

# **Preparing for a European Research Trip**

**R. Kent Stuetz  
New York State Archives**

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**Question:**

**How do you know  
when you have been  
spending too much time  
in Europe doing genealogy?**

**Answer:**

**Don't worry . . .  
Your spouse will let  
you know!**

# Agenda

- Europe
- Prior planning
- Research
- Bring it on home

# Why Do Genealogy in Europe?

- **Critical Contacts**
- **Learn insider information**
- **Records & resources**
  - More available locally
  - Indexes & finding aids
- **Get feel for people & customs**
- **Understand the geography**
- **Connect with ancestors**

# Location Location Location

- **You must identify a locality**
  - Family sources & traditions
  - Immigration & naturalization records
  - Ethnic associations
  - Church records
  - Census enumerations
  - Death records & obituaries
  - Published & manuscript histories
- **Internet resources**
  - Maps
  - Bulletin boards
  - Other contacts

# Contacts

- **Its all about local contacts!**
  - **Institutional contacts**
    - Staff, volunteers, priests, historians, etc.
  - **Individual contacts**
    - Friends, relatives, fellow researchers, etc.
- **Share what you are looking for**
  - Talk with people openly . . .
  - Where you research & what names
  - Ask questions often, don't be bashful
  - Always listen for what people know
- **The broader the net is cast . . .  
the greater the catch!**

# Prior Planning

- **Electronics**
- **Documentation**
- **Attitude**
- **Gifts**
- **Culture**
- **Language**
- **Travel**
- **Accommodations**
- **Schedule**

# Electronics

- **Consider all your potential gear**
  - Laptop computer
  - Digital camera
  - Battery recharger
  - External hard drive
  - Lights
  - Portable printer
  - PDA
  - Cell phone
  - Digital card reader
  - Personal care items



# European Standards

- **Europe uses several different . . .**
  - **Electrical currencies**
    - 220 volt vs. 110 volt
  - **Sockets & plugs**
    - Plug adapters
- **Countries need unique assessment**
- **Hardware evaluated individually**
  - **Input requirements (voltage)**
  - **100-240 V**

# Transformers & Converters

- Light duty voltage converters
- Voltage transformers
- Step down vs. step up
  - 220/240v  $\leftrightarrow$  110/120v
- Watts vary based on load
  - Multiple outgoing sockets
  - Estimate max load +
- \$30 very respectable model
- Purchase wired for your country
- Don't forget socket adapters!

# Documentation

- **Passport**
- **International drivers license**
- **Regular drivers license**
- **Medical information**
- **Photocopy everything (front & back)**
  - **Credit cards & financial instruments**
  - **Passport & IDs**
  - **Airline tickets**

# Finances

- **EU countries all use Euro**
- **Currency exchange**
  - **ATMs & credit cards give best rates**
  - **Airports & banks worst rates**
- **Don't bring currency**
  - **Confirm use of ATM card**
  - **Call credit card company**
  - **Bring a few emergency \$**
- **Credit card benefits**
- **Import/export duties**

# Attitude & Gifts

- **Be humble & gracious**
  - It ain't America - get over it!
  - You have much to learn
  - Don't be an ugly American
- **Bring gifts**
  - Research facility staff
  - Those who help you
  - Cash contributions to institutions
- **What do they like?**
  - Fine American chocolates
  - Tee shirts & American stuff

# Culture

- **Learn local culture & customs**
- **Enjoy their foods & beverages**
- **Bring your own drugs (legal ones)**
- **Follow their laws**
  - **Speed limits & parking regulations**
  - **Travel permits/stickers**
- **Don't find fault or be critical**
- **Many travel guides available**
- **Calories don't count in Europe!**

# Language

- **Learn as much as possible before**
  - CD & cassette tape instruction
  - College & BOCES classes
  - Language & travel books
- **Familiar genealogical vocabulary**
- **People will help you**
  - Many folks speak some English
  - Varies from country to country
  - English spoken more in cities
  - Bring good dictionary
- **Make it a point to learn language**

# Getting to Europe

- **Seasonal airlines prices**
  - January thru April best discounts
  - Summer is most expensive
  - Spring & Fall are reasonable
- **Shop all the carriers for sales**
- **Some European airports cheaper**
  - Munich vs. Vienna
  - A little driving in Europe may save \$
- **Last minute ticket deals**
- **Ticket hawkers**



# Travel within Europe

- **Good public transportation**
  - Will it get you into the Hinterwald?
  - Will it give you needed mobility?
  - Consider a mix
- **Rental cars**
  - Not cheap . . .
    - Shop for sales & discounts
    - Compare final prices (watch for add ons)
  - Simple to drive throughout EU
  - Rent with credit card for benefits
- **Travel permits & stickers**

# Accommodations

- **Go local!**
  - Stay away from touristy lodging
  - Long-term accommodations cheaper
  - Live with friends or contacts
- **Many hotels on Internet**
  - Ask questions
  - Get pricing
  - Learn about availability
  - Make reservations online
- **Be flexible, but make reservations**

# Schedule

- **Not your last trip to Europe**
  - You won't finish it in one visit
  - Think long term & plan accordingly
- **Schedule is based on budget**
  - Longer you stay the more it costs
- **Use time wisely . . .**
  - Maximize research time
  - Minimize down time
- **Schedule important appointments**
- **Be flexible with contingency plans**

# Scheduling Research Visits

- **Contact each repository**
  - Introduce yourself to staff
  - Make them aware of your plans
  - Share your research objectives
  - Learn their rules & restrictions
  - Determine services they provide
  - Ascertain their schedule
    - Research hours
    - Special closings
  - Ask questions
  - Make reservations where needed

# Travel Binder

- **Blue brain organizes trip**
  - Chronological order as needed
    - Airlines ticket
    - Car rental
    - Map from airport
    - Hotel reservation
    - Contact information
  - Schedule
  - Copies of legal & fiscal docs
  - Records repository info
  - Research guide
    - Objectives
    - Finding aids
    - All things . . .

