

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. Special holiday regards to readers of this column! I want to extend my best wishes in the new year. The year 2005 begins the ninth year of this monthly column to appear in North Dakota and South Dakota weekly newspapers. I am most grateful to the editors of these newspapers and to the many readers for their positive comments about this column.

The new "Music of the Germans from Russia" CD of the Jamestown College (ND) Concert Choir is available. The choir performs: Grosser Gott, Wir Loben Dich (Holy God We Praise Thy Name); Schoenster Here Jesu (Beautiful Savior), In Dem Garten, and other songs.

The music, which defined the faith and culture of the German-Russian population, traveled with them when they left Russia to settle the North American prairies and plains. This unique collection from the Jamestown College Concert Choir honors those ethnic Germans from Russia.

Music, especially singing, was central to village life in South Russia. Their hymns traveled with them from their native Germany as did the hymnals. Church elders and teacher-deacons lead services when a pastor was unavailable. Choirs were formed, and pipe organs became common at the end of the 19th Century. Folk music also flourished, which were brought with them from Germany, while variations and new songs developed in their new Russian homeland. For many, their history does not end in Russia but continues on the plains and prairies of Canada and the United States. The colonist freedoms, which originally brought them to Russia, were being revoked during a period of Russian nationalization. Spurred on by the Homestead Act and other

promises of free land, many German Russians sailed for America with few possessions, enormous hope, and their enduring "Hymns of Faith" in a faithful God.

For further information, go to library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/tapes/JCChoir.html. The Jamestown College Concert Choir will be part of the forthcoming Germans from Russia music documentary (now in production at Prairie Public Television) to premiere in April, 2005 on PPTV, while later on other PBS stations throughout the USA. Information about this music documentary is available at: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/outreach/documentaries/index.html. The documentary will be the fourth in the "Germans from Russia Series" of Prairie Public Television: 1) "The Germans from Russia" (1999); 2) "Schmeckfest: Food Traditions of the Germans from Russia" (2000); 3) "Prairie Crosses" (2002).

The videotape, "Germans from Russia on the Canadian Prairies: Then and Now" provides an excellent visual story: covering medicinal remedies (Brauche), cookery, games, religion, immigration, folkways, and music. The documentary is available at: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/tapes/canadianprairies.html.

Prairie Public Broadcasting has produced a new DVD which includes these two award-winning documentaries: "The Germans from Russia: Children of the Steppe, Children of the Prairie" and "Prairie Crosses, Prairie Voices: Iron Crosses of the Great Plains. For further information, go to library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/tapes/dualdvd.html.

A new book is available: "Danzig: North Dakota: 1906-2000: Gone But Not Forgotten" by Geneva Roth Olstad. Danzig is located in McIntosh County, ND near to Wishek and Ashley. Families include Baumann, Brinkman, Dockter, Donner, Eszlinger, George, Gohl, Groszhans, Helmer, Hetzler, Joachim, Kemmet, Mertz, Pudwill, Roth, Salzer,

Stroh, Walz, Weber and Wolf. For further information, go to: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/nd_sd/danzig.html.

The 11th Journey to the Homeland Tour, sponsored by the NDSU Libraries is scheduled for May 26 - June 6, 2005. The tour includes Budapest, Hungary; Odessa, Ukraine and the former German villages; Stuttgart, Germany; and Alsace, France.

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

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