

The First Trip Back to Rathdamnitz

F.W. (Frederick William) and Elizabeth Marschke, grandparents of Rob, Libby, Georgia, Jim, Sarah and Jon, took a trip to Europe in the 1920's. They went to Germany to visit F.W.'s birthplace, Rathsdamnitz. F.W. and Elizabeth's passport shows that F.W. was about Dad's height and that he was born on March 10, 1866.

As the story goes, when F.W. got to Rathsdamnitz, he was disappointed because the town just wasn't the same as he remembered it. We have two pictures that were taken while they were in Rathsdamnitz. One was taken in front of the church in Rathsdamnitz. The other is of an unknown building. The church was originally built in the 1500's and luckily is still standing today.

The Church at Rathsdamnitz Rathsdamnitz in the 1920's

F.W. and his family came to the United States sometime during 1880. They left Germany for two reasons. First, Dad believes that F.W.'s father, William, wasn't well and that F.W. also wanted to avoid the draft. At the time they left, Germany was called Prussia. They lived in the Prussian state of Pommern.

After the Second World War, the Allies split up Germany and Rathsdamnitz became part of Poland. The town name was changed from "Rathsdamnitz" to "Dgbnica Kaszubska". The name Rathsdamnitz could no longer be found on any modern maps. Marianne's father owns the map on page 5. The map was made sometime prior to 1945, before the end of World War II. The highlighted spots are places mentioned in the original leaving papers (or the church document that possibly was sent for after F.W. and his family came to America.) Varzin was the birthplace of F.W.'s father. Wussow is near Techlip where F.W.'s oldest sister was born. Krangen, although not highlighted on the map, is near Wussow. (F.W. always claimed his birthplace was Rathsdamnitz, but the leaving papers listed his birthplace as Crangen or Krangen.) Ben now has the original leaving papers and the church document in California. The papers are written in old German, which Ben is able to read.

Marianne's Father's Map

A Neat Web Site

One day I (Georgia) decided to surf the Internet to see what could be found on Rathsdamnitz. This search proved to be more than a little difficult, since I knew no German and the information (not surprisingly) wasn't in English.

At that point, I e-mailed Ben and asked him to look at it. He was able check it out, because he could read German, and he even translated the interesting parts of it, which I sent some of you. The rather extensive web site listed some church records and the fact that the town had changed names. (These notes are reproduced at the end of this document.)

After looking at the web site translation, I e-mailed Ben a couple more times and he said that when he got a chance, he would try to visit Rathsdamnitz to check it out. I was

delighted to hear this, because Dad still wasn't sure that the town that this web site referred to was the Rathsdamnitz we were looking for. He thought Rathsdamnitz was closer to Leipzig in East Germany. I figured Rathsdamnitz had to be in Poland now, because the papers that F.W. and his father brought from Germany in 1880 kept referring to other towns that appeared to also now be in Poland.

Ben and Marianne were able to take a vacation to Rathsdamnitz in June. Ben sent the pictures that they took back to me along with some notes about the people and places they saw while they were there. If you compare the picture Ben took of the church in 2001 with the church picture taken in the 1920's, you'll see that some things don't change all that much from one century to the next. The next twenty-four pages or so include Ben's notes and pictures of the trip he and Marianne took to Rathsdamnitz. I've put the pictures as close to the notes that pertain to them as possible.

Ben and Marianne's Trip to Rathsdamnitz

Georgia,

Here are the notes to the photos that Marianne and I took during our trip to Stolp, Rathsdamnitz, Pomerania.

These are our vacation photos, too, so we're posing in most of them and some of them are rather goofy. I apologize that we're not more photogenic and not very good photographers.

We know we didn't take enough photos for you to know what it's really like there, but hopefully there's enough here to give you a feel for how things look. We didn't edit any out, you've got every photo we took.

We tried to take representative photos, photos of stuff that's typical. So there are photos of a couple typical houses in Rathsdamnitz, rather than photographs of every house in Rathsdamnitz.

I numbered the photos. I think it'll make more sense to look at them in order.

#s 1-5 were taken in Stolp. I figured Stolp might be interesting, if for nothing else than to see what Poland's like nowadays. Stolp is about 100,000 people.

Stolp was surrendered without a fight to the Red Army in 1945, the next day the Russians burned it to the ground. It's an ugly town, even by East German standards.

Poland's even cheaper than E. Germany, we went straight to the best hotel in Stolp and stayed there the whole time (it was \$55.-/night, inc. breakfast). Dinner in decent restaurants in Poland cost us \$5-\$8.- for both of us, depending on what we ordered.

