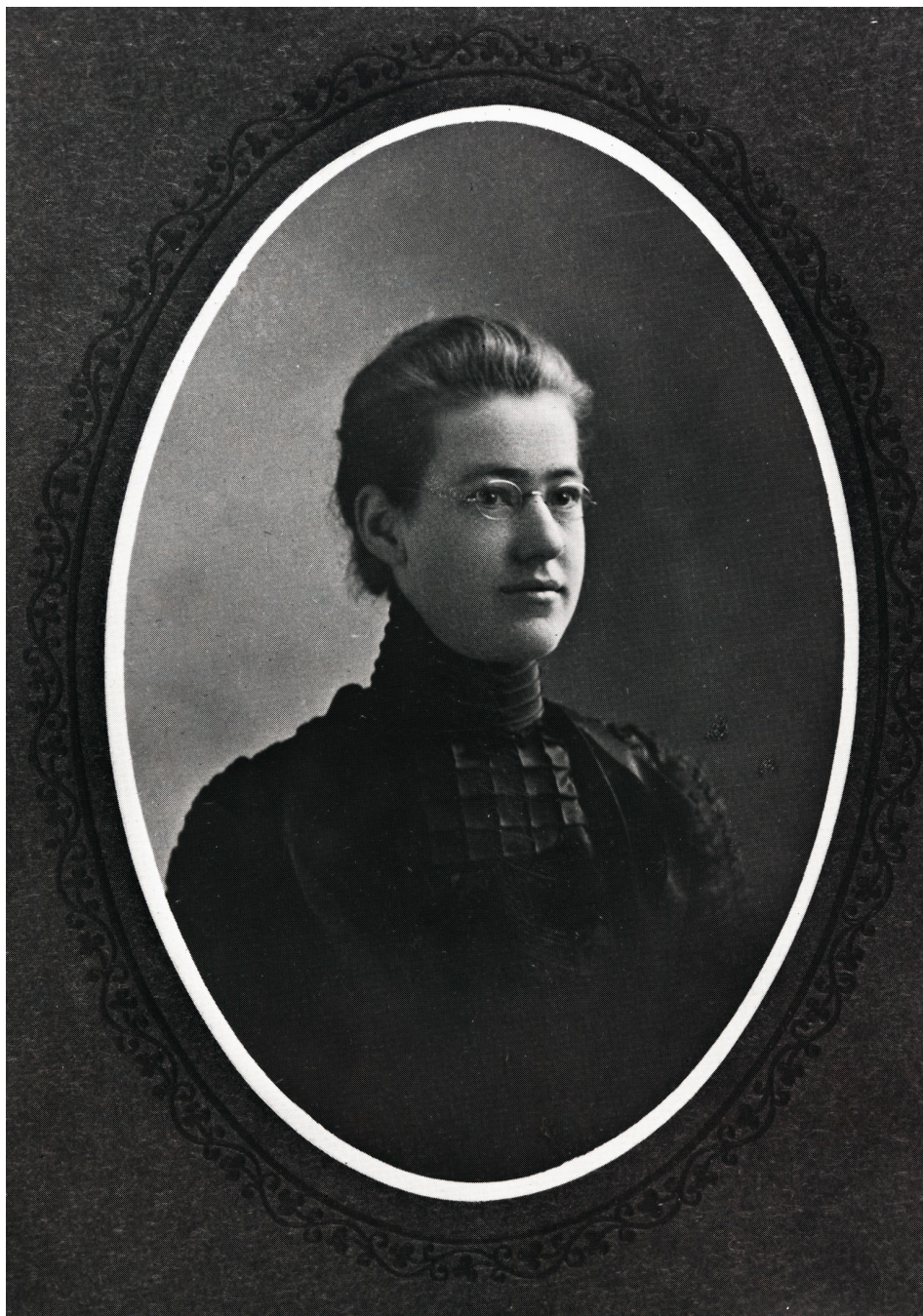


THE CZAR'S GERMANS



Courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.
Hattie Plum Williams. Photograph presumably taken in 1902.

