

4

Census Records in the German States from 1816 to 1864

As described above, the history of census records in the German states from the Congress in Vienna in 1815 to the first national census campaign in 1867 is quite complex. The individual needs of the states were not always addressed in the requirements of organizations to which they belonged. In an attempt to show specific instructions and census forms for each of the thirty-eight states that joined together to establish the German Empire in 1871, an extensive campaign was conducted that resulted in more than one thousand letters and emails, complemented by dozens of visits by the author in city, county, and state archives in Germany. Documents were sought in connection with each of the census years identified by recent books on the topic. In some states, the desired documents were found for nearly every census year from 1816 through 1864, but in others states few if any documents could be found. The collection would be more extensive if every city archivist could be contacted and would respond, but that is not a reasonable expectation.¹

Each state chapter in this book has six main components: location, census history, census instructions by year, census content by year, suggestions on how to gain access to surviving census records, and representative census images. In some cases, the boundaries of the state during the nineteenth century are quite different from today and comments are provided regarding the ramifications for research in those areas.

In studying the descriptions of census records presented below for each of the states (before the first “national” census campaign that was carried out in 1867) as well as in the tables, researchers should keep the following in mind:

1. the head of household was not always the owner of the dwelling,
2. the head of household might have been an unmarried person living independently,
3. the age used in all records found in this study to distinguish an adult was fourteen years (the age

at which public schooling ended, formal apprenticeship or employment began, and the child was confirmed in church—if Christian),

4. the term *Bedienstete*, though usually referring to male servants, could refer to both male and female servants and laborers,
5. pre-printed pages featured either the German *Fraktur* alphabet or the modern Antigua font.

Instructions were issued every census year for every state, but many of those have yet to be located; many indicate simply that the procedures used in the previous census year be repeated. Specific instructions will not be mentioned in provincial chapters unless they differ from previous years. In the tables, the symbol X indicates that the information was required.

The states are presented in this book in alphabetical order by their German names, with English equivalents in brackets.

Many census forms have been found as attachments to the instructions, suggesting to provincial officials how the forms could be printed or lithographed locally or ordered from the provincial capital to fulfill local enumeration needs.

No attempt has been made in this book to collect or represent the numbers of inhabitants counted anywhere at any time. Those numbers are of far less importance to family historians and genealogists than the names of inhabitants, their biographical data, or their location when the record was compiled.² On the other hand, most if not all of the statistics collected from the pages on which names were recorded found their way into official publications. That fact emphasizes the value of the census campaigns to the respective governments.

The initial goal for this book was the location and procurement of a typical census page for each state in each enumeration year, but it soon became clear that such an ambitious goal could not be reached given the temporal restrictions of this study. Thousands of pages

were indeed found, but in some cases it was determined that more than one style of enumeration page was used in the same province the same year. Thus it is possible that the only image found for a given year is one used by the minority of towns or enumerators in that province; nevertheless, the content of each page should be very similar each year.

The quality of the images shown in this book is not always excellent. Researchers who have worked with microfilms or digitized copies of handwritten documents from nineteenth-century Germany will not be surprised that some documents are too dark, too light, out of focus, or suffer from the fact that the original page has or had flaws.

Many images chosen for display have been cropped for purposes of economy. For example, there is no particular reason to show all twenty-fives names on a page when the first ten will serve as samples of format and content. In the case of support literature, it was considered sufficient to show the introduction rather than all pages of a given document.

The use of German place names can cause serious confusion among family history researchers. It was decided for this book that the acquaintance with the German names is important product knowledge, thus the heading for a chapter will feature the German name first (for example):

Braunschweig [Brunswick]

and all subsequent references to that duchy will appear as Braunschweig (no italics). Likewise, if that duchy is mentioned in other chapters, only the German name will be used. In cases where the spelling is the same in both languages (such as Brandenburg or Posen), there should be no confusion.

See Appendix D for a list of all German state names in both languages.

Notes

- ¹ Nearly one-half of the German archivists who responded indicated that they had some census records in their collections.
- ² See Kraus for excellent collections of population numbers for all states and all years.