

# POLONUS PURLS (Polonus Philatelic URLs)

## Polish Place Names

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By: Sam Ginsburg

Perhaps you have a cover or postmark and want to know more about the place it's from. Or maybe you (or a relative) are from a particular place and you want to know more about it. Your quest might be full of problems because towns often have a variety of names: Polish, Russian, German, Austrian, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and/or Yiddish<sup>[1,2]</sup>. Towns are absorbed into larger ones (think Los Angeles) or merge (think Buda and Pest). They are shuffled among powiats, vovoidships and who-knows-what-else. And countries have multiple towns with the same name: the US has more Centervilles and Fairviews than I can count. Much of the English-language military and World War literature uses German names for places in Eastern Europe, so if you're interested in those topics, a place-name converter is essential. The quest becomes to identify the variety of names your place has had over the years, and to pick the right one. This column scratches the surface of starting places, but it could be helpful in your quest.

Assuming you have the name of a place in some language or other, then you might start by simply typing the name into an internet search engine. You might find its other names by browsing a little. If not, then this column is for you.

Many resources are in print rather than on-line, but clues are often on-line. An example is website [www.Stampdomain.com](http://www.Stampdomain.com), whose Polish Philatelic Bibliography page lists George Kay's book, *Postal Place Names in Poland: A Philatelic Gazetteer*. I haven't seen the book, but it's available from the American Philatelic Research Library (APRL), according to the latter's on-line catalog. Stampdomain.com has many useful links, and will reappear in future columns.

Słownik Geograficzny -- Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich (A Geographical Dictionary of the Polish Kingdom and Other Slavonic Countries), is a Polish-language historical atlas of place names, 17 volumes produced from 1880-1902. This is available on CD from the Polish Genealogical Society of America, [www.pgsa.org](http://www.pgsa.org). The site has

links to a variety of resources including English translations of a growing number of Słownik entries, as well as to some of the sites listed below.

Before WWII, Jews were almost 10% of Polish population, so it's not surprising that Jews have put a lot of effort into websites helping sort out their roots and geography. JewishGen ([www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org)) is one of the best-known of such websites. It has links to many town histories, often in English. Clicking on Databases is a good way to start. The Communities Database even allows you to put in the geographic coordinates of your town, if you know them. Yiskor books, written by WWII survivors to preserve the memories of the town and its Jews, tell the town stories, sometimes in English, often in Yiddish. (RootsWeb, <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com>, is somehow related, but it seems to be good only for searching for someone's name.) Bob Ogrodnik managed to find [www.jewishgen.org/forgottencamps](http://www.jewishgen.org/forgottencamps), a website on WWII camp history. It may be useful to the many members who specialize in WWII camp mail. You don't have to be Jewish to find JewishGen useful.

In general, genealogy sites often have useful tips for sorting out town names. For example, a Bing search on Polish Place Names uncovered a Family Tree Magazine on-line article on Polish place names at <http://www.familytreemagazine.com/article/polish-town-name-changes>, with a variety of "how to" tips and leads to an on-line 1912 German Gazetteer, etc. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names\\_of\\_European\\_cities\\_in\\_different\\_languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_European_cities_in_different_languages) is exactly what it says. I learned that Wrocław is called Boroszló in Hungarian. There's a link to [http://worsten.org/v\\_pomeranio/indexoj\\_vpm/pl\\_vpm.htm](http://worsten.org/v_pomeranio/indexoj_vpm/pl_vpm.htm), which purports to list German and Esperanto names for places in Poland. I think the site itself is in Esperanto, so I had some trouble understanding it. World-IQ ([http://www.wordiq.com/definition/List\\_of\\_European\\_cities\\_with\\_alternative\\_names](http://www.wordiq.com/definition/List_of_European_cities_with_alternative_names)) also has a listing of place names with names in other languages. Did you know that Warsaw is Varsjá in Icelandic, Varşova in Turkish, and Varsovio in Esperanto? Atsnotes.com is a diverse site, primarily dedicated to paper money from around the world, but with a variety of subsites, one of which, <http://www>.

