

In Touch with Prairie Living

February 2001

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.

On Saturday, March 3, 2001, 9:30 am-11:30 am, the NDSU Libraries, Prairie Public Broadcasting (www.prairiepublic.org) and the Germans from Russia Cultural Preservation Foundation will host a special Germans from Russia program at the Civic Center Library Theater, Scottsdale, AZ. Dr. LaVern "Vern" Freeh, author of the book, "Couldn't Be Better: The Russian Farm Community Project," will be the featured speaker. The program is free and open to the general public.

Freeh grew up on a farm near Harvey, ND, during the Great Depression, the son of German-Russian parents. Freeh is a graduate of NDSU and received his PhD. from Michigan State University. He served for 12 years as Vice President for Public and International Affairs at Land o' Lakes. In his early career, he taught in a one-room school and at Linton, ND, where he was the football coach.

The North Dakota Picnic will be on Sunday, March 4, 2001, at Pioneer Park, Main Street, Mesa, AZ, from 10 am to 3 pm. The NDSU Libraries will have information tables at the picnic. I am looking forward to seeing many Dakotans at these events in Scottsdale and Mesa. We invite you to join us for these Arizona events.

GRHC has recently published, "Gazing Forward, Glancing Back, Remembering Always: Memories Retold and Relived by the Community of Streeter, North Dakota" by Sandi Dewald. She shares a wonderful story of special memories from many longtime Streeter families.

Sandi Dewald states in the introduction: "This book is a tribute and a thank you to all of the people who

have shared their ideas, insight and love with us. Without the help of each and every one, this book would not be possible. The stories and advice in this book are true-life experiences with the credit given to the individual whenever possible."

"So much of our heritage will be lost if we, the middle-agers, don't start to record these things. Years ago everyone had a garden, raised and cleaned chickens and turkeys, raised kids and milked cows. There weren't any freezers, no electricity and for sure no running water. Nowadays how many of us have a garden patch, sew, cook or bake?"

Featured in the book is the history of Matilda Schlenker Dockter born on July 31, 1895, at Kloestitz, Bessarabia (today in southern Ukraine). Matilda celebrated her 105th birthday at Streeter, ND, on July 31, 2000. She is one of the oldest living North Dakotans and German-Russians in America. When she was seven years old, Matilda came to the U.S. with her parents and seven brothers and sisters. They were on the ship for 21 days and she remembers many people were very seasick. The family landed at Ellis Island, New York. They traveled by train to homestead in North Dakota.

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 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>.

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."

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) for Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany; German-Russian cookbooks; GRHC's publications including recent books, "Gazing Forward...", "Couldn't Be Better: The Russian Farm Community Project," "The Germans by the Black Sea Between Bug and Dniester Rivers," "Marienberg: Fate of a Village," 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/gerrus>).

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