Your ancestor’s hometown is one of the most important finds you will make on your genealogy journey. Unfortunately, a town name can also be one of the most difficult words to decipher on your ancestor’s document. Why? Because towns exist in the thousands, and, unlike regular German words, there is no dictionary to check if your transcription guess is right or wrong. That handwritten word could be any combination of letters – which is a bit overwhelming, to say the least.

Luckily, there are a few methods you can use to decipher towns on German records. Read on to find out my five favorite tricks for puzzling out those elusive place names:

1. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GOOGLE’S SUGGESTION FEATURES

The first tip is a simple one. If you are unsure of your transcription, type your transcription guess into Google Search, followed by the country, state, or region your document comes from (for example, type “Obertraun, Austria” into the search box). If an entry for that place name comes up, you then have verification that your transcription is correct.

If your transcription is one or two letters off, however, Google’s “Showing Results For” or “Did You Mean?” features are very helpful. If you typed “Obertrun, Austria” (missing the “a”) into the search box, Google may correct you, saying “Showing results for Obertraun, Austria”. You can then double check the handwritten word on your document, along with the location of Google’s suggestion, and verify that the suggestion is correct. If it is, mark it down, and continue transcribing. This trick has helped me puzzle out many towns in German records.
2. USE MEYERS GAZETTEER’S WILDCARD TOOL

If your town is in Germany (or used to be), then Meyers Gazetteer is the website for you. This online collection of pre-WWI towns, villages, cities, estates, and more is a wonderful tool for deciphering towns – especially if you can’t read all the letters in your handwritten word. Simply type the letters you recognize into the website’s search engine, and use an asterisk for the letters you don’t. Meyers Gazetteer will then give you a list of all towns with that letter combination.

Have a long list? Narrow your search by selecting the state (if known) where your document comes from under “Filter Results by Region”. You will then see a list of the towns in that region only. You can then go back to your handwritten word to see if any of these towns match up with the word on your document. Having a narrow list of possibilities is extremely helpful in deciphering handwritten town names.

3. TOGGLE THE MEYERS GAZETTEER MAP

No luck with the Meyers Gazetteer list? No need to give up yet! If you know another town name related to your document (where the document comes from, the groom’s town name, the archive, etc.), type that town name into Meyers Gazetteer’s search engine. Click on the name, and it will take you to the entry for that town. Next, click on the map to the left of the entry. The modern map will now toggle to the historical map of the region.

You can then drag the map around and see what towns are in the surrounding area (it’s likely that your mystery town is not far from the other town mentioned on your record). Does one of those nearby town names match up with your handwritten word? Seeing possibilities for what your word can be is extremely beneficial for the genealogist.

4. PLAY WITH GOOGLE MAPS

Just like the old-fashioned map on Meyers Gazetteer, Google Maps also works well for this trick. Type in the town you know related to your document, and drag the map around to see if any other towns nearby match up with your mystery word. If you can’t find your town on the Meyers Gazetteer map, try Google Maps, and vice-versa. I sometimes have more luck with one tool than the other, depending on the town. It’s always good to have two options!

5. USE THE RECORD ITSELF

Last but not least, use the record itself! More times than I care to admit, I have struggled and struggled over what a town name could be, only to find a stamp with that town name – in printed text – at the bottom of the document. Before you start deciphering the handwriting, therefore, scan the entire page, looking for anything that might include the town name. Possibilities could include:

• Stamps
• Column Headings
• Document Titles
• Margin Notes (perhaps the town name is easier to read there)
• And More – every document is different!
So there you have it! With these five tips, deciphering the towns in your German documents should become much easier. Happy researching!

About the Author:
Katherine Schober is a German-English genealogy speaker, author, and translator specializing in the old German handwriting. She is the author of The Magic of German Church Records and Tips and Tricks of Deciphering German Handwriting, as well as the creator of the self-paced online course Reading the Old German Handwriting. Katherine lives in St. Louis with her Austrian husband, and can be reached via e-mail at language@sktranslations.com or via her website, www.sktranslations.com.

Roots Tech Connect will take place on February 25-27, 2021. This will be a virtual, free conference sponsored by FamilySearch.org, a nonprofit, volunteer-driven organization sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Over 130,000 people from 175 different countries have already registered.

