

Eigenheim Flood in 1919

Bessarabischer Heimatkalender—1960

W. Rumpelstin, Buchdruckerei und Zeitungsverlag K.G.

[Book Printing and Newspaper Publishing Limited]

Burgdorf, Hannover/Germany

Pages 57-58

Translated by: Allen E. Konrad

July, 2025

P.O. Box 157, Rowley, IA 52329

onamission1939@gmail.com

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

=====

[Translation Begins]

Eigenheim Flood on 9 July, 1919

by Immanuel Manske

It was a hot harvest day. People and animals suffered under the oppressive heat that drove sweat from every pore. Not a cloud in the sky, not a breeze stirred, not a lark twittered. A strange feeling weighed down the workers in the field. There was something in the air, but what? This summer day, on 9 July, 1919, was incredibly hot. The earth burned beneath their feet. The oil, thinned by the heat, ran down like water from the mowing machine. The sweaty horses in front of the harvesting machine desperately fought against the annoying flies, wasps, and hornets while longing for the water barrel on the wagon. Water, water! The big farm dog under the wagon, whose long red tongue hung down to the ground, was dried with thirst.

The young farmer R.K. turned his water jug upside down and got the last drops of water out of it, which he poured over his wrists. “Nothing to be done,” he said, “I have to remove two horses from the machine and get another barrel of water.” (*“Nix z’ macha,” sagte er, “muss zwai Pferd von dar Maschen wegnema on noch a Fass Wasser hola.”*)

But he never got the chance. His gaze was directed towards the northeast. What kind of cloud is rising on the horizon there? It is black and grows larger and more menacing by the minute. The harvester machine stop rattling, and the people look anxiously at the black monster that is rising high in the sky. Slowly the cloud rises higher, coming closer and closer. Now the first bolts of lightning cross within it, and a deep rumble of thunder shakes the air. Thus, the lion emerges ready to pounce from the reeds of the lagoon, with flashing eyes and a wild roar, and throws itself upon its prey. But also from the northwest, a black cloud is creeping up on the horizon. It is rising higher and higher, coming closer and closer. Even in it, the first lightning flashes are

now flickering, and rolling thunder is rumbling. It threateningly approaches its sister. When their paths cross and they collide, may God have mercy on the people and animals beneath them!

Meanwhile, it was now four o'clock in the afternoon. The northwestern cloud had swallowed the sun. A shadow spreads over the earth, a cool breeze sweeps over the fields.

The two hostile sisters had approached and were now facing each other threateningly. They had taken on a different form. At their peaks, small gray clouds appeared, which quickly spread apart and then turned into a swirling dance. Shortly thereafter, a weak wind rose. And then the duel began in the air. The two monsters charged at each other, spitting fire and roaring furiously, and tore at the flanks of each other. The waters poured down, while in no time the entire sky was covered and darkness lay over the earth.

The meeting point of the two clouds was over Starokosatschje, which lay four kilometers [2.5 miles] north of Eigenheim. In the long deep valleys behind Starokosatschje, the ends of which converged just beyond the village, water collected and flooded the village.

A high tidal wave approached the Eigenheim border. The Starokosatschjer dam broke, and the now even higher wave swept away the Eigenheim dam at the northern edge of the village. Like lions released from a cage, the roaring and foaming wild waves flooded our village, while the water became even more trapped among the tall weeds and willows in the valley, thereby spreading even further. Meanwhile, it rained from above, and heaven, air, and earth seemed to be merged with clouds, water, and mist.

The high wave rushed by, dragging everything along that it encountered on its way. The farmyards located in the valley were flooded. The lower parts of the houses and stables stood meters deep in water, collapsed, and were washed away. The cellars and wells were full of water.

There swims a cow in the waves, which twist and swirl. With a sudden plunge, it disappears behind the bridge railing. Like an ocean liner, a long wooden fence sails by. Some chickens sit on it. They look around bewildered and continue south. Behind the wooden fence is a pigsty. The two pigs inside are carefree. They grunt their deep bass and leisurely make their way to the Black Sea. Now follows a thatched roof, which trails behind a cleaning mill (*Putzmühle*). On the cleaning mill sits a dog. Fearfully, he looks into the foaming water whirlpools. Where will he land? Mr. X sees how his wooden house slowly turns on its axis, tips over, and takes a course southwards. See you again (*Auf Wiedersehen*) in the Black Sea! The sky is slowly clearing up. The rays of the departing sun fall diagonally on the devastated valley, in which the floodwaters are gradually receding. I stand on a hill and look down at the ravaged village. Where just an hour ago there were pretty houses, clean stables, and sheds, there is now a desolate field covered in mud.

Yes, I thought to myself, one can save oneself from fire by extinguishing it or fleeing. But no one can tame water, nor can one save oneself from it. What a person has built up over many years in the sweat of his brow, the water destroys in a few moments, because, as the great poet says, the elements hate the creations of human hands.

[Translation Ends]