

German and Danish Research: Schleswig-Holstein Censuses

Germany and Denmark “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

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OBJECTIVE

This guide will introduce the Schleswig-Holstein censuses available for research and explain how to locate them online.

Specifically, this guide will teach you to:

- Understand the history of the Schleswig-Holstein border changes.
- Access Schleswig-Holstein censuses.
- Locate a specific person in a Schleswig-Holstein census.

INTRODUCTION

From the 1400s to 1866, the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were both ruled by Denmark. In 1863, the King of Denmark, Frederik VII, died childless, leaving behind a heated succession dispute between Denmark and the German Confederation (1815–1866). In 1864, this dispute led to the Second War of Schleswig, of which the Germans were victorious (Denmark had won the First War of Schleswig, in 1851).

As a result of the German victory, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Austrian Empire, and the Kingdom of Prussia signed the Treaty of Vienna in 1864. This treaty split the political area, giving the Kingdom of Prussia rule over the province of Schleswig (except for Ærø, a Danish island), and giving the Austrian Empire rule over the province of Holstein.

But the dispute was far from settled. Just two years later, in 1866, the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia fought each other in the Austro-Prussian War. In August 1866, they signed the Peace of Prague, in which the Austrian Empire ceded the area of Holstein to Prussia. As such, in 1867, the combined province of Schleswig-Holstein was under Prussian rule. Schleswig-Holstein remained a province of the Kingdom of Prussia and became part of Germany along with that region in 1871. Schleswig-Holstein remained a Prussian province until 1946, although the northern part of Schleswig split off in 1920 (see explanation below).

Throughout the course of these various wars, the population of Schleswig-Holstein remained a mixture of Danish and German people. Germans usually remained the majority in Holstein, but Northern Schleswig contained a majority of Danes.

A provision in the Peace of Prague promised that within six years, Northern Schleswig would be permitted to choose whether or not to be reunified with Denmark. About 50,000 Danes, a third of the Danish inhabitants of Northern Schleswig opted for Denmark. Because of this choice,

they were forced to migrate across the new political border to Denmark to wait for the supposed reunification vote. They left, trusting that they would be allowed to retain their land in Schleswig. The illusion shattered when they realized no vote was going to take place.

Disappointed, the Danish optants returned to Schleswig to care for their lands. By leaving Denmark, they automatically forfeited their Danish citizenship, yet they were unable to acquire Prussian citizenship because they had not applied for it within the allotted six years. For years, these optants, Northern Schleswig Danes, were persecuted for the smallest offense and were subject to unwarranted police visits and arrests. Their lack of citizenship caused issues not only for them, but for their descendants all the way until 1907, when Prussia and Denmark signed a treaty to confer citizenship upon the optant descendants living on their territories.

In North Schleswig, although the residents were predominantly Danish, there was political pressure to be more German since the area was under German rule. Schools were conducted in only German, not Danish, and the language of administration was also German. Around 60,000 Danish Schleswig-Holstein residents emigrated by 1900, many of whom traveled to North America.

The map below shows the entirety of pre-1920 Schleswig-Holstein with its parishes (the map is not fully to scale).



In 1920, a reunification vote, known as the 1920 Plebiscite, was held. This was a direct vote by all members of the Schleswig population to choose between two potential Danish-German borders. The Danish historian Hans Victor Clausen, who had traveled in this area for years and who studied Danish history and geography, proposed two new borders: One would include the northern part of Schleswig, which contained a Danish majority. The other border would also include the central part of Schleswig, which contained a German majority, who nevertheless also spoke Danish and, Clausen felt, may thus feel some affinity towards Denmark.

Clausen's two proposed borders became the foundation of the 1920 Plebiscite, and the two voting regions became known as Zone I (in the far north of Schleswig) and Zone II (in central Schleswig). Of the Schleswig population, 90% participated in the vote.

Zone I voted as a unit, so even though a few areas had a majority Germany vote, the entire zone came under Danish rule when 75% of Zone I voted to rejoin Denmark.

Zone II voted as separate parishes; 80% of Zone II voted to remain part of Germany, and each parish had a majority Germany vote, so the entirety of Zone II remained part of the Prussian province of Schleswig-Holstein.

Both Zone I and Zone II ended up with minority populations from the other country. Today, North Schleswig (Denmark) is the home of some 15,000 Germans, constituting about 6% of the North Schleswig population. And South Schleswig (Germany) is the home of 50,000 Danes, who make up around 10% of the South Schleswig population. The Danish state, with some help from Germany, pays for Danish schools in the German part of Schleswig and for German schools in the Danish part to give the German and Danish minorities of Schleswig the type of life they each desire.

