

Approach and Methods for the Wiederhold Genealogy

Gio Wiederhold 8 May 2021

The general motivation for having a Genealogy is the common to all such work: finding out where one's direct ancestors came from. For many Americans the puzzle is especially interesting since so many came from other parts of the world.

Alfred Wiederhold had a broader ambition, namely to have a comprehensive genealogy for all the Wiederholds in the world. I (Gio Wiederhold) have the same objective. This ambition seemed feasible, since the name Wiederhold is quite unique. The concept that all Wiederholds are related seems indeed validated, since in the Warburger Stammtafeln an official named Volland named one of his three sons Wedderhold (abt.1210-1259), and that name was then used by an ever-increasing number of descendants. No earlier Wiederholds have been found, although there some earlier similar place names. Volland and his descendants lived at the border of Westfalen and Hessen, defined there by the small river Diemel, which flows into the Weser 32 km north west (taking a much longer path). The Weser enters the North-sea at Bremen, about 200 km north.

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My (Gio) prime objective is to complete a the comprehensive Wiederhold genealogy that Alfred started. To achieve that I have gathered many additional sources, listed in the [prior, introductory section](#). Access to the Internet, not available to Alfred has helped greatly. To help in cross referencing the individual entries include a field, labelled "Alfred W.", which indicates briefly the source entry, and complements the more general entry of Sources found in all genealogies. When I determine that published genealogy data are likely wrong, I enter longish notes, and mark them with the label (error). Notes can also provide assumptions made about entered data. Being comprehensive, a can afford to enter some likely matches among distinct sources. Locality is important. Since many Wiederholds worked for local rulers historical data about their movements helps as well, and the Wiederhold tree includes many such entries. Specifically, I always include a likely date-of-birth (DoB), information essential for cross-matching. If not directly given in a source, I will estimate a DoB (see section below). I also follow matrilineal ancestors. Those data are sparse in many genealogies but greatly help in selecting alternative matches and in narrowing down estimates of dates.

Scope

First of all I do want to enter all known persons with the name 'Wiederhold' or one of its common misspellings into the Wiederhold genealogy.

To come to breakpoint in terms of being comprehensive, I set in 2018 a limit of the year 1800 for the Wiederholds to be entered. However, I will often enter all Wiederholds that appear on a specific document. I also try to follow Wiederholds that emigrated as far to the current families as I have data. Publishing recent information is limited by European privacy laws. They mandate that that names of living persons cannot be placed on the Internet. If no death date is known, the software I use assumes that people born more than 120 years ago can safely be shown. This rule does not restrict use of documents that a scan from published sources, as Alfred Wiederhold's volumes.

I include the husbands of married daughters, and their children, at least to the first generation. For early Wiederhold I track the husbands' ancestors as well. In the small communities ancestors often match, showing that marriages were among cousins of various degrees of consanguinity.

Gaps

Most of the Wiederholds shown in the genealogy are reliably connected to this ancestry. There are some gaps that I am still trying to fill in. Many gaps exist during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), when the protestant movement, largely initiated by [Martin Luther](#) (1483–1546) caused conflicts throughout Europe, with some of the most violent ones in the areas around Hessen. Combatants involved parties as far north as Sweden, under king [Gustavus Adolphus](#) (1594-1632), and south, as Spain, ruled by the broadly-based Habsburg family, as [Charles V.](#) (1500-1558), at that time also ruler of the Netherlands, archduke of Austria, and crowned by the pope as Holy Roman Emperor in 1530.

The thirty-years-war is estimated to have caused about 8 million casualties, massive dislocations, and destruction of religious property, including church records. About half-a-million soldiers died, most of them mercenaries. Most Wiederholds at the time would have been affected. Becoming a mercenary was often the only option for sons when all property was lost. The genealogy includes many rulers at the time, since those records help in constructing the fates of Wiederholds and also elucidate some remote familial relationships, as documented in the [Ancestor Stories](#) on these pages.

