

Researching German Ancestors

Class 2: Basics of German Language and Script

Rhonda R. McClure, Senior Genealogist

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Meet today's presenter



Rhonda R. McClure
Senior Genealogist

OVERVIEW

- **Presentation (60 mins.)**
 - Understanding basic concepts of the German language
 - Key words for genealogists
 - Sütterlin and Kurrentschrift
 - Fraktur and blackletter
- **Q&A (30 mins.)**



Nora
1

[Handwritten German text, likely a legal document or court record, mentioning names like 'Maurice', 'Graf', and 'Gemeinde'. The text is written in a cursive script.]

Maurice
Graf
eine Magd.



Voice of
Rhonda R. McClure,
Senior Genealogist

Overview of German Language

German Alphabet (*das Alphabet*)

- Same 26 letters as English
- Three vowels with umlauts – ä, ö, ü
 - An extra “e” can replace the umlaut – ae, oe, ue
- “Hard S”/double S/*Eszett*
 - ß
 - *die Straße* = the street

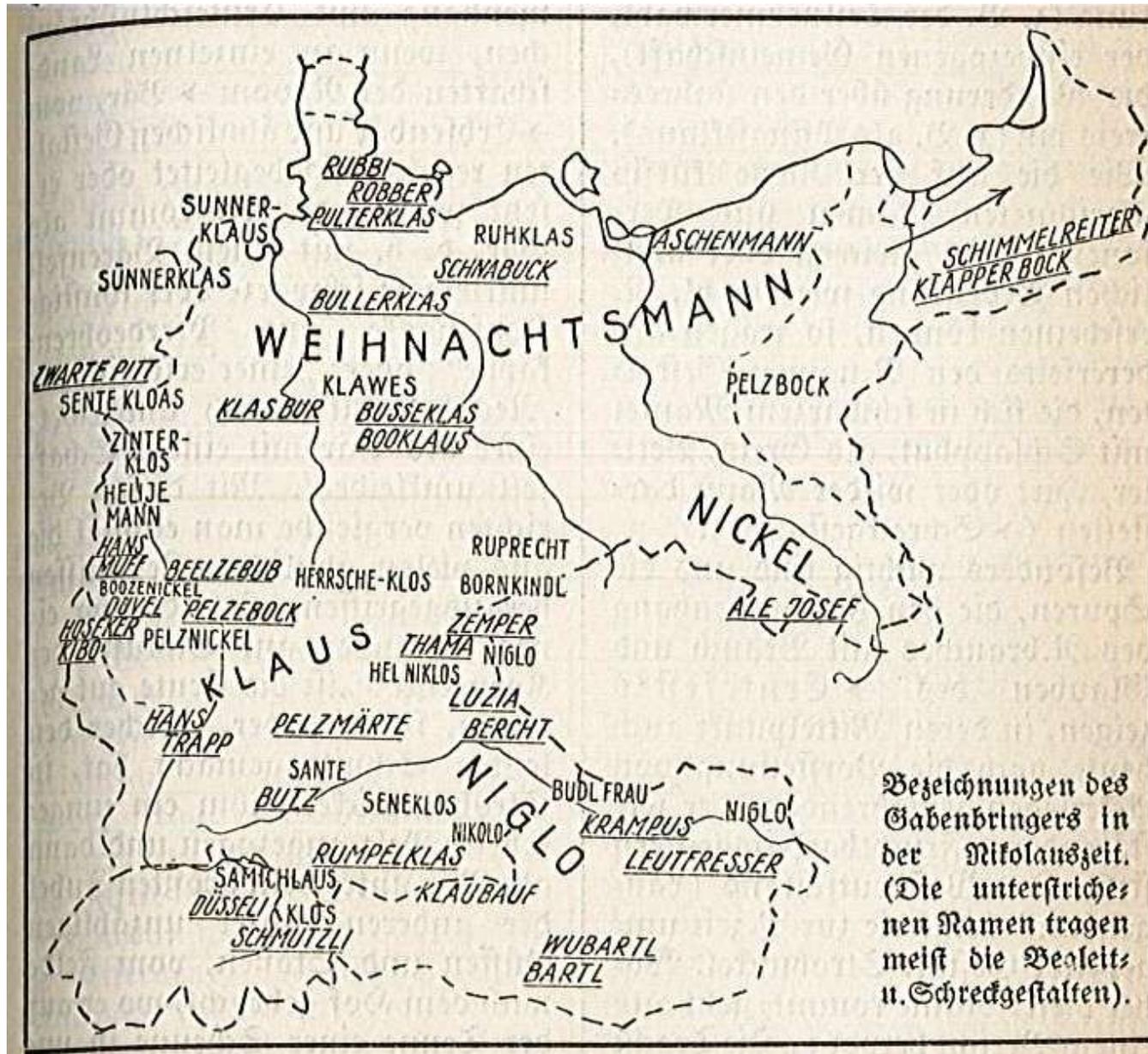


The German Language (*Deutsch*)

- English is a *Germanic* language – there are many cognates (or similar words) between English and German
 - *der Mann* = man
 - *rot* = red
 - *schwimmen* = to swim (unconjugated verb)
 - There are also some “false friends” e.g. *die Art* = type, kind
NOT art
- Like the English language, German has evolved over the past several centuries
- There are many German dialects based on historic regions



German Dialects (*deutsche Mundarten*)



German Dialects – Santa Claus

German Dialects

- Applies more to spoken than to written language
- *Nein* = no
 - Berlinerisch = *nee*
 - Oberösterreichisch = *na*

German Grammar (*Grammatik*)

- Nouns are capitalized
 - *ein Glas Milch* (a glass of milk)
- Nouns have gender
 - Three genders – *der* (m), *die* (f), *das* (n)
 - No hard and fast rule to determine the gender of a noun
- Compound words are common
 - *Militärdienst* = military service
- There are four cases, some of which alter the ending of an adjective, noun, or indefinite article (adding an –en, –ens, –er)
- Possessives can be formed by adding the –s ending as in English, but are not necessarily formed this way
- Plural forms often change the spelling of a noun
 - *ein Kuh, zwei Kühe* (one cow, two cows)

Feminine Forms

- *-in* is a feminine suffix
 - Many surnames will take the *-in* suffix when applied to women
 - Many occupations for women take the *-in* suffix, similar to *-ess* in English
 - *der Musiker, die Musikerin* (the musician)
 - *der Weber, die Weberin* (the weaver)
 - *der Koch, die Kochin* (the chef)
- *-l* and *-chen* are diminutive suffixes, sometimes also used for female words, similar to *-ette* in English
 - *das Mädchen* (the girl) is the diminutive of *die Magd* (the maid/the maiden)

Standardization of Words

Original	Options
p	b
t	d
k	g
pf	f
z	tz
h	ch
D	T
f	v or w
s	z or sch
x	ks or cks
th (usually at end of word)	h may be omitted

Why try to read the originals?

- Transcriptions can have errors
- Transcriptions often do not have all the details contained in the original

Baptism of Johann Adam Wartmann
Father Johann William Wartmann
Mother Barbara Pfaetzgraeffin

The screenshot shows a genealogy record for Johann Adam Wartmann. The record includes the following details:

- Name:** Johann Adam Wartmann
- Event:** Baptism
- Baptism Date:** 1 Jan 1770
- Baptism Place:** Berks Co., PA
- Church:** Christ Church on Bieber Creek or Mertz Church, Rockland Township.
- Role:** Baptized
- Remark:** of, Shall be Johann William Wartmann and Barbara Pfaltzgraeffin.

Household Members:

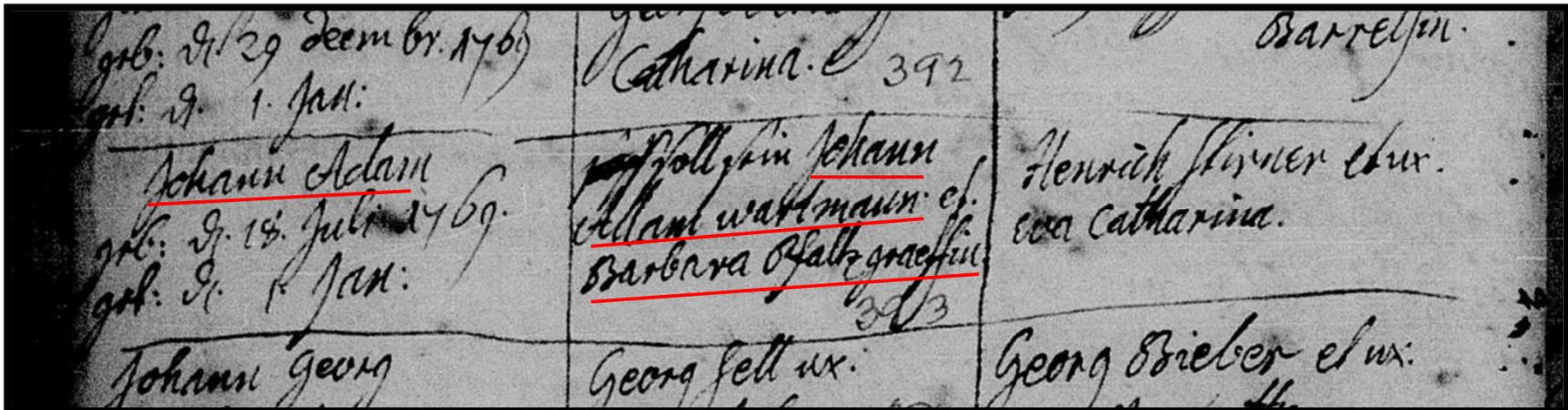
Name	Role
Barbara Pfaetzgraeffin	Mother
Catharina Stirner	Sponsor
Henrich Stirner	Sponsor
Barbara Wartmann	Mother
Johann Adam Wartmann	Baptized
Johann Adam Wartmann	Born
Johann William Wartmann	Father

The record also features a 'No Image' placeholder for the original document, a 'Write a comment' field, and a 'Make a Connection' section with a link to find others researching the same individual. A red arrow points from the text below to the 'Name' field in the record.

Child
Birthdate and
baptism date

Parents

Godparents



Johann
Adam

Johann Adam Wartmann
and Barbara Pfaltzgraeffin

Baptism, Johann Adam Wartmann, Christ
Church, Rockland, PA, 1770 [FHL Film 21107]

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Gertrud Metzger

in the Württemberg, Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1500-1985



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Name: Gertrud Metzger

Event Type: Taufe (Baptism)

Birth Date: 23 Mrz 1911 (23 Mar 1911)

Baptism Date: 21 Apr 1912

Baptism Place: Heilbronn, Württemberg (Baden-Württemberg), Deutschland (Germany)

Page Number: 167;167

Father: Leonhard Metzger

Mother: **Karoline Metzger**

Publication City or District: Heilbronn

Author: Evangelische Kirche Heilbronn (OA, Heilbronn)

Save Cancel

Suggested Records

- New Jersey, U.S., Death Index, 1901-2017
Gertrude Kohl
- 1940 United States Federal Census
Gertrude Kohl
- U.S., Newspapers.com Marriage Index, 1800s-1999
Mrs. Gertrude Metzger
- U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014
Gertrude Kohl
- New Jersey, U.S., Marriage Index, 1901-2016
Gertrude Metzger
- New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957
Gertrud Kohl
- U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947
Mrs Gertrude Kohl
- U.S., Newspapers.com Obituary Index, 1800s-current
Gertrude Manak
- U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995
Gertrude Metzger

Source Information

Ancestry.com. Württemberg, Germany, Lutheran Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1500-1985 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016.

Original data: Lutherische Kirchenbücher, 1500-1985. Various sources.

Description

This collection consists of Lutheran church records for the years 1500 to 1985 from Württemberg, Germany. [Learn more...](#)



Karoline geb. Schickner

Baptism, Gertrude Metzger, Heilbronn, 1912

German for Genealogists

Key Words

- You can understand and translate basic records without speaking the language
- Key record types include *Kirchenbücher* (church books such as baptism, marriage, and burial), civil registration records, and *Familienregister* (family register books)
- The same set of basic vocabulary will get you through all of these record types

Key Words: Relationships

English	German
Mother	die Mutter
Father	der Vater
Male/Female	männlich/weiblich
Parents	die Eltern
Legitimate/Illegitimate	ehelich/unehelich
Daughter	die Tochter/das Töchterlein
Son	der Sohn/Sohnlein
Child	das Kind
Wife	die Frau, die Ehefrau, die Gattin, die Ehegattin, die Weib
Husband	der Mann, der Ehemann, der Gatte, die Ehegatte
Boy	der Jung, der Knabe, der Bube
Girl	das Mädchen, das MädI
Widow/Widower	die Wittwe, die Wittib/der Wittwer, der Wittiber
Godparent	der Pate, der Taufpate

Key Words: Life Events

English	German
Born	geboren
Birth (n.)	die Geburt
Baptized	getauft
Baptise (v.)	taufen
Baptism (n.)	die Taufe
Confirmation	die Konfirmation, die Firmung
Married	getraut, verheiratet, copuliert
Marry (v.)	trauen, heiraten, ehelichen
Died	gestorben
Die (v.)	sterben
Death	der Tod
Buried	begraben
Bury (n.)	die Beerdigung, die Bestattung, das Begräbnis

Key Words: Time

English	German
Day	der Tag
Month	das Monat
Year	die Jahr
Age	das Alter
Years old	Jahre Alt
Morning	die Morgen, der Vormittag
Afternoon	der Nachmittag
Night	die Nacht
O'clock	Uhr

Key Words: Months of the Year

English	German
January	Januar, Jänner, Hartung, Jenner
February	Februar, Hornung
March	März, Frühlingsmonat
April	April, Ostermonat, Osteren
May	Mai, Wonnemonat, Blütemonat
June	Juni, Brachmonat
July	Juli, Heuert, Heumonat, Heuet
August	August, Erntemonat, Hitzmonat
September	September, Fruchtmonat, Herbstmonat, Herpsten, 7ber, 7bris
October	Oktober, Weinmonat, 8ber, 8bris
November	November, Wintermonat, 9ber, 9bris
December	Dezember, Christmonat, 10ber, 10bris, Xber, Xbris

Tip:
Use online German-word
lists to aid in transcription
and translation

German Genealogical Word List

[Genealogical Word Lists](#) → **German Genealogical Word List**

This list contains German words with their English translations. On most computers, CTL+F will search this page for the word you wish to translate. The words included here are those that you are likely to find in genealogical sources. If the word you are looking for is not on this list, please consult a German-English dictionary, the online [Grimm Deutsches Wörterbuch](#) (one of the best sources), or other regional online dictionaries found at [woerterbuchnetz.de](#). Latin words are often found in German records, and a few are included in this list. See the [Latin Word List](#) (34077).

