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An Introduction to CompGen.de, Germany's Free Genealogy Mega Website Managed by The Association for Computer Genealogy

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Recherchieren Kommunizieren Informieren Über uns Kontakt

This site is maintained by the Verein für Computergenealogie e.V. (Society for Computer Genealogy, Inc.). Although the primary language of the site is German, much of its content is also available in English and the translation tools available in your Web browser and online can help with the rest. The site includes links to millions of names in public family trees, a village gazetteer of most of central Europe, including the political entities to which your ancestors' home villages belonged, thousands of city directories, searchable village genealogies, and much more.

NOTE: The databases on the site are transcribed by volunteers. Other than the DigiBib section, this site does not contain original source material.

Here are the resources under the Recherchieren (Research) menu item:

- **ADRESSBÜCHER** (City Directories/Address books). Indices of over 8,500 online historical address books, population registers, citizen books, etc. In addition to the name and address, the books often include information on profession, marital status, home ownership, business and more. Note digitized copies of these and other books (primary sources) are available through the DigiBib menu item (see below).
- **FAMILIENANZEIGEN** (Family Announcements) is a database consisting of extracts from birth-, marriage-, and death notices, also advertisements for engagements, confirmations, anniversaries, etc., placed in daily newspapers. Most of the four million entries are deaths from the last 20 years. A complete list of extracted newspapers is found under "[Ausgewertete Zeitungen](#)" (extracted newspapers).
- **GEDBAS** (Genealogische Datenbasis) is a genealogical database. Anyone can contribute data in the form of GEDCOM files, or search for information. You can search for surnames, first names and place names, and optionally specify files added within the last week, month or year. Details are explained in the section "[GedBas/FAQ](#)". Persons less than 100 years old without a death date will not be shown. Entries usually include the contributor's contact information.
- **GRABSTEINE** (Tombstones). In Germany burial plots are usually "recycled" every 20 or 30 years, and the tombstones removed. So, a database that permanently records tombstone information is especially useful. The inscriptions are searchable by surname and cemetery locations in the database and displayed with the respective photos. Since the project is fairly new, most of the tombstones are of recent origin. A list of the cemeteries included is found under "[Friedhöfe](#)".
- **ORSFAMILIENBÜCHER/ORTSIPPENBÜCHER**. CompGen.de has more than 1,000 searchable Orsfamilienbücher (OFBs). The primary sources are usually the church books, from which baptism, marriage and funeral records have been transcribed, often with the names of godparents and witnesses.

Additional historical primary sources of spiritual or secular origin may have been used in a local family book, as well as already published secondary sources, such as local family books of neighboring communities. The OFBs are not limited to Germany only – there are plenty of OFBs available for places located in the former Eastern Territories of Prussia, German emigré communities in places such as Russia and Romania, and other German-speaking places in the world.

NOTE: Although not associated with CompGen, the History and Genealogy Department of the St. Louis, MO, County Library has a [large collection of printed OFBs](#). Their staff can do lookups in OFBs and copy up to 30 pages. You can submit requests using their online [Lookup Request Form](#).

- **GOV** - Genealogisches Ortsverzeichnis (Historical Gazetteer) is a village gazetteer that covers much of Europe with more than a million entries. Put any place name into GOV and, if it's spelled correctly, the database will return any listings for that place name. Note that many German towns are duplicated in GOV, with separate entries for religious and civil data.
A drawback to GOV is that the place you enter must be spelled exactly right – no similar spellings or sounds-alike searches allowed. For villages of the Second German Empire (1871-1918) first perform a phonetic search using the online Meyers Gazetteer ([Meyersgaz.org](#)) to determine the correct spelling. Part of a GOV entry is a graphic called Übergeordnete Objekte ("Parent Objects"), which traces the history of the place over time to show of which larger political units it was a part. This graphic can help you determine which archive might have records relating to the specific village over time.
- **VERLUSTLISTEN** (List of Casualties WW1). The Prussian Military Archive was destroyed in 1945; therefore information about WW1 soldiers is difficult to find. Among the few surviving sources are the published casualty lists. Many are already available online. A searchable index is available on CompGen. Note there is a separate casualty list from Austria-Hungary from World War I under construction.
- The **METASEARCH** option will submit your search query to several databases in parallel – including most of those mentioned above plus several others such as the Bremen passenger lists, and Emigrants from the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg – and then wait 10 seconds for answers. As soon as search results are available, they are displayed, but the search continues in the background until the 10 seconds are up.

