The fraudulent War- and Domain Councilor Paul Gottlieb Schartow

Paul Gottlieb Schartow was born around 1731 in Golzow (Neumark), as the son of the theologian Johann Bartholomäus Schartow (ca. 1695–1756) /1/.
Paul Gottlieb S. attended the Joachimsthal Gymnasium in Berlin in 1746. He began his (law?) studies in Frankfurt/Oder in 1749, later joined the Prussian Army, and served as an officer in the Seven Years' War—ultimately rising to the rank of captain. In May 1763, he was promoted to War and Domain Councilor in Küstrin /*/ and, under Frank Balthasar Schönberg von Brenckenhoff, worked on land improvement projects in the Warthebruch region until 1779. According to the land improvement commissioner, Schartow was considered experienced and skilled. Together with Hahn, the Neumark Director of Public Works, he was to continue the embankment work along the Vistula under President von Logau /2/.
As early as mid-1772, Schartow had asked the Grand Master of the Order of St. John, Prince Ferdinand of Prussia, for permission to acquire a portion of the Warthebruch. He intended to settle colonists there. Since this was the first such concession process and thus set a precedent, the first step was to determine whether such an award complied with the Order's statutes. Second, a decision had to be made regarding the amount of rent, as Schartow requested a rate lower than the customary twelve groschen per morgen. Third, an agreement had to be reached on the size of the concession, since Schartow sought 750 morgen, while the Grand Master was initially willing to grant him only 400 to 500 morgen /4/.
The decision was made in favor of the War Councilor Schartow, but with the conditions that all his measures had to be "approved" by Prince August Ferdinand and that progress had to be "reviewed" twice a year by the Order's Chamber Director Friedrich Heinrich Stubenrauch /**/.
In August 1772, the royal commissioners Schartow and Stubenrauch both estimated costs of 27,787 Reichstalers. With this plan, the Order took greater control of the settlement initiative again in 1772. This is indicated by the collaboration between the royal commissioner Schartow and Stubenrauch, director of the Order's treasury /3/.
In 1772, the embankment work in the Order's territory continued at the king's expense, while the Order was to take over the internal infrastructure, such as the construction of canals, roads, and settlements. Fearing friction due to the institutions working separately alongside one another, the Order's councilors entrusted Schartow with the development of the internal infrastructure as well, the costs of which the Order was to cover upon presentation of contracts and invoices.
Schartow stated that he was willing to share the incurred costs with the Order, provided he was granted appropriate compensation. The Order agreed and concluded a contract with Schartow on November 12, 1772, in which, at Schartow's request, his per diem allowances were also regulated as follows: "In recognition of these efforts and in lieu of the travel expenses of the War and Domains Council, the Council shall be granted, in the tract of land at the Waldow border and behind the Krieschter Holländer, 750 Morgen—each Morgen calculated at 180 rods of the Dutch measure—as an equivalent in the form of a fully acquired property, to be held in hereditary and exclusive ownership now and forever" (§ 6 of the treaty).
This agreement was further supplemented by a ground rent contract dated June 13, 1773, which specified the rent obligations and other payments to the Order. Schartow thus received land from the Order of St. John as compensation.

/*/ Küstrin was the seat of the War and Domains Chamber—a central Prussian administrative authority for the Neumark region. A War and Domains Councilor was a high-ranking official and member of the local council responsible for the Prussian state's financial, tax, economic, and estate management.

/**/ Friedrich Heinrich Stubenrauch (1743–1806) was married to Elisabeth Eleonore Muzell (1749–1813). The youngest daughter from this marriage, Auguste Ernestine (1785–1860), married Johann Friedrich Benedict Schartow (1775–1856) from Magdeburg.
URL: https://www.wikitree.com/genealogy/STUBENRAUCH

In 1774, Schartow founded the first enterprise, *Schartowsthal* /3/.
Schartow was granted the land in recognition of his services in reclaiming and colonizing the area, including brewing, distilling, and milling rights, as well as discounted lumber, on the condition that he settle 15 colonists there. Otherwise, he was largely given free rein.

He evidently enjoyed high esteem and the king's favor. This is presumably why the Order of St. John did not attempt to take advantage of the founding of Schartowsthal, as it had done in Albrechtsbruch, Brenkenhofsfleiß, and Kriescht /6/.

