

Germans from the City of Odessa and the Black Sea Region Exhibit Catalog

An Exhibit of the Vocational Job Training Center, Augsburg, Germany
Clay Building Trade Program in Collaboration with
The German Cultural and Meeting Center "Bayerisches Haus" Odessa, Ukraine

Pages from the Catalog Translated from German to English

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Comment on transcriptions:

Again and again questions on transcribing first and last names, street and place names were raised during the development of the exhibit and during the development of this publication.

The authors of the individual contributions each decided on different kinds of methods which remain unchanged. Phonetic transcription was chosen for the exhibit with the exception of few naturalized deviations having found their way into the usage of the German language. Street names were not translated into German and the adjunct "street" i.e. "ulica" was omitted. Russian street names are based on transcriptions because they are used primarily in the city of Odessa and by Black Sea Germans.

Picture Credits

The pictures shown in the exhibit were the result of a close collaboration with institutes and private persons in the city of and in the region of Odessa. Alexander Archipow took the photos.

Photographs relating to the Black Sea Germans in North Dakota are compliments of the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo.

We Thank

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Opening Speech

A strong desire for political and cultural self determination resulted in independence for the Ukraine in 1991. In the period following, this led the people living there increasingly to remember history and culture. When the city of Odessa was celebrating its 200th anniversary in October, 1994, the ethnic diversity of this region was impressively presented in a cultural program. Only few know about the history and work of the more than 450,000 Germans who used to live in Southern Ukraine in the 19th century and who have made a considerable contribution to the development of the city of Odessa and to the Black Sea region. They had followed the invitation by Czarina, Catherina II, to settle this area of Russia with the promise of special rights.

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Odessa the exhibit "The History and Work of the Germans in the Black Sea Region" developed in German-Ukrainian collaboration was opened to the public at large as the peak of the "German week" and later on in other Ukrainian states. I welcome the fact that this exhibit, meanwhile

revised and expanded around the subject area "integration of ethnic German immigrants", gives the population now the opportunity in various German cities beginning with Augsburg to inform itself about the history, the culture and about the economic situation of the German Russians in the Black Sea region. In this way the understanding of the Germans living there and of the ethnic German emigrants having come to the Federal Republic can be strengthened.

I want to thank all who helped with this exhibit and wish a good success for the presentation.

Manfred Kanthner
Bundesminister des Inneren

Preface: The development of the exhibit

Contacts existing for centuries between Germany and the Ukraine have become closer in the last few years. Ukrainians and Germans moved closer to each other in politics, culture and economics but also in numerous personal contacts between individual and various other organizations. The good relationship between both countries brought more public interest to the Ukrainians living in Germany and to the Black Sea Germans living in the Ukraine. The State of Bavaria as a partner region takes on a special position here.

Accepting an invitation of the Russian Czar the first German emigrants reached the Odessa region by land or via the Danube at the beginning of the 19th century. They settled there and, enjoying numerous privileges, founded thriving colonies. However, even before WWI the first colonists were expelled from their chosen homeland by Russian powers. Some emigrated from the Black Sea region to America where they, as an ethnic group, maintain their roots to this day. Numerous Germans fell victim to the collectivization of agriculture and Stalin's "purging." However, from 1941 to 1945 many of them were resettled in the German Reich by the German army and, after the war ended, were deported to Siberia and Central Asia by Russian occupational forces. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a large number of Black Sea Germans and their descendants left these areas for the Federal Republic of Germany under pressure of ethnic tensions and economic hardship.

Some 1,000 Black Sea Germans are living in the Ukraine to this day or were able to return there. They have intensified their efforts to remember their language and their culture which they largely lost under the pressure of political and historical events. Aside from the German society "Wiedergeburt", the German Lutheran community as well as informal meetings and circles, the German Cultural and Meeting Center 'Bayerisches Haus' which aside from German language courses offers a number of cultural events, operates a kindergarten and regularly gives crash courses to participants in practical job training in Germany since 1993. The house furthered by the Bavarian Department of Labor and Social Order could be instituted thanks to the involvement of the Department for Social Protection and National Minorities in Kiev, and municipal and regional authorities in Odessa as well as the German Lutheran Community in Odessa and its partner, the Evangelical-Lutheran national church in Bavaria and has become known beyond the Ukrainian border as a place to go for Germans as well as for persons interested in the German language and culture.

