

## **WILHELM SCHEEL - My Life**

*In 1905, Wilhelm Scheel (born May 6, 1829, died April 28, 1908), businessman, entrepreneur and founder of the chemical factory on Kessiner Chaussee (today Neubrandenburger Straße) as well as co-founder of the sugar factory, PLC in Rostock, wrote down the story of his life for the benefit of his descendants. This historical document – which as such must be considered in the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – conveys a vivid picture of various aspects of life in Rostock. Wilhelm Scheel was not only an entrepreneur and a Royal Danish consul. In 1893, he donated Rostock's first allotment association, the "Fruit and vegetable club for Rostock and surroundings" at the White Cross. The association, renamed "Privy Councillor of Commerce Scheel" in honour of its donor in 1913, still exists today. His birthplace Schwaan awarded Scheel the honorary citizenship.*

*In 1868, Wilhelm Scheel joined ranks with Friedrich Witte, Joseph Josephi(y), Victor Siemerling, Pelzer and others (amongst them members of the trade association) to found the "General Mecklenburg Trade Association", the precursor of the Mecklenburg Chamber of Commerce, from which today's Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Rostock emerged. For 37 years, until his death in 1908, Wilhelm Scheel was a member of the supervisory board of the "Rostock Patriotic Fire Insurance Company", 18 years of which as its chairman.*

*Rostock can boast another patron from the Scheel family, Wilhelm's nephew Prof. Karl Franz Christian Scheel (born March 10, 1866 in Rostock, died November 8, 1936 in Berlin). He founded*

- 1. the Karl Scheel Student Award of the Physical Society of Berlin. Since 1994, it is annually awarded to the best A-level graduates from the Große Stadtschule Rostock (renamed Innerstädtisches Gymnasium Rostock in 2006), in the field of physics*
- 2. the Karl Scheel Award of the Physical Society of Berlin, annually awarded in Berlin since 1958 to scientists for outstanding scientific work.*

*In 1958, the Chemical Factory Wilhelm Scheel underwent a forced conversion from sole proprietorship to a limited partnership with "state participation" and was duly renamed Wilhelm Scheel K.G. Chemical Factory Rostock.*

*Finally, on April 16, 1972, the company was entirely nationalised (expropriated). It was merged into the VVB IKS (Cooperation of the shipbuilding industry in the Union of State-owned companies).*

*Over the years, however, this sub-division dwindled into insignificance, although in some cases production continued until 1989 / early 1990. Finally, the site was used as a storage location. After 1990/1991, as a consequence of unclear official responsibilities, it became industrial wasteland. Between 2005 and 2010, the historic factory was finally completely dismantled. At present, parts of the site are being planted. Further plans are unknown.*

*We would like to thank Werner Moennich (great-great-grandson of Wilhelm Scheel) from Hamburg and Christine Kusch (daughter of Wilhelm-Sibrand Scheel), who made this publication possible (see also Wilhelm Scheel: The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary).*

*Berth Brinkmann*

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**The 60 years 1845 – 1905 which were delightful because they consisted of work and toil.**

*On May 6, 1829, I was born in Schwaan, a small town in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, to the baker and innkeeper Friedrich Martin Scheel and his wife Marie, née Gaedt. I attended the local elementary school, until I was confirmed on Palm Sunday in 1845. I was considered a reasonably talented, good student, although I secretly skived school for eleven weeks during the very severe winter of 1844/45, preferring to hang around and practice smoking and other forbidden things in the Schwaan Lindenbruch (despite the severe cold of some 21 to 26 degrees Celsius below zero).*

*The day after Easter 1845, my parents organised for me and my few belongings to be brought from Schwaan to Rostock. The journey was effected on a sleigh returning from Hamburg to Rostock, whither it travelled twice a week – on unmacadamised roads – as a sidecar of the postal service. As a student in Schwaan, I had been rather wild for the past six months, and it was with concern that my dear teacher Gustav Schulz urged me to turn over a new leaf and hence become a different, decent person.*

