

# Out of the Whirlwind: Finding Your Family Lost in the Holocaust

Deborah H. Long

123 Woodleaf Drive, Chapel Hill, North Carolina USA 27516

DebbieTheTeacher@gmail.com

Deborah Long, 2019 rev. August

## NAME - LOCATION - HISTORY:

Check the name of the person whom you are searching and the name of the town where the person originated.

Locate the city on a map and note surrounding towns and area.

Learn the history of the community to familiarize yourself with Holocaust events in that area:

- USHMM has made the first two volumes of their *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945* freely available on its website at <http://tinyurl.com/m9qat2t>
  - Volume I includes the major concentration camps, their subcamps, SS construction brigades, and early camps set up by the police, SA and SS shortly after the Nazis seized power.
  - Volume II includes ghettos in German-occupied territories.
  - Each volume matches the physical format of the book, and each consists of two pdf files. The place name index is in the back of the second part of each volume.
  - Each signed article includes citations and bibliographies for further research. Overview articles provide additional information, and are worth reading.
  - Future volumes will be made available online after the print volume has been available for a few years.
  - Volume III- camps and ghettos in countries allied with the Nazis- is scheduled to be released in print this year.
- Identify the governing bodies or occupying forces. (For example, a “Ghetto List” which identifies thousands of towns in Eastern Europe where Jews lived showing the town name in various languages, region/country as defined by Germany during World War II (Example: Generalgouvernement), date of occupation, date of liquidation, date of deportation, place of deportation, comments and source of information can be downloaded here: <http://hauster.de/data/ZRBG20151210.pdf>. The site is in German.)

If possible, ask relatives or persons who would know where the survivor/victim went and what happened. Get as much information as possible, including the European spelling of the person’s name, age, address and names of relatives.

## **INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE (ITS), BAD AROlsen, GERMANY:**

The ITS is a critical resource for obtaining records on your family member. Forms available at ITS website: <https://www.its-arolsen.org/en/information/request-for-information-on-victims-of-nazi-persecution/>

## **USHMM**

Search requests are also accepted at:

- The **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**: [https://secure.ushmm.org/individual-research/getting\\_started.php](https://secure.ushmm.org/individual-research/getting_started.php)
- Priority given to survivors & families.
- At the USHMM website, also go to Holocaust Survivor and Victim database at <https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/>
- Visiting the library and the archives in DC is a must for any US-based serious researcher. Plan on spending several days. Consult this page to plan your visit: <https://www.ushmm.org/information/visit-the-museum/plan-your-visit>

*Submit requests to both the ITS and the USHMM.*

## **YAD VASHEM**

This resource is also a critical website for Holocaust research on people and events. Check Yad Vashem, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/> for

- Pages of Testimony, where persons have registered names of people who died in the Holocaust. Click on 'Digital Collections' and then 'Shoah Names' Database.'
- Under 'Digital Collections,' you will find many more items of interest, such as 'Shoah Related Lists Database' and photographs.
- Archival records - Hire a researcher to check Yad Vashem's extensive archival and photographic files if you cannot go there yourself. If you can, travel to Jerusalem to see Yad Vashem and explore its extensive library.

## **JEWISHGEN**

Check [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org) website for names, locations, registers, and current research by topic and location. Pay special attention to the Holocaust Database, InfoFiles, Jewish Genealogy Family Finder, Cemeteries and Special Interest Groups links.

## OTHER RESOURCES

Check:

- **Yizkor books** (memorial books for towns). The NYC library has many of them online for towns of interest. The website [www.holocaustcenter.org/memorial-book-index](http://www.holocaustcenter.org/memorial-book-index) has a list of the memorial book cities.
- **American Joint Jewish Distribution Committee** files at <http://archives.idc.org/Sharedlegacy/search-names>. Photographs and text searching also available.
- **Miriam Weiner's Routes to Roots website** [www.rtrfoundation.org](http://www.rtrfoundation.org) to identify Jewish archival records in Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania and Moldova.
- **USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education online catalog** of survivor who gave their oral history at <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/Search.aspx> Also searchable by relatives, subject and place name.
- **Concentration or slave labor camps** where your family members might have been. Google the name of the camp and then write directly to the address or find out where the records are currently being kept.
- **Displaced persons camps records and periodicals** which appeared at the time. The Holocaust Memorial Center (HMC) in Farmington Hills, MI (<http://www.holocaustcenter.org/home>) and other repositories have microfilm copies.
- **HIAS Records**, Location Service, 333 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10001, 212.613.1424. Fax: 212.967.4442. Email: [valery.bazarov@hias.org](mailto:valery.bazarov@hias.org). Fee per search.
- To see if your family member went to **Israel**, Mrs. Batya Unterschatz-Landsman conducts research for a fee. Email is [batyal@netvision.net.il](mailto:batyal@netvision.net.il). Read about Batya here: <http://www.billgladstone.ca/?p=8951>. Be aware that the person's last name may have been changed to a Hebrew version of a European name.
- The **Red Cross** still participates in searches from WWII. Contact your local chapter here: <https://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html>
- **Landsmanschaften societies**. Place ads in their newsletters or ask the head of the society to speak with members regarding the person(s) in whom you are interested. Read more here: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/landsmanschaften>
- Review the **list of all of the Holocaust museums** around the world and see if any of them

