

History of Eigengut (Schimke Weiler), Bessarabia

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Translated by: Allen E. Konrad
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[Note: Comments in square brackets are those of the translator.]

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[Translation Begins]

History of “Eigengut” (Schimke Weiler) Community Akkerman (Cetatea-Alba) District, Bessarabia Written by Sexton-Teacher Th. Wagner

Whoever has driven from Bairamtscha to Akkerman no doubt has noticed a village along the postal road, 4 km [2.5 miles] east of Bairamtscha, which bears the name “Eigengut.”. The referred to place is one of the smallest villages in Bessarabia. The purpose of this brief history will be to introduce this place to a wider circle. We thank the energy and enterprising efforts of a single person for this small but beautiful place of “Eigengut.” He is the settler Gottlieb Schimke from Paris [Bessarabia]. In his birthplace of Paris, Gottlieb Schimke worked as a farmer dealing in cattle. In the good old days, Gottlieb Schimke conducted his business in all the markets in the surrounding area: Tarutino, Arzis, Bairamtscha, Tartarbunar, Wolontirowka, and others.



Prayer House

Since cattle trading earned him a good profit, he pursued, as did all our older folks, the quest for land. Paris was restricting him too much. In 1895, he bought a piece of land of 500 *Dessjatinen* [1 dessiatine = 2.7 acres / 1.09 hectares]. The land bordered the estate of the community of Halle (Alisowka) to the east; to the west—Bairamtscha; to the south—Romanówka, and to the north the estate of Samuel and Wilhelm Schimke (now expropriated), the so-called “*Pfaffenland*” [Parson’s Land]. It was not long before a stately colonist house even stood on his estate. 5 houses for sons and daughters followed this one the next year. After a short time, a row of six houses were also put up. Six is the number of his children. Three sons: (1) Samuel, (2) Wilhelm, (3) Edward; and three daughters: (1) Caroline, (2) Christine, (3) Otilie. Across from the row of houses were earthen huts [*Erdhuetten*]. One of them served as a prayer and school house in those early days. The other earthen huts were occupied by half-farmers (*Halfbauern*). These



Samuel Schimke and Mrs. Mathilde, nee Pfahl. Karoline Fano, Christine Krause and Otilie Klein. Descendants of Gottlieb Schimke

earthen huts have long since been demolished; already in 1907, the founder built on this site a prayer house with sexton living quarters. Water had to be ensured when getting established. A well had to be dug and after a year already a second one had to be dug. Both wells are in the middle of the street and provide very good water. The water is drawn with the horses, which meant a horse and a man had to be retained. The current water hauler is Andreas Gabbert. The horse is called “*Schimmel*.” [white/gray horse]. Immediately after the founding in 1895, the founder plotted an orchard south of the prayer house. Gottlieb Schimke was a great lover of tree planting. Today, an avenue of acacia trees beautifies the town, running from the northern end of the village down to the postal road (*Poststrasse*). Like it had to in all our other German colonies, the increase of the population called for the allocation of farmyards. Such places were measured out to the right and left of the prayer house. Of the freshly plotted farmyards, already two houses have been built to the right and the left of the prayer house.

Today, after 37 years, the little village, with two row of houses across from each other, a belfry with two bells standing in front of the prayer house and two well houses in the middle of the street, has the appearance of a village.

In the matters of the church, the community has been served from the Posttal Parish up to 1926. From 1926 on, “*Eigengut*” belongs to the Andrejewka Parish, the head of it being Pastor Albert Kern. Since the founding of the community, the following sexton-teachers have been employed: 1. The founder of the estate, Gottlieb Schimke (1895-1898); 2. Johannes Mehl (1898-1904); 3. Friedrich Eichelberg (1904-1910); 4. Karl Stuhlmüller (1910-1912); 5. Albert Gunsch (1912-1915); 6. Wilhelm Mayer (1915-1920); 7. Johann Schneider (1920-1922); vacant 1923-1924; 8. Jakob Eckert (1925-1928); vacant 1928-1929; 9. Oskar Becker (1929-1930); 10. Theodor Wagner (1930-to the present).

