Using Ancestry, FamilySearch, and Polish Archives online for Genealogical Research

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Overview of Presentation

• My motivation for my trip to Warsaw for IAJGS—my genealogical quest for information on my paternal grandfather

• Importance of history and geography

• Locating ancestral towns

• Archives
  • ELA/Praziad and Szsearch.pl
  • Church Archives

• Did I find what I was looking for?
Motivation for this presentation

• As advertised, I am an amateur genealogist
• I, like most librarians, love to search. I had hoped to understand the Polish archives as part as my search for information on my Polish grandfather.
• Let me begin again by telling you about my grandfather so you can see how learning more about Polish archives was designed to help my search.
ITS tracing service card from ITS website. This is from one of the few online ITS files

• https://digitalcollections.its-arolsen.org/01020401/name/pageview/733746/548874
“Proof” that Bolszowce is the right town
Between a Broch and a hard place: My search for Saul Lichtmann

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saul Lichtmann 1889-1941</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolszowce 1889 (ITS death card/Sonnenstein)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cologne 1919 (Nate Birth Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cologne 1921 (Herman Birth Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires 1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leipzig 1933 (book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leipzig-Dosen 1939 German Minority census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Landes-, Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Leipzig-Dösen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirna-Sonnenstein 1941 death card</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From JRI-Poland and Polish archives online: But which of the two Sauls (if either) is mine?
How I spent my summer vacation 2018—Off to Poland.

• Because my interest is in the part of Poland that was in Ukraine...I was very excited about Gesher Galicia’s AGAD day
  • Focus on Eastern Galicia “beyond the Bug River”

• Originally I was going to go to what I believe is my ancestral village, but it didn’t turn out that way.

• We will focus on finding information in Archives and Church Records

• Unfortunately, JRI-Poland makes things much easier for Jewish records than non-Jewish
Importance of history and geography

• Poland’s changing borders
• World wars take a toll on records
Poland’s changing borders

• Poland is known for its frequently changing borders (Information from Family Search) -- https://s3.amazonaws.com/ps-services-us-east-1-914248642252/s3/research-wiki-elasticsearch-prod-s3bucket/images/2/21/Poland_Historical_Geography_Handout.pdf

• Many towns were in more than one country over the periods we are interested in. This has implications for record-keeping rules (e.g., civil registration requirements varied) AND privacy/disclosure timelines.

• Try to locate your town with Jewishgen town finder
  • https://www.jewishgen.org/communities/search.asp
  • .... if there were Jews living in the town of interest!
Polish geography

Poland is currently divided into 16 provinces known as voivodeships (Polish: województwa, singular województwo).

• https://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/
ARCHIVES
Overview of Archives

• What are archives
• Vital records
  • Organized by religion
• Civil registration
• Administrative records that are of genealogical interest (e.g., criminal records, wills)
• Administrative records that are NOT of genealogical interest (municipal correspondence)

• Collection of unpublished materials.
• More than vital records. They include the records of an institution, personnel records, newspaper clippings.
• They may be in any format, including text on paper or in electronic formats, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings. In addition to archival records, an archive can contain artifacts such as the milk can from the Warsaw Ghetto that is pictured here.
• We may wish there was one big file of all the names of our Polish ancestors, but that is not the way the archives are arranged. We may have to hunt in multiple archives to find what we are looking for.
Polish Archives

- Historic archive (in Warsaw)
  - AGAD is the historic archive for materials that are no longer under the restrictions of the Polish privacy laws (more than 100/80 years old).
  - Contain information from Ukraine and Poland

- Urząd Stanu Cywilnego” meaning “Civil Registry Office” for metrical (vital) records under 100 years (80 for marriage or death)
  - Does not contain Ukraine

- Most records remains in district archives
- Many records may remain in local parish or archdiocese’s archives
Examples of different archives

AGAD--historic
USC (Warsaw)--current
Regional archives (Radom)
Church archives
Polish privacy protection

• New Polish laws for the protection of personal data (as of March 1, 2015) have enabled JRI-Poland to access/scan/extract marriage and death records up to 1935 (more than 80-years old) in Civil Records Offices (USCs) in Poland

• However, economic reality has slowed (or stopped) the transfer of these marriage and death records to AGAD
Finding records involve understanding location

• We’ve discussed the importance of history/geography and the types of archives that exist

• **But do the records exist?**
  • Polish search online using szsearch
  • Not all religious archives have ended up online
  • Locating church records
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Lichtman / Szifer]</td>
<td>Szel 1888 176 103</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Lichtman / Teichberg]</td>
<td>Szel 1889 47 103</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A storeroom in the Tarnów state archive
Decision tree for locating vital records

