

# Housing Construction at *Jarek*

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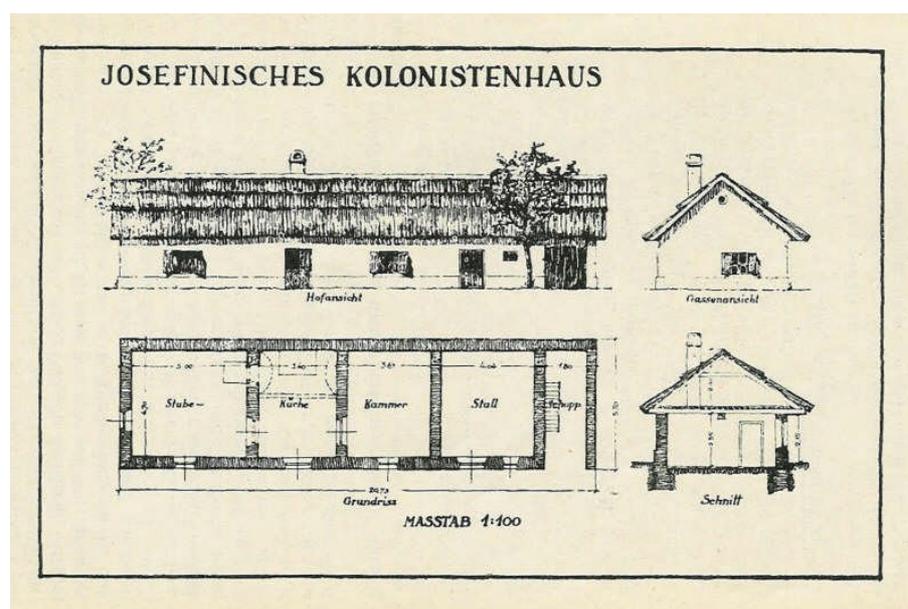
## 1. The Colonist' s House of Josef `II era

Jarek was founded at the time of Josef II's settling period in the spring of 1787. All the houses at the village were built according to the plans designed by the Kameral engineer Josef Kiss on sites of equal size. The latter were 15 klafters wide and 50 klafters long (1 Vienna klafter is 1.89 m), i.e. about 28 m wide and 95 m long. Each house had a front room a kitchen, a small room as well as a stable. The houses including the stables were 11 klafters long and 3 klafters wide, i.e. about 21 m long and 6 m wide.

With about 60 square meters of living space the houses were approximately as large as a 2-room-apartment of today They consisted of stamped loam, which was taken out of "Grundlöchern" (ground holes) near the village. The gables bordered on the lanes. The roofs covered with reed or straw projected a little over the lane. A window of the front room faced the street; the other one faced the yard. The front room was heated by a stove fired from the kitchen. The front door opened into that windowless kitchen leading to the front and small rooms.

There was no cellar yet, so it can be assumed that at least the greater part of the 80 houses planned for the families was finished before winter came and ready for occupation. (*Link to: The Village of Jarek*)

The stable was situated under the same roof and attached to the small room. From an open shed the loft could be reached via stairs. The construction costs of the house amounted to 200 guildens, half of them for the labour, the rest for the materials.



*Picture 1 - A colonist's house of Josef II's era.*

The extremely simple and modest farmhouses offered shelter to people and animals, and this meant progress, if you consider that the settlers had survived a winter at Ruma where they had to live in caves dug in the hillside. (*Link to: Winter at Ruma*)

At Jarek there is not a single house from this period left, as the whole village was destroyed by a conflagration in the year of the revolution, 1848. (*Link to: Revolution of 1848*)

## **2. The longitudinal house**

In the first year of the 19th century the colonist's houses made of stamped loam were probably replaced one by one by simple longitudinal houses made of air-dried bricks. After the fire of 1848 at the latest all the houses were built in this way.

Now all the houses got gables built of bricks, which were not only as wide as the rooms, but also included a pergola. They were a little wider and higher than the roofs covering the pergolas looking out onto the yards. Wooden columns entwined by grapevines supported the roofs, so that there was a shady space behind them, which especially during the hot summers served as common room to the inhabitants.

These pergolas are a characteristic of the Pannonian Villages and still to be found in the Austrian Burgenland and in Hungary. Their floor was paved with bricks or stone flags. Now the room looking out onto the lane had two windows. Behind it there were one or two more rooms, the kitchen, the pantry and a small room, the windows and doors of which all opened on to the yard. People did not want to look into their neighbours' yards. That was a matter of mutual consent.

At the rear of this longitudinal house there was the stable. Now the roofs were covered with tiles. The great fire had been a lesson, and people wanted to avoid a catastrophe similar to that of 1848, when the whole village was burnt in one night.