The Czar's Germans

With Particular Reference to the Volga Germans

By

HATTIE PLUM WILLIAMS

Edited by

Emma S. Haynes

Phillip B. Legler

Gerda S. Walker

Published under the auspices of the
American Historical Society of Germans from Russia
631 D Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68502

Copyright © 1975
American Historical Society
Germans from Russia
631 D Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68502

International Standard Book Number: 0-914222-01-5

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 75-32862

Dedicated to
OUR PARENTS

all of whom were Volga Germans:

The Reverend and Mrs. J. C. Schwabenland,
from the colonies of Straub and Norka;

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Legler,
from Doennhof;

Mr. and Mrs. John Stroh
from Frank.

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------|
| ILLUSTRATIONS | ix |
| INTRODUCTION | xi |
| MAP OF EUROPE IN 1763 | xviii |
| CHAPTER ONE | |
| GERMAN EMIGRATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY | 1 |
| Causes of German Emigration | 3 |
| Eighteenth Century Emigration From Germany to America | 10 |
| German Emigration to European Countries in the Last Half of the Eighteenth Century | 20 |
| CHAPTER TWO | |
| GERMAN COLONIZATION IN RUSSIA | 29 |
| Catherine's Colonization Policy | 31 |
| The Work of the Ambassadors and the Professional Enrollers | 42 |
| Results of Enrollment in Various Countries Outside the German States | 51 |
| Tactics of Agents in German States | 55 |
| Action Taken by German Princes to Stop Emigration | 71 |
| Cessation of Russian Campaign and Later German Colonization in Russia | 88 |
| CHAPTER THREE | |
| THE VOLGA GERMANS IN RUSSIA | 97 |
| Number and Distribution of Immigrants to the Volga Region | 98 |
| Pioneer Experiences | 106 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Economic and Political Life of the Volga Germans | |
| 1. Period of Deterioration, 1767-1801 | 118 |
| 2. Period of Economic Progress, 1801-1850 | 139 |
| 3. Period of Changing Status in Relation to the Russian Government 1850-1871 | 160 |
| CHAPTER FOUR | |
| IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES | 175 |
| The Universal Military Service Law of 1874 in Russia | 178 |
| Immigration of Three Unrelated Groups of Germans in Russia | |
| 1. The "Odessa" Germans | 180 |
| 2. The Mennonites from South Russia | 184 |
| 3. The Volga Germans | 193 |
| The Ebb and Flow of Immigration | 204 |
| Conclusion – Character of Russian German Immigration | 215 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES | 223 |
| INDEX | 231 |

ILLUSTRATIONS

| | Page |
|--|--------------|
| Hattie Plum Williams | Frontispiece |
| Map of European Russia in 1763 | xviii |
| Destruction of Heidelberg by the French under General Méloc in 1689 | 3 |
| An extravagant hunting party at Bear Lake near Stuttgart in October 1782 | 5 |
| Title page of Bible printed by Christopher Saur in 1743 | 11 |
| Christopher Saur's home, Germantown, Pennsylvania | 13 |
| View of Mannheim around 1730 | 19 |
| Portrait of Frederick the Great | 27 |
| Portrait of Catherine the Great | 32 |
| Manifesto of July 22, 1763, issued by Catherine the Great | 36, 37 |
| Belfry in Walter Chutor | 40 |
| General view of Luebeck in the Eighteenth Century | 48 |
| View of the main square in Frankfurt am Main | 58 |
| Example of an "Avertisement" used to entice people to go to Russia | 66 |
| Plat of Hamburg in the late Eighteenth Century | 74 |
| Decree of the mayor and town council of the Free City of Frankfurt am Main, forbidding emigration to foreign countries | 82 |
| General view of Buedingen in the Seventeenth Century | 83 |
| Final decree of Joseph II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, forbidding emigration to foreign countries | 86 |
| A general view of Sarepta of the early Nineteenth Century | 92 |
| View of the Volga with the <i>Bergseite</i> in the background | 108 |
| A portrait of the rebel Pugachev | 114 |
| The Norka Reformed Church | 132 |
| A crown house built by Catherine the Great for the early colonists in Stahl am Tarlyk | 134 |
| Balzer in the wintertime | 136 |
| A typical village street scene in Messer on the Volga | 137 |
| General view of Katharinenstadt | 138 |
| When Volga German men gathered, long German pipes were smoked | 142 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| A Volga German school around 1800 | 143 |
| Market scene in Grimm on the <i>Bergseite</i> | 144 |
| Granaries at Katharinenstadt on the Volga | 145 |
| Threshing of barley by hand along the Volga | 148 |
| Windmills in German villages | 149 |
| A grandmother in Messer winds thread on a bobbin in preparation for weaving <i>sarpinka</i> | 150 |
| Preparing for <i>sarpinka</i> weaving | 151 |
| Weaving the <i>sarpinka</i> cloth | 152 |
| The Volga River at Seelman on the <i>Wiesenseite</i> | 153 |
| Mill in Frank | 154 |
| Sawing wood at Kolb | 155 |
| Alexander II, Emperor of Russia | 166 |
| Burlington and Missouri River Railroad Emigrant Home built in 1870 at Lincoln, Nebraska | 182 |
| <i>Dakota Freie Presse</i> (November 18, 1909) describing the arrival of Black Sea Germans to North America | 185 |
| The Cornelius Jansen family at their home in Berdyansk, South Russia, about 1870 | 187 |
| First church and belfry constructed by Catholic Volga Germans in Munjor, Ellis County, Kansas | 195 |
| Volga German women and children along the tracks of the Burlington Railroad before World War I | 201 |
| Topping sugar beets before World War I | 205 |
| Hauling sugar beets to the beet dump | 206 |
| Picking potatoes, one of the many forms of stoop labor performed by Germans from Russia | 207 |
| Wheat harvest scene | 208 |
| Mr. John Bitter from Laube and Mr. Michael Leisle in soldier uniforms in Russian army in 1907 | 211 |
| House of Henry Baum in Frank on the <i>Bergseite</i> | 214 |
| Sod house in South Dakota, formerly built and owned by Germans from Russia | 216 |
| A typical Russian German grandmother | 219 |

