Map Guides to German Parish Registers

SWFGG
Handout 3-3-2012
This is a series by Kevan M. Hansen that will be no less than 54 Books and currently there are about 40 books completed.

You will need to know the State and the town when using the books.

This map can be used as a reference tool.

Doing German research is unlike American genealogical research where the place to search for basic vital records is usually a civil registration such as city/town, county and state. The German research is usually related to an ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In 18th and 19th century German-speaking areas, one must search the parish registers for Catholic, Lutheran, and other churches to find the births, christenings, marriages, deaths and burials. The historic boundaries of the old German parishes have not been defined except in very general terms, particularly for the mid-to-late 1800s. These books remedy that problem and serve as a road map to these records—saving hours of effort.

Each Book is divided into five sections:

- Province / Duchy Resources
- Maps of parish boundaries for the main Lutheran Churches
- Maps of parish boundaries for the Catholic churches
- Records for minority religions
- A complete index to all towns shown on the individual maps
Each volume will have the following Information

- The Family you’re searching for may have gone to Church and left vital records behind that may be seen today.
- Identifies the parish where the ancestor worshipped based on where they lived
- Gives the FHL microfilm number for the family’s parish records
- Identifies nearly every city, town, and place that included residents
- Visually identifies church parishes for Lutherans & Catholics in each district
- Identifies adjoining parishes in case an ancestor attended an alternate parish
- Aids in area searches, particularly across district or regional borders
- Provides visual identification of search areas in which to look for family
- Helps in determining proximity of one area to another
- Aids in Determining Reasonable distances of travel from one area to another
- Identifies population centers in each parish
- Identifies archives, repositories and other resources
- Aids in identification of the location of minority religions
- A master Index to all the towns shown on the individual maps

These books can save you endless hours of frustration in attempting to determine which German parishes to look for in the church records of your ancestors.

You can instantly locate where your ancestor most likely went to church, but these clear, easy to read maps show the surrounding parishes – complete with the Family History Library microfilm numbers for each.

Invariably, however a good researcher will want to know more.
What are the other parishes located near the primary ancestral Parish
What are their boundaries?
What villages were located within them?
Did the ancestor have family connections in those parishes?

These are important questions, and when using microfilmed parish records, a thorough researcher will want to have a good handle on the geography of an ancestral area in order to look for clues in the records of other nearby churches.

It’s not at all uncommon to find German families spread out all over more than one parish, particularly if they were agricultural laborers. Couples often found their future spouses in the neighboring towns. The Map Guide to German Parish Registers series is a useful research tool to address the questions.

Once you know the exact place where your ancestor is from, then you must determine the name of the kingdom, province, or duchy to which the town belonged.
You can use Google to search for the town or use:
Jewish Gen Gazetteer - **Town Search** ;
Ancestry.com - **Meyers Gazetteer of German Empire**
Family Search - **Finding Place Names**

**Meyers Orts:**

**Example:** Towns name is **Hymendorf**

Exact copy from Meyers Gazetteer of the German Empire

This is what is written above:

**Hymendorf,** Name of the Town
**Kol.,** Colony, such as a group of small Houses
**Pr. Hann,** Prussia, Hannover
**R.B. Stade,** Administrative district in the province of Stade
**Kr. AG Lehe,** County Court Lehe,
**Bkdo. Bremerhaven,** District Military office Bremerhaven,
**StdA. Neuenwalde,** Civil Register Office Neuenwalde, **Note**
**P Debstedt,** Post Office Debstedt
**E 4,8 km Drangstedt,** It’s 4.8 Km East of Drangstedt
**289 E.,** Population of 289
**T,** Telegraph under Postal Authority
**Ev,** Evangelical (Lutheran in German)
**Pfk,** Means a Pfarrkirche (Parish)

**Note:**
Civil Register Office is listed as Neuenwalde the reason being is that they did not have a Church in Hymendorf and everyone went to Church in Neuenwalde
Using Jewish Gen: Town Search for the Town: Hymendorf

Town name entered:

Result for the Town Hymendorf
The Key Number for Hymendorf is: **15**
The Parish Key # for Hymendorf: **There is none!**
However when you look at the Meyers Ort it shows that Civil Registration was in **Neuenwalde**.

The residences from Hymendorf attended Church in a nearby town of Neuenwalde. But the entry in the Map Guide to German Register page 339 does not reflect this.

So the Meyers Ort gave us the clue Civil Registration as being in Neuenwalde.

**Note:** Many Times when there was no Church in that town they usually went to the next nearest town. The reason being they did not have a church in the town at that time.

Each of these volumes are devoted to particular German states and off outline maps of parishes located within particular County (Kreis).

Thus, they are useful for determining the proximity of towns to other parishes in the area. In addition to offering clues about other possible records, they can “empower the researcher when confronted with the necessity of a radius search”

**Note:**

**Bavaria Map Guides to German Parish Registers**

Some areas of Bavaria have **very few films**.
That’s the reason the film numbers are not listed for some towns. There are no films.
LDS has had good success filming in most areas of Germany – **With Bavaria being the exception**
Terminology that you may come across:
Use the “German English Dictionary” by Ernst Thode
Regierungsbezirk(e) - Administrative District(s)
Bezirk(e)........... - District(s)
Kreis(e)............. - District(s) / County (ies)
Standesamt....... - Registration office
Amt.................. - Office; district; jurisdiction
Pfarramt............ - (church) parish office
Pfarrer.............. - (male) pastor; priest
Pfarrkirche......... - Parish church
Pfarrbuch... ....... - Church (record) book; parish register
Auswanderer...... - Emigrant(s)
Seelenregister/Seelenliste – Family Register

If you’re unable to find an area or a very tiny village located within the boundaries of a particular parish this maybe because the maps are simply not sufficiently detailed. Then it is recommended that you do more careful search of Meyers and the Karte des Deutsches Reich Series

Note: The Karte des Deutsches Reich web site is in German & Google Translate does not translate this site.

