

German gazetteers online

By Kory L.
Meyerink, MLS, AG, FUGA



All genealogical research is ultimately local in origin. Our ancestors lived in specific places, and the records about them were usually created in those places where they lived. Further, it is through a family's location that we, in part, identify them.

The geographic aspect of genealogical research is even more important for Germanic ancestors than it is for most North Americans. Some key records for North Americans were created at the state, provincial, and national levels. That is seldom the case with German ancestors. Virtually all the key records about German families were created at the local level, in the town or parish where they lived.

Therefore, locating places in Germany is an important aspect of successful German research. From there it is essential to identify the parish where the family attended church. The primary tools for such research are gazetteers. Most of those gazetteers are written in German (often using an archaic font style), and are hard for most researchers to access, except via microfilm at a Family History Center. Fortunately, technology is changing all that. Slowly, an increasing number of gazetteers for various German states are appearing online.

The German Empire

However, due to the constantly changing map of Europe, particularly as it pertained to German areas, the boundaries and jurisdictional levels of German countries often changed. Indeed, the actual country of Germany did not even exist until 1871. Earlier, our German ancestors lived in one of many different and independent German states. These changes have significant impact on German research, one of which is how to designate the now changed jurisdictions that were in place when our ancestors lived there.

Over time, genealogical convention has evolved to the end result that most references to German place names tend to use the governmental jurisdictions established by the various countries that made up the German Empire from 1871 to 1918. Using the boundaries and jurisdictions of this time period is useful for many reasons:

- First, there is an excellent gazetteer that describes each locality in the empire and designates the jurisdictions to which it belongs.
- Second, prior to 1871, the civil (government) jurisdictions are of less importance for most genealogical work, since they generally kept fewer records of genealogical value.
- Third, the vast majority of German immigrants who settled in North America arrived during, or in the thirty years before, the existence of the German Empire. Thus, these jurisdictions pertain quite specifically to hundreds of thousands of German immigrants.
- Fourth, the largest collection of German genealogical records (those at the LDS Family History Library) are cataloged and described on the basis of the Empire's jurisdictions.
- Fifth, although the empire was first established in 1871, most of the major boundaries and jurisdictions had been fairly stable (with notable exceptions) since the 1815 Congress of Vienna, with its dismantling of Napoleon's empire and establishment of the German Confederation. Thus, most 1871 boundaries and jurisdictions effectively date from much earlier in that century.

When the German Empire was created in 1871, it combined the Kingdom of Prussia with other German kingdoms, principalities, duchies, and independent states. This was the culmination of centuries of political evolution among the Germans that lead to one primary German nation. However, as an empire, most of its constituent members had a high degree of autonomy, especially in the making and preservation of governmental records, at the local, regional, and state (kingdoms, etc.) levels.

Family researchers need to recognize these places for several reasons. First, they are part of the jurisdictions where our ancestors lived. Second, they have their own different sub-jurisdictions that affect research procedures. Third, many have separate gazetteers that may be necessary for identifying certain jurisdictions, such as parishes. Fourth, with so many German towns sharing the same name, it may require knowing the correct German country (state) in order to separate the right town from others of the same name.

The recent online posting of the seminal gazetteer for Germany, *Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs* at Ancestry.com, is a great boon for German researchers. However, it has several drawbacks. While it is currently available to use without a subscription, that will not likely endure. Second, it is not electronically searchable; rather, only the images are posted, requiring researchers to “drill down” to the right page to locate an entry. Lastly, it still requires being able to read the old German Fraktur font, and understand myriad abbreviations.

Major gazetteer providers

The following discussion covers the growing number of free, English-language Web sites where useful, if not always complete, gazetteers are available for most of the former German Empire. The list is arranged by the various German states (and Prussian provinces), since most of these gazetteers only cover one state. However, three Web sites include gazetteers for three or more states, and require some general discussion first. State-specific links are provided below.

[Genealogy Net](#)—Considered by some as a kind of German “RootsWeb,” this German site (with many English pages) maintains many useful research sources and tools, including databases of places as well as people. Each database usually includes a brief discussion of the source of the data and the nature of what is included in the database. For state and regional tools, select the “Regional” tab, and then the country of interest, followed by the state on the country map (similar to GenWeb). Its three country modern gazetteer (GOV) is discussed at the end of this article.

[Kartenmeister](#)—This personal site created by a German now living in Canada, is a powerful database search engine that identifies more than 70,000 locations formerly in the German Empire. It indicates that “All locations are EAST of the Oder and Neisse rivers and are based on the borders of the eastern provinces in Spring 1918. Included in this database are the following provinces: Eastprussia, including Memel, Westprussia, Brandenburg, Posen, Pomerania, and Silesia.” Scroll to the bottom of the page, and

input the known search data into the appropriate boxes. Results include the parishes and other jurisdictions to which the locality belonged.

