

Brief History of Eigenheim

Bessarabischer Heimatkalender—1963

W. Rumpelstin, Buchdruckerei und Zeitungsverlag K.G.

[Book Printing and Newspaper Publishing Limited]

Burgdorf, Hannover/Germany

Pages 47-50

Translated by: Allen E. Konrad

August, 2025

P.O. Box 157, Rowley, IA 52329

onamission1939@gmail.com

Note: Information within [brackets] are comments by the translator.

=====

[Translation Begins]

Brief History of Eigenheim

by Immanuel Manske and Albert Möves

This village was founded in the year 1861 and was then one of the oldest daughter colonies in the old homeland. It was located in the Alkalia Valley, by the stream of the same name, seven kilometers [4.4 miles] west of the Dnjestr [River] Liman¹ and the Dnjestr [River] Plawjna.² Its neighboring villages were: to the east Seimeny, to the south Babej, to the west Petrowka, and to the north Starokasatschje.

We would like to turn back a little in history, as far as this relates to the southeastern part of our homeland and then also to the locality [*Gemarkung*] of Eigenheim.

It is known that at the place where our former district town Akkermann is located, there was a Phoenician settlement named Aphiusa 4,000 years before Christ (v. *Chr.*).

The proximity of this settlement (Eigenheim was only 30 kilometers [18.6 miles] from Akkerman) suggests that settled people already lived in the area of Eigenheim back then.

Other facts that we have experienced indicate that at the site where Eigenheim was located, there must have been human settlements a very long time ago.

¹ [A long narrow lagoon near the mouth of a river.]

² [The swampy-like area consisting of floating vegetation, reed thickets and wooded area as the river enters the north end of the long narrow lagoon before emptying into the Black Sea.]

So, at the western slope of the Alkalia Valley, above the largest spring of the Eigenheim area, storage pits for grain were uncovered at about one and a half meters [4.9 feet] underground during excavations. One of them was filled with millet husks, whose kernels must have decayed. Millet, as is known, was cultivated in ancient times and served as a staple food for people. The decay of the millet grain in burned-out, consequently drained clay pits on the mountainside has probably taken thousands of years. Around the turn of the century, farmer Daniel Pfeifer stumbled upon a stone in his vineyard, which he investigated and dug out. This stone, about two meters [6.6 feet] long, was made of hard, yellowish, smooth-surfaced, weathered large shells and was equipped with a bronze plaque. The plaque was painted with singular characters.

The farmer freed it and took it with him to his house. He dug the stone into the entrance of his yard as a gate post.

The case must have been widely known, for soon after, historians appeared at Mr. Pfeifer's (whether the famous Professor Knauer from Sarata was among them is beyond our knowledge) and requested to see the little plaque. Unfortunately, the farmer could no longer find it.

During further excavations on the western slope of the Alkalia Valley in Eigenheim, human skeletons were often unearthed, both individual and multiple together, whose parts were already decomposed and deteriorated.

No further traditions and findings are known to us, and we cannot determine what may have occurred in the period from 4,000 BC to about the beginning of the Migration Period in the southeastern part of our homeland.

It is known from the migration of people that this began due to the pressure of overpopulation in the East, pushing towards the West, and as a result the southern part of our homeland became the gateway and gathering place for the crowding of people over the course of the centuries.

The monuments that the people pushing against each other piled up for their leaders over their graves of earth, the so-called *Kurgane* (*Kanonenhügel* =cannon hills), resist the erosion of time like no other monuments. There are five such hill monuments also located on the former territory of Eigenheim. Two large ones on the western side of the village, just above the village center, called the "Kison Hills", stand closely side by side like two guardians of honor for the community. They will continue to withstand great periods of time and still stand there when the last traces of the once flourishing village of Eigenheim will have long been wiped out.

The estate, which once also included the land of Eigenheim, belonged to a general named Marino, who owned 60,000 *Deßjatinen* [162,000 acres / 65,400 hectares] of land. It extended from the Dniester Liman westwards to the Sarata Valley. On the Eigenheim steppe were the manors (*Chutora*): Mihaki, Gadsehi, Bailik, Dschambulja, Danilewski, Morda Buzan. General Marino resided at the estate of Brussow near Seimeny.

At that time, this steppe looked wild and uncultivated. Tall grass and weeds served as hiding places for the wolves, which roamed in whole packs. The two tenants on the lands of the

General, the horse breeder (wild horses) Negro and the sheep breeder Staroradow, had no small amount of trouble and worry because of robbers and wolves.

