Getting Started on Ukrainian Genealogy

by Edward (Ted) Lomatski

Originally this article was written as a standard response to individuals that were starting to trace their Ukrainian ancestors. It is meant to be a very basic guide to getting started with research.

I was told by my (very frustrated) golf instructor that golf is the only sport where anyone walk into Canadian Tire, purchase a set of clubs and go directly to the links, without any sort of instruction and say they were a golfer. I guess I kind of feel that way about genealogy. So, the first step in starting your research is to go to (Canadian Tire does not have any books on genealogy) the library and take out a book or three on genealogy. One of the books should be letter size (8 ½" x 11") and have full size forms in it that you can photocopy. Before I go any further, I should make a couple of points. The first, is that you should actually read the books (when all else fails, read directions!) and secondly, if you think that you will complete this project in a few weeks, genealogy is probably not for you. In one of the books, there will be all examples of various forms used to compile a family tree. What you want is to be able to photocopy the "Family Group Sheet","Pedigree Chart" and a "Correspondence / Research Log". A good idea is to have a ring binder to hold your sheets in an organised fashion. You will need to keep track of your correspondence and research so that you do not duplicate research in the future. And don't think that you will remember everything - it is impossible! These sheets can also be obtained at the Family History Centre of the Church of Latter Saints (Mormons) (see below). They provide an orderly method of recording information and will help you put your family tree in perspective. In addition, it will enable you to collect all the information at one time in an organised fashion. Remember, it is always important to note your sources, even if they are oral. There is a system to genealogical research and it is has been well defined for over 200 years. If you are not organised in your approach, you will be wasting your time and that of others. The worst case scenario is that someone that you have interviewed will have passed away in the interim and you will have lost a valuable source of information and a chance to verify your facts.

You can also find these forms on the internet at: http://genealogy.tqn.com/hobbies/pastimes/genealogy/msub02.htm

The only problem I have with the forms at this location is that the Family Group Record does not include a place for burial information (which is important).

If you are at all serious about researching your family tree, you will also have to have a good genealogy program on your computer. Although it is possible to keep handwritten records, a genealogy program will allow you to enter information only once and have it appear in all the appropriate places, and legibly! It is also an easy way to share information with your relatives as well as a means of getting them to share information with you. It is far easier to get people to fill in a form than to get them to respond to individual questions. Mind you, you will have to provide examples, and ask them to write dates out in full. The program that I personally recommend is Personal

Ancestral File (PAF) from the Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). Since the LDS have pretty much defined genealogical convention, you cannot go wrong. It is one of the most comprehensive and easy to use programs as well as being available for free by download at: http://download.familysearch.org/

Another good program is Family Tree Maker. It is a commercial program and has some advantages over PAF in the number of different printouts it offers. There are other programs that are as good, but I just have not used them. And, as with most computer related items, they are changing constantly and different features are being added. Ask a professional genealogist before buying. There are a number of "cheap" programs out there that are not compatible with the "GEDCOM" program included in all professional genealogy programs. GEDCOM is the standard for exchange of genealogical information. These cheap programs are generally poorly supported, do not adhere to convention, and will run poorly when you build up your file. (Ya getz what ya pay fer!) BEWARE!

The Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) runs Family History Centres with birth, death and marriage records that they have microfilmed in virtually every country on the planet. Their services are free (except for films you order from Salt Lake City) and open to everyone. Phone the local LDS church and ask where the closest Family History Centre is located if it is not listed in the phone book. Find out their hours and ask if they have "intro" nights. Most likely they will tell you when you come in when an experienced volunteer is on duty.

Check the LDS records and see what you can find. However, do not go in without your

Family Group Sheets and Pedigree Charts. The people in there are volunteers and are willing to help, but you have to be as organised as possible. The LDS was in Ukraine shortly after independence and has microfilmed thousands of source documents. More microfilms are being released all the time, although it will probably still be several years before they are able to finish cataloguing and indexing.