In the beginning the gables showed a slightly curved Baroque alignment, in later years they were decorated with prongs on the sides, which ended in a circular element at the gable. Frequently there was the year of the construction engraved below it. In the course of the 19th and 20th centuries the gables became more and more splendid, and there were often beautiful window Frames made of relief plaster round the and other decorative elements.

The construction material of those houses was no longer stamped loam, but either air-dried or fired clay bricks. From about 1860 on there was a brick kiln at Jarek, which was situated at the road leading to Katsch on Novi Sad territory. From that time on it can be assumed that at least the people who could afford it had their houses built with fired bricks.



*Picture 2 - An old longitudinal house with reed-covered roof.*

*This very beautiful and well-kept house is to be found at Temerin, the neighbouring village of Jarek, which had a high Hungarian population. The protruding gable is particularly beautiful and shows a style no longer existent at Jarek.*

**The following 4 photos of longitudinal houses were all taken at Jarek in 2005 and 2006.**



*Picture 3 - longitudinal house in the Water Lane with a very simple created gable.*



*Picture 4 - A longitudinal house in the Water Lane with a wonderful stucco relief around the windows. At the gable you can see the year of building 1932.*



*Picture 5 - A longitudinal house in the Hospital Lane (house no. 176). The door has been blocked up and therefore the gable is emblazed with half pillars and a round arch.*



*Picture 6 - the half pillars and the round arch on house no. 176*

### **3. The Half-Transverse, Angular or Five-Window House**

From about 1830 on this construction type existed in Batschka. It cannot be determined exactly, since when it was realized at Jarek.

About half the width the site of 15 klafters (about 28 m), i. e. about 14 to 15 m, was built on. As a rule there were 3 rooms with 5 windows facing the lane in this part. In some houses there were also 6 windows.

One of the rooms was the extra or 'parade' room. There were 2 beds with piled up feather pillows and duvets along the wall. Patterned velvet covers were spread over them, under which linen sheets with beautiful lace could be seen. In the middle of the room there were a large table and chairs or a bench. A large ward robe in the corner contained the farmer's wife's dowry. In this room the family's relatives from other villages were lodged during great festivities, e. g. the parish fair called 'Kerweih'. Apart from that it was empty most of the time. The other rooms in the front house were the family's bedrooms.

At right angles to the front house there was a further part added with 1 or 2 rooms, the kitchen, the pantry and a small room. In the front part of the house the pergola was frequently closed in with large windows. The rooms in the rear had windows and doors looking out onto the pergola, so that, similar to the longitudinal house, the neighbours' private sphere was respected.

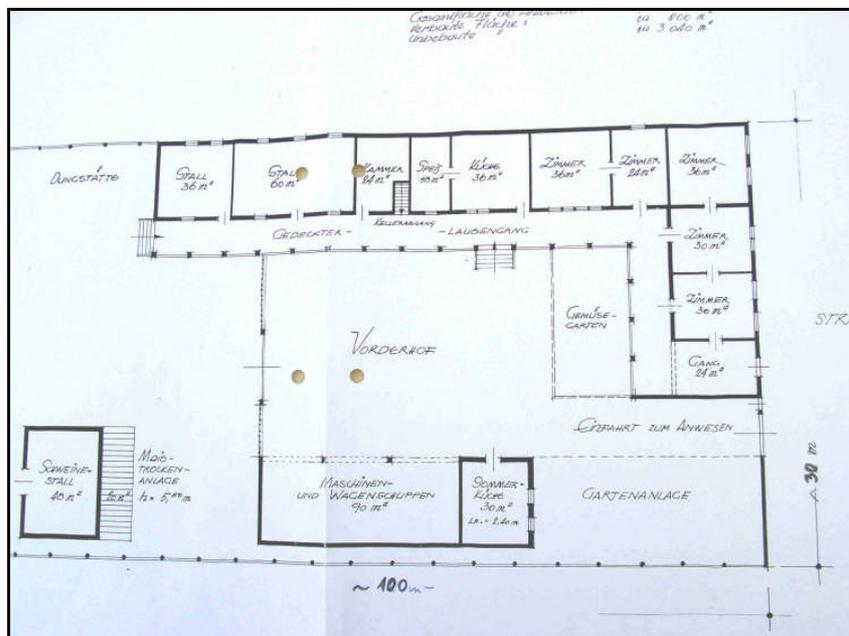
At the end of the pergola there were 2 or 3 stairs leading down to the stable for the cows and horses, which was attached to the rear house.

In the angle between the two parts there was a flower garden or a small vegetable garden, too. The paved front yard could be reached through a large gate next to the house. This front yard was separated from the farmyard behind by a fence with a further gate.

