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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**

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Sackelhausen

Sackelhausen is located about 10 kilometres west of Temesvár and belongs to the Temesvár Government District.

The Origins and Founding of the Community

The first documented reference to the community is from the year 1392 when the Domain of Zakalhaza and all of its serfs were awarded to Blasius de Peterd and his heirs and descendants. In a written deposition from the year 1707 the community we learn that the community was inhabited by Romanians and was named Zakalhaz. According to the annals in the archives of the Imperial Chancellery in Vienna the village consisted of 66 houses. The houses and the church (20 x 12 metres) along with the manor house where the steward Schivoïn (Jivoïn) resided were located on the heights of present day Wallachia Street as a protection against the annual floods.

According to an Imperial decree the entire Romanian population of the old village who numbered 60-80 families were forced to leave. The families left in 1767 on St. George's Day (Orthodox calendar) and moved to Torak in the Serbian Banat not far from Gross Betscherek (Zrenjanin). In 1768 the Romanian church was disassembled and taken to Torak. There the former inhabitants of Sackelhausen gave their new home the name of their former home calling it Sacalaz that was in effect until 1780.

The first wave of German settlers arriving in Sackelhausen occurred in 1765. They were housed in the old Romanian village while their houses were being built. The largest influx of newly arriving families occurred in the years 1766-1770 and again in 1784-1787. Initially the settlers were exempted from paying taxes for six years. With the exception of wood for building their houses and heating them, everything else they were given, such as, travel money, livestock, farming implements, seeds and fodder had to be repaid within three years. The German settlers came from the Rhine-Palatinate (the Mosel region, the Hunsrück and Rhineland), the Saar, Hesse, Baden-Württemberg, Luxembourg, Lorraine, Alsace and some specific locations such as Vöcklabruck in Austria, Fürstenfeld in Bavaria, Eisenburg in Saxony, Marienburg in East Prussia, and Csaba (Bekéscsaba) in Hungary. The dialect that is still spoken is a blend and mixture of the various dialects brought by the settlers from their various regions.

When the engineer, Johann Zacharias Sax, of Temesvár received the assignment to plan for the construction of the colonist village of Sackelhausen in 1766 he collaborated with the steward, Schivoïn, to determine the best site for the new village and came up with various possibilities. The settlers were satisfied with their third proposal which placed the village several *Klafter* east of the old Romanian village. The village plan included 300 houses, situated on seven streets, in two rows from east to west. The houses were of adobe construction with reed roofs. At that time there was not yet a school, church or rectory. In various documents the village is identified as Szakalház and Szakelház. Later the German inhabitants called it Sackelhaus and Sackelhausen. On February 22, 1772 the

engineer, Carl Alexander Steinlen, drafted a plan for the new Catholic church and rectory that would be constructed by the end of the year.

Picture
St. Michael's Church
in Sackelhausen

Picture
The Cemetery in Sackelhausen
in the summer of 1991

Large Scale Deaths and Devastation

As a consequence of the first floods that hit the village in 1767 large numbers of people lost their lives due to the outbreak of malaria and dysentery that followed.

In the years that followed the future of the developing community was threatened by the outbreak of epidemics like typhus and dysentery in 1770. In 1772 the village reached its lowest level in population (1,038). Up to the year 1809 the population grew slowly but by 1810 the German population had finally reached 2,000. To get a better picture of the development of the fortunes of the village new house numbers were assigned in 1811. For the first time the entire house lots were divided into two. In this way "half way justice" became a designation that would have great significance in the following years in terms of taxation. Cholera broke out in the village on July 12, 1836. In a single month there were 136 deaths. In total, 236 villagers died as a result of the pestilence. The next major epidemics struck in 1873 when cholera claimed 174 victims and in 1878 there were 236 children that died from diphtheria. Another epidemic appeared in 1886 that led to the death of 73 children but it was to be the last large scale loss of life the community would suffer in this kind of way.

On June 17, 1882 a thunderstorm devastated the village with high winds up to 150 kilometres an hour that ripped through Sackelhausen and flooded the houses as a result of hours of heavy gushing rainfall. The storm damaged 90% of the houses. The water in places reached up to the roof of the houses. The village was ruined and uprooted and fallen trees were strewn all about.

The Hungarian Revolution and Its Results

On March 18, 1848 the Hungarian Revolution also extended to the Banat. Sackelhausen was disarmed on October 17, 1848. On October 2, 1849 thirteen German communities in the Banat were signatories of the "*Bogarosch Swabian Petition*" addressed to the Emperor in which they pointed out their objections to the proposed new governance placing the Temesvár Banat under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Wojwodina. Where formerly both German and Hungarian were taught in the schools after the Revolution in 1854 German was introduced as the language of instruction. In 1860 the Banat was incorporated within Hungary. In 1880 the local Catholic denominational school was

converted in to a public community school. This was done in order to solidify the "Hungarianization" plans of the government that intensified after 1886 so that by 1901 education in the community public school was completely Hungarian.

