



זכרון ZichronNote

The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

Volume XXIV, Number 1

February 2004

CALENDAR OF GENEALOGICAL EVENTS

Meetings of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

Please note: Unless otherwise indicated, the meeting schedule is as follows:

- San Francisco:** **Sunday, Doors open 12:30 p.m. Program begins at 1 p.m.**
Jewish Community High School, 1835 Ellis Street. Jewish Community Library open on second floor. **Free parking: enter parking area from Pierce Street.**
- Los Altos Hills:** **Monday, Library opens at 7 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m.** Congregation Beth Am, 26790 Arastradero Road
- Berkeley:** **Sunday, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.** Berkeley-Richmond Jewish Community Center, 1414 Walnut Street, North Berkeley.

Sun. February 15, Berkeley: *The Jews of Singapore.* Joan Beider, Senior Lecturer in Journalism at U.C. Berkeley. Don't know of any family that lived in or came through Singapore? Intriguingly, there is a Lithuanian Jewish connection to Singapore as well as a fascinating surprise which Joan uncovered during the course of her research. Join us for this truly fascinating presentation.

Mon. February 23, Los Altos Hills: *New York City Genealogy: 19th and 20th Century Sources.* Steve Harris, Ph.D, has spent his genealogical career tracking down relatives in New York City, both on site and online. He will share some of his lesser-known sources as well as new ways to use traditional approaches. Original source material will be available for use after the presentation.

Sun. March 21, San Francisco: *Program to be determined.*

Sun. April 18, Berkeley: *Program to be determined.*

Mon. April 19, Los Altos Hills: *Using Wills and Probate Records for Genealogical Research.* Attorney Marc Seidenfeld will explain how these often overlooked documents can hold information and clues for genealogical research.

Sun. May 16, San Francisco: *Program to be determined.*

For the latest program information visit www.jewishgen.org/sfbajgs

More Genealogy Events of Interest on Page 4

ZichronNote

Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

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People Finder queries are free to Society members. Non-members may place queries for \$5 each, limited to 25 words not including searcher's name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Back Issues are available for \$5 per issue. Requests should be addressed to the SFBAJGS at the address below.

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Membership is open to anyone interested in Jewish genealogy. Dues are \$23 per calendar year. The Society is tax-exempt pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. Make your check payable to "SFBAJGS" and send to: SFBAJGS, Membership, P.O. Box 471616, San Francisco, CA 94147.

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President's Message Perspectives on Past and Future

by Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

Another year has rolled by and there have been events here and abroad that no one could have predicted — the war in Iraq, the election in California of Arnold Schwarzenegger as Governor, increased internal security — just to name a few of the "biggies." As we shake our heads and wonder how this could be and how we are supposed to live in these challenging times, perhaps we forget that our ancestors lived in equally difficult times, if not worse. Wars were a common occurrence. Puppet leaders or governments were often installed, and as for internal security, just think about ghettos and the Pale of Settlement.

On the other hand I am pleased to report that the Society, unlike the State of California, is in good, if not great, shape. We are in the black. The board of directors is constantly aware of its responsibilities to the membership, and we continue to look at how we can improve our services. We are now planning another interesting series of meetings for the year, including our annual workshop at Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills this fall. I would like to see us appearing (again) at both of this year's premier events for Bay Area Jewry: Israel in the Ball Park and the Palo Alto Street Fair. Yes, this year the San Francisco event that celebrates Israel Independence Day has outgrown Yerba Buena Gardens and is slated to take over SBC (formerly Pac Bell) Park!

I should also remind members that the 2004 International Conference on Jewish Genealogy will be held in Jerusalem. I know a number of them intend to be there.

Looking further ahead, we have been invited by Congregation Beth Am to teach a series of classes in the spring of 2005. This will be similar to the series we taught at Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco a couple of years ago. This event will be co-sponsored by the SFBAJGS and Beth Am.

Finally, some sad news. It's one thing that we spend hours researching the birth, marriage or death of long-ago ancestors; it's quite another matter when a member of the Society passes away. The SFBAJGS is sad to report the passing of Jerome "Jerry" Hamerman, of Menlo Park, who passed away on Christmas Eve. Jerry was a regular attendee at our South Bay meetings, and always had a point of interest to contribute at the meetings. We owe him more than a debt of gratitude. When Rosanne Leeson, our vice-president, announced in the spring of 2003

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Welcome, New Members

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Frankel Re-elected to Head SFBAJGS Board; Revised By-laws Approved

Jeremy Frankel was re-elected president of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society in the society's recent election of officers. Rosanne Leeson was re-elected as vice president, James Koenig was re-elected as recording secretary, and Dana Kurtz as treasurer.

