

A History of the Blessig Family

Philip Jacob II Blessig

PHILIP JACOB II BLESSIG was born in the house on the English Quay on 16th November 1821. He was educated at the Muralt private Academy which was conducted by J.V Muralt and his French wife, who had previously managed a Pension in Paris at which many young Englishmen of good family were educated. After leaving school P.J Blessig began work as a junior in the family Firm of Blessig & Co, which at that time was directed by his late father's partners, Friedrich Forsch, Paul Schinckel, and Wilhelm I Blessig.

When P.J. Blessig's mother died in 1843, the following members of the family appear to have been living in the house on the English Quay, (ages in brackets): his step-brother Wilhelm (45) with 3 sons of his first marriage viz: Vassi (21), Alexander (19), and Griescha (12), and Wilhelm's 2nd wife Jane nee Higginbotham and her children viz: Edward (6), Alfred (4), Sophia (3) and Jane (2); in addition there were P.J Blessig himself (21) and brothers and sisters: Emilie (26), Frederic (25), Elisabeth (16), Constantin (14), and Robert (12).

In the following year, 1844, Emilie Blessig married P. Schinckel and they took over the back part of the house facing the Galerenaya, whilst Wilhelm Blessig and his numerous family occupied the front part facing the English Quay. The Schinckels then boarded P.J Blessig and his brothers and sister Elisabeth.

About this date P.J Blessig made a calculation of the annual family budget, possibly at the request of his stepbrother Wilhelm, and in the notes of that calculation the following items appear:

- Cost of board for adults in the house, 1200 roubles (£180) per head per annum.
- Cost of maintenance of the house, and of the country villa on the Peterhof road, and carriage & horses, wages of staff etc. totalled about 6000 roubles (£900) per annum.

To that may be added costs of the children's board and education, and also the cost of entertaining the very numerous visitors to the house. The whole of these essential items of expenditure, by a rough estimate, can hardly have been less than 20,000 roubles per annum, which was equivalent to £3000 at that date.

It may have been from these calculations and from consideration of the fact that he was a junior among several older members of his family in the Firm, with little prospect of earning an income on which he could marry and have a home of his own, that P.J Blessig reached his decision at the end of 1844 to leave St. Petersburg and seek his fortune abroad. In later years he used to

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quote the statement of his elders in Petersburg, that "*there were too many mouths to be fed from the family business there*" (in Russian the proverb is "*all dogs cannot gnaw at one bone*"). And so he demanded from the partners Forsch and Schinckel and his stepbrother Wilhelm, his portion of the family inheritance, somewhat to their consternation.

The amount of that portion comprised a share, which probably did not exceed £10,000 in cash, of his late father's capital in the Firm of Blessig & Co, and certain shares in the family real estate, namely: shares representing 2/14 of the value of part of the house on the English Quay, 1/14 of the value of the house on Vassili Ostrov, and 1/14 of the value of the country villa at Ligovo. In Feb. 1845 he was paid 7,114 silver roubles (£1,070) for 1/14 of his holding in the house on the English Quay, but he retained for some years his other 1/14 share in that house and also his shares in the Vassili Ostrov house and in the country villa. As he subsequently became the principal joint owner of the latter property, some account of it will be given here.

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The Villa Blessig.

During the months of June to September the heat and unsanitary conditions in St. Petersburg were unpleasant, and there was a general exodus of the upper classes to country villas situated within a 10-20 mile radius of the city. A country villa was called a 'datcha', which is the Russian word for 'gift', and the appellation derived from the time of Catharine the Great, who was in the habit of giving country houses and estates to her numerous Court favourites. Many professional and businessmen rented small wooden houses from the peasants as datchas for the summer months, but many old established families had their own large freehold datchas.

In 1802 P.J. Blessig I had purchased from his business partner Frederic KümmeI for a sum of 5500 roubles (£825) a large datcha on the Peterhof road near the village of Ligovo, about 9 versts (6 miles) SW of St. Petersburg. That datcha lay between one owned by Count N. Golovin and another owned by KümmeI. The land was about 150 acres in area, in the form of a very long and narrow strip which ran across the Peterhof road toward Cronstadt Bay in the freshwater Gulf of Finland; much of it was grassland pleasantly diversified by clumps of oak and lime trees, in which nightingales sang in early summer, and in autumn great quantities of mushrooms grew in the grass, which were used for making Russian soup; near the house there were small ponds, and a good garden in which flowers, bush fruit, and vegetables thrived well. In a conservatory adjoining the house were grown many varieties of evergreen shrubs, such as orange bushes, myrtles, castor oil plants, and oleanders etc, and in autumn most of those shrubs, well wrapped in straw and protected against frost by hot water bottles were conveyed in a closed carriage to Petersburg where they were placed in the windows of the house on the English Quay, to provide relief from the dreary outlook during the long winter months. That was customary in many large city houses.

