

The 1864 - 1881 Records of the German Workers on the Bortscheag (Bortschak/Portschak) Estate By Elvire Necker, 2008

While working on the history of my Schorr-Ohlhausen-Nelitz forefathers, I came across a set of records which the Heimatmuseum Stuttgart under the leadership of Ingo R. Isert provided. To my knowledge they have not been recorded in St. Petersburg or anywhere else, and so we decided to make them available to the general GR public. I want to express my gratitude to Elli Wise, with her great ability and generous giving of time these records were deciphered and also a thank you to Ingo R. Isert who provided them for my research.

From the 1860s the French (most likely Elsacian) owners Adolf Schlinger and Julia Spöner, with the help of their manager Alfred Scherer (A.Kern Heimatbuch, p. 107), employed a group of German workers on their estate. Later on these people bought land in the villages of Unter-Albota, Albota, and Sofiewka. The Estate Bortscheag was situated west of the river Jalbug. The village of Bortscheag grouped around the former manor house still existed in 1940 and was situated about 6 km northeast of the villages of Albota and Sofiewka. In the middle of the 1800s this estate consisted of about 8,000 desjatines which bit by bit were sold off, the last 1,000 desjatines in 1912 to found the village of Neu-Dennewitz (Bess. HK 1952, p.85).

Tracing the history of the Bortscheag Germans, one finds them earlier under the so-called "Separatists," people who at one time had followed Ignaz Lindl, Johann Jakob Wirz (Basel) and Karl Ehni from Borodino. The families started out in Leipzig (Nelitz, Schorr etc.), Teplitz or Friedenstal, then dispersed abroad into "Turkish Moldau" also called "Neu-Moldau," the Dobrudscha, in particular into the villages Atmachea and Jakobsonsthal near Braila/ Galatz. During this time they are recorded in the "Kirchenbuch der ev.-luth Gemeinde Galatz" of 1856 - 1941 (LDS films 1945975, 1270534, 1270535). As this area was outside of Russia, they lost their colonist status. In Bortscheag, i.e. returning to Imperialist Russia they then became so-called "Pässler," living with a passport rather than being Russian citizens.

Interestingly, entries of 1861 in the Galatz church records already list "colonists of Portschak in Bessarabien" (Jakob Tetzlaff, Michael Nast a.o.), the year before they were residents of Jakobsonsthal. Our records, however, only start in 1864. It is also noteworthy that the first few entries (# 1 - 9 of 1864) are given in French, possibly because of the French estate owners. Most of them are recorded by "Lehrer Ferdinand Ohlhausen," some by Michael Nast and from Oct. 1880 by Küster Haase. Several times these records are "Kirchlich bestätigt, Pfarrer Dörschlag" (certified by the church, Pastor Dörschlag), so they must have been officially accepted.

What we have are birth records of 1864 – 1881 (# 1 - 227), death records of 1867 - 1881, lists of confirmands of 1867 and 1878, and marriages of 1867 - 1878.