



Alsace-Lorraine: Department Archive Records Online

Germany “How to” Guide, Beginner Level: Instruction

Charlotte N. Champenois, BA
Charlotte.Champenois@FamilySearch.org
August 2019

OBJECTIVE

This guide will introduce you to Alsace-Lorraine department archives and teach you to locate records for specific people in the departments of Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, and Moselle.

LINKED TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Alsace-Lorraine Historical Overview](#)

[FamilySearch Community](#)

[Archives](#)

[Links to Department Archives](#)

[Record Availability per Department](#)

[Archives du Bas-Rhin](#)

[Parish Registers](#)

[Decennial Tables \(Ten-Year Indexes of Names in Civil Records\)](#)

[Civil Registers](#)

[Archives du Haut-Rhin](#)

[Archives de la Moselle](#)

[Changing Website Language](#)

[Further Information](#)

ALSACE-LORRAINE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Alsace-Lorraine has a lengthy history of being alternately under German and French rule.

From around year AD 870 to 1648, the area was under German rule. With the Thirty Years' War of 1618–1648, the area changed hands and came under French rule until the France-Prussian War of 1870–1871 (known in France as the War of 1870), when Germany once again took over the region. The German Empire regained the area of Alsace-Lorraine, added to it the department of Moselle and a few arrondissements (subdivisions) of the department of Meurthe, and gave the region the German name Elsaß-Lothringen.

Within the following 75 years, Alsace-Lorraine changed hands four times. The area remained under German rule until the end of WWI, in 1918. At that point, the Treaty of Versailles returned

Alsace-Lorraine to French rule, and it remained part of France until the beginning of WWII. France invaded Germany in 1939, and Germany retaliated by invading France in 1940 in the Battle of France. Germany took control of Alsace-Lorraine but had to surrender the region to France in 1944.

Alsace-Lorraine remains under French rule today, though the people living there are a mixture of German and French ethnicity because of the region's history of repeatedly changing hands.

This short historical overview is to explain why ancestors from the region of Alsace-Lorraine may be listed as being from France in some records and from Germany in other records. If U.S. censuses show this back-and-forth information, the likelihood of your ancestor being from Alsace-Lorraine is high.

Because Alsace-Lorraine has been back and forth between German and French rule, the language of the records switches between German, French, and Latin.

You may want to examine the following before continuing:

- Read the [German Script Tutorial](#) “How to” Guide to learn about and practice reading the old German script.
- Refer to the *FamilySearch* Wiki [French Genealogical Word List](#).
 - Familiarize yourself with how French numbers work, especially 70 and above.
 - 70–79 are written as an addition problem, as 60 plus something; for example, 71 = sixty-eleven (soixante-onze).
 - 80–99 are written as a multiplication and addition problem, as 4 times 20 plus something; for example, 81 = four-twenties-one (quatre-vingt-un) and 99 = four-twenties-nineteen (quatre-vingt-dix-neuf).
 - Many genealogical words are given in French, but the list is not comprehensive.
 - To search the page, hit CTRL+F on the keyboard and start typing in the search.
- Refer to the *FamilySearch* Wiki [German Genealogical Word List](#) and [Latin Genealogical Word List](#).
 - Genealogical word lists are available on *FamilySearch* for other languages too.
- Read the [Finding Ancestors in Alsace-Lorraine “How to” Guide](#) for an overview of the seven departments of Alsace-Lorraine.

