



# Reading Civil Registration Marriage Records

Germany “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

September 2018

## GOAL

This guide will teach you how to extract genealogical information from a German civil registration marriage record by identifying key words and phrases.

## INTRODUCTION

Civil registration is governmental registration of all births, marriages, and deaths that occurred in a specific district. Civil registration districts (*Zivilstandsamt* until 1874, *Standesamt* from 1874 to the present) were strictly organized geographically. All individuals were registered regardless of religious faith.

There were usually two copies produced, particularly after 1874. The *Hauptregister* or primary copy was generally kept in the local civil registrar’s office, while the duplicate copy or *Nebenregister* was to be collected centrally at the court level for safekeeping. Many of these duplicate records are now located in state archives.

Depending on the area and time, civil registration may be recorded in German, French, Danish, or Polish.

Due to privacy laws, access to recent records is restricted to immediate family members. These restrictions are as follows:

### Germany

Births: 110 years  
Marriages: 80 years  
Deaths: 30 years

### Poland

Births: 100 years  
Marriages: 80 years  
Deaths: 80 years

Although some areas of what would later become the German Empire began keeping civil copies of births, marriages, and deaths as early as the 1790s, the practice was not mandatory for all areas of the empire until 1 January 1876. These modern civil registration records were pre-printed standardized forms with blanks for the registrar to write in the required information by hand.

Marriage records typically span two pages and generally contain information about the bride and groom, including name, birthdate and place, residence, occupation, parent’s names, residences, and occupations. Additionally, marriage records contain the names, occupations, ages, and residences of the witnesses.

Not every town had its own *Standesamt* (civil registration office). Use Meyer’s Gazetteer to determine the location of the nearest *Standesamt*.

You may want to consult the following "How to" Guides before continuing:

- [Fraktur](#)
- [German Script](#)
- [Meyer's Gazetteer Online: Meyersgaz.org](#)

## HOW TO

### Sample marriage record

B. 0

Nr. 3.

Weidenburg am zwölften und zwanzigsten  
Februar tausend acht hundert achtzig und ein

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschienen heute zum  
Zweck der Eheschließung:

1. der Adeliche Friedrich Wilhelm Sarafin

der Persönlichkeit nach

be kannt,  
Evangelischer Religion, geboren den ein und zwanzigsten  
September des Jahres tausend acht hundert  
funf und fünfzig zu Wottau  
wohnhaft zu Weidenburg  
Wohnplatz N: 130  
Sohn de Verstorbenen Johann Rudolph Johann  
Sarafin und seiner Ehefrau Maria  
Johanna Bludgith wohnhaft  
zu Wottau

Source: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89GL-K6N2> : accessed 14 August 2018.

## Marriage record outline in English

Nr. (#)

(location) on day (full date written out) year.

Appeared before the undersigned civil registrar with the intention of being married:

1. (occupation/status) (name of the groom), personally known, (religion), born on (full date), at (location), residing at (location)  
Son of (name of parents), residing at (location)
2. (name of the bride), personally known, (religion), born on (full date), at (location), residing at (location)  
Daughter of (name of parents), residing at (location)

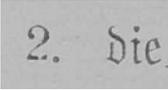
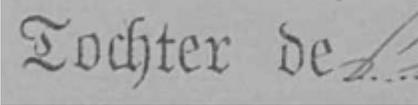
The witnesses were:

3. (name of witness 1), personally known, (age), residing at (location)
4. (name of witness 2), personally known, (age), residing at (location)

## Key Words

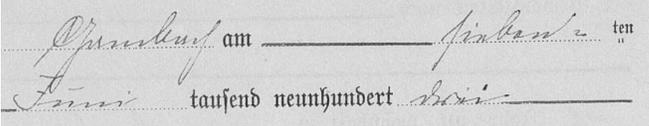
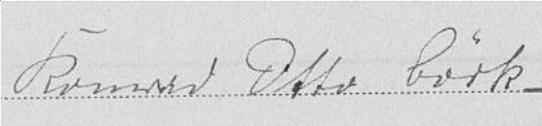
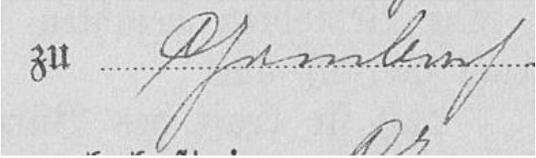
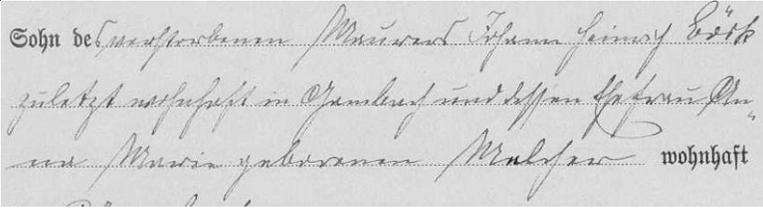
The following key words will indicate the essential genealogical information. Depending on the context, the information may come before or after the key word. Note that the German words and phrases are written in standardized German. In some cases, the examples provided may differ in spelling or conjugation of the word. Keep in mind that phrases and even words may be split between two lines. Also remember that in marriage records, the phrases may appear more than once.