In the spring of 1994 the employees of the cultural center began with preparations for an exhibit of the history and work of Germans in Odessa and the Black Sea region. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the city the exhibit documented the contribution of Germans to the emergence and development of the city of Odessa. Thus, for the first time in this form it was reported positively about the presence of Germans in this area of the

Ukraine who after 1945 were generally condemned as public enemies and therefore suffered from discrimination until recently.

The material for the exhibit was collected from archives, museums and libraries. There were trips to the former German colonies in the Odessa region and Germans still living there were interviewed. Private individuals in Odessa also provided detailed information and exhibits so that an extensive exhibit with current and historic material could emerge and give the visitor a vivid impression of the works of the Germans in the south of present day Ukraine and in the city of Odessa.

On October 2, 1994, the exhibit was ceremoniously opened ending the "German week" in Odessa. Among those present were representatives of municipal and regional authorities of the city of Odessa, representatives of federal organizations and associations working in Odessa, representatives of the Department of the Interior and of the Bavarian Department of Labor and Social Order, family, women and health as well as representatives of federal associations of German Russians.

In the course of the next months the exhibit was shown in various Ukrainian locations and was met with great interest everywhere. In May, 1995, the acting Secretary for Nationalities and Migration in Kiev, Oleksandr Haschyzkyi, emphasized in his opening speech of the exhibit the necessity of rehabilitating Germans in the Ukraine and thus left hope for an officially new interpretation of the history of the Germans in the Ukraine. The exhibit had thus achieved one of its main concerns.

Subject areas were added for the display in Germany. In light of the background of the increasingly more difficult integration of ethnic German emigrants the concern of this accompanying text of the exhibit is to sensitize the vision for the history and presence of ethnic German emigrants.

1794	Founding the port city of Odessa
Since 1804	Suffering from the consequences of the Napoleonic Wars numerous farmers, trade and crafts people decide to emigrate from South Germany. The first settlers reach the Black Sea area in the so-called 'Ulmer Schachteln' (row boats) by going down the Danube or by land.
1804-10	Rise of the Großliebental, Kutschurgan, Glückstal and Beresan colonies near the city of Odessa. The status of the colonists and the privileges connected with it made it possible for the settlers to produce agriculturally, which resulted in considerable wealth.
Middle of the 19th Century	The rising national identity lets hear initial opinions in Russia demanding restrictive politics towards foreign settlers. The privileges of the settlers are abrogated step by step.
1871	Founding of the German Reich. Further deterioration of the situation for the settlers. Numerous Black Sea Germans emigrate to America.

1914	Beginning of WWI. Due to the "settlement laws" Austrians, Hungarians and Germans in the border areas are expropriated and deported to Siberia.
1917-20	Revolution and civil war, expropriation of farmers. Numerous farmers lose their property. Further deportation to Siberia.
Since 1920	The politics of ethnic minorities of the Soviets brings temporary improvements in the situation for national minorities. National village councils and German national districts emerge even in the Ukraine.
1937/38	The political situation deteriorates drastically, disintegration of national districts and bans against teaching the German mother tongue.
1939	Beginning of World War II
1941	Odessa is occupied by Romanian and German troops. All Germans in these occupied areas are registered in "Volkslisten."
1944	Retreat of the German army. Resettlement of Germans in present Polish areas by the army, deportation of German Russians from Germany by the Soviet army to labor camps and special settlements in Siberia and Central Asia.
1955	Official end of the state of war between the Soviet Union and Germany, visit by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to the USSR and start of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
End of 1955	Easing of restrictions for Germans in the areas of deportation. Numerous Black Sea Germans get the opportunity to resettle from the special settlements to Central Asia and the Baltic Republics. A return to the Black Sea region is not possible.
1964	Partial rehabilitation of German Russians.
1972	Lifting of sanctions for freedom of movement in the USSR.
1987	Revision of the Soviet regulation for emigration for the purpose to unify families. The numbers of ethnic German emigrants increase noticeably for the first time.

