The Little German House closes doors after 15 years, welcoming people from all over the world

By Terri Lang

On 500 Main Street in Strasburg, North Dakota, nearly 15 years ago, a unique gift shop opened its doors. With old-fashioned German hospitality, owner Judy Dasovic-Gabriel has greeted people from all over the world into The Little German House.

It started out with Judy and her husband Kevin, on a cold winter’s night, visiting about a dream they both shared, owning an antique shop.

“And then this cute little house was for sale and I knew it was exactly what we wanted,” Judy remembers.

The century-old home, previously used as a restaurant before it was built in 1889, 13 years before Strasburg was incorporated as a town.

When they purchased the home in November of 2002, it was in excellent shape, but Kevin and she did some redecorating, and restored some of its historic features.

“I knew exactly how I wanted to look – it had to be yellow with white trim, shutters and window boxes and a white picket fence,” she said.

They worked hard to make it what Judy dreamed of, adding her unique decorating touch to the antiques. The Little German House was a success.

The red geranium was The Little German House’s signature flower.

“Geraniums are a European tradition and have always been popular in America. Before Kevin and I moved here, in 1999, there were very few of them in Strasburg,” Judy said.

While her geraniums were not for sale, Judy always had many geranium gift items to choose from.

“Geraniums were a must-have for the success of the shop. They sold hundreds of them for special gifts. Judy said that many people through the area.”

In addition to the bus loads, tourists have come from all 50 states, Canada, Puerto Rico, Japan, Europe, Iceland and more. Groups such as the Scandinavians, Dakotan Memories, Heritage Tours, Red Hat Society, Tri-County Alliance, and German Americans of Russia, have all visited The Little German House.

Judy has made presentations about her shop, local tourism and promoting what small towns can offer. She accomplished that through Alternative Tourism, an Rural Enterprise Conference in Napoleon, the Napoleon celebration, an Ennmons County Farmers Union Yellow Brick Road Ladies Night, Emmmons County Farm Bureau Women’s Program and the Christmas Open House in Hazleton.

The Little German House has been issued in the City Magazine guide, and word of mouth, including on the community. May life all over the world.

Judy says she could have never had her dream come true without the help and support of her husband, Kevin Gabriel. It was Kevin who added the fine details to The Little German House’s exterior and yard, such as the white shutters and window boxes, stenciling, an outhouse, an old wagon and windmill and bird feeders, and a beautiful white picket fence surrounding it all.

On 500 Main Street in Strasburg, The Little German House held their going out of business sale the last two weeks in September. Judy received this beautiful bouquet of red flowers from friends in 1964. When they moved to North Dakota, Judy and Kevin and I have done well, and we are so very proud of it!” Judy said.

What are Judy’s plans for the future? After spending 37 years in the field of education as a teacher, home visitor, supervisor, director, grant writer and a life-long learner, prior to being the proprietor of The Little German House, who knows what Judy’s next adventure might be, “well, only time will tell,” she said.

For now, she will be focusing on cleaning up the shop. In the spring, an auction will be held.

Judy left us with some closing thoughts.

“I have been blessed and I am so very thankful to everyone who has supported us. It has been my pleasure to bring The Little German House to Strasburg and our community. May life always provide you with good memories from The Little German House.

“In 36 years, Judy has made presentations about her shop, local tourism and promoting what small towns can offer. She accomplished that through Alternative Tourism, a Rural Enterprise Conference in Napoleon, the Napoleon celebration, an Ennmons County Farmers Union Yellow Brick Road Ladies Night, Emmmons County Farm Bureau Women’s Program and the Christmas Open House in Hazleton.

Judy loves to read and promoted many good books, including one of her favorites, Dr. Edward F. Keller’s My Mother’s Apron. Judy had a sign hanging amongst her books at the shop:

“In this age of technology, one forgets the pure joy of beautifully written and illustrated books. A loved one will cherish one or all of these delightful books. I promise.”

Beautiful hand-made iron crosses hung in this historic house that customers bought for special gifts. Judy said they sold hundreds of them over the years.

All of what The Little German House was will be treasured memories for Judy and Kevin, the community and the many folks who made it their destination spot.

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Always promoting Lawrence Welk and the Homestead Show, Judy offered many of his memorabilia for custom- ers to purchase. She often played his music while guests were shopping.”
The yellow exterior home with the white trim and shutters and white window boxes, all surrounded with white picket fence, was Judy’s vision for her shop. Beautiful red geraniums have always been a trademark and the signature of the The Little German House.

At Christmas time, people would stop in to shop or just to enjoy the beautiful Christmas displays.

The Little German House always had a fine collection of vintage aprons for sale.

Welcoming tourists, guests and customers to The Little German House in the past 15 years are, front row, left to right, Betty Hanson (12 years) and owner Judy Dasovic-Gabriel, and back row, Linda Ulrich (11) and Jane Pearson (15). Missing from the photo is Natosha (Weichel) Veith (3).

Judy and Kevin celebrated their 10th anniversary at The Little German House in July of 2012. Guten Tag und Willkommen zu Das Kleine Deutsche Haus!!

German-Russian, Dutch and Scandinavian items were on display and for sale at The Little German House.

Judy always offered a large variety of the Pride of North Dakota items (spices, dried soups, jams and jellies and more).