

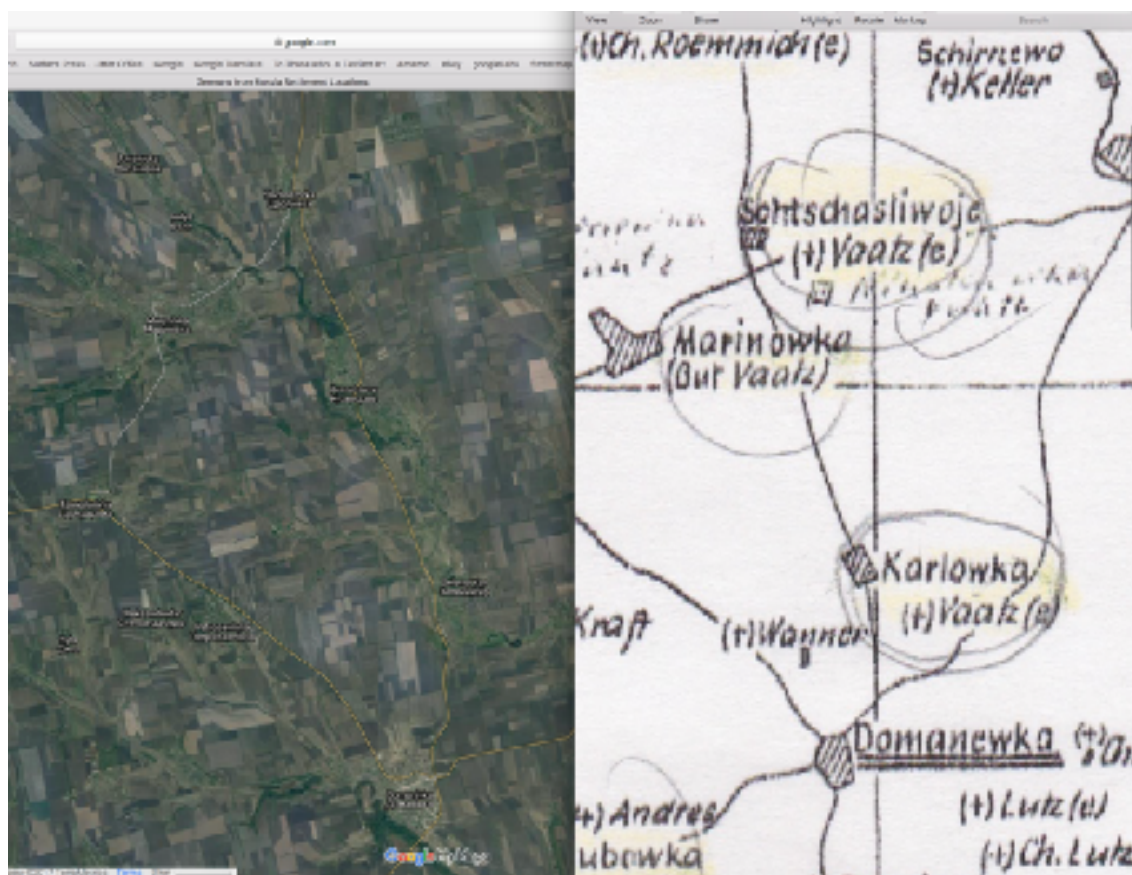
The Rediscovery of Karlovka

Peter, Paul Dorothy and I searched, together with our guide and driver, both called Serge, for Karlovka, the family farming estate of Albert Vaatz. Albert was Isa and Tamara's uncle, the oldest brother of Paul, the girls' father. Isa and Tamara were our respective mothers. Karlovka was the location of many of the happy stories that our mothers used to tell us of their childhood adventures and experiences. This is what we