*This sharp exhortation had affected me, the hitherto unrestrained boy, more than the parting from my dear parents' home. With firm intentions I entered the office of my instructor, Moritz Rehberg, that evening. A tear fell on the hand that grasped the door handle. My instructor, a strict, righteous man, recently married, ran a grocer's shop, which he aimed to expand.*

*The spacious shop could be entered from Mönchenstraße via the restaurant which the postmistress, one widow Töppel, ran opposite the Rostock weigh house. The entrance to the private premises, on the other hand, gave onto Poststraße, now Krämerstraße (the building was a corner house). An office, 12 feet long and 12 feet wide, was attached to the shop. This office was an oriel jutting into what is now Krämerstrasse just opposite the house of A. F. Dolich. Thus located, with three sides facing the open road and high, small-paned windows on every side, the office vouchsafed the three apprentices a most spectacular view of Poststraße, Vogelsang, Marienkirche and Kibbenibberstraße.*

*A bitter cold engulfed us without respite from mid-November 1844 and until after Easter 1845, transforming the river into a solid mass of ice. Hence, the beach-wagons drawn by two horses, which, assigned by prerogative, usually took the grain from the granaries to the sea-going vessels moored at Rostock beach, took to driving their loads directly to Warnemünde, where the ships were duly loaded. These transports on the thick ice were still being effected several weeks after Easter. The location of our shop on the Mönchenstraße (also known as Pentecost Market Street) had its benefits: Non-local customers who had come for their Pentecost shopping at the Hamburg merchants Alexander or Ascher, mistook us for merchants from Hamburg and made extensive purchases. The grocers referred to, Alexander and Ascher, used to come with large freight cars, having permission to trade in Rostock duty-free for a period of 14 days.*

*Alexander had his depot opposite our premises, at the wine merchant Ahlers, now Bencard. H. Ascher exhibited his goods – coffee, rice, sugar, spices and tropical fruit – further down Mönchenstraße, at what was at the time the wallpaper factory A.F. Dolich, and is now Janzen's fish market. We apprentices were instructed to check that the Hamburg competitors did not open their depots before the second day of Whitsun, at 4 pm, and only until Saturday evening during the second week of Whitsun. Even then, however, the law was frequently circumvented: Thus, the Hamburg tradesmen delivered the goods to the customers after the Whitsun market was closed, pretending that the goods had been ordered during the Whitsun market but that delivery had, until*

*then, not been possible. The habit of recommending their goods as cheaper by distributing Commodity Price Currents from house to house during the Whitsun market, was taken up by the Rostock grocers H.C. Philibert, L. Sarkander, Moritz Rehberg and others. I was convinced that our shop had the greatest advantage from these circumstances and that we did the best business of all.*

*Due to my good conduct, my instructor curtailed my apprenticeship – 3 years as of Easter 1845 – by three months. On New Year's Day 1848, I accordingly accepted the position of clerk with the merchant Adolph Becker, with an annual salary of 80 Thaler. My instructor was well educated: He had passed his apprenticeship at Saniter & Weber, then the one business in Rostock with worldwide connections; he had subsequently worked in France, England and Szczecin for several years; He was the eldest son of the vicar Becker of St. Mary's Church. Besides the small grocery shop, we had the largest and most beautiful stock of cigars ranging up to the most expensive prices.*

*At Becker's I held a position of trust, but had too little to do and was frequently bored. Hence, I used my free time to do the accounts for the widow Flättner, formerly the widow Meyer, who lived opposite us at Blutstraße No. 7. She ran a fruit and delicatessen shop. The remuneration was 3 Louisdor per annum. On March 23, 1851, I left Becker and Rostock, to take up a position at the office of the shipping agent Carl Ferdinand Unger, Hamburg, representative of the Hamburg-Magdeburg-Prague Steamship Towing Company. I started the job on April 1, 1851. The salary was only 500 Mark per annum, but my parents, who did not want me to starve, pledged to add fifty Thaler, i.e. 150 Mark every three months. I had received the first 50 Thaler upon my departure from Schwaan.*

