# German Migration to the Russian Volga (1764-1767)

**Origins and Destinations** 

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American Historical Society of Germans from Russia

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#### Introduction

#### Socio-Economic Migration

In the early 1760s, Catherine the Great of Russia issued a series of invitations to the people of Western Europe to move to Russia. When the socioeconomic devastation wrought by the Seven Year's War ended in 1763, her invitations were well received by many. The time was ripe for migration.

Between 1763 and 1772, 30,623 colonists arrived in Russia for resettlement. For more discussion about the issues surrounding the immigration of the Germans to Russia, From Catherine to Khrushchev by Adam Giesinger is recommended.

The study of socio-economic migration patterns involves uncovering not only the reasons for population movement, but also tracing from where the movement occurred and to where the migrants went. For the Germans from Russia, beginning the study of these migration patterns involves first determining the origins and destinations of the migrants. Obtaining this information is particularly difficult for a number of reasons.

#### **Origins**

There are no single source manuscripts that indicate either the exact origin or the destination of the German-Russian colonists. The colonists did not come from the same place or even the same region of Central Europe. Some were not ethnically German at all, but came from such diverse locations as the Scandinavian countries and England to the north and from Bulgaria and Italy to the south.

Recruiters under the employ of Catherine the Great were dispatched to many areas of Central Europe. Large numbers of the colonists responding to her invitation to migrate to Russia gathered in the following locations: Büdingen near Isenburg, Danzig, Frankfurt am Main, Freiburg im Breisgau; Friedberg, Fürth near Nürnberg, Hamburg, Heide, Lübeck, Neu Münster, Regensburg, Rosslau, and Schlitz. Lübeck was a particularly busy port. Of the 30,623 colonists who arrived in Russia, 21,965 (72%) migrated through the port at Lübeck in the year 1766 alone.

The manuscripts to which this discussion pertains include records from the parish of the colonists' origin, records of the parishes in and near the gathering and embarkation points in Central Europe, disembarkation records at the point

of arrival in Russia, and Russian census documents for the years immediately following the colonists' arrival in Russia. The manuscripts that have been identified are located in a variety of archives and depositories throughout the modern states of Germany and various parts of the former Soviet Union.

The corpus of this book consists of listings of the marriages of colonists before they left Germany for Russia. These marriages are noted in the records of nine Protestant parishes\* for which original manuscripts were available for review:

St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Lübeck
Lutheran Cathedral in Lübeck
St. Mary's Lutheran Church in Lübeck
St. Egedi's Lutheran Church in Lübeck
St. Jacob's Lutheran Church in Lübeck
City Lutheran Church in Friedberg
Lutheran Church in Büdingen
Lutheran Church in Schlitz
Lutheran Church in Fränkisch-Crumbach

The appendices list additional marriages that were published in early twentieth century historical journals for which original manuscripts were not available for review during the preparation of this work. In the parish manuscripts that were reviewed, other events such as births and deaths among the departing colonists were also discovered and have been included in the appendices as well. Namely, these types of events were found recorded in the parishes in Büdingen, Friedberg, Lübeck, and Schlitz. Additional lists of colonists were found in the parish records of Aulendiebach, Fränkisch-Crumbach, Mettenheim, and Rohrbach and these, too, are included in the appendices.

In the early twentieth century, several German compilers published listings of marriages and other events involving the colonists before they left for Russia. These listings involve the parishes in Danzig, Rosslau, and Wöhrd along with the Reformed Church in Lübeck for which original manuscripts were not available to review for this book. Consult the section entitled "Inaccuracies" for additional discussion about the publications of these twentieth century compilers.

#### **Destinations**

Not all of the colonists were settled in the Volga region around Saratov. The first group of colonists (20 families) settled in Astrakhan, the delta area where the Volga River enters the Caspian Sea, on 27 October 1763. There were 167 colonists who continued more than 400 kilometers south of Saratov to establish the Moravian colony of Sarepta. The Ukraine received 696 colonists founding the colony of Borshchagovka and a group of Belovezh colonies near Nezhin with a few artisans settling in the city of Kiev itself. The following settled near St. Petersburg: 207 (60 families) to Novaya Saratovka (aka Sechziger); 103 (22 families) to Srednaya Rogatka (aka Zweiundzwanziger); and 106 (28 families) to Izhora (aka Kolpino or Achtundzwanziger). In 1767, another 275 (67 families) founded the villages of Lutsk, Porkhov, and Frankfurt near Yamburg also in the St. Petersburg area. Two colonies in Estonia received 329 colonists, and 337 went to various crafts factories in Petersburg, Moscow, & Tallin.

