OVERVIEW

**Donor:** Victor Knell


**Collection Number:** 079

**Quantity:** 6.25 linear feet + artifacts

**Summary:** Manuscripts, books, family histories, certificates, textiles, and artifacts related to the Knell and Adolf families of Hazen, North Dakota, 1915-2008; correspondence, organizational materials, books, and ephemera related to German from Russia organizations and heritage, 1971-2009; and historical records concerning German settlers in Bessarabia, Ukraine, no date.

**Languages:** English & German

**Links:**
- Photographs from the Victor Knell Collection
- Victor Knell Collection (Family Histories)
- Introduction to the Village History Project, Germans From Russia Heritage Society
- List of people’s names that appear in the Victor Knell Collection
- Inventory of the convention programs
- Inventory of the German beer coasters

**Access Restrictions:** Open to the public, available upon request. Copyrights to items in this collection remain with original copyright holders or are in the public domain.

**Citation:** Victor Knell Collection, 079, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, NDSU Libraries, Fargo, ND.
BIOGRAPHY

Victor Knell was born on August 23, 1941, in Hazen, North Dakota to parents Traugott and Hertha (Adolf) Knell. Victor attended school in Hazen and graduated high school in 1959. He later attended North Dakota State University after serving in the Army. Knell is a member of the American Heritage Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR) and the Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS). Victor is a historian who has influenced identification and preservation of dialect-usage and folk traditions. He has served as village historian for Brienne and Teplitz, in Bessarabia; served as editor for the Red River Chapter newsletter; and has been involved with editorial-publications projects at the Germans from Russia Heritage Society, Bismarck, North Dakota. Mr. Knell has also compiled five family histories for Knoll/Knell, Breitling, Oster, and Adolf heritage.

The Knoll/Knell family (from ancestral village of Neckartailfingen, Wuerttemburg, Germany) was among the religious pietists of "emigration harmonium" to South Russia. They traveled by “ulmer barges” down the Danube River toward the Black Sea. The Oster family was reformed religionists at Lambsonb, Palatinate, Germany. They were tailors who immigrated in 1798 to Tschewrenka village (in Austria-Hungarian Empire, today Yugoslavia) as linen weavers, later moving near Odessa, South Russia. The Adolf family was printers in Berlin, Brandenburg, Germany. From Odenberg, Russia, they immigrated in 1817 to (the former German village of) Brienne, Bessarabia, where the Adolf family erected and operated a wind-powered flour mill.

Traugott Knell was born on September 22, 1915 in Zap, North Dakota to parents Jacob and Pauline (Breitline) Knell. Hertha (Adolf) Knell was born August 12, 1917 in Expansion, North Dakota to parents Reinhold and Pauline (Oster) Adolf. Traugott and Hertha married on September 29, 1940 at St. Peter’s Church in a double wedding with Traugott’s brother, Arnold, and Hertha’s sister, Ida. Traugott worked as a farmer and Hertha was a housewife. The couple had four children: Victor, Elaine, Marvin, and Gary. Traugott and Hertha Knell both died on December 30, 1991.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Victor Knell Collection is a grouping of multiple donations made by Victor Knell over the course of several years. The collection contains numerous series of different types of resources, many of which concern the Traugott and Hertha (Adolf) Knell family of Hazen, North Dakota. Other main components of this collection are the series of records and documents concerning former German residents of Bessarabia, and a collection of programs and records from various Germans from Russia conventions. A complete inventory of documents, resources, and artifacts is found within Folder 1/1.

The Correspondence Series contains one folder of correspondence sent to Victor Knell regarding German from Russia heritage, dated 1988-2008. The Selective Service documents folder contains a grouping of correspondence sent to Traugott Knell and Hertha Arnold from the Selective Service branch of the federal government regarding work performed for government
agencies during the Depression and the early years of World War II. These items date from 1938-1942.

