

# Online Resources for Finding German Ancestors

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*The Internet has become an indispensable tool for the German genealogist. There are websites for everything, from identifying places to finding records and locating addresses for potential relatives. New resources appear almost daily. The following is just a selection.*

## **TRANSLATION HELP**

Electronic translators are often effective in translating the tabs and basic information presented on a foreign-language Web site. Go to “ <https://translate.google.com/> ”. Choose the “from” and “to” languages and enter the Web address in the field provided. The Website will then appear in its translated form. Clicking on any part brings up the original foreign-language text. Another good online translation tool is found on [www.deepl.com](http://www.deepl.com) However, electronic translation programs are NOT recommended for writing letters.

## **GAZETTEERS AND MAPS**

Meyers Gazetteer of the German Empire covers all localities found in the German Empire. Many German entries in the FamilySearch Catalog are based on this book. Now there is a new, easy-to-use version available online at <http://www.meyersgaz.org/> Diacritics are not required when searching. Additional features include phonetic searches, flexible use of wildcards, maps, parish information (“Ecclesiastical”), related localities, and a place to add an e-mail address to collaborate with others interested in the same locality. Links to additional regional gazetteers are found at [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany Gazetteers](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Gazetteers) .

The Ravenstein Atlas of the German Empire at <https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/ARavenAtlas> includes maps and a place-name index that are downloaded in sections. It goes down to the parish level, where churches are marked with crosses.

## **RECORD COLLECTIONS WITH IMAGES**

- <https://www.familysearch.org/> has numerous German record sets online, found under “search- records” and “search- images”. Many collections include partial or complete indexes. Before using a collection, it is best to compare the number of indexed entries to the number of images listed under “browse records”. For example, the collection “Germany, Hesse, Frankfurt, Civil Registration, 1811-1814, 1833-1928” includes 386,801

images with 296,780 entries indexed. To find this information, first enter the country name in the “Search by place” field. The resulting list includes the number of indexed records in each collection. The collection home page lists the number of images.

- Most online collections pertain to specific geographic areas: cities, states, or regions. Also check under “Poland” for materials from the former Eastern provinces, including a new set of Evangelical church records
  - Check “Russia” and “Ukraine” for Volhynia, Black Sea Germans etc., especially the records of the Lutheran St. Petersburg Consistory.
  - The FamilySearch microfilm collection has been digitized, so the FamilySearch Catalog is another important access point for digital images. The level of access depends on the restrictions imposed by various contracts with archives and partners. Accessible images may either be viewable freely from anywhere, only with a FamilySearch or LDS log-in, or only in a family history center.
  - Some records are indexed and/or accessible on other websites, including Ancestry, Archion, and various Polish websites.
  - The FamilySearch Wiki at [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page) includes links to numerous courses related to German research, including several presentations on reading the old German script..
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- <https://www.archion.de/> - The German Evangelical Church Book Portal Archion has been in business for several years now. It is a subscription site (passes range from 20 to 180 Euros) for digitized church records from about twenty-five archives. Many have not been filmed by FamilySearch, such as the Eisenach, Hannover, Oldenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, and Kassel archives. Record availability varies significantly by archive. Browse or search for free to determine available records. Payment and log-in is only required for viewing record scans. Scan quality varies by archive.
  - <http://matricula-online.eu/> - a free portal for church records from Germany and Austria. Click on “Weiter zu Matricula”. The website allows access to records from the German Roman Catholic dioceses of Aachen, Augsburg, Bamberg, Dresden-Meissen, Eichstätt, Fulda, Hildesheim, Limburg, Magdeburg, Munich and Freising, Münster, Osnabrück, Paderborn, Passau, and Vechta (Oldenburg), and the archive of the Catholic Military Bishop.  
In addition, this website contains major collections from Austria, Slovenija, and Luxembourg and samples from several other countries.  
Search functions include the ability to search by locality (Austria), map, and parish, not just by archive.

