

Eichendorf, Kahul District

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

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[Translation Begins]

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A Brief History by Gottlob Hornung

When our ancestors were allocated a land quota of 65 hectares [160.6 acres] during the settlement in Bessarabia 140 years ago, many a heavy heart sighed, wondering how he would manage this wild land with primitive farming tools and weak draft animals. Many of the settlers would have been satisfied with half of the arable blessings at that time.

However, it became clear with the next generation that there was not too much land at all. With the great increase in children, the farms had to be halved and quartered. By the third generation, the fathers found themselves forced to look for new land. They sold the small farm in the mother community and leased or bought new land from estate owners, which led to the establishment of the first daughter colonies in the early 1860s. By the turn of the century, the daughter communities were already cultivating more land than the 24 mother communities combined.

At the beginning of the new century, the third generation faced the same problem as the second once did. There was a lack of land for the married sons. Once again, dozens of new daughter colonies sprang up from the Bessarabia soil. Among the newly founded daughter settlements of the century was also Eichendorf, Albota Parish, in the Kahul District.

Eichendorf

Located 35 kilometers [21.8 miles] northeast of the district town of Kahul on a high plateau of the mountain ridge of the Carpathian foothills, which stretches from north to south, east of the Pruth [River] Valley. The village bears its very natural name, "Eichendorf" [Eichen=oaks; Dorf=village], as it was placed in the middle of an oak virgin forest that still remains almost

untouched and splendidly animal inhabited. The entire land area of the village of 2,800 *Deßjatinen* (3,050 hectares [7,537 acres]) at the time of purchase in 1908 consisted of only 800 *Deßjatinen* [2,160 acres] of arable land and 2,200 *Deßjatinen* [5,940 acres] of dense oak forest. It was purchased from the large landowner Prince Ferdinand Chica for 180 rubles per *Deßjatinen*. Three small valleys run parallel with the Pruth through the land, which flow into the Jalpug [River] above Bolgrad with their spring meltwater. The soil was extremely rich in humus. One can imagine what leaf deposits had occurred in the several thousand year old oak forest. Over 1 meter [3.28 feet] deep, the soil was deep black; accordingly, the farmers had enormous harvests. However, the land had one disadvantage: on the uncultivated land, there was hardly any water to be found up to 20 meters [65.6 feet] deep, and without water, no farming home can be established even on golden soil. Therefore, one had to venture further into the forest. But even here, due to the high plateau, there was hardly enough water for a chicken yard. A fortunate find was one of the three valleys, the so-called “Brunnental” [Well Valley], which had plenty of good water for people and animals. Many wells were dug here. Near this valley, the village was established right in the middle of the oak forest.

Getting Started

The farmers in Eichendorf progressed literally like that of the American farmers: They first had to clear a place for human and animal dwellings. But clearing oak trees with diameters of often more than half a meter [1.6 feet] means something more challenging than clearing fir trees. Many broken ax handles had to be replaced, and some drops of sweat had to be sacrificed to the already moist ground before the tree fell. And yet, the tireless new settlers made it. Although primitive earthen huts were initially built for the people, better stables had to be created for the domestic animals, which found it difficult to learn to bend. Necessity produces invention: They dug a foundation half a meter [1.6 feet] deep into the ground, placed thick oak logs, up to two and a half meters [8.2 feet] high, next to each other, built a strong floor above it that served as storage for grain in the first years, and covered the roof with reeds. The walls were coated with clay mixed with straw (*Strohlehm*) and made smooth. These stables were little inferior to the solid buildings of the mother communities. Even in 1940, during our Resettlement, such stables and barns were in a condition that no hard working farmer needed to be ashamed of.

The tiresome water fetching from the Well Valley would have been bearable in winter for household use, but not for supplying the livestock of an average farmer. They repeatedly tried to dig a well in their own farmyard without a divining rod and Geiger counter for their own needs, and lo and behold, the initial disappointments with “dirty water” (*Suderwasser*) were richly rewarded with every new digging by the neighbors. It was as if each newly dug well brought the water sources closer. The more one drew water, the more abundant the water supply became.

