Researching German Ancestors

Class 3: Religious & Civil Records

Rhonda R. McClure, Senior Genealogist

THE BRUE FAMILY **LEARNING CENTER**

American Ancestors.
A NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAMILY HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

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Meet today's presenter

Rhonda R. McClure
Senior Genealogist

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OVERVIEW

- **Presentation** (60 mins.)
  - What to expect
  - Church records
  - Civil records

- **Q&A** (30 mins.)

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Voice of
Rhonda R. McClure,
Senior Genealogist

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**What to Expect
from Records**

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What to Expect from Records

- Different periods often provide different information for basic vital records

- Registers in columnar format may have less information than narrative (or have it in different places)

- Country-wide civil registration did not begin until 1876

- Prior to 1876 most information comes from church records

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Symbols

- There are several symbols used within handwritten items
- Especially prevalent in
  - marginal notes
  - register style pre-printed tables
  - Family registers
- Important to remember when working in church records and sometimes civil registers

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Symbol	Meaning
*	= geboren (born)
∞	= verheiratet (married)
†	= gestorben (died)
(*)	= außereheliche Geburt (illegitimate-ly born)
∼	= getauft (christened)
○	= verlobt (engaged)
□	= begraben (buried)

From *The German Research Companion*, 3rd ed. by Shirley Reimer, Roger P. Minert, and Jennifer A. Anderson

Standard Abbreviations

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Symbol	Meaning
† *	= Totgeburt (stillborn)
○│○	= geschieden (divorced)
✕	= gefallen (killed in action)
o-o	= uneheliche Verbindung (common-law marriage, illegitimate union)

From *The German Research Companion*, 3rd ed. by Shirley Reimer, Roger P. Minert, and Jennifer A. Anderson

Standard Abbreviations

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Slide 10

= getauft (christened)
= geboren (born)
= verheiratet (married)
= gestorben (died)
= begraben (buried)

From *The German Research Companion*, 3rd ed. by Shirley Reimer, Roger P. Minert, and Jennifer A. Anderson

Older Standard Abbreviations

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Slide 11

Abbreviations

- geb. – *geboren* (born, maiden name)
- gest. – *gestorben* (died)
- getr. – *getraut* (married)
- verh. – *verheiratet* (married)
- u. – *und* (and)
- v. – *von* (from)

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Abbreviations

- Months:
  - September – *7ber, 7bris*
  - October – *8ber, 8bris*
  - November – *9ber, 9bris*
  - December – *10ber, 10bris, Xber*

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Church Records

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Church Records

- Most used for identifying births, marriages, and deaths

- Most predominant religious groups:
  – Catholic (Katholisch)
  – Evangelical Lutheran (Evangelische-Lutherische)

- Necessary to know the town

- Some larger towns may have multiple parishes

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Church Records

- Recorded in many different formats

- Most common:
  – Register style – handwritten or pre-printed tables
  – Brief paragraph style – short entries written as a sentence (includes most important information)
  – Full paragraph style – reminiscent of Napoleonic code-style entries and may include lots of extra information

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Help with Church Records

The Magic of German Church Records

Finding the Key to Your Ancestor's Past

Katherine Schober

German	English	Handwritten
Aeltern	parents	
Anmerkungen	comments	
Bemerkungen	comments	
Beistände/Beyständc	witnesses	
ehelich	legitimate (within wedlock)	
Eltern	parents	
evangelisch	Protestant	
evangelisch-lutherisch	evangelical Lutheran	
Geburt	birth	
Geistlicher	clergyman	
Geschlecht	gender	
Gevatter	godparents/sponsors	

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Help with Church Records

- Schrober's book has two main sections:
  – Section 1: Deciphering German Church Records: The Essential Information (6 chapters)
  – Section 2: Deciphering the Records (7 chapters)
  – 7 appendices

- Includes a chapter on 10 websites to help you decipher the church records

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Help with Church Records

German Church Books

BEYOND THE BASICS

- Using church records
- Includes chapters on:
  – Marriage
  – Birth
  – Death
  – Confirmation
  – Other records
- Handwriting
- Glossary of terms

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Page from *German Church Records*

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Familienbücher Sample

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Types of Records

- *Taufregister* – Christening/baptism registers
- *Geburtsregister* – Birth registers
- *Konfirmationsregister* – Confirmation registers
- *Trauregister/Heiratsregister* – Marriage registers
- *Sterberegister* – Death registers
- *Begräbnisse* – Bural registers
- *Familienbücher/Familienregister* – Family registers

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QUESTIONS?

