

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

On July 7-8, Bob Dambach, director of television at Prairie Public Television (PPTV), and I will travel to Lehr, Wishek, Napoleon and Strasburg to review sites for a new Germans from Russia foodways documentary produced by Prairie Public and the Tri-County Tourism Alliance (Emmons, Logan and McIntosh counties, south central North Dakota) – www.germanrussiancountry.org.

Filming and interviews will be completed in the fall of 2016. The premiere of the new documentary is scheduled for July 12, 2017, at the Heritage Center, Bismarck.

In 2000, PPTV, produced the award-winning documentary, *Schmeckfest: Food Traditions of the Germans from Russia*, which has been one of the most popular programs of the Germans from Russia Series shown on PBS stations throughout the USA. Further information for *Schmeckfest* is at <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/tapes/foodpantry.html>.

Ronald Vossler, native of Wishek, an Associate Poet-Laureate of North Dakota, has authored a new book of fiction, *Dinosaur Café: A Semblance of Monstrous Prairie Creatures*. Vossler shares stories that were shaped from the lore, superstitions, and history of the Dakota Germans revealing the intense inner world of an unknown ethnic group, working out its destiny on the immensities of the American prairie.

Vossler's Introduction includes: "Central Dakota was a distant place – its homogenous population the highest concentration in the world of Black Sea Germans, an immigrant minority to which I belonged --- and it deserved, I thought, its own distinct richly imagined literature."

In the chapter, *Dinosaur Café*, Vossler writes: "Fresh off the farm,

Maggie took her first job as a café waitress in the oldest building in town, whose sloping and shifting floor boards betrayed the fact that the joists needed repair and the foundation was shifting – a more than fortuitous event, for on those uneven floorboards farm-girl Maggie, for the first time in her life, regained her fugitive balance. Not much later, by the way of a loan from her thrifty parents, she bought out the previous owners of the café, and set up her own business. Our Maggie, drawing on a childhood of herding cattle, and half a century of her observation of customers waited on hand and foot, grew into a self-taught philosopher."

Other Stories include: *Fried the Bale Queen of the Lost Jehus of Gnadenthal County*; *Monologues of Viola*, *Watching Over Her Prairie Babies*; and *The Final Incarnations of Gottliebina Schmetterling, Healer*. For more information, go to <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/rvossler/dinosaurcafe.html>.

Other books written by Vossler are at <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/rvossler/rvosslerlist.html>.

The Welk Homestead near Strasburg, ND, is now open to the public until Labor Day, September 5, Thursdays to Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. The Ludwig & Christina (Schwahn) Welk Homestead 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.

The NDSU Libraries' Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC) is sponsoring the 21st Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine May, 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, and Stuttgart, Germany. For complete information, schedule and tour costs visit: <http://library.ndsu.edu/homeland-tour>.

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 historic 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, we will have a 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.

The Germans from Russia Heritage Society 46th International Convention is September 7-11, 2016, Ramkota Hotel, Rapid City, SD. For registration and schedule, go to www.grhs.org.

If you would like more information about the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine; 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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