

German-language Archives: A Blueprint for Researchers

Emily C. Rose

Use the *Findbuch* or *Repertorium*, the archive organization register, to find the location of the documents or volumes.

Genealogy Information can be found in the following archives and documents:

Jüdisches Familienregister, Ortssippenbuch. Jewish family registers for each locale. Also birth, marriage, and death registers. Each film/volume is identified with RSA (Reichssippenamt) and a number. These are located at the state archives.

Kirchenbücher. In some places, church registers include Jewish births, deaths, and marriages.

Familiennamenannahmelisten Surname adoption lists. *Matrikel.* Matriculation and residency lists.

Amtsblätter, official gazettes.

Jüdische Friedhofsdokumentation. Cemetery documentation. Published or unpublished lists and photographs of headstones. These are located in the village, town, or county archives.

Gemeindearchiv, Stadtarchiv. Village or town/city archives. The following materials can be found in these archives:

Gemeinderatsprotokolle / Stadtratsprotokolle: Community and town council minute books.

Chronological; usually with an index. All deliberations of community or town councils: transactions, certificates, citizen status, trade status, relations with the town, complaints, etc.

Kaufbücher: Contract registers. Chronological: house, field, and sometimes other sales and purchases. Usually there is an index, but often lists the buyer only.

Güterbücher: Property registers. Property number, owner, previous and subsequent owners, value of property. Organized by name or property number. Sometimes a single index serves several volumes.

Gewerbesteuerkataster. Trade tax registers. Lists of individuals with the trade category and amount of tax paid. Several years of payments are listed in each register.

Verträge. Contracts. Listed and numbered in chronological order by the date of the end of the process.

Eheverträge: engagement documents and wedding contracts. Information on parents, birth village, trade of fathers, trade of individual, dowry, possession inventories of bride and groom, and halitzah letter.

Engagement documents and wedding contracts are sometimes included in wills or divisions of property.

Testamente and *Erbschaftsunterlagen:* wills and divisions of property. Names, parents, children, children's birth dates, children's spouses and domiciles, assets and debts, house ownership, special requests, business relations with other Jews and Christians, emigration.

Totenregister, Leichenschauregister: death or corpse registers. Chronological. Name, spouse, death date, burial date, age or birth date, cause of death, doctor.

Brandversicherungskataster: fire insurance registers. Organized by house number. Name, house number, value of house, house description, additions to house.

Bürgerlisten and *Beisitzerlisten*: lists of citizens and partial citizens. Chronological. Includes trade, status, and reason for status.

Hypothekenregister, Schuldenregister: mortgage and debt registers. Chronological. Creditor and debtor, amount, and dates of payments.

Verzeichnis der Gemeinderatsmitglieder: community council members. Chronological.

Verzeichnis der Gemeindediener, Community Employees. Chronological.

Justizprotokolle, Gerichtsprotokolle: court protocols. Located in local and county archives. Legal and financial transactions.

Pflegerlisten, Pflөгertabellen: guardian registers. Chronological. Parents, children, birth dates, curator, assets to distribute, amount paid, emigration.

Zünftmitgliederlisten: Guild member lists

Auswanderungsliste and *Akten*: emigration registers and applications. Local, county, and state archives. Chronological. Name, destination, trade, assets taken, parents, guarantor, reason for emigration.

Adressbücher: address books. Late nineteenth and twentieth century. Name, address, business or profession.

Karten: maps. Property numbers, location of synagogue, school, and cemetery.

Alte Fotos: old photographs. Synagogue, school, ritual bath, cemetery.

Zeitungen: local newspapers. Advertisements, announcements. These sometimes have an index.

Schicksallisten: lists of last Jewish residents and their fate. Usually a typed list. Name, death or emigration.

Kreisarchiv: county archive. A variety of materials can be found in these archives.

Auswanderungslisten and *Anträge, Tabellen der Auswanderungslisten*: emigration registers or documents. Chronological. Name, destination, trade, assets taken, parents, guarantor, reason.

Familienregister. Family Registers. Registers started after 1873. Usually these may not be photocopied unless the researcher can prove that he is a direct descendent.

Zeitungen. Local newspaper. Advertisements, announcements. Sometimes the bound newspaper volumes have an index.

Literature on state and county history. Law compilations.

General Guidelines

1. Call ahead to check when the archives are open as the local archives often have very limited hours. Often there is no archivist at a given location, so the researcher must coordinate with the village hall staff. Ask if there is a photocopy machine available.
2. Be prepared to undertake all research without the assistance of the archivist or staff.
3. Bring a research packet that includes the following: long strips of paper (to mark what you need to photocopy, to locate indexes in volumes, and to indicate from where you removed a document or volume in the village archives); stapler (clips are not secure enough for photocopies), bracket clips (for documents from the same source), pencils, sweater (often the archives are in damp or cool locations), and comfortable walking shoes and long pants (for the cemetery). Use legal and larger-size manila envelopes and duty-free-size plastic bags to organize your documents.
4. Ask to see *Jüdische Friedhofsdokumentation*, the Jewish cemetery documentation information. These are usually typed, making it easier for the non-German reader to locate names.
5. When you locate a volume, look first for the index. The indexes are usually at the beginning or end, but sometimes they are located in the middle. In most volumes, the pages are numbered 1 followed by 1b; then 2, 2b; and so forth. In the index, look under last and first names, “*Juden*,” “*Jud*,” and “*Israeliten*”; sometimes the index is incomplete. Photocopy the front page of the volume or any identifying number.
6. After you photocopy a document, write the archive, name of volume, page number, and location of the volume in the archive on the back of the document. Be sure the date is on the page you photocopied or search for a date in the preceding pages.
7. When in doubt, photocopy. You never know what additional information you will find when you have time to study a document. The cost of photocopying in the state and some town archives can be quite high, while some local archives do not charge a fee.
8. Often transactions or proceedings begin at the local or county government level, proceed to the regional and state levels of government, and then return to the local or county level. The researcher needs to check in the archives at all levels of government.
9. Always print, and write the numbers “1” and “7” in the European style.
10. Ask the local village or town hall administrator which county, regional, and state archives pertain to your locale.