

QUESTIONS WHEN HIRING a RESEARCHER

The same as when engaging other professional services, when considering the use of a professional researcher it is advisable to interview more than one. This is true even if a friend or colleague provides positive input about a service they engaged. The service they received may have been excellent, but it might have covered very different needs, objectives, locations, etc. Plus, the personality factor between you and the researcher is important.

Following are a series of questions, organized by theme, to guide you in selecting the researcher with whom you will work. Keep in mind that depending on your desires, the professional might work mostly or entirely from their office, or they might need to travel to the village and archives. Of course, the latter will incur additional expenses, but the added costs can be acceptable based on your objectives and alternatives.

This is not an exhaustive collection of questions. The goal is to highlight the primary checklist to help you organize your thoughts for interviewing the professional. Similarly, the professional will ask you for your input about your objectives, expectations, time frame, relative importance of family lines, depth of research, etc. A clear, two-way interview, goes far toward avoiding surprises by both parties.

How well they know the area(s) of your interest

- Are you familiar with my geographic area(s)?
- Have you researched these general areas before?
- Have you previously researched in my specific villages and parishes?
- Do you have access to, or previously visited, the churches, archives, etc?
- Are there any restrictions, inabilities for access or other constraints or concerns that can hamper your research?

What they research

- Which types of records are available from my area and do you have access to research all of them?
 - Vital records – Church (Catholic, Protestant, other)
 - Vital records – Civil
 - Maps – Cadastral, Civil, Military, etc.
 - Land ownership, transfer, and lease records
 - Court and Notary records
 - Military service and recruiting records
 - Census and estate records
 - Cemetery headstones and records
 - Other
- Can you attempt to locate living relatives?

What they produce for you

- What type or types of research report do you produce?
- Is it a standard report, or are different levels of detail available, and though each report might follow a similar script are they very much unique to each client?
- Do you have a sample for me to examine?

How you and they communicate

- In addition to email, are you available to schedule Skype, Zoom or similar meetings?
- How available are you for scheduling such meetings, especially considering the difference in time zones?
- Will your documentation and report be in electronic format or hardcopy?
- If electronic, will it be in DOC or PDF format; or either/both by my choice?
- Will you send the original scans of documents, and in what format(s)?
- If electronic, will you provide all of the files and reports via internet or mailing a flash drive?

What their research fees are

- Do you charge by an hourly, daily or project rate?
- Is there a flat rate for a certain amount of basic work; or a flat fee in addition to the hourly or daily rate?
- When traveling, what is included in that charge?
- If the villages are visited, is there an additional fee for photos and video?

What their tour fees are

- Will you meet me at, and return me to, the airport or train station?
- What is the mileage rate or other basis to drive me to visit my ancestral villages or family?
- What types of lodging will be provided? At about what cost?
- What incidental fees or expenses might be incurred?

Basic items you should provide the researcher

- Data you already accumulated and organized:
 - Family trees and vital records
 - Ancestral villages in Poland
 - Ship manifests
 - Naturalization papers
 - Anything else that will assist the researcher
 - Your prime objectives:
 - Holes to be filled
 - Brick walls to be addressed
 - Special family circumstances, historical events or legends, etc.
 - Locating and meeting relatives
 - Etc.
 - If you have the researcher visit the village and parish, do you want them to take photos and/or videos of:
 - Interesting locations in and around the villages such as the square, train station, city hall, interesting architecture
 - Outside and inside of the church
 - Cemetery and tombstones that might be found
 - If you engage an in-person tour, be sure to advise the researcher of:
 - Any special dietary needs, mobility issues, other special requirements
 - Specific things you want to do, see or experience
 - If you wish to attempt locating family member, or to visit family members you already know
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