

Getting Started with Jewish Genealogy



Now I know why my Bubbie seems to be in witness protection!!!

"Whoever teaches his son teaches not only his son but also his son's son – and so on to the end of generations." -Talmud: Kiddushin

"Blessed is he who remembers what is forgotten!" - S. Y. Agnon



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Introduction

Why is Jewish genealogy different from other genealogy? There are a lot of other beginner's guides out there for people who want to trace their lineage, and eventually you really should read some of them. This guide aims to focus a bit more on Jewish genealogy and Philadelphia. Everyone faces the typical challenges that dates seem arbitrary and "my family didn't spell their name that way," but we learn to go with the flow. But it can be more challenging tracing our Jewish ancestors. You may discover that your great-grandfather (GGF) had a Hebrew name, a Yiddish name, a Russian name, and an Americanized name! The old records we seek are usually in a language you can't speak or read. Records from Eastern European countries are not made freely available (yet), and you can't just go visit the archive in a foreign country and find Aunt Sadie's records in English. To add insult to injury, countries changed names as borders changed! You may not know where to find a Philadelphia cemetery that was bought out by another cemetery decades ago. You may get tangled up in DNA when you realize that your great-aunt married her cousin. To quote Avotaynu:

Two major events shaped Jewish life of the past two hundred years: migration and the Holocaust. Few Jews today live where their ancestors lived a century or two ago. As a result, many Jews believe they cannot trace their family roots because:

- My family name was changed (at Ellis Island)
- No one in my family knows about the past
- No one is left alive to tell me about my family's past
- All the records were destroyed in the Holocaust
- My town was wiped off the face of the map

These statements are myths. Jewish genealogy today is highly organized and therefore help is available to dispel these myths. There are many resources available to help you trace your Jewish family heritage.

- Databases exist on the Internet to get you started
- There are more than 80 genealogical societies throughout the world where you can meet other persons tracing their roots
- There are books on Jewish genealogy; Avotaynu is the leading supplier of these books
- There is a strong presence of Jewish genealogy on the Internet

Welcome to Jewish genealogy! So...where do we start? Our goals are:

- To begin finding your ancestors
- To accurately document your findings
- To better understand the context of their lives
- To begin identifying the cultural issues that shape us today
- To present specific resources for Jewish research and Philadelphia

Nu, So Let's Get Started...?

Just think about the heritage you're leaving your children!

- Overcome inertia, begin NOW!
- Success fuels effort
- The journey has value
- Remember the context of Jewish peoples' lives
- Ask questions, meet members, and seek help at JGASGP meetings
- Enroll family members to help
- Write and deploy results to your family

Getting Organized

Forms

Forms are freely available from Ancestry, Cyndi's List, Family Tree Magazine, and FamilySearch (the LDS Church). Start with the links at the end of this handbook for several forms and some invaluable handouts for getting started! The *Five-Generation Ancestor Chart* is a good place to start, along with the *Pedigree Chart*, *Family Group Record*, and *Research Log-Checklist* to track what you find (and don't find!).

Gathering and Recording Information

What do you know about your mishpokhe so far? Begin your research by writing down the names of your ancestors on a Pedigree/Ancestral Chart. Start with yourself and your immediate family and work outwards from there. Fill in the dates and locations of Birth, Marriage, and Death (BMD). Use the maiden names of female relatives. Use a "?" if you don't know a specific fact. Gather any documents that you have or can obtain from relatives. Be sure to record these documents on the Records Checklist form.

TIP: If you have printed out a form, use a pencil instead of a pen. As your research progresses, old information will undoubtedly need to be corrected.



Files or Notebooks?

Loose-leaf binders or manila folders? There is no right or wrong answer, it's a matter of personal taste. And you may find that you'll change your mind over the years or use a combination of techniques, start scrapbooking, or hang framed photos on your wall. But whatever you decide, be sure to use acid-free/lignin-free plastic protectors to prevent deterioration over the years...especially for any originals you may acquire!

Organizing Records

Organize by surname and break it down by family, geography, or whatever seems most reasonable depending on your research. You can number each document like in a library, and create an index, or use a checklist to see what you have and what you still need. Your memory is *not* a sufficient storage device! Record conversations, family lore, newspaper clippings, etc., and mark each with *Who? Where? When?? What? Why?* There will be far too much to remember as time goes on. And remember that names and spellings may change over time. A Yiddish name, written in Hebrew, was transliterated to a close approximation of the original in English, so Cohen could become Coen, Cowan, Cohan, Cone, Kon, Kohn, Kaan...without consideration to errors or poor handwriting. Be creative when you search.

Genealogy Software

Genealogy computer software provides the best method to store, search, share, correct, and print reports and charts. It's far simpler than the dozens of scraps of paper you'll have all over your desk! There are several popular software packages on the market, and they should all be able to create a GEDCOM, which is a standardized format you can use to move from one platform to another if you need to upload a tree or move your data if you ever change your software program.

Here are some tree-keeping options:

<https://www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/online-tree-vs-genealogy-software/>

For PC: Family Tree Maker, Heredis, Heritage, Legacy, Roots Magic, Family Tree Builder, Family Historian



For Mac: Family Tree Maker, Heredis, Mac Family Tree, Reunion, Roots Magic, Family Tree Builder
And here are some software comparisons:

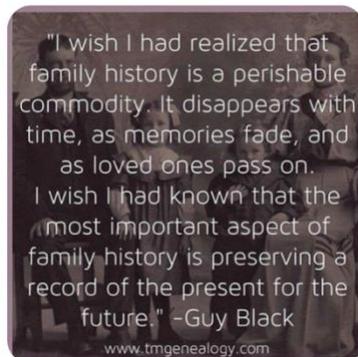
<https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/genealogical-software-programs>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_genealogy_software

It is possible to create and maintain a tree online only, but if the Internet is flakey, the company goes out of business, or you decide not to continue paying for a subscription service, you may no longer have access to your tree and research. It's far safer to use your computer, and software programs exist that link to the online tree. And don't forget to make regular backups! You can't afford to lose your valuable research!

Tools To Get You Going....

Talk to Your Relatives!



Don't wait 'til Pesach or Thanksgiving! It is every genealogist's lament that they should have asked questions when they had the chance, when their older relatives were still living. So short of holding a séance, *now* is the time to pick up the phone and get to know your extended family members on a new level, starting with oldest relatives on all sides *first!* It's a sad fact of life that those who can answer your questions are a dying resource. Visit if you can, and plan on more than one conversation or visit for follow-up. If you have a recorder and camera (*your cell phone!*), bring it. Ask about names, dates,

towns, remembrances and stories, documents and photos. Aim for more than just birth, marriage, death information...gather stories to bring your family members to life! Plan and organize and be sure to write everything down! Begin a gentle conversation with *What?* or *How?* and avoiding making them feel like they're being interrogated.

Speaking with people

Active Listening

- Playing back the essence of the **CONTENT** of what has been said until the speaker agrees or nods that you have it correct.

Empathic Listening

- Stating the strong **FEELING** that you suspect underlies a statement.

Encouragement and follow-up questions are critical. Here are some sample questions to get you started:

- What town did they come from?
- When did they immigrate to America?
- What was the name that they used in the old country?
- How many children did they have? What were their names?
- Were they married before they came to America? How did they meet?
- Did they have other relatives that came to this county?
- Where did they live in the U.S.?
- What was the neighborhood like?
- Did they belong to a synagogue? Were they religious? Did they keep kosher?
- Where are they buried?
- Did they belong to a landsmanschaft (a supportive organization of people from the same hometown in "the old country")?
- Can you tell me some interesting family stories?
- What were their occupations and hobbies?
- What foods did they like to eat? Do you have any recipes?
- Can you describe the personality of your family members?



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- Do you know of family members lost in the Holocaust? (If so, get all the information you can!)
- And very important! Do they have any old records and photos? Take pictures of everything they find for you, including a nice one of them for the portrait thumbnails in your family tree. Photo or photocopy documents (*promise and don't forget to return them*).

Frequently Asked Questions, Brick Walls, and Bubbe Maysehs

(*Hey, if you don't like my spelling, check Leo Rosten's Joys of Yiddish*). Our name was changed at Ellis Island. No, it wasn't. *Really...*that's a bubbe mayseh. Name changes frequently occurred at the embarkation point when our ancestors signed up for their cruise. Shipping companies had employees who spoke multiple languages, so they probably didn't misunderstand what they heard. More likely, your relative turned to the person in front of him in line, asked his name, and gave that when they were asked...to sound more American! Whatever went into that ship's log is what was handed to officials when they arrived in Castle Garden, Ellis Island, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Galveston, Canada, or wherever. If they didn't change their name yet, they likely Americanized it after they got here, and just as likely didn't do any legal paperwork to do so (*what, leave you a paper trail?!*). Or they could have legalized the new name choice in court during the naturalization process.

Spelling Variations - so what was our name, really, and how did they spell it?

If you don't know your ancestor's name, start with a more recent generation. Records of recent ancestors typically lead to records of earlier generations. Remember, your ancestor's name may not be listed the same way in all records. Sometimes they spell it differently even within the same document just to give you shpilkes! Look for variations and Hebrew, Yiddish, country (Russian/Polish/Ukrainian) equivalents or English transliterations. Zayde Jacob may have traveled as Yankel. When using online family trees, if footnotes and sources are given, copy them into your research log. These may lead to additional information about your ancestor. And by the way, have I mentioned that spelling doesn't count?

