

RESEARCH IN GERMANY

2019

Determine the place of origin of your ancestor.

German records are not centralised therefore before any research can be undertaken, you need to first establish the exact town or village that your ancestor was born in or that a particular event occurred in.

The golden rule of genealogy is to always work back from the known to the unknown. Therefore the place of origin of your ancestor should be looked for in New Zealand records, or if your family came via Australia or Britain then in those records.

The place of origin of your ancestor should be mentioned on N.Z. birth and death certificates after 1876 and on N.Z. marriage certificates after 1882.

It should appear in naturalisation papers so if your ancestor became naturalised then the full file for this should be applied for. It may also appear in an obituary, on a headstone, in army records, shipping lists, as well of course as family sources. If the family were in Britain, then the census there may show the place of origin or it may be mentioned on shipping lists

(Alien Arrivals) for cross Channel travel from Continental Europe. Hamburg was a major port of embarkation for Germany and North and Eastern Europe. The Hamburg Passenger Lists begin in 1850, are chronological by ship and show each passenger's last place of residence.

Also, always keep in mind the records of parents, all siblings and children, as you may just find the clue you are after in those.

Researching in Germany

German ancestor research is very easy to do as long as you have the Parish (*Kirchspiel*) or Town (*Stadt*) that your ancestor's event was registered in.

When you have what you think is the location of your ancestor's birth or marriage it is important to confirm this by using **Meyer's Ortslexikon** (A gazetteer for the German Empire pre 1912). This very good resource, which is available for free use online, lists even the smallest of settlements. It gives important information, although in heavily abbreviated form, such as a description of a place's location, nearby larger places and which registry office (*Standesamt*) kept the records.

The most challenging part of German research is usually the old gothic hand-writing. One might like to seek some help with this aspect.

Germany as a state came only into existence under Bismarck in 1871. Previously it consisted of over three hundred small duchies, grand-duchies, kingdoms and similar which explains the lack of centralized record keeping.

Civil Registration

Civil registration for Birth/Baptism (*Geburt/Taufe*), Marriage (*Trauung, Copulation*) and Death (*Tod, Verstorbene*) started roughly in stages from 1792 in the west to 1876 in the east.

The records are kept at the local registry office (*Standesamt*). Some of these records are now being transferred to archives. There are however restrictions for public access due to data security laws. Births 110 years, marriages 80 years and deaths 30 years since the event was registered are restricted. Exceptions to this only on application and by direct relations.

Parish records (*Kirchenbuch*)

Church records were kept generally from about 1650, some earlier ones are available for some locations. From 1876 they ceased to be official but were still kept, even to this day.

A parish (*Kirchspiel*) can consist of several small towns (*Stadt*), villages (*Dorf*) and estates (*Gut*).

Big cities have several parishes with numerous churches of different denominations.

In general the northern half of Germany is predominantly Lutheran and the southern half predominantly Catholic with Catholic parishes in the north usually covering quite big areas. The more recent the records, the more information they usually contain.

What information will you find in parish records

Birth / Baptism (*Geburt / Taufe*):

Will give you the name of the child, parents and also Godparents (*Taufzeugen, Gevattern*).

Remember to look closely at god-parents as brothers, sisters and the parents of parents may be found here, as well as other relatives such as uncles and aunts.

Confirmations (*Konfirmation*):

Name of child (*Konfirmant*), birth date and place, father's name and occupation (mother's name if illegitimate). Good quick source for finding siblings and establishing when and where born. Lists of the names of boys and girls were usually kept separate but in the same church book by year. Boys were usually confirmed at age 15, girls at age 14. The ceremony was normally held on Palm-Sunday (Sunday before Easter).

Marriages (*Trauung*):

Bride and groom, their parents and occupation. Often also where born if not local. Some will show witnesses.

Deaths (*Tod / Verstorbene*):

Name of deceased, death date, sometimes also occupation. Some have burial date and also where buried, others may have cause of death or parents of the deceased.

Population Registration

Another important record is the Population Registration (*Meldekarte, Einwohnermeldekarte*) which are kept at the *Einwohnermeldeamt/Meldeamt* for each sizeable location. Some are now kept in archives.

These record the movement of inhabitants and also contain personal details such as birth place and date. Several cards for the same person/family can exist in different locations. Reference is usually made where they moved to.

The cards are alphabetical by surname, show current and previous addresses, other family members, where and when they moved from or to. The cards did not move with the person/s. There will be another card if they moved outside the district.

Address Books

A good resource are online address books (*Adressbücher*), which are available for quite a number of places, usually small/medium sized towns and big cities.

