

## Heinrich Matthias Steigleder

You were born, in the summer of 1731, in the city of Suhl, in the Electorate of Saxony. Your father, Johann Balthazar Steigleder, was a master carpenter. Your mother, Maragarethe Barbara Koch, was the daughter of a goldsmith. As a boy, you were apprenticed to a master gunsmith who, like many of your relatives on your father’s side of your family, made muskets, pistols, and rifles.

Under normal circumstances, a person of your social standing would not have been able to become a military officer. However, thanks to a combination of expansion and casualties, many of the regiments fighting in the present war found that their need for junior officers exceeded the supply of suitable young gentlemen. Thus, the summer of 1761 found you in possession of a lieutenant’s commission, albeit in Freytag’s Free Corps, a recently formed unit in the service of the elector of Hanover that, in all likelihood, would be disbanded soon after the signing of a peace.



**Richard Knötel, *Freytag’s Free Corps in 1760*, circa 1910**

1762

In courts and coffee houses, lecture halls and salons, pamphlets and books, philosophers argue that you are living in the Age of Reason. The Wars of Religion, which wrought so much destruction in Germany, have been over for more than a hundred years. In the Electorate of Saxony, the country of your birth, a Roman Catholic monarch, Frederick Augustus II, rules over a population that is almost entirely composed of Lutherans. Nonetheless, while he has built a splendid Roman Catholic church next to his palace in Dresden, he has done nothing to inhibit the free exercise of the Lutheran faith in his realm.



**Bernardo Bellotto, *View of Dresden with the Hofkirche on the Right*, 1742**

In some respects, the reasonableness of your times extends to military matters. Thus, no one objects to your service in the army of the Elector of Hanover, even though he is the enemy of the sovereign of the land in which you were born and raised, the Elector of Saxony. Similarly, no one finds it odd that you correspond with friends and relations in Suhl, even though it is a major source of weapons for the army of Electoral Saxony.

When, however, it comes to the war in which you have been engaged, the “small war” in western Germany, it is easy to forget that you are living in the Age of Reason. Many of the people engaged, from starving country people and deserters to unpaid French troops and professional partisans, engage in acts of desperation, brutality, and vengeance to a degree that is very much at odds with the ideals of the Enlightenment.



## The World War

The war in Hanover is part of a larger war, one that is also taking place in North America, India, the Caribbean, Iberia, and central Germany. In most theaters of this conflict, the chief belligerents are France and Great Britain. In central Germany, however, the struggle pits the forces of the Holy Roman Empire, which is allied with France, against those of Prussia, which is allied with Great Britain.

Over the course of the past eight years, a number of additional belligerents have taken part in the fighting. In Europe, Russia and Sweden took part in the struggle against Prussia. In India, the situation of the Moghul Empire was analogous to that of the Holy Roman Empire. That is, while the Empire as a whole was allied with France, some of its component states cooperated with Great Britain. In North America, various Indian nations drew French and British forces into ongoing disputes, and, in turn, were drawn into the larger conflict.



## The War in Germany

In Germany, the present war has been fought in two distinct theaters. In the east, the two main belligerents are Prussia and an alliance of member states of the Holy Roman Empire. (As this is hard to say, the latter alliance is often referred to as “Austria” or “the Empire.”) In the west, the main belligerents are Great Britain and France. In the area between the two theaters, the forces that fight usually contain contingents from the armies of Hanover and Saxony.

In the eastern theater, Prussia has lost many battles. Indeed, there were moments in which its survival as a state was in doubt. Nonetheless, Prussia has managed to avoid catastrophic defeat. In the western theater, British and Hanoverian forces have won many victories over French armies. None of these, however, has been decisive. Thus, at the beginning of each campaigning season, the British and Hanoverian leadership must deal with the possibility of a French invasion of western Germany



## **Hanover and Great Britain**

Formally known as the “Electoral Principality of Brunswick-Lüneburg” (Kurfürstentum Braunschweig-Lüneburg), the Electorate of Hanover is one of the three hundred or so component states of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. With a population of 700,000, it has fewer people than Austria (10,000,000), Prussia (4,100,000), Bavaria (1,800,000), or Saxony (1,300,000.) At the same time, Hanover is forty-two times as populous as the sovereign County of Schaumburg-Lippe-Bückeburg, which has fewer than 17,000 residents.

