

The Wenstrup Family 17th Century (1600's)

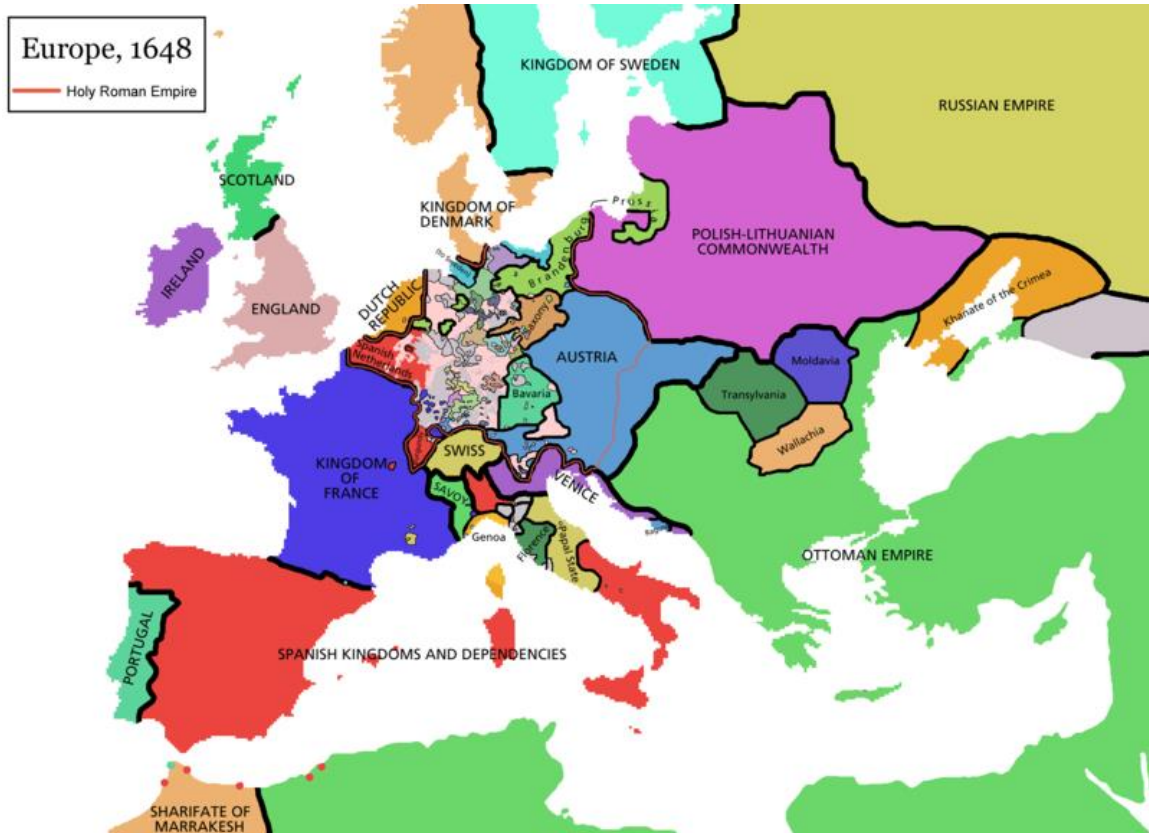
The worst epoch in the story of the Wenstrup farm occurred at the beginning of the 1600's and is the time during the 30 years war. Historically waged from 1618 to 1648, the war primarily took place within Germany and especially in northern Germany near the Wenstrup farms. There are not many records of the farm during these bitter years, but the Wenstrup farm would have seen few more sorrowful times and few times of greater need for the inhabitants around Neuenkirchen. In the year 1954 there is written in the town of Vechta, a commemorative volume about a deceased teacher from the Wenstrup farm, a Ms. A Tepe.

The Thirty Years' War began as a civil war and was fought mostly on German soil including a large amount of the war taking place in the area of the Wenstrup farm. It would during its course eventually involve most of the powers of Continental Europe. Although it was from the outset a religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics, the rivalry between the Habsburg dynasty and other powers was also a central motive, as shown by the fact that Catholic France under the *de facto* rule of Cardinal Richelieu supported the Protestant side in order to weaken the Habsburgs, thereby furthering France's position as the pre-eminent continental power. This increased the France-Habsburg rivalry which led later to direct war between France and Spain.

Disadvantageous for the Wenstrup farm inhabitants was that the army and the war was very near during this time, that as in the peaceful years before, the development of the small farms with living quarters and ample food supply was of great utility for the armies. Again and again the inhabitants of these areas were subjected to the lootings and requirements of the warring parties and roaming mercenaries. Soon after the start of the 30 Years' war, the troops of the count of Mansfeld and the "crazy" duke Christian of Braunschweig led a campaign through the Damme Berg region and related the pillage done for many days to the farms lying in their vicinity. The farm of Wenstrup would have been no exception, and the armies would have been quartered in their buildings. Enemy and friendly armies behaved both the same, ruthlessly.

