

Neu-Posttal – Founded 1864

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

[Translation Begins]

In Memory of Neu-Posttal, Founded in 1864

Otto Hettig

I do not want to write a chronicle, but merely provide a brief overview of the origin and development of our home community Neu-Posttal and report on the life, work, and accomplishments of our ancestors.

The colonist had to anticipate every danger if he did not want to perish. In addition to many other calamities he had to overcome, the shortage of land in the Mother Communities soon became noticeable. Immediate measures had to be taken to address this. So, in 1863-1864, brave men from the colonies of Katzbach, Kulm, Dennewitz, Teplitz, Brienne, Alt-Posttal, and Neu-Arzis leased an estate, near the district town of Akkerman, of 3,217 *desjatina* (approximately 3,535 hectares [8,686 acres]) from the Russian Princess Kotschubei, which was in 1882 transferred into ownership for the thrifty settlers by the colonizer Gottfried Schulz for 89 rubles per *desjatina*.

As early as 1864, the foundation stone for the community of Neu-Posttal could be laid in the valley so dear to us. The new “colony” was surrounded by the following villages: to the north and south were the Russian villages Demidovka and Kebabtschea; to the east and west, the German “colonies” Pawlowka (Pauleni) and Benkendorf.

Through this valley ran an old Russian postal road from Akkerman, our district town, to Ismael, a port city in the left Danube area. Where the church steeple had stood out since 1905, there used to be an old Russian Post House, from which the village received its name, called *Starja Potschta*, Old Post, by the Russians. The new settlement was laid out in two rows with 45 homesteads; right through the village ran the beautiful, wide valley spanned by two

embankments. After abundant rains and a substantial snowmelt, water accumulated here into two sizable ponds. Summer and winter, the pulse of village life and activity beat here: everyone fled here from the scorching sun into the refreshing waters of the ponds; flocks of snow white geese majestically made their way from one bank to the other; wild flocks of ducks chattered to each other like market women sharing village gossip; concerned mares neighed for their foals playing outdoors; powerful stallions thundered ear-shattering calls at their rivals and demonstrated their strength, stamping, pawing, and rearing, before the shy mares; high pitched cries of children reached the ears of their anxious mothers, diligent boys and busy farmhands lovingly washed the steppe dust from the bodies of the horses, their faithful companions in work on the fields and farmyards. Even the harshest winter could not bring life to a standstill here. The youth gave themselves to the pleasures of winter with an enthusiasm for life. Just as the elderly sought refuge by the stove, thoughtful and withdrawn, from the hardships of winter, the youth stormed out of the limitations of the living rooms into the steppe wind, fearless and full of energy.

