Introduction to Researching German Russian Family History

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Brief German Russian History

- **Manifestos, 1762-1763:** Almost immediately upon ascending the throne, Catherine the Great issues her first and, later, second manifesto encouraging the settlement of newly acquired land in the Russian Empire for "German" colonists.
- **First Settlements, 1760s, 1790s, 1830s:** Colonies along the Lower Volga River are established in the 1760s. The second Partition of Poland leads to the first German settlers of Volhynia towards the 19th century. The 1830's and beyond led to the settlement of the Bessarbian region and, later, other German colonies (Caucasus, Crimea, and much later Siberia).
- **Losing Appeal, 1870s**: German colonists of the Russian Empire lose special privileges granted to them by Catherine II and Alexander I. Slavophile movement - "Russia for Russians." [Россия для русских]. Additionally, land shortages begin to occur in certain villages.
  - The first wave of emigration occurs
- **Years of Hell, 1917, 1920s & beyond:** Russian Revolution occurs, as well as famines and the Holodomor. Russia sees the rise of Communism & Collectivization of farms. Many are deported to labor camps in Siberia.

Famous German Russians

- **John Denver, musician:** Known at birth as Henry John Deutschendorf Jr. (December 31, 1943 – October 12, 1997), he quickly became one of the most popular acts of his era.
- **Sally Brening Everett, Runza Founder:** Cofounder of Runza Restaurant, a popular chain in Nebraska that sells German-Russian style Runzas, also known by many other names including krautburgers, bierocks & more.
- **Lawrence Welk, Musician & Entertainer:** Born in North Dakota, near significant GR populations, Lawrence Welk was known as an accordionist, band leader, and television host of the Lawrence Welk Show.

- **Randy Meisner, Member of the Eagles:** Grew up in the panhandle of Nebraska. Musician, member of the Eagles.

American Historical Society of Germans from Russia History

- **Founding, 1968:** The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia was founded in 1968 and incorporated in Colorado as an international, non-profit.
- **Relocation, 1973:** AHSGR was relocated to Lincoln, Nebraska
- **Heritage Center, 1983:** The construction of the International Headquarters Building is completed and the receives a dedication at the 15th International Convention.
- **Campus Additions, 1980s and after:** Several of the historical reconstructions on our campus were completed in the 1980's. Our Ag Building was completed in 2000. AHSGR continues to serve its mission and hopes to expand.

AHSGR Archives

- AHSGR houses rare and unique documents created and collected by members of the German Russian community.
- These Special Collections are comprised of books, manuscripts, original research on Germans from Russia, correspondence, photographs, and more.
- Because our Special Collections are of unique content, most collections are only available to be viewed in-house at the AHSGR Library in Lincoln, Nebraska.
  - Some collections have been digitized and are available at https://ahsgr.pastperfectonline.com/
  - Additional information and the available finding aids are available at https://ahsgr.org/research/archives-and-special-collections/
- The AHSGR Archives holds approximately 7,200+ linear feet
- Over 300 unique collections
  - Original letters from Russia
  - Welfare Society, Inc. (Lincoln, Neb.)
  - Russian Census copies
- Museum Collection holds 2,400+ items
  - Samovar
  - Textiles
  - Bibles
- 5,700+ Master tiffs have been created in our new Digital Imaging Lab

Heritage Center Library Resources

- Our library is part of the Emma Schwabenland-Haynes Library Archive and houses roughly 7,000+ books, surname charts, census translations, and some manuscripts.

