

# Lithuanian Research Now and in the Future

by Howard Margol

The Special Interest Group for Jewish Lithuania (Litvak SIG) now has translated more than 1.2 million individual archival records, approximately 80 percent of which have been added to the LitvakSIG All Lithuania Database (ALD). Additional records are added to the ALD 18 months after they first are made available to qualified contributors. A qualified contributor is someone who contributes a certain amount, usually \$100, to Litvak SIG, designated for a specific translation project, such as vital records or the internal passport project, or to a District Research Group (DRG). The contributor usually receives the records within one week after translation. To learn how to become a contributor, see [www.litvaksig.org/contribute](http://www.litvaksig.org/contribute).

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## Current Status of Records

Following is the summary of archival records useful for Jewish genealogy now in the process of being translated.

**Historical Archive in Vilnius (LVIA).** About 95 percent of the known records in LVIA have been translated. This includes:

- Kaunas rabbinate deaths, 1935–40
- Viesiejie (Suwalki) marriages, 1856–1900
- Viesiejie (Suwalki) births and deaths, 1856–67
- Pasvalys births, 1907–11
- Pumpenai births, 1907–11
- Plunge deaths, 1900–14
- Lida District family list, 1888 family list

The Mormons filmed approximately 550,000 vital records, mostly pre-1915 records, held in LVIA. An additional 250,000 rabbinical records, for the years 1922–39 were not filmed, although, for some towns, the records date back to 1881. A complete index of these records may be found in an article by Ada Green in AVOTAYNU (Vol. XIV, No. 1, Spring 1998). With the exception of Vilnius, 90 percent of the vital records already have been translated. Records for Vilnius and the cities in Vilnius district account for 30 percent of the total number of vital records.\* More than 125,000 Vilnius vital records have been translated; with the exception of birth records, we anticipate that the remainder will be translated by 2015. Because of Lithuania’s 100-year privacy law, no birth records later than 1911 may be translated at the present time. A complete index of vital records held in the Historical Archive (LVIA) appears on the Litvak SIG Members Only website, [www.litvaksig.com](http://www.litvaksig.com).

**Kaunas Regional Archive (KRA).** About 95 percent of the known records held in the Kaunas Regional Archive (KRA) have been translated. The following lists are being translated currently:

- Kaunas draftee lists, 1877, 1878, 1879
- Kaunas owners of small manufacturing firms, 1930–40
- Kaunas education, health care institutions, societies, synagogues, tax file, 1930–40
- Kaunas real estate taxpayers, 1930–40
- Kaunas different professions taxpayers, 1930–40

A complete index of Jewish records located in the Kaunas Archive (KRA) may be found on the LitvakSIG Members Only website, [www.litvaksig.com](http://www.litvaksig.com).

**Central Archive (LCVA).** The Central Archive, located in Vilnius, holds millions of post-World War I records, including, for example:

Siauliai—permission for children under age of 18 to emigrate, 1939–40 (currently being translated)

**Internal Passport Files, 1919–40.** Files for Memel (Klaipeda) and Vilnius are being translated.

## Future Translations

Economic problems in Lithuania resemble those in the rest of the world; Lithuania’s archives have had to institute cost-saving measures. Archive employees are forced to take a two-week vacation without pay twice each year. With fewer employees working at any one time, productivity has been adversely affected. Researchers are allowed to have only 10 files each day in the Historical and Central Archives. The Kaunas Archive allows 20 files per day. This created a problem for the 22 translators I manage and have working in the reading rooms of the archives. They spend one hour on the bus to get to the archive and another hour returning home. Usually, they can process the 10 daily files in about an hour, but it does not make economic sense to travel to the archive to work just one hour.

As a result of the file limitation, the translators devised the following system. They go to the archive on a Friday and order 10 files for Monday, 10 files for Tuesday, and another 10 files for each of the following days in the coming week. They return to the archive the following Friday and have 50 files waiting for them. In other words, they only work one day each week, even though they would like to work three, four or five. Needless to say, this slows down the translation process considerably. Since the KRA allows 20 files each day the problem is not as acute there.