#1 is the city hall in Stolp, it's actually quite new, built to look old. It's one of the few pretty buildings in town.

There's an old manor house which houses a Pomeranian Museum, which is adjacent to the library/archive where I located the church book from Rathsdamnitz, but we neglected to take pictures of it. Next time.

Ben and Marianne

#1 City Hall in Stolp – Marianne on Left

The next photo, #2, is actually a wide median dividing the main thoroughfare in Stolp, it's quite pleasant, except for the exhaust fumes from the traffic. Poland's full of crappy old two-strokes and diesels, and they all seem to trail black clouds.

#2 Park in Stolp – Marianne, "Your Shoelace is untied!"

#3 Cheesy Shopping/Pedestrian Zone in Stolp – Ben

#3 is the main shopping area in Stolp, it's 4-5 blocks long, all small shops and cafes. This is a typically Socialist urban pedestrian zone (Halle's got the same thing, so do most East German towns).

#4 Typical Side Street in Stolp - Marianne

#4 is a typical street in Stolp. The drabness/shabbiness is actually not so bad as in many parts of East Germany.

#5 is another typical street in Stolp. Again, in contrast to E. Germany, there are fewer empty/abandoned/condemned buildings. The buildings are in relatively good repair, if a bit colorless.

#5 Again, Stolp (Random Passersby)

#s 6-11 were taken on the way to Rathsdamnitz from Stolp and during other meanderings through the Pomeranian countryside. The countryside is actually really pretty, traffic's light, and the roads are generally decent.

#6 The Highway from Stolp to Rathsdamnitz

#6 is the main highway Stolp-Rathsdamnitz (looking south, towards Rathsdamnitz), this is a typical Polish secondary road. There's not much in the way of Autobahn/Interstate in Poland except what the Germans built before 1945. The main highways across Poland are still two-lanes.

#7 Landscape Along the Highway from Stolp to Rathsdamnitz

#8 Cobblestone Lane, Ben – Our Peugeot

#s 8-9 are typical cobblestone lanes. These are everywhere, they're still common in E. Germany, too. Many smaller villages, including one outside Rathsdamnitz where Marschkes lived, are accessible only over these roads. #8 is the only road to Polish "Krzywan," German "Kriwan," which was listed as the residence of several Marschkes (look at photo #14, Krzywar is the small black blob due north or the big grey Rathsdamnitz blob, near the edge of the map).

#9 Typical Cobblestone Lane in Pommern

#10 Ben Exploring the Pomeranian Countryside

#11 Marianne, the Peugeot and More Countryside

#s 10-11 were taken during a misadventure that had us off-roading through farmers' fields in our poor little Peugeot. It was quite pretty, though.

#s 12-28 are Rathsdamnitz itself.

#12 Polish Rathsdamnitz. Welcome to Debница Kasubka.

Totally Unpronounceable – Ben

#13 Now Entering Rathsdamnitz

#s 12-13 are where the highway from Stolp enters Rathsdamnitz. The highway is the main thoroughfare through Rathsdamnitz.

Rathsdamnitz is like most other villages we saw in Poland, backwards and desperately poor. The paper mill is at roughly the joint of the L (see below) but looked abandoned. We saw no economic activity in Rathsdamnitz to speak of, not even large-scale agriculture (the website says that the people of Rathsdamnitz were traditionally wood-cutters and not farmers). In any case, subsistence farming is still a way of life for many Polish people. Driving down the highway we regularly saw people selling berries and fish and bread by the roadside, usually there was somebody every quarter mile or so, sometimes more often.

Unlike E. Germany, we saw a lot more young people and a lot fewer people sitting around drinking in the middle of the day. Presumably the young people in Poland are still in Poland, unlike the young people in E. Germany, many of whom are now in W. Germany. Also, unemployment in Poland is essentially nil, and they seemed a bit more prudish about drinking in public, hence, no bums.

#14 Tourist Map of Rathsdamnitz

#14 is a tourist map of the Rathsdamnitz area. The grey L-shaped blob on towards the left of the map is Rathsdamnitz, nowadays. Originally, the village was only the upper part of the upright on the L, the part nearest Stolp.

I'm not sure exactly what the green/light green/yellow means, but it's some correlation to cultivated land/grassland/forest. The heavy blue blobs at the bottom of the map are the Stolp River.

Note the odd shape of the map: it's of the Rathsdamnitz Gemeinde, the Rathsdamnitz "congregation." Note also the scale of kilometers at the bottom of the map. The furthest corners are maybe 20km (12 miles) away from Rathsdamnitz. Everyone living in this area would have come to church in Rathsdamnitz. Each of the black blobs is a village; some of these "villages" are only a handful of buildings, though. Most of the Marschkes in the Rathsdamnitz church book are actually described as living in these smaller villages.

