

CHAPTER TWO

HEUER ANCESTORS IN POMMERN, PRUSSIA

*“Every man is his own ancestor, and every man is his own heir.
He devises his own future, and he inherits his own past.”¹*

Our Heuer ancestors lived within a small geographical area of Prussia called Pommern, known in English as Pomerania, near the Baltic Sea. More specifically, the villages and towns they lived in lie in what was once known as East Pommern within the boundaries of Kreis Greifenberg, an area of about 350 square miles. Kreis is the German term that denotes a lower level administrative area within a German state and is comparable to a county in the United States. Kreis Greifenberg was to Pommern as Kewaunee County is to the state of Wisconsin.

Pommern is a historic region on both sides of the Oder River, bounded by the Baltic Sea in the north and the Vistula River in the south. Occupying the historically shifting border area between Poland and Germany, the region is now divided between eastern Germany and western Poland.



The region was named for the Slavic Pomerani tribe, which settled there during the 5th century. It was, at various times, an independent territory but during the 12th century, Pommern was divided into two parts. The western part became part of the Holy Roman Empire and was ruled by Polish Dukes until 1648 when it was subdivided between Prussia and Sweden. Prussia acquired part of Swedish Pommern in 1720 and the remainder in 1815. The eastern part, which became known as Pomerelia, was taken from Poland by the Teutonic Knights in 1308 but they returned it in 1466. Pomerelia became part of West Prussia in 1772, and in 1919, part of it was again given to Poland. From 1815 to 1919, Prussia held both eastern and western Pommern. After World War II, a portion of western Pommern was included in the territory of Communist East Germany. When Germany was reunified in 1990, this area was incorporated into the Federal Republic of Germany as part of the new state of Mecklenburg.

Most of Pommern is a low-lying, glaciated, coastal plain, poor in resources except for peat. The land is crisscrossed with canals originally built during the period of colonization to drain the swampy areas and create waterways for the transport of people and produce. Agricultural products include potatoes, rye and hay, and pasture lands that support the raising of cattle. Today, tourism is important because of the sandy beaches and many lakes. The gently rolling terrain, dotted with lakes and streams, bears a striking resemblance to the lands of northeastern Wisconsin – a world away.

For fifteen centuries, since about A.D. 400, life remained very much the same for the peasant core of Europe. In Prussia, on the Baltic Sea, the development of life of the peasantry took slightly longer only because the area had been settled at a later date. Once the leaders of the tribal groups established control of these northern territories, the life of the peasant was no different from middle and southern Europe. Except for the constant disputes among the ruling classes, which usually led to war and border changes, the peasants were secure in their homes, their villages, and their churches. Since public roles were limited in those times to the clergy, the nobility, the feudal lords, warrior and sailor, and the serf, the populace felt comfortable with the lifestyle to which they were accustomed.



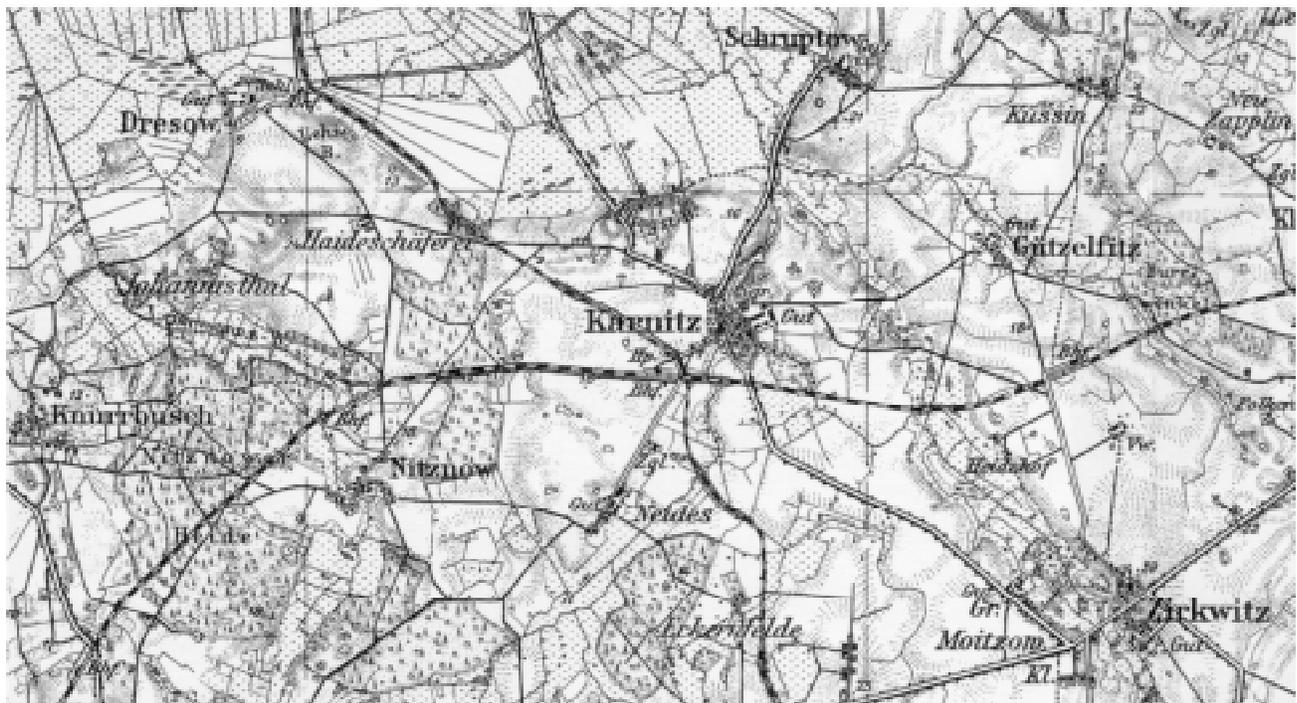
The Baltic Sea at Hoff, Greifenberg, Pommern is similar to a view from the banks of Lake Michigan in Algoma, Wisconsin. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach-1996)

The villages and towns in Kreis Greifenberg where the Heuers lived in the 18th and 19th centuries, were very small and appeared on only very detailed maps, but they surrounded larger towns that are easily found. Karnitz (also spelled Carnitz in church records) was one of these. Surrounding Karnitz were five small villages: Schruptow, Gutzelwitz, Nitznow, Dresow, and Neides. All of those villages were served by the Evangelische (Protestant) Church in Karnitz. Other nearby villages were Parpart, Kahlen, Gross (Large) Moitzow, Klein (Small) Moitzow, Gedde, Muddlemow, and Tressin, clustered around the town of Zirkwitz, and the town of Goerke (also spelled Görke in church records) with its villages of Woedtke, Ruhleben, and Borntin.²

The towns of Zirkwitz and Goerke, like Karnitz, were community centers with the church being the focal point for most social events. These three towns were all built in the traditional style with a large church encircled by a wall and including a cemetery, then surrounded by a ring of houses, barns, and buildings of the individual farmers built in a tight cluster. Open fields surrounded the town with brooks, trees, and rocks defining each field as they stretched toward the neighboring villages.

