

# DISCOVER THE HOLDINGS OF GERMAN ARCHIVES

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## Introduction

German archives hold many records valuable for expanding our genealogical research. Church records not available digitally may be waiting in archives. State and local archives may contain emigration, court, tax, and other records to fill in our ancestor's story. This lecture will explain how to find relevant archives and discover their holdings. It will describe how to navigate detailed online finding aids when available. One need not be fluent in German to do this research. Essential vocabulary and translation tools will be discussed.

## Know Your Ancestor

- Thoroughly research them in their adopted country, the country to which they immigrated.
- Identify their town of birth (i.e., target town) in the former German Empire or areas that became part of the German Empire.
- Research them using all available church records from their place of birth.

## Know the Town in Germany

- Identify the jurisdictions to which the target town belonged using *Meyers* (see Resource # 20).
- Identify earlier jurisdictions.
- Identify the modern jurisdictions to which the target town belongs.
- Study the history of the areas where they lived.

## Plan Your Research

- Identify archives that may hold sources of interest, based on historical and modern jurisdictions.
- Use the archive's finding aids when available online.
- Review available information about records available overseas:
  - *GenWiki* articles
  - *FamilySearch* Catalog – “Archives and Libraries – Inventories, registers, catalogs”
  - Publications of historical societies relevant to the target town

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## Access the Archival Holdings

- Hire a local researcher
  - Contact the archive for a list of researchers
  - [International German Genealogy Partnership](#)
  - [Association of Professional Genealogists](#)
- Plan a trip
  - Ensure that the archive will be open when you plan to visit.
  - Make an appointment well in advance.
  - Be aware of their hours and if they close for lunch.
  - Use the shopping cart feature to request materials in advance.
  - Be aware of entrance fees and forms of payment accepted, often cash.
  - Know the times for record pulls. Are there fees for extra record pulls?
  - Know the rules and regulations of the archive (e.g., What items are allowed in the reading room: laptops, cell phones, pens, notebooks? What are their duplication policies and costs?)

## Essential Vocabulary

**Abteilung(en)** –branches (of an archive)

**Akten** – documents created in the process of performing tasks

**Amt** – lower administrative district

**Amtsgericht** –local court district

**Archiv(e)** – archive(s)

**Aushebezeiten** – record retrieval times

**Band** - volume

**Bestände** – holdings of an archive

**Bezirkskommando** – military district

**Bistum** – bishopric

**Bundesland** – German state

**Fürstentum/Fürstenthum** – principality

**Deutschland** – Germany

**Dorf** – village

**Evangelisch** – Lutheran

**Familienforschung** – family research

**Findbuch (Findbücher)** – finding aids

**Findmittel** – finding aids

**Freistadt** – free city

**Gemeindelexikon** – gazetteer

**Geschichte** – history

**Gesellschaft** – society

**Grafschaft** – area ruled by a count or earl

**Großherzogtum** – grand duchy

**Herzogtum/Herzogthum** – duchy

**Karte** – map

**Katholisch** – Catholic

**Kirche** – church

**Kreis** – similar to a United States county

**Königreich** – kingdom

**Kurfürstentum** - electorate

**Landesarchiv** – state archive

**Lesesaal** – reading room

**Recherche** – research

**Seite(n)** – page(s)

**Staat** – state

**Stadt** – city

**Standesamt** – civil registration office

**Standesbuch** – registration book

**Standort(e)** – locations/branches

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**Suche** - search

**Übersicht** - overview

**Urkunden** – legally relevant documents

**Verein** – society

**Verzeichnis** – index or listing

**Zweitschriften** - duplicates

## Keyboard Shortcuts

Character	Letter Equivalents	PC	MAC
ä	ae	Alt 0228	Option u, * a
ö	oe	Alt 0246	Option u, o
ü	ue	Alt 0252	Option u, u
ÿ	ye	Alt 0255	Option u, y
ß	ss	Alt 0223	Option u, s

\* - hold the Option key while pressing u, release, then type the letter over which you would like an umlaut.

## German State Archives

The German state name is listed first and the English state name follows in parenthesis, when applicable.

