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DAS BANAT UND DIE BANATER SCHWABEN

BAND 5

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STADTE UND DORFER

**BEITRÄGE ZUR SIEDLUNGSGESCHICHTE
DER DEUTSCHEN IMBANAT**

Redaktion
Elke Hoffmann
Peter-Dietmar Leber
Walter Wolf

Für den Inhalt der Beiträge ist der jeweilige Verfasser verantwortlich.

**HERAUSGEGEBEN VON DER
LANDSMANNSCHAFT DER BANATER SCHWABEN**

THE BANAT AND THE SWABIANS OF THE BANAT

Volume 5

CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES

**Contributions to the Settlement History
of the Germans in the Banat**

Editorial Staff

Elke Hoffmann
Peter-Dietmar Leber
Walter Wolf

The individual author is answerable for the contents
of his or her contribution

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Bogarosch

Important Events in our Community History

Bogarosch (Bogáros in Hungarian; Bulgarus in Romanian) is located in the Temes District and is one of the oldest villages in the fertile Banat prairie a tributary of the Pannonian Plains and Basin. The Goths settled here as early as 340 AD. They were followed by other migrating populations like the Huns, Gepedes, Celts, Avars and Slavs. The first documented reference to Bogarosch was in 1463. In 1494 the "prairie of Bogáros" was part of the Domains of the Erdödy de Vörösvári family. During the time of the Turkish occupation from 1552-1716 the Banat deteriorated, it was depopulated and reverted to swamplands. After and following the liberation of the Banat from the rule of the Turks by Prince Eugene (of Savoy), Field Marshall Count Florimundus Claudius von Mercy was appointed the governor of the Banat. A resettlement of the liberated areas was necessitated for both economic and strategic reasons. This was accomplished through the arrival of settlers from the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Bogarosch was resettled by German colonists in 1769 during the Maria Theresian period of colonization under the leadership and direction of Josef Neumann on behalf of the Colonization Commission. On the basis of the church records of Bogarosch of the 1,381 German settlers 29.3% originated in Lorraine, 22.0% came from Luxembourg, 16.4% from the Rhineland Palatinate, 12.0% from the Saar, 6.2% from Baden Württemberg, 4.7% from Bavaria, 4.0% from Alsace, 2.8% from Silesia, 1.4% from Bohemia. Later additional settlers came from the Austrian hereditary lands, Hesse, Belgium, the Northern Rhineland, Westphalia, Moravia, Saxony and Mercydorf. There were 183 Full Sessions and 16 Half Sessions allotted to them. Each settler family was given either 34 or 18 Joch of land as well as a house lot measuring 1,000 square Klafter and a garden plot of another 600 square Klafter. They were given farming implements and household furnishings. The accumulated debt of each settler was approximately 500 Gulden to be paid back by 1775. Until that date the settler did not have to pay any taxes.

The tradesmen were promised ten years of freedom from paying taxes but these agreed upon conditions were not honoured by officialdom. In 1773 the taxes for years 1770-1773 were collected. The settler with a Full Session had to provide 48 1/2 days of free labour (Robot) and those with a Half Session had to provide 29 days and both groups had to give one tenth of their crops and deliver them to the nearest royal storehouse in the area. It was up to the discretion of the authorities what to assess the settlers and this made the life of the settlers difficult. Because of these many burdens placed upon them many of them abandoned their land and homes and simply disappeared. In the face of these oppressive burdens the settlers in Bogarosch presented a petition to the Colonial Administration in Temesvár. They were able to lighten their work obligations and received back some of the excessive taxes they had been forced to pay.

At the beginning there were 201 houses built in Bogarosch and in addition there was also a pub (tavern) and four mills. According to the survey conducted in 1774 Bogarosch and its cultivated fields covered an area of 6,743.5 Joch and by the year 1880 there were 7,147 Joch. In 1853 the poorest inhabitants of the village were awarded 20 Joch of land

divided among themselves provided by the Domain owner as house lots to build homes. As a result in the years 1854-1862 there were 80 such houses and an additional 37 in the years 1872-1900.

Natural disasters and epidemics were heavy blows that could only be overcome through industriousness and perseverance. A major drought in 1794 destroyed the entire harvest as well as in the year 1863. There were major floods in 1816 and 1830 that caused great damage and led to famine. During 1831 and 1836 cholera raged causing countless deaths and from 1801 to 1892 diphtheria and measles claimed many victims (in 1831: 141; 1836: 163; 1801: 90; 1872: 106). These huge population losses could only be balanced by the high birth rate of approximately 100 per year after 1800.

