

Marienberg

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The church that would not fall. (Catholic, Marienberg).
Local people tell of the church's being slammed by trucks and tanks,
and it would not fall - Photo by Suzanne K. Wiest (1993).

Marienberg, also known as Bisiuk, was a German Catholic village in the Volga valley of Russia. It was founded in 1855 by the inhabitants from other Catholic Volga villages and was therefore a "daughter colony." By the year 1912, Marienberg had 3,310 inhabitants.

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Marienberg, a Catholic German-Russian village, also known as Bisiuk (Besuk), was located in the Bisiuk river valley some 15 to 30 miles east of the town of Seelmann which was on the Volga River, 5 miles south of what was the Catholic village of Streckerau and about 25-30 miles south of the Lutheran village of Brunnental. The village straddled the Bisiuk river and the main road, which ran north to south, crossed the river on the west side of the village and then continued on at an angle to the southeast. There was no bridge at the river, only a shallow section that wagons could use to cross the river.

The climate in Marienberg would be very similar to the climate in North Dakota or southern Saskatchewan, along the US-Canada border which is the 49th parallel. Since Marienberg was located on the 51st parallel, this would mean that the summers would be hot and dry while the winters would be cold, harsh and windy.

The village had a population of 3,310 in 1912. By using 15-20 as the size of the average German-Russian family, this would mean approximately 150-200 families lived in the village. A family would include all the family members including grandparents, siblings, their wives and everyone's children. It would appear that the village extended about three or four blocks to the north of the river and the same to the south. The main road was located on the west side and the village extended about 5-6 blocks to the east. The families each owned about two acres of property in the village. Each block consisted of approximately ten properties and would be surrounded by a small path or wagon road. There were orchards and agricultural lands to the west of the main road. A large water wheel was located just west of the road and was used by the Reit family to water the trees in the orchard and their vegetable gardens alongside the river. The surrounding land, adjacent to the village on all sides, was the large agricultural area where the villagers grew various grain crops. Each family would have been assigned or owned sufficient acreage to support their family. There were no services in the village; no electricity, no running water and no sanitation. The village was quite primitive by modern standards. It has most likely been that way in these small German-Russian communities for hundreds of years.

In addition to the houses in the village there was a large Catholic church, which later became known as "the church which would not fall." This was because the Russian army was unsuccessful in destroying it about 1941. The church was located on the north river bank in the first block east of the main road. The front of the church faced west. There was a school, which unlike the houses, was built of

wood and bricks. It was located in the second block east of the main road and two blocks north of the river. A block further north there was a vodka factory. On the outskirts of town, north towards Streckerau, there was a flour mill where the villagers would take their grain to be milled into flour. There were two bakeries in the village, not stores as we know them, but large brick ovens which were used by all the women of the village to bake bread. One was near the main road south of the river and one on the same road as the school and just down from the church. The shoe-maker was on the south side of the river, in the second block to the east which would make it just east of the Reit property. Across the road to the north of the church there were at least two general stores. The Schell family owned one of them and it was attached to their house. Most of the stores were wooden structures. A walking bridge crossed the river at the beginning of the third block from where the main road and river crossed. This allowed the villagers a way of crossing the deeper section of the river without having to go across the shallow section where they would have to wade through the water. The Reit holdings ran along the south side of the river, their property was a triangular shape piece of land, which was formed by the river and the main road leading south. The general store-lumber yard was on the main road in the second or third block north of the river. The government water well, used for drinking water was located at the north west corner of where the river and main road crossed. The women of the village would use pails to carry the drinking water back to their homes. Some of the homes had their own wells on their property. The Reit family was a typical German-Russian family. It consisted of two grandparents, three sons, their wives and children. George Reit the oldest son lived in the largest house on the family property. It was a 16'X32' house with a 10'X10' room attached. The house was constructed from bricks made from a mixture of mud, straw and manure and each brick was 16"X16"X4". The bricks were made, dried and used to form the walls of the house. There was one door and two windows. The roof had a wooden frame that was covered with reeds which were bundled, tied and put on the roof much like a thatched roof. George Reit's parents lived in the small attached room. It was the custom that the parents lived with and were taken care of by the eldest son. George Reit and his wife Monika (Appelhans) had a number of children during their marriage, somewhere between twelve and fifteen. Not all survived. By the time they finally reached Germany in 1922 only four children were with them. Many of the children in these German-Russian families would die in child birth or as a result of flu epidemics and other diseases that took their toll on children and adults alike. George's brother Peter his wife and two children along with the youngest brother Jakob lived and shared a smaller house on the same property. The homes were sparsely furnished. There would be a fireplace/bakoven and a long table with benches at one end of the room. There was no other furniture in the room. Everyone in the family slept on the floor upon straw which covered the ground floor, the grandparents in their room, George and Monika in one corner and the children in the other corner. They had

no dishes or cutlery except for large kitchen knives, wooden bowls and wooden spoons. Meals consisting of boiled meat, soups and stews made up their diet. Meals were cooked over the fireplace, and served in a large bowl from which everyone ate. The more affluent members of the community, merchants etc., lived in wooden houses and had furniture, chairs, tables and beds and enjoyed a higher standard of living than those who had a more agrarian existence living off the land.

