RUSSIAN HERITAGE

Volume VII, Issue 1.

Санкт-Петербург ⬛ Saint Petersburg

300 Лет • 100 YEARS

RUSSIAN HERITAGE

Fall Meeting for *Russian Heritge* on September 15, 2002

The kick-off meeting for *Russian Heritage* this fall will be held on September 15 at the King Wah Chinese Restaurant in St. Petersburg Florida (2750 34th Street South). The dinner will begin at 5:30 and the program will include the introduction of new officers and a preview of the coming year's activities. This is a good opportunity to catch up on the activities of members over the summer, several of whom have been in Russia and some who have been working on the programs for the big celebrations in 2003. Members can order from the regular menu. Most of the entrees and combinations are under $10.00.

Officers for 2002-2003

At the May business meeting, the following members were elected for a one year term:

Chair of the Executive Board	Tatiana Vondersaar
President	Bill Parsons
Vice President	France Frankian
Secretary	Olga Fincher
Treasurer	Bill Grant

Members of the Board: Zina Downen, Vladimir Khokhlov, Elena and Sergei Novikov, Bernie Orlando, Victor Peppard, Andrei and Elena Ustinov, and Nadia Yevstigneyeva.

Remember Our Web Site

Our Web site is a good place to keep current with the activities of *Russian Heritage*. If people want to know more about our organization, tell them to check us out the following address:

www.russian-yellowpages.com/Florida/RussianHeritage

2

Tania Vondersaar Honored by City of St. Petersburg!

Tania Vondersaar was presented a Certificate of Appreciation by Mayor Rick Baker and the City of St. Petersburg, Florida on May 22, 2002. The certificate reads: "A special commendation for distinguished efforts benefiting the entire community." Tania was nominated by SPIFFS for her tireless efforts in promoting Russian culture to schools, retirement centers, youth groups, and other organizations. She recently participated in a multicultural festival at PTEC, and a Fashion Show at the Post Office. She has also made presentations recently at Skycrest Elementary School and at a Girl Scout Camp with more than 200 scouts in attendance. She also represented Russia for SPIFFS when the Tall Ships came to St. Petersburg.

Tania has served on the Board of Directors of *Russian Heritage* for six years, and has served as Vice President and President. She is now Chair of the Board of Directors. Congratulations Tania!

Planning Continues For 2003 Celebrations

Russian Heritage to Focus on Two St. Petersburgs In 2003

Many suggestions have been put forward by members and friends of *Russian Heritage* to celebrate the joint anniversaries of the two two St. Petersburgs in 2003. We will be working closely with the city committees to plan and coordinate events which focus on the relationships between the two cities that share the name St. Petersburg. Several of activities are listed on page 9 under "Coming Events."

At the July meeting of the Executive Board, it was decided to also look into the possibility of helping to sponsor the exchange of young musicians from the two cities. Vladimir Khokhlov is exploring this option. Bill Parsons is working with Ray Arsenault of USF to plan the March symposium.

It is expected that there will be many more projects coming out of the city efforts. Already Tania Vondersaar and Bill Parsons have been invited to speak, and there are many opportunities to work with local organizations who want to participate in the joint celebrations.

If you have ideas that you would like *Russian Heritage* to explore, contact one of the members of the board, or call 727-864-8235. And remember, we hope that you all will get involved as volunteers.

City Organizes 300/100 Planning Committees For 2003

The cities of St. Petersburg, Florida and St. St. Petersburg, Russia are getting serious about plans for jointly celebrating the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Russian city and the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of the Florida city. Mayor Rick Baker has formed a local committee headed by President Carl Kuttler of St. Petersburg College to supervise the activities locally. Many activities are anticipated, including an exchange of city delegations, a special exhibit at the Florida International Museum, and a series of events throughout the year. It is reported that even Presidents Bush and Putin have discussed our joint celebration.

Six planning subcommittees have been organized to plan what is now being called "the 300/100 events." They include: Arts and Culture; Business and Commerce; Education and Technology; International Relations; Recreation and Tourism; and Community. If you are interested in participating on one of these committees, please call 727-864-8235 and you will be put in contact with the appropriate committee.

