

Gazetteers

A **Gazetteer** is a geographical dictionary or directory often used in conjunction with a map or atlas. It typically contains information concerning the geographical makeup, social statistics and physical features of a country, region or continent. For the area covered, and the objectives and uses for its compilation, content of a gazetteer can include location, population, dimensions of peaks and waterways, gross domestic product, literacy rates and other information.

Gazetteer editors gather facts and data from official government reports and surveys, censuses, historical documents and other sources. This information is generally divided into topics, and sometimes sub-topics, with entries listed in alphabetical order based on the purpose for which the data is collected and classified.

For Genealogy, the prime use of a gazetteer is to assist in identifying the ancestral village or town, the parish and registry office where vital records would have been recorded, and possibly some history about the location. Additionally, some provide the governmental units (gmina, powiat, województwo/province) in which each village was located. Knowing these units helps to identify the correct village, considering the large number of villages in Poland with the same name.

Especially useful are gazetteers that include alternate names for a location, such as those locations having a German or Russian name during the Partition Period but a Polish name after Poland regained independent statehood. In some cases, the difference is only a slightly different spelling of the phonetics (Poznań / Posen, or Lubichowo / Lubichow). In other cases, the difference is dramatic; for example, Wrocław / Breslau. Furthermore, some locations can have a different Polish name after the Partition Period than it had prior to the Partitions; or before and after WWII.

Online Gazetteers for various areas and dates of creation, especially the 19th century, are available on the PGSA website. A collection of links to gazetteers is found under the Research Sources tab, then under the Geography section, or click here: [Gazetteer Collection](#) (Member Only Access).
