

The Napoleon Series

Officers of the Anhalt Duchies who Fought in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815: Anhalt-Köthen-Pleß, Christian Friedrich von

By [Daniel Clarke](#)

Christian Friedrich von Anhalt-Köthen-Pleß was born on November 14, 1780, in Castle Pless, Pleß, or Pless, (Pszczyna), Upper Silesia, Prussia. He was the son of Friedrich Erdmann, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen-Pleß (1731-1797) and his wife Louise Ferdinande of Stolberg-Wernigerode. As such he was the younger brother of both Friedrich Ferdinand (1769-1830) and Heinrich (1778-1847). Christian himself did not marry.

Like his older brothers he joined the Prussian army at a young age. By the time he was 25 years old in 1806, Christian was a Captain and company commander in the 25th Infantry Regiment, von Möllendorf. With his regiment he fought at the Battle of Auerstadt on October 14, 1806 in a brigade led by Colonel Johann Adolf von Lützow (1748-1818). With his regiment he reinforced the division of Generalleutnant Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Count Schmettau (1743-1806), which was trying to take control of the village of Hassenhausen in the centre of Maréchal Louis-Nicolas Davout's (1770-1823) battle line. When the assault failed and the French out flanked the Prussian right, the army quickly retreated, sweeping Christian along too. After the Peace of Tilsit in 1807, Christian was promoted to the rank of Major. But, along with his older brother Friedrich Ferdinand, he decided to resign his rank in 1808 and accompanied him back to his principality.

However, with Napoleon's defeat in Russia in 1812, Christian rejoined the Prussian army that was mobilizing at the beginning of 1813. He regained his former rank and was given command of the newly raised 10th Silesian Landwehr Infantry Regiment. Not ready in time to fight that spring, Christian and his regiment joined the 12th Brigade led by Generalleutnant August, Prince of Prussia (1779-1843) in the II Prussian corps commanded by Generalleutnant Friedrich von Kleist (1762-1823) after the summer armistice. He first took part in the Battle of Dresden on August 26-27, where he led his regiment in a series of attacks on the Gross Garten (Great Garden) on the east side of the city in an attempt to capture Redoubt Number 2 near the Pirna Gate. On both days the assaults failed, and the army had to retreat when Napoleon turned the left flank of the Allied army which was held by the Austrians.

The retreat began on the night of August 27-28 in heavy rain. Changing his Prussian allies orders, the Russian wing commander told Kleist to move his corps to Teplitz (Teplice) via Glashütte, Saxony, over the mountains into Bohemia (Czech Republic). On the night of August 29, finding the road blocked at the foot of the mountains into Bohemia through Graupen (Krupka), Kleist decided to follow a small mountain path north-eastwards which

led to Peterwalde (Petrovice), in accordance with new orders a courier had given him earlier to support the Russian corps acting as the Allied army's rearguard. What Kleist also now knew at this time was that a French corps, commanded by general Dominique Vandamme (1770-1830), was between himself and his destination and was facing the Russians. So, at 5am on the morning of August 30, Christian and his regiment took up the line of march across the mountains. By 11am the lead elements of the corps were moving down the mountain path from the village of Tellnitz (Telnice) across the road to Peterwalde, which was directly in the rear of the French, who were busily engaged with the Russians and their Austrian reinforcements. Christian completed the deployment of his regiment in the valley, when the French, realising their predicament as Kleist's guns announced his arrival, began their attempt to cut through the Prussian lines of about 10,000 men. During the fierce fighting which followed, somewhere approaching 30,000 Frenchmen tried to break out toward Peterwalde, and Christian was killed in the maelstrom.¹

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1 [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 135; Elting, John R., and Vincent J. Esposito, *A Military History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, London, Greenhill Books, 1999, pages 135-137; 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 355-358, 370; Petre, F. Lorraine, *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia, 1806*, Uckfield, United Kingdom, The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2007, pages 156-159, 161-163; Petre, F. Lorraine, *Napoleon's Last Campaign in Germany, 1813*, Driffield, United Kingdom, Leonaur Ltd an imprint of Oakpast Ltd, 2011, pages 179, 182-186, 188-193, 201-203, 210-212; Cust, Sir Edward, *Annals of the Wars of the Nineteenth Century, Volume I, 1800-1806*, London, John Murray (Publisher), 1862, pages 338-341; Cust, Sir Edward, *Annals of the Wars of the Nineteenth Century, Volume IV, 1813-1815*, London, John Murray (Publisher), 1863, pages 83-88, 92-95