

Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy

Class 3: Accessing Records in the Old Country

Melanie McComb, melanie.mccomb@nehgs.org

Assess What's Available

- Research the towns where your ancestors lived to understand what records survived and where to access them
- Published books on archival holdings (see Miriam Weiner's series)
- Online Web Sites:
 - JewishGen <https://www.jewishgen.org/>
 - Routes to Roots Foundation <https://www.rtrfoundation.org/index.shtml>
 - FamilySearch <https://www.familysearch.org/en/>

Types of Repositories

- USC Office (Urząd Stanu Cywilnego) is a Civil Records Office
 - Typically store records less than 100 years
- Regional Archives

Types of Records

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Census Records | • Military Records |
| • Metrical Books <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Vital records, usually recorded by local churches | • Duma Lists <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Lists of eligible voters who participated in elections for Russian Parliament |
| • Tax Records | • Other Voter Lists |
| • Revision Lists | • Cemetery Records |
| • Emigration Records | • Synagogue Records |
| • Internal Passports | |

FamilySearch

- Finding Jewish Records by Town
 - Search for the town under “Place” in the catalog
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>
 - Review the different categories available
 - **Important:** Don't discount Church Records; Metrical books for Jewish people were recorded by local churches.



- Finding Jewish Records by Country
 - Search for "Jewish Records" in the Catalog under the town or region where your ancestors lived
 - Search for "Jewish Records" (Search by keyword) in the Catalog

JewishGen.org

- Search by a combination of surname and locations to identify resources available that may pertain to your family
- Use the Family Finder database to identify other researchers searching that same surname. You may find new cousins in the process!

Genealogical Translation Resources

- FamilySearch Genealogical Word Lists -
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Genealogical_Word_Lists
- Published Genealogical Translation Guides
- Genealogical Translations Facebook group -
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/GenealogicalTranslations/>
- Contact a local university's foreign language department to ask about students/faculty who can assist with a request
- Hire a professional genealogist or translator through the Association of Professional Genealogists website

Tips for Hiring a Researcher

- Do your homework on finding a researcher that can travel to the archives that you need records from that are not digitized.
 - The Association of Professional Genealogists (<https://www.apgen.org/cpages/home>) has an online directory that you can search by location and expertise on. Many genealogists will list what archives they regularly go to.
 - Regional societies may have an approved list of researchers (ex. Polish Genealogical Society of America)
 - Pick someone with a closer proximity to archives to cut down on travel costs.
- Set a clear expectation on hours and budget that you're willing to pay for.
- Review prior work samples before signing any contracts and agreeing to any financial terms or wiring money.
- Ask for references.
- Discuss hourly costs and what the final product should look like.



Hiring the Archive

- Archivists will have institutional knowledge of their holdings. However, they may not be thinking of other records that can be searched that are held in their repository.
- If you are ordering specific records, it may be more cost effective to order directly from the archive. Many archives will email you the records after receiving payment.
- Archive wait times may be significantly longer than hiring a researcher.
- You may deal with some language barriers if the archivists do not correspond in English.

Websites

Association of Professional Genealogists - <https://www.apgen.org/directory>

Austro-Hungarian Army Database - <https://wojak.genealodzy.pl/>

Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections - <https://www.yivo.org/vilna-collections-project>

FamilySearch Wiki - https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page

Gesher Galicia - <https://www.geshergalicia.org>

Holland America Passenger Lists Database - <https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl>

International Jewish Cemetery Project - <http://iajgscemetery.org>

JewishGen - <https://jewishgen.org/>

JRI-Poland - <https://jri-poland.org>

Krakovsky Documents - https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Krakovsky_Documents

Litvak-SIG - <https://www.litvaksig.org>

National Library of Israel - <https://www.nli.org.il>

Routes to Roots Foundation - <https://www.rtrfoundation.org/>

Blogs

JewishGen Blog <https://www.jewishgen.org/blog>

Lara Diamond: *Lara's Jewnealogy* <https://larasgenealogy.blogspot.com>

Philip Trauring: *Blood and Frogs: Jewish Genealogy and More* <https://bloodandfrogs.com/>

Renée Carl: *Eastern European Mutt* <https://easterneuropeanmutt.com>

Books

Harold Rhode, *Jewish Vital Records, Revision Lists and Other Jewish Holdings in the Lithuanian Archives* (Teaneck, New Jersey: Avotaynu, Inc., 1996).

Judith R. Franzin, *19th Century Polish-Language Civil Registration Documents (Birth, Marriage, and Death Records*, 3rd Edition (Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois, 1989).

Miriam Weiner, *Jewish Roots in Poland: Pages from the Past and Archival Inventories* (New York, New York, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1997).

Miriam Weiner, *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova: Pages from the Past and Archival Inventories* (Secaucus, New Jersey: New York, New York, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1999).