

Research Guide – Romania v 4
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The information below has been compiled from a variety of sources.
Some quoted material has been edited for clarity



Source: <https://romania.jewishgen.org/research/regions-and-towns>


Modern Day Romania

Source: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

A Brief History of Romania

“Like most European countries, Romania’s borders have changed considerably over time. Starting in the late 15th century, the Ottoman Empire ruled the Romanian provinces of Moldavia, Walachia, and Dobruja, while Austria and Hungary controlled the Banat, Bihor, Maramures, Satu Mare, and Transylvania. Austria took over Bukovina (north western Moldavia) in 1774, and Russia obtained Bessarabia (eastern Moldavia) in 1812. An unsuccessful Balkan revolt against the Turks ultimately led to Russian occupation of Walachia and Moldavia from 1829-34. The two principalities merged in 1859 to form Romania (also spelled Rumania or Roumania at various times), which remained subservient to the Ottomans until full independence was achieved in 1878. The province of Dobruja was also added at that time.

After World War I, Romania regained control over the territories of Banat, Bessarabia, Bihor, Bukovina, Maramures, Satu Mare, and Transylvania at the expense of Austro-Hungary and Russia. During the Holocaust period, Romania temporarily gave up northern Transylvania (including northern Bihor, Maramures, and Satu Mare) to Hungary, and permanently lost northern Bukovina and Bessarabia (now the Republic of Moldova) to the Soviet Union.

Jews were present in the region under the Roman Empire, but subsequent invasions and wars severely disrupted their existence. The Jewish population increased significantly after 1800, primarily due to immigration (first from the Balkans and later in the mid-19th century from the Russian Empire and Kingdom of Galicia). A 1930 census showed a Jewish population of 757,000 in Romania, including 207,000 in Bessarabia and 93,000 in Bukovina. During the Holocaust, there were many massacres and deportations.

After World War II, the Jewish population within the new borders of Romania was estimated at 430,000. By 1965, as a result of massive intermittent emigration, the Jewish population had dropped to 100,000. By 1989, toward the end of the Communist period in Romania, there were only 19,000. By 2005, there were only 9,000 Jews left.”

Source: Amit, M. *Genealogy Guide: Romania and Moldova*, 2 June 2011:

https://libguides.cjh.org/genealogyguides/romania_moldova

History Reference Books

A list of reference books about Romanian Jewish History can be found at:

https://libguides.cjh.org/genealogyguides/romania_moldova/cjh_resources

Historical Regions of Romania

“Modern-day Romania is a combination of different historical regions, with different pasts. The most notable historical regions of modern-day Romania are as follows:

Moldavia, located in the Eastern part of Romania, which was united with Wallachia in 1859 to create the modern country of Romania, before which it was part of the Ottoman Empire. This includes communities such as Iași, Galați, Bacău, Botoșani, Dorohoi, Piatra Neamț, Fălticeni, and Focșani.

Wallachia, located in the Southern and Southeastern parts of Romania (and comprised of the territories of Muntenia and Oltenia), which was united with Moldavia in 1859 to create the modern country of Romania, before which it was part of the Ottoman Empire. This includes communities such as Bucharest, Craiova, Ploiești, and Brăila.

Dobrogea, also called Dobruja, located in the Southeastern part of Romania, which became part of Romania in 1878, before which it was part of the Ottoman Empire. This includes communities such as Constanța and Tulcea.

Bucovina, located in the Northeastern part of Romania, which became part of Romania in 1918, before which it was part of the Austrian Empire. Bucovina was historically German-speaking and is today divided between the modern-day borders of Romania and Ukraine. The communities located in modern-day Romania include Suceava (Suczawa), Rădăuți (Radautz), and Siret (Sereth). Communities that were located in Romania before World War II but are now in Ukraine include Cernăuți (Czernowitz/Chernivtsi), Sadagura (Sadagora/Sadhora), Vijnița (Wiznitz/Vyzhnytsya), and Storjineț (Storozynetz/Storozhynets).

