



# AVOTAYNU®

The International Review of Jewish Genealogy

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## As I See It

Attendance at the July 2016 International Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies (IAJGS) conference in Seattle was more than usually rewarding. In addition to its customary features, a half-formed thought that had been gestating for a while at the back of my brain, plus the synergy of presentations by Stanley Diamond, Sarah Nadia Lipes and Anna Royzner, all combined to give birth to an idea. I present it in more detail in the editorial on the facing page of this column, but in essence, it is the development of a new level of leadership and coordination in the organized Jewish genealogy field.

Long experience teaches that every successful initiative has had a strong leader to guide the effort. Without a leader, no idea, however good, ever translates into action. The same will be true of the effort I propose.

Over the past 35 years, organized Jewish genealogy has spawned and executed many excellent projects, and we have formed a number of effective organizations in the process—the International Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies (IAJGS), International Institute for Jewish Genealogy (IIJG), JRI-Poland, and JewishGen, with its special interest groups (SIGs) and others.

As a mark of our successes throughout the field, we have observed a growing set of issues and opportunities for important advances emerging from these various organizations. What Jewish genealogy does not yet have, however, is an umbrella organization that coordinates and leverages issues of mutual interest and actions among all our groups. In the United States, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (which elects the president of the group), takes on such a task for their mutual interests. Australia, the United Kingdom and other countries have similar bodies that play similar roles.

If the project I propose to index “second-tier” Jewish records is to come to fruition, it will need the combined efforts of all our Jewish genealogy groups, organized through a consortium, and a strong leader must emerge to bring this about. The late Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern, widely recognized as the father of contemporary organized Jewish genealogy, stepped forward to organize what he called “a loose confederation of genealogical societies.” That confederation evolved into IAJGS.

I suggest that IAJGS return the favor by stepping forward to lead what I am calling the Second Tier Project. If you like the idea, or don’t, please write to us ([info@avotaynu.com](mailto:info@avotaynu.com)) and give us your opinions and suggestions.

Stage Three of JRI-Poland, presented by Stanley Diamond at the Seattle IAJGS conference and described elsewhere in this issue of AVOTAYNU, illustrates the remarkable, complex and valuable organization that he and his volunteers have so brilliantly created. The Jewish genealogy world would benefit beyond measure if it were to har-

*(continued on page 54)*

## As I See It

(continued from page 2)

ness the type of organizational skill that Stanley Diamond has contributed to JRI-Poland—in pursuit of a project that goes beyond just Poland.

Beyond the editorial, the contribution by Edward Luft illustrates the type of “second-tier” sources that can be so useful to Jewish genealogy. Luft’s interest is in the multitude of valuable, under-utilized, genealogically valuable websites. This time he focuses on a site devoted primarily to unusual resources from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Along these same lines, Vivian Kahn’s article highlights the database of the Hungarian Special Interest Group (H-SIG). One of JewishGen’s most active groups, H-SIG’s efforts reflect the type of volunteer effort that can be brought to the Second Tier Project.

Emily Garber, another talented member of our community with high standards, contributes an eminently readable article that illustrates exactly how to integrate the Genealogical Proof Standard into a piece of research. This topic usually makes me fight the urge to take a nap, but Garber makes it surprisingly interesting.

Unlike many other genealogists who usually only trace backward in time, Jewish genealogists often anchor their research in the past and work forward in time to discover living relatives. Recently named as a Certified Genealogist, Professor Ruth Craig emulates Garber’s devotion to high standards with an excellent article that demonstrates the use of an unusual source, travel records, in order to find descendants of a relative who survived the Holocaust. In the same vein, Stephen Denker combines the efforts of a German researcher with U.S. censuses and online obituaries to find living descendants of an ancestor whose given name at birth had been unknown to them.

Individuals affected by the Holocaust are the subjects of both Craig’s and Denker’s articles, and Holocaust-era research remains central to Jewish genealogy. In this issue, Megan Lewis reports on digital resources on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) website; and Alex Avram traces the evolution of the Yad Vashem collection, highlighting recent developments of importance to genealogists.

Among other topics in her “wrap-up” report of the Seattle conference, IAJGS president Marlis Humphrey includes a report of the association’s annual meeting at which she presented her vision for the future. I didn’t attend the IAJGS annual meeting, and my editorial had not even been conceived, let alone written, when Humphrey proposed “unleashing the potential of the collective network to tackle game-changing projects in Jewish genealogy.” To me, this sounds like the definition of serendipity. I sure hope that Humphrey and her board agree.

