

# German Elementary School in Bessarabia under Church Supervision until 1891

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Note: Information within [brackets] are comments by the translator.

## **Currency and Weights & Measures approximate conversion equivalents found in this document:**

*Banko Assignation* was inferior Russian paper money

1 ruble banko = 100 kopeck or 20¢ (1850)

1 ruble silver = 75¢ (1850)

1 Faden (cord measurement 7'x7'x2') = 98 cubic feet / 2.34 cubic meters

1 Garnetz = ca. 10 pounds

1 Tschetwert = 6 bushels / 2.1 hectoliters]

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[Translation Begins]

## **The German Elementary School of Bessarabia under Church Supervision until 1891**

by Rector Jakob Becker

Church and School belonged, above all things, to the colonists' own self-administration. We were given full equality. "Church autonomy was even gladly given to us, because orthodox Russia feared that the Russian Church could be affected by the Protestant Church, as well as by other Western churches. Right at the beginning, we were confronted with this fear. Empress Catherine II promised the colonists in her Manifesto, according to §6, 'free religious exercise', and especially the villages the 'freedom' to build churches and bell towers, and to maintain the

necessary number of priests and church workers, with the sole exception of the monastery (*Kolsterbau*).” (Hahn, p. 41.) This has also been documented to us with regard to the church.

As far as school is concerned, there is not even a word to be found anywhere that we are entitled to it. So the Russian state, the state authority, did not care about the school of the colonists in any way. Nevertheless, we find the beginnings of our colonist school already a few years after our settlement in Bessarabia. Why they were so interested in a school can probably be explained by the fact that they were, for the most part, deeply religious people. Thus, they saw the school as an institution that prepared their children for life to such an extent that they could read and sing God’s Word, Luther’s Catechism and Christian songs. For most people, spiritual satisfaction was higher than earthly possessions; their souls, not earthly salvation, was the purpose of life. From the old Swabian homeland, they brought with them a strict, unwritten and, in their religious worldview, established customs and moral laws. They have stubbornly preserved the old way. This is proven by their successes in all areas. The old customs and practices brought from home were preserved and advocated as something sacred. The pastor was the only intellectual who moved with them into the vastness of Russia. His and the people’s convictions in the religious field were one and the same (Lindel & Sarata). In the later years, however, pastors also came from other countries, for example, the Baltic States. Through the work, perseverance, but also the love of order of these pastors and colonists, they were able to create for themselves a well-ordered community that was exemplary for their surroundings.

It is also not so, as some claim, that the colonists led a rather carefree life. A society succumbing to moral decay and depravity—as has been claimed in some quarters—would never have led them to these successes. Dr. Matt says: “How could a pastor, whose people he was responsible for, numbering up to several thousand and who lived within a radius of many kilometers, cope with the work of leading an unrestrained community to such a rigid and austere view of life as is still found in most colonies today? He intervened organizationally in the course of development of the existing views, views such as were conditioned by the various German tribes, denominations and sects to which the colonists belonged. But now the colonist, who felt called upon—these were not the worst—to leave records of his tribesmen to posterity or to act as a constant admonisher, had such a strict standard within him that the application of it tends to register manifold violations and imperfections. The ethical strictness and sectarian one-sidedness of the judges is therefore the main reason why the pictures that have come down to us about the colonist life of the first decades appear so exceedingly discolored.” (p. 17.)

This is also what W. Mutschall writes in *Our Village Schools in the Last 50 Years* [[Unsere Dorfschulen in den letzten 50 Jahren](#)]. It was there, the Elementary School (*Volksschule*), in every little village, when our colonies could look back on a 50-year existence. “From the poorest beginnings, it had developed in the course of half a century into a rank that corresponded to the concept of elementary school education at that time, because nothing better was known.” But Dr. Matt also proves it to us in the following way: As already mentioned, the first settlers were composed of the most diverse German tribes. — Statistics Dr. Stumpp. —

They had all acquired a certain life experience and view. Even if one may not speak simply of perfect personalities in the manner of the sharply defined “forms of life”, not of bearers of German culture as a whole, one must say, in order to take into account the motives which

necessitated the emigration, that one can divide the communities of the first colonists into two opposing, sharply defined collective types. The one, religious, in its most primitive form completely anchored in the hereafter, kept the balance of the type of management of affairs people who had both feet firmly grounded in this world, and who had courage enough to take responsibility for the continued existence of their relatives in the wilderness they encountered. The mutual influence of these two types created the later colonist, who was purposefully striving and always reverently opposed to the edification of the fathers. So it is understandable that school was an urgent need for both of them, in order to ensure the preservation of their worldview in their descendants, even if initially with different educational goals. In addition, there is another factor. The majority of the colonists were already familiar with the general compulsory schooling in their former homeland. Therefore, the motivation for familiarity must not be overlooked.” (p. 18.)

