

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
GERMANS FROM RUSSIA IN COLORADO STUDY PROJECT
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

FAMILY, RUSSIAN, AND IMMIGRATION BACKGROUND:

What is your full name? Where were you born? When? What is your birthday?

What were the names of your parents? Were your parents born in Russia or in this country? What were their birthdays? In what village were they born? Your father? Your mother?

What was your parents' faith? Lutheran? Reformed? Roman Catholic?

When did you your parents come to the United States?

Why did your family emigrate from Russia? Shortage of land? Military conscription?

What did your parents tell you or what do you recall of conditions in Russia?

What memories do you have or what stories did your parents tell you of life and conditions in their native villages?

What memories do you have of Russia? Do you recall any stories about the government?

The Tsar? Tsarist authorities? Do you have and knowledge of or did you experience "Russification" practices? Do you remember anything of the Stolypin land reforms?

Do you recall anything about the Russo- Japanese War?

Did your family, parents, relatives, or you travel much within Russia? Did you ever go to a big city? Do you have memories of Saratov? Did you ever see or sail on) the Volga River? What was the landscape like? Flat? Rolling? Hilly? Any gardens? Trees? Orchards?

What was your parents' level of education? How much schooling in Russia did they (did you) have? Could they (you) speak Russian? What were conditions like in the village schools? Were your teachers from your own village? Was the school in the church? Was the pastor the school teacher? Did you sing the anthem to the Tsar? Was there a picture of the Tsar in your classroom? The Russian flag?

What memories do you have of the church in Russia? Did you your family) attend church regularly? What do you recall of the church services? Any hymns? Singing? What do you remember about the pastor? How important was the church, the pastor in the community? Were there bells in the church? A steeple or bell tower?

What do you recall of the family home in Russia? What did it look like? .Was there a "Hof"? How many rooms were there? Were there barns and sheds? Where was the cooking done? Where did people sleep? Did your family have pets? Livestock? Where were they kept?

When and how did you (your parents) emigrate from Russia? Did your family receive any letters from relatives or friends already in America? ,Where- were they living in America? Do you know if anyone helped pay for the passage to America? Who provided the fare? Did your family have a sale before they left Russia?

What was the route of travel from the Volga region? From the Black Sea region? What memories do you have of the trip ? The train ride? Did you sail on a ship? From what port?

Did, you go to the Kaiser's Germany? Do you recall anything of the German people or the German big cities? From what port did you sail? Do you remember the name of the ship? Any trouble with the German authorities? What do you recall of the ocean voyage? Were you seasick?

What was your port of entry into the United States? New York? Baltimore?

Galveston? Do you have any memories of Ellis island? Was there any problem with immigration or health authorities? Trachoma? Was anyone denied entry into the United States?

What were your impressions of or experiences in New York? Were you or your family met by anyone?

What do you recall of your travel westward across the United States? The train trip?

Where did you go? To Chicago? to Nebraska (Lincoln? or Sutton?) To Kansas?

To the Dakotas? To Washington? To Idaho or Oregon? To California? Why?

Did your family (you) live in other states before coming to Colorado? If so, Why? When? For how long? Where? What do you recall of living conditions there?

EARLY YEARS IN COLORADO:

When? Why? and Where? did you and your family first come to Colorado? Do you remember the date? Did you come because relatives were here? Did the sugar companies bring you? Was your passage, train fare, paid? Did your family have a seasonal contract at first or did you seek a more permanent settlement?

Do you recall anything about the railroad trip? Did you travel in passenger coaches or box cars?

Do you recall any knowledge of Mr. H. G. Amen of Lincoln, Nebraska? Did you (your family) have any contact with agents of the Great Western Sugar Company? The National Sugar Company? The Holly Sugar Company? The American Sugar Company?

How were you (your family) treated by the native Americans? The Coloradoans upon your arrival? Where did you first live, work, settle in Colorado?

What were your living conditions? Working conditions? like in the early years in Colorado? Did you your family) do "stoop labor" in the beet fields?

What were the contract conditions with the sugar companies? With the local farmers? Do you remember anything about contract terms or prices? Did you as a child (or your children) also do "stoop labor" in the fields?

Did the Colorado or local school authorities bother you or your children? Did you or your children, your brothers and sisters, miss much school? What did you think of school in America? What was your parents' attitude toward American schooling for their children?

What were your personal (your family's) relations with the beet companies? with the beet farmers? with the beet workers' organizations? with the local townspeople? with others? Do you recall any people in particular who helped or assisted you and your family? Whom you especially disliked?

What was the role of religion, of the church, to you and your family in the early years in Colorado? Did your family go to church? What did you think of the minister? Did you attend Christian Endeavor? Was it a Lutheran, Congregational (Reformed), or Roman Catholic Church.? Did you associate with people from other churches? Did you or your family have anything to do with "The Brotherhood"?

Were you involved in any kind of social activities, organizations outside the church?

Was there a German-Russian church that you and your family attended? How regularly?

Were the services in the German language? Until when, do you recall? Were there church bells? Do you recall singing hymns in German? Did, your church still use the Volga Gesangbuch?

