

How do I find my great-grandfather's ancestral town?  
Part 10 - Putting it all together: Getting to old country records  
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Last month, I showed you how I obtained vital information about my maternal grandmother using readily available sources in the U.S. This month we'll go farther afield. I'll show you how I identified my grandmother's ancestral town and found remarkable new information about her family in the vital records of Kremenets.

This is what I learned about her ancestry from family interviews, US Censuses, and US vital records. My grandmother's Hebrew birth name was Reisel Vurer (or something like that). She was born between 1873 and 1877 (or thereabouts) and died in 1912. Reisel immigrated in 1900. She had two sisters, Velia (married to David Gitelman) and Dora (married to Abe Mandel). All three sisters were born in "Russia". Their father's given name was Duvid.

To reach back to the old country I looked for Reisel's passenger ship manifest. This was before online searching and creation of the Ellis Island Database. Fortunately, one of the projects carried out under the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression, was to create name indexes for the passenger ship manifests of arriving immigrants. Regional centers of the US National Archives and the Mormon Family History Library have microfilms of those indexes. I found an index card for Reisel Doctor whose last residence was Kremenitz, Russia-Vohlin (Volhynia Province). This was the first mention of her old country town ... a major breakthrough. She arrived in New York on the SS Palatia from Hamburg on 20 July 1900.

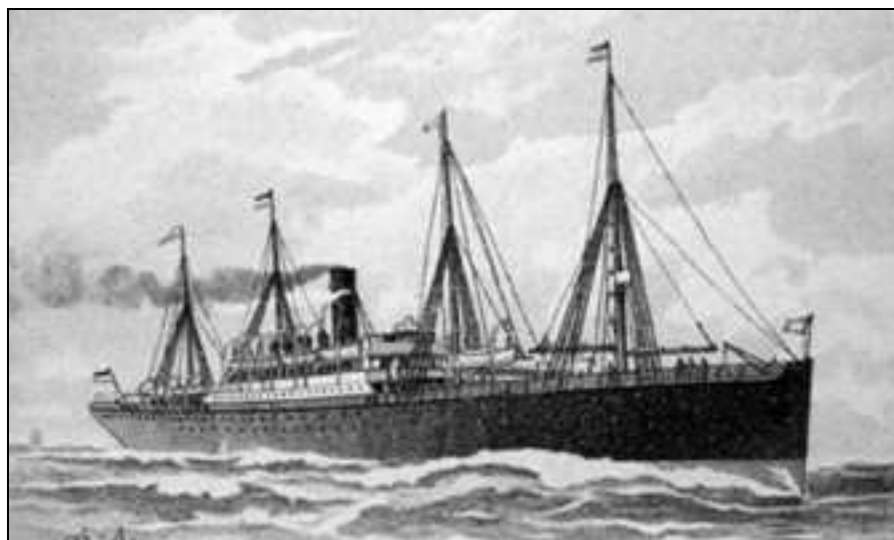


Figure 1 - The Steamship Palatia

You can use Google to find photos of *your* ancestors' passenger ships.

With this information I was able to find Reisel's passenger ship manifest. It confirmed her old country town as Kremenitz and told me that her destination was Joseph Kornfeld, her uncle in NYC. (I didn't yet know exactly how she and Joseph were related.)

Subsequently, I also found a 1909 passenger manifest for one of Reisel's sisters, Hinde Wure. (Previously I didn't know about her.) Hinde's destination was the home of her sister, Dvora (Dora) Mandel. Hinde was born in "Cremitz", Russia. (Personal names and town names often are misspelled in official records. You have to do some creative interpretation.) This also confirmed Kremenets as Reisel's old country town.

Now I was ready to seek records from the old country. There were three ways I could do this: (1) hire a researcher in Ukraine, (2) visit the archives in Ukraine where my records are held, and (3) check whether the Mormons had microfilmed Kremenets records. Eventually, I did all three, and all paid off. In 1997 the Mormon Family History Library released microfilms of vital records from Kremenets, 7 reels containing about 15,000 page images in handwritten Russian and Hebrew. Making sense of them was almost impossible. In 2000 the annual conference of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies was held in Salt Lake City. I attended and got help with the microfilms. After scrolling through the first reel, I found my grandmother's 1872 birth record ... Reyzil Aydil Vorir, daughter of Duvid from Yampol and Sore Ester. That was the beginning. Subsequently, I helped form the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP. We raised money to hire translators to translate all 15,000 microfilm pages. Last year we completed the translation, and in the process helped more than 400 people find their ancestors.

