

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
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This month we are preparing for the 22nd Journey to the Homeland Tour to Berlin and Stuttgart, Germany, and to Odessa, Ukraine, May 16-26. The first tour was in May 1996.

May tour members will visit these Black Sea villages: Karlsruhe, Kathariental, Landau, Rastatt, Speier, Worms (Beresan district); Baden, Elsass, Kandel, Mannheim, Selz, Strassburg (Kutschurgan District); Alexanderhilf, Grossliebental, Gueldendorf, Josefstal, Mariental, Neuburg, Peterstal (Liebental District); Brienne, Friedenstal, Gnadenfeld, Krasna, Paris, Sarata (Bessarabia). This year's tour members are from Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin, Alberta, Canada, and Scotland, UK.

I would like to share comments from tour members who will join the May tour to Germany and Ukraine.

Rita Kelly of Bismarck writes: "I am a German-Russian descendant from all four grandparents (don't let that acquired Kelly last name fool you!), I lived on a farm 12 miles northeast of Dodge, ND, before growing up at Bismarck. Having spent some time in Germany with Weissenburger relatives in Neuburg am Rhein, plus tracing Wenz and Seidel family roots from around the Stuttgart area and northwest to Neuburg am Rhein, I am ecstatic to be able to make this trip to the Odessa area to get a feel for the land from which all four of my grandparents – who knew each other there – emigrated in 1907. I realize little will be left of actual artifacts, but geography shapes us."

Leo Wolfe of Seattle shares: "I was born in McHenry County, ND, near Blumenfeld, settled by Germans from Russia from the Catholic Kutschurgan colonies. My family moved to Towner, ND, when I was four. I had to learn English, as we spoke German on the

farm. I am looking forward to tracing my roots in Germany, France and Ukraine; and walking in my ancestors' foot steps."

Randell Stephenson, Aberdeen, Scotland, writes: "Among many other far-flung corners of the world, I've spent quite a lot of time doing fieldwork and collaborating with local scientists in Ukraine and Romania and know that both families of my maternal grandparents (who met in Alberta) came from the Bessarabia-Odessa area. My mother died in 2017 and this coming summer my brother, sister (both of whom live in Canada) and I are planning a family reunion including children and grandchildren who live in Canada, Australia and China, so it seemed like a good idea to join the May tour and bring home to the reunion some stories and insights into our mother's heritage."

Doris (Eszlinger) Dickinson, Port Saint Lucie, FL, native of Ashley, ND, writes: "I'm interested in visiting the ancestral villages because my Grandfather Andreas Neu, was born in Neuberg, South Russia. He was baptized in the Lutheran Church at Alexanderhilf. He left his family in 1905 from Odessa for the 15 day trip at sea for Baltimore. A train ride took him to his Uncle Jacob Neu in Menno, SD. He worked as a farm laborer for Fred Neu for three years. He met Louisa Weber and married her. They moved to the present day Neu farm two miles northwest of Ashley, ND. Four generations of Neu's have been farming this land, bought by Grandfather Weber. Also, my Eszlinger grandparents lived in the Stuttgart area, went to South Russia, and then came to America in the early 1900s. They traveled through Canada and homesteaded land near Danzig, McIntosh County, ND. The reason for this trip is to walk on the land

my ancestors lived and worked."

Jocelyn (Renner) Tang of Fargo, native of Mandan, writes: "I was born in Mandan, ND, to Lawrence Renner and Elizabeth Kuntz. My daughter and I went on the Journey to the Homeland Tour in 2014, but unfortunately the Odessa and ancestral villages part of that trip were canceled due to the conflict in Ukraine. My daughter is joining me again as we try to walk the same earth and look at the same sky as my grandparents did in Ukraine. We left something on the table back in 2014 and now we hope to fulfill our dream!" Jocelyn's great aunt is the late Fern (Renner) Welk, wife of bandleader Lawrence Welk.

Rachel (Neu) McCleary of Ipswich, SD, native of Ashley, ND, comments: "I am very interested in visiting and learning about the homeland. My main interest is the current culture of the people. My grandfather came to South Dakota in 1905. My great-grandparents came prior to North Dakota."

Glenn Schumacher, Boise, ID, writes: "I am very interested in walking around the homes and villages where my ancestors once lived, the churches where they worshipped, the cemeteries where my ancestors are buried, and seeing the fields where they toiled. I have come to realize that due to war, famine and resettlement efforts, much of that history is now gone. However whatever remains I would like to see."

If you would like more information about the 23rd Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine (May 2019); becoming a Friend of the GRHC, or would like donate (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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