

Germany Beginning Research Series - Handout



Lesson 1: Getting Started

With Baerbel Johnson, AG®

Overview

Overall, basic genealogical research principles can be illustrated by this simple diagram.

- **Gather** – Begin by identifying what you know and also what you do not know. Do this by gathering home- and other sources. Write down the information.
- **Choose** – Decide what you want to find out. Formulate a specific goal, such as: “I want to find out the names of Grandma Frieda’s parents.”
- **Find** – Look for resources and records that may help you find this information. Search the records.
- **Evaluate** – Analyze what you have found and utilize what you have learned.
- **Share** – Share your findings with others. This enables you to compare notes, preserve the information, and possibly learn more.



At the center of the diagram is the concept of getting help.

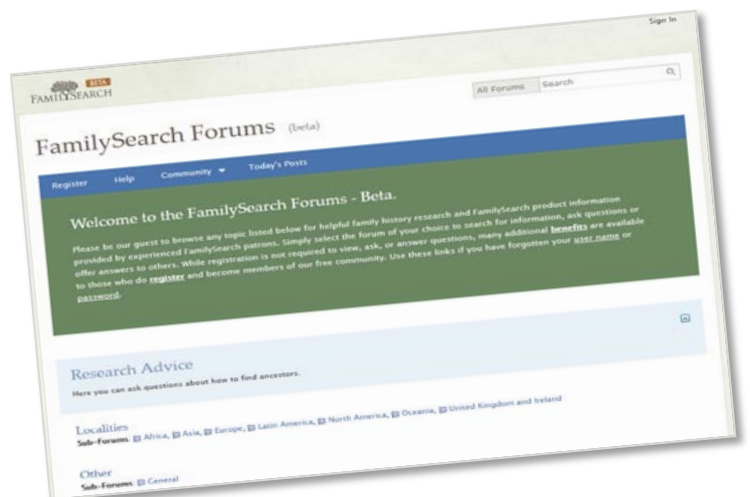
FamilySearch Wiki & Forums

A useful tool is the FamilySearch Wiki. It contains numerous articles with helpful suggestions and links. Here are some useful links from the lesson:

- [Tracing Immigration Origins](#)
- [Hansel and Gretel: Finding Our German Ancestors](#)
- [Internet Resources for Finding 19th Century German Emigrants](#)
- [Determining a Place of Origin in Germany](#)
- [Pre-1820 Emigration from Germany](#)

Another great resource is FamilySearch Forums. You can use this online service to ask or answer questions. This enables family historians to help each other. Registration is free, and registered members also have the option of posting images, such as records they need help deciphering. Here is the link:

- [FamilySearch Forums](#)



Needed: the German Home Town

Most of the records that document your German Ancestors were kept locally. Thus the most important detail needed for further research is the town of origin. With that information you can find out which records exist and how you can access them. Follow these three steps to learn more about your family:

Step 1: Locate home- and other sources

Gather any home sources that you or your relatives may have available. As you do this, keep an eye out for anything that may help you determine your ancestor's home town in Germany, such as papers written in German that you may not be able to read.

Once you have located information from home sources, you may want to enter it into FamilySearch.org and see what you can turn up. Be sure to use "advanced search" to take advantage of the "wildcard" and "exact search" features.

Step 2: Search sources in the country of immigration

If home sources didn't list your ancestor's German home town, you may be able to find it some other way. Most often this information is found in records created in the country of immigration. Check ALL the records you can find for that locality. You will need to check records on various levels of jurisdiction, such as town, county, and state. Look for your ancestor and potential relatives or friends. Sources may include censuses, vital records, various types of printed materials, naturalization records, and passenger lists. These Wiki articles provide more detailed information. If you don't have a lot of information about an ancestor, you may need to begin with the children or perhaps even grandchildren, who should be better documented.

Step 3: Write down what you know

As you sift through your home records and talk to relatives, write down what you know. Start with a pedigree chart. Then add information about each family to the family group record. Along the way it is a good practice to use a research log to document your research.

