Poland: Jewish Family History Research Guide

Polish Geographic History

In the second half of the 18th century, the Kingdom of Poland also included what are now Lithuania, Belarus, and part of Ukraine. After the Third Partition of Poland in 1795, Poland ceased to be an independent nation. Prussia annexed the northern and western sections: Bialystok, Kalisz, Lomza, and Poznan. Russia annexed the eastern areas: Brest, Grodno, and Vilna. Austria annexed the southern areas as part of the gubernia, or province, of Western Galicia: Kielce, Lublin, Radom, and Siedlce. In 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, a semi-autonomous Kingdom of Poland, was established within the Russian Empire. The Kingdom of Poland, also known as Congress Poland, did not include Galicia, Poznan, Silesia, Pomerania, most of Lithuania, or Belarus. At the end of World War I, Poland was reestablished at three-fifths of pre-partition size with the addition of Galicia, Poznan, Pomerania, and sections of Silesia. Borders were again redrawn after World War II.

Finding Your Ancestral Town

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

Where Once We Walked: A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust—Revised Edition, by Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Amdur Sack with Alexander Sharon. (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-World War II Jewish population.
Genealogy Institute DS 135 .E83 M65 2002

The Jewish Communities Database and JewishGen Gazetteer

The JewishGen Communities Database contains information about 6,000 Jewish communities in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. This database contains each community's name in various languages and political jurisdictions during different time periods - **http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/**

JewishGen KehilaLinks (formerly "ShtetLinks") is a project facilitating web pages commemorating the places where Jews have lived. These web pages may contain information, pictures, databases, and links to other sources providing data about that place - **http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/**

The JewishGen Gazetteer contains the names of one million localities in 54 countries in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia - **http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocTown.asp**

The data is based on the U.S. Board on Geographic Names databases. For each locality, the search results will display:

- The place's name(s), with the native name in bold.
- Coordinates — latitude and longitude.
- Links to maps.
- Country in which the locality is located today.
- Distance and direction from reference point.
- Link to display all places within a 10 mile radius.

Vital Records

There are four main sources of information about vital records from towns in Poland—the Family History Library, the Routes to Roots Foundation, the Polish State Archives, and Jewish Records Indexing-Poland.

Family History Library (FHL) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS)

The Family History Library of the Church of Latter-day Saints has microfilmed a number of Polish records. To identify the relevant microfilms, do a "Place Search" in the Family History Library Online Catalog **https://familysearch.org/#form=catalog**, first using the town name, and then using the province (gubernia) name.

LDS microfilms can be ordered online for viewing at any LDS Family History Center including the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute. The ordering website is **http://www.familysearch.org/films**. Further information and instructions on ordering microfilms for viewing at the Genealogy Institute can be found at **http://www.cjh.org/p/34#microfilms**. Many LDS microfilms of Jewish interest are available at the Genealogy Institute on long-term loan. A list of these microfilms can be found at **http://www.jgsny.org/microfilms-at-cjh**.

The Family History Library has been digitizing its collections, and therefore, many records are already available on its site either image only, index only, or both image and index. To browse the digitized collections by country, visit **https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list**

Routes to Roots Foundation, Inc.
The Routes to Roots Foundation database lists Jewish genealogical records located in Eastern European archives for towns currently in Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, and Ukraine. In cooperation with archivists in all five countries, the web site updates listings previously published in Miriam Weiner's books (see below).
www.rtrfoundation.org

Polish State Archives
Searchable databases of archival holdings, links to individual archives, and information about accessing the collections
www.archiwa.gov.pl/

Jewish Records Indexing—Poland
Jewish Records Indexing-Poland (JRI-Poland) is an ongoing project to create an on-line database of indices to 19th century Jewish records from current and former territories of Poland. The database covers records microfilmed by the FHL as well as nonmicrofilmed records located in the Polish State Archives, the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, and other repositories.
www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/

Selected References at the Center for Jewish History

Beider, Alexander. *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from Galicia.* Avotaynu, 2004.
Genealogy Institute. CS 3010 .Z9 G353 2004

