

Questions and answers about the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP

28 August 2000

Dear Kremenets Researchers,

First, Sheree and I thank you for your wonderful response to our message about forming a new Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP within JRI-Poland. We currently have 122 people on our e-mail distribution list. So far, we have received 60 responses to our announcement message and almost all of you who responded have offered to help in one way or another. Sheree and I have tried to respond to each of you personally. In this message, I will try to answer some of the questions that several of you have raised.

1. Do other records besides those on the LDS microfilms exist?

Yes. As noted on the spreadsheet that I sent out, Miriam Weiner's book, "Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova" identifies the following Kremenets records in Ukrainian state archives: Marriage records for 1907, 1914-1915, 1917-1919, 1921-1922, 1924-1926, 1930, 1933, and 1935-1939; Birth records for 1908-1915, 1917, 1921-1925, 1929-1930, 1932, 1935, and 1938; Death records for 1898, 1904, 1909-1911, 1913-1915, 1917-1918, 1921, 1924-1926, 1928-1931, and 1936-1937; Census records for the town of Kremenets for the years 1834, 1858, 1874, 1886, 1926; Census records for Kremenets Uezd exist for the years 1811, 1814, 1869, and 1925; School records for years 1914-1928; and Notary records for 1920-1939. The LDS has not microfilmed any of these records. In addition, there are two Yizkor Books for Kremenets. As far as I can tell, neither has been translated. Four of you have access to at least one of these books. We will try to get the table of contents and the necrologies from these books copied and translated in parallel with our vital records project for JRI-Poland.

2. I have not been able to open the spreadsheet. How can I get the inventory data?

Within the next few days, the Kremenets inventory data will be available on JRI-Poland's web site. We will have a separate Shtetl listing for Kremenets. I'll send out a message to let you know when this is available.

3. Have you run across the name [... a surname ...] in the Kremenets vital records?

We have not yet translated the records, so we don't know what surnames are on them. I have translated a few of the 5,000 pages and will post those names soon. Eight of you have indicated that you can (or might be able to) help with translation. As soon as we raise enough money to make copies and distribute them to our translator volunteers, we will begin generating a surname list. We'll post an interim list on JRI-Poland (much as the Bialystok researchers have) as it becomes available. In the meantime, please be patient ... and, if you are willing and able, help us recruit people who can translate the records and/or donate funds. Those will be our biggest tasks. The rate at which we get this project done depends on our success in raising money and finding volunteer translators.

Some of you have sent me information about your families. I am happy to receive and read this information. However, please recognize that until we get these translations under way, I can not tell you whether or not your families or their towns/shtetls appear in the records. Also, just in case you haven't submitted your family names to JGFF, please be sure to do so. Ditto for submissions to FTJP.

4. What towns/shtetls are included on the microfilms?

We don't know. The microfilms appear to cover Kremenets Uezd (District), rather than just the town of Kremenets. In Imperial Russia, people were registered in particular towns and that town registration stayed with them even if they moved. Some of the microfilmed records include the town in which an individual was registered, and that town often is different from Kremenets (but usually is nearby). We won't have a list of towns until we translate and index the records. That is a big part of what this project is about.

5. I know a little Russian or Hebrew, but these records are difficult to read. How can I help?

First, recognize that these records are in "columnar", not textual paragraph format. This means that we don't have to translate whole sentences. We have several translation aids available: (1) the Family History Library's list of Russian keywords that often appear in Russian vital records, (2) the Russian alphabet in print and cursive styles, and (3) the Hebrew alphabet in print and cursive styles. We will send these aids to anyone who wishes to try translation. I have found that if you get familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet, you can use "pattern matching" to decipher the handwritten records. Also, by comparing the Russian and Yiddish sides of the vital records ledger you often can figure out what the words are. I don't know Yiddish, but I have found that it is close enough to Hebrew to figure out most of the letters and words, even with some of the fancy 19th century lettering. (Perhaps one of our group can develop a list of Yiddish keywords akin to the Russian list.) I also have found that the translation task

becomes somewhat easier with practice. If any particular records are troublesome, we can ask professional experts to help us.

If you are willing to give translation a try, we desperately need you. We will tailor your translating workload to your abilities. That is, we will send novices just a few pages to translate. Skilled translators will receive more pages.

6. Have you had contact with any surviving members of the Kremenets Association?

Unfortunately, no. However, if any of you will volunteer to make contact and serve as liaison to the Association, we all will benefit. Please let me know if you can do this.

7. How will this project proceed? What will be done first? What is your most pressing need?

There actually are three parts to our project: (1) Translate and put on-line the vital records of Kremenets that the Mormons have microfilmed, (2) Translate selected parts of the Kremenets Yizkor Books, and (3) Make arrangements to index the Kremenets records that exist in various Ukraine archives and that have not been microfilmed by the Mormons. We are deferring (3) for now. We will try to do the Yizkor Book part of the project in parallel with the Mormon microfilm records, but the most critical part of the project is working with the Mormon microfilms.

We have three "most pressing" needs: (1) donations to pay for making copies of the microfilmed pages, mailings, and translations, (2) volunteers to make the copies and send them to us for distribution to translators, and (3) translators who are willing to try to transliterate or translate the Russian and/or Yiddish records.