The school of the Bessarabian Germans was a daughter of the church and therefore became a



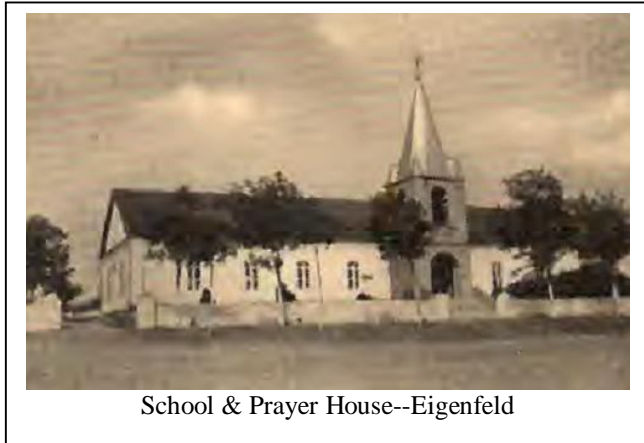
Church School, and because the maintainer of this school was each individual community, it was called “Church-Community-School”. Since the Manifesto spoke only of the church, it is also understandable that she could only be a child of the church. Under her wings she was able to develop an activity that can be regarded and described as exemplary in the last few years. She was legally under the leadership of the local clergy. In questions of the internal and external arrangement of the school, the appointment and dismissal of

the teachers, and so forth, their voice in the community was therefore authoritative. The duties and rights of the school were nowhere laid down by the authorities.

It was not until 21 September, 1832 that the legal position of the German Church School was defended to the School Administration of the Russian schools in Odessa as follows: “That the German Protestant church school in the city of Odessa, on the basis of the church and religious freedom most graciously granted to every religious party in Russia and in consequence of the most highly confirmed Protestant Church Law (namely the Swedish one of 1686) Chapter XXIV §22 as a Religion Church-Community-School was established and therefore a legal, public school of the Evangelical Congregation in Odessa, as well as all other Evangelical Lutheran German parish schools, both in the Baltic provinces and throughout Russia and in all German schools of South Russia (*Süd=Reussen*). On the basis of this, the Evangelical Church-Community-School in Odessa, namely according to the Church Law Cap. XXIV §3 and according to the instruction for the German colonies in New Russia of 16 May 1801 §5 under the direct supervision and direction of the pastor of the community, who according to the Church Law Cap. II §10, Cap. XXIV §3 of 11.2.31 and according to the instruction for the colony §5 to examine the school teachers of his Church-Community-Schools himself, with regard to teaching, to prescribe school instruction to them and, if necessary, to give direct account only to the

highest directorate of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment (*Minii der Volksaufklärung*) about his Church-Community-Schools. (Dr. Matt, pp. 18 and 19.)

From the above it can be clearly seen that the overall education of the colonist youth was placed in the hands of the colonists, as already mentioned above. In the years 1827, 1839, 1843 and 1850, various “School Regulations” were established by the Evangelical Lutheran Consistory in St. Petersburg, the Ministry of Empire Domains or the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment. Even



School & Prayer House--Eigenfeld

these School Regulations did not change the fact that youth education was placed in the hands of the colonists. The only intellectuals who could push the colonists forward were the pastors. They were therefore also the designers and shapers of the colonist school, the school of our people, the Church-Community-School. Thanks to his education, the pastor was at the head of the colonist school. In the first decades, the work in our elementary schools stagnated; for the pastors were overburdened with work, because each had a whole church

Parish to look after. Several congregations (*Gemeinden*) formed a parish—4 to 5 congregations, which lay quite far from each other. The great distances alone laid claim to the whole person, demanded an effort that was not the case in the old homeland. In addition to his duties as one caring for souls (*Seelsorger*), he also had to fulfill those of a registrar of births, marriages, and deaths (*Standesbeamten*). So it is also understandable that he could devote little time to school work. Only rarely was he able to submit himself to pedagogical questions. To this must be added the circumstance that the pastors of our mother colonies were people from the Baltic States, who had a completely different past, quite different customs and practices, a different country style, yes, a completely different character than the colonists, the majority of whom came from Swabia. As a result, these pastors often found themselves helpless in the face of the traditions of the settlers and their hopes and desires. So it is also understandable that a rather tense relationship often turned out to be between the one caring for souls and the ones cared for, which then also resulted in the pastor having to leave. These motives confirm to us that the pastors in the first years of colonization were indeed the directors of our elementary schools, but not “intensive” “workers” in them. Nevertheless, their influence on the development of our schools was very great.