Beider, Alexander. *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Kingdom of Poland*. **Genealogy Institute CS 3010 .B419**

Frazin, Judith. *A Translation Guide to 19th Century Polish Language Civil Registration Documents* (Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois, 2009). **Genealogy Institute CS 871 .F73**

Gruber, Ruth Ellen. *Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to Central and Eastern Europe* (Jason Aronson, 1999).
Genealogy Institute DS 135 .E83 G68

Pinkas-Ha Kehillot, Poland, Volumes I-VII: This encyclopedia of towns (in Hebrew), published by Yad Vashem, provides brief town histories and demographic information. **REF DS 135 .P65 v. 1-7**

Shea, Jonathan D., and William F. Hoffman. *In Their Words: A Genealogist's Translation Guide to Polish, German Latin and Russian Documents, V.1 [Polish] & 2 [Russian]* (Language and Lineage Press, 2000-2002).
Genealogy Institute CS 873 .S49 2000 (v.1), CS 844 .S49 2002 (v.2)

Weiner, Miriam. *Jewish Roots in Poland* (Routes to Roots and YIVO, 1997) **Genealogy Institute CS 877 .J4 W45**

Weiner, Miriam. *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova* (Routes to Roots and YIVO, 1999).
Genealogy Institute DS 135 .U4 W37

Wynne, Suzan. *Finding Your Jewish Roots in Galicia: A Resource Guide* (Avotaynu, 1998). Covers towns formerly in the province of Galicia ("Austrian Poland"), now divided between Poland and Ukraine, listing vital records by town and explaining how to obtain them. **Genealogy Institute CS 878 .G35 W96**

Wynne, Suzan. *The Galitzianers: the Jews of Galicia, 1772-1917.* (Suzan F. Wynne, 2006)
Genealogy Institute DS135.P62G32

Selected Web Sites

JewishGen Poland Database - Records indexes, business directories, Holocaust lists, etc.
www.jewishgen.org/databases/#Poland

Judaica Europeana - **http://www.judaica-europeana.eu/**

Museum of Family History - **http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/**

The Postal Savings Bank throughout Interwar Poland: Spis właścicieli kont czekowych w Pocztowej Kasie Oszczędności - A digitized copy can be found via the CJH Digital Collections at **http://access.cjh.org/ -** in the search box enter: Spis właścicieli kont czekowych w Pocztowej Kasie Oszczędności (or just Spis.)

Shoreshim: Jewish Roots in Poland – Paid resource, subscription required, available on site at CJH
http://www.shoreshim.org/en/default.asp

Virtual Shtetl – Search for your town in Poland - **http://www.sztetl.org.pl/pl/selectcity/**

Yizkor (Memorial) Books: some of the best sources for learning about Jewish communities in Eastern and Central Europe. Groups of former residents, or landsmanshaftn, have published these books as a tribute to their former homes and the people who were murdered during the Holocaust. The majority of these books were written in Hebrew or Yiddish. The Yizkor Book Project at JewishGen has made a lot of the information available through translations
http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/

For more information about Yizkor Books please check our website at **www.cjh.org/p/60** (special-interest topics.)

Regional Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
Danzig/Gdańsk SIG: **http://www.jewishgen.org/Danzig/**
Gesher Galicia (Poland and Ukraine): **www.jewishgen.org/Galicia**
Kielce-Radom SIG (south-central Poland): **www.jewishgen.org/krsig**
Suwalk-Lomza SIG (Poland and Lithuania): **www.jewishgen.org/SuwalkLomza**
Warszawa Research Group - **http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/WarszawaGroup.html**

PolishRoots: Databases, such as an 1835 Posen city directory, covering both non-Jews and Jews
www.polishroots.org – links to many free databases.

Library of Congress: Digitized 1923 commercial directory for Poland and Gdansk (Danzig)
The directory can be found at **http://www.loc.gov/rr/european/pdir/poldir.html**