

In Touch with Prairie Living

April 2008

By Michael M. Miller

Germans from Russia Heritage Collection
North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

GRHC

HERITAGE COLLECTION

As I write the April column, Prairie Public Radio broadcasts "Growing Up German-Russian: A Radio Series, Part II." The audio clips are from GRHC's Dakota Memories Oral History Project and are aired four times a day at 7:33 am, 6:30 pm and during the final segment of the "Here It Now" shows at 4 pm and 7 pm, March 24 to May 12.

The dates for the series are March 24, 28; April 1, 10, 16, 18, 21, 25, 28; and May 2, 6, 9, 12.

Please tune into Prairie Public Radio at 90.5 FM-Bismarck, 89.9 FM-Dickinson, 91.9 FM-Fargo, 89.3 FM-Grand Forks, 91.5 FM-Jamestown, 88.9 FM-Minot and 89.5 FM-Williston.

The Growing Up German-Russian radio series focuses on the childhood memories of second- and third-generation Germans from Russia. It consists of short clips about memories of traumatic events, rural traditions, family life and food ways.

The Prairies magazine, published from 1975 to 1986 by the Ashley Tribune, printed two articles titled "Passage to Dakota" which featured an interview with Andrew and Christina Neu who had celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary in 1982. They were married on October 1, 1907 at Delmont, SD.

This April column features some of the memorable excerpts from this article. The following has been printed with permission from the Ashley Tribune.

Andrew Neu states: "In spring [in Russia], around the first of March, we took our shoes off and threw them away. We had good weather. Not like over here. We had no cyclones. Not like over here. It was nice living over there. The houses were about two to three feet thick. We'd build first with straw, and in the morning the rooms would still be warm.

"Bread was baked in stoves which were round and outside. We used a long stick and shover on the end. We'd put a big loaf of bread on, about three-fourths of a pound, and put it on sticks.

We bake bread that way. It was good bread. Sometimes the stoves didn't hold together very good. They were may made of brick. One time someone said, 'Jacob, Jacob, hurry get money! the stove fell down.'

"One day we came to Rochham, South Dakota. We moved from Menno, South Daota. We had a nice living there. In 1932, when I started farming near Rockham, I got 19 cents for a bushel of wheat, 11 cents a bushel of barley, five cents a bushel of oats. I ran the threshing machine for my neighbors, and for use of my machinery and labor, I got \$5 an hour. Anyone who sold grain had to pay the threshing bill first. Some paid. Some didn't. I could still collect from some over there.

"In 1943, we got \$100 for an acre of wheat, \$25 for corn, \$66 for oats and some alfalfa. We couldn't grow much. We didn't have enough to feed one chicken.

"My father and mother owned a farm, which my dad sold sometime in the late 1920s, and put all the money from the sale in the bank. In 1930, when the bank closed up, Dad got not a dollar out. He had nothing for living, so they went to my younger sister and lived there a year or so.

"In the winter of 1940, there was a farm sale, 161 acres. I went to Fergus Falls [Minnesota] to get some money, but couldn't borrow on land. But my son-in-law in North Dakota had some money, and he sent me \$1,700. We bought the farm for \$2,500, in 1941. We had good luck there.

"Out in Russia, we had good-sized towns. The farmers all live together in towns. If I was younger, I'd go back. I still got my picture from my church where I was baptized in Russia. We had a great, nice church. Most people were Lutherans, but there was one Baptist church and one Catholic church."

For further information about the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, Dakota Memories Oral History Project, the 2009 Journey to

the Homeland Tour and donations to the GRHC (such as family histories), contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Library, PO Box 5599, Fargo, ND 58105-5599 (Telephone: 701-231-8416; Email: Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu; GRHC website: www.ndsu.edu/grhc).

April 2008 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.