

A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE VOLGA-GERMANS IN
ELLIS COUNTY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THEIR MUSIC

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T. H.

PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to present a study of the five original Volga-German settlements of Ellis County, Kansas, which were established by the Volga-Germans in 1876 and 1877: Catherine, Munjor, Herzog (Victoria), Pfeifer, and Schoenchen. Although the inhabitants were German by nationality, their ancestors had left Germany in 1763 at the invitation of Catherine II of Russia.¹ These people lived for over a century in self-imposed isolation on the land allotted for colonies along the Volga River in the southeastern part of Russia, retaining to a large extent their own language, customs, music, and religion.² Although they were not greatly influenced by the Russians around them, they lost practically all contact with their native Germany. After immigrating to the United States in 1876, their customs differed from those of both contemporary Germany and Russia. The immigrants who settled in the United States had a stable, rural culture which they maintained at first by isolation as they had in Russia. The Volga-German culture became so Americanized toward the end of the eighteenth

¹Gottlieb Bauer, Geschichte der deutschen Ansiedler an der Wolga (Saratow, Russia: Saratow Publishing Co., 1908), pp. 9-10.

²John Geddie, The Russian Empire (London: Nelson and Sons, 1882), p. 184.

century that isolated villages proved to be impractical.

The Volga-Germans who live in the United States today are numerically the smaller part of the Volga-Germans who settled the Volga region in Russia. Only a small part of the Ellis County Volga-German history and folklore has been recorded, and nothing has been recorded regarding their music. Therefore, the writer, himself a descendent of the Volga-Germans, feels it is urgent that his generation dedicate itself to collecting and preserving the history and folklore of his people. The purpose of the music in this thesis is twofold; to reinforce some of the cultural information that appears within, and to retain a few of the most popular, most loved songs of the Volga-German culture.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE VOLGA-GERMANS

The German Colonists are invited by Catherine the Great to settle the semi-arid regions of Russia.

When Catherine the Great ascended the throne as Czarina of all the Russias in 1762, her one great ambition was to make her reign the outstanding period of Russian history. Ambitious and energetic, she was prepared to go to any lengths to realize this aim.

In an effort to achieve her goal, she began to colonize Eastern Russia. Peter the Great had had the same goal in mind, but his attempt had failed, due partly to the settlers, the harsh climate, and the marauding Kirghiz tribe. The Czarina, however, felt the area could be developed agriculturally by settlers who would also serve as a defense against the ever present Kirghiz tribe which still raided the area.

Catherine's first invitation to foreigners was issued in the same year that she ascended the Russian throne. However, there was very little response to this appeal, because the invitation was not very attractive. She was undismayed by this first failure and decided to issue a much more detailed invitation in the following year.

In July of 1763, Catherine issued a Manifest whereby settlers were granted rights and privileges which were quite appealing to those who wished to colonize.³ Among the privileges granted were: Freedom from military service for one hundred years; freedom from taxation for thirty years; unlimited possibilities of land purchase; internal self-government; and the free exercise of religion.⁴ This manifesto prompted more Germans to immigrate to Russia than any other nationality, because there was a general unrest in Germany at the time due to poor economic conditions, political tensions, religious discriminations, and the Thirty Years' War.

Catherine's second manifesto helped her to attain her goal, for late in the eighteenth century the colonization of Russia's eastern frontier was soon to become a reality.

Life on the Volga River.

Thousands of people were attracted by the manifesto of 1763, and from 1763 to 1767 about 8000 families from the German states of Hesse and the Rhineland migrated to the Volga region of Russia.⁵ Once the colonists had arrived in Russia, they followed a land route through Northern Russia and then took the water route down the Volga River to Saratow, which later became the capital city of the Volga

³Cf. B. M. Dreiling (compiler), Golden Jubilee of the Russian-German Settlements of Ellis and Rush Counties, Kansas (Hays, Kansas: Ellis County News Publishers, 1926), p.9.

⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁵Bauer, pp. 12-14.

region. There was a large expanse of barren and uninhabited land lying on both sides of the river. The district west of the river was known as the mountain side, "Bergseite", and east of the river as the meadow side, "Wiesenseite".⁶ A fairly integrated unbroken string of German settlements emerged on both sides of this river, each speaking a different dialect of German and each having slight variations of customs, such as food preparation. To this day reference is made to the people from the Wiesenseite and the Bergseite. The people from Pfeifer, Kansas, came from the Bergseite, and the people from Catherine, Herzog, Schoenchen, and Munjor, Kansas, are from the Wiesenseite. There were approximately one hundred German colonies founded on the Volga. Many of the settlers were tradesmen and artisans who became agriculturalists. The vast treeless land proved to be well adapted for raising wheat, so all the colonists became farmers at the time of colonization. They lived in villages, going to their farms in groups to do their day's work. The villages were independent of each other; thus, slight differences arose as to customs, the people being known by the Russian village from which they came.

The colonists passed through several years of sufferings and hardship before they arrived at a stage of comparative prosperity. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the colonists were enjoying prosperity, a measure of peace,

⁶Dreiling, p. 10.

and happiness undreamed of in the early years of their presence in the realm of the Czars. This was not to last.

The Agitation for Departure begins.

After many years of hard work, the colonies were finally taking form. Wastelands were replaced by fields, modal villages were built, schools and churches were constructed, and the colonists were acquiring more and more land. They developed a type of winter wheat which seemed to be very adaptable to the climatic conditions and to the soil. Until 1871 all areas of life seemed to be advancing. However, the growth and prosperity and the improved cultural conditions of the Germans irritated the native Russians, and a movement arose which opposed the further expansion of the Germans in Russia. The manifesto of 1763, issued by Catherine the Great to encourage settlers to go to Russia, gave the colonists many privileges not enjoyed by native Russians. These privileges were a constant source of irritation to the Russians and led to antagonism which increased with the years.

The Volga-Germans had been allowed to choose their own form of government. A Vorsteher (mayor) assisted by two or more Beisitzer (councilmen) and a Schreiber (secretary) ruled each colony. The heads of families made up the legislative body. Several colonies formed a Kreis (circuit), which was ruled by an Obervorsteher (supreme judge). They, in turn, were subject to a governing group in Saratow, the

capital of the Volga settlements. The land remained the property of the government and periodically it was divided by lot, each family receiving an area based on the number of male members in the family.⁷

The year 1871 terminated the one-hundred year Manifest granted by Catherine the Great. The era of self-administration came to an end and the Volga-German colonists became Russian citizens. Three years later Alexander II of Russia passed a military law subjecting all colonists in Russia to military service.⁸ Many settlers expressed dissatisfaction with the law. The Catholics among them found military life especially distasteful, since it was almost impossible to attend Catholic services during the six-year period of training and also because the religious discriminations prevented any but orthodox Russians from rising to the rank of an officer.⁹ Mennonites, who settled along the Black Sea area of Russia also objected to military training as being contrary to their religious beliefs.¹⁰ This resulted in agitation for a general migration.

In 1874, 3000 colonists met at Herzog (Russia) to discuss the question of immigration. Just as the Russian

⁷Francis S. Laing, German-Russian Settlements in Ellis County, Kansas (Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Historical Society, 1909-1910), XI, p. 513.

⁸"Russland," Brockhaus, XVI (1933), p. 252.

⁹Dreiling, p. 13.

¹⁰P. P. Wedel, Kurze Geschichte der aus Wohlynien Russland nach Kansas Anugewanderten (Schwiezer-Mennoniten, 1929).

government had formally been interested in the immigration of Germans and had granted certain rights and areas of land, so now the governments of North and South America extended similar offers. The meeting at Herzog resulted in the election of five delegates who at the expense of their respective communities were to visit America to look for places suitable for settlements. Five men, each a representative of the villages now existing in Ellis County, Kansas, departed for America. Their stay in America lasted approximately ten days. When the representatives came back to Russia they gave a favorable report of what they found in America, and subsequently the colonies emigrated to America.¹¹

A large group of Volga-Germans came from Saratow, arrived at Baltimore, and proceeded to Topeka, Kansas, by train. Topeka served as a center for the Volga-Germans. An agent for the Kansas Pacific Railroad told the new settlers about a tract of land that was for sale. The settlers bought the land at a very reasonable price and settled the area, which is now Ellis County.¹²

Home and Home Life in the Volga-German Settlements in Ellis County, Kansas.

The actual task of providing homes, food, and clothing occupied much of the time and thought of the Volga-German

¹¹Carl Wittke, We Who Built America (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 311.

¹²News item in the Hays Sentinel, February 23, 1877.

families for the first few years. The only immediately available tools to the newcomers were the will to succeed and the knowledge of how to provide for the necessities of life. The immigrant families were confronted with the necessities of life and the hardships of the frontier as so many other settlers were. Upon settling in Ellis County, the Volga-Germans applied their German-Russian culture to their new life in America.

Ellis County had been organized just nine years when the first Volga-German colony was settled in Catherine in the spring of 1876. The number of people in the county fluctuated from year to year since many people were traders and adventurers rather than settlers who stayed and farmed the land. The Volga-Germans found Ellis County a vast, unbroken prairie.¹³ The Kansas Pacific Railroad stopped at Hays and Victoria on its daily run from Kansas City to Denver, providing a supply of necessary food, farm machinery, and building materials for all settlers within a radius of a hundred miles. The settlements of Catherine, Pfeifer, Munjor, and Schoenchen depended on Hays and Victoria from the very beginning for supplies such as flour, sugar, and fabrics, that could not be provided for in the home. The people had horses and wagons which they had purchased in Topeka.¹⁴

¹³First Biennial Report of Kansas State Board of Agriculture 1877-78 (Topeka, Kansas: State Board of Agriculture, 1878), VI, p. 206.

¹⁴Laing, p. 523.

However, if their errands did not necessitate the carrying of too many articles, the settlers frequently walked to Hays or Victoria, a distance of nine or ten miles.¹⁵

The first Volga-German colonies in Ellis County closely resembled the Volga settlements of the eighteenth century in Russia. The geographic area of the two regions is very similar. A century of living on treeless, grassy plains in Russia had completely changed the attitude of the people, and they no longer wished for the familiar German scenery of mountains and forests. Living in Kansas was a circumstance in direct contrast to the bewilderment and disappointment of the Germans who had settled on the Volga in the eighteenth century.¹⁶

The homes and shelters first used by the immigrants were similar to those they had built in Russia. Since most of the colonists in Ellis County had spent all their money in making the long journey to the United States and could not afford to buy the lumber available in Hays, they erected temporary shelters of rude board tents which were soon replaced by sod houses or dugouts.¹⁷ Before this the Germans had erected similar shelters called Semlinken¹⁸ as temporary houses along the Volga. The sod house was not peculiar to

¹⁵Personal interview with Margaret Hoffman.

¹⁶Sister Mary Eloise Johannes, A Study of the Russian-German Settlements in Ellis County, Kansas (Washington, D. C. : The Catholic University of America Press, 1946), p. 28.

