

Belowesch Colonies

Suggested sources for German Origin research

Prepared by Maggie Hein, 9/12/2017

Introduction

In 1766, six colonies known collectively as the “Belowesch Colonies” were formed in the Tschernigov (Chernigov) region. This is northeast of Kiev, in present day Ukraine. These include the Lutheran colonies of Belowesch, Gorodok, Kaltschinowka, Kreschatten, and Rundewiese, as well as the Catholic colonies of Gross Werder and Klein Werder. (See Stumpp book page 91 and pages 823-851.) This time period (1763-1767) is better known (by those of us who research Volga Germans) as the time that the Volga German Colonies were established. It appears that the settlers in the Belowesch Colonies not only traveled to Russia at the same time as the Volga settlers, but also came from some of the same towns in Germany as the Volga settlers, arrived on the same ships, and can be documented in some of the same resources that we commonly use for Volga German research. The purpose of this document is to highlight those resources that I have used for Volga German origin research that may also be of interest to Belowesch researchers.

Odenwald / Erbach

There are several genealogy researchers living in the Odenwald region who have documented the emigrants departing from this area to settle in Russia. The best known of these is Ella Gieg. Among her published work is a five-volume set titled Auswanderungen aus dem Odenwaldkreis. The first four volumes have been scanned and are available digitally on Family Search. Unfortunately, like many other German materials, you have to be at a Family History Center to view the digital images.

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/491873?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

Two AHSGR members went through the Gieg books and extracted the names of the individuals and families who were listed as going to Russia. This was published as an attachment to an AHSGR members-only publication called “Clues 2016.” (See AHSGR website for ordering information.

<http://www.ahsgr.org/?page=CLUES>)

There is a list of emigrants from Höchst im Odenwald, prepared by Trudy Schenk, and published in a book called Pennsylvania German Roots Across the Ocean. Likely the information here duplicates what is in the Gieg books, since they both draw on the Höchst im Odenwald church records. The book is available digitally via Google books. The chapter that discusses the emigrants from Höchst im Odenwald starts on page 157.

https://books.google.com/books/about/Pennsylvania_German_Roots_Across_the_Oce.html?id=dbWPG_sOk8gC

Most (possibly all by now) of the church records for the parishes mentioned in the Gieg books have been indexed by Family Search. Unfortunately, digital images of the records do not appear to be available yet. The indexes make it considerably easier to determine if a family you are interested in appears in a

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particular set of church books. Go to Family Search > Search > Catalog. Put the name of the town in the "Place" field > click on "Search" > open up the entry for "Church Records" > click on the description to view the detail > then page down. You will see the "magnifying glass" symbol next to each film entry. Click on the "magnifying glass". That will allow you to do a search of a person's name that is limited to only that microfilm. You can extract the family information from the indexes, and then verify it by accessing the microfilms later. Obviously, getting the microfilms will not be possible after Family Search discontinues microfilm distribution, but at some point they are supposed to be available digitally.

Another option is the Online OFB pages of the Genealogy.net web site. Several of the towns in the Odenwald region have online OFBs. Since this is free and easy to use, it is certainly worth checking the OFBs for those towns to see if you can find obvious matches to any of the Belowesch families.

<http://ofb.genealogy.net/>

Isenburg / Gelnhausen / Hanau

The historical region of Isenburg was split between the Grandduchy of Hessen (the areas closer to Büdingen) and the Electorate of Hessen (the areas around Gelnhausen and Hanau). This distinction is relevant when you begin looking for the church records. Many of the Grandduchy of Hessen parishes have been filmed by Family Search and are (or were) available via microfilm rental. The Electorate of Hessen parish records are at the Kassel Archive. Up until a few years ago, you could not access the Kassel Archive collection without travelling to Germany or hiring a German researcher. When Archion.de opened up for Beta testing in late 2014, one of the early participants was the Kassel Archive. Among the large collection of records they have contributed are the parish records for Kreis Hanau and Kreis Gelnhausen. I can't overemphasize how much of an impact this has made on Volga German origin research. It appears that it will be of some use to Belowesch researchers also, since some of those settlers appear to have come from this area. I am currently in the middle of going parish by parish in Kreis Hanau and Kreis Gelnhausen, looking for people who settled in Volga villages in Canton Frank and Canton Norka. I will look out for the families that are mentioned in the Belowesch settlers Lists. It would be helpful for me to have the Belowisch First Settler's Lists (see Kulberg discussion below) so that I can see the composition of the families and the ages of each family member in 1766.

<https://www.archion.de/en/>

What about the families that don't have an origin listed in the 1807 / 1809 census lists ?

Glad you asked. I have a couple of ideas about that.

The Kulberg Book

Reports by Ivan Kulberg (a/k/a the "Kulberg Book") is a list of roughly 22,000 individuals who arrived in Russia in the Spring, Summer, and early Autumn of 1766. I have always thought of this as a primarily Volga German resource, but one of my Volga German colleagues pointed out to me that Igor Plevé (the translator of the lists) mentions people going to Ukraine. On page 23 of the introduction, he states that

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there was an effort to encourage people to settle in “the deserted areas owned by count P.A. Rumyantsev-Zadunaysky near the town of Belaya Vezha in Chernigov region.” He goes on to list more than 150 families that he believes were settled in Ukraine. Note that it is sometimes a challenge to match up surname and place name spellings in this book with other documents, so be ready to be creative in your searching. Some additional research led me to references to an article by Pleve entitled “Die ersten Ansiedler der Belowescher Kolonien im Gebiet Tschernigow” published in Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Russland 1997/1998. A copy of this article would be a good place to start if you wanted to embark on a Belowesch German Origin project. The Kulberg book can be purchased from the AHSGR Bookstore.

<https://ahsgr.site-ym.com/store/ViewProduct.aspx?id=5347260>

My suggestion is (if this hasn't been done already) someone should go through the Kulberg book, look at the families identified by Pleve, and review the book for other possible Belowesch settlers. The Kulberg book usually does not list the exact town from which the family migrated. The geographic designations are generally just the region from which the settlers came, but this is better than having no information at all. I find the book useful because it gives me the whole family grouping (helpful when the parents died during the trip and you are researching orphans or stepchildren). You can also see that groups of families traveled together from the same origin location, and if you have the origin for one family from other sources, that might lead you to the origin for the rest of the families.

Already identified origin locations

You are likely still going to have some families with no exact town of origin to research, even after going through all of the sources mentioned above. AHSGR, CVGS, and Black Sea German Research have listings of origin locations on their web sites. The list on the BSGR site is translated from the 1997/98 Heimatbuch from the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland. The listings on the AHSGR page include suggested origins from the Stumpp Book, from the Pleve translation of the Volga First Settlers Lists, and from other sources (not necessarily all confirmed by research in German church records – entries in red are verified); the listings on the CVGS page are generally confirmed by research in German church records. Neither page is completely up to date, but I've been posting my recent findings on the CVGS Facebook page pending getting them input into both web sites. Since we can see that the Belowesch people probably travelled with the Volga people, there is a possibility that you might pick up some clues from the already identified origins for Volga settlers. This would obviously be your last resort because many of these surnames are very common and you could be off on a wild goose chase. The head of household and origin information from the first settler's list published in the Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Russland 1997/1998 article (see Kulberg discussion above) is included on the AHSGR Origins pages.

<http://www.ahsgr.org/default.asp?page=GermanOrigins>

<http://cvgs.cu-portland.edu/origins.cfm>

<http://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/belowesch%20settlers.pdf>

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