Even when the Oder's water level was normal, flooding would easily occur because the Warthe flowed into the Oder against its current. In the spring of 1775, the Oder apparently carried far more water than usual, turning the problem into a catastrophe. The majority of the settler families fled. The disaster mercilessly exposed the weaknesses of the plan and the construction efforts. The method of proceeding step by step and carrying out the settlement without having completed the embankments had been barely feasible at the Netzebruch, but led to disaster at the Warthebruch.
Given the frequent high water levels, such a disaster should certainly have been expected within a few years. The construction of dikes that began upstream on the Netze inevitably led to higher water levels downstream.
It would have made sense at that point to consult more closely with the engineering officer von Petri, who had warned against hasty settlement; however, he died in 1776.
Schartow and Director of Public Works Friedrich Ludwig Hahn took over the management of the enterprise. Schartow now served concurrently as both the state and the Order's representative for the land reclamation project. In 1775–76, Waitz von Eschen served as a sort of additional royal inspector for the land reclamation project on the Warthe, with a focus on financial oversight. Von Logau, who was tasked with "ensuring that, during the extension of the Vistula embankments, the work is carried out properly and everything is executed according to plan," put it this way in a letter: he had also been instructed by the king to "... to discuss the matter in greater detail regarding how best to proceed and what is most necessary to do in the coming years with the 90,000 Reichstaler." The king had approved this sum for the next phase of construction /3/.
To establish the *Schartowsthal* settlement, Schartow entered into contracts with several contractors (entrepreneurs) and issued invoices for the work they performed. Since this work was part of the "internal" infrastructure, the Order was obligated to pay for it. However, the royal treasury initially advanced the requested funds. The Order's treasury then reimbursed these advances. This procedure functioned without complaint for some time, until the state treasury refused to make further advance payments in 1775. The Order's administration was then required to settle the invoices immediately and established a special fund for this purpose. It was only then that the Order began to examine invoices and contracts more closely. Around this time, the old contract between Schartow and the authorities also expired.
Schartow refused to carry out further embankment work at Ordensbruch unless a new contract was issued by the Order. The Order's office was initially not averse to commissioning Schartow for this work, but conducted an investigation into the work carried out thus far. In the process, discrepancies came to light. Among them was the construction of a canal that was listed in the invoice as 1,322 rods long but was in reality only 1,112 rods long. The canal construction was carried out by the contractor Eysenak in Landsberg. He was summoned by the Order's Office to Sonnenburg, where he was presented with the contract and the invoices for this project. The contract bore the contractor's signature, but Eysenak was unaware of either the contract or the invoices. Furthermore, his name had not been written by him, as was determined by handwriting analysis.
The contractor made the same statement regarding five other contracts bearing his signature. The Order's office was now compelled to suspect that other contractors had also been taken advantage of in the same manner.

At the end of January 1776, von Logau reported that, upon reviewing the cost and revenue estimates—and in particular the plans for the family-based labor allocation with Schartow and Hahn—he had determined that the available information, while "perhaps sufficient for a general plan, cannot yet be relied upon thoroughly for actual implementation."
In 1776, von Logau held sole oversight of Schartow and Hahn's activities /3/.
In 1778–79, work on the Vistula River was suspended once again, this time due to the War of the Bavarian Succession, which, however, ended without major hostilities and resulted in a diplomatic victory for Prussia. Work also progressed only slowly in the following two years.