The archives also no longer allow cameras to be used by researchers to photograph the records. Instead, researchers must pay for paper copies of the records instead of photographing them. The archives, at the same time, doubled the cost of copies. Paper copies cost 1.20 to 1.50 Lithuanian litas per page depending on the archive and the type of

pages being copied. Currently, one lita equals about 42 American cents.

The following lists were found in the Lithuanian archives by Peggy Freedman and me on our July 2011 group trip to Lithuania. If sufficient contributions are made to LitvakSIG, all of these lists can be translated and made available to LitvakSIG members.

### **Historical Archive in Vilnius (LVIA)**

Fond 710, Jewish account holders in State Savings Banks.

Fond 605, files on more than 100 Jewish converts to the Russian Orthodox Church, primarily from the mid-19th century. Rich with biographical details: narratives that tell the dramas of conversion, their reasons for conversion, parental objections and more.

Fond 532, files about Jews who either did not register for the military draft or failed to report for military duty. Arranged by district and date, primarily from the start of the 20th century.

File 131, includes the list of families of Jews who did not register for the draft in 1915 in Antaliepte, Dusetos and Tauragnai and in locations in Zarasai (Novoaleksandrovsk) district.

File 133, includes lists similar to those in File 131 for Joniskelis, Krekenava, Linkuva, Pakruojis, Panevezys, Pasvalys, Pumpenai, Pusalotas and Ramygala; a list of Jews from Kursenai, Luoke and other locations in Siauliai district; a list of Jews from the Siauliai district, Gruzdziai, Joniskis, Kriukai; Pasvitinys and New and Old Zagare; a list of Jews from Linkuva, Pakruojis, Zeimelis; a list of Jews from Baisogala, Lygumai, Radviliskis, Saulenai Seduva and Skiemonys; and a list of Jews from Mosedis, Panevezys, Pikeliai, Salantai, Skuodas, Tirsliai, Ylakai and Zidikai. The last list includes only first name, last name and father's name.

File 134, includes the lists of families of Jews who avoided the draft in 1915 from Akmene, Klykoliai, Papile, Tryskiai and Vieksnai, as well as a list from Krekenava and Ramygala.

File 316, includes the lists of Jews not registered for the draft from various locations in Panevezys district—Joniskelis, Pasvalys, Pumpenai, Pusalotas and others, plus a list of Jews from various locations in Zarasai (Novoaleksandrovsk) district.

Thousands of records of various types are listed in the LVIA catalogue, but finding records of Jewish genealogical value is difficult. The archive catalogue lists records in a general way, without specifically identifying contents of the records. Some files consist of 500 to 1,000 pages of correspondence with little or no genealogical value. Determining the exact contents of some files may be costly and time-consuming.

### **Kaunas Regional Archive (KRA)**

Fond I-54, Draft Commission Files of Kaunas Gubernia,

### **A Personal Story**

On July 12, 2011, I was in the reading room at the Lithuanian Central Archive together with Peggy Freedman and our translator. As we were leaving, I noticed a series of books on a nearby bookshelf and became curious, because I had not noticed the bookshelf before. Our translator took us over to the bookshelves where Peggy looked at a 1939 Lithuania telephone directory. She turned to the listing for my shtetl of Pusalotas and told me one Jew was listed by the name of Isaakas Frankas (Isaak Frank). I had known that he was the only person in Pusalotas who could afford to have a telephone in that shtetl during the 1920s and 1930s.

Our translator heard us mention the name Isaakas Frankas, and she quickly searched for it in the surname index on the archive computer. Two years ago, the archive initiated a project to include the person's name and the type of record in the archive where the name appears. Two million names are now in the index, and that represents less than 2 percent of the estimated total.

