

Get Your Questions Answered by the German Research Experts

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If you have any questions please do get in contact with us!

Get your questions answered and glean useful advice for your German Jewish Family History research from Roger Lustig and Jeanette Rosenberg OBE, GerSIG Directors.

Roger and Jeanette are available to answer your questions relating to starting out or making progress with your German research. They can offer you advice about where records can be found, what they may contain, how to get copies of documents and can provide strategies and ideas for making the most of your research. If you're a beginner or a more experienced researcher, this is a perfect opportunity to ask questions and get useful advice from people who can help you research your German Jewish family history.

Roger specializes in German Jewish history, focusing on the parts of Prussia that became Polish in the 20th Century. Jeanette Rosenberg is a frequent researcher at archives in Germany and focusses in West Germany, notably in Rhineland and the Pfalz.

Here are the questions and answers from this session:

Where are the records held in Bavaria?

<http://www.gda.bayern.de/english/>

RLL: Depends on what "the records" means. As the link above mentions, vital records from 1876 onward are kept in the town where they were created (or whichever town a place was incorporated into since then).

Before that, the answer varies by governmental region.

Jewish records for ca. 1810-1875 are largely on Gatermann films. Printouts of the Bavarian films are at the state archives in Würzburg (Unterfranken), Nürnberg (Mittelfranken) and München (southern regions). Oberfranken never delivered its records to be filmed, so they're evidently still in the towns. Ask Ekkehard Hübschmann for more info on those.

You'll need to contact the relevant state archive and get scans or photocopies of records from a particular town. The original films are currently at the Zentralarchiv für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland (Heidelberg), where a comprehensive catalog is being prepared.

Staatsarchiv Nürnberg - Die Judenmatrikel 1813-1861 für Mittelfranken - http://www.gf-franken.de/digitquell_frm.html is a CD-ROM that contains images and index of the lists of protected Jews for each town in the region. The images are also available on film via familysearch.org.

Die unterfränkischen Judenmatriken von 1817 by Dirk Rosenstock (Würzburg: Schöningh, 2008) is a brilliant reconstruction of the Unterfranken equivalents of the previous item, albeit only for the original protection-holders. There's a wealth of information about their families, occupations, etc. GerSIG hopes to produce an on-line index of this.

Before 1810: the situation varies from place to place, especially in light of the many tiny principalities, bishoprics, etc. that "owned" Jews.

Where Do I look for records in Gnesen in Germany/Poland?

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gniezno>

<http://data.jewishgen.org/wconnect/wc.dll?jg~jgsys~community~-501970~K>

See also the link to PRADZIAD (Polish State Archives vital-record index) under Bytom/Beuthen.

How do I find records from 1394 for my family in Frankfurt am Main?

How do I differentiate between the 3 branches of the family?

How did they get from there to Prague?

Alexander Dietz Stammbuch der Frankfurter Juden (largely superseded and corrected by Ele Toldot)

<http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/content/titleinfo/1102542>

https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_S2ILAAAAIAAJ

<http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=31817>

<http://goldschmidt.tripod.com/>

Ele Toldot <http://tiny.cc/kd5s9x> (See also the talk given at the Seattle Conference by Ralph Bloch from Ontario Canada and his handout on the conference thumb drive).

Prague – speak to the Austria Czech Sig <http://www.jewishgen.org/AustriaCzech/>

In general, any further research would have to involve collating whatever sources remain from medieval times in all of Germany.

General comment: any records (Jewish or Gentile) from central Europe before 1648 (the end of the 30 Years War) should be considered a gift. The devastation wrought by that war included the loss of many historical sources.

Were there links between families in London and Aachen in 1795?

What would they be?

Trade Links – may be information at UK National Archives - <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> or in the Gazette, the UK's Official Journal <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/>

UK Newspapers online – via <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/> or <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Leicester University's City Directories Project <http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/find/specialcollections/specialcollections/historical-directories>

How do I find records for Darmstadt in Hessen?

Some Darmstadt civil records (1876ff) have already been indexed by familysearch. These are viewable only at Family History Centers or with an LDS logon. The same records are available to all at <http://www.lagis-hessen.de/en/subjects/index/sn/pstr> -- just enter the name of the town.

