

# 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

In June, I attended the 43rd American Historical Society of Germans from Russia International Convention on the campus of Concordia University in Portland, Ore. This was the most impressive conference I have ever attended relating to the history and culture of the Germans from Russia. I extend my deepest appreciation to the staff at the Concordia Library.

At the GRHS Convention, July 18-22 in Bismarck at the Ramkota Hotel, premieres the seventh documentary in the award-winning Prairie Public Germans from Russia Series – “At Home in Russia, at Home on the Prairie.” We had a wonderful response to the preview of this new documentary at the AHSGR Convention in Portland.

This new documentary tells the story of the Kutschurganers. The life they led in South Russia and their life after journeying to the prairies of North America. The stories are told by the descendants of these pioneers: Msgr. Joseph Senger, Christina Gross Jundt, Helen Feist Krumm, Adam Giesinger, Fr. Thomas Welk, Theresa Kuntz Bachmeier, Barbara Schneider Risling, Ron Volk, Colleen Zeiler, Debra Marquart, Mary Ebach and Clara Ebach. The new DVD is available from the GRHC.

The featured speaker at the Germans from Russia Heritage Society International Convention (July 18-22, Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck) will be Dr.

Ute Schmidt of Berlin, Germany, author of the book, “Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea,” translated from German to English by James T. Gessele. At the convention, Schmidt will autograph the hardcover book published in 2011 and available from GRHC and GRHS.

An important new book, “Collectivization in the Soviet Union: German Letters to America, 1927-1932,” compiled by Janice Huber Stangl, is now available. Most of the letters were written by village correspondents to German-language newspapers published in the United States. These letters appeared in the “Eureka Rundschau” (Eureka, SD, 1927), and “Der Staats-Anzeiger” (Bismarck, ND, 1928-1932). Stangl and Johann Bollinger, co-authored the book, “Marienberg: Fate of a Village,” which includes translations of letters to America from Germany living in Ukraine during the 1916 to 1926 time period. For more information, go to <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/bollinger.html>.

Most of the “collectivization” letters published in the book were written by Jakob Ahl, (1873-1936) the son of a colonist miller from Bergdorf, a mother colony of the Glueckstal District, Odessa Province, South Russia (today in Moldova, near Odessa, Ukraine). Jakob Ahl was an Evangelical Lutheran lay minister/

sexton and taught in numerous villages in South Russia for more than 37 years.

The letters contain many names, place and family events. Censorship by the Soviet regime in the late 1920s and the early 1930s had become ever more oppressive. Between 1920-1923, due to a policy of forced requisition of grain from farmers, a Great Famine had occurred in the Soviet Union, in which about 300,000 German villagers had starved to death. This new book tells the dramatic and tragic story of the fate of thousands of our Germans from Russia during the Stalin Era. The book is published in cooperation with the Glueckstal Colonies Research Association ([www.glueckstal.net](http://www.glueckstal.net)) and the GRHC. To secure the book, contact the GRHC. The book webpage is <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/stangl.html>.

For further information about the Friends of the GRHC, the 19th 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](mailto:Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu); the GRHC website: [www.ndsu.edu/grhc](http://www.ndsu.edu/grhc)).

July 2012 column for North Dakota and South Dakota newspapers.