Black Sea Germans from the Ukraine

The history of the Black Sea Germans is more than 200 years old. At the end of the 18th century Russia conquered in the war against the Turks vast areas of the steppe by the Black Sea; the cultivation of which was to

be implemented immediately. As serfdom limited the Russian peasants in their freedom of movement and thus made an immediate settlement of the new area impossible, foreign settlers were recruited. Already in July 1763, Czarina Catherine II issued in a manifesto the permit to all foreigners coming to Russia to settle in governments of their choice and granted them special rights. The Czarina's manifesto guaranteed foreign settlers also the right of free religion and self government aside from various economic and political privileges. The call of Catherine II was most welcome in the German small states where economic hardship, denominational differences and wars wore down the population.

Alexander I. was determined to continue the colonization politics in South Russia begun by Czarina Catherine II. Based on the colonization program drawn up by Secretary of the Interior, Count W. Kotschebej, the governments of Cherson, Jekaterinoslav and Taurien were settled and as of 1812 also Bessarabia. In 1803 the first settlers from the town of Ulm arrived via the Danube at the quarantine ward of Dubossar. Thus the massive colonization of the Black Sea region began.

The settlers having arrived at the mouth of the Danube had a long and difficult journey behind them and in many cases had lost relatives during their travel. After a two week stay at the quarantine ward they could continue to travel to Odessa where they spent the winter. In the spring of 1804 the distribution of land got started. The decree for the colonization by foreigners provided for the distribution of large connected tracts of land at good sites.

German Colonies in the Odessa Region

"The colonists founded well organized colonies in the inhospitable areas settled by them; they turned barren steppes into healthy fields, reforested, put in orchards and vegetable gardens and introduced many useful innovations in the area of agriculture." South Russian Department of State Property, 1854.

Many historians dealt with the works of the colonists and acknowledged it. In the beginning the strange geographic and climatic conditions created great difficulties for the German farmers. They were forced to develop new methods of land cultivation. They worked mainly raising cattle in the first phase of their adaptation to these new circumstances. In 1805, sheep with fine wool were brought to the cities of Odessa and Dnepropetrowsk and the breeding of these animals began in New Russia. This wool was soon the most important product of the colonists. The Germans also managed to adapt East Frisian cattle to the adverse conditions of the steppes. The new breed was soon known as 'German-Red Cattle' or 'Colonists'-Cattle'. Later the colonists began to extensively grow grain, sunflowers, wine, vegetables, fruits, tobacco and silk. They worked as beekeepers and in forestry. There were brickyards, wineries, breweries, cheese factories and oil mills in many colonies. Soon water-, wind- and steampowered mills, stud farms and cloth factories emerged.

The German colonists soon obtained, for these conditions, an unusual amount of wealth. It was not only the decree of land distribution and the structure of the community that contributed to it. The community which had received land for settlement functioned as the landowner. Part of the land was made available for the common use of pasture for cattle. Beyond that all families were left equally with land for their yard, fields and meadows for their own use. As a rule it was approximately 60 hectares. A "farm" or "family piece" of that property formed together with other farm buildings a "farm" or "farmstead" which was not allowed to be split, sold or mortgaged; the inheritance laws took this into account. One of the direct descendants of the owner took over

the yard which could not be divided but on the condition that the community proclaimed him able to manage the "farm". Young people who could not remain on the parental farmstead pursued a career in trade or industry, founded new colonies on retained pieces of land or acquired or leased land themselves.

Social life in the colonies was based on self government. The highest organization of power was the city council which involved one representative from each farmstead. The local council selected a mayor and two representatives to appoint a secretary. She coordinated the payment of taxes and other obligations, discussed questions of general interest and complaints, employed clergy, decided the exclusion of colonists from the colonist status. Every question was settled with a so-called 'dictum.' The mayor was elected every three years. His tasks were to look after the condition of the colony, agricultural implements and cattle, to ensure the timely start of working in the fields and to supervise the cleanliness of the farmsteads. The administration of grain supply, of the school system, the responsibility for public buildings and roads was the responsibility of the communities. The local Russian administration was called on exclusively in questions which were beyond the competence of the colonies. Observers were sent to the colonies; they supervised on the spot the activity of the German administration and gave reports to the office of social services which was responsible for the colonies.

