Letter from the Director

As I write this letter, I am reminded of the memorable experience traveling with our 16th Journey to the Homeland tour group in May to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany. We had a wonderful cooperative group of 26 persons. Staying at the guest rooms of the Parish House at the new St. Paul’s German Lutheran Church in Odessa was truly a rewarding experience. The Church was dedicated in April 2010. Tour members walked the land of their ancestors and visited the villages where their relatives once lived in these former Bessarabian and Black Sea German villages today near Odessa, Ukraine.

On May 15 at Stuttgart, Germany, I was invited to speak in the German language at the 60th Anniversary of the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland, the large organization of Germans from Russia in Germany. Many in attendance were ethnic Germans who emigrated to Germany from the former Soviet Union. Since 1989 to date, about 2.5 million have returned home to Germany. On May 30 in Ludwigsburg near Stuttgart, was the large gathering for the Bessarabien Bundestreffen, the ethnic Bessarabian Germans, many who have relatives in the USA and Canada.

Upon returning from Germany on June 7, I traveled to southwestern North Dakota to attend the Elgin Centennial (June 18-19) with the GRHC displays, information tables and outreach program. This was my first experience being at a centennial of a German-Russian community west of the Missouri River in North Dakota. This was a rewarding and valuable outreach event where I was warmly received.

While in southwestern North Dakota, I visited the Mott area for German-Russian historic sites including the John Stern Homestead. At the GRHS Convention in Bismarck, the GRHC will be closely involved with a presentation by Acacia Jonas Stuckle, GRHC special collections associate, regarding the Dakota Memories Oral History Project. The new Prairie Public documentary, “It’s All Earth and Sky,” premiers on July 21 at the North Dakota Heritage Center in Bismarck. Further information is shared in this newsletter. We will have outreach displays and host the Journey to the Homeland Tour Reunion on July 23, 9 p.m. at the Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck.

The GRHC has published a very important scholarly hardcover book, “German Russian Handbook” by Ulrich Mertens, translated from German to English by Brigitte von Budde and Alex Herzog. Thomas Stangl, Allyn Brosz and Alex Herzog edited the book. This publication is a major resource for the Germans from Russia community worldwide. The new “German-Russian Handbook” becomes available for the first time at the GRHS Convention in July.

With kind regards,

Michael M. Miller
Prairie Public Television has produced a new documentary of the award-winning Germans from Russia Series, “It’s All Earth and Sky.” The program premiere showing is Wednesday, July 21 at 7 p.m. in the North Dakota Heritage Center, Bismarck.

The second premiere will be at the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Convention on August 6, Lincoln, Nebraska.

The 60-minute documentary features five representative Germans from Russia who describe their German-Russian ethnicity and their family’s immigration and growth in the large picture of “becoming” American in the 20th Century.

Researchers, writers and guideposts were Dr. Donna Reeves-Marquardt and Dr. Lewis Marquardt from Austin, Texas. Executive producers are Bob Dambach and Michael M. Miller. Funding was provided through the generous gift of Arthur E. and Cleora Flegel, Friends of Prairie Public and the NDSU Libraries’ GRHC. This documentary is part of Prairie Public’s award-winning “Germans from Russia Series.”

Bessarabia Publication Project Update

While in Berlin and Potsdam on May 30 and June 1, James Gessele, Carol Just and Michael Miller attended meetings with Dr. Ute Schmidt and the publishers of the Bessarabian German book.


The GRHC will publish this translation with a completion goal by the end of 2010.

16th Journey to the Homeland Tour

Tour members shared their memories of the May 2010 tour. Gilbert Schauer, Longview, Wash., a native of Streeter N.D., writes: “It was almost like coming home. That’s what I felt when I was in Neudorf and Kassel. I understand why my parents especially my mother was satisfied with so little. As long as she had a roof over her head and three meals a day she was happy. It was a dream come true to visit the homeland. We can sure thank God that our parents and grandparents left and immigrated to America.”

Children and geese seem to have free range, hard to tell to which home they belong, this along with the cows being led and herded on the streets.”

The 17th Journey to the Homeland Tour Ukraine and Germany is scheduled for May 18-28, 2011.