<https://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/faq.html#Names>

Wildcards – have you ever used wildcards? No, not deuces. Regardless of whether you're in Google or Ancestry or wherever, if you can't spell the name, use a “?” to replace a single letter that you're not sure of, or “*” for one or more letters. Ex: if you can't figure out if the last name is spelled Rosenzweig or Rozenwajg or Rozentzwayg or any number of spelling variations, try replacing unknown letters. “Ro?en*g” will show all of those and more. The “?” will give you results with the needed S or Z, and the “*” will result in all the missing letters between the N and G. And be aware that your relatives probably used many different given names just to confuse you. For example, a woman named *Ester Rivka Cohen* is listed as the bride on a marriage record in Poland. In the U.S. she is listed on census records as *Rebecca* or *Becky*. On her son's Philadelphia birth record, she is listed as *Ester*. Go figure. See JewishGen's Knowledge Base (below) for information on names.

How do I find my ancestral town?

I'll bet now you're sorry you didn't ask Bubbie when you had a chance! Look here: and you'll find the JewishGen FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) for a wealth of help with finding your ancestral town...<https://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/faq.html#Towns> and Jewish names, Holocaust research, and lot of other valuable topics. JewishGen's Knowledge Base also includes “How to Read a Hebrew Tombstone,” “Jewish Genealogical Research in Eastern Europe,” “Manifest Markings – A Guide to Interpreting,” and “U.S. Passenger List Annotations.” And remember, Jews moved around and may have lived in shtetls (Jewish suburbs) surrounding the towns you may have been told. And to add insult to injury, names changed frequently, especially every time Poland was acquired by a new conqueror, like after WWII. And just for fun, check this site to see if your family surname is associated with a town name: <https://www.mygenealogyaddiction.com/counties>



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Using Online Databases to Find Records

- Explore – the more you look, the luckier you get
- Try the free sites or promo periods first
- Spelling does not matter – try lots of alternatives and use Soundex systems. A Yiddish name, written in the Hebrew alphabet, was transliterated to a close approximation of the original, so Cohen could become Coen, Cowan, Cohan, Cone, Kon, Kohn, Kaan...without consideration to errors or poor handwriting. Be creative when you search.
- Sometimes family lore is only partly true
- Primary records resolve discrepancies
- European borders frequently changed! And some European places were both cities and states/counties with changed spelling. Keep in mind that even Philly is both a city and a county.

FREE	SUBSCRIPTION
<p>Ancestry.com – 2-week free trial with limited access to their collections. Check a wealth of learning guides, their Facebook page, training videos on YouTube, a comprehensive collection of databases of genealogical records. Holocaust records are <i>always</i> free.</p> <p>Paid subscriptions include <i>U.S. Discovery</i>, <i>World Explorer</i>, or <i>All Access</i> to records including basic level access to Newspapers.com and Fold3.com. It also enables you to email other family tree owners to share information.</p>	
<p>FamilySearch.org (LDS Church) has innumerable genealogical databases and millions of records from all over the world, family trees, records, catalogs, books, images, a research wiki, pedigrees, etc. Be aware that trees can be edited by anyone.</p> <p>Familytreemagazine.com - great articles in their magazine and online on a large variety of genealogy topics.</p>	<p>Fold3.com – military records for the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican American and Early Indian Wars, Civil War, Spanish-American War, WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, Recent Wars, non-military and international records</p>
<p>GEDmatch.com – the most comprehensive site to upload your DNA test, regardless of where you test, to find DNA matches from ALL other sites, offering you a much larger collection of matches.</p>	<p>HeritageQuest.org can be found on the Free Library of Philadelphia website, free to card holders. Records for the U.S. (including City Directories) and Canada.</p>
<p>Geni.com - family trees</p>	<p>JGSNY.org – website for the Jewish Genealogical Society of New York, Burial Society information, etc.</p>
<p>GesherGalicia.org – vital records, census records, archives for towns in Galicia, a former province of the Austrian Hungarian Empire. Publishes a periodic journal.</p>	<p>JRI-Poland.org – has Polish Jewish vital records (BMD), resident lists, etc.</p>
<p>JewishGen.org has extensive Jewish databases you probably won't find anywhere else: <u>F</u>amily <u>T</u>ree of the <u>J</u>ewish <u>P</u>eople (FTJP, where you can upload your GedCom), JewishGen Communities Database (finding your ancestral town), European Records, Immigrant Bank Records where our relatives may have saved to buy ship tickets to bring family members to America (look for Blitzstein, Lipschutz/People's, and Rosenbaum Bank records), <u>J</u>ewishGen <u>O</u>nline <u>W</u>orldwide <u>B</u>urial <u>R</u>egistry (JOWBR), free foreign language translations (ViewMate), Jewish Exponent Obit Index, a Memorial Plaques, Names Database, Yizkor books, SIGs (Special Interest Groups), a Jewish calendar calculator, and specific records for those researching relatives that lived in Philadelphia etc. The site is free, but a \$100 annual subscription offers the most comprehensive search tools.</p>	



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<p>JGASGP.org - Jewish Genealogical & Archival Society of Greater Philadelphia offers this free Getting Started With Jewish Genealogy guide, lists resources like links to the Jewish Exponent Obituary Database, Temple University Special Collections Resource Collections Resource Center, Immigrant Bank Records, etc.</p> <p>JGASGP Membership also includes the updated Philadelphia Resource Directory (an exhaustive collection of resources for Philadelphia cemeteries, funeral directors synagogues, etc.), forms and resources to help you dig in, monthly notices and heads-up about online events on other sites, meeting summaries, the award-winning quarterly publication Chronicles featuring stories and tips on how our members research, and a vibrant group of genealogists willing to share their expertise and give you helpful tips on how to find your missing relatives.</p>	
<p>MyHeritage.com has databases of genealogical records, domestic and international. Limited access to their collections with a free account.</p>	
<p>Rootsweb.com – family trees, mailing list archives, message boards, obituary Daily Times index, family history wiki</p>	<p>Newspapers.com is the largest online newspaper archive of over 20,200 newspapers from the 1700s-2000s.</p>
<p>SteveMorse.org – has easy-to-use custom designed database tools for finding census, immigration, vital records, translation of foreign languages, maps, calendar, etc.</p>	<p>OneGreatFamily.com – online family tree. 7-day free trial.</p>
<p>NON-GENEALOGY SEARCH SITES Anywho.com (people, business finder), Facebook.com, Google.com (search engine, maps, images, translation of foreign languages, Intelius.com (people search, background checks, etc.), LinkedIn.com, Mapquest.com</p>	<p>Rtrfoundation.org –website of the renowned researcher Miriam Weiner, lists record archives for towns in Ukraine, photos and postcards, maps and articles</p>

Understanding Primary vs. Secondary Sources

Primary sources are those created shortly after an event by someone with personal knowledge. For example, a birth certificate provides a much more accurate birthdate than subsequent records because it's prepared closer to the time of the event. However, this is Jewish genealogy... "in the old country" a rabbi may have submitted birth records months or even years after the occurrence, and it isn't surprising to learn that grandpop was born "during Passover." Fact or fiction? Even primary information should be scrutinized.

Secondary sources are compiled from Primary Sources or from memory well after the event, and therefore needs validation. For example, the informant (*who was it?*) who answers a census taker's questions may not know or accurately remember the person's age, and often the informant can't provide an undertaker with the decedent's mother's maiden name.

Using the Search Box

When searching records online, inputting as much information as you can in the Search Box may eliminate some false results, but sometimes less is better if you're trying to find a record that just won't come up. For the same reason, if you check the box to Exact match, you could end up with no results. A lot of records pop up when you let the search engine be creative with spelling. For example, I once found my great-grandfather (GGF) *William* listed as *Tom*! The census taker wrote "Wm" in script, and the transcriber thought it looked like Tom; I had to agree when I looked at it. And if you can't find Uncle Yankel (known as Jacob to us Americans!) from Wolhynia, Ukraine, try filling in only the town without his name. You should get a list of residents of that town, Yankel may have had a different last name, or you may find additional relatives!



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Soundex is a system that codes the phonetic sound of a name since there are many potential spellings. Each letter or sound is assigned a number, focusing on consonants, and as you can see in this example, two similar but differently spelled names both result in the same Soundex code number. JewishGen took it a step further, using coding that works better with Slavic and Yiddish surnames and includes refinements independent of ethnic considerations. This assures that searches will bring up multiple possibilities of spelling your ancestors' names, increasing the likelihood of your finding their records.

AUERBACH = 097500

A	U	E	R	B	A	CH	
0	NC	9	7	NC	5	Pad	
0		9	7		5	oo	

OHRBACH = 097500

O	H	R	B	A	CH		
0	NC	9	7	NC	5	Pad	
0		9	7		5	oo	

Visiting Archives

Most archives have rules about what you can and can't bring in with you. Many require written requests and have listed charges and restrictions. Check web sites or call to get application forms, costs, and rules. Expect waiting times for phone calls. You will probably need to check your coat and purse in a locker. Do not bring any originals; if you're looking for something based on records you already have, bring a photocopy! You may use pencils, not pens. Your laptop and a notebook or tablet for notes are ok. You may or may not be allowed to use your phone for photos, and if you want copies you may need to bring lots of change for photocopiers or viewers. Some allow you to save files to a USB drive. Some records may not be in English. Since your first visit may not be as productive as you'd like, plan on at least 1/2 day and making multiple visits. Expect to have all your folders and belongings checked when you leave since theft of original records means nothing remains of those records for others doing the same research.

Types of Records in Genealogical Research

Birth, Marriage, and Death Records (BMD)

Engagement announcements and marriage records are also printed in newspapers. BMD records provide some level of information about other family members. Marriage records give the name of the bride and groom and provide details about the wedding day, including family members and friends in attendance and more. BMD records are also referred to as Vital Records.

