

# In Touch with Prairie Living

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 October column, the splendid autumn colors are vivid on the NDSU campus and throughout the Dakotas.

I am often asked to suggest some of the most important books for research and study about the Germans from Russia. Some of the titles that I would highly recommend include: 1) *Paradise on the Steppe: A Cultural History of the Kutschurgan, Beresan, and Liebental Colonies, 1804-1872* by Joseph S. Height (Catholic villages); 2) *Homesteaders on the Steppe: Cultural History of the Evangelical-Lutheran Colonies in the Region of Odessa, 1804-1945* by Joseph S. Height (Lutheran villages); 3) *Memories of the Black Sea Germans: Highlights of Their History and Heritage* by Joseph S. Height and 4) *From Catherine to Khrushchev: A Story of Russia's Germans* by Adam Giesinger.

Height's books, *Paradise on the Steppe* and *Homesteaders on the Steppe* include the history, migration, founding families, dialects, customs, folkways, folksongs, holiday traditions, village chronicles, schools, festivals, church and religion, diaries, games, agriculture, and weddings. Joseph Height was born in 1909 at Trampling Lake, Saskatchewan. His German immigrant parents came to America in 1900 from the Black Sea colonies of Mannheim and Strassburg, near Odessa, Ukraine.

Edna Boardman has completed

excellent book reviews. Boardman comments about *Memories of the Black Sea Germans*: "It is a fascinating collection of primary and cultural material. The book will answer many questions German-Russians have assumed no answers. Height tells of his family's sojourn from the Catholic Kutschurgan colonies in Russia to Towner, North Dakota and then to Trampling Lake in Saskatchewan."

For Adam Giesinger's book, Edna Boardman writes: "This is the most thoroughly researched, the most professionally written, of the popular books on the Germans from Russia, yet it is very interesting and absorbing to read. Giesinger writes in part what nobody else does." Giesinger was born in 1909 in a sod house on a homestead near Holdfast, Saskatchewan. His ancestors immigrated to Canada from Mannheim and Selz near Odessa. He died in June, 2004.

In October, 1997, I completed an oral interview with Adam Giesinger at his home in Winnipeg, Manitoba, for Prairie Public Television. In the interview, Giesinger stated: "My first interest arose about 1917 at the time of the Communist Revolution in Russia. There was a lot of talk in the family, because they still had close relatives over there; grandma's sisters and brothers still live over there. So that's when I got curious about Russia.

I was about seven or eight years old."

Height and Giesinger's ancestors immigrated from the Kutschurgan villages today near Odessa, Ukraine - Baden, Elsass, Kandel Mannheim, Selz, and Strassburg. These villages celebrated their 200th Anniversary (1808-2008) in September. Many people from these villages immigrated to the Dakotas and Saskatchewan.

These outstanding Germans from Russia books by Joseph Height and Adam Giesinger are available by contacting the GRHC or at [www.ndsu.edu/grhc](http://www.ndsu.edu/grhc).

The AHSGR 2009 Convention is at Medicine Hat, Alberta (June 14-21) and the GRHS 2009 Convention is at Rapid City, SD (September 9-13).

The 15th Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany is May 20-30, 2009. Space is still available!

For further information about the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, the Dakota Memories Oral History Project, Journey to the Homeland Tours and donations to the GRHC (such as family histories), contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 5599, Fargo, ND 58105-5599 (Telephone: 701-231-8416; Email: [Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu](mailto:Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu); GRHC website: [www.ndsu.edu/grhc](http://www.ndsu.edu/grhc)).

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