Transylvania, located in the Western, Northwestern, and Central parts of Romania, which became part of Romania in 1918, before which it was part of Hungary. Reference to Transylvania often includes the historical regions of Crișana, Maramureș (part of which is now in Ukraine), and Banat. This includes communities such as Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), Sighetu Marmăției (Máramarossziget/Sighet), Satu Mare (Szatmár), Oradea (Nagy-Várad), Arad, Timișoara (Temesvár), Dej (Dés), and Târgu-Mureș (Maros-Vásárhely). *Because this part of Romania was historically part of Hungary (with records written in Hungarian), please reach out to the [Hungary Research Division](#) regarding this area.*

Bessarabia was part of Moldavia before 1812, after which it was part of the Russian Empire, only to return under Romanian control between 1918 and 1940. It generally comprises the modern-day Republic of Moldova, with small parts in Ukraine. This includes communities such as Chișinău (Kishinev), Hotin (Khotyn), Bălți (Bieltsy), Soroca (Soroki), Briceni (Brichany), Edineț (Yedintsy), Bender (Bendery), Lipcani (Lipkany), and Orhei (Orgeyev). *This territory is not covered by the Romania Research Division, and you should instead contact the [Bessarabia Research Division](#).*

The JewishGen Romania Research Division website has a list of towns that were, at any time, part of Romania for which there is a specific “town page” on JewishGen, see:

<https://romania.jewishgen.org/research/regions-and-towns>

For those regions that were formerly Hungarian, inquiry should be made with the JewishGen [Hungary Research Division](#). For towns that are today in the Republic of Moldova, contact the JewishGen [Bessarabia Research Division](#).

Source: **JewishGen Romania Division Website:** <https://romania.jewishgen.org/research/regions-and-towns>

Where to start?

From the JewishGen Romania Research Division Website: <https://romania.jewishgen.org/get-started>

“Knowing your family came from Romania is a good start, but Romania is made up of many different territories that have diverging histories. Some of modern-day Romania was formerly part of Hungary, Austria, or the Ottoman Empire. Some of former Romania is now part of Ukraine and Moldova. So an important first step is identifying the town of origin. To do so, you should begin your search by:

- Searching your family's surname in the [JewishGen Romania database](#).
- Joining the Romania Research Division [Facebook group](#).
- Subscribing and sending a message to the [JewishGen mailing list](#).
- Using other introductory sources, including the vastly popular Facebook groups [Tracing the Tribe](#) and [Jewish Genealogy Portal](#).
- Searching on commercial websites including [Ancestry.com](#) (*subscription*), [FamilySearch.org](#) (*free*), and [MyHeritage.com](#) (*subscription*). Documents such as naturalization (citizenship) records, ship records, military records, and death records might identify the town of origin.
- Identifying where your ancestors are buried. Many Jews were buried in cemetery sections organized by *landsmanshaftn*, which were mutual aid organizations that supported individuals from a common town of origin. [For USA searches]
- Submitting a DNA test to one of the commercial sites and reviewing DNA matches.
- Asking older relatives.”

The JewishGen Romania Research Division website contains many resources for Romanian genealogy research. **Click on the following links for the following topics:**

Genealogy and History: links to websites for general Romanian research, Jewish research, history, the Holocaust and more.

Romanian Regions and Towns: information about the different historical regions of Romania, as well as links to the JewishGen pages for specific towns in Romania, broken down by region.

Jewish Cemeteries in Romania: description of towns and links to Romanian cemeteries in the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR), as well as other Romanian cemetery resources.

Historical News: read transcriptions of historical English-language newspaper articles regarding the Romanian Jewry, both in Romania and abroad.

Rom-SIG Newsletters: historical newsletters from Rom-SIG that are filled with a significant array of detail on Romanian Jewish genealogy and history.

Romanian Sudits: a description of the history of the Jewish "foreign subjects," those Jews who arrived in Romania from foreign lands.

Miscellaneous Record Sets: records relating to Jewish communities in Romania and overseas.

The JewishGen Romania Research Division can also be contacted via its Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/jewishgenromania>

Romanian Family History Research Guides

Glaskie, M. 2019 **Resource Guide: Searching your Jewish Ancestors from Romania**, Israel Genealogy Research Association: <https://genealogy.org.il/resources/resource-guide-romania/> for information about accessing Romanian government archives and other sources for family history records.

*Amit, M. **Genealogy Guide: Romania and Moldova**, 2 June 2011, Centre for Jewish History, Ackman and Ziff Genealogy Institute, N.Y*
https://libguides.cjh.org/genealogyguides/romania_moldova for information about accessing primary records, resources available at the Centre for Jewish History, relevant websites, maps and videos.

Accessing Records

Romanian Government Archives

Previously most genealogical research had to be done on site in the various Government archives in Romania and it is possible to hire local researchers to undertake research on your behalf but this is, of course, expensive and time-consuming. You will also need to pay for translations. However, many valuable records can be accessed via intermediaries such as the JewishGen Romania Research Division and the Botosani Research Team group (**see below**).