Not all of the colonists made it to the final settlement destinations. Of the 26,676 colonists dispatched from Oranienbaum for settlement in the Saratov region, 3,293 (12.5%) died on route.

#### Translating

The documentation is further complicated by the dual alphabets involved, with the Cyrillic in Russia and the Latin in Germany, and the fact that both alphabets, particularly the Cyrillic, have changed considerably over the past 240 years. In the manuscripts, one realizes that German scribes were recording the movement activities of people with surnames that they had never encountered before, people who came from villages that were completely foreign to them. Upon arrival in Russia, scribes who knew only Russian were recording information as they heard it from colonists who spoke only German (or Swedish or French or Italian, for example). They were making their best guess as to the actual names of the villages from which the colonists originated.

The colonists themselves did not always provide consistent information about their origins. In the most ideal circumstance, the colonists provided the names of actual villages in which they were born. At other times, the colonists indicated only the region from which they came, or the place where they most recently lived before immigration, even if this place had been their home for only a few months.

<sup>\*</sup> Although all of the parishes reviewed herein are Protestant, marriages of colonists identified as Catholic are frequently noted.

The translation and editing of eighteenth-century manuscripts present many linguistic and historical challenges. The manuscripts are handwritten. The ink has often bled through from one side of the paper to the other. Many pages are in poor condition, having faded or suffered moisture or dry-rot damage. Even with excellent penmanship and good preservation of the documents, inconsistencies and contradictions often arise because the information gathering involved the personal testimony of numerous individuals.

The manuscripts involved in the research for this book were not only in German but also in Russian where translation into English also involves transliteration. The Russian language uses characters of the Cyrillic alphabet while English and German use characters of the Latin alphabet. The contemporary Russian alphabet has 33 characters while the English alphabet has 26 and the German alphabet 30. Some characters in one alphabet do not have corresponding letters in another. This creates difficulty when transcribing German names into Russian and vice versa. For example, the Russian alphabet has no character for the German letter h. To accommodate the often-used German h, an eighteenth-century Russian scribe usually, but not always, used the Russian letter  $\Gamma$  which literally translates into the German letter g. Thus a literal translation of this transliteration results in German instead of Herman, Gartman instead of Hartman, and so on. To further complicate matters, the Russian alphabet of the eighteenth century had four more characters than the contemporary Russian alphabet.

When working with original Russian manuscripts, translation and transliteration must also account for variations in orthography caused by the phonetic differences between German and English. For example, the German j sounds like the English y although both languages have both letters. One, therefore, finds the same colony referenced as Potschinnaja in German and Pochinnaya in English. Since the manuscripts referenced herein have been translated from Russian into English, in the aforementioned example the English y is used.\*

Another linguistic complication involves the inflection of the Russian language. For example, if speaking in Russian of a place as a *selo* ("village" - neuter gender) or *selenie* ("settlement" - neuter gender), the name of the aforementioned example colony would be translated as Pochinnoye. This is the

form used in the gazetteer published by the U.S. Board of Geographic Names. However, if speaking of the place as a *derevnya* ("village" - feminine gender) or *koloniya* ("colony" - feminine gender), the name of this same place would be translated as Pochinnaya. Since the Russian manuscripts noted herein refer to the *koloniya*, that form has been used, especially in the Gazetteer.

In German orthography at this time, the  $\ddot{y}$  was also used by many scribes for vowel diphthongs with i or y as the second letter. Therefore, one often finds  $a\ddot{y}$  and  $e\ddot{y}$  where ay and  $e\dot{i}$  are found in contemporary orthography (for example: Mayer for Mayer and Schneyder for Schneider).

Orthography of given names and surnames has been left as found on the original manuscript, except for (1) omission of the feminine ending (generally – in, sometimes –en in Lübeck) for female surnames (Bichmännin = Bichmann; Bredin = Brede; Goblin = Gobel) and (2) simplification of the masculine nouns (Schlegeln = Schlegel; Wülffen = Wulff). The German  $\beta$  (double s or ess-tset) character has been maintained whenever it appeared in the original.

Many German scribes included the standardized common phrase "surviving legitimate son/daughter" (seelig nachgelassener ehelicher Son/Tochter) describing an individual's relationship to a parent. Some even used an acronym for these phrases (S.N.E.S. or S.N.E.T.). These phrases have not been included in this translation unless the reference was not "standard" – for example, surviving illegitimate son/daughter.