The revised By-laws submitted to the membership in the mail were also approved and the mail vote ratified by a majority vote of members attending the January 18 meeting in San Francisco.

Any member who wants a copy of the revised By-laws should contact Dana Kurtz at dlkurtz@ix.netcom.com.

Bounced E-mails

If your name is on the following list, messages sent to your email address as listed in the Society roster bounced. Please send your new email address to Beth Galleto at galleto@pacbell.net so you can continue to receive notices from the SFBAJGS.

Fred Loewy, Martha Greene, Shirley Hausafus, Gerald Wagger, Irene Lowe, Les Shipnuck

Are Your SFBAJGS Dues Overdue?

Membership dues for 2004 were payable on January 31, 2004. If you have not yet sent in your renewal, please do so as soon as possible.

A yellow stripe across the mailing label of this issue means we have not yet received your payment. The May issue of *ZichronNote* will be sent only to members in good standing.

Please send your check for \$23, made payable to "SFBAJGS," to:

SFBAJGS - Membership
P.O. Box 471616
San Francisco, CA 94147

Jewish Genealogy Month

For the fifth consecutive year, the Jewish Genealogical periodical *Avotaynu* is sponsoring Jewish Genealogy Month. This year it is March 23-April 21, 2004, which corresponds to the Hebrew month of Nisan 5764—the Passover season. In association with this event, *Avotaynu* has created a poster. This year's theme is "This Year in Jerusalem," which commemorates the return to Jerusalem of the International Conference on Jewish Genealogy.

The 2004 poster, as well as all its predecessors, can be viewed at www.avotaynu.com/poster.htm. Information about the conference is at www.ortra.com/jgen2004/.

CALENDAR, cont.

More Genealogy Events

Local and Regional

Thurs., Feb. 19, 7 p.m. **Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. How to Access Resources in the County Clerk's Office for Family History Research.** Presented by Gina Alcomendras, Assistant Clerk-Recorder, Santa Clara County. Mission Library, 1098 Lexington, Santa Clara. www.rootsweb.com/~cascchgs/

Wed., April 14, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. **Solano County Genealogical Society. Preparing for a Trip to the Salt Lake City Library.** Solano County Genealogical Society Library, 620 E. Main Street, Vacaville. www.rootsweb.com/~cascgsi/

Sat., April 24, 9 a.m to 4 p.m. **Sonoma County Genealogical Society. All Day Seminar on Genealogical Research Techniques.** Presented by lecturer and writer Elizabeth Shown Mills. Luther Burbank Center. www.scgs.org

State

Sat., Mar. 13, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. **California State Archives, Family History Day at the Archives.** Genealogy and History Fair; genealogy classes, society booths, workshops and more! Free to the public. California State Archives, 1020 "O" Street, Sacramento. 916-331-4349 or www.ss.ca.gov/archives/level3_famhistday.html

Sun., Mar. 14, 1 p.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles. A Potpourri of One Step Genealogical Research Tools.** Presented by Stephen Morse. Museum of Tolerance, 1399 South Roxbury, Los Angeles. www.jgsla.org

Mon., April 19, 7:30 p.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles. Using Maps Successfully in Genealogical Research.** Presented by Robert Sherris. Valley Beth Shalom, Lopaty Chapel, 15739 Ventura Blvd., Encino. www.jgsla.org

Mon., May 17, 7:30 p.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles. Lauder Foundation Genealogy Project and the Hidden Children,** presented by Yale Reisner, Director, Lauder Foundation Genealogy Project. Skirball Cultural Center, Magnin Auditorium, 2701 N. Sepulveda. www.jgsla.org

Discovering and Sharing Your Heritage: A Digital Classroom Genealogy Workshop

SFBAJGS Board Member Ron Arons is teaching a six-session course at Lehrhaus Judaica on Mondays beginning February 9. The first three sessions will provide the basics of U.S. Jewish genealogy. The last three sessions will teach the participant how to turn their family story(ies) into digital multimedia presentations (using PowerPoint, Photoshop, Windows Movie Maker and/or other tools). The course will be taught at the San Francisco JCC, 1808 Wedemeyer St. (in the Presidio).

For more information including location and fees, visit the Lehrhaus website at www.lehrhaus.org.

**One-on-One Help
with Your Family Tree**

First Sundays:

Feb. 1, March 7, April 4, May 2, June 6
12 - 2 p.m.

