

Tartarbunar

Bessarabischer Heimatkalender—1986

W. Rumpeltin, Buchdruckerei und Zeitungsverlag K.G.

[Book Printing and Newspaper Publishing Limited]

Burgdorf, Hannover/Germany

Pages 83-97

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January, 2026

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

[Translation Begins]

The German Community in Tatarbunar 1846-1940

Ingo Rüdiger Isert

Historical Overview

Under Turkish rule, Tatars settled for almost 250 years, from around 1564 to 1807 in the south of Bessarabia, and not only gave this region the name Budjak (*Budschat*), “Angle” (*Winkel*), but also left dozens of place names of Tatar origin. At the beginning of the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812, the Tatars left the Budjak, and even during the war, the immigration of Moldovans, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, among others began into the largely depopulated area. (Lit. 1, pp. 6, 7, 11, 12)

Tatarbunar (also Tatar-Bunar, Russian Tatarbunary) is located near the mouth of the Kogălnik [River] into the Kunduk Liman and was once (Literature 1, p. 7) “a Tatar town with a large castle, a mosque, and a minaret.” The place name means Tatar well and refers to the abundant springs that surface here.

In the statistical description of Bessarabia and the so-called Budjak, we find a report about the old Tatarbunar: “In 1770, there was a large city here; in its ruins, one can still find today (Note: in the year 1827!) destroyed stone bathhouses, the foundations of minarets, and other buildings. One can also still see the traces of an old castle on the hill on the right side of the little river Kagatsch. The castle had a square layout, double walls made of fired bricks, and towers on its four corners. Each side measured 24 *Faden* (Note: 1 *Faden* = 2.13 m [7 feet]). In 1816, the castle was demolished by the inhabitants of Tatarbunar. The stones and bricks were used for house construction, so that now only the foundations can be recognized. After the Turks withdrew from Bessarabia, Bulgarians settled on the ruins of Tatarbunar, but, in 1822, they relocated to the lands assigned to them. The non-Bulgarian inhabitants of Tatarbunar remained

here, and additional newcomers settled, so that Tatarbunar today is considered one of the larger towns, which is why a *Wolost* administration also has its office here.” (Lit. 2, p. 20)

How Many Germans Have Already Passed By Tatarbunar?

When Germans first came to Tatarbunar is not recorded, nor is it known whether Germans stayed there for a while before Daniel Friedrich Isert settled in Tatarbunar. However, it is known that already at the beginning of the 19th century, Germans saw Tatarbunar, and some found their graves in the soil of Tatarbunar.

For a century (primarily 1763-1862), German people streamed into the vast Russian Empire, since 1804 also via the waterway along the Danube to Ismail and then further overland to Odessa. In the “*Remarkable and Complete Travel Description...*” edited by Fiechtner, recorded by a Swiss baker family, there are reports about the journey by ship down the Danube and about the hardships during the 49-day quarantine at Ismail on the Danube Delta. Afterwards, the journey continued by ox-cart to Odessa; the route went by way of Tatarbunar. There was probably not a single family on this emigration journey that did not lose one or more family members to scarcity, hunger, and illness. So we learn that Elisabeth, daughter of Jakob Burgermeister, and the mother of the travel report writer, died in Tatarbunar. About the mother we read: “On the tenth (Note: 10 December, 1817), we arrived at a Jewish inn at midnight; here we could rest a little... In the morning, we were again faced with sorrow, as the mother had died in the wagon. It was Tuesday, the eleventh month of winter, at six thirty in the morning when she passed away. My wife wrapped her in linens, and Hafner Frey from Ellg, together with a person from Württemberg, buried her on the same morning at nine o’clock on a hill in the steppe, a few rifle shots away from the Jewish inn. Not far from this Jewish inn, on the other side of a river, is a large village called Tartar Buniar, but the land where now my blessed mother was buried is called Bessarabia.” (Lit. 3, pp. 54, 62, 63)

The Founding of the German Community in Tatarbunar



Tatarbunar, 2 October, 1925. View of the center. In the background, the Russian Orthodox Church. In the foreground, across the entire width of the image, the Isert estates: grain mill (*Getreidemühle*), fulling mill (*Walkerei*), dye works (*Färberei*), oil mill (*Öhlmühle*), textile factory (*Tuchfabrik*), residential houses, and farm buildings.]

Daniel Friedrich Isert, born on 15 May, 1801, in Filehne/Posen, comes from an old family of textile makers, which can be traced back in Schönlanke/Posen to the year 1679. In 1826, according to his marriage certificate, he was a manufacturer in Strzeblew near the textile-making town of Ozorkow in Poland, and from 1832 to 1846-1847, he lived in the German textile-making colony of Dunajewzy/Podolia (further details on this as well as the following can be found in Lit. 4).

In 1845, Daniel Friedrich Isert came to Bessarabia with the intention of finding a suitable place where he could settle for the production of textiles (Lit. 5 and Lit. 8). The conditions were favorable, because the “large sheep farming in Bessarabia, which brought a lot of wool to the market, had to literally attract contractors to the region in order to refine this valuable raw material” (Lit. 9).

In Tatarbunar, Daniel Friedrich Isert finally bought an outdated water mill from Feodor Schulga for 131 silver rubles on 27 October, 1846 (Lit. 5). This date is considered the founding day of the German community in Tatarbunar, which remained probably small in numbers until 1940, but was significant due to its industries and businesses (Lit. 7).

