



Chapter 2

Historical Background: Kronach, Bavaria

Origins of the Surname

The surname “Wagner” is a trade-name in origin, associated with skills involving wagons, carts, and transport. *Der Wagner* not only fabricated wagons, but also any wooden implement that had spokes or poles – e.g., wheels, ladders, axles, scythes, and long-handled farming tools. He typically had a shop in the village, and he also traveled around to farmsteads to repair tools as needed. In larger cities the Wagner was a member of a guild, whose crest bore the symbol of a spoked wheel. Another common function of the Wagner was a teamster, who transported goods via high-sided wagons or carts. In that capacity he was known as an *auriga* in Latin, a trade name which is commonly found in Catholic church books. He transported products and people along the rural byways of the German countryside, which often involved travel between cities and across the numerous political boundaries within the Holy Roman Empire.

Various forms of the surname occur throughout the Germanic speaking regions, including all parts of modern Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, and Scandinavia. Internet sources (unattributed) state that the surname derives from “Waganari,” an early German term for wagon-maker, driver, or wheelwright. Early recorded cases include “Conrad Wegener,” dated 1290, in Schöntal, Baden, during the reign of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf I (1273–91). In Baden there is also a dialect form of the name, “Wegler.” In neighboring Württemberg there was a “Heinrich Wägelin” in 1281. Some sources on internet assert that the Wagner surname was first found in Saxony, where the family became a prominent contributor to the development of the area from ancient times. This is credible because our family originated in Kronach, Bavaria, which is just below the border with Saxony and Thuringia.

All these variations on the surname derived from the cognate *der Weg*, which means “the way, path or road,” related to the proto Indo-European word, *wegh-*, “to carry or move.” More unusual variants include “Wayner” which is found in Liegnitz in 1372, “Wener” in Frankfurt in 1387, and “Wehner” in 1535.

These are equivalent to the old English "Wainwright" (wagon maker), which is similarly related to the cognate "way."

Der Wagner.



Ich mach Räder/Wägen vnd Kärren/
Roll vnd Keyßwägen / für groß Herrn/
Kammerwägen / den Frauen flug/
Auch mach ich dem Bauwren den Pflug/
Vnd darzu auch Schlenfen vnd Egn/
Thus als mit gutem Holz verlegn/
Ich arbeit hart bey meinen tagn/
Triges erfundn erstlich den Wagn.

"I make wheels/ wagons and carts/ freight-wagons and carriages¹/ for great Lords/
chamber-wagons/ for proud women/ also I make plows for the farmers/ as well as

¹ *Kärren*, also spelled *Kern* in old records, is usually translated simply as "wagon." It is related etymologically to the English words "carriage," "cart," and "car."

sickles and harrows/ crafted all with good wood/I work hard during my day/ Friges² first invented the wagon.” (source: Mattheus Merian, Topographia Franconiae, 1656)



² “Friges” is probably a reference to “Phrygia” in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), the mythical origin for wagons according to Greek historians.

Roads were primitive throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. Most roads came about over centuries of use as an unplanned result of foot, horse, and wagon traffic. These early trackways typically followed streams and rivers, which were essential for the frequent stops to care for horses and oxen; rivers also were a major means for transportation and portage of goods. Over the years these old paths became sunken as horses and wagons churned them to mud in wet weather, and they became widened as running water flowed down the trails in winter. Local townspeople and farmers usually maintained the roads to some extent by clearing out the mud, tossing it onto the sides until it formed high banks. Sunken road-beds such as these connected most towns and farmsteads throughout Europe.

The following passage illustrates the conditions of travel and transport that prevailed in certain parts of Germany in the early days. Although the description is exaggerated for humorous effect, it's probably a fairly accurate portrait of travel and transport conditions in the rural areas of Germany, as well as in eastern Europe where travel conditions were notoriously even worse.³

“Before the arrival of stage coaches (about 1800) public travel in Germany was more uncomfortable than anywhere else in Europe. At the beginning of the 18th century a certain Count Lillien had introduced carriages which carried freight and mail, with a few seats reserved for wealthy passengers. Then the family of ‘*Thurn und Taxis*’ obtained the monopoly of the Empire’s general postal service, a source of enormous profit, making contracts with a score of states and inaugurating 40 transport routes. The traveler could use either the ordinary post [wagon], which cost 26 *kreuzers* (about three farthings) per mile, or the more expensive special post, which cost about 1 ½ *thalers* per mile (about three-pence in English money). These mail coaches remained in service until 1766, the year in which the journals could announce the first closed carriages as a sensational innovation.

“In Germany one traveled at a snail’s pace. Casanova took three days to go from Magdeburg to Berlin, a journey of 85 miles...ten [days] from Berlin to Dresden (120 miles) and two from Munich to Augsburg (40 miles). The slowness of these journeys was due to various factors – the faulty construction of the vehicles, the bad state of the roads and the crossing of frontier posts. In the first place the vehicles were not solidly built. The breaking of an axle was so common an occurrence that Ritter von Lang maintains that the travelers often bet which way the coach would fall at the next bend in the road... On the stages the halts were interminable, due to time wasted by meals and changing horses; these were sometimes not available and had to be hired from local peasants. ...The slowness

³ The passage is from Adrien Fauchier-Magnan, *The Small German Courts in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Methuen and Co., 1947, pp. 107-108.

of the journey was doubled by enforced halts at various customs houses where passports were examined and taxes levied. The crossing of a number of small states in the course of one day with their several frontiers and their different currencies caused added difficulties.”

