

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.

GRHC will have an exhibit booth for the first time at the following Pride of Dakota Showcase events: November 9-10, State Fair Center, Minot; November 16-17, Alerus Center, Grand Forks; November 23-24, Centennial Hall, Fargo; December 7-8, Civic Center Exhibition Hall, Bismarck. On Saturdays the time is 10 am to 6 pm and on Sundays from 12 noon to 5 pm. Join us to see books, videotapes, maps, and cookbooks available.

The September showing of Prairie Public's "Prairie Crosses, Prairie Voices: Iron Crosses of the Great Plains" received a tremendous response from viewers in North Dakota, western Minnesota, eastern Montana, and southern Manitoba. Be watching for this third documentary of PPTV's Germans from Russia series on other PBS stations.

Iron Crosses stand as sentinels on the prairie landscape, framed by vast expanses of grass and sky. Though they stand silent, behind each cross is a story. "Prairie Crosses, Prairie Voices" evokes these stories: memories of the Germans from Russia, a frugal and tenacious people whose blacksmiths used wagon-wheel rims and scrap metal to fashion markers for their dead.

"Prairie Crosses, Prairie Voices" explains the traditional iron art form that crossed continents and oceans, also survived famine and war - to be reborn on the Great Plains of North America.

Dr. Timothy J. Kloberdanz, writer and narrator, states; "The wrought iron grave crosses of the German-Russians - with their unbroken hearts of metal, brightly painted stars, endless circles, banner-waving angels, exquisitely formed lilies, and rose blossoms that

rust but never wilt - evoke the defiant spirit of their mortal makers."

The videotape, "Recipes from Grandma's Kitchen: Germans from Russia Food Traditions & Preparations", continues to be well received. The NDSU Libraries and the Germans from Russia Cultural Preservation Foundation has produced this videotape.

GRHC's newest published book is "Johnny Schmidt: Son of a Dakota Pioneer" by B.A. Bose. This is a powerful memoir of growing up in a pioneering family in South Dakota. The author shares stores of the early 1900s about blizzards, country weddings, Christmas, Easter, dry years, cream separator, farming, horsepower threshing, first automobiles and telephones, and prairie fires.

GRHC's new book is in its fifth printing of "German Food & Folkways: Heirloom Memories from Europe, South Russia & the Great Plains", by Rose Marie Gueldner, Anamoose, ND. The book is available at this website: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/cookbooks/gueldner.html or contact GRHC.

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. Each videotape includes 20-minutes of bonus video footage not shown in the one-hour documentary. To purchase the videotapes, contact GRHC.

The next Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany has been announced for May 20 - June 2, 2003. The tour includes visits to the former Bessarabian, Black Sea and Crimean German villages in southern Ukraine near the Black Sea. Dr. Harley Roth, San Jose, CA, writes of his May, 2002 tour experience: "It was a great trip. A trip that will impact my life forever. I made great friends, met wonderful people, ate great food,

visited the most interesting places, formed the most endearing memories, and found my roots!"

For further information about Germans from Russia heritage, donations to the Collection including family histories, books, notecards, videotapes, cookbooks, and tours, 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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