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FROM THE INITIAL HISTORY OF THE BULGARIAN CHURCH IN BRAILA IN THE 19TH CENTURY

(Summary)

The article tells about the early history of the Bulgarian church in the Romanian town of Braila in the third quarter of the 19th century. In this city at that time there was a large Bulgarian emigrant community, resettled there mainly after the Russo-Turkish war of 1828–1829. It was distinguished by its active economic and socio-cultural activities and in the 1860s turned the city into the cultural capital of the Bulgarian diaspora in Romania. There was a Bulgarian school there, Bulgarian newspapers were published, Bulgarian printing houses functioned; prominent Bulgarian writers, playwrights, publicists such as Dobri Voynikov, Vasil Drumev, Hristo Botev lived and worked in the city for some time... The Bulgarian Literary Society (predecessor of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) was founded there (in 1869), a community center and other social and cultural organizations operated, and a fruitful theatrical activity developed.

But even in the 1860s, the Bulgarian community still did not have its own church to worship in their native language. The article traces, on the basis of the currently available documentary and other sources, the preparation and implementation of the construction of the Bulgarian Church of the Ascension of Christ in Braila, carried out mainly in the years 1868–1875. This endeavor was guided by the elected church boards, which managed to mobilize for this purpose the spiritual potential and material resources of the Bulgarian community there. The funds for the construction of the temple were raised through voluntary donations and loans, in which representatives of all strata of the Bulgarian diaspora participated: rich

merchants and bankers, as well as smaller merchants, craftsmen, innkeepers, gardeners, etc., as well as many activists of the local intelligentsia, active participants in the national liberation movement, etc. Thus, the construction of the Bulgarian church in Braila, which still exists today – a century and a half later, became a real nationwide affair and despite some accompanying negative phenomena, became one of the most positive and successful pages in the history of Bulgarian emigration to Romania.