

Germans From Russia

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH OUTLINE

DRAFT

PURPOSE

This outline will introduce you to sources and strategies for researching your German-Russian heritage. The Family History Library has a significant number of materials to help. Most of the Library's holdings are available on microfilm and can be used at the library in Salt Lake City or ordered at one of the family history centers. You can determine whether the library has specific records by using the Family History Library Catalog™. This catalog is available on microfiche and on compact disc computer format. You can use it at the library in Salt Lake City or at any of the family history centers.

You can obtain the address of the family history center nearest you by writing:

Family History Library
35 North West Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150

IMPORTANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

As Imperial Russia expanded, a great need developed for capable and industrious workers, especially farmers, to settle these new and often unsafe lands. Many Germans, eager to improve their positions in life, began to colonize in Russia. As their colonies grew, the Germans developed more land and established "daughter colonies." Many of these Russian Germans later emigrated to the United States, Canada, and South America. The timetable here lists important events in the history of the Germans in Russia.

- 1762 Catherine the Great issues first manifesto inviting foreigners to settle in Russia. No response.
- 1763 Catherine the Great issues second manifesto inviting foreigners to settle in Russia. This time it attracts

thousands of colonists from Germany, largely because of the following incentives.

- ▶ Free transportation to Russia
- ▶ Large tracts of free land, plenty of water, free timber
- ▶ The free exercise of religion
- ▶ Interest-free loans for purchasing equipment
- ▶ Freedom from taxes for ten to thirty years, depending on the area of settlement
- ▶ Exemption from military service for themselves and their descendants
- ▶ Local self-government in colonies

1764-1767 German colonies are founded along the Volga River. Isolated colonies are founded in the Ukraine (including Belovesh) and around St. Petersburg.

1786 The first Black Sea colony, Alt Danzig, is founded.

1789-1790 German Mennonite colonies are founded in the Khortitsa district in the south Russian province of Taurida.

1804 Czar Alexander I invites colonists to settle in the Black Sea region of South Russia.

1804-1827 German colonies are founded in the Black Sea region. Colonies are established in the Odessa and Beresan districts of Kherson province, in the Molotschna district in Taurida, and in the Crimea.

1813 Alexander I invites colonists to settle in Bessarabia province. (This was territory acquired from Turkey in 1812.)

1814-1842 German colonies are founded in Bessarabia.

1816 Two German colonies are founded in eastern Volhynia near Novograd-Volynskiy.

1817-1818 German colonies are founded in the North Caucasus (also called Transcaucasia) and South Caucasus.

1822-1832 German colonies founded in the Molotschna area of eastern Ukraine near Berdyansk on the Black Sea and in the Mariupol district (also called Planer or Grunau district).

1831-1832 Germans from Russian Poland settle in western Volhynia near Lutsk and Rovno.

1849 A group of German colonists from the Beresan district emigrate to Ohio.

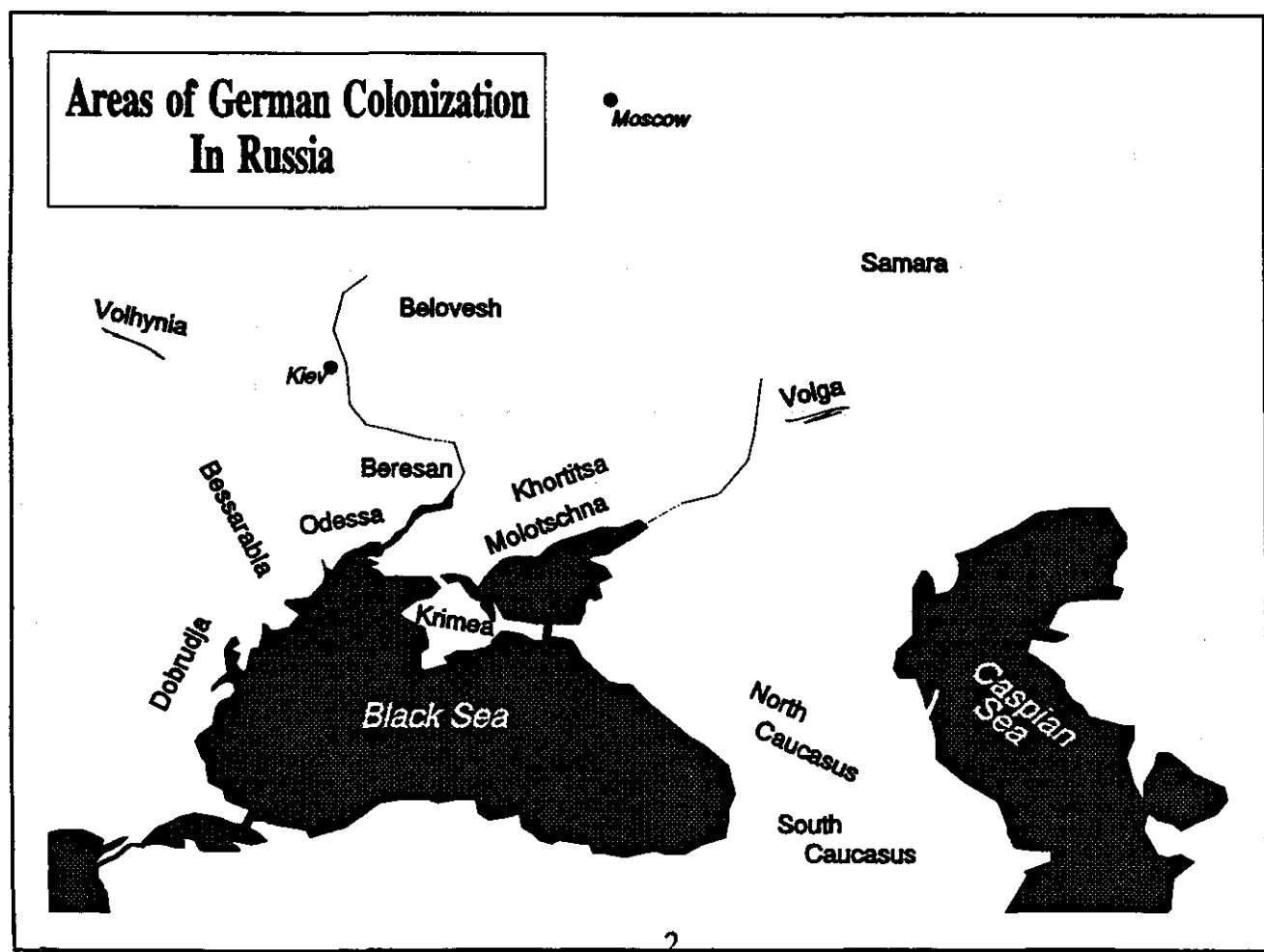
1854-1859 German Mennonite colonies founded near Samara on the Volga river.

1861 Russian serfs are emancipated.

1860-1875 Germans settle in the Volhynia in large numbers. They are encouraged by Russian noblemen needing peasants to farm their lands. But they do not enjoy the favored status offered to earlier German colonists.

1871 The Imperial Russian government repeals the manifestos of Catherine the Great and Alexander I. The German colonists were to lose their special status and privileges and become subject to Russian military service after a ten year grace period.

1872-1873 Several groups emigrate from the Odessa area to Nebraska and the Dakotas. Scouts from other Black



You can also get information about village coordinators as well as about how to become one yourself by writing to one of the following chairpersons (include a stamped addressed envelope):

Carol Harless
595 Camellia Way
Los Altos, California 94024

Margaret Freeman
1015 22nd Street
Santa Monica, California 90402

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following are books of interest to those with German-Russian ancestry. These and many other books about the German-Russians are available in the collection of the Family History Library. Many of these are available on microfilm or microfiche and can be ordered at Family History Centers. To find Family History Library book and film numbers, and to find additional titles, see the subject catalog of the Family History Library Catalog on microfiche under the heading GERMANS — RUSSIA.

Geisinger, Adam. *From Catherine to Khrushchev; the story of Russia's Germans*. Battleford, Saskatchewan: Marian Press, 1974.

Koch, Fred C. *The Volga Germans in Russia and the Americas, from 1763 to the Present*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977.

Miller, Michael M. *Researching the Germans from Russia: Annotated Bibliography of the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at the North Dakota State University Library; with a Listing of the Library Materials at the Germans from Russia Heritage Society*. Fargo, ND: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1987.

Rath, George. *The Black Sea Germans in the Dakotas*. Freeman, SD: Pine Hill Press, 1977.

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Black Sea migrants, respectively.)

8. References or additional information are at times provided. The following are included:
- a) RL stands for Revision List or Census List. These immigration lists provide information only for the Black Sea area for the years 1816; partly for 1811, 1808 and 1858. The Revision Lists are found on pages 499 to 972. There is a place name index to the Revision lists on pages 1015 and 1016.
 - b) PL stands for Passport Lists. These lists (I through VIII) are for a small part of the Black Sea colonies. These provide the itinerary from Germany to Russia. These lists are found on pages 973 to 1014.
 - c) CK stands for Conrad Keller. Conrad Keller published names in his book, *The German Colonies In South Russia* noted earlier.
 - d) OW stands for the book by Karl Stumpp *Ostwanderung der Württemberger 1816-1822*. (Emigration from Württemberg to the East 1816-1822). This lists names of migrants. (Not available at the Family History Library)
 - e) Jb stands for *Jahrbuch des DAI* (Yearbook of the DAI). Published 1929 in Stuttgart. (Not available at the Family History Library)
 - f) Abbreviations and such symbols as *, +, and ∞ are explained on pages 117, 167 and 204.

EXAMPLE;

Ackermann, Johannes, Ww., 41 J., aus Heutensbauch/Backnang-Wu, 1819, nach Hoffnungstal/Od; RL: 58, 73 S.: Johannes 11, Christian 9.

Johannes Ackermann was a widower, age 41, when he migrated from Heutensbauch / Backnang in Württemberg (Germany) in 1819 to Hoffnungstal, Odessa District Russia. More information is given in Revision Lists 58 and 73. His sons, Johannes 11 and Christian 9, were with him.

To find Revision List 58 and 73, turn to page 1015 and 1016 and find Hoffnungstal/Od. Ackermann migrated to Hoffnungstal/Od. The lists for Hoffnungstal/ Od. are found on page 678. The information pertaining to Johannes

Ackermann is found under 58 (page 683) and 73 (page 684).

SOCIETIES, LIBRARIES, AND ARCHIVES

There are several organizations in the United States and Canada that foster and promote Russian-German culture, history, and genealogy.

American Historical Society of Germans
from Russia
631 D Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68502-1199
Telephone (402) 474-3363

Germans from Russia Heritage Society
1008 East Central Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501
Telephone (701) 223-6167

Society for Ancestral Research of
Germans from Poland &
Wolhynia
3492 West 39th Avenue
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V6N 3A2
Telephone (604) 263-3458

These organizations sell books and maps and produce membership publications of interest and value to those of Russian-German heritage.

VILLAGE COORDINATORS

Genealogical research in the German colonies in Russia will, in time, be greatly facilitated by the recently instituted system of village coordinators. These are individuals who coordinate the gathering of information and compiling data-bases about the inhabitants of specific villages. You are encouraged to share your family information with the village coordinator for the village your ancestors came from. You may also benefit from information already submitted by others. A list of villages and village coordinators is available at the Family History Library (in the "Germans in Russia" reference binder by the European reference counter on Basement level 1).

Russian-American Genealogical Archive Service (RAGAS). You may request bilingual research application forms by contacting:

RAGAS
1929 18th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

RECORDS IN NORTH AMERICA

Some emigrant groups, however, may have brought their records with them when they left Russia. Thus, the vital records of a few of these colonies, especially Mennonite colonies, might be in collections in the United States and Canada. If you are looking for Mennonite records, check with the Mennonite congregation in North America where the family first settled.

