

## Discovering The German Home Town of Some Early Immigrants to Lycoming County

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Identifying my Reicherdt immigrant ancestors was quick and easy. Finding their home town in Germany took almost half a century.

One of my Grandmother's prized possessions was her father's christening certificate, which was created in Lycoming County in 1864. That document says John Adam was the son of Cristian Steiber and his wife Angeline, who was a daughter of John Reichert.

Cristian was unmarried in Lycoming County's 1860 census, so I hunted for all Angelines or similar first names. There was only one Angeline with a last name anything like Reichert. She lived in the household of John Reighard, who may be presumed to be her father and who was born in Wertemberg. There's my immigrant ancestor!

224	2334	John Reighard	16	M		Farmer	1	3000	500	Wertemberg
		Susanna	28	F						Pa.
		John Reighard	25	M		Farm Laborer				"
		Mary	21	M		"				"
		George	18	M		"				"
		Angeline	16	F		"				"
		Charles	3	M						"
		Peter	12	M						"
		Jacob	71	M						Wertemberg
		Sarah Manewalt	54	F						Pa.

Figure 1: The John Reighard household in the 1860 census of Lycoming Township, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. Susanna was not Angeline's mother. Family tradition (related to this author in 1972 by several of our oldest relatives) and the 1850 census of the same township indicate that Angeline's mother died, then John married their housekeeper, Susan Maneval (per family) or Susanna Manewalt (per censuses).

### The Immigrant's Father's Family

In that same household is Jacob Reighard, thirty-one years older than John and born in Wertemberg. Presuming that he is John's father is just as reasonable as presuming that John is Angeline's father.

That census gives Jacob Reichard a computed birth date of 1783. The 1860 and 1850 censuses of the county show no other person with a similar name and born within eighteen years of 1783.

The 1850 census shows his wife was Dorathy (*sic*), born in Germany and 70 years old. That gives her a computed birth date of 1780.

Lycoming County's 1840 census shows only one family that was headed by anybody with a name similar to "Jacob Reichard", containing a male born about 1783, and containing a female born about 1780. There are no other people in that household.

The county's 1830 and 1820 censuses show this couple with children who have genders and ages that match information gained from later extensive research about this household.

The 1810 and 1800 censuses show no families with a reasonable name for the head of household, a male of the correct age, and a female of the correct age. In 1790 Jacob Reichard was seven years old, so there is no way to identify him in the census if he is there.

Combining information from those censuses provides the following description of our ancestral household. The name is spelled Reighard in 1860; Richard in 1850, 1840, and 1830; and Reichart in 1820. Members of the household with computed birth years are:

father	Jacob	born 1782 - 1783	in Wertemberg
mother	Dorathy	born 1780	in Germany
son	John	born 1814	in Wertemberg
son		born 1815 - 1820	
daughter		born 1810	
daughter		born 1815 - 1820	
another woman		born 1775 - 1790	

The usual caveat applies; those relationships are assumed, but are the most likely to be correct.

Extensive research during the decades following the above discoveries allowed us to describe that household as follows:

father	Jacob	born 1782 - 1783	in Wertemberg
mother	Dorathy	born 1780	in Germany
son	John	born 28 January 1814	in Wertemberg
son	Jacob	born 1816	in Wertemberg
daughter	Mary	born 1810	in Wertemberg
daughter		born 1819 - 1820	in Pennsylvania
another woman		born 1775 - 1790	

#### A Naturalization Document

Lycoming County's records include *Jacob Reighart's Declaration to become Citizen U. States* (*sic*), dated 2 September 1828. In that document, Jacob says he was born in 1783 in the Kingdom of Stutgard (*sic*), whence he emigrated in 1819. That explains why he appears in the 1820 and later censuses, but not in the 1810 and earlier censuses.



Figure 2: Jacob's signature, written with the old Germanic alphabet, transliterates as Jacob Reicherdt.

That was all we knew about Jacob Reicherdt in the early 1970s. After that, we made no progress on his origins or ancestry for forty-five years. Then I got lucky.

### German Family Registers

Genealogists know that new discoveries are made continually, thus creating more resources for researching other matters. Therefore, we know that abandoned projects should be revisited from time to time in hope of finding something that will answer questions and solve puzzles. Thinking of new ways to investigate Jacob Reicherdt's origins, and hunting for new materials that might be helpful, were fruitless until quite recently.

Exploiting the German records and comparing them to American records requires an understanding of German naming customs. For centuries, and still today, it was normal - but not universal - for a German couple to give all their sons the same first name, unique middle names, and the father's surname. They did the same thing for their daughters. These were called the *vorname*, *nachname* or *kallname*, and *familienname*. The first name was often used for important matters but the middle name was used for casual matters and friends and family. Some Germans used only their first names when they came to America, while others used only their middle names as though they were first names. Some continued the tradition of using the first name for formal matters and the middle name for casual matters. Therefore, when hunting in Germany a name that was used in America, we must search for both first and middle names and might expect to find the correct person using either name or both names in either order.