The Villa Blessig was a roomy two-storeyed building of wood on a brick basement, with the upper storey projecting over the lower, in the style of peasant houses in the country, and that provided a large open veranda on the ground floor where meals could be taken in the open air during the summer and early autumn months.

When P.J. Blessig I died in 1832 he left the villa to his widow Emilie Charlotte nee Forsch, for her lifetime with remainder to her children; her stepson Wilhelm Blessig had the right to purchase the villa if he wished for 3000 roubles, and in such case the money was to be paid to her children. As Wilhelm Blessig and his wife Jane nee Higginbotham had their own villa among the English colony at Mourino Gardens NE of Petersburg, he did not exercise the right of purchasing the Ligovo villa, and the children of Emilie and P.J. Blessig inherited it when their mother died in 1843.

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Всеподобнейшему Императору
Великий Государь Император
Александр Николаевич
Самодержец Всероссийский Государь Великорусский

Просит сынов и наследников
покойного 1^{го} дивизию Кунца и Овдья
Буржеса Тимрауна Кунца. Он
жена Иванова Блессига, родная
сестра Коммерческой Советницы
Евдокия, и помещенные погреб
Графдеи Феликс Континент
и Роберт Франков сыновья
Блессига и в том наих прошение,
тому следуют пункты.

По Купии Крпности, совершенной
29^{го} Января 1802 года С. Петербургского Губер
ского Правления в Вестников Графдеи Кунца
двух Департаментов, и ввешной 28 Марта
тогоже 1802 года С. Петербургского Уездного
Суда во 2^{ом} Департаменте, покойному
родителю нашему 1^{му} дивизию Кунца Феликсу
Иванову Блессигу, остается поупкою от
1^{го} дивизию Кунца Фридриха Кунца
загородная дача, состоящая по Петербургской
дороге от С. Петербурга на 9 верст, где

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казался по раздроблению С.Петербургскаго
Уезднаго Суда 2 Департамента 1801 года
в синодальности даро Кесмииска и Графа
Толовина, по до Которо земли во
верхней Конец попеременно 87 саженей,
по Петербургской дороге 64 саженей амбиса
по синодальности с даро Графа Толовина
двои земли попеременно 1747 саженей, а другою
двои по синодальности с даро Кесмииска
1761 саженей, за покупную цену 5500 рублей
ассигнац. — Означенную даро покойный
родитель наш, Филипп Тессеи, в 1 и
3 пунктах духовнаго завещания своего,
завещавшаго створавшаго наследу смерти
завещателя 2 Департамента С.Петербургской
Палаты Гражданскаго Суда, 7 и
Сентября 1832 г., отказав себя свой, а
матери нашей, Димии Шавовой
Тессеи, урожденной Формы, в посылу,
ненные владение, с тем в 9 пункт
завещания известными условиями, чтобы
завещанное ей недвижимое имущество,
могут только после ее смерти нами
добавь его с нею приехать дома.

2

Убъ прилагаемых при насъ заве-
щательствъ нашей Копии сь опредѣленъ
2 Департамента С.Петербургскаго

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Translation of the first two pages of a 5 page Petition made in 1859 to Tsar Alexander II by the brothers Frederic, Philip, Constantin, and Robert Blessig, requesting a new Grant of Title to them for the Villa Blessig near St. Petersburg.

Most Serene Highness

Great Lord Emperor Alexander Nikolayevich Autocrat of all the Russia's, Lord Most Merciful

Petition from the sons and heirs of the deceased 1st Guild Merchant and Oldenburg Consul-General Philip Ivanov Blessig, namely the brothers Collegiate Counsellor Fedor and Hereditary Honorary Citizens Philip, Constantin, and Robert Philipov sons of Blessig, in this our Petition these following are the heads:

By a Deed of Purchase contracted on 29th January year 1802 in St. Petersburg City Court of Justice, Department for Citizens' Rights, and completed on 28th March of the same year 1802 in the St. Petersburg District Court, 2nd Department, our deceased parent Philip Ivanov Blessig acquired by purchase from the 1st Guild Merchant Frederic Kümmele a suburban datcha situated on the Peterhof road at the 9th verst from St. Petersburg, which is described in the records of the St. Petersburg District Court, 2nd Department, year 1801, as lying adjacent to the datchas of Kümmele and Count Golovin; and under chain measure the land at the upper end has a width of 87 sashens (203 yds) and at the Peterhof road end 64 sashens 5 arschines (151 yds) and in adjacency to the datcha of Count Golovin the side is 1747 sashens (4076 yds) and the other side adjacent to the datcha of Kümmele is 1761 sashens (4110 yds); and the purchase price was 5500 roubles (£825). The aforesaid datcha of our deceased parent Philip Blessig, under the 1st and 3rd clauses of his Will and Testament proved post mortem by order of the 2nd Department of the St. Petersburg City Court on 7th Sept. 1832, was devised to his wife our mother, Emilie Ivanovna Blessig born Forsch, for her lifetime possession, and under the 9th clause of the Will it was stipulated that this devise to her of real estate was heritable after her death only by the children begotten by him with her.

