

OUR VON PRESSENTIN ANCESTORS IN GERMANY

BERNHARD FRIEDRICH VON PRESSENTIN In Pomerania 1846-1871

Why did **Bernhard Friedrich** go to Pomerania?

The family histories do not say why Bernhard gave up his work as a forester and moved to Pomerania. After trying to make sense out of the history of this portion of Europe, (not even Google could do this for me!) it seems that when Poland was partitioned in 1772 the western part of former Poland (known as Pomerania) was given to Prussia; and it was thoroughly Germanized. No doubt, it was considered a "land of opportunity" and perhaps Bernhard felt it promised him a bright future. Here's what "Wikipedia" says about Pomerania at this time in history:

"Things changed in the late 1700s when Poland was carved up by its powerful neighbors in the three Partitions of Poland. Now the native Poles came under occupation, and were ruled by foreigners. The Prussian state was determined to become stronger with the acquisition of the additional Polish lands. To ensure continued possession and a secure German presence, settlers were encouraged, and German communities were assisted with gifts that built churches, provided bells, and various other infrastructure improvements."

Occupation: In the fall of 1846 Bernhard Friedrich bought the estate of Bothenhagen near Schievelbein in Pomerania. For reasons not explained in the family histories, a year later he traded that property for the manor Hölkewiese near Baldenburg, also in Pomerania.

Marriage: That same year, 1847, Bernhard married Emilie Braun, who was born on March 12, 1825 at Greifenberg in Pomerania, the daughter of Johann Friedrich Braun and his wife Dorothea Julie Zittow. They had twelve children, who were all born at Hölkewiese.

Through various misfortunes and bad years for agriculture in general, after 1862 Bernhard was reduced in circumstances and had to dispose of the Hölkewiese property. After Bernhard disposed of his holdings in Hölkewiese, near New Year's in 1869, he took a residence in nearby Casimirshof, today called "Kazimierz" near Baldenburg (now called "Bialy Bor").

In the summer of 1868, Bernhard's second son, **Karl Julius**, left for North America. He sailed via Hamburg to Quebec on the ship *Liebig*, and then entered the United States. He went first to Milwaukee and then to Racine in the state of Wisconsin, where he stayed until the fall of 1869. Then he moved to the region of Manistee in the state of Michigan, where on May 15, 1871 he was married to Wilhelmine Johanna May (born on September 15, 1852 in the Province of Brandenburg).

And, in the spring of 1871 Bernhard and his family left Pomerania and moved to the Schöneberg section of Berlin.



Locales Related to Bernhard Friedrich and Emilie Braun v.Pressentin

The red star (**No.1**) on this map shows where the little village of Hölkwiese/Koltki is located today --12 miles east of "**Bobolice**" and well inside Poland.

All of Bernhard Friedrich's children were born in Hölkwiese.

Emilie Braun's birthplace, Greifenberg, is also in Poland and now known as "Gryfice" (**No. 2**).

The city of Schwerin, in Mecklenburg (**No. 3**) is west of the "home manor" of Prestin.

The present-day border between Germany and Poland is represented by the blue line (**No. 4**) running south from the mouth of the Vistula River.

VIEWS OF EMILIE BRAUN'S BIRTHPLACE-- GREIFENBERG, POMERANIA

Gryfice (Polish); **Greifenberg** (German); is a town in northwestern Poland with 13, 900 inhabitants. It is the capital of Gryfice County in West Pomeranian Voivodship since 1999. Below are views of Greifenberg in the early 1900's. Contemporary photos of "Gryfice" were difficult to find.



Town Square

Greifenburg Gate

Greifenburg Church Scene

Pomerania--after Bernhard Friedrich's departure

Pomerania has continued to be traded back and forth as a spoil of wars. After World War I Germany was forced to relinquish part of West Prussia to Poland. Then, after the outbreak of World War II (1939), Germany re-annexed the independent state of Danzig and the Pomeranian region of Poland. After World War II ended, Germany (again!) was forced to return these areas to Poland. With the transfer in 1945 of the larger part of Pomerania to Polish administration, the German-speaking population was largely expelled and Polish citizens from the eastern border with Russia were relocated in former German Pomerania. Little Hölkwiese got a new Polish name: "Koltki."

The village of Hölkwiese seems worthy of its own page, not only because all of the founders of the USA branches of the von Pressentin family were born there, but also because its history after World War II is representative of what happened throughout former Pomerania.

To gain a better understanding of the upheaval some of our von Pressentin relatives experienced at the end of World War II, I highly recommend reading *A Terrible Revenge, The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans* by Alfred-Maurice de Zayas, originally published 1986, revised 2006, 182 pgs., paperback.

The author documents how the closing phase and the aftermath of WW II saw millions of refugees and displaced persons wandering across Eastern Europe in one of the most brutal and chaotic migrations in world history.

The genocidal barbarism of the Nazi forces has been well documented. What is little known is the fate of German civilians who found themselves on the wrong side of new postwar borders. All over Eastern Europe, the inhabitants of German communities that had been established for many centuries (700 years) were either expelled or killed.

Some of these people had supported Hitler, but the great majority did not. Some 2 million died and 15 million were displaced--driven from their lands by those opposed to anyone and everything German.

The book includes information from interviews with the children of the displaced. The author uses many eyewitness accounts to describe the horrors experienced by these displaced people--mostly women, children and elderly men.

It is not easy reading at times, but it is an aspect of postwar Europe that needs to be better known.