Village Image

Every loyal son of the homeland will experience the same as I: My hometown was the most beautiful among all others. Here, however, I would like to say without exaggeration: Eichendorf was one of the most beautiful and climatically healthiest places among all German settlements in Bessarabia. You drive through farmer fields as if in paradise. These are interrupted by a dense oak forest with well-maintained wagon roads, and if you have not yet come out of your

amazement at the splendid forest nature, you almost bump your nose into a spotless village with its hospitable inhabitants. It lies in one of the three valleys of the village area and stretches a kilometer [.6 mile] long from north to south with a 60 meter-[196.8 feet] wide road. On both sides, behind an avenue of acacia trees with sidewalks, behind blindingly white courtyard walls, one neat farmhouse lines up next to another. The center of the village is cut through from east to west by a cross street. Four old oaks stand here like mighty pillars, memorializing a glorious forest past, as if to say: Even before your arrival, it was peaceful and beautiful here. To the right of the entrance through the cross street stands the beautiful school and town hall built in 1911, with an iron bell tower erected in 1921 by the village blacksmith Robert Hottmann as a gift to the community. In the same year, the community also purchased two beautiful bells in [the sounds of] “f” and “a” from the motherland, which soon announced joy and sorrow, resonating in the nearby brook. Across from the schoolhouse on the other side of the street was the co-op store (*Konsumladen*) with a modern dairy farm [*Milchmeierei*]. Extending from this courtyard were the stables for the community’s cattle-breeding and residences for the herders. West of the yards, there was a cemetery with well-maintained graves and memorials. In front of every house, there was a beautiful flower garden, where the housewives and older girls engaged in a real competition. And inside the house: “Flowers as much as you want, on every windowsill, and that was beautiful!” (dialect—*Bloama soviel du witt, auf jedem Fensterbritt, und dös war schö!*)



Agriculture, Crafts, and Cattle-breeding

The people of Eichendorf made intensive use of the virgin, humus-rich soil. All types of grains that could be grown in Bessarabia were planted here. The soil yielded extremely well. There was less shortage of rain here, as the moist, cool forest attracted more rain than anywhere else. The conveniently located Pruth Port ensured good sales and better prices, where everything went directly to wholesale in barges. After soybean cultivation had successfully taken root among

German farmers in the 1930s, the best results were also achieved with this crop in Eichendorf. The fertile soil yielded 40 to 50 *Zentner* [1 *Zentner* = 110.25 lbs / 50 kg] per hectare of the coveted bean, which richly rewarded the farmer's hard work. The farmers quickly came to prosperity and wealth, which was particularly evident in the modern agricultural machinery, the improved livestock, and the desire for better education for their children. There was less interest in growing grapes, especially since the wild varieties did not produce marketable wine and the cultivated ones required too much care. They maintained just enough vineyards for their own needs.

In the beginning, Eichendorf had a locksmith and a blacksmith, who maintained a branch business for agricultural machines and their spare parts until the First World War. Later on, carpenters, shoemakers, saddlers, and tailors joined them. Building, considering the reluctance of the Bessarabian Germans towards wooden houses, was not easy for Eichendorf.

In virgin forest areas, one does not always find stones. Necessary foundation stones were obtained from far away, and houses were built from air-dried bricks (*Patzen*). However, since these required thorough renovation and repairs every year, they switched to fired brick, and so massive houses emerged, which the Moldovans living there still look up to with admiration today. Eventually, there were six constantly operating brickworks in Eichendorf, which brought in no less than a well-managed medium-level agriculture. However, one thing distinguished Eichendorf from other German villages: the unity of the beautifully whitewashed houses was interrupted here by the alternation of dazzling white and brick-red facades.

Animal-breeding also experienced a significant upswing. It was well known that the Germans in Bessarabia were the best horse breeders. In Eichendorf, the "German Horse", a cross between Arabian and Orlov breeds, had found its best expression; it was beautiful, quick, not very demanding for Steppe life, and very enduring. The people of Eichendorf owned nearly five hundred of the most beautiful horses.

The red German dairy cow was also crossed with the Schleswig-Holstein breed introduced by the Agricultural Chamber, resulting in a very milk-producing cow. More than five hundred cows daily brought their rich blessing.