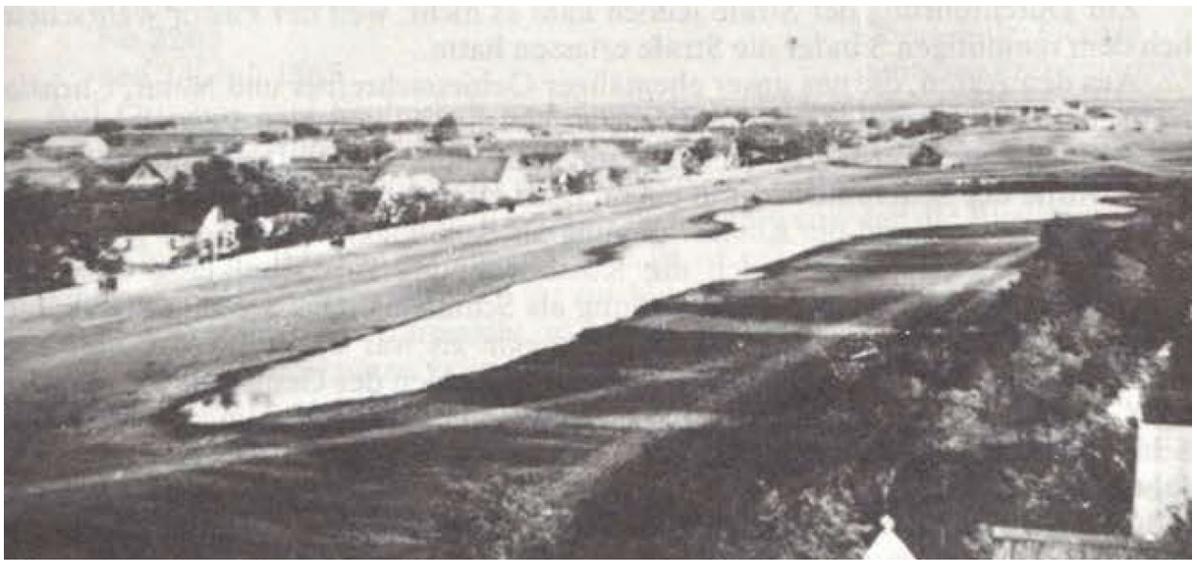
However, the people of Posttal will fare no differently than I did: At the catch-word “valley and ponds,” my Neu-Posttal suddenly appeared before me, I saw it, I heard it, it called out to me and touched me deeply to the very bottom of my heart; the never-failing and bubbling life seized me; but the graves also rose before me, in which those rest who shaped a better future for us through tireless work, and whose resting places can no longer be tended and cared for by us.

Our charming home village stretched out on both sides of the lovely valley, farmhouse after farmhouse, each more stately than the other, like glistening pearls on a string. In a noble contest, the housewives and daughters competed for the sunniest home, the cleanest rooms, the fullest cupboards and chests, the tastiest baked goods and the most delicious dishes on the table, the richest supplies in the cellar, the most beautiful flowers in the garden and on the windowsill, the prettiest little garments that they made with their own hands for their children on the sewing machine.

Meanwhile, the fathers, together with their sons, diligently, carefully, and lovingly managed the farmyard and fields. The tall straw stacks had to stand like an architectural masterpiece. Magnificent horses, cows, fattening pigs and breeding boars, fine sheep and lambs, poultry, full cellars, bursting corn cribs, fragrant and sparkling wines in barrels, well-tended fields, nurtured vineyards and orchards, ready-to-use equipment, capable farmhands and maids: this was the pride of the determined person from Neu-Posttal.

Despite all his wealth, however, he did not forget his church, which can be seen on the cover of calendars (*Kalender*) from 1950 to 1963. The steeple had to rise above everything; in keeping with its significance, the welcoming church stood in the middle of the village; the clear bells reached every house and invited people to the worship service, which was always well attended.

The sound of the ringing often served the lone traveler surprised by the merciless snowstorm or the person on a horse wandering hopelessly over the banks of snow, showing them the way to safe shelter in the endless wasteland.



Neu-Posttal: Lower Village – East Side with Pond

In the center of the village stood the founded in 1923 *Cooprativ*, the Cooperative Association, with a colonial grocery store, dairy, people's bank, lumber yard, and grain storage building. Its spaces also housed the municipal library, the archive of the Herd Book Association, and the Horse Syndicate. Not far from the church stood the "German House," the home of the Youth Association "*Frohsinn*." It was built in 1937-1938 with municipal funds, through voluntary services, and in a cooperative effort. A romantic sight was offered by the three little houses on the village street with its draw wells (*Schöpfbrunnen*), which provided drinking water for people and livestock.

