Germans from Russia groundbreaking to be held in conjunction with festival

Sitter, Sue. “Germans from Russia groundbreaking to be held in conjunction with festival.” Pierce County Tribune, 22 June 2019, 1 & 2.

The Heart of America Germans from Russia organization has made some great strides in their goals toward having a presence at the Prairie Village Museum. They have raised enough money to pass to the museum to allow for a very good start at the informational items for a display to begin telling the story of the Germans from Russia.

The family of Valentine (left) and Alice Brossart have helped make the dream of a Germans from Russia presence at the Prairie Village Museum a reality

On Sunday, June 23 at 2 PM at the Prairie Village Museum there will be a groundbreaking for the building to be erected on museum grounds. It is being held in conjunction with the 7th Annual Rhubarb Festival. The Germans from Russia were rhubarb lovers and there will probably be some Rhubarb Kuchen available.

The building was a dream of Valentine Brossart, and his family has helped make that dream come true.
Valentine’s interest in and passion for telling the story and preserving the past of the Germans from Russia probably started at a very young age.

His mother, Elizabeth Voeller Brossart, had an interesting early life and a story to pass on to her family. She was born in Selz, Russia (now Ukraine) in 1892. She spent approximately the first 16 years of her life in this village before emigrating to the United States with part of her family. They eventually lived about 10 miles northwest of Rugby. She spoke German with only a few partial sentences of English. Valentine’s youth was filled with many stories and the music of her childhood growing up in the “homeland”. Until the last year of life in Selz, Russia, Valentine’s mother had many special, all happy memories of her childhood years which she passed on to whoever would listen. They included much song and dance, attending the many church activities, working together gardening, cooking, but mostly having fun living together with family and friends. One of her early farm duties she remembered was having the family livestock ready every morning for the “herdsman” when he stopped by to gather their livestock with the other village livestock to take to the pastures for the day. Her happy early life changed rather abruptly when she had to leave suddenly due to the rapidly developing dangerous political situation in Selz and the villages surrounding it. She came to the United States and like many others before and after, life soon became much more challenging and difficult for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was asked late in her life if she had one final wish, what would it be? She immediately replied (in German) “To return to my first home in Selz, Russia, and to relive my happy childhood memories.” At her age, along with the political issues at that time, her wish was only a dream.

However, her son, Valentine, and his son, Ron, were able to fulfill her dream in 2005 when they traveled with the Journey to the Homeland Tour arranged by Mike Miller, the Director at the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at NDSU. Being able to see Selz, Russia, the home his mother held so dear, was one of the highlights of Valentine’s life.

His mother’s stories told during his childhood had an impact on Valentine, and he felt that this heritage should be preserved for future generations. During his special times at the Prairie Village Museum, he often remarked that the rapidly deteriorating Germans from Russia building should be replaced with a better structure. His life passed before his dream could be accomplished. Eventually the original building was removed. Valentine’s wife, Alice, before her passing and in his memory, left a legacy fund to be used to assist in ensuring that his dream of a building could be completed - a building to be used to tell the story and preserve the Germans from Russia heritage.

The Brossart story is one of many. The Heart of America Germans from Russia organization wishes to preserve these many stories and the heritage of those who came here from Russia.

This very generous fund has been the beginning of the resources needed to undertake this project. Many have already donated monies, and that has made it possible to begin
construction of a building on the Prairie Village Museum grounds. This is the start of a big project. Additional funds are needed for interior finishes and exhibits and for an endowment fund for continued maintenance of the building.

If you are interested in contributing to this project, you can do so by contacting Monica Houim at 701-208-0461, or mailing a donation to Germans from Russia, PO Box 221, Rugby, ND. We have partnered with the North Dakota Communication Found to ensure your donation is tax deductible. You may donate online through the Foundation by going to: www.ndcf.net/donate.