There will be dozens of virtual classes in multiple languages on topics such as discovering your family story, tracing your ancestors, and preserving your memories. Enjoy opportunities to chat with other attendees through various messaging boards, social media interactions, and video chats. In addition to virtual programs and videos, there will also be a virtual exhibit hall. All recordings and videos will be available on demand throughout the year.

Keynote speakers for the conference will be: Lorena Ochoa, Francesco Lotoro, Sharon Morgan and Nick Vujicic.

• Ochoa, from Mexico, was a professional golfer and now has a TV show on CNN en Espanol devoted to golf. She also runs her own charitable foundation.

• Lotoro, from Italy, is a pianist, composer, conductor and a piano professor. He specializes in works written in civilian and military captivity during World War II.

• Morgan, from the United States, is a writer and genealogist. She is the founder of Our Black Ancestry, an online community dedicated to providing resources for African American genealogical research.

• Vujicic, from Australia, is an international motivational speaker and author. Born without arms or legs, he dealt with many challenges such as bullying, self-esteem issues, depression and loneliness. He has visited over 65 countries and met with 16 presidents.

To register, go to: https://www.rootstech.org?lang=eng
Thirteen thousand immigrants made their way on the Rhine to Rotterdam. From there, most of them managed to gain passage to England. They were looking for the “free trip across the Atlantic”, to a land of prosperity, fertile soil, religious freedom, and hope. The group was labeled as poor Palatine refugees by the English. (In fact, this huge group of immigrating Germans were not all Palatines, but from all over southwest Germany. However, they were all labeled together as the Poor Palatines.) They were not refugees, rather people looking to find a new life in Carolina, a life they believed the Queen Anne was offering them. They had liquidated all the belongings they could not carry to pay for the trip to England. They had no money for food and had little clothing.

Queen Anne

The Germans were crowded into rooms in the area of Saint Catherine’s Parish in England. This had been a section of poor people and foreigners. The British assumed this group was affiliated with William Penn. However, when they realized they were incorrect, they contacted a Lutheran Chaplain to provide some of the care this group needed. When British officials entered the area of the Palatines, they found 20-30 people squeezed in a room. They had nothing and were under the assumption that Queen Anne was going to provide for them and get them safely to Carolina.

The British rented barns in the nearby countryside which were not in use. The barns provided a safe haven. The wanderers were given milk, cheese and bread. The first two waves were placed in barns. As more and more arrived, they were scattered all over London. They lived in warehouses, barns, or in the streets. In late June the barns were needed by the farmers, and so they moved back to the city or surrounding areas. Tents were provided and camps were set up near Blackheath and Camberwell.
By the end of August, the Germans realized that the Queen never planned for them to settle in America. Some joined the British Army. The Queen employed about 400 to dig a canal near Windsor. In the beginning, most of the English had sympathy for the group's plight. As a matter of fact, the Germans became sort of "an attraction". The locals would visit the camps to observe their customs, and these curiosity visits were common. The poverty of the Germans was apparent, and the Britons were concerned they brought with them a threat of disease. They were thought to "infect the clean air" of London. The Poor Palatines were referred to by many as gypsies, a derogatory term used for intruders of civilized groups. One official called them a race of vermin. They were known as vagabonds who were lazy and were in England to take advantage of British generosity.

There was a report of a mob of peasants who rose up against a group of Germans, mostly children. There were groups who wanted to band together and attack German camps and slit the throats of the foreign interlopers. In response to this threat, the Germans began to post guards outside of their camps.

The British felt that the Germans were too poor, too Catholic, too unskilled and definitely too unenlightened to be British subjects. The Board of Trade considered sending them to Jamaica or Ireland. The idea of sending the Germans to Jamaica was given up, and many were sent to Ireland. Then there was an idea that they be sent to New England to make pitch and tar, an idea favored by the Royal Navy. They further suggested that a settlement on the Hudson River would be most appropriate. This suggestion was made at the end of August.

A discussion lasted over three months until it was decided that 3000 Germans should be sent to New York for the purpose of producing naval stores. Robert Hunter, governor of New York suggested that these 3000 be servants of the Crown for a certain term, or at least until they repaid the expenses involved in setting them to work and to live. The Germans were to be placed in different settlements and instructed on the manufacture of naval stores. The plan further indicated that there would be superiors in each area to ensure that they were working, and that the products were sent to England.