You may want to examine the following before continuing:

- Read the Danish [Dansk Demografisk Database](#) (DDD) "How to" Guide on locating Danish censuses on the DDD website.
- Consult the DDD overview of [which censuses are under transcription and which have been completed](#) at dis-danmark.dk/kipkort (in English).
 - The counties listed in the table that make up the entirety of the pre-1920 Schleswig-Holstein are the following: Haderslev, Tønder, Åbenrå, Sønderborg, Sydslesvig, Dithmarschen, Holsten, and Lauenburg. Schleswig-Holstein is listed under these same counties on *Danish Family Search*, although Sydslesvig, Dithmarschen, Holsten, and Lauenburg are found under "Slesvig-Holsten" in the lists of places next to the Danish Counties map on the homepage.
 - Click on a colored box next to your region of interest and in the column for the census year of interest to view a map of the census information for that area in that year. The key under the table explains the color code. If, for example, you click on the region "Sydslesvig" (South Schleswig) for 1787, you will see on the map that Amrum and St. Laurentii are in blue and the rest of the region is all in gray; this indicates that Amrum and St. Laurentii are completed/fully indexed for 1787 and that census records for the rest of the Sydslesvig region do not exist.
 - If you cannot find your person of interest in a census you know includes Schleswig-Holstein, consult this table and the hyperlinked maps to see if it is because census records for that year (shown by the color gray) do not exist for your town or if it is because transcription is still underway (yellow or orange) or has not yet begun (white).
 - Note that although gray technically indicates that the records have not been preserved, records do turn up once in a while that were thought lost.

- Consult the DDD table of [the percentage that has been indexed per census](#) (in Danish).
 - Note that “Dækning” means “coverage,” or the percentage of the total population that has been indexed for a specific census year—when followed by a number, it indicates the coverage for that year, such that the heading “Dækning 18” means “coverage in 2018.” The “Dækning” column without a year, farthest to the left, is the coverage for the current year.
 - Any number close to 100% usually indicates that the index is complete.
 - When the coverage is listed as, e.g., 99%, this indicates that the index is complete but also that a small portion of the population in that census year apparently was not included in the census (or perhaps that some records were lost).
 - On the other hand, when the coverage is listed as, e.g., 100.6%, this indicates that some people were counted more than once when the original census was taken.
 - To view the coverage for Schleswig and Holstein, scroll down to “FT Slesvig” and “FT Holsten,” respectively, under the “Type” heading.
 - So far, 7 Danish censuses have been fully indexed by volunteers coordinating with the Danish National Archives DDD.
 - The first Danish census to be fully indexed was that of 1801; its index was completed in 2001. The indexes for the 1787, 1801, 1845, 1850, 1860, 1880, and 1885 censuses are now completed.
- Read the [German Script Tutorial](#) “How to” Guide to learn about and practice reading the old German script.
- Watch the [Old German Script](#) video series on the *FamilySearch* Learning Center to gain a foundation for reading the old German script.

Locating Schleswig-Holstein Censuses

Danish censuses, including those covering Schleswig-Holstein, are made available after 75 years. Indexing is an ongoing project by volunteers, organized by the Danish National Archives.

The table below lists the availability of the Schleswig-Holstein censuses on four main genealogical websites and shows which are not available. Those marked with the white checkmark symbol (instead of the gray ✓) are only available for the post-1920 Danish/Northern part of Schleswig (i.e., Haderslev, Tønder, Åbenrå, Sønderborg); no censuses were taken in these areas while they were under German rule in 1864–1920. Those with the blue ✓ symbol are only available for Sydslesvig (i.e., Southern Schleswig), Tønder, and Haderslev.

See each section below for details on how to access the censuses on each of these four websites, as well as how to access the Lübeck censuses on *Ancestry*.

| | <i>FamilySearch</i> | <i>Danish Family Search</i> | <i>ArkivalierOnline</i> | <i>MyHeritage</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1769 | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |
| 1787 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1801 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1803 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| 1834 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1835 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1840 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1845 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1850 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1855 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1860 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1864 | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |
| 1880 (only Haderslev) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1885 (only Åbenrå) | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| 1890 (only Åbenrå) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1895 (only Åbenrå) | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| 1921 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1925 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1930 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1940 | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Lauenburg is only included in the 1845, 1855, and 1860 censuses.

Again, consult the DDD overview at dis-danmark.dk/kipkort to see which counties are included in which census years. Click on a specific year for a specific county to view the census coverage and the indexing status for each town.

On FamilySearch

- Go to [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) and click on **Search** and then on **Catalog**.
- In the **Place** search, if you know your ancestor's county or town of residence, type in the **county or town name** and select the location **from the drop-down box**. Click **Search**.
 - If you don't know the specific town of residence, type in **Denmark** and select the location "**Denmark**" **from the drop-down box**. Click **Search**.
- A list of available censuses for the chosen location will show up. Click on a **census year** and then on the title, e.g., **Denmark, Folketælling, 1835** [Denmark, census, 1835].
- On the 1835 census page, click on the word "**here**" in the red sentence, "These records are available online, click **here**."
- Fill in the name, birth year, etc., and click **Search**.
- Click on a **result** to view the full index and, if an image is attached, an image of the original record. Click on the **census image** to view the full image.

