

Internet Resources for Jewish Genealogy

Getting Started – The essential beginning point is JewishGen at www.jewishgen.org. Upon clicking into this website, you will find a variety of databases, mostly from Europe, but some with a great deal of information from the US, and other countries around the world, all available at no charge, although the site exists from donations. Upon entering this site, you will see a link to log in. Although you do not have to register or log in to see the site information, access to the databases will require a free registration. You can limit the amount of information you provide, but one great resource here is the JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF). You will be asked to fill in the families and towns you are researching. This will allow you to connect to other researchers looking for the same surnames and places around the world. As of March, 2022, there are over 890,000 researchers looking for over 1,517,000 different surnames and over 35,000 town names. If you are serious about investigating your family history, there is no better place to find others who may have already done some of your research for you. Many cousins have first connected through JGFF. JewishGen offers a variety of discussion group mailing lists dealing with a variety of topics including a broad mailing list covering Jewish genealogy generally. You can sign up to receive Email from any or all of these lists, either as individual e-mails or as a daily digest with a single mailing of everything sent out each day. All of these lists are moderated to keep them on-topic and eliminate spam.

If you are on **Facebook**, this is another great family resource. Facebook is a free social networking site that allows you to find family members through its search features. With a population of over 1 billion users, you are sure to find members of your family, as well as friends you might choose to connect or reconnect with. If you have distant cousins on Facebook, you can “friend” them and keep in touch. In addition, they may have also friended other relatives for you to contact. These contacts can add immeasurably to your research. You control how much information on Facebook is available to those whom you have not friended, so it is important to navigate the site with care. Once you have set up your Facebook account, be sure to find the site for JGSLI, as we will keep you informed through Facebook of a great deal of information.

Yet another great resource is the home page of the Jewish Genealogy Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County at <https://www.jgscv.org/>. Under research resources, you will find links to many other sites, including Ancestry, Ellis Island database, and others. Most genealogy pay sites offer a free trial, but the basic membership is not terribly expensive. Try the free membership for each site to determine if it is helpful to you before paying, however. Check with your local library for to see if they have subscriptions to one or more pay sites.

For the more advanced – The list of resources on the internet is endless. Fortunately, a genealogist, Cyndi Ingle, has

done her best to list all of them. Cyndi's List, at www.cyndislist.com, has over 318,000 links, organized by categories. Looking for resources in the Czech Republic? Cyndi's List has 350 of them. Google and Yahoo (www.google.com and www.yahoo.com) can help you search by using key word searches. Their ability to help you depends on how specific you are in your search, but with practice, you can learn to narrow your search as necessary. If you are searching Google for key word Cohen, the almost 53 million results can be daunting. But the more information you ask for, the more you can narrow your search.

Many states in the US have indexed death records and other vital records on line. A search can lead to birth, marriage, and death records that provide information such as place of birth, parents, date and place of death, etc. If your relative lived in the United States and died after about 1962, there is a searchable Social Security Death Index

(<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1202535>), which will provide information such as date of birth, date of death, where they received their last social security benefits, etc. This database has not been updated since 2014. Many newspapers have searchable online obituary archives which offer clues as to survivors and, most especially, the names of married daughters.

The internet has made searching for family information much easier, and as time goes along, more and more records will become available in the comfort of your living room. Organizations like Find a Grave at www.findagrave.com allow you to search

for a family member who may be buried in a long forgotten location. However, you can do others a favor by adding your information to their databases. The same is true of JewishGen's JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR, pronounced Joe-Bar) which is accessed through JewishGen. The internet is an interactive place, and by putting family information online in these places, you can help others do their research now and in the future. In addition, many of these sites ask for help in transcribing existing lists of information into searchable databases. Consider contributing time to some of these projects.

Finally, a site that allows you to search a variety of databases is www.stevemorse.org. Steve Morse, the engineer who designed the processor that runs most Windows-based computers, is also a genius when it comes to searching databases on line. Using his site, you can search by a variety of means, but the best is by Soundex. This allows a wider search that is not dependent on knowing how to spell a name. One hundred years ago, spelling, especially of names, was not a science. Passenger lists, naturalization records, and other documents on line may not have the spelling that is familiar today. Morse's website allows you to cut through the mistakes and misspellings to have a better chance of finding your ancestor.

Local Resources – Italian Genealogy Group (Italiangen at www.italiangen.org) is the genealogy organization on Long Island for those with Italian roots. However, a member of Italiangen, John Martino, has

coordinated a project to digitize all birth marriage and death records indexes from the 5 boroughs of New York and Nassau and Suffolk counties, as well as Naturalization records indexes. These indexes are searchable and some records go back well into the 19th century.

Pay Sites - While much information on the internet is freely available, do not ignore the paid sites that have information. By far, the most comprehensive is **Ancestry.com**.

Ancestry has digitized all US Census records from 1790 – 1930, many arrival records at a variety of ports, naturalization records, military records, draft records and many others in the United States and Europe. The data is searchable without paying, but to actually see the records require payment, although they offer a 14 day free membership. Another good site for a variety of records is **Fold3.com**, which is also owned by Ancestry, but operated separately. Fold3 has a large collection of digitized American military records.

Vitalsearch.com has a number of states signed up to provide birth and death records. This is a way to get actual birth records from a number of states. **MyHeritage.com** offers a large number of records, including obituaries, newspapers, and a variety of military and other historical records, all from the United States.

To sum up, much of your family information may well be available now, or in the future, via the internet. Resources available vary in quality and amount of information, and more information is coming on line every day. Happy hunting!