Again and again the farmers had to give the army horses that they would never receive back again. Also meat stock and grain were required as daily deliveries to the armies. If one did not give the demanded voluntarily, it was stolen with force. The fear of the mercenaries was present day and night. Also, it was no longer for the women and children of the farms to wander away from the home and harvest field fruits and berries.

One can easily see by looking at a map of Europe after the 30 Years' war that indeed Germany was nothing more than a battlefield where the other Continental powers of Europe waged war and struggled to gain power and land. Germany lay devastated in 1648 and in many ways a wasteland stripped of resources.



14. Map showing the kingdoms of Europe at the end of the 30 Years' War, 1648.

As it was in the German homeland at the end of the 30 Years' war, so it was in the Wenstrup homeland. At the end of the war the Wenstrup farm must have offered a desolate picture. The fields lay broken, the cattle stables were baren, and those that had survived were weakened from hunger and drawn by illnesses.

Before the war it was seen that the region supported a very high cattle existence. Now in the farms around Nellinghof, Vörden, Neuenkirchen, and Wenstrup there were 1/8 as many animals as before the war. One had to begin literally again at zero. Moreover the farms were debt-ridden, for again and again they were requisitioned to pay taxes to fuel the armies throughout Germany. So, for example, the town Vörden for the time of September 1640 until March 1641, owed 4400 for the lodging and provisions of the Swedish troops that were stationed there. This giant sum was divided amongst the operating farms and payment was required to the office.

It would take nearly 200 years for the Wenstrup farms to recover from the affects of this terrible war.

Information about taxation ratios, and the condition of the houses as well as the population directly after the 30 year-old war shows:

Head treasury index from the year 1649:

Gers Wenstrup		2 Thaler	14 Schilling
Wife		1 Thaler	7 Schilling
1 daughter			14 Schilling
1 Servant			14 Schilling
Johan Wenstrup	(paupers)	1 Thaler	7 Schilling
1 daughter			6 Schilling
1 lame servant			0
Steinkamp		1 Thaler	7 Schilling
3 Sons			18 Schilling
1 daughter			6 Schilling
Hired servants	1 man		7 Schilling
	1 woman		4 Schilling
Hermann Grundick		1 Thaler	7 Schilling
Wife			14 Schilling
Small farmhouse	1 man		7 Schilling
	1 woman		4 Schilling
Outhouse	1 man	(paupers)	0
	1 woman		0
Small farmhouse	1 son		2 Schilling
Bultmann			7 Schilling
Wife			4 Schilling
Mussmann			7 Schilling
Wife			4 Schilling
Lass			8 Schilling
Steinkamp			7 Schilling
Wife			4 Schilling
Johan Steinkamp	No remaining home, or other possessions		

15. Treasury Index from the year 1649 showing the state of the Wenstrup farms at the end of the 30 Years' war.

Indeed As to the house of Johan Steinkamp, all that remains from the battle is stone framework, that is listed as vacated or not habitable. He and his family were likely living in one of the outbuildings of the other families of the Wenstrup area. It can be further seen from the following inventory, that not only were the number of inhabitants in the Wenstrup farm area significantly reduced, but their situation was dire from a significant drop in the number of farming livestock:

