New Zealand

by Claire Bruell

New Zealand is composed of two islands, the North Island and the South Island. The capital is Wellington, at the foot of the North Island; the largest city is Auckland in the north of the North Island. Christchurch and Dunedin are the two major centers in the South Island.

European explorers first came to New Zealand at the end of the 18th century and a steady stream of traders, whalers, sealers and missionaries followed in the early nineteenth century. British rule was formalized by the Treaty of Waitangi signed by both the native Maori and representatives of the Queen of England in 1840. At this time, an estimated 1,200 Europeans lived in the North Island and 200 lived in the South Island. Most of the main cities were founded in the 1840s. A large number of people came in the 1850s and 1860s, when gold was discovered in Coromandel and Thames in the North Island, and in Nelson, Otago and on the west coast in the South Island. In 1861, 14,000 people landed in Dunedin in a single month—all seeking gold.

Jews came along with the others, and there is no doubt that their contribution was greater than their numbers might have suggested. Jewish communities were established in the North Island in Auckland, Wellington; South Island: Christchurch and Dunedin in the early days of the colony. Fledgling communities also developed in Greymouth, Hokitika, Nelson and Westport in the South Island, but they no longer exist. For a time, some Jews lived in Hawke’s Bay, Napier and Wanganui in the North Island.

The Auckland community has recently been rejuvenated by South African immigrants and is the largest in New Zealand. Wellington follows close behind. Only a handful of Jews live in Christchurch and Dunedin today. The 2001 census revealed that the total national Jewish population is 7,300 people depending on definition. This is a rise of almost 50 percent over the previous census. The Auckland region registered as the biggest Jewish center with 3,132 individuals. New Zealand’s general population is approximately 3.5 million, two thirds of whom live in the North Island; the population of Auckland is more than one million. The major resources for tracing one’s Jewish relatives in New Zealand are New Zealand civil records and Jewish records. The Jewish communities have records of congregants; the civil records include birth, marriage, divorce and death records.

Civil Records

Archives New Zealand’ (formerly known as National Archives) is the repository for records created by governmental departments considered to be of national importance. Researchers may expect to find such records as noncurrent school registers, shipping records, government employees’ records, health and immigration records, and many others. Records are transferred to Archives New Zealand for preservation when they are no longer in use. Access to some records is restricted for 50 or 100 years for privacy reasons. Archives New Zealand has a set of telephone directories dating generally from the early 20th century. Its website lists a VHS video 16 minutes “A Guide for New Readers” (VHS) available for NZ$35 published 1996. This is an introduction to the reference and research service at Archives New Zealand Head Office in Wellington.

Regional offices in Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin are repositories for government archives originating within these geographical areas. The head office in Wellington holds records for that region as well as some that originate in other areas.

The publication (1990) “Family History at National Archives” by Bridget Williams describing records held by Archives NZ is now out of print. Since 1990, many records have been transferred to Archives NZ with government restructuring. These changes are reflected in a later (1995) publication, updating the information in the out of print one. This 1995 publication is called “Beyond the Book: An Outline of Genealogical Sources at National Archives transferred or Identified Since the Preparation of Family History at National Archives”. This later publication can be ordered from the Archives New Zealand website. The section on “Genealogical Services” will be helpful to researchers who refer to the website.

Alexander Turnbull Library and National Library of New Zealand

Between them, the Alexander Turnbull Library’ and the National Library of New Zealand’ are the two largest repositories of New Zealand reference material in the country. The Turnbull has compiled a national register of archives and manuscripts in New Zealand. The register may be found in public libraries throughout the country. It is known as NRAM (National Register of Archives and Manuscripts). The Oral History Center at the Turnbull Library will eventually hold copies of the Spielberg Foundation’s interviews with New Zealanders who are Holocaust survivors, as well as the Jewish Oral History Project’s interviews with survivors, community personalities and Jewish servicemen who served during World War II—primarily from Auckland.

