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| catherinatitle | picture of Empress Catherine the Great |
| ***Catherine the Great*** *was a lady of high intellect, a tireless worker for the good of Russia, and above all, she was human and she was kind. She was a legend in her own time. Her behavior throughout her exceptional life was at all times understandable. No onther ruler had her many fine qualities.* [**Catherine the Great**](http://members.tripod.com/~Nevermore/CGREAT.HTM) (1729-1796), empress of Russia (1762-1796), continued the process of Westernization begun by Peter the Great and made Russia a European power. She was born a German princess in Stettin (now Szczecin, Poland) as Sophie Fredericka Augusta von Anhalt-Zerbst and in time turned out to be a powerful and enlightened ruler of the vast Russian Empire. In 1745 she was married to prince Carl Peter Ulrich, the heir to the Russian throne (the future Emperor Peter III). She bore three children to whom she was a devoted and caring mother. Being a bright personality with a strong sense of determination, she joined the Russian Orthodox Church, learned the Russian language and by doing a lot of reading acquired a brilliant education. She was proud to be a friend and an active correspondent to the best thinkers of the time, such as the prominent French Enlightenment personalities Rousseau and Diderot. After the death of her husband she became Russia's autocratic ruler. Throughout her long reign many reforms were undertaken and the territory of Russia was further extended by acquiring the lands of Southern Ukraine and the Crimea. The rights of the Russian nobility were extended, which won Catherine popularity among the Russian social elite. Catherine's more benevolent achievements included the foundation of the first Russian schools for girls and of a medical college to provide health care for her subjects. In 1776 she created a major cultural institution, the Great Theater in Moscow, which became a cradle of wonderful music and ballet achievements and is widely recognized today in the international artistic world. She established the Free Economic Society (1765) to encourage the modernization of agriculture and industry. She promoted trade and the development of underpopulated regions by inviting foreign settlers, and she founded new towns. University of Moscow and Academy of Science became an internationally recognized learning center under her sponsorship. Being very well educated and knowing the importance of education she also increased the number of state and private schools. Catherine undertook major reforms of provincial and urban administrations to ensure better control of the empire. She aimed at completing the job started by Peter I -- westernizing Russia--but she chose different methods. Unlike Peter, she didn't force society into service of the state, but rather encouraged individual initiative in pursuit of self-interest. She succeeded to a degree with the upper class, but didn't quite do it with the majority of the population -- the peasantry. Catherine the Great, being the outsider of the Romanov dynasty, wanted to establish strong links with earlier Russian history and the Romanov tsars. She commissioned an impressive monument to Peter the Great - the Bronze Horseman. Most experts agree that the St. Petersburg of Catherine the Great changed its appearance significantly and turned out to be one of the most impressive European capitals. Under Catherine, the territory of the Russian Empire was greatly expanded, especially through two wars with the Ottoman Empire (1768-1774 and 1787-1791) and the annexation of Crimea (1783), which gave Russia control over the northern coast of the Black Sea. Catherine the Great died in 1796 at the age of 67, having lived longer than any other Romanov monarch. She was buried in the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg. At the time of her death modern Russian was organized and its culture had struck firm roots. Russia was also playing a determining role in world affairs. <http://www.otto-graph.com/samples/4/catherine.html>1. What were Catherine’s major accomplishments?2. Where did she succeed, where Peter failed?3. How did she become the leader?4. What was the status of Russia at the time of her death? |