

**THE OTTO FAMILY BRANCHES**

Many of our Otto ancestors originally came from Pomerania, located in the north east of present day Germany. I have found 31 Otto individuals who immigrated to South Africa during the last 300 years. About 69% of all Ottos are descended from Michiel Otto, who arrived at the Cape in 1714. About 19% of all Ottos are descended from Johann Friedrich Otto. The rest belong to the other 29 small Otto families. The Native American Lakota tribe have a saying, which really applies to us. After a pipe-smoking ceremony, they say: “Mi taku oyasin”, meaning, “We are all related!”

There were 1400 people with Otto surnames recorded on Death Notices, as of the year 2005. Generally the most recent Otto Death Notices, those from the previous 25 years, are housed in the Supreme Court and those Death Notices dating further back are housed in the Archives of the four “old” provinces: Cape, KwaZulu Natal, Free State and Transvaal.

A few generalizations may be made about where and when certain Otto families lived. The Otto families left Germany to find opportunities in a new land. Michiel Otto and Johann Friedrich Otto are the only Otto families who were established in South Africa prior to the Great Trek. Some remained in the Western Cape, but most moved inland, to escape British colonial rule. Generally, once they made the move over land, these Otto families remained in their new farming communities. The twentieth century industrialization caused many to trek, for economic reasons, to the cities. Pretoria became the city of choice for many Otto families, since most were Afrikaners. In 2005, Otto families distribution by province were: Gauteng 33%, Western Cape 34%, Free State 7%, North-West 6% and the remaining 20% equally distributed in the remaining provinces. The mobility of the twenty-first century has allowed many South Africans to trek throughout the global village. About 14% of our Otto families are among the more than one million South Africans living abroad. Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand and United States are popular emigration destinations.

The following are the genealogical codes, branch patriarchs, branch sizes as a percentage of all Ottos and where the descendant branches of Michiel Otto initially settled.

C3D2E1	Michiel Johannes	6.6%	George, Western Cape
C3D2E2	Johannes	0.9%	Uniondale, Western Cape
C3D2E4	Johannes Gerhardus	3.4%	Oudtshoorn, Western Cape
C3D2E9	Johannes Daniel Jacobus	2.3%	Oudtshoorn, Western Cape
C9D1E3	Michiel Daniel	3.3%	Caledon, Western Cape
C9D1E5	Michiel Bernardus Jacobus	7.7%	Free State
C9D1E6	Andries	5.7%	Heidelberg, Western Cape
C9D1E7	Diederik Jacobus Johannes	3.3%	Heidelberg/Heilbron, Free State
C9D1E9	Matthys Gerhardus	12.4%	Gansbaai/ Hermanus/Stanford
C9D1E10	Cornelis Johannes	4.1%	Pietersburg, Limpopo/North-West
C9D7,8	Johannes C. R., Petrus A.R.	2.6%	KwaZulu Natal

GENEALOGIES OF OTTO FAMILIES

C16D3E2	Hendrik Johannes	9.7%	Dewetsdorp/Limpopo/Mpumalanga
C16D3E4	Josias Hendrik	1.3%	Dewetsdorp, Free State
C16D3E5	Jacobus J.P., E7 Johannes J.P.	1.4%	Free State/Western Cape
C16D7,11	Johannes J., Johannes P.	1.4%	Limpopo/Mpumalanga/North-West
C16D12	Cornelis Jacobus Bredenkamp	2.6%	Zeerust, North-West

The following are the genealogical codes, branch patriarchs, branch sizes as a percentage of all Ottos and where the descendant branches of Johan Frederik Otto initially settled.

B5C1	Johan Frederik	4.2%	Hoopstad, Free State
B5C2	Johannes Lodewicus	2.0%	Rustenburg, North-West
B5C3	Philip Matthys	3.5%	Boshof, Free State
B5C4	Hendrik Tobias	1.8%	Ottosdal, North-West
B5C5	Gerhardus Petrus	4.6%	Ottosdal, North-West
B5C6	Willem Sternberg	2.8%	Boshof, Free State

There are 15 of the 29 small Otto families that have left no male descendants to carry on the family name and another 9 families are in danger of dying out.

In 1999 there were 814 Otto households listed in all the South African telephone directories. In the general population Otto families were more concentrated in the province North-West, Limpopo, Pretoria area, Mpumalanga, Free State and Western Cape. Conversely, Otto families were few and far between in places like Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal.

**Statistics of the Otto Family Groups in the book**

Family Groupings Descendants	Direct descendants	Otto spouses included	%
Michiel	2931	4784	69.4%
Johann Friedrich	811	1319	19.0%
The 29 small Otto families	528	802	11.6%

The Otto family is a midsize South African family. In comparisons, according to the 1964 Population Register of the Republic of South Africa the largest families were:

Jacobs = 82500; Botha = 79500; Smith = 76500; Williams = 64500; van Wyk = 63000; van der Merwe = 60000; Nel = 49500; du Plessis and Venter = 48000; Pretorius = 46500; Coetsee / Coetzee = 46500; Fourie = 46500; Louw = 46500; van Rensburg = 46500; Smit = 45000; van Zyl = 43500; Adams = 42000; Hendricks = 40500; du Toit = 39000; Kruger = 39000; van Niekerk = 39000; Meyer = 34500; Abrahams = 34500; le Roux = 31500  
Source: South African Surnames by Eric Rosenthal, 1965