The Jewish Oral History Project has variously been called The Oral History Project, the Holocaust Oral History Project and a Jewish Oral Archive. It was begun in 1994 by a group in Auckland who decided to interview survivors and individuals displaced by the Holocaust. To date more than 70 people have been interviewed. The interviews, together with photographs, biographical data and transcripts have been deposited with the Oral History Centre at the Turnbull Library. Plans call for copies to be placed at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and for the oral histories to be held in the archives at the Auckland War Memorial Museum’ where they will be available for educational and research purposes.
Public Libraries
Holdings of public libraries throughout New Zealand are many and varied. The Auckland Public Library has the most comprehensive holdings of any public library in New Zealand. Researchers can peruse directories, almanacs, research by the New Zealand Society of Genealogists, the Who's Who series, family histories, some passenger and shipping arrivals, and local histories rich with genealogical information.

Most public libraries have New Zealand post office directories that are commonly known as Wises. These were published between 1872 and 1961 and contain an alphabetical list of persons and business firms by name. They may be regarded as a combined Yellow Pages and electoral roll and may be used to trace the movement and occupation of a person over an extended period of time.

The Auckland Public Library also holds a copy of “Book of Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in Auckland, New Zealand (Auckland Hebrew Congregation) 1842–56,” a very slim handwritten, unpublished exercise book, probably donated by someone who discovered it at the synagogue.

Public libraries may hold information on army lists and histories, electoral rolls and newspapers—particularly the older newspapers, which can offer much rich social history. The National Library of New Zealand holds a major collection of nongovernment archives and manuscripts from the early days of European discovery up to the present.

The Hocken Library is a library, archive and art museum that focuses on the history and culture of New Zealand and the Pacific. It is administered by the University of Otago in trust for the people of New Zealand. Collections of books, newspapers, pictures, periodicals, archives, photographs and many genealogical sources can be found here. The library is particularly rich in information related to the Otago and Southland areas in the South Island.

Birth, Death and Marriage Records
New Zealand law requires that every birth, death or marriage be registered at the Registrar General’s Office, as well as in local registry offices. The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages is a branch of the Department of Internal Affairs. Civil registration began in 1848, and each birth, death and marriage registration entry is duplicated. One copy is held at the district office where the event was first recorded and another copy is held at the Registrar General’s Office. Although Archives New Zealand holds some early registers, mainly from small, closed registry offices, the first place to try is the Registrar General’s office that holds the records for the whole country. (See also under “Public Libraries” for early Auckland Jewish records book.)

Records of Foreigners in New Zealand
Matters concerning citizenship were and still are dealt with by the Department of Internal Affairs. As it is a government department, its noncurrent records are held at Archives New Zealand.

When New Zealand became a British Dominion in 1840, anyone born in the country became a British subject by law. From 1846 to 1866, becoming naturalized required an act of legislation; the lists of naturalizations can be found with other legislation in most public libraries.

In 1866 the Aliens Act instituted a new procedure: An application had to be made giving considerable personal details. The application was to be accompanied by a certificate of good repute and was then published in the official New Zealand Gazette, which included reports on decisions of the central government.

Archives New Zealand has much information in its holdings about aliens regarding their registration and the special controls imposed during wartime. During World War I, all enemy aliens were required to report to the nearest police station. A New Zealand Register of Aliens was compiled and published by the Department of Statistics in 1917.

Registration of aliens was introduced again during World War II; the register of the Auckland Aliens Tribunal and the records of the Auckland Aliens Authority are at National Archives. The Auckland Aliens Tribunal was established in July 1940 to investigate whether aliens should be interned. Later that year, the Aliens Authority was set up in various districts to replace the Tribunal and at the same time an Aliens Appeal Tribunal was set up to hear appeals against decisions of the Authority. By July 1942, the Minister of Justice had received reports on all enemy aliens and almost all non-enemy aliens.

