

Katzbach 1821

Bessarabischer Heimatkalender—1971

W. Rumpelstin, Buchdruckerei und Zeitungsverlag K.G.

[Book Printing and Newspaper Publishing Limited]

Burgdorf, Hannover/Germany

Pages 19-22

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December, 2025

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

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[Translation Begins]

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by Conrad Laib

The inhabitants of this colony consist partly of descendants of those families who, in earlier years, emigrated from the Kingdom of Prussia to Poland, and partly of descendants of those families whose fathers, between the years 1800-1804, emigrated from the Electorate of Württemberg to Poland at the request of the Royal Prussian government and were settled there.

In Poland, we received news from our relatives and acquaintances from the colonies of Bessarabia that they were prospering under the High Government of Russia, and at the same time informed us that there was still the possibility of settlement in the province of Bessarabia. In response to this news, 28 families decided in 1821 to follow their friends and acquaintances to Bessarabia. With these 28 families, steps were then taken to establish the colony with the approval of the colonial authorities.

The valley that cuts through the land is called Allagia and stretches from the north to the south. At the foot of the hills that form the valley lies the colony, built in two rows; however, the rows had to be spaced far apart due to the many bends of the small river, which, although it has no river springs, often flows strongly from rain and snowmelt, where each house faces the street with its gable. In the middle of the colony stands a spacious stone-built prayer house, and 15 *Faden* [105 feet / 31.5 meters] downstream a schoolhouse, which, in addition to the classroom, contains a residence for the schoolteacher, built of stone and air-dried bricks. Further down stands a stone-built storehouse for storing communal produce.

The farmyards of the settlers are up to 60 *Faden* [420 feet / 126 meters] wide, with the houses situated in the middle. Some of these houses are made of stone and air-dried bricks, but many

are already solidly built of stone, and further progress in construction would have been made if it were not for the complete lack of stones on the land belonging to the colony, which had to be brought from other places. As a result, many settlers have not yet completed their buildings and farmyard enclosures due to unfortunate situations.

Because the houses are built very far apart, this colony offers little that is pleasing even to the eye of the traveler; yet in most places, and especially where the ground is suitable, there are partly beautiful orchards, and elsewhere a beginning has been made with the planting of trees and shrubs.

The land is mostly situated on hilly slopes, which hampers its fertility, as rain and snow water run off too quickly. The surface of the soil consists of black loam mixed with clay; in the valleys, the ground is mixed with saltpeter, which carries a harmful substance, so that the well water on the right side of the river is undrinkable. In favorable weather, the land is fertile and suitable for planting produce of every type known in this area, with the so-called Arnuth (summer wheat, because it withstands heat and drought the best) thriving here more excellently than all other grain varieties. Fruit trees have a considerable, healthy growth in their youth, but do not last long; in many places, however, they are difficult to cultivate and wither during dry years even when they have already taken root. The grapevine is preferable because it tolerates heat best, which is why the colonists have diligently focused on planting vineyards in recent years. The colony is located at a distance of 112 [75 miles / 118.7 km] from the government town of Kischinev, 95 [63.3 miles / 100.7 km] from the district town of Akkerman, and 80 *Werst* [53.6 miles / 84.8 km] from the border town of Ismail, and a few years after its founding, probably in memory of the liberation of Europe from Napoleon's despotic power and the defeat of the enemies by the Russian armies in 1812, it was given the name Katzbach.

