

## Paris, Bessarabia – Part 2d

*Paris in Bessarabien:*  
*Chronik der Gemeinden Paris und Neu-Paris in Bessarabien,*  
Arthur Suckut, self-published, 1986, 321 pages.

Translator: Allen E. Konrad  
P.O. Box 157 Rowley, IA 52329  
E-mail: <onamission1939@gmail.com>  
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Information in square brackets [ ] is that provided by the translator. This book has 321 pages of information. So as to not overload a digitized copy of this book, the translation will be made in parts. The translation below is pages 51-111 of Arthur Suckut's book.

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[Translation Begins]

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So the sexton residence with its sexton became the center of the congregation. It is perhaps worth adding to the carrying out of the office of the sexton that it was also important in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bessarabia that the sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion) were administered only by an ordained pastor. If the children happened to be baptized by the sexton, which was also permissible, then the mother had to bring her child to the church again at the next worship service in order to have the baptism confirmed by the pastor. He prayed again over them and blessed them with the words that are still common today at baptism: "Receive the sign of the Holy Cross on the forehead and breast as a sign that the crucified Lord also died for you."

In my youth it was the case that baptism was performed after the worship service, but later the church council decided to give more meaning to baptism and to hold it in front of an assembled congregation.

The "children's teaching" (*Kinderlehre*) mentioned in the report was compulsory for all school leavers. Every young person had to be in the *Kinderlehre* for three years every Sunday afternoon.

If he missed, he received a stroke mark (*Strich*). This list was then sent to the father at the end of the year and he had to pay "stroke money" for it. This was a very unpleasant thing for the young people and it could happen that the father made additional "strokes" at home.

In addition to teaching the doctrine of faith, everyone attending the *Kinderlehre* had to bring a handwritten copy of the respective Sunday Gospel, which was then viewed by the sexton or by a church leader and marked with a note.

## **Marriage**

These were carried out only by the pastor. For the wedding, the couple to be married had to be "examined" (*Verhör*), as we called it, by the pastor three weeks before the marriage. Today one calls it wedding talk (*Traugespräch*). It happened that the pastor not only received the particulars for the public notice, but also asked questions about the Commandments or Articles of Faith to determine whether they were capable of having a Christian marriage. Many a bridegroom or many a bride have revisited the Catechism and diligently recalled the Commandments; especially the Sixth Commandment, because this was often inquired about.

The public notice was drawn up and read out on three consecutive Sundays after the sermon with the announcements: "Wishing to enter the holy state of marriage and publically presented today for the first time: Johannes Bader, son of the Paris settler Ferdinand Bader and his wife Mathilde née Konrad, with Ella Sauter, daughter of the Teplitz settler Gottfried Sauter and his wife Christine née Kalmbach. May the Lord give His blessing to the ones in love."

This changed a little when the couple to be married was no longer "single." Then, according to the above example, it was mentioned something like this: "Johannes Bader, no longer single son of the Paris settler... etc.!" The "no longer single" couples were not married on Friday, the usual

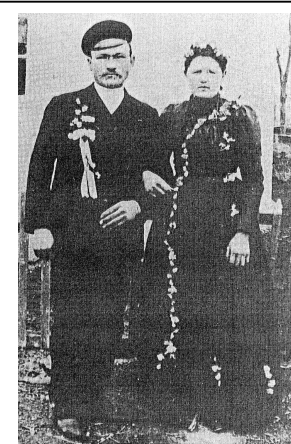
wedding day, but on Wednesday. The “no longer single” bride was not allowed to wear a wreath during the wedding ceremony, but had to do without one.



Wedding of Ottomar Eichelberg and Emma née Suckut, 1932

On the day of the wedding, it was customary for the sexton to hold a devotional before the wedding ceremony. When the often long procession of groomsmen formed at the door of the wedding house, the bride approached her parents to say goodbye to the house of the parents and ask them for forgiveness; the groom did the same. This often happened with many tears, and only then did the procession start to move.

