

Tarutino Girls' School History

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History of the Tarutino Girls' School

Adapted from Wilh. Mutschall
by Hans Wagner

When our ancestors settled in South Bessarabia, in the first years of the foundation of our colonies, we also thought about the village schools and the establishment of an institution for the training of teachers, sextons, clerks and leading men for administration and economy. However, there was no thought of a higher level of education for women at first.

The colonist wife, however, has always played an important role in the economic, as in the religious and moral life of the colony, and taken on a valuable part in the cultural work. Her



Tarutino Girls' High School

work as a mother and educator of the children, as a guardian of good pious morals and domestic order cannot be overestimated, although it was mostly hidden from the eyes of the outside world. If the influence of the woman, who had received only an elementary education, on family life was already so great, a higher degree of intellectual education could also enable the daughter of the colonist to perform higher tasks—she could then devote her knowledge to the service of her people and contribute to cultural

development. These thoughts and considerations were the starting point when the German Girls' School was founded in Tarutino in 1906—almost 100 years after the first colonies came into

being. It may be mentioned here that the school was not immediately a Girls' Lyceum, but went through various phases of development over the years. In order to meet the requirements of the tasks set, as well as the legal and national conditions of the authorities, the school was sometimes an Elementary School (*Volksschule*), sometimes a High School (*Progymnasium*), but mostly a middle thing between the two.

Girls were admitted from the Elementary School. The course was initially for three-years, after which the graduates were to be given the right to teach at Class 2 Elementary Schools.

As is so often the case, the school had to struggle with severe economic concerns from its first beginnings to the end. It was foreseeable that the lessons could not be paid for by the school fees alone. Therefore, a School Association was founded for material support. When the first three-year course came to an end, a 4th "Supplementary Class" was already established. The graduates of this class formed the division (*Zötus*) of the school. Extremely important changes occurred at the beginning of the 5th school year. To begin with, a change in the staff was necessary because, according to the confirmed statutes, a higher education certificate was prescribed for the teachers. Also, the German national standpoint was temporarily broken for economic reasons—we also find children of other faiths and nationalities in the student lists of that time. Modest and limited, as you can imagine, were the funds that flowed to the school for its maintenance and for the acquiring of teaching materials, but the working spirit was always a good one.



Tarutino Girls' School Student Body for Female Students for the School Year 1922-1923

In spite of the fact that the teachers fulfilled their duties towards the school and the state in an exemplary manner, the activities of the school had to be temporarily suspended during the First World War, as the school authorities demanded the involvement of Russian teachers. The Revolution of 1917 freed the German colonists from the restrictions imposed on them by the

Tsarist government and gave them a measure of freedom of action. Our school, which was closed during the war, could also be reopened without special permission from the school authorities by way of the registration procedure. For the reopening of the Tarutino Girls' School, our women's world showed lively interest this time. A Women's Association was founded, which had the task of providing for the maintenance of the school. One could start the work over again with one Preparatory Class and three Classes. The 4th Class was added the next year. Then Bessarabia fell to Romania. It was clear that in the new state with completely different school laws, this type of school would not prevail. In fact, the school was closed at the end of 1918. After various negotiations with the school authorities, the school was able to return to life under the following conditions: not a School Association, but the whole community had to act as a school supporter. The headmistress could only be a lady under the name "Principal" (*Direktorin*), — the school had to be converted into a Girls' Grammar School (*Mädchengymnasium*).

The municipality of Tarutino now acted as the landlord of the school and decided to ask the school authorities for permission to establish, in place of the Girls' School, a German Girls' Grammar School (*Mädchengymnasium*) with all rights. The opening of the Private Girls' Grammar School was permitted by teaching in German on the basis of the regulations approved for minority schools and by introducing the Romanian language in accordance with the program of state schools. When the school was founded, only 4 Classes had been envisaged, but now there was the possibility to add a Class every year and to expand the school into a complete 8 Class Lyceum. According to the Romanian name, the lower level of 4 Classes was called *Gymnasium*, and the 4 Classes of the upper level *Lyceum*.

