

RT1211 German Family History Made Eas(ier)

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Several studies have shown that Germans comprise the largest ethnic group in the United States. Many Americans are interested in tracing their German ancestor(s) but lack knowledge on how to proceed. German research is easier than most people think and can be a lot of fun. The Internet provides many tools. This presentation will answer the following questions:

- How using the Internet will help you locate where your German ancestors lived
- How to build on the knowledge and experience of other researchers
- What to do (and how to search the Internet), when we know the locality but not where the records are being kept
- How to contact distant relatives still living in Germany and obtain help from them
- Where are there civil and church records available online.

Beginning German research and needing to be pointed in the right direction:

- Central Europe Genealogy Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CentralEuropeGenealogyResearchCommunity/>

- US Federal Census Records (online) available to view on FamilySearch and Ancestry websites

<https://familysearch.org/1940census> (1940 US Census)

- Hamburger Passenger Lists (online)

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Hamburg_Passenger_Lists

- Ellis Island Passenger Arrival Lists

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1368704>

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- Baden Emigration Index 1866-191 at Ancestry.com

<http://www.ancestryinstitution.com/>

- Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg Emigration Records

<http://www.auswanderer-bw.de/auswanderer/index.php?sprache=de&suche=1>

Searching by surname when you cannot pinpoint the exact location where your ancestor lived

- <http://geogen.stoepel.net/> or <http://legacy.stoepel.net/> (This website reveals the relative and absolute concentration of people listed in present-day Germany under any particular surname.)

Searching for leads when you have an uncommon surname and know where your ancestor lived

- Weisse Seiten (German White Pages) which usually list the postal address as well. (The relevant postal code can be found by googling on the name of the locality.)

<http://www.telefonbuch.de/>

- German Zip Code Directory

<http://www.deutsche-postleitzahlen.de/>

(Municipal Reform from 1970's taken into consideration)

Searching for where the town/village/estate is located when you already have a name

- Use Meyer's Ortslexikon (1913 edition) as well as several regional gazetteers online at Ancestry.com
- Prussian Municipality Gazetteer (1905) online at Ancestry.com
- Several other Regional Gazetteers can be found online and still others exist in printed form.
- Kartenmeister

<http://www.kartenmeister.com/preview/databaseuwe.asp>

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is especially useful for finding localities in East Germany now belonging to Poland or Russia. It can be searched both under the former German name as well as the present-day Polish name. In addition, it will indicate which parish (Kirchspiel) and civil jurisdiction the locality belonged to while still part of Germany.

- Fuzzy Gazetteer: <http://tinyurl.com/ovwkd9d>
This is an online tool which allows the user to work around misspelled names by using phonetics.
- Google Maps: <https://www.google.de/maps/> sometimes will find localities in Poland which formerly belonged to Germany under the German name.

Building on the work of others:

- GenWiki Website (free but mostly in German)
<http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Hauptseite>
- FamilySearch Wiki (less content than on GenWiki site but mostly in English)
www.familysearch.org
- Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Genealogischer Verbände (DAGV)
www.dagv.org

When you know the locality but not where the records are:

- Look for the municipal website and contact:
 - The local genealogical society (Genealogische Arbeitsgemeinschaft)
 - The local historical society (Heimatsverein)
 - The local civil registration office (Standesamt)
 - The mayor's office (Bürgermeisteramt)
 - If all else fails, the webmaster of the site
- Look on the Internet for an Ortsfamilienbuch/Ortssippenbuch for the locality where your ancestor lived even if the town no longer belongs to Germany.
 - The German Computer Genealogy Society (GenWiki) lists the online versions
<http://ofb.genealogy.net/>
 - The Cardamina Verlag (printing company) specializes in printing Ortsfamilienbücher:
www.cardamina.net/artikelauswahl.php?kids=13sprache=2

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- If all else fails, then Google the name of the locality you are interested in and add “Ortsfamilienbuch” as the other search term.
- Some German Parish Registers are online:
 - Some are free to peruse and can be found by Googling the name of the parish you are interested in and adding the search term “Kirchenbuch.”
 - Some such as Archion [for Lutheran church records in Saxony (as well as several other regions of Germany cost) **a fee**]
<https://www.archion.de/> (Click on the DE in the top right corner to change from German into English)
- Most regional or provincial archives in Germany have an online service which indicates their holdings:
 - HADIS for the Province of Hessen
<https://arcinsys.hessen.de/arcinsys/start>
 - For the public archives of Baden-Württemberg, go to:
<http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/web/>
- Some archives have the actual images of civil documents (birth, marriage, death) online free of cost:
 - The Archives in Alsace-Lorraine [Elsaß-Lothringen, now part of France] (Department Rhin-Bas and Rhin-Haute)
http://www.archivosgenbriand.com/index_english.html
- The GenTools Website (free) contains tools which convert the dates recording in the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian Calendar as well as other helps such as calculating the precise date for religious holidays.
<http://www.gentools6.de/startseite.php>
- The German National Library (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek) has everything printed after 1992 and before that the provincial state libraries in West Germany were given copies of everything in print. The entire holdings are indexed online with contact information.
http://www.dnb.de/DE/Home/home_node.html (Click on upper left to change from German into English)
 - This is a good source for finding books and other publications containing genealogical information.
 - Some books may be available via Inter-Library loan outside of Germany.