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A Guide to Researching Indices To Jewish Records of Poland

The archives of Poland contain a remarkable collection of Jewish vital record registers that have survived the ravages of time and upheavals of history. Jewish Records Indexing – Poland is dedicated to the indexing of these and other records. This award-winning database has become a vital finding aid for family historians and has revolutionized the research into Jewish records from both current and former areas of Poland. The database depends on three prime resources:

LDS Microfilms of Records in the Polish State Archives

Records from 1810 to 1865 – and in some cases beyond – have been microfilmed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormons) and you can view them in LDS Family History Centers worldwide. There are about 2,000 microfilms containing Polish Jewish vital records for more than 570 cities and towns. These microfilms were the starting point for JRI-Poland's indexing and the foundation of its searchable database.

Polish State Archives - Direct

Three million records from 450 Polish towns now indexed

In July 1997, Jewish Records Indexing-Poland entered into an agreement with the Polish State Archives (PSA) to index its holdings of Jewish vital records not microfilmed by the Mormons (LDS). These generally are the records from about 1865 to 1905.

In 2000, the JRI-Poland/Polish State Archives project was expanded to include indexing of more than one million records from 88 towns in the eastern portion of the former Galicia area (now part of Ukraine). These records are located in AGAD, the Archiwum Glowne Akt Dawnych (The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw).

With the addition of these indices, information on the majority of Jewish vital records from the last decades of the 19th century and early 20th century have now become readily available outside of Poland. No longer is it necessary to hire the Polish State Archives or a private researcher to find records.

Other Sources

To fulfill its mission of indexing records of genealogical value, JRI-Poland is adding indices from other record groups in the Polish State Archives such as Census Records, Books of Permanent Residents, Army Draft, School and Court Records.

In addition, the JRI-Poland database includes records from such diverse sources as the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Polish museums, various cemeteries in Poland, and birth, marriage, death, draft evaders, and court notices in Polish newspapers.

How to use the JRI-Poland Database

JRI-Poland "Your Town" pages provide an overview of what records are available for your town in the Polish State Archives, which of these have been microfilmed by the LDS, and the status of JRI-Poland indexing of your town's records. But researchers are often not sure of the towns of their ancestors. From among the millions of Jewish records for thousands of Polish towns and villages, the JRI-Poland database can give quick insights into the locations where your family records may exist. The database offers search capability using the Daitch-Mokotoff soundex system, giving you access to sound-alike entries. You can search the database for surnames, given names, towns, or a combination of these search parameters. This does not mean you can get all records for a particular town, but if a small village is mentioned in a larger town's records, such a town search may find records that mention that village and help a researcher pinpoint in which record group that village can be found. IMPORTANT: While most searches can be made within a geographical area, two major additions to the JRI-Poland Database — the 1930s Aliyah Passport File and the post-war Monitor Polski court notices — require the researcher to search the entire database and not limit the search by geographical area.

Using the JRI-Poland database is a great first step in your research efforts. While the database does not contain actual vital records, successful searches will give you an index entry with the name, record number, the year the event was recorded (but not necessarily when it actually occurred). Search results include the LDS microfilm number so you can order the film and review the actual record at your local Family History Center. For records not filmed by the Mormons, follow the on-line instructions that include an easy-to-use form for ordering records from the Polish State Archives.

Surname Lists

The website includes "Surname Lists" extracted from the vital records indices of most towns that have been indexed. All surname/spelling variations, as written by the town registrar in the civil records, have been included in each surname list. This feature is an aid to researchers who may not initially recall all the names in their various family branches, but whose memories may be sparked by scanning the list. It also makes it possible to locate unusual spellings that are not identified in a sound-alike soundex search.

Easy Steps to a JRI-Poland Search

Click this Button Follow Instructions:

SEARCH THE DATABASE

Check JewishGen Family Finder <www.jewishgen.org/jgff> for newly discovered surnames; input your new surnames/towns into the JewishGen Family Finder entry. Check for JRI-Poland Shtetl CO-OPs for newly discovered town(s). Obtain actual record, make photocopy and/or extract and note important information. Input new information into your Family Tree.

