German Genealogy Begins In the U.S!

Carol Whitton
Whittoncarolyn514@gmail.com

Regardless of Ethnicity, Genealogy Begins with You
    A. Collect family information.
    B. Use U.S. records found in the families' end U.S. location to confirm information.
    C. Choose ONE family line to focus on.
    D. Connect each direct-line person to both parents, using MORE THAT ONE
        RECORD with IDENTICAL evidence such as:
        1. birth certificates, baptisms, family Bibles, passports, military, school registn.
        2. any document giving the person's full name and date of birth,
        3. also stating parental names and relationships.
    E. Pieces of evidence—names, dates, and places—may be found in several related
       records, but then many more than two records will be needed.
    F. Use help aids, such as:
        1. StLGS's bookmark: dates each U.S. State required birth and death registration
        2. StLGS's online free checklist of source types available by century.

When You Reach the German Immigrant Ancestor, Broaden the Search
    A. Avoid Tunnel Vision, broaden the search to all family members, relatives, and if
       necessary, the FAN (Friends, Associates, and Neighbors) Club.
       1. Create a timeline going back.
       2. Include all early family events. **If the direct-line ancestor didn't report what
         you need, others did!**
       3. Ask: what's missing from the timeline. Which records don't you have yet that
         could be obtained?
        U.S. County records are on Family Search https://www.familysearch.org/en/
        Visit repositories too—State Archives, Courthouse, Libraries, Societies.
       4. Work towards the whole families' EARLIEST U.S. record. German place of
         origin could be named in any U.S. source.
       5. If evidence in two records is NOT identical, more records for more people help
         explain differences and avoid getting stuck!
    B. Before beginning German research find in U.S. records:
       1. Families' full German administrative place of origin: Village, District, County,
         Prefecture, Province, Country. [Not all independent German States had the
         same administration or all the levels.]
       2. Ancestor's full given name and German surname. Avoid duplicate names.
       3. Approximate date of last family event in Germany.
    C. The German origin place could be named in ANY U.S. RECORD! USE ALL!
    D. Pose and Prioritize your questions; some must be answered before others.
    E. Avoid Online Pitfalls:
       1. People—Check every suggested record. Is it your ancestor?

Some will be correct; others will be someone else.
Ask is each consistent with evidence you already have?
If unclear whether the same person or not, follow to more records.
2. Dates—Inconsistent, Unlikely, or Impossible
Mothers of age 55+ giving birth to children.
Children of 0-12 years, marry or have children.
Deceased persons marry or have children.
Anyone living beyond 120 years.
3. Places—
Moved too far, too quickly for time period.
Moved after dying.
Moved to different place than children moved.
F. Keep an Organized Research Log for each source. Classes available.
1. Where and when researching?
2. Who/what sought?
3. ID #, TITLE, place?
4. Avoid repetitive entry of citation. Enter once; thereafter copy!
5. How Organized? Indexed? If so, list index first.
6. What done with each item found?
7. Individual item details. And brief summary of what found.
G. Learn Citation Parts. Take a citation class! Apply a citation to each image.
1. Creating Repository—Church, Cemetery, Courthouse, etc.
2. Citation Details—In original record
3. Repository Viewed—FSL, Ancestry, Find A Grave, etc.
4. Repository from which Online Obtained—NARA, State Archive, museum, Historical or Genealogical Society, Library, etc.