The **Organizational Materials Series** contains documents and resources related to four Germans from Russia heritage organizations. The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Folder, Folder 1/5, includes correspondence and documentary items, including fundraising resources, for that organization, which date from 2002-2008. The folders of resources for the Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS), Folders 1/6 and 1/7, contain correspondence regarding fundraising, books published by that organization, internal club documents, a membership list, and information concerning the GRHS Village Research Project and GRHS Heritage Foundation, 2003-2008. The Heritage Foundation for Germans from Russia Folder, 1/8, contains six documents regarding membership to that organization, dating c. 2003-2007. The folder of resources for the North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Folder 1/9, contains one document for that organization, a report and history of that club, dated 1971.

Within the **Family History Series**, are fifteen folders of resources relating to several family groups of German/Russian descent. A main feature of this collection is the group of resources related to Victor Knell’s family lineage, namely the Adolf and Knell/Knoll families. Also contained within this series is a significant grouping of information concerning the Kuch family, Folder 1/17. The Kehrer Family Folder contains six packets of information prepared by Mary Olzak of Kirkwood, Washington, dated 1997.

The **Community History Series** contains four folders of resources related to the history of three villages in Bessarabia, Ukraine. The histories of Alt Arcis and Beresina were written by Dr. Elvire Necker-Eberhardt in 2000. Folder 1/27 contains a typescript of a history of the village of Teplitz, Bessarabia, written by Rosawita Niessner in 1986. Also present in this series is the history of Neckartailfingen, Germany, Folder 1/26, which was copied from an unknown German-language encyclopedia entry, translated by Brigitte R. von Budde in 1986.

The **Historical Records Series** consists of eleven subseries of documents, mostly photocopied, concerning statistical and biographical information of former German/Russian settlers of Bessarabia and is housed within Box 2. A large portion of this series consists of 728 photocopied records, titled “Exit forms, 1940.” These documents, which show proof of German lineage for former settlers of Brienne and Friedensfeld, Bessarabia, were required of Germans from Russia who wanted to return to Germany from Russia in 1940, and feature dates of birth, relatives, and significant names and locations for their individual subjects. They were collected as part of the GRHS Village Research Project of 1995, for which Victor Knell researched Brienne and Friedensfeld. An index for this series is located in Folder 2/1. Also present within the Historical Records Series are several other folders of documents with data related to Germans from Russia, including birth and death records of Bessarabia from the 1830s, prepared by Reuben Drefs, 1996; marriage records for Kronthal, North Dakota; and church records from North Dakota and South Dakota parishes, c. 1900-1960.

Contained within the **Subject Files Series**, are three folders: the *Deutscher Chor* Winnipeg Folder, the Genealogy Materials Folder, and the Germans from Russia Materials Folder. The
Deutscher Chor Winnipeg folder contains four documents relating to this German-language choir from Winnipeg, Manitoba, which appeared at the 1993 GRHS Convention. Present are correspondence and fliers advertising their appearance. The Genealogy Materials folder contains generic resources, such as an unused family pedigree chart and a list of books related to genealogy. The Germans from Russia Resources Folder, Folder 1/40, contains broad information about that ethnic group and their history, research, and a short essay about websites which are dedicated to Germans from Russia, written by Victor Knell, no date.

The Victor Knell Collection contains numerous pieces of printed materials, with a wide variety of formats represented. These have been processed into the Printed Materials Series. The Brochures Folder, 1/42, of this series contains advertising brochures for the following subjects: Association of Personal Historians; Castle of Celle; Esplanade Archives; Hazen, North Dakota; Knife River Indian Villages; S. Kiemele; Kunstdrucke, Oderberg; Lake Sakakawe; Memory Preserve; Mennonite Heritage Village; Rapid City, South Dakota; and Schneider LLC Tours. The Certificates Folder contains two documents, certificates of appreciation to Victor Knell, 1992, 1993, from the Germans from Russia Heritage Society.

