

The Napoleon Series

Officers of the Anhalt Duchies who Fought in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815: Anhalt-Köthen, August Christian Friedrich, Prince, and then Duke of

By [Daniel Clarke](#)

August Christian Friedrich, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen was born on November 18, 1769, in Köthen Castle, Köthen, in the Principality of Anhalt-Köthen. He was the son of Karl Georg Lebrecht, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen (1730-1789) and his wife Luise Charlotte of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg. August married Karoline Friederike, Princess of Nassau-Usingen on February 9, 1792, but the marriage was an unhappy one and they divorced in October 1803, having had no children.

After his education in Köthen—August would later take an interest in natural history, and accrue a large collection of bird specimens—as a 19 year-old he accompanied his father in the autumn of 1789 to fight against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans with an Austrian army. Here he took part in the Siege of Belgrade from September until early October, where his father commanded part of the Austrian besieging forces. During the siege his father also contracted an illness and died within two weeks of the city surrendering. After the death of his father August became the Prince, and ruler, of Anhalt-Köthen until the French Revolutionary Wars took him away to war again.

Having served with the Austrian army previously in 1789, and later as a Lieutenant Colonel in the 37th Cavalry Regiment, Coburg Dragoons, August was made a Colonel and joint commander of the 4th Cavalry Regiment, Hohenzollern-Hechingen Cuirassiers, in early 1792. But, he was quickly elevated in rank again to Generalmajor on April 20, 1792. But, this elevation does not seem to have brought August any advancement in command, as the beginning of 1793 found him commanding one of his old regiments, the 37th Cavalry Regiment, Coburg Dragoons, in the army led by Feldmarschall Friedrich Josias, Prince of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld (1737-1815) in Belgium and The Netherlands. With his regiment he fought in all of the major engagements of that year until the Battle of Wattignies on October 15-16. While besieging the fortress at Maubeuge in northern France, the Austrians were forced to withdraw some regiments from the blockade in mid-October when general Jean-Baptiste Jourdan (1762-1833) led a relief army toward their positions. Another part of the Austrian army had entrenched themselves around the village of Wattignies during the course of the siege, and therefore this strengthened force awaited the attacks of the French which began on October 15. It was during the course of this battle that Friedrich led his regiment in a counter-attack near the village and was badly wounded. According to one source he sustained a total of eight bayonet wounds and was so disabled he could not get back to the Austrian lines, which meant that he was

taken prisoner. After his capture he was held for some time and eventually released, although it is not clear for how long.

After a long recovery from his wounds, it seems that August did not hold another field command until 1796, when he reappears to command a cavalry brigade in The Netherlands. His command consisted of the two Carabinier regiments: the 5th Cavalry Regiment (1st Carabiniers), Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen, and the 6th Cavalry Regiment (2nd Carabiniers), Kaiser. Transferred to Germany and the Army of the Lower Rhine commanded by Archduke Charles (1771-1847) in June 1796, he arrived just in time to fight at the engagement near Renchen on June 28, where the Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen Carabiniers were engaged. Later his brigade was joined by a French Emigré regiment in the form of the Royal Allemand Dragoons. During this time August's brigade was part of the reserve corps commanded by Feldmarschalleutnant Franz Baron Werneck (1748-1806), which included most of the heavy cavalry and grenadier battalions. Then, in July, part of his brigade was engaged at the Battle of Malsch on the 9th, before the army was forced to withdraw.

At the deciding battle of the campaign at Würzburg on September 3, Feldzeugmeister Wilhelm Ludwig Gustav Count Wartensleben (1734-1798) had taken over command of the reserve, although Werneck was given command of the grenadiers. Here August fought against General Jourdan's Armée du Sambre-et-Meuse. Briefly: the division of general Jean Etienne Championnet (1762-1800) held the French centre along the ridge near the villages of Kürnach and Estenfeld. Later in the afternoon, when Championnet was being forced backwards by Austrian numbers, Jourdan sent another of his divisions from his left to Championnet's aid and moved his reserve cavalry to his left flank as well. While the Austrian attack was developing, Wartensleben moved his reserve corps across the River Main at Schwarzbach (Schwarzback-am-Main) on a pontoon bridge that had been constructed the previous evening. Once across, Archduke Charles moved the cavalry reserves to his right flank from their positions behind his centre, as his lines moved forward beyond the S bend in the river above Schwarzbach. The French cavalry charged the Austrian heavy cavalry and a large mêlée ensued, in which August's brigade of Carabiniers was engaged. The result was that the French cavalry were routed with heavy losses. Also the forming infantry rearguard sustained large numbers of casualties from attacking Austrian horsemen, while they retreated into the woods behind their positions at Kürnach, Unterpleichfeld and Oberpleichfeld.

For his actions during 1796 August was promoted to Feldmarschalleutnant in March 1797, and later returned to his principality for the short peace that existed from the summer of 1797 until 1799. When war was declared again between Austria and France early in 1799, August returned to command a small light cavalry division in Archduke Charles's Army of Germany. It was composed of the 2nd Light Dragoon Regiment, Coburg, and the 6th Light Dragoon Regiment, Archduke Ferdinand, which amounted to around 2,000 troopers in 12 squadrons. Missing the Battle of Ostrach on March 21, August would lead his division at the Battle of Stockach a few days later on March 25. During the early morning the French Armée du Rhin mounted attacks on both Austrian flanks, with the heaviest blow coming on the right. This flank was pushed backwards until

the Archduke could bring up reinforcements in the form of a division of grenadiers from his reserve. To make time for his grenadiers to arrive, the Archduke ordered August and his regiments forward to disrupt the French battle lines. August therefore came down on the French left flank, pushing toward the village of Liptingen (Emmingen-Liptingen) behind the French lines. This charge gave the grenadiers the time they needed to form for their counter-attack, which in turn turned the tide of the battle and forced the French to retreat southward toward Switzerland.

