

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 Germans from Russia as an important part of the northern plains culture.

I want to express my thanks for the warm hospitality and many kindnesses with our GRHC outreach programs in June and July at McClusky, Streeter, Wishek and Zeeland, ND. I look forward to attending the Festival of Germans from Russia in September 23-25, 2005, Medicine Hat, Alberta. The Medicine Hat area today has many families of Bessarabian and Black Sea German ancestry.

We want to thank persons in south central North Dakota who participated as interviewees for the Dakota Memories Oral History Project sponsored by GRHC during May, June and July. Jessica Clark, coordinator of the project, and Will Clark, videographer, were most pleased with the warm hospitality and wonderful childhood stories shared by the interviewees. Jessica is the Theresa Mack Germans from Russia History Doctoral Fellow at the NDSU Libraries for 2005-2006. For further information, go to the GRHC website at "Oral History Project".

Jessica Clark writes: "Every interview has been enlightening and full of wonderful childhood memories. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and visiting with everyone in the Streeter, Gackle and Ashley areas. I have learned a lot about growing up German-Russian in North Dakota through a variety of childhood memories and different perspectives. Will and I are truly excited about this project and are most appreciative of everyone's support and interest. We are looking forward to our trip to the Wishek, Linton and Edgeley areas of south central North Dakota for additional interviews. Again, thank you!".

GRHC has published this new book, "Graf - Buck Family Heritage:

Photographs and Memories of Streeter, North Dakota". Katherine Westine writes: "As a child, I loved the Old World feeling of things in my grandmother's and aunts' houses: the feather beds, the plachts (woven blankets with dark and deep colors), the old Edison phonograph with the many cylinders, and especially the food (Strudel, Kaese Knopf, Kuchen, Kuchen, and sausage). My grandmother would always spoil us by letting us eat a bit of the dough before the Strudels were put into the kettle."

In July of 2001, David, Katherine and Philip Westine donated to GRHC from the estate of their mother, Gertrude Buck Westine, what is now the article "Ludwig and Christina Graf Buck Collection". After reviewing this valuable gift including the family history, photographs, recipes and letters, the idea of a publication was developed and became reality. The book includes the old family recipes of Wilhelmina "Minnie" Buck and of Katie Graf Knalson.

The book's section, "The Story of the Told by the Mittleider Letters", were written in Blumenfeld (Caucasus) in 1929 and 1930. They reveal the tragedy of the Russian German farmers in the Soviet Union in a most dramatic sequence.

The new DVD and performance CD, "A Soulful Sound: Music of the Germans from Russia" which premiered on Prairie Public TV in April, are available. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, thousands of German-speaking peoples established major German settlements in Russia, first along the Volga River in the north, and secondly along the Black Sea in South Russia and nearby Bessarabia. Eventually, many migrated yet again, this time to North and South America. Throughout their travels, these Germans - now Germans from Russia - maintained their traditional religious music, their lullabies and folk songs, their vocal and instrumental music

alike.

"A Soulful Sound" blends expert commentary with performances of traditional music from regional talent including St. Andrew's Lutheran Church Centennial Choir, University of Mary and Jamestown College concert choirs, Young People's Hutterite Singers, ALIVE Gospel Choir, Harvey area Centennial Men's Choir, and the Napoleon/Kintyre area folk singers. Singers featured included Maria Appelhans, Rosalinda Kloberdanz, John J. Gross, Tony Wangler, Robert Erbele and Ron Volk. Enjoy Marv Zander and Victor Schwahn and their bands as they perform accordion music and recreate a traditional wedding reception at the Blue Room in Strasburg, ND.

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".

The 12th Journey to the Homeland Tour, sponsored by the NDSU Libraries is scheduled for May 23 - June 2, 2006. 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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