

Das Tote Dorf

Allscheid - The Dead Village (The fateful end of this village)

Re-constructed from the findings of the Register of the Council of Steinigen, and Register of Gillenfeld.

By W. Nohn, Mayor, in Gillenfeld, May 15, 1958
(Translated from the German by Ary J. Scheffer and Elsa Krauch)

The stony heights give us a wide view. If one looks from here over Steinigen and the Alfbachtal (Alfbach valley) in the direction of Darscheid, the eye falls on a small, shimmery white building in the midst of the landscape, which is easily recognized as a small chapel. This chapel is sanctified to St. Erasmus, whose name it bears. It is visited by people from far and near. Bareheaded and praying, the people find their way inside, and ask St. Erasmus for healing of their children's rash and scurvy. The wanderer who rests at this spot today does not realize any more that this silent little chapel is the last sign of a village that once stood here. Here stood the 18 houses of the village of Allscheid, which, until the year 1852, belonged to the political village of Steinigen. Allscheid lived only in the memory of the older generations of the village of Steinigen and the surrounding villages, and even these memories would have been blotted out completely in time had not Klaus Mark of Brockscheid in the year 1952 brought the vanished Allscheid to life again in his folk drama "The Dead Village".

Our home narrator succeeded admirably in conjuring up for us on the stage the harsh fate of these people as they grappled with poverty, the sorrowful battling of simple, industrious Eifel people for their- ancestral homeland from which merciless necessity banished them. On the basis of the oral tradition and the historical proven facts, Klaus Mark transformed the tragic fate of the one-time little village of Allscheid into a layman's drama for the village stage. With the recollection of the dead village and its trial-tested population, a memorial has been created in honor of love of home. The work has the advantage that the material is not constructed, but is historically true.

This work brings to life again the endless time of need in which a stranger tells of the idea of wandering that came to the remote people of Allscheid. It tells of the discussions of the deputies and the tragic struggle of the responsible men, accompanied by the fearful worries of the women and children as to what the decision would be. We were interested, therefore, in the way Klaus Mark brought out these themes, so let him tell it:

"The interest in the sunken village of Allscheid was awakened in my earliest youth by the blind organ-grinder, Johann Sadler, of Steineberg. He was born in 1850 in Allscheid of a family that had not decided to emigrate from the locality. I still see the blind organ-grinder before me, as he was guided by his wife who led him by the arm as

he wandered from village to village, eliciting melodies of the old folk songs on his little hand organ. In my home village of Brockscheid, the two little old people were always gladly received. The little gifts that they received from door to door were gladly given, like little gifts from God, for the fate that made the poor man blind in the first days of his life was hard and tragic.

"Sometimes the blind music man and his good wife spent the night in my home village. When I heard of this, I regularly betook myself to the little house at the edge of the village by the church. In the twilight I listened quietly in the room when the old man, who was always very talkative, told of Allscheid, which he himself had never really seen indeed, but whose picture he carried in his soul, as his mother in many stories had told him from his infancy on. He painted for me the bitter poverty of the times; he spoke of the undying love of home of the Allscheid people, and drew me a living picture of the inhuman tragedy that was bound up in the emigration of 100-odd years ago. No wonder that the words of this organ grinder made such a deep impression on my youthful mind. A deep sympathy awakened in me when, after such an evening, the blind man and his wife started on to the next village. In the hesitating, uncertain fate which, in past days, had banished the Allscheid village families from their old ancestral home. It was as if the restless blind man were seeking his lost home, his dead village of Allscheid, which has been wiped out so long ago, like the light in his dead eyes."

"Allscheid in the Eifel - 100 years ago a village stood here". Under this heading the southwest broadcast began its verbal report of the history of the vanished Eifel village. The broadcast did not have as its purpose the vague discussion of all things which have vanished, but instead the hard and difficult fate of an entire village whose soil was no longer able to nourish its people. They emigrated in closed rank, and the neighbors in Steinigen could only get possession with the specific injunction that they would never settle there again. What the document said about this, and what the grandchildren of these one-time neighbors who were able to report, could be learned from the broadcast on October 19, 1952, from the studio at Mainz. Even if what is remembered today does not give us much latitude, nevertheless it must be considered worth while to call to life again the old village from the annals of the administration for the village chronicle. While this register of resolutions of the council of villages of Steinigen and Allscheid gave us only scant information with the exception of the decisive resolution of May 22, 1852, the registry of the administrative records of Gillenfeld made it possible to reconstruct the families of Allscheid again. The archives of the land registry office of Daun yielded a village plan and gave us - albeit only fragmentary - information about the property rights. It was a laborious detailed task, but the outcome of which could make it worth while in the interest of our local history.