A grouping of ephemera was also processed as part of the Printed Materials Series. Folder 1/44 contains the following: two sticker badges for the AHSGR; one printed card with “Lasagna”; one advertising flyer for the board game “Colonists of Deustchenfeld”; and one flyer for the 1988 Sängertreffen in Winnipeg. Also present are programs for the Peace Lutheran Church of Hazen, North Dakota 75th Anniversary, 1984; German advent Christmas service, 2002; “Strasburg Centennial Musical; Look to the Rainbow”, 2002; “Welcome Night Concert and Sing Along and the “Festival for the Germans from Russia” community worship service, 2005. Pieces of oversized ephemera within this series include two paper placemats from the 1980 convention of the GRHS which feature a map of Eastern Europe, two paper napkins which state “Komm Herr Jesus, Sei unser Gast”, and two paper napkins for the 50th Anniversary of the weddings of Traugott and Hertha Knell, and Arnold and Ida Knell, 1990. A photocopy of a school program for a Christmas pageant at the school in Krem, North Dakota, 1924, is contained within Binder 1.

Also within the Printed Materials Series is a collection of maps, arranged into Folder 1/45 and Box 4. The contents of Folder 1/45 are as follows: a color photocopy map of the settlements of the Black Sea region, a photocopied map of the Beresan colony in 1918, a photocopied grouping of maps of Bessarabia and a plat map of the Michael Kuch farm, and a large, foldout map of Neckartailfingen, Germany. (Neckartailfingen is a municipality near Stuttgart, Germany.)

This series also contains one folder, Folder 1/46, of pamphlets and booklets. These have been processed as follows: “The Joy of Christmas Music,” circa 1980; “Weihnachtliche Sitten und Gebräuche in der einstigen Heimat Bessarabien” by Christian Feiss, 1989; “German Folk Fest Trollwood Park Sing-a-Long,” 1992; “Our German Drang Nach Osten” by Leo J. Neifer, 2002; “From a German Kitchen,” no date; and “Germany for the Jewish Traveler,” no date.

The Pictures Series of the Victor Knell Collection consists of four groupings that have been arranged as follows. The Art Prints Folder contains four reproductions of engravings depicting nineteenth-century immigrants aboard ships, entitled “Dancing between Decks”, “On Board an Immigrant Ship” (by M. W. Ridley), “The Departure”, and “The Roll Call.” Within Binder 1 is a
collection of color lithographed leaves from an unknown German-language children’s book, circa 1895. Also contained within the Pictures Series is a grouping of photographic images, the bulk of which consists of photocopies that are housed within Binder 1. Within Folder 1/49, is one color photographic image, 2004.03.01, which depicts the children of the Knell family playing musical instruments, circa 1960.

Also present within the Victor Knell Collection is a grouping of programs and documentation concerning Germans from Russia heritage societies and several regional and national conventions hosted by these organizations, known as the Conventions Series. The American Heritage Society of Germans from Russia Subseries (AHSGR) features programs, symposium surveys, membership reports, and fundraising materials that were handed out at the various conventions, 1988-2004. In 2008, the GRHS and the AHSGR held a joint national convention and those materials are represented in the 2008 National Convention Subseries. The Germans from Russia Heritage Society Subseries contains programs, sing along booklets, memorial service programs, and club information, 1980-2009. Also present within this series are convention materials for the North Dakota Heritage Society of German Russians (NDHSGR), 1978 and 1979.

The Oversized Series contains maps, newspaper clippings, and a book that were too large to fit with the rest of the collection. These materials were separated into two boxes. The maps in the Oversized Box 4 consist of three groupings of photocopies of maps of Colorado (8 maps), North Dakota, and Oregon, the originals of which date from 1873-1923. Periodical clippings in this series which date from 1984-2004, are from the Hazen Star, and Heimat, and are found in Oversized Box 5 as well as Folder 1/47.

The Certificate Series consists of six original lithographed religious certificates (baptism, confirmation, and marriage) and one family tree chart that were presented to Traugott Knell, Hertha (Adolf) Knell, and Victor Knell, dated 1915-1941. Also present is one set of laminated, photocopied copies of the religious certificates.