Some of the more intriguing possibilities include the composition of an original musical score on the the two cities to be presented in both cities, our symposium on the historical developments of the two cities, a special SPIFFS program, and a travel program to Russia in the summer of 2003.

2003 Celebrations For The Two St. Petersburgs

St. Petersburg, Russia is well on its way in preparations for its 300th birthday celebration in May of 2003. The city of St. Petersburg, Florida is also organized to celebrate its 100th anniversary as an incorporated city, and to focus on its connections with St. Petersburg, Russia. Mayor Rick Baker and President Carl Kuttler of St. Petersburg College are leading the city committee preparing for the joint celebrations.

A major project in this effort will be a spectacular exhibit at the Florida International Museum on loan from the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. It is expected to open in February, 2003. An exchange of city delegations is also planned, and exact dates are being negotiated.

Russian Heritage is also planning several events and projects as part of this celebration. Our Old Russian New Year Celebration will feature the two anniversaries. We will also participate in a symposium on the history of the two cities in early March, with a possible second similar symposium being held in St. Petersburg, Russia in July.

Another project is being investigated is an exchange of high school students between the two St. Petersburgs. A subcommittee of *Russian Heritage* is now working with others on the details for such an exchange. Future newsletter articles will feature these and other projects being planned for this joint celebration.

On the following pages you can read about the similarities and differences between the two cities, written by Professor Bill Parsons. If you have any questions or additions to this topic, please respond to the *Russian Heritage* Post Office Box.

Санкт-Петербург ≡ Saint Petersburg

300 Лет ∙ 100 YEARS

St. Petersburg, Russia and St. Petersburg, Florida:
Similarities and Differences
by
Professor Bill Parsons

At first glance, the two St. Petersburgs seem to be very different.
St. Petersburg, Russia is a large, northern city in Russia which served as the political and cultural capital of Tsarist Russia for 200 years. In 1914 it was renamed Petrograd, and after the death of Lenin in 1924, it became Leningrad. It was the second major city of Communist Russia until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, when it again became St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg, Florida is a moderate-size, southern city in the United States which has not been the political center of a country, a state, or even a county in its 114 year history. More details on these differences and related factors will examined after considering several interesting similarites these two cities share.

A second look at the two cities shows some interesting similarities.
1. The most obvious similarity is that **the name is the same**, or almost the same. St. Petersburg, Russia (Sankt Peterburg) was founded May 1703 and named in honor of the Apostle Peter, the Tsar's patron saint, and not specifically after himself. St. Petersburg, Florida was named in honor of the Russian city which was special to Peter Demens, the city's Russian founder.

Legends accompany the founding and naming of both cities. According to legend, the young tsar Peter came to a deserted island in the delta of the Neva River on May 16, 1703 and announced: "The city will be here!" In fact, Peter was not present at this foundation date, and the construction of the fort and city was begun by his friend Alexander Menshikov. Legend also explains that St. Petersburg, Florida got its name as a result of a wager between Demens and co-founder John Williams, but these two did not meet until after the naming of the city, and it was an associate of Demens who suggested St. Petersburg, knowing of Demens' desire for this name.

2. Both cities were **established by strong Russian personalities**. These cities did not evolve gradually, but were established and developed according to a plan laid out by Pyotr Alekseyevich Romanov (1672-1725) in Russia, and by Pyotr Alekseyevich Dementyev (1850-1919) in Florida. These two men are better known in history as "Peter the Great" and "Peter Demens".

3. **The waterfront location** of the two cities offers other interesting parallels. It is now appropriate to comment on the beauty of the two locations, with waterfront parks and impressive architectural structures along the banks of the Neva river and its branches and canals throughout its delta, and the splendor of beaches and parks and more modest architectural structures between the Gulf of Mexico and Tampa Bay. The many islands and bridges of the two cities have caused some observers to comment on the similarities, at least for St. Petersburg, Russia in the summer. However, there are no problems with frozen waterways in St. Petersburg, Florida!