The author adds a footnote at this point: “The caprices of the postillions [the wagon driver] also had to be taken into account; they sometimes caused unpleasant incidents. Frederick the Great liked to tell the story, which amused him greatly, of the journey of a certain Monsieur Cogolin. This Frenchman was traveling from Potsdam to Berlin; thinking that the coach was going too slowly, he harangued the driver and even went so far as to cane him. The man got off his horse, forced Cogolin to exit the carriage, gave him a good beating, then put down his baggage on the road and left the traveler to proceed on foot.”

The historical background in Kronach

The earliest records for our Wagner family are found in the city of Kronach, which is located in northern Bavaria near the head-waters of the Main river. The area forms a natural watershed linking the Rhine and the Elbe Rivers. This was a favorable location for trade, especially for the many forest products that were transported from the nearby Franconian forest (*Frankenwald*) which is part of the mountainous and heavily forested region that forms the boundary with the northern state of Thuringia.

The city marks its official founding year as 1003 A.D., and it was preparing to celebrate its 1,000th anniversary when I first visited the city in 1992;⁴ however, there are earlier records for the city that pre-date this official year for the millennium celebration. A record from around 600 A.D. refers to the small village known as “Crana” which was located on a terrace of land between the confluence of two rivers valleys, the Kronach and the Hasslach.⁵ There the rivers merge below the city and flow into the Rodach, which in turn meanders southward into the Main, and thence to the Rhine in the west. This location at the confluence of the two rivers was a natural conduit for forestry products from the Frankenwald, as well as a crossroad for other ancient trade routes from the Saale and the Elbe, leading south to the Danube, the Main, and ultimately to the Rhine.

⁴ A special historical society was created to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the city. It published a series of journals on various aspects of the city’s history. The series is called, *1000 Jahre Kronach, Zeitschrift des Vereins 1000 Jahre Kronach e. V.* Eight issues had been published when I visited Kronach in the summer of 1994.

⁵ Many place-names in Germany have the affix “-ach” (e.g., Lindach, Eisenach, Bacharach, etc.). It is derived from the old Teutonic “aha,” which means “water;” hence, it designates a place along a stream or river (viz., “Bach,” stream). It is equivalent to the Latin suffix “-iacum” (viz., *aqua*).



Map of Franken region in northern Bavaria, by Mattheus Merian 1656

The most important Bishopric (*Bistum*) in northern Bavaria was based in Würzburg, where it had its administrative abbey (*Hochstift*), southwest of Kronach on the Main River. In 1007 some of its lands were used to create a separate Bishopric at Bamberg, located on the river between the two cities. In compensation, Würzburg was promoted to the higher status of Archbishopric (*Erzbistum*) for the entire region, and it was given additional lands in southern Thuringia. In 1122 the Emperor Henry V granted the city of Kronach to the Bishop of Bamberg, along with the formal title of *Fürst-Bischoff* (“Prince-Bishop”). The Bishopric of Bamberg had the special status of being *reichsunmittelbar*, i.e., it was directly subject only to the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope, it was not owned by or subject to other lesser nobility. After acquiring Kronach, the Prince-Bishop turned the city into the northern seat for his diocese and gave it all the appropriate trappings of higher government. A stone house and a tower were constructed on the upper edge of the city, which became the foundation for today’s Rosenberg castle. The parish church in the city, named in honor of St. John the Baptist, was established sometime before 1404. Over time Kronach became the seat of a superior court (*Obervogtamt*), and it was one of the three most important administrative seats for the Bishop. In 1384 the Prince-Bishop granted the right to the citizens of Kronach to elect a city council and two *Bürgermeister* each year from their own ranks. Later, as Kronach grew in size, the city was divided into quarters and a separate *Bürgermeister* was elected for each section.⁶ The old outer city walls and stone towers are still largely intact. The main gate into the old-town is known as the *Bamberger Tor*, which dates to the 15th century. The gate bears the coat of arms of the Bishopric of Bamberg (the original symbol was a stone tower and three roses) which are carved on the stone gateway.

The Rosenberg castle went through several periods of expansion and renovation, and it eventually became an impregnable fortress which served as a refuge for the Prince-Bishop when foreign armies threatened the region. With the advent of the cannon, the outer walls were converted into the typical star-shaped bastions of the 16th – 17th centuries, designed for the best field-of-fire coverage. The castle sits near the apex of a hill, strategically overlooking the “upper town” portion of the *Altstadt*. Behind the castle are some buildings that served as the royal *Residenz* of the Prince-Bishop during his official visits. The front walls of the castle are very high, some 60’ or so, while the lower rear walls of the castle are protected by an almost sheer cliff. The Rosenberg remains one of the largest and most intact Baroque castles in Germany today.⁷

⁶ D. J. Degen, “Oberregierungsrat of Kronach, Aus der Geschichte der Stadt Kronach,” in *Das Bayerland, Illustrierte Halbmonatschrift für Bayerns Land und Volk*, Bayerland Verlag: München, 1929.

