

HISTORY OF ROTHE AND GREEN FAMILIES

On July 22, 1763, Catherine II of Russia (1762-96) issued the Manifesto of the Empress that succeeded in luring thousands of Germans to the vast southwest frontier of the empire. A key element of her program involved the colonization of the fertile Volga Region.

Burdensome taxes, selling of mercenaries, and recurrent ravaging by invading armies contributed to the exodus of the German people from Germany to Russia.

On June 4, 1871, the Russian Council of Ministers issued a ukase (decree by authority). This decree repealed all privileges originally granted "for eternal time" under the terms of the Manifesto of 1763.

The Germans could no longer control their local governments and weren't exempt from Russian military duty. These two things, plus encouraging news of the great opportunities abroad, caused large scale emigration of the Volga Germans to the Americas.

On November 25, 1875, a group of German emigrants, under the leadership of Henry Rothe, George Green, and others totaling 50 families in all, left Schonfeld, Russia to make connections with the S.S. City of Montreal, the ship which would take them to America.

Henry Rothe was born in Frank, Russia on August 2, 1824, where he was a wealthy merchant who could see the vast potential of America. He left Russia with his three children; John, who was to become a farmer in Kansas, Anna, his eldest daughter, who would later become Mrs. Phillip Green, and his youngest child, Katherine, who was a half-sister of Anna's.

Henry died while visiting his daughter, Anna and her family in Endicott, Washington Territory on April 22, 1883. Katherine, a little girl of 12 who had made the trip with her father, remained with Phillip and Anna and later married John Schrieber.

George Henry Green was born in Germany on March 8, 1836. He was originally from the Volga Colony of Norka, but later moved to Rosenfeld. He made the journey to America with his wife, Christina, and eight of their children.

The S.S. City of Montreal, after a two week journey, landed at the Rothe and Green contingent at Castle Garden on the Battery of Manhattan on December 30, 1875, amidst hectic preparations to celebrate the new year. It was among these German families that a nucleus was forming which would insure Russian-German immigration to the Pacific Northwest starting in 1881.

The completion of the first transcontinental railroad in May, 1869, was a big factor for the Western movement of the Volga Germans.

In 1876 the Green family, the Brachs, the Rothes, and many others, were directed to the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad where they boarded a train for Central Kansas. There they took up homesteads under the generous times of the Homestead Act of 1862.

On March 3, 1878, Phillip, George Green's second son, married Anna Margaret Rothe, Henry Rothe's oldest daughter, in Otis, Kansas. Three of their eight children, Mary Green Kleweno (1878), Peter Green (1880), and Magdalena Green Kaiser (1881), were born here.

Severe draughts, intense heat, electrical storms, and devastating tornadoes caused many of the Volga Germans to want to leave Kansas even though the land was fertile. This, plus more railroad development, would prove sufficient enough force to drive a segment of their ranks from Kansas to the Pacific Coast.

In 1881 the George Green family, of which there were now nine children (a daughter was born while they were living in Otis, Kansas), along with other German families, boarded a Union Pacific Railroad train and traveled to San Francisco; then north by steamboat to Portland, Oregon.

One of the first Volga Germans to settle in the Pacific Northwest, George H. Green was once flogged in Russia for protesting the punishment of a "Bruder" who was trying to break away from the Lutheran Church. The first two groups of Volga Germans to settle in the Pacific Northwest founded the first German Congregational Churches in the American West.

To support his family, George Green went to work in a lumber mill in Portland and homesteaded 100 acres of land near Silverton, Oregon. George was injured in a fire at the lumber mill and died from these injuries on April 27, 1902.

Phillip, George's son who was articulate in the German, Russian, and English language, was to play a leading role in acting as spokesman for the small party of Volga Germans who wanted to leave the Portland area because the land wasn't very fertile. They were interested in the land east of the Cascade Mountains, especially the Palouse Country.

The efforts of this group along with those who settled in Adams County, began a trend that culminated in the immigration of many Germans from Russia to the Washington Territory.

Phillip Green and Peter Ochs were picked to scout the Palouse area and report back. They returned late in the summer of 1882 convinced that they had finally found a place to settle permanently. They had been assured of employment on the railroad at one dollar a day until they could begin farming the following spring.

Following the Emigrant Road, the Green, Litzenberger, and Baht families traveled in covered wagons as they left Portland late in September of 1882 for settlement in the Endicott area.

While descending the steep slopes of the Cascade Mountains on October 3, Phillip and Anna's youngest daughter, Magdalena, celebrated her first birthday. After traveling a few days north of Walla Walla, the weary settlers finally reached their destination on October 12, 1882.

Phillip and some of the other Volga Germans had to build crude houses into the hillside, similar to the Zemlyanka which their ancestors had constructed when they first immigrated to Russia. Phillip and many others worked on the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad while he was getting ready to farm.

The Oregon Improvement Company and its general agent, General Thomas R. Tannett, were very helpful to the Volga Germans settling in the Palouse country. The German settlers were met at Texas Ferry (Riparia) and Endicott by General Tannett or his subordinates who rendered a myriad of services for all settlers.

Five children were born to Phillip and Anna Green after they settled in the Endicott area; Henry (1883), John (1885), Christina Green Wilson (1888), Leta R. Green (1889), and Josephine Green Huntley (1892).

Endicott was named after William Endicott, Jr., a Boston Banker who was a large shareholder in the Oregon Improvement Company and The Oregon Railway and Navigation Company. He had been in the Palouse area in 1880.

Books to Read for Complete History

Scheuerman, Richard D. and Trafzer, Clifford E.
The Volga Germans - Pioneers of the Northwest
The University Press of Idaho - A Division of the Idaho
Research Foundation, Inc., Moscow, Idaho, 1980

Scheuerman, Richard D.
Pilgrims of the Earth - A German Russian Chronicle
Ye Gallion Press, Fairfield, Washington, 1974

Walters, George J.
Wir Wollen Deutsche Bleiben - We Want to Remain Germans -
The Story of The Volga Germans
Halcyon House, Publishers. Kansas City, Missouri, 1982.