Finding Your Family – Telling Your Story

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**Sources of Information**

Oral Histories

Censuses

Immigration Records

Naturalization Records

City Directories

Draft Records

Vital Records

Newspaper Records

Court Records

Other Researchers

Unique Aspects to Jewish Records

Naming Patterns

Holocaust Records

Tombstone Information

Landsmanshaftn and Burial Societies

Ketubahs

**Interview Family and Extended Family**

Who are family members named for?

What were their surnames in Europe?

Where were they from?

Where are they buried?

When did they immigrate?

Where did they go?

Any cousins they remember?

**Census Data**

US Census available through 1940 with indexing

US and State Censuses accessible through Ancestry and Familysearch

**Varies by year, but generally contains:**

Names and address

Family members and ages

Occupation

Place of birth and that of parents

Age at or years in marriage (1910,1920, 1930)

Number of children and number living (1900-1910)

Year of immigration (1910, 1920,1930,1940)

Status of naturalization and year of naturalization (1920)

**Immigration Research**

Stevemorse.org allows easier searching of Ellis Island

Castle Garden covers 1855-1891

Ellisisland.org covers 1892-1924 on-line

Ancestry.com has collection for 1820-1957 for other ports

Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Galveston, New Orleans, San Francisco, Canada

**After 1906 can find the following:**

Nearest relative in Europe

Who they were going to in the US

Name, Age, Sex, Marital Status

Occupation

Town of birth and nationality

Last permanent residence

Who picked them up if they were detained

Notes if subsequently naturalized

After 1924 visa application issuance

Records after 1906 are 2 pages

**Becoming a Citizen**

1st Declaration of Intention must be filed 3 years before admission as a citizen

2nd Petition to become naturalized after 5 years residency and within 7 years of Declaration of Intention

3rd Certificate of Naturalization

Until 1922 wives became naturalized through their husband’s filing

After 1922 had to become naturalized on her own

Children became naturalized through their parents’ filing

**Naturalization Records**

In 1906 a Certificate of Arrival was required providing name at arrival, date of arrival, port and ship – captures name changes, wife’s name and children’s birthdates, individual’s birth date, occupation and address

Sources: Ancestry.com, National Archives offices, local historical societies, Family History Library

**Alien Registration Act**

Became law in 1940

All aliens over the age of 14 had to register

File through the US Citizen and Immigration Services to get a copy

Must prove the person has died or birthdate was over 100 years ago

Can also seek visa applications which were required after 1924 through same channel

**Draft Records**

WW I draft registration on-line via Ancestry.com

WW II draft required registration of men age 45+

Only the “Old Mens Draft” records are available

Info provided is name, place and date of birth, contacts who will always know where they are

WWI provides naturalization status

**Vital Records**

Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates

Death records are least reliable depending upon who provided information

Good sources for parents’ names to take you back another generation

Americanized names often given for those who never were Americans

Provides cemetery and funeral home

Cause of death for medical history

Available in individual states, but also may be at FHL

Look up obituary in following day’s newspaper

**Naming Patterns**

**Ashkenazic Jews**

Named after deceased relatives

Closest deceased relative no one in immediate family is named for

If name of elder starts appearing in births, look for death record

**Sephardic Jews**

Named after living grandparents

Father’s father, Mother’s father,

Father’s mother, mother’s mother

**Holocaust Records**

**YadVashem.org**

Searchable by town, name or who submitted

May provide name, town and date of birth, most recent location, children, spouse, occupation, date of death

Can find other records submitted by same individual

Many submitted in 1950s, but some in 1990s+

Israeli Genealogical Society will assist in contacting Israeli submitters

**International Tracing Service Records**

Useful for locating survivors

Has interviews, transport list, displaced persons lists

Can order records on-line or go to Holocaust Museum in DC

ITS in Germany has correspondence from files

**Yitzkor Books** many on-line at NY Public Library, some English

**Finding Living Relatives**

Letters

Other Researchers

Holocaust Databases

Memoirs

**European Vital (Metrical) Records**

JRI-Poland has an on-line index

All Lithuanian database can be found on Jewishgen.org

FHL has from 1810-1877 for many Polish towns

Separate Jewish records began in 1826 in Poland

Books of Residents

Prior to 1826 in the Catholic Records

Early Polish records are in Polish, mid 1860s shifts to Russian

**Obtaining and Translating Records**

Ordering from European Archives or order FHL films or documents

Viewmate

**Tombstone Clues**

Father’s name, look for double names

Match siblings across cemeteries by father’s name

Interrelate multiple sources – immigration, family story, tombstones, naming, death records

Use databases such as Jewish On-line Worldwide Burial Registry

**Things to Remember**

Start with what you know

There are many paths to the same information

Don’t forget the women!

The process of discovery is a winding road- revisit old research for new insights

What you don’t find can be as important as what you do– note where you’ve looked unsuccessfully as well as your successes

Birthdays weren’t important, don’t expect age consistency

Search broadly first, then narrow

Look for related lines- siblings, cousins