

# History of Korntal I (Cantemir I) Community

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[Note: Comments in square brackets in the document are those of the translator.]

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## **Chronicle of Korntal I (Cantemir I) Community** On the Occasion of the Colony's 50<sup>th</sup> Year of Existence written by Wilhelm Unterseher

Upright your heart and trustworthy your word,  
German your consciousness and God your treasure!

With God, upright, trustworthy and German! These are foundation stones upon which things can be built.

It was in the eighties of the last century when the German settlers in the old colonies of Sarata, Lichtental, Gnadental, Alt-Elft and others became too crowded. There was no longer enough arable land available, so, in 1885, Friedrich Gebhardt, Christian Seeger, Jakob Unterseher, Gottlieb Gäßler, Karl Fink, Friedrich Mayer, Christian Gentner, Martin Mayer and Christian Gäßler from Lichtental; Gottlieb Knauer and Johannes Knauer from Sarata; Karl Bareither from Gnadental; and August Stach from Alt-Elft up and bought a 1,000 *Dessjatinen* [1 dessjatine = 2.7 acres/1.09 hectares] piece of land from Mr. Otto Mehrmann, who was chairman of the Akkerman District Land Office at that time. This piece of land was bordered by the following neighbors: Eigenfeld to the east, Alexander Wagner to the south, Gerstenberger to the west, and Gottlieb Bodamer to the north. It is on elevated ground and has two small valleys in the farmable land so that it is easy to work. In the early years, it delivered good harvests; in recent times, the fertility has somewhat diminished and it has to be worked more often and deeper.

The settlement got started in 1886. However, since our valley is deep and narrow, and not particularly predisposed to dwellings and farmyards, there were various plans. But one had to humble himself. Although, a suitable place for the village would have been on the field; however, lacking water and being unable to provide for such, it would have made for great difficulties. It was finally agreed, for better or for worse, to build in the deep valley. But

settlement got off to a slow start. The first one to settle in was Friedrich Gebhardt from Lichtental, followed by Christian Gentner and Friedrich Fink from Lichtental, also August Stach from Alt-Elft. Already in 1889, Stach sold his house and land to Neu-Arzi's settler Daniel Siewert, who moved to Korntal yet that same year. In 1890, Gottlieb Knauer gave up his schoolmaster position in the community of Katzbach and settled on his Korntal estate. Also coming in that same year were Friedrich Mayer, son of Friedrich, from Lichtental, and soon after Daniel Schneider from Neu-Elft, husband of Karl Bareither's daughter, taking over his father-in-law's portion, and then also Samuel Knauer, son of Johannes. The following arrived in 1891: Karl Knauer, son of Johannes, Wilhelm Unterseher, son of Jakob, and Gottlieb Gäbler. This last one had been schoolmaster in Neu-Elft up to this time. Then, in 1892, Karl Bareither from Eigenheim also came and now we had ten farmyards established. At the founding, thirteen farmyards were measured out. In the course of a year, three yards were taken over by sons of the owners, so Seeger's farmyard by his son Christian, Martin Mayer's farmyard by Jakob (now Christian), and Christian Gäbler's farmyard by his son Friedrich. At the time of its establishment, there were also two non-owners that lived in Korntal temporarily: Johann Uhlich and August Kraminski.

In the course of time, various changes took place in the newly founded colony by immigration and emigration. Those moving out were: Friedrich Mayer to Novo-Nikolajewka in the Bender District; the sons of Daniel Siewert, Immanuel and Christoph to Nikolajew; August Stach to Alt-Elft; Christian Mayer, on whose place Johannes Dayß from Gnadental came, to Lichtental; Gottlieb Gäbler to Lichtental; and Heinrich Siewert to Buganeshti in the Kahul District. Friedrich Deiß from Lichtental came onto Gottlieb Gäbler's place and Gottlieb Bodamer is now located in Siewert's yard. By marriage, Gebhardt's yard was taken over by Friedrich Jauch from Eigenfeld. Today, after fifty years of the settlement, we have 38 whole and 8 half farms with 32 built-up farmyards. Of the founders and first settlers, only two women are still living in Korntal: Katharina Knauer, 89 years old, and Margaretha Gentner, 80 years old.

