

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

October is a busy month with several GRHC outreach events. I look forward to attending the festive Sauerkraut Day on Wednesday, October 12. We will have a display at the Wishek Armory as part of the Crafts Show from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. joining at the booth will be the Tri-County Tourism Initiative (Emmons, Logan and McIntosh counties of south central North Dakota in the heart of German-Russian country.

On Saturday, October 29, "Dakota Air: The Radio Show" will perform at the Hopkins Center for the Arts, Hopkins, Minn., 7-9 p.m., sponsored by the Minnesota North Star Chapter of Germans from Russia. The performance marks the show's expansion from the North Dakota prairies into the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. To order tickets, call 952-979-1111 or order online at www.northstarchapter.org. Merrill Piepkorn and the Radio Stars Band, and the Dakota Airheads Acting Troupe will perform. The show will be recorded for broadcast across North Dakota, western Minnesota, bordering states, and into Canada on the Prairie Public Broadcasting radio network.

The GRHC will have a display at the Dakota Air Show on October 29. I look forward to seeing longtime colleague, musician and author Debra Marquart who will perform with the Dakota Air show. Debra appears in Prairie Public Television's award-winning documentaries, "Homesteading" and "It's All Earth and Sky."

The Dakota Memories Heritage Tour in September to south central North Dakota was truly a wonderful, rewarding and unforgettable experience for the tour members. Our stops at Streeter, Napoleon, Wishek, Strasburg, Hague, Ashley and Lehr shared the rich heritage and culture of the Germans from Russia especially with their impressive church

architecture, county museums, music, folk culture, landscape, hospitality and their delicious ethnic meals. The GRHC staff looks forward to working with the Tri-County Tourism Initiative exploring ideas to continue these bus tours for the future. For photographs from the September tour, go to www.ndsu.edu/grhc at Dakota Memories.

Carol Just of St. Louis Park, Minn., tour member and presenter at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, writes: "I am always struck by how hungry people are for stories about pioneer life. We are only a few generations removed from the experience and yet so few stories have been documented. It is so much fun to meet the tour members, learn their stories, share a few of mine and discover how much we have in common."

Andrea Winkjer-Collin, editor of the "North Dakota Horizons," magazine, joined the tour group. She comments: "I enjoyed exploring a part of North Dakota where I have not previously spent a lot of time. The culture is very rich and every stop we made helped tell the immigrant and pioneer story of our state. I hope these tours can continue. I am certain many people would enjoy learning more about the Germans from Russia who settled in the state. It is a wonderful story of faith and perseverance!"

Julie (Opp) Burgum of Casselton, N.D. writes: "I grew up in Logan County but had never taken the opportunity to visit the Welk Homestead or the Sts. Peter and Paul's Catholic Church in Strasburg. Another first for me was the St. Mary's Catholic Church and Cemetery in Hague. Amazing structures and so well maintained by the proud local parish members. The highlight for me was the program at St. Andrew's

Church near Wishek with a presentation by Carol Just and the performance of the St. Andrew's Centennial Choir singing the heartfelt German songs – tears were shed by many in the audience. This tour was a wonderful experience for me along with my mother and two aunts. How fortunate that our rich heritage is being showcased through the Dakota Memories Heritage Tour!"

We are most appreciative to the "North Dakota Living magazine" for including four major articles in the September edition featuring the state's German-Russian community. The cover story "St. Andrew's preservation celebrates German heritage," shares the story of this rural St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in McIntosh County. "St. Andrew's Lutheran Church stands to proclaim the strong heritage of its original 15 families, those who came after, and all their descendants. Most were large farm families who clung to their rich German heritage. These houses of worship – with doors closed – remain to tell the story for their people's heritage and boast architecture influenced by the culture of their founders," writes Wendy Fix. Become a Friend of St. Andrew's Preservation Committee on Facebook to stay current on preservation activities.

For further information about the Friends of the GRHC, the 18th Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany (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).

October 2011 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.