• Note the LDS Microfilm Number(s) or Polish State Archive reference corresponding to records, located at the bottom of search results.
• Order LDS Film from your local Mormon Family History Center or order records from the Polish State Archives. (Using the On-Line Order Form) Copies of records from LDS films may also be ordered from the Family History Library, Salt Lake City <http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHL/frameset_library .asp?PAGE=library_services.asp> or Beth Hatefutsoth, The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv. <www.bh.org.il/Genealogy/ldsbyname.aspx>

Searching for Surname TOBIAZ

Database LOMZABIR (Lomza Polish Period Births)
Gubernia: Lomza/Province: Bialystok

Surname	Given name	Year	Type	Akt	Father's Name	Mother's Name
TOBIAZ	Maryam	1884	B	30	Szolim Izraelowicz	Malka
TOBIAZ	Chiam	1886	B	21	Moszk Idzkowicz	Chia Ryfka
TOBIAZ	Josk	1886	B	11	Symon Davidowicz	Leja

Database LOMZAMAR (Lomza Polish Period Marriages)
Gubernia: Lomza/Province: Bialystok

Surname	Given name	Year	Type	Akt	Father's Name	Mother's Name
TOBIAZ	Sora Ryfka	1832	M	6	Idzk Izraelowicz	Devorah
KATZ	Yitzhak	1832	M	6	Moszk Idzkowicz	Leja

Database LOMZADEA (Lomza Polish Period Deaths)
Gubernia: Lomza/Province: Bialystok

Surname	Given name	Year	Type	Akt	Father's Name	Mother's Name
TOBIAZ	Sora Ryfka	1832	D	60	Idzk Izraelowicz	Sora
TOBIAZ	Naftel	1834	D	25	Moszk Idzkowicz	Ryfka
TOBIAZ	Chackiel	1834	D	11	Symon Davidowicz	Sora Leja

Datafile	(LDS) Films / Contact Information
LOMZABIR	1199530, 1199531, 1199532, 1618507
LOMZAMAR	CLICK HERE FOR INSTRUCTIONS
LOMZADEA	CLICK HERE FOR INSTRUCTIONS

Building the JRI~Poland Database

How your towns get indexed from LDS Films

Shtetl CO-OP volunteers (see below) index the Latin script pre-1868 records. Both volunteers, and professionals funded by individuals and groups of Jewish genealogists, transliterate Cyrillic script entries from the post-1867 Russian era registers.

Congress Poland Records - Polish State Archives

Indexing takes place on an archive-by-archive basis, beginning with the designation of a volunteer to serve as "Archive Coordinator," who selects "Town Leaders" who become the fundraisers for their town project. JRI-Poland purchases index pages for the non-microfilmed years for all towns in the branch archive. The Warsaw-based JRI-Poland team indexes records for each town. The post-1867 records are in Russian and the data entry is done in Cyrillic. A custom software program transliterates entries to Latin characters. As surname frequency lists for each town are added to the website, Town Leaders begin fundraising for the project. Entries are added to the JRI-Poland online database when funding has been completed.

Galician Records - Polish State Archives

The records for Galicia differ in many respects from the other records indexed by JRI-Poland. There are very few LDS microfilms for these towns. The town records are in columnar format and rarely contain index pages. These records are written in either Polish or German. AGAD staff, working in their off-hours, have been hired by JRI-Poland to index the records directly to an Excel spreadsheet using procedures and templates developed by JRI-Poland.

Prussian Records – Polish State Archives

Many Prussian civil records of Jewish vital events are microfilmed, mostly from 1812-1874. Shtetl CO-OPs are working on some towns, but many more volunteers are needed (see next section). From 1874 onward, Jewish events in most former German towns were recorded in the Standesamt mixed civil record registers. There are more than 2800 towns with such records although not all contain Jewish entries. Many records from 1874 - 1884/1888 have been microfilmed by the LDS (see next section). More recent ones are being indexed by PSA staff, hired by JRI-Poland.

JRI-Poland's Shtetl CO-OP Initiative for records in LDS Microfilms

Shtetl CO-OPs are groups of volunteers with a common interest in an ancestral town or area. They share the work and cost of copying index pages in the LDS films for their town(s) and enter the indices into a spreadsheet. Files are checked for quality and then added to the database.

Shtetl CO-OPs emphasize cooperative research and sharing. While towns with one or two microfilms may have been indexed by a single dedicated volunteer, the team approach is valuable for towns that had large Jewish populations and for which there are many microfilms. Volunteers often become ongoing research partners, and sometimes even discover family connections.

