

Resettlement experiences
in Poland and Germany
during and following WWII
by the Bessarabian relatives of
Johannes and Christiana (Ehni) Schock

By Martin R Schock

(grandson)

ABSTRACT

The Russian-German siblings, nephews and nieces of Johannes and Christiana (Ehni) Schock had lived at Borodino, Bessarabia (now generally Moldova), until the fall of 1940. Letters from these relatives during years 1946-51 provide a window into their forced resettlement experiences in German-Nazi occupied regions of Poland during years 1940-45 of WWII. The relatives fled these regions as the Soviet military advanced westward through Poland during later years of the war and resettled at several places throughout Germany. The letters also provide personal stories of hardships of survival and life during the decade of resettlement years.

November 2020.

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Johannes Schock and Christiana (Ehni) Schock

Johannes a.k.a. John Sr.

b. 1877 Dec 01 at Borodino, Bessarabia

d. 1961 May 18 at Turtle Lake, ND USA

Christiana a.k.a. Christine

b. 1880 Dec 23 at Borodino, Bessarabia

d. 1957 Mar 30 at Turtle Lake, ND USA

They were married in Klöstitz, Bessarabia;
and their three oldest children were born
in Borodino.

They journeyed from Bessarabia to the
U.S.A. during April 1910.

She had a stroke in 1952, which left her
bedridden until her death.



Family Photo
taken about 1940

Front Row:
Alexander, *John Sr.*,
Christiana, and Emil

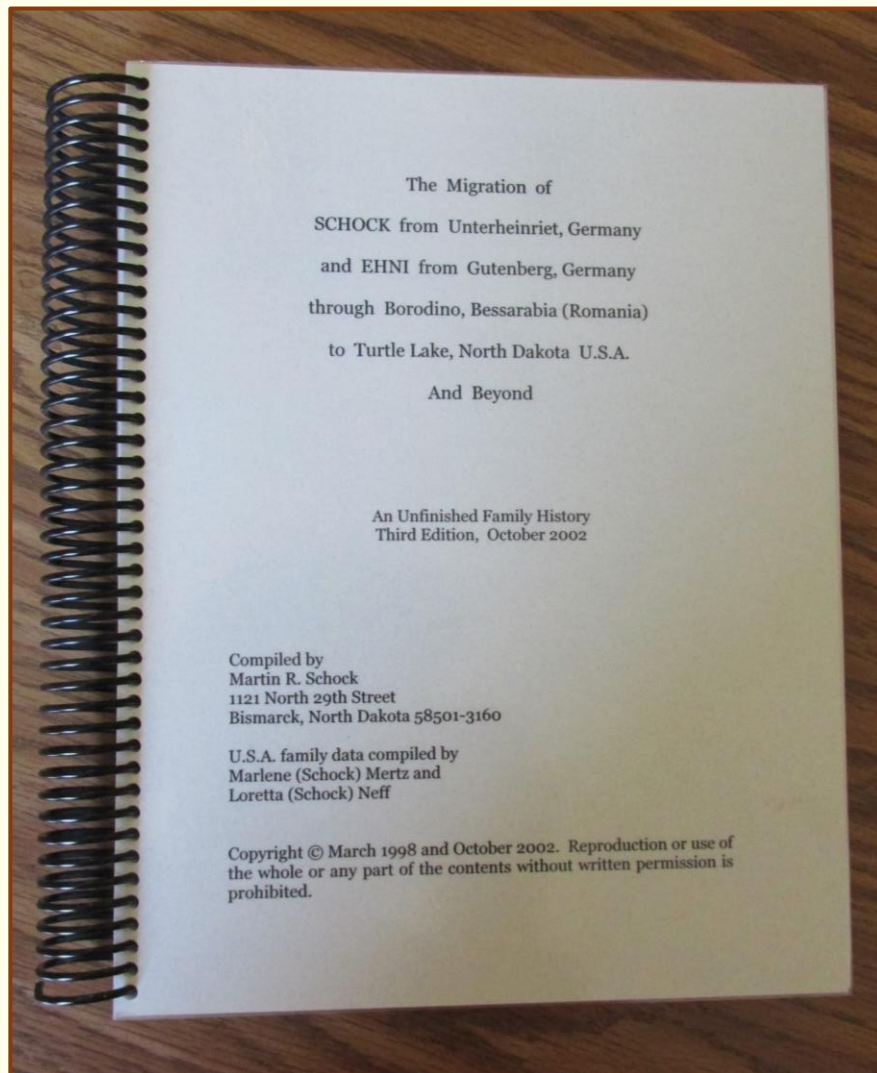
Back Row:
John Jr., Daniel,
Helena, **Emma**,
Reinhold, and Jacob

Not shown:
Gustav
(d. 1910 May 05)



Schock and Ehni family genealogies and histories were compiled and published in a book titled:

“The Migration of SCHOCK from Unterheinriet, Germany, and EHNI from Gutenberg, Germany through Borodino, Bessarabia, to Turtle Lake, North Dakota U.S.A. and beyond”



THE LETTERS

There are about 346 letters that were received during years 1946 through 1951 from siblings of John Sr. and Christiana Schock. There are also a few letters from former Borodino friends of John Sr. and Christiana. The letters originate from several locations throughout Germany, except one which was mailed from Poland.

There were exchanges of letters prior to 1946 back into the late 1920s and 30s;* these letters were destroyed or lost. And, a few letters after 1946 are also lost.

Several years after the deaths of Christiana and John Sr., the letters were previewed by their son Reinhold (a.k.a. Reiny) Schock who also filed them by sibling family.

* Son Reinhold, who was born in 1921, mentioned that his mother, Christiana, often read letters to him when he was a boy.

During the late 1980s, the letters were transcribed from the handwritten German cursive to German type, and then translated to – and typed in – English by Emma Schock Whitaker. So, there are three versions of each letter. (Photo provided by Jeremy Kopp, GRHC, NDSU, Fargo, ND.)





Emma and Reiny celebrating her 95th birthday.

Siblings of John SCHOCK Sr. who sent letters (→)

Parents: Jacob SCHOCK and Christiana (LANGE) Schock

Siblings by birth order; all born in Borodino, Bessarabia:

Johannes	died at an early age
Jacob	died at an early age
Johannes	married & moved to the U.S.A. in 1910
→ Jacob	1 st wife Christina nee Maier, 2 nd wife Katharina nee Maier (Christina and Katharina were sisters) 3 rd wife Elisabeth ???
→ Christina	husband Martin Fueller one child, Alexander, went to Argentina (his 1 st wife was Ottilie Rößler)
Daniel	died three days after birth

Siblings of John SCHOCK Sr. (continued)

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Magdalena | died at an early age |
| → Daniel | married Magdalena nee Füller,
(niece of Gottlob Füller of rural Turtle Lake) |
| → Magdalena | married Johannes Fickel |
| → Reinhold | married Elisabeth nee Maier
(sister of the 1 st & 2 nd wives of Jacob) |
| → Friedrich | married Elisabeth nee Otterstätter |
| Emanuel | moved to U.S.A. in 1913 & then
married Magdalena Hoffer of McClusky, ND |
| Gottfried | moved to U.S.A. in 1913 & then
married Olga Schadler of rural Turtle Lake, ND |

Letters were also exchanged between several Schock families in Germany and Emanuel Schock and Gottfried Schock, brothers of John Schock Sr. These letters, if not missing or lost, were not available.



Emanuel (married
– no children).



Front row: Ruby Jean, wife Olga, Gottfried and Violet. Back row: Alfred, Walter, Rudolf, Rueben and Herbert. Not shown – Albert (died young).

Letters from sibling families & friends of John SCHOCK Sr.

Siblings of John Sr. by birth order:

Jacob	27 letters from five family members
Christina	22 letters from five family members
Daniel	50 letters from three family members
Magdalena	18 letters from three family members
Reinhold	17 letters from him and his wife
Friedrich	40 letters from four family members

Friends of John Sr. at Borodino:

Johannes Schock	17 letters from three family members
Benjamin Schock	2 letters (brother of this Johannes)
others	2 letters

Siblings of Christiana (EHNI) Schock who sent letters (→)

Parents: Father – Johannes EHNI

1st wife – Christiana (SCHMIDT) Schock

Step siblings by birth order; all born in Borodino, Bessarabia:

Christina died at an early age

Gottlob * married Wilhelmina nee Härter **

→ Gustav (son of Gottlob) married Pauline nee Krüger

Johannes * married Elisabeth nee Sigloch

triplets –

Barbara died at an early age

Catharina died thirteen days after birth

Johann Georg died eight days after birth

* Gottlob and Johannes are not listed among those departing Borodino in 1940.

Source: *Heimatbuch Borodino und Friedrichsfeld*, pages 148-165.

** Gustav Ehni writes in his only letter that his mother died in 1942; he does not provide the place of her death.

Siblings of Christiana (EHNI) Schock (continued)

Parents: Father: Johannes EHNI

Mother: Katharina (SCHOCK) Ehni (2nd wife)

Siblings by birth order; all born in Borodino, Bessarabia:

- Daniel 1st wife Friederika nee Schock
 2nd wife Johanna nee Scheffelmayer
- Jacob married Karolina nee Schilling (sister of Israel Schilling)
 Jacob died in service during the Russian-Japanese War
 (and all five children died at an early age)
- Katharina married Samuel Hess
 (two children, Gottlob and Regina, moved to Canada)
- Barbara married Ludwig Weber
Christiana married & then moved to the U.S.A. in 1910
- Israel 1st wife Maria nee Weber
 2nd wife Emma (surname unknown)

Letters from sibling families and friends of Christiana (EHNI) Schock

Step siblings & siblings of Christiana by order of birth:

Gottlob's son Gustav	1 letter
Daniel & family	31 letters
Katharina & family	74 letters
Barbara & family	14 letters
Israel & family	40 letters

Friends of Christiana at Borodino:

Christine (Vetter) Schock	1 letter
Annette (Ziegler) Höger	4 letters

Neighbor of Israel in Germany:

Karl Facius	4 letters
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Location time lines of letters

Bessarabia	Prior to Sept. 1940 *	Letters received but not saved
Exodus from Bessarabia	Sept. 1940	Letters unknown
Transit camps	1940-41 or 42	Letters unknown
Pomerania & Wartheland	1941-42 thru 1944	Letters unknown
Occupied Germany	1945 and beyond **	Letters saved

* Reiny, youngest son of Christine and John Sr., mentioned that his mother often read these letters to him.

** Most letters dated after 1946. Christiana's stroke in 1952 changed the dynamics of letters sent to and received from Germany.

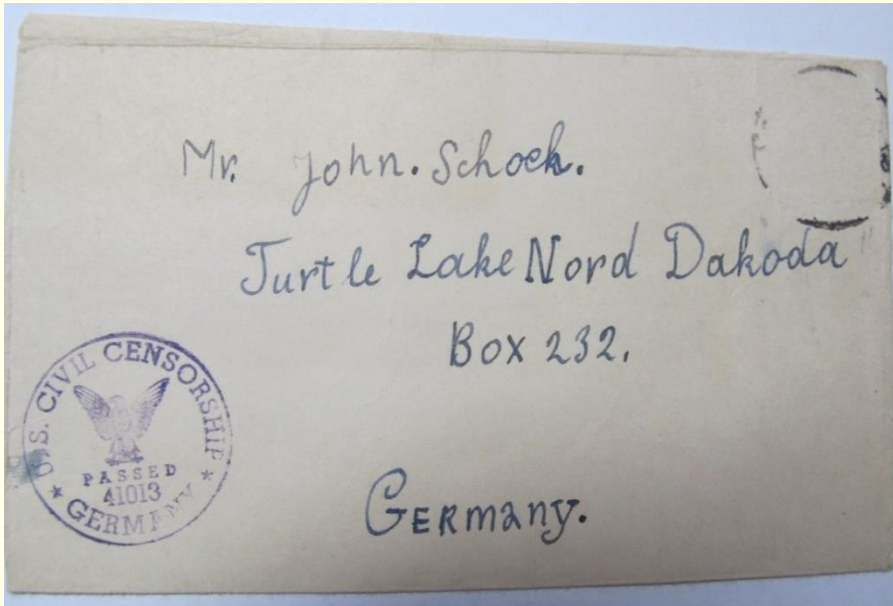
Censoring of letters

Many letters express joy – and gratitude – when receiving letters and pictures from relatives and others in America, or in Russian captivity, or from other relatives in Germany. For example,

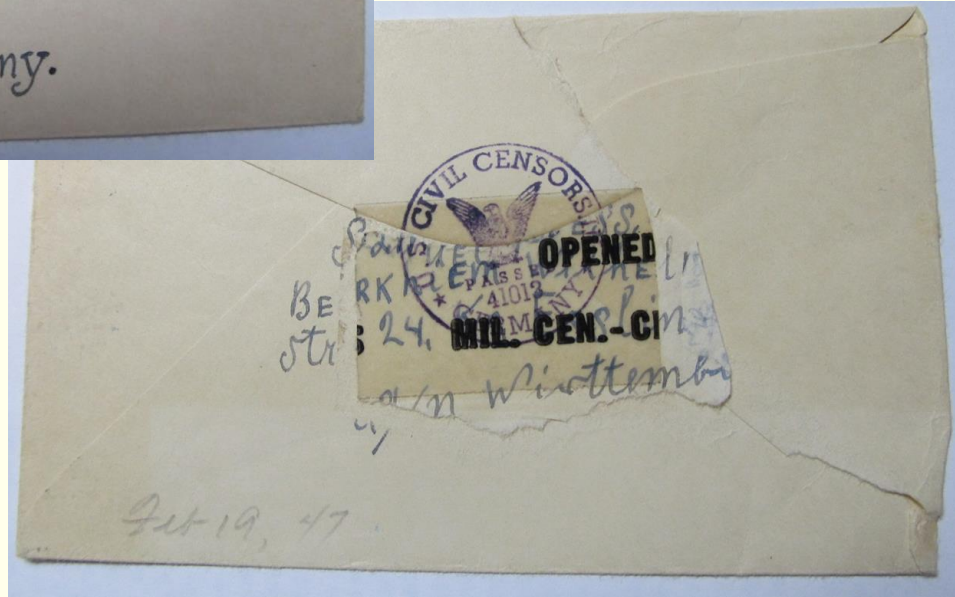
Israel Ehni, brother of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 2 Nov 1947 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “... mail means happiness – one always wants to know what’s new. ... Yes, I would like to write about a lot of things, but that is a risky thing, so I will let it be.” (Presumably knowing mail was censored.)

Some letters from America were not received (i.e., likely lost), some were opened, and some were censored. For example,

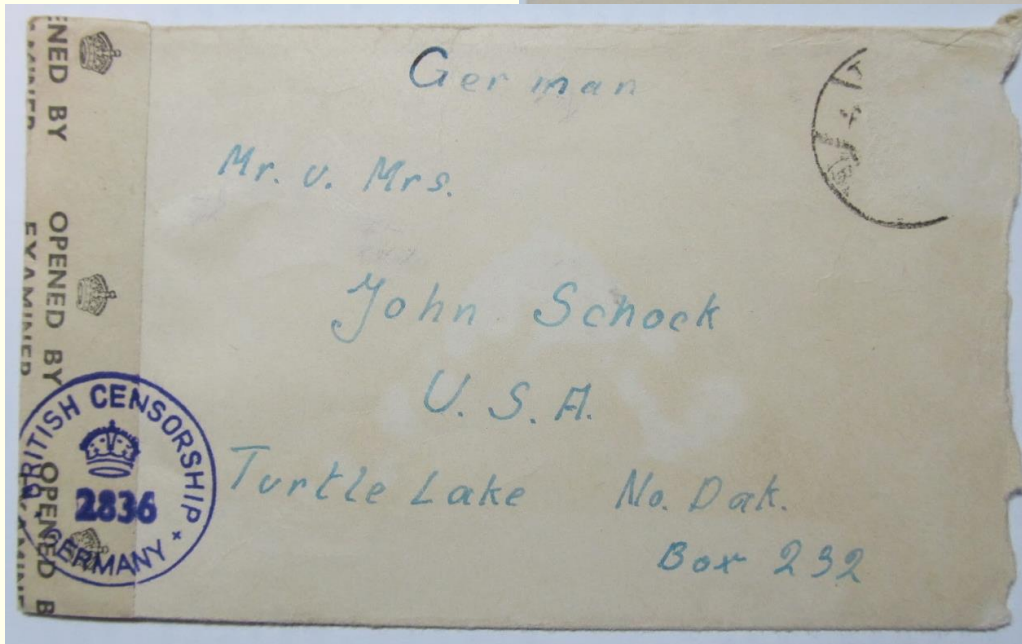
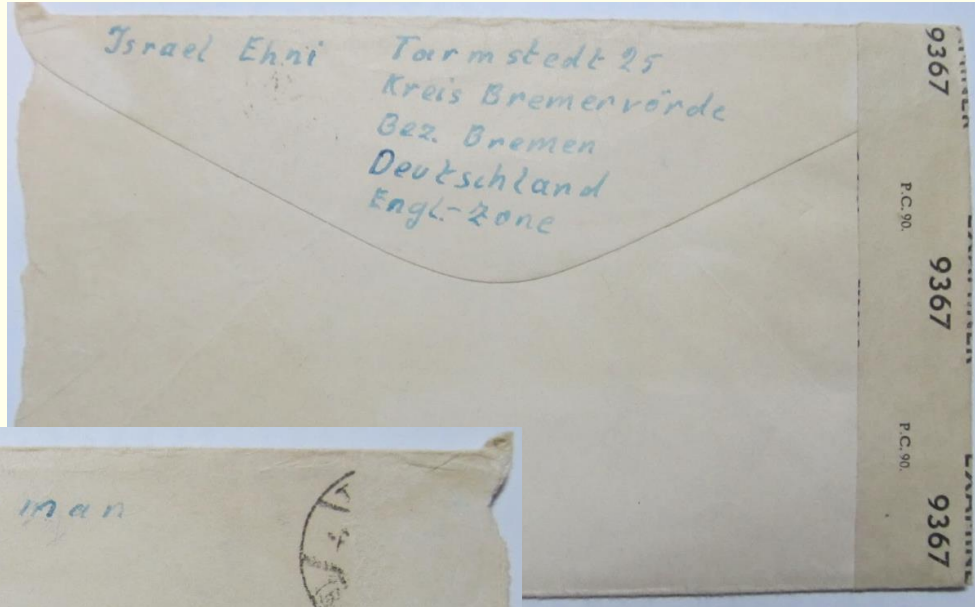
Israel Ehni writes 6 Jan 1948 from Tarmstedt: “You wrote [in your letter of 8 Dec 1947] that my letters are no longer censored. Yours aren’t either and for a time every one was opened.”