[ProGenealogists's German Genealogy Research](#)—This free site, begun by Gary Horlacher, and now maintained by a genealogical research company, includes a variety of gazetteers of differing origin and content. Each gazetteer is based on an older, published gazetteer whose content was keyed into columns in a word processing document. Those documents were then converted to Web pages. In most cases, the key data provided for each locality are the Catholic and Protestant parishes to which the place belonged. Searches can be made by selecting the alphabetical portion of the gazetteer, or using a search box for the entire German Web site. The company is in the process of consolidating each of these gazetteers into one database-driven site, to improve search efficiency and allow searches across all the states. It may add more states in the future.

Bavarian Gazetteer
by U. Petra Suess & Daniel Schlyter

Select your listing of Bavarian place names from below, or select another page from the list to the right. As always, if you see errors, or you would like to add to this site, please [contact us](#).

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Name of Town	District (Kreis)	Province	Evangelical (Evangelisch)	Catholic (Katholisch)
Azerbach	Freising	Oberbayern	Allershausen	Allershausen
Azerbach, Gemeinde: Rimsting	Rosenheim	Oberbayern	Rosenheim	Pien
Azerhofen	Straubing	Niederbayern	Straubing	Azerhofen
Azermeos, Gemeinde: Ratt am Inn	Wasserburg	Oberbayern	Münldorf	Emmaseing
Azerndorf, Gemeinde: Straußdorf	Obersberg	Oberbayern	Ebersberg	Straußdorf
Azernd, Gemeinde: Halzhausen	Wittiburg	Niederbayern	Landshtut	Halzhausen
Azersteining, Gemeinde: Forstinning	Ebersberg	Oberbayern	Feldkirchen	Forstinning
Aitrang	Maik Oberdorf	Schwaben	Kaufbeuren	Maik Aitrang
Aizenroute, Gemeinde: Schedegg	Lindau	Schwaben	Lindenberg in Allgäu	Schedegg
Ajen, Gemeinde: Sankt Lorenz	Kempten	Schwaben	Kempten	Kempten

German state gazetteers

The following list of German state gazetteers is arranged according to the constituent members of the former German Empire, which consisted of nineteen states. The list uses the German spelling, with English (if different) in parenthesis. Note that for the Kingdom of Prussia, each of its thirteen provinces are treated as if they were separate states, and are listed after the full-fledged states.

Kingdoms

[Bayern \(Bavaria\)](#): Based on the 1928 Bavarian gazetteer, this alphabetical listing of all places in Bavaria identifies the local district (Kreis) and the Bavarian province, along with the Catholic and Protestant parish.

[Sachsen \(Saxony\)](#): This modern listing of municipalities in the current state of Saxony (Sachsen) reflects changes after the unification of East and West Germany. Modern Saxony's borders closely parallel those of the old Kingdom of Saxony. Smaller towns may not be in this list, which simply identifies the district (county) to which the places belong.

[Württemberg](#): Based on the village registers of the *Beschreibungen der Oberämter*, published by the royal statistic-topographic bureau (1824–86), this alphabetical list simply gives the name of the place, and the "Oberamt" to which it belonged. It does not identify parishes. As of press time, this URL was not working. Please search the "Regional" section of Genealogy.net for the new URL.

[Preussen \(Prussia\)](#): The various Prussian provinces are treated as separate states below.

Duchies (and Grand Duchies)

[Anhalt](#): Wikipedia provides a very useful listing of the 1,042 cities and communities (like townships) in the modern German state of Sachsen-Anhalt. The modern state comprises all of the former Duchy of Anhalt, along with most of the Prussian province of Saxony (Sachsen). The list is alphabetical, but clicking on a locality provides an entry with a brief history, along with the current population, latitude and longitude, modern district (Landkreis), and the postal code.

Baden: This database of towns in Baden is provided by Lineages, a research company. Typing in the name of a town provides a list of matching places, along with the parish and district (Kreis) to which they belong. Clicking on the entry for the town or parish brings up a list of church records available through the Family History Library. Type in only the first part of the place name (including just the first letter if desired) for a list of towns, parishes, and districts that begin with those letters.

Braunschweig (Brunswick): Currently no gazetteer appears to be online for the former duchy of Brunswick.

Hessen (Hesse): Based on a 1939 book about the church and civil records for the former Grand Duchy of Hesse (often called Hesse-Darmstadt), this alphabetical list simply gives the Evangelical and Catholic parish for each place, or a see reference for some smaller places.