Records

- Obtain and Document Family Records
- Birth, Marriage and Death Records
- Census Records
- Immigration Records
- Citizenship Records
- Social Security Records
- City Directories
- Others

Cemetery Records/Tombstones

You'll find a list of Philadelphia area Jewish cemeteries in the Appendix and on our website, <https://jgasgp.org/>. If/when you plan to visit, keep in mind that it's best done during the week, Monday through Friday morning, when the office is open and can give you a map and direct you to where you'll find your family members. They'll close for shabbat, so expect them to close early on Friday afternoons for the weekend. Check out Find-a-Grave.com, BillionGraves.com, Cyndislist.com category for Cemeteries, and <http://www.iajgs.org/cemetery>

There is no substitute for actually visiting the cemetery. Information you can get from visiting the office include the name (and maybe address) of who paid for the plot and perpetual or ongoing care, the undertaker's name (also found on the Certificate of Death), dates of death (needed if you want to apply for death certificate) and burial, a map of the cemetery and directions to the plot(s). When you visit the grave, always note the father's Hebrew name on the inscription ("so-and-so son/daughter of so-and-so") to take your tree another generation back! Family plots were sometimes purchased from Landsmanshaftn



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or synagogues that secured large blocks of graves for their members; that may give you more information about their lives, so also pay attention to surrounding graves that may give clues to extended family. But if you can't go to the cemetery in person, many cemeteries will take a photo of your relatives' tombstones for a small fee. Jewishgen.org can give you information on reading tombstones and the meanings of the symbols at the top of tombstones. In addition, under Tools you'll find ViewMate, a wonderful resource for free translations in many languages.

While most funeral homes have no problem accommodating genealogists in their requests for relatives' records, keep in mind that funeral home records are private records, and they are within their rights to restrict or deny access. Also, the content varies from one funeral home to another and from one time period to another. To locate the funeral home, try searching for it online. Or use the following reference guides to help you locate funeral homes: American Blue Book of Funeral Service (Kates-Boylston), the National Yellow Book of Funeral Directors (Nomis) and The Redbook (National Directory of Morticians), <https://www.redbookfuneraldirectory.com/>. One of these directories should also be available in your public library's reference section. If the funeral home is no longer in business, online research may reveal it was bought by another funeral home—possibly along with its records. You also could check old city directories to see if a funeral home of a different name suddenly pops up at the same address as the home that handled your ancestor's arrangements. If you can't track down what happened to the home, the local historical society or library may be able to help. These organizations sometimes have old records of local businesses such as funeral homes.

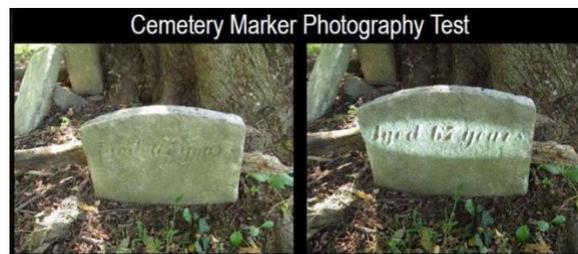
Download *Find-a-Grave* and/or *Billion Graves*, free apps for your smartphone, and take pictures of every stone you need...and more if you have spare time. These websites help researchers find graves even if they live too far away to visit the cemetery. Others may have done the same for you and you may have help/luck finding your relatives! When planning a cemetery trip, it pays to be prepared. These items will prevent frustration and having to return better equipped:

For the office visit, if you have a portable scanner, digital recorder, or magnifier, bring them. And don't forget a tip and a thank you for the office personnel's help.

For your comfort, wear sturdy shoes and sunscreen and a hat in summer and bring drinking water and a snack, gardening gloves, something to sit/kneel on, a Kaddish card, pebbles to leave on the stone, and a small first aid kit, just in case...we have a couple of cemeteries where walking is hazardous.

For recording your findings, charge and bring your phone or a camera for pictures and a tablet and pen or pencil for notes.

Practical items include a trash bag, a shpritz bottle of plain water, a towel or paper towels, hand pruners for overgrown vegetation blocking the stone, a soft brush (opt. for shmutz on the stone), and maybe aluminum foil for making an impression of a tombstone that is difficult to read (opt.).



TIP: when tombstones are hard to read or the sun is not cooperating, there are a couple of ways you can get a decent photo. This experiment was done on a sunny day for a stone in the shade. A flashlight (or flash on a camera) shining perpendicular to the stone will highlight the letters to make them more readable. The photo of the stone on the left was taken without the flashlight, the one on the right is the same marker with the flashlight shining on it. Another technique is to lightly shpritz *plain water* on the



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whole front of the stone before taking the shot (*never use anything other than plain water since chemicals hasten the aging of the stone!*).

Census Records

Start with the most recent records that your family members will appear in and work backwards through the decades. This will help you find more family members before they aged out and moved away from their parents. Jews lived in Jewish neighborhoods, so be sure to read the other names on their street; you might find other relatives or neighbors who married into your family. Census questions varied from one decade to another, but will typically give you an address, whether they rented or owned their home, family relationships, a close approximation of age, whether they could read and write English, their education, country of origin, language spoken at home, occupation, etc. Census records from 1900 to 1930 list the year of immigration and naturalization status! This will help you find Naturalization records and ship manifests (passenger records). Note: dates may not be exact, and ages depend on when their birthday falls, before or after the census date, plus margin for error (they didn't always know exactly when they were born, sometimes they lied, and it's funny...people frequently tended to get a couple of years younger as the years went by according to the census!). Censuses are released when they become 72 years old, so the 1950 census will be released in April, 2022.

City Directories

Long before phones and phone books we had directories of who lived where, typically listing an occupation, wife's name, and whether it was a home or place of business! Just be careful you've got the right one! (*Would you believe there were FOUR Abraham Goldmans who were tailors in Philadelphia in 1904?!*)

Death Certificates

This is where you *might* get lucky finding full names of parents, depending on who the informant was who supplied the funeral home with the personal information of the decedent. It could just as easily have an approximate (*wrong*) birth date and where s/he was born. Note the address, health history and cause of death, the informant's name (typically a family member), date of death and place of burial. With that information you can get information from the cemetery.

DNA Testing

There are a few kinds of tests: Autosomal, Y-DNA, and mtDNA. We get 22 autosomes from our father and 22 from our mother. A 23rd chromosome from each is the sex chromosome, *Y* for males and *mt* for females. Y-DNA is passed down from father to sons through the generations, so only men can take that test (if you're Y-challenged, test a brother, father, or paternal relative in that line). mtDNA is passed down the mother's line to both males and females, but only females can pass their mtDNA down to the next generation since we all get our mtDNA from our mother...not our father's mother. Autosomal testing is the cheapest and most popular test, and tests the autosomes from both parents...but it's only accurate for a handful of generations back. After that it's too dispersed to be really helpful.

Where to test? There are several testing companies: 23andMe, Ancestry, FamilyTreeDNA, MyHeritage, etc. At the time of this writing, all testing companies do Autosomal tests, but only [FamilyTreeDNA.com](https://www.familytreeDNA.com) offers the *Y* or *mt* tests. Look for sales around Mother's Day, Father's Day, and the holidays.

Ancestry has done such a good job of hyping DNA testing on TV that millions are testing just to find out if they should wear lederhosen or a kilt. Most Jews have a reasonable idea of where we came from in the past few generations, so we need a better reason. Do it if you want to research more cousins to help you build out your family tree and hopefully track it back farther. Reach out to good matches. The "DNA tourists" probably won't have a family tree or may have just themselves and their parents, so if they're



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not interested in a tree, they probably won't even respond to you if you email them. That can be frustrating unless you already have an idea of where they fit into your tree. Focus on the good matches (~100cMs or more), not the distant (4th, 5th-8th cousin matches). cM (centimorgans) is a unit of measurement of DNA, and a guideline of how close the matches are to you.

If you're going to take an Autosomal test, you may as well do it on Ancestry, which has the largest number of genealogists testing because they won't accept data from other testing sites. You can download your DNA results and upload them to other sites, and in particular, to the site with the largest database and best DNA tools: [GedMatch.com](https://www.gedmatch.com). They accept test kits from all the other sites, so you can find matches with people all over the world regardless of where they tested.

Just a word about endogamy...Jews had a limited pool of potential marriageable partners, so it was not uncommon for cousins to marry. When that happens, you may find you're related to matches on both your maternal and paternal sides. The result is that you appear to be more closely related than you actually are. It makes it harder. And btw, GedMatch can tell you if your parents were related.

Here's a good site to start learning more about DNA:

<http://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/news/what-dna-test-should-you-take>

Facebook Groups

Jewish Facebook groups: <https://jewishgenealogysurnameproject.com/facebook-groups/>

Online Jewish Communities like *JewishGen*, *Tracing the Tribe*, *Blood and Frogs*, *Jewish Genealogy Surname Project*, *Jewish Genealogy Portal*, local synagogues, local Jewish Genealogical Societies like ours, *Jewish DNA for Genetic Genealogy and Family Research*, *Ancestry.com*, *Family Tree Maker Users*, and a lot more if you just type in Jewish. Take a peek at *Twisted Twigs On Gnarled Branches Genealogy*, too.

Family Trees

When looking at other people's trees, always keep in mind that you must verify everything you find. Just because it's online does not mean it's accurate! We well-meaning amateur genealogists make blunders and sometimes "bark up the wrong tree." Why is that a problem? Because others who see it will assume you were right and add it to their tree, spreading misinformation like a virus. It's best to be sure before you post, (or at least add something to warn others that you're still researching and aren't sure yet: "???").

