

Kolatschowka, Bendery District

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Translated by: Allen E. Konrad

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P.O. Box 157, Rowley, IA 52329

onamission1939@gmail.com

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

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[Translation Begins]

Kolatschowka, Bendery District—60 Years

by Oskar Bohnet

Between 1908 and 1912, there were numerous opportunities to purchase land in Bessarabia. In the industry-poor area, the population was almost entirely dependent on agriculture. The farms, increasingly fragmented due to population growth, made land cultivation more difficult. In order to escape the constraints of the mother colonies, people sought a way out and found it in the purchase of land and the establishment of daughter colonies.

In this way, the village of Kolatschowka, originally named Sabaneewaka, was created, named after its then owner General of Infantry Ivan Vasilievich Sabaneew. He had significant influence at the court of Tsar Alexander I, where his word was often decisive in the regulation of state affairs. For his loyalty to the state and his services to the state, on one of his birthdays he received an estate of about 5,000 *Deßjatinen* [13,500 acres / 5,450 hectares] in the Bessarabia Governorate, Bendery District. After his death in 1885, a part of the estate measuring 3,029 *Deßjatinen* [8,178.8 acres / 3,301.6 hectares] and 400 *square fathoms* [14,400 ft² / 1,337.8 m²] was inherited according to a will by his heirs: the widow of a colonel, Nadejda Andreevna Kolatschowskaja, née Schipowskaja, and Feodor Porfirievich Schipowski. After this event, the estate was named Sabaneewaka-Kolatschowka and was offered for sale. On 3 October, 1908, there was a purchase act between Mr. Schipowski and a group of 59 German farmers from 9 mother colonies through their authorized representatives A. Widmer, H. Bohnet, D. Erdmann, and Jakob Künzle, according to which the mentioned estate with all immovable property was recorded in the name of the new owners at a price of 325 rubles per *deßiatine* at the public record office (*Katasteramt*) in Kischinew [Chişinău]. Up to that point, Kolatschowka had still been leased as an estate to 5 German farmers from Leipzig (Bessarabia) for 10 years. Under different conditions, their lease agreement also stipulated that 5 uniform residential houses with service

buildings of the same length, width, and height had to be constructed, 15 acacia trees planted in front of each house, and wells and cellars had to be made. These developed courtyards were auctioned to the highest bidder among the new community members, who became their new owners in A. Wiedmer, H. Bohnet, G. Schöck, D. Matheis, and G. Schalo. The proceeds flowed into the municipal treasury and were a great help for the difficult beginning.

After surveying the land and dividing it into 57 agricultural estates of 50 *Deßiatinen* each (approximately 54 hectares [133.4 acres]) and 57 homestead plots of about 8,500 square meters [91,460 ft²], land and building plots were allocated to the individual owners through a lottery. This formed a German village community, whose members came from ten mother colonies, namely: Alt-Posttal, Leipzig, Dennewitz, Brienne, Gnadental, Kulm, Beresina, Lichtental, Tarutino, and Alt-Elft. At the beginning of their living together, various opinions could be heard, mainly in the community meetings. Each member of this colorful society brought some of the customs and traditions from their mother colony and wanted to have everything the same here. For example, during a community meeting, the question was raised whether the Feast of Michael should be celebrated or not. Two groups formed. After a brief debate, a vote was taken. One group, led by the curator, won with a 'no'. Appearing satisfied, they dispersed. Far from it, for on the eve of the Feast of Michael, at evening hours, both church bells suddenly rang out, announcing the holiday. As mentioned earlier, this was how things were at the beginning after the village was founded; however, later, village life in Kolatschowka proceeded quite harmoniously and certainly not in the way one might have expected in such a case.

Kolatschowka, located on the eastern side of the wide Skinös Valley on a horseshoe-shaped hill, had a very beautiful location, protected from storms and water. In the middle of the valley meandered the reed and rush-covered stream Skinös, a tributary of the Kugälnik. On the western side of the valley runs the railway line Kischinew-Bendery-Leipzig-Akkerman (now Dnestrowsk). Four kilometers [2.4 miles] south of Kolatschowka was the large train station and junction Bessarabjaska, next to it the market town Romanowka with its weekly market. Both—the market town and the train station—were of great importance to the community of Kolatschowka. All agricultural products could be sold in a timely manner and always got good prices.

Recruit group in Kolatschowka in October 1932. The instruments used here, as is common on such occasions: “Harmoschka”, triangle, and drum. In the center, Mayor Oskar Bohnet in “service uniform”, to his right Notary A. Drefs, to his left the head of the police station.



The community of Kolatschowka found itself in a critical situation due to the Exception Law (*Ausnahmegesetz*) issued by the government on 2 January and 15 February, 1915, concerning the liquidation of German estates (Russian: *Sakon o likwidazii nemezkwow semlewladenia*). Although Kolatschowka was not an estate at that time, a reason was nevertheless found to categorize it as such. Thanks to a clause in the Exception Law (see *Heimatbuch* page 306), Kolatschowka was spared from liquidation due to a postponement of the enforcement of the law and amendments to it.

