

Guide to Reading Geschlechterbuchs

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- **Guide:**

The original text in Geschlechterbuchs was prepared in “Gothic type and in an old style of the German language”, typical of the area and era. The occupations and descriptions listed are often not typical to current German /English translation. Some References, notorieties, long descriptive texts, and multiple locations of residence are found right after the Occupation.

Other German lineage books, follow a similar format with variations in the diacritics, and order. The infinity sign is used instead of the wide thin X that is shown on the following page. Reading this Guide will help the researcher study these other lineage books, too.

Bibliographies by original authors were extensive and varied, referencing libraries throughout the world, etc. Studying these bibliographies allow the researcher to determine which letter in the Gothic alphabet matches the English alphabet. This is very helpful.

Careful study of the following will allow the reader to reference the original texts. Many volumes of *Geschlechterbuchs* were printed for family names in Switzerland and Germany.

.....
.....

The following is the “format” was used by one original author without variation, and is typical of most Geschlechterbuchs. In following this format one can ascertain **exactly** what event and date is being specified by its placement in the text: Diacritic marks as shown are found at the beginning of any specified item on the list below. The star is a 6 pointed Star. The German cross, is set **in front of names and death**. The “X” is **wide** and thin. (Other Geschlechterbuchs have variations on how these diacritics are drawn, i.e., the wide thin X may be an infinity sign instead.)

⌘ - **Name,**

* - **Birth Location, Date of Birth,**

⌘ - **Death Location, Date of Death,**

Occupation(s) if listed,

Citizenship if listed,

Locations of Residence: may only be referred to as “in 1896 at Zuerich” [resided in Zurich]

Marriage(s) (number of - if listed as more than one),

× - **Location of Marriage, Date of Marriage,**

⌘ - **Spouse’s Name, listed with Maiden surname (last name),**

**Spouse's Place of Residence,
Spouse's Birth Place,
Spouse's Date of Birth,
Spouse's Death Location,
Spouse's Date of Death,
(spouse's previous married name if previously married, with previous marriage information listed in the same format followed for all other listings),
⊗ - Spouse's Father's Name if listed,
⊗ - Spouse's Mother's Name listed with Maiden Surname: This is indicated by original author as "whose wife was". This always indicates the "Mother", not an unrelated person. (Sometimes, even the vital statistics of this Father and Mother of the Spouse are listed.)**
Following the birth, death, occupation, residence and parentage, the children's names and data are **listed in the same orders**. Any reference to "other" children are in the footnotes, same format.

The original author/editor used the abbreviation: **ebd.** to specify "in the same place" when referring to a location of a birthplace or marriage, etc. A location with the term "**bei**" or "**am**", i.e., Roesli **bei** Lipperschwendi, or Oetwil **am** See, is correct; ("bei" means "near", "am" means "on"). In these cases no word for word translation is appropriate. Type the location as written. ("Ober" or "ober" before a village or town should also be left as the location name, never translated to 'Over'.)

If **no date** or **location** or **name** is shown, the original text indicated the **missing information** as "...", therefore this is not an indication if unreadable text.

Any "?" marks in the text are not meant to represent unreadable text, but rather a question as to the accuracy of the information they had available.

When the Gothic text shows the " " / umlaut **over any vowel**, the letter may be translated to English, such as *Jorg* changed to **Joerg**: "**a**" to **ae**, "**o**" to **oe**, "**u**" to **ue**. Current exceptions are: the name *Zuerich* / Zurich, and *Luzern* is printed Lucerne.

Month abbreviations: European form is maintained throughout as in, Day - Month - Year, with months abbreviated as: **Jan = January, Feb = February**, etc. Original date: 1. 12. 1587, translation: 1 Dec 1587.

The term **Gemeinde**, **abbreviated: Gmde.** recurs throughout the texts. Translators use the terms: "**Community of**", "**Municipality of**", and even "**Parish of**". Reference to these **Municipalities** in the earlier years indicated where marriages and recorded christenings took place. These were central to the surrounding villages and farms, therefore one *Gemeinde* / Municipality / Parish could have several villages. The use of the term "Municipality of" is currently accepted. For brevity and ease in Genealogical posting, the term "Municipality of" is left out entirely, as in: Ettenhausen, Wetzikon, Switzerland. However, the term "**Canton**" should be retained when stated.

RE: **Cathedrals:** When referring to a location of marriage, in order to indicate which church or cathedral in which the marriage took place, the authors made the following notations: “married in Zurich (**St. Peter**) on 26 Jul 1810”. This would indicate the marriage took place in the church/cathedral of St. Peter in Zurich. Notations at death may indicate a hospital, infirmary.

RE: **stillborn : children who are born dead , or children who were born, lived, died.** In Germanic countries the term can mean either. The text generally uses both terms: *ungetorben* / unborn/stillborn and *totgeboren* / born dead. The use of *ungetorben* indicates in the following sample that the 2nd boy lived for a time, still calling this child unborn/stillborn with date of death a day after birth [see pg. 391, and multiple others]. In some cases the child is “named” and still listed as *ungetorben* / unborn/stillborn.