The Colonies of Großliebental

Overall, more than 500 colonies were founded in present day region of Odessa east of the Dnjepr River and approximately 40 in the area of Nikolajew and approximately 150 in Bessarabia. The colonists often named the villages after their home towns. Thus, the villages of Baden, Rastadt, Kassel, München, Straßburg and others originated in South Russia. As the growing colonies needed more land, daughter colonies, which carried the name of the mother colony with the prefix 'new', emerged. Later the colonies had to be partially renamed. In 1819, under Alexander I, the German villages got names in memory of Napoleon's victory such as Tarutino or Borodino.

The colonies of Großliebental were in close proximity to the city of Odessa. Großliebental (today Welikodolinskoje) was the center of the region densely populated by Germans; it included the colonies of Lustdorf (Tschernomorka), Kleinliebental (Malodolinskoje), Alexanderhilf (Dobroalexandrowka), Franzfeld, Neuburg (Nowogradowka), Mariental (Marjanowka), Josefstal (Jossipowka) and Peterstal (Petrodolina). The colonies maintained close ties to the city of Odessa. As of 1907, a street car line connected the town with Lustdorf, the charming resort town by the Black Sea which attracted many people seeking rest and relaxation. The former street car depot in Lustdorf now serves -- as does the villa where the Russian poet, Anna Achmatowa, was to have lived -- as an apartment building.

The residents of the colonies belonged, as a rule, without exception to one and the same denomination. "Catholic," "Lutheran" or "Mennonite" meant far more than a tradition or customs, a certain way of life and a specific German dialect. The churches built by believers of various denominations were expropriated in the '30s. During the Soviet regime they were unoccupied, destined for ruin or were used for other not intended worldly purposes. Some German church buildings survived in the area of the former Großliebental colonies. The buildings serve as cultural centers and youths clubs with exception of the church in Großliebental itself; it is being remodeled to an orthodox church.

The Kutschurgan Colonies

The significant colonies of the Kutschurgan area were Straßburg (today Kutschurgan), Baden, Selz, Kandel (today Limanskoje), Mannheim (today Kamenka) and Elsaß (by Stepnoje). The Kutschurgan River is a small tributary of the Dneister River. At the same latitude as the colony of Baden it flows into the liman with the same name which now forms the border between the Ukraine and Moldova. In 1808, almost 400 families from southern Germany founded the Kutschurgan colonies on its banks; supposedly they were backed by the governor of the Odessa region, Duke Arman de Richelieu, himself. Grain and vegetables, melons, sunflowers, flax and wine were grown in the colonies. Cattle were bred and mills, blacksmith shops and other trade shops were operated. The city of Odessa was vitally important for the economic development of the colonies. The trading of grain and wine was handled at the docks; furthermore, the colonists regularly sold vegetables at the "Priwos" and the "New Bazaar" in Odessa. They met in the tavern "Maibach" where they exchanged information, discussed prices and did business.

The Beresan Colonies

The Beresan district was one of the largest districts in the Black Sea region. Today it is located partially in the district of Odessa, partially in the district of Nikolajew. The colonies of Karlsruhe (Stepowoje), Rohrbach (Nowoswetlowka), Worms (Winogradnoje), Rastadt (Poretschje), München (Gradowka) and others belonged to this district. In the Beresan colonies were remarkable facilities which, after all, shed light on the material wealth and cultural prosperity of the German settlers. Alluded to is the school for the deaf and dumb in Worms, which was founded due to the initiative of the Evangelical pastor Daniel Steinwand (1857-1919). Besides general and parochial schools, an agricultural technical college was located in Landau, the center of the district. In addition, a theater with orchestral accompaniment existed in Landau. It is remarkable that theaters remained reserved for cities, even during the heyday of the colonies. The colonies of Rastadt and München were located northwest of the district of Landau. Many silent witnesses of the past are preserved in these locations.

The History of the Black Sea Germans Since the Middle of the 19th Century

The emergence of 'Panslavism,' the changed national identity and because of the founding the German Reich the increased need for polarization led increasingly to criticism of the concentration of real estate in the hands of nonslavic immigrants. One warned of a "peaceful conquest" and of the "Germanization" of Russia. In 1887, a law for foreigners was enacted which very much restricted foreigners' rights to lease and acquire property especially in areas near the borders. As of 1871, the privileges for colonists were abolished and Russian i.e. Ukrainian as the official language was introduced to the German colonies.

