

In Touch with Prairie Living

August 2018

By Michael M. Miller

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



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA
GRHC
HERITAGE COLLECTION

In July, I was pleased to attend the 48th Annual Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS) International Convention at the Ramkota Hotel in Pierre, SD. I'm looking forward to the 49th Annual International GRHS Convention which will be held at the Holiday Inn, Fargo, ND, July 31-August 3, 2019.

Rev. Milt Ost, Albert Lea, MN, native of Beulah, ND, was the convention keynote speaker. Ost is a retired minister who served his entire career in the midwest including Napoleon, ND. He is the author of two books about the Ost family: *Tumbleweeds Burning: A Novel, an Epic Saga of Grit and Courage Across Two Continents* (2014) and *Tumbleweeds Burning Book 2: A Novel, an Epic Saga of Grit and Courage in a Strange New World* (2015). Both books are available at the GRHC website.

Ost shared, "These people we call Germans from Russia were gentle and lovable who endured much in their history and lives." He stated these foundations: 1) People of the Law who made the community strong; 2) Home of the Heart where the family meant everything – there was men's work and there was women's work in the home and on the farm. He remembers growing up on a farm near Beulah where they never talked about love; 3) Faith was very important for the Germans from Russia community with their religion and their church brought from the Old Country in Russia.

One of the outstanding workshops at the convention was presented by Allyn Brosz, Washington, DC, a native of Tripp, SD, "Traveling Back in Time: Using Historic Newspapers to Enhance Your Family Story". One of the best sources for old newspapers is from the Library of Congress website, *Chronicling America*. Old newspapers contain news about your family's

movements, about their business activities, their medical events, even crimes and family tragedies. Brosz showed illustrations of the arrival of immigrants on the railroad to Dakota Territory and a list of the dead from the Children's Blizzard of 1888.

Brosz also shared a newspaper story titled, *Immigrants Sing Songs on Train: Family of Four Delight Milwaukee Passengers* – "Young Russian girl immigrant, softly crooning a song of her fatherland, strikes responsive chord in hearts of other members of the family, who break out into songs greatly enjoyed by fellow passengers." These are German-Russian immigrants traveling on the train from New York City to Dakota Territory.

Another excellent workshop was presented by Carol Just, St. Louis Park, MN, a native of Berlin, ND, who introduced the new book, *Watermelons and Thistles: Growing up German from Russia in America* (2018). The 2nd anthology published by the Minnesota North Star Chapter - Germans from Russia. Just invited six of the authors to share their stories: Larry Kleingartner, "Draft Notice"; Ron Scherbenski, "Bauer #2 Launched a Lifetime of Learning"; James Gessele, "Foot in Mouth"; Matt Klee, "The Art of Thumping Watermelons"; Bill Bosch, "Are You German?"; Allyn Brosz. "Burian is the Word for Weeds." Just also gave tips on how to self-publish and distributed handouts with guidelines and suggested topics.

Robert Russell, Director of the Northern State University Library, Aberdeen, SD, presented, "Worth a Thousand Words: Images in the South Dakota Germans from Russia Cultural Center". Russell shared examples of the digital photo collections archived there including the Anne Roesch Larson Collection, Julius Stangl Collection

of Java, SD, Jakob and Klara Ochsner Collection, Eureka – McPherson County Pioneer Museum Collection, and *Prairies* magazine published decades ago by the *Ashley Tribune*.

The GRHC works closely with the South Dakota Germans from Russia Cultural Center located in Williams Library, donating books for their collection. The Cultural Center will celebrate a Grand Opening in October 2018.

Peter Goldade, Fountain Valley, CA, a native of Selz, ND, presented, "Exploration of Repression Files". The Russian Revolution of 1917 ushered in an era of mass atrocities inflicted on the population. Fortunately, the Communist Regime of the Soviet Union left a trove of records which describe these tumultuous times. The records also provide invaluable information on personal and family data and the ultimate fate of many people. Goldade has compiled the important book, *Our Relatives the Persecuted*, available on the GRHC website

Goldade has authored four family histories – Goldade, Jundt, Migler and Sander. His Goldade, Jundt and Sander families have ancestral heritage to Selz, Kutschurgan District, today near Odessa, Ukraine. His published books are available on our website at <https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/general/petergoldade.html>.

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 to donate (family histories or photographs), contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 6050, Dept. 2080, Fargo, ND 58108-6050. (Tel: 701.306.3224); Email: michael.miller@ndsu.edu; website: www.ndsu.edu/grhc.