If you look closely, you can see that the area off the map to the NW is labeled, Gmina Slupsk, this is the Stolp Gemeinde. Varzin and Wussow are not on this map. They are quite close to each other just off the western end of this map, just outside the Rathsdamnitz Gemeinde (compare with the photocopies of Marianne's father's map of pre-1945 Pomerania).

The highway leading off the map to the NW is the one we followed from Stolp to Rathsdamnitz. The heavier black lines (like the one leading out to the NW towards Stolp) are like photo #6, the thinner black lines are like photos #'s 8-9.

#15 is the backside of the church. The white half-timbered building is the attached rectory. The church backs up against the Mühlenbach, the "Mill Creek" that runs through Rathsdamnitz, hence the open space behind the church.

#15 Backside of the Church in Rathsdamnitz

#16 Front of the Church in Rathsdamnitz

#s 16-17 are the church tower, here, too, you can see the white, half-timbered rectory.

The church tower is the same one pictured on the Rathsdamnitz website, has been there since 1584, the tower since 1786. Though the building is roughly the same, the churchyard is now littered with shrines and statues (no-no's under Lutheranism), probably placed there since WWII, when the church (which was Lutheran) was made Catholic.

On a related note, we visited the cemetery in Rathsdamnitz (no photos), but it's all new since WWII, Polish-Catholic instead of German-Lutheran. However, you can see where they broke up the German-Lutheran gravestones and used them in mixing concrete, you can see the chunks of black marble in the concrete that say "Here lay..." or have bits of names and dates.

#17 Front of the Church in Rathsdamnitz

#18 Side View of the Church/Rectory building.

#19 Interior of the Church in Rathsdamnitz

Note the low-slung ceiling; it's no architectural wonder. The church is really rather plain, though the altarpiece was gilded. We arrived just as the priest was preparing for evening Mass (he's kneeling at the front).

#s 20-23 were all taken at the same intersection on the way into Rathsdamnitz. This is the first intersection in town coming in from the north, and is probably roughly the center of the old village.

#20 Rathsdamnitz, Park and Shrine

#20, note the fenced shrine in the middle of the trees, there's a cross there (blocked by the trees). These are everywhere in Poland, crosses with fresh flowers and people praying...

#21 Rathsdamnitz, Main Highway, by the Ice Cream Parlor

Marianne in the Distance

#21, was taken from the same vantage point as #20, but turned to the right. The road is the highway from Stolp (looking south, into Rathsdamnitz).

#22 Marianne on the Main Highway in Rathsdamnitz

#22, taken across the street from #20-21, looking down the highway from Stolp into Rathsdamnitz.

#23 Main Highway/Thoroughfare/Rathsdamnitz

#23, traffic in Rathsdamnitz. Horse-drawn wagons are still quite common in Poland as farm machinery, not for fun or nostalgia. We lucked into seeing this one in

Rathsdamnitz. Cars are a rare luxury in Poland, and most of cars on the road are really crappy. Gasoline is cheap by German standards but extremely expensive given to Poland's economic status. Most traffic is on foot/hitch-hiking or on bicycle. #23 was taken down the road from #'s 20-22. You can see the fence around the shrine from #20 directly behind the wagon.

#24 The Creek in Rathsdamnitz – Not the Stolp River

#24, the Mühlenbach, the "Mill Creek." Note the old woman in pink in the center of the photo working in her garden. The road to the left is the highway from Stolp.

**#25 Typical Houses in Rathsdamnitz
#26 House in Rathsdamnitz**

#26, probably an old farmhouse, with attached barn. The house is the left part, the barn the right.

#27 Rathsdamnitz, Overview from Hillside, Our Peugeot

#27, view west over Rathsdamnitz. The barn in the center of the photo is the same farmhouse as #26.

#28 Rathsdamnitz, Overview from the Hillside

#28, view over Rathsdamnitz, taken from almost the same point as #27, but turned further right (towards the NW). Note the church steeple in the center of the photo.

That's it! Next time, Varzin and Wussow!

Love,

Ben and Marianne

While Ben and Marianne were in Rathsdamnitz, they went to a museum that had the Rathsdamnitz Church Book to see if they could uncover any long lost family members. Ben's first notes are about the church book, itself.

Notes to Rathsdamnitz Church Book 26.6.01

File number A-85.

Located in Stolp, in the library adjacent the Pomerania Museum.

Typical church book, 4" thick or so, approx. 8"x14." Entirely handwritten.

