

## The Napoleon Series

### Officers of the Anhalt Duchies who Fought in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815: Chambaud-Charrier, Friedrich Ernst von

By [Daniel Clarke](#)

Friedrich Ernst von Chambaud-Charrier (usually simply Chambaud in most texts), was born in 1757 in the Principality of Anhalt-Dessau. He was the son of Alexander von Chambaud-Charrier, a possible Lieutenant Colonel in the Prussian army. He also had two older brothers, Maximilian Rudolph Theophilus, an infantry captain in the Prussian army, and Alexander Friedrich Wilhelm, who was an officer in the Bavarian army. There is no information about any marriages or children.

Like his father, Friedrich Ernst joined the Prussian army as an Ensign in 1779 in the 3rd Infantry Regiment, von Anhalt-Bernburg-Schaumburg-Hoym, and became a Lieutenant a couple of years later in 1781. During the latter part of the 1780s he was promoted to Captain and company commander, but did not remain long in his position. Instead, he returned to Anhalt-Dessau and took command of the state's newly created and small Jäger (Light) Infantry Company in 1795. Not participating in the French Revolutionary Wars, because the principality was closely allied to Prussia, Chambaud-Charrier was promoted to the rank of Major in March 1795, shortly after his return, and retained his command of the miniature army for the next decade.

By the time Napoleon began to formally organize the Confederation of the Rhine in early 1807, he had risen to the rank of Colonel. As the most senior Anhalt officer available within the three duchies of Dessau, Bernburg and Köthen, it was he who was given the task of forming a combined infantry battalion, using his Jäger Company as the central nucleus. Leopold III, Duke of Anhalt-Dessau issued a decree in early 1807 calling for volunteers to gather in Dessau by May 22, and by July Chambaud-Charrier had organized an 800-man battalion. Although not well trained, he and his battalion were sent to southern Poland in the third week of the month to join French and Allied forces there. Returning to the Anhalt duchies after a few months, during 1808 the battalion went through a reorganization of its companies.

In February 1809 Chambaud-Charrier was ordered to take half of the battalion to Boulogne, in what was most likely preparation to go and serve on the Spanish peninsula. By March 5 he had reached the city of Metz where his command remained some days in garrison. With war with Austria looking more likely, instead of continuing his march he was directed to Strasbourg where he arrived on March 13 and continued to complete rear-area duties. On April 8 he was ordered to take his little command to the city of Würzburg in Bavaria, and reunite the battalion. But, the division, commanded by General de Division Marie-Francois Rouyer (1765-1824), had already marched forward to the

Danube River. Rouyer, though, decided to leave his Anhalt and Lippe contingents at the town of Donauwörth, where Chambaud-Charrier finally reunited his battalion on April 25, while the general himself carried on to Regensburg.

As the senior officer Chambaud-Charrier also took command of the regiment: the 5th Rheinbund (Anhalt-Lippe) Infantry Regiment. Two days later the regiment marched to Regensburg and rejoined the rest of the division, before the whole marched to the city of Passau where it arrived between May 4 and 5. The regiment remained in the city until the end of July, where they helped to construct fortifications ordered by Napoleon. During the early hours of July 23, Chambaud-Charrier received orders to march to Salzburg and join the corps of Maréchal Lefebvre, which was going to suppress the uprising in the Tyrol and Vorarlberg. He arrived in the city on July 26, but the next day moved into the Tyrol as Rouyer's division had been designated as the advance guard. Moving through Innsbruck on July 30, Chambaud-Charrier marched for the town of Brixen (Bressanone) in the Eisack (Isarco) Valley on August 1 with the rest of the division. On August 4, after the division had spent the night at Sterzing (Vipiteno), he was involved in the running skirmishes with the Tyrolean rebels between the hamlets of Mittewald (Mezzaselva) and Oberau (Franzensfeste). Here the regiment had to move to the head of the column near Oberau to support the 4th Rheinbund (Saxon Ducal Houses) Infantry Regiment, which had become seriously engaged in the ragged terrain where the rebels rolled logs and boulders down into them from the mountain sides. Sustaining a handful of casualties in their counter-attack the regiment bivouacked for the night at Oberau before Rouyer, anxious due to his separation from the corps, ordered a retreat the next day back down the valley. Briefly rejoining Lefebvre's column as that officer marched back to Innsbruck, Chambaud-Charrier moved the regiment to the town of Hall (Hall in Tirol), where, on August 13, the division engaged in some skirmishing with the Tyrolean's again, while the Maréchal fought the Battle of Bergisel.

Returning to Salzburg, the regiment remained in garrison until new orders arrived on August 31. These directed the regiment to the Austrian capital Vienna. Leaving the next day, the regiment only arrived in the city on September 21 and was greeted with the news that Napoleon himself would review them on the 23rd near the Schönbrunn palace. Reviewing the division and asking each regiment to perform a number of drills, Napoleon promoted a handful of men from the Anhalt Battalion before it returned to its quarters. By October the regiment was moving back to Germany along the Danube River, and the men were expecting to spend the winter with their families.