## PURLS (cont.)

[atsnotes.com/other/gerpol.html](http://atsnotes.com/other/gerpol.html), has a cross-reference list of Polish and German place names. Site [gerpol.html](http://gerpol.html) is sorted by the German place name and site [gerpol2.html](http://gerpol2.html) is sorted by the Polish place name. Once you find one of these two pages, it's very easy to use. Atsnotes also has an article on the paper money of Gross Born. Thanks to Bob Ogrodnik for this lead.

Kartenmeister ([www.kartenmeister.com](http://www.kartenmeister.com)) claims to list more than 70,000 places located in German Eastern Provinces before WWI, in Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia, Brandenburg and other places (mostly in Lubuskie Voivodship, I believe). I haven't poked around much, but it looks promising.

Nearby countries struggle with problems no different than the Poles do. [http://www.iabsi.com/gen/public/place\\_name\\_terminology.htm](http://www.iabsi.com/gen/public/place_name_terminology.htm) is a Slovak site which includes some Polish prefixes, suffixes and roots. Martin Markovic maintains a list of similar websites at <http://martin.markovic.sweb.cz/links.htm>

You might also try the following website, which I was unable to try myself: the Getty Thesaurus of

Geographic Names ([http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting\\_research/vocabularies/tgn/](http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/tgn/))

This column has listed some of the resources available for sorting out Polish place names. While these sites may provide just the answers some of you need, many of you will have to search more. In the latter case, if you let me know about the other resources that worked for you, perhaps I can include them in a future column.

*Note: Please send your favorite websites to me at [samgins1730@yahoo.com](mailto:samgins1730@yahoo.com) for possible inclusion in a future column and/or on the Polonus website. I'd also appreciate your feedback on any of the sites listed here or names of websites that should be included in this topic. Thanks.*

### Endnotes:

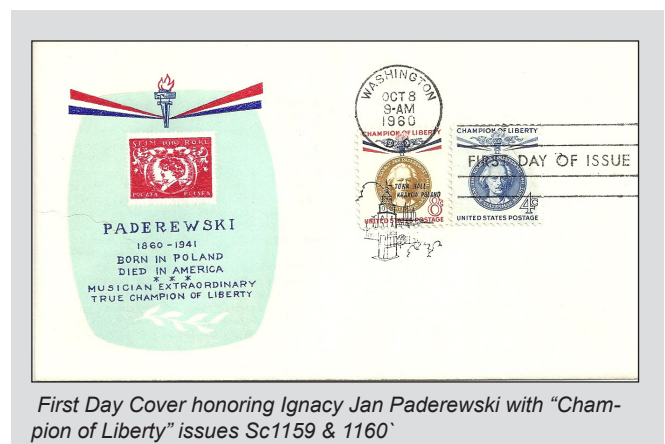
[1] In Medieval times, Polish place names were even in Latin, if you believe <http://nicolaa5.tripod.com/articles/latin.html>.

[2] <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/N0240560.pdf> has a fascinating introduction in how the German naming process happened in Poland. Genealogy-oriented <http://www.donhoward.net/genpoland/where.htm> also has some suggestions for finding place names.

## 50 Years Ago .....

Polonus members plan to visit Washington DC and participate in the first day ceremony for the Paderewski "Champion of Liberty" four and eight cent stamps, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. In celebration of the event, Polonus prepared an Official Polonus Paderewski First Day Cover. This cover was a beautiful three-color, embossed unique design on rag bond envelopes. As reported in Polonus Bulletin #184, the number of such covers was limited to 3000.

The good news today is, a small supply of these covers is still available and for sale at the member's price of **\$5.00 per cover**. Send your order with check made payable to: Polonus Philatelic Society, to: Polonus Philatelic Society, P.O. Box 489, Maryville, IL 62062. This may be your last chance to acquire this limited edition cover.



First Day Cover honoring Ignacy Jan Paderewski with "Champion of Liberty" issues Sc1159 & 1160

**Please note:** Some covers have a single stamp and others have both. Orders will be filled on a random basis without selection of one- or two- stamp covers.