

Finding German Records Online: An Overview of Helpful Websites

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Do you use FamilySearch? How about Archion or CompGen's GenWiki? Learn about various websites to help you in your German research.

Gazetteers

MeyersGaz

www.meyersgaz.org

Location covered: German Empire (1871–1918)

Instructions: Type a town name from the German Empire into the search box in the middle of the homepage (or at the top right of any location page) and hit Enter.

Example: Say an ancestor is listed in a record as having been born in Rimselrein, Bayern. Searching for Rimselrein yields no results. Searching for R*ms*n yields several results. Clicking on the dropdown box to filter by Bayern shortens the list of results significantly to the following placenames: Ramsen, Ramstein, Ramstetten, and Rimslrain. Rimslrain is a logical spelling variant of Rimselrein; clicking on the blue Rimslrain shows the location on the map, lists the closest Catholic parish as being two miles away in Kirchbichl (the closest Protestant parish is 9 miles away in Penzberg), and links to a larger location (Unterfischbach), which it is dependent on and whose page lists the location of the civil registration office (Unterfischbach). (Alternatively, searching for Rimselrein and then clicking on the blue “sounds like” search results” option at the bottom of the results page brings up Rimslrain—but note that the “sounds like” search does not work with all spelling variations).

Notes: Use an asterisk as a wildcard; for example, searching for Sch*lm*rg will yield the following results: Schloss Colmberg, Schwalmberg, and Schwalmsberg. For words with umlauts, search using either the umlauted or the non-umlauted version of the letter—however, do not expand the umlaut. For example, search for Lämmersdorf or Lammersdorf, but searching for Laemmersdorf will yield no results. When searching for a full placename (without wildcards), you can click on the “sounds like” search results” option at the bottom of the results page to view similar-sounding locations. Stray spaces in the search box will result in no search results.

GenWiki

wiki.genealogy.net

Location covered: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and more

Instructions: Type a German town name into the “GenWiki durchsuchen” search box (currently at the top right). If a list of search results is presented, click on a result to view information about it.

Example: Searching for Limbach yields several results, organized under various German states. Searching for Genthin brings you to a page listing the contact information for Genthin’s Protestant parish and a link to an online OFB (Ortsfamilienbuch) for Genthin. Searching for Zerpenschleuse brings up no page dedicated to this town but does show pages it is mentioned on.

Notes: Many town pages do not contain much information, but others list jurisdictional levels, names of parishes, where records are found, and more.

Kartenmeister

kartenmeister.com

Location covered: Ostpreußen (East Prussia) (including Memel), Westpreußen (West Prussia), Brandenburg, Posen, Pommern (Pomerania), and Schlesien (Silesia).

Instructions: Scroll to the bottom of the page. Fill out one or more criteria, such as the German or Polish placename, and click “Submit.” If the results do not fit on a single page, click on “Next 10” at the bottom to view the next results, or click on the back arrow to refine the search.

Example: Searching for Dürreltel in row 1 (German City Name) brings up Dürreltel (i.e., the town), the Dürreltel Bahnhof (train station), and the Dürreltel Ziegelei (brickworks). (Searching for Durrlettel or Duerrlettel will not work.) Clicking on the first result shows that Dürreltel has also been known as Lutol Zuchy, Lutolek Suchy, Suchy Lutolek, and Lutol Suchy, it has its own Lutheran parish, it belongs to the Catholic parish of Kutschkau, and it belongs to the civil registration office of Brätz.

Notes: Use the * wildcard in place of multiple letters and use the ? wildcard in place of a single letter; decrease the number of results by entering the county or province. For example, searching for P and entering the county as Friedeberg (click on “Next 10” at the bottom right of the results page to view the next page, or select a greater number of results per page before clicking “Submit”), searching for Pi*l*ce, or searching for Pie???e all result in a list that includes Pielice.

