Finding German Colonies

Russia "How to" Guide, Beginner Level: Instruction

December 2015

GOAL

This guide will teach you about finding information on German colonies in Russia and how to locate ancestors in one of these colonies.

INTRODUCTION

Once you know the name of the colony for which you are searching, the next thing to do is to find information about it, including its Russian or Ukrainian name, its modern name, what historical region it was in, and what parish it belonged to. This will help you find what records are available.

HOW TO

One of the best places to find information about your German colony is online. There are many websites dedicated to providing information on German colonies in Russia. Each website gives different information for the colonies. Look at multiple websites so you can find as much information as possible about your colony.

The following information can be found online about a German colony:

- Russian/Ukrainian name equivalent
- Modern place name
- Other names it is known by
- What region it belonged to, including Volga, Odessa (also known as Kherson), Volhynia, Crimea, and Kiev.
- The Lutheran or Catholic parish

Search the web

Open your browser and go to a search page, such as www.google.com. Type in the name of your colony and the phrase 'Germans from Russia.' Generally, several search results will come up that will help you to find the information noted above. You may even find that your colony has its own website, Facebook page, or town coordinator. You will also find links to various Germans from Russia societies and libraries. If your town name is slightly misspelled, the search results should still appear. If you find no search results, it may be due to a major misspelling of the German colony name.

Other resources for finding German colonies

"Long German Russian Village List" (D. Wahl)

This list can be found in many places. You can do an internet search for the title or use the following URL:

http://www.leibbrandt.com/leibbrandt_archive/dr_georg_leibbrandt/VILLHELP.TXT

This list is alphabetical and includes the German, Ukrainian, and Russian variants of the German colonies. It may list the region, other names for the colony, the parish, when it was founded, the religion, and the approximate latitude and longitude.

GRHS Village List

Use the following URL in order to access this list:

http://www.grhs.org/villages/alpha.html

This list is compiled by the Germans from Russia Heritage Society, and focuses on the Odessa/Black Sea and Crimea German colonies now located in Ukraine. Each village or colony should have its own page, and may include the region, area, district, rayon, year it was founded, religion, the parish, village coordinators, and the German, Russian, and Ukrainian names. This website also include lists of the available records this society has for a particular colony.

CVGS Gazetteer

This gazetteer is found at the following URL:

http://cvgs.cu-portland.edu/gazetteer.cfm

The Center for Volga German Studies focuses on the Volga River region but may include other colonies as well. These pages will typically include other names for the place, latitude and longitude, a short history, information about the parish church and the pastors, population by year, village coordinators, the sources from which they took the information, and external links that will lead you to more information.

Village Coordinators

Many German colonies have village coordinators. These are people who generally have in-depth knowledge of the colony, including settling families, location of the parish church, and where the records are currently housed and how to access them. Village coordinators can be an invaluable resource when researching ancestors from the German colonies; if your colony has one, be sure to contact them for further information.

PRACTICE

Together we will find information about the colony of Frank.

1. Open up an internet browser and use a search engine, such as www.google.com.

2. In the search box, type: Frank Germans from Russia.

3. The first 5 search results that came up for my search were:

    - " Frank and Kolb, Russia"

    - " Cyndi's List - Germans from Russia - Villages & Colonies"

    - "Village of Frank Russia – BoulderNET"

    - "A Brief History of the Germans from Russia – Libraries" from NDSU

    - "Frank - The Center for Volga German Studies at Concordia ..."

4. Click on the first four webpages and look at the websites. The pages from BoulderNET and NDSU Libraries contain short histories. The "Cyndi's List" results provides links to additional websites. The "Frank and Kolb, Russia" webpage is dedicated specifically to the villages of Frank and Kolb.

5. Click on the final search result, "Frank - The Center for Volga German Studies at Concordia....". This is the same as the CVGS gazetteer for the Volga River area as discussed above. On this page you will find a wealth of information. Under "History," it states that the colony was established in 1767 by 117 families from various parts of Germany. This page states that the parish church was established in 1768 in Frank itself. In addition, it provides a list of years and the population of the colony in that year.

6. Now do a new internet search in your search engine. In the search box, type: Borodino Germans from Russia.

7. The first 5 search results may look similar to the following list:

    - "Borodino, Bessarabia – Germans from Russia Heritage Society"

    - "Bessarabia Germans – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia"

    - "Borodino / Bessarabia"

    - "German Russian History – Libraries – North Dakota State …"

    - "Borodino, Bessarabia – American Historical Society Of … "

8. Click on the first webpage. Notice that this is from the GRHS Village List website, as

discussed in the Instruction above. Read through the website.

9. The information provided shows that the village was founded in 1814, and that people living in the village were both Evangelical (Lutheran) and Catholic. Notice also that the parish name is given as Klöstitz. In the upper right corner, look at the names of the village coordinators: Judy Remmick Hubert and Ingrid Reule. Their names are blue, indicating that each of these coordinators has a website you may visit that may provide more information on Borodino, including valuable genealogical information. Click on the name of the first village coordinator, Judy Remminck Hubert.

10. This website contains lists of families from the German Colony of Borodino. Click on the letter "G." Then click on the surname "Giessler" in the surname list. It should open in a new tab in your web browser.

11. Notice that the village coordinator's website has several generations of the Giessler family listed. If you were looking for information from the village of Borodino, this website would be invaluable for identifying previous research.

12. Return to the website from GRHS for Borodino by clicking on the tab for the website. Scroll down until you see the words "Church Records". Click on it.

13. This page shows the Church Records available for the Bessarabia region. Check here to see if any of the records for Borodino are available. Click on the words, "List of microfilms".

14. This list of parish records is alphabetized. Scroll down the page until you see Borodino. Here you will see that church records for Borodino are available, with the "Film Number" indicating the FamilySearch microfilm number. You may access these microfilms at the Family History Library or any Family History Center.

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this "How to" Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you've mastered the Guide! Click here to try out the Activity.