JEWISH GENEALOGY: BOOKS, BLOGS, AND WEBSITES

Note that all genealogy books at the Newton Free Library whose call numbers begin with the letters GEN are reference books. All books that have GEN before the Dewey Decimal number will be found in Special Collections which is located on the first floor left rear of the library. As you go into Special Collections, Genealogy Reference will be immediately to your left. Circulating books that begin with the Dewey Decimal number are housed on the second floor of the library and can be checked out.

Note that the following entries usually have links either to the Minuteman Network catalog. If you see this list online or as an attachment to an email, the book titles in blue will be live links to the catalog. To get to the book information on a PC, you need to hold down the Ctrl key in the lower left corner of your keyboard while you are clicking on the link. (If you are looking at a paper copy, you can type the address into your computer.) Thanks to Alfaretta for reminding me that I needed to include these instructions on my lists.

BOOKS

How to Trace Your Jewish Family History


The author knew nothing about his family when he started his research. His parents separated when he was born. He did not know that his father was Jewish, nor anything about his mother’s family. This is a very helpful book for people beginning their Jewish search or for anyone who is really “starting from scratch.”


**Key Reference Books**


Cohen, Chester G. Shtetl Finder: Jewish Communities in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries in the Pale of Settlement of Russia and Poland, and in Lithuania, Latvia, Galicia, and Bukovina, with Names of Residents. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1989. 929.1 COHEN


This reference work includes a large number of Jewish, Russian, and German names. Especially useful is the index which includes variants, equivalents, derivatives and cognates. The introduction includes information on Jewish family names, surnames in the Soviet Union, surnames of Eastern Europe outside Russia, and surnames in German-speaking countries.

Immigration, Emigration, and Migration


Immigration, Emigration, and Migration: Jewish People in America Series


Researching Family Names


Hanks, Patrick and Flavia Hodges. David L. Gold, special consultant for Jewish names.

This reference work includes a large number of Jewish, Russian, and German names. Especially useful is the index which includes variants, equivalents, derivatives and cognates. The introduction includes information on Jewish family names, surnames in the Soviet Union, surnames of Eastern Europe outside Russia, and surnames in German-speaking countries.

**Resources for Specific Families**


**Researching by Record**


**Researching Women**


**Foreign Languages for Genealogists**


**Researching by Location: America**


Other editions are owned by other Minuteman libraries. The link only shows Newton. Just do a catalog search with the title and author and the others should come up as separate records.


Researching by Location: Eastern Europe, Russia, and Israel


Cohen, Chester G. Shtetl Finder: Jewish Communities in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries in the Pale of Settlement of Russia and Poland, and in Lithuania, Latvia, Galicia, and Bukovina, with Names of Residents. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1989. 929.1 COHEN

The most succinct definition I have seen of the word shtetl is from the inside jacket of the Petrovsky-Shtern book below. I thought I would define it here for those who know the word but are not sure exactly what it is. "The shtetl, in essence, was a Polish private town belonging to a Catholic magnate, administratively run by the tsarist empire, yet economically driven by the Jews."


Other editions are owned by other Minuteman libraries. The link only shows Newton. Just do a catalog search with the title and author and the others should come up as separate records.

Kasnett, Yitzchak. The World That Was: Hungary/Romania. A Study of the Life and Torah Consciousness of Jews in the Cities and Villages of Transylvania, the Carpathian Mountains and Budapest. Cleveland Heights, OH: Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, 1999. 943.9 KASNETT


This is a key reference for finding Jewish place names in Europe. Indexed by pronunciation.


A translation of the first two volumes of a major work originally published in Hebrew in 1973.


**Researching by Location: Eastern Europe–Lithuania**


Jewish Communities in America


**Jewish Communities Overseas**


What happens when a Boston girl, with a Protestant father and a Muslim mother from Pakistan, discovers her maternal grandmother is Jewish? She begins tracking down her past. She discovers that she is descended from a group of Jews who were shipwrecked off the coast of India 2000 years ago. This book describes her search for her history and how it affects her life.
Jewish Communities Overseas: Shanghai


Liliane Willens’ family fled Russia during the Russian Revolution and settled in Shanghai. The author describes their life in China from the 1920s to the 1950s, a very tumultuous period in Chinese history. [Brookline is now the only library in the Minuteman Network that owns this book.]

