

Introduction to Genealogy Research in Germany

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Speaker: Thilo C. Agthe

Before we get started...

- These slides and other materials can be downloaded from

<http://www.genealogy.agthe.com>

- Feel free to ask questions as we go along.
- I will be around for a little while afterwards to answer individual questions.

Tools for Success in German Research:

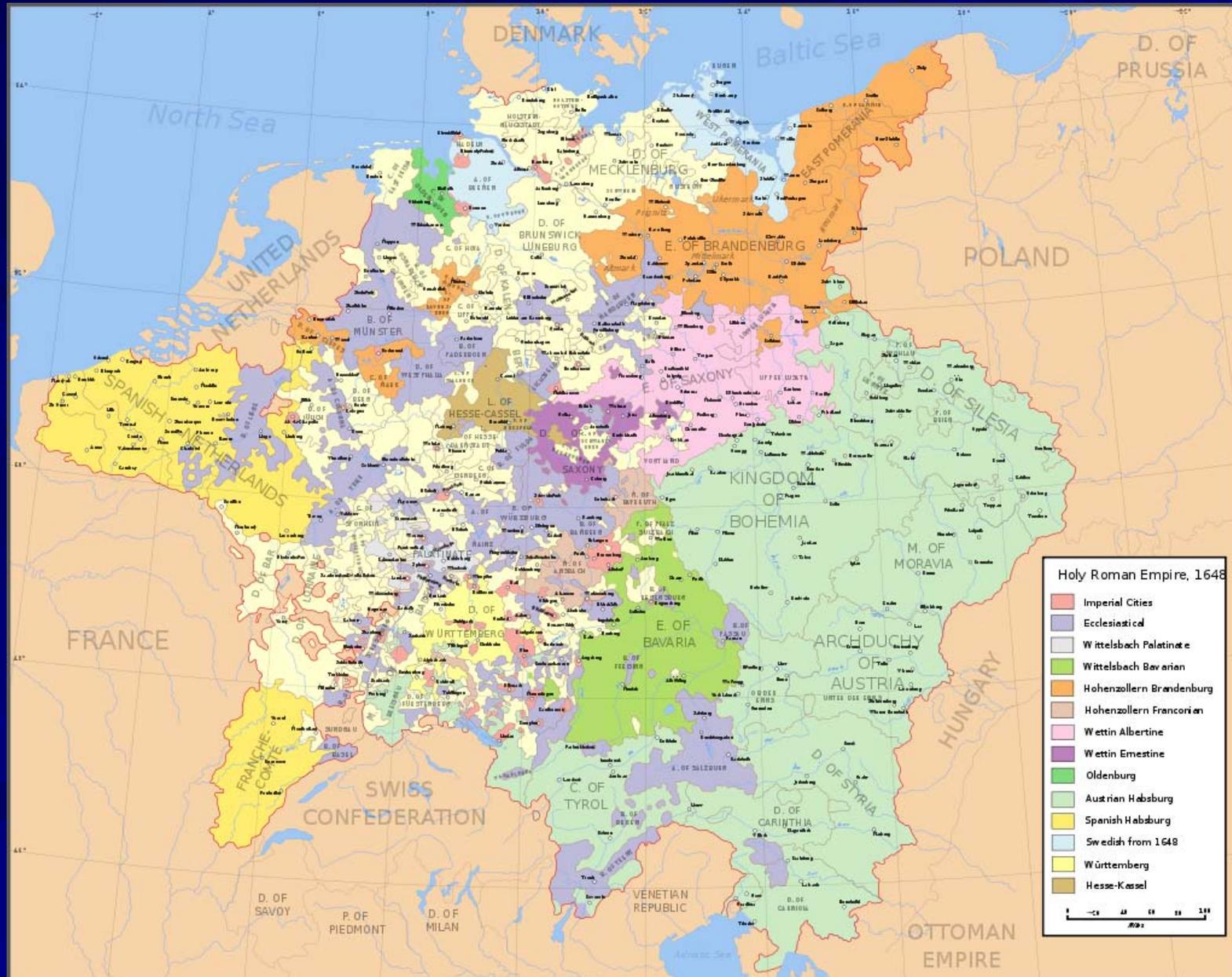
- Become a student of German history
- Need an idea of where your ancestors are from
- Learn to read German script
- Know the limitations imposed on genealogy research in Germany
- Have a Plan if you visit Germany
- Patience, patience, patience...