On Danish Family Search

There are multiple ways to locate Danish censuses on *Danish Family Search* that include Schleswig-Holstein:

A. Go to danishfamilysearch.com and click on the **Search** heading.

- From the respective drop-down boxes, select the **County** and, if known, the **Parish**.
- Fill in the **First Name** and/or the **Last Name**, deselect the **Source types** off to the right (except for **Census Data**), and click **Search**. Clicking on a search result will bring up the full index for that person; if you then scroll down, you can click on the image to view the scanned original record as well.

B. Go to danishfamilysearch.com and click on **Slesvig-Holsten** (or one of the other Schleswig-Holstein counties) from the list of counties to the left of the Danish Counties map.

- Click on one of the **Counties and Areas** or one of the **Parishes** listed to the right; if you don't know the specific area, follow the steps under Way A instead.
- Click on the **Census data** heading. To search within the area for a certain year, click on the **magnifying glass icon** next to a census year.

C. Go to danishfamilysearch.com and click on one of the **areas on the Danish Counties map itself**. Note that only Haderslev, Tønder, Åbenrå, and Sønderborg are included on the map; since this is a current Danish map, only these four Schleswig-Holstein areas are included since they were the ones who, in the 1920 Plebiscite, voted to rejoin Denmark. If your county is in today's German part of Schleswig-Holstein, follow the steps for Way A or Way B above instead.

- Click on one of the **Hundreds** or one of the **Parishes** listed to the right. You can also click on one of the **parishes on the map itself**. If you don't know the specific area, follow the steps under Way A instead.
- Click on the **Census data** heading. To view the list of people within the area for a certain year, click on the **magnifying glass icon** next to a census year.
- Red headings/buttons will show up that indicate different ways to view the census data. Click on one of these **red buttons, e.g., "View surnames."** You must log in to view this list; registration is free (simply click on the **User** heading and then the **Create member account** option). The surnames button will show you a list of all the surnames included in that census for that region. Clicking on a surname will bring up the list of all people with the chosen surname in the census in that region; you can then click on the **magnifying glass** to view the full index and census image for a particular person.
 - Click on a **bolded heading (such as "Name")** to re-organize the data alphabetically, chronologically, etc. This is especially helpful if, for example, you know the approximate age or year of birth of your person; simply click on the **Age** or **Born** headings to view the list of people in their order of age or birth year.

On ArkivalierOnline

- Go to sa.dk/en and click on **Census lists**.
- The censuses that include the pre-1920 area of Schleswig-Holstein are found under three listings:
 - **Folketællinger** [Censuses]. Clicking on this option will bring up a list of all Danish censuses on the website. Click on a **"Holsten" or a "Slesvig" census** and select the location within that area from the **drop-down box(es)**. Then click on the correct listing under the **Contents** heading to browse the original images.
 - **Folketællinger, Sønderjylland** [Censuses, South Jutland/North Schleswig]. Clicking on this option will bring up a list of Slesvig [Schleswig] and Holsten [Holstein] censuses. Click on a **census** and select the location within that area from the **drop-down box(es)**. Then click on the correct listing under the **Contents** heading to browse the original images.
 - **Tyske folketællingskort, 1885** [German census cards, 1885]. Clicking on this option will bring up a list of Schleswig-Holstein areas included in the 1885 census. Click on a **census** and select either **Mænd** [Men] or **Kvinder** [Women] to browse the original images.

On MyHeritage

- Go to myheritage.com and click on **Nordic Census** in the right-hand column (under **Categories**).
- To perform an overall search in all the censuses, simply fill in the name, birth year, etc., and click **Search**. Note that this search includes the Norway, Finland, Sweden, and non-

Schleswig-Holstein Denmark censuses.

- To perform a search in a specific census, click on **a census** from the right-hand column; if you hover the mouse over the census title, a note will show up, specifying which regions are included in that census. This will let you know if Schleswig-Holstein is included in the census taken that year. Then fill in the name, birth year, etc., and click **Search**.
- Click on **a name or an image** to view the full index. On the person's personal index page, scroll down to view the image, and click on the **census image** to view an image of the original record.

On Ancestry

- Go to [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and click on **Search** and then on **Card Catalog**.
- On the left-hand side, under **Filter By Collection**, click on **Census and Voter Lists**.
- On the left-hand side, under **Filter By Location**, click on **Europe** and then **Germany** and then **Schleswig-Holstein**.
- *Ancestry* only has censuses for the city of Lübeck. If your ancestors are from Lübeck, click on **a census year**.
- At the specific census search page, fill in the name, birth year, etc., and click **Search**.
- Click on **View Record** next to a name to view the full index and an image of the original record. Click on the **census image** to view the full image.

Further information

- Refer to [Schleswig-Holstein, German Empire Genealogy](#), a *FamilySearch* Wiki article, for help researching in other record types.