

USING YOUR ANCESTORS' MARKERS

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Previously, we discussed collecting an ancestor's markers ("Collecting Your Ancestors' Markers"). Now we'll use some of those markers.

One use, which we won't discuss in detail, is in writing a family narrative. Constructing a narrative from a list of markers helps you unhook from the document-centric text that sometimes results from writing while looking at research results.

What I'd like to focus on is using markers to analyze our research.

In the study below, I began by listing the markers in chronological order, but—as fond as I am of chronologies—we are not creating a chronology. The truth is that the easiest way for me to collect my ancestor's markers was to follow his chronology.

Henrich Weitzel left records from 1751 (his arrival in Philadelphia) through 1776 (his will in Lebanon Twp., Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania). Some of his markers include:

- ship *Patience* (arrival in Philadelphia, 1751)
- German signature Johan Henrich Weitzel on oath of allegiance (1751)
- associates [complete list of other passengers] (1751)
- Indianfield Lutheran Church, Franconia Twp., Montgomery Co. (baptisms 1752, 1756, 1759, 1763; confession 1753–1756)
- religion Lutheran (Indianfield, 1752–1763)
- associates [complete list of other communicants] (1752–1763)
- daughter Anna Margaret (1752 birth, 1753 baptism)
- wife Margaret (1752 birth, 1753 baptism)
- associate Anna Marg. Pitsch, single (sponsor, child of Henry and Margaret, 1752)
- wife Elizabeth (1753 confession, 1756, 1758, 1759, 1763 baptisms)
- son John Martin (1756 baptism)
- associates Martin Freidag and Anna Maria (sponsors, child of Henry and Elisabeth, 1756)
- associates Martin Freidag and Anna Maria (Henry and Elisabeth sponsored their child, 1758)
- son Johannes (1758 baptism)
- associates John Nonemacher and Susanna Maria (sponsors, child of Henry and Elisabeth, 1759)
- daughter Maria Magdalena (1763 baptism)
- associates Philip Wenz and Maria Magdalena (sponsors, child of Henry and Elisabeth, 1763)
- resident Lebanon Twp., Lancaster Co. (taxes, 1769)
- owned no land (taxes, 1769)
- owned 100 acres (purchase, 1770)
- owned 100 acres (mortgage, 1771)
- German signature Henrich Weitzel (facsimile in deed book, 1771)
- owned 40 "cultivade" acres and 40 uncultivated acres, 2 horses, 3 cattle, 8 sheep (taxes, 1771)
- 100 acres (mortgage, 1774)

- German signature Henrich Weitzel (typed mortgage, 1774)
- children Martin, John, Elias, Margareth the wife of Killian Kreeg, and Magdalena (will, 1776)
- German signature Henrich Weitzel (will, 1776)

A single event or document can yield numerous markers. For example, a will might contain markers related to spouse, children, occupation, residence, land ownership, and associates (the witnesses and executors). List each marker separately. In our example, we see that a single baptismal record held at least five markers:

- Indianfield Lutheran Church, Franconia Twp., Montgomery Co.
- religion Lutheran
- daughter Anna Margaret
- wife Margaret
- Anna Marg. Pitsch, single (sponsor)

Sometimes markers within a document should remain together. For example, the children named in the will comprise—as a group—the marker. Let's rearrange our markers by type and see why.

- daughter Anna Margaret (1752 birth, 1753 baptism)
- son John Martin (1756 baptism)
- son Johannes (1758 baptism)
- daughter Maria Magdalena (1763 baptism)
- children Martin, John, Elias, Margareth the wife of Killian Kreeg, and Magdalena (will, 1776)

The children named in the will are siblings, children of the testator. The same cannot be said of the baptisms. The mother of the daughter Anna Margaret was not the same as that of the other three. One man? Two men? Even having "matching" wives is not determinate. I've worked on one problem where two couples named Daniel and Magdalena were both having children baptized contemporaneously at the same church, with no indication that they were different couples (other than the problem of children being born a few months apart). Hence, we carefully list the baptisms separately.

Our markers help us see that four of the five siblings named in the will match those baptized. Trivial? Not exactly. Especially when you recall that the baptisms occurred in what is now Montgomery Co., and the will was in what is now Lebanon Co., which are not close.

Conversely, a single confession/communion list for the church provided over two dozen associates as markers, and the passenger list of the *Patience* held over a hundred names. Don't neglect such a list because the number of names is high. We omitted the names in our list above for space reasons, but we didn't omit them in the list of markers:

- associate Johann Martin Freitag (passenger, 1751)
- associates Martin Freidag and Anna Maria (sponsors, child of Henry and Elisabeth, 1756)
- associates Martin Freidag and Anna Maria (Henry and Elisabeth sponsored their child, 1758)

- associate Martin Freidag (communion, 1753, 1755)

This provides us with a powerful possibility. We always watch sponsors carefully because they may be related to one of the parents. In this case, the sponsor relationship occurs twice and the husband (and possibly the wife) traveled to America with Henrich, which may provide an important clue as we look for European origins. (Weitzel is a more common name than Freidag, and names found in pairs are less likely to be coincidental than names found alone.)

This also suggests that Martin Freidag deserves further attention in Pennsylvania. I only found one new record, but it strengthened the connection. The will of Martin Freitag of the City of Philadelphia was written and probated in 1758. He left an unnamed wife and children. The executors and guardians included *Henry Weichsel*. The other executor and witnesses will be added to my markers list.

Now let's look at another regrouping of markers:

- German signature *Johan Henrich Weitzel* on oath of allegiance (1751)
- German signature *Henrich Weitzel* (facsimile in deed book, 1771)
- German signature *Henrich Weitzel* (typed deeds, 1774)
- German signature *Henrich Weitzel* (will, 1776)

Although we would surely have guessed, clearly we have a German immigrant. Or do we have two? The name on the first document doesn't match. In the previous article I suggested that you scan and save the signatures or marks of your ancestor. Now it is time to use them. I couldn't do much with the typed signature, other than know that it was in German script and the possible spelling, but even the deed book signature was helpful. It was what I call a

“facsimile” signature, one for which the clerk tried to replicate the appearance of the signature (especially common for German signatures where they didn't know what the letters were). (See my article, “How Did Your Ancestors Sign their Names?” *Ancestry* magazine, January/February 2004, 28–33).

When you line up the signatures and compare, it is clear that the same man signed all three documents. For the formal oath, he used his full baptismal name, but twenty years later, he was comfortable with just “Henrich.”

At this point I'd like to digress from Henrich, but not too far. In Lebanon Twp., Lancaster Co., where we found Henrich's will, we also find one for Dietrich Weitzel, who died eleven years earlier. Dietrich was not on the Lancaster tax rolls in 1750 or 1751, but was there by 1756. He supposedly owned 50 acres of land (a marker), but there was no patent or deed (a document). He signed his will with a weak and wobbly German signature as Dieterich Weitzel.

As the passengers of the *Patience* stood in line to sign the oaths in 1751, the person in front of Henrich Weitzel was Johan Diterich *Weitzen*. Error? Coincidence? Are they related? As it turns out, the markers tell us that the most likely answer to the order of the surnames on the passenger list is coincidence—Johan Diterich Weitzen couldn't write and signed the oath with a rudimentary X, whereas Dieterich Weitzel signed his will.

By examining our ancestors' markers, we begin to see them as a real people and possibly gain insight into genealogical questions.