INTRODUCTION

The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia is proud to underwrite the publication of *The Czar's Germans* by Hattie Plum Williams. The manuscript upon which this book is based was written between the years 1909 and 1915, and constitutes the first serious study of the Volga Germans in the English language.

Although Dr. Williams died in December 1963, biographical material about her is scarce. The University of Nebraska *Senior Class Book of 1902* tells that she was born in Iowa in 1878 and was the only girl in a large family of boys. She attended the University of Iowa for one year and then transferred to the University of Nebraska. During her undergraduate days, she married Thomas Frederick Arthur Williams who was seven years her senior and already practicing law in Lincoln. The *Class Book* facetiously refers to Mr. Williams as "Taffy" and mentions that he sees to it that his wife is brought to the University gate every morning.

Even as a young university student, Mrs. Williams became aware that Lincoln, Nebraska, had become a gathering center for thousands of Protestant Volga Germans who began immigrating to the United States after the special privileges which had been promised to them by Catherine the Great were withdrawn in 1871. With her keen mind and sympathetic heart, Hattie Plum Williams soon became very interested in this immigrant group. Her Master's thesis in 1909, entitled "The History of the German-Russian Colony in Lincoln," begins with these paragraphs:

Standing at the corner of Tenth and O Streets in the city of Lincoln, Nebraska, any weekday morning between 7:30 and 8 o'clock, you may see pass by you from ten to twenty women with little black woolen shawls on their heads. Ask any citizen who they are and ninety-nine times in one hundred he will tell you they are "Russians". . . . As a matter of fact . . . his information is incorrect. . . .

These people, of whom there are about 4,000 in the city (including "beetfielders") are Germans, not Russians; they are Teutons, not Slavs; they are Lutheran and Reformed, not Greek Catholics. To be sure they and their ancestors lived in Russia for over one hundred years and they came here directly from the realm of the czar whose bona fide citizens they were — but they never spoke the Russian language, never

embraced the Greek religion, never intermarried with the Russians, and many of their children never saw a Russian until they left their native village for a new home in America.

Mrs. Williams was able to make these comments from personal experience. In the bibliography at the end of her M.A. thesis, she states that in June 1908 she took a school census of the Russian German colony in Lincoln; and that from December 1907 until May 1908, she had taught Russian German "beetfield children" in a Lincoln elementary school.

