

Rohrbach, Worms, and Waterloo were historically significant **Black Sea German** colonies located in the Beresan District of the Russian Empire. Today, these towns are situated in the Mykolaiv Oblast of southern Ukraine, though they go by different names.

In the early 1800s, Tsar Alexander I invited German settlers—primarily fleeing the devastation of the Napoleonic Wars in regions like Baden, the Pfalz, Alsace, and Württemberg—to farm the newly acquired steppe lands north of the Black Sea. In exchange, the settlers were promised free land, religious freedom, and exemption from military service.

The Beresan Colonies

All three of these specific towns were Evangelical (Lutheran/Reformed) parishes and were tied closely together by geography and frequent intermarriage between families.

Rohrbach

- **Founded:** 1809
- **Modern Name:** Novosvitlivka (Новосвітлівка)
- **History:** The original group of settlers consisted of 26 families, but it quickly grew into a prominent agricultural hub. According to village history, it was named by two early colonists after their hometown of Rohrbach in the Pfalz region of Germany.

Worms

- **Founded:** 1809
- **Modern Name:** Vynohradne (Виноградне)
- **History:** Located just four miles from Rohrbach, Worms was settled at the exact same time, likely by colonists who traveled in the same wagon trains. The two villages shared incredibly strong ties, and for many years, they shared the same Evangelical parish pastors.

Waterloo

- **Founded:** 1819 (with further expansions in 1827 and 1832)
- **Modern Name:** Stavky (Ставки)
- **History:** Established a decade later than Rohrbach and Worms, it was named specifically to commemorate the 1815 Battle of Waterloo where Napoleon was finally defeated.

Historical Records

When tracing family lines back to these colonies, the original parish records and village censuses are heavily relied upon. The **1858 and 1892 censuses** for the Beresan district are particularly rich sources of information.

Because the Russian Empire required local parishes to send duplicate copies of their vital records (births, marriages, and deaths) to the capital, many of these documents survived in the

St. Petersburg Consistory Archives. Today, organizations like the Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS) have translated and indexed a massive portion of these records, making it significantly easier to reconstruct the family trees of those original settlers.