

In Touch with Prairie Living

May 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*. We continue to receive wonderful messages about the documentary through letter and e-mail messages.

Marvin C. Hoffer, Lewiston, MT, native of Java, SD, writes: "Across the centuries, across the ocean...I knew the smiles, the rugged faces, and my heritage tongue. They are part of me, I am part of them. For me to observe, but unable to touch, unable to speak with them, dipped deep into the well of my emotions. This film awakened elements of my soul that have no title, and I shed tears of yearning to make that bond. It would be so satisfying to sit at a simple table with *Unser Leute* in South Russia (today Ukraine and Moldova) and share laughter, a hug, cup of coffee, the smiles of their children, and touch the land upon which my heritage walked, lived and died. Yes, we Germans are an emotional people, and it is a good expression of character. Thanks to the many able, and generous, persons who engendered and completed this film of *Unser Leute*. It is a great service to those who come after us."

Dr. Thomas Isern, Department of History, NDSU, Fargo, writes: *The Germans from Russia* documentary is a wonderful piece of work - a great idea brought to fruition with masterly production. I'll use it for teaching, refer others to it, and just enjoy it myself repeatedly. This is the sort of project that does what Prairie Public Television and NDSU both are supposed to be doing - giving the people of the plains a constructive and useful history."

Sister Helen Kilzer, member of Annunciation Monastery, Bismarck, comments: "The documentary is an authentic portrayal of the Germans from Russia experience, its joys and sorrows both light hearted and profound. For descendants of these immigrants, this documentary will amplify the stories told by ancestors that remain untold."

North Dakota Lieutenant Governor Rosemarie Lohse Myrdal writes: "This program made sense of so many vague ideas that I had about the Germans from Russia heritage. I now have a much better understanding of the love of the prairie, the belief in hard work, and the devotion to home and family that I have witnessed in my meetings and friendships with North Dakotans who share this heritage. North Dakota history is in many ways a collection of settlement stories."

Dr. Vern Freeh, Roseville, MN, native of Harvey, ND, writes: "Not only did it give me renewed and deeper appreciation for my heritage, it dramatically underlined my good fortune in their immigration to America and my responsibility to perpetuate the vision, work ethic, values, and strong Christian beliefs they so aptly demonstrated."

The documentary will be shown on Spokane (Washington) Public Television on Thursday, May 27 at 7 pm (PST).

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. On May 18, I lead the Journey to the Homeland tour group for Odessa, Ukraine. We will be in Odessa from May 19-26 and in Stuttgart,

Germany, from May 27-31. We will visit the former Bessarabian, Black Sea, and Crimean German villages.

The GRHC traveling exhibit, "The Kempf Family: Germans from Russia Weavers on the Dakota Prairies", is on display from May 2 to October 15 at the National Buffalo Museum, Jamestown, ND. Also featured is the German-Russian architecture display from the State Historical of North Dakota, Bismarck. See the GRHC website at "Outreach Programs" for Kempf and German-Russian clothing and textile photographs: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/outreach/index.html>.

Our outreach schedule will bring GRHC displays and information materials in July to two North Dakota centennial celebrations, where these communities have historic German heritage: Linton, July 2-3, Emmons County Historical Museum; Medina, July 2-3, American Legion Hall. Join us at the Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention at the Ramkota Inn, Aberdeen, SD, July 8-11. For more information, call GRHS at 701-223-6167 or <http://www.grhs.org>.

For further information about donations to the collection, the Kempf display, the videotape documentary, the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany (including the large Germans from Russia gathering called the *Bundestreffen*), for June 6-19, 2000 tour, GRHC's latest publications, *Tender Hands: Ruth's Story of Healing and Homeland* Book of the Bessarabian Germans, 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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