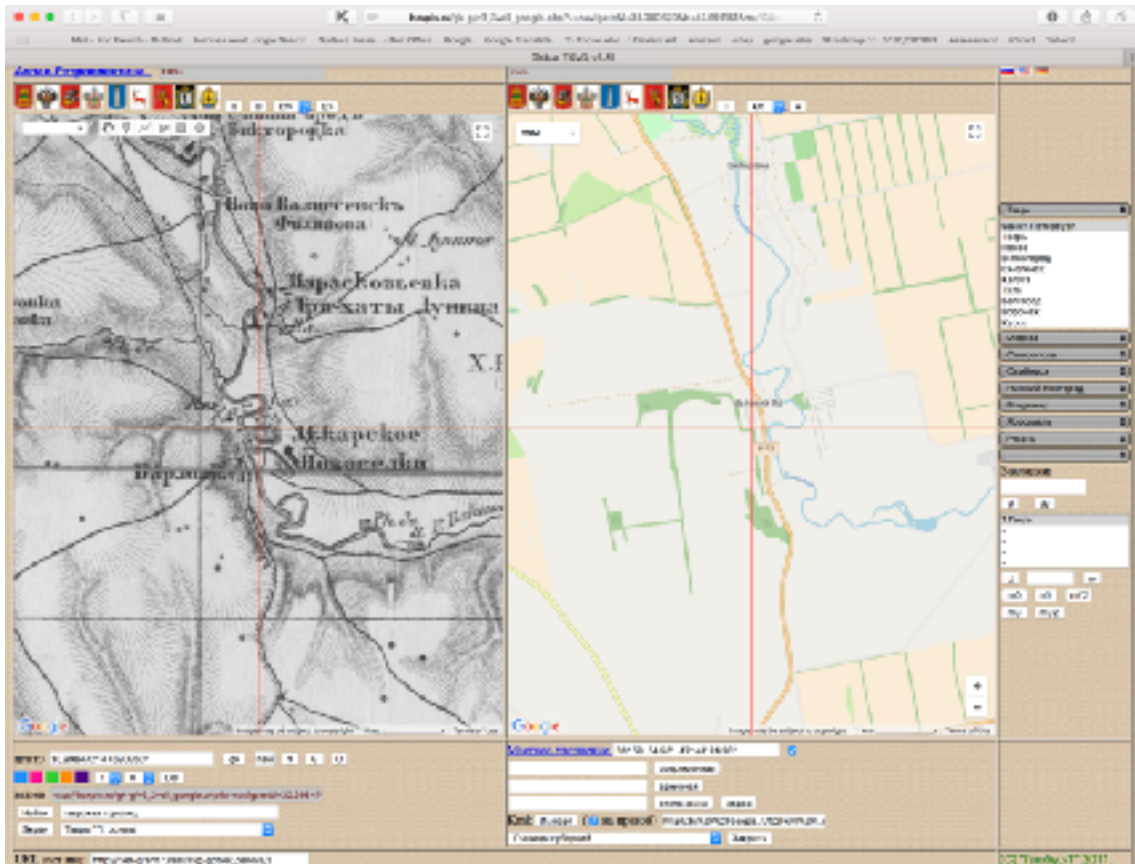


were hoping to find. The house with the tower. On this photograph you can just see Tante (Aunty) Tilla, Isa and Tamara and governess, Mlle. Voutaz on the right.

Locating the site was not easy. It is no longer marked on any modern maps. I worried that it could have been destroyed, as many of the large estate houses had been by the victorious and revengeful Bolsheviks, following the end of the Russian civil war. The exact location was not known. My first guess was by comparing a Google Maps view with a map hand drawn by Stumpp, a researcher of Russian German history. It would appear from this that Karlovka was near the present village of Zelenyi-yar. However searching 'by air' using Google Earth drew a blank. I could find no large square house with a tower. A



more precise location was obtained with the help of an American contact, a member of the Blacksea German organisation, who sent me the map below. Left is an old map that still shows Karlovka. The name карловка is just visible in the horizontal centre-fold of the map. This is compared on exactly the same scale with a Google map. It shows



Karlovka just to the West side of the main road. And we have an exact grid reference. So now we know where to go.

