

Latvian Jewish Vital Records – Exploring Raduraksti

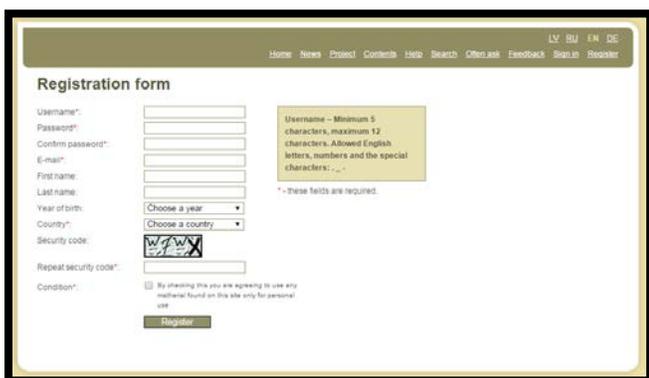
Did your Jewish relatives live in Latvia before World War II? The Latvian government has created a website to provide access to birth, marriage, death and divorce records (through 1909) as well as census and revision lists and a section called List of Latvian Inhabitants (1918-1940).ⁱ Using these records I have been able to rebuild my husband’s family history. These records led to finding his unknown living cousins and to creating a list of family members, who perished during the Holocaust.

This post will explain how you can access these records. A second post will give you tips for transcribing the records from Russian and Hebrew.

Step 1: Access the Latvian State Historical Archives website, [Raduraksti](http://raduraksti.lv). At the top right, find and click your language; Latvian, Russian, English or German.ⁱⁱ

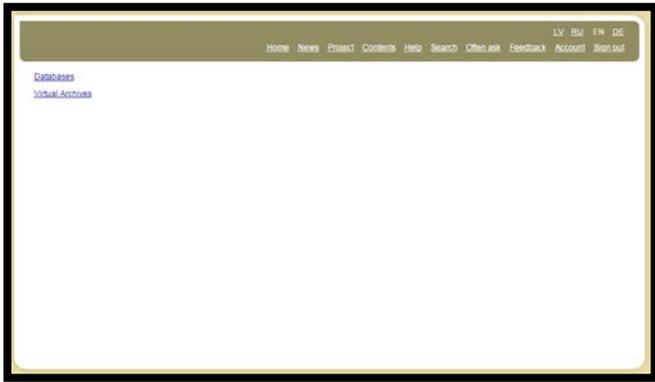


Step 2: Register. Choose Register and complete the [registration form](#).ⁱⁱⁱ



Step 3: Explore the [Raduraksti](#) site. Read the [Project](#), [Search](#) and [Help](#) pages.

Step 4: Explore the holdings. Choose [Contents](#). You will be prompted to [sign in](#). You can then choose between [Databases](#) and [Virtual Archives](#).^{iv}

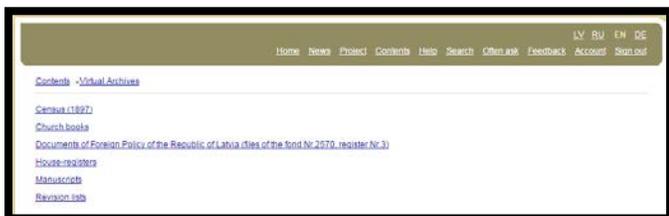


The section, **Databases**, includes only the [List of Latvian Inhabitants \(1918-1940\)](#).

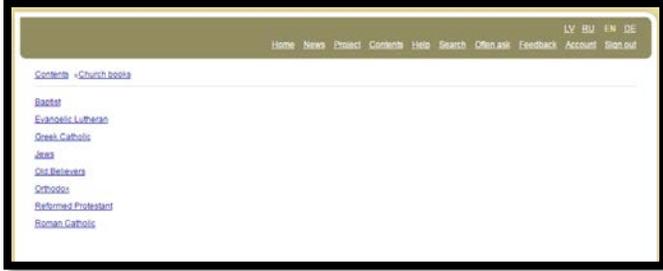
The **Virtual Archives** includes:

- the [1897 Russian Census](#)
- Jewish [vital records](#) (as well as Baptist, Lutheran, Orthodox, Greek, Old Believers, Catholic and Protestant)
- Latvian foreign policy documents
- [Riga House Registers](#)
- Latvian dictionary & grammar books
- [Revision Lists](#) for cities and towns

Step 5: Let's explore Vital Records. I suggest vital records because these are the easiest to transliterate if you are unfamiliar with the languages. Next, choose [Virtual Archives](#) and then [Church books](#).^v



Choose [Jews](#) and then [Rabbinats](#).^{vi}



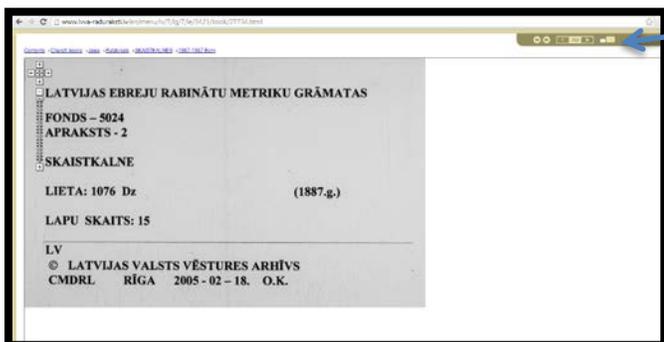
Step 6: Find your town or city. You will see a list of cities and towns where vital records were recorded. I am working on translating the records for [Skaistkalnes](#), which was originally Shemberg or Schoenberg. You would choose the town or city where your ancestors lived.

