Crossing the Pond: Successful Strategies for Finding Your Elusive Eastern European Ancestors

Presented by:
Lisa A. Alzo, M.F.A.
Talk Overview

- Immigration influx from Eastern Europe
  late 19\textsuperscript{th}/early 20\textsuperscript{th} c.
- Complications of Eastern European genealogy
- 10 Common myths about research
- Traditional methods and online resources
- Records in U.S. and abroad
- Techniques for overcoming common obstacles
Additional Resources

http://internet-genealogy.com/Tracing_Eastern_European_LA.htm

Special issue:
Internet Genealogy
Tracing Your Eastern European Ancestors
Myth #1: It’s Too Difficult!

- Exotic sounding surnames
- Border changes
- Political divisions
- Town/village names
- Record availability
Genealogy is…

- Persistence
- Skill
- Serendipity
Keys to Success

- Immigrant’s original name
- Name of town or village
- General locations:
  - Prague, Presov, Kiev, etc.
- NOT GOOD ENOUGH!
Myth #2
All information is online

• Yes, a number of U.S. records are available. But…
• Many foreign records must be obtained by traditional methods!
• Utilize Internet resources!
• Always verify information!
Myth #3: Need to Search “Across the Pond” First

Start by researching records on this side of the ocean and work backward

• North American records typically easier to access
• These records provide clues to town/village of origin
• Helps you to avoid making critical research mistakes
Important First Steps

• Develop a research strategy
• Who, What, When, Where, Why?
• Document everything
• Organize your information
• Genealogy software programs
• Pedigree/ancestral chart
• Family group sheet
• Free online charts and forms
Learning Details about the Immigrant

- Personal and family details
- Locate the town/village of origin
- Search U.S. records for surnames
- Check for siblings, friends, neighbors
Information to Research

• Full name (including maiden names)
• Approximate dates for vital events
• Locations for vital events
• Understanding of "place"
• Ask about documentation
Key U.S. Sources

- Home and Family Sources
- Federal Census records (1790 – 1940) & Mortality Schedules
- State Census records (where available)
- Immigration records
- Naturalization records
- Social Security Death Index (SSDI)
- Vital Records – Birth, Marriage, Death
Other Sources

- Church records
- Obituaries
- Cemetery stone inscription
- Burial records
- Funeral home records & memorial cards
- Lodge, fraternal, insurance records
- Newspapers
- Land/probate records
Myth #4: Contemporary Spelling of Names

- Be flexible and open to alternate spellings
- Various languages, alphabets, etc.
- Anticipate/expect confusion with names, dates, places

Verona  Veron  Vera  Veronica
Sztraka  Straka  Stracha  Strake
Myth #5: Current Geography = Historical Geography

- Border changes
- Austria-Hungary
- World Wars
- Political divisions
- Search both old & new names
Locating the Ancestral Village

- Check Maps, Gazetteers, Atlases
- Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Eastern Europe
- FEEFHS Map Library http://www.feeefhs.org
- FamilySearch http://wiki.familysearch.org
- Common Place Names
  (Slovakia Genealogy Research Strategies)
The Palgrave concise historical atlas of Eastern Europe [Book] by Dennis P. Hupchick, Harold E. Cox in Books

Overview - Online stores - Nearby stores - Reviews - Related books

$13 online


Eastern European history is a difficult subject for Westerners to understand, partly because of the region's political, ethnic, and cultural diversity. The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Eastern Europe, revised and updated for this edition, addresses this need. In 52 two-color, full-page maps and facing page explanatory text, the atlas illustrates key moments in East European history, from the Middle Ages to the present. Students will regard it as a useful reference, and general readers will value it for its clarity and wealth of information.

