

In Touch with Prairie Living

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By Michael M. Miller

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



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA
GRHC
HERITAGE COLLECTION

The North Star Chapter of Minnesota Germans from Russia has published an outstanding new book, "Hollyhocks and Grasshoppers: Growing Up German from Russia in America". The stories are written by chapter members, many with North Dakota & South Dakota Roots, living in the Twin Cities, including longtime colleagues and friends: Bernelda (Kallenberger) Becker, Sharon Grenz Chmielarz, James Gessele, Nancy Gertner, Chris Huber, Dallas Zimmerman, Cynthia Miller, Jake Klotzbecher, Penny Eberhardt and Patsy Ramberg.

There are 35 essays and poems with vintage photographs on the topic of growing up German from Russia in America. Bernelda Becker, a Eureka, S.D., native, writes about Work Day at the Country School, Butchering Day, The Bogeyman Behind the Closet, From Russia, Mit Liebe, Grandmother's Lasting Influence and The Eureka Bazaar. James Gessele, Mercer, N.D. native, writes Juneberries, Kuchen: What's In It for Me?, and Mercer's First Television Set. Cynthia Miller, Beulah, N.D. native shares about Fleischkuechla at the Dairy Queen.

Christmas services in a country church... going to town on Saturday night... the utter deliciousness of homemade ethnic food. These are only some of the memories shared by members of the North Star Chapter of Germans from Russia in this beautiful anthology. The authors' experiences span decades and cross state boundaries, evoking feelings that all descendants of immigrants share. The voices of the past shine through in these pages, good times and hard times, family and friends, new things colliding with old ways. The warmth and steadfastness of these pioneers remains the same, viewed through the eyes of the people

who experienced it.

"All things German Russian are contained here -- rock picking and kuchen-making and root cellars and country school and fleischkuechle and brauche and back-breaking work in the fields and meadowlarks and butchering and church-going and hochzeits and wedding schnapps. These things were so ubiquitous to many German-Russian childhoods that it would have been impossible to imagine life being any different. And now, it is so different. To grow up German Russian was to be taught by one's elders to aim yourself forward, into the future, into hard work, America, and assimilation. The authors whose work is contained in "Hollyhocks and Grasshoppers" have willfully disobeyed that forward command for this short time. They have looked back with intensity and real mastery to conjure up that lost world that lives quietly within those of us who grew up German-Russian. Their backward gaze is joyful and full of longing. Each sentence, each line here rings with honesty and empathy, understanding and, most of all, love."

--- Debra Marquart, author of "The Horizontal World: Growing Up Wild in the Middle of Nowhere"

"What a wonderful conversation! The authors are a congregation of individuals discovering that they are part of something big, a shared remembrance that makes them Germans from Russia. Their conversation is full of things of the senses, and it is utterly authentic."

--- Dr. Tom Isern, Distinguished Professor of History, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

"This impressive collection provides a kaleidoscope of childhood memories and poems in the voice of

the Germans from Russia descendants whose ancestors left their German villages in South Russia and settled the Northern Plains in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century. Kudos to Minnesota's North Star Chapter, Germans from Russia, for inspiring their members to share their memories with the rest of us." --- Michael M. Miller, Director & Bibliographer, GRHC, NDSU Libraries, Fargo

"Hollyhocks and Grasshoppers" is available from the GRHC at the webpage - <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/hollyhock.html>.

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.

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