

# 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

The Father William C. Sherman Photograph Collection contains over 13,000 photographs, negatives, and slides donated by Father Sherman to the GRHC in December 2012. The subjects include houses and other dwellings, barns, sheds, and various agricultural structures. The images document interiors and domestic architecture of the homesteaders. To view part of the collection, go to [www.digitalhorizonsonline.org](http://www.digitalhorizonsonline.org).

The collection primarily includes images of three ethnic groups: Germans from Russia, Ukrainians, and Hungarian Germans. Father Sherman and NDSU students explored central and western North Dakota, seeking out vernacular architecture. Most of the images were captured during the summers between 1971 and 1978. NDSU students, Leo Kim and John Guerro, traveled and photographed with Father Sherman. Along with the photographs, the group conducted a site survey of each farmstead, consisting of the location, ethnic information, name of the builder or current land owner, and an estimate of the construction year. Along with the survey, they took measurements of the structures and drew floorplans. All of these documents are included in the collection.

Father Sherman and his research crew not only gathered valuable information related to building techniques and solutions, but also anthropological and linguistic data. Other ethnic groups also documented during Sherman's expeditions included: Bohemian-Germans, Czechs, English, Estonians, Germans, and Norwegians. The diversity reflects the complex ethnic heritage of South Russia. Religious traditions represented included Catholic, Lutheran, Mennonite, and Jewish beliefs.

Father Bill Sherman writes, "For about 10 years at NDSU, I'd get the architecture and history students together and we'd saturate the state studying the housing Germans from

Russia built out there. They built houses just like they did back in the Black Sea areas near Odessa, Ukraine."

The hundreds of photographs include: the Phillip Glovatsky farm near Grassy Butte, John Graff farm near Streeter, Scheuffele barn near Lefor, Edward Bossert home near Karlsruhe, Fred Friesz farm near New Leipzig, Ludwig Welk homestead near Strasburg, St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church near Hebron, Adolph Henzel home near Heart Butte, John Dehnaiuk farm near Belfield, John Pechtl home near Richardson, Keith Stugelmayer home near Ashley, Walter Scheid farm near Hazen, Martin Haase home near Kulm, John Bittlecomb home near Westfield, Matt Erhard farm near Glen Ullin, Barbara Krushenisky farm near New Hradec, Peter Thomas home near New England, Tolloc Olson home near Dagum, Edward Hausauer home near Eureka, SD, Martin Appert home near Hazelton, Richard Sykes-John Henne home near Alfred, Philip Mittleider home near Streeter, Claude Ritz home near Almont, Christina Imhoff home near Burt, Frank Fischer home near Schefield, Valentine Fleck barn near Flasher, Marvin Sipe log cabin near Grassy Butte, Rudolph Engelhardt home near Garrison, Philip Meisel home near Halliday, Jerry Friesz home near Fallon, Matt Korang home near Regent, Theodore Saeman home near Dodge, Ephrem Sioboden home near Benedict, Peter Glass home near Golden Valley, and many others photos.

Father William Sherman is a well-known and celebrated North Dakota scholar and educator. He taught Sociology of the Great Plains at NDSU from 1971 to 2001. He served at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Grand Forks from 1976 to 2003. Father Sherman has been awarded two honorary doctorates from the University of Mary and the University of North Dakota. His work highlights the unique and complex history of North Dakota inhabitants, especially

that of the Germans from Russia.

In 2017, NDSU Press published a new edition of "Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota" by William Sherman. Included in the new edition is a selection of 58 photographs from the Father Sherman Photograph Collection. Thomas D. Isern, Distinguished Professor of History at NDSU, writes in the Introduction, "The ethnic atlas was the product of an energetic, persistent mentor rallying the research efforts of a corps of student researchers. It was Father Bill's ambitious attempt to trace every landowner, establish ethnicity, and gather other pertinent local details of settlement and persistence." Prairie Mosaic is available for sale on our website.

Attached are the following three farmstead photographs from the Sherman Collection:

1. The Klunt (Ibach) home located in Emmons County, ND, is a three-room stone building with clay exterior and gable roof. The building is an example of traditional architecture of the Germans from Russia construction, floor plan, and exterior. The wall's plaster consists of a mixture of clay and straw.

2. The Innozenz Kuntz four-room farmhouse located near Glen Ullin, ND. Take note of the entry addition (forheisal) and front door area of the photograph. The Kuntz homestead was built by a German Catholic family from Russia.

3. The Andreas Renner house near Beulah, ND, built in 1905. An outside wood stairway leads to the open loft room door. Andreas Renner immigrated from Gross-Liebental, Odessa district. The first home on the farm was a sod building.

For more information about the 25th Anniversary Journey to the Homeland Tour to Germany and Ukraine (May 2021), or if you would like to donate family histories and photographs, contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 6050, Dept 2080, Fargo, ND 58108-6050, Email: [michael.miller@ndsu.edu](mailto:michael.miller@ndsu.edu); Tel: 701-231-8416.

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