

RESEARCHING YOUR GERMAN ANCESTORS

IVETA BLAHŮTOVÁ



MIDWEST
GENEALOGY
CENTER

GERMAN EMPIRE IN 1913

SOURCE: THE HISTORIC MAP WORKS
[HTTP://WWW.PROQUESTHISTORICALMAPWORKS.COM/MapHPIC=WM&H=249&L=GERMANY&CONT=EUROPE](http://www.proquesthistoricalmapworks.com/MapHPIC=WM&H=249&L=GERMANY&CONT=EUROPE)



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CURRENT GERMAN MAP

Source:
MGC Research
Database The
Cultural Grams:
http://online.culturegrams.com/worldtop/empdf.php?filename=germany_map_geo_atlas_political

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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 - the best option



Standesamt (Civil Registry Office, Old Town Hall, Fürstenfeldbruck, Bavaria

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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

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



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



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IMMIGRATION WAVES

- o 1. Wave – from SW, Baden, Alsace, Pfalz, 1683 - 1820, mainly to PA, economic and religious reasons
- o 2. Wave (1820 – 1871) - to WI, OH, IN, MO - cotton trade (New Orleans - LaHavre), tobacco trade (Baltimore - Bremerhaven), Hamburg (from 1840 to NY)
- o 3. Wave (1871 – 1914) – to large cities in NY, MN, IL

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



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RESEARCH

- Federal Census - every 10 years from 1790-1950
- Census 1930, 1920, 1910, and 1900 - immigration year
- Census 1920 - the year of naturalization
- Pay attention to families living nearby (FAN)
- Track siblings and their descendants
- Research others on the same ship
- First church they attended
(*German Immigrants in American Church Records*, series, by R. Minert)



FINDING A PLACE OF ORIGIN.. (IDEAS)

- Witnesses (relatives & neighbors in the old country)
- Military records (pension files, WWI draft cards)
- Hamburg Pass. Lists – last residence (Ancestry LE)
- From Sept. 1906 - <https://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>
- Passport applications
- US SS Application (Ancestry LE)
- Local church, library, and archives - unique collection (manuscript, newspapers in *Deutsch*, obituaries)

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MAPS - DO YOU RECOGNIZE PLACES NEARBY?

- 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://gov.genealogy.net/search/index> (Genealogy.net)
- Topographical Maps of German Lands (fiche, sheets I- 674, MGC)



NAME CHANGE..

- Your ancestor might change the name
 - to hear the same sound
 - long names shortened
 - spelling changed for easier pronunciation
 - names translated to English
- Beginning of the 20th century - many changed the names on the background of the political and social events.*

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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 2nd)
- First Name - hint – given after godparents
- Surname map legacy.stoepel.net

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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 at FamilySearch.org

Mutter	Mother
Words starting with: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Z	
N [edit edit source]	
German	English
N.N. = nomen nescio	name not known
nach	to, after, according to
nachbar	neighbor
nachbarschaft	neighborhood
nachgelassen	surviving
nachlaß	estate, inheritance

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

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ALPHABET & HANDWRITING STYLE

The German Alphabet

A	Ä	Ö	U	Ü	ß
B	ä	ö	u	ü	ß
C	ch	ck	ck	ck	ck
D	d	dt	dt	dt	dt
E	e	ei	ei	ei	ei
F	f	ff	ff	ff	ff
G	g	gg	gg	gg	gg
H	h	hh	hh	hh	hh
I	i	ii	ii	ii	ii
J	j	jj	jj	jj	jj
K	k	kk	kk	kk	kk
L	l	ll	ll	ll	ll
M	m	mm	mm	mm	mm
N	n	nn	nn	nn	nn
O	o	oo	oo	oo	oo
P	p	pp	pp	pp	pp
Q	q	qq	qq	qq	qq
R	r	rr	rr	rr	rr
S	s	ss	ss	ss	ss
T	t	tt	tt	tt	tt
U	u	uu	uu	uu	uu
V	v	vv	vv	vv	vv
W	w	ww	ww	ww	ww
X	x	xx	xx	xx	xx
Y	y	yy	yy	yy	yy
Z	z	zz	zz	zz	zz

ss Ä ü
st B ß
st B

1789 Am 12^{ten} Aug. Johann Friedrich August...
Anna Maria...
1790 Am 12^{ten} Aug. Johann Friedrich August...
Anna Maria...
1791 Am 12^{ten} Aug. Johann Friedrich August...
Anna Maria...