To the peasant serf, which our ancestral Heuers surely were, the village was the beginning, the middle, and the end. Throughout their existence, they lived a familiar routine with family and relatives. They identified and positioned themselves to strangers much like we do today by stating, "I was born in (this) parish and in (this) village."

The town may have had a smithy, a mill, a railroad station, a castle, and maybe even an inn. The smaller villages had



Detailed 1892 map showing Karnitz where the central church for Neides was located.



Enlarged section of 1892 map showing the Guts in Karnitz and Neides. The manor house is the prominent structure on the Gut. Railroad tracks intersected at Karnitz, one east-to-west, and the other north-to-south. The Bhf. means Bahnhof – railroad station – and there was one for each line. A major road, probably not yet paved, comes into Karnitz from the southeast.

only ten to twenty families totaling between fifty and 100 souls, while the larger villages and towns had populations of 200 or more.

The village, despite its size, was much more than a collection of huts and farm buildings. It was a community in every sense with relationships and ties of family, of kinship, and of many rights and obligations. The detailed maps of Kreis Greifenberg clearly show how the villages were laid out and how similar they were. In every village was an enclave, sometimes more than one, called a *Gut*, meaning farmstead or estate. The larger estates were called *Ritterguts* – Knightly (landed) estates – when owned by the nobility, or *Gutshof*, meaning estate, manor, or a large farm when owned by ordinary people. They were almost always surrounded by a wall and were completely enclosed. Inside the enclosure was the *Gutshaus* – the manor house or large farmhouse – where the estate owner and his family lived. Each *Gut* had a manager or supervisor who directed the tenants. The *Gutshaus* occupied the highest and best ground in the *Gut* with the barns, central water well, peasant houses, and barnyard around it. The animals and fowl were housed within the wall and never left unless attended by caretakers. Farms owned by the nobility were usually much larger and may have included a number of villages. In those cases, the nobility lived in a castle, often far from the villages, and a supervisor who represented their interest resided in the village.³

A manor required between 900 to 2,000 acres of tillable land and the same amount of wetlands, wood lots, and pasture. Typically, the manor was a self-contained community. A large manor had a mill for grinding grain, an oven for baking bread, fishponds, orchards, perhaps a winepress or oil press, and herb and vegetable gardens. Bees were kept to provide

honey. Woolen garments were produced from sheep raised on the manor. The wool was spun into yarn, woven into cloth on hand looms, and then sewn into clothing. Linen textiles could also be produced from flax, which was grown for its oil and fiber. Leather products were made from the manor's cattle. Horses and oxen were the beasts of burden. A blacksmith, wheelwright, and carpenter made and maintained crude agricultural tools. The arable land was divided into fields, which were laid out in strips without hedges or fences to separate one strip from another. Crops were rotated in the fields with one-fourth plowed and sown in the fall, another one-fourth in the spring, and one-half plowed and sown in June. These three periods of plowing and sowing could produce three crops, depending on the weather. At harvest time, all the peasants including women and children were expected to work in the fields. After the harvest, the community's animals were let loose in the fields to forage. On the manors that used the strip system, each peasant head of household was allocated a number of strips to work with his family and a yoke of oxen. But even then, he followed village custom that was probably as rigid as the rule of an overseer.

Other peasants lived in the village houses outside the manor. These peasants did not own any land but only rented it from the landowner. The landlord's power and influence were a tangible thing. He protected the villagers while they farmed his land. In return, he demanded they give him a day's work periodically, besides the rents and taxes he collected annually. If they did not meet those obligations on time, there was great danger they would lose the land.

Peasant families could be moved or transferred from village to village, either at their request or by the order of the landlord. Permission had to be granted by an "assurance attester" for any move of an individual or complete family. The attester may have been the landlord, his supervisor, or an individual within the village charged with the responsibility. The permission document, which also served as a recommendation of the individual or family, was provided to the landlord or supervisor of the village receiving the new migrant. There were, undoubtedly, many reasons for moving. Parents moved



This manor, located at Voightshagen, was typical and very likely built in the early 1880s. It would have been similar to the one on the Gut in Karnitz. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach -1996)

to live with an established family of their offspring; young men and women moved to be married; apprentices of skilled occupations transferred to a village where a void for their services existed; and some may have moved to better their positions.

The central town, with its church, was where the minister was domiciled, and the surrounding villages also contributed support to the church and the minister. Each village, however, kept its own identity in the book in which the central church recorded vital statistics. Religious fees were imposed and included all holidays, festivals, births and baptisms, marriages, burials, and burial memorials. Individual support of their religious leader often took the form of special gifts of food or produce, or a service such as tailoring.

Villagers were also expected to provide services for each other without charge. The peasant could not perform some tasks himself. For those, he turned to specialists with skills and unique equipment such as the smith, the miller, the tailor, and weaver. Butchery, for instance, was not accepted work for a common man to do, so a specialist in this field could demand a fee for his work. Some things had to be bought, like salt and of course, shoes.

At times, itinerant Yugoslavian gypsies, a Hungarian bricklayer, an Italian mason, or a Slovak broom maker would settle in a village for several months. They understood that no village could support them the year around. That could account for the appearance, now and again on the marriage records, of a surname so strangely alien that it was instantly noticeable. Apparently, this itinerant met and proposed matrimony to a village maiden whose father recognized a good worker and thus, gave his permission for the marriage. The man was then welcomed as a family member.

The peasants, as a rule, did not venture into the larger cities although they were not too distant in miles. They had no reason to go nor money to spend. However, as individuals, they welcomed the strangers who came to the village, bringing news and a bit of the outside world.

The villagers regarded themselves as a clan, connected by ties of blood. Those ties were not merely sentimental but functional, determining the role of individuals in their society.

Single men rarely lived alone in the village. Marriage was the normal expected state. If death deprived a man of a mate, forces in the community came into play to supply a new helpmate. A study of the old church records for many of these areas proved that was true. A young man with several small children who lost his mate and the mother they needed would remarry immediately, often to a sister of his first wife. Quite often an older man, unable to face life alone when his wife died, would marry a much younger woman, probably a widow, to care for him and his household.

The family revolved around the husband and wife. The man was head of the family, controlling all the goods, making decisions, taking charge of the fields, and imposing discipline in the home. His wife's role was that of a mother whose domain was the house, often consisting of only one room. Besides the house, covered with a thatched roof, she was responsible for the garden and the livestock. Her greatest concern was the provision of food, clothing, and shelter for all. Children, each according to their age, were expected to contribute: helping to herd cattle, weeding the garden, and as they grew older, they became counterparts of their parents, working beside them in preparation for setting up family units of their own.

Other family members: grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins with no place of their own, were cared for, but not without the expectation that each individual would help in any way they were able. There were no paid servants. If somehow a helper was necessary, she was treated and counted as a member of the family. This practice followed them until the middle of the 20th century in their Wisconsin lives.