Major German Emigration Waves

- **1683 to 1820**: migration to Southeast Europe, North America, Russia, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Reasons: religious persecutions and economic hardships after the Thirty Years' War. Many of these emigrants were Protestants from the Palatinate area of Germany who wanted religious and economic freedom.
- **1820 to 1871**: Emigration caused chiefly by economic hardships, including unemployment and crop failures. Many Germans also left to avoid wars and military service. In some cases, government entities encouraged citizens to emigrate. Most of these emigrants were from the Rhineland, Hesse, Baden, Wuerttemberg, and Alsace-Lorraine. Also, political refugees after 1848.
- **1871 to 1914**: Emigration became more affordable, and political and economic problems continued. Emigrants came from all areas of Germany, including large numbers from eastern Prussia. Emigrants included not only ethnic Germans but also Poles and Jews.

A short walk through German history:

“Germany” in 1648, after the end of the 30-Years War:



A short walk through German history: “Germany” during and after the Napoleonic Wars:

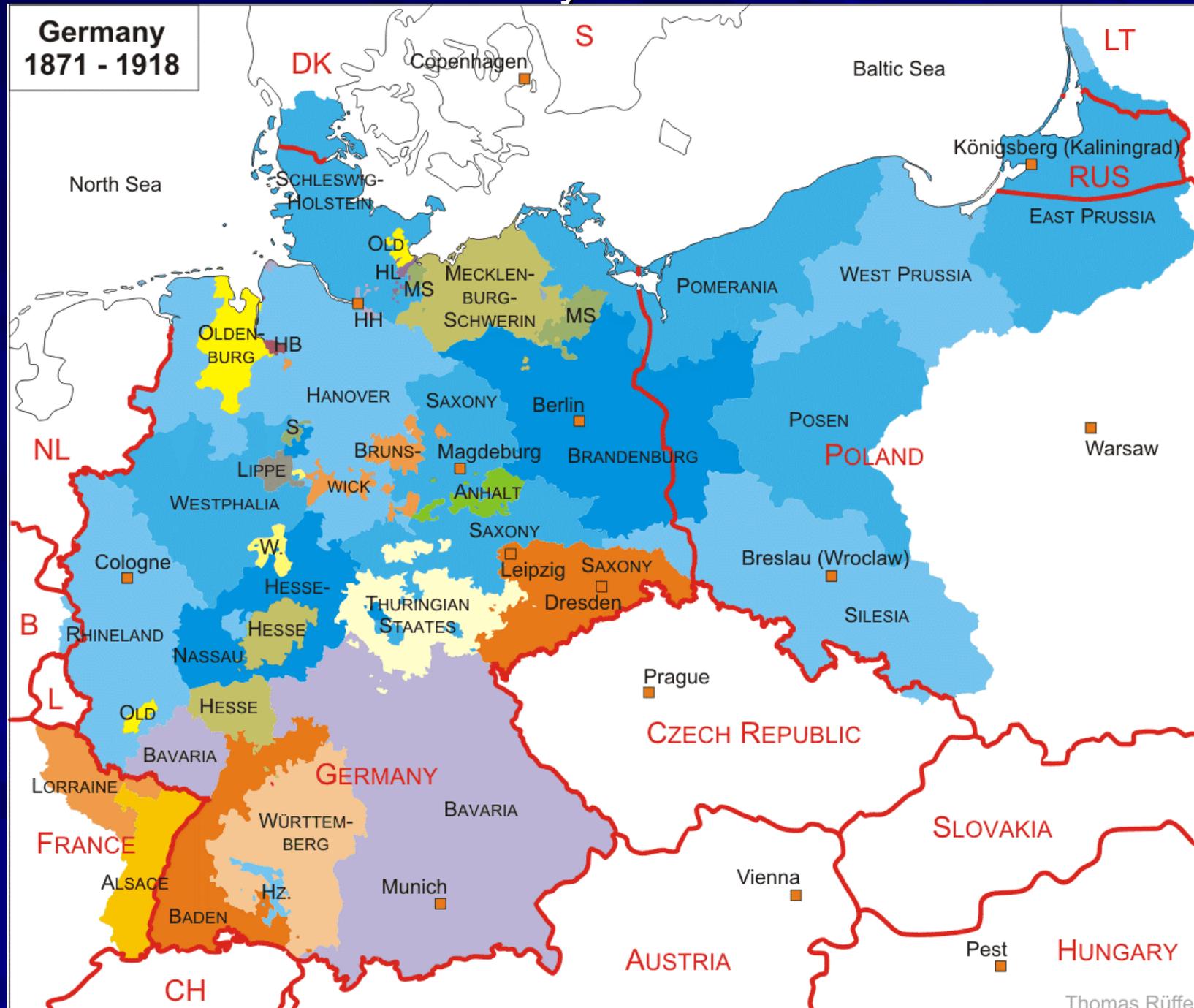


5. Deutschland zur Zeit Napoleons I. im Jahre 1812
 Die Rheinbundstaaten haben Flächenkolorit
 Maßstab 1:20 000 000



6. Deutschland zur Zeit des Deutschen Bundes von 1815 bis 1866
 Die Staaten des Deutschen Bundes haben Flächenkolorit.

A short walk through German history: Germany after 1871:



A short walk through German history:

“Germany” after 1871:

- There were 26 German States from 1871 – 1918:
 - 4 Kingdoms: Prussia, Bavaria, Württemberg, Saxony
 - 6 Grand Duchies: Baden, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Oldenburg, Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach
 - 5 Duchies: Anhalt, Brunswick, Saxony-Altenburg*, Saxony-Coburg-Gotha*, Saxony-Meiningen*
 - 7 Principalities: Lippe, Reuß ältere Linie*, Reuß jüngere Linie*, Schaumburg, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt*, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen*, Waldeck
 - 3 Free Cities: Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck
 - 1 Imperial Territory: Alsace-Lorraine

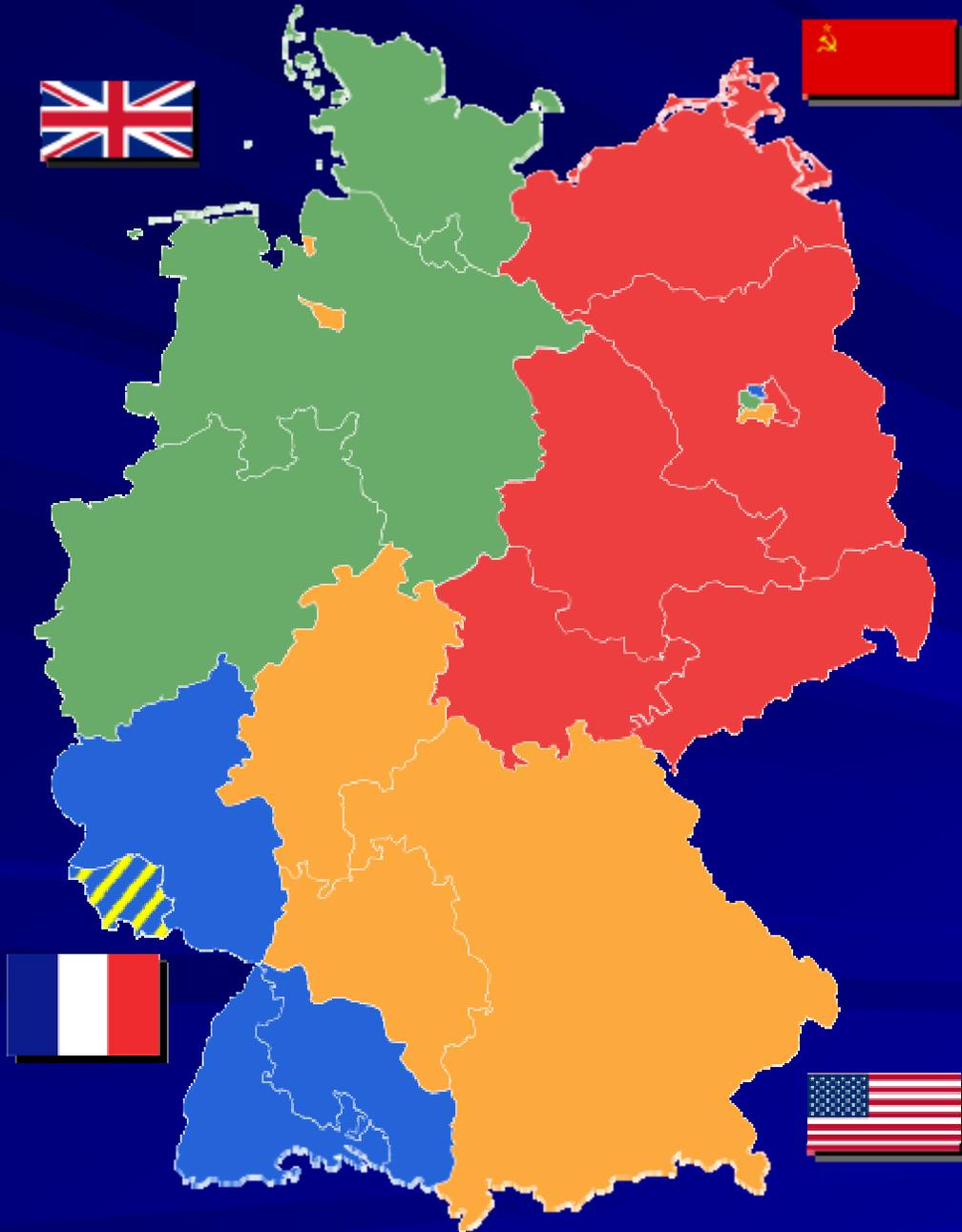
* Thuringian States: an informal term for the 8 states located in Thuringia

