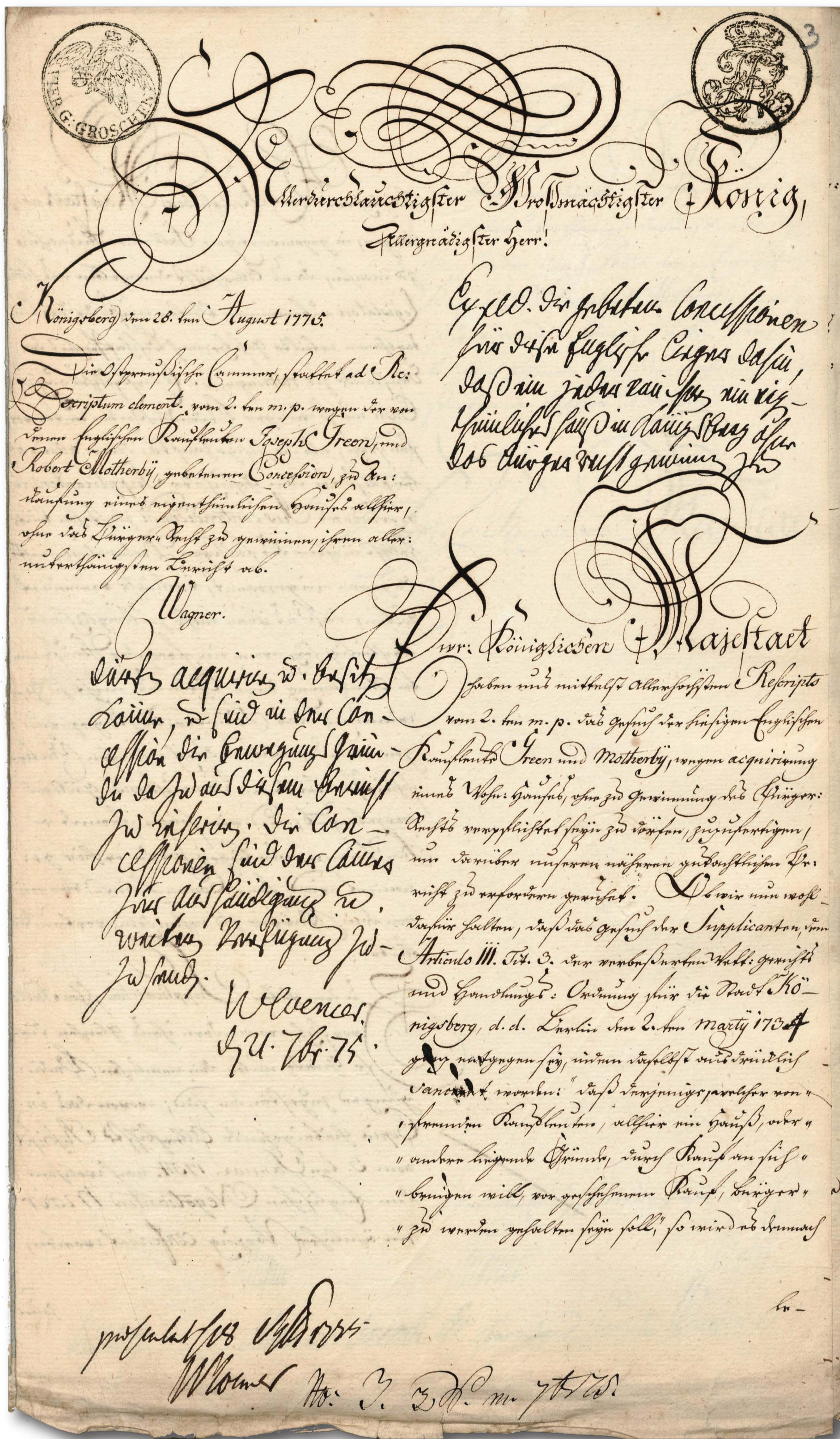


# KANT'S FRIENDS FROM HULL - 1

**Joseph Green**, considered by contemporaries as Kant's closest friend, was born in Hull in 1727. His father, also Joseph, was then captaining a ship regularly visiting Baltic ports, but soon after set up as a merchant at Hull. Around 1750 Joseph Green, junior, settled at Königsberg, as agent for his father and others. He remained there until his death in 1786, becoming the most highly esteemed amongst the merchants in the English colony at Königsberg.



Document granting permission to the English merchants Joseph Green and Robert Motherby to buy a house in Königsberg without obtaining citizenship, 1775. (Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz [Prussian Secret State Archives], Berlin)

Kant is said to have gone to Green's house every afternoon, staying until 7 pm. Kant's view of maxims, as necessary for building character, was, at least in part, indebted to Green's way of life. Green was also a bachelor, but he lived a different life from the one Kant had lived before they became friends. The Hull merchant had a strict regime following the clock and calendar pedantically and he had a major influence on Kant's way of thinking.

Kant told his biographer that he had not written down a single sentence in the *Critique of Pure Reason* unless he had presented it to Green and had his unprejudiced opinion. Green's death in 1786 is said to have distressed Kant so much that he stopped attending social events and gave up evening meals.

Green, 'more a scholar than a merchant' was less interested in pursuing his business than in reading books about new inventions and travels of discovery. He needed an assistant, and one was found amongst his family circle at Hull, the young **Robert Motherby**.

Motherby, who arrived at Königsberg around 1755, quickly learnt German and through his industry and prudence, as well as his decisive way of thinking, brought Green's business into a greater prosperity than it had hitherto been. He soon became his master's friend and a partner in the merchant house, and eventual heir. Kant regularly invested small sums with Green & Motherby and they managed his assets so well that he became quite wealthy.



Robert Motherby 1736-1801 (Karin Hahn)

The harbour at Königsberg. Green and Motherby would have had their counting house nearby. (East Prussian State Museum, Lüneburg)

