

IMMIGRANT INVENTIONS P. 52

TROLLOPS, TRAMPS, AND TARTS P. 10

IS THAT MOZART'S WIFE? P. 61

ancestry

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SPECIAL
RESEARCH
ISSUE

Superheroes to the Rescue!

12 genealogy champs conquer
reader conundrums to defend **TRUTH**,
JUSTICE, and the Native American, Mexican,
Chinese, African **AMERICAN**, Scandinavian,
French-Canadian, Scots-Irish, Polish,
Italian, Slovak, German,
and Dutch **WAY**

VOL. 26 / NO. 1



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Secret Weapons and Trump Cards

FORGET SUPERPOWERS—our favorite superheroes get their edge the old fashioned way: out of a well-stocked bag of tricks. From tried-and-true tools to online finds and secret weapons, see what our superheroes have deemed their favorite trump cards.

French-Canadian

Dave Ouimette






-  *Répertoire alphabétique des mariages des Canadiens-Français, 1760–1935* (Institut Genealogique Drouin, 1990).
-  www.genealogie.umontreal.ca/en/
-  Paper itinerary—what to research, contact info, and backup plans

Polish

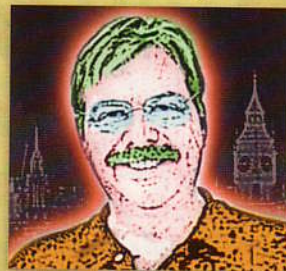
Cecile Jensen






-  *Genealogical Gazetteer of Galicia* (Brian J. Lenius, 1999).
-  www.jewishgen.org/shtetseeker/loctown.htm
-  Fine-point black pen and color-coded spiral notebook with pocket dividers

Scots-Irish

George Morgan






-  *The Scotch Irish: A Social History* (James G. Leyburn, 1962).
-  www.enotes.com/immigration-almanac/scots-scotch-irish-immigration
-  Digital camera—Pentax Optio A20

Slovak

Lisa Alzo




-  Microfilms at FHL
-  www.stevemorse.org
-  Relatives with documents and photos

African American

Lisa Arnold






-  Courthouse records
-  www.ancestry.com/aahistory
-  Magnifying glass

Scandinavian

Marilyn Carlson



-  *Post og Telegraf Bøg* (lists place names—even small ones)
-  www.dda.dk
-  1805 map of Bornholm, Denmark



Tried and true



Jetting thru cyberspace



Secret weapon

Chinese

Jeanie C. W. Low



The New Chinese-English/English-Chinese Dictionary



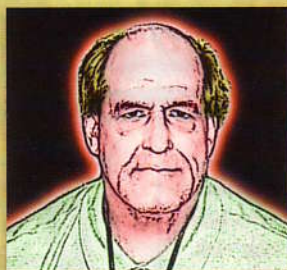
www.asianamericanmedia.org/separatelivesbrokendreams



Google

Mexican

John Schmal



Family History Library



www.somosprimos.com



Paperwork—death and marriage certificates, naturalization records

Dutch

Kory Meyerink



FHL's Netherlands's civil registration collection



www.genlias.org



Filing cabinet

American Indian

Myra Vanderpool Gormley



Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups (Belknap, 1980).



www.archives.gov/genealogy/heritage/native-american/index.html



Yellow, green, or blue plastic sheets for microfilm reader—brings out faded or blurred writing

Italian

Suzanne Russo Adams



Home sources: first communion, marriage, death certificates



www.gens.labo.net



Flash drive

German

Adele Maurine Marcum



Meyers Orts- und Verkehrslexicon des deutschen Reich (index of place names)



www.genealogy.net



Copy cards for photocopier



WHERE ARE SLOVAK ANCESTORS REALLY FROM?

BY LISA A. ALZO

MY ANCESTORS WERE SLOVAK AND believe me, I could write a book about stumbling blocks with this particular ethnicity ... I have found my Slovak ancestry to be challenging at best. It's difficult to pinpoint any particular problem, but I just can't find the village of origin for my great-grandparents or their landing at Castle Garden.