Jewish Community Library
1835 Ellis Street
San Francisco

**Here's a chance to get help
with your genealogy questions ...
between meetings of the SFBAJGS.**

Whether you're trying to find your great-grandmother's elusive town or your grandfather's passenger manifest, you can take advantage of the Jewish Community Library's extensive reference collection and Internet connection to countless searchable databases — all with one-on-one guidance from experienced genealogists.

Longtime Library volunteer staffer Judy Baston and other veteran researchers from the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogy Society, including Ron Arons, Jeremy Frankel, Dana Kurtz and Marian Rubin, will help with brainstorming and problem-solving.

Bring your materials and your questions to the Library, the first Sunday of each month.

For more information: e-mail library@bjesf.org

It's This Year in Jerusalem for Annual IAJGS Conference

The Israel Genealogical Society invites genealogists to the 24th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, which will be held on July 4 through 9 in Jerusalem at the Renaissance Jerusalem Hotel.

In the words of the conference co-chairs Jean-Pierre Stroweis, Eitan Shiko, and Professor H. Daniel Wagner:

The capital of Israel is a treasure trove of unique archival and family history resources unavailable anywhere else in the world! To walk over the very ground where it all began, to visit archeological sites unique to the Bible, to visit areas where your own ancestors might have lived, to meet with your Israeli cousins, is an experience you will not want to miss!

The Organizing Committee will spare no effort in making this event a resounding success. The Conference will provide an ideal stage for exchanging information and ideas regarding the ever-increasing influence and role of genealogical research in our time. We plan to organize visits to a number of Israeli archival repositories and sites of genealogical interest, including Yad Vashem, the Jewish National and University Library, the Central Zionist Archives, the 3,000 year old Cemetery on Mount of Olives, and more.

Leading experts will present lectures on the cutting edge of Jewish genealogy. Plenary and parallel sessions will cover all relevant areas, including—but not limited to—genealogy and molecular genetics, computer software packages, mathematical methods and problems, family research in schools and educational programs, Aliya-related issues, and much more.

The official language of the conference will be English, with partial simultaneous translation in Hebrew.

Researchers will be able to enjoy special "Breakfast with the Experts" sessions and small group tutorials designed to facilitate a productive interchange of research tips on a variety of topics.

We wish to offer you and your family this unique opportunity to join us in Israel in July 2004. Look for further details (web site, registration details, program, and hotel location) as they become available in the near future.

For more information visit the conference website at www.ortra.com/jgen2004/

SFBAJGS Family Finder Update

The surnames and towns being researched by our newest members are listed below. This database is maintained for our membership. If you have a correction or update you would like us to know about, contact: SFBAJGS, P.O. Box 471616, San Francisco, CA 94147, or send e-mail to Larry Burgheimer at BurgAuer@aol.com.

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Town, Country</u>	<u>Member</u>
ALHOUSE	Russia	Einbund, Nate
ALTMAN	Minsk, Belarus	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard
BANKS	Plonsk, Poland	Miller, Avram
BAUER	L'viv, Ukraine; Bayonne, NJ; Brooklyn, NY	Singer, Russ
BLACK	Chashniki, Belarus	Einbund, Nate
BLECHMAN	Chashniki, Belarus	Einbund, Nate
BORODINSKY, BRODINSKY	Priluki, Ukraine	Miller, Avram
COHEN	Riga, Latvia; Lowell, MA	Singer, Russ
DEUTCH	Revageta, Lithuania	Sachs, Rebekah
EINBUND	Minsk, Belarus; Estonia; Germany	Einbund, Nate
FISHER	Vilnius, Lithuania; St. Petersburg, Russia	Raleigh, Marsha Rivkind

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Family Finder, cont. from page 5

