

Romanian Genealogical Research

Find the village of origin

If you do not know the family's home village, investigating a lineage is next to impossible. So finding the village is the first step. You also need to know the jurisdiction of the village historically as well as today. Places now in Romania were once part of other countries or empires. Officially the two provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia were united in 1861 and were renamed Romania. In 1878 the coastal area of Dobruja was added and the independence of Romania was recognized. It became a kingdom in 1881. After the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, Transylvania, Bukovina, part of Banat, and the Russian province of Bessarabia were added to the Kingdom of Romania, bringing it to its largest extent. In 1940 a part of Borgeuja was lost to Bulgaria and in 1945 the Bessarabian portion of Moldavia and part of Bukovina were ceded to the Soviet Union.



How to find your village:

- Old family documents (letters, naturalization petitions, obituaries, etc.)
- Ellis Island Database: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/eidb/ellis.html>>
- Ancestry.com (for ports other than Ellis Island)

How to determine where the village is located:

Knowing the jurisdiction of the village will also help you anticipate the type of records you will find. Gazetteers provide this information. There is no historical gazetteer for Wallachia, Moldavia, and Dobruja, though there are ones for Bukovina, Transylvania, and Banat. The

gazetteer for Bukovina (*Gemeindelexikon der im Reichsrat vertretenen Königreiche und Länder, Bd. 13 Bukowina*) shows where people attended religious services and this is normally where the vital records were kept. This is also true of the gazetteer for Transylvania and Banat, portions formerly in the Hungarian Empire (*Magyarország helységnévtára tekintettel a közigazgatási*). Both gazetteers are online at <<http://www.lib.byu.edu/fhc/index.php>>. Browse the Gazetteer Collection to find the volume for Bukowina.

In lieu of a gazetteer, there is a good Austrian map set, scale 1:200,000 that covers all areas in modern Romania at <<http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/topo/3felmeres.htm>>. The maps can be downloaded and manipulated with any image viewer to browse for the place of interest. It is important to determine surrounding places to your ancestral village as vital events for several generations might be recorded in different places.

Records to research

Begin with civil registers if possible. However, the records usually begin late. The Romanian, Austrian and Hungarian record keeping traditions varied. Civil registration began in the Kingdom of Romania in 1865, the Hungarian Empire in 1895, and in Austria only after World War II. More current civil registration is kept in city and town halls where it is virtually impossible to get copies. However, early civil registration has been transferred to state archives. Also, religious vital records and transcripts created for civil authorities and found in archives exist for all places back to earlier periods.

Determine the family's religion

Since civil registration began late and you must use religious vital records and therefore must determine the family's religion. Roman Catholic, Calvinist/Reform, Lutheran, and Jewish. Each maintained its own set of records. In most cases, the religious authorities continued to keep their own records after 1895, but were no longer required to do so by the civil authorities.

What next?

Romanian records remain largely remain in Romanian archives and institutions and have not be filmed by FamilySearch Record Services (formerly the Genealogical Society of Utah). The major exception to this rule is records of the ethnic German minority, which were filmed in Germany. These are mainly records of the Banat region and of the Transylvania Saxon villages.

Many of the records are located in civil archives. Researching in Romanian archives used to be very difficult, but conditions have improved considerably over the past couple of years and especially since January 2007, when Romania became a member of the European Union. The Romanian State Archive site is found at <<http://www.arhivelenationale.ro/index.php?lan=0>>.

Romania has 43 archive branches, one for each *judetul*, or district, plus a central archive and municipal archive in Bucharest. Boundaries of these districts frequently do not correspond to the historical boundaries for areas that used to belong to Hungary. Determining where the records of a particular village might be located may require understanding the boundary changes.

REGISTRU STĂREI CIVILE
PENTRU NĂSCUTI

*Din anul una mie optu sute șapte decii și nouă luna
Dcehembre în Nouă Zili--ora decii din zi--
Acta de Nașteri a Dna Anița de secul feminin de
religiea ortodoxă, născută alaltaeri pi la ovele nouă
Diminiați, în casa parintilor sci din cotuna moheita
Comună Pilipauți, fiică Dlui Gheorghii Ștefan Cojo-
caru în etate de trei decii și cinci ani, și a soției sale
Fransina în etate de trei decii ani, ambei de profesia
agricoli domiciliati în sus deșă cotuna și comună
După Declarațiunea facuta de tatal care ne au
în fațosat copila, marturi au fostu Nicolai Luhane
în etate de cinci zeci ani și Nicu Popi în etate
de patru decii ani, ambei de profesia agrico-
li domiciliati în aceasta Comună. -- Care au
subscris acestae în pricină cu noi și cu Decla-
rantele depe celelăiu cetet constatat dupe lege
de noi Haralacube Chiracae primarul comuni Pilipauți și
oficier stare civili--
Eu Gheorghii Ștefan Cojocariu / Declarant
Eu Nicolai Luhane / Marturi
Eu Nicu Popi / Primar*