One example of
letter censorship
by the U.S.



An example of letter censorship by the British.



LETTERS ARCHIVED

The ownership of the letters was transferred to the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection (GRHC), North Dakota State University (NDSU), Fargo, North Dakota. The GRHC inventoried, documented and scanned the collection of letters into a searchable archive. The www link is:

<https://library.ndsu.edu/AS2.pub/repositories/4/resources/3714>

Resettlement migration and experiences described in letters are presented in four parts.

Part 1

The migration of Schock and Ehni from Bessarabia through Poland into Germany.

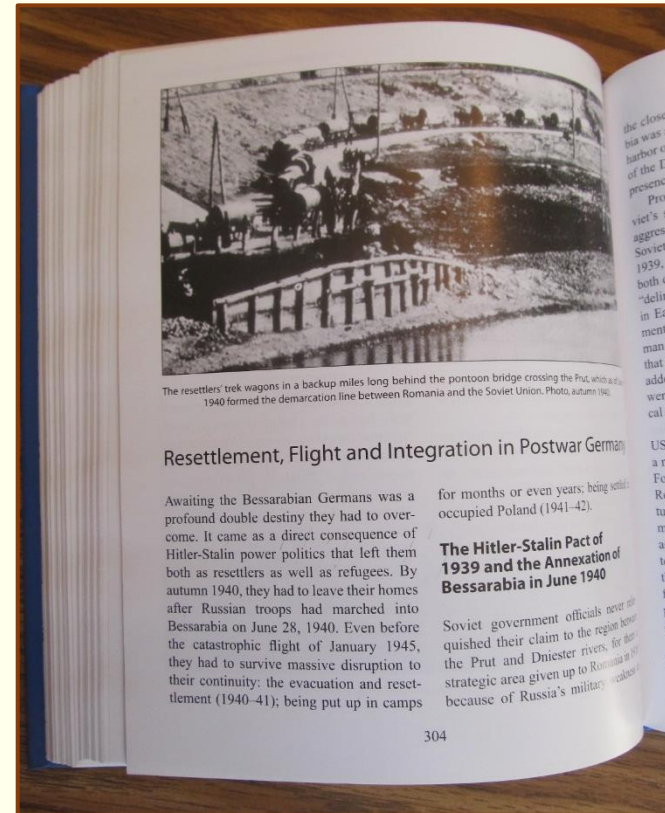
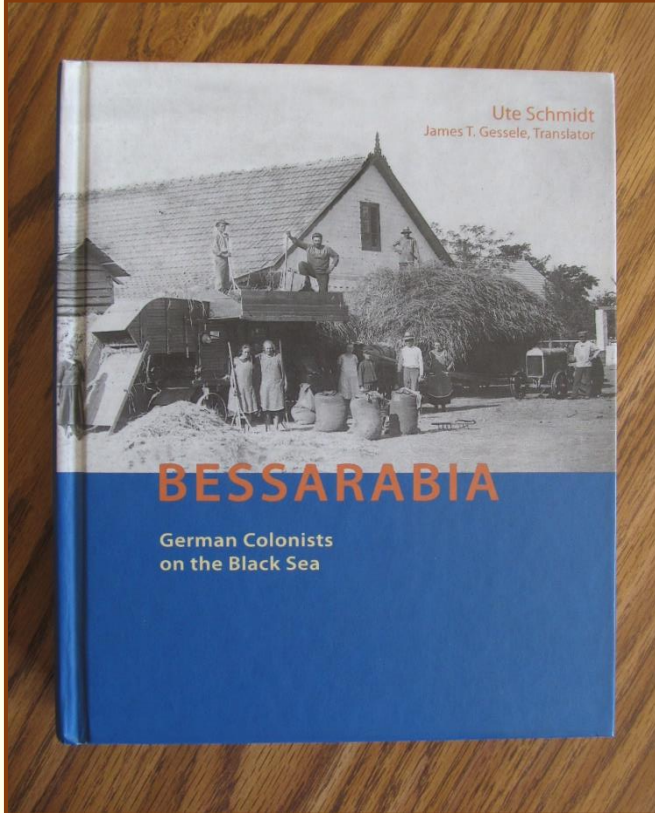
Note: Several excerpts from letters in Part 4 provide additional experience details.

Exit from Bessarabia / Exit from Nazi occupied Poland

Jacob Schock and his family left Borodino, Bessarabia, about 1918. The remaining five SCHOCK and four EHNI families – and their friends – departed Borodino during October/November 1940.*

Annette Höger, Borodino friend of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 21 May 1948 from Zuhlsdorf in the Soviet zone of occupied Germany: “Then the hour came [in 1940] when we had to give up and surrender everything and call after the good life of our beloved homes. I could have cried myself to death as we drove away [on horse-drawn wagons] – the bells rang, the poor cattle bellowed – it was like Judgment Day had broke upon us. Until today [May 1948], everyone is torn apart in the whole world and without a home [i.e., they don’t own the place where they live], with most of our dear fathers and children slaughtered in the war’s bloody massacre. God will make it all well again.”

* Assumes that Gottlob Ehni, Johannes Ehni and their spouses also left as their names were not on lists of those departing Borodino during October 1940. Source: *Heimatbuch Borodino und Friedrichsfeld*, pages 148-165.



This book, *Bessarabia – German Colonists on the Black Sea*, includes a discussion with pictures of the Nazi-Stalin arranged exodus of Germans from Bessarabia during September and October 1940. See pp. 304-343.

Front center – Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, sister of Johannes Schock. Front right – Johannes Fickel. The names of the others are not known.

The exodus trek began with horse drawn wagons to a port on the Danube, and then from that port by transport boats to a transit camp. This photo of the Fickel family was taken on a transport ship. This photo is the only photo of Schock and Ehni during the exodus from Bessarabia and resettlement in Nazi occupied Poland.





1 The exodus from Bessarabia began with horse drawn wagons and continued with transport ships on the Danube River upstream (red line) to southern Czechoslovakia.

Information source: *Bessarabia – German Colonists on the Black Sea*, pp. 304-331.

2 The trek for folks from Borodino, including Schock and Ehni, continued (brown line) to transit camps in Gau Sachsen, Germany, and then to Nazi occupied regions of Poland.

Pauline Ehni, wife of Jacob Ehni and daughter-in-law of Daniel Ehni, writes 26 Feb 1947 from Kleinbottwar in the American zone: “Dear friends, the Nazi Band of the big German Third Reich has turned us into beggars. **First, we were driven out of Bessarabia, -- that was an arrangement between the Russian Commission and the German Commission. We had to leave everything to the Russians, and the Germans agreed to resettle us in West Prussia. We were there from May 26, 1942, until January 23, 1945.*** Then, we were forced to leave and were in flight for eight weeks, going from one place to another.” ... “Oh how many children, and also old people, were killed or froze to death! The terrible oppression is impossible to describe ...! On March 21, [1945] we arrived in northern Germany and remained there until the 9th of February, 1946. Then we had to leave again, this time for southern Germany – to Wuerttemberg in the American zone.” (* Prior to West Prussia, they were located at a transit camp in Gau Sachsen, Germany. Emphasis added.)

Johannes Ehni, son of Daniel Ehni, writes 18 May 1947 from Immelhauserhof by Sinsheim in the American zone: “... on January 20, 1945 we had to leave our home for the second time and were in flight [by wagon] day and night for seven weeks, with wife and children, in the coldest of winters!!! Oh, how many children and old people froze to death on those wagons! That was a bitter destiny for us poor people. There was many a poor soul that cried out to God until they froze to death!”

“The resettlement bureaucracy viewed the German ‘returnees’ from abroad basically as a ‘human resource’ ... As with other resettlers arriving in the *Altreich* (a quarantine) before them, the Bessarabian Germans were ‘processed’ ... by the mobile commissions of the EWZ or *Einwandererzentralstelle* (Immigration Center), a ... facility of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Reich Central Security Office). ‘Processing’ meant undergoing racist, genetic and health-based selection procedures ...” The image at right is the *Fragebogen* (questionnaire) for Daniel Schock. Source discussion: *BESSARABIA – German Colonists on the Black Sea*, p. 325.

512 54

Forschungsstelle des Rußlanddeutschtums, Stuttgart 5, Danziger Freiheit 17

Deutsches Ausland-Institut Stuttgart Verband der Rußlanddeutschen Berlin

Fragebogen

zur sippenkundlichen Aufnahme des Rußlanddeutschtums

1. Familien- und Vorname des Hausvaters: Daniel Jakob Schock
 Wohnort (genaue Anschrift): Borodino, post. Kreis K. Akhman, Bessarab. Russ.
 Beruf: Bauer Staatsangehörigkeit: Russ. 20%
 Geboren am: 25/11 1886 in: Borodino
 Gestorben am: — in: — Glaubensbekenntnis: Ev.-Luth.

2. Vor- und Mädchenname der Hausmutter: Magdalena Jakob g. Füller
 Geboren am: 10/6 1896 in: Borodino
 Gestorben am: — in: —
 Glaubensbekenntnis: Ev.-Luth. Ort und Tag der Trauung: 28/2 1913 in Khorostiv

3. Kinder: (eng und doch deutlich schreiben)

Vorname:	Geburt: (Ort, Tag)	Bei verh. Kindern Name d. Ehegatten	Ausgewandert: (Tag, Jahr, Ziel)	Tot: (Ort, Tag)
<u>Emili</u>	<u>28/11 1915 Borod.</u>	<u>Emil Hiltsbrand</u>		
<u>Magdalena</u>	<u>2/9 1918 "</u>		<u>7/2 1919 Borodino</u>	
<u>Jakob</u>	<u>3/10 1919 "</u>			
<u>Magdalena</u>	<u>28/9 1921 "</u>			
<u>Daniel</u>	<u>3/2 1925 "</u>		<u>1/4 1925 " "</u>	
<u>Daniel</u>	<u>2/3 1929 "</u>			
<u>Alma</u>	<u>25/11 1930 "</u>		<u>14/6 1934 Borod.</u>	

4. Vor- und Zunamen, Ort und Tag der Geburt, des Todes der Eltern von

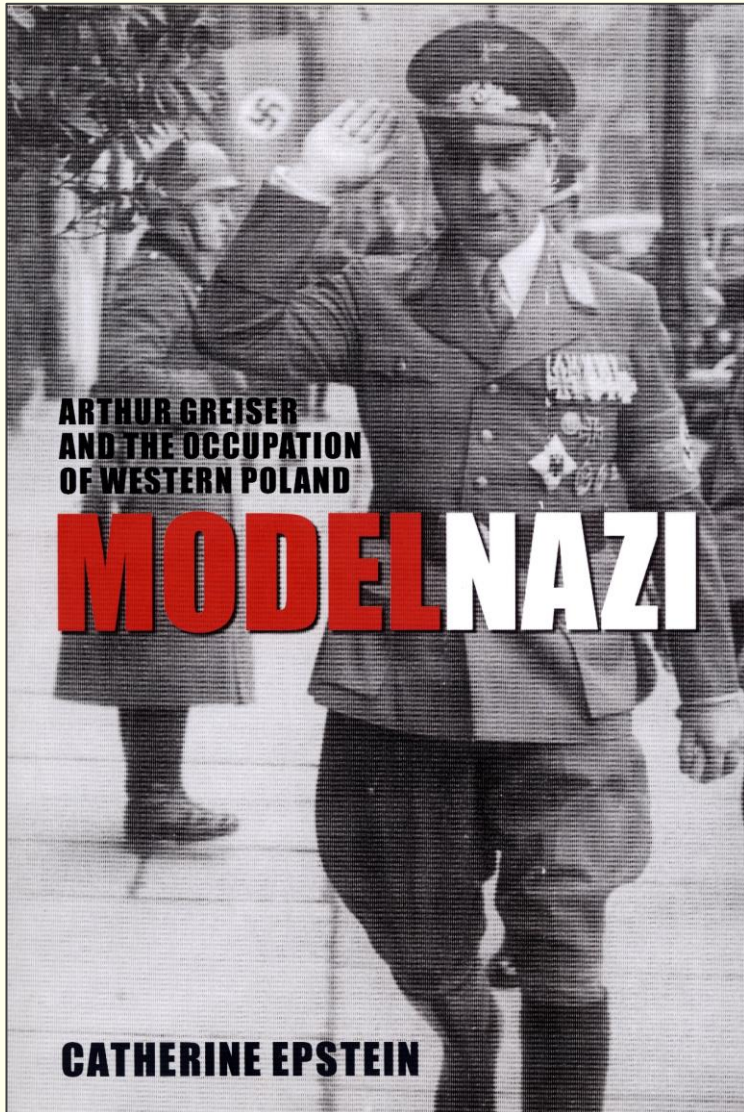
a) dem Hausvater (1): Vater: Jakob Jakob 14/2 1852 gest. 15/6 1915 Borodino
 Mutter: Christina g. Gange 3/9 1855 " 8/9 1939 " "

b) der Hausmutter (2): Vater: Jakob Füller geb. 17/10 1873 gest. 1900 " "
 Mutter: Elisabetha " geb. Mayer 17/7 1872 gest. 20/1 1894 " "

5. Hat die Familie Grundbesitz? ja Wie groß? 16 1/2 Hekt.

6. Name und Beruf des ausgewanderten Vorfahren (väterlicherseits): Gottlieb Schock
Koniar
 Aus welchem Land und Ort Deutschlands ist er ausgewandert? Happenbach Württemberg
 In welchem Jahr ausgewandert? — Wohin? Bessarabien
 Erster, zweiter usw. Siedlungsort: —

Seite 2



The letters do not discuss the social, political and economic experiences while in Nazi occupied Poland from 1940 into 1945.

Arthur Greiser was the Nazi Gauleiter (party territorial leader) of Warthegau, which was a region of western Poland annexed to Nazi Germany in 1939. The book shown at left provides an in depth historical description of his ruthless Germanization of the area, including the first mass extermination of the Poles and Jews in Nazi occupied Germany and Poland.

Some Schock and Ehni lived in the Warthegau region; and others lived nearby. Some lived on farms formerly owned by Poles.

The relocation of Schock and Ehni from Borodino, Bessarabia, via Gau Sachsen into regions of Poland was part of a Nazi project to colonize eastern Europe.

To make space for the imported Germans from Bessarabia, the Nazi bureaucrats intended to deport, resettle or murder Jews, Slavs and Poles.

Imported Germans from Bessarabia were placed on farms previously occupied by Poles.

However, the Germanization of Warthegau and other regions of Poland collapsed when Russia invaded from the East after the Nazi failed military attempt to seize Moscow.



Refugees somewhere on a 1945 flight from Pomerania or East Prussia.
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flight_and_expulsion_of_Germans_from_Poland

Boundaries of Europe's political entities changed many times during and following World War I and World War II. Germany and Soviet Russia occupied Poland in 1939: Germany invaded from the west and Soviet Russia invaded from the east.* The greater region of Poland continued to be subdivided.

