

Joachim Wild

Anleitung zur Familienforschung in Bayern

In: *Mitteilungen für die Archivpflege in Bayern* 25/26 (1979/1980), S. 1–10
(überarbeitet 2001)

Übersetzt und als Kurzfassung konzipiert von *Hannah Hien*

Stand: Juni 2013

Guidelines for genealogical research in Bavaria

A Some advice before starting

Genealogical research should always start in the present day with those family members still alive, then going back to investigating previous generations. Collecting data about people who coincidentally have the same name as your family, or skipping centuries in an attempt to link your family to an aristocratic family with the same name will definitely lead to grave mistakes!

We recommend the following procedure:

- 1 Try to get as much information as possible from your own family – names, dates and places. Only then should you begin to study external archival sources for family and local history.
- 2 German emigrants to the USA can research the emigration/immigration lists in the German Emigrants' Database of the Historic Museum of Bremerhaven, Germany. (<http://www.deutsche-auswanderer-datenbank.de>) and the database provided by the American Family Immigration History Center (<http://www.ellisland.org>).
- 3 Research civil registers kept by local authorities since 1876 (see Section B, below).
- 4 Research parish registers. They may take you as far back as the second half of the 17th century (see Section B below).
- 5 Once you have established a basic family tree using all the information possible from civil and church registers, you can then continue your research in state, municipal, ecclesiastic and other archives (e.g. noble family archives). This type of research is very different from using registers which often provide very quick results, allowing you to go quickly back from generation to generation. Other types of archive require much greater effort and more precise methods, and results may be quite different to what you will have expected. You are very likely to find additional facts about ancestors you already know by name, e.g. their school career, military service, economic circumstances. You might also find new ancestors but it will often be impossible to determine the exact degree of relationship.

Due to the great loss of records during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) most people will be unable to carry out any research into their family before the mid-17th century and only extremely rarely can family research into the final decades of the Middle Ages be carried out. Going even further back would, in any circumstances, be unlikely given that only a limited amount of documents were written at that time.

Genealogical research in Bavarian State Archives is free of charge if carried out by the users themselves. Archivists will assist if necessary. Outside the Bavarian State Archives other conditions may apply.

B Civil and parish registers

Civil and parish registers are the most important sources for genealogists, particularly the birth registers (which not only contain the names of legitimately-born children but also their parents' names and, quite often, their godparents' names) and the marriage registers which will guide you further and further back into the past, providing new clues for research work.

In Bavaria, civil registry offices were introduced on 1 January 1876. In the regions to the west of the Rhine, however, they were introduced in the Napoleonic era as consequence of the 1808 legislation. Registry offices are part of the municipal administration. All births, marriages and deaths have to be registered there. In this legal respect, the municipal registry offices have replaced the recording of baptisms, church marriages and deaths by parish officers.

Civil registers can now be found either in the registry office of town halls or in municipal archives (birth registers have a closure period of 110 years, marriage registers of 80 years, and death registers after 30 years). Copies of civil registers have to be sent to the district registry offices and, after the same periods of time, preserved with state archives. In larger cities the registers are retained *in situ*.

Since the 16th century parish officers have kept registers of baptisms, marriages and funerals. Some Protestant parishes began keeping registers as early as the 1520s/30s. In 1563 Catholic parish officers were required to keep registers by order of the Council of Trent. However, during the Thirty Years' War many registers were destroyed. Therefore today most parishes have registers dating from after 1648, though extensive and complete series of registers often only exist from about 1700.

Today Roman Catholic parish registers can be accessed either in parochial archives or in diocesan archives; Protestant registers are in the Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria in Nuremberg. See <http://www.lkan-elkb.de> for both; this link (site is in German only) will help to find the parish registers you are looking for. Moreover, copies of the parish registers, which had to be made in the years between 1803/1825 and 1876, were sent to the regional state authorities (*Bezirksämter*). These copies, if they still exist, can now be found in the respective state archives.

C Other sources in the State archives

Archives offer a wide range of opportunities for genealogists. However, in order to make full use of them you must be willing to be patient and, above all, learn to decipher the different types of old handwriting. And quite often, although you have searched for days, you may only come away with only tantalizing hints about your research and nothing concrete.

Within the archival records, registers of voluntary jurisdiction (*Briefprotokolle, Notelbücher*) provide the most valuable sources for genealogists and should be consulted first. These registers were first kept during the 16th century within the lower-level courts held by a territorial lord, an aristocratic family, the bishop, a monastery or a town with a notarial presence. In the registers were recorded all legal transactions between the subjects of a particular jurisdiction, such as marriages, devolution of property, partition, purchase or barter of land (real estate), appointments of guardianship for orphans, and all kinds of activity requiring certification. However, these documents only survive in large numbers from the end of the Thirty Years' War (1648); continuous series start only around 1700.

In 1862 public notaries were established in Bavaria, thus from that year notarial documents replaced the registers of the non-contentious jurisdiction. These notarial documents are preserved in the state archives of Würzburg (Upper and Lower Franconia), Nuremberg (Middle Franconia, Upper Palatinate) and Munich (Upper Bavaria, Lower Bavaria and Swabia).

