

Finding Information to Support Family Stories of Holocaust Survivors and Victims

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Background

As in any genealogical research we begin with what we know, or what others can tell us. Carefully transcribe the family's recollections. If dates are involved, construct a timeline of dates, places and people. Often all or some of the facts are missing from your family's recollections. Try to fill in the gaps, using traditional research techniques. If places are mentioned, check a gazetteer such as the one on *JewishGen*. Make sure you can narrow down the place(s) mentioned and can identify the country in which they are located today and where it was prior to World War II. Many town names are not unique, and places with these names can be found in many different countries. Borders changed further complicate identifying your town(s) of interest. To find the story, you need to know where you are looking and who you're looking for. If all you have is a surname, see if an oral testimony has been recorded that mentions your family name – remember surnames are not unique. If you do find an oral history that includes your family's name determine whether the people mentioned are part of your family or are not related.

Does your family's story mention that someone survived? Where does that story indicate the survivor settled after the war? Does the story say the person was murdered during the Shoah? Were they in a camp or were they murdered in a ghetto or on the streets? If it was the latter, then the best place to search for them is in Yizkor books and memoirs, and on *Yad Vashem's* Pages of Testimony.

Sometimes the story is of unnamed people in the family who were murdered. Unnamed because none of the people in the family remember their names. Finding their names probably means searching records in Europe for births and marriages and looking for census records, revision lists or other types of family lists on which you can identify the names of parents or siblings.

The Records

Records are varied. They range from individual memoirs still being published today; to testimony of witnesses gathered for the tribunals convened after the war, to prosecute those who could be identified as part of the killing machine; to *Yizkor* or memorial books written by survivors from particular towns; to records from various archival repositories. There are other books, like *Histoire de l'immigration juive à Nancy (1870-1945)*, a collection of short biographical sketches of Jewish families and individuals who settled in Nancy and their fate during the war. It includes information about those who survived.

My top resources are those found online at Ancestry®, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Yad Vashem. Ancestry® is a subscription database but many of the Holocaust databases are free to search. In particular is the database representing the collaboration between the Arolsen Archives and Ancestry®: <https://www.ancestry.com/cs/alwaysremember>
<https://www.ushmm.org>
<https://www.yadvashem.org>

At Yad Vashem, Pages of Testimony (POT) are a unique resource. These are pages containing vital information about victims of the Shoah submitted by family members, friends, neighbors, researchers and anyone who remembers them. Frequently these recollections can help fill in information about parents, dates, spouses and relationships – how was the person who submitted the POT related to the subject?

If the people for whom you are searching were in camps, there might be information about their movement from one to another during the war. If they survived, there may be ship manifests and documentation of their transfer from one zone to another while waiting to leave Europe.

Post-war phone books and city directories can help find survivors – look for people with the surname you are researching in the place your family thinks they settled and be prepared to make a lot of phone calls or write letters.

Searching for the facts behind the stories isn't just an idle pastime. For me, it's an obligation to reunite the family's memory or story with the people they never knew. Often, it's the only way to restore the names of people back to their rightful place, as part of a family. As Jews, we often follow the custom of naming our children after the deceased. By doing that we keep their memories alive. Searching for our families can restore their names to our family's memory.

SOURCES (this is not an exhaustive list):

Ancestry® <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/catalog/?keyword=holocaust>

Arolsen Archives <https://arolsen-archives.org>

British Library <https://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/voices/info/decrees/decrees.html>

Czech Databases <https://www.holocaust.cz/en/database-of-victims/>

JewishGen <https://www.jewishgen.org>

Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris, France <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org>

Montreal Holocaust Museum <https://museeholocauste.ca/en/>

National Holocaust Centre and Museum, Nottinghamshire, U.K. <https://www.holocaust.org.uk/>

USHMM, Washington, D.C. <https://www.ushmm.org/>

Yad Vashem, Jerusalem <https://www.yadvashem.org/>

Yizkor Books:

JewishGen <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/>

New York Public Library: <https://libguides.nypl.org/yizkorbooks>

USC Shoah Foundation: <https://sfi.usc.edu/>

Yiddish Book Center: <https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/yizkor-books>

Oral Histories

British Library Oral History <https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Jewish-Holocaust-survivors>

Fortunoff Video Archive <https://editions.fortunoff.library.yale.edu/>

Michigan Holocaust Memorial Center <https://www.holocaustcenter.org/visit/library-archive/oral-history-department/>

New York Public Library <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2016/01/25/voices-holocaust-survivors>

St. Louis Holocaust Museum <https://stlholocaustmuseum.org/survivor-stories/oral-histories/>

University of Michigan <https://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/interviews.php>

San Francisco JFCS <https://holocaustcenter.jfcs.org/oral-histories/>

USC Shoah Foundation <https://vhaonline.usc.edu/search>

USHMM <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-reflections-testimonies>

645606 539625

A.E.F. D.P. REGISTRATION RECORD

For coding purposes: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Original Duplicate

M. Single Married F. Widowed Divorced **JEW-POLISH**

(2) Family Name: **EBNER HELENA** (3) Sex: **F.** (4) Marital Status: **Married** (5) Claimed Nationality: **JEW-POLISH**

(6) Birthdate: **4.4.1921** Birthplace: **BENDEIN** Province: **POLAND** Country: **JEW** (7) Religion (optional): **JEW** (8) Number of Accompanying Family Members: **3**

