

# Malojaroslawetz I (Wittenberg) History

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[Note: Comments in square brackets in the document are those of the translator.]

## Conversion equivalents:

Deßjatinen [1 dessjatin = 2.7 acres / 1.09 hectares  
Faden [1 faden = 7 feet / 2.1 meters]  
Pud [1 pud = 36 pounds / 16.38 kg]  
Tschetwert [1 tschetwert = 6 bushels / 2.1 hectoliters  
Tschetwerik [1 tschetwerik = 3 pecks / 26.24 liters  
Werst [1 werst = 0.67 mile / 1.06 kilometers]  
1 Ruble Banco (1850) = 20 cents  
1 Ruble Silver (1850) = 75 cents

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[Translation Begins]

## **Brief Historical Overview of the Establishment and Existence of Colony Malojaroslawetz I Published by Dr. of Medicine, A. Recker.**

This is the heading of an extremely valuable document for the first Malojaroslawetz Colony (popularly known as Wittenberg, really Württemberg, called Kirgish by the Bolgars and Russians), which was written in 1848 by the then sexton-teacher **Kurz** on request and according to a prescribed plan of the authorities. With the zeal of duty of the officials of that time, it can probably be assumed that a similar historical overview has emerged in every old colony. Whether they all survived the time of the cigarette paper shortage fortunately would not be too difficult to determine in each individual colony. Due to the fact that the colonists were pretty much all settled and treated according to one and the same pattern and on the basis of the facts

reproduced in this writing, the historical development of a German settlement torn away from the motherland and transplanted on foreign neglected soil not only has a strictly local significance, but it also has a great value for all other German settlements and therefore deserves to be rescued from oblivion. This document takes us only a short distance from the path that our fathers painstakingly took, but this short distance is all the more valuable to us because we are being transported to the very beginnings of our cultural work. But there is another purpose for the publication of this document: to encourage and ask one or the other in this or that colony not to shy away from some time and effort in order to record the most important events of his colony, or even to write a history of the colony, or where there already is a history, to continue by adding to it. Not only will his name be mentioned with respect by later generations, but he himself will also find pleasure in the awareness that he has done something for the general public. Those called to this work would be, in my opinion, our teachers, who could probably sacrifice an hour here and there for this purpose in their free summer months. But even some farmers will really find enough time in the long winter months to be able to put this or that event or perhaps their observations on paper, all the more so since the *Kalender* is made for such a thing.

The name of the colony: in the first two years of its existence, the colony was called Mariental, but probably only by the authorities (Welfare Committee), who called the new settlement so, just to give the child a name.

The names of the two cattle epidemics, *Uebergälle* and parched wind-driven soil (*Löserdürre*), which Kurz uses, are unknown to me.

In terms of monetary value, the colonists owned *Löwen*, Russian silver money and bank assignments (B.A. = paper money).

The spelling of the author is retained.

### ***Brief Historical Overview of the Establishment and Existence of Colony Malojaroslawetz I.***

A number of Germans, in the years 1796 to 1806, emigrated from their homeland of the Kingdom of Württemberg, mostly from the area of the Black Forest and Danube district, to the Kingdom of Poland, where they themselves were settled in the most charitable way by the Imperial Prussian government. Due to the revolutionary unrest in Poland, in 1810 and 1911 and the French campaign via Poland to Russia in 1812, they were forced to emigrate again from Poland, and under these circumstances received a friendly invitation from the Russian government to move into the country and to settle with privileges. In 1814, a commissioner, by the name of Krüger, came to Poland, who identified the Germans who were themselves under pressure, and gave them the necessary travel passports to emigrate to Russia.

So, in 1814, they moved in various units, from Poland to Russia, under the leadership of a Russian official.

Arriving in Russia, they were quartered, until their settlement, with the old inhabitants of Bessarabia, in various villages, where they were also supplied with the necessary food.

