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The Census of 1867: The Great Transition

The census of 1867 was for all practical purposes the first national census. Almost all of the German states belonged to either the *Zollverein* or the North German Confederation or both and were thus required to participate. Each organization had been established primarily for economic purposes and required a periodic census of its members, but the methods and content were still not entirely uniform between the two organizations: the *Zollverein* counted only the local residents while the Confederation counted any person present in a given locality during the night before the target date as well as residents who were absent that night.

Among the thousands of documents collected during the compilation of this book, only one was found that emanated from the office of the "Chancellor of the North German Confederation" in Berlin.¹ Otto von Bismarck represented the *Bundesrat* [representative council] of that organization when he issued a decree on October 9, 1867, that a census be performed among the member states on December 3 of that year. The decree indicated that the census was important for two primary reasons: the funding of a common military force and the sharing of costs supporting the Confederation. The distribution of customs duties was thus no longer the prime motivation for a census campaign.

Bismarck's text reads,

...considering the fact that the *Zollverein* has scheduled its next census for the end of this year anyway, and that all of its member states are to participate, the Royal Government of Preußen has prepared forms and instructions for a census and presented them to the *Bundesrat* with the recommendation that they be used throughout the Confederation.²

That same Bismarck was Prussian prime minister. Whether he was attempting to extend his sphere of

influence beyond Preußen or was genuinely offering to save other German states the effort needed to produce the census literature cannot be determined here. Whatever his intention may have been, he stressed the requirement that a line be devoted to each and every individual to include first and last names, gender, age, occupation or status, and citizenship. At the same time, locals away from home for certain purposes were specifically to be excluded from the count.

Gehrmann emphasized the national nature of the campaign that year: "The 1867 census has to be considered the first in the history of the Reich. Not only did all states participate, but the population counted was also ... the effective (*faktische* or *ortsanwesende*) population."³ Michel stated that the 1867 enumeration represented the "development of the modern German census" and set the standard for subsequent census enumerations.⁴

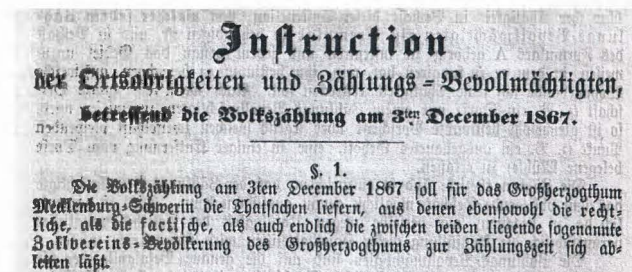


Figure 1. The 1867 instructions issued by the government of Mecklenburg-Schwerin indicated that the first purpose of the census was to satisfy local statistical needs, the second to conform with *Zollverein* standards. [Stadtarchiv Wismar 4063]

The prime vehicle of the 1867 census was the *Haushaltungsliste* [household list] that was to be filled out by each head of household. Officials responsible for specific households in well-defined *Zählbezirken* [enumeration districts consisting of perhaps fifty households] distributed the sheets beginning November 30 and collected them on December 3 or (at the latest) the next day.⁵ Specific details were required for each person, and foreigners were asked

From the instructions given to town officials and individual enumerators, it is clear that all of the German states were veterans of previous census

campaigns. The self-identity of each state is reflected in the fact that the census instructions were issued not by the *Zollverein* or the Confederation, but by the government of the state (usually the respective ministry of the interior). The instructions issued by most states indicated that the census was conducted in accordance with the statutes of one of those interstate unions. The Prussian version of the instructions listed that reason as the second of two, the primary justification being

Figure 2. The Prussian version of the 1867 census (used in all thirteen Prussian provinces) had verbose instructions on both sides of the paper as well as a sample family at the bottom. This is the inside view (pages 2 and 3); the paper was folded between columns 13 and 14. [Gebesee, Sachsen-Provinz; Kreisarchiv Erfurt]

to provide important statistical information for the Prussian government in Berlin.

As stated in the instructions for the 1867 census, officials were to count the persons from the name lists, to enter the numbers onto statistical reports for enumerations districts, to transfer those totals to community statistical reports, and from there to county and provincial statistical reports. Officials at each level were instructed to monitor lists for completeness and correctness.

However the texts of the instructions to local officials and enumerators were worded, the current investigation determined that individual household pages were printed identically in many of the states.⁷ Others had almost identical content but differed in appearance.

