Medicine Hat & District Genealogical Society

Germans from Russia

Branch Library Research Guide First Draft

Hopefully, this guide will help our Germans from Russia (GR) researchers more easily locate people and resources to help them with their research. Along with library resources such as books, maps, CDs, VHS tapes, journals, and magazines, helpful Branch computer bookmarked websites will be listed. Since families are traced back from Russia to Germany, German resources and websites are also included. In addition, by listing the available Branch library GR resources, areas where there is a lack of resources will be discovered. In the future, books or CDs that cover these areas can be purchased when funds become available.

This guide is just a first draft. It is hoped that members will make suggestions as to how it can be expanded or improved.

Research Guide Index

Germans from Russia History
Family History Research Guideline Germans from

Russia Websites

Present Members Matrix-prepared, but not included Former Members

Matrix-prepared, but not included

*Maps of Germans from Russia Settlements *available for viewing at the
Branch library or on the internet

Brief History of the Germans from Russia

On July 22, 1763, EMPRESS KATHERINE II of Russia issued a Manifesto inviting foreign colonists to Russia. It was hoped that the settlers would till new Russian lands and provide protection against Eastern tribes. Few settlers had arrived in response to the first Manifesto dated December 4, 1762. The 1763 Manifesto gave settlers freedom of religion, no taxation for a period of years, and freedom from being drafted into the military or civil service. In addition, settlers were given free land and transportation along with loans to purchase needed supplies to build houses and farm the land.

Families from all over Western Europe, especially the German states, were recruited by special commissioners and native agents to leave their homelands and

settle in the vast Russian lands. Seeking a better future with freedom from military service and wars, poor economic conditions, and political oppression, and religious freedom, large groups of German families, mainly from Hessen, arrived at assembly points from where they traveled to seaports, such as Lubeck and Danzig, where passage to Russia was provided. After crossing the Baltic Sea and landing at Kronstadt, the settlers journeyed to the lower Volga region, the site chosen by the Russian government. Several villages were also started in the St. Petersburg area. According to The German Colonies on the Lower Volga by Gottlieb Beratz, 8000 families arrived in the Volga region from 1764 to 1767. North and south of Saratov on the Volga, 104 VOLGA GERMAN villages were founded.

MENNONITES formed the six Belowesch villages in Southern Russia in 1766. In 1789, a group of 228 families of Mennonites left West Prussia for religious and economic reasons to found eight villages by the Chortitza River. In 1804, Mennonite villages were founded by the Molotschna River also by families from West Prussia.

In 1770, about 70 German HUTTERITES seeking religious freedom settled in the Chernigov region on the estate of Count Peter Rumiantsev. Later on they started a new village near the Molotscha Mennonites.

ALEXANDER I, the grandson of Katherine II, desired settlers to cultivate the vast land areas captured from the Turks in the Black Sea region. Agents were sent to Germany to recruit settlers. To avoid undesirable emigrants, Alexander issued a decree on February 20, 1804, which instructed immigration agents to recruit only foreigners that would serve
 as model farmers and tradesmen. Freedoms guaranteed in Katherine's manifesto were repeated. To flee unfavorable taxes, constant wars, and religious restrictions, thousands of Germans left southwestern Germany, Hungary, Poland, and West Prussia for the Black Sea region. They reached this new land taking various land routes and rivers, such as the Danube and the Dniester. Adam Giesinger in From Catherine to Khrushchev, states that there were over 200 villages in this region by 1848. Nearly 10,000 German families came to found villages in the BLACK SEA region.

Starting in 1816, German settlers started arriving in Volhynia. In 1793, Russia had claimed the Polish province of VOLHYNIA. Landowners needing farmers to till their lands persuaded thousands of Germans to establish villages in this region. By 1871, they had founded 139 villages in Volhynia.

Starting Family History

In genealogy/family history, we are trying to find out more about our families. Many books and websites will give you a step by step method to follow. Start with yourself and record what you know about your family. Ask help from people close to you for details and documents which can help. Find out about people or resources which can help you from friends, relatives, genealogical societies, libraries, and websites. As you work from the known to the unknown, record your findings with notes on sources.