¹⁷Dreiling, p. 23.

¹⁸Partly underground huts.

Ellis County. It was used by various pioneer peoples both in the United States and in Europe in localities where lumber was scarce, as it was an easily constructed form of shelter. The Volga-Germans built sod house villages, since they preferred living in villages rather than on isolated farms as other pioneers did.

Each family obtained a lot in the village to be used for a home and garden. The men frequently worked together to build a sod house for a member of their group. The implements needed were a spade, a plow, and a horse, since nature provided the necessary sod for walls and the small trees for window frames and ridge poles. Sometimes a half dugout was built by raising a three-foot wall around a hole three feet deep, but, for the most part, the Volga-Germans preferred the regular sod house. Long strips of prairie sod were turned up with the plow, and cut into rectangular sections with a spade. The strips consisted of thick buffalo grass roots combined with soil. The grass strips had a low moisture content and kept their shape quite well. The sod was laid with one layer placed lengthwise and the next crosswise as the side walls were built. This gave an uneven finish to the surface but made the house very stable.¹⁹

The average sod house contained two rooms, a kitchen, and a bedroom. The inside walls were plastered with mud and straw or dried prairie grass which had been mixed by tramping

¹⁹Personal interview with Alphonse A. Hoffman in the spring of 1974.

it with bare feet. After the walls dried, they were plastered inside and out with burnt gypsum.²⁰ Frequent applications of plaster kept the walls neat and clean.

The most important piece of furniture in the house was the homemade stove, which was built between the kitchen and the bedroom. The stove was constructed of sun-baked bricks and was considered a real work of art if it drew well, thus heating both rooms and baking bread properly. The bricks were made of soil mixed with straw, then molded in wooden frames and dried in the sun. Sometimes, a large iron basin, with a flat bottom about two feet in diameter, was inverted and worked into the top of the stove. The stove measured about five feet in length, two feet in width, and six feet in height.²¹

The bedroom had several necessary pieces of furniture in addition to the stove. The bed was handmade, the bedstead of wood, and the mattress of bags sewed together and filled with hay or straw. Since the family had only one bed, the children slept on similar straw-filled bags which were laid on the floor each night. A table and several benches stood opposite the bed. Nearly every home had a trunk in which good clothes and a few family treasures were kept.

The kitchen, the smaller of the two rooms, had a fireplace and several pieces of simple, homemade furniture. The

²⁰Personal interview with Alphonse A. Hoffman in the spring of 1974.

²¹Everett Newton Dick, The Sod-House Frontier, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1937), p. 259.

earthen floor was worn hard by constant use. The cooking was done either before the open fireplace or on the built-in-stove. Food was simple but substantial. The main meal usually consisted of one course. A favorite dish was fresh pork stewed with cabbage and served with mashed potatoes. Occasionally, egg noodles were added to vary the dish.²² During the summer months, the early settlers included fresh vegetables and fruits in their diets as well as wild grapes, gooseberries, plums, and elderberries, which were plentiful along the river and creek banks.²³

One hundred years of living in Russia had modified the food habits of the Germans. When they first settled on the Volga, they had considered the Russian food unappetizing and longed for the butter, meat, and eggs they had enjoyed in Germany. Gradually, the Germans accepted the Russian foods, while retaining as many of the German seasonings and methods of preparation as possible, so that their diet came to be a combination of German and Russian foods. Common dishes were cabbage soup, potatoes, and, occasionally, oat cakes, cheese, butter, and eggs. Cabbage was made of sour cabbage almost identical to German sauerkraut. Today, the people still prefer plain foods, showing a preference for meat, potatoes, and vegetables. The people still retain many Volga-German habits in the preparation of their foods,

²²Personal interview with Lawrence Weigel in the spring of 1974.

²³News item in the Hays Sentinel, April 20, 1877.

eliminating salads, rich desserts, herbs, and spices.

The Volga-Germans have accepted the American tradition of housing more readily than they have in the matter of preparation and seasoning of food. Sod houses began to disappear by 1885,²⁴ when the people became financially able to build stone houses. A frame house required money for the lumber, while the stone house only required hard work; the stone could be quarried for the taking in the nearby bluffs.

The Volga-Germans grouped their homes in the villages and drove to the fields each morning. This custom proved to be inconvenient when all the nearby farm land was taken, and it became necessary to buy land several miles from the village. The dual system of housing became common at this period. This system was typical of the Volga-Germans, and it proved to be a modified form of village housing. Small houses were built on their respective farms where part of the family resided during the week in the winter. The school children and the mother or perhaps an older sister lived in the village home, but the whole family tried to spend the entire weekend in the village home. In the summer the village was practically deserted except on Sunday when all the families went to the village to attend church services. This two-house system of town house and country house had its disadvantages. Often both homes were small, and neither home was furnished as well as one larger home could have

²⁴Kansas City Star, December 3, 1933, p. 3.

been. When automobiles came into existence, the majority of the Volga-Germans began to reside permanently on the farm.

Almost all of the frame and stone houses built in the villages to replace the original sod houses followed the same general style of architecture. They were one-story, square buildings, usually consisting of four rooms, and built directly on the street without any front porch or front lawn. The only outside entrance was at the rear of the house or, less commonly, at the side. The front of the house had at least two windows with heavy shutters. Along the Volga, it had been necessary to build the house with the outside entrance at the rear and have shutters on the windows as a protection against the Kirghiz tribe. Heavy board fences had also enclosed each house and lot. By building high wooden fences, the villagers were able to protect themselves fairly well. They followed the same custom in America even though there was little need of it. The people compared the Indians to the Kirghiz tribes in Russia. There were no Indian raids in Kansas after 1869, but they did have an occasional Indian scare.²⁵

Victoria, an English settlement located less than a quarter mile from Herzog, had homes very similar to those of the Volga-Germans in Herzog. The Englishmen built their homes of rock instead of lumber with the main entrance on the side of the house instead of the front. The English

²⁵Carroll D. Clark and Roy L. Roberts, People of Kansas, (Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Planning Board, 1936), p. 21.

families of Victoria gradually sold their homes and land to the Volga-Germans in Herzog and either returned to England or moved further west. The two villages were eventually incorporated into one and retained the name of Victoria.

Children, especially boys, had always been considered an economic asset in the traditionally large Volga-German family. Early marriage and an increase in population was encouraged by the Volga-Germans in Russia, because each family was entitled to land in proportion to the number of male members in the family. Young men married at the age of eighteen or nineteen, and young women married at the age of fifteen or sixteen years.²⁶ For the first few years after the Volga-Germans settled in Ellis County, most marriages among them took place between these ages. Land in Ellis County was not proportioned to the number of male members in each family as it was in Russia, but had to be purchased. In spite of this, the Volga-German families were still quite large, consisting of approximately eight to ten children. The Volga-Germans had large families since there was land to be farmed and the children helped to provide the necessary labor, and also because the death rate during the latter part of the nineteenth century was far greater than the birth rate.

Since the couples married very young and hardly seemed mature enough to manage a home and to farm for themselves,

²⁶William B. Bailey, Modern Social Conditions (New York: Century Co., 1906), pp. 152-3.

the newly married couple usually lived with the husband's family for a few years. This custom was still prevalent among the Volga-Germans in Ellis County for a generation after the colonies were founded. In many instances, the father left much of the manual labor to the sons, while he acted as a supervisor and managed finances. The mother could also afford to leave much of the hard work to her daughter-in-law, though she continued to control the activities of the home. If it were possible to do so, the father bought more land as each son married, and later when the son wished to begin farming for himself, the father provided a farm and machinery for him. While the sons worked at home, the father cared for all the money earned through the sale of crops or livestock.²⁷

The pooling of resources had its advantages, because it meant more common capital to buy and equip farms, and the paternal control of spending encouraged thriftiness. The young people were apparently content to follow this manner of life at first. Although as they later observed the independent life of newly-married non Volga-Germans, who were permitted to handle their own financial matters and live in their own homes, they began to question the patriarchal supervision. The young Volga-German couples seldom had money to spend on things considered luxuries. They were not taught to manage for themselves in financial matters, and

²⁷Marjorie Gamet Raish, "Victoria, The Story of a Western Kansas Town" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas, 1938), p. 131.

they lacked a feeling of responsibility toward debts, because they expected their fathers to take care of the expenses. The father's close supervision tended to create a feeling of dependence which resulted in the sons' lack of initiative to participate in financial affairs. The enlarged family was not always a contented one, for in some instances quarrels were occasionally caused by disagreements between the parents and children. These misunderstandings usually took place between the mother and the daughter-in-law, rather than between the father and the sons, which may be why the daughter-in-law was not fully accepted into the family. The quarrels usually concerned financial matters and house-keeping.

By the twentieth century, the patriarchal family had weakened, and a new custom was favored whereby the newly married couples established a home for themselves immediately after marriage. At the turn of the century, land became scarce in the vicinity of the five original settlements and new colonies had to be established in nearby counties. The young man's father still provided the couple with a farm if it were possible to do so, and gave them machinery, cattle, and livestock. In most instances there was loyalty and parental devotion between the young couples and their parents.²⁸

The Volga-German clothing was a constant source of amusement to the few non-Volga-Germans living in Ellis county

²⁸Johannes, p. 41.

during the first years of the settlement. The Volga-Germans came to America with their traditional clothing. Since they were accustomed to severe winters on the Volga, their large coats, home-knitted stockings, mittens, and head coverings were heavier than the Kansas climate demanded and were conspicuous because of their size and colorful designs. In the winter the men wore large coats lined with sheepskin. The coat, called a kaftan, had a close-fitting waist with the lower part long and full like a skirt, which gave the Volga-German a very unusual appearance. A large cap, called a kardus, and high boots with "shafts",²⁹ into which the trousers were placed, helped to emphasize the male's strange costume. The shafts of the boots were usually decorated with flowers embroidered in silk. Some men wore their hair long from the crown of the neck and quite frequently wore mustaches.

The women and girls wore dresses of dark materials with full skirts. They also wore dark shawls on their heads in place of hats, some of the shawls being decorated with bright-colored embroidered flowers.³⁰ The Volga-German females were concerned about their apparel but had neither the time nor the money to provide any new attire. Therefore, during the first few years of the settlements they had to be contented with the clothing that they had brought with them

²⁹A colloquial expression meaning the top of the boots.

³⁰News item in the Kansas City Star, October 8, 1911, p. 5.

from Russia.

The change from the Volga-German style in clothing to the American style was a gradual one, varying from village to village and from family to family. The immigrant women retained their preference for dark dresses of ankle length, and shopkeepers in Victoria and Hays kept a supply of cotton materials in dark colors in stock to satisfy their customers. The fashion trend favored dark colored fabrics until the beginning of the twentieth century. The younger people gradually accepted contemporary American styles upon seeing the alluring advertisements in local stores and in mail order catalogues, such as Sears and Montgomery Ward.

