

Rynowka Parish

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[Translator's Note: Pastor Johann Kludt's wife reflecting on the work of her husband in Rynowka, an Evangelical (Lutheran) village in the Don District of Russian.]

[Begin Translation]

Rynowka Parish

Little has been written or talked about concerning the Rynowka Parish. It is one of the youngest Lutheran (*evangelische*) parishes in Russia. Its founding was quite difficult and only took place in 1901, when my husband, Pastor Kludt, was called to care for it. It was a decision of necessity because Rynowka was located 35km from the railroad line, which ran from Rostow to Woronesh and Moscow, 2 stations southward from the major Millerowo Station, from which the railway branches off to the industrial city of Lugansk and 50km from the small town of Kamenskaja. In the wide open deserted Don District. The parish consisted of 3 different groups of German colonists, the largest group made up of Prussians who had purchased, from the District Office of Grunau, parcels of land from a Mennonite land-owner and established 3 large colonies. 20km farther down the way were 2 colonies made up of young settlers from the Ludwigstal Parish. This 2nd group consisted of rich farmer sons from Molotschna, 70km north of Rynowka, already settled at the end of the 19th century. They were the wealthiest and most intelligent, almost all former students of my father from the Prischib Central School. The 3rd group was made up of emigrants dating back to the 1763 invitation by Catharine II, in the Riebendorf Colony in the Woronesh Gouv., scattered out in larger and smaller settlements, living either on their own land or on leased land. All totaled, there were more than 10,000 souls. Two pastors had tried to form a parish out of these three groups, but they were not successful in bringing the three groups under one hat, mainly because the Prussians at Rynowka, those who were older and smarter than the Molotschna folks, wanted the pastor to live in their midst. In 1901, when my husband had to leave his beloved Grunau Parish, his first love as he called it, because of the russification of the school which required serving it in Russian and his repeatedly pointing out that the Germans must remain German, our provost (*Propst*) offered him the position of provost assistant with residence in Rynowka. He accepted the position with a somewhat heavy heart, but still trusting in God. And, lo and behold, he managed, without particular effort, to get the parish to materialize. The Prussians were happy to have their pastor from the old colony. The Molotschna folks rejoiced in having the son-in-law of their one time pastor and sent their people to be married on a further 70 kilometers of travel. And the Riebersdorf folks also joined. Never, in the 7½ years that we spend in Rynowka, did we ever have a single complaint about difficulties with anyone of them. The reason which prevented them from coming together in the beginning was that both pastors, who had previously tried to unite the colonies into a single parish, had demanded that they all contribute equally in the construction of a church in Rynowka. My husband came to understand that the people had only just recently moved into the Don District

and had invested all their savings in a house, garden and equipment and did not want to take the risk of being unable to pay in the event of a crop failure. In return, a residence for the pastor was located in Rynowka in the house of a former land-owner which, at a right angle to it, had a sound structure made of fired bricks and covered with a tin roof that served as a stable for the horse and a place to keep the wagon. My husband now suggested to the 5 nearby colonies to convert this building next to the house into a prayer house which is what gradually happened. A little work was done on it each year. Every spring and every autumn, I would personally make a visit to every home in the three colonies, accompanied by a church trustee, and was able to collect from each a half ruble. That first year we were already able, through the money collected, to replace the barn windows on each of the long walls with 8 beautiful arched stained-glass windows. In the second year, proper benches were acquired in God's house; a parlor-organ in the third year, which I played every Sunday; in the fourth year, a large altar picture, better altar clothes and an altar area carpet; in the fifth year, a pulpit was added; in the sixth year, wood floor boards were put down; and in the seventh year, a small tower with a bell was put up on the roof. This was now a respectable prayer hall and no one found the cost to be too painful and, by means of the personal visits to the homes, a person came closer to the people and learned to know them better. In January of 1908, we left the Rynowka Parish and took up the call to the Jekaterinodar Parish in the Kuban District, the residence of the pastor being in the town of Jekaterinodar, where some 10,000 colonists in various colonies, who either owned their own land or leased it, had to be served.

29 August, 1939

[End Translation]

See Map Below

[Source of Photo: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_River_\(Russia\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_River_(Russia))]

[Map Customized by Translator for this Document]