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Tauf (Baptismal) Records

- Usually include:
  - Date of baptism (if online date it is date of baptism)
  - Name of child
  - Name of at least father (after 1700, both parents listed)
  - Names of witnesses or godparents
- Number and gender of witnesses may vary by locality and time period

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Tip:
Remember some German records are written in Latin

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Register Style Baptism

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Register Style Baptism

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Baptism, 1773, Brief Paragraph

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Baptism, 1832, Printed Register

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Baptism, 1832, Printed Register

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Baptism, 1844, Full Paragraph

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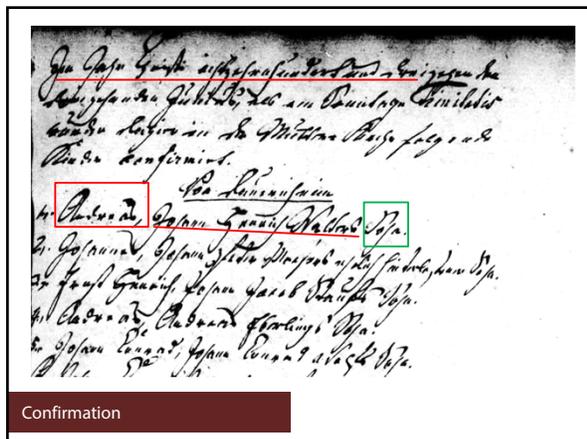## Konfirmation (Confirmation)

- Usually offer the least amount of information on an individual.

- Should not be dismissed

- Different clerks or ministers, different years result in different information recorded

- Usually happened at age:
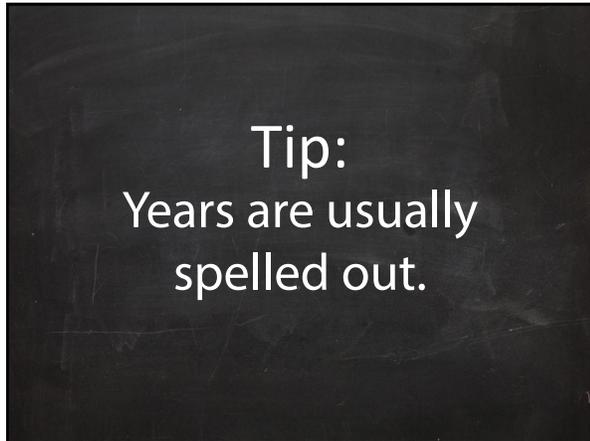 - 12 for Catholics
  - 14 for Protestants

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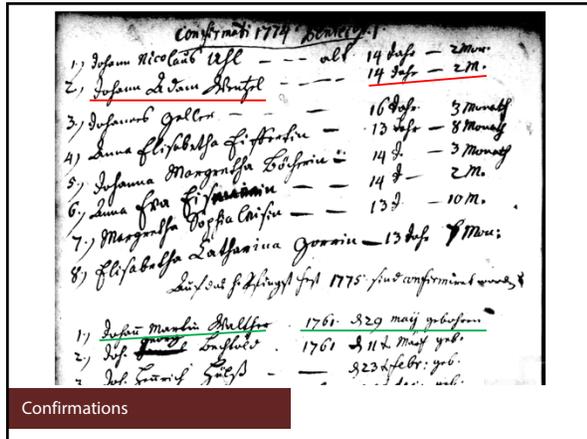
Confirmations

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Confirmation

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Tip:
Years are usually spelled out.