The environments were not conducive to building the cities in the early years of development. These were places where just a few random settlers or fishermen lived and worked before the new cities were started. The site for Peter's city was a swampy delta of the Neva River, characterized by "foul weather, bad water, and low-

lying, sodden soil which made it triply unattractive." St. Petersburg, Florida rose from low-lying sandy soil of Pinellas Peninsula that certainly had better weather for most of the year, but the area was plagued by insects and extreme heat though the summers, and like its Russian counterpart, suffered from a paucity of suitable building materials. Periodic flooding was, and still is, a frequent problem for parts of both cities, caused in part by the fact that no part of the Neva Delta or the Pinellas Peninsula is more than 30 feet above the sea.

4. Each city is a **tourist magnet**. Originally St. Petersburg, Russia was the major Russian port and the main destination for trade as well as diplomats and curious visitors. With the creation of the beautiful "Venice of the North" and the cultural capital of Russia as well as its political center, St. Petersburg became a cosmopolitan city that attracted visitors from thoughout the empire, from all across Europe, and beyond. According to UNESCO, St. Petersburg, Russia ranks among the 10 tourist attractions in the world. St. Petersburg, Florida was a city built on tourism, especially during the winter months. For the most part, it has been the warm and healthy climate and the beaches that attracted tourists to St. Petersburg. More recently a cultural dimension has been added, with emphasis on institutions such as the Dali Museum, the Florida International Museum, and the Fine Arts Museum. Still it is hard to equate this with the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, and the 258 other museums in the Russian St. Petersburg.

5. Both St. Petersburgs are considered **"unique" cities** by their historians and by their residents. During the preparations for the 300th anniversary of the founding of St. Petersburg, Russia, there have been four international conferences in the city devoted to papers describing the "phenomenon of St. Petersburg." About 40 papers were presented at each conference to show how this city is a "unique phenomenon" and was quite unlike any other city. St. Petersburg, Florida also claims it is a unique city, "one that transcends the normal dictates of economic productivity and capitalist enterprise," that is, a city that never passed through an industrial phase, but based itself from the beginning of tourism and services. Although most cities think they are somehow unique, it appears the two St. Petersburgs have better reasons to celebrate this fact.

6. Although St. Petersburg, Russia is 200 years older than its younger namesake in Florida, the two cities did experience some of the same developments in **the first 100** years of existence. In terms of population, the Russian city went from just a few Finnish fishermen in 1703 to about 235,000 by 1803. St. Petersburg, Florida advanced from about 30 settlers in 1888 to more than 238,000 by 1988. Even the territorial size of the two cities followed a similar pattern in the first 100 years. St. Petersburg, Russia went from a few structures on a few islands to a city of 40 square miles in its first 100 years. St. Petersburg, Florida went from 2 square miles in 1888 to 58 square miles in 1988. A close look at **the last 100 years** (1903-2003) will show a very different picture of population and territory.

The differences are as important as the similarities. If we look at the two St. Petersburgs in 2003 or in 1903, we see major differences.

1. **Population.** In 1903, when St. Petersburg, Russia celebrated its 200th birthday, it had a population about 1,500,000, while St. Petersburg, Florida had just over 2,000. By 1917 the population of the Russian capital had reached 2,300,000, but with the

shocks of revolution, civil war, and economic disruption, the population fell to 720,000 by the end of 1920. St. Petersburg, Florida rose to 14,237 by 1920.

In the twenties and thirties both cities grew rapidly. In 1941, when Russia was invaded by Germany in WWII, St. Petersburg (Leningrad) had reached 3,544,000, but due to the blockade and evacuation of the city, the population fell to a low of 600,000 in 1943. More than 1,000,000 lives were lost in first 248 days of the blockade in Leningrad, more than 12 times the losses in Hiroshima in 1945. After the war, Leningrad gradually rebuilt its population, reaching 2,814,000 by 1956 and 4,329,000 by 1985. The present population is 4,619,900 with the metropolitan area numbering 4,891,100.

