

In Touch with Prairie Living

November 2017

By Michael M. Miller

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



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA
GRHC
HERITAGE COLLECTION

In preparing the November 2017 column, I am reminded of writing the first column in November 1996. This is the 251st monthly column in 21 years (1996-2017). My appreciation to all for the continued interest from readers.

Thanksgiving regards to you and your family. We can be grateful that our ancestors immigrated to the Dakota prairies, Canada, USA, and South America from the former German villages of South Russia. Having visited these former German villages near Odessa, Ukraine, in May 2017, I have seen the difficult lives and challenges the people of Ukraine experience today.

The GRHC's largest outreach event is the Pride of Dakota Holiday Showcase. We will have a booth at the Fargo Showcase at Scheels Arena, 5225 31st Avenue South, November 17-19, The Bismarck Showcase will be on at the Events Center, 315 South 5th Street, December 1-3. The times for both events are Friday, 4-9pm; Saturday, 9am-5pm; Sunday, 11am-4pm.

Featured at the booth will be the popular new DVD and companion cookbook, *Gutes Essen: Good Eating in German-Russian Country*. The documentary was produced and funded by Prairie Public Broadcasting – www.prairiepublic.org and the Tri-County Tourism Alliance – www.germanrussiancountry.org.

The DVD documentary celebrates the food culture of the Germans from Russia who immigrated to south central North Dakota beginning in the 1880s. Visit the kitchens of ten local cooks who make strudels, sauerkraut, kartoffelkurbis, stumbus, fleischkuechla, borscht, German potato salad, stirrum, knoephla soup, and kuchen. Spend a morning at the historic Model Bakery in Linton where kuchen is hand crafted, and tour Grandma's Kuchen in Ashley to

see a mechanized method for mass marketing. Learn the tricks of making sausage at Schmitt Locker in Napoleon and the Supervalu Grocery at Zeeland, explore the church fair and supper in Strasburg, and the 91st annual Sauerkraut Day in Wishek.

The new cookbook features recipes of ten North Dakota women filmed in the documentary: Mary Ann (Werre) Lehr, Lehr; Sue (Kaseman) Balcom, Mandan; Violet (Eiseman) Diegel, Wishek; Deann (Haak) Larson and her sister Carrie (Haak) Heidrich, Strasburg; Donna (Hoffman) Eszlinger, Ashley; Carolyn (Kuhn) Sperle, Napoleon; Theresa (Meier) Eissinger, Napoleon; Marion (Kramlich/Woehl) Schweigert, Lehr; LaVerna (Dockter) Kaseman, Wishek; and Marge (Burlack) Horner, Napoleon. Carolyn (Kuhn) Sperle was filmed at the age of 100 on July 8, 2016. She passed away at age 101 on July 29, 2017. Many other well-known German-Russian recipes are included from the kitchens of Emmons, Logan and McIntosh kitchens.

Virginia (Hieb) Wanzek, who compiled *Treasured Family Recipes*, writes, "The 'Gutes Essen' cookbook is a great reminder of the time I spent in my mother's kitchen. For me, this was a long time ago, but I will never forget the wonderful food that came out of that kitchen. This cookbook contains and preserves the old recipes for future generations. I also enjoyed seeing photos of the old favorites along with copies of the original hand-written recipe cards. 'Gutes Essen' will have a special place in my collection of cookbooks and I will enjoy sharing it with my family."

Other new items at the Holiday Showcase booth include the hardcover book, *Women Behind the Plow*; *Sophie's Grandma* (a new

German-Russian children's book); *Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota*; *Russian Agriculture in the 1880s*; and *The Prairie Post Office: Enlarging the Common Life in Rural North Dakota*.

Women Behind the Plow, published by the Tri-County Tourism Alliance, features the photos and stories of 18 women who raised families on their farms in Emmons, Logan and McIntosh counties. Claudia Berg, Director of the SHSND writes, "The efforts of the Tri-County Tourism Alliance and the author Sue (Kaseman) Balcom, continue the work documenting and celebrating the Germans from Russia. The true culture of a community can be illustrated in everyday life by everyday people."

Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota, published by the North Dakota State University Press, is one of the most important ethnic studies books ever published in the USA. Thomas D. Isern, Distinguished Professor of History at NDSU, writes, "Father Bill would agree that a fundamental value of the book is regional. The book documents and defines the identity of North Dakota as the most ethnic of all Great Plains states." The book includes many photographs from the Homesteads of North Dakota from the Photographs of the Father William C. Sherman Photograph Collection, at the GRHC, NDSU Libraries, Fargo – www.digitalhorizonsonline.org.

If you would like more information about the Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine; becoming a Friend of the GRHC, or to donate (family histories and photographs), contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 6050, Dept. 2080, Fargo, ND 58108-6050 (michael.miller@ndsu.edu – 701-231-8416); website: www.ndsu.edu/grhc.