

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 Welk Homestead is open to the public until Labor Day, September 5, Thursdays to Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. The Ludwig & Christina (Schwahn) Welk Homestead, near Strasburg, ND, became a State Historic Site on July 1, 2015. More information of the Homestead is at <http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/welk> and http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/lawrence_welk/index.html.

I am pleased to announce NDSU Libraries' Germans from Russia Heritage Collection sponsorship of the 21st Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine, May 18-28, 2017. Leading the tour will be Michael Miller, GRHC Director, and Jeremy Kopp, GRHC Special Collections Associate. The tour includes Berlin, Germany; Odessa, Ukraine & the former German villages; Stuttgart, Germany. For complete information, schedule and tour costs visit: library.ndsu.edu/homeland-tour.

Personally, the Homeland Tours have truly been a rewarding, amazing and unforgettable experience. I have met wonderful people who have become friends in Odessa and the former German villages. Life today is very difficult economically for people living in the former German villages where our ancestors once lived before immigrating to the United States and Canada and to Argentina and Brazil. The bonding of tour members as lifetime friends has been very special to me.

The tour offers travelers the unique opportunity to visit the villages of their German-Russian ancestors near Odessa, Ukraine. Tour members will walk where their ancestors walked and have their eyes opened to village life.

Tour members will see many sites, including the Brandenburg Gate, Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin Wall, Odessa

Opera House, Potemkin Steps, Black Sea and Bessarabian German villages, shores of the Black Sea, outdoor markets, a German-Russian Museum, historic churches, and Alsatian architecture. While in Stuttgart, Germany we will have a one-day tour to Alsace, France along the Rhine River. Many of our German-Russian families left Alsace as well as Baden and Wuerttemberg to immigrate to South Russia (southern Ukraine) from 1804 to 1808.

Isabelle Roth Allan of British Columbia, shared, "This was an unforgettable trip back to my roots. I especially enjoyed the trips to the village of our parents and being where they lived their lives. I have also come to appreciate the courage and tenacity these Germans from Russia carried with them and passed on to us. The Journey to the Homeland has been an awesome experience."

I shall always remember when I was with Isabelle and her sister at the former St. Michael's Catholic Cemetery at the village of Kandel, Kutschurgan District, where her grandparents were buried. In May 2017, during the tour village visit, there are plans for a memorial monument dedication at the Kandel Cemetery.

Marie Tandeski Delizonna, San Jose, Calif., Maddock, ND native, shares, "It certainly has given me a better understanding of my background. Indeed we are blessed that our ancestors had the courage to leave home and family to seek a new life in an unknown country and thrive! Again thank you for all the effort you put into this trip and preserving the culture of the Germans from Russia."

Ruth Tietz DeNault, San Clemente, Calif., native of New Leipzig, ND comments, "I was able to visit the villages of Leipzig, Bessarabia and

Peterstal near Odessa, the ancestral home of my grandparents. I was able to stay overnight in Leipzig. Nearby Peterstal is where my grandmother was sent to be a babysitter and shepherdess when her father and grandfather died in a blizzard. It was a privilege and blessing to see those villages, the homes where our people lived so long ago."

James and Alice Zimmerman Ackerman, Fargo, natives of Eureka, SD, and Venturia, ND shared, "These memories – nobody will ever be able to take from us. In our wildest dreams we never thought we'd walk on the soil that our ancestors came from. We were lucky enough to go to a village named Glueckstal and stay overnight. It was great to meet our fellow tour members, people we hope will stay in contact in the future."

Penny Kramer Eberhart, Stillwater, Minn., native of Ashley, ND stated, "I better understand why our ancestors missed some parts of their life in Russia. The fertile soil, the large fields of wheat, the vineyards and fruit trees, were greatly missed [by our ancestors] when compared with the hilly rock soil, no trees and endless wind in the Dakotas."

If you would like more information about the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine (May 18-28, 2017); or would like donate to the GRHC (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; website: www.ndsu.edu/GRHC.

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