The task of making a living was much more important to the early settlers than the subject of clothing. It was a task in which the whole family took an active part. After one hundred years, the Volga-Germans were experienced farmers.

Although some of the original settlers had brought spring wheat from the Volga, they did not have enough to supply everyone with seed. Others obtained seed in Hays. The settlers discovered that spring wheat was not well adapted to the Kansas climate and within a few years they began to plant winter wheat.

In 1880, the "black year", a drought swept over Western Kansas, withering the grass and burning the crops. Farm animals suffered from insufficient food and water and the wheat crops were completely lost. Many of the male colonists

went to Colorado to work on the construction of the Rio Grande Railroad.³¹ They saved their wages and returned to their farms in the following spring. In the meantime, the women and children plowed the fields and prepared the ground for the fall wheat crop. In July of 1880, the Kansas Pacific Railroad Company offered seed wheat to the settlers within twenty miles of the railroad and required as payment one hundred seven bushels of wheat for every one hundred bushels of seed sold to the farmer. The payment was to be made when the crop was harvested.³²

In spite of all these calamities, the Volga-Germans, like many other settlers in Kansas, were able to live in the environment and were able to establish a satisfactory home life for themselves.

Education and Bilingualism of the Volga-Germans in Ellis County.

It was an effort to send the children to school during the first years that the Volga-Germans lived in Ellis County, because almost every child was needed to help to support the family. Most Volga-Germans felt that an elementary education was sufficient for earning a living. The elementary curriculum was a very modest one in the beginning, with religion, reading, writing, and arithmetic claiming

³¹Johannes, p. 44.

³²Ellis Weekly Headlight, July 24, 1880, p. 4.

practically all the attention. Girls usually helped to care for the younger children and, through this, they learned by experience to care for a family. The annual school term of twelve weeks was short and progress was slow, so that it was easy to forget much that had been learned from one term to another. A further drawback in the educational endeavor of the first decades was the bilingual system. While it is true that the Volga-Germans wished to have English taught in the schools, it definitely remained a "foreign language" until the period around 1910-15.³³ Children of pre-school age rarely spoke English, and school children only used it in the classroom. Teaching was conducted in both English and German, the mornings being reserved for German, and the afternoon for English. Religion was always taught in German. Since the English language was a foreign language to most of the children, conversations were ordinarily carried on in German. The two languages proved to be a complication at least in the elementary grades, because they retarded the learning process and required dual teaching in some subjects. The causes which hampered educational advancements in the colonies were the failure of the children to attend school regularly, the difficulties arising from the bilingual system, and the opposition of the parents. These problems were solved when the State of Kansas required children to go to school until a certain age and have English as the primary

³³Johannes, pp. 96-98.

language in educational institutions in Kansas.

In 1922 Victoria (Herzog) had a grade school attended by four to five hundred students and also had a high school completed that same year. The schools were staffed with Sisters of St. Agnes, all qualified teachers. The high school was fully accredited, and its graduates were admitted to any institution of higher learning in the State of Kansas.³⁴

The German spoken by the Volga-Germans in Ellis County today is of particular interest in that it resembles the language of Germany of two hundred years ago. The Volga-Germans were originally from Southern Germany, from Bavaria, Alsace, and along the Rhine River.³⁵ The various settlements in Ellis County have dialects identical to the Volga settlements. This is quite natural since the people who settled each village came from the same city or cities along the Volga. A comparison of the various dialects reveals that in Catherine and Victoria the vowel sounds "e" and "i" predominate, in Munjor and Schoenchen the long "a" predominates, and in Pfeifer the long "o" is stressed. The Catherine dialect most clearly exemplifies High German.

People conversant with High German frequently fail to grasp the true meaning of many words used by the Volga-Germans in conversation, and some expressions are used in a

³⁴Dreiling, p. 53.

³⁵Jacob C. Ruppenthal, The German Element in Central Kansas (Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, XIII, 1913-14), pp. 513-34.

sense that is now obsolete. The word Freund is used to mean "relative", and Halbbruder and Halbschwester to mean "first cousin".

At the present time much of the German spoken by the Volga-Germans in Ellis County is anglicized. Frequently words are coined by combining a German prefix with an English word. Such expressions as geengineert, getelophoned, or "Ich han' die Car gestarted", meaning "I started the car" are common. English words are frequently Germanized as "Kartofel digga", or "das Haus blestere", "to dig potatoes" . . . "to plaster the house". The present tendency favors the speaking of English much more in the home than formerly. In most instances the children do not learn to speak the German language fluently, but they can understand it.

German was not taught in schools during World War I because it was forbidden by the state school law.³⁶ German is presently being taught as a foreign language in Ellis County.

³⁶Laws Relating to Education, Session of 1919 (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1919), p. 26.

CHAPTER II

GERMAN SONGS IN THE LIFE OF THE COLONISTS

The emigrant may lose the love of his native land, and the ability to speak his native language fluently, but the songs of his homeland still survive.

Folkmusic and songs were, and still are, the single most important cultural feature to the Volga-Germans. The German colonists in Russia enjoyed singing on every occasion just as their ancestors had. This tradition was continued in America and is still, to a certain extent, a part of the lives of the people in Ellis County.

There were songs for every occasion. The colonists sang religious songs, songs of joy and sorrow, songs of love and marriage, songs of war, songs of their homeland (Germany), farewell songs, drinking songs, and songs of death. Some of the old ballads and songs of romance date back to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. Most of the songs sung in Ellis County began during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of the songs began in Germany and were taken to Russia at the time of immigration between 1763 and 1767.³⁷ When the Germans migrated to Russia after the

³⁷Personal interview with Lawrence Weigel in June of 1974.

Seven Years' War, there were no printed song-books available, nor were the songs considered folklore as they later were in Russia. There is evidence from the dialects of the songs that the immigrants on the Volga River came primarily from the state of Hesse in Northern Germany. Some of the songs originated in Theuringen in Central Germany and others in areas where Germany borders France.

Many songs were simple, some were artistic, and every imaginable melody was used. Many melodies and texts were altered because they were sung without printed musical notes, and this made it possible to have several melodies of the same song. If the singers were accompanied by musical instruments, the violin, accordian, and dulcimer³⁸ were generally used.

Most songs mirror the experiences of a people, as do the songs of the Volga-Germans. The songs discussed in this thesis usually do depict the historical background and the customs of the Volga-Germans. This chapter is devoted entirely to the actual songs sung by the Volga-Germans in Russia and again in Ellis County, Kansas. An English translation will be given for most songs as well as an explanation for the occasion of each song; musical notes will accompany the songs where it was possible to ascertain the text.

Stories of the Colonists as told in Song.

³⁸A wire-stringed instrument of trapezoidal shape played with light hammers held in the hands.

I. DIE ABREIS VON RIGA

THE DEPARTURE FROM RIGA

1.

Die Abreis von Riga,
Die faellt mir so schwer.
Drum ade du schones Madchen,
Wir sehn uns nimmer mehr.

1.

The departure from Riga,
It almost breaks my heart.
So farewell my beautiful lover,
Forever and ever, we must part.

2.

Sehen wir uns nimmer wieder,
So wuench ich dir Glueck.
Du einsamster Juengling,
Kehr nur einmal zurueck.

2.

If this parting is forever,
Happy may you always be,
My dear lonely sweetheart,
Please come back to me.

3.

Es war am Sonntag Morgen,
Kamm der Lotsmann an Bord,
Frisch auf, ihr Matrosen,
Heute muessen wir fort.

3.

It was early Sunday morning,
The boatsman came aboard.
Attention, all you sailors,
Today we must leave port.

4.

Da sprachen die Matrosen,
Warum denn grade Heut,
Heut ist doch der Sonntag,
Fuer alle Schiffe Leut.

4.

The sailors asked the boatsman,
Why must we leave today,
Isn't this holy Sunday,
The day for all to pray.

5.

Da sprach nun der Lotsmann,
Ich bin ja nicht Schuld,
Dann euren Kapitaene,
Haben keine Geduld.

5.

The boatsman then replied,
I asked that we delay,
But your captain wouldn't listen,
This ship must leave today.

6.

Da sprangen die Matrosen,
Im Schiffbot hinaus,
Den Anker zu fassen,
Dort fuhren sie naus.

6.

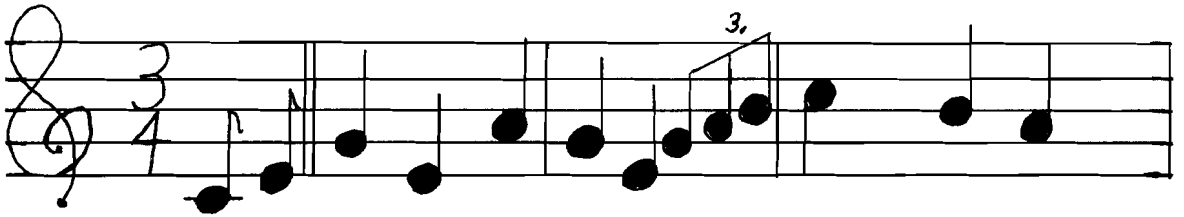
Aboard the ship they climbed,
The anchor from the sea did raise,
For far away land they sailed,
And to the Lord they gave praise.

7.

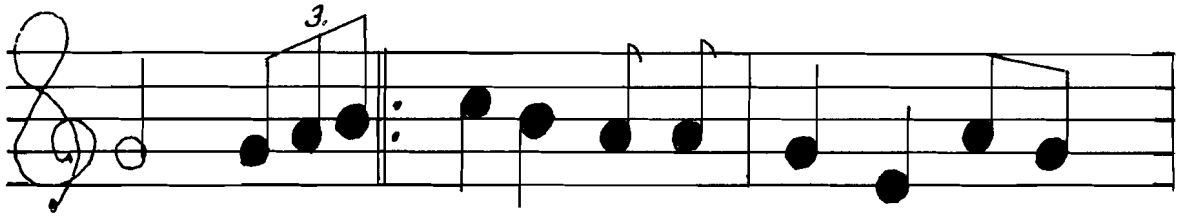
Und als sie dort fuhren,
Das Wetter sich erhob,
Die Wellen die Schlugen,
Das Schiff ging immerfort.

7.

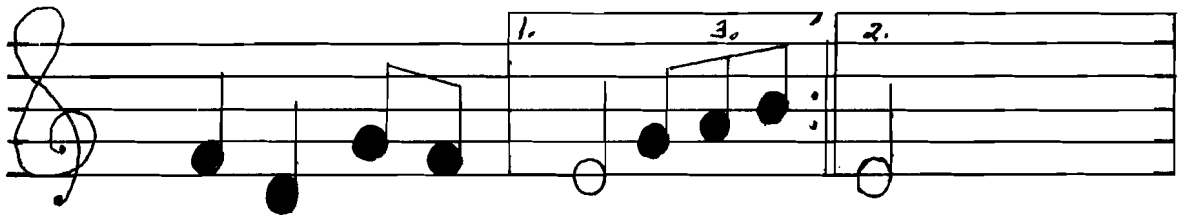
When on the sea they sailed,
A storm in their path did rage,
The boat was struck by waves so
high,
But all the people were safe.