- David J Miller Collection
- Arthur Flegel Collection
- Flegel Research Collection
- Reference Collection
- Microfilm & EWZ records
- Maps
- Access to genealogy websites & accounts
- Online Library catalog: https://ahsgr.biblionix.com/catalog/
  - Our library contains the largest collection of German Russian research information in the Western Hemisphere.
  - This catalog is a listing of the physical books held in the AHSGR Library at the Heritage Center in Lincoln, Nebraska.
  - While AHSGR Members do have access to certain materials on our website, **the books listed in this catalog are not electronically available for download. We do not have copyright permission to scan and distribute electronic versions of the books listed in our library.**
  - Many of our books are available through Interlibrary Loan through your local library or university.
  - You do not need to log in to your account to search the AHSGR Library Catalog.
    - You only need to log in with an account password if you want to reserve an item, and/or check out materials in person in Lincoln, Nebraska.
    - The log-in prompt may come up on the screen, or be in the upper right-hand corner, and you can disregard it.
    - If you would like to check something out, you will need to come into the library in person or do an ILL Inter-library Loan request through your home public library and it will be mailed to them for checkout.
  - New materials are constantly added. If you have a title suggestion, please contact librarian@ahsgr.org.
  - Much of the material in our Research Collection are translated records from the Russian Archives. Due to the high volume of use, Research Collection materials are not available for Interlibrary Loans or checkouts.
  - Items published by AHSGR are available for purchase through the ASHGR online store, https://ahsgr.org/shop/.
  - **Interlibrary Loans:**
    - AHSGR only loans materials via ILL to other libraries. We do not loan items directly to individuals, even members.
    - Interlibrary loan requests can be made through your local library or university via OCLC Worldshare.

- AHSGR only loans materials if we have two copies of the title. We also do not loan surname charts, maps, fragile materials, and materials in the **Research Collection.**
- Loans are made for 6 weeks from the time the requesting library receives the material.
- There is no charge for loans made in the United States. International requests may require additional fees.

Early Years Books

- *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763 – 1862*, Dr. Karl Stumpp, *"The Stumpp Book"*
    - Black Sea and some Volga
    - Can help determine first settlers or villages that certain surnames tended to settle
    - Origin location not 100%
- *Einwanderung in das Wolgagebiet, 1764-1767*, Igor Pleve
    - Multiple Bands, 1-4
    - Alphabetical by village
    - Russian and German entries
    - Dr. Brent Mai compiled a surname index, (DK 511 .P484 2011)
- *Transportation of Volga Germans from Oranienbaum to Colonies on the Volga, 1766-1767,* by Dr. Brent Mai
    - Combined surname index to all volumes of Einwanderung in das Wolgage-beit, 1764-1767
    - Copies of 9 transport lists to the Volga
    - Fond 383, Opis 1, Central State Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow
- *Lists of Colonists to Russia in 1766 Reports by Ivan Kulberg*, Igor Pleve, *"the Kulberg lists"*
    - Entries in English
    - Typically lists date of arrival
    - Head, wife, & children if applicable
    - Additional notes such as occupation
- *Emigration of German Colonists to Russia in 1766*, Andreas Idt & Georg Rauschenbach
    - Compares entries on different lists
    - Note on names
    - Alternate spellings are very common
    - A spelling not being exact does not mean the person is not your ancestor
    - Not standardized until recently

- o Most orthographies are not one-to-one
- *The German-Russian Handbook*, Ulrich Merten
  - o Helpful as a German Russian location Gazetteer
  - o Includes other helpful terms
  - o Includes parishes and current place names
- *The Immigration of German Colonists to Denmark and Their Subsequent Emigrations to Russia in the Years 1759 – 1766*, Eichhorn et. al., *Schleswig-Holstein*
  - o Good for those who emigrated from the Danish colonies, including Schleswig-Holstein
- **& more**
  - o **Check out the AHSGR Online Library Catalog, https://ahsgr.biblionix.com/catalog/. Many of the more than 7,000 are available for Interlibrary Loan through your local library.**

Revision Lists & Vital Records

- **What is a Revision List?**
  - o Census on *taxable* populous ('*souls*') in Russian Empire[1]
    - ▪ *Revizskie skazki*, (Ревизские скáзки)
    - ▪ 1811 revision contained no female enumeration
    - ▪ Often tallied households' agricultural production
    - ▪ Typically recorded names, ages, and relation to head
  - o Relied on local governments to record their constituents
    - ▪ *Zemstvo, (*земство)[2]
  - o Many revisions available here were transcribed* from Russian Archives
    - ▪ *Not original, take with grain salt
- **Using a Revision List**
  - o Start by referencing the index
    - ▪ Typically located in the back
  - o Find your surname of interest
    - ▪ Note the line number
    - ▪ Remember, spelling can vary
  - o Find the page with the line number

