

Grunfeld, Crimea by Ilse Bauman nee Lohrer

The village Grunfeld (Tatar: Adschi Achmat) was located four kilometers from the railroad station Kolai, and was established by my Great Grandfather Mathias Lohrer. He was 12 years old when he came with his father from a town in Wuerttemberg, unknown to us, to Weinau on the Molotschna. He married Elisabeth Schill. This marriage produced five sons-Jacob, Gottlieb, Mathias, Michael, and Johann-and two daughters-Johanna and Christine. After all the children were grown and some already married, my Great Grandfather bought land in the Crimea in about 1860-1865. Here he settled with four sons; Mathias had died. Later the sons-in-law Wilhelm Siffring and Jacob Krauter also came.

The first years must have been very difficult, according to the following event that was told to us: The winter wheat was just beginning to head out as my Great Uncle Michael and a Tatar were driving around the fields. He said to the Tatar: "We have lived through many poor harvests in Crimea and if the one this year is poor again, we will likely have to abandon the land." Thereupon the Tatar told him to halt and after getting down off his wagon he spread his coat over the wheat. Then he counted the heads that were under the coat and said cheerfully: "Korkma Schorbaschi," which means "do not fear, you will harvest a very good crop." This was truly the case and from then on conditions improved. Their lack of knowledge of how to work the heavy soils of Crimea was the reason for the poor crops during the early years. They had more success with sheep husbandry. When the amount of pasture land was no longer sufficient for their many sheep, they were forced into buying more and more land.

The water question gave them many problems. Only the well on my Great Grandfathers yard provided suitable drinking water. In all other wells the water was slightly salty and could only be used for the cattle. Later on, however, each farmer had an artesian well.

As the wool prices declined, they gave up sheep husbandry and depended entirely upon the cultivated land. Winter wheat was primarily the crop grown. How much land the community or the individual farmer owned, I don't know. My Grandfather Gottlieb Lohrer had about 975 dessjantin (equal to 1060 hectare). The youngest Great Uncle, Johann Lohrer, established the village Altschin with his four sons, three kilometers distant from Grunfeld, that later became famous for its large orchard.

The following industrial establishments were found in Grunfeld: 1) a brick-works with two kilns, 2) a steam-driven mill built in 1900, 3) a locksmith's workshop, 4) a blacksmith shop, and 5) a cabinet-maker shop. Most of the families were fellow members in the cooperative store in Kolai.

The people of Grunfeld early put great emphasis and worth on education. Two of my Uncles, Friederich Lohrer and David Richter were engineers, Jacob Siffring was an agronomist, and Edward Lohrer a teacher. The daughters were sent to

school at Halbstadt or Baltikum at Lindheim and Dorpat. The youngsters completed the Central School or Gymnasium and the Commerce School in Simferopol.

Except for Johann Richter all had to leave the village in 1930, and as descendants of the rich Lohrer had to undergo fearful imprisonment and deportation.

[Editor's Note: Certainly not all of the Germans were cleared out as early as 1930, but there is no doubt that many of the wealthier land-owners were targeted early on during the first wave of collectivization which began with Stalin's first Five Year Plan in 1928. Yes, many of the so-called kulaks fled or were exiled to Siberia and points east as early as 1930. Hilda Riss, a well-known Crimea researcher, even lists those who were exiled or absent from Rosental by the early 1930's.]

Many found employment in the Caucasus (region) and were active as teachers, bookkeepers, and similar occupations. Unfortunately, they with all other Russian-Germans were deported to Siberia in 1941. I am not aware that any of our many relatives ever found their way into Germany.

After 1930, I once again visited our home village Grunfeld. How disconsolate and ravaged it appeared!! Most of the houses were abandoned, door and windows stood open, and the cattle roamed about freely. The fences and many buildings were partly torn apart. The tile supposedly was taken to use in construction of a Jewish village. Furniture and other goods were also supposedly removed by the Jews. Later on, Russians supposedly were to have settled here. So the German village Grunfeld and its first occupants vanished from Crimea through the Bolshevist Regime. *

* The section on Grunfeld was apparently written by Ilse Bauman nee Lohrer (Ed.).