For researching the **19th and 20th centuries** the following types of record can be consulted. The types listed can be found mainly in state archives, but may also be held by municipal and noble family archives:

- 1 Real property cadasters/land ownership surveys (*Grundsteuerkataster*), 1808 (= starting date for a series). Compiled for reason of taxation, listing all estates and their owners
- 2 Mortgage registers (*Hypothekenbücher*), 1826 (= starting date for a series), listing mortgaged property, later replaced by the more extensive land registers
- 3 Land registers (*Grundbücher*), 1905–1910, listing all properties and their owners, mortgages and servitude
- 4 Residency and marriage records (*Ansässigmachungs- und Verehelichungsakten*) 1825 (= starting date for a series). – These record permission by authorities to take up residence on marriage; they also sometimes contain school reports, documents about military service, attestation of economic circumstances
- 5 Residency records (*Heimatakten*), 1825–1915: contentious issues on residency permissions for socially-deprived people
- 6 Trading licences (*Gewerbekonzessionsakten*): 1825 (= starting date for a series), often drawn up in connection with permission of residency and marriage
- 7 Probate records (*Nachlassakten*): identification of heirs, administration of estate, sometimes probate inventories
- 8 Guardianship records (*Vormundschaftsakten*): appointment of a guardian for children under-age after father's or mother's death
- 9 Emigration records (*Auswanderungsakten*), only when legally and officially permitted by authorities
- 10 Building applications (*Baugesuche*): these survive, at best, from the middle of the 19th century
- 11 Personnel files (*Personalakten*), in today's sense only since the 19th century
- 12 Military conscriptions (*Militärkonskriptionen*), registration by year of birth of all young men liable to military service; existing for all those born 1799/1800 onwards

Pre-**1800** the following sources are of great importance:

- 1 Registers of voluntary jurisdiction (*Briefprotokolle*): see above
- 2 Private charters (*Urkunden*), deeds, e.g. enfeoffments, rentals, property transactions, wills, bills etc.
- 3 Urbaria, rent rolls (*Urbare, Salbücher*): directories of real estate including the rents and services a land owner may expect to receive every year
- 4 Rent registers (*Stiftregister, Gültregister*): directories of the rents actually received every year

- 5 Registers and books of fiefs (*Lehenbücher, Lehenprotokolle*): directories of all fiefs and enfeoffments
- 6 Census and taxation registers (*Steuerbücher*): lists of subjects for purpose of taxation
- 7 Court records and transcripts (*Gerichtsprotokolle*): transcripts of criminal cases and civil suits
- 8 Civil case files (*Zivilprozessakten*)
- 9 Annual account statements of courts (*Gerichtsrechnungen*): list of criminal fines including short descriptions of the cases
- 10 Annual account statements of churches (*Kirchenrechnungen*): list of loans made to individuals including interests and repayment
- 11 Personnel Rosters (*Stammrollen*): regimental lists since the 17th century including information about age and place of origin of soldiers
- 12 Appointment and remuneration records (*Bestallungs- und Besoldungsbücher*): listing all persons employed by state or court

A list of all Bavarian archives with information on record groups and opening hours can be found on <http://www.archive-in-bayern.de> (in German only).

Finally, some archives hold **special record groups** e.g. the Bavarian nobility register kept by the herald of the Kingdom of Bavaria in the 19th century, which today is to be found in the Bavarian Main State Archives, Munich. These archives have also preserved large numbers of personnel files from the Bavarian ministries as well as the records of the Bavarian Army until its dissolution in 1919, personnel lists from World War I or personnel files of officers and sergeants (in department IV of the Bavarian Main State Archives: Military Archives), and the archives of the Sudetenland Germans (as deposit in department V of the Bavarian Main State Archives).

For **emigrants** we recommend once again the emigration/immigration databases available from the Historic Museum of Bremerhaven, Germany (<http://www.deutsche-auswanderer-datenbank.de>) and the American Family Immigration History Center (<http://www.ellisland.org>). Because notification of legal emigration had to be published in order to inform possible creditors, printed news sheets (*Regierungs- und Intelligenzblätter*) can also be consulted for further information. These are accessible in academic libraries and occasionally even online.

For **research on Jewish families**, please bear in mind that most archives of Jewish communities in Europe from the Middle Ages to the present day are kept in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem (<http://cahjp.huji.ac.il>). In some cases they also contain registers of community members. For information on Holocaust victims contact the institution of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (<http://www.yadvashem.org>) and Bad Arolsen (<http://www.its-arolsen.org/en/inquiries-by-family-members/index.html>).

The following Bavarian and Franconian genealogical societies should also be of great help:

- 1 Bayerischer Landesverein für Familienkunde e.V., Munich
(<http://www.blf-online.de>)
- 2 Gesellschaft für Familienforschung in Franken e.V., Nuremberg
(<http://www.gf-franken.de>)
- 3 Gesellschaft für Familienforschung in der Oberpfalz e.V., Regensburg
(<http://www.genealogy.net/vereine/GFO>)