⁷ Degen, 1929, p. 67.

The city of Kronach is best known in world history as the birth place for Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472 -1553), the famous Renaissance artist whose works are depicted in most art history texts. His family surname was Maler, but he is more commonly referred to by his city of birth.⁸ He is reputed to have been born in the *Gasthaus zum Scharfen Eck*, which still stands today.

Aside from Kronach's association with this famous early artistic luminary, the city also takes pride in its rather unique history of being one of the few strongholds that was never conquered by a foreign army. Throughout its millennium of history Kronach has stood firm against all invading armies. These included the Hussite rebellion in 1430, the Peasants War in 1525, and the "Second Margrave's War" in 1553. Throughout all the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation, the territories of the Prince-Bishop remained staunchly Roman Catholic.

⁸ Hanns Werner, "Lukas Maler, genannt Lukas Kranach, und seine Vaterstadt Kronach," in *Das Bayerland, Illustrierte Halbmonatschrift für Bayerns Land und Volk*, Bayerland Verlag: München, 1929.



View of Kronach from the Hasslach River, showing the lower and upper town, with Rosenberg castle in background.



"A bird's-eye view showing how perfectly this medieval city, birth place of Lucas Cranach (1472-1553)...has been preserved. The houses are crowded in three ring-like formations around the center and Rosenberg Fortress towers imposingly above the little town." (Source: *Bavaria, a Panorama in Color*, Frankfurt am Main: Umschau Verlag, 1963).



Rosenberg castle in Kronach, showing its sheer walls.⁹



⁹ Photo source: <http://www.afineline.org/writings/travel/1994.html>

The Thirty Years' War

Kronach faced its gravest threat in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), when the city survived three major sieges during the 1630s. This chapter in its history lives on in the city's collective memory and it is commemorated even today. In order to understand Kronach's crucial role in the events at that time, a brief synopsis of the causes and campaigns in that war will be provided.

The Thirty Years' War was the result of a complex interplay of political and religious factors that had been building in Europe since the 16th century. On the surface it was a continuation of the religious rivalries unleashed during the Reformation, pitting Catholics against Protestants (primarily Lutherans and Calvinists). Beneath the surface, however, there were important international rivalries. The major opponents were, on the one hand, the House of Habsburg (the Holy Roman Emperor based in Austria: Ferdinand II and Ferdinand III, together with their cousin Philip IV of Spain); their rivals included Christian IV of Denmark, the English and the Dutch League, the Bourbons in France, and Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden. The military campaigns were fought mainly in the German-speaking parts of Europe, so the numerous smaller German principalities also became involved, jockeying for territorial advantages. A Protestant Union, led by Frederick V Elector of the Palatinate, was formed in 1608 for the avowed purpose of defending the lands and rights of each member state against the Habsburgs. Its two most important members were the Elector of the Palatinate and the Elector of Brandenburg, supported by the Duke of Württemberg, and the Margraves of Kulmbach, Ansbach and Baden-Durlach. To counter them, a Catholic League was formed in 1609, headed by Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria. Maximilian had the largest army in southern Germany and he was the most important ally of the Catholic Emperor.

When spark was set to this tinder it quickly erupted into a protracted, agonizing series of conflicts that devastated most of central Europe. The casualties suffered in Germany from battles, starvation and disease (chiefly typhus, bubonic plague, and dysentery) were staggering. Estimates range from a low of about 20% to a high of 50% in some regions (e.g., Brandenburg). Overall the population of the German states was reduced by about 30%. The male population suffered the highest losses, being reduced by almost half. The Swedish armies alone destroyed 2,000 castles, 18,000 villages and 1,500 towns in Germany, which amounted to almost one-third of all German towns.¹⁰