If the pastor could not come to the local church, a long row of wagons was ready, horses decorated with roses and ribbons, and they went to the wedding ceremony. The Brethren (*Brüder*) put up with a lot because of the ornaments attached to the harnesses of the horses, because it was the way of the world and the children of God were not to conform according to the word of the apostle: “Do not be like this world” (Romans 12:2). Where it was possible, it was prevented from happening.



Wedding couple-Daniel Allmer and Justine née Knecht, 1907



Wedding of Alexander Kison and Adele née Allmer, 1934]



Wedding of Willi Ziebart and Erna née Radies, 1930]





Double Wedding of Samuel Quast and Mathilde née König (left), Johannes Dallmann and Emma née König



Wedding couples of a double wedding:  
Quast-König (left)  
and Dallmann-König

## **Holy Communion**

The elders know that they had to announce their intention for communion. An old rule said that if someone had not come to communion for seven years, he should be excommunicated from the church. The one who lived in open sin should not be admitted unless he repented, according to the word of the Holy Scriptures in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29: "Let a person examine himself; and so eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For whoever eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks the judgment on himself, in that he does not perceive the body of the Lord."

As in Matthew 5:23: "If you offer your gift on the altar, and remember that your brother has something against you, leave the gift before the altar, and go and reconcile with your brother, and then come and offer your gift." But I have not experienced this congregation discipline, which was very good, only the "writing down" (*Anschreiben*) was still left.

In the administration of the sacrament, it was so that it was took place in the worship service after the sermon with of a very serious speech. Then the general church confession was prayed and the distribution began, as is still customary today.

## **Religion and Confirmation Instruction**

Religious education was very important in my school days (1906-1915). There were times when we had "biblical history" every morning as the first hour. The religious book by Falke and Förster, which we had in the last years of my school days, contained among each biblical story several Bible verses and hymn verses, which were part of the assignment and had to be memorized. Every week was catechism hour. Then the whole catechism was gone through and memorized. Starting with the Ten Commandments through the Five Chief Parts, "The Sacrament of the Altar" including "The Doctrine of the Office of Keys and Confession."

Then came the 73 confirmation questions, which also had to be memorized. If we had gone through some Chief Parts by Christmas, then we got as homework during the holidays among many others: a review of Chief Parts 1 to 3.

It is therefore understandable that the pastor progressed differently in the confirmation instruction than he does today.

In my time it was the case that all the persons to be confirmed, from the villages that belonged to the parish, had to go to the parish village for three weeks for confirmation instruction if they wanted to be confirmed. Those from the nearby areas came on foot every day, the others were housed in the parish village. Then instructions were not how this is happening today, but only examined and explained. These hours were then similar to our leisure activities today. One dealt fundamentally with the true doctrine of faith. The persons to be confirmed were reminded of the dangers of sin, and I will never forget how earnestly, but also in heartfelt love, the old Pastor Simsont warned us of the danger when explaining the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment ["You shall not commit adultery."]



Confirmation 1936 (year's class 1921) at the church in Paris. Front row center Sexton-Teacher Otto Steudle (left) and Pastor Alexander Simsont



Confirmation 1937 (year's class 1922); Front row center Senior Pastor Immanuel Bauman from Klöstitz and Sexton-Teacher Wilhelm Gässler (right)



Confirmation 1938 (year's class 1923); Front row center our new Pastor Jakob Rivinius and Sexton-Teacher Wilhelm Gässler (right)



Confirmation 1939 (year's class 1924); with pastor Jakob Rivinius and Sexton-Teacher Wilhelm Gässler (right)





Confirmation 1940 (year's class 1925); with Pastor Jakob Rivinius and Teacher Albert Eckert (right); this was the last confirmation in our old homeland

Confirmation was an unforgettable day for many, often a turning point in life. But it was not known as a celebration, as it is understood today, where sometimes three days are “celebrated.” The gift for the one confirmed was that if his parents could, the person would get a new suit or dress. The boys in black, the girls were dressed in white. All other celebration activities were unknown. They received a new hymnbook with an engraved name from the godparents. That is how I experienced it, in other parishes it may have been different.