Neu-Posttal was also a Parish Community with the seat of the pastoral office. From here, the Main Communities taken care of were: Sofiental, Benkendorf, Mannsburg, Pawlowka, and Basyrjamka; in addition, there were the Subsidiary Communities: Sangerowka, Katlebug, Kamtschatka, Neufall, Schabo-Possad, Popasdru, Schabolat, and Straßburg. The Main Communities received pastoral services every 4th and 5th Sunday, while the Subsidiary Communities were ministered to by the pastor only twice a year. On the remaining Sundays, the communities were cared for by the parish assistants, the "sextons." The sextons were primarily responsible for the reading worship services (*Lesegottesdienst*), baptisms, and funerals. Weddings, confirmations, and the distribution of Holy Communion were carried out by the pastor. In the spring of each year, the confirmands from the entire parish would come to Neu-Posttal for a two-week confirmation class and were confirmed by the pastor upon completion. After confirmation, they were required to attend Children's Instruction (*Kinderlehre*) until the age of 18. Our ancestors took attending Children's Instruction very seriously. The ecclesiastical authority could involve the secular authorities to maintain order and discipline. This was often done. Here is an example from the year 1872. At that time, the parish office was still in Benkendorf.

“To the village administration in Posttal.

The local W.M., obligated to attend Children’s Instruction, to whom I communicated, at his request to be released from the obligatory Children’s Instruction, that he could be released the next time I come to Posttal, allowed himself, in my presence in the Prayer Hall, the cheeky remark that he would no longer attend the Children’s Instruction. As a result, I request the village administration of Posttal to bring the mentioned W.M. to appropriate punishment for such outrageous impertinence.

Posttal, 12 March, 1872

G. Schomburg, Pastor.

However, the punishment was not carried out because the pastor had probably pardoned the penitent sinner.

From the files that our former local clerk and notary, Christian Neth, saved for us during the Resettlement, it is evident that New Posttal placed great importance on education and schooling from the very beginning of its settlement. As early as 1864, schooling began in a house built for that purpose. In 1866, the Prayer Hall and the sexton’s residence were used as a classroom. Later, after the residence of the sexton was also converted into a classroom, this building served the community as a schoolhouse until the Resettlement. However, the schoolhouse still did not meet its requirements. Therefore, a new schoolhouse was planned for 1913. However, a water supply seemed more important to the community, so the artesian well was drilled first, and the construction of a schoolhouse was postponed to the following year. This, however, did not happen in the following year or the years after, because in 1914 the First World War broke out. It stayed like that until the Resettlement. Between 1875 and 1940, however, there was no significant population growth; the number of inhabitants fluctuated between 390 and 410. The number of families probably increased, but the birth rate remained low: while the first settlers had up to ten children, the average number of children in the last years was only four or even fewer. The people of Neu-Posttal focused more on quality. They placed great value on good education. Therefore the quite remarkable number of teachers, academics, along with many others who attended higher schools. From Neu-Posttal came: 43 teachers, 15 academics, including 1 pastor, doctors, veterinarians, engineers, and agricultural graduates, 23 high school graduates, and about 160 people with higher education. This allowed Posttal to truly stand out among the other communities.

Neu-Posttal was also a center of administration and economy. During the Russian period, such an administrative district was called a “*Wolostnoje Prawlenie*” (the German name: “*Gebietsamt* = District Office”), and the Romanians renamed it “*Comuna*.” The head of the administrative authority was called Senior Mayor (*Oberschulz*) and, during the Romanian period, *Primar*. The Senior Mayor also headed a Judicial Panel (*Richtergremiums*), whose secretary was the District Clerk (*Gebietsschreiber*). The lay judges were elected by the community. The Senior Mayor was elected by all eligible voters of the *Wolost*. To the honor of the people of Neu-Posttal, it is worth noting that for this responsible honorary position, throughout all the years—with a single exception—only citizens from Neu-Posttal were elected. Under the administration of these capable village mayors, the village experienced a noticeable political, economic, and cultural

upswing. That the office of the mayor simultaneously also held judicial powers is evident from the regulations of the Malojarolawez II municipal office to the Posttal mayor's office from the year 1865. They order the election of a new court assessor. It reads:

“To the Posttal Mayor's Office.