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Town, Country</u>	<u>Member</u>
FRANCE	Ukraine	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard
FRANK	Radviliskis, Lithuania	Sachs, Rebekah
FUTTER	Legnica, Poland	Monasch, Walter
GOLDFINGER	Tuchow, Poland	Miller, Avram
GUTMAN	Kock, Lublin, Michow Lubartowski, Poland	McMurtry, Richard
HARENSKY	Lithuania	Einbund, Nate
HARRIS	Lithuania	Einbund, Nate
HERTZBERG	Lowell, MA; Jersey City, NJ	Singer, Russ
HORN	Tuchow, Poland	Miller, Avram
HOROWITZ	Kiyev, Ukraine	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard
KATZ	Vilnius, Lithuania	Sachs, Rebekah
KLEIN	Ukraine	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard
LAZAROWITZ	Burdujeni, Romania	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard
LEIBOWITZ, LIEBOWITZ	Botosani, Romania	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard
MAI, MAY	Minsk, Samokhvalovichi, Belarus; London, England	Raleigh, Marsha Rivkind
MAYER	Alsace, France; New York, Freeport, L.I., NY	Singer, Russ
METZGER	Hannover, Germany; Rutherford, NJ; New York	Singer, Russ
MONASCH	Szczecin, Poland	Monasch, Walter
MORGANSTERN	Kock, Poland	McMurtry, Richard
NUSENOFF	Russia; Nashua, NH	Singer, Russ
OPPENHEIM	Kiyev, Ukraine	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard
PRATINE	Minsk, Belarus; Estonia; Germany; France	Einbund, Nate
RAPAPORT	Kock, Poland	McMurtry, Richard
SCHIMMELBURG	Silesia	Monasch, Walter
SHMERKOWITZ	Minsk, Belarus	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard
SINGER	Medzhibozh, L'viv, Ukraine; Bayonne, NJ; Brooklyn, NY	Singer, Russ
THEIL	Wien, Austria	Einbund, Nate
WASSERZUG	Marijampole, Lithuania	Miller, Avram
WISE	Mstislavl, Belarus	Sachs, Rebekah
YUTEN	Burdujeni, Romania	Leeb, Marjorie & Leonard

Outreach Brought SFBAJGS Before the Public in 2003

In an effort to spread the word that the SFBAJGS is here for people searching their Jewish roots, members made outreach presentations throughout the Bay Area last year.

The Society had a booth in the Israel in the Gardens fair in San Francisco and at the Palo Alto Street Fair. Several experienced members provided "One-on-One" genealogy assistance at the new Jewish Community Library in the Jewish Community High School and continue to do so. (See page 4).

SFBAJGS President Jeremy Frankel gave a talk at the Magnes Museum on "Genealogy 101." He was an instructor at the Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society's all-day Annual Conference at the Livermore LDS church, where he discussed "Non-

Traditional Source Material at UCB and UCSF." He also gave a brunch presentation on "Genealogy 101" to the Oakland Lodge chapter of B'nai B'rith.

Board Member Ron Arons taught a genealogy course at Lehrhaus Judaica and a beginners' genealogy class in Berkeley.

Vice President Rosanne Leeson gave a presentation, with Marc Seidenfeld, to Keddem Congregation in Palo Alto. She also gave a presentation at Congregation Shir Hadash in Los Gatos, and a talk before the Brandeis University National Women's Committee of the Greater East Bay.

The Board plans to continue to reach out to the Bay Area community in every possible way in 2004.

Looking for the Shmata Kings Genealogical Research in the Czech Republic

by Judith Berlowitz

Judith Berlowitz is a relative newcomer (2003) to genealogy. She has a PhD in Romance Languages & Literatures, has taught Spanish and World Civilizations and has also done research in ethnomusicology (Judeo-Spanish balladry). She lives in Berkeley with her husband and black lab, has three superstar daughters and two grandsons (the doctor is two and the lawyer is eight!). In her spare time she is a medical, legal, and musical translator and sings alto in the Oakland Symphony Chorus. Her genealogical research includes surnames **ALEXANDER, BERLOWITZ, DA SILVA-SOLIS, FISCHL, FRESCHL, GATTMAN, LOEWENBERG, NUNEX-CARVALHO, PHILIPSBORN, SCHMALBACH, and RITTERBAND.**

The Background

My recent (and first) trip to the Czech Republic and my search for my Freschl ancestors unfolded through a series of amazing coincidences that will probably come as no surprise to most genealogists. My husband Cy and I had reserved for the trip months in advance. I was vaguely aware, as a “new” genealogist, that my great-grandfather Carl Freschl had come to the U.S. from “Prague” in around 1870; other family members had told me his antecedents were from “Austria.” From trees hand-drawn by family members I had the names of his parents (Philip Freschl and Caroline Lederer) and even grandparents (including the surname Fischl), but no more detailed information on ancestral towns. Prague, and certainly “Austria,” which probably included the entire former Austro-Hungarian Empire, seemed impossibly vague. We planned to stay in Prague, visit the ghetto, the castle, Kafka sites, etc., and spend a day at Terezin (Theresienstadt), with a side trip to Budapest, birthplace of my maternal grandfather.

