IMMIGRANT CLUSTER COMMUNITIES: 
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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There are a handful of “cluster” immigrant communities throughout the United States that blossomed during the immigration influx of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Exploring “cluster genealogy”—the process of researching those relatives, friends, and neighbors who lived near an ancestor—can often break down brick walls in the search for individual family lines and help to place our ancestors’ lives in historical context. For those descendants who’ve moved away from such traditional immigrant enclaves, 21st-century technology can be used to rebuild “cluster communities” in the virtual world.

Overview

• How to identify chain migrations and cluster communities by utilizing census and immigration records, and other resources with examples
• Ways to work beyond your own family tree to share and collaborate with other researchers
• The shift to “virtual” cluster communities (benefits, pitfalls, and obstacles)
• Using tools such as social networking sites, wikis, and Second Life to connect with other researchers, and build community or village-based online genealogical communities

Introduction

• Immigration influx of 19th and 20th centuries
• Immigrants often traveled together
• Put down roots among relatives, friends, or neighbors from their native land
• Immigrants often settled in enclaves within cities and towns
• Many would cluster in specific regions in the United States
• These cluster communities offered a place where the immigrants could transplant and preserve their culture, lifestyle, and traditions in new surroundings
• Immigrant groups frequently founded their own churches, schools, boarding houses
• Many formed their own academic, athletic, or charitable groups, and fraternal, occupational, and social organizations, ethnic presses (newspapers, etc.)
• Work (coal mines, steel mills, etc.)
• Followed relatives, friends, neighbors
Importance of Cluster Communities in Genealogy

• Go beyond your own family
• Connecting with others
• Gives historical perspective
• May provide valuable contacts/clues for research

Sample Cluster Community: Bradenville, Pennsylvania

Key Tools for Identifying a “Cluster Community”

• 1930 Census
• Other Census records
• 1990 Census Supplementary Data
• Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia Library
  http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus
• Networking w/ fellow researchers
• Church records
• Immigration records (Ellis Island)
• Steven Morse Search Tool for EIDB www.stevemorse.org New “Gold” form that supplants former “Gray” and “Blue” forms

Steve Morse: Searching the Ellis Island Database in One Step

○ Mines the Ellis Island Database
○ Enables more specific searches
○ Ability to do “town” search (exact, “sounds like”)
○ Step #1: Find immigrants who came from Milpos (or variation on town name)
○ Step #2: Go to the Ellis Island Database and look at the actual manifest to identify the number of immigrants listing “Bradenville” as their destination in U.S.
○ Step #3: Compare names to names in St. Mary’s Church Records, cemetery, and U.S. Census (1930) for Bradenville and surrounding areas.

U.S. Census (1930) for Bradenville and surrounding areas.

○ Step #4: Prepare spreadsheets (using Microsoft Excel)
○ Step #5: Make contact with descendants
○ Repeat Steps 1-5 for other villages (Hanigovce, Olejnikov, L'utina, etc.)

Sample pages of immigrants to from Milpos (or Honig Milpos, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Arrived</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Antal,Andras</td>
<td>Milpos</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Antal,Pal</td>
<td>Milpos</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Banas,Josef</td>
<td>Milpos</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Banjasz,Jstvan</td>
<td>Milpos</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Banyasz,Gyorgy</td>
<td>Milpos</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Csekan,Andras</td>
<td>Honig Milpos, Hungary</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Csekan,Erzsebet</td>
<td>Milpos</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Csekan,Gyorgy</td>
<td>Milpos, Hungary</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Immigrant “Cluster Communities in the 21st Century”

- Descendants of immigrants move away
- Find different venue: The Internet: “Virtual” communities
- Example: www.avillagecluster.com

Example: Saris (Saros) County “Cousins” Web Site (See sample Web page on following page)

- Village-based Web site: Myfamily.com www.myfamily.com
- Co-Administrators: Lisa Alzo, John Matviya
- “Invitation-only” site (private, password-protected)
- Site (w/ over 30 members)
- The Web site serves as a central place to:
  - Correspond
  - Post family trees and photographs
  - Share research data
Collaborative Research Projects

- Producing a single, all-encompassing "family" tree based on common surnames
- Extraction of immigration data from the Ellis Island Database
- Transcription of LDS microfilm records of the key villages
- Transcription of church records from Bradenville’s St. Mary’s Greek Catholic Church
- Evaluating Bridgeport, CT, as another cluster community

No matter what ethnic group you belong to, you can follow the above example to create your own “virtual” cluster communities for your ancestral town or village.
Your Genealogy “Cloud”

- Web 2.0 (the "second generation" of online technology)
- Blogs www.blogger.com; www.wordpress.com, etc.
- Social Networking Sites (see below)
- Wikis (user-contributed sites) www.genealogywiki.org
- You Tube www.youtube.com

Social Networking Web Sites

- Facebook www.facebook.com
- MySpace www.myspace.com
- Second Life www.secondlife.com
- Twitter www.twitter.com

Genealogy-Specific

Store and Share Trees

- FamilyLink www.familylink.com
- Findmypast.com www.findmypast.com
- LivingGenealogy.com www.livinggenealogy.com
- SharedTree www.sharedtree.com
- We Relate www.werelate.org

Pedigree Databases with Social Networking Enhancements

- Genes Reunited www.genesreunited.com
- NokTree.com www.noktree.com

Family Sharing Sites

- Amiglia.com www.amiglia.com
- Footnote www.footnote.com
- Geni www.geni.com
- Myfamily.com www.myfamily.com

Multi-tasking Sites

- Ancestry.com Member Trees www.ancestry.com
- MyHeritage www.myheritage.com
- Zooof: The Family Network www.zooof.com

Preserving Your Ethnic Heritage: What Can You Do?

- Strengthen family bonds/meet new cousins
- Keep traditions alive
- Honor your ancestors and keep the sense of community they built alive
- Pass on to future generations
Conclusion

Researching cluster communities in the U.S. helps to further personal research and provides a foundation for building a mutually beneficial community-based research protocol with genealogists with like surnames or ties to the same ancestral village(s).