

**POLISH INHABITANTS OF
NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK
FROM EARLY 1800s - EARLY 1900s**



Emigration of European Jews in 19th Century

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The following introductory discussion is part and parcel of a much larger (separate) database of individuals and has several aims:

- To highlight the existence of individuals living in Norfolk and Suffolk from the early 1800s to the early 1900s who were born in Poland
- To identify whether they married, had children, their occupation and remained in the East Anglian region
- To confirm whether or not they had earlier Polish roots or had British parents who had moved to Poland for work or trade
- To provide an explanation as to why some of the individuals moved to East Anglia
- To provide records confirming the settlement in Norfolk and Suffolk of those with Polish birth at an earlier date than previously understood

The data was taken from two main sources the: 1851 and later Census, 1851 Anglo Jewry Data base-JewishGen. The 1841 Census does not contain details of where a person was born other than the sections born in county, not born in county, foreign (the term 'foreign' is used to indicate Irish and Scottish birth or overseas). The 1851 Census does contain details of where a person was born and in some cases records a town or region if the individual was born overseas. Other data includes whether the person was a naturalised British subject.

Later records include UK Naturalisation certificates which record the country of origin and can identify the names of parents and where they lived, a person's occupation, whether married and if so the names of children and the address of the applicant. It is important to recognise that the place of birth can vary significantly over several census. These changes depend on a variety of factors including whether or not an individual remembered when and where he or she was born, who was providing the information to the census recorder, the ability of the census recorder to note the information with accuracy and with correct spellings, the historical changes to place origins particularly with the several partitions of Poland over periods of time and the changes to place names, whether or not individuals giving information to census recorders were able to speak and understand English and if not whether the census recorder chose to put a place of birth as convenience rather than accuracy because they could not understand what they were being told.

Some of the individuals changed their surnames for a variety of reasons mainly due to problems spelling and pronouncing foreign names. Numbers of the Polish who settled in Norfolk and Suffolk were Jews from Poland and the territories held by Russia and later Prussia. Their arrival in the UK was often to do with the pogroms and persecution that existed in those lands. It is important to recognise that Poland was invaded and partitioned over a period of decades by Prussia, France and Russia, Austria-Hungary. The place of origin recorded in census and other records for individual's place of birth reflected these changes and place of birth can vary over census decades e.g. Poland Russian, Prussia, Russia Poland or a town or city.

Records such as marriages show that some of the children of Polish parents married Norfolk men and in the case of Polish Jews these marriages were to non-Jews. Some of the Polish Jews are buried in Earlham Road Jewish Cemetery and other individuals are buried in the earlier Guildencroft Jewish section of the cemetery rented from the Quakers and closed in 1848. It is possible that there may be others buried in an earlier cemetery located in Ber Street but there are no existing records to confirm this. There are Jewish cemeteries in Great Yarmouth and Ipswich (see Cemetery Scribes website for data on cemeteries and individuals buried).

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The database contains the names of individuals born in Poland who are not of earlier family Polish roots. However, it is important to include them because they provide evidence of British persons who travelled to Poland to undertake a variety of occupations. Subsequently, they returned to the UK and settled in various parts of the country including Norfolk and Suffolk.

Also included in the database are the names of those born in Poland but living in Suffolk. This is because several of them were recorded as travellers and were very likely to have visited Norfolk for trade. The census records may identify only once a particular individual suggesting that they may have left the UK, changed their names or their place of birth was recorded incorrectly. In these examples there is often limited or no data to trace them further.

The Early 1800s records of Foreign individuals recorded in Norfolk

The names of foreign individuals living in Norfolk during the early 1800s are not identified as specifically Polish. They have been included because their place of origin is not easily identifiable. For example in the 1841 Census there is no record of place of foreign origin except in very rare circumstances. Later census records give places of origin such as Prussia, Russia, Germany which reflected the changing European powers' territorial occupations and name changes to cities, towns and regions. In the case of individuals with Polish origin it is important to note the affect these changes had upon the UK records for where they were born. Rather than miss out individuals they have been included in the separate database so that further research may shed light on their place of birth and parentage.

In his article *The Jews of Norfolk and Suffolk before 1840* (Jewish Historical Studies Vol.32 1990-92 pp 219-235 Jewish Historical Society of England) Malcolm Brown names numbers of Jewish individuals living and working in both Norfolk and Suffolk but provides limited information on them. The inclusion of census and other data on the various individuals Jews and non-Jews in the database is an attempt to show, where possible, where they originated from with a specific focus on Poland and its associated geographical areas covering 1800 - early 1900s.

Why did Poles settle in Norfolk and Suffolk?

Large scale travel was promoted by sea from Europe to UK with immigrants travelling from Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Bremen, Hamburg to ports such as Hull, Grimsby, London, Southampton and the Channel ports among others. With the development of steamships travellers were also able to travel wide distances depending on how much they could afford. For many, walking and travel by carts was a necessity to travel to embarkation ports such as Libau, Riga and other Baltic ports. Poor travellers faced dangerous transportation and exploitation. There were several reasons why Poles settled in East Anglia. The leather trade in Norfolk was still buoyant and this included the expansion of the shoe and boot industry in Norwich. The restrictions on Jews regarding the trades they were allowed to do included tailors, shoe and boot makers, cap makers and this work can be seen in the various British Census records. In Lowestoft fishing was a key industry increasing employment and bringing workers from Europe and from the country to towns and cities. The population of Eastern England was increasing although there was to be later large-scale emigration and unemployment. Industries such as railway and crane manufacture, maltings and railway development encouraged people to move to towns from the countryside and from other areas of the UK.

These factors and the close proximity of East Anglia to Europe were crucial elements encouraging the movement of Poles to migrate.