Begins with a brief history of RD, church built in 1584, tower in 1786, Pfarrhaus [pastor's house] burned and rebuilt in 1790, etc. etc. etc.

Next, list of pastors that ministered there, their dates, etc.

RD is linked with Podeswilhausen, the next village to the south, though P's entries are made separately, it's presumably the same pastor doing the services, making the entries in the church book.

The book begins in 1670, handwriting is generally decent, legible. Entries are few, initially. Book ends in 1832, or 1840, plus oddball confirmation entries through the 1860's. The book is 667 pages, total, marked by an archivist, surnames are underlined in red, just like archivists did in many other sources I've seen.

Generally, the page is split vertically into three parts, Getraut, Geboren, Gestorben [Married, Born, Died].

I'm beginning at the end, working back in time. All dates are day/month/year. Confirmation records are laid out roughly one year per page, approx. 20 confirmations per year. No information except name and birth date/birthplace.

The next section includes the actual church records. Ben revised the first list of record he sent me. The second list does not include days and months. (One note: Illegitimate births were listed upside down in the church book.)

Marschkes/Marzkes from Rathsdamnitz Church Book

Georgia,

All the people that I found in the RD church book are presumably **NOT** directly related to Carl Gottlieb or Johann Wilhelm Marschke, but were presumably some sort of cousin.

This means our forefathers are NOT in the RD church book that I looked at, which doesn't continue past the 1860's. In any case, the "German Genealogy: Pommern/Pomerania" web site says that after 1874 the Prussian state took over record keeping from the church. That doesn't mean the church wouldn't have still kept records, just that they wouldn't have been the records used to produce birth certificates, death certificates, etc. I think that the librarians in Stolp were telling me that if I went to another library in Stolp I might find a church book or records encompassing the later period when Johann Wilhelm and Ulrike Marschke lived in RD. I didn't follow up on that because it was hot and Marianne and I wanted to go to the beach.

I'm starting with the oldest records and working forwards through time. Names are first, then the year and record in which I found mention of them, then any other information recorded or deduced. Exact dates are in the "RD church book" notes. Babies born that aren't ever mentioned again are listed under their parents, but not separately.

If this seems like a huge mess, it's because it is. There were "Marzkes" spread all over the countryside, at least a half-dozen nuclear families, maybe more. It's absolutely impossible to tell from the church book what relation most of them were to each other,

too, except that enough of the names and birth dates overlap to be sure that they're not all siblings or anything easy like that.

In any case, our Carl Gottlieb and family weren't the first Marschke's in RD. I don't know, though, how closely related they may have been to some of these others.

Anyway, here's what I've got...

Christian Martzke, Sr.

1783 died at 78 yrs. old

born c. 1705

1787 daughter died, Maria Martzken @ 31 yrs. old

1793 widow died, Dorothea Kniebeln @ 76 yrs. old

Maria Martzken

1787 died @ 31 yrs. old

born c. 1746

daughter of Christian Martzke, Sr.

widow of Johann Haut

Christian Martzke, Jr.

1779 marriage with Dorothea Catharina Bruntzen from Kriwan
"Freimann," "Free man," presumably free peasant.

1780 daughter born, Catharina Louisa

1783 son born, Johann Gottlieb

1784 son died, Johann Gottlieb

Christian Martzke as "hiesige Einwohner"

1800 marriage with Christine Skepen, "Mädchen," "maid."

"Maschke," "Freymann"

1801 daughter born, Ernestine Louise Caroline

"Marchke," "Freimann"

[Catherina] Louisa Marzken

1780 born to Christian Martzke

1809 godmother of Carolina Friderica

"Louisa Marzken," presumably Catherina Louisa

1812 godmother to Johann Friedrich, Jr.

1813 illegitimate daughter born, Charlotte Friderica

"von der Magd Louisa Marzken"

Catharina Maria Martzken

1780 godmother to Catharina Louisa Martzke

married to Kraft, from Stolp

Michael Martzke, from Starnitz

1783 godfather to Johann Gottlieb

Catharina Elisabeth Martzken

1783 godmother to Johann Gottlieb

[Anna] Christina Marzken

- 1792 godmother at baptism of illegitimate child
- 1795 daughter born, Catherina Friderica
 - married to Johann Kramp
- 1799 daughter born, Dorothea Henrietta Elisabeth
 - married to Johann Kramp
 - called "Christina Marzken," without "Anna"
- 1812 son born, Martin Gottlieb
 - married to Johann Kramp
 - godmother Dor. Maria Marzke
 - again called "Christina Marzken," without "Anna"

Maria Elisabeth Marzken

- 1795 godmother to Knapp baby
 - "ein Magd," "a maid"
- 1799 godmother to Dorothea Henrietta Elisabeth Kramp
- 1802 godmother to Kramp baby
- 1802 marriage with Michel Hermann
 - "Mädchen"
 - "Freymann und Soldat vom Regiment v. Treskow"
 - "Free man and soldier with von Treskow's regiment"

Barbara Marzken

- 1795 godmother to Catherina Friderica Kramp

Johann [Friedrich] Marzke, Sr.

