



Founding History of the Veterinary School Hannover 1778

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Georg der Dritte. pp.

Unserm wohlgeneigten und gnädigsten Willen zuvor, Edle Veste und Liebe Getreue.

Da wir nunmehr die Einrichtung des von Uns beliebten Instituts einer Ecole Veterinaire daselbst völlig bestimt und festgesetzt haben, und zu dem Ende die Ratificationen der über jeden einzelnen Punct gethanen Vorschlägen unterm heutigen Dato an Unser Ministerium ergehen laßen, welches darüber des mehreren mit euch communiciren wird; so habet ihr auch mit selbigem gemeinschaftlich sofort dasjenige zu bewerkstelligen, was euch bey Einrichtung des Instituts zukommen wird, als wohin außer der Beedigung des Ober Hof Roß Arztes Kersting die Bestallung des jungen Havemann gehört, welche wir nach eurem untherhängigsten Vorschlage genehmiget, und zugleich für selbigen bis zu entstehender Vacantz, extraordinair den Gehalt eines Pferde Arztes gnädigst verwilliget haben. Wir lassen euch solches auf euren untherhängigsten Bericht vom 12ten vorigen Monats hiedurch unverhalten seyn, und verbleiben euch mit wohlgeneigten und gnädigsten Willen stets beigethan

St. James den 7ten Julii 1778

George R.

An
das Oberhof Maarstalls-
Departement zu Hannover.

Alvensleben.



Fig. 1: The Order of George III to the Royal Stables Department in Hannover for the swearing in of Johann Adam Kersting and for the employment of August Conrad Havemann of 7 July 1778 [Lund 1929 (as annotation 1), see 6].

Part 1: Kersting's Call to Hannover

A letter from George III, King of England and Elector of Hannover, which he had signed on 7 July 1778 in St. James (Fig. 1, 2) [1], was after 13 years' preparatory work the decisive step to founding an *École vétérinaire* along French lines [2], - and this intention would have almost failed at the last minute: Friedrich Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel did not want his blacksmith and court horse physician **Johann Adam Kersting** who had been called to Hannover to go. And the only alternative to sending capable "subjects" to Kersting in Kassel for one to two years and to be trained by him, as suggested by General von Hardenberg on 29 March 1777, had been categorically rejected by the King's Chamber in Hannover. They did not want future equine surgeons "to earn their money outside the country", but they had the intention of fetching Kersting to Hannover.



Fig. 2: George III, King of England and Elector of Hannover, 1779, painted by Benjamin West [Ch. Hibbert (1998): George III, A personal history, Viking, London, Abb. 14].

Johann Adam Kersting (Fig. 3) was 50 years old and a reputed hippiator beyond the country's borders [3]. The controversy regarding the question of location (Göttingen, Hannover or Celle) had meanwhile been decided upon in favour of Hannover. George III agreed to the plans for founding the school on 9 September 1777. Kersting's call (vocation) as future first teacher at the school was issued on 1 November 1777. He was offered an annual salary of 300 thalers, free lodging and - one would say today as an incentive bonus - 70 thalers per annum for every pupil [4].

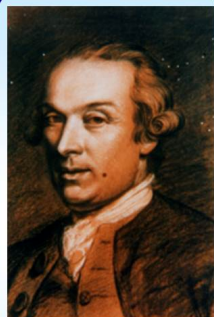


Fig. 3: Johann Adam Kersting (1727-1784), the first teacher of the Royal School for Equine Medicine Hannover [charcoal and chalk portrait of an oil painting by Johann Heinrich Tischbein the Elder, undated, Veterinary History Museum Hannover].

Annotations: [1] New transcription by J. Schäffer. As a handwritten facsimile in Ludwig Lund (1929, editor): Die Königliche Tierarzneischule zu Hannover, 1778-1878. In: Die Tierärztliche Hochschule Hannover. Festschrift aus Anlaß der Hundertfünfzig-Jahrfeier am 13.-15. Juni 1928. Schaper Verlag, Hannover, 3-38, here 6. Cf. The transcriptions of Reinhard Froehner (1941): Die Tierärztliche Hochschule in Hannover. Schilderung ihrer Entwicklung. In: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Veterinärmedizin 3, 129-172, 219-237, 257-303, here 265, and Siegfried Buntenkötter (1993a): 80 Jahre Rektoratsverfassung an der Tierärztlichen Hochschule Hannover. In: Dtsch. tierärztl. Wschr. 100 (8), 303-308, here 303-304. [2] Froehner 1941 (as annotation 1), 168.

[3] Reinhard Froehner (1953): Die Tierärztliche Hochschule in Hannover, 1778-1953. Verlag M. & H. Schaper, Hannover, 33. [4] Ernst Ehardt (1940): Beiträge zur Geschichte der Tierärztlichen Hochschule zu Hannover in ihren ersten Anfängen. Hannover, Tierärztliche Hochschule, Diss., 32-33.