Holocaust

If you think your whole family survived the Holocaust, you have another "think" coming! To quote Arthur Kurzweil's book [From Generation to Generation](#),



"The Talmud says that when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, then the Jews did their family trees. Sometimes if you want to go forward, first you have to go backward. You see where you are coming from, and you know where you are going. Thank G-d we are here today as Jews, because our ancestors who survived that cataclysm did their family trees. I believe, as I am sure you do, that we are in that same kind of situation today. We are a rebuilding generation. We come after two of the worst moments of Jewish history--one, of course, the Holocaust when a third of our people were murdered, and two, the mass migration of Jews when our families were torn apart. There is probably not a family here this evening that if you go back two or three generations, you will not see that family torn apart--brothers and sisters never saw each other again, husbands and wives, grandparents and grandchildren. And I believe that in the same way that the Talmud says that when the Temple was destroyed, they rebuilt by doing their family trees, in our generation we have the same



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task. As a rebuilding generation, we are doing our family trees to rebuild, to put the pieces back together again, to take that shattered people and to bring them back together again. Our work is mitzvah work. I think we are doing a good job.”

There are several links in the References section: Yad Vashem, USHMM Holocaust Survivor and Victims Resource Center Database (HSV), ITS/Arolsen, JewishGen.org, etc. You'll also find more on this subject on our website under archived meeting notes, November 2019, “*Out of the Whirlwind: Finding your family lost in the Holocaust*” by Deborah Long.

Landsmanshaft

A landsmanshaft (*plural landsmanshaftn*) is a mutual aid society, benefit society, or hometown society of Jewish immigrants from the same European town or region. It was a social group whose members shared a common communal memory, values, challenges, life experiences, and a connection to their hometown in “the old country.” In the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries they provided help in learning English, coping with transition, meeting people, helping find employment, learning democratic culture, assisting with financial loans, helping with medical expenses, and creating burial societies (Chevra Kadisha) which bought a tract of cemetery property and sold graves to their members, friends and associates. Many groups published newsletters, held meetings (minutes, dues register, programs). Check YIVO’s Landsmanshaft Collection and the Philadelphia Jewish Archives in Philadelphia and JGS NY’s Burial Society Database at <https://jgsny.org/index.php/searchable-databases/burial-society-databases/burialsoc-joodb> Also be sure to check the Landsmanshaft in Israel. Many of them wrote Yizkor books and have burial sites in Israeli cemeteries.

Legal Records

Many types of legal records are made public in newspapers. Probate records, court case records and name change records contain valuable genealogical information such as ancestors’ names, relatives, places of residence and more.

Marriage Records

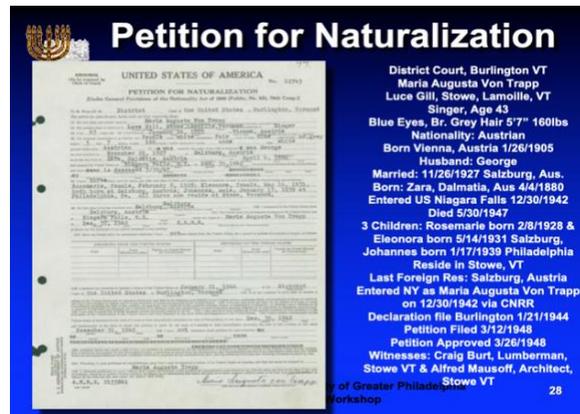
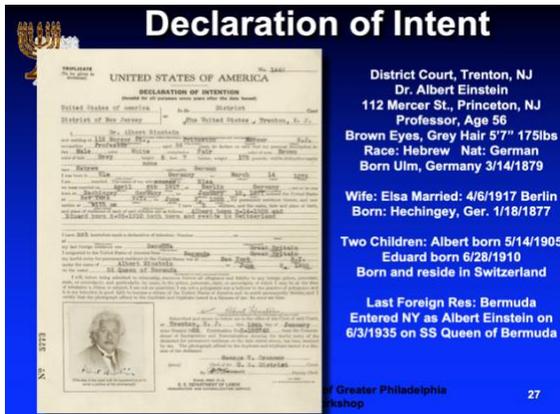
Marriage records are stored in Orphan’s Court, City Hall room 405. Records are retrieved over ten days to two weeks, so plan to make two trips; they cannot be ordered online or over the phone. Be prepared with ID to sign into the building and pass security. There is no divorce docket since the Department of Records destroyed divorce records for privacy reasons.

Military Records

Information included height, weight, eye color, everything from the name of a family contact on Draft Registrations to how and where your family member served in Military Records. You can find these on Ancestry, FamilySearch, etc. as well as <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy>

Naturalization Records

See the “Finding Jewish Records.pdf” file in the Appendix. There are four documents involved in naturalization: Declaration of Intent, Petition for Naturalization, and Certificate of Naturalization, as well as the requirement for study to learn U.S. history and laws. Becoming a U.S. citizen was hard work, and our ancestors took great pride when they became Americans. Pay attention to who witnessed their forms, you may find a sibling or cousin!



The first two are most valuable. They give name of ship and dates of embarkation and arrival, occupation, date and place of birth, and details on spouse and children. Children under 16 and a wife automatically became citizens when their husband/father did until 1922; after that women needed to apply separately. Records are easy to search after 9/25/1906.

Newspapers & Periodicals

Newspapers are found on many of the sites mentioned and offer everything from obituaries to engagements and parties for visitors in old papers. Check Google, <https://www.newspapers.com/> or the Card Catalog on Ancestry, Fold3, MyHeritage, [Chronicling America](http://www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/), The Free Library, etc.

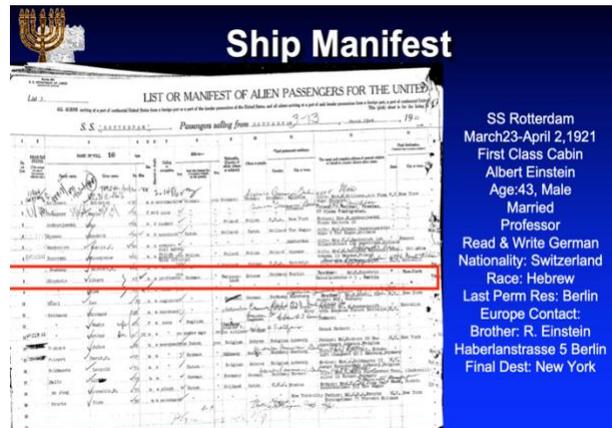
Obits/Death Notices

These are an excellent source of genealogical information. They contain your deceased ancestor's date of death and burial place, and often provide details about their spouse, children, and parents as well as other extended family.

<http://news.google.com/newspapers>
<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/>

Passenger Lists

Since the days of stagecoaches traveling across the frontier to passenger ships arriving at naturalization ports, several types of passenger lists are printed in newspapers. These lists contain the names of our traveling ancestors, where they boarded and landed, and maybe a contact left behind and who they're meeting at their destination, which can lead you to names and addresses to research! Passenger lists can be found at NARA (National Archives & Records Administration) in Philadelphia, online databases such as Ancestry.com, Ellis Island and Castle Garden. See the resources at the end of this handbook.



Photographs

Check Ancestry, Facebook, LinkedIn, SnapChat, Twitter, and any other resources where your family members socialize online. Newspapers record many of life's special moments. As such, you may find pictures of your ancestors in wedding photos, family reunion photos, birthday photos and old photo illustrations and sketches often printed in newspapers. And believe it or not, there's a deadfred.com genealogy photo archive you can peruse.

Property Deeds

If your family bought instead of renting, this will give you more information on who, what and where! See *Tracing Philadelphia Property Deeds.pdf* on our website, <https://jgasgp.org/> This resource is available at City Hall, and the link to do a public search of the deed book indices can be found at <https://epay.phila-records.com/phillyepay/eagleweb/historicalIndex.jsp>. You should know the date (month, day, year) when the property was bought. This information may be found in the local newspaper (The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Evening Bulletin, The Daily News) under *Real Estate Transactions*.

Ships

Ancestry.com has made a lot of information available online, but if you want more.... Morton Allen Directory of European Passenger Ship Arrivals (in large libraries) gives year-by-year listing of arrivals of ships, dates, exact names of steamships to New York 1890-1930, and Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore 1904-1926. The National Archives has 11,000 reels of microfilm with copies of passenger lists since 1820 (\$3/page). If you're 50+ years old, you can research yourself in Washington, D.C. FamilySearch has lists of passengers leaving from Hamburg (many non-German Jews came through there) between 1850-1934. Lists give passenger names, occupation, date of birth, residence, age, sex, name of vessel, captain's name, destination, and date of departure. Ship photos can be found at Mariners Museum, 100 Museum Drive, Newport News, VA 23606 (send for price list and details). Large libraries may have Catalog of Marine Photographs. Steamship Historical Society, 414 Pelton Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10310 for information. The University of Baltimore Library collection contains more than 30,000 photos, 1420 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Social Security Death Index

At <https://www.healthcare.gov/people-with-disabilities/ssdi-and-medicare/> and available on many websites, such as <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1202535>

Unions

Unions became popular as a result of incidents like the deplorable conditions leading to the tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. You may want to check into any records they may have for your ancestors. For example, Philadelphia was a major clothing/textile hub on the east coast, in some areas of the industry bigger than NYC. Many of the professional tailors who opened their own business shops were shuttled by the Jewish community into labor unions. There were various unions: needle-worker unions; garment manufacturing unions; tailor unions, etc.