The occupation and employment of the Korntal settlers was and is agriculture. The fields which were provided to them were easy to reach and met the requirements. But, compared with the early years, the land portions have already gotten significantly smaller, and so the residents of Korntal have already also taken up crafts. Now there are cobblers, tailors, carpenters, a blacksmith and locksmith. We also have a butcher shop, a dairy, a small mill and a small store, so that we have already attained greater self-sufficiency than in those first years.

As for the religious life of Korntal, until the construction of a community prayer house (*Bethouses*), the founders at first held their Sunday worship services in a private home and without a hired teacher. At first, there were only three families with their children. Friedrich Fink read the sermon to them and Friedrich Gebhardt provided the space for the worship service to take place. But that did not last too long; There were disagreements and the worship service was moved to the Fink home, where it then remained until the completion of the prayer house. When Gottlieb Knauer of Katzbach moved to Korntal in 1890, he replaced F. Fink, and, as the old schoolmaster, read the sermon from then on regularly every Sunday. In the winter months, he held school for the children in a small space at the Christian Gentner place and was thus the first teacher in Korntal.

The establishment of the school and prayer house was started in 1890. The construction was finished in the autumn of 1891 and was able to be dedicated on 13 October, 1891, by Pastor Meyer of Sărata. Because the majority of Korntal founders and settlers came from the Sarata Parish, from 1891 to 1927, we were pastorally served perhaps four times a year by Sarata pastors A. Mayer, W. Mayer and G. Winger. In 1927, the neighboring villages of Eigenfeld, Friedensfeld, Gnadenfeld, Annowka-Manscha, Korntal I and Korntal II formed their own parish in Eigenfeld, to which we also belong. The parish is looked after by Pastor Rudolf Hornung, Eigenfeld, the one now also serving as our caretaker of souls. Our sexton-teachers during the whole period were as follows: Gottlieb Knauer; Gottlieb Gäßler, (who were local settlers; only when they were position exhausted, the following outsiders were hired:) Gottlieb Schuhmaier from Sarata; Friedrich Stolz from Neu-Freudental in Kherson; Karl Drefs from Volhynia; Gustav Boßler from Friedenstal; Immanuel Schulz from Eigenfeld; Leopold Gäßler from Lichtental; Bernhard Hiller from Tarutino; August Adolf from Eigenfeld; Rudolf Knauer from Korntal; Karl Ziegler from Gnadenfeld; Robert Deiß from Lichtental; Karl Roth from Lichtental; and Otto Necker from Friedensfeld. Besides the ones mentioned, the following were active as teachers in the community: Friedrich Gutsche from Friedensfeld; Gotthilf Aldinger from Lichtental; and Wilhelm Krug from Gnadenfeld, who, however, stayed with us for a very short time. Up to 1934, our sexton also always agreed to take on the teacher's position; today, we have a Romanian teacher at our school.

There were some reversals in the course of time in our church and religious life; one was able to enjoy some precious ones, but there was also no lack of the unpleasant ones. Nevertheless, it must be said: up to now things have gone well; Jehovah Sabaoth contends for us gloriously

As a small political entity, Korntal community was administered at first by the Moldova Mayor's Office (*Schulzenamt*) and was counted until 1894 as part of the district office, or as one said at that time, to the Administrative Area (*Wolost*) of Plachtejewka. Accordingly, the former custom being that we had a *Sotzki* and a *Dessjatzkie*, one hundred men and tenth men subordinated to the police watchman officer, the *Urjadnik*. These men dealt with police related violence. For the economic and administrative management, a member of the community was elected and considered as the area administrator (*Ortsvorsteher*). With great difficulty, Korntal succeeded to be detached from the Plachtejewka District Office and joined to Eigenfeld in 1894. The new District Office was now a smaller administrative district and consisted only of the three villages of Eigenfeld, Friedensfeld and Gnadenfeld, but for this it was pure German and signified a self-government in the German sense. In Plachtejewka, we were part of a strong Russian and Moldovan administrative unit, whose location was very difficult for us to reach, especially in the winter. Therefore, we were happy when we were finally joined to Eigenfeld. We received our own Council Office and our own mayors; the clerk position was taken over by the teacher then serving and we were a completely separate municipality with all facilities that came along with it. We even had a telephone apparatus and were in a permanent connection with the villages of our *Wolost*, of our district, and of the whole country. This condition lasted until 1918, so, as is known from the history of our country, with Bessarabia getting connected to its mother country Romania, a great political change entered.

