

## Where Our Grandparents Walked: Researching Our Ancestral Homelands in Eastern Europe

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### General Principles

To find the village name, *you must research European history* for the time period they lived there. Remember that *country and town names have changed and boundaries have changed.*

*Personal names and surnames may also have been changed-* either “Americanized,” spelled phonetically, or outright changed. These changes often were not formalized in court, but you should check court records in the county they lived in the U.S. to see if your family members changed their name officially. Contact the St. Joseph County Archives for court records in St. Joseph County at 574-235-9091.

When you get stuck, *consult a historical or genealogical expert:* via the internet, in person, or read more.

If you have exhausted all the U.S. records pertaining to your direct line ancestors and still can't find their town name in Europe, *start researching records pertaining to the in-laws, third cousins, great-aunts, shirt-tail relations, neighbors, and close associates in the U.S.* (such as godparents of children) to see if you can find the relative's or associate's town of origin in Europe. This will help you because your direct ancestors may have lived in the same place or very near by.

### Search Strategies

1) Evaluate records and memorabilia you already have at home

Look for newspaper clippings, programs, memorabilia, letters, photographs, obituaries, certificates, scrapbooks

2) Interview relatives

Ask them specific questions. Tape or videotape them. Ask them if they have any records or memorabilia to share with you (see point 1).

3) Records in the U.S.

#### Census

U.S. Census records were taken every 10 years. Available years include 1790-1930. Different census years report different information. May tell you the year of immigration, where they were born, and what language was spoken in home.

Available online in the *Ancestry Library Edition* database and the *HeritageQuest Online* database. Both are available at all branches of SJ CPL for free, and HeritageQuest is also available from home with a valid SJ CPL library card. (From our website, <http://www.libraryforlife/localhistory>, choose “Digital collections and databases,” select HeritageQuest off the list, and enter your name and library card number when prompted.) At Local & Family History Services at Main, you can ask a librarian for a tutorial on how to use these databases.

#### Vital records

For St. Joseph County:

-SJ CPL has birth and death indexes from 1882-1920, marriage records from 1830-1920 and marriage applications for 1905-1920.

-For birth and death records, contact the Health Department in the County-City building at 574-235-9750.

-For other marriage records, contact the St. Joseph County Archives at 574-235-9091.

For all other locations, see <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm>

-See also: Finding Birth Dates for Foreign-Born Relatives at [http://www.sjcpl.org/subjectguides/index.php/Foreign\\_Births](http://www.sjcpl.org/subjectguides/index.php/Foreign_Births)

### Church records

For St. Joseph County:

SJCPL has microfilmed local church records and church records for the entire Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne/South Bend up till 1921. See two inventories of our church records online at:

<http://www.sjcpl.org/aboutsjcpl/departments/localhistory/collection.html>

For all other locations: church records are usually kept at the local level. Contact a local library or the local church.

-Search the LDS catalog to see if they have microfilmed records from the town and denomination you seek, [http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset\\_fhlc.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp) Order the microfilm for a fee and view it at the Mishawaka LDS Family History Center (574-243-1633).

-See also:

Bochar, Jack. *Locations of Chicago Roman Catholic Churches, 1850-1990*. Sugar Grove, Ill. : Czech & Slovak American Genealogy Society of Illinois, c1998. **(LH Ref 282.77311 B631L )**

Minert, Roger P., ed. *German Immigrants in American Church Records*. Rockport, Maine: Picton Press, 2005, 5 vols. **(LH Ref 973 G317Z G317 v.1-5)**

### Obituaries, Cemetery inscriptions

For St. Joseph County:

-SJCPL has cemetery records and funeral home records in print and on microfilm.

-SJCPL has an online Obituary Index (1913-present) to the *South Bend Tribune* at [http://www.sjcpl.org/obits/search\\_form.php](http://www.sjcpl.org/obits/search_form.php) and St. Joseph County newspapers on microfilm from 1831–present. SJCPL also has the *South Bend Tribune Online* (1998-present) available at all SJCPL branches and from home with a valid SJCPL library card. (From our website, <http://www.libraryforlife/localhistory>, choose “Digital collections and databases,” select the title off the list, and enter your library card number.)

-Print obituary indexes are available for 1831-1912 and for Mishawaka, Walkerton and North Liberty newspapers for various years.

For all other locations: see <http://www.deathindexes.com/>

-Most local libraries will copy and send you obituaries from their town’s newspaper for a nominal fee. To find a library anywhere in the United States see, <http://lists.webjunction.org/libweb/>

-*Chicago Tribune* and *New York Times* (1980-present) are available online at all SJCPL locations and from home with a valid SJCPL library card (From our website, <http://www.libraryforlife/localhistory>, choose “Digital collections and databases,” select the title off the list, and enter your library card number.) *The New York Times* prior to 1980 is available on microfilm at SJCPL.

### Land records, Probate records and more

For St. Joseph County:

-SJCPL has some land, probate, and other county records in print and on microfilm

-For other probate and court records, contact the St. Joseph County Archives at 574-235-9091.

-For other land records, contact the St. Joseph County Recorder at 574-235-9525.

