

= Johann Jakob von Wunsch =

Johann Jakob von Wunsch ( 1717 ? 1788 ) was soldier of fortune and Prussian general of infantry , and a particularly adept commander of light infantry . The son of a Württemberg furrier , he served in several armies in the course of his lengthy career .

Shortly after he turned 18 , his father enrolled him in Württemberg service . In the Württemberg Regiment , he supported the Austrians against the Ottoman Empire in 1737 . Later , he served in Bavarian army during the War of the Austrian Succession . In 1748 he came to the notice of Prince Henry , and enter Prussian service for the Seven Years ' War , where he led an autonomous corps in many raids and skirmishes that wrought havoc on the Austrian forces . His incursion over Prussia 's border with Bohemia in 1778 was the opening action of the War of the Bavarian Succession .

In peace time , he devoted his efforts to training light infantry , developing an autonomous corps of skirmishers . Frederick the Great 's successor , Frederick Wilhelm II , promoted him to general of infantry and raised him to the Prussian nobility .

= = Family and early military career = =

Wunsch was born on 22 December 1717 in Heidenheim , Württemberg to a furrier and died at Prenzlau , in the Kingdom of Prussia on 18 October 1788 . His grandfather served in the Austrian military , and his father had served for a few years in the Bavarian military . He received schooling locally , and on his eighteenth year , his father sent him to Officer Cadet training in the Duke of Württemberg 's Regiment . While with this regiment in Vienna , he married Josephine le Roi , the daughter of a Habsburg War Commissary . They had one son .

= = Early military career = =

The Duke of Württemberg 's regiment supported the Austrian military in its wars with the Ottoman Empire . Between 1737 and 1739 , Wunsch participated in several battles in the vicinity of Banja Luka , in modern @-@ day Bosnia and Herzegovina . By 1739 , he realized he had prospects in neither Austrian nor Württemberg service and he entered Bavarian service as the oldest second lieutenant in the Hussar Regiment Frangipani .

Upon the death of Charles VII , Holy Roman Emperor , the new Duke of Bavaria , Maximilian III Joseph , agreed to forgo any imperial aspirations . Wunsch 's Bavarian regiment went into the service in the Netherlands , where it eventually liberated Brussels from the French in 1745 . In the course of this service , Wunsch advanced to the rank of Rittmeister , or captain of cavalry . At the conclusion of the war in 1749 , Rittmeister Wunsch acquired a staff position and a pension and remained in the Netherlands with his wife and son . When it became apparent that there would be another war , in 1756 he offered his services to Frederick the Great and became the oldest captain in Prussian service . His unit came under the command of Prince Henry of Prussia , an officer who understood the value of the new military formation of light troops for skirmishing and raids .

= = = Seven Years ' War = = =

Throughout the Seven Years ' War , Wunsch operated successfully as a light troops officer . After the Battle of Prague in 1757 , he was promoted to major . He followed this up with stellar action near Torgau in September , and the following day his troops overran Leipzig . The subsequent Prussian successes at the battles of Breslau and Leuthen led to his promotion , this time by Frederick himself , to lieutenant colonel . The King also gave him command of an independent battalion and awarded him the Order Pour le Mérite . Wunsch made a brief journey to his home town of Heidenheim and returned to his unit in Bohemia . Wunsch 's raids were so successful that , in 1758 , Frederick promoted him to the rank of colonel and gave him his own regiment of light troops to command . Two days later , at the Battle of Kunersdorf , the Prussian army was nearly destroyed . Frederick barely escaped with his life , assisted by his remaining cavalry . Wunsch 's small force remained

intact and provided the rear guard for Frederick 's escape . In Berlin , Wunsch commanded the city 's defenses .

From April to November 1759 , he led his regiment on a series of raids and skirmishes in Silesia , Bohemia , Franconia , and Thuringia , such as the Battle of Peterswalde ( Silesia ) in August 1759 . Wunsch took the pass of Reizenhain from the Austrians , skirmished with them at Königswarte and attacked and beat a small force of Austrians by Weinberg . He acquired two cannons in the engagement . He successfully raided various towns and cities held by Austria and her allies in Franconia , Saxony , and Bohemia , capturing supplies and cannons and frequently taking many prisoners . His son was a lieutenant in his regiment during these raids .

Following this action , Frederick sent Wunsch into Saxony with a corps of 10 ,000 ? 12 ,000 men in his first independent command . There he participated in the Battle of Hoyerswerda with General Frederick August Finck . Prince Henry , in overall command of the army , surprised von Daun at Hoyerswerda by punching a hole in the Austrian defensive line . This success gave Frederick the first good news he had had in weeks and confirmed to Frederick that Wunsch had been worthy of the trust placed in him .

After two months of skirmishing in Bohemia , in November Wunsch participated in the Battle of Maxen . There , Count Leopold Joseph von Daun 's army isolated and captured Finck . Subsequently , Wunsch led both his corps and Finck 's until they too were surrounded : Daun 's army was three times the size of Finck 's and Wunsch 's combined force . Wunsch capitulated on 21 November 1759 and spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner in Innsbruck .

After the war , Frederick reorganized his army , placing nine of his generals under command of General Hans Joachim von Zieten . An additional eight were placed under command of Finck . Wunsch remained the only general with an independent corps , further unusual in that he was not Prussian .

= = Late military career = =

Wunsch used the ensuing years of peace in garrison at Prenzlau to reorganize the light corps of Frederick 's army . In 1778 , he patrolled the border of Austrian Bohemia during the tense negotiations surrounding Bavarian Succession crisis . His entry into Bohemia in early July of that year was the first action of the War of the Bavarian Succession . There were no major engagements in the war , only a series of raids in which both sides tried to deny each other access to food and fodder . After his initial foray at the Silesia border , he and his command remained at the County of Glatz , guarding the military commissary and the bakery .

In 1787 , Frederick Wilhelm II , Frederick the Great 's successor , named Wunsch a Knight of the Order of the Black Eagle for his excellent service . After a lengthy illness , Wunsch died of a pneumonia in Prenzlau on 18 October 1788 .

= = Monument = =

Prince Henry established a monument for him in 1790 , in Rheinsberg . Its inscription reads : Johann Jakob von Wunsch , the son of Heidenheim , the splendid monument which the Prussian people have established on behalf of their King , Frederick The Great .