

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.

From July 29-31, I was pleased to assist in hosting three important officials from Germany, who visited North Dakota: Jochen Welt, federal government commissioner for Repatriates & National Minorities; Klaus Poehle, director general, Department of the Interior; and Dr. Alexander Schumacher, assistant to Jochen Welt. Dr. Schumacher who is of Volga German ancestry immigrating to Germany from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

In Bismarck, they met with persons at the Germans from Russia Heritage Society, at the State Capitol with Governor John Hoeven and at the Heritage Center. At Strasburg, ND they toured the Lawrence Welk Homestead and Saints Peter & Paul's Catholic Church and Cemetery with wrought iron crosses. At Lehr, ND, they met with local residents at the historic Lehr Tabernacle Campgrounds, as well as visiting Robert & Susan Erbele's bison ranch. At Fargo, they toured the NDSU Research Technology Park and the Northern Crops Institute. At the NDSU Library, they met historians, researchers and authors regarding the history and culture of the Germans from Russia. The German officials also traveled to Los Angeles to meet with German-Russians, many with Dakota roots.

Karen Herzog, Bismarck Tribune writer, prepared an excellent article in the July 31, 2003 issue: "The lost Germans are found: Now what? German officials here to seek help in aiding those left behind in Russia". Mike Nowatzki, Fargo Forum writer prepared this article in the July 31, 2003 issue: "Delegates seek better programs to help Germans from Russia". The articles can be located at the GRHC website. Nearly 2.2 million

ethnic Germans have emigrated to Germany from the former Soviet Union since 1989.

They were interested to learn 1) about cultural assimilation of German-Russians with other ethnic groups in North Dakota and 2) how this distinct heritage is studied and preserved today. Jochen Welt's office is responsible for the immigration process, as well as economic development and education projects in the former Soviet Union. About one million ethnic Germans still remain in Russia, Kazakhstan, Siberia and Ukraine. Many of these ethnic Germans have long lost relatives in the Dakotas, since the Stalinist ers of isolation and genocide ethnic immigrations.

The office of Jochen Welt hopes to explore and develop cooperative ideas with the office of Jochen Welt, the Germans from Russia Heritage Society, Bismarck, ND; the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Lincoln, NE; the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland, Stuttgart, Germany; and GRHC.

GRHC has published a new cookbook, "Sharing Our Best Recipes: Members and Friends of United Methodist Churches, Medina and Tappen, North Dakota." There is a German-Russian ethnic section which includes recipes for: Fleisch Kuechla, Knoepfla soup, Holapsie (pigs in the blanket), Borscht (vegetable) soup, Ribble (milk) soup, Strudels, hot German potato salad, homemade noodles, dumplings, Spaetzle (tiny egg noodles), cheese buttons, Kuchen, Baska (Easter bread), Pfefferneuse, Blatschinda (pumpkin pockets), and much more. Recipes come from the kitchens with these family names: Bitterman, Bittner, Eisenbis, Enzminger, Falk, Guthmiller, Harr, Hillius, Hofmann, Hoersch, Ketterling, Kinnischzke, Kuck, Mayer, Messer, Mittleider, Moos, Moser, Reich, Roemmich, Roesler, Schmallinger, Schlecht, Sprunk, Staiger, Wasmuth,

Wolsky, and Zimmerman. The cookbook is available by contacting GRHC or at: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/cookbooks/sharing.html.

GRHC has recently published, "Escape by Troika: The World War II Chronicle of a Bessarabian German," by Oskar Zimmermann, Anaheim, CA. Mr. Zimmermann has many Zimmerman relatives in south-central North Dakota. The book is available at library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/escape.html.

Prairie Public's award-winning "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. Although they stand silent, behind each cross is a story.

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.

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