*On April 15, 1851, only thirty Thaler cash were left of this sum. Hence, when my guardian, master mason C. Woderich from Schwaan, wrote to inform me that the proceeds from the large inn, two dwellings, numerous fields and teams, did not allow for further allowances, I was quite desperate. I decided to eke out my income by working as a commission agent in Hamburg for my friends in Mecklenburg. The aforementioned 30 Prussian Thaler, i.e. 75 Hamburg Kurant Mark, were registered as working capital in my Italian double entry accounts.*

*I did not touch this small capital, although for the next 8½ months I often lived in want, skipping lunch and living on coffee and bread rolls. Only once, when my dear uncle Chr. Ahrens from Rostock, a gentleman of private means, came to visit me, I was treated to a warm meal for lunch by this paternal protector.*

*My small business consisted in the purchase and shipment of pigeons to my former instructor Rehberg in Rostock, in the purchase of copper plates and copper nails from Samuel Watkinson in Altona (who ordered them from England) for my uncle, the coppersmith W. Hübner and in the purchase of goods for customers and friends in Schwaan, e.g. Mrs. Stoldt from Schwaan.*

*Even if these small business transactions were of no significant financial benefit, they constituted a stimulating occupation and were a useful way of spending my free time. In December 1851, my former instructor Rehberg informed me that he had recommended me for a post as clerk with his friend Ernst Schmidt in Rostock. On December 16, I first went to visit to my sister, who was married to the accountant Hoch, in Worin. – The fact that my parents were unable to continue the promised allowance had turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I had never touched the rest of the thirty Thaler, but had, with the utmost care, noted every penny of income and expenditure in my balance. In Hamburg I had not a shilling debt, but had, according to my accounts, increased my reserve funds from 30 Thaler to 61 Thaler 26 shillings. With this sum in my pocket, I returned to Mecklenburg where, on January 1, 1852, I took up a position with Mr. Ernst Schmidt.*

*In this job, which implied selling low carbon steel and bituminous coal to a large clientele of*

*blacksmiths and locksmiths, I was very happy, especially since my dear, highly decent instructor gave ample proof of his satisfaction with my work.*

*In addition to bar iron from Stockholm and England, we purchased large steamer loads of hemp from St. Petersburg, which we regularly sold to the large caulkers in Rostock and to all ropemakers and fishermen in the inland of Mecklenburg. These transactions assured us decent profits.*

*With the outbreak of the Crimean War, Russia dropped out as a supplier of hemp, which resulted in a price explosion. We had accumulated a considerable stock for our long-standing customers; however, though anxious about how we should satisfy our loyal customers later on, we could not resist the temptation of selling most of our stock in bulk to Lübeck: We had purchased 336 pounds of hemp at 13 Thaler per 200 pounds. We now sold this hemp at 28 Thaler per 200 pounds. F. W. Folsack, our agent at the time, would not let us rest. In the meantime, we had bought Polish hemp, which did nicely for our domestic customers. – We had raked in a fortune. My distinguished instructor Schmidt – he likewise the son of a vicar – remained modest and did not let it be noticed that he had become a rich man overnight.*

*Neither had this exciting time gone to my head; however, I was haunted by the urge, first aroused in Hamburg, to do my little business for my own account. Thus, I sold beautiful cigars obtained from Hamburg to the customers, blacksmiths, etc., with a return of 8 shillings p. ¼ box.*

*My instructor's relatives, wealthy country folk, trusted me so much, that they entrusted to me the butter that had not been sold during the summer months, often between 10 and 30 1/3 tonnes. They had, indeed, come to the conviction (as it is, well-founded) that little Wilhelm Scheel obtained the best, most substantial prices. I was happy that all the world was pleased with me, and showed a pleasing and attentive manner towards everyone. The 4¼ years I spent in this job were very nearly the happiest of my life. Besides this, however, I was not above providing numerous plumbers with various boxes of tinsplate obtained in Hamburg, which I sold with a profit of 12 shillings per box. I also provided the optician Paetsch with what brass he required.*

