

Address given by Ivan Svarnyk
to the
Ukrainian Genealogical Group - National Capital Region
30th March, 2000

The following is an edited transcription of the session with some of the question and answer period included.

Thank you for inviting me here to address your group.

My institution, the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine is located in Lviv. It is the richest repository of manuscripts, metrical books, legal documents and related material. We have more than one million files in more than 800 collections in our archives. Our documents cover from approximately 1200 to 1939, over 700 years of documents. We provide many services for genealogy, heraldry, as well as history, economics and other research fields. The study of genealogy did not exist during the Soviet era as did other historical disciplines. In the 1980s only a small group of enthusiasts were working in heraldry and other historical disciplines. Today there are many people who seek our services about their family history in Lviv, Ukraine and from all over the world. And we help them in their search. As an example, we put together a family tree for former Secretary of State of the United States, Zbigniew Brzezinski who was born near Lviv in the small town of Zhovkva. We helped him find sources about his family history.

The main source of information on Ukrainian family history is church metrical books or records. We have more than 6000 of these church record books from all of Galicia (Halychyna) and southeastern part of Poland, the Ukrainian ethnic territory which is now in Poland - Cholm, Jaroslaw, Przemysl. The chronological dates of these books are 1780s to the beginning of the 20th century. In the beginning, these books were written in the old Ukrainian language, but only a small part are written in the Ukrainian alphabet. At the beginning of the 19th century, these books were written in Latin. Names, family names are in Ukrainian or Polish or German transcription, but in the Latin alphabet. We have of course all types of these metrical books - Birth, Marriage, Death. This information is not complete because there were two world wars on this territory. Many churches were destroyed and the record books burned. However, we have some copies that were made in these parishes and sent to the Lviv Greek Catholic Consistory. We have in some cases, the original books and in other cases, copies from villages and towns. We have not only Greek Catholic, but Latin Rite (Polish) and Jewish metrical books from synagogues. We do not have many German books as they were removed to Germany in 1942 or 1943 during the war. But we do not know where these books are today, maybe in Germany, however we do not have any information regarding these books.

Also we have another type of historical sources, these are economic documents. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, there are very specific economic documents, Josephine and Franciscan metrical records which include the economic description of all villages and towns in Western Ukraine. We have in these books information about owners of property, mostly men and sometimes about women more specifically, widows who were the owners of land. And, in addition to Josephine and Franciscan metrical records, we have cadastral maps of all village and towns in Western Ukraine and Eastern Poland. These maps are from the middle of the 19th century. And on the maps are all houses in the town, its number or name of owner. And of course we have maps of German colonies in Western Ukraine.

Another type of documentation is military documents. We have the biggest collection of the bureau of military registry. And in this collection, there are more than 10,000 names of men who served in the Austrian army from the 1890s to 1940s. The most recent documents are from 1944. And there are many names recorded, the first names, the family names as well as the names of the parents, where the soldier was born, where he lived before going into the Austro-Hungarian army.

The archive is open every day except Sunday. It is possible for anyone to visit the archive and to carry out research on their family history. And there is no charge for this. But you must pay for photocopies. The cost for photocopy, microfilm, etc. is about 10% of what it is in Canada. If you are in a hurry, they will do it for you immediately, especially if you pay an extra \$5.

Another type of documentation relates to nobility. When the Austrians occupied Galicia in 1772, many people wanted to confirm their nobility status. And we have records of some offices which were established in Lviv for this purpose. We can confirm the nobility of maybe 10,000 families of Polish, Ukrainian, Hungarian, German origin. We have the largest collection of documents from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of World War I including illustrations of their coats of arms.

My particular interest and area of expertise is the heraldry of the towns and cities of Ukraine. I have a large card index of heraldic symbols of cities and villages. And in Ukraine there exists a Ukrainian Heraldry Society with sections on heraldry, genealogy and other sections. Many people are interested in uniforms, orders, and other related areas. Every year we have an All-Ukraine Heraldry Conference. And at the last conference, we had half of our presentations on genealogy. Many researchers are interested in the genealogy of famous people such as scientists, historians and others. They prepare articles for our journal "Znak" (Symbol) and also publish books and brochures.

Our society has an address list of those that are interested in specific subjects. I have the phone, and fax numbers and addresses. Regular mail is the most reliable way of communicating. Researchers can write to us in English and we have people that can also communicate in Polish, German, Greek, Latin. When someone writes with a first request, they do not have to send any money. However, when you do send a request, you must be as precise as possible in your information, giving as many details as possible, including village, county, province. You must also be precise and as accurate about the information on your ancestors, including dates of emigration. Sometimes it happens that we have very old information but no information about the turn of the 20th century which makes it difficult to make a connection with the historical information in the archives and what is known to the researcher.

Questions and Answers:

Q Is it possible to track down people born in Ukraine in the 1920s and find out what happened to them 20 years later. Is it possible to find information on their families?

A Of course it is possible but our documents are limited to the period up to 1939 in our archives. After this year, there are no records in our archives (as these documents would be considered current).

Q What is the best way to send money to the Archives?

A When you write to the Archives with your first inquiry, the Archives will send you details in the reply on paying by bank transfer.

