

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

I look forward to attending the 48th Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS) International Convention, July 18-22, at the Ramkota Hotel, Pierre, SD. Registration information is at www.grhs.org.

The GRHS Convention workshops include: *Can't Find Great Grandpa*; *Historic Papers Can Enrich Your Family Story*; *Watermelon and Thistles: Growing Up German from Russia in America*; *Cooking Stirrum*; *Making Spaetzle*; *Beyond the Myth, Preservation of Germans from Russia Agricultural History*; *Overcoming the Genealogy Brick Wall*; *German-Russian Garden and the Seeds They Transplanted from the Steppes to the Prairies*; *Cooking Mennonite Grüne Schauble Suppe (Green Bean Soup)*; and *Dirty Thirties*.

The Welk Homestead State Historic Site, near Strasburg, ND, is open to the public June-August, Thursday-Sunday, 10am to 5pm. More information is at www.history.nd.gov/historicsites/welk.

With the success of the 2017 documentary, *Gutes Essen: Good Eating in German-Russian Country*, filming and interviews for the *Women Behind the Plow*, the 10th documentary of Prairie Public's Germans from Russia Series, begins this summer. Filming will be in Emmons, Logan and McIntosh counties of south central North Dakota. This new documentary will premiere on Prairie Public in March 2019. Major sponsors are Prairie Public Broadcasting, the Tri-County Tourism Alliance, and GRHC.

The well-received book, *Women Behind the Plow* featured oral histories and historic photographs honoring the contributions of women who worked in the fields and raised families in a time before electricity. As daughters of Germans from Russia immigrants, they shared the historic traits of their ancestors love of family, hard work and Christian faith. They embodied the

German-Russian expression, "Arbeit macht das Leben Süß" or "Work makes life sweet". The documentary will share the memories of some of the women featured in the book as well as stories of women on the farm through five decades starting with the Great Depression of the 1930s. In addition, the documentary will compare those memories with the experiences of women working and running farm operations today.

When I am asked for a good book on the general history and culture of the Germans from Russia, I recommend *The German-Russians: In Words and Pictures* by William Bosch. The author nicely covers the immigration of the Volga Germans and Black Sea Germans to Russia. The migration and settlement in North and South America includes chapters of *Why they Left*; *Development in the United States and Canada*; *Routes and Fares*; *What They Found America*; *Eureka, the Wheat Capitol of the World*.

The author writes in the preface of the book: "The German-Russians left Germany and traveled to Russia, where they created an agricultural and industrial empire. Then many of them left all behind and started anew somewhere in the Americas. Their story is a colorful and fascinating tale filled with triumph and tragedy. I hope this book will help people discover the saga of an amazing people and their achievements. The German-Russian people in each area of Russia shared many common experiences with their kinfolk. When I was growing up in the southern part of North Dakota, all of my relatives spoke German dialect. We all had grandparents who grew up in Russia."

William Bosch writes in his epilogue: "Germans who moved to North and South America did well.

In the US and Canada, they gradually assimilated into the English speaking populace and their respective economies. Today, it is very hard to find anyone under sixty who will still speaks a German dialect that was spoken in Russia. Their schools, churches and commercial pursuits are indistinguishable from those of those of other ethnic groups in the United States and Canada. Their customs of three-day weddings have died out, as have Christkindel and Belznickel, which has been replaced by Santa Claus. Their ethnic foods remain, and some restaurants in North and South Dakota serve German-Russian dishes one or two days a week. Perhaps the greatest legacy is the role they played in developing agricultural industries in their new lands in the Americas."

Dr. William Bosch grew up on a farm east of Linton, Emmons County, ND. His mother's Dockter family came from Lutheran villages Neudorf and Kassel (Glueckstal District), South Russia (villages today in Moldova and Ukraine), and his father's Bosch family came from the Catholic village of Rosental, Crimea, Ukraine. He attended North Dakota State University, and completed his Ph.D. in mathematics in 1970 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His working years were spent teaching at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. *The German-Russians: In Words and Pictures* is available on our website at Shop Online then General Books.

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.