

History of the Sexton Training School in Schischkin, Kherson Government

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[Note: Comments in square brackets are those of the translator. The map on the last page was extracted from a Kherson Government (Russia) map of German Settlements on file at the Germans from Russia Heritage Society Library in Bismarck, North Dakota. The Schischkin Sexton Training School was located near Hoffnungstal, Kherson Government (red circle on right side) which was east of the Bessarabian city of Bendery (red circle on left side)].

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[Translation Begins]

History of the Sexton Training School in Schischkin near Hoffnungstal, Kherson Government by W. Mutschall

The church schools in the German communities of Russia formed their own type of schools, particularly as regards to their administration and management. Following the church decree of 1832, the main purpose of the visits to the church schools was the instruction in religion. Through them, the Director of the Ministry of the Interior, Adjutant General Count Strogonow, drew up and, on 10 March, 1840, confirmed the most significant “rules for church school lessons and catechization instruction in the Evangelical Lutheran Colony congregations in Southern Russia” and that the external and internal management and oversight of the church schools are to be in the hands of the clergy, their duties and rights to be most accurately established. Which are, among others: “The clergy are to lay upon the hearts of those incorporated in the parish the sacred duty to educate their children in the fear of God. They are to visit the schools in their local community once a week, and in the others at least once every 2 months. Moreover, they are to make unannounced visits, lead the supervision of the teaching and encourage the children to be diligent. The visits are to be entered into a journal. Teaching to begin in early October and close at the end of March. For failure to appear (*Versaeumnisse*) [or coming late], a fine of 3 kopeck is to be levied. This to be used to buy books for the poor children. Whoever is unable to pay it, must do 1-2 days of community labor for each failure.” These rules were forwarded by the General Consistory to Provost Fletnitzer to see to it that they were carried out.

On the basis of this regulation, each clergy played the role of a local school inspector, and that with full authority, and because the church schools were under the Ministry of the Imperial domains, but these had no school inspectors, so our clergy were able to deal with and hold sway the schools in their district and had to be accountable only to their ecclesiastical authority. No wonder then when one called with partiality the schools the “Front Yard of the Church” or the “Daughter of the Church” and endeavored, with a certain jealousy, to keep at a distance any interference from non-church bodies.

For decades, the teachers in our schools were sexton and church school teacher in one person and had to teach in all subjects. If there was a large number of students, the sexton-teachers were given a school helper or assistant (*Provisor*). For a long time, the sextons obtained recruits through the various and often very questionable elements. A job applicant indicated in his application for employment that he had learned the “French art of paperhanging” (*Tapferzierkunst*) in Berlin. Some of the favorable persons of our communities were put into place who had the good fortune in the old homeland to receive a positive degree of general education and accomplished some good; so: Natterer in Sarata, Eckert in Lichtental and Friedenstal, Hahn in Lichtental, Hartmann in Friedenstal, Minderlen in Brienne, Kludt in Posttal, G. Kurz in Wittenberg, J. Kurz in Tarutino, Meyer in Klöstitz, A. Kludt in Teplitz, J. Koch in Gnadental, and others.

The lack of sextons grew in the 1860s as many families poured out from the mother colonies and formed new communities, daughter communities, either on land they bought for themselves, or on land they leased. Ever stronger became the desire now of our Bessarabian pastors for an institution where people could be specifically and expertly trained to become sextons and church school teachers. Because all attempts of the synod, to gain influence at the Werner School in Sarata to bring about a modification of their program, were rejected by the Welfare Committee, our pastors then developed the plan to call to life an independent Sexton Training College “for the training of sextons and church school teachers for the Evangelical Lutheran communities in Russia.” A draft, drawn up in 1864 by Pastor Pingoud in Tarutino, reveals how the thinking about this went and what path it was believed could be taken to achieve the job. The school should be a purely religious institution. The planned institution should find its place on a relinquished, donated piece of land which was in the immediate vicinity of the parish village of Klöstitz. It was hoped that the funds for the maintenance of the training college would come from a Subsidy Fund similar to that of the sexton school in Kolpana in *Ingermannland* [known as No One’s Land between the Kingdom of Sweden and Russia in the 17th century; Ingria today] which was created for the congregations of the Finnish nation, receiving from the Central Committee in Petersburg an annual grant of 2,000 rubles. In the eye of the organization, a curator administration of 3 pastors was to be set up. The director and teacher of religious education should be, for the time being, the pastor from Klöstitz. The thought was to have a 4 year course of study, taking on 10 students every 2 years. They would only have to be concerned about clothing; the institution would provide the instruction, educational supplies, food and housing. As the cost estimate for construction and initial equipping came to over 20,000 rubles, the pastors may have been frightened about the boldness of their undertaking and they dropped the plan, but only, as far as Klöstitz came into question.

