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:

Germany	**Poland**
Births: 110 years	Births: 100 years
Marriages: 80 years	Marriages: 80 years
Deaths: 30 years	Deaths: 80 years

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.

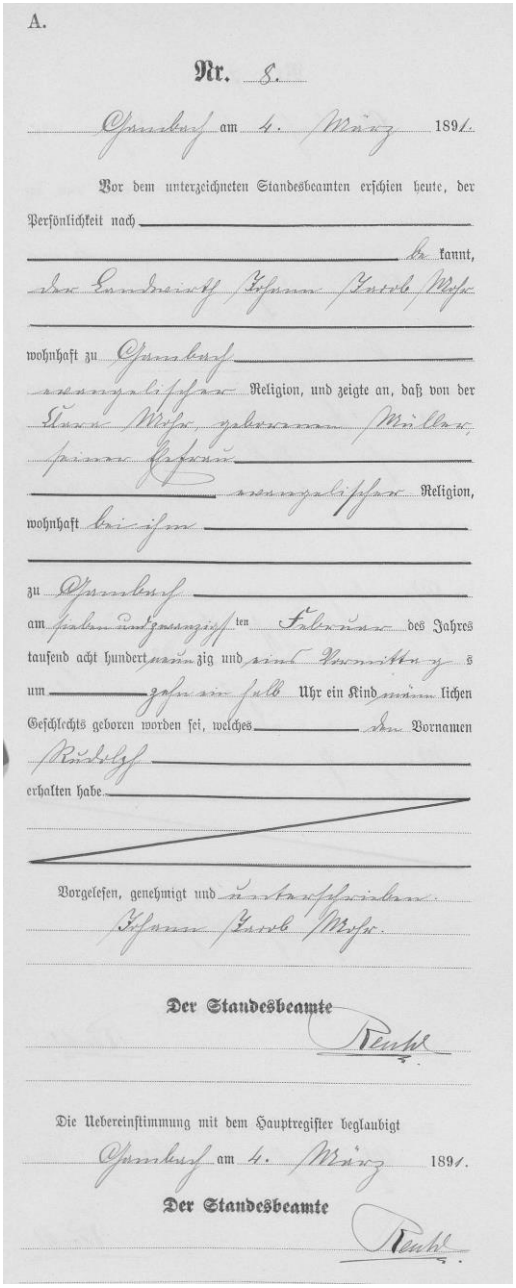
Not every town had its own *Standesamt* (civil registration office). Use Meyer's Gazetteer to determine the location of the nearest *Standesamt*.

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



A.

Nr. 8.

Ornbau am 4. März 1891.

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschien heute, der Persönlichkeit nach bekannt, der Landwirth Johann Jacob Meier wohnhaft zu Ornbau evangelischer Religion, und zeigte an, daß von der Ehefrau Meier, geborenen Müller, seiner Ehefrau evangelischer Religion, wohnhaft hier zu Ornbau am fünf und zwanzigsten Februar des Jahres tausend acht hundert neunzig und eins Vormittags 9 um neun Uhr ein Kind männlichen Geschlechts geboren worden sei, welches den Vornamen Rudolf erhalten habe.

Vorgelesen, genehmigt und unterschrieben.
Johann Jacob Meier.

Der Standesbeamte
Reuhl

Die Uebereinstimmung mit dem Hauptregister beglaubigt
Ornbau am 4. März 1891.

Der Standesbeamte
Reuhl

Source: https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L993-H8SL : accessed 31 August 2018.

Birth record outline in English

A.

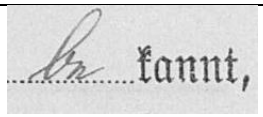
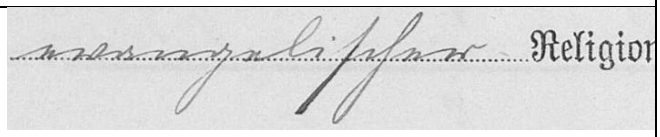
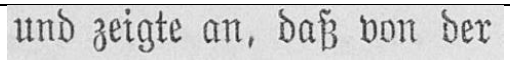
Nr. (#)