Schartow, Grapow, and Krieger were suspected of having fraudulently obtained state and order funds through fabricated contracts and false invoices. The letter was received by the royal chancellery on July 23, 1779. As early as the next day, the king ordered the General Directorate to investigate the matter and punish those involved if any breaches of duty were found.
On July 25, 1779, the General Directorate appointed a commission to investigate the incidents. The commission consisted of von Grape, Chamber Director of Neumark, and Schmidt, War and Domain Councilor of Neumark. The Grand Master commissioned his Chamber Director, Stubenrauch, to represent the interests of the Order of St. John.
On July 31, 1779, the commission met for the first time to review the facts of the case. During this meeting, the complex ties between Schartow and the Order of St. John were discussed—ties that had, among other things, led to the founding of the settlement of Schartowsthal.
On August 1, 1779, during another session, additional contractors were heard, resulting in the discovery that some contracts had been signed by them and other master builders with three crosses, even though these individuals were certainly literate. Suspicions of fraud were substantiated during this session and led to the suspension of the accused—Schartow, Grapow, and Krieger—by the General Directorate in Berlin. At the same time, on August 5, 1779, Director of Public Works Hahn was appointed as Schartow's successor.
Finally, the king ordered that all municipalities be publicly called upon to submit complaints regarding this matter. Likewise, craftsmen who still had claims against the royal treasury were to come forward immediately. A few days later, the interrogations resumed, during which additional signatures were not recognized. Director of Public Works Hahn was also heavily implicated and had to take a seat in the dock. Soon afterward, the complaints from the municipalities began to arrive. Here are a few examples:
ALBRECHTSBRUCH: Merten and Angelicke were each allocated 37 Morgen. However, there are only 31 Morgen. Schartow has taken the missing 6 Morgen for his own use. Michael Frölich recounts his bad experiences with Schartow. Four years ago, he moved from Schloppe (West Prussia) to Schartowsthal, lured by Schartow's promises. "He said," Frölich reports, "that he would provide us poor people with money for clearing and cultivating the land, assign pastures for our livestock, give us all the wood we needed, and grant us the freedom to use it as we pleased. Furthermore, he would build a barn at his own expense to store our crops and grant us a year of tax exemption." He kept none of these promises. He forced them to perform farm labor three days a week for one quarter-year and two days a week for three quarter-years. When some people reminded him of his promise, he "threw them out without any mercy or compassion, along with their belongings, and also issued a ban forbidding anyone from giving them shelter." He also had Frölich's son thrown into the Stock (prison) for some time. The exiles found lodging with strangers. Frölich found her in Abrechtsbruch.
BEAULIEU: Each settler has 6 acres of poor land. The arable land is nothing but sand and unsuitable for growing winter crops. The yield does not last until the next harvest. The garden plot is pure mud. When the houses were first occupied, they were not yet fully finished, "so that our living quarters," as the complaint states, "resembled a cattle barn more than a human dwelling, because there was no hallway in any of the dwellings, and the ceilings, walls, and roof were such that the elements penetrated everywhere, we could not even sit or lie down in a dry place, as the wind blew right through the rooms." Grain and straw first had to be stored in the attics, near the flimsy, non-fireproof wooden chimneys, until the settlers built barns at

their own expense. There was no well and no oven. No clearing or land-preparation fees were paid, even though all of this had been promised. The first settlers—17 in number—had all died of starvation within the first year. It was not until a year and a half later that the next group moved in and ventured to begin farming. The construction of paths and footbridges was promised, but nothing was carried out. The ditches that were dug are not sufficient to drain the high water levels, so the gardens are constantly flooded. Until now, they have held their church services in the schoolhouse; now they have been transferred to Kriescht. Seven colonies are united here in one church. The journey there in winter is impossible for the elderly and for those who lack winter clothing.

BRENKENHOFFSFLEISS: All the houses here are in very poor condition. The firewalls and stoves were set on wooden stumps that began to smolder as soon as they were first lit. The walls are thin mud walls. Rain pours right through the roofs into the rooms, since they lack ceilings—but then again, the dear sun shines through from above /6/.

The charges were brought against Paul Gottlieb Schartow, a member of the War and Domains Council, and other employees in the land reclamation and colonization sector. They were accused of—and found guilty of—the following acts of abuse of office to secure personal gain:

- Forgery of contract documents and agreements,
- Forgery of certificates for work performed,
- Forgery of signatures on receipts and other supporting documents,
- Making reduced payments while recording higher amounts in the records.

On October 25, 1779, the verdicts were handed down and confirmed by King Frederick II:

- against Paul Gottlieb Schartow, a member of the Prussian War and Domains Council: removal from Government service and one year of imprisonment in a fortress,
- against Grapow, an employee of the dike administration: removal from Government service and three months of imprisonment in a fortress,
- against Hahn, an employee of the dike administration: removal from Government service.

They were ordered to pay the costs of the investigation and court fees. In addition, smaller fines were imposed on other individuals—including officials from the municipal administration of Landsberg/Warthe—for breach of official duties.

Whether this revealed only the “tip of the iceberg” can no longer be assessed today /7/.

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Sources:

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