Websites - Beginning Family History

How To Begin - Library and Archives Canada - Canadian Genealogy Centre
collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy

How Do I Begin? FamilySearch - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Research Helps
- Guidance familysearch.org

Some Helpful Resources at the Branch Library

Beginning Family History Handouts - at the Branch Library

Books

Finding Your Family on the Internet Michael Otterson
Genealogy for the first time Laura Best
Genealogy Online for Dummies Matthew L. Helm and April Leigh Helm
Handbook for Researching Family Roots with emphasis on German-Russian heritage, ... Diane J.
Wandler and Prairie Chapter Members
The Canadian Genealogical Sourcebook Ryan Taylor
The Everything Family Tree Book William G. Hartley
Tracing Your Family History Lise Hull
Finding Your Canadian Ancestors A Beginner's Guide Sherry Irvine and Dave Obee Genealogy
Research: The Basics Carolyn Schott GRHS Heritage Review Vol. 38, No. 4, December 2008, pp. 31-37

Germans from Russia Research

Helpful Societies
American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (ahsgr.org) Germans
from Russia Heritage Society (grhs.org)

Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe (sggee.org)
The Federation of East European Family History Societies (feefhs.org)
East European Genealogical Society (eegsociety.org)
Galizien German Descendants (galiziengermandescendants.org)
The Bukovina Society of the Americas (bukovinasociety.org)
Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland (deutscheausrussland.de)
Bessarabiendeutscher Verein e.V. (bessarabien.de)

These are just a few of the helpful societies for beginning and experienced GR researchers. Other helpful organizations can be found by doing a search using "Germans from Russia" or the name of a region or GR village. AHSGR has a helpful handout, available at the Branch Library, called Frequently Asked Questions. GRHS has on its website under Research Resources Frequently Asked Questions and An Elementary Tutorial on German-Russian History. The Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (library.ndsu.edu/grhc) is a rich source of valuable resources and information.

Searching Records

While some will gather information on both sides of their families at the same time, others will select one ancestor/family name and work their way back. This can depend on whether the Branches come from the same village/region/country. Check family history holdings of libraries, GR societies, and websites for evidence of research completed on the names you've selected.

Two essential elements of genealogical research are names of people and places. Many German-Russian names have a variety of spellings and have been changed to English equivalents. Check family documents and interview relatives to discover DIFFERENT SPELLINGS OF NAMES. Resources will have to be checked using all possible variations. Finding a GR ancestor's TOWN or VILLAGE of ORIGIN may be a challenge. An obituary or family history may just give Russia, Ukraine, Rumania, Volhynia, or Odessa as the birthplace. Finding the village of origin when you begin will definitely make your journey easier.

Resources for Finding Family Names and Villages of Origin

Bibles and Other Family Documents Family History Books and
Family Websites Obituaries
Sources

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS - Check news columns submitted by small villages surrounding a city. For example, communities such as Pashley, which no longer exists, submitted news articles to the Medicine Hat News. Funeral announcements for an ancestor's immediate family or other relatives may lead to the needed village name.

These obituaries are often on a newspaper's website; some have archives with notices that may go back six years or more. To see the notice's full text, a fee may be charged.

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS where ancestors lived for short periods - If your ancestors lived in the United States, check the newspaper of the village where they lived. Many genealogical societies have obituary indexes on their websites.
Alberta Genealogical Society - abgensoc.ca/databases.html
Germans from Russia Heritage Society - grhs.org
Obituaries - odessa3.org/collections
American Historical Society of Germans from Russia -ahsgr.org/obituaries.htm
Saving Our Ancestral Records - ahsgrsoar.org
Obituary Project - The Lower Volga Villages - webbitt.com

GERMAN NEWSPAPERS - Some indexes have been made for German obituaries. Copies of the obituaries can be ordered.
Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia - msbc.com/genealogy.html
Mennnonitsche Rundschau Der Bote
Germans from Russia Heritage Society -grhs.org
Dakota Freie Presse Dakota Rindschau
American Historical Society of Germans from Russia - ahsgr.org Odessa3.org/collections
Der Staats Anzeiger

CHURCH NEWSLETTERS - Churches belonging to one regional group may have published a newsletter containing obituaries.