The one who already had both feet in the work at that time was the teacher. Unfortunately, however, it must be confessed and lamented that no “students, teachers, professors and other learned people” went along with our ancestors. The intellectual professions were lacking in the ranks of our colonists. The overwhelming majority of them were farmers and artisans, and they had also been demanded by the Tsar’s house for the steppes of southern Russia. This drawback was usually remedied by simply appointing a “teacher” from among themselves by election. There is no denying that the election was often quite unfortunate. The demands that can be made in the ability of such a “dispenser” (*Provisors*) (see *How it was at Home* [*Wie’s daheim war*], by Rector J. Becker, Chapter—School) were the lowest conceivable: elementary reading, faulty

writing, the singing in a monotonous sing-song manner of one of the most common chorale melodies were enough to give the man the reputation of a capable teacher.

It was not “make a mess of craftsmen and dismissed officials” who were appointed to the high office of the educators of the youth, but as a rule venerable, old farmers who left the cultivation of their land entirely to the family in order to meet the skilled demands of their office. In the absence of the pastor, the teacher was at the same time the spiritual person in the colony (“sexton”), who had to hold two or three worship services on festival days, who baptized and buried; and anyone who is familiar with the pietistic-strict concepts of the colonists and knows how closely they want all acts of worship to be connected with the person who carried them out, must admit that only persons of authority could be entrusted with the highest office in the colony. A measure of trust, influence and dignity was required that not just any “newcomer” could be in accordance with. (p. 20 Dr. Matt.)

We can see from this that high demands were placed on the personality of the teacher. The teacher had to be a person to look up to and respect. In every respect, he should lead an exemplary life and be a shining example to everyone. In every situation in life, he had to be a role model for his children, but above all for his church members. If he met these requirements, he was one of the most respected personalities. If the “teacher” had said it, it was absolutely true!

Not only were the members of the congregation instilled with the fact that the task of the school teacher in his congregation was a high and sacred one, but also the teacher himself was taken in and convinced of his importance and task. A striking example of this is again given to us by Dr. Matt on page 21: “Now that I have decided when it should be the will of God to give up my teaching service in the year 1844, in which I often have to accuse myself that I cannot preside over the school as I should, and that I am getting older every day, as my strength is also decreasing, and I often think (whether I am already doing as good as I can), whether the children are not lacking what they could have learned from a trained school teacher...” (from the Church Archive of Sarata.)

In 1939, Wilhelm Mutschall, the tireless collector and chronicler of his German-Bessarabian homeland, drew attention to an old School Regulation that in 1838 did not lack a certain historical charm for us descendants. That “Ordinance” is a stormy movement against the extremely poor school attendance in the village schools of that time; they want to seize the bull by the horns and defeat it, whatever the cost. The “Ordinance” was issued by the *Komptoir* (Welfare Committee in Odessa) at the request of the Pastor Hastig of Arzis and temporary preacher of the Tarutino Parish.

The most important points are:

1. A School Court shall be established in each colony.
2. The School Court shall consist of the mayor, the oldest junior lawyer, a church administrator and two members of the congregation.