In 1815 and 1816, they founded the colony of Malojaroslawetz in the Kirgish valley, 100 *Werste* [67 mi / 106 km] from the provincial city of Kischinev, 110 *Werste* [73.7 mi / 116.6 km] from the district city of Akkerman and 85 *Werste* [57 mi / 90 km] from the city of Ismail. The size of the designated land is 8,138 *Deßjatinen* [21,972 a / 8,870 ha] 570 *Faden* [3,990 ft / 1,197 m], forms an undulating surface, has many saltpeter-containing springs, few stones, which are mostly made of shell limestone, and are mostly found on the western side of the colony, difficult and often with danger to life to break because they are resting on a 10 to 15 foot thick layer of earth. The fertile land consists of a layer of heavy, black and solid humus soil about 6 feet thick, strong with saltpeter in the valleys and mixed with white, yellow sand in the hills, but in some places with black sand, and is best suited for wine and grain agriculture, fruit and forest trees do not thrive because the heavy, hard soil resists rooting and does not provide them with the appropriate moisture, so that with the best care plum and apricot trees die and dry up after 12 to 15 years, pear and apple trees, also acacias and elm at the most after 20 years; also, the grass growth is poor, and therefore cattle breeding is less productive than elsewhere.

When the colony was founded, 16 families from Prussia joined the above mentioned people from Württemberg, so that there were 140 families. But there was not enough land available, so two families had to settle elsewhere, so that only 138 families remained in the colony. The Germans who came in were mostly people from Württemberg, which also gave rise to the colony name of Württemberg, and is now still the name of the village, in the mouth of the common people: only a few years after the settlement did the colony receive the name Malojaroslawetz at the instruction of the authorities, probably in memory of the victory at Malo-Jaroslawetz won by the Russians in 1812 over the French.

Before the founding of the colony, two Bulgarians, Slatkov and Mongowsky, occupied the steppe as tenants. The immigrants did not find houses or anything else that could have served them to stay; there was also no trace of woodland, gardens and vineyards.

To build their places to live in, the colonists received from the High Crown the necessary building materials, then brushwood to entwine the houses and 25 *Leven* (about 5 rubles of silver) construction money; for their farming equipment—wagons, agricultural implements, the necessary draught animals and some furniture for home furnishings; for sowing—4 *Tschetwerik* [24 bu / 8.4 he] of wheat and 4 *Tschetwerik* [24 bu / 8.4 he] of potatoes, also from the settlement until their first harvest each soul received a daily *Pud* [36 pounds / 16.38 kg] of flour and some hulled and crush grain (*Grütze*). For this support, each of these families owed the High Crown 1,114 rubles B.A. or 318 rubles 28½ kopecks of silver, which amount they had to pay back to the High Crown in 1833, interest (*Procente*) free. According to presumed estimates, the settler's own assets brought here amounted to 20-100, for a few 100-200, but some 200-1,000 rubles of silver.

Immediately in 1815, a farm house was put up for the school and for worship, and in 1817 the regional office of the Malojaroslawetz region was established and the area administrative office was built in the colony. In 1816, 1817 and 1818, the grain did well, and the price of cattle was

very high. A good cow was worth 16-20 rubles of silver. In 1819, the first special schoolhouse was built, and also to be used for holding the worship service; also this year, in the month of November, there was a great earthquake. In the years 1819, 1820, 1821 and 1822, the harvests were average, in addition to the fact that in the last year a significant hailstorm ruined the harvest for 40 farms. The price of cattle was very low because a cow was worth only 3.5 to 4 silver rubles. Because the municipality could not make full use of its land bordering the colony of Tarutino due to the great distance; thus, in 1923, with the permission of the authorities, half of the community consisting of 69 families separated from the other half, and established for themselves a new colony on the other half of the land consisting in 4,069 *Deßjatinen* [10,986 a / 4,435.2 ha] 285 *Faden* [1,995 ft / 598.5 m] in the so-called Post Valley, which got the name Colony Malojaroslawetz II [Alt-Posttal].