***FamilySearch* Community**

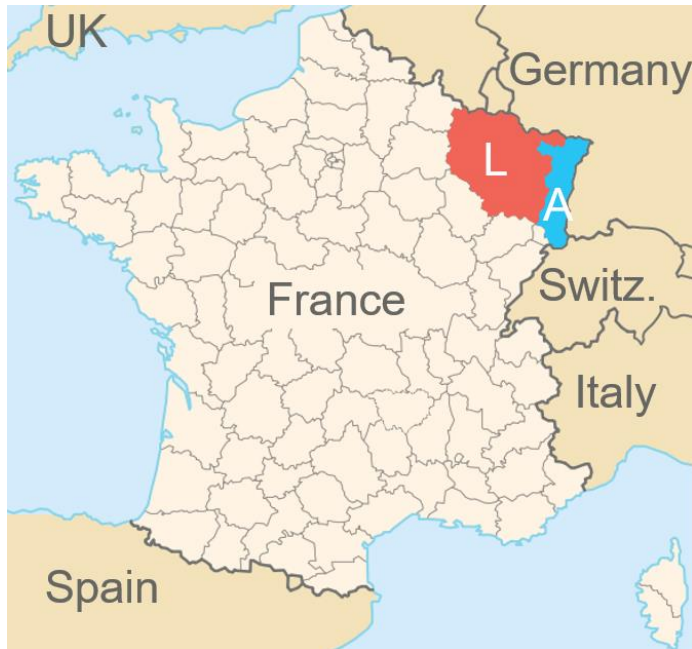
The *FamilySearch* Community page contains many helpful groups. People can post questions and respond to others' posts, and each Community group (split up geographically) has a list of links helpful for researching in that geographic region.

- Go to FamilySearch.org and click on **Help** and then on **Community** (or you can go straight to community.FamilySearch.org). At this point, you will need to **sign in** using your *FamilySearch* log-in information.
- Two pop-ups will ask you to **accept the conditions** and link your current *FamilySearch* account with your free Community membership. It will only ask you to accept the conditions the first time you access the Community page.
- Click on the blue **Groups** button in the lower right-hand corner.
- In the **Search Groups** search bar that shows up underneath the row of images, type in **France** and then hit **Enter**.
- To the right of the **France Genealogy Research** heading, click on the blue **Join** button.
- Click on the **My Feed** heading at the very top of the page. (From this point on, you can go directly to **My Feed** after going to the [Community homepage](#).)
- In the left-hand column under **My Groups**, click on the **France Genealogy Research** Community group name. This takes you to the France Community page, where you can click on the **Question** heading to post questions, which can include uploading documents and posting links.
- Return to the community.FamilySearch.org page and click on the blue **Groups** button. This time, in the **Search Groups** search bar, type in **Germany** and hit **Enter**.
- Click on the **Germany Genealogy Research** heading.
- Scroll down a little to see a **Links** heading in the right-hand column. Under this heading are listed several helpful websites, including word lists, webinars, a surname distribution map, the Republican calendar, archival websites, and more. Click on any of these to go directly to a website.
 - You can also join this Germany Community group. If you have French-related questions about Alsace-Lorraine, post in the France group, and if you have German-related questions, post in the Germany group.

ARCHIVES

Links to Department Archives

Below is a map showing the location of Alsace-Lorraine in relation to the rest of France and to Germany (A = Alsace; L = Lorraine).



Following are listed the seven departments that make up the area of Alsace-Lorraine. Each department is linked to its archival website, where records can be found. Next to each department name below is the department number in parentheses.

Alsace:

- [Department Archives of Bas-Rhin \(67\)](#)
- [Department Archives of Haut-Rhin \(68\)](#)

Lorraine:

- [Department Archives of Moselle \(57\)](#)
- [Department Archives of Meurthe-et-Moselle \(54\)](#)
- [Department Archives of Vosges \(88\)](#)
- [Department Archives of Territoire-de-Belfort \(90\)](#)
- [Department Archives of Meuse \(55\)](#)

A map showing the current German-French border and the border (through Alsace-Lorraine) of 1871–1918 is found at wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alsace_Lorraine_departments_evolution_map-en.svg. All of the Alsace-Lorraine departments are marked on the map.

Record Availability per Department

Clickable, current maps showing record availability in department archives of France are found on GeneaNet.org. On this page are maps showing the existence of parish registers, registration

registers, censuses, and cadastral maps for each department archive; click on the department of interest in the correct map to learn more.

Most French departments are assigned an official two-digit code. Residents in smaller departments sometimes refer to their own department as the number rather than the name. On the [GeneaNet.org maps](#), Alsace-Lorraine is covered by department archive numbers **57** (Moselle), **67** (Bas-Rhin), and **68** (Haut-Rhin), as well as parts of **54** (Meurthe and Moselle), **55** (Meuse), **88** (Vosges), and **90** (Belfort). Hovering the mouse over a number on the map will bring up the name of the department.

