

Grigoriopole History

The area where the city of Grigoriopol is currently located was occupied by Scythians and Samatians between VII and III B. C. During the Middle Ages the area was conquered by Russia and became part of Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia. At the very beginning of the 18th century Moldavians slowly became the main ethnic group of the area. In 1791 by the Treaty of Jassy the territory of current Grigoriopol officially became part of the Russian Empire. The period between 1791 and 1792 was fundamental in the establishment of the city, as after the end of Russo-Turkish War there was an influx of more than 4,000 Armenian refugees from Izmail, Akkerman, Kaushany, Kiliya, and Bender.

In 1792 in the area called Black Slobodka was established a city originally named Grigoriopolis, and it was an Armenian colony. In a decree by Empress Catherine the Great aimed at improvement of southern Russian Empire it was rated: *"Late Prince Gregory Potemkin-Tavricheskiy ordered the Armenian town near the Dniester River between the Chyornaya and Chernista valleys, including urban pastures of both, to be named Grigoriopol. We approve this and direct to take the aforementioned district between the Chornaya and Chernitsa valleys and syndicate them as an Armenian city under the name of Grigoriopol"*



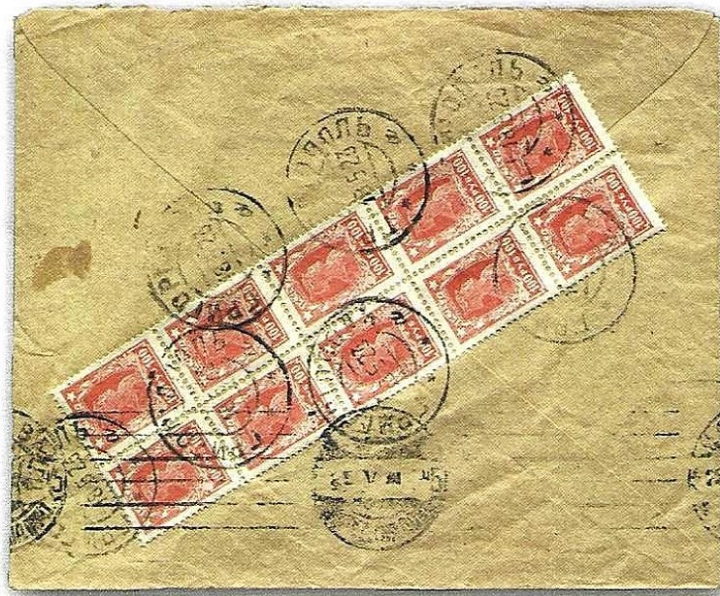
Coat of
Arms of
Grigoriopol

Very Scarce Armenian related 1923 cover mailed from Grigoriopol to Berlin

Russian



Cover was mailed from
Grigoriopol on May 18
1923 to Berlin franked
with 10 of the 1922
Worker & Soldier 100 R.
perforated issue, tied with
plenty of Grigoriopol
postmarks.



Based upon survived documents, there are two theories of the etymology of city's name and they both are related to Prince Poternkin. The first theory states that the prince ordered to name it in honor of himself, and the second one that he ordered to name it after the Saint Gregory the Illuminator, the patron saint and the first head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Along with Catherine the Great he approved the plan of construction of the city and on July 25, 1792 in a solemn ceremony officially founded it. Armenian population consisted of refugees fleeing the persecution of the Turks which they came here in search of jobs and fertile land. On that day in a festive atmosphere with a large crowd of Armenian refugees and numerous foreign guests, the Armenian Archbishop Isif Argutinsky blessed six stones which were intended to lay down the city.

Administratively Grigoriopol was included in Tiraspol county of Kherson Province. Russian Empire's strategic plan was to form Grigoriopol as a center of commerce which helped the city to grow very fast. In 1794 city received its coat of arms and a seal, and Pavel Tumanov became its first mayor. Armenian colony of Grigoriopol received the status of a self-governing national Armenian administrative-territorial unit in the form of the Magistracy, the subordinate power of the governor of the region and administration. The migrants were subjects of the Russian Empire with rights and privileges same as rights and privileges of citizens of Russia. By creating in the south of the country an Armenian community the Russian Government intended to turn it into an industrial and commercial center. Until the 1830s Grigoriopol played an important role in the economic life of the southern Russia. It later lost its economic value, since all merchants moved to larger shopping centers such as Odessa or Chisnau. In the seventh decade of the XIX century majority of Armenians left the city.

The main occupation of inhabitants of Grigoriopol along with agriculture were craft and trade, which were developed later in the XIX. Residents were famous for their art of handling hides and sewing all sorts of fur products. Along with the rise of economic and social development the cultural and intellectual potential of Grigoriopol steadily increased as well. In the city there were male and female schools, public library, and various groups of amateur artists. Among most prominent Armenian families of Grigoriopol were Shaginyan, Hahanyan, Avanesov, Voskanov, and Hovsepov families.