RESEARCH IN POLAND (PRUSSIA) 2019

Determine the place of origin of your ancestor.

Polish records are not centralised therefore before any research can be undertaken, you need to first establish the exact town or village and province / county / jurisdiction that your ancestor was born in or that a particular event occurred in.

The golden rule of genealogy is to always work back from the known to the un-known. Therefore the place of origin of your ancestor should be looked for in New Zealand records, or if your family came via Australia or Britain then in those records.

The place of origin of your ancestor should be mentioned on N.Z. birth and death certificates after 1876 and on N.Z. marriage certificates after 1882.

It should appear in naturalisation papers so if your ancestor became naturalised then the full file for this should be applied for. It may also appear in an obituary, on a headstone, in army records, shipping lists, as family sources. If the family were in Britain then the census there may show the place of origin.

Hamburg was a major port of embarkation for Poland. The Hamburg Passenger Lists begin in 1850, are chronological by ship and show each passenger's last place of residence.

Researching in German / Prussian Poland

It is vital to understand that the country of Poland as it exists today was only created after World War II; indeed there was no country of Poland from the Partitions of Poland in 1795 through to 1918. The Polish speaking area fell within the Prussian, Russian and Austrian Empires (see map overleaf).

This Handout covers that part of Poland formerly administered by Prussia. For the period 1795 to 1918 the records and research methods are very similar to the rest of Prussia. The records can be in Latin, Polish or German.

In general church records exist from the 17th century. In 1806 as a result of the introduction of the Napoleonic Code, the churches were required to make duplicates of their church books to be deposited with the civil authorities. With the formation of the German Empire in 1874 civil registration proper was introduced.

The second half of the 19th century brought processes of Germanisation to the area. Place names were officially renamed, sometimes by accommodating the spelling to the German style, sometimes by translating the meaning of the name, or even by coining a completely new name which sometimes retained some of the original sound.

A very useful online gazetteer that includes an English option can be found at **www.kartenmeister.com**

When you have what you think is the location of your ancestor's birth or marriage it is important to confirm this by using *Meyer's Ortslexikon* (Meyer's Gazetteer for the German Empire, pre 1912). This is available on **www.meyersgaz.org/index.aspx** and lists to the smallest of settlements. It gives important information, although in heavily abbreviated form, such as a description of a place's location, nearby larger places and which registry office (*Standesamt*) kept the records. The name of the Parish (*Kirchspiel*) is also given.

Civil Registration

Civil registration for Birth/Baptism (*Geburt/Taufe*), Marriage (*Trauung, Copulation*) and Death (*Tod, Verstorbene*) started in 1874.
The records are kept at the local registry office (*Standesamt*).

Parish records (*Kirchenbuch*)

A parish (*Kirchspiel*) can consist of several small towns (*Stadt*), villages (*Dorf*) and estates (*Gut*). Big cities have several parishes with numerous churches of different denominations.

The name of the parish can be located using Meyer's Gazetteer or referring to the German Map Guide series of books.

What information will you find in parish records:

Birth/Baptism (*Geburt / Taufe*):
Will give you the name of the child, parents and also Godparents (*Taufzeugen, Gevattern*).
Remember to look closely at god-parents as brothers, sisters and the parents of parents may be found here.

Marriages (*Trauung*):
Bride and groom, their parents and occupation.
Often also where born if not local. Some will show witnesses.

Deaths (*Tod / Verstorbene*):
Name of deceased, death date, some-times also occupation.
Some have burial date and also where buried, others may have cause of death or parents of the deceased.

Location of records

The availability of Polish records can be checked online at

http://baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/pradziad.php

This site, called Pradziad (grandfather), forms part of the Polish National Archives website. Searches can be done by place name. The results returned list all the individual church books, civil registration records, soul's lists and manorial records for the particular place and in which archives the various records are deposited. It is really very easy to use.

The **FamilySearch** *Wiki* must be checked as a large number of records are coming online. **FamilySearch** have also filmed extensively in Poland. Do check their catalogue.

Following WWII some records were moved westwards and now reside in Germany. Check the church archives in Berlin.

Useful Polish Words

małżeństw / małżeństwa: marriages

urodzeń / urodzenia: births

zgonów / zgony: deaths

Kościół rzymsko-katolicki:
    Roman Catholic Church

Ewangelicko-Reformowane:
    Evangelical-Reformed Church

Urząd Stanu Cywilnego:
    Civil Registration

What you already know

<u>Surname</u>

<u>Christian name</u>

<u>Country</u>

<u>County/Province</u>

<u>Town/Parish</u>

<u>Birth</u>

<u>Marriage</u>

<u>Arrival in NZ Year</u>

<u>Children born not in NZ</u>

<u>Parents</u>

NZ Certificates to obtain

Birth ......

Marriage .....

Death .....

Naturalisation ....

Check List

Hamburg Passenger list
UK Census
UK Alien Arrival
UK Naturalization Archives

Map of the Polish Speaking Area c.1865

Present day Poland is the area within the dashed line.

Poland (Prussia) comprised the Prussian Provinces of East Prussia, West Prussia, Pomerania, Posen, Silesia and part of Brandenburg.

The cities of Danzig, Poznan and Wroclaw fell within the area.

Grammatical Effects on Polish Names

Polish grammar affects given names, surnames, and place-names. Surnames are affected by gender endings. For example the family name (masculine) Grala becomes, for an unmarried woman, Gralówna and for a married woman Gralowa. In the case of the family name of Kowalski, the male name would be written as Kowalski and the female as Kowalska. Although these endings can be confusing, it is important to note that these changes do not indicate different families.

The Polish language uses grammatical endings to indicate such things as possession, objects of a verb, or objects of a preposition. To one unfamiliar with Polish this could cause confusion. Always record names and places in their nominative case.

The following is an example of how case endings change surnames in a typical birth entry:

Jósef, syn Antona Grabowskiego i Anny z Nowaków Grabowskich w Warszawie
Jósef, son of Anton Grabowski and Anna (maiden name Nowak) Grabowska in Warszawa

Websites

www.familysearch.org	FamilySearch
www.ancestry.com	Ancestry – Library or Worldwide version
baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/pradziad.php	Polish State Archives
www.ezab.de	Evangelical Church Central Archive in Berlin
www.meyersgaz.org/index.aspx	Meyers Gazetteer
www.kartenmeister.com	Gazetteer of former German Territories east of the Oder-Neisse line.
www.pgsa.org/Towns/townindex.php	Geographical Gazetteer of Polish Kingdom & other Slavonic countries.
http://english.mapywig.org/news.php	Maps of old Poland from Wojskowy Institute
www.genealogienetz.de	A German Genealogy portal
www.agfhs.org.uk	Anglo-German Family History Society

European Group Contact

Send research queries to the Contact on the **European Interest Contact** page at **www.genealogy.org.nz**

A group meets on the 1st Friday of most months at the Family Research Centre at 159 Queens Rd, Panmure from 4pm– 10pm. Continental advice is usually available, however please first check with the Contact to be quite sure.

Recommended Reading

Chorzempa, Rosemary, *Polish Roots,* 2014.

FamilySearch.org   Research *Wiki* for information on records, how to use them and links to various archives.

Hansen, Kevan, *Map Guide to German Parish Registers.*

Towey, Peter, *Tracing your German Ancestors*, 2013.