Another of Humphrey’s topics is the 2017 IAJGS conference in Orlando, Florida. Adam Brown, managing editor of Avotaynu Online, serves as chairman of that event. He is

interested in polling our readers’ attitudes and opinions about the conference, so we have created a questionnaire to sample opinions, shown on the following page. In the 32 years of AVOTAYNU’s existence, I cannot remember ever before including requests for readers’ opinions; this time we have two! Please take the time to answer the questions and send your replies to the same email address as above: [info@avotaynu.com](mailto:info@avotaynu.com).

DNA testing is one of Adam Brown’s special interests. It led him to establish the Avotaynu DNA project, for which he supplies a progress report in this issue. AVOTAYNU publisher Gary Mokotoff tries to understand, participate in and keep abreast of developments in genetic genealogy, but he is puzzled and frustrated by the results of the testing he and others have done. Mokotoff set out his problems and invited Brown to help him understand more. We present their dialogue here.

Sometimes volunteer efforts lead genealogists into new areas of interest. That happened to Israeli Esther Rechtschafner when she participated in the Israel Genealogical Research Association (IGRA) BillionGraves.com efforts. Rechtschafner became curious about the history and meaning of inscriptions on Jewish graves over the centuries. IGRA published her research on its website, and we offer a condensed version here.

I close with AVOTAYNU’s deep thanks to our U.S. Update Editor, Diane Goldman, who has so excellently discharged those responsibilities for many years and now wants to retire from the position. Diane’s departure leaves an open slot on the AVOTAYNU team, and I am looking to fill it. The job involves reading and abstracting all the many JGS newsletters—print and online—which we will supply. It is a great way to stay abreast of the activities and news from all the Jewish genealogy societies in the U.S. To volunteer, write to me at [sallyann.sack1@verizon.net](mailto:sallyann.sack1@verizon.net).

Sallyann Amdur Sack-Pikus  
Editor

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Whether you want some simple task done such as locating a record or solving a specific problem, or you want to retain someone to compile a complete family history, hire the best. My clients include amateur genealogists as well as members of the most prestigious Jewish families in the country. References supplied on request.

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# Update on Jewish Records Indexing-Poland: Phase Three

by Stanley Diamond

*The following article is based upon a presentation at the IAJGS conference in Seattle, Washington, August 2016—Ed.*

In 2016, Jewish Records Indexing-Poland (JRI-Poland) celebrated its 21st birthday. Over those years, it has had two constants. One has been its dedication to serving the research community by bringing the Jewish records of Poland to the researcher's doorstep. The other "constant" has been change: new opportunities developing from ongoing dialogue and negotiations with Polish archival leadership; fortuitous advances in technology; new governmental regulations; and unexpected discoveries of, or access to, new sources.

Responding to the external changes has been a challenge for the JRI-Poland executive committee and board. In the following, I describe the latest chapter in the JRI-Poland journey, based on the unanimous agreement of our leadership to introduce the JRI-Poland Phase Three mission: to extract all genealogically relevant data from records, rather than just create basic indexes and to link our search results to online digital images of the actual records.

When JRI-Poland<sup>1</sup> was born in 1995, its principal resources were the Jewish records microfilmed by the LDS (Mormon) Family History Library. These records generally started in 1826 and ended between 1865 and 1880. Indexing microfilmed records was Phase One of JRI-Poland.

Our initial contract with the Polish State Archives (PSA) in 1997 enabled JRI-Poland to purchase index pages of Jewish records from more than 500 towns. These were mostly the years of Russian language records not filmed by the LDS and accessible only in archive branches across Poland. This was Phase Two. The creation of extended indexes of Galician records in the Agad archives was a model for Phase Three. Most of what follows applies primarily to Phase Three records from Congress Poland.<sup>2</sup>

## Phase Three Records from Congress Poland

The long-term objective and significance of Phase Three is to make access to and research of records as simple as possible for documenting Jewish family roots in Poland; and by doing so, enabling family historians to build multi-generational ancestries in hours instead of what has been months or years. To accomplish that, the aim of Phase Three is to extract all genealogically relevant information from the records and to link these search results to online digital images. JRI-Poland now will extract both newly available years of records as well as those records for which it previously only indexed limited information.

For example, important genealogical data in a birth record includes the name of the child, date of birth, names and

ages of parents, mother's maiden name and the town of birth or the town where parents are living. Marriage records identify the town in which the groom was born or was living. Death records often list the spouse and children left behind. In some cases, the names of the children identified in death records are the only references one will find for children whose births never were registered or whose birth records were lost.

Creating extracts of all records has always been JRI-Poland's dream. Many researchers have done that with records in the LDS microfilms. Not only did they help their own research, but their efforts have helped many others with roots in the same town. In recent years, individual genealogists or groups of researchers have funded JRI-Poland's efforts to do the same for towns previously only indexed under the PSA project (when year-end index pages were purchased from the Polish State Archives).