What are the Gatermann Films?

<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Germany/Gatermann.htm>

http://www.papaworx.com/Blog/tag/gatermann_films

For many places in Germany the most important sources for pre-1876 Jewish vital records survive only on film. Most of these films are called “Gatermann films” after the company that made them. The films are owned by the respective German states, or, in the case of the former East Germany and Prussian-Polish territories, by the German government. (Those are kept in the Leipzig archive.)

Baden-Württemberg has put its collection on line at <https://www2.landesarchiv-bw.de/ofs21/olf/struktur.php?bestand=5632>. Most of the films for Hessen are on-line via the link given above for Darmstadt. Those for the Hessen-Kassel and Waldeck regions are indexed as part of the JewishGen Germany Database. That index provides links to the images.

The East-German and Prussian Polish sets are supposed to go on line any year now.

What are the holdings of the archives in NRW and what is held where?

Die Zivilstandsregister und Kirchenbuchduplikate im Nordrhein- Westfälischen Personenstandsarchiv Rheinland : eine Übersicht. Brühl : Nordrhein-Westfälischen Personenstandsarchiv Rheinland, ©1996. ISBN 3877101798.

Die Bestände des Nordrhein-Westfälischen Personenstandsarchivs Westfalen-Lippe

http://www.archive.nrw.de/lav/abteilungen/ostwestfalen_lippe/BilderKartenLogosDateien/Dateien/Best_nde_Kurz_bersicht_PA_Westfalen-Lippe1.pdf

Most important: the Jewish vital records from the Detmold and Arnsberg districts of Westphalia are now on line via http://www.archive.nrw.de/LAV_NRW/jsp/bestand.jsp?archivNr=409&tektId=1254&expandId=1253 – a massive collection. The Münster region is still to come. (There are also some Gatermann films, but start here.) See diagram below under “Köln.”

Note that portions of NR-W (and everywhere else) west of the Rhine have very few specifically Jewish vital records, as civil registration was introduced there ca. 1798 and maintained since. Consult local registry offices for information from there.

What is the Lars Menk Dictionary

A Dictionary of German-Jewish Surnames by Lars Menk <http://www.avotaynu.com/books/Menk.htm>

This dictionary identifies more than 13,000 German-Jewish surnames from the area that was pre-World War I Germany. From Baden-Wuerttemberg in the south to Schleswig-Holstein in the north. From Westfalen in the west to East Prussia in the east. In addition to providing the etymology and variants of each name, it identifies where in the region the name appeared, identifying the town and time period. More than 300 sources were used to compile the book. A chapter provides the Jewish population in many towns in the 19th century.

The effort took nearly 10 years and used more than 300 sources to compile the information.

In general: start your search here.

Here is a link to Ancestry's guide to German Civil Records

A guide to German birth, marriage, and death registrations - <http://c.ancestry.com/cs/media/social-research-german-civil-registration.pdf>

What is Standesamt 1 in Berlin and what does it hold?

<http://www.berlin.de/labo/buergerdienste/standesamt-i-in-berlin/>

Other Standesaemte - <http://service.berlin.de/standorte/standesaemter/>

HINT: translate using either Google Chrome's automatic translation facility or Google Translate

SA 1 contains duplicate (backup copy) vital registers from territories formerly in Germany. They are being put on line and indexed by ancestry.com. The title of the collection is **Eastern Prussian Provinces, Germany [Poland], Selected Civil Vitals, 1874-1945**. Indexing is being done alphabetically by town, and they were up to K last time I checked.

What about the Berlin Address Book?

<http://www.zlb.de/besondere-angebote/berliner-adressbuecher.html>
<http://digital.zlb.de/viewer/cms/82/>

This contains OCR-searchable scans of the annual address books for the city of Berlin up to 1943. They also have the 1931 directory of the Berlin Jewish community.

What's the "Gedenkbuch"?

<https://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/> is a memorial book listing the names, birthdates and birthplaces, residences and details of persecution for residents of Germany murdered by the Nazis. It is updatable—send them your evidence. More detailed than the corresponding info at Yad Vashem in most cases.