- 1809 marriage with Dorothea [Maria] Kramp
 - "Johann Marzke," without Friedrich
- 1809 daughter born, Carolina Friderica
 - "Freimann"
 - godmother [Catherina] Louisa Marzken
- 1812 son born, Johann Friedrich, Jr.
 - godmother Catherine Louisa Marzke
- 1814 wife died, Dorothea Maria Kramp @ 30 yrs. old
- 1815 son born, Wilhelm Heinrich
 - father: Johann Merzke
 - mother: Maria Elisabeth Blum
- 1818 son died, Carl Jacob
 - 11/2 yrs. old
 - "Johann Märzke"
- 1820 son born, Martin Ferdinand
 - father: Johann Friedrich Märzke
 - mother: Maria Blum
- 1823 daughter born, Wilhelmina Louise Dorothea
 - father: Johann Märzke

mother: Maria Blum
1826 son born, August Gottfried Reinhold
father: Johann Friedrich Merzke
mother: Maria Els. Blum
1831 son born, Ludwig Albert
father: Johann Friedrich Maerske
mother: Maria Elisabeth, geb. Blum
godfather: Johann Friedrich Maerzke, Jr?
half-brother of baby?

Johann Friedrich Maerzke, Jr.

1812 born to Joh. Fr. Sr. and Dorothea Maria Kramp
1831 godfather to half-brother Ludwig Albert
1833 marriage with Anne Christine Kapien, from Gr.

Krien

1833 son born, Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Maerzke
father: Johann Friedrich Maerzke
mother: Anne Christine Kapien
godfather Johann Friedrich Maerzke, Sr.
godfather Wilhelm Heinrich Maerzke
half-brother of father, born 1815

Johann [Friedrich Wilhelm] Marzke

1833 born to Joh. Fr. Jr. and Anne Christine Kapien
1847 confirmed, born 1833 in Damnitz

Wilhelm Heinrich Maerzke

1815 born to Joh. Fr. Sr. and Maria Elisabeth Blum
1833 godfather to Johann Friedrich Wilhelm
1837 marriage with Charlotte Christine Zadach
he 22, she 25 yrs. old.

Wilhelmine [Louise Dorothea] Maerzke

1823 born to Joh. Fr. Sr. and Maria Elisabeth Blum
Wilhelmina Louise Dorothea
1837 confirmed, born 1823 in Damnitz

August [Gottfried Reinhold] Maerzke

1826 born to Joh. Fr. Sr. and Maria Elisabeth Blum
August Gottfried Reinhold
1840 confirmed, born 1826 in Damnitz

Ludwig [Albert] Maerzke

1831 born to Joh. Fr. Sr. and Maria Elisabeth Blum
godfather: Johann Friedrich Maerzke, Jr?

1845 confirmed, born 1831 in Damnitz

From here on out it's exclusively random records of people named Marzke or something similar. There's not enough info on any of these to figure out who they were or what relation they may have been to the others.

Louisa Merzke, geb. Sohmekel
1822 died @ 72 yrs. old
widow, born Sohmekel [?]

Eleanora Marzken
1810 illegitimate daughter born, Johanna Dorothea Henrietta
godmothers Dor. Maria Marzken, Dor. Maria Kramp

Dorothea Maria Marzken
1810 godmother to Johanna Dorothea Henrietta Marzken
1812 godmother to Martin Gottlieb Kramp

Charlotte Louise Marzke
1822 marriage with Carl Wilhelm Grakl[?], "Einwohner"
"Mädchen"

Martin Merzke
1826 marriage with Wilhelmine Heinriette Neitzel
he is from Starnitz, son of Martin Merzke, Sr.?
she is daughter of Carl Nietzel

Carl Maerzke
1831 confirmed, born 1817 in Damnitz

Johann Marzke
1832 confirmed, born 1818 in Damnitz

Martin Maerzke
1833 confirmed, born 1819 in Damnitz
this is not Martin Ferdinand born 1820.