Phase Three has been made possible as the result of two major changes in access to the records in Poland. First was the decision by the Polish State Archives to launch a long-range initiative to digitize the vital records of all religious denominations in its branches. Then, last year's surprise change in Polish privacy laws opened up access to 20 additional years of marriage and death records in civil records offices, and for some towns, books with marriages and deaths up to 1935 that had been moved to PSA branches many years ago.

The 2013 multi-year agreement between JRI-Poland and the PSA,<sup>3</sup> plus the far-reaching, far-sighted PSA decision to scan vital records and make them available online, created a monumental opportunity for the research community that JRI-Poland serves. The new agreement and the easy access to digitized images is making it possible (and much more convenient) for volunteers to help rapidly expand the JRI-Poland online database and provide instant access to actual records by linking the entries in the search results table to online digital images.

More than 1.7 million entries from 165 towns in the JRI-Poland database already are linked directly to digital images or to folders on the PSA website that contain images of town records. A significant number of the entries are Galician columnar records in the AGAD Archives.

Millions of additional records are not yet linked because the images are not yet online—and researchers frequently ask why. At the 2013 IAJGS conference in Boston, JRI-Poland reported that the Lublin Archives had indicated that scans of all its Jewish records would be online by the end of the year, an estimated 160,000 records. That has not happened yet; I explain why below.

TYPE	Year of Volume	Yr. of Event	Act #	SURNAME	FIRST NAME(S)	SEX	Age	Town BORN	Town LIVING	Town Permanent Residence	Civil Status	Father's Given name	Father's SURNAME	Mother's Given name	Mother's Maiden name	Comments
M	1918		68	ENGEL	Azriel	M	25y	Warszawa				Icek	ENGEL	Perla	FRYD	
M	1918		68	BRODZKA	Udla	F	35y	Łódź				Szmul Majer	BRODZKA	Bajla Sura	GUTMAN	
M	1918		69	BIRENCWEJG	Moszek	M	22y	Sulejów	Sulejów			Izrael Icek	BIRENCWEJG	Chaja Ita	ROZENTAL	
M	1918		69	GELBLUM	Necha Rojza	F	29y					Izrael	GELBLUM	Chana	MADENBERG	
M	1918		70	SILBERSZTEJN	Wolf	M	62y	Częstochowa			W	Jakób	SILBERSZTEJN	Salomea	MERTZ	
M	1918		70	MAJERMAN	Berta	F	53y	Częstochowa	Częstochowa		W	Szaja Wolf	LANDAU	Anna	SUDOWICZ	
M	1918		71	LIBERMAN	Berek Zysman	M	30y					Cudek	LIBERMAN	Chana	TURNER	
M	1918		71	HERSZBAUM	Marjema	F	28y	Wolborz	Wolborz			damaged	HERSZBAUM	Fajga Rywka	GOLDFARB	
M	1918		72	PASMONIK	Chaim Szmul	M	21y	Bełchatów	Bełchatów			Efroim Dawid	PASMONIK	Idessa	ELBINGER	
M	1918		72	BARAN	Marja Laja	F	31y	Rawa				Chaim Chaskiel	BARAN	Mindla	LANDAU	
M	1918		73	GRUSZKA	Moszek Szyja	M	27y	Bełchatów	Bełchatów			Lejba	GRUSZKA	Ruchla	LIEBERMAN	
M	1918		73	PERL	Rejla	F	19y					Chaim	PERL	Bajla	HILLER	
M	1918		74	BENDERMACHER	Lajzer	M	21y					Szaja	BENDERMACHER	Fajga Ruchla	SZMARAGD	
M	1918		74	LAJZEROWICZ	Basza	F	27y					Dawid	LAJZEROWICZ	Estera	JOCHLOWICZ	
M	1918		75	JANOWSKI	Josek Berek	M	20y	Noworadomsk	Noworadomsk			Majer Naftal	JANOWSKI	Sura Dwojra	NAJMARK	

*Example of the data extracted from the marriage records in the Piotrkow Trybunalski USC*

Readers may also recall that when the first batch of 150,000 scans of Łódź residents cards went online in December 2015, users had hopes that the remainder would follow soon. Yet, it was not until September 2016 that the remaining scans became available online. Almost immediately, a global volunteer team was organized to extract the key data from registration card images. The data is for both Jewish and non-Jewish families in Łódź. The team already has identified 20,000 cards for Jewish families from which it has extracted all the family members. The task of extracting the Łódź data is huge and many more volunteers are needed. Write to LodzCards@jri-poland.org to volunteer.