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Part 2: Kersting's Escape from Kassel

After his letter of resignation from 3 December 1777 had been turned down in Kassel, Kersting was only able to escape the diplomatic implications and sovereign's punishment by fleeing to Hannover. He announced this unavoidable step on 28 December in a letter to the Master of the Horse in Hannover and assured him: Loyalty towards George III and the call to Hannover was a duty of honour (Fig. 4).

It came as Kersting had expected. By accepting the call to Hannover he had greatly fallen out of favour in Kassel: His name was no longer allowed to be mentioned at the Hessian Court. On the back of his letter of resignation addressed to the Landgrave Friedrich on 26 February 1778 it is noted that charges at the Court of Justice would only be dropped if Kersting returned immediately [6].

On 18 January 1778 Kersting was in any case already in Hannover and submitted his suggestions to the Royal Stables Department concerning the **“setting up of a general veterinary school”** (Fig. 5) [7]. The official extradition from Kassel, which threatened Kersting with *“unpopular measures”*, was decisively turned down by the Hannoverian Chamber with a detailed statement in a letter of 28 February 1778:

„Kersting hat nochmals, aber vergeblich bei Hochfürstlicher Durchlaucht um seinen Abschied gebeten. Nach Kersting's Memorial [vom 26.02.1778], dessen Richtigkeit der Regierung bekannt sein wird, hat Kersting nie einen Diensteid oder Pflicht oder Handgelübde aldort geleistet gehabt, hat zur Erlernung seiner Kunst einige Lehrgelder, Reisegelder oder sonstige Subsidien vom dortigen Hofe nicht erhalten. Er ist durch nichts in dortigen Diensten, beständig, oder auch nur länger, zu bleiben vinculirt gewesen und hat selbige nicht heimlich verlassen, sondern förmlich, wie in regula sowohl dem Diener wie dem Herrn freisteht, gekündigt, um seinen Abschied wiederholend und mit geziemender Ehrerbietung angehalten und den Erfolg desselben lange Zeit vergeblich abgewartet [...] Wie er demnach nunmehr als ein mit Recht und ohne Vorwurf in Sr. Majestät Unsern allergnädigsten Herrn Dienste getreten und darin wirklich stehender Diener zu betrachten ist; also ersuchen wir die Herrn dienstlich, Sie wollen bei Dero gnädigstem Herrn, Durchlaucht, Sich dahin kräftigst verwenden, dass aller widrigen Verfügungen gegen ihn sich enthalten und hingegen die Abschieds-Urkunde ihm ertheilt werden möge“. [8]

The exchange of correspondence continued now at the highest level. The Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel (Fig. 6) corresponded with the English king, his cousin, in a letter written in French on 18 May 1778 [9]. However, George only replied on 7 July 1778, - in fact in German, pressurised by his Ministers as Kersting had meanwhile been called to St. Petersburg to set up a veterinary school there as well. Thus, action had to be taken if the founding of the school in Hannover was not to be thwarted at the last minute. George admitted in a confident manner that he was unable to approve Kersting's behaviour; however, he clearly wrote that Kersting “had not breached” anything. And then George appealed to his cousin Friedrich's sense of honour and appealed to his free spirit and generosity to accept Kersting's decision [10].

This exciting but also long-winded prehistory is in no way presented exhaustively. However, it is important to know as with it the circle is complete with the final document from the story of the founding of the *“Royal School for Equine Medicine”* in Hannover (see part 3).

Fig. 4: „Nichts wird im Stande sein mich von meiner einmahl genommenen Entschliessung zurückzuhalten, zu dem Ende werde ich auch gleich nach dem Neuen Jahr von hier abreisen, aber ohne gnätigste Entlassung, ohne Recommendation und wie fast glaube, auch wohl gar ohne Glückwünsche zu meiner Reise und meinem künftigen Schicksahl. Alles Begegnungen, die mich in meinen Endschliessungen nur stanthafter machen. Empfehlen Sie mich Ihrer Excellenz dem Herrn Oberstall-Meister und versichern Sie Dieselben, ich sey bereit in Königlichen Diensten meine ganzen Kräfte nicht nur aufzuopfern, sondern auch darinnen zu sterben ...“ [5]

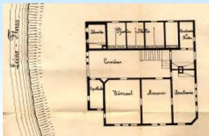


Fig. 5: Site plan of the veterinary school 1778 at Clever Tor:
“The location of this building is one of the most pleasant and because it is located near the river Leine it immediately offers everything which is necessary for cleanliness.
The waste from the Institute of Anatomy was directly thrown in the river [an extract from: Günther 1878 (as annotation 5), plan 1 and see 10].