A short walk through German history: “Germany” after World War 1



A short walk through German history:

Germany from WW2 through reunification:



A short walk through German history: Germany today:



Finding the Place of Origin

- Before taking your research back to Germany you must find the name of the specific place (city, town or village) where your immigrant ancestor lived.
- VERY helpful resources:
 - Germany Portal on Familysearch.org:
<https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Portal:Germany>
 - Determining a Place of Origin in Germany
http://www.familysearch.org/eng/Search/RG/frameaset_rq.asp
 - A Genealogical Handbook of German Research
http://www.familysearch.org/eng/Search/RG/frameaset_rq.asp?Dest=G1&Guide=Ger_BMD_RefDoc_HandbookGermanResearch7.asp

Immigration Resources

- American Family Immigration History Center (www.ellisislandrecords.org); Ellis Island, 1892 – 1924: 22 Million records
- Castle Garden (www.castlegarden.org); 1855-1890: about 8 Million records
- NARA, German immigrant data files (<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/>): database, 4 million records of arrivals from Germany, 1850-1897

Emigration Resources

■ “Germans to America”

- German passenger arrival records for the years 1850-1897.
- Each volume contains a chronological listing of the passenger lists and an alphabetical index. Information includes name, age and sex; and when given: occupation, country or province of origin, village of residence (many say "unknown"), and destination (many say "unknown" or simply "US").
- People listed their country of residence as Germany, Prussia, Bavaria, or numerous other German states (like Hesse, Saxony, Brandenburg, etc). Passengers from Switzerland, France and Luxembourg are also sometimes included. Germans from Russia should be listed in the separate Migration from the Russian Empire series.
- BEWARE: GTA contains many errors and omissions. If a listing is found, the original passenger lists should be consulted.

Emigration Resources

■ Palatines:

- There are significant sources for Palatine emigration to America. The following list is very incomplete:
 - Pennsylvania German Pioneers: Original lists of Palatine Germans who arrived at Philadelphia from 1727 to 1808.
 - The Palatine Project – Reconstructed Passenger Lists 1683-1819 (www.palproject.org)
 - Pennsylvania Foreign Oaths of Allegiance: Names of immigrants who took the oath of allegiance to the province and state of Pennsylvania from 1727-1775.
 - Pennsylvania Foreign Oaths of Allegiance, Vol. 2” Names of immigrants who took the oath of allegiance to the province and state of Pennsylvania from 1777-1789.
 - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Indentures, 1771-73: Information regarding individuals bound over as apprentices, servants, etc. Information provided includes, name, date of indenture, port of immigration, occupation, term of indenture and other helpful notes.
 - Philadelphia German Immigration, 1700-75: History of German immigration to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from 1700 to 1775.
- Online searches will reveal many more sources!