Voting Records

These can be found in newspapers, manuscript collections, vertical files, local county archives, historical societies, genealogical societies, state archives, university and college libraries and archives, and museums. Search online databases at <https://archive.org/>, <https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/>, <https://books.google.com/>, <http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/>, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>, <https://www.loc.gov/>, <https://www.archives.gov/>, <https://www.familysearch.org/>, <https://www.myheritage.com/>

Written Materials

Books

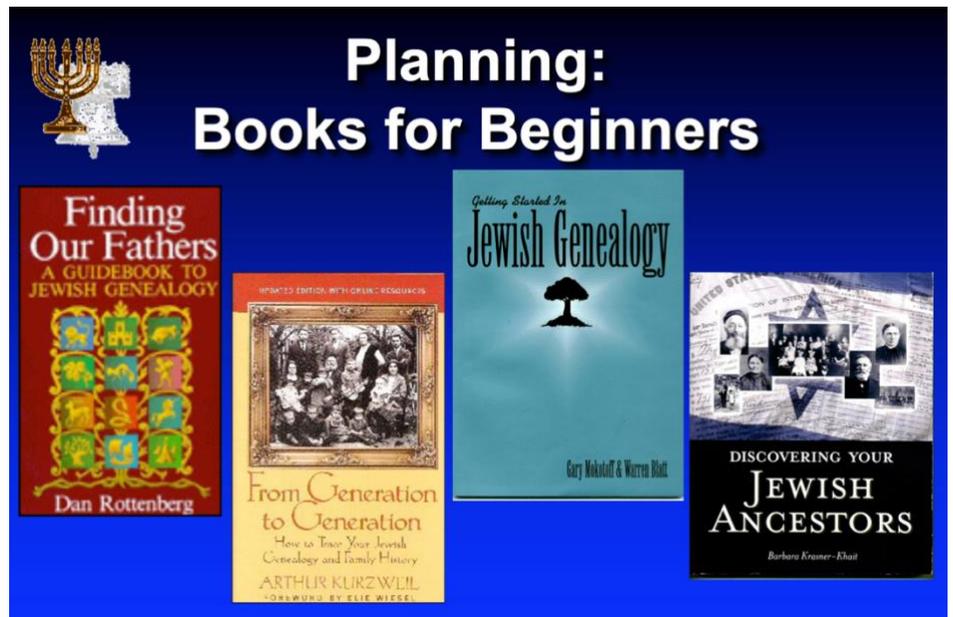
- Rottenberg: [Finding Our Fathers](#)
- Kurzweil: [From Generation To Generation](#)
- Mokotoff & Blatt: [Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy](#)
- Krasner-Khait: [Discovering Your Jewish Ancestors](#)

You'll also find some excellent reference books when you come to JGASGP meetings. One example is [Where Once We Walked](#) by Mokotoff, Sack & Sharon to help locate shtetls.

JGASGP's [Chronicles](#) is another helpful journal, published quarterly. Members can find back issues on our website.

[Avotaynu](#) is a helpful journal and has a large selection of Jewish genealogy books and much more available on their website at <https://www.avotaynu.com/>

[Encyclopedia Judaica](#) (16 volumes) - finest source to begin research on most Jewish subjects. Check index for reference to items which may not have a full article written about them. Bibliographies for each article can give more sources of info.





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Pamphlet: “*Research Outline: Jewish Genealogy*” – 56-page PDF from
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/img_auth.php/2/24/Jewish_Genealogy_Research_Outline.pdf

Forms

Five Generation Pedigree Chart - <http://misbach.org/download/5GenPedigree.pdf>

Family Group Sheet.pdf - https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Family_Group_Sheet_NGS_Final.pdf

Family Unit Chart - <https://www.mymcpl.org/sites/default/files/06-0010familyunitchart.pdf>

Blank Census Forms:

1900: <https://www.mymcpl.org/sites/default/files/MGC-1900censusblank.pdf>

(or substitute 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, or 1950 after it's released in 2022)

Research Checklist: <https://www.mymcpl.org/sites/default/files/06-0118%20Research%20Checklist.pdf>

Research Log: <https://www.mymcpl.org/sites/default/files/06-0005%20Research%20Log.pdf>

These documents and forms can be found on JSASGP.ORG:

Records Checklist.pdf

Source Summary Sheet - Research Log.pdf

Tracing Philadelphia Property Deeds.pdf

Tracing Your Jewish Ancestors, From the United States to Europe 1850 to 1930.pdf

Website Links

Here are some very helpful links on our JSASGP website:

<https://jgasgp.org/2009-phila-area-resource-directory>

<https://jgasgp.org/cemetery-data>

<https://jgasgp.org/ethnicimmigrant-bank-passage-order-book-indexes>

<https://jgasgp.org/jewish-exponent-obituary-index>

<https://digital.library.temple.edu/digital/collection/p16002coll16.php> for Steamship Ticket Purchase

Ledger Books

Links for Pennsylvania records

- [Pennsylvania Death Records, 1900-Present - Archives.com](#)
- [Pennsylvania Obituary Records, 1900-Present - Archives.com](#)
- [Pennsylvania Birth Records, 1900-Present - Archives.com](#)
- [Pennsylvania Marriage Records, 1900-Present - Archives.com](#)
- [Pennsylvania Vital Records, 1900-Present - Archives.com](#)
- [Pennsylvania Obituary Records, 1719-1995 - GenealogyBank.com](#)
- [Find Obituaries and Death Records in Newspapers 1690-Today - GenealogyBank.com](#)

Note: the Pennsylvania Archives will be moving around June 2022 to a new facility being built at 1681 N. Sixth Street, midtown Harrisburg (William Penn founded Pennsylvania in 1681).

Pennsylvania residents who do not have a paid subscription to Ancestry.com can access free records on the website from the Pennsylvania State Archives at <https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Ancestry-PA.aspx>



Jewish Cemeteries and Funeral Homes in the Philadelphia Area

Cemeteries (more in the JGASGP Resource Directory available on www.JGASGP.org):

ADATH JESHURUN CEMETERY, 1885 Bridge Street, Philadelphia, PA - (215) 743-2524

CHEVRA BIKUR CHOLIM, 1853 Bridge Street, Philadelphia, PA – (215) 342-6113

CRESCENT BURIAL PARK, Pennsauken, NJ - (856) 662-6313

HAR HASETIM CEMETERY / GLADWYNE JEWISH MEMORIAL CEMETERY, Conshohocken

State Road, Gladwyne, PA – (years 1890-1945) Gladwynejewishcemetery.org (also see

https://www.mainlinemedianews.com/mainlinetimes/news/hidden-jewish-cemetery-being-revealed-restored-in-gladwyne/article_492dec6b-df3a-5f22-86ea-880cb9d35ef0.html)

HAR JEHUDA CEMETERY, 8400 Landsdowne Avenue, Upper Darby, PA - (610) 789-2104

HAR NEBO CEMETERY, 6061 Oxford Avenue, Philadelphia, PA - (215) 535-1530

HAR ZION CEMETERY, 1201 MacDade Boulevard, Collingdale, PA – (215) 726-1146

HAYM SALOMON MEMORIAL PARK, 200 Moores Road, PO Box 1218, Frazer, PA - (215) 644-1100

KING DAVID MEMORIAL PARK, 3594 Bristol Road, Bensalem, PA - (215) 355-9917

LOCUSTWOOD MEMORIAL PARK, Route 70 West, Cherry Hill, NJ - (856) 429-0500

MIKVEH ISRAEL CEMETERY, 1114 Federal Street or 55th & Market Street, Philadelphia, PA – (215) 922-5446 (synagogue phone)

MONTEFIORE CEMETERY, 600 Church Road, Jenkintown/Rockledge, PA - (215) 663-1250 -

www.montefiore.us

MT. CARMEL CEMETERY, 5700 Frankford Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19135 - (215) 535-1530

MT. JACOB CEMETERY, 700 West Oak Lane, Glenolden, PA - (610) 583-1462

MT. LEBANON CEMETERY, 1200 Bartram Avenue, Collingdale, PA - (610) 583-3151

MT. SHARON CEMETERY, 502 S. Springfield Road, Springfield, PA - (610) 543-8900

MT. SINAI CEMETERY, 1901 Bridge Street (at Cottage Street), Philadelphia, PA - (215) 886-8430 -

<http://mtsinaicemetery.org/contact-us/>

ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL PARK, 2701 Old Lincoln Highway, Trevese, PA - (215) 673-7500

SHALOM MEMORIAL PARK/ FOREST HILLS, 25 Byberry Road (at Pine Road), Huntingdon Valley,

PA - (215) 673-5800 - <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/funeral-homes/huntingdon-valley-pa/forest-hillsshalom-memorial-park/0355>

WEST LAUREL HILL CEMETERY, 225 Belmont Avenue, Bala Cynwyd, PA - (610) 668-9900 -

<https://westlaurelhill.com/webcemeteries/records>

Funeral Homes (more in the JGASGP Resource Directory available on www.JGASGP.org):

Berschler & Shenberg Funeral Chapels, 1111 S. Bethlehem Pike, Ambler, PA - (215) 329-2900

New Jersey chapels available - (856) 665-5401 – berschlerandshenberg.com

Goldstein's Rosenberg's Raphael-Sachs - <https://www.goldsteinsfuneral.com/>

6410 N Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA - (215) 927-5800

310 2nd Street Pike, Southampton, PA 18966 - (215) 927-5800

Pacific & New Hampshire Avenues, Atlantic City, New Jersey - (609) 344-9004

info@rothgoldsteins.com

Joseph Levine & Son Memorial Chapel, Inc., 7112 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA - (215) 927-2700 -

<https://www.levinefuneral.com/about-us.html>

4737 Street Road, Trevese, PA 19053 – (215) 942-4700

2811 West Chester Pike, Broomall, PA - (610) 325-2000

Haym Salomon Memorial Park, 200 Moores Road, Frazer, PA - (610) 644-1100

1002 West Skippack Pike, Blue Bell, PA – *coming late 2020*

Platt Memorial Chapels, Inc., 2001 Berlin Road, Cherry Hill, NJ - (856) 428-9442 – plattmemorial.com



Resources

Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute (AJHS)

<http://www.cjh.org/p/34>

Phone, email, and online chat., no appointments necessary. Newsletters, etc. On Ancestry, Fold3, and many others. CJH.org – click on examine research guides. Largest repository outside of Israel, sound records, artwork, histories, memoirs, personal papers, etc. Has access to the full range of genealogical resources of the CJH partners' collections. The Institute has developed fact sheets and guides for beginning and advanced researchers. An extensive microfilm collection includes microfilms of birth, marriage, and death records on indefinite loan from the Family History Library. Digital microfilm readers enable patrons to save images as JPGs, PDFs and other image file formats and also allow for printing. Genealogy librarians are available six days a week (Sunday through Friday) to assist patrons. Reference services may be reached by phone at (917) 606-8217 or by e-mail to Inquiries@cjh.org.