German is spoken in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Records written in German may be found in these countries and also in parts of Poland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Hungary, and wherever German people settled. There are several different dialects in the German language. For example, in the province of Westfalen and other areas of Germany that border the Netherlands, you may notice words that are closely related to Dutch words. You may find the Dutch word list useful when working with these records.

In addition, German is found in some early records of the United States, such as in Pennsylvania, Texas, Wisconsin, and other states where Germans lived.

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German Genealogical Word List



Downloadable List

- [PDF File](#)

Handwriting

- [German Paleography Seminar](#) at FamilySearch.
- [Old German Script](#) at FamilySearch.

Associated Countries

- [Austria](#)
- [Belgium](#)
- [Germany](#)
- [Liechtenstein](#)
- [Luxembourg](#)
- [Switzerland](#)
- [Virginia](#)

www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/German_Genealogical_Word_List

OLD GERMAN PROFESSIONS

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 - [Contributed by Brigitte Gastel Lloyd](#)

OLD GERMAN PROFESSIONS, OCCUPATIONS and ILLNESSES

Translated from German into the English language by Oliver Weiss

A B

Abbauer -tenant on a (new, split-off) farm; heir with a small part of a farm (usually a second son)

Abdecker -skinner

Abendmahlgast -communicant

Abenteurer -jeweler; adventurer (also "Abentuerer)

Ablader -longshoreman

Abnahmemann -retired farmer on life estate

Abnehmer -photographer

Abschiedsman -Man retired on life estate

Abstreifer -renderer; knacker; flayer; roof-uncoverer

Accisenschreiber -tax clerk

Achatschleifer -agate polisher

Achtbuerger -one of eight citizen representatives; citizen
(bourgeoisie, not a guild member)

Achtelbauer -farmer on 1/ 8 of a full-sized farm

Achtelhufner -farmer on 1/ 8 of a full-sized farm

Achter -Juryman

Achtermann -farmer on farm behind ones's own

Achtmann -lay juryman; spokesman

Ackerbauer -farmer; tiller of he soil

Ackerbuerger -citizen farmer

Ackerer -farmer; tiller of the soil

Ackerknecht -farmhand

sites.rootsweb.com/~romban/misc/germanjobs.html



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German Words with English Translations

Diseases, Occupations, Military Terms

Diseases and Causes of Death

Abortus / Abtreibung - abortion	Haisentzündung - throat infection
Abszess - abscess	Haisschwindsuch - throat congestion
Alter - age, old age	Hirnentzündung - brain infection
Altersschwache - weakness of old age	Hitziges Fieber, Kopfhitzig - brain fever
Aussatz - leprosy	Husten - cough
Ausserer Schaden - external damage	Influenze, Grippe - influenza
Auszehrung - consumption, wasting away	Innerliche Krankheit - internal disease
Bandwurm - tapeworm	Ischias - sciatica (hip joint problems)
Beulenpest - bubonic plague	Keuchhusten - whooping cough
Blätterrose - shingles	Kindbettfieber - childbed fever
Blinddarm - appendicitis	Kinderpocken - chicken pox
Blutfluss, Blutlauf, Blutgang - hemorrhage	Knockenfrass - bone disease
Bräune - quinsy, angina	Knockenkrebs - bone cancer
Brand am Fuss - gangrene on the foot	Kolik - dysentery
Brechrühr - cholera	Kopfwasser - hydrocephalus - fluid on the brain
Bruchschaden - hernia	Krampfe - cramps, convulsions
Brustenzündung, Brustfieber - pleurisy, inflammation of the chest	Kratze - scabies
Brustkrämpf - cramps, spasms, convulsions	Krebs - cancer
Brustwassersucht - dropsy of the chest	Kropf - goiter

<https://pommerscher.org/cpage.php?pt=176>



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Zuletzt verifizierte Übersetzungen 1.229.228 Übersetzungen – 3.363 neu – 99,7% verifiziert

Zeit	Englisch	Deutsch	Geprüft von
15:01	to repurpose sth.	etw. [Akk.] zu einem neuen / anderen Zweck nutzen	BHM sch
14:10	dent. med. treatment center [Am.]	Behandlungsplatz {m} <BHP>	BHM
12:41	underworld jargon	Unterweltjargon {m} [auch: Unterwelt-Jargon] [Gauzersprache]	pol BHM
12:40	cosmet. pogonotrophy	Pogonotrophie {f}	Wen sol BHM
11:51	gastr. jobs med. nutritionist	Ernährungsfachkraft {f}	Hal
Voice:	final farewell by cnr	asklepiadeische Stro... by Halmafelix	1.332.190 more »

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dict.cc: Wörterbuch für Englisch-Deutsch und andere Sprachen

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- 8 **ddr**
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495
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485

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QUESTIONS?

German Handwriting

Handwriting Types

- Latin script
 - Same alphabet, same letter-forms as English script
 - Used when church records were written in Latin
 - Used for titles/headings/names in records
- *Kurrentschrift/Sütterlin*/German script/Gothic script
 - “Running” or cursive writing
 - Same alphabet, different letter-forms
 - Used up to ca. mid-20th century
 - *Kurrent* is the general term, *Sütterlin* was a specific form taught from 1915-1941

Kurrent/Sütterlin for Genealogists

- Where to find it?
 - Church books (esp. Lutheran)
 - Civil registration
 - Military service papers
 - Letters
 - Basically, any handwritten document written in German before about 1941!

41

1782

Dorf in Gegend	Nachmen des Landes oder der Pfarren.	Frau/Leibweib	geb. Tag, Ort geb. Jahr
Page 102	Philippa Tinn von Bessen geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	Johann David Tinn geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	geb. 1748 1782
Page 103	Barbara Jungferm geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	Johann David Tinn geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	geb. 1748 1782
Page 104	Elisabetha Böhmerin geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	Johann David Tinn geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	geb. 1748 1782
Page 105	Jacob Tinn geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	Johann David Tinn geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	geb. 1748 1782
Page 106	Elisabetha Tinn geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	Johann David Tinn geb. am 11ten Dec. 1748 geb. in Bessen	geb. 1748 1782

The Alphabet in *Kurrent*

a	<i>a A</i>	j	<i>j J</i>	s	<i>s S P</i>
b	<i>b B</i>	k	<i>k K</i>	t	<i>t T</i>
c	<i>c C</i>	l	<i>l L</i>	u	<i>u U</i>
d	<i>d D</i>	m	<i>m M</i>	v	<i>v V</i>
e	<i>e E</i>	n	<i>n N</i>	w	<i>w W</i>
f	<i>f F</i>	o	<i>o O</i>	x	<i>x X</i>
g	<i>g G</i>	p	<i>p P</i>	y	<i>y Y</i>
h	<i>h H</i>	q	<i>q Q</i>	z	<i>z Z</i>
i	<i>i I</i>	r	<i>r R</i>	tz	<i>tz</i>

ä Au ö Ou ü Uu
ff ll ff pf ff ff

Das Sütterlin - Alphabet im Vergleich zu Kanzleischriften des 17. - 19. Jahrhunderts
To compare: Suetterlin alphabet to older writings of 17th - 19th century
Pour comparer, alphabet Sütterlin à des écritures plus anciennes de 17ème - 19ème siècle

⇒ [Großbuchstaben / capital letters / Majuscules](#)

a:  *aaaa*

b:  *BBBB*

c:  *cccc*

d:  *DDDD*

e:  *eeee*

f:  *ffff*

ff:  *ffff*

ff:  *ffff*

suetterlinschrift.de/Lese/Kanzlei1.htm

Tip:
Handwriting is
individual

H

Haller, Margaretha

Haller, Dr. Christian Maria

Häsel, Friedrich Wilhelm

Häsel, Johanna

Häsel, Johanna

H

Häsel, Johanna

H

Heller, Anna

Heymel, Johanna

Heller, Anna

Church book index – letter “H”

Easily Confused Letters

Lowercase Letters

- F and S

A white rectangular box containing the cursive lowercase letters 'f' and 's' written in black ink. The 'f' is tall with a descender, and the 's' is a simple loop.

- M and N

A white rectangular box containing the cursive lowercase letters 'm' and 'n' written in black ink. The 'm' has two humps, and the 'n' has one hump.

- R and V

A white rectangular box containing the cursive lowercase letters 'r' and 'v' written in black ink. The 'r' has a small hump and a descender, while the 'v' is a simple loop.

- G and Y

A white rectangular box containing the cursive lowercase letters 'g' and 'y' written in black ink. The 'g' has a hump and a descender, while the 'y' has a hump and a descender.

- E and R

A white rectangular box containing the cursive lowercase letters 'e' and 'r' written in black ink. The 'e' is a simple loop, and the 'r' has a small hump and a descender.

Capital Letters

- M and N

A white rectangular box containing the cursive capital letters 'M' and 'N' written in black ink. The 'M' has two humps, and the 'N' has one hump.

- D and V

A white rectangular box containing the cursive capital letters 'D' and 'V' written in black ink. The 'D' has a hump and a descender, while the 'V' is a simple loop.

- B and L

A white rectangular box containing the cursive capital letters 'B' and 'L' written in black ink. The 'B' has two humps, and the 'L' has one hump.

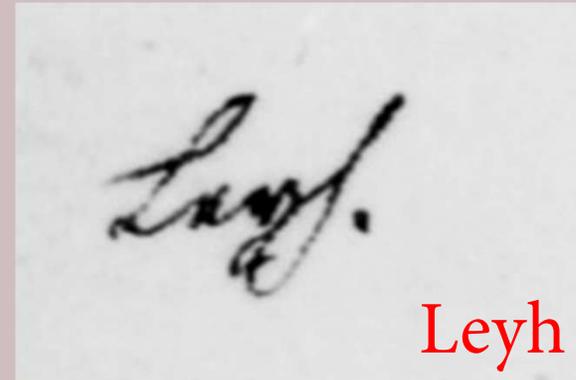
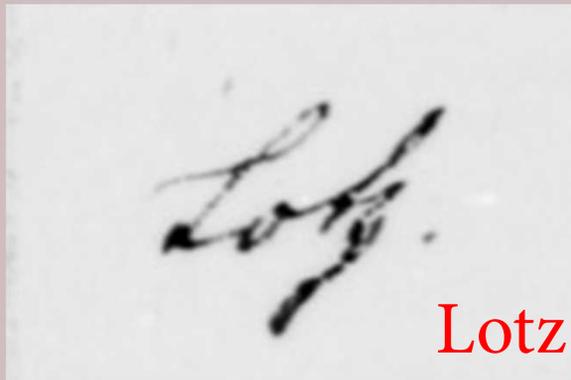
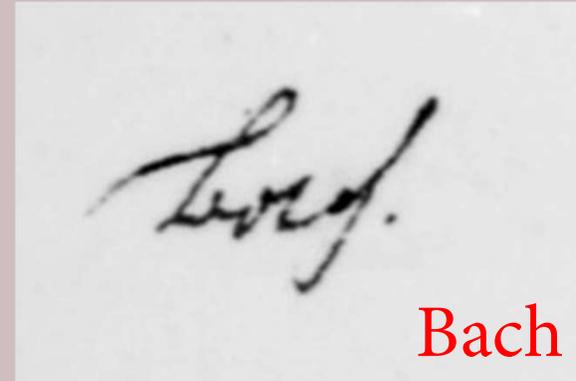
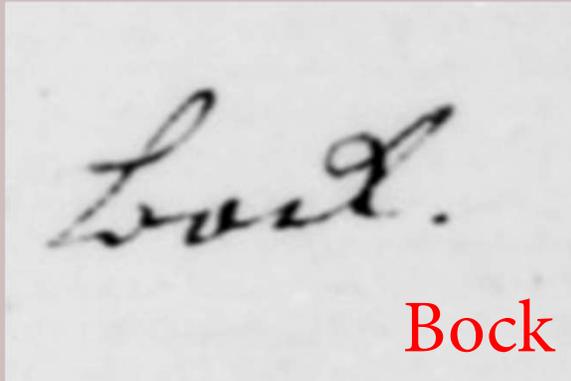
- C and L

A white rectangular box containing the cursive capital letters 'C' and 'L' written in black ink. The 'C' is a simple loop, and the 'L' has one hump.