Mecklenburg: Both Mecklenburg duchies are included in this alphabetical listing, which simply names the duchy (Schwerin or Strelitz) along with the parish (Evangelical) and the 1819 census district and FHL microfilm number.

Oldenburg: Provided by a Germany-based genealogist, this is a list of preserved parish registers for the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Oldenburg. Arranged by church district, clicking on the district will generate a list of all parishes, and when the church records begin.

Waldeck: Abstracted from the 1909 gazetteer of Westphalia and Waldeck, this alphabetical list of places identifies the district (Kreis) along with the Evangelical and Catholic parishes to which it belongs.

Parish Registers of the "Ev. luth. Kirche Oldenburg"
Church district Oldenburg

Parish	Baptism	Marriage	Burial	Other
Hankenburg	Dec. 1728-	June 1728-	April 1728-	*
Halle	Oct. 1617-	Nov. 1617-	Oct. 1617-	
	Evangelical 1617-1719 Catholic 1617-1719			
Ofen	1801-	1801-	1801-	
Oldenburg	1642-	1642-	May 1779-	
	Evangelical 1642-1801 Catholic 1642-1801	Evangelical 1642-1801 Catholic 1642-1801		
Osternburg	1653-	Oct. 1653-	June 1698-	
	Evangelical 1653-1704 Catholic 1653-1704	Evangelical 1653-1704 Catholic 1653-1704		
Rastede	1622-	1635-	Dec. 1626-	
	Evangelical 1622-1704 Catholic 1622-1704	Evangelical 1635-1704 Catholic 1635-1704	Evangelical 1626-1704 Catholic 1626-1704	

A selection from the Oldenburg Web site.

Principalities

Lippe (Detmold): Extracted from the 1911 gazetteer of the Principality of Lippe, each entry is a brief description of the locality, including number of houses, population, parish, post office, civil registry office, judicial offices, and other information.

Schaumburg-Lippe: This list, arranged in columns, identifies the town, its approximate size, civil office, district, church parish (keyed by a letter standing for one of the twenty-four parishes in the area), and other information.

Thuringen (Thuringia): There appears to be no online gazetteer for the eight small duchies and principalities that made up the area known as Thuringia.

Free cities

The three former imperial (free) cities of Bremen, Hamburg, and Luebeck do not have gazetteers because of their small size.

Empire state

Elsass-Lothringen (Alsace-Lorraine): Derived from a variety of current and historical sources, this is an alphabetical list of communities in the former area of Alsace. Clicking on the town of interest

provides an entry with variant spellings, current French jurisdictions, population at different dates, and the religious composition in 1807. There appears to be no online gazetteer for Lorraine.

Prussian provinces

[Brandenburg](#): Extracted from a 1938 gazetteer of Brandenburg, this is primarily a list of towns with their current postal code.

[Hanover](#): As with Oldenburg (above), this is a list of preserved parish registers for the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hanover. Arranged by church district, clicking on the district will generate a list of all parishes in the district, and when the church records begin. With more than eleven hundred parishes so arranged on the page, use the Ctl-F function to search for the parish of interest. For the part of Hanover that was in the area called East Frisia, click on the link for “Parish Registers of the Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche in Nordwestdeutschland.”

[Hessen-Nassau \(Hesse-Nassau\)](#): An alphabetical listing that identifies the district (Kreis) along with the Catholic and Evangelical parishes for each locality.

[Hohenzollern](#): This alphabetical list identifies the district (Kreis) and the location of the Protestant, Catholic, and civil records for each locality.

[Ostpreussen \(East Prussia\)](#): The [Kartenmeister](#) link is discussed above. The [ProGenealogists's](#) link is labeled “Prussia” and covers both provinces, East and West Prussia. It is based on the 1910 Prussian gazetteer. For each locality, it identifies the district (Kreis) along with the Catholic and Protestant parish, and the civil registry office.

[Pommern \(Pomerania\)](#): The [Kartenmeister](#) link only includes what is known as “Hinter Pommern” or eastern Pomerania, which is the area now in Poland. It comprises about two-thirds of the former province.

[Posen](#): The [Kartenmeister](#) link is discussed above.

[Rheinland \(Rhineland\)](#): There appears to be no online listing of places in the former Rhineland province. However, studies indicate that the [Family History Library Catalog](#) has listings for more than 2,300 places in the province, and this includes about 75 percent of the parishes. To see the list, type “Rheinland” in the “Place Search” then after selecting Rheinland, select “View Related Places.”