OTHER LINKS. In addition to the databases, CompGen also includes these resources under the **Recherchieren** (Research) menu item:

- **GenWiki** provides links to portals with additional information and databases. It also contains wiki articles with history, links to repositories serving German areas, links to dictionaries, and other genealogy aids. Somewhat similar to the FamilySearch Wiki. Topics include:
 - *DigiBib (Digital Library)*
 - Literature relevant to genealogy and local history whose copyrights have expired.
Note: There are currently two versions of DigiBib: a new one with links to items acquired since September 2020 < <https://www.digibib.genealogy.net/viewer/> >, and the older version with links to items not yet migrated to the new site.
 - *Encyclopedias (Dictionaries)*
 - Abbreviations.
 - Old Dimensions and Dates (*e.g.*, coins, calendar terms, names of wedding anniversaries).
 - Old or Foreign Terms (*e.g.*, job titles, names of diseases).
 - Names and Kinship (*e.g.*, Schwippschwager: the husband of the sister of one's spouse).
 - Research Fields Related to Genealogy (*e.g.*, naming conventions, farm names, Heraldry).

- *Regional Research*
"If GenWiki is the heart and soul of the CompGen Web site, then Regional Research is the heart and soul of GenWiki" – Teresa Steinkamp McMillin, Certified Genealogist
- Current and former political and ecclesiastical divisions.
- Locations of archives in current and former German speaking areas.
- Research in specific German states.
- Research in European countries and worldwide.
- Practical Help
 - Includes a Beginner's Guide, templates for writing letters to: churches, offices, archives and organizations, and foreign language terms.

NOTE: Many GenWiki locality pages are automatically generated in conjunction with the GOV, and may be empty.

- **BLOG ARCHIVE.** The genealogy blog contains thousands of research and experience reports, lectures, useful tips and information systematically sorted by categories and keywords.
- **NAME DISTRIBUTION MAP.** Two sources form the basis for this map:
 - 1) German casualty lists of the First World War, and 2) a listing from a phonebook-CD from 1996.
 For each surname that appears in the casualty lists of the First World War, the geo-referenced hometowns of the soldiers are located on a map of the German Empire from 1914. Calculations show that the median date of birth of the soldiers was 1890 — hence the date assigned to that database. You can compare that list with the distribution of surnames based on telephone book data from 1996. You can also plot the distribution of surname variants. For example, compare the relative distribution of the variants Kraus, Kruse and Krause in 1890 and note the regional variation.

Under the KOMMUNIZIEREN (Communicate) menu item you will find:

- **FORUM.** The forum offers structured discussions on various topics and is a popular online meeting place for CompGen family researchers.
- **DISCOURSE.** A powerful platform offers many functions (*e.g.*, file attachments for reading assistance) for efficient exchange and management of groups.
- **EVENTS.** Check the calendar to see when and where interesting events, meetings or webinars will take place.

Social Media. The Verein für Computergenealogie can be found on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Resources

FamilySearch, 2021. How to Use the German GenWiki.

< [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/How to Use the German GenWiki](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/How_to_Use_the_German_GenWiki) >

Genwiki, 2020. *World War I Casualty Lists*. Includes an explanation of the abbreviations used in the list and how the content of the lists varied over time. < <https://wiki.genealogy.net/Hauptseite> >.

McMillin, Teresa Steinkamp, 2018. *CompGen: Germany's Genealogy Mega Site*. Requires a subscription to Legacy Tree Webinars. < <https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/compgen-germanys-genealogy-mega-site/> >

St. Louis County Library, Genealogy Department. Common symbols and abbreviations used in Ortsippenbücher and other German genealogical sources.

< <https://www.slcl.org/sites/default/files/HG%20OSB%20symbols.pdf> >

Genealogy.net (GenWiki) Menu Explanation