Sheep breeding was also practiced to a considerable extent, as half of the household life depended on their wool, meat, and cheese. One counted around two thousand sheep in Eichendorf. The Marino sheep provided the best wool and gave abundant milk. In recent years, some farmers also turned to Karakul breeding. Unfortunately, one always had trouble with the sheep due to the wolf, which never became extinct in the forests. Thus, great damage occurred when it broke into the stables. The nearby forest offered the animals the best cooling in summer and—most importantly—when the grass in the steppe was scorched by the sun, there was still the juiciest food here.

School and Church

In the first three years from 1908 to 1911, the worship service was held in farmhouses (reading service) by farmers Joh. Frick, Friedr. Necker, and Chr. IBler. After the completion of the new

school in 1911, the first regular Sexton-Teacher moved into the village, and regular school attendance by the children began. The following sextons and teachers served in this order:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Gotthilf Wernick | (1908-1911) |
| 2. Johannes Schäufole | (1912-1913) |
| 3. Christian Ißler | (1914-1915) |
| 4. Jakob Frick | (1918-1920) |
| 5. Immanuel Bohnet | (1920-1923) |
| 6. Reinhold Tschritter | (1924-1926) |
| 7. Johannes Häfner | (1927-1940) |

The following members of the community were very dedicated to the church, school, and community: Wilhelm Hase, Daniel Schlechter, Ludwig Schmauder, Robert Hottmann, and Friedrich Necker. The people of Eichendorf placed great importance on the education of the children. In the early years, when there was no village school, several farmers came together and hired female house teachers in groups. The Kindergarten was also not neglected. Boys and girls were sent to the Bessarabian German Middle Schools, who later contributed greatly to the cultural improvement of the village. Today, sons of Eichendorf farmers are active in more important professions in the Reich: a mining engineer, a certified interpreter at the Max Planck Institute, several teachers, and officials.

Eichendorf was a purely Evangelical Lutheran community and did not tolerate either enthusiasts (*Schwärmer*) or sectarians among its members. Many villagers belonged to the Brotherhood, which was the true glue (*Kitt*) of an orderly community life. They were the most diligent churchgoers and open to what is good in every respect. In the village, there were two Brotherhood assemblies, an upper and a lower, according to the village layout. Much importance was placed on honor and decency in the village. Accordingly, moral deviations were very rare. Even among the youth, the moral examples of their parents were held in high regard. After the Resettlement, seventy-nine young people joined the German Wehrmacht, of whom, as far as is known today, twenty-six have fallen and eight are considered missing. Married men numbered sixty-eight, of whom ten fell in battle and eleven are still missing. Three families with a total of fourteen people were abducted by the Russians in 1945. The location of the Schmauder family is known, while no sign of life has yet been received from the other two.

The Forest

The Germans in Bessarabia knew little about forest life and the great benefits that a forest brings. Besides the healthy climate and the moisture that the forest provides to the land, there is an abundance of various berries, herbs, and mushrooms; furthermore, the singing of birds and the activity of animals is a great pleasure. The many acorns provided the best and cheapest feed for pigs. The farmers used a great deal of the felled timber for agriculture. Moldavian charcoal burners used inferior wood to make charcoal, which found a strong market. In the forest surroundings, besides the feared wolf, there lived the badger (*Dachs*), the fox (*Fuchs*), and the squirrel (*Eichhörnchen*). The forest was infinitely rich in feathered singers. One could encounter the horned owl (*Ohreule / Uhu*), the jay (*Eichelhäher*), the woodpecker (*Specht*), the

magpie (*Elster*), the cuckoo (*Kuckuck*), the wild pigeon (*Taube*), the hawk (*Habicht*), the nightingale (*Nachtigall*), and many other songbirds here.

Land Reform

The 800 *Deßjatinen* of treeless arable land purchased at the founding of the village were not sufficient for intensive agriculture. Forests were continually cleared and the land gained was proportionally allocated to the farmers according to their ownership. This ultimately resulted in an “*Ackerleswirtschaft*” [acre-less farm] that was the least rational. By 1928, the industrious community had 1,800 hectares [4,448 acres] of available arable land, but it was too scattered into numerous small plots (*Stückle*) for the individual farmers. In 1928, it was decided to parcel the land into larger plots. This work was carried out by a state-certified surveyor. It did cost a good pile (*Batzen*) of money, but it guaranteed that the land could be cultivated better, that weeds could be drastically combatted, and that the yield could be significantly increased. The entire land was divided into nine parcels. Now, the great benefit of land consolidation (*Flurbereinigung*) was recognized.

