

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 52nd Germans from Russia Heritage Society Convention will be at the Baymont Hotel, Mandan, ND, from July 19-22, 2023. Join us for this festive gathering of our Germans from Russia community. For more information, go to www.grhs.org.

GRHC's new traveling exhibit, "Building Life and Home on the Prairie," will be on display at the Prairie Village Museum, Rugby, ND, June 5 to August 21. Thanks to a generous gift from the Mike and Peggy Bullinger Family, a second exhibit will be on display at the Harold Schafer Heritage Center, Medora, ND, from June 7 to September 8.

One of the most important books I would recommend for our Germans from Russia community is "The Black Sea Germans in the Dakotas" by George Rath. It is available at <https://grhc-northdakotastate.ndsu.nbsstore.net/black-sea-germans-in-the-dakotas>.

George Rath was born in 1891 in Nesselrode (Kuyalnik), near Birsula, Province of Odessa, Ukraine. His father was Georg born at Bergdorf (Glueckstal District). His mother was Katharine Reiser. He was inducted into the Russian Army in 1916 and began training as an officer candidate at the Odessa Military School. However, in September 1916, he was redesignated as "German Colonist" and transferred to a reserve infantry unit. Following the power grab by the Bolsheviks, he emigrated to Germany, where from 1920 to 1922 he continued theological studies at the University of Tübingen.

In 1922, Rath emigrated to the United States and after ordination, he served ministerial duties with the Evangelical Synod of North America. In 1923, he married Rosine Eisemann, born at Hoffnungstal, Province of Odessa. In 1946, he became an Associate Professor of Modern Languages at the State College of Peru, Nebraska, where he taught until his retirement in 1961.

Allyn Brosz, Washington, DC, native of Tripp, SD, writes, "George Rath's book is an important study on the impact of the ethnic Germans from Russia in the Dakotas. This book contains one of the best discussions of the developments in Russia during the 1860s and 1870s that led to the mass migration

of German-Russians to North America. Rath provides passenger arrival lists of the first immigrants as well as geographic information for the towns and counties in South Dakota and North Dakota and where they settled. This is an essential book for understanding the history of the Black Sea Germans."

Rath gives a fact-filled overview of the Black Sea Germans who settled in the Dakotas. He began with a look at the original Black Sea settlements whose inhabitants originated from Germany and Alsace. Rath traced their immigration to the Dakotas and identifies where they settled.

Book chapters focus on the role and scope of the major Protestant denominations to which the German-Russians were attached. Rath makes note of the German-Russian talent for arduous work and their hunger for land. He was aware of public German-Russian culture, newspapers, and language changes. He recorded facts about the church and community history and interests himself in the origins of place names. Rath provides a list of immigrants who crossed the Atlantic on the ships Cimbria and Thuringia.

In south central North Dakota, Rath's coverage included Early Catholic settlers in McIntosh and Emmons Counties, including groups who settled in the Beaver Creek area in the Spring of 1886.

Part I for South Dakota includes: Settlements of counties such as Bon Homme; Avon, Scotland, Tyndall; Hutchinson; Clayton, Freeman, Kaylor, Menno, Parkston, Tripp; Edmunds: Bowdle, Hosmer, Ipswich, Roscoe; Walworth: Akaska, Java, Lowry, Mobridge, Selby; McPherson: Eureka, Leola, Long Lake; Campbell: Ardis, Herreid, Mound City, Pollock; Brown: Aberdeen; Corson: McLaughlin; Perkins: Lemmon.

Part II for North Dakota includes: Settlements of counties such as McIntosh: Ashley, Lehr, Wishek, Venturia, Zeeland; Emmons: Hague, Hazelton, Linton, Strasburg, Temvik; Logan: Fredonia, Gackle, Napoleon; LaMoure: Alfred, Edgeley, Jud, Kulm; Stutsman: Kensal, Jamestown, Medina, Streeter, Windsor; Kidder: Lake Williams, Pettibone, Robinson, Steele, Tappen, Tuttle; Wells: Bowdon, Cathay, Fessenden, Harvey, Manfred; McLean: Butte, Garrison, Max,

Mercer, Turtle Lake; McHenry: Anamoose, Drake, Karlsruhe, Towner, Upham, Velva; Benson: Esmond, Knox. Sheridan: Denhoff, Goodrich, McClusky, Lincoln Valley, Martin, Pierce: Balta, Fulda, Orrin, Rugby, Selz; Morton: Fallon, Flasher, Glen Ullin, Hebron, Mandan, New Salem, Odense, St. Anthony; Grant County: Carson, Elgin, Heil, New Leipzig, Raleigh, Shields; Stark: Belfield, Dickinson, Richardton, South Heart; Dunn: Dodge, Fayette, Halliday, Killdeer; Mercer: Beulah, Golden Valley, Hazen, Stanton, Zap; Hettinger: Burt, Kennedy, Mott, New England, Regent.

Included in the book is "Supplementary Information About the Settlements" which identifies towns of the large German-Russian communities in the Dakotas. He chronicles names of the first settlers, along with the names of the ancestral villages from which they originated.

Rath also named seventy-eight families of 1873 who left Worms, Beresan District, South Russia (today near Odessa, Ukraine) and settled at Scotland, Dakota Territory.

Rath recognized the importance of published historical information provided by German newspapers such as Dakota Freie Presse, Dakota Rundschau (Eureka Rundschau), Der Staatsanzeiger, Die Wishek News, Nord Dakota Herold, and The Ashley Tribune. Rev. George Rath authored numerous articles in German for the Dakota Freie Presse during the oppression of the Germans in Russia under Josef Stalin, in which he defended their human rights. He wrote of the "Fate of the Black Sea Germans During the First World War."

Rath says of the Germans from Russia, "Wheat raising was the object of their lives, and, from the vantage points of the 1970s, he (the Germans from Russia) foresees stability and continuity well into the future."

For more information about donating family histories and photographs, or how to financially support the GRHC, contact Jeremy Kopp, at jeremy.kopp@ndsu.edu or 701-231-6596; mail to: NDSU Libraries, Dept. 2080, PO Box 6050, Fargo, N.D. 58108-6050; or go to www.ndsu.edu/grhc. You may also contact me directly at michael.miller@ndsu.edu or 701-231-8416.

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