

In Touch with Prairie Living

March 2006

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.

The Dakota Memories Oral History Project continues in 2006. Interviews will be done in the Linton/Strasburg/Hague/Zeeland area and in the Rugby area of North Dakota. A grant was received from the Embassy of Canada to complete interviews in July of German-Russians in central Saskatchewan with family roots to North Dakota. The 2005 interviews on DVDs are available.

We designed this project to document the heritage and culture of the German-Russians. This project focuses on childhood memories and family relationships, specifically, what it was like growing up German-Russian on the northern plains. For further information, go to library.ndsu.edu/grhc/dakotamemories/index.html.

GRHC has published this historic new book, "The Centennial of St. Andrew's Catholic Church, Zeeland, North Dakota and the Spiritual Heritage of St. John's Catholic Church, Rural McIntosh, North Dakota", authored by Father Andrew Jasinski.

Father Andrew writes: "Telling the story of St. Andrew's necessarily involves telling the story of the Germans from Russia and of St. John's the Baptist Church, which one stood five miles north of Zeeland, the first Catholic Church in North Dakota to serve the Germans from Russia." This book is the story of the courage of a people who came to the New World, bringing with them a faith deeply rooted in their history, supporting them on their journey, and which continues to be nurtured among their children. This book is but only one story of the Catholic faith uprooted, replanted, and bearing fruit, in order that it be transplanted to other places and people."

The Zeeland, ND, area was heavily settled by German-Russian immigrants from the Catholic Kutschurgan District villages, today near Odessa, Ukraine - Baden, Elsass, Kandel, Mannheim, Selz and Strassburg. Contact GRHC to secure this book or go to library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/nd_sd/zeelandnd.html.

The new book, "The Old God Still Lives: German Villagers in Czarist and Soviet Ukraine Write Their American Relatives, 1915-1924", by Ronald J. Vossler, teaching at UND, Grand Forks and a Wishek, ND native. These letters chronicle a substantial and on-going correspondence between the ethnic Germans who left Ukraine between 1873 and 1914, and who sent much money, food and clothing to those wishing that they had left South Russia also.

There is much in this new book for persons who desire to learn more about villages which were the source of one of North Dakota's most distinct, and most numerous, ethnic groups. There are 150 letters translated from the old German script to English, published in five German language newspapers in North Dakota. Families receiving these letters include: Boschee, Morlock, Wanner, Schauer, Dockter, Bender, Ketterling, Ackermann, Doerr, Kurtz, Bohlander, Schock, Mindt, Wiest, Schoepp, Schaible, Wacker, Bauer, Kessler, Frank, Schaeffer, Rohrich, Wolf, Heinle, Stockburger, Hieb, Spitzer, Huber, Rueb, Sauter, Ammon, Schweigert, Rohrbach and Wentz.

Prairie Public Broadcasting has announced a new DVD, "Germans from Russia Food Pantry" which combines three award-winning public television favorites that have been broadcast throughout North America. Enjoy "Schmeckfest: Food Traditions of the Germans from Russia" and "Recipes from Grandma's Kitchen: Food Preparations and Traditions of the Germans from Russia, Volume I and II". The DVD documentary and performance CD, "A Soulful Sound:

Music of the Germans from Russia" are available.

Also, Prairie Public Broadcasting has produced a 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. Limited space is still available!

The Festival of Germans from Russia will be in Lodi, CA on April 22; the Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention (www.grhs.org) will be July 12-16, Airport Holiday Inn, Portland, OR; and the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Convention (www.ahsgr.org) will be August 13-19 at Lincoln, NE. Join us for these festive events!

For further information about Germans from Russia heritage, Dakota Memories Oral History Project, donations to GRHC including books, events, 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).

March, 2006 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.