January 2026 German Schrift

Welcome to the newest edition of the German Genealogy Quarterly eNewsletter--the German Schrift! This newsletter will highlight the German Special Interest Group (SIG), featured German resources, research tips, and interesting places to visit.

German Special Interest Group

Review of the October and December 2025 Meetings

October 2025 In-Person Meeting:

At our October 2025 in person meeting, we heard from MGC member Jerry Lee, who shared his research into his maternal line family. This was followed by a lively discussion. On Sunday, our regular attendee Paul shared information about his German ancestors who settled in Serbia. It was great to see several members asking for his contact information.

December 5, 2025 - Coffee & Conversation (Online Event):

This online event was a new experiment focused on discussing German customs and traditions while sipping winter coffee from our favorite mugs. I hope everyone had a wonderful time!

If you missed our Holiday Edition, be inspired by reminiscences from the Holiday Schrift 2024!

German Special Interest Group (In-Person)
Saturday, January 24, 2026 | 2:00 p.m.

We will welcome a presenter Jerry G, current President of the local chapter of American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR). Jerry will be talking about his experiences while as a young man he took a trip to Germany in 1960s. He has many photos, and we are looking forward to his presentation!

German Special Interest Group (Zoom)
Sunday, January 25, 2026 / 2:00 p.m.

ALL EVENTS

What's Happening?

Coming in early 2026, the Midwest Genealogy Center will launch an e-newsletter Irish Roots and Branches. If you have Irish roots and would like to subscribe, you can sign up using the link below or call us at 816-252-7228.

LEARN MORE

I would like to mention an upcoming event in Germany, in case you are planning a visit this year and might be interested in attending. The 54th Genealogy Day will take place at the end of September 2026 in Göttingen, Lower Saxony. Please check their website for updates and additional information.

LEARN MORE

Featured Resources

Midwest Genealogy Center Archives
(Provided by John, MGC Archivist)

A new addition to the MGC Archives in December 2025 is the Betz Family Collection, which contains various papers related to the Betz family of Kansas City. The most well-known member of the family documented in the collection is Earl Betz, who established the first permanent system of physical education in American public schools. As a family of German heritage, the collection also includes several letters written in German, such as the one pictured above.

MGC ARCHIVES

Midwest Genealogy Center Periodicals

German Genealogy Journal
"Finding German Ancestors in the Austro-Hungarian Empire - A Case Study, by Katherine M. J. Swanson, Ph.D.

This article provides a general overview of how to research German ancestors who answered the call of nobles from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and settled on their lands. After the end of the Ottoman wars, the Banat and other regions came under the control of the Habsburg dynasty. The Habsburgs recruited settlers from Alsace and Lorraine (now part of France) to populate these areas. One helpful website listed in the article is Donauschwaben Villages Helping Hands (DVHH.org).

PERIODICALS

Featured Books

Pennsylvania German Fraktur and Color Drawings, by the Pennsylvania Farm Museum of Landis Valley (1980).

Fraktur, meaning "broken letters," originated in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. In Pennsylvania, it served primarily as a form of religious art and, while its origins in European Catholic folk art, was used extensively in Protestant documents. The German language text was often created as a birth/certificate (a model or template), produced mainly by rural schoolmasters and copied by their students. Fraktur was most commonly applied to Taufschein (baptismal certificates). Visit MGC to explore this book and admire the beautiful penmanship, decorative writing, symbols, and colors it contains.

Jewish Ancestors? A Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Germany & Austria, by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (2001).

This small book is packed with valuable information, including reviews of concentration camp records held in various locations, details on which records survived (if any), and where they are stored. The book is available for checkout, including through the interlibrary loan (ILL) system.

Research Tips

Online Resource Tip:

The Genealogy.net website is constantly updated, and this time it would like to highlight its city directories. These are invaluable for occupations, marital status, and even leaders names for owners.

To explore them, **visit this link**. Enter the place name in the upper-left corner and click on the map. When you click on any of the numbers shown in the Bremen area, the map will expand into many more numbers until you locate the place and year of interest.

Your emigrant ancestor may appear in Bremen while waiting for a ship departing from Bremerhaven, working temporarily to earn money, or during a time when his wife gave birth before the family traveled overseas. As many passenger records were destroyed, these directories can be an important alternative source to confirm that your ancestor passed through Bremen or lived temporarily in the area, possibly as a renter, while waiting for a ship.

