

“A Poor Man’s Bad Arolson” Perspective of a Researcher at Yad Vashem Israel Pickholtz

The last several issues of *The Galitzianer* have presented the newly available International Tracing Service (ITS) files at Bad Arolsen, Germany, from the perspective of onsite research in Germany. Not everyone can get to Germany to do this research in person, which is of course the best way to do it. Therefore I would like to report my own experience in doing research in this new resource, using the data which the ITS provided to *Yad Vashem*. This same database has been provided to the other ten countries which supervise the ITS, but I cannot say to what extent those ten allow the sort of hands-on research described below.

I am quite sure that readers of *The Galitzianer* have no need for a review of the background of the ITS files, but I would like to mention two points that are relevant to the material at *Yad Vashem*. The staff at *Yad Vashem* is willing to do this research for you, at no charge, if you are looking for specific people, unambiguously identified. They will not, however, search for all the people of a given surname, from a particular area or town, as the material is not organized to allow that. So if you are looking for unnamed family members, you have to do your own search or have someone do it for you. (*Yad Vashem's* inquiry address is ref@yadvashem.org.il and their explanatory web page is at www1.yadvashem.org/ITS_and_YADVASHEM/home.html.)

This newly available database is similar in structure to the ITS material that has been at *Yad Vashem* for fifty years on microfilm; many of us have used that older material with great success over the years. It has been said that the new material contains all of the old material, but that is not the case. Some references appear in one or the other and some ap-

pear in both. These references are simply index cards that often are excerpts of more detailed material – either personally specific or from lists – that are in Bad Arolsen. The cards are often valuable on their own, as well as being useful in identifying file numbers for inquiries to Bad Arolsen.

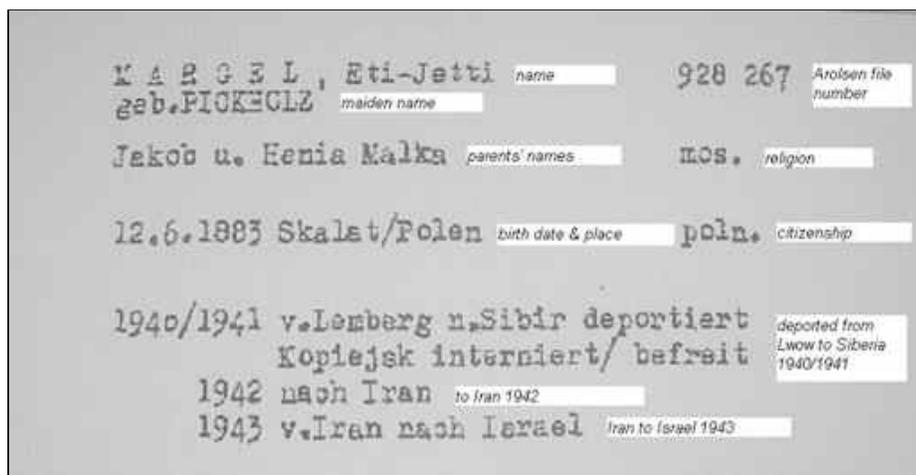
Both the old and the new material are in alphabetical order, according to a German form of Soundex; so for instance Weiss and Wajs would appear together. This saves time in searching, but it is worth checking alternate spellings as there are occasional maverick cards. Despite the fact that the new material is computerized, you cannot search in any way other than alphabetical. Further, the computer program is the Germans’ own and as any SAP user can testify, it is far from user-friendly. Eventually, *Yad Vashem* plans to integrate this material into its own, existing database.

To give you an idea of how valuable I found the new material, I can tell you that a search of “Pikholz” in the old material produced sixty-six cards, referring to forty-two individuals. Many of those cards appear in the new material as well, but I shall outline here only the “new”

people. In all cases, I have requested the files from Arolsen, with Pamela Weisberger’s assistance. Keep in mind that my research is for all descendants of Pikhholz families, so there are perforce no irrelevant entries.

In 1994, a man in Baltimore submitted a request to ITS about his mother’s mother and siblings, who lived in Lwow. The grandmother was Yetta Pikhholz Schaffer whom I cannot identify specifically. The man knows his mother’s birth date and I have made inquiry to the Civil Records Office, hoping to get a birth record that will show the grandparents’ parents’ names.