North Dakota received many immigrant German-Russians from the Kherson provinces of Russia. Their pattern of settlement in this country is directly related to their pattern of settlement in Russia. Catholic families from the Beresan region and many from Crimea settled in Stark county, North Dakota. Catholic families from the Katschurgan and Leibenthal regions settled in Emmons, Logan, and McIntosh counties. In many cases, the original Catholic immigrants recorded their heritage in the records of the new Catholic parish in North Dakota. When researching the genealogy of German-Russian Catholic families from North Dakota, it is important to determine where they originally settled in North Dakota. The records of the Catholic parish in that place will then help in tracing your ancestry. Priests are usually happy to help those who wish to research the records in person and may help by correspondence. Remember that in some cases the records of one parish may have been consolidated with those of another parish. For those whose ancestors settled in Stark county, considerable research has already been done and the information written up. The following books will prove to be of great value:

Aberle, George P. Monsignor. *Pioneers and their Sons*. Bismark, N.D.: Tumbleweed Press, 1980. (Family History Library US/Canada collection book number 978.4 D3a; FHL film number 1,035,608 items 1 and 2)

Volume one includes 165 and volume two 2,120 family histories of Catholic families in and around Stark county, North Dakota. In most cases, these histories trace the direct line two or three generations back through Russia and back to Germany.

Keller, Conrad. *The German Colonies in South Russia, 1804-1904* (A. Becker, translator). Saskatoon, Canada: Western Producer, 1968-1973. (Family History Library Europe collection book number 947.7 F2k; Vol. 1 on FHL film number 873,989, Vol. 2 on film number 1,181,597 item 3).

Volume two includes detailed information about the Beresan Catholic colonies. For each colony a list of inhabitants in 1839-1840 is provided with ages, relationships, and places of origin in Germany.

Brendle, Johannes. *Aus deutschen Kolonien in Kutschurganer Gebiet* [From the German Colonies in the Kuchurgan district] Stuttgart: Ausland und Heimat Verlags-Aktiengesellschaft, 1930. (Family History Library Europe collection book number 943 W2sd; not microfilmed).

Includes detailed information in German about the Kuchurgan Catholic colonies near Odessa. It provides lists of settlers for each village with ages, relationships, and places of origin in Germany.

For Mennonites the following book can be very helpful:

Unruh, Benjamin Heinrich. *Die niederlandisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 17., und 19. Jahrhundert* [The Netherlands-Low German background of the Mennonite migration to the East in the 16th, 18th and 19th centuries]. Karlsruhe: Self-published, 1955.

This book, in German, includes background history on the Mennonite movement into Russia. Lists are then given of families according to the town in Russia where they settled and time period, including in many cases birthplaces in Germany or Poland.

TRACING FAMILIES BACK TO GERMANY

Despite difficulties in accessing records in Russia, it is often possible for you to successfully trace your lineage to Germany and back to the early 1600s. In some cases where vital records are unavailable or have significant gaps it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish a line of ancestors through the 1800s in Russia. Nevertheless, even in these cases there may be family sources or printed sources that enable you to do so. You may have older relatives who can remember several generations of information, or such information may be recorded in family Bibles or other family documents.

The German colonists who settled in Russia came mostly from southern Germany, principally Württemberg. If you can determine the specific place where the family originated you can trace the family back using German records micro-filmed by the Family History Library. In many cases, however, the colonists spent a generation in Poland before moving on to Russia. If you can determine the place in Poland where the family lived, clues necessary to trace the family back to Germany may be found in the Polish records. Many of these Polish records are also available through the Family History Library.

The following work is of great value to those

researching Germans in Russia. It lists most of the original German colonists who came to Russia and usually indicates their place of origin in Germany.

Stumpp, Karl. *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763 to 1862*. Tübingen: Karl Stumpp, 1972. (Family History Library Europe collection book number 943 W2k; also on FHL microfiche number 6,000,829 or on FHL microfilm number 1,183,529). This book is also available for purchase from the Russian German organizations listed on page 7.

This book is the single most valuable source for those researching German families from Russia. It includes excellent information in English on the history of Germans in Russia (pages 15-40) and lists of German emigrants to Russia. For genealogists, the most valuable part of the book is the alphabetical lists of emigrants. These are divided into three sections.

1. The emigrants to the Volga region, pages 117 to 165.
2. The Mennonite emigrants to South Russia and the province of Samara, pages 167 to 204.
3. The emigrants to the Black Sea regions (except Mennonites), pages 204 to 497.

Information about each emigrant listed is presented in the following order:

1. Surname
2. Given name (first name)
3. Given name (second name)
4. Age (this is not always listed)
5. The place in Germany the migrant left. (The village or town name is spelled out; the district name is abbreviated. Abbreviation designations are listed on pages 117, 167, and 204 for Volga, Mennonite and Black Sea migrants, respectively.)
6. Year of migration
7. Destination in Russia. (The village is spelled out; the district name is abbreviated. Abbreviation designations are listed on pages 117, 267 and 204 for Volga, Mennonite and

SOURCES FOR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

Vital Records: Vital records of birth, marriage, and death are needed to undertake actual research in Russia. Such records were kept by the churches. Laws were passed in the mid 1820s requiring Protestant and Catholics to make transcripts of their birth (christening), marriage, and death (burial) records. Records may have been kept earlier, however. These transcripts and some original church records have in most cases ended up in state archives.

RECORDS AT THE FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY

The Family History Library has only recently begun acquiring records from archives in Russia and Ukraine. Nevertheless, some vital records of German colonies have already been acquired from other sources, including the following:

Church records of the Lutheran colonies in Bessarabia. These films do not cover all colonies and are incomplete in many cases. Unfortunately, many of these films are of poor quality. (Most of the Bessarabian films are also available at the library of the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks, North Dakota and at the headquarters of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia in Lincoln, Nebraska.)

- ▶ Church Records of the Lutheran parish of Roschischtsche which had jurisdiction over all the German colonies in western Volhynia.
- ▶ Church records from some German colonies in Bukowina and Galicia, formerly in Austria.

These films may be ordered and used at any Family History Center. For film numbers check the microfiche locality section of the Family History Library Catalog under one of the following:

RUSSIA (EMPIRE), BESSARABIA, (PARISH)
RUSSIA (EMPIRE), VOLHYNIA, (PARISH)
AUSTRIA, GALIZIEN, (PARISH)
AUSTRIA, BUKOWINA, (PARISH)

The library recently acquired church record transcripts from the Lutheran Consistory of St. Petersburg. These pertain to German-Lutheran parishes in the Black Sea area, Bessarabia, Volhynia as well as areas around St. Petersburg itself, but do not include German Mennonites or Catholics. These films cover the time period from 1833 to 1885. The film numbers are listed in the Family History Library Catalog. The fastest way to find them is on the compact disk version of the catalog on computer. Select the "Computer Number Search" and input the number 710454. This is not a film number but rather a computer number which can quickly find the catalog entry with all the film numbers. Unfortunately these films are very difficult to use without the index to parishes which indicates where and on what films you can find specific localities and years. This is *The Lutherans of Russia: Vol. 1 - Parish Index to the Church Books of the Evangelical-Lutheran Consistory at St. Petersburg, 1833-1885*, by Thomas K. Edlund. (St. Paul: Germanic Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 16312, St. Paul, MN 55116, published 1994; FHL book no. 947.2 K23e 1994; not yet on microfiche.) The later records of St. Petersburg archive up through 1820 are at the St. Petersburg city archive and have not been microfilmed.

RECORDS IN ARCHIVES

The Family History Library as yet has NO records from the Volga region, nor from the Caucasus. The transcripts of the Volga Evangelical Lutheran colonies appear to be at the state archives in Saratov. It may be possible to get information from these records through private researchers in Russia. For more information about this contact the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia in Lincoln, Nebraska, listed at the end of this paper. Research in archives in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine can also be arranged through the

Sea colonies and the Volga colonies investigate opportunities in America.

- 1874 The Imperial Russian government amends the 1871 decree and institutes compulsory military conscription of German colonists immediately.
- 1874-1914 Thousands of German colonists emigrate from Russia to North and South America.
- 1914 The First World War begins.
- 1917 Political unrest in Russia leads to two revolutions and the beginning of Soviet communist rule.
- 1919 The United States government enacts strict immigration laws which greatly slows the tide of immigrants. Canada continues to receive German immigrants from Russia.
- 1920-1923 Famine in Russia. Over 150,000 Volga Germans die of starvation.
- 1928-1940 German farms and property are confiscated by the state and Germans are forced onto collective farms.
- 1939-1945 The Second World War. Germany is at war with the Soviet Union. Germans are persecuted and many are moved to Siberia and the central Asian republics. Many who have the opportunity flee to Germany.
- 1991 The communist party falls from power and the Soviet Union breaks up into independent states.

RUSSIAN GERMANS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

In North America, the Germans from Russia were attracted to the great prairies, which were not unlike the steppes of Russia where they had

been farming for generations. Volga Germans settled mostly in Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas. The greatest concentration of Black Sea Germans is in the Dakotas. German Mennonites from Russia settled in Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, California, and Manitoba. Most Volhynian Germans settled in Michigan, Wisconsin and Western Canada. ★

FINDING PLACE OF ORIGIN IN RUSSIA

The first step in researching your Russian-German genealogy is to determine specifically where in Russia your ancestors lived. You may be able to find out the town your ancestor came from by talking to older family members. The family may have documents concerning the place of origin such as old passports, birth or marriage certificates, journals, photographs, letters, or a family Bible. Even if something is written in German or Russian, it may contain valuable information. Get help in reading it. Other sources are found in local libraries and courthouses and at the Family History Library including: naturalization applications and petitions; obituaries; county histories; marriage and death certificates; and American passenger lists of arrivals as well as European lists of departures.

You will want to verify the spelling and location of places where your family lived. A good listing of German colonies in Russia is "Place Names of German Colonies in Russia and the Romanian Dobrudja" by Armand Bauer (Fargo, N.D.: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1974). It is found on pages 130-183 of Russian German Settlements in the United States by Richard Sallet, Richard. (Fargo, N.D.: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1974; on FHL book number US/Can or Europe 973 F2rs; not microfilmed.) This book is available at some public libraries or can be purchased from one of the Russian-German organizations listed in this paper under "Societies, Libraries, and Archives."

AREA D



*"Record Protection in
an Uncertain World"*

WORLD CONFERENCE ON RECORDS AND GENEALOGICAL SEMINAR

Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.
5-8 August 1969

EMIGRATION FROM GERMANY THROUGH POLAND
AND RUSSIA TO THE U.S.A.

By

Prof. George Rath

EMIGRATION FROM GERMANY THROUGH POLAND AND RUSSIA TO THE U.S.A.

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From early times Germany has been a country surrounded by many powerful nations. It has had no possibilities for expansion to make room for its growing population except by means of force or emigration to other countries. We see, therefore, the population from Germany emigrating to countries east and west of their homeland.

In the course of the German emigration to the eastern countries one can distinguish two phases:

1. The emigration at the beginning of the Medieval Age which resulted in the building of cities by the merchants and craftsmen in those countries where they settled.
2. The emigration during the latter part of the 18th century to the farm or open country resulting in the colonization of idle land.

We deal in our discourse especially with the latter emigration. Originally directed to the East, it ended to a great extent in the West; in the United States, Canada and the countries of South America. (1) It would take much time to go deeply into it, and we can only take here a short glance at it in our discourse.

Transylvania

It was the Hungarian king Geisa II (1141 - 61) who invited the Saxons from Flanders and inhabitants from the Middle and Lower Rhine to settle and cultivate his land. Seventy years later the king Andrew II called the German Order to the Burzenland. The Order of the German Knights and the Saxon peasants practically brought Transylvania to life. With the years arose blooming cities, like Hermannstadt, Mediasch, Klausenburg, Kronstadt and others. Before the first world war there lived in Siebenburgen about 250,000 Germans. Ther Germans of the Zips, 46,000, are a part of this group.

The Banat

A continuation of the emigration to this region took place under the Austrian Empress Maria Theresia (1717-1780) and her son Joseph II (1741-1790) in the Banat. This country lies in the lower areas of the rivers Theis, Maros, and Temes. It was won from the Turks in 1718. When Maria Theresia heard of the colonization plans of Catherine II of Russia, she decided to colonize this land for Austria. With a great system of canals the marshy country was drained and then cleaned of brush and trees. About 45 acres of land and many privileges were offered to settlers. They came from almost the same countries as the settlers who went to the Volga, Alsace-Lorraine, Baden, Wurttemberg, and Palatinate. Often members of the same family separated in a manner that one or some went to Russia and the others to the Banat. Correspondence continued for a while but later stopped. About 1,000 families were originally settled in the Banat. Later came more settlers, who had to be satisfied with less land.(2)

Poland.

