

Locality Guide for German Research in the Beresan enclave, Odessa region, Russia (now Ukraine)

By Carolyn Schott
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Historical Background

The land where the Beresan enclave is located was ceded to Russia from Turkey in 1792 through the Treaty of Jassy. The land was very sparsely settled at that time. Tsar Alexander I, following the example of his grandmother, Catherine the Great, published a manifesto on 20 February 1804, inviting European settlers (primarily Germans) to settle the steppes of “New Russia.”

These German colonists were promised:

- Religious freedom
- Exemption from taxes for 10 years
- Exemption from military service and billeting troops (unless they were en route to a battle)
- Loans, payable in 10 years, to get established and purchase seed, food, etc. for their families
- Exemption from paying duty on personal possessions that they brought into Russia
- Exemption from serfdom
- Ability for craftsmen to join guilds/associations, and practice their trade freely
- Land (30-60 dessiatin, which equals about 80-160 acres)

German families from Württemberg, Baden, the Rhineland/Pfalz, and Alsace responded to this manifesto, beginning in 1803. Immigrants reported first to a quarantine station in Dubossari on the Dniester River, and then were assigned to their colonies. The first arriving colonists were settled in colonies near Odessa, in Molotschna, and in Crimea.

The first colonies in the Beresan enclave were settled in 1808—Rohrbach and Worms (Lutheran). Additional mother colonies (both Lutheran and Catholic) were settled from 1809 through 1819. And as the population grew, land was purchased from local nobles to found numerous smaller daughter colonies and khutors (large farms with two or three families).

In the 1870s, Tsar Alexander II began rescinding some of the colonists’ original promises, including their exemption from military service. Many families began leaving the Beresan to immigrate to North and South America.

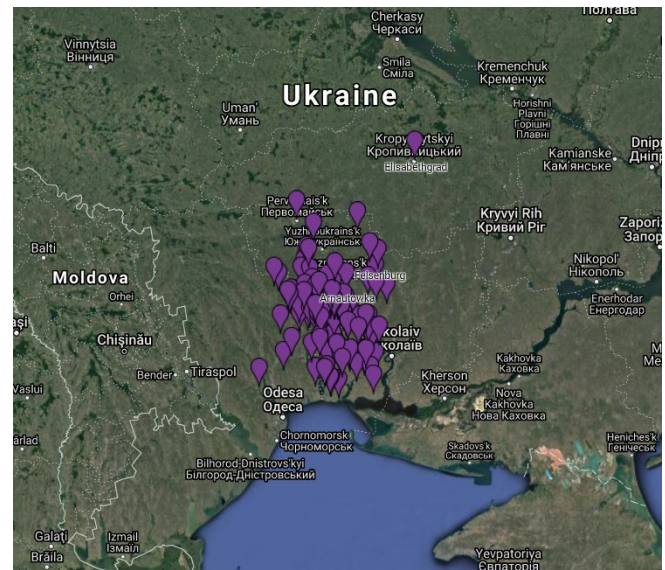


Image of Beresan colonies from Germans from Russia Settlement Locations, www.germansfromrussiasettlementlocations.org/p/maps.html : accessed 10 March 2020.

In 1917, the Russian Revolution unleashed upheaval in society throughout Russia. The ruling authorities arrested and deported many people as “kulaks” (those wealthy enough to have a larger farm or hire one or two people) to forced labor camps in Siberia. The political turmoil accompanied by a severe drought resulted in the famine of 1920-1921, which led to widespread death throughout Russia. The Beresan villagers’ land was eventually seized and they were forced onto Soviet collective farms. In 1932-1933, deliberate seizure of crops led to another famine, called the Holodomor (or famine genocide). In 1937-38 was Stalin’s Great Reign of Terror, when arrests and executions escalated throughout Russia, including in the Beresan enclave.

In October 1941, the Nazi German army captured Odessa. The Beresan area was occupied by the Nazis from that time until 1943. As the Russian army began to advance to recapture the area (from fall of 1943 through summer of 1944), the Nazi German army retreated to German-occupied Poland.

As the Russians advanced, German colonists feared a return to the discrimination and harsh treatment of the Soviet era. In addition, after living under Nazi German rule for a couple of years, they feared being counted as Nazi collaborators once the Russians recaptured the area. As a result, most German families throughout the Odessa region fled along with the Nazi army retreat. Once they arrived in German-occupied Poland, they applied to be repatriated to Germany.