This is how we propose to proceed.

a. As soon as sufficient funds for copying become available (probably within the next two weeks), Sheree and I will solicit volunteers to get a set of records copied. We will start with the first film and assign a number of pages to each volunteer according to the number of copies the volunteer feels comfortable making. Each volunteer will order the assigned film into a local Family History Center, either on temporary loan or indefinite loan.

b. The "copies volunteer" will send a set of two copies to Sheree or me (we haven't yet decided which of us will handle this). One of the copies should be a "first generation copy". We will assign a set of the copied pages to a "transliterator/translator volunteer", and will send the "first generation" pages to the translator.

- c. We will maintain a master list of surnames and places which will be posted on the Kremenets portion of JRI-Poland while data-entry and proof-reading is completed.
- d. When the transliterated/translated pages are returned to us, we will forward them to a "data entry volunteer" who will enter them on a spreadsheet template, preferably using Microsoft Excel. The "data entry volunteer" will e-mail the completed template to us.

- e. We will send a set of the original copies and the spreadsheet data to a "proof-reader volunteer" who will check accuracy of the computerized entries. Upon completion of this task, the data will be sent to JRI-Poland for inclusion in the on-line Kremenets database.

Since we have several volunteers who have specified that they would like to work on the Yizkor Book part of the project, we will try to start that task in parallel with the vital records project. Yizkor Book translations will be posted on JewishGen's Yizkor Book Project website.

8. I would like to help with data entry, but I don't use Microsoft Excel. How can I help?

To be compatible with JRI-Poland's database, we have to submit our records in Microsoft Excel, or in a compatible format. However, if you use any standard spreadsheet program like Lotus 123, or a database program like Microsoft Access, either you can save the file in a Microsoft Excel format, or you can send it to us and we can convert it.

9. Before I send money, how do I determine that you are legitimate?

The best way to determine our legitimacy is to check the Kremenets listing on JRI-Poland's web site. Donations will be made to JRI-Poland and ear-marked for the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP. None of the individuals involved in coordinating the CO-OP will handle the money that is donated.

10. I would like to donate. Who do I send my check to? Can I use a credit card?

Your donation can be by check, bank draft, money order, or Visa Card. See <http://www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/visa.htm> for additional information. Checks should be made out to "Jewish Records Indexing - Poland", and you should write "Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP" on the check.

Send your contributions or address your questions concerning donations to:

Jewish Records Indexing, Inc.
c/o Sheila Salo, Treasurer
5607 Greenleaf Road
Cheverly, MD 20785 USA

Telephone / Fax: (301) 341-1261
E-Mail: ssalo@capaccess.org

Visa contributions also may be telephoned to Sheila Salo. (Only between the hours of 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern Daylight/Standard Time, please).

Jewish Records Indexing – Poland, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to Jewish Records Indexing – Poland are tax-deductible in the U.S. to the extent permitted by law.

When you make your donation be sure to specify that the donation is for the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP, otherwise Sheila Salo, JRI-Poland's treasurer, will not know that the money is earmarked for our use. Also, to enable us to track contributions, please send me an e-mail message (rondocor@earthlink.net) or letter telling me how much you have donated.

11. I want to donate to the project but I want my donation to be used only for the Yizkor Book Project. How do I specify this?

We must keep funds for the Yizkor Book part of the project separate. If you want your donation to be used only for the Yizkor Book part of the project, please specify that when you make your donation and also in an e-mail message or letter to me.

12. Where can I find copies of the Kremenets Yizkor Books?

Check the Yizkor Book Database on JewishGen. It's listed under Projects and Activities on JewishGen's main page. Or, go to <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor> and do a search for Kremenets. You will find two different Yizkor Books listed and a list of libraries where each is available. You will also find a link to a list of booksellers who trade in Yizkor Books.

13. How does the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP relate to the new Ukraine SIG on JewishGen?

We probably will be loosely affiliated with the new Ukraine SIG. Exactly what the affiliation will be depends on how the SIG develops. I've been in communication with the SIG organizers and they are aware of what we are doing. Our objectives are

similar ... to make more information about our ancestors and ancestral shtetls freely available to the Jewish genealogical community. However, we are organizing our Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP as part of JRI-Poland. This will allow us to use the database and financial infrastructure that JRI-Poland has already established, and to be part of a thriving, successful, and incredibly useful project. It also allows us to use their IRS non-profit status to accept tax-deductible contributions. I expect that there will be mutual web links between the two sites, Kremenets/JRI-Poland and Ukraine SIG. No conflicts that I can see at this point.

To date, we have received 60 responses to our "announcement message." Almost everyone has volunteered to do one task or another. Thirty three of us have agreed to make donations to the Project. We have 8 people willing to try to translate the microfilms, and 5 willing to try translating the Yizkor Books. Either Sheree or I will contact you within the next couple of weeks to ask you to take on specific assignments. In the meantime, please make your donations to JRI-Poland, earmarked for the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP. JRI-Poland is ready to receive these donations. If you haven't yet offered a donation, please try to make one. Making the copies we need is going to be fairly costly.

As usual, if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please send them to Sheree or to me. We are looking forward to working with you and to seeing the first fruits of our labor on-line.

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