

## Christmas at New Leipzig, North Dakota

Joanne (Hertz) Townsend, Electronic mail message to Michael M. Miller from Montague, Michigan, a native of New Leipzig, North Dakota, 25 October 2009

Dear Michael:

Did your family make stollen at Christmas?? I have devised my own version of stollen by watching a friend of my Mom's, who was a great baker. I never saw her recipe but remembered how she put it together. Later, after marriage, my husband gave me a Time-Life subscription for recipes from different countries. The service sent me a German book of recipes with German history and lifestyle in a hard-bound book--and the companion was just the recipes in a spiral book for the kitchen. There was a recipe for stollen in it and it reminded me of how much we loved it--but I decided on making a different dough that I had made and also chose the fruits--but the book gave me an idea of how much fruit for the amount of dough. (Besides, where would one find angelica here!) I began to put my own recipe together and soon I was elbows -deep in dough! My recipe makes 2 stollen of a very good size. There were years I'd make 8 of them and give as gifts. Now, I usually make just 2 recipes--make one recipe into 4 smaller stollen for couples and 2 large for when we have more than 2 at Christmas. I don't think there were any other people in town that made stollen except Mrs. Groth. Whether she was from a family that immigrated straight from Germany, I don't know. (She grew up in Detroit and her husband was from Milwaukee.) I'm curious if anyone knows whether some Russian Germans made it or not. One thing: it is not cheap to bake and that may have prevented them from making them. Another friend, a Mrs. Stumpp, who didn't come from Germany till 1950 (the town supported their arrival). She made Klose for the holiday but put apricot preserves inside the dumplings. Heavenly! She also made dumplings from bread dough, steamed them, then quickly rolled in butter and fine bread crumbs and lightly browned. They, too, were delectable! With the holidays coming, I'm already thinking of all the goodies I used to bake when we had three sons home. Now I don't do as much, of course. Like any child, each has their "favorite," so what I bake now depends on who is coming home! I still make pfefferneusse and because of a Dutch mom, I make Speculaas, a Dutch cookie not unlike "windmill cookies" but richer. I used to make lebkuchen and even tried springerle but the boys shied away from those so I stopped. At my age now, and with a hand that needs surgery, I won't be able to do the baking that I'd like--but I'll find a way to make stollen for sure---to serve on Christmas morning!

PS: In the Hertz film there is a Independence Day parade. I must tell you a story about it. The year was 1938. Dad had a 1932 Plymouth and decided he'd be in the parade so got a huge piece of canvas that completely covered the car. Then, he put horizontal stripes of red, white, and blue crepe paper all over it, then made just enough slit across the windshield that he could see through it---enough room to drive. (This car is in the parade early in the film.) I begged to go along --and so I went. In the 30's we had some extremely hot weather--and this day was one! Although the parade wasn't that long, both Dad and I came home soaking wet from the heat that built up inside that car--but it was fun! When I got home, on the table in the kitchen was a "half-birtfhay cake!" Mom had made one layer, cut in two, stacked it and put frosting on to celebrate my "half-birthday. I was born on January 4th! (I was 4 1/2 that day!)