The "Register of the Resolutions of the Council of Steinigen - Allscheid", begun in 1846, still remains in its original form at the Administration of Gillenfeld. It expresses the opinion at every opportunity that "the residents of the village of Allscheid were without means". In 1847 that portion of the firewood which fell to the inhabitants of Allscheid was sold at auction in favor of the village treasury because they were unable to raise the money to buy it. "Furthermore they were absolved from the annual firewood

and live stock taxes (on cattle and goats)." April 4, 1847 "the council recognized it to be its duty to come to the aid of its fellow citizens and proposes herewith: that 100 bushels of rye are to be consigned to the inhabitants of Steinigen - Allscheid". February 29, 1848 "...according to which for the building of a parish house in Darscheid 22-6-10 and for the covering of a deficit in the church treasury in Darscheid 8-10-4 Taler."

30-16-2 Total was to have been up in 1848. As it seemed absolutely impossible for the poverty-stricken people of Allscheid to raise this amount, the village council wished to express an opinion about this. After closer consultations of the matter at hand, one is of the unanimous opinion that the assessment is an impossibility, because the inhabitants of Allscheid are utterly insolvent and are poverty-stricken.

The decisive conclusion of May 22, 1852, reads as follows: Minutes at Steinigen on May 22, 1852, present were the Council members:

1. Johann Adam Michels
2. Johann Adam Schuler
3. Matthias Lehnerz
4. Johann Josef Thelen
5. Nikolaus Schafer
6. Peter Demerath of Allscheid
7. Matthias Josef Roden

In today's regular council meeting, which under the chairmanship of the undersigned village manager, Johann Adam Michels, the undersigned council members were present, the council took under consideration the already completed actions in connection with the inhabitants of Allscheid because of the taking over of their last remaining woods and the sale of their private property, and concludes following mature consideration commensurate with the importance of the matter of the existing taxation of the woods by the municipal head forester, Mr. Muller of Daun, regarding the taxation of the private ownership by the committee appointed for this purpose consisting of three members namely:

1. Johann Adam Schuler
2. Matthias Lehnerz
3. Johann Adam Michels, all members of the council,

and taking into consideration of this fact, that the buying out of the inhabitants of Allscheid is most urgently ordered, to requisition in the interest of the latter, as well as the woods in question and also the private property of the individual inhabitants. And with the conclusion of the business the council delegates

1. Village Manager - Johann Adam Michels
2. Member of the Council - Johann Adam Schuler,

and declares the following terms for this business:

1. The price for the forest is fixed at the sum of 3000 Taler which sum is to be used primarily and exclusively for the defrayal of the travel expenses of the emigrants and the expense of re-settling for the three families who did not emigrate. That

share of the money apportioned to the three families who settled in Steinigen, on the other hand, is to be paid to the latter themselves after their re-settling has been completed.

2. The price for the private properties is also established on the basis of the former taxation with the individual private owners of Allscheid under the proviso of the ratification of the provisionally concluded bills of sale and indeed for the total landed real property of the 19 different sellers for 2200 Taler. The buying community of Steinigen takes possession and use immediately after the completed ratification of the imperial government. The stipulated buying price shall then be paid to the sellers provided they are not burdened with mortgages or other incumbrances and not until 15 days after the transcription of the deed in question, the mortgage debt should, above all, be paid out of the buying price to the respective claimants. The council concludes in order to make further colonization impossible that immediately following the completion of this private selling contract and the ratification of the whole business by the imperial government that all of the structures which constitute the village of Allscheid are to be torn down at the expense of the community. With regard to the raising of the funds:

i. Capital for the forest	- 3000 Taler
ii. Same for private property	- 2200 Taler
iii. For razing of the buildings	- 150 Taler
iv. For expenses	- 200 Taler
	<hr/>
	5500 Taler

This capital should be raised in the following manner according to the agreement between the village of Steinigen and the property owner', Nikolaus Holzer of Daun, the latter agrees to advance the preceding amount where redemption plus the current taxes are to be affected in the following manner:

The purchased private property is to be sold back to the community with the proviso that the buyer shall be pledged under threat of penalty for breach of contract in the sum of 300 Taler and the denial of a right to re-buy - and to be pledged not to re-build dwellings here. The proceeds shall be collected by Holzer himself, which was formerly stated in Article 2.

In the same manner, under Article 1, the procedure regarding payment for felled oak trees is to be collected by Holzer under established conditions or else to be paid to him from the village treasury. With regard to the remaining portion there is to be transferred to Mr. Holzer, in accordance with Article 2 in the frequently referred-to agreement, the cord wood of the stand of beech trees in the village forest depending upon the amount which in the opinion of the village officials and forestry officials may be cut - at a price of 3 Taler per cord, and after satisfactory proof be deducted from capital and interest. The borrowed capital is to yield interest of 5-1/2 per cent in view of the great amount of trouble and difficulty entailed in this matter whereby the village guarantees to Mr. Holzer the rightful and unhindered access to the redemption of the private properties

which are to be sold. If however, this loan cannot, contrary to all expectations, be covered, then the village of Steinigen would have to petition for a loan at the deposit fund, for the present, for re-payment of the eventual residue, and be prepared to reimburse this loan through the sale of village properties, and if necessary through assessment. All of these contracts are subject to the ratification of the government. Finally the village council respectfully petitions the government to ratify these conclusions.