The maps indicate which record types are available for each department; see the color key at the top left of each map. Clicking on a department number on a map will take you to that department's archival website, where you can access the record types indicated on the maps.

However, not all of the links take you directly to the record section of the department websites; clicking on the number 67, for example, takes you to the Bas-Rhin department homepage. To access the records, you may have to click around on the website for a while.

Because most emigrants from Alsace-Lorraine who immigrated to the United States were from the departments of Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, and Moselle, walk-through explanations of how to access the online records of these three departments are given in the **Archives** sections below.

Archives du Bas-Rhin

There are 514 communes in Bas-Rhin. To determine whether your commune is in the department of Bas-Rhin, refer to the [Communes of the Bas-Rhin Department](#) Wikipedia page.

The Bas-Rhin records can be accessed via archives.bas-rhin.fr/registres-paroissiaux-et-documents-d-etat-civil.

- In the middle of the page is a search bar with the words **Votre commune** [your commune, the equivalent of a township or a municipality in English, or a Gemeinde in German]. In the search bar, type in the name of a place and hit **Enter** or the **Rechercher** [search] button. Note that if you have a space preceding or following the commune name, the search will not work.
- Let's say you're looking for records for the commune of Waldhambach. In the **Votre commune** search bar on the [Archives du Bas-Rhin website](#), type in **Waldhambach** and click **Rechercher**. This will take you to the Waldhambach records page.
- Three options will be listed below the bookshelf image. These options offer various record types you can access: **Registres paroissiaux (avant 1789)** [parish registers (before 1789)], **Tables décennales** [decennial tables; these are ten-year indexes of names in civil records, and this type of record exists in the Low Countries and in France], and **Registres d'état civil** [civil registers]. The page will automatically have the first option (the parish registers) selected.
 - If you hover the mouse over a faded image of a book, such as the one to the far left in the image above, you will see a note pop up that it's "**en deficit**," meaning there is a gap and the book is missing.

Parish Registers

- Some communes, including Waldhambach, will list a Catholic (**Paroisse catholique**) and a Protestant (**Paroisse protestante**) parish.
- In the case of Waldhambach, the image of a Catholic book on the Bas-Rhin website is faded, indicating that the book does not exist. Hovering the mouse over the book brings up a note to “**voir Tieffenbach**” [see Tieffenbach]; this indicates that the Catholics living in Waldhambach attended the Tieffenbach Catholic parish. (Sometimes a note like this indicates that a town was previously part of another parish.) As such, if we return to the [Bas-Rhin commune search page](#) and type in **Tieffenbach** and click **Rechercher**, you will see Catholic record books that also cover Waldhambach.
- You can now click on those record books to view the original Catholic records.
 - As practice, hover the mouse over the first distinct **BMS** book (the one with 1738–1760 on the spine); notice this will bring up the year ranges available in that book for each record type. To view the records, **double-click** on the **1738–1760 BMS book**. This will take you to a page containing the usage rules; to accept these rules, scroll down to the bottom and click on the **Accepter** button.
 - Once you have accepted the usage rules, the digital book will show up.
 - To zoom in or out, use the **plus and minus magnifying glasses** or **scroll on the mouse**. To view a different part of the image, click on the **image** and **hold** the mouse down while you **drag** the image around.
 - To view a different page, click on the **back-and-forth arrows** in the pink circles at the bottom of the image. To skip several pages, click on the **white horizontal line** between the back-and-forth arrows; alternatively, click and hold the **white vertical line**, drag the line horizontally, and let go. Once you let go, the image will reload, showing you the new selected page, and the number by the back arrow will have changed.
 - The number by the back arrow indicates the image number you are currently viewing, so that number changes as you flip through the book.
 - The number by the forward arrow indicates the total number of images in that book, so that number does not change within a single book.
 - In the lower right-hand corner of the image are **three faded circles**.
 - To view the image full-screen, click on the **orange circle**. (Hovering over this circle will bring up the words “**afficher en plein écran**,” meaning **view full-screen**.)
 - To exit the full-screen view, hit the **Esc** key on your keyboard.