### Baden-Württemberg: Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg

<https://www.landearchiv-bw.de/> . Its branch locations:

- Staatsarchiv Freiburg
- Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe
- Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv Neuenstein
- Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg
- Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen
- Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart
- Staatsarchiv Wertheim

### Bayern (Bavaria): Die Staatlichen Archive Bayerns

<https://www.gda.bayern.de/die-staatlichen-archive-bayerns/> . Its branch locations:

- Hauptstaatsarchiv Bayern
- Staatsarchiv Amberg
- Staatsarchiv Augsburg
- Staatsarchiv Bamberg
- Staatsarchiv Coburg
- Staatsarchiv Landshut
- Staatsarchiv München (Munich)
- Staatsarchiv Nürnberg (Nuremberg)
- Staatsarchiv Würzburg

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**Berlin:** Landesarchiv Berlin

<http://landesarchiv-berlin.de/>

**Brandenburg:** Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv

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

**Bremen:** Staatsarchiv Bremen

<http://www.staatsarchiv.bremen.de/sixcms/detail.php?gsid=bremen02.c.730.de>

**Hamburg:** Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg

<http://www.hamburg.de/staatsarchiv/>

**Hessen (Hesse):** Hessisches Landesarchiv

<https://landesarchiv.hessen.de/>. Use the Arcinsys search feature to find Grandduchy Hessen emigration list: “auswanderernachweis.” Its branch locations:

- Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv
- Staatsarchiv Marburg
- Staatsarchiv Darmstadt

**Mecklenburg-Vorpommern:** Landesarchiv Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

<https://www.kulturwerte-mv.de/Landesarchiv/>. Its branch locations:

- Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin
- Landesarchiv Greifswald

**Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony):** Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv

<http://www.nla.niedersachsen.de/startseite/>. Its branch locations:

- Abteilung Hannover (Hanover)
- Abteilung Aurich
- Abteilung Bückeberg
- Abteilung Oldenburg
- Abteilung Osnabrück
- Abteilung Stade
- Abteilung Wolfenbüttel

**Nordrhein Westfalen (North Rhine Westphalia):** Landesarchiv in Nordrhein Westfalen

<http://www.archive.nrw.de/lav/>. Its branch locations:

- Abteilung Rheinland in Duisburg
- Abteilung Westfalen (Westphalia) in Münster

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- Abteilung Ostwestfalen-Lippe (East Westphalia) in Detmold

## **Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland Palatinate):** Rheinland-Pfalz Landesarchiv

<http://www.landeshauptarchiv.de/>. Its branch locations:

- Landeshauptarchiv Koblenz
- Landesarchiv Speyer

## **Saarland:** Landesarchiv Saarbrücken

<http://www.saarland.de/landesarchiv.htm>

## **Sachsen (Saxony):** Sächsisches Staatsarchiv

<http://www.archiv.sachsen.de/>. Its branch locations:

- Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden
- Staatsarchiv Leipzig
- Staatsarchiv Chemnitz
- Bergarchiv Freiberg
- Staatsfilialarchiv Bautzen

## **Sachsen-Anhalt (Saxony-Anhalt):** Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt

<http://www.landearchiv.sachsen-anhalt.de/startseite/>. Its branch locations:

- Standort Magdeburg
- Standort Merseburg
- Standort Wernigerode
- Standort Dessau

## **Schleswig-Holstein:** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein

[http://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/Landesregierung/LASH/lash\\_node.html](http://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/Landesregierung/LASH/lash_node.html)

## **Thüringen (Thuringia):** Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar

<http://www.thueringen.de/th1/tsk/kultur/staatsarchive/standorte/weimar/index.aspx>. Its branch locations:

- Staatsarchiv Altenburg
- Staatsarchiv Gotha
- Staatsarchiv Greiz
- Staatsarchiv Meiningen
- Staatsarchiv Rudolstadt
- Staatsarchiv Weimar