The instructions for the Prussian version of the 1867 census (by column) are more extensive than used in any German state prior to that year. Primary headings are designated by Roman numerals and secondary headings by Arabic numerals as follows:

- I. First and last name of each person; persons in each household should be entered in this order: head of household, his wife, children in order of age; other relatives who are permanent residents in this household; other persons including those under hire with room and board; servants of all kinds; occupational helpers such as apprentices and journeymen with room and board; temporary visitors; quartered soldiers of the army; finally any sub-lessees [*Aftermieter*] and other persons who merely sleep there [*Chambergarnisten*, *Schlafleute*] should be designated as *Afm*, *Chg*, *Schl*; the term "unknown" is to be entered in column 2 for children not yet baptized.
- II. Gender: for male persons enter a 1 in column 4, for female persons enter a 1 in column 5.
- III. Age: enter the calendar year of the person's birth; if the child was born in 1867, enter the month of birth.
- IV. Religion: the following abbreviations may be used in this column: *ev.* for Protestant, *k.* for Roman Catholic; *i.* for Jewish (Israelite); *mn.* for Mennonites; *gk.* for Greek Orthodox; dissidents and other church names are to be written out.

- V. Marital status: this status is shown by writing a 1 in the appropriate column (8–11) for each person; single persons are those who are not currently married and have never been married; persons living in separation for life are to be counted as divorced; the designation of the relation of each person to the head of household is only to be recorded where such a relationship exists; for all other persons an entry is to be made in column 12 (see sample list).
- VI. Occupation: status, occupation, or occupation in training, employment, and servitude. For persons without current employment, the status of their training is to be indicated, such as pupil, prep-student, cadet, trainee, or university student. For persons to whom more than one kind of status applies, the principal activity should be indicated; along with the occupation (such as farmer, mechanic, or tailor), the employment is to be shown (such as owner, lessee, master, entrepreneur, principal, inspector, administrator, superintendent, foreman, journeyman, apprentice, laborer); the same kind of information is to be shown for females.
- VII. Citizenship: Enter a 1 in column 14 for Prussian citizens. For other persons, the state of which they are citizens is to be listed. For persons from the grand duchy of Hessen, the town is also to be listed in column 15.
- VIII. Manner of residence: it is the purpose of this census to determine the manner of residence for each person as indicated in columns 16 through 18. Enter a 1 in the appropriate column. The town of residence should be shown for each guest (for persons from this state, enter both the town and the county. For all other persons (regardless of the brevity of their stay), enter a 1 in column 19.
- IX. Special deficiencies: Enter a 1 in the appropriate column for any person dealing with that condition. For any person born with insanity or who became insane in the first few years of life, enter a 1 in column 22. Enter a 1 in column 23 for any person who became insane later in life.

Secondary column headings were as follows:

1. consecutive number of inhabitant
2. given name
3. surname
4. masculine
5. feminine
6. age
7. religion
8. single
9. married
10. widowed
11. divorced
12. relationship of household members to the head of household
14. citizens of Prussia
15. citizens of other states (which states?)
16. maritime persons working for the North German Confederation or the Zollverein
17. travelers in inns [hotels, etc.]
18. guests in the household (coming from where?)
19. all other persons present in the household
20. blind in both eyes
21. deaf-mute
22. idiot
23. insane

The Hessen version of the 1867 census features much shorter column headings. The most significant difference is the inclusion of the birth place in column 6 (a feature that is most valuable to family history researchers). Shown below is a page recorded in the town of Rödgen near Gießen. The exterior of the sheet (pages 1 and 4 effectively) has lengthy instructions, while the interior pages (2 and 3) feature personal data for every individual to be recorded in columns 1–10 and 11–23 respectively.

Ordnungs-Nummer.	Vor- und Familien-Namen.		Geschlecht.		Ort und Zeit der Geburt.				Familienstand.
	Vorname.	Familien-Name.	Männlich.	Weiblich.	Geburtsort.	Zeit der Geburt.			Angabe, ob ledig, Verheirathet, Wittwer oder Wittwe, Geschieden (darunter auch die gerichtlich v. E. u. B. Getrennten).
	Die Namen etc. werden in der aus dem Muster ersichtlichen Reihenfolge und mit der in §. 3 der Anleitung angegebenen Unterscheidungen durch Ueberschriften (a. Anwesende, b. Abwesende) eingetragen.		Durch Eintragen der Ziffer 1, anzugeben.		Bei den inländischen Orten, deren Name im Inland mehrfach vorkommt, ist der Name des Kreises, bei ausländischen der Name des Staates mit anzugeben.	Tag.	Monat.	Jahr.	
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
	<i>a. Anwesende.</i>								
1.	Ludwig	Lafu	1	—	Hainhof	—	—	1822	Heirath
2.	Karl	Lafu	geb.	1	Rödgen	—	—	1823	"
3.	Leopold	Lafu	geb.	1	"	—	—	1847	Leig
4.	Wilhelm	Lafu	geb.	1	"	—	—	1854	"
5.	Karl	Lafu	geb.	1	Landskron	—	—	1796	Leig