Actum ut supra The Village Council
Signed: Michels, Schuler, Thelen, Schafer, Roden Matth
 Josef Lehnerz, Demerath

Thus for the Decree.

And so, on a summer's day in 1852, the inhabitants of the quiet little village of Allscheid emigrated. Some of them voluntarily because that era of great emigration awakened the desire for adventure, but most of them because they were forced to go. All of them left their homes amid hot tears and bleeding hearts. The property owner Holzer referred to in the foregoing resolution of the village council brought the emigrants together with their belongings to Rotterdam per wagons from where they were put on board ship for North America. With last kerchief wavings the last bridge to home and fatherland was forever severed.

The families that stayed behind remained in Allscheid until their re-settlement in the Spring of 1853. Three families then went to Steinigen: the families of Henn, Heinz and Demerath. Through marriage, the family Weber also remained in Steinigen. The Heinz house was rebuilt in Steinigen exactly as it had stood in Allscheid. The doors and windows were taken from Allscheid. The family Maus/Sadler remained in Steineberg. Of the large family of Burghard, one family remained in Demerath, another family in Gillenfeld. The family Braun moved to Mehren. On the 12th of January 1929, the last remaining woman from Allscheid died in Steinigen. She was the widow Helen Jungen, nee Henn, born November 22, 1852, in Allscheid. The last surviving man had been born in Allscheid December 16, 1850, He was Johann Sadler, son of Michel Sadler and Eva, nee Maus. He was the blind organ grinder who was referred to by Klaus Mark He died, almost 85 years old, on October 16, 1935, in Steineberg.

The quiet little village of Allscheid, the houses and cottages with root and branch were torn down in the Spring of 1853. No stone remained upon stone. Rubbish of lumber, stones, and beams were hauled away, garden fences and hedges were laid low. A short time thereafter plows made their furrows through the very places where formerly had been houses, barns, granaries and roads. Only the little church was spared from destruction. About the church bell a quarrel arose between the village of Steinigen and the parish of Darscheid, which in 1855 was settled in favor of the village of Steinigen. In

the year 1867 the little church once again became the object of a quarrel between the two parties. The parish of Darscheid was represented by the Pastor Ludowici and the village of Steinigen was represented through the head of the council Demerath and by Mayor Zillgen of Gillenfeld. In the judgment of the communal architect Bruck of Wittlich, the building was declared to be in a state of decay. There was talk of a "pathetic sight, because following the emigration of the Allscheiders nothing more had been done". One of the inhabitants of Steinigen declared himself ready to restore the little old church into a house of worship in order to end the quarrel. The little chapel and a cellar arch along the wayside are today the last landmark of the vanished village of Allscheid.

During the radio report in Steinigen, it was stated that nothing had been heard from the Allscheiders after their emigration. But this was contradicted by Matthias Josef Hab. He declared that he knew positively that descendants of an Allscheider family had come on a visit. He also had knowledge of a letter in which it had been told that the family had made their fortune in America. After a long search the letter in question has been relocated. Its text has been attached as an appendix.

Recently a descendant of the Dreis family has given us word of his arrival in Germany. Just at the time when these lines are being written the visit materializes. Mr. Leslie M. Dreis, 3131 East Broadway, Long Beach 3, California, with his son who at the present time is stationed in Lembach near Kaiserslautern are looking in upon us. With great interest they examine the results of the investigation, and they are able to inspect the entries of the old register of births for themselves. The bridge spans a full century!

Was it due to the old folk songs of the blind organ grinder which inspired Klaus Mark to write his folk-play "The Dead Village", or was it the spark of the deeply rooted love of home which was re-kindled again in German hearts over there after many years, or was it perhaps our present calling across the wide spaces which re-built this bridge after 100 years?

Who Knows?

Perhaps fate is beckoning to us that we should so shape our short sojourn on this earth that we not only work and amass, but that we should also cherish what our beneficent Creator has placed in our cradle as a precious gift: Love of home and fatherland, inspired union with Nature and humanity and worthy consideration of tradition! In this manner we present to you this little contribution of our chronicle of home.

"Amen"

From a document provide *Ur, William J. Giesen of St. Paul MN (a Dreis family descendant, and therefore an Allscheid village descendant) in 1970 to his cousin, Carole Beach of Minneapolis MN.*

Note that the village of "Steinigen" is spelled "Steiningen" on modern maps.