From the annexed and certified copy of a grant made by the 2nd Department of the St. Petersburg

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Before leaving St. Petersburg in 1845, P.J Blessig II made some arrangements with his brothers and sisters to ensure that the villa property would remain intact within the family, and that shares in it would not pass outside. In February 1845 he purchased his sister Sophia Boehlingkh's 1/14th share for 2143 roubles (£315), and in January 1849 he purchased at a similar price the shares of his sisters Emilie Schinckel and Betsy Blessig. In November 1858 the four brothers Frederic, Philip, Constantin, and Robert jointly purchased their eldest brother Carl's share. These transactions resulted in the above-mentioned four brothers becoming sole owners of the villa, and among them P.J Blessig of Liverpool held a majority of shares. A new Grant of Title in respect of the property then became necessary, and in accordance with Russian property law the four brothers addressed a Petition to Tsar Alexander II in March 1859 for a new Title Deed. The Petition was heard in the St. Petersburg Civil Court and was duly granted, and in August 1859 State Counsellor Frederic Blessig, as representative of the 4 brothers was ceremonially inducted to the property by officials and witnesses from the Local Court. A copy of all the documents concerning this bureaucratic business, written in Russian legal script, has been preserved, and some extracts are shown here. No pictures or photographs of the villa are extant in England.

During the years 1865-8 the old villa, which had become dilapidated in the course of time, was pulled down and completely rebuilt in the same style but with many improvements. At the same time a new and smaller villa was built on the property, a short distance from the main house, to serve as a separate residence for State Counsellor Frederic Blessig and his family and guests. Dr Robert Blessig and his wife, with their ward Amalia Clelia, daughter of the deceased artist Alexander Blessig, occupied the rebuilt main villa. P.J Blessig of Liverpool financed his brothers in these building operations, and on completion in 1868 the property with its two houses and 150 acres of land was valued at 30,000 roubles, equivalent to £4,500 at that date.

In 1876 P.J Blessig purchased a farm in Livonia for his brother Constantin, who had been renting farms there from 1864, and presumably Constantin then renounced his share in the villa property. Dr Robert Blessig died in 1878, and his shares then passed to his brothers Frederic and Philip, but they agreed to allow Robert's widow to remain in occupation of the main house for her lifetime. When Frederic Blessig died in 1887, his shares passed to his sons Bobka and Erni, who in due course inherited their uncle P.J. Blessig's shares, when he died in 1904, and those two brothers became the final owners of the property. From 1887 to 1904 Bobka Blessig used to send to his uncle in Liverpool an annual account of income and expenditure for the property, and the outgo on maintenance and wages etc. seems to have been

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balanced by letting off the grasslands with a couple of cottages. In 1899 Bobka Blessig built an orangery and made some other improvements. During the Russian Revolution the small villa on the property was burned down by local Bolsheviks, but about 1918 or so the Leningrad Soviet decided to adapt the main house as a school for some of the vast number of abandoned children (bezprizorniy) who were running wild in the streets of the city at that time.

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По Указу Его Императорскаго
Величества, даннаго С. Петербургскаго
Уезднаго Суда изъ 2.^{го} Департамента отъ 10.^{го}
Юлиа 1859^{го} года, за № 1586, С. Петербургскому
Земскому Суду предписано: На основании поста-
новлений сего Департамента, составившагося
20.^{го} Марта сего года, ввести во владение даннаго,
состоящего по Петергофскому дарову отъ С. Петербур-
га на 9.^{ти} верстахъ, принадлежащаго Сидорова-Горского
Генералъ-лейбному Конюшу Филипу Блессигу, - наибо-
лее: Коллежскаго Советника Федора, и
потомственныхъ Наследныхъ Гражданъ Филипа,
Константина и Роберта Филиповичей
Блессигъ.