First Contact

Then I received an e-mail through Jewishgen from another researcher, William M. Klein, who turned out to be a third cousin. (We are both great-great grandchildren of Philip and Caroline.) He mentioned the Ritterband family as also being Freschl descendants. The Ritterbands! A childhood memory emerged: a Shabbos dinner with tomato juice and candles at the Ritterbands in Los Angeles. I remembered their first names, searched the web, and landed on a relative by marriage, who referred me to the very Dick Ritterband at whose home I had spent maybe one evening. “Uncle” Dick was very friendly and interested in my project, and soon sent me a three-page, single-spaced letter he had “dug up, not knowing why I ever kept it” from his brother, Bob, who had died recently.

On reading the letter, dated October 1, 1981 and addressed to William Klein, I zeroed in on this phrase: “The only thing that comes to mind is the

native town for the Philip Freschl-Caroline Lederer Group: Sometime in the late 1940’s or early ’50’s, your grandparents, Will and Elsie ... told of having made a pilgrimage to the ancestral town... I remember their description of the place, said to be an hour or so outside of Prague, Czechoslovakia, and bearing the name of Czevnitz. (This spelling is my own phonetic guesswork) ... Maybe some day you or some other modern day descendant can repeat that search...” As any genealogist knows, finding a shtetl name is like sighting a gold nugget! A shtetl search on JewishGen yielded no such name, but the closest Soundex approximation to Bob’s spelling was “Revnice” (German “Revnitz,” in some documents “Rzewnitz”). Correspondence with Jan Hellman of the Boh-Mor SIG (Bohemia-Moravia Special Interest Group) revealed that Revnice was his mother’s birthplace, and accompanying Jan’s email were photos of the Revnice synagogue, now a pizzeria!

The Search Narrows

My next step was to turn to the Jewish Family History Centre, Prague, at www.toledot.org, whose project it is to list Jewish families of the Bohemia and Moravia regions of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. This is a vital task because the Czech government does not permit the Mormons to film in their country. Therefore the only access anyone has to these materials is from the original sources and the online work that the Family History Centre is undertaking. I did find some family names on the Toledot website, but nothing in connection with Revnice. So I emailed the genealogist of Toledot.org, Julius Müller, sending him a photo of the synagogue/pizzeria. Julius wrote back immediately, in elegant English, registering shock at the photo, and offering his services at the Prague Archives for a very reasonable fee. Meanwhile, in a brief language exchange (Spanish for Czech), I was beginning to converse haltingly. I learned how to pronounce “Revnice” and “bramborove knedliky” (potato dumplings) — much to the detriment of my waistline.

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Czech, cont. from page 7

First Stop: Prague and Terezin

Cy and I arrived in Prague on a drizzly Saturday and settled into our ugly but efficiently-refurbished Soviet-era hotel, which we soon learned was located not only in the heart of the “old-new” Jewish Ghetto, but precisely on the site of a home in which Franz Kafka had lived and had written the “Metamorphosis.” The cool weather did not seem to deter a labor-union demonstration and countless tourists from seemingly everywhere in the world — for whom the Czechs seemed completely prepared, in language ability and every type of accommodation.

Our visit a couple of days later to Terezin turned out to be a private tour with Wittmann Tours’ excellent and knowledgeable guide Helena. We were her only clients for the day, so she was able to give us more detailed explanations, including personal anecdotes. At the Terezin Museum, she introduced me to the person in charge of the inmate database. Finding the names of loved ones on such a list must be one of the most conflicted feelings on earth: the joy at making a family connection mixed with the sorrow and dismay at the taking of life and the system that made it possible. There turned out to be no Freschls on the Terezin database, but there were Fischls. To me this meant that my Freschls had either escaped or had been lost or assimilated before the Holocaust. I could give no 20th century names for Fischls, so I could not explore the database more fully.

In the Prague Archives

The following day we relocated to the intimate, lovely Hotel Constans, on the other side of the Vltava (Moldau) River. It is located in the Malá Strana district, on a narrow cobblestone street on the slopes of the Prague castle, on what we learned had been the earlier site of the Jewish population of Prague. A couple of days later I phoned Julius Müller and we arranged to

meet at the Archives. This seemed like a miracle, since the guidelines I had found for doing research in Prague had seemed extremely intimidating. After some searching I met up with Julius, who casually informed me, “Well, I found your family.”

The next seven hours were spent in the spacious and comfortable research room at a long table, with Julius obtaining volume after volume of Jewish family records for the Freschl family of Bohemia from the Archive workers. Also doing research there was a fellow genealogist from the UK. Julius introduced us, and it turned out to be Celia Male, with whom I had been corresponding on the Boh-Mor list!