The free space on the other side of the front yard was also used as garden or as site for a small retirement house, where the old farmer and his wife lived. In the front yard there was also the **summer kitchen** with an attached oven and often a tool-shed, too.



*Picture 7 - The summer kitchen, a painting from Jodof Glanz, Hodschag  
(the owner is Franz Greiling (in Stuttgart))*



**Picture 8 - The plan of half-transverse house in the Main Lane (house no. 95)**

In the back-yard there were hens, geese, ducks and hogs in the shadow of big mulberry trees. The violet fruit tasted sweet and served as food for the animals, if they were not 'saved' and distilled to mulberry spirits.

At the end of the farmyard there was the corn drying rack called 'hambar' as well as the pig sties. Next to them there were the straw heaps, and behind all that there was still room for a further garden with fruit trees.

The old sites were almost 100 m long. Through a small door or a gap in the fence the neighbour's garden could be reached and through his site the parallel lane; of course this way could only be used, if there were good relations between the neighbours.



**Picture 9 - A “hambar” (or a“tschardak”) in the back yard, which was used to dry corn.**



*Picture 10 - A flower garden in the angle between the front and back house (2005).*

The **half traverse house** was frequently found in the three oldest lanes of Jarek, the Main Lane, the Water Lane and the Hospital Lane.



*Picture 11 – A half-transverse house in the Hospital Lane.*

*This house has not been restored for more than 60 years. The wonderful shell-shaped decorations above the windows and the beautiful frieze reflect the high quality and great variety of stucco ornamentation realized during the art nouveau period.*



*Picture 12 – A modernised half-transverse house in the Water Lane.*

*The present multi-coloured coating is not identical with the original appearance of the house until 1944. At that time almost all the houses were whitewashed. Every year before 'Kerweih' the women painted the facades with slaked lime.*



*Picture 13 - At the corner of Railway Lane and Water Lane (house nr 14).*

*The old farmhouse gives an idea of the former beauty of the village. The original appearance has not been restored, but the delicate, cream-coloured tints of the frieze underline the harmonious effect of the decoration.*



*Picture 14 - The transverse house in the Water Lane.*

*Though this house has not been painted for more than 60 years the structural fabric is still in good condition and gives an impression of the great variety of' stucco ornamentation.*



*Picture 15 – A half-transverse house in Hospital Lane.*

*This house (number 185) with relief plastering illustrates the great difference in the facades. Years ago it was restored in two colours, but the paint has flaked off since then.*



*Picture 16 – A very dilapidated house in the Hospital Lane in 2005.*

*The retirement house beside it (number 186) is about to collapse.  
The ruin of the house built in 1899 shows the typical construction style.  
It consists of one room, a kitchen and a narrow pergola. You can see  
the door leading from the lane to the pergola, as well as the wooden beams  
supporting the ceiling and also the paved floor in the corridor.*

#### **4. The Transverse house or the “Rural Villa”**

This construction type is the consistent continuation of the half-transverse house. It was destined for several generations; the integrated retirement house was attached to the main building. The whole site of 15 klafters (about 28 m) bordering on the lane was built on. On the one side there was the main-building with 5 to 6 windows, followed by the integrated gate opening a passage to the front yard. Beside the gate there was the 'retirement' house with at least two, but frequently 3 or even 4 windows. Unfortunately there are only two of those formerly large and splendid 'nine-window houses' left at Jarek.



*Picture 17 - A nine-window house in the Hospital Lane (house no. 187).*



*Picture 18 – A transverse house at the corner of Hospital Lane and Cross Lane (number 183) with eight windows.*



*Picture 19 - The back of house number 183 as seen from the Cross Lane.*

*The stable which had been attached on the right side has been pulled down in the meantime. Only one room has a large window facing the street. (It is the “famed” observation window in Old Jarek of “Eckrosibüsel”.)*

These large and impressive farmhouses were built very frequently from the end of the 19th century to about 1914, later only occasionally. Magnificent Stucco ornamentation round the windows and above the gates reflect the wealth of the owners.

The rooms of these houses were between 3.50 and 4 m high and for this reason very difficult to heat. In winter the inhabitants preferred staying in the rooms in the back part which were a little less high.

The arrangement of the rooms in these houses was similar to that the half transverse houses. The bedrooms were in the front part, the kitchen, small rooms and the stables were in the back part. They also had pergolas.

The division into front yard and farmyard was the same, too. The Main, Hospital and Water Lanes had houses of this type exclusively. Often two neighbouring houses were identical.



