

The registry books of the Jewish communities, which are kept in the holding of the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, formed archival fond no 300 – the metrical books (vital records) of the Jewish communities from the so called “Zabużańskie” (“East of the Bug River”) Territories – Eastern Territories of the Second Polish Republic or the pre-World War II Poland (today South-West Ukraine). The fond covers more than 150 years, from 1789 till 1945, and has now 4065 archival units (books) – 137,63 linear meters. Of course there are not all books from the religious Jewish communities of these territories.

The smaller part of vital records is also kept in the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv and other national archives of Ukraine, some registration books are missing. The oldest preserved book of vital records was from the community of Kamionka Strumiłłowa, and it was a register of death from the years 1789-1876 (call no 388). The most recent – from the other side – is an index book for the marriage registry for Tarnów from the years 1936-1943 (call no 1429).

Depending on the period of their creation, the books differ in form and content. The oldest books have oversimplified system of registration: only the most important date about the new born child, married couple or dead person. Starting from the reforms of emperor Joseph II Habsburg in the 80s of 18th century the registration books were unified for any denomination. They contain also the information typical for Mosaic religion like circumcision with date, names of eyewitnesses etc.

The fond 300 collected the registration books of births, marriages, and deaths as well as personal indexes, but they are very few. Indexes, if they existed, were incorporated into the book or done separately. The registry of birth contained all the information about the new born child: name, date (day, month and year), place of birth and circumcision, sex, status and names of parents, their place of living (street, house number) and names of the grandparents from mother side (occasionally also from father side), and also information about the work and place of living of fellow sponsors and witnesses, midwife as well as who performed circumcision and notes.

A great number of so called illegitimate children registered in the books need to be noticed. The child was regarded as illegal, and so registered, when parents had only the rabbinic marriage, which was not registered in the relevant civil office. In such a case the column for the name of father was left empty.

In the marriages registers there are: names, places of birth, occupations, addresses (street, house number), age of bride and groom, names, occupations and addresses of their parents, date of ceremony and name of rabbi, as well as information about witnesses with their names, occupations and addresses.

In the death registers the specific data are about the dead: name, marital state, sex, occupation, place of living, information about the family (parents and spouses), date of death and funeral and the number of the post-mortem cart with the name of a medical officer who did it and other notes about corps and the kind of death.

The amount of preserved metrical books for the individual community is very different: from 1 book (for Lubycza Królewska or Okopy) to a several hundred (for Lwów – 495 books) with the chronological sequence.

The languages of records are mainly Polish and German, there are also some notes in Russian, Ukrainian and sometimes in Yiddish.

The metrical books are transferred according to the Law on the Acts of Civil Status (from the 28th of November 2014 – Official Journal of Laws, item 1741) and regulations of the Head Office of Polish State Archives (from the 26th of March 2015) from the Archives of the Civil Registrar's Office of the city of Warsaw.

On the base of existing Law on the Acts of Civil Status (from the 28th of November 2014) access to the registry of birth in any kind or form is forbidden before a hundred years from the closure of the book and to the registry of marriages and deaths – before 80 years. For that reason on the web site of the Central Archives of Historical Records (<http://www.agad.gov.pl/>) one could only find digital images of the vital records older than a hundred or eighty years respectively.

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Map of Galicia and Bukovina 1877 (Austrian period) in Hebrew,
by Avigdor Jakov Halevi Horowitz Meisels, [Jüdisches Museum Wien]