

Using the Meyers Gazetteer

by
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This handout will assist in identifying and verifying German localities based on the 1871 German Empire as they are listed in the gazetteer *Meyers Orts- und Verkehrslexikon des deutschen Reichs*. (943 - E5mo, fiche 6000001-29.)

Sometimes, the town in Germany that the immigrant was from, became anglicized in U.S. records. This occurred when it was pronounced in German and recorded based on how it was heard in English. By understanding German phonetics and using a German gazetteer, it is often possible to change the anglicized town name back into the correct German spelling. This is explained in **A Genealogical Handbook of German Research**, Chapter 7, pages 48-54.

U.S. census and other records often give the name of the kingdom, province or duchy as the place of birth of German immigrants. Researchers who are not familiar with these may assume it is the name of the town itself. To further complicate things, there are a few cities by the same name as the province or duchy to which they belong, i.e. Braunschweig, Hannover, Brandenburg etc. Researchers then mistakenly think the ancestor is from the city and spend time looking in the wrong place.

Frequently the immigrant will provide information as to where in Germany they were from. Instead of giving the place of birth, they often identify the cultural district that they were from such as "Kurahessen" or "Nordfriesland". Sometimes they give the name of a topographical area such as the "Schwarzwald" (Black Forrest) and "Erzgebirge" (Ore Mountains).

In the Meyers gazetteer, if an abbreviation or series of abbreviations are followed by a comma "," or simicolon ";" then the town itself had the records which were associated with the abbreviation(s). For example, "StdA." (StdA.) is the abbreviation for Standesamt (civil registry office). If it is followed by a comma or semicolon then the town itself had its own civil registry office. If there is no comma or semicolon, then the abbreviation will be followed by the name of the town that had the civil registry office to which your town belonged.

The Meyers gazetteer will indicate if a town had its own parish and the denomination of it. It will not tell you where the parish records were kept, if the place did not have a parish or if the denomination that is given is not the one you need. The two main denominations were Catholic "kath. Pfk." (kath. Pfk.) and Lutheran "ev. Pfk." (ev. Pfk.). The Pfk. Means Pfarrkirche (parish).

LOCATING YOUR TOWN OR VILLAGE IN THE MEYERS GAZETTEER

Meyers is written in German in the old fracture print, and uses abbreviations extensively. On the following page is the alphabet showing the Gothic upper and lower cases with their Roman letter equivalents:

Upper Case				Lower Case			
A	A	N	N	a	a	n	n
B	B	O	O	b	b	o	o
C	C	P	P	c	c	p	p
D	D	Q	Q	ch	ch	q	q
E	E	R	R	ck	ck	r	r
F	F	S	S	d	d	s, #	s
G	G	T	T	e	e	ß	ss
H	H	U	U	f	f	t	t
I	I	V	V	g	g	tz	tz
J	J	W	W	h	h	u	u
K	K	X	X	i	i	v	v
L	L	Y	Y	j	j	w	w
M	M	Z	Z	k	k	x	x
				l	l	y	y
				m	m	z	z

The Meyers gazetteer identifies the kingdom, province or duchy to which a locality belonged. Sixty five percent of the localities listed are see references to larger communities. Fifteen percent of the localities had either a Catholic or Lutheran parish. Fifteen percent had their own civil registry office.

A complete entry will include the name of the kingdom, province or duchy. The following are how these will appear in an entry in the Gothic script:

Anh. (Anh.)	Anhalt
Baden	Baden
Bay. (Bay.)	Bayern (Bavaria)
Braunsch. (Braunsch.)	Braunschweig (Brunswick)
Els.=Loth. (Els.-Loth.)	Elsass-Lothringen (Alsace Lorraine)
Hessen	Hessen (Hesse)
Lippe	Lippe
Meckl.=Schw. (Meckl.=Schw.)	Mecklenburg Schwerin
Meckl.=Str. (Meckl.=Str.)	Mecklenburg Strelitz
Oldenb. (Oldenb.)	Oldenburg
Pr. (Pr.)	Preussen (Prussia)
Brandbg. (Brandbg.)	Brandenburg
Hann. (Hann.)	Hannover
Hessen=N. (Hessen=N.)	Hessen-Nassau
Hohenzollern	Hohenzollern
Ostpr. (Ostpr.)	Ostpreussen