My personal benefits were huge. Table 1 shows some of the birth, marriage, and death records that I found for Reyzil and her immediate family. The family name was Vorer in Hebrew and Vurer in Russian. Reyzil's father Duvid was an ironsmith from Yampol. His father's name was Meshulim (or Shalom). Her mother was Sore Ester, daughter of Meir Volf Korinfeld from Poritsk, Ukraine. Between 1872 and 1888, Duvid and Sore Ester had 5 daughters and a son. The 1880s were difficult for the family. Daughter Yehudit died in 1881, at age 2-1/2, from smallpox. Son Beril died in 1888, at age 6 months, from scarlet fever. Duvid died in 1889, at age 37, from tuberculosis. How the family survived after Duvid's death still is a mystery, although there are hints that Sore Ester remarried into a notable Kremenets family. Reyzil was the first to marry, in 1899. The records also show that Velye married in 1904. Between 1900 and 1910 all four of Duvid's and Sore Ester's daughters immigrated to America.

In addition to the records for Duvid's family, I learned that his father Meshulim/Shulim had at least two other children, Yehoshie Eliezer and Tsima/Tsiml. I found 12 birth records and 4 death records for them and their children. (Between 1881 and 1895, Tsima had 9 children and Yehoshie had 5.) I also solved the mystery of Joseph Kornfeld. (Recall that his home in NYC was Reizil's destination when she immigrated.) Joseph was the brother of Reyzil's mother, Sore Ester Korinfeld. The family tree grew by leaps and bounds and my time horizons were extended to the early 1850s or earlier when my 2<sup>nd</sup> greatgrandfathers, Meshulim Vurer and Meir Volf Korinfeld, would have been born. This wasn't bad for having begun with so little information about grandmother Rose/Reyzil.

Some of you may recall Yehoshie Vurer from one of my earlier columns. He appeared in a Yad Vashem Page of Testimony submitted by his daughter Bruria in 1956. The tragedies suffered by the Vurer family in the 1880s continued in 1942. Yehoshie and three of his children (Meshulam, Yosef and Hinde), z"l, were murdered by the Nazis and thrown into a mass grave in August 1942. They were among 15,000 Jews murdered in Kremenets within a few days.

I'll conclude next month with an examination of my family's entries in the Russian Empire's Revizskie Skazki (Revision Lists or Censuses). These were recorded in the 1800s and are available through the Mormon Family History Library for many towns of Tsarist Russia.

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**Table 1 - Birth, Marriage, and Death Records for Kremenets  
 (from Ternopil Central State Archives)**

<b>Source of Information</b>	<b>Year of Record</b>	<b>Primary Person</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Other People in Record</b>
Birth record, Kremenets	1872	Reyzil Aydil	infant	1872	Duvid Vorir (father) from Yampol & Sore Ester (mother)
Birth record, Kremenets	1874	Velye (Reyzil's sister)	infant	1874	Duvid (father), son of Meshulam Vorir, ironsmith from Yampol and Sore Ester (mother)
Birth record, Kremenets	1876	Dvore (Reyzil's sister)	infant	1876	Duvid (father), son of Shalom from Yampol and Sore
Birth record, Kremenets	1879	Yehudit (Reyzil's sister)	infant	1879	Duvid (father), son of Shalom from Yampol and Sore, daughter of Meir Volf Korinfeld from Poritsk
Death record, Kremenets	1881	Yehudit	2-1/2	1879	Duvid (father) from Yampol
Birth record, Kremenets	1885	Hinde Feyge (Reyzil's sister)	infant	1885	Duvid (father), son of Sholim from Yampol and Sore daughter of Meir Volf
Death record, Kremenets	1888	Beril (Reyzil's brother)	6 mos.	1888	Duvid (father) from Yampol
Death record	1889	Duvid	37	1852	Meshilim (Duvid's father) from Yampol
Marriage record, Kremenets	1899	Reyzil Aydil	27	1872	Duvid (father) from Yampol
Marriage record, Kremenets	1904	Vele	29	1878-1879	Duvid (father) from Yampol
12 birth & 4 death records, Kremenets	1884-1894	Yehoshie Eliezer and Tsima (Duvid's siblings)			Meshulim (father of Duvid, Yehoshie and Tsima) from Yampol plus children & spouses of Meshulim's children