Во исполненіе такового Указа Временное
Отдѣленіе С. Петербургскаго Земскаго Суда, на
основаніи 929 ст. Тѣмъ Х. С. I Зак. Гражд. изд. 1857г.
и прибавило сего числа на означенную дару, и при-
гласивъ нископодписавшихся стороннихъ

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и вступилей — всенитало ввипрописанной Указъ
2^й Департамента Уряднаго Суда, по взысканию
кого спора на ввводъ во владение нитотъ когото обьяв-
лено. — А потому Временныи Отдѣленныи учрежде-
нныи С. Петербургскими Урядными Судами Ханго-
вскими умершаго П. Плессига оставившася посылъ сего
последняго дарено, со стрѣжидими на оной и ввотши при
надлежащими во владение ввведенъ и съ сего вввод-
наго листа копия иль выдана. — Августа 20^{го} гжи
1859^{го} года. — Во владение ввведенъ Управникъ В. Ха-
заровъ. — Приставъ Тавриинъ и Урядный Отрядный
Священъ. — При ввводъ во владение были свидетелями:
Со стороны Церкви Св. Петра Митрополита Сча-
роста Павелъ Петровъ Зарарскій. — Директорскій
Статскій Советникъ Усарскій. — При ввводъ во
владение находимъ и копию съ ввводнаго листа
получилъ Статскій Советникъ Плессигъ. —

Варно: [Подпись] Управникъ В. Хазаровъ.

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Translation of Title Deed investing the brothers Frederic, Philip, Constantin, and Robert Blessig with possession of the Villa Blessig near St. Petersburg.

By Ukase of HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, the St. Petersburg District Court 2nd Department on 10th July 1859 gave Order No.1586 to the St. Petersburg Local Court as follows: At a hearing on 20th March in this year in the 2nd Department Court concerning possession of a datcha situated on the Peterhof road at the 9th verst from St. Petersburg, which formerly belonged to the deceased Oldenburg Consul-General Philip Blessig, it was confirmed that the residual heirs to the property are: Collegiate Counsellor Feodor, and Hereditary Honorary Citizens Philip, Constantin, and Robert Philipovitch Blessig.

In fulfilment of that Order, the St. Petersburg Local Court 1st Section, in accordance with Statute 929 in Volume X Cap. I of the Civil Code, edition 1857/58, went on this date to the aforesaid datcha together with invited witnesses, whose names are given below. The Order of the 2nd Department Court was there read out, and as no objection was raised by those present, to the giving of possession of the datcha, the Local Court 1st Section thereupon implemented the St. Petersburg District Court Order for possession of the datcha and its curtilage by the residual heirs of the late Mr. Philip Blessig, and those heirs were introduced into possession on this date, 20th August 1859, and a copy of this Title Deed was handed to them. Introduction into possession was made by the Police Captain B. Hazaroff, Inspector Gavriloff, and District Attorney Svitsin. The witnesses were Paul Petrovitch Zagorski, Churchwarden of the Metropolitan Church of St. Petri, and the Actual State Counsellor Ysarski. Possession was given to State Counsellor Blessig, and a copy of this Title Deed was handed to him. Certified: (sd.) Police Captain B. Hazaroff.

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Liverpool.

As mentioned earlier, PHILIP JACOB II BLESSIG claimed his share of the family inheritance in St. Petersburg, probably about £10,000, early in 1845, and decided to seek his fortune in Liverpool. The Firm of Blessig & Co. in Petersburg, whose business was in seaborne trade, already had some connections with Liverpool, as cotton piece goods and raw cotton were being increasingly imported in the 1840's, and tallow, hemp, and other raw materials were exported from Russia to Liverpool.

Arriving there in the summer of 1845, when in his 24th year, Blessig began work with a firm of commission merchants in Rumford Street. There he found a young man of the same age as himself, Francis Caesar Braun, who had recently come to Liverpool from the Bavarian Rhine Palatinate. Together they rented a furnished lodging at No. 23 Marine Crescent in the suburb of Waterloo, where many young businessmen had lodgings. Marine Crescent is a terrace of small two-storeyed houses, which still exists, on the sea front. In the 1840's horse omnibuses used to run at half-hourly intervals from the Angel Hotel in Bale Street, Liverpool, to the Bath Hotel at Waterloo, a distance of 6 miles, and gigs could be hired if a faster journey was necessary.

On 20th August 1846 P.J. Blessig and F.C. Braun ventured to set up their own Firm as **Blessig, Braun & Co.** with an office in Fenwick Court.



P.J. Blessig aged 35. 1856.

