

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.

Our Journey to the Homeland to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany was a wonderful experience. Tour members saw many villages and developed new contacts and friendships. Our 13th tour is scheduled for June, 2007. The dates will be announced later when we know the confirmed date of the Russlanddeutschen Bundestreffen (national Germans from Russia gathering) scheduled for Wiesbaden, Germany for June 2007. GRHC will sponsor the "Amerika Haus" information tables at this large gathering held every three years.

A new small museum room was dedicated on May 27 at the former German village of Selz, Kutschurgan District, about one hour from Odessa near the Moldova border. The museum is the first in the Kutschurgan District villages and an important historical event. Louisa Riesling who lives near the former Selz church was instrumental to develop this museum idea. Private financial donations were received primarily from persons from Canada and USA who visited Selz. At the dedication, GRHC donated maps, an American flag and books for the museum. Photographs of this event appear at the GRHC website at the "Tours" section.

I look forward to meeting our Germans from Russia community in Portland, Oregon, during the Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS) Convention. This is the first time the GRHS Convention is on the West Coast where we have many German-Russians living in Oregon, Washington and California.

I am pleased to announce a new one-half hour documentary, "We'll Meet Again in Heaven" funded by GRHC. The scholar and narrator is Ronald Vossler,

UND, Grand Forks. Vossler guides the viewer from the small North Dakota town where he found the first letter, down the "blood-dark corridor of ethnic history" to former German villages in Ukraine and Moldova that were the source of numerous immigrants to the American prairie frontier.

These wrenching personal letters, along with compelling, survivor interviews, detail an odyssey of hunger and destruction in Soviet Ukraine. Based on a decade of research, including on-location footage in Ukraine and Moldova, this film draws upon hundreds of personal letters, written from German villages in Ukraine to the Dakotas, and brought in public attention for the first time. To order this new documentary, contact GRHC.

The Dakota Memories Oral History Project continues in 2006. Interviews were in May in the Linton/Strasburg/Hague area; in July in the Rugby area of North Dakota; and in August in the Kulm/Lehr area.

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. Saskatchewan locations include Allan, Regina and the Tramping Lake/Luseland/Unity area.

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/grhc/dakotamemories/index.html.

The 2005 interviews are available from GRHC on DVD. They include 31 interviews, including more than 60 hours of video. For more information, go to: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/dakotamemories/order/index.html. Family names for these interviews include: Boschee, Buck, Dewald, Fercho, Fischer, Gross, Hartmann, Herman, Heyne, Janke, Kasemen,

Kleingartner, Klundt, Long, Meidinger, Mueller, Miller, Pressler, Schaeffer, Schlecht, Schott and Zimmerman.

Prairie Public Broadcasting has produced the 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 Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention (www.grhs.org) will be July 12-16, Airport Holiday Inn, Portland, OR; the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Convention (www.ahsgr.org) will be August 13-19 at Lincoln, NE; and the Festival of Germans from Russia, October 13-15, Leader, SK. I look forward to attending important events in Portland and Lincoln.

For further information about Germans from Russia heritage, Dakota Memories Oral History Project, donations to GRHC including books, events, documentaries, CDs, DVDs, cookbooks and the May, 2007 tour, 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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