



*Using Ortsfamilienbücher to
Research Your German Ancestors*

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OBJECTIVES

- What are they?
- How to find them
- How to use them

WHAT ARE ORTSFAMILIENBÜCHER?

- Ortsfamilienbücher means “local family register.” Ortsfamilienbücher is plural, while ortsfamilienbuch is singular. You may also encounter “Ortssippenbücher”, “Die Einwohner von,” Die Familien von,” etc. in titles. At SLCL, they are affectionately called “OFBs .”
- Ortsfamilienbücher feature concise genealogical information about inhabitants of a specific town, village, or parish. They are based primarily on surviving church records, and can cover the period from the beginning of church records (as early as mid-16th century) to about 1900.
- Information found in OFBs is extracted and compiled from original records, so they are considered a secondary, not a primary source. As many German church records are now available online, you can check the information against the original records.
- OFBs are not available for every town, and they are more common for some areas of Germany than others. They have also been published for German-speaking areas outside of modern-day Germany.

PLACE OF ORIGIN

- There is no overall name index for OFBs, therefore it is necessary to know your ancestor’s town of origin.

WHERE TO FIND

- SLCL has one of the largest OFB collections out-

St. Louis County Library

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St. Louis Genealogy

Denominational Records

Ortssippenbücher / Familienbücher

Ortssippenbücher (singular Ortssippenbuch), also known as Familienbücher and Ortsfamilienbücher, are sources of genealogical information about families within a specific town, village, or parish. Information can cover many generations of a family going back to the beginning of written records. The main text lists individuals alphabetically by surname. Individuals are usually assigned a number for cross-referencing purposes, allowing researchers to find information about a spouse, parent or other person listed elsewhere in the book. Information is usually extracted from church and civil records. A history of the village and the local parish church, lists of those killed in war, rosters of emigrants to the United States, and other information are sometimes also included.

The History & Genealogy Department has OSBs for Germany, Alsace and Lorraine in France, and former German-speaking areas in eastern Europe, including former East Prussia and Banat and Batschka in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia. OSBs are written in German (French for villages in Alsace and Lorraine in France). Because most follow a common format, knowledge of the language is not essential as long as the researcher understands the pattern in which the information is given and is familiar with the symbols and abbreviations used.

Lists of OSBs available in the History & Genealogy Department can be downloaded as a PDFs from the following links:

- [Ortssippenbücher | By country, state, and district](#)
- [Ortssippenbücher | Village names A-Z](#)

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side of Germany. A list of holdings, as well as a map, can be found on the library's website (slcl.org/research-learn/genealogy/german-genealogy/ortssippenbuecher-familienbuecher).

- The list can be searched by town or by larger area. It is updated once a year, and any new titles acquired before the yearly update can be found by searching the town name in the SLCL card catalog (slcl.org). The library also provides a free lookup service (slcl.org/research-learn/genealogy/lookups-other-services/lookup-request). Book pages (no more than 30) can be scanned and emailed to you. Library staff will usually send all of the pages with the requested surname.
- If SLCL does not have a book for your town, and you would like to know if one exists, check the GenWiki website (wiki.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Ortsfamilienbuch). You can then check Worldcat (worldcat.org) to see if another library has it.

HOW ORGANIZED

- Information in OFBs is usually presented alphabetically by surname and then chronologically, with listings for individuals. Each individual will be assigned a number.
- The use of a somewhat standard format with symbols and abbreviations make the entries easy to decipher even if you don't read German. Some common symbols include: * = birth, ~ = baptism, ∞ = marriage, + = death, □ = burial. A general list of OFB symbols and abbreviations can be found at the Ostfriesen Genealogical Society of America's website (ogsa.us/cpage.php?pt=8).
- OFBs usually include sources and an index, although the index is not always needed, as the book is laid out in alphabetical order.
- When using an OFB, you will want to start with the immigrant or most recent ancestor, and work backward. You will be moving through the book from later pages to earlier pages.