About the delays in the uploading of scans on the PSA website, a director of one of the PSA branches commented that with digital images pouring in from branches all over Poland—often provided by efficient outside contractors—the PSA’s National Digital Archives division has been overwhelmed with high resolution scans that require cataloging, reducing file image sizes, final processing and uploading. Fortunately, for towns in some branches of the PSA, JRI-Poland has been able to acquire the images of records and, where resources are available, to enable us to expedite work on Phase Three extractions for these towns.

While the 2015 civil records law makes marriage and death records publicly available after 80 years, access to birth records remains unchanged at 100 years. Subject to arrangements with individual Civil Records Offices (USC), this significant change is allowing JRI-Poland to scan and extract marriage and death records up to 1935 in USCs around Poland. Although one to two million additional records are now available to us, it is important to recognize that this presents a major challenge, for many reasons.

Each town has its own Civil Records Office and negotiations for access must be undertaken with each individual office. More than 600 USCs have Jewish records; clearly this is a huge task for JRI-Poland. Contacts with USCs over the past 16 months have been an eye-opener. Although the new privacy laws technically have given access to marriage and death records after 80 years, and although having the

indexes can save time for USC staff, impediments to carrying out the work in the USCs still exist. Birth, marriage and death records typically are all recorded in the same book, but birth records are still embargoed until they are 100 years old. Some USC managers have shown genuine trust in JRI-Poland, trust that is taken very seriously. Others have gone to great lengths to ensure that the pages with births won’t be scanned. Some managers have recognized the potential value of the indexes for simplifying their own day-to-day operations and have been very flexible about what they have allowed to be scanned.

Even though records in most USCs can be scanned in one day, making arrangements will always remain a problem, not only because space must be assigned for our workstation but also a staff member must be designated to provide oversight. Notwithstanding the complexities, JRI-Poland has already scanned and/or indexed or extracted records in more than 125 USCs.

Above is an example of the data extracted from the marriage records in the Piotrkow Trybunalski USC.

Note the many other towns mentioned. These entries provide an indication of where the bride and groom moved following the wedding and points to where to conduct research next.

In just one year, Phase Three has become a smashing success. Records are being scanned all over Poland and volunteers have been linking non-stop. While the extraction of records has been ongoing, digital images of records are becoming available at a much faster pace than we can fund data extraction. This has resulted in a major roadblock and dilemma for JRI-Poland.

The process of extracting data cannot keep up with scanning because it is difficult for JRI-Poland to find volunteers with the skills needed to extract the 1868 to 1915 Russian-language records. For that reason, we must almost always use professionals to enter the data from Cyrillic records. This presents a funding issue that I will describe below.

To expedite records-extraction under our Phase Three initiative, we have acquired our own copies of digital im-

ages from a number of PSA branches. PSA branch managers recognize that when the images go online, we will link our search results and enable researchers to conveniently download the record images. That is significant for the archives, because responding to researcher requests for records is not the best use of staff time for professionals who have studied years to become historians and archivists. This, of course, is the reason that researchers' orders for records may take months to be processed.

We have obtained scans of records for towns in the Kielce, Łomża, Radom, Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Łowicz, Mława, Pułtusk, Sandomierz and Siedlce branches of the PSA. For some towns, we have scans of every record going back to 1808. Until images appear online, contact Town Leaders to see what is available for a town of interest. Names/contacts for Town Leaders appear on the "your town" pages linked from the navigation bar on the JRI-Poland website.

Experienced researchers will not be surprised by a few of the additional benefits of creating full extractions of records and linking them to online images. They include the discovery of records for which there were no index pages when they were our only source of data. By working with the actual records rather than index pages, we are seeing family names that were read incorrectly, either by the registrars who created the year-end indexes or our volunteers who had not yet become fully familiar with Polish handwriting and diacritical marks or accents.

With full Phase Three datasets, we are now able to sort files by fathers' and mothers' given names and identify an entry that had defied deciphering or spot those families that used two spellings interchangeably, spellings that are not sound-alike compatible. These datasets may also help researchers discover the patronymic name that ancestors used before they adopted hereditary family names.

Noteworthy as are the goals of Phase Three, extracting all the records for all towns is proving to be an immense task. Phase Three extracting can be expedited only by having a large number of qualified volunteers or with significant donations from generous genealogists around the world that enable JRI-Poland to hire professionals.

