

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 Austria-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. These resources at the Center for Jewish History contain further historical details:

Encyclopedia of Eastern Europe

Modern reference work gives a balanced history of disputed territories, such as Transylvania. Romanian topics are covered on pages 666-698.

REF DJK 6 .E53 2000

Encyclopedia Judaica

Comprehensive source of articles on major towns and regions.

REF DS 102.8 .E496

Jewish Encyclopedia

Published in New York beginning in 1901; presents an early 20th-century view of international Jewish problems.

REF DS 102.8 .J7

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

REF DS 135 R7 A6 1991

Cargher, Janku Meir. *Die Judenfrage in Rumaenien*. Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke, 1918. Provides a historical narrative with specific details about various pieces of legislation.

LBI DS 135 R7 C35

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 2023

Eskenasy, Victor, et al. *Izvoare si marturii referitoare la evreii din România = Sources and testimonies concerning the Jews in Romania*. Bucharest: Federatia Comunitatilor Evreiesti din Republica Socialista România, Centrul de Documentare, 1986-.

YIVO 9/83842, /107486

Forster, Norman L., and Demeter B. Rostovsky. *The Roumanian Handbook*. London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1931.

YIVO 3/36339

Geller, Jacob. *Ha-Yehudim ha-Sefaradim be-Romanyah*. Tel Aviv: U. at Tel Aviv, 1983.

YIVO /90751

Gyemant, Ladislau. "The Jews from Romania: An Historical Destiny." *ROM-SIG News*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Spring 1995, pp. 9-13. Summary article by a professor of Jewish history who is also an active genealogical researcher.

Genealogy Institute

Hartman, Zvi, editor. *Antisemitism in Romania: The Image of the Jew in the Romanian Society. Bibliography*. Tel Aviv: The Goldstein-Goren Centre for the History of the Jews in Romania--Diaspora Research Institute, 1993.

REF DS 135 R7 A62 1993

Hincu, Dumitru, ed. *Evreii din Romania in razboiul de reintregire a tarii, 1916-1919*. Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1996. Includes cemetery data and lists of dead, wounded, decorated, and imprisoned soldiers.

YIVO /112904

Hitchins, Keith. *Rumania, 1866-1947*. New York: Oxford U. Pr., 1994.

YIVO /88224

Iancu, Carol. *Jews in Romania 1866-1919: From Exclusion to Emancipation*. New York: Columbia U. Pr., 1996.

Based on primary source material in Romania, France, and Israel, this translation of a French doctoral thesis contains many statistics, but unfortunately no footnotes!

YIVO /92175

Kissman, Joseph. "Immigration of Rumanian Jews up to 1914." *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science, 1947-48*, pages 160-179. Well written and detailed.

REF – YIVO Publications

Kissman, Joseph. *Shtudyets tsu der Geshikhte fun Rumenishe Yidn in 19tn un Onheyb 20stn yorhunder = Studies in the History of Rumanian Jews in the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Centuries*. New York: YIVO, 1944.

YIVO REF DS 135 .R7 K5

Knyphausen, Anton. *Rumaenische Palette: das Land der Hirten und Bauern*. Berlin: Im Deutschen Verlag, 1942.

YIVO /31139

Neumann, Victor. *Istoria Evreilor din Romania: Studii Documentare si Teoretice*. Timisoara: Amarcord, 1996.

YIVO /107396

Romanian Jewish Studies. Jerusalem, 1987. 2 journal issues with English-language articles.

YIVO 15/10166

Ruppin, Arthur. *Die Juden in Rumaenien*. Berlin: Verlag von Louis Lamm, 1908. 40-page pamphlet with statistics.

LBI DS 135 R7 R86

Schuster, Hans. *Die Judenfrage in Rumaenien*. Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1939. Provides a brief history, but contains mainly descriptive material with some statistics.

LBI DS 135 R7 S37

Schwartzfeld, Elias. "The Jews of Roumania from the Earliest Times to the Present Day" and "The Situation of the Jews in Romania since the Treaty of Berlin." *American Jewish Yearbook 1901-2*, pp. 25-87.

Genealogy Institute and REF DS 101 AJ 1901-02

Studia Judaica. Cluj-Napoca: "Babes-Bolyai" University, 1991- . Periodical.

YIVO /108405

Verax [Rosetti, Radu D.] *La Roumanie et les Juifs*. Bucharest: I. V. Socecu, 1903.

LBI DS 125 R7 V4

The following sources have information about specific regions or towns within Romania:

Carmilly, Moshe. *Istoria Evreilor din Transilvania (1623-1944)*. Bucharest: Enciclopedica, 1994.

YIVO /87866

Deutsch, Judah Joel. *Sefer Mishnat Bet Aba*. New York: Y. Y. Doitsh, 1980.

AJHS BM 522.3 .E7

Dicker, Herman. *Piety and Perseverance: Jews from the Carpathian Mountains*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Pr., 1981.