### **Funeral in my Homeland**

At the death of a person, the event had to be reported immediately in the church office. The sexton immediately notified the church servant (*Kirchendiener*) so that the deceased was “rung out” which went like this: If a child had died, then nine (3x3) bells strikes followed using the small bell, then three more times with the sounding of both bells. If it was an adult, then came nine bell strikes with the big bell and then three more bell soundings. When the time of the funeral was determined, the sexton wrote the so-called “Funeral Notice” (*Leichzettel*) in which the name of the deceased and the time of the funeral was announced. These notices were then passed on from house to house until to the end of the village in every direction, so that everyone was informed for whom the funeral had been rung and when the funeral was to take place.

As soon as the pastor, accompanied by one or two church elders, went from the church office to the funeral house on the day of the funeral, the bells began to ring, and they walked into the courtyard, where the congregation was already gathered around the stand (*Bahre*) with the coffin



(Sarg). A hymn to begin, a word of God, a prayer, and the often very large procession of people started to move out and went towards the cemetery while the bells were ringing. Very rarely was the deceased conveyed by vehicle, in most cases he was carried by four to six men. Depending on the distance, the funeral procession stopped a few times, the carriers set down the stand and a verse was sung. Then the funeral procession proceeded again. At the front, the pastor walked with the church elders, then the congregation followed, and behind the coffin the family and relatives of the deceased. In the cemetery came the usual address and the committing of the remains of the departed man into the earth. During the final song, the grave was covered.

*Ruhet wohl ihr Totenbeine in der stillen Einsamkeit.  
Ruhet, bis der Herr erscheine einst am Ende dieser Zeit.  
Euch, die Nacht und Gräber decken, durch der Allmacht Ruf zu wecken.*

Rest your dead limbs in the quiet solitude.  
Rest until the Lord appears at the end of this time.  
You, the night and grave covering, through the Almighty call, to awaken.

*Nur getrost ihr werdet leben! Der das Leben selber ist,  
wird euch neues Leben geben, Er gelobt's, Er, Jesus Christ.  
Die in Seinem Namen sterben, sollen nicht im Tod verderben.*

Be consoled that you will live! The one who is life itself,  
will give you new life, He vows it, He, Jesus Christ.  
Those who die in His name shall not perish in death.

*Und wie sollt im Grabe bleiben, der ein Tempel Gottes war?  
Den der Herr ließ einverleiben Seiner auserwählten Schar,  
die Er selbst durch Blut und Sterben hat erkaufte zu Himmelserben?*

And how shall remain in the grave the one that was a temple of God?  
The Lord incorporated His chosen multitude,  
which He himself by blood and death has bought to heavenly heirs?

*Nein, die kann der Tod nicht halten, die des Herren Glieder sind.  
Laß den Leib im Tod erkalten, laß, weil wir von Erde sind,  
in der Gruft ihn immer modern. Gott wird ihn zurückerfordern.*

No, death cannot hold those who are the members of the Lord.  
Let the body be cold in death, let it, because we are of earth,  
in the tomb it is always fashionable. God will rebuke it.

*Jesus wird, wie Er erstanden, auch die Seinen einst mit Macht  
führen aus des Todes Banden, führen aus des Grabes Nacht  
zu dem ewigen Himmelsfrieden, den Er Seinem Volk beschieden.*