Blessig contributed £6,300 capital, whilst Braun had only about £100 to invest. During the year 1846-7 they made about £500 profit which they divided, and Blessig received 6% interest on his capital. In the next year they incurred a considerable loss through the bankruptcy of a factory abroad which they had supplied with cotton. As they also needed further capital to expand their business they then decided to go into temporary partnership with the head of the Firm where they had previously worked. This arrangement took effect from 1st March 1848, Blessig and the new partner each contributing about £6,000 capital, whilst Braun still had no capital to invest. The new partnership proved successful, and during the ensuing three years the annual profit of the Firm

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averaged £18,000. By the end of 1851 Blessig and the new partner each had about £17,000 invested in the business, and Braun had about £6,000. After six years this temporary association ended, as the third partner wished to revert to his own business in partnership with his son. And so, from 1st March



1854, P.J. Blessig and **F.C. Braun** once more became the sole owners of Blessig, Braun & Co, and they established their office in Walmer Buildings, Water Street. They chose at this date a motto for the Firm, "Non Mutamur" (We are unchanged), indicating that the partnership was the same as originally formed in 1846.

In August 1849 P.J. Blessig and F.C. Braun left their lodging at Waterloo. Braun took rooms at No.34 Falkner Square, and Blessig rented No.11 Deane Street, off the Prescott Road. That house was one in a pair of semi-detached blocks built about 1830 in late Georgian style on land belonging to Mr. E.D. Falkner, who had a small mansion nearby, named Fairfield Hall, which later gave its name to that district of Liverpool. In 1849 this was the extreme

eastern limit of the city, being 2 miles from the Exchange, and the Deane Street houses stood in what was practically open country, surrounded by fields, and as they were on the sandstone ridge called Edge Hill, they must have had a fine view over the city. P.J. Blessig paid a rent of £65 and tax of £30 per annum for his house, and he completely furnished and redecorated it in the autumn of 1849 for an expenditure of about £700. The house had, 3 bedrooms, 2 servants' rooms, a small boudoir used as a bathroom, and dining room, drawing room, kitchen etc. Two business friends were invited to share the house with him, and a cook and manservant were kept; the wage bill was about £5 and the housekeeping bill about £10 monthly. As an indication of the relative value of money at that period his accounts show that a three-course luncheon in the city cost 1/8d, and a good cigar 6d. No.11 Deane Street still stands inhabited (1954) but in sadly dilapidated condition, and may soon be demolished with other old houses in that neighbourhood to make way for new building.

In 1851 Blessig's partner, Francis Caesar Braun, when on a brief visit for business in St. Petersburg, married there, Maria Julia Falke, aged 24. Her

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forebears, of Swedish ancestry, had long been resident at Reval and in St. Petersburg. After his marriage F.C. Braun rented a house in Sandfield Park West Derby until about 1863, when he purchased a large house named Holly Lodge, in Stoneycroft, West Derby.

Catharine Caroline Braun

On 4th August 1852, P.J Blessig married at St. John's Church, West



Caroline Blessig aged 30. 1865.

Derby (now the Parish Church of Knotty Ash), his partner's youngest sister, **Catharine Caroline (Lina) Braun**, who was then in her 18th year. Her father J.L.F Braun, who died in 1850, had been a Notary & Revenue Official at Gernersheim in the Bavarian Rhine Palatinate, and her mother, who died in 1868, was a daughter of Pastor P.C Lauckhardt, Superintendent in the Lutheran Church at Framersheim. Earlier ancestors on both sides of Caroline Braun's family had been Pastors and Court Preachers to the Princes of Leiningen at Dürkheim in the Palatinate. The Brauns, like the Blessigs, originated in Alsace, and their Arms had a golden mullet (star) on a blue shield. After his marriage P.J. Blessig rented a house

at Almond's Green, West Derby, and there all his children were born in the ensuing ten years. West Derby was 4 miles from the centre of Liverpool, and at that period only a few merchants and professional men had houses there. It was a pleasant country village which lay at the gates of Croxteth Hall, residence of the Earl of Sefton.

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Blessig, Braun & Co., Liverpool

The business of Blessig, Braun & Co. continued to prosper. In the year 1861 P.J. Blessig momentarily considered retiring at an early age. He was then aged 40, and by hard work had improved his fortune to nearly £100,000. The American Civil War was then impending and owing to the probable suspension of cotton supplies there were great risks for the Firm in making large-scale future purchase contracts. Another reason for his idea of retirement at this time may have been his wife's health, which had begun to trouble her, perhaps due to an inability to adapt herself to life at Liverpool. However, in the following year the difficulties seem to have been resolved. Blessig decided to remain in business so long as his partner Braun wished to continue (and in the event, he remained in business for a further 40 years, almost to the end of his long life), and he decided to build at West Derby a large house with a good garden, for the benefit of his wife and young family. On coming to Liverpool in 1845 he had retained his Hereditary Honorary Russian Citizenship, but in December 1862 he took British Citizenship.