A grouping of books was also donated as part of this collection. These have been processed into three categories: Books, Music Books, and Historical Books. The Books Collection consists of informational resources dedicated to Germans from Russia and related topics. The Historical Books Collection contains seventeen books that are of Knell/Adolf family importance because of their provenance or inscriptions. The Music Books Collection consists of books of sheet music of popular songs and practice lessons that were owned and used by Victor Knell for the accordion. An inventory of the books is available below, under the Box and Folder List. Three items of electronic media were donated, the details of which are listed below.

A collection of Artifacts is also present, which is listed below with accession numbers and brief descriptions. Several textiles, listed within this finding aid as the Textiles, were donated by Victor Knell and are housed at the Emily P. Reynolds Historic Costume Collection, NDSU. These include three artifacts from the marriage of Traugott and Hertha Knell: Mrs. Knell’s wedding dress and headpiece, and a boutonniere worn by Mr. Knell, dated 1940. Also present are three embroidered dish towels, each featuring a multicolored design, made by Hertha Knell, circa 1955.
SEPARATION RECORD

Several artifact items from the Victor Knell Collection, item numbers 2010.01.11 - 2010.01.15, were separated from the document series for preservation and storage purposes and are located on shelf storage at the GRHC.

The textile items, item numbers 2003.03.07 - 2003.03.12, have been relocated to the Emily Reynolds Historic Costume Collection, which is located on the campus of North Dakota State University. Fourteen days of advance notice is requested for the viewing of these materials.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box/Folder</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>Finding aid, detailed inventory, and initial inventory</td>
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CORRESPONDENCE SERIES

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<tr>
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<td>Correspondence – Adolf family, 1984</td>
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<td>1/3</td>
<td>Correspondence – General, 1988-2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>Correspondence – Selective Service, 1938-1942</td>
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ORGANIZATIONAL MATERIALS SERIES

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<td>American Historical Society of Germans from Russia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>Germans from Russia Heritage Society (1 of 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>Germans from Russia Heritage Society (2 of 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>Heritage Foundation for Germans from Russia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/9</td>
<td>North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia</td>
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FAMILY HISTORY SERIES

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<tr>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>Erbele family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Flemmer family</td>
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<td>1/13</td>
<td>Gans family</td>
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<td>1/14</td>
<td>Garbrecht family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>Kehrer family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>Knoll family (1 of 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shelf Knoll family (2 of 2) [Binder 1]
1/17 Kuch family
1/18 Schaal family
1/19 Schimke family
1/20 Sener family
1/21 Sprenger family
1/22 Steffens family
1/23 Stuhlmiiller family

COMMUNITY HISTORY SERIES

1/24 Alt-Arcis, Bessarabia, Ukraine 1848 village history
1/25 Beresina, Bessarabia, Ukraine 1848 village history
1/26 Neckartailfingen, Germany history
1/27 Teplitz, Bessarabia, Ukraine 1848 village history

HISTORICAL RECORDS SERIES

1/28 Birth records, Bessarabian village index
1/29 Birth records, St. Petersburg Bessarabian birth index
3/1 Brienne records transcripts
1/30 Christian Fiess films records
1/31 Death records, St. Petersburg Bessarabian death index
2 Exit forms, 1940
2/1 Exit forms, 1940 – index
2/2 Exit forms – Koblenz
1/32 Marriage records – Bessarabian village, 1830s
1/33 Marriage records – Kronthal, North Dakota
1/34 Parish records – North Dakota, South Dakota churches

SUBJECT FILES SERIES

1/35 Deutscher Chor Winnipeg
1/36 “Easter”
1/37 Genealogy materials
1/38 German-English Christmas Program, 1997
1/39 German Folk Fest – Trollwood Park, 1992
1/40 Germans from Russia materials
“The Christkindlein”

PRINTED MATERIALS SERIES

Brochures
Certificates
Ephemera

Ephemera – copy of school program, 1924

Maps
Pamphlets
Periodical clippings

PICTURES SERIES

Art prints

Art prints – Color lithograph leaves from unknown book, c. 1895

Photographs
CD-ROM: “Victor Knell Photographs.”