*Picture 20 - Two identical built transverse houses each with 7 windows in the Cross Lane in direction to railway station (house no. 73 and 74).*



*Picture 21 - Also two identical transverse houses in the Main Lane (house no. 148 and 149).*



*Picture 22 - A transverse house in the Main Lane  
(house no. 149) with 4 windows on each side and . . .*



*Picture 23 - . . . with wonderful stucco ornamentation above  
the great house gate . . . and in the neighbourhood . . .*



*Picture 24 - . . . a transverse house in the conform construction (house no. 148) . . .*



*Picture 25 - . . . which has the same stucco ornamentation above the great house gate, but now sadly in a derelict state.*



*Picture 26 – A beautiful nine-windows house demolition  
Main Lane (house no. 109) in the year 2005 . . .*



*Picture 27 - . . . and one year later (in 2006) after a brake  
there remains only a five-window house (house no. 109).*

The windows and gates of all these transverse houses are decorated with imaginative stucco ornamentation. Occasionally the year of the construction and the name of the owner are still to be found above the gates.



*Picture 28 - The name and the building-year above the great house gate from house no. 211 in the Water Lane.*



*Picture 29 - House no. 183 in the Water Lane. The ornamentation above the gate is the same as at the catty-cornered house no. 211. The year of construction may also be 1912.*

The following photos taken at Jarek (in 2005 and 2006) show some more details of gates and windows:



*Picture 30 – House no. 202 in the Hospital Lane, a “modern“ renovated house from 1923.*



*Picture 31 - A great housegate in the Main Lane.*



*Picture 32 - The gate of house no. 187 in the Hospital Lane.*



*Picture 33 - Entrance gate of house no. 103 in the Main Lane.*



*Picture 34 - Gate of house no. 73 in the Cross Lane, which was built about 1912.*



*Picture 35 - An identical Gate at house no. 75 in the Cross Lane, and the same year of construction like house no. 73.*



*Picture 36 - Fresco in the entrance of great housegate of house no. 149 in the Main Lane.*



*Picture 37 - The frieze at house no. 149 in the Main Lane.*



*Picture 38 - Another beautiful frieze above an entrance-gate in the Hospital Lane.*



*Picture 39 - Decoration around windows at house no. 149 in the Main Lane.*



*Picture 40 - A window at house no. 73 in the Cross Lane (wich was once a workshop of a wainwright).*



*Picture 41 - Door and window with stucco relief at house no. 143 in Main Lane (constructed about 1923) as a half-transverse house on a small parcel attached to the neighbouring house (house no. 144).*

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## 5. Summary

Unfortunately there are only a few examples of these three house types, the longitudinal, the half-transverse and the transverse house, left at Jarek. Most of them are in a bad to desolate condition. Few of them have been renovated recently, but none looks the same as in former times.

Very little is known about the building history of those magnificent houses. There are no documents, no plans or accounts concerning the costs of construction. What is known is only that most of the houses were built by Anton Diener and his brother-in-law Adam Niefer between the turn of the century and about 1918. Adam Niefer and his family migrated to Canada in 1929. His descendants still live there, but they have no information as to the houses built by their family.

Neither are the names of the stucco plasterers known, who can really be called artisans in their domain. Probably they came from elsewhere and went from one village to the other. Oral tradition confirms that the costs of façade plastering were almost as high as the construction costs of the houses themselves.

What is remarkable, too, is that not only the so-called "rich farmers" had the stately large transverse and half-transverse houses with art nouveau or Baroque facades built, but also "average farmers". In the years before World War I it was fashionable to live in a new large house with rooms that were 4 m high. No sooner than in the 1920s and 30s were the houses built less high and the number of windows looking out onto the lanes were reduced from 5 or 6 to 3 only, but the number of the rooms was the same.

Unfortunately many of the houses have been pulled down totally or partly in recent years, and new buildings have been constructed in their place or next to them. This is not astonishing either, if you consider the costs of the materials necessary for renovation. All the roofs would have to be repaired, but there is absolutely no money available. Some facades have been repainted, but the roofshave not been retiled. So it is only a question of time, until the water will seep through the leaky roofs and the houses will more or less collapse and have to be replaced with new ones.

For the present Jarek generation it is very sad that the houses in which they were born, or in which they had lived as young families, are no longer standing. For the generation of children and grandchildren only a few pictures in the albums or Heimatbüchern (books about the old Jarek), as well as the pictures of trips to Jarek, can keep awake the memory of the old home of the parents and grandparents. Nevertheless the Danube Swabians have accomplished a great and essential contribution to the cultural development of the Vojvodina over a period of over 200 years, even though they are not mentioned in a single prospectus or official brochure of the state of Serbia.

**Perhaps this account will also be read by some Serbians and they will find out in this way something about the Danube Swabian past in their beautiful country, that was home to the inhabitants of Jarek for 157 years.**