

THE WETTENGEL OF NEUENBERG:
THE LEADING MERCHANTS OF PRAGUE
BEFORE THE BATTLE OF WHITE MOUNTAIN

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At the end of the 16th century the Wettengel from Neuenberg were the richest burghers of the Old Town of Prague. They came from the domain of Neuberg near Asch in Bohemia. According to the Prague customs book of 1597, Christoph Betengel (Wettengel) paid the highest duties (92 Schock 14 Gr. of Bohemia). He owned a number of houses in the Brückel quarter and fields where the National Museum is now located. In addition, he acquired in 1583 in eastern Bohemia the estate of Barohrádek for 12,600 Schock of Bohemian Groschen, and in 1587 the estate of Reichenau on the Kněžna for 33,750 Schock of Bohemian Gr. Since his only son Johannes died in Lyons during a horseback journey in 1587, and his only daughter Katharina died around 1600, his brother Eustachius became his main inheritor in 1602. The latter had only obtained the civic rights of the Old Town of Prague on 10 March 1592. When his brother Christoph died in 1602, he became a member of the council of the Bohemian capital, as his brother had been before him. But this honor proved a heavy burden for him, because of his poor knowledge of the Czech language, and he finally got the sovereign to free him from this office on 13 November 1603.

After the sudden death of Eustachius in January 1620, an inventory of his estate was prepared, which gives a detailed picture of his financial situation. Eustachius' two sons inherited a total of 250,000 Schock of Meissen Groschen. But this handsome inheritance did not bring happiness to the two young Wettengel, whose fate was influenced by the defeat of the Protestants at White Mountain. Both became officers in the Imperial service. The younger Christoph Wettengel died in the camp at Nizko (Neisse) on 15 February 1623. His brother Hans had to fight hard for the recognition of his claims; he died in 1630.