

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

This March column has been prepared by Pamela Burkhardt, the GRHC's collections' manager. Pam has 24 years of experience working with the Clay County Historical Society in Moorhead, Minn. She joined the GRHC staff in December 2009.

Most of you know we have many of books focusing on the Germans from Russia. When you visit the GRHC, you will see family histories, books on German-Russian history, cooking, religion, politics, textiles, famine, emigration, life on the prairies, town and county histories and a host of other topics. A number of catalogued books and materials from the Glueckstal Colonies Research Association Collection, the Dr. Adam Giesinger Collection and the Walter & Alice (Riedlinger) Essig Collection are kept elsewhere along with newspapers, larger books and all electronic material. What you don't see are the letters, shawls, photographs, scrapbooks, passports, exit documents, certificates and other materials. These are Special Collections.

The textiles, blankets, head coverings, shawls and other clothing, are housed with the Emily P. Reynolds Historic Costume Collection here at NDSU. From Canada, Hermina Moran recently sent us her mother's plachte (blanket). This striped blanket was woven in Colelia in the Dobrukscha Region of Romania. The blanket, baby Hermina and her mother Martha (Janer) Tuchscherer all appear in an unaired propaganda film shot in Germany on December 20, 1940. We have various copies of this film as DVDs, some annotated, in Special Collections.

Although we don't have many three-dimensional items, we count a samovar, a china tea pot and crucifixes among

the treasures. We have a tiny replica of a South Dakota sod house donated in 1997, made by Delores Capstraw. The original two-room sod house was built by Philip and Amelia Zenker near Leola, S.D., where they raised eight children.

We have collections that fill many shelves and others with a single item. The large Herb Poppke Collection has many correspondence files and over 400 maps. The Ludwig and Christina Buck Graf Collection contains hundreds of photographs. Ron Vossler's four-box collection has photocopied German-language famine letters from 1917 to 1935 reprinted in North and South Dakota newspapers. In 2011, we received a five-page cookbook "German Recipes: M-m-m, Es Schmackt aber gut" printed in 1984. It was compiled by five women including former 4-H leader June Schloss from Esmond, N.D. According to Phil, June's son, June and four friends "made it for the senior citizens group to be passed out to their children." The copies were made using a hectograph.

As Collections' Manager, I review materials donated and collected from 1984 to the present and make sure the paperwork is in order and the inventories complete and accurate. Currently, Special Collections measure over 380 linear feet of shelf space – well over a football field in length! We are beginning to upload finding aids for special collections in the digital repository <http://library.ndsu.edu/repository/> for researchers to see what is available.

What would we like to add to the GRHC Special Collections? It would be easier if you tell us what

you have. We can't possibly make a list of all potential materials. We regularly welcome hymnals, theology books, cookbooks, family histories (hard copy and/or DVDs), group, church, town and county histories and photographs from North Dakota and South Dakota, Canada and beyond. We appreciate identified photographs and family information with any donated items. Harder to find are secular music, traditional clothing, personal journals, family recipe "boxes," letters and documents. Basically, we are looking for items brought over during emigration, objects displaying cultural heritage made or used by people during early years of Germans from Russia settlement in North America and items illustrating the impact of assimilation while retaining cultural identity. We will be happy to consider items representing on-going traditions created by descendants of German Russian immigrants.

If you have a question or are not sure we would accept a potential donation, contact michael.miller@ndsu.edu or pamela.burkhardt@ndsu.edu, collections' manager.

For further information about the Friends of the GRHC, the 18th Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany (May 16-26, 2013), 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).

March 2012 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.