

## House construction

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**Electronic mail message from Redginald Heth to Edna Boardman, Minot, North Dakota: [Edna Boardman is author of the book, [All Things Decent and in Order](#) published in 1997.]**

I raised the issue of "concrete" on the ger-res listserv several weeks ago after having received from NARA the homestead records of my great-grandfather Martin Heth (Hedt) who came to Parkston, SD from Bessarabia in July, 1880. I will quote from his testimony in the records.

"A concrete house 18x56 in size, shingle roof, four doors, five windows, pine floor, two rooms and a kitchen, worth \$600.00. One concrete stable 16x20, board and sod roof; value \$75; one frame stable 16x32, pole and straw roof, worth \$75; 1 frame granary 12x16, shingle roof, worth \$75; and one sod stable 18x50, board and sod and pole and hay roof, worth \$75; a well 24 feet deep curbed with boards worth \$48; a cattle corral, 100x150 feet, worth \$25; 25 acres broke worth \$87.50. Total improvements \$1060.50."

I was curious about the word "concrete" and wondered if it might be rammed earth. I subsequently found in Richard Sallet's book, "*Russian-German Settlements in the United States*", pages 190 to 195 a wonderful description of our ancestors buildings, but no reference to concrete. Sallett refers to "puddled clay" and "stone-clay" buildings. I thoroughly enjoyed your book, *All Things Decent and in Order*.

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**Electronic mail message from Steve C. Martens, Associate Professor of Architecture, North Dakota State University, Fargo**

Regarding Reg Heth e-mail to Edna Boardman, I agree with the conclusions he drew from Sallet book; a CONCRETE house would be highly unusual construction type for Germans from Russia in South Dakota. You might also direct Mr. Heth to Koop's study on German-Russian Folk housing in South Dakota the videotape available from the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, NDSU Libraries, for more detail on construction technologies.

Lay people often use the words "cement" and "concrete" interchangeably, although technically this is not accurate. Typically one might expect a South Dakota house to be of one of the seven common types of puddled clay, rammed earth, or even stone occasionally COATED ON THE OUTSIDE with a cementitious coating such as stucco or Portland cement. In fact, this was done on a portion of the Hutmacher House in Dunn County, ND.

Given the expense and general lack of availability of cementitious materials in South Dakota, it strikes me as unlikely that the house he described would be monolithic concrete; a coating seems more probable. Hope this may shed some light. Perhaps I'll hear back if further information is desired.