

German SIG Prussia Discussion

History: Summary of territorial gains and losses

Source: Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/place/Prussia>

For good map, see <https://www.britannica.com/place/Prussia#/media/1/480893/194371>

Time period/ governance	Key events	Prussia territory gains & losses
Before 1200 Tribes	Hunters/herder related to Lithuanian/Latvians Spoke Baltic/Slavic language Conquered by German-speaking Teutonic knights in "Northern Crusades"	
About 1350 Teutonic Order	Majority of population was German-speaking	
1466 Teutonic Order	Wars between Teutonic knights and Lithuanian/Polish	Lost: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West of the Vistula • Kulmerland (Chelmno district) • Ermland/Warmia <p>Kept lands east of the Vistula (aka East Prussia) but subject to Polish crown</p>
1600s Teutonic Order > Hohenzollerns	Old Baltic/Slavic language died out Population assimilated Protestantism spreading	
1618 Hohehzollerns	Direct line of Albert, last Teutonic Grand Master, dies out. Son-in-law (and Elector of Brandenburg) inherits.	Added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandenburg
1640-1688 Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg		Gained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full control of East Prussia
1688-1713 Friedrich, Elector of Brandenburg > King Friedrich I of Prussia	1701 – Crowned King of Prussia	Added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Hohenzollern lands
1713-1740 King Friedrich Wilhelm I	Treaty of Utrecht Second Northern War Increased Prussia's military strength Reorganized administration to autocratic state Large-scale colonization of East Prussia	Added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper Quarter of Geldern [near Düsseldorf] • Neuchatel & Valengin [border of France & Switzerland] • Western Pomerania
1740-1786 King Friedrich II (the Great)	Austro-Prussian Silesian wars 1 st partition of Poland Improved judicial/educational systems Promoted arts and sciences	Added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silesia • East Frisia • West Prussia

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1786-1797 King Friedrich Wilhelm II	2 nd & 3 rd partitions of Poland	Added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ansbach • Bayreuth • Land in Poland Lost: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land west of the Rhine
1797-1840 King Friedrich Wilhelm III	Prussia big loser in war with Napoleon Administration, social, military reforms started Congress of Vienna and Peace of Paris treaties (after Battle of Waterloo) Prussia became the only “great power” that was predominantly German-speaking	Lost: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lands west of the Elbe • Land in Poland from 2nd/3rd partitions • Southern part of land gained in 1st partition. [Prussia kept Brandenburg, Pomerania, Silesia, northern West Prussia w/o Danzig, East Prussia] Added after Congress of Vienna: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danzig • Parts of Saxony • Prussian Rhine province • Westphalia • Vorpommern • Saarlouis and Saarbrücken
1840-1861 King Friedrich Wilhelm IV	1848 revolution Constitution and bicameral government German unification movement	
1861- King Wilhelm I > crowned as German emperor	Otto von Bismarck appointed minister and president Seven Weeks’ War Franco-German War	Added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schleswig-Holstein • Hanover • Electoral Hesse • Nassau • Frankfurt am Main [Prussia now included 2/3 of Germany’s population.]
1871-end of WWI	Prussia and German empire are basically synonymous	
End of WWI	Prussia becomes a Land (state) within Weimar Republic	Lost: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silesia • West Prussia • Posen • Danzig • Memel • Northern Schleswig • Saar • Land near Belgian border

Time period/ governance	Key events	Prussia territory gains & losses
End of WWII		Lost: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern East Prussia Land east of the Oder-Neisse line
1947	Formal abolition of Prussia by Allies	

Research by province

Brandenburg (Neumark)

Facts:

- Civil registration started 1876
- Neumark area shown as Brandenburg in FamilySearch and Meyers Gazetteer, but archives are in Poland

Interesting resources:

- Emigration records (Ancestry) <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/4121/>
- Neumark database <https://neumark.agoff.de/NeuMark/>
- Brandenburg State Archives <http://blha-recherche.brandenburg.de/suchinfo.aspx>
- Ortsfamilienbücher <https://www.bggroteradler.de/datenbanken/genealogische-quellen/ortsfamilienbuecher/>

East Prussia

Facts:

