

Schimke—Private Estate

Bessarabischer Heimatkalender—1965

W. Rumpelstin, Buchdruckerei und Zeitungsverlag K.G.

[Book Printing and Newspaper Publishing Limited]

Burgdorf, Hannover/Germany

Pages 61-62

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March, 2026

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

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Schimke—Weiler / Schimke—Private Estate

From the History of One of the Smallest Communities in Bessarabia

by Quido Fano

This year, the population of the small community of Eigengut-Schimke (Schimke-Weiler) could look back on the 70th anniversary of the village.

But it was not meant to be! Today, 25 years after the Resettlement [in 1940], we want to take a brief look back at the special features of the little village and focus on the people who lived there.

Where did they come from, and how did they stand out from the surrounding villages?

Eigengut (Private Estate)-Schimke, as the name already suggests, was not the founding of many, but owes its creation to the initiative of a single man, Gottlieb Schimke. He, who had become wealthy through cattle trading, purchased in 1894 from the land agent Gottfried Schulz from Neu-Posttal a portion of the steppe that was for sale and belonged to the Manasche district. With 500 *Deßjatinen* [1,350 acres / 545 hectares], Gottlieb Schimke was the largest purchaser and was allowed to choose his land first. He chose the northwestern corner. This land was of good quality and had the most favorable traffic location—on the post road to Akkerman. (The railway line to Akkerman was built only later.)

After finding enough water at not too great a depth, nothing stood in the way of the growth of the village. In a very short time, the houses for him and his children were built. The Low German

(*plattdeutsche*) language, which the inhabitants brought with them from Paris [Bessarabia], remained the common language for a long time.

A quiet life, filled with work more or less according to the course of the year, allowed people their contemplative life. Like hardly any other village community, they stuck together and shared hardships and worries, but also joys with one another.

They tried to outdo each other in hospitality.

In 1909, the area was enlarged by 100 *Deßjatinen* [270 acres / 109 hectares] through the purchase of the so-called “Pfaffenland” (Clerical Land).

After 1918, all land ownership fell under the Romanian Agrarian Law. The land expropriation of 1923 was of such significance for the residents that any report about Schimke would be incomplete without mentioning the expropriation along with its excitements and worries. In 1911, Wilhelm Schimke, a son of the founder, purchased an estate of 500 *Deßjatinen* [1,350 acres / 545 hectares] near Kaschpalat. He sold his property in Eigengut-Schimke to his siblings. No deed of sale was completed. They trusted each other. The consequences of this informal land purchase became apparent for the Schimkes about ten years later when Wilhelm Schimke was the first to fall under the Romanian Agrarian Law. According to this law, no one was allowed to own more than 100 hectares [247 acres] of land. Therefore, the land that Wilhelm Schimke had previously owned as private property was expropriated and divided despite objections. (Part of it was still in the hands of non-Germans in 1940.) On the other hand, the “case nostra”, the first instance of the expropriation commission in Akkerman, recognized the will of Gottlieb Schimke, who had already died in 1909, in which he named his children as heirs to his land. Only the sons and sons-in-law were expropriated of the amount of land that exceeded the hundred-hectare limit. Otherwise, everything seemed to be in order.



Schimke Weiler—South End. Eastern row of houses.

In October of 1923, however, the heirs of Gottlieb Schimke once again received a summons from the Expropriation Commission. This time they had to appear in Kischinev. There they were informed that Gottlieb Schimke was still the owner of the estate. And—he was

expropriated. For all the heirs, only 100 hectares of land remained [247 acres]. This seemed to be the end of the thriving little village, which it had developed into in the meantime. Nevertheless, although an appeal was actually not allowed, an objection was filed with the highest court (“*curtea de casatie*”) in Bucharest. The purpose of this measure was to gain time, because as long as the case had not yet been concluded, the expropriated land could not be divided.

Wilhelm Klein took up the matter, as he had done so many times in later years. He writes:

“In search of justice, my path led me to the then Minister of Agriculture, Constantinescu. The minister was sympathetic to our cause and referred me to the lawyer Cosacescu. He managed, through administrative means, to have us repurchase our expropriated land from the Romanian state. The purchase price, including attorney’s fees, expenses, and so forth, came to 3,000 lei per hectare [2.471 acres]. (The total sum for the repurchased land amounted to over 1.5 million lei.)”

On 9 June, 1927, the repurchase of the expropriated land in Akkerman was completed. The land expropriation, which had greatly hindered the upward development of the community in the 1920s, had been overcome by the early 1930s. However, new land purchases on a larger scale did not take place. On the other hand, a completely new area opened up for the enterprising residents of Schimke. The basis of their economic strength remained the land, but prosperity came through mill ownership.

Wilhelm Klein was the first to engage in the milling business. Gradually, almost all the Schimkes acquired more or less large shares in mills. The name Klein became widely known. The mills in Zaritschanke and Bairamtscha were milestones on this path to success. The purchased mills were either completely renovated from the ground up or demolished and rebuilt. In 1939, a very modern and expensive mill was built in Volontirovka. After overcoming the initial difficulties and obstacles, milling operations began at the beginning of September, 1939.

Spurred on by their successes, the Schimkes continued to expand their goals. New mill plans matured. Inspection trips already produced results.

Then came June of 1940 [Resettlement] and everything came to an end....

One man should also be remembered here. It is thanks to his tireless diligence and skill that everything ran smoothly—first in Zaritschanka and later in Bairamtscha. This is the former chief engineer, Theodor Herrmann.

What do the things look like today in the once so charming little village? In a letter from the old homeland, I am told the following: “There is nothing left on Schimke now, except for a cattle farm and a bull-fattening operation (*Bullenmästerei*).”

[Translation Ends]



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