- To adjust the lighting and contrast or rotate the image, click on the **yellow circle**. (Hovering over this circle will bring up the words “**régler l'image**,” meaning **adjust the image**.)
- To view an index, if one is available for the page you have open, click on the **green circle**. (Hovering over this circle will bring up the words “**voir les indexations**,” meaning **see the index**.)
 - If no index is available for the page, a green note will pop up on the side, stating “**Pas d'indexation pour cette page. Ajouter la première!**” [No index exists for this page. Add the first index!].
- For practice, with the **1738–1760 BMS Tieffenbach book** open, go to image 9. Note that the baptism entries on this two-page spread are in Latin.
- To return to the bookshelf page, click on **Retour Adeloch** on the left-hand side, directly above the image.

Decennial Tables (Ten-Year Indexes of Names in Civil Records)

To browse the Tieffenbach commune’s ten-year index books, do the following:

- On the [Tieffenbach records webpage](#), click on the **Tables décennales** button below the bookshelf image. Right-click on the webpage and select **Translate to English**.
- For practice, double-click on the “**1792–Year X**” death register book. This will open a digital version of the book.
- Open page 3 by clicking in the middle of the **white line** between the back-and-forth arrows under the image.
 - The ten-year index lists people pseudo-alphabetically by their surname—i.e., all the surnames beginning with the letter **A** are listed together, but otherwise not alphabetically, meaning we see the first surnames in the following order: Anthoni, Arnold, Arnold, Anthoni, Abraham, Anthoni, Arnold.
 - The death date is listed to the right of the name. Note that some of the death dates are written as current/Gregorian calendar dates and others are listed as French Republican calendar dates. Refer to the [Alsace-Lorraine: Converting French Republican Calendar Dates](#) “How to” Guide to learn how to convert the dates from one calendar to the other.

Once you have located a person in the ten-year index, such as Magdalena Anthoni (who died on 6 September 1793), look up the complete record in the civil registers.

Civil Registers

To browse the Tieffenbach commune’s civil records, do the following:

- On the [Tieffenbach records webpage](#), click on the **Registres d'état civil** button below the bookshelf image. Right-click on the webpage and select **Translate to English**.
- For practice, let's locate the death record of Magdalena Anthoni, whom we found in the ten-year death index as having died on 6 September 1793. Double-click on the "**1793–an IV**" death book.
- Browse through the book by clicking on the **white line**. Look for the date of 6 September 1793; the dates are usually listed first in each record, and the names are listed about halfway down the record. Browsing through the record book, you will find "Magdalena Antonin" listed on image 5 as having died on 6 September 1793.
 - The death date is listed at the very start of the record as "Heute den Sechsten Tag des Monats Septembris Eintausend siebenhundert drey und zwanzig im zweyten Jahr der Republik," which means "Today, the 6th day of the month of September, 1000 700 3 and 20 in the 2nd year of the Republic."
 - Often, each year's records end with an index of the people in that year. As such, there is usually both a yearly index and a ten-year index containing a person's name.
 - If the image of a book is faded, indicating that the book is missing, look at the other book that should contain your person's name: the ten-year index or the book containing the full entries.
 - Often, the name of the person (or, in the case of a marriage, the name of the people) the record is for is listed in the margin of the entry.
- Click on the **orange circle** in the lower right-hand corner of the image to view the image full-screen.

Archives du Haut-Rhin

There are 366 communes in Haut-Rhin. To determine whether your commune is in the department of Haut-Rhin, refer to the [Communes of the Haut-Rhin Department](#) Wikipedia page.

The Haut-Rhin records can be accessed via archives.haut-rhin.fr/search?preset=44&view=list.