Hamburg – link to HGFJG

<http://www.jghh.org/de/judentum/genealogie>

President is Juergen Sielemann info@jghh.org

Explain the year limits for Datenschutz in Germany

110 Years Birth registers
80 Years Marriage registers
30 years Death registers

Records not yet as old as the above may only be viewed by descendants and others entitled to do so.

Where records are there for Bythom / Beuthen and what is available?

Standesamt 1A (see above) has an excellent collection of civil vital records for 1874-1940, which has been indexed and put on line at ancestry.com. The first copies of these books are in the Polish State Archive in Katowice.

For 1812-1874, the Jewish records are essentially complete on microfilm (made by the Nazis, some Gatermann, some earlier). JRI-Poland has parts of these registers in their index, and the rest is being edited.

Note that, for the county of which Beuthen was the seat, we have no records before 1844 or so. The county included Myslowitz, for which the 1847-74 records are indexed at JRI-Poland. 1847-74 records for the rest of the county are almost complete and are or will be indexed for JRI as well. Post-1874, consult the Polish State Archive vital-records index at <http://baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/pradziad.php?l=en>. They also have listings for surviving pre-1874 Jewish records from Prussian Poland.

What is NALDex? What is AHB NAL?

<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Germany/Naldex.htm>

A database of transcribed surname-adoption lists, prepared by GerSIG members. Currently contains lists from Prussia (about 95% complete) and Lippe-Detmold. More to come, though the variety of list types prepared by different states will preclude their being a single index.

http://www.a-h-b.de/AHB/links_e.htm

Web site of Wolfgang Fritzsche, a researcher in Germany. He has many surname-adoption lists on his site too.

Where do I find records for Koeln:

<http://www.archive.nrw.de/>

http://www.archive.nrw.de/lav/abteilungen/rheinland/profil_zustaendigkeit/index.php

http://www.archive.nrw.de/lav/abteilungen/ostwestfalen_lippe/profil_zustaendigkeit/index.php



Koeln Death Certificates online <http://historischesarchivkoeln.de/lav/index.php>

What kinds of records are available on Genealogie Netz?

http://www.genealogienetz.de/index_en.html

What is the name of the big yellow book listing all the archives in Germany?

Archive in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz, published annually or every 2 years by Ardey-Verlag available via Amazon.de ISBN 978-3-87023-415-7

How do I find a link to local archives in Germany?

In Google, search for the name of the place then type “archiv” – no final “e”.

Who is Andrea Bentschneider and how can you find her?

She’s a professional German genealogist who has worked on the Who Do You Think You Are tv show and is a friend of Roger’s. She has a company called Beyond History - <http://www.beyond-history.com/> She is also President of VdB which is the association of German-Speaking Professional Genealogists Association <http://www.berufsgenealogie.net/german/start.html>

How to find past Obermayer Awardees – who can help us in Germany

<http://obermayer.us/award/awardees.htm>

What US Ports would my people have arrived at?

Top 10 N. American Ports of Arrival in 1903

Port	Number of Immigrants
Ellis Island	706,113
Baltimore	69,541
Boston	64,358
Montreal & St. John's	33,048
Philadelphia	29,926
Honolulu	11,439
San Francisco	9,504
Key West Florida	5,129
New Orleans	4,685
New Bedford Mass.	4,435

(Note: there were about 100 other ports of entry over the years...)

What is the FamilySearch Research Wiki

The FamilySearch Wiki is a tool for finding information about subjects, records that may have been generated about your ancestors, and the places in which the records might be found. It is a vast information depository. When you search in the Wiki you can search for places your ancestors lived, but also for subjects and research methods to help you understand and learn about the history of your families. You can possibly find records and record collections from the states, counties and cities where your ancestors may have worked and lived. You will not find Wiki pages about specific ancestors, but you may find a link to a database that contains your ancestor's birth, marriage and/or death record!

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Main_Page

Who was Jacob Jacobsen and what are his records, where do I find them?

<http://findingaids.cjh.org/?pID=147427>

Why would my family have had children in lots of different places?

They moved about because of their family run- business.

We hope that you find this document useful.

Jeanette and Roger
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