Michael Ludwig Meschke
1837 marriage with Anne Gertzlaff, geb. Laorentz
he 36, she 40 yrs. old

Johann Maerzke
1838 confirmed, born 1824 in Starnitz

Ernstine [sic] Maerzke
1840 confirmed, born 1826 in Damnitz

Heinrich Maerzke
1842 confirmed, born 1828 in Damnitz

August Maerzke
1844 confirmed, born 1830 in Damnitz

Charlotte Maerzke
1845 confirmed, born 1831 in Damnitz

Caroline Manzke/Maenzke/Marzke?
1846 confirmed, born 1832 in Damnitz

Carl Aug. Manzke
1852 confirmed, born 1838 in Schartow

Johann Friedrich Marske
1852 confirmed, born 1836 in Starnitz

Charlotte Luise Maezke/Marzke
1853 confirmed, born 1839 in Damnitz

Following is the four Marschke children from Mellin. They're presumably all siblings, but all I've got is confirmation records, nothing about their parents, nor about their current residence, though they're presumably still in the RD congregation if they were being confirmed in the church there. "Mellin" is presumably the Polish "Mielno" which is just S. of RD, towards Podwilshausen.

Emilie Marschke, b. 20.9.1845 in Mellin
1859 Confirmed

Pauline Therise Marschke, b. 6.6.1843 in Mellin
1857 Confirmed
Twins with following

Carl Wilhelm Marschke, b. 6.6.1843 in Mellin
1857 Confirmed
Twins with above

Heinrich Marschke, b. 2.5.1842 in Mellin
1856 Confirmed

The above four are presumably not directly related to the other Marzke people, because none of the others are from Mellin, and it's at this point that the name changes from Marske or Marzke to Marschke. I'm still not absolutely sure that "Marzke" is the same as "Marschke," but seeing that Carl Gottlieb was a "Marske" is reassuring.

Additional Maps

Kingdom of Prussia in 1866 - Green
German Empire 1871-1918 – Green and Yellow

While this map is not altogether clear, it shows Pomerania well. You can see Pomerania up by the Baltic Sea. Rathdamnitz was located in Pomerania until the Second World War. After the War, Rathdamnitz became part of Poland. If you look at the next two maps, you can see the piece of land that juts out on all the maps.

Rathsdamnitz, Poland Page

Latitude	54.3667	Longitude	17.1500	Altitude (feet)	121
Lat (DMS)	54° 22' 0N	Long (DMS)	17° 8' 60E	Altitude (meters)	36

Map found at <http://www.calle.com>

I was delighted to find this map on the Internet. I'm not sure when this was made, but it gives Rathsdamnitz's latitude and longitude. Even if it undergoes another name change, we should know where it is.

Poland Today

If you this map and the previous one, you can get a good idea where Rathsdamnitz is in relation to Poland as a whole. You can find many more maps on the Internet and other Atlases.

The final section contains the notes that Ben made from the information that we found on the Internet. You can visit the site, which has additional pictures of Rathsdamnitz. The Internet address is <http://www.stolp.de/Stolp-Land/rathsdamnitz.htm>

Selected Notes and Translation of the Rathsdamnitz Website

Georgia,

My translation of what I thought would be the more interesting parts of the website follow, along with some notations I've made that should make sense of the translation. I've put my literal translations in quotes, with my explanations either in brackets within the quotes or in separate paragraphs.

The page numbers correspond with the page numbers of the website. It shouldn't be too difficult to follow along on the website and keep track of where I'm translating.

I've done this quickly rather than thoroughly, so there's a good chance that I've botched parts of it. If something seems wrong, let me know and I should take a second look. I've skipped parts that seemed REALLY boring or irrelevant, let me know if there are parts I skipped that you want to know about.

(Webmasters note: Not all of us have access to someone like Nephew Ben so Google has a rudimentary translator at:

<http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=de&u=The URL you Want Translated From GERMAN TO ENGLISH>

So this website would be translated with Google by going to the following URL:

<http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=de&u=http://www.stolp.de/Stolp-Land/rathsdamnitz.htm>

Page one

“The community of R laid on the right bank of the Stolpe [River], south east of Stolp. It was the second-largest community in the *Landkries* [literally “land circle,” meaning “county,” sort of]. The paper factory gave R the character of a small industrial area. The houses laid on either side of the Mühlbaches [River], which flowed southwards of the Schottow [River]. The southern road out of Stolp ran thru R”

There follows itemized information about R from 1945, presumably right before the population was forcibly expelled by the Russians and Poles. For example, R was 1700 hectares, had 2844 inhabitants, 790 households, 145 apartment buildings as of 1925, etc. etc. etc. Most of this is not relevant to 19th century R and is boring bureaucratic detail.

Page two

Historie

This is a brief history of R.

