

Alexander Asylum in Sarata

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[Note: Comments in square brackets in the document are those of the translator.]

[Translation Begins]

Alexander Asylum at Sarata. A Memorial Piece on its 70th Year of Existence (1866-1936)

If we consider making a presentation about the cultural condition of a people or a section of people, we think about educational and charitable institutions, such as school, church, retirement home, orphanages, and so forth. From this stand point, we must admit that our German Bessarabian people have recorded some achievements in these areas in the first 100 years. School and church are not always just in the best order, however, they are nevertheless around, even in smaller and poorer communities, built almost everywhere from their own resources and also supported to some degree,. Today, we shall consider more closely the question of social welfare. It is so natural that in places where people live, one will also always find the needy, sick, crippled, orphans, and so forth. It was also like that here in Bessarabia. Right in the first decades after the immigration, one could also encounter the above types of people in the villages. Not only was it a commandment of Christian charity to care for these unfortunate ones; often it was also difficult for their families and relatives to care for them, to see to their welfare in their new homeland. As a result of these considerations, after the issue had already been discussed frequently at the synods and other meetings, six pastors: Behning from Sarata, Bienemann from Arzis, Faltin from Kischinev, Busch from Klöstitz, Walker from Alt-Elft, and Becker from Hoffnungstal in Kherson decided on 14 August, 1864, and of course with the approval of the Diaconate, to create a House of Mercy for the poor and unfortunate in our



The Six Founding Pastors
From the Left: Becker-Hoffnungstal, Busch-Klöstitz,
Walker-Alt-Elft, Behning-Sarata, Faltin-Kischinev,
Bienemann-Arzis

communities. Sarata was chosen as the place where the institution should be established. Becker and Bienemann immediately began correspondence and personal conversation with Pastor Löhe in Neuendettelsau, Bavaria and received from there both the first Sisters (*Schwestern*) [a Protestant Order of Nursing] and also considerable monetary support. Living quarters for the Sisters and patients was rented for the time being, and on 01 November, 1864, the first patient was brought from Alt-Elft. By the end of 1865, there were already seven, and the executive committee saw itself compelled to put up its own building. The amount needed was raised through donations, partly by bonds, and on 05 May, 1866, in the afternoon of the Festival of Ascension Day, the corner-stone for the construction of their own House of Mercy was laid. On the eve of 03 May, 1866, there was also a special corner-stone that arrived in Sarata, which Pastor Becker had brought along with him from Hoffnungstal. Rosine Tröster was the first deaconess student from our midst. She was followed by more young women from Hoffnungstal and Hoffnungsfeld in Kherson as the first resident deaconesses, once Pastor Becker had taken over the matter of the acquisition of Sisters. Sister Rosine soon became hospital matron and managed the institution with much love, tact and success until her death in 1919. Even today there is a child of Hoffnungstal at the head of the institution: Sister Cäcilie Tröster, a relative of Sister Rosine. On 05 May, 1867, the building was finished and, with the participation of numerous guests from near and far, was dedicated with the



Alexander Asylum, built in 1866

name “Alexander Asylum”—in remembrance of the deliverance from deadly peril of the then Russian Emperor Alexander II. And things progressed. Already in 1868, a hospital department was established for the sick, the Sisters were given lessons in practical nursing, and, since 1874, the district (*Kreislandschaft*) paid the institute for each 10 sick, put in place a doctor and medic, and gave the medicines, linen, and so forth.

In May, 1875, Provost Behning took a call to the Crimea and was succeeded by Pastor Katterfeld, who had previously already worked in Neuendettelsau with Pastor Löhe, and afterward in a similar institution in Mitau. Katterfeld operated our Deaconess House with great blessings. During his time, the first field deacon was also added during the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78. Unfortunately, already in 1880, he returned to his homeland of Mitau. Sarata was vacant for 2 years. In March of 1880, Pastor Alfons Meyer, pastor of Sarata and rector of the institute, managed with many blessings and success for 36 years (until 1918). A special building was constructed for the hospital and given over to serve its purpose in 1883. Since the start of the work and until 01 December, 1935, in the hospital alone, 26,825 sick were cared for, with the data from 1893-94 missing. In 1886, the male patients were separated from the females and transferred to the asylum in Arzis, designed specifically for men, which was first housed in a rented residence; however, since 1872, in a specific house called “Bethel”. The Arzis community donated the place. A beautiful lot with a simple building was purchased in Sarata in 1903 as a hospital for invalid old people, for women only, and, in 1908, a two-storey building was also built for this purpose and named “Elim”. This was possible thanks to the legacy of

merchant Leopold Hasenjäger from Kiev, who was married in a childless marriage to the former Sister Doris. The *Kaiserswerter* Association, connected with the “Alexander Asylum” since the time of Katterfeld, contributed a considerable sum for this purpose. Throughout several decades, until 31 December, 1935, a total of 1,193 patients were cared for in the Asylum, in Bethel, and in the Orphan House: over a period of 57 years. Of the 119 being cared for today, one is here already for 45 years. There were 80 orphans. In 1906, a clinic (*Ambulatorium*) was added to the hospital building, and on 12 May, 1935 the corner-stone was laid for a new freestanding hospital, in which several rooms are already completed to accommodate the sick. The successor to Pastor A. Meyer was his son W. Meyer (1919-1922), and after his death, the present rector, Pastor G. Winger (1923), became the head of the institution.