Many ended up in Germany after the war. But many were also recaptured by the Russians (who were also advancing into German-occupied Poland) and were forcibly resettled east in Siberia, Kazakhstan, or Kyrgyzstan, unable to return to their homes in the Beresan enclave.¹

Villages/colonies in the Beresan Enclave

Mother Colonies ²	Religion	Year Founded
Johannestal	Lutheran	1810
Karlsruhe	Catholic	1810
Katharinental	Catholic	1817
Landau	Catholic	1809
München	Catholic	1809
Rastadt	Catholic	1809
Rohrbach	Lutheran	1808
Speier	Catholic	1809
Sulz	Catholic	1809
Waterloo	Lutheran	1819
Worms	Lutheran	1808

Daughter colonies and khutors include: Adshiaska, Alexanderfeld, Alexandrowka Khutor, Alt Kaltscha, Antschekrak, Arnautowka, Athelental, Beresowka, Blumenberg, Blumenfeld, Blumental, Bondarewka, Christina, Christoforowka, Domanewka, Dworjanka, Eigengut, Elisabethgrad, Felsenburg, Freudental,

¹ Joseph S. Height, *Homesteaders on the Steppe* (Bismarck, ND, Germans from Russia Heritage Society, 1975 with second printing in 1987), chapters 1, 2, 27-31.

² Height, *Homesteaders*, p 11.

Friedenheim, Friedensdorf, Friedrichstal, Gnadenfeld, Grigorjewka, Grünfeld, Halbstadt, Hans, Hoffmannstal, Hoffnungsburg, Hornbacher Khutor, Isbaschka, Jelisawetowka, Jenner Höfe, Kamenaja-Balka, Kartakai, Kary Khutor, Khutor Martin, Kiewo-Alexandrowka, Klein Karlsruhe, Kralowka, Krasna, Lenintal, Leonopol, Lichtenfeld, Luisendorf, Manne Khutor, Marizina, Mesena Khutor, Michailowka, Neu Kaltscha, Neu Kandel, Neu Katharinental, Neu Liebenfeld, Neu München, Neu Peterstal, Neu Rastatt, Neu Rohrbach, Neu Schampoly, Neu Speyer, Neu Worms, Neufeld, Neusatz, Nikolajewka, Olgenfeld, Perwomaisk, Petroska, Poppen Khutor, Renowka, Rosenfeld, Rosenheim Schandt, Schirnewo, Schmaltz Khutor, Schmidt Khutor, Schönfeld, Sebastiansfeld, Sirotskoje, Slepucha, Sonnenberg, Steinburg, Steinfeld, Stuttgart, Trichaty, Tschemerlejewka, Uljanowka, Vaatz, Weidemann, Wiesengrund, Wilhelmstal, Wolkowo, Woltschij, Wosnessensk.

In addition, three daughter colonies—Annental, Lichtenfeld, and Neu Lustdorf—are geographically separated from the Beresan enclave, but are included as part of the Worms parish ³

Available Records

Censuses

The earliest censuses for the mother colonies were published in the Karl Stumpff book, *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763-1862*.⁴

Colony	1816	Other
Johannestal		1825, 1830
Karlsruhe	X*	
Katharinental		1834
Landau	X*	1891
München	X*	
Rastadt	X*	
Rohrbach	X*	
Speier	X*	
Sulz	X*	
Waterloo	X	
Worms	X*	

* Another version of the 1816 census for some villages was published for sale by the Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS), which may have material not available in the original Stumpff book.⁵

The 1858 census for all mother colonies, except München and Rastadt, was published by GRHS in *The Black Sea German Russian Census Volume 1*.⁶

The 1891 census for Worms and Rohrbach is available (translated version) on the Black Sea German Research website. (Scroll down to Odessa/Cherson region: www.blackseagr.org/research_village.html)

³ *Germans from Russia Settlement Locations* (www.germansfromrussiasettlementlocations.org/p/maps.html : accessed 10 March 2021)

⁴ Karl Stumpff, *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763-1862*, (Lincoln, NE, The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1973), pp 714-808.

⁵ "Beresan District Records-Member Store," at *Germans from Russia Heritage Society*, (www.grhs.org/pages/beresan-census-m : accessed 11 March 2021).

⁶ *Black Sea German Russian Census Volume 1* (Bismarck, ND, Germans from Russia Heritage Society, 2003).

Lutheran Records

List of Lutheran parishes in the Odessa region (which includes the Beresan enclave):

www.blackseagr.org/research/parishes_odessa.html

No original Lutheran church records are known to have survived. However, from 1833-1917, duplicates of the church records were prepared each year by the pastor and sent to the St. Petersburg Lutheran Consistory. Most of those have survived.

