

## Ukraine: Jewish Family History Research Guide

### Brief History

During the middle ages, Ukrainian lands were controlled by a loosely knit group of principalities. By the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, most Ukrainian lands were possessed by either the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the Mongolian-Tatar Golden Horde. In 1569, the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania united as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and western Ukrainian lands were placed under Polish control. At that time, eastern Ukrainian lands were under the control of the Ottoman Empire. In 1772, Russia, Prussia, and Austria partitioned the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and several Ukrainian areas were made part of Galicia, a province of Austria. By 1795, Austria controlled western Ukraine and Russia controlled eastern Ukraine. By the end of WWI, Ukrainian lands were within the borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (a constituent of the USSR), Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. After Soviet victory in WWII, the borders of the Ukrainian SSR expanded westward to include the Ukrainian areas of Galicia. Upon the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Ukraine became an independent state. More detailed information about the history of Ukraine is found in Paul Robert Magosci's *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas* (see below).

For a general history of Jews in Ukraine, see "Ukraine," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Professor Zvi Gitelman's chapter on "The Jews of Ukraine and Moldova," originally published in Miriam Weiner's *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova* (see below) is now available online at [www.rtrfoundation.org/webart/UK-arch-Ch1Gitelman.pdf](http://www.rtrfoundation.org/webart/UK-arch-Ch1Gitelman.pdf).

### Finding Your Ancestral Town

Once you have identified the name of your ancestral town, you can locate it on the map with the following sources. It is also very helpful to identify the province in which your ancestral town is located, using historical atlases and/or the websites listed at the end of this fact sheet.

Mokotoff, Gary and Sallyann Amdur Sack with Alexander Sharon. *Where Once We Walked—Revised Edition: A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust* (Avotaynu, 2002). This gazetteer lists towns according to variant spellings and provides the map coordinates of the town, as well as an estimate of the pre-WWII Jewish population. **Genealogy Institute DS 135 .E83 M65 2002**

*ShtetlSeeker Database* [www.jewishgen.org/ShtetlSeeker](http://www.jewishgen.org/ShtetlSeeker)

This database allows you to search for towns using either the exact spelling or the Daitch-Mokotoff Soundex. Soundex searches find similar sounding names with variant spellings. Links on the database connect each town name to MapQuest.com, where the town location is identified with a red star on the map.

### Vital Records

In the Russian Empire, records were kept by the Jewish community and were mandatory starting in 1835. They were in a tabular format in Russian and Hebrew. There were also numerous censuses (also called "Revision Lists") in the 18th and 19th century and an all-Empire census in 1897. The censuses are held by the regional archives but are not available for all areas. Specific information may be found in the following:

Weiner, Miriam. *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova*, (Routes to Roots and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1999). This book covers towns in present-day Ukraine and Moldova. The archival inventories, in alphabetical order by town, list what records are available from which archives. It should be noted, however, that these archives do not always respond fully to requests and many individuals choose, instead, to hire outside researchers. A referral to a professional researcher can be obtained by writing to the JewishGen discussion list, or to the Special Interest Group discussion lists (see addresses below). **Genealogy Institute DS 135 .U4 W37**

Kronick, Aleksander and Sack, Sallyann Amdur. *Some Archival Sources for Ukrainian-Jewish Genealogy* (Avotaynu, Inc., 1997). This book inventories the records of 300 towns in 12 archives, mainly the archives in Kiev, Lviv, Warsaw and Zhitomir. **Genealogy Institute DS 135 .U4 K76**

You can identify what records from your town have survived, and where they are located, at the website of the Routes to Roots Foundation, which offers a database of genealogical records for towns in Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, and Ukraine (see below).

## Other Sources

*Yizkor Books*: Yizkor books are memorial books that recollect Eastern European Jewish communities. To learn whether there is a yizkor book for your town, consult the yizkor book bibliography at the Center for Jewish History or check the Yizkor Book project on the JewishGen website, at [www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor](http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor). The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research has one of the world's largest collections of yizkor books. For example, two yizkor books about Ukrainian towns at YIVO are:

*Chelm*, M. Bakalczuk-Felin, 1954, in Yiddish.

*Dnepropetrovsk-Yekaterinoslav*, Harkavy and Goldburt, 1973, in Hebrew.

*Pinkas Hakehillot Poland, Volumes I-VII*. Your town may have been in Poland at some time in its history. This is a multi-volume encyclopedia of towns in Hebrew, published by Yad Vashem, providing brief town histories and demographic information. **REF DS 135 .E81 P65 1976**

Magocsi, Paul Robert. *Ukraine—A Historical Atlas*. (University of Toronto Press, 1985) This book provides maps showing the changes in Ukraine's borders through 1985. **Genealogy Institute G 2151 .S1 M34**

For additional sources at the Center for Jewish History, search CJH's online catalog at <http://search.cjh.org>.

## Web Resources

**Routes to Roots Foundation, Inc.** [www.rtrfoundation.org](http://www.rtrfoundation.org)

This site continually updates Miriam Weiner's books on Poland, Ukraine, and Moldova. The database is searchable by town, listing records for towns in Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, and Ukraine. Contact information and web links, where available, are provided for archival repositories in all of these countries.

**Ukraine Special Interest Group (SIG)**

[www.jewishgen.org/Ukraine](http://www.jewishgen.org/Ukraine)

**Gesher Galicia SIG**

[www.jewishgen.org/Galicia/](http://www.jewishgen.org/Galicia/)

**Hungarian SIG** (including Sub-Carpathian Ukraine)

[www.jewishgen.org/Hungary/](http://www.jewishgen.org/Hungary/)

**Romanian SIG** (including Moldova and southern Ukraine)

[www.jewishgen.org/romsig/](http://www.jewishgen.org/romsig/)

SIGs cover specific geographical regions. They sponsor e-mail discussion lists, publish newsletters, and maintain web sites and databases.

**Eastern Europe FAQ**

[www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/eefaq.html#UKRAINE](http://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/eefaq.html#UKRAINE)

This article provides an overview of the availability of records from Ukraine, and explains how to access them.

**JewishGen ShtetLinks**

[www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/ukraine](http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/ukraine)

ShtetLinks hosts websites for specific towns, including towns in Ukraine.

**Ukrainian Genealogical Society**

[www.rootsweb.com/~ukrgs](http://www.rootsweb.com/~ukrgs)

This site includes a bibliography of helpful books on Ukraine, as well as links to other general (not specifically Jewish) Ukrainian genealogy sites.