But our problems are just starting. When we arrive there is not much on that side of the road. Just some simple single story houses. Very probably German colony 'long houses' whose style we have come to recognise from our earlier tours through the villages but no great house. So we explored through the trees on the east side of the road. We do find several old ruined buildings hidden away.

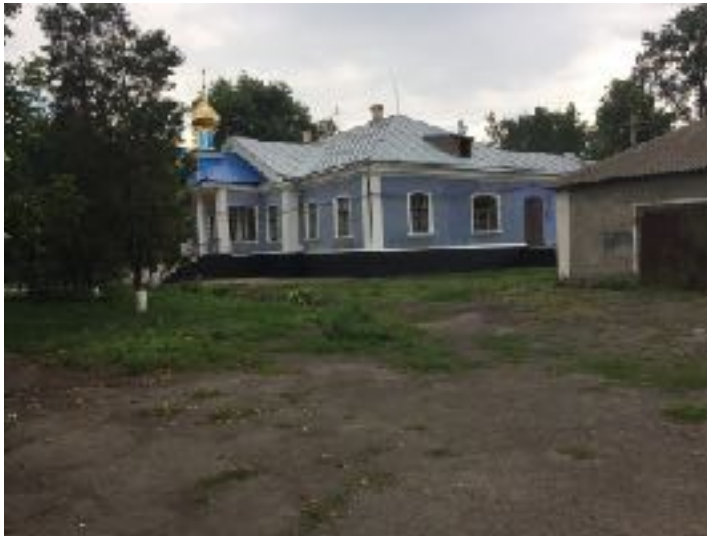




We are despairing. Serge searches hard for someone to ask but the place is almost deserted. Those that he does ask are not very helpful until he finds a family setting up for a picnic and the man says, 'Yes the house with the tower is over there, through the trees.' What we find is not what we expected. It has a tower sure enough but this one is small and golden. We have found



another Orthodox church.



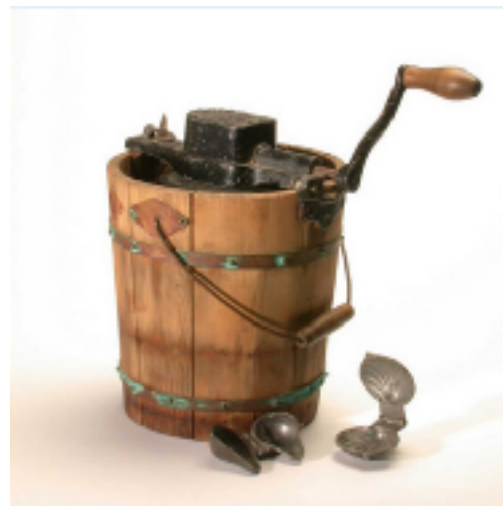
But is this really the old estate house? We convince ourselves it is. One thing that helped was comparing these two pictures. The outhouse in the newer picture matches the Summer kitchen in the 1910 version. Certainly the building has decreased in height. But we assume that, following destruction by the Bolsheviks, it was completely rebuilt but almost certainly on the original foundations.



The other thing that helped to convince us was the drive way. Not identical but what can one expect after 108 years? Similar enough. It is not usual for a village church to have such a grand approach.



The clincher was Paul's discovery of the ice house. It definitely was one, and only grand houses could afford themselves this luxury.



An ice cream maker



So there we were four happy, contented, satisfied explorers, having found our treasure, standing on the steps as the original family did 108 years ago- almost certainly also in August.



Below is a Google Earth picture of the site. It shows the main house and surrounding buildings. The driveway of trees is clearly distinguishable now one knows what to look for. The bridge, lower left



goes over what is now only a trickle of a river . The dark green below it indicates the bed of the original river and one can trace the course of a larger river in lighter green that is followed by the road.

Ron, August 2018

20 August 2018