

2003 Convention Report – Edmonton Alberta

The 2003 convention was held at the Coast Terrace Inn in Edmonton on August 8 through August 10.

Attendance was at an all time high for SGGEE conventions with 116 registered conventioners including seven speakers. 109 SGGEE members, friends and relatives attended the banquet on Saturday evening.

Post conference comments received both verbally and by email were in the main, very positive, but as hoped for, suggestions for improvements were also offered

Seven speakers provided very informative and educational lectures throughout Friday and Saturday of the convention. Each speaker conducted two successive and identical sessions throughout both days, the exception being the banquet speaker. Each convention session was allocated an hour and fifteen minutes of time. This period works well for scheduling sessions, coffee breaks and meal times. A complaint frequently heard at conventions that lunch breaks aren't long enough so one hour and thirty minutes were allocated for this purpose. The hour and fifteen-minute sessions also allow for ample question and even discussion time

Speakers

Kurt Arndt, whose father was a Kantor and teacher in the Tuczyn/Kostopol area of Volhynia, spoke of his family's Volhynian life and resettlement in the Warthegau region of Poland during WW2

William Brese, the President of the Moravian Historical Society in Edmonton and also the editor of their Historical Magazine, spoke on "Western Canadian Moravian Roots".

George Dorscher, the President of the Alberta Chapter of Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS) chose as his subject the immigration of our ancestors into Canada and their desire for land. His subject was entitled "Land Give Me Land"

Horst Gutsche, a serving Lutheran pastor in the Edmonton area spoke on the recent discovery of birth, marriage and confirmation records which were assembled by a former Lutheran pastor in Volhynia during WW2. Pastor Lemke and his wife worked primarily in the Zhitomir area to compile these records. Appropriately, pastor Gutsche's presentation was entitled "Volhynian Lutheran Records (1900s)"

Rosemarie Ingram has extensive experience regarding family research because of her volunteer work in various Family History Centers in British Columbia. Her sessions dealt with the research process and was entitled "Genealogy Research Basics"

Donald Miller of Hillsboro Oregon was the banquet speaker. He spoke of the Communist oppression of the Baptist clergy in Volhynia. Don has had a life-long interest in genealogy, specially human-interest stories and events in Volhynia.

Dave Obee spoke of his travels to Russia, Poland and Ukraine in the pursuit of genealogical information. He and his wife Dixie are owners of Interlink Books and Genealogy Unlimited an Internet book store specializing in books and maps for genealogists.

General Remarks

The Research Room remains extremely popular and should remain a large feature of SGGEE conventions.

The two main SGGEE databases, the Pedigree Database (PD) and the Parish Records Index (PRI) were the premier attractions in the Research Room. With the aid of Gary Warner, the database manager and others, several conventioners were able to find ancestral family connections in the PD much to their joy. The SGGEE library as an integral part of the Research Room is steadily gaining in popularity also.

Double scheduling of each session was an attempt to provide as much flexibility to the conventioners as possible so they could attend a lecture or the Research Room at a time of their choosing. The Research Room was open as many hours as possible each day with advisors, technical persons and library resources available at least 12 hours a day during Friday, and Saturday and also the afternoon of Thursday and Sunday morning.

Attending the convention were nine people who were born in Poland or Volhynia. They were Eleanor Heblin of Tuczyn, Leo Stenzel of Karolowka near Lutsk, Gottlieb Scheffler of Gonscharicha, Kurt Arndt of Bugrin, Art Breier of Zhitomir, Else Schech of Tuczyn, Emma Schmidt of Laschinanka near Zhitomir, Edith Greene of Friedenstal, Edmund Janetske of Bialasy Poland. A special guest at the convention was Olga Skrynska from Rowno Ukraine. Olga has previously served as a guide for Volhynian tours in Ukraine and works as a teacher and translator in that country

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