JewishGen (for record index searches)

The first place to look for Romanian family records is the JewishGen website: www.jewishgen.org

The majority of listings are indexed records, some with a link to a copy of the document and a reference to the source. The Romanian-Moldova database contains over 1.2 million records from a variety of sources, including: voter lists, census records, business directories, vital records, diplomatic records, yizkor books, and others. Records can be searched for free. However, further advanced search features are only available to contributors of \$US100 or more to the JewishGen General Fund. See the website for further details.

JewishGen Romania Research Division

Once you have identified relevant records you can request copies of the original documents (where available) from the JewishGen Romania Research Division: <https://romania.jewishgen.org/>

This is a group of “volunteer genealogists and researchers exploring the lives and experiences of Jewish ancestors and relatives who lived in Romania.” The group charges US\$15.00 per record as a way of recouping the costs involved in accessing and copying original documents from various Romanian archives. Contact: Dana Lugassy: DLugassy@jewishgen.org

Research enquiries can also be sent to the Romania Division Director, Michael Moritz (mmoritz@jewishgen.org)

Jewish Genealogy in Romanian Moldova (The Botosani Research Team)

Records for certain towns in what was formerly Romanian Moldova have been obtained from Romanian archives and indexed by a private group of researchers called the Botosani Research Team who run the *Jewish Genealogy in Romanian Moldova* Facebook Page: Sorin Goldenberg, Robert Zavos and Luc Radu

They have created a free searchable database of family names for the cities of Botosani, Dorohoi, Husi and Vaslui: <https://jewishromgen.pythonanywhere.com/> (Google registration required for access).

They are able to provide records (apart from the ones you can locate on their database above) for the following towns:

Adjud	Focsani	Podu Turcului
Baia	Frumusica	Puiesti
Bara	Harlau	Pungesti
Barlad	Hertza	Radauti-Prut
Bacesti	Hertza Villages	Roman
Bivolari	Husi	Saveni
Botosani	Lespezi	Sculeni
Bozienii (de sus)	Mihaileni	Stefanesti
Bucecea	Moinesti	Sulita
Buhusi	Negresti	Targu Frumos
Burdujeni	Odobesti	Targu Ocna
Codaesti	Panciu	Targu Neamtz
Darabani	Pascani	Vaslui
Dorohoi	Piatra Neamtz	Zvoristea
Falticeni	Podu Iloaei	

The group do research for free and supply records and translations for a fee.

Their price list is available at: https://docs.google.com/.../1z5_W8g2Tij.../edit...

Contact: romanianjewishrecords1@gmail.com

Challenges to Genealogy Research in Romanian Moldova: Luc Radu, Botosani Research Team -

Email: Luc.radu@verizon.net

“There are some major challenges to genealogy research in Romanian Moldova, as opposed to, say, limitrophe [states or territories situated on a border] areas like (Russian) Bessarabia or (Austrian) Bucovina:

1. **Extreme “fluidity” of Surnames:** while use of surnames was legalized from 1860s, in practice for most of the 19th century and in some cases as late as 1948, Jews used surnames, which varied, from record to record and within same family and from year to year. Same person may have been registered, say, with a German/Yiddish surname, with a Romanian occupational name, with a traditional Jewish “ X son/daughter of Y”, with some specific Romanian toponymic [surname based on place name] or a specific Romanian patronymic or matronymic [surname derived from father or mother’s name].
2. **Lack of Census input data forms:** while country-wide censuses were done every 10 years since 1859 the only ones preserved are from after 1930. There are a few specific in several places or for foreign subjects but offer, in general, limited information.
3. **The non-standard type for civil records (Births, Marriages, Deaths - BMD):** while their content has been stated in the 1866 Civil Code, the records are in a narrative form, where the order of information varies from place to place and from year to year. This, and the use of many archaic, fallen [out] of use words, makes the work of transcribing the records much more complicated than for places where the data is in a fixed format. However, there is a particular advantage of Romanian Births and sometimes Marriage records where the Civil Office kept them up to date with notations for other events: marriage, emigration, name change, death. Obviously, such information is lost in case [where] one accesses the Archives-developed index (not always available or correct).
4. **Civil records started in 1865/66 only:** the community-kept records (metrical) have been preserved only for limited years and places. Also they contain bare-bones information. I also note that civil records are NOT separated by religion so in order to find Jewish records one has to look through at least twice and, in many cases, multiple times pages of registers.
5. **LDS [Latter Day Saints] Church has not been allowed to access and copy records.** As a result there has been almost no information online on major genealogical sites like Ancestry and Family Search. At the time our group started the research in 2008 or so, the only collections available on JewishGen were some Cemetery Burial records and the 1942 Jewish Males Census. More recently JewishGen has acquired civil records from several places.