Add to Shopping List
FEEFHS Map Library

Austro-Hungarian Empire
Austria - Austria, Styria and Tyrol 1882
Banat Region - central Hungary 1882
Bohemia 1882
Galicia 1882
Moravia 1882
Northern Hungary 1882
Transylvania - Eastern Hungary 1882
Western Hungary 1882
Austria Hungary 1887
Krakau (Krakow) city plan, 1890s
Austria and Western Hungary North 1908
Austria and Western Hungary South 1908
Eastern Hungary and Galicia 1908
Austrian Tyrol 1908
Torontal, Banat 1910

German Empire
Alsace-Lorraine 1882
Baden-Wuerttemburg 1882
Northern Bavaria 1882
Southern Bavaria 1882
Brandenburg - Prussia 1882
Brunswick, Lippe-Detmold, Schaumburg-Lippe, etc. 1882
East Prussia 1882
Hanover - Prussia 1882
Hesse-Cassel and Hesse-Darmstadt 1882
Mecklenburg-Schwerin - Mecklenburg-Strelitz 1882
Saxony-Thuringia 1882
Hungary Gazetteers

Magyarország helységnévtára tekintettel a közigazgatási, népességi és hitfelekezeti viszonyokra

Magyarország helységnévtára tekintettel a közigazgatási, népességi és hitfelekezeti viszonyokra [Gazetteer of Hungary with Administrative, Populational, and Ecclesiastical Circumstances], János Dvorzsák, Budapest: Havi Füzetek Kiadóhivatala, 1877. (FHL book 943.9 E5d vol.1–2; FHL film 599564 item 3 (vol. 1) and FHL film 973041 (vol. 2); FHL fiche 600840.)

Volume 1 is an index that lists all place names in alphabetical order, followed by the name of the historical county and a set of numbers. These numbers refer to the gazetteer entry in Volume 2. The first number is the sequential number of the county (hun. megye, ger. comitat), the second is the consecutive number of the district (hun. járás, ger. bezirk), the last is the number of the locality. The numbers are followed by the location of the town or by the various symbols. Many place names listed in the index are followed by “=” or “v.” These are “see” references and refer you to another version of the place name. Other place names are followed by “.” This indicates a farmstead (p. or pusztta), settlement (r. or telep), mill (m. or malom), or other small settlement and refers you to the larger locality it belongs to.

Volume 2 gives specific information about the locality. It is arranged by county and districts. Use the numbers from the index in Volume 1 to find the entry for your town. Counties are numbered at the heads of the pages. Additional names the locality was known by are listed in parentheses. The names of farmsteads, settlements and mills that belong to the locality are sometimes listed within the brackets. Population figures follow according to religion. The following abbreviations are used:

ág. / ÁG. ágostai Augsburg Evangelical Lutheran
gk. / GK. görög katholikus Greek Catholic
izr. / IZR. izraelita Jewish
kg. / KG. keleti görög Greek Orthodox
ref. / REF. református Reformed
rk. / RK. római katholikus Roman Catholic
un. / UN. unitárius Unitarian

If the village had its own parish church or synagogue, the abbreviation for the religion will be in BOLDFACE capital letters followed by the diocese, also in Boldface type. If the people attended church else–where, the abbreviation of the religion will be in lowercase. The location of the parish or synagogue follows the population figure. If “-“ follows the population figure, it means that the specific parish was not known.
Locating the Ancestral Village

- Radix Genealogy Site
- Identify location today (border changes)
- Google Earth
- Shtetlseeker (JewishGen.org)
Welcome to JewishGen

Preserving Our History for Future Generations

Our free, easy-to-use genealogy website features thousands of databases, research tools, and other resources to help those with Jewish ancestry research and find family members.

If you are a beginner: Click here to get started >

If you're more experienced, you can use the search boxes below or the menu above.