3. The court shall hold its sessions on Sunday afternoons: every Sunday from 1 November to 1 May, and every four weeks in the other months.
4. It must insist that the school-age children are unavoidably sent to school; to take appropriate measures on the teacher's notification of the absence of children or other disorders; strict to see to it that all children are unavoidably sent to the pastorate for confirmation classes
5. The school is to be held from 1 November to 1 May every day in the morning from 8 to 11 o'clock, in the afternoon from 1 to 3 o'clock; from 1 May to 1 June twice a week, namely Wednesday and Friday from sunrise for two hours; from 1 June to 1 September — 1 November, the school is held as in May.
6. The duty of the school teacher is: to instruct the children in reading, writing, and arithmetic, to instruct them to cleanliness, modesty, obedience, and courtesy to everyone, to report to the mayor any absence of the children or other disorder which he himself cannot control, but in case of repetition of the same disorder, to report it to the School Court.
7. On a report that children are absent, or that they are very dirty or in torn clothing, and so forth, the School Court must examine the matter at its first session and punish the guilty parents or guardians with 25 kopecks up to one ruble. In the case of deliberate obstinacy or stubbornness of the child, it will be sentenced to a stick beating. The judgment will be carried out immediately after the meeting.
8. If the colonists do not obey the School Court, they are brought to obedience by the District Office by means of a more severe punishment, if necessary they are presented to the *Komptoir*.
9. The District Office is to see to it that the judgment of the School Court is just and will satisfy the teacher's complaint, in the worst case each member of the School Court will be punished with one ruble. However, the execution of the judgment depends on the confirmation of the *Komptoir*.
10. The fines entered into a string book (*Schnurbuch*) will be used, with the permission of the pastor, to buy writing materials for poor school children.

This is the most important thing from the regulation.

In a Circular Order to all the Mayoral Courts of the Tarutino Parish, the pastor urges the practical implementation to these offices and gives some explanations and advice, which in any case go far beyond the scope of the Ordinance, but show that he is severely earnest in the school.

Entrusted with the management of the Tarutino Parish, he wanted to work to the best of his ability, both officially and professionally, as long as there was time to remedy a disease that had hitherto taken place, as quickly as possible. It had become known to him that not only the

careless and God-forgotten (*Gottvergessenen*) among the youth avoid the most necessary and beneficial instruction in order to pursue worldly amusements, but also many children are still strengthened in such evil disposition by their parents and guardians and are held back from instruction. Therefore, as a caretaker of souls, he felt compelled, on the other hand, to take hold of and carry out measures:

1. That School Courts will be introduced everywhere where they do not yet exist;
2. that the youth of both sexes, even the servants with the exception of those who have already been married, attend Sunday School diligently until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> year of their age, always show due respect to the school teacher, write well at least on a quarter sheet of paper presented to him, and diligently recite the Catechism, so that he, the pastor, may not have the trouble of rejecting bridal couples for ignorance of religion and having to first send them to school;
3. that every Sunday a member of the School Court should attend the Sunday school, so that he may come to the aid of the school teacher if necessary;
4. that all those who have not yet reached the age of 20 and do not wish to attend Sunday School shall be punished by the School Court with 10 kopecks for the first omission, 20 kopecks for the second, 80 kopecks for the fourth, and so forth, for each subsequent omission, with a doubling of the penalty, which shall be paid to the church treasury. If the fine for the last failure has increased to 10 rubles banko, the disturbing and stubborn shall, at the discretion of the School Court, be punished with corporal punishment until the person is willing to attend Sunday school;
5. that only sickness and events that cannot be postponed can be considered an excuse for absenteeism from Sunday School.

The School Court, in case it opposes this highly practical arrangement or allows the youth to get away with it out of friendship or kinship, will be punished the first time by the amount of 2 rubles, the second time by 3 rubles, and so forth, for the benefit of the church treasury, and in the event of failure to succeed, the opponents of all moral and secular order and orders of the Consistory and the Welfare Committee will be sued by the higher authorities for punishment according to Russian laws.

All this is to be announced by the mayor of the community and by the school teacher in the church after the worship service has ended.”

This was a measure of almost draconian severity, born from the mind of a man who, with good intentions and with a fervent effort to seek the good.

At that time, the teachers were employed by the community on the basis of an agreement between them and the community representatives. Even then, the members of the congregation were trying to give their school teacher a secure position in life. In the first years of colonist life,

however, it was still the case that the school teacher was paid “less than the cow-herder”, at that time he was still required to want his office more or less voluntarily. This was a very great unreasonable expectation; because at that time everyone was still in extreme poverty. But now I do not want to withhold this document any longer and let it continue in the text: Between the Church.....and the Newly Contracting School Teacher.....