- [born dead] 1. ⌘ *totgeboren* Son, *⌘[born, died] 27 Jul 1857;
- [stillborn] 2. ⌘ *ungetorben* Son *⌘[born] 7 Sep 1867, ⌘died 8 Sep 1867.
- [stillborn] 3. ⌘ *ungetorben* Son *⌘[born, died] 16 Aug 1706.
- [stillborn] 4. ⌘ *unget. Kind* [child] *⌘born/died 20 Dec 1722

Births out of wedlock are found in footnotes: (the term “illegitimate” does not generally appear, and the birth is simply noted or indicated). The term “*erzeugt* / begat ” indicates parentage: listing the offspring’s sex , the other “parent” next, then the child’s name. Note the Surname used by the child. Sample footnote:

“50)Tochter Wolfensberger, mit Jakob Christoph Hauesser, von Baeretwil, erzeugt:

- 1. Anna Elisabetha, Baeretswil * 2.11.1809, ⌘ ...”

Translation:

(Footnote 50) “[Elisabeth] begat Daughter surname Wolfensberger, with Jakob Christoph Hausser, from Baeretswil:

- 1. Anna Elisabetha born in Baeretswil on 2 Nov 1809, died ...”

Frequently, the use of **Landwirt** is used to describe a Freeborn person who never belonged to a Duke as an indentured servant. As such, he had the rights and privileges of a free farmer or landlord, and could have been granted land for serving the duke, raising crops, etc. He could sell his crops. He could be a **Citizen (Buerger)**, a registered tax payer, and could take a “**surname**” for himself. It can be translated as Landlord/Farmer.

Any word beginning with “**J**” or “**I**” could be interchangeable, since the capitalized Gothic typed letters are interchangeable. Locations should be verified with current maps to determine which letter is accurate. Typically, the bibliography in a Geschlechterbuch does not show any last names in German beginning with “**I**”. Locations are more common, as is the female given name “**Ida**”.

Any hyphenated word which begins on the next line with a lower case letter, should be considered as one whole word, minus the hyphen. However, any hyphenated word which begins on the next line with a capital letter should remain hyphenated. Note that the Gothic German type shows the hyphen as two lines, not one.

Translating: The first thing I ask myself, is: How important is this list of notorieties to me? Or this word in the footnotes? If the word is in a list of vital statistics, as in the case of “erzeugt”, then I do wish to know what it means. The literal translation of the word is “conceived or begat” inferring, that the persons “begat” a child, as listed. Most of the time the footnotes talk about how or where a person died, i.e., of the “pest” which means of the “plague”, or as a “Soldat” meaning, “soldier”.

Some of the best books for translating German genealogical text phrases are:

Ernest Thode’s German-English Genealogical dictionary,
and **Langenscheit’s German dictionary,** and **Chemnitz University,** http://dict.tu_chemnitz.de/

You may also use **Alta-Vista translation** service on the internet. However, with this service, be aware that since you are looking at old forms of German, it is wise to search with only one or two word phrases. The translation today may differ radically from the actual context meaning.

When translating a word that is long, break it up into sections, and look for each part of the word. This is true even when using a dictionary. This makes it easier to discern the meaning for these older uncommon terms. Even then, look at all four dictionaries.

Remember Langenscheit’s book has abbreviations in the back, as well as locations. Sometimes the very word you’re trying to translate is actually a location in a foreign country.

Remember, **break the word down into parts if you cannot find a translation for it any other way. Read Thode’s entire introduction.** This will be very helpful. This is where you will find a most excellent reference examples of Gothic German type.

When searching Geschlechterbuchs, one must find the Roman numeral noted in any given section to follow the descendants (forward) or ancestors (back).
For example:

**XII b. Hans Jakob Wolfensberger [with vital statistics, spouse, and first child deleted here]
2. August, s. XIII c.**

This "s" [elongated remember] **means, "see"** roman numeral XIII c." You would then search the next pages to find:

**XIII c. August Wolfensberger [vital statistics and spouse deleted here] with his only son listed
1. Heinrich August, s. XIV c.**

The point is, you must search forward (or backward) in the book or text to the roman numeral you are being referred to. This is sometimes easy, only a few pages away, and sometimes extensive, many pages ahead (or behind).

Resources:

<http://feefhs.org/> Federation of East European Family History Societies, which has information regarding Geschlechterbuchs and other genealogical resources. entitled **"Where "one stop" Central (Germany and Switzerland) and East European genealogy is available from about 185 Home Pages of helpful organizations located in 14 countries on 4 continents, 5 Canadian Provinces and 27 U.S. States."**

see also: C. A. Starke. <http://www.starkeverlag.de> This is the original publisher of Geschlechterbuchs. They are reprinting all 250 volumes of Geschlechterbuchs onto Compact Discs at the rate of about 8-10 volumes per disc, with one disc being produced per year. Remember this site is all in German. Email in English is the best way to communicate with this company. Keep it simple, since complex translation is difficult on both sides. Email address as of 2007: c-salem@starkeverlag.de

You may contact me via e-mail: myrnabl@whidbey.com, with any questions or help needed.