Take a look at the list. The towns are listed by their modern name. If you do not know the modern name for your ancestors' town, do a town search on [JewishGen](#). The results will show variant names for the town as well as the modern name and spelling.

Skaistkalnes' records in the virtual archive span from the year 1854 through 1905. The records are sparse in the earlier years.^{vii} Each town has different years available. Another example is Maltas, which has only the years 1871 through 1891.^{viii}

Step 7: View the original registration pages. On the town page, scroll down to the year and type of record you seek and click on it.

I looked for the birth of my husband's grandfather, Mendel. We believed that he was born in July 1887 so clicked on [1887-1887 Born](#). This is what the first page looks like. Please note on the top right, the ability to enlarge the image by clicking the larger rectangle. You can click the arrows to go forward and backward. You can also type a page number into the box.^{ix}



Here is an example of a page of births from 1887 in Skaistkalnes. The records are written in Russian on the left and in Hebrew on the right.^x

Contents » Church books » Jews » Rabbinate » SKAISTKALNES » 1887-1887 Born

№	Имя новорожденнаго	Въ какомъ мѣсяцѣ и въ какомъ числѣ	Годъ	Кто родилъ	Кто крестилъ	Мѣсто крещенія	Имя крестнаго отца	Имя крестной матери	Имя крестнаго дѣда	Имя крестной бабушки
1	Абрахамъ	17. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
2	Израиль	18. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
3	Сара	19. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
4	Сара	20. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
5	Сара	21. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
6	Сара	22. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
7	Сара	23. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
8	Сара	24. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
9	Сара	25. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
10	Сара	26. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
11	Сара	27. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
12	Сара	28. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
13	Сара	29. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
14	Сара	30. 12. 87	1887	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара

Step 8: What is the date of the record? Mendel was not listed among the births in 1887. Expanding the search to 1886 identified him as the seventh male born in 1886 and his date of birth, the 19th of June.^{xi}

Contents » Church books » Jews » Rabbinate » SKAISTKALNES » 1886-1886 Born

№	Имя новорожденнаго	Въ какомъ мѣсяцѣ и въ какомъ числѣ	Годъ	Кто родилъ	Кто крестилъ	Мѣсто крещенія	Имя крестнаго отца	Имя крестной матери	Имя крестнаго дѣда	Имя крестной бабушки
1	Израиль	1. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
2	Сара	2. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
3	Сара	3. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
4	Сара	4. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
5	Сара	5. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
6	Сара	6. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
7	Менделъ	19. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
8	Сара	20. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
9	Сара	21. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
10	Сара	22. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
11	Сара	23. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
12	Сара	24. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
13	Сара	25. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
14	Сара	26. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
15	Сара	27. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
16	Сара	28. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
17	Сара	29. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара
18	Сара	30. 6. 86	1886	Менделъ	Сара	Синагога	Израиль	Сара	Израиль	Сара



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Conflicting dates? Flexible dates. Mendel's birth was stated to be 19 June 1886. His American records show 28 July 1887. In family history research it is good to keep an open mind about both dates and names. In the 21st century, these are fixed, but back in Russia in the 19th century, they were more fluid. Also, before early 1918 in Russia, the Julian calendar was still in use.^{xii} The Julian date 19 June 1886 becomes the Gregorian date 1 Jul 1886. Would it be strange that immigrants arriving from Russia would have trouble identifying their birth date?

Now you can view vital record pages on the Raduraksti website. In my next post, I will show you how to translate the Russian and Hebrew records even if you are not fluent in the languages.

A special note: There was an amazing woman, Christine Usdin, who had made it part of her life's work to translate many of the Raduraksti records. Sadly she passed away before she could finish her work. You can view her translations on [JewishGen](#) as well as a list of years and places translated on her original website, [The Riga Rabbinat vital records](#). Some of the records for Riga are linked to translations. Christine Usdin's work and dedication inspired me to begin my own translations.

As always, if you have any questions, [please let me know](#).

Jennifer

ⁱLatvian State Historical Archives, *Raduraksti* (<http://www.lvva-raduraksti.lv/en.html> : accessed 13 February 2015), Project page.

ⁱⁱIbid., Home page.

ⁱⁱⁱIbid., Register page.

^{iv}Ibid., Contents page.

^vIbid., Virtual Archives.

^{vi}Ibid., Church Books.

^{vii}Ibid., Contents» Church books» Jews» Rabbinate» SKAISTKALNES.

^{viii}Ibid., Contents» Church books» Jews» Rabbinate» MALTAS.

^{ix}Ibid., Contents» Church books» Jews» Rabbinate» SKAISTKALNES »1887-1887 Born.

^xLatvian Jewish Rabbinat metrics books for births in 1887, Latvia, Skaistkalnes, p. 1 (image 4 of 19), January births; digital image, *Raduraksti* (<http://www.lvva-raduraksti.lv/en.html> : accessed 13 February 2015);

^{xi}Latvian Jewish Rabbinat metrics books for births in 1886, Latvia, Skaistkalnes, p. 6-7 (image 9 of 18), June births, 3rd entry, number 7, Mendel Sochet; digital image, *Raduraksti* (<http://www.lvva-raduraksti.lv/en.html> : accessed 13 February 2015);

^{xii} Stephen P. Morse, *The Julian Calendar and why we need to know about it* (<http://www.stevemorse.org/juliancalendar/julian.htm> : accessed 13 February 2015).