

# **German-Russian Country**

## **An Initiative in Heritage Tourism**

"German-Russian Country" is, first of all, an idea—the idea that the settlement region of the Germans from Russia, North Dakota's largest ethnic group, is an under-utilized resource for heritage tourism in North Dakota.

It is, second, a collaboration, at this point involving several units of North Dakota State University, the State Historical Society of North Dakota, and the North Dakota Division of Tourism. Representatives of these agencies are exploring the resources and prospects for heritage tourism in German-Russian country, with initial emphasis on the counties of Emmons, Logan, and McIntosh.

German-Russian Country is, third, a program of proposed actions designed to elevate the capacity for heritage tourism and hospitality in the region of focus (which may serve, too, as a model for others). This has begun with the organization of bus tours, indicating a strong public interest in the region. It likely will extend to the development of self-guided auto tours and web-based guides for independent travelers. Such developments will require both an expanded knowledge base as to the heritage resources of the region and also an improved infrastructure for heritage travelers. This infrastructure comprises informational elements (internet, signage, and other means), logistical capacity to sustain travelers, and human resources to welcome and serve them.