

Poland: Jewish Family History Research Guide

Polish Geographical 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 WWI, 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 WW II.

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 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-WWII Jewish population.
Genealogy Institute DS 135 .E83 M65 2002

ShtetlSeeker Database

This database allows you to search for towns using either the exact spelling or the Daitch-Mokotoff Soundex, which finds similar-sounding names with variant spellings. A search may also be limited to a specific country. Links on the database connect each town name to several online mapping web sites.

www.jewishgen.org/ShtetlSeeker

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 FHL has microfilmed Jewish birth, marriage, and death records from over 500 Polish cities and towns. Over 2,000 microfilms contain approximately 2,000,000 records, the majority from 1808 to 1865, with some continuing up to 1888.

To identify the relevant microfilms, do a “Place Search” in the Family History Library Online Catalog, **<https://familysearch.org/>**, first using the town name, and then using the province name. For a list of microfilms on long-term loan at the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute, see **www.jgsny.org/microfiche.htm**. Additional films are available through our short-term loan program, or at any LDS Family History Center (FHC).

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/?CIDA=176

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 non-microfilmed 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, 1989). **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

Regional Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

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

PolishRoots: Databases, such as an 1835 Posen city directory, covering both non-Jews and Jews

www.polishroots.org

Library of Congress: Digitized 1923 commercial directory for Poland and Gdansk (Danzig)

lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=gdc3&fileName=scd0001_20020613002popage.db