

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.

We are pleased to announce the "Recipe Index Search" available for use at the GRHC website. The search includes recipe titles from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, such as Bessarabian, Black Sea, German, Russian, Ukrainian, Mennonite, Hutterite, Volga, Crimean, and the Northern and Central Plains of the USA. The cookbook title, recipe category, recipe name, page number, and person who submitted the recipe are available through this search.

Kristi Krebs Brink, NDSU Public History major and GRHC student employee, writes: While indexing, I found a recipe for Homemade Cottage Cheese for Strudel from my grandmother, Charlotte Dobitz Krebs, New England, ND. This search will help anyone looking to find a specific recipe title, including which cookbooks contain the recipe."

Tom Isern, Professor of History at NDSU, writes in his weekly "Plains Talk" column of January 23, 2003: "If you need to rustle up some German-Russian cuisine at home, let me draw your attention to a new service offered by the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC) at NDSU. It's an amazing recipe index providing references to the cookbooks offered for sale by GRHC. A search for Kuchen produces 191 matches."

GRHC has recently published, "Through the German Colonies of the Beresan District and Colonist Tales", translated from German to English by Dr. Roland Wagner, San Jose State University, a native of the Dickinson ND area. Many families from the former Beresan District villages, today located near Odessa, Ukraine, immigrated to central and

western North Dakota. Wagner writes: "Nuggets of information can be gleaned from Bachmann's writings about the conditions of life in the German colonies during the early Soviet era. The consumption of sunflower seeds and watermelons figure prominently in Bachmann's stories at various points".

GRHC has published this new book, "Gottlob Lerch: A Story" By F.B. Urban, translated from German to English. Gottlob Lerch was a simple, hard-working man who immigrated from the Kuban Region of the Russian Empire to the plains of North Dakota to make a new life for himself and his family. Ingeborg Wallner Smith, the translator, writes: "This is a homesteading story with a twist. This homesteader is not only an immigrant from Russia, but is the descendant of the German farmers invited to Russia by Catherine the Great. Lerch was a proud countryman, massive and gnarled like an oak. He could count up his forefathers unto the fifth generation, and was convinced that man's destiny was to cultivate the land and to preserve it."

GRHC has published its third new book by Ronald J. Vossler, freelance writer and a faculty member at UND, Grand Forks: "Lost Shawls and Pig Spleens: Folklore, Anecdotes, and Humor of the Germans from Russia". The book is a companion to, "Not Until the Combine is Paid and Other Jokes from the Oral Traditions of the Germans from Russia in the Dakotas", published by GRHC in 2001.

In cooperation with the Germans from Russia Cultural Preservation Foundation (www.grculture.org), a new videotape, "Reflections with Monsignor Joseph Senger" is available. A native of Orrin, ND, Monsignor Senger, Minot, shares his childhood, farm life, and religious life, as a son of German-Russian immigrants. He shares his story of the emotional and unforgettable visit in May 2001 to southern Ukraine and his ancestral German villages.

Prairie Public's "Prairie Crosses, Prairie Voices: Iron Crosses of the Great Plains" is receiving a terrific response from viewers. Be watching for this third documentary of PPTV's Germans from Russia series on other PBS stations in 2003. 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.

The videotape, "Recipes from Grandma's Kitchen: Germans from Russia Food Traditions & Preparations" Volume I, continues to be popular. The NDSU Libraries and the Germans from Russia Cultural Preservation Foundation has produced this videotape. Volume II of this videotape series will be available in the fall of 2003.

Now in GRHC's fifth printing since February 2002: "German Food & Folkways: Heirloom Memories from Europe, South Russia & the Great Plains", by Rose Marie Gueldner, Anamoose, ND, is available. Additional cookbooks are available at the GRHC website from the Mertz Family, Haymarsh (near Glen Ullin, ND), and Napoleon, ND.

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 draw much viewer interest, and have been shown on many PBS stations. Each videotape includes bonus video footage not shown in the one-hour documentary.

The Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany is for May 20 - June 2, 2003. This tour includes visits to the former Bessarabian, Black Sea and Crimean German villages in southern Ukraine near the Black Sea.

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