I Nicu Popi / Mayor

Din anul una mie optu sute șapte decii și nouă luna
Dcehembre in Nouă Zili--ora decii din zi--
Actu de Nașteri a Dna Anița de secul feminin de
religiea ortodoxi, nascuta alaltaeri pi la ovele nouă
Diminiați, in casa parintilor sci din cotuna moheita
Comună Pilipauți, fiică Dlui Gheorghii Ștefan Cojo-
carui in etate de trei decii si cinci ani, și a soției sale
Fransina in etate de trei decii ani, ambei de profesia
agricoli domiciliati in sus deșă cotuna și comună
După Declarațiunia facuta de tatal care ne au
in fațosat copila, marturi au fostu Nicolai Luhane
im etate de cinci zeci ani și Nicu Popi in etate
de patru decii ani, ambei de profesia agrico-
li domiciliati in aceasta Comună--Care au
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de noi Haralacube Chiracae primarul comuni Pilipauți și
oficier stare civili--
Eu Gheorghii Ștefan Cojocariu / Declarant
Eu Nicolai Luhane / Marturi
Eu Nicu Popi / Primar
In year one thousand eight hundred seventy nine
month
of December, ninth day--two in the day--
Born Miss Anita feminine gender of
religion orthodox, born day before yesterday at nine
in the morning, in the house of their parents
town of Pilipauți, daughter of Gheorghii Ștefan Cojo-
caru, 35 years old, and his spouse
Fransina, 30 years old, both of the profession
of agriculture living in this community
After declaration is made by the father who
brought forth the little girl, witnessed by Nicolai Luhane
30 years of age and Nicu Popi, in age
40 years, both of the profession farmer
resident in this town--Who the
undersigned this purpose with us and with declaration
from those citizens ascertained as legal
by us Haralacube Chirac, mayor of town of Pilipauti and
officer of civil registration
I Gheorghii Ștefan Cojocariu / Testifier
I Nicolai Luhane / Witnesses

What to expect if you go there in person

1. Since July, 2005, it is no longer necessary to apply to Bucharest for research permission for the regional archive branches: permission can be obtained on the spot.
2. Use of laptop computers is now permitted (since the beginning of 2007).
3. While digital photography was not allowed or permitted in only certain archives, it is now allowed in all branches of the archives. In fact, you can take UNLIMITED photos for a daily fee of about \$2.
4. Documents more recent than 100 years can **not** be viewed, whether they are birth, marriage or death records. Sometimes, they will bring you a book which contains more recent material, but it may be sealed off. In any case, it can sometimes be viewed, but copies cannot be requested.

5. The rule used to be that only ten books could be requested per day. The daily limit is now five. This can be a serious problem if you are researching more than one family or a family that moved around. Also, some books are very small, containing only a few years. This can get very frustrating, because whether it has 30 pages or 300, it counts as one book. Jewish records of Oradea are one such situation.
6. Once you have seen your ten books, you need to return them before you can get more. And once they are put back, you can't see them again for six months(!) So plan your research carefully!
7. Call or write ahead to make sure the archive will be open during your visit! Archives can be closed unexpectedly for vacations, holidays, conferences, renovation work, etc.
8. When you arrive, you will have to fill out an application and get your permission issued. On the form, you must state what the „theme” of your research is, what names and time frames, etc. Be somewhat general. Sometimes, they will not let you see something unless it was mentioned in advance on this form.
9. Next, you will be taken to the research room, where you can view a book which contains an inventory of the documents. All town names will be in Romanian only(!), so bring a good bilingual map or at least a list of the Romanian names of the places you want to research. The inventory will detail which records are available for which time periods.
10. There are separate records for each religion (i.e. Jewish, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, etc) Make sure you order the right ones! You will have to fill out a card listing the number of each volume you want to see, then a separate slip for each book.
11. Once you have finished filling out all the paperwork, the staff will bring you the books and you can start researching.
12. On the whole, staff speaks only Romanian. French is the other language most widely spoken, and after that, German and/or English. In Maramures, the archivist speaks good English, but this is an exception (she also let me see more than ten books a day).
13. Records in Western Romania and Transylvania) are normally in Hungarian or sometimes in German. Elsewhere, they may be in Romanian (sometimes in Cyrillic script).
14. Archives close fairly early (usually about 3:30P.M.), so get there at opening time and take a snack so you don't have to hunt for a place to eat lunch (food and drink must be consumed outside the research room, of course).