FUNERAL HOME WEBSITES - Some of these have included notices.

OBITUARY WEBSITES - These are websites with notices from Canadian and U.S. newspapers. Often one needs to pay a fee or take out a membership to obtain/view a desired copy. Examples are obituaries.com and newspaperarchive.com

Naturalization Applications

For immigrants that lived in the U.S., naturalization applications can contain a wealth of information about a family, its home village, and its arrival in North America. Later applications, after 1906 in North Dakota, are especially worth checking. Historical Society websites can list naturalization applicants.

The North Dakota Naturalization Records Index is at lib.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndirs/databases/naturalrec.php.

For South Dakota, it's sdhistory.org/arc/naturalizationarchives/firstpaperslist.asp. After finding your ancestor in the index, copies can be ordered.

Passenger Ship Lists

Ship lists can give the last residence (village) of the passenger and/or a relative's village in the homeland. Check the document, "Germans from Russia Websites" for some helpful sites.

EWZ Records

EWZ (Einwandererzentralstelle) Records are immigration records of ethnic Germans that arrived in Germany from 1939-1945. These are of tremendous help if your ancestors or relatives reached Germany during this time period. Along with the village name, parents and grandparents of the immigrants can be listed. Indexing of these records has made them available to researchers. Check these websites for further information:

grhs.org/rig/bess/research _resettlement.htm
volhynia.com/ewzmain.html
odessa3.org/collections/war
galiziengermandescendants.org -1939 Resettlement Records

Koblenz Records

The Koblenz questionnaires were completed by Germans from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Dobrudscha when they departed Russia at the start of World War 11. These Fragebogen, completed before the EWZ forms, list family members, date and place of birth, and other helpful biographical data.

grhs.org/rig/bess/research _resetttlement.htm
odessa3.org/collections/bess/koblenz/

DAI Records

The DAI, Deutsches Ausland Institut, lists were made during World War 11. They contain various types of information collected about Germans from Russia that resettled in Germany.

grhs.org/rig/bess/Korners/allen konrad_korner.htm
odessa3.org/collections/war/dai/

Christian Fiess Records

Christian Fiess, born in Sarata, Bessarabia, collected many documents on Bessarabian families with the help of others that had left Russia during the War. This collection was microfilmed by the LDS Church.

grhs.org/rig/bess/CF/Christian _fiess.htm
odessa3.org/collections/bess/fiess

Attestation Records - Soldiers of the First World War - CEF

The Attestation Paper lists the address of the soldier, present place of residence, nextof-kin, and the place of birth. Library and Archives Canada collectionscanada.gc.caldatabases/cef

Likacheff-Ragosine-Mathers (LI-RA-MA) Collection

Immigrants from the Russian Empire - The collection contains "documents created between 1898 and 1922 by the consular offices of the Russian Empire in Canada." Copies of passport applications, questionnaires, and personal documents which list the year and place of birth are in the collection. Library and Archives Canada collectionscanada.gc.caldatabases/li-ra-ma

Land Records

        Canadian Homestead Records for Germans from Russia often state that the homesteader was from Russia or S. Russia. If the person lived in the U.S. and came to Canada to fill in a homestead application, it may have the village name in the States. Sometimes the Country, Sub-division, and Last Place of Residence listed are more helpful.
United States Homestead Applications can include the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, Declaration of Intention, which should contain the homeland village. These records describe the homestead and the progress made by the family.
Check the document "German from Russia Websites" for some helpful sites.

Lists of Emigrants from Germany to Russia

        Depending on the family name, indexes (books and websites) can be used to discover the homeland village of the family with the surname being researched. This village name would have to be further proved with other resources before being accepted as the correct homeland village. Searches can be completed on Germans from Russia websites. The major resource, The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763-1862 by Karl Stumpp, is indispensable. An alphabetical listing of family names from this book can be searched at odessa3.org/collections/ships/link/sindex.txt.

