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Residential Registration in Germany

How did the “Res-Reg” project start? RPM did this twelve times in ten cities

RPM’s first discoveries came in historical research for clients

Research scenario from Speyer to St. Louis: *Res-Reg* has the answer.

Origins in Germany: as early as the twelfth century (Heidelberg?)

First focus:

Single young men

Laborers, journeymen, beggars, sick and afflicted, gamesmen, musicians,
dishonest businessmen, criminals, students

Anybody else who might endanger the local citizens (spies, persons of aberrant
religions)

First steps by local officials

Stop them from crossing the border.

Check passports and *Wanderbücher* as they cross the border.

Register them wherever they plan to overnight (employers, innkeepers, family members
as hosts); those staying only one night were sometimes exempt.

Punitive measures

Levy fines on travelers who do not comply.

Levy fines on employers and innkeepers who do not comply.

Evictions of undesirables

If they are criminals elsewhere, violate local societal standards, deserters, carry disease,
or cannot be identified through documents

Where to leave the territory? where they came in or closest border crossing

First interstate efforts at registration of strangers [*Fremde*] and foreigners [*Ausländer*]

1817 in Prussia: keep records of all newcomers

1842 in Lübeck (port cities have greater challenge)

1851 Gotha Accord (15 states: issue passports to own citizens, monitor passports of foreigners arriving)

What detail was recorded?

Name, age or birth date, hometown or previous residence, status or occupation; documentation (ID)

Date of arrival with previous residence [*Anmeldung*]

Date of departure with destination [*Abmeldung*]

Increased vigilance (principally after 1850)

Single females

Men with family members and household members (relatives, servants, employers)

Citizens from other towns in the same state

Final expansion of the system (usually after 1870)

Everybody is included

Anybody changing residence within the same town

Sometimes done house by house (dwelling by dwelling)

In practice almost everywhere by 1900

National registration developments

1867: *Bewegungsfreiheit* [freedom of movement] within *Nordeutscher Bund* [North German League]: any citizen of any member state is allowed to travel to, within, or establish a residence or business in any other member state)

1871/1872 Adoption of *Bewegungsfreiheit* in new German Empire

1938 National Socialist government version of the laws (possibly in order to locate Jews still within Germany—compare with 1938 census of foreigners)

2000- Recent revisions by state or national government

How to locate records of residential registration

Most records before 1920 have been transferred from the modern office of residential registration [*Einwohnermeldeamt*] to the city archives [*Stadtarchiv*]

Archives at higher governmental levels have ever fewer records of this variety

Find the email option in city archive website: the formula is www.cityname.de in Germany (www.stuttgart.de).

Ask about their online catalog [*online-Findbuch*].

Offer to pay research fees and costs for copies, scans, and postage.

Results of RPM research: a book entitled *German Residential Records for Genealogists: Tracking Your Ancestor From Place to Place in Germany* (released in September 2018 through Family Roots Publishing of Orting, Washington); available at a discount through www.rogerpminert.com.

Glossary

Abmeldung, abmelden: register upon departure

Anmeldung, anmelden: register upon arrival

Arbeitgeber: employer(s)

Dienstboten: laborers or employees without guild status

Einwohnermeldamt: modern term for residential registration office

Fremde, Fremder: strangers, male stranger

Gastgeber: innkeeper(s), host(s)

Handwerker: laborers in specific crafts and trades

Häuserliste: list of persons by specific house or dwelling

Meldeamt, Meldebüro: the government office where the registration takes place

Meldeblatt, Meldeformular: page used to record the residential report

Melderegister: registry of persons arriving or departing

Meldung: registration or report

Pass, Passkarte, Reisepass: passport or permission to travel

Polizei [from "policy"]: the local government office responsible for enforcing policy (residential registration, traffic, crimes, building codes, commerce, roads and bridges, holiday celebrations, land deeds, marriage licenses, fire, taxation, Sabbath observance, etc.)

Register, Melderegister: book in which arriving and departing persons are recorded

Reisende: travelers

Ummeldung, ummelden: register change of address in same town

Wanderbuch: employment record of a journeyman (three years of travel with official employment under a master of the same craft or trade)

Example of a registration page from the city of Warfleth in the grand duchy of Oldenburg in 1858:

Königreich Oldenburg
 Amtsstadt Warfleth

Nr.	Name	Heimatort	Legitimations-Actenstücke	Datum der Residenz
	A. Legitimations-Actenstücke			
1.	Herrn. Heistermann	Moringhausen Alt. Borchhausen Königreich Hannover.	Oldenburg. C. A. D. D. D. D. Legitimations-Actenstücke Königreich Hannover.	
2.	Herrn. Friedr. C. Tegtmeier	B. in n. n. n. Alt. N. n. n. n. Königreich Hannover.	Legitimations-Actenstücke Königreich Hannover.	
3.	Ferdinand Heistermann	Liechensand Alt. N. n. n. n. K. Hannover.	Oldenburg. C. A. D. D. D. Legitimations-Actenstücke Königreich Hannover.	
4.	Sophientangr. Thielker	Grasringmer Alt. B. n. n. n. K. Hannover.	Legitimations-Actenstücke Königreich Hannover.	
5.	Herrn. Friedr. Esberg	Steinbrink Alt. D. n. n. n. K. Hannover.	Legitimations-Actenstücke Königreich Hannover.	
	B. Legitimations-Actenstücke			

Figure 1 Column headings: consecutive number; name; hometown; documents presented; dates of residence. (Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Oldenburg—used with permission.)