

In Touch with Prairie Living

April 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 want to share with you some of the comments received from viewers of the landmark videotape documentary, *The Germans from Russia: Children of the Steppe, Children of the Prairie*.

Mary Lynn Axtman of Fargo, native of Rugby, ND, writes: "Our ancestors did not lose their connections to their Russian homeland and then family they left behind once they settled in North America. The letters from Russia asking for help from their American relatives in the documentary was so touching and real for many of our families. The video also showed that this important searching and helping goes on even today with the tours and gatherings in Russia and Germany where relatives are being reunited again. The travel by ships across the Atlantic Ocean and passage through immigration centers like Ellis Island relates not only to our German-Russian immigrant ancestors but to all European immigrants who settled in North America."

Ivy Miller Breen of Cragmont, ID, writes: "As soon as I got the video in the mail, I rushed home to view it. It was wonderful! I would highly recommend it to everyone. Towards the end of the video when Shona Dockter spoke of healing words that were used with cats manure, I just about fell off my chair. These were the very same "magic words" my father used on me which was passed down through his mother, Christine Heydt Miller. I used those same "magic words" on my own daughters to heal their scrapes and bruises as they were growing up. I have only recently become aware of the rich heritage of the Germans from Russia so you can well imagine my shock of hearing this on the video. Thank you so much for making this wonderful and

important documentary. I will cherish my copy."

Allyn Brosz of Washington, D.C., Tripp, SD, native comments: "I was impressed by the professional quality of the production and by the concise and integrated manner in which the video told the story of "Unser Leute" (our people). What a valuable addition to the resources on the Germans from Russia. It will undoubtedly be a standard reference work, both for education and public relations. This is truly a treasured resource for telling our story."

Shona Dockter of Roseville, MN, Streeter, ND, native writes: "The video was absolutely wonderful. I was enthralled every minute as I watched. The original music is especially touching and appropriate. What a wonderful achievement. I cannot describe the pride I felt as I watched the story of our people unfold. I will share with you the impact of the documentary on my parents: for my father, the most touching moment was the chance to actually see the Russian steppe where his father had walked as a young boy. My mother was struck by the isolation the immigrants must have felt when they homesteaded the prairies. She had always known that the German-Russians lived together in villages in Russia and then went to homesteading individually on the prairie. She had never given that aspect of immigration story much thought until she saw it illustrated by the documentary. Thank you for making our history come alive for hundreds of people."

Jolene Geist Ehret of Kileen, TX, Jamestown, ND native writes: "What courageous people our ancestors were when their descendants made the decision to come to the New World, sometimes leaving family behind. For the first time in my life, I am actually proud of my heritage. I only wish that I could have learned more from my grandparents before they passed on. I can hardly wait for my children to watch the video. I know they will be

as proud as I am to be a German from Russia. My heartfelt thanks to all those who were involved in making this very special movie. You did a magnificent labor of love for our people."

The documentary will be shown on South Dakota Public Television on Friday, April 16 at 8 pm CT; Nebraska Public Television on Sunday, April 25 at 5 pm CT; and Oklahoma Public Television on Sunday, May 2 at 9 pm CT.

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

This "Collector's Edition" of the videotape includes 20-minute bonus video footage, "Ukraine Places & Faces" of wonderful filming from the former German villages of the Bessarabian, Beresan, Crimean, Glückstal, Kutschurgan and Liebental 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 (including the large Germans from gathering called the Bundestreffen), for 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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