- F and J

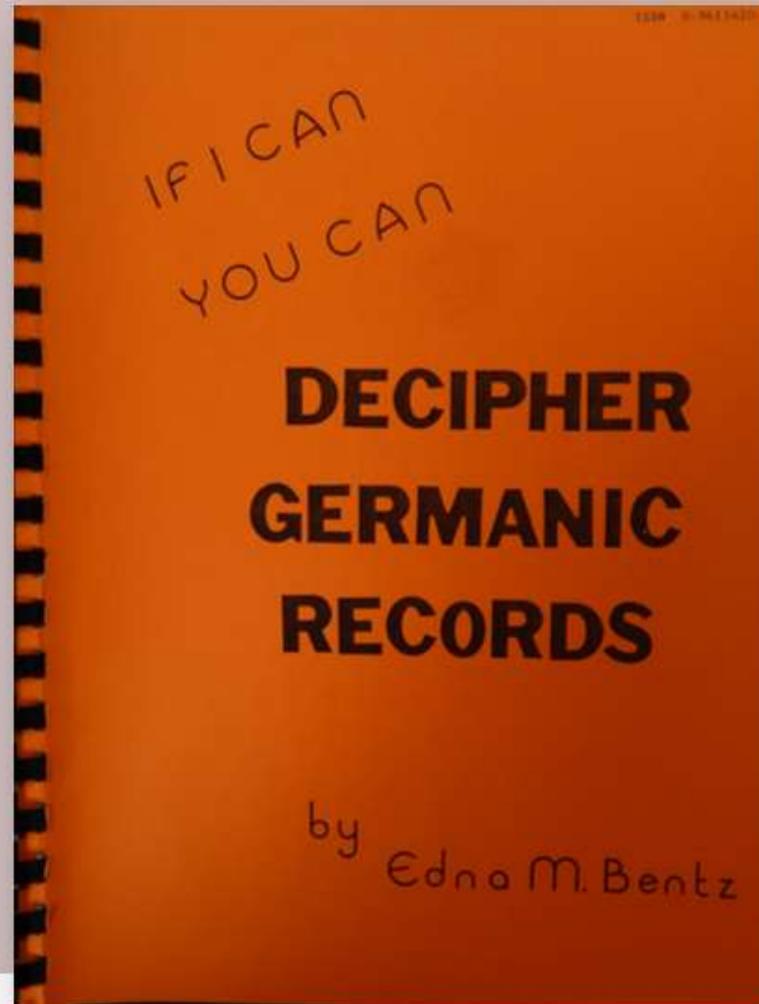
A white rectangular box containing the cursive capital letters 'F' and 'J' written in black ink. The 'F' has a hump and a descender, and the 'J' has a hump and a descender.

Surname Examples

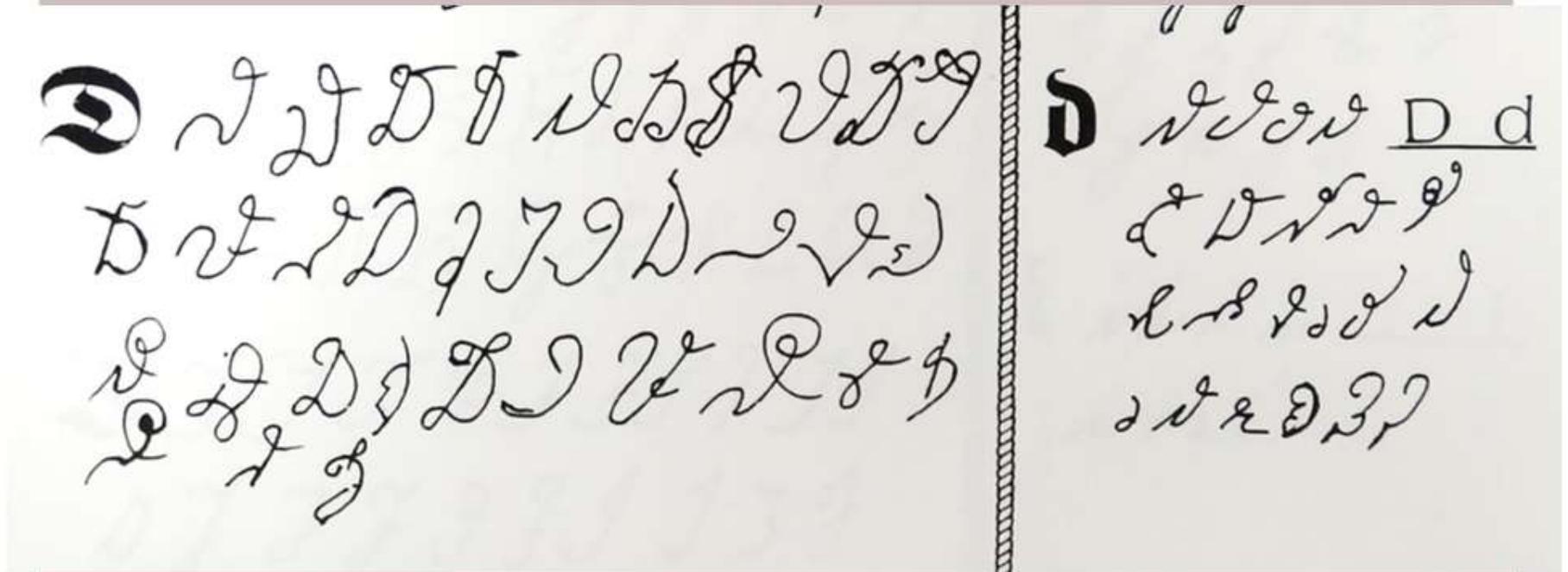


Old German Script - Guides

- *If I Can, You Can Decipher German Records* (1982)
by Edna M. Bentz

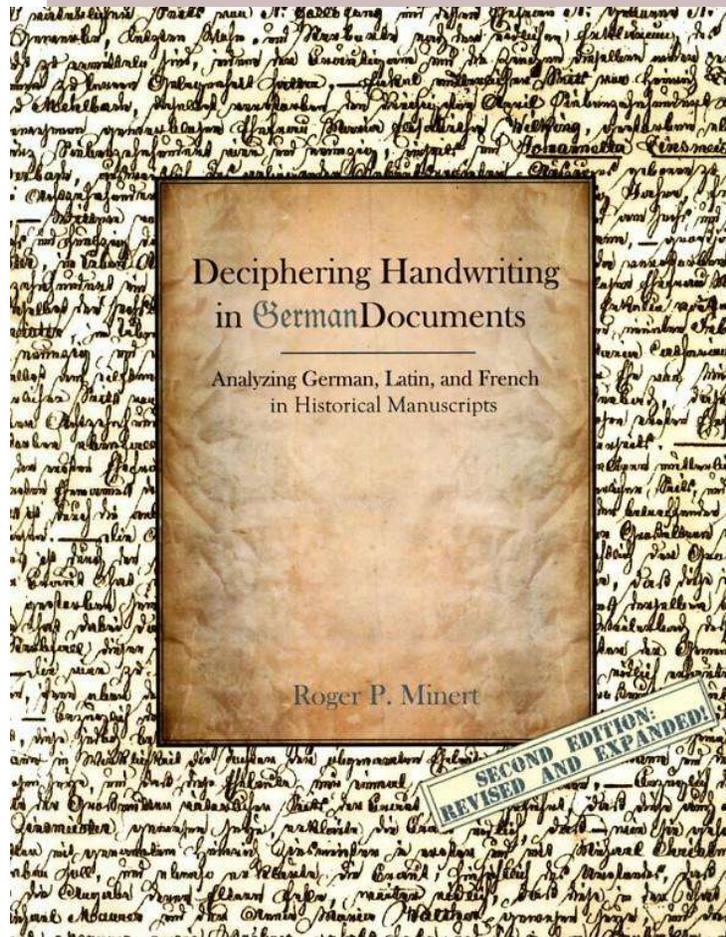


Old German Script - Guides

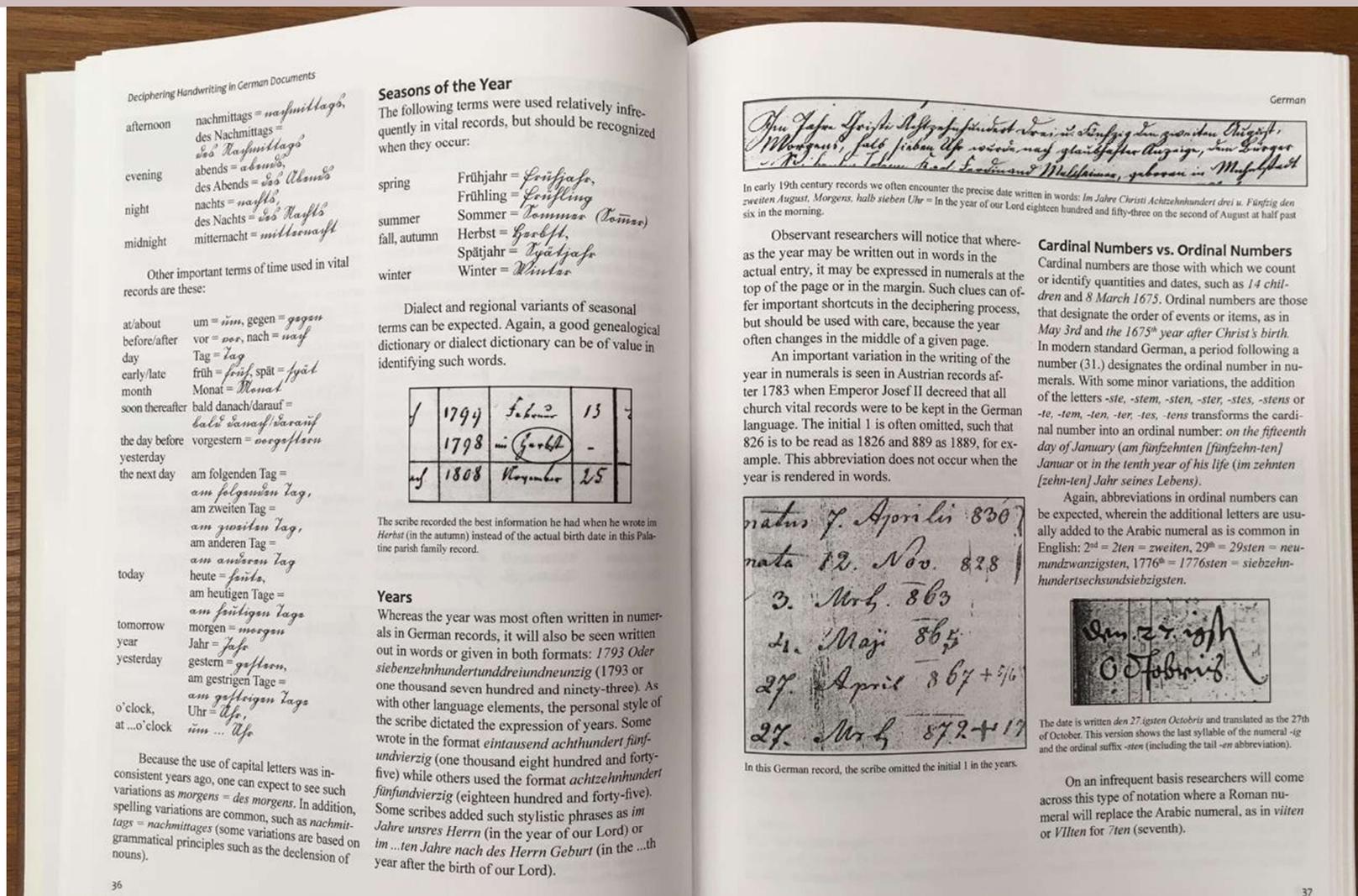


Old German Script - Guides

- *Deciphering Handwriting in German Documents* by Roger P. Minert (2nd ed., 2013)



Old German Script - Guides



Deciphering Handwriting in German Documents

- afternoon nachmittags = *nachmittags*,
des Nachmittags = *des Nachmittags*
- evening abends = *abends*,
des Abends = *des Abends*
- night nachts = *nachts*,
des Nachts = *des Nachts*
- midnight mitternacht = *mitternacht*

Other important terms of time used in vital records are these:

- at/about um = *im, gegen* = *gegen*
- before/after vor = *vor, nach* = *nach*
- day Tag = *Tag*
- early/late früh = *früh*, spät = *spät*
- month Monat = *Monat*
- soon thereafter bald danach/darauf = *bald danach/darauf*
- the day before vorgestern = *vorgestern*
- yesterday am folgenden Tag = *am folgenden Tag*,
am folgenden Tag = *am folgenden Tag*,
am zweiten Tag = *am zweiten Tag*,
am anderen Tag = *am anderen Tag*
- today heute = *heute*,
am heutigen Tage = *am heutigen Tage*
- tomorrow morgen = *morgen*
- year Jahr = *Jahr*
- yesterday gestern = *gestern*,
am gestrigen Tage = *am gestrigen Tage*
- o'clock, Uhr = *Uhr*
- at ...o'clock um ... *Uhr*

Because the use of capital letters was inconsistent years ago, one can expect to see such variations as *morgens* = *des morgens*. In addition, spelling variations are common, such as *nachmittags* = *nachmittages* (some variations are based on grammatical principles such as the declension of nouns).

