

In Touch with Prairie Living

August 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. My thanks to the many people who visited the GRHC information tables at the Java, SD, Centennial in June.

On June 19, the North Dakota State University campus experienced major flash flooding from heavy rains. Losses at NDSU may reach \$30 million dollars. The Main Library at NDSU suffered losses totaling more than \$4 million dollars primarily to the Lower Level and the thousands of valuable journals that had to be discarded. Fortunately, the archival and historical materials of the Institute for Regional Studies and the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection located at the Lower Level did not receive serious water damage. Materials have been moved to other locations in Fargo. The valuable German-Russian books and other materials are in good shape and have been moved to the NDSU Technology Skills Center north of the Fargodome. While in Stuttgart, Germany, until June 22, I was informed with a phone call of the flooding in Fargo.

From July 18-26, I joined staff of Prairie Public Television, Fargo, traveling to Saskatchewan for documentary filming. We filmed where the German-Russians settled: areas near Allan, Leader, Luseland, Regina, Saskatoon, St. Joseph's Colony, Tramping Lake, and Unity. This was a valuable experience in many ways for oral history, filming historic sites including the wrought-iron crosses in cemeteries, churches, farms and homesteads. Some of the filming will be used in the future documentary on the German-Russian wrought-iron crossed produced by Prairie Public Television, Fargo, for the fall of 2001. Our special thanks to colleagues in Saskatchewan who assisted us to identify historical

sites for filming and introduced us to elderly persons who knew much of the history. We were truly impressed with the interest from our Canadian friends.

The Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU Libraries, Fargo, has available the "North Dakota Biography Index" (NDBI), the best place to begin for information about North Dakotans, both living and deceased. Searching the index will enable you to quickly determine which publication to consult for biographical information. The total number of biographical sketches indexed is currently more than 138,000 found in some 540 publications. For further information about the "North Dakota Biography Index," go the Institute website: library.ndsu.edu/db/biography/, or contact the Institute staff: Tel: 1-701-231-8914; E-mail: nulibarc@plains.nodak.edu.

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 December 1. The NDSU Library, Fargo, features in the new Marie Rudel Portner Germans from Russia room until December 31, 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>.

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Because of the interest developed from the "Schmeckfest" documentary, additional cookbooks including German-Russian recipes have been added to the GRHC web at the section, "Cookbooks."

GRHC has published an important new book about the fate of the Germans in the former Soviet Union, "The Open Wound: The Genocide of German Ethnic Minorities in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1915-1949 and Beyond," by Samuel D. Sinner, doctoral history student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Many German-Russians will discover in this book the names of familiar ancestral villages, as well as those of their own families and relatives. For further information, go to this GRHC website: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/sinner.html.

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; "North Dakota Biography Index"; 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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