Surname Charts

- AHSGR German Russian surname chart lists delineate the various ancestral charts that have been purchased by AHSGR members from researchers in Russia. The individual(s) or village chart coordinator commissioning the chart are listed on each.

- Some charts have been researched and created by individuals and are listed as "Created by" instead of "Commissioned by."
- Many of the charts have been donated to the Society, and some of these charts are available for purchase from AHSGR.
- When the chart is noted with a "contact the submitter," we are asking that you take the time to write to the commissioner of the chart with your ancestral lineage.
- Some charts are available for purchase. The charts listed on our website, https://ahsgr.org/research/surname-charts/, are clearly marked with purchase methods.

Family Histories

- Since the creation of AHSGR, genealogists and researchers have shared the family histories they have compiled.
- The AHSGR Library holds over 1,500 family histories and genealogy books.
- Search the library catalog for surnames, relevant locations, or keywords, https://ahsgr.biblionix.com/catalog/

Flegel Resources

- Arthur "Art" E. Flegel dedicated much of his life to researching, writing and documenting 18th and early 19th century family surnames and historical events pertaining to the settlement of large populations of Germans in the Russian Empire.
- The Flegel collection is comprised of two parts.
    - Flegel Library Collection: General resource library
    - Flegel Research Collection: German Russian research and notes compiled by Arthur Flegel.
- Search the Flegel Collection at https://ahsgr.biblionix.com/catalog/.

EWZ Files

- **What are the EWZ Files?**
    - The EWZ files are records created by the Einwandererzentralstelle (Central Office of Immigration) by Nazi Germany between 1939-1945.
    - These records attempted to determine Germanic ethnicity of individuals residing in or entering German territory.
    - Anyone residing in an EWZ camp had to file an application and many individuals filed applications for their deceased or arrested spouses or children.
    - While AHSGR condemns the original intention behind the creation of such documents, they nevertheless can provide important information including, but not limited to, genealogical facts.

- o There are three main types of EWZ paperwork:
    - ▪ The EWZ application or Antrag (EWZ-50 = others)
    - ▪ The EWZ health cards or Einwandererkartei & Gesundheitskartei (EWZ-57)
    - ▪ The EWZ Stammblatt or pedigree record (EWZ-58)
  - o A portion of the files were intentionally destroyed before they could be captured.
- **What EWZ Records does AHSGR have access to?**
  - o AHSGR has a large collection of digital EWZ-50 records. These will, very rarely, contain photographs or a pedigree record.
  - o AHSGR also has two microfilm reels of EWZ-50 records & four reels of EWZ-57 records.
  - o EWZ-57 records are available for surnames Burgauner, Dorothea - Busch, Karoline & Grimann, Herbert-Griwzow, Hilda. These records sometimes contain photographs.
  - o AHSGR has other various Captured German Documents available on microfilm.
- **How can I obtain a copy of an EWZ record for my ancestors?**
  - o You can submit a research request here: https://ahsgr.org/research/genealogy-services/
  - o Be sure to be as detailed as possible with your request. Include the EWZ index number, if known.
  - o If you would like to find an index number or verify if someone you are researching has an EWZ record, you can check Odessa3's War Records collection or the Black Sea German Research website.
- **Using Odessa3's index**
  - o Go to Odessa3 Film Indexes: http://www.odessa3.org/collections/war/ewz/ewzindex.html
    - ▪ Full-text search is also available: http://www.odessa3.org/search.html
  - o Enter your search term
  - o For EWZ related searches be sure to select War Records from the dropdown below the search text box.
  - o EWZ-50 index numbers will appear in the following format: A3342-EWZ50-#### ####

Village and Family Files

- Village Files contain miscellaneous resources on a particular village or region:
  - o Norka
  - o Odessa
  - o Volhynia region, etc.

