

Disclaimer

I am not an expert in German or old Alsatian records and do not claim such. The following is written from the point of view of someone who knows a little German trying to help someone who perhaps knows none.

Brief explanation about German language and grammar

1. All nouns are capitalized, not just proper nouns. This is helpful in deciphering the records.
2. The verb is often the last word of the sentence. See the "Sample Baptism Record" translation below, in which I purposely kept the German word order.
3. All nouns have masculine, feminine, or neuter gender. Articles, adjectives, and nouns can all have different word endings, based both on the gender and on the case, such as subject, object, or possessive.

Knowing this can be helpful when you see a word you think you recognize, but the ending of the word is different than what you expected. Two particular examples often seen in the Bas-Rhin church records are:

Feminine version of a surname (archaic) : A woman named Eva who's last name is Schmitt may be recorded as Eva Schmittin.

Possessive forms when describing women: You may see many words ending in "s" regarding a woman because she is always described in terms of being someone's daughter or wife.

Months

Januar, Februar, März, April, Mai, Juni, Juli, August, September, Oktober, November, Dezember

In old records the last four months of the year may be seen abbreviated by their original meanings as 7ber, 8ber, 9ber, Xber.

Helpful German Words

absterben	die
allhier, allhie	from here (this town)
Beamter	official; öffentlich Beamter = public official
Befürworter, Bfr.	sponsor
begraben	buried
bestattet	interred, buried
Bürger	citizen, resident
Chirurg	surgeon
dahin, daher	from there (that town)
drey	drei, i.e. three
ehelich, ehel.	legitimate
ehemann	husband
Ehrwürden	Reverend
ejusdem, ejurdem, ejerdem	seems to mean "of the same month"; modern ehedem = "formerly"
Gattin	spouse or wife
genannt	named
Geschlecht, das	the gender
Geschwächt	weakness, frailty
getauft	baptized
gewesen	former
Hausfrau, ehfrau	wife
Heyland (modern Heiland)	Savior
hiesige	local
hinterlassene	surviving, as in family
ledige	unmarried as in single or as in illegitimate
öffentlich	public, common, open to public
Pfarrer, Pfr.	pastor
Schwachheit	weakness, frailty
Schwäher, Gegenschwäher	brother-in-law or father-in-law; modern Gegenschwieger = inlaw
Seitenstechen	pain in the side
starb	died
sterben	die
Stiefson	stepson
taufen	baptize
verschied	passed away (died)
Vogt	church representative
weniger	minus, as in 2 years minus 4 days
weyland (modern weiland)	deceased, former
Wittib	widow
Zeuge, Zeugen	witness, witnesses
zeugen	testify, witness

Typical form of baptismal record, mid 1700s

Day of week *den date such as 1st* [of understood] **month** [this is the date of birth] *würdn* **name of father** *dem Bürger und* **Father's Occupation** *dahin* [if from Hatten] *von seines ehel. [abbrev for ehelich] Haus-Fraun* **first name of wife** *eines gebohren* **maiden name** *von town of her birth* *geburtig ein* **son or daughter** [Sohn or Töchter] *gebohrn welches de_ Tag darauf ____ getauft* [i.e. the date of baptism] *und* **baby's name** *genunnt* [modern genannt] ____ *de; Die Taufzeugen* [modern Taufzeugen] *waren:*

[Witnesses:]

1. **man's first and last name** *Bürger und* **occupation** *dahins* [from here]
2. **woman's first and last name, man's first and last name,** *Bürgers und Occupation dahins* [describes where from and relationship to parents]
3. **woman's first and last name** [describes as above]

[Signatures of witnesses here]

Ehr. [Ehrwürden] **signature of minister** Pfr. [Pfarrer]

Sample Baptism Record, Literal Translation

On Wednesday the third of this month was [to] John Smith, the citizen and blacksmith here, of his legitimate wife Jane nee Hart of Anytown, a daughter born, which was this day baptized, and Madeline named. The baptismal witnesses were: [list]

Form of Protestant Marriage c. 1760

I was obviously unable to make out many of the words in the following record, but still enough to obtain genealogic information.

Day of week *den* **day of month** *sind nay _____ proclamation östnetz [?] in der Riochen Cop. und ringasognot worde* **name of groom,** *Bürger und* **groom's occupation** *dahier* [this town] -OR- **groom's town; groom's father's name** *der Bürger und* **father's occupation** *des his town,* _____ *und* **bride's first name,** *wogl. bride's father, Bürger und his occupation and town.*