Di- e Ab-reis von Ri-ga Die Faellt mir so



schwer Dr-um ad je du schoenes Maed-chen wi- r



sehn uns nim-mer mehr drum ad mehr

A group of Germans migrated to Russia during the years from 1763 to 1768. They met at Lübeck and Danzig in Germany and traveled up the Baltic Sea. Enroute some of them stopped at Riga in Latvia and then proceeded to Petersburg (now Leningrad), Russia. From there, they traveled across northern Russia by the land route to the Volga area, and then proceeded down the Volga River to Saratow. One hundred-four villages were built on both sides of the river.

The song, "Die Abreis von Riga," describes the colonists' departure from Riga, on their long trip to Russia. Riga lies on the Baltic Sea.

II. IN RUSSLAND KOENNT MAN
AUCH NOCH LEBEN

IN RUSSIA ONE COULD STILL
BE LIVING

1.

In Russland koennt man auch
noch leben,
Wenn man nicht Soldat braucht
gehen.
Ja als Ratnik muessen wir
stehen,
Drum wollen wir aus Russland
gehen.

1.

In Russia one could still be
living,
If the Czar had been forgiv-
ing,
As recruits we had to stand,
Now we're moving to a foreign
land.

2.

Unser Kaiser hats beschlos-
sen,
Er wollt uns alle aus Russ-
land lassen,
Er hat es uns freigestellt,
Weil wir ziehn fuer unser
Geld.

2.

The Russian Czar made up his
mind,
Volga-Germans were not his
kind.
He gave a choice to leave or
stay.
We drew our money and went
away.

3.

Wenn wir nach Stadt Hamburg
kommen,
Wird uns dort das Geld ge-
nommen,
Von Stadt Hamburg bis ans
Meer,
Sein uns alle Saecke leer.

3.

When we arrived at Hamburg
City,
Our money was taken, what a
pity.
As we travel to the sea,
Our pockets empty, at last
we're free.

4.

Als wir auf das Schiffflein
steigen,
Tat uns Gott die Gnad ver-
leihen,
Und als wir fahren auf dem
Meer,
Schwebt ein Engel vor uns
her.

4.

The ship is ready, we must
go.
We pray to God, his grace
bestow.
We're not afraid of waves
and water,
Angel of the Lord, over us
will hover.

5.

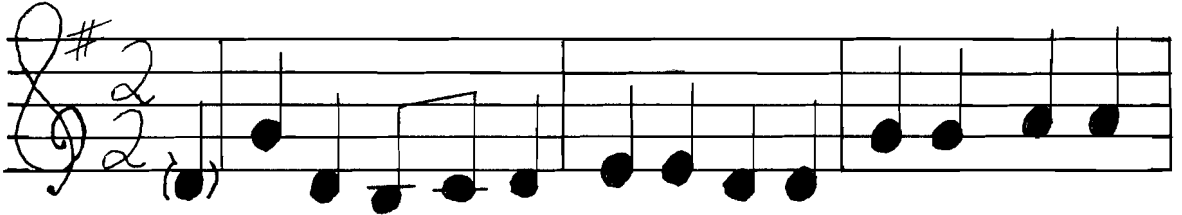
Und als wir an das Land an-
kamen,
Steigen wir ab in Gottes-
namen,

5.

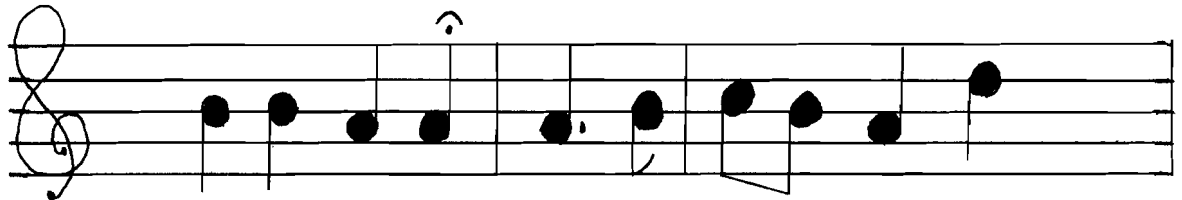
When we arrive on distant
shore,
The Lord's blessing we will
implore,

Fallin wir nieder auf unsre
Knie,
Danken Gott in aller Frueh.

We'll fall down on bended
knees,
Oh America, the land of the
free.



In Russ-land koennt man auch noch le-ben Wenn man nicht



Soldat braucht geben Ja als Rat-nik muessen



wir stehen Drum wollen wir aus Russland gehn.

The preceding song, "In Russland koennt man noch leben", is approximately one hundred years old. This song tells of the Volga-Germans' disappointments in the Russians before emmigrating to America. The song states that the Volga-Germans could still be living in Russia if the Czar (Alexander II) had allowed them to live under the rules of the Manifest set forth by Catherine the Great. The native Russians didn't favor the Manifest so the Volga-Germens had

a choice; to live under the rules of the Russian Government or to leave the country. Many Volga-Germans left Russia. The immigrants spent all the money they had for the ship fare to America, but then they were able to begin a new life in a free country.

III. EIN AUSWANDERUNGS
LIED

AN IMMIGRATION SONG

1.

Jetzt ist die Zeit und Stunde
da,
Dass wir ziehn nach Amerika,
Viel tausend Seelen geht's
dort gut,
Dass troestet uns und gibt
uns Mut.

1.

The time and hour is now at
hand,
We're moving to a foreign
land,
Where souls by thousands
prosper well,
Dauntless, with tears, we
say farewell.

2.

Die Wagen stehn schon vor der
Tuer,
Mit Weib und Kinder ziehen
wir.
Die Pferde stehn schon ange-
spannt,
Wir ziehen in ein fremdes
Land.

2.

Our wagons loaded stand in
a row,
With wives and children we
shall go.
Our horses hitched to wagons
stand,
We're leaving for an unknown
land.

3.

Ihr alle die mit uns verwandt,
Reicht uns zum letzten mal die
Hand.
Ihr Freunde weinet nicht zu
sehr,
Wir seh'n uns nun, und nimmer
mehr.

3.

To our beloved ones and our
kin,
We say farewell, and sigh
within,
Weep not so hard that we
must part,
It grieves our weary sad-
dened heart.

4.

Seid alle maennlich, und seid
stark,
Macht uns den Abschied nicht
zu hart.

4.

Be manly and renew your
strength,
As time goes on, we'll meet
at length.

Wir ziehen ja nicht aus der
Welt,
Auch da ist Gott, der uns
erhaellt.

5.

Wenn unser Schiff zur See ein-
schwimmt,
Dann werden Lieder angestimmt.
Wir fuerchten keinen Wasser-
fall,
Der liebe Gott ist ueberall.

6.

Und kommen wir gen Baltimor,
Dann heben wir das Land empor,
Und rufen laut "Victoria",
Jetzt sind wir in America.

7.

Willkommen fremdes Vaterland,
Wo sich mein Herz hat hin
gewannt,
Du Land wo ich geboren bin,
Muss meiden und muss weit
dahin.

8.

Leb wohl du altes Vaterland,
Lebt alle wohl die uns ge-
kannt,
Wir werden uns einst wieder-
sehn,
Dort wo die Friedens Palmen
wehn.

We still remain upon this
sphere,
Where God's protection will
be near.

5.

When we embark the ship at
sea,
We'll join in songs of jubi-
lee,
We fear no water and no
waves,
For God is there and His
love saves.

6.

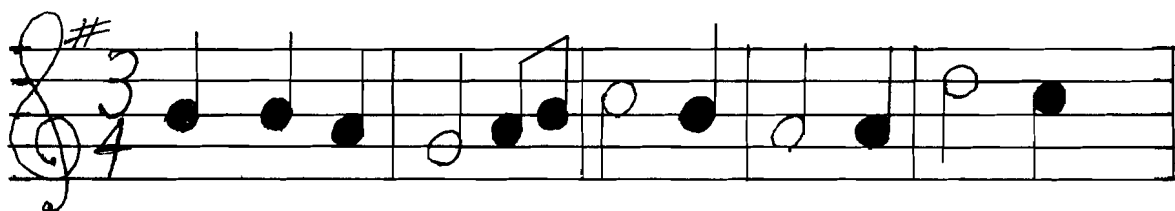
When we'll arrive on yonder
shore,
God's holy name we will
adore,
We'll shout, when we step
on the strand,
America, thou blessed land.

7.

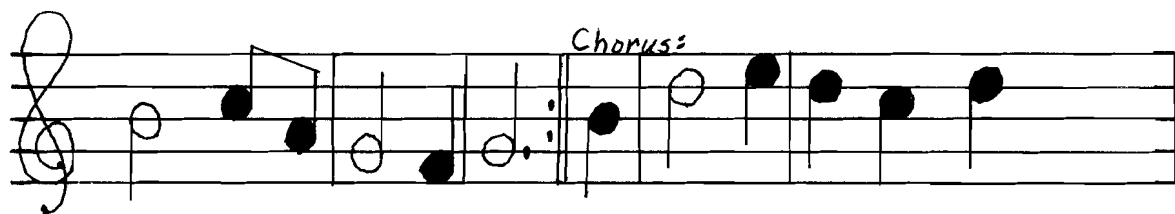
Welcome, thou fatherland
afar,
Where favored gates stand
wide ajar.
We now our land of birth
disown,
We've choose a home in lands
unknown.

8.

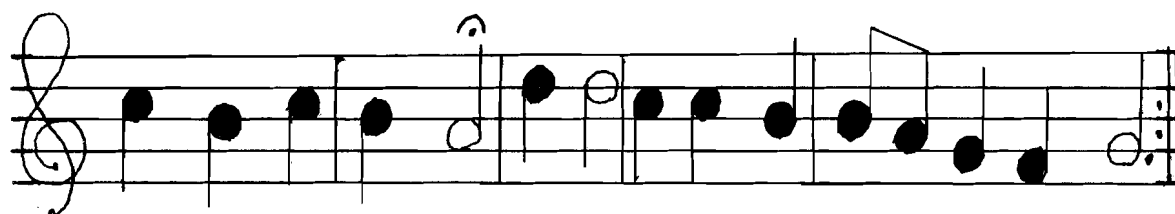
Farewell, farewell, my father
land,
Farewell, again, my kindered
band.
Some day we'll meet on hea-
ven's shore,
'Neath peaceful Palms for-
ever more.



Jetzt ist die Zeit und Stund-e da; Dass wir ziehn



nach A - mer - i ka. Wir zieh-en ja---nicht



aus... der Welt....Auch da ist Gott der uns er haelt.

