

## Discovering Your Eastern European Ancestors on MyHeritage

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### The Challenge of Eastern European Geography

#### The Core Genealogical Problem

The single biggest challenge in Eastern European genealogy is finding the name of the place *at the time* an event occurred in your ancestor's life.

- Borders in this region have shifted drastically over centuries.
- A location might have been in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Galicia), the Russian Empire (Pale of Settlement), or the Soviet Union depending on the year.
- **Action Item:** You must take time to research the specific history of each location you identify to understand where the records might be kept today.

#### Defining "Eastern Europe"

Because there is no single agreed-upon definition, the list of countries varies by source.

##### **1. The UN Statistics Division Definition (Geographical)** This standard classification includes 10 countries:

- Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia (European portion), Slovakia, and Ukraine.

##### **2. The UN "Eastern European Group" Definition (Political)** For voting purposes, this broader list includes 23 member states. It includes the 10 countries above, plus:

- **Balkan States:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia.
- **Baltic States:** Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- **Caucasus States:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

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## Leveraging MyHeritage Technology

### The Power of the Family Tree

- **Build the Tree:** There is a distinct advantage to hosting your tree on MyHeritage. You should add all known information about your family.

- **Automated Search:** MyHeritage automatically searches all entries in your tree for documents (Record Matches) and connections to other people (Smart Matches).
- **The Benefit:** You may find it unnecessary to manually search for every record; the search function may take care of finding pertinent records for you.

## Using the Collection Catalog

To find specific Eastern European records, navigate to **Research > Collection Catalog**.

- **Filter by Location:** You can filter by "Europe" or specific countries like Lithuania or Hungary.
- **Specific Collections:** The catalog highlights valuable databases, such as:
  - *Lithuanian-Jewish Revision Lists from LitvakSIG (1795–1942)*.
  - *Hungary Catholic Church Records (1636–1895)*.
  - *Former Russian Empire, World War I Casualties*.

## Processing Matches

When MyHeritage presents a match (brown for documents, green for people), you must:

1. **Review for Accuracy:** Carefully examine the dates, places, and relationships.
2. **Save to Tree:** Save correct entries to your tree. This helps the algorithm find *more* records based on the new data.
3. **Cross-Platform Data:** Matches may come from other platforms like Geni or FamilySearch trees.

## DNA Strategies for Eastern Europe

### Ethnicity and Genetic Groups

- MyHeritage provides an Ethnicity Estimate (e.g., Danish, English) and specific **Genetic Groups** which can help pinpoint origins.
- **Vital Tip:** For Eastern European research, it is extremely important to have an up-to-date DNA test to overcome the lack of paper records.

### Filtering DNA Matches by Location

You can filter your list of DNA matches to show only those residing in specific countries. This is a powerful way to find cousins who stayed behind.

- **Example:** You can filter for "Poland" or "Germany" to find matches that are new to you and might hold the key to your European connection.
- **Analyze the Match:** Look at the "Shared DNA" percentage and the size of the largest segment (in cM) to estimate the relationship (e.g., 3rd or 4th cousin).

### **Advanced Tool: Shared Ancestral Places**

This map tool shows ancestral events that you and a DNA match have in common.

- **Triangulation Strategy:** Ancestral places can point to common ancestors even if the location is in the US.
- **Case Study:** A match with a Polish individual (Marcin Jasiński) showed a shared ancestral place in **Illinois, USA**. This Illinois connection suggests a specific line of research to find the common ancestor.

### **Theory of Family Relativity™**

MyHeritage generates "theories" that explain how you and a DNA match are related by analyzing combined family trees and records.

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## **PAGE 4: Visual Tools and Continued Learning**

### **Working with Photos**

MyHeritage offers advanced tools to enhance historical photos, which can bring Eastern European ancestors to life.

- **Enhancement:** Sharpening blurry images.
- **Colorization:** Adding color to black and white photos.
- **Animation:** Using "LiveMemory" or Deep Nostalgia to animate faces.
- **Tagging:** You can tag people in photos (e.g., "Archibald Newell Hill") and view details uploaded by other users.

### **MyHeritage Wiki**

The Wiki is a crucial resource for understanding the local context of your research.

- **Country Guides:** You can search for "Latvia" (or other countries) to find articles on history, geography, naming traditions, and ethnicity.
- **Historical Context:** The Wiki explains complex histories, such as the Livonian Order, Swedish rule, or Soviet occupation, which affect record availability.

## **Educational Resources**

- **Knowledge Base:** Visit [education.myheritage.com](https://education.myheritage.com) for articles, downloadable resources, and courses (e.g., "Intro to Genealogy").
- **YouTube Channel:** The MyHeritage channel (@myheritage) features thousands of videos, including tutorials on DNA features and documentaries.

## **Summary Checklist**

1. **Define the Place:** Research the shifting borders (Galicia, Pale of Settlement, etc.).
2. **Build the Tree:** Upload what you know to trigger Smart Matches.
3. **Test DNA:** Use location filters to find cousins currently living in Eastern Europe.
4. **Verify:** Always review matches and confirm data before adding it to your tree.