

Krasna - 170 Years

Bessarabischer Heimatkalender—1984

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

[Translation Begins]

Krasna – 170 Years

Our hometown Krasna was founded in the year 1814.

The literature about our old homeland is scarce. We owe a lot of information about the history of our home community to teacher E. Ruscheinski. This can serve as a foundation for further development and expansion.

According to the reports of Father Konrad Keller in the *Farmers' Calendar (Bauernkalender)* from the Odessa District of 1912, it can be seen that the majority of our Krasna settlers emigrated twice. The first time from Germany to Poland. Following a call from the King of Prussia, our families settled near Warsaw around 1804 and founded the two villages of Orschokowin and Schitonitz. When all-destroying military campaigns of Napoleon through Poland to Russia brought the settlers to the brink of ruin, and even a divided Poland could no longer offer protection to the colonists, they were forced to seek a new homeland in another place.

In November of 1813, after the surrender of Bessarabia by the Turks to Russia (1812), the Russian government under Tsar Alexander I issued a call to the "Warsaw colonists" with the well-known tempting promises.

In 1814, 133 families, led by Mathias Müller and Peter Becker, left their villages in Poland and crossed the border into Russia near Uschtschiluk, some with poor wagons, others on foot. In the area around Bendery and Kischinew, they were given quarters. Some of these settlers stayed there until May of 1815, and a few even until 1816. But already in the spring of 1814, 90 families arrived at the steppe river Kogälnik, which rises in the Woodland Heights of central Bessarabia and flows into Lake Kunduk. Here, about 90 km [56 miles] west of the district town of Akkerman, where the valley was very wide, the colony of Krasna was established. The first

verification was on 21 November, 1814. The area was remote and empty. Weeds and tall grass served as habitat for wild animals. There were no human dwellings yet. The land that the colonists were to receive had been leased to three Bulgarian tenants: Iskro, Loto, and Karpp.



Krasna, Roman Catholic Church



Krasna, Roof Over Courtyard Entrance

Very soon, the surveying of the farmsteads began. Preparations for the upcoming winter also had to start. For construction purposes, each colonist received construction timber: four posts, doors and windows, as well as a piece of wood for a bench and eight rubles. Each settler also received farming equipment: a wooden plow, a wagon, a harrow, two scythes, two sickles, an iron shovel, a hoe, a spear shaft (*Degenstock*), and other small tools; draft animals: two oxen, a cow; seeds: four *Tschetwert* [ca. 105 liters] of wheat, two *Tschetwert* of potatoes; and, for a year and a half, one *Pud* [36 lbs. / 16.38 kg] of flour per month from the storehouse in Tarutino. The beginning was very difficult, especially since the draft animals were thin and too weak for work. Therefore, the settlers had to help each other diligently.

At the beginning, the place was called Elisbeta, later Konstantinschutz. Only after years did the colony receive the name Krasna by the highest order, in memory of the Battle of Krasna during [Russia's] war with Napoleon I.

Shortly after the conquest of Bessarabia by the Russians from 1809 to 1813, Catholics could be found in this area and in the northern region of the Black Sea. Among the 133 families settled in Krasna, there were 19 Evangelical [Protestant] families. According to an agreement between the Catholic and Evangelical colonists, the Evangelical fellow-countrymen moved to Katzbach in 1822, in agreement with the authorities. This place was a distance of eight kilometers [5 miles] from Krasna.

Soon the settlers set about building a humble little church. It was already constructed and consecrated in 1818 under the leadership of Father Paschkowski. On the wall of the property of

Martin Ternes stood the altar of the first church of Krasna. The rectory (*Pastorat*) was located at the back by the garden ditch. Since its founding in 1814, Krasna formed an independent parish and belonged to the Kamianets Diocese until the establishment of the Kherson or Tiraspol Diocese in 1848. From the founding of the Krasna parish until the year 1870, the population was served ecclesiastically by Polish and Lithuanian clergymen. They were not able to attend to the native language of the children of their parishioners, and so our ancestors were left to their own strategies. The first immigrants, who had still brought religious traditions from the old homeland, had passed away. Since there was no connection to the old homeland, our ancestors would have had to decline spiritually and religiously if their own sons from among them had not been trained as caretakers of souls. Soon a connection was established with the German-speaking priests and professors from the old homeland, Germany.

The community developed quickly and well. Around 1840, 58 settlers planted the first larger vineyards on a hillside. Others soon followed their example. The population of the community also grew steadily. Soon, considerations were made about where to build a new house of God in place of the church which had in the meanwhile become far too small. It was soon decided to build the new church in the center of the village. According to our tradition, the parish church was completed in 1866 and consecrated by Bishop Vinzens Lipski on 6 October, 1874. In 1885, the parsonage (*Pfarrhaus*) was built, surrounded by a lovely fruit and vegetable garden.



Urmitz 1980, Home of the Bessarabian Germans. In front, Women's Handicraft Group of the Country People Association (*Landsmannschaft*).

To activate spiritual life, our priests introduced religious societies. So, the Marian Congregation was founded for the special veneration of Mary, which adult girls joined. If there was a lack of charitable associations in Krasna, this was due to the seclusion of our community. To develop religious life, popular missions were carried out, through which the connection to the Catholic Church was repeatedly strengthened.

Eight priests came from the community of Krasna, and 18 girls chose their life path as nuns. Religious life was at the forefront of daily events.

Through the German-Soviet Resettlement Agreement of 5 September, 1940, our village, church, and economic life was brought to an end.

On 13 October, 1940, at 9:00 in the morning, the disbanding of the Krasna community began. On the main street of the village, a convoy (*Treck*) three kilometers [1.9 miles] long formed with about 500 wagons. At 11:00, the convoy set off. A rider from the German Resettlement Command rode ahead of it. Wherever our fellow countrymen were thrown by fate, they always managed to overcome adversity. The Resettlement and the Camp Life were followed as an interim stage by a few years on Polish farms. After the collapse in 1945, our Krasna people, like all other fellow countrymen of our ethnic group, were scattered into the winds. It took a few years until the traces of war were overcome and our Catholic fellow countrymen, after years of separation, were reunited.

The former chaplain of Emmental and now Suffragan Bishop of Limburg/Lahn, Walter Kampe, and the District Administrator of the Mayen district, Dr. Jansen, succeeded in relocating the Catholic Bessarabian Germans largely to the Rhineland, the original homeland of their ancestors.

It did not take long for the lives of our fellow countrymen here in Rhineland-Palatinate to return to normal.

We came together in the Association of Bessarabian Germans in Rhineland-Palatinate. The Association is the center of our social life. A parallel to our former Youth Home, built in 1938 in Krasna, is the current Home of the Bessarabian Germans in Mülheim-Kärlich (Urmitz train station).

Co-operative work by Alex Hein, Josef Erker, Georg Habrich, Isidor Dirk.

[Translation Ends]



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