



## Researching German Ancestors

### Key Points in German Research:

#### 1. Know the exact place in Germany

Records were kept locally (no central repository)

#### 2. Church records – from early 1600s, recorded

baptism (birth), confirmation, marriage, death, burial

#### 3. Church and civil records (B,M,D)- the best option

**Understand History** - *Regional history* - a) clues why they left b) why the records are not available for a certain time c) where the records are now

Germans – the largest ethnic group (US) - came for economic opportunities, religious, political freedom

Karl der Grosse (Charlemagne) - HRE in 800, extended Frankish Empire (present Germany)

Otto von Bismarck unified Germany (1871) (bef. principalities, duchies, kingdoms,..)

### Immigration waves:

1. Wave – from SW, Baden, Alsace, Pfalz, 1683 - 1820, mainly to PA, economic and religious reasons

2. Wave (1820 – 1871) - to WI, OH, IN, MO

3. Wave (1871 – 1914) – to large cities in NY, MN, IL

Russian Empress Katherine the Great invited Germans (1760s -1880s)

### Research

US Federal Census - every 10 years from 1790-1950

Census 1930, 1920, 1910, and 1900 - immigration year, Census 1920 - the year of naturalization

Census 1850 to 1880 - kingdom, state, province (Rh. Bavaria)

Pay attention to families living nearby (FAN)

### Finding a Place of Origin... (Ideas)

Track siblings and their descendants

Witnesses (relatives & neighbors in the old country)

Locate gravesites - examine tombstones

Research others on the same ship

Occupation records, societies' membership (ethnic insurance)

First church they attended - *German Immigrants in American Church Records*, series, by R. Minert)

More Ideas - **German Topical Guide** - at MGC website – **MidwestGenealogyCenter.org**

Land & court records (tax list, probate, will)

County histories, Genealogical and Historical Societies

Military records (pension files, WWI draft cards)  
Passport applications  
US SS Application (Ancestry LE)  
Local church, library, and archives - unique collection (manuscript, newspapers in *Deutsch*, obituaries)

### **Passenger Lists**

*PA German Pioneers* (the list as on the ship - check other names)  
*Germans to America*, Series (2nd half of the 19 cent.)  
Ellis Island records, from 1892 (Castle Garden before)  
Hamburg Pass. Lists – last residence (Ancestry LE)  
*Emigration to Russia, 1763-1862*, by K. Stumpp  
From Sept. 1906 - <https://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>

### **Maps** - Do you recognize nearby Places?

*Map Guide Series*, by K. Hansen, radius search of nearby villages, your relatives in these places!  
Meyers Ort Lexikon: German Empire from 1871, church, civil registry office, military, court,  
[www.meyersgaz.org/](http://www.meyersgaz.org/)  
<http://gov.genealogy.net/search/index> (Genealogy.net)

### **Name Change**

Your ancestor might change the name

- a) to hear the same sound
- b) long names shortened
- c) the spelling changed for easier pronunciation
- d) the names translated to English

*Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - many changed the names on the background of the political and social events.*

### **Original Names**

If the surname has *ae, oe, ue* - it had the *Umlaut* - two dots above letters *a, o, u* (*Schäffer -Schaeffer*)

Name After the Farm – farm names did not change

4 sources (location, occupation, patronymics, characteristics)

First Names – could be 3 (usually went by the 2<sup>nd</sup>)

First Name - hint – given after godparents

Surname map [legacy.stoepel.net](http://legacy.stoepel.net)

### **Reading old German script...**

Start with first names – written larger

Locate letters in other words & compare

*German English Genealogical Dictionary*, by E. Thode

*In Their Words*, A Gen. Transl. Guide, Vol IV. (W. Hoffman, J. Shea)

*Deciphering Handwriting in G. Documents* (R. Minert)

Video lessons & German Word list - @ [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org)

## **Alphabet & Handwriting Style**

Books, Periodicals, die Schrift

In Search of Your German Roots, by A. Baxter, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

Trace Your German Roots Online, by J. M. Beidler

OFB/OSB – Village Lineage Books

Blumenbaum, Germanic Genealogy Journal, The Hessians: Journal of the J. S. H. A., Journal of the AHSGR, and more...

## **MGC - Die Schrift (e-Newsletter), Topical Guide online**

## **Online Research**

Ancestry LE, My Heritage LE

FEEFHS.org, Cyndislist.com

GGSMN.org (Germanic Gen. Soc. in MN)

GermanRoots.com

NARA – nation's record keeper

German Interest Groups on social media

Village name.de

Former German territories – check records in current countries

## **Germans from Russia & East. Europe**

[AHSGR.org](#) (Amer. Hist. Society of Germans from Russia)

[GRHS.org](#) [VolgaGerman.net](#) [VolgaDeutsche.net](#) [VolgaGermanResearch](#), [VolgaRecords.com](#), [GRHC Library](#), [BlackSeaGr.org](#) [Odessa3.org](#), , [SGGEE.org](#), [Glueckstal.net](#), [BukovinaSociety.org](#)

[Galizien-Deutsche.de/](#), [GalizienGermanDescendants.org/](#)

EWZ Files - *EinWandererZentralstelle* (FamilySearch.org)

## **FamilySearch.org** - Church and Civil Records - online

Search options: 1. Browsing 2. Catalog 3. Wiki <https://www.familysearch.org/>

Check MGC website for a microform collection

## *Let's Cross the Ocean* - **German Websites**

Genealogy.net (<https://www.compgen.de/>)

[Archion.de](#) - Lutheran records - not free (PayPal)

[Data.matricula-online.eu/en/](#) - [Records In Germany \(Online & in The Archives\)](#)

Church Books (*Kirchenbücher*)

Civil Registry Office, *Standesamt*), from 1876 in all Germany

City records (Address book, Move In and Out, Police records)

Permission to emigrate, Emigration list, Passports

Census (*Volkszählungen*), Notarial and Court records

Land records (land lease, purchase and sale), *Grundbuch*

Tax records (*Steuerlisten*)

Guild records

Family Registers, Village Lineage Books (*Ortsfamilienbücher*)

## Military Records

Know your ancestor's village

Meyers Ort Lexikon – gives the military district

FamilySearch.org - Catalog

Genealogy.net GenWiki Lexicons

Write to the Main Archive <https://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/>

Bundesarchiv Military Records (in Freiburg)

## Writing to the Archives (Addresses)

*Ancestors in German Archives*, by R. Wright

Center for Genealogy in Leipzig (former territories)

Archion.de <https://www.archion.de/>

ArchivPortal <https://www.archivportal-d.de/>

## Samples of letters:

[FamilySearch.org/wiki/](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/)

Visit Your Ancestor's Homeland (Heimat)

Contact a local tourist office (*Verkehrsverein*) and city mayor

Walk the steps of your ancestor, visit church, archives, find distant relatives... somebody stayed behind... meet their descendants.

Viel Glück! Iveta B.



midwestgenealogycenter.org



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PUBLIC LIBRARY

MIDWEST  
GENEALOGY  
CENTER

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28