In the years 1823, 1824 and 1825, the grain harvest was very poor because grasshoppers destroyed the seeded fields. In 1826, there was a cattle epidemic (anthrax) in the colony, as a result of which the people suffered great losses. In this and the following year, the harvest was average. In the month of May, 1828, a whole corps of Russian military marched through the colony on their way to Turkey, larger and smaller troop divisions followed, and in the winter of 1828 to 1829, Russian military kept its ground and winter quarters in this area; also, in the month of November of this year, there was a strong earthquake. After the peace agreement with Turkey, the Russian military, on its return journey, again passed through our colony, and since the local inhabitants received no compensation for the supply of the military and no *Progon* money for the advance credits was made, this campaign was not only annoying for them, but also associated with many losses, in addition, in 1829, in this colony, the cattle death (*Viehsenche*) called *Uebergälle* through which several farmers lost all their cattle, and the rest kept only a few. In 1828, 1829, 1830 and 1831, the grain harvest was good. In the year 1831, cholera also reigned, but only a few individuals died. In the years 1832 and 1833, a new prayer house was built and the old schoolhouse was repaired: also, in these two years, the harvest was bad due to a lack of rain, and cattle and grain prices were high, so that a cow was worth 14 to 15 silver rubles and a *Tschetwert* of wheat 6 to 9 silver rubles. In 1834, the regional administrative office was moved from here to Colony Malojaroslawetz II. At the beginning of August, 1835, large hail fell so that three days after the hailstorm a single hailstone still weighed 1½ pounds; but because the crops were already gathered, this hailstorm only caused great damage to the vineyards and tree gardens. In this and the following year, the grain harvest was average; also, in 1836, the 20 free years of the colonists had expired and now the settlers were required to pay the same taxes as the crown farmers of this province. In 1837, the harvest was good; in 1838, however, average again. On the 11th of January, 1838, in the evening at 9 o'clock, there was a great earthquake and lasted 10 minutes. In 1830, the grain storage was built and in this and the following years, 1840 and 1841, the harvest was poor due to a lack of rain. There was a harsh winter in 1840-1841. On the 10th of November, 1840, the first snow fell, several days in a row snow flurry alternated with cheerful weather throughout the winter, the snow reached a height of ½ *Faden* over the open, flat steppe, and since it remained laying there until the end of March, 1841, there was a great lack of fodder, so that a bundle of hay (*Klafter Hen*) came to 20 to 30 silver rubles. In 1841 and 1843, the harvest was average. In the month of June, 1842, great cloudbursts occurred, causing four major floods, which washed away a lot of hay, damaged crops and devastated the gardens in the valley; but the harvest turned out pretty good. Since the old schoolhouse was extremely damp in the valley because of its low location, which was unhealthy for teachers and learners, and also

exposed to flooding; so it was demolished and in the same year a new one was built on a higher place.

In the summer of 1845, the parched soil raged among the cattle of the local colony, where a lot of cattle died. In this and the following year of 1847, the harvest was also poor. In the month of June, 1847, grasshoppers damaged a large portion of the grain; and the harvest was pretty bad. In this year, the administrative building of the mayoral office was also built, but not completed until the following year of 1848. In 1845, 1846 and 1847, the price of cattle was very low, a cow was 7 to 8 silver rubles, and the price of grain was pretty much the same from 1838 to 1847; a *Tschetwert* of wheat stood at 5 to 6 silver rubles. In the winter of 1847-1848, there was a completely unknown disease among the horses, in which all the means used were fruitless, a horse rarely recovered from it and many farmers lost their entire team. Also, this winter had a lot of snow and cold temperatures of 15 to 20°, which lasted for a few weeks. With anxious anticipation, the inhabitants of the local colony enter 1848, with grasshopper hatching beginning in many places in Bessarabia.

May the Almighty also prevent this plague on the land for the healing of his people!