In the year 1821, Polish emigrants settled here. 28 families, who were instructed by the higher authorities to settle on this steppe, were joined a year later by 8 more families transferred to Katzbach from the colonies of Malojaroslawetz [also known as Wittenberg] and Culm [Kulm]. In 1825, 19 Evangelical Lutheran families from the Roman Catholic colony of Krasna, which borders this land, were transferred to this community due to religious matters, along with the corresponding amount of land. 7 more Polish emigrant families arrived in 1833, and in the same year, one family from the Grand Duchy of Baden, and finally, two families from the colony of Malojaroslawetz II [also known as Alt-Posttal] were resettled here, and in this way completing the settlement of the colony with 65 heads of households. Of this number, only 2 families emigrated directly from their homeland to here, namely one from the Kingdom of Württemberg and one from the Grand Duchy of Baden; all the others were Polish emigrants from the departments of Plotzk, Warsaw, Posen, and Kalisch. Upon their arrival, the settlers found nothing here but a steppe overgrown with tall grass, which was leased by a *Kischler*, a Moldavian nationality man by the name of Karpp Bussa, and above all, they had to focus on building dwellings to protect themselves and their children from storm and rain, which, however, consisted only of earthen huts. The first 28 families arrived in 1821 and the last in 1833; they traveled at their own expense and received no support for their settlement. Their brought resources consisted of two horses, a covered wagon, some bedding, clothes, and household utensils. Their cash reserves were small; on the other hand, those who were transferred here from the Malojaroslawetz and Culm colonies traveled at the expense of the High Crown and

were also supported in construction during their initial settlement. However, they left their Crown advances along with their farm buildings in their first settlement locations to other colonists and set up their establishment here like the first families using their own resources. The 19 families who were settled in the Krasna Colony brought their Crown advance with them and, like all colonists who received advances, were required to repay it in installments.

There were also some serious events that had a more or less unfavorable impact on this community. In 1827, during the march of the Russian defense troops to [the Danube] ports (*Pforte*), the colonists were rather inconvenienced by quartering the troops and providing supplies of draft animals. Much more serious, however, was the plague that prevailed here in 1829, although only 3 families completely died out and their houses along with the equipment inside had to be burned. For a long time, the colony was under quarantine, with all traffic cut off, which caused delays and great hardship. In 1831, the colonists suffered greatly during the raging cholera, and some ended up dying. Devastating livestock epidemics occurred in 1828, 1834, and 1845, during which two-thirds of the livestock were lost each time. The years 1830, 1832, 1833, 1834, 1841, and 1847 were crop failures, in which hardly any sowing was harvested; complete failure years were 1822, 1823, 1824, 1841, and 1846. Swarms of locusts and occasionally voles (*Erdmäuse*) [*Microtus agrestis*] caused great damage in the years 1823 to 1829, 1836, and 1847; beetles (*Käfer*) usually appeared during the flowering period from 1840 onwards and also caused a lot of damage to the fruit crops. In 1843, a hailstorm almost entirely destroyed a promising harvest. In 1829 and 1837, earthquakes were noticed here, but without misfortune or destruction.

When one considers the current state of the settlers and takes into account the beneficial circumstances, it can be said with truth that the inhabitants, despite the various obstacles, owe most of their prosperity, in which they find themselves, to God, to the protection of the High Government under which the settlers have long been able to conduct their affairs peacefully, and then to the enjoyment of the graciously promised 10 years of freedom, which His Majesty, our most gracious Emperor, was pleased to extend by another 3 years after the conclusion of the campaign against the ports (*Pforte*).

So, a great relief was also provided to the 19 head of households who had been transferred here from Krasna, as they were graciously granted longer terms to repay the crown advances they had received by the grace of the government, instead of repaying them within 10 years. Another reason for the still modest prosperity lay in the efforts of the settlers to plant vineyards and orchards, to diligently pursue arable farming, along with the competitive engagement in livestock, especially sheep breeding, from which they had occasionally been able to enjoy a nice income. Yet another means of livelihood cannot go unnoticed, in which the female population busied themselves in winter with processing wool and flax, thereby meeting household needs and saving on many expenses. As we finally also express our gratitude to our High State Government, especially for the benevolent support of church and school institutions, looking back at the past, we see how instruction in the saving truth was limited just a few years ago, and how now, through the paternal care of our high authorities, preachers have been sent to the settlers to proclaim the Gospel to them. Under their supervision, the schools in the communities have improved significantly, the youth receive good instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and church singing has also been elevated; something that was entirely lacking for

many before, except for those whose parents adhered to their old German customs, which, however, was the case for very few.