Emigration Resources

- Hamburg Passenger Lists: include the last foreign residence of people leaving from Hamburg:
 - The *Direct Passenger List* (1850 to 1934) lists those who left Hamburg and went directly to their destination.
 - The *Indirect Passenger List* (1850 to 1910) shows those who left Hamburg, went to another port, and then on to their destination. After 1910 the indirect list is included with the Direct Passenger List
 - The Hamburg lists and indexes are on 486 rolls of microfilm at the FHL.
 - Or via Ancestry.com: <http://content.ancestry.com/iexec/?dbid=1068> (\$) (only 1890-1913 have been indexed so far. However, all of the images for 1850-1934 are available)
- Bremen Passenger Lists, 1920-1939 (www.schiffslisten.de/index_en.html). Records of earlier departure lists from Bremen & Bremerhaven were largely destroyed. Only the lists on this website, covering 637,880 passengers, survive.
- Reisepaß-Protokolle, 1851-1929: passport documents maintained by the Hamburg Allgemeines Polizeiliches Meldeamt, and held by the Staatsarchiv Hamburg, also available through the Family History Library

Emigration Resources

■ German Emigration Lists

- Württemberg, Germany Emigration Index (names of approximately 60,000 persons who made application to leave Germany from the late eighteenth century to 1900; available on ancestry.com: <http://www.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=3141&enc=1>)
- Baden, Germany Emigration Index, 1866-1911 (names of over 28,000 persons who left Baden, Germany, between 1866 and 1911; available on ancestry.com: <http://www.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=4610&cj=1&oxid=0000584978&olid=0000584978>)
- Emigration from Southwest Germany (approx. 260,000 names of emigrants; available on the website of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg: <http://www.auswanderer-bw.de>)

■ More Emigration Lists can be found here: <http://home.att.net/~wee-monster/emigration.html>

- Keep in mind that some emigrants will not be on these lists, if they left without permission

Resources in Germany

- Standesamt (civil registry) – records of births, marriages and deaths. Records start in 1874. Access to records is limited by law. Generally speaking, for more recent records, only direct descendants and siblings will be granted access (more on this later...)
 - https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Germany_Civil_Registration
- National, state and municipal archives:
 - https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Germany_Archives_and_Libraries
 - <http://home.bawue.de/~hanacek/info/earchive.htm>
- Church records (pre-1874)
 - https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Germany_Church_Records
 - <http://home.bawue.de/~hanacek/info/darchi18.htm> (in German - comprehensive list of church archives)
- Cemetery Records

Civil Registry Offices (“Standesamt”):

- Recent changes to German law:
 - Per the „Personenstandsgesetz“ (PstG) of 2008 (effective 1/1/09), civil registry records are to be made available for genealogical research as follows:
 - Marriages: 80 years (now: 1931)
 - Births: 110 years (now: 1901)
 - Deaths: 30 years (now: 1981)
 - BUT, records will not be kept in the registry office, but will be transferred to archives, most likely the city and town archives (“Kommunalarchive”).

- Ask the Standesamt in the town concerned regarding whether and where the records are available.

- Birth/Death/Marriage registers for localities in the former eastern territories of Germany (now Poland and Russia) are kept at Standesamt 1 in Berlin (<http://www.berlin.de/standesamt1/>) – but are not complete and may only cover a few years after 1874.

Archives in Germany:

- **Best source:**

[https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Germany Archives and Libraries](https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Germany_Archives_and_Libraries)

Others:

- **Listing of genealogical archives:**

<http://home.bawue.de/~hanacek/info/earchive.htm>

- **Links to German State Archives:**

<http://www.archivschule.de/content/23.html> (in German)

- **Links to town/city archives:**

<http://www.archivschule.de/content/29.html> (in German)

- **Interesting resource:**

- Microfilms of registry records of jewish communities in Württemberg, Baden und Hohenzollern (<https://www2.landesarchiv-bw.de/of21/olf/struktur.php?bestand=5632>), State Archive Stuttgart (thank you Roger Lustig!)