Photographic images – scanned copies

CONVENTIONS SERIES

AHSGR, 1988
AHSGR, 1993
AHSGR, 2003
AHSGR, 2004
AHSGR, 2006
AHSGR, 2007
AHSGR, 2009
AHSGR/GRHS 2008
GRHS, 1980
GRHS, 1981
GRHS, 1983
GRHS, 1984
GRHS, 1985
GRHS, 1986
1/63  GRHS, 1987
1/64  GRHS, 1988
1/65  GRHS, 1989
1/66  GRHS, 1990

3/3  GRHS, 1991

1/67  GRHS, 1992
1/68  GRHS, 1993
1/69  GRHS, 1994
1/70  GRHS, 1995
1/71  GRHS, 1996
1/72  GRHS, 1997
1/73  GRHS, 1998
1/74  GRHS, 2000
1/75  GRHS, 2001
1/76  GRHS, 2002
1/77  GRHS, 2003
1/78  GRHS, 2004
1/79  GRHS, 2005
1/80  GRHS, 2006
1/81  GRHS, 2007
1/82  GRHS, 2009
1/83  GRHS, no date

3/4  NDHSGR, 1978

1/84  NDHSGR, 1979

Box 4  CERTIFICATE SERIES

2010.01.01  Marriage certificate – Traugott Knell and Miss Hertha A. Adolph, 1940

2010.01.02  Confirmation certificate – Traugott Knell, 1930

2010.01.03  Baptismal certificate – Victor Traugott Knell, 1941

2010.01.04  Baptismal certificate – Hertha Augustine Adolf, 1917

2010.01.05  Confirmation certificate – A. Adolph, 1931

2010.01.06  Baptismal certificate – Traugott Knell, 1915
2010.01.07   Family tree chart, 1940

OVERSIZED SERIES

Box 4    Maps

Box 5    Brienne: Family Book, 1841-1860

Box 5    Periodical clippings

Box 6    BOOKS

1. Familie Adolf in Brienne.
2. Giesinger, Dr. Adam. German Villages in the Ukraine: A Key to a Microfilm of the Captured German Documents.
9. Kuch, Johann Adam. Short Notes About the Life and Family Conditions of Old Johann Adam Kuch. 1864.

Box 6

BOOKS, MUSIC

1. 43 Hits of the Year for Guitar-by Hansen (?)-Published by Topper Music Publishing, Co., New York-Copyright-1959(1960)
2. 45 Popular Waltz Songs-by: (?)-Published by: Chas. H. Hansen Music Corp., New York-Copyright
3. 50 Country & Western Hit Paraders-Jim Denny-Published by: Cedarwood Publishing Co., Inc. Nashville 3, Tenn.
5. Black Hawk Waltz (Piano Accordion Arrangement)-by Mary E. Walsh-Piano Accordion Arr. by Joseph P. Elsnic-Published by: Vitak-Elsnic-Co., Chicago, Ill.-Copyright: 1937
9. Forster Accordion Choir Folio-by: Forster (?)-Published by: Forster Music Publisher Inc. Chicago, Ill. Copyright: 1938
10. Forster C Ensemble Folio No.1-by: Forster (?)-Published by Forster Music Publisher, Inc. Chicago, Ill.-Copyright: 1937
11. Forster C Ensemble Folio No.2-by: (Forster (?)-Published by: Forster Music Publisher Inc., Chicago, Ill.-Copyright: 1938
12. Forster C Ensemble Folio No. 3-by (?)-Published by: Forster Music Publisher, Inc. Chicago, Ill.-Copyright: 1938


15. *International Polkas* (Piano Solo)-arr. by: Joseph P. Elsnic-Published by: Vitak-Elsnic Co., Chicago, Ill.-Copyright: 1943


18. *Lieder für geistliches und folks gesänge* - Edited by James Valley Chapter #9, Germans from Russia Heritage Society. No date.


