

In Touch with Prairie Living

December 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. As the holiday season approaches, I wish to share in spirit of the Yuletide holiday season. May I extend special "Weihnachten" greetings.

I am pleased to announce the completion of two new books published by the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. *Homeland Book of the Bessarabian Germans* includes 356 pages with many photographs of the villages. The book will be of much interest to Dakotans with Bessarabian German heritage. The new publication shares the story of 126 years of Germans families in Bessarabia. Later thousands of these Bessarabian Germans immigrated to North America from the 1880s to the early 1900s. Many families homestead in central North Dakota and South Dakota as well as the western Canadian prairie provinces. Included are extensive indexes, lists of Bessarabians who died in WW I and WWII, agricultural practices, as well as village life and customs.

Cities and townships in North Dakota were named after these villages, including Kulm, Beresina and Leipzig. Village histories and photographs include Akkerman, Alt Elft, Alt Postal, Arzis, Borodino, Brienne, Dennewitz, Eigenfeld, Eigenheim, Emmental, Friedenstal, Gnadenfeld, Hoffnungstal, Katzbach, Klöstitz, Krasna, Lichtental, Mariental, Paris, Sarata, Seimeny, Tarutino, Teplitz and Wittenberg.

Tender Hands: Ruth's Story of Healing is authored by Ruth Weil Kusler with Peggy Sailer O'Neil, both of Beulah, ND. Ruth was born on January 9, 1908, nine miles south of Beulah. Her mother, a midwife and faith healer, taught her daughter the family's healing methods and home remedies. Ruth followed her mother's footsteps,

massaging and caring for the sick throughout her life. She feels blessed that God gave her such "tender hands." Ruth dedicates her book to her mother stating: "To my mother, who taught me the importance of praying and caring".

Pauline Neher Diede of Hebron, ND, author of pioneer books, writes in the preface: "You, Ruth, have serviced during an era of the twentieth century as a follower of your dear mother's steps - that of helping people that hurt! Your parents were immigrants from Russia who settled the wild and undeveloped land of North Dakota. There was barely a doctor available anywhere. Any kind of human need depended on the intuition of a midwife -- for the birth of babies as well as her practical use of herbs, setting broken or fractured bones, and the touch of "Brauche", a spiritual meditation. Your mother held the touch of healing, Ruth. And she passed on her aptness to your tender hands and healing prayers."

Persons interested in securing *Homeland Book of the Bessarabian Germans* or *Tender Hands: Ruth's Story of Healing*, may contact me at the address below.

As we celebrate this holiday season, may I suggest that you review the GRHC website page "Ein Bessarabisches Weihnachtsfest". There is a wonderful story of how German families celebrated Christmas in Bessarabia. At the website page, are traditional Bessarabian German holiday recipes including Pfeffernüss, Golden Carrot Pie, Rum Fruit Dumplings, and Red Beet Wine Hot Punch.

Christmas traditions and memories are shared at the GRHC website page "Christmas" (http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/textile/textilecollection.html) with wonderful stories. Mary Welk Mitzel born in 1913 at rural Orrin, Pierce County, ND, tells about the "Belzenickel" bringing "Christkindl" along to their home on Christmas Eve. Wonderful holiday memories are shared by Janice Huber

Stangl, Hosmer, SD native; Bonnie Zeller Whillock, Heil, ND native; Jim Heilman, Eureka, SD native and Virginia Becker Chapman, Herreid, SD, native.

The Germans from Russia video documentary premieres on Prairie Public Television in early 1999. The one-hour documentary explores the history and culture of this unique ethnic group. The videotape can now be secured and will be sent in March, 1999, to all persons ordering the video. This limited-edition version is available to those who order their request before January 1, 1999, and will contain special footage not seen in the general documentary. For further information, call toll free: 1-800-359-6900 or contact me.

For further information about the two new books, the Germans from Russia television documentary, the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany for May 18-31, 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>).

December 1998 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.