In Their Own Words: Personal Narratives of the Search for Family

Every Family Has a Story: Tales from the Pages of AVOTAYNU. Edited by Gary Mokotoff. Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2008. 929.1 E93M

This is not a book about how to do genealogy. This work relates the stories of what people accomplish working on their genealogies and the affect of the discoveries they make.

In the late 19th Century, David Laskin’s family took three different paths. One branch, coming to the United States, became an American success story. The second migrated to Israel and were participants in its founding. The third remained in Europe. This book tells their story.


The author knew nothing about his family when he started his research. His parents separated when he was born. He did not know that his father was Jewish, nor anything about his mother’s family. This is a very helpful book for people beginning their Jewish search or for anyone who is really “starting from scratch.”


Miller, Nancy K. *What They Saved: Pieces of a Jewish Past*, Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2011. 920 M61W

After her father's death, Nancy K. Miller discovered a minuscule family archive: a handful of photographs, an unexplained land deed, a postcard from Argentina, unidentified locks of hair. These items had been passed down again and again, but what did they mean? Miller follows their traces from one distant relative to another, across the country and across an ocean. Her story, unlike the many family memoirs focused on the Holocaust, takes us back earlier in history to the world of pogroms and mass emigrations at the turn of the twentieth century. (From book jacket)


**Photographs and Pictures**


This book and the author’s search for her Jewish roots all began with a chance discovery of a drawer full of unlabeled, unknown, very old family photographs.
Atlases and Maps

Gilbert, Martin. The Illustrated Atlas of Jewish Civilization: 4,000 Years of Jewish History. New York: Macmillan, 1990. This work is no longer owned by any library in the Minuteman Network. It can be ordered through Interlibrary Loan.

Food and Family

Charles, Rebecca and Deborah DiClementi. Lobster Rolls and Blueberry Pie: Three Generations of Recipes and Stories from Summers on the Coast of Maine. New York: ReganBooks, 2003. This work is no longer owned by the Newton Free Library but can be requested from other Minuteman libraries. This work is a wonderful example of what can be done to combine recipes and family history.


Yesterday’s Kitchen: Jewish Communities and Their Food before 1939. Compiled and Edited by Gillian Burr with Marion Cohen. Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993. This book is no longer owned within the Minuteman Network. It can be requested through Interlibrary Loan.


Culture and Identity


Other editions are owned by other Minuteman libraries. The link only shows Newton. Just do a catalog search with the title and author and the others should come up as separate records.

The History of Jews in America and Overseas


**Holocaust Research**


Key reference for finding Jewish place names in Europe. Indexed by pronunciation.

**Travel Guides**


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**SOCIETIES**

American Jewish Historical Society-New England Archives
99-101 Newbury Street
Boston, MA 02116
http://ajhsboston.org
Federation of East European Family History Societies
http://feefhs.org
Check out the links at the top of the homepage. Scroll down past one or two highlights of recent events. Underneath you will find links for geographical areas in alphabetically order. The Ukraine will be listed here.

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies
Post Office Box 1094
Agoura Hills, CA 91376
http://iajgs.org

Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston
P.O. Box 610366
Newton Highlands, MA 02461-0366
Telephone: (617) 796-8522
http://www.jgsgb.org
This is a key local group. You should definitely check out their website. It's worth joining this group just for their newsletter Mass-Pocha, whether or not you are Jewish. There is much to learn here.