Church Records

■ Church records (for pre-1874 events):

- The FHL has thousands of German church books on microfilm.
- Many churches in Germany will provide information by mail (be nice, and a donation usually helps... ☺).
- Churches may not have many records – it varies greatly from parish to parish.
- When visiting in person, there may be a fee for using the archive.

■ Church archives:

Best source:

https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Germany_Church_Records

- See also here: <http://home.bawue.de/~hanacek/info/earchive.htm#BB>
- Also, for Protestant church archives see <http://www.ekd.de/archive/deutsch/mitglied.htm#Archive> (in German)
- For Catholic church archives see <http://home.bawue.de/~hanacek/info/darchi17.htm>

Village/Parish Lineage Books ("Ortssippenbuch")

- Pastors or genealogists sometimes compiled a lineage book, which included details about each family located in a village or parish (sometimes these are also called "**heritage books**")
- A list of parishes with lineage books can be found here: <http://www.online-ofb.de/>
 - Some of the lineage books are online
- Lineage books do not exist for every village or parish!

German Census Records

- Censuses were not taken nationally in Germany and therefore exist for only a limited number of places and times:
 - **Mecklenburg-Schwerin:** 1819 census on 60 rolls of microfilm. Household information, including age, sex, birthplace, parish, marital status, occupation, length of residency and some additional comments. Arranged by district and city, Records are available for almost every town in Mecklenburg-Schwerin.
 - Index to the 1819 census: Schubert, Franz. *Mecklenburg-Schwerin Volkszählung 1819: Register der Familiennamen*. Berlin; Göttingen: Ditterich: Im Selbstverlag, 1981-1986. 2 vols. in 5. (FHL book 943.17 B4s ser. 4.)
 - This census is listed in the Locality Search of the Family History Library Catalog under: **GERMANY, MECKLENBURG-SCHWERIN - CENSUS**

German Census Records (cont.)

- **Schleswig-Holstein:** until 1864, Schleswig Holstein (incl. Lübeck, Oldenburg and parts of Hamburg) was ruled by Denmark and several census were taken between 1769 and 1860 (1801, 1803, 1834, 1835, 1840, 1845, 1850, 1855).
 - Written in either German or Danish, sometimes both. The information varies according to the year in which it was taken:
 - 1769. Names the head of each household and the number of people in the house.
 - 1801-1860. List each person's name, residence, position in the family, age, marital status, and occupation.
 - 1845 and later. List birthplace, parish of the birthplace, length of residency at the census place.
 - These censuses are microfilmed but not indexed. They are arranged by district and city. These records are listed in the Locality Search of the FHL Catalog under: GERMANY, PREUßEN, SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN - CENSUS

German Census Records (cont.)

- The Family History Library has some less significant census records from a number of other German states. These are listed in the Locality Search of the catalog under: GERMANY, [STATE] – CENSUS
- Minority Census of 1939: “Volkszählung, 1939.” Extracts of the 1939 German census concerning non-Germanic minorities living in Germany; emphasis is on the Jews.
- Searching Census Records
 - When searching census records, remember the following:
 - Information may be incorrect.
 - The ages listed may not be correct.
 - A given name may not be the same as the name used in vital records.
 - Names may be spelled as they sound.
 - Place-names may be misspelled.
 - Some parts of the census may be illegible.
 - If the family is not at the expected location, you should search the surrounding area.

Generally NOT very useful:

- Military records – almost all WW1 records were destroyed in WW2. (but see: <http://www.denkmalprojekt.org/en.htm>)
 - WW2: German War Graves Association online grave search: www.volksbund.de/graebersuche (in German)
 - Deutsche Dienststelle (WASt) for the notification of next-of-kin of members of the former German Wehrmacht who were killed in action: records of millions of WW2 German soldiers: http://www.dd-wast.de/frame_e.htm
- Cemeteries: Burial lots in Germany are leased for a finite number of years (usually 20); if the lease is not renewed, the plot is reused.
 - The cemetery office may still have records, even if the grave itself has disappeared.
- Ahnenpass: document used to prove “racial purity” during the 3rd Reich – these often contain unreliable information and everything must be independently verified.