For all other locations:

-These type of records are usually kept locally for each county in the U.S. For addresses of courthouses in the U.S., see *Ancestry’s Red Book* **(LH Ref 929.1 An21 2004)**

-Allen County Public Library, Genealogy Center in Fort Wayne is one of the best genealogical libraries in the country. See their website: <http://www.acpl.lib.in.us>

-Search the LDS catalog to see if they have microfilmed records from the county you seek,

[http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset\\_fhlc.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp) Order the microfilm for a fee and view it at the Mishawaka LDS Family History Center (574-243-1633).

#### 4) Immigration, Passenger Lists

- SJCPL has print indexes for many ports and years.
- Ancestry Library Edition* database indexes many U.S. passenger list records. It is available for free at all SJCPL branches. Many of the index entries contain links to digital images of the original passenger lists. Please ask a librarian for a tutorial on how to use this database.
- Ellis Island (<http://www.ellisland.org>) offers free indexes of New York City passenger records (1892-1924). You must pay a fee for a copy of the records.
- Castle Garden (<http://www.castlegarden.org>) offers free indexes of New York City passenger records (1830-1892).
- The National Archives (<http://www.nara.gov/genealogy/immigration>) offers information about passenger lists they have (1820-1982) and an order form to order copies of your ancestor's record for a fee.
- You may also want to consult Steve Morse's website (<http://stevemorse.org/>) to search for names on passenger lists that you have been unable to find through other means.
- See also: Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *The Family Tree Guide to Finding Your Ellis Island Ancestors*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Family Tree Books, c2005. **(LH 929.1 C21fe)**

#### 5) Naturalization records

##### St. Joseph County:

- SJCPL has an index to some St. Joseph County naturalizations.
- Consult the St. Joseph County Archives at 574-235-9091 for early county naturalizations.

##### For all other locations:

- Most Indiana naturalization records are held at the Indiana State Archives, <http://www.in.gov/icpr/3210.htm>
- The National Archives provides an overview of naturalization records and where to find them at: <http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/naturalization/>

#### 6) Maps/Gazetteers/Atlases

- Room, Adrian, comp. *Place Name Changes Since 1900: A World Gazetteer*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1979. **(LH Ref 910.3 R66p)**
- Magosci, Paul Robert. *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993. **(LH Ref 911.47 M275h)**
- Atlas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1892*. Bountiful, Utah: Thomsen's Genealogical Center, 1990. **(LH Atlas Ref 912.43 At651)**

ShtetlSeeker (<http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/>) indexes former *and* current names of towns, villages, and cities in 31 countries in Europe. (Includes towns without Jewish communities).

Maps are available online: see <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>, <http://images.google.com>, and <http://maps.google.com>

#### 7) Records in Europe

##### How-to Guides

- SJCPL has many how-to guides on researching immigrant ancestors, and researching in different countries or different nationalities. Some examples:
- Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering your Immigrant & Ethnic Ancestors*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2000. **(LH 929.1 C21gi)**
- Goethals, Jozef J. *Searching for Flemish (Belgian) Ancestors*. Baltimore, Md.: Clearfield, 2007. **(LH 929.1 G554s)**
- Grenham, John. *Tracing your Irish Ancestors: the Complete Guide*. Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Pub. Co., 2006. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. **(LH 929.1 G865t, 2006)**
- LaBudie-Szakall, Kathleen Ann and Jan Steven Zaleski. *Finding Your Polish Ancestors*. Toronto: Heritage Productions, 2003. **(LH 929.1 L115f)**

##### Church records

Search the LDS catalog to see if they have microfilmed records from your village in Europe, [http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset\\_fhlc.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp) Have to know the village name, but

their database does include some cross-references to former names of villages. Also have some national records for different countries. Order the microfilm for a fee and view it at the Mishawaka LDS Family History Center (574-243-1633).

#### Civil and governmental records

Search Cyndi's List (<http://www.cyndislist.com>) for the country you are interested in. Find addresses of archives and libraries. May need to correspond in the local language or you may want to hire a local researcher who can speak the language and translate documents for you.

#### 8) Internet web sites

Ancestry research in the lands of the former Austrian-Hungarian Dual Monarchy

<http://www.ihff.at/indexstarte.htm>

Austrian Family History <http://austrianfamilyhistory.org/index.html>

Cyndi's List <http://www.cyndislist.com> is an index of internet sites relating to genealogy.

Federation of Eastern European Family History Societies <http://feefhs.org/>

Genealogy of Halychyna/Eastern Galicia <http://www.halgai.com>

GenWeb: <http://usgenweb.com> or <http://www.worldgenweb.org/> for two volunteer-run free websites offering message boards and genealogical information about different locations worldwide.

Google books: <http://books.google.com> Read full-text digital copies of books online: mostly books published prior to 1923.

Jewish Gen: The Home of Jewish Genealogy <http://www.jewishgen.org>

Lucky Ladewski Papers (Polish Families in St. Joseph County Indiana)

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~instjose/LadewskiPapers/lucky.htm>

Polish Genealogical Society of America <http://www.pgsa.org/>

Radix: Genealogy Research in Hungary <http://www.bogardi.com/gen/>

Rootsweb: <http://www.rootsweb.com> is a free online community with message boards, family trees, genealogical information and more.

ShtetlSeeker <http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/>

Slovenian online phonebook <http://www.telekom.si/en/>

#### How-to guides for internet research:

Dollarhide, William. *Getting Started in Genealogy Online*. Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Pub. Co., c2006.

**(LH 929.1 D69ge)**

Crowe, Elizabeth Powell. *Genealogy Online*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008. **(LH 929.1 C886g)**

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