A new ray of hope shone over the pastor from Hoffnungstal, Kherson Government. Pastor Gustav Becker, an excellent teacher, had taught several pupils in the years 1863-65 at home and, by his special ability in educational theory, he came to the attention his brothers in the ministry. At the request of all the pastors of the 1st Provost District, he opened a Sexton Training School with 20 pupils, in May of 1866, on land purchased by someone from his community from a nobleman's estate, 3-4 *Werst* [1 verst = 0.66 mile or 1.06 km] from Hoffnungstal. Of this more than 1,000 *Dessj.* [1 dessiatine = .27 acres/1.09 hectares] major estate, the community received 8 dessiatine, temporarily, for the school, for 2 years, free of charge. The clergy guaranteed to take over part of the funding for the maintenance of the training college and endeavored to support the school from the annual collections for the Subsidy Fund. Statute-wise, our Bessarabian pastors had to submit the collections to the Odessa District Committee. To get freer hand with regard to the use of funds, they now asked the ecclesiastical authority for the approval to set up a special Bessarabian District Committee. After years of writing back and forth, 1863-66, they finally obtained acknowledgement from the top for this Committee. At their first meeting, they chose Pastor Pingoud as Director, Pastor Walcker as Secretary, Pastor Bush as Treasurer. Much was acquired through the establishment of the Tarutino District Committee, but not everything in the long run. If the year's collection from a whole parish frequently came to only 100-130 rubles and only half of these proceeds was allowed for local needs—how little were the resources that the Committee had at its disposal! And so it happened that 6 pastors signed a bond for 600 rubles which was to be used by the training college. For the 4 pupils from Bessarabia: Sam. Herrmann, Mich. Groß, Joh. Beck and Dav. Dieno, our pastors had pledged a support of 40 rubles for each, but they were always in arrears with the payments. The need for money was like a chronic disease on the institution; with the best of intentions, Pastor Becker's imploring for help from here on could not always be met. "We must go forward, must win or perish!" Becker wrote Pingoud in 1869.

But we return to the institution itself. Classrooms and housing for the teachers and pupils were prepared in a factory and other buildings. Head Teacher was Peter Diehl, from the region of Frankfurt on the Main [Germany], known for his educational excellence. The Rector, Pastor Becker, came to the school every day on his horse. Instructions in Russian were given by a certain Prokofjew. The manager and food supplier for the pupils was a Martin. The money for food came to 60 rubles per year. The annual expenditure at the school amounted to 3,000 rubles. The weekly number of hours for teaching was 36. Teacher Diehl drew an annual salary of 600 rubles, 360 rubles were noted for Prokofjew.

Work was carried out in the Sexton Training College in Schischkin, without a doubt, with complete unrestrained effort. The final exam was held on 13 May, 1870, in the presence of the Provost and in the presence of 10 pastors, to the "highest satisfaction" of all those present. The sacrifice had not been for nothing, considering the time, effort and money expended to bring about such a beautiful thing. But the rejoicing was not unclouded: a bitter downside fell in upon it when the question was under consideration for the continued existence of the school and it was recognized that its continued existence would be an impossibility. The confirmation of the school by the Government was denied; the Central Committee of the Subsidy Fund had discontinued its payments; the District Committee of Tarutino was advised that its collection funds for poor communities of Bessarabia were intended for them and not for something in another administrative district (*Gouvernement*), even if an authorized school institution. And so

the called into life under fervent effort, cherished with love and enthusiasm, cared for Sexton Training College in Schischkin “perished,” just as Becker himself had suspected and feared.

The 17 graduates of the school were given employment immediately, Dieno in Alt-Posttal. With others, pupils who had entered in the middle of the course, Becker continued private instructions until 1872, at which time he started to publish the “*Volksboten*” [“*Messenger of the People*”]. Teacher Diehl accepted a call from Großliebental, where he worked for some years at the Central School (*Zentralschule*). Until recently, from the number of students still alive, there was only Gottlieb Zimmermann in Brienne.

Pastor Schomburg continued with a somewhat modified program and other objectives. Living in a small park by Benkendorf, he gradually gathered 20 youths around himself. For 4 of them, who promised to devote themselves to the service of sexton, the Tarutino Regional Committee, at Schomburg’s request, approved 300 rubles as annual support. At the May, 1873 arranged exam, he was able to produce “laudable results.” Schomburg later moved his headquarters to Akkerman and, after he resigned from the ministry, went to Katherinenstadt on the Volga River, where he opened a private secondary school (*Privatgymnasium*) to prepare young people for the school-leaving exam (*Abiturium*) [qualifying for admission to a university].

They all left the scene of their effectiveness, the very men who for more than 60 years worked together to educate the youth. But their names should remain unforgotten. And because the author has known almost all personally or at least seen their faces, so let the readers be forbearing with him when he unites them here in the manner of a photo gallery. In the history of the Sexton Training College, the following, more or less, participated actively:

Pastor Becker in Hoffnungstal,
Pastor Pingoud in Tarutino,
Pastor Busch and Pastor Lemm in Klöstitz,
Pastor Walcker and Pastor Zeller in Fere-Champenoise I,
Pastor Baumann and Pastor Bienemann in Arzis,
Propst Behning and Pastor Katterfeld in Sarata,
Pastor Faltin in Kischinew,
Pastor Schomburg in Benkendorf,
Propst Fletnitzer in Odessa,
Pastor Keuchel in Großliebental,
Propst Kyber in Nikolajew.

Honor their memory! They did what they could.

[End of Translation]

Map on page 5



Location of Sexton Training College—near Hoffnungstal, Kherson Government