The First 20 Years up to 1865

Daniel F. Isert brought his family, wife, and 8 children, to Tatarbunar only in 1847 (his wife had given birth to their 11th child in Dunajewzy on 11 January, 1847, and three children had died by that time). On the purchased property, he built a fulling mill and afterwards a weaving mill (*Weberei*)—it was the first textile factory in Bessarabia.

Since Tatarbunar was rich in springs and water flowed through his property, he received permission from the community to develop and expand the springs (Lit. 8). The water from the hill springs was channeled underground to 3 water towers, on which stood a large cross; among the population, they were called Tartar Wells (*Tatarenbrunnen*). The water that continued to flow was dammed up by Daniel F. Isert in front of his property into a small pond. The water power was just enough to drive the 2 millstones and the machinery of the fulling mill. The mill and the fulling mill were located on the left and right of the water trench running through his property. On the other side of the mill, he built a residential building. The fulling mill (with the weaving?), the mill, and the residential house were under one roof and measured a total of 14m [45.9 feet] wide and 46m [151 feet] long. In separate buildings, the weaving, the actual textile factory, later (presumably from 1850) found its place. The picture-postcard with the center of Tatarbunar show the state of affairs in later times.

The still relatively young company suffered great economic losses due to the Crimean War (1853-1856). The Russian troops advancing into the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia lacked hospitals, so the large milling and weaving spaces were confiscated, all equipment dismantled, and hospitals set up. Of the originally promised compensation, Daniel F. Isert was only paid a portion after the lost Crimean War (Lit. 5).

Daniel F. Isert was a welcome advisor in the Russian community. At his suggestion, a retirement home affiliated with the Orthodox Church was established. In 1940, at the time of the Resettlement, this retirement home was just in the process of being expanded.



Tatarbunar 1928. Property/ west view/ by Samuel Hamann. On the left the residential house, on the right the farm mill, behind it the power plant

Daniel F. Isert had another 5 children born in Tatarunar; the first child born there was Wilhelm August (*28 August, 1848, old calendar, †10 November, 1931). According to an excerpt from the Sarata church book, “Daniel Isert, merchant and manufacturer in Tatarbunar” died on 10 February, 1865, in Tatarbunar from a nervous disorder and was buried two days later by Pastor Behning. When Daniel F. Isert closed his eyes forever at nearly 64 years old, he left behind a solid economic foundation.

At the time of his death, 11 children were still alive (for more details, see Lit. 4); five of them were already married, had moved to other Bessarabian communities, and had been strongly supported by their father in establishing their livelihoods. (For example, through his son Karl Gotthilf Isert, the first business in Tarutino was established in 1860, and the second textile factory in Bessarabia, which Karl G. Isert sold in 1865 to his brother-in-law Steinke. The textile maker Friedrich Leopold Steinke from Dunajewzy had married a daughter of D. F. Isert and had worked in Tatarbunar for a time. Under the name Steinke, this textile factory was known throughout Bessarabia until 1940.)

Of the six unmarried children living at the home of their parents, the following inherited in Tatarbunar (Lit. 8):

1. Traugott Julius (20 years old) inherited the textile factory
2. Michael Friedrich (18 years old) a property with residential and agricultural buildings; he became a cooper (*Böttcher*) and maker of wagons
3. Wilhelm August (16 years old) inherited the mill and the fulling mill
4. Josephine Amalie (12 years old) a developed plot of land on the main street.
The inheritance of two other daughters is not recorded.

Daniel F. Isert had worked as a textile maker in three locations within the Russian Empire. His final home became Tatarbunar, where he felt at home and where he acquired Russian citizenship. He preserved the traditional profession of his ancestors, documented in the town of Schönlanke since 1679, and spread it throughout Bessarabia (aside from Tatarbunar, also in Tarutino and

Klöstitz) (Lit. 4, p. 98 and Lit. 10, pp. 78-82). In the following decades, up until the end of World War I, the Isert families and their relatives remained confined to the small German community in Tatarbunar.

The Isert Textile Factory in Tatarbunar

Traugott Julius Isert, the heir to the textile factory, married in 1866 a daughter of Daniel Christian Martin, the sexton and teacher born in Großliebental/Cherson.

These textile factories of the 19th century in Bessarabia were, in the proper sense, already factories, but they should not be measured by the standards of today. Horses (with a tread wheel or a *Göpel* devise) were usually the driving force, while hand spinning machines and hand looms remained common for a long time; only in later years, and very slowly, did steam engines, so-called locomobiles, and even later driven by motor become established. (In the *Heimatkalender* 1961, pp. 91-93, the *Childhood Memories* section vividly describes the atmosphere and working methods of a textile factory powered by a horse mill.) Local wool was processed into very durable but simple textiles. Additionally, under contract for the local population, wool was combed and spun on the one hand, and on the other hand, finished peasant fabrics were fullered and dyed.

Traugott J. Isert managed the textile factory in Tatarbunar until his death in 1903. His youngest son, Traugott Heinrich, was to take over the inheritance. At that time, he was 21 years old and very ill, so his eldest brother, Wilhelm Immanuel Isert, a teacher in Schlangendorf/Cherson, returned to Tatarbunar, gave up his profession, and together with him took over the management of the textile factory. When, six years later in 1909, Traugott Heinrich also died, the management of the textile factory remained solely with Wilhelm Immanuel. Another tragedy occurred on 25 May, 1917, when the textile factory fell victim to a major fire (Lit. 8).