Seasons of the Year

The following terms were used relatively infrequently in vital records, but should be recognized when they occur:

- spring Frühjahr = *Frühjahr*,
Frühling = *Frühling*
- summer Sommer = *Sommer* (*Sommer*)
- fall, autumn Herbst = *Herbst*
- winter Spätjahr = *Spätjahr*,
Winter = *Winter*

Dialect and regional variants of seasonal terms can be expected. Again, a good genealogical dictionary or dialect dictionary can be of value in identifying such words.

f	1794	Februar	13
	1798	in Herbst	-
auf	1808	November	25

The scribe recorded the best information he had when he wrote in *Herbst* (in the autumn) instead of the actual birth date in this Palatine parish family record.

Years

Whereas the year was most often written in numerals in German records, it will also be seen written out in words or given in both formats: 1793 *Oder siebenzehnhundertunddreißig* (1793) or one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three). As with other language elements, the personal style of the scribe dictated the expression of years. Some wrote in the format *eintausend achthundert fünf und vierzig* (one thousand eight hundred and forty-five) while others used the format *achtzehnhundert fünf und vierzig* (eighteen hundred and forty-five). Some scribes added such stylistic phrases as *im Jahre unsres Herrn* (in the year of our Lord) or *im ...ten Jahre nach des Herrn Geburt* (in the ...th year after the birth of our Lord).

German

Im Jahre Christi achtzehnhundert drei u. Fünfzig den zweiten August, Morgens halb sieben Uhr = In the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and fifty-three on the second of August at half past six in the morning.

In early 19th century records we often encounter the precise date written in words: *Im Jahre Christi achtzehnhundert drei u. Fünfzig den zweiten August, Morgens halb sieben Uhr* = In the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and fifty-three on the second of August at half past six in the morning.

Observant researchers will notice that whereas the year may be written out in words in the actual entry, it may be expressed in numerals at the top of the page or in the margin. Such clues can offer important shortcuts in the deciphering process, but should be used with care, because the year often changes in the middle of a given page.

An important variation in the writing of the year in numerals is seen in Austrian records after 1783 when Emperor Josef II decreed that all church vital records were to be kept in the German language. The initial 1 is often omitted, such that 826 is to be read as 1826 and 889 as 1889, for example. This abbreviation does not occur when the year is rendered in words.

Cardinal Numbers vs. Ordinal Numbers

Cardinal numbers are those with which we count or identify quantities and dates, such as *14 children* and *8 March 1675*. Ordinal numbers are those that designate the order of events or items, as in *May 3rd* and *the 1675th year after Christ's birth*. In modern standard German, a period following a number (31.) designates the ordinal number in numerals. With some minor variations, the addition of the letters *-ste, -stem, -sten, -ster, -stes, -stens* or *-te, -tem, -ten, -ter, -tes, -tens* transforms the cardinal number into an ordinal number: *on the fifteenth day of January* (*am fünfzehnten [fünfzehn-ten] Januar* or *in the tenth year of his life* (*im zehnten [zehn-ten] Jahr seines Lebens*)).

Again, abbreviations in ordinal numbers can be expected, wherein the additional letters are usually added to the Arabic numeral as is common in English: 2nd = *2ten* = *zweiten*, 29th = *29sten* = *neunundzwanzigsten*, 1776th = *1776sten* = *siebzehnhundertsechundsiebzigsten*.

natus 7. Aprilis 830
nata 22. Nov. 828
3. März 863
21. Mai 865
27. April 867 + 1/2
27. März 872 + 1/2

In this German record, the scribe omitted the initial 1 in the years.

den 27. 1078
O. Oktober

The date is written *den 27. 1078* and translated as the 27th of October. This version shows the last syllable of the numeral -ig and the ordinal suffix -sten (including the tail -en abbreviation).

On an infrequent basis researchers will come across this type of notation where a Roman numeral will replace the Arabic numeral, as in *viiten* or *VIIten* for *7ten* (seventh).



[Here you find printed Blackletters](#)

Here you can learn Suetterlin - the "German handwriting"

NEW : Want to see your name in Suetterlin ? [enter here](#)

[DEUTSCHE VERSION](#) [VERSION FRANCAISE](#)

Professional help you will find at : www.suetterlin-service.de Offer: transcription of old german handwriting (Suetterlin and older).

Suetterlin script: a script, created by the Berlin graphic artist Ludwig Sütterlin (1865-1917), which was taught from 1915 to 1941 in German schools. It is also called the "the German handwriting". The writing is a standard form of the earlier and very different chancery writing which was mainly used by government officials. See the page ["Development of Latin Writing"](#).

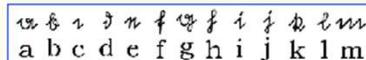
People of an older generation often cannot write any other way and yet both the postman and the grandchildren have trouble reading their envelopes and letters written in this script. When old **family documents** are taken out or church books are to be read, the knowledge of this writing is absolutely necessary.

During the reading lessons we begin with the last level of the "Suetterlin script", which is also known as "the German handwriting" - and then turn to the old chancery-writings, in German called "Kurrentschrift" or "Kanzleischrift".

Suetterlin writing is rarely written precisely since it occurs almost only in handwriting. Even an experienced reader must first get used to the specific handwriting, until the text becomes understandable.

Special German characters: ä, ö, ü have two dots above. In the Middle Ages it was a **tiny "e"** above, this is similar to two tiny strokes (compare the Sütterlin "e") . Nowadays there are two dots.

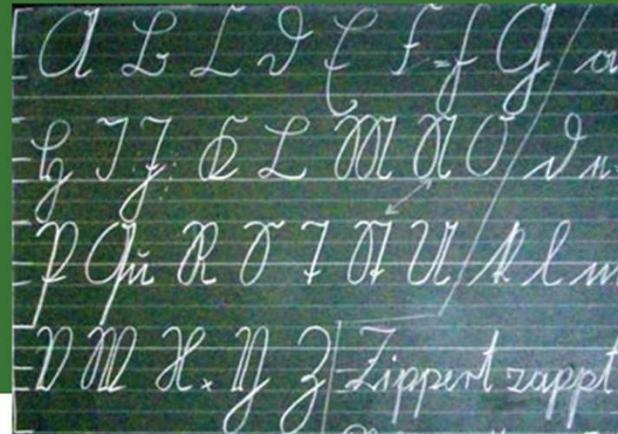
If you have no ä, ö, ü on your keyboard, you may replace with ae, oe, ue and it is still understandable, e.g. Doerling is same as Dörling. The "B" that looks like "B" means "ss" and can understandably be replaced with "ss".



suetterlinschrift.de/Englisch/Sutterlin.htm



Kurrentschrift Schreiblehrgang von Margarete Mücke



[Willkommen](#)

[Was ist Kurrentschrift?](#)

[Schreiblehrgang](#)

[Leseübungen](#)

[Leseübungen
Originaldrucke](#)

[Originalhandschriften
1529 - 2013](#)

[Kontakt](#)

[Impressum/
Datenschutz](#)

Schreiblehrgänge als PDF

Hier finden Sie meine Schreiblehrgänge als PDF-Datei, die Sie sich kostenlos herunterladen oder ausdrucken können.

Schreiblehrgang 2014

Schreiblehrgang Kurrentschrift 1.Überarbeitung 2014, Margarete Mücke

Neu: Damit Sie einige Original Handschriften kennenlernen, finden Sie hier Texte aus einem

Poesiealbum ab1880

Handwriting the old German "Kurrent" Script

Schreiblehrgang Kurrent 2016 mit englischen Anweisungen - Margarete Mücke

Schreiblehrgang 2016

Schreiblehrgang Kurrentschrift 2.Überarbeitung 2016, mit Fraktur - Margarete Mücke

Der Scheiblehrgang 2016 ist genau wie der von 2014 aufgebaut. Zusätzlich finden Sie zu jedem Kurrent-Buchstaben den entsprechenden Buchstaben in der PC-Druckschrift „Alte Schwabacher“, die dem Original aus dem 15. Jahrhundert nachempfunden ist. Darin wurden in Deutschland die ersten Bücher gedruckt. Später haben Typographen viele neue Schriftformen entwickelt. So ist es noch bis heute, besonders für die Werbung. Ich möchte

kurrent-lernen-muecke.de/lehrgang.php

BYU Script Tutorial LOGIN Search

HOME ABOUT

Script Tutorial: : making sense of old handwriting ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The German Documents

Return to Main Screen
Language Options

German Documents

Home

Techniques & Tools

- Names
- Common Terms
- Basic Guidelines
- Sample Document

Alphabet

- The Alphabet: Full Chart
- Gothic Handwriting
- Gothic Typefaces

Interactive Experiences

- Letters Test
- Words Test
- Passages Test

Letters Test

The Following is a test of your ability in the transcription of various German letters. Click Take Test to begin.

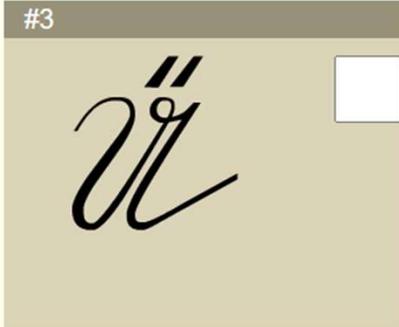
[View Answers](#)
[Take Another Test](#)

To enter an ß or an umlauted vowel in one of the answer boxes below, copy and paste from the following: Ä ä Ö ö Ü ü ß

PART I: IDENTIFY THE FOLLOWING LETTERS

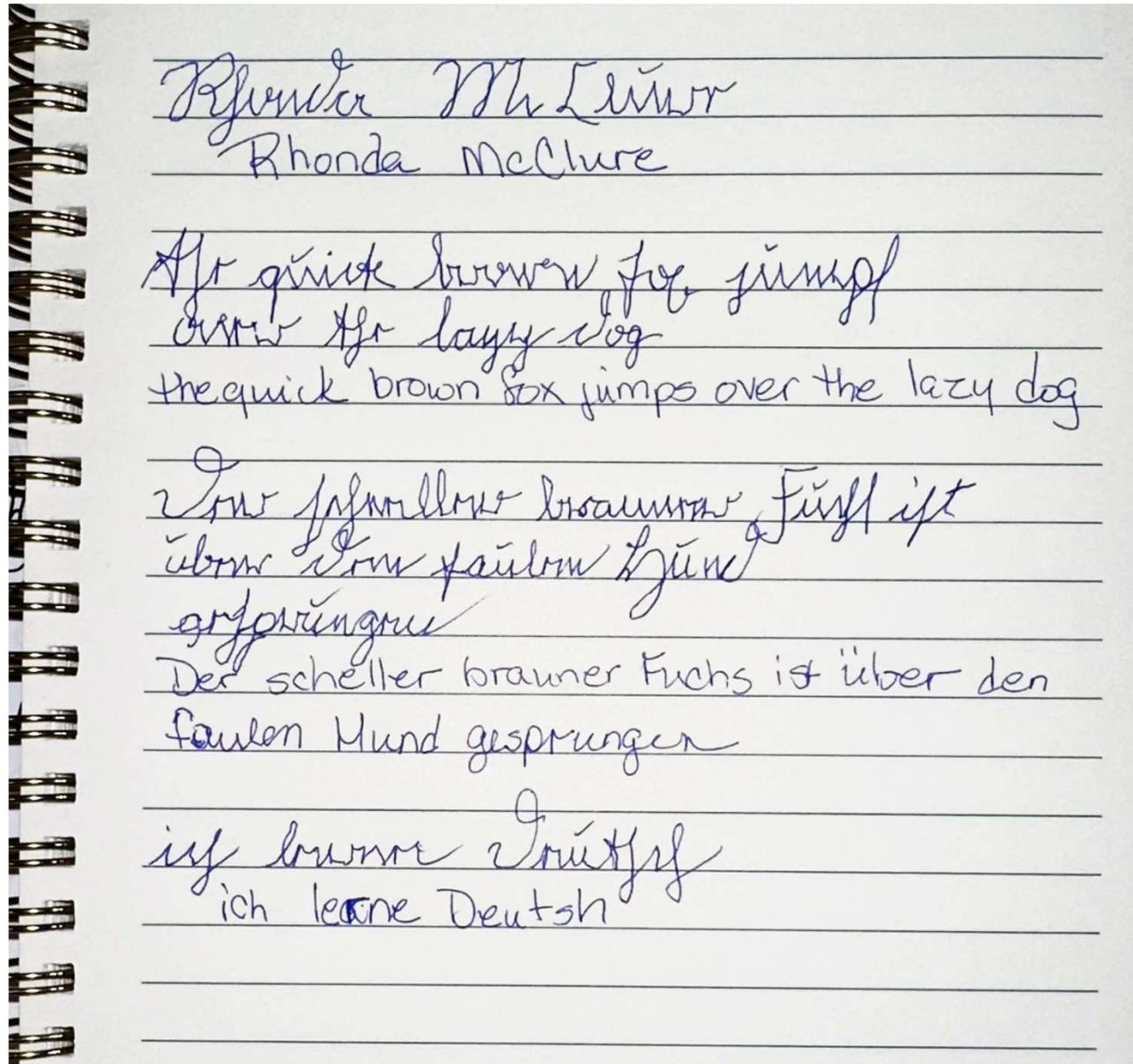
#1 

#2 

#3 

<https://script.byu.edu/german-handwriting/interactive-exercises/letters-test>

Tip:
Practice writing words
in German script



Handwriting practice page

Die Ergebnisbox ist ein gif-Bild, welches per rechter Maustaste gespeichert werden kann.