The Palatines were, in effect, employees of the Crown and would receive land profit only after their debt had been repaid. At that time of repayment, each individual was to receive 40 acres of land. An additional benefit of this arrangement for the British was that the Germans would serve as a buffer for the native Americans in the Hudson or Mohawk Valley.

The Germans were under the impression that they would be settled in an area near the Schoharie River. Prior to setting sail for New York, four Native Americans arrived with Peter Schuyler to have an audience with the Queen. A story that was passed around in the German camp was that the Native Americans presented to the Queen lands near the Schoharie River that would be perfect for the Germans to settle in. The four Native Americans were not chiefs and had no ability to give away land. The story that circulated among the Germans had them convinced that they could only be happy and prosperous in Schoharie. This was yet another dream that would not come true for this group of 3000.

*Next Month the trip across the Atlantic! Stay Tuned....*
German Genealogy Group, Inc.
Post Office Box 1004
Kings Park, NY 11754

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Vice President: open
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Facebook Manager: Merrill Loechner

Meet our Volunteers & Board Member!
The German Genealogy Group (GGG) is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization that was established to provide mutual support among those interested in researching their Germanic ancestors. We meet on the first Thursday of the month from September through June (virtually for now).

All members are encouraged to submit articles, hints, suggestions, etc. for publication. We reserve the right to edit submissions. For guidelines, please email JKingny@yahoo.com.

While we strive for accuracy, the German Genealogy Group assumes no responsibility for typos, errors of fact or opinions expressed or implied by contributors. Errors brought to our attention will be corrected.

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Member of: Genealogy Federation of Long Island
International German Genealogy Partnership
National Genealogical Society

www.GermanGenealogyGroup

Or

www.TheGGG.org

Find us on Facebook, too!

Mrs. Meyer’s Crescent Cookies

1/2 lb. softened butter
2 tsp. vanilla extract
2 c flour
2 c chopped pecans, walnuts or almonds (chopped very finely)
5 Tbs. granulated sugar
1 Tbs. water
1/2 tsp. salt

Powdered sugar

Cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add vanilla and water. Stir flour and salt into the mixture. Add nuts and mix thoroughly.

Using portions about the size of a small walnut, roll into crescent shaped cookies.

Bake in a slow 325 degree oven for about 20 minutes.

While cookies are still warm, roll carefully in powdered sugar. Cool on wire rack.

Order a GGG Cookbook!
It’s only $15.
Information available at www.TheGGG.org

UPDATE 5 Jan. 2021…. The National Archives and Records Administration has suspended its Order Online system for reproduction and digitization services until further notice due to COVID-19. Any orders that have been placed will not be serviced until operations can resume safely. Once operations resume, your document reproduction request will be serviced in the order it was received. Customer service representatives are available to answer questions regarding orders currently in their system at trustfundsupport@nara.gov.
In the Spotlight: Don Eckerle

In March, the German Genealogy Group will celebrate its 25th Anniversary. The first meeting of the GGG took place on 7 March 1996 at the Family History Center in Plainview, New York. Don Eckerle was among the 35 people who attended this first meeting. Many of the founding GGG members and others that followed dedicated countless hours to the GGG, but Don Eckerle stands out for his role in spearheading the database project in which over 22 million records are indexed and available on our website for anyone to use.

Don will tell you that the idea of a database came up on a June day in 1999 when he was having a beer with his friend, John Martino, from the Italian Genealogical Group, (IGG). John mentioned he heard that a group in Manhattan put a database on their website. Armed with a shared vision, Don and John forged ahead with a joint venture between the GGG and IGG to index records. They started with naturalization and military records from the Suffolk County Clerk’s Office.

Don always makes the point that the indexes for the records are of genealogical value to everyone and available to anyone. Although the focus is on records specific to the New York and New Jersey area, they are not restricted to any ethnic group. Over the years, Don worked with numerous entities who trusted him to ensure their records were indexed properly and made available to anyone who was interested. Don and John worked with hundreds of volunteers who devoted their time to indexing the records, and Don worked tirelessly sorting and proofing files to ensure the highest levels of accuracy. He continues to seek records to index and volunteers to learn his tasks in preparing the files for the database on our website.