Q Do you have information on Bukovina?

A As this area has been its own entity in the past, there is a separate archive in Chernivtsi which works on the same principle as the Archives in Lviv.

Q Does the Lviv archives have land ownership records?

A Yes, but only for Halychyna (Galicia) and the northern part Volyn, only a part of it. Most records are kept at the Lutsk in the Volyn Oblast Archives, so you would have to write there.

We can give you addresses and phone numbers of all archives in Ukraine.

Q What about the archives in Ivano-Frankivsk?

A Most land records, etc for Ivano-Frankivsk are available in our archives (Lviv)

Q Regarding land cadastral records, do you think this is a good tool for searching for our ancestors?

A Of course, because this is very good source, because we have all registers of all land owners, but not women. Those without land are not recorded of course. Most villagers had land, so their name would appear in the land registers.

Q Would you send photocopies of these maps?

A Yes

Q How long would it take to do the research and how much would it cost (range of fees)?

A It would depend on how complicated the research was and how much information was supplied as well as the availability of documentation. For example, if the family history has 200 names, it would take approximately three months. The initial reply would take about a month. You also have to take into account that there is the mailing time - 10 to 15 days for a letter to go each way.

Q Do you have priorities for people? I have heard that pensioners who are seeking pensions have priority?

A No, there is no priority system or restrictions. This also applies to doing research at the archives. It does not matter if a person is a citizen or a foreigner, it is first come, first served.

Q Do you have any information on wills and testaments?

A We have one of the richest collection of tabula, this is the office which confirms the owners of land and there is a vast collection of land transactions purchases, wills, land transactions.

Q Do you have any census records?

A No, we do not have any census documents. They may be in Vienna, Austria.

Q One of my grandparents came to Canada in 1900 and they think that siblings went to Argentina, maybe Paraguay or Brazil. Can you help?

A It is possible, but it is not guaranteed that they can find that person. We have some emigration documents, but they are incomplete.

Q Do you have any information on the archives in Kiev?

A Yes of course, in Kiev we also have the Central State Historical Archives which cover central and eastern Ukraine

Q How far back can we search in archives for information on our ancestors?

In some cases it is possible to go back to the 17th century, in cases of clergy and nobility to 13th century. In Galicia prior to the World War II, we had a large part of the population that was nobility. They lived in villages and were farmers, etc. Dr Kaye did some research on this and wrote a paper and mentions some of these Boyar families. They were poor but they knew who they were.

Q Do you have any books, etc on Ukrainian heraldry?

A Yes the latest book is from Andri Hrychylo, *The Heraldry of Ukrainian Cities*.

Q Do you have anything on Ukranian family heraldry?

A No we don't. However, there is a book which was published in Austria in the 1890's covering noble families from Galicia. These include Ukrainian, German, Polish and some Jewish families. Also, all clergy who were appointed Bishops of the Greek Catholic Church received a coat of arms. That adds to the confusion at times. There are some families with coats of arms that date back to the middle ages.

Q Is there anything in your archives to indicate where a family might have come from originally. Either from another village or another country?

A There is much information about colonists - Czech, Bohemian, German, Austrian, etc. There are many villages in Ukraine settled by immigrants. Around Lviv alone are some 50 immigrant villages. Most of these colonies do not exist today. And we have in Lviv today German people coming to visit their ancestral villages which no longer exist. Homes were destroyed during WWII and people re-immigrated to the German Reich during the Second World War.

There is an organisation called *Germans from Russia*, meaning Ukraine as well. These people are well organized and if you search the internet you will find they have many databases. If you look at Cyndi's List (a genealogical database / link page) you will see that these people have newsletters, conventions and produce their own books. Most of these people are actually from Ukraine - from Halychyna to the Caucasus.

Q Is there any serious claim being made by former residents or their descendants, be they Ukrainian, German, Austrian, Polish or Jews on the lands?

A There is no law yet to allow the return of property. Not long ago, one fellow came and claimed a castle in Ukraine. He claimed that he was a member of the *Rurik* family, which is one of the oldest noble families in Europe.

Q I assume that all the records are manual, that is to say, on paper. Is there anything in a database?

A Not at present. In Lviv we started on a database five years ago, but it is going very slowly. Presently in our catalogue, we have maybe a half million index cards.

Q What kind of arrangements do you have with the Mormons?

A In the beginning we made microfilms of all metrical books and records for the Mormons about 6 or 7 years ago, but this is only 10 or 15% of all our holdings. The LDS have a fiche with all their Ukrainian holdings including German, Jewish and other groups. This is just a small portion of what they (the LDS) have because of the backlog in cataloguing in Salt Lake City, and even a smaller portion of what is available in Lviv.

Q Do you have any documents on Lemkivchyna?

A We have some records in Lviv but they are incomplete. On Lemkivchyna, there may be information for example, metrical records in Przemysl in Poland in the Voivodstvo (Provincial) Archive. Economical documents are in our archive (Lviv) of course.

Q Do you have any school records?

A Yes, we have maybe 100,000 files, but to find something is very difficult because of the massive number of documents. In each village we also have documents about the schools. But there few registers with information about the children.