

# Alternate Surnames in Russian Poland

Lecture Notes from the Boston Seminar 1996  
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Surnames were not always fixed or permanent in the way we consider them today. This discussion involves the manifestations of alternate surnames in the towns of Checiny, Poland and Krasnystaw, Poland, with an illustration of a case study from Krasnystaw. Refer to the Summer 1996 issue of *AVOTAYNU* for further discussion of Checiny examples.

During my quest to find my MANELA ancestors in Checiny, I discovered the notation "MANELA v KWART". 'v' stands for 'vel', the Latin word meaning 'also known as'. Most cases of 'vel' represent a transition between two names. It is important to recognize that records will exist with only one of these surnames as well. 'vel' is not the only indication of a variant surname, but it is the most easily identified.

Other instances found in Checiny include:

- Husbands may take on the wife's surname, particularly if she is from a more prestigious family.
- Records may identify people by occupation rather than surname. (This is actually an error, not a variant surname, but leads to the same type of confusion in research).
- Identification by patronymic (father's given name) rather than a surname. Confusion can arise for names that qualify as either a surname or given name. For a woman identified as "Haia Manela": is Manela the father's given name or surname?
- Adoption of a new surname with no transition period.

The last manifestation is the most difficult to trace. It becomes crucial to consider all facts on vital registrations, including patronyms, ages, occupations in order to match families of seemingly different surnames. One branch of the Manela-Kwart clan began to use the surname Goldrat around 1822. The concrete connection was only possible due to the family of a married sister of the man whose children's registrations reflected this surname change. Although most Checiny women registered by patronym, this woman used her maiden names of Manela and Kwart, and eventually Goldrat as well. She was much easier to identify than her brother, because she remained married to the same man, for whom I was able to identify a stable occupation, surname and patronym.

The changing regimes of the region may help explain this phenomenon of sudden acquisition of a new surname at this time. In 1795, Checiny fell under Austrian rule in the third partition of Poland, and became part of West Galicia. The Jews of Checiny were required to adopt surnames under the Austrian regime in 1805. In 1809, Austria ceded West Galicia to the Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw. Then in 1815, the Kingdom of Poland

(Congress Poland) was established by the Congress of Vienna, and fell under the leadership of the Tzar of Russia. Surnames were mandated for Jews in Russian Poland in 1821. Consequently, some families, or even just certain branches of families, reverted to their prior surnames from the Austrian mandate, while others took on new identities.

Alternate surnames were rampant in Krasnystaw, but were of different forms than in Checiny:

- Variations on a root: GOLDBERG, GOLDEN, GOLDMAN.
- Similar sounding names: WILENSKA, WILKENSZTAJN.
- People intermittently using their fathers' surnames, mothers' maiden names, and stepparents' surnames.
- Women who married multiple times used any of their current and prior surnames, often in an inconsistent manner.

The family of Marya Cukierman and Jankiel Goldman introduced two mysteries to my family research. In addition to the marriage of Marya and Jankiel, and the births of their two daughters, I found a second marriage for Jankiel, however I had not found a death record for Marya. Additionally, Jankiel had different parents on his two marriage registrations:

1845 Marriage #3:

Groom: Jankiel Goldman, son of Herszek (deceased) and Sura Goldman

Bride: Marya Cukierman, daughter of Lipa (deceased) and Perla Cukierman

1856 Marriage #2:

Groom: Jankiel Goldman (widower), son of Herszek and Sura Cukierman

Bride: Fajga Klarman, daughter of Szloma Klarman and Chana Szajn

Why did Jankiel's parents have different surnames on the two records? Herszek Goldman was dead by 1845; did Sura remarry a Herszek Cukierman by 1856, and if so, why was he listed as Jankiel's father?

I began to perform complete vital records extractions in Krasnystaw, which at first only served to confuse the issue further:

1833 Birth #1:

Father: deceased

Mother: Sura Rywa Cukierman

Child: Herszek Lipa

No identity was provided for the deceased father. Was Cukierman Sura Rywa's married or maiden name, or did she perhaps remarry prior to the registration of the baby's birth?

I hit the jackpot with the 1855 death records:

1855 Death #10:  
Decedant: Marya Goldt  
Father: Lipa Cukierman  
Husband: Jankiel Goldman

This accounted for one part of the mystery. Marya's death was registered under an abbreviated surname.

1855 Death #5:  
Decedant: Sura Rywa Goldman, widow  
Father: Herszek Cukierman  
Mother: Fajga  
Sons: Icyk Goldman, Jankiel Goldman  
Daughter: Mendla Stycer, widow

This was quite an unusual death record for Krasnystaw, which normally provided no survivors' list, and often no parents. It is interesting to note that Sura Rywa's parents are the grandparents of Marya Cukierman. Hence Marya and her husband Jankiel Goldman were first cousins. Therefore, Jankiel's parents were listed under their correct surname on his 1845 marriage, but under his mother's maiden name in 1856. Furthermore, the fatherless baby of 1833 was the son of Sura Rywa Cukierman and Herszek Goldman.

The search was on to find Mendla Stycer. Naturally that was not her actual name, but she was rather easy to identify. Numerous records existed for a young widow named Mindla Stancygier, who registered children under the maiden names of Cukierman and Goldman. However, for each mystery solved, more always seemed to surface. Mindla Stancygier's most predominant maiden name was Fliswaser.

There was only one Fliswaser family in Krasnystaw, and as a result of my thorough study of the town, I had come to know all the residents quite well. Josef Fliswaser, a glazier, and his wife Dwojra, had numerous daughters prior to Dwojra's death in the early 1830s. I returned to the records of the 1830s searching for clues.

1835 Birth #3:  
Father: Josef Fliswaser  
Mother: Sura Herszkowiczow  
Child: Fayga

Following the deaths of Herszek Goldman and Dwojra Fliswaser, Josef Fliswaser married Sura Cukierman. Mindla was still a child, and grew up in the home of Josef Fliswaser, apparently causing her to use his name as her primary means of identity.

This single case study illustrates many of the naming anomalies in Krasnystaw:

- Herszek Goldman and Sura Rywa Cukierman were identified on Jankiel's 1845 marriage as Goldman and on his 1856 marriage as Cukierman.

- The 1833 birth of Herszek Lipa Goldman did not identify his surname. The only surname on the record was the maiden name of his mother, Sura Rywa Cukierman.
- The 1855 death of Sura Rywa Goldman was registered under the surname of her first husband, rather than her most recent husband, Josef Fliswaser, and she was identified as the widow of Herszek Goldman.
- The 1855 death of Marya Goldman was registered under the variant name of Goldt.
- The 1855 Death of Sura Rywa Goldman identified her daughter as Mendla Stycer, while in actuality, Mendla's married name was Stancygier.
- Mendla Stancygier used three different maiden names: Goldman - her father's name, Cukierman - her mother's maiden name, and Fliswaser - her stepfather's surname.

In conclusion, you can piece together the full picture only by examining EVERY record, not just every record of your surname(s) of interest. Full vital records extractions are the best solution.

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August, 1996