“I, the one signing at the end, local colonist and citizen, hereby confess that I have come to an agreement with the local community, as a school teacher, to the best of my knowledge and duties as well as to the existing church laws, and orders of the pastor, will without reluctance to fill the school teaching profession from 1 May, 1844 to 1 May 1 1845, for which the Lord chooses to give intellectual strength and health. The annual salary is three hundred rubles *Bank Assignaten* ( $\frac{1}{2}$  ruble *Benko Assignaten* = 1 silver ruble), paid out with one hundred ruble *Bank Assignaten* notes. Furthermore, as additional revenue: he must obtain them from the persons concerned:

1. From a funeral with song—80, and without song—40 kopecks *Bank Assignaten*.
2. From a three times proclamation (publication of banns), thirty kopecks, and if the joining together (marriage) is performed in the local Prayer Hall—50 kopecks.
3. From an emergency baptism or a baptism that is performed in the local Prayer Hall, forty kopecks, but if a baptism in Sarata is performed for a person born here, he receives 20 kopecks. For a baptism performed in the Prayer Hall for someone from outside the community, he receives the entire offering.

For this he commits himself:

1. To keep a diary of offerings received and ecclesiastical income with the church trustee in charge of accounting.
2. To take care of the ringing of bells for every worship service, as well as for funerals and weekly prayers, at 12 o’clock midday, and night bell ringing.
3. According to the Community Decree, to see to it that the community fuel for the school is brought in, and to order the cleaning of the Prayer Hall and school, and since the school teacher is at the same time colonist and landlord, he is free from providing a team of horses, guard duty, and communal labor. The above contract is valid in all parts and is adhered to, confirmed by the following signatures. (Matt. pp. 21 and 22.)”

Karl Knauer, in his not yet published *Steppe Flowers* [Steppenblumen], Part 2, gives us a very deep insight into the school system of our ancestors at that time. He writes: “The call to be a school teacher was also not very tempting in Bessarabia. In the struggle for existence, the poor settlers could only lay out a little cash for the teacher. His modest demands were mainly rewarded in kind: wheat, corn, hay, burn-fuel and housing, free grazing for several head of cattle. However, there was plenty of sharing with the teacher during the time of butchering and other abundant



harvest results. Of course, the teacher's family also had to farm in order to support the mostly many-heads group of children. While the teacher worked in the school and the municipal government office, his family members diligently worked the plow, scythe, hoe, fork and rake out in the field.

Two examples may give us a picture of how an average teacher in Bessarabia was paid: Time—1850-1860.

1. My uncle Gottlieb Knauer, Korntal, Bessarabia, was a teacher, sexton and clerk in Katzbach for many years. He received 10 rubles (silver) a month as an annual wage, then for the whole year: two wagon-loads (*Fuder*) of community hay, two *Garnetz* (about 10 pounds) of wheat per family, four head of cattle for meadow grazing, housing and burn-fuel (manure and vines).

2. Christian Eisele, Friedensfeld, fellow student of G. Knauer, was active for a long time in Teplitz and then in Lichtental. He received: three *Garnetz* of wheat and two *Garnetz* of corn, two wagon-loads of hay, three to four head of cattle pasture-free, free housing and heating, a little sports money (*Sporteln*) from baptisms, marriages and funerals.

Herbert Weiss also provides information about the salary of a teacher at that time in his *Chronicle of the Municipality of Teplitz* [[Chronik der Gemeinde Teplitz](#)]. “In 1838, the teacher received: 230 rubles *Assiguation*, “*Kisik*” (comes from the Romanian *tisic* — Mist. Be) [maybe manure to burn], hay. In 1844: 300 rubles, 5 *Faden* [cords] of “*Kisik*”, 20 wagon loads of hay and 12½ *Tschetwert* (quarter) [75 bushels / 26.2 hectoliters] of wheat.”

Yes, our ancestors were accustomed to the school being under church supervision from their original homeland. It was good for all our colonists; for under their roof the people remained not only pious, but also German. Language, customs and practices were at the same time under the care of the church. School life flourished more and more. Every village already had its Church-Community-School, which did diligent and thorough work. Community and Church were very interested in creating good, fruitful school conditions.