It is obvious that the writing of her Master's thesis merely stimulated Mrs. Williams' interest in the subject of Germans from Russia. She now planned a monumental study which would be divided into two sections. The first part, consisting of five chapters, was to be a complete history of the Russian Germans (a term which Mrs. Williams used from 1913 on). The second part, with seven chapters, would be a sociological study ending with a discussion of the integration of the group into American life. Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War I prevented Mrs. Williams from accomplishing her objective. In 1915 the first two chapters of her sociological study were accepted by the University of Nebraska as a dissertation for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. These chapters were published in *University Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 3, Lincoln, Nebraska, July 1916, under the title, "A Social Study of the Russian German." The rest of her work was never completed.

From 1915 until 1945 Dr. Williams served as chairman of the sociology department of the University of Nebraska. She was a leading figure in the field of social legislation throughout the 1930's and 1940's and was often called upon to read papers on this subject. One of her lectures, "The School as an Assimilative Agent," was frequently repeated before churches and social clubs. Another paper, "The Road to Citizenship — A Study of Naturalization in a Nebraska County," appeared in Vol. XXVII of the *Political Science Quarterly*. In this article Dr. Williams described naturalization proceedings in Nebraska before World War I and mentioned how the votes of newly arrived immigrants were often used by liquor and other special interest groups for selfish ends.

Throughout her lifetime Mrs. Williams retained an avid interest in the history of the Germans from Russia. She was always the first person to come to their defense whenever misunderstandings over their background or political loyalties arose. And in her function as a

teacher, she gave advice and guidance to many students who came to her for help.

Testimony of the role which Mr. and Mrs. Williams played in the lives of Volga German students is given on page seventy-three of William F. Urbach's book, *Our Parents Were Russian German* (privately published, 1963). Mr. Urbach relates that in 1910:

Mr. and Mrs. Williams had me at their home very often, sometimes alone, but often with other students whom they chose to entertain. I never left an occasion at their home without an uplift. Their understanding of human problems, their interest in young people, the books and magazines which they made available to me for reading, and above all the very atmosphere of their pleasant, comfortable home inspired ambitions within me for educational advancement. I wanted very much to go to college, and both of them encouraged me, pointing out how it would open up opportunities for greater enjoyment of life.

In the summer of 1960 Mr. and Mrs. Urbach came back to Lincoln, Nebraska, to discuss with Mr. and Mrs. Williams the writing of the Urbach family history mentioned above. Dr. Williams took advantage of the visit to ask the Urbachs to help classify the Russian German material which she had collected and to turn it over to the archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society. She was, at the time, eighty-two years old and in poor health, but her enthusiasm and interest in Russian German history had remained undiminished. She urged the Urbachs to do their utmost to gather such things as letters, photographs, church records, visas, jewelry, trinkets, and china, which would be of value in a Russian German collection that could be placed in some appropriate historical museum.

During the ensuing years, Mrs. Williams' health continued to fail. Death came for her on December 29, 1963, and for her husband in 1970.

After the organization of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR) in 1968, Mrs. Gerda Stroh Walker, genealogy chairman, was the first person to come to Lincoln and examine the manuscript material which had been given by Mr. and Mrs. Williams to the Nebraska State Historical Society. Mrs. Walker returned to Colorado with the exciting news that the first three chapters of the unpublished *Czar's Germans* had been included in the bequest, and that other handwritten material constituted additional chapters. The bequest also included the original cards which had been used for a

private census of the Volga German settlements of Lincoln, Nebraska, taken between March 15 and April 15, 1914, in which Dr. Williams was assisted by Mr. Jacob J. Stroh. The cards contain information on such subjects as: place and date of birth, date of arrival in Lincoln, and name and age of children in each family. Needless to say, such information is very important today for purposes of genealogical research.

In addition to this material, Mrs. Williams donated to the Nebraska State Historical Society her very valuable library of Russian German books. These included such extremely rare volumes as *Unsere Kolonien* by Alexander Klaus, published in Odessa, Russia, in 1887; *Volkslieder und Kinderreime aus den Wolgakolonien*, a collection of Volga German folksongs and children's rhymes, by Johannes Erbes and Peter Sinner (Saratov, 1914); two volumes on the history of the Evangelical Lutheran churches of Russia by E. H. Busch (St. Petersburg, 1862 and 1867); Friedrich Matthaei's description of the German settlements in Russia (Leipzig, 1866); and most important of all, Grigorii Pisarevskii's three volumes of archival material on the arrival and early history of foreign colonists in Russia, published between the years 1909 and 1916 in the Russian language. There are also copies of the Saratow *Volkszeitung* from March 25, 1912, to December 25, 1914. No issues of this newspaper have been preserved in the Library of Congress or in the Institute fuer Auslandsbeziehungen in Stuttgart, Germany. These may be the only copies in the western world.