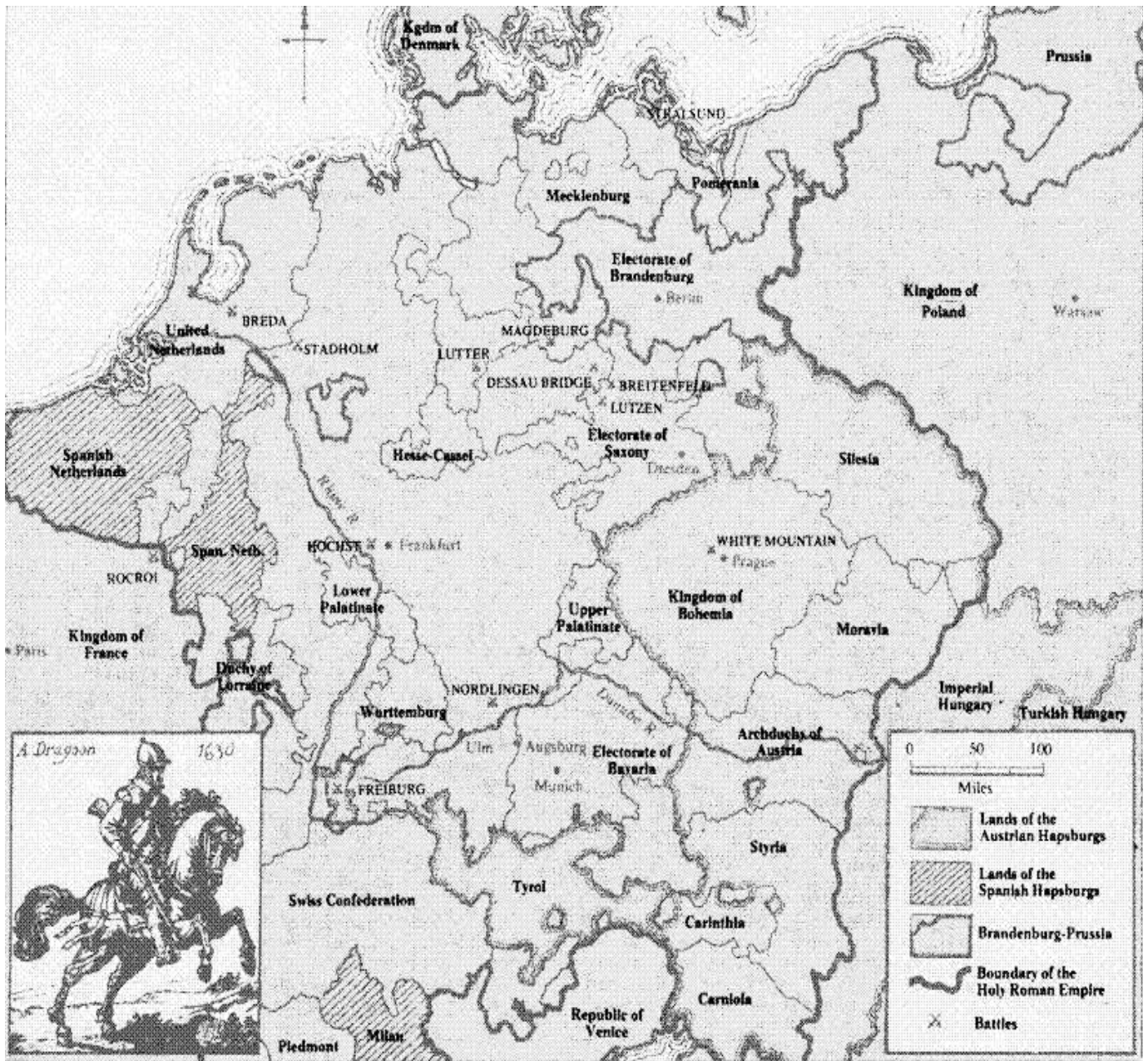
The war began as a regional revolt in Bohemia in 1618 when the Protestant nobles in Prague deposed Mattheus, the Holy Roman Emperor (who also held

¹⁰ For a general discussion of the Thirty Years War, see Herbert Langer, *The Thirty Years' War*, Dorset Press, 1990 (originally published in German in 1978). There are several sources available on internet – see for example:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years'_War

title of King of Bohemia). Infamously, they hurled two of the Emperor's officers through a window, an event that echoes down in history as "the defenestration of Prague." Mattheus died in 1619 and his heir, Ferdinand II, was determined to uphold the claims of the crown. A joint army of Imperial and Bavarian troops of Duke Maximilian I, headed by General Tilly, thoroughly defeated the Protestant rebels in Bohemia in 1620. The following year, hostilities broke out in the Low Countries and the Rhine lands, pitting the armies of Spain and General Tilly against Duke Christian of Braunschweig (Brunswick) and Frederick V of the Palatinate. Germany's Protestant Union invited both Kings Christian IV of Denmark and Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden to enter the war on their behalf. Christian IV accepted and was given command of Protestant forces in 1625 (with considerable subsidies from the Bourbons in France, rivals of the Hapsburgs). However, the Danes were out-manuevered by the more numerous Imperial and Bavarian armies, led by the mercenary General Albrecht von Wallenstein. By 1629 the Danes had had enough and they sued for peace.

At that point, when it seemed that all Protestant hopes were lost, Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden decided to join the fray and the war rapidly expanded into a new phase. Although Ferdinand's Imperial armies had the upper hand until then, his treasury was exhausted and his alliances were weakened. He also had dismissed his successful General Wallenstein in 1630, leaving his armies in the hands of General Tilly. The Swedish-led armies consolidated the disarrayed forces of the Protestant Union, then drove Tilly's armies back. They regained much of the territory that had been lost and conquering half of the Imperial states. They won a stunning victory against Tilly at Breitenfeld on September 17, 1631.

After that victory, the way was open for Gustavus to send his forces through Franconia, Thuringia and down the valley of the Main to the Rhine. Gustavus derisively referred to this region as the *Pfaffengasse* ("priests' alley") and he treated the wealthy Bishoprics as military booty. In October, 1631 his armies looted the Catholic Bishoprics of Würzburg and Bamberg, then took the Archbishopric of Mainz, and by December his troops were in the Lower Palatinate on the west side of the Rhine. Tilly, reinforced by the armies of Maximilian of Bavaria, launched a counter-attack and drove the Swedish army out of the Bishopric of Bamberg. Gustavus quickly moved his army back eastward and retook Bamberg, then struck south into Bavaria. Tilly resolved to make a stand at the River Lech. On April 15, 1632, near the city of Rain, the two armies met and Gustavus was victorious. During the battle Tilly was mortally wounded and he died two weeks later. After this battle the Swedish forces proceeded to ravage Maximilian's defenseless Duchy. In mid-May, 1632, they captured Munich itself. Maximilian had to flee to Salzburg for Habsburg protection.