	4896 (b) 08.08.1865 rk DI, <Trauzeugen> Der hies. Bü. und Schmied Augustin Thomas, und der hies. Bürgermeister Joseph Enders
p	Kolb, Franz Xaver, Handelsmann, Schuhmacher, <4888>, * 21.11.1838 DI, ≈ 22.11.1838 rk DI, † 1910, 1876, Steingasse Nr. 294 Starb in Amerika
	und Schlüter, Eva, <7716>, * 18.02.1842 DI, ≈ 19.02.1842 rk DI, <Ausgewandert> Kolb, Franz Xaver, Herkunft: DI, - Ausw.datum: 1877-10-12 / Ziel: Amerika (Nord), - Alter/geb.: 1838, Konfession: kath., Schuhmacher. - Ehepartner: Kolb, Eva, *1842, 3 Kinder(er). - Bemerkungen: mit Ehefrau und 3 Kindern: Margaretha *1866, Anna Maria *1871, Adam *1874. Quelle: G 15 DI XI/4 B I. 57
rk	1) Katharina Margaretha, * 15.03.1866 DI, ≈ 17.03.1866 rk DI, <Paten> Katharina Margaretha Schlüter, des hies. Bü. und Schlossermeisters Konrad Schlüter, ehel. led. Tochter,
l	2) Heinrich, * 22.01.1868 DI, ≈ 26.01.1868 rk DI, <Paten> Heinrich Kolb, des hies. Bü. und Blaufärbers Heinrich Kolb, ehel. led. Sohn, † 24.04.1874 DI, □ 26.04.1874 rk DI,
er	3) Anna Maria, * 08.01.1870 DI, ≈ 10.01.1870 rk DI, <Paten> Anna Maria Schlüter, des hies. Bü. und Schlossermeisters Konrad Schlüter, ehel. led. Tochter, † 26.11.1870 DI, □ 28.11.1870 rk DI,
ara	4) Anna Maria, * 20.09.1871 DI, ≈ 22.09.1871 rk DI, <Paten> Anna Maria Kolb, des hies. Bü. und Spenglers Adam Kolb II., Ehefrau,
ara	5) Adam, * 20.02.1874 DI, ≈ 24.02.1874 rk DI, <Paten> Adam Kolb, des hies. Bü. und Weißbinders Augustin Kolb II., ehel. led. Sohn,
3	6) Joseph, * 11.10.1876 DI, † 08.05.1877 DI

EXAMPLE: THE KOLB FAMILY

- Learn how to trace a family, the Kolbs, in *Familienbuch Dieburg* from 1865→1670.

TRANSLATION TIPS

- Resources for translations include Google translate (<https://translate.google.com/>), DeepL.com (deepl.com/translator), Google Lens (app), and the *German English Genealogical Dictionary* by Ernest Thode

- A detailed German word list can be found at the FamilySearch Wiki “German Genealogy Word List” page (familysearch.org/en/wiki/German_Genealogical_Word_List).

ONLINE OFBs

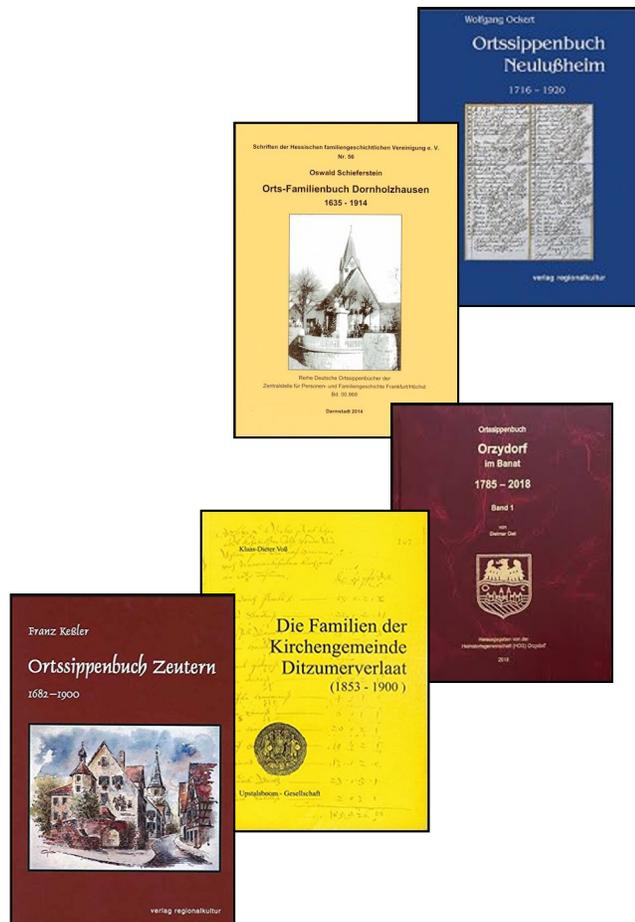
- Some OFBs can be found online. Access a list at the GenWiki online Ortsfamilienbücher page (wiki.genealogy.net/Kategorie:Online-Ortsfamilienbuch). These will look similar to those in print.

SIMILAR RESOURCES

- Hofgeschichten (farm chronicles), hausergeschichten, (building chronicles) and bürgerbücher (citizen registers) are similar to OFBs. They are catalogued with the OFBs and can be found in the holdings list.

CONCLUSION

- Great resource for German genealogy
- Easy to find and use
- Won't find for all towns
- Questions? Email us! genealogy@slcl.org



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