St. Petersburg, Florida had its population more than double from 1930 to 1950, when it reached 96,738 residents. It almost doubled again in the 1950's, reaching 181,298 by 1960, and it increased to 239,000 by 1990. The present population is 248,323, making the Florida city about 1/20th the size of St. Petersburg, Russia. If you include the entire Tampa Bay metropolitan area, the population is about 2,360,000, making it this nation's 19th largest metropolitan area, and not quite half the size of St. Petersburg, Russia.

2. **The composition of the population.** Both cities are cosmopolitan in terms of the ethnic background of the inhabitants. St. Petersburg, Russia, throughout its history, has had a large population of non-Russians, from various parts of the Russian Empire and from many European countries. However, more than 90% of the population is Great Russian, and about 93% is Slavic. St. Petersburg, Florida also has a great mixture of ethnic backgrounds, from Europe, Latin America, Africa, and recently an increased Asian presence, but differs from its Russian namesake by the fact that a large numbers of African-Americans are included in the population. In 1910 they accounted for 26% of the population, and by 1930 the percentage was about 18%. The large migration of whites from the north after WWII reduced the proportion of blacks to about 12 % by 1950, but in the second half of the twentieth century the percentage again increased to about 15 - 16% of the population.

3. **Ice and snow vs. sun.** The nickname for St. Petersburg, Florida is "the sunshine city". It has an average of 360 sunny days a year, and once was famous for an offer by a local newspaper to give away the paper free on any day the sun did not shine. St. Petersburg, Russia is known for its "white nights" in June, when the sun lights up the sky at midnight and it never gets dark. But rain, snow, and long winter nights create a very different atmosphere. St. Petersburg, Russia has an average of 132 days of snow cover, and has almost 200 days of precipitation each year. Still, itts annual precipitation is only 25 inches, compared to 58 inches for St. Petersburg, Florida.

4. **The industrial revolution** had a profoundly different impact on these two cities. In the nineteenth century St. Petersburg, Russia became an industrial city with a large working class that lived in extreme poverty. The factories of the capital city attracted many worker, and this worsened already cramped living quarters. From 1860 to 1900 the population tripled, with 2/3 of this growth coming from migration into the city. By WWI it is estimated that 1/8 of the total industrial production of the Russian Empire came from the factories of the capital. This contrasts sharply with St. Petersburg, Florida, which largely bypassed the industrial phase of development, and in fact is considered the largest U.S. city without a base of industrial production.

5. **As a cultural center**, St. Petersburg, Russia attracted the best artists, musicians, and writers from many parts of the empire. They were often trained here and they produced many of their best works here, especially in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. The presence of these world-class cultural figures, the Tsarist patronage of the Academy of Arts and many of the museums and theaters in the city, and the numerous newspapers and journals of the capital combined to make St. Petersburg a true center of world culture. St. Petersburg, Florida cannot claim to be home to such major cultural figures, although it is proud of its museums, theaters, institutions of higher education.

6. One of the sharp contrasts between the two St. Petersburgs is **the experience in WWII**. The blockade of Leningrad was a tragic, yet heroic event in the history of the Russian city. At the beginning of the war, Leningrad had a population of of 3,544,000 and produced $1/8^{th}$ of the Soviet industrial output. The seige lasted for almost 900 days, and more than a million people died during the first year. In January 1943 only 600,000 people remained in this city, but they would not give in. St. Petersburg, Florida served the war effort as a training camp for various branches of the military. Tent cities were erected in park areas, and local hotels were made available to house the officers. During and immediately after the war, an increase in population and prosperity helped bring St. Petersburg out of the economic problems of the thirties.

