

The Napoleon Series

Officers of the Anhalt Duchies who Fought in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815: Dahle, Andreas

By [Daniel Clarke](#)

Andreas Dahle was most likely born in the Principality of Anhalt-Zerbst. But, because Friedrich Augustus, Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst (1734-1793) had built barracks in the town and Duchy of Jever to train and supply soldiers for Britain in her wars in the Americas during the 1770s and 1780s, Dahle could well also have been born in another part of Germany, and have been lured by the conditions offered by the prince for service in one of his regiments. Overall little information could be found about this officer's service before or after the 1790s.

Dahle first appears in the records with the rank of Lieutenant when the French Revolutionary Wars began in 1792. With this rank he was given command of the Anhalt-Zerbst Dragoon Squadron, which Friedrich Augustus, Prince of Anahlt-Zerbst had raised as part of his contribution to the Holy Roman Empire's war effort against France. The squadron from its beginning to end was tiny, probably having a strength of no more than 25 to 35 men. After being trained and equipped this 'squadron' was sent to the city and fortress of Luxembourg in the Austrian Netherlands. Here Dahle and his men seem to have remained as part of the garrison until early 1794, when they were most probably withdrawn up the River Moselle to the Fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, on the River Rhine opposite Coblenz (Koblenz) for a short time.

During these long months of garrison duty, Dahle's and his squadron's monotony was broken up on two occasions. The first came in the winter of 1792 and the first three months of 1793, when the Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst took up quarters in the city, possibly to review and organise all of the troops sent by the minor German principalities to aid Austria. However, the prince died on March 3, and any authority or duties he was tasked with were taken over by another officer. The second incident occurred on September 12, 1793, and is notable as it was Dahle's first taste of combat during the war. During the early morning of this day a French column of around 500 men attacked the village of Frisange, which is south of Luxembourg on the French border, and on the main road south to Thionville and Metz. Here Captain Piguet, who commanded the Anhalt-Zerbst Jäger Infantry Battalion, was in garrison and attacked. This officer sent back for reinforcements, and it so happened one Colonel Gebhart Lebrecht von Blücher (1742-1819) was in the city with part of his regiment and another one or two Prussian cavalry squadrons. Blücher quickly moved his 400 horsemen down the road to Frisange, and Dahle, who had not been ordered to take his men into the fight, followed the Prussians on his own initiative to help his fellow Anhalters. The French, who had not managed to gain possession of Frisange in the meantime, were forced into a hasty retreat when Blücher and Dahle arrived, as they only had 40 to 50 cavalry of their own.

After this clash with the enemy, Dahle and his men remained in and around Luxembourg until the spring or summer of 1794. He and his men were then moved north up the River Moselle to Ehrenbreitstein for a time, when it became clear the French were going to overrun the Austrian Netherlands. The fortress at Luxembourg withstood a siege of 10 months from August 1794 until June 1795 in his absence. Due to the small nature of Dahle's unit, there is little information about his movements during the second half of 1794, (although no engagements seem to have taken place in his vicinity, at the confluence of the Moselle and Rhine rivers). In 1795 Dahle joined the Army of the Lower Rhine with other small German contingents, but does not appear to have taken part in any engagements during the late autumn campaign.

Remaining in the Army of the Lower Rhine commanded by Feldzeugmeister Wilhelm Ludwig Gustav Baron Wartensleben (1734-1796) for 1796, Dahle was assigned to the corps led by Feldmarschall-leutnant Nikolaus Baron Colloredo-Mels und Wallsee (1740-1803), which were in camp around the town of Neukirchen before June. Dahle was part of Generalmajor Joseph von Spiegelberg's (1743-1799) cavalry brigade that contained two cuirassier regiments, a regiment from Würzburg and a small combined Franconian Circle (Fränkische Kreis) dragoon regiment. Information about Dahle's movements are pretty thin on the ground, but the corps he was attached to moved to Nauheim, near Mainz and Frankfurt¹, at the beginning of the month. However, from here it was forced to retire northward during the night of July 4-5 after Wartensleben heard that the French under General Jourdan had crossed the River Rhine at Düsseldorf above his right flank. Joining Wartensleben at Friedberg, Dahle and his men formed part of the right flank of the army near the village of Assenheim (Niddatal), at the small engagement near the town on July 10. From here the army withdrew south and crossed the River Main near Frankfurt. On the south bank of the river Dahle and his squadron were part of the Austrian left, which ran west to east from the mouth of the River Main to the village of Kelsterbach, just west of Frankfurt. On July 15 they withdrew again, this time to the city of Aschaffenburg and thence to Würzburg, further southeast during the Frankfurt Armistice.

