

## Ancestor Research Wilrich / Willrich

### Nicolaus Wilrich

Nicolaus Wilrich, son of Christian Wilrich (born about 1570 in Nieder Fischbach near Kirchen at the Sieq (Sieq is a small river) within the Lordship of Sayn-Sponheim), was a secretary at Lune, 1586 - with 87 students at Marburg.

Nicolaus Wilrich, born 1595 at Lutzenlinden near Giessen; died 1667 at Helmstedt in Braunschweig (county). He studied in Helmstedt 1615 and found here an enormous workload as student as well as teacher.

However, before we start with Nicolaus Wilrich, it is important to know the early history of the school system in Helmstedt, which was of great importance to him.

Duke Julius introduced the reformation to his dukeship Wolfenbuettel since the summer of 1568. An examination of the intellectual knowledge revealed a somewhat less than desired education of the clergy in the country. The now Lutheran country initiated the desire to renew and raise the level of the school system.

The Duke of Gangrene founded a "Paedaqoqium Illustre" (an educational system for show) in 1570.

In 1576, this institute was moved, together with its professors and students, to Helmstedt. The convent Marienthal made all its buildings available for the students - called the collegium. In this institute all the students who previously studied Latin, were supposed to be prepared for their studies at the university. In order to have sufficient aspirants available for academic openings in the country, the cost of the studium for these young people was mostly paid for by the government.

In 1575, the level of the Gymnasium Illustre was raised to a university, the "Akademia Julia".

In 1635, the mayor and council of the city of Helmstedt, proposed to the Consortium of the Duke at Wolfenbuettel, to hire Nicolaus Wilrich to be the rector for the Latin city school. The same year, after successful completion of the examination and probationary period, he was employed as rector. During his 33-year tenure, he was frequently praised for his meritorious services in this teaching position.

Helmstedt suffered tremendously during the war and the plague. During the worst years, 1625-1628, almost all of the professors moved to Braunschweig, only a few remained. One of the few remaining was Professor Calixt, who may be called the patron of Nicolaus during these hard times.

The "History of the School System, Especially of the Latin City School at Helmstedt," by Teacher Wilhelm Knoch, published about 1860 by Dr. Hess, Professor and Director of the Gymnasium of the Duke at Helmstedt, especially shows the financial problems of that period. No funds were available for the upkeep of the buildings, during the 30-year war, the salaries of

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the colleagues were paid incomplete and infrequent, and the situation of the civil servants of the Duke, i.e. the professors, was not much better.

Verbatim, it reports: Schrader (who was the General Superintendent and in that position in charge of the whole school system) reports 1650, that Nicolaus Wilrich, Rector since 1635, did not receive his full salary, and since some of the pieces of the salaries were darkened, he requested an explanation. Wilrich himself declares that during his 15 years in the position he received instead of 733 Thlr 12 Mgr (Thlr equals to the current Marks and Mgr the current Pfenning) only 405 Thlr 16 Mgr, and so, depending on the times, first 3, 5, 6 Thaler less, so that they still owed him 328 Thlr.

Schrader committed himself to the improvement of the school system and, again in 1654, submitted a request to the council "to restore some of the missing income of the Rector." and urged "to pay the remainder of Rector Wilrich's salary of more than 100 Thlr for his distinguished services during many years."

This shows that Nicolaus Wilrich, in spite of all the hardship of war and plagues, fulfilled his duties and acquired a good reputation and high honor.

From the newspaper of the Family Association in August 1928, I cite:

Public proof of this fact as well as the desire of the dignitaries to show their appreciation, is the fact that two of his sons were matriculated already as children:

Balthasar was 8 years old, Johann Georg 9 years, when they were first matriculated in Helmstedt, the first one during the lifetime of his father, 3 weeks prior to his death.

Linke also names - as mentioned in the newspaper of 1928 - in his "Low Saxony Family Archives" among many prominent men, Nicolaus Wilrich. The sermon composed by the Assistant Rector and the Senate of the "Academia Julia" in the Latin language (which sermon is kept for safe keeping at the State Archives at Hanover) gives a view of the growth, the work and also the family of Nicolaus Wilrich.

Nicolaus Wilrich married Catharina Harding, daughter of the citizen Thomas Harding, a saddler master, and his wife Elisabeth, on April 15, 1651. The ceremony was held in the Protestant church St. Stephan at Helmstedt.

The difference in age was quite large. Catharina was 19 years old, while Nicolaus was 56 years, and he had been employed as Rector at the Latin city school since 1635.

He lived together with his family at the house at Markt 2, in Helmstedt, which was the house of Catharina Harding's family. They had 7 children:

1. Dorothea Elisabeth, born 1652
2. Thomas, born 1654
3. Marie Gertrud, born
4. Anna Elisabeth born 1658.

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5. Balthasar born 1659, died 1667

6. Johann Juergen (Georg), born 1663\*in Helmstedt, died in Gardelegen

7. Johann Christian, born 1665\* in Helmstedt, died 1743

\*These have living descendants. Georg was the progenitor of the eastern (Ostelbiche) branch of the family, which uses the "Wilrich" spelling of the name.

Two of the children died during their childhood, Anna Elisabeth and Balthasar.

Nicolaus Wilrich died in 1667, at the age of 72. His life was full of work as well as difficulties. He received recognition for his tireless actions. His colleagues and supervisors honored him. Survivors were his wife Catharina, 35 years old, with 5 children, the oldest 15, the youngest 2 years old.

*This information is based upon research by Theodor Willrich 1873-1954, the father of Ilse Janssen-Willrich 1900-1996 of Rinteln/Weser. Theodor placed his documents and photos in the Archives at Pattensen, near Hanover.*