

In Touch with Prairie Living

May 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.

The website of GRHC has an attractive new design and format: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc>. May I invite you to review the web pages.

An excellent new book on the Dakotas has been published: "Dakota Circle: Excursions on the True Plains," by Tom Isern, a history professor at North Dakota State University, Fargo. John E. Miller of South Dakota State University writes: "Confident in the regional future, historian and traveler Tom Isern is free to explore the delights of regional life — from fiberglass pheasants to Montana caviar — and to invite readers of "Dakota Circle" along for some excursions on the true plains. The book informs us about our regional culture and does it in an engaging way. It is uniquely readable."

This book includes a story of the Christkindl and Belzenickel traditions of the Germans from Russia. Ernie Zahn, Velva, ND, is featured. Isern writes: "Ernie was born in 1915 to a German-Russian farm family in Dickey County, ND, the twelfth of thirteen children, and his father died when he was just three. So he and his brothers did all sorts of things to make a little money and carry the family through." The book is available at the GRHC website.

Prairie Public Broadcasting is sponsoring the "Cultural Heritage Tour: Capitols of Eastern Europe" for September 26 - October 7, 2001, including Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Bratislava, Leipzig, and Berlin. For further information, visit Prairie Public's website at <http://www.prairiepublic.org> or call 1-800-359-6900. The tour is sponsored by Prairie Public and the Germans from Russia Cultural Preservation Foundation.

The 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 thank you to all 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."

The NDSU Library, Fargo, features, the exhibit until June 1, 2001, "Germans from Russia Wedding Traditions: From the Steppe of South Russia & Bessarabia to the Dakota Prairies" at the new Marie Rudel Portner Germans from Russia Room. The exhibit will be on display at the Old Post Office Museum, Devils Lake, ND, from June 17 to September 15, 2001. The "Grand Opening Program" takes place on Sunday, June 17, at St. Joseph's Parish Hall, Devils Lake. Speakers are Jay Gage, Kempf Family exhibits curator, and Michael M. Miller, Bibliographer.

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>.

<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, "Order," and then "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 and May 21-June 3, 2002) 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, and the new book, "Dakota Circle," 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 2001 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.