### **Fundraising through Family Tributes**

One of the important initiatives to generate financial support for Phase Three record extraction is "Family Tributes," which are donations from generous researchers and their families. Each JRI-Poland "Your Town" page includes a "Family Tribute" section. By donating the funds to fully extract the Phase Three records for a town, genealogists also will have the opportunity to honor their ancestors and/or memorialize family that perished in the Shoah. One Family Tribute contributor recently asked if it would be possible to include links to Pages of Testimony for her family, and we have encouraged her to do so.

In the meantime, we have good news about the Galician-style columnar records from southern Poland. Some PSA

archivists have already expedited the transfer of marriage and death registers up to 1935 from USCs in their area. For example, such years of records for Dąbrowa Tarnowska, Radłów, Szczuczyn, Tarnów, and Zabno have been transferred from nearby USCs to the Tarnów archives.

Almost half of the towns from Congress Poland have fewer than 3,000 records, and the cost of full extractions will rarely exceed \$2,000 per town. Eight percent of the towns have fewer than 10,000 records; fully extracting a town with ten thousand entries should not exceed \$4,000 to \$5,000. On the other hand, cities with large Jewish populations such as Będzin, Białystok, Łódź, Lublin and Warsaw present a massive challenge. A few will cost \$50,000 or more. Of course, we will collaborate with every interested researcher to seek the most efficient way to carry out quality work at the most economical cost and in a reasonable time frame.

Because Łódź has more surviving records than any other town in Poland, it will truly test JRI-Poland's abilities to both raise funds and coordinate data entry. We have acquired scans of birth, marriage and death records from 1907 to 1915 and all the marriages and deaths from 1916 to 1935. In total, more than 50,000 scans with an estimated 150,000 records must be extracted. Without major contributions, it will be years before this Łódź data can be extracted and put online. Łódź records are not only important to researchers who trace their families back many generations there, but also to genealogists whose families lived anywhere in the vicinity. Łódź was an industrial center and attracted Jews from both near and far.

Early in 2016, an Israeli government department contacted JRI-Poland about an inheritance case. It needed to learn the names of sons and daughters of a couple from Łódź and to determine if they had children who might have survived. We explained that we had not yet raised funds to enable us to start making record extracts for all the new years of scans we have. We also noted that without a database, wading through the scans of an average of about 150 birth, marriage and death index pages for each year would be a daunting task—particularly because the marriage records are indexed only by grooms' names. Thus, to locate brides in the family would require reviewing column after column of brides' names.

Anyone who has ever spent time in front of handwritten text knows how easy it is to tire quickly and overlook names. The task was even more onerous because the family name was Kahan, the most common family name in Jewish records from Poland. That meant that every record with a variation of the surname Kahan—Kagan, Kon, Kohn and even Kac—also had to be noted. Then, each record had to be examined to see the names of the parents. We offered the department the services of a dedicated volunteer who would do just that in return for a donation to the Łódź records-extraction project. Fortunately for us, the department's management recognized the extent of what was needed and made a significant donation to the Łódź extraction project

Year	Type	Akt	standardized surname	SURNAME	Standardized Given Name	Given Name	Sex	Age	standardized father name	Father Given Name	Fath Age	Father Occupation	standardized mother name	Mother Given Name	standardized extended mother surname	Mother Surname	Moth Age	Town	Event Date	Reg Date	birth ref
1835	D	93	FINKIELSZTAJN	PALTYL	Mosiek Maje	Mosiek Maje	M	1	Zanwel	Zajmwel			Sora	Sora				Slupia	14-Dec-1835	15-Dec-1835	
1836	B	45	FINKIELSZTAJN	PALTYL	Sora Brandla	Sara	F		Zanwel	Zanwel	25	cyrulik	Marya	Marya	SILBERMAN		24	Slupia	07-Jun-1836	15-Jun-1836	
1838	B	39	FINKIELSZTAJN	PALTYLOWICZ	Izrael	Izrael	M		Zanwel	Zajmwel	32	wyrobnik	Marya	Marya	SILBERMAN		25	Slupia	06-Apr-1838	14-Apr-1838	
1841	B	51	FINKIELSZTAJN	FINKIELSZTAJN	Abram Icyk	Abram Icyk			Zanwel	Zanwel	33	cyrulek	Marya	Marya	SILBERMAN		27	Nowa Slupia	08-Jul-1841	16-Jul-1841	
1844	B	#	FINKIELSZTAJN	CYRULIK	Tema	Tema			Zanwel	Zanwel v Zelmar	36		Marya	Marjem	SILBERMAN		32	Nowa Slupia	20-May-1844	16-Oct-1844	
1848	B	24	FINKIELSZTAJN	FINKIELSZTAJN	Paltyel	Paltyel			Zanwel	Zanwel	36	cyrulek	Marya	Marjem	SILBERMAN		30	Nowa Slupia	17-Mar-1848	26-Mar-1848	
1853	M	3	FINKIELSZTAJN	FINKIELSZTAJN	Sora Brandla	Sura Brändla	F	17	Zanwel	Zanwel			Marya	Marya	SILBERMAN			Nowa Slupia		15-Jan-1853	1836 B45
1862	M	5	FINKIELSZTAJN	FINKIELSZTEIN	Abram Icyk	Abram Icyk	M	21	Zanwel	Zelman v Zanwel		felczer	Marya	Marya	SILBERMAN			Nowa Slupia		15-Jan-1862	
1864	M	33	FINKIELSZTAJN	ZAWADZKA v FINKIELSZTAJN	Tema	Tema	F	20	Zanwel	Zanwel		felczer	Marya	Marya	SILBERMAN			Nowa Slupia		12-Jul-1864	
1866	M	20	FINKIELSZTAJN	FINKIELSZTEIN	Paltyel	Paltyel	M	18	Zanwel	Zanwel		felczer	Marya	Marya z Joskow	SILBERMAN			Nowa Slupia		26-Jun-1866	
1874	M	19	FINKIELSZTAJN	FINKIELSZTAJN	Cyrta	Certa	F	18	Zanwel	Zanwel			Marya	Marya	SILBERMAN	SILBERMAN		Nowa Slupia		20-Aug-1874	

