THE GERMANS FROM RUSSIA IN COLORADO STUDY PROJECT: A PROGRESS REPORT

Introduction

The original conceptualization of a study of the Germans from Russia in Colorado goes back many years, for CSU is a logical place for such a project, concerned as it is with the history, the agriculture, and the general development of Colorado. Preliminary steps toward such a project were initiated by Professor Kenneth Rock of the Department of History with the assistance of modest Faculty Research grants in 1974 and 1975.

Not until the summer of 1975 did adequate "seed" money become available to inaugurate a systematic program of study, training, and publication. After two months of planning, in September the "Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project" began to operate with a full complement of staff members.

In the brief time between September and the end of January 1976, remarkable progress was made. This report summarizes these achievements and future plans. It is being sent to all persons who have expressed interest in the Project. Their suggestions are earnestly requested for furthering the important work of studying, preserving, and disseminating knowledge about the history and ethnic legacy of the Germans from Russia in Colorado.

Project Objectives

In keeping with Colorado State University's missions of teaching, research, and service, the Project early established the following objectives

1. RESEARCH, STUDY, AND PUBLICATION

   a. Bibliographic research and study
   b. Library and field study
   c. Publication of findings through articles, books, bibliographies, guides, collections of documents, readings, and translations of original works
   d. Reports and papers for professional meetings
   e. Information bulletins, newsletters, feature stories for the media
2. HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION
   a. Collection and preservation of documentary materials
   b. Collection and preservation of museum materials
   c. Collaboration with historic preservation and restoration projects, with the State Historical Society of Colorado, with the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, and with similar organizations and projects

3. DOCUMENTATION AND DISSEMINATION OF ETHNIC LEGACY
   a. Oral history recording of experiences, folkways, customs, religion
   b. Recordings of music, folklore, dialects, oral traditions
   c. Filming or videotaping ceremonies, rites, dress, etc.
   d. Production of documentary films and taped programs

4. TEACHING AND TRAINING
   a. Infusion of findings into graduate and undergraduate curriculum and teacher training at CSU
   b. Involvement of graduate and undergraduate students in research, study, and writing
   c. Sponsorship by Project of speakers, exhibits, festivals, demonstrations, films, performances, and other enrichment programs
   d. Encouragement of and participation in interdisciplinary instruction on ethnic studies, immigration history, and intercultural relations

5. PUBLIC SERVICE
   a. Dissemination of information of general public interest
   b. Encouragement of and assistance to private individuals and organizations interested in the Germans from Russia or related immigration, ethnic, or historic study
   c. Service to and cooperation with various community groups interested in Centennial and Bicentennial celebrations, local and state history, the history of agriculture, urbanization, language and cultural studies, etc.
   d. Cooperation in all of the above with other colleges and universities in and beyond Colorado

Staff

To implement these goals, a highly qualified and dedicated staff was formed, consisting of the following persons

Sidney Heitman, Professor of History, Project Coordinator. Prof. Heitman holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University and the Certificate of its Russian Institute. With his knowledge of Russian and German and a specialization in Russian history, he coordinates the Project and participates in the research and writing.
James W. Long, Associate Professor of History, Senior Researcher. Prof. Long earned a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin and is a specialist in Russian history. His research has been published in this country and abroad. He has conducted research for the Project at the Hoover Institution and is presently studying in the USSR as an exchange scholar under the auspices of IREX.

Kenneth W. Rock, Associate Professor of History, Senior Researcher. Prof. Rock holds the Ph.D. from Stanford University in modern Central and East European history. He is a specialist on the history of the Hapsburg Empire and of Germanic Europe. His research has been published in leading journals. He is studying the Germans before their migration to Russia and their history in the United States and in Colorado particularly.

David G. McComb, Associate Professor and Chairman of the Department of History. Prof. McComb earned the Ph.D. at the University of Texas-Austin and is a recognized expert in American urban history, a field to which he has contributed a major book, and in oral history and its techniques. He is Project Consultant on oral history.

John Newman, Special Collections Librarian and CSU Archivist. Mr. Newman, who has advanced degrees in history and library science, is the Project Archivist and supervises its special collection in the CSU Libraries.

