

In Touch with Prairie Living

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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.

In September, Bob Dambach, director of programming and productions, Prairie Public Television (PPTV), Fargo, and I traveled to south-central North Dakota and north-central South Dakota for videotape documentary filming projects. We filmed in the Eureka, Bowdle, and Roscoe, SD, area for the 2002 PPTV iron cross documentary and the 2004 Glueckstal documentary. We filmed at the Hague Cafe, Hague, ND, with Helen Grefroh Fischer making her famous strudels. In Linton, ND, we filmed Viola Welk Bosch making German-Russian foods. Father Thomas Welk, Wichita, KS, was filmed for the 2003 Kutschurgan documentary.

In October, we traveled to Bismarck and Strasburg, ND, filming Germans from Russia foodways including Bernadine Lang Kuhn and Erika Lang Wangler, natives of Napoleon, ND. We also filmed at the well-known annual church supper and bazaar at Saints Peter & Pauls Church, Strasburg.

We have designed two new color-coded laminated 11 by 17 inch maps of the former Germans villages of South Russia. These maps include German villages of Bessarabia, Crimea, Dobrudscha, Beresan District, Kutschurgan District, and Liebental District, as well as Mennonite and Hutterite colonies. Ancestors of the Germans from Russia community in the Dakotas immigrated from these villages in South Russia. For further information, write to me or visit: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/maps/maps3.html>. The two maps were completed in 1999, with revisions in 2001. These maps, clearly identifying locations and names of the homeland villages, have been popular at GRHC outreach events.

Reservations are being taken for the Journey to the Homeland Tour (May 26-June 7, 2002) sponsored by the NDSU Libraries. The tour will include Odessa, Ukraine, and the nearby former Bessarabian, Black Sea, and Crimean German villages; Stuttgart, Germany, and Alsace, France. Limited space is available.

GRHC has published two important books that unfold the tragic story of the Germans who stayed in South Russia (today Ukraine), the famine and suffering they experienced. *Well Meet Again in Heaven: Germans in the Soviet Union Write Their American Relatives: 1925 - 1937*, written by Ronald J. Vossler, shares their dramatic first-account story. The book includes many letters translated from German to English including these family names: Boschee, Dockter, Eckman, Feiger, Goehring, Graf, Heupel, Hochhalter, Ketterling, Kirschmann, Kramer, Lang, Morlock, Opp, Rudolf, Rueb, Schauer, Speidel, Stock, Viel, and Wanner. Ron Vossler writes: "The family names clearly show a direct link, one of old love and also of family ties, between the Dakota pioneers and those unfortunate family members who remained behind in Russia."

In the new biography published by GRHC, *Why are you still alive?: A German in the Gulag* by Georg Hildebrandt, Heidelberg, Germany, the author writes about his life story and the suffering by the Ukrainian Germans. Many Germans died in Siberian detention camps during Stalin's dictatorship. Hildebrandt's biography revives this story originally published in 1993 in the German language. His biography is a shocking document of the Germans in the former USSR. He documents what happened with amazing memory and precision. Hildebrandt celebrated his 90th birthday in July, 2001.

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 include 20 minutes of bonus video footage not shown in the one-hour documentary. See many interesting pages about the documentaries at the Prairie Public Broadcasting website: <http://www.prairiepublic.org>.

For further information about German-Russian heritage; donations to the Collection, including family histories; outreach programs; videotape documentaries; *Journey to the Homeland Tour*; German-Russian cookbooks; and GRHCs publications including recent books: *Streeter, ND book*; *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*, 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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