Since 1714, the elector of Hanover has also reigned as the king of Great Britain. (The third of these monarchs, George III, ascended to the thrones of Great Britain and Hanover in 1760.) Because of this relationship, known as “personal union,” the foreign policies of the two countries, while not entirely identical, are closely aligned.

The armies of Great Britain and Hanover are distinct organizations. However, units from both armies often operate together. Thus, Hanoverian troops served in the British army that defeated the Jacobite Rebellion in Scotland in 1745 and 1746. Likewise, British troops served alongside the Hanoverians and Hessians of the army that fought against the French in Hanover in 1759.



**George III, King of Great Britain and Elector of Hanover**

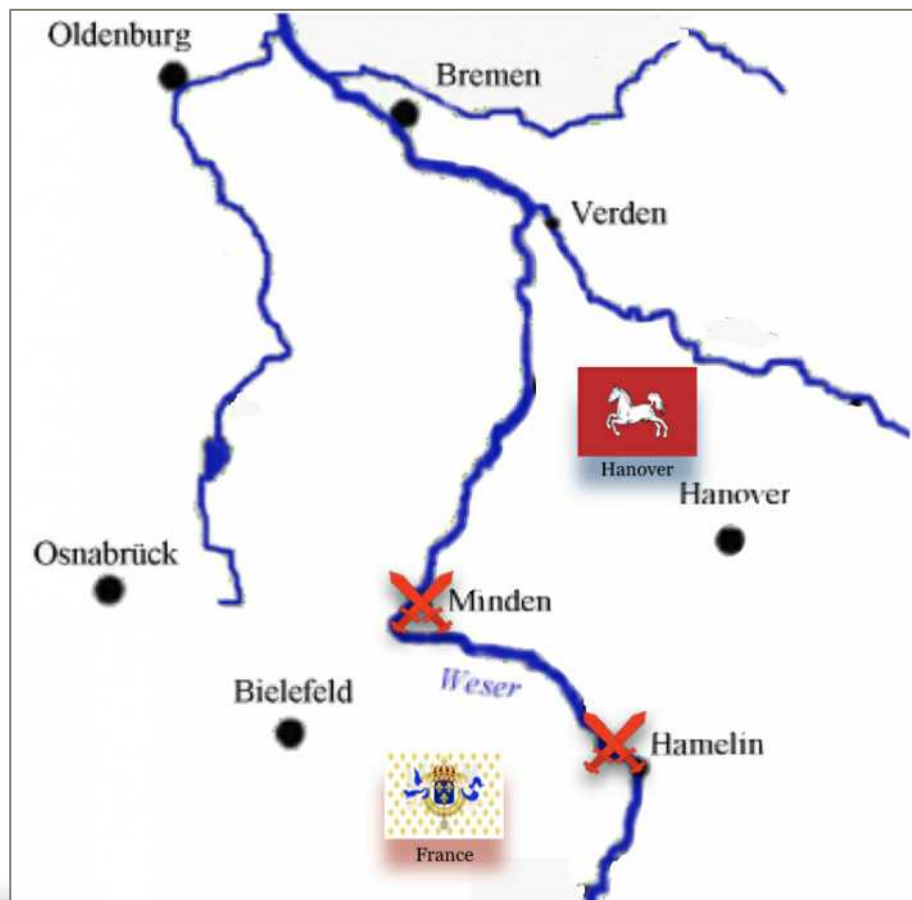


### The War in Hanover (1757-1759)

In the spring of 1757, a French army invaded the electorate of Hanover. On 26 July 1757, this force won a battle (at Hastenbeck, just south of the city of Hamelin). On 11 August 1757, it occupied the eponymous capital of the electorate, the city of Hanover.

In October of 1757, the Hanoverian government gave command of its forces to Ferdinand, Prince of Brunswick. Making use of money provided by Great Britain and troops provided by Prussia and Hesse-Kassel, Ferdinand organized a new army.

