

## Books of Residents and Other Valuable Polish Resources

Fay and Julian Bussgang

When vital (metrical) records are missing for towns being researched in Poland, there are many other sources that may give the information sought, such as:

1) **Books of Residents/Lists of Residents** (*Księgi Ludności, Spis Mieszkańców*). These records, usually bound in huge volumes, are found in Polish regional state archives. If the books have survived for the towns being researched, an enormous amount of information can be gotten from them. Unlike a census, Books of Residents are ongoing registrations, spanning a number of years, recording the comings and goings of the permanent residents of a community. Organized by house number or address, they contain some or all of the following information for each household: name of resident, sex, names of parents (including mother's maiden name), place and date of birth, marital status (single, married, widowed), social status (peasant, town dweller, nobility), religion, occupation, and previous residence.

Sometimes, a name may have been crossed out at a later date. If so, the reason is given in the "Notes" column. For example, if a daughter had married and moved out, the date and place of her marriage, the name of her husband, and the registration number of the marriage document might be listed. If a person had died, the date and place of death is often shown. If the person had moved, the new city or address or house number is often noted. A man's military status might be given—in the army, in the reserves, etc.

The time period covered by the books may vary from community to community. From the mid 1800s until 1931, all communities in the Kingdom of Poland were required to maintain Books of Residents. In Kraków, Books of Residents (called *Spis*) existed from the 1850s onward. However, rather than being continually updated, as in the Kingdom of Poland, data was recorded every ten years or so, like a census. Maiden names and names of parents were not included. Books of Residents of the city of Kraków sometimes include the Jewish quarter, Kazimierz, and/or the suburb of Podgórze (where many Jews lived). However, for some years, books for these areas were separate. In addition, people living in Kraków who were not permanent residents (*obcy*) were sometimes listed in separate books.

It used to be very difficult to find out which Books of Residents have been preserved for particular towns and what dates are covered by them. However, the Polish State Archives now offers this information on their website (see below).

2) **Registration Books** (*Księgi Meldunkowe/Księgi Rejestru*) or **Books for Population Mobility Control** (*Księgi Kontroli Ruchu Ludności*). These books replaced the *Księgi Ludności*, beginning in 1932. They contain information similar to the Books of Residents, except that they are organized by surname rather than by house number or address and include all residents of a community, not just those who have their permanent legal residence there. These volumes are housed in regional state archives.

3) **Survivor Lists**. Located in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*), these lists contain the names of thousands of Jewish survivors who were registered after the war all over Poland plus many lists of Polish Jews registered elsewhere, e.g., in DP camps or in Swedish rehabilitation centers. The lists contain name, birth date, names of parents, address before the war, and address when registered. This information is not always accurate or complete.

4) **Ghetto Lists**: a) Łódź Ghetto. A list of Łódź Ghetto inhabitants, originally kept by the Germans, can be found in several places, including the headquarters of Former Lodz Residents in Tel Aviv, Yad Vashem, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the University of Toronto. The database is now online and can be accessed through JewishGen or through the Yad Vashem Central Database of Victims of the Shoah (see Useful Websites below). The list shows name, birth date, place of residence, and changes of place of residence. It also shows date of death if it occurred in the ghetto and sometimes date of deportation. By comparing addresses of people with the same last name, it may be possible to reconstruct family living

units. The online database can be searched not only for surname but for any word, making it possible to find people for whom you know only a first name or address.

b) **Other ghettos.** The Polish State Archives in Kraków have copies of applications for *Kennkarten* (wartime identity cards). Information about the inhabitants of ghettos in Białystok, Łódź, Kraków, and Warsaw are located in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. At the Institute, there are also cards documenting deaths of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. These cards often have photos.

5) **Records of Jewish Communities** (*Kahał* or *Gmina Żydowska*). Jewish community records for many towns are located in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (*Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych*–AGAD) at 7 Długa Street, in the collection called “CWW” (*Centralne Władze Wyznaniowe Królestwa Polskiego*). The time frame for most of these records is mid to late nineteenth century.

Jewish communities had their own form of self-government within the Polish state. These *gmina* (community) records are mostly concerned with building and maintaining synagogues, assessing and collecting contributions, and electing rabbis—sometimes, with resolving disputes. For the genealogist, these records may be useful simply in placing someone in a given community at a given time.

6) **Synagogue Records.** These 20th century records, found in the Jewish Historical Institute, are for a limited number of communities. A list of members shows not only the names and what contributions they made to the synagogue each year but may also show the address where they lived. Some communities show voting lists for synagogue council members and may include occupation in addition to address.

