

# MONOGRAPHS

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The average genealogical tree ends along with the metrical records of a given parish, and the oldest generation begins more or less in the mid-18th century. Many researchers feel dissatisfied due to the lack of older metrical registers as, like it or not, they come up against the so-called brick wall.

Monographs give you a chance to continue your genealogical adventures and bring to life the schematic tables of your ancestors.

There are a multitude of monographs for a variety of localities and regions on the publishing market. The historical compilations of the so-called *Małe Ojczyzny* [small homelands, i.e., focusing on a small area rather than a large region such as Wielkopolska or Mazowsze] have become a popular trend. Their authors are not only professional historians but also amateur enthusiasts, usually connected by family roots.

Monographs have two significant and measurable benefits for genealogists: broader knowledge about their ancestors' lives, and a palette of bibliographical sources—so-called footnotes, or to put it another way, signposts to specific archival materials. Every historical fact noted, document copy, transcription, quotation, or description in a monograph is supported by footnotes. By following them, we can find records dealing with ancestors, mentioned by first and last name.

The amount of information depends on the historical significance of a given locality as well as on the author's involvement with the search for materials. It happens that for one locality, several monographs may exist, while for another, there are none. If the locality in question was a small settlement or village—and if it did not even survive to modern times—then let us look for a monograph on the parish, *gmina*, *powiat*, or geographical region.

The classical monograph gives a multi-dimensional image of a given area, based on

a chronological-thematic structure. Chapters typically describe the locality's genesis; settlement; geographical, political, and economic conditions; education; religious life; and ethnography. The compilations are enriched with tables, maps, photographs, brief biographies, and indexes at the end.

The authors of monographs usually make use of examples, a fragment of some archival unit, and treat some issues in brief. In particular, lists of inhabitants with first and last names and their sources rivet the attention of genealogists. The variety of another kind of genealogical document may be surprising. We may learn that, for example, our ancestor was born during an infestation of wasps, paid tribute to stationed armies, took active part in local insurrection, bought a horse on credit, provided the manor with beaver hides, was a forest ranger, or was imprisoned in a fortress for crossing the border illegally.

The oldest document is usually the charter founding a given locality (a sort of birth certificate for that community), or the establishment of the first church. Interesting for researchers are documents dealing with settlement and colonization of the area. Recruiting colonists from abroad was quite widespread; most often, they were Dutch, Germans, and Czechs who possessed useful knowledge and practice in the fields of agriculture or crafts.

Land owners established villages, settlements, castles, palaces, gardens, factories—depending on conditions and needs. They also issued other sorts of grants of privilege, to hold markets or build mills, granaries, customs houses, breweries, forges, and taverns. The owners themselves changed over the course of time, and it is worthwhile to systematize them, because many private collections have been preserved and are available in archives.

The archival legacy of individual families includes much genealogical information, such as lists of serfs, their social and

civil status, the kind and size of their farms, details of their tax obligations, and their levies.

Over the course of centuries, the structure and names of territorial administration have changed: there were *dzielnice* (sections), *okręgi grodowe* (castle districts), *księstwa* (duchies), *ziemie* (lands), *klucze* (demesnes), *sołectwa* (*sołtys* properties), *ekonomie* (royal properties), *starostwa* (properties or jurisdictions of *starostas*), *powiaty* (counties), *wójtostwa* (property or jurisdiction of *wójt*s), *obwody* (circuits), *cyrkule* (circles), *departamenty* (depart-ments), and *województwa* (provinces).

Monographs help establish the right administrative units for specific localities, and such knowledge is the next step to potential archival holdings. (I described the documents of territorial administration in detail in an earlier issue of *Rodziny*.)

A treasury of monographs is the Biblioteka Narodowa (National Library) in Warsaw. The online catalog at will search all entries for us on any subject we desire. We set the first column on “*słowo z opisu*” (a word from the description), we enter the geographic name in the second column, the third we leave as is, and then click on “*szukaj*” (search).

It’s worthwhile using several grammatical forms, e.g., Lipno, Lipnie, Lipnowski, Lipnowskiego. 🍀

The screenshot shows the search results for 'Odrzykoń' in the National Library of Poland catalog. The search criteria are: SŁOWO: Odrzykoń, Wyszukiwanie w całej bazie. The results are sorted by relevance (trafności). The first three results are:

1	Odrzykoń 660 lat : mapa 1:15 000			
	Krosno : Apla, 2008.			
	LOKALIZACJA	SYGNATURA	UWAGA	STATUS
	MAG KARTOGRAFII	ZZK 36.807		
	MAG KARTOGRAFII	ZZK 36.806.A		
2	Odrzykoń- "Prządki" - legendy i opowiadania			
	Bogaczyk, Agnieszka.			
	Krosno : P.U.W. "Roksana", 2007.			
	LOKALIZACJA	SYGNATURA	UWAGA	STATUS
	MAG KS	II 2.644.545		
	MAG KS	II 2.328.017.A		
3	Odrzykoń- "Prządki" - legendy i opowiadania			
	Bogaczyk, Agnieszka.			
	Krosno : P.U.W. "Roksana", 2006.			
	LOKALIZACJA	SYGNATURA	UWAGA	STATUS
	MAG KS	II 2.569.793		
	MAG KS	II 2.254.852.A		

As an example, here are the first three matches from a search of the Biblioteka Narodowa for Odrzykoń, near Krosno, in southeastern Poland. Once you know these sources exist, you may be able to get hold of them!