Researching Your Russian Doukhobor Roots

A presentation by Jonathan J. Kalmakoff
Who are the Doukhobors?

- religious sect founded in early 18th century among Russian peasantry
- rejected the rituals and beliefs of the Orthodox Church
- abolished all priests, icons and sacraments
- *Dukho + Borets = “Spirit Wrestler”*
Who are the Doukhobors?

- believe the spirit of God resides in every human being – to kill another human being is to kill God
- teachings consist of oral collection of psalms and proverbs called *The Book of Life*
- ceremony consists of simple prayer meeting recited around table with bread, salt, water
Who are the Doukhobors?

- pacifist, egalitarian and anti-authoritarian beliefs brought conflict with Church and State
- frequently persecuted and exiled to remote frontier regions of Russian Empire
- 1895 Burning of Arms and refusal to perform military service brought renewed persecution
- 1899 – 7,500 Doukhobors immigrate to Canada
Genealogical Challenges

- most Doukhobors were illiterate
- kept few written records of their own
- often refused to register vital statistics
- frequently relocated
- Russian/English language barrier
- records scattered & difficult to access
Genealogical Advantages

• finite number of Doukhobors
• small founding population
• intermarriage within Doukhoborism
• migrated and settled en masse
• strong oral tradition
• recent archival discoveries
Doukhobor History

- basic understanding of Doukhobor history essential for Doukhobor genealogical research
- 300 year history complex and fascinating
- problem solving becomes easier with knowledge of the historical context in which events occurred
Ethnic & Religious Group

• common cultural tradition and sense of identity set Doukhobors apart from Russian society
• stayed physically and theologically separate from the hostile world around them
• for most of their history, Doukhobors have been a distinctive ethnic as well as religious group
Migration & Settlement

- Prior to 1801
- The Molochnaya ~ 1801-1845
- The Caucasus ~ 1841-1899
- Canada ~ 1899 - present
Prior to 1801

• mainly concentrated in South Russia
  • provinces of Tambov, Voronezh, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav and the Don
• Doukhobors scattered across Russian Empire
• no centralized doctrines or leadership
• severe persecutions during 1760s and 1790’s
The Molochnaya, 1801-1845

- Tavria province, Russia near Sea of Azov
  - present-day Zaporozhiye province, Ukraine
  - Molochnaya district - 9 villages established
- central hereditary leadership develops
- period of prosperity, religious toleration
- renewed persecution results in exile, 1841-45
The Caucasus, 1841-1899

- Tiflis province, Russia
  - present-day Georgia
  - Akhalkalaki district - 8 villages established
  - Borchalo district - 3 villages established
- Elizavetpol province, Russia
  - present-day Azerbaijan
  - Kedabek district - 4 villages established
- Kars province, Russia
  - present-day Turkey
  - Shuragel’ district - 4 villages established
  - Zarishat district – 2 villages established
The Caucasus, 1841-1899

- 1886 – central hereditary leadership ends
  - leadership crisis results
- Doukhobor community splits into factions
  - Small, Middle and Large parties
- 1887 - universal military service introduced
  - refusal to bear arms results in renewed persecution
- 1895 - Burning of Arms
1899 Immigration to Canada

- 7,500 Doukhobors immigrate to Canada
- aided by Leo Tolstoy and Society of Friends (Quakers) in England and America
- settle on three blocks of land reserved by the Dominion Government in Saskatchewan
- largest mass migration in Canadian history
- 12,000 Doukhobors remained in Russia
Canadian Settlement
Canadian Settlement

- North Reserve, Saskatchewan
  - Pelly, Arran districts
  - 20 villages established
- South Reserve, Saskatchewan
  - Kamsack, Veregin, Canora, Buchanan districts
  - 38 villages established
- Saskatchewan Reserve, Saskatchewan
  - Blaine Lake, Langham districts
  - 13 villages established
Canadian Settlement

- 1903-1907 – land ownership crisis results over compliance with homestead rules
- Doukhobors split into three factions
  - Independents – take oath, accept private property
  - Community – refuse oath, reject private property
  - Sons of Freedom – small radical zealot wing
- 1907 – loss of Community Doukhobor homestead lands
Canadian Settlement