School and Education

The instruction of the children took place in the first year of settlement in 1769. No school building per se existed and instruction was carried out in private homes. By 1771 there was a simple school building that was renovated and enlarged in 1806 and again in 1853. Until 1813 there was only one class and by 1860 there were 430 pupils attending school. In 1872 a new and much larger school was erected on the site of the former Kindergarten which the German children attend alongside the children of the Romanian colonists. In 1870 it was possible to establish a local library with 135 books. The long term teaching efforts of the Ferch family had a lasting effect upon Bogarosch. In 1924 the *Joseph-Ferch-Foundation* was established to assist poorer children to enable them to continue with their studies. It is noteworthy to mention the large number of academically trained individuals from Bogarosch who worked in various positions in Bogarosch and throughout the Banat in other communities as well as in foreign parts at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Among them were some that were well known in academic circles such as Johann Szimits and Ägidius Haupt both renowned poets who wrote in the Banat dialect. The well known "Student Ball" that was held annually in Bogarosch on August 15th was a welcome occasion for the local Bogarosch academicians to interact with colleagues who come from all over the Banat.

The first political document authored and published by the Swabians in the Banat is closely tied and linked to Bogarosch, in that the author of this petition was the resident priest and Dean in Bogarosch, Johann Nowak. An assembly of representatives from 27 German communities met in Billed on October 2, 1849 to prepare a petition on behalf of the German population to safeguard their rights in the face of the nationalistic tendencies of their Hungarian and Serbian neighbours. In their petition they declared: "We ardently wish nothing more than to remain under the direct protection of Your Royal Majesty as subjects of the great Austrian Monarchy..." The furtherance and continuity of the rights of the Swabians in the Banat were denied by the Royal Chamber in Vienna but this petition is an example of the attempt on the part of the Swabians in the Banat to identify and articulate their national and political aspirations.

After the end of the Second World War the situation of the Swabians in the Banat that was part of Romania changed radically which also effected the inhabitants of Bogarosch.

The deportation to slave labour in Russia, the confiscation of land and property, and the deportation to the Baragan Steppes along with the ongoing persecution and chicanery of the Communists uprooted the people. All of these actions resulted in the feeling that their homeland had become a foreign place to them. These factors resulted in the demographic change in the village population. In the year of settlement in 1769 Bogarosch's population consisted of 200 German families or 1,381 individuals. In 1930 there were 2,176 German residents in Bogarosch who made up 92.5% of the population. These numbers decreased dramatically by 1999 when only 29 persons in Bogarosch identified themselves as Germans.

Church "The Assumption of Mary"

A wooden prayer house was built early in the settlement year in Bogarosch. In the following year Bogarosch became a parish after having been served by the parish of Csataad. Even though the provincial engineers Kostka and Sax who reported on the building of churches and rectories in 1771 had considered the church in Bogarosch to be one of their best efforts the Royal Colonization Administration ordered the building of a new church in 1773. On October 15, 1773 the dimensions of the foundation of the new church were finalized and a year later the completed edifice was consecrated to the Assumption of Mary. On July 18, 1773 the provincial engineer Kostka made the following remark about the church, "...in all aspects the new church has been built with the use of only good material." Between 1859 and 1860 the church was renovated and transepts were added making it cruciform in shape. At the beginning of the 1920s the old tower roof was replaced with a cupola. The church was renovated in 1936 and 1973.

The Roman Catholic church in Bogarosch is located at the centre of the village where the main street and the street to the school and church intersect. The house numbers at the time of the settlement indicate that the site for the church was one of the first to be surveyed in the new community and the first houses were erected to the west of it. The layout of the church in Bogarosch was that of a large assembly hall with an organ loft and trapezoidal apse. This original layout remains quite discernable since the reconstruction that added the two transepts leaving the ground floor shaped like a cross. The western wall serves as a facade for six vertical pillars which adorn it. In addition there are much broader pillars along the outer walls. A trapezoid shaped gable rests above the portal along with an oval shaped window. The church in Bogarosch, and its simple style and its vertical and horizontal structural characteristics belongs to the *Classical* period like most of the village churches in the Banat. The simple tower design used in the early construction of the church was modified and now closely resembles that of the classic Baroque. During the renovations of 1859/1860 the facade of the western wall was maintained and is nearly identical to other village churches in the Banat which are modelled after the one in Bruckenuau.