Text: Schriftgröße: schwarz blau

Schrift *Schrift* *Schrift* *Schrift* *Schrift* *Schrift* *Schrift* *Schrift* *Schrift* *



Das war einmal ein kleines süßes Mädchen, das
hatte jedermann lieb, das sie nur ansah, um
allerliebsten aber ihren Großmutter, die wußte
gar nicht, was sie alles dem Kinde geben sollte.
Einmal schenkte sie ihm ein Köpfchen von Woll

deutsche-handschrift.de/adsschreiben.php#schriftfeld

Deciphering German Script

- Understanding key words and where they are likely to be mentioned in a record helps you catch on to an individual's specific handwriting style
- Become familiar with letters by studying known words like given names and town names, as you will then be more easily able to decipher unknown words

Tip:
Practice, practice,
practice!

Entry #	Address	Birthdate	Baptism Location and Date	M/F and Child's Name
---------	---------	-----------	---------------------------	----------------------

251.	Fambach. Am Wasser. Num. 34.	Siebter Ja- nuar Mittags 12 Uhr.	Kirch. 12 ^{ter} Januar.	Knabe. Paulus Wilhelm Petter.
------	------------------------------------	--	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

251

Derselbst
Am Wasser
Num. 34

Siebter Ja-
nuar Mittags
12 Uhr

Kirche
12th Januar

Knabe
Paulus Wilhelm
Petter

The same place

Am Wasser
#34

Seventh January
12:00 in the
afternoon

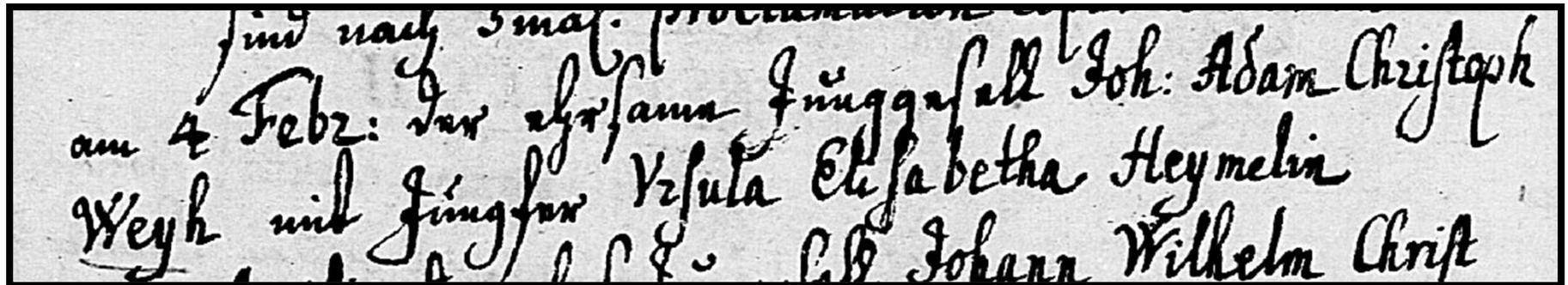
Church
12th January

Boy
Paulus Wilhelm
Petter

Baptism, Paulus Wilhelm Petter, Fambach,
1839

am 4 Febr. der ehrsame Junggesell Joh. Adam Christoph

on 4 February the honorable bachelor Johann Adam Christoph



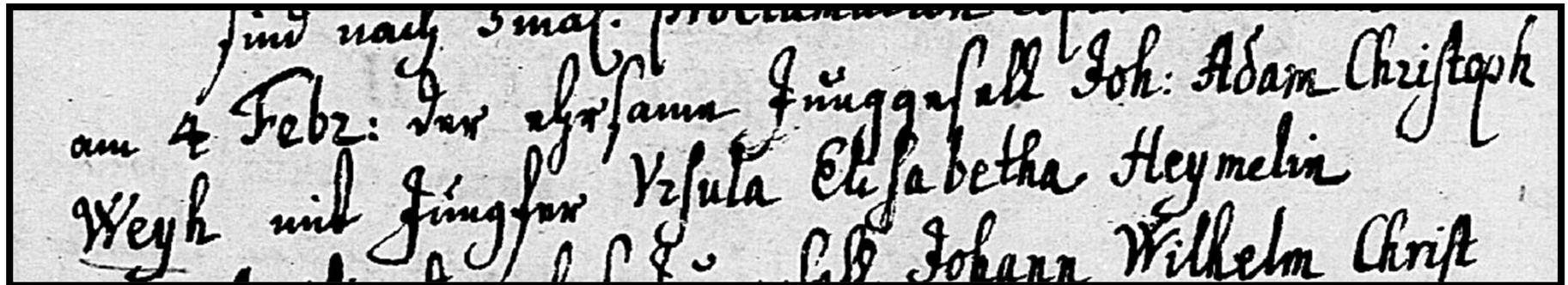
Weyh mit Jungfer Ursula Elisabetha Heymelin

Weyh with maiden Ursula Elisabetha Heymelin

Marriage, Johann Adam Christoph Weyh and
Ursula Elisabetha Heymelin, Fambach, 1739

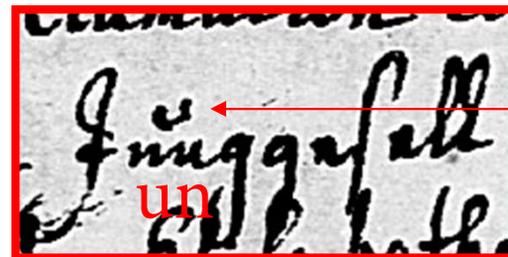
am 4 Febr. der ehrsame Junggesell Joh. Adam Christoph

on 4 February the honorable bachelor Johann Adam Christoph



Weyh mit Jungfer Ursula Elisabetha Heymelin

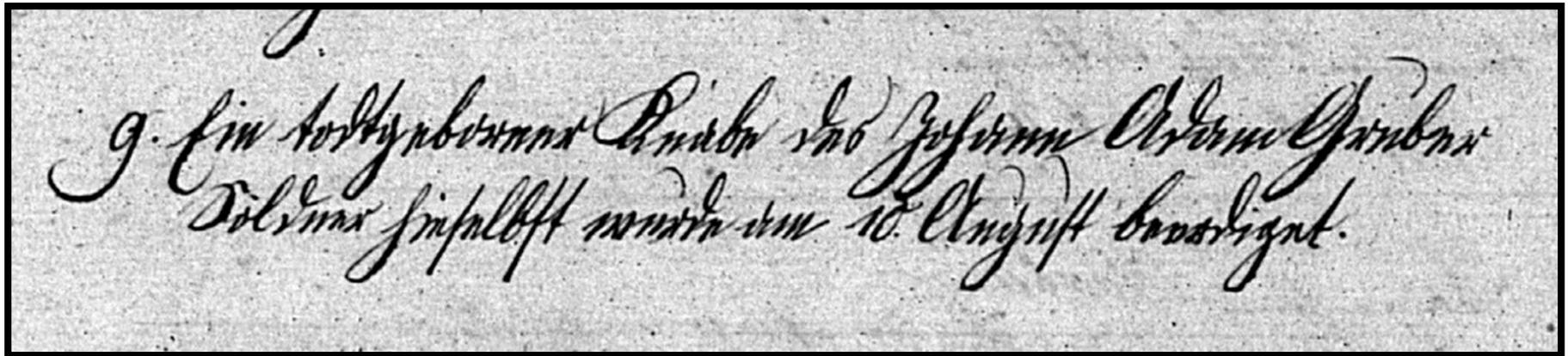
Weyh with maiden Ursula Elisabetha Heymelin



Marriage, Johann Adam Christoph Weyh and Ursula Elisabetha Heymelin, Fambach, 1739

9. Ein todtgeborener Knabe der Johann Adam Gruber

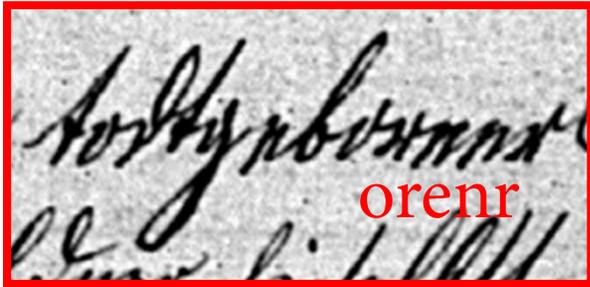
9. A stillborn baby boy of Johann Adam Gruber



Söldner hieselbst wurde am 10. August beerdigt

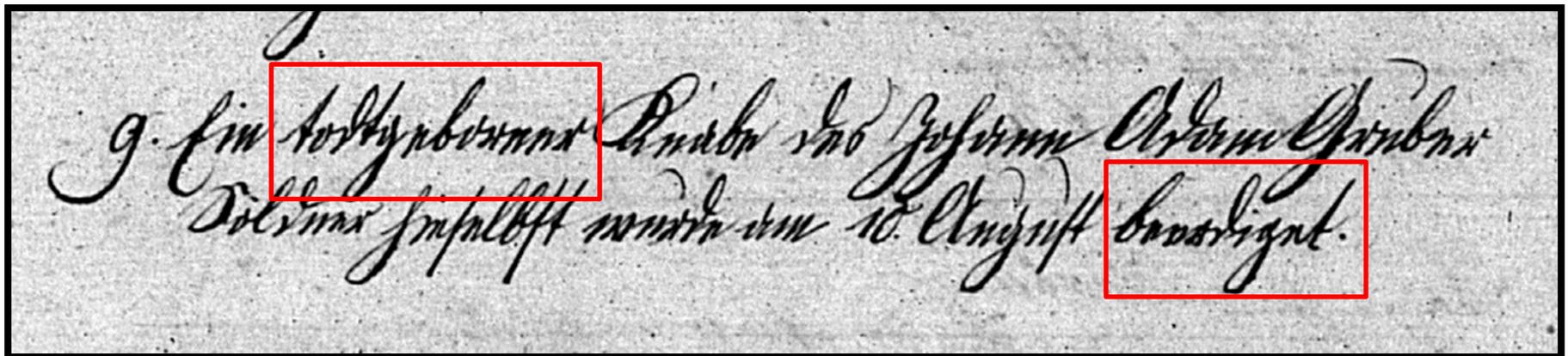
mercenary soldier of this place was buried on the 10th of August

Burial, Unnamed Child, Möttingen, 1838



9. Ein todtgeborener Knabe der Johann Adam Gruber

9. A stillborn baby boy of Johann Adam Gruber



Söldner hieselbst wurde am 10. August beerdigt

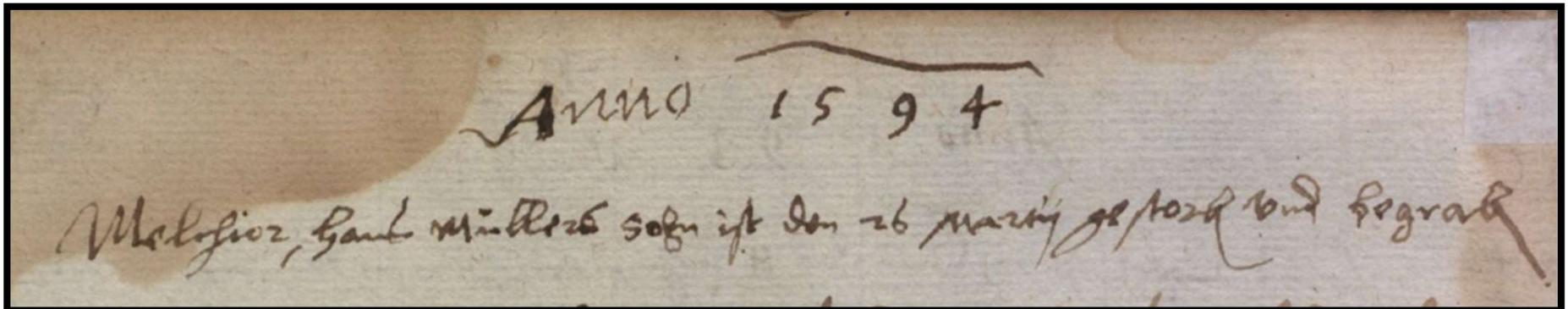
mercenary soldier of this place was buried on the 10th of August