Enemy aliens were those people who had come from countries at war with Britain and her allies. Non-enemy, or so-called “friendly aliens” were so classified because they had originated in countries fighting the Germans and their allies.

The reports are now at Archives New Zealand. Access to alien registration files is restricted until the end of the year 40 years after death, or 100 years from birth, whichever is the sooner. The same is true for the records of the Auckland Aliens Tribunal and Authorities. Registration of aliens was undertaken in two systems, first in 1939–48 and again in 1949–77. Archives New Zealand holds indexes to both systems, but only those indexes from the period 1939–45 that were not re-registered into the later system are open for research. The index cards record name, registration number, nationality, sex, marital status, date and place of birth, date of arrival in New Zealand, addresses and dates, and occupation addresses and dates.

The Auckland and Wellington Public Libraries have details of aliens who were naturalized in New Zealand between 1843 and 1916 and registrations of persons granted citizenship.
between 1949 and 1981. Also extant is a register of persons naturalized in New Zealand before 1948 that superseded the Register of Alien Friends published in 1925 by the Department of Internal Affairs. Both registers are held at National Archives. Access to the naturalization files on individuals is restricted to the end of the year following 100 years after the birth of the individual or 40 years after the death, whichever is sooner.

**Wills and Probate**

Wills of New Zealanders who died before June 16, 1842, were probated in New South Wales, Australia. Copies of the indexes up to 1980 are available at the Auckland Public Library. The indexes alphabetically list names of the deceased, places of residence and dates of death. Wills are usually probated at the High Court nearest the deceased’s residence. Investigation of an individual may lead to the discovery of family relationships; details of children, including their married names; and perhaps names of spouses of family members.

Wills were not filed for probate if the value of the estate was small and if the beneficiaries agreed on distribution. If the deceased owned land, a copy of the will should be with the transfer documents at local land information offices (see Land Records section below). Most probate registers and files have been transferred to Archives New Zealand. Researchers should first try the appropriate local office and, if unsuccessful, National Archives, Wellington.

**Land Records**

Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) holds records of transactions relating to land. The Torrens system of land registration provided a government-guaranteed title to land and was implemented with the 1870 Land Transfer Act. LINZ holds certificates of title and other documents relating to land such as leases and mortgages. New Zealand has five land registry districts, in the North Island at Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington; in the South Island at Christchurch and Dunedin. Copies of registered documents such as leases, mortgages and transfers are available from the LINZ office in each district.

There is a map on the Web at WWW.LINZ.GOV.NZ showing the geographic situation of each of the 12 LINZ offices nationwide. The section “Researchers and Historians” is helpful to those seeking information about land ownership. The Skylight Internet Ordering System is aimed at assisting people searching historic land ownership records for genealogical purposes. A researcher who wants to obtain a copy of a land record must know

- The land district to which the search relates
- The record type (certificate of title, lease, other)
- The record number

Record number can be difficult to find unless exact details of ownership are known. Finding old records and record number is not easy. LINZ operates an electronic title and survey system known as Landonline. This is geared for use by land professionals such as attorneys who pay a license fee to use the system. Landonline has had land records only for the past two years and replaces the old Land Title computer system that held the records for approximately 12 years. Predating the Land Title computer system, branch offices kept a card system arranged by owner’s name. The maintainance of the card systems varied from office to office and accuracy cannot be assumed. The best way to approach a search for land ownership details is to employ a local “search agent.” Such search agents can be located through Yellow Pages.

**Census Information**

Nationwide census taking began in 1858, but returns prior to 1966 have not been kept. An exception is the local censuses for 1845 and 1849 for the Nelson area (South Island). These records, which include details on occupants, buildings and land use, are held at Archives New Zealand in the Head Office, Wellington. Records from 1966, which have been kept, are not accessible for 100 years.