At each Church Assembly, school questions and needs were also discussed and, if possible, solved. Great importance was attached to a proper, regular school life. For this reason, rules and regulations were created at these assemblies that were intended to guarantee proper school operations. It is very interesting that you can read from everything tradition affiliation. The arrangements are so similar to those of Württemberg that we can probably rightly say that most of the colonists were people from Württemberg, and that the Württemberg country probably had the best school conditions in Germany. The Württemberg people prevailed with their proposals for an improvement of the school system in our colonies. But now a text from *The German Farmer Settlements on the Black Sea* [[Die deutschen Bauernsiedlungen am Schwarzen Meer](#)], Chapter—*Church and School*, by Gottlieb Hahn: “In view of the tiresome perception that school absences occur all too frequently, the Church Assembly felt moved in the session of 7 January, 1842, to make the following order for the announcement to all congregation members:

### **A. Weekly School**

1. Those children who have reached the age of 14 and have acquired sufficient knowledge through early, faithful and diligent attendance at school shall also attend school only three half-days a week, but without fail, until their confirmation.
2. All children over the age of 6 are obliged to attend the Winter School, which lasts from the end of the autumn vacation until the beginning of the spring vacation, regularly every month, with the exception of eight half days.
3. The Summer School, which covers the period from the end of the spring vacation to the autumn vacation, excluding the summer holidays, may not be missed by the children any more than the Winter School
4. The little children from 6 to 9 years of age only get one vacation a year, namely in the summer.
5. According to the Church Assembly, the holidays will be announced by the school teacher to the school youth.

### **B. Sunday School**

Our unmarried sons and daughters are to attend Sunday School regularly until they are 20 years old; as well as the Children's Instruction (*Kinderlehre*).

Since the benefit which instruction can bring, both for time and for eternity, is so easily misunderstood by many, and is placed on the conscience of the administrator of this church, they have resolved and will also carry out [the following]:

1. That every father whose child misses a school without first obtaining permission from the pastor must pay a fine of 10 kopecks.
2. That every Sunday School student be punished by 40 kopecks for missing a Sunday School or Children's Instruction.

So resolved on 7 January, 1842 by the members of the Church Assembly: signed: Pastor H. Breitenbach, Senior Mayor Beygel, Mayor Seeßle, Church Representatives (*Kirchenmünder*) Wagner, Schaufelberger. Identical to the original: [signed] Senior Mayor Beygel.

We can also find information about the school conditions at that time in *From the Chronicle of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and Congregation of Kischineff with Consideration of the Diaspora Communities* [[Aus der Chronik der ev.=luth. Kirche und Gemeinde Kischineff mit Beruecksichtigung der Diasporagemeinden](#)], by Erich Bäuerle on page 13: "A schoolroom was quickly added to the house that Sexton (representative of the pastor) Löffler had built for himself, and in July of 1845, classes could begin again.

But the new “teacher” proved to be incompetent all too soon and had to be dismissed in October. Again the students went on involuntary vacation, and it was not until a month later that a successor was found in the person of Ludwig Baisch from Württemberg, who had received his education in his homeland and, at first at least, devoted himself to his service with the necessary zeal.

We want to let the Chronicle itself talk about the first Church and School Visitations: “As has been the case with all Evangelical Lutheran congregations of southern Russia, the General Superintendent and Vice-President of the St. Petersburg Evangelical Lutheran Consistory, Doctor Ritter von Flittner visited these areas in the months of May, June, July and August, and also the local small community had the honor and joy on the first day of Pentecost, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June this year, to see this high superior in their midst and to hear a pleasant and edifying address from him to them. After the end of the worship service and the religious examination of the schoolchildren, His Reverence discussed with the church council and some other congregation members, took a closer look at the church and also the schoolhouse...., accompanied by the local pastor, he continued his journey to the Borodino Colony, where His Reverence wanted to attend the worship service on the second day of Pentecost.” (p. 1.)

In the summer of 1851, General Superintendent Dr. Ritter von Flittner, from Petersburg, visited the southern Russian Provost Region. This time, however, the visitation was limited to the presence of the Provosts, to whom the other preachers were called. Pastor Helwich (Kischineff) also attended the Church and School Visitation in Odessa. (p. 19.)

In July of 1853, Provost Fletnitzer, Odessa, undertook a Church and School Visitation, assisted by Pastor Pingoud from Tarutino. Pastor Helwich notes in the Chronicle that all was found to be “in peace and legal order.”

From the above, it can be seen that the church authorities were very interested in the educational places of the colonist youth. Every opportunity was taken to pay attention to the state of the school. The highest representatives of the church went to the then still poor school premises and even more poorly equipped rooms in order to know and form an opinion of the level of knowledge of them. Therefore, it is also understandable that the parish pastors also paid special attention to the schools entrusted to them. They also did not want to have the worst schools during school visits. This is probably one of the reasons why the performance in the school improved almost from year to year.