The Pommeranian peasant dearly held and clearly defined the land entrusted to each family, its house, garden, and barnyard. Sometimes the agricultural lands around the village were enmeshed with each other depending on the whim of the landlord. He had primary control, and it was to the peasant's advantage to yield to demands made by him. Each family paid its rental fee, but the total acreage could be in as many as nine or ten places.

Longstanding customs determined the arrangements necessary to control land holdings and the methods of inheritance. The lands descended from generation to generation, usually going to the oldest son. The marriage of the oldest son was thus a critical event in the family history. Ideally, a proper wife would bring with her a dowry that could, and would be, divided among the younger sons. This sounds like an impossible situation, but matchmakers saw to it that these negotiations were carried forward with a great degree of compatibility. It must be remembered that there was only a certain amount of land available, and it had to be divided carefully to retain, not ownership, but stewardship. One who lost his land, for whatever



The main entrance to the von Elbe manor in Karnitz, across from the church (see map page 40). (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach-1996)

reason, also lost his status in the community. There was little to do for that kind of person because of his lack of other skills. After the sons were settled, young women of marriageable age were provided for and were usually given gifts of money or household articles.

It is easy to see that no marriage was isolated. According to custom, the bride of the oldest son would come to live in the home of her father-in-law. She contributed as another family member until the older couple retired and her husband became the head of the family. Even after retirement, when the cloak of authority would shift to the son, the older couple remained part of the household doing whatever they could to assist. If they became disabled by old age, they were cared for until their death.

Marriages often included a verbal or written marriage contract between the parents of the bridegroom (or bride) and the couple to be married. It spelled out the division of property desired by the parents among the various family members while keeping the house and any other major property holdings within the family. The agreement became the method for the orderly transfer of property from one generation to the next and provided for the ultimate care for the parents until their death. The agreements were very specific, including tools, clothing, furniture, animals, and cash, depending on the occupation of the parents making the grant. The parent's home could only be given once, usually to the oldest surviving son, but the remaining children were provided for by obligating the oldest son to give them produce, animals, or cash as they reached maturity. This meant, of course, that the brothers and sisters had to leave home and seek their own life elsewhere. This custom had endured through the ages. However, growing populations left fewer opportunities for those displaced by the process.

The new family would begin raising its own children and earning some money to lay aside for whatever needs they might have, no matter how simple. Each bit of money was earmarked for some specific requirement and not to be used for any other purpose. The needs were simple: rent, shoes, salt, and church support.

When children were born, the mother was usually attended by an experienced midwife – a person who undoubtedly was strong-willed and could be detached from the emotional and often dangerous proceedings – who directed the others, usually the grandmother or some other close relative. Since the homes were often only one or two rooms, everyone else in the family left until the baby was born.

Baptisms were a very important event for the parents, relatives, and the congregation. The time-honored ceremony was normally held after the regular Sunday service with the entire congregation remaining in the church to witness the solemn christening. If a child was gravely ill at birth, the pastor would be summoned, regardless of the hour, and the baptism would take place in the home. Godparents were chosen by the parents. If the newborn was a boy, two men and a woman would be chosen; if a girl, two women and a man would be asked. They would usually be aunts and uncles of the child. Among the godparents was usually a young woman, one upon whom this honor was bestowed for the first time. She was then known as the *jungfer paten*. She would carry the child to the church and home again afterwards. If she walked quickly, it was believed the child would learn to walk at an early age. The father and mother often did not go to the church for the baptism, only the godparents. Immediately after the baptism, the godparents would slide their *patengeschenk*, a gift of usually two *thalers*, under the pillow on which the child lay. The money was put in a box-like envelope that had a pious saying inscribed on its face. The godparents remained bound to the godchild all of his or her life and were expected to be an example of a good Christian. Each godparent usually presented the godchild with a Christmas present every year until confirmation.

At the end of life, death was not something to fear; it was seen as something that was inevitable. When the final hour was near, the pastor was called and the members of the immediate family gathered around the deathbed. After death, the church bells tolled once for every year of the deceased's life. The women bathed and dressed the body, and it was placed in a coffin after which the family began a vigil that would last until the burial. The body was transported to the cemetery where a graveside service was held. After the burial, the mourners went to the church where the pastor again held a service. When the funeral and church services ended, relatives, friends, and family gathered at the house of mourning. The solemn expressions on the faces of the mourners were soon replaced by smiles and cheerfulness after several servings of spirits. Funerals were always reason for families to get together.

Over the centuries, the Prussian language had been prohibited and faded away. It was replaced by the official form of the German language known as *hochdeutsch*. When Martin Luther translated the Old Testament, he used the *hochdeutsch* form and that helped make it the leading dialect.

The history of the culture of the Pomeranian people shows them to be industrious, strong-willed, deeply religious, and happy. Stories, songs, poetry, and other recorded historical information confirms that Pomerania had some good writers and storytellers for such a small and rural area. None of it could be labeled as morose or depressing. Even the stories of the poorest people seem to reveal a fun-loving environment with festivals, annual fairs, dances, religious observances, colorful weddings, confirmations, and family gatherings. They lived in a countryside that was well maintained in manicured villages and houses kept in good repair. Not being encumbered by numerous possessions, their focus was on the values of family, friends, and the church.

This had been the way of life of the Prussian peasant for at least fourteen centuries. Their life, if they were fortunate enough to reach old age, could be defined as simple, spiritual, structured, and predictable with few exceptions. All of this

was to change very rapidly over the comparatively short period of one-and-a-half centuries.

The history of this Heuer family begins in the village of Neides (now called Neidysz and part of Poland), Kreis Greifenberg, Pommern, Prussia. The earliest available records provide a traceable line to this smallest of the four villages served by the Karnitz Evangelische Church. Besides the Heuers, some of the other families who resided in Neides in the early-1700s were the Pagenkopps, Brockhusses, Konradts, Eichhorsts, and Broitzmanns. These families would play an important role in this Heuer family history.

Almost 100 years before **Johann Friedrich Heuer** was born in Neides, Pommern, his great-grandfather was born in the same village. His name was Martin Heuer.

MARTIN HEUER (1707 - 1771)

Martin Heuer, **Johann Friedrich's** great-grandfather, born circa 1707 in Neides, Kreis Greifenberg, Pommern, Prussia, grew up in the familiar routine of life in a small village. His birth day, month, and birth order have not been established nor have his parents been identified. Martin's parents may have been born and lived their entire lives in Neides or an adjacent community. It is possible for them to have been immigrants to Pommern from one of the southern German states such as Austria after The Reformation. Martin was born only two years after the bubonic plague devastated the Prussian population, killing everyone in vast areas of the territory. This may have been the reason his family could not be identified.

When Martin was born, Prussia and the province of Pommern was ruled by Frederick I. When he died in 1713, Frederick William I took the throne and immediately increased the size of the Prussian army. Prior to his reign, the methods used to maintain or increase the size of the army spread terror throughout the populace, especially in families where young men lived. It was common practice for soldiers to forcefully take a teenager in the prime of youth from a farmhouse at any time of the day or night. The countless, bloody altercations caused a crisis in Prussia. The peasants were not content to see their sons dragged away for a lengthy term of military service from which many never returned. Clearly a bureaucratic intervention was needed by the central government.