Wilhelm I. Isert did not return to his trained profession as a schoolteacher even at this time. He took the still usable machines and founded a new textile factory in Tarutino. (This enterprise got off to a good start in the period after World War I, after the annexation of Bessarabia by Romania, but fate struck once again: on 29 July, 1920, Wilhelm I. Isert died after an operation in Karlsbad/Bohemia, where he had gone for treatment of his gallbladder disease. This enterprise was discontinued a few years later, but the engine continued to serve as a power source for electricity generation in Tarutino for a long time.)

The Locksmiths of the Balz Family

After the death of her husband, Anna Emilie Balz, née Isert, daughter of Daniel F. Isert, returned to Tatarbunar (before 1885) with her two children. Her son Wilhelm Paul Balz had learned the trade of gunsmith in Kischinew. After moving to Tatarbunar, he ran his own locksmith shop. This had a lasting impact on the family: not only did his three sons become locksmiths, but the wives were often brought in from locksmith families as well. After their father died in 1905, the brothers Johannes and Woldemar continued the family locksmith business and expanded it with a foundry. In the 1930s, Woldemar parted ways with his brother Johannes and opened his own locksmith shop.

The Balz folks had an extraordinary knack for craftsmanship. It is reported that they carried out all kinds of repairs and even made missing spare parts themselves, such as for engines.

The Isert Mill until 1910

Wilhelm August Isert, who had inherited the fulling mill and the watermill, equipped the mill with a horse drive (treadwheel) in 1877, a year after his marriage, and added a small oil mill. Later that same year, the treadwheel was reportedly replaced by a 12-horsepower steam locomotive (Lit. 5). The steam engine then drove not only the mill and the oil mill but also the fulling mill.

In Bessarabia, oil pressing was closely connected with the milling industry. Oil mills and grain mills shared the same drive and were often housed under the same roof. The most important piece of equipment in the oil mill was the press. The oil mill met local demand exclusively: farmers brought their rapeseed (*Raps*), mustard (*Senf*), or camelina (*Hederich*) for processing along with their wheat (*Weizen*). The oil mill was a suitable complement to milling operations, but it was also found wherever spare drive power was available, such as in textile factories.

The steam engine appeared in several places in Bessarabia in the decade of 1870-1880 (Lit. 4, p. 114 and Lit. 10, p. 74). Only a small portion of the straw, which accumulated in large quantities from extensive grain cultivation, was used as bedding in the stables or for heating room stoves. The combustion furnaces of the steam engines now consumed large amounts of this cheap but loose fuel, which burned quickly under intense heat. By the turn of the century, the originally profitable straw heating had become increasingly expensive, and straw became scarce for the numerous steam mills. In addition, this heating system often caused fires—some mills burned down more than once! The steam mill of Wilhelm A. Isert also operated into the early 20th century, when the mill had to be shut down following a boiler explosion.

The Isert-Hamann Collective Partnership

On 24 April, 1910, the company “W. Isert, A. Isert and S. Hamann, Collective Partnership” was founded. It was a family partnership with unlimited liability for the partners (Lit. 6). Wilhelm A. Isert took in his eldest son G. Alfred Isert and his son-in-law Samuel Hamann as co-partners, each with a one-third share. (The latter two had already built a steam mill with an oil mill in Solokary in 1899 with two other partners; this mill, most recently with a capacity of 12 tons, was taken over in 1916-1917 by Chaim Glückmann from Tatarbunar {Lit. 4, p. 122}). The responsible manager of the partnership was Samuel Hamann, and the purpose of the founding was the modernization and operation of the decommissioned steam mill.

The Anton Erlanger Mill Construction Company in Odessa carried out the reconstruction of the old mill building and replaced the equipment. The old boiler and engine house was completely demolished and rebuilt according to the plans of the Otto Deutz Engine Factory in Cologne for a gas production system, and equipped with a powerful Deutz suction gas engine (*Sauggasmotor*) (60 HP) with a compressor. On 2 October, 1910, the new mill was put into operation. To distinguish it from wind, horse, and steam mills, this type of mill was called a “Mechanical

Mill." The new mill operated around the clock and was fully occupied with contract milling work for the first six years. During the uncertain years of World War I, the company invested part of its profits in a durable form, in black gold. The anthracite coal used for the gas production plant from the Donets Basin [eastern Donbas Ukraine] was shipped via cargo barges across the Black Sea and the Kunkuk Liman directly to Tatarbunar. On a newly purchased yard, the coal eventually piled up into a large, shiny black heap. The far-sightedness of this measure soon became apparent. Since the Russian Revolution (Nov. 1917), coal deliveries had been faltering and came to a complete halt when Bessarabia separated from Russia in 1918 and became part of Romania. There are no other coal deposits in the Black Sea region, and coal prices increased sharply. Before the coal supply was used up, it lasted for 2 to 3 years, the experience had been made that the Polish coal (from Upper Silesia) was not of sufficient quality for the gas production plant and therefore asked for advice from the Deutz Company. The answer was: charcoal. Charcoal was now purchased from the forests of Central Bessarabia. The company was spared the bitter fate of other mill owners of having to shut down the mill again and again due to a lack of energy (in the case of steam mills, especially a lack of straw).

