

Jewish Family History Foundation

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation

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Our major goal is the preservation, acquisition and dissemination of 18th century and older Jewish records from archives in Eastern Europe. As a means of researching ancestors on these documents which lack surnames, we also support the acquisition and translation of early 19th century revision lists and other records. These documents will be of interest to various Special Interest Groups, and eventually will be shared with JewishGen and other nonprofit groups.

18th Century Records and the Grand Duchy Project:

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland were joined as a Commonwealth from 1569 through the 18th century. More than 80% of the Jews in the world today descend from ancestors who once lived in Lithuania-Poland. The responsibility for the collection of taxes for the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth was transferred from a centralized council to the individual communities in 1764. A census was ordered to determine the tax assessments for the Jewish communities or kahals. The tax was increased in 1784 and another census was ordered. Our goal is to obtain copies of these censuses from several eastern European archives, translate them, and create a searchable online database.

Research groups are being organized around groups of Jewish communities (kahals) within 18th century districts:

Researchers are joining together to raise funds to acquire and translate records, and volunteering for translation from Old Polish and Hebrew. Donors will receive the translated data in the form of Excel spreadsheets, in advance of its placement in the publicly accessible database. If you have 17th or 18th century documents that you would like to contribute, please contact us. For more details about the organization of specific research groups, and progress on aspects of the project, consult the website periodically.

Visit our website for articles about successful research using 18th century GDL records:

- *18th Century Links to the Family of the Vilna Gaon*, by Chaim Freedman
- *Hadassah Lipsius' Charney Family of Mir, Belarus* (connecting an 1836 Warsaw marriage record to an 1816 Mir revision list to the 1784 GDL census for Mir)
- *The Komisaruk Family of Raseiniai*, by Chaim Freedman, (connecting an 1858 revision list of Ekaterinoslav Province, to an 1847 application to become a farmer, to an 1846 list of people too poor to pay box taxes, to an 1816 revision list for Raseiniai, to the 1784 GDL census for Girtagola, to the 1765 GDL census)
- *Eric Goldstein Uses a Late 19th Century Will to Trace Shabashevich Family of Raseiniai, Lithuania* (connecting a 1875 will, to the 1858 revision list, to an 1816 revision list, to the 1784 GDL census for Vidukle)
- *Ada Green Discovers the Relationship Between Two Branches of Her Grushka Family In Krakes, Lithuania* (connecting cemetery tombstones in South Africa and New York, to death records in Lithuania, to an 1874 family list, to an 1816 revision list, to the 1784 GDL census for Krakes)
- *David Hoffman's Friedland Family of Ariogala, Lithuania* (beginning with family lore and an 1882 Kaunas birth certificate, connecting to an 1874 Ariogala family list, to an 1848 taxpayers list, to an 1846 candle tax list, to an 1816 revision list, to 1784 GDL census for "Eryogolla", to 1765 GDL census for "Eyrogola")

What Records are in the GDL Censuses?

The 1784 Census of the GDL covered districts or provinces in what later became Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine, as well as Lithuania. The earlier 1765 Census included a significantly larger area. Each district included many separate Jewish kahals, sub-kahals, towns, villages, taverns and inns. At this time many Jews lived in the rural inns and taverns surrounding towns as well as in the towns themselves. What follows is a list of the 18th century districts included in the 1784 census. To illustrate the more detailed information on our website, we show the many towns, and kahals that were included in the 1784 census for Grodno (now in Belarus and Zemaitija (now in Lithuania):

1) Grodno Powiat (District): Alytus, Bakalarzewo, Baranowo, Dambrowa, Filipow, Grodno, Indura, Janowa, Jeziory, Kamionka, Korycin, Krasnopol, Krasnicki, Krynki, Kuznica, Leipalingis, Lipsk, Lishkov, Lunna, Malego Lipska, Mosty, Novy Dvor, Odelsk, Przerosl, Raczki, Sejny, Sidra, Skidel, Sokolka, Sopockin, Suchowola, Sztabin, Veisiejai, Wasilkow, Woli, Zabłudov (This part of the census is only partially translated and when fully translated may include more towns).

2) Zemaitija (Samogitia) Duchy: Akmene, Baisogala, Batokai, Cekiske, Darbenai, Dotnuva, Erzvilkas, Gargzdai, Gaure, Girtagola, Grinkiskis, Josvainiai, Jurbarkas, Keidaniai, Kelme, Klykolai, Krakes, Kraziai, Kretinga, Kurdikos Naumiestis, Kursenai, Kurtuvenai, Kvedarna, Laizuva, Lechava, Luoke, Lyduvenai, Nemakskiai, NovoZagare, Palanga, Papile, Pasile, Plunge, Raseiniai, Rietavas, Sakai, Salantai, Saukenai, Seda, Seredzius, Siaudininkai, Siauleniai, Siauliai, Silale, Siluva, Skaudvile, Skuodas, StaroZagare, Sveksna, Taurage, Telsiai, Tryskiai, Tytuvenai, Upyna, Uzventis, Vainutas, Varniai, Veliuona, Vidukle, Vieksniai, Vilkija, Virbalis, Zemaiciu Naumiestis.

The other Powiats/Districts and Provinces in the 1784 Census (for 18th century & alternative spellings consult the website):

3) Breslav powiat, 4) Brest province, 5) Kaunas powiat, 6) Lida powiat, 7) Minsk province, 8) Mozyr powiat, 9) Novogrudok province, 10) Orsha powiat, 11) Oshmiany powiat, 12) Pinsk powiat, 13) Polock province, 14) Rechytsy powiat, 15) Slonim powiat, 16) Trakai province, 17) Ukmerge (later Vilkomir) powiat, 18) Upyte (later Panevezys) powiat, 19) Vilnius province, 20) Volkovysk powiat.

Other 18th Century and Earlier Records:

The archives, libraries, and private collections in Eastern Europe are filled with many other "ancient documents" including kahal records, which illuminate and document the active religious, communal, and secular life of Jews going back to the early 1500s. Individual landlords, often nobility (or magnates) kept detailed records of many types about the Jews who leased lands from them for their kahals or towns, or worked on their estates. These records are found in the collections of papers of noble families. One of our projects involves creating an inventory of documents in archives and libraries of the early documents to ensure they are preserved.

As with all such extremely frail documents, they are in danger of rapid deterioration, and there is urgency in these preservation efforts. The Jewish Family History Foundation will coordinate its efforts with the upcoming program for digitalization of archival collections in these countries.

"**Bridge Records**" are a combination of Vital Records, early 19th Century revision (census) and tax lists, mid-19th Century wills and other court records, with family units that provide surnames. These serve as bridge documents to identify ancestors on 18th century census and tax lists that lack surnames. The Jewish Family History Foundation has acquired and translated many of these lists, and our webpage will guide you to JewishGen and other genealogical databases where you can find other lists.

A database of the 1816 Revision Lists for the following towns in the Raseiniai-Kaunas district appears on our website:

Batokai, Cekiske, Datnuva, Davkinlava, Erzvilkas, Gaure, Girkalnis, Grinkiskis, Josvainiai, Jurbarkas, Kvedarna, Labunava (also 1811 list), Nemarksciai, Siline, Pojure, Raseiniai, Reitavas, Seredzius, Silale, Sveksna, Taurage, Upina, Vainutas, Veliona, Vidukle, Vieverzenai, Vilkiya, Zemaiciu Naumiestis.

The Foundation hosts and supports Family and Shtetl Research Groups: For more information, contact us.

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