

# OUR VON PRESSENTIN ANCESTORS IN GERMANY

## BERND and ANNA DOROTHEA VON PRESSENTIN

**Bernd: 1639-1709, Anna Dorothea: 1642-1722**

The current von Presentin family historian provided this background on the two people who are the common ancestors for all of us who carry von Presentin DNA in our genes today:

"In the centuries up to the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) our family was always prosperous. During the lengthy war the whole country suffered greatly. Cities and villages were raided and burnt down, and many farms were destroyed.

The von Presentins came near to extinction at this time. Then, in 1665 the last surviving man in the family, Bernd von Presentin married his niece Anna-Dorothea von Presentin. This couple are therefore now our common forefathers.

At the time of their marriage the family possessed about 4800 hectares in the Duchy of Mecklenburg. It was a huge estate, bearing in mind that a small farm has only 15-20 hectares."

(And, for those of us who are metrically challenged, a hectare is equal to about 2 1/2 acres.)

### From *The History of the Family von Presentin Book I, 1899*

*From at least 1649, Bernd was under the guardianship of his cousin Claus von Presentin of Prestin and Engelke von Restorff. He attended the excellent Sternberg school, a preparatory school for university study. He was confirmed at about 14 years of age and then around the end of 1653 was sent in service as a page to Duke Philipp of Holstein-Glücksburg. After his brother Helmuth died in 1676 the family of the von Presentins nearly became extinct, since now only his [Helmuth's] younger brother Bernd was alive as the only male descendant of the family. Bernd received the estate of Weitendorf and the Rittersitz in Sternberg. Bernd rebuilt the Rittersitz at Sternberg and enlarged his property there by purchase of a barn along with a garden. He died at the Rittersitz in Sternberg on March 24, 1709. [His wife] Anna Dorothea died at Sternberg at the Rittersitz on November 6, 1722.*

**Marriage:** Bernd was married on November 12, 1665 to Anna Dorothea von Presentin, the eldest daughter of Claus von Presentin (34) and his wife Barbara Eva von Oldenburg of the House of Köthel. Anna Dorothea, born at Prestin on November 24, 1642, died at Sternberg at the Rittersitz on November 6, 1722.

## Bernd and Dorothea von Pressentin's Family

**Children:** 10 children were born to this marriage:

1. **Hartwig Helmuth**, born at Prestin on October 18, 1666 and died on September 18, 1737
2. **Claus Jürgen**, born at Prestin May 8, died May 22, 1668
3. **Bernd Ulrich**, born at Prestin on May 6, 1669 and died in battle, between July 27 and August 1, 1702.
4. **Nicolaus Otto**, born at Prestin on September 29, 1671, died January 28, 1732
5. **Elisabeth Sophie**, born at Weitendorf on February 18, 1674, died unmarried on October 29, 1745 at Prestin, where she had managed the household for many years.
6. **Eva Dorothea** was born on October 21, 1675 at Prestin. She was married on February 4, 1708 to Siegfried Christian von Jagow of Gross-Gaartz in the Mark and died in 1721.
7. **Ilse Marie**, born on October 29, 1679 at Prestin, died unmarried on February 22, 1752 at Daschow.
8. **Anna Hedwig**, born at Prestin July 22, 1682, on January 15, 1718 became the wife of the Royal Danish Captain Johann Anton von Wickede and died in 1750, after she had become a widow on April 1, 1728.
9. **Katharina Juliana**, born at Prestin on February 28, 1685, was a *Konventualin* at the Malchow cloister and died there on October 2, 1758.
10. **Balthasar Christoph**, born on February 12 [place not noted] and died February, 1748. Balthasar Christoph was the founder of the House of Kaarz, which however was extinguished with his children. [I visited Kaarz in 2003. It has been beautifully restored.]