Website Searches - Family Name using Alternative Spellings/Villages

Germans from Russia Heritage Society - grhs.org - GRHS Website Search American
Historical Society of Germans from Russia - ahsgr.org - Find Your Ancestors/Ancestors List
Volga Germans - webbit.com/volga - Search for Your Ancestors Society for
German Genealogy in Eastern Europe - sggee.org

Family History and Genealogical Records - familysearch.org

Conduct a search of LDS family history and genealogical records. Again additional research will have

to be completed to make sure the village is correct.

Germans from Russia Websites

      Medicine Hat centers a region that contains many Germans from Russia descendants. In the 2001 Canadian census, 40.6 % of the Hat's population gave German as their ethnic origin. Nearby SE Alberta communities of Dunmore, Irvine, Walsh, Schuler, Hilda, and Seven Persons were homesteaded by significant numbers of Germans from Russia. Across the border in SW Saskatchewan, Golden Prairie, Richmound, Fox Valley, Burstall, and Leader also have many GR roots.

Often it is faster/less frustrating to reach these societies/websites by doing an internet search without the website address.

Societies/ Websites

Canada/ United States

Odessa A German-Russian Genealogical Library - odessa3.org
Germans from Russia Heritage Society - Chapters and Regional Interest Groups (RIGS), resources - grhs.org
American Historical Society of Germans from Russia - Village Coordinators, Research Links, resources - ahsgr.org
SOAR-Saving Our Ancestral Records - ahsgrsoar.org
Germans from Russia Heritage Collection - NDSU Library - library.ndsu.edu/grhc
Volga Germans - webbitt.com/Volga/home
CVGS - The Center for Volga German Studies at Concordia University - cvgs.cu
Kratzke - Brent Mai's Research Germans from Russia - berschauer.com/Genealogy/Total
Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet - GR links cyndislist.com/germruss
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints - International Genealogical Index, Ancestral File, Russian German resources - familysearch.org
St. Petersburg Records - Record
Search/ Asia and Middle East - Russia Lutheran Church Book Duplicates 1833-1885 - familysearchlabs.org
Germans from Russia - Research Wiki - 30 Research articles - familysearch.org/en/ Category: Germans from_ Russia
Germany - Baptisms and MarriagesRecord Search/Europe - familysearchlabs.org
Federation of East European Family History Societies - research in Eastern and Central Europe - resources, map library -feefhs.org
Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe - present day Poland and NW Ukraine, Volhynia - maps, resources, research help - sggee.org
Volhynian website - Dave Obee - Volhynia.com
Mennonite genealogy - Mennonites.ca
Mennonite church registers, passenger lists - mennonitegenealogy.com/ Canada
Mennonite Historical Society of BC - obituary indexes, migration and census lists - mhsbc.com/genealogy.html
Gliickstal Colonies Research Association - publications - glueckstal.org
Galizien German Descendants - resources, maps - galiziengermandescendants.org
The Krasna Project - Krasna, Bessarabia plus Emmental, Bess, and Karamurat, Dobrudscha(Dobruja) - 14ushop.com/krasna

East European Genealogical Society - eegsociety.org
Kartenmeister - Place names in provinces of East Prussia, including Memel; West Prussia, Brandenburg, Posen, Pomerania, and Silesia, maps - kartenmeister.com
East and West Prussia Gazetteer - progenealogists.com/ germany
Donauschwaben Villages Helping Hands Inc. - Banat, Batschka, Hungarian Highlands, Sathmar, Syrmia & Slavonia, Swabian Turkey - dvhh.org
Russian Roots, German Branches - The Weiss Family, Selz to Fox Valley - maps, photos - russianroots.ca
Canadian Census - collectionscanada.ca automatedgenealogy.com

Germany

Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland - homeland association of Germans from Russia - publications, Heimatbiicher - deutscheaurussland.de
Historischer Forschungsverein Der Deutchen aus Russland E.V. - historical research society of Germans from Russia Association - hfdr.de
Deutsche Auswanderer-Datenbank, Historische Museum Bremerhaven - German Emigrants Database - dad-recherche.de
Ancestry.com German site - Hamburg Passenger lists - ancestry.de
Germany - German Genealogy - many links - Dutch.favos.nl
German genealogy - online heritage books (Ortsfamilienbucher), family notices in newspapers(Familienanzeigen in Tageszeitungen), Historical address books, ships databases, German European settlements such as Dobruja - genealogienetz. de
 Kirchlicher Suchdienst - tracing service of the ecclesiastical welfare associations - kirchlicher-suchdienst. de