- When you open the [Archives du Haut-Rhin website](#), first accept the terms and conditions of the archival page by clicking on the blue **J'accepte les conditions de la licence** button. This will take you to a page where you can look up town records.
- Click on the drop-down box next to **Commune** and start typing the (French) name of your commune of interest. For practice, start typing **Jungholtz**; notice that you need only type in the first two letters, in this case, for the correct commune to be selected. Click on the **commune name**.
- Translate the page by right-clicking on the webpage and selecting **Translate to English**.

- Click on the drop-down box next to **Type of act** (Type d'acte) and select a record type—births, marriages, deaths, decadal/decennial tables (ten-year indexes of civil records), etc. For practice, select **births** (Naissances). Then click **Search** (Chercher).
- The search results show that there are two books containing birth records in Jungholtz: 1880–1882 and 1883–1892. Let's click on the **1883–1892 birth book**.
- Click on the **collection of images**. This will take you to the digital copy of the book.
- Each year should end with an index. Locate the index for the Jungholtz 1883 births by browsing through the images.
 - To view a different image, do any of the following:
 - Click on the **arrows** directly to the left and right of the image.
 - Click on the **scroll bar** found to the right of the small image icons, then hold and drag the scroll bar down and click on a new **image icon**. (If you do not see the column of image icons, widen your browser screen.)
 - Click on the **image number** found at the top of the image icons, where it says **1 out of 155** (1 sur 155), change the number, and click the **ok** button that pops up.
 - To zoom in and out, scroll using the mouse or click on the **plus and minus buttons** at the bottom of the image.
 - To print the record, click on the **printer icon** in the top right-hand corner and select whether you want to print the current view, the current document, all 155 documents in the book, or a selection of documents.
 - To rotate the image or change the lighting, use the **icons** at the bottom of the screen.
- You will find the Jungholtz 1883 birth index on **image 12**. Look at the **8th name: Elisa Justina Horn** is listed as being born on **17 October 1883**.
- Remembering that the yearly index is directly *after* the births for that year, locate the **17 October 1883** birth entry. You will find the entry on [image 9](#), which was recorded a few days after the birth. The parents are listed: **Alexander Horn** and **Josephine Kopf**.

Archives de la Moselle

There are 725 communes in Moselle. To determine whether your commune is in the department of Moselle, refer to the [Communes of the Moselle Department](#) Wikipedia page.

The Moselle records can be accessed via archives57.com/index.php/recherches/archives-en-ligne/registres-paroissiaux. Church and civil records can be browsed on this website.

- When you open the [Archives du Moselle website](#), you will see a clickable list of communes. At the top of the list is a clickable alphabet. For practice, click on the letter L.
- With the list of communes starting with the letter L open, scroll down, right-click on **Langatte**, and click on **open link in new tab**. This will take you to the [Langatte records page](#).
- To view records in a certain year range, type in the **beginning** year in the **first blank box** and the **ending** year in the **second blank box**. Then click **Rechercher** (search).
 - If, for example, you search for 1735 to 1845, the **1713–1728 baptisms, marriages, burials** church book will *not* show up as a result because it is not included in your chosen year range.
- To view *all* the records in the commune, simply leave the fields blank and click on **Rechercher** (search). (Note that if you translate the page first, you will not be able to click on the search button; if this is the case, refresh the page first.)
- Right-click on the webpage and select **Translate to English**.
- Note that the [Langatte records page](#) contains a list of small images of records, along with the record type—births, baptisms, marriages, deaths, and burials—and year range covered by each book. Right-click and translate the page.
 - To view a different image, do any of the following:
 - Click on the **arrows** in the lower right-hand corner; clicking on a **single arrow** will move you forward (or backward) **one** page, whereas clicking on a **double arrow** will move you forward (or backward) **ten** pages.
 - Click on the white box in the lower right-hand corner, where it says **Page 1 de 89**. Type in a new number and hit **Enter**. This will take you to your chosen page.
 - To zoom in and out, scroll using the mouse or click on the **plus and minus buttons** below the image.
 - To view the image full-screen, click on the **computer screen icon** below the image. Click on the same icon to return to the regular view.
 - To change the lighting, to view the image as a negative, to undo all the changes you have made to the image (such as lighting), to add or remove the small image in the lower right-hand corner, and to rotate the image, use the other **icons** at the bottom of the screen.
 - To print the record, click on one of the two **basket icons** below the image.
 - To print only part of the record, click on the **first basket icon**. Then click on the record and, holding the mouse down, drag the mouse over the area you wish to print. Let go of the mouse once you have selected the desired section (your selection will show up in blue).