Each family property in the village was surrounded by a six foot fence. There were times when thieves or marauding vandals would attack the village and steal whatever they could. On the Reit property there were the two houses, a large barn, a drive shed, a root cellar, an out house, and an ice house which was filled with ice that had been cut from the Bisiuk river in the winter.

The Reit live stock consisted of horses, camels both Dromedaries(1 hump) and Bactrians (2 humps), cows, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, ducks, turkeys and geese. In their vegetable garden, which was located by the orchard, they grew watermelons, squash, cabbage, potatoes, beets, turnips, carrots, peas and beans much as we do in North America. The orchard produced apples, cherries, apricots, prune plums and pears. So food in the village was plentiful.

Many of the villagers began leaving the village prior to WWI, many left at the beginning or near the end of the Revolution around 1921, while those who chose to remain eventually were sent to Siberia about 1941, after which the village was destroyed by the Russian army.

The information contained above was related to me by George Reit, my wife's grandfather, who was born and lived in Marienberg from 1905 until 1921. George at the time this was written in 2001 was still alive and living in Summerland B.C., Canada. John Schell another living Marienberger confirmed most of what is written here and provided additional information. The family names were taken from a copy of a German document which listed all the people coming from Minsk, Russia by train to Frankfurt an der Oder, a refugee camp in Germany, on December 9, 1922.

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List of German-Russians leaving Minsk by train and entering Germany.

EMIGRATION

Nineteen families left Marienberg August 2, 1921. They had become disillusioned by the horrific events that followed the revolution. They packed their belonging in wagons and made their way west. They went by wagon to Seelmann, where they crossed the Volga by barge, they then went through Voronezh to Rogashev, making it that far by mid November. They stayed there until late January 1922, when they traveled by train to Minsk. They remained in Minsk, in an unheated building, until arrangements were made to allow them to cross Poland into Germany. On December 9, 1922, the people listed below were the only ones to survive and reach Germany. Once in Germany they were housed along with other refugees in what had been a prisoner of war camp for captured Russian soldiers in WWI, at Frankfurt an der Oder. From here they made their own way to Canada, the U.S. or Argentina.

(1) In part from Christina Schell S.C.I.C.- Tragedy Travel Triumph - Story of a Family

Surname	Given Name	(Nee)	Father	Birthdate d/m/y	Age years
BAIER					
	Jakob		Philipp	17/10/89	
	Katharina (Ziegel)		Andreas	24/1/95	
	Anna		Jakob	14/4/21	
to Michel Ziegel ?(sister-in-law) 1176 N.Hallanog, ?, Philladelphia or Leo Ziegel something? Panto Brazil.					
BIERTWERT / Bierwert					
	Clemens		Andreas	3/5/85	
	Clis ? (Diel)		Joseph	11/9/86	
	Clemens		Clemens	23/9/05	
	Maria		Clemens	7/1/08	
	Anpelia		Clemens	10/2/14	
	Magdalena		Clemens	3/7/16	
-to Georg Dudart or ? Duchart, Cossen ? New Mex. (see Ortmann same destination.)					

BOHN

Georg	Andreas	16/6/88
Anna (Lechmann)	Joh.Peter	10/2/00
-to Christoff Bohn,(brother) ? unreadable possibly c/o J.Leff/Lekk ?		

DIEL / DIEHL

Georg	Jonaz ?	27/4/94
Marg. (Dulkon ?)	Johannes	1/11/95
Georg	Georg	1/11/95
-to Martin Ullmann (Uncle) Nr.442 and Seitz Mattch? (uncle) (see Engraf) Philipp Diel, Seitz?		

DIEL / DIEHL

Adam	Joseph	10/10/96
- no destination declared. Arrived in Canada April 1924. CPR Montrose.		

DIETRICH

Alisius	48
Katharina (wife)	

EGEL

Andreas	32
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ENGRAF

Georg	Karl	15/7/77
Klara	Joseph	1/11/81
Rose ?	Georg	24/6/02
Anna	Georg	3/4/11
Georg	Georg	20/6/13
Maria	Georg	17/1/15
Karolina	Georg	2/9/16
Phlipp	Georg	24/6/21
- to Antoneri ? Fischer (halfbrother) Coronel Suarez, Arg. Prov Buenos Aires. or to Fischer, Nr 436 n. Martin Ullmann, (halfsister) Winnipeg Manitoba. Canada. or to Seitz Mattch? (halfbrother) Coronel Suarez,Col 2, Argentina.		

FRANK

Raimund	Johannes	28/6/81
Barbara (Reiz/Reiss)	Joh.Peter	20/6/86
Adolf	Raimund	22/1/05
Johannes	Raimund	25/6/11
to John Frank, Claffen (classen/klassen ?), New mex. or to Andreas Schmalz,Gallop, New Mex.		

