

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 look forward to meeting our Germans from Russia community in Lincoln, Nebraska, during the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Convention.

The Dakota Memories Oral History Project continues in 2006. Interviews were conducted in May in the Linton/Strasburg/Venturia area; in July at Rugby and Saskatchewan; and August in the Kulm/Lehr/Wishek area of North Dakota. Persons interviewed included family names of Bender, Brossart, Degenstein, Ebach, Eckroth, Engelhardt, Klein, Kraft, Pressler, Rost, Schall, Schwab, Sehn, Vetter, Wald, Weber, and Welder.

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/Kronau/Regina/Saskatoon area as well as the Tramping Lake/Luseland/Unity area. Family names interviewed include: Bertsch, Boechler, Fermer, Herauf, Hoffart, Jahner, Leippi, Keen, Kohlman, Krismer, Lang, LaTurnas, Miere, Riehl, Sebastian, Sellinger, and Zeiler.

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.

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: Aberle, Boschee, Brosy, Buck, Dewald, Dockter, Fercho, Fischer, Hartmann, Herman, Heyne, Hoerter, Janke, Kasemen, Kauk, Kleingartner, Klundt, Long, Meidinger, Mueller, Miller, Presler, Schaffer, Schlecht, Schott, and Zimmerman.

Sarah Lacher, NDSU history graduate student and interviewer, who traveled to south central North Dakota this summer, stated: "The Dakota Memories Oral History Project has been a wonderful learning experience for me. Hearing and seeing each narrator's memories has helped me to learn about my own heritage. Narrators may have been shocked that I said the interview may be three hours, but once we were rolling the memories kept pouring out, along with the occasional shot of redevye. Needless to say, each narrator was extremely welcoming to the videographer and me, often sharing German Russian lunches with us. Each narrator help me to learn more about what it would have been like for my grandfather, dad, and uncle growing up near Venturia, ND. I had an amazing experience in the Linton, Strasburg, Kulm, Lehr, and Wishek area."

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.

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 Festival of Germans from Russia, is October 13-15, at Leader, Saskatchewan. The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Convention is June 11-16, 2007, Holiday Inn, Hays, KS (www.ahsgr.org); the Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention is July 19-22, 2007, Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck, ND (www.grhs.org).

The dates in June, 2007 for the 13th Journey to the Homeland Tour will be announced later.

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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