

Romania: Jewish Family History Research Guide

Historical Background

Like most European countries, Romania's borders have changed considerably over time. Starting in the late 15th century, the Ottoman Empire ruled the Romanian provinces of Moldavia, Walachia, and Dobruja, while Austria and Hungary controlled Banat, Bihor, Maramures, Satu Mare, and Transylvania. Austria took over Bukovina (northwestern Moldavia) in 1774, and Russia obtained Bessarabia (eastern Moldavia) in 1812. An unsuccessful Balkan revolt against the Turks ultimately led to Russian occupation of Walachia and Moldavia from 1829-34. The two principalities merged in 1859 to form Romania (also spelled Rumania or Roumania at various times), which remained subservient to the Ottomans until full independence was achieved in 1878. The province of Dobruja was also added at that time.

After World War I Romania regained control over the territories of Banat, Bessarabia, Bihor, Bukovina, Maramures, Satu Mare, and Transylvania at the expense of Austro-Hungary and Russia. During the Holocaust period, Romania temporarily gave up northern Transylvania (including northern Bihor, Maramures, and Satu Mare) to Hungary, and permanently lost northern Bukovina and Bessarabia (now the Republic of Moldova) to the Soviet Union.

Jews were present in the region under the Roman Empire, but subsequent invasions and wars severely disrupted their existence. The Jewish population increased significantly after 1800, primarily due to immigration (first from the Balkans and later in the mid-19th century from the Russian Empire and Kingdom of Galicia).

Finding Your Ancestral Town

To make the best use of this guide, you should first follow the general guidelines in our fact sheet on starting your family history research, and if necessary, use our fact sheets on immigration, naturalization, census, and vital records to identify your ancestral town (vital records might be written in Romanian, Hungarian, Hebrew, German, Russian and other languages depending on the location and time period). If you determine that your town is within modern-day Romania, you will also need to find out the name of the county (*judet*) in which it is located. If your town was in Austro-Hungary before 1920 (i.e., if the town is located in Banat, Bihor, Maramures, Satu Mare, or Transylvania), you should also consult our fact sheet on Hungary.

ROM-SIG News

Formerly published by the Special Interest Group for Romanian Jewish Genealogy (see www.jewishgen.org/romsig), this newsletter contains anecdotes, short memoirs, members' personal experiences with travel to Romania and working with various archives and professional researchers, occasional family photos, documents, and recipes, scholarly articles, and excerpts from Yizkor books and other publications (census lists, business directories, etc.).

CGI CS 1047 .J4 R66

Finding Records

Although religious authorities were required to maintain registers of births, marriages, and deaths starting around 1790 in Austro-Hungary and around 1830 in Walachia and Moldavia, records before 1850 are scarce. Civil (government) registration of vital events began throughout Romania in 1865, but not until 1895 in Austro-Hungary. Various kinds of censuses were conducted from the 18th century onward, and many of these records have been preserved. A census could be limited to a particular county or city; it might count only the Jews, or only property owners, or the entire population; and it was most often conducted for taxation purposes.

The two main sources for records are the Family History Library (FHL) of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) and archives in Romania.

Family History Library (FHL)

Even though the FHL has not been directly allowed to microfilm records in Romania, there are some Jewish vital records available from different sources, however most genealogical research must be done on site in Romania. Microfilmed vital records: Arad county (town of Apateu), Bihor (records from several towns), Bukovina (also records from several towns) Causani-Noui, Moldova (records from both, the presently independent Republic of Moldova, and from the Moldova county in Romania. Moldova was also part of Bessarabia). Some films of census records are available for areas that were previously under Hungarian rule (see our fact sheet on Hungary).

If you want to find microfilm records at FHL: go to the Family History Library Online Catalogue at <https://familysearch.org/#form=catalog> and do a "Place Search" first using the town name, and then using the province (*judet*) name. For a list of microfilms on long term loan at the Ackman & Ziff Genealogy Institute, see: www.jgsny.org/microfiche.htm

List of District Archives in Romania which holds genealogical records:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20080208171910/http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/9-14-2005-76774.asp>

Some of the resources at the Center for Jewish History:

Ancel, Jean ed. *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the Antonescu Era*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

YIVO 00083843

Ancel, Jean and Eskenasy, Victor. *Bibliography of the Jews in Romania*. Tel Aviv: The Goldstein-Goren Centre for the history of the Jews in Romania, 1991.

REF DS 135 R7 A6 1991

Braham, Randolph L. ed. *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the Antonescu Era*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

YIVO 00092176

Braham, Randolph L. ed. *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*. Columbia University Press, 1994.