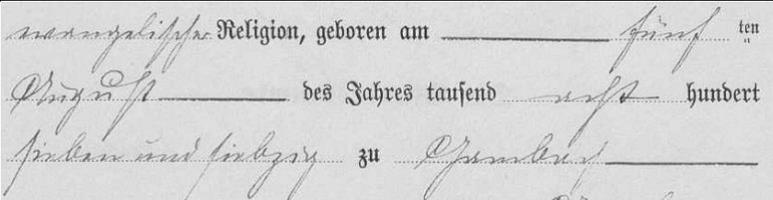
English	German	Information given	Example
the [groom]	1. der	<u>followed</u> by the occupation/status and name of the groom	1. der
religious affiliation	Religion	<u>preceded</u> by the type of religious affiliation (example: Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, etc.)	Evangelischer Religion,
born the	geboren den	<u>followed</u> by the day and month of birth	geboren den
of the year	des Jahres	<u>followed</u> by the year of birth	des Jahres
at/in	zu	<u>followed</u> by the place of birth	zu
residing at/in	wohnhaft zu	<u>followed</u> by the place of residence	wohnhaft zu
son of	Sohn des	<u>followed</u> by the occupation/status and names of the groom's parents	Sohn des

the [bride]	2. die	<u>followed</u> by the occupation/status and name of the bride	
daughter of	Tochter des	<u>followed</u> by the occupation/status and names of the bride's parents	

## PRACTICE

The last page of this guide contains an image of a civil marriage record. You can also view the image on FamilySearch by clicking [here](#). For any unfamiliar words, use the FamilySearch word list, found at: [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/German\\_Genealogical\\_Word\\_List](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/German_Genealogical_Word_List).

Where and when did the marriage take place?	<p><b>Place: Gambach</b> <b>Date: 7 June 1903</b></p> <p>This information is always located at the very top of the first page.</p>	 <p>Gambach am siebenten Juni tausend neunhundert drei</p>
What is the name of the groom?	<p><b>Konrad Otto Böck</b></p> <p>Note: the handwritten word before his name is his occupation!</p>	
Where was the groom born?	<p><b>Gambach</b></p> <p>Look for the word "zu". In this instance the groom was born, lived, and married all in the same city.</p>	
What are the groom's parents' names?	<p><b>Johann Heinrich Böck and Anna Marie Melcher</b></p> <p>Look for "Sohn des" which will be followed by information about the groom's parents.</p>	

What is the bride's name?	Elise Petry	
When was the bride born?	<p>5 August 1877</p> <p>Look for "geboren am" which will be followed by the date and place of birth.</p>	

## ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this "How to" Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you've mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.

Nr. 5

Opndorf am zweiten ten  
zwei tausend neunhundert zwei

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschienen heute zum Zwecke der  
Eheschließung:

1. der Münster Konrad Otto Bück

der Persönlichkeit nach

da kannt,  
evangelischer Religion, geboren am fünf und zwanzigsten  
April des Jahres tausend acht hundert  
fünf und sechzig zu Opndorf  
Opndorf, wohnhaft in Opndorf

Sohn des verstorbenen Münster Johann Georg Bück  
gebürtig aus Opndorf und dessen geborenen Eltern  
aus Münster geborenen Mutter wohnhaft  
in Opndorf;

2. die Elise Fackel, geb. Bück

der Persönlichkeit nach

da kannt,  
evangelischer Religion, geboren am fünf ten  
April des Jahres tausend acht hundert  
sechzig und siebenzig zu Opndorf  
Opndorf, wohnhaft in Opndorf

Tochter des Münster Johann Georg Fackel  
gebürtig aus Opndorf und dessen geborenen Eltern  
aus Münster geborenen Mutter wohnhaft  
in Opndorf

Als Zeugen waren zugezogen und erschienen:

3. dem Minister Hermann Maljow-Wiklow

der Persönlichkeit nach \_\_\_\_\_

er kannt,

37 Jahre alt, wohnhaft in Opornburg;

4. dem Richter Paul Meiß

der Persönlichkeit nach \_\_\_\_\_

er kannt,

36 Jahre alt, wohnhaft in Opornburg

Der Standesbeamte richtete an die Verlobten einzeln und nach einander die Frage:  
ob sie die Ehe mit einander eingehen wollen.  
Die Verlobten bejahten diese Frage und der Standesbeamte sprach hierauf aus,  
daß sie kraft des Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuchs nunmehr rechtmäßig verbundene Eheleute seien.

Borgelesen, genehmigt und unterschrieben

Hermann Otto Witt  
Paul Witt geborenen Fabrig  
Hermann Maljow  
Paul Meiß

Der Standesbeamte

Ramm

Die Uebereinstimmung mit dem Hauptregister beglaubigt

Opornburg am 7. Juni 1903.

Der Standesbeamte

Ramm