On July 8, 1876, one hundred and eight Volga-German families left Saratow, Russia, on a long trip to America. The one hundred and eight families settled in Ellis County, Kansas. Jakob Stukul of the Shitomir district in Volhynia, Western Russia, wrote the preceding song in 1874 entitled, "Ein Auswanderungs Lied" - "An Immigration Song".³⁹ The song expresses the feelings of the Volga-Germans as they are

³⁹Personal interview with Lawrence Weigel in June of 1974.

preparing to leave Russia. After some preparation the people are ready to leave for an unknown land. They are saddened that they must leave their kin, but are confident they will someday meet again. Upon boarding the ship they join in songs of jubilee, putting their trust in God in a journey that will make them free.

IV. DAS TRAU RIGE SCHICKSAL
HAT UNS UEBERNOMMEN

OUR SAD DESTINY HAS
OVERTAKEN US

1.

1.

Das traurige Schicksal hat uns uebernommen,
Dass der russische Kaiser uns zu Soldaten hat genommen,
Die Reih' die war an mir,
Sonst koennt ich bleiben hier,
Aber ich muss scheiden und ihr bleibet hier.

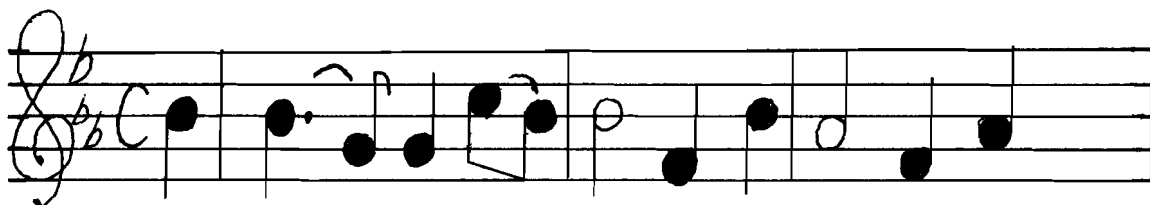
Our sad destiny has overtaken us,
The emperor has called us to serve in the Russian army,
It is now my turn to go,
Or else I would stay.
But I must depart and you remain here.

2.

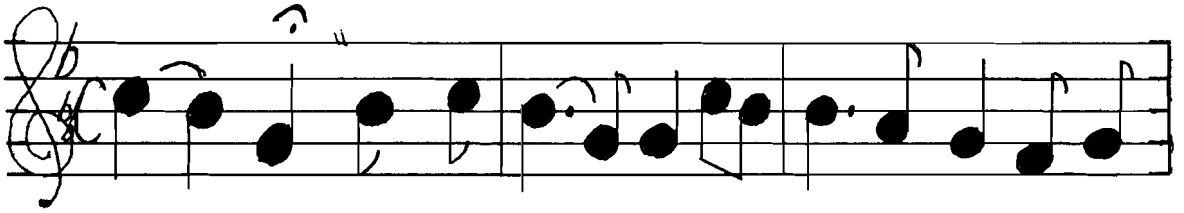
2.

Kathrine die war die Kaiserin
Die zog uns Deutsche zu sich hin,
Auf hundert Jahr gab sie uns frei,
Die hundert Jahr, die sind vorbei.

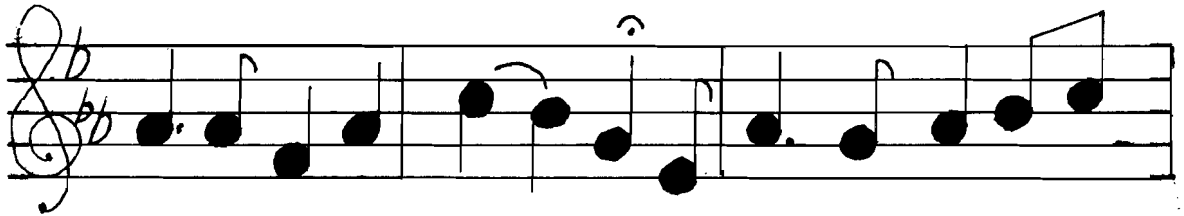
Katherine she was the Empress
And drew us Germans to her near,
Now we are free at last,
The hundred years have passed.



Das trau - ri ge Schick-sal hat uns ue-ber



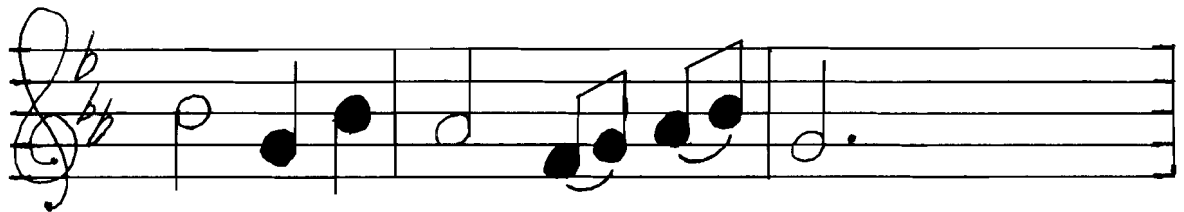
nom-- men dass der rus- si-sche Kai-ser uns zu Sol-



da-ten hat ge -nom - men, die Reih' die war an



mir, sonst koennt ich blei-ben hier. A-ber ich muss



schei-den und ihr blei - bet hier.

The promises made by Catherine the Great were good for one hundred years. Proof of this can be found in the preceding song, "Das traurige Schicksal hat uns uebernommen". In November of 1874, the privilege of military freedom also

ended, and it was an event which inspired several songs. This song explains how the military law affected the Volga-Germans. Some Volga-Germans remained living in Russia under the Czar Alexander II. Those Volga-Germans who were dissatisfied with Alexander's laws emigrated to America.

V. WIE SCHOEN IST DAS
LAENDLICHE

OH HOW PLEASANT IS LIFE
IN THE COUNTRY

1.

Wie schoen ist das Laend-
lichen Leben,
Ein Haeuschen auf gruenen
Flur.
Mit Schattigen Baeumen um-
geben.
Wie gluecklich macht mich die
Natur.
Im Schatten der gruenen der
Baeume,
Da sitz ich so gerne allein.
Es wiegen die goldenne Traue-
me,
Die schoene Vergangenheit
ein.

2.

Die Schwalbe sitzt oben an
Dache,
Sie zwitschert ihr Morgenlied
vor.
Ich hoere sobald ich erwache
Der Voegelein lustigen Chor.
Die Wachtel schlaegt in den
Getreide
Die Lerche singet in Hain.
Die Lerche so froehlich mit
ein.

3.

Zufrieden leb' ich auf dem
Lande
Obgleich ich kein Edelmann
bin.

1.

Oh how pleasant is life in
the country,
Living in a nice little
house on the plain,
Surrounded by shady trees.
I love to sit all alone,
Under the shade of the tree,
And dream of days gone by.

2.

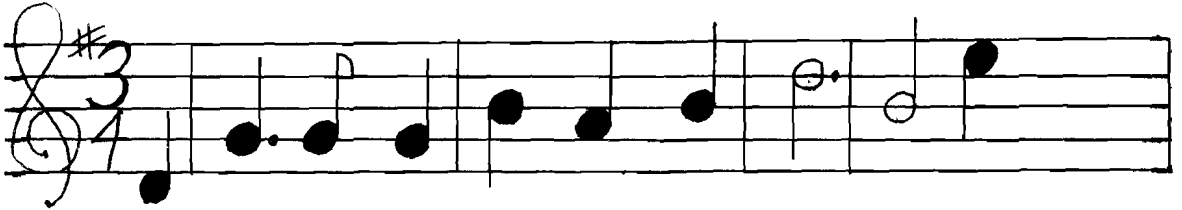
The swallow sits on the roof
top,
And chirps her morning song.
As I awake,
I hear the chorus of the
birds around me.
The quail is in the field of
grain,
The lark sings in the grove,
And soon joins in the chorus.

3.

In peace I live on the land,
Even though I am not a noble-
man.

Es schwinden im mittleren
 Stande
 Die Tage so froehlich dahin.
 Ein Strahl der erwachenden
 Sonne
 Draengt sich in mein Stueb-
 chen herein.
 Ich fuehle unsaegliche Wonne
 Kein Koenig kann gluecklicher
 sein.

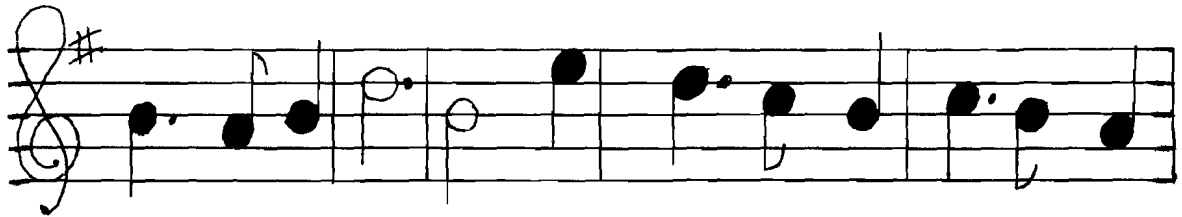
The happy days are disappear-
 ing.
 Now, a ray of sunshine rushes
 into my little room,
 And I feel an unspeakable
 feeling of delight.
 Not even a king could be more
 fortunate than I.



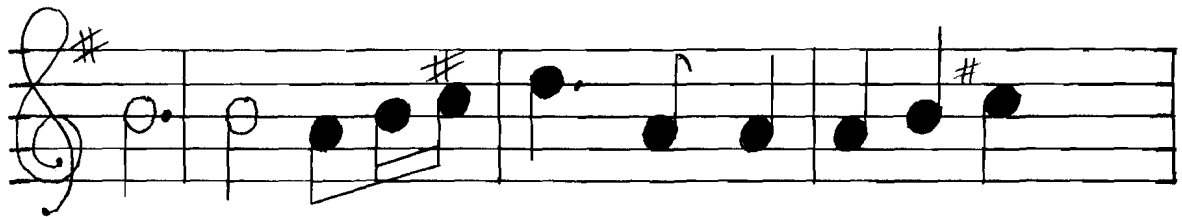
Wie schoen ist das laend-liche Le- ben Ein



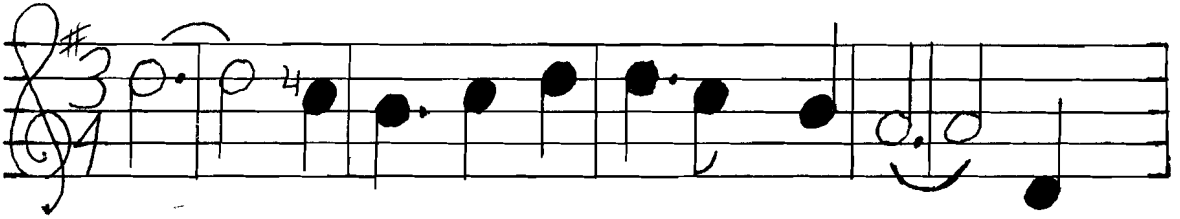
Haeuschen auf gruen-en der Flur. Mit Schatt-i-gen



Baeu-men um ge- ben Wie glueck-lich macht mich die Na-



tur... I-m Schatten- der gruenen der



Baeu-me da sitz ich so--ger-ne al - lein. Es



wie-gen die gol - den -ne Traue-me Die



schoen - e Ver- gan -gen heit ein.

