

In Touch with Prairie Living

March 1999

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. I would like to share with you the editorial that was featured in The Forum newspaper, Fargo, ND, on February 9, 1999.

A unique important film saga

“An extraordinary documentary film about Germans from Russia should be required viewing in every classroom in North Dakota.”

The film is entitled “The Germans from Russia: Children of the Steppe, Children of the Prairie.” It traces the astonishing saga of a unique people from 18th century Germany and Russia to 20th century North America. It was produced by Prairie Public Broadcasting and the North Dakota State University Libraries.

Clearly, it’s a product of scholarship, dedication and love. A capacity invited crowd last week at the premiere at the Plains Art Museum in Fargo was captivated by the skill of the filmmakers and power of the story.

Often the first reaction to “documentary” is ho-hum. Not this film. The story follows the Germans from Russia from ancestral villages in the Old World to northern prairie farmsteads in the New World. It is told with humor and intelligence. It depicts with sensitivity the hardships and seemingly unendurable heartache the immigrants experienced through the generations.

And through it all, the film honors the tenacity, faith and work ethic of the Germans from Russia.

Producer Bob Dambach and his Prairie Public crew can be proud of a documentary work that surely will stand as the best film depiction of one of North Dakota’s most important ethnic groups. Of special note is the wonderful script by Ron Vossler and original music by John Altenbernd.

Also, the determination of Michael Miller, bibliographer of the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at NDSU, cannot be minimized. He can claim significant credit for the success of the effort to fund and produce the documentary.

The documentary will be aired this month on Prairie Public Television. But if you miss it, or you want it for your collection, the video can be ordered from Prairie Public in Fargo.”

The Germans from Russia documentary will be re-broadcast on Prairie Public Television on Wednesday, March 18, 1999 from 8:30 pm-9:30 pm (CST).

My thanks to all the financial donors to this documentary project and especially to the many donors of \$1,000 or more. I want to express my gratitude to the major donors: Arthur E. and Cleora Flegel, Menlo Park, CA; Stuart and Cindy Mitzel Longtin, Fargo; North Dakota Humanities Council; and the Members of Prairie Public. The Longtins joined the Journey to the Homeland tours in May, 1997 and May, 1998. Without their support, the documentary would have not become reality.

At the documentary premiere events, Kathleen Pavelko, President of Prairie Public Broadcasting, shared this message: “The Germans from Russia documentary is historically sound, emotionally striking, visually beautiful and I think a real contribution to the history and heritage of the prairie region. We hope that through his program, many hundreds of thousands of viewers nationwide will come to understand the remarkable qualities which make this ethnic group unique in the history of Europe and North America.”

Our future dream is to consider video documentary projects on specific areas of German-Russian history and culture including specific villages such as those of Bessarabia, Beresan, Crimea, Kutschurgan, Glückstal, and

Lieental regions of South Russia (today Moldova and Ukraine near Odessa), as well as, the culture, foodways, textiles, and culture of the German-Russians. Our first project to begin in the summer of 1999 will be filming of German-Russian cooking, foods, and recipes.

To secure the documentary videotape, contact Prairie Public Broadcasting at 1-800-359-6900.

This “Collector’s Edition” of the videotape includes bonus video footage, “Ukraine Places & Faces” of wonderful filming from the former German villages of the Bessarabian, Beresan, Crimean, Glückstal, Kutschurgan and Lieental regions in southern Ukraine and Moldova not shown in the one-hour documentary.

For further information about the collection, the videotape documentary, the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany, for May 17-31, 1999 (limited space is still available), the June 6-19, 2000 tour, 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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