Check the website for the current list of Shtetl CO-OPs and volunteer to lead or participate in a one for your town. Step-by step instructions are available to guide you.

Help Build the JRI - Poland Database

- Lead or join a Shtetl CO-OP
- Contribute indices for towns/years/films of interest to you.
- Photocopy and submit index pages for use by future Shtetl CO-OPs.
- Contact Shtetl CO-OP Coordinator Hadassah Lipsius at:
  <shtetlcoop@jri-poland.org> for more information on how you can help.

A Treasure for Genealogical, Genetic And Other Research

The database searches surnames within a specific town or broader geographic area. This not only benefits individual genealogists and those seeking to reunite families separated by the Holocaust, but the wider community as well. JRI-Poland has been recognized by the international medical and scientific community because of the potential benefit of the database for Ashkenazi families trying to trace their medical histories, particularly those at increased risk for hereditary conditions and diseases. The story of JRI-Poland was featured the Spring, 2001 issue of Avotaynu (Vol. XVII, No.1), the International Review of Jewish Genealogy and is available on the JRI-Poland home page.

An Overview of Jewish Vital Records of Russian Poland*

YEARS	1808-1825	1826-1867	1868-1917	1918-1942
Type	Catholic Civil Transcripts	Separate Jewish Registers		
Language	Polish		Russian	Polish
Location of Registers	Records older than 100 years are kept in regional branches of the Polish State Archives. Many of these records have been microfilmed by the Mormons, usually up to around 1865 or later for some towns.**			Records less than 100 years are typically kept in the town's Civil Records Office (Urzad Stanu Cywilnego).
JRI-Poland Indexing	Limited***	Shtetl CO-OPs	Polish State Archives Project	Not Available

* This chart applies only to records in localities within the semi-autonomous region under Russian rule known as the "Kingdom of Poland" (Congress Poland, aka "Russian Poland"). For other localities which are now part of Poland (e.g. former parts of Galicia, Prussian Poland, Grodno Gubernia), record formats, languages and periods covered are different.

For more detailed information, read Warren Blatt's "Vital Records in Poland – A Primer," Kielce-Radom SIG Journal, Vol. 1, No. 2. Or refer to Warren Blatt's "Poland Vital Records" InfoFile on JewishGen.

For some details of Jewish vital records available for towns of Congress Poland and Eastern Europe, see Miriam Weiner's Routes to Roots, Inc. website: www.rtrfoundation.org/index.html

** May be viewed at Mormon (LDS) Family History Centers around the world. Many of the Mormon (LDS) microfilms are available at the Douglas E. Goldman Jewish Genealogy Center at Beth Hatefutsoth - The Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv. A list of available towns and types of records on microfilm can be downloaded from the JRI-Poland website.

*** The majority of Jewish vital records in this period contain only patronymics rather than surnames.

An Overview of Jewish Vital Records For Eastern Galicia (AGAD Records)*

YEARS	Up to 1772	1772-1783	1784-1788	1789-1876	1877-1905	1906-1917	1918-1942
Galicia was Part of	Kingdom of Poland	Austrian Empire					Republic of Poland
Responsibility To maintain	No Civil Records		Catholic Church	Jewish Community	Jewish Community on behalf of Austrian or Polish Government		
Language			Latin	Mainly Polish	Polish or German		Polish
Location of Registers			None found in Catholic registers	AGAD, Warsaw and/or Ukraine Archives, Lviv		USC Warsaw and/or Ukraine Archives	
JRI-Poland Indexing				AGAD Polish State Archives Project only. Lviv not available		Not available for indexing	
Available In Poland				Most records available Start in 1877		Records less than 100 years Are kept in the Warsaw Civil Records Office (Urzad Stanu Cywilnego)	
To determine whether records exist And where they are located				Use the Archive Database at Miriam Weiner's Routes to Roots Foundation, Inc. /www.rtrfoundation.org			
To check availability from AGAD Archives And status of Indexing				Use the JRI-Poland AGAD Project Status Report /www./JRI-Poland.org/agadtowns.html			

* This chart applies to Jewish vital records from former Polish towns in the Eastern portion of Galicia (now part of Ukraine), available in AGAD, the Archiwum Glowne Akt Dawnych (The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw). Eastern Galicia is defined as the area east of the Bug River. Records from Polish towns that were formerly part of Western Galicia (west of the Bug River), are located in branches of the Polish State Archives in this region.