

Sremski Karlovci

Vojvodina - Serbia

*The Foundation for the Protection
of the Danube Swabians' heritage*

ZAVICAJNA KUCA

MUSEUM

*Ethno exhibition of the rural household
of the Danube Swabians from the
second half of the 18th century*



www.zavicajnakuca.com



Ambasada
Savezne Republike Nemačke
Beograd



A bathtub where they bathed the children



A churn – used to make butter



Well

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of the 18 th century*

Old postcards



*Sremski Karlovci
2016. godine*



Old postcards

This brochure was published on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Danube Swabians' settlement in the area of today's Vojvodina and the 277th anniversary of their settlement at Sremski Karlovci and their life together with the other ethnic groups in the region.

The Foundation is grateful to the German Embassy in Belgrade, who supported it and helped with the publication of the brochure.

Old postcards



THE HOMELAND FOUNDATION FACILITIES

The Foundation for the Protection of the Danube Swabians' heritage – „Zavicajna kuca“ (Homeland Foundation) was established in 2009, based on the idea and desire to preserve the facilities located in the homeland area, to gather together household objects from the second half of the XVIII century, as well as agricultural tools and implements of the time. All this was meant to be shown to



the lovers of traditional culture, research workers, journalists, writers and tourists.

The citizens of Sremski Karlovci understood the idea that propelled the establishment of the Foundation and the museum and have donated household and workshop objects, cellar utensils and hand tools in order to help the functioning of the museum. By donating these objects, the benefactors have both saved these objects from perishing and found a lasting place for them.

THE AREA BEFORE SETTLEMENT

The area now occupied by the Foundation facilities was „empty“ at the time the Danube Swabians settled at Karlovci in 1739. There were no houses, no streets, not even dirt roads. Karlovci of those days reached only up to the „Lower Church“ and there were no other houses all the way to the Peace Chapel.

The Danube Swabians settled at Karlovci after the Belgrade Peace was signed, according to which Belgrade fell under the Ottoman rule. The entire Roman Catholic population, which Austria had settled in the northern Šumadija and the towns of Šabac, Beograd and Smederevo after the 1718 Peace of Požarevac, left this area, threatened by the forthcoming new rulers. They feared that the new rulers would be their enemies and their lives and possessions would be jeopardized. These refugees settled down at Zemun, Ruma, Petrovaradin and Karlovci. It is estimated that 52 families numbering 220 members settled at Karlovci.

When they arrived at Karlovci, these people bought land lots to build their houses on and were given arable land in the nearby „Lipije“ area. The newly erected houses formed a hamlet of their own - Schwaben Dorfel, made up of two streets. These are presently

the Matoševa and Karlovačkog mira streets.

The state gave the inhabitants of Schwaben Dorfel a total tax relief. Otherwise, tax was levied on the house, land (vineyard, arable land, orchard, vegetable garden,...), as well as on livestock. It was known exactly how much tax was due for a cow, a horse, goat, sheep,...

Since the inhabitants of Schwaben Dorfel did not have to pay taxes, all the inhabitants of Karlovci who wanted to build houses decided to build them at Schwaben Dorfel. Tax was not a negligible item in the family budget. And so Schwaben Dorfel grew, and Karlovci grew as well, especially after the Second Serbian Migration, to become one and the same town called Karlovci at the end of 19th century.

However, the inhabitants of Karlovci in their day-to-day communication, still call this part of Karlovci, once Schwaben Dorfel, Svapska.

Bearing in mind that the main building of the Foundation is a family



house built on the edge of Schwaben Dorfel, it is assumed that it was built around 1770.

Old postcards

THE MAIN BUILDING OF THE MUSEUM

The only preserved building, from the second half of the XVIII century, i.e. the time when the Danube Swabians settled in the Pannonian Plain, is the main building of the Homeland Foundation. It is a family house dating back to 1739, when the Swabians settled at Sremski Karlovci, 1739. Numerous tourists from Germany, Austria and other countries coming to see their homeland in Vojvodina can see how their ancestors lived here 250 years ago.

The homeland family dwelling, an old thatched roofed structure of peculiar beauty, was made of adobe and contained an earth stove and an open fireplace and chimney. The house had low ceilings and thick adobe walls, so as to be heated with as little energy as possible. Certainly, one has to bear in mind that people were then (about 250 years ago) shorter in stature.



The dwelling has two bedrooms and a kitchen. The first, parents' room, was on the street side and the other one, children's, on the backyard side, both of them

entered from the kitchen.

