

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 new traveling exhibit, *Women Behind the Plow*, will be featured at the NDSU Library, Fargo, N.D., from March 14 to April 22, 2016. The exhibit is sponsored by the Tri-County Tourism Alliance (Emmons, Logan & McIntosh counties, south central North Dakota) – www.germanrussiancountry.org.

Following NDSU, the exhibit will be on display at the Opera House, Ellendale, N.D., May 5-7; Lehr, N.D. Tabernacle, June 13-16; Lake Region Heritage Center, Devils Lake, N.D., July 7-27; Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention, Ramkota Hotel, Rapid City, S.D., September 7-11; Harry L. Petrie Public Library, Linton, N.D., October 3-21. Photographs of the exhibit can be seen at <https://flic.kr/s/aHskj3dKNi>. The exhibit panels feature photos and memories created from interviews collected with the assistance in part from a State Historical Society of North Dakota grant.

Rosina (Kemmet) Thurn is pictured on a panel tending the grain wagon as the field of wheat is being combined. Shoveling grain was another chore for farm women. Frieda (Grenz) Stoller is featured on a panel standing on a truck load of grain shoveling through an auger to the grainery near their house on the outskirts of Hazelton in Emmons County, circa 1950s. Frieda said, "My mother, Magdalena (Opp) Gimble didn't work in the grain fields. She tended the garden and took care of the farm animals. Ma was proud of the poultry we raised, especially the ducks and geese whose feathers she would use to make feather ticks and pillows. She fed hogs, milked cows and did a lot of the cooking. I was the youngest and did only minor chores in the farmyard. I never learned how to milk a cow. Ma taught me exactly how to hold a chicken as she chopped off its head."

Eldena (Becker) Rau is featured on a Farmhand tractor circa 1944 or 1945. Farmhands were used by every farmer to make haystacks in the summer. Then in the winter the front part was changed so they could tear apart the haystack and feed it to the cows in winter.

On April 23, I will attend the Spring Banquet of the North Star Chapter of Minnesota (Germans from Russia), at Berea Lutheran Church, 7738 Emerson Avenue South, Richfield, Minnesota (www.northstarchapter.org). The featured speaker will be Louise (Regehr) Wiens, Leamington, Ontario. Her presentation is entitled, *What Kind of Germans Are We?*

In 2015, Louise retired from a long career as a nurse. In retirement, Louise helps her 91-year old aunt who was born in Leipzig, Bessarabia. Her latest endeavor is offering free German language classes to children at her local community library. This is the same library where she developed a love of the English language after immigrating as a child from Germany to Canada in the 1960's. In August 2015, Louise visited Leipzig, Bessarabia, near Odessa, Ukraine, for the 200th Anniversary.

Louise explains, "By 1945 my mother, born in Leipzig, Bessarabia, had been resettled in Germany, but was then told she would have to leave, as she was not born there. When she arrived in Kazakhstan, with her mother and two sisters, my father was a young orphan roaming the village alone, having been swept up from Kleefeld, Ukraine and deported to Martuk in 1942. On December 22, 1955, my parents arrived by train in Friedland, Germany, (in the former DDR), a resettlement camp which is still operating today. They had toiled for over 10 years while in exile on a collective farm in Martuk, Kazakhstan.

The day after arriving in Friedland, I was born in the hospital in nearby Gottingen."

"Reunited in 1955 with many family members in Germany, we lived in Gronau until 1961 at which time an offer of sponsorship came from a cousin, Dr. J.G. Neufeld of Toronto, Canada. Many organizations at that time were still busy reconciling families and Mrs. Neufeld recognized my father's name in a German Canadian newspaper as a first cousin."

"Declining another opportunity to move to South America, we left most of the extended family behind in Germany, Belgium and Russia, and boarded the *Seven Seas* ocean liner in Bremerhafen, Germany, arriving in Montreal, Canada July 1961. Stopping briefly in Toronto, we continued to the southern most tip of Ontario and settled in Leamington, a prosperous farming community, settled by many German Russians in the 1920's, and by many Italians from Sicily in the 1950's. Dr. Neufeld relocated to British Columbia in his later years where he established the *Anna and J. G. Neufeld Science Centre at Trinity Western University*.

You can read Louise (Regehr) Wiens compelling essays at the GRHC website at http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/custom_traditions/index.html – Louise (Regehr) Wiens Memories.

If you would like more information on how to purchase these books or you would like to donate family histories and photographs to the GRHC, contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 6050, Dept. 2080, Fargo, ND 58108-6050. (Tel: 701-231-8416); Email: Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu; website: www.ndsu.edu/GRHC.

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