In 1845, the Odessa Welfare Committee issued special school rules, to which the Sarata Regional Office commented and issued the following rules for attending Village Schools and Children’s Instruction in three municipalities of the Sarata district:

“In that the High Welfare Committee for Foreign Settlers of Southern Russia, by order of an Higher Order, has sent us members incorporated in the Sarata Parish, in accordance with the regulation of 17 December, 1845, No. 8856, printed rules for attending the Village Schools and Children’s Instruction, for which care we church members unanimously express herewith the heartfelt thanks to our dear High

Authorities. However, since the dates of school attendance suspended in these rules, due to the summer vacation indicated therein, the children again get out of the practice of what they have already learned, also because of the spring and autumn time, which in our region already falls in the months of March and October, mentioned by the regulations as school time, can not be carried out due to a great disadvantage of farming.

So we would like it if the following rules for school and catechism instruction, which were laid down for us a number of years ago by the Church Assembly of our area and adopted by us, would be received and confirmed.

These rules are:

1. The school teacher is obliged to conduct school all year round, with the exception of the haying and harvest season.
2. All children present in the colony—native and foreign—from the age of 6, are to attend school daily and regularly during school hours.
3. The children who have reached the age of 9 are given vacation time in the spring and autumn to help their parents in gardening and working in the fields, the beginning and end of which are determined by the Church Assembly with consideration for the weather and other circumstances.
4. All children from the age of 6 to 14 are permitted to miss 8 half days in a month without payment of a penalty, in addition to the fixed vacations, because of various events, but the rest of the time they are required to come to school regularly and without absence, summer and winter
5. Those children who have reached the age of 14 and have acquired sufficient knowledge through faithful and diligent attendance at school, which shall be determined by an examination to be arranged with them, shall be permitted to attend school only during school hours on three half days, namely, on the mornings of Monday, Wednesday and Friday, for the assistance of farming, until they are completely dismissed from school after confirmation.
6. All children present in the colony from the end of the age of 8, and all confirmed young people up to the age of 18, are bound to attend the Catechism Instruction on Sunday, festival days and holiday days in the church and be instructed in the Catechism, but from completing the 18<sup>th</sup> year to the 20<sup>th</sup> year—to be present as a listener at the Catechism Instruction.
7. As legal reasons for the absence of students:
  - a) illness of the student himself,
  - b) the need to care for a sick person belonging to the family,
  - c) a death in the family, but only until the end of the funeral and burial, and

d) an extremely stormy weather with a long way to school.

**Note:** There may also be others, no less than the prescribed reasons, which will prevent the pupil from appearing at school, which is why every father of a family is obliged to inform the school teacher of the same location about the cause of the absence of his child, pupil, apprentice or servant from school every time before the beginning of the school lesson, that the school teachers are strictly obliged to make an announcement of those present and then actually present at the end of school hours, so as to note the absentees in a comparison, and to submit the same to the relevant authority every week for the inspection and collection of the fine.

8. All confirmed young men and young women, completing the age of 18, attend the Catechism Instruction in the church on Sunday afternoon, the so-called Sunday School or *Repetierschule* [pre-school of the upper school], which has the purpose of preserving and developing what has been learned in school and making it fruitful for their future life.
9. For every absence of a pupil from school without important cause, the parents, guardians or private tutors (*Erzieher*) and heads of families pay to the relevant authorities—3 kopecks silver, and for each Sunday pupil for missing a Sunday School or Children’s Instruction—10 kopecks silver, but should it happen that one or other of the latter were unable to attend Sunday School and Children’s Instruction for serious reasons. then, before the commencement of Sunday School or Children’s Instruction, as mentioned in the preceding remark, the person concerned is to make a report to the school teacher, so that the school teacher can make a proper notice of this.

It has also been decided and laid down as a rule for the actual, punctual carrying out of these prescribed rules that a meeting will be held every 4 weeks by the Church Assembly for the review, assessment and confirmation of the fines imposed for submitted School and Children’s Instruction absenteeism, that the fines for School and Children’s Instruction absenteeism should be transferred to the School Class for the good of the school.”