Westpreussen.de

westpreussen.de

Location covered: Westpreußen (West Prussia)

Instructions: Hovering your mouse over the Forschungshinweise tab, click on “[Ortsverzeichnisse](#)” (place directories/gazetteers). At the end of the first line, click on the word “[hier](#)” (here). Type a town name from Westpreußen (West Prussia) into the “Ortsname” (placename) search box and click on the “Suche” (search) button. Study the results to determine which of the results is the location you are looking for. Click on “Details” in the last column to view information about that town. Click on the civil registration office or a parish name for information about the record types that are available and for which years, and where those records are located.

Example: Searching for Fronza shows its Polish name (Frąca), spelling/name variation(s) (Francze, Fronca, Frantza, Fronza, Franzenshof, Hochfranzen), jurisdictional levels, civil registration office (Fronza), Protestant parish (Schmentau), Catholic parish (Lalkau), number of residents in certain years, notes, and links to maps. Clicking on the civil registration office and parish names shows that, besides being available onsite in various locations, some are also online: civil registration records at metryki.genbaza.pl, indeksy.net, szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl, namensindex.org (indexes), and FamilySearch (listed as Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage); Protestant records at Archion and FamilySearch; and Catholic records at FamilySearch (and possibly www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl).

Notes: Stray spaces in the search box will result in no search results.

LAGIS Hessen Historisches Ortslexikon

lagis-hessen.de

Location covered: Hessen (Hesse)

Instructions: On the left, click on the green Lexica tab, then on Ortslexikon, and then on [Extended Search](#)/Erweiterte Suche. Type a town name from Hessen (Hesse) into the first search box (Place Name/Ortsname) and hit Enter or click on the LAGIS Search/LAGIS-Suche button at the bottom of the screen. Click on a search result to view information about that town.

Example: Searching for Zennern yields two results: Zennern and Niederzennern. The Zennern page lists it as a Dorf (village), shows it on a map (which can be clicked on to maximize), describes its geography, lists its earliest reference, lists historical names (such as Slánare, Czehinder, and Zehendern), shows population statistics, lists its jurisdictions over time, and more.

Pommerscher Greif

pommerscher-greif.de

Location covered: Pommern (Pomerania)

Instructions: In the middle of the text, click on the blue hyperlinked “[Quellendatenbank](#)” to access the location search. Type a town name from Pommern (Pomerania) into the blue search box, select the “Phonetische Suche” (phonetic search) box if uncertain of the official spelling, and click on the “Suche” (search) button. Study the results to determine which location you are looking for. Click on the placename in the “deutscher Ortsname” (German placename) column for information about that town. Town pages may include the location of the parishes and civil registration office the town belongs to, where the records are (online and onsite), and whether records for certain years are missing/destroyed.

Example: Searching for Stralsund shows the Protestant and Catholic parishes of the town (all in Stralsund) and the location of civil registration records (Stadtarchiv Stralsund), Protestant church records (Kirchenkreisamt Stralsund and Landeskirchliches Archiv Greifswald), and Catholic church records (Pfarramt d. Pfarrei St. Bernhard Stralsund/Rügen/Demmin).

Notes: Stray spaces in the search box will result in no search results. For more information about the Pommerscher Greif place search, see the English [Users Guide](#).

JewishGen Communities Database

jewishgen.org

Location covered: 6,000 Jewish communities in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East

Instructions: Hovering your mouse over the third tab, Discover, click on “[Town Finder \(Communities Database\)](#).” Type a town name into the gray “Jewish community” search box at the top of the table to the right. Select a country to narrow the search, if desired, and hit Enter or click “Start the search.” On the search results page, click on “Another Search?” below the table if needed.

Example: Searching for Baisingen takes you to a table showing only Baisingen. Hover your mouse over the town name and click on “Baisingen, Germany” in the pop-up for additional information.

JewishGen Gazetteer

jewishgen.org

Location covered: One million localities in 54 countries in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia

Instructions: Hovering your mouse over the third tab, Discover, click on “[Town Finder \(Communities Database\)](#).” At the bottom of the description to the left, click on the linked [JewishGen Gazetteer](#). Type a town name into the “Search for locality” search box at the top of the table to the right. Click on the dropdown box, change the country/region to match the place you are looking for, and hit Enter or click “Start the search.” Log in if you have not already done so. Click on the JewishGen icon next to a search result to view additional information.