Germany during the Thirty Years' War

In desperation, the Emperor summoned Wallenstein in 1632 to take over leadership of the Imperial armies once again. Wallenstein did not delay in deploying his new force. In May he recaptured Prague, drove the Saxons from Bohemia, then joined his forces with the remnants of Maximilian's Bavarian army. He liberated Bamberg on Oct. 7, took Coburg the next day, and moved on to attack Saxony in hopes of forcing a decisive battle. Gustavus marched north to Saxony's defense and the two armies clashed at Lützen, near Leipzig, on November 16, 1632. After a protracted battle, Wallenstein's advance into Saxony

was halted and he withdrew his forces to Bohemia for winter quarters. The Swedish forces cleared out any remaining Imperial troops, then went into winter quarters in Franconia. But they too had suffered a major setback -- their King Gustavus lay dead on the field of battle.

Wallenstein met his own end two years later in 1634. Ferdinand had dismissed him, for the second time, but when Wallenstein refused to disband his forces and even contemplated switching allegiances, the Emperor ordered him to be assassinated.

The Sieges of 1632-1634: Kronach's Shining Hour

Kronach played a small but nonetheless important role in this grand unfolding of events. The city remained untouched during the first decade of the chaos, but it used this time to prepare itself for the eventual hostilities. Two stone blockhouses were built near the Rosenberg fortress and a sturdy breastwork of logs was built to replace the palisades that had served as city walls. The Prince-Bishop sent soldiers to be quartered there, including musketeers, pike men, cannoneers, and cavalry. Since the main military force was far away in Bamberg, the citizens of Kronach, including those in neighboring villages, were mustered to form a defense militia known as the *Ausschuss* (lit. a "commission"). The residents were divided into city quarters, each under the leadership of a *Viertelmeister* (there were four *Burgermeister*s, one for each of the city-quarters). Whenever alarm was given, they had to show up with the *Ausschüsser* of their quarters, their weapons ready and dressed in their best armor. The militia performed guard duty and marched in ceremonial processions. Some of them served as defenders of the Rosenberg castle, while others were assigned to guard the city walls.¹¹

The peaceful conditions changed when Gustavus Adolphus entered the war. After his victory against Tilly and the Catholic League at Breitenfeld in 1631, Bavaria and Franconia lay prostrate before his armies. Tilly had died on the field of battle and his forces were in retreat. Duke Maximilian had fled to Salzburg for Imperial protection. Wallenstein, the formerly victorious leader of the armies of the Catholic League, had been dismissed by the Emperor two years before and he did not re-enter the fray until April, 1632. In October, 1631 the Swedish army and their Protestant allies triumphantly marched through Thuringia and Bavaria, looting the Bishoprics of Bamberg and Würzburg on their way. Kronach remained a thorn in their side. It was the major unconquered bastion of resistance in the

¹¹ <http://www.cronacher-ausschuss-compagnie.de>. Historical reenactors in Kronach formed the *Cronacher Ausschuss Compagnie* (Cronach Militia company) in 2001 to provide "living-history" presentations of the military and civil life in the 17th century. They wear authentic militia costumes and reenact famous battles scenes during the *Historisches Stadtfest* (historical city festival) in Kronach, held every last weekend in June.

north, strategically located between the Protestant cities of Coburg¹² (about 20 km. west of Kronach) and Kulmbach¹³ (about the same distance to the southeast).

Kronacher Ausschuss Compagnie 1632
- Die Musketiere -



In the Chronicles of Kronach those tumultuous years are usually referred to as the “Swedish war,” but in fact the Saxon armies played an equally prominent role in the sieges of the city. At that point in history Saxony had been divided into several small dukedoms through the process of hereditary branching of royal family lines. One branch, known as the “Albertine” line, held the title of Elector, which had passed to Johann Georg I (1611–1656). Johann Georg had initially hesitated to join the Protestant cause, but his reluctance disappeared when the Imperial troops under Tilly ravaged Saxony in 1631. He formed an alliance with Gustavus Adolphus in September that year and his Saxon troops participated in the defeat of Tilly at the battle of Breitenfeld.¹⁴ However, his Saxon armies were an unreliable ally. At one point in the battle they were routed by the Imperials and the Elector himself had to seek safety in flight. After the victory at Breitenfeld the Saxon army marched into Bohemia and occupied Prague, but Johann George soon began to negotiate for peace and his soldiers offered little resistance to Wallenstein, who drove them back into Saxony. Gustavus Adolphus prevented the Elector

¹² Coburg had a long history associated with Protestantism. In 1530 Martin Luther had quartered there. In 1596 it became the capitol of the Duchy of Saxony-Coburg under Duke Johann Casimir (ruled 1596 – 1633).

¹³ Kulmbach, we recall, was one of the original members of the Protestant Union in 1609. Tilly besieged Kulmbach and sacked the city in Oct. 1631.

¹⁴ After the death of the Swedish king at Lützen in 1632, Johann George I again negotiated peace. In May 1635 he concluded the important treaty of Prague with Ferdinand II.

from deserting, so Johann Georg allowed his troops to fight on in a desultory fashion against the Imperials in 1632, led by various lesser Saxon nobility.

