

# In Touch with Prairie Living

May 2011

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 May column, I will be traveling to Germany and Ukraine from May 17 to June 8. Upon returning to North Dakota, the GRHC will have a busy summer of outreach events including the 125th celebrations at Bowdle and Rugby, and the Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention at Spokane.

The GRHC displays and information tables will be at the Bowdle 125th Anniversary, Bowdle, S.D., at the Senior Center on Main Street: Friday, June 24, 1-6 p.m., and Saturday, June 25, 10 am-4 p.m. Acacia Jonas Stuckle, GRHC special collections associate, will be in attendance to assist visitors.

I look forward to attending the Rugby 125th Anniversary, Rugby, N.D., at the Heart of America Library, located on 201 West Third Street. I will be at the GRHC's display on Friday, July 1, 10 am-5 pm; Saturday, July 2, 10 am-5 pm; and Sunday, July 3, 2 pm-5 pm. Rugby and Pierce County have a large settlement of Black Sea Germans from the Kutschurgan District villages [Baden, Elsass, Kandel, Mannheim, Selz and Strassburg] today near Odessa, Ukraine. I will visit these villages with tour members on May 21.

The Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention is at the Davenport Hotel, Spokane, Wash., July 20-24. For more information, go to [www.grhs.org](http://www.grhs.org). Acacia and I look forward meeting our German-Russian community at the Spokane convention.

What a memorable and festive event at the historic Wishek, N.D. Civic Center on April 9 with the "Dakota Air: The Radio Show." The event was like a family reunion in the heart of German-Russian country in south-central North Dakota. Local guest stars included: Wishek High School Choir accompanied by eight students playing accordions with Janet Wolff, director; Ashley native Vicki Klipfel Melchoir, actress and singer; Wishek native and writer Ron Vossler; St. Andrew's Centennial Church Choir; Kristi Goldade, North Dakota's

yodeling cowgirl; and accordionist Ellon Meidinger.

I would like to share comments from Sue Bartholomew Balcom, Mandan, N.D. who attended "The Dakota Air show," from her Kitchen Snitch Blog (<http://www.kitchensnitch.blogspot.com>): "Seeing everyone was awesome, but what really hit home the most was Ron Vossler. His work with the heritage and history of the Germans from Russia really has made me appreciate my heritage. I didn't when I was young and I regret not getting to know my family in a deeper way before they all retired, moved off the farm and moved away. And, yes, some have passed...but the reality is our family is blessed by longevity – and food. Ron talked about wurst - and if you come over to my house, I will try and say that with the spice and smoke that he did, although I do not have the opportunity to learn how to speak German as a youngster. It saved me from the German accented English, but I would love to be able to speak that language. Hearing him tell jokes, sliding in and out of English to German and back again me long for the days around the kitchen table where English was the second language. I could go on about how wonderful the evening was – topped with pieces of prune and rhubarb kuchen before bedtime."

The GRHC has available three books by Ron Vossler relating to his collected notes, memories and humor: 1) "Not Until the Combine Is Paid and Other Jokes: From the Oral Traditions of the Germans from Russia in the Dakotas;" 2) "Lost Shawls and Pig Spleens: Folklore, Anecdotes, and Humor of the Germans from Russia;" 3) "Dakota Kraut: Collected Notes on How I Learned to Love My Accent and Ancestry: 1983-2003."

"Dakota Air: The Radio Show" performs at the beautiful Burning Hills Amphitheater at Medora, N.D. on June 4. Be watching for the 2011-2012 season of "Dakota Air: The Radio

Show" in North Dakota communities.

For further information about the Friends of the GRHC, Dakota Memories Heritage Tour (September 15-18), 18th Journey to the Homeland Tour (May 17-27, 2012), 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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