American Jewish Archives

(the Jacob Rader Marcus Center) - 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

Founded in 1947, devoted to collecting historical documents related to American Jewry...family trees and histories. AJA also has a large collection of synagogue records (mostly Reform), and town research. Send them a copy of family tree and/or history to make it available to others (referred to in their publication American Jewish Archives). They also answer inquiries through mail and often photocopy relevant material.

American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS)

2 Thornton Road, Waltham, Mass 02154

Founded in 1892, AJHS is the oldest national ethnic historical organization in the U.S. Its holdings include records dating from 1654 to the present of the nation's leading Jewish communal organizations. Collections include orphanage records (subject to 70-year privacy laws), immigrant aid organizations, military records, court records, personal papers including family collections with genealogies and papers of rabbis and mohel.

Library and archive, most helpful are synagogue records, published family histories, genealogies, Jewish organization records and US town histories. Indexed and published collections online. Put AJHS in keyword search on Ancestry.com as well as on AJHS's web site. Orphan records: Brooklyn Hebrew Orphan Asylum (1879-1960), Sheltering Guardian Society of NY, Home for Hebrew Infants (1922-1943). Jewish Military Records: American Jewish Committee, Ofc. of War Records, Questionnaires of Jewish WWI servicemen (1918-1921). These are only sources of Jewish records for WWI and WWII for many since government records were destroyed in fire. Discharge papers, casualty records, etc., including some photos. These are available on Ancestry.com. National Jewish Welfare Board WWII Service Files documents 85K files and over 300K Master Card Index. Correspondence, etc. Immigration Assistance Records: Baron de Hirsch Fund 1870-1991, Industrial Removal Office 1899--1920? (non-profit employment agency and immigrant placement records), and Jewish Immigrant Information Bureau >1914 in Galveston, Texas. List of Jewish Farmers.

American Sephardi Federation

<http://americansephardi.org/> - Books, archival collections, periodicals, online community records. Vital records, marriage records and ketubot, circumcision records, cemetery records, family trees, notarial records, holocaust deportation lists.



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Annenberg Research Institute

420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106 - (215) 238-1290

Annenberg Research Institute is a postdoctoral research institution devoted to Judaic and Near Eastern Studies. It is the successor to Dropsie College and is an institution of theological and nondenominational character. Especially rich in Esoterica Judaica dating from the last century. The institute holds over 100,000 volumes relating to Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, including:

- Most Jewish journals and old newspapers
- Yizkor books
- Ancient and medieval manuscripts
- Rare printed books from the 15th and 16th centuries
- Archival materials
- Archaeological artifacts

Arolsen Archives

In Bad Arolsen, Germany, the Arolsen Archives was formerly known as the International Tracing Service under auspices of International Red Cross. Submit an inquiry about Holocaust victims to ITS/Arolsen. The Arolsen Archives has 30 million original documents and 50 million reference cards, the largest worldwide archive on the Shoah, available for free. It includes items like:

- Displaced persons
- Concentration camps, ghettos, Nazi penal institutions
- Transport and prisoner lists from various camps
- Children's records
- Central name index
- Partnership with Yad Vashem. <https://digitalcollections.its-arolsen.org/?lang=en> Search by name in English! Check every few years as more new records become available. Records are available for free.
- Ancestry introduced a Holocaust Database in the summer of 2019 freely available to all.

Avotaynu

Publishes journals, books, videos, and other sources to assist in Jewish genealogy research. Journals, "5 Minutes Guide to Jewish Genealogy Research," e-zine, Jewish Surnames search. www.avotaynu.com.

Balch Database

18 South 7th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106 - (215) 925-8090. Pennsylvania Historical Society, Ancestry, and major libraries and NARA. Includes Russians to America from 1834-1897. Most arrival docs are for NY, but Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans and Philadelphia are included. The records were culled from ship passenger lists independently and contain a lot of errors.

Castle Garden

Nearly 12 million people arrived between 1870-1900, more than 70% through New York City. Castle Garden opened in 1855 was the primary immigration processing center, greeted immigrants to Battery Park until it was replaced in 1892 by Ellis Island. The Immigration Act of 1882 imposed new immigrant screening requirements for which the facility was ill-equipped. Dishonest employees made things worse for immigrants, too. Castle Garden wasn't always the safe haven it was meant to be. Some of the chaos can be chalked up to so many new arrivals crowding together from so many different countries. In 1890, the federal government took over immigrant processing, citing corruption at Castle Garden as one reason. Castle Garden's Emigrant Landing Depot closed. A temporary facility opened at the nearby Barge Office while the new [Ellis Island Immigration Station](#) was being built. When that facility opened in 1892, it



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ushered in an even more massive wave of migration. If your ancestors arrived in New York before, during, or after, you can now research records from 1821-1891 on FamilySearch.org and castlegarden.org

Center for Jewish History (CJH)

15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011 - <http://www.cjh.org>

Center for Jewish History and partner collections span five thousand years, with tens of millions of archival documents (in dozens of languages and alphabet systems), more than 500,000 volumes, as well as thousands of artworks, textiles, ritual objects, recordings, films, and photographs. The Center's experts are leaders in unlocking archival material for a wide audience through the latest practices in digitization, library science, and public education. As one of the world's foremost research institutions, the Center offers academic fellowships, symposia, conferences and lectures as well as a wide array of cultural, educational and genealogy programs for the public. Home to five partner organizations:

- *American Jewish Historical Society*
- *American Sephardi Federation*
- *Leo Baeck Institute*
- *Yeshiva University Museum, Amsterdam Avenue & 185th Street, NYC 10033*
- *YIVO Institute for Jewish History, 1048 5th Avenue, NYC 10028*

Deciphering Jewish Tombstones

How's your Hebrew? Inscriptions on tombstones can give you a lot of information, including the name of the father of the decedent, taking you back another generation. Here's a website by Madelaine Isenberg of the University of California that offers her freely downloadable PDF, "*Reading Jewish Tombstones for Dummies*," that will help you decipher and understand this valuable resource!

https://www.academia.edu/30354800/Deciphering_Jewish_Tombstones?auto=download&email_work_card=download-paper

Division of Vital Records

P.O. Box 1528 New Castle, PA 16103 – (724) 656-3100. Find BMD forms here: <https://www.pa.gov/>

Ellis Island

Need I say more? (212) 561-4588. Go to <http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org> to create a free account and begin searching. Certificates cost. What will you get in your search? Name of passenger original name (if changed in US), maiden name, year of birth, ship of travel, port of departure, where the passenger lived in the US, name of spouse and children. For a \$30 donation the foundation is now (as of mid-2020) offering a free digital copy of the Ship Manifest displaying your ancestor's arrival, and will follow up with a hard copy on archival paper (they used to charge \$25, so this is a good deal if you have relatives coming in through Ellis Island). If your search is unsuccessful, you will receive a 10% promo code for anything they sell in their shop. Also see Castle Garden for records from 1821-1891. see <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/ellis-island-history>

Family History Center and FamilySearch Affiliate Libraries

FamilySearch provides research materials that you may use to trace your family history. They currently have mutually beneficial agreements with more than 200 archives throughout the world. Over the years, FamilySearch has worked with more than 10,000 archives in over 100 countries throughout the world. It partners with archives in order to share best practices as well as to broaden user access to valuable



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historical records. FamilySearch safeguards more than 3.5 billion images on microfilm, microfiche, and digital media. Their purpose is simple: to help people connect with their ancestors through easy access to historical records. As permitted by law and contractual obligations, you can access the information and records in FamilySearch's collection at an increasing number of places throughout the world, including the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, an extensive network of FamilySearch centers worldwide (including some here in the Philly area), and other genealogical and educational institutions as well as on the Internet. Family History Library has digitized millions of microfilm records that are only available in their Family History Centers. To find a FHC near you, go to <https://www.familysearch.org/help/fhcenters/locations/>

Philadelphia Pennsylvania Family History Center, 4720 North Broad Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19141-2106. This family history center does not have microfilm circulation privileges.

Philadelphia Pennsylvania Metro Family History Center

2072 Red Lion Road, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19115 (215) 673-2770

Valley Forge Pennsylvania Family History Center, 721 Paxon Hollow Road Broomall, Pennsylvania 19008-3423 - (610) 356-8507. See the Wiki page for details for classes and events.