Search

Search for a surname

Search for a town

Search ancestry.com

First Name: 

Last Name: 

http://www.jewishgen.org
JewishGen
An affiliate of the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

ShtetlSeeker – Town Search

Search for town [Milpos]

Narrow the search by country / region?: Eastern Europe

Measure distances in: Miles Kilometers

Show the distance and direction from:
- The capital city of the relevant country
- Latitude: [ ] N Longitude: [ ] E
- Selected City: [ ]

Search method: Sounds Like – Ditch-Mokotoff Soundex

Start the search
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Coordinates</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milowice</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>50°17' N 19°05' E</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>159.0 miles SSW of Warszawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milowice</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>50°24' N 17°36' E</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>194.5 miles SW of Warszawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milowice</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>51°11' N 17°39' E</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>161.1 miles WSW of Warszawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milowice</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>54°36' N 15°03' E</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>257.2 miles W of Warszawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milpoš</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>49°11' N 21°01' E</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>191.6 miles ENE of Bratislava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mil'vidžiay, Milvydžiay</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>56°21' N 23°37' E</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>132.5 miles NNW of Vilnius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mil'vidžiay, Stoteles, Milvydžiay</td>
<td>railroad stop</td>
<td>56°21' N 23°37' E</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>132.4 miles NNW of Vilnius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mlievichi</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>56°51' N 35°02' E</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>125.1 miles NW of Moskva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mlievichi, Mlievic</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>52°10' N 18°48' E</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>111.7 miles NW of Warszawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mollwitz, Maltowicz</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>50°51' N 17°23' E</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>182.9 miles WSW of Warszawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molupis, Malup, Molupio</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>55°18' N 22°27' E</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>121.6 miles WNW of Vilnius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molupis</td>
<td>stream</td>
<td>55°47' N 21°38' E</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>163.7 miles WNW of Vilnius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moivic</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>45°46' N 15°45' E</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>12.3 miles W of Zagreb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muehlbach, Mühlbach, Pomezi nad Ohří</td>
<td>populated place</td>
<td>50°05' N 12°17' E</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>96.7 miles W of Praha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Myth #6: My Ancestor Came Through Ellis Island!

- 20 million immigrants at Ellis Island 1892-1924
- Ellis Island was not the only port
- Database launched April 2001
- Eastern European surnames are often difficult to search
First Name: Janos
Last Name: Alizio
Ethnicity: Hungarian-Slovak
Last Place of Residence: Also-kocsen, Russia
Date of Arrival: Oct 29, 1910
Age at Arrival: 17y
Gender: M
Marital Status: S
Ship of Travel: Kaiserin Auguste Victoria
Port of Departure: Hamburg
Manifest Line Number: 0023
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Last Permanent Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Alios</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jonas</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Father: Jonas Alios

Alios Krasen Also Kottwedger Jörson
Myth #6: My Ancestor Came Through Ellis Island!

• Search Tools
• Steve Morse “One-step webpages”
  http://www.stevemorse.org
• More specific search parameters
• “Sounds like” searches: names & towns
• Read his “About this Website and how to use it on the first page!”
One-Step Webpages (Steve Morse)

Webpages by Stephen P. Morse, San Francisco

FIND YOUR ANCESTORS

Search Billions of Records

FIRST NAME
LAST NAME

LOCALITY

Search Billions Of Original Documents

First name
Last name

Public Appearances

About this Website and how to use it

Ellis Island Search Forms and Ship Arrivals

Overview: Which Ellis Island Search Form to use

Ellis Island Gold Form (1892-1924): Preferred Form for Searching for Ellis Island Passengers in One Step
Ellis Island White Form (1892-1924): Original Form for Searching for Ellis Island Passengers in One Step
Ellis Island Manifests (aka Missing Manifests) (1892-1924): Direct Access to Ellis Island Manifests in One Step
Ellis Island Ship Lists (1892-1924): Searching for Ships in the Ellis Island Microfilms in One Step
Ellis Island Additional Details (1892-1924): Obtaining Additional Passenger Information in One Step

$ All NY Passengers (1820-1957): Searching for Ellis Island and Castle Garden Passengers in One Step
$ All NY Manifests (1820-1957): Direct Access to Ellis Island and Castle Garden Manifests in One Step
All NY Ship Lists (1820-1957): Searching for Ships in the Ellis Island and Castle Garden Microfilms in One Step

Morton Allan Directory: Searching for Ships in the Morton Allan Directory in One Step
Ship Pictures: Obtaining Pictures of Passenger Ships in One Step
Ships & Fleets: Obtaining Details on Ships and Fleets in One Step
NARA/FHL Roll Numbers: Obtaining NARA and FHL Roll Numbers for NY Ship Arrivals in One Step

http://www.stevemorse.org
Myth #7: Immigrants Stayed Permanently in U.S.