After reviewing the electoral list submitted by the report of the local mayor's office dated the 10th of this month under No. 20 and an extract from the same, according to which the municipality elected by majority vote the local settler Lorenz Härtter to the position previously held by the former court assessor Johann Jörke, who had served his legal term to the satisfaction of the authorities, and after assurance from the mayor's office that Härtter possesses the necessary knowledge and qualities for this service, the district office confirms him in the office of a mayoral court assessor.

2. Malojaroslawez
No. 2263
24 July, 1865

Senior Mayor: Göckle
Official Assessor Ensslen”

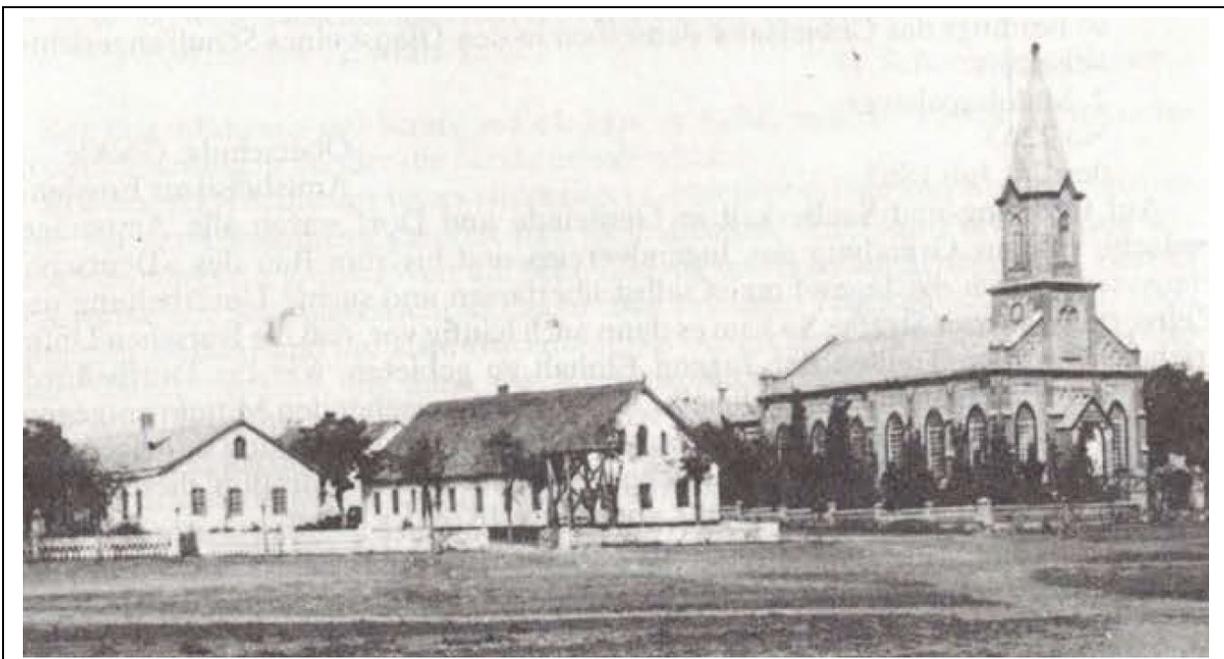
All officials were concerned with order and cleanliness in the community and village. Until the establishment of the Youth Association and the construction of the “German House” (*Deutschen Hauses*), the youth were mostly left to their own devices and sought entertainment and pastimes in the streets. As a result, it often happened that the fellows got into mischief. To curb the behavior of the youngsters, the village authorities were forced to confront the trouble-makers with all the means at their disposal. If a fine did not work, they were thoroughly flogged, supposedly at their own written request. To illustrate this case, the following “Community Decree” from the year 1878 serves as an example. It reads:

“10 October, 1878. We, the undersigned people of Posttal, idle boys and hired hands, give this signature to confirm that if, from today onwards, we cause trouble on the street or start a fight again, we ask to receive 15 lashes each time for such acts, with which we will then be completely satisfied and will not bring any complaint anywhere, since we are requesting such punishment for our improvement, which we sign by our own hand.”