Example from the Opatow record extracts

in appreciation—even before work started. After many days of searching and double-checking, no brides in the family were found but, thankfully, we did locate the son’s marriage record which was the original focus. Any reader interested in a variation of Kohn from Łódź should write to [Lodz@jri-poland.org](mailto:Lodz@jri-poland.org); JRI-Poland will see if any of these marriage records are yours as well.

### Benefits for Qualifying Contributors

JRI-Poland may receive Family Tribute level donations for only a limited number of towns. For the others, it will depend on its long-standing Qualifying Contribution incentive. JRI-Poland has always emphasized the benefits of having a personal copy of the Excel spreadsheet with the entries for one’s town’s records, making it possible to find hidden gems by browsing the file or sorting it in various ways. Researchers who made Qualifying Contributions to support the indexing of records for their towns have been eligible to obtain Excel Files with the entries for all the town’s records.

As part of the Phase Three initiative, JRI-Poland has significantly expanded the benefits of being a Qualified Contributor. Initially, the shared Excel files only included the post 1870–1880 records not filmed by the LDS. Now JRI-Poland is combining all of a town’s data and making the resulting Excel files available to Qualified Contributors. In many cases, these files will ultimately include extended indexes to records from 1826 to 1914. For the majority of towns, the minimum Qualifying Contribution for the expanded Excel files will be \$180 or \$200. By adding to their previous donation to a town project, researchers will qualify for the new expanded files. On the other hand, hiring a researcher in Poland to obtain all of one’s family records likely runs into thousands of dollars, and one never knows if any records had been overlooked.

The benefits of acquiring a file with a town’s extracted records are magnified by using the JRI-Poland NameFinder, downloadable from a link on the JRI-Poland home page. The NameFinder is an Excel add-in that can find all entries for all family names quickly and accurately. This macro-tool also enables researchers to search quickly JRI-Poland Excel files for any text of interest, not just surnames. For example, if one wants to identify every man with the given name Jankiel, standard Excel sorting will not find entries when the second given name is Jankiel but the NameFinder

immediately lists all the sound-alike versions of Jankiel in every column of the spreadsheet. Note that the NameFinder works only with JRI-Poland Excel files. It cannot be used to search the online JRI-Poland database.

Having an Excel file with full extracts of all records may be the only way to discover the surname or patronymic a family used before settling on the known one. It may also be the only source to find brothers of an ancestor who used different surnames or sisters of an ancestor whose marriage record only indicated her father’s patronymic. Above is an example from the Opatow record extracts.

The records show three registrations for Paltyl/Paltylowicz, two with a father named Zanwel and mother Marya, and one with a father Zanwel and mother Sora. Filtering or sorting for the father named Zanwel and mother named Marya identifies the three Paltyl records, as well as an additional six records for Zanwel and Marya, all but one with the surname Finkielsztajn—and all registrations indicate the town of Nowa Slupia. Further research makes it evident that Sora was the deceased first wife and that the baby Sura, born the following year to the second wife Marya in 1838, was obviously named for her father’s first wife. We also see that the occupational surname *cyrulik* (barber) crept in because Zanwel was in fact a barber. The ability to corroborate the linkage of varied surnames under a single family umbrella underscores the importance of extracting all genealogical-relevant data, including town names and fathers’ professions from archival documents.

