

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

With this September column begins the new academic year on the campus of North Dakota State University. Life on a university campus becomes much busier with return of student employees to the GRHC.

Homer Rudolf and I traveled from August 1-8 to southeast South Dakota and Lincoln, Neb. From August 1-3, we visited Yankton, Scotland, Lesterville, Tripp, Menno and Freeman, S.D. The first families of Germans from Russia to come to Lesterville, Dakota Territory in 1872 were from the former German village of Johannestal, Beresan District, Odessa Region, Ukraine.

We photographed the cemeteries near Scotland including the Petersburg Cemetery, Odessa Reformed Church Cemetery, Odessa Lutheran Cemetery as well as the Johannestahl Cemetery near Menno. Our visit to the Heritage Hall Museum located near to the Freeman Academy was most impressive. The complex includes a summer kitchen, two historic churches, musical instruments and an archive of 10,000 items. For further information about the Museum, go to www.freemanmuseum.org.

From August 3-8, we attended the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia International Convention at Lincoln, Neb. I was pleased to meet the delegation from Buenos Aires of the Volga German Society of Argentina. Prairie Public's new documentary, "It's All Earth and Sky" premiered at the convention with a very positive response and large crowd in attendance. "It's All Earth and Sky" premieres on Prairie Public Television on Wednesday,

October 6 at 8 p.m. CDT.

While in Nebraska, we went on a day bus tour one hour west of Lincoln to visit the Mennonite Heritage Park near Henderson. The Heritage Park shares the hardship and trials of the 1874 journey of the 35 Mennonite immigrant families from Holland to Russia then on to Henderson. These Mennonites lived in the Molotschna Colonies of South Russia (today Ukraine). In August of 1874, they traveled by rail to Hamburg, Germany and set sail on the S.S. Tuetonia for America. The voyage was plagued by fire, seasickness and death before they arrived in New York. A trip by rail brought them to Lincoln where they waited a month for the Burlington Missouri River Railroad to complete their new home, the Immigrant House. For more information, go to www.hendersonheritage.org.

We visited Sutton, Nebraska which was settled by immigrant families from the former Black Sea German villages of Worms and Rohrbach, South Russia (today Ukraine). Sutton has an impressive main street with beautiful historic architecture restored. James Griess has authored the book, "The German Russians: Those Who Came to Sutton" available from the GRHC. More information about Sutton, is available at www.suttonchamber.org.

Dr. Homer Rudolf, Richmond, Va., a native of Wishek, N.D., spent a number of days in June and July at the GRHC processing the Glueckstal Colonies Research

Association (GCRA) Archives. The collection includes extensive family records, books, maps and family histories. The GCRA collection, shipped from Redondo Beach, Calif., included 58 boxes and totaled 1,738 pounds. The GCRA Archives have been donated to the GRHC. Dr. Rudolf is the new coordinator of GCRA (www.glueckstal.org). The GRHC and GCRA have a long history of successful cooperative projects in publishing and documentary work. The GRHC is developing finding aids for the GCRA Archives which will be available on the GRHC website and for those visiting the collection. The GCRA Archives is an important new resource worldwide through the NDSU Libraries' Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. GCRA produced the award-winning documentary "Heaven Is Our Homeland" available from GRHC.

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

For further information about the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, the Friends of the GRHC, the Dakota Memories Heritage Tour (September 15-18, 2011), the 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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