![FamilySearch logo]

Westpreussen.de

Germany/Poland "How to" Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

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GOAL

This guide will teach you how to use the online resource westpreussen.de to identify locations, jurisdictions, and locate extant records.

INTRODUCTION

Westpreussen.de is a German website with information about the former Prussian province of West Prussia which corresponds *primarily* to the Pomeranian Voivodeship (województwo pomorskie) in modern-day Poland.

If you are unsure if your town was in the area of interest, consult the gazetteer at www.meyersgaz.org to determine the former province. Use the "How to" guide Meyers Online: Meyersgaz.org for help.

Once you have determined that your town of interest was in West Prussia, you can learn more about the town and available records using this guide.

Please note that some links on this website may lead you to other websites. If you are directed to szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl or metryki.genbaza.pl and need additional help, please consult the "How to" Guides Polish State Archives Online and Metryki.GenBaza.pl.

HOW TO

Note: This website is in German, but, if desired, you can use the Google Translate feature when using Google Chrome as your web browser by right-clicking anywhere on the screen and selecting *Translate to English*. You can also go directly to translate.google.com and change your language settings to translate from German to English. Copy the following link, westpreussen.de, and paste it into the German box. Click on the link that appears in the English box and you will be taken to a translated version of the site.

Searching for your place

1. Click on the following link or type westpreussen.de in your web browser.

2. In the link list found on the left-side of the page, locate the heading *Forschungshilfen* [Research aids], and then choose the option *Ortsverzeichnis* [place directory].

3. Type the name of a town/location into the search box and select *Suche* [search]. To practice, type **Arnsmuhl** into the search box, then choose *Suche*.

Note: You do not have to use umlauts (ex: ü, ä, ö) in the name search, but you <u>MUST</u> use ß for the double "s" (ex: Groß Wittenberg <u>NOT</u> Gross Wittenberg). If you do not know how to type ß on your keyboard, consult the guide [Inserting Special Characters](#).

4. There is only one result for this place name: **Arnsmühl**.

   The results include six columns giving information about the location in question. The columns and their English equivalents are as follows: *Ortsname* (Place Name), *Polnischer Ortsname* (Polish Place Name), *Namensvariationen* (Place Name Variations), *Status* (Status), *Landkreis* (District) and *Details* (Details).

   Click on **[Details]** found in the *Details* column a new page will appear with an informational table about the place in question.

5. In addition to the initial five fields from the previous page are the following: *Regierungsbezirk* [District], *Amtsbezirk* [District], *Amtsgericht* [District Court], *Standesamt* [Civil Registration Office], Evangelische Kirche [Evangelical Church Parish], Katholische Kirche [Catholic Church Parish], Einwohner [Residents], *Literatur* [Literature], *Landkarten* [Maps], and Genealogisches Ortsverzeichnis [Genealogical Place Directory].

Locating records

6. In our example with the town **Arnsmühl** we see that the *Standesamt* [Civil Registration Office] is in a city called **Rose**. If you click on the place name **Rose** in this row you will be brought to a new page to learn more about availability of civil records for this location.

7. If you proceed to the next row for **Evangelische Kirche** you will see the following notes: *Groß Wittenberg (ab 1853), zuvor Lebehnke (ab 1839) und Schneidemühl (Posen).* This means that Arnsmühl has belonged to the Evangelical Church parish in Groß Wittenberg since 1853. Prior to that point, it belonged to the parish in Lebehnke and the Schneidemühl parish in Posen before 1839.

   Click on **Groß Wittenberg** and it will open a new page about the church records for this location. Scroll down the page to see the two-column chart with the word **Bemerkungen** [remarks] in the left column. In this case, the right column tells us that the records were destroyed during WWII.

8. Returning to the page about **Arnsmühl**, the next row is **Katholische Kirche** [Catholic Church parish]. Again, it lists Rose as the place. Clicking on this link will take us to a new page which describes the availability of Catholic church records for Rose. At the top of the page we can see the Polish name in brackets – Róża Wielka.

   Scroll down and you will see two charts displaying record availability for this place from two different repositories. The first is for the *Diözesanarchiv Köslin* [Diocesan archive in Koszalin]. If you click on this link you will be brought to another page listing contact information for the archive. The rows in this chart show the years this archive has for each event type: Taufen [Baptisms], Eheschließungen [Marriages], and Bestattungen

[Burials]. The last column is a link to additional information about the records. In this instance, the records mentioned are not available online but can be viewed at the archive.

The chart titled *Kirchengemeinde Rose* depicts the holdings of the parish itself. Clicking on this heading leads you to contact information for the parish.

Note: Tables for the *Landesarchiv Berlin* [Provincial Archive Berlin] do not suggest online availability of records. However, many civil registration records from this archive have been digitized by *Ancestry.com* and are available through their collection *Eastern Prussian Provinces, Germany [Poland], Selected Civil Vitals, 1874-1945*. (Ancestry is a subscription website but can be used for free at your local Family History Center or the Family History Library.) To determine if your desired civil registration office and year of interest has been digitized in this collection, click on the link above, or go to Ancestry.com and sign in (or use the institution account at a Family History Center). Click the **Search** tab at the top of the page, then select **Card Catalog**. In the **Title** search field on the left-side of the screen, type **Eastern Prussian Provinces**, then select **Search**. Choose the collection name in the results list. On the right, under the heading **Browse this collection**, click on the drop-down box under **Civil Registration Office**. If the office you want is there, click on it and proceed to the *Year Range* drop-down box, then select the register type (Geburtsregister = Births, Heiratsregister = Marriages, Sterberegister = Deaths).

Other Information and Resources

9. The **Einwohner** row shows the number of residents in the town during various years.

10. The **Literatur** row lists books about the location or area.

11. The **Landkarten** row is a list of digital maps for the area.

12. The **Genealogisches Ortsverzeichnis** row contains a link to the historical place database on genealogy.net depicting the political administrative hierarchy in which the location is located.

PRACTICE

1. Go to www.westpreussen.de. In the link list on the left, click *Ortsverzeichnis* [Place Directory].

2. Type **Pestlin** in the search box, then select **Suche** [Search]. One result will appear. On the right, click **[Details]**.

3. Go to the ninth row which reads *Standesamt* [Civil Registration Office] and select **Watkowitz**.

4. Note that there are six charts showing a variety of record availability for this location. The first chart implies digitized records in the fourth row where it says "Als Digitalisat

zugänglich", but when you click on it the records are not available digitally.

The second chart shows the heading *Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage* [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] and links to the Family History Library Catalog.

Charts three, four, and six for the *Standesamts* in Stuhm, Tolkemit, and Berlin I do not display records online, but you can click their headings and find contact information for each repository.

Chart five is for the *Landesarchiv Berlin* [Provincial Archive Berlin] and does not list online records. However, many civil registration records from this archive have been digitized by Ancestry and are available through their collection *Eastern Prussian Provinces, Germany [Poland], Selected Civil Vitals, 1874-1945*. Click on the link above and then choose **Browse this collection**. Click on the drop-down box under **Civil Registration Office**, and search for **Watkowitz**. Next, select your desired year from the *Year Range* drop-down box, and choose the register type.

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.