

# 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 July column, I have fond memories of May in Odessa, Ukraine and visiting the former German villages. I look forward to meeting our Germans from Russia community at the GRHS Convention from July 21-25 July in Bismarck.

Here are memories shared by May tour members. Gilbert Schauer, Longview, Wash. writes: "It was almost like coming home. That's what I felt when I was in Neudorf and Kassel. I understand why my parents especially my mother was satisfied with so little. As long as she had a roof over her head and three meals a day she was happy. It was a dream come true to visit the homeland. We can sure thank God that our parents and grandparents left and immigrated to America." Gilbert is a native of Streeter, N.D.

Mary (Nemeth) Mussell, Anoka, Minn., shares: "To stand in front of the Lutheran Church in Bergdorf built in 1851, the church my great-mother married my great-grandfather, was a terrific experience. The Germans are gone from the villages and the beautiful churches that are standing have been converted to community centers. We had the pleasure and good fortune to be house guests of a family in Glueckstal. Several of the homes had a bench for sitting next to the fence. You could see folks resting on the benches. Chickens and geese seem to have free range, hard to tell to which home they belong, this along with cows being led and herded on the streets."

James and Alice (Zimmerman) Ackerman, Fargo, N.D., natives of Eureka, S.D. and Venturia, N.D., write: "These memories no one will ever be able to take from us. In our wildest dreams we never thought we'd walk on the soil that our ancestors came from - what a privilege."

Vi Bitterman, Iowa City, Iowa, comments: "The countryside is as lush and green as related in stories handed down by family members. In all the villages we visited in Ukraine, we were greeted with warmth and hospitality. I think Bessarabia is a place of great contrasts. We saw three children, probably in their teens, riding in a small cart filled with green grass and being pulled by a lone horse. As we passed, we saw that the teen sitting at the back of the cart was on a cell phone. In April, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of my mother's arrival at Ellis Island with her parents and siblings. I am grateful to my grandparents' determination to give their family a better life."

Arve Moser, Sartell, Minn., a native of Medina, N.D., writes: "The terrain to and from the villages reminded me of North Dakota's Red River Valley with huge fields of grain and some slightly rolling hills, very lush, green and beautiful. It is difficult to imagine looking at the large fields and not seeing any family farms, due to the way the former USSR operated. It is important to visit these former German villages, and to truly

appreciate the decision of our ancestors to come to America and further, in my case, to North Dakota."

The 17th Journey to the Homeland Tour is scheduled for May 18-28, 2011 for Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany.

Prairie Public Television in conjunction with the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, will present the Premiere Showing of the new documentary, "It's All Earth and Sky," Wednesday, July 21 at 7 p.m. in the North Dakota Heritage Center on the capitol grounds in Bismarck. The event is free and open to the general public.

Acacia Jonas Stuckle, GRHC special collections associate, will present "Dakota Memories" at a workshop on July 22 during the Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention, Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck (July 21-25). For further information, visit [www.grhs.org](http://www.grhs.org).

For further information about the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, the Friends of the GRHC, the September 2011 Dakota Memories Heritage Tour, the May 2011 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](mailto:Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu); the GRHC website: [www.ndsu.edu/grhc](http://www.ndsu.edu/grhc)).

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