YIVO 00087631 01/23/96 C

Dicker, Herman. *Piety and Perseverance: The Jews from the Carpathian Mountains*. Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981.

AJHS DS 135 .R93 Z273

Emigration Collection: Emigration 1881-1914. Documents on Romania include newspaper clippings from 1902 and relevant proceedings of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, Paris. Materials in German and French.

LBI AR 1989

Eskenasy, Victor, et al. *Izvoare si maturii referitoare la evrii din Romania-Sources and testimonies concerning the Jews in Romania*. Federatia Comunitatilor Evreiesti din Republica Socialista Romania, Centrul de Documentare, 1986

YIVO 00083842

Geller, Jacob. *Ha-Yehudim ha-Sefaradim be-Romanyah*. University of Tel Aviv, 1983.

YIVO 90751

Hartman, Zvi, ed. *Antisemitism in Romania: The Image of the Jew in the Romanian Society*. The Goldstein-Goren Center for the History of the Jews in Romania, Diaspora Research Institute, 1993.

REF DS 135 R7 A62 1993

Iancu, Carol. *Jews in Romania 1866-1919: From Exclusion to Emancipation*. Columbia University Press, 1996.
YIVO 00092175

Ioanid, Radu. *The Ransom of the Jews: the story of the extraordinary secret bargain between Romania and Israel*.
 Ivan R. Dee, 2005.
YIVO 000114599

Weiner, Miriam. *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova: Pages from the Past and Archival Inventories*. New York:
 YIVO, 1999. This book is useful for research in Bessarabia and Bukovina.
CGI DS 135 .U4W37 C.1

Safran, Alexandre. *Resisting the Storm: Romania 1940-1947*. Yad Vashem, 1987.
YIVO 00082510

Landsmanshaft Records

Landsmanshaftn are societies formed by Jewish immigrants from the same villages, towns, and cities in Central and Eastern Europe. These became a dominant form of Jewish social organization in the late 19th century, and include religious, cultural, and social organizations as well as American-style fraternal societies. *Landsmanshaftn* provided immigrants with social networks and financial assistance with health and accident insurance, cemetery plots and funeral expenses. **YIVO** has an extensive collection of archival materials from *landsmanshaftn* representing Romanian Jews, including former residents of towns such as Bacau, Baran, Birlad, Botosani, Bucharest, Burdujeni, Radauti, and Satu Mare, and regions like Bereg, Bukovina and Maramures. Other collections containing the records of Romanian-American religious congregation including:

Roumanian-American Congregation (Philadelphia, PA). Minutes, financial records, tickets for High Holy Days services, meeting notices, scrapbooks.
YIVO Archives RG 1101

To find out if YIVO has a collection for your town, consult the Center for Jewish History's online catalog at <http://search.cjh.org> or one of the following sources:

A Guide to YIVO's Landsmanshaftn Archive. New York: YIVO, 1986.
Genealogy Institute

<http://home.att.net/%7Elandsmanshaft/yivo.htm>

Website prepared/edited by Ada Green, listing organizations represented in YIVO's Landsmanshaftn Collection.

YIZKOR Books:

Yizkor (memorial) books provide the history of Jewish communities destroyed or ravaged by the Holocaust. Most include photos and biographical articles, and many have name lists of those deported and killed (these lists are also called necrologies). Yizkor Books are primarily written in Yiddish and Hebrew.

YIVO has a large collection of Yizkor books, including those covering Bacau, Baia Mare, Baia Sprie, Beclean, Bessarabia, Bistrita-Nasaud, Bivolari, Borsa Maramures, Bronka, Cluj-Napoca, Copalnic Manastur, Darabani, Dej, Dolgoye, Dorohoi, Edinet, Gertsa, Gherla, Gura Humorului, Halmeu, Hirlau, Huedin, Ileanda, Kapreshty, Kushnitsa,

Maramures, Marculesti, Marghita, Mihaileni, Oradea, Radauti, Rakhov, Reteag, Romania, Ruscova, Sadgora, Salaj, Saveni, Snyatyn, Somcuta, Satu-Mare, Stefanesti, Strimtura, Tasnad, Tirgu Lapus, Tirgu Mures, Transylvania, Turt, Tyachev, Vatra-Dornei, Vinogradov, and Zadneye.