Don served one year as President of the GGG in 2002 when he succeeded Hans Schrader, the first President. The following year in June 2003, Don nominated Elizabeth Lovaglio for President, and he served as the Vice President ever since. He has represented the GGG with our sibling genealogical societies and German associations and has supported and participated in a myriad of GGG events.

In this new year, Don is stepping down as the Vice President of the GGG. Fortunately he will continue in his role on the Board, of which he has been a member since the organization’s inception. The Vice President position is open at this time. Don will also remain as the GGG Database Administrator, and while he is currently training a volunteer to back him up in this position, there is always room for others to join the team.

We look forward to celebrating with Don in reaching 23,000,000 indexed records in our database in the coming months, and applaud him for his even-handedness and longevity in moving the GGG toward this remarkable milestone.

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**German Life Magazine**

GGG U.S. members can subscribe at a reduced rate to *German Life* magazine which is published 6 times a year. The magazine covers genealogy, travel, history, food, culture, towns and cities, products, markets, language and important events in Germany. The usual subscription rate is $22.95 per year. The rates below are for GGG members.

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Send your name, address & whether a new or renewal subscription, along with a check made out to *German Life* and mail it to:

**GGG German Life**

PO Box 1004

Kings Park, NY 11754

This offer is good anytime and can also be given as a gift.
Updated… German Records at www.FamilySearch.org for 2020. CLICKABLE LINKS

Saxony, Church Book Indexes, 1500-1900 - Oct 8, 2020
Saxony-Anhalt, Halberstadt, Civil Registration, 1874-1982 - Oct 7, 2020
Prussia, West Prussia, Catholic and Lutheran Church Records, 1537-1981 - Oct 6, 2020
Hessen-Nassau, Diocese of Limburg, Catholic Church Records, 1601-1919 - Oct 2, 2020
Württemberg, Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, Catholic Church Records, 1520-1975 - Sep 30, 2020
Germany Births and Baptisms, 1558-1898 - Aug 26, 2020
Rhineland, Diocese of Trier, Catholic Church Records, 1704-1957 –Aug 18, 2020
Schleswig-Holstein, Kreis Steinburg, Civil Registration, 1874-1983 –Jul 22, 2020
Baden, Church Book Duplicates, 1804-1877 - May 11, 2020
Baden, Archdiocese of Freiburg im Breisgau, Catholic Church Records, 1678-1930 - Apr 2, 2020
Germany Marriages, 1558-1929 - Feb 23, 2020
Germany Deaths and Burials, 1582-1958 - Feb 23, 2020
Prussia, Brandenburg and Posen, Church Book Duplicates, 1794-1874 - Feb 21, 2020

The NJ Records Preservation Group has published the index for Woodland Cemetery (the old German Cemetery) in Newark, NJ, on its website, NJRPG.org. Mary Lish & John Sass created this database over 20 years ago and have been working on it ever since, adding & correcting information, helping family researchers, etc. They will still help everyone who finds a family member listed in the database to learn who else is buried with them, and share all of the sometimes extensive family information they have on a burial.
This cemetery database is the 2nd major cemetery computerized and published, the first being Clinton Cemetery in Irvington which was created by Mary Lish & Dan Silva. This is in addition to the ongoing populating of databases of the Newark defunct cemeteries, and Potters field/Newark City Cemetery.

..............................................Submitted by Kelly Vogel-Cooper, Member #3455

Germans from Lithuania Name Index Now Online

The Board of Directors of the International Association of Germans from Lithuania (IAGL) is pleased to announce that the IAGL searchable name database is now online. This free database provides researchers access to original church and civil records pertaining to ethnic Germans living in the Suwałki Gubernia in the former Russian Empire, today southwestern Lithuania. The website contains tens of thousands of transcribed names of the earliest available records from southwestern Lithuanian cities including Kalvarija [Kalwaria], Kybartai [Kybarten], Marijampolė [Mariampol], Virbalis [Wirballen], Wiskystis [Wischtiten], and others, up to Lithuania’s first independence in the 20th century.

For more information, visit https://www.germansfromlithuania.org/
**Book Review**


The book is divided up into four sections: Census Facts, Population Schedules, Non-Population Schedules and Census Samples and Worksheets, which also includes Soundex Extraction Forms.