7. **As a health city**, St. Petersburg, Florida became famous, even before it was founded. In 1885 Dr. W.C. Van Bibber delivered an address at the American Medical Association annual convention stating that the Pinellas peninsula was the ideal location for the creation of a "health city". Throughout its history it has been advertised as a good place for people suffering health problems, and many came seeking its healthy environment. St. Petersburg, Russia has had a different reputation. In the second half of the nineteenth century 60 people of every 1,000 died each year from diseases of bad water, malnutrition, and poor sanitation. It was dangerous to drink water from the Neva River, and the rates for typhoid fever were 4 times higher than Moscow, and deaths from typhus were more than 8 times greater than Moscow, and more than all the cities in Germany. It was considered the most unhealthy capital in Europe. Even at present the water supply from the Neva is tainted with the parasite "giardia lamblia" and with traces of heavy metals. Bottled or boiled water is suggested for visitors to this city.

8. **The Churches** of the two St. Petersburgs offer interesting perspectives on the two cities. Before the 1917 revolution, St. Petersburg, Russia was a city of more than 460 churches, mostly Russian Orthodox, but including churches representing many of the diverse ethnic communities of the capital. The official Communist position was opposed to religion, and most of these churches were closed during various "anti-religious" campaigns. At the low point, it was reported that only six churches remained open on the eve of WWII. Many were reopened during the war, but later closed again in the post-war era. At the dawn of perestroika, there were less than 25 churches officially operating, including about 16 Russian Orthodox churches. Since 1991 many of the former churches have reopened, and the Church has begun to play a much larger role in society.

St. Petersburg, Florida has been known as a "city of churches" with more than 200 congregations representing some 60 religions and denominations. As in St. Petersburg, Russia, the diversity of the inhabitants helps to explain the diversity of the houses of worhip. Although the architecture in Florida churches cannot match the

9

splendor of the Russian churches, a strong religious spirit now permeates society in both St. Petersburgs.

9. **The Tsarist heritage and the Communist influence** have fashioned a path of development in St. Petersburg, Russia different from that found in the American experience in St. Petersburg, Florida. Strong centralized authoritarian power under both the Tsars and the Communist regime have limited the amount of democratic development of society. In fact, in the last 100 years there have been five rather major revolutions in St. Petersburg, changing drastically the ways society operated. Censorship, political repression, and tight controls over ideas represent the negative aspects of this authoritarian control. Reforms in Russia after the fall of Communism have attempted to move St. Petersburg towards a democratic society and market-oriented economy while trying to retain some aspects of the welfare state. For some the transition has been difficult, but it appears that progress is being made.

St. Petersburg, Florida has followed a democratic path since its founding (1888) and its incorporation, first as a town in 1892, and then as a city in 1903. It has not evolved without its own social and economic problems, such as segregation and discrimination against the black population, and economic difficulties in times of recession and depression, but it has not experienced anything like the revolutionary changes of its Russian counterpart. In the past fifteen years, St. Petersburg, Florida has progressed on a steady path of downtown development that has reinvigorated the community.

10. It would be possible to make comparisons on a variety of additional topics, such as education, sports, crime, entertainment opportunities, media, etc., but I think the above mentioned comparisons give some of the major similarities and differences between the two cities. One conclusion that might be made to show the **MAJOR** difference between the two cities is the fact that "a biography of St. Petersburg, Russia is a history of modern Russia" while a biography of St. Petersburg, Florida is more the history of a southern American city which has made its mark as a city of tourism, leisure, health services, and "non-industrial" development. These two cities sharing the name St. Petersburg are both special, and they are celebrating together in 2003 their own histories, and the links between them that date back to Peter Demens in 1888.

St. Petersburg

Санкт Петербург

10

BALALAIKAS AND DOMRAS

Many Americans know the balalaika as the Russian instrument made famous in the film "Dr. Zhivago." Many are not aware, however, that since the nineteenth century, the balalaika and its cousin the domra have formed the basis of the Russian folk instrument orchestra that entertains audiences in Russia and around the world. There are major balalaika orchestras in Atlanta, Huston, the Washington D.C., and Vancouver, Canada. There is also a Balalaika and Domra Association of America (BDAA) with nearly 500 members. During the second week of July, the BDAA held its 24th annual convention in New Orleans.

