

Peter Heinrich Holthaus and his chess books

As we know from bibliographies of the early 19th century, the nearly completely unknown Peter Heinrich Holthaus from the town of Schwelm wrote two chess books between 1796 and 1815, published in altogether five editions.

These are the oldest chess books which have been published in the lower Rhine – Westphalian region. At the same time they belong to the rarest books of chess literature. Three books are lost, and of two books only a few copies (4 + 2) are known worldwide.

All books were brought out by the publisher Johann Anton Mannes in Elberfeld (today Wuppertal).

Mannes was very well disposed to chess and he also published chess advertisements and articles in his Elberfeld newspaper and in his merchant calendar.

His chess author Holthaus was a marked chess propagandist.

Among other things he suggested:

- 1) To look for skilful chess players who would offer group learning of chess.
- 2) To establish occasional chess columns in newspapers.
- 3) To set up proper chess clubs following the English example.

These suggestions were made in the year 1794, nine years before the foundation of the first German chess club in Berlin, incredibly modern in those days in Germany!