There is a card for Jetty Margel, born in 1883 in Skalat to Yaakov Pikhholz and Henie-Malka Ginsberg. [see image, below] I have many birth records for this couple and the closest to Jetty is Jente-Ruchel, born 1880, about whom I know nothing beyond the birth date. There were several cards for Jetty, allowing me to learn that her husband Theodor Margel was killed in Czernovitz in 1942 and that Jetty and a daughter Paulina Horowitz (b. 1911, Jaroslaw) were in Siberia together. Jetty eventually arrived in Jerusalem from where she inquired about Paulina’s fate. [see image on next page] I have already visited Jetty’s 1970 grave and am in the process of making contact with a granddaughter (from Jetty’s second daughter), here in Je-



Name:	Mrs MARGEL -HOROWITZ	No:	177626
Sex:	Paulina, Linka	Nat:	Jewish
B. D.:	30th June 1911 -	X Ref:	177627/29
B. P.:	Jaroslan / Poland		
Address:	Priisk, Jur -Allach, Junskaia raion Jakutskaja		
Occupation:	ASSR		
Last news			
Date:	February 1946		
Enquirer's name:	Mrs MARGEL -PICKHOLZ Jetty, Julia		
Address:	Basil Shiber's House Talbich Jerusalem, Palestine		

rusalem. Jetty had a brother who died in New York in 1940 and I am in contact with his granddaughter, as well as other cousins, all in the US. This adds a new branch to their family, with at least one living descendant.

In 1992, eighty-three year old Markus Pickholtz of Detroit inquired about Rachel Pickholz, her son, daughter and daughter-in-law, all of Mikolayev. Rachel's parents were Josef Pickholz and Gittel Grunwald and her husband (who I later learned had died in the 1930s) was Isak Dreier. Markus never actually went by "Pickholtz" (or any other of his family's names!) in the US, but I found that he died in 2001 in Chicago. He has two daughters, one a prominent member of the Chicago Jewish community, whom I know from my own Chicago adventures. She was able to help me fill in the picture from her side and I was able to send her birth records for her grandmother, great-aunt, great-grandfather and others, as well as *Kollel Galicia* records which indicated the approximate death dates of Isak Dreier and Josef Pickholz in the 1930s. All this has led me to some new conclusions about the main Pickholz family from Rozdol, conclusions which will be written up sepa-

rately. Markus is buried in Jerusalem.

There is a card for Hersch, born 1905 in Rozdol to Pinkas Pickholz and Vittie Dreier. We have a birth record (1883) for Israel-Hersch, born to this same couple. I will be curious to see a clarification of the dates as well as to learn how close Vittie Dreier is to Isak Dreier above.

Szlomo Pickholz, was born in Grzmaylow (1911) to Israel Pickholz and Necha Birnbaum. I know who he is and I have some one-way contact with his daughter here in Israel, but we know very little and I want to see if the full files can tell us more. There are also cards for Israel and Necha, both listed as Birnbaum and both born 1869 in Grzmaylow.

There were cards for Israel (1920), Raisel (1922) and Matias (1926), children of Schmuel Pickholz and Lea Lauterbach of Boryslaw. I believe that this Schmuel survived the war and is buried in Netanya, but I have no actual corroboration.

Sara Teitelbaum Pickholz, daughter of Schmuel Teitelbaum and Chaya Loewenstein, was born 1907 in Ostrolenko Poland. She went to Israel after the War, but I have never found such a person here. I don't know who her husband is or if they had children. I might get lucky with

an inquiry to the Central Zionist Archives.

Klara Mandler Pickholz was born 1905, in Stanislawow. Pamela sent me the full document, from which this card was made and it told me her parents' names and that her husband was Herman. I have two Herman Pickholz, born 1895 and 1896, so she may be the wife of one of them.

Friede Pickholz Halpern Hellenberg was born 1893 in Boian / Czernovitz and married to Mendel (Halpern?). Lea Pickholz Keller was born 1906 Drohobycz to Benzion and Rivka Rachel. [*Insert stage direction to shrug shoulders.*]

Then we have Granek Pickholz (1908), Besa Pickholz (1890), Chaim Pickholz (1924), Estera Pickholz - not even a year of birth, Hana Kutschik Pickholz (1924 Gorki), Maurice Pickholz (1906 Czernovitz), Mitel Pickholz... Chaim and Hana may be a married couple, but for the rest we can only wait to see if Arolsen has more.

Finding all the above in the database at Yad Vashem and sorting them out from among the previously known Pickholz descendants was probably a matter of three or four hours, half an hour from home. In that sense, you might call it "A Poor Man's Arolsen," since it contains only part of what Arolsen offers, without the expense of going to Germany. I prefer to think of it as a key to Arolsen, as each card carries an ITS file number, making the eventual German search easier and quicker. But more important, much of this material stands on its own, either with the detail of the Schaffer, Margel and Dreier families above or as introductions to the others that I discovered.