

Krasna in Bessarabia, Today Known as Krasne

By Otto Riehl. *Historischer Forschungsverein der Deutschen aus Russland*, March 2016.

Translation and editing from German to English by Alex and Dr. Nancy Herzog, Boulder, Colorado.

The Krasna village described herein lies 120 kilometers (as the crow flies) [ca. 72 miles] in a west-south-westerly direction from Odessa, situated on the small river Kunduk (Kogilnik), from where it is a mere 70 kilometers [just over 40 miles] to the Black Sea.

The village was founded in 1814 by colonists from the Duchy of Warsaw. However, many of the settler families had originally emigrated from the Saar region, the South Palatinate, and Lower Alsace.

The original [settler] ancestor of my line of the Riehl name settled in Wilhelmsdorf in 1804, 50 kilometers [30 miles] northwest of Warsaw. This ancestor had emigrated from Kröttweiler (Croettwiller), his wife from Schleithal, both from the Weißenburg (Wissembourg) area in Lower Alsace.

The years prior to 1814 were anything but favorable for the people in the Warsaw Duchy.

The area around it in 1807 became part of the Duchy of Warsaw, a satellite state of Napoleon. It would exist until 1815. Power was wielded by the French Ambassador, not by the King of Prussia. Large estate owners again received a great deal of power.

Between 1812 and 1813, Napoleon and his “Grand Army” marched across the area to Russia and back again. The policy of supplying the army through requisitions eventually brought complete ruin to the region. Poverty and poor conditions caused many to heed the call of Alexander I (November 1813) to move to Bessarabia.

By order of the Tsar, the village in 1818 was given the name Krasna, the origin of the name coming from the “Battle of Krasnoye” (near Smolensk), where Napoleon had suffered heavy losses in 1812.

118 Ancestors are my Connection to Krasna

In 1843, my maternal Schreiber line ancestor moved to Krasna from Landau in the Beresan. In 1903, my great-grandmother (Schweizer) from Straßburg in the Kutschurgan, married into a Krasna family.

Community Life

Krasna was the oldest Catholic rural community of Bessarabia with its own parish. Until 1848 it was part of the Kamenez-Podolsk Diocese, then part of the Tiraspol Diocese, and between 1921 and 1940 part of the Iasi Diocese. By 1940 there were 446 farmsteads, 380 farm owners, 58 craftsmen, and three teachers in Krasna. By the same year, 7,532 hectares [just over 20,000 acres] of land plus 1,980 hectares [over 5,300 acres] of leased land were being farmed. Because the families all had many children, arable land was usually in short supply. This situation again and again caused residents to move away as follows:

1876: 30 families to the neighboring Dobrudzha area;

1886: 25 families founded the daughter colony Emmanuel (Bender County);

1897: several families moved to the Caucasus;

1909 – 1914: 567 persons to the US and Canada;

1925: 25 families to Brazil;
 1929: several families to Brazil and Canada.

Resettlement

Within three weeks during early September 1940, some 2,852 Krasna residents plus children under 14 left their home village. These Krasnaers were familiar with the fate of their compatriots on the other side of the Dniester who in 1917 came and remained part of the Soviet Union. That awareness proved to be the most significant reason for nearly unanimous agreement to leave. [By an agreement with Germany the Soviet Union would soon take over Bessarabia. – Tr.] As far as is known, between April and August of 1941, most former Krasna farming families were resettled in the area of Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) in Poland (Kuyavia-Pomerania), all on properties that had just been confiscated from Polish farmers.

Flight to the West

During the night of January 21/22, the resettled Bessarabians received an order to evacuate. More accurately, it was permission to flee Poland.

New Beginning

Many Krasnaers came to live in Schleswig/Holstein and Lower Saxony, and some emigrated to the US, Canada, or South America.

From about 1950 on, the overwhelming majority of surviving Krasnaers settled in Rhineland/Palatinate. They had followed a recommendation by the future Auxiliary Bishop Walther Kempe, who between 1935 and 1940 had been the pastor of Emmental, a Krasna daughter colony. Krasna togetherness, developed over 125 years, proved to have been maintained.

Friendship

In 1990, my father visited Krasna for the first time after the resettlement. Since then, he has been there seventeen times. I accompanied him twice. Many former Krasnaers maintain good contacts with today's population of Krasna. But no one wishes to turn back history.

The largest part of the former German settlement area is now part of Moldova, and the eastern part, including today's Krasna, is part of Ukraine.

Otto Riehl, Kirchlinteln

Translator's Personal Note: my maternal grandfather, Johannes Steiert, once lived in Krasna, Bessarabia before moving to the Kutschurgan. Valentin Herzog, my father, was born in "the other" Krasna in the Beresan district. A.H.

[Captions and Quote:]

Text page, photo with caption: *The (neo-Romantic) Catholic St. Joseph's Church, dedicated in 1874.*

Photo: from the archive of the Bessarabiendeustcher Verein. Above, a stamp from the Republic of Moldova, "200-Year Anniversary of German Settlement in Bessarabia," 2014.



Well-preserved farmer's home of Bessarabian Germans in Krasna, today, Krasne near Tarutino (Tarutyne) in Ukraine.

*"God, protect our homeland in joy and in suffering,
preserve the fruitfulness of the fields
that reach to the Black Sea shore."*

Excerpt from the "Bessarabian Homeland Hymn",
Created 1922 by Albert Mauch (1867 – 1960)

Notable March Events:

3/1/1766	250 years ago: Heinrich Friedrich von Storch, German-Russian economist, is born in Riga.
3/7/1991	25 years ago: The law banning [deported] German Russians to return to their original homes in the Soviet Union is officially rescinded.
3/17/2001	15 years ago: Boris V. Rauschenbach, space explorer and art critic, dies in Moscow.
3/21/1836	180 years ago: The first Russian railroad line from St. Petersburg to Zarskoye Selo via Pavlovsk, is built by the Austrian Franz von Gerstner. It opened on October 30, 1837.
3/23/1991	25 years ago: Waldemar Ekkert, Volga German literary specialist, dies in Krasnoyarsk.
3/25/1941	75 years ago: The resettlement of around 60,000 ethnic Germans from the Soviet-controlled Baltic region is officially completed.

3/26/1906	<i>110 years ago: Gertrud Braun, co-founder of the Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland and editor of "Volk auf dem Weg," is born in Eupatoria, Crimea.</i>
3/28/1566	<i>450 years ago: Siegmund von Herberstein, the Emperor's diplomat, an author and writer of the first great report on travel in Russia, dies in Vienna.</i>

Our appreciation is extended to Alex Herzog for the translation of this article and Otto Riehl for permission to share this article on our website.