

In Touch with Prairie Living

November 2013

By Michael M. Miller

Germans from Russia Heritage Collection
North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

GRHC

HERITAGE COLLECTION

As I prepare the November text, I am reminded of my first experience in writing this column in November, 1998. This is the 202nd monthly column written in 15 years. I appreciate the positive comments and continued interest from readers. In a future column, I will share with you the unforgettable experience of my travel to Argentina from September 23 to October 16 for the final filming and interviews in the Spanish, English and German languages for the 2015 South American Germans from Russia one-hour documentary project of Prairie Public Broadcasting. More information and photographs at <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/outreach/documentaries/sadocumentary.html>.

My Thanksgiving regards to you and your family. We can be most thankful that our ancestors immigrated to the Dakota prairies, the USA and Canada from their former German villages of Russia. When I visited with tour members in May 2013 in the former German villages near Odessa, Ukraine, I was reminded of the life challenges these villagers experience every day for their personal survival, health and livelihood where our ancestors lived before immigrating to North and South America.

Jeremy Kopp, GRHC Special Collections Associate, attended Sauerkraut Day on October 9 in Wishek, N.D. with our displays. He comments, "Sauerkraut Day was a special day for me as it marked one year since I began working at the GRHC! I enjoyed catching up with many familiar faces in Wishek; the community is so welcoming!"

The NDSU Libraries' GRHC's most important outreach 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 Convention Center/Centennial Hall (November 22-24) and the Bismarck Holiday Showcase is at the Convention Hall (December 6-8). The schedule is Friday, 4-9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Come and visit our booth at the Fargo and Bismarck Holiday Showcases.

At the Holiday Showcases, we will premiere the new GRHC published book, "The Russian Germans under the Double Eagle and the Soviet Star: Including a Pictorial History of Cities, Landscapes and People", by the Bernd G. Längin. The website for the book is <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/doubleeagle.html>. This popular book was originally published in 1991 in German and has been translated to English and published by the GRHC.

From the back of the book, "Called by the Czars, banned by the Soviets: The Russian-Germans – Their great contributions advanced the cause of the Russian Empire for two hundred years. Bernd Laengin paints a picture of the rise and fall of the German minority under the Double Eagle and the Soviet Star. With an effectively unknown fate, a history is recalled before all traces of the German generations on the Volga, in Ukraine, in the Caucasus, Bessarabia and Volhynia are completely obliterated." Alex Herzog, who edited the book, writes, "This book is a good, comprehensive summary of the history of the Germans in Russia, and the illustrations contribute well to the message and content of the book."

Bernd G. Längin (1941-2008) was a longtime colleague and friend, I have fond memories of my visit with Bernd at Winnipeg, Manitoba and in Fargo,

and his deep interest in the heritage and culture of the Germans from Russia in the Dakotas. His dream was to see this book translated and published in the English language. This book with the impressive historical photographs, is a wonderful tribute to his important work as a journalist and writer. He blends these photo images with the important story about the various Germans from Russia groups. Bernd had a particular interest in the Amish, Hutterite and Mennonite German communities and includes many outstanding photographs of their life. Bernd wrote over twenty-four books in his lifetime and was a wonderful story teller. He travelled the world many times and dedicated his life to the impact that leaving Europe, and Germany in particular, had on its many emigrants.

Chapters in the book visually cover: The Volga Region; Ukraine; Germans in the Caucasus; Bessarabia; Volhynia; and Siberia, Steppe Regions and Middle Asia. Bernd Längin shares descriptive chapters of "The Siren Call of the Czarina" and "First Called, then Banned" relating to the ethnic Russian-German groups.

We are deeply honored when his wife, Christiane Längin of Winnipeg, donated Bernd's important personal library in 2011 for the Bernd G. Längin Collection at the NDSU Libraries' Germans from Russia Heritage Collection.

For additional information about the Friends of the GRHC, the 20th Anniversary Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany (May 15-25, 2014), and donations to the GRHC (such as special collections, 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