FRANK

Anna (Becker)	Peter	8/7/83
Johnnes	Anton	5/8/10

to Anton Frank, (Gatte/gotte), Coronel Suarez, Arg.

GOTTE

Anna (Borgardt)	Georg	20/2/61
Katharina (Lochter)	Mathias	8/9/98

-to Johannes Gotte (son), Coronel Suarez, Col 2, Argentina.

GRUNEWALD

Heronimus	Jakob	12/6/80
Marg. (Beilmann)	Friedrich	? /81
Amalia	Heronimus	7/2/07
Philomine	Heronimus	12/5/09
Anna	Heronimus	12/2/11
Clemens	Jakob	28/12/93
Anna (Leonhard ?)	Paul	7/3/91
Amalia	Clement	29/3/17
Philipp	Philipp	18/12/00
Amalia	Philipp	4/6/97
Peter	Philipp	9/2/09
Adolf	Philipp	6/1/14
Johannes	Johannes	6/4/05

to Jakob Beilmann, Winnipeg Manitoba., Canada. 484
College Ave.or possibly Peter Grunewald c/o M. Seick/Seitz,
Eft. Coronel Suarez Col 2 Arg. Prov Buenos Aires.

GRUENWALD

Anna-Angelica
Eugene
Adolf
August
Joseph

LEONHARD

Paul
Christine(wife)

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MILDENBERGER

Katharina (Rausch)	Georg	8/12/70
Clis ?female (Frank)	Joseph	22/6/87
Schwiegert		
Johannes (son of ?)	Georg	12/4/10
Andreas	Georg	6/11/12
Emanuel	Georg	29/6/14
Georg	Georg	21/10/16
Joseph	Georg	12/2/18

to Adam Schmalz, Aldea Colorado or Georg Schmalz,
Gallop, New Mex.

ORTMANN

Peter	Heinrich	8/9/97
Barbara (Herrlein)	Johannes	18/8/99
Katharina	Heinrich	8/11/00

- to Georg Dufart/dusart/dukart, Coffen? New Mex.(same as Biertvert)

RAUSCH

Heinrich

Victoria

26

REIT/ Ried/ Riet/ Reith

Georg	Georg	11/1/80
Monika (Appelhans)	Jakob	11/2/83
Anna	Georg	7/11/01
Pauline	Georg	1/1/03
Georg	Georg	26/12/04

-to Johannes Bahl (sister-in-law) 2. Colonie Eft. Coronel Suarez Arg. Georg Jr came to Canada April 1924 CPR Montose. Pauline came to Canada in 1925. Remainder of family and Monika's 2 year old son Ronimus, who was born in Germany, returned to Russia in 1925 and were never heard from again.

ROST

Barbara

Sophie -daughter

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SHELL

Anna	Jakob	2/10/95
Barbara	Jakob	6/1/97
Jakob	Jakob	23/8/99
Margaretha	Jakob	29/1/01
Paulina	Jakob	17/4/03
Johannes	Jakob	20/09/06
Christine	Jacob	20/7/08

-to Bingens Uebel (uncle), Young Sask., Canada.

TURBAN / Durban / Urban

Georg	Michael	12/1/98
Barbara (Rausch)	Georg	27/6/99
Pauline	Michael	10/10/04
Johannes	Michael	5/7/12

-to Georg Rausch, (Sister-in-law), Corum F.G. Pacifico Pampa, Central Argentina.

WEISSBECK

Johannes	Christof	3/2/67
Katharina (Fischer)	Andreas	17/3/67
Barbara	Johannes	12/12/04
Anna	Johannes	04/1/09
Johannes	Johannes	10/8/89
Perpetua (Berger)	Heinrich	10/12/89
Emanuel	Heinrich	15/8/10
Johannes	Heinrich	1/8/12

Perpetua	Heinrich	23/7/14
Emillia	Heinrich	20/5/16
Victor	Heinrich	5/1/19

- to Lerner/Kerner ?, Johannes and Michel Weissbeck, 68 n. 9 St., Kansas City, Kansas.

ZEEWALD/ Seewald/ Seevald

Julia (Ullmann)	Michael	16/12/98
Jakob	Jakob	30/10/18

to Michel Ullmann, Winnipeg Manitoba, Canada.

Please note - Every effort was made to get accurate information, from a not too clear document. When it comes to surnames often there were changes in spelling. Look closely at those names which are similar to the ones you are researching.

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Twisted iron cross in Volga Catholic cemetery (Marienberg) - Photo by William Wiest (1993).

MARIENBERG PRIESTS

These priest are known to have served in the parish of Marienberg.

FALKENSTEIN, Johannes - Named administrator to Marienberg parish in 1913.

KAPPES, Alois - Marienberg parish priest 1910 to 1912.

KAYSER, Jakob - priest in the Marienberg parish. He was executed along with eight others, in Marienberg by members of the Red army somewhere between 1919 and 1921. He had only been a priest for five years at the time of his death.

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