[Sachsen \(Saxony\)](#): See “Anhalt” above. The Wikipedia listing of 1042 cities and communities should include most of the former Prussian province of Saxony (Sachsen), except for the district of Erfurt.

[Schlesien \(Silesia\)](#): The [Kartenmeister](#) link is discussed above.

[Schleswig-Holstein](#): This is an alphabetical list of parishes, giving both the civil and church district and the date that records begin. It is not a comprehensive listing of all towns in the province.

[Westfalen \(Westphalia\)](#): This is simply an alphabetical list of about one thousand parishes in Westphalia for which the Family History Library has catalogued records. Studies suggest that the list encompasses at least 80 percent of the province’s parishes.

German Name	Mickrow
Alternate Name 1:	Mikrow 1807
Today's Name	Mikorowo
Kreis/County	Stolp
Residents of Jewish Faith	8
German Province	Pommern
Today's Province	Pomorskie
Location	East 17°35' North 54°24'
Location Description	This village/town is located 17.4 km and 218 degrees from Lauenburg, which is known today as Lebornk
Lutheran Parish	Mickrow 1905
Catholic Parish	NO catholic residents in 1905
Standesamt/Civil Registry	Mickrow 1905
Gemeindelexikon/Town Index	IV-29-86
Population By Year/Einwohner	1905. 415
Church	Yes
	Buy Map of this Location

Results of a search for the town of “Mickrow” in Pomerania in the Kartenmeister database.

Westpreussen (West Prussia): See “Ostpreussen” above.

Nationwide gazetteers and atlases for Germany

Often a genealogist may not know in which state a particular place was located. In such situations, a nationwide listing of places can be quite helpful. Such listings seldom identify the church parishes to which a town belonged, or the former civil jurisdictions. Modern German gazetteers also do not include places in the territories lost after the World Wars. Therefore, they are not sufficient for all of a person’s German research. However, with those caveats, the following research tools may prove useful.

[*Gemeindeverzeichnis Deutschland 1900*](#): This Web site seeks to include every community (Gemeinde) and independent place (Gutsbezirke) in the German Empire as of 1900. Each former German state has a separate listing, and is divided into its specific subdivisions (province, district, etc.). These subdivisions may be further divided before giving the list of communities. The community list gives

only the population, and does not indicate the parish or civil registration district to which it belonged. It is useful for states such as Thuringia and Brunswick for which no other gazetteer is available.

[*Genealogische Orts-Verzeichnis \(GOV\) \(Genealogical Gazetteer\)*](#): This German-language database includes places in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and parts of Poland. It searches for the character string typed in the search box (truncate by leaving off as many letters as desired). The results list includes the type of location, the higher level jurisdictions, and the current postal code.

[*Deutsches Post \(German Postal Offices\)*](#): This is the official site of the German Post Office. To search for a town, select “PLZ suchen” and type in the town name in the box labeled “Ort,” then press “suchen.” It provides the current postal code, or the new name of the community (many small towns have merged into a larger community) and its postal code.

[*List of German Municipalities \[sic\]*](#): This handy list of modern municipalities (like a township in the U.S.) provides the modern German state, county, and administrative district (if any) along with the postal code. Each letter of the alphabet has its own page, so use the Ctl-F function to search for a character string. Since these are officially recognized municipalities, smaller place names are not included.

The future will undoubtedly see even more geographic tools on the Web for German research. If the help you need is not there yet, keep a watchful eye on the sites noted above, and at other German research sites. In the meantime, good luck tracking down that elusive German place name! **DG**

Kory L. Meyerink, MLS, AG, FUGA, is vice president of ProGenealogists in Salt Lake City and was previously with Ancestry and the Family History Library. He is past-president of UGA, founder of the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy, a nationally known speaker, editor of Printed Sources, and an adjunct faculty member for BYU and San Jose State University. He has been accredited for Germany research since 1980.



Name der Gemeinde	Gem.schl.	PLZ	Bundesland	Regierungsbezirk	KFZ	Landkreis
Name of Municipality	Key	Zip code	Land/State	Region/Adm. District	Lic.Pl.	County
Gauz	12037100	19309	Brandenburg	NA	PER	Perleberg
Gauz	13023260	19395	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	NA	ERZ	Ludwigslund
Gauz	13013300	18230	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	NA	DSR	Bad Döberitz
Gaube-Gotze	16034290	07330	Thüringen	NA	SLE	Saalfeld
Gabersville	09572137	91077	Bayern	Mittelfranken	EPH	Erlangen-Hochstadt
Gabersdorf	16043170	99428	Thüringen	NA	WE	Weimar
Gablen	16021200	07985	Thüringen	NA	GRZ	Greiz

German Municipalities.

