

Balaktschelly Municipality Reflections

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[Note: As preparations were being made in Bessarabia for the Germans to be evacuated in 1940, there was an effort to have brief histories of their villages written. This is one of those histories which has been difficult to translate because it is a poor quality carbon copy of the typed document. Comments in square brackets in the document are those of the translator.]

1 Dessjatine = 2.7 acres / 1.09 hectares

1 Faden = 7 feet / 2.1 meters

1 Werst = 0.67 miles / 1.06 kilometers

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[Translation Begins]

Village Reflection (*Dorfspiegel*) of Balaktschelly Municipality

By Emil Lang, Teacher

If you drive on the big road from Sarata Colony to Balaktschelly, [after traveling] 11 Werst [7.4 mi / 11.6 km] you come to the narrow valley of the steppe stream Balaktschelly. To the right of this road was the large estate of Countess Tolstoy.

In 1898, the northwestern part of the aforementioned steppe was purchased by some families mainly from the colonies of Sarata and Gnadental. In the spring of 1890, a small part of the buyers settled on their estate and founded a village there.

Although the newly founded village had now been relocated to both sides of the Balaktschelly stream, it was called half "Balaktschelly" for the sake of easier identification. The village was nicknamed "Klein-Balaktschelly" to distinguish it from the "Groß-Balaktschelly" founded before on the same count's estate. In the course of 25 years, however, Balaktschelly increased in the extent that the administration was forced to rename it Groß-Balaktschelly.

The fact that the settlers of the village chose the village section in the above-mentioned part on the northeastern side of the square of the steppe will most likely be due to the fact that the greater part of the steppe represents a plateau and therefore the wells in the particular place were the easiest to dig. The village is hidden in a narrow valley and only opens up to the eyes of the

stranger when he has come closer to it The road, as well as the row of houses of the upper half, is situated on the contrary from north to south and thus form a right angle, the summit of which is located in the middle of the village.

Close to the upper end of the village, just before the mouth of the northern part of the steppe stream Balaktschelly, is a dam that serves as a watering place for the herd. On the crest of the plateau, which runs parallel with the Balaktschelly valley from northwest to southeast, there are a series of three hills called Cannon Humps (*Kanonhubckel*).

On the slope of the called plateau, south of the village, there are vineyards. In the first decade of settlement, the vineyards were located on the same slope, only further away from the village, along the Jaroslawka border. Parallel to the ridge of the hill, the Leipzig-Ackermann railway line crosses the part of the steppe on the plateau. It occupies 24 hectares [59.3 acres] of the best arable land of the same, which has not been given to the municipality to this day. Also, the fact that it cuts the steppe into two parts is to the detriment of agriculture. The next station, seven *Werst* [4.7 mi / 7.4 km] to the southeast, is Kulowtscha [Kuleveca]. Balaktschelly is located 45 *Werst* [30 mi / 47.7 km] from the district town of Ackermann (Cetetea-Alba). Two *Werst* [1.3 mi / 2.1 km] to the east lies the little Russian village of Plachtoewka [Plachtejewka]. The largest market town in our surrounding area is Bairamtscha, eight *Werst* [5.4 mi / 8.5 km] to the north.

The plateau of our steppe, which extends southwest of the ridge of the hill, has a consistently meter [3.28 feet] thick layer of the best black soil. This part of the country is very fertile and demanded, considering its rare flatness, less pulling power during cultivating than described below. The land located northeast of the ridge of the plateau, meandering through by small narrow ponds, on the other hand, represents an earth surface with approximately ¼ meter [8 inches] layer of black earth. The subsoil of our land surface is largely followed by a layer of clay, while the top layer of the hill slopes in some places even has clay or stone clover (*Steinklee*). In the earlier time, these loamy and stony places were not cultivated, but left as pasture.

Hair-grass (*Schmielen*), stone clover and other grasses proliferated in the west. Year after year, however, the uncultivated soil has been reduced more and more by piecemeal plowing, so that at present it is almost impossible to speak about pasture land. Almost all land has come under the plow, is being cultivated and altered.

The Balaktschelly steppe consists of 1,941 *Desjatinen* [5,240.7 a / 2,115.7 ha] 1,518 *Faden* [10,626 feet / 3,187.8 m] and was at the time of purchase divided into 25 farms of 59 *desjatinen* [159 a / 64.3 ha]. The greater part of the buyers remained in the mother colonies, who gave their land to semi-farmers for cultivating, or leased it for money.

The following people who settled down in 1899 and 1900 must be considered as the founders of Balaktschelly:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 01. Richter, Friedrich | 04. (Hermann), Christoph |
| 02. (?)immler, August | 05. Allmendinger, Friedrich |
| 03. Keller, Johann | 06. Rüb, Gottlieb |

07. Strehle, Anton
08. Hermann, Johann
09. Motzag, Georg
10. Oberlander, Gottfried
11. Schwarzmann, Johannes
12. Rüb, Johann
13. Bechtle, Michael

14. Neubach, Jakob
15. (?)immler, Simon
16. Roth, Christian
17. (?)onnepf, Julius
18. Zick, Gottfried
19. Rick, Georg

Arriving on the open steppe, the settlers dug poor cellar caves as protection against rain and storms of the unfriendly spring weather. The draft animals and dairy cattle spent the night under the open sky.