After selecting a year on the right, click the blue Digitalisat link to open the book. Look for sections that reference Einwohner (residents), such as Alphabetisches Verzeichniss der Einwohner. The Bremerhaven port directory beginning in 1839 is available to explore. It looks like this:

As we mentioned Bremerhaven as one of the most used ports for embark and emigrate, this 10-min video may relate. Watch: *Why did so many Germans immigrate to the United States?*

Handy Tips for Traveling to Germany

Travel Tip from Samantha K: Using Euros and Cash

You may not need much foreign currency, as most places accept credit or debit cards. However, smaller vendors such as farmers' markets or booths may prefer cash. You can withdraw cash from ATMs overseas or at airports, though airport ATMs and exchange services often charge higher fees and offer less favorable rates.

It's best to use a local bank ATM or a well-lit one. Be sure to research the advantages and disadvantages of platforms such as Euronet, Travelex, or Cashzone, as they may levy higher ATM fees or exchange rates. Keep in mind that purchasing currency through your local bank does not always guarantee the best rate. Avoid exchanging more money than you need, as you may be left with unused currency or bear money when exiting it back to the bank.

Tip from Sveta (Before You Go):

You may find **this website** helpful, as it lists prices throughout Germany. Please note that the site contains a large number of advertisements.

Another Helpful Resource:
Deutschland.de
This site offers information on travel, daily life, work, language, culture, and much more.

Places to Visit

Leavenworth, Washington, United States

Leavenworth is a very Bavarian town with plenty to see! Experience the charm and Gemütlichkeit through its many shops, events, and museums, including the **Nutcracker Museum**. The museum features items spanning several centuries! If you cannot visit in person, you can **explore the town virtually** too!

Be sure to also check the **Washington State Online Digital Archives**, which include original vital records and beyond birth certificates.

If this destination feels too close to home, consider visiting **Rostock, Germany**. Rostock is the largest city in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) and was originally founded by the Polabian Slavs. The historic city center retains much of its charm, including six restored gable houses dating from the 16th to 18th centuries. The city's oldest church, Marienkirche, dates from the 13th century. St. Peter's Church, which itself was built in the 13th century, was rebuilt after heavy bombing during World War II. Rostock is also home to one of the oldest universities in the world, founded in 1419 and named after Duke Albert V of Austria. As a former East Germany, Rostock was the largest seaport city.

As a family historian or genealogist, you may be especially interested in local history museums. Explore the **Heimatmuseum** in Warnemünde.

You can also visit the largest floating museum in the region, housed entirely on a ship. Through the **museum's website**, you can click on Aktivitäten to see the ship's schedule and explore exhibits via the museum app.

If you plan on bringing the whole family, take a trip to the **3D Trick Museum** for a journey into optical illusions.

And as always, I want to attach the available records for researchers for this particular area. Familysearch has **military records from the early 1800s**, and **church books from 1657**.

Fun and Learning

Little Pearls from the Books

Upon defeating the Ottoman Turks at Vienna in 1683, further victories by Christian forces resulted in opportunities for folks from the extended Habsburg domains to migrate to liberated areas in Hungary, over which Austria had jurisdiction by way of royal succession. Prospective colonists of diverse nationalities from various parts of the historic Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation found new beginnings in Hungary, especially during the 18th Century. For reasons never altogether determined, **German-speaking settlers generally came to be referred to as 'Swabians' locally, regardless of their actual regional origin.**

(Finding Aids 1785-1945 Data Regarding German and Hungarian Ancestors of Benedikt Tonda and Nina Seti, Plus an Expose About the Local 1941-1946 Internment Camp for Germans of Hyperions, by Jacob Siegmundt, Ph.D. (p.11,000)

What is this German word? Dust off that German dictionary from your shelf! These are some common phrases that you might find useful, especially when traveling.

Wie g__ / es Dir/en?
(How are you?) polite form

Spr_ chen Sie English?
(Do you speak English?)

Ich ve_ _ _ lehe das nicht.
(I don't understand.)

Ich möchte g_ _ n ...
(I would like to...)

K ö n n _ e Sie mir bitte sen_ en ...
(Please, could you send me...)

Proverb:
Wir denken selten an das, was wir haben, aber immer an das, was uns fehlt.

We seldom think of what we have, but always about what we lack (always just on that what we are missing). (Arthur Schopenhauer)

Thank you. Danke schön.

Sveta S.

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