I searched Ancestry.com's card catalog for Wurttemberg and found *Württemberg, Germany, Family Tables, 1550-1985 (in German)*. My search request for Jacob (exact and sounds-like and similar), Reicherdt (exact and sounds-like and similar), born 1783 (exact) produced eight hits. Only one of them showed a name similar to Dorothy in the "Relatives" column. That record image includes the source title *Verfilmungsstelle: Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart - Landeskirchliches Archiv Stuttgart - Kirchenbücher des Kirchenbezirks Herrenberg - Herrenberg*. Ancestry's label at the top of the screen is *Württemberg, Germany, Family Tables, 1550-1985 for Jacob Friedrich Reichert - Haslach, Herrenberg u. Oa - Familienregister u. Index 1808-1896*.

2.

19.

Geburts-Tag, Monat und Jahr.	Hausvater.	Copulations-Tag, Monat und Jahr.	Hausmutter.	Geburts-Tag, Monat und Jahr.	
14. Jun. 1783.	Jacob Friedr. Reichard, Wagner. Nr.	31. Jul. 1808.	Catharina Dorothea	19. Sept. 1780.	
Die ganze Familie ist i. S. 1810 nach Nordamerika ausgewandert					
Wahr.	id. fol. C. 18. 1810. Jacob Reichard	id. fol. C. 189. 1810.	Wahr.		
Mutter.	- Catharina geb. Wagner.	Catharina geb. Wagner.	Mutter.		
Zahl der Kinder.	Namen.	Geburt.	Confirmation oder Erste Communion.	Verheirathung.	Tod.
1.	Christina Magdalena	14. Febr. 1810.			
2.	Jacob Friedr. I.	7. Sept. 1811.			17. Jan. 1816.
3.	Johann	30. Jan. 1814.			
4.	Jacob Friedr. II.	d. 23. Maj. 1816.			

Figure 3: The page, enlarged in the following figures.

Reading the page proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is the ancestral family we sought for nearly half a century:

2.

19.

Geburts-Tag, Monat und Jahr.	Hausvater.	Copulations-Tag, Monat und Jahr.	Hausmutter.	Geburts-Tag, Monat und Jahr.
14. Jun. 1783.	Jacob Friedr. Reichard, Wagner. Nr.	31. Jul. 1808.	Catharina Dorothea	19. Sept. 1780.

Figure 4: Heads of household. The husband was Jacob Friederich Reichard born 14 June 1783. The couple married 31 July 1808. The wife was Catharina Dorothea born 19 September 1780.

Zahl der Kinder.	Namen.	Geburt.	Confirmation oder Erste Communion.	Verheirathung.	Tod.
1.	Christina Magdalena	14. Febr. 1810.			
2.	Jacob Friedr. I.	7. Sept. 1811.			17. Jan. 1816.
3.	Johann	30. Jan. 1814.			
4.	Jacob Friedr. II.	d. 23. Maj. 1816.			

Figure 5: Children. Christina Magdalena born 14 February 1810, Jacob Friderich born 7 September 1811 died 17 January 1816, Johann born 30 January 1814, and Jacob Friederich born 23 May 1816.

Figure 6: Message.  
Die ganze Familie ist i. j. 1819 nach Nordamerika ausgewandert  
The entire family did in year 1819 to North America emigrate

### Conclusions

The names of the parents and their birth dates match. The list of children is the same, and their names and birth dates match. The date of emigration matches. The document was created within the kingdom of Stuttgart. Everything in Germany agrees with the American information, and nothing disagrees. The German information includes a child we didn't know about because he died in Germany. And last of all, the German information does not include the child we believed was born in America. This is the ancestral family we hoped to find.

Ancestry's label identifies their location as Haslach (in the Herrenberg district). It is in the middle of Baden-Württemberg and about twenty miles from the city of Stuttgart. Haslach is about half a mile wide in any direction, with a current population of about 31,000.

### But Wait ... There's More !

The family page also shows the husband's parents and the wife's parents. That leads to another story, which will be explained in the sequel to this article.

Vater.	<i>vid. fol. C. 18. Joh. Jacob Reichert Hauptmann im Regiment.</i>	<i>vid. fol. C. 259. Zeeb.</i>	Vater.
Mutter.	<i>- Christoph geb. Noppalin.</i>	<i>Johanes Zeeb Ehefr. - Anna Maria geb. Steyer.</i>	Mutter.

Figure 7: Husband's and wife's parents.  
Johann Jacob Reichert, Christina Noppalin, Johannes Zeeb, and Anna Maria Steher.