R falls into the historical “village-form” of a *Gassendorf*, “alley-village.” “Already in prehistoric times it was heavily settled. Countless excavations from the early Bronze and Iron Age point to this.”

“The Wends [Slavic ethnic group] gave the area the names ‘*Dammeneze, Dampitze, Damnitze, Damnnitz,*’ which mean the same as ‘*Eichenort,*’ [“Oak Woods”]. The name stayed until the 17th century, and resulted then in *Rathsdamnitz*, because it was a property [feudal fiefdom] of the city and therefore of the ‘*Rates*’ of the city.”

A “*Rat*” is a magistrate, “*Rath*” is an old-fashioned variation of the spelling.

Rathsdamnitz translated loosely to “Magistrates’ Oak Woods.” This is actually quite complicated, because cities that were ruled by their own magistrates (rather than outside nobles) had special status. By calling the village “Rathsdamnitz” instead of plain “Damnitz,” the guys in Stolp who were in charge of R were flaunting this.

“On the 14th of April 1683 the name ‘*Rathsdamnitz*’ first appears in the files, it was regularly used from 1718 onwards. The old Wendish settlement lay at the place where the later the ‘*Spritzenhaus*’ would stand [I don’t know what a *Spritzenhaus* is and it’s not in my dictionaries, but it translates literally to “spray house”]. The in-migrating Germans settled somewhat northerly from the creek, which was called the ‘German creek.’”

“This tradition is in any case not sure.”

“In the *Landkreis* there were twelve *Eigentumsdörfer*” [feudal villages] of the town.

According to a bill of sale from 1485 the magistracy of the city bought a part of the village of Damnitz from Martin Wobeser and an other part after the inheritance of Duke

Bogislaw of Rügenwald in 1493 from the children of the dead Claus vom Puttkamer of Zettin.”

“Two farms and a *Kössate* [some sort of smaller farm, or share-cropping farm], which the Duke had bought from Ewald Zitzewitz, were given over to the magistracy of Stolp along with the right of inheritance, which became owner/lord of the village.”

It seems that Damnitz (later Rathsdamnitz) was bought up by the duke, then given to the city of Stolp to administer. The right of inheritance meant that the grant wasn't temporary, but permanent. This is a bit muddled in the website and not very well detailed. It would presumably make more sense if we read the rest of the book from which the website is excerpted.

“In the village there were eighteen *Bauernhöfe* [peasant farms], that mainly were spread thru the *Ackerwerk* [farmland] and the *Vorwerk Neufeld* [these are areas around Rathsdamnitz, apparently, a look at the map should make sense of this]. The inhabitants maintained themselves, to the extent that they did not pursue agriculture, by cutting wood from the Loitzer forest and floating the lumber down the Stolp [River]. The city of Stolp had entrusted the farmland of Damnitz to an administrator, who made a yearly tax collection for the magistracy of money, goods in kind, and livestock.”

A *Bauernhof* would have actually consisted of several nuclear families, not only the owner and his family, but each of the hired hands' families, too. One of these “peasant farms” could consist of dozens of people and the owner could be quite wealthy. Payments “in kind” were normal up until the 18th century, this means that they would pay taxes in the form of some of their production, rather than money.

“The peasants with two or more horses and the *Kossäten*, who had one or no horses, but two to four oxen, held their farms and the associated acreage... cost-free from the city of Stolp. According to the size of the farm they had to pay taxes to the administrator annually. They had the right of complaint, which they made use of freely.”

The peasants have to pay taxes, of course, and they also had the right to appear before the magistracies, which they apparently did often. Holding their land “cost-free” is not exactly how it was, because they still had to pay a variety of taxes. Taxation in the early modern rural world is EXTREMELY complicated and I don't pretend to understand it. There are historians who spend their entire careers trying to understand how peasants paid (or avoided paying) taxes and how they related with their aristocratic or urban overlords.

“If a peasant ran his farm poorly, he could be replaced and received either a *Kate* or must serve as a hired hand.”

I don't know what a *Kate* is, it means “cat” but that seems screwy.

The census from 1717 from Stolp includes the following five peasants and three *Kossäten*... their names are at the bottom of page two.

Page three

"It can be read in the protocols/censuses and documents that there was in 1763 the intention that some of Rathsdamnitz should be parceled into peasants' farms, and colonists settled there. It's not clear if or how well the parceling was carried thru, but it's certain that at least three colonists were settled: Andreas Johst, Christian Wilke, and **Mart Garske.**"

This was a constant theme in 18th century Prussia, trying to get people from elsewhere to settle in the rather sparsely populated areas of Pommerania and E. Prussia. Generally it was unsuccessful, because the soil was crappy and no one wanted to live there. There's a chance that "**Mart Garske**" somehow became "Marske" which became "Marschke."

