

Sixty Years 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.

Conversion Rates for Measurements

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1 Deßjatin = 2.7 acres {a} / 1.09 hectares {ha}

1 Faden = 2.1 meters / 7 feet

1 Quadratfaden = 4.41 sq. meters / 49 sq. feet

1 Quadratmeter = 1 sq. meter / 10.76 sq. feet

[Translation Begins]

Sixty Years Kolatschowka, Bendery District

by Oskar Bohnet

In the period between 1908 and 1912, there were numerous opportunities to purchase land in Bessarabia. In the industrially poor area, the population was almost entirely dependent on agriculture. The farms, more and more fragmented by the growth of the population, made it difficult to work the strips. In order to get out of the confines of the mother colonies, a way out was sought and found in the purchase of land and the founding of daughter colonies.

In this way, the village of Kolatschowka, with the original name Sabaneewka, was founded after the then owner Infantry General Ivan Vasilyevich Sabaneew. He had a great deal of 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 state services, he received on one of his birthdays an estate of about 5,000 *Deßjatinen* [5,450 hectares / 13,500 acres] in the province of Bessarabia, Bendery District. After his death in 1885, a part of the estate in the size of 3,029 *Deßjatinen* [3,301 ha / 8,178 a] 400 *Quadratfaden* [1,764 sq. m-/ 4,304 sq. ft] fell to his heirs according to a will: widow of a colonel, Nadejda Andrewna Kolatschowskaja née Schipowskaja and Feodor Porfirowitsch Schipowski. After this process, the estate was called Sabaneewka-Kolatschowka and was offered for sale. On 3 October, 1908, Mr. Schipowski and a group of 59 German farmers from 9 mother colonies through their representatives A. Widmer, H. Bohnet, D.

Erdmann and Jakob Künzle came to an act of purchase, according to which the said estate with all immovable property was registered in the *Kataster* office in Kischinew at the price of 325 rubles per *Deßjatin* in the name of the new owners. Up to this time, Kolatschowka had been leased as an estate (*Gut*) to 5 German farmers from Leipzig (Bessarabia) for 10 years. Under other conditions, their lease agreement also stipulated that 5 uniform residential houses with farm buildings of the same length, width and height had to be built, 15 acacia trees had to be planted in front of each house, wells and cellars had to be built. These built on farmyards, auctioned off to the highest bidder among the new community members, got their new owners in A. Widmer, H. Bohnet, G. Schöck, D. Matheis and G. Schalo. The proceeds flowed into the community treasury, and were a great help for the difficult beginning.

After surveying the estate and dividing it into 57 farms of 50 *Deßjatinen* each (54 ha / 135 a) and 57 farmyard plots of about 8,500 sq. meters [91,460 sq ft] each, then came land and building plots drawn by lottery to the individual owners. 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 living together, one could hear different opinions, mainly in the community meetings. Everyone from this colorful company brought something of the customs and traditions of his mother colony with him and wanted everything to be like this. For example, in a community meeting, the question was raised as to whether St. Michael's Day should be celebrated or not. Two groups were formed. After a short debate, the vote was taken. A group headed by the curator won with a "no". Apparently satisfied, they parted ways. Far from it, because on the eve of St. Michael's Day, at the end of the day, both church bells suddenly rang and announced the holiday. As mentioned above, this was the case in the beginning after the foundation of the village, but later on the village life in Kolatschowka was quite harmonious and not at all as, in such a case, it might have been expected.

Kolatschowka, situated on the eastern side of the wide Skinosa Valley on a horseshoe-shaped hill, had a very beautiful location, protected from storm and water. In the middle of the valley meandered the river Skinos, a tributary of the Kugälnik, overgrown with bulrush and reeds. On the western side of the valley runs the railway line Kischinew—Bendery—Leipzig—Akkerman (today Dnestrowsk).

Four kilometers [2.5 mi] south of Kolatschowka was the large railway station and junction Bessarabjaska, next to it the market town of Romanowka with its weekly market. Both the market town and the railway station were of great importance to the Kolatschowka community. All agricultural products could be sold in time and always obtain good prices.

The Kolatschowka community was put in a critical position by the government's Emergency Law of 2 January and 15 February, 1915 on the liquidation of German lands (Russian: *Sakon o likwidazii nemezkwow semlewladenia*). Although Kolatschowka was not an estate at that time, a reason was found to put it in the category of estates. Thanks to a clause in the Emergency Law (see *Heimatbuch*, page 306), Kolatschowka was spared from liquidation by postponing the implementation of the law and amending it.



[Recruit group in Kolatschowka in October of 1932. The instruments used here, as in general for such occasions: *Harmoschka* [push-pull concertina, triangle and drum. In the middle Mayor Oskar Bohnet in his “official suit”, to his right Notary A. Drefs, to the left the Chief of the police station]

Before and during the First World War, Kolatschowka developed only slowly, but after the war, one stable house after another was built, and the rise of the village was obvious. At the beginning of the 1920s, the community was forced to survey new building sites.