In the valley of Siratowka, which stretches between the colony of Seimeny and the estates of David and Eduard Schulz down from the country road (stretch) Akkerman—Kischinew to the Liman bank, the robber leader Reuter-Michel from Friedenstal had his den. He smuggled the stolen horses through the *Plawnja* into the Cherson province, where he had his people, and received stolen horses from there to bring them to the market in Bessarabia. Nine kilometers [5.6 miles] to the west, in the valley of Alkalia, where later the village of Eigenheim would be located, some of his men lived in a forest, where the robber house and the tavern (the later village administration) stood.

This valley stretches from north to south. At its deep bottom flowed the stream Alkalia. Its banks were mostly wooded.

The robber's house was located on the eastern slope. A bumpy forest path, crossed by thick tree roots, led past it, which ended six kilometers [3.7 miles] to the east in the mentioned section that connected the district town of Akkerman with the government city of Kischinew and passed by Reuter-Michel's den (*Spelunke*).

Thirty kilometers [18.6 miles] west of here, in the Sarata Valley, lay the robbers' nest Negrowo (after which the village and homestead Negrowo near Friedensfeld is named).

Since Bessarabia was a border region of the Russian Empire and displayed a more or less wild character, it was treated rather neglectfully by the Russian government. Criminals whose offenses were not serious enough to be exiled to Siberia were sent to Bessarabia, where they often had to serve their punishment under strict Cossack guard. (The poet Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin and Prince Volkonsky, who was exiled for life by Tsar Alexander II to the "Obrywa"—a gorge-filled area on the shores of the Liman near Seimeny—because he was involved in a coup at the imperial court in Petersburg.) The police were weakly represented, had an attitude that the devil be concerned about the robbers, and protected their own skin. Often, they went hand in hand with the robbers. The General was mostly away, busy in Petersburg, Kischinew, and Odessa, and as a result did not keep an eye on what was happening on his leased lands.

While Negro mainly dealt with robbers as a horse breeder, Staroradow, as a sheep breeder, was more troubled by wolves. The shepherds and guards were indeed armed and had their large shepherd dogs, but they were powerless against the robbers and predatory animals. There were also cases where shepherds and guards conspired with the robbers by enabling the theft for them and were rewarded for it.

This is what it looked like back then on the steppe, which was later transformed into a rich granary, mostly through the pioneering work of German settlers.

A part of General Marino's estate was acquired by the widow princess Wolkonskaja for her son Georgij Petrowitsch Wolkonskij, who had been exiled by the Tsar. He soon died in exile, and

the widow sold the acquired land, among others, to German farmers. So, in the year 1886, the daughter colony Eigenheim was established with a land area of 2,883 *Deßjatinen* = 3.044 hectares [7,521.7 acres]. However, the land was not leased, as was the case with most community establishments, but was purchased outright. It was therefore the property of the settlers, their own home, which is why the colony was named Eigenheim [*Eigen*=own & *Heim*=home].

The first settlers were sons from the mother colonies: Tarutino, Kulm, Leipzig, Katzbach, Alt-Elft, Paris, Arzis, Brienne, and Plotzk. So the bearers of the names Höhn, Möwes, Schimke, Schulz, Groß, Dobberstein, and Kison came from **Kulm**; Radke and Pietz from **Alt-Elft**; Reinke, Flöther, Kern, Stefamate, and Jeß from **Paris**; Graumann, Wonnenberg, Fächner, Priebe, Bublitz, Zarbock, and Manske from **Tarutino**; Schill and Burgemeister from **Katzbach**; Lemke from **Leipzig**; Kappel from **Arzis**; Richter and Mattheis from **Brienne**; Bareither from **Gnadental** and Blum and Wilske from **Plotzk**. The Harsch family originated from **Zipriko** in the region of Cherson, and Karl Naumann senior was counted as a free citizen of the city of **Akkerman**.

So we have a colorful mixed population here. Since the settlers came from different mother colonies, the dialects were also extremely varied. Some said: “Äck häbb sächt”, others: “Äck hob gesocht”, the third group: “Ich hab jesacht”, the fourth: “Ich han gesagt”, the fifth: “I han gsagt”, and the sixth (was it the teacher or the clerk): “Ich habe gesagt” [“I have said.”].

If we now add the Russian and Romanian languages, then it is no wonder that a woman from Eigenheim, just as a gypsy woman came running up to the farm with a beggar-bag on her back, exclaimed angrily: “*Choh ma, choh, idji, du=te, mauk ma, datt fortkommst, stupai s Bogom, du Zijonwiff, du spootschlechtig!*” [Russian mix—translation attempt: “Go away, go, hurry up, I will beat you, you gypsy woman, you really bad person!”]