Carl Freschl, ca. 1885

A quickie lesson from Julius gave me some pointers in reading German script and a backdrop on which to build my family’s history. In 1726, the Habsburg ruler Charles VI, to enforce the quota of Jewish families, issued a so-called “Familianten” order, whereby only the first-born son of each Jewish family was given permission to marry. The permits could also be sold if there were no son to inherit them. The Familianten order was in force until 1848. In addition, by decree of the Austrian Emperor in 1787, all Jews living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (which included Bohemia) were required to adopt German surnames.

The first of the bulky, leather-bound volumes I examined showed that Sender Zodek, son of Zodek Belle (a surname based on the mother’s name – yes, a matronymic!), had adopted the name Alexander Fröschl. Why he chose Fröschl, a name meaning “little frog,” we will probably never know. He was evidently a first-born son, for the next folio showed his marriage, in 1785, to Chelle “oder Anna” (or Anna) Ginsburg. The place of their marriage was “Grossmorzin,” the German version of Morina, a small town just one kilometer from Revnice (and a new “nugget.”) The following

Continued on next page



*Judith in the Prague Archives.
Photo by Julius Müller.*

der Geburt			der Beschneidung			des Kindes			Name des Kindes			Name der Mutter			Name des Vaters				
Tag	Monat	Jahr	Tag	Monat	Jahr	Name	Gebohrten	Alter	Vater	Mutter	Gebohrten	Alter	Vater	Mutter	Gebohrten	Alter	Vater	Mutter	
17	Oktober	1815	17	Oktober	1815	Carl	Freischl	1	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl	Freischl

Carl Freschl, birth record. From photocopy, Prague Archives.

folio showed the names of his three sons (I later found the daughters, Pezka, Rosalia, Anna, and Judith). I recognized the second son, Abraham Fröschl, as my great-great-great grandfather! A few folios later revealed the process whereby Abraham, as the second son, had purchased his Familiant license in order to marry my great-great-great grandmother, Rosalia Fischl, on 9 July, 1815, also in Morina.

I eventually viewed birth, marriage and death records for many family members, but a gap remained in the family of my great-grandfather, Philip Freschl (the spelling kept evolving, down to the modern-day Czech version, Frešl). For some reason, it occurred to Julius to look in the Catholic Church census record of Jewish families. As I sat hunched over another dusty volume, grieving for yet another one-year-old baby snatched away by diphtheria, I looked up to see a smiling Julius, who was showing me a page, in elegant German script. "Look," he said, "the ganze mishpocha!" And there they were, six little Freschls, all born in house number 62 in Revnice. "I can take you there," he then declared. We immediately cancelled our trip to Budapest and decided to devote our entire time to the Czech Republic.

Contacts with the Prague Jewish Community

Julius had suggested that I contact Olga Sixtova at the Prague Jewish Community to see if I could get burial records for my family, which I decided to do the next day. It took us some time to find the office, located in a high-security apartment building near the Spanish Synagogue, but I did perfect my Czech direction-asking. There Ms. Sixtova suggested I contact Jaroslav (Achab) Heidler, a theater director who was also dedicated to searching for and cataloguing Jewish cemeteries throughout the Czech

Republic, with results to be seen (in Czech only for the moment) at www.chewra.com. I emailed Achab, who responded promptly, just under the wire of the Shabbat sundown, with a list of Freschls buried in Morina and the numbers of their graves, according to a system that he had devised. He also attached a photograph — of the tombstone of Sender Zodek!

That night we wanted to go to services and asked Julius for a recommendation. He suggested we go to the progressive synagogue, Beit Simcha, near the National Museum. It turned out to be a little basement-shul, with barely over a minyan, and a lay person conducting services. Our Julius turned out to be the president of the congregation. I had the unexpected experience of finding it easier to read the transliterated Hebrew in Czech phonetics than in English! During kiddush we were also amazed (but not really surprised, given the coincidences of the trip so far) to meet someone who was from Berkeley and living in Prague.

