

In Touch with Prairie Living

September 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 (GRHC) 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 from Journey to the Homeland tour members visiting Odessa, Ukraine, and the former German villages in May, 1999, and other news from GRHC.

Dennis Walther, Fairfield, CA, and Linton, ND native, writes, "Traveling to the village of Worms where my great-grandfather was raised and enter the church where he probably attended is an experience to last a lifetime. Driving toward Worms, I thought I was near Hazelton in Emmons County. The fields are green and soil looks fertile. We talked to two ladies in Worms that are of the Baptist faith. I told them I would pray for them and wanted them to pray for me. They were so touched, they cried."

Tom Larscheid, Germany, and a South Dakota native, writes, "Our most exciting find was the discovery of the lost cemetery of Karlsruhe in the Beresan District. All the headstones have been knocked down and hauled away; but with the help of a farmer, we found one in a weed overgrown ditch."

Gene and Georgia Kessler Brilz, Chandler, AZ, Beulah and Mandan, ND, natives, share this message, "Our visit to Glueckstal was a very emotional experience. We stopped at the Glueckstal Lutheran Church where my grandparents attended and where my grandfather was baptized and confirmed. It was sad to see the church now being used as a cultural center. We found the street where my grandparents lived. When I looked across town at the hills, it reminded me of their farmstead in North Dakota."

Dr. Ralph Tarnasky, Bismarck and Lehr, ND, native writes, "On May 24, I had a most extraordinary day meeting a 73-year-old Russian-German lady,

Cecilia Samoylenko, of Tarutino, Bessarabia (today in Ukraine). This was in Grandpa Tarnasky's hometown of Tarutino. Cecilia knew many Tarnaskys as a young girl. Cecilia wishes to immigrate to Germany and has been waiting for four years in Tarutino. To meet this woman who knew distant relatives was truly a rewarding experience."

Violet Schauer Tanner, Olympia, WA, writes, "My trip to the Crimea and the Glueckstal region has been something I had dreamed of all my life. The region has not changed since our ancestors left or very little if any. It was wonderful meeting the folks that lived in the villages and the love they showed us. It is my hope that my grandchildren will be able to come here and visit in the future." John Teske, Falls Church, VA, and Aberdeen, SD, native writes, "Looking at the villages and farms reminds us of the Dakota plains. We all take home memories and thoughts of what life was like for our ancestors, and we are thankful for the opportunity for the visit."

The award-winning documentary videotape, "The Germans from Russia: Children of the Steppe, Children of the Prairie", continues to be well received throughout North America. To secure the 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 beautiful filming from the former German villages near Odessa not shown in the one-hour documentary. See many interesting pages about the documentary at the Prairie Public Broadcasting website: <http://www.prairiepublic.org>.

See photographs of the Linton, ND, Centennial Parade of July, 1999, at the following GRHC website page: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/outreach/activities/linton.html>.

I was pleased to attend the Germans from Russia Heritage Society

Convention at Aberdeen, SD, in July. I was impressed with the many new family histories published and the extensive research by persons in the Family History and Genealogy Room. See photographs of the Aberdeen convention at <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/outreach/activities/grhsc2.html>. Plans have begun for the 30th anniversary convention at the Radisson Inn, Bismarck, ND, for July 13-16, 2000. May I encourage you to become a member of GRHS, 1008 East Central Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58501. The National Buffalo Museum at Jamestown, ND, features the GRHC traveling exhibit, "The Kempf Family: Germans from Russia Weavers on the Dakota Prairies", until October 15. See the GRHC website at "Outreach Programs" for Kempf family and German-Russian clothing/textile photographs: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/outreach/index.html>. Also on display is the "German-Russian Architecture" traveling exhibit from the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck.

For further information about donations to the collection including family histories, outreach programs, the Kempf display, the videotape documentary, the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine, Alsace, France, 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>).

September 1999 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.