The Romanian Agrarian Reform also left its mark on Eichendorf. Among the largest landowners, Frick, Schmauder, Schäufele, and Hermann suffered considerable losses in land ownership. The municipality also had to cede 100 hectares [247 acres] of forest to the state due to this reform. Through long legal proceedings, the municipality was able to buy back the forest, but they only received devastated land that was neither suitable for agriculture nor usable as forest.

Conclusion

As I conclude my brief report here, I must say that Eichendorf was one of the most progressive communities in the Kahul District. It had a great future ahead of it, and many beautiful and good things would have become a reality for our German farmers down there on the steppe. Then came the Resettlement in 1940, which also tore the Eichendorf folks from their successful endeavors. Honor and faithful memory to our dear dead, who sacrificed sweat and blood for our existence and now sleep in the local cemetery awaiting the great Easter morning.

List of the Farmyard Owners of Eichendorf

At the founding of the community, each owner of 50 *Deßjatinen* [135 acres / 54.5 hectares] was assigned one farm. Some buyers had purchased more than 50 *Deßjatinen* and received a second plot of farm land, which remained uncultivated for a longer time and is therefore referred to as “empty”. (The farm numbers and their owners can be seen in the table below.)

From the directory of farms at the time of resettlement, it can be seen that Eichendorf filled up very quickly over the course of 32 years, and on one farm, two, even three families settled down; a sign that the good soil and favorable sales opportunities for all agricultural products exerted great attraction.

A. 1908—Purchase Time**B. 1940—Resettlement Time**

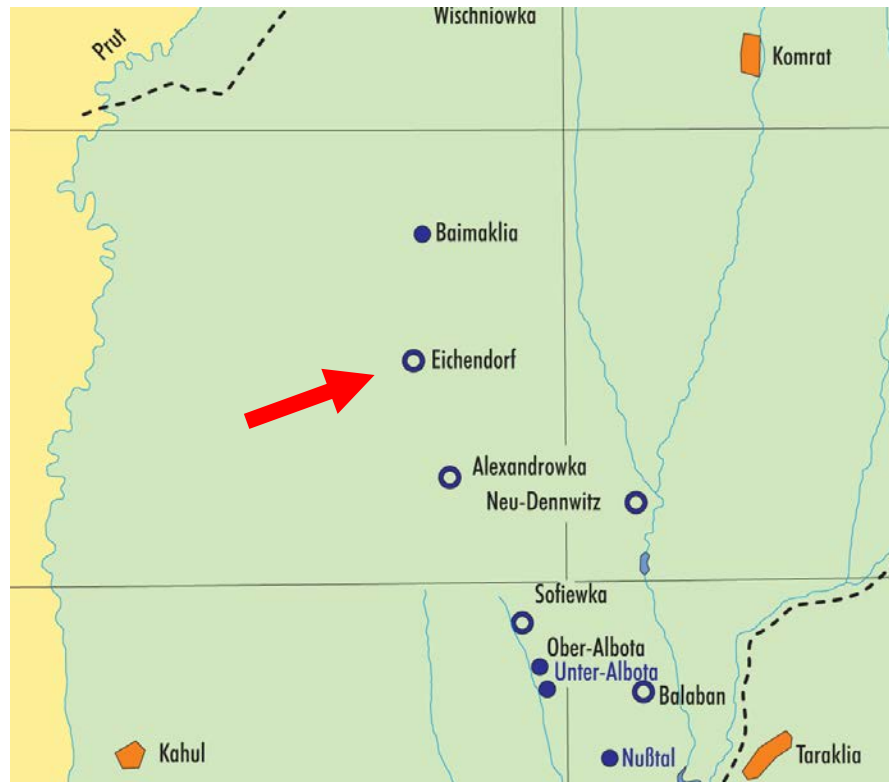
01. (Empty)	01. Witt, Wilhelm
02. (Empty)	02. Schlechter, Johannes
03. (Empty)	03. Necker, Artur Necker, Oskar
04. Necker, Friedrich	04. Necker, Friedrich I
05. Bohnet, Christoph	05. Matheus, Karl
06. (Empty)	06. Fried, Jakob
07. Dobler, (?)	07. Denning, Berta Hermann, Andreas
08. Hermann, Johannes II	08. Hermann, Johannes II
09. Hamann, Andreas	09. Hamann, Nathanael Hamann, Woldemar
10. Göhring, Rudolf Silcher, Georg	10. Lang, Theodor Silcher, Georg
11. Hermann, Johannes I	11. Herman, Eduard Hermann, Reinhold
12. Beierbach, Friedrich II	12. Schäufole, Jakob
13. Kuch, Johannes II	13. Kuch, Johannes I Kuch, Emma
14. Schmauder, Ludwig	14. Schmauder, Daniel Schmauder, Ludwig
15. (?)	15. Erdmann, Gottfried II
16. Hiller, Gottlieb	16. Schlechter, August
17. Erdmann, Gottfried I	17. Kuch, Johannes II Hiller, Gottlob
18. Schäufole, Gottlieb	18. Schäufole, Immanuel
19. Beierbach, Friedrich I	19. Göhring, Andreas Widmer, Adam und Friedrich
20. Lust, Gottlieb	20. Lust, Christian
21. Frick, Christian	21. Sawall, Friedrich Sawall, Artur and Wilhelm
22. Lang, Jakob I	22. Lang, Jakob I
23. Siebert, (?)	23. Wolf, Jakob I and Gotthold Wolf, and Jakob II
24. Wächter, (?) Döbler, Christian	24. Trefs, Friedrich Döbler, Adolf
25. (Empty)	25. Lang, Jakob II Lang, Bernhard
26. (Empty)	26. Hamann, Heinrich
27. Roth, Friedrich	27. Roth, Friedrich Witt, Emilie
28. (Empty)	28. Denning, Gottlieb Denning, Friedrich
29. (Empty)	29. Ißler, Gottlieb