Poland profited from it's beginning from the German immigration. The cities of Krakau, Warsaw and many others were in the thirteenth century but little villages. The German merchants and craftsmen developed them into industrious and important cities. Polish kings granted great privileges to the German immigrants over a period of several centuries. Among these the most important was the privilege of their own jurisdiction under the Magdeburgian law. However Kasimir the Great (1333-1370) deprived them of that privilege and from that time there began a decline of the German cities and the influence of the Germans. The cities became "Polanized" and the German immigration came to an end for a time.

However, in the later part of the 18th century German immigration was renewed, under favor of the Polish gentry. (3) They leased land to the German farmers from their estates, usually for a period of 30-40 years. According to the Polish law this privilege was hereditary. Thus on the Vistula River sprang up numerous settlements of German farmers. When Poland was divided in 1772, Prussia and Austria began to colonize their Polish areas with German colonists. The Western part of Poland received at that time a great influx of German colonists. Before the first world war Poland had a population of about 700,000 Germans who lived in both the cities and the country. (4)

Galicia

The so-called Tolerance edict of Emperor Joseph II in 1771 found it's application especially in the province of Galicia. Of course Germans settled here very early from the older settlements of Poland, especially in the cities, but after the division of Poland, new groups of colonists came from West Galicia, Germany, and Austria proper, and settled especially in Eastern Galicia. They were both Catholic and Protestant. Land, money and loans (5) were

granted to them, but the country was already very densely settled. The Ruthenians or, as they call themselves now, Ukrainians, were an agriculturally minded people. The German colonies among them remained small. Usually some trade or handicraft had to be learned to go along with farming. These German settlements were extensively spread over the country, (6) their number totaling about 50,000 persons.

Bukowina

This province had already received German immigrants in the Medieval Age. They came into that country, from Transylvania and Galicia. The immigrants of this early time were mostly merchants, craftsmen, teachers and officials. The Moldavian princes were always favorably inclined to the Germans and granted them many privileges. When the first Germans arrived, Czernowitz was only a little village. After Austria had taken over the rule of the country in 1774, it brought in a strong influx of German settlers in order to better cultivate the land. Numerous villages sprang up and other German people settled in the cities. The German language was taught in 500 public schools. In 1875 a German university was founded in Czernowitz. (7) The cities in this country in time took on an European aspect because of the houses built by the Germans. The province had about 75,000 persons of German descent.

Volhynia

The Province of Volhynia was taken over by the Russians after the first division of Poland, but the Polish influence was still strong for many years. The Mennonites, who had settled in the neighboring province of Kiev at Michalin, moved from there to Volhynia around 1723. It is definitely known that some of them settled in this province in 1773, coming from Graudenz, Germany. After the Polish uprising in 1830 the Polish gentry began also in this province as in Poland proper to invite German settlers to their estates as renters, woodcutters and laborers. (8) They leased to them their land or used them to cut lumber in their forests, which was to a great extent sold to German factories. (9)

In 1860 after a renewed Polish uprising the German influx became even larger. The poor Polish gentry was anxious to make use of their marshy lands and forests and invited many thousands of new settlers. The settlements in this province arose before the first world war to about 500, but were usually very small in size. The German population in this province totaled about 200,000. (10) Almost all of them were Lutheran, except of course the Mennonites, but neither group ever became prosperous. (11)

Russia

Already Czar Ivan IV, the Terrible, (1533-1584) had called craftsmen, merchants and officers from Germany and settled them near Moscow in a villiage called "Nyemetzkaya Sloboda". Czar Peter I had also invited many Germans when he built his new capital St. Petersburg. But it was the Empress Catherine II, who with her manifesto of July 22, 1763, brought about a great exodus from Germany to Russia. Not only Germans were invited to come and to settle in her domain but Western Europeans in General.

The unsatisfactory conditions in Germany favored her invitation. In fact the population suffered immensely under the steady wars. There were the three Silesian wars between Austria and Prussia; 1740-1742; 1742-1745; and 1756-1763. Interwoven with them were the Austrian Succession war 1741-1748; and the Bavarian Succession war 1778-1779. Finally the French Revolution came in 1789 (12) midst the general poverty and misery the call to Russia came for many as a relief or last resort.

Of most importance among the provisions of the manifesto, are the first 10 sections. Essentially they promise and grant to the settlers the following:

1. Freedom of Religion
2. Exemption from taxes for a period of ten to thirty years.
3. Loans for the aquisition of necessary tools.
4. Thirty to sixty hectars of land.
5. Exemption from military service for "all the time of their residence in Russia."
6. Self-rule in church and school.

Item number seven, which deals with the freeing from military service, reads thus:

"Paseliwschiesya w Rassii innostrannye wa wso wremya prebywaniya swayewo, ni w wayennuyu, ni w graschdanskuyu sluschbu protiwu woli ich apredeleny ne budut."

In English:

"The foreigners which have settled in Russia shall during all the time of their living there not be put into military or civil service against their will."

Government agents spread copies of the edict translated into different languages in Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland, Austria and Prussia. About 25,000 persons were recruited and directed to the sea ports of Luebeck, Rosslau and also some Hollandish ports including Kronstadt. (13) Some of the emigrants were settled around St. Petersburg in 13

villages, but the great majority was sent to the Volga over Novgorod, Tver, Moscow, Ryazan and Pensa. They landed in Saratov and were placed under the direction of a "Board of Guardians". This board settled the newcomers on both sides of the Volga river. Forty-four villages were founded on the so-called hillside and 60 on the meadowside. Some to the north-east and some to the south of Saratov. (14)

The emigration to Russia went on till 1768, when the German states placed a prohibition on further emigration. This was not, however, until Germany in Russia had become the largest colonist group. Before the First World War it counted 554,000 persons. (16)

In spite of the measures of the western states, the emigration to Russia continued. In the years from 1765-1789 a number of Protestant and Catholic colonies were founded in the provinces of Cherson, Voronezh, Tschernigov and Ekaterinoslav. (17)

Mennonites

It was Potyomkin, governor general of South Russia, who in company with general von Trappe succeeded in interesting the Prussian Mennonites on the Vistula River in the Lowlands of Danzig to settle in the newly acquired areas of the Dnieper region. After having sent two delegates for investigation they, on the promise of an application of the privileges of the Empress being extended to them, moved down the Dnieper in 1789 and with 288 families founded 8 villages on and by the island of Chortiza in the province of Ekaterinoslav. Later a new tract of land was given to the Mennonites by the government along the Molotschna River in the province of Taurida. By 1840 this group had founded 46 villages in South Russia, which had a population of about 10,000. The Mennonites were very successful in their farming and for the most part became wealthy.

Hutterites

Related to the Mennonites are the Hutterites, a religious group which after many hardships and persecutions was reorganized in Moravia by Jakob Hutter, from whom it accepted its name. It finally found an asylum on the estate of Count Rumyanzew in Wischenka on the Dyesna River. From here the Hutterites, with the help of the Mennonite leader Johann Cornies, moved to the province of Taurida where they, in 1842, (19) founded the village Huttertal in the district of Melitopol with 78 families. Later three more villages were founded by them.

Colonization in the Black Sea Region

A continuation of the colonization in Russia was undertaken by Emperor Alexander I. by an edict published on February 20, 1804, he asserted the privileges granted by Catherine II with regard to military service and homerule in church and school, and doubled the land apportionment. The colonists had to have property in the amount of about \$300.00, be married, and present documents of good behaviour. These colonists were to be model farmers for the other nationalities. (20)

While the Volga Germans came predominantly from Hesse and to a small extent from Rhenish Franconia, Palatinate and Wurttemberg, this group came mostly from Werttemberg, Alsace-lorraine, the Palatinate and Bavaria. (21)

As to religion, they were both Protestants and Catholics. A part of them became Baptists in Russia. The provinces in which these immigrants settled were Bessarabia, Cherson, Ekaterinoslav, Taurida, and the peninsula of Taurida. They founded 181 villages. With the other colonies the Russian Empire may have had 300 so-called "Mother colonies". (22) Their population at the beginning may have been about 100,000 persons.

Economic and Cultural Development.

There was a great difference in the economical development of the Volga and Black Sea Germans. The Volga colonies practiced the so-called "Mir" system. According to this the land was divided among the inhabitants. This slowed down the economic development to a large degree. At the Black Sea, though, the original colonial land had to stay with one member of the family. The others had to look out for themselves. Thus the whole village had to look for the needed room or land for the next generation. The so called "mother colonies" had to buy again and again land for the so-called "Landlosen" i.e. those of the colony who were without land. On the newly bought land originated the "daughter colonies." At the Volga, the government twice added land to the original amount; about three million acres. Nevertheless, the need for more land remained. The surplus of the population stayed and was an obstacle in the economic progress.

In the meantime at the Black Sea, the villages bought about twelve million acres of land for "Landlosen", or land-lacking, to avoid overpopulation. (23) The land, however, was never bought from the Russian farmers or peasants. It was the Russian gentry who sold their lands at high prices to the German settlers. Naturally the price of the land rose very fast. In 1910 the hectare - about three acres - was sold for 300 rubles, (\$150.00). Every year more land came into the hands of the German colonists, for they were thrifty and industrious people.

An example may serve to illustrate this. In the provinces of Bessarabia, Cherson, Taurida and Ekaterinoslav, the German population averaged 6% but the amount of their land was 23%. (24) Conditions were similar in other provinces in South Russia where the number of Germans,

including all religious confessions, was about 500,000 souls. They were very much spread out on account of the necessity to make room for their activities as farmers. Daughter colonies were founded in the Don province, the Kuban, the Caucasus, Orenburg, Turkestan and Siberia. Before the first World War there were about 3,000 larger or smaller villages with a population of 1,700,000, not counting the Germans in the Baltic provinces, Congress Poland and Polish Volhynia. (25)

The civil rule of the colonies was executed by the Committee of Guardians in Saratov and Odessa. The direction of the religious matters lay in the hands of the General Consistory in St. Petersburg. (26) The language used in school and church was the native German language. The government did not contribute to the maintenance of the church nor the schools. They were all maintained by the colonists. There was seldom found a person who could not read or write. Illiterates were practically unknown among the Russian-Germans, while according to the census of 1897 the Russian population was as high as 78% illiterate. (27)

Time does not allow us to continue with the destiny of the Germans in the Russian Empire. We confine ourselves here only to these few lines.

During the First World War the infamous government of Czar Nikolas II issued the Acts of February 2 and December 13 of 1915 by which the German colonists lost all rights to their land and property. He could not live up to the execution of these laws for, as we know, he and his family were executed in Katharinenburg. Kerensky postponed the execution of these laws, but the Communists had their chance to realize the ideas of Nikolas. They deprived all Germans in European Russia of their possessions and sent them to Siberia or Turkestan. Not a single German village is left on the European soil of Russia. But in spite of all the disaster, as we hear, the German colonists came slowly back. (28)

Immigration to the United States

On June 4, 1871 the government of Czar Alexander II issued a decree by which the German colonists lost all the privileges granted to them by Catherine II and Alexander I. Even the name was taken away. They were no more "Coloniste" but settlers (in Russian "Paselyane"). They still were not made "Krestyane", as the Russian peasants were officially called, but in fact subjected to the "Semstwo", and made equal to the Russian peasantry. For them, this was a discrimination of their social standing. (29) They began to look for some other place for settlement. North and South America became the countries to which they emigrated.

"Among the many good reasons which motivated the immigration of the Russian-Germans to the United States, four are outstanding: 1- General unrest; 2- the wanderlust; 3- the Ukase of June 4, 1871 and; 4- land hunger coupled with land need." (30) Thus writes A. Schock, in his book: *In quest of free land*. This is all true, but the moral side of

the problem also played an immense role.

In the United States, meanwhile, the West was conquered. Hundreds of millions of acres of land were lying idle waiting for an industrious human hand to wake them up.

The railroads - The Union Pacific, Santa Fe, Burlington, Northern Pacific, and others took upon them the task of linking the Pacific with the Atlantic. The federal government granted them 181,000,000 acres of land, to the individual states 140,000,000 acres. The federal land office sold 100,000,000 acres to settlers. People from their own "old west" and from Western Europe came across the ocean to take homesteads by the thousands and hundreds of thousands.