- Check Port of Departure Records
- Hamburg
- “Direct” and “indirect” lists and both should be searched so you don’t overlook your ancestor
- Check for these lists (Auswandererlisten 1850-1934) in the FHL catalog
- Online Ancestry.com (subscription)
Myth #7: Immigrants Stayed Permanently in U.S.

- **Bremen (1920-1939)**
- Most Bremen have not survived
- Reconstruction effort, some lists (1920-1930) online (Die Maus)
  
  http://www.passengerlists.de/
Myth #7: Immigrants Stayed Permanently in U.S.

- Many immigrants renounced homeland for the U.S.
- Political or religious oppression
- Terrible economic or social conditions
- Never wanted to go back
Myth #7: Immigrants Stayed Permanently in U.S.

- Many came over a short time just to earn enough money
- Planned to return to their homeland and purchase land
- Would possibly travel back again to earn more money
- “Birds of Passage”
- Did not necessarily intend to settle permanently in U.S.
Myth #7: Immigrants Stayed Permanently in U.S.

- Check for multiple entries arrival & embarkation
- Note “Place of Residence & “Destination” columns “State of Origin” for departure records.
- Clues: Look for USA listed in passenger lists
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Janos Fenczak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departure Date</td>
<td>11 Dez 1904 (11 Dec 1904)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Birth Year</td>
<td>abt 1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Year:</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td>männlich (Male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>ledig (Single)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family:</td>
<td>Household members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence:</td>
<td>Posi,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity/Nationality:</td>
<td>Österreich (Austrian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation:</td>
<td>Landmann, Tagelöhner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Name:</td>
<td>Patricia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping line:</td>
<td>Hamburg-Amerika Linie (Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Type:</td>
<td>Dampfschiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation:</td>
<td>Zwischendeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Flag:</td>
<td>Deutschland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of Departure:</td>
<td>Hamburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of Arrival:</td>
<td>Dover; Boulogne-sur-Mer; New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume:</td>
<td>373-7 I, VIII A 1 Band 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page:</td>
<td>2330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microfilm Roll Number:</td>
<td>K_1786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuname</td>
<td>Vorneame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Wilhelm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Müller</td>
<td>Johannes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmidt</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koch</td>
<td>Maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansen</td>
<td>Else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table contains information about passengers on the Hamburg-America Line.*
Myth #8: Place of Residence = Place of Birth

- Immigration records: “Place of residence”
- Does not always indicate “Place of birth”
- May lead you down a false path
- Confusion during foreign records search
- Some immigrants may have had to work to earn money for passage in the city of departure
- Others may have moved
Example: Janos Figlyar

- Arrival record
- Lists his “Last Place of Residence” as “Podolinec”
Example: Janos Figlyar

- From personal documents
- He was born in “Osturna”
- His real father died around 1900 or 1901
- His mother remarried & moved to Podolinec
Personal images removed due to copyright restriction
Myth #9: Ethnic identity is 100% certain

- Beware of the “nationality trap”
- Ask what language spoken in home
- Check the Census records columns
- “Language spoken at home before...U.S.” (1930)
- “Mother Tongue” (1920)
Myth #9: Ethnic identity is 100% certain

• Religion may provide additional clues
• Don’t take the information as “gospel”
• There are always exceptions
• “Family history mysteries”
• Be open to all possibilities
Myth #10: Resources and Research Process Universal