After you have some idea of what you are doing, or even concurrently, gather all the documents that you can. Baptismal Certificates, Marriage Records, letters, family Bibles, photos, etc. Talk to everyone in your family and let them know what you are doing and what you hope to accomplish. Don't get discouraged! People will be vague or unco-operative for various reasons. You will however, find a few allies! Use them well. Supply them with information as your work progresses, even if it is sharing your frustration! Explain why things are done and how - especially if you are sharing Family Group Sheets. When interviewing people, take notes or tape the interview. I prefer taping. I purchased a voice-activated tape record and find that once you put it down, ask some leading questions, people generally forget about it and keep talking. And, with the voice-activated feature, those pauses where people are thinking are not recorded. Throw out nothing. As you work, you will find yourself going back to the same documents. If you cannot keep an original document, photocopy it.

Genealogy on the Internet
There are many sources for genealogy on the internet and they are growing by leaps and bounds. More and more people are sharing their research - be it their family tree, cemetery

records or local histories.

One Ukrainian resource on the web is the genealogy group at the following site
http://www.infoukes.com/
go to the genealogy area and subscribe to the genealogy forum. When you have subscribed, ask questions. The questions are answered by individuals so, be prepared for contradictions.

Other sources of information can be found at the following sites:

"Did Your Baba Come from Austria?" by Orysia Tracz
explains why people from Ukraine were classified as Austrians
http://www.infoukes.com/genealogy/tracz/

Links to Ukrainian Sites Around the World - Oleh Baran
One of the most comprehensive links to all things Ukrainian
http://www.physics.mcgill.ca/WWW/oleh/ukr-page2.html#History

Ukrainian Community and Family Histories-this website provides links to sources for names of pioneers, primarily in Western Canada.
http://come.to/ukrainian.families

German Genealogy: Tips for Researchers - this site is good for those dealing with terminology on old Austrian records
http://www2.genealogy.net/gene/www/ghlp/tips.html

Polish Research Website - documents from Halychyna (Galicia) and Bukovia are held in the archives in Warsaw
http://members.xoom.com/agadadm/

Naming customs in Poland and Ukraine - see

Ukraine - naming customs
http://www.rootsweb.com/~polwgw/naming.html

Hamburg Passenger Lists - available at the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) lists all passengers that sailed from the Port of Hamburg from 1850 - 1934 which is the bulk of Ukrainians immigrating to the new world
http://www.genealogy.net/gene/www/emig/ham_pass.html

Oblasts and Raions in Ukraine
http://lemko.org/genealogy/oblasts.html

Vital and Marriage Records From Greek Catholic and Orthodox Parishes in Former Austrian Galicia, Former Malo Rus, Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus (former Byelorussia)
http://lemko.org/genealogy/galicia.html

Addresses for Archives in Western Ukraine and South-eastern Poland
http://lemko.org/genealogy/addresses.html

Vital and Marriage Records From Greek Catholic and Orthodox Parishes in Former Austrian Galicia, Former Malo Rus, Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus (former Byelorussia) available through the Mormon Family History Library (FHL). The parish records identified are not the only ones available from the FHL. They are only the most recent records obtained by the LDS. To determine the complete list, consult the LDS Family History Library Catalog (FHLC).
http://lemko.org/genealogy/galiciapl.html

Localities in Ukraine - Latin/Cyrillic
http://lemko.org/lih/indexuke.html

Hamburg Port Site
The city of Hamburg, accommodating

emigrants in the past and to this very day, is in exclusive possession of lists of those who passed through her utilizing the harbour. Bremen and other cities lost almost all these precious lists, but only Hamburg managed to safeguard complete records covering the flow of emigrants from 1850 to 1934. What makes these lists so valuable, is the fact that even the hometowns from whence the emigrants came is recorded. By the year 2003, the city of Hamburg expects to be able to display the lists for the entire period covering emigration from 1850 to 1934. All the data pertaining to the emigrant lists are being processed and brought to the Internet, here at this centre. Currently there is access to the first years: 1890-1893. http://www.hamburg.de/LinkToYourRoots/engl ish/

 I hope this has given you some insight as to where to start with your own research.