In the 1730s, King William I introduced the cantonal system of administering his subjects, creating layers of civil administration down to the lowest levels throughout the country. Everyone and everything was subject to the



This small sign announces what was the Prussian village of Neides. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach-1997)



A typical thatched-roof house of the mid-to-late 1700s still standing in Neides. In 1997, when this photo was taken, what remained of Neides was four houses and several farm buildings. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach-1997)

rules and control that eventually emerged with the system. All young men were required to register with the local lord, most of whom were the officers in charge of recruiting for the army. This saved costs of recruitment, both in monetary and human terms. Since the pool of young men was vastly increased, they were trained first and then required to serve only three months per year in times of peace. They were allowed to return home for the remainder of the year and assist their parents.

Other laws were enacted to protect peasant farmers from the monied nobility. Investors and the nobility were forbidden from purchasing peasant farms; conversely, a *rittergut* could only be sold to a member of the nobility. Occupations other than farm management and military service were, in many ways, closed to the nobility by tradition. In rural areas in Pommern, the commander of a military unit was also the civil government official. Those in the rank of captain and above received a budget for their units. What they did not spend, they kept. This led to strict discipline and thrift that soon became part of

estate management. In some cases, it also led to greed and distrust of the officers by the rest of society. In rural Prussia, the agricultural society and the military eventually were merged. That was the reason so many civilians wore used military clothing. The soldiers received new uniforms every year and they sold their old ones in their home villages.

The major changes initiated by Frederick William I had both reason and purpose and more importantly, achieved the desired results. He wanted to protect peasant farmers so they would have large families to maximize production and supply men to maintain a large army, which spurred economic growth.

Compulsory military service ensured that all of the male citizenry was exposed to the training and discipline of military service. Later those with military service were integrated into the civil service where their training, obedience, and management skills were put to good use. The buildup and maintenance of a 60,000-man army required a large quantity of clothing, food, and supplies to sustain them, all of which bolstered the economy. Thousands of well-trained soldiers were shipped to New England in North America in the mid-1700s as paid mercenaries, further enhancing the coffers of Prussia. The exposure of the young men to the culture of colonial America may have been a mistake. When the Prussian soldiers returned, they undoubtedly related their experiences in the new world, not the least of which was the vastness of the land, the freedom of its inhabitants, and the myriad of opportunities it presented.

Martin worked with his father while completing whatever formal schooling was provided. He might have been a farm worker, a shepherd, a cowherder, a miller's helper – or his chance of becoming a full-time soldier was very good considering how often Prussia and its neighbors went to war – but he became a tailor. He may have learned this respectable and essential trade from his father or he may have been an apprentice to the village tailor. In any event, the church records clearly state his occupation as, "Master Tailor from Neides."

MARTIN HEUER (1707 - 1771)
FRAU HEUER (UNKNOWN - 1748)

Martin married in his mid-twenties. The name of his first wife is not known so she is referred to here simply as Frau Heuer. She was the great-grandmother of **Johann Friedrich**. The Karnitz parish church records state that Martin and Frau Heuer produced eight children. The exact dates of their births were not found so the years shown here are approximate and based on the records of their death. Only the last three children of this marriage have been identified. They are Michael born 1740, died 1808; Martin Wilhelm born 1745, died 1787; and Caspar born 1748.

Being a master tailor did not guarantee an easy or financially secure existence for Martin and his large family. He had probably spent ten years of his youth as an apprentice tailor, then another few years as a journeyman before receiving his master certification and awarded the rank of *Schneidermeister*. Martin must have made a reasonable living, enough to support his large family. Payments for his services were small and usually not made in currency of *thalers* or *groschen* (30 *groschen* = 1 *thaler*). Instead, he was given potatoes, rye, or other foodstuffs in trade for his services. In addition to his services for the village, he may have also made uniforms for the military.

His wife, Frau Heuer, died in 1748, perhaps during childbirth with their eighth child. Martin was forty-one and had little choice but to quickly marry again.

MARTIN HEUER (1707 - 1771)
MARIA PAGENKOPP (UNKNOWN - 1788)

Martin married Maria Pagenkopp in 1748. She was a young woman, also from Neides, who was willing to assume the responsibilities of wife, housekeeper, and mother to the children from Martin's first marriage. This union produced eight more children. The exact dates of some of their births were not found so the years shown are approximate and based on other records. Seven of their names, dates of birth, and dates of death are as follows: Joachem born 1749; Catharina born 1750, died 30 May 1809; Engel born 1752, died 21 May 1812; Sophia born 1755; David born 4 June 1756, died 5 September 1836; Christoph born 1760, died 28 August 1814; and Maria Louisa born 22 August 1765, died 31 March 1769. The eighth child could not be found nor identified.

Prussia was now ruled by Frederick II, known as Frederick the Great. He was crowned king in 1740 and one of his first actions was to increase the army to 100,000 men. Frederick the Great marched his army south into Silesia in 1740 and for the next five years, fought a series of battles with Austria for control of Silesia. The Prussian king won the war but not before the loss of thousands of men on both sides. From 1745 to 1756, Frederick the Great utilized the period of peace to again increase the size of his army to 160,000 men, which continued economic prosperity. He reformed his agricultural policy, which actually benefited the peasants. His reforms, however, applied only to his royal lands within which he allowed the development of peasant estates. He considered an economically healthy peasantry essential for the welfare of the state, and the success of his policy was demonstrated by the high number of peasant immigrants he managed to attract and settle in Prussia. Between 1746 and 1756, ninety new peasant villages were founded in Pommern. We do not know what effect, if any, the policy changes had on the Heuer family.

From 1756 to 1763, Prussia was at war with Russia and, during the period, fought numerous battles with the Austrians, Saxons, Bohemians, and the Russians. At one point Russian troops occupied East Prussia and Pommern, and they were poised to conquer Brandenburg and the city of Berlin, its capital, but were suddenly recalled to Russia after the death of the Czarina. In the Prussian territories the population was being taxed to support the war, and the recruiting of peasants as replacements had depleted the male population so severely that those aged fourteen were being inducted. The Seven Year's War ended in 1763 but had exacted a horrible toll in human lives and left Prussia in a near-poverty condition.

Frederick the Great opened his storerooms and distributed corn for food and for sowing to his suffering noble subjects. To his peasants he distributed horses and rebuilt, at his own expense, the houses that had been destroyed. He established new settlements with a new flow of immigrants. By the end of his reign in 1786, one of every fifth Prussian was an immigrant colonist.

The king was also successful in changing the diets of his subjects. He saw the potential of the lowly potato to help feed his nation, which was largely dependent on bread. But first he faced the challenge of overcoming the people's prejudice against it. Although the potato had been introduced to Europe in 1621, Prussians resisted growing and eating the starchy tuber. In 1774, Frederick the Great issued a decree that ordered his subjects to grow potatoes as protection against famine. People in the town of Kolberg told him that the things had neither smell nor taste – not even the dogs would eat them – so what use were potatoes to them. The king then used reverse psychology in a less direct approach to encourage them. He ordered his royal farm superintendents to plant a large field of potatoes and stationed a heavy guard to protect the field from thieves. Nearby peasants naturally assumed that anything worth guarding was worth stealing. The peasants quickly found a way to carry off the plants and soon thereafter, potatoes became very popular. By the mid-1800s, the potato had become the main course in a typical Pommern house.