But, with the war in Spain eating up men daily, they were needed there, and instead made their way through France and into northern Spain by March 1810. Their destination was the region of Catalonia, where, still part of Rouyer's division, it joined the VII Corps commanded by Maréchal Augereau at the city of Girona. Marching southwards, the corps headed for the provincial capital at Barcelona to relieve the French division of General Souham, where it arrived at the end of the second week of March. At the end of the month Maréchal Augereau moved south to attack the fortress at Tarragona, leaving part of Rouyer's division, including the Anhalters, at the town of Manresa, west of Barcelona. Trying to delay the French attack on Tarragona, the Spanish commander sent a strong

force to attack Augereau's supply lines back to Barcelona. After capturing the town of Villafranca (Villafranca del Penedès) on March 30, the Spaniards moved on Manresa, which they attacked on April 5. Chambaud-Charrier and his regiment were forced to withdraw toward Barcelona along with the 4th Rheinbund (Saxon Ducal Houses) Infantry Regiment. During the retreat the local militia, or Somatènes, regularly attacked the two regiments, inflicting particularly heavy losses at the village of Martorell a few miles outside of Barcelona, where 250 men from Anhalt and the Lippe principalities were killed or taken prisoner.

After these experiences Chambaud-Charrier and his men remained in Barcelona for around one week, before the whole corps retreated north back to Girona. Here it was tasked with garrisoning the large area around the city and the coastal town of Palamós. The task of the regiment was to prevent communication between the Spanish Catalan army led by General Enrique O'Donnell (1769-1834)—which had been trapped in Tarragona until Augereau's retreat—and British ships out to sea. During this time, from about May until August 1810, Chambaud-Charrier got a promotion of sorts when he was given command of Rouyer's second brigade, made up of his own Rheinbund regiment and the 6th (Schwarzburg-Reuss-Waldeck) Rheinbund Infantry Regiment, after General Schwarz took a leave of absence. Chambaud-Charrier's duties increased with his responsibilities, and he also now had to maintain coastal defences around Palamós and monitor small detachments in the interior that were busy trying to catch Spanish Guerrillas. This came to an end, however, when, for some unclear reason, Duke Leopold III recalled him to Anhalt-Dessau near to the end of August.

Given a detachment of about 20 men, Chambaud-Charrier began his journey home on August 27, passing through the town of Figueres and arriving at Perpignan on September 1. After just over a month he arrived in Dessau on October 10, having missed the Battle of La Bisbal on September 14, where many of his former command were captured. His time in Spain was his last active command, and about four years later, during 1814, he died in Dessau at the age of 57.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nafziger, George F, *The Armies of Germany and the Confederation of the Rhine, 1792-1815, Volume I*, Privately published, 1993, pages 1-2, 16; Rawkins, W. J., *Armies of the Confederation of the Rhine, The Rheinbund Contingents 1806-1813, Part 2: Anhalt, Lippe, Reuss, Schwarzburg, Waldeck, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Oldenburg & Frankfurt*, <http://www.thehistorybookman.webeden.co.uk>, pages 12-15; Gill, John H., *With Eagles to Glory: Napoleon and his German Allies in the 1809 Campaign*, Barnsley, Frontline Books, an imprint of Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2011, pages 388-394, 397-400, 402-405; Zeidler, L., *Der Spanische Feldzug des Bataillons Anhalt im Jahre 1810*, Zerbst, Germany, Friedrich Romer, 1844, pages 3-18, 42, 79, 81-82; Oman, Sir Charles, *A History of the Peninsular War, Volume III: September 1809 to December 1810*, London, Greenhill Books, 1996, pages 290-297, 497-499; Sañudo, Juan, *Anhalt-Lippe Infanteria Regimiento No 5, No 1,116, Base de Datos sobre las Unidades Militares eb la Guerra de la Independencia Española CD-ROM*, Ministerio de Defensa, 2007; Straubel, Rolf, "Er Mochte nur Wissen, das die Armee mir gehoret", *Friedrich II und seine Offiziere*, Berlin, BWV - Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2012, page 367; Kalliope Verbund, <http://kalliope-verbund.info/de/query?q=ead.otherroles.gnd%3D%3D%221025231139%22>, accessed 04/3/2017; Kalliope Verbund, <http://kalliope-verbund.info/de/search.html?q=Maximilian+Rudolph+chambaud>, accessed 06/5/2017; Hein, Bernhard, "Geschichte des Dessauer Militärs", *Dessau Geschichte*, [http://www.dessau-geschichte.de/dessau\\_geschichte\\_militaer.php](http://www.dessau-geschichte.de/dessau_geschichte_militaer.php), accessed 06/5/2017