Reading Civil Registration Birth Records
Germany “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction
September 2018

GOAL
This guide will teach you how to extract genealogical information from a German civil registration birth record by identifying key words and phrases.

INTRODUCTION
Civil registration is governmental registration of all births, marriages, and deaths that occurred in a specific district. Civil registration districts (Zivilstandsamt until 1874, Standesamt from 1874 to the present) were strictly organized geographically. All individuals were registered regardless of religious faith.

There were usually two copies produced, particularly after 1874. The Hauptregister or primary copy was generally kept in the local civil registrar’s office, while the duplicate copy or Nebenregister was to be collected centrally at the court level for safekeeping. Many of these duplicate records are now located in state archives.

Depending on the area and time, civil registration may be recorded in German, French, Danish, or Polish.

Due to privacy laws, access to recent records is restricted to immediate family members. These restrictions are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Poland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Births: 110 years</td>
<td>Births: 100 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages: 80 years</td>
<td>Marriages: 80 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths: 30 years</td>
<td>Deaths: 80 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although some areas of what would later become the German Empire began keeping civil copies of births, marriages, and deaths as early as the 1790s, the practice was not mandatory for all areas of the empire until 1 January 1876. These modern civil registration records were pre-printed standardized forms with blanks for the registrar to write in the required information by hand.

Birth records typically span one page and generally contain the registration date (which can differ from the birth date), the name of the informant, the name of the mother and father, residence of the mother, the child’s date of birth, and the full name of the child.

Not every town had its own Standesamt (civil registration office). Use Meyer’s Gazetteer to determine the location of the nearest Standesamt.
You may want to consult the following “How to” Guides before continuing:

- Fraktur
- German Script
- Meyer's Gazetteer Online: Meyersgaz.org

HOW TO

Sample birth record

Birth record outline in English

A. Nr. (#) (location) on (full date written out). [Note: this is the registration date not the date of birth.]

Appeared before the undersigned civil registrar, the personally known (name of the informant), residing in (place), (informant’s religious affiliation), and indicated that (name of the mother), (the mother’s religious affiliation), (mother’s place of residence), at (place), on (full date), and at (time), gave birth to a (gender) child, who was given the name (child’s given name). Was read…

Key Words

The following key words will indicate the essential genealogical information. Depending on the context, the information may come before or after the key word. Note that the German words and phrases are written in standardized German. In some cases, the examples provided may differ in spelling or conjugation of the word. Keep in mind that phrases and even words may be split between two lines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Information given</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>known</td>
<td>bekannt</td>
<td>followed by the name of the informant. This is often, but not always, the father of the child</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious affiliation</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>preceded by the type of religious affiliation (Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, etc.)</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and indicated that by</td>
<td>und zeigte an, daß von der</td>
<td>followed by the name of the child’s mother</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Example" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on [day]</td>
<td>am ...ten</td>
<td>day of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>am siebenundzwanzigsten (on the 27th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the year</td>
<td>des Jahres</td>
<td>preceded by the month of birth; followed by the year of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a child</td>
<td>ein Kind</td>
<td>followed by the gender of the child (weiblichen – female / männlichen – male)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>given name(s)</td>
<td>Vornamen</td>
<td>followed by the given name(s) of the child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRACTICE**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the name of the informant?</th>
<th>Carl Mross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note: the handwritten word before his name is his occupation / status!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the name of the child’s mother?</th>
<th>Ottilie Mross, maiden name Pflaum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look for “und zeigt an, dass von der“ which is followed by the name of the mother.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When was the child born?
31 May 1900
Look for *am*, which is followed by the date of birth.
am einunddreißigsten Mai des Jahres tausen neunhundert

What is the name of the child?
Elisabeth
Look for *Vornamen*, which will be followed by the child’s name.
geboren werden sei und das Kind

**ACTIVITY**

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.
Nr. 64

Neidenburg, am 7. Juni 1906.

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschien heute, der Persönlichkeit

welche

nicht bekannt, die

von Familie Carl Meiss

wohnt in Neidenburg

evang. Religion, und zeigte an, daß von der

Eltern Meiss geboren

Jenseits

evang. Religion,

wohnt bei

zu Neidenburg, Neidenburg A M 1084,

am 7. Juni um 1 Uhr, des Jahres

vorher mitsammt

halb morgens um

fünf Uhr ein Kind

geboren werden sei und daß das Kind

Namen

erhalten habe

Vorgelesen, geschrieben und nachprüfbar

Carl Meiss.

Der Standesbeamte.

Signatur

Die Notariatsannahme mit dem Hauptgericht beglaubigt.

Neidenburg, am 7. Juni 1906.

Der Standesbeamte.

Signatur