Estimating Birthdates

Dates of birth are not always available. For all entries I enter either the documented date of birth or a likely "About" year of birth (DoB). If only a baptismal date is given, I use that as the date of birth and note that in the comment line. When I have to estimate the year of birth I enter the rule I used, as 'equal to partner's birth year', '25 year prior to marriage', or '25 years between generations', 'near a sibling (2 years)', or 'interpolated between parent and child dates'. Many more estimation rules occur less frequently. Often I depend on estimates made by others; then there won't be a further note. When there is no death or burial date, I will enter a date of confirmation if known, to show that that they were not short-lived, a frequent occurrence in past centuries. For children that died early I enter 'short-lived' in the notes for their death, so I won't try to match them to descendants.

I try to enter all ancestors, as far back as I can find them, and also their spouse's ancestors. I enter all spouses and children of Wiederhold daughters, although they would not have the name Wiederhold, but cannot enter all their descendants. Where known, I may enter say '2 sons and 3 daughters' with their marriage data and a source reference for others to follow up. I do enter multiple spouses, to avoid creating later linkage errors. I also enter known unmarried partners if they had children. Extramarital children of Wiederhold daughters typically continue the name Wiederhold.

Spelling variations

Differences in spellings of names in records from various sources are common. In some church books spellings even changed when a new priest took over. Wiederhold, not a familiar name, is often spelled differently, but most alternative spellings remain recognizable. I enter all alternatives within a branch as Wiederhold to simplify search and show other spellings in the Also-Known-As (AKA) field. I made exceptions for the earliest entries (1250-1450), where the documents consistently used the name 'Wedderold' and some major and consistent later lines of 'Wiederholt' and 'Hedrich von Wiederhold',

often when families had moved to other counties. Some name changes may have been so drastic that a branch of descendants cannot be found.

The common given name [Johannes](#) may be abbreviated in sources Jo`es, Joannes, Hans, Hänsel, Hannes, or even omitted if there is also a less common middle name. Emigration often led to changes in spellings, as to John, Jean, or Juan.

Places

In early days people moved around little. Landowners stayed put, and partners were found within a few hours walking distance. For those ancestors place names provide much evidence for matching. Major movements occurred during major pestilences, as in 1495 and during the religious strife of the 30-years war (1618-1648), during the 7 Napoleonic wars in Europe (1792-1815), after the failure of the attempted democratization of Germany (~ 1848), and subsequent to the two world wars, 1918 and 1945.

By that time transport was available to most people, many had employment other than farming, and place names play less of a role.

Making Assumptions

The comprehensive coverage of the genealogy allows making linkages even if they are not explicitly documented. For instance, when a person has only a birth record in the church book of one community, and there is a person with a similar name who has a marriage and death record in a nearby community, and there are no alternatives, I will link them, and enter a note documenting the decision.

Early documents often omit the maiden names of wives and give only their married names. Rather than using their married names I use `n' to indicate unknown family names. If I then find records of a family that shows husbands – more likely to be shown – and there is a match, I can fill in the name.

Where church officials checked possible consanguinity prior to marriage, very useful records were created. That will identify marriages among cousins, which were relatively frequent in small communities, allowing land ownership was to be preserved. When no such check is shown, it is a hint that one of the couple came from another place. For instance, I use that to make a link for Heinrich Wiederhold, born 1694, local in Kefferhausen, and Anna Katherina Wiederhold, born there in 1696, but likely a daughter of refugees from Hannoversch Münden, Niedersachsen, where her ancestor would be the [preacher, Johannes Wiederhold, born about 1578](#), who was drowned in the 30-years war.

Without explicit parental records in some location similarities of name and lead to linkage problems that are hard to resolve. For instance, children of brothers may be assigned to the wrong sibling. But then the relationship to a grandparent may still be correct. As I find more cross-references I will correct and matching errors and [gaps](#)  [that](#) I find.

For my mother's family, Tuybens, I got a good start by merging the data from a cousin, Loes, who had become a Mormon, and collected data for their records. Later, on two vacations we spent several days at the Royal Dutch Archives (CBG) in The Hague. The records of the Dutch East Indies Company are detailed and well preserved, but also very difficult to read and search.

Gio Wiederhold, February 2019



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