Several significant changes have been made to the original 1999 edition. The most exciting change is the addition of over 1,700 website links and colored tables and maps. The new edition also includes chapters on the 1940 and 1950 censuses as well as a chapter on the state censuses of 1885. The non-population schedules for states are now updated to include 1935. In addition, 57 sample census images have been added to the book and eight new worksheets were added to include manufacture schedules and the 1940 census.


*The Census Book* is 244 pages and was published in 2019 by Family Roots Publishing Company. [https://www.familyrootspublishing.com/](https://www.familyrootspublishing.com/) Check it out at your local library.

-Reviewed by Jean King, GGG Newsletter Co-Editor

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**January Meeting**

*Join Michael L. Strauss on January 7th*

German-Americans in World War I - Fighting Against the Fatherland

Recording and Handout available until April 6, 2021
Now that you have pages of matches and gobs of new information, how do you keep track of it all? We will spend time going over how to create and track correspondence, organization tools within each testing company, as well as strategies for tracking the genealogy information of your matches, including surnames, locations and genetic relationships. You are bound to walk out of this lecture with a game plan that you can implement right away.

Diahan Southard is a leading voice for consumer DNA testing from her position as Founder of Your DNA Guide. Diahan teaches internationally, consults with leading testing companies and forensics experts. Southard’s company, Your DNA Guide (YourDNAGuide.com), deploys a team of scientists who provide one-on-one genetic genealogy education and research services. She has a passion for genetic genealogy, a genuine love for people, and a gift for making the technical understandable.
Hunt down that information!

Military Records
Hessian Troops in America (includes map and gazetteer)
www.lagis-hessen.de/en/subjects/index/sn/hetrina

Church Records
Protestant records online: www.archion.de
Some Catholic (Germany and Austria): https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/

UPCOMING Webinar Conference
hosts a 3 day virtual conference (via Zoom) April 1 to May 31, 2021, with 60 additional recorded presentations available on-demand until May 31, 2021. Featured speakers include Angie Bush, John Grenham, and Dear Myrtle. Events include Special Interest Groups, Ancestors Road Show, Society Fair, Library & Archive Showcase and a Virtual Exhibit Hall. Registration January 2021; $150. Optional activities include Advanced DNA, Becoming a Professional Genealogist, and Writing Up Your Genealogy for a separate fee.
To register: www.nergc.org/2021-conference-2/
At the end of January’s virtual meeting with Michael Strauss, we asked members to email us the name of an ancestor who served in a War, to honor their name. Here are some Veterans and the War in which they served: more next month.

**Your Turn:** Those who served

**Revolutionary War**
Robert Hunter, Private  
Charles R. Minnix, Corporal  
Jonathan Coggeshall, Private  
John McPheeters

**War of 1812**
Joshua Box, Private, U.S. Infantry

**Civil War**
Johann Phillip Kraher, Co. D, 6th NY Heavy Artillery  
John S. Romaine, Union Army  
William H. Romaine, Union Army  
Jacob Weingartner, Sgt., 46th NY Vols.

**Spanish-American War**
Adam J. Pracht, Corporal

**World War I**
Stephen M. Schwab, Lieutenant, Killed in Action

**World War II**
Norman C. Waldron, Staff Sergeant, US Army Air Corps  
Clifford Vogt  
George Horst Delp, Corporal, US Army  
Frederick A. Batkin  
Theodore M. Farquier  
Charles W. Summers, Tech 5, US Army  
Clifford Olsen, Medic, 414th Infantry, Bronze Star, Purple Heart  
John Eckerle, Lt. Colonel, Army Signal Corps  
Joseph Eckerle, 1st Lt., Bombardier, Army Air Corps  
Carl Eckerle, Corporal, Army Cavalry Recon.

Charles William McCoy, Lieutenant  
Melvin Thomas McCoy, Major US Army Air Corps  
Earl Lorane McCoy, Lieutenant, US Army Air Corps  
Carlyle Castle, Lieutenant, US Army Air Corps  
John James Sullivan, Lieutenant, US Army Air Corps

**World War II**
Frank William Peckham, Motor Machinist Mate 3C, USNR  
Francis Ernest Mueller, US Army  
William August Leonhardt, US Army
Please be sure we have your current email address.

THE NEXT Virtual Meeting of the German Genealogy Group is at 7:30pm on February 4, 2021
For Members only.
To join, go to www.TheGGG.org