The following served our community as mayors from 1895 until 1918: Christian Gentner, Daniel Siewert, Gottlieb Gäßler, Karl Bareither, Karl Knauer, Samuel Knauer, Wilhelm Unterseher, Christian Unterseher, and Immanuel Knauer.

Also after 1918, we still had our independent council with its own administrators (*Schulzen*), but now called *Primar*, and our own clerk (*Sekretär*). But as time went on, our mayor's office (*Primarie*) was suspended and our community was joined to Eigenfeld. In 1930, the Czarist Government gave back to us our previous independent position by making a separate administrative entity out of Korntal I and Korntal II. But this situation would not last too long. When, in 1931, the *Jorgapartei* [Nicholas Jorga/Iorga—Prime Minister of Romania 19 April, 1931–06 June, 1932] came to the helm of the State, our independence was again taken from us; Korntal I was joined to Eigenfeld and Korntal II joined to Gnadenfeld. Today, it is questionable whether we will have the good fortune to form a separate municipality once again.

Many things have happened over the course of fifty years. There were good and bad times. That many beautiful harvests were bestowed upon us cannot be denied. The person who was industrious and thrifty gradually moved forward economically. But there were also many crop failures which strongly impacted our economic life, particularly in the last few years. The operating expenses, living expenses, taxes always got larger, prices for agricultural products have reached a deplorable low, and you no longer know how to bring spending and revenues into balance. Despite all the thriftiness and cutting back, the expenditures are always considerably more.

But our village chronicle knows not only to report on the crop failures visited upon us. A large fire broke out on 4 May, 1899 in the farmyards of Fink and Mayer. Everything was powder dry and, in addition, there was a strong wind, so that we, especially since there was a lack of water, were unable from own forces to tackle the fire very quickly. But help came. A well-organized mutual fire insurance existed between the four villages of Eigenfeld, Friedensfeld, Gnadenfeld and Korntal, who, with energetic help, also came to our assistance with their fire engines. Soon the fire brigade from Eigenfeld, Friedensfeld and Gnadenfeld were in position with their hoses and water, which, after some hours of work, doused the terrible fire and averted further risk to our village. Yet a number of smaller fires have occurred in our community over the years, but with God's help it was managed each time to nip it in the bud.

We have not been wanting when it comes to other kinds of mishaps. There was the time that Oscar, the son of Paulina Mayer, went to the field with F. Fink to lead the horse in front of the mowing machine. In the middle of the work, for some unknown reason, he fell off the horse and, unfortunately, was struck by the machine and had to be brought home dead. Another misfortune overtook Otto Dayß, a son of Johannes Dayß. He had been feeding the horses which were by the farmyard crib and wanted to go back out when, suddenly, he received a hoof blow to the chest from a foal, which resulted in his death. And another accident cost the life of a child belonging to Heinrich Siewert. The Sierwert children were returning from the vegetable garden (*Bastan*), when the son of Joseph Schreiber came up fast from the field with a team of horses, and as they drove in, one of the children was unfortunately hit by the shaft of his wagon so that the child ended up being carried dead from the place. Also not to leave unmentioned the accident of our

citizen Alois Knauer, who, in 1932, fell headlong from a loaded wagon and suffered a serious injury to the spine from which he later died.