Salt Lake City, UT Family History Library, 35 North West Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150 - (801) 240-6996

Free Library of Philadelphia

1901 Vine Street, Philadelphia PA 19103 - (215) 686-5396 - Free public library branches are throughout Philadelphia area. Also check Temple University's Charles Library and/or University of Pennsylvania's Van Pelt Library. Apply in person for a free library card to gain access to a fine collection of genealogical indexes, books, maps, gazetteers, interlibrary loans, vital records indexes, city directories, newspapers, and free Internet access and other sources in a special section of shelves. Ask staff for assistance in locating these and individual family genealogies. Many titles are in closed stacks. Ask reference desk staff for a copy of *Researching Your Family History*, Social Science and History Department. It will assist you in your search. At this same desk, order reverse directories. There is a fifteen-minute wait. They are received in the Literature Department across the hall. This department contains the Map Department (atlases, gazetteers, globes, maps, books such as *Wards of Philadelphia* going back to 1800s). Explore Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Database (from 1600-1922) at <http://search.freelibrary.org/advSearch.cfm>

Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania (GSP)

2100 Byberry Road, Suite 111, Philadelphia PA 19116 – (267) 686-2296 - info@genpa.org
Great for OLD families in Pennsylvania. Researchers are available for assistance. Call first.

Historic Society of Pennsylvania (HSP)

1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia - (215) 732-0422, <https://hsp.org> – Founded in 1824, this is one of the nation's largest archives of historical documents. Philadelphia's Library of American History, with over 21 million manuscripts, books, and graphic images encompassing centuries of US history. As a member, you can access certain records online (such as HSP's records on Ancestry.com—Pennsylvania and New Jersey Church and Town Records, etc.). You also have full access to their genealogical databases. Additionally, there are microfilms. (like cemetery records for cemeteries that no longer exist, like Bellvue), paper sources, and electronic databases that are only available when you're in the library, such as the Historic Newspaper Index, JSTOR, and HeritageQuest, to name a few. They also have a research service, Research by Mail, in which you can hire a researcher to search their archives for you. While the service is available to both members and nonmembers, you do get a substantial discount if you are a member. Also, members have access to the "premium" service in which a researcher can go to other local repositories for you (ex. Marriage Records at City Hall, City Archives, etc.). If you'd like to see more



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about that service, please take a look at this page of their website: <http://hsp.org/collections/library-services/research-by-mail>

Holocaust Records

See Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Holocaust Database on <https://www.JewishGen.org/databases/Holocaust/>, and you can also find a “List of Websites to locate Holocaust Survivors” on our website, jgsgp.org, under Archives > Meeting Summaries and Handouts (*January, 2020 by Frederick Blum*).

Immigrant Bank Records

When our families were coming to America long ago, the US family members may have saved money to purchase steamship tickets to bring relatives to “the new country.” Go to <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/USA/> and scroll down, on right to find *Blitzstein Bank Passage Order Records*, *Lipshutz/Peoples Bank Passage Order Records*, and *Rosenbaum Bank Passage Order Book Records* or if you have a subscription to Ancestry you can also find records under *Philadelphia Bank Immigrant Passage Records, 1890-1949*. The actual ledgers are stored in the HIAS Pennsylvania collection at Temple University Libraries (including the Rosenbluth Brothers, which is not listed on JewishGen) at Temple gives an interesting description of Immigrant Banks on their website. Here’s a bit of it:

During the immigration boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, community banks, often referred to as immigrant banks, were informal establishments which served Eastern and Southern European immigrant communities across America during the latter half of the 19th century up until the Great Depression. Unlike traditional banking institutions, they often operated in other businesses such as grocery stores, butchers, saloons, and other natural gathering places for immigrants. The banks kept deposits, facilitated money transfers abroad, and provided lending and notary services for immigrant newcomers in addition to routine business functions. Most notably, immigrant banks acted as agents for steamship lines, facilitating the sale of tickets and arranging transport from Europe. The creation and ultimate success of immigrant banks was a result of the failure of existing banks to relate to newly arrived immigrants and offer the ancillary services they needed most. Immigrant bankers easily gained the trust of immigrants and subsequently their patronage through their shared language and ethnic and cultural camaraderie.

Although steamship agents and immigrant banks in Philadelphia were plentiful, few records of their activities are known to have survived with the exception of four steamship agents who primarily served the Eastern European Jewish population. These four steamship agents recorded the sale of tickets purchased by their customers in ledgers listing the sales transactions. Unlike passenger lists which document an immigrant’s entry into port, these ledgers record details about the purchase such as the name of the ticket purchaser, the individual(s) for whom tickets were purchased, the name of the steamship line, fees, and travel itinerary. These details reveal information about the passengers, the family members who were arranging passage, and the associated costs of travel. In the 1940s, HIAS Pennsylvania, formerly the Association for the Protection of Jewish Immigrants, an organization dedicated to providing legal and supportive services to immigrants and refugees acquired the steamship ticket purchase ledgers. HIAS Pennsylvania utilized these ledgers to verify immigration information when assisting individuals with the naturalization process or facilitating passage for family members seeking asylum. In 2009, Temple University Libraries acquired HIAS Pennsylvania’s records and the collection of steamship ticket purchase ledgers.

International American Jewish Genealogical Society (IAJGS)

IAJGS offers annual week-long conferences every summer. Past conferences have been in Philly, D.C., Cincinnati, Warsaw, and other host cities, and online when coronavirus prevented us from visiting San Diego. You can find more information each year from JGASGP or on their website, IAJGS.org.



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International Tracing Service (ITS)

See Arolsen Archives.

Jewish Exponent

The Philadelphia area Jewish newspaper - 2100 Arch Street, Philadelphia PA 19103 - (215) 832-0700

JewishGen.org

search tens of millions of Jewish records, discover your ancestral town, explore what life was like for your ancestors, connect on the JewishGen Discussion group, get involved and join the volunteer team. If you donate \$100/year to support their important work, gain deeper access to tools to aid in your research.

Home • [JewishGen.org Information](#) • Research

Research:

- Yizkor Books** – Aims to translate Yizkor (memorial) books, predominantly written after the Holocaust, into English. There are currently hundreds of completed or partially completed translated books online.
- ViewMate** – Where users can post photographs and documents online, and request help in translating or identifying information.
- Discussion Groups** – Share information, ideas, methods, tips, and resources with other Jewish genealogy researchers.
- KehilaLinks** – Aims to create "virtual" Yizkor Books online, by creating web pages for individual towns, and uploading items such as pictures, maps, personal recollections, and research data.
- Research Divisions** – Web pages for JewishGen Research Divisions focusing on historic regions of origin, or special topic. Note: We are currently in the process of restructuring and modernizing our website. There will be ongoing changes to these pages:
[Austria-Czech](#) • [Belarus](#) • [Bessarabia](#) • [Coulund](#) • [Early American](#) • [French](#) • [Galicia](#) • [Germany](#) • [Hungary](#) • [Latvia](#) • [Poland](#) • [Romania](#) • [Scandinavia](#) • [Serbian/C](#) • [Southern Africa](#) • [Sub-Carpathia](#) • [Ukraine](#) • [United Kingdom](#) • [Rabbinic](#)

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MEMORIAL HERITAGE

▪ **Jewish Genealogical & Archival Society of Greater Philadelphia (JGASGP) -**

<https://jgasgp.org/> This lively group meets monthly at Keneseth Israel, 8339 Old York Road, Elkins Park, PA 19027 -or- Main Line Reform Temple, 410 Montgomery Ave, Wynnewood Pennsylvania 19096. Attending meetings will teach you new things, to think outside the box, and gives you a place to ask for suggestions on where to look next! Board members are available to answer your questions for 30 minutes before each meeting. The JGASGP Library is housed at the Historical Society of Philadelphia.

NOTE: throughout the COVID pandemic, meetings are held virtually every three weeks. Members receive emails with Zoom information.

JOWBR Burial Registry

The JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry is a database of more than three million names and other identifying information from cemeteries and burial records worldwide.

<https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/> or <https://iajgscemetery.org/>

JRI-Poland

jri-poland.org – This site is the largest fully searchable database of indexes to Jewish vital records accessible online, images of more than 2.2 million records and 6.1 million records from more than 550 Polish towns. More are being added every few months. They feature work of the famous genealogist Miriam Weiner and the Routes to Roots Foundation.



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Libraries

See Free Library of Philadelphia, and here are some more thoughts:

Temple: Charles Library

U of P: Van Pelt Library

Gratz College: Tuttleman Library

And for those of you with New York relations:

New York Public Library - Jewish Div., Room 84, 42nd Street & 5th Avenue, NYC 10018

Columbia University

Museum of Jewish Heritage, A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

Edmond J. Safra Plaza, 36 Battery Place, New York, NY 10280 - www.mjhnyc.org. JewishGen is an affiliate member.



National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

Philadelphia City Archives Division, 14700 Townsend Road, Philadelphia, PA 19154-1096 - (215) 305-2044. Questions: Philadelphia.archives@nara.gov or inquire@nara.gov or email

Philadelphia.archives@nara.gov. <https://www.archives.gov/research/start/online-tools>.

The complete National Archives are in Washington, DC, which houses the Library of Congress, reference books, a map room, and knowledgeable librarians. See <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy> But Philly records are in Philly: <http://www.phila.gov/phils/docs/inventor/genealogy.htm> shows what's available, including Births, City Directories, Deaths, Deeds, Marriages, Naturalizations and the dates covered.

Archival Research Room, Microfilm Research Room. Free access to Ancestry, Fold3, FamilySearch, Castle Garden, Ellis Island, ArchivesUSA, ProQuest Direct, and more. The NARA Townsend Road location is open for researchers wishing to use original records (that is, paper and photographs; not digitized or online). Researchers must make an appointment; NARA cannot accommodate researchers without an appointment.