Figure 3. The left-hand page of the Hessen version of the 1867 census [Rödgen, Hessen; Stadtarchiv Gießen, 4 RÖ 103]

Religion.	Stand oder Beruf.	Art des Aufenthalts.									Aufenthaltsort.	Staatsangehörigkeit (Heimathort).	Anmerkungen.
Bei Christen wird auch die Confession angegeben.	Hauptbeschäftigung (voran, sodann) mit Erwerb verbun- dene Nebenbeschäftigungen, Arbeits- und Dienstverhält- niß, auch Vermögensverhält- niß zum Haushal- tungsvorstand.	Durch Eintragen der Blätter 1. anzugeben (vergl. Anleitung §. 4, Bl. 1., sowie auch §. 2, Abf. 2.)									Als Aufenthaltsort ist bei Personen, welche sich selbst- ständig ernähren und eine eigene Haushaltung führen, der Ort ihrer dauernden Niederlassung zum Betriebe ihres Geschäfts etc., bei un- selbstständigen Personen der Ort, woselbst ihre Familie anständig ist oder doch nicht anständig war, anzugeben.	Für jede Person ist der Staat, welchem dieselbe an- gehört, für Angehörige des Großherzogthums Hessen der Heimathort (bei mehrfach vorkommenden Ortsnamen unter Angabe des Kreises) deutlich einzuschreiben.	Vergl. Anleitung §. 4, Blätter 1. a., 1. b. und 2., sowie das Muster.
		Vorübergehend anwesend als	Nicht über 1 Jahr Abwesende										
11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.	22.	23.	
Evangelisch	Lehrer	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	Rödgen	Rödgen		
"	"	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	"	"		
"	"	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	"	"		
"	"	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	"	"		
"	Mutter	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	"	"		

Figure 4. The right-hand page of the Hessen version of the 1867 census [Rödgen, Hessen; Stadtarchiv Gießen, 4 RÖ 103]

The Bavarian version of the 1867 census differed vastly from the forms used in other states. For example, the age was stated generally in columns 5–8 in two categories of each gender: “under 14 years” or “over 14 years.” A wide variety of religious classifications appeared: “Catholic, Protestant, Reformed, Greek Orthodox, Mennonite, Anabaptist, Irvingian, German Catholic, Friend of Light, Jewish, or other non-Christians.”

In general it can be stated that any researcher studying ancestors or other persons of interest in Germany would do well to search for them in the 1867 census. However, if the location is not known to at least the county level, this search is not practicable.⁸

Leipzig. Druck. Oeffener.
Gemeinde. M. K. K. K.
Oeffener. K. K. K.

Figure 5. This census form used hand-written column headings that were lithographed. [Mindelheim, Bayern, <https://familysearch.org/search/image/index#uri=https%3A%2F%2Ffamilysearch.org%2Frecap%2Ffscd%2Fwaypoint%2FMCDD-BWL%3A242635301%3Fcc%3D1941345>]

Notes

- ¹ Otto von Bismarck, Proclamation October 9, 1867 from the Bundesrat of the North German Confederation (Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Bückeburg Dep 9C Nr 637).
- ² Otto von Bismarck, "Proclamation." Nordeutscher Bund. October 9, 1867.
- ³ A person had to be physically present to be counted. Gehrmann, Rolf. "German Census-Taking Before 1871." (Rostock, Germany: Max-Planck-Institut für demografische Forschung, 2009), 15.
- ⁴ Michel, "Volkszählungen," 84.
- ⁵ In all census instructions beginning in 1867, local officials were told that if December 3 fell on a Sunday or a holiday, the campaign was to begin the next day. However, the data collected were to reflect the population status as of December 3.
- ⁶ Gehrmann, "German Census-Taking," 15.
- ⁷ Even the dates of the announcements of the upcoming census campaigns differed from state to state—as if each state were deciding independently whether to participate. For example, the grand ducal office in Baden issued the announcement on September 19, the royal Prussian office on October 12, the interior ministry of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach on October 23, the interior ministry of Sachsen-Meiningen on October 25, and the Royal Bavarian office not until November 21.
- ⁸ Fortunately, Gehrmann was quite incorrect in assuming that the original family pages of the 1867 census were all destroyed. He concluded, "... it is impossible to find original census lists after 1864—only in exceptional cases were copies or compilations from the individual forms made for local purposes." As will be shown below, literally thousands of those pages survive. See Gehrmann 16.