• British Columbia
  • 1908-1912, Community Doukhobors relocate to Grand Forks, Castlegar, Slocan districts
  • over 90 communal villages established

• Alberta
  • 1917-1924, Community Doukhobors settle in Lundbreck, Cowley, Shouldice districts
  • 15 villages established

• And Saskatchewan Again
  • 1917-1918, 14 villages established at Kylemore

• Demise of the CCUB, 1937-1938
Recurring Place Names

Goreloye Tambov, Russia [1700]

Goreloye Tavria, Russia [1805]

Gorelovka Tiflis, Russia [1841]

Novo-Goreloye Elizavetpol, Russia [1847]

Goreloye Good Spirit Lake, SK [1899]

Novo-Goreloye Buchanan, SK [1899]

Gorelovka Blaine Lake, SK [1899]

Gorelovka Kars, Russia [1879]

Bolshaya Gorelovka Blaine Lake, SK [1902]

Malaya Gorelovka Blaine Lake, SK [1902]
Russian Names

- personal name + patronymic + surname
- i.e. Ivan Vasilyevich Popov
  - Ivan = personal name
  - Vasilyevich = patronymic
  - Popov = surname
- i.e. Anna Ivanovna Petrova
  - Anna = personal name
  - Ivanovna = patronymic
  - Petrova = surname
Russian Names

• Personal Names
  • children often named after parents, grandparents
  • recurring names every several generations
  • occasionally more than one child given same name
  • small pool of commonly used names developed

• Diminutives
  • short, “pet” forms of personal names
  • used to express familiarity or endearment among friends and relatives
  • Ivan = Vanya, Vanka, Vanechka, Vaniusha, etc.
Russian Names

• Patronymics
  • formed by adding suffix -ovich (son of) or -ovna (daughter of) to father’s name
  • *i.e.* Ivan Vasilyevich = Ivan, son of Vasily
  • *i.e.* Anna Ivanovna = Anna, daughter of Ivan
  • useful for identifying parentage in records

• Surnames
  • suffix endings include -in (Salikin), -ov (Popov), -ev (Bondarev), -sky (Barovsky), -enko (Savenko)
  • Additional –a suffix ending for female surnames (Markova, Konkina)
Russian Names

• roots of Russian surnames provide clues about the identity of early ancestors
  • formed from first names, nicknames, occupations or geographic origin of ancestors

• Doukhobor surnames also provide clues about ethnicity of early ancestors
  • Russian, Ukrainian, Cossack, Mordvin, Tatar, Polish
Name Changes in Canada

- **English Spelling Variants**
  - no standard system in 1899 for transliterating Russian (Cyrillic) into English (Latin) alphabet
  - most Doukhobor immigrants were illiterate
  - multiple spelling variants evolved for same name
    - *i.e.* Popov = Popoff, Popow, Popove, Papof, Papove

- **New Canadian Names**
  - through assimilation process, English names adopted
    - *i.e.* Vasily = Wasil, William, Bill, Walter
    - *i.e.* Anastasia = Mabel, Nellie, Nettie, Anna
Names in Records

- Doukhobor immigrants had several different names during their lifetime
- records may list Russian or English form
- name spellings vary from record to record
- pattern of recording names inconsistent
# Names in Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Record</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Popov</td>
<td>Russian Census</td>
<td>1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanya Popo</td>
<td>Ship Manifest</td>
<td>1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Poppoff</td>
<td>Canada Census</td>
<td>1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwan Popoff</td>
<td>Canada Census</td>
<td>1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwan Popow</td>
<td>Homestead Application</td>
<td>1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan S. Popoff</td>
<td>National Registration</td>
<td>1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Popoff</td>
<td>Tombstone</td>
<td>1926</td>
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</table>
Oral Tradition

• for centuries, Doukhobors passed down names, relationships and events orally from generation to generation
• often the only source of information in the absence of written records
• interviews with elders should be a priority
• important to document and preserve
• cross-reference with records when possible
Written Records

- “myth” that there are few Doukhobor records
- while Doukhobors kept few records of their own, the State kept many records about them!
- records compiled in Canada not necessarily better or more plentiful, just more accessible
- resources developing rapidly as records are located, indexed, translated and published
Ship Passenger Lists