German place names have been left in their original orthography. They have neither been translated to English (i.e., Köln not changed to Cologne) nor corrected for misspellings or contemporary orthography. The German Amt is translated as "district".

German occupations have been translated into English, but because the German word for the occupation often has added meanings that do not translate easily into English, the German has been noted in parentheses following the translation. The German Geselle has been regularly translated as "journeyman". The German orthography has been left as it appears in the original.

### Inconsistencies and Discrepancies in Previous Translations

Some of the German manuscripts under consideration were published in a variety of journals and books, mostly for genealogical purposes. In 1912, Hermann Wäschke published a listing of colonists from sources in Roßlau. The colonist marriages that occurred in Wöhrd near Nürnberg were transcribed and

<sup>\*</sup> This difference is mentioned because the late Dr. Karl Stumpp, a prominent German-Russian researcher whose works are often cited, used German translation and translateration conventions.

published in 1926 by Wilhelm Funk. Hermann Hoffmann followed in 1927 with publication of the colonist marriages that occurred in Büdingen in 1766. Listings from Danzig (1938) and Lübeck (1939) followed. Prominent German-Russian researcher, Karl Stumpp, published abbreviated manuscripts in 1974 that included listings from each of the above locations (Büdingen, Danzig, Lübeck, Nürnberg, and Roßlau), and later editions included listings from Schlitz.

Since translations/transcriptions of several of these manuscripts have already been published, why is this book necessary? Quite frankly, it is because the manuscripts have never been published as a strict transcription of the original. Each of the previous compilers published edited translations without providing rationale for the edited changes. The editing was very inconsistent within itself, and information available in the original manuscript was omitted and other information added that is not found in the original manuscript.

For example: in the parish register of St. Peter's Lutheran Church (Evangelische Kirche Sankt Petri) in Lübeck on 18 July 1765, the marriage of Johann Adam Bockbarger & Maria Catharina Rossbach is recorded. Those are the names as they are clearly spelled in the original manuscript (LDS International Film Number 326271). However, in the article "Die Lübecker Traulisten" one finds Johann Adam Rockbarger & Maria Katharina Rotzbach listed. Karl Stumpp lists (p. 151) Joh. Adam Rockbärger & Maria Kath. Rossbach and gives no date. No explanation is provided by either compiler about why they chose to deviate from the direct transcription of the names.

Another example: in the parish register of the Lutheran Church (Evangelische Kirche) in Büdingen (LDS International Film Number 1197023) is recorded on 5 June 1766 the marriage of Johann Henrich Klein from Niederwölstadt and Anna Maria Bingemer from Rendel. However, in the article by Hermann Hoffmann one finds listed A. Maria Bingemer and the marriage date as 3 June 1766. Karl Stumpp lists (p. 122) Johann H. Klein from Niederwöllstadt near Friedberg and Anna Maria Bingermann from Rendel near Friedberg in Hessen. In another entry by Karl Stumpp (p.138) Joh. Heinrich Klein from Niederwöllstadt near Friedberg & Anna Maria Bingemern from Rendel near Friedberg are listed. Again, neither compiler provides an explanation about why they chose to deviate from the original manuscript.

Another example: in the parish register of City Lutheran Church (Evangelische Kirche Stadkirche) in Friedberg (LDS International Film Number 1269633) is recorded on 17 May 1766 the marriage of Eberhard Forschauer from Aslar in the district of Braunfels. Karl Stumpp lists (p. 128) Eberhard

Forschauer from Altenstädt near Wolfshagen in Hessen. Once again, no explanation is provided for the deviation from the manuscript.

This examination has also brought into question the most comprehensive listing of Volga colonists, that of Karl Stumpp. He does not site the sources of his information, and one must conclude that, because his work includes so many of the errors and omissions of the previously published lists, it is doubtful that he examined many of the original manuscripts. He evidently relied heavily, if not completely, on the previously published information.

Additional information from the known German manuscripts as well as additional manuscripts has been discovered. In addition to translations of the marriage lists previously published in part from the above mentioned locales (Büdingen, Danzig, Lübeck, Roßlau, Schlitz, and Wöhrd), an additional 72 marriages from St. Jacob's Lutheran Church in Lübeck were located, 3 in Fränkisch-Crumbach, and 57 in Friedberg; this information will also be included. Not only have the parish marriages registers been examined, but in several of these locations, the births and deaths of people identified as colonists are noted, many times providing additional information about the origins of the individuals involved and their families. Additional lists of colonists departing for Russia have been found in Aulendiebach, Fränkisch-Crumbach, Mettenheim, and Rohrbach. In total, more than 1,365 entries have been included.