The Shtetl Trip

The following hot and clear Sunday morning Cy and I met Julius in front of the ultra-baroque Svaty Mikolas church and he drove us southwest of Prague, along the Berounka River, first to the tiny town of Dobrichovice, site of three Freschl birth-houses. We stopped on the main road to re-check our notes and saw that the first house we needed to find was house number 23, where some descendants of the first son of Alexander, Jonas Froeschl, were born. Then we looked up beside the road, and there, freshly painted, with flowers gracing the upper balcony, stood house number 23! The young man in the upper story called for his grandmother, who opened the door willingly to Julius' explanation of our presence; we were not Germans, Russians, Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons, just some Jews looking for our past. The

Continued on next page

Czech, cont. from page 9

grandmother did not recognize my family names and explained that the house had not belonged to Jews since early in the 20th century. This pattern was to be repeated at the next Dobrichovice house; the third house was no longer standing.

Next we drove, through fragrant apple orchards and fields of ripe rye, to Revnice, a town of about 3,000 people. We arrived in the middle of the harvest festival for the first pressing of the wine, as Julius explained to us, so we proceeded to mingle with the crowd in the pleasant, shaded central town square. I tried to imagine the town 150 years ago, with a substantial Jewish population, all in sepia tones, with my ancestors selling clothing from their store-front houses and perhaps peddling to nearby towns (so many branches of my family — the Alexanders, the Freschls, the Gattmans, the Philipsborns — have been in the garment business that I call them the “shmata kings”), but was brought back to reality by the ladies at the wine booth who were offering us samples. The wine tasted like apples and earth, and sipping it, I did feel that ancestral connection.

On one side of the square, a traditional Czech brass band played Germanic-like waltzes and polkas, alternating with the band on the other side of the square, a small Moravian ensemble consisting of three fiddles, bowed bass and cymbál (hammered dulcimer), that played shepherds’ tunes and mournful love songs with bent notes and reverse-dotted rhythms. As we crossed the square to hear the music more closely, on the front of a large, graceful house I spotted a sign that contained the word “Potrzeby.” I remembered seeing a word very similar to that one scattered through the *Mad* comics and magazines I read as a teenager and asked Julius what the word meant. He explained that it meant something like “supplies, gadgets, devices.”

After listening to the music, we began our search for Revnice birth homes of my Freschl family. “Let’s start with number 1,” suggested Julius, and as we crossed in front of the “Potrzeby” house, we looked up and saw Ěis 1 — Num. 1! My great-grandfather,

Carl Freschl, was born in this lovely house! Next we had to find the owner, so Julius asked a passerby if she knew who the owner of this house was. “Oh sure,” she replied, “He’s in the bar.” In what seemed like five seconds, Julius emerged from the bar with a pleasant-looking man, who happily let us into the house (whose front part is now occupied by a pet store and a beauty shop) and into the back yard, now a lawn, flower garden, and dog pen. I tried to catch and absorb what the man was telling Julius, while imagining the vegetables, chickens, and goats that my family had probably raised in that spot. Yes, the “Freshlova” family had lived there, left possibly at the beginning of the 20th century, and the house had been completely remodeled by ‘Architect Weiss.’ He pointed to the initials, “JJW” that adorned the upper balconies. Weiss had survived Terezin, returned, converted, and married a Christian woman.

Later, we found two other houses in Revnice, using notes from birth records and old hand-drawn maps, including the tiny number 62, home of the “ganze mishpocha.” In house number 23, Katherina Freschl, Abraham’s daughter, was born, and lived with her husband, a Mr. Polak. The old woman in number 23

who answered the doorbell remembered the Polak family, which had emigrated to America, and lovingly patted my cheek and hands as she told us without a drop of hypocrisy what wonderful people this Jewish family had been. I must say now that we did not encounter any evidence of anti-Semitism. In fact, three Revnice inhabitants received “Righteous Gentile” awards for having hidden and cared for four Jews in a hollow below the floor of their small house. Asked what made him risk his life for Jews, one of the awardees, Bohumil Bohdan, who had been sent to Buchenwald, said: “For that I needed only my heart.”

But now we had to find the synagogue/pizzeria. Everyone whom Julius asked registered complete disbelief on hearing that the pizzeria was a former synagogue. But there it was, with its typical arched windows. I felt for an indentation on the right door post that might indicate a past mezuzah but of course



Dobrichovice House #23.

Photo by Judith Berlowitz

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Yizkor Books — Town Memorial Books

How to Determine if There is a Book for Your Ancestral Town, and What You Might Learn from the Book

by Marian Rubin

Marian Rubin is the coordinator for the Hebrew to English translation of the Rzeszow (pronounced zhe-shuf), Poland Yizkor Book, part of JewishGen's Yizkor Book Translation Project.

What are Yizkor books?

Yizkor books were written after the Holocaust to memorialize the lost Jewish communities.