- Records: Type and availability will vary
- Not all countries the same
- Be flexible in your research
- Use resource guides/books
FEEFHS Resource Directory

http://www.feefhs.org/links.html
LDS Records

• The Family History Library (FHL)  
  http://www.familysearch.org
• Has filmed and/or digitized some records
• Not **all** records in **all** countries
• Church records
• Several villages in one parish
• Records may be in larger, nearby town
• Census Records (Austria-Hungary)
Sample LDS Microfilm
Church Marriage record,
1875 Hungary
How to Read and Interpret Church/Civil Records

- Birth, Marriage, Death
- Languages (Cyrillic, Greek, Hungarian, Latin, Slovak)
- Can often be difficult to read and interpret
- LDS: Word Lists (see FHL catalog)
Census Records

- Availability depends on country
- Check FHL Catalog
- Types
  - Landowner Census (1828)
  - Jewish Census (1848)
- Sample Census record
- 1869 (Osturna) Hungary
- Browse 1869 Census at FamilySearch
Sample LDS Microfilm
Census record, 1869
(Osturna) Hungary
1869 Hungary Census of Osturna, Szepes County

| House # | Surname | Given Name | Relationship | Male | Female | Birth Yr | Age | Religion | Marital Status | Profession | Occupation | Birthplace | Citizenship | Language | Male | Comments | Marriage Date | Spouse |
|---------|---------|------------|--------------|------|--------|----------|-----|----------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------|---------|---------|------------------|--------|--------|
| 20      | Pigliyar| Ana        | HH           | X    |        | 1814     | 55  | GC       | Widow Zelkesgarida | Farmer     | Osturna    | L          | N           |           | |        |         |                  |        |        |
| 20      | Pigliyar| Miklos     | Son          | X    |        | 1834     | 35  | GC       | S               | Szolga     | Osturna    | L          | N           |           | |        |         |                  |        |        |
| 21      | Pigliyar| Katalin    | Dau           | X    |        | 1836     | 33  | GC       | M               |           | Osturna    | L          | N           |           | |        |         |                  |        |        |
| 22      | Pigliyar| Janos      | Son          | X    |        | 1843     | 26  | GC       | S               | Farmer     | Osturna    | L          | N           |           | |        |         |                  |        |        |
| 23      | Pigliyar| Maria      | Dau           | X    |        | 1845     | 24  | GC       | S               | Servant    | Osturna    | L          | N           |           | |        |         |                  |        |        |
| 24      | Pigliyar| Miklany    | Son          | X    |        | 1847     | 22  | GC       | S               |           | Osturna    | L          | N           |           | |        |         |                  |        |        |
| 25      | Pigliyar| Gyorgy     | Son          | X    |        | 1851     | 18  | GC       | S               | Farmer     | Osturna    | L          | N           |           | |        |         |                  |        |        |
Other Records

- Military records
- Local histories
- Nobility records
- Tax lists (limitations)

May or may not be on microfilm at FHL
Research by Mail or in Person

- Archives in Eastern European Countries
- Availability/policies for research will vary
- Check FEEFHS Web Site
- Consult LDS Family History Library (FHL) Word Lists/Letter Writing Guides
- Some in downloadable PDF format
- “Research Helps”
Professional Researchers (check credentials)

• Association of Professional Genealogists
  http://www.apgen.org

• Board for Certification of Genealogists
  http://www.bcgcertification.org

• Cyndi’s List
  http://www.CyndisList.com

• Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International
  http://www.cglsi.org
Networking: Finding Others

- Genealogical and historical societies
- Queries in genealogical publications
- Facebook, Twitter, Blogs
- Online Message Boards/Forums
- Mailing Lists - RootsWeb
- Foreign telephone directories
- Establish contacts in the ancestral village (mayor or priest)
In Summary

- Determine immigrant’s original name
- Town or village of origin
- Start on this side of the ocean
- Follow the family & friends (cluster genealogy)
- Use the Internet to gather information and network with others
- Be flexible with spelling
- Think “outside the box”
Conclusion

Effective Eastern European genealogical research in the 21st century is not accomplished by only traditional research or only online research, but by using both methods.
Finally…

Be serious about your research

But have FUN doing it!