"Wie schoen ist das Laendliche Leben" was sung in Russia and has been retained in America. The Volga-Germans lived on the plains of Russia and now some still live on the plains of Kansas. The Volga-Germans have always been a rural people. The song relates how serene life in the country once was, and perhaps still is.

The Volga-German Wedding and its Music.

When a Volga-German youth wanted to marry, he asked two of his friends to act as Freiersmeanner, or matrimonial

agents, for him. The Freiersmeanner went with the young man to the home of his future bride where they visited with the girl's parents and where the Freiersmeanner, on behalf of the young man, asked for the young lady's hand in marriage.⁴⁰ This was merely a formality, because the matter was usually settled by the couple to be wed before this time. However, marriages were not planned without asking the parents' advice. Since it was the custom to choose a bride from the young man's native village, the choice was somewhat limited and often several young men and women of one family married brothers and sisters of another family.

The question of dowry was usually decided during the Freiersmeanner's visit, although the couple's fathers occasionally settled this at another time. The young man received land and farm machinery from his father. If the couple planned to live with the husband's parents for a time after marriage, they received the land and machinery when they moved into a home of their own. If the father could buy land near or adjoining his farm, he did so, and this land eventually became the young couple's property.

The engagement period did not last very long. Formerly the most popular time of the year to marry was during the autumn months after harvest.⁴¹ Tuesday was a popular

⁴⁰Raish, pp. 131-32.

⁴¹This followed the custom found on the Volga where marriages were performed during seasons when there was not much farm work. January was a popular month there with many marriages also taking place in February.

day for weddings. The couple was always married in the morning, because the marriage ceremony was conducted during the church service. The groom, aided by his mother, almost always selected and paid for the bride's trousseau.⁴²

It is customary in the Catholic Church to publish the bans of marriage⁴³ for three consecutive Sundays immediately before the date set for the wedding. On the Sunday of the second announcement, the young couple separately visited the homes in the village to invite the unmarried members of the families of friends and relatives to attend the wedding celebration. On the Sunday of the last announcement, it was customary for two men, selected by the fathers of the bridal pair, to go through the village with invitations known as Einladen, asking relatives and friends to the festivities. The men carried canes, and as they went from house to house, someone in each house tied a ribbon to the cane as a mark of acceptance. The invitation was usually in verse, sometimes impromptu. The following one was popular in Schoenchen.

DIE EINLADUNG

⁴²"Courtship and Marriage," Current Literature, XXXII (Jan.-June, 1902), 676-682. This article mentions the fact that the bridegroom presents the bride with the wedding costume.

⁴³The bans of marriage consist of an announcement of the names of the two parties to be married and the names of their respective parents. This is a safeguard for the couple, as anyone knowing of any impediment to the marriage is conscience bound to make such impediment known to the interested parties or to the pastor.

Wir kommen nicht hergeritten
 Wir kommen sicher geschritten.
 Braut und Bräutigam,
 Sie lassen Euch bitten,
 Sie lassen Euch laden ins gemein,
 Ihr sollt auch Hochzeitsgaeste sein.
 Zehn Gaens - die muessen dran
 Neunzehn Huchner und der alte Hahn.
 Die sind gefuettert und so fett,
 Wie ein altes Wagenbrett.
 Dann kommt auch gleich die Kathrin Woes
 Und kocht auch gleich die dicken Kloess.
 Sie kocht sie nach Belieben
 Und kocht auch gleich die roten Rueben.
 Poety-Blitz- Was faellt mir ein-
 Ich hab ja vergessen den Branntwein.
 Wenn Ihr Uns unser Stoecklein ziert,
 So sagen wir auch wo Ihr hingehoert.

THE INVITATION

We do not come on horse astride,
 But lusty foot it side by side;
 To speak to you for groom and bride
 And beg of you without delay:
 Be with us on our wedding day.
 Ten geese, they say, and many a hen,
 In numbers round of nine and ten.
 Are fattened for the festive meal.
 And rounded like a wagon-wheel.
 Remember, too, good Aunt Katrin
 Will cook the dumplings thick and lean,
 And serve them with the choicest meats.
 Together with the reddest beets
 The deuce! We nearly did forget-
 Good brandy will be there you bet.
 Now tie a ribbon on this cane,
 And we'll invite you all again.

The invitation was usually well received and many people served refreshments to the two men reading the invitation. The eve of the wedding was known as Polterabend "racket eve", and the young people of the neighborhood, including the engaged couple, spent the evening in dancing and hilarity. Music for the dance was furnished voluntarily,

and the musicians were compensated with refreshments which were served throughout the evening.⁴⁴

On the wedding day, the groom and his attendants walked to the bride's home accompanied by a band or the village musicians. When the young men arrived at the bride's home, he and his bride knelt on a white cloth spread on the floor to receive the blessing of the young lady's parents and of her relatives who were present.⁴⁵ The young couple and their attendants then returned to the home of the groom's father where the bridal couple received the blessing of the young man's parents and his relatives. At the groom's home the procession formed to go to the church. After the wedding ceremony, the procession returned to the groom's home. The groom always walked first, followed by the bride, to show that the husband was head of the house.⁴⁶ When the bridal couple arrived at the groom's home, the couple stood at the main entrance to the house to accept the congratulations of all, which consisted of a handshake and "Viel Glueck und Segen zum Ehestand".⁴⁷

The wedding feast was held at the groom's house. A great deal of work and planning went into the preparation of the meal. No expense or trouble was spared to provide all

⁴⁴Johannes, p. 112.

⁴⁵Dreiling, p. 27.

⁴⁶Laing, p. 519. Raish, p. 132.

⁴⁷"Happiness and blessing on your married state."

the delicacies such as fresh breads and cakes.⁴⁸

Quast, a beverage made from rye flour, was a favorite drink on the wedding occasions. While the bridal couple and the guests were still sitting at the table, someone would rob the bride of one shoe. The shoe had to be redeemed, especially for the dance in the early afternoon. Sometimes the best man would buy the slipper for a sum agreeable to all. This was done in fun, and the cooks usually received the money for their work in preparing the wedding dinner.

After the meal the dancing began with the Brautreihe "bride's walk". As the orchestra began to play the bridal couple walked around the room hand in hand. The guests approached the couple and pinned gifts of money on the bride's dress. The younger people usually danced first, but because the homes were so small, there was usually a time limit to the dances of about ten minutes. Then the older people danced. The couples danced quite rapidly around the room, and the music became faster and faster as they danced. The English in Victoria, seeing the dance for the first time, described it as "an exaggerated hop waltz".⁴⁹

VI.

BRAUTDUSCH

1.

Sing mit froehlichem Gemuete,

⁴⁸Kranzkuchen, a cake with a hole in the center. The circular cake was held in the left hand with the arm frequently being thrust through the hole, so the guest could hold his glass with the right hand.

⁴⁹Raish, p. 134.

Braeutigam mit deiner Braut.
Die dir Heute Gottes Geute,
Zur Gehilfin anvertraut.

Das sie dich in Angst und Pfagen,
Troesten soll in dieser Welt;
Und die Buerde mit die tragen,
Welche dir beschwerlich faellt.

2.

Tretet froehlich zum Altare,
Betet Gott mit Ehrfurcht an,
Dessen Geute viele Jahre,
Euch gesund erhalten kann.

Bittet Jesum um den Segen,
Ladet Ihn zur Hochzeit ein;
Denn daran ist es gelegen,
Wenn ihr wollet gluecklich sein.

3.

Reicht einander Hand und Herzen,
Redlich ohne Heuchelei.
Trachtet dass in Freud und Schmerzen,
Eure Treue standhaft sei.

Immer soll die Liebe brennen,
Nach dem Goettlichen Gebot.
Niemand soll die Ehe trennen,
Niemand als allein der Tod.

BRIDE'S SONG

1.

Sing with gay and cheerful spirit,
Bridegroom with your lovely bride,
Whom today God has entrusted,
As a helper at your side.

May in all your fears and troubles,
She your consolation be.
And with you share all the burdens,
From all sorrow you'll be free.

2.

Cheerfully kneel at the altar,
With deep feeling, to God pray;

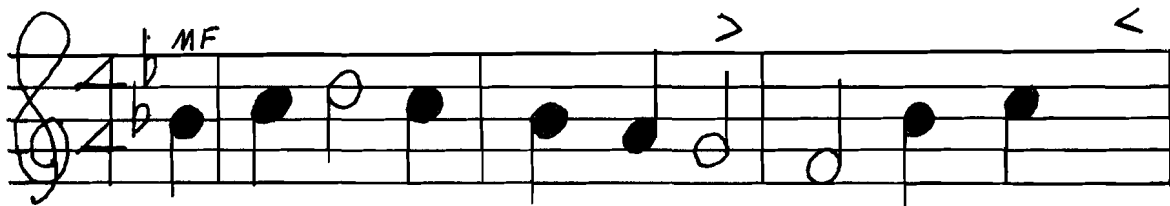
Ask that in his living goodness,
You'll enjoy good health each day.

Ask dear Jesus for his blessing,
Invite him as wedding guest;
That's a rule for all good people,
If you want your marriage blest.

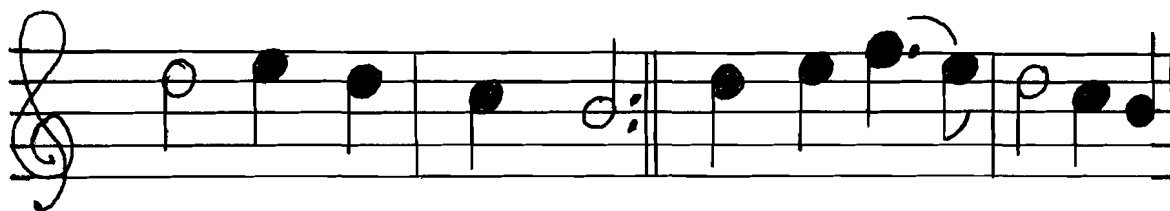
3.

Extend hand and heart to each other,
Be upright, and honest and true,
That in all your joy and sorrow,
Your strong faith will sustain you.