Pomm. (Pomm.)	Pommern
Posen	Posen
Rheinl. (Rheinl.)	Rheinland (Rhineland)
Sa. (Sa.)	Sachsen (Saxony)
Schles. (Schles.)	Schlesien (Silesia)
Schlesw.=Holst. (Schlesw.=Holst.)	Schleswig-Holstein
Westf. (Westf.)	Westfalen (Westphalia)
Westpr. (Westpr.)	Westpreussen
Sa. (Sa.)	Sachsen (Saxony) [kingdom]
Schaumb.=L. (Schaumb.=L.)	Schaumburg-Lippe
Thur. (Thür.)	Thüringen (Thuringia)
Reuß=ä.=L. (Reuss=ä.=L.)	Reuss-Greiz
Reuß=j.=L. (Reuss=j.=L.)	Reuss-Schleiz-Gera
Sa.=A. (Sa.=A.)	Sachsen-Altenburg
Sa.=C.=G. (Sa.=C.=G.)	Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha
Sa.=M. (Sa.=M.)	Sachsen-Meiningen
Sa.=W.=E. (Sa.=W.=E.)	Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach
Schwarzb.=Rud. (Schwarzb.=Rud.)	Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt
Schwarzb.=Sond. (Schwarzb.=Sond.)	Schwarzburg-Sonderhausen
Waldeck	Waldeck
Wütt. (Württ.)	Württemberg

After identifying to which kingdom, province or duchy the town belonged to, the Meyers gazetteer then identifies where the county, district, military, court and civil registry offices were located for that village. The following is a list of these abbreviation in the Gothic script:

AG. (AG.)	Amtsgericht (lower court)
AH. (AH.)	Amtshauptmannschaft (county seat in Sachsen [kingdom])
BA. (BA.)	Bezirksamt (county seat in Bayern)
BKdo. (Bkdo.)	Bezirkskommando (military command)
DomA. (DomA.)	Domäneamt (county seat in Mecklenburg Strelitz)
Kr. (Kr.)	Kreis (district in Prussian provinces, county seat in Baden, Braunschweig, Hessen and Waldeck)
KrH. (KrH.)	Kreishauptmannschaft (county seat in Saxony [kingdom])
Kt. (Kt.)	Kanton (county seat in Alsace-Lorraine)
LrA. (LrA.)	Landratsamt (district in Thüringen)
LG. (LG.)	Landgericht (higher court)
OA. (OA.)	Oberamt (county seat in Württemberg)
OLG. (OLG.)	Oberlandesgericht (county seat in Schaumburg-Lippe)
RB. (RB.)	Regierungsbezirk (county seat in Prussian provinces and regional district in Bavaria)
RittA. (RittA.)	Ritteramt (county seat in Mecklenburg Schwerin)
StdA. (StdA.)	Standesamt (civil registry office)
VerwA. (VerwA.)	Verwaltungsamt (county seat in Thüringen)

Abbreviations and the order in which they appear in the Meyers gazetteer depends on which kingdom or duchy they pertain to. The following is a list of the various kingdoms and duchies followed by the abbreviations in the order in which they will usually occur in the locality entries:

Anhalt	Kr.	LG.	BKdo.	AG.	StdA.	
Baden	Kr.	LG.	BKdo.	A.	AG.	StdA.
Bayern	RB.	BA.	AG.	Bkdo.	StdA.	
Braunschweig	Kr.	LG.	BKdo.	AG.	StdA.	
Elsass-Lothringen	Kt.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.		
Hessen	Kr.	LG.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.	
Lippe	OLG.	VersA.	AG.	LG.	BKdo.	
Mecklenburg-Schwerin	RittA.	LG.	BKdo.	AG.	StdA.	
Mecklenburg-Strelitz	DomA.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.		
Oldenburg	A.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.		
Preussen	RB.	Kr.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.	
Sachsen	KrH.	AH.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.	
Schaumburg-Lippe	OLG.	LG.	BKdo.	LrA.	AG.	StdA.
Thüringen	VerwB.	LrA.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.	
Waldeck	Kr.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.		
Württemberg	OA.	LG.	AG.	BKdo.	StdA.	

Going from the largest to the smallest district, it identifies where county, district, court, military and civil registration records were kept. The following is an entry from the Meyers gazetteer:

Riebrau, D., Pr., Hann., RB. Bkdo.
 Lüneburg, Kr. AG. Dannenberg, P E 12 km
 Göhrde Kr. Dannenberg; 47 E., StdA., ev. Pfk.

The above entry gives the following information about Riebrau:

- It is a village in the Prussian province of Hannover.
- The county seat and Military record office are at Lüneburg.
- The district and court records were at Dannenberg.
- The telephone, post office and train station were 12 kilometers away at Göhrde in the district of Dannenberg.
- Riebrau has a population of 47 and has its own civil registry office and Lutheran parish.

Incomplete localities will have the abbreviation “s.” (s.) after it, as a see reference that refers you to a town that has a complete entry. The information found under that locality will also pertain to your town.

Look up the complete locality entry information in Meyers for your locality. Copy down the name of the kingdom, province or duchy to which the town belonged. Record the localities where the county, district, court, military and civil registry records are found. Write down also the type of parish(es) if any are listed.

In Germany there was an average of three places by the same name. When this occurs, check the Library Catalog for the parish or civil registers for each. For those localities where these records have not been microfilmed, check the Catalog for the places where the court, military, district and/or county seat records were kept as given in the Meyers gazetteer.