

Guild Records in Germany

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A guild is an association of trade or craftsmen designed to promote and protect their interests. They started in about the 12th century and are still with us today, although their power and prestige have waned since the close of the 18th century.

Purposes of a guild

- Train new members
- Protect trade secrets
- Care for widows and orphans
- Judge those who broke guild rules

Levels

- Apprentice
- Journeyman
- Master

Apprentice

- About 10 yrs old
- Training lasts 5-7 years
- Learns the trade or craft
- Family pays fee

Journeyman

- Travels to learn from different masters
- Can charge for a day's labor
- Produces a 'master piece'

Master

- Open own shop
- Employ others (journeymen)
- Take on apprentices
- Has say in affairs of guild

Record Types

- Vital events records
- Kinderbücher
- Apprenticeship letter
- Registers of apprentices
- Journeymen's letters
- Wanderbücher

A short glossary for guilds

angenommen—to be taken on as an apprentice

Bursch—boy, apprentice

Geselle—journeyman

Gilde—guild

Innung—guild

Lehrbursch—boy, apprentice

Lehrgeld—the money a family pays to have their child trained

Meisterstück—masterpiece

Meisterwerk—masterpiece

Walz—time spent wandering as a journeyman

Wanderschaft—journey

Wanderzeit—time spent wandering as a journeyman

Zunft—guild

To find guild records:

FamilySearch.org > Search > Catalog > [Name of town, such as “Magdeburg”] > Occupations > [record type]

For further reading:

Bukke, Inger M. *The Comprehensive Feast Day Calendar*. Bountiful, Utah: Thomsen's Genealogical Center, 1983.

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Jeske, Gerhard. “Guild Records in Germany.” *German Genealogical Digest* 10:4 (Winter 1994): 118-121.

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Wikipedia. “Guild.”

Wikipedia. “Jost Amman.”

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