

In Touch with Prairie Living

September 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 NDSU Library opened on August 7 after being closed since June 20, due to the major flash flood. The Germans from Russia Heritage Collection is housed with the Institute for Regional Studies, now located at the Technology & Skills Center located north of the Fargodome.

Our thanks to persons who assisted us in videotape documentary filming by Prairie Public Television in July at Allan, Leader, Luseland, Macklin, Regina, Scott and Tramping Lake, Saskatchewan. We were warmly received by many of our German-Russian neighbors, while we experienced breathtaking filming of the landscape, farms, fields of grains, churches, and iron crosses in their cemeteries. The filming in Saskatchewan was produced for two future documentaries on the Germans from Russia to be released in 2001 and 2002. We were also able to secure community history books and family histories to add to our archives in the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. Our days in Saskatchewan were a wonderful experience. I will never forget!

In July, I traveled to Streeter, ND, to attend the 105th birthday event for Matilda Schlenker Dockter. In September, 1994, I completed an oral interview with Matilda which appears at the GRHC website at "Oral History." Matilda was born in Kloestitz, Bessarabia, South Russia, immigrating at age seven with her family to America. Matilda remembers the 21-day journey across the Atlantic Ocean landing at Ellis Island. When Matilda's family arrived in New York, the two youngest children in the family died and were buried in New York. The family traveled to Kulm, ND. The family grew up to include 13 children. Matilda born

on July 31, 1895, has lived in three different centuries.

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 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 the 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>. "Schmeckfest" was shown in August on PBS stations in South Dakota, Nebraska, Minneapolis, and PPTV.

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."

A new book has been published: "Otto Mueller: A Life between Stalin and Hitler" by Otto Mueller and Yvonne Schmidhauser (1999). Otto Mueller shares: "The history of the Second World War has influenced my life with such tremendous force." He was born in Ukraine in 1921. His wit, keen mind and faith in God helped him outlive many life-threatening situations. This book can be located at: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/mueller.html.

In August at Barnes & Noble in Fargo, I attended an excellent presentation by Elizabeth Walter, author of the book, "Barefoot in the Rubble." The book is a difficult and challenging story of Elizabeth's struggles in her childhood of her ethnic group - Donauschwaben - surviving the detention camps, hunger, forced labor, destruction of villages, and the attempt by a brutal Communist regime to erase all ethnic Germans. Elizabeth Walter was named 1998 Woman of the Year by the American Legion Auxiliary.

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 May 22 to June 4, 2001; "North Dakota Biography Index;" the book, "Otto Mueller: A Life between Stalin and Hitler," 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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