Cemetery, Cemetery Chapel and the Settlers' Memorial Cross

The cemetery that was surveyed and set apart at the time of the settlement consisted of four Joch which had to be enlarged in 1844. It was enclosed by a plastered wall with an

iron door at the entrance. The cross in the cemetery is from among the oldest buildings and structures in the village and was donated by Johann Laub in 1770. Its form is consistent with those of all public and sacred monuments to be found in all of the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. The cross is anchored on a very high base of sandstone with a much reduced representation of the body of Christ. A similar shaped cross was donated and erected a few years later in front of the church. The cemetery chapel erected between 1919/1920 follows the stylistic building traditions of the past. The almost square-shaped foundation is typical of the Neo-Gothic style with its strong adherence to its final shape and form. Above the entrance to the chapel is a three phase window. The other windows maintain the Gothic architectural style. The war memorial erected in memory of the 83 men who lost their lives in the First World War is located in the cemetery and was designed by the architect, Franz Ferch, in 1924 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the construction of the church. It stands on a man-made hillock. It is a simple block made of square bricks and seems to rise out of the earth. On the farther side of the block there is a tablet with the names of all of the men who had fallen during the war. On top of the block there is a replica of the Iron Cross made of stone bearing the inscription of the war years 1914-1918. A series of steps leads up to the monument. Along the terrace adjacent to the memorial are grave markers with the names of the fallen and the year of their birth and death. For those who fell during the Second World War ~ 12 in the Romanian Army and 44 serving in the German armed forces along with four civilians ~ and the 49 deportees to Russia who perished there and the 28 who died in the forced re-settlement in the Baragan Steppes ~ are remembered on two additional tablets alongside the war memorial by their families.

Economic Life

The major economic backbone of Bogarosch was agriculture as was true of all of the villages in the Banat. Even though the early settlers had to deal with great difficulties they were able to drain the swamplands and turn them into fertile fields. Wheat and corn along with other grain crops were the primary crops. The lifestyle and economic fortunes of the farmers improved with the passing of time. By 1865 the farmers of Bogarosch owned 1,223 Joch of land of the neighbouring villages while only 296 Joch of Bogarosch land was owned by outsiders. The other branch of economic life that Bogarosch ~ by tradition ~ engaged in was cattle rearing. In 1787 a community cattle stable was built on a site that contained 321 square Klafter along with a bull pen. These facilities stabled young breeding stock that was sold annually at a meadow on the edge of the village that attracted buyers from many Banat communities. There were also horses, beef cattle and pigs.

Trade was another economic factor in the life of the community. As early as 1905 a Trade and Commerce Association was formed with 29 members and by 1935 counted 93 members. As a result of the booming agricultural business the development of mills was a necessity. Two mills were in operation at the time of the settlement and later two more were added. In 1904 the "Steam Powered Mill AG" was founded and in addition there were also three malt and corn crushing mills. The "Bogarosch Savings and Loans" was established in 1887 and after four years was renamed "Bogarosch Savings Company".

The "Bogarosch People's Bank" carried on business from 1897 until 1911. The Credit Union was founded in 1901. The first milk co-operative came into existence in 1901 and a second in 1921 that dealt primarily with cheese production. The founding year of the "Agricultural Co-Operative" was in 1931.

Cultural Institutions

There was a lively community and organizational life in Bogarosch. The "Reading Society" arose in 1878; a local branch of the Farmer's Union had its beginnings in 1885 and a Memorial Society was formed in 1892. There were numerous organizations that were formed in the first half of the 20th century: in 1902 the Worker's Union; 1924 the Men's Choral Society; 1926 the Catholic German Women's Association and Marian Circle; 1932 the Catholic Youth Association; 1922 the Sports Association. Because of the activities of these organizations a venue to hold them became necessity and as a result in 1928 the Farmer's Home was built and in 1933 the Women's Home.

The Bogarosch Dialect

Our dialect is a mixed or rather blended one, primarily of the Rhineland-Franconian (Palatinate-Lorraine) type. In Bogarosch colonist groups from various areas with different dialects developed a distinctive new dialect of their own. In a real sense the Palatinate and Lorraine families because of their large numbers "won out" over the other groups who gradually gave up their own usages. As a result the German dialect in Bogarosch is a left bank Rhineland-Palatinate-Lorraine type with some upper German usages.

The Return Migration to Germany

At the end of the 19th century some of the inhabitants of Bogarosch emigrated elsewhere. Between 1895 and 1940 approximately 790 individuals left their homeland. After the Second World War some of those who had been in the military did not return but lived in foreign parts. Of the 67 men involved, 46 of them stayed in what was then Western Germany, six were in the Russian Zone of Germany, nine were in Austria and there was one person each in Canada, England and France and three in the USA.

The bringing together of their families began in the 1950s and between 1950 and 1976 there were 143 inhabitants of Bogarosch who had emigrated to Germany, Austria and the USA. Between 1977 and 1980 an additional 173 left Bogarosch. In the 1990s the emigration became massive that one can now say it has closed down. In 1940 there were 2,654 Germans living in Bogarosch, and today in 1999 there are only 28 Germans still living there.

Homeland Association

The former inhabitants of Bogarosch living in Germany joined the Association of Banat Swabians in 1981 and formed their own Homeland Association for their village and meet regularly every two years.