Location family/-siblings books (*Ortsfamilien/sippenbücher OFB*)

For some localities all families have been reconstructed, using original records, to create these books. Each family can cover several generations.

Census (*Volkszählung*) records exist only sporadically for a few places. Mecklenburg is well covered.

What you already know

Surname

Christian name

Country

County/Province

Town/Parish

Birth

Marriage

Arrival in NZ Year

Children born not in NZ

Parents

NZ Certificates to obtain

Birth

Marriage

Death

Naturalisation

Check List

- Hamburg Passenger list
- UK Census
- UK Alien Arrival
- UK Naturalization Archives

Register Book of deaths for Marlow, Mecklenburg, 1841, P.472

The columns are headed: Death date, burial date, name of deceased, birth place, age, sickness or incident that caused the death. The first entry reads: Died Apr 26, buried Apr 29, Sülzer Saltworks worker's or labourer's wife Marie Dorothee Puffpaff née Harder, resident of this place, mother's and father's names unknown, born Mützkow in Pommern, said to be 71 yrs, died of a brain stroke.

Tage		Monat		Jahr		Geburtsort		Alter		Ursache des Todes	
Apr.	26.	Apr.	29.	71	Jahre	Mützow	in Pommern	71	Jahre	Marasmus	Störung

Bartien

Carl Martin Wolf

1. Geburtsort (Kreis, Land etc.)	2. Geburtsjahr und Tag	3. Familienstand	4. Religion	5. Stand oder Beruf	6. Militärschicks	7. Staatsangehörigkeit
<i>Boizenburg</i>	<i>1841</i>	<i>ledig</i>	<i>ev.</i>	<i>Militär 812 1/2 Jahre</i>		
9. In Hamburg seit	10. a. früherer Aufenthalt	11. In Legitimationspapieren haben vorgelegen:	12. Der Familiennamen			
<i>27. 4. 1912</i>	<i>Boizenburg</i>	<i>1841</i>	<i>1841</i>			
13. Name		14. Geburtsjahr und Tag	15. Bemerkungen			
1. Ehefrau:		16. Die Wohnung der unter 1. genannten Person oder, wenn Dienstbote, der Dienstverrichtung				
2. Kinder:		17. Wohnort				
18. Name		19. Geburtsjahr und Tag		20. Bemerkungen		
<i>1912</i>		<i>1912</i>		<i>1912</i>		

Meldekarte for Carl Martin Adolf Bantien who moved to Hamburg on 27th April 1912

The card was pre-printed and recorded information in 18 fields. The fields are:

- 1) Surname and Christian names of householder (Calling name underlined)
- 2) Place of birth
- 3) Date of birth
- 4) Marital status
- 5) Religion
- 6) Status or profession
- 7) Military status
- 8) Nationality
- 9) Since when in Hamburg
- 10) Last place of residence
- 11) The documents that were shown
- 12) Names of spouse(s) and children
- 13) Birthplaces of spouse and children
- 14) Birth dates of spouse and children
- 15) Comments for spouse and children
- 16) Date of registration
- 17) Residential address (of person under No.1)
- 18) Receipt No.

Websites

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|---|---|
| www.familysearch.org | FamilySearch |
| www.ancestry.com | Ancestry – Library or Worldwide version |
| www.meyersgaz.org/index.aspx | Meyers Gazetteer |
| http://wiki-en.genealogy.net/Main_Page | Main Genealogy Server for Germany |
| http://legacy.stoepel.net/en/Default.aspx | Surname maps for Germany |
| www.berufsgenealogie.net/english/start.html | List of Professional Genealogists in Germany |
| www.archion.de/en | Online Parish Register (subscription) Archive |
| http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/en/list | Online Digitised German Newspapers |
| http://agora.sub.uni-hamburg.de/subhh-adress/digbib/start | Address books for Hamburg and other cities |
| www.online-ofb.de | Ortsfamilienbücher (place family books) |
| www.landkartenarchiv.de/index.php | Online Digital Maps |
| www.agfhs.org.uk | Anglo-German Family History Society |

European Interest Contact

Send research queries to the Contact on the **European Interest Contact** page at www.genealogy.org.nz

A group meets on the 1st Friday of most months at the Family Research Centre at 159 Queens Rd, Panmure from 4pm– 10pm. Continental advice is usually available, however please first check with the Contact to be quite sure.

Recommended Reading

- FamilySearch.org Research Wiki for information on records, how to use them and links to various archives.
- Hansen, Kevan, *Map Guide to German Parish Registers.*
- Towey, Peter, *Tracing your German Ancestors, 2013.*