In 1972 a second member of AHSCR, Mr. Phillip B. Legler, came to Lincoln on four different occasions, spending more than two months classifying and re-typing the historical section of *The Czar's Germans*. Finally, in August of the same year, the board of AHSCR appointed Mrs. Walker, Mr. Legler, and Mrs. Emma S. Haynes as a committee in charge of preparing the Williams' manuscript for publication. In the opinion of the board, this manuscript represented a major scholarly achievement.

One must always remember that in the years prior to World War I, practically nothing on the history of the Volga Germans had been written in the English language. Even such secondary sources as the histories in German by Gottlieb Beratz and Gerhard Bonwetsch did not, as yet, exist. In order to obtain material on the exodus of German colonists to the Volga, Mrs. Williams found it necessary to write to the directors of twenty-four state and city archives in Germany, asking that all available records of the 1760's be searched at her expense for information on this subject. She also corresponded with the Russian historian Grigorii Pisarevskii whose book on *Foreign Colonization in*

Russia in the 18th Century had been based upon hitherto unpublished archival information in Moscow and St. Petersburg. As a result, practically everything which she writes in the second chapter of her manuscript comes from direct primary sources. Unfortunately, the files in which Dr. Williams kept this extremely valuable correspondence have disappeared. One can only hope that they will come to light eventually.

The latter part of Chapter III deals with the Russification policies of the czars which played such an important role in causing immigration to the New World. It is interesting to note that repressive measures did not begin with the communists. Czar Nicholas I also attempted to prevent his subjects from leaving the country and introduced laws interfering with human rights. And in Chapter IV the objections that the Germans had toward assimilation into the Russian culture bear an interesting parallel with the reasons given by present-day Germans wishing to leave the Soviet Union.

Chapters II and III are being printed almost exactly as they were written except for necessary editing. However, much of Chapter I, which places the emigration of Germans to Russia within the general framework of German immigration to many countries of the world, has been re-written in abridged form by me. Chapter IV is based upon incomplete notes which had been typewritten by Mr. Legler.

In an explanatory note at the beginning of her thesis, Mrs. Williams wrote, "Some omissions of pages, given names, etc., in footnotes and in the bibliography are found because the books were used in eastern libraries and it seemed best not to have them sent to me until the final checking of references could be done." The editors have done their best to supply the missing references but in a few cases it was impossible to find the name of the company or the date of publication of a book which had been used.

This work is truly a cooperative effort of many members of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia. Thanks should be expressed to Miss Ruth M. Amen, President, and Mr. David J. Miller, General Counsel, of AHSGR for their support of the project. Mrs. Clarence T. Olson, a patient and obliging researcher, undertook the time-consuming task of preparing the Index. We are especially grateful to Dr. Adam Giesinger for translating the French references within the text and for reading the manuscript prior to its publication. Dr. Giesinger sent important corrections, comments, and suggestions, as well as making numerous improvements in the translations from German to English. His unfailing kindness and courtesy were much appreciated.

Thanks should also be given to Mr. James E. Potter, Archivist of the Nebraska State Historical Society, for giving AHSGR permission to publish the Williams' manuscript, and to his staff, Mr. Donald Snoddy, Assistant State Archivist, and Mrs. Louise Small, Chief Librarian of the Nebraska State Historical Society, for their unfailing courtesy and help in making the Hattie Plum Williams' material available.

Here in Europe we are especially grateful to the archivist of the Hamburg City Archives for making accessible the letters of Hattie Plum Williams written in 1913 which are still being preserved there. The Institut fuer Auslandsbeziehungen and the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland very graciously made their outstanding picture files available to us. Dr. Karl Scherer of the Heimatstelle Pfalz provided us with the painting for the dust jacket and many other archives, museums, and private individuals gave us copies of additional photographs.

Emma S. Haynes
Frankfurt, Germany
August 1, 1975

200 MILES