Once you know the town’s name:
Use Jewish Gen - http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocTown.asp

Alternate Search - Geogen Surname Mapping (go thru FamilySearch)

Geo Mapping
You Need to know the German State, i.e., Saxony, Saxony Anhalt, Hannover

Locate the town in the State in the Map Guide to German Parish Registers
Search the Master Indexes in the rear of the Parish Books for the town & it will tell you which book it’s in.
Or go on line:
Remember: Once you located the town Use the “Town Index in the back of Book.
It will tell you the Religious Denomination such as Lutheran Catholic with a Page number
Other Churches within your Area of Search
It will tell you where to get obtain these other Records - i.e. Jewish, German Reformed
If there is no FamilySearch Film number you can reach out through correspondence to the district Archive or Parish itself

Learn more about **How to write a German Letter** to a Church or an Archive: [https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Letter_Writing_Guide](https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Letter_Writing_Guide)

**Other Material that can Assist you in Your German Research**

**Maps, Gazetteers, Books & Online Websites**

*ShtetlSeeker Town Search*
([www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocTown.asp](http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocTown.asp))

**Map Guide to German Parish Registers**
*By Kevan M. Hansen.*
A series of volumes, segregated by German state. It lists nearly every town, no matter how small, and identifies what church the residents would have attended. The books are very user friendly. The series will be about 54 volumes when complete.

**Maps of the German Empire of 1871**
*By Jensen Publications. Pleasant Grove, Utah*
AThe book gives a good overview of the history of each state or Prussian province of the 1871 German Empire. It doesn’t provide a lot of historic details regarding specific villages.

**How to Read & Understand Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs- Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs.**
Wendy K. Uncapher
This book helps one how to read and understand the entries from Meyer’s gazetteer.

This gazetteer consists of 14 volumes (one for each pre-1919 Prussian Province). Among other things, It helps to identify to what Catholic and/or Lutheran parish a town belonged. Written in German and gothic print. This is available on microfilm through FHL and on indefinite loan at the Wilmette Family History Center [WFHC], Wilmette, Illinois.

**Karte Des Deutschen Reiches**
Available online: [www.library.wisc.edu/etext/ravenstein/home.html](http://www.library.wisc.edu/etext/ravenstein/home.html)
(1:100,000 scale topographical maps of 1871 German Empire; FHL 0,068,814). It’s on indefinite loan at the WFHC, Wilmette, Illinois.

**Kartenmeister** [www.kartenmeister.com](http://www.kartenmeister.com)
Excellent website for finding modern names of towns east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers.
This book contains excellent historical maps of German lands and their jurisdictions changed over time. Available at FHL; Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois; University of Illinois-Chicago, Illinois.

**Books**

**German-English Genealogical Dictionary**  
This is an excellent book it’s a must have for reading German records. The book also has Latin, some French and other languages found in German-speaking lands.

**If I Can, You Can Decipher Germanic Records**  
*By* Edna M. Bentz San Diego, California: Tamara J. Bentz, 2005  
This book has many examples of words written in script, variations of letters in script, it also has lists of occupations and illnesses.

**Deciphering Handwriting in German Documents.**  
This is an excellent resource for those wanting to learn how to read German script. It has a lot of examples of script as it has changed throughout time.

**German Church Books: Beyond the Basics**  
If you want to reconstruct your families this book provides you with a good methodology for reconstructing families using church records. The book gives you many tips and techniques for deciphering church records. It focuses on Protestant records and many of the concepts also apply to Catholic records.
**Germanic Genealogy: A Guide to Worldwide Sources and Migration Patterns**  
Edward R. Brandt, et al.  
St. Paul, Minnesota: Germanic Genealogy Society. This book contains a lot of useful tools and resources that can be used for research of Germanic peoples from all over the world.

**Ancestors in German Archives**  
By Raymond S. Wright, III  
This is an excellent book that has many German archives listed by location. There are other Archives in Germany. The ones listed within the book are the ones that responded to the author’s request for information.

**Helpful Websites**

**Family History Library**
FamilySearch website of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City has indexes of records library’s catalog; helpful research aids and much more.

**Request forms for photocopies may be found at:**

**German Research Outline may be found at:**
http://www.familysearch.org/eng/search/RG/images/34061_Germany05.pdf

**German Genealogical Word list may be found at:**
https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German_Word_List

**German Letter Writing Guide may be found at:**  
Writing to an Archive or a Church Use the FamilySearch Germany Letter Writing Guide

- Writing Dates
- Greetings
- Introductions
- Biographical Information
- Genealogical Requests
- Referral Requests
- Payment
- Closing Remarks and Return Address
- Follow-up
- EXAMPLE LETTER

Most often German towns have their own websites:
www.<town name here>.de

Many of the towns websites are in German, sometimes they may have an English version available; a British Flag will appear. The best for anyone doing German research go to Google Tools, use translate from German to English as part of your tool bar. This will translate the German websites.