When the Treaty of Trianon came into effect in June 1920 the Banat was divided among Serbia, Hungary and Romania. The greater part of the Banat was ceded to Romania and German would again become the language of instruction in our school in compliance with minority rights guaranteed in that Treaty. In 1923 both German and Austrian children came to Sackelhausen for several weeks and stayed with village families who acted as their foster parents.

The Domestic Economy

The cultivation of the land was regulated in the "Chief Instructions for Repopulation" of January 11, 1772. The total expanse of the land and fields was divided into three equal parts. One part for fall planting, another for spring planting and the third would lie fallow. Every two years they would be rotated. (This was the classic three field method practiced in the German farming areas of the Empire.) Every family was obliged to plant twenty fruit trees and twelve mulberry trees to cultivate silkworms.

In 1826 the community recorded a significant livestock inventory that included 1,749 milk cows. As an example of the importance of the flourishing dairy industry in the community, the first still existing community Seal of 1831 features a cow and a man milking. From 1767 onwards the entire acreage of the community belonged to the German population and up until 1945 there were only German farmers and tradesmen in the village. In 1901 milk production was mechanized and a Milk Co-Operative was founded. From spring until the autumn of 1863 Sackelhausen suffered drought and all of the seeds dried up. Fodder for the livestock was already used by autumn. In the spring of the following year the plight of the population reached its highpoint. An "emergency committee" was established. They opened an emergency kitchen whereby 200-300 persons received a warm meal once a day. In 1868 agricultural production recovered and crops were harvested and the number of livestock increased. Milk and butter were taken to be sold in Temesvár. With the completion of the construction of the railway in 1857 huge quantities of wheat could be delivered to the mills in Temesvár and Kikinda and the farmers could sell their surplus wares more easily.

A new economic turning point in the 1870s was the result of the village's response to what appeared to be the "never ending" rain that was to be remembered as "the water years of the 70s". An economic upturn and recovery resulted in the 1880s with a steam powered mill, a brick burning operation and a lumber yard. In the summer of 1897 the reapers and harvesters working for the rich farmer, Wilhelm Besch, went on strike and demanded higher wages for their work.

The economic recovery continued unabated. In the first years of the 20th century walkways and bicycle pathways were paved, a new school, a large tavern, a residence for the local doctor were built and the first telephone was installed in the post office. After

the end of the First World War and renewed economic upswing occurred especially in terms of milk production and swine exports both of which flourished at the time.

The world economic crises in the 1920s and 1930s led to a fall in the price of wheat and the farmers ended up sitting on their grain.

In 1944 the economic potential of the community was immense. Agricultural production was at its height because of the use of machinery resulting in the best harvests since the founding of the community.

In 1951 the state collective was established along with the collective farm but most of the Germans sought work in Temesvár. Life in the village began to normalize in the 1960s. Around 1960 electricity was introduced all across the country and resulted in bringing electricity to the village. The houses were modernized, enlarged, bathrooms were installed and electrical appliances were secured.

Organizational Life

In 1872 there was a hunt club in Sackelhausen and a fire brigade with 105 members and a Memorial Society was founded in 1896. The community belonged to Romania ever since 1920. In that year, numerous associations were founded like the Agricultural Association and a year later the Youth Association and in 1922 the Trade and Commerce Union. The number of members increased measurably in all of them. In 1925 the Lorris Boy's Band became the Musical Society.

Picture

Traditional Costume Parade in Sackelhausen

Picture

200th Anniversary Celebration
In Sackelhausen in October 1965

A highlight in the cultural achievements of Sackelhausen was the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the German community on October 10, 1965. The festivities were modelled after those of the 160th anniversary celebration with a festival parade, a special mass and various speeches. A highpoint of the celebration was the opening of a museum with old documents, costumes and other items as a reminder of times past that deserve to be remembered.

War and Deportation

During the years of 1935 to 1938 the competing "German Folk Group" and the "German People's Party" championed their causes throughout the Banat. The two parties joined forces in 1938 because the Romanian Government would only recognize the newly formed, "Volk Group of the Germans in Romania" as the only representatives of the Germans in Romania. The NSDAP of Romania (National Socialist Democratic Workers

Party using the nomenclature of Nazi Germany) came into existence in 1940 but it had little if any influence on life in the village.

As early as 1940 there were five young men sent to Germany as volunteers. In 1941 the German Folk Group carried out a census, which reported that we had 4,030 inhabitants in our village. Following the defeat of the Romanian Army at Stalingrad (1943) the Romanian government headed by Antonescu declared the ethnic Germans in Romania were permitted to serve in the German Army.

At the beginning of September in 1944 German troops moved into our village while the Russians were attempting to take Temesvár where bitter fighting was raging. On September 17th, 1944 the villagers received the order to evacuate the community. The people set out in the direction of Hatzfeld, Kleinjetscha and Deutschsanktmichael. On September 19th, 1944 Temesvár fell into Russian hands.