Just as the year 1910, in which the school was able to dismiss the 1st Division of the four-year course, was a milestone in the history of the school, so the year 1924 appears to be an even more important period, since it was here that the 1st Division of the complete Girls' Lyceum graduated from school.

The years that coincided with this period were full of surprises, often of a serious nature: knowledge of the national language was declared compulsory for teachers and the school authorities asked teachers to take an exam in Romanian language and literature. As in all Private Schools, the transfer examinations had to be held in the presence of a deputation sent by the government. Since the Girls' Lyceum was known to be one of those schools that were allowed to examine their students themselves, because it had all the rights, it was brought about in 1930 that the presence of a state representative was only necessary for the examination for entry into the Upper Level and for graduation.

The legal situation has also often been challenged by the authorities due to ignorance of the circumstances or being too much in a hurry.

In 1925, the Romanian authorities introduced the baccalaureate in all schools in the country, which of course caused general confusion in our school as well. They wanted to make it more difficult to enter the university (*Hochschule*) in general, and for some of our graduates this law also became a stumbling block on the way to university. Nevertheless, our students have submitted to the baccalaureate and made their way to university. No sooner had they adapted to

the extremely uncomfortable and difficult baccalaureate law then our Lyceum was confronted with even more difficult tasks in 1928 by a new School Reform. The 8th Class was omitted, — the material spread over 8 years was to be worked through in 7 years, — the 7th Class had to use the whole summer holidays to prepare for the supplementary examination to be held in autumn— only in this way could the 7th class receive a certificate of completion of the 8 year course. The school was put in no small embarrassment by a letter from the authorities, in which it was explained that the Upper Level of the school was to be closed because of insufficient numbers of pupils and inadequate classrooms. Although this regulation could also be revoked through energetic negotiations, it was decided to make an important and drastic innovation: the transformation of the school into a Teachers' Training College (*Lehrerinnenseminar*). According to the laws for Romanian Elementary Schools (*Volksschulen*), a corresponding number of teacher apprenticeships had to be filled with female teachers. The Werner School was forbidden to co-educate in the Training College, so it was necessary to establish a special Women's Training Institution. The graduates of a Lyceum only found employment in the village schools if the teachers with college education were not sufficient, and they were also at a disadvantage compared to them in that they received a lower salary from the state—about 2/3 of that the ones from the Training College received. As a result, the wish had been voiced from many quarters for the Lyceum—which was less suited to our practical, farming life and was our biggest problem child of all schools—should be transformed into a Training College. The school board approached this question and, after careful consideration, decided to make representations to the government about this reorganization. The permit was granted. So, after 25 years of existence, the Tarutino Girls' School has continued to work as a Teachers' Training College since 1932.

We have reached the end of the school's history.

If we imagine the difficulties with which it had to struggle, how many temptations it had to overcome, we cannot help thinking of the men who stood by the self-sacrificing teaching staff of the school as founders, supporters, and maintainers. The origin of the school can be attributed to the initiative of Mr. Immanuel Fiechtner, who worked as a teacher and director at the Tarutino village school from 1892 to 1908, and he can rightly be honored as the actual founder of the school. The Tarutino citizen Karl Isert, who is still well remembered as a public benefactor, made a donation to the school in 1905, even before it had seen the light of day, by bequeathing a large private house with all outbuildings and courtyard in his will. Many of the benefactors and patrons near and far who helped to bear the difficult fate of this problem child should be mentioned at this point, but we do not want to fail to mention two personalities here: namely the deceased Senior Pastor Daniel Haase and his still living wife, Mrs. Melanie Haase, the last female director of the school. Founded as a Four Class Girls' School, it was transformed into a Girls' Lyceum after 13 years, and 12 years later, into a Teachers' Training College. However, it was only able to fulfill the special pedagogical and methodological tasks for a short time, until we moved to the Reich in 1940:

To the Reich, to which one had so often turned for help in the most severe economic distress, and without whose constant material and moral support our School would certainly not have been able to survive.

[Translation Ends]