



## **Wenstrup Family History 400 AD – German Emigration**

## Wenstrup – Wisendorphe 'Settlement of the Wenstrup Farm' 300 – 400 AD

The earliest recorded mentioning of the name Wenstrup that has yet been found was in the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century at the Cloister Corvey just south of Hannover Germany. Only recently was this discovered, as prior to this an entry in a mercantile store in the city of Osnabruck dating to the year 1240 was assumed to be the earliest record. At the Cloister Corvey at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century was recorded the taxation of a farm at the present location of the Wenstrup farm near Neuenkirchen-Vorden to a family name Wisendorphe, which is the original Latin for Wenstrup.

This does not mean that the Wenstrup name began at that time, but only that this is the first authentic documented record of entry. In fact it is likely that by that time the Wenstrup name had already existed for many hundreds of years, probably dating back to the time of the Saxons in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.



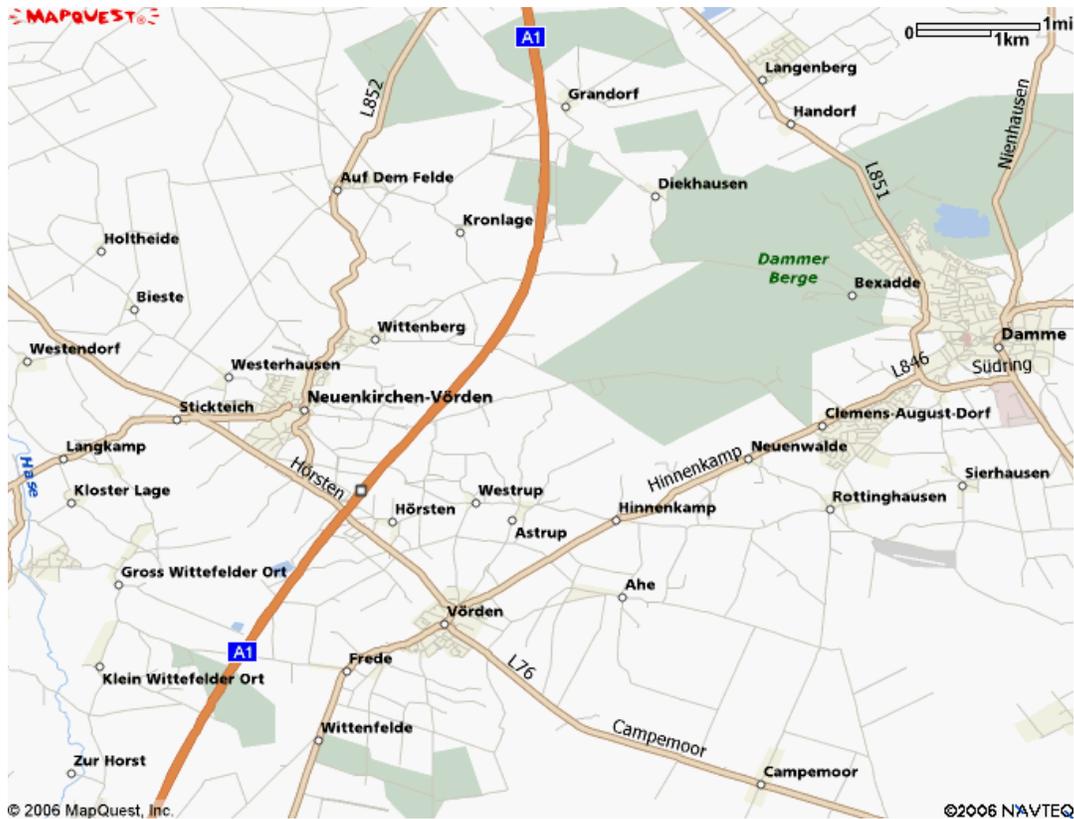
1. Large scale map showing Neuenkirchen-Vorden and the site of the Wenstrup farms north of Osnabruck and southwest of Hamburg. Also shows geographical proximity to the North Sea which led to the very harsh cold wet winters.

The following analysis is based on a treatise by W. Foerste examining the types of farms such as the Wenstrup farms during these times and focusing specifically on advance settlement farms known as “thorps”. About the time of the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Germanic tribe known as the Saxons undertook an eastward expansion from the Elbe and Weser river valleys toward the Rhein river valley. This path of expansion would have brought them to the area north of Osnabruck where the Wenstrup farms are located.



2. Map showing the rivers of Germany and the area of northern Germany over which the Saxon tribe moved from the Weser river valley to the Rhein river valley.

In this time of the 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> century the Saxons formed a ring of these advance farms around the Damme Berg (mountain). To the north of the mountain were the farms of Grandorf, Holdorf, and Harpendorf. To the east near the Dummer See (lake) were the farms of Ihlendorf and Oldorf. To the south were the farms of Astrup, Westrup, and Biester; and to the west was the farm of Wenstrup. All of these perimeter farms were placed at traffic routes so that they could observe and control a larger area of influence.



3. Map showing the modern day towns many named for these original farms in the land around the Wenstrup farms between Neuenkirchen-Vorden and Damme.

These perimeter farms were established to serve several functions for the settling Saxons:

1. The farms delineated the territory against stranger possessions.
2. The farms offered protection from surprise attacks.
3. The surrounding lands were used for their agricultural benefit and part of the realized yield shared with the Saxon hierarchy.

Much of the knowledge of the function and form of these perimeter farms the Saxons built, comes from a similar system they employed in Britain a couple of hundred years later.

The configuration of these farms in almost all cases were rounded in an oval shape. The farm Jans-Wenstrup for example consists of an oval 400m by 600m. Additionally it is known from history that these Saxon farms almost always existed in groupings of three. Each farm essentially being laid within shouting or other sound communication range of the next. In the case of the Wenstrup farms this triumvirate consisted of the Gers-Wenstrup farm, the Jans-Wenstrup farm, and a third farm that in the more modern day was known as the Grunding and Steinkamp farms. The Grunding and Steinkamp farms consisting of ½ the land of the Gers-Wenstrup and Jans-Wenstrup farms and hence probably was divided into two smaller farms from an original Wenstrup farm.

It can thus be summarized that most likely the Wenstrup farms came into being in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century as a result of Saxon colonization. This is indicated by the following:

1. The Wenstrup farms were developed in a triumvirate around an Allmende (a Germanic term for common ground) in an area of likely Saxon settlement during the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.
2. The Wenstrup farms exist in the area of a known trade route of this time.
3. They lie at the location of a water source out of the mountains.
4. They exist in a threefold group, consistent with Saxon settlements of the time.
5. They show an oval or oblong layout.

Thus it can comprehensively be said that the settlement of the “thorp” Wenstrup was not the work of a single settler in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century, but rather the framework of three Saxon families settling in the region of the Damme mountain and given the Land name Wenstrup. Thus we as the gentleman farmers before are the descendents of these Saxon settlers.