To improve the quantity and quality of the milling, the company renovated and supplemented the mill equipment in 1916 and 1927. Additional roller mills and a five-part, free-swinging box sifter (all from the Bühler Company) were installed. The general trend at that time of mutual escalation in modernization created a dangerous overcapacity in Bessarabia in the long run. After this major overhaul, the company once again operated the commercial milling side very actively, in addition to contract milling. The mechanical mill now had a daily output of 20 tons. In 1930, a bakery with an oven for 200 four-pound [1.8 kg] loaves was opened at the new mill yard, and the bread was sold in the shop in the house of Eduard W. Isert. In later years, the bakery was leased out.

In July of 1923, the company concluded a contract with the municipality of Tatarbunar for a duration of 20 years, starting on 1 January, 1924, for the construction of an electricity plant for street and residential lighting in Tatarbunar. After the contract was confirmed by the authorities, the company began erecting utility poles in the center of the market town in December of 1923. At the same time, the company opened a store for electrical supplies and had wiring installed in the homes and business premises of its subscribers. For provisional electricity generation, a wing was added to the mill's engine building and a 52 kW dynamo from the company BBC in Vienna was installed. The dynamo was driven by the mill's suction gas engine. From mid-April of 1924, electricity could be supplied to the first subscriber. In the summer of 1925, a new building specifically for the power plant was erected on the yard of Samuel Haman. For this purpose, the company purchased a diesel engine (50 HP) from the Graz Railway Carriage (Waggon) and Machine Factory. To complete this project, the Romanian State Bank granted a mortgage loan of 800,000 lei. In April of 1926, the power grid in Tatarbunar was expanded to a length of 6 km [3.7 miles], and in the summer of 1939, all the utility poles were replaced.



Tatarbunar. Part of the staff at the entrance (vestibule) to the Farmers' Mill and the Power Plant

To make better use of the new engine power (electricity for the lighting was only supplied from dusk until midnight), the company built a mill in the annex of the power plant with 2 grinding and crushing operations in the summer of 1926. In this “Farmers’ Mill,” a lot of corn was processed, both for animal feed and for flour for human consumption.

The Weisser Mill

In Tatarbunar, there was a second large mill, located on the opposite side of the river in front of the pond, which was dammed at the level of the properties of the Iserts. In the early 1920s, it was still an old steam mill with a daily output of 15 tons. It belonged to the elder Jew, Weisser. To get rid of the steam drive with all its disadvantages, in 1926, he bought the old building to tear it down and completely rebuild the mill. The old machines were refurbished and new ones purchased. After the renovation, there stood a beautiful mill with a daily output of 25 tons, producing the finest flour. One morning, on the way to the mill, old Weisser was found dead from a stroke. His son Emil Weisser took over the mill. He had attended the Evangelical Grammar School (*Gymnasium*) in Bucharest, and studied in Vienna and Paris. Afterwards, he worked at a bank in Bucharest. He was an impressive figure and of splendid character. As a businessman, he realized that, given the high debts from the new mill construction, the most economical solution was to sell a share of the mill. At a favorable price, Emil Sackmann and his relative Vossler each acquired a quarter of the mill. Emil Sackmann then lived for about a year in Tatarbunar, renting from Christine Isert, née Gast. (Lit. 4, p. 182)

The Jesse Textile Factory

Around 1918-1919, brothers Leonhard, Traugott, and Wilhelm Jesse came to Tatarbunar. The Jesse family is a family of textile makers. Leonhard Jesse was born in 1882 in Tutschin/Volhynia; in the marriage certificate of 1904, he is listed as a resident of the town of Kamenez-Podolsk/Podolia and as a textile factory owner. During World War I, Leonhard leased the Steinke textile factory in Sarata, while Traugott was imprisoned in Orenburg/Ural at that time. After an attempt in Akkerman, the three Jesse brothers leased from 1918-1919 until around 1927 the burned-out textile factory of Heinrich E. Isert, son of Traugott Heinrich, and set up machinery. In the yard of the textile factory, there was a well, which, however, had hard water [contains high levels of dissolved minerals]. Since the well at the oil mill (property of Wilhelm A. Isert) provided soft water [contains low levels of dissolved minerals], the Jesse family at the textile factory also hoped to find soft water on their premises and had drillers from Sarata look for water-bearing layers. The first drilling attempts only produced hard water until a seam was tapped at a depth of about 200 meters [656 feet] that contained hydrogen sulfide water. This water was ideally suited for textile production because the wool washed in it became clean, the fats dissolved, and at the same time it became soft and bleached. The textile factory was very profitable. The Jesse brothers bought their own property and built their own new textile factory there.