Burial, Unnamed Child, Möttingen, 1838



Anno 1594

Year 1594



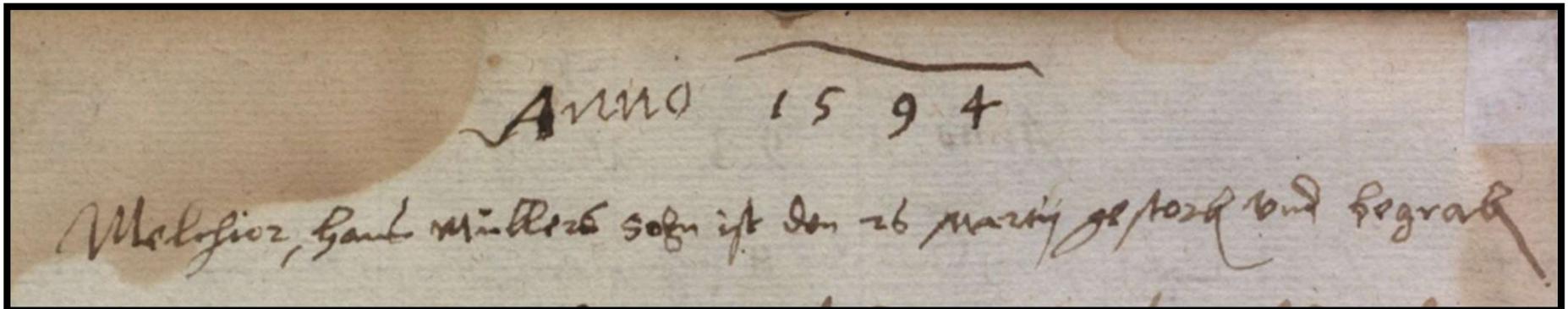
Melchior, Hans Müllers Sohn ist den 26 Martij gestorben und begraben

Melchior, son of Hans Müller, died and was buried on March 26th

Burial, Melchior Müller, Alsenz, 1594

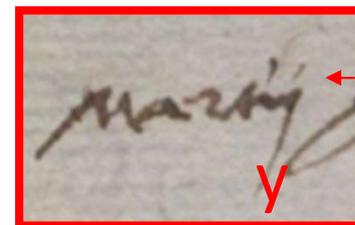
Anno 1594

Year 1594



Melchior, Hans Müllers Sohn ist den 26 Martij gestorben und begraben

Melchior, son of Hans Müller, died and was buried on March 26th

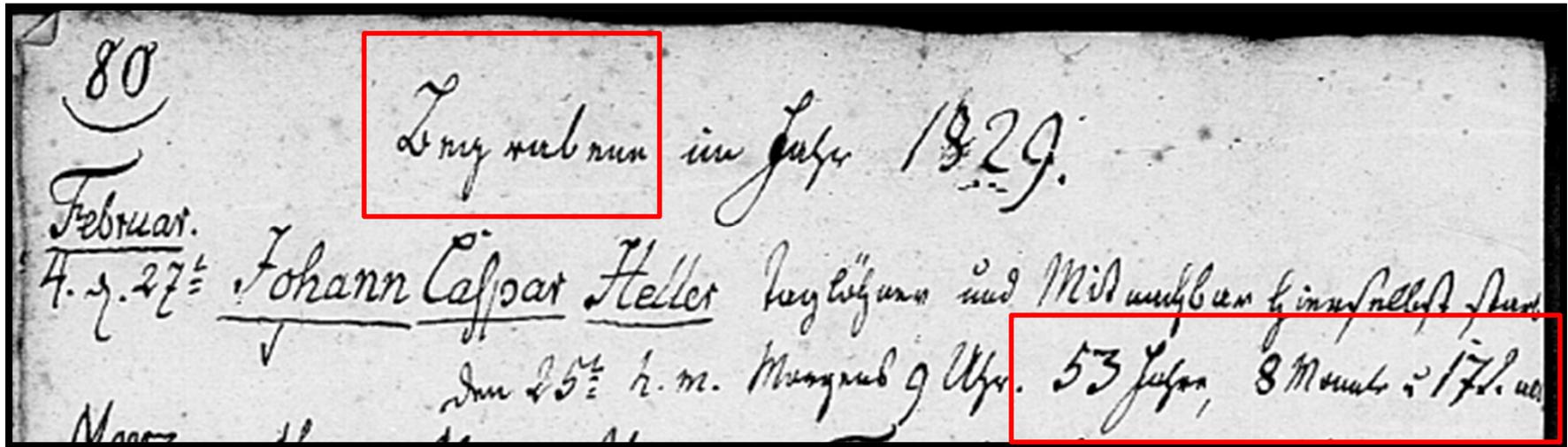


Burial, Melchior Müller, Alsenz, 1594

Tip:
Even records written in German
will include the occasional
Latin word/phrase

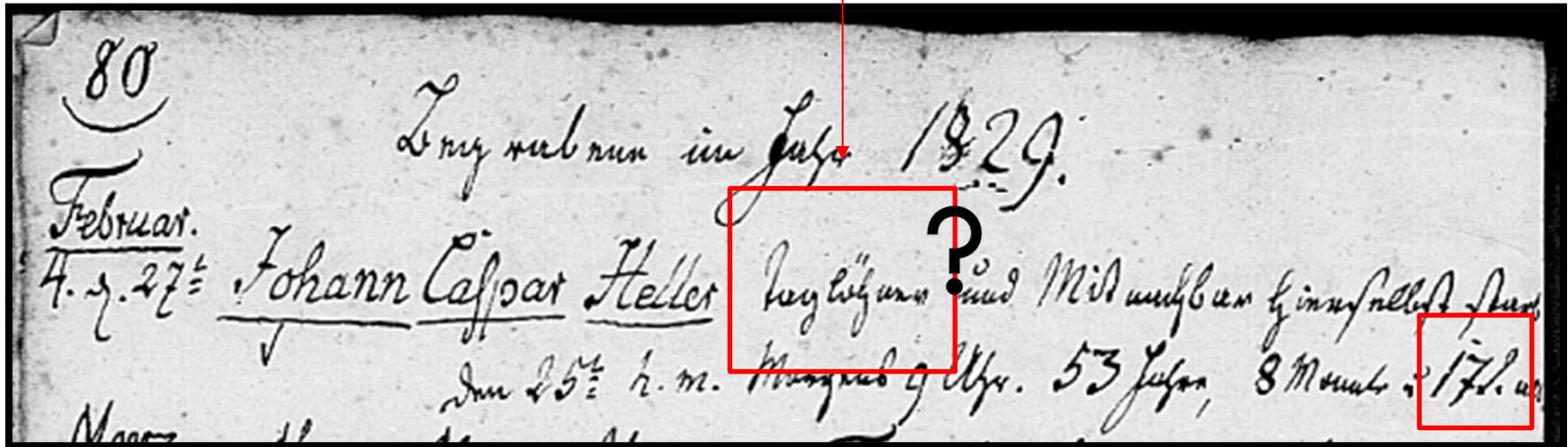
Use what you know to help you translate

- Look for clues
 - What letters or words do you recognize?
- Use approximate spellings to search for possible words in the word list or dictionary



Burial, Johann Caspar Heller, Fambach, 1829

Do I see these letters elsewhere?



Years Months Days

Jahre Monate Tage

Burial, Johann Caspar Heller, Fambach, 1829

T [edit | edit source]

German	English
T.d. = Tochter des, der	daughter of
T.v. = Tochter von	daughter of
Tabelle	index, table
Tag	day
Tagelöhner	day laborer
Tagner	day laborer
Tal, Thal	valley
Tante	aunt
Tapazier	(wall)paper hanger
Tapeten	wallpaper, hangings
Taufe	baptism
taufen	to baptize
Taufpaten	godparents
Taufschein	baptismal certificate
tausend	thousand
Testament	will
Tischler	cabinetmaker, furniture maker
Tochter	daughter
Töchterchen	young daughter
Töchterlein	young daughter
Tochtermann	son-in-law
Tod	death
Todesart	manner of death
Töpfer	potter
tot	dead
Totengräber	grave digger

familysearch.org/wiki/en/German_Genealogical_Word_List#T

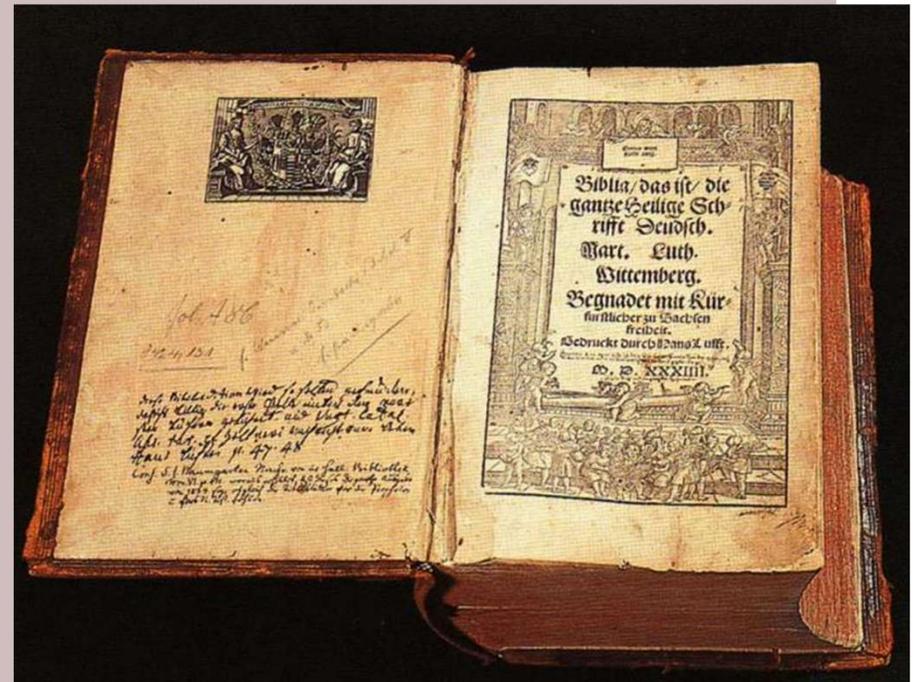
Tip:
Most men will have
their occupation near
their name.

QUESTIONS?

Fraktur and German Gothic Print

Gothic Print

- Standard text style in Germany from about the 9th century up to 1941
 - A style of handwriting before moveable type was invented
 - Also common in the Czech Republic and Scandinavia
- Also known as “blackletter” or *Fraktur*
- A few variations



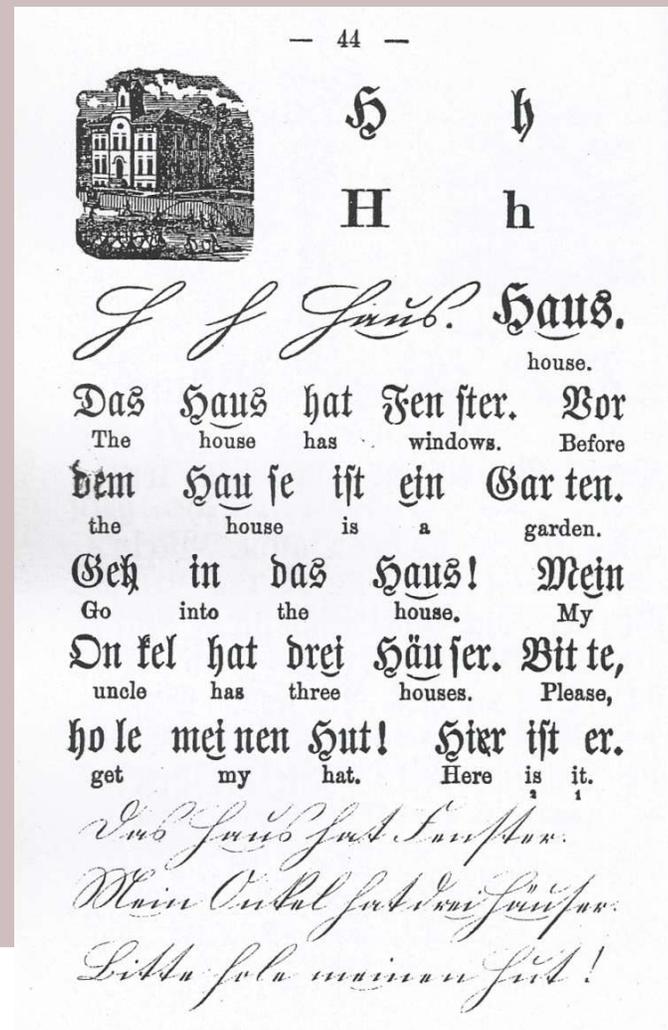
Gothic Print for Genealogists



- Where to find it?
 - Headings in church books and military records
 - Newspapers, books, gazetteers, printed material before about 1941
 - Gravestones

Gothic Print/Fraktur - Guides

- Handwriting Guide – German Gothic
 - <https://feefhs.org/sites/default/files/guide/german-gothic.pdf>
- Deciphering Death Notices in German Newspapers (pp. 2-9)
 - <https://www.slcl.org/sites/default/files/01-2010.pdf>



The Alphabet in Fraktur

A a, B b, C c, D d, E e,
A a, B b, C c, D d, E e,

F f, G g, H h, I J i j, K k,
F f, G g, H h, I J i j, K k,

L l, M m, N n, O o, P p,
L l, M m, N n, O o, P p,

Q q, R r, S s, T t, U u,
Q q, R r, S s, T t, U u,

V v, W w, X x, Y y, Z z,
V v, W w, X x, Y y, Z z,

ch ck ss sz sch sp st th tz
ch ck ss sz sch sp st th tz

*plus letters
with umlauts!