How important do you really think was the role and influence of the church upon you, your family, your friends?

Did you (your family) associate only with immigrants from your native village in Russia here in Colorado? Did you associate only with members of your religious denomination?

What were the patterns of settlement in Colorado? Was there any continuation of the closed or denominational village traditions continuing from the Old Country into the New World?

What do you know of your German-Russian heritage? Who kept the traditions alive in your family? Your mother? Your father? Was there a conscious attempt to keep traditions alive? Did you (your family) feel ashamed of your ethnic traditions? Did anyone try to suppress them? Did you want to become "Americans"?

Do you think that you (or your family) had pride in their ethnic traditions? Do you recall as a child any accurate knowledge or stories your parents told about their ancestry? What do you remember? Did you (your family) come from "over the clouds" (uber did Wolken or uber die Wolga)?

How long was German spoken in your family? In your parents' home? Did your father and mother both learn to speak English? Only your father? Could either read or write in English? What was their (your) attitude toward the German (the English) languages?

Did your father consider himself to be a Hausvater? Did he insist that his children worked for him until age twenty-one? Do you recall any strife over the family "work ethic" attitude? Did you or your brothers and sisters wish to "escape" from the family roof and become "Americans"?

Do you recall any American holidays or celebrations in which you participated as a child or were German and church holidays more important in your life?

Were you or your family called "Rooshians" or "Russians" by the Americans? What was your (your family's) attitude toward this term? Do you (your family) consider yourself "Germans" or "Russians"? How important do you believe this was to you as a child growing up in Colorado or to your family? Do you recall incidents at school or with your American neighbors about these terms?

Did you call the Americans the "Englischer"? Any thing else? Do you think there was much understanding or misunderstanding between the two groups of people?

Did you have any contact with immigrants from other countries in Colorado? What do you recall of your (your family's) relationships with other immigrant families and groups?

Do you have any general comments about conditions in general in Colorado before the First World War?

THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914-1918:

What do you recall of your experiences during the First World War? Do you remember any discrimination? Can you recall any examples?

Did you (your family) feel any divided loyalties? What were your feelings toward the Germans? Towards the Russians? Towards the Germans from Germany? From Austria--Hungary? What do you recall of the feelings expressed by Coloradoans (Americans) towards the Germans from Russia? How did they feel in return?

'What were your feelings toward the German language? Was its use banned in your community? Did you (your family) suffer? How? How much? When? Where? Why?

Do you recall any observers or "spies" at German-Russian church services? - Was anyone checking on your community's loyalties?

Did you (your family) change your name? Do you know of anyone who became "Swiss," "Dutch," "Swedish," "Polish," or even "German" at this time?

Did you (anyone in your family) serve in the United States Army during the First World War? Did he volunteer? Was he drafted? What feelings were aroused in the family because of military service?

Do you have any comments in general about life in America (in Colorado) during the First World War?

THE TWENTIES:

Do you recall any social or economic improvements in your family after the First World War? Were the 1920s "better" years or years of hardship? Did your family acquire any land? Did your family become renters? Did your family become owners of land? Did you move to better or more permanent housing in the 1920s?

Do you recalling hearing news from Russia, of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War? Did you hear about the fate of the Tsar? Did friends or relatives write your family about the activities of the revolutionaries or military treatment of the Volga and Black Sea regions during the Revolution and Civil War?

Did you hear about the famines in Russia in the Volga provinces? Do you recall any association with the German-Russian Volga Relief Society in Colorado or elsewhere? Did your family contribute?

Did you know any new immigrants from Russia to Colorado about 1922, those who brought tales of life in Russia from 1917-1923?

14hat was German-Russian religious life in Colorado like in the 1920s? Do your recall when your congregation built a new church? Any conferences? What do your recall of marriage ceremonies among the German-Russians?

What were family relationships like during the 1920s? Did you still associate primarily with other members of the German-Russian community?

What do you recall of attitudes toward marriage within or outside of the German-Russian ethnic community?

Are you familiar with the term "under Lait") (unsere Leute" or "our people"? How widely was this term used? By whom?

What were German-Russian attitudes towards education in the 1924s? Did you miss much schooling as you (your brothers and sisters) worked in the beet fields? Did anyone in your family attend high school or college? Did your community have any "summer school" or special "German school" (in the church) for young German-Russian children? -Was there any night school or citizenship class for German-Russian adults? Who conducted such classes?

Do you have any memories of vocations other than farming? Did you (your father, brothers, sisters) perform other tasks on the farm than labor in the beet fields? Haying? Threshing? Livestock? Lambs? Did you (your family) have any connection with business in the towns and cities of Colorado? Did your mother, (you, your sisters) do house work for others?. Was your father (relatives) in any type of business other than farming? Did you know any members of the German-Russian community in the professions by the 1924s?

Did you know of anyone who went to college or a university? When? - Where? Did you associate with them?

What were conditions like in the fields? On the farms?

What were relationships like with the sugar companies? The management? Other Laborers? Renters? Prices?

Do you recall Mexican ("Chicano" today) laborers moving in? Any Japanese? Any other group? Were there many? Where? Why? When? What were relationships like between German-Russian and Mexican-Americans during the 1920s?