For more information on Yizkor Books consult our online catalog at:
<http://search.cjh.org> or YIVO website www.yivo.org/yizkor/

Baker, Zachery M. *Bibliography of Eastern European Memorial/Yizkor Books*. Jewish Genealogical Society, 1992
YIVO Ref D804.3 Z225 1992

New York Public Library has digitized some of the Yizkor books (some of these books are being translated into English)
www.nypl.org/research/chss/jws/yizkorbooks_intro.cfm

Personal Papers of Individuals and Families

Arthur Segal Collection. Typed autobiography, Part 1, *My Boyhood in Rumania, 1875-1892*. London, 1939.
LBI AR 9194

Jacob Sinnreich Family. Typescript of excerpts from 1898 diary, school papers, and family tree. German language materials from Bukovina.
LBI AR 5061

YIVO Territorial and Photographic Collections – Romania

Territorial Collection – Rumania. Assorted materials relating to Jewish history and life in Romania: the register of the free loan society in Bacau, 1836; handwritten copies of registers of various other 19th-century societies; leaflets, posters, and programs published by *Fusgeyer* (idealistic emigrant groups traveling strictly by foot from Romania reaching Western Europe around 1900, the majority of which ultimately settled in Northern America); material on the situation of the Jews before and during World War II; reports on the concentration camps in Transnistria; and albums of photographs, documents, charts and maps on the Romanian Holocaust.

YIVO Archives RG 116 -- Rumania

Territorial Photographic Collection – Rumania. Over 450 photographs can be found in the “People of a Thousand Towns” online catalog, which may be accessed from <http://yivo1000towns.cjh.org>. Subjects include *Fusgeyers*, farmers, blacksmiths, a tinsmith, a furrier, lumberyard and winery workers, shepherds, butchers, grocers, peddlers, rabbis, medical equipment and personnel, traditional and vocational schools, agricultural colonists (1920’s settlements in Bessarabia), synagogues, summer camps, pogroms (1903-5 and post-WWI), refugees, portraits, street scenes, and non-Jewish villagers and peasants.

There are numerous photographs of Carpathia and Maramures. Towns include Bacau, Bender, Bilhorod-Dnistrovsky, Birlad, Bolhrad, Borsa Maramures, Botosani, Briceny, Bucharest, Chernivtsi, Chiperceni, Chisinau, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Dej, Edinet, Gertsu, Iasi, Iclod, Izbeste, Khotin, Leova, Lipcani, Marghita, Moinesti, Moisei, Novoselitsa, Ocnita, Orhei, Piatra-Neamt, Reghin, Ruscova, Ribnita, Sacueni, Sadgora, Sapinta, Satu-Mare, Sebes, Sighetu Marmatiei, Soroka, Stefanesti, Suceava, Telenesti, Tirgu Neamt, Tirgu Ocna, and Viseul de Sus.

YIVO Archives RG 120 -- Rumania

Roman Vishniac Collection (1930's). The collection contains photographs of Jewish life in Romania in the late 1930’s.
YIVO Archives RG 122

Web Sites

www.jewishgen.org/romsig/

Website of Romania Special Interested Group within the JewishGen website

www.jewishgen.org/databases/Romania/

The JewishGen All-Romania database (including Moldova) is an index of tens of thousands of records related to Romania (from different sources)

www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/kishinev/pogromvictims1903.htm

Kishinev Pogrom Victims

www.feefhs.org/links/romania.html

Romanian home page of the Federation of East European Family History Societies

www.rootsweb.com/%7Eromwggw/districthotmap.html

This map shows county boundaries with links to individual county maps indicating most major towns

www.rootsweb.com/~romwggw/index.html

Romania World GenWeb, important web site related to genealogical research in Romania. (Addresses and telephone numbers for archives, maps and other links)

www.romanianjewish.org

B'nai Brith International and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania

<http://romania.ici.ro/en/index.html>

Romanian Home Page

www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/romania.html

Romania online historical maps (Perry-Castaneda Library, University of Texas at Austin)

www.ushmm.org/research/center/presentations/features/details/2005-03-10

Romania Facing the Past (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum) - report

www.loc.gov/rr/european/phonero/romdir.html

Online historical directory for Bucharest and Romania from the years: 1923-4, 1937, 1938, 1958 and 1959

www.rtrfoundation.org/

Miriam Weiner's Routes to Roots Foundation web site contains some maps related to Romania

www.haruth.com/JewsRomania.html

Links to various topics related to Jewish Romanian interest

www.lo-tishkach.org

Lo-Tishkach European Jewish Cemeteries Foundation contains database of Romanian cemeteries

www.progenealogists.com/romania/

Website of professional genealogists with list of Archives in Romania

www.bh.org.il/V-Exh/Romania/