**Electoral Rolls (Voter Registration Lists)**

Election rolls for all New Zealanders from 1865–1943 are available on microfiche at the Wellington Public Library, the New Zealand Society of Genealogists Library and many other public libraries. Records from 1928 to the present are at the Registrar General’s Office, Lower Hutt; some electoral rolls...
prior to 1900 are held at Archives New Zealand in Wellington. An almost complete set of electoral rolls can be found at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington.*

School Records
The 1877 Education Act provided for a national system of free compulsory education for children. The public school system had been started in 1871, but was not fully functional until 1911. In general, admission registers are held by Archives New Zealand in Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin or Christchurch. Admission registers and class lists, provided they have been fully and correctly completed, should contain the full name and date of birth of the pupil and parent or guardian, previous school attended, pupil’s class at time of enrollment, next school to which the pupil transferred, and the reason for the child’s removal from the roll. The New Zealand Society of Genealogists* has an ongoing project of indexing and transcribing admission registers. To discover the location of schools, consult Wises Postal Directories, available in most public libraries.

Passenger Ship Arrivals
Ship arrival records are held at Archives New Zealand branch repositories and at Archives New Zealand Head Office in Wellington. The branch of Archives New Zealand that has shipping records for a particular port most likely will be the one that is geographically closest. Records created before 1839 are not available. Lists of passengers up to 1886 are limited to government-assisted immigrants. The lists from the period 1887–1973 are held, with some gaps. The indexes provide reference to the embarkation lists. These sometimes lead to supplementary records containing further information on individual immigrants or shipboard conditions during the voyage to New Zealand. Summaries of some passenger shipping arrivals and departures were published monthly in some newspapers. Newspapers often carried details of arrivals and departures of ships, together with passenger listings and accounts of passage. From the late 1880s lists exist of passengers leaving the country.

Jewish Records
Six Jewish congregations are active in New Zealand today, four of which are in the North Island

- Wellington Hebrew Congregation* has existed for approximately 150 years. A specific list of records held by this congregation is not available, but reportedly, the congregation has a birth register that started in 1876, a death register from 1845, a marriage register from 1863 and a register of converts from the 1940s.
- Wellington Progressive Jewish Congregation Inc.*, was established in 1960.
- Auckland Hebrew Congregation* has existed since 1850.
- The Progressive Jewish Congregation of Auckland*, had its beginnings in 1960.

The New Zealand Jewish Archives* is located at the same address as the Wellington Hebrew Congregation. Between them, the two institutions hold most of Wellington’s existing Jewish records. Most records in the archives pertain to the Auckland and Wellington Jewish communities. Included are board minutes of the Wellington Hebrew Congregation from 1885 to the present and ongoing, annual reports, records from various Jewish organizations—Zionist Society, Habonim New Zealand and Jewish Club which seem to be mostly Wellington-based. Archivist Michael Clements claims that the Wellington City Council Cemeteries Department* has a computerized list of those buried at the Karori and Makara cemeteries, but the Jewish burials are not listed separately. Personnel at the Cemeteries Department says that the names are on index cards and they may be manually copied.

The two active Jewish congregations in the South Island are:

- Dunedin Jewish Congregation* was originally a larger and more active community, especially during the gold rushes of the nineteenth century; This community, now with 50 members was established in the decade of the 1840s.

The gravesite of Moss Meyer Levy, who died in 1836, demonstrates that there was Jewish presence in New Zealand even before it formally became a British colony in 1840 with the Treaty of Waitangi between the Crown and the indigenous Maori tribes.
• Canterbury Hebrew Congregation has existed since about 1850 and, like its counterpart in Dunedin, suffers from declining numbers. Canterbury Congregation is situated in the city of Christchurch.

Both the Dunedin and Canterbury congregations hold records for other nineteenth-century South Island communities that have ceased to exist. See “Cemeteries” section for the locations of Jewish burials. These are communities that once had Jewish settlements. Inquiries about records that might be useful to Jewish researchers have elicited responses that range from no response at all to very helpful.