Russia

Russian Archives - GR resources - Saratov, Engels, and Volgograd Archives - webbitt.com/Volga - Volga Archives

Getting Research Done at the Russian Archives -dobrinka.org/ archives
Researching Russian Roots - archives - mtu-net.ro/rrr
Russian Federal Archive - rusarchives.ru website in Russian

Argentina

Alemanes Del Volga - Association of Volga Descendants in Argentina - alemanesdelvolga.com
Centro Argentino Cultural "Wolgadeutsche" - cacw.com

Emigration and Passenger Lists

What Passenger Lists Are Online? - home.att.net/ -wee-monster/ontinelists
 Emigration Port Hamburg - fhhl.hamburg.de/fhh (Use #1)
Bremen Passenger Lists 1920-1939 - schiffslisten. de
Ballinstadt - Port of Hamburg - ballinstadt.de/en/about

Passenger lists leaving UK: 1890-1960 - findmypast.com
Library and Archives Canada & Canadian Genealogy Centre - ancestors - Passenger Lists, Immigrants from the Russian
Empire(LI-RA-MA Collection) - collectionscanada.ca
Halifax, Quebec, and St John Ship Arrivals 1900-1914 - G. Dorscher - odessa3.org/collections/ships
Portland, Maine Ship Arrivals - 1906-1912 - A. Brosz - odessa3.org/collections/ships
Ships List Indexing Project - Nanaimo Family History Society - members.shaw.ca/Nanaimo.fhs
Passengers arriving at New York - ellisislandrecord.org
Ellis Island Database - One Step Search Tools - jewishgen.org Hosted Organizations
Immigrants arriving in New York 1830-1892 - castlegarden.org
German Emigrants Database - European emigration to the United States 1820-1939 mostly German ports - dad-recherche.de
National Archives - Access to Archival Databases - Passenger Lists - Russians to America Passenger Data File 1834-1897 - archives. gov/ aad
 One Step Webpages -stevemorse.org

Land Records

Alberta Homestead Records - abgensoc.ca
Saskatchewan Homestead Index - saskgenealogy.com
Canadian Land Records - Western Land Grants - collectionscanada.ca
glorecords.blm.gov United States Land Records - Search Land Patents -

German Language and Writing

Omniglot writing systems & languages of the world -
omniglot.com/ writing/ german.htm
suetterlinschrift.de German handwriting, German script -

North and South Dakota

censusfinder.com Census Images -
- nd. gov/ hist/ sal/ archives.htm State Historical Society of North Dakota
- lib.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndirs/databases/ North Dakota Naturalization Records Index naturalrec.php
- doh.sd.gov/OnlineServices.aspx South Dakota - 100-year-old birth records

Alberta

- ualberta.ca German-speaking Communities in Alberta - Manfred Prokop - Central and Eastern Europe to Alberta settlement for GR groups, links to excellent sections on related topics, maps - Search ualberta website - "german communities"

Maps

- rollintl.com/roll/grsettle.htm German-Russian Settlement maps

Berkeley Soviet Military Topographic Maps - ehrman.net/maps/Berkeley.htm
lib.utexas.edu/maps Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection - Germany maps -
Index to William Schroeders' 205 Maps and Historical Notes related to Mennonite History -
mennonitechurch.ca/ programs/ archives/ holdings/ Schroeder maps/
library.wisc.edu/etext/ravenstein/ home.html An Atlas of the German Empire -

Newspapers

zeitung.de German newspapers -
dw-world.de German and European News- Deutsche Welle -

Genealogy Programs

gensoftreviews.com Genealogy software, reviewed and rated -

List serves/Mailing Groups

electronic discussion groups
- rootsweb.ancestry.com Russia Mailing Lists - Genealogy Resources on the Internet