- Civil registration started 1874
- 1945 partition—Southern East Prussia and Soldau to Poland; Northern East Prussia divided between Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg), Russia, and Klaipeda Region, Lithuania

Interesting resources:

- 1736 list of inhabitants <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/246062>
- Nassauische Bauern und andere deutsche Siedler in Ostpreußen im 18. Jahrhundert* by Friedrich Stahl (book) <https://vffowbuchverkauf.de/SO-005>

Pomerania

Facts:

- Civil registration started 1874
- A small area near the Baltic was Swedish as late as 1815
- Polish section divided between West Pomeranian and Pomeranian voivodeships (capitals in Szczecin and Gdansk)

Interesting resources:

- My Pomerania records portal <https://mypomerania.com/>
- Passenger lists 1869-1901 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2452/>

Posen

Facts:

- Civil registration started 1874
- Roughly coincides with current Greater Poland Voivodeship

Interesting resources:

- *Liste der Kolonisten aus dem Netzedistrikt von 1776 - 1798* by Lena Bellée-Vogt https://pbc.gda.pl/Content/80763/1942_H_05_06.pdf on page 181.

Schlesian/Silesia

Facts:

- Civil registration started 1874
- Upper Silesia mostly Protestant, Lower Silesia mostly Catholic
- Majority of German-speaking population expelled during WWII
- Mostly in current-day Poland, incorporated into the Lubusz, Lower Silesian, Opole, and Silesian Voivodeships

Interesting resources:

- Schlesienkartei, card index to Silesia records, by Association of East German Genealogists, indexes a broad range of Silesian genealogical records <https://agoff.de/?p=29345>

West Prussia

Facts:

- Civil registration started 1874
- Ethnic/religious diversity - Germans were the largest group; also many Kashubians, Poles, Mennonites, and Jews
- 130K German colonists settled here during WWII, but most Germans fled/expelled at end of war.
- Now Pomeranian (Pomorskie) Voivodeship

Interesting resources:

- Ausländerakten, 1812-1895 (FamilySearch) <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/457631>
- Familienforschung in Westpreußen website <http://westpreussen.de/pages/forschungshilfen.php>

South Prussia: The “forgotten” province

Facts:

- Southern half was part of Prussia only from 1793-1807
- Left off most lists of Prussia
- Currently in Lodz, Kyavian-Pomerania, Masovian, Greater Poland voivodeships

Interesting resources:

- Overview of history https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provinz_S%C3%BCdpreu%C3%9Fen
- Secret State Archive of Prussian Cultural Heritage https://archivdatenbank.gsta.spk-berlin.de/midosasearch-gsta/MidosaseARCH/i_ha_rep_84/index.htm?kid=GStA_i_ha_rep_84_1_1_2_9

Research hints

For researching by name

- Compgen name distribution map <https://nvk.genealogy.net/map>
- Polish name distribution map <https://nazwiska-polskie.pl/>

For researching by location

- Meyers Gazetteer <https://www.meyersgaz.org/>
- Kartenmeister <http://www.kartenmeister.com/>

- Germans from Russia Settlement Locations (for finding South Prussia villages)
<https://www.germansfromrussiasettlementlocations.org/p/maps.html>

Locating church records in Poland

- FamilySearch wiki “how to” –
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Poland_Church_Records#Locating_Church_Records
- Geneteka – a database of vital records indexed by volunteers
<https://geneteka.genealodzy.pl/>
- Instructions on using Geneteka <https://fromshepherdsandshoemakers.com/2018/04/23/a-step-by-step-guide-to-using-geneteka-part-i/>
- Poznan Marriage Record indexing <https://poznan-project.psnc.pl/#> (Actual record images available on FamilySearch)
- Metryki GenBaza—scans of records for Pomerania, Posen, Silesia, and West Prussia. Site:
<http://metryki.genbaza.pl/en> Registration instructions:
<https://mypomerania.com/registering-for-metryki-genbaza-pl/>
- Szukaj w Archiwach (The Polish Archives)
https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/en/strona_glowna
Webinar on using this site: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/lessons/szukaj-w-archiwach>