Why you need to learn to read German script

German Church Records:

9 1.	Münst. Nr 16.	das piffen Juli 1879, Mittwoch zwölff Uhr.	das pinbau und zimmrigkeit Juli, Nachmittags zwai Uhr in der Kirche.	Agler, Franz, Riefend, adeliger Wgn.	Fahr Agler, Karl Friedrich, Solzbinger und Wau, wogefell in Münst. und desu Gutsau Luth. Familin geb. Meißner aus Oibau.	1. 2. 3. 4.
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1879.		
1.	Jao. Karl Gieser Berufend aus aus Wau, Rath, 2 ^{te} Wgn der Solzb. Landw. Poggau Gollob aus.	Capit. der D. Brackau aus 7 Juli 1879.
2.	Jao. Karl Riefend Berufend Wunfger aus Kaufach, finter einziger Wgn 1 ^{te} Wgn der Solzb. Landw. Jando. Wilf. Berufend Wunfger.	Nr 7.
3.	Agler aus Wirtsofacht, wogefell. Lafter der Wirtsofacht geb. Agler (aus Kaufach).	
4.	Agler Luilia Lafter aus Wunfger Wunfger, 2 ^{te} Wgn. der Wunfger. fadaarbeitend aus Wunfger. Jando. Lafter.	

Why you need to learn to read German script

■ German Civil Records:

A.

Nr. 37
76

Schlön, am 12. Februar 1898.

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschien heute, der Persönlichkeitsnach der Anna,
der Ehefrau Johann Bonnhoff -
Johanna Ringel,
wohnhaft in Schlön

Religion, und zeigte an, daß von der Waise Emilie Maas, Ludwigshafen,
wohnhaft Feldmark Schlön Nr. 27 C,
in Feldmark Schlön Nr. 27 C,
am zweif in Februar des Jahres
tausend acht hundert neun und acht, Königsberg a
um zweif Uhr ein Kind, weiblichen
Geschlechts geboren worden sei, welches der Waisen
Anna/Königsberg erhalten habe.
der Königsberger, wöhrliche, der der Waisen
Amt, der Emilie Maas zufragen, zu
verfassen zu sein.

Bezeugen, geschäftig und unterscriben

Anna Bonnhoff-Johanna Ringel

Der Standesbeamte.
Wagner

40. 5. 1979
Berlin-Steglitz
St. Amt Steglitz von 4504

Nachstehender Bildabzug gilt als
beglaubigte Abschrift

A.

Nr. 1275

Berlin, am zweif Juli 1896

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschien heute, der Persönlichkeitsnach der Ehefrau Waise Anna,
der Ehefrau Waise Anna,
der Ehefrau Waise Anna,
der Ehefrau Waise Anna,
wohnhaft in Berlin, Wilhelmstr. 25

Religion, und zeigte an, daß von der Waise Anna,
der Ehefrau Waise Anna,
der Ehefrau Waise Anna,
wohnhaft in Berlin

zu Berlin in zweif Juli des Jahres
tausend acht hundert acht und zweif, Mitt,
um zweif Uhr ein Kind weiblichen
Geschlechts geboren worden sei, welches der Waisen
Ulrich, Anna, Willy
erhalten habe

Bezeugen, geschäftig und unterscriben,
Richard Meyer

Der Standesbeamte.
J. H. Meyer
Stück

Should I go to Germany to do Research?

- NO, if you have no idea (yet) where your people are originally from.
- YES, if you know where to go and what you are looking for:
 - know WHERE you want to go, WHAT you want to find, and WHO you need to speak to.
 - Make arrangements with Archives and Churches well in advance of your trip to assure availability of records and space (at a table or microfilm reader).
- YES, because Germany is a great place to visit (leave time for sightseeing)!
- Remember, FHC resources allow you to do much of your research without ever getting on an airplane!

The learning curve...

- Things to do and keep in mind:
 - Study German history
 - Learn to read German script
 - Get really good German maps
 - Write letters to German archives and churches in German, if at all possible (but, many if not most Germans speak enough English to read a letter)
 - Be prepared that most archives in Germany will charge for their services
 - “Data Protection” regimes can be a problem – be aware that generally Germans are very sensitive about privacy concerns!
 - BE PATIENT!!!

THE END!

Thank you for your attention!

Contact:

Thilo C. Agthe
thilo@agthe.com