- Crossborderarchives at <http://www.crarc.findbuch.net/> includes digitized parish registers from Austrian and Slovak archives. Sacramental records from the military church office in Vienna for 1899-1905 are included. In these records the parents often came from far away, and their birth places are listed in the records.
- Baden-Wuerttemberg State Archives:
  - <http://www.leo-bw.de/> Historical gazetteer for Baden-Wuerttemberg with links to online parish register duplicates for Baden covering 1810-1870. Look up the place and search the associated documents. For direct links to those collections, organized by civil court district, see:
    - Northern Baden: Staatsarchiv Karlsruhe  
<https://www2.landesarchiv-bw.de/ofs21/olf/startbild.php?bestand=12390>
    - Southern Baden: Staatsarchiv Freiburg  
<https://www2.landesarchiv-bw.de/ofs21/olf/struktur.php?bestand=10028>
    - Jewish 19<sup>th</sup> Century civil registration records in Wuerttemberg (Baden records listed with the respective localities)  
<http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/web/49483>
- <http://genteam.at/> - This Austrian site also includes an index to the church book duplicates and civil births [to 1899], marriages [to 1929], and deaths [to 1979] of the city of Nürnberg [see “regional” in list at left], and records of the Jewish congregation in Nürnberg. Newly added is an index to Bayreuth City marriage testimonials from 1875 to 1915. Free registration and password are required.
- <http://www.ancestry.com> (subscription only- available for free at LDS family history centers) includes
  - various lists of emigrants/immigrants, images of Mecklenburg censuses for 1819, 1867, 1890, 1900, and 1919
  - Passenger lists from Hamburg (1850-1934)
  - Greifswald and Swinemünde passenger lists (1869-1901)
  - Evangelical parish registers for Wuerttemberg (partly indexed) with images, Baden (index only), Mecklenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Eastern Prussian provinces, Romania
  - 19<sup>th</sup> Century Brandenburg parish register duplicates
  - Civil registration records for various cities, including Berlin, Hamburg, Lübeck, Mannheim, and many others
  - Civil registry records for localities in the former Eastern Prussian Provinces
  - records of Jews in various localities
  - address books
  - other resources, including maps, gazetteers, and records

- See <http://www.ancestry.de/cs/recent-collections> for newly added and updated collections on Ancestry.de

## CIVIL REGISTRATION AND CHURCH RECORDS ONLINE

Recent legal challenges regarding copyright issues involving genealogical records have resulted in the removal of many resources from online access. Hopefully the issue can be resolved soon, and access restored. In the meantime, here are some links to available resources.

- Ancestry has posted civil registration records from many German cities and regions online, including one for the Eastern Prussian provinces, and births, marriages, and deaths of Berlin, Brandenburg
- FamilySearch has civil registration records and/or indexes for a number of German towns and regions online, including an expanded version of the Nuremberg civil registration records index (see bullet under Genteam.at above).
- Civil registration records for today's state of Hessen <https://www.lagis-hessen.de/en/subjects/index/sn/pstr>
- <http://www.familia-austria.at/index.php/forschung-und-service/netzrecherche/111-matriken-im-netz> Links to collections of church records online, arranged by country, then state
- Brandenburg parish register duplicates online <https://blha.brandenburg.de/index.php/2022/08/01/kirchenbuchduplikate-online-verfuegbar/#more-7611> . The navigation is cumbersome, but all images are in the public domain. This material was microfilmed by FamilySearch years ago.

## INDEXES ON THE INTERNET

Societies and other organizations continually add to the pool of indexed records available online. Some indexes can be used in conjunction with material microfilmed by FamilySearch; others index digitized material. Users must ascertain the extent of completed indexing as it relates to each record collection.

Sometimes online indexes can be used to find the respective record images on the Internet.

Example:

- a. <http://blackseagr.org/> - Individual/family entries found in this Black Sea Germans database include sources
- b. <http://odessa3.org/collections.html> - Collections include indexes to various church records and genealogical collections pertaining to Black Sea Germans. Click on "St. Pete" to access indexes of the Lutheran St. Petersburg Consistory records.
- c. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151> "Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885." The collection includes the images and a partial index.

### Examples of new and updated indexes:

- [www.compgen.de](http://www.compgen.de)
  - The finished German WWI casualty lists (over 8.5 million names)
  - Significant additions to the address books and cemetery databases
  - The Meta-Search” feature <https://meta.genealogy.net/> can be used to search for surnames and places in several databases at the same time. Note- It is very specific!
  - A new surname distribution map can be searched for multiple names in the years 1890 and 1996, see <https://www.compgen.de/recherchieren/#namenskarte>
- Die Maus (Bremen area genealogical Society)
  - Indexes to various record sets from towns in the extended Bremen area are found at <http://www.die-maus-bremen.de/datensammlung/datensammlung/> [Note: Some indexes are only available to Society members]
- An Index to church records and civil registration records posted by the Olsztyn (formerly Allenstein, East Prussia) Poland, state archive, found at <https://namensindex.org/> . This covers mostly the Western region of Masuren that borders West Prussia.

### ADDRESS BOOKS

Address books can be very helpful when researching in larger towns and cities. Search for them on [www.google.de](http://www.google.de) under “[town name] + historisches Adressbuch”. Also check regional digital libraries (also for areas now in Poland). Here are some newer online collections:

**Portal: Address book:** <https://wiki.genealogy.net/Portal:Adressbuch> digitized volumes and a searchable database [also helpful when trying to localize surnames]

**Ancestry.com** also has a large collection of indexed German address books.

**Polish digital libraries:** <https://fbc.pionier.net.pl/> search for “Adressbuch + town name”

#### Bremen:

- <http://brema.suub.uni-bremen.de/periodical/titleinfo/928434> - 1754-1955
- Also see <https://die-maus-bremen.info/index.php?id=56> for more links