The index showed that Isaakas Frankas had applied for an internal passport in Pusalotas. This was exciting news for me, because although almost 10,000 Panevezys district internal passport records have been translated, I have found no sign of my ancestors from Pusalotas. Prior to World War I, Pusalotas was in Panevezys district. We learned that a separate fond of internal passports exists that includes records from all of the villages and towns in the Birzai district. During the interwar period, 1919–40, Pusalotas was part of Birzai district and not in Panevezys district as before. This fond is not even listed in the Central Archive catalogue, so, without the new surname index, we never would have found the internal passports for the Birzai district towns. This opens up an entirely new way for us to find additional internal passport records as well as other types of records in the Central Archive.

The following week, Peggy and I spent more time in the Central Archive on our own, but without a translator we did not accomplish a great deal. We did find, however, internal passports for my maternal grandmother, my grandfather's brother and my father's youngest sister. If I had not asked about the books on the bookcase as we were leaving the archive the previous week when we had a translator with us, we would not have found those internal passport records.

*Howard Margol*

primarily 1906–15. Many include extracts from family lists that name all family members.

Fond I-45, Police of Telsiai District, Third Precinct; file 6, registration book of reserve soldiers, 1908; file 8, registration of reserve soldiers; file 11, passport registration book, 1912; file 13, personal identifications, 1914.

Similar fonds include:

I-597, First Precinct of Telsiai District, 1907–17; I-44, Second Precinct of Telsiai District, 1902–16; I-46, Fourth Precinct of Telsiai District, 1863–1917; I-454 Kretinga Police Command, 1904–17; I-455, Gargzdai Police Command, 1913–15

Similar fonds also exist for the other districts of Kaunas Gubernia.

A major future LitvakSIG project is the translation of Kaunas Gubernia court records, 1883–1914. An index of court cases will be created that will include the type of court case, location, names of Jews involved, date and fond number. With this information, individual researchers will be able to contract with the Kaunas Archive (KRA) to translate the important parts of the court case. No attempt will be made to translate entire records of individual cases.

**Central Archive (LCVA)**

An extremely large number of files of various types, in the Central Archive, remain to be explored. Many involve the years 1919–40. Following are some records already identified.

**Emigration files.** During the years 1919–40, everyone in Lithuania who wanted a passport for foreign travel had to apply, in person, in the capital city of Kaunas. Each application includes considerable information about the individual. The files are for two major shipping lines, the Royal Mail Lines, LTD, and the Canadian Railway Line.

**Palestine Jewish Fund Society (Palestinos Zydu Fondams Remti Draugija), 1923–40.** These are records of Zionist activity by town, for example, Janova, Papile and Plunge.

**Fond 391, Minister of Education Teacher’s History Cards.** These are teacher and student records listed by name. A list of all schools is included.

**Internal Passport Files, 1919–40.** In 1919, Lithuania became an independent country for the first time. In order to become a citizen, everyone living there or coming there to live, had to apply for an internal passport within 30 days. Failure to do so would result in heavy fines or even expulsion from the country. The passports were not intended for travel but were rather for identification. A full explanation of internal passports may be found at [www.jewishgen.org/databases/Lithuania/InternalPassports.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Lithuania/InternalPassports.htm). Almost all internal passport records for Lithuania have been translated, with the exception of Klaipeda and Vilnius. We anticipate the Klaipeda records to be translated by March 31, 2012, but the Vilnius file is so large several years likely will be needed to fully translate them all. The Klaipeda files are written in German, and the Vilnius files are in Polish. Qualified translators for these languages are difficult to find in Vilnius.

**Note**

\* Cities in Vilnius district are: Antakalnis, Bagaslaviskis, Bezdonys, Ciobiskis, Gelvan, Giedraiciai, Inturik, Jasiunai, Laibiskis, Maisiagala, Mikasiliskis, Moletai, Musninkai, Naujoji Vilna, Nemencine, Novygorod, Paberze, Rudamina, Salcininkai, Sesuoliai, Shirvint, Snipiskes, Stundishki, Turgeliai, Vilna (Vilnius City), Yakubantse.

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