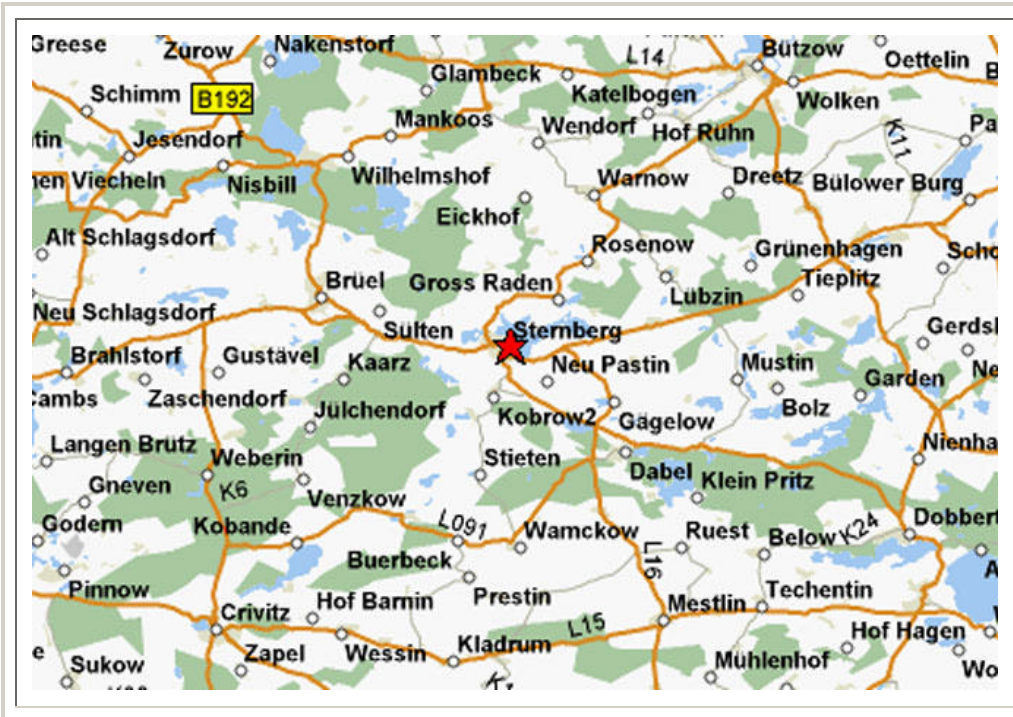
### Balthasar von Pressentin

Balthasar's life was so remarkable; it deserves a short mention here. In 1707 he joined the Royal Swedish army and later fought against Russia under the flag of Sweden. He was taken prisoner in a battle on July 8, 1709 and confined at Kasan [Kazan, home of the Tatars, situated eight hundred kilometers to the east of Moscow] where he had to endure the greatest mistreatment; he was even led out to execution several times, but finally was rescued by the Russian Prince Menzikoff.

A few years after his imprisonment, Balthasar joined the Russian military service. Then, as a German, he was transferred to the Baltic provinces in Kurland [now Latvia and Estonia] and in 1713, now a Russian lieutenant; he was married to Anna Sybilla von Peykern. Not long thereafter he was transferred to the garrison in Astrakhan [Caspian seaport on the Volga River's delta.]. At the beginning of 1726 he took his discharge and returned through Kurland to Mecklenberg.

With his family, in the summer of 1726 he reached his relatives, brothers and nephews, who did not recognize the brother they had long thought dead, until he identified himself as such by a mole on his arm. Because the division of the inheritance had already been completed, it had to be undertaken anew on July 5, 1726. Following their father's writ, Balthasar received the Sternberger Rittersitz and the village of Kaarz (in part) and now lived with his family in Sternberg. Because his financial situation worsened steadily, he was forced to sell the Rittersitz in Sternberg. When Balthasar sold his portion of the village of Kaarz remains unknown. In the meantime his wife had died and Balthasar moved to Prestin, where he lived with his nephew Johann Wilhelm. He spent the rest of his life in poverty and ended his hard life in February of 1748.

# STERNBERG



## STERNBERG

(Red star on map)

One of the most important events in the history of Mecklenburg took place at Sternberg.

It was here that the Reformation was first introduced in Germany in 1549.

Sternberg was also the seat of the Mecklenburg Parliament from 1275 to 1913.

## The von Pressentin Sternberger Rittersitz 1397-1796

(From *The History of the Family von Pressentin Book II*, 1935.)

*Like other families of the Mecklenburg nobility our family also had a seat in the city of Sternberg. This had been continuously under family ownership since 1397. This "Ritterhof" (knight's estate) consisted of a solid residence and spacious courtyard with outbuildings along with scattered lands lying between the fields of the townsfolk, so that the whole estate was 527 hectares. As a manor it had its own jurisdiction, hunting and grazing rights, and representation in the government of the town belonged to the current owner.*

*The Rittersitz burned down three times. On August 19, 1508 half the city of Sternberg went up in flames and the Rittersitz was also destroyed and built again on the same spot. Bernd's mother, the widow of Cuno Helmuth von Pressentin, was widowed and fell into great distress during the Thirty Years' War.*