After disagreements between the Jesse brothers, Traugott Jesse moved with his family (with his wife Emma née Voß, his two daughters Hildegard and Leontine, and his sister-in-law Otilie

Voß) from Tatarbunar, went to Ismail, and owned a small textile factory there. (Lit. 4, pp. 168, 170)

More German Businesses in Tatarbunar

In the yard of the Isert textile factory, a vein had been drilled to a depth of 200 meters [656 feet] on behalf of Jesse, which produced an artesian well: "The water came out with great pressure, like a fountain, about 4 meters [13 feet] high. The water was rich in sulfur and soda. The sulfur smell was so strong that all the silver in the neighborhood turned brown. It took a long time for the residents in the neighborhood to get used to the sulfur smell" (Lit. 8). The water was sent to the Bellevue Pharmacy in Berlin for bacteriological and chemical analysis. According to the investigation report of 8 March, 1922, it is a typical mineral water with a predominant content of sulfur and alkali compounds: "The sulfur content is almost as high as that of the Aachen Kaiserquelle. The water deserves—if it proves to have a consistent composition upon continued examination—special attention." After the Jesse family moved out of the Isert textile factory around 1927, the building remained empty for a while. In part of the building, a sparkling water factory (*Sprudelfabrik*) moved in. The water from the artesian well was carbonated and sold as sparkling water or, with additional ingredients, as lemonade. In another part of the building, a distillery (*Schnapsbrennerei*) was established.. The distillery involved a Russian, Woldermar and Paul Hamann, Eduard W. and Heinrich E. Isert. After about five years, the distillery was abandoned. Heinrich E. Isert then began to use the water from the artesian well for medicinal purposes. He set up a bath with 6 to 7 tubs, which was primarily visited by the population of Tatarbunar on weekends. In the summer, guests with rheumatism and sciatica came for spa treatments. Today, a well-developed modern health spa is said to stand at this location.



Tatarbunar - 2 October, 1925. Textile factory of the Jesse Brothers

Around 1920, shoemaker Gustav Rein from Galicia arrived in Tatarbunar. He rented an apartment, shop, and workshop from Amalie Sardar, née Isert. Since he was very capable, he worked his way up and employed several journeymen in the last years before the Resettlement. Soon he had built his own house and rented a shop in a building near the large bridge; only the workshop remained in the house of Amalie Sardar. In 1940, he moved with his family to Tarutino and therefore was not resettled with the people of Tatarbunar.

Widow Emilie Degentesch, née Marks, also lived in Tatarbunar since around 1920 and owned a hand-knitting business there with a few workers. She produced stockings, sweaters, and other knitted goods.

Michael Friedrich Isert, who had inherited a property with residential and farm buildings from his father Daniel Friedrich Isert, was a cooper and wagon maker in Tatarbunar. He died in 1902. In the 1920s and 1930s, his daughter Amalie Sardar, married Mauch, and his daughter-in-law Christine Isert, née Gast, primarily lived off the income from the rental apartments. Christine Isert also began sewing additionally and taught many girls from Tatarbunar how to use needle and thread.

In 1912, on the initiative of Samuel Hamann, a bank was founded in Tatarbunar, of which he was the director until 1916.

His brother-in-law Eduard W. Isert, who, after attending the Werner School in Sarata and the Bookkeeping School in Simferopol on the Crimea, gained practical experience at banks in Paris and Tarutino [Bessarabia], had been the head of the “Lower Danube” (*Untere Donau*) Bank in Tatarbunar since 1926, where Artur Kehrer, a former French teacher at the Tatarbunar Middle School, was also employed. In 1929, the year of the collapse of banks, this bank also had to close. Artur Kehrer then became an accountant at the Isert-Hamann Collective Partnership, while Eduard W. Isert focused intensively on the family business, expanding the fulling mill and improving the dye works. After the death of his father Wilhelm A. Isert, he inherited the fulling mill, the oil mill, and a share in the Collective Partnership. He bought the unused buildings and parts of the textile factory and half of the adjoining courtyard in the name of his wife. His fulling mill was running excellently. But he did not succeed in rebuilding a textile factory with all the work processes by the time of the Resettlement in 1940.

