

In Touch with Prairie Living

By Michael M. Miller

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



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

GRHC

HERITAGE COLLECTION

The month of July will be busy traveling to Casper, Wyoming from July 29 to August 3 for the first joint convention of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia and the Germans from Russia Heritage Society. Alexander Rupp of Berlin, Germany, travels to Fargo in July and will represent the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland, Stuttgart, at the convention in Casper. I look forward to hosting the Rupp in Fargo and working with him at NDSU relating to the GRHC/Germany projects.

Acacia Jonas Stuckle, GRHC special collections associate, returned in June from a presentation at the German Russian Cultural Festival, Leader, Saskatchewan. Our interviewers and videographers have returned from May and June trips in the Dakotas for the Dakota Memories Oral History Project. This summer includes exciting activities for the GRHC.

Stuckle said, "I enjoyed traveling to Leader, SK to attend the German Russian Cultural Festival. I met many interested people, and was fascinated by their stories. I was fortunate for the opportunity to attend and participate in the events."

We have completed our fourth season of interviews. We finished up the season in the Beulah/Hazen, North Dakota area. Cassie Ptacek, interviewer, and David Mart, videographer, shared some comments for their recent trip.

Ptacek said, "I had such a wonderful time getting to know the people and the area. Everyone was so welcoming and eager to participate! The memories they shared with us will be an amazing addition to the Collection."

Mart remarked, "The stories we were fortunate enough to record in Beulah and Hazen were both interesting and unique. It was good to see the German-Russian heritage so strongly embraced."

Organizers of the Dakota Memory Oral History Project released a CD set titled "Growing Up German Russian: A Radio Series, Part I and Part II." Also sponsored by the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Prairie Public Broadcasting, the dual disk special contains the radio series that aired from March 24 through May 17 on Prairie Public Radio, as well as the series that aired in spring 2007.

Focusing on memories from German-Russians living on the Northern Plains, the radio series is a collection of narratives from participants of the Dakota Memories Oral History Project. The CD set also includes commentaries by Jessica Clark, Dr. Gordon Iseminger, Dr. Tom Isern, Marvin Hartmann, Michael Miller, Cassie Ptacek, and Dr. Kimberly Porter.

The CD costs \$30 and is available by contacting the GRHC.

I want to share with you memories from Journey to the Homeland tour members who experienced unforgettable days in May, while visiting in their ancestral German villages near Odessa, Ukraine.

Sylvia Feiock Frahum, Palm City, Florida commented, "This trip was a dream come true visiting and walking on the soil of my grandparents was a remarkable experience. We stayed overnight in Glueckstal with a wonderful family who were so gracious

with fresh fruit and vegetables from their garden as well as eggs from their chickens. Leaving the village of Hoffnungsburg, I met an old woman who told me all about the cemetery of my ancestors."

Alllean Mertz Boschee, Crookston, Minnesota noted, "It was an experience of a lifetime to walk and visit where my ancestors came from. I better understand that many were hesitant to talk about their lives before coming to America. I can see many resemblances to the Dakotas such as beautiful valleys. But I felt a sadness that many of the churches were gone and so much destruction."

Beatrice Haman Tolle, Arvada, Colorado stated, "The most profound experience was walking around the ruins of the church in Kandel knowing that my father, Peter Haman, was baptized and made his first communion there. I gave thanks they had to leave this country. The war and Communism still is apparent with the poverty and the lack of employment in the small villages."

The 15th Journey to the Homeland Tour to Ukraine and Germany is May 20-30, 2009.

For further information about the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, Dakota Memories Oral History Project, 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).

July 2008 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.