

## JEWISH DOCUMENTS IN THE STATE ARCHIVE OF VINNITSA OBLAST

by  
**Faina A. Vinokurova, Vice-Director**  
and  
**Oleksander S. Petrenko, Chief Archivist**



17 Soborna Street  
287100 Vinnitsa  
Ukraine

Tel: 380/4336/32-20-93

The State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast holds documents dating from the eighteenth century to the present. Among these documents are 5,900 fonds, consisting of 1,433,573 files. Due to the former administrative-territorial division of Vinnitsa Oblast, documents in this archive cover towns from other districts, including Cherkassy, Kiev, Zhitomir, Khmelnytskyi, Odessa and Kirovograd, along with some areas of the Republic of Moldova.

The history of Jewish settlement in the eastern part of Podolia (Bratslav region) dates back to the end of the fifteenth century. The settlers were Ashkenazi Jews, persecuted by Emperor Maximilian and forced to move to Poland and Lithuania. Thus, an intensive Jewish settlement of Bratslav region began only in the second half of the sixteenth century, in connection with the rapid growth in farming.

A considerable part of the Jewish population was annihilated during the liberation war of the Ukrainian people against the Polish gentry in 1648–1654. In the postwar period, the survivors emigrated to Poland.

Eastern Podolia was populated by Jews from the beginning of the eighteenth century. The archival documents include 300,000 files (which include information about Jews) and cover the period from 1725 to the present time. The number of strictly Jewish fonds is comparatively small. There are fonds of some synagogues, educational establishments, Jewish societies and national town councils. The fonds of the Jewish public committees contain information about the pogroms of 1918–1920, the political views of the participants, the number of victims and the results of the pogroms. For example, the testimony of a witness of the pogrom in Trostyanets in May 1919 describes the events, participants and number of deaths. The testimony also reports where victims were buried. From a genealogical viewpoint, these documents are valuable in doing research on pogrom victims and on those people given subsidies by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and other public organizations.

The fonds of the town councils of Ladyzhin and Samgorod for 1920 to 1930 shed light upon the so-called “small town problem” (Jews had no work because of the bad economy and, therefore, had to move somewhere else). They deal with the migration of Jews to the southern regions of Ukraine and to Birobijan. The many electoral rolls and lists of those who

lost electoral rights, immigration records and other official documents in Yiddish are also resources for genealogists.

More than 600 metrical books of birth registrations by state rabbis contain valuable genealogical material. There are records of births, marriages, divorces and deaths that are not evenly preserved in different populated areas. The birth registrations of Vinnitsa and Yuzvin date back to 1834. There are also birth registrations for Khmelnytskyi region (Izyaslav, Novyi Konstantinov, Staraya Sinyava) and Rashkov (in Moldova).

The majority of the Jewish documents can be found in the general fonds as follows:

1. The documents of the state councils, local authorities, and financial, tax and military-service organizations (Bratslav vice-regency, the town dumas, police departments, public fonds and revision committees). Among them are the revision lists (1795–1858), family lists (1874–1913), tax lists on Jewish property, and lists and photographs of men called up for military service in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; documents about synagogues, schools and home construction; and electoral rolls to the State



Oleksander S. Petrenko, vice-director of the Research Department in the State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast, with Miriam Weiner, explaining the difficulty of making photocopies from a book of this size, 1993