Spring plowing in the countryside near Behlkow, a short distance east of Bornlin. (Courtesy of Ronald Henry Heuer-1996)

Some of Martin Heuer's sons from his first marriage may have been among those called to serve during the Seven Year's War. His second family, the children named above, were very young and we do not know how the war affected them or their parents. Those children, however, were some of the first to benefit from Frederick the Great's order – that the educational system be improved. Under the reforms, attendance at school for six hours per day was compulsory for all children between the ages of five or six and thirteen. The reforms were not enforced universally throughout Prussia so it is difficult to know the level of compliance in Neides, Pommern. During the period 1772 and 1775, there were 750 new schools built, most of them in the countryside where the peasants lived. The new schools came too late for Martin Heuer's children, but his grandchildren would benefit from the increased emphasis on education.

Martin trained several of his sons to be tailors, and after many years of experience, they became master tailors in neighboring villages. When Martin died on 9 March 1771 at the age of sixty-four, eleven of his sixteen children were still living according to the record of his death.

Maria probably stayed in Neides with one of her sons until her death on 19 October 1788. Her death record stated she was survived by three sons and three daughters, all of whom were married. The record made it clear that the children mentioned were her children and not stepchildren. Maria Louisa, the second to last child of the eight children born to Martin and Maria, died at age four before both her parents.

CASPAR HEUER (1748 - 1812)

Caspar Heuer, **Johann Friedrich's** grandfather, was born in Neides, Kreis Greifenberg, Pommern, Prussia about 1748 to Martin and Frau Heuer. He was the youngest of eight children. Soon after he was born, his mother died and his father married Maria Pagenkopp.

Of the original eight children, only Caspar and two of his full brothers, Michael and Martin Wilhelm, have been identified. The brothers were older than Caspar and were married by the time he grew to adulthood. Although his father had trained some of his sons to be tailors, Caspar would become a day laborer.

After completing whatever schooling was offered, Caspar probably continued to live at home and work on the village farm. In his late teens he may have been called to serve in the military. There are no records to confirm military service for him specifically, but it was a common requirement for most young men during this period. At some point, Caspar either moved or was transferred to Karnitz, the larger town and community center near Neides.

CASPAR HEUER (1748 - 1812)
SOPHIA STREGE (1743 - 1812)

Caspar waited until he was twenty-seven to marry, perhaps because he first had to complete his required military service. Then he chose a thirty-two-year-old woman from Karnitz to be his wife. Sophia Strege, **Johann Friedrich's** grandmother, was born in 1743 in Karnitz and lived there until she and Caspar were married in the Karnitz church on 25 September 1775. By this time, Caspar was living in Karnitz and working for David Pagenkopp, the farm supervisor and a relative of his stepmother.

Caspar and Sophia's first child was born on 4 June 1776 in Karnitz. They named him Martin. On Martin's birth record, his father's occupation was listed as *knicht bauer* or farm worker (servant). True to tradition, when their children were born and baptized, the parents turned first to their brothers and sisters as potential sponsors. The child was very often given the name of one or more of the sponsors. For Martin, who was never given a second name, one of his sponsors was his uncle, Caspar's full-brother, Martin Wilhelm, also a farm worker. At some point, after the birth of their first child, the family moved back to Neides.

Their second child, also a son, was born on 17 December 1780 in Neides. He was given the name Joachim Friedrich after Caspar's half-brother, and one of his sponsors, Friedrich Schmeling. Joachim's other sponsor was Michael Heuer, Caspar's full-brother who was listed as, "a tailor from Nitznow." Joachim grew up in Neides and in his mid-twenties moved to Osterburg (also spelled Ostburg) where he found work. He died of *ruhr* – dysentery – on 17 October 1807. His body was brought back to Karnitz for burial in the church cemetery. He had never married and was only twenty-six when he died.

Caspar and Sophia's third child was born on 16 October 1783 in Neides. He was given the name David after his sponsor, uncle David Heuer, Caspar's stepbrother. The elder David was a tailor from the village of Klein Justin. Young David also grew up in Neides, attending school and working with his father and his two brothers. As a young adult, he enrolled in the local militia while still living at home. He continued to live with his parents even after his oldest brother, Martin, married. In 1816, David married Louisa Oehtgen, the oldest daughter of Ernest Friedrich Oehtgen. He was released from service with the local militia and moved with his new wife to Lutkenhagen, the village where Louisa had been born.

King Frederick the Great died in 1786 and was succeeded by his nephew, Frederick William II, who ruled from 1786 to 1797. The new king allowed the army to disintegrate, and the power of Prussia diminished. He did, however, promulgate the Code of 1794, authored by Frederick the Great. The Code was the final phase of judiciary reform, sometimes referred to as a constitution. It provided a number of basic rights such as protection of person and property, equality before the law, equality of the sexes, liberty of religion, the right to an education, and the pursuit of happiness, to name but a few. The Code also placed all subjects in the kingdom, including the king himself, under the laws of the state. Frederick William II presided over a war with France that ended in 1795 after which Prussia had to give to France the Prussian territory west of the Rhine River. During the same period, 1792 to 1795, Prussia and Russia each invaded Poland, from the west and east respectively, and annexed the conquered land. Frederick William II died in 1797. Although his greatest accomplishments would be the constitution and the expansion of Prussian territories, for the Heuer family it may have been that Pommern was spared the ravages of war.

In 1805, Caspar and Sophia's oldest son, Martin, married Louise Brockhuss and brought her to live with him and his parents. Caspar was fifty-seven and Sophia, sixty-two. With Martin assuming responsibility for the land, Caspar became a



This early-1900s plat map of Karnitz includes the names of the resident families and the houses they lived in. Among the family names are G. Heuer, O. Gauger, J. Lindemann, R. Ohm, M. Ohm, E. Reimer, K. Eichhorst, W. Schmeling, H. Mielke, H. Tesch, H. Laabs, H. Tietz, and O. Paape. Von Elbe owned the Gut and many properties in the village. The large area in front of Von Elbe's manor house includes a fruit orchard and a pond, making it look like a park. The Karnitz Church is located at the cross to the left of Von Elbe's manor and the Schule (school) is a short distance to the north. (Chronik des Kreises Greifenberg in Hinterpommern by von Dr. D. Albert Ulrich aus Woedtke, 1990 – Published by author only in German) (Courtesy of Ronald Henry Heuer)

jachtsman or fisherman. *Jachtsman* also translates to owning and operating a boat.

When the 19th century began, most Prussians were still governed by the bonds of nature. Frederick William III had succeeded his father and had no desire to improve the deplorable state of the Prussian army nor was there any money in the state treasury to accomplish it. The new king took steps to liberate the peasantry from bondage. In the period between 1799 and 1806 alone, 50,000 peasants were freed from all services to their lords and became free peasants but mainly on lands where the crown could exercise direct influence. It would be more difficult to carry out this process on the private estates, and that would not happen until 1850. There would be many changes during the 19th century for the Prussian State and for the Heuers in Pommern.

