



Foreword from the Head of the Schulenburg Family

On 28th of October 1237, the Margrave and the Bishop of Brandenburg signed a contract on the distribution of taxes ("the tithe") between the church and the Margrave's government. Eighteen witnesses from both sides signed the treaty, which can still be seen in the Museum of the Brandenburg Cathedral. One of the witnesses was the priest of Cöln, a village which later became part of Berlin. This is why Berlin claims to originate in 1237. Another witness was Wernerus de Sculenburg, who was a knight and the head of the administration of the Margrave's government; today this person would be called prime minister. Since Wernerus is the oldest proven ancestor of the Schulenburgs, the history of the family dates back to 1237 as well.

Since then the family has experienced good and bad times and the lives of the family members reflect their respective times. Today, 777 years later, the family consists of 70 male cousins and their family members. A family gathering takes place every second year. The 109th family gathering took place in September 2013 in Vienna which is where the famous Johann-Matthias Schulenburg met Prince Eugen roughly 300 years ago.

As the current Head of the Schulenburg Family, I would like to express my gratitude to Fritz, for writing the first history of the Schulenburg Family in English. His summary of the history of this family is well conceived and written and it is based on many documents, among them reams on the Schulenburgs that has been published over the past 120 years. None of this material has been published in English. With this book, Fritz portrays how our family members over the past 24 generations have managed their lives in both the good and tragic times of German and European history.

Graf Johann-Matthias von der Schulenburg (XXII Generation)





The Beginning – Origins of the Schulenburg Family in the Margraviate of Brandenburg (13th Century)

The Schulenburg family comes from a small barren region in Northern Germany named the Altmark. The Altmark (in English: *Old March*) is a region comprising the northern third of the State Sachsen-Anhalt. Today one can find small beautiful ancient towns in the area such as Salzwedel, Beetzendorf, Stendal, Tangermünde and Gardelegen. As the Altmark was the initial territory of the Brandenburg Margraves, it is sometimes referred to as the “Cradle of Prussia”, as Otto von Bismarck was born close to the city Stendal.

The first Margrave (a German old title similar to Marquess) of Brandenburg – the famous conqueror and war hero Albrecht the Bear – conquered the Altmark in the 12th Century and founded several villages. The Altmark received its name at the time of the rise of Albert in the region. A March – or Mark – referred to a border region similar to a frontier, comprising the border between two countries. As Albrecht’s land grew further to the East, a “Newmark” (New March) was founded and the remaining land became known as the “Alt (Old) mark”. Often aristocratic families like the Schulenburgs were left in these regions and endowed with castles and land to start cultivating and organizing the lands connected to certain payments to the Margrave to finance further wars on the frontiers. Later in 1150, Albert the Bear made the fortress of “Brandenburg an der Havel” part of the Margraviate of Brandenburg¹. It became the nucleus of the Margraviate.

With Albrecht the Bear, the Schulenburgs most likely entered the region even though their exact origin prior to the Altmark is unclear, since it was only in the 13th Century that people started carrying last names.

The first proven document clearly naming a Schulenburg that is in a line connected to the Schulenburgs living today dates back to 1237 when the Knight *Wernerus de Sculenchurch* (II Generation of the Schulenburgs²) approved together with others in a contract a comparison of tax rights between the Margrave and the Bishop of Brandenburg.

¹ Today “Brandenburg an der Havel” is a small town compared to nearby Berlin, but it was the original nucleus of the former realms of Brandenburg and Prussia.

² The First Generation is covered by Conradus in 1187 – however, as the only written documentation of him is in a copy done in the 16th century which is not proven to be correct, historians do not consider him to be the first “Schulenburg” in the line. Additionally, one is not clear about the connection to Wernerus.

Picture 1: Margraviate (Mark) Brandenburg in 1320³

Gaining Importance in the Margraviate of Brandenburg – Split into White and Black Line (14th Century)

Under the Margrave of Brandenburg, the Schulenburgs worked their way up by defending several castles and supporting the Margrave regionally. Additionally, as the Schulenburgs were hard-working and successful landlords, they contributed significant payments for the expansion towards the East. By the early 14th Century, the Schulenburgs owned several villages and manors in the region. Among them were villages like Audorf where a beautiful romanian church still stands from the 12th Century. Other smaller villages are located around Salzwedel, the second largest town in the Altmark. One of the first castles endowed to the Schulenburgs was a small castle close to Salzwedel, from which the name “Schulenburg” most likely comes (“Schulen” coming from “Schauen” (to look) and castle coming from a “Burg” (castle), from which you can look far). Today one can only see a few hills where this castle used to stand.

Picture 2: Romanic church in Audorf from approx. 1140⁴



⁴ Photo was taken in 2013.