Some letters refer to their location as Poland. Other letters refer to their location as West Prussia (although most of old West Prussia was merged with Poland during 1919 following WWI). One letter refers to their location as Warthegau (a.k.a. Wartheland), a post-1939 region in west-central Poland.

Only a few letters reveal the name of the town or the place (hof) where the writers had resided in at least three Gau (political land areas) of Poland, and those places were in the west Pomeranian, the 'new' West Prussia, possibly Silesia, and Warthegau.

* For information on the occupation of Poland by Germany and, subsequently, the flight of Germans from Poland to Germany see:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Poland_\(1939%E2%80%931945\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Poland_(1939%E2%80%931945))

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_camps_in_occupied_Poland_during_World_War_II

and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flight_and_expulsion_of_Germans_from_Poland

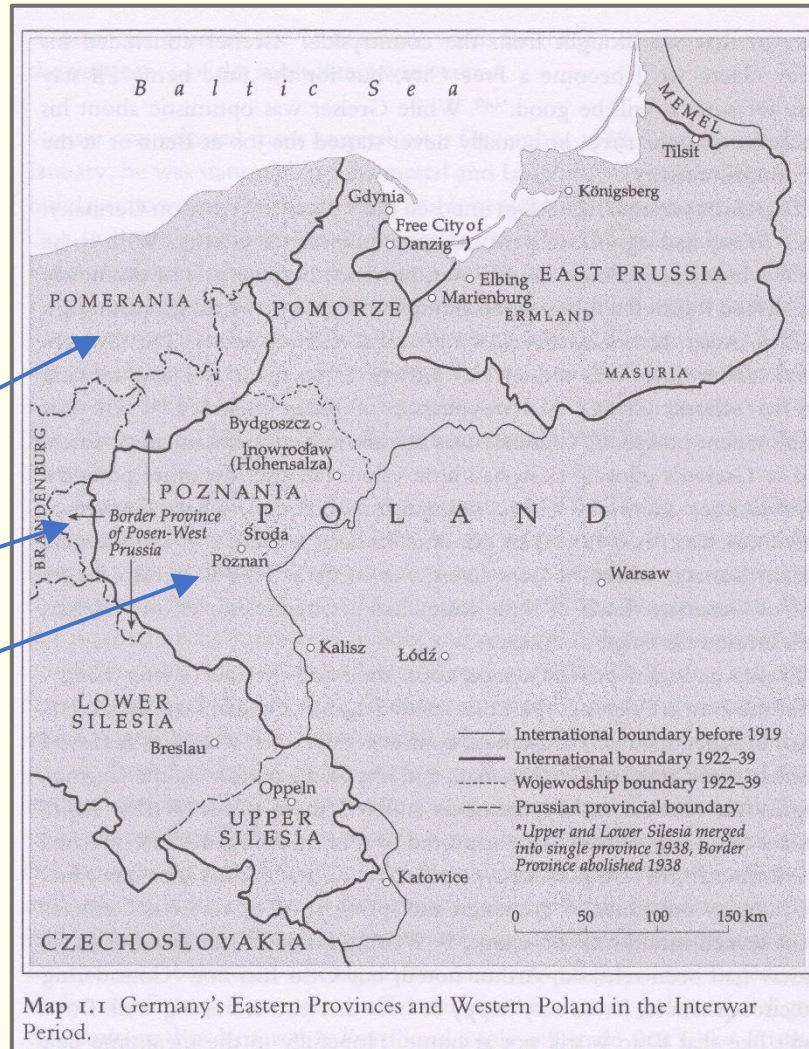
The locations of Schock and Ehni families during years 1942 through 1945 were the Nazi occupied regions:

Pomerania,

West Prussia,

Wartheland.

Map source: *Model Nazi – Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland*, p. 38.



More than 90,000 Germans from Bessarabia were forced to relocate into the Nazi occupied regions of Poland including Pomerania, West Prussia and Wartheland.

West Prussia is the blue region – inside the red oval – on the western border of Warthegau (Wartheland).

Map source:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Karte_viertepolnischeteilun g.png



Resettlement in Germany

In 1985, Emilie Hildebrandt, daughter of Daniel and Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wrote a letter to her cousin Emma (Schock) Whitaker which provides the following information.

“In Sept 1940, we had to leave Borodino; then we came to a camp in Spirigs Walden* where we stayed til Oct. 1941; then we settled in Westpruessen until we were driven out by the Russians in Jan. 1945. By Mar. 1945 [after living for ten weeks in a wagon] we came to Hannover (Ger.) where we were ‘quartered’ by some people until Mar. 1946. In April 1946, we came to Weilheim-Teck and were brought to some people who didn’t want us, but thank God we were by some good people who provided for us.”

* The correct spelling for transit camp ‘Spirigs Walden’ is Schirigswalde; this camp was located in Gau Sachsen (Saxony), Germany. [There were other such camps in Gau Sachsen and about 800 transit, resettlement, concentration (labor) and extermination camps throughout Poland.]

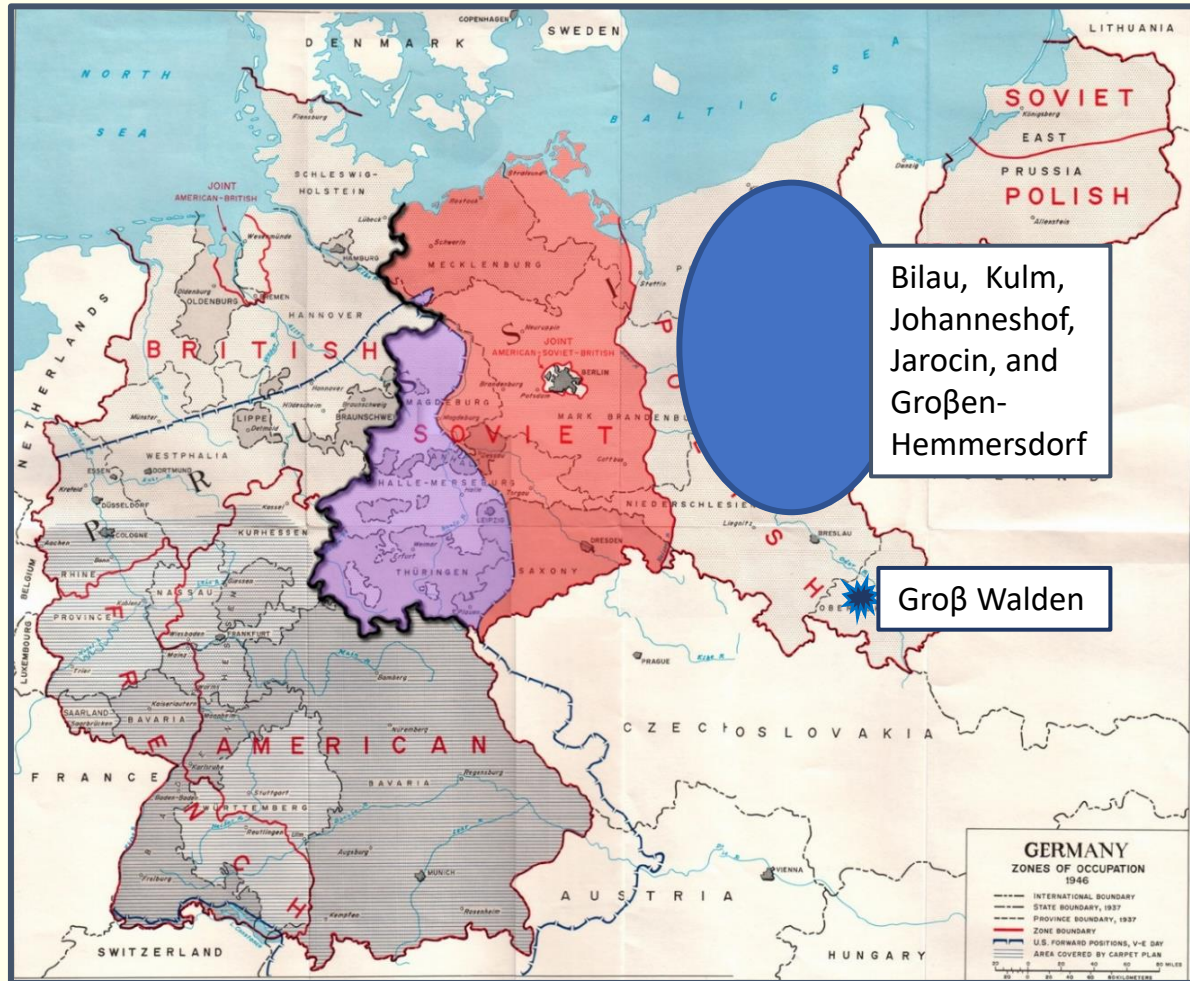
Annette Höger, wife of Jacob Höger and a Borodino childhood friend of Christiana (Ehni) Schock, writes 21 May 1948 from Zuhlsdorf in the Soviet zone: “Since the flight from Poland we have been [i.e., lived] in 8 barracks. When we had to leave Poland [in 1945], we were 20 days and 20 nights under God’s ‘free’ heaven. Those most contemptible devils of Poland robbed us of everything we had – clothing, bedding – everything. Then we had to go through the Polish ‘Control’ where we were beaten and pushed around like dogs. ... Then they stripped my husband down to his undershorts and me down to my undergarment and made us walk in our stocking feet for 80 kilometers through all that frost and ice. You can imagine our misery – the bread was frozen hard as a rock – children cried to God as streams of bloody vomit flowed. We were in the thousands and thousands, one after another. By day we were allowed to drive [by wagon] ½ kilometer then we had to halt while the Poles came, and from wagon to wagon, with rubber truncheons ([i.e.,] policeman’s clubs), they beat innocent children and old men to death. ... Thousands of our poor women were forcibly violated and raped under God’s open skies, ...”

During WWII

The deep blue area indicates locations of extended Schock and Ehni families. The names of some places are mentioned.

Post WWII

Soviet Russia occupied Poland from the east. The extended Schock and Ehni families on arriving in Germany were scattered within the American, British and Soviet zones of occupied Germany.



Bilau, Kulm, Johanneshof, Jarocin, and Großen-Hemmersdorf

Groß Walden

Displacement of extended families

Locations (●) of 26 places in Germany where letters were mailed by SCHOCK and EHNI families during years 1947 through 1951. The locations of two places ('hof') are unknown.

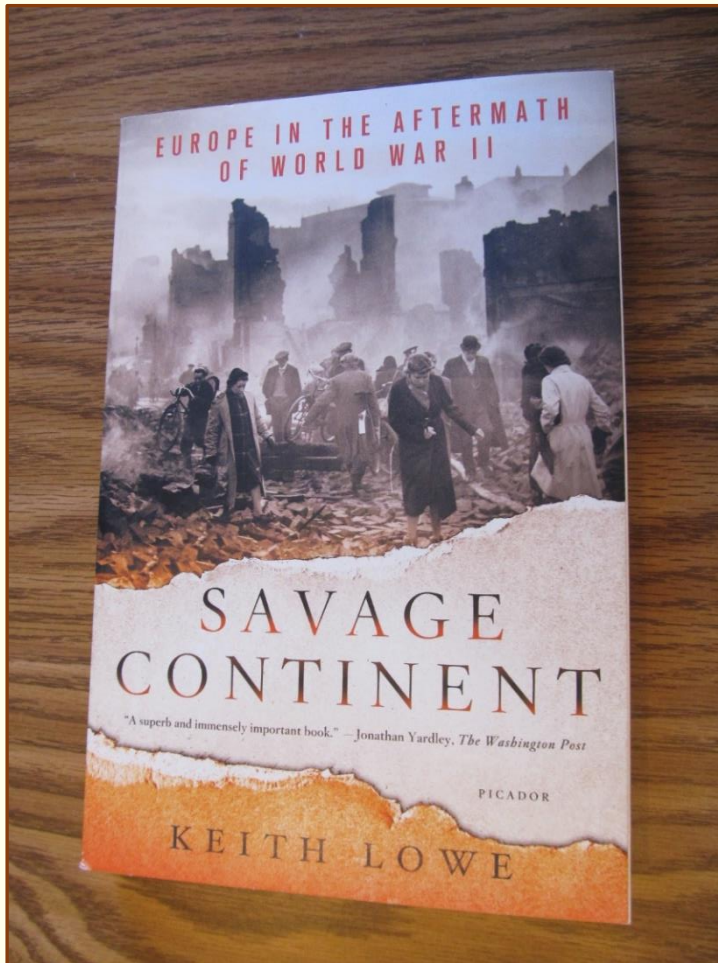
A few families were located in the Soviet Zone and some were located in the British Zone. Many families returned to the Württemberg-Baden region of the American Zone where ancestors of Schock and Ehni had lived in the early nineteenth century, which was at Unterheinreit and Marbach/Gutenberg, respectively.

Source of map: *German History in Documents and Images* at <http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/about.cfm>



Samuel Ehni, son of Daniel Ehni, wrote 11 May 1947 from Kupferzell in the American zone: “Five million* refugees and destitute people came to this small country [of Germany] after the war when Germany had to surrender Pomerania, Silesia, East Prussia and West Prussia.” Refugees also came from Warthegau and other regions.

* Another letter placed the number of refugees higher at eight million. Published research places the number around twelve million.



The personal experiences of Schock and Ehni recorded in their letters illustrate the larger impact of forced resettlement on millions of refugees in Germany.

Resettlement migration and experiences described in letters are presented in four parts.

Part 2

Common migration and resettlement experiences.

Note: Excerpts from letters in Part 4 provide additional experience details.

Living Conditions – War destruction and post war reconstruction

Very few letters mention public utility and property destruction caused by WWII and post war reconstruction, and these letters do not provide detail (possibly due to concern letters were being censored).

Examples of the destruction are shown on the next slides. Large towns and small villages where war-supported manufacturing were bombed by the allies.



Dresden after Allied air raids on February 13 and 14, 1945.



Evangelical Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtnis Church in Berlin before and after WWII. (Photos by M. Schock)



Devastated
Stuttgart city
center after
bombing in 1942.

About 60% of
Germany's
people were
homeless at the
end of WWII.

Living Conditions – Despair and faith

Many letters reflect despair and desperation regarding:

- (1) personal health issues, hunger, poverty, and living conditions as fugitives in Germany – where they were often treated as strangers, and
- (2) missing and displaced relatives – several ‘kinder’ were prisoners of war.

Pauline Härter, daughter of Daniel Ehni, writes 15 May 1947 from Bempflingen in the American zone: “I am so depressed again today. Dear Aunt [Christiana], there’s no one to whom I can pour out my heart so I have to leave it all to God.”

Israel Ehni writes 19 Sep 1947 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “You cannot imagine how destitute it is here – I can’t tell you how much gets stolen, people get beaten to death and stabbed to death – everything goes on. Hunger hurts and people look for food.”

Family Benjamin Hess, son of Katharina (Ehni) Hess, wrote 2 Dec 1947 from Reileifzen in the British zone: “Here we sit alone, far and wide not an acquaintance or a relative, and the ‘natives’ want nothing to do with the refugees. It is difficult to live among all these German people, yet [i.e., even now] there is no love for us in Germany.” (Emphasis added.)

Several letters quote hymns or Biblical scripture and express a confident faith and trust in God underlying their survival during strenuous times from 1940 through 1951.

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wife of Daniel Schock, writes in her letter of 27 Apr 1948 from Neukirch (in the Soviet zone) as follows: “Dear Bro-in-law Joh. and Sis-in-law Chr. besides children! I must relate or sing with the poet:

‘Weep not, poor widow,
Jesus wants to comfort you.
He has promised help and compassion
When your need is most severe.
He sees your misery and the tears that flow,
O how it pains Him that your heart is bleeding.
Weep not, poor widow, and don’t worry,
Should you be in want of bread,
Jesus will replenish your flour and your oil
According to His wise counsel.
Weep not, poor widow,
He, who calls Himself your Father,
Knows your needs, your loneliness
And your tears – He has even counted them.’”

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wife of Daniel Schock, writes 16 Jan 1948 from Neukirch in the Soviet zone: "... ... On the other hand, I have God to comfort and help me and that is the only good thing for He knows what is best for me. There is a time for everything and I won't dictate to Him. It shall be as God wills. I shall be ready when He decides and should I have to be here a while longer, I won't oppose Him, but commend myself to Him. ... God be with us."

Johanna (Ehni) Menz, daughter of Daniel Ehni, writes 3 Mar 1949 from Ritterhude in the British zone: "My dear ones, we dare only to trust in God -- if He won't help us, then we are lost. My dear ones, one can lose everything, but never ones faith! "

Emilie Hildebrandt, daughter of Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, writes 11 Oct 1947 from Weilheim-Teck in the American zone: "If we could only come in to you – we always hear that we are to go to Amerika, but no one knows when! A way has to be found as the potato crop is very bad. The cattle have to be butchered off because of the fodder scarcity and we are facing a very hard winter. But we can't change things, -- it is all in the hand of God, and His will be done in heaven and on earth."