The most prominent of these nobles, cited as the principal leaders of the assaults on Kronach, were Dukes Bernhard and Wilhelm of Saxony-Weimar and Duke Johann Casimir of Saxony-Coburg. They were descendants of the "Ernestine" royal branch of Saxony, the other major family line that did not hold claim to the title of Elector. Since the division of these two branches in 1547, a policy had been followed of ensuring that each male heir had a territory, no matter how small, over which he could reign as a "Duke." As a result, southern Thuringia had been divided into several principalities, each ruled by a petty nobleman who was eager to add to his collection of vassal estates.¹⁵ Duke Johann II of Saxony-Weimar (1570-1605) had 12 sons and he was eager to provide separate realms for each since it was apparent that they could not all "remain in their own Duchy" at Weimar. One of his sons, Wilhelm (later known as "the Great," 1598-1662), was a Lieutenant-General under Gustavus Adolphus and after the victory at Breitenfeld he was appointed Governor of Thuringia and Erfurt in 1631. But Wilhelm was ambitious and he wanted more. He established a pretentious court and sought to have possession of the Catholic Bishopric in Thuringia and the northern frontier of Franconia. Gustavus did not regard him as being important enough, so he left Wilhelm "at his shaky command-post and out of favor."¹⁶ His younger brother, Duke Bernhard (1604 -1639) received most of the honors. Bernhard's troops had played a crucial role in the battle of Breitenfeld. At first he was subordinate to his brother, but he came into his own as a prominent commander when he led forays into Bavaria, and eventually he was promoted to a higher rank than Wilhelm.

The third protagonist in the battles at Kronach was Duke Johann Casimir of Saxony-Coburg (1564-1633). He too was a member of a separate branch of the "Ernestine" lineage of Saxony, and his guardian was Johann Georg I the Elector. Duke Casimir's single major holding was his capitol city of Coburg, in addition to several smaller towns bordering Kronach on the north, such as Rodach. After joining the Swedish alliance, he also had great interest in expanding his share of the spoils of war.

Thus it was that the armies of these ambitious Dukes of Saxony-Weimar and Coburg, accompanied by a strong contingent of Swedish soldiers, appeared at the gates of Kronach in May and June, 1632. They were led by two Captains, named Mussel and Hastver. Initial demands for surrender and tribute dragged on through the spring. The citizens and military garrison at Rosenberg were urged to cooperate, but to no avail. The siege lasted for several weeks, involving heavy

¹⁵ The principalities in Thuringia included Saxony-Altenburg, Saxony-Eisenach, Saxony-Gotha, Saxony-Weimar, Saxony-Coburg, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, Schwarzburg-Sangerhausen, and the territory of the Counts of Reuss

¹⁶ Langer, 1990, p. 129.

troop assaults and cannon barrages. Some 1,260 cannon shots were reportedly fired at the city walls. The military garrison of the Prince-Bishop was not strong enough to defend the city, so they focused their defense on the Rosenberg fortress and it fell upon the citizens to defend themselves. During one of the battles four citizens were captured, tortured and gruesomely flayed alive, to display the consequences of continued resistance. The people bravely held out until finally the enemy forces withdrew.



During Wallenstein's advance northward into Saxony in 1632, he bivouacked for a few days near Kronach, in the neighboring town of Unterrodach. He sent a proclamation commending the citizens of Kronach for their bravery. The city council may have been flattered by this official recognition, but they were more interested in receiving compensation for the damages that they had suffered! The council authorized one of its members, Erasmus Wagner, to give Wallenstein a memorandum listing their damages and complaints. The memo stated: 1) the city

had incurred many expenses from supporting four companies of soldiers for several months, 2) timber commerce and the tilling of the fields had come to a stand-still during the military campaigns, 3) much damage and several deaths were suffered during the sieges because they had a limited military garrison of only 60 soldiers, and the citizens themselves, about 500 people total, including the women and widows, had to hold out by themselves against the enemy, 4) in addition to this, the cavalry in Kronach had to be provided for, including fodder for their horses, 5) the neighboring villages contributed very little to their common defense, and 6) apparently there were some bad relationships with the commander of the military garrison, who had threatened to shoot the *Bürgermeister* and other people if they didn't obey his orders.¹⁷

After his brief stay near Kronach, Wallenstein carried his counter attack into Saxony. The death of Gustavus Adolphus at the battle of Lützen in 1632 left a dangerous vacuum in the Protestant forces. The Swedish regency was placed in the hands of a committee of nobles, under Axel Oxenstierna. The German Protestant allies began to threaten mutiny, so Oxenstierna bribed them with grants of conquered land in lieu of the sums owed them. Most richly rewarded was Bernhard of Saxony-Weimar, who had proven himself to be a star among the military commanders. In 1633, with his brother, Duke Wilhelm, and the Swedish General Gustav Horn, he led an invasion into Bavaria, which was defended at that time by Count Aldringer (1588 - 1634) who had taken over Tilly's command.

