Introduction to European Research
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The primary important thing to remember about "doing" European research is the fact that the techniques are the same as those applied in the United States research. The researcher must "do his homework," including all necessary correspondence.

Essential points of European research include:

1. Know the exact location of where the individual or family lived.
2. Know the political history and geography of the area, concentrating on the exact location of the ancestor's residence.
3. Know the primary religion practiced in the area and the religion practiced by the ancestor.
4. Where are the records for the particular village, town, etc. kept?
5. What possible spelling variations may there be for the surname?

The researcher should also be cognizant of information available on documents kept in the home. For example: when a citizen of a foreign country applied for emmigration, frequently he was given identification papers to carry on his person. These papers were given to the individual prior to his coming to the United States.

On documents that may be in the home, it is important to note a church seal that may be impressed upon the paper. Many times it will indicate a larger town where the people had to file or register. The larger town, rather than the exact village or town, will be the exact location of family/ancestor archival information.

The researcher of European family information should also search for vital records as available in United States research.

Within the United States, the researcher should search the Naturalization Records. Naturalization Records consist of three types of documents, filed separately at different stages of the naturalization process. The three documents are: application, declaration of intent, final papers. The declaration of intent and the application are the most important of the naturalization records. They were processed in any court of jurisdiction and most often deposited in county court offices. The later the date of naturalization, the more complete the record.

The serious researcher must be cognizant of the migration patterns, carefully checking census records and tax records.

When checking passenger lists, be sure to check both custom passenger lists and cargo passenger lists. Many German immigrants came to the United States through the port at New Orleans. Officials in New Orleans have recorded abstracts of passenger lists, dating from 1813. They are typed and indexed. The abstracts include the name of the vessel, departure and arrival dates, port of departure, etc.

Gazetters are helpful when locating the exact location of villages.

Maps should be consulted for similar efforts in locating the ancestor's area of residence. Maps will break the area down into specific small geographic areas.

After locating the village, making assumptions on why ancestors came, when they came, and by checking what type of church or social groups, it will become easier to determine where they came to in the United States.

NOTE: Many times the record taker, who was English, would take the name down phonetically, and often times may have interpreted the area from which the ancestor came as the ancestor's surname.

When searching for a German ancestor, and looking through a modern-day directory from the area in which the ancestor resided, and finding someone with the same surname residing in the area, it is probable the ancestor come to the United States after the Civil War.

It is important to remember, when doing research, to go to the parish records first because they are the most extensive. The researcher then should check, in the following order, census records, civil records, and then begin correspondence.

It is recommended the researcher write to the local post office, if the village is small, looking for ancestors and relatives of ancestors, anyone with the same surname.

An alternative, when no correspondence has been established, is to write to local newspapers requesting advertisement space to place an ad saying you, as the researcher, are "looking for the ancestors of . . . "

When writing to Europe, the researcher must include 2 international reply coupons (currently 65¢ each). When writing ask for only one thing at a time. However, when writing to East Germany, do not address it as such. The letter will never reach the addressee; it will be destroyed.