# Research

- **History**
- **Preparatory research**
- **Maps**
- **Records**
- **Consultants**
- **Research methods**
- **Research aids**
- **Repositories**

# History

- **Understanding history is key**
  - European, national, regional & local
- **All aspects of history**
  - Governmental, religious, socio-economic, military, etc.
- **History supplies context**
- **Provides helpful clues**
  - History of parish may lead to older records in earlier neighboring parish

# Preliminary Research

- **Learn all you can prior to trip**
  - Study detailed maps of area
  - Become familiar with locality names
  - Understand governmental structure
  - Search available microfilmed records
- **Use Internet to immerse yourself**
- **Develop research objectives**
- **Organize every needful thing . . .**
  - Existing genealogical data
  - Document everything you learn
  - Write down every hunch & question
  - Match research objectives with scheduled visits



# Maps

- **Modern research maps**
  - Loose detailed maps
    - 1:50,000 or 1:35,000
  - Bound book maps with gazetteer
    - 1:100,000
- **Online interactive maps**
  - MapQuest Europe
  - Specialty interactive maps
- **Historical research maps**

# Records

- **Identify every available record**
  - Where are they stored?
  - What information do they contain?
  - Are there restrictions on their use?
  - How may I reproduce them?
    - May I digitally film them?
    - Other reprographic services available?
- **Where do I learn this?**
  - Published guides
  - Repository staff
  - Email
  - Internet sites
- **Talk to everyone**
- **Ask in different ways over & over**

# Deciphering the Records

- **Original foreign records challenging**
  - Different language
  - Unique vocabulary
  - Local adaptations & usage
  - Foreign handwriting scripts
  - Each changed in different periods
- **Find a mentor**
- **Study aids**
- **Experience is best teacher**

# Hiring a Consultant

- **Advantages**
  - Skilled with local records & repositories
  - Know all resources available
  - Provide additional contacts
  - Can teach & mentor you
  - Experience may save \$ in long run
- **Disadvantages**
  - Can be very costly, for example . . .
    - \$50/hr. is not uncommon in Europe
    - Plus travel time & expenses
  - May not help find anything

# Research Methods

- **Where will you focus your time?**
  - Extract focused data
  - Duplicate records & materials
- **Research cycle is critical**
  - What specific information do I need?
  - In what record will I find it?
  - Extract or duplicate record
  - Do supplementary records exist?
  - Repeat research cycle
- **Focus on best record sources 1st**

# Research Aids

- **Many aids available to help**
  - **Collection guides**
  - **Publications**
  - **Detailed finding aids**
  - **Indexes**
  - **Online catalogs**
- **Spend time to see what's what**
- **Duplicate finding aids & guides**
  - **Help you plan for tomorrow . . .**  
**and for next year's visit**

# Repositories

- **Where is every record stored?**
- **Learn about their collections**
  - Finding aids & catalogs
  - Online listings
  - Ask questions
- **Figure out their game**
  - What are their research hours?
  - How many records may I use?
  - May I use a laptop, camera, etc.
  - Pencils vs. pens
- **Plumb depths of every collection**

# Walk Ancestor's Land

- Find ancestral home sites
- Locate distant relatives
- Slow down to appreciate
- Can be spiritual adventure
- See some sights
- Take pictures to . . .
  - Document localities
  - Share with family
  - Post on website



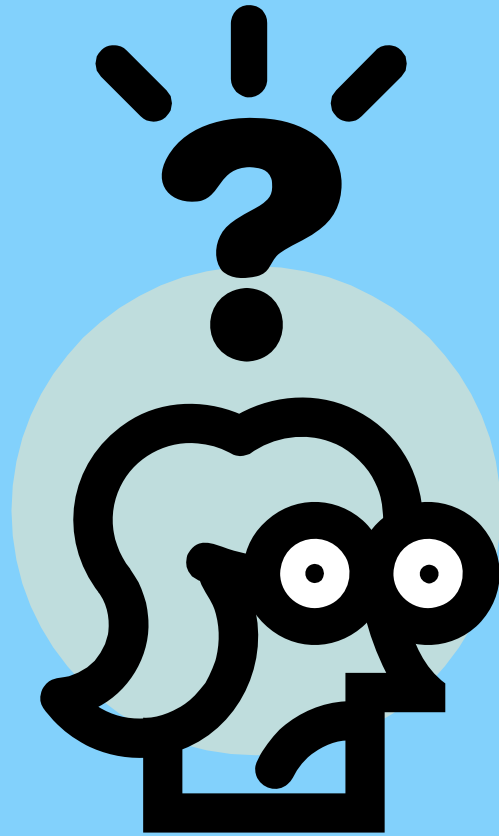
# Bring Home Treats

- **Share your experience with family**
- **Bring home . . .**
  - **Chocolates & candy**
  - **Foreign foods**
  - **Clothing**
  - **Toys & games**
  - **Fun stuff from your trip . . .**
- **Remember to thank those who assisted you in Europe**

# When You Return Home

- **The real work begins . . .**
  - **Sorting through tons of paper**
  - **Organizing digital images**
  - **Extracting genealogical data**
  - **Studying your finds**
- **Continue to learn**
- **Stay in contact with associates**
- **Soon you will feel urge to return  
and plan your next trip!**

# Questions?



**The End**

**Thank You!**