



## Czech, Slovak, and East European Genealogy Research

East European countries - created after WWI, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Another split - in the 1990s. Study history – most of these countries were under Austro-Hungarian rule for centuries.

Mass emigration – in 1880s – 1920s; Reason for emigration - Primarily economic reasons. The ship and railroad agents, agents of US companies, and earlier emigrants played a role in a decision to emigrate. Some wanted to earn money to buy land back home; however, eventually many started a new life in America.

*How to start a research?* To **learn the exact place** in Europe – first collect information from your family - locate all descendants of the immigrant ancestor (photos, naturalization papers, etc.). *Ideas:* Ethnic church, ethnic insurance company, fraternal organization, census, passenger list (who travelled with your ancestor – track them), naturalization papers, military records (WWI & WWII draft registration cards), Canadian records. Research neighbors, friends, and associates – *they joined relatives and friends who spoke the same language.* Obituaries. County histories. Archives and libraries. Social Media - genealogy groups. Genealogical and Historical societies - list of immigrants coming to their region.

Before exploring foreign records - 1. *Know the name* of your immigrant ancestor (original name is ideal), 2. *Place* (state, region, district, town and village or parish), 3. *Vital data* - birth year – you want to find his or her birth record in the old country (if married there – also a marriage record), 4. *Religion* (it helps).

*Locate place on the map.* Check gazetteers (make notes of the neighboring villages and towns – other relatives lived there). Wikipedia – gives the closest administrative district and region.

**Records** - kept **locally** - **Church Records** are the best sources - kept by local parish, then later sent (or their duplicates) to the civil registry office in a district town - recorded baptism, marriage, and burial, but also included birth and death dates. The sponsors and witnesses were usually family, related either by blood or by marriage; follow their stories, too. *Where to find these church records?* Generally – for East European research - [Family Search](#) – 1. Wiki, 2. Catalog, 3. Browse All Publication. If records not there, try Archives in each country.

Later **Civil Vital Records** were created at the town level, by civil registry office (*Matrika, Metryka..*), usually in the City or Town Hall, they are more detailed, and later preserved at city archives and regional archives. For Military records – consult state or special military archives. For addresses and help writing to the archive or city hall, use the FamilySearch.org website - Wiki link, Archives, and Letter Writing Guide.

Using the *Catalog* link at *FamilySearch.org*, type the name of the village or town. If this does not help, type the region's name. Czech Republic, Austria, Poland - Archives online (Czech Republic – very large collection free online). Other countries – Access the records through the FHL. For request of vital records from any country of the world, consult *International Vital Records Handbook*, by T. J. Kemp.

In many cases, immigrants changed the spelling of their names - pronounced the same or similar way, simplified for hard to pronounce names or anglicized names to blend quicker. Census taker might record name phonetically. Names could be transcribed incorrectly by indexers. Female version may be different (-a, -ova).

The Midwest Genealogy Center (MGC) is a great place to start (or continue) your research. We offer guidance, resources, books, gazetteers, ethnic periodicals, and classes. Check the [Catalog](#) and type the keywords, such as Czech, Slovak, Czechoslovak research, Rusyn, Polish, Ukrainian, and other search terms.