From all these regulations and “ordinances” it can be seen how serious our ancestors were about the school, how excellently they took care of the school of the colonists. The payment of all the teachers of the German settlements was paid from their own funds. The state did not give a penny of support for this. For the immigrants, it was, in any case, a great sacrifice which could only be maintained by the idealistic attitude of the immigrants. They were very concerned about their school. Initially, the Prayer Hall in each colony served as the schoolroom, in which in some places 200 to 300 children were taught together by one teacher. “A division into different classes came about first in the last decade of the previous century as they began to build schools everywhere according to the number of school-age children. As a result of a so-called Church School law of 1839, every child from the age of 7 to 15 was required to attend school, from 15 to 18 to attend the “Children’s Instruction” (*Kinderlehre*). The “*Kinderlehre*” is a Sunday Training School, as it has been preserved in Württemberg until the last decades of the last century; this is

also indicated by the term *Kinderlehre*. It builds its lessons on those of the school in order that the colonist youth expand the knowledge they have acquired in reading, writing, catechism and choral singing.

Unexcused absenteeism was fined, even as in the school, the proceeds were used to acquire books for poor children. The activities of the school were limited to the winter months, from 1 October to the end of March. The general compulsory education was something quite natural for the colonists, since certain knowledge of writing, reading and the Lutheran Catechism was required at confirmation. (Matt. p. 22).

Herbert Weiß writes on p. 263 of his *Chronicle of the Municipality of Teplitz* about the purpose and task of the school at that time as follows: “In an 1850 *General Ordinance on Instruction in the Evangelical Lutheran Church School of Southern Russia* it says: ‘The tasks of the Evangelical Church Schools of German settlers in southern Russia consist above all in educating the growing youth in the fear of God and in the knowledge of the salvation truths of our evangelical confession and preparing them for confirmation classes.’ So that was the educational ideal at that time.

In the Decree of 1839, the following books are recommended for use: “The ABC Book....from 1821, Testament (meaning the New Testament), Bible, Hymnbook, Luther’s Catechism, Württembergische Kinderlehre as a book of sayings (*Spruchbuch*), and the Württemberg Confirmation book.” The Bible has survived for a very long time as the sole means of education in the vast majority of colonies; it was the colonist’s chief source of all knowledge, and his demands on the school went beyond this only very gradually, to the extent that the educated teachers were able to make a different educational goal desirable to the colonists (Matt. p. 23).

During this period of the autonomous German school of the people under ecclesiastical supervision, another event occurred which was of the greatest importance for the whole of Germans in southern Russia and later especially for the Germans of Bessarabia. It is the “Central Schools” (*Zentralschulen*) that have brought a significant step forward in the development of Church Schools. At the suggestion of the Welfare Committee in 1842, these were introduced in the German districts.

“They were higher Elementary Schools (*Volksschulen*) with courses lasting several years, in which the sons of colonists were to receive a better education, so that they could take over the position of teachers, sextons and clerks in the colonies. Lessons were also taught in Russian here. These schools fulfilled their purpose very excellently.” (*The Germans in the Black Sea Region of South Russia* [*Die Deutschen im Schwarzmeergebiet Südrußlands*], by Edmund Schmid, p. 107).

In the Sarata Colony of Bessarabia lived the merchant Christian Friedrich Werner, who came from Württemberg-Giengen an der Brenz. After his death, the “Werner Capital” of 25,000 rubles, which he had granted in his will, fell to the community of Sarata. After a long back and forth of the rather fanatic colonists of this community, the capital was allocated and determined for the construction of a Teacher and Clerk Training School.

“The building of the Werner School, completed in 1843, included two modest residences for teachers and a domestic boarding place with a classroom, a common dormitory, a dining room and a room for the sick. Classes began in June of 1844 with 10 students.” (Matt. p. 58).

From everything described so far, it is evident that our ancestors had to spend great energy on the creation and establishment of their Church-Community-Schools. They held on very strongly to tradition. We also see this when we make a comparison between the school of colonists left behind in Württemberg and the Bessarabian German Colonist School. The maintainer of their schools was also the individual colony. After a long search and trial and error, it was finally possible to give our Colonist School a certain character of its own—again based on the school conditions left behind in Württemberg. According to today's modern pedagogical conception and conviction, the educational ideal was one-sidedly oriented, which should not really surprise us if one takes into account the ecclesiastical religious attitude of the colonists. Nevertheless, the educational ideal became a firm tradition. Any attempt at innovation was most emphatically rejected and completely rejected by the colonists. Only those proposals that tied in with the old tradition were able to prevail. This is the only way we can explain why the Bessarabian German was so attached to his Church-Community-School; he tried to preserve it under all circumstances. The state let him do his thing undisturbed.

[Translation Ends]