Fig. 6: Friedrich II, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel and Cousin of George III [oil painting by Johann Heinrich Tischbein the Elder 1773].

Annotations: [5] According to the transcription of Karl Günther (1878): Die Königliche Thierarzneischule zu Hannover in den ersten Hundert Jahren ihres Bestehens. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Thierheilkunde. Festschrift zum 100jährigen Jubiläum am 5. August 1878. Schmorl & von Seefeld, Hannover, 2-3. Cf. Ebhardt 1940 (as annotation 4), 33. [6] Froehner 1953 (as annotation 3), 45. [7] Printed by Ebhardt 1940 (as annotation 4), 34-36. [8] According to Günther 1878 (as annotation 5), 4. [9] See Ebhardt 1940 (as annotation 4), 39. [10] Cited by Ebhardt 1940 (as annotation 4), 40.



University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover

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Part 3: Ad Mandatum Regis – The Final Royal Order

Only a few days after the diplomatic tension had died away with George's reply to Friedrich of 7 July 1778 (see Part 2) and with the same post the letter quoted at the beginning had been sent to the Royal Stables Department in Hannover (see Fig. 1) ordering the swearing in of Kersting and confirming the employment of an assistant, August Conrad Havemann the stud assistant from Celle (Fig. 7), a **royal decree** printed in Hannover was published with the date of **18 July 1778** (Fig. 8a-c). These six sections of the comprehensive official order of the cabinet finally sealed the existence of the school. In section 1 the necessity thereof is first of all justified,

„daß durch Vernachlässigung der Roß-Arztney-Wissenschaft, und daher rührende Ungeschicklichkeit der gemeinen Roß-Aerzte und Cur-Schmiede in Unseren Teutschen Landen, viel heimlicher Schade verursacht, und dannhero von ausgebreitetem Nutzen seyn werde, zu gründlicher Unterrichtung angehender Roß-Aerzte Gelegenheit zu verschaffen ...“ [Fig. 8a].

Likewise, in an abridged form the intended purpose of the school is explained and the circle of persons who should attend the educational establishment is named. It was an express wish of the king that

„in Unserer Residentz-Stadt Hannover, unter der Aufsicht und Direction Unseres Ober-Hof-Maarstall-Amtes, eine mit tüchtigen Lehrern versehene, und mit der Zeit auch auf die Lehren von der Cur-Art anderer Thiere, mithin auf den Umfang einer Vieh-Arztney-Schule zu erstreckende, Roß-Arztney Schule, errichten und unterhalten zu lassen; in welcher nicht nur alle, bey Unseren Hof-Maarställen, Stutereyen, und Cavallerie-Regimentem künftig zu bestellende Roß-Aerzte und Cur-Schmiede, eine gewisse Zeitlang Unterricht zu nehmen verbunden seyn sollen, sondern die auch sonst einem jeden anderen, gegen Entrichtung des Lehr-Geldes, oder sonstige Uebereinkunft mit den Lehrern, offen stehen soll“ (Fig. 8a).

The original intention of this decree was, however, at a totally different level: It was enacted “due to the anatomies which had to be examined at the Equine School of Medicine”, which the small text in the margin at the head of the document proves. Three-quarters of the decree (sections 2-6) are concerned with “uncouth prejudices about the vileness or dishonesty of treating dead animals” (Fig. 8b).

Ad fig. 8a-c: This decree of George III from 18 July 1778 is the first publication in which the founding of the school was publicly mentioned and was made public.

Although the decree served a completely different purpose as regards content, it is in actual fact the foundation charter of the school [Veterinary History Museum Hannover].