### **Review. Current Condition of the Colony. Conclusion.**

In 1848, Colony Malojaroslawetz I experienced 33 years of its existence, which can be called a time for the inhabitants of the same to experience development and training on behalf of this country. When they came to the country, they knew neither the customs, laws, nor the language of the people and were often deceived and robbed. Ignorant of the nature of the soil and climate, they worked the field, wine and horticulture, as in their homeland, and first had to learn through gradual success that they had to work the land here in a completely different way in order to reach their objectives. Especially in viticulture. Right in the first years, some farmers planted vineyards; but because they pruned the vines too short, the same bore no fruit. Discouraged by this, most became indifferent and blamed the soil and climate until such a time that they understood it better; and only from 1840 on there were usually very good wine harvests, whereby some farmers were helped out of their trouble, and thus encouraged, whereupon a person also eagerly proceeded to the planting of new vineyards. It was a great good fortune for the colony that due to the half-separation of the colony for a new formation, in 1823, a half-lot was added between two houses and thus the construction sites were expanded, also the fields were distributed more appropriately by a new division.

To the detriment of the settlers was particularly the extremely cheapness of the grain from 1817 to 1821, in that a *Tschetwert* of wheat was only 1 1/5 to 2 1/2 silver rubles, and lasting from 1819 to 1825 the cheapness of the cattle, where a cow was worth only 3 to 4 silver rubles. Due to these drawbacks and the inappropriate management of farming, they fell into poverty, which prevented them from building the public buildings according to the orderly and spacious enough manner required. Because of difficult work and others reasons, also out of laziness and indifference, the children were not properly sent to school, whereby the up-coming generation was poorly taught. If, in such circumstances, the authorities had not adopted rules of law for the maintenance of good morals and order, and if the community itself had not had several up-right

fellow citizens in its midst, who themselves would have led by good examples; so apparently morality and viciousness would have gained the upper hand.

Taught by experience, a person finally learned to use better farming practices, and although the prosperity was greatly disturbed by the many losses, by crop failures, cattle epidemics and the like, it gradually increased, and the current state of the colony shows what improvements, industrial activity and appropriate establishment of the economy can do.

In particular, this community owes its prosperity, first of all to God and to the noble provision of the powers that be, to the healthy location of the village, where since the settlement fewer diseases and death tolls than endangered other disadvantaged colonies of family-good fortune; the sheep breeding and the diligence of the female gender, which in the winter time provided from wool, flax and hemp, the domestic needs of underclothing and clothing by themselves spinning, weaving and sewing, and thus not only save a large outlay of money, but also sometimes, when necessary, money can be obtained; the grape vines, which has been plentiful since appropriate processing, and helps the beleaguered farmer out of necessity through the proceeds from the wine.

Admittedly, the colony is not yet in the state in which the authorities, as well as the colonists themselves, would like to see it; however, even the outward sight shows to those who see the colony again after ten years of absence that it has been significantly improved. Due to the wide valley, which separates the two rows of the houses from each other and contains many barren saltpeter sites, the colony has an unfriendly appearance; it is also in its design, due to the lack of stones like some other colonies; however, the houses are usually in good condition, the courtyards are surrounded by walls, and in front of and behind the houses there are orchards. In the valley, between the two rows of houses in which the Kirgish has its river bed, vegetable gardens have been created in recent years, and on the western side of the lower village, adjacent to the orchards behind the houses, the new forest site is made on the hill slope, consisting of acacias, elm and cherry trees. Along the colony, on the right bank of the Kirgish, the country road runs from the provincial town of Kischinev to the town of Ismail, and as a cross road cutting through the village is the postal route from the town of Bender to the town of Reni.

The fact that the teaching of the youth has been pleasingly advanced and is still progressing is proven by the improvement of church singing and that every child, male as well as a female, not only able to read at its confirmation, but is also able to give an account of the main doctrines of faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; also in writing, head and numeral arithmetic, the children learn what is necessary, as much as occurs in the common life.