*Rather than hampering me in any way, my instructor, Schmidt, observed my activities with a benevolent eye.*

*The mayor of Schwaan, Mr. Daniel, who resided in my mother's house, was well-disposed towards the ambitious boy from Schwaan: as head of the town, which boasted a significant brickyard, he was able to purchase 200 tonnes of coal from me at 12¾ Thaler per double tonne, delivered by barge to the brickyard in Schwaan free of charge. My advantage was that I could make a better price than others: The agent F. W. Martens from Rostock had overreached himself with the amount of coal and sold me a load so cheaply that I made 60 Thaler with the Schwaan deal. My joy upon this first great gain was such that I was wide awake all night, a night never to be forgotten. In return, I bought 51 000 bricks from the Schwaaner brickyard at 10½ Thaler per 1000 bricks. These bricks I sold for 13 Thaler per 1000 bricks to the authorities of the Rostock city district Toitenwinkel for the construction of a prison. The delivery to the construction site was included free of charge. However, since the cart drivers' privilege still persisted at that time, carriage costs were very high. The brick business therefore yielded but a small premium.*

*For quite some time I had been desirous of a job as a traveller, as I wished to meet the customers on the home market. In April 1855, I left my dear instructor Schmidt, and, almost against Schmidt's wishes, entered the large business of Mr. Ernst Brockelmann. Not only did he manage 40 large*

*sailing ships and run a soap factory along with an oil mill, but his grain trade was the largest business Mecklenburg has ever seen.*

*My expectations were not fulfilled. At first, I felt out of place, and I missed Schmidt's minute order. The accounting was 2½ years in arrears, because the son-in-law Theodor Schwarz, who had been responsible for the books, had been detained as a state prisoner in Bützow for political reasons for that period of time. The task of bringing the books up to date was assigned to the apprentice Carl Trendelburg from Wismar and myself. I still believe that in secretly slipping us 20 louis d'or each on Christmas Eve, old Mr. Brockelmann wished to express his appreciation for the assiduity with which we had attended to this matter.*

*During the Crimean War, neutral ships were permitted to operate in Russian ports. The enterprising Ernst Brockelmann made use of this circumstance: Our treasurer Gustav Kindler and Brockelmann's son Carl were sent to Galatz to purchase various shiploads of wheat and maize from Galatz and Braila. These were sold from Rostock, mostly to England. At first, the economy favoured these undertakings. The price for a small bushel of wheat, which was 2 Thaler 28 Shillings when Gustav Kindler left, rose to 4 Thaler during the following months.*

*The never resting Ernst Brockelmann became insatiable. His appetite had become too big. The transactions in the Russian ports had not even been completed, when, by the end of 1855, large quantities of rye were purchased in America. The ships for the transport of the huge amounts of rye to Europe were chartered at expensive freight prices.*

*The enterprise failed. The rye prices went down, and the ships chartered at great expense were offered for other purposes and loaded with cotton or other commodities. However, the difference in the freight prices cost us a fortune.*

*Unfortunately, Ernst Brockelmann, who was personally very frugal, became involved in a doubtful business in Güstrow.*

*In his eyes, his son-in-law Schwarz, who was still in custody at Bützow, had incriminated his co-defendants, the Wiggers brothers, by his confessions. This supposed offence, Brockelmann could not forgive, and he therefore did not want to see Theodor Schwarz back in Rostock.*

*Brockelmann persuaded himself that he had to set up a business for Schwarz in Güstrow.*

*In my opinion, however, this was not prompted by the wish to secure Schwarz a living; rather, old Mr. Brockelmann wanted to make money by setting up a large machine factory and iron foundry.*

*Brockelmann, hitherto an enterprising and prominent businessman favoured by good fortune, now found his luck failing. The American business had already cost a lot of money, and the large-scale factory in Güstrow was devouring considerable funds. When finally the money crisis broke out in Hamburg in the last months of 1857, we, too, were confronted with scarcer funds and an increasing reserve of wealthy patrons and friends. When the largest companies in Hamburg were said to be in distress, some even facing ruin, our credit was likewise shaken. The reverberations of this shock continued until the company slowly perished.*