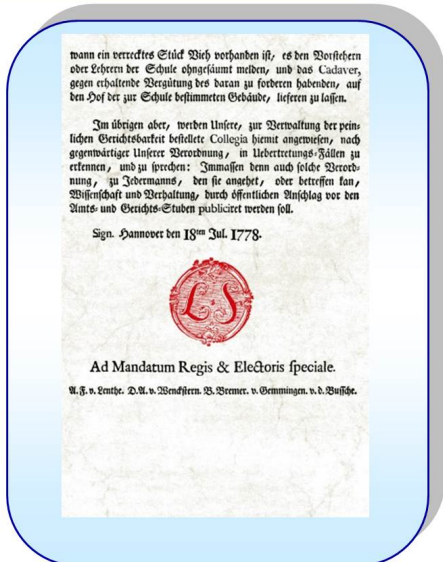
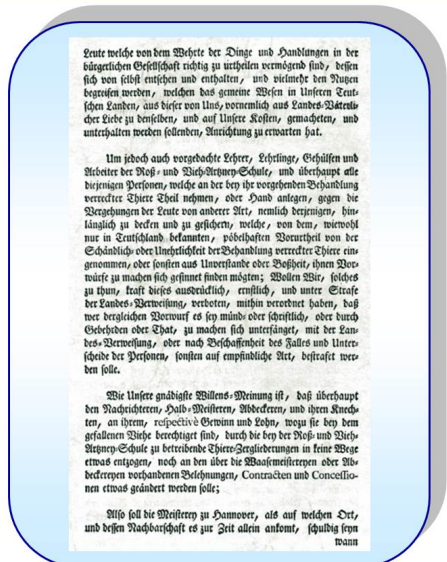
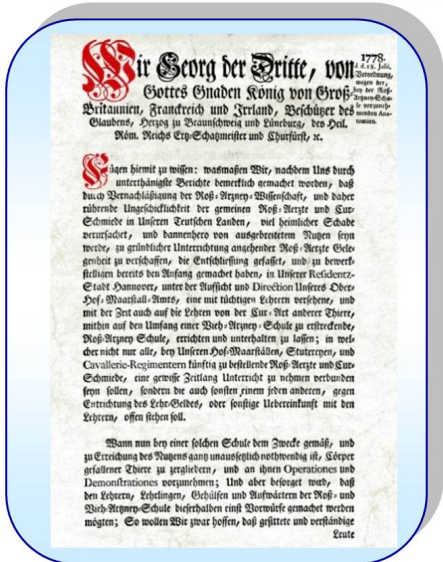


Fig. 8a-c: “Decree due to the anatomies which had to be taught at the School for Equine Medicine” from 18 July 1778.



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Part 3 (cont.): Ad Mandatum Regis – The Final Royal Order

Above all, government offices and courtrooms were attacked and it was preached from all pulpits that it was forbidden under threat of extradition or another sensitive punishment to accuse the teachers, apprentices, assistants and workers of the Hannoverian School of infamy due to the necessary dissections and anatomical practice on carcasses. Simultaneously, it is explicitly conceded that “executioners, knackers and their servants” should have none of their privileges taken away by working at the school; quite the opposite, they were instructed to supply the school with carcasses in return for cash (Fig. 8b and c).

Still in 1816 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (Fig. 9, 10) had to fight against these prejudices during the founding of the veterinary school in Jena where the dealing of veterinarians with carcasses due to their “association with the most corrupt business” – namely that of the knacker’s yard – was seen by the public as “double and three times as unfavourable” and the veterinarians therefore needed protection [11].



Fig. 9 and 10 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Pastelzeichnung von Louise Seidler 1811 [Wikipedia, common], und die 1816 gegründete Tierarznschule in Jena, undatiert [FL-ARCH, Jena].

The decree from 18 July 1778 serves as the actual founding decree of the “Royal Equine School” in Hannover, which was soon to be extended to the “Royal Veterinary School” and during the term of office of its 7th and last director was promoted to the status of University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover in 1887. Thereby, it is the oldest veterinary educational institution in German-speaking countries, which since its beginning (1778) has continuously taught by public order and is the only teaching institution which has maintained its independence.

According to Friedrich Günther it is a fact that under Kersting the school had “a very good reputation” [Fig. 11]. - Kersting died on 2 March 1784 from the consequences of a hoof kick. Kersting’s successor at Court Stables in Kassel was Christian Clausenius (1779-1793). He was succeeded by Friedrich Eberhardt in 1793 [12].



Fig. 11: Kersting’s “Roß-Arzney Schule” in Hannover had “a very good reputation”.

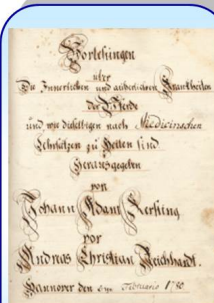


Fig. 12: Kersting’s “Lectures on internal and external diseases of horses”, MS 1780 [Veterinary History Museum Hannover]

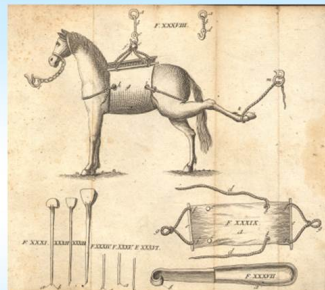
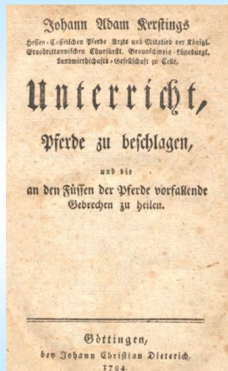


Fig. 13 and 14: Some of Kersting’s manuscripts were published as books after his death [Veterinary History Museum Hannover].



Fig. 15: Clevertor. In the background the military hospital, on the left and righthand side the veterinary school building, circa 1830, water-colour painting, unknown artist [from: Kunstverein Hannover (editor 1951): Alt-Hannover. Die Geschichte einer Stadt in zeitgenössischen Bildern, 1600-1900. F. Bruckmann, München, see 58].