Researching for your east European ancestors can be like searching for that proverbial needle in a haystack. Information is scarce at best, however archives, societies and genealogy companies are making more and more information available all the time.

If you are looking in a particular country for family history, remember boundaries were in a constant state of flux, and changing borders were a matter of fact. Be sure to include the surrounding countries in your research, depending on the era, your ancestors may have been living and included in neighbouring countries' data. As an example I will use the country of Ukraine and how it was divided up after the treaty of Riga in March of 1921. The Ukraine was divided into four parts: Eastern Ukraine went to Russia, Galicia was taken by Poland; Bukovina and part of Bessarabia went to Rumania; and Carpatho-Ukraine to Czechoslovakia

Researching my wife Val's Ukrainian roots has proved to be very futile indeed. Fortunately she was able to go back a few generations just from talking and recording information from both her parents before they passed.

With first-hand knowledge from Val's father, who witnessed the destruction of some of the Ukrainian village churches, we know that when the Russian authorities moved into a village, churches were the first to be looted, ransacked and then burned, thus destroying valuable family history. Enforced collectivization in the Ukraine by Stalin's Red Army began in 1929-30. Also, with the confiscation of food supplies from the rural areas, this is considered the main reason for the starvation period that followed.

It is understandable that under these conditions very little is left for the modern day genealogist searching for family history. However, with advancements in genealogy and social media becoming a favourite source for searching family history, there are sites pertaining to eastern European Countries you may find useful in your research.

For Polish research try these sites for more info: The Polish State Archives at http://www.szukajwarchiwach.pl Polish Church books at http://www.ksiegi-parafialne.pl Polish genealogy society at http://geneteka.genealodzy.pl This site also includes records from areas now in Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine; Polish Jewish records at http://www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/index.htm

Investigate the following Russian sites for information. These sites may also help with Ukraine and Germans from Russia as well. Russian Archive Portal http://www.rusarchives.ru Generations of the Perm region pokolenia.permkrai.ru/ All Russian family trees http://www.vgd.ru/ Victims of the Political terror in USSR lists.memo.ru Odessa Genealogical Library http://www.odessa3.org

Estonia Historical Archives http://www.ra.ee/dgs/

Archives of Ukraine http://www.archives.gov.ua/Eng/

For Lithuania research try the Virtual electronic heritage system at http://www.epaveldas.It/en/home. This site may include records from Belarus as well. Most of these sites will be in the language of the country you are searching, so be prepared to use Google translate.You may also want to try the sites at http://www.familysearch.org and the Federation of East European family history societies at http://www.feefhs.org. Also if you are a member of Ancestry.com they have a growing collection of east European records. One thing you must remember is to keep your search active and revisit the web sites often as new materials are added on a regular basis.Throughout the last number of centuries the Eastern European countries have been in great turmoil, with borders changing constantly. Trying to locate and research your ancestor in any one country can be a challenge. I strongly recommend using Google maps related to the time period you are searching, to keep you on track and in the right country.

Good luck and happy hunting. Lloyd Robinson is president of the Medicine Hat Genealogy Society. He may be contacted at timetraveller2011@gmail.com