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies
Post Office Box 1094
Agoura Hills, CA 91376
http://iajgs.org

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
15 W. Sixteenth St.
New York, NY 10011-6301
Telephone: (212) 246-6080
http://www.yivoinstitute.org

PUBLISHER

Avotaynu, Inc.
155 North Washington Avenue
Bergenfield, NJ 07621
Telephone: (800) 286-8296
http://www.avotaynu.com

PERIODICAL

Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy. Newton Free Library has issues from Spring 2006 to the present. Located in Special Collections, first floor rear of the Newton Free Library. Periodicals are immediately to the left as you enter the room.
DATABASES

Ancestry Library Edition (In Library Only)

Ancestry Library Edition allows you access to more than three billion names using a number of different records that it provides online. Once you find a transcribed record through Ancestry’s “Search” function, the database often allows you to click onto a photographic copy of the original record. Never rely on a transcription when you have access to an original record. There can be major discrepancies between the original and the transcription. Another Ancestry tip: their section on federal census records allows a search for neighbors. This is often very useful for finding additional family members. If you are looking for recent immigrants, it also helps you find other people from the town or village of origin. People coming to a strange country often settled around other people they knew or who shared the same culture. Ancestry does not allow the library to provide remote access, so it must be searched here at the Newton Free Library.

American Ancestors: Member Website of the New England Historic Genealogical Society (In Library Only)

The New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), founded in 1845, is the nation’s oldest and largest genealogical society with a research library of over 200,000 volumes.

The library provides the American Ancestors database to anyone using one of the library’s computers. Here you will find extensive family resources, including databases, how-to articles, research columns, bibliographies, free queries, and discussion groups. You may also browse through the online book catalog for New England, New York, and other regions. This site is not limited to the New England area as its new title suggests. Non-members can access some sections of the American Ancestors site from home. Anyone working within the library can access the database as though you were a member. Check with a librarian if you need help.

USEFUL INTERNET SOURCES

Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston—key website
P.O. Box 610366
Newton Highlands, MA 02461-0366
Telephone: (617) 796-8522
http://www.jgsgb.org

This is a key local group. You should definitely check out their website. It's worth joining this group just for their newsletter Mass-Pocha, whether or not you are Jewish. There is much to learn here.

Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston Special Interest Groups
http://jgsgb.org/local-jgsgb-sigs
JewishGen: The Official Home of Jewish Genealogy—key website  
http://www.jewishgen.org

JewishGen Family Finder  
http://www.jewishgen.org/jgff  
This site not only lets you enter both surnames and locations, but helps you locate others who may be working on some of the same people or places. It also helps others locate you.

Jewish Gen Family Tree of the Jewish People  
http://www.jewishgen.org/gedcom

Jewish Gen Lithuania Database  
http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Lithuania

Jewish Gen Special Interest Groups  
https://www.jewishgen.org/jewishgen/sigs.htm  
You must register to use this site, but the site is free.

Center for Jewish History  
http://www.cjh.org  
This is a must see site. There is an amazing amount of material here

Israel Genealogy Research Association  
https://genealogy.org.il

The Jewish National and University Library  
http://web.nli.org.il/sites/nlis/en  
This site contains a wealth of information in both Hebrew and English.

Cyndi’s List of Genealogical Sites on the Internet  
http://www.cyndislist.com/jewish  
For some reason that I can't fathom this does not work as a live link. However, if you copy and paste the above address into a web browser, you'll be taken right there.

Steven Morse: The One-Step website  
http://stevemorse.org  
Addition suggested by Cary Aufseeser

Yizkor Memorial Books at the New York Public Library  
http://www.nypl.org/collections/nypl-recommendations/guides/yizkorbooks
Special Note on the Israel State Archives
According to a posting dated 2017 August 2nd on Dick Eastman's EOGN, the Israel State Archives is at a standstill over legal issues. If you want anything from them, it may take up to two years to get it. Here's a link to Eastman's article. I tried the link he provided and it is only giving you one sentence of the original article in Israel News.

LOCAL

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East Boston Immigration Center at the Temple Ohabei Shalom Chapel
http://mysticriverjews.jcam.org

BLOG

Tracing the Tribe
http://tracingthetribe.blogspot.com/index.html [Last entry 2014]
Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/20364215746/ [Flipped to using Facebook, but you have to log in to use it. That means you have to have a Facebook of your own. A number of people have reservations about going on Facebook. I almost deleted this entry. Then I realized it still might be useful. Older postings at the Blogspot site might still help people. And some of you might already have Facebook accounts. [vea/2018 May 15]