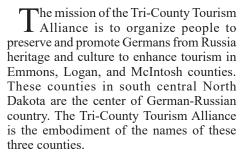
In Touch with Prairie Living

June 2022

By Michael M. Miller

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



The Tri-County Tourism Alliance has partnered with Talking Trail LLC, Bismarck, ND, to develop the exciting Germans from Russia Talking Trail. The user-friendly mobile app is a platform for use with your cell phone. Shared memories, photos, and voices of the rich history for sites in three counties, Emmons, Logan, and McIntosh. Get lost listening to captivating stories from German-Russian Country. Whether it is the tragic story of the Feist children, the heroic story of Wilhelmina Geiszler, or the rich history of the immigrant journey memorialized at the Lake Hoskins Settlement Marker, you will love listening to the stories of these communities.

The German-Russians are one of the most visible and vibrant ethnic immigrant culture of the Plains and Carmen Rath-Wald, President of the Tri-County Tourism Alliance, comments, "A Talking Trail in German-Russian Country allows travelers to hear stories about the people, places, and cultural traditions of Germans from Russia settlers in south central North Dakota. These authentic stories will create layers of understanding of the Real People, Real Places, and Real Things in German-Russian country."

The Talking Trail takes us to St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery, north of Zeeland, ND. The first sod church was built in 1888, and the earliest iron cross marks a grave from 1889. The diphtheria epidemic had a devastating impact on families in the St. John's area between 1887-1899. There were 99 deaths in the St. John's Parish. The greatest number of losses were the children. Cast iron crosses mark the graves of the children of Michael and Louisa (Elizabeth Scherrer) Feist. Deaths in this family were, Magdalena (4), Franz (6), Michael (7), twin sisters Barbara and Francisca (9), and Johannes (13). They all died during Lent,

between March 7 and April 2, 1898.

The Talking Trail also takes us to the Old St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, west of Hague, ND. Founded in 1884, on the grounds of the of the first St. Mary's Catholic Church, the cemetery features the impressive handmade wrought-iron crosses of four blacksmiths who emigrated from South Russia to the Hague area. These names were Paul Keller, Michael Schmidt, Jacob Schneider, and his brother Deport. These handmade crosses are a symbol of the German-Russian characteristics of thrift, hard work, practicality, faith, and creativity. The iron crosses make St. Mary's one of North Dakota's most important artistic cultural sites.

Also enjoy the experience of visiting the Welk Homestead State Historic Site near Strasburg for Talking Trail stories of the blacksmith shop and sod house made with batsa bricks. Here you can see, and hear, the beautiful story of homesteading and prairie life. The Welk Homestead is open from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend, Thursdays to Sundays, 10am to 5 pm.

Call 701-566-5566 followed by the Talking Point number and the # key to experience the stories of the Germans from Russia. The Talking Trail locations in Emmons, Logan, and McIntosh counties are:

223# Emmons Co. Museum, Linton 224# Logan County Museum, Napoleon

225# St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Hague

226# Civic Center, Wishek

227# Emmons County Courthouse, Linton

228# McIntosh County Courthouse, Ashley

229# Logan County Courthouse, Napoleon

230# Dinosaurs on the Prairie, east of Napoleon

231# Schwab Sodhouse, Strasburg

232# Zeeland City Hall

233# St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery, Zeeland

234# Lehr Tabernacle

235# St. Andrew's Cemetery, McIntosh County

236# Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church, Strasburg



237# South-Central Threshing Grounds. Braddock

238# Lake Hoskins Settlement Marker, Ashley

239# Logan County Museum, Napoleon

240# McIntosh County Heritage Center, Ashley

241# Wilhelmina Geiszler Bust, Ashley

242# Burnstad Site, Wishek

243# St. Andrew's White Carpenter Church, McIntosh County

244# Welk Homestead, Strasburg

245# Welk Homestead, Strasburg

246# St. Mary's Catholic Church, Hague

247# St. John's Catholic Church Memorial, Zeeland

248# St. Andrew's Stone Church, McIntosh County

249# Beaver Lake State Park, Wishek

250# Ashley Firehall

251# Zeeland Arch

252# Elise Perras Museum, Hazelton

253# Keller Hotel, Strasburg

254# St. Luke Lutheran Church, Wishek

255# Zion Lutheran Church, Ashley

256# Gordon Hoberg Story, Wishek

257# Friedens Cemetery, McIntosh County

The Tri-County Alliance Germans from Russia Talking Trail is just one of many Talking Trails. These include Fargo Air Museum, Enchanted Highway, Dakota Territory Air Museum in Minot, Northern Plains National Heritage Areas, Old Red Old Ten Scenic Byway, Jamestown ND, Otter Tail County MN, New York Mills MN, Great Voices Series, Talking Zoos, and South Dakota. For further information, go to www. talkingtrail.com.

For more information about donating family histories and photographs, or how to financially support the GRHC, contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, Dept. 2080, PO Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050, (Tel: 701-231-8416); michael.miller@ndsu.edu; or go to library.ndsu.edu/grhc.

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