

In Touch with Prairie Living

December 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 December column of *In Touch with Prairie Living* begins my sixth year of sharing news and culture about the Germans from Russia. Thank you for the positive and appreciative messages about the columns. Holiday greetings and the best in the year 2001 from the campus of North Dakota State University.

We are pleased to announce the publication of the book, "Couldn't Be Better: The Russian Farm Community Project: The Story of Two People, One American, One Russian, and Their Dream for Rural Russia," written by Dr. LaVern "Vern" Freeh.

Dr. Freeh grew up on a farm near Harvey, ND, during the Great Depression, the son of Germans from Russia. He is a graduate of NDSU and received his PhD. from Michigan State University. He was a professor for 18 years at the University of Minnesota and served for 12 years as Vice President for Public and International Affairs at Land O'Lakes, a Fortune 500 company. His first experience in teaching was in a one-room school. He taught and coached football in Linton, ND, in the early 1950s.

The book traces the history of a project in Russia, with which the author has been involved in joint efforts of U.S. and Russian people in creating a model for privatizing and revitalizing rural Russian communities following the collapse of Communism.

The author reveals how the project began and how it has evolved. He highlights the role of such prominent Americans as Armand Hammer and Robert Schuller. This book is an outstanding review of achievement when people put aside their cultural and national differences and work together

for the common good of all.

Vern Freeh will be the featured speaker at the Public Library Theatre, Scottsdale, Arizona, on Saturday, March 3, 2001, at 9:30 a.m. The event is sponsored by the NDSU Libraries (<http://library.ndsu.edu>), Prairie Public Broadcasting (<http://www.prairiepublic.org>), and the Germans from Russia Cultural Preservation Foundation.

The NDSU Library, Fargo, features the exhibit, "Germans from Russia Wedding Traditions: From the Steppe of South Russia & Bessarabia to the Dakota Prairies" until June 1, 2001 at the new Marie Rudel Portner Germans from Russia Room. The exhibit includes wedding photos taken in the former villages of Bessarabia, Black Sea, Crimea, Mennonite, Volhynia, as well as the Dakotas.

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 minutes of 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>.

Because of the popular 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, "Fond 252: Odessa Office for Foreign Settlers in Southern Russia (1806, 1807, 1814-1834, 1843, 1850) Guide" compiled by Lilia Belousova, State Archives,

Odessa, Ukraine. Not only does the new publication help interested researchers locate valuable files but also the detailed descriptions of each of the file's contents will give the reader a better sense of the lives and events that concerned the German settlers in South Russia (today southern Ukraine). For further information go to the web page: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/fond252.html>.

For further information about donations to the collection, including family histories, outreach programs, videotape documentaries, Journey to the Homeland Tour (May 22 to June 4, 2001) to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany; North Dakota Biography Index"; German-Russian cookbooks; GRHC's publications including recent books, "Couldn't Be Better: The Russian Farm Community Project," "Fond 252," "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>). May I invite you to view the new design of the GRHC web pages.

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