According to the school official statement of 01 January, 1848, the community consists of 77 families and has 386 male and 382 female for a total of 768 souls. Under vineyard and garden land there are 175 *Deßjatinen* [472.5 a / 190.75 ha], under arable fields 1,116 [3,013.2 a / 1,216.4 ha], under hay fields 1,116, and under cattle pasture 1,662 [4,487.4 a / 1,677 ha]. In the municipality there are 259 horses, 856 head of cattle and 2,294 sheep. Produce sown: winter grains—180 *Tschetwert* [1,080 bu / 378 he] 4 *Tschetwerik* [12 pk / 104,96 lit ], summer grains—697 *Tschetwert* [418.2 bu / 1,463.7 he] 5 *Tschetwerik* [15 pk / 131.3 lit], potatoes—20 *Tschetwert* [120 bu / 42 he], for a total of 898 *Tschetwert* [5,388 bu / 1,885.8 he] 2 *Tschetwerik*

[6 pk / 52,5 lit]. As for the municipality, there remains the crown debt of 15,160 rubles 7¼ kopecks silver, toward which it has to pay 493 rubles 35 kopecks silver in 1848. In 1848, the municipality also has to pay the following taxes: for the maintenance of the colonial administration—58 rubles 17 kopecks, for the maintenance of the land police—18 rubles 63 kopecks, for land and postal fees—56 rubles 58 kopecks, basic interest—661 rubles 2 kopecks, municipal taxes—1,069 rubles 79 kopecks, for a total of 1.864 rubles 19 kopecks silver. 156 *Tschetwert* [936 bu / 327.6 he] 3 *Tschetwerik* [18 pk / 78.7 he] of auxiliary stockpiles of grain are available.

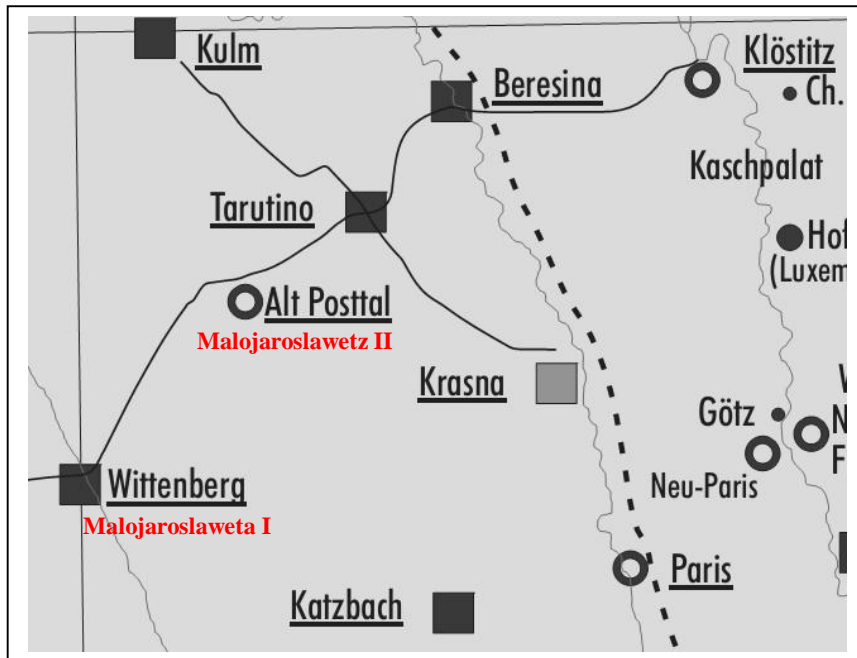
And so we conclude with the most fervent wish that God the Most High will act with his grace over our national authority, as well as over this municipality, as from up to now and into the future, and bless all the efforts of the same abundantly!

Writer: Johann Georg Kurz  
Sexton and Church School Teacher

As to the truth of the above article, the office of the mayor certifies with its signature: Colony Malojaroslawetz I, 27 April, 1848.

Mayor: Necker  
1<sup>st</sup> Assistant: Glaß  
2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant: Schmied  
Secretary/Clerk: Widmer.

[Translation Ends]



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