Phase Three extracts are also helpful for identifying the many gravestones that have only the given name and patronymic of the deceased. In the past few months, Town Leader Judy Wolkovitch has added surnames to the transcriptions of more than 300 gravestones in the Piotrków Trybunalski cemetery.

In addition to millions of searchable indexes, JRI-Poland has hundreds of thousands of additional records from many towns that have been indexed but are not yet online, often because of lack of funding. Sometimes the shortfall in funds is tied directly to a town being what we call an “orphan,” for which there are few active researchers. “Adoptive parents” would be welcome. An example is Sobienie Jeziory, five miles southeast of Góra Kalwaria. Although the JewishGen Family Finder lists 34 researchers interested in Góra Kalwaria, only three are cited for Sobieine, even though

both towns had similar Jewish populations. A comparison of surnames from both towns shows clear ties between some families. When researching a family, remember also to look at the surname lists for nearby towns in the JRI-Poland Your Town pages.

### **Białystok Area Records**

We all know about the records in the Polish State Archives and town civil records offices. But, every year there have been discoveries of new research resources in various locations in Poland including museums, municipal offices, libraries, and even in the personal collections of historians and would-be historians. For as long as I can remember, Białystok area researchers have asked if the Belarus State Archives in Grodno has records for their towns now in Poland. Those who knew about the holdings of the Grodno archives asked how to access the records.

No Jewish vital records of Polish towns are in the Belarus archives, but JRI-Poland now has a project to extract all relevant genealogical data for Jewish communities formerly in Grodno guberniya and now in Poland. This includes Białystok and 27 other towns near Białystok, Bielsk Podlaski, and Sokolka. The records being extracted are revision lists (a form of census), supplemental lists, and other sources with family information. The earliest records are in an 1816 Brańsk revision list. We expect the completed project will include more than 32,000 records of interest.

Among the USC marriage and death records JRI-Poland has scanned recently are those in the Białystok, Tykocin and Wasilków USC offices.

Researchers with an interest in Kraków may be aware of the Shoreshim website with a range of data from Kraków and a few nearby towns. With the retirement of its founder, this site has now been taken over by the Jewish Community Center of Kraków. In June, JRI-Poland's database manager Michael Tobias met with officials of the JCC and a tentative agreement was reached to share all Shoreshim vital records and related data with JRI-Poland. Subsequently, all vital records not previously indexed by JRI-Poland were transferred to JRI-Poland and will be added to the JRI-Poland database. Remaining data sets (secondary sources for genealogical research) will be retained by the JCC but will also be searchable in the JRI-Poland database. Most importantly, the elimination of confusion as to the home of Jewish vital records of Kraków will benefit researchers. JRI-Poland now plans to aggressively relaunch its dormant Kraków activity and undertake a massive Phase Three project to fully extract both previously indexed and newly available Kraków records.

### **Where Are the Missing Records?**

There is always the possibility of other collections turning up, sources that were either misfiled, mislabeled or in undocumented locations. In other cases, local offices have been known to uncover Jewish registers incorrectly filed among non-Jewish books or just plain overlooked in a stor-

age room. We have been able to mention examples of such discoveries virtually every year.

For those serious about finding undocumented records for a town, we can offer hints on how to go about it. If you are prepared to take the initiative, let us know. We'll try to help.

At the 2015 IAJGS conference, we introduced a new search system with additional options for refining searches with faster results. This year, additional refinements were added. The search system now features:

- A standardized format for vital records results
- An option of either "stacked" or single line results
- Search results in downloadable PDF files
- Exact spelling "given name searches" include some limited given name synonyms. Due to the change in Polish privacy law, marriage and death results and mapping now include data up to 1935, where available
- Fuzzy matching, a technique to find close matches that are misspelled or typed incorrectly. Fuzzy matching has three levels starting with searches for names or towns which are different from a request by one letter or pair of transposed letters.

More changes to the website are coming. JRI-Poland will migrate all of its more than 1,000 pages to WordPress and transfer its back-end database to a much more flexible system that will permit information updates for any or all towns with a minimal delay.

An additional table on the Your Town Pages will include information on other sources of data indexed by JRI-Poland, such as cemetery and school records, army draft lists, censuses and books of residents, newspaper announcements, ghetto lists and more. Until now, the data has been searchable in the database, but users may not have been aware of it. Because some of the data in the new table will be for towns for which vital records have not survived, Your Town pages for additional locations will appear for the first time. Among them are hundreds of towns from the Prussian-Polish area. These are towns where, after 1873, no separate Jewish books were kept and record keeping was on a non-denominational basis.