*These experiences and circumstances had made me very cautious, almost anxious. However, when the annual income from my salary and my side businesses amounted to some 1000 Thaler, I did find the courage to set up my own household: I became engaged to the 24-year-old Wilhelmine Baeder, eldest daughter of the lawyer C.F. Baeder of Rostock.*

*My admission as citizen and merchant in Rostock dates from 14 September 1857 and at that time cost several hundred Thaler.*

*My father-in-law, who had acquired quite an ample fortune as an ordinary lawyer, had reduced his cases to a minimum. Together with auction secretary Schwahn, based at Burgwall 1, he tried his hand at money transactions. He eventually gave up his practice altogether, in order to devote his time to buying and selling such bank shares at the Berlin stock exchange as were discussed in the financial newspapers, namely Dessauer, Geneva, Thuringia, Bremer and others. The old gentleman was very pleased with my joining the family; he even overestimated my abilities. However, he frequently attempted to impress on me that the articles which I traded required the payment of wages, while his shares, securities etc. did not. It would be too much to say that he induced me to speculate on the stock market, but this was not due to any lack of encouragement. The old gentleman's learning and knowledge impressed me.*

*In early 1858 I began to acquire bank shares in Berlin through the global company Breest & Gelpcke, making some 1000 Thaler in the first months of 1858. On August 13, 1858, the happy lawyer Baeder had an opulent wedding organised for his daughter Wilhelmine. As newly-weds we moved into a modest home in Grubenstraße corner Hartenstraße, where we stayed for 7 years with the baker Hermann Methling.*

*My wife had two sisters:*

- 1. Marie, who married Dr. Eduard Mahn of Ribnitz, now Warnemünde;*
- 2. Elise, who married the merchant Naeser of Dippoldiswalde in Saxony.*

*The only brother, Fritz Baeder, was not favoured with much talent and had moreover been neglected by his father (in spite of all the pleas and appeals of his mother, a sensible lady, née Detharding).*

*My frankness in showing my father-in-law the success of my business had given the old gentleman the idea of making his son a partner in my company. Thus, he would be permanently provided for. Immediately after our wedding, in late August 1858, my worthy mother-in-law and my sister-in-law Marie, then the bride of Eduard Mahn, openly communicated this paternal wish. I found the plan distasteful, and the hurry and the energy with which it was pursued aroused my resistance. It would have been folly to take in a partner. Father Baeder, who was not used to being opposed by his family, pursued his plan by urging me to accept considerable funds to expand my business. However, my decision was firmly taken. Despite my father-in-law's efforts, I did not waiver.*

*On July 29, 1861 my dear mother-in-law died in Warnemünde.*

*Quite soon afterwards, the widower had found a second wife: Wilhelmine Beutel, daughter of the late preacher Beutel of Polchow. This sensible lady made constant efforts to reconcile me with her restless husband. I had to rebuke these overtures, because my brother-in-law Fritz had made matters worse.*

*In the face of my constant negative attitude, my father-in-law, who attached great importance to his money, endeavoured to show me that he and his son Fritz were very well able to do commercial business without me. Both father and son aspired to the position of ship manager – in the eyes of the old gentleman the highest position a Rostock merchant could hold. They already possessed two small sailing vessels to start with. One of these, hitherto called "License", was renamed "Heinrich Sibrand" in honour of Baeder's famous ancestor.*

*My father-in-law's brothers, the cooper Carl Baeder and the merchant Adolph Baeder, as well as the most wise of the Rostock business men could only shake their heads, when Dr. C.F. Baeder and his son Fritz joined forces with one Paul Schneider. The most noteworthy achievement of this rather wild individual had been to sail his beautiful Rostock-made vessel into Chinese waters without success before finally losing it there. To this person, Baeder and son lent the greater part of 20.000 Thaler for the construction of a new ship, the "China". As long as Captain Paul Schneider had his new ship in the ship yard in Rostock, and the owners were willing to pay for the construction fees, everything was fine. However, when the beautiful ship left the Schnickmann bridge to ship manager Baeder's cheers, I considered Baeder's capital of 20,000 Thaler lost. My misgivings proved to be correct.*

