

In Touch with Prairie Living

April 1998

By Michael M. Miller

Germans from Russia Heritage Collection
North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

GRHC

HERITAGE COLLECTION

The Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at the NDSU Libraries in Fargo reaches out to prairie families and former Dakotans. In various ways, it affirms the heritage of the Germans from Russia is an important part of the northern plains culture.

This spring, a video crew from Prairie Public Television will be videotaping examples of early German-Russian houses, barns and other dwellings in North Dakota for inclusion in a documentary which PPTV is producing on the Germans from Russia. The documentary is expected to air on PPTV in the winter of 1999. If you know of any such existing structure, which is still standing, please contact Bob Dambach at Prairie Public Television at 1-800-359-6900 and share with him the location.

Ron Vossler, documentary scriptwriter and instructor at the University of North Dakota and Bob Dambach, producer at PPTV shared these comments: "The documentary will explore, if not answer, the questions of: 1) Who are these people called Germans from Russia? 2) Why did they first immigrate to South Russia? 3) Why did they leave not one, but two homelands, and immigrate to the North American prairies? 4) What happened to those Germans who stayed behind? 5) How did this group assimilate into the prairie landscape? 6) What are the folk, religious and cultural traditions of the German-Russians today? 7) How does an ethnic group continue their heritage in a new land? 8) How does an ethnic group pass down their heritage to a new generation?"

Bob Dambach stated, "We plan to produce an hour long program on the Germans from Russia that will document the history and vibrant cultural heritage of this group." Included will be outstanding video footage from the former German villages in southern Ukraine. Part of Prairie Public's mission is to explore and celebrate the heritage of the people of the prairie region. We at

Prairie Public are excited to be a partner with the NDSU Libraries in a project that will share the rich culture and heritage of the Germans from Russia, who were critical to the settlement of North Dakota." Dambach said that the project will reach the people of North Dakota, the prairie region and North America.

This documentary is a major financial undertaking of Prairie Public Broadcasting and the NDSU Libraries. Many people have responded, but we would appreciate additional support to produce educational materials to enhance the forthcoming documentary. If you are interested to learn more about the documentary, please contact Bob Dambach or Michael Miller.

Close to 3,000 people attended the North Dakota Picnic at Pioneer Park in Mesa, Arizona. The next annual picnic will be on Sunday, March 7, 1999. We were pleased to see many North Dakotans who shared their memories about growing up on Dakota soil. Assisting at the NDSU Libraries information tables were tour members who will join the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany from May 26 to June 8, 1998. We continue to be impressed with the interest expressed by visitors about their ancestral heritage. North Dakota includes a community of various ancestral roots. There were many attending the picnic who grew up in German-Russian communities. One can sometimes identify his or her hometown area by Goebel, Iszler, Maier, Schwartz, Mitzel, Haman, Flegel, Bosch, Dosch, Keller or Doll. It was a pleasure to join North Dakotans at this special day in March.

As stated in a feature article in The Forum, Fargo, ND, March 8, 1998: "After the picnic grounds are cleared and North Dakota accents no longer linger in Pioneer Park, children at Anne Carlsen Center for Children in Jamestown, ND, see the benefits. Residents attending the picnic are asked

to pay \$1 with proceeds benefitting the Center for Children."

For further information about the collection, the television documentary, the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine in May, 1999 and German-Russian heritage, contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 5599, Fargo, ND 58105-5599 (Tel: 701-231-8416; E-mail: Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu; GRHC website: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc>).

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