could assist: <http://www.science.co.il/holocaust-museums.asp>

- Review **holocaust survivor resources**: <https://yivo.org/Holocaust-Study-Resources>
- Review the **Avotanyu** ([www.avotaynu.com](http://www.avotaynu.com)) website for useful, up to date, articles in your area of research. Use the latest Avotaynu CD to search by keyword. For up-to-date news, subscribe to online Avotaynu Nu? What's New?
- Check Ancestry.com which is working to make more Holocaust resources available through its World Memory Project (see <https://www.ancestry.com/cs/wmp>):  
[https://www.ancestry.com/cs/alwaysremember?o\\_xid=100484&o\\_lid=100484&o\\_sch=Email+Campaigns](https://www.ancestry.com/cs/alwaysremember?o_xid=100484&o_lid=100484&o_sch=Email+Campaigns)
  - At the 39<sup>th</sup> IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, Ancestry announced a new partnership with Arolsen Archives, formerly known as the International Tracing Service (ITS). The partnership provided two new Holocaust-related databases that are indexed and are free access—i.e. you do not require a subscription to access these databases, however, you do have to register with name, email address and password.
    - 1. Lists of Those Persecuted 1939-1947—. This collection consists of foreigners and German persecutees in Germany between 1939-1947 who were persecuted by public institutions, social securities and companies. The records may also include information on those who died, including burial information. The documents were assembled according to the Zones of Occupation - American, British, French and Soviet - by the Allied forces within Germany. Areas outside Germany were also recorded. These initial records are from the American sector. The other sectors: will be added at a later date.
    - 2. Passenger Lists 1946-1971—these are lists of displaced persons mostly traveling from a resettlement camp to a final destination—often the United States. This collection consists of passenger lists of immigrants leaving Germany and other European ports and airports between 1946-1971. The majority of the immigrants listed in this collection are displaced persons - Holocaust survivors, former concentration camp inmates and Nazi forced laborers, as well as refugees from Central and Eastern European countries and some non-European countries. Many of the immigrants listed in the collection fall outside the ITS (International Tracing Service) mandate. The records in this collection are organized by Resettlement Camp location where immigrants began their journey. These centers were the first step in their long journey. The passenger list Africa, Asia and Europe, Passenger Lists of Displaced Persons, 1946-1971 and Europe, Registration of Foreigners and German Persecutees, 1939-1947 are predominately in German with some English.
  - Go to: <https://www.ancestry.com/cs/alwaysremember> When you find the person you are searching, a new window opens and the record appears. Click on the image of the record. When the image opens you can click on the tools icon on the right to print or download. If you want to save it to your computer click on the green “save” button on the upper right side of the screen.
- Visit cemeteries and Holocaust memorials which often have names listed/available.

## **PUBLICIZE:**

- Place an ad in **TOGETHER**, published by the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors by emailing [allgenerations@aol.com](mailto:allgenerations@aol.com). This magazine has a 'Searches' column and they accept notices for publication. Serena Woolich, president of Allgenerations, Inc., administers an email group of survivors and children. The notice will reach the survivor community and other interested parties.
- Create a Facebook page for your missing family members: see <https://www.facebook.com/searchingforMenachem/> as an example.
- Place an ad in **Generations of the Shoah International Newsletter** ([www.genshoah.org](http://www.genshoah.org)) Email: [GSI@genshoah.org](mailto:GSI@genshoah.org)
- Go to local Holocaust Remembrance Day events and get involved. Read your family names during any "reading of the names" event.
- Deliver presentations on your family history and become a member of a local Holocaust speakers' group.

