

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

Packet 4: “Reminiscences from the Life of Athanasius Karlin”: The Settlement

Teacher	Sequence
1. How would you describe or characterize these people?	Have students make a list of adjectives on the board which describe them effectively. Give reasons for choosing these adjectives. Talk about the things which seemed important to them from the account given by Karlin and in what ways this reflects what sort of people they were.
2. Do you think the land was expensive or inexpensive for the Volga Germans? Why?	Suggest that the students try to find out what they price of farmland is today per acre. Compare that to the cost of living now and to their cost of living in 1876. Approximately how much would it cost to purchase the same amount of land today? (This make a good math lesson.) Internet sites like, “How Much is That Worth Today?” (http://eh.net/hmit/powerusd/) help to compare today’s dollar with that of another time period.
3. Have you ever moved to a new part of the country or a new school? How did you feel at first? Have you ever visited a country where they did not speak your language? How did you feel? Compare and contrast this to the Volga German situation when they came over here. What would some of the difficulties be? What were some of the problems you faced and felt? What finally made you feel like you belonged there and were a part of what was going on?	These are somewhat probing questions for children this age, but should elicit good responses. There are no incorrect answers but you, the teacher, should bring them back in the end to relating their feelings to what the Volga Germans would have been feeling. Those things which probably helped establish a feeling of belonging and home were their friends and families around them and their religion.
4. What kinds of things do you think you would have found in the first simolinkas in Ellis County? What factors determined what you would or would not have in your house?	Basically they would have had only utilitarian things purchased with money. Only a very few items would have been brought from Russia and the other things they would either have had to make or do without.
5. What do you think were the greatest worries or concerns of the adults? Of the children?	List these in order of importance. Be sure the children understand that necessities were first and extras came much later, and that some of the things which we call necessities were extras to them. You might begin by making a list of things today which we consider to be

	absolutely necessary to get along.
6. Look at the simolinka of Mr. & Mrs. Casper Sack, in the background of the large stone house. Do you think this would have been a particularly comfortable place to live?	More discussion on this will come about in the packet on housing and this picture can be used in conjunction with that also (this, too, is the case with the two photographs of Volga Germans – they can be used when discussing clothing). But it should be pointed out here that it was not altogether as uncomfortable as one might imagine. It was a little difficult to keep clean but was well-suited to the climate of the prairie.