By the end of the 19th century, lack of land and increasing political pressure had a great effect on the livelihood of Germans. Many of them decided therefore to leave the Black Sea region. As the German Empire was willing to take in only a small number of Black Sea Germans, many settlers participated with Russian and Ukrainian farmers in colonizing Siberia within the framework of the agrarian reform and founded new colonies there. Thousands emigrated to America at the beginning of the 20th century and settled in the states of North and South Dakota among other places. A second wave of emigration reached this area at the end of WWII. The

colonists evacuated from the Black Sea region to Germany by the German army tried by escaping to the USA to avoid extradition to the Red Army by the allies.

Whoever travels today from the Black Sea region to North and South Dakota will be surprised of the huge number of parallels which exist between the "Ukrainian" and the "American" Black Sea Germans. The emigrants, like their ancestors in the Black Sea region one century earlier, set up their lives on the prairies of North America. Their new hometowns have the same names as the German settlements by the Black Sea, the tough living conditions on the prairie resemble the adverse conditions under which the steppe of Southern Russia had to be cultivated. However, above all, the Black Sea Germans brought with them to America their distinctive way of life. Today in Europe and in the USA they attempt successfully to enter again into relations with their scattered relatives and to weave torn threads once again. The collapse of the Soviet Union has made it possible that they meet by the Black Sea or elsewhere.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the political and economic living conditions of the German settlers by the Black Sea continued to deteriorate. As WWI was approaching, drastic measures were adopted against German settlers in order to prevent from the beginning any potential confrontation with the adversary. Even before the armed struggle in which approximately 300,000 Black Sea Germans participated at the Russian front lines, the so-called settlement laws were enacted. They provided for dispossession and deportation of all citizens with Austrian, Hungarian and German heritage living within a 150 Km wide strip of land along the Western border.

The dispossession and deprivation of rights of the Germans in the Black Sea region reached its first peak with the settlement laws and then, until 1917, lasting measures were to implement them. In 1917, a large part of the colonies fell to the just founded Ukrainian Peoples' Republic. Even during WWI, the Peoples' Republic was occupied by German and Austrian-Hungarian troops. The German colonies were under their protection, and at first this brought in a sense of ease to the situation for the German population.

Coercive sanctions by the state to get food and a drastic drop in agricultural production followed the October Revolution. Further dispossession and deportation were the consequences of collectivization and robbed large parts of the rural population of their existence. As the German population represented a large percentage of prosperous farmers with relatively much real estate, it was affected more than the average by the measures against the kulaks. There were famines even though Lenin's "new economic politics" introduced in 1921 brought temporarily ease to agriculture. The grain supplies stored by German communities before the Revolutions were forcefully removed.

At the same time the ethnicity politics of the Soviet Union brought about an expansion of cultural freedom for the Black Sea Germans. In the `20s the Soviet government favored the formation of national administrative districts where the particular mother tongues of people could be used as the official language. Seven German national districts, where Germans represented more than 70% of the population, emerged in the `20s in the Ukraine. The break up of national councils and districts as well as the deportation of people began in the course of Stalin's "purge" increasingly operated from 1936; the Germans were affected by this purge as much as the rest of the population.

German national districts in the Ukraine (1936)

During WWII the fate of the Black Sea Germans was determined by the swift occupation of the Black Sea region by Rumanian and German troops. While the Germans living east of the Dnjepr river were deported to Siberia, the Germans living west of the Dnjepr were initially under the protection of the German Reich. They were registered in the so-called "List of German people" which later on served as the basis for handing out German certificates of naturalization. By the end of 1943 the resettlement of Black Sea Germans from the occupied areas to the so-called Warthegau began with the advance of the Red Army.

As far as they survived the difficulties of the flight, the Germans were settled on farmsteads of expelled Polish people with the goal to "germanize" the region. The events of the war soon forced the settlers to continue fleeing westward. After the war, part of the Germans from the Black Sea region who stayed in the western occupied zones of Germany managed to go into hiding in order to escape the extradition to Soviet occupational forces and repatriation into the Soviet Union. Others could travel to America. However, a large number of Black Sea Germans were handed over to Soviet commando units and with huge losses deported to Siberian special camps and labor camps.

Translation from German to English by Brigitte von Budde, German translator for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, NDSU Libraries, Fargo.

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