Shongrunden	Astrid	Penticton	BC
Silverton	Ernest	St. Albert	AB
Songster	Dr. Giuliana	Sierra Madre	CA
Tardie	Elizabeth	Edmonton	AB
Tiisler	Enn & Pärja	Canmore	AB
Timma	Olev	Calgary	AB
Tipman	Lisa	Calgary	AB
Tipman	Bob & Kathy	Calgary	AB
Ustina	Astrid	Edmonton	AB
Ustina	Judy K	Edmonton	AB
Ustina	Stephanie	Victoria	BC
Visser	Mari & Igor	Cochrane	AB
Vollman	Karl & Sharon	Calgary	AB
Wartnow	Floyd C	Delta	BC
Watson	Maret	Spruce Grove	AB
Zach	Inge	Calgary	AB
Zielinski	Michel & Kristine	Spruce Grove	AB

A winter scene featuring a wooden building with a red upper section and a light blue lower section. A large, spoked wooden wheel is in the foreground, partially covered in snow. The background shows a clear blue sky and some evergreen trees. The text is overlaid on the image.

*Kaunist jõuluaega!  
Head uut aastat!*

*Merry Christmas!  
Happy New Year!*