- o Check your village on the AHSGR website for a list of village files, village records, and village coordinators.
  - o Some Village Files are online for free to AHSGR members, https://ahsgr.org/villages/
- Family Files contain research collected or conducted by AHSGR:
  - o By surname of interest family
  - o By surname of researcher
  - o By surname of requestor

Microfilm

- Reader available
- Microfilm collections include:
  - Bessarabian Church Records
  - Galveston & San Antonio Port Immigrations
  - & more
- Received a grant to digitize some of our German Russian church records from across the United States.
  - Available to view online for AHSGR members, https://ahsgr.org/research/church-records/

AHSGR Website Resources

- **Many of these online resources are available only to AHSGR members. To become a member: https://ahsgr.org/membership/**
- **German Origins Resources**
  - o Karl Stumpp book, https://ahsgr.org/research/karl-stumpp-book/
  - o German Origins Projects, https://ahsgr.org/research/german-origins-project/
  - o Village Coordinator messaging: https://ahsgr.org/village-coordinators/
- **AHSGR Publications**
  - o Journals: https://ahsgr.org/publications/journals/
  - o Workpapers: https://ahsgr.org/publications/work-papers/
  - o Newsletters: https://ahsgr.org/publications/newsletters/
  - o Clues: https://ahsgr.org/publications/clues/
  - o Jugend Zeitung (Youth Magazine): https://ahsgr.org/publications/clues/
- **Place Resources**
  - o 1811 Census of 34 Colonies in Russia, https://ahsgr.org/research/1811-census/
  - o Village Files and Resources: https://ahsgr.org/villages/
  - o U.S. Church Records: https://ahsgr.org/research/church-records/

- o Danish Records: https://ahsgr.org/research/danish-birth-marriage-and-death-records/
- o Reference Services, https://ahsgr.org/research/genealogy-services/
- o Sandy Schilling Payne Maps
- **Video Resources**
  - o Online Video Library: https://ahsgr.org/video-library/
    - Treffen Tuesdays
    - Convention Rewatch
    - History
    - Textiles
    - Recipes & Foodways
    - Research & more
- **Unique Collections**
  - o Aussiedler Collection: https://ahsgr.org/research/ausseidler/
  - o American Volga Relief Society: https://ahsgr.org/research/american-volga-relief-society/
  - o Immigration and Passenger Lists: https://ahsgr.org/research/german-origins-project/
  - o Letters from Hell Index: https://ahsgr.org/letters-from-hell-index/
  - o Obituary Collection: https://ahsgr.org/research/obituaries/
  - o Genealogy Forms: https://ahsgr.org/research/genealogy-forms/
  - o Passports to Freedom: https://ahsgr.org/research/passports-to-freedom/
  - o Surname Charts: https://ahsgr.org/research/surname-charts/

Online German Russian Resources:

- American Historical Society of Germans from Russia: https://ahsgr.org/
  - o Online Library Catalog: https://ahsgr.biblionix.com/catalog/
  - o Online Collections Database: https://ahsgr.pastperfectonline.com/
- Volga Parish Records: https://www.boydhouse.com/darryl/volgarecords.com/
  - o Church records for Bergseite and Wiesenseite Parishes. The Parishes are broken down into individual villages. There is also a few Lutheran Village records as well.
  - o Information is free and available to all.
- The Volga Germans: https://www.volgagermans.org/
  - o Good general information about Volga Germans.
  - o Histories of villages and surnames.
  - o List of all known censuses and where to find them.
- Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University: https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/.