*In early 1859, my working capital amounted to 9029 Thaler and 6 Shillings. My grocery shop was a success. The year 1858 had yielded a profit of 3898 Thaler and 7 Shillings. But even in the first days of 1859, France was buzzing with rumours of a coming war, and in April the war had fully broken out.*

*The Berlin Stock Exchange was very nervous, and the prices for bank shares, of which I and my father-in-law Baeder possessed plenty, fell daily. During the upsetting weeks and months until July, I believed myself lost and approaching bankruptcy.*

*I now regard these events as a blessing; I vowed that never again would I seek riches, but that I would renounce all speculation in shares, and be content with my nice, quiet grocer's shop. Tranquilly I set out on my business trips. On July 13, 1859 I was accordingly staying at Schönrock's Inn in Neubukow, when the post brought the despatches with the news of the peace agreement which Emperor Franz Joseph and Napoleon III. had signed in Villafranca on July 11, 1859.*

*Once in my room on the first storey, I went down on my knees and prayed more ardently than ever before, thanking God for being thus rescued from bankruptcy.*

*So as not to expose myself to any influence in Rostock regarding my decision to sell all the shares, I went to the nearest post office in Wismar and successively sent out telegraphic orders for the sale of the shares, the prices of which had, incidentally, begun to rise again. My larger package of Dessauer Kredit shares, which I had bought at an average of 45%, was sold at 22½ % by my banker Brust & Gelpcke.*

*On my arrival in Rostock, my father-in-law reproached me bitterly for these sales, of which I had made no secret. That I acted wisely in casting off the Dessauer shares at 22½%, was, however, proved many years later at Baeder's death, when his shares, which had never earned any interests, had to be sold at the rate of 2½%.*

*The decade from 1858 to 1868 marked a period of success in Mecklenburg. Business ran calmly and soundly. This changed on August 11, 1868, when Mecklenburg was obliged to join the tariff union. The ensuing decree requesting duties to be payed on all goods ex post annoyed the merchants very much. Many of them had cherished the hope that it would not come to any ex post clearance. Various large purchases of goods had been made, which now became unprofitable, or, as often as not, even ensued losses.*

*Despite all protests, the ex post clearance was carried out. This induced Witte, Josephi, Scheel, Siemerling, Pelzer and others to found the General Mecklenburg Trade Association. With strenuous efforts, this association succeeded in ensuring that His Royal Highness, the Grand Duke Friedrich Franz II of Mecklenburg, mitigated the hardships of the ex post clearance, remunerating that part of*

*the clearance that had been intended for the Mecklenburg treasury. Mecklenburg's joining the tariff union in August 1868 changed my whole business. The city merchants suffered great losses from the activities of the merchants in the country. – Some of my articles, e.g syrup, which had ensured me an annual profit of 10-12 000 Mark, could no longer be sold by city merchants.*

*I was obliged to turn my whole business upside down.*

*Cart grease, a major trade article in my portfolio, could no longer be obtained from Brussels as before. It could now be purchased at a better price and tax-free from factories in the tariff union. However, since resin, the raw material used to produce cart grease, could be imported duty-free from America, I assumed that an according factory would be profitable. In 1870, I decided to act on this assumption, and within six months, the factory had been built.*

*It was then that I discovered to my dismay that the merchants from the tariff union had supplied the whole of Mecklenburg with such large stocks of cart grease that there would be no demand for the product for years to come.*

*My only chance to hold my ground in this tough competition lay in providing the best, purest product. This I was determined to do.*

*Soon I took advantage of the fact that my competitors were only dealers and had no idea that their goods were adulterated up to 50% with gypsum.*