**Frankfurt am Main-** [http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Online-Adressbuch f%C3%BCr Frankfurt am Main](http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Online-Adressbuch_f%C3%BCr_Frankfurt_am_Main)

**Heidelberg, 1818-1922:** <http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/helios/digi/unihdaddressbuch.html>

**Kassel and surrounding area 1834-1939** [color scans!]: <http://orka.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/viewer/toc/1382947338432/0/>

**Mainz -** [http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Adressbuch f%C3%BCr Mainz](http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Adressbuch_f%C3%BCr_Mainz)

**München** 1803- 1966: [http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Adressbuch f%C3%BCr M%C3%BCnchen](http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Adressbuch_f%C3%BCr_M%C3%BCnchen)

**Sachsen** to additional lists of inhabitants

: <http://adressbuecher.sachsendigital.de/projekt/> - with way-pointed images

**Thüringen- various cities and towns:** <http://zs.thulb.uni-jena.de/servlets/solr/find?qry=adressb%C3%BCcher>

## ORTSFAMILIENBÜCHER (TOWN GENEALOGIES)

Online *Ortsfamilienbücher* (“OFBs”) are compiled from the records of a given locality or region as lineage-linked databases. Some include documentation and/or notes. They follow a standard format.

**CompGen** has the largest collection of OFBs with over 1050 collections currently online (over 17 million entries), including books for German communities in Southeastern and Eastern Europe.

User instructions:

- Access the home page on <http://www.online-ofb.de/>. Choose the locality, either from the alphabetical list found under “Funktionen” on the left, or from the main page. Localities are listed from north to south, with separate sections for German communities in other countries, such as Poland
- The main page includes geographical and historical information, a list of sources, and a tool bar with three different search options:
  1. Gesamtliste der Familiennamen – List of all surnames
  2. Geburtsorte auswärtiger Personen- birthplaces of persons from other localities
  3. Sterbeorte weggezogener Personen – death places of those who moved away
- Click on a surname. A list of persons with birthdates [if known] comes up.
- Click on a person of interest. This brings up the individual or family page.
- Some entries may include cross-references to other online OFBs with a red notation “Es gibt (eine) ähnliche Person(en) im OFB [town name]”
- “Keine Angaben!” means “no information given”
- A family page may include spouses, parents, children, other spouses, and additional information.
- Some “books” are databases designed to gather all extant genealogical data for a given locality [town/county/geographical area], especially in cases where civil registration and/or church records no longer exist. Examples include the OFB Memelland and the “Familiendatenbank Kreise Arnswalde and Friedeberg (Neumark)”

**Hint:** Use search engines to locate more books using keywords such as: Ortssippenbuch, Dorfsippenbuch, Ortsfamilienbuch, Dorffamilienbuch, Familienbuch, OFB, OSB) to locate lists of available and future town genealogy publications

## NEWSPAPERS

Many digital libraries in the United States and Germany have published digitized newspapers online. Newspapers can be a good resource for finding the German town of origin, relatives, and local history information.

Search engines like google.de can be used to find out which newspapers existed for a given town and time period. Use the terms listed below to search for newspapers for localities of interest. Also see

- <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- <https://theancestorhunt.com/blog/100-million-historic-u-s-newspaper-pages-now-available-from-advantage-archives/> for the United States and
- [http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Zeitungen#Listen\\_digitalisierter\\_Zeitungen .28WS.29](http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Zeitungen#Listen_digitalisierter_Zeitungen_.28WS.29) and the associated web links near the bottom of the article for Germany.

The standard term for a newspaper is “Zeitung”, but other terms are often used in the name that may allude to the publication’s primary purpose, frequency, or intended audience.

Examples:

- *Abendblatt* (evening newspaper)
- *Amtsblatt/Amtsblätter* (official newspaper/s)
- *Polizeiblatt/Polizeiblätter* (police newspaper/s)
- *Intelligenzblatt/Intelligenzblätter* (intelligence paper/s – „intelligence“ = „news“)
- *Gesetzblatt/Gesetzblätter* (law paper/s, publish government information)
- *Kurier/ Amtskurier* (Courier- disseminate information)
- *Rundschau* (newsy, often includes entertainment sections)
- *Presse* (publication)
- *Tages-, Wochenblatt* (daily-/ weekly publication)
- *Anzeiger* (literally: notices)
- *Beilage* – (supplement)

## HERALDRY

An index to Siebmacher’s heraldry books is found at [http://data.cerl.org/siebmacher/\\_search?lang=de](http://data.cerl.org/siebmacher/_search?lang=de) There were two series of books, the “old” and “new”. For the “old” series, the entry in the index is linked to an image of the page containing the respective coat of arms. The set included 119 books in all Some volumes of the set are still under copyright and are not available online.

**This compilation is just the tip of the iceberg- Online resources have become an important part of German family history research!**