



MOSES GENEALOGY



GERMAN RESEARCH FOR THE EVERYDAY AMERICAN

Main Challenges:

1. Spelling Variations
2. Reading the Old German Handwriting
3. Finding the Hometown
4. Navigating the German Records

1. Spelling Variations- There are many ways to spell your German surname. Keep an open mind as you apply some variations. They should be:

- Natural
- Logical
- Predictable

Voiced and Unvoiced Pairs

- B/P
- D/T
- G/K
- V/F
- S/Z
- Ch/K

Ex: **Nachtigall**

ch → ck or k

t → d

g → k

ll → l

Nakdikal

Each combination of the spelling changes is another variation of the surname.

2. Handwriting- **See the German Handwriting Syllabus**

3. Finding the Hometown

LOOK EVERYWHERE!

Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, MyHeritage.com

-Naturalization Records- Search Ancestry's Immigration and Travel collection:

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/40/>

-FamilySearch Catalog has naturalization records as well. Do a general search or look in the catalog by place of naturalization. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>



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-Passenger Lists at Ancestry.com: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/40/>

-Hamburg Passenger lists at Ancestry.com:
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1068/>

-Explanation of Hamburg Passenger Lists from FamilySearch Wiki:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Hamburg_Passenger_Lists

German-language church records in the United States:

-Written for Germans by Germans

-German pastors had more familiarity with spelling and hometowns.

-Could your ancestor already be indexed in the *German Immigrants in American Church Records* collection? Check it out! The FHL has some copies, but not a complete collection. BYU Library has all books. They can be hard to pin down, but they are incredibly helpful!

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1316260?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

-Check in the FamilySearch Catalog (or Google) to see whether there was a German-speaking church in the town where your ancestor lived!

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>

4. Finding Records in the German hometown

Use Meyers Gazetteer to determine what the hometown is called today. Keep in mind, spelling variations absolutely apply to hometowns. <https://www.meyersgaz.org/>

Google Maps can also be very helpful in finding a hometown when there are several towns with the same name.

Look up the place name in the FamilySearch Catalog- are the records available there?
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>

Search Ancestry's Indexed Records <https://www.ancestry.com/search/>

For Protestant church records not available on FamilySearch, try Archion. This is an ongoing project, so it does not have all churches, just like any other record group. It



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costs about 20 Euros per month, but is totally worth it if you find your people here.
<https://www.archion.de/>

For Catholic records, try Matricula Online. This is a project to digitize Catholic church records. <http://data.matricula-online.eu/en/>

Other Tips:

MyHeritage.com has many German family trees. I have been able to connect several client family lines to those already in MyHeritage.com. Make sure you can verify the information with sources, but if it looks like a match, check it out!

Vocabulary Resources

- Family Search Wiki : German Genealogical Word List
 - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/German_Genealogical_Word_List
- Ernst Thode's "German-English Genealogical Dictionary"
 - <https://www.amazon.com/German-English-Genealogical-Dictionary-Ernest-Thode/dp/0806313420>

If you are trying to find your hometown and have run out of sources, be sure to check with the historical society for the place your ancestors lived. They may have some more clues and know about obscure record collections.