This set the stage for the second storm unleashed on Kronach on February 2, 1633. The enemy troops occupied the neighboring villages of Steinberg and Hasslach. The next day, some 3,000 foot soldiers advanced against the Hasslach Gate of Kronach, while 17 companies of cavalry took up positions nearby. The attack met strong resistance from the citizens. The enemy hid behind the houses in the lower part of the city, then advanced across one of the bridges. They were met by a barrage of shots from the city wall and towers, which inflicted heavy casualties. The attackers set fire to the lower city, burning about 70 houses and workshops. The Kronach musketeers then counter-attacked across the bridge, seized the houses, and sent the enemy into head-long flight. After the battle, the citizens retrieved about 100 muskets¹⁸ and pikes and carried them inside the city. As the enemy retreated, they set fire to several outer buildings of the city, as well as in the villages of Seelach, Hasslach, Knellendorf, Gundelsdorf, and Glosperg.

The enemy regrouped and Duke Wilhelm's Saxon troops launched even more intensive attacks in May and June, 1633. The *Bürgermeister* coordinated the defense and musketeers were stationed on the east wall of the city. The attackers advanced across the Hasslach bridge to the city's wooden wall on the west. The cry went up that the enemy was attacking from that side, so the citizens

¹⁷ Chronicles, vol. 6, p. 207.

¹⁸ The muskets in use at that time were wheel-locks, an early form of flintlock.

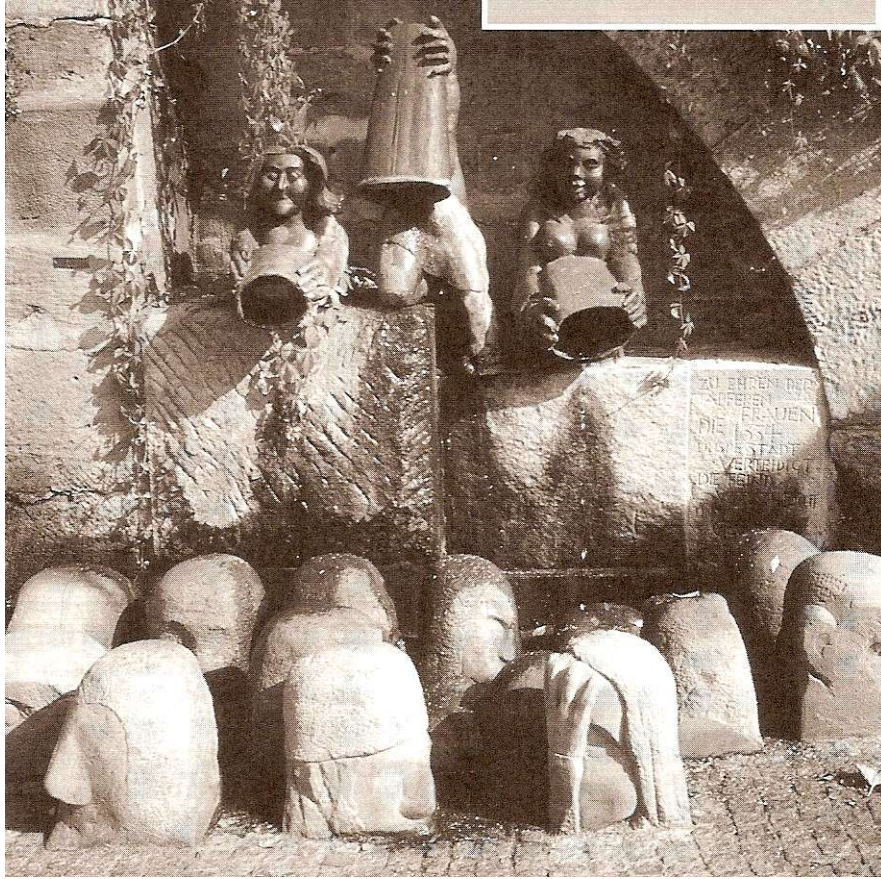
barricaded the bridge and unleashed a heavy counter-fire. The enemy retreated, and the citizens and soldiers charged after them, firing into them as they fled. The enemy suffered 200 wounded and dead, while the citizens reported only 3 deaths. When Wallenstein became aware of the precarious position of the city, he returned with 2,000 foot soldiers and 7 companies of cavalry, which forced the enemy to abandon their siege of Kronach on June 16, 1633.

Although the armies of Dukes Bernhard and Wilhelm failed to take Kronach, they did achieve military victories in other parts of Bavaria. In 1633 Bernhard was awarded the title of "Duke of Franconia." He was given the lands seized from the Bishoprics of Würzburg and Bamberg, but the fortresses of Würzburg and Königshafen remained in Swedish hands.¹⁹ Bernhard installed one of his many brothers as the steward of his domain and returned to the wars. Lacking adequate funds of his own, Bernhard authorized his soldiers to extract heavy contributions and loot from the local citizenry. As a stern Protestant and a successful military commander, he was regarded by German Protestants as the savior of their religion.

The third storm against Kronach was unleashed in March, 1634. The armies of Duke Bernhard and the Margrave of Brandenburg-Kulmbach, with their Swedish allies, returned with the intention of decisively defeating the stubborn holdouts at Kronach. This time they managed to blast a hole in the city wall with their cannons, through which the enemy forces could storm. But the citizens of Kronach, supported by their courageous women, beat back all attacks and inflicted heavy casualties. Accounts of the battle report that the women of Kronach poured boiling water over the city walls onto the attackers. The club-wielding towns-women flew at the attackers with bellows of rage, shouting encouragement to their men folk to fight on. The Swedes, who had sacked and burned half of Germany, fled in disarray. A Swedish colonel reportedly said that the men of Kronach fought that day like wild devils, but the women were nine times worse. After this defeat, the Saxons and their allies once again gave up the siege and withdrew to Coburg.