## **READ:**

### **Book Recommendations**

- Mokotoff and Sack. Where Once We Walked: A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust (Avotaynu, 1991).
- Mokotoff. How to Document Victims and Locate Survivors of the Holocaust (Avotaynu; 1995)
- Spector and Wigoder, editors. Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust, 3 Volumes (New York University Press, 2001)
- Daniel Mendelsohn. The Lost: The Search for Six of Six Million (HarperCollins, 2013)

### **Diaries and Oral Histories**

- YIVO (New York City); Ringelbloom Archive (Warsaw, Poland)
- USHMM – list of published diaries: <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/diaries>
- Spielberg/USC testimonies about Shoah and other genocides: [www.sfi.usc.edu](http://www.sfi.usc.edu)
- Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies: <http://orbis.library.yale.edu>

## MISC. WEBSITES

- [www.americanjewisharchives.org](http://www.americanjewisharchives.org)
- <https://www.jdc.org/>
- <https://www.bh.org.il/databases/databases/>
- [www.porges.net/Terezin/BeitTheresienstadt.htm](http://www.porges.net/Terezin/BeitTheresienstadt.htm)
- [www.jafi.org.il/ph/relatives.htm](http://www.jafi.org.il/ph/relatives.htm)
- [www.stevemorse.org](http://www.stevemorse.org)
- [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)
- [www.kadisha.biz/](http://www.kadisha.biz/)
- [www.toledot.org/terezin1.jpg](http://www.toledot.org/terezin1.jpg)
- <http://totenbuch.werkraum-media.de/>
- [cemetery.jewish.org.pl/lang\\_en/](http://cemetery.jewish.org.pl/lang_en/)
- <http://immigrantships.net/bremenproj/bremenproject.html>, ships leaving German harbors post war
- [Beit Lohamei Haghetat - Ghetto Fighters House Museum](#)
- [Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine](#), Paris, France
- [Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies](#), New Haven, CT
- [Foundation Monumentum Iudaicum Lodzense](#), Lodz, Poland
- [Leo Baeck Institute](#), New York, NY. A partner of the Center for Jewish History
- [Memorial Book for the Victims of National Socialism at the University of Vienna in 1938](#), Vienna
- [Polish Righteous – Recalling Forgotten History](#), A project of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw. In Polish and English
- [Simon Wiesenthal Center](#), Los Angeles, CA
- [University of Michigan Holocaust Survivor Oral Histories](#), Dearborn, MI
- [www.crag.org/search-holocaust-records.php](http://www.crag.org/search-holocaust-records.php), Czestochowa-Radomsko Area Research Group
- OBD, the Russian Defense Ministry site, which lists over a million fallen Red Army soldiers: <http://www.obd-memorial.ru/html/index.html>
- Benjamin Meirchak's partial list of Jewish military casualties in WWII: <http://www.zchor.org/meirtchak/volume5.htm>
- The Pobediteli website, which provides a multimedia history of the Eastern Front and lists over a million surviving (in 2005) WWII Red Army veterans <http://english.pobediteli.ru/>
- The Israeli Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II, which lists soldiers and partisans who fought for the Allies: <http://www.jwmww2.org/en>
- [Yahad-In Unum](#) (YIU) is a French organization founded to locate the sites of mass graves of Jewish victims of the Nazi mobile killing units, especially the Einsatzgruppen, in Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Moldova. It was founded in Paris in 2004 by leaders in the French Roman Catholic and Jewish communities. YIU is led by Father Patrick Desbois, a Catholic priest whose grandfather was a French soldier deported to the Nazi prison camp Rava-Ruska, located in a Ukrainian town that borders Poland.
- <http://www.massuah.org.il/eng/Contact-us> Massuah, International Institute for Holocaust Studies, designed to evoke discourse on the significance of the Holocaust in our contemporary society and culture. Massuah comprises a central school, permanent exhibitions, multimedia centers, archives,

conference halls, dormitories, and an amphitheater.

## **CHALLENGES OF HOLOCAUST RESEARCH**

- No single master list of those who died
- The Germans destroyed much of the existing documentation
- Ancestral town research required: Did einatzgruppen visit; was work/labor camp or extermination camp nearby? Where would people from that town have been transported (train, death march)
- Documents and oral histories may not be recorded in English

## **WHY HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IS NECESSARY**

- 22% of millennials have never heard of the Holocaust
- 41% of millennials believe 2 million or fewer Jews were killed in the Holocaust
- 41% of Americans and 66% of millennials never heard of Auschwitz death camp