Years	Images of Original Records	Indexes
1833-1885	Available on FamilySearch under "Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885" at www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151?fbclid=IwAR1cZmgQAm-9RIhF35EliELBm6m37WevUupbuoNWPtni75P0yQA4Z0KFtT8 Path is Kherson > Odessa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some indexed on FamilySearch Updated, corrected indexes, including wives' maiden names, on the Black Sea German website at www.blackseagr.org/research_church_stpetes.html Older indexes on the Odessa3 website www.odessa3.org/collections/stpete/
1886-1898	Unknown	Unknown
1899-1917	Most available from the Mykolaiv Archive at http://mk.archives.gov.ua/tsifrovyi-arhiv-metrychni-knygy/1042-metriczni-knygy-2208.html?start=3&fbclid=IwAR1zDJbVvc3TCaBFeXKg-uXmDLMHCtSsORWiDCQ1Dd9HkJYQgoQWMyqvlk See pages 3 and 4. The years 1900, 1914, and 1916 are missing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indexes on the GRHS website, Beresan Regional Interest Group at www.grhs.org/home/memberfile?path=%2Fchapters%2Fbdo%2Fmemonly%2Fstpete_annual_reports_1899-1917.html (Available to GRHS members only) Much of the 1899-1917 indexed information is also included in the Odessa Region Families tree in the Black Sea German database www.blackseagr.org/blksea-db/searchform.php

Catholic Records

A full description of the availability of Catholic records from the Odessa region (including the Beresan enclave) is here:

www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/weiss/THE%20CATHOLIC%20CHURCH%20RECORDS%20OF%20SOUTH%20RUSSIA_edited.pdf

Some Catholic records are readily accessible, including these record translations available on the Black Sea German website at: www.blackseagr.org/research_church_tiraspol-deaths.html. Images of the original records are available on request.

Colony	Type	Years
Karlsruhe	Deaths	1839, 1841, 1844, 1850 1865-1880
Katharinental	Deaths	1871-1880
Landau	Deaths	1866-1880
Rastadt	Deaths	1839, 1841, 1850
Rastadt & München	Deaths	1865-1880
Speier	Deaths	1886-1880
Sulz	Deaths	1870 to 1880

Records obtained, translated, and published (book format, available for purchase) by GRHS:⁷

Colony	Type	Years
Karlsruhe	Baptisms	1 Jan 1827 – 26 Dec 1840 (missing 1828-1830 and 1832)
Katharinental	Baptisms	2 Jan 1827 – 26 Dec 1840 (missing 1828-1830 and 1832)
Landau	Baptisms	2 Jan 1827 – 31 Dec 1840 (missing years 1828-1830 and 1832)
Landau	Baptisms	1860-1866
Landau	Deaths	1860-1872
Rastadt	Baptisms	Jan 1840 – Nov 1870
Rastadt	Baptisms	Sep 1830 – May 1839
Rastadt	Deaths	Dec 1814 – Dec 1850
Rastadt	Deaths	Jan 1851 – Nov 1865
Rastadt	Marriages	May 1815 – Nov 1865
Speier	Baptisms	3 Jan 1858 – 27 Oct 1867
Speier	Baptisms	1 Jan 1868 – 22 Dec 1877
Speier	Baptisms	6 Jan 1878 – 28 Dec 1888
Sulz	Baptisms	19 Jan 1827 – 30 Dec 1840 (missing 1828-1830 and 1832)

In addition, many Catholic Beresan researchers have obtained records at their own expense and included information about Catholic Beresan families in their trees in the Black Sea German database:

<http://www.blackseagr.org/blksea-db/searchform.php>

⁷ "Beresan District Records," GRHS (www.grhs.org/pages/beresan-census-p : accessed 11 March 2021).

EWZ records

When Beresan German villagers fled their homes in 1943-1944, they followed the path of the retreating Nazi German army to Nazi-occupied Poland. There they filled out paperwork to be repatriated to Germany through the Einwanderungszentralstelle (EWZ) or Central Immigration Control department. The most important record series for the Beresan families are the EWZ50s and EWZ57s.

EWZ50 records include several generations (usually individual + parents +grandparents), plus detailed history on the main individual. They are indexed in the Black Sea German database (www.blackseagr.org/blksea-db/searchform.php). Copies of the original records can be obtained from several sources (www.blackseagr.org/research/ewz_films.html).

EWZ57 records include a family tree as they were used to verify an individual's German ethnicity. They are available on microfilm from FamilySearch at www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/730589?availability=Family%20History%20Library These are alphabetical by surname, but are not indexed.

