

# Eastern European Genealogy Resources Checklist

This checklist outlines US sources that might name your ancestor's town/village of origin, grouped by highest to least probability of giving a specific town name. While you should seek out all sources for your immigrant ancestor, use this form to prioritize your search and set expectations. This form is designed as a guideline. Add your own additional resources as needed.

**(Print out to keep with your genealogy files, OR, click in the box to use the form digitally)**

## Sources: Best Bets

- Family members** (parents, grandparents aunts, uncles, cousins) – pay attention to family lore; ask about specific people, events, and places.
  - Family documents** (see Personal and Family Keepsakes section below) – keep an eye out for foreign language documents, which are more likely to have accurate place-name spellings than American records.
  - Church records** (baptismal/christening record, marriage register, death and burial record) – more likely to name the ancestral town or village than civil vital records.
  - Naturalization records** (declarations of intention, petitions for naturalization or Alien Registration ~1940) – Naturalization records from 1906 on are most likely to contain ancestral town information. Citizenship papers may be in different towns, and in any court of record (common pleas, probate, etc.)
  - Newspapers** (obituaries, articles about achievements or celebrations, legal notices) – Ethnic newspapers in immigrant's native tongue are most likely to contain place of origin names.
  - Fraternal organizations/beneficial societies** (Examples: Czech-Slovak Protective Society, First Catholic Slovak Union of America (Jednota), Polish National Alliance, Ukrainian Workingmen's Association) – Consult the Balch Institute at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, Cyndi's List under Societies and Organizations, and eBay.
  - Use this line for notes, or add your own items**
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## Sources: Hit or Miss

- Civil vital records** (birth, marriage and death certificates, marriage applications, bonds/banns; divorce records) – look for info on another jurisdiction that will help you.
  - Cemetery records** (headstone inscriptions, plot cards) – Many tombstones list a town or origin and/or have a picture if the deceased, plus inscriptions (often in native language).
  - Social Security records** (application, or SS-5 form) – An SS-5 form nearly always lists the applicant's birthplace; however, since 2013, new restrictions have been placed on what information is released depending on immigrant's year of birth).
  - Probate files** (wills, estate papers, guardianships, etc.) – you may need to read between the lines to get a sense for family dynamics.
  - Land records** (deeds, property transfers, tax records, land patents) – Many immigrants sought to own land, so check for federal homestead records.
  - Local histories** (commemorative town or county history books) – Early volumes often give lists of settlers, sometimes including the place or origin.
  - Military records** (Civil War pensions, WWI and WWII draft registrations) – Draft cards typically give birthplaces, while pensions give just birth (and marriage) date.
  - Passenger lists** (customs lists and passenger arrival lists for the various US ports) – Lists after 1900 shown town of origin, next of kin in Europe, and destinations.
  - Use this line for notes, or add your own items**
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## Sources: Long Shots

**US Census Records** (decennial schedules ten years from 1790 to 1940 except 1890) – Country of origin can be confusing, e.g. for Czechs and Slovaks often Austrian or Austria-Hungary; for Poles, often Austria, Prussia, or Russia, other perplexing places such as Ruthenia, or Slovak Land may be listed).

**Directories** (city directories, or business directories – Search each year for the relevant period. Check advertisements as well as listings.

**Emigration (port of departure) records** – Available for Hamburg; Bremen records destroyed following WW2. Also check outgoing UK passenger lists (available on subscription sites Ancestry.com, FindMyPast). Typically just list the country.

**Border Crossing Records** (1895-1956) – Some immigrants entered Canada first and then came to the US (check Ancestry.com or FamilySearch microfilm).

**US Passport Applications (1795-1925)** – More likely post-WWI; not all immigrants applied. Check Ancestry.com or FamilySearch microfilm.

**Funeral records/Funeral book** – often have next of kin and/or family members' names and other information.

**Coroner's report** – check for them at local or county level if your ancestor died from an accident, as a result of a crime or other suspicious circumstance.

**Use this line for notes, or add your own items**

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## Other Sources

Calling cards or memorial cards

Life insurance policies

Name change petitions

Jury summons

Voter registration cards

Work applications and personnel documents and pension records; disability paperwork

Convent records (where applicable)

Medical records and vaccination records

Jury summons

Tax records/returns

Land records

Probate and other court documents (including guardianship, civil, criminal, etc.)

Voter Registration records

Legal paperwork

School records/report cards

Yearbooks

Alumni directories

Miscellaneous books (Examples: biographies, Arcadia photo history books)

**Use this line for notes, or add your own items**

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## Personal and Family Keepsakes

- Bible
  - Photographs
  - Clothing, jewelry, china or other heirlooms
  - Diaries or journals
  - Scrapbooks and/or autograph books
  - Letters, envelopes, cards or postcards, invitations
  - Quilts or needlework samplers
  - Recipe cards and books
  - Church membership records
  - Society and organizational records
  - Newspaper clippings/articles
  - Bridal books
  - Baby books
  - Calendars or datebooks
  - Miscellaneous paperwork from other relatives
  - Use this line for notes, or add your own items**
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## Miscellaneous (additional items special to your ancestors)

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