

A History of the Blessig Family



Hugh Myddleton Heyder
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PREFACE

The history of the **Blessig** family of Strasbourg, St. Petersburg, and Liverpool, has not hitherto been written, and it is now produced mainly for descendants of **P.J Blessig** of Liverpool, who may wish to have a record of this line of their ancestors, and the collateral relatives. Prominent individuals in the history are Philip Jacob Blessig the elder, who founded the family in St. Petersburg, and his son Philip Jacob Blessig the younger, who founded the family at Liverpool. Some of the latter's brothers were also men of note, such as William Blessig who became head of the family in St. Petersburg, Excellency Frederic Blessig who was a distinguished Civil Servant, and Robert Blessig who was the foremost eye surgeon of his day in St. Petersburg. In the next generation there were some worthy successors in Petersburg, amongst whom were Edward and John Blessig, able partners in the family business, Robert (Bobka) Blessig who was director and chairman of large Insurance Companies, and his brother Ernst Blessig who was another eminent eye surgeon. Of the ladies of the family in Petersburg little can be recorded beyond dates concerning them, but some of their portraits have been reproduced, and it is known that several of them had good musical talent, and nearly all were fluent in two or three languages.

Histories of St. Petersburg frequently mention that its harsh extremes of climate tended to weaken physical health within two or three generations, for residents of foreign origin who had been born and bred in the city. Moreover, foreign residents usually married almost wholly within their own small communities. It may have been due to one or both of those causes that the very large Blessig family of the mid-nineteenth Century in St. Petersburg showed a marked decline in numbers by the end of that Century. The Russian Revolution of 1917 finally dispersed the few members of the family then living in 'Petrograd', although some individuals of the branches settled in the Baltic States managed to survive until about 1940, when they also were swept away, in the havoc of the Second World War.

Possibly a very few of these latter may yet be living precariously as elderly refugees in parts of Germany, but they will soon be gone. In France, there are a few bearers of the name who belong to a branch of the Blessigs of Alsace, which diverged from the main line there about 300 years ago. In England, the name became extinct with the death in 1950 of Edmund Blessig of Garston Park, Surrey, a son of P.J Blessig of Liverpool and last surviving grandchild of P.J Blessig of St. Petersburg. It is noteworthy that the lives of those three individuals covered a span of 188 years, an uncommon record of longevity among the Blessigs.

And so this history is of a merchant and professional family which rose and experienced fortune and misfortune in several countries during two or

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three hundred years, but whose name has now very nearly disappeared. It is probably a last opportunity for recording the collated details before these become wholly lost.

1954. Hugh Myddleton Heyder

Sources used.

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History of Alsace and of Strasbourg.

Extracts from Strasbourg Archives and Parish Registers.

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British Museum Reference Library (genealogies).

Liverpool:

Documents and letters left by P.J Blessig of Liverpool.

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Liverpool Directories & Town Plans; files of "Liverpool Post"

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