Already when tilling the spring seeds a person noticed a great lack of moisture, harsh spring winds deprived the soil of the rest of its winter moisture, and so the seed was scattered into the thirsty soil with the hope of early precipitation.

After the end of the sowing period, a heavy snow fell. The consequences were a total crop failure. Hard struggle and persistent work overcame the tough time, from the cellar caves arose pretty stone houses, which were surrounded by street walls.

In 1907, the community decided to build a prayer house and school house. At their own expenses, without support, they put up a magnificent building. A harmonium [organ] contributed to the embellishment of the services and, in 1934, the old bell frame built of wooden posts was replaced with a new one of stone, which, together with two bells, cost a total of 70,000 lei.

Like our fathers, who left their homeland largely because of agricultural concerns (*Baumangel*) but also not lastly because of matters of faith (*Glaubensmangel*), so the inhabitants of the village were and are very religious people.

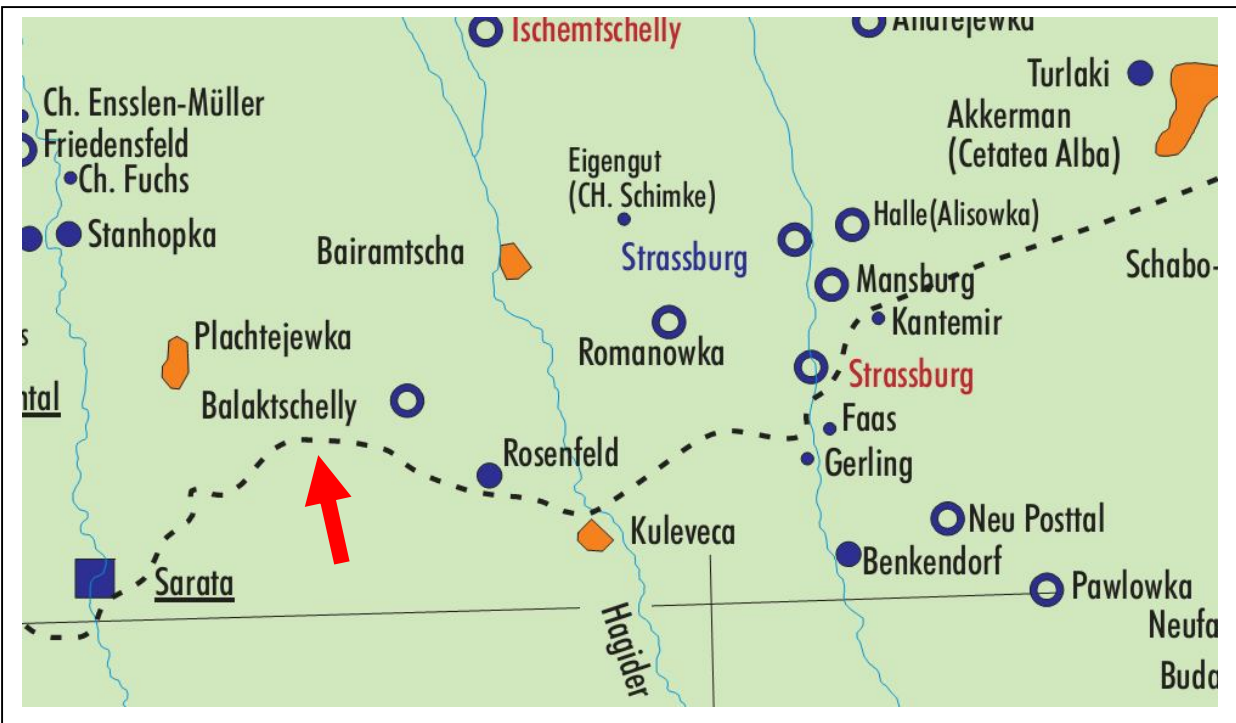
The school was nationalized under Russian as well as Romanian rule until 1939. When, in 1938, the District Consistory took steps to obtain church schools in Bessarabian colonies, permission to open the school was also granted, but after a short time it was withdrawn.

In the next year, the Romanian government was recently consulted in this regard and, on 01 October, 1939, the church school could be opened, in which all school-age children, also the unprivileged, were included. At the school closing exam held on 09 June 1940 before a Romanian commission, 90% of all pupils were moved up to the next grade.

In the pre-war years, hardly anyone was concerned about middle school education, as every settler had to deal with the building up of his farm. In the later years, however, Balaktschelly had come to the fore, in which it had almost the most students at the two German middle schools at Sarata and Tarutino.

The inhabitants of our village were also seized and permeated by the new social ideas coming from the motherland. Everyone experienced with all the German people the resurrection of the strengthening of Germany. Radio and press were the means of connection, were the bridges to the old homeland, of which much was spoken and dreamed. But few of our farmers could have decided to resettle of their own free will. But torn away from the beloved sod, all follow the call of the Führer with hope and faith in looking to the future.

[Translation Ends]



Stumpp Map of Bessarabia reworked by Rolf Jethon—not in original document