Frederick William III allied himself in 1805 with Emperor Alexander I of Russia against the new threat from France in the form of Napoleon. The Prussian army suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of Napoleon's army even though they possessed superior numbers of troops. The Prussian fortresses fell one after another, and by 27 October 1806, Napoleon entered Berlin. The Russians entered the war and defeated Napoleon on the border of Lithuania but did not follow this action aggressively. That allowed Napoleon's forces to invade Silesia and Pommern, which were all conquered and occupied.

The Prussian reform movement continued in spite of the wars with Napoleon. In fact, it was the French Revolution that persuaded the other European powers to act on the reform of social injustices. In Prussia, and Pommern, the peasant serf was a man with certain specific duties to carry out for his lord, with the right of every citizen to go to court, and a watchful bureaucracy to ensure that the landowner did not abuse his rights. The nobility readily agreed to the new reforms with a freed peasantry. They reasoned that if the protective measures, which secured the economic basis of the peasant serf and the land he held were revoked in the name of freedom, then the landowner could evict any number of peasants he thought necessary, consolidate his estate, and employ seasonal farm labor when and as he needed it. The reform decree contained provisions that *should* have made it easier for all to buy, own, and cultivate land. In practice, the reforms would not be achieved because the peasant, even though he had the right to freely use his own resources, could not compete with the established landlord. In December 1808, Frederick William III issued a decree that installed provincial governments under the central authorities in Berlin for the provinces then existing – East Prussia, Pommern, Brandenburg, and Silesia.

The reform movement also addressed the subjects of education and religion. In the early 1800s, changes in the educational system were made that provided primary education to all, regardless of position or gender, in state-operated schools. All religions were to have the same rights and duties.

All churches in the Pommern area in which the Heuers lived were called Evangelische (Evangelical) Protestant. They served both the Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist) congregations from the same altar. Both denominations believed that church and state should be kept separate. The king reasoned that by changing the original words for the distribution of Holy Communion, he could satisfy the religious beliefs of his subjects. Instead, he provoked many Lutherans who believed God's word as expressed in the Bible. Many dedicated Lutherans protested such royal action and would rather have suffered slander, persecution, forfeiture of property, imprisonment, and even banishment, than yield to the faith-destroying edict of the king. The conflict between orthodoxy, the Lutheran belief, and pietism, the Calvinist belief, continued to be a source of division among Lutherans.

Frederick William III settled the war with Napoleon by paying him an enormous sum – 140 million *thalers*. This was followed by uprisings of German people against the French army in Austria, Bavaria, Pommern, and Brandenburg. Napoleon's army was able to suppress all of these uprisings and by 1812, had massed its forces on the Russian border.

By 1812, Martin and Louise had three children, **Johann Friedrich** born in 1808, Carl Gottlieb born in 1810, and the youngest, Marie Elizabeth Louise born in 1811. Marie contracted the *grippe*, more commonly known as influenza, and died in January 1812. In the close quarters in which the two families lived, influenza was quickly passed to those most susceptible, the elderly Caspar and Sophia. The disease then took Sophia's life on 14 February 1812, at the age of sixty-nine years. The Karnitz church record listing Sophia's death states that, "Sophia suffered for eight weeks with a fever. Caspar also had the fever. Apparently did not use a doctor."

This record tells us that both Sophia and Caspar contracted influenza near the same time. We believe that Caspar also died of influenza, maybe even before Sophia. The fact that a doctor was not called is certainly not surprising, given the lack of faith in medicine on one hand and the scarcity of doctors on the other. The church records, after this entry for Sophia,



Spring flowers blanket the floor of a forested area between Borntin and Behlkow, now known as Bielikowo. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach-1996)

never again mentioned Caspar Heuer. In the wake of an epidemic it was common for the record keeper to miss entering a death into the records. We have to make do with this information instead of a specific death date for Caspar. All three – Marie, Sophia, and Caspar – were buried in the Karnitz church cemetery.

MARTIN HEUER (1776 - 1847)

Martin Heuer, the father of **Johann Friedrich** and the eldest child of Caspar and Sophia Strege Heuer, was born on 4 June 1776 in Karnitz, Kreis Greifenberg, Pommern, Prussia. Martin was baptized three days later in the Karnitz church. His sponsors were all relatives: David Pagenkopp, a farm supervisor of his father Caspar, from Karnitz; Martin Wilhelm Heuer, his father's full-brother, listed as a farm worker; and Marie Strege, a relative of his mother, listed as a servant.⁴ The occupation of Martin's father was listed as *knicht bauer*, or farm worker. Shortly after Martin's birth, the family moved back to Neides.



The village of Karnitz, now Karnice, Poland in 1996. The steeple of the central church protrudes through the trees in the upper left corner of the picture. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach-1996)

Martin grew up in the traditional Prussian way. He completed his schooling and worked in the fields with his father and brothers. There is no record of his confirmation because this particular church record, unlike many others, did not include confirmation; only birth, marriage, and death. However, based on the knowledge that confirmation was a routine custom, it is almost a certainty he was confirmed in the Evangelische church at age fourteen or fifteen.

There is little doubt that Martin served either in the Prussian army or in the local militia as did his younger brother, David. During this period, military service was compulsory. The sheer size of the Prussian army made it necessary to induct all able-bodied men, if for nothing more than training before releasing them to local militia's where they served as a reserve for the army if needed. That may explain why they were both twenty-nine when they married. It is likely they wanted to be free of further military service after their marriage. The time they spent, whether it was three years or more likely five or six, fulfilled their obligation.

As the oldest son, Martin was expected to take over from his father and care for his parents until their death. In 1805, he married a young woman who lived in the nearby village of Nitznow in Kreis Cammin.

MARTIN HEUER (1776 - 1847) LOUISE BROCKHUSS (1785 - 1848)

Martin Heuer and Louise Brockhuss, **Johann Friedrich's** mother, were married on 28 September 1805 in Neides. Louise moved to Martin's house, the home of his parents, Caspar and Sophia.

Louise, the seventh of twelve children born to Hans and Engel Broitzmann Brockhuss, was born 19 September 1785. When she and Martin married, he was twenty-nine and she was nine days from her twenty-first birthday.

Louise's father had died four years earlier. Her widowed mother, Engel, with Louise and three younger brothers: Gottfried – fifteen, Johann David – thirteen, and Christian – eleven, were all living with Engel's married son, (Louise's older brother) Jochem, in Nitznow. Jochem had married Dorothea Christina Heuer, Martin Heuer's cousin. Dorothea was a daughter of Martin's uncle, Michael, who had died two years earlier in 1808. The families were members of the same church at Karnitz and knew each other well.

Martin and Louise's first child and first son was born 18 April 1808 in Neides. He was named **Johann Friedrich**, and was baptized on 24 April 1808. His baptismal sponsors were his maternal uncle, Friedrich Brockhuss Johann Heuer and Maria Konradts (sometimes spelled Conradt) from Neides. All were relatives.