Congress provided laws to dispose of these huge portions of land. Four laws were outstanding for getting settlers for the West: 1- the preemption law of 1841; 2- The homestead law of 1862 which offered an acre for \$1.25; 3- the Timber and Culture Act; and 4- the Desert Act of 1877. (31) Agents were employed by the federal government and railroad companies as well as by individual states to invite settlers from their own country and Europe. These agents and millions of pamphlets found their way also to Russia. (32)

The first group of Russian-Germans had arrived much earlier though; namely in 1849. It was William Schaufller, a Russian-German, who had studied at Andover, Massachusetts, and became a Presbyterian missionary for the Jews in Constantinople, who pointed out to a group of pietistic minded people in Odessa the religious freedom they could enjoy in America. (33) Another minister of the gospel, Johannes Bonekemper, from Umbrecht, Germany, who was in charge of a parish north of Odessa, also a pietist like Schaufller, decided to move with his group to the United States. However, he went to the then Turkish Dobrudja and his people, about 80 persons, left without him (34) for America where they landed on the 10th of November, 1849. This was the first group of Russian-Germans to come to the United States. However, soon after their arrival they dispersed after suffering many hardships.

A few of them came to Sandusky, Ohio, where they settled. One of them, Ludwig Bette, who had become a wine grower and wealthy man on Kelleys Island in Lake Erie, decided in 1872 to visit his relatives in Russia. While there he talked about the wonderland America, and after what had happened since June of 1871, he found willing ears to listen. He was hardly home, before his closest relatives followed him, and he placed them on his farm. About 75 persons came during the winter of 1872-73, and settled in Sandusky, waiting until spring to move westward. A delegation sent to the West found South Dakota to be a most suitable place of settlement. On April 17th these Russian-German immigrants landed in Yankton and took homesteads 20 miles north of that city. They called the settlement Odessa. (35)

The first settlers from Russia in Nebraska were a group of 46 persons who came in April 1873 from the province of Bessarabia and settled at Columbus. (36)

In the fall of 1873 a group of about 300 persons came on the ships *Cimbria* and *Thuringias* from the province of Cherson, and settled in and near Sutton, Nebraska, (37) with some going to South Dakota.

The Mennonites

The Mennonites had sent to St. Petersburg one delegation after the other to bring about the change of the June edict. But all was in vain. Finally, upon the advice of one of their leaders, Cornelius Jansen, and on the invitation of the Canadian government, they and the Hutterites sent over to Canada and the United States three delegations to look for possibilities to settle. One of these groups reached an agreement with the Northern Pacific railroad for settlements in North Dakota. (38) However, the agreement was not kept. Two of the delegates were received by President Grant, in New York, but he could not give them the assurance of exemption for military service. (39)

The petition of Cornelius Jansen and his friends to the Congress for the setting aside of an area of 200,000 acres for the Mennonites was also not granted. They had to accept the laws made for all immigrants. (40) The American Mennonites organized a "Committee of Guardians" which directed their friends from Russia and assisted them. The State of Kansas received the majority of the Mennonite immigration, about 600 families, with South Dakota receiving about 200 families, and Nebraska about 15. (41)

The Volga Germans

In 1874 the Evangelical and Catholic Volga German colonies held meetings which resulted in the election of 14 delegates whom they sent to the United States to look for land. Nine of them were Evangelical and five were Catholic. They came over on the ship *Schiller* or the Hamburg America Line. They were in the states of Arkansas, Kansas, and Nebraska. In September of the same year the immigration from the Volga began. The Protestants went to Sutton, Nebraska, and the Catholics to Kansas. Some of the Protestants also went to Kansas.

The Hutterites

The first Hutterites arrived in Lincoln, Nebraska, in July 1873. Scouting from here for land and not finding what they expected, they went to Yankton, South Dakota, where they stayed until August, 1874, when they bought an estate west of town on which they founded their first "Bruderhof" - brotherly estate. (42) At the same time they also settled at Silver Lake in Turner County, and later at the Wolf creek on the James River. (43) Later they

organized about 24 "brotherly estates" - "Bruderhofe". - in South Dakota. (44)

Settlements in the Individual States

South Dakota

From 1873 until 1884 the Russian-Germans settled in South Dakota in the counties of Hutchinson, Yankton, Bon Homme, Turner, Douglas, and Mix. By 1884 the land in these counties was almost all taken, and the immigration went farther north with the covered wagon or with the railroad. In the central part of the state are very few Russian-German settlements. They did settle, however, in the more northerly counties of Edmonds, McPherson, Campbell, Potter and Wallworth. (45)

The Mennonites came to South Dakota in the summer of 1873, and settled about 30 miles north of Yankton in the spring of 1874. They took homesteads near Freeman, Menno, and Parker. Most of them came from Volhynia, but also from the Crimea and Molotschna. They did not spread out in South Dakota as did the non-Mennonites. (46)

Nebraska

The settlement at Sutton did not develop to a large degree. The evangelical group spread out from there to Burlington, Colorado; St. Francis, Kansas; Culbertson, and McCook, Nebraska. The Catholics spread to Albion, Nebraska. (47)

The Volga Germans settled partly on farms near Sutton, but the majority went to work at the railroad and in the nearby towns. Materially they were by far less well-off than the Black Sea Germans. They scattered in the towns along the Burlington railroad: Hastings, Grand Island, York. Lincoln, though, became the main place of arrival and settlement. Here they found jobs and from here they spread out at the beginning of the century to the beetfields of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho. (48)

The oldest settlements of the Mennonites in Nebraska is Beatrice. Mennonites from Germany also settled here. Jansen and Henderson have also settlements of this group.

Kansas

The first settlements of the Mennonites in Kansas originated north of Newton in Marion and McPherson counties in 1874. They founded the villages of Brudertal, Rosenort, Gnadenfeld, and others. Later they turned to individual farming buying most of their land from the Santa Fe railroad. (50)

The Protestant Volga Germans started for Kansas around Christmas, 1875. They settled first near Peabody, Marion, and Tampa in the neighborhood of the Mennonites in Marion county. Later they spread farther West to Rush and Russel counties; also to Bazine and Ness counties. (51)

The Catholic Volga Germans started their immigration to Kansas in October 1875 on the ship *Ohio* of the North German Lloyd line. They settled also in Rush, Russel, and Ellis counties and organized a number of villages: Liebertaz, Pfeifer, Munior, Schoenchen, Catherine, and Victoria (formerly Herzog). (52) St. Francis has a Black Sea German Settlement. Some Black Sea Germans live near Russel. (53)

Oklahoma

When this state finally was opened for white settlement in 1891, protestant Volga Germans from Kansas crossed the line and settled on the upper course of the Canadian river. They founded a number of settlements including Shattuck, Tangier, and Okene. (54)

The Black Sea Germans settled at Clinton and Bessie. (55)

There are also some Mennonite Settlements at Menno, Cordell, and Mountain View.

North Dakota

The Russian-German immigration to this state began in 1884, and was a continuation of the immigration of the Black Sea Germans to South Dakota. At that time both states were one territory. When there was no more land in that state to settle, the move to North Dakota began. The Volga Germans were absent in this immigration and they were not many Mennonites. (56) The immigrants were almost all Protestant and Catholic Black Sea Germans. If one places the Missouri River in the middle, one may form of the area in which the Russian-Germans have settled in this state a pyramid, at the top of which will be Pierce County, not far from the Canadian border, and the base about 150 miles east and west of the river. The area comprises 23 counties. The Protestants live mostly east of the river; the Catholics to the north-east and west of it. But the Protestant element predominates everywhere. After the Norwegians, the Germans and Russian-Germans form the largest national group in North Dakota. In 1910 the state counted 60,000 persons of Russian-Germans descent. McIntosh county, for example, has a population of which 90% are Russian-Germans. (57) Strong Russian-German settlements are found also in the counties of Logan,, Stutsman. McLean, Emmons, and Morton. (58)

Colorado

The first Volga Germans arrived in Denver in 1880 with the Union Pacific railroad on which they were working. They originally lived in Russel, Kansas. In 1900 when a sugar factory was built in Sugar City German workers were called in from Lincoln, Nebraska. From that time on began the immigration of that group to Colorado. Settlements arose in Ft. Lupton, Greeley, Windsor, Ft. Morgan, Ft. Collins, Loveland, Longmont and Montrose. (59)

Wyoming, Montana, Idaho

In the state of Wyoming the oldest Russian-German settlement is found in Cheyenne. The group was brought in by the Union Pacific railroad, The oil city of Casper has also a Volga German settlement. When in the Wind River and Big Horn Basin irrigation and the planting of Sugar beets was begun in 1916, Volga German farmers and workers were brought in. Worland and Riverton also has Volga German settlements, (60) as well as Lovell and Wheatland. (61)

Montana has Volga German settlements in Billings, Hardin, Laural, Park City, and Worden. These are places with irrigation where beets, peas and beans are grown. (62)

Black Sea Germans live in the eastern part of Montana at Fallon, Watchins, Glendive, and Terry. (63)

Mennonite settlements are found on the Missouri at Wolf Point, and Hutterites at Lewistown.

In Idaho we find the Volga Germans in Sugar City, St. Maries, Paul and Malbeta. They came here also with the beginning of the sugar industry. (64)

Washington

The Volga Germans reached this state in 1881. They came from Hastings, Nebraska, and settled at Ritzville. Further settlements of the group are at Walla Walla, Yakima, and Tacoma. (65)

Some Catholic Volga Germans settled at Toppenish.

The Black Sea Germans came to the state in 1890 and settled at Ritzville, Ralston, Odessa, Lind, and Krupp (Marlin) (66)

Mennonites settled also at Ritzville.

Oregon

The oldest Volga German settlement in this state is in the northern part of Portland. In the 30's this settlement numbered about 500 families. It goes back to 1882, when the Volga Germans, after having worked for the Union Pacific, were either brought to or terminated their employment in San Francisco. From there they were brought to Portland by ship.

In 1891 a group of Black Sea Germans settled in Eugene, and in 1906 and 1909 in Mulino and Newberg.

In 1892 some Black Sea Germans settled also in Portland together with some Catholic Volga Germans.

California

A large Volga German settlement is found in Fresno. They came to California as workers on the vegetable growing fields and in the packing houses. Other settlements of that group are found in Reedley, Sanger, Dinuba, and Visalia. (69)

Lodi has a strong settlement of Black Sea Germans since 1897. The settlers originally came from Menno, South Dakota. From Lodi they spread out to the north and settled in Galt, Scampo, and Elk Grove. (70) In Southern California there are Black Sea and Mennonite settlements in Shafter and Bakersfield. (71)

Texas

Since 1890 some Black Sea Germans who probably came from Worms (Sutton), have settled in Texas. We find settlements in Henrietta, which was organized by them, and in Petrolia. (72)

Utah

There is a small settlement of Black Sea Germans in Provo. The group came to that state in 1887. They are from Neudorf of the province of Cherson. Originally they had gone to Palestine in 1873 with other templars. From there they came to Utah. (73)

Industrial Cities in the East

Industrial cities of the East received a great German influx especially of Volga Germans: Muscatine, Iowa - factory workers; Saginaw, Bay City, and Flint, Michigan automobile industry; Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, Ashkosh, Racine, and Milwaukee, Wis. - Factory workers;

Chicago, Jefferson Park, Dolton, Lansing, Thorndton, Riverdale - in all of these are found Volga Germans. Groups are also found in Wauseon, Ohio, New Jersey, New York, Pine Island, and Stuyvesant Falls.

Economic Development. The immigration

According to the official dates of the Commissioner of Immigration since 1903 to 1927 there emigrated from Russia to the United States 115,022 persons., of German descent.

The highest number came in the years:

1905	-	10,279
1906	-	13,480
1911	-	11,031
1912	-	17,857
1913	-	9,889

Total persons who immigrated from Russia to the United States since 1857-1905 : 1,565,487. (74)

This shows that the highest immigration took place during or about the time of the Japanese war and the years before World War I. Dates from 1857 to 1903 indicate in general persons from Russia, but not the nationality.

One can state that the Germans from Russia became in time quite prosperous. About half of the Volga Germans from Russia are on farms in Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado and other states. The other half lives in the cities and are employed in the factories, shops railroads, etc. They were usually much poorer than the Black Sea Germans at their arrival. Big settlements of Volga Germans employed in industries are found in Chicago, Lincoln, Denver, Portland, and Fresno. They usually live in the suburbs, but not in slums. Their yards and houses are clean. Hattie Plum Williams writes in her book *A Social Study of the Russian German* "Neglect and decay of buildings is nowhere visible. On the other hand many of the houses of the settlement are made over from half tumbled down structures which were brought at a low price and remodeled under the skillful and painstaking hand of the owner."