Locating people/families displaced during WWII

- Arolsen Archives <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/search>
- Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Suchdienst (German Red Cross Tracing Service)—may be ending in 2023.
<https://www.drk-suchdienst.de/>
- Kirchlicher Suchdienst—Active 1953-2015, created population register of people by their hometown to aid tracking displaced people. All materials handed over the Bundesarchiv, Department B in Bayreuth, in 2015.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20170930230331/http://kirchlicher-suchdienst.de/offline/>

Additional links shared in the chat during the Zoom meeting:

- PTG Pomorski Towarzystwo Genealogiczne, Pomeranian Genealogical Association,
<http://www.ptg.gda.pl/index.php/default/lang/en-utf-8/>
- Two more Posen indexing websites: <https://www.basia.famula.pl/en/> and <https://e-kartoteka.net/en/about>
- My favorite mapsite: <https://mapa.szukacz.pl/mapnik.html>
- Websites: <https://www.myheimat.de/>
- Pommerscher Greif e.V. <https://www.pommerscher-greif.de/>
- Mark Rabideau site <https://www.many-roads.com/>
- Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich, Geographical dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and other Slavic countries,
http://dir.icm.edu.pl/pl/Słownik_geograficzny
- Europe Free Online Historical Newspapers <https://theancestorhunt.com/blog/europe-free-online-historical-newspapers/>

- Family research in West Prussia <http://westpreussen.de/pages/forschungshinweise/quellen.php>
- Skanoteka – Metryki <https://metryki.genealodzy.pl/>
- West Prussian Land Register 1772/73 - K-Kompr (R. Drefs) <https://www.odessa3.org/collections/land/wprussia/link/kk-k1.txt>
- South Prussia Land Records (R. Drefs) https://www.blackseagr.org/research_prussia.html
- VFFOW (Association for Family Research in East and West Prussia) <https://www.vffow.org/>
- POLISH VITAL RECORDS DATABASES <https://sites.google.com/view/polishgenealogygroup/internet-tools/collections-and-databases>

Additional resources suggested (11/22/2023)

- A page of resources for researching in Polish areas of Prussia (especially the books listed by Heike, Miller, Wiese) https://www.blackseagr.org/learn_poland.html
- Books by Eugen Oskar Kossman, including:
 - *Die deutschrechtliche Siedlung in Mittelpolen. Dargestellt am Lodzer Raum*, 1938.
 - *Die Anfänge des Deutschtums im Litzmannstädter Raum. Hauländer und Schwabensiedlungen im östlichen Wartheland*, 1942.
 - *Ein Lodzer Heimatbuch. Geschichte und Geschichten aus Stadt und Land*, 1967/1995.
 - *Die Deutschen in Polen seit der Reformation. Historisch-geographische Skizzen. Siedlung, Sozialstruktur, Wirtschaft*, 1978.
 - *Deutsche mitten in Polen. Unsere Vorfahren am Webstuhl der Geschichte*, 1985.
 - *Deutsche in Polen. Siedlungsurkunden 16.-19. Jahrhundert*, 1996.
- Publications by Albert Breyer http://www.upstreamvistula.org/Documents/ABreyer_Pub.htm
- Archiv der Deutschen aus Mittelpolen und Wolhynien [https://www.bkge.de/Heimatsammlungen/Verzeichnis/Herkunftsgebiete/Zentralpolen/Zentralpolen.php#:~:text=Archiv%20der%20Deutschen%20aus%20Mittelpolen%20\(und%20Wolhynien\)%20\(integriert\)&text=Ausk%C3%BCnfte%20erteilen%20die%20MitarbeiterInnen%20der,Kargel%2C%20Julian%20Will%20und%20anderen](https://www.bkge.de/Heimatsammlungen/Verzeichnis/Herkunftsgebiete/Zentralpolen/Zentralpolen.php#:~:text=Archiv%20der%20Deutschen%20aus%20Mittelpolen%20(und%20Wolhynien)%20(integriert)&text=Ausk%C3%BCnfte%20erteilen%20die%20MitarbeiterInnen%20der,Kargel%2C%20Julian%20Will%20und%20anderen) and <https://martin-opitz-bibliothek.de/de/sammlungen/sondersammlungen/archiv-der-deutschen-aus-mittelpolen-und-wolhynien>