Mary (Nemeth) Mussel, Anoka, Minn., shares: "To stand in front of the Lutheran Church in Bergdorf, the church where my great-grandmother married my great-grandfather, was a terrific experience."
My time working with Michael M. Miller, Acacia (Jonas) Stuckle, and the staff at the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC) has been incredible! I am truly grateful for the opportunities provided by my position as the Dakota Memories Oral History Project’s (DMOHP) Coordinator.

In 2005, Mr. Miller brought me onboard at the GRHC with a doctoral fellowship to design and coordinate an oral history project, the DMOHP. Through this project, I was presented with a number of wonderful opportunities, like meeting interesting people, sampling delicious German-Russian cuisine, traveling the Northern Plains, and much more.

This position also provided me with a number of opportunities to develop into a successful research historian. During the past five years, I have presented at regional, national, and international conferences. These presentations were always grounded in the materials collected for the DMOHP.

Using this material, I also have one co-authored peer-reviewed publication in the America Review of Canadian Studies, and a forthcoming solo peer-reviewed publication in the Historian. In addition, this past year, I was presented with the 2010 Research Award from North Dakota State University’s Graduate School and College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences for my work with the DMOHP. This award not only recognized my presentations and publications, but also my participation in public forums, oral history workshops, tourism, and radio productions, as well as my efforts to build an oral history research collection at NDSU Libraries.

Without the support of the GRHC, Michael M. Miller, and Acacia (Jonas) Stuckle, I wouldn’t have had these opportunities—a fortuitous occurrence that I owe my success as a German-Russian scholar to the Staff and Friends of the GRHC.

Before I begin a new chapter in my life, I just wanted to say THANK YOU for the opportunity to research such a fascinating ethnic group and to advance as a scholar!

-- Dr. Jessica Clark

Jessica Clark Graduates with PhD in History

The Glückstal Colonies Research Association (GCRA) founded in 1987 has donated its complete archives to be housed at the GRHC. In May, the GCRA shipped 58 boxes (1,738 pounds) from Redondo Beach, C.A., to Fargo. The GCRA and the GRHC have a long history of successful cooperative projects in publishing and documentary work.

Dr. Homer Rudolf, Richmond, V.A., a native of Wishek, N.D., is coordinator of the GCRA. He has been working several days this summer with volunteers processing the GCRA Archives. The GCRA Archives includes extensive family records, books, maps and family histories. The GCRA has provided the funding for shipment, storage totes and shelving units.

Eventually the GCRA Archives will develop a finding aid and make it available on the GRHC website for researchers.

Cheryl Buechler Schumacher, Alice (Zimmerman) Ackerman, Wayne Schumacher and Kelly Holwegner have assisted Dr. Rudolph with processing the GCRA Collection. They will be working with the materials for a week at the end of July and again in September.

--- Dr. Homer Rudolf working with the GCRA collection at the GRHC in June 2010.

--- Dr. Jessica Clark with Dr. Calvin Fercho, one of her first DMOHP narrators, during her farewell celebration at NDSU Libraries.

--- Dr. Jessica Clark
Debra Marquart’s NDSU Visit

Author and former North Dakota native, Debra Marquart, visited NDSU on March 4, 2010.

In addition to guest lecturing in one of NDSU’s literature classes, Marquart conducted two book signings and delivered a presentation.

Marquart read from her work and discussed researching, uncovering and writing about German-Russian history for her memoir, "The Horizontal World: Growing Up Wild in the Middle of Nowhere."

Marquart is a professor of English in the Master of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing and Environment at Iowa State.

Mott’s Presentation

On April 8, 2010, Andrea Mott presented ‘My adventures in German-Russian Country’ at the NDSU Alumni Center. The event was sponsored by NDSU Libraries’ Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and NDSU’s Center for Heritage Renewal.

Mott’s presentation focused on her experiences while collecting interviews for the Dakota Memories Oral History Project in the North Dakota communities of Napoleon and Richardton.

Mott shared several humorous anecdotes in addition to many photographs and video clips.

Mott is the first presidential fellow in NDSU’s history doctoral program.

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NDSU Libraries’ Germans from Russia Heritage Collection

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