

# 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

I write this June column while traveling with our 17th Journey to the Homeland tour group in Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany. Tour members have experienced memorable visits to their ancestral German villages of their parents, grandparents, and ancestors.

Upon my return to Fargo on June 8 from Germany, I look forward to attending the 125th Anniversary for the community of Rugby, N.D., and welcoming visitors to the GRHC displays and information tables at the Heart of America Library on July 1-3. Acacia Jonas Stuckle, GRHC special collections associate will be at the 125th event at the Bowdle, S.D. Senior Center for June 24-25.

Family members of Kleingartner, Weist and Hehr surnames with roots to Gackle and Jamestown, N.D., traveled to Hoffnungstal, Dennewitz, Kloestitz, Neu Elft and Paris, Bessarabia. Joining the Kleingartner family to visit Hoffnungstal was Inge (Hofer) Fryman, Upland, Calif. Her parents were born in Hoffnungstal, and left the village in 1940 with the thousands of other Bessarabian Germans for Poland during World War II. Inge was born in Germany in 1942, and in 1951, her family came to North Dakota residing with the Kleingartner relatives at Gackle, N.D. For Inge (Hofer) Fryman, going back to Germany in May, was her first time since leaving there in 1951 – 60 years ago!

Marlys (Ruff) Nickisch of St. George, Utah, visited Mathildendorf, Bessarabia, where her father, Reinhold F. Ruff, was born, and left at age two with his parents homesteading near Fredonia, N.D. Her mother's parents, Gottlieb & Katharina (Schott) Scherbenski were born in Hoffnungstal, Bessarabia,

homesteading near Lehr, N.D. Marlys wrote: "To think that I put my feet in the Bessarabian German villages where my grandparents learned to take their first steps makes me very excited."

John & Janet (Miller) Henke of Gackle, N.D., visited the village where John's father, Adolph Henke was born, Hoffnungstal. The Henke's also traveled for an overnight stay in the village of Glueckstal in the Republic of Moldova to visit Bergdorf and Neudorf where Janet's ancestors lived before immigrating to the U.S. in 1891. The Henke's shared: "We want to bring back history to share with our grandchildren so they will always know what our ancestors went through to come to America as Germans from Russia. Being able to walk where our ancestors did and see the landscape where they called home was very exciting."

Richard Mastio of Carmel, Calif., traveled to Selz (Kutschurgan District), where his grandfather, George Mastio was born in 1872, and to Landau (Beresan District) where it is grandmother, Frances Reichert Mastio was born in 1877. They immigrated to the U.S. In 1890 or 1891, to Plantersville, Texas, and then to St. Joseph, Mo. There were 17 children in the family of Richard's father. While in Landau, we visited the Orphanage & Boarding School where we brought gifts for the children.

Elmer & JoAnn Miller of Washburn, N.D., with their daughter Karen of Bismarck, visited Hoffnungstal and Paris in Bessarabia, and Gueldendorf. All of these villages are today in southern Ukraine near to Odessa.

Charles Eckroth of St. Cloud,

Minn., and his brother, Rev. Leonard Eckroth of Bowbells, N.D., with roots to Mandan, N.D., visited Karlsruhe (Beresan District). Karlsruhe was the village where their father, Louis Eckroth, born in 1889, two years later with his parents, immigrated to the U.S. in 1891. The parents of Charles and Leonard Eckroth, Andrew and Katharina (Kopp) Eckroth, had 14 children, three of whom died in infancy. The Eckroth family has two sons as Catholic priests and two daughters as Catholic nuns.

I joined the Eckroth family for their historic visit to see the former Saints Peter and Paul Church in Karlsruhe which is today in ruins. The former German Parsonage near the church is restored as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Rev. Roger Dieterle of Belfield, N.D., and cousin Delvin Dieterle of Seattle, WA., visited Friedentstal, Kloestitz, Kulm and Tarutino, Bessarabia where they stayed overnight. Roger's grandfather, Ferdinand Dieterle, was born in Kloestitz, and his grandmother, Margaretha (Ruff) Dieterle in Friedenstal, Bessarabia. Roger's grandparents left Bessarabia on December 15, 1901, arriving in New York on January 18, 1902. They traveled by train to Martin, N.D.

For further information about the Friends of the GRHC, Dakota Memories Heritage Tour (September 15-18, 2011), 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; the GRHC website: www.ndsu.edu/grhc).

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