- The link includes access to their online collection, their online exhibit "Building Life & Home on the Prairie" and other resources.
- German from Russia Settlement Locations: https://www.germansfromrussiasettlementlocations.org/
  - Google Maps of Ancestral German Russian Colonies, 1700-1939
  - Created and maintained by Sandy Schilling Payne
- German from Russia Historical Society: https://www.grhs.org/pages/home
  - GR society out of North Dakota
  - Genealogy Database (need login)
  - Letter archive
  - Obituaries, Passports, and other resources (need login)
- Odessa: A German-Russian Genealogical Library: http://www.odessa3.org/
  - Sometimes called Odessa3
  - Lots of good information. Sometimes hard to find. But it is good to spend some time exploring.
  - Bessarabian Records, St. Petersburg Archives, EWZ index.
  - Both Russian and US records.
- Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe: https://www.sggee.org/
  - German ancestry who lived in present-day Poland and northwestern Ukraine.
  - Special emphasis on those who lived in the pre-WWI province of Volhynia
  - username is ahsgrlibrarian and the password is AHSGR.1234
- Norka: https://www.norkarussia.info/
  - Document and preserve the heritage, history, traditions, and accomplishments of the German colonists who settled in Norka as well as their descendants.
  - Timeline with links to resources
  - Maps, History, and Culture
- Black Sea German Research: https://blackseagr.org/index.php
  - Black Sea region of South Russia (now Ukraine)
  - Free Research: searchable database with more than 650 trees with over 2.6 million names
  - Searchable research repository with over 1,500 research documents (pdf/html)
  - Maps and photos
  - Connect with other Black Sea German Russians
- Pfeifer Village Website: https://www.boydhouse.com/darryl/pfeifervillage.com/
  - Village on West side of Volga River
  - Census records: 1767, 1798, 1834, 1850, and 1857
  - Emigration Lists for Kansas and North and South America
  - Maps and photos

- Volhynia.com: https://www.volhynia.com/.
  - Church records
  - History, timeline, and overview
  - Info on EWZ files
- Volga German Institute: https://volgagermaninstitute.org/
  - Locations, Surnames, Biographies, Events, etc.
- Germans From Russia of Ellis County: https://www.volgagerman.net/
  - Folklore and videos
  - Research materials
- JewishGen.org: https://jewishgen.org/
  - Millions of records from around the world
- Kartenmeister: http://www.kartenmeister.com/preview/databaseUwe.asp
- Wolgadeutsche: https://wolgadeutsche.net/
  - In Russian, but can be auto-translated
  - History of the Volga Germans

AHSGR Research Services:
- Unable to visit AHSGR Library and Archives in Lincoln, Nebraska?
- Patrons who are not able to visit may use AHSGR Reference Services to access these resources
- Research Services Pricing
  - Research service fees are charged to cover the expenses incurred by AHSGR in doing research for members and non-members. All requests for research incur a base and hourly fee.
  - The Base Fee will be paid upfront to hold your place in the Research Request Queue.
  - Save on your Research Fees by becoming an AHSGR Member: https://ahsgr.org/membership/
  - First, you will submit your online Research Request: https://ahsgr.org/research-request-form/
    - Please limit your Research Request to one surname at a time.
  - When ASHGR receives your Request, a staff member will reach out to you and work with you to complete a Research Plan.
  - Once the Research Plan is agreed on, the Base Fee is due.
  - As soon as AHSGR receives the Base Fee payment, your Research Request will be placed in our Request Queue.
    - AHSGR completes Requests in the order in which they are received.
    - Due to the high volume of Requests and the time needed to complete each request, there may be a 3-4 week wait period.
  - AHSGR staff will contact you for the final payment of the Hourly Fee that was estimated and agreed upon in the Research Plan.

- Once final payment is received a Research Report, and any additional supporting documents will be sent.
- All fees are applicable even if AHSGR staff is unable to find information pertinent to the request because considerable time and effort are still required.
- Base Fee
  - Members: $30
  - Non-members: $90
- Hourly Fees
  - Members: $40
  - Non-members: $100
- Photocopies: $.25 each

- Submit an online Research Request: https://ahsgr.org/research/genealogy-services/