

WILLKOMMEN

German (Deutsch) SIG

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Or put in silent mode**

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FEATURED PRESENTATION

WHAT SEEMS TO MAKE GERMAN GENEALOGY MORE DIFFICULT THAN OTHERS?

Solutions to the Obstacles

Presented by: Bernie Guenther

FOLLOWED BY:

➤ Member Questions, Discussion, Brick Walls etc.

WHAT IS GENEALOGICAL GERMANY?

- **Remember that Germany as a nation did not exist until 1871.**

So maybe we should be referring to it as *German Language Genealogy*.

Going back to the Holy Roman Empire, German, with several dialects, was the *lingua franca* of most of North-Central and Eastern Europe. This comprised today's nations of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, not to mention areas lost by Germany & Austria after WWI and WW II. We'll be searching in all of them.

Today's Germany still has many dialects, but thanks to Luther and invention of the printing press, most records we will be looking for will be in a standardized German, taught in schools.

❖ **Thank God, you say, but what about that godawful old script?**

❖ **Shhhh!..... We'll get to that in a minute.**

THE SHIFTING SANDS

- **This means that we must gain knowledge of the area's history in order to decipher in what archives records could exist.**

Google is your friend—put in name of town, no matter how small, you'll be surprised what you'll come up with, usually a history of the town with dates, especially Wikipedia.

- If you are a Palatine—generally considered to be those that emigrated before the American Revolution—the search is pretty easy.
 - Baden—Württemberg are generally considered to have some of the best records available and they can be accessed through Fam Search & Ancestry
- But what if you trace back to Posen Province of the Prussian/2nd German Empire from 1772-1918? Search on following sites:
 - Polish Genealogical Society runs 2 sites, Geneteka.genealodzy.pl and Metryki.genealodzy.pl.
 - If Evangelical, consult Archion.de, the official site of the German Evangelical Church.
- **During various periods in a state's history, the Kreis (county) for a municipality could change.**
 - For instance, in 1972 there was a widespread re-organization of governing districts. After the fall of the wall, the same occurred in the eastern states.

Records could also have been destroyed during wars and from natural disasters

DUPLICATION OF TOWN NAMES

- Before 1871, since each principality was an independent country, they could choose whatever name they wanted, hence many duplications.
 - For example, there are 9 different towns or villages of *Lindau* in present day Germany.
- In many cases, town names, usually the largest one, were also the name of the administrative district.
 - This was complicated where no civil records, only parish records, existed, generally before 1871, raising the question: What was the town of residence, vs. the parish in which the event is recorded?

To the Rescue: Meyersgaz.org

It is a detailed compilation of all localities in the 2nd German Empire as of 1912, now featuring partial translations and ability to toggle back and forth between 1912 and present day Google maps to find location of parishes within a 20 mile radius of the target town.

Link to abbreviations:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Abbreviation_Table_for_Meyers_Orts_und_Verkehrs_Lexikon_Des_Deutschen_Reichs

Disadvantage: Meyers only covers Germany at the time point of 1912. What about before 1912? Archion, Centennia and Kartenmeister cover prior time points. Once again, Google can help.

DEMONSTRATION
Meyersgaz.org

DON'T KNOW THE TOWN/STATE'S NAME?

➤ That's a toughie. Why would that be?

Depending at what time in history, it was easier to tell the immigration official, census taker or town registrar "Germany" rather than spell "Schleswig-Holstein."

➤ Possible Solutions:

- Tap the family rumor mill, especially from older family members.
- Consult Family Search or Legacy Family Tree Webinars for past presentations on the subject. There were some name endings peculiar to certain areas.
- There is also www.familysearch.org/search/collection/igi
 - Search under "community Indexed IGI", enter surname only and see which villages have concentrations of that name (Source: James Beidler book)
- If you only know the state, join a Rootsweb message board, a mailing list on CompGen or a forum (Archion offers one).

THE LANGUAGE & THE SCRIPT

➤ The Language

- There are certain key words that you can easily learn to obtain the key information needed, i.e. Birth, Marriage & Death. Check out:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany_Genealogy

While this can work with some records before 1871, then you mostly have to deal with

➤ That Godawful Script—Visit following for tutorials:

- Legacy Family Tree webinar library-2 part series by Gail Blankenau—Webinar membership required.
- Family Search site above provides two 3-part series, one by eminent German genealogist, Dr. Fritz Juengling, plus a BYU tutorial—all for *free*
- Archion.de—click on “Family Research” on opening page to find *free* script tutorial
- Book by Jim Beidler---**Family Tree German Genealogy Guide** provides good tutorial on Fraktur script.
- Book by Katherine Schober—**Tips & Tricks of Deciphering German Handwriting**
- Ken Weaver’s Presentation to German SIG---February 2017 (Currently on SIG website)