Below that, there were then 29 signatures.

Our older people from Posttal will surely be able to vividly imagine the shrewd village clerk, who had to maneuver like a tightrope walker, carefully and securing himself on all sides, through the many conflicts between the different village groups and between the community and state authorities, so as not to fall himself. How amazed must the Senior Mayor have been at this accomplished work of diplomatic skill? And who could not picture the outdone and dumbfounded “ravenous wolves” in the guise of a humble little sheep at the solemn signing of their surrender? How impressive must the authority of the village leaders have been if even the “lords of the street” bowed before them in humility?

Posttal was and remained a farming community until the Resettlement. Our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were fortunate to belong to the generation that had largely grown up on the steppe of their new homeland and could put the experiences their fathers into practice. They accepted things and circumstances as they came and proved themselves capable of handling the new situation at all times. Before the 1880s, hay was still mown with scythes, and the threshed grain was tossed in the wind. This is how the grain was separated from the chaff. There were no cleaning mills at that time. It was hard and difficult work. Fortunately, there was never a shortage of laborers. Around 1886-1887, the first threshing machines and cleaning mills began to appear. The main crop to sow was and remained, alongside the summer crops, winter wheat. In recent years, however, there was also a shift to oilseeds, which not only brought a good price but also prepared a nitrogen-rich soil for the winter wheat. It is not as if we always had good harvests. No, sometimes there were also lower yields, even total crop failures.



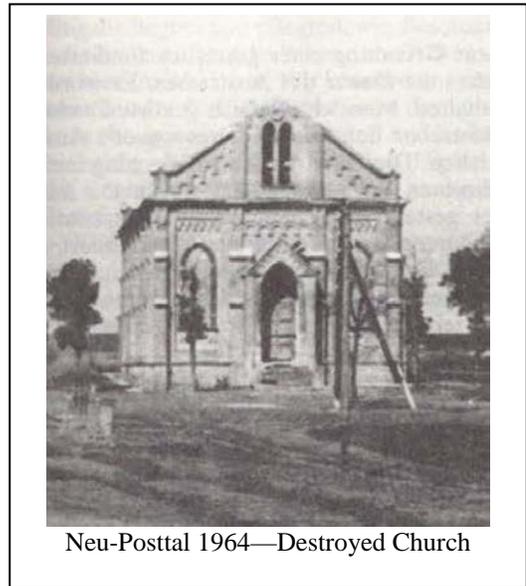
Neu-Posttal: Church, School and Doctor's House

The Bessarabian soil, and especially our Posttal land, was good, but the good harvest yield usually depended on the weather despite good cultivation. If we had early rain in the fall and a lot of snow in the winter, half of the harvest was secured, unless unexpectedly various grain pests appeared in large numbers. One of these pests, which we still remember, was the fruit beetle (*Käfer*), which appeared during the blooming period, settled on the ears of grain, and ate the milky kernels. To get rid of it, simple methods were often used: old and young armed themselves with pots and buckets, went to the infested fields, and collected the beetles off the ears. Then they were destroyed. Rope loops were also made, two horses were hitched to them, and they were driven through the grain field, brushing the beetles off the ears. Although the beetles were not killed by this, they were at least driven away from their own field. Another scourge of the land were the ground squirrels (*Erdhasen*) [or] (*Zieselmäuse* = gopher mice), which also often appeared in large numbers on our meadows and fields. The village administration was often compelled to order extermination hunts for these pests. For many

years, each farm had to deliver a certain number of tails from the pests. The animals were either drowned or caught in traps. The gopher mice were hunted even more so when cash rewards were offered for them. Above all, people kept their own fields free from the ravenous ground squirrels. Despite crop failures and pests, Posttal nevertheless reached its full economic development.