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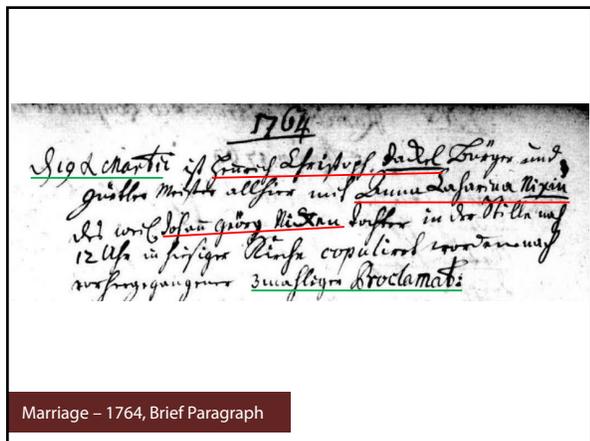
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Trau/Heirats (Marriage) Records

- Often supply the most information
- At the very least include
  - Groom's name and father's name
  - Bride's name and father's name
  - Date of marriage
- May include birth information on the bride and groom

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Marriage – 1764, Brief Paragraph

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Marriage, 1809, Full Paragraph

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Marriage, 1812, Full Paragraph

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Bergräbnisse (Burial)/ *Sterben/Tod* (Death) Records

- Usually include:
  - Date
  - Name of deceased
  - Occupation/relationship
  - Location
  - Age
- Dates often in number and name of month and may "ditto" the month and year

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Burial, 1693, Brief Paragraph

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Tip:
Pay close attention to the date to ensure you have the full date

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Death, Church, Brief Paragraph

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Burial – 1763, Brief Paragraph

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Familienbücher (Family Register)

- May be a separate register
- Generally found in southern Germany:
  – Baden
  – Württemberg
- Somewhat resemble a family group sheet
- May include cross reference numbers to other sheets

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Tip:
Forms usually printed in Fraktur or German Gothic Font

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Main Couple

Their Parents

Additional Information

Children's Info

Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Häusvater -- Father

Hausmutter -- Mother

Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Familienbüch: Johannes Gramman

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Familienbüch

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Tip:
Germans can have
many given names

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Given Names

- Not unusual for child to have more than one given name

- The name with which they are called is known as the *Rufname*

- Two children may have the same given name, does not always infer death of the first child

- Likely find Biblical and or Saint names

- Until 2008, name had to identify gender
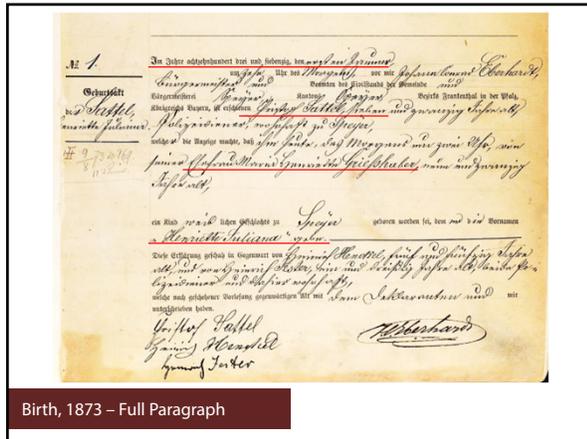
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QUESTIONS?

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Civil Records

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Civil Registration

- Country-wide civil registration was begun in 1876
- Found at the local civil registration office (standesamt)
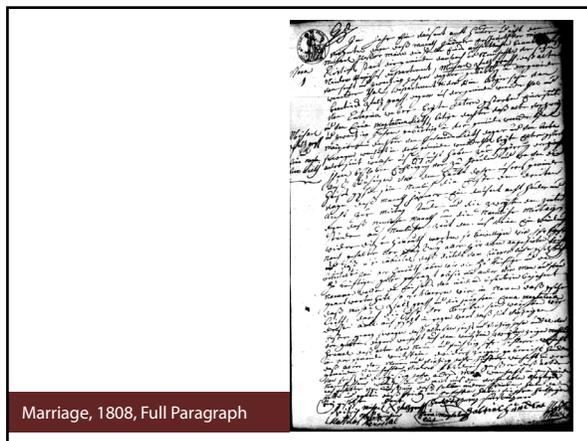- Some records may be available at FamilySearch.org

