

The Napoleon Series

Officers of the Anhalt Duchies who Fought in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815: Anhalt, Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Franz von

By [Daniel Clarke](#)

Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Franz von Anhalt was born on June 22, 1769, in the city of Potsdam, Prussia. He was the son of Prussian general Heinrich Wilhelm von Anhalt (1734-1801) and his wife Caroline Friederike von Wedel. He married Caroline Sidonie Ludowike von Weiss in May 1795 and they had nine children.

In 1782 Friedrich entered the military college in Berlin, and in 1784 graduated to become an Ensign in the 2nd Infantry Regiment, Heinrich von Anhalt—his father's regiment—that May. A handful of years later, on July 24, 1787, he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. Later, in 1790, he became an Adjutant to Generalleutnant Karl Friedrich Count Klinckowstrom (1738-1816) and took part in the military exercises that took place during that year. During 1794 and 1795 Friedrich also fought against the Poles. Afterwards he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant in December 1797, and by the end of 1801 he had attained the rank of Staff Captain as well. In the war with France in 1806-1807, Friedrich first commanded a company of one of the newly formed Reserve Battalions, before being given his own battalion to command, the 5th East Prussian Reserve Battalion on February 6, 1807. Friedrich first saw action at the Engagement of Soldau (Dzialdowo) in December 1806, and later fought near Königsberg (Kaliningrad) in June 1807. For these actions he was given the rank of Line Captain on March 3, 1807, and Major on July 20, 1807.

After the war had ended, Friedrich was put on half pay for a short time, but swiftly became Adjutant-General to Feldmarschall Friedrich Adolf Count Kalckreuth (1737-1818). This lasted until December 1807, when, again, his pay was reduced and he was without a command. Then, in November 1811, he was given command of the West Prussian Grenadier Battalion for a time until May 1812, when he was put in charge of overseeing the inactive officers living in the province of Brandenburg.

When war came again with France in 1813, Friedrich was given command of the 7th Infantry Regiment, 2nd West Prussian. He was assigned to Colonel Joseph Friedrich Karl von Klüx's (1774-1816) Lower Silesian Brigade of General der Kavallerie Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher's (1742-1819) army. At the opening battle of the campaign at Lützen on May 2, Friedrich led his regiment in a number of attacks around the key villages of Gross Görschen, Klein Görschen, Kaja and Rahna against the French division of general Joseph Souham (1760-1837), whose men were mostly young conscripts. After an artillery barrage, Friedrich was ordered forward with the rest of the brigade and captured Gross Görschen from the French. However, the French then counter-attacked

and re-took the village, but a little later in the early afternoon Friedrich led his regiment against the village a second time and re-captured it. At around 3pm a fresh French division reached the outskirts of the village, having just stormed and re-captured Kaja, but made no progress against Friedrich's positions within Gross Görschen. Later, during the early evening under orders from Napoleon, the French made coordinated attacks along the Allied line that captured most of the villages, although some Prussian units from Klüx's brigade held onto Gross Görschen, but it is not clear if Friedrich and his regiment were some of those men. Just over two weeks later Friedrich fought at the Battle of Bautzen on May 20-21, where he helped to defend the ridge near the village of Krechwitz. During the fighting on the second day of the battle his command was assailed by a Württemberg division from general Henri-Gatien Bertrand's (1773-1844) corps. The result of this was a close range and bloody firefight, before his regiment and brigade were forced to withdraw. At both of these battles Friedrich was wounded; and the wound he received at Bautzen meant that he missed the fighting at Dresden on August 26-27 as he was still recuperating. For his actions Friedrich was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on June 25, received the Iron Cross, 2nd Class and the Russian Order of St. Anne, 2nd Class.