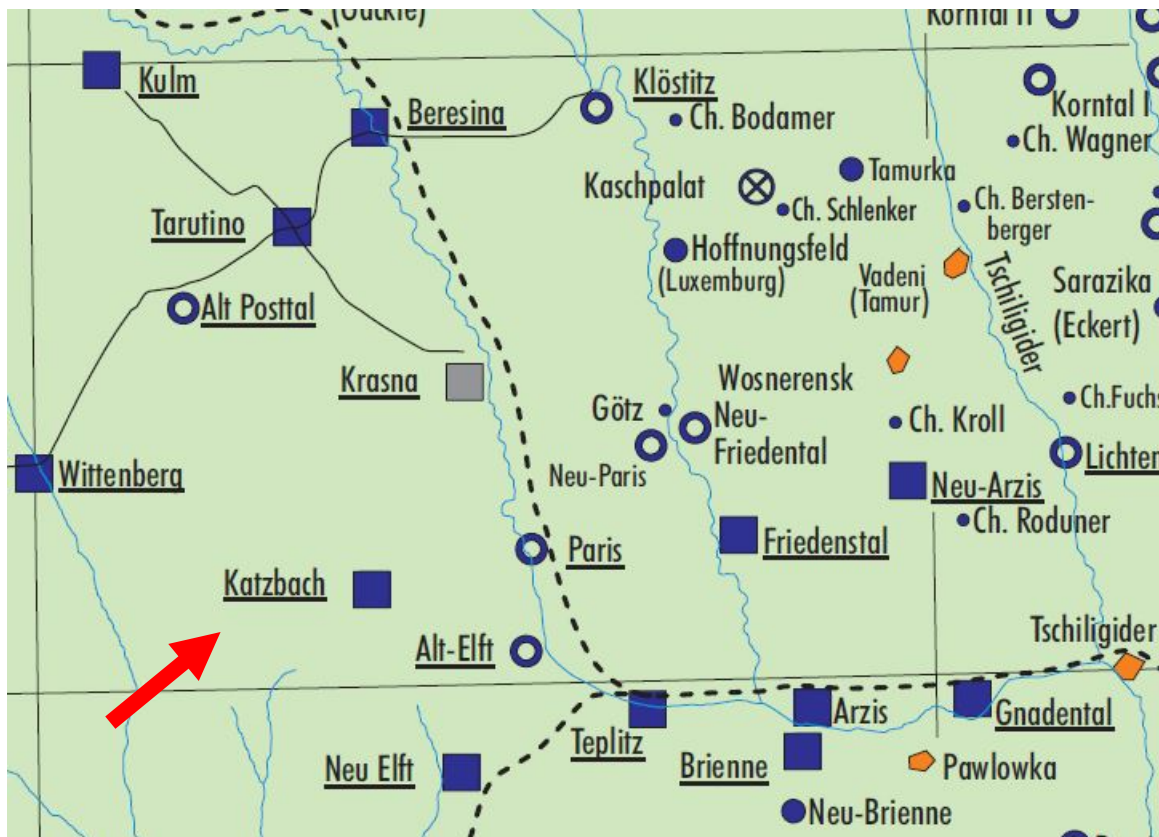
May the providence of God continue to graciously watch over our government and authorities, so that their subjects may enjoy the blessings from above under their protection forever!

The above description is certified by the office of the mayor and the church schoolteacher with signature and imprint of the crown seal.

Took place in Katzbach Colony on 8 May, 1848.

(Seal). Mayor: Müller. Assessors: Bürgermeister, Rauser (Stauser-?).
Municipal clerk: Wittibschläger.
Church and school teacher: Conrad Laib (author).

[Translation Ends]



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