The street bedroom was the parents' room in which, besides the parents, small children slept. A washstand was held there, clothes were kept in this room, food was prepared and eaten here. The backyard bedroom was for the children or a grown-up girl. It accommodated children above the age of three or four, sometimes younger, if the mother got pregnant again. If there were more children, they slept in beds by twos. Somewhat older children, above the age of 13, as they usually accompanied their



parents in field work or were engaged in day labour, and in case there was no place for them to sleep in the bedrooms, were sent to the attic, where they made their bed in

the grass or clover hay. These children, but also the parents of the household head, if there were any, or his siblings, only slept in the attic. They ate and washed up in the main household.

The fact that this house was not located in either of the two main streets

comprising Schwaben Dorfel (today two parallel streets Matoševa and Karlovačkog mira), but next to them, confirms a thesis according to which it was built a few decades after the Danube Swabians had settled at Karlovci (in 1739).



A cart used for work

FACT AND FIGURES ABOUT THE MAIN BUILDING

The house was built in three stages. The room overlooking the street was the first to be built, followed by the kitchen and the backyard room. There were two reasons for the erection in stages. First, it was the time of continuing wars between Austria and the Otoman empire and nobody knew which side would be the lucky one. It could easily happen that one had to move away, so it was wiser to invest as little as possible so as to lose as little as possible, if it had to be. Secondly, poverty was almost general, at least at that time and in that social stratum, so it was easier to build a house in several stages.

The main building of the Foundation, the family dwelling, was made of adobe (packed mud) and covered with thatch (about 30 cm thick). The ceiling



was also made of thatch which was layed out accross the attic beams. Its thickne-ss was 30 cm and on top of it a 10 cm thick layer of mud was spre-ad. The inside of the house was only 2 meters high, so that people of present day height could hardly move in it with ease. The windows are small, in order

to keep the warmth in and generally to have a better thermal isolation. The floors were made of packed mud and were kept in good condition by occasional glazing with watered-down cow dung. This solution would kill microorganisms in the soil floor, create a coating and render a pleasant yellowish hue. True, for an hour or two after this treatment, the inside smelled, but then it was all well. More versatile housewives used to „kill“ the smell by bringing in fragrant flowers such as hyacinth.

To build a house like this, a family had only to buy doors and window frames (or to have someone make it for them free of charge). The rest was found „on the spot“. If they dug into the backyard soil about 50 – 60 cm deep, they came accross a layer of earth good for the house walls – „adobe“ walls. They were made by packing adobe earth and adding some straw, reed or twigs for „reinforcement“. The reed was found on the bank of the Danube, only 150 meters away, and the beams were found in the nearby groves. Admittedly, the beams were not as straight as an arrow, but they served the purpose.

Knowing that the house was built by themselves, with the help of friends and neighbors, one must conclude that the house cost very little.

The house consisted of two bedrooms and a kitchen. Each room had an earth stove, stoked from the kitchen. In



the kitchen, there was an open fireplace, where water was heated all day long for domestic uses. The house had only one chimney, so that the smoke from each stove in the bedrooms – through an opening in the upper part of the stove – reached the kitchen and, together with the smoke from the open fireplace, was vented out of the house through the chimney located above the fireplace.

Above the fireplace, the householder used to hang hams, bacon and sausages to preserve them by smoking. These meat products were left in the smoke for a few days (and the householders knew perfectly for how long) and then put away and protected from flies.

“Oranija” - a kettle, hung above the open fireplace, which provided hot water throughout the day.



Hot water was used for various domestic uses, bathing children, laundry, cooking, etc.

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The first washing machine



Milking bucket



"Cimenta" – a liquid measure – the one in the picture is of 0.5 l.



A charcoal iron

THE INSTALLATION OF THE HOMESTEAD

The exhibited house has been furnished with pieces of period furniture to illustrate the life of its inhabitants of two and a half centuries ago. The installation was designed with the expert support of the Museum of Vojvodina in Novi Sad and the Central Museum of the Danube Swabians from Ulm (Donauschwabisches Zentralmuseum).

The bedrooms are furnished with bed frames, with straw-filled mattresses, big down pillows and eiderdowns, wardrobes and tables, all dating back to that period. As expected, there are plenty of kitchen utensils (cutlery, dinner sets, bowls and other kitchen accessories).

The house also exhibits dressy folk costumes „worn“ by five life sized mannequins (three women and two children).

On the street side wall, between the windows, there is the „house chapel“ or the „family altar“. If the house was located far from the church, the family went to church only several times a year, usually for Christmas and Easter. This „house chapel“ therefore served as a place for the „Pater Familias“ to read the prayer in a ceremonious way, standing in front of it, before the main meal, in the presence of all the family members. This was considered to be the fulfillment of their religious obligation in establishing



the communication with God.

