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: Białystok, 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.

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 (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


Genealogy Institute. CS 3010 .Z9 G353 2004

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


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


Genealogy Institute CS 873 .S49 2000 (v.1), CS 844 .S49 2002 (v.2)


Weiner, Miriam. *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova* (Routes to Roots and YIVO, 1999).

Genealogy Institute DS 135 .U4 W37


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