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Birth Record – 1875, Register

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Birth Record – 1875, Register

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Birth Record – 1875, Register

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Birth, 1873 – Full Paragraph

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Marriage Records

- Marriage records include the minimum:
  – Date of the marriage
  – Names of bride and groom
  – Names of parents of bride and groom

- Additional information may be included:
  – Occupation of groom
  – Town of origin
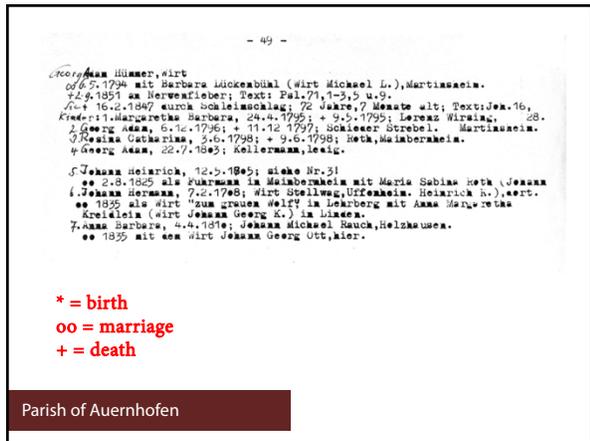 – Witnesses of marriage
  – Ages of bride and groom

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Marriage, 1808, Full Paragraph

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Marriage, 1808, Full Paragraph

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Marriage, 1835, Register

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Marriage, 1835, Register

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Marriage, 1835, Register

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Marriage, 1891, Full Paragraph

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Marriage, 1891, Full Paragraph

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Bride's Name

Birth Date

Birthplace

Bride's Parents

Marriage, 1891, Full Paragraph

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Death Records

- Basic information included:
  - Date of death
  - Date of burial (sometimes)
  - Name of the deceased
  - Age of the deceased (usually)
  - Names of parents (and/or surviving spouse)
- Additional information:
  - Occupation of deceased
  - Town of origin

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Death – 1855, Register

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Death – 1855, Register

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Death – 1855, Register

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Death – 1873, Full Paragraph

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Typed Registers

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* = birth
oo = marriage
+ = death

Parish of Auernhofen

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geb. = birth/born
oo = marriage
+ = death

Parish of Auernhofen
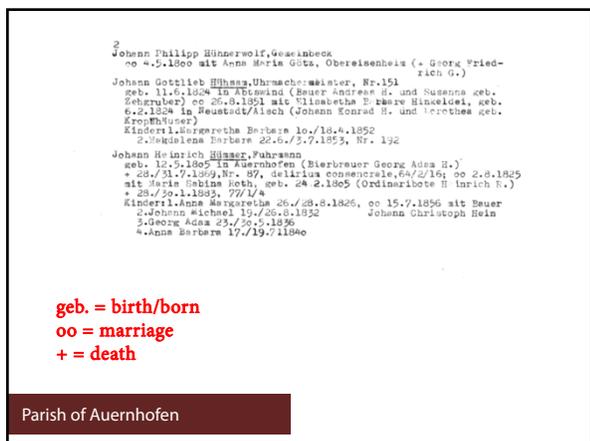
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Keep in mind

- Could be in German or Latin
- Offer a variety of information
- Can vary from year to year or minister to minister
- May have an index
- Family registers should be used as clues to find the actual life event records
- Require a lot of patience to read

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QUESTIONS?

Schedule a consultation
consultations@americanancestors.org

Hire Research Services
research@americanancestors.org

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Consultations

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

AmericanAncestors.org/
Expert-Help/Consultations

SCAN ME

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THANK YOU!

AmericanAncestors.org/Education

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