Genealogy Research is More Than Collecting Records:
A. Collect Records
Ancestors tell us about themselves with records they created at the time.
We CONFIRM pieces of evidence by obtaining MORE THAN ONE record.
B. **Evaluate:** Sources, Records, and Each Piece of Evidence
KEY=DOES NEW EVIDENCE AGREE WITH WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE?
Who gave the information? An eyewitness or was it second-hand?
When did the eyewitness report? Was he/she old enough to remember, but not yet too forgetful?
Could there be bias or untruth?
C. **Interpret and Explain** ALL Inconsistencies
Write explanations to clarify.
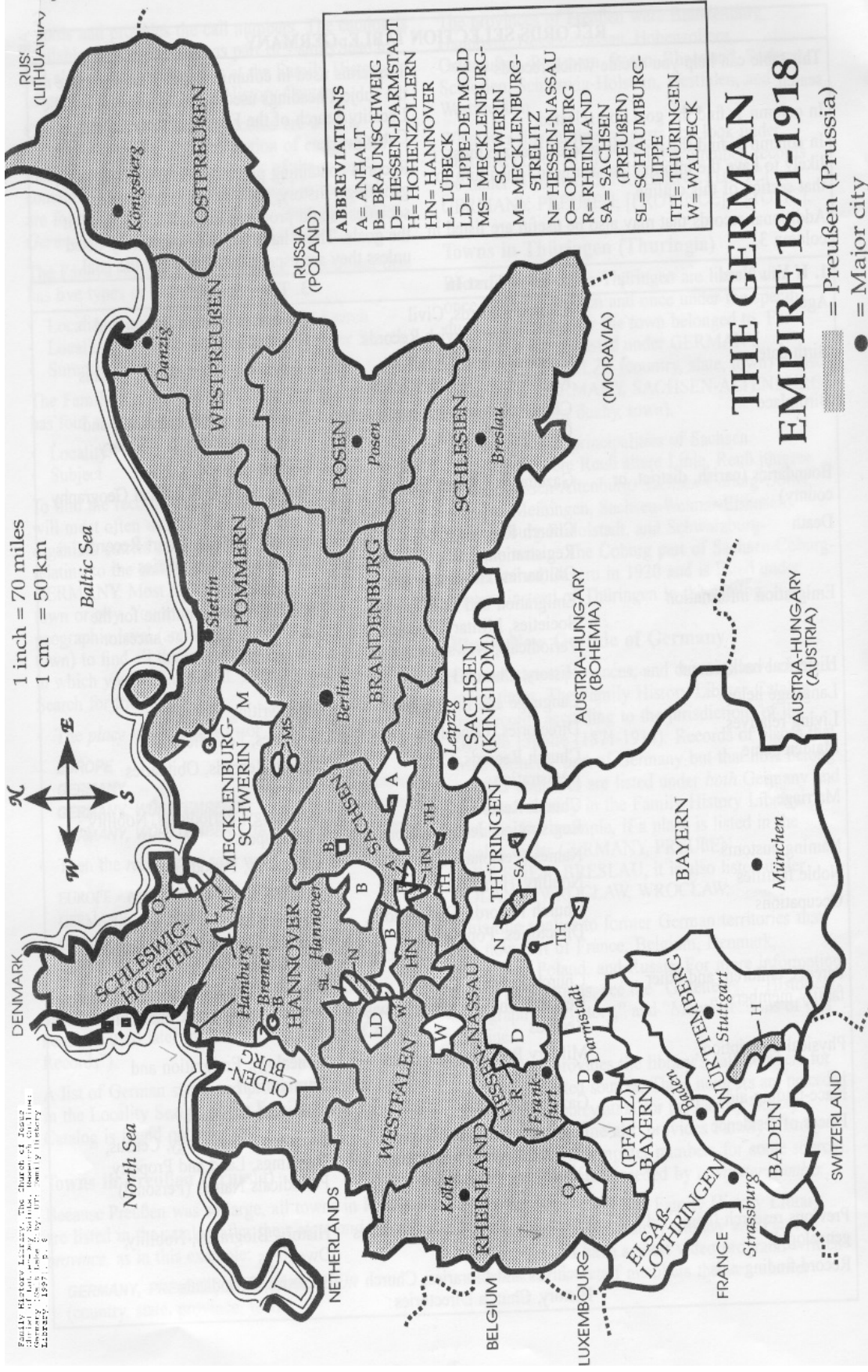More U.S. records for more people support the best explanations.