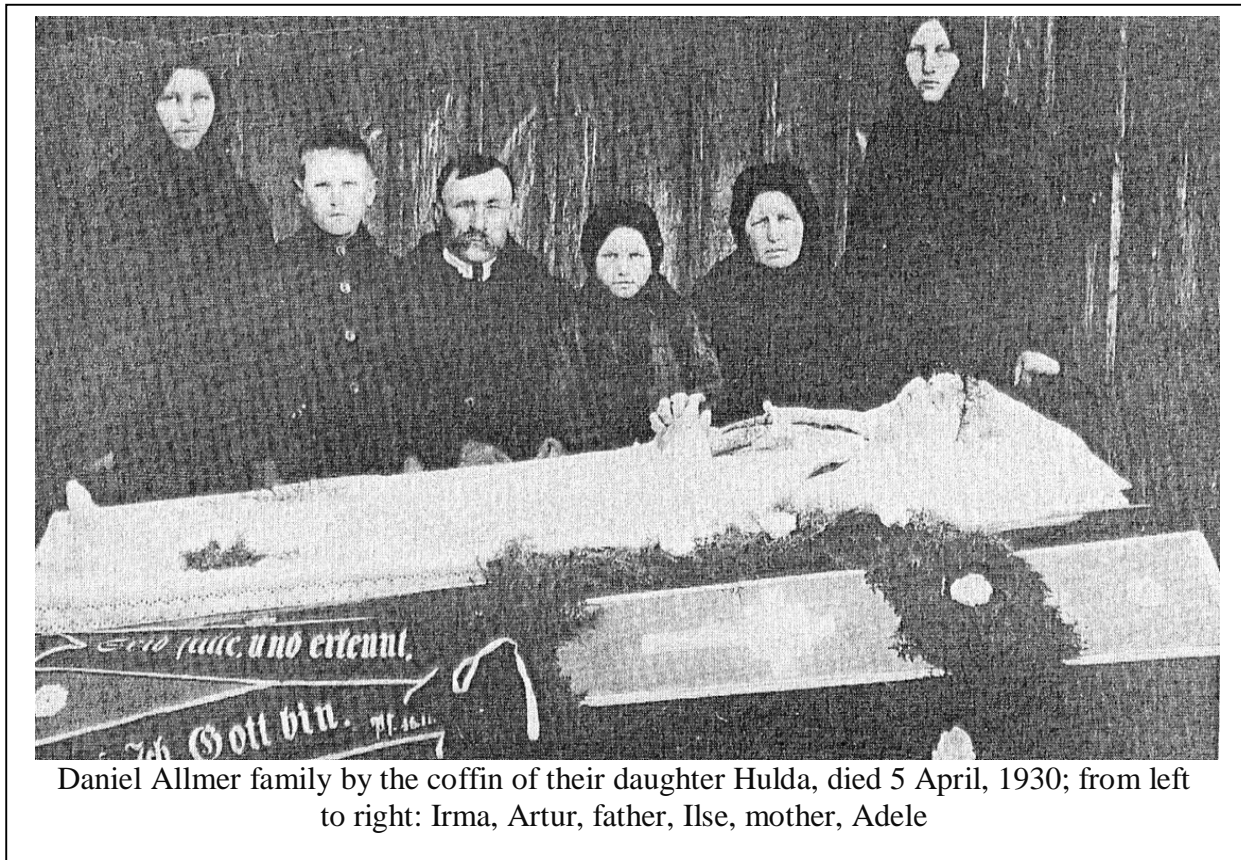
Jesus, as He has been told, will also be able to use his power

to lead out of bonds of death, lead out of the night of the grave to the peace of heaven which He gives His people.

Sod was laid over the fresh burial mound in the shape of a cross. Then the relatives knelt down again around the grave to say a silent prayer or to let their tears run freely.

Afterwards, the mourners gathered together for a meal, to which the gravediggers and porters, who had been asked for this service from the circle of relatives or acquaintances, were invited. Few wreaths were brought, it was not the custom. One of the Brethren said, "We must bring wreaths as long as man lives." A lot of this was done. If anyone was sick, it was self-evident that they would go to him, sing some songs, pray with him, and bring him comfort. Even among people who stood apart from the clergy, it was often said: "Call the Brethren."

In order to give the last honor to the dead and to express their condolences to the relatives, two hymns were sung at the grave by the members of the brotherhood, but also by others, if so desired.



[Continued in Paris, Bessarabia – Part 2e]