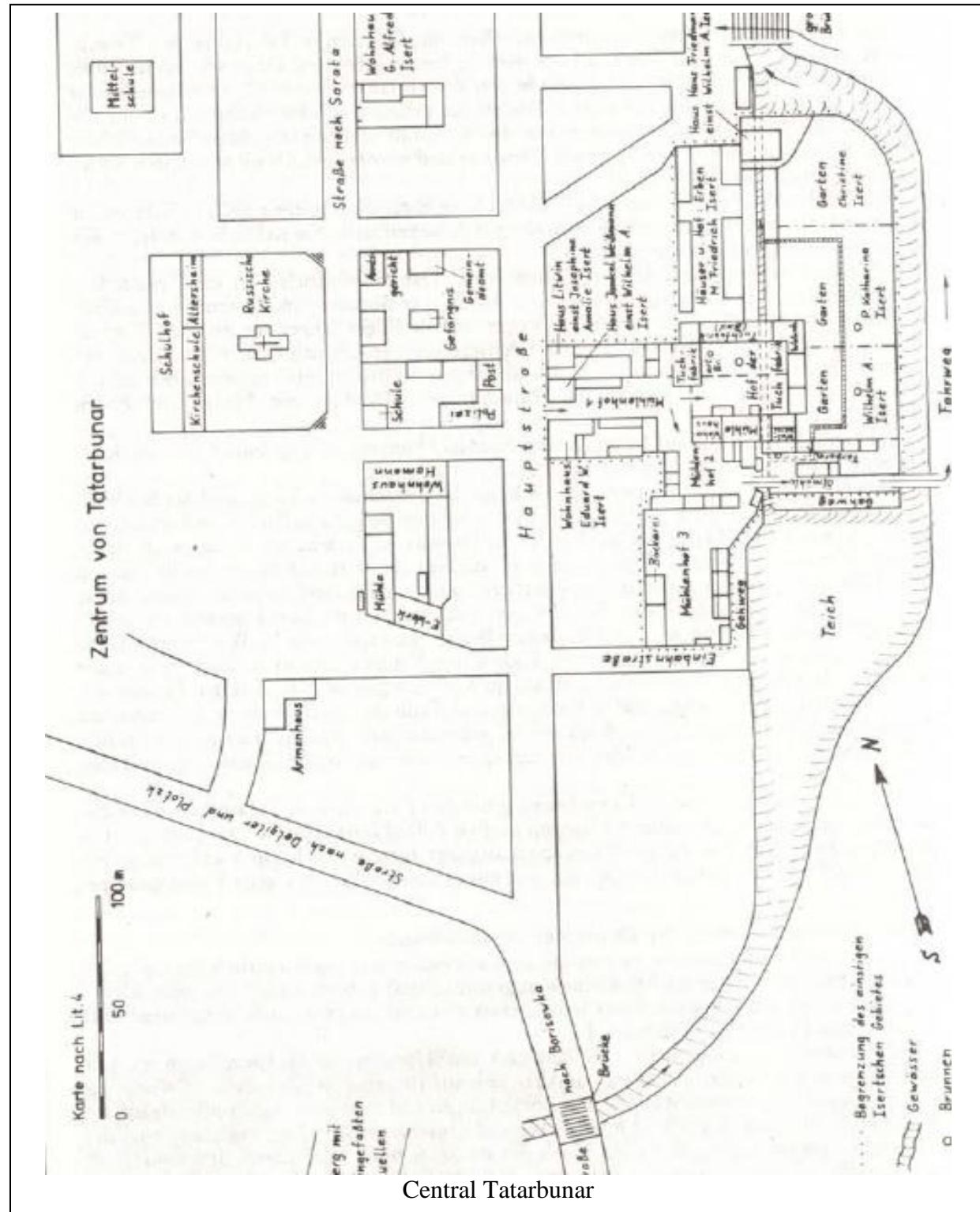
Agriculture was of no significance as a source of income for the Germans in Tatarbunar, although, for example, Samuel Hamann and G. Alfred Isert briefly engaged in some farming on the side and had established a few vineyards. Livestock farming, a few cows, horses, pigs, and sheep, was also actually intended only for personal use.

The Religious Life of the Germans in Tatarbunar

The Evangelical German community in Tatarbunar was pastorally assigned to the Kischinew Parish until 29 October, 1903, and from then on belonged to the Sarata Parish. The pastors came to Tatarbunar only rarely, about twice a year, and then conducted sermons and communion.

Besides members of the Isert and Hamann families, hardly anyone else belonged to the Evangelical congregation. This did not change even when more Germans moved in after World War I. Every Sunday morning, people gathered in the living room of Wilhelm A. Isert for devotions (Lit. 12). The devotions were read by family members and the teachers who were currently employed. After the devotions, they stayed together, talked, shared news, and in good weather, went for a walk in the nearby gardens until it was time to gather together again for the noon meal.

If the pastor in Sarata was unreachable or unavailable, emergency baptisms and even funerals were conducted without a pastor. In place of the pastor, it was usually someone who read the devotions during that time.



School and Education of the Germans in Tatarbunar

The situation in the large market town of Tatarbunar, where Germans were always only a small minority, was completely different from that in the German villages with their village school. At the time of the Resettlement, about 50 Germans lived in the town of over 11,000 inhabitants. The German children either attended the four-class Russian elementary school (*Volksschule*) in Tatarbunar or were taught by private tutors; in some cases, children stayed in a German village for boarding and then attended the village school there.

Teacher Anastasia Dimitrovna Fomina had also taught all the Isert family of the older generation in Russian. A friendly relationship developed between her, her sister Ewdokia Dimitrovna, and the Isert family. The first German teacher to come to Tatarbunar was Miss Maria Knoch from Dorpat [Estonia]. She was already in Tatarbunar in 1892, as that year she is mentioned as the godmother of Wilhelm Adolf Isert. Miss Knoch had previously been employed by the Falz-Fein family in the Cherson Governorate, through Wilhelm I. Isert, who was the teacher in Schlangendorf/Cherson (his work there is evidenced by his 1904 treatise published in Odessa, *Statistical-Historical Description of the Colonies in the Swedish Territory*), was transferred to Tatarbunar.

From 1919 to 1925, there was a German private school in Tatarbunar. The parents of the few school-age children paid a teacher and provided a classroom. The private teachers were: Robert Steinwand (1919-1920), Otto Osswald (1920-1922), Ida Matt (1922-1923), David Schaible (1923-1924), and Lilli Hamann (1924-1925). From 1926 onwards, there were hardly any German school-age children left.

After elementary school or private school, German children mostly went to one of the three German high schools in Bessarabia, to the Werner School in Sarata, or to the Boys' Gymnasium or Girls' Lyceum in Tarutino. Some attended other schools as well. It may be surprising how many of the children attended these schools.