Timothy J. Kloberdanz, who holds a B.A. and an M.A. in Anthropology, is a Research Associate in the Project. He is a widely published and recognized authority on the Germans from Russia and a specialist on oral history, folklore, and the dialects of the Germans from Russia. He is responsible for oral history interviewing and general research and bibliographical study. He is also an award-winning scholar and a member of the International Board of Directors of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia.

Dennis R. Means and William L. Virden are graduate students in history at CSU and Research Assistants in the Project. Mr. Means has had experience in archival research and in preparing a master's thesis on the Germans from Russia in Larimer County, Colorado. Mr. Virden, who learned Russian and German during his military service, assists the staff with bibliographical research and the acquisition of materials.

Kenneth W. Wollard, an undergraduate student in anthropology, provides general assistance to the staff.

Kay J. Bolls, the Project's steno-transcriber and secretary, has many years of experience in office and records management and is the staff's reliable aide, on whom all depend heavily for a variety of skilled tasks.
The Project is especially fortunate to have such a well-qualified and highly motivated staff, which unquestionably accounts for the considerable progress until now, described next.

The Special Collection

Perhaps the single most significant achievement to date is the creation of a special collection of research materials administered by Mr. Newman Project Archivist. The “Germans from Russia Collection” is housed in the Special Collections Department, of CSU Libraries and provides both bibliographic and archival support for the Project. Except for books owned by the Libraries and shelved with the Collection because of subject association, all items in the Germans from Russia Collection are owned by the Project. Ultimately, the entire Collection will be transferred to the Libraries' ownership.

The bibliographic component of the collection includes the books, articles, and other material necessary for basic background study of the subject. In order to avoid duplication of the resources of the nearby Greeley Public Library and to make the best use of available funds, purchases are made selectively. Many items have been found elsewhere in the University Libraries, especially in collections relating to agricultural history and rural sociology, which touch on the Germans from Russia. Also, Project staff members make frequent use of interlibrary loan facilities to borrow books and articles from other Libraries. With carefully chosen but adequate published resources, the bibliographic component of the Collection is already attracting student and other non-faculty interest in addition to the use it receives from, Project staff members.

Complementing the published material is the more unique and specialized group of unpublished reports, surveys, interviews, and manuscripts. Most of this is generated by the activities of the Project itself. This element of the Collection is growing steadily, and its diverse contents are being arranged in an organized manner and indexed as they are received. While the first use of much of this material will be for studies and related publications of Project staff members, there is abundant information for a great deal of additional study. A catalog of the Collection will be printed in later issues of the “Information Bulletin.”

Other Achievements

Other achievements include the following activities:

Staff members completed on-site field surveys of the state to determine historic patterns of settlement by Germans from Russia, densities of German population past and present, and guides for future research, historic preservation, and oral history interviewing.
Scores of personal contacts and hundreds of pieces of correspondence with scholars, clergymen, County Extension Service agents, newspaper editors, and others have resulted in the compilation of a file of informants, potential interviewees, and interested persons in and beyond Colorado. These contacts have also brought to the Project's attention a number of unpublished manuscripts, collections of personal papers, and many leads to other possible resources for the study.

Oral history interviewing began with the aim of recording and transcribing at least 50 interviews with primarily older of the German-Russian community in Colorado.

Research was begun on a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of the Germans from Russia. Entries will be computerized to permit constant updating and various types of cross-referencing. Listings will include information regarding not only contents and publication data, but also their locations and accessibility. Titles will include all published and unpublished material dealing with the Germans from Russia from their origin in Germany to their migration to Russia and subsequent settlement in Canada, the United States, and South America, as well as the return of some to Germany and the status of those who remained in the USSR. The bibliography will include not only, conventional materials, but also documents, manuscripts, government records, and audio-visual materials bearing on the subject, as well as descriptions of major collections and archives.

Studies by staff members during the term of the Project that have been completed, are scheduled for publication, or are in progress include the following:

Timothy Kloberdanz


"Bloodletting, Blessed Salt and 'Brauchen'- Folk Medicine from the Volga German Catholic Colonies, 1390-1914, American Historical, Society of Germans from Russia Work Paper No. 19, December 1975

Black Babushka: A Study of Volga German Folk Life, book to be published under the auspices of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia in 1976.

