

***Szukaj w Archiwach* – The Polish State Archives Website: Church and Civil Records**

Poland “How to” Guide, Beginning Level: Instruction

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GOAL

This guide will teach you to use the website of the Polish State Archives to find digitized records and relevant archival holdings from locations in Poland.

INTRODUCTION

The Polish archive system consists of many regional archives throughout Poland which are under the umbrella of the main Polish State Archive in Warsaw. This website incorporates the holdings of all regional archives to help users find and locate records and documents. Most holdings of the Polish State Archives are listed on this website and list the format type, including if the item is digitized. This is a government archive system and does not include records found in church diocesan archives.

The name of the town which created the record (such as church parish or civil registration office) is necessary to successfully use this website, as records are listed under those locations. If you do not know the name of the parish or civil registration office, consult the following “How to” Guide [Poland-Skorowidz Gazetteer Online](#).

There are many ways to use and search this website. This guide will cover the most effective way to search to find “vital records and civil registers” (church books and civil registration). Feel free to click around and explore the website to learn more.

HOW TO

Searching for your place

Use the web browser Google Chrome, as the “Translate to English” feature is very helpful when working on foreign websites.

1. Go to the link: <http://www.szukajwarchiwach.pl>.
2. If the website defaults to Polish, click on the British flag, located in the upper right corner of the website to translate it to English.
3. Choose “Advanced search.”

- Under the “Search options” on the left-hand side there are some boxes you can check. Select “Vital records and civil registers.” **Do not** select the “Only units/collections with scans” box. You cannot search for “Vital records and civil registers” *and* “Only scans.” You will always get zero results with that combination, regardless of what may be available. Keep in mind when the website refers to “Vital records,” they mean church books. The Polish and German version both use the phrase “Church books and civil registers.”
- In the search bar (the black box in the middle of the dark gray bar), type in the locality you wish to search. For practice, use the town of Smogorzewo. Then click on the orange “Search” box or hit “enter” on your keyboard. You must spell the name of the town correctly, and you must include any diacritic marks the town name may contain (example: Łódź). To insert a diacritic mark, see the “How to” Guide [Inserting Special Characters](#).
- Your search results will have a blue bar on the left side, indicating that they are vital records or civil registers. They will be organized by village, followed by the *gmina*, or community, in which the village is located. Knowing the full jurisdiction for your place is helpful, as sometimes there will be multiple villages with the same name. Knowing the *gmina* is important to be able to determine which of the villages listed is the village of your ancestor.

Selecting a Record Set

- Once you’ve determined which village is the correct one (for this example the correct town is Smogorzewo in *gmina* Winnica), then you can examine your results and determine what types of records (Roman Catholic, Jewish, Civil Registers, etc) are available and useful to us. A typical result looks like this.



- In bold is the name of the village and the community. This will help you identify the correct location. In this case **Smogorzewo** in the **community** (*gmina*) of **Winnica**.
- Beneath that is the range of years that the records cover; in this case, **1874-1914**.
- Under the years in the first box it says **rzymskokatolickie**, which means **Roman Catholic**. Other possibilities for that space include, but are not limited to:

<i>urząd stanu cywilnego</i>	civil registry office
<i>ewangelickie</i>	Evangelical
<i>prawosławne</i>	Orthodox
<i>mojżeszowe</i>	Mosiac (Jewish)
<i>mennonickie</i>	Mennonite
<i>greckokatolickie</i>	Greek Catholic

- To the right of *rzymskokatolickie* is the type of record. In this case that is **urodzenia**, or births. The other two most common records types are *małżeństwa* (marriages) and *zgony* (deaths), though there are other possible types of records.
- Under the record type is the archive in which the records are found. In this case, the records are located at the **Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie Oddział w Pułtusk**,” or the State Archive in Warsaw from the Branch in Pułtusk.
- Finally, above the place name it says **Pradziad: 79/148/0**. This is the collection file number. Frequently when you search a town there will be several results that are very similar and differ only by the type of record (births, marriages, deaths, etc.). This usually means they are part of the same collection. You can make sure by comparing the numbers above the place name. If they are part of the same collection you only need to look at one of them. If the collection titles do not match, then you should look at both results. For Smogorzewo we have three results with matching collection titles above the place name, so you can click on any of the three.

Navigating a Record Set

8. Clicking on an entry takes you to a page with more information about the collection. In the “Collection” field there will be three numbers separated by forward slashes and then followed by a descriptive title. In our example it is **79/148/0 Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Smogorzewie** (Files of civil status of the Roman Catholic Parish in Smogorzewo). If the title is blue, you can click on it for more information about the collection, and there may be scanned records. If the collection title is not blue, then there is no additional information about the collection and there are no digitized records for that place.
 9. Click on the name of the collection. On this page there will be additional information about the collection. Notice that it is still in Polish, even though you are on the English version of the website. Click on the little blue button close to the bottom of the page that says **zobacz więcej** [see more]. It opens the rest of the archival description. If you do not click that button before you translate to English, you cannot read the full description.
 10. Now is when Google Chrome’s translation function comes in handy. Right-click anywhere on the page and a menu will appear near your cursor. Click on the option “Translate to English.” Anything on the page still in Polish should be translated to English. Now you can read the description. The translation is not perfect, but it still has helpful information. It discusses general information about civil registration record keeping in Poland, including language changes and administrative function. In this case, there is a list of the villages included in the parish of Smogorzewo at the end of the entry.
 11. At the top you have a navigation bar. The section you are on will be highlighted in red. This the easiest way to get back and forth between parts in a collection. Depending on the collection or where in the collection you are, there may be more or fewer options on this bar.

