



Our Family

by

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Grafschaft Castell

Until the end of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 "Grafschaft Castell" had been one of the numerous completely independent territories in Franconia. It became part of the Kingdom of Bavaria on 25 September 1806. (1)

In 1807 Friedrich Wilhelm Viehbeck, an assessor at the Chancellery in Ruedenhausen described "Grafschaft Castell" as follows:

"Die vormalige Reichsgraftchaft Kastell (comitatus castellensis), welche bekanntlich durch den rheinischen Bundesvertrag unter koenigl. bay-erische Souverainetaet gekommen ist, liegt fast ganz in der Mitte von Franken, theils auf, theils unter dem Steigerwalde, und ist von dem Grossherzogtum Wirzburg, den Fuerstenthuemern Bamberg, Baireuth und Ansbach, der gefuersteten Grafschaft Schwarzenberg, und der Herrschaft Limpurgspecksfeld umgeben. Sie hat, wie die meisten Herrschaften in Franken, kein geschlossenes Gebiet, sondern ihre Landesbestandtheile liegen zum Theil sehr zerstreut und weit entfernt von den Hauptorten. [...] Wenn das ganze beisammen laege, so moechte es wohl ein Areale von ongefuehr 4 Qu.Meilen ausmachen. [...] Die Bevoelkerung betraegt nach den neuesten Zaehlungen nahe an die 10.000 Seelen ..." (2)



The gate of the "Schloss" in Castell

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

The former "Reichsgraftchaft Kastell" which, as is known, came under the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Bavaria through the "Rheinischen Bundesvertrag" [a federal treaty], lies very nearly in the middle of Franconia, partly in, partly below the Steigerwald and is surrounded by the Grand Duchy

of Wuerzburg, the Principalities of Bamberg, Bayreuth and Ansbach, the princely "Grafschaft" of Schwarzenberg and the territory Limpurgspecksfeld. Like most of the independent territories in Franconia it does not consist of one complete whole area, but its various constituent parts of land are partly very scattered and very remote from the main town or villages. [...] If the whole was put together, it would probably cover an area of approximately 4 sq. miles. The population according to the latest census amounts to nearly 10 000 souls.

The territory was ruled by the Counts of Castell, whose line goes back to the 11th century. In the 14th century the territory was given the right to its own currency, its mint being at Volkach, a small town on the Main north of Kitzingen. The House Castell had divided into two branches, Castell-Remlingen and Castell-Ruedenhausen, in the 16th century. After the House of old Castell-Ruedenhausen had died out in 1803, the "Grafschaft" was united and jointly ruled by two brothers, forming the Houses of Castell-Castell and new Castell-Ruedenhausen. The territory Castell was then divided into four administrative districts:

1. Castell
2. Ruedenhausen
3. Remlingen
4. Burghaslach

In 1901 the two branches of the House Castell, Castell-Castell and Castell-Ruedenhausen were elevated to "Fuerstenstand", "Fuerst" being a German title similar to that of Prince. The family Castell-Castell still live in the big baroque castle, built in 1687 - 1691, in the centre of the little old village Castell. The "Kanzlei Castell" (the chancellery of the house Castell) and the "Domaenenamt", the Estate Office, control the families' various business enterprises in agriculture, forestry, wine growing and the Castell Bank, the oldest bank in Bavaria, which was founded in 1774. Underneath this building are the very modern presses, vats and vaults, where the grapes are pressed and Castell wine is actually produced, bottled and stored. Castell wine is one of the best known Franconian wines, exported to many parts of the world in the green, distinctively shaped flat, squat bottles called "Bocksbeutel".

The "Kanzlei Castell" also has one of the largest private archives, and it is here that we found many of the earliest records relating to our Sahlmann and Rosenblatt families.



The Archives in Castell, 1989

(photo: Heinz & Thea Skyte)

Footnotes

- (1) Friedrich Wilhelm Viehbeck: Grafschaft Castell in Franken, 1807 (Territory Castell in Franconia).
- (2) do.