7) **Notary Records.** Each notary kept his own books, so there may be many such records for a given community. Preserved in regional state archives, these records may contain prenuptial agreements, wills, business agreements, summonses (e.g., for nonpayment of rent), documentation of loans, validation of matriculation, etc.—whenever an official certification that something took place was needed.

8) **Cemetery Records.** These exist for a very limited number of communities. Kraków, Łódź, and Warsaw are known to have partial lists of people buried there. The JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry ([www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetery/](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetery/)) continues to document cemeteries.

9) **Księgi adresowe** (Address Books/Business Directories). *Księgi adresowe*, found in regional archives, are similar to city directories. Each volume may be somewhat different but in general contains: 1) lists of individuals by occupation and 2) lists of heads of household within the city, noting address and occupation. Sections in newer volumes of *księgi adresowe* may have telephone numbers, addresses of city offices, schools, institutions, and sanatoriums, as well as house owners, listed by street.

10) **Kalendarze** (Calendars). Found in regional state archives, *kalendarze* were business directories published every year or so in cities like Łódź. Much like our Yellow Pages, they contained a list of businesses, organized by trade and by location, as well as advertisements.

11) **Almanacs.** *Almanach Żydowski*, containing biographies of Jews active in the community was published in Lwów in 1937. Other towns may have such books also. These books are most likely to be found in libraries, such as the National Library in Warsaw or the Jagiellonian University Library in Kraków.

12) **Identity Cards** (*Zaświadczenia o tożsamości*) and **Passports** (*Paszporty*). Copies of applications for the issuance of identity cards and passports can be found in regional state archives from the period between the world wars. They usually contain a photograph of the applicant.

13) **Physician Records.** Found in the Central Library of Physicians in Warsaw (see address below), these records may reference published articles or obituaries, which can then be found in other libraries.

14) **Military Records.** Records for those who served in the Polish army can be found in the Military Archives in Warsaw. The Military Archives in Vienna have records of those who served in the Austrian army, and the Ministry of Defence (*sic*) in Great Britain has records of those who served in the Free Polish Forces under British command during World War II.

## Useful Web Sites and Addresses for Polish Genealogical Research

**1. JewishGen: [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org)** Foremost website for Jewish genealogical research.

One must register to access some sites, but there is no fee. Below are listed just a few of the offerings:

- a. **Family Finder:** [www.jewishgen.org/jgff/](http://www.jewishgen.org/jgff/) Find contact info for people researching similar surnames/towns.
- b. **JewishGen Communities Database:** [www.jewishgen.org/Communities/](http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/) Gives each community's historical names and jurisdictions, and a link to further information and resources about that community.
- c. **JewishGen Gazetteer:** Gives latitude and longitude, the distance/direction from a reference city, links to maps. To search by town name (soundex or exact spelling): [www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocTown.asp](http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocTown.asp)  
To search towns located within a certain distance of a given latitude/longitude: [www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocRad.asp](http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/LocRad.asp)
- d. **Yizkor Book Project:** [www.jewishgen.org/yizkor](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor) Memorial books created after WWII by survivors of destroyed communities, originally written mostly in Yiddish and Hebrew. History of town, stories about people, lists of those killed. English translations posted chapter by chapter. Whole books translated: "Yizkor Books in Print."
- e. **Yizkor Book Necrology Database:** [www.jewishgen.org/databases/yizkor](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/yizkor). Holocaust victims.
- f. **Special Interest Group Web Pages:** [www.jewishgen.org/jewishgen/sigs.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/jewishgen/sigs.htm) Info posted by SIGs.
- g. **Special Interest Groups (SIGs) mailing lists:** [www.jewishgen.org/listserv/sigs.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/listserv/sigs.htm)  
Mailing lists for groups of people researching same locality. Can subscribe and get daily digest. Can search archives.
- h. **Viewmate:** [www.jewishgen.org/viewmate/](http://www.jewishgen.org/viewmate/) Can post photos, documents, or letters for translation, advice.
- i. **JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR):** [www.JewishGen.org/databases/cemetery/](http://www.JewishGen.org/databases/cemetery/)  
Project to document burials worldwide. New data added constantly.
- j. **Polish-Jewish Genealogy: Questions & Answers:** <http://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/poland/Questions.htm>
- k. **All Poland Database:** [www.jewishgen.org/databases/Poland](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Poland)

Multiple database search facility incorporating JRI-Poland and many other databases connected to Poland.