Easily Confused Letters

Lowercase Letters

- F and K **f and k**
- F and S **f and s**
- R and X **r and x**
- SZ and ß **sz and ß**

Capital Letters

- A and U **A and U**
- B and V **B and V**
- F and J **F and J**
- I and J **I and J**
- I and J **I and J**

Heading Examples

Seite 172.

Jahr 1854., Monat April. Juni.

Männlich.

Weiblich.

Heading Examples



Seite 172.

Seite



Jahr 1854., Monat April. Juni.

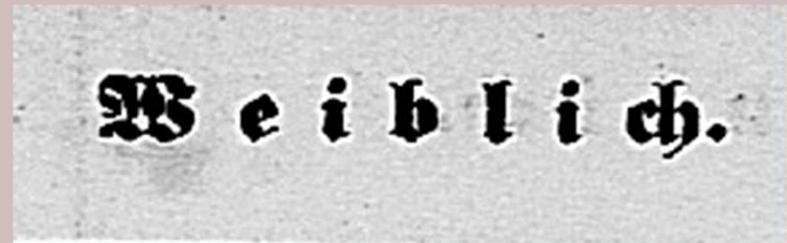
Jahr

Monat



M ä n n l i c h.

Männlich



W e i b l i c h.

Weiblich

1. Anna Maria Monheimer, Ehefrau von Heinrich
Hehl, Winzer, zu Niederkirchen wohnhaft;
 2. Jacob Monheimer, Ackermann;
 3. Johana Adam Monheimer, Maurer;
 4. Elisabetha Monheimer, ledig und ohne Gewerbe;
 5. Michael Monheimer, Maurer;
- Letztere vier zu Rödersheim wohnhaft.

List of heirs from estate auction notice, *Amts- und
Intelligenzblatt des Königlich Bayerischen
Rheinkreises*, 1837

1. Anna Maria Monheimer, Ehefrau von Heinrich Hehl, Winzer, zu Niederkirchen wohnhaft;
2. Jacob Monheimer, Ackersmann;
3. Johana Adam Monheimer, Maurer;
4. Elisabetha Monheimer, ledig und ohne Gewerbe;
5. Michael Monheimer, Maurer;
Letztere vier zu Rödersheim wohnhaft.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Anna Maria Monheimer, Ehefrau von Heinrich Hehl, Winzer, zu Niederkirchen wohnhaft; | 1. Anna Maria Monheimer, wife of Heinrich Hehl, vintner, resident of Niederkirchen; |
| 2. Jacob Monheimer, Ackersmann; | 2. Jacob Monheimer, plowman; |
| 3. Johann Adam Monheimer, Maurer; | 3. Johann Adam Monheimer, bricklayer; |
| 4. Elisabetha Monheimer, ledig und ohne Gewerbe; | 4. Elisabetha Monheimer, single and unemployed; |
| 5. Michael Monheimer, Maurer; | 5. Michael Monheimer, bricklayer; |

List of heirs from estate auction notice, *Amts- und Intelligenzblatt des Königlich Bayerischen Rheinkreises*, 1837

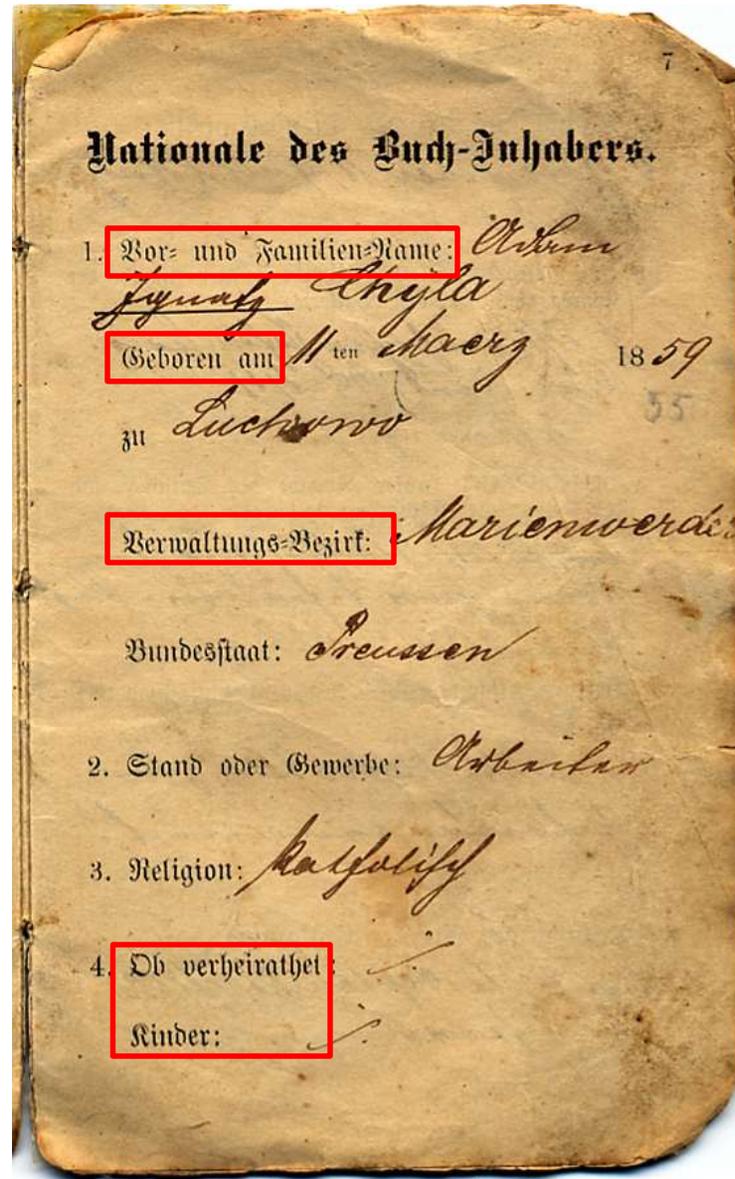
Zum
Andenken an
Adam Wartman

In
memory of
Adam Wartman



Gravestone, 1843, New Hanover, PA

Military pass
book page with
questions
regarding the
identity of the
service member



Military Pass Book, Adam Ignatz Chyla, 1879

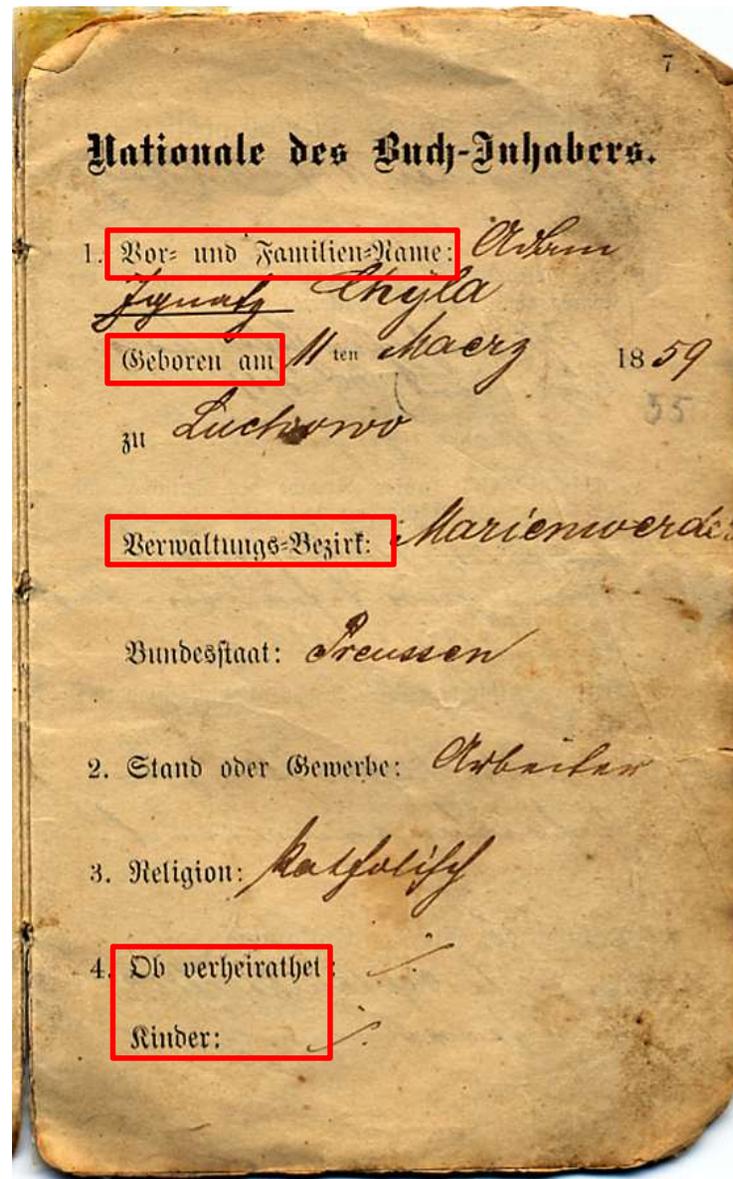
Vor- und Familien-Name:

Geboren am

Verwaltungs-Bezirk:

Ob verheiratet

Kinder:



First and family name:

Born on

Administration district:

Whether married

Children:

Military Pass Book, Adam Ignatz Chyla, 1879

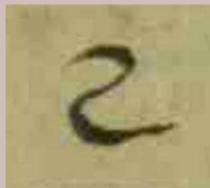
Numbers and Abbreviations

Numerals

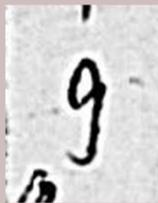
- Arabic numerals are used in both *Kurrent* and *Fraktur*
- Some variations in how these numerals are written

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

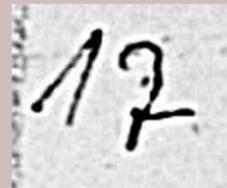
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