Emmauskirche in Sillenbach district of Stuttgart, Germany. This Lutheran Church was constructed by and for Bessarabien Germans following WWII. The first Pastor was a refugee from Bessarabia. (Photos from a www site.)



Remodeled interior of Emmauskirche (2011). (Photo provided to Martin R Schock by Gilbert Goodwin, Stuttgart, Germany. Schock and Goodwin, who was an Elder of this Church, met at the church in 2011.)

Living Conditions – Little humor

The letters rarely included humor; one example follows.

Katharine (Ehni) Hess, sister of Christiana (Ehni) Schock, writes 8 Apr 1948 from Berkheim in the American zone: “We are alive and well and hope you are the same. We received your dear letter and see that you too are well which makes us very happy.” ... “Oh, where do you get it all – you don’t have a well to dip out of! We want to thank everyone who has helped us again and again – I thank you many thousand times and again a thousand times, especially your children.” *

* Some letters acknowledge contributions to some packages by Alex, Helen, Emil and Reiny, all “kinder” of Christiana. Daughter Emma sent packages from California.

Living conditions – Income

Income was derived by some relatives from full time work, others by part time work, and others by seasonal work. In addition, Germany provided meager stipends to some – but no detail is provided.

One family worked for a German Earl,

- another family was a farm manager while the owner was in Russian captivity,
- one worked for a saw mill,
- one worked in construction,
- one worked in an underground coal mine,
- some were craftsmen such as a shoemaker, tailor or seamstress,
- and others were servants or farm laborers .

By their own admission, the few that lived on farms were somewhat better off than the others. Only the very few had sufficient food and clothing – only three families mention having their own gardens.

Living Conditions – Lack of daily staples

Helena (Schock) Weißhaar, daughter of Jacob Schock, describes the destitute conditions of most refugees in her letter of 22 June 1947 from Ellwangen, Wuerttemberg. “There is nothing to be had in these ruined, crushed towns, and no hope for the future. The situation is worse than in the year 1940. One knows the reason why – not only that, but in every little detail concerned. Until now we are a big burden for the people because we have nothing of our own – not even a bed or table or anything to sit on --. As for linens or underwear – don’t even speak of it! Not the least little thing one needs is available – it isn’t made anymore – neither needle, thread, comb, soap, nor anything one needs to keep oneself clean.”

Annette Höger, a childhood friend of Christine (Ehni) Schock, mentions among some comments in several letters when she writes in her letter of 21 May 1948 from Zuhlsdorf in the Soviet zone. “Even though we have ration cards, we are starving. We can’t buy anything [even when we have money] because there is nothing to buy.”

Some letters ask for aid and others outright beg for aid while describing destitute conditions. Clothing, food and other items often requested in the letters were:

- darning needle, sewing thread and patching material
- baby clothes, socks, shoes, dresses, suits and a cap
- white flour, lard and oil for cooking
- paper, pencil and cigarettes

John Sr. and Christine Schock sent numerous care packages to Germany over four or more years.

- Family Samuel Ehni, son of Daniel Ehni, writes 11 May 1947 from Kupferzell in the American zone: “... [Aunt Christiana,] you wrote in your last letter that you have sent 32 packages already.”
- Martha Fueller, daughter-in-law of Martin and Christine (Schock) Fueller, writes 15 Apr 1948 from Jungholzhausen: “... you write that you have sent 70 packages.”
- Reinhold Schock writes 2 May 1948 from Unterriexingen in the American zone: “Dear sis-in-law [Christiana], you write that you get letters from people that you don’t even know. I believe it! ...”

Others mentioned in letters as also sending, or contributing to, care packages included: Birst, Braun, Brokofsky, Fueller, Gett, Grosz, Ruck family, Sackmann, Schell, Schilling, Gottfried Schock and Walker – all of the Turtle Lake, North Dakota, area.

Living Conditions – Confirmation of care package contents

Israel Ehni writes 3 Apr 1947 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “Three letters and the Package with the food – yes in the letter you wrote that when I get the package I should write you what was in it. There was a variety of things – 34 tin cans of assorted (fruit & vegetables?) and two packages sugar, two packages of cocoa, two of dried bread (like melba toast, maybe ?), two of cookies and candy, 20 chocolates (bars?), a hundred cigarettes and a hundred small pieces sweetener (saccharin?). I believe I have listed everything. About the clothes – I have always written you about them. I wonder if you are not getting all of my letters. The packages of clothes were as you sent them – even the outer wrapping was still good, Oh I did forget something – there were also two small cans of coffee, enough to have coffee two times.”

Art(h)ur, or another of Jakob Ehni’s children and a grandchild of Daniel Ehni, wrote 2 Nov 1947 from Kleinbottwar in the American zone: “The two small dresses fit Annie very nicely. They made her happy. The clothes fit Elsa, but each got something. ... The package was very nice and contained 4 dresses, 2 skirts with blouses, 1 apron, 1 undergarment, 1 pullover, 1 nightshirt, 1 suit of pajamas, 2 little dresses, 1 bed linen, 1 pair small stockings, a pair of socks, 2 jackets that were ripped (or separated), 3 boxes of matches, 2 spools of thread, darning yarn, a comb, writing paper with envelopes, rice, rolled oats and sugar.”

Sharing care packages

Several letters mention sharing package clothing with other household family members or with other relatives. Some letters list the content of the package received – apparently due to a curiosity of Christiana expressed in her letters as to whether packaged contents were received.

In one instance, sending packages from the American zone to the Soviet zone was mentioned.

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, sister of John Schock Sr., writes 12 Nov 1947 from Neukirch in the Soviet zone: “It doesn’t work for Emilie [, my daughter in the American Zone,] to send things here for only two pound packages are allowed, if the Russians let them come through ...”

Emile Hildebrandt, daughter of Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, writes 30 Nov 1947 from Weilheim-Teck in the American zone: “Dear Uncle and Aunt, today I attempted to make three packages for mother – I can put only two pounds in each one. Now I hope that she will get them – then I will send her other things over.”

Living Conditions – Ration cards and black market

Family Benjamin Hess, son of Katharine (Ehni) Hess, wrote 1 Sep 1947 from Reileifzen in the British zone: “You [Dear Uncle and Aunt] have certainly done your duty [in sending care packages] ... There must be all sorts [of people] to have sent that many for the purpose. It would be easier for many to help one, than for one to help so many, nevertheless it does help a lot in such great need. ... **My dear ones, there are many hard times when one has to ask why our God allows it to happen. The need would be only half as great if it were divided properly, but some [i.e., non-refugees] can feast and carouse while the others are undernourished from lack of food that they can get with ration cards! Everything goes to the ‘Black Market’ where the poor can’t afford it.”**

Israel Ehni, brother of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 5 Oct 1947 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “**Such poverty as exists in Germany a person can’t imagine. There is a shortage of everything – even paper is so scarce, it is almost impossible to get – and so expensive! Everything goes to the Black Market. Some people can get some things with their ration cards.”**

Living Conditions – General circumstances

Emilie Hildebrandt, daughter of Magdalena (Fueller) and Daniel Schock, writes 23 Mar 1947 from Weilheim-Teck in the American zone: “There are many donations from America but, unfortunately, not enough for all the refugees. In this town, we number 82 persons from Bessarabia and not much reaches us.”

Emilie Hildebrandt writes 7 Sep 1947: “There will be such poverty this winter – it is already so great that one steals potatoes from the other in the fields out of desperation!”

Emilie Hildebrandt writes 30 Nov 1947: “Many of the refugees [here] have received packages from the Evangelical Relief agency in America – five pounds [of] lard and 5 pounds of flour. It helps the people a great deal as here nothing that is ‘brilliant’ (?) – one can’t write much about it – he who has lard also has light. Most have no light. We too have only one and when it is burned out, it will be out! – for we have nothing and we get nothing. We are strangers. But it is not the same in all the villages – some are quite well off” (Emphasis added.)

Erna Schmiedel, daughter of Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, writes 12 Apr 1947 from Ludwigsburg in the American zone: “Many thanks for your dear package of love, dear Aunt and Uncle. You have done so much for us that we don’t know what we can do in return.” ... “Dear Aunt and dear Uncle, we would love to write something more cheerful and happy, but our situation is so dismal one can only write of what fills our hearts. I know that it must be depressing for you to always hear such sad news from your close relatives. We hope and pray that after all this misery we will see better times again, but for now the food situation is very bad.”

Erna Schmiedel writes 12 Oct 1947 from Ludwigsburg: “We have been in Wurttemberg a whole year now and in no respect has anything gotten better. The food problem gets worse all the time [possibly due to factors in addition to dry weather], and we are facing a very hard winter. Because of the drought in Germany, everything withered and dried up. We had a small garden ourselves and, for all our trouble, didn’t harvest anything because of the lack of water.”

Pauline (Ehni) Haerter, daughter of Daniel Ehni, writes 11 Apr 1948 from Bempflingen in the American zone: “One could write a whole bible about all the misery and wretchedness, and who knows what will happen to us poor people! **We are all heaped together here – Bessarabiens, Dobrudja (Bulgarian-Romanian), Yugoslavian, Czechoslovakian, -- Germans from all countries – you can’t imagine!” ***

* One or two letters noted that [due to the mix of foreign refugees] no one speaks German anymore but instead ‘strange languages.’

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock writes 26 Jan 1949 from Neukirch in the Russian zone: “**I am sitting in bed to write as otherwise my leg gets too cold and firewood is so scarce. We got one meter wood and a hundredweight of coal. Erna and I kept going out to the forest to gather wood and were still going but couldn’t find anymore. There are too many re-settlers that don’t have anything. One has to cook so it is out [of] the question to burn fuel for heating.”**

Emilie Hildebrandt, daughter of Daniel Schock, writes 6 Mar 1949 from Weilheim-Teck in the American zone: “**In January, there was much influenza here by us and death reaped a rich harvest!** Two of my children and I were sick too, but we are so thankful to God that we got well again.”

Living Conditions – Reich Mark devalued and exchanged

During June 1948, the Reich Mark was devalued, which complicated the lives of refugees as many 'lost' their savings due to a currency exchange.

Family Samuel Ehni wrote 28 Jun 1948 from Kupferzell in the American zone: “You have probably learned about the new currency in Germany and that we have become wholly destitute. Now we have lost even the last little bit [of currency] we had left, and we have the Reform Authorities to thank for it!” ... “The other money was depreciated – for every 100 Mark only 10 Mark remained!”

Katharine (Ehni) Hess writes 9 Sep 1948 from Berkheim in the American zone: “Since the money depreciation, everyone does what he knows won't cost any money. ... The people are profiteering in everything [via the Black Market] – let the refugees manage as they can!”

Friedrich Schock writes 5 Dec 1948 from Großaltdorf in the American zone: “Our money is worthless – for our 10,000 Mark we got 250 back. Everything is so expensive. Before the depreciation, coffee wasn't available, now it costs so much we can't buy it anyway. Rice and black tea are still not available.”

Living Conditions – Family members separated, missing

In 1985, Emilie Hildebrandt, daughter of Daniel and Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wrote a letter to her cousin Emma (Schock) Whitaker which provides the following information.

“In 1963 we bought our house and had a home again. Our dear father was carried off during the flight [from Poland into Germany]. We don’t know exactly, but he is said to have died during an operation. I was at first alone in Weilheim-Teck, then [in] 1946 my husband Emil came from prison camp, then [my sister] Lena from Siberia. From the East zone, came my brother Jacob then my brother Daniel to me. In 1950 came my mother from the East zone and last came Lena’s husband Alfred. So we were all together again – only our dear father was absent.”

Katharina Hess, sister of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 3 Jul 1948: “There was a lady who rode with us on the train who told of a woman waiting at the train station for her son, who was expected to come home from Russian Captivity. As they were coming off the train, an old man came in front of her and said ‘Maria, don’t you know me anymore?’ Whereupon she fainted. When she came to, it was her husband who had come from Siberia where he had been since the first World War and couldn’t write for 34 years.”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes 29 Sep 1949 from Berkheim in the American zone: “**Now I want to let you know that our son-in-law, Otto Schock, came home on Sept 19th, and is he strong! I never expected that, but he says he was at the point too already, where he could have said ‘Adieu’ to the world and closed his eyes. Many of his comrades, as they were dying, asked him to please tell their wives that they had died. He knew only two of the wives whom he could tell that their husbands had died, as he was not allowed to take out any addresses. Anyone caught with an address on him was immediately sent to Siberia and that was it for him!**”

Emigration Hopes

The letters of a few Schock and Ehni express interest in emigrating from Germany to America or Canada.

Marta (Mötz) Hess, wife of Benjamin Hess, a tailor, and daughter-in-law of Katharine (Ehni) Hess written 7 Jun 1948 and mailed from Reileifzen in the British zone. “My husband is lazy when it comes to writing so that I have to do it all. ... We got the Evangelical Canadian-Assistance Newsletter today and it states very plainly that friends in America need to request permission for our immigration and be completely responsible for our passage, then we can go. German citizens, members of the Nazi party and the S. S. are not permitted. ... It states in the 'journal' that America is asking for Custom Tailors and we want to apply, for here we are lost and will forever be slaves! Can't even earn a sewing machine in spite of all the papers. All tailors first get foodstuff or some other exchange. May God bring an end to this too!”

For many months, Katharina (Ehni) Hess, sister of Christine (Ehni) Schock, and her husband tried to emigrate to Canada and join a son there. She describes an experience in her letter of 29 Jul 1948 from Berkheim in the American zone.*

“Since we can’t go to Canada, I will let you know that we were in Bremen for 16 days where the overseas port is and there was a ship that sailed with 450 people, but 1,000 more were waiting for a ship. If you can imagine, there were some blind, some deaf and dumb, two with wooden legs who had lost their legs in the war, and an 84 year old woman, who likewise couldn’t walk. You can’t imagine how I cried when the Canadian Consul told us we were refused passage”

* They never did emigrate, giving up hope the next year. She died in 1951.

Summary

The Schock and Ehni refugees experienced strenuous affects of 1) the war, 2) social status as refugees, 3) harsh winters, 4) 1947's dry weather and 5) devaluation of Reich Mark.

- a) most had poor housing, some lived in barracks, and some refugees apparently had no housing;
- b) many dealt with sickness often due to hunger, malnutrition or lack of heat and one had nasal cancer;
- c) a few of the war service men returned with injuries and some did not return,
- d) a few were injured on their jobs;
- e) a few experienced crime or lived in neighborhoods where crime had occurred or was occurring;
- f) all dealt with devalued currency mid-1948, bartering and a Black Market; and
- g) all lacked some or most daily staples (such as food and/or clothing and/or cooking/heating fuel).

The letters provide a small window into experiences of the six Schock and four Ehni families during and after WWII. Resettlement of these families displaced them from one another, but in time they somehow managed to locate one another as well as other relatives.

Their shared life experiences illustrate amazing qualities of human spirit as faith and perseverance. The day to day survival challenges of integration, adjusting and adapting to post war Germany illustrate the moral character of German descendants from Bessarabia.*

Along their paths of life and turmoil, they lost their meager possessions but they were not deprived of their pride, faith and hope.

* See *Bessarabia – German Colonists on the Black Sea*, pp. 344-348.

Resettlement migration and experiences described in letters are presented in four parts.

Part 3

Life fate of some siblings and nieces of John Sr. and Christiana.

Fate of Jacob Schock,
John Schock Sr.'s brother

Elisabeth (surname unknown) Schock, 3rd wife of Jacob Schock, writes 8 Dec 1946: “... all those who stayed behind [in Borodino or Bessarabia] went to Siberia, and what is more, one of those snatched in 1937, when Jakob was also taken away [in Kherson], have [sic] visited his people from his place of birth!” (At this time, she was living near her brother-in-law Reinhold Schock. The place where she mentions that a ‘visit’ occurred is unknown.)

Traugott, youngest son of Jacob Schock, writes 20 Jan 1947 from Unterriexingen in the American zone: “As my [step] mother [Elisabeth] has written you, my dear father has not been with us since 1937, and this is because he was seized and carried off by the Russians. After the terrible confusion in Russia since 1918 it got steadily worse for us. By 1930, it had come so far that we were completely dispossessed, robbed of our citizenship, and expelled from house and home just as we were (i.e., without a possession in hand). ...” (Traugott’s letter provides more detail, see next slide.)

Elisabeth Schock, 3rd wife of Jacob Schock, writes 15 Nov 1947 from Unterriexingen: “With God and with great joy I am finally coming to you again – Reinhold's wife, Elisabeth, arrived [from Poland] on Nov. 13th [1947]. You can imagine what a great joy that was. ... Oh My! If you could talk to her, your hair would stand on end, as the saying goes.”

