

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!

Prairie Public Television is in the final production stages for the new documentary of the music of the Germans from Russia. Filming was done in the Dakotas and Colorado. The concert choirs of Jamestown College and the University of Mary were closely involved.

This new music documentary premieres on PPTV on Sunday, April 24, 2005, at 7 pm (CDT). The program will later become available to other PBS stations.

These are sponsored Premiere Events: 1) Saturday, April 16, 2 pm, Heritage Center Auditorium, Capitol Grounds, Bismarck; and 2) Sunday, April 17, 2 pm, Reiland Fine Arts Center, Jamestown College. Sponsored by Prairie Public Broadcasting, these events are free and open to the general public.

Major financial sponsors for the music documentary are: North Dakota Council on the Arts; North Dakota Humanities Council; North Dakota State University Libraries; Germans from Russia Cultural Preservation Foundation; and the members of Prairie Public Television.

The music documentary is the fourth in the "Germans from Russia Series". Previous documentaries are: 1) "The Germans from Russia: Children of the Steppe, Children of the Prairie" (1999); 2) Schmeckfest: Food Traditions of the Germans from Russia" (2000); 3) "Prairie Crosses, Prairie Voices: Iron Crosses of the Great Plains" (2002).

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, while pipe organs became common at the end of the 19th Century. Folk music also flourished, which was brought with them from Germany, while variations and new songs developed in their new Russian homeland. For many ethnic Germans, 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.

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.

The Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention is July 14-17, 2005, Ramkota Hotel, Pierre, SD. The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Convention is July 17-21, 2005, Westin Inn, Oklahoma City. The Festival of Germans from Russia is September 23-25, 2005, Medicine Hat, AB. For further information, go to library.ndsu.edu/grhc/outreach/travel_dates/index.htm.

The 11th Journey to the Homeland Tour, sponsored by the NDSU Libraries is scheduled for May 24 - June 4, 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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