Pursuing the defeated French into Switzerland, August continued in command of his slim division of horsemen. The Archduke's army crossed into Switzerland near Lake Constance, and pushed future Maréchal André Masséna's (1758-1817) French forces back toward the city of Zurich during the month of May, where the latter took up positions to defend the city. However, August would not get to take part in the major battle of this campaign on June 4 outside of the city walls. Instead he was detached from the army to support the infantry force of Feldmarschalleutnant Friedrich August Joseph Count Nauendorf (1749-1801), which was sent to reinforce a corps operating in the Vorarlberg region—although Nauendorf and his corps were recalled in time to form the right flank of the Austrian army at the First Battle of Zurich. Remaining in the region for some time, August eventually rejoined the main Austrian army that was now back in Germany and was commanded by the promoted general Kray. During the campaign in 1800, August seems to have remained in the corps commanded by Nauendorf, but little detail is known about his exact actions. But, one or both of his regiments are listed as taking part in the engagements of Engen-Stockach on May 3, the Iller River on June 5. However, by the time the Battle of Hohenlinden took place on December 3, sources show his two regiments had been put into separate brigades.

After the war had petered out and the Second Coalition broke apart at the end of 1800, August decided to quit Austrian service in 1801. Later, though, he was given the honorary rank of Generalmajor in the Prussian army in 1803. When the Confederation of the Rhine was formed during 1806-1807, he joined the alliance and provided men from his principality for the 1st Battalion, 5th Rheinbund (Anhalt-Lippe) Infantry Regiment. During these years and the subsequent ones that followed, August seems to have become an admirer of Napoleon, and became quite a Francophile, dividing his lands into departments along French lines and introducing his version of the Code Napoleon. After introducing

his many reforms, August died at a relatively young age on May 5, 1812 in Geuz Castle, Köthen, Anhalt-Köthen.¹

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¹ Montag, Reinhard, "August Christian Friedrich Fürst von Anhalt-Köthen-Pleß", *Lexikon der Deutschen Generale: Die Generale der Königl. Preussischen Armee*, <http://www.lexikon-deutshegenerale.de/biografien/preussen>, accessed 09/4/2017; [No author found], "Die Fürsten aus dem Hause Anhalt in Brandenburgisch-Preussisch Kriegsdiensten", *Zeitschrift für Kunst, Wissenschaft und Geschichte des Krieges*, Band 10 (Volume X), Berlin, Posen und Bromberg, 1827, page 134; Dodge, Theodore A., *Warfare in the Age of Napoleon, Volume I: The Revolutionary Wars against the First Coalition in Northern Europe and the Italian Campaign, 1789-1797*, Driffield, United Kingdom, Leonaur Ltd an imprint of Oakpast Ltd, 2011, pages 287-301; Phipps, Ramsay Weston, *The Armies of the First French Republic and the Rise of the Marshals of Napoleon I, Vol. II - The Armée du Moselle, du Rhin, de Sambre-et-Meuse and de Rhin-et-Moselle*, USA, Pickle Partners Publishing, 2011, pages 325-328, 337-341, 350-352; Haythornthwaite, Philip J., *The Napoleonic Source Book*, London, Arms and Armour Press, 1990, page 125; Kessinger, Roland, "Die Schlacht von Stockach am 25. März 1799", *Zeitschrift für Militärgeschichte*, No. 22, Salzburg, Austria, 2006, pages 84-116; Cust, Sir Edward, *Annals of the Wars of the Eighteenth Century, Volume V, 1796-1799*, London, John Murray (Publisher), 1862, pages 167-170; Angeli, Moritz Edlen von, *Erzherzog Karl als Feldherr und Heeresorganisator, Volume I: Erzherzog Karl in den Feldzügen gegen Frankreich von 1796 und 1797*, Vienna, Wilhelm Braumüller, 1896, pages 189-205, 394-413; Angeli, Moritz Edlen von, *Erzherzog Karl als Feldherr und Heeresorganisator, Volume II: Erzherzog Karl in den Feldzügen gegen Frankreich von 1799*, Vienna, Wilhelm Braumüller, 1896, pages 78-92, 187; Nafziger, George, *Nafziger Orders of Battle Collection*, Combined Arms Research Library (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/carl/nafziger.asp>, accessed 09/4/2017; Rickard, J, *Battle of Würzburg*, 3 September 1796, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_wurzburg.html, accessed 09/4/2017; von Witzleben, August, *Prinz Friedrich Josias von Coburg-Saalfeld, Herzog zu Sachsen, Volume II*, Berlin, R. Decker, 1859, page 323; *Militär Almanach und Schematismus, Oesterreichischer Militär Almanach für das Jahr 1792*, Vienna, Joseph Frister, 1792, pages 54, 60; *Militär Almanach und Schematismus, Oesterreichischer Militär Almanach für das Jahr 1793*, Vienna, Joseph Frister, 1793, page 53; Picard, Ernest, *Hohenlinden*, Paris, Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, 1909, 395-396