German Immigrants in Church Records in the State of Kentucky

Deborah Mocke  
*Brigham Young University*

Roger P. Minert, PhD  
*Brigham Young University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jur](https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jur)

Part of the [History Commons](https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jur)

**Recommended Citation**


This ORCA is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Undergraduate Research by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
German Immigrants in Church Records in the State of Kentucky

JUNE 21, 2019 BY ADMIN

Deborah Mocke and Roger P. Minert, PhD, History

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to assist in the furthering of German genealogical research, by making German Protestant church records in America more accessible to people with German ancestry. In the 2000 U.S. Census, nearly one in six people reported their ancestry as German. “42.8 million people (15 percent of the population) considered themselves to be of German (or part-German) ancestry,” making Germans the largest ancestral group in America. Since the eighteenth century about seven million Germans immigrated to North America. The most challenging task in Germanic family history in the United States is the identification of the hometown in Germany, without which no family tree can be compiled.

My goal was to compile a list of all available German Protestant church records in the state of Kentucky to prepare for the extraction of genealogical data from these records. This data is to be published in an additional volume of German Immigrants in American Church Records.

Methodology

My first task was to create a spreadsheet to capture Kentucky’s counties, cities, towns, townships, churches and record sources. A list of the counties and towns was obtained from FamilySearch.org Wiki. There were 120 counties with about 7400 towns in Kentucky.

The next task was to find German Protestant Churches in those towns. Churches with keywords like Deutsch, German, Evangelisch, Evangelical, Immanuel, Lutheran, Reformed Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Zion, Reformed, Bethlehem, and anything else that looked German needed to be found. The FamilySearch Catalog was used for this search, as most of the Church Records in the United States have been filmed or gathered by FamilySearch. The catalog was combed town by town for church records. Promising records were added to the spreadsheet with the microfilm or digital numbers. This was the most time-consuming aspect of the project.

Professor Minert, who specializes in German family history, and is very familiar with German Church Records, guided us in evaluating the potential of these records for finding German documents. Once all possible German records for Kentucky had been located, on approximately 195 microfilms, each digitized microfilm was scanned for relevant documents written in the old German Script. On each microfilm there were about 1000 images.

Results

Protestant Church documents containing vital records written in German were found on 25 digitized films. Another 66 films with potential German records were not digitized and still have to be checked at the Family History Library in Salt Lake.
Scanning so many digitized church records enabled me to see the types of church records that have been filmed, such as church minutes, histories of churches, articles of faith, membership records as well as birth, death and marriage records. Also found in church records are genealogical information in family bibles, building plans and costs, and photographs. Loose papers found in books, in the churches, were photographed as well. I learned what a valuable source church records are for researching people and places. This exercise greatly increased my appreciation of Church records.

This project enabled me to become familiar with the FamilySearch Catalog. While undertaking this research, I noticed how quickly FamilySearch was digitizing microfilms. My appreciation has grown for the enormous amount of work which is being done and has been done to further genealogical research.

I learned that Germans, in general, did not join Presbyterian Churches. If they did, all their services and communications were in English. I also learned there were no German records in Catholic Churches.

**Conclusion**

Now that I have completed this project, Professor Minert is able to proceed with the extraction of genealogical information from these German records. This information will be made available in English in another volume of German Immigrants in American Church Records. From these books descendants of German immigrants in America can find their ancestors and their ancestors place of birth in Germany.


2 Roger P. Minert, editor, German Immigrants in American Church Records (Rockport, Maine: Picton Press, 2005). Twenty-three volumes produced, to date, on U.S. Midwestern States.