AJHS DS 135 .R93 Z273

Farkas, Rose. *Rucele: Sixty Years from Szatmar to Los Angeles*. Santa Barbara, CA: Fithian Pr., 1998.

YIVO /93680

Gyemant, Ladislau. "The Jews of Transylvania: Historical and Statistical Preliminaries." *ROM-SIG News*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Winter 1995, pp. 3-5. Summary article.

Genealogy Institute

Kara, I. *Juden in Podu Iloaiei: zur Geschichte Eines Rumaenischen Shtetls*. Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 1997.

YIVO /99690

Kohen, Yitshak Yosef. *Chakhme Transilvanyah = Sages of Transylvania*. Jerusalem: Mifal Moreshet Yahadut Hungaryah, 1988.

YIVO /83204

Magyar Tortenelmi Tarsulat. *Siebenburgen*. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1940. Focuses on Hungarians, Romanians, and Germans, with photos of ethnic costumes, churches, and castles.

YIVO /32075

Mozes, Terez. *Evreii din Oradea [Varadi Zsidok. Romanian.]* Bucharest, Editura Hasefer, 1997.

YIVO /112901

Neumann, Victor. *Istoria Evreilor din Banat: O Marturie a Multi Si Interculturalitatii Europei Central-orientale*. Bucharest: Atlas, 1999.

YIVO /105262

Ojtser: das Shtetl in der Moldau und Bukowina Heute. Vienna: C. Brandstaetter, 1988.

LBI Library st 1209

Pachet, Pierre. *Conversations a Jassy*. Paris: M. Nadeau, 1997.

YIVO /92204

Peri, Yitshak. *Toldot ha-Yehudim bi-Transilvanyah ba-meah ha-esrim=Az Erdelyi Zsidóság Története a Huszadik Században=The History of the Jews in Transylvania During the Twenties [sic] Century*. Tel Aviv: Hotsah Tarbut, 1995.

YIVO /88076

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. 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 (Austria-) 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. Besides the encyclopedias listed above, the following resources can be extremely helpful in this process:

Nomenclatura Postala a Localitatilor (Orase, Comune, Sate, Catune, Ferma, Manastiri, etc.) din Romania. Bucharest: "Eminescu" S.A., Institut de Arte Grafice si Editura, 1925.

REF DR 204.3 .N6

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.).

Genealogy Institute

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

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

Finding Records

Although religious authorities were required to maintain registers of births, marriages, and deaths starting around 1790 in Austria-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 Austria-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. The FHL has not been allowed to microfilm records in Romania. Jewish vital records are only available for Apateu, Cahul, Causani-Noui, Chisinau, Sacueni, Salard, Salonta, Sintimreu, and Tighina. Some films of census records are available for areas that were previously under Hungarian rule (see our fact sheet on Hungary). However, most genealogical research must be done on site in Romania. These articles explain how and where:

Gyemant, Ladislau. "Sources for Jewish Genealogical Research in Romania" and "Where to Find Jewish Genealogy Research Materials in Romania." *Avotaynu*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Fall 1996, p. 8-11, and *ROM-SIG News*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Summer 1998.

Genealogy Institute

www.rootsweb.com/~romwgw/transylrecords.html

Provides addresses and telephone numbers for archives in the Banat, Bihor, Maramures, Satu Mare, and Transylvania.

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.

Genealogy Institute

www.rtrfoundation.org/

Miriam Weiner's Routes to Roots Foundation web site updates the information contained in her book.

www.jewishgen.org/databases/Romania/

The JewishGen All-Romania database (including Moldova) is an index of tens of thousands of records.

Certain records were created specific to the "Sudits," or foreigners living in Romania during the 19th century. These individuals, under the diplomatic and legal protection of a foreign government, were granted special economic privileges through treaties with the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. One-third or more of the Sudits were Jewish. For details, see:

Maries, Stela. "The *Sudits* of Romania: Invited and Privileged Guests?" [Translated/edited by Burno Segal.] *ROM-SIG News*, Vol. 4 No. 3, Spring 1996, p. 3-9; Vol. 4, No. 4, Summer 1996, p. 5-10; and Vol. 5, No. 1, Fall 1996, p. 8-16.

Genealogy Institute

Depending on the region and time period, records may be in one of several languages: Romanian, Hungarian, German, Russian, Hebrew, and/or Latin. The same can be said of naming patterns. Although Sephardic Jews adopted surnames as early as the 15th century, prior to 1800 most Ashkenazi Jews used Hebrew or Yiddish patronymics (e.g., Moshe ben Avraham). Laws mandating surname adoption took decades to implement.

Although surnames at the time of adoption were in the official language of the locality, a name (or they way a name was spelled) could be changed for various reasons. Specifically, Jews living under Hungarian rule increasingly abandoned Hebrew or German names for Magyarized versions as the 19th century progressed. For a more detailed discussion, see:

Bratu, Marcel. "The Surnames of the First Ashkenazi Jews in Romania;" "Sephardic Surnames in Romania;" "The Surnames of the Later Ashkenazi Jews in Romania;" "Onomastic Derailments: Irregular Surnames;" and "Ashkenazi Surnames Appeared...Quite Soon." *ROM-SIG News*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Summer 1996, p.23; Vol. 5., No. 1, Fall 1996, p. 21-22; Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 1996-97, p. 5-7; Vol. 5, No. 3, Spring 1997, p. 28-29; and Vol. 5, No. 4, Summer 1997, p. 31-34.