Before and during the First World War, Kolatschowka developed only slowly, but after the war, one stable house after another emerged, and the rise of the village was evident. In the early 1920s, the community was compelled to measure out new building plots.

Despite more than enough work of their own, each family had to contribute labor, according to the municipality decree, under the guidance of some experts, in the construction of municipality buildings. In this way, the approximately 20 meter [65.6 feet] long, 12 meter [39.4 feet] wide, and 4.5 meter [14.8 feet] high Prayer House, the sexton's Residence, and the village Administration building were created, which included a classroom, summer kitchen, and firewood storage for clerk and teacher, 5 cattle-herder and sheep-herder houses, and 5 community wells. There was also a stable for breeding stallions and 6 to 7 breeding bulls. The municipality assets also included 21 hectares [50.8 acres] of arable land, which was leased annually to the highest bidder among the municipality members. Until 1926, the Kolatschowka municipality belonged to the Tarutino Parish. The long distance of 25 kilometers [15.5 miles] prompted Leipzig and the surrounding German municipalities, including the municipality of Kolatschowka, to establish their own parish. The building contributions for the parsonage were allocated according to the amount of land and the number of families in the municipalities, and accordingly, compulsory labor services were rendered. Except for 4 Baptist families, all residents of Kolatschowka were of the Evangelical-Lutheran confession.

The neighboring villages of Kolatschowka were: to the north Kurdschika, to the east Mintschuna and the heirs of H. Bonhet, to the south the large parish village Leipzig, and to the west Kolatschowka bordered the Moldavian village Abaklia, which politically belonged to it before and during World War I. After the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania, the villages Kolatschowka, Kurdschika, and Peterstal formed a *Comuna* (administrative district with 7,500 hectares [18,532.5 acres]) with its seat in Kurdschika. Distance to the District city was 65 kilometers [40.4 miles]. The village Kolatschowka was officially called **Colaceni** by the Romanians, but the name Kolatschowka remained popular until our Resettlement to the German Empire. From the founding of the village until the Resettlement, the following served as teachers and clerks at the same time: A. Erdmann, Im. Sauter, H. Bohnet Jr., J. Kallis, A. Fandrich, Ed. Baier, Chr. Fieß, Qu. Sauter, H. Radtke, and Im. Kalmbach, whose term was probably the longest from 1918 to 1926, while those of the others rarely exceeded 3 to 4 years. The following served as mayors during this time: J. Irion Sr., Chr. Göhring, Fr. Pahl, G. Birkholz, Oskar Bohnet, and David Bölke. The curators and church council members included: Im. Schill, H. Häuser, Aug. Klettke, G. Birkholz, J. Grams, and J. Irion Jr. The synod members were: Oskar Bohnet and Im. Schill.

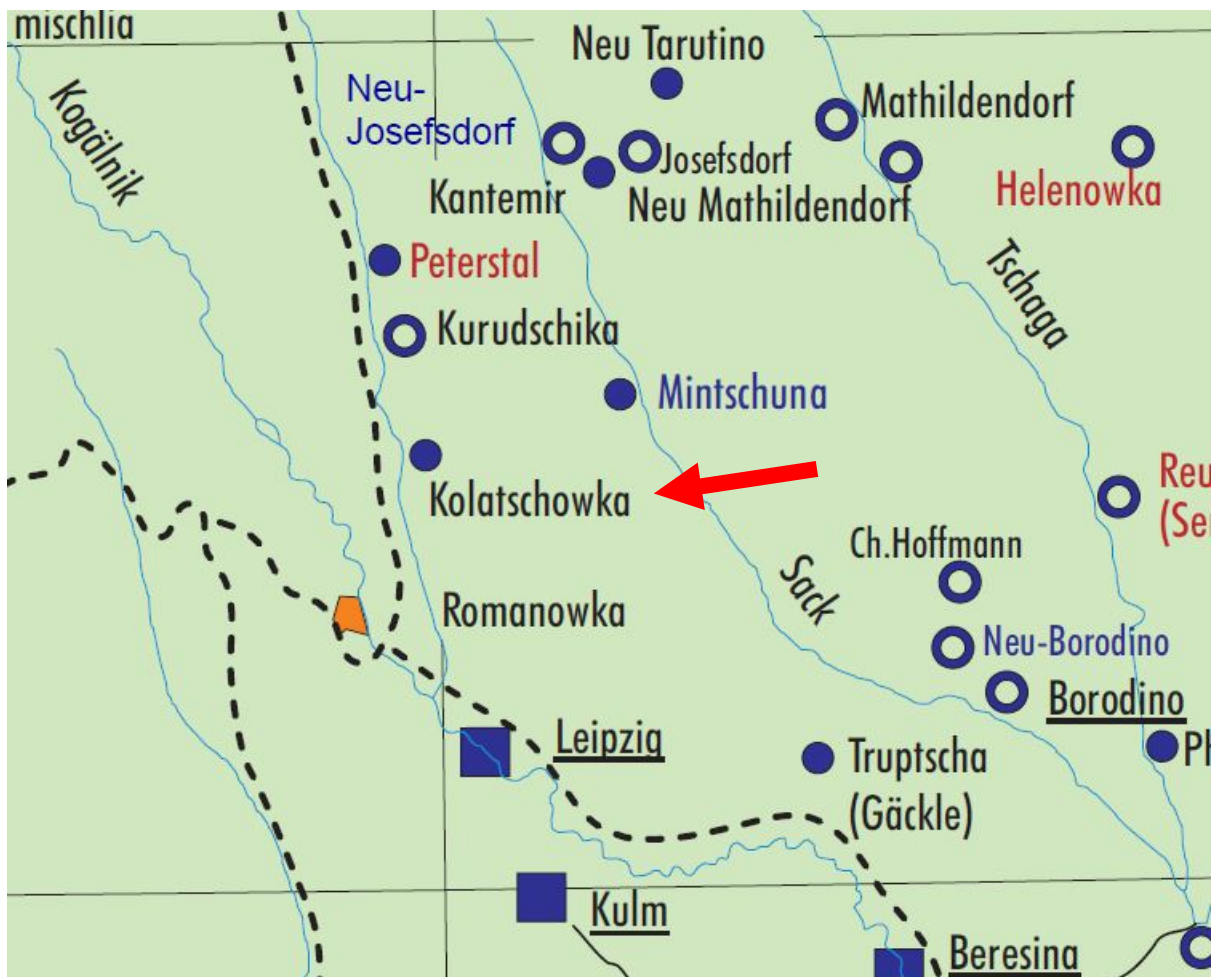
The municipality of Kolatschowka was not spared from sensational events, like many other communities. The year 1918 brought a total crop failure, forcing the livestock to be brought to the grain fields to save them from starvation. The years 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, and 1927 were marked by poor harvests. This was followed by average and good harvests until 1932, when hail destroyed a third of the total harvest and completely ruined the grape harvest. During a flood on 2 September, 1927, many low-lying villages in the Skinosa Valley suffered unimaginable damage, and even people lost their lives in the two-meter-high [6.6 feet] floods. Thanks to its favorable location, Kolatschowka came away with relatively little damage. During the dry years, as far as can be recalled, hoof-and-mouth disease occurred four or five times.