22. No title. Booklet of songs, typewritten and mimeographed. Songs include “The Star Spangled Banner” and “O Canada!”

23. No title. Booklet of German songs, photocopied. Songs include “In München steht ein Hofbräuhaus” and “Ein Freund, Ein Guter Freund.”

24. *Red Handkerchief Waltz* - Arr. by Joseph P. Elsnic-Published by Chicago 9, Ill.-Copyright-1938


29. “Songs and hymns from the original polka mass.” 1 sheet.

32. The Very Best of Country Music-Produced by John L. Haag-Published by-West Coast Publications, Inc. Los Angeles, Calif.-Copyright-(?)

Box 7

BOOKS, HISTORICAL

5. Das Kleine Gebetbuch. Columbus, Ohio: Druck des Lutherischen Verlags.
ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Shelf  PC diskette. 3.5”. Labeled “Victor Knell Collection.” [Binder 1]

Box 6  VHS videocassette; “Oster, Adolf, Knell family reunion; Hazen, North Dakota; July 28- 29, 1990”

ARTIFACTS

Box 8  2003.06.08  Paper napkins – “Komm Herr Jesus, Sei unser Gast…” (5)

Box 8  2003.06.07  Paper napkins – Golden anniversary of Knell family weddings, 1990 (4)

Box 8  2003.06.09  Placemats – GRHS convention, 1980 (2 copies)

EPRHCC  2004.03.02  Accordion – owned by Victor Knell, c. 1950

Box 9  2004.03.03-105  Collection of 100 German beer coasters, c. 1988 – Two title cards.

Box 8  2004.03.106  Rayon napkin – German town heraldry – Featuring shield of Berlin

Box 8  2004.03.107  Rayon napkin – German town heraldry – Featuring shield of Frankfurt

Box 8  2004.03.108  Rayon napkin – German town heraldry – Featuring shield of Hamburg

Box 8  2004.03.109  Rayon napkin – German town heraldry – Featuring shield of Hannover

Box 8  2004.03.110  Rayon napkin – German town heraldry – Featuring shield of Munich

Box 8  2004.03.111  Rayon napkin – German town heraldry – Featuring shield of Stuttgart

Box 8  2004.03.112  Rayon tablecloth – map of Germany

Box 8  2008.09.01  Unopened box of 18 German wooden Christmas decorations. Marked “Heitmann Deco.” Addressed on reverse to Bertha and Siegfried Betz, Undingen, Germany

Shelf  2010.01.11  China plate – Cream colored – Threshing scene, 1975
Shelf 2010.01.12 China plate – White with black – “Ulmer Schachtel 1816”
Shelf 2010.01.13 China plate – White River scene – “Along the Missouri”
Shelf 2010.01.14 Circular plaque – “Unser täglich Brot bit uns heute”
Shelf 2010.01.15 Pictorial wooden plaque – “The Trash’n Crew”
Box 8 2010.01.16 Pinback button – “GRHS 25th Anniversary,” 1995
Box 8 2010.01.17 World War II ration book. Inscribed “Hertha Knell,” circa 1945

EPRHCC TEXTILES
2003.06.02 Bridal tiara with headpiece, 1940
2003.06.01 Bride’s wedding gown, 1940
2003.06.03 Groom’s corsage – Traugott Knell, 1940
2003.06.06 Embroidered tea towel – Berry pattern, c. 1955
2003.06.05 Embroidered tea towel – Bird pattern, c. 1955
2003.06.04 Embroidered tea towel – Rose pattern, c. 1955
Artifacts

2003.06.07
2003.06.08
2003.06.09
2004.03.03
2004.03.04
2004.03.106
2004.03.112
2008.09.01
Artifacts, textiles

2003.06.02  
2003.06.01  
2003.06.03  
2003.06.04  
2003.06.05