Most Yizkor books were written in Israel in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s by the natives of a town, both survivors and those who had made aliya (emigrated to Palestine) before the War. There are more than 1,500 Yizkor books, with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem holding the entire collection. In San Francisco, the Holocaust Center of Northern California, 14th Avenue and Balboa, holds a collection of over 450 books, one of the largest collections in the world.

What information do Yizkor books contain?

Yizkor books vary in size from fewer than 75 pages to more than 800 pages. Most have many photographs of people in the Jewish community.

The following are a few of the topics common to many of the books:

- The history of the Jewish community
- Religious life; religious education
- The rabbis of the town
- Community life and institutions
- History of the Jewish community between the First and Second World Wars
- Growth of Zionism in the town
- The community during the Holocaust
- Remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust

Printed at the end of this article are some resources for determining whether a Yizkor book exists for your town.

Can I find information about my family in a Yizkor book?

Many people will not find a reference to their families. However, there are many references to individuals and families in the books. A comment about your relative may appear incidentally in an article. If a relative was prominent in the community,

there is a good possibility that he is mentioned. Businessmen are often mentioned, as are scholars, rabbis, cantors and those active in the life of the community. A chapter about business in the community may name many (often by surname only) in the various occupations. Some books have group photos of members of organizations, with identification of those in the photos. Usually, there are lists of those who perished in the Holocaust, or another form of remembrance, such as memorial tributes from families.

In the Yizkor book for one of my communities, there are nuggets of information about individuals that might help a genealogist trace the family. In several instances, the name of the author of an article is shown with the city of residence after the War, i.e., Dr. Shlomo Horowitz, Haifa. An article about Reb Wolf Licht, the gabbai of the Beis Midrash, notes that his children left the city "for they did not see a future there. One went to France and the other to Spain." For someone trying to trace the Licht family, these may be important pieces of information. One article names four men who converted to Catholicism, changed their names and remained in Poland after the War. The author noted the new names. Until they find these clues, genealogists from these families might say, "I can't find any trace of my grandfather's brother."

The books are mostly in Hebrew and Yiddish. How can I find a translation?

Some books contain a section in English. If the book you want is at the Holocaust Center on 14th Avenue, look at the book, even if the card catalog shows the book is written in Hebrew and Yiddish. A book may have an English section that is not noted in the catalog.

The main source of translations is JewishGen's online Yizkor Book Translation project. Many books are being translated, with chapters being published online as the translations are completed.

Continued on next page

Yizkor Books, cont. from page 11

To see if your town has a Yizkor book in the JewishGen translation project, go to: www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/translations.html#Communities

If the Yizkor book from your ancestral town is being translated in JewishGen's Yizkor Book Translation Project, use JewishGen's "Search this website" box on JewishGen's homepage, www.jewishgen.org. Enter your relative's name in the box, and if he or she is mentioned in a Yizkor book article that has already been translated, the name should appear with a page number or page range that you can access on the Translation website. To get a rich portrait of Jewish life in the community, read the entire translation.

If your town has a Yizkor book and it is not in the JewishGen Translation project, consider starting a translation project. See the guidelines on JewishGen's Yizkor book Translation project website: www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/

How do I find out if a Yizkor Book exists for my town?

If there is no book for your town in JewishGen's translation project, try these three sources to learn if a book was written for your town:

■ To see whether a book for your town is in the collection of the Holocaust Center of Northern California, go to San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society website at www.jewishgen.org/sfbajgs and click on Yizkor Books at the Holocaust Center of Northern California.

President's Message, cont. from page 2

that the Society wanted to appear at the Palo Alto Street Fair, but our funds could not stretch to the cost of a booth, Jerry said without blinking an eye that he would underwrite the cost. Thus the Society was able to attend and continue our outreach to the South Bay Jewish community.

After Jerry's death I was contacted by Jerry's son Ozzie, with respect to the Society being named as beneficiary of any donation that friends and relatives might like to make in his name. This was to be printed in the obituary that appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Our thoughts are with Jerry's family.

As some of you know, our member Judy Baston is also a regular volunteer librarian at the new Jewish Community Library (JCL). Judy instituted a new service, whereby experienced researchers such as

■ Look up your town's entry in the book "Where Once We Walked" (WOWW). The letters "YB" indicate that a Yizkor book for the town exists. You can refer to WOWW at our SFBAJGS meetings and at the Jewish Community Library in San Francisco. (See page 18 for hours and location.)

■ Send an e-mail inquiry to the Yad Vashem library in Jerusalem: library@yadvashem.org.il