Until 1918, only a German teacher was active in Kolatschowka. After the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania, the Romanian school authority sent a second teacher, a Romanian, who took the Romanianization of the Germans very seriously. With only one classroom and about 120 students, it was necessary to hold classes in the morning and afternoon. The education of the residents was at the elementary school (*Volksschule*) level; only seven men attended higher schools. Beyond the borders of their home community, Robert Kienzle and Quido Sauter worked as teachers and Ernst Sauter as a truck driver. Regarding industry and trade, it is worth noting that the village had a carpenter, two blacksmiths, a shoemaker, a saddler, two tailors, a cooper, and a wheelwright; furthermore, there was a roof tile factory, a windmill, a private dairy, a shop, as well as a communal dairy and a co-op store in Kolatschowka.

The agitation among the population after the entry of the Russians into Bessarabia on 28 June, 1940 only subsided after the arrival of the German Resettlement Commission, after we were under German protection. Of course, the German population volunteered one hundred percent for Resettlement. Work began feverishly. Transport lists were drawn up in triplicate in both German and Russian, and the assessment of the assets of the resettlers was carried out. The transport of the seriously ill had to be prepared, and so on. On 29 September, 1940, the time had come for the community to gather for departure at the edge of the village. After a brief speech by the authorized representative and receiving the final instructions, they set off with their own horse-drawn wagons, tears in their eyes, looking back on their lost homeland, with a heavy heart of farewell, towards the Leipzig train station, where Soviet freight cars with seating awaited us. The young men with teams and large luggage stayed behind and only came a month later to join their families in the Resettlement Camp in Austria. After the older men, women, and children in the border and port town of Reni underwent strict identification and customs checks, they traveled by ship on the Danube to the port city of Prachowa in Yugoslavia on 30 September, 1940. After a pleasant day's stay, the Kolatschowka community took the train through Yugoslavia, over the border town of Graz, past Vienna towards their interim destination, and reached Camp Schloß Wolfsberg near Krems on the Danube, in Austria, designated for Kolatschowka on 5 October, 1940. However, this camp could accommodate only about three hundred people. The other three hundred members of the community found accommodation at Camp Altenburg in Austria. In general, camp life always left much to be desired, as was the case here. The food was relatively poor. The health condition was satisfactory until a scarlet fever epidemic broke out in July of 1941, in which seven children aged between two and eleven died among twenty infections. Exactly one year after starting camp life, on 5 October, 1941, the Kolatschowka community came to Litzmannstadt for settlement.

On 30 November, 1941, the community members arrived in the Graudenz District at their assigned smaller or larger farms, according to their Bessarabian possessions. For some things turned out well, for others less so, but overall there was satisfaction. However, this satisfaction was not to last long. The war came ever closer, and on 23 January, 1945, we had to leave our new homeland again, and the misery of Flight began. Today, scattered across all countries, there is no sign of life for some families and they are considered missing. As far as they have found a new home in the West, their situation can be described as good.

[Translation Ends]



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