

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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We are preparing for the 23rd Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine, and Berlin and Stuttgart, Germany, May 15-25. The first tour was in May 1996.

May 2019 tour members will visit these Bessarabian and Black Sea German villages: Alexanderhilf, Gueldendorf, Grossliebental, Josefstal, Mariental, Peterstal (Liebental District); Katharinental, Karlsruhe, Rohrbach, Rastadt, Speyer, Worms (Beresan District); Baden, Elsass, Georgental, Kandel, Mannheim, Selz, Strassburg (Kutschurgan District); Glückstal, Hoffnungstal, Kassel, Klein Neudorf, Neu Glückstal (Glückstal District); Arzis, Beresina, Krasna (Bessarabia).

Tour members are from Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, Alberta, and Ontario. I would like to share comments from tour members who will join the May 2019 tour to Germany and Ukraine.

Brother Placid Gross, Assumption Abbey, Richardton, ND, native of the St. Boniface area, west of Napoleon, ND, writes, "By some good fortune I was on the first Journey to the Homeland Tour 23 years ago [1996]. Many of the cows in Ukraine are red in color and are known as the German Red Cow because the breed was originally imported from Germany. These cows that graze on the Ukrainian Steppe are descendants of the cows that my two grandmothers milked before coming to USA. One of my goals on this trip will be to hand milk a German Red Cow out in the open corral on the prairie. Then, I will be thinking of my grandmothers, Barbara (Schweitzer) Gross and Anna Marie (Schmaltz) Vetter. It will be spring time and when I see any men plowing it will remind me of my two grandfathers, Mathias Gross and John Vetter. I will take off my shoes,

roll up my pants, and run barefoot in the farrow behind the plow just as I did when I was a kid in Logan County, ND." Brother Placid is a well-known German from Russian folklorist.

Sue Hanline, Lowell, MI, shares, "This trip will be a dream come true for me – not only to know where I came from, but to actually go there. Elsass may be just a little place on a Ukraine prairie. Going to Kutschurgan will let me get a big sense of my ancestors little place on the prairie. I am excited to see where my grandmother, Magdalena Volk Bauer of Herreid, SD, began, actually being there and walking where my ancestors walked before me will be an emotional experience. I want to pay homage to them for all they have given to me. Although the communists destroyed the earthly graves of my great-grandparents in Elsass, their spirit must live on in this place."

Ella Melik, Colbert, WA, writes, "My grandmother's parents emigrated from East Prussia to Odessa in the 1880s. My grandmother Ella was born and grew up in the city of Odessa. I have wanted to visit Odessa for years now and spend time seeing this beautiful city on foot. Her sister Anna taught at the St. Paul Realschule, and the sisters corresponded for years. Anna sent many photos, including a postcard-sized photo of a church interior. It was later verified as being St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Odessa. The sister kept in touch by mail for years. In 1937, the letters stopped coming. In 1944, Anna was arrested (basically for being ethnic German) and died in a Soviet prison. A visit to St. Paul's is at the top of my agenda. And if possible, I would really love to be permitted go up the bell tower and see the view of the city from there." Information prepared by Ella Melik about St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Odessa, Ukraine, are

located at https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/history/index.html, scroll down to Odessa, Ukraine.

Timothy Reich, Ottawa, ON, shares, "I am looking forward to the trip, particularly to see ancestral villages of Josefstal and Grossliebental (near Odessa, Ukraine), Stuttgart, Germany, and the Alsace, France." Tim Reich's ancestors emigrated from Russia to start a new life in Canada in three groups, 1908, 1909 and 1912. They all settled in south-central Saskatchewan. "I look forward to meeting tour members with similar interests researching the Black Sea Germans."

Nancy Kraft, Moorhead, MN, grew up on a farm north of Rugby, ND. Her grandfathers were born in Strassburg, Russia. Alex Kraft, 10 years old, and Frank Neiss, 5 years old, immigrated to the USA with their families arriving at the port of Baltimore in 1910. Alex married Rosina Ripplinger and Frank married Catherin Schwan. They farmed in the Rugby area. Nancy writes, "I am excited to see the land they had the courage (thank goodness!) to leave behind. I look forward to meeting everyone, and hearing their stories on the trip."

Roger and Norene Sandberg, Mandan, ND, write, "We are excited to see a part of the world where our ancestors lived – laughed – and loved."

If you would like more information about the 24th Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine (May 2020), becoming a Friend of the GRHC, or would like to 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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