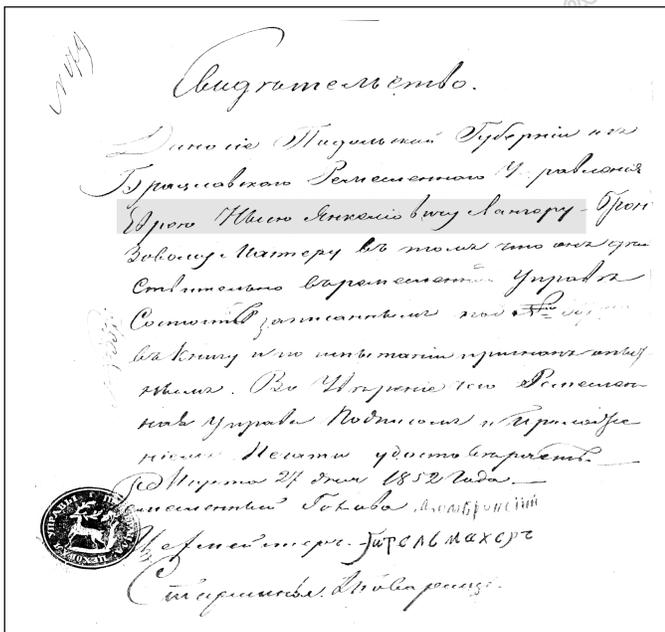
702

- Dumas (1905–1907). The earliest documents, dating from 1795, consist of the revision lists from Eastern Podolia covering Skvira, Lipovets and Mogilev Districts.
- The documents of legal-administrative and notary offices (regional courts and magistrates from 1796 to 1872), Vinnitsa regional court of 1909–1920 and notary records from 1880 to 1920. Numerous documents, among them the decree of Prot Pototskii about the Jewish settlement in Yampol in 1792 and the names of those who wished to move there, are represented. The traditions and customs of the Jews of Podolia region can be found in the testaments and marriage contracts. One can find interesting information about pogroms before World War I and the October Revolution, such as the judicial-inquiry documents about the pogrom in Bogopol in 1905.
  - The documents of educational establishments—especially non-elite ones—in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For example, one can find documents from the Mogilev Podolskiy specialized commercial school, where Jews were the overwhelming majority. Lists of advanced pupils and their personal files are displayed here.
  - The fonds of various state and public organizations (local authorities, regional and district executive committees) contain numerous documents about Jewish life for the period 1920 to 1930, a time of national cultural revival. The documents that contain the lists of electors and those who lost electoral rights testify to the social origin and status of adult Jews. Materials about the political campaign of the 1920s

in Vinnitsa, Tulchin, Gaysin and Mogilev Podolskiy are also kept in the State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast.

- Documents of Jewish agricultural cooperatives include membership lists of the collective farm of Shpikov, the cooperative FJAC, the collective farm Khliborob in Yanov, the Komintern in Khmelnik and others.
- Jewish migration to southern Ukraine and to Birobijan is reflected in the documents of the regional executive committees and in the fonds of the regional agricultural departments and the Society of Jewish Migration Assistance. For instance, in Illintsy, a society for migration to Dzhankoy (Crimea region) was organized in 1929. The full list includes 57 members. The fonds of administrative departments (*administrativnyi otdel*) of the regional executive committees are other important sources of genealogical information. They contain registration files of the Jewish religious communities, including lists of synagogue members (with personal signatures) and personal files of rabbis and cantors of the synagogues.
- The activities of the Jewish National Schools and the Pedagogical Technical School are reflected in the documents of Podolia Province and the district educational inspections. The judicial-inquiry documents on the reprisals against Jews from 1920 to 1950, especially those arrested as members of the underground Zionist organization in Tulchin District in July 1924, represent an interest for academic research.

The State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast contains a massive number of documents on the Holocaust (see Chapter 7). These are of great genealogical significance and deserve extensive research.



Application for a business license (bronze worker) by Aron Nison Langer, son of Yankel, living in Bratslav, 1852

703

**Faina A. Vinokurova** is a professional historian-archivist. She graduated from the Moscow Historical-Archival Institute in 1973. She is currently vice-director of the State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast. She has participated in more than a dozen international and local conferences on Jewish history and has lectured at several of them. Ms. Vinokurova is a specialist in the history of the Jews of Podolia and the author of the forthcoming monograph *The Repressed Generation: From the History of Jews in Podolia in the 1920s–1930s*. She is co-editor (with Iosif Maliar) of the first Ukrainian/Israeli selection of testimonies and recollections of Holocaust survivors from Vinnitsa Oblast, *The Catastrophe and the Resistance* (Tel Aviv/Kiev: Ghetto Fighters' House, 1994). The results of her archival research on the Holocaust are represented in document examples to be published by Anthex Publishing in 1999, under the title *The Jews of Vinnitsa Oblast During the Holocaust*.

**Oleksander S. Petrenko** was born in 1968 and graduated from the Historical Faculty of Vinnitsa Teachers' Training Institute in 1992. He then began working for the State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast, where he is currently chief archivist and the vice-director of the Research Department. Mr. Petrenko has a special interest in the feudalism of Eastern Podolia and the history of Jewish towns in the late eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century.