Returning to fight at the deciding battle of the campaign at Leipzig during October 16-19, Friedrich and his regiment were now part of Generalmajor Georg Dubislav Ludwig Pirch I's (1763-1838) Brigade, of Generalleutnant Friedrich von Kleist's (1762-1823) II Prussian Corps. On the first day of the battle, October 16, Friedrich and his men were involved with the attacks and counterattacks around the village of Markkleeberg, which were directed against the corps of Maréchal Augereau and general, later Maréchal, Poniatowski, who were forced to give up the village to the Allies by nightfall. On October 18, the third day, Friedrich again engaged in assaults on a strong French position in and around the fortified village of Probstheida. Here the Prussians attacked the village twice with little success, sustaining large numbers of casualties through artillery fire, before being forced to withdraw by French heavy cavalry. Later a third attack, launched by a Russian corps, was more successful, although the French held onto the village until nightfall. Finding that the French army was withdrawing during the early morning of October 19, the Allies launched a general attack all along their lines, and Friedrich would have fought his way into the city of Leipzig itself before the fighting ended.

This battle was Friedrich's final action during the campaign of 1813. But, he also did not take part in the 1814 campaign in France either. This was because in mid-December 1813 he was given command of the small fortress and garrison at Glatz (Kłodzko). Details are lacking, but given he seems to have performed well during the battles in which he fought, it is probable that his wounds forced him to take a less active role in the war. Friedrich would go on to be promoted to Colonel in May 1815 and retained his command at Glatz during the 100 Days.

After the Napoleonic Wars had ended, Friedrich was made Inspector-General of Landwehr in the Posen region of Prussia in December 1816. A few years later he was promoted to Generalmajor on March 30, 1820, and given command of the 10th Infantry Brigade, Posen. Switching between commands in 1824, he was given command of the 5th Infantry Brigade, Frankfurt/Oder. Only a year later, in 1825, Friedrich chose to retire from the army, citing the wounds he had received in 1813—although the death of his wife,

which left his four year-old daughter without a mother, may have also influenced his decision. Only a decade later Friedrich would die in the town of Prenzlau, Prussia, on April 16, 1837.¹

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¹ Straubel, Rolf, "Er Mochte nur Wissen, das die Armeemir gehoret", Friedrich II und seine Offiziere, Berlin, BWV - Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2012, page 431; Montag, Reinhard, "Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Franz von Anhalt", Lexikon der Deutschen Generale: Die Generale der Konigl PruBischen Armme, 09/4/2017, <http://www.lexikon-deutsche generale.de/biografien/preussen>; Leggiere, Michael V., Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany: The Franco-Prussian War of 1813, Vol. I The War of Liberation, Spring 1813, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pages 233, 235-239, 336-337, 345-347, 352-355; Leggiere, Michael V., Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany: The Franco-Prussian War of 1813, Vol. II The Defeat of Napoleon, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pages 627, 637-638, 644, 699, 705, 717, 719, 734, 737, 747; Elting, John R., and Vincent J. Esposito, A Military History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars, London, Greenhill Books, 1999, pages 141-142; Dodge, Theodore A., Warfare in the Age of Napoleon, Volume V: The Retreat from Moscow, the Peninsular Campaign and the War of the Sixth Coalition, 1812-1813, Driffield, United Kingdom, Leonaur Ltd an imprint of Oakpast Ltd, 2011, pages 245-247, 273-283; Dodge, Theodore A., Warfare in the Age of Napoleon, Volume VI: The South of France Campaign, the Campaign of 1814 and the Campaign of the Battle of Waterloo, 1813-1815, Driffield, United Kingdom, Leonaur Ltd an imprint of Oakpast Ltd, 2011, pages 10-11, 19-21; Petre, F. Lorraine, Napoleon's Last Campaign in Germany, 1813, Driffield, United Kingdom, Leonaur Ltd an imprint of Oakpast Ltd, 2011, pages 289, 293-295, 314-316; Rickard, J, Battle of Lützen, 2 May 1813, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_lutzen_1813.html, accessed 09/4/2017