

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.

We are pleased to announce the following public programs in these North Dakota communities called the Dakota Memories Oral History Project: 1) October 30, 2005, Wishek: St. Luke's Lutheran Church 107 Centennial Street South, 2 pm; 2) November 13, 2005, Gackle: American Legion Hall, Main Street, 2 pm. The programs are free and open to the general public, and are sponsored by the North Dakota Humanities Council, the NDSU Development Foundation, and the NDSU Libraries, Fargo.

Program participants will be: Jessica Clark, coordinator of the project; Tom Isern, NDSU Department of History; Kimberly Porter, UND Department of History; and Michael Miller, NDSU Libraries. 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 Ashley and Wishek areas. I have learned a lot about growing up German-Russian in North Dakota through a variety of childhood memories and different perspectives."

At these programs, we will share their childhood and other memories of the interviewees.

NDSU graduate LaVern Freeh has written his memoirs with the new book, "Child of the Prairie, Man of the World", just published by GRHC. Freeh grew up in a German-Russian family near Harvey, speaking German and English in his youth while attending a country school.

Ione Kolbe Tebelius, Harvey High School English teacher from 1940-1944

writes: "LaVern Freeh always made my English classes very interesting and entertaining with his original interpretation of what the author was writing. These tellings are evident in his book."

Ronald Roskens, former University of Nebraska president writes: "A humble son of the soil, recounts with candor, compassion, and clarity, his fascinating journey from the modest beginnings to prominence as an architect of the Global Village."

GRHC has published Duane Stabler's new book, "Researcher's Guide to McPherson County, South Dakota Cemeteries", which summarizes information form over 100 family plots, gravesites and cemeteries. McPherson County was a key destination for many immigrants from South Russia to settle in the Dakotas. The book contains a historical overview, photo postcards, names and locations of cemeteries, data of individuals, buried and maps to the cemetery or gravesite.

Stabler writes: "This book was an idea that stemmed from my visit to my Great Grandparents gravesite at the Neudorf Cemetery, McPherson County. It was then that I realized that information about these ancestors, buried in gravesites throughout McPherson County, needed to be recorded."

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 Klobberdanz, John J. Gross, Tony Wangler, Robert Erbele and Ron Volk. Enjoy Marv Zander and Victor Schwahn with 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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