

## Record Sources

### A World Without Jews — The Silent Forests






I have stood in the woods in Lithuania. I have seen the stones. I have felt the silence in Poland beneath the trees. The hush and the darkness have enveloped me. I have seen the new growth flower in the silence without witness in Belarus. One remaining Jew holds the keys to all that is Jewish in the shtetls of my ancestors.

-Nancy Holden-RootsKey JGSLA Spring 2004

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SEARCH THE B+R-I	ARCHIVES	TRANSLATION AIDS	SAMPLE DOCUMENTS	MAPS	NEWSLETTERS	

## Record Sources

From our Newsletter image archives...

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When there are no primary records, a researcher looks for other records to fill in the gaps. Early in the history of the Belarus SIG many educators and long time researchers contributed their expertise and small databases. The secondary tool bar contains their contributions. The **Records** section and the **Newsletters** section have academic and historic articles and sketches. If you are interested in specific towns or surnames, please use the search the SIG Site and JewishGen Search from the **Help Desk** tab.

### Record Sources and its The Secondary Toolbar

<a href="#">DISTRICT GROUPS</a>	<a href="#">RECORDS</a>	<a href="#">BOOKS &amp; GUIDES</a>	<a href="#">LANDSMANSHAFTEN</a>	<a href="#">LAWS</a>	<a href="#">CEMETERIES</a>
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[Oleg Perzashkevich](#) in his August 1999 address to the IAJGS, entitled *Jewish Genealogical Records in Belarus*, describes the kinds of Primary and Secondary records available on the Belarus Website from 1999 through 2016.

First of all, we should define what is a genealogical record, and what is not. Usually, one considers that if a record includes a name, patronymic, family name, and any date like birth, marriage, divorce or death, it is a genealogical source. Of course, it is. Such records are the most important, and I propose to call them the primary sources, but not the only ones. There are two reasons not to confine oneself to these documents:

1. One can get a little information about the family history.
2. If the records do not survive, you have no chance to know anything about the family at all.

The second reason is the dominant one if you work on Belarusian Jewish genealogy. Because, at least since the 18th century, Belarus was situated on the strategic "border" of Eastern Europe, a lot of documents were totally destroyed. To prove this thesis, I want to mention just a few well-known and relatively recent events: Napoleon's [1812 March to Moscow] invasion, World War 1, and World War II. It must be said that those wars were much more destructive in Belarus than in Western Europe, as they were considered "fights to death". That is why I suggest the use of other records than primary ones. Let us call them secondary sources. What are they?

**[Secondary Sources]** include a very wide spectrum of records on legal (and illegal) actions, business, property, migration and other activities of the family, to be researched. Although you cannot reconstruct the family tree with them, in some cases it is possible to fill in some blanks that were caused by the absence of principal sources.

The records on genealogy of Belarusian Jews can be divided into three groups:

(I) Pre-Russian records (before 1772/95)

### **The Partitions of Poland**

(II) Russian Imperial period (1772/95-1917)

### **Russian Revolution**

(III) Post-Imperial records (since 1917).

If you are interested in the kinds of secondary records exist in Minsk Gubernia, [read Oleg's 2003 address](#)

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### **Skill Building Exercise #35: Secondary Record tabs**

- ➡ Read about Landsmanshaften Societies ➡ Read about Benevolent Societies
- ➡ Read about Cemeteries
- ➡ Open the other links to get a feel for where information is stored.

### **Skill Building Exercise #36: The 2016 Belarus SIG Projects**

Since its inception the Belarus SIG has been working on collecting primary records. In the Spring of 2016, we invite you to share in SIG Projects.

### **Belarus District Project Groups**

DISTRICT GROUPS	RECORDS
SEARCH THE B•R•I	ARCHIVES

Open the tab. Notice that now there are several linked pages that explain how to participate in the District Research Groups. At the bottom of the page see these links:

<a href="#">Our Towns: Do we have your records?</a>
<a href="#">Our Towns: Active Research Projects</a>
<a href="#">About The B•R•I (Belarus Records Inventory)</a>
JEWISHGEN SEARCH   KEHILALINKS   SITE MAP   SITE SEARCH   SUPPORT/VOLUNTEER   DONATE   TAKE OUR SURVEY