The valley of Alkalia was very rich in springs, which played an important role in the settlement. A strong spring was located in the north of the area, at the Kasatscher border, a second at the northern end of the village, near the herder’s house, a third below the farm of Johannes Ritz, a fourth at the big bridge, a fifth on the border between Johann Möwe and the garden of Johann Isaak, a sixth at the *Schillsbrücke* [Schill’s Bridge], a seventh next to the small bridge at the southern end of the village (*Gartenecke Beck*=Garden Corner Beck), two more at the *Roten Lehm* [Red Clay] and several behind the dam at the Babejer border. The largest and strongest spring, however, was the one in front of the herder’s house at the municipal well, below Karl Naumann’s farm. This spring fed the Alkalia stream year in, year out, and in the winter its water never froze, becoming the playground for ducks and geese. An engineer who once examined this spring determined that the very strong main water vein was higher up the slope, under the street in front of Karl Naumann’s farm. As the engineer’s investigations revealed, this vein also fed the large municipal well.

The two ponds, one at the northern and the other at the southern end of the village, were also fed by these springs. In the last years before the Resettlement, the water in the ponds could no longer be retained, as the riverbed had been raised and thus the embankments were constantly breached or flooded during floods. In earlier times, however, when the valley bed lay much

deeper, the two ponds were deep and rich in water. But they were not only rich in water, but also very rich in fish (*Karpfen*=carp).

These two ponds were a source of income for the municipal treasury for many years. Fishermen from Kossa were brought to the banks of the Liman for fishing. They spread their net over the water at one end of the pond and then dragged it, with five to six fishermen on one bank, to the other end of the pond, where the fish were loaded onto trough wagons (*Trogwagen*) and brought to the municipality yard. Here, they were sold to the population by the mayor's office. The money flowed into the municipal treasury and was later used for various purposes such as bridge construction, improvements to community buildings, and so on.

At the time of its founding (and possibly even earlier), three principle traffic routes intersected in Eigenheim: Firstly, the "Salt Route" (*Salzweg*), which came from the north, leading all the way to Tuzla on the Black Sea, from where sea salt was transported into northern Bessarabia; secondly, the main road to the northwest and west towards the district town of Akkerman; and thirdly, the main road which came from the southwest and south, passing through Palanka at the Dniester mouth, through Plawnja and over Majaki to Odessa. On this route, the reeds from Plawnja at Palanka and the sea sand from the Dniester Liman near Kossa were also brought to the southwest and south.

One of the four Eigenheim bridges, namely the "Schillsbrücke", is said to have existed before the founding and served as a crossing opportunity over the wide deep valley for the wagons from the west and southwest.

Eigenheim was the seat of a *Wolost* [a Russian local administrative unit], to which thirteen villages belonged and which later served as a place for a school.

The Prayer House was built in the year 1866. The bells were purchased around the year 1888 and had, according to Pastor W. Meyer from Sarata, the most beautiful sound in his church parish (Neu-Posttal). At the time of emigration, a new church stood with a roof over rough brickwork, which was said to be the largest of all German churches in Bessarabia. The architect was Mr. Büxel from Schabo.

The administrative building, which also served as a school for a long time, stood before the founding of the village and is said, as mentioned above, to have been an inn or a robber's house.

For a long time, Eigenheim was a church parish village. The parsonage, toward the end, served as a club house.

Eigenheim had a co-op store and two private stores, initially two steam mills, in earlier times three horse mills and a windmill.

Hardly, in a daughter colony was the craft so strongly represented as in Eigenheim. For a time, two businesses were also working, producing roof tiles.

The Youth and Women's Association existed until the end, as did the brass band under the direction of Sexton-Teacher Johann Gäßler, while the string orchestra under the direction of Mr. Adolf Beck no longer existed in the last years before the Resettlement. On 9 July, 1919, there was a great flood in Eigenheim, which caused significant damage in the yards that were located in the valley. Many houses collapsed. Stables were washed away down to the foundation, and cellars and wells were full of water.

In the years 1870 and 1888, two major livestock epidemics ravaged the area, resulting in the death of most of the animals. The "nasal illness" (*Rotzkrankheit*) also occurred occasionally among horses. Two people were infected and died. There was once a major epidemic among livestock, which caused the death of all animals. In 1885, there was a locust plague (*Heuschreckenplage*) that destroyed the entire harvest.

With the Resettlement in October of 1940, the German village of Eigenheim ceased to exist.

[Translation Ends]



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