

JEWISH DOCUMENTS IN THE KAMENETS-PODOLSKIY CITY-STATE ARCHIVE

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The Kamenets-Podolskiy City-State Archive in Khmelnytskyi Oblast holds many documents about the Jewish residents of Podolia Guberniya from 1793 to 1917. There are also many documents from the Soviet period, including information about education, the occupations of the local population and other documents that describe the social, political and economic life before World War II. Most of the documents from the Soviet period are located at the State Archive of Khmelnytskyi Oblast. In the Kamenets-Podolskiy City-State Archive, we have documents describing events in both the city and region prior to 1941.

Statistics on the Jewish population of Podolia Guberniya can be found in different files. Only a small quantity of metrical books survive, primarily those for Kamenets-Podolskiy and Starokonstantinov (Volhynia Guberniya) for the period 1870 to 1913, and for the town of Zbarizh and a few others. According to the laws of the Russian Empire, Jews were permitted to settle only in shtetls and to work as craftsmen or merchants. They were generally not allowed to work on the land; to do so, it was necessary to have special permission from the governor. Jewish agricultural colonies were established in only specific regions. There were a few in the Balta and Vinnitsa regions as well as Letichev region. However, agricultural colonies survived for only 10 years, regulated by a specially established Jewish migration committee. A few documents (with general information) from the committee fonds have survived, such as petitions from Jews for permission to join the colonies and lists of farmers and their families (in Podolia Guberniya and other regions of the Russian Empire).

Jews worked primarily in commercial businesses. They rented land and owned mills, inns and shops. Sometimes they were stewards at landowners' estates, plants and factories, or were professionals, such as doctors and lawyers.

Most of the documents can be found in the following fonds:

- Fond 228 Podolsk governor (passport desk)
- Fond 227 Podolsk City Hall (metrical books of births, marriages, deaths and divorces)
- Fond 226 Podolsk Treasury (economic department and inventory reports)

The inventory reports have information on family members, family lists and lists of Jewish soldiers in the Podolsk

region. However, prior to 1840, the last name of the father was not always mentioned. It was only in the early nineteenth century that the emperor issued a law that required the use of last names in metrical books. Therefore, it is often difficult to follow relationships between generations during the research process.

Information on births and lists of Jewish citizens of towns and shtetls are kept in different fonds. For example, regional courts and city-hall fonds hold various criminal files, purchase agreements and petitions for different years. The Podolsk City Hall also kept information on elections, the opening of prayer houses and schools, and the assignment of rabbis in small towns.

Many Jews came from other lands. Therefore, they had to obtain permission to live in and become citizens of the Russian Empire. In this situation, a petition would be sent to the governor of Podolsk requesting permission to enter the city boundaries and to obtain a residence permit.

All citizens were listed in the inventory reports (revision or census lists) for tax purposes, but many people tried to avoid registration (in an attempt to evade the draft), resulting in incomplete census lists. Accordingly, supplementary revision lists were created. By law, these revision lists were to be created every 10 years, but in reality, that schedule was not adhered to.

Although Jews had permission to rent property, they could do so only in specified regions. Often a family was registered in one place but lived somewhere else. Very often the family record was incomplete (for example, the wife and small children were reported in one place, while the father and older children, usually sons, were registered in another location). In most of the revision lists, men and women are listed separately, on facing pages.

This archive also has documents about Jewish families in the military lists until 1917. There were many cases of males avoiding military service (because of the 25-year term and harsh conditions). In this situation, the parents had to pay a fine in money or in kind. If the family did not have the money, the court could confiscate their house or other property in order to satisfy the fine.

Although Jews were not legally permitted to live in villages, but only in towns or shtetls, there were many violations of this rule. For example, a shtetl would be divided into several sections, and one section would resemble a village. If a Jewish

family settled in that section, the neighbor might send a letter to a judge, and the Jewish family would be ordered to leave. Such cases could last for years, as the Jewish families might be able to bribe the authorities and thereby avoid expulsion.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the majority of the shtetl population was Jewish. There were many disputes between the Jews and other nationalities, resolved by the Podolsk County Board, Podolsk Treasury Department, county courts and the townships themselves.

Thousands of files bear Jewish surnames. In almost every record book of the Podolsk County Board, it is possible to find information about the life of the Jewish community. There is also a great deal of information in the fonds of the Podolsk court, notary offices, records of public colleges, boys' and girls' gymnasiums (high schools), the Proskurov and Kamenets City Halls, the Kamenets and Proskurov townships and the city boards of these towns.

Jews were allowed to settle no closer than 30 miles from the borders of the Russian Empire. Podolia and Bessarabia Guberniyas were considered frontier guberniyas. Jewish colonization of the Russian Empire began from the southwest, which is why most violations of the settlement law took place in this region. The same kind of violations also occurred during the census registration.

Kamenets-Podolskiy was the center of Jewish population from where Jews spread north through the Russian Empire. Many Jews resided in Podolia Guberniya as foreigners. They, as opposed to citizens, could change the place of their residence as often as they wanted, which resulted in significant migration within the guberniya.

Many Jews obtained passports and consequently moved abroad. About 300 emigration documents of Jewish families have survived.

Research in the Jewish documents of Podolia Guberniya is just beginning. There is a wealth of information to be discovered about the Jews and Jewish life in the region among these many records.

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From left: Vitaly Chumak, Miriam Weiner's associate, in Ukraine and Moldova; Zinaida M. Klimishina, archivist; and Sergei A. Borisevich, director of the Kamenets-Podolskiy City-State Archive; 1995

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