Those villagers from Sackelhausen that had been quartered in Hatzfeld were entrained in box cars and were transported by train to the German Reich. They were brought to Thuringia, Lower and Upper Austria, Bavaria, Silesia and Bohemia. Those who were in Kleinjetscha and Deustchsanktmichael remained behind and on October 14, 1944 they returned home to Sackelhausen that was in the hands of the Russian occupation forces.

Picture
Memorial for the Victims of the First World War
In front of the church in Sackelhausen
(The school is in the background)

Picture
A Noteworthy Photograph
Of Six Generations of a Family
in 1935

In the autumn of 1944 a list was compiled of the individuals who had remained behind consisting of men between the ages of 16 to 45 and women aged 17 to 30 years for the purpose of transporting them to labour camps. On January 15, 1945 the village was surrounded by the police, the military and Romanian volunteers from neighbouring communities. Those who were on the list went on foot accompanied by their captors to an assembly camp at Freidorf where they were entrained in cattle cars and sent to Russia. The majority ended up in the labour camps in the Donets Basin (coal mines) around Stalino and the region along the Dnieper River at Krivoirog and Dnjepropetrowsk. Due to the lack of food, the extreme cold and lack of medical attention, 23 of the men and women from Sackelhausen perished in the camps.

In the summer and autumn of 1945 most of the villagers who had fled and ended up in Thuringia, Bohemia, Lower Austria and Bavaria returned home to Sackelhausen. But there were 569 others who remained in Germany and Austria. Several of them later emigrated to America. In the meantime the homes of the families who had fled were

occupied by Romanian colonists. The returnees had to bribe them financially to get back their own houses. The Agrarian Reform was carried out in Sackelhausen in the summer of 1945 and to a great extent the Germans were all dispossessed of their land and property. From this point onward until the 1990s Sackelhausen was a Romanian and German village.

On the morning of June 18, 1951 numerous German families were hauled out of their beds by military personnel and were driven on foot carrying what they could snatch in the way of necessities on their way out of their houses heading for the box cars that would take them to the Baragan Steppes. They were dumped there under the open sky. For protection against the coming winter they dug earth pits to live in and later erected reed roofed houses. Up until their release in the years 1955 and 1956, fourteen of them died there. Among these deportees were not only Germans from Sackelhausen but Germans from other communities in the Banat as well as Serbs and Romanians. The colonists in Sackelhausen that they referred to as the "Macedonians" were almost all involved in the deportation. They settled there and never returned to Sackelhausen.

Emigration

As a result of the steady increase in the population and the concentration of land in the hands of the larger landowners many families emigrated to America. A major portion of these emigrants returned to the village (up until 1930) and could build houses and buy land with their hard earned savings. The emigration to America occurred up to the First World War and then the 1920s and 1930s and after the Second World War.

The mass emigration reached its highpoint in 1983. From 1940 to 1993 a total of 3,516 persons emigrated. In 1993 there were still 40 Germans in Sackelhausen and by 1997 there only twelve. The vast majority of the German inhabitants of the village had emigrated prior to the overthrow of communism in 1989.

On the basis of a survey done in 1993 there were 2,638 of these emigrants who were still living of whom 2,288 resided in Germany, 143 in the USA, 83 in Austria, 49 in Canada, 12 in France, 40 in Sackelhausen and 23 others lived in other countries while the whereabouts of six others is unknown. None of the inhabitants of Sackelhausen lived in Germany, Austria and France prior to 1944. In the USA and Canada there are countrymen who have lived there for several generations now. In 1980 there were 348 families in the USA and 56 in Canada that had their roots in Sackelhausen.

The HOG of Sackelhausen

In Reutlingen and its surroundings, (Wannweil, Metzlingen, Pfullingen, Gönningen, Urach and other communities) there are 1,234 persons who are living there who had come there from Sackelhausen. They account for 46.3% of all of the Germans who left Sackelhausen from 1940-1993. Reutlingen is the headquarters of the HOG with Michael Schäfer, Michael Koppi and Katharina Ortinau as its executive. The annually published "Sackelhausen Heimatblatt" is sent from here to our countrymen all over the world. The

HOG carries out numerous activities meant to preserve the cultural heritage and continue to research the historical past of Sackelhausen.

The people of Sackelhausen once more have their brass band and singing groups which have earned a good reputation all across Germany. At the "Römerschanze" cemetery the HOG erected a memorial for those who died in the two world wars and those who perished in the deportations. There is an annual *Treffen* (Assembly or Reunion) held in Reutlingen that attracts several hundred participants from all around the world. A memorial service is always held in honour of our dead at the "Römerschanz" cemetery and then in the evening we celebrate *Kirchweih* in the List House.

Joseph Pitzer, Michael Koppi, Doris Ortinau

Picture
The Memorial at the
Römerschanz in Reutling