Estate and other categories of Jews in Bessarabia, Russia in the 19th century

Yefim A. Kogan
JewishGen Bessarabia SIG Coordinator

July 17, 2012

Newton, MA, USA
(born in Kishinev, Moldova, Soviet Union)
yefimk@verizon.net
Estate and other categories of Jews in Bessarabia, Russia in the 19th century

- Estates in Russian Empire in the 19th century
- Estates of Jews in Bessarabia, statistics
- Estates of Jews in Bessarabia, what privileges did these estates grant?
- Town, where people registered for an estate
- How could Jews change their estates, if at all?

- Questions?
Estates in Russian Empire in the 19th century

• Купцы (Kuptsy) – Merchants
• Мещане (Meshchane) – Townsmen, Petty Bourgeois, Bourgeois, Tradesmen, Middle Class
• Земледельцы (Zemledeltsy) – Farmers, peasants
• Бурлаки (Burlaki) – Temporary workers
Estates in Russian Empire in the 19th century

• Почётные Граждане (Pochyotnye Grakhdane) - Honorary Citizens (hereditary or private)
• Дворяне (Dvoryane) - Nobility (hereditary, private)
• Иностранные (Inostrantsy) – Foreigners
• Военные (Voennye) – Military

some other estate – clergy, etc.
Estates of Jews in Bessarabia, statistics

Russia, as of 1897:

• 95.0% belonged to the Middle Class
• 1.7% were Merchants
• 0.15% reached the status of Honorary Citizens (hereditary or private)
• 2.75% were Farmers
Estates of Jews in Bessarabia, statistics

Kishinev, as of 1897
Total number of Jews – 50,236 (46.3% of total population)

• 173 - Hereditary and Private Honorary Citizens
• 190 – Farmers
• 1208 - Merchants
• 47,446 - Middle Class
Estates of Jews in Bessarabia, what privileges did these estates grant?

**Merchants:** live and conduct business outside of the Pale. Different gilds had different privileges

**Farmers:** could lease or buy piece of land, some had 10 or 25 years of relieve from taxes, conscription to the military
Estates of Jews in Bessarabia, what privileges did these estates grant?

**Burlaki** – Temporary workers.

Burlaki were hard working labor force. In Bessarabia mostly they worked as peasants on the land. The Russian word ‘burlak’ means people who were walking on the beach pulled with twine riverboats upstream.

Ilia Efimovich Repin (1844-1930)
**Burlaki na Volge** – Volga_Boatmen (1870-1873)
Honorary Citizens (hereditary, private)

Honorary Citizens Estate was established for Jews in 1832.

• Those who bought land and settled 50 Jewish families received Private Honorary Citizens
• Who settled 100 Jewish families received Hereditary Honorary Citizens
• Merchants of 1\textsuperscript{st} gild for 10 years, Merchants of 2\textsuperscript{nd} Gild for 20 years
• Active in social Jewish life, philanthropists
Nobility (hereditary, private)

Some Jews from 1856 on the basis of the common rules acquired hereditary nobility with getting into a rank of “действительный статский советник” - Actual Civil Councilor / Actual State Councilor.

According to the All Russia Census of 1897 108 Jews received hereditary nobility estate and 2905 received private nobility estate.
Honorary Citizens, Nobility

Honorary Citizens:
Leyb Moiseevich Tsirelson – Kishinev Town Rabbi
Abraham son of Naum Katlovker, from Soroki
Shteinberg Moyshe-Leyb, Hirsh, Ovshiy, Borukh, Kishinev, found at JewishGen

Jewish Nobility:
Gunzburg, Efron, Polyakov, Brodsky, Vysotsky – well-known Jewish nobility families
Teytel Yakov Lvovich from Podolia, laywer, public figure
Town, where people registered for an estate

Бендерский Мещанин – “Benderskiy Meshchanin” - should be usually translated as a Middle Class person from Bendery according to Russian/English translation, but in fact it is Middle Class person who was Registered in Bendery!

Many people lived in the towns they were registered, but not all. Small towns may not even have a society of Middle Class to register to, or a Merchant Society.
How could Jews change their estates, if at all?

Revision lists note when Jews changed their estate. Sometimes the whole Revision list is about a number of families changing their estate from one to another.

For example:

1853 in Kaushany over 80 families of Middle Class in town were granted landholdings by the state, and they were reclassified as farmers, but in 1864 due to difficult economics they were permitted to return back to Middle Class.
How could Jews change their estates, if at all?

Revision List, 1854, Teleneshty, Orgeev uezd
BERNSHTEYN Berko Srul Farmers. By the decree of Chamber of Commerce relisted as Merchant of Orgeev;

Revision List, 1854, Romanenko colony, Bendery uezd
AKSMAN Gershko Itsko Farmers. Family was relisted to Middle Class in Kishinev.

Revision List, 1848, Izmail
BLANK Abram Motl Middle Class. Old Jewish Society. By Chamber from January 31, 1859 relisted to Kishinev Merchants.
How could Jews change their estates, if at all?

There are records with notes of changing estates among Revision Lists from

- Middle Class and Farmers to Merchants;
- Middle Class to Farmers;
- Farmers to Middle Class.

In rear cases the estate was not changed, but the town of registration was changed.
Estate and other categories of Jews in Bessarabia, Russia in the 19th century

Questions?