

Meyer's Gazetteer Now Online, Indexed and Fully Searchable!
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An extremely exciting development in German genealogical research has recently occurred. *Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs* (Meyer's) has now been indexed, put online, and coupled with the *Karte des Deutschen Reiches*. Although versions of Meyer's have been online in various places for some time, this version has many features that set it apart from all others and make it an invaluable tool for German research.

History of the project

As early as 1994 Marion Rainey felt inspired to index Meyer's. So, she set herself to the task and for the next 20+ years has spent countless hours indexing the multi-volume work—without any compensation or indexing help. After some time, Brad Coleman, a computer programmer, volunteered to help with the technical and computer aspects of the project. The result of their work is a powerful tool for German research. Their desire is to have this new tool online and free for all researchers forever.

Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-lexikon des deutschen Reichs

This is the most important of all German gazetteers. The goal was to list every place name in the German Empire (1871-1918). It gives the location, *i.e.* the state and other jurisdictions, where the civil registry office was and parishes if that town had them. It also gives lots of other information about each place. The only drawback to Meyer's is that if a town did not have a parish, it does not tell where the parish was, making reference to other works necessary.

To access Meyer's:

Type 'meyersgaz.org' into the URL box. Once you have done that, you will come to the Meyersgaz.org homepage where you will see a search box. Type the name of your place in the search box. You can use a wildcard * (an asterisk) in your search. For example, '*gheim' will return 'Balgheim, Bergheim, Bietigheim, Billigheim' and anything else that contains 'gheim.' Also, you can type only the beginning of a name and it will return all places that begin with those letters. For example, 'Neu' will return 'Neu Abbau, Neu Abschwangen, Neuacker, Neuafrika' and many others. You do not need to include umlauts, as 'Munchen' will return 'München.' You can type umlauts if you wish, but you should not expand umlauts, e.g. 'ü' as 'ue', as that will return no hits. Now, a list of places with that name will appear—all those places of the same name, but with other jurisdictions which will help you identify your town. Choose the town for which you want more information.

Once you are on the town page, you will see the name of your town and a menu that includes the following items: Entry, Map, Ecclesiastical, Related, E-mail, and Feedback.

Entry

You are on the 'entry' page. You will see the entry as it appears in Meyer's, the extraction of the entry, the explanation of the extraction, and a map. The extractions include and are primarily

limited to jurisdictions and parish information. The explanations are helpful for those who do not speak German or are not familiar with the old jurisdictions. For example, you will learn what *Kreis*, *Bezirkskommando*, and *Landgericht* mean. By clicking on 'View entry on PDF of the original page,' you can see the entire page on which the entry appears. Click on 'Show previous and next entry' to see the previous and following entries. If there was a correction in the Meyer's addendum, this will also be indicated.

Map

After you have read the information on this page, click on 'Map' in the menu or on the map itself. You will now see your town on the old *Karte des deutschen Reiches*. This set of maps was produced during the time of the German Empire and so corresponds chronologically to Meyer's. You can zoom in and out. If you click on the words 'Toggle Historical Map' in the upper right-hand corner, you can switch to Google Maps. This is especially helpful if you are searching in Poland or other areas of the former German Empire that are now in other countries. This is because you can get the current, *i.e.* non-German, name of the town. If you hover on 'Toggle Historical Map,' you will see a menu. If you click on the menu items, you will see pins appear on the map that correspond to what you have chosen, either Jurisdiction (all places where other jurisdictions are given, such as *Kreis*, *Bezirkskommando*, and *Landgericht* that are included in the entry), Catholic parishes, Protestant parishes, or Jewish synagogues. This will help you determine the location of the nearest parishes, *etc.*, within a 20-mile radius, should you need to do an area search. You can also click on the pins and the names of corresponding towns will appear.

Ecclesiastical

When you click on 'Ecclesiastical,' you will get a list of nearby towns that have parishes or synagogues and with the distance from your town. This will also help you determine the nearest parishes, *etc.*, within a 20-mile radius, if you need to do an area search. This is the same information that you saw under "Map," but in a different format.

Related

'Related' provides a list of other towns that refer to your town as another jurisdiction, such as *Amtsgericht*.

E-mail

In this section, for the town in which you are searching, you can add names and your email address so that others who are searching for the same names can contact you. Then you can collaborate and share information. (Please add your search names and contact information!)

Feedback

Finally, you can also give feedback. This includes corrections, suggestions for improvements or new features, how you use the data, or just a word or two to compliment the owners of the site.

As with most projects, this is a work in progress and will evolve over time. Additions and corrections are being made as of this writing. It is possible that other features may be added in

the future. In the meantime, it is hoped that researchers will use this very valuable tool in their research.

To learn more about Meyer's, especially the many abbreviations, see:

Uncapher, Wendy K. *How to read & understand Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs*. Janesville, Wisconsin: Origins, 2003.

References:

Karte des Deutschen Reiches. Berlin: Kartographische Abteilung der Königlichen Preußischen Landesaufnahme, 1845-1916.

Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs. 5th edition. Utrecht, E. (Erich) Leipzig and Wien: Bibliographisches Institut, 1912.