Despite their own work in abundance, each family had to do compulsory service in the construction of municipal buildings under the direction of some experts, according to the municipal decree. In this way, the approximately 20 meters [65.6 ft] long, 12 meters [39.4 ft] wide and 4.5 meters [1.8 ft] high Prayer House, the sexton residence and the village town hall, a building with a schoolroom, summer kitchen and fuel stable for clerk and teacher, 5 herder and shepherd houses and 5 community wells were built. There was still a stable for breeding stallions and 6 to 7 breeding bulls. To this community property belonged another 21 hectares [51.9 a] of arable land, which was leased every year mostly among the community members. Until 1926, the village of Kolatschowka belonged to the Tarutino Parish. The long distance of 25 kilometers [15.5 mi] prompted Leipzig and the surrounding German communities, including the municipality of Kolatschowka, to found their own parish. The construction costs for the parsonage were apportioned according to the amount of land and the number of families of the communities, and accordingly compulsory service was also performed. With the exception of 4 Baptist families, all the inhabitants of Kolatschowka were of the Evangelical Lutheran confession.

The neighboring villages around Kolatschowka were: Kurudschika in the north, Mintschuna and the heritage of H. Bohnet in the east, the large parish village of Leipzig in the south. In the west,

Kolatschowka bordered on the Moldavian village of Abaklia, to which it belonged politically before and during the First World War. After the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania, the villages of Kolatschowka, Kurudschika and Peterstal formed a Comuna (administrative district with 7,500 hectares / 18,532.2 acres) and its seat in Kuruschika. The distance to the district town was 65 kilometers / 40.4 miles. The village of Kolatschowka was officially called **Colaceni** by the Romanians, but the name Kolatschowka remained popular until our resettlement in the German Reich. From the founding of the village until the Resettlement, the following acted 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 of office was probably the longest from 1918 to 1926, while that of the others rarely went beyond 3 to 4 years. The following acted as mayors during this time: J. Irion Sr., Chr. Göhring, Fr. Pahl, G. Birkholz, Oskar Bohnet and David Bölke. The following are to be mentioned as curators and church councilors: Im. Schill, H. Häuser, Aug. Klettke, G. Birkholz, J. Grams and J. Irion Jr. As synod members: Oskar Bohnet and Im. Schill.

As in many other communities, the Kolatschowka community was not spared from sensational events. The year 1918 brought a total crop failure, so that the cattle had to be brought to the grain fields to save them from starvation. The years 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926 and 1927 were characterized by weak harvests. This was followed by medium and good harvests until 1932, when hail destroyed a third of the entire harvest and completely destroyed the wine harvest. During a flood on 2 September, 1927, many low-lying villages in the Skinosa Valley suffered unimaginable damage, even people died in the two-meter-high [6.5 ft] floods. Thanks to the favorable location, Kolatschowka escaped with relatively minor damage. During the dry years, as far as can be remembered, foot-and-mouth disease occurred four or five times.

Until 1918, there was only one German teacher working in Kolatschowka. After the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania, the Romanian school authorities sent a second teacher, a Romanian, who took the Romanianization of the Germans very seriously. With only one classroom and about 120 students, they were forced to give lessons in the morning and the afternoon. The education of the inhabitants was that of the elementary school, only seven men attended secondary schools. Beyond the borders of their home community, Robert Kienzle and Quido Sauter were active as teachers and Ernst Sauter as a truck driver. As far as industry and commerce are concerned, it should be reported that a carpenter, two blacksmiths, a shoemaker, a saddle-maker, two tailors, a barrel-maker and a wheelwright were active in the village; there was also a roof tile factory, a windmill, a private dairy and a shop in Kolatschowka, as well as a community dairy and a co-operative store.

The excitement among the population after the Russian invasion of Bessarabia on 28 June, 1940 subsided only after the arrival of the German Resettlement Commission, after we were under German protection. Of course, the German population announced one hundred percent for the Resettlement. Feverishly, they now went to work. Transport lists were drawn up in triplicate, in German and Russian, and the estimation of the assets of the re-settlers 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 at the end of the village to depart. After a short speech by the authorities and acceptance of the last orders, we then went with our own horse-drawn wagons, with tears in our eyes, looking back at the lost homeland, with farewell pains in our hearts,

toward the Leipzig train station, where Soviet freight wagons with seats were waiting for us. The young men with a team and large luggage stayed behind and only came a month later to their families in the Resettlement Camp in Austria. After the elderly men, women and children in the border and harbor town of Reni were subjected to strict identity and customs controls, they sailed by ship on the Danube to the harbor city of Prachowa in Yugoslavia on 30 September, 1940. After a pleasant day's stay, the community of Kolatschowka steamed by train through Yugoslavia, via the border town of Graz, past Vienna, toward its provisional destination and reached the Camp intended for Kolatschowka, the Wolfsberg Castle near Krems on the Danube, in Austria, on 5 October, 1940. However, this Camp could only accommodate about three hundred people. The other three hundred people in the community found accommodation in the Altenburg Camp in Austria. In general, Camp life always leaves much to be desired, which was also the case here. The food was relatively good. The state of health was satisfactory until a scarlet epidemic broke out in July of 1941, from out of twenty illnesses, seven children between the ages of two and eleven died. Exactly after one year of Camp life, on 5 October, 1941, the community of Kolatschowka came to Litzmannstadt to settle.

On 30 November, 1941, the members of the community came to the Graudenz District, to their assigned smaller or larger farms, according to their Bessarabian [back then] wealth. One did well, the other less well, but there was satisfaction everywhere. But this satisfaction was not to last long. The war came closer and closer and on 23 January, 1945, we had to leave our new home again and the misery of Flight began. Today, scattered all over the world, there is no sign of life from some families, 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