- To print the entire record, click on the **second basket icon**.
- Doing either of the above will bring up a notification stating that the image has been added to your printing list. Return to the **Langatte records page** and click on the **Print basket** button in the top right-hand corner.
 - In the top left-hand corner of the print basket, select the size of the paper you will be printing on: **A4** (8.3 x 11.7 in) or **A3** (11.7 x 16.5 in). Make sure your paper is at least the size of your selection.
 - If needed, change the orientation from **Landscape** to **Portrait**.
 - To delete a selection, click on the **trash can icon** to the right.
 - To delete *all* selections, click on **Empty the basket** at the bottom.
 - To print all your remaining images, click **View cart in PDF**. This will open a pdf that you can **download** and/or **save**.

Changing Website Language

- **Look for a flag, a globe or a couple of capital letters** signifying a language. Usually such a **symbol** is located in the upper right-hand corner of the webpage. If a symbol exists, click on it and change the language to English. Note that on many websites, doing so will only translate portions of the website, and the website features available may change significantly.
- **To translate a webpage to English** that does not have a built-in English version, with the webpage open in a Google Chrome browser, **right-click** on the mouse. A drop-down box will pop up by the mouse on the screen. Select "**Translate to English**." The webpage is then translated by Google Translate, usually within a couple of seconds. Note that the translation will not be not perfect and some items may remain in French.
- **Be aware of translated place names and personal names.** If a place or personal name is also a word, performing the Google Translate function will translate the name into another word. This may render nonsense; for example, an occupational surname (which should not be translated) may be automatically translated into the word for the occupation and cause confusion. If something in the translation seems strange, **refresh** the page to view the original version.
 - For example, the German occupational surname **Schuhmacher** and the French occupational surname **Cordonnier** both mean **shoemaker**. As such, translating a webpage with either of these names would also translate the surnames, causing confusion. **Refresh** the page to view the original version.
- **Refresh the page** (by clicking on the **circular arrow** at the top left-hand corner of the Google Chrome browser) to return the page to its original language.

Further Information

- Learn more about French communes from the [Communes of France](#) Wikipedia page.
- Books (available in the Family History Library):
 - Hansen, Kevan M. [Map Guide to German Parish Registers: Imperial Province of Alsace-Lorraine, vols. 33–38](#). K.M. Hansen, 2004.
 - Maps and guides to determine your parish in Alsace-Lorraine and where to locate the parish records on *FamilySearch*, if available there
 - Lists almost every town and parish from around 1870
 - Burgert, Annette K. [Eighteenth Century Emigrants from the Northern Alsace to America](#). Camden, ME: Picton Press, 1992.
 - Includes immigrants' names, arrival dates, villages of origin, family data from church registers, and post-migration information
 - Thode, Ernest. *Genealogical Gazetteer of Alsace-Lorraine*. Indianapolis, IN: Heritage House, 1986.
 - Pages 22–137 list towns alphabetically by the German name. In each entry, the French town name is given, and sometimes it is followed by the arrondissement (administrative district, abbreviated **Arr.**) and, in parentheses, the postal code and the nearest larger town.
 - Pages 17–21 list the larger towns, also alphabetically, with a little more information about each.
 - Schrader-Muggenthaler, Cornelia. [The Alsace Emigration Book, vols. 1–2](#). Apollo, PA: Closson Press, 1989.
 - Lists names of emigrants from Alsace
 - Eichenlaub, Jean-Luc, Anne Oddolay, and Christian Wilsdorf. [Etat des Registres Paroissiaux du Haut-Rhin](#). Colmar, France: Archives Départementales du Haut-Rhin, 1985.
 - Inventory to the parish registers in the Archives du Haut-Rhin