*She was forced to pawn out the estate's fields. Her sons, Helmuth and Bernd then held the Rittersitz, one after the other. Helmuth died in 1676 without heirs. On April 23, 1659 the whole city burned down to a barn and the church walls and the Rittersitz shared the same fate. The family papers stored in a chest were also lost for the first time. Bernd rebuilt the Rittersitz and enlarged it in 1702 through the purchase of a barn and a garden. After Bernd's death in 1709 the division of the inheritance had already been made, when his youngest son Balthasar, whom everyone believed to have fallen in Russia, returned from there with his family in 1726. The division had to be done over, and Balthasar received the Rittersitz and Kaarz share, according to his father's writ.*

*On account of his poor financial situation, Balthasar pawned the Rittersitz for 30 years to Karl v. Rieben of Pomerania. In 1741 the city and the Rittersitz again went up in flames. A Fräulein v. Restorff burned to death in the Rittersitz and the Pressentin family papers were again obliterated.*

*The Rittersitz changed hands, within the family, several times. Finally, in 1800 the von Pressentin heirs of the Stieten line relinquished their claims to the Sternberg Rittersitz . In 1830 this baronial fief came to an end and the property was absorbed into Sternberg.*

*While the street (the Rittersitzstrasse), on which our former residential buildings stood, was completely empty up until 1842, in time modern, ugly houses grew up on the buildings' site and on both sides of the street, partly by use of the old underground arches constructed of rock and large bricks, which today are divided up and used as cellars. Some are especially well preserved under house no. 29. Otherwise there is nothing left of the earlier Rittersitz and its facilities and hardly anything known of it by the population. The old grounds were broken into 6 lots, three on the site of the old residence and a further three houses on the site of the former stalls and barns.*

Christopher Wallis has noted that the von Pressentin family's ties to Sternberg are still very much in evidence in the very imposing Sternberger Church. In the side chapel, used for services in the winter months, are massive headstones for von Pressentins. Several members of the family were buried under the church floor. A plaque on the floor near the altar is inscribed: "Grabgewölbe derer von Pressentin 1605." ["Burial crypt of the von Pressentins, 1605."] The von Pressentin coat of arms can be seen in the stained glass window on the right of the Altar. Another of our direct ancestors, Gustav Friedrich von Pressentin, gave the communion tray to the church in 1767.

Karen and I spent a day in Sternberg in 2003, and walked along the street where the von Pressentin "Rittersitz" once stood. We also spent time in the Sternberger Church, seeing evidence of the von Pressentin family throughout the building.



*Von Pressentin Crest in Stained Glass Window, Sternberger Church*

# PRESTIN

**Bernd and Anna Dorothea** lived at various estates, including both the "Rittersitz" in Sternberg and the Prestin estate, but most of their ten children were born at Prestin, including our direct ancestor, **Nicolaus Otto**.



**Prestin Manor House in 1870**

## History of the Manor House in Prestin

(From *The History of the Family von Pressentin Book II*, 1935.)

*The first building on the site was originally a Wend (Slavic) fort or castle, situated in the valley and surrounded by a moat. By 1270 Prestin was already known to be in the hands of our progenitor Petrus and remained in our possession until 1872, that is, demonstrably for about 600 years. It is certain von Pressentins lived here long before then. Later a medieval castle stood on this site. The first Manor House was built by Dinnies von Pressentin in 1538. In 1728 Johann Wilhelm von Pressentin built a new two-story half-timbered house in front of the old house, which became one of the wings of the new Manor House. The facade was later plastered and three sides of the moat were filled in so that the park around the house could be enlarged. After the death of Adolph von Pressentin in 1864 his widow was forced to sell the Estate in 1872.*

As the Russians overran northern Germany in 1945, the village of Prestin was in their path. They burned down the Manor House. While the rest of the estate buildings, including the chapel and church survived, they were treated roughly in the ensuing years when the village was a Communist "collective people's farm."

When Karen and I visited Prestin in May, 2003, we toured the remnants of the estate. For this picture, Karen stood with the family historian, Friedrich-Franz on the site of the manor house.



Between the end of World War II and 1990, Prestin was part of the "German Democratic Republic," known to most of us as East Germany. With the Reunification of 1990, this small village is once again within Germany.

Prestin is about 20 miles east of Schwerin, which was once the headquarters of the Duchy of Mecklenburg. Today, Schwerin is the capital of the German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. The population is just under 100,000.

Schwerin has a fairy-tale castle where members of our family once served as pages.