- Assuming you have figured out the geography...
  - Do records still exist?
  - Are the archival records indexed? (do we even know these records exist? 
    SZsearch/PRADZIAD and JRI Poland
  - Are the individual records indexed?
    - JRI Poland; Gesher Galicia; FamilySearch;
  - Are they scanned and available online
    - Much of the scanning of individual documents was done by Church of Jesus Christ (Mormon Church) decades ago
    - Polish government scans (see SZSearch)
    - NB: Scans of thousands of records that aren’t indexed may or may not be useful
    - You may have to contact the archives to get records
Location, location, location

• Locating your ancestral towns

• Vital records searching in Szsearch.pl
  • Beyond vital records in Szsearch.pl (won’t be covering but you’ll have the notes)

• Finding church records – overview of Family Search wiki
Determining the Parish

• I use Google, Wikipedia, Jewish gen’s community finder, szukajwarchiwach.pl, and ancestry.com

Place your ancestor might have lived

Pabianice, Lodzkie, Poland

☐ Exact to...

• https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Poland_Church_Records#Determining_the_Parish
What do we know about the places Maria’s families are from?

My roots on my mother’s side are in Patnów, woj: Łódzkie, a small village. My mother was Warzycha.

- On my father’s (Romanowski) side, there was Gródek, pow: Białystok, woj: Mazowieckie.

- [http://www.thecatholicdirectory.com/directory.cfm?fuseaction=show_country&country=PL](http://www.thecatholicdirectory.com/directory.cfm?fuseaction=show_country&country=PL)
Maria’s hometown and that of the Warzechas (her mom is from Patnow) and Romanowskis (her dad is from Grodek)
Poland Church Records

Kopie księg metrykalnych, 1817-1929
Author: Kościół rzymsko-katolicki. Parafia Pabianice (Pabianice)

Kopie księg metrykalnych, 1827-1874
Author: Kościół ewangelicki. Parafia Pabianice (Pabianice)

Księgi metrykalne, 1774-1855
Author: Kościół rzymsko-katolicki. Parafia Pabianice (Pabianice)

Wikipedia article
opis wikipedii
51.665000 19.359167
SYM: 0959079
SYMPOD: 0959079
typ (PRNG): miasto
komentarz (PRNG): do 2006 r. - istniały części miasta: Berg, Dąbrowa, Kapuśniaki, Nowa Wola, Ostatnie Pole, Piaski - Kolonia, Sereczyn, Ścięgny Strumieńskie, Za Ługiem (miejscowości włączone do wsi, nazwy zniesione)
Where is this cemetery? Parish info?
Joan’s family—her mother’s manifest Grabowa siem.? Plock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modern Town &amp; Country</th>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th>c. 1950 After WWII Town / Country</th>
<th>c. 1930 Between Wars Town / District / Province / Country</th>
<th>c. 1900 Before WWI Town / District / Province / Country</th>
<th># of JGFF Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plock, Poland 52°33'N 19°42'E 59 miles WNW of Warszawa</td>
<td>Płock [Pol], Plotzk [Yid, Rus], Plożk [Ger], Schröttersburg [Ger, 1941-45], Plotsk</td>
<td>Płock</td>
<td>Płock</td>
<td>Płock</td>
<td>729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of matches = 1
The Izabelin I found in JewishGen was in Belarus. Not Joan’s family. Instead...

- https://szukajwarchiwach.pl/search?q=Izabelin%20XARCHro%3A50
Vital Records

• Much genealogical research focuses on vital records
• Birth, marriage, death
• Poland had an excellent vital records system beginning in the late eighteenth century
• Vital records were kept by religion
• Copies of vital records were maintained at the regional level, too.
Googlization of search

• Trend in field toward "one search" has pluses and minuses
  • You don’t have to figure out where to begin
  • You may get too many hits

• Polish archive searching is adopting "one search"
  • Vital records (Pradziad) combined with civil registration (ELA)
  • Contemporary records combined with historic records
  • Archival documents (correspondence, administrative records) combined with vital records, civil registration, etc.
Administrative records in Polish archives via SZsearch

- Polish archives contain historic documents of what comprises most of modern Poland
- Many records have been destroyed/lost
- Not organized by religion
- Not user friendly
One Search for all Polish archives

Recently, the National Archives of Poland posted this notification: Ladies and Gentlemen, we would like to inform you that on June 29, 2018, the database and search engines: Simple search, SEZAM (Archive Record System SEZAM), ELA (Population Records in ELA archives) will be closed and will no longer be available on the websites of the Supreme Directorate of State Archives. The only source of information about the resource of a given archive is the Search in Archives service (www.szukajwarchiwach.pl). At www.archiwa.gov.pl, the current version of the PRADZIAD database will remain available. Source: [1]