In re-publishing this information, no claim is being asserted for complete accuracy. As much as one might wish, there are bound to be errors in a compilation of this magnitude and an obligatory disclaimer must be provided from the beginning. The information contained in this work has been obtained by the authors from sources believed to be reliable. However, neither of the authors nor the publisher can guarantee the accuracy or completeness of any information published herein. Neither the authors nor the publisher shall be responsible for any errors, omissions, or damages arising from use of this information.

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referencing is more than 1,240 footnotes identifying additional sources of information about the origins and destinations of the Germans from Russia.

Most colonists arrived via ship in Russia where they disembarked at Kronstadt and proceeded to Oranienbaum near St. Petersburg, Russia. From 1766, reception and housing of the colonists in Oranienbaum was conducted by Ivan Kuhlberg, and the lists of colonists that he compiled are often called the Kuhlberg Lists. He registered more than 20,000 colonists in 1766. In his doctoral dissertation, Igor Pehve published the names of those who arrived aboard the ship *Anna Catharina* in May, June, and August 1766. Where identifiable, cross-references to these lists have been indicated in the footnotes as evidence that the colonists actually made it to Russia.

In Oranienbaum, the colonists were organized into transport groups, and transported via small ships and wagons to the area around Saratov along the Volga. As part of the CIS Research Project, the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia acquired copies of nine of these transport lists. These lists comprise part of Fond 383, Opis 1 in the Central State Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow. A total of 7,501 individuals are mentioned on the nine transport lists which were transcribed by Brent Mai and published by AHSGR in 1998. Many of the individuals identified in the German manuscripts are included on these transport lists. Those identifiable have been noted in the footnotes.

The 1767 Russian Census, frequently called "Original Settler's Lists," often noted the German origins of the colonists. The following colonies are reviewed and included in the footnotes:

Anton Balzer Bangert Bauer Beauregard Bettinger Boisroux Brabander Cäsarsfeld Chasselois Degott Dehler Dietel Dinkel	Dobrinka Dönhof Dreispitz Enders Ernestinendorf Fischer Frank Franzosen Galka Göbel Graf Grimm Herzog Hildman	Holstein Hölzel Huck Husaren Jost Kamenka Kaneau Katharinenstadt Kautz Keller Köhler Kolb Kraft Krasnoyar	Kratzke Kukkus Kutter Leichtling Louis Mariental Merkel Müller Norka Ober-Monjou Pfeifer Preuss Rohleder Rothammel
--	---	---	--

Schönchen	Semenovka	Stahl am Karaman	Walter
Schuck	Sewald	Volmer	Yagodnaya Polyana

The 1775 Russian Census documents for Beideck, Grimm, Messer, Moor, Norka, and Schilling were also consulted. Cross-references have also been made to most of the 101 colonies extant at the time of the 1798 Russian Census:

Anton	Grimm	Louis	Schilling
Balzer	Herzog	Luzern	Schönchen
Bangert	Hildmann	Mariental	Schuck
Basel	Hockerberg	Meinhard	Schulz
Bauer	Holstein	Merkel	Schwab
Beauregard	Hölzel	Messer	Schwed
Beideck	Huck	Moor	Seelmann
Bettinger	Hummel	Müller	Semenovka
Biberstein	Husaren	Näb	Sewald
Boisroux	Hussenbach	Neu-Kolonie	Shcherbakovka
Brabander	Jost	Nieder-Mojou	Stahl am Karaman
Degott	Kamenka	Norka	Stahl am Tarlyk
Dehler	Kaneau	Ober-Monjou	Stephan
Dietel	Katharinenstadt	Orlovskaya	Straub
_ Dinkel	Kautz	Paulskaya	Susannental
Dobrinka	Kind	Pfeifer	Urbach
Dönhof	Köhler	Philippsfeld	Volmer
Dreispitz	Kolb	Pobochnaya	Walter
Enders	Kraft	Preuss	Warenburg
Ernestinendorf	Krasnoyar	Reinhard	Wittmann
Fischer	Kratzke	Reinwald	Yagodnaya Polyana
Frank	Kukkus	Rohleder	Zug
Franzosen	Kutter	Rosenheim	Zürich
Galka	Laub	Rothammel	
Göbel	Lauwe	Schäfer	
Graf	Leichtling	Schaffhausen	