In spite of all the preventive measures taken by the Russian Government, it was still a nice time from 1890 to 1914. Since it had withdrawn many of the promises over the years that were given to our ancestors to immigrate, so our older people were not all that satisfied any more, but, all in all, it was still a happy time which one, nevertheless, did not know how to appreciate. It was first in the month of July, 1914, that the World War broke out, giving a mighty turn-around. Now it showed what the Russian Government had in store for us and what they intended to do with us. Initially, eighteen men from our little village were drafted into the war. Three of them never returned. These are they: (1) John Knauer, single, died as a soldier of an ailment in Odessa and was buried there. (2) Karl Schneider, single, fell in the battles on the Turkish Front. (3) Friedrich Deiß, married, missing in action on the Turkish Front. The remaining 15 combatants, in part not without wounds and damage, were fortunate to return home.

Not only did we have to send our eighteen sons onto the battlefield and give up our possessions of horses, wagons, harnesses, cattle and grain, and got paid very little for them, but had the terrible threat constantly over our heads that in the middle of the turmoil of war we should be driven out from homeland (*Scholle*). I will never forget those terrible days all the days of my life, that we waited in great fear for the phone call ordering that we leave. But God's grace spared us the terrible event and we were able to say: You meant it for evil to drive us out, but God meant to make it good for us.

In March of 1917, the dawn of a better time seemed also to break out for us Germans. To be sure, it only looked like that and also lasted only for a short time. Already in December, a new wave of horrors came upon us. The Bolsheviks had taken command. Like on a given signal, the mass, especially Russians, streamed into the estates from all the villages and robbed and plundered in the house of our yard, even if it was riveted down and firmly nailed. To barely save their lives, the owners had to flee. Also, our village was on the black list and, from day to day, waited for the arrival of the predatory hordes. But the grace of God kept us also this time from the worst: the revolutionary movement was suppressed before our community's turn came up.

The winter of 1917 to 1918 was a terrible time for all the small inhabited places. They were in constant danger of being robbed. The day of 18 February, 1918, brought deliverance from fear and terror to us people in Korntal. On this day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, a Romanian Riflemen Regiment (*Jägerregiment*) pulled into Korntal. Guards were immediately posted at each end of the village and no one was allowed to leave or enter the village without permission from the military authorities. It was a wonderful experience: In the blink of an eye, we had become a Romanian village, without a fight. The surprise was great, but all were delighted and rejoiced that the Bolshevik danger had now passed. This experience will remain unforgettable to everyone who experienced those fateful days. Although, at first, we had a difficult time understanding our rescuers, whose language we did not yet understand, but that became possible with time, and we could not thank God enough that he had so graciously brought us out of our misery. We were allowed to again maintain our traditional religious customs and also use our mother tongue everywhere. The Russians had banned everything during the time of the war. At that time, we were not allowed to speak in German with each other on the street but still in the

family, and they even wanted to ban our German services and the use of the German language in religious instruction in the schools. If you think back to these hopeless conditions, a horror still comes over a person today and one asks God that he may preserve us, through his grace, from such evil in the future.

