

In Touch with Prairie Living

January 2004

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 NDSU History Department and GRHC are pleased to announce the Theresa Mack Germans from Russia History Assistantship. The recipient will be enrolled in NDSU graduate doctorate program in History beginning with the 2004-2005 academic year.

Theresa Mack Wald, Grand Forks, ND, writes: "My gift for the assistantship is to preserve the heritage and culture about the positive aspects of the Germans from Russia. I want to provide a living legacy for the scholarly study of my heritage of which I am very proud. My parents, John G. Mack born in 1888 and Katherina Deringer born in 1890, lived in the Catholic Black Sea German villages of Elsass and Neu Schloessel, Kutschurgan District, South Russia (today near Odessa, Ukraine). My father was 14 years and my mother was 24 years when they came to America."

GRHC has published an important new cookbook, "Cookbook for the Germans from Russia", by Nelly Daes, translated from German to English by Alex Herzog, and edited by Janice Huber Stangl. Daes was born in Friedental, Ukraine. Her family decided to flee toward the West in 1935. Their wanderings and flight was to last as long as ten years. Nelly finally ended up living near her family's origins in West Germany. Colonist women in their various settlement areas would "peek into the pots" of their Ukrainian and Russian neighbors. In the course of time, they adopted certain dishes from them. Nelly Daes comments: "All of the recipes have been tested by various cooks and should be applied under the following motto: 'In cooking, you make use of...whatever you have on hand!'

Janice Huber Stangl writes: "This book contains not only recipes, but also humorous and heart-wrenching anecdotes from the German Russian diaspora. It is essential addition to every household."

Alex Herzog writes: "What I like about Nelly's cookbook is her inclusion of, at times amusing, and at other times very sad and tragic anecdotes, as well as the descriptions of the Black Sea Germans customs and folkways - all woven between and around the recipes. Also, the recipes she presents are more inclusive than the book title indicates, because they stem not only from the Black Sea area, but also from Asia and Germany." The new cookbook is available at: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/cookbooks/das.html, or contact GRHC.

We have prepared a listing of items of highly recommended books, maps, videotapes, and cookbooks on the subject of Germans from Russia. The list provides valuable items suggested for families, schools, and libraries for research and reading.

"German Food & Folkways: Heirloom Memories from Europe, South Russia, & the Great Plains" by Rose Marie Gueldner continues to be one of GRHC's most popular books available and is now in its seventh printing since publication in February, 2002.

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.

Plans have begun for Prairie Public Television's 2005 documentary on the music of the Germans from Russia. This program will be the fourth documentary in the Germans from Russia Series. The concert choirs of Jamestown College, Jamestown, ND, and the University of Mary, Bismarck, ND, will perform historic music for the documentary. More information will appear in future columns.

For further information about Germans from Russia heritage, donations to GRHC including books, 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: library.ndsu.edu/grhc).

January, 2004 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.