

Preamble to Birth and Death Records of Bessarabia Settlers found in Lutheran parishes of Taurien Gubernia, Fond 484, Nikolaev Archives.

Genealogy researchers are often confounded when a particular family “disappears”. It sometimes happens where a researcher is aware of a sibling to a direct ancestor. The researcher will find the birth record for this sibling, a marriage record, even birth records for a few children, and then the family disappears from that community. There is no evidence that this family emigrated to North or South America. What happened to this family? These are the thoughts which occurred to me as I was indexing early 1900’s Church records for Lutheran parishes of Taurien Gubernia, specifically the German colonies of Prischib and Crimea. I was surprised to find many re-located Bessarabian families among these records. I began to make a list of Bessarabian families in Crimea for the benefit of Bessarabian researchers who might be looking for them. (GRHS can provide digital images of any of these records, should a researcher desire a copy of the historical record.)

Why were these Bessarabian colonist families living in Crimea? The answer lies in the changes which occurred within South Russia as a result of the Crimean War. While Russia lost very little geographic territory, it was forced to give up a strip of Bessarabia to Romania, which was part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire at that time (1855). Tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars had already fled Crimea fearing Russian reprisals for their treasonous support of the Allied forces during the war. Russia determined to “Christianize” Crimea and forcibly expelled most of the remaining Tatars who left for the new Ottoman territories in Bessarabia and Bulgaria. The new Crimea would serve as a Christian buffer against Islam. To fill the void on the northern steppes created by the absence of the Tatars, the Czarist government again offered incentives in the 1860’s to encourage settlers to move to Crimea. A growing land shortage for the sons of the German colonists led to much interest among all the German colonists of South Russia. But the Bessarabian colonists, unhappy about the new rulers in western Bessarabia, not to mention their new neighbors, had additional incentives to move to Crimea.

These lists are not complete. It was only after I recognized the significance of these re-located Bessarabia Colonists, that I began indexing these births and deaths separately.

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