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## Resources

1. *Archivportal-D*. [www.archivportal-d.de](http://www.archivportal-d.de) : copyright 2020. This service of the *Deutsch Digitale Bibliothek* allows one to search the collections of many state and local archives in Germany.
2. Association of Professional Genealogists. <https://www.apgen.org/directory>.
3. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “*FamilySearch* Catalog,” online catalog. *FamilySearch*. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>. Conduct “Place” searches for each level of jurisdiction to which a village belonged.
4. ———. “Germany Historical Geography,” wiki article. *FamilySearch*. <https://familysearch.org> : 2020.
5. ———. “Step-by-step Guide: Using Meyers Gazetteer Online,” wiki article. *FamilySearch*. <https://familysearch.org> : 2020.
6. *Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek (DDB)*. [www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de](http://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de) : copyright 2020. This website, funded by the German federal government, offers “unrestricted access to Germany’s cultural and scientific heritage.”
7. *Gemeindelexikon für das Königreich Preussen* (Gazetteer for the Kingdom of Prussia). Berlin: Verlag des Königlichen Statistischen Landesamts. 1907-1909. This gazetteer contains fourteen volumes (one for each pre-1919 Prussian Province). Among other things, it helps to identify to what Catholic and Lutheran parishes a town belonged. Written in German and Gothic print, it is digitized at <https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/14875?availability=Family%20History%20Library> and [www.hathitrust.org](http://www.hathitrust.org).
8. Google. *Google Translate*. <https://translate.google.com/>.
9. Hansen, Kevan M. *Map Guide to German Parish Registers*. Fifty-eight volumes have been published as of this writing. It is separated by German state (or portions thereof). It lists nearly every town and identifies what church the residents would have attended. Written in English and user-friendly, this series is not yet complete, but will ultimately contain sixty-two volumes.
10. *HathiTrust Digital Library*. <http://www.hathitrust.org>. This website is a partnership of international libraries and institutions to “contribute to the common good by collecting, organizing, preserving...the record of human knowledge. Currently over twelve million volumes are digitized and available on this website.
11. International German Genealogy Partnership. <https://iggp.org/cpage.php?pt=22>. This link leads to lists of German researchers.

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12. *Internet Archive*. <http://archive.org>. This is a non-profit that was founded with the purpose of creating an internet library. Its goal is to offer permanent access to “historical collections that exist in a digital format.”
13. *JewishGen Gazetteer*. [www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocTown.asp](http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocTown.asp). This contains places from all Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. It offers multiple phonetic coding systems, useful when the exact spelling of a town is not known.
14. *Kartenmeister*. <http://www.kartenmeister.com>. This is an excellent website for finding modern names of towns east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers. It also includes early 20th century jurisdictions.
15. Köbler, Gerhard. *Historisches Lexikon der deutschen Länder*. Seventh edition. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007. Contains a brief summary of historical jurisdictions for larger cities.
16. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg. *Leo BW*. <https://www.leo-bw.de/web/guest/home> : copyright 2020. This is a cultural display for the state of Baden-Württemberg.
17. Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC). *World Cat*. <http://www.worldcat.org> : copyright 2001–2020. This website allows you to search the holdings of libraries worldwide.
18. McMillin, Teresa S. *Lind Street Research Blog*. <https://lindstreet.blog/> : copyright 2017–2020. Posts mentioned:
  - “Where Did They Come From?” posted 23 October 2017.
  - “Gazetteers for German Research” posted 6 November 2017.
  - “Finding German Church Records” posted 12 November 2017.
19. TU Chemnitz. Beolingu. <https://dict.tu-chemnitz.de/> : 2006–2020. This is an online dictionary with some useful features.
20. Uetrecht, Dr. E. *Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs- Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs* (Meyer’s Directory of Places and Commerce in the German Empire). 1912. Reprint, Genealogical Publishing Co., 2000. A database of this work is available at <https://www.meyersgaz.org>.
21. Verein für Computergenealogie. *Das Geschichtliche Orts-Verzeichnis (GOV)*, database. <http://gov.genealogy.net/search/index> : 2020. This online gazetteer allows one to search for place names in German areas.
22. Verein für Computergenealogie. *GenWiki*, wiki. <http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Hauptseite> : 2020. This extensive set of articles may contain information about the town/regions you are researching.
23. Wright, Raymond S., III. *Ancestors in German Archives-A Guide to Family History Sources*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2004. This book only lists archives that responded to the author’s request for information.