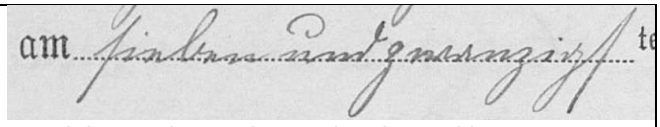
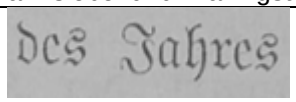
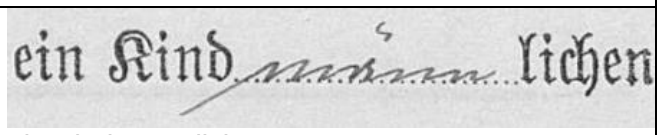
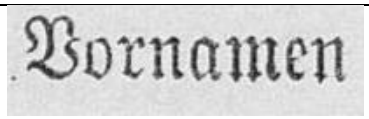
(location) on (full date written out). [Note: this is the registration date not the date of birth.]

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

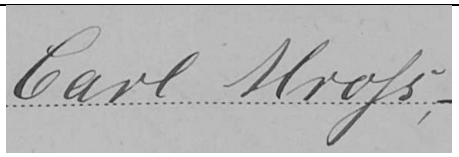
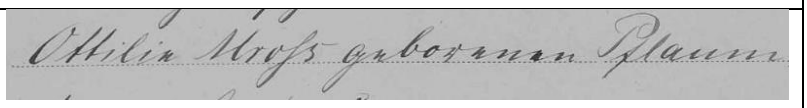
The following key words will indicate the essential genealogical information. Depending on the context, the information may come before or after the key word. Note that the German words and phrases are written in standardized German. In some cases, the examples provided may differ in spelling or conjugation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

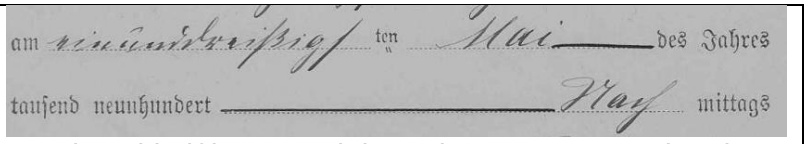
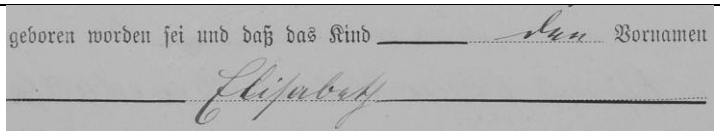
English	**German**	**Information given**	**Example**
known	bekannt	followed by the name of the informant. This is often, but not always, the father of the child	
religious affiliation	Religion	preceded by the type of religious affiliation (Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, etc.)	
and indicated that by	und zeigte an, daß von der	followed by the name of the child's mother	

on [day]	am ...ten	day of birth	 am siebenundzwanzigsten (on the 27th)
of the year	des Jahres	<u>preceded</u> by the month of birth; <u>followed</u> by the year of birth	
a child	ein Kind	<u>followed</u> by the gender of the child (*weiblichen* – female / *männlichen* – male)	 ein Kind männlichen...
given name(s)	Vornamen	<u>followed</u> by the given name(s) of the child	

PRACTICE

The last page of this guide contains an image of a civil birth record. You can also view the image on FamilySearch by clicking here. For any unfamiliar words, use the FamilySearch word list, found at: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/German_Genealogical_Word_List.

What is the name of the informant?	Carl Mross Note: the handwritten word before his name is his occupation / status!	
What is the name of the child's mother?	Ottilie Mross, maiden name Pflaum Look for "und zeigt an, dass von der" which is followed by the name of the mother.	

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.	

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.

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A.

Nr. 64

Neidenburg, am 7. Juni 1900.

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschien heute, der Persönlichkeit nach _____ be kannt,

der Töpfer Carl Kroß,

wohnhaft in Neidenburg

evangelischer Religion, und zeigte an, daß von der Ottilie Kroß geborenen Pflaum, seiner Ehefrau

evangelischer Religion,

wohnhaft bei ihm,

zu Neidenburg, Töpferberg III No 350

am einunddreißigsten Mai des Jahres tausend neunhundert Nach mittags um fünf Uhr ein Mädchen geboren worden sei und daß das Kind den Vornamen Elisabeth erhalten habe

Vorgelesen, genehmigt und unterschrieben

Carl Kroß.

Der Standesbeamte.

Joppen

Die Uebereinstimmung mit dem Hauptregister beglaubigt.

Neidenburg, am 7ten Juni 1900.

Der Standesbeamte.

Joppen

Source: https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99GP-M9ZL : accessed 31 August 2018.