

Identifying Westphalia

Dear genealogists,

You have ancestors, most of whom emigrated to the USA in the 19th century - and of whom it is said that they come from Westphalia. First of all, of course, the question arises: where is Westphalia actually?



This is what this map of Germany shows. The area marked in red is Westphalia as part of North Rhine-Westphalia. And many of you also have ancestors in other regions of Germany. Emigrants liked to marry emigrants.

Westphalia is again divided into administrative districts, these again into districts and cities.



Roland Linde will report on this in the following, in order to research and find archival material, knowledge of the division in the 19th century is necessary: The Westphalian administrative districts are Arnsberg (gray), Münster (pink) and Detmold (green). The seat of government in Detmold was in Minden before 1947.

So this is the area when people speak of Westphalia. The development of the population of Westphalia is also interesting: The population quadrupled between 1816 (1.066 million) and 1910 (4.125 million). This is a major factor in emigration: there was simply not enough work, poor harvests made the difference. Another map clearly shows how many people have emigrated from which region: the larger the red dot, the more people.

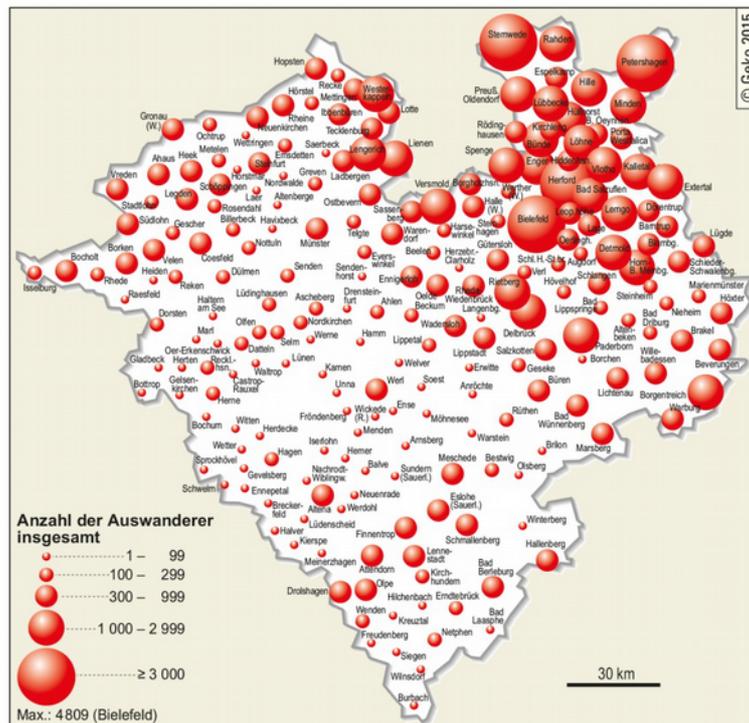


Abb. 1: Gesamtzahlen nachgewiesener Auswanderungen aus Westfalen 1700–1900 (Quelle: TREUDE 2013, Begleittext S. 12)

The intensity of the points in the then administrative district of Minden suggests a high number of emigrants. The regions in the south of Westphalia (Siegerland, Wittgensteiner Land and Sauerland), on the other hand, show only a small number of emigrants. On the one hand this is due to the archival records, which are few in the Arnsberg district, on the other hand it can also be due to the fact that this region was not so densely populated.

Now to the emigrants: Perhaps a date of birth is still known, or even a place of birth. The question of the place of birth is of central importance. Finally, one must find the correct baptismal record so as not to research the wrong family. That would ultimately be a lot of work for nothing. This question needs to be thoroughly clarified at the beginning of the research!

There are numerous documents for this in the USA: passenger lists, immigrant lists, the census, etc. Here in Germany, emigrant files are preserved in a wide variety of archives. In general, you couldn't just emigrate, you needed a permit from the authorities. And men, for example, could only get this once they had done their military service. And those who had not yet done so and still wanted to emigrate, yes, they were among those who preferred to emigrate secretly. Sometimes it actually happened that a young man was supposed to join the military, he did not come, and then it was found that he had long since emigrated. And those who flee from debt or a committed crime also emigrated secretly. He wouldn't have got a

passport. However, not all of these files have been evaluated by a long way, but some are evaluated and printed. In some cases these books can be viewed online.

On the homepage of the „Westphalian Society for Genealogy and Family Research“ (<https://vereine.genealogy.net/wggf/>) you can find information on the relevant publications on the home page under Basic Knowledge (Basiswissen) under Emigration (Auswanderung).

The printed lists of emigrants are structured according to a uniform scheme. To keep the information clear, headings are replaced by letters. For example, in order not to have to write „Name of the emigrant...“ every time, the information is hidden behind the letter a). And if there is no information on one of the letters, it is omitted. And every book is indexed with an alphabetical register of names. But very important: By far not all emigrants are recorded by name. Not all names can be found in the archives either.

For the Grafschaft Lippe, a region in the east of Westphalia, you can find detailed information on emigration from Lippe on the homepage of the „Genealogical Evening“ (<http://www.lippe-auswanderer.de/>).

That's where I ended up. Many details are topics for my own lectures, but now I'll pass on to Roland Linde. He will outline the next steps necessary to study the ancestors.

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