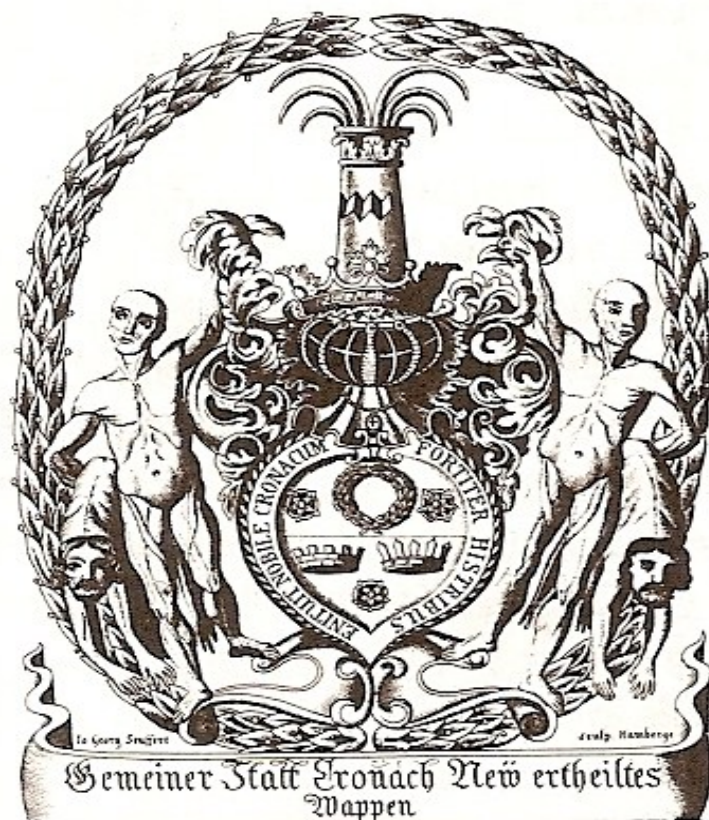
In 1990 the sculptor Heinrich Schreiber was commissioned to create a fountain, known as the *Frauenbrunnen*, commemorating these stalwart women. It portrays them pouring water out of huge vats onto their unfortunate attackers. It was erected in the town plaza near the Bamberger Gate.

¹⁹ Langer, 1990, p. 129.



The Frauenbrunnen in Kronach

Official proclamations of gratitude were lavished upon the citizens of Kronach by the Emperor and the Prince-Bishop for their courageous and stout resistance during all these sieges. The proclamations were accompanied by gold necklaces and honorifics, which were prominently displayed in the city hall. As partial restitution for their damages, Kronach was also awarded the income from two private estates (*Rittergüter*), known as the Weissenbrunn and the Theisenort; later, in 1639 the Bishop also conferred upon them two additional estates of Hasslach and Stockheim. These estates generate income that is used even today by the city for charitable purposes. In 1651 the Prince-Bishop also granted a new coat-of-arms (*Stadtwappen*) to the city as a tribute. On it are displayed the four “flayed men” (*Geschundenen Männer*) who were brutally tortured during the siege of 1632. As you cross the Haslach river and enter Kronach through the *Bamberger Tor*, the picturesque old gateway in the walls on the southwest side of the city, you pass into the *Melchior-Otto-Platz*. There a column was erected in 1654 commemorating the city’s defense against the Swedish army in 1632–34. The residents of Kronach take great pride in these glory days of the past.



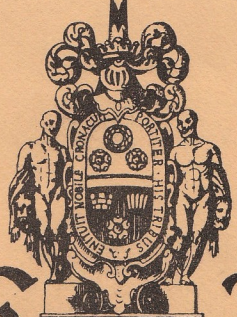
**The Kronach Coat of Arms of 1651
Portraying the "flayed men."**

Folget ein Bericht/wie man
die Schanzen vmb läger/ vnd hauffen Kriegs-
uolck zu Ross vnd Fuß/ sampt dem Geschütz vnd dem not-



turfft/auffwerffen/führen/ ordnen vnd schlagen soll/ alles mit Au-
genscheinlichen Figuren verzeichnet.





Kronach

mit seiner Feste

Rosenberg

- 1 - FESTUNG ROSENBERG
- 2 - KRIEGERDENKMAL
- 3 - STADTTURM
- 4 - HAMMEL/STORCHENTURM
FREMDENERKEHRSAMT

- 5 - NEUES RATHAUS MIT WEHR-
GANG UND LEELAUBENTURM
- 6 - ALTES RATHAUS
- 7 - FLOSSMEISTER-FACHWERKHAUS
- 8 - GEBURTSHAUS LUCAS CRANACH d.Ä.
- 9 - EHRENSÄULE

- 10 - KATH. STADTPFARRKIRCHE
- 11 - BAMBERGER TOR
- 12 - KLOSTER UND KLOSTERKIRCHE
- 13 - ROSENTURM
- 14 - STÄDTISCHES BÜRGERSPITAL