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 TRACING JEWISH ANCESTORS: WHERE IS THE "OLD COUNTRY" LOCATED TODAY?
 A directory of the 25 Russian Pale gubernii (provinces).
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A JewishGen InfoFile

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I. WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?
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Between 1880 and 1924, one-third of Eastern European Jewry left their homes, and more than 90% came to the United States. Of these, about 75% were from the Russian Pale, an area to which Jews were confined by law. The Pale consisted of the 15 western provinces of European Russia and the 10 provinces of Congress Poland. Another 18% of these Jewish immigrants came from the Austria-Hungary regions of Galicia, Bukovina and Hungary. About 4% arrived from Romania.

II. WHERE IS THE "OLD COUNTRY" LOCATED TODAY?  
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The following chart lists the gubernia, its capital city and that city's current name and country. Example: Kovne (city) formerly within Kovne (gubernia), is presently known as Kaunas (city) in Lithuania (country).

THE RUSSIAN PALE -- PAST AND PRESENT JURISDICTIONS			
RUSSIAN PALE 1835-1917		EASTERN EUROPE since 1991	
Gubernia (Province)	Capital City	City Name	Country
Bessarabia	Kishinev	Kishinev	Moldova
Chernigov	Chernigov	Chernigov	Ukraine
Cherson	Cherson	Kherson	Ukraine
Grodne	Grodne	Grodno	Belarus
Kelts (CP)	Kelts	Kielce	Poland
Kiev	Kiev	Kiyev	Ukraine
Kolesh (CP)	Kolesh	Kalisz	Poland
Kovne	Kovne	Kaunas	Lithuania
Lomze (CP)	Lomze	Lomza	Poland
Lublin (CP)	Lublin	Lublin	Poland
Minsk	Minsk	Minsk	Belarus
Mohilev	Mohilev	Mogilev	Belarus
Pietrkov (CP)	Pietrkov	Piotrkow	Poland
Plotzk (CP)	Plotzk	Plock	Poland
Podalia	Kamenets Podolsk	Podolia	Ukraine
Poltave	Poltave	Poltava	Ukraine
Rudem (CP)	Rudem	Radom	Poland
Shedlitz (CP)	Shedlitz	Siedice	Poland
Suwalk (CP)	Suwalk	Suwalki	Poland
Taurida	Simferopol	Simferopol	Ukraine
Varshe (CP)	Warsaw	Warszawa	Poland
Vilna	Vilna	Vilnius	Lithuania

Vitebsk	Vitebsk	Vitebsk	Belarus	
Volin	Zhitomir	Volynhia	Ukraine	
Yekaterinoslav	Yekaterinoslav	Dnepropetrovsk	Ukraine	
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In short, it may be helpful to learn the history of name and boundary changes in the area where you suspect that a person lived. Many boundaries and place names have changed constantly over the years. Always verify them in historical atlases or genealogical texts pertaining to the area.

For a brief history of Poland/Russia in the last 200 years, w/color maps: < <http://www.polishroots.org/genpoland/polhistory.htm> >.

III. MISCELLANY

- The plural form of gubernia is gubernii.
- To view a related outline map, and further descriptions of each of these gubernias and regions, see the "Provinces and Regions" section of the JewishGen Eastern Europe FAQ at:
< <http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/eefaq.html#REGIONS> >.
- Gubernii and city names are spelled as transliterated from Russian. You may see the names spelled very differently in source documents.
- CP: CONGRESS POLAND (Kingdom of Poland): part of Poland occupied by the Russian Empire, 1815-1918. The 10 gubernii (1867-1917): Suwalki, Lomza, Plock, Warszawa, Siedlce, Lublin, Radom, Kielce, Piotrkow and Kalisz. Today, all in east-central Poland (except northern Suwalki, which is today in southwest Lithuania).
- GALICIA PROVINCE (Empire of Austria-Hungary): An historic region, now in southeastern Poland and western Ukraine. The Polish section covers RZESZOW and the greater part of KRAKOW areas; the Ukraine section includes LVOV, IVANO-FRANKOVSK and TARNOPOL oblasts (provinces).
- BUKOVINA or BUCOVINA PROVINCE (Empire of Austria-Hungary): An historic region that is now shared by Romania and Ukraine. The main Ukraine city is Chernovtsy. Romanian cities include Suceava and Botosani.

GUBERNII OUTSIDE THE PALE:

- KURLAND or COURLAND: now within Latvia.
- ESTLAND: now within Estonia.
- LIVLAND or LIVONIA: an historic region, comprising the present-day areas of northern Latvia and southern Estonia.

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