

Kazuń Nowy/Niemiecki (Deutsch Kasan)
1832-1841
Civil Records

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Background:

The surviving civil records for this congregation begin in 1832. The records presented here are treated as a group ending in 1841. This is because the birth, marriage, and death records for these years were entered, at the time the events occurred, with a version of each event in Polish and German. This was indispensable in producing these extracts, as I was only previously familiar with the German language and the cursive script used, *Kurrentschrift*. It was hoped and hypothesized that parallel records in two languages would have added an extra degree of precision, since the recorder must process the required information in two different modes of thinking, one in his mother tongue and one which would be inspected by the local Polish authorities.

These records are in fact duplicates turned in to a regional governmental official, while the originals were kept in possession by the parish. In nearly all cases, the parish was either a Lutheran or Catholic church, and the books were probably kept in the church itself. However, the congregation based in Deutsch Kasan (Kazun Niemiecki) is the only Mennonite congregation known so far within Russian Poland that was authorized to have its own 'parish' and record and keep its own civil records. In the case of this Mennonite 'parish', the original books were not kept in the church building, but in the possession of the Mennonite member who was officially recognized and authorized by the regional government to be the record-keeper.

Events were recorded and held in Kazuń Niemiecki by Heinrich Bartel, as the "Civil Registry Officer for the Mennonite Congregation in Kazuń Niemieckie"¹, until 1836. No written comment of a change of record-keeper is found, but the record books for 1836 are from the start recorded and held in Cząstłow Niemiecki by Heinrich Nikiel. The books from 1832-1835 appear to be completely written out by Heinrich Bartel, including "signing" the names of the father and witnesses, although the evidence from subsequent years with original signatures make it unlikely that all the fathers and witnesses in 1832 were able to write their names. Whatever the actual case, Heinrich Bartel "signs" the Polish entry with the Polish version of the names, and "signs" the German entry with the German version.

It turns out that dual-language entries did not impose an extra measure of accuracy or precision. Only a slight majority of the surviving copies have entries where the Polish and German contain the same amount of information, even when accounting for the fact that no

two languages will convey the same information with word-to-word equivalence. There are many accidental errors, most which are characteristic of the process of manuscript copying. Misspellings are almost never repeated by the same writer, thus incidental errors and not attributable to low education. Sometimes either the Polish or the German version will be lacking one of the witnesses, or one version is lacking the occupation/status or age of a person. In these cases it is very fortunate that we have two versions with which to form the most complete record possible.

Some differences seem deliberate. Besides the attempt to use the Polish equivalent or Polish spelling of first and last names in the Polish version of the entry, and use the German forms and spellings in the German versions, the German versions of records also very frequently will include a few more details. For example, only the German version will give the birthplace of the deceased, or the village out side of Poland where the surviving parent(s) or sibling(s) live, or name the surviving children. When the Polish version contains a few bits of additional detail, it feels very much unintentional.

However, most of the issues seem to be due to a lack of attention to detail, and thankfully the accuracy is, in general, not greatly affected. For example, the spelling of a name, an age, or a date in Index won't match info found in either the Polish or German version of an entry. Spellings very rarely will affect identification of an individual, and ages and dates had to be spelled out in the records, thus enforcing a bit of precision. More difficult issues include situations where a person signs a record, but later in the same year, the recorder says the person could not write, even though it can be proved that they are the same individual. Similarly, the recorder will give one age to an individual, and later in the same year make the same individual one year younger, and signatures prove they are the same person. Admittedly, there are situations where signatures are lacking and persons with the same name, occupation, and residence but different ages cannot be definitively reconciled. Or if everything but the residence matches, or everything but the occupation.

Methodology:

The guiding methodology in producing this document is my interest in and study of a few intersecting disciplines: historical linguistics, onomastics, and manuscript studies. The goal was to provide a useable extraction of all significant genealogical data, while also presenting the complexity of non-standard spelling as it occurred in historical documents, even when created by a single scribe. Knowledge of the historical spelling variations in these records not only helps when looking for these names and places in other records, but also provides examples of the types of variations one might encounter when dealing with other names and places in which (Low) Germans are recorded in Polish-language records.

Structure:

Introductions for each type of record, i.e., Birth Records Intro, Marriage Records Intro, & Death Records Intro, contain further specific information about how the records were composed and how they are presented in these extractions.

The extractions of each record type, i.e., Birth Records, Marriage Records, & Death Records, have three basic documents:

- an Intro
- the main Records File of year-by-year, record-by-record presentation of core record data
- an alphabetized Index of all persons named in each record, with their basic biographical data as found in that record

The Death Records have an additional document, a Causes of Death glossary

Finally, there are two documents to aid the use of any type of record:

- a Villages Gazetteer, which provides identification of all locations mentioned in any of the records of this year span

A Note About 'Terezya'/'Sahra'

The records of Kazun Niemiecki contain a phenomenon that I had not seen before, and of which I have not yet found any discussion. It is completely unfamiliar to experienced members of online Polish genealogy groups. It is not certain yet if this phenomenon occurs in other dual Polish-German civil records.

The same female is recorded in Polish as '*Terezya/Teresya*', and in German as '*Sara/Sahra*'. This happens with female births and for mothers. No explanation or history of this naming practice is yet known.

Surnames

The combination of spelling differences in Polish and German for the same name, inflectional endings for grammatical gender, and the momentary whims of the scribe, results at times in three or four versions of the same Surname in the entry of one event.

For example, the first parents in the Index for 1832 Births are entered by the recorder as "Isaac und Marike **Schröders**", then in the Polish-language entry he gives the father as "Jzaac **Szreyder**", and in the German-language entry as "Jsaac **Schroder**". The record books extant for this year are duplicates, in which the recorder provided "signatures": at the end of the Polish entry he spells the father's name as "Jzaac **Szreyder**," and at the end of the German entry as "Jsaac **Schröder**." A total of four variations.

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1. "Urzednik Stanu Cywilnego Wyznania Menonistow in Kazun Niemieckie," "Beamter des Civil-Standes, in Dorfe Dt. Kasan".

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