Learn More About Research in Germany
A. Read Old German Script in U.S. as well as in Germany. Classes at Local, State, National, and International Societies.
B. The best German How to Information at Family Search Research WIKI:
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Genealogy

C. Obtain maps.
   1608-Rev War HRE of the German Nations sent German immigrants to U.S.
   German States prohibited emigration after 1768.
   HRE ended when Napoleon began invading c1800. Austrian Empire separated.
   German emigration allowed again after about 1817.
   Second Empire 1871-1918 map used as basis for German research by FSL
D. Prussia began standardizing German administration levels as states allied with it
   in 1850s and 1860s prior to 1871 unification. Prior, state's administration differed.
E. German research begins in the U.S. with parish records because:
   1. B, M, D records build a family!
   2. Pre-1806, families remained in a parish for MANY generations.
   3. Parish records began c1540 during the Reformation.
   4. Civil records began only after unification, c1876.
   5. Parish records are ONLINE.
   6. First research at home, then visit!
F. Step 2 in German Research: identify the village's parish:
   1. Hansen, Kevan, *Map Guide to German Parish Registers, X State* (Salt Lake
      City:Family Roots Publishing, yyyy) http://www.familyrootspublishing.com
   2. Meyer's Gaz Onlline: http://www.meyersgaz.org
G. Step 3 German Research: find the German Parish Record Online:
   Family Search https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/
   Ancestry https://www.ancestry.com/
   Archion (Protestant) https://www.archion.de/de/
   Matricula (Catholic) https://www.icar-us.eu/en/cooperation/online-
   portals/matricula/

Conclusions: German Genealogy Begins in the U.S.
   1a. Research U.S. Thoroughly First!
   - Verify direct-line connection to an immigrant ancestor.
   - Pose unique questions for the ancestor. Prioritize them.
   - Recognize and avoid online pitfalls.
   - Now find records for every family member.
   - Create a sourced timeline of all family events back to earliest year in the U.S.,
     then use everyone to push it back further.
   - Examine timeline. Which records are missing? Obtain missing!
   - Evaluate. Does new evidence agree with what you have?
   - Explain all differences. Writing explanations helps clarify.
   - Verify ancestor's families' full German place of origin with at least two U.S.
     records.
   1b. Learn more about Germany and reading German.
   2. Determine village's parish.
   3. Locate online German parish records.

THE GERMAN EMPIRE 1871-1918

1 inch = 70 miles
1 cm = 50 km

= Preußen (Prussia)

= Major city

ABBREVIATIONS

A = ANHALT
B = BRAUNSCHWEIG
D = HESSEN-DARMSTADT
H = HOHENZOLLERN
HN = HANNOVER
L = LÜBECK
LD = LIPPE-DETMOLD
MS = MECKLENBURG-
SCHWERIN
M = MECKLENBURG-
STRELITZ
N = HESSEN-NASSAU
O = OLDENBURG
R = RHEINLAND
SA = SACHSEN
(PREUßEN)
SL = SCHAUMBURG-
LIPPE
TH = THÜRINGEN
W = WALDECK

RUS?
(LITHUANIA)

OSTPREUßEN

Königsberg

WESTPREUßEN

Danzig

RUSSIA
(POLAND)

POSEN

Posen

SCHLESIEN

Breslau

(MORAVIA)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
(BOHEMIA)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
(AUSTRIA)

BAYERN

München

Baltic Sea

POMMERN

Stettin

BRANDENBURG

Berlin

M

MS

SACHSEN
(KINGDOM)

Leipzig

A

TH

THÜRINGEN

SA

N

TH

North Sea

DENMARK

SCHLESWIG-
HOLSTEIN

L

M

MECKLENBURG-
SCHWERIN

N

E

S

W

Hamburg

Bremen

HANNOVER

Hannover

SL

B

SACHSEN

B

HN

B

OLDEN-
BURG

O

WESTFALEN

LD

W

HESSEN-
NASSAU

R

D

HN

W

Frank-
furt

Darmstadt

D

TH

NETHERLANDS

RHEINLAND

Köln

BELGIUM

LUXEMBOURG

ELSAß-
LOTHRINGEN

(PFALZ)
BAYERN

Baden

WÜRTTEMBERG

Stuttgart

H

BADEN

FRANCE

Strassburg

SWITZERLAND