The rest of Traugott's story in his 20 Jan 1947 letter* follows below.

"It was useless to look for work as the government [of southern Russia] would not pay anyone that didn't have voting rights. We were also not allowed to settle anyplace as the police would not accept us without 'documents' (permits, passports). So we wandered like gypsies from one place to another, not being accepted anywhere. We earned our livelihood by performing private labor for our food and provisions. We struggled for our existence like this, in and around Odessa, until 1935. Since we had slaved so hard and still hadn't gotten any passes (passports), we decided there was nothing left for us but to flee somewhere and so we found ourselves deep in the wilds of the Caucasus Mts. hoping to perhaps get some documents and citizenship rights there. It took extreme effort, toil and trouble to manage there, so after two years (in 1937) we went back. However, we could not go home, -- we had to work in a Russian Kollektive (Commune) and we got our last blow when after five months, on Nov 11, 1937, our dear father was seized and taken into custody. Since his arrest we have not had one sign of life from him or any other person.

"As soon as we were banished from house and home my 'Geschwistern' (brothers and sisters) who were still single had to leave home and fend for themselves. There were three that had to go, two of them disappeared in Russia without a trace even before the war began in 1941. My brother, Adolf, was drafted into the German armed forces and to this day hasn't reappeared. He and his family, his wife and three small children, is also missing. ..."

* Traugott also includes a brief description of his German soldier and war experience.

The fate of Jacob Schock, brother of Johannes (John Sr.) Schock, is revealed in the GRHS *Heritage Review*, March 2003 edition, page 18. Editorial comments by Ted J. Becker, Editor, provide information on the origin of the quoted text which follows in the paragraph below. The quoted text is taken from a list of repressed people found in books that are part of a book series titled (in the English translation) *Odessa Martyrology*, which were first published in the Ukrainian. These books are “devoted to the history of repression carried out during the years of Soviet Power in Odessa and the Odessa Region (Oblast).”

“Shock (Schock) Yakiv (Jacob) Yakovich (Jacob), b 1877 [actual birth year was 1879] in the village of Borodino, Bessarabia, German, a peasant, educated, lived in the village of Leninka, Beresansky district. A carpenter of the collective farm. Was arrested on 10 November 1937. Was sentenced by the Decision of the USSR People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs on 26 December 1937. Was executed on 18 January 1938.” Page 48.

Fate of Daniel Schock, John Schock Sr.'s brother

Note: Excerpts from letters in
Part 4 provide additional details.

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock described the disappearance of her husband Daniel in a letter to her daughter Emilie Hildebrandt. The letter was written on 5 Aug 1946 at Johanneshof, Poland (post Besswitz).

“Now dear children, I must write again what happened to father as we drove [by wagon] back with the Besswitzer trek as far the stolh (or stolz, stoth, ??) where it meant [as we learned that] we needed papers and before we could return to our home [in Poland]. So father and Schimman went in – and Mrs. Minkobi, who returned, – but the other two did not come out again. I kept running around the house and looking in the windows but it was in vain; I did not see him again. Then the Russians chased me away. What could I do? I had to go before they took me in there too, but I stopped our wagon a short distance away and waited and wept. The others drove on, but I and Erna remained. She did not leave me, but we never saw him again. Dear Children, it was on March 11, 1945 that father disappeared. Many others from Besswitz and Seehof came back, but they didn’t know about father – they didn’t even know him. They weren’t people like us – of our community – and they were allowed to go back home. ... Oh God if he would only be found again. Dear children do concern yourselves about your father, brother and sister. I have inquired everywhere and perhaps something will still ‘come.’ There is no special place where I can ask for help in searching – to whom can I turn? ... We got to the ‘Hutte’ (camp or shelter) on March 15, and laid around there until we came here on April 1.”

Footnotes to previous slide.

1. “of our community” refers to a place in or near Bilau, Poland. (Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, 1 Dec 1947 and 29 Dec 1947 from Neukirch, Saxony.) Bilau is located midway between Warsaw, Poland, and Stettin, Pomerania. Bilau was west of and near Thorn.
2. **Stolz** is likely the correct spelling, and it was, plausibly, a border control check point between Pomerania and Mecklenburg.
3. “**Seehof** is a deserted village in the territory of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland, about 37 kilometers south-east of Szczecin [Stettin]. ... Before 1945, Seehof belonged, as well as Augusthof, as part of the rural community Sabes for Pomerania of the Prussian province of Pomerania. ... Today the place is desolate. The deserted village is situated in the area of Gmina Warnice (*Town Warnitz*) in Polish West Pomeranian Voivodeship.” Source: computer translation of the German from the www at [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seehof_\(W%C3%BCstung\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seehof_(W%C3%BCstung))
4. **Besswitz** is today a small village in west Pomerania about 175 kilometers north-east of Szczecin (Stettin). Source: www at <http://wikimapia.org/9787279/de/Biesowice-Besswitz>

Daniel Schock's sister, Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, provides more information about Daniel in her letter of 30 Nov 1947 from Ludwigsburg.

“Brother Daniel is dead. For many years he had had a gastric complaint – even in Bessarabia. When he was snatched by the Russians on the flight, he was with a Russian doctor as interpreter when his stomach ailment recurred and worsened. He was operated on and died during surgery. This is what his daughter, Emilie Hildebrandt said. His wife, Magdalene, is no longer in Poland, but in Thuerengen in the Russian zone.”

And, Daniel Schock's wife, Magdalena nee Fueller, writes in a letter dated 1 Dec 1947 from Neukirch:

“Oh God, I can't imagine where he [husband Daniel] is or if he is still alive. Sometimes I think he is not alive anymore, but he was so well-trained and knew the [Russian] language and all” *

* Magdalena (Fueller) Schock provides similar information about Daniel's language skill in her letter of 1 Apr 1948 from Neukirch in the Soviet zone.

Fate of Magdalena Schock Schaber,
daughter of Daniel Schock and niece of John
Schock Sr.

Note: Excerpts from letters in Part 4 provide
additional details.

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wife of Daniel Schock, writes 13 Aug 1948 from Neukirch in the Soviet zone: “Through the Red Cross I have learned that my [daughter] Lena is alive and is searching for her parents, [her brother] Daniel Schock, and sister Emilie Hildebrandt. God is always the almighty! While many say there is no God, I can and must say that He has heard my prayers”

Emilie Hildebrandt, daughter of Daniel Schock, writes 16 Jan 1949 from Weilheim-Teck: “Yesterday I had another card from [my sister] Lena. She is in Siberia working in a coal mine and writes that she will gladly work as long as she can hope to be among us again. ... [my brother] Jacob [who also sends cards from Russian captivity] wanted to be home by Christmas and still isn't here. There are always some coming back, ...” (Note: Emilie Hildebrandt writes 5 Aug 1949 that Jacob arrived at Weilheim-Teck from captivity on July 26, 1949.)

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wife of Daniel Schock, writes 2 Dec 1949 from Weilheim-Teck: “Rejoice with me, my dear ones, for I have done it I arrived here [at Emilie’s] on November 24th and, if it is God’s will, I will not leave my children again. Now I have them all together except for our dear kind father [Daniel].”

Magdalena (Schock) Schaber, daughter of Magdalena (Fueller) and Daniel Schock, writes 5 Feb 1950 from Weilheim: “I endured extremely hard times; was forced to leave my house and home, and child and go to Russia. My child [Annie] died of starvation in 1945 in Poland and I knew nothing of my family until 1948 when I heard that my father had been taken hostage. ... I came home from Russia in old rags, and after I came, my husband [Alfred] found us too.”

An interview of Magdalena (Schock) Schaber* in a 1949 issue of the German newspaper “Circle Messenger”. She provided a print copy to Emma (Schock) Whitaker.

“It was in Weilheim, on Keiter Street. In front of us sits a young lady, Magdalene Schaber, whose return from Russia we announced several days ago. ...

“It was in 1940 when it began – when the big ‘disruption’ entered her life, and it was done in Bessarabia. She left with all the other Bessarabien Germans in the big ‘trek’ to return to the German Reich. But fate found her on a farm in February 1945 in West Prussia when the Russians also marched through their village. There were some Polish people that provided her and other German captives some bread and other nourishment during the first days of the occupation. Then they were marched off with only the clothes they had on; whether they left children behind or not, there was no turning back,

“Four weeks later she took a transport from this overcrowded internment camp together with 1500 other ‘companions of fate’, men, women and children, to Siberia. They traveled seven thousand kilometers through Russian territory and when they arrived there were two hundred fewer, and they had learned what ‘potato peels’ and ‘frozen potatoes’ tasted like, and what they could expect as ‘guarded’ captives traveling through this vast land. ... They traveled through vast unpopulated regions and also through settled areas until they came to a huge camp.”

* She married Alfred Schaber on 5 Sep 1941 at Camp Großen-Hemmersdorf – located east of Berlin in West Prussia.

The “Circle Messenger” interview with Magdalena Schaber continued.

“They were allowed to stay together, but after ten days they were all driven to a mine, even the women! Three hundred meters underground they had to work – the Russian workers had to perform the same way. And they received no reward, only paltry food – mornings, 600 grams of bread; at noon, some soup; and evenings some tea with sugar!

“After four months they went to a glass factory where they had to shovel sand and quartz into a smelting furnace with its 1400 degrees of singeing embers streaming out at the unprotected captives. This work cost our Returnee an eye. Then it was time again to return to the mine. ... Again it meant the ‘coal pits’ and between times they once had to help build settlement housing where they had to carry heavy slag stones – the women more than the men, but they at least were allowed to remain together and after three years the food got better, and occasionally it was possible to manage some spare time for one’s self.

“Then one day there was some mail. It was one o’clock at night and it was Magdalene Schaber’s birthday, when a comrade awakened her and gave her ‘the first sign of life’ from a relative who meanwhile had found a new home in Weilheim, Germany. It was her first contact with the outside world and the first hope of possible return. Then one day it came about – a month after a Russian office had announced it and exactly to the hour it became a reality. It meant ‘return’ for all those who up to now had endured with body and soul – those who had not gotten sick and been sent back before this time.”

Fate of a fiancé of Erna Schock,
daughter of Friedrich Schock and niece
of John Schock Sr.

Erna Schock, daughter of Friedrich Schock, writes 23 Jul 1948 from Gaildorf: “Yes dear Aunt, if there were no love, but with us there is more. My fiancé is from here and is not allowed to marry a refugee girl, so he has been, so to speak, disinherited. All of us refugee girls are poor and are not accepted by the mother-in-law. Yet, all the young men from here chase after the girls from Bessarabia. We find it best to get married now – at least he will know where he belongs. ... I have my own plate and spoon and he does too – so we already have a start.”

Elisabeth, Erna’s mother and wife of Friedrich Schock, writes 5 Dec 1948 from Großaltdorf in the American zone: “Erna is at home since our currency was depreciated. She wanted to get married and her fiancé, a teacher, had gone to his home to get his papers – his mother wouldn’t permit the marriage so he had a nervous breakdown and went and lay down on the railroad track so that he was decapitated by a train. ... He committed suicide on Aug 21.” (Note: Elisabeth’s brother, Jacob Otterstaetter, emigrated in 1929 to Canada.)

Fate of Elisabeth Maier Schock,
wife of Reinhold Schock and sister-in-
law of John Schock Sr.

Reinhold Schock, brother of John Schock Sr., writes 11 Mar 1947 from Unterriexingen in the American zone: “Dear Sis-in-law, you also ask why I haven’t sent you my Liβa’s address. I can tell you why – because they won’t allow anything to be sent to Poland, that’s why. If you want to send anything to your brother or sister’s children, then send it to me. Last Sunday, I went to see Andreas Menge in Besigheim. He was together with my Liβa in Poland and told me that when they were driving away the Polish policeman said ‘Frau Schock stays here – she doesn’t ride along.’ You can imagine the grief when they all drove away and she had to stay there alone with the Poles! That was Oct. 20, 1946, and I went to see Andreas Menge on Mar. 9, ‘47, when I asked him what the people had to endure – that is indescribable. I immediately filled out an application from the Resettlement Commission and got an immigration permit and sent it to the camp in Poland where Liβa is. It’s all done according to military regulations so that I have some hope Liβa can get out with an immigration permit.” (Emphasis added.)

Reinhold Schock, brother of John Schock Sr., writes 2 Feb 1947 from Unterriexingen in the American zone: “Now I would like to inform you that I have gotten an answer from my wife, Elisabeth. For two years I didn’t hear or know anything about her, and all of sudden she send [sic] word she is still in Poland;* her writing is very bad. They took all her belongings away from her. She stands with empty hand – just as she is. They took everything! They have to sleep on straw without covers. They have only grain sacks to cover themselves and have to sleep like dogs.” “If I could talk to you personally, I could keep up a conversation day and night about the misery and sorrow that has struck us.”

* Neither Reinhold nor Elisabeth reveal where she was located in Poland.

Reinhold Schock writes 16 Nov 1947: “Thanks and praise God, I have overcome one grief and worry – my wife is now with me but hardly recognizable. Thank God we are together again, ... She came just as she is, without clothes , without shoes – almost naked! ... My wife came to me at Unterriexingen on November 14.”

Reinhold Schock writes 31 Jan 1948: “I was in the ‘People’s Army’ – the rural police, but don’t say anything, -- and I had to leave immediately with the police patrol – the entire gendarme post and I couldn’t get back to my house and so all our things were left to the Poles.”

Elisabeth (Maier) Schock, wife of Reinhold Schock, writes 31 Jan 1948 from Unterriexingen: “I inform you that we are as well as can be expected – I am not really well anymore, I had to endure too much in Poland. I had to do various kinds of work ... I had to walk five kilometers to work. It was so hard I can’t even write about it.” ... “Further, I will let you know what happened to me in Poland when the Russians came. I was alone in my dwelling. Two women came and asked me ‘Frau Schock, are you alone?’ I said ‘Yes,’ then they said the ‘The Russians are here already! ... So we hurriedly made a fire and burned all our things (which probably were identification papers). Then we went downstairs and in a half hour they rode up to the front of the door and asked ‘Where are the Nemtze?’ (Nemiecly, which is the Polish word for German or Germans). ...” (Emphasis added. Her letter continues; see next slide.)

Elisabeth, wife of Reinhold Schock, continues her story in her 31 Jan 1948 letter as follows below.

“Then the two women went up and said ‘We are Polish.’ Then they said ‘if you hide the Germans then you will be shot instead of the Germans!’ -- Yes, my dear ones, that’s what happened. I can’t even write you about it. Anyway, I sat in the cellar a whole day, trembling with fear. When I finally went out it was black and full of Russians. I quickly went to our neighbors, about a half kilometer away. I stayed there a month, working in the village. Then, we had to go to some camps in Kulm.* I was there three months, then they herded us to the big Gittär (?)** to work, and so it went on and on. Dear sister-in-law [Christiana], it is a wonder that I am still alive! Yes, it was always God guiding me, and it always meant ‘Be patient, thou downtrodden afflicted – be patient a while longer. The time will come and the hour will strike when you will go home.’”
(Emphasis added.)

* Kulm (or Chełmno) is located in the region known as West Prussia prior to 1919; now, it is located in northern Poland and west of Warsaw. There was a Nazi extermination camp located there. See, for example, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che%C5%82mno>

** An alternate translation would be Gießerei, which was likely a forced-labor steel mill or foundry.

Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, sister of Reinhold Schock, describes her first visit with brother Jacob's wife Elisabeth in Unterriexingen in her letter 1 Feb 1948 from Ludwigsburg.

“Dear brother and sister-in-law, on Jan. 12th, my husband and I were in Unterriexingen to see brother Reinhold, his wife and brother Jacob's wife. They all live in the same barracks. ... When we got there it was 8:30 in the morning and they were just getting up. We went into the hallway; there were three doors. I knocked but no one answered. I waited a while then knocked again and finally a woman came. ‘Whom are you looking for?’ – ‘Please excuse me, but does a Frau Schock live here?’ ‘Yes,’ was the answer. ‘Frau Schock, someone wishes to see you.’ Brother Jakob's wife came forward, the first time I ever saw her in my life. Brother Reinhold's Lisbeth was peeking through the keyhole of the door that I had knocked on; --‘I don't know those people’, and she wouldn't open the door. Then Jakob's wife took us into her room. In the afternoon, brother Reinhold and his wife [Lisbeth] came and she told us that she had peeked through the keyhole and didn't know us. It had been eight years since we saw each other and she said ‘I knew you as a stout lady and now you are only half a person!’ I said, ‘You too, and you don't have one tooth left in your mouth, but I had some teeth made!’ -- and that's how the conversation went. She didn't say much about what happened in Poland.”