*With great energy I called on and informed more than 1000 consumers throughout Mecklenburg, from the largest to the smallest clients. I used my own team of horses for that purpose. Being modest in demeanour, I was, in most cases, well received, and often recommended to further customers. Until this day, the loyal clientele I thus acquired is, after more than 30 years, my pride and the firm support of my company; this is a constant source of joy to me.*

*On the Day of Repentance and Prayer, before Christmas 1870, at 6 o'clock in the evening, a fire broke out in the mixing boiler and reduced the grease shelter to cinders. The stills remained operational, and the small factory was quickly repaired; Although the factory was not insured, the damage amounted to only about 600 Thaler. Some 2 years later, another fire broke out when a small still was prematurely opened.*

*For safety's sake, distillation was taken out of the first factory building, which is now the grease shelter. Instead, the present distillery was built well away from the other parts of the factory. It was a fire-safe building planned by Fritz Saniter.*

*When Wendt & Rudeloff's grange (formerly used for the storage of bones), which was situated on the factory premises, was sold for scrap, I bought it for 150 Thaler. The construction company Blahn converted it into a flat for Geerhahn and a storage space.*

*In November 1876, once again, a fire broke out. The circumstances remain unexplained, although it was suspected to be the result of arson by one of my workers. The building being insured, the damage was only slight, but a better house was built for Geerhahn, the one he still occupies.*

*Two more factory fires had left no significant damages. Currently, only the supplies in the first court are insured against fire. The distillation is to continue to work uninsured.*

*In order to be near my factory and my workers, I built a small house in 1876/77. I am happy with that decision, because the factory fires have become less frequent.*



*As early as 1874, I pursued the plan to downsize my business, and to drop such articles as caused large amounts of receivables, for instance petroleum. To be sure, this meant that I did not profit by the big petroleum boom which occurred the same year and made others rich. However, the money previously locked in the articles I sold off was put to a sound and worthwhile use in the form of mortgages, which I bought via a Rostock mortgage bank. These mortgages yielded an interest rate of 4 percent. Hitherto, I had paid interest; in 1899, I was already receiving a considerable amount of interest, without having to pay any.*

*The receivables and the according losses had decreased, without any significant drop in my annual earnings, i.e. my profit. The business is now ready to be taken over by my eldest son and partner, Wilhelm Sibrand.*

*Setbacks I have had quite a few in my time. But they always served me as a warning to be careful and made me continue with even more vigour.*

*From September 13, 1855 on, I undertook all business trips myself, until, in 1885, I transferred this task to my good son Wilhelm Sibrand Scheel. During the first years, I travelled from town to town by stagecoaches and trains, by day and by night; after 20 years, however, I finally started to travel more comfortably in a fine coach of my own.*

*The hardships did not harm my health. During the 30 years of onerous travels I have not been seriously ill. I cannot thank God sufficiently for this blessing. Despite all the irregularities, I have tried to be as moderate as possible in the enjoyment of food and drink: however, I did have to change my lodgings almost every night.*

*For nearly fifty years, I have been able to do my business in good health. However, the most important factor for my success was the minute accounting and control of my revenues and expenses. If my beloved children, descendants, and other business men understand and imbibe this principle from my notes, my last wish shall be fulfilled*

*I have always loved my business above all other things. It is, in a way, the bride of my old age. It would be a great joy for me to live to see my dear grandson Werner Scheel as a conscientious and grateful member of the company staff; I am happy to say that his dear parents have taught their able son the prerequisites a good merchant requires.*

*I have just had the joy to see him graduate from grammar school, and since he is about to begin his apprenticeship, I would like to give him a bit advice that I have found very helpful in my career:*

**1. My motto:**

*"It is a man's will that makes him great or insignificant".*

**2. My principle is to postpone nothing:**

*"Whatever you wish to do, do it right away. Thus, you will always have time and will not belong to those people who never have time, but get very little done!"*

Rostock, March 5, 1905

Wilhelm Scheel

Privy Councillor of Commerce and Royal Danish consul

(This german/englisch translation by Mrs. Henrike Wöhler on request of the abovementioned relative Werner Moennich)