The new church regulation brought us a church council (presbytery): Curator Wilhelm Krauß and members Simon Fano, Reinhold Fano, Otto Schimke and Gustav Klein, who is also the church chairman.

School instructions are not held in the prayer hall, but in a special room. The school attendance is good. The number of students in the previous school year was 7. The small community has to maintain its school themselves, what, in the present difficult time, can be called a great achievement. The community shows a great interest for the school. In praise of the community, it has to be said that there is not a single family that does not read a magazine. It must be mentioned even in relation to the school, that in 1930, at the beginning of the school year, the government sent a Romanian teacher, who, however, left after 2 months (his name was Wasili Härliä), because it was not worthwhile for the government to maintain a school for so few children.

Since its founding, the community was administered by a village mayor (*Dorfschulzen*) and was part of the Bairamtscha administrative subdivision (*Wolost*). Today, Eigengut is administered by a mayor (*Primar*) who has his residence in Bairamtscha municipality (*Kommuna*) to which the political community belongs. The church community is under the administration of a congregation curator (*Gemeindekurators*).



House of Founder Gottlieb Schimke, now of Otto Schimke

Today, the souls number 37. Craftsmen settled here for a time, but left again after a while.

The primary occupation is farming and cattle-breeding, and earlier it was also vine culture.

What strongly held back the economical advancement of the community was the land expropriation. It struck severe wounds which have still not healed up to today. Since then the community has not been able to return to its previous height, because to this damage was added even a second one, namely, the low prices for agricultural products.

In closing to this brief history, I must mention that the founder was not only concerned about land and buildings, church and school, but also for a resting place after this life for himself and his descendants. West of the village, surrounded by a stone wall, is the cemetery. When we enter the cemetery, we are immediately confronted by the large number of graves, decorated with stately monuments, for great was the death rate among the offspring.

Dear reader, I ask you to go with me in the spirit to the “Eigengut” cemetery. We go slowly up the hill, go through the gate and walk onto the piece of earth consecrated with tears, and we find ourselves in the cemetery. We go to the first tombstone in the middle of the cemetery and read on it: “Here in God rests Gottlieb Schimke, born 28 March, 1844, died 29 January, 1909.” The neighboring stone to the left reads: “Here in God rests Luise Schimke, nee König, born 29



Teacher and School Children

January, 1846, died 7 June, 1910.” We continue further to the left and find the following tombstones: (1) Justine Schimke, nee Pfahl, born 20 October, 1837, died 7 February, 1913, (daughter-in-law). (2) Samuel Fano, born 12 March, 1864, died 6 July, 1924, (son-in-law). We go up further in the second row of graves and find one tombstone on which is written: “Here in God rests (3) Gottlieb Klein, born 14 August, 1874, died 8 May, 1910.” (son-in-law). Continuing further in the same row we find the grave of (4) Sophie Schimke, nee Pöd, born 27 April, 1883, died 27 January, 1930, (daughter-in-law). We return again to the first row of graves and find on one tombstone: “Here in God rests (5) Gottfried Krauß, born 27 March, 1869, died 3 September, 1925.” (son-in-law). To the right of Gottlieb Schimke rests in God his son (6) Eduard Schimke, born 28 January, 1882, died 13 April, 1915. A little further on we also find graves of grandchildren and others. We still have

to consider two more tombstones; on one we read: Emma Eckert, nee Kohler, (wife of one-time sexton-teacher Jakob Eckert). On the other one we find the inscription of two brothers: Johann and Eduard Schlewing, both suffering misfortune in their youth, one while hauling stones and the other killed by a gun shot. We are leaving the cemetery. Along the way to the little village this saying came to mind: “As for those who love me and keep my commandments, I will do good even to the thousandth member.” In the little village we find the inhabitants gathered, as they bid you farewell, you call back to them with this word: “What you have inherited from your fathers; be sure to possess it.”

[End of Translation]