

Establishing A School in Geradstetten 1559

From the *Kompetenzbüchern des Landeskirchlichen Archives*

The establishment of a school in Geradstetten goes back 450 years. The introduction of “German Schools” to the villages was above all to be attributed to the Reformation. The Lutheran worship service was no longer given in Latin, rather in German. The return to the Bible as the foundation of Christian belief required an educated Christian who could hold the Bible in his own hand and read it. A few years after the establishment of the Reformation, Duke Christoph in the “*Grossen Kirchen ordnung*,” Major Church Ordinances of 1559, ordered the establishment of “*Teusche Schule*” in all the towns.

To gain an overview of church circumstances in his Duchy, Duke Christoff had all the duties and benefits of all offices cataloged. In these “*Kompetenzbüchern* [competence records]” of 1559 and 1580 one can for the first time find hints of a school in Geradstetten, in which the sexton and school master duties are described as combined. This combination of duties, remarkable to us today, is an old Wüttemberg specialty, which was followed up to the 19th Century.

The combination indicated that the office of sexton no longer had the same meaning after the Reformation that it had in the old church. We would today say he was under worked. So one must find for him a new responsibility, and often the sexton’s house could be used as a schoolhouse. In many towns the sexton-schoolmaster job was combined with further duties, such as village secretary or even bailiff!

Let’s first take a look at the *Kompetenzbuch* of 1559. We learn from it that in the winter about 30 boys attended school. The schoolmaster received no salary for this, rather was paid by the tuition of the children. But it was indicated that the Duke could also pay him as a favor or gratuity, *uss gnaden*. At least the heating of the schoolroom was taken care of, as every student had to bring a log with him each day.

As schoolmaster he accordingly enjoyed the privilege of being free from taxes and other town duties. On the other hand he certainly had problems in collecting the tuition, as was true throughout the Duchy.

Gerartstetten School and Sexton Office

Performed together, but for the school no salary, instead he will receive some payment as a favor. In the winter he has 30 boys, none in the summer. and gets per boy a cost of 7 schilling and in the morning a log. For seeing to the sexton office, he gets from everyone each year several mass (1.67 Liter) of wine according to what they owe... Generally he gets 3 pails of wine, and whoever does not grow wine, they instead give him money, whatever the wine would cost. Has no schoolhouse other than his house, in which he lives as sexton and also holds school.

Bailiff and sexton offices are separate.

From the *Kompetenzbuch* of 1580 we learn that now the schoolmaster was salaried by the town and duchy together. In fact a further increase was indicated. The tuition remuneration in money and wood remained the same, and the town planned to build its own schoolhouse in connection with the construction of a new wine press. His main income of 5-6 pails of wine he drew from his job as sexton.

*Geratstetten
School and Sexton Office
For the Sexton Office 5 or 6
Pails of Wine*

and for the school

<i>from property</i>	<i>iiij (4) pounds Heller</i>
<i>from our Noble and Princely Lord</i>	<i>iiij (4) pounds</i>

*Further from the major and town council,
(...if our Noble and Princely Lord also gives to the school)*

<i>p. Addition</i>	<i>iiij (4) pounds</i>
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<i>In this case if our noble and princely Lord also contributes, from him,</i>	<i>iiij (4) pounds</i>
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<i>School tuition per boy and each day a log</i>	<i>7 schillings</i>
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The mayor and the town council wish to add a schoolhouse to the new wine press building

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From the time before the Thirty Years War until far into the 18th Century, one hears no talk about the specific training of the schoolmaster. It was sufficient if he was capable of reading and writing, obeyed the catechism, and could strike up a chorale and carry a tune. He was hired by the town council, certainly however with the agreement and foreknowledge of the pastor. An interview before the Overseer or *Spezial* (Dean) was certainly the rule, but there is no mention in the proceedings of a test of his capabilities. In Geradstetten the first schoolmaster “confirmed” by the Stuttgart consistory appeared in the visitation minutes of 1702!