



RESEARCH IN POLAND

2019

Determine the place of origin of your ancestor.

Polish records are not centralized therefore before any research can be undertaken, you need to first establish the exact town or village and province / county / jurisdiction that your ancestor was born in or that a particular event occurred in.

The golden rule of genealogy is to always work back from the known to the unknown. Therefore the place of origin of your ancestor should be looked for in New Zealand records, or if your family came via Australia or Britain then in those records.

The place of origin of your ancestor should be mentioned on N.Z. birth and death certificates after 1876 and on N.Z. marriage certificates after 1882.

It should appear in naturalisation papers so if your ancestor became naturalised then the full file for this should be applied for.

It may also appear in an obituary, on a headstone, in army records, shipping lists, as well of course as family sources. If the family were in Britain then the census there may show the place of origin.

Hamburg was a major port of embarkation for Poland. The Hamburg Passenger Lists begin in 1850, are chronological by ship and show each passenger's last place of residence.

Researching in Poland

It is vital to understand that the country of Poland as it exists today was only created after World War II and in fact there was no country of Poland from the Partitions of Poland in 1795 through to 1918. The Polish speaking area fell within the Prussian, Russian and Austrian Empires (see map overleaf).

As a result of the partitions of Poland, church and civil records vary in their content, languages and form depending entirely on which area a particular place was administered by.

German / Prussian Poland

This area covers the north and west of Poland. The records and research methods are very similar to the rest of Prussia.

In general church records exist from the 17th century. In 1806 as a result of the introduction of the Napoleonic Code, the churches were required to make duplicates of their church books to be deposited with the civil authorities. With the formation of the German Empire in 1874 civil registration proper was introduced.

The second half of the 19th century brought processes of Germanisation to the area. Place names were officially renamed, sometimes by accommodating the spelling to the German style, sometimes by translating the meaning of the name, or even by coining a completely new name which sometimes retained some of the original sound. A very useful online gazetteer that includes an English option can be found at

www.kartenmeister.com

The records can be in Latin, Polish or German.

Russian Poland

This area covers the east of Poland (and actually extended into Belarus and Ukraine). The eastern part was incorporated into the Russian Empire and their records were kept in Russian. The portion on the map marked Kingdom of Poland retained Polish until 1867 when Russian was forcibly introduced as a reprisal after an 1863 uprising.

Duplicates of church books were kept after 1806. At the beginning, the main church in an area was required to record the other denominations, although as the other communities were officially recognised throughout the 19th century, separate duplicates were kept by those churches. Both the Julian and Gregorian calendars were used. Often records show dates in both forms.

Austrian Poland

This area falls in the south east of Poland and was part of the Austrian province of Galicia. Galicia extended south into Slovakia and eastwards into Ukraine. The main church was Catholic. Church books were kept in Latin until after WWI. After 1784 separate church records were kept for all villages, no matter how small. Thus there can be many sets of church books for any given parish. Duplicates were also kept from 1784. Families tended not to move far which caused concentrations of identical names. Fortunately the records compensate by being very full and often

mentioning at least two generations in a particular entry.

Further Records

Another class of records found in Polish repositories are lists of parishioners known as **Soul's Lists** or **Status Animarum**. These are found mostly for the 19th and 20th centuries and contain names of parishioners, house numbers, and dates of births, marriages and deaths. Usually the records cover a span of years and show when people moved into and out of the village. In Galicia they form part of the church records. In Prussian Poland such lists were public documents prepared by village mayors and so form part of the civil records.

Location of records

The availability of Polish records can be checked online at

<http://baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/pradziad.php>

This site, called Pradziad (grandfather), forms part of the Polish National Archives website. Searches can be done by place name. The results returned list all the individual church books, civil registration records, soul's lists and manorial records for the particular place and in which archives the various records are deposited. It is really very easy to use.

The FamilySearch *Wiki* must be checked as a large number of records are coming online. FamilySearch have also filmed extensively in Poland. Do check their catalogue.

Useful Polish Words

małżeństw / małżeństwa: marriages

urodzeń / urodzenia: births

zgonów / zgony: deaths

Kościół rzymsko-katolicki:
Roman Catholic Church

Ewangelicko-Reformowane:
Evangelical-Reformed Church

Urząd Stanu Cywilnego:
Civil Registration

Map of the Polish Speaking Area in 1865
 Present day Poland is the area within the dashed line

What you already know

Surname

Christian name

Country

County/Province

Town/Parish

Birth

Marriage

Arrival in NZ Year

Children born not in NZ



Parents

NZ Certificates to obtain

Birth.....

Marriage.....

Death.....

Naturalization....

Military in NZ....

Check List

Hamburg Passenger list

UK Census

UK Alien Arrival

UK Naturalization Archives

Grammatical Effects on Polish Names

Polish grammar affects given names, surnames, and place-names. Surnames are affected by gender endings. For example the family name (masculine) Grala becomes, for an unmarried woman, Gralówna and for a married woman Gralowa. In the case of the family name of Kowalski, the male name would be written as Kowalski and the female as Kowalska. Although these endings can be confusing, it is important to note that these changes do not indicate different families.

The Polish language uses grammatical endings to indicate such things as possession, objects of a verb, or objects of a preposition. To one unfamiliar with Polish this could cause confusion. Always record names and places in their nominative case.

The following is an example of how case endings change surnames in a typical birth entry:

Józef, syn Antona Grabowskiego i Anny z Nowaków Grabowskich w Warszawie
 Józef, son of Anton Grabowski and Anna (maiden name Nowak) Grabowska in Warszawa

Websites

www.familysearch.org

www.ancestry.com

baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/pradziad.php

www.kartenmeister.com

www.pgasa.org/Towns/townindex.php

<http://english.mapywig.org/news.php>

FamilySearch

Ancestry – Library or Worldwide version Pay to view

Polish State Archives

Gazetteer of former German Territories east of the Oder-Neisse line.

Geographical Gazetteer of Polish Kingdom & other Slavonic countries.

Maps of old Poland from Wojskowy Institute

European Group Contact

Send research queries to the Contact on the **European Interest Contact** page at www.genealogy.org.nz

A group meets on the 1st Friday of most months at the Family Research Centre at 159 Queens Rd, Panmure from 4pm– 10pm. Continental advice is usually available, however please first check with the Contact to be quite sure.

Recommended Reading

Chorzempa, Rosemary, *Polish Roots*, 2014.

familysearch.org Research *Wiki* for information on records, how to use them and links to archives.