Due to all these factors, serious genealogical research which attempts to find information for an extended family, as important data may be revealed only that way, has to employ a specific methodology we [The Botosani Research Team] have developed:

- Acquire ALL the civil records
- Transcribe the Jewish records using forms specifically designed to capture all significant data to allow a comprehensive search
- Generate a database and a specific search engine allowing to search multiple places via very flexible search keys.”

First Steps in Researching Your Jewish Botosani roots - A Very Short Guide: Sorin Goldenberg 23 09 2014, Botosani Research Team

“Background:

1. Places:

Botosani is a city, but it was also the main city of the county by the same name. By 1894, Botosani had the 3rd largest Jewish population in the old Kingdom of Romania, 17 thousands Jews out of total 32 thousands. Other settlements in the Botosani county were Harlau, Sulitsa, Stefanesti, Burdujeni, Bucecea. Other Jews might have lived in the many villages in the county. Some might have lived all their lives in one place, others might have moved to other place following the marriage, and some might have moved through several places during their lives.

2. Civil State Registration:

Civil state registration in Romania started in December 1865. Before that it was carried out by the community, but very few registers remained, and many were not registered. In the 1st decade, many, especially girls were not registered at birth. The registration was performed at the city hall in every city, town or commune (center of several villages). Thus, there were tens if not more of possible places where the registration of events was performed. The civil state registers are kept for 100 years in the place of the registration, and only then transferred to the local branch of the National archives in Botosani. The registers of the settlements that were part of the former Dorohoi county are now at Botosani. The registers of Harlau and Burdujeni are now at Iasi and Suceava respectively.

3. First Names:

Botosani Jews in the second half of the 19th century, usually used Yiddish first names. Those names had sometimes Romanian localized version – like Bercu or Hershcu instead of Berl/Hersh. Only the rich families used European 1st names – Max, Oscar, Jacques etc... Romanian typical 1st names were very rarely used.

4. Surnames:

The Romanian State never required Jews to adopt surnames, unlike many of the other places in Europe. For generations the Ashkenazi Jewish naming practice was “X son of Y” – or in Romania, “X sin Y”. Jews that immigrated to Romania from outside in the 1st half of the 19th century might have abandoned the surnames adopted as a result of foreign laws. Adoption of surnames in Romania was voluntary, slow. In Botosani, as a city far away from the capital, it was slower. Even when adopting a surname, most Jews would not register it with the authorities, as the law required, from 1895 and on. At least 50% of Botosani Jews did not have surnames in the second half of the 19th century. Romanian law required people to have civil marriage. Starting with mid-1880s, kids of couples who only had religious marriage might have been registered as illegitimate, carrying the mother’s name and surname (if she had one).

5. **Dates:**

Romania used Julian calendar until 1919. There was a difference of 12/13 days between Julian and Gregorian calendar in the 19th/20th century respectively. While this might create confusion – that is not the big problem. Romanian records are not consistent in registering ages. Our experience shows that even after emigration, Romanian Jews did not record the true birth date – sometimes they were close, usually several years away.

Guidelines [for conducting a records search in Romania]

1. **Places of origin:**

Botosani might be the place of origin of your ancestor – but it might be the county and not the city. Try to determine, as best as you can the exact place of origin. [For family members who went to the U.S.] Ellis Island manifest, naturalization papers can be the source to this information. However, sometimes they are not accurate, as the information supplied by the immigrants was not accurate.

2. **First Names:**

It is important to determine the names people carried in Romania. Your Romanian ancestor almost surely was not a John, Henry, Harry, Louis etc... While some names have immediate equivalence, others might not have, or the person might have chosen a totally different 1st name rather than the expected one. Usually, the tombstone would carry the Hebrew name of the person. The Hebrew name would be fairly easy translated into the Yidish Romanian one, though sometimes, in case of a double name the person might have been known by only one of the names, not necessarily the 1st one.

3. **Surnames**

As surnames were rare in Botosani – the surname your ancestor carried [when they emigrated to the US] might have been adopted only at Ellis Island, or even in the states. The surname itself might not be very important. Spelling of the name is usually meaningless, as many Jews did not write Romanian, so the clerk would register whatever he thought he heard.

4. **Family member search**

This is major information [for a search.] For each emigrant:

- a. Name. Hebrew name if possible.
- b. Date of birth (usually it will not be accurate)
- c. Place of birth

For the heads of families, it would be very useful to gather information about their parents (tombstones, death certificates). Any information about siblings, might also add pieces to the puzzle.”