Werner School and Teacher College in Sarata: Wilhelm P. Balz, Wilhelm I. Isert, G. Alfred Isert, Georg O. Isert, Traugott H. Isert, Eduard W. Isert, Wilhelm A. Isert, Heinrich E. Isert, Woldemar Hamann, Paul Hamann, Lilli Hamann, Olga Hamann, Wilhelm Hamann, Max Hamann, Robert Hamann, Oskar Hamann and Ernst Hamann.

Tarutino Boys' Gymnasium: Wilhelm A. Isert, Emil Hamann, Viktor Isert, Paul Isert, Artur Isert and Eduard Hamann.

Girls' Lyceum Tarutino: Margarete Balz, Viktoria Sardar, Wilhelmine Isert, Irene Isert, Hildegard Jesse, Leontine Jesse and Hedwig Degentesch.

Akkerman Gymnasium: Emil Hamann, Paul Hamann.

Kischinew Gymnasium: Viktor Jesse, Eleonore Jesse, Ludmilla Kehrer, Eleonore Kehrer.

Bruckenthal Gymnasium in Hermannstadt/Transylvania: Wilhelmine Isert.

Personalities and Special Events in Tatarbunar

Two people from the German community in Tatarbunar, who guided the fortunes of their families and businesses, appear to us like patriarchs: they were Wilhelm August Isert and his son-in-law Samuel Hamann.

In the report of Ilse Meyer (Lit. 12), what is particularly striking is the quietly working Christianity of Wilhelm A. Isert and his close connection to the Alexander Asylum in Sarata. Ilse Meyer characterizes his inner greatness with Professor Uhlig's remark from Tübingen directed at Isert: "You Germans in Bessarabia are uncut gemstones, but gemstones you are!" and the opinion of a pastor: "I can only learn from him, for I, as an educated man, am far behind him."

Samuel Hamann, initially a teacher in Teplitz and Maraslienz, developed entrepreneurial skills after his marriage to Anna Isert, which led him to Solokary in 1898, then back to his birthplace of Plotzk in 1908, and finally to Tatarbunar, where he took over the management of the Isert-Hamann Collective Partnership in 1910. A life report (Lit. 13) published on the occasion of his diamond wedding anniversary, describes other stages of this tireless organizer's life.

In 1924, Tatarbunar was severely affected twice. On 29 February, part of the town was flooded when floodwaters carried straw bales away from the Weisser steam mill, which wedged against the large bridge and blocked the outflow. The water rose over the banks and poured into the courtyards and houses. In the Isert-Hamann mechanical mill, the water reached a height of one meter [3.28 feet]. David Schaible, who at that time was working as a private tutor in Tatarbunar, was able to provide an eyewitness account of it (Lit. 14).

In the autumn of 1924, there was an uprising in the south of Bessarabia against the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania that had taken place six years earlier. The town of Tatarbunar became the center of this uprising. The Tatarbunar uprising, with its painful consequences, has already been reported on (Lit. 4, pp. 74-77 and quite extensively in Lit. 11).

An instructive episode from the last century is recounted in the tale *Toppellock Instructs a Russian Priest* (Lit. 15). The wife of a poor shoemaker, recently widowed in Tatarbunar, could not afford to have her husband buried according to church rites because the money was insufficient. He was secretly buried at night. The priest imposed a punishment for this transgression. The robber chieftain Toppellock, who had already found shelter with the family of the shoemaker several times, confronted the priest and admonished him for his heartless behavior towards the poor widow. Toppellock cut off the long curls and flowing beard of the priest. For three months, the priest could not leave his house until the hair of his head and beard had grown back. This 'voluntary house arrest' had obviously transformed the priest, for from then on he was kinder to the poor.

The End of the German Community in Tatarbunar

With the occupation of Bessarabia by Russian troops on 28 June, 1940, life in Bessarabia basically changed. Only for the Germans was there the opportunity, through the Resettlement

Agreement signed on 5 September, 1940, to decide for or against staying in Bessarabia. The change was first felt by the owners of factories and businesses, whose property was 'nationalized'. The Collective Partnership Isert-Hamann was strangely expropriated in two stages: on 29 August, 1940, the mechanical grain mill along with the bakery was confiscated, and on 10 September, 1940, the power plant along with the farmers' mill was seized. Despite the nationalization, the businesses were taxed on 30 September, and this tax was collected already on 2 October. These incidents accelerated the preparations for the departure.

When Dr. Hermann Maurer of the German Resettlement Commission, returning from Kilia where he had led a transport from Sarata, stopped at Eduard W. Isert's in Tatarbunar on the morning of 3 October and heard about the incidents, he recommended leaving the same day. This news was communicated to all the Germans, who then loaded their wagons and left Tatarbunar around 5:00 PM. For the Tatarbunar resettlers, Sarata was the meeting point, where they spent the night. Dr. Maurer had the Resettlement papers completed during the night, and the next morning (according to Lit. 16, p. 631, it was 5 October, 1940) the transport of the Tatarbunar residents departed together with the Sarata resettlers. In Kilia, the Tatarbunar folks (except Paul and Eduard W. Isert) boarded the Danube ship *Charlotte Schönbrunn*, which took them upriver to Semlin near Belgrade. After a two-day rest, they continued by train via Graz, Vienna, and Prague. Late in the night from 14 to 15 October, the Tatarbunar folks arrived in Nixdorf/Northern Bohemia. The Tatarbunar folks were accommodated in Relocation Camps No. 109 (German House in Nixdorf), No. 108 (former hospital in Nixdorf), and No. 106 (Wölmsdorf).