All congregations in New Zealand lack resources and must rely on volunteer help. Most have records that record milestone events, past membership lists and Board of Management minutes. In some cases, records are well-archived and easy to access. Most congregations, however, lack people who are familiar with their records and who have the time available to search for specific information.

Despite these difficulties, the Auckland Hebrew Congregation is prepared to open its archives to any bona fide researcher who visits and who gives advance notice or his or her visit. Other congregations may also be prepared to do this, but in each case, the researcher should write in advance explaining what is desired.

Jewish Publications

Given this situation, the most profitable way to make inquiry of local communities probably would be to place an advertisement in community newsletters or in the monthly New Zealand Jewish Chronicle, the only national Jewish newspaper. Back issues of The Chronicle and its predecessors The Jewish Times and The Jewish Review are held at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington and at the New Zealand Jewish Archives. (Addresses for all institutions marked with an asterisk are given at the end of this chapter.)

Monthly newsletters published by congregations in which researchers might also advertise are:

• Wellington Hebrew Congregation’ and Wellington Jewish Social Club’ newsletter.
• Wellington Progressive Jewish Congregation.’
• Auckland Hebrew Congregation’s Kesher.’ Inquiries may be addressed to the synagogue office.
• Progressive Jewish Congregation of Auckland’s Teruah. Its editor may be contacted through the congregation office.
• Canterbury Hebrew Congregation’s newsletter editor can be reached at the synagogue office.
• Chadashot is a community magazine published by the Auckland Zionist Society.’ It publishes advertisements.

Cemeteries

Information on the following cemeteries has been compiled by the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS)’ cemetery project <http://www.jewishgen.org/cemetery>. Sometime in the near future, this project will hold the names of those buried in the cemeteries listed below on a CD available from the International Jewish Cemetery Project which can be contacted through the website. The cemeteries have a number of Jewish graves, even though many of these places no longer have Jewish communities.

Cemeteries in the North Island are:

• Auckland: Karangahape Road cemetery, Waikumete Cemetery, old and new sections
• Dannevirke: Mangatera cemetery, Hamilton cemetery (a few graves only)
• Hawkes Bay: Park Island cemetery
• Napier, Bluff Hill cemetery
• Palmerston North: Kelvin Grove and Old cemeteries
• Wanganui: General cemetery
• Wellington: Bolton Street, Karori and Makara cemeteries

The cemeteries in South Island are:

• Ashburton: old public cemetery
• Christchurch: Linwood cemetery
• Dunedin: Southern cemetery; Naseby cemetery near Dunedin (a few graves only)
• Greymouth: General cemetery
• Hokitika: General cemetery
• Nelson: Wakapuaka cemetery
• Queenstown: General cemetery
• Timaru: General cemetery

In addition, records of burials typically are held at the cemetery itself and in the local council offices. A council is a local body that administers the parks, cemeteries and similar places in every area. For example, no Jewish community exists any longer in Nelson in the South Island but the Nelson community council has records of all burials in the Jewish section of the local cemetery. The New Zealand Society of Genealogists’ also has recorded burials in most cemeteries in the country, most of which may be accessed at LDS Family History Centers (see chapter XX.) Many public libraries in New Zealand have cemetery records on microfiche.