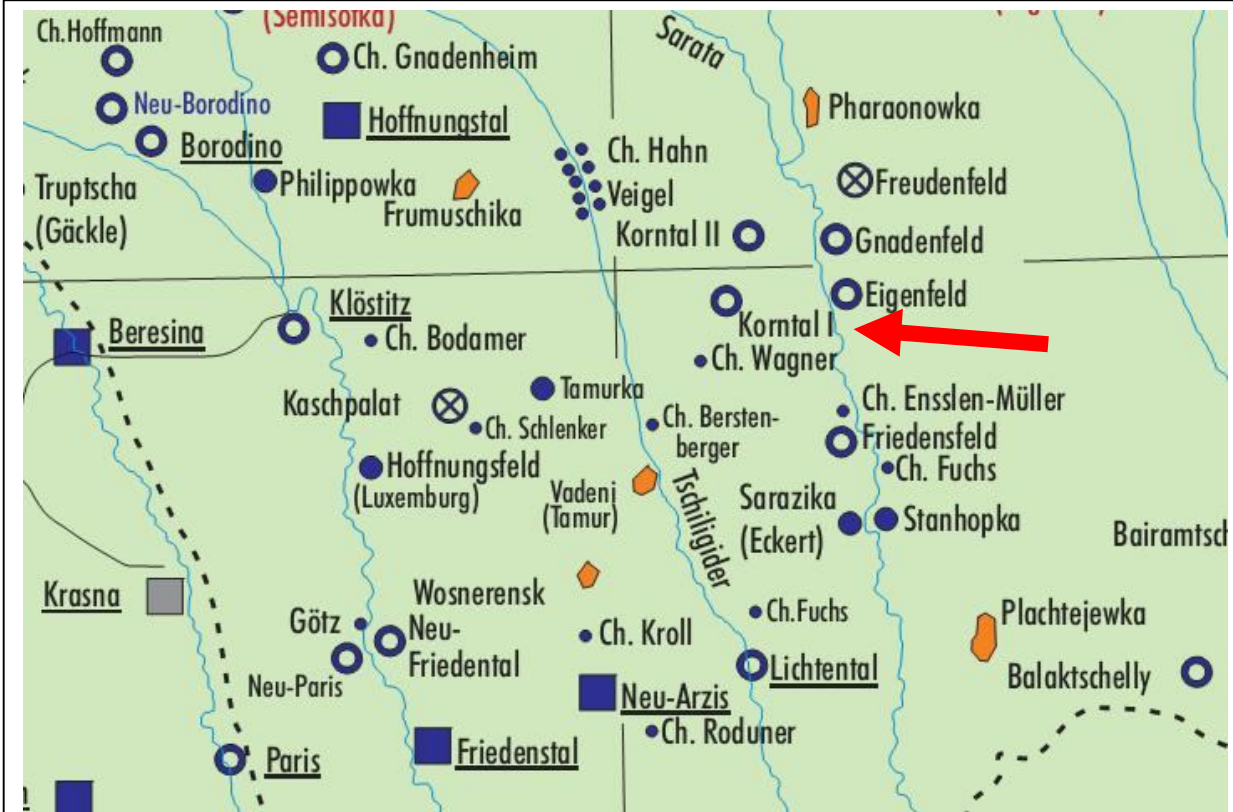
As regards the judicial system, we had in former times first the Area Court (*Gebietsgericht*). It consisted of men, chosen by the people from among their members and every month, once or twice, came together and sat in judgment on the submitted complaints. The judgment was determined from the testimony of the defendants and witnesses. The entire process was handled without any lawyer and was not connected with any expenditure. In cases where the Area Court (*Gebietsgericht*) had no responsibility, such as appeals, they came before the District Judicial Court (*Kreisamtsgericht*) in Akkerman, and then the Regional Court (*Bezirksgericht*), the *Okruschnoi Sud*, in Kishinev. It is first here that lawyers and juries make their appearance. The current court procedure is known. The Lower Courts are not to pursue any case by means of a lawyer so as not to contribute to the increase of expenses.

I would like to write down yet something from my memories of the past fifty years. Up to 1914, the Germans in this country enjoyed a general respect and appreciation. We were often portrayed by other folks as an example. The German character, the German hard work and not least, the German word had unconditional validity everywhere. The German was highly regarded also in the public service and in the offices of State. The “Nemetzkoje Slovo” – that is, the “German word” was worth more than a signature and seal. It is very regrettable that this reputation has faded somewhat, however, it shall not lie with us to bring it back again to its old splendor. Some of us have bravely endured with diligence and thrift, may dear God grant that we overcome victoriously these present hard times which have brought need and privation to all nations, and then head for a happier future. Everything rests on God's blessings. However, I wish for my dear community of Korntal a valiant, productive advance in the second half of the century of its history. May the Lord also take it into his gracious protection, may it always stay focused on the words which I have already noted at the top of these recollections of fifty years:

Upright your heart and trustworthy your word,  
German your consciousness and God your treasure!

[Translation Ends]

[See Map Below](#)



Stumpp Map of Bessarabia reworked by Rolf Jethon—not in original document