Genealogy Institute

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 contain the records of Romanian-American religious congregations, such as:

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://catalog.cjh.org> or one of the following sources:

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

Genealogy Institute

Guide to the YIVO Archives. New York: YIVO, 1998.

Genealogy Institute

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

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

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* emigrant groups around 1900; 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 & 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 www.yivo.org/library/index.php.

Subjects include fusgeyers, farmers, blacksmiths, a tinsmith, a furrier, lumberyard & winery workers, shepherds, butchers, grocers, peddlers, rabbis, medical equipment and personnel, traditional and vocational schools, agricultural colonists (1920s 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-Dnistrovskyy, 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

American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) Photographs

YIVO Archives RG 335.9

American ORT Foundation (vocational training programs)

YIVO Archives RG 380

Roman Vishniac Collection (1930's)

YIVO Archives RG 1223

Yiddish Theater Photographs

YIVO Archives RG 119

Holocaust Resources

Besides CJH's online catalog, CJH's online Holocaust Bibliography provides greater detail on archival collections.

www.cjh.org/shoa/search.php

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.

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, Gertsu, Gherla, Gura Humorului, Halmeu, Hirlau, Huedin, Ileanda, Kapreshty, Kushnitsa, Maramures, Marculesti, Marghita, Mihaileni, Oradea, Radauti, Rakhov, Reteag, Romania, Ruscova, Sadgora, Salaj, Saveni, Snyatyn, Somcuta Mare, Stefanesti, Strimtura, Tasnad, Tirgu Lapus, Tirgu Mures, Transylvania, Turt, Tyachev, Vatra-Dornei, Vinogradov, and Zadneye.

Other reference books useful for Holocaust research include:

Alexandru, J., and S. Stanciu. *Martiriul Evreilor din Romania 1940-1944: Documente si marturii = The Martyrdom of the Jews in Romania 1940-1944: Documents and Testimonies*. Federatia Comunitatilor Evreiesti din România. Centrul pentru Studiul Istoriei Evreilor din România. Bucharest: Hasefer, 1991.

YIVO 9/83843

Ansel, Jean. *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry During the Holocaust*. New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986.

LBI DS 135 RY D7

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

YIVO /92176

Braham, Randolph L., editor. *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

YIVO /87631

Butnaru, I. C. *The Silent Holocaust: Romania and its Jews*. New York: Greenwood, 1992.

Provides the historical background of anti-Semitism in Romania as well as an account of the Holocaust period.

YIVO DS 135 .R7 B78

Carmilly, Moshe. *The road to life: the rescue operation of Jewish refugees on the Hungarian-Romanian border in Transylvania, 1936-1944*. New York: Shengold, 1994.

YIVO /88667

Geller, Iacov. *Ha-Amidah ha-Ruchanit shel Yehude Romaniah be-tekhufat Holocaust (1940-1944)*. Lod: Orot Yahadut Ha-Mahgrab, 2002.

YIVO /109959

Giurescu, Dinu C. *Romania in al doilea razboi mondial: 1939-1945*. Bucuresti: All Educational, 1999.

YIVO /99691

Iancu, Carol. *La Shoah en Roumanie: les Juifs sous le Regime d'Antonescu (1940-1944): documents diplomatiques francais inedits*. Montpellier: U. Paul Valery, 1998.

YIVO /93454 [Romanian version, 2001: /108541]

Ioanid, Radu. *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies Under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000. Details the role of the Romanian national government in starving, torturing and killing hundreds of thousands of Jews.

YIVO /95231

Reviczky, Adam. *Verlorene Kriege, Gewonnene Schlachten = Vesztes haboruk, megnyer csatak*. Vienna: Bohlau Verlag, 1996.

YIVO /89369

Sebastian, Mihail. *Journal, 1935-1944*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000.

YIVO /98710

Rosen, Moses. *Martirul evreilor din Romania, 1940-1944. (Martyrdom of the Jews in Romania)*. Bucharest: Hasefer, 1991. Documents and testimonies.

YIVO 9/83843

Safran, Alexandre. *Resisting the Storm: Romania 1940-1947*. Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 1987. Memoirs and documents.

YIVO 9/82510

Web Sites

www.jewishgen.org/romsig/

ROM-SIG, Special Interest Group for Romanian Jewish Genealogy

www.fefhs.org/ro/frg-ro.html

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

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

Romania World GenWeb

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

The Jews of Romania—a Virtual Exhibition from Beth Hatefutsoth

www.romanianjewish.org

Romanian Jewish Community

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

Kishinev Pogrom victims

www.ici.ro/romania/en/index.html

Romanian Home Page

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

Romania 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)