The English Peterhof

In 1863 P.J Blessig purchased a 15-acre field on land known as Black Moor, lying between Leyfield Road and Eaton Road at West Derby, and there



he built his large house and laid out extensive gardens. He named the house 'Peterhof' after the Tsar's Summer Palace on the Gulf of Finland. The architect was sent to Russia to study the decorative features of that palace, some of which were copied for the house at West

Derby. Peterhof was occupied from 1864 to 1881, when, all his daughters being married, P.J. Blessig sold it to Mr. R. Heap, a Liverpool rice-miller. The house, renamed as 'Blackmoor' by Mr. Heap, continued to stand until 1925, when it was pulled down, and a modern housing estate now covers the site. On leaving West Derby in 1881, a house named 'Beechley' at Allerton was purchased, as mentioned later.

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Blessig Braun & Co partners and employees.

P.J Blessig's first partner **F.C. Braun** was not fortunate in the span of life granted to him. In 1871 owing to his wife's poor health, he purchased from Baron August v. Landy, a large country villa near Bingen on the Rhine, and with it he also rented a shooting in the neighbouring forests of the Hunsruck hills. Unfortunately, his wife died within a few months of taking up residence at this villa, and Braun himself died there very suddenly, two years later. He

left a fortune in Liverpool of nearly £240,000. His partner P.J. Blessig was his Executor and became the guardian of the younger Braun children. The villa at Bingen was sold in 1879 to Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Hesse, and later passed to other



owners. It is now called **Villa Sachsen**, and has large vineyards, which produce well-known white wines. Braun's house at West Derby was sold in 1885 after all the daughters had married. It is now a High School for girls.

After F.C. Braun's death, P.J. Blessig took as partner in the Firm, **Mr. F.C.A Minoprio**, who had joined the business in 1858; he was of N. Italian ancestry, and was born at Frankfort in 1838, and died at Liverpool in 1893. His partnership in Blessig, Braun & Co. ended in 1886, and P.J. Blessig then took as partner his son-in-law, **Theodore Heyder**, who had been in the Firm as a junior from 1873. Among other juniors in the business at various periods were: **Alexander Heyder** 1875-1880, **Arthur Braun** 1875-1889, and **Hermann Philip Braun** 1868-98. A clerk who joined the Firm in 1863, **Mr. W.E McConnan**, later became the Cashier and remained with the business for 55 years, becoming a partner in 1904 after P.J. Blessig's death, and retiring finally in 1918. Another clerk who was with the Firm during 1868-9 was a young man named **Ernest Cassel**, who came to Liverpool from Cologne at the age of 17, and who later became the well-known millionaire friend of King Edward VII, and grandfather of Lady Mountbatten. On 20th August 1896, Blessig, Braun & Co. celebrated their 50th Anniversary. P.J. Blessig, then aged 75, was presented with his portrait painted by Frederic S. Beaumont, an artist who frequently exhibited at the Royal Academy during 1885-1909. In March 1901, **George**, son of **Theodore Heyder**, became a partner in the

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business, and at the end of that year P.J. Blessig retired, being then aged 80. His fortune, which had largely been settled on his family, but which left substantial capital in the business, approximated to £750,000. **Theodore Heyder** (who in 1915 assumed his mother's family name of St. George) then became Head of the Firm and directed it until his retirement in 1923. His son George St. George finally wound up the business at the end of 1924, after its continuous existence for nearly 80 years.

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P.J Blessig: life outside the company.

For many years P.J. Blessig was a Director of the London & Lancs. Insurance Co, and of the British & Foreign Marine Insurance Co, and was much esteemed by his fellow Directors. Soon after coming to Liverpool in 1845 he had been appointed **Russian Vice Consul at Liverpool**, and he held that appointment for more than 50 years, receiving the Order of St. Stanislaus for his long service. It has been mentioned that he sold his West Derby house named '*Peterhof*' in 1881, after all his daughters had married. In that year he purchased a house called '*Beechley*' at Allerton, from Mr. P. Bancroft for £17,000.