Of the people from Tatarbunar, only Paul Isert was allowed to travel with a wagon, which allowed him to take more Resettlement luggage with him. After he had brought his family to Kilia with the other Tatarbunar folks, he returned to Sarata with his uncle Eduard W. Isert. It was not until 19 October, 1940, that they set off with a fully loaded wagon with the Satar [sic] convoy (Lit. 16, pp. 637-643) to Galatz.

List of the Persons from Tatarbunar who Resettled to Germany in 1940

01. Johannes Chr. Balz married to Natalie née Kalantartschuk; Children: Alexandra, Wilhelm, Friedrich.
02. Woldemar Balz married to Lydia née Gast.
03. Pauline Isert née Veygel.
04. Heinrich E. Isert married to Else née Matthies.
05. Spiridon Sardar married to Amalie W. née Isert, verw. Mauch.
06. Christine Isert née Gast.
07. Berta J. Isert née Hag; Child: Artur.
08. Paul Isert married to Jeanne C. née Büxel; Child: Manfred A.
09. Samuel Hamann married to Anna L. née Isert; Children: Wilhelm, Eduard, Max, Robert.
10. Woldemar Hamann married to Lydia née Samochin; Children: Anna L., Grigitte.
11. Paul Hamann married to Maria née Michailow; Child: Henriette.
12. Emilie J. Isert.
13. Elisa Isert.
14. Eduard W. Isert married to Emma née Gerstenberger; Children: Wilhelmine, Irene.

15. Lukeria Jesse née Konokeenko; Children: Viktor, Eleonore.
16. Johann Jesse married to Alice née Jesse; Children: Hans, Rita.
17. Adolf Görres.
18. Artur Kehrer married to Helene née Mardar; Child: Ludmilla.
19. Emilie Degentesch née Marks.
20. Anton Sobolew married to Hedwig née Degentesch; Child: Paul.
21. Dr. Gottfried Enßlen married to Anna née Schulz; Children: Roland, Ulrich.

In total, there were 21 families or single individuals, a total of 56 people, who were resettled in Germany.

Note:

- Before the Russian occupation, the following moved away from Tatarbunar: the Gustav Rein family to Tarutino and Viktoria Sardar (married to Artur Schulz) to Schabo.
- When the Russians marched in, Leonhard Jesse (married to Lukeria, née Konokeenko) fled to Romania and stayed there during the war. He only came to Germany in 1959.
- Emil Salzwedel was arrested by the Soviets and taken to Odessa. He is said to have later returned to Tatarbunar.
- Arthur Kehrer's daughter Eleonore stayed in Tatarbunar; she did not want to be resettled.
- Viktor Jesse, Woldemar Hamann, and Max Hamann were in the Romanian military until the time of Resettlement. When the Resettlement started, all Bessarabian Germans who were still in military service had to report to a Collection Camp in Bucharest, from where they were sent to Galatz to the German Resettlement Commission. They were then transported by a Danube ship to Semlin. There, Viktor Jesse, Woldemar and Max Hamann joined the Tatarbunar Resettlement Groups. For this reason, all three are not listed in the above Resettler Directory.

It was not an all-inclusive (*runde*) anniversary, neither from the Founding of the congregation nor from the Resettlement, when Max Hamann invited the family members and all Tatarbunar folks to a meeting in the Göppingen [Germany] town hall in 1978. And yet over 50 came, and all the participants were his guests for a day. For some, this meeting was the first encounter after 38 years! David Schaible liked to remember the time long ago, his Tatarbunar students, and once again—just like during the flood in Tatarbunar in 1924—he was an attentive observer and good reporter, but this time of more pleasant matters (Lit. 18).

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Tartarbunar in 1976

In November of 1976, Oskar Hamann from the German Democratic Republic had the opportunity to visit his hometown of Tartarbunar. The reception by his former acquaintances was very warm. He reported the following changes (Lit. 17): Many new houses and streets made it difficult to find one's way. The marketplace has completely changed; the old market stalls have been demolished, a large park has been created, and a cultural center has been built. The watercourse of the stream has been widened and bounded by concrete walls. The area between the church and the Hamann property is now popularly called Hamann Square (kolo Hamana). The front part of the house of Samuel Hamann was demolished in the spring of 1976, and a large apartment block is being built there, extending up to the church square. The farmers' mill has been dismantled, and only the empty rooms of the electricity plant remain. The wall openings through which the drive belts ran to the farmers' mill are now visible from the street. The large oil tank (visible in the picture of Hamann's estate all the way to the right) ran along the street. The house of G. Alfred Isert remains unchanged—only now it has grown old. Only part of the large grain mill is still standing. From the fulling mill of Eduard W. Isert, the fulling machines remain as if waiting for transport. The Weisser mill is still operating but looks very worn out. Work in the Jesse textile factory goes on day and night, and it is now three times as large as before the Resettlement. The Russian Orthodox Church is very well preserved and possesses many precious icons that came from surrounding closed and cleared out churches. Of the seven bells—each with its own distinctive sound—only the large bell has survived. The church is also a testimony to the revolutionary period, as the Tatarbunary Uprising was organized there in 1924. The cemetery, where Germans were also buried, has been leveled, and a park has been established on the site.

[Translation Ends]

