All me mates was going away [to England] like, you know, an’ I just wanted to see it, to see what it was like. I seen them all comin’ home with black f***in’ suits on them and lovely ties, and rakes of money, an’ takin’ all the women off the young bucks at home.
Owen, b. 1943, Co. Mayo.

Well that time, that was the late 50s, early 60s, you could get ... a different job every day of the week that time ... Oh! I’ld jump around from Wimpeys, McC Alpines ... then I was with Green Murphy’s, jumping around with different firms.
Vincent, b. 1939, Co. Galway.

It has been a very lonely life. I helped my family in Ireland when they needed it. I sent parcels and money when they had nothing, but it isn’t remembered now or spoken about. It’s like it never happened.

Doing the rounds. Visiting with friends and relations whilst ‘home’ on holiday, Co. Mayo. c. 1960. Photo: Ferguson/McGowan Archive

A small selection of objects associated with the emigration – such as travel identity cards, trunks and suitcases, religious paraphernalia and mementoes – will add another dimension to the exhibition. These objects will evoke a sense of leaving and reflect the experience of Irish emigrants in Britain. The exhibition will run until the end of September.

USA
Jessica Clark (Jessica.Clark@ndsu.edu) is a PhD student at North Dakota State University (NDSU), specializing in rural history. Her dissertation research specifically focuses on childhood memories and oral histories. In 2005, she was awarded the Theresa Mack Germans from Russia History Doctoral Fellowship through NDSU Libraries Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC). As part of her fellowship, Jessica works closely with Michael M. Miller, bibliographer of the GRHC, and Dr. Tom Isenr, professor of history at NDSU, in coordinating the landmark oral history project they created in January 2005 – the Dakota Memories Oral History Project.

“We designed the Dakota Memories Oral History Project to document the history and heritage of Germans from Russia. It focuses on childhood memories, in particular, what it was like growing up German-Russian on the Northern Plains. The history of Germans from Russia began during the 1700s, when Russia’s Catherine the Great encouraged German immigration by promising land and freedom. Most Germans were content in south Russia until the late 1800s, when Tsars Alexander I and Alexander II revoked their freedoms and implemented a policy of Russification: at the same time, the United States encouraged the settlement of the West.
with the Homestead Act of 1862. The loss of personal freedoms and the possibility of free land prompted another migration. After a long and dangerous voyage, many Germans from Russia settled in the Great Plains region, and some continued their migration north into Canada. Interestingly, the Germans from Russia resisted assimilation for years, maintaining their cultural and ethnic traditions, such as food, language, and religion.

'Oral history projects have documented the history and heritage of countless first generation Germans from Russia. For instance, the Federal Writers' Project employed people to record the experiences of Germans from Russia in North Dakota following the Great Depression, and for the last thirty years Germans from Russia have been collecting their own history and archiving it at the GRHC. The Dakota Memories Oral History Project, however, employs two trained historians—one from outside the memory group and one from within—and records the childhood memories of second- and third-generation Germans from Russia. As historian Elliott West points out in Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier, it is important to examine childhood history because children have their own perceptions, unique experiences, and are active participants in history.

'By using specialized interviewing techniques—yearly rounds, memory maps, landmark walks, cemetery walks, and photo album tours—along with traditional sit down interviews, we have recorded a wealth of memories pertaining to family, chores, school, religion, and play. For instance, Christina (Aberle) Long of Berlin, North Dakota, reminisces about one of her earliest memories—a Christmas gathering at her grandparents' house. When Christina was about four years old, she was sitting in a row on a bench with her siblings and cousins waiting for her Christmas goodies. She remembers being afraid of the Belzynckel—a person in chains who would take away all the bad children. She could hear the Belzynckel screaming and hollering in the other room, while the Krist Kindel (Christ Child) was handing out the presents. The Krist Kindel gave Christina a Shift Lard Pail full of candy, nuts, and one chocolate marshmallow cookie. This cookie impressed Christina, yet she was also much afraid of the noisy Belzynckel; therefore, when the Christ Child's donkey approached her pail, she let the donkey eat her cookie.

The Belzynckel and Krist Kindel have long been a significant part of the German-Russian Christmas celebration.

'Thus far, we have conducted more than thirty interviews with Germans from Russia in southeastern and south central North Dakota, and in 2006 we are continuing the project in south central and north central North Dakota. We have also received a grant through the Canadian Embassy for interviews in Saskatchewan, Canada. Future plans include adding more than fifty interviews, or approximately one hundred and fifty hours of videotape, to our collection during the 2006 field season (DVD copies are available for purchase from the GRHC) and working closely with Prairie Public Television in Fargo, North Dakota to develop a documentary series—Dakota Memories: Growing up German-Russian on the Northern Plains.

'For more information on the Dakota Memories Oral History Project visit our website at www.lib.ndsu.nodak.edu/grhc/history_culture/oral/interviews/project.htm, or contact Jessica Clark tel 701-231-8419 or email Jessica.Clark@ndsu.edu.'