(9) Number of Dependents: **2** (10) Full Name of Father: **WOLRACH ABRAHAM FRIEDLER BRONISLA** (11) Full Maiden Name of Mother: **BRONISLA**

(12) DESIRED DESTINATION: **USA** (13) LAST PERMANENT RESIDENCE on RESIDENCE JANUARY 1, 1938: **KATOWICE POLAND**

City or Village: **DRESSNAKER** Province: **---** Country: **---**

(14) Usual Trade, Occupation or Profession: **JEWISK POLISH** (15) Performed in What Kind of Establishment: **---** (16) Other Trades or Occupations: **---**

(17) Languages Spoken in Order of Fluency: **JEWISK POLISH** (18) Do You Claim to be a Prisoner of War: **No**

(19) Amount and Kind of Currency in Your Possession: **---**

(20) Signature of Registrant: **HELENA EBNER** (21) Signature of Registrar: **HELENA EBNER** Date: **27.4.48** Number: **557**

(22) Destination or Reception Center: **---**

(23) Code for Issue: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28**

(24) REMARKS: **Alexander - husband Ruth - daughter 19.11.48 - to Germ. camp.**

DP-2
10-5014-1

ORIGINAL 645606 *

UNITED NATIONS DISPLACED PERSON/REFUGEE
IDENTITY CARD
For resident of International Refugee Organization (IRO) Assembly Center

Name (Family): **EBNER** Helena Date of Birth: **4.4.21**
Vorname: **Helena** Geburtsdatum: **4.4.21**

Height Cm: **175** Weight Kgs: **70** Hair: **brn** Eyes: **brn**
Größe: **175** Gewicht: **70** Haar: **brn** Augen: **brn**

Nationality: **Polish** Identifying Marks: **---**
Nationalität: **Polish** Besondere Merkmale: **---**

Holder's Signature: **HELENA EBNER** Validating Officer: **T. V. Allison, Chief**

RES & MAINTENANCE Dept.

Official Stamp: **ACIR** Date: **---**

Photograph: 

Left Index: **---** Right Index: **---**
L. Zeigefinger: **---** R. Zeigefinger: **---**

Figure 1: Arolsen Archives – identity card and Displaced Person Camp registration for Helena Ebner

YAD VASHEM

The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority
www.yadvashem.org
Hall of Names, P.O.B. 3477, Jerusalem 91034



יד ושם

רשות הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה
www.yadvashem.org
היכל השמות, ת.ד. 3477, ירושלים 91034

Page of Testimony דף עד

Pages of Testimony commemorate the Jews who perished during the Holocaust - Shoah. Please submit a separate form for each victim, in block capitals. Fields in bold are mandatory.

Victim's photo Please write victim's name on back. Do not glue.	The Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law: 5713-1953 determines in section 2 that: "The task of Yad Vashem is to gather into the homeland material regarding all those members of the Jewish people who laid down their lives, who fought and rebelled against the Nazi enemy and his collaborators, and to perpetuate their names and those of the communities, organizations and institutions which were destroyed because they were Jewish."			
	Victim's family name: Silbermann		Maiden name:	
Victim's first name (also nickname): NORBERT ISRAEL		Previous/other family name:		
Title: MR.	Gender: Male	Date of birth:	Approx. age at death: unknown	
Place of birth: (town, region, country): SUCZAWA Suceava, BUCHOVINA		Citizenship:		
First name of victim's father: unknown		Family name of victim's father:		
First name of victim's mother: unknown		Maiden name of victim's mother:		
Victim's family status: Married	First name of victim's spouse: Adela	Maiden name of victim's spouse: Siegler	No. of children: 2	
Permanent residence: (town, region, country): Vienna, AUSTRIA		Street:		
Victim's profession: Salesman		Place of work: TRAVELING SALES	Member of organization or movement:	
Places and activities during the war - prison/deportation/ghetto/camp/death march/hiding/escape/resistance/combat (circle relevant option): Escaped to Switzerland, was caught and sent back to Austria, while he was eventually imprisoned in MAUTHAUSEN				
Residence during the war (town, region, country): Vienna, AUSTRIA		Street:		
Circumstances of death: prison/deportation/ghetto/camp/death march/hiding/escape/resistance/combat or unknown - Shoah: shot while trying to escape in MAUTHAUSEN				
Place of death (town, region, country): Mauthause in Vienna, AUSTRIA		Date of death: Jan. 10, 1942		
I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this testimony is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that this Page of Testimony and all the information on it will be publicly accessible.				
Submitter's first name: Charlotte	Family name: COOPER	Previous/maiden name: Silbermann		
Street, House no., Apt: 400 S.W. 134 Way		City: Pembroke Pines	State/Zip code: FLORIDA 33027	
Country: U.S.A.	I am a Shoah survivor: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	My relationship to the victim (family/other): daughter		
During the war I was in a camp/ghetto/forest/the resistance/in hiding/had false papers: In hiding and then secured visa to Czechoslovakia				
Date: May 10, 2008	Place: Pembroke Pines, Florida	Signature: <i>Charlotte Cooper</i>		
"ונתתי להם בביתי ובחומותי יד ושם... אשר לא יכרת" ושעמיתו י"ח "And I shall give them in My house and within My walls a memorial and a name... that shall not be cut off" Leviticus 24:7				

Figure 2: Yad Vashem - Page of Testimony commemorating Norbert Silbermann submitted by his daughter, Charlotte Cooper