Other available records

- **1811 Beresan District Family Lists** (Karlsruhe, Landau, München, Rastadt, Rohrbach, Speier, Sulz, Worms)⁸ Translated and published by GRHS.
- Various files obtained from the Mykolaiv and Odesa Archives translated and published by GRHS, Beresan District Regional Interest Group, www.grhs.org/chapters/bdo/bdo_archives_index.html Includes **land records, military records, tax lists, village statistical journals, etc.** (Available to GRHS members only)
- Index of some **Repression records** (people who were arrested and/or executed during the Soviet regime) is available under the Nikolayev Repressions tree (use dropdown) in the Black Sea German database at www.blackseagr.org/blksea-db/searchform.php

Repositories

The two primary archives in Ukraine that have information about the Beresan colonies are Mykolaiv (Nikolaev in Russian) and Odesa (Odessa in Russian).

Odesa Archive:

Website: <http://archive.odessa.gov.ua/>

Email Address: archive@odessa.gov.ua

Address:

буд. 18, вул. Жуковського
м. Одеса, 65026, Україна

18 Zhukovs'koho St
Odesa, 65026, Ukraine

⁸ "Beresan District Records," GRHS (www.grhs.org/pages/beresan-census-m : accessed 11 March 2021).

The FamilySearch wiki provides an overview of fonds (collections) in the Odesa archive that relate to German settlements, with links to online indexes of records included:

www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germans_from_Russia_Archives_and_Libraries

For more information about German information in the Odesa Archive, see:

http://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/Odessa_Archives.pdf

Mykolaiv Archive

Website: <http://mk.archives.gov.ua/tsifrovyi-arhiv-metrychni-knygy.html>

Email Address: n.kolesnik@mk.archives.gov.ua

Address:

Державний архів Миколаївської області
вул.Театральна, 43, код 0512
Миколаївської, 54019, Україна

Derzhavnyy Arkhiv
43 Teatralna St.
Mykolaiv, 54019, Ukraine

Contacting an Archive

The FamilySearch wiki provides useful information for contacting these archives, including suggested wording and translation to Russian. However, although most Ukrainians speak Russian, the official language of the country is Ukrainian. So you may have better success using Google Translate to translate your email into Ukrainian. Scroll to bottom of page:

www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germans_from_Russia_Archives_and_Libraries

Archives in Ukraine are not always staffed to respond to inquiries, so it can often be more efficient to work with a local researcher to obtain documents. Reliable local researchers include:

- Odesa: Serge Yelizarov jaroslavjarik@yahoo.com
- Other Ukrainian or Russian archives: Mila Koretnikov koretmila@gmail.com

Maps

- **Germans from Russia Settlement Locations** is a Google-based map that provides key information on each village, including current-day name in the local language: www.germansfromrussiasettlementlocations.org/p/maps.html
- **Stumpp's book *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763-1862*** includes detailed maps of the locations where Germans settled, including the Beresan enclave (provided with the book as separate documents).
- The **Black Sea German Research website** has individual **plat maps** for many of the Beresan villages: www.blackseagr.org/maps_villageplat.html

Online Resources

- The **Black Sea German Research website has a robust collection** of family trees, records, and articles on history, personal accounts, and culture for German villages near the Black Sea, including the Beresan enclave. See www.blackseagr.org and www.blackseagr.org/learn_odessa.html for information on the Odessa region, including the Beresan enclave.
- The **Black Sea German Research website has photos** (mostly current-day) for many of the Beresan villages: www.blackseagr.org/photo_album.html#Villages
- The **Odessa3 website** has older indexes to the St. Petersburg records and other records for Black Sea Germans, including those in the Beresan enclave. See www.odessa3.org/collections.html

Additional Publications

- *Homesteaders on the Steppe* by Joseph S. Height (history and original settler lists for Lutheran villages in the Odessa region). Published by the Germans from Russia Heritage Society, Bismarck, ND, 1975.
- *Paradise on the Steppe* by Joseph S. Height (history and original settler lists for Catholic villages in the Odessa region). Published by the Germans from Russia Heritage Society, Bismarck, ND, 1973.
- *Trauerbuch Odessa 2* by Anton Bosch (history of Soviet repressions and lists of people arrested/executed in the Odessa region). Published by the Historischer Forschungsverein der Deutschen aus Russland e. V., Nuernberg, Germany, 2007.
- *Through the German Colonies of the Beresan District and Colonist Tales* by Hermann Bachmann (history, dialect, and songs of the Germans of the Beresan enclave). Published by the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND, 2003.