Pre-1826 Jewish records exist in the civil transcripts for many hundreds of towns for which there are no separate, later Jewish records. While most have been filmed by the LDS, all ultimately will be scanned and made available online by the PSA.

With regulations calling for separate Jewish community record keeping in 1826, the Jews of small villages became part of nearby, larger Jewish communities. To find additional pre-1826 records, make a list of the villages near a family's town and check for available civil transcripts of vital records.

The Kielce PSA branch has 27 towns with post-1825 Jewish records and 117 towns and villages for which there are pre-1826 civil transcripts. Each one might hold a treasured record that can move a genealogist's research back generations. At some point, JRI-Poland hopes to list such



nearby towns on the Your Town pages and encourage volunteers to extract the Jewish records.

Jews sometimes were named in the 16th- through 18th-century Polish court proceedings, yet Jewish vital record registration began only in 1810 in eastern Poland and in 1808 in western Poland. Jews were recorded in 18th-century tax lists and early 19th-century notarized business records, but usually without surnames. As JRI-Poland's projects to extract the vital records between 1810–1825 progress, notary records may enable some families to help bridge the generation gap between Jews mentioned in early court and tax records and the Jews mentioned in vital records. The notary records of Lublin present a fascinating opportunity to explore the value of this historic source. We are partnering with the Brama Grodzka History Center in Lublin, which currently is extracting the records of Jews in the early notary records.

While in Poland, assessing the feasibility of this initiative, project leader Robinn Magid stumbled upon a business receipt for her 6th great-grandfather, Aron Lewkowicz Frydliber, which revealed his previously unknown patronymic, Lewko, thus yielding the name of her 7th great-grandfather, born in approximately 1735. For more information on notary records, read Ania Wiernicka's paper, "Spiritual Genealogy: A Look at Polish Notarial Documentation," linked to the JRI-Poland navigation bar Learn button.

The JRI-Poland database search system has some distinctive features that new researchers may not know. Instead of just surnames, it is possible to search the database by surname, given name, and town, or a combination of these. In addition, users may search by year ranges and record types. Only by searching through the JRI-Poland portal may one specify a radius of specified kilometers from certain geographical coordinates. This can still focus a search, but also yield results from several different guberniyas. Taken together, these features provide an invaluable tool—both for expanding an overview or focusing searches and solving dilemmas associated with too many results when a search involves large towns and common surnames. These extras are available as a standard feature for searches only via the JRI-Poland portal. Here is why.

Because JRI-Poland is an independent non-profit organization hosted by JewishGen, JRI-Poland indexes are displayed on and also form the major component of the JewishGen All-Poland Database. The additional features just described above, however, exist as a standard option only on the JRI-Poland search page. Researchers should bookmark the JRI-Poland search page the next time they use it. One other note: Some JRI-Poland data was shared with Ancestry.com eight years ago, but this was limited to a span of years in LDS films. So Ancestry is not the place to do a complete search for Polish Jewish records.

While change has been the constant, Jewish Records Indexing-Poland's mission has remained the same—to best

serve the researcher. To do so has required the collaboration of our leadership, the dedication of our volunteers and the generosity of our supporters. As in the case of many non-profit organizations, while most benefit, the minority carries the brunt of the responsibility both in terms of volunteer activity and financial support. It remains our challenge to find ways to persuade all users to be counted among those supporting our mission and along the way helping their own research and that of future generations documenting their families' roots in Poland.

#### Notes

1. Initially known as REIPP
2. The Kingdom of Poland, also known as Congress Poland or Russian Poland, was created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna as a sovereign state of the Russian part of Poland. It was connected with the Russian Empire under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland until 1832. It was made an official part of the Russian Empire in 1867, and finally replaced in 1915 with the Regency Kingdom of Poland.
3. AVOTAYNU, Vol XXIX, No. 1, Spring 2013
4. Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (The Central Archives of Historical Records) in Warsaw is the repository that holds records for the area of the former Galician province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was part of Poland between the two World Wars.

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*Stanley M. Diamond, winner of the 2002 IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award, is co-founder and executive director of Jewish Records Indexing-Poland and founding president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal. His interest in genealogical research related to genetics ultimately led to the creation of JRI-Poland. It was recently announced that Diamond will be receiving a Canadian government Meritorious Service Medal for his "work in documenting Jewish genealogy and particularly for establishing and directing Jewish Records Indexing-Poland." He lives in Montreal, Canada.*

### Research Assistance in Israel

Batya Unterschatz, former director of the Jewish Agency's Search Bureau for Missing Relatives can assist you in locating people who live/lived in Israel. If you have Pages of Testimony, family documents or other material that identify family members you cannot locate, inquire regarding assistance required and rates.

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