Searching phrase: ludności

- Collection: 29/89/0
  Spis ludności miasta Krakowa z r. 1900
  1900
  Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie
  Digital copies: 12350

- Collection: 29/90/0
  Spis ludności miasta Krakowa z r. 1910
  1910
  Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie
  Digital copies: 19489
Szsearch.pl can be searched by Archive
Backup info on metrical records for Klimontow
  • Klimontow required accent
    • Klimontów (hold down key to get accent)

• Alas, scans not available online
Szsearch.pl can use Vital Records Filter for Name of the Locality, Community, Province, Denomination (i.e., religion), or Type of Civil Register.
Leaving the locality blank
Conclusions regarding SZsearch

• The current SZsearch is a work in progress.
• The archives are aware of this and trying to improve it
  • Takes time and money
  • Preservation is a higher priority than digitization
  • Search engine seems idiosyncratic
• https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_alphabet#Letters
Locating Church Records

Locating Church Records

- Original Catholic records are usually found in individual parish or diocesan archives.
- Protestant records are often in state archives; some are in the possession of Evangelical Church archives or officials.
- Civil transcripts are generally kept in the local civil registration offices (Urząd Stanu Ciwilnego) for 100 years; then they are transferred to state archives.

Determining the Parish

To use church records, you must know the town and religion of your ancestor. You must also determine the parish that your ancestor’s town belonged to so that you will know which parish registers to search. Your ancestor may have lived in a village that was part of a parish located in a nearby larger town. Over time, some villages may have belonged to more than one parish as jurisdictions changed.

- Use Kartenmeister to find the Polish and German province, county, Catholic parish, Lutheran parish, and Standesamt (civil registration office), if the town was in the area of Poland once controlled by Prussia.
- Use Meyer’s 1871 Gazetteer Online to find information on towns in the area of Poland once controlled by Prussia. Click on the "Map" option to see the 1871 map of the town in its region with parishes indicated, and the current Google map.
- If the town was in the area of Poland once controlled by Russia or Austria, look it up in Skorowidz Gazetteer Online to find the parishes of various religions. Here are the instructions. Use the second option, "Viewing anywhere via the Digital Library of Wielkopolska".
Archives beyond vital records—
Registers of Population

- Book of permanent residents (see next slide)
- Census records (would be similar to what we are familiar with)
- Military records
- Tax records
- Parish records
  - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Poland_Church_Records#Determining_the_Parish
Search Szsearch (=szukajwarchiwach.pl) for vital and civil records should be able to search for Księgi Ludności (Book of Residents), etc.


e.g.,
https://szukajwarchiwach.pl/search?q=XSERIA%3AKsi%C4%99gi%20Ludno%C5%9Bci%20XS
KANro%3At&order=
Search for Book of Residents Krakow
Did I find out which of the Saul Lichtmann’s is my grandfather?

• For personal reasons, I didn’t go to Ukraine and headed home
• Had to change my plane ticket and spent two extra days in Warsaw
• Ended up accompanying a man I’d met at the AGAD archives to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. He had an appointment to meet with a researcher there.
What did I learn from my trip?

• The breakthrough came when Anya at JHI said that February 1889 may have been written as II/1889 and picked up as November.

• I followed through from there and assumed that the Saul Lichtmann born 1889 was my grandfather. Using this info, I was able to rule out the other Saul Lichtman. This was later confirmed by my contact with the Canadian Lichtmans.

• There’s still a Saul Lichtmann who married a Sara Lichtmann in Vienna in 1914. I can’t rule out that this wasn’t my grandfather.
Summary and Conclusions

• I have made very slow progress, but it is my quest.
• It was helpful to hear the names of Polish places non-stop for a week.
• I wouldn’t have been able to give this talk if I hadn’t gone.
• I will go to Bilshivtsi and the Ukranian archives sometime soon, but not without a translator.
Additional Sources

- Bussgang (2000) on Books of Residents
  http://www.afamilytreeguide-chicago.info/Documents/Polish%20books%20of%20Residents%20article.pdf

- Bussgang’s handout on sources
  http://jgsgb.org/pdfs/Polish_Resources-Bussgang.pdf

- Polish vocab

- Step-by-step on how to use digitized records on the Polish State Archives’ website

- JRI guide to using Polish National Digital Archives (precursor to SZsearch)

- SEZAM

- Archives Portal Europe
  https://www.archivesportaleurope.net/ead-display/-/ead/pl/aicode/PL-21/type/hg/id/06

- JRI-Poland’s Galician vital record titles translated