- constitute the official record of Doukhobor immigration to Canada
- ship passenger lists for 3,200 Doukhobor immigrants in 1899 are missing or incomplete
- microfilm available through NAC
- comprehensive indices available online and in book format
Ship Passenger Lists

- Doukhobors immigrated to Canada in four distinct waves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Ships</th>
<th>Persons</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1898-1899</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>1902-1906</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>260</td>
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<tr>
<td>1909-1914</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>870</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919-1925</td>
<td>Order-in-Council prohibiting Doukhobor Immigration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1925-1930</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Census Records

• single most important group of records for Doukhobor genealogy

• censuses of Doukhobors taken by various governments for various purposes
  • taxation, electoral representation, homestead entry, exemption from military service, etc.

• some Doukhobors refused to provide information to census-takers or provided inaccurate information re: ages
# Census Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Published Index</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Canada Census</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Doukhobor Village Census</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Census of Northwest Provinces</td>
<td>Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Canada Census</td>
<td>Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Doukhobor Village Census</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Census of Northwest Provinces</td>
<td>Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Independent Doukhobor Census</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Doukhobor Village Census</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Membership Lists

- membership lists may exist for various Doukhobor organizations
  - Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood
  - Society of Independent Doukhobors
  - Named Doukhobor Society of Canada
  - Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ
  - Spiritual Communities of Christ (Sons of Freedom)
  - local Doukhobor societies
Membership Lists

- difficult to locate – many lost or destroyed
- often fragmentary, localized and contain only a select group of Doukhobors
- important as census substitutes, especially for the 1920-1950 period
- indices published online and in books
  - Doukhobor Genealogy Website
Ecclesiastical Records

- no formal clergy, sacraments nor church in the Doukhobor faith
- therefore, no religious records of baptisms, marriages, burials nor parish registers
Vital Statistics Records

- in early years of Canadian settlement, some Doukhobors refused to register their births, marriages with the government
  - Independent Doukhobors complied most
  - Community Doukhobors complied less
  - Sons of Freedom complied least
- changes to legislation eventually forced all Doukhobors to comply fully with registration
- MB, SK, AB, BC vital records available online
Homestead Records

• available for Independent Doukhobors who took out homesteads - often took affirmation
• Community Doukhobors either didn’t apply for, or forfeited homesteads – refused oath
• Doukhobor homesteads generally correspond with original reserve settlement areas
• online databases available at NAC and SAB
• microfilm records available at SAB
Cemetery Records

• 109 private Doukhobor cemeteries in Canada
  • many are neglected; some are destroyed
  • no burial register, cemetery map nor markers for many

• Doukhobors also buried in municipal cemeteries

• Doukhobor Cemetery Transcription Project
  • Doukhobor Genealogy Website
  • transcription of all Doukhobor cemeteries over 2 years
  • webpages of transcribed cemeteries include history, physical layout, driving directions, burials, contact info
Other Records

- naturalization records
- passports
- school records
- maps
- tax rolls
- newspapers
- journals & periodicals
- libraries and archives
- national registration
- local history books
- voters lists
- military and alternate service records
- police records
- court records
- prison records
Records from Russia

- difficult to access geographically
- records scattered throughout various local and state archives in the former Soviet Republics
- language barrier
- technological barrier
- extent of records unknown
Records from Russia

- since 2002, over 10,000 documents relating to Doukhobors in 19th century Russia discovered
  - Russian State Historical Archive
  - Kherson Regional State Archives
  - Odessa Region State Archives
  - Central State Historical Archive of Georgia
  - State Archives of Azerbaijan
  - National Archives of Armenia
Records from Russia

- Tsarist era documents contain census and tax lists of Doukhobor villages in Molochnaya and the Caucasus from 1820s to 1880s
- allow researchers to trace most Doukhobor families through 1800s back to mid-1700s
- in the process of being studied, translated, indexed and published
Doukhobor Genealogy Website

www.doukhobor.org

• the largest and most comprehensive internet source connecting researchers of Doukhobor genealogy
• dedicated to the reclamation, discovery, collection, preservation and sharing of information related to Doukhobor family history
Doukhobor Genealogy Website
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- guides and indexes to archival records
- surname databases, guides to names and naming practices, glossaries
- place name databases, gazetteers, historical maps, ancestral village finder
- stories, biographies, articles and tutorials
- message board
- useful internet links