Magdalena (Schock) Fickel in a letter of 1 Feb 1948 describes her first meeting – after several years at barracks in Unterriexingen – with the wife of her brother Jacob, and her brother Reinhold, and then in 1947 also with Reinhold’s wife Lisbeth [Elisabeth] who had been allowed to leave Poland. Lisbeth “didn’t say much about what happened in Poland. She looks very bad.” (Note: her letter provides more detail.)

Resettlement migration and experiences described in letters are presented in four parts.

Part 4

Family observations and experiences of post war life.

Pictures and family data

The letters included some, but not much, family information on names, dates of birth, and dates of death for siblings, nephews and nieces.

Some letters included photos.

- A few letters mention that family pictures were lost during their journeys from Bessarabia through Poland into Germany.
- Once in Germany, some reasons were given for not sending pictures. In one instance: “I would love to send you a picture, but they want a pound of lard to make one and I just can’t pay that -- ...” (Martha (Renke) Fueller, daughter-in-law of Christine (Schock) Fueller, 17 Jan 1948 from Jungholzhausen in the American zone.)

Part 4.A -- The SCHOCK family

The slides that follow provide personal observations and experiences using the written words of the siblings, and family members of siblings, of John Schock Sr.

Jacob Schock and wife Elisabeth. The photo dates to about 1920.

She was his third wife; her surname is not known.* They did not have children; he had children by the two prior wives.

Four of his children were missing somewhere in Russia: namely, Magdalena with his 1st wife and Adolph, Emil and Christine with his 2nd wife.

* She had a sister and a nephew, John Schell, in America who sent her care packages. (Per Reinhold Schock, 31 Jan 1948, from Unterriexingen.)



Jacob
Schock

fled Borodino about 1920, captured by the Soviets and executed in January 1938; four children missing; later – his wife, three children and a grandson, who did not know the whereabouts of his parents, were in Germany

Emilie Amandt, daughter of Jacob Schock, writes 22 April 1947 from Steinheim in the British zone: “It is a joyless, difficult time for us with our children, and now we have to put up with strangers. I have gotten so weak and also have heart trouble. ... Ach, I’d like to scream to Heaven ‘God help us, - do we really deserve this’ – hunger hurts so!”

Arnold Pracht, son of Magdalena (Schock) Pracht (father unknown) and grandson of Jacob Schock, writes 29 Aug 1947 from Reichertshofen in the American zone: “I don’t know anything yet about my parents or siblings. May God grant that they are still alive. I have found several of my school comrades from our homeland, but not one relative other than the Bessarabiens and [step] Grandmother [Elisabeth], Traugott ...” ... When mentioning his wedding, he writes: “The farmers from the local village donated some provisions and also the wedding guests brought some things so that we could have a celebration ...” (Emphasis added.)

Emile Amandt writes 1 Sep 1947: “Would you like to know my husband has often come from work and said that everything turned black in front of his eyes. It has been just like that with me when I stand up, and I thought this was the end. Thank God we have improved somewhat, but it has been very, very serious without strength ...”

Helena Weiszhaar, daughter of Jacob Schock, writes 4 Jan 1947 from Ellwangen in the American zone: “How much more must we endure! We know we sinned against God many times and He must punish us to teach us patience and humility. We were rich in worldly ‘dirt’, having inherited from our father 100 hectare land. You can see that there weren’t just a few implements, tools, house, homestead, cattle, horses, sheep, chickens, pigs and grains that were left behind. But we don’t want to look back like Lot’s wife did, ... I don’t want any of it and may God strengthen our faith!”

Helena Weiszhaar writes 22 Jun 1947: “Our God guides us in ways that often seem too difficult for us because they lead through the valley of humiliation and degradation, but also hold great rewards for those that endure. So we will not cast away our faith and succumb to the fever that would estrange us”

Helena Weiszhaar writes 27 Sep 1947: “The parched and withered harvest that we have here will not bring us anything good. There is already serious hunger and it will effect many people if God doesn’t provide ways and means. ... It is already bad, the majority are undernourished. Our three youngest children are medically declared undernourished so they can hardly go to school this winter. We will keep our faith in God”

Helena Weiszhaar, daughter of Jacob Schock, writes 4 Jan 1947 from Ellwangen: “Dear Uncle and Aunt, one thing that is difficult for us to endure is the injustice that has the upper hand and the unfairness that takes place. For instance, we are excluded for getting relief because we have friends in America and friends who can help and have helped. So they took only the addresses of those that have no friends and turned them over to the American Aid Society. Some have received three packages already ... and we can just look on while poverty is getting noticeably worse. This week we got no lard at all because the laborers everywhere are fighting and it [the lard] was sent there to appease the fighting.” (See also, Helena Weiszhaar’s letter dated 7 Dec 1947.)

Emilie Amandt, daughter of Jacob Schock, writes 11 Oct [1948] from Steinheim: “Now I will let you know that we walked around the fields the entire Autumn [of 1948] looking for ears of grain so we would have a few to thrash out from day to day. What can one do! There wasn’t much loose grain as you can imagine when there are thousands of people gleaning and each wants something to live on. Dear Uncle and Aunt, I just can’t write it all – only He above us knows what it’s like.”

Christine (Schock) Fueller upper right, her husband Martin Fueller upper left, her brother Gottfried Schock upper center, and four sons.

Christine was his second wife,* and she died at unknown place in 1946. The photo dates to about 1912, as Gottfried came to America in 1913.

* The only two children with his first wife died as infants.



Sons Oscar and Adolf were drafted in the German Army and later held by the Russians as prisoners of war (POW) in Stalingrad where Adolf died of starvation: Oscar returned to the family in Germany. Son Emil was also a Russian POW serving as an interpreter and then returned, and son Jacob was drafted into the Russian Army and never heard from thereafter.

Christina (Schock) Fueller died somewhere in 1946; husband was in Germany with some children; three sons were Soviet POWs, one of them died of starvation; the fourth son was a Russian soldier and MIA

Martha Fueller, daughter of Martin and Christine (Schock) Fueller, writes 17 April 1947 from Herbsthausen in the American zone: “We have endured so much already – first had to leave our home, then a year in camp, the 7 (?) years in Westpreussen and then the flight [from there] – two months underway [by wagon] in the worst of cold and snow. ... Yes, our dear ones, if we could see each other once in our lifetime, I could tell you books full!” (Emphasis added. Note: Christine died in 1946.)

Martin Fueller, husband of Christine (Schock) Fueller, writes 10 May 1948: “I want to let you know that we are alive and well, except for me. I always have this pain in my nose [which was cancer]. It won’t heal and no doctor can help me. I’d rather be dead than linger around here, but one has to wait for death to come and that hasn’t happened yet. ... We squat here in our misfortune and it seems we’ll never get out and can’t do anything about it.”

Martin Fueller also writes 10 May 1948 from Herbsthausen: “We can’t write you how unfortunate we are.” (Emphasis added.)

Johanna, wife of Johannes who is a son of Martin and Christine (Schock) Fueller, writes 30 Mar 1947 from Vellberg in the American zone: “Walde [Waldemar] should have been confirmed a year ago, but with our endless wandering it was impossible. He would have finished school in Berlin because he went to the deaf-mute school there. He is deaf and it is very hard for him to talk. The school had to be moved in 1944 already because of the air attacks and he came to be very close to us in the town of Branberg.* Then, when he was [home] on Christmas leave, it was just our luck to be able to take him along on the flight in January 1945, otherwise, I firmly believe, he would not be with us today.”

*The town by the name of Branberg could not be verified; but there is the town of Brandenburg an der Havel located west of Berlin.

Elsa, wife of Oscar, son of Martin and Christine (Schock) Fueller, writes 1 Jan 1948: “I get mail from Oscar [who is in Russian captivity] every month, but he is allowed to write only 26 words.” And, Elsa writes 29 Mar 1948 from Schweizerhof (post Grab) in the American zone: “I had another card from my husband [Oscar] on March 5th. He wants me to send him a package. I asked at the post office and packages for Russian captives are not going through yet.”

Emilie Amandt, daughter of Jacob Schock, writes 28 May 1947 from Steinheim: “We are all so weak already that my husband won’t be able to work if it goes on like this. ... I complaint [sic] again at city hall yesterday, but it’s no use. We just can’t get a permit [ration card] to buy any of the controlled goods ...” (Note: regarding ‘permit,’ distribution of food was controlled by ration cards.)

Ida Siegloch, daughter of Martin Fueller and Christine nee Schock, writes 7 Sep 1947 from Herbsthausen: “Nothing is available here! Those who were able to take some things along on the flight [from Poland] still have something, but there are thousands with only the clothes on their backs. We were able to rescue a few good clothes and some beds so that we can sleep, but all else is gone.” ... “I am better for now, except I am very thin because of the poor food.”

Ida Siegloch writes 12 Feb 1948: “The white flour from the grain I gleaned [last year] lasted for cooking until now, but now it is all gone. Oh Lord, it is hard for me to have to write like a beggar.” ... “Our Farmer has eight brothers and sisters. All the others come from town every day like beggars for a pound or two of potatoes and a bit of flour – like the gypsies used to come to us in Bessarabia.”

Daniel Schock at left, his wife Magdalena nee Fueller at right, his mother Christina (Lange) Schock (who lived with this family for 26 years), and three children – Jacob, Emilie (in back) and Magdalena. Not shown is son Daniel. The photo dates to about 1925.



Daughter Magdalena married Alfred Schaber in Poland. She was taken captive in Poland by the Russians and transferred to Siberia until October 1949; Alfred was disabled during the war and a Russian POW until 1949. Son Jacob was a German soldier taken as a Russian POW until 1949.

Daniel
Schock

captured at a border crossing station by Soviet when turning back to Poland after fleeing Poland – never heard from again; one son was a Russian POW and one daughter was taken by the Soviets to a labor camp in Siberia – later she was released and reunited with the remaining family

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wife of Daniel Schock, writes 16 Jul 1947 from Neukirch, Saxony (Soviet zone): “Oh you dear ones, I thought for me there was no more joy, but the dear Lord made me happy again and released me from Poland. ... It was hard until we had overcome everything (confusion) as there was no day or night – we could take only what we could carry, a few old clothes, a little food, and two beds that I was able to rescue. ... Now I stand here with one ‘everyday’ dress. ... Each [Christine and Reinhold’s wife Elisabeth] had her own farmstead [in Poland] – everything was well and good until the cruel Russians came. [Note. In March 1947, Magdalena was still in Poland.]

“Now we are still in the Russian zone [of Germany], but they don’t harass and molest the people as they did in Poland. There is only an army of occupation. At least one does not have to fear that they will come in the night as in Poland. And now, my dear ones, the hour came on June 20th, that we got away. ... On June 26th [1947], we came to the Camp Eisterhorst.* ... These people hardly know what to do with the refuges anymore.”

* Camp Eisterhorst (Stalag IV-A) had been a Nazi POW Camp during WWII and located somewhere in Germany’s State of Saxony.

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wife of Daniel Schock, writes 10 Mar 1948 from Neukirch in the Soviet zone: “Dear bro-in-law Joh. and sis-in-law Chr. I will solve the puzzle that confronts you – My son Jakob was a soldier in the war when we had to flee our home [in Poland], but he was still in a neighboring village. As he bid farewell, he said ‘My dear parents, we will not see each other again.’ That gave Daniel so much sorrow on the way. He said ‘Maybe our Jakob is right, that we won’t see each other again.’ But [Daniel] never thought that he himself would be taken away from us, only that Jakob wouldn’t be coming back.”

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock also writes on 10 Mar 1948: “... our Jacob is in Russian captivity. We have gotten a card from him since he learned from his comrade where we are. We had written to the comrade as Emilie had learned from him [i.e., the comrade] that Jacob was with him. Now we know that at least this one is alive, ... he will know where we are. ... they can’t write much – only 25 words on a card once a month. ... I don’t want to believe that they won’t come back. Lord help me to endure with patience. ”

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock writes 25 Sep 1948: “I don’t want to stay here [in the Soviet zone]. They shoot all the time so that the door and windows rattle, and the village is always full (of soldiers?). They have already stabbed three and shot two to death at night in their beds. I can’t write you ... about it. That happened in late June or July already in the night. God have mercy on us and let other times come to us!”

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock writes 22 Nov 1948: “We have just had Bible week. ... While one is sitting there, one has other thoughts than when one is alone – as the Russians are always around at night ... and I don’t have so far to go to and from my home.”

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock, wife of Daniel Schock, writes 5 Dec 1948 from Neukirch: "... and now after nearly four years, I have personally received a card from my beloved [daughter] Lena [who is in Siberia]. She also received the card I sent to the 'Search Service' in Berlin ... She has to work underground [in a coal mine], but she has enough to eat." (Magdalena, wife of Daniel Schock, 29 Oct 1948 from Neukirch in the Soviet zone.) "Lena has written again. She is always asking about her little Annie." (Note: Annie was taken by her paternal grandmother in Poland when her mother Lena was taken hostage; Annie died three months later due to starvation.)

Magdalena (Fueller) Schock writes 23 Jun 1949: "Oh, when I think about how nice it was at home [in Borodino] when our family circle was intact and how it is now when we get shoved from one place to another. Everywhere the masters need their space – he now needs my little room to store his feed – I want to see about getting an interzone pass so I can come over and visit Emilie [in the American zone] ... [My son] Daniel has gotten a permit to go too, but his boss does not want to let him go. I don't know what will happen now. If he could go first then we could make it, but for me to go and leave here, I can't do that. They wouldn't wash and mend his clothes – they have no pity for the young laborers. He can see that at the table – how well the masters eat while he and the maid have to eat at a separate table."

Emilie Hildebrandt, daughter of Daniel Schock, writes 25 Jan 1948 from Weilheim-Teck: “Dear Uncle and Aunt, we have not received the package that you sent in October. It must be lost as today it is the fashion to steal. It is too bad when we need it so badly and you sacrificed it for us.”

Emilie Hildebrandt writes 5 May 1948: “I now get a card from Jacob [my brother in Russian captivity] every month. He is working as a blacksmith and says I should not worry about him – but then they are not allowed to write anything else.”

Emilie Hildebrandt writes 26 Sep 1948: “Dear Uncle and Aunt, we are really poor now – what my husband earns won’t even pay for what we are allowed on our **ration** cards.* Now that we have no money everything is available, but it is so expensive that we can only look at it.” (Emilie Hildebrandt, 13 Jul 1948 from Weilheim-Teck.) Again, “we don’t have enough money to buy out our **ration** cards or firewood. Everything is so expensive, we can’t get anything nice.”

* A few letters described foods and amounts allowed by ration cards and fewer letters also described provisions which could not be purchased with ration cards.

Magdalena (Schock) Fickel seated right, her husband Johannes Fickel seated left, and their family. The photo was taken after 1948 since their children are adults and married.

Before the flight from Poland, they lived in Jarocin, Kreis Jarotschin, Warthegau.



Son Traugott was a Russian POW for four years until September 1948. Son Emil also fought in the war. Both returned to family in Germany.

Magdalena
(Schock) Fickel she does not reveal life experiences while in Poland.
Two sons were Soviet POWs and later reunited with the family in Germany; another son is mentioned but nothing else

Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, sister of John Schock Sr., writes 14 Apr 1947 from Ludwigsburg in the American zone: “We have a severe winter behind us, thank God, but are still facing a difficult spring. If we can endure then it will be better. We have to hold out until the new harvest. **Rations** are decreasing all the time. We can’t buy potatoes anymore. Butter is [rationed at] 200 grams a month. Flour is especially not available.”

Magdalena (Schock) Fickel writes 30 Nov 1947: “I didn’t get around to writing [or answering your letter] because we were trying to help ourselves in kind of a pitiful way. My husband and I went out to the fields to glean ears of grain and for all our trouble we were able to gather about two pounds of kernels in one day. As soon as a farmer leaves a field there are about 50 people waiting, and the farmers won’t let anyone on a field until after they themselves have gleaned it.”

Erna (Fickel) Schmiedel, daughter of Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, writes 18 Feb 1947 from Ludwigsburg: “We are awaiting with longing the personal appearance of my dear brother [Traugott] from Russia. Through the Red Cross we learned that he is alive and is in Lisichansk in the Donets region [of far eastern Ukraine].”

Magdalena (Schock) Fickel writes 22 Sep 1948: “... our lost son Traugott, came back, -- joy, tears and songs of praise. We were four years without a trace of him when he finally found us [on 21 Sep 1948]. He weighed 200 pounds when he was taken prisoner, but came home merely skin and bones, ... weighing only 100 pounds!

Traugott Fickel, son of Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, writes 22 May 1949 from Ludwigsburg: “I have recovered from the effects of my Russian captivity, but I am not well yet. ... When my parents and my wife had to leave Warthegau [a Nazi occupied region in Poland], it happened so fast that they didn’t have time to take anything with them and so we lost the last of what we were able to take with us when we were resettled [in Poland] from Bessarabia.”