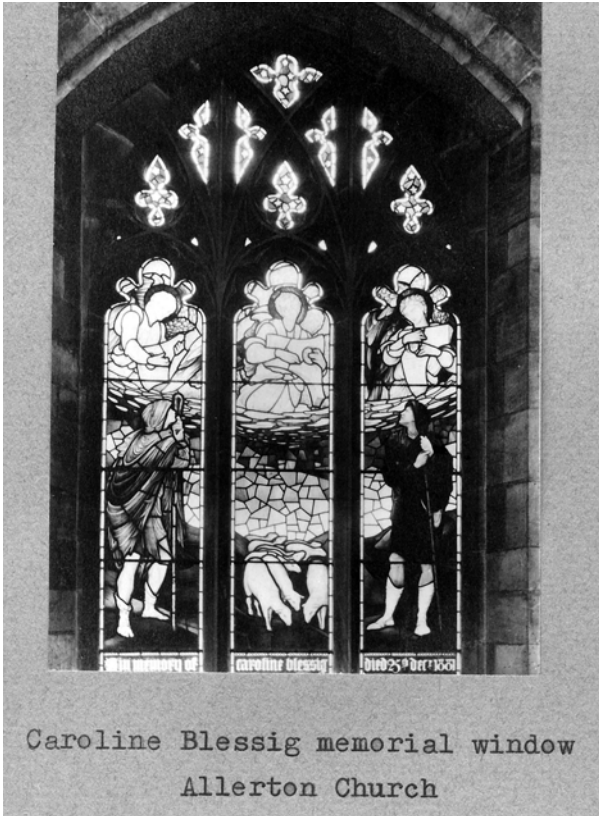


The house had been built in 1835 by Mr.Wm. Marriott on land formerly known as Mercer's Farm. It had a good garden, large stables, and a grass field, covering in all about 8 acres.

Soon after moving to this new residence, his wife Catharine Caroline nee Braun died, on Christmas Day 1881, at the age of 46. She was buried in the Toxteth Park Cemetery, where P.J. Blessig had a beautiful monument erected on her grave.

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He also gave, as memorial to her, a window for the N. aisle of the newly built Allerton Church; it represents the Shepherds watching their flocks on the first Christmas Eve, and was designed by Burne-Jones and executed by William Morris artists.



Caroline Blessig memorial window
Allerton Church

After Caroline Blessig's death, her niece **Amalie Deffren** came from West Derby to keep house for P.J. Blessig at Beechley, and in 1885 when the Braun family house at West Derby had been sold, his sisters-in-law, Mrs. Lisette Berg nee Braun, b.1825 d.1902, and Louisa Braun b.1828 d.1899, also came to live at Beechley. During the period when he resided at West Derby, P.J. Blessig rode a good deal to maintain health; he frequently

rode the 4 miles from his house to his Liverpool office, and he and his family had permission from Lord Sefton to ride in Croxteth Hall park, adjoining West Derby. After moving to Allerton he took up shooting for recreation and exercise, having previously done much shooting as a young man in Russia. During 1882-85 he rented the Chirk Castle shooting in Wales from the Myddleton family, staying for weekends at the Hand Hotel in Chirk. He also rented for a year or two the Boreatton Park shooting at Baschurch in Shropshire from Mr. Rowland Hunt, and a house on the estate, named Glyn Morlas, where his daughters stayed with their children in summer. During 1886-89 he rented from Captain C.G Conwy the Bodrhyddan Hall shooting near Rhuddlan, with a house called Spital on the estate.

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From 1889 to 1900 he rented **Ranton Abbey** and its large shooting in



Ranton Abbey, Staffordshire.

Staffordshire, from the 2nd and 3rd Earls of Lichfield. At all of these shootings which he rented, he provided sport and relaxation at weekends and holidays for his sons-in-law, nephews, and other relatives and friends who were in business in Liverpool; and in the summer months the house Spital near Rhuddlan, and later Ranton Abbey, were occupied for long periods by his daughters' families.



At Ranton Abbey. 1898.

Olga Heyder	Theodore Heyder
Edmund Blessig	P.J.Blessig
	Shepherd (Hd. keep)

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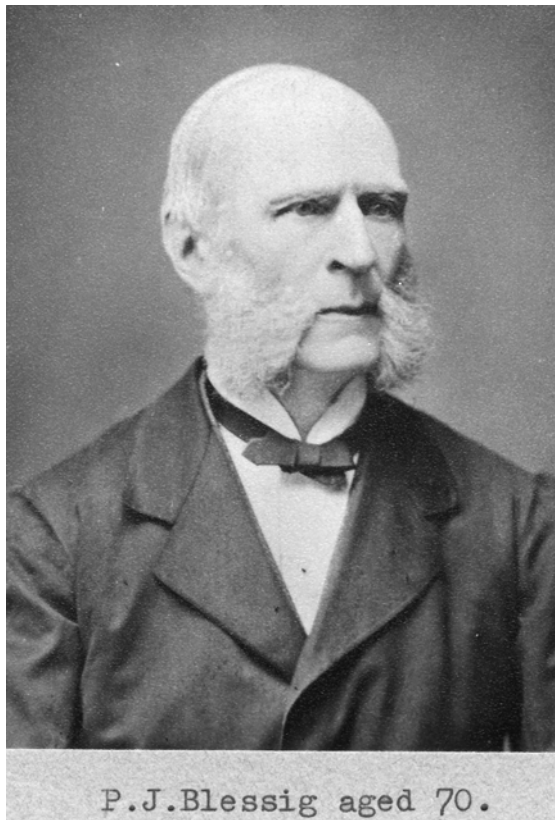
P.J. Blessig kept 5 or 6 fine black carriage horses at Beechley, and he went to much trouble in obtaining matching pairs of good breed from London dealers. At his shootings he usually rode and drove a pony. For indoor recreation he was a keen whist player, and in the 1830's he and his friends became devotees of a card game called Raseltin, which originated with the Army in the Egyptian campaign of 1884 and took its name from the Khedive's palace of Ras-el-tin. P.J. Blessig appreciated home life and did not readily attend social functions whether public or private, partly on account of slight deafness.