The Volga Germans were very successful as beet farmers in Nebraska, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. First they came as laborers, then they rented the farms and finally they bought them. About one-half of the beet farms in Colorado are owned by Volga Germans.

The Black Sea Germans live on farms in Nebraska, Kansas, South and North Dakota, Montana, and Washington. Where there is wheat to plant there they feel best. To a good part they were also poor when they came to the United States and experienced great hardships at

the beginning. They contributed immensely to the building up of the farms where they settled and became more prosperous than the Volga Germans. Seldom were they satisfied with one quarter of land. Two or three is the usual measure.

Religious Conditions

While in Russia the Germans were of the following confessions: Lutheran, Catholic, Mennonite, Baptist, and Hutterite, but in the United States, however, they split into smaller factions. Those who are Lutheran belong to a number of Lutheran denominations such as the American Lutheran Church, Missouri Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Lutheran and United Lutheran.

The Congregational church had a German Congregational Branch which was dissolved at the Union of the Congregationalists with the Evangelical and Reformed churches. These three churches now compose the United Church of Christ. The Russian-Germans who belonged to the Congregational, Evangelical and Reformed churches, now belong to the United Church of Christ. The United Brethren linked with the Methodists and so the Russian-Germans who formerly belonged to that church are now Methodists.

One of the reasons for the German emigration from Russia was the requirement to change their church services from their mother tongue to a foreign language. These immigrants experienced similar difficulties in the United States when their churches changed from German to English, which caused many bad feelings in the congregations.

We could count 400 congregations of different denominations not including the Mennonites, Hutterites, and Catholics.

The steamship lines used by the Russian-Germans to reach the shores of the United States were : The Hamburg America Line, Red Star Line, Inman Line, and The North German Lloyd.

The Mennonites used mainly the Hamburg America Line. It seems the service, especially the food, on the ships of this line was better than on the others. There were usually no small complaints concerning the treatment and food on the ships of the North German Lloyd.

The genealogist will have to face the sad experience that the records of the Hamburg America Line were destroyed. However there are records of the senate of the Free City of Hamburg that are preserved, and could be used for genealogical purposes. It is different, though, with the records of the North German Lloyd line of Bremen. Here everything was destroyed by the bombings that took place during the second World War.

The National Archives and Record Service in Washington, D.C. has shipping records of

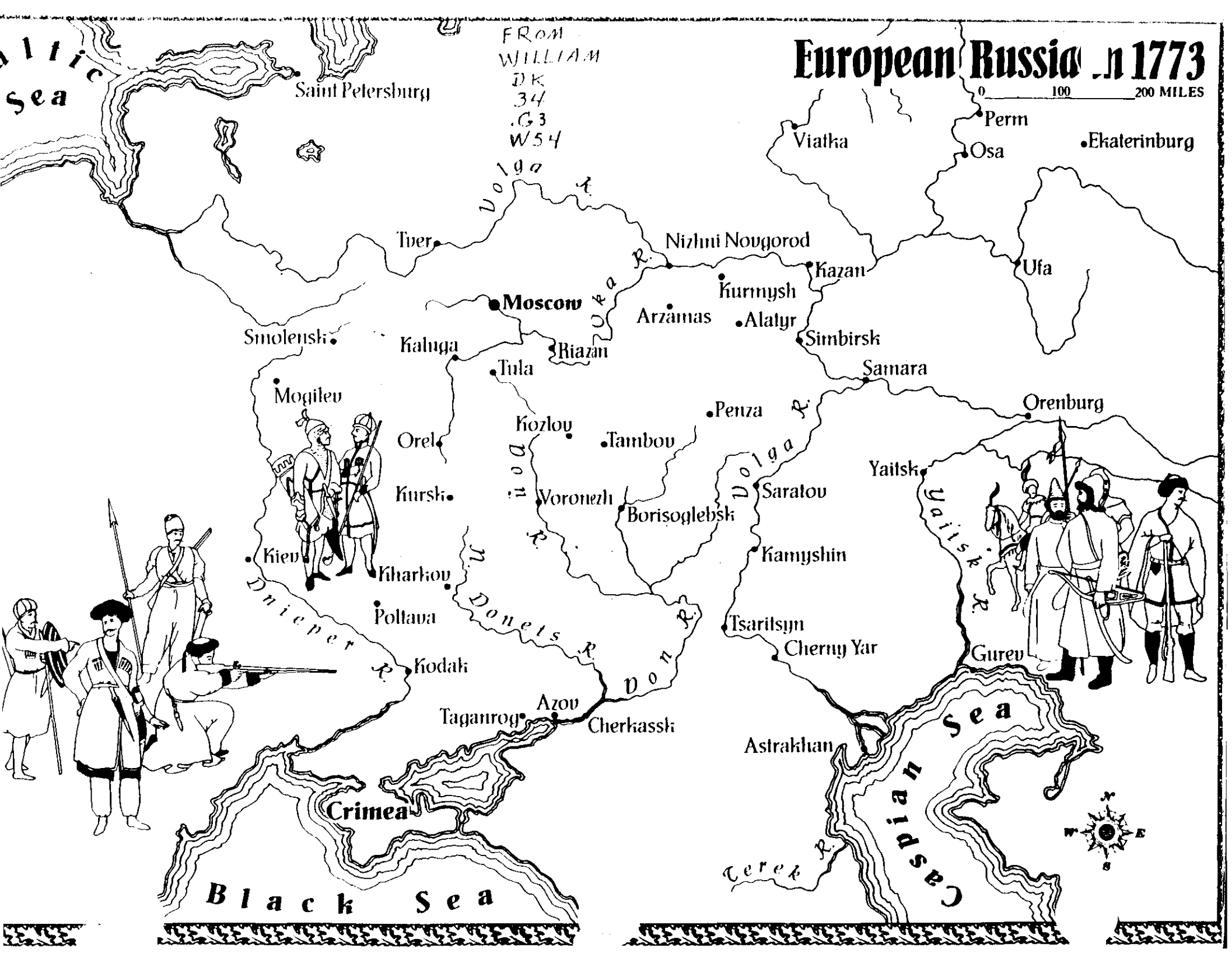
immigration beginning with 1820. These records are from the customs office, and are therefore not complete. The Immigration Office has records from 1891 on, and the port of New York from 1897. The records on Russia begin with 1857. Unfortunately they do not indicate the descent of the persons. Only from 1904 on is the origin or extraction indicated.

Of importance for genealogy is a good number of family chronicles which were published by Russian-Germans as well as church records of different denominations to whom the Russian-Germans belong but especially important is a series of so-called Jubilee books published in South and North Dakota. Our bibliography will give an account of those.

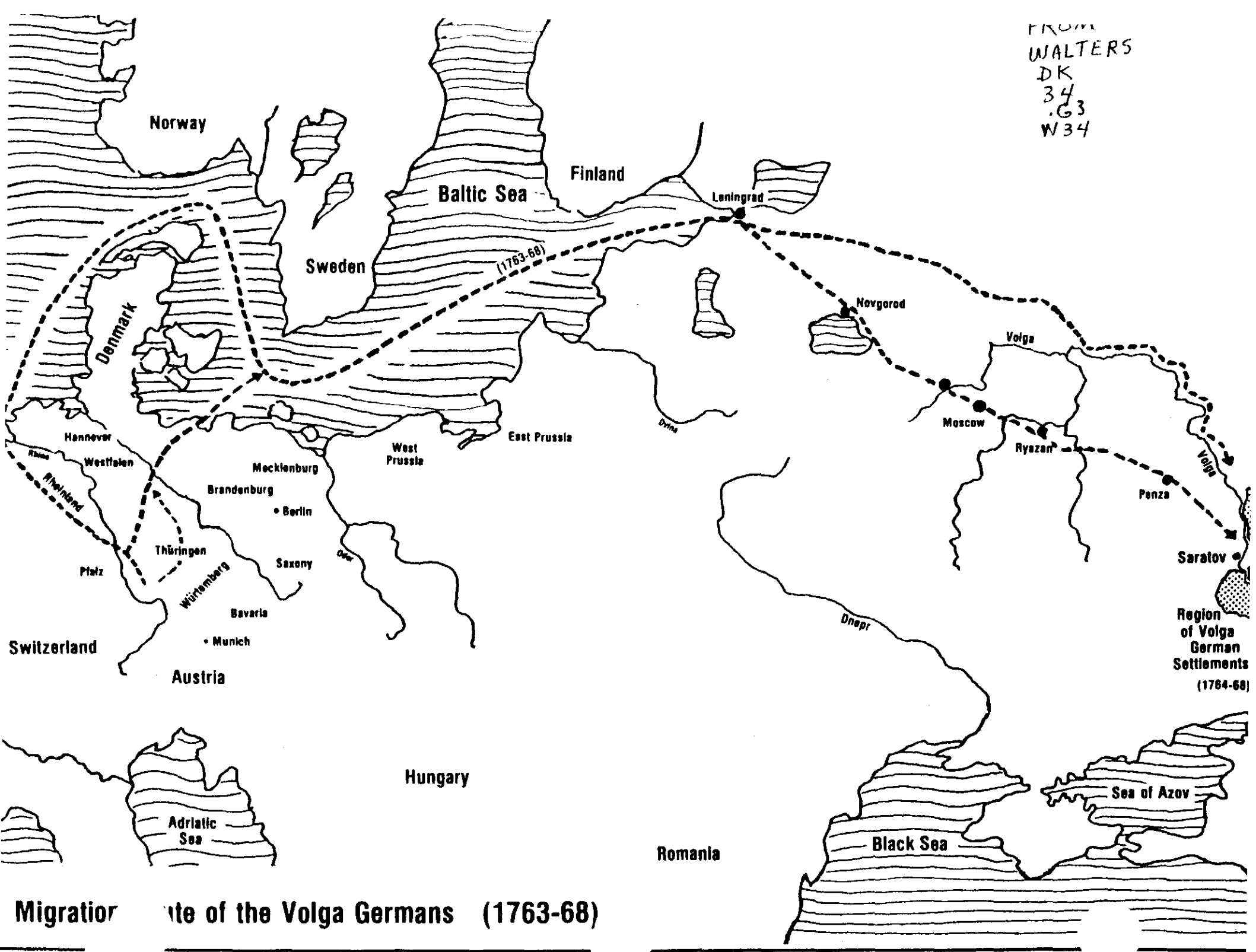
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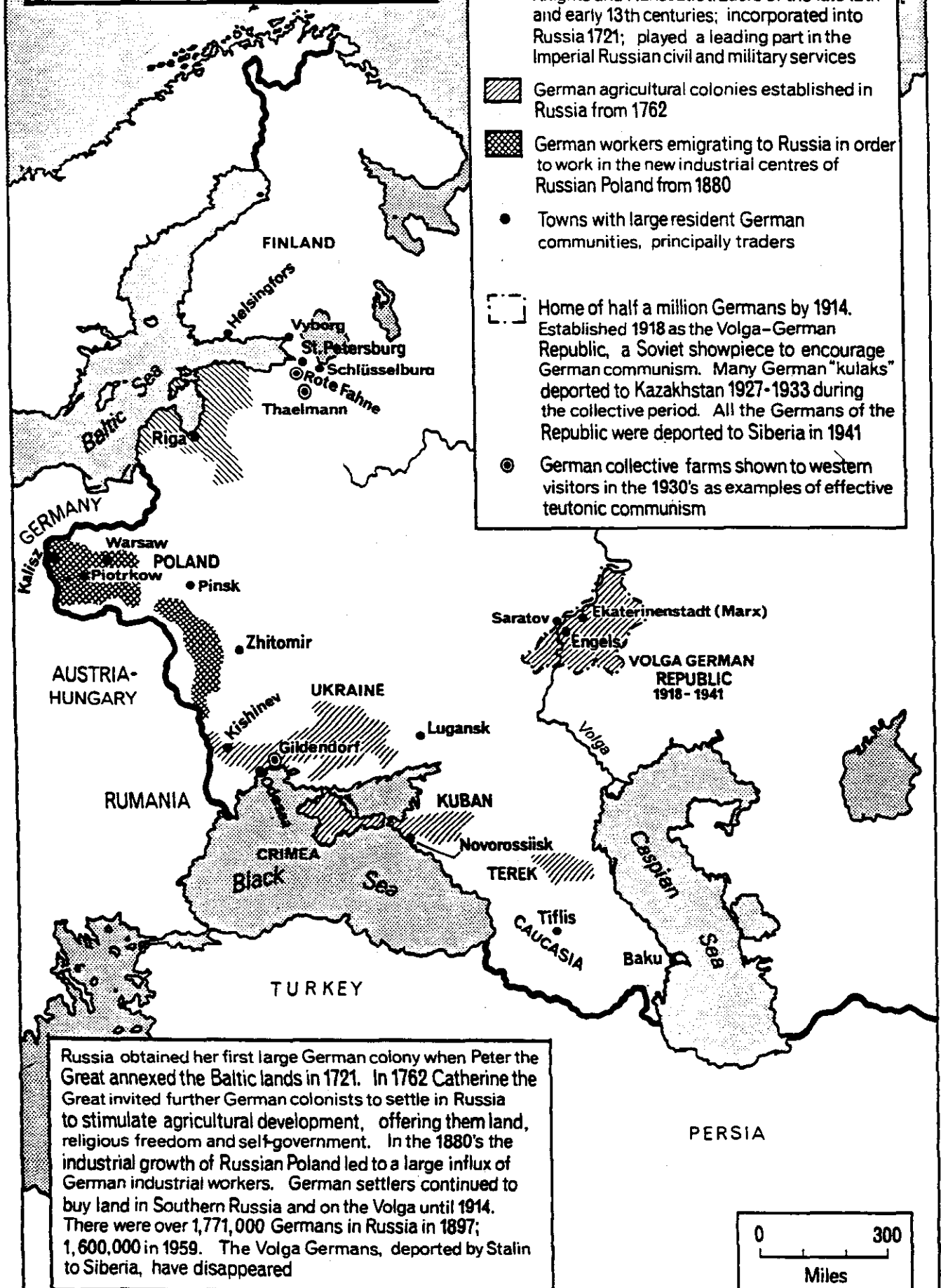