Erna (Fickel) Schmiedel, daughter of Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, writes 18 Feb 1947 from Ludwigsburg: “A thousand thanks from our parents for your dear ‘Care package’ with the food provisions. Here in Germany we say ‘a Love Package from America.’ Our joy was great indeed! ... There is nothing more kind in the world than to bring joy to others ... Many times I have been stopped on the street by refugee children or wives begging for bread stamps. My heart ached that I couldn’t help them but had to tell them that I was a refugee too.”

Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, sister of John Schock Sr., writes 19 Mar 1948 from Ludwigsburg: “... we are especially hard up this last period of month – when Erna was shopping her case (purse) was stolen, together with our **ration** cards and 20 Marks, so we have been three weeks without any means for buying provisions.”

Traugott Fickel, son of Magdalena (Schock) Fickel, writes 22 May 1949: “Everything is available here now, but it is very expensive.” Magdalena (Schock) Fickel writes 23 Nov 1949 from Ludwigsburg: “Though everything is now available, we can’t afford it.”

Reinhold Schock and wife Elisabeth (Mayer) Schock. The photo was taken sometime after 1947.

Their only two children died as infants.

Reinhold Schock writes 11 Sep 1948 from Unterriexingen: "I am not like I was in Bessarabia. There I weighed 224 pounds, and now I weigh 140 pounds. That's the way it is in Germany -- here the pants grow!"



Reinhold
Schock

separated from his wife while in Poland due to forced service in the German Peoples Army; they were reunited in Germany in 1947 after she was allowed to leave Poland where she had worked on a farm

letters provided little observations of post war living circumstances

Friedrich Schock and wife Elisabeth (Otterstaetter) Schock with four of their children.

The photo was taken after 1932 and older boys are not shown.

Older sons Benjamin and Adolf were involved in the war; Benjamin was injured and Adolf was an English POW. The oldest daughter Erna experienced a love tragedy as her fiancé committed suicide.



Friedrich
Schock

he describes fleeing Pomerania through Mecklenburg;
one son was injured during the war, and another was a
British POW; one son is not mentioned in letters and
one daughter committed suicide

Friedrich Schock, brother of John Schock Sr., writes 23 Feb 1947 from Erlenhof (post Fichtenberg): “Our daughter-in-law Martha [wife of Benjamin] was expecting and left [western Pomerania] by train with her oldest daughter. She had taken the necessary things with her, but when they got to Thorn* they had to leave everything behind. Only the sick, old people, children, and those expecting, were allowed on the train. Many things were left behind, and the young and healthy ones had to go on foot. They got as far as Mecklenburg, the Waren [Muritz]** area, before the Russians caught up with them. On the second day she [i.e., my daughter-in-law Martha] gave birth in the forest [of Mecklenburg during the flight] and that’s where [my son] Benjamin got her black [i.e., in the dark] across the border.” ... “He came to us out of the military.” (Note: the baby lived only six months.)

* Thorn is in west Pomerania – east of Bilau; now it’s name is Torun and it’s located in Poland northwest of Warsaw. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toru%C5%84> Apparently, Martha and her daughter had intended to change trains when on their westward flight to Germany.

** For information on Waren which is located in Mecklenburg, see the www at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waren_\(M%C3%BCritz\)#Nazi_era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waren_(M%C3%BCritz)#Nazi_era)

Friedrich Schock writes 12 Mar 1947 from Erlenhof: “We have been dealt a very hard lot and can’t do anything to change it. We were able to save most of our things and after a two-month flight we got to the area near Bremen.” ... “From there we had to come down here to Schwabenland, to Wuerttemberg I was set up to manage a farmstead until the owner is released from captivity. ... It is not bad for us here – we have sufficient and good food as we supervise it ourselves. We have strudla and everything like in Bessarabia.” (Note: they were no longer on the farmstead as of 14 Mar 1949.)

Erna Schock, daughter of Friedrich Schock, writes 4 May 1947 from Erlenhof (post Fichtenberg) in the American zone: “I went to the Consul in Stuttgart and unfortunately, only those who have a daughter or son in America are being allowed in for the time being. The consul thought you might inquire there if there could be a possibility in the near future. Yes, it is frightful for us not knowing if we will have a home again in our lifetime. Now only the brides of the American soldiers are to go on the first transport.”

Elisabeth, wife of Friedrich Schock, writes 28 Sep 1947 from Erlenhof: “Here in Wuerttemberg, the farmers work like slaves. We didn’t have to work like this in West Prussia, especially not the women. Here, the men go about the business and the women tend to the cows – and such high hills. Climbing is so hard for me and everything is two and three stories high.” (Note: Elisabeth had her own farm in Poland at the time when forced out.)

Erna Schock, daughter of Friedrich Schock, writes 1 Dec 1947: “While we patiently wait and hope for better times, it seems to be getting worse. There is a Proverb: ‘And so we want to put the fate of our lives in God’s hands. He will let the most come of it.’”

Erna Schock, daughter of Friedrich Schock, writes 23 Jul 1948 from Gaildorf: “We live in one room – we sleep and eat in it – it is kitchen and living room, and still there is room for we have nothing to put in it! We just got two beds from a concentration camp so, at least, we don’t have to sleep on the floor anymore. They aren’t really beds, just some boards nailed together. We work from early morning until night to earn enough to live on. What we have to buy is frightfully expensive, and our pay just doesn’t increase! May God help us that things will change soon. Poverty and misery is everywhere and the place is full of Communists. Since they took our money, there are few Democrats other than the Capitalists who will squeeze the last penny out of the laborer. I was in town briefly today –no one knows that it is Sunday anymore, it has become a work day too. In town are big blockades posted with signs ‘Rules for Reclamation’! I cried myself sick when I came home. They always promise everything possible, but it is a sin and shame the way they treat us refugees. The natives who still have their homes and all their belongings are asked if so much as a hen was killed [sic], and every little war-damage caused by the invasion is paid for, while they squeeze us in the smallest hole that no else would enter and ignore us! As I came with our savings book they simple said ‘Refugees don’t get a percentage on their money, go to where you turned it in.’ ... I don’t like to always scold, but sometimes it gets ones gall!”

Benjamin, son of Friedrich Schock, writes 15 Mar 1949 from Wredenhagen* in the Soviet zone: “We have a heavy fate weighing on us, especially us homeless. We are just excess, useless left-overs. We keep hoping there will be ‘emigration’ but all is quiet now. One works [in an underground coal mine] from early until late just to stay alive. To buy anything else [i.e., other than food] is out of the question.”

* Anne (Schock) Schwarz, youngest daughter of Friedrich Schock, mentions in a letter of 12 Jan 1970 from Murrhardt, Germany, that by 1970, ‘Beno’ lived in Stuttgart.

Frederika Herrmann, mother-in-law of Benjamin, writes 6 Feb 1949 from Mönchshof, Mecklenburg: “I have been here with my daughter, Martha, Benjamin’s wife for eight days. He is away working in the ore mines while she sits here in poverty and misery with her three children.” (Note: Martha stayed in Mecklenburg and did not join Benjamin in the American zone.)

Johannes Schock from
Borodino, friend and
distant cousin of John
Schock, Sr.



Magdalena Wallewein, mother-in-law of Johannes Schock who was a distant cousin and Borodino neighbor of John Schock Sr., writes 11 Apr 1948 from Sipplingen: “Dear Neighbor – that you thought of me! Johannes’ father sent us the letter from you and I was overjoyed that you still remember me, and thank you for it. Of course my Andreas [Wallewein] is lost and I’ve had my share of crying. Now on February 11th he will be gone three years without a trace. We were in flight for two months, from 20th January to 18th March. In three weeks, my Andreas became ill and I had to leave him in the hospital in the town of Bitoff. That was under Polish authority – there were many military soldiers – they took him to the hospital as he had frozen his hands and feet. I had told him ‘Andreas, we will not find each other again in this life,’ and now it is so. He said he would be well again in four weeks – so where are the four weeks? We always fled with the soldiers – everything went ‘drunter und drüber.’ (higgledy-piggledy, upside down!) One can’t write down everything that happened – I have never seen anything like it and it snowed all the time. Sometimes we went five (sutge ?) paces or stretches (?) then stopped again to look for food – bread or potatoes , and feed for the horses. One had to go up to five kilometers to find three or four pounds of oats or barley. So many horses starved and one of ours got sick too so that we couldn’t go on. Then, we threw all our things off the wagon – two big chests and a straw sack full of bedding – five woolen tapestry (or carpets), two quilts and Sunday clothes – everything in the chests, and [my daughter] Maria’s entire dowry. (Emphasis added. Magdalena Wallewein’s sister, Maria, married a Benjamin Schock, brother of this Johannes.)

Johannes Schock, distant cousin and Borodino neighbor of John Schock, Sr., writes 27 Feb 1948 from Herbsthausen in the American zone: “We can’t buy anything with money, because all the merchants will trade [or barter] only for scarce food items – which we don’t have – when you have to live on **ration** cards there is never anything left over. The farmers get everything, but they trade everything possible. What they should trade in food, they hide and sell to the **Black Market**. ... All the refugees and those torn apart have to live and eat too, but no one will sell anything for money – they say simply that the money is worthless.”

Johannes Schock, distant cousin and Borodino neighbor of John Schock, Sr., writes 27 Jun 1948: “Now I must tell you that there have been a number of changes in our currency lately. Everyone in the family had to turn in 60 Reich Mark, and then each person got 40 new Reich Mark. If one didn’t have 60 Mark to turn in, he got 40 of the new Marks anyway. All the rest of the money had to be turned in and is to be exchanged at ten for a hundred. This is not certain yet, but it has hit the refugees the hardest again, for all the money they have been able to earn and save they have not been able to buy anything. No one would sell for money. The farmers always bartered with their goods for scarce food items.”

Johannes Schock, distant cousin and Borodino neighbor of John Schock, Sr., writes 27 Jun 1948 from Herbsthausen in the American zone: “There is a great a deal of tension in Berlin these days. The Russians allotted 70 Marks per head and our refugees are asking each other if they can remain here as slaves for the rest of their lives. You can imagine how they are looked at, especially if one has from four to six children they practically have to exist on the streets. Here the yards are small, not like in Bessarabia. The Germans have few children – one or two, seldom three or four, and of course the children want to play like they were used to and there are always some people that won’t allow it.”

Johannes Schock, distant cousin and Borodino neighbor of John Schock, Sr., writes 30 Dec 1948: “There is some merchandise available now, but it is so expensive and there is no money.”

Photos taken by Martin R Schock during July 2011 of Unterheinriet, Germany, nearby farm land, and Happenbach, Germany. These villages are the homeland villages from which Schock emigrated to Bessarabia about 1817.



Side street parallel to, and one block from, main street through Happenbach.



Above: highway through center of Unterheinreit, Germany.

Left: example of centuries old architecture beneath stucco.



Church in Unterheinriet, Germany, where Schock likely worshiped prior to 1817 when some moved to Bessarabia.





Landscape between Unterheinriet and Happenbach, Germany.

Part 4.B -- The EHNI family

The slides that follow provide personal observations and experiences using the written words of the siblings, and family members of siblings, of Christiana (Ehni) Schock.

Daniel
Ehni

died at Borodino in 1934. Two daughters and a grandson write. One son-in-law and three grandsons were Russian POWs. Letters do not mention the oldest daughter and her family.

Daniel Ehni and his second wife
Johanna Scheffelmaier.

Photo source: Daniel's great
granddaughter Katja Jürgens-
Gropengießer (2020).



Daniel died in 1934. Daniel had 16 children from two marriages; 9 of the children died as infants. Six of the remaining children married; Ehni families lived in the British and American zones.

Daughter Pauline's husband, Samuel Härter, was a POW and never returned during the period of the letters through 1949; and three grandsons were also POWs – one a French POW, one an American POW and the third a Russian POW.

No information about daughter Berta, Magdalena's sister by Daniel's 1st marriage, is provided. In one letter, Magdalena mentions by name her brother and her four adult (step) siblings, but she does not include Berta.

Left to right: Art(h)ur, his parents Pauline (Hein) and Jacob Ehni, and his sister Else at the grave site of his brother Daniel.

Photo source: Jacob's granddaughter Katja Jürgens-Gropengießer (2020).





Emanuel Stickel and wife Magdalena (Ehni) Stickel, front and center, surrounded by their children. Magdalena is a daughter of Daniel Ehni. The photo was taken in Germany about 1950.

Magdalena (Ehni) Stickel, daughter of Daniel Ehni, writes 3 Aug 1947 from Winzerhausen in the American zone: “Everything [i.e., food and provisions] goes to the **Black Market** where we can’t afford it. ... we are gone from our homeland with no more than the name ‘riff-raff’. ... When we resettled in West Prussia, we had built up quite nicely again, and now everything is gone. If one could only buy – but there is nothing available, and what there is goes [i.e., is traded or bartered] for food and provisions that we don’t have.”

Magdalena (Ehni) Stickel writes 12 Oct 1947: “We were in West Prussia three years.”

Magdalena (Ehni) Stickel writes 18 Jul 1948: “They [my husband and older children] are all working, but without profit or gain! We would soon have had some money saved again, but with the new [devalued] currency we became destitute once more.” ... “Everything has become more expensive, and there is no money since the devaluation. When we had money there were no wares to buy; now it is better with the merchandise, but no money!”

Family Samuel Ehni, son of Daniel Ehni, wrote 27 Feb 1947 from Kupferzell in the American zone: “If it were not that America is shipping in so many provisions, Germany would be starved out already.”

Family Samuel Ehni wrote 11 May 1947: “The worst off are the families where the husband is still in captivity and his wife and children don’t even know if he is alive, -- like my sister Pauline”

Arter Ehni, son of Jacob and grandson of Daniel Ehni, writes 26 Dec 1947 from Kleinbottwar in the American zone: “The people have to do with very little fuel and it is bitter cold outside. Many of our fellow-citizens, the new citizens, don’t even have a roof over their heads, having lost their homes – such poverty all over! That’s why we long so strongly for the ‘fragrance of the lime trees, -- the fresh green of the fields and forests, the meadows and the pastures!’”

Pauline (Ehni) Haerter, daughter of Daniel Ehni, writes 17 Oct 1948: “Further, dear Aunt and Uncle, my work is in the forest. I go there with my children and pick up beechnuts. These are small kernels that fall from the trees and are made into oil [for cooking]. We have also gathered [i.e., gleaned] a hundredweight of wheat ears so that we will have flour for cooking. We can get only bread with our **ration** cards and it is barely enough ...”

Pauline (Ehni) Haerter, writes 8 Apr 1949 from Bempflingen: “Many captives of the Russians and the Poles are returning now, but I still have no knowledge of my husband [Samuel].”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess, seated right, and her husband Samuel Hess. The boy's name is not known. The approximate date of the photo is also not known, but she died 13 October 1951.

Katharina and Samuel had 13 children – 3 died as infants. Son-in-law Otto Schock was a Russian POW for over five years – returning to his family 19 Sep 1949. Youngest son Johannes was killed in the war leaving his wife Martha and one child.



Katharina
(Ehni) Hess

died in 1951. She wrote often including tales of life around her. Her youngest son died in service during the war; one son and one daughter moved to Canada

Katharina (Ehni) Hess, sister of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 19 Feb 1947 from Berkheim in the American zone: “Thank you, thank you, thank you [for your package] – our language is too plain to express how we feel – so I must proclaim to you our joy that our son-in-law [,Otto Schock,] has been heard from! He is in the Russian zone. He wrote to the camp where we were in Neugersdorf.* In the camp he had worked at Ebersbach* and the people there wrote to Daniel Mäyer, who wrote to [our daughter] Magdalena --- that’s how we know. He longs so for his family, ...”

* Neugersdorf and Ebersbach merged into one town in 2011; it is located in southeast Saxony, east of Dresden, on the border of the Czech Republic. The German Nazi had a concentration camp there during WWII. (Note: The Russian army was advancing westward and reached Berlin before the British or Americans.)

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes 5 Jan 1948 in a letter addressed to Israel Schilling: “... I am getting forgetful. It is no wonder – when one has been in flight [from Russian zone to the American zone] for two months and is such cold weather! It snowed day and night and often no ‘wadir’ (covers ?). At night we slept in cow barns like our Savior – many times out on the street, and such weather – I can’t begin to tell you. If I could tell you everything, you would be astounded.” (Emphasis added.)

Katharina (Ehni) Hess, sister of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 19 Feb 1947 from Berkheim in the American zone: “We have been told that there will be even less bread next month – may God have mercy – so many refugees continue to come from West Prussia – on one train that arrived, the people had not been given any food and their clothes had been taken away from them so that most of them froze to death. Have mercy on us – it is so cold, already February and no more firewood or coal.”