Nearly two years later, their second child and second son was born to Martin and Louise on 26 January 1810, also in Neides. They named him Carl Gottlieb and his sponsors were Peter Tancke from Neides; Gottfried Brockhuss, a maternal uncle; and Louisa Schmeling from Karnitz.

Their third child and first daughter named Marie Elizabeth Louise was born 1 December 1811, and her sponsors were Elizabeth Brockhuss Tanck (also spelled Tanke and Tancke) from Gutzelwitz; Maria Wegner from Neides; and paternal uncle David Heuer, also from Neides.



Two-story, two-family homes in Tressin in 1996. Note the two chimneys, one for each side of the duplex. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach-1996)

There were five adults and three children in the household: Martin, Louise, and their three children; Martin's brother, David; and their parents, Caspar and Sophia. In January 1812, the *grippe*, better known as influenza, caused the death of baby Marie Elizabeth Louise. Then Grandmother Sophia and Grandfather Caspar contracted the disease and died shortly afterwards, as was previously related. In less than three months the household had gone from seven members to eight and then to five.

On 22 June 1812, Napoleon's army began crossing the river Memel, the Russian frontier. It did not take the Russians long before they had lured Napoleon's 600,000 men deep into the Russian vastness, scorching the earth as they retreated, leaving nothing for his army to subsist on. Napoleon captured Moscow, but after that his only recourse was to leave Russia. During his withdrawal, Russian attacks became stronger and stronger, culminating in a disastrous defeat by the Russians at the crossing of the Beresina River.

The French defeat at the hands of the Russians further fanned the flames of anti-Napoleonic sentiment in Prussia. In February 1813, the king issued an edict, drafting into the military, all male citizens of the ages seventeen to twenty-four who had previously been exempted. Fortunately, the Martin Heuer family had no one that fit the criteria.

The combined armies of Prussia, Russia, Austria, Sweden, and Britain attacked Napoleon's forces in Leipzig and in a three-day battle from 16 to 19 October soundly defeated the French. The allied armies followed the defeated army who resisted at various locations as they retreated towards Paris. On 31 March 1814, Napoleon's forces surrendered, and Napoleon abdicated the throne and fled to the island of Elba.

Martin and Louise's fourth child and second daughter was born 27 December 1812. They named her Caroline Christina Elizabeth. Her baptismal sponsors were Joachem Broitzmann, Dorothea Heuer (spelled Heuern in the record meant to denote female gender), and Louise Strege (n), all relatives. Caroline died just three months later on 3 April 1813 from whooping cough.

On 29 September 1814, Louise gave birth to their fifth child and third son who was given the name Joachim David Wilhelm. His sponsors, all relatives, were David Eichhorst from Neides, Joachem Broitzmann, and Dorothea Elizabeth Pagenkopp.

The euphoria that followed Napoleon's abdication was short-lived. He returned to Paris on 1 March 1815, gathered an army, and marched to Liege where he met and defeated the advancing Prussian army. The Prussians then took a stand at Ligny on 16 June 1815. The battle raged all day until the Prussians gave up the city and retreated toward the village of Waterloo. The British, under General Wellington, were already at Waterloo in defensive positions waiting for Napoleon's army. Napoleon mistakenly believed he was going against only the British army and attacked Wellington's defensive positions. After being repulsed three times, the French forces began their fourth attack. The Prussian army, under General Blucher, finally arrived and the French were soundly defeated.

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 established the German Confederation that reduced the several hundred German states to thirty-nine. As a result of the war, Prussia gained vast territories in the west. The provinces now consisted of West Prussia, Pommern, Silesia, Westphalia, Brandenburg, East Prussia, Rhineland, Lower Rhine, Saxony, and Posen. The kingdom of Prussia after 1815 constituted two territorially unequal parts. The eastern part was predominantly Protestant and the western part predominantly Catholic. Prussia, now at peace, was a nation that extended for 278,000 square kilometers and had a population of over ten million.

Martin's brother, David, thirty-one and married to Louisa Oehtgen, was released from the local militia and moved to Lutkenhagen, her home village.

Tragedy struck again when three and one-half-year-old Joachim David Wilhelm died on 5 March 1818. The cause of his death was not recorded.

Martin and Louise's sixth child and fourth son was born 9 September 1818. He was named Ernst Friedrich August and his baptismal sponsors were Michael Tesch from Poberow, Sophia Conradt from Poberow, and David Conradt from Neides. On 17 January 1824, Ernst Friedrich August died, but the cause of his death was not recorded. With the death of Ernst, the Heuer family household was reduced to father Martin, mother Louise, and their two sons: Johann Friedrich, nearly sixteen,



Enlarged section of 1892 map showing details of Kahlen, a very small village.

to eat from the single bowl. Augmenting the potatoes were portions of fried bacon and sour milk. No plates were used for the individuals around the table, only a spoon to transport the food from the single bowl to each mouth. Almost every evening meal consisted of *pellkartoffeln* – potatoes boiled with their skins on – with herring and sour milk. For this meal, a homemade cloth would be spread on the table and the potatoes piled on it in the center. After everyone was finished, the tablecloth was simply lifted, with the leftovers still on it, and carried out to the pigs. The women had little cleaning to do since there were no dishes to wash or to be broken. *Schnapps*, a clear, cheap beverage made from distilled alcohol and usually flavored with peppermint, was part of the early and second breakfast, mostly for the men although women sometimes drank it also. The alcohol content was a small percentage and even then it was almost always diluted with water. Although this diet was mainly very bland, it was nutritious and sustained their lives. During the summer, there was a variety of apples, pears, plums, cherries, and berries. In the fall, after the weather had become colder, beef and pork were more often consumed because it could be preserved, but it was never eaten in large quantities because there was never much of it available. However, in Pommern, like all areas along a large body of water, fish were plentiful. They were inexpensive and provided a major food source for the peasants.

Martin and Louise's seventh child, third daughter, and last child, was born 17 February 1827. They named her Maria Caroline Friederike.⁶ This birth record was the first mention of the Heuer family in the Zirkvitz church records, confirming their move to Kahlen. However, Martin and Louise did not stay in Kahlen very long. By November of 1828, they were living in Parpart in Kreis Greifenberg, only a short distance away.

The Heuer family had become acquainted with the Christian Ruhnke family when they arrived in Kahlen. The oldest child in the Ruhnke family was a daughter, Friederike Louise. She was three and one-half years older than Johann Friedrich Heuer, but that did not prevent them from marrying on 29 November 1828. Contrary to custom, Johann Friedrich moved into the Christian Ruhnke home in Kahlen. Friederike Louise's mother, Dorothea Marie Weber Ruhnke, had died on 9 April 1828 leaving her husband, Christian Ruhnke, now an old man, a widower. Johann Friedrich Heuer took over the role of head of the Ruhnke household.

and Carl Gottlieb, fourteen. They had buried two daughters, two sons, and Martin's mother, Sophia and his father, Caspar – all in the Karnitz church cemetery.

