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Noble Dignity and Oath of Fidelity to Russia in the Fate of V. F. Blankenghorn (1787—1855).
Documents from the Russian archives and those from the National Historical Archive of Belarus

Abstract

The procedure for foreigners obtaining Russian noble dignity is studied on the example of V. F. Blankengorn (1787-1855). Born in Prussia and educated at the Berlin Academy, he became a Smolensk gubernia land surveyor. The author draws on documents of the Department of the Gerold of the Governmental Senate from the Russian State Historical Archive and those of the Smolensk Gubernia Assembly of Nobility fond from the State Archive of the Smolensk Region. In the case of V. F. Blankengorn, his right to hereditary nobility was acquired through being awarded a Russian order. Social ascent opened before V. F. Blankengorn new opportunities

for further career advancement and improvement of financial situation; in his later years he became collegiate counselor (VI class in the Table of Ranks) and gubernia architect. He was awarded two Russian orders and owned an estate and serfs. However, being a foreigner, he could only pass his estate to his children after accepting Russian citizenship. He, his wife, and children did that in 1840 (14 years after he had received noble dignity). This fact of V. F. Blankengorn's biography is confirmed by documents from the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the State Archive of the Smolensk Region. Materials from the fond of the Chancellery of the Vitebsk, Mogilev, Smolensk, and Kaluga governor-general from the National Historical Archive of Belarus have enabled the author to throw light upon V. F. Blankengorn's trip to Berlin in 1826 in order to settle inheritance matters. Taking leave, receiving a foreign travel passport with its owner's description are described. The biography of this foreign specialist who worked in the Russian periphery is, on the one hand, rather typical for the period and provides an example of successful social adaptation, while remaining, on the other hand, a real history of an individual.

Keywords

V. F. Blankengorn, foreigners, Germans in Russia, obtaining Russian nobility, acceptance of Russian citizenship, foreign travel passport.

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