Informed that the French were advancing toward him and wanting to attack their left flank as they marched, Wartensleben moved his entire force firstly north to Schweinfurt, and then east toward Bamberg to Zeil (Zeil am Main), where he halted. After hearing of this Archduke Charles, the overall commander in Germany, was not pleased as he wanted to unite the two armies, but made the most of the situation by ordering Wartensleben toward Nuremberg to cut any communication between there and Aschaffenburg, as well as detaching a corps to cover Bohemia (Czech Republic) behind him. For the latter task Wartensleben chose part of Colloredo's corps, although it seems Dahle and his cavalry were not part of this force. This is because they were transferred to the brigade of Generalmajor Michael Baron Kienmayer (1755-1828), which was part of Feldmarschall-leutnant Joseph Heinrich Baron Staader von Adelsheim's (1738-1808) division during August 1796. Staader von Adelsheim held the Holy Roman Empire military rank of Reichs-Generalfeldmarschall-leutnant, and was responsible for all of the small German

¹ I may have got this confused with Bad Nauheim, just north of Friedberg, between Wetzlar and Frankfurt.

contingents that fought with the Austrian armies. As such Dahle and his men would play a minor role at the Battle of Würzburg on September 3, where they were not heavily engaged, if at all.

The next year, 1797, Dahle and his squadron did not play a major role in the short campaign of April, before the peace treaty between France and Austria was signed at Leoben. Dahle seems to have remained in the corps of Staader von Adelsheim, which had a strength of 29,000 men around the city of Mannheim, and formed the Austrian army's centre in Germany. During the short April campaign the French actually turned and attacked the Austrian right above Düsseldorf, just as they had done in 1796, which meant the centre never became engaged, and Dahle and his troopers saw no fighting.

When the campaign ended Dahle and his men were in a sense left in limbo, due to the fact Anhalt-Zerbst no longer existed, as it had been evenly divided between the other Anhalt principalities in 1796 with the death of Friedrich Augustus, Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst in 1793. Due to this the Austrians decided in the latter part of 1797 and early half of 1798, to use the Anhalters and other troops to form another cuirassier cavalry regiment, which was the 6th Cuirassier Cavalry Regiment, Vacant. Later, in 1801, this became the 6th Dragoon Cavalry Regiment, von Melas. After the creation of the new regiment there is no record of Dahle serving in its ranks, and no further information could be found about this officer.²

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² Austrian General Staff, *Krieg unter der Regierung des Kaisers Franz: Krieg gegen die Französische Revolution 1792-1797*, Band I, Vienna, L. W. Seidel & Sohn, 1905, page 536; Austrian General Staff, *Krieg unter der Regierung des Kaisers Franz: Krieg gegen die Französische Revolution 1792-1797*, Band II, Vienna, L. W. Seidel & Sohn, 1905, page 277, 340, 347, 355, 411; Dohna, Albrecht Leopold Wilhelm, *Der Feldzug der Preussen gegen die Franzosen in den Niederlanden im Jahr 1793*, Vol. III, Berlin, Stendal (publisher), 1798, pages 261, 320-321; Angeli, Moritz Edlen von, *Erzherzog Karl als Feldherr und Heeresorganisator*, Volume I: *Erzherzog Karl in den Feldzügen gegen Frankreich von 1796 und 1797*, Vienna, Wilhelm Braumüller, 1896, pages 95, 225-229, 237-238, 463, 503; George, Nafziger *Orders of Battle Collection*, Combined Arms Research Library (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cqsc/carl/nafziger.asp>, accessed 24/6/2017; Phipps, Ramsay Weston, *The Armies of the First French Republic and the Rise of the Marshals of Napoleon I, Vol. II - The Armée du Moselle, du Rhin, de Sambre-et-Meuse and de Rhin-et-Moselle*, USA, Pickle Partners Publishing, 2011, pages 305-306, 420-428; Wurzbach, Constantin von, 'Staader von Adelsheim, Joseph Freiherr von', *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, Volume 36 Sonnklar-Stadelmann, Vienna, Kaiserl. Konigl. Hof und Staatsdruckerei, 1878, pages 304-305; Kudrna, Leopold and Digby Smith, 'Joseph Heinrich Freiherr Staader von Adelsheim', *Biographical Dictionary of all Austrian Generals during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1792-1815*, The Napoleon Series, <http://www.napoleon-series.org>, accessed 24/6/2017; Nagy, Istvan, 'Austrian Cavalry Regiments and Their Commanders: 1792-1815: The Dragoons – Dragoon Regiment Number 6', The Napoleon Series, http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/organization/Austria/cavalry/c_austriancav5.html, accessed 24/06/2017