Then, for reasons known only to Martin and Louise, they moved from Neides to Kahlen, a small village in Kreis Cammin served by the church in Zirkvitz.⁵ There are no records that reveal what year they moved, but it was between 1824 and early-1827.

It had been nearly fifty years since Frederick the Great had issued the order to plant potatoes. The intervening years of crop failures and famines, among other economic factors, had convinced the peasantry of Europe to become more dependent on this hardy food. A typical Pommern breakfast consisted of bread, butter or lard, with bacon, ham, or sausage. Milk and *schnapps* were the beverages. The *arbeiters* – workers – always carried a second breakfast with them to the fields. It was made from the same ingredients as those served at the earlier breakfast. At noon a large bowl of potatoes would be set in the middle of the table and everyone used a spoon



The Zirkvitz Church as it looked in 1996. Constructed in the early-1300s, its earliest records date back to 1598. Records for Martin, Louise, and other Heuer family members were found in the archives of this church. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach)



Map showing details of Parpart, a very small village.

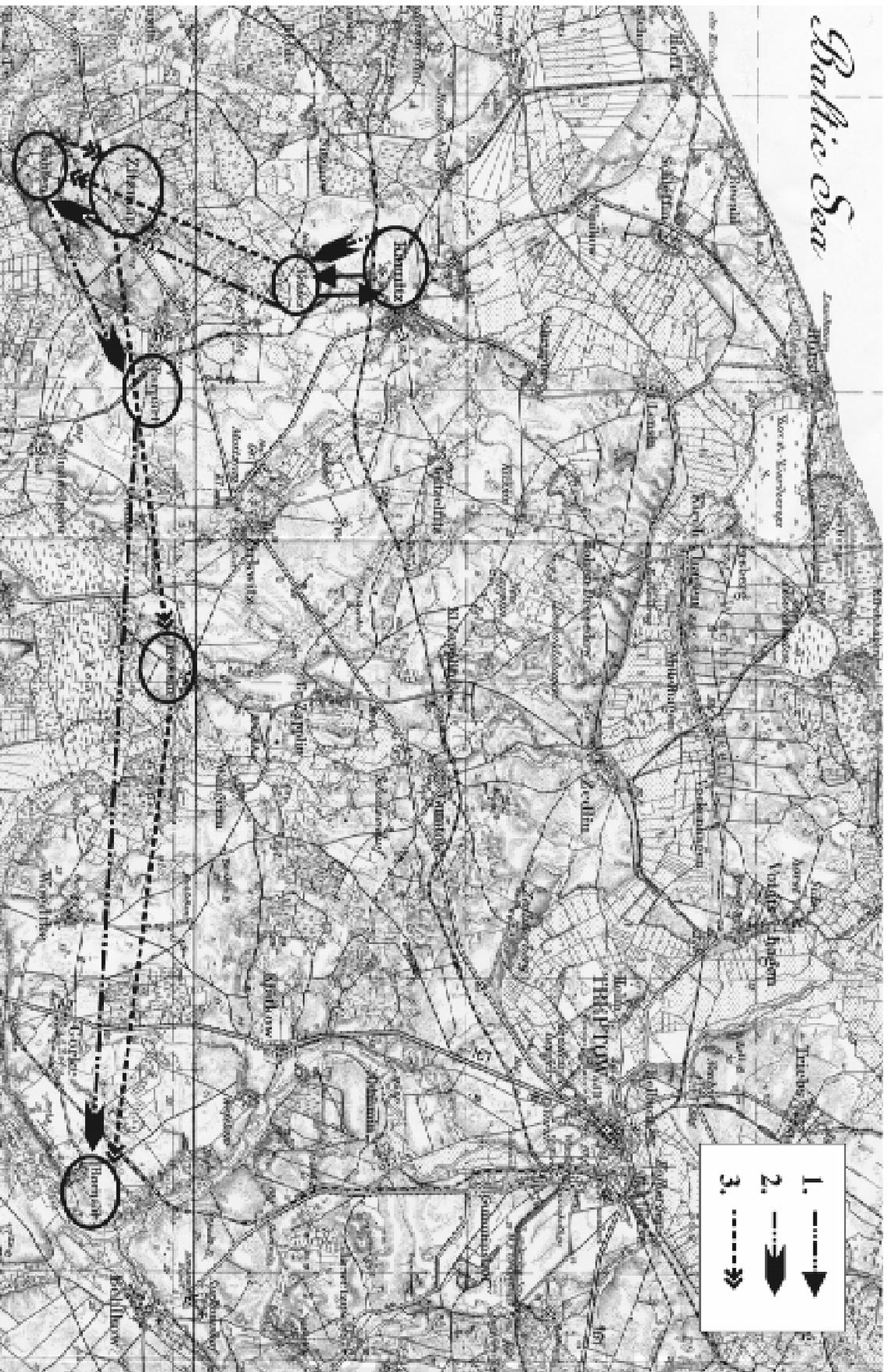
Martin and Louise remained in Parpart where he continued to work as a *budner*. This translates to one who is a small farmer or stallkeeper. It also means someone who owns the house but not the land, also a day worker. Their second son, Carl Gottlieb, Johann Friedrich's brother, married Friedericke Kicker from Pustchow on 19 February 1836 and moved to live there. On the church record of their marriage, Carl Gottlieb father's name was given as, "Martin Heuer from Parpart."

Sometime after 1836, Martin, Louise, and Maria Caroline Friederike Heuer moved to Borntin to live with or near their oldest son, Johann Friedrich and his family. Borntin was a small village, no bigger than Tressin, and it was near Goerke (now Gorzyca, Poland). They now attended the Evangelische church at Goerke. Martin Heuer died in Borntin on 3 April 1847 at the age of seventy years and ten months. He was buried four days later on 7 April in the Goerke church cemetery. According to the Goerke death register, his next of kin was listed as, "Brookhuss from Neides," an apparent reference to his wife, Louise Brockhuss, who was originally from Neides.

Louise Brockhuss Heuer died the following year on 24 August 1848 at the age of sixty-two years, eleven months, and five days. She was buried in the Goerke church cemetery three days later on 27 August 1848.



Abandoned communal farms like the one shown above now dot the countryside. (Courtesy of Suzanne Emelyn Heuer Vlach-1996)



Tracing the Heusers in Pommern, Prussia

Martin Heuser, Great-Grandfather of Johann Friedrich Heuser – Neides 1707 - 71.

1. Caspar Heuser, Grandfather of Johann Friedrich Heuser – Neides 1748 - 75 / Kuratze 1775 - 77 / Neides 1777 - 1812.

2. Martin Heuser, Father of Johann Friedrich Heuser – Kuratze 1776 - 77 / Neides 1777 - 1825 / Kahlen 1825 - 28 / Porsow 1828 - 37 / Baurdin 1837 - 47.

3. Johann Friedrich Heuser – Neides 1808 - 25 / Kahlen 1825 - 28 / Zimmar 1828 - 32 / Tressow 1832 - 36 / Baurdin 1836 - 57 / 1857 - Emigrated to America.