

Jekaterinodar Parish

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[Translator's Note: Pastor Joh. Kludt's wife reflecting on the work of her husband in Jekaterinodar, an Evangelical (Lutheran) village in the North Caucasus, also known by the German name of Gnadau, in the Kuban River District, established in 1871, and some activities of the Ladies' Society of the parish.]

[Begin Translation]

The Jekaterinodar Parish

The Jekaterinodar Parish (*Kirchspiel*) consisted of the municipal congregation which, before the war, was made up of about 300-400 members from all ranks and some 20 rural communities, which were scattered throughout the Kuban District in groups of 3 to 4 colonies and were served by the pastor 3-4 times a year. In order to fulfill his obligation, the pastor had to be traveling intermittently nearly the whole year. However, during the era of the czars, he was able to make use of the railway that reached out in three directions from Jekaterinodar with trains running three times a day. Our work routine was that my husband left the house in the afternoon to arrive in a colony around coffee time and that same evening would conduct an evening worship service. The next morning he would conduct a worship service with holy communion. In the afternoon, he would visit the sick and then traveled on to the next colony. Once he finished serving a group of colonies, he returned home and then the work started for him. He would make his entries into the big book because, in Russia, the pastor was an official responsible to the State for accurate information. I was able to help him a lot with this work. He dictated and I wrote. Serving as the relief officer and in the registry office of the town, he had to turn to me for my assistance if he was to have any time left to prepare for his journeys. Because the Kuban District was the breadbasket of Russia, if there was a crop failure in the east of Russia, many Volga Germans came into this district in search of work and wages which they were able to find mostly through the town office. Women and young girls looked mostly to me because I had a written list of families who fancied Germans as washer-women, nannies or cooks, because they firmly believed in the honesty of the Germans. The parish was still in its early stages. Only in the 70s of the last century were Germans drawn into the Kuban District where they settled on some land which was purchased and some which was leased. At the end of the 1870s, two brothers [of the faith], by the names of Schück and Gärtner, came to Jekaterinodar from Baden as professionals and preachers' sons. They introduced the berry culture into this area and planted the first large nursery. Once that had somewhat settled in, and their business was in motion, one of the brothers got himself a wife from Württemberg and now all three got busy in earnest, and along with two other similarly minded men of the community, grammar school master Brock and pharmacist Schilling, they began to work toward establishing a unified parish for the Germans. The gentlemen of the church council turned to the Benevolent Fund of the Evangelical [Lutheran] Congregations of Russia and to the Gustav Adolf Society in Germany. The women

of the community began to work together and sold their finished products at various evening and other occasion events. The country parishes (*landgemeinden*) pooled their contributions and so it was possible, in 1895, to put up a proper structure which contained all in one building: a prayer hall (*Betsaal*) on the top floor serving as a large school hall to convene confirmation instructions and a place for public seating; a room for the teacher and a library on the first floor and the pastor's office was added on to the back of the building. Up to this time, all gatherings were held at the Schück house and Mrs. Schück was kept busy with her duties of hospitality and other activities. The first pastor who was appointed was Pastor Asmuss. He was an efficient organizer and, in the 12 years of his holding office there, was able to get all congregations to have their own prayer chapels which all also served as schools, some congregations even acquired an organ (*Orgel*), another a parlor organ (*Harmonium*), and every congregation had their own teacher, who was usually entrusted with the task of conducting the reading worship service (*Lesegottesdienst*) for the pastor. Mrs. Asmuss (*Frau Pastor Asmuss*), providing much assistance to the work of her husband, soon discovered that the schools in the communities were in need of support and needed greater resources so that all children, even the poorest, would be able to attend. To be sure, there were opportunities for young girls looking for work who could assist in the homes of elderly handicapped women until such time that they could help themselves again. So she founded a Ladies' Society, which, during my husband's time in office, numbered 20 members and had collected some 1,000 rubles for a home for those with incurable ailments (*Siechenheim*). The number of women increased to 35 in our time. They came to the school hall every Thursday to work together. The person working at the school put on the tea kettle, one of the women brought some simple pastries and then the chairman asked whether there was anyone in the community who was sick and was in need of being visited, or if there was a child in the congregation, and this did not happen too often, that was in need of being taken in and raised. When such concerns did not arise, then a good book was read aloud. The committee of this society was made up of 4-5 women, met several times during the year, trying to determine how best to keep the community together and how it might be able to come up with the things needed for the up-keep of the school and the establishing of a home for those with incurable ailments. In the beginning, smaller, so-called Tea Evenings, were organized in the school room, to which only the members of the community came. These usually took place on Saturday evening. The school benches were removed and replaced with the church chairs. The young girls decorated large tables with flowers and beautiful arrangements. Tea was brought and served with donated rolls, doughnuts and cakes. The Lutheran (*evangelische*) Church choir sang Mendelssohn quartets. At best, there might be songs with piano accompaniment or someone singing a solo, or something played on a violin, cello, or harp. Someone gave a recitation, or some read a short essay of interest to everyone. These evenings were very popular and brought the members of the community closer together. Three or four times a year we would organize a much bigger evening where we rented a large hall with a stage. An evening like this took a lot of effort because some difficult pieces had to be practiced. First of all, in regards to the musical events, but also for the much anticipated small comedy which was performed at the end of the evening. A buffet would be served between the two events. Such evenings were always a lot of fun for both the players and for the audience. We not only invited the German community to these evening, but also the intellectuals among the Russians and others, who were very anxious to be part of the evening—"because they always had such a good time with us." Such evenings often brought in hundreds of rubles for the fund for the home for those with incurable ailments through the sale of the baked goods and cold cuts donated by the

members. The owner of a confectioner's shop, who herself was Polish and Catholic, always saw to it that she would donate an enormous flat cake for each event. Not only did she make a contribution to the church on behalf of her deceased husband, who had belonged to the congregation, but our elderly people were allowed to pick up a basket full of bread at her place each week. She did this all as a matter of course in memory of her husband whom death had snatched away from her so early on. (Taken from portrayals of various members of the Ladies' Society)

As reported by the wife of Pastor Joh. Kludt, Korntal

30 August, 1939

[End Translation]

[Source of Map: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kuban_River.png]