- | | |
|---|---|
| 30. Jergentz, (?)
Witt, Karl | Ißler, Daniel |
| 31. Baumann, Daniel
Fried, Gottlieb | 30. Jergentz, Rosine
Baumann, Johannes |
| 32. (Empty) | 31. Lang, Herbert
Göhring, Nathanael |
| 33. (Empty) | 32. Hermann, Immanuel
Hermann, Friedrich |
| 34. Witt, Johann | 33. Wolf, Karl
Fälchle, Gustav |
| 35. Denning, Christian | 34. Witt, Heinrich
Witt, Otto |
| 36. Haase, Wilhelm | 35. Denning, Benjamin
Denning, Konrad |
| 37. (Empty) | 36. Haase, Artur
Haase, Robert |
| 38. Rebmann, Christian | 37. Höllwarth, Sophie |
| 39. Roth, Christian | 38. Roth, August
Blum, Alwin |
| 40. Bohnet, Immanuel | 39. Roth, Eduard
Roth, Georgs Erben |
| 41. Klaudt, Ferdinand | 40. Schmauder, Johannes
Schmauder, Georg |
| 42. Göhring, Immanuel
Göhring, Theodor | 41. Höllwarth, Sophie |
| 43. (Empty) | 42. Höllwarth, Traugott |
| 44. (Empty) | 43. Frick, Jakob
Frick, Rudolf |
| 45. Hottmann, Robert | 44. Frick, Immanuel |
| 46. Ißler, Christian | 45. Hottmann, Karoline |
| 47. (Empty) | 46. Ißler, Oskar
Ißler, Gottfried |
| 48. Frick, Johannes I | 47. Schmauder, Jakob
Schmauder, Gottlieb |
| 49. Stelter, (?) | 48. Frick, Johannes II
Frick, Christian |
| 50. Müller, Christian | 49. Hiller, Ferdinand
Hiller, Gottlieb |
| 51. Necker, Joachim
Necker, Luise | 50. Demuth, Katharine
Hiller, Reinhold |
| 52. Dorsch, Wilhelm I | 51. Schlechter, August
Schlechter, David II |
| 53. Schlechter, David I | 52. Dorsch, Wilhelm II |
| 54. Schreiber, Daniel I | 53. Schlechter, Friedrich |
| 55. (Empty) | 54. Schreiber, Otto und Emil
Schreiber und Daniel II |
| | 55. Hornung, Gottlob |

56. (Empty)

Ost, Immanuel
56. Lust, Johannes

[Translation Ends]



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