l. **Łódź Ghetto Database:** List of all people registered in the Łódź Ghetto. Shows name, birth date, place of residence, changes of place of residence, date of death if it occurred in the ghetto, sometimes date of deportation. One can search not only for a surname but for any word. Searches made through the All Poland Database, but posted in a separate category. <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Poland/LodzGhetto.html>

**2. JRI-Poland: [www.jri-poland.org](http://www.jri-poland.org)** [Independent organization hosted by JewishGen] Project to index all birth records in Poland over 100 years old, marriage and death records over 70 years old. Database searchable by surname (soundex/exact spelling). Some Books of Residents indexed: <http://www.jri-poland.org/bor.htm> Łódź 1916–21  
Registration cards scanned and posted online: <http://jri-poland.org/psa/lodz-registration-card-scans.htm>

**3. Geshher Galicia: [www.geshhergalicia.org](http://www.geshhergalicia.org)** [Not part of JewishGen]: All Galicia Database, Map Room, Inventory of Cadastral Maps and Archival Records in Galicia.

**4. Routes to Roots Foundation—Miriam Weiner: [www.rtrfoundation.org](http://www.rtrfoundation.org)** Holdings of East European Archives.

**5. Virtual Shtetl: [www.sztetl.org.pl/en/](http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/)** Project of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (POLIN). History, documents, photographs from various localities in Poland, often from previously untapped sources.

**6. Steve Morse: <http://stevemorse.org/>** Many web pages that greatly simplify research at other sites.

**7. Genealogy Indexer: <http://genealogyindexer.org/>** Uses OCR (optical character recognition) to index surnames found in business directories, Yizkor books, and other documents already posted online by various libraries or organizations worldwide. Index gives link to view the document page. To use complicated sites (e.g., Kraków 1880–1910 Censuses, Warsaw Directories), see directions at: <http://genealogyindexer.org/forum/viewforum.php?f=14>

**8. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Collections and Archives: <http://www.ushmm.org/online/archival-guide/>**  
One can enter topics to search various collections (e.g., "Łódź Ghetto," "Stanisławów," "Chelmno," etc.).

**9. Yad Vashem Database of Shoah Victims' Names: <http://db.yadvashem.org/names/search.html?language=en>.** Information on victims of Holocaust obtained from pages of testimony submitted or from memorial lists. May include name and address of submitter. Many other Holocaust related databases are being added.

**10. Karta: <http://www.indeksreprejonowanych.pl>** Index of persons deported from Poland to USSR. Click on *Wyszukiwanie*. Fill in name (need exact Polish spelling—try different variations if not successful). Use only surname if not sure of spelling of first name. Gives place of imprisonment, birthdate, name of father.

**11. Kresy Siberia Virtual Museum: <http://kresy-siberia.org/muzeum/?lang=en>** / Info on deportation, imprisonment, and other repression of the inhabitants of the Kresy (Eastern Borderlands).

**12. LDS (Latter Day Saints)** For records regarding Jewish genealogy, see: [www.JewishGen.org/databases/FHLC/](http://www.JewishGen.org/databases/FHLC/)