Katharina Hess writes 18 Jul 1947 from Berkheim: “Now the crop is ripe and ready and very nice too, but much too little was seeded for so many. ... What a miserable life! -- and then there are so many thefts. One hears that someone broke in at one place to steal and then again at another place – the other night they were at [my daughter] Lehna’s neighbors, but the woman heard them and got up right away. One stood in front of her and she screamed so the neighbors heard her and they [the robbers] ran away.”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess, sister of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 3 Apr 1947 from Berkheim in the American zone: “Now I want to tell you of something that was said to have happened -- There was a woman who heard over five years ago that her husband was killed in the war, and now she was getting remarried. While she was in church for the wedding her husband came home and he came and stood near the front of the church, and when the bride came out and saw her husband standing there, she ran and fell around his neck and went home with Him! Now you can see some of the things that have happened!”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes 16 May 1947: “Now I will tell you about another incident that was reported – two refugees had agreed that they would go to every farmer and try to buy some wheat, only two pounds from each, and they didn’t get even one kernel! They [the farmers] would rather see the people starve – one can work as hard as he is able and still get nothing to eat. If I could tell you everything you would ‘get an earful’.” (Emphasis added.)

Emilie (Hess) Kron, married daughter of Katharina (Ehni) Hess, writes 15 Mar 1947 from Reuendorf (post Stetten) in the American zone: “I must let you know how we are faring in Germany. Concerning food provisions, it is not bad. We are here on the estate of an Earl (or Count) where I and four of the children work.” Emilie (Hess) Kron writes 1 May 1947: “Those that work in factories get more pay and don’t wear out so many shoes and clothes, but one does not know yet how it will be with employment.”

Olga Wießner, daughter of Katharina (Ehni) Hess, writes 18 Jul 1947 from Berkheim in the American zone: “Almost 3 years in flight and we don’t know what to expect – are we really such terrible sinners! And now I have had worse luck – my **ration** cards for all eight of us, were stolen. Here is theft like you can’t picture. ... I have a purse that gaps open and someone took my wallet with everything when I was in town shopping. ... People will line up for the bread before the bread is even baked.”

Olga Wießner, daughter of Katharina (Ehni) Hess, writes 5 Jan 1948: “... we can’t get **ration** cards for shoes, nor for clothes.”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess, sister of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 1 Sep 1947: “Oh if I had a thousand tongues – how I would love to talk to you. There is so much to be said, but so, I must bear it alone. ...”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes 24 Sep 1947: “Hunger makes tripe (fleckle) taste like bratwurst as thick as the sleeve of a fur coat!”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes Jul 1948 from Berkheim: “... we don’t have money and don’t get relief aid anymore. They took our old money from us and we don’t have any of the new. All the refugees are complaining about the new currency, many are now unemployed that had jobs before. Everything is available now that we couldn’t buy before.”

Katharina Hess writes 3 Nov 1948 from Berkheim: “It looks very bad here – a mob (i.e., scheigen) of men, women, boys and girls ganged up and broke the big windows in the stores downtown and destroyed what was in them so that the army had to clear the streets with their panzers. There were up to 50 thousand people and it was all because everything is so expensive and the people have no money.”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess, sister of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 28 Jan 1949 from Berkheim in the American zone: “All those that wanted to be home [by Christmas] are not writing anymore! The Russians are keeping them back, -- they plan to build a track (or road) to Japan and that’s where these half-starved men will have to work. Oh, that God would have mercy on them. None are coming home from there, but many came home for Christmas from France. I don’t know why only those from France were allowed to come home. The paper said the joy was more than words can describe.”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes 24 Mar 1949: “The astrologers predicted that the world would ‘go under’ on March 17th so some people ate and drank till they were drunk so they could say they had lived!”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes 7 Apr 1949: “I never wanted to die here as they don’t let the dead rest in peace. After one is dead for ten to twelve years, he is dug up and another goes in the grave. I said they won’t leave the dead in peace when they are already at rest, and I wouldn’t want that. I once asked a woman why they do it and she said ‘because they don’t have enough space.’”

Emilie (Hess) Kron writes 6 Mar 1949 from Reuendorf in the American zone: “I also want to tell you that shortly after the ‘collapse’ [in 1940] a man by the name of Kartonov went back to our [Bessarabian] homeland, but he died from starvation and grief. His wife writes that only God knows if she and the children will be alive by Springtime.”

Emilie (Hess) Kron writes 26 Jun 1949: “I hope you excuse me for not writing so long – my husband always said the girls* should write, but that is like ‘dragging the dog to his bark’ – it is not easy!”

* Their daughter did include a short thank you note.

On other topics:

- Emilie (Hess) Kron also writes 6 Mar 1949: “It hasn’t rained for two years and no one speaks German anymore – all strange languages.”
- Erna Kron, daughter of Emilie (Hess) Kron, writes 21 Aug 1949: “The harvest turned out very well this year and we will probably finish next week, but the potato crop is not especially good.”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes 5 Feb 1950 from Berkheim: “I don’t want to die in Berkheim, but I will have to. If one wants music at his funeral, one has to pay for it! I never heard of such a thing that one has to buy the ‘singing’ too! So, in tears, I paid them two Mark, otherwise it will cost 35 Mark when I die or there will be no singing.”

Katharina (Ehni) Hess writes 23 Apr 1951 from Berkheim: “One meter of wood is 55 Mark. Whoever wants some, has to order it or he doesn’t get any. Our Lena goes to the forest and digs up tree roots, and that is our fuel. Coal is not even made available.”

Magdalena (Hess) Schock, daughter of Katharine (Ehni) Hess, writes 10 Mar 1947 from Berkheim: “Many have shown up after they had not been heard from for 3 or 4 years. So, one day the time will come for my husband [Otto] when my children and I will be able to rejoice with him again.”

Magdalena (Hess) Schock writes 6 Jul 1947: “... I was excited about having heard from my husband [Otto] in Russian captivity. I have to say ‘Oh dear God, by the Russians!’ That is very hard for me that he is with the Russians and has to suffer such hunger. In January, he was behind ‘barbed wire’ for two years already.”

Magdalena (Hess) Schock writes 13 May 1949 from Berkheim: “..., and my husband [Otto] is not home yet. There are many who come ... I have gone to the railway station twice when some captives arrived. There was many a wife and many a mother who welcomed her son, and the joy is -- I can’t describe it!”

Barbara (Ehni) Weber, seated right, her mother Katharina (Schock) Ehni, seated left, Ludwig Weber, Barbara's husband, standing right and a daughter Maria (Weber) Konrad .

The photo was taken prior to 1943, since Barbara died of a stroke in Poland during 1943.

Ludwig writes of a son Alexander who died in 1944 and a daughter Olga Ruff in the Russian zone – nothing else is written. An older daughter, Anna, married Heinrich Engle, who with Anna and Heinrich's son, Albert, were Russian POWs – Albert was released but not Heinrich at the time of the letters.



Barbara (Ehni) Weber died in 1943 in Poland. A son-in-law and grandson were Russian POWs – the grandson had not been released at the time of the letters.

Heinrich Konrad, son-in-law of Barbara (Ehni) Weber, writes 17 Aug 1947 from Ensingen in the American zone: “Right now I don’t have much time to do the cooking too, and these days that is quite an art [when there is no white flower, meat, lard or cooking oil]. Poor Germany!”

Heinrich Konrad writes 7 Sep 1947: “Now we are facing another riddle – no rain the whole summer. There has never been such a drought here. One doesn’t know what to think, but we mustn’t lose our trust in God.”

Anna (Weber) Engel, daughter of Barbara (Ehni) Weber, writes 10 Nov 1947 from Schwagstorf in the British zone: “We are facing another winter – without bedding or stockings and we don’t have a stove in our room. But we are, after all, refugees and no one here knows how we suffered on that journey -- and now with this poor food we are all anemic. When we go to the doctor, we are told to eat better, and that just isn’t possible.”

Israel Ehni. The photo at left was likely taken about 1948 in Germany. The photo at right was taken when he was a soldier for Russia during the Russian-Japanese War.



Israel Ehni writes 2 Dec 1949 from Tarmstedt: “We were on the road from January 18th to March 7th [1945] and saw many things too – and where I was during the 1st World War, there I go so far into Turkey. ... only God and I know what I have been through.”

Israel
Ehni served as Russian soldier during the Russian-Japanese War. He does not write about personal experiences, but instead about events in the region.

His 1st wife, Maria Weber, died somewhere after they left Borodino; he married his 2nd wife while in Poland and they somehow became separated – he learns she is in Russia, but does not reveal her story

Israel Ehni, brother of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 27 Jan 1947 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “I must tell you again the first package was also still as well wrapped as when you sent it – [my daughter] Ida went to the Post today and brought the package and she saw that many packages had arrived and also that many were broken to pieces – those that were wrapped in paper only, especially those with foodstuff in them – many were empty – each one takes a little out and by the time it gets to the owner it’s empty – she even told of one that was filled again with stones! Such things are caused by hunger.”

Ida (Ehni) Siegloch, daughter of Israel Ehni, writes 27 Jan 1947 from Tarmstedt: “Here in our village many packages arrive and half are stolen from – they tear open the cartons and take out what fits them and then they deal in the **Black Market** – these Germans are worse than gypsies! ... The citizens have whatever they want and we poor refugees can starve.”

Israel Ehni writes 3 Apr 1947: “And now I must tell you that I go to church every Sunday and how sad it is that there are so few people in church. They can always have cinema and theater like that was going to get them into heaven.”

Israel Ehni, brother of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 11 Jun 1947 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “Further, I will let you know that I now have a trace of my wife, Emma. She is very far away from here. ... She is with the Russians and I won’t go there. ... I found where Emma’s son-in-law [by her prior marriage] is in France and he sent her address to me ...”

Israel Ehni writes 11 Jul 1947: “In June, we had no rain at all, but there will be a nice crop – only not enough. I always feel lucky to be on a farm, as I haven’t gone hungry yet. ... It is much better on a farm.”

Israel Ehni writes 19 Sep 1947: “I always felt that God might open another door (way out) for us – now a man came from the Russian zone – he escaped. [There, t]he Russians are dragging in all people – not only the menfolk, but also girls and young women, but he says they don’t know where the Russians are taking them.” (Israel Ehni, 20 Jul 1947.) “There would be much to write about, but as I can’t tell you in person, I also can’t write you – something is ‘hanging in the air’ but we can’t see yet what is going to happen.” (Emphasis added.)

Israel Ehni, brother of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 6 Jan 1948 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “Considering the food situation here, it is so sad when one gets into town and sees the people there – the wind could blow some of them over.”

Israel Ehni writes 14 Feb 1948: “God only know how many more will starve this year. What was allotted for each period is discontinued. There is nothing anymore.”

Israel Ehni writes 3 Feb 1948 from Tarmstedt: “I and [my son-in-law] Karl went to a gathering where our senior Pastor from Bessarabia held services. I can’t tell you how nice that was – no less that five thousand people and all were from Bessarabia. We met many acquaintances that we thought might be dead already! You can imagine the joy and what it will be like in heaven!” Israel Ehni writes 1 Apr 1948: “The third of April I am going to Bremerverde – there will be a Pastor from Bessarabia and one can again meet many [from Bessarabia] – I am already happy about it.”

Israel Ehni, brother of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 29 Jun 1948 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “... what shall I write you – that we are so poor now – that we don’t have any money at all! – that all money was depreciated so that a thousand [Mark] will leave a hundred and ten, only one. Everything was taken away; there is to be new money ... the **black market** that was rampant is dead! No ceilings have been set and everyone charges what they want.”

Israel Ehni writes 2 Jul 1948: “I can write you this, that the Russians have barricaded Berlin and won’t allow anything in; they want to let the people starve. They won’t let anything in except what can be flown in. ... No one can get passage in or out anymore”

Israel Ehni writes 30 Dec 1948 from Tarmstedt: “Everything is available now, but we can’t afford to buy anything.”



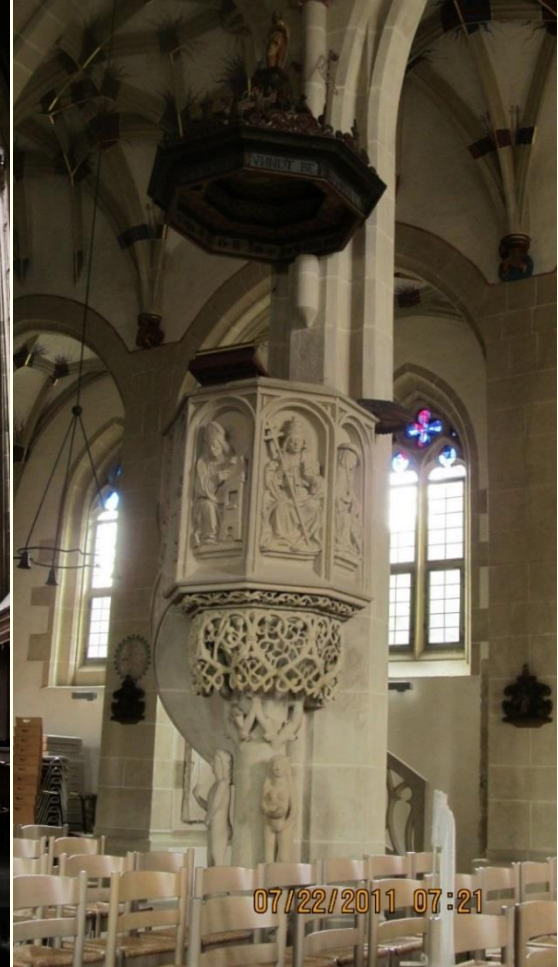
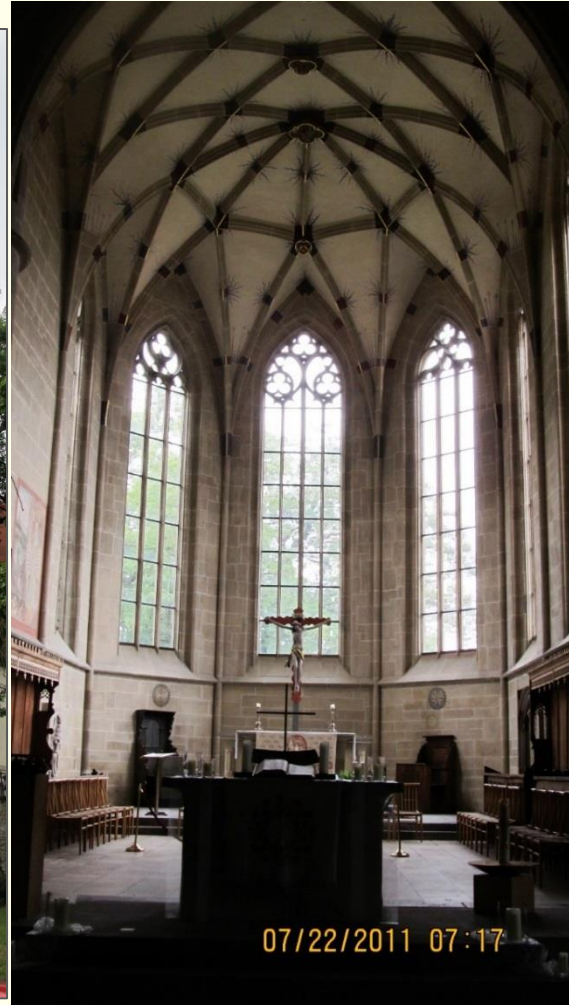
U.S. 'Checkpoint Charlie.' Photo above taken May 1965. Photos at right taken September 2013 by Martin R Schock.

Israel Ehni, brother of Christine (Ehni) Schock, writes 12 Dec 1947 from Tarmstedt in the British zone: “I have already often felt that there isn’t a God anymore – and then again I have to thank God that what happened to others didn’t happen to me and I think ‘prayer helps in every need’ – and that is so.”

Israel Ehni writes 6 Jan 1949 from Tarmstedt: “Yes, dear sister and bro.-in-law, I have written quite a lot, but not everything. There was a pastor from America – he said that ‘all that glitters is not gold’ in America, at Christmas time there is still more spiritualness in Germany. Well there may be some, but I’d say only one person out of a hundred, though I won’t argue about it – there may still be places with some good people, but the worse the times – the worse the people. Our people from Bessarabia don’t go to church anymore either, especially the young ones. (Emphasis added.)

Israel Ehni writes 6 Jul 1949 and also 8 Sep 1949 from Tarmstedt: “I can’t write you everything about how it is now.” (Emphasis added.)

Photos taken by Martin R Schock during July 2011 of Marbach, Germany, and the nearby area. This is the place from which Ehni emigrated to Bessarabia.



Alexanderkirche, Marbach, Germany.







Last slide