

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

As I prepare this November text, I am reminded of my first experience in writing this column back in November 1998. This is the 192nd monthly column written in 14 years. I appreciate the positive comments and continued interest from readers.

My Thanksgiving Regards to you and your family. We can be thankful that our ancestors immigrated to these Dakota prairies from their former German villages of South Russia. When I visited with tour members in May 2012, in the former German villages near Odessa, Ukraine, I was reminded of the hard life for these people who live in the villages where our ancestors once lived before coming to America.

In October, Jeremy Kopp began working at the GRHC as the new Special Collections Associate. He is a 2011 NDSU graduate in Public History. Jeremy completed his degree with an internship at the GRHC. His first day of work was at Sauerkraut Day on October 10 in Wishek, N.D.

Prairie Public Television's newest documentary of the award-winning Germans from Russia Series premiered on Wednesday, October 17 at 7 pm (CDT), "At Home in Russia, At Home on the Prairie". Stories are told by descendants of these pioneers who settled on the prairies of North Dakota and Saskatchewan: Monsignor Joseph Senger, Christina Gross Jundt, Helen Feist Krumm, Dr. Adam Giesinger, Father Thomas Welk, Theresa Kuntz Bachmeier, Barbara Schneider Risling, Ron Volk, Colleen Zeiler, Debra Marquart, Mary Ebach and Clara Ebach. For further information and to secure the DVD of Prairie Public's award-winning Germans from Russia Documentary Series, go to: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/tapes/kutschurgan.html>.

The GRHC's most important outreach program event is the Pride of Dakota Holiday Showcases sponsored by the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (www.prideofdakota.com). The Fargo Holiday Showcase is at the Centennial Hall/Convention Center (Nov. 18-20), and the Bismarck Holiday Showcase is at the Convention Hall (Nov.30-Dec.2). The schedule is Friday, 4-9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

At the Holiday Showcases, we will premiere the GRHC's new cookbook, "Alma's Favorite Recipes: Cooking & Memories from a German-Russian Farm Kitchen". When it comes to cooking, Alma (Janke) Schott knew how to do it right. After all, she had almost nine decades of experience. Alma passed away at age 89 on October 7, 2012.

Schott pleased the palates of her family and friends with her cooking for decades. Her baking was well-known in south central North Dakota. Growing up on a German-Russian farm between Fredonia and Gackle, N.D., she learned to bake and cook when she was only eight or nine years old and it became an important part of her life. She credited her mother to being her home economics teacher. Most of the helpful hints that Alma's mother gave her had been used for approximately 75 to 80 years.

"This book is absolutely charming," said Evon J. Dewald, retired teacher/librarian. "The reader feels as though the author and reader are having a good cup of coffee and a delightful visit. I felt as though I was watching my grandmother and mom baking in their kitchens, and explaining to me how these wonderful family favorites were made. Certainly this recipe book is a happy read."

Some highlighted donations that were received in recent years: Roxanne (Sayler) Henke, Wishek, N.D. donated five photographs of the Ensslen family members in America, a photograph of the Jacob & Katherine (Gackle) Ensslen family in Russia. Henke also donated an impressive metal samovar made in the Batashev Factory, Tula, Russia, made between the late 1890s and 1910.

Richard and Donna Helm of Yuma, AZ., donated two wedding dresses and a pair of silk gloves, dating from 1915 to 1925, and copies of baptism and confirmation certificates for Erna Margaretha Graf, dating to 1908 and 1923. Ruth (Schmidt) Humphrie of Vernal, UT., donated fourteen photographs relating to the Schmidt family from 1895 to 1955. Deloris Diegel of Wishek, N.D., donated three bibles, a theology and a song book, and a black shawl, all dating from 1873 to 1930. Marlene (Flath) Strand of Wilton, CA., donated translated letters of 1910 to 1948, photographs of textiles and a family tree. The wedding dress, gloves and shawl donations are housed at the Emily P. Reynolds Historic Costume Collection on the NDSU campus – www.ndsu.edu/erhcc.

For further information about the new cookbook, 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 and photographs), contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 6050, Dept 2080, Fargo, ND 58108-6050 (Tel: 701-231-8416; Email: Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu; the GRHC website: www.ndsu.edu/grhc).

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