Example: Searching for Baisingen in Western Europe takes you to a table with several results, only one of which is Baisingen (changing the search method dropdown option on the search page from “Phonetically Like” to “Is Exactly” will yield only Baisingen as a result). Hovering your mouse over the town name (or clicking on the JewishGen icon next to it) will provide additional information.

Notes: To use this gazetteer, you must create a free account and log in.

FamilySearch Wiki

familysearch.org/en/wiki

Location covered: much of the world

Instructions: Search for a topic or location, such as Germany. Clicking on a search result will take you to an article about the topic or location containing links to various resources and information.

Example: Searching for Germany and clicking on the “Germany Genealogy” search result takes you to the “Germany Genealogy” FamilySearch Wiki page, which lists various information as well as possible topics of interest in a table on the right. Scrolling down to the list of provinces, kingdoms, and duchies of the German Empire and clicking on Hohenzollern brings you to a page about Hohenzollern. Clicking on “civil registration” from the table on the right takes you to a page about civil registration in Hohenzollern, including information about how to locate civil records.

Notes: The *FamilySearch* Wiki contains more than 102,500 articles. Learning how to navigate it and what kind of information and links to resources it offers can aid greatly in genealogical research.

More gazetteers at familysearch.org/en/wiki/Online_German_Gazetteers_and_Parish_Register_Inventories

Records

Matricula-Online (or Matricula)

data.matricula-online.eu

Location covered: mostly Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, and Slovenia (mostly Catholic)

Instructions: Click on the Map/Landkarte heading or map icon to search for a town on the map; click on nearby place markers on the map for a link to those parishes’ records. Alternatively, click on the Search for Places/Ortssuche heading or the magnifying glass icon to search for a parish (or sometimes a town); click on a search result to view that parish’s records. Or click on the Fonds/Bestände heading or the book icon and continue selecting the next, smaller jurisdiction until arriving at a parish page.

Example: Clicking on “Search for Places” and searching for Lechterke brings up one result: the parish of Badbergen St. Marien (the parish name is in blue). Click on the result to view the parish page. (Alternatively, click on the Map heading and search for Lechterke in the right-hand map search; looking at the map, there are two parishes near the town: Quakenbrück Unbefleckte Empfängnis Mariens and Badbergen St. Marien.) Select the records to view by moving the year marker and/or selecting a record type. Then click on the camera icon by a book of interest and browse the digital images.

Notes: Established in September 2009 by ICARUS (International Centre for Archival Research, an association of archives from 23 European states and Canada), this website is the go-to for German Catholic records, although it has a few Protestant records as well. Matricula-Online is free to use.

Recently added records: data.matricula-online.eu/en/nachrichten

Archion

archion.de

Location covered: Germany (Protestant)

Instructions: Click on the Suche/Search tab. Type a parish name into the Freitext/Text field or the Ort/Location field; if typing in the second field, select the location from the pop-up list. Select a year range and record type, if desired, and hit Enter or click on Suchen/Search. Click on a result to browse the digital images (logging in at this point and having an active subscription/pass is necessary).

Example: Searching for Iburg yields thirteen results: T (Taufen/baptisms), TR (Trauungen/marriages), KB (Kirchenbuch/church book), KONF (Konfirmationen/confirmations), B (Bestattungen/burials), NAMENSREG (Namensregister/name index), FAMILIENBUCH (family book), and ZIVREG (Zivil Register/civil register), some of the records going back to 1717. Typing Gemmrigheim into the search box, typing a period (Zeitraum) of 1860 to (bis) 1880, and selecting Trauung/Marriage yields only one result: the 1808–1875 Eheregister (marriage register) of Gemmrigheim. Click on the book to browse.

Notes: Established in 2014 by the Evangelical Church in Germany, Archion contains Protestant records from several church archives. Though by subscription only, passes as short as one month are available and will not automatically renew. Potential subscribers can check whether records for a specific parish are available before registering, and the Hildrizhausen records are browsable as a free test of the website.

Recently added records: archion.de/en/news/recently-added