In the course of 1758, Brunswick operated in the Rhineland, defeating a French army at Krefeld (12 June 1758) before going over to the defensive. In the spring of 1759, Brunswick, who had been reinforced with British troops, resumed the offensive. This bore fruit on 1 August 1759, when he won a decisive victory at Minden.



## The Men that Fought at Minden

Rudyard Kipling

The men that fought at Minden, they had anarchistic bombs  
Served to 'em by name of 'and-grenades;  
But they got it in the eye (same as you will by-an'-by)  
When they clubbed their field-parades.

The men that fought at Minden, they 'ad buttons up an' down,  
Two-an'-twenty dozen of 'em told;  
But they didn't grouse an' shirk at an hour's extry work,  
They kept 'em bright as gold.

The men that fought at Minden, they was armed with musketoons,  
Also, they was drilled by 'alberdiers;  
I don't know what they were, but the sergeants took good care  
They washed be'ind their ears.

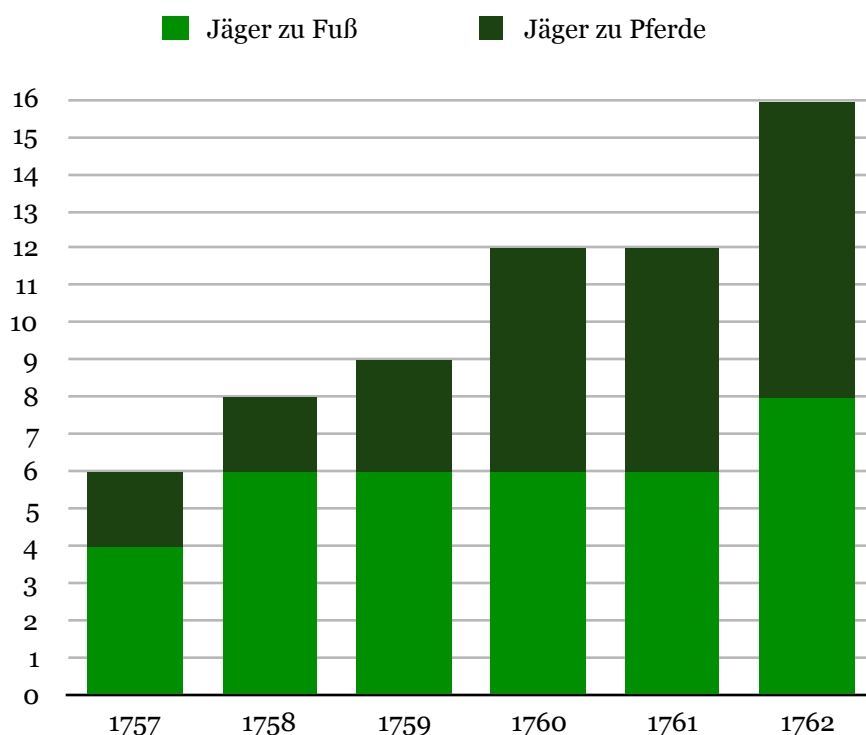


Richard Simkin, *The 25th Foot at the Battle of Minden*

## Freytag’s Free Corps

In May of 1757, Count Christian Günther von der Schulenburg, Supreme Master Huntsman (*Oberjägermeister*) of the Elector of Hanover, received permission to form what was, in effect, a small private army. Recruited from among the game keepers of various princely and noble estates, it initially consisted of four companies of “hunters on foot” (*Jäger zu Fuß*) and two of “hunters on horseback” (*Jäger zu Pferde*.) (Each company of “hunters on foot” was authorized 5 officers and 196 enlisted men. Each company of “hunters on horse” rated 4 officers and 102 enlisted men. Whether mounted or on foot, all of the hunters were armed with rifles, many of which were the same weapons that they had carried in civilian life.)

In 1759, Colonel William von Freytag, who had previously been in charge of the “hunters on foot” of Schulenburg’s Free Corps, took command of the entire unit. As a result, people started to refer to the organization as “Freytag’s Free Corps (*Freytags Frei Corps*) or the “Freytagish Free Corps” (*Freytag’sche Frei Corps*.)



**Increase in the Number of Companies of Freytag’s Jäger Corps  
May 1757 - March 1762**