The following served as hospital matrons at the institute: (1) Sister Rosine Tröster until 1919, (2) Sister Magdalena Kovalsky (1919-1927), (3) Sister Lina Farr (1927-1928), (4) Sister Elisabeth Süßmilch (1928-1931), and (5) since 1932, Sister Cäcilie Tröster

197 Sisters joined the institute during the course of its 70 years; today, 57 Sisters are on duty.

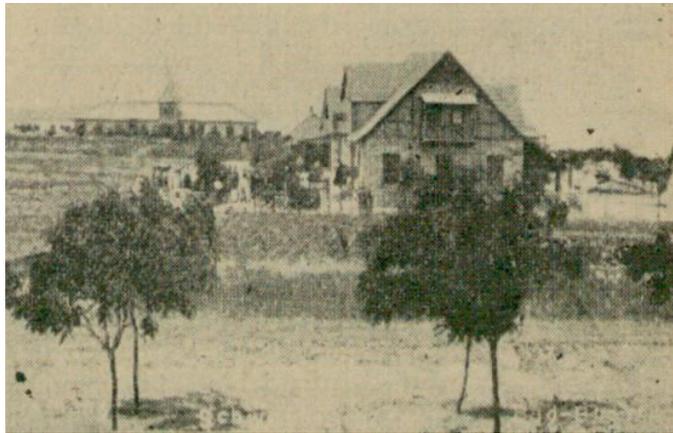
From what has been said, it is to be noted how one branch after another grew out from the “original home” (*Stammhaus*), to meet the demands of life: a hospital, Bethel, Elim. It happened that way also with the orphanage. Already before the war, there were summers where often children from the Odessa Orphanage, where Sisters from Sarata were also working, were brought to the Asylum in Sarata for recuperation. Inevitably, children from our midst also had to be admitted to the institution. There was a special room for them. Their dining room was located under the “grand staircase”. The courtyard was crowded with convalescents, crippled, mentally feeble, epileptics, who often got their attacks. The children saw that with terror, also heard many a not-so-nice word from the raving mad and feeble-minded. “A private orphanage!” was the cry of the locality. But there was no money. Then came a last resort. A patient in Elim, Miss Emilie Kurz, bequeathed her property, house and yard, to the institute for its lifelong maintenance. The house was fixed up for the orphans. Today, they already number 20! It is short on space. For the time being, it is only a “last resort”. Here an important task awaits the community for its solution!

Help was quickly found for the question dealing with the summer recuperation (*Erholung*) of orphanage residents, as well as other children in need of recuperation. Since the German Bad Burnas was located on the Black Sea, the management of the Sister Nursing Order donated a plot of land for a rest home in 1926. The former hospital matron, Lina Farr, petitioned not only for a Sisters’ Holiday Home, but also for a Children’s Holiday Home. The idea was well received, the gifts flowed in, and, since 1929, our little ones find summer recuperation, care and education in “Their” home, which is run by the Sisters. The Sisters also have a small house in Budaki, a place which the Roduner-Gassert brothers donated to them.

However, for the Sisters, more important than the summer recuperation was their old-age pension scheme. It is clear that the main work in our “Alexander Asylum” and all its branch institutions, had to be borne by the Sisters Nursing Order. We can confidently say: “Like the Sisters, so the institution.” The correct and efficient training of the Sisters, therefore, has always been the primary concern of the rectors and Institution Council. Yet, the Sisters focused a lot of their attention on their pending future old age and inability to work. For that reason, many often took advantage of a well-meaning proposal to marry and left the institution. That was a big

problem. Therefore, the Sisters took recourse to help themselves and, on the advice of Head Nurse Rosine, already long before the war, parted with some of their monthly, to be sure not very much pocket money toward a building fund for a retirement home. Other revenues were received by mail, and since 1926, the Sisters are in possession of their own special "Late in Life Peace" home, where they can spend their retirement years in peace and quiet, free from burdens and trouble.

In addition to the various jobs within the home, there are also numerous activities on the outside. Here we make mention first of all of the medic deacon, which, as already mentioned, was associated with the "Red Cross" in 1877-78. So also many of our Sisters were active in the World War of 1914-19, as care-givers to the wounded and sick. Then the institution, for decades, had their Sisters



Nurses' Residence in Bad Burnas

at so-called out-stations: in Odessa, Kiev, Worms, Saratov, and so forth, where they worked in old people's homes, orphanages, hospitals and places like that. In more recent times, the introduction of district nurses in our colonies for healing is finding some approval. They also assist with the education of the youth, in the worship services, with winter relief, care for the poor, and so forth. Not to be forgotten are the private caregivers of the sick, who they often assist. In closing, there is still one service of the Sarata Sisters Nursing Order to call special attention to. 50 years ago (1886), the first Women's Society grew out of her here in Sarata, which, on the occasion of the institutes 70th year celebration, can celebrate its own 50th Jubilee anniversary. Immediately the next year, Women's Societies were founded in Klöstitz and Alt-Elft, and today there are 30 in our communities. Through the work of our Women's Societies, the Institution of Mercy has already received some noteworthy contributions.

So our "Alexander Asylum" has already done great things in these 70 years. Its social relevance of our communities is great. Greater, however, is its value as a measure of our Christian and ethnic life. There is still a lot left to do for it. The hospital must be expanded. The interior equipment is still very primitive; lacking is an X-ray machine, and so forth. That's why the institution needs to be taken hold of under the arms. But not so that our religious and ethnic organizations simply take over the thing. Then it would not be a Mercy Institution any longer. But every single one among us has come to a clear understanding that it is from us that the future of our institution depends. So this means that one not only occasionally give a few lei [Romanian coinage], but also offer to work. There are, for example, the various collections. Their success depends on the way they are managed. What would it be like if, for example, no wedding, baptism, and so forth, were celebrated without taking up an offering for our institution? If the bride and groom themselves took the plates in hand to collect? How would it be if in our last will and testaments we would more often consider our institution? Our Sisters offered their most precious, their lives; What are you doing?

F. Fiechtner, Sarata

[End of Translation]