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Migration Route of the Volga Germans (1763-68)

THE GERMANS OF RUSSIA 1710 - 1959



THE PROVINCES AND POPULATION OF EUROPEAN RUSSIA IN 1900



The first official Russian census was held in 1897. The total population was just over 129 million - nearly as large as the combined populations of Britain, France, and Germany. Over 80% of all Russians were peasants. Finland was an autonomous Duchy, and, like Poland, was subdivided into Provinces

MAIN NATIONAL & ETHNIC GROUPS IN EUROPEAN RUSSIA IN 1900	
Russians	55 million
Ukrainians	22 million
Poles	8 million
White Russians	6 million
Jews	5 million
Balts	4 million
Caucasians	3 million
Germans	2 million

Prepared by
 Mitch Foss
 Dallas, Texas



- Jagodnaja Poljana
- Pobotachnoje
- Neu-Straub

Germany Russia

Prepared by
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Jagodnaja Poljana
Pobotachneje
Neu-Straub

SARATOV

Pokrovsk
(Engles)

Volga River

Volga
Wiesenseite

Karanyoh River

Medvelitz River

Volga
Bergseite

Jeruslan River

Kamyschin

N
W E S



PIONEERS ON TWO CONTINENTS: GERMANS TO RUSSIA AND AMERICA

Gwen Pritzkau

Born in Utah. Resides in Riverton, Utah. Acquisitions processor, Salt Lake County libraries. Author, lecturer, teacher.

HISTORY AND CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION

For several centuries it had been the custom of Russian rulers to invite foreigners to settle in their realm.

Their invitations brought skilled workers, politicians, artisans, craftsmen, and farmers. As early as Ivan the Terrible (1533-1584) there had been a German section in the city of Moscow. The first Romanov Tsars, Michael and Alexis, wished for Russia to become Europeanized, but it was Peter The Great, son of Alexis, who made the first determined effort along these lines.

After Peter became Tsar, he toured Germany, Holland and England. He was so impressed with what he saw in western Europe that he brought back with him a collection of skilled workers and craftsmen in hopes of teaching the techniques of the West to the Russians. This task he undertook with great enthusiasm and energy. The Russian people were not too receptive. He pleaded, threatened and punished. His efforts produced a small beginning and that was all.

The great Tsar realized that he must develop commercial and cultural ties with the West if his plans to modernize Russia were to succeed. He needed a seaport on the Baltic Sea. In order to obtain one he engaged in a war with Sweden (1700-1721) to conquer the area around the mouth of the Neva River. It was near here that he built the new capital of St. Petersburg. In his new Baltic provinces he found the necessary resources to help modernize Russia. The Germans had been in this region since the twelfth century.

Coming to a backward country, [these German missionaries] and merchants soon set themselves up as rulers. Although the Germans were few in numbers, they saw to it that the region along the Baltic Coast from Danzig to the Gulf of Finland was predominantly Germanic in law and custom. The small German population was much involved in trade, industry and government.

Peter the Great found his new subjects entirely to his taste. In these men he found the help needed to Europeanize Russia. As long as Russia was ruled by Tsars the Baltic Germans played a large part in Russian affairs of state.

Peter the Great also introduced the policy of intermarriage of the Royal House of Russia with its German counterparts. This practice was continued for several generations, which made the Royal Family almost completely German in blood. However, for the most part, they were devoted to the interests of Russia.

After Peter's death, little was done to promote Western manners and customs. The next ruler to make any great effort to change Russia was Catherine II (1762-1796). Catherine was born at Stettin on May first, 1729, and began life as Princess Sophia Augusta of Anhalt-Zerbst, a minor German principality. She had the good fortune to be recommended by Friederich the Great as suitable consort to the Grand Duke Peter of Holstein, grandson of Peter the Great. He had been brought to Russia in 1742 as a prospective heir to the Empress Elizabeth.

Catherine arrived in Leningrad in

February 1744 and was married in August 1745 to the Grand Duke. The Princess was lively and intelligent. She soon learned the language, history, customs and problems of her newly adopted country and soon became devoted to Russia's interests.

In contrast to the keen-minded Catherine, Peter was a dullard given to heavy drinking, interested only in playing soldier [and women less gifted than his wife.] When Empress Elizabeth died in 1762, the Grand Duke Peter then became Emperor Peter III. Before long he had alienated the people that mattered. He had offended the military, the government, and the Church. As Peter's popularity diminished, Catherine's grew. Her tact and personality won her numerous loyal friends, whose numbers were augmented as soon as Peter's accession permitted him to threaten his wife with divorce and to apply such ill-judged reforms as his capricious fancy dictated.

On June 28, 1762, a small revolution took place which ended in Peter leaving and being sent to an estate at Ropsha, where he died in a drunken brawl with officers who were supposed to be guarding him.

These events placed Catherine on a throne which she did not have any legal right to, but she did have the approval and support of the Russian aristocracy.

Early in her rule she made liberal changes. She built schools, hospitals, extended religious tolerance, and brought about agricultural reforms. The largest contribution she made to agriculture was the founding of the German colonies near the Volga River and elsewhere in her realm. She had hoped that such settlements would bring industry, new ideas and a higher standard of living.

These Germans were to serve as models for the Russian peasant farmer. In December 1762, she issued the first invitation to her German countrymen. This first proclamation brought little results. She sent her agents into the section of Ger-

many that was busy fighting in the Seven Years' War. Her invitation held no special inducements. Six months later, 1763, Catherine issued a new manifesto, a masterpiece of immigration propaganda, which became the foundation for Russia's colonization policy for the next hundred years.

Catherine published her invitation in the papers in Germany. She followed her notice by sending German-speaking agents into areas where they found thousands of discontented people willing to listen to her message. I shall list briefly the highlights of that famous document.

1. Large tracts of free land, plenty of water, free timber.
2. Good opportunity to practice a trade or establish industries.
3. Interest-free loans up to ten years.
4. Freedom from customs duties on goods brought into the country.
5. Free transportation to Russia.
6. The right to settle anywhere in the country.
7. Freedom from taxes for five to thirty years, depending on area.
8. No excise fees on new industries for ten years.
9. Exemption from military service for themselves and their descendants.
10. Local self-government in colonies.
11. Full religious and academic freedom.
12. Free to leave again if they found Russia unsuitable.

In addition to the above-named benefits, the Russian government also agreed to some help with transportation and housing.

These Germans jumped at the chance for a better life for themselves and their children.

At that time Europe had engaged in many wars. The young men had to spend part of their lives fighting in some army. The cost of these wars kept the common man at the brink of starvation. Due to the high taxes imposed, the peasant lived in dire poverty.

At one time in history Germany enjoyed religious unity, but with the Reformation came religious conflicts which brought about small wars between independent states. If the ruling Prince or Duke was Catholic and another was Lutheran, this was reason enough for a war. The German peasant of 1763 did not have much to be happy about. He groaned under heavy taxes, his young sons were dragged off to fight in wars in which he had no interest, he was persecuted for his religious beliefs. Foreign as well as German armies had just devastated his fields, his cattle, and his home. Industry and trade had been disrupted. Poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition were widespread.

Catherine's message brought hope to those who dared not hope, and faith to those who dared not believe.

In order to survive they knew they would have to leave their homes, families and friends.

THE FIRST IMMIGRATION INTO RUSSIA

With a promise of a better life, the first German colonists prepared to leave their beloved fatherland. Before they could leave, all debts had to be paid, arrangements had to be made for older family members staying behind, and decisions had to be made about what possessions to take and what to dispose of. Real estate, cattle, and furniture had to be sold. Food and clothing for the long journey had to be made ready. It was a time of much activity. There was an excitement in the air, but a sadness in the heart.

Catherine had appointed a Johann Simolin to act as special commissioner to head the emigration organization. His deputies were Friederich Meixner, whose headquarters were at Ulm, and Johann Facius, with headquarters at Frankfurt-on-Main. About four hundred families went to Russia in 1764. The emigration movement brought strong reaction from the German governments, resulting in laws

threatening severe punishment, confiscation of goods, and prohibiting the sale of property.

These actions did nothing to stem the flow of emigration. The people still left in large groups.

In 1768 Emperor Joseph II forbade all further emigration to Russia from anywhere in Germany. Therefore, for many years there was only a trickle of German emigrants to Russia, mostly those having family there since the first group left in 1763 and 1764.

By 1767 more than seven thousand families (twenty-six thousand people) had gone to Russia. For the most part these immigrants had come from Hesse, but other parts of Germany were represented as well.

As soon as the necessary emigration arrangements were completed, the would-be emigrants met in the appointed cities. There the Russian travel agents located temporary living quarters and issued a small food allowance daily, which was based on the size of the family.

Inasmuch as land was to be given only to heads of families, many marriages took place prior to leaving Germany and often between partners who came together as strangers. The marriage registers from Budingon, Rosslau and Lubeck are very helpful to the researcher.

When sufficient numbers had gathered, they were transported to a Baltic seaport, usually Lubeck, where they boarded a ship that took them to Kronstadt, near St. Petersburg. From Kronstadt they were taken overland in crude, slow-moving wagons, or on foot, to Oranienbaum. Here they were given crude materials to build makeshift huts which were to be their living quarters while waiting instructions for the next move.

It was here in this volatile settlement that many became disillusioned. In spite of the promise that they could settle

anywhere they liked, they were told that they would be transported to the distant and desolate area of the Volga region and that they would all become farmers.

They waited weeks, sometimes months, before word came approving the final move. The emigrant groups took different routes, but the following is typical.

Small ships, always overcrowded took the immigrants to St. Petersburg, up the River Neva to Schusselburg, along Lake Ladoga to the Volkov River, up the Volkof River to Novgorod.

Here began an overland trek to Torshak on the Volga. The women and children were forced into wagons piled high with baggage.

The men and older boys had to walk. Many of the immigrant groups reached this stage of the journey in the late fall when the weather was cold. Many fell sick and were left behind in some obscure Russian village, while many died en route and were buried along the way. Some groups had to spend the winter in the Russian village of Torshak where they were quartered with the native peasants in their small, smelly, and overcrowded huts. From Torshak, ships took them to Saratov, which was the nearest town to the proposed settlement sites.

Here, near Saratov, the Russian government had marked-off both sides of the Volga River for settlement. The first group of colonists arrived there on June 29, 1764. They founded the colony of Dobrinka, which was located on the west bank (Bergseite) of the Volga River. From 1764 to 1767, shipload after shipload of colonists arrived at Saratov and were led to the barren Volga regions.