Addresses

Alexander Turnbull Library, P.O. Box 12-349, Wellington, www. NATLIB.GOV.TZ/EN/USING/2ATL.HTML
Archives New Zealand Auckland, P.O. Box 91220, Auckland; e-mail: ENQUIRIES@ARCHIVES.GOVT.NZ; AUCKLAND@ARCHIVES.GOVT.NZ
Archives of New Zealand Christchurch, P.O. Box 642, Christchurch; e-mail: CHRISTCHURCH@ARCHIVES.GOVT.NZ
Archives New Zealand, Dunedin, P.O. Box 6183, Dunedin; e-mail: DUNEDIN@ARCHIVES.GOVT.NZ
Archives of New Zealand, Head Office, P.O. Box 6148, Te Aro, Wellington; e-mail: WELLINGTON@ARCHIVES.GOVT.NZ; website: WWW.ARCHIVES.GOVT.NZ
Auckland Hebrew Congregation, 108 Greys Ave., P.O. Box 68-224, Auckland, www.AHC.ORG.NZ
Auckland Institute and Museum Library, Private Bag, Auckland
Auckland Public Library, P.O. Box 4138, Auckland, www. AUCKLANDCITYLIBRARIES.COM
Auckland War Memorial Museum, Private Bag 92018, www. AKMUSEUM.ORG.NZ
Auckland Zionist Society, P.O. Box 315, Auckland; telephone: 649-309-9444; e-mail: AZS@XTRA.CO.NZ
Canterbury Hebrew Congregation, 406 Durham Street, P.O. Box 21-253, Christchurch
Christchurch Public Library, P.O. Box 1466, Christchurch; telephone: 643-941-7923; e-mail: LIBRARY@CCC.GOV.TZ; website: HTTP://LIBRARY.CHRISTCHURCH.ORG.NZ/HERITAGE/GENEALOGY.ASP
Department of Internal Affairs (Archives), P.O. Box 805, Wellington; telephone: 694-495-7200; website: WWW.DIA.GOV.TZ
Dunedin Jewish Congregation, corner Dunas and George Streets, Dunedin
Hocken Library, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin; website: WWW.LIBRARY.OTAGO.AC.NZ/LIBS/HOCKEN/index.html
Land Information Office, P.O. Box 92016, Auckland; e-mail: AUCKLAND@LINZ.GOV.TZ
Land Information Office, Private Bag, 3028, Hamilton; e-mail: HAMILTON@LINZ.GOV.TZ
Land Information Office, P.O. Box 5014 Wellington; e-mail: WELLINGTON@LINZ.GOV.TZ
Land Information Office, Private Bag 4721, Christchurch; e-mail: CHRISTCHURCH@LINZ.GOV.TZ
Land Information Office, Private Bag, 90107, Dunedin; e-mail: DUNEDIN@LINZ.GOV.TZ
National Library of New Zealand, P.O. Box 12-349, Wellington North; telephone: 644-474-300; e-mail: WWW.NATLIB.GOV.TZ
New Zealand Jewish Archives, 80 Webb St, Wellington, e-mail: CLEMCLAN@IHUG.CO.NZ
New Zealand Jewish Chronicle, P.O. Box 27-156, Wellington; fax: 644-4384-2123; e-mail: EDITOR@RIFKOV.CO.NZ
New Zealand Society of Genealogists, Inc., P.O. Box 8795, Auckland; website: HTTP://WWW.GENEALOGY.ORG.NZ
NRAM (National Registry of Archives and Manuscripts); e-mail: WWW.NRAM.ORG.NZ
Progressive Jewish Congregation of Auckland, 180 Manukau Rd., P.O. Box 26-052, Epsom, Auckland; e-mail: BSHALOM@IHUG.CO.NZ; website: WWW.BETHSHALOM.ORG.NZ
Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 131 High Street, P.O. Box 10526, Wellington
Shoah Foundation, P.O. Box 5168, Los Angeles, CA 90078-3168
Wellington City Council Cemetery Department, 101 Wakefield Street, Wellington
Wellington Hebrew Congregation, 80 Webb St., Wellington; website: HTTP://HOMEPAGES.IHUG.CO.NZ/~BETHEL
Wellington Progressive Jewish Congregation, 147 Ghuznee, P.O. Box 27-301, Wellington; e-mail: TEMPLE@ACTRIX.CO.NZ; website: WWW.SINAL.ORG.NZ/index.html
Wellington Public Library, 65 Victoria St, P.O. Box 1992, Wellington; telephone: 644-801-4040; e-mail: CENTRAL@WCL.GOV.TZ; website: WWW.WCL.GOV.TZ

Bibliography