Originally, the aim was to keep the farm undivided, while the other sons either chose a trade or received newly purchased land from their father in the newly settled colonies. However, after the Agrarian Reform of 1921-1922, this possibility was no longer available. In Posttal, too, they began to divide the farm equally among the sons. Yet most of our farmers were fortunate enough to own far more than their farm,

namely 71 *Desjatinen* = 77 hectares [191.7 acres] of land. In this way, they were able to give their sons a considerable amount of land as an inheritance, which not only made them capable of sustaining themselves but also brought to many great prosperity. To further advance agriculture, increasing attention was given to animal and poultry breeding.



Neu-Posttal 1964—Destroyed Church

At the beginning of the 1930s, a legally based Grazing Legislation was established. This immediately restricted the duration of grazing. From then on, fewer but better livestock were kept. Selected breeding animals were also acquired, and the state supported this effort of the community; exhibitions were held and prizes awarded. The quality of the breeding animals mostly depended on the financial strength of the individual Grazing Associations. Since Neu-Posttal belonged to the economically better-off communities, only select breeding stock was purchased. However, individual farmers were also interested in sheep and pig breeding. The Karakul sheep was particularly well received. There were also some attempts to improve poultry breeding. However, these remained only attempts, as egg prices fluctuated and were often low.

In growing grapes, the path to grafting was also taken. Even after the First World War, the vines growing directly from their own roots (*Selbstträger*) dominated. It was not until the 1930s that more attention was paid to grafted vines. Some of the best farmers were groundbreaking in this and found many imitators.

Trade was initially completely in the hands of foreigners. Through the founding of the Cooperative (*Genossenschaft*), the locals were able to seize control of trade from the foreigners to some extent. What the Posttal person needed for his own needs, he could find here; he also brought his agricultural products here and offered them for sale. The excellent butter produced in our dairy found particularly good sales; in many Romanian cities, it was one of the most sought after agricultural products.

Trade was also represented in our village. Our craftsmen were known far beyond the boundaries of the municipality for their diligence, conscientiousness, and solid work, and everywhere they

were given orders [for products]. The Posttal Mill, which was privately owned, supplied all the surrounding villages with flour.

In terms of Credit Institutions, there was only the Orphan Fund, and the Bank that was only established in recent years. The entire community was liable with its assets for the repayment of bonds made to the Orphan Fund. The interest rate was extremely favorable, making its credit affordable for everyone. But this Credit Institution also benefited the orphans; the orphan deposits were secured against all eventualities and still earned interest, which grew to a considerable sum of money by the time they reached adulthood. They provided a welcome foundation for establishing an independent livelihood. The Orphan Funds were protected by custom and by law. The elected caretakers had to submit their accounts to the auditing reviewers for confirmation every year, the audit report was submitted to the municipality for approval, and it was only through the municipal decision that the caretakers were discharged. The Romanians had no understanding of this so beneficial institution. The Romanian state took over the care of the orphans while retaining the caretakers, but from then on the administration became inconvenient and cumbersome.

There is hardly anything noteworthy to report about the Healthcare System until the First World War. We did not even have our own doctor; in urgent cases, one had to be brought in from far away. This deficiency prompted the residents of Neu-Posttal to hire their own doctors to care for the sick of the entire population. We also consistently had competent doctors. Although our community was small, all the doctors were fully occupied because they also had to attend to patients from the neighboring villages.

No less popular were our local Veterinarians, who, as sons of farmers, were closely connected with their community and cared for and tended animals with a devotion that only a son of a colonist could show. A look into the stables and at the meadows and fields of Neu-Posttal was enough to determine who was at work there. For this reason, we could proudly display our breeding livestock anywhere. If there was an agricultural exhibition somewhere in the vicinity, Neu-Posttal was sure to be well represented, and many awards, prizes, or diplomas were brought home from there. In a word: Neu-Posttal was at least one of the most progressive German communities in Bessarabia.

But we can honor our ancestors in no more meaningful way than by bringing the creative will we have inherited from them to full expression here in our German Fatherland, for the good of our people and for our own benefit!

[Translation Ends]

[View Neu-Posttal Location in Map Below]



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