- 13. Museum of Family History:** [www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/](http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/) A virtual, multimedia, and interactive museum. Exhibitions, cemetery documentation, education, history, postcards, videos, personal recollections, etc.
- 14. YIVO Institute for Jewish Research:** [www.yivoinstitute.org/](http://www.yivoinstitute.org/) Resource center in lower Manhattan for East European Jewish Studies; Yiddish language, literature, and folklore; American Jewish immigrant experience.
- 15. Polish State Archives (*Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych*):** For lists by towns of surviving Vital Records (BMD) see: <http://baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/pradziad.php?l=en> Enter town name. Scroll down to see records for *mojżeszowe* (Jews). Database no longer updated, but display is better than in new system (see: <http://szukajwarchiwach.pl> where one can find which records are digitized and online). For digitized images of vital records indexed by JRI-Poland, see: [http://jri-poland.org/help/Guide\\_to\\_Images\\_Linked\\_by\\_JRI.pdf](http://jri-poland.org/help/Guide_to_Images_Linked_by_JRI.pdf) For lists of surviving Books of Residents (*Księgi Ludności*) and other Registers of Population, see: <http://baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/ela.php?l=en> Enter town name. For Books of Residents, limit search by using symbols “1st” and “meld.” To find what records have been digitized and posted online, see <http://szukajwarchiwach.pl> Enter town name at top. Choose “Only units with scan.” Under category, choose “*akta miasta ...*”, then scroll through results to find *Księgi Ludności* or *Księgi Meldunkowe*. Polish State Archives also houses Notary Records, Business Directories, and Jewish Community Records. For addresses (including email addresses) of different regional archives, click on “Archives” on the main Search page.
- 16. Polish Civil Registry Offices (*Urząd Stanu Cywilnego*–USC):** Birth records less than 100 years old, marriage and death records less than 70 years old. To find addresses of various USCs, go to <http://www.biznesfinder.pl/> Type in “*Urząd Stanu Cywilnego*” on left (Polish font needed). Type in town name on right. Select correct *województwo* (province) on pull-down. Click “Szukaj.” Scroll down to address. For *Archiwum Zabużańskie* (former provinces of Galicia now in Ukraine), located at ul. ks. Ignacego Kłopotowskiego 1/3 (Praga), see: [http://bip.warszawa.pl/menu\\_podmiotowe/urzed\\_stanu\\_cywilnego/wydzialy/usc\\_wr\\_iii/default.htm](http://bip.warszawa.pl/menu_podmiotowe/urzed_stanu_cywilnego/wydzialy/usc_wr_iii/default.htm)
- 17. Jewish Historical Institute–JHI (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*–ŻIH):** <http://www.jhi.pl/en> ul. Tłomackie 3/5, 00-090 Warsaw. Tel. (+48)(22) 827 92 21.
- Genealogy & Family Heritage Center: Email: [familyheritage@jhi.pl](mailto:familyheritage@jhi.pl) Tel (+48)(22) 828 59 62
  - Survivor Lists—Polish Jews registered in 1946–47, some outside Poland, Computerized Survivor Database
  - Pre-World War II Jewish Community records of certain towns
  - Records of Jewish organizations, mostly postwar
  - Some metrical records [see JRI-Poland for extracts]
  - Deaths in Warsaw Ghetto
  - Wartime testimonies and memoirs
- 18. Central Medical Library (*Główna Biblioteka Lekarska*), [www.gbl.waw.pl](http://www.gbl.waw.pl) *Dział Zbiorów Specjalnych*** (Special Collections) ul. Jazdów 1A, 00-467 Warsaw. Tel. (+48)(22) 622 50 05. Email: [zb.spec@gbl.waw.pl](mailto:zb.spec@gbl.waw.pl) Registry of physicians and pharmacologists, personal data and medical articles by or about them.
- 19. National Library of Poland (*Biblioteka Narodowa*)** <http://bn.org.pl/en/> Journals, Newspapers, Books
- 20. Central Military Archive (*Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe*),** ul. Czerwonych Beretów bl. 124, 00-910 Warszawa-Rembertów. Tel. (+48)(22) 261-814-584: [www.caw.wp.mil.pl/en/index.html](http://www.caw.wp.mil.pl/en/index.html) Information about those who served in the Polish army. List of collections. Email: [caw@wp.mil.pl](mailto:caw@wp.mil.pl)
- 21. Ministry of Defence, Polish Correspondence Section:** Ministry of Defence, APC Disclosures 5 (Polish), Building 1 (Ops), RAF Northolt, West End Road, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 6NG, England. Tel 020 8833 8603; Fax 020 8833 8866. Email: [polishdisoff@northolt.raf.mod.uk](mailto:polishdisoff@northolt.raf.mod.uk). Web: <https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records> Info on those who served in Polish army in the West during WWII (Anders Army, Polish units in UK, etc.).
- 22. Sikorski Museum:** <http://sikorskimuseum.co.uk> Info about Polish exiles in Britain during and after WWII.
- 23. Austrian State Archive/Military Archive (*Österreich Staatsarchiv/Kriegsarchiv*)** Nottendorfergasse 2, 1030 Vienna, Austria. Tel. 43-1-79540-0. [www.austria.gv.at/site/6408/default.aspx](http://www.austria.gv.at/site/6408/default.aspx) Email: [post@bka.gv.at](mailto:post@bka.gv.at) Info on those who served in Austrian army. Explanation of what is needed to do research on individuals.
- 24. Polish Genealogical Society of America:** [www.pgsa.org/](http://www.pgsa.org/) Maps, administrative districts, sample letters.
- 25. Genealogical Society of Poland:** <http://genealodzy.pl> Wonderful databases and projects for those who read Polish. Włocławek, Nieszawa, and other Kujawy-Pomerania Books of Residents online.
- 26. Directory of Cities, Towns, and Regions in Poland:** <http://www.fallingrain.com/world/PL/> Latitude & longitude of towns.
- 27. JDC–Joint Distribution Committee Archives:** Names and addresses of recipients of remittances during WWI and of person sending them: <http://yourjewishgem.blogspot.com/2014/08/remittance-lists-jdc-database.html>