More than 120 people attended this week-long event, featuring workshops, lessons, rehearsals, mini-concerts, with a combined orchestra concert at Loyola University as the climax experience. An audience of nearly 700 spectators were thrilled by the 70 + musicians playing various size balalaikas, domras, bayans (Russian accordions), guslsi, zhaleiki, and other Russian folk instruments. Among the participants were world-class soloists on the balalaika, domra and bayan; many members of top balalaika orchestras from around the US and Canada; a man who played the balalaika in the movie "Dr. Zhivago;" and the president of *Russian Heritage*.

The Atlanta Balalaika Orchestra is scheduled to perform in the Tampa Bay Area in May 2003. We will report on this event when we learn more details.

The People of *Russian Heritage*

Anatole Sokolsky has been named an Honorary Member of *Russian Heritage* for his outstanding contributions to the promotion of Russian culture in the Tampa Bay area. The Board of Directors took this action at its July meeting to recognize Professor Sokolsky for his many accomplishments as a teacher and scholar of Russian Studies; for his work as a community leader in popularizing Peter Demens as founder of St. Petersburg and working to commemorate his name with the establishment of Demens Landing; and for his work in the Russian-American community as founder of the Russian-American Club and the Congress of Russian Americans. Anatole will be 99 in November of 2002, and will celebrate his 100th birthday, together with the city of St. Petersburg in 2003!

Andrei and Elena Ustinov went to Estonia this summer where they participated in a dance workshop with some of their students.

Franz Frankian, Zina Downen, Nadia Yevstigneyeva, Sergei Novikov, Bernie Orlando, and Bill Grant are other Board members who visited Russia this past year.

Margo Catsimatidis has been recognized for her work as chairperson for the Alzheimer's Association Gala Charity event at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York which raised more than $1.6 million. More than 600 are expected to attend the event this fall. Margo is best known in St. Petersburg for her work in planning last year's Old Russian New Year's Celebration, which she is working on again for 2003.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, October 20, 2002. **A Concert of Russian Sacred and Folk Music** featuring the Florida Slavonic Choir. Included in this event will be a sing-a-long with members of Russian Heritage. Concert begins at 3:00 p.m. in a place to be announced.

Sunday, November 10, 2002. A Program on Palekh and other Russian Lacquered Boxes. Elena Novikov will present information about this tradition. Come learn more about this Russian art form, and/or share with other members examples that you have collected. Details to follow.

Tuesday, December 31, 2002. First Night in St. Petersburg, Florida. We do not know all the details yet, but it appears that New Year's Eve in St. Petersburg will kick off the celebration of the 300/100 events.

Sunday, January 12, 2003. Old Russian New Year's Celebration. This highlight event will again be held at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club. Those who attended in 2002 are still talking about it! This will be an event you will remember for a long time! Preparations are well under way, so make your plans now. Mayor Baker and his wife Joyce will again be our Honorary Chairs.

Thursday, February 27, 2003. **Tampa Bay Symphony Celebrates 300/100 Anniversaries at Mahaffey Theater in St. Petersburg.** Russian and American music will be featured in this concert, along with ballet performances by Andrei Ustinov and Elena Martinson. A more detailed program will be forthcoming. The same program will be presented in Tampa on February 23, and in Clearwater on February 25.

March 2, 3, & 4. Symposium: "The Two St. Petersburgs." Eckerd College, The University of South Florida in St. Petersburg, and Russian Heritage will sponsor this event to compare the histories of these two cities. Local scholars and specialists from St. Petersburg, Russia will participate. It is planned to present a similar symposium in the St. Petersburg, Russia in July 2003.

March 19-23. Petersburg International Folk Fair Society (SPIFFS) presents Annual Folk Fair. The Folk Fair is first open to the schools, and to the general public from March 21-23. This year Russia will be the featured country, in keeping with joint anniversary celebrations.

There will be many more events focusing on Russia in 2003, including a major exhibit at the Florida International Museum. Watch for information in future newsletters.