"According to Brüggemann [some source we don't have] R had in 1784 two *Vorwerke* [this might be "industries," not sure], one betw. the village and the Loitzer forest and for a paper mill, driven by the Schottow [River], a water mill, a saw mill, a preacher, a sexton, five peasants, three Kossäten, two Büdner [dunno what this is] a preacher *colonus* [dunno, possibly a chapel], a pub, a smithy, and in total 26 hearths."

Again, this is muddled (poorly written German) and not entirely clear, but it's trying to inventory the village in 1784. The count of hearths is important, because each hearth was a household, more or less, though often an early modern household would contain several nuclear families.

"The freeing of the serfs in the early 19th century introduced a new era in R."

"As a result of the 7 August 1820 law regarding the lords' and peasantry's relationship the four peasants and three Kossäten were given ownership of their farms. The lordship was replaced by an annual rent of 24 talers and certain deliveries [of goods]. Rathsdamnitz in 1847 counted 180-200 residents. Through the transformation of the paper mill into a paper factory the administrative town transformed itself into an industrial town."

Pages three-seven

Papiermühle Rathsdamnitz/ Paper Mill R

There's a long history of the paper industry in R here. This seemed less-than-fascinating, so I skipped it.

Briefly, the paper industry dates back to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, but hit its stride during the late nineteenth century. It expanded thru the 1920's, but then hit hard times and went under in 1933. This apparently devastated R's economy, because hundreds of workers became unemployed. It's interesting that in 1933 R had 3300 residents, in 1945 only 2844.

Page seven

Handel, Handwerk und Gewerbe.../Trade, Hand-working, and Industry...

This section details a lot of various residents of R and their occupations. Of particular interest to us might be "Fish Trading Friedrich Dahms and August Marschke."

Unfortunately, there's no mention of the date when all these people were doing these jobs.

Page seven-eight

Landwirtschaft/Agriculture

This, too, isn't very interesting, because all of the data is from the 1930's.

Page eight

Kirche/Church

"The church in Damnitz was built in 1584 and opened on St. Michael's Day (29 Sept.). The building with the brick tower was set on a *Feldstein* [field stone?] foundation was built simply and without ornamentation. Only the Hauptgesims [main something, probably a typo] was built of cut bricks, which described a quarter circle. The church was expanded to the east in half-timber style. The altar and pulpit were united and built over the walled canteen [this doesn't make sense to me, either]. From the period of the initial building there are two statues carved from wood, one of which is a Madonna with Child, from the Gothic period..."

Page nine
Kirche, cont.

This next box is extremely important, because it details where the Kirchenbücher [church books] are and what dates they cover.

After that, there's more information about expansion of the church in the late nineteenth century, addition of more bells, etc.

After the Reformation, the church in R was taken over by the magistracy in Stolp, and they appointed a pastor. There was a power struggle over the church in R for a hundred years, from 1584-1684.

R was predominantly Lutheran, in 1925 there were a total of only 43 Catholics in the town.

Page nine-ten
Schule/School

In 1749 the royal Prussian gov't ordered R to build a school, the school was done in 1750, this is typical of eighteenth century Prussia, part of Frederick the Great's "enlightened despotism." A bigger school was completed in 1820.

The school was expanded again and again during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are lists of the names of the teachers from the 1930's and 1940's.

Page ten
Kommunalpolitik/Communal politics

The revolution of 1918 also happened in R. A council of workers and soldiers took over the town, and the people remained calm.

The town expanded significantly during the 1920's as a result of the employment opportunities at the paper factory.

Page ten
Mittelwellensender Stolp/Middle-Wave Transmitter Stolp

R was home to a radio station, built in 1938.

Page ten-eleven

Kriegsende, Okkupation, Annektion und Expulsion aus der Heimat/ War's End, Occupation, Annexation and Expulsion from the Home

This details the end of the war in R. The Russians got to R in March '45. Most of the town fled. The town was plundered, and those women and girls that had remained were raped by the Russians.

In June '45 the Poles took over R. After August '45 there was a Russian commandant in charge of R. The Poles treated the Germans poorly, beating and imprisoning them at will. The Poles renamed R "Dgbnica Kaszubska."

Most of the German residents of R left. 1628 of the residents wound up in what would become West Germany, 321 went to East Germany.

During WWII R suffered a total 59 war dead, 47 civilian dead, and 233 missing persons (unexplained cases).

Page eleven

Literatur/Literature

This is the bibliography.