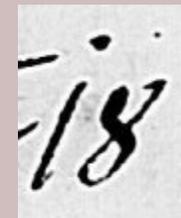
2



9



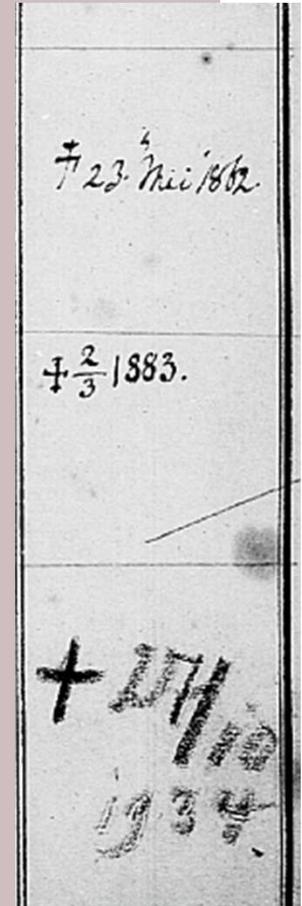
17



18

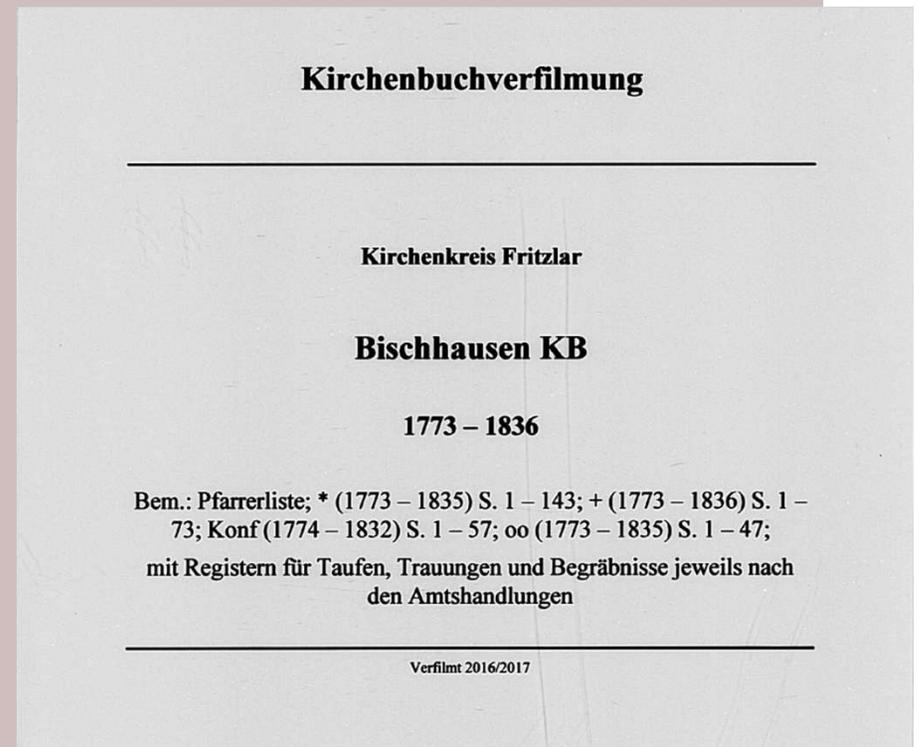
Dates

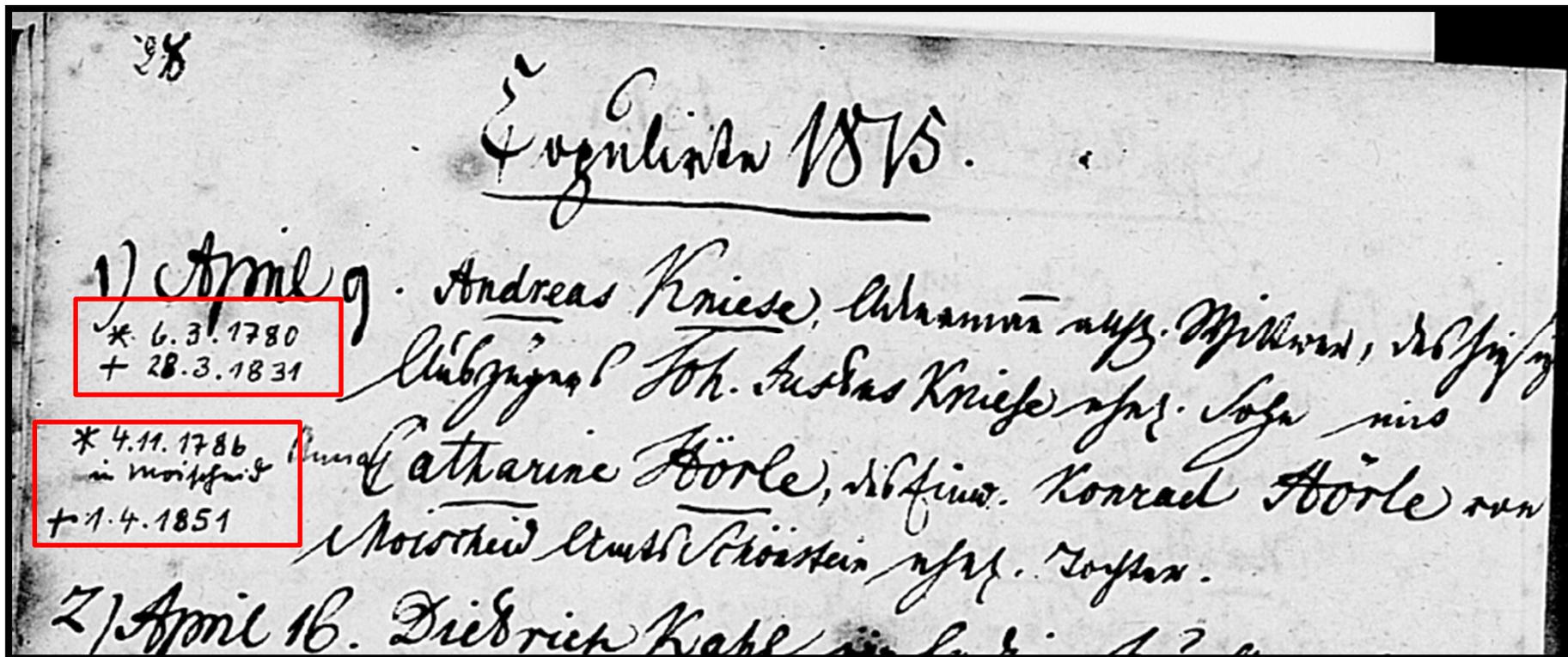
- German (and most European) dates are written DAY/MONTH/YEAR
- Starting with 21, German numbers are formed as “ones place” + “tens place”
 - *Einundzwanzig* = one and twenty = 21
 - *Neunzehnhundert sechsundzwanzig* = nineteen hundred twenty-six = 1926
- The *-ten* ending in German is equivalent to *-th* ending in English
 - Some irregular numbers, e.g. *eins* (one) becomes *erst* (first)
 - Seven → seventh, as in “on the seventh of April”
 - *Sieben* → *siebten*, as in “*am Siebten April*”
 - A period after the numeral is the abbreviation for this ending → “*7. April*”
- Sometimes Roman numerals are used in headers



Common Abbreviations

- * birth
- ~ baptism
- oo, ∞ marriage
- + death
- *geb.* = *geboren* (born), *nee* (maiden name)
- *et. ux.* (Latin) = and wife
- *ehel.* = *ehelich* (legitimate)





Andreas Kniese
b. 6 March 1780
m. 9 April 1815
d. 28 March 1831

Anna Catharine Hörle
b. 4 Nov 1786 in Moischeid
m. 9 April 1815
d. 1 April 1851

Marriage, Andreas Kniese and Anna Catharine Hörle, Bischhausen, 1815

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GEDBAS | GOV | OFBs | Adressbücher | Familienanzeigen | Grabsteine | Totenzettel | Verlustlisten 1. WK | Literatur | Metasuche

GenWiki Anmelden

genealogy.net
genealogienetz.de

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Genealogische Symbole und Zeichen

Genealogische Symbole und Abkürzungen ersetzen ausgeschriebene genealogische Begriffe. Ziel ist beim Festhalten von Forschungsergebnissen sowohl Zeit und Mühe als auch Platz und Material (Papier) zu sparen. Forschungsergebnisse sollen übersichtlicher und schneller lesbar werden. Wie oft bei Abkürzungen, kann der Gebrauch für Außenstehende auch verwirrend, bzw. unverständlich sein.

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- 1 Geschichte
- 2 Gebräuchlich (in Deutschland)
 - 2.1 In Unicode definierte Zeichen
 - 2.2 Einsatz in Genealogie-Software
 - 2.3 Genealogische Zeichensätze als Computer-Schriften (TTF)
- 3 Kritik
- 4 Weiterführende Quellen und Schriften
- 5 Referenzen

Geschichte

In der Literatur des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts findet man genealogische Zeichen nur sehr selten. So werden in *Johann Christoph Gatterers Abriß der Genealogie (1788)*, das als die erste wissenschaftliche Abhandlung über die genealogische Forschung als historische Hilfswissenschaft (im deutschen Sprachraum) gilt, außer dem Kreuz noch keine genealogischen Zeichen verwendet. Im Jahr 1909, also zu einer Zeit, als die Ahnenforschung nicht mehr nur in Adels-, sondern auch in bürgerlichen Kreisen auf breites Interesse traf, machte sich *Stephan Kekule von Stradonitz*, dem wir das heute international angewendete *System zur Durchnummerierung einer Ahnentafel* verdanken, für die Vereinheitlichung genealogischer Symbole und Abkürzungen stark.^[1]

International ist es gemäß den Empfehlungen eines Arbeitskreises des IV. Internationalen Kongresses für Genealogie und Heraldik in Brüssel im Jahr 1958 weitgehend üblich, die Hauptlebensdaten durch einen einzigen Kleinbuchstaben, ohne nachfolgenden Punkt, zu symbolisieren, z. B. b für born (geboren), d für death (Tod) und m für married (verheiratet).^[2] Doch auch diese Form der Symbolik kann je nach Landessprache variieren.

Einen gewichtigen Grund dafür, dass die (internationale) Etablierung einheitlicher genealogischer Zeichen und Abkürzungen so wenig erfolgreich war, sind die sogenannten Sonderzeichen wie Kreuz (†) und liegende Acht (bzw. Unendlichkeitszeichen ∞ oder vereinte Kreise ∞). Sie gehörten nicht zur Standardausstattung einer Schreibmaschine und auch nicht zur Standardausstattung der Setzkästen der Druckereien. Außerdem gab es keine Normen (weder DIN noch ISO) oder zumindest anerkannte Übereinkünfte, sodass Abkürzungen und Zeichen sich teils sehr unterschiedlich entwickelten. Mehr oder weniger durchgesetzt haben sich gewisse Symbole im deutschsprachigen Raum und teils auch in Ländern wie Dänemark und Schweden. Mit der Verbreitung der computergestützten Familienforschung, war die Anwendung von Symbolschriften ein erstes Mittel Zeichen am PC darzustellen.

Erst die Erweiterung des Zeichenkodierungsstandards Unicode um "Verschiedene Symbole" im Jahr 2005 verbesserte die Situation. Zehn hinzugefügte Zeichen werden mit der Genealogie in Verbindung gebracht. Bedeutend ist vor allem die Einführung der geläufigen Symbole für verheiratet, geschieden, außereheliche Verbindung und im Krieg gefallen. Seitdem sind die von Familienforschern am meisten genutzten Symbole erstmals international definiert und können in modernen Betriebssystemen dargestellt und ausgedruckt werden.

Dennoch ist die Nutzung genealogischer Symbole auch heute weitgehend eine Besonderheit der Familienforschung im deutschsprachigen Raum. Ein weiterer Grund, der die internationale Vereinheitlichung genealogischer Zeichen bis heute verhindert hat, liegt darin, dass die in Deutschland benutzten Zeichen zumeist als der christlichen Symbolik entstammend angesehen werden. In der deutschsprachigen Wikipedia wurde vor einiger Zeit ein ausführliche Diskussion darüber geführt, ob es zulässig ist, die Lebensdaten nichtchristlicher Personen mit * und † zu kennzeichnen, wobei nur das Kreuzsymbol eindeutig dem Christentum zugeordnet werden kann. Tatsächlich findet man diese Symbolik nur in der deutschsprachigen Wikipedia, nicht in den anderssprachigen Schwesterprojekten. Auch einen Artikel über genealogische Zeichen sucht man in den anderssprachigen Wikipediaprojekten bisher vergeblich.

Gebräuchlich (in Deutschland)

In deutschsprachigen Ländern überwiegt der Einsatz genealogischer Symbole und deutschsprachige Genealogieprogrammatoren setzen bei Tafeln und Listen gerne Symbole ein.

Die Symbole in dieser Tabelle sind gebräuchlich und z. B. im Duden unter "Genealogische Zeichen" erwähnt^[3]. Je nach Browser und System werden gewisse Symbole evtl. nicht richtig dargestellt.

Symbol	Alternativen	Bedeutung	English	Beschreibung
*	* * *	geboren (geb.)	born (b)	Stern (hochgestellt), Asterisk
†	† † †	gestorben (gest.)	deceased (d)	Wendepfeil (hochgestellt)
∞	∞ ∞ ∞	verheiratet (verh.)	married (m)	Unendlichkeitszeichen
∞	∞ ∞ ∞	verheiratet (verh.)	married (m)	Unendlichkeitszeichen

wiki-de.genealogy.net/Genealogische_Symbole_und_Zeichen

Tip:
Install a translator
extension to your web
browser

Review

- Original records can provide more details than transcriptions/translations
- Utilize all tools that you need to feel comfortable using the records – keep one or all handy:
 - German dictionary
 - Copy of the alphabet in *Kurrent* and *Fraktur*
 - Genealogical word list
 - Examples of translated records
- Practice, practice, practice!

Vielen Dank!

QUESTIONS?

Schedule a consultation

consultations@americanancestors.org

Hire Research Services

research@americanancestors.org

Consultations

Book a one-on-one
consultation with
a genealogist and
receive help with your
family history research!

[AmericanAncestors.org/
Expert-Help/Consultations](https://AmericanAncestors.org/Expert-Help/Consultations)



The image shows the top portion of the AmericanAncestors.org website. At the top left is the logo with a tree icon and the text "AmericanAncestors.". To the right of the logo is the text "A National Center for Family History, Heritage & Culture". Further right are links for "Bookstore", "About Us", and "Create a Tree", followed by a "LOG IN" button with a right-pointing arrow. Below this is a navigation bar with links for "Search", "Events", "Join/Renew", "Give", "10 Million Names", "Publications", "Expert Help", "Tools", "Projects", and "Centers & Initiatives". The main heading is "Researching German Ancestors 2025" in a large, dark blue, serif font. Below the heading is a white box containing text: "Thank you for registering for the online conference, Researching German Ancestors!", a paragraph about the seminar's purpose and topics, and a note that the course includes five 90-minute classes and exclusive access to materials. At the bottom of the white box is the text "JOIN THE LIVE BROADCAST" in all caps.

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Researching German Ancestors 2025

Thank you for registering for the online conference, Researching German Ancestors!

Germans have been emigrating to America since the seventeenth century and today are the largest self-reported ancestry group living in the country. No matter when your ancestors arrived in the U.S., this online seminar will teach you how to trace your German ancestry. You will discover key records, resources, and repositories, while gaining important skills and strategies for finding your ancestors. Topics include: migration patterns, finding German origins, deciphering records and German script, using and accessing records, and leveraging online resources.

This course includes five 90-minute classes and exclusive access to handouts and recordings of each presentation. These recordings and all course materials will be available for the foreseeable future.

JOIN THE LIVE BROADCAST

<https://www.americanancestors.org/researching-german-ancestors-2025>



THANK YOU!

AmericanAncestors.org/Education



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