

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 this October column, I am pleased to share with you the memories of the first Dakota Memories Heritage Tour in September to Germans from Russia sites in south-central North Dakota. We are thankful to these sponsors who made this tour possible: NDSU Extension Service, NDSU Libraries, NDSU Center for Heritage Renewal, NDSU Extension Service Center for Community Vitality, Prairie Public and the GRHC. I was so pleased that our tour group included various ethnic backgrounds from throughout the Dakotas, California, Minnesota, Iowa and Alberta. For some people this was their first introduction to the heritage and culture of the Germans from Russia.

Jessica Clark, DMOHP coordinator and presenter, shared her thoughts about the tour. "Impressive! That's how I would describe the first Dakota Memories Heritage Tour. It was full of wonderful adventures, educational presentations, and scrumptious food. I truly feel privileged to have been part of this tour, and to have had the opportunity to share my research findings."

There are many wonderful stories to tell. I remember Sebastian Meier of Zeeland (88) sharing his memories about the John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery, north of Zeeland, the oldest German-Russian cemetery in North Dakota. Evelyn Welk Schwab and her sister, Edna Welk Schwab of Strasburg, ND, provided tours of the Ludwig and Christina Schwahn Welk Homestead. Edna and Evelyn grew up on the Welk homestead and are nieces to Lawrence and Christina Welk. The Welk Homestead

was dedicated in June, 1992.

At the Schwab House northeast of Strasburg, Larry Schwab and Imogene (Schwahn) Schwab shared their memories of living and raising a family at this farmstead and in the earthen made house. Larry's parents, John and Magdalena (Baumgartner) Schwab, raised ten children (five boys and five girls) on this farmstead from 1925 to 1948. In 1948, Joseph and Imogene Schwahn Schwab moved on this farmstead and raised ten children (six boys and four girls) until the 1970s. Larry Schwab mentioned at one time there were 17 people living in this farm house. Larry was well known with his brothers performing on the piano with the Bubbling Quintet later the Schwab Boys. Larry, who was born at this farmstead in 1928, mentioned that he has performed music for 72 years of his life. In his childhood, he shared that there was no electricity or running water inside the home.

Carol Just of St. Louis Park, MN, a Berlin, ND native writes: "Thanks for inviting me to be part of the Dakota Memories Heritage Tour. The prairie was beautiful and good weather prevailed. The tour members were fun and interesting, food was delightful and the programs were interesting and well presented." Carol Just was a presenter at the St. Andrew's Lutheran Church northeast of Zeeland, ND, where the St. Andrew's Centennial Choir who performed German songs of their immigrant families.

Michele Reid, Dean of Libraries,

reflects upon her experiences during the tour. "Our first Dakota Memories Heritage Tour offered a wonderful experience for those interested in Germans from Russia sites as well as those wanting to explore North Dakota history and culture. Our group enjoyed the commentaries by NDSU and Prairie Public Broadcasting presenters. Cemetery walks and historic churches, prairie homesteads and grasslands were just some of the highlights, along with great ethnic food and German conversation. I enjoyed being part of the first Heritage Tour and can now boast of my new honorary German from Russia status!"

The 16th Journey to the Homeland Tour is May 20-30, 2010. The tour includes May 22-26 in Odessa, Ukraine visiting the former Bessarabian, Black Sea and Crimean German villages. The tour group also travels to Stuttgart, Germany for May 26-30 including a day tour to Alsace, France, and visits to the German-Russian museums in Stuttgart. Detailed Tour information and costs are at this webpage: www.ndsu.edu/grhc at "Homeland Tours."

For further information about the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, the 2010 Journey to the Homeland Tour and donations to the GRHC (such as family histories), contact Michael M. Miller, The Libraries, NDSU Dept. #2080, PO Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050 (Telephone: 701-231-8416; Email: Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu; the GRHC website: www.ndsu.edu/grhc).

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