A total of 104 villages were founded in this fashion. One hundred and three were German, and one was French. Of these, 44 were on the west side (Bergseite) and 60 on the east side (Weisenseite), with a population of 6,433 families or 23,109 people.

A few of the German immigrant groups did not go to the Volga River area, but were directed to settle elsewhere. A group of 110 families settled near St. Petersburg in 1765. In the same year, a small group of 34 families from Wurttemberg was sent to a Count's estate in the Voronezh region where they settled the isolated village of Riebendorf, in the political district of Woronesch. They were Lutherans from the German village of Sulzfeld near Heilbronn. Within a number of years, their population increase made it necessary to establish several daughter-colonies, some extending as far south as the Sea of Azov.

In 1766, another 80 families were sent to Hirschenhof and Helfreichshof. The same years, 147 families went to the Chernigov region where they started the six villages of the Belowesch settlement. In 1767, another 67 families founded three colonies near Jamburg. These groups were exceptions. The main flow of immigrants went to the Volga River area.

Although the Russian government had promised housing for the newcomers, they found neither houses nor lumber with which to build. Instead, they were shown how to build the Russian-type mud huts. In some cases, the Germans had to live in these hovels for two and three years before they obtained the materials to build a proper house for their families. Housing and building materials were not the only thing found in short supply. Cows, horses, pigs, chickens, and farm implements were very scarce. The farm implements and building tools were not only hard to come by, but they were far inferior to those they had left behind in Germany. Seeds for crops and gardens arrived too late to plant. Many of these first colonists did not have enough warm clothing for the coming winter. Due to the lack of trees, there was not enough fuel to keep the huts heated. Because of these problems, many people died the first winter. In the spring, floods came and washed away the mud huts, and they had to start all over again.

It was not until 1775 that the colonists had a good harvest with enough yield to feed themselves and their livestock. This was due to several reasons. Many of the colonists had never farmed before. Even those who had been farmers had to learn new cultivation methods. They were unfamiliar with weather and seasonal conditions. They were ignorant of the types of soil and which crops to plant where.

Many of the people were mistreated by greedy village "directors" who were interested only in their own wealth. Many wished to return to Germany, but there was no going back.

Gradually, the immigrants adjusted to their new surroundings and slowly houses began to replace mud huts. Within a few years schools and churches were built. Trees were planted along the streets and good wells were found in every village.

Along with the other hardships were the wolves and bands of robbers that roamed along the lower Volga area. These robbers were attracted to the German colonists because they represented a high form of living than had been known in the area. They not only stole goods and cattle, but kidnapped people either to be used as slaves and servants or to be sold.

For many years it was not safe for the colonist or his family to be alone on the roads or in the fields. They formed in groups to protect themselves and their livestock.

Within a few years there developed a community pride and the Germans began to prosper. They no longer yearned for their native homeland. To the younger generation, this land of the Tzar was home.

The Russian government was highly pleased with the fine colonies, wheat fields, new industries, and all of the other accomplishments of the German newcomers. The plundering tribes, who for so many years had robbed, kidnapped, burned, killed and

caused general destruction to the Germans as well as to the native Russian peasant, had now been driven away.

Catherine II began to look elsewhere for new lands to conquer.

In 1768-1774 and 1787-1792, Russia and the Turks fought for the rich, fertile lands surrounding the Black Sea. The Russians were the victors, which extended the empire to the Black Sea. The Crimea Peninsula was incorporated into Russia in 1783.

In 1786 Catherine sent agent Georg von Trappe into the Danzig region of West Prussia to recruit new settlers. The Mennonites of West Prussia were having problems with the government and the Lutheran Church. It was a well-known fact that the Mennonites were clean, honest, hard working, industrious, productive, and model farmers. This group would make a good contribution towards building up the vast, uninhabited steppes of the Ukrain. It took some time for the Mennonites to prepare for the move to Russia. In the meantime, von Trappe led a group of Lutherans from Danzig (fifty families) to Russia, where they founded the German colony of Alt-Danzig, near Elizabethgrad. Some fourteen families of this group were directed to stay in the nearby colony of Alt-Schwendorf, which was settled in 1781 by Swedes from the island of Dago under the leadership of Ivan Maximovich Sinelnikov, an official assigned to them by the Russian government. But these Germans were not happy there, so they left and went to Alt Danzig to be with their countrymen.

In 1788, 228 Mennonites families left West Prussia and started several colonies in the Chortitza region of the Ukrain.

Catherine II died in 1796, but before her passing she saw many of her dreams bear fruit.

Paul I, son of Catherine, was ruler from 1796-1801. During this time colonization came to a standstill. From 1801 to 1825

Russia was ruled by Alexander I, son of Paul. He carried out his grandmother's policy of immigration, and once again the call went out to Germany for colonists to settle in the Ukrain. Because the first immigration of Germans under Catherine II had been so successful and had been satisfactory to both the Reich and to Russia, the second invitation was most welcome.

This time the invitation was directed mainly to the thickly populated areas of southern Germany. The Ukase of the Tsar had the same basic conditions as that of Catherine. German-speaking travel agents were sent to Germany to open offices for the purpose of enlisting and interviewing prospective settlers.

Again, as in Catherine's time, the area of southern Germany was war torn, over-taxed and oppressed. Napoleon was taking their young men for his armies. Civil disorders and religious conflicts were common. The conditions made it easy to enlist people to colonize faraway Russia.

The Tsar had set aside entire districts of crown land between the Bug, Dniester and Pruth Rivers for settlement. In addition to the crown lands, large estates were bought from private land-owners. Within three years the Russian government had hoped to be ready to start receiving the first German immigrants for the Black Sea region; however, some German colonists began arriving before plans were complete and things were not ready for them.

Two Germans, acting as Russian agents, Ziegler and Schurter, had done such a good job of recruiting that some two hundred families had arrived in 1803. In hopes of slowing down the flow of immigrants, certain restrictions were placed on immigration:

1. Only experienced farmers or tradesmen were to be accepted.
2. They must own property worth at least three hundred Florins.
3. Only families could come.

4. No more than two hundred families--year would be accepted.
5. They wanted only people of a higher class.

The quota was ignored, and for many years the number was much larger.

Most of the immigrants came from Wurttemberg, Baden, Palatinate, Alsass, Hesse and Bavaria. They also came from Poland and Hungary, where the Germans had settled many years earlier in another migration. West Prussia and Prussia were also represented.

The immigrants from Poland and Prussia came on foot or in wagons. They traveled overland, bringing their few possessions with them. Many times you would see an older member of the family being pushed in a wheelbarrow, the journey taking several months to complete. Oftentimes they had to bury a loved one along the way in an unmarked grave.

The families from southern Germany came in one of two ways: overland on foot, wagon, or horseback; or down the Danube River on boats, finishing the journey on foot by going overland to the appointed Russian town where they were to meet with Russian agents. Once there, they were placed in quarantine. Sometimes this lasted for weeks or even months. The barracks in which they were housed were overcrowded, dirty, and poorly ventilated. Because of these conditions, many people died. In some cases, entire families were wiped out. Hardly any one family was not affected.

The hardships and privations these people suffered cannot be described.

Nothing seemed to stem the flow of immigrants, being spurred on by the hopes of a better future for themselves and their children.

Four hundred families arrived in 1803. More than eight hundred families arrived in 1804, and another two hundred and fifty in 1805. Only sixty families came

in 1806 and 1807. But in 1808-1810 there was a surge of two thousand families. After 1810 there was a lull in immigration due to a war with Turkey. In 1812 the war ended and Russia had acquired the province of Bessarabia, and again the call went out for immigrants to colonize newly acquired lands. The manifesto was widely publicized in Poland, where recently settled Germans were known to be discontented. By the end of 1816, some fifteen hundred families had arrived. Many of these people had to live with native peasants before being settled on their own land. The government and the agents could not keep up with the fast flow of immigrants that were arriving daily.

In the years 1816-1818, another mass migration took place—again from southern Germany, and again religious and economic factors played a role.

In 1816, the area of southern Germany had a complete crop failure, which in turn brought about severe economic depression.

Certain religious "prophets" were foretelling the Second Coming of Christ. Many of these people thought they should be there to witness the event, so, in September 1816, a group of forty families left Wurttemberg for the "Holy Land." They did not arrive in Russia until December. Their provisions were gone, and so they stayed for the winter in the Schwabian colony of Grossliebenthal. In order to continue on through Russia, they had to get permission from the Russian government, which did not arrive until July 1817. Only thirty-one families left, traveling along the northern coast of the Black Sea on their way to Jerusalem. They traveled over the Caucas mountains, arriving at Tiflis. It was here that the Russian authorities forced them to stop and settle down. With the help of the Russian government, the German village of Marienfeld was founded on Easter Day, 1818. When the religious separatists in Wurttemberg heard of the success of their fellow countrymen, they also began to make plans to migrate.

The meeting place was the city of Ulm, from which nearly eight thousand people left during the summer of 1817. The journey down the Danube was long and hard. They traveled in constant fear for their lives and property, as robbers were numerous. The boats were small and overcrowded. Disease and fever claimed many lives, and many were buried along the way. By the time they reached Hungary, many had lost heart and stayed with the German colonists there. When they reached Ismael, an epidemic of fever struck, and within a twenty-four day period, some twelve hundred people had died, many children losing their parents, parents losing all of their children. By the time the group left Ismael, only five thousand people survived to move on. Some of these people settled in the Odessa area. Ninety-eight families settled the village of Teplitz, Bessarabia. Sixty-four families went north of Odessa and founded the village of Hoffnungstal. Four new colonies were started in the Odessa area, giving homes to one hundred families. Many occupied vacant places in the Leibental and Gluckstal settlements. The five hundred remaining families went on to the Caucasus. Many wished to go on to Jerusalem, but the Russian government refused to give them permission. Here they founded several more German colonies.

By 1848 there were more than two hundred colonies in the Black Sea area numbering nearly sixty thousand souls.

The period of mass migrations was over. A few smaller groups and individual families continued for several years.

The Germans living in the Volhynia came as the result of their desire, wandering eastward from the Vistula Valley, Brandenburg, Pommern, Silesia, and West Prussia. Others came as result of invitations by Polish estate owners who wanted German farmers on their lands because of their reputation of being honest, hard-working, good farmers. They were not governed by the same rules and regulations as were the Germans that came

as a result of government-sponsored programs.

After the defeat of Napoleon, it is possible that all of his German soldiers did not return to Germany but remained in Russia, finding their way to the German colonies where many of them had friends and family.

LIFE IN THE GERMAN COLONY

After many years of hardship and sacrifice, things started to look better for the German colonist and his family. The temporary shelter of mud huts or holes dug in the ground gave way to the permanent shelter of a house in a wellplanned "dorf." It must have been a time of great excitement. Everyone helped to build his own house as well as help the neighbor. All of the houses looked much the same. They were constructed from whatever building material was native to the area. Wood, sod, rammed earth, stone or clay brick were the most common. In the Volga, wood was used for the roof, whereas thatched reeds were sometimes used in the Black Sea region. Each house had a large yard, a kitchen garden, and out-buildings.

The church was located in the center of town, as was the water well. Some colonists had their barn and house under the same roof. When building a church, no amount of money or labor was spared. It was very important to the colonists to have the most beautiful church in the district. Usually a colony was either Protestant or Catholic, but not both in the same dorf.

The village also had pig pens, horse barns, granaries, milking sheds, sheep barns, and village pasture lands.

The houses faced a wide street lined with shade trees. Each colony had between fifty and one hundred houses, and they were all laid out in similar fashion. Near the edge of town was an orchard, vineyards, beehives, a grinding mill, a

cemetery and other things necessary to the well being of a community. The village-owned farmland sometime stretched for great distances. The land was farmed as a community and the profits shared according to their needs.

Within a few years the population of a mother colony in the Black Sea region could grow to three thousand with three to five hundred in the daughter colonies. In the Volga some of the mother colonies had a population of twelve thousand. In 1763 the population in the Volga was twenty-seven thousand. In 1914 it was six hundred thousand. (This was after the mass migration to North and South America.) Similar growth was experienced in the Black Sea colonies.

When a colony outgrew its land, more land was purchased from the crown, or sometimes from private landowners for a daughter colony, which was populated by people from the mother colony. In due time there were over five hundred German dorfs and chutors.