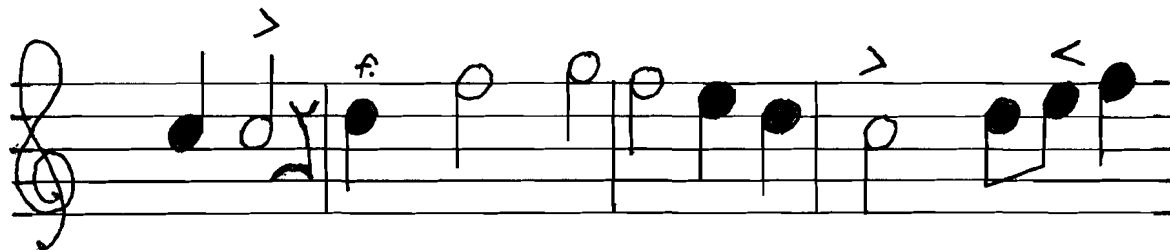
May your love-light burn forever,
It is written in God's command;
May your marriage never waiver,
Until death, your love must stand.



Sing mit froe-lich -em ge -mue -te. Braeu-tig
Die dir heu-te Got- tes Gue -te. Zur ge -



-am mit dei -ner Braut. Das sie di-ch in Angst und
hil-fin an -ver -traut.



Pla-gen Troes-ten soll in dieser Welt. Und die

Und ich bin alle Freuden voll;
Ei das macht weils du mir hast befohlen,
Das ich kein andres lieben soll.

2.

Du liebst ja alle Tag ein andren,
Und ich soll lieben dich allein;
Dass kann ja nicht immer so bleiben,
Es muss einmal geschieden sein.

3.

Herz mein Herz schwimmt alle Tag im Wasser,
Herz mein Herz schwimmt alle Tag im Blut;
Ei du bringst mich um mein jung frisch Leben,
Du bringst mich um mein jung frisch Blut.

4.

Da kommt ein Vogel angeflogen,
Und setzt sich nieder auf meine Schoss;
Einen Zettel druch er in seinen Schnabel,
Von mein feineliabschen einen Gruss.

5.

Ach Vogel, flieg nur wieder weiter,
Und nimm den Gruss und auch den Kuss,
Denn ich kann dich heute nicht begleiten,
Weil ich dahir verbleiben muss.

6.

Seht ihr nicht die viele schoene Haeuser,
Und auch die schoene Thueren dran;
So begruess mir alle meine Nachbars Leute,
Die bei der Arbeit lustig sein.

7.

Wenn ich mir vieles Gelt gesparet,
Dann bau ich mir ein neues Haus.
Mit sieben hundret sieben und siebzig Fenstern,
Zum oberaten schau ich heraus.

HEART MY HEART

1.

My dear sweetheart, why are you sad,
When I am happy and gay;

It is because you have forbidden me,
To love any other girl today.

2.

Yet every day you love another,
And I should love only you;
Don't expect this to remain that way,
Because to me you are not true.

3.

My heart swims in water every day,
My heart swims in blood too;
You are robbing me of my young life,
My blood I give to you.

4.

From afar a bird comes flying
And gently sits down upon my lap;
In his bill he carries a greeting,
With his wings he starts to flap.

5.

Dear bird fly back to my sweetheart,
And return her greeting and her kiss;
I will not be able to accompany you.
Here, I will remain and live in bliss.

6.

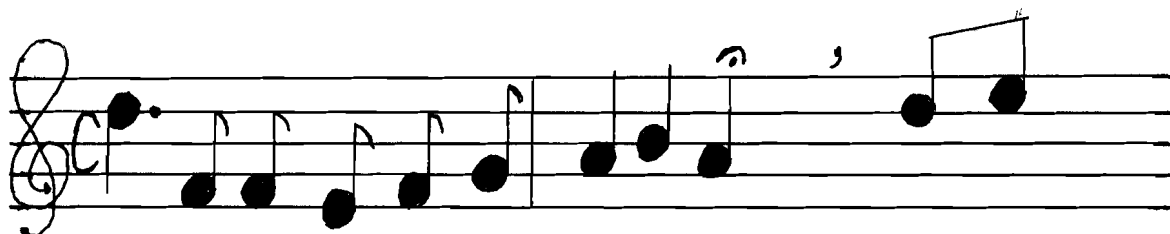
Don't you see those beautiful houses,
With the best doors in the land;
I send greetings to all my neighbors,
When they work, they're happy, how grand.

7.

When I have saved enough money,
I will build a house where I can roam;
With seven hundred seventy seven windows,
I will look out the highest in my house.



Herz mein Herz wa-rum den du so trau- rig und

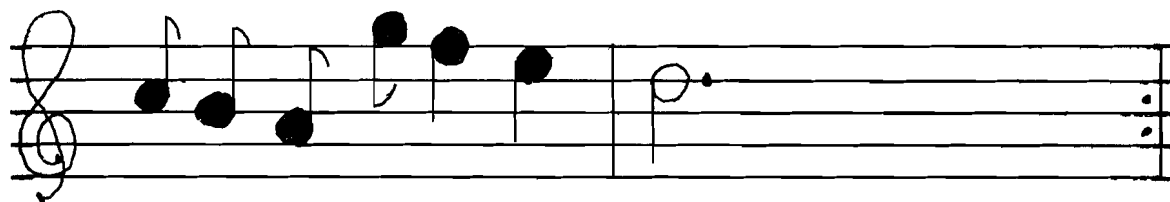


ich bin al-le Freuden voll

Ei das



macht weils du mir hast be-fo ---len das



ich kein an--dres lie-ben soll.

One other very popular wedding song sung in the colonies in Ellis County was "Heart my Heart". Each settlement in Ellis County has its favorites, but it seems that this song is liked by everyone. It must have been very popular in Germany and in Russia because there were several melodies in those countries accompanying the song. However, in Ellis County the same melody is used by everyone.

VIII.

DREI WOCHEN NACH OSTERN

1.

Drei Wochen nach Ostern,
Da geht der Schnee weg.
Da heirat mein Schaetzen,
Dann habe ich Dreck.

2.

Ein scheckiges Paar Ochsen,
Eine schwartz braune Kuh,
Die gibt mir mein Vater,
Wenn ich heiraten tu.

3.

Und gibt er sie nicht,
So heirat ich nicht,
Ich pfeiff dir was Vater,
Behalt sie fuer dich.

4.

Drei hab ich geliebt,
Was hab ich davon,
Mein Schaetzchen betruedt,
Das hab ich zum Lohn.

5.

Bald grass ich am Necker,
Bald grass ich am Rhein,
Bald hab ich ein Schaetzchen,
Bald hab ich auch keine.

6.

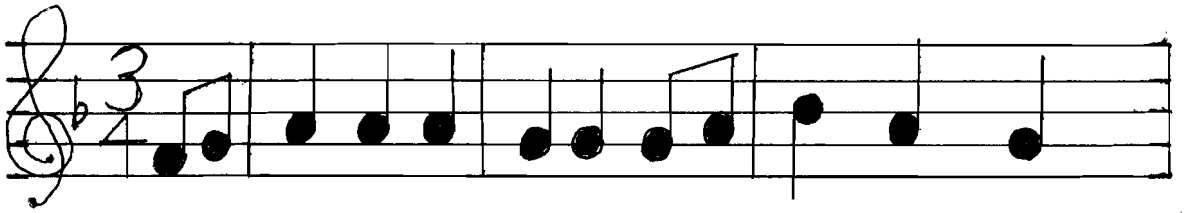
Was hilft mir das grassen,
Wenns Sichel nicht schneit,
Was hilft mir mein Schaetzchen,
Wenns bei mir nicht bleibt.

7.

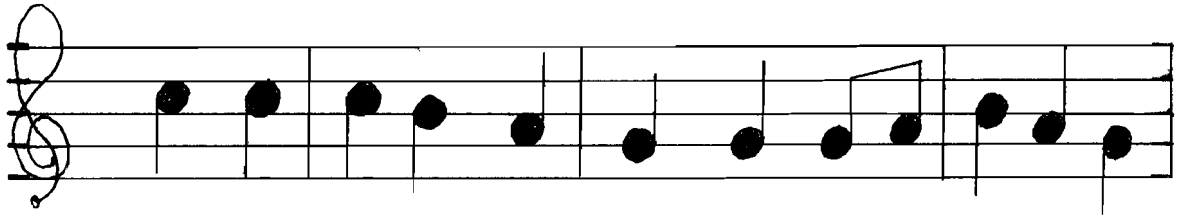
Hab Haffer gedreschen,
Hab Linsen gesaecht,
Hab manch ein schoen Madchen,
Am Tanzen gedreht.

8.

Im Wirtshausen drueben,
Da steht einen Tisch,
Da rappeln die Glaesser,
Da trinken wir frish.



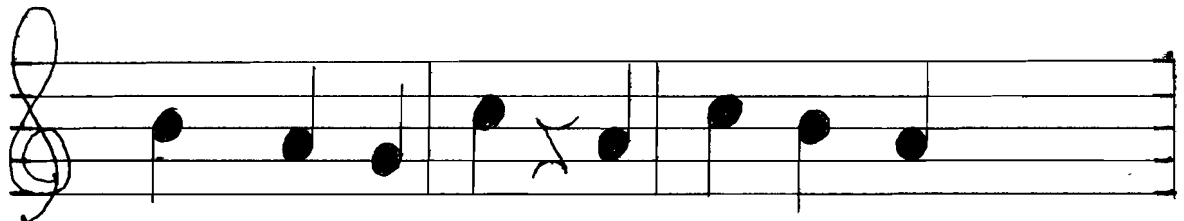
Drei Woch-en nach O-ster-n da geht der Schnee



weg. Da heir-et mein Schaet-zen dann ha-be ich



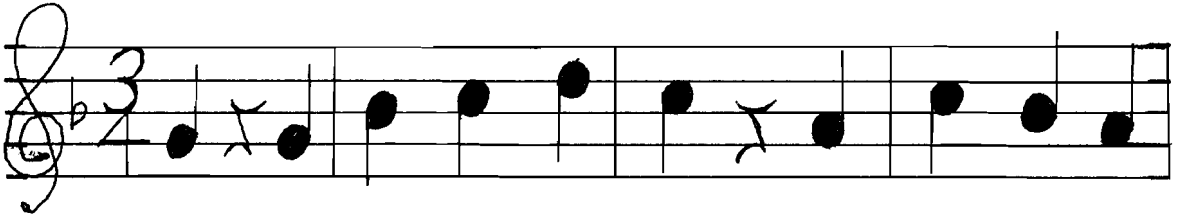
Dreck. Ein scheck-ig-es Paar Och-sen ein-e



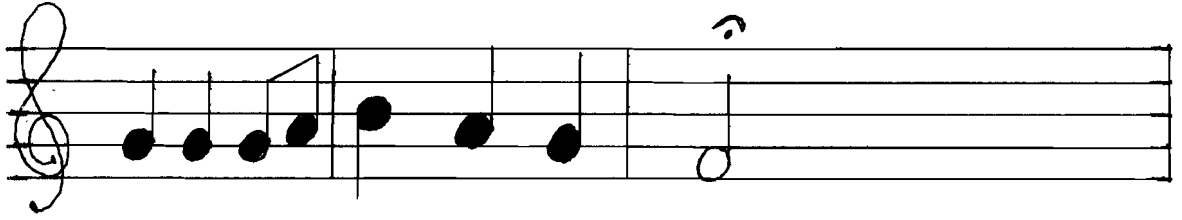
schwartz brauen Kuh Die gibt mir mein



Va-ter wenn ich hei-ra-ten tu. Und gibt er sie



nicht so hei - rat ich nicht Ich pfeiff dir was



Va-ter be- halt sie fuer dich.