The image shows a navigation bar with three items: 'Archive' in blue text, 'Collection' in white text on a red arrow-shaped background, and 'Units [30/30]' in blue text. There are right-pointing chevrons next to 'Collection' and 'Units [30/30]'.
- Click “Units.” Units is usually followed by two numbers in brackets, as shown above [30/30]. Now you will have a table giving you information about the records.

Reference code	Title	Dates	Number of scans
79/148/0/-1	Files of births, marriages and deaths	1874-1878	226
79/148/0/-2	Files of births, marriages and deaths	1879	24
79/148/0/-3	Files of births, marriages and deaths	1880	34
79/148/0/-4	Files of births, marriages and deaths	1881	34

- The first column is the reference code or unit number.
- The second column is the title of the records. If this is in Polish, use Google Chrome to translate the page in Step 10 or find the words for birth, marriage, and death in Step 7.
- The third column gives the years that the *unit* covers.
- The final column says, “Number of scans.” You can see how many images there are in each unit. If there is a “0” in this column then there are no digital images for that unit. Be sure to check that column for all units in a collection when you are looking for digital images.

In the “Number of units per page” drop down menu on the upper right, you can increase the number up to 100 units per page.

12. Click on the title of the unit that you wish to view. In this example use the scans for 1890.

Viewing Images

13. This takes you to the unit page. On the navigation bar at the top, click on the option “Digital copies [40]” in blue.

14. You will now see thumbnail images of the unit (79/148/0/-9). To see if the images have been digitally indexed, look in the navigation bar to the right of the red arrow box for the word “Indexes”. If the number is 0, there are no indexes; if there is another number there, click on “Indexes” to access them.

Sometimes, even if there are indexes, it is only the name of the place or the type of record. However, there may be handwritten indexes in the set of images, typically at the beginning or at the end of the set. You may be able to find them by glancing through the thumbnails.

Using the dropdown menu, “Number of scans per page” above the thumbnails to increase the scans on the page can be especially helpful when looking through images.

15. Click on the fourth image. It will enlarge when you click on it. At the bottom right corner of the image there are two icons as shown. Clicking on the “Z” icon will open the zoom feature; move your mouse over the image to see zoomed in sections for clearer reading. If you hover the mouse on the right or left side of the image, an arrow will appear. By clicking the arrow on the right, you will advance one page. By clicking the arrow to the left, you will go back one page.



The button to the left of the “Z” is the full-screen icon; it will open a new window containing a larger version of the image. Here you will find other tools including brightness, contrast, and magnification.

Additionally, in the full screen view you have the option to “Download” at the bottom and save the image to your computer or add as a source to your tree.

To return to the navigation page, close the full-screen window.

Search tips:

- Many places in Poland have names in another languages, including German or Russian. To get the most complete results, you should search in both languages, as not all results are included under both names.
- Szukaj w Archiwach has much more than just vital records and civil registers, and some of it may be useful to you. As mentioned earlier, this guide teaches the most effective way to search to get the best results for vital records and civil registers. See the advanced “How to” Guide to learn more about other potential record types.

PRACTICE

Now, let’s look in the Polish State Archives to see if there are any records for the village of Mąkolno. Follow these steps:

1. Go to the website: <http://www.szukajwarchiwach.pl>. If the website is in Polish, click on the British flag in the upper right corner.
2. This is a Polish website created by Polish people. As a result, spelling things correctly, including diacritics, is essential to obtaining full results. You may still get some results if you search *without* the diacritics, but you may not get all results.

Click on “Advanced search” and click the box: “Vital records and civil registers.” Then copy and paste “Mąkolno” from this guide or type it using the “How to” Guide [Inserting Special Characters](#) into the black search box and click on “Search”.

3. Identify the entries with the title “Mąkolno, community Sompolno.” Notice that there are several results with the collection title **54/783/0** and several with the title **513/106/0**. The second collection has no digital images. Use collection **54/783/0** to answer the following questions.

In what archive are these records?	Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu Oddział w Koninie, translated as State Archives in Poznań. Branch in Konin
Click on the collection name. Open the additional information and translate to English (step 10). What are marriage annexes and why might they be useful?	“documents confirming the legal capacity of persons to marry.” They are useful because they might include “copies of birth certificates, acts of knowing, copies of death certificates of the dead spouse,” etc.
Using this same information, what languages are these records in?	Polish, Latin, Russian.
Click on “Series.” What years does this collection cover?	1808-1993

How many digital scans are there in this collection?	6723
Click on the Units in the bar. You are looking for someone born in 1873. How many scans are there for that year?	131

- Click on the title of the unit for 1873. From this page, click on “Digital copies” found to the right of the red arrow box.
- Hover over the thumbnail images and you will notice that there are file numbers at the bottom of each image. Click on the one labeled File: 14.jpg. Open it in the full screen view. Then answer the questions:

What is the number of the top entry? It is handwritten and located at the top of the image.	27
At the both the top and the bottom of the window is the source information for within the collection. Write the full number to note the source.	Unit 54/783/0/6.1/64

- Exit out of the full screen view but keep looking at image 14. Just above and to the left of the zoom and full screen buttons, find the words “Show link” and click on them. This will show the website address that will bring you right back to this specific image. Click once in the box that appeared containing “http://www.szukaj.....” The box should now be highlighted in blue. While the mouse pointer is still in the box, right click and select “Copy”. You may now paste the website link as source documentation into Family Tree on FamilySearch or your favorite genealogical program.

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.