The German colonies in both the Volga and the Black Sea were, for the most part, dependent only upon themselves. The early immigrants were not all farmers. Although many had to learn the farm industry, they had not forgotten the trades and crafts brought with them from Germany. Every dorf had a shoemaker, harness and saddle maker, baker, blacksmith, cabinet and furniture maker, brick and tile masons, weavers, millers, teachers, tanners, candlemakers, merchants, and professional people. Every person played an important part in the growth of the community during the time of settlement as well as a hundred years later. Then, as now, German craftsmanship was in great demand. Their reputation grew, and soon their work and wares were in demand by the colonists and the Russians alike.

Schools were church-built and maintained, with the preachers or the laymen serving as teachers, each village having their own. Children from seven through fourteen attended. At one time there were

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Schools were church-built and maintained, with the preachers or the laymen serving as teachers, each village having their own. Children from seven through fourteen attended. At one time there were

three thousand German schools in Russia, and also many institutions of higher learning. Compared to the local Russian, the German stood on a higher educational and cultural level. By the age of sixteen, the German child was better educated than his Russian counterpart.

The church was the center of their lives. Whether the village be Catholic or Evangelical, the clergy played a large part in their social and cultural affairs. Because the colonists lived in closed colonies, they had retained much of the background they had brought with them from Germany.

Each village had their own customs regarding weddings, death, baptism and certain other holidays, these customs being peculiar to the district in Germany where they had lived prior to going to Russia.

In the absence of medical service, the early-day colonist relied on "folk medicine." The use of herbs, chants, charms, and magic was quite common. They had a cure for warts, toothaches, poison ivy, headaches, nosebleeds, burns and boils. They butchered according to the moon. They were superstitious about barking dogs, howling wolves, sneezing cats, first-laid eggs, falling stars, and birthmarks.

Each village had a social committee to look after widows, orphans, collect taxes, and keep general order. They dealt with cases of public drunkenness, smoking on the street, and failure to keep a light burning in the window at night.

Sunday was observed as the "Sabbath." No one was allowed to work and everyone was expected to attend church services. During the time of church meeting, no traffic was allowed on the street. After church was over, the colonists would gather in someone's home for more prayer and the reading of scriptures. Dancing, loud laughing, card playing, love-making and singing were oftentimes thought to be

sinful. Throwing garbage into the street was forbidden, and, if caught, carried a fine. They upheld obedience; they were taught hard work to avoid drunkenness and laziness.

Easter and Christmas were celebrated as being holy days. One could always find a decorated tree in the church with apples, candy, candles and tinsel. On Christmas Eve, groups of carolers would sing to the shut-ins and elderly.

Marriages were performed in the church, but the celebrating was in the home, sometimes lasting up to three days. There were all kinds of foods to eat as well as a little "Schnapps." The invitations were in the form of a written letter or by a rider on horseback. The practice of matchmaking was common. Even here, laughter and happiness were frowned upon. The practice of announcing the banns three times continued here just as it had been in Germany.

After the grain and other crops were harvested, the colonists would take it to the city to be sold. While here they would make the necessary purchases to last for the coming year. It was always a time of great excitement. Long caravans of horse-drawn wagons stretched along the open plains. Household items and groceries would be purchased in large quantities.

Village life changed somewhat with every generation. As land became scarce, many moved to the cities and took jobs in factories or as laborers. For the most part, they retained their customs and culture, and they exist in many far-flung corners of the world today.

Conditions had indeed improved for the German colonists. While a few had acquired great wealth, most all were comfortable. They had turned the barren waste land into productive fields, started new industry, founded beautiful villages, and built schools and churches.

BROKEN PROMISES LEAD TO MASS EXODUS

Catherine's manifesto of 1763 had given the German colonists special privileges. In 1871 these same promises were abrogated. From this time on, the Germans no longer enjoyed living in Russia.

This change came about during the reign of Alexander II, who was very anti-German. From the beginning, the German colonists had enjoyed home rule, used German language in schools and church, and had lived in closed colonies. On June 4, 1871, a decree was issued that would change that. The Russian language was to be used, and their villages would soon be incorporated into local Russian government. Still worse was the law of 1874 which made military service compulsory for all Russian citizens, including the Germans. The promise of freedom from military service for themselves and their descendants, for all time, was for them one of the most attractive features of Catherine's manifesto.

Life in the Russian army was terrible. Often the soldier had to serve from 6 to 20 years. Discipline was harsh, pay was poor. The families that were left behind were not provided for, and, more often than not, they never saw each other again.

Even before the military law was passed, the Germans began to think about migrating and sent some scouts to the United States and South America to investigate the possibility of a mass migration and the conditions of obtaining land.

The Homestead Act, signed by President Lincoln in 1862, made it possible for any immigrant willing to become a citizen to receive 160 acres of free land. By 1873 the railroads had reached across the vast plains of the midwest and, through the government, had been endowed with millions of acres of land. They had spread immigration propaganda in Europe, attracting people who were interested in becoming American farmers. Some of these

pamphlets had reached the German colonies in south Russia.

In 1849, a group of twenty-one families (eighty-three people led by Ludwig Bette from Johannestal) came to the United States. They boarded a small sailing vessel, the "Constantia," which sailed from Odessa on July first (old style) and landed in New York Harbor on 22 October, some 101 days later. Some of this group, Bette included, found their way to Kelleys Island, Erie County, Ohio. They seemed to prosper, as in 1872 Bette returned to Russia to visit his relatives. His apparent wealth no doubt made an impression on his relatives and friends. He told them of the opportunities that were available in the United States. Ludwig Bette returned to this country on board the "Westphalia" on August 2, 1872.

This good news must have spurred the colonists to make ready for immigration to the United States as the first group left two months after Bette had left. From October 1 to November 13, four different groups left Russia. They sailed from Hamburg, Germany, and landed in New York.

They spent the first winter in America in Sandusky, Ohio. The following spring all but four families went to Yankton, Dakota Territory, becoming the first German-Russians to homestead there.

In September 1874, a small group of Volga Germans came to Kansas, Nebraska, and Arkansas. During the winter of 1874-1875, another small group came to Red Oak, Iowa, and a larger group going to Lincoln, Nebraska.

In June 1873, a group of four hundred persons from the Worms-Rohrbach area, near Odessa, settled in Sutton, Nebraska.

About three hundred thousand Germans left Russia in search of freedom and land. Of this number, some went to South America and Canada, but the bulk came to America.

The Volga Germans found their way to

Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington, Texas, Oklahoma, Iowa, and also Michigan and California.

The Black Sea German is mostly found in North Dakota; South Dakota; Sutton, Nebraska; Eastern Montana; Oklahoma; Idaho; California; Eastern Washington and Colorado.

The migration lasted until the First World War.

THE FATE OF THOSE WHO STAYED BEHIND

Although the remaining Germans did not agree to all of the anti-German measures brought about by Alexander III, they adapted as best they could and seemed to prosper. After his death, his son, Nicolas II, relaxed the rules set forth by his father.

As a rule, the German colonists remained loyal to the Tsar. They did not take part in the revolution of 1905. In fact, many of them suffered heavy losses during the revolution through raids by the local Russian peasants. They had no desire to take part in any politics outside of their own village.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the German colonist had hit the peak of economic prosperity. Most of his wealth was in the land and industry. They had large farms, nice houses, large herds of horses and cattle, and ate very well. His neighbors, the Russian peasant, had not prospered.

A feeling of resentment against the Germans was spreading.

The outbreak of World War I was a shock for the Germans in Russia. They became "enemies of the people." They were regarded with suspicion and hatred by the Russians. Although many of their young men served in the Russian army, many giving their lives, they were never to be trusted by the Russian government again.

After the war ended, many Germans left Russia and returned to Germany.

The remaining Germans suffered greatly. Many were shipped to Siberia or Turkistan. They were not allowed to settle in all German colonies. They were forced to abandon their German culture. They were forbidden the use of the German language.

The villages of the Black Sea and Volga are no longer inhabited by Germans. The churches have been destroyed, and the village names changed so that today one would never know that Germans had once lived there.

Thousands perished while on forced marches. Thousands more died in labor camps. Families were split up, never to see each other again.

Today, as in the past, these Germans are once again making agricultural history. Wherever they are living, they have turned the barren waste lands into timber, grain crops, row crops and vineyards. They are producing crops where nothing ever grew before.

Contact with the outside world is limited, but it is possible to exchange letters with family members.

THE GERMAN RUSSIAN IN AMERICA

The voyage to America took anywhere from seventeen days to several weeks, depending on the weather and the condition of the vessel.

The immigrants left from several ports, such as: Hamburg, Bremen, Liebau (Russia), also the ports in Holland and France. Some of the people went first to England and then to North America.

Most of the immigrants booked passage in "steerage." The quarters were crowded, dirty, and foul smelling. The food was poor and the other passengers were sometimes less than polite. In general, the

voyage to America was anything but pleasant.

As soon as the ship docked, the passengers were subject to a medical examination. If a person had a certain eye infection, called trachoma, they were not permitted to go ashore. Thus, families were separated, and sometimes they were sent back to Germany alone, or they went to South America where the restrictions were less severe.

Once on land they were met by harbor missionaries of various churches. Usually these missionaries guided them to towns where other German-Russians had settled. They advised them about train schedules, places of departure, and how to exchange their money.

Another form of aid to the newcomer was immigrant houses which were found in cities farther west. Accommodations were available to those immigrants with little or no funds.

As a rule, the Black Sea German bought tickets for the Dakota Territory, the Volga for Kansas and Nebraska. In later years, many German-Russians went to Canada.

As soon as suitable land was obtained, the settlers concerned themselves with providing a shelter for their families and livestock. It was not uncommon for the settler to live in a dugout, with the wagon box serving as roof, until a sod house was built.

The houses were all similar in construction, usually with two rooms, a stone oven for heating and cooking, small windows, dirt floor and one door. Sometimes the barn and house were under the same roof with only a wall separating the two.

Trees were very scarce, being found in scattered hollows. Cow or buffalo chips were gathered and dried for use as fuel.

The winters were long and hard. The

blizzards were so severe that many a homesteader became lost and sometimes froze to death.

In the spring the virgin sod was plowed and crops were planted. Although a small harvest was realized that first year, it was two or three years before they had enough for themselves and some to sell.

Within a few years, the sod houses were replaced with fine homes. Large barns, herds of cattle and sheep, and windmills were found on every farm.

Again, the German-Russian had turned unoccupied lands into the bread basket of the world.

Churches came later, as did the school houses. For years, both school and church services were held in the German language.

Wherever the German-Russian settled, you will find German names for many of the towns, school districts, townships and church parishes. The names of villages went from Germany to Russia to the United States, Canada and South America.

In contrast to their dorfs in Russia, rural farm life in the United States and Canada seemed very lonely and monotonous. The homesteads were far apart, giving them an immense solitude and sense of loneliness. At least in Russia one had next door neighbors with whom they could exchange words of greeting and comfort.

Though the German colonists came from Russia, they were not Russians. Furthermore, they disliked being called Russian. Just to look at them it was indeed difficult to distinguish them from native Russians; however, that was just in appearance. The language, culture, and customs were strictly Germanic.

The first generation pioneers retained much of their historical characteristics. Children of that generation associated with no one outside of the family unit or others of their kind.

With the coming of the First World War, the German colonists entered a period of cultural transition. The process of cultural fusion had been accelerated. Unfortunately, many descendants of the colonists are completely uninformed of their heritage.

Those wanderers in transit for almost two

centuries left their homeland in Germany in favor of Russia and ended by coming to America. They were not gold-seekers or speculators, but sought to build permanent homesteads, to help promote economic progress, and to bestow upon their descendants the values of hard work, honest effort, self-reliance, thrift and an undying faith in God.

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Other Resources – Germans from Russia

American Historical Society of Germans from Russia
<http://www.ahsgr.org/>

Germans from Russia Heritage Society
<http://www.grhs.org/>

Cyndi's List – Germans from Russia
<http://www.cyndislist.com/germruss.htm>

Wikipedia – History of Germans in Russia and the Soviet Union
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Germans_in_Russia_and_the_Soviet_Union

Germans from Russia Heritage Collection – NDSU Library
<http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/>

The Sidney Heitman German's from Russia – Colorado State University
<http://lib.colostate.edu/gfr/>

Bestandskartei der Rußlanddeutschen, 1750-1943 (Index cards of ethnic Germans in Russia)

Russisches geographisches Namenbuch : Kartenband – by Max Vasmer

German captured documents collection : reports from ethnic German communities in Ukraine, 1940-1944