Search for federal censuses, ship records, naturalization records, military records and maps. Censuses: 1790-1870, 1880, 1900-1940 include some Soundex indexes (most of 1890 was destroyed by fire); 1910 includes Soundex indexes for 21 states. 1850 is particularly useful for German Jewish families that arrived at the beginning of the wave of immigration to America. Many National Archives branches and genealogical libraries have these. Records of U.S. District Courts, U.S. Court of Appeals, U.S. District Circuits, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Navy. They do not have state and local court records. There is a small fee for microfilm and paper copies. Call (215) 685-9400 for a recorded listing of partial records and dates:



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Start Your Family Research	Browse Popular Topics
 <p>Learn how you can use the resources at the National Archives to explore your family's ancestry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start Your Genealogy Research• Genealogy Resources• Genealogy Research Using Military Records• Reference Reports• Records Digitized by our Partners	 <p>Explore genealogy resources related to specific topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Census Records• Ethnic Heritage• Military Service Records• Immigration Records• Land Records• Naturalization Records• More Topics

Naturalizations

Eastern District (Philadelphia) Index 1795-1951; petitions 1790-1930

There are a few stages to Naturalization, so you may find forms for:

- I. Declaration of Intent
- II. Petition for Naturalization
- III. Certificate of Arrival
- IV. Certificate of Citizenship

These records can be found in the Philadelphia Index:

- Delaware: Wilmington 1797-1991
- Maryland: Baltimore 1792-1972
- Pennsylvania: Philadelphia 1790-1991
- Virginia
- West Virginia

Ship Passenger Lists: Philadelphia Name Index 1800-1906, Soundex Index 1883-1948, Book Index by date 1906-1926, Baltimore Name Index 1833-1866, Soundex Index Federal list 1820-1897, Book Index by date 1897-1952. Philadelphia has multiple indexes to US ports ranging from 1800-1906 (National Archives – microfilms M360); from 1820-1874 (NARA microfilms M334); Lists 1883-1945 (NA microfilms T840)

National Museum of American Jewish History

101 South Independence Mall East Philadelphia, PA 19106-2517 - (215) 923-3811 -

<https://www.nmajh.org/>

Newspaper and Database Center

The Free Library of Philadelphia has a Newspaper and Database Center on the 2nd floor, next door to Social Sciences. City directories from 1785-1936 on microfilm are listed alphabetically by name, occupation, address, and in later years, spouse. Also list by occupations such as butchers, grocers, and tailors. Research is self-service. Printing is performed by staff. Newspapers are on microfilm and date back to approximately the 1860s. Ex: The Public Ledger, Inquirer, Bulletin, and The Philadelphia Record. A manual lists holdings.

Philadelphia City Archives

548 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123 - (215) 684-9401 Here's an overview of their vast collection of all City records not in current use which possess historical, administrative, legal, research, cultural or other important value. <https://www.phila.gov/phils/records.htm> and <https://www.phila.gov/Records/Archives/Archives.html>



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Philadelphia County Records at City Hall (Local Courthouse)

Plan a visit in person. The city provides access to marriage and divorce records (Orphan's Court), wills and probate records (Register of Wills), some birth and death records, real estate records, business records, voter registrations, and some archives. Some records are retrieved over a week or two, so plan to make two trips; they cannot be ordered online or over the phone. Be prepared with ID to sign into the building and pass security.

Pennsylvania Department of Vital Records

Department of Health, Bureau of Health Statistics & Registries, Division of Vital Records, P.O. Box 1528, New Castle, PA 16103 - (724) 656-3100

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/certificates/Pages/Vital%20Records.aspx> – be sure to see the *Genealogy Fact Sheet* for information on who can request records, what to do if you don't know a death date (they can do a 10-year search for \$25) forms, and cost of birth and death certificates.

The Philadelphia Jewish Archives Collection

Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) at Temple University, Charles Library

PJAC was formed through the efforts of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and the American Jewish Committee in 1972. Its mission was to collect, preserve, facilitate research and share the story of the Jewish communities of the Greater Philadelphia area. The Archives accumulated ethnic bank records, HIAS records, Jewish newspapers (Exponent and several in Hebrew and Yiddish), synagogue records, and created the Jewish Exponent Obituary Project. In 2009 the holdings of PJAC were transferred to the Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) at Temple University Libraries. With the support of many philanthropic individuals, an archivist position has been endowed by PJAC. PJAC combined with Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Philadelphia, (JGASGP) to form the Jewish Genealogy & Archival Society of Greater Philadelphia (JGASGP). With our new name and mission, the core mission of PJAC continues. Donations can also be made through the library website: <https://library.temple.edu/scrc>

Jessica M. Lydon is the archivist. You MUST call to request items to view prior to visiting. Be patient as the items need to be located and brought over to the reading room. Responses may take 24-48 hours. Library hours M-F 8:30-5:30. 1900 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122. Contact for an appointment: [\(215\) 204-8212](tel:2152048212) or scrc@temple.edu

Pier 53 Immigration

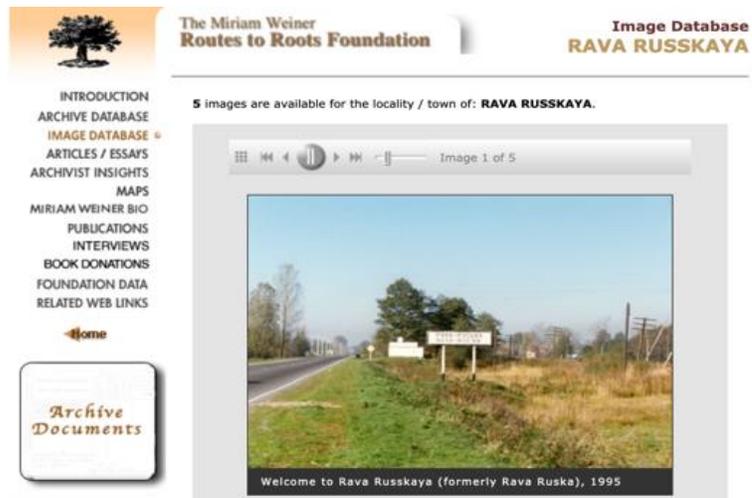
Philadelphia had a pier?! Pier 53 was Philadelphia's immigration pier from 1870 to 1915. Try Ancestry.com for a start searching for records. Check out 'Pennsylvania Passenger Lists' and scroll to the list at the end of the drop-down menu, then plug in relevant info (name, date, etc.) If you find them and the ship is either the American Line, the Red Star Line, or the Hamburg-American Line, then they came in through Pier 53. Happy hunting! For some history, see <http://washingtonavenuegreen.com/> and <http://washingtonavenuegreen.com/06pierproject/06pierproject.html>



Routes to Roots Foundation

Based on her 30-year career of genealogical research, Miriam Weiner single-handedly created Routes to Roots Foundation and has worked in the archives of Poland and the former Soviet Union since 1989. It is an incredible resource for researchers, recently updated with the new Surname Database and so much more:

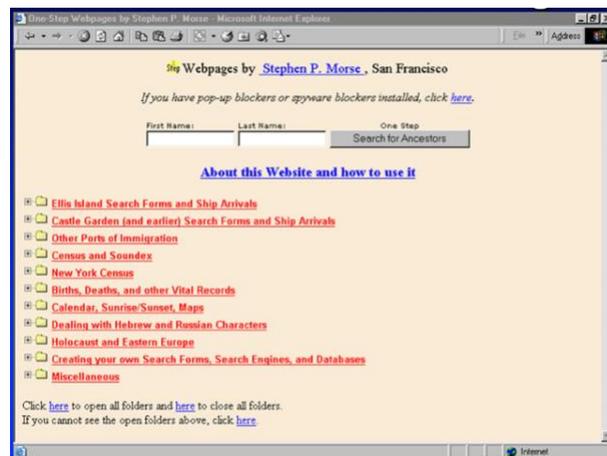
<https://rtrfoundation.org/>



SteveMorse.org

Steve Morse, a brilliant database designer, found most search engines too inefficient to do his complex searches, so he designed his own powerful search engine. Luckily, he shared it with all of us! This site may help you find those records hiding from you.

<https://stevemorse.org/index.html>



Synagogues

An excellent resource for Philadelphia area synagogues can be found in the Jewish Genealogical & Archival Society of Greater Philadelphia's Resource Directory available in the Members Section on www.JGASGP.org

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM)

100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2126 - <https://www.ushmm.org/>

Do not miss this museum! Make the trip.

Webinars

Here are some fantastic websites for webinars and handouts on any genealogical topic you can think of!

Ancestry – Ancestry.com

Boston Family History Library - <https://fh.lib.byu.edu/classes-and-webinars/online-webinars/>

Family Tree Magazine - <https://university.familytreemagazine.com/>

Legacy Family Tree Webinars - <https://familytreewebinars.com/beginners>

World Zionist Organization, Central Zionist Archives

Search Bureau for Missing Relatives:

<http://www.zionistarchives.org.il/en/AttheCZA/AdditionalArticles/Pages/ChipushKrovim.aspx>



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Yad Vashem

Yad Vashem Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority (Holocaust records)

P.O. Box 3477, 91034 Jerusalem, Israel - <http://www.yadvashem.org/> - you can submit as well as find millions of records of victims of the Shoah. And if you go to Jerusalem, be sure to visit the museum!

Yiskor (Memorial) Books Project

See JewishGen.org for this vital project to identify and remember people in death.

YIZKOR BOOKS

