# Finding Your German Ancestor's Home
## March 27, 2024

History of German Immigration
  --Small number to Jamestown in 1608
  --33 settlers formed Germantown in 1683
  --Large influx 18th Century
  --Pennsylvania 1715-75, peak 1749
  --250,000 Germans in America at start of American Revolution
  --5M in 19th Century because of 1816-17 Crop Failures and 1848 revolution

Step One—Gather information.
Step Two—Has the immigrant's birthplace been identified?

Best U.S. Record Sources
   --Local Community Sources:
      -Churches: Baptism, marriage, membership, death, burial.  Godparents, witnesses.
      -Cemeteries:  Tombstones, cemetery office records.
      -Mortuary records.
      -School records
      -Occupation records: companies, professional associations, unions.
      -Social and fraternal societies, such as the Turnvereins, Gesangvereins, Mannerchors.
       Libraries, historical & genealogical societies: city directories (when arrived), occupation, neighbors; local & family histories.
      -Newspapers (German & English): Birth announcements, marriage, travel, obits.
      -Courthouse/local registrar (might be County level): B,M & D certificates, naturalization,  wills, probates, court cases.

State Records:  State Census (some)

U.S. Records
      -Census
      -Passenger Lists & Indexes
      -Passports
      -Citizenship/Naturalization
      -Military Records

Google Search:  Google Maps, Contact info for city and county record offices.

Census Records—Usually only Country of origin; but sometimes the state (i.e., Bavaria, Hessen, etc.)
      --1900-1930:  Whether naturalized and year of immigration.
      --1940 & 1950: Whether naturalized only.

Passenger Lists
      --Search both Ancestry and FamilySearch Data Bases for German Passenger Lists.

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--Ancestry has an "Immigration and Travel" database.

--FamilySearch has a "Passenger List" database.

--Hamburg Passenger Lists, 1850-1934 (Family Search & Ancestry)

    -Direct list: 1850-1934

    -Indirect list: (Interim port) 1850-1910

-Bremen Passenger List: (German site & FamilySearch). Very limited number of people: http://www.passengerlists.de/; https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1787826.

-An early partner with Bremen was the port of Baltimore, MD. Many Germans landed. Baltimore passenger arrival lists can compensate partially for the loss of Bremen records.

-One Step Webpages by Stephen Morse, https://stevemorse.org/.

-Baltimore Passenger lists, 1820-1864 ($). Ancestry & Family Search

-Maryland, Baltimore Passenger Lists, 1820-1948. Ancestry & Family Search

-Maryland, Baltimore Passenger Lists, (1820-1957) ($), Index . Ancestry & Family Search

-Wurttemberg Index (Ancestry & FamilySearch): Eight volumes with about 60,000 emigrants to the U.S. from the late 1700s to 1900.

-Miscellaneous German Emigration Indexes: FamilySearch https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Finding_Town_of_Origin

Ellis Island Passenger List (https://heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger) : List of 22.5M immigrant from 1892 to 1924. Often lists only country of origin.

-Castle Garden (Ancestry & FamilySearch): List of 10M immigrants from 1830-1892.

-Germans to America (FamilySearch): Glazier and Filby's 74 volumes covering 1840-1897.

-NARA

    -1798-1819: Ship cargo manifests or baggage & passengers. Very fragmented.

    -1820-1945: Passenger lists. Prior to 1880s, rarely included town of origin.

    -U.S. Customs Passenger Lists 1820-1905. County of origin only.

    -Immigration Passenger Lists 1883-1945. Usually included place birth and/or last residence.

Passports

    --Some as early as 1789

    --Except for during Civil War and WW II, not required until 1941.

    --The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has those issued between 1795 and March 31, 1925. Passport applications may provide information about the applicant's marital status, date and place of birth, naturalization (if foreign born), occupation or business, and names of other family members. Located at https://www.archives.gov/research/passport.

    --Ancestry.com (https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1174/. ): Index and digital images for 1795-1925. Fold3 also has an online index.

Citizenship and Naturalization

    --Check 1900-1950 Census Records.

    --Prior to Sep1906 any court could process.

    --After Sep 1906 only Federal Courts (time to transition)

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--List of places to search for naturalization records:
-Family Search https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/.
-National Archives: https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/naturalization.
-Ancestry.com: https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/img_citizenship

Military Records
--WW I Draft Registration: Index and images on Ancestry & FamilySearch; about 24M records
-1$^{st}$ Registration: Men 21-30 (born 1886-96); place of birth
-2$^{nd}$ Registration: born 1896-97; place of birth of person & father.
-3$^{rd}$ Registration: Men 18-40 (born 1873-1900); no place of birth.
--WW II Army Enlistment Records: 1938-46; 8.3M records. Ancestry & FamilySearch
--WW II Draft Registration Cards: 1940-47; born 1898-1929. Ancestry & FamilySearch.
--Fold3: Organized by wars, such as WW I, WW II, Civil War, etc.; https://www.fold3.com/login.
--NARA: https://www.archives.gov/.
--NPRC, St. Louis: https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/military-personnel.

Church Records
--Must first know the immigrant's religion. Most from Southern Germany were Catholic and Northern were Evangelical Lutheran.
--German Immigrants in American Church Records (GIACR) https://rpmgrtpublications.wixsite.com/mysite/services-2. Series of 39 books covering German Protestant Churches in mostly the Midwest states settled by Germans. Published by Family Roots Publishing Co. Includes immigrants from Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg.
--List of churches that have been indexed: https://rpmgrtpublications.wixsite.com/mysite/services-2.
--FamilySearch Wiki: How to Find Church Records in the United States.
--Correspond or visit directly with the Church where they lived in the U.S.

Newspaper Research
--Many of the cities with a large German population published their own German language newspapers. Obituaries and other related articles could provide hometown.
--Chronicling America (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov). Newspapers in 27 languages, including German. Can filter by language, timespan, and location.
--Don't limit your search just to German newspapers, local English language newspaper could also be very helpful.
--Ancestry, FamilySearch, and MyHeritage all have newspaper databases.
--Elephind (www.elephind.com. ) will search all free newspaper databases that are online. Have had good results with it.

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--Cyndi's List, State Newspaper Archives, and Google are all excellent resources in doing newspaper research.

FAN Club

--Always check records of siblings.  Birth and death records, in particular, might list the birth location of a sibling.
--Witnesses to baptisms and/or legal documents, groomsmen, and maids of honor at weddings should be researched, as they could be from the same towns.
--Neighbors on census records who are from the same country, could be from the same location.
--Immigration or naturalization records for FANs might provide the name of their German hometown.

DNA

--If German heritage on only one side of the family, Ancestry designates matches as ''maternal'' or ''paternal''.
--MyHeritage DNA tests allow you to filter matches by various locations, including Germany.  You can also filter by ancestor (TOFR).
--Ancestry DNA allows you to also filter by location and by ancestor (ThruLines).
--23AndMe allows you to filter by Ancestor Birthplaces, including Germany.

Cyndi's List

--Start with "Germany" and work from there.
--Check for all the sources we have discussed, including Immigration, Naturalization, Newspapers, German Church Records, Military Records, etc.
--Use search list in upper right-hand corner of home page.