Did your family have any association with American banks? Were the bankers and businessmen with whom your family dealt of German extraction?

Did you join any clubs or organizations during the 1920s?

When did your family first acquire an automobile? Do you remember what you (your family), and other German-Russians thought of a car? A. truck? When did your family acquire machinery to make life easier on the farm? Did many German-Russian families have machinery?

Were there differences by the late 1920s between German-Russian families who were prospering economically and others who were engaged in "stoop labor"? Do you recall the phrase, the "roaring twenties"? Did this apply at all to the German-Russian experience in Colorado?

Was there much "Americanization" going on by the 1920s among the German-Russian community?

Do you recall any political opinions that you (your family) held during the 1920s? Did you (your family) identify with Republican or Democratic American politics? Why or why not? To what extent?

Do you have any comments in general to make about the decade of the twenties?

THE THIRTIES; THE DEPRESSION:

Do you have any personal recollection of the stock market crash of 1929? When did the Depression affect you (your family)? Did it affect you (your family) at all? How? To what extent? How much? Were the 1930s "hard times" for you (your family) or was there no change to any significant extent?

Do you think that the Depression affected your "American" neighbors more than it did most German-Russians? Why do you think so if you do?

Did your family lose any money? Lose any land? Have to move in the 1930s? Did you have enough food to eat in the Depression? More or less or just about the same as any other time?

Did you (your family) (a) improve yourself (itself), or (b) retrogress during the 1930s?

How? Why do you think?

Was your family able to buy land when other Americans lost their money during the 1930s? Do you have any recollections of this kind of situation?

What was your (your family's) attitude toward President Hoover? Toward President Roosevelt?

What was your attitude toward the banks? Toward the business community? Toward the town community?

What was you (your family's) attitude toward the W. P. A.? T he C. C. C.? -What was the attitude toward welfare? Toward social security? Toward relief? Toward old age pensions?

Was this the time when any members of your family applied for and received their citizenship papers? Why at this time? Do you recall any of the details about naturalization procedures? Who encouraged you (your family) to become citizens? Why? When?

Where did you (your family) live during the 1930s? Did anyone lose, his job? Did anyone have to move or change homes?

What was your (your family's) attitude toward the Soviet Union? Toward Stalin? Toward collectivization? Toward the purges?

Was your family able to maintain contact with relatives in the Soviet Union? For how long? When was this contact broken? Have you had any further contacts since the 1930s?

What was your (your family's) attitude toward Germany? Toward Hitler?

Were you (your family) more concerned about events in Europe or events in Colorado and America?

Did you (your family) subscribe to newspapers? German-language newspapers? If so, which one? Which ones? To American newspapers? Which ones?

Do you have any general comments to make about the 1930s? Schools? Churches?
Automobiles? Travels or movement to seek jobs?

THE FORTIES: THE SECOND WORLD WAR:

Do you remember the outbreak of the Second World War? 1939 or 1941? What was you (your family's) attitude toward the Second World War? Was anyone from your family conscripted into the army? Did anyone volunteer? Were attitudes different this time from World War I?

What were German-Russian attitudes toward patriotism in the U. S. A.?

What were German-Russian relationships with other "native" Americans? With other immigrant-Americans?

Was there any supervision of the German churches this time? Do you recall whether there were still services in the German language? When did your church change its services to the English language? Did this cause any hard feelings?

Was there any anti-German discrimination during the Second World War that you recall?

Did you receive news of relatives living in the Soviet Union? In Germany? What were your (your family's) reactions to Germany attacking Russia?

Did you follow the campaigns in the Soviet Union?

Did any one you know have anything to do or contact with the D. P.'s after the Second World War? Did you meet or know of any new immigrants from the German-speaking regions of the Soviet Union?

Do you have any general comments about life during the years of the Second World War in Colorado?

THE POSTWAR ERA; THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES:

Did the years following the Second World War bring any significant social or economic improvement to you (your family)?

Were you (your family) renters or owners of land, farms by this time? When did you acquire your land? How? Did you have more than one farm?

Did any members of your family move into town? Enter the professions or different lines of business?

Did any members of your family move into town? When? Where? What were the relationships there?

Did your church cease services in the German language? When? Why? Was there a consensus or were there disagreements? Did your church move or erect a new building? When? Where? Change its name?

Did any members of your family attend college or university? Do you think there were more German-Russians who attended college now than before? Why? Where? Did German-Russian attitudes toward higher education change? Where there any changes in attitudes towards marriage with people within or outside the German-Russian community? Did many German-Russians marry outside the ethnic community? About when? Did attitudes change?

To what extent did you (your family) maintain German-Russian traditions into the years after the Second World War.

To what extent had assimilation into American culture, society transformed the German-Russian community by this time?

TODAY:

Does your family have any contact with relatives in the Soviet Union? Have you (your family) made trips abroad? To Germany? To the U.S.S.R.?

To what extent do you believe the German-Russian community is assimilated into American society today?

Do you (your family) know of or are you members of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia?

What is your attitude toward your "roots," your German-Russian heritage today?