

In Touch with Prairie Living

July 2000

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 as an important part of the northern plains culture.

The Germans from Russia Heritage Society's 30th Anniversary Convention is July 13-16, at the Radisson Hotel, Bismarck. There will be excellent workshops, bookstore, and the genealogy/family history room for research. For more information and registration, contact GRHS at 701-223-6167, or visit their website at <http://www.grhs.org>.

In June, I return safely to Fargo after memorable days with our Journey to the Homeland Tour members in Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany. The visit to the Black Sea and Bessarabian German homeland villages was unforgettable experience. Life in our former German villages is very difficult economically, especially for the older generation who receives a very small pension. I saw large gardens where many vegetables already appear in the large market in Odessa and at the bazaar near the village of Kutschurgan, the former German village of Strassburg, located on the border with Ukraine and Moldova. One can see many people going to the Kutschurgan market by foot, bicycles or vehicles. Many Moldovans travel to the market where the economy may be even more difficult than Ukraine with lack of employments and salaries. We must be very grateful that our ancestors decided to immigrate to the Dakota prairies and to North America. Again I was touched by the warm hospitality and friendship of the Ukrainian people.

The tour members presented to the Lighthouse Orphanage in Odessa, the handmade quilts made by the German-Russian women at the English Lutheran Church, Tuttle, ND, coordinated by Arlene Kruckenberg Knutson. The

article with color photographs, "N.D. grandmothers craft quilts for Ukraine orphans," by Carol Just Halverson, appears in the April, 2000 issue of "North Dakota REC/RTC Magazine." The story can be found on the following GRHC web page: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/outreach/journey/photographs/journey99/halverson.html>.

On June 4, at The Forum in Ludwigsburg, near Stuttgart, Germany, I attended the Bessarabian Bundestreffen with about 5,000 persons in attendance. Joining me were tour members: Herbert Herman Sr., Gackle, ND, and his daughter, Melinda and Charles Snell, Bismarck, ND. Sixty years ago in 1940, thousands of Germans left the Bessarabian villages for Poland and on to Germany. Many of the Germans have relatives in the United States and Canada. To attend the Bessarabian Bundestreffen is a rewarding and memorable experience which I also attended in June, 1998.

On Saturday, August 5, 2000, I will be in Devils Lake, ND, for a Chautauqua presentation. The event takes place at 3 pm at St. Joseph's Catholic Church. I will speaking about the Germans from Russia of the central Dakotas and the settlements in north central North Dakota.

GRHC's traveling exhibit, "The Kempf Family: Germans from Russia Weavers on the Dakota Prairies," continues to be shown at the Public Library, Harvey, ND, until November 1. The NDSU Library, Fargo, features until November 1, the exhibit, "Germans from Russia Wedding Traditions: From the Steppe of South Russia & Bessarabia to the Dakota Prairies."

The award-winning documentary videotapes "The Germans from Russia: Children of the Steppe, Children of the Prairie" (1999), and "Schmeckfest: Food Traditions of the Germans from Russia" (2000), continue to be well received throughout North America. To secure the videotapes, contact

Prairie Public at 1-800-359-6900. The videotapes can also be secured by going to this GRHC website at "Videotape Documentary & Other Projects." The videotapes include 20-minute bonus video footage, not shown in the one-hour documentary. See many interesting pages about the documentary at the Prairie Public Broadcasting website: <http://www.prairiepublic.org>.

For further information about donations to the collection, including family histories, outreach programs, videotape documentaries, Journey to the Homeland Tour including Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany, for late May/early June, 2001; German-Russian cookbooks; GRHC's publications including these new books, "Marienberg: Fate of a Village," "Open Wound," and "The Dark Abyss of Exile: A Story of Survival"; 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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