He generally travelled abroad for four or five weeks in the summer, in early years with his wife to visit her relatives in the Palatinate, and to see his uncle Forsch's family at Dresden, and his sister Emilie Schinckel's family at Hamburg. He also visited his brother Carl who had a shooting near Achern in Baden, and on several occasions he went to St. Petersburg to see his brothers and relatives there. In later years he combined family visits with regular 'cures' at Carlsbad and other Spas, on account of a painful kidney trouble, Bright's disease, which became chronic after middle life. He always found the Spa visits tiresome and monotonous, but bore patiently with them in the hope of becoming fit for his usual autumn and winter shooting; once or twice he tried the Buxton Spa, but he regarded the water there as too 'wishy washy' for his taste. He was a great cigar smoker.

P.J. Blessig was a Founder Subscriber for the building of the first Philharmonic Hall at Liverpool, which was completed in 1849, and for 50 years he had a family box for the concerts there. In 1872 he became a shareholder in the Wellington Club, which owned the Wellington Rooms, where his wife and daughters and later his grandchildren attended the subscription dances, and where he enjoyed playing whist in the card room. He took no public part in politics, but was strongly Conservative and was an original member of the Liverpool Conservative Club, founded in 1880. Under the electoral system current during most of his life he had more than one vote, and voting was spread out over 2-3 weeks. In the Exchange Division of Liverpool he had a vote in respect of his business premises; he had another vote in the Lancashire County constituency as a resident at West Derby, and later at Allerton, and during the 1890's he had a third vote in the Staffordshire County constituency as a tenant of Ranton Abbey.

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P.J. Blessig chose for his family crest a Griffin holding an Axe, the latter having reference to the Auberge a la Hache of his grandfather and great-grandfather at Strasbourg, and he chose for his personal motto the words 'Non Aedes sed Fides' (Good Repute is better than Riches). In his business career he lived up to that motto, holding the honour of his Firm's name as more important than speculative gain. Although he was a hard and shrewd fighter in the battle of life, he was generous to those who merited his help. In addition to providing for his own family and helping some relatives of his wife, he did much for the less fortunate members of the large Blessig family. His assistance to his brothers Frederic and Robert in the matter of the villa near Petersburg has been mentioned, and he also purchased farms in Livonia for his brother Constantin and his nephew Griescha Blessig. After the death of his brother Robert in 1878 he was largely responsible for founding the "Blessig Institute for the Blind" in St. Petersburg as a memorial to that brother and his work. He trained several of his nephews from abroad in his Liverpool office, including Edward Blessig, the future very able head of "Blessig & Co." in St. Petersburg. Although he was not the eldest of his generation Philip Blessig came to be regarded as head of the widely scattered family.



He was a good judge of character and did not suffer fools gladly, but he had a dry sense of humour. On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of his Liverpool firm, when an illuminated address was presented to him, he remarked that his only artistic achievement had been the writing off of the Firm's bad debts; and he displayed on the wall of his office a tabulated list showing bad debts amounting to scores of thousands of pounds written off since the founding of the business; the list began with the name in red ink of a man who after many years had voluntarily refunded his debt, and the remainder were neatly shown in categories as Robbers,

Half-wits, and Complete Fools.

At Beechley, P.J. Blessig's sister-in-law Louisa Braun died in 1899. In 1900 he gave up his Ranton Abbey lease, being then in his 80th year and unable to shoot any more, and at the end of 1901 he retired from business, as already mentioned. In 1902 his sister-in-law Mrs. Lisette Berg died, and in

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that year his own health began to fail seriously. After some intermittent periods of partial recovery, he died at Beechley on 17th April 1904, in his 83rd year. He was buried in the family grave in Toxteth Park Cemetery. The house Beechley was sold by his Executors in 1906 to Mrs. Emily Stewart Brown.