Source: *How to Read German Church Records Without Knowing Much German*, by Arta F. Johnson, PhD, 1980

Practice: <https://stevemorse.org/>,
[Kurrentschrift](https://www.kurrentschrift.com/) & [Suetterlinschrift.de](https://www.suetterlinschrift.de/)

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BOOKS, PERIODICALS, DIE SCHRIFT

- o In Search of Your German Roots, by A. Baxter, 5th Edition
- o Trace Your German Roots Online, by J. M. Beidler
- o Historic German Newspaper Online, by E. Thode
- o OFB/OSB – Village Lineage Books
- o Blumenbaum, Germanic Genealogy Journal
- o The Hessians: Journal of the J. S. H. A.
- o Journal of the AHSGR
- o Family Tree Magazine, .. and more

- o MGC, Die Schrift, e-Newsletter
- o MGC, Topical Guide (MGC website)

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ONLINE RESEARCH

- o Ancestry LE, My Heritage LE
- o FEEFHS.org, Cyndislist.com
- o GGSMN.org (Germanic Gen. Soc. in MN)
- o GermanRoots.com
- o NARA – nation's record keeper
- o German Interest Groups on social media
- o Village's name.de

Records of former German territories - in current countries

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GERMANS FROM RUSSIA & EAST. EUROPE

<https://ahsgr.org/>
HQ in Lincoln, NE
(with permission)

- o [AHSGR.org](https://ahsgr.org/) (American Hist. Society of Germans from Russia)
- o [GRHS.org](https://www.grhs.org/) [VolgaGerman.net](https://www.volgagerman.net/)
- o [VolgaGermanResearch](https://www.volgagermanresearch.com/), [GRHC Library](https://www.grhc.org/),
- o [BlackSeaGr.org](https://www.blackseagr.org/) [Odessa3.org](https://www.odessa3.org/)
- o [SGGEE.org](https://www.sgg.org/), [Glueckstal.net](https://www.glueckstal.net/), [BukovinaSociety.org](https://www.bukovina.org/)
- o [GalizienGermanDescendants.org/](https://www.galiziengermans.com/)

EWZ Files - [EinWandererZentralstelle](https://www.einzentralstelle.com/) (FamilySearch.org)

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FAMILYSEARCH.ORG

- o Church and Civil Records - online
- o 3 Search options: 1. Browsing 2. Catalog 3. Wiki

<https://www.familysearch.org/>

Find your family. Discover yourself.
Bring to life your family's history by exploring the lives of those that came before you.

- o Check MGC website for a microform collection

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GERMAN WEBSITES GENEALOGY.NET

<https://meta.genealogy.net/>

<https://wiki.genealogy.net/Hauptseite>

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ARCHION.DE - Lutheran records - not free (PayPal)

Front page

Search by browsing (green – online)

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DATA.MATRICULA-ONLINE.EU/EN/

Matricula online - Catholic records

https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/deutschland/fulda/marburg-st-johannes-ev2-01/?pg=35

WRITE TO THE ARCHIVES (ADDRESSES)

- o Ancestors in German Archives, by R. Wright
- o Center for Genealogy in Leipzig (former territories)
- o Archion.de <https://www.archion.de/>
- o ArchivPortal <https://www.archivportal-d.de/>
- o For military records - write to the Main Archive <https://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/>

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



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