The eastern and southern walls display a selection of old family photos and postcards depicting Sremski Karlovci, enabling the visitors to get back several decades and even a whole century to the life of the village and its inhabitants.

There are several objects of the homestead infrastructure of the depicted times exhibited on the porch of the main building and visitors can view them and imagine what it may have looked and functioned in real life.



THE BACKYARD

The backyard has been prepared for the forthcoming construction of a restaurant which will serve traditional food of Danube Swabians and for a documentary center.

The backyards of the homesteads in the time period studied here were used for all kinds of work, for firewood storage, for stacking hay, straw and clover, to breed chickens and carry out many other activities.

A part of the yard has been paved with the large, „Swabian“ bricks, so that it is possible to circulate in the yard even in wet weather. It should be noted that when this house was built the yard was not paved with bricks. You can imagine what it was like to walk in the yard in rainy days – each step to be made in mud and sticky soil.

The free green surfaces in the street, in front of the house, have been tilled and used as spice garden. Because the „spice garden“ was a part of the organized household of every single Swabian housewife in their old homeland. She grew dill, parsley, basil, thyme, mint, etc. Along the fence adjoining the neighbours, a





"Puttony" – a basket with picked grapes, taken from the grape picker and emptied into the cart. It was carried by the "Puttonyos" on his back.

dozen of grapevines have been planted, as well as a smallish vineyard, according to the prevailing cultivation methods. The original vineyard was suited to manual cultivation by man alone, but when man realized he could use a horse for

cultivation, he dug out every other row of the grapevine so that his horse could pass and pull the required cultivating implement, usually the harrow.

Within the backyard, there is a reconstructed old-fashioned backhouse (there is no modern toilet), so that the visitors can get an idea of this aspect of life in the past as well.

Suitable parts of the backyard are equipped with four massive wood tables with benches, dug into the ground, in the shades of a walnut tree and an almond tree. They can



Grape and fruit sprinklers



accomodate about thirty visitors, who can relax in the shade and have a refreshment.

The seating capacity for the same purpose is enhanced by another three portable folding tables with benches.

In the homestead, there is a 10 meter deep dug well, with a 5 meter high water column. The well is in good condition and has water even in periods of draughts. This well, only somewhat „younger“ than the house itself, can bring to life the way a village household was supplied with water, both for the domestic uses (drinking, cooking, washing up and laundry), but also for the other household requirements (cattle and livestock watering, vineyard irrigation and sprinkling, pig slaughtering). The well has been cleaned up (the water is not potable) and a superstructure has been mounted according to the prevailing local designs from the second half of the XVIII century.

THE SHEDS

The shed is a mandatory and indispensable facility in the infrastructure of a farming household even today, but in the period presented here it had an even higher importance. The shed was used to store away and protect from rain the tools, cultivation implements, harnessing equipment and some household appliances. The shed was also used to store the yeast indispensable for bread baking („kumlov“), safe from the reach of animals, cats in particular, after it had been processed as prescribed.

The sheds are a true reconstruction of the original facilities, but, unfortunately, considerably smaller than the real ones and insufficient to meet the practical requirements. This is why the number of exhibits which should be



“Thresher” – a separator for the elimination of light particles from grains

displayed is reduced, although it is still possible to see several of the main utensils and tools every village household had to have.

Next to the sheds, there is a small souvenir shop.

One of the exhibits in the backyard is a horsedrawn cart, the so called „taljige” – a dray, drawn by one horse. Namely, in hilly landscapes such as the one surrounding Sremski Karlovci, there are numerous deeply rutted roads where two horses could not go abreast. This is why people designed a cart for one horse only. Since it was to be drawn by one horse, the dray is shorter than the type for two horses.

The construction site in the backyard is a restaurant-to-be, which will serve the traditional food of the Danube Swabians. When it is finished, its visitors will be able to get a well-rouded impression of the life in those times and to eat and drink what the first inhabitants of this place once ate and drank.



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A girl eligible for marriage, in a formal dress



A young man in formal attire



A housewife in a formal dress



A widow in a formal dress



This is where the father sleeps, always by himself, because he works hard and has to get a good rest. Mummy sleeps in the other bed. She usually sleeps with a child, often with two children and there is sometimes a baby in the cradle next to her bed.



Grape press with a funnel

The first maize sheller



A dray – one-horse cart used in the Furška Gora area.