Drei Wochen nach Ostern, "Three Weeks after Easter"

is a song that tells the story of a fellow who had several fiancées. Since the Catholic church prohibits weddings during the lenten or advent season, it is customary to have weddings immediately after Easter. Now that Easter was over, the fellow in the song is ready to marry, but none of his fiancées agreed to marriage. He says, "one day I have a sweetheart - the next day I don't"....and compares this to the man who said, "there is no use to go out to cut grass when your sickle doesn't work". The first two verses say that three weeks after Easter the snow will disappear - and my sweetheart will get married - but not to me, and this leaves me with nothing. My dad promises me a pair of speckled oxen and a black and brown cow if I get married. But if I don't get these animals I will not marry, and dad the heck with you, keep them for yourself.

DUSCH

1.

Heinrich schlief bei seiner neu vermaehlten,
Bei eine reiche Erbin an den Rhein.
Schlangen bissen die den falsch quaelten,
Lassen ihn nicht ruhig schlafen ein.

2.

Zwoelfe schlugs da drang durch die Gardiene,
Eine weise tode kalte Hand.
Dann erblickt er seine Wilhemina,
Die vor ihm ins sterbens Kleide stand.

3.

Bebe nicht, sprach sie mit leiser Stimme,
Ehmahls mein geliebster bebe nicht.
Ich erschiene nicht vor dir im Grime,
Deiner neue liebe fluch ich nicht.

4.

Zwar der Kummer hat mein eignes Leben,
Drauter Heinrich schmerzlich abgekurtzt.
Doch der Himmel hat mir Kraft gegeben,
Das ich nicht zur Helle bin gesturtzt.

5.

Warum traut ich deinen falschen Schwoeren,
Baute fast auf redlichkeit und treu.
Warum liess ich mich durch Worten ruehren,
Die du gabst aus lauter heuchelei.

6.

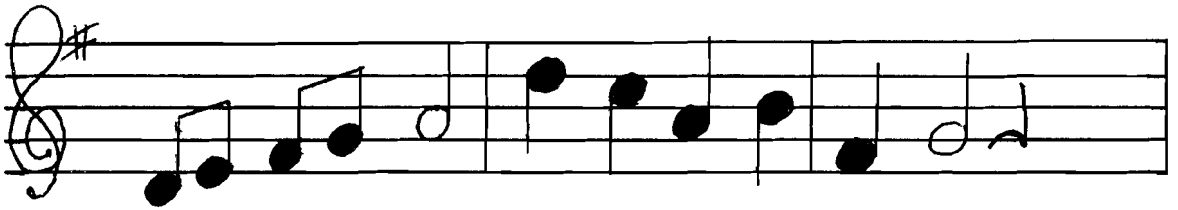
Weine nicht, den eine Welt wie diese ist,
Der Traenen die du weintst nicht wert.
Lebe froh und gluecklich mit Eliesa,
Welche du zur Gattin hast begehrt.

7.

Lebe froh und gluecklich hier auf Erden,
Bist du einst vor Gottes Tron wirst stehn.
Wo du strenge wirst gerichtet werden,
Fuer die Liebe die du kannst verschmehen.



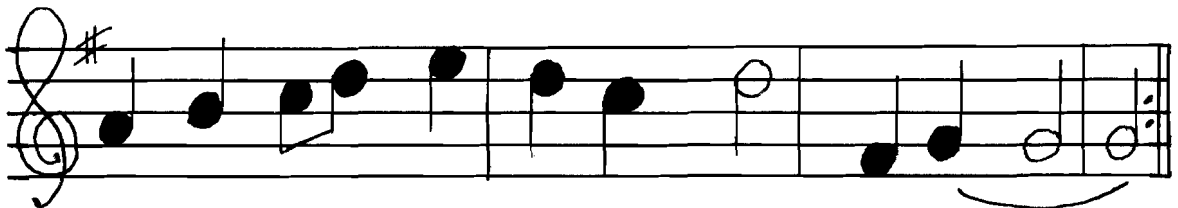
Hein - rich schlief bei sei - ner neu ver - maehl - ten



bei ei - ne rei - che Er - bin an den Rhein.



Schlangen bis - sen die den falsch - en quael - ten



Lass - en ihn nicht ruh - ig schlaf - en ein

The preceding folk song was played and sung at Volga-German weddings in Ellis County toward the beginning of the twentieth century. It was brought to America in 1876 and is called a Dusch, "Shower". In the song, Heinrich's wife passed away, and he didn't wait long to marry a rich heiress

who lived on the Rhine. Her name was Eliesa. As Heinrich and his new wife retired for the evening, he had trouble sleeping and was tormented by the thoughts of his untrue love of his first wife Wilhemine. As the clock struck twelve, he glanced toward the curtain and saw a white, cold, dead hand reaching toward him. He realized it was Wilhemine, his dead wife, who stood before him in her burial dress. "Don't tremble", she said in a gentle voice, "I am not here to curse your new love, it was grief that shortened my life, Heinrich, but heaven gave me the strength I needed - so that I would not go to hell. Why did I trust your false words of love, which in reality you gave me with deceit in your heart. Don't weep - this world is not worthy of your tears. Live joyfully and happy with Eliesa, whom you have taken as your wedded wife. Make the best of it here on earth, but your day will come, when at the judgment seat of God, you will be severely judged for the love you so deceitfully gave me."

X DIE JERICHER HALZEN HAT FETT GESTOHLEN

1.

Die Jericher Halzen die hat Fett gestohlen
Bei den Friedrich Hoff.
Sie lassen sich auch gleich Maenner geben,
Und suchen nach ihren Fett.

2.

Und als sie bei der Jericher Halzen kommen
Da tut sie ein heller Piff.
Ihr kommt da her und sucht bei mir,
Ihr meint ich waer ein Dieb.

3.

Mir wollen dich nicht zum Diebe machen,
Mir wollen nur ein grad mal sehn,
Gertern Abend hast du Fett gestohlen,
Und die Leut haben dich gesehn'.

4.

Das Fett hab ich gestohlen,
Das sag ich frei heraus,
Drei silber Rubel geb ich eich,
Ei plaudert's nur nicht aus.

5.

Die Rute sollst du haben,
Das ist eine grosse Schandt,
Leg du dich ein mal da nieder,
Auf dieser schmahle Bank.

6.

Und als sie die erste Rute grug,
Da greischt sie gleich "Grahull"
Die Ge-richtsmaenner sagen-"nur besser drauf"
Das kommt von dein Betrug.

JERICHI HALZEN STOLE LARD

1.

Jerich Halzen stole lard,
At the home of Friedrich Hoff.
So he called in several men,
To look for his missing stuff.

2.

And when they came to Jerich's house,
She let out a great big sigh,
You search my house - I'm not a thief,
You're going to make me cry.

3.

We are not claiming you are a thief,
We just want to look around,
Last evening you stole some lard,
People say, it was more than a pound.

4.

Yes - I stole the lard,

That, I will freely admit,
Three silver Rubels are yours,
But don't tell people what I did.

5.

A good whipping is what you need,
It is such a disgrace,
Lie down on this narrow bench,
With your guilty red face.

6.

As she received the first whip lash,
She cried, Oh no - I didn't cheat,
The judges cried, "Whip her again,
You caused this by your deceit."

Die Jerich Halzen hat Fett Gestohlen "Jerich Halzen Stole Lard", is a good example of how the Volga-Germans corrected their own social problems. Whippings were administered for minor offences, such as the whipping Jerich Halzen received for stealing lard. The Russian government did not interfere with any of the Volga-Germans' social problems that didn't concern the Russians themselves.

"Jerich Halzen Stole Lard" has been retained in America as a cultural reminder of what life in Russia was really like.

XI. VOLLENDET HIENIEDEN

MY LIFE IS NOW ENDED

1.

1.

Vollendet hienieden ist nun
mein Lauf.
Jetzt nimm mich O Vater zu
Dir hinauf.
Mein Herze fand endlich die
ewige Ruh,
Dein Engel schloss freundlich
mein Auge zu.

My life now is ended, my
course now is run,
All labors are over,
The day now is done.
O Father of mercy, bend
down unto me,
And take me to heaven to
be with Thee.

2.

Ihr Kinder lebt wohl und ge-
denket mein,
Und schliesset in euer Gebet
mich ein.
Einst werde in lichterem
Himmel's Hoh'n,
Wir alle verklaert uns ja
wieder sehn.

2.

Farewell to my dear ones,
Farewell to you all;
Remember my soul in its
pleading call.
And walk toward the home
beyond earthly ken,
For there we shall gather
and meet again.⁵⁰

Singing songs at funerals added a great deal of meaning to the burial ceremony for the Volga-Germans. The people were deeply moved by the various songs and even to this day people will weep when they are sung. Vollendet Hienieden depicts one's life and death. It was sung at funerals more frequently than any other song. The song states that one works throughout his entire life, and when his course is run, when his labors are done, he may rest eternally and hope to meet his dear ones again beyond his earthly scope.

These songs which the Volga-Germans first sang in the Russian colonies and later, on the plains of Kansas in Ellis County will live on in the hearts of those who have heard them from childhood, and to whom they have so much meaning.

⁵⁰Translated by Father Edwin Dorzweiler, O.F.M.,
Catherine, Kansas.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The past one hundred years of Ellis County history has been enriched by the Volga-Germans who came here to look for a new home in this great land of opportunity and to obtain that freedom which they did not have in Russia.

These people who came from the Volga River region in Russia and settled on the plains of Western Kansas were poor by economic standards. The fact that the Volga-Germans were not very high on the social ladder was of minor importance since they provided their own social activities with the customs and traditions they brought with them from Germany and Russia.

This study of the cultural activities which center around the home, school, and general social life, of the Volga-German colonies of Catherine, Victoria, Munjor, Pfeifer, and Schoenchen, in Ellis County, Kansas, indicates which native customs have survived and which have adapted themselves to modern American conditions. Examples have been given to illustrate that the native customs pertaining to the home life of the people have been modified considerably and have adapted themselves to meet American conditions. A complete adaptation to American conditions has also been

noted in education. In regard to the general social customs, the Volga-Germans show a considerable modification and adaptation to American conditions.

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