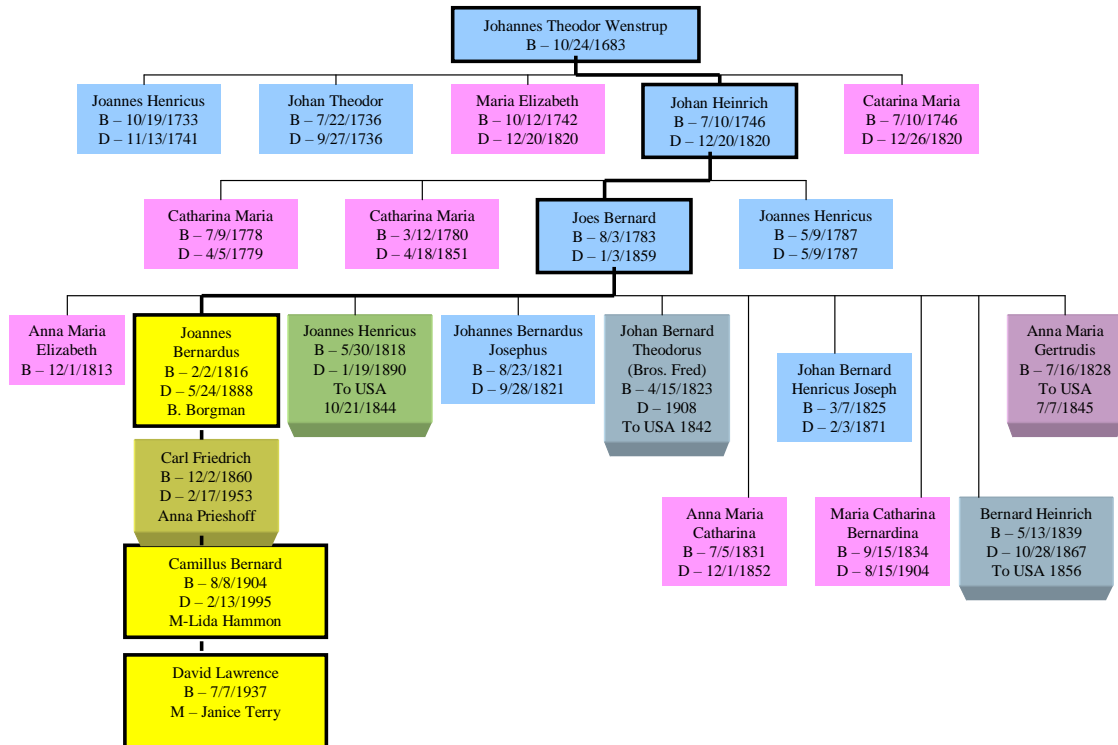
	Oxen	Cows	Sheep	Pigs	Horse	Fowl	Total
Gers Wenstrup Farm							
Arent Wenstrup (1550)	19	25	16	39	9	2	110
Gerd Wenstrup (1659)	2	0	0	1	2	2	7
Jans Wenstrup Farm							
Johann Wenstrup (1550)	8	10	20	16	6	0	60
Johann Wenstrup (1659)	2	1	0	1	2	0	6
Southern Farms and Subsequent Divisions							
Hnerk Steinkamp (1550)	14	10	10	30	7	0	0
Steinkamp (1659)	3	3	0	1	2	0	9
Johann Grundik (1550)	11	11	30	12	5	1	70
Grundick (1659)	2	2	0	1	2	0	7
Johann Steinkamp (1550)	5	4	0	5	4	0	18
Johann Steinkamp (1659)	1	1	0	0	1	1	4

16. Table showing the significant drop in the number of livestock possessed by the Wenstrup inhabitants from 1550 to 1659.

In the above table Gerd Wenstrup is shown as being associated with the Gers-Wenstrup farm and Johan-Wenstrup is shown as being associated with the Jans Wenstrup farm. In fact it is this time immediately following the 30 Years' war that it is believed that these designations were given for the first time. Prior to this time both farms would have maintained the Wenstrup name from the original Saxon settlement. The third southernmost farm had prior to this time come under the name of another family either by marriage, sale or other recourse. Additional farms had also been subdivided from this southern farm as well as carved out of the common areas of the total Wenstrup land. The designation of Gers-Wenstrup and Jans-Wenstrup were given to make it easier for the governing bodies to keep the farms and their taxation payments separate and less confusing. Gerd Wenstrup and the Wenstrup family of the northern most farm took the name Gers-Wenstrup because Gerd and so many of his family had the given name Gerhardt and its other forms. Johann Wenstrup and the Wenstrup family of the middle farm took the name of Jans-Wenstrup because Johann and so many of his family had the given name of Jans and its other forms.

It is also at this time in the year 1651 that the oldest records which can detail the direct lineage of the United States Wenstrup line was begun to be archived in the Catholic parish church of St. Bonifacius in Neuenkirchen. It is seen from the birth records of the St. Bonifacius church register, that Johannes Theodor Wenstrup was born on October 24 of 1683. It is unclear however, whether his father was the same Johann Wenstrup mentioned in the 1659 livestock inventory list, or the son of another Wenstrup family living in the Neuenkirchen area, possibly in one of the small subsistence farms carved out of the southern farm and common lands.

US Line Wenstrups



17. Diagram showing the United States Wenstrup lineage back to the patriarch Johannes Theodor Wenstrup born in October of 1683.

The churchregisters of the Roman Catholic St. Bonifacius church in Neuenkirchen started in 1651. The church books consist of birth, marriage, and death books. Typed out copies of these books are available in four volumes. Baptise register Neuenkirchen (1787-1830) Death register Neuenkirchen (1651-1830) Death register Neuenkirchen 1830 - Marriage register R.C.Church Neuenkirchen (1651-1791). They can be reviewed at the Diözesan Archiv, Köpingstrasse 14 Vechta Germany. Many of the records of the family Wenstrup are found from these church records.