VANESSA GALL

If you find tracing your Slovak ancestors a daunting task, you're not alone.

Border changes, language differences, political considerations, and exotic-sounding surnames often complicate the research process. In addition, misconceptions and myths about the research process abound and often discourage even the most avid researcher.

Slovakia has a complicated history. Briefly, the Catholic Habsburg family from Austria began ruling the Czech lands in 1526. The Habsburg Empire was later renamed the Austrian Empire. A long period of unrest led to the formation of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy in 1867. Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia were provinces of Austria, while Slovakia was under Hungary. After WWI, the Austro-Hungarian empire was dissolved, and Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and

Slovakia were reformed into Czechoslovakia. Today, the area is separated into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Some 620,000 Slovaks came to America during the years of mass migration (1875–1914), making them one of the largest groups to come to our shores. Slovaks left their homeland for many reasons, including poor economic conditions and political or religious repression. Over 500,000 Slovaks had settled in the United States by 1914, forming cluster communities among their relatives, friends, or “old-country” neighbors in cities including Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Chicago.

Did You Know?

Prior to 1895, churches in the region maintained vital records. In 1952, the state ordered these be placed in the regional archives (*Statni Oblastni Archivy*). Note, however, that not everyone followed this order by the 1895 cutoff date. You'll find more information about the Slovak State Archives on its English-language website <www.civil.gov.sk/snarchiv/uk.htm>.

Best Things about Researching Slovak Ancestors

- ▶ The Family History Library has microfilms for most counties. See Eastern Slovakia Research Strategies for an updated list <www.iabsi.com/gen/public>.
- ▶ Most Slovaks settled together in enclaves. If you can't find your direct ancestor, search for siblings, cousins, and neighbors.
- ▶ There are plenty of online resources. See "Surfing for Slovak Ancestors" in the *Ancestry Daily News* for details <www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=10610> and <www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=10805>.
- ▶ Check out the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International <www.cgsi.org> and the Federation of East European Family History Societies <www.feefhs.org> for published journals/newsletters, conferences and workshops, and referrals to professional researchers.

Worst Things about Researching Slovak Ancestors

- ▶ Border changes can mean that your ancestor's homeland was in more than one country.
- ▶ Records can be in Latin (till the 1850s) and Hungarian (till 1914). You'll also see a few in German and Slovak, with Jewish records in German.
- ▶ Exotic-sounding surnames can result in spelling or transcription errors in records and online databases.
- ▶ It's not uncommon to find a relative who refuses to talk about the "old country," making information difficult to obtain.

Common Misconceptions

Misconception #1—Everything is online. While you'll find some records online, microfilmed records and archived documents still provide most of the key information for your ancestors pre-immigration.

▶ **Misconception #2—Contemporary names are the same as the traditional names.** Surname spellings often vary in grammatical context. Immigration officials did not purposely change people's names, but many immigrants chose to "Americanize" their names upon arrival in the United States.

▶ **Misconception #3—Current geography is the same as historical geography.** Not true—the two world wars and other conflicts reshaped Eastern Europe.

▶ **Misconception #4—Your ancestors must have come through Ellis Island.** Some 20 million immigrants passed through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1924, but there were plenty of immigrants who went to other ports. Search those using the Immigration Collection at Ancestry.com.

▶ **Misconception #5—Grandma was Slovak.** Avoid the "Nationality Trap." Just because Grandma said she was Slovak does not mean it's 100 percent true. Other nationalities lived in Slovakia. Also, many Slovaks who lived in Eastern Slovakia may actually be ethnically Carpatho-Rusyn.

I Can't Find Them on a List

Phonetic spellings of Slovak names and illegible handwriting complicate the search process and increase chances for transcription errors. To work around these:

- ▶ Try variations (Fencak, Fencik, Fenisak)
- ▶ Reverse first and last names
- ▶ Try adding the suffix "ova" for females

LISA A. ALZO is an instructor, lecturer, and author of six books and numerous magazine articles. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International and is 2nd Vice President for the Federation of East European Family History Societies.