"When the Owl, Calls: Death Among the Volqa German Catholics in Old Russia,"


"They Came Over the Clouds: Colorado’s Germans from Russia," in progress for Empire Magazine of the Denver Post.

"Traditional Concepts of Self and Society Among the Germans from Russia in Colorado," in progress.

"Steppe, Prairie and Pampa: Latitude Pull and the Germans from Russia on Three Continents," in progress.

"Volga German Kinship Terms versus Standard German Kinship Terminology," in progress.

Kenneth W. Rock


"Colorado’s Germans from Russia: An Initial Inquiry," forthcoming in the Pacific Historical Review.

James W. Long

A bibliography of Russian language sources relating to the Germans from Russia in the U.S. and abroad, in progress.

Sidney Heitman

The Germans from Russia: An Annotated Bibliography, in progress.

A demographic study of Germans from Russia in Colorado, in progress.

My Childhood on the Prairie, by Clam Hilderman Ehrlich, being prepared for publication with an introduction by S. Heitman.

Dennis R. Means

“An Exploratory Bibliography of Sources Relating to the Germans from
Russia in Colorado," unpublished paper.


John Newman

Activities by staff members include:

James Long was selected to participate in the academic exchange with the USSR and is spending six months in the Soviet Union conducting research on the tsarist regime and on the Germans from Russia in the old Empire.

Timothy Kloberdanz was elected a member of the International Board of Directors of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia and is in charge of its folklore studies. His master's thesis, "The Volga German Catholic Life Cycle; An Ethnographic Reconstruction," was awarded an Honorable Mention in the Chicago Folklore Prize competition for 1975 sponsored by the University of Chicago Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. Normally, only published works by recognized scholars or doctoral dissertations are eligible for consideration The fact that Tim's M.A. thesis was accepted for consideration and then awarded a distinction makes this a special honor and recognition of the quality of his study.

Kenneth Rock was awarded a CSU Faculty Research Grant to assist his study of the Germans from Russia in Colorado. He will conduct research and oral history interviews in Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas.

John Newman, Special Collections Librarian and Archivist of the Project was recently appointed University Archivist.

In addition to serving as Project Coordinator, Sidney Heitm an continues as Editor of The Social Science Journal, published by the Western Social Science Association, is a member of the Education Committee of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, is an Executive Committee and Advisory Committee member of the National Service Center for Teachers of Pre-College Russian and East European Studies, and is coordinator of CSU's Russian and East/Central European Studies program.

In August 1975, the Project hosted a luncheon meeting with the International Board of Directors of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia.

Project staff members were leaders in the formation late in 1975 of a
"Colorado Society for Immigration Studies," which will bring together interested persons in this field and advance programs related to immigration history and ethnic studies in Colorado.

Members of the staff are involved in several ethnic studies projects: an East European cultural festival at CSU; a workshop for secondary school teachers on Germans from Russia to be conducted in the summer of 1976 at CSU; various Centennial-Bicentennial programs and activities; a U. S. Office of Education-sponsored program to broaden instruction at CSU in international education; CSU's Russian and East/Central European Studies program; and CSU's Experiment station Research Conference, where a program on Germans from Russia will be presented.

Staff members also participated in and attended meetings of various organizations concerned with ethnic studies generally or the Germans from Russia in particular: the annual meeting of the AHSGR in Lincoln, Nebraska; the Immigration History Society meeting in San Francisco, California; the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in Atlanta, Georgia; the Western Social Science Association in Denver, Colorado; the annual meeting of the Colorado Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Estes Park, Colorado; the International Congress of Historical Science in San Francisco, California; and the American Sociological Association annual meeting in San Francisco, California.

Members of the staff will also participate in special sessions on the Germans from Russia at the forthcoming 1976 annual meetings of the Western Social Science Association (April, Tempe, Arizona), the AHSGR (June, Denver, Colorado), and (tentatively) the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (October, St. Louis, Missouri).

Preliminary work has begun on establishing special projects within the larger Project employing staff members and other specialists in the U. S. and abroad to study, document, preserve, and disseminate information concerning German-Russian folklore, religious music, and language and dialects. Further progress on these projects depends upon successful funding.

