

Jewish Genealogy Yearbook 2006

SIGs: Latvia

Latvia SIG

Founded: Jul 1995

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Distribution: Hard copy distributed to paid members of the SIG.

Library: Members of the SIG, the JGS of Washington, Peter Lande and Vadim Altskan of the USHMM have provided materials related to the history, families and lives of Latvian Jewry as well as where they lived. Holocaust records from a number of sources indicate where many died. Much of this material is in Russian and Hebrew and remains, regrettably, un-translated. Included are a variety of documents covering Jewish life in Latvia and also immigrant communities and their families, particularly in the United States. Typically, these families often have links in Israel, South Africa, the UK and elsewhere in Europe. The library also contains the Beth Hatefutsoth database of Latvian Jewish communities in the Diaspora. This is a subset of the BH database covering communities from all over the world and the SIG wishes to thank Beth Hatefutsoth, Dov Levin, and Martha Lev Zion for making this database available. Since, September 2005 entries in this database have been featured in the Latvia SIG newsletter and future issues will continue this practice.

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Membership: 80 dues-paying members; 590 subscribers to the Latvia SIG listserv

Mission: The Latvia SIG is dedicated to enhancing the genealogy experiences of its members by providing: a quarterly newsletter, a bibliography of Latvian genealogical resources, historical information about Jewish Latvia, points-of-contact within today's Latvia, a growing on-line database of important historical records, details of Holocaust events in Latvia, narratives of members' trips to ancestral towns, and a Family Finder of towns and surnames.

Update: A major activity for 2005 has been the bringing on-line a number of archival databases, including: Marriage Lists for Riga (9,000+ marriages), the Family Lists for Rezekne (6,000+ entries), the All Russian Census of 1897 for Riga, Rezekne, Krustpils and areas within Courland with nearly 7,000 Jewish residents. A current effort is underway to bring on-line the 1897 census results for Dvinsk, arguably the center of Jewish life in Latvia at that time. The Latvia SIG thanks Arlene Beare for her untiring efforts in acquiring and bringing these databases on-line. Again, thanks to Arlene Beare the Latvia SIG has acquired transcripts of the original interviews of approximately 30 Holocaust survivors done by Aina Antane of the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia, Riga. These transcripts, originally in Russian, are being translated into English and are being featured in the Latvia SIG newsletter as they become available.