

Two Letters of Settlement [*Urfehdebriefen*]

Feuds [*Fehde*] in the Middle Ages were the violent enmity between individuals or families to assert legal claims. The authorities however always attempted to put a dampers on these, and they were finally forbidden in the “*Ewigen Landfrieden*” [Perpetual Public Peace Acts] of 1495. In the subsequent first decade of the 16th Century one tried to shut them off through so called Letters of Settlement [*“Urfehdebriefen”*].

“Urfehde, sometimes “urvehede” connote the end or “*Aussein*” of a feud or dispute. Along with this they dealt mostly with offenses like riot and insurrection against the authorities, forest and forestry violations, adultery and thievery. In the Letter of Settlement both parties agreed to cease further hostilities, never to leave a certain village, or not to possess any arms. Geradstettener were involved in several letters of settlement of these times. [Those that follow were in connection with pardon and amnesty agreements between prisoners and the reigning duke.]

In the first case, the letter concerns the participation of a Geradstetten farmer, Uetz Wonnhardt, in the uprising “*Armen Konrad*” [“Poor Konrad” Peasant Uprising] in the year 1514. In this rebellion Uetz Wonnhard sided against Duke Ulrich. The Schorndorf Latin School teacher Roesch described this event in his History of the District Seat as follows:

... On August 11 a sentence and decree of the district was passed on the participants [of the peasant revolt]. Eight [of the accused] appeared, among them two from Schorndorf, and came away with their lives spared. Not appearing were 147 persons, of which ten were from Geradstetten, and all were declared outlaws. Many of these fugitives fled to other states or Switzerland, and sought through the mediation of friends to return home.

Uetz Wonnhardt of *Newen Herberg*, a farm by the hamlet *Unterfoehrenbach* which later disappeared, was among the accused. He fled out of the country, was captured, tried, and brought to the tower in Schorndorf. Friends and sponsors of Oetz Wonnhardt succeeded however in obtaining his pardon from the Duke.

The conditions for this pardon were set down in the following Letter of Settlement.

I, Utz Wonnhart, living in Neuwen Herberg belonging to Geradstetten confess and avow openly with this letter [that]...as I participated earlier last year in the uprising against the Principality of Wuerttemberg, did hold myself unruly against my Noble Prince and Lord Duke Ulrich of Wuettemberg, I was therefore rightly accused by my Lord and condemned. And after that, found and captured, completely accepting [my fate].

Yet nonetheless my Noble Lord named above called upon me and agreed to the pardon [advocated] by my good friends and sponsors. For this I will be thankful my life long to you, my Noble Grace. Thus I renounce all activities in this dispute, and all connected with it, which I participated in the past, against his Nobel Grace, and swear allegiance to him and Holy God.

I have also accordingly taken an oath that I agree to accept this agreement with my Noble Lord and the district, an oath as well to the other ordinances and laws of the Duchy, and that I agree to hold myself away from common and vulgar behavior, and to complain no more.

Also for all my life [I agree] not to use armor or weapons, again not to have those without the grant and permission of the authorities of my noble Lord.

And this is to happen now with this letter, all loyal and true.

And to attest to this as a true document, I have asked the Erbarbarn and Wissen Hainrichen Schertlin, the judge, and Martin Roesslin, the old burgermaister of Schorndorf, to put their seal on this letter.*

And this letter is written on Saturday after the Sunday of Cantate after Christ's birth, 1515.

*Heinrich Schertlin was the father of Sebastian Schertlin of Burtenbach, the famous fieldmarshall of Kaiser Karl V.

Another case of a Letter of Settlement this time is concerned with the adultery of a Geradstetten citizen. It was written in 1536. Lienhart Trub the younger, from Geradstetten, was taken into custody and thrown into the tower because of illicit relations with Apollonia, the daughter of a Schorndorf citizen. He had to swear to a Letter of Settlement and promise under oath "to completely and entirely put the said Apollonia out of his mind."

I, Lienhart Trub the younger, of Geradstetten, state publicly with this letter that on certain days I knowingly joined with [Apollonia] unchastely, and in addition to this I had a friendship, [though] no marriage could I make with her, that I handled her in a forbidden way outside of marriage, and that I walked away from it.

Therefore I was punished and thrown into the tower by the authorities. After this I swore an oath to God to swear off this behavior and all its consequences, and what follows is given to my Noble Prince and Lord Duke Ulrich of Wuerttemberg, as my district Prince and Lord, his princely and noble officers and servants, that never in my life again will I treat the said Apollonia in such a way, will stay away from her and put her entirely out of my mind.

But if I do not abide by this, the aforementioned Noble Lord, his noble officers and jailors should take me and stretch me on the rack without respite or second thoughts of mercy, until my body and spirit are no longer...All previous negotiations and contradictions against this pardon are ended, and with this letter the pardon and negotiations are accepted.

*Given on Wednesday after the Trinity Sunday counted after Christ our Lord was born,
1536.*

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