In the area of teaching-training, the Project is providing financial assistance for two graduate students in history and one undergraduate student in anthropology. One of the graduate students, Dennis Means, is acquiring experience in oral history interviewing, archival and field research, and general historical methodology. The other, William Virden, is involved in bibliographic search and study and general historical research. Staff members are also involved in various aspects of CSU's instructional and extra-curricular educational programs, where they are infusing information about the Germans from Russia into relevant courses and other activities. Three potential graduate students are considering masters and doctoral study at CSU on the Germans from Russia. However, additional funding beyond the "seed" grants now available are needed to support this growing interest in graduate study at CSU of the Germans from Russia.
Future Plans

During the balance of the initial year of operation and afterward, the following activities are planned;

Completion of the bibliographic survey ("state of the art" evaluation) of work on the Germans from Russia; computerization of the hundreds of items located to make it possible to update the bibliography continually; and publication of the results of the survey, including every known item in English, German, Russian, and other languages, their location and accessibility, and other descriptive notations of use to researchers. When this phase of the Project is completed, it will provide the first and only comprehensive guide to the extant literature on the subject, covering all languages in which material has appeared, including published and unpublished sources, documentary sources, manuscript material, photographs and other forms of materials.

Continued graduate training in history, sociology, anthropology, and archival science for selected students at CSU in masters and doctoral programs, whose work will be coordinated with the staff, facilities, and resources of the Project. Some will serve on the staff as Research Assistants, depending upon the availability of funds.

Continued acquisition of published and unpublished material for deposit in the special collection.

Continued research, study, and writing and the publication of the results of such efforts in appropriate outlets--journals, books, magazines, newspapers, special reports, etc. Support of research by scholars other than those directly affiliated with the Project at CSU. This may take the form of assistance with the expenses of research by graduate students and independent scholars elsewhere; appointments as Fellows or Associates of the Project of appropriate scholars elsewhere; the creation of fellowships, scholarships, and other forms of stipends for graduate students and scholars to come to Fort Collins to work for varying periods of time at the special collection (contributing their knowledge and experience in the meantime to the staff of the Project and to the instructional programs at CSU); and the furnishing of copies of research materials upon request by scholars working elsewhere. All these important activities also depend upon adequate funding.

Expansion of research and study from the history of the Germans from Russia in Colorado to such related fields as folklore, ethnomusicology, linguistics, cultural studies, demographic studies, etc,

Collection and publication of illustrative materials, such as photographs, maps, and other graphics relating to the Germans from Russia. Such material is presently scattered widely in this country and abroad and
copies should be collected in a single place for ready reference and preservation.

Production of documentary films on the history and culture of the Germans from Russia in Colorado for use as research and instructional media, as well as for the information of the general public. Also the production of special television and radio programs devoted to aspects of the subject, as well as feature articles for the popular press.

Special courses, workshops, and teacher training programs at CSU dealing with immigration and ethnic history generally and with the Germans from Russia in Colorado, specifically. Special efforts will be made to infuse the CSU curriculum in various departments and disciplines (including the social sciences, humanities, agriculture, business, etc.) with appropriate material dealing with the Germans from Russia and their historic role and contributions, and also to extend such instructional components to the secondary and elementary schools through various forms of "outreach" activities.

Sponsorship of various ethnic awareness activities at CSU and elsewhere in the state designed to acquaint the general public with the country's and the state's origins and roots, its debt to the immigrant streams that peopled and formed our country, and the pluralistic nature of our society -- all intended to develop an awareness of the multiplicity of American cultural roots and an appreciation of both one's own and others' ethnic heritage.

The production of records and tapes for general distribution and for educational purposes of German folklore, music, singing, poetry, language, and ceremonies.

Cooperation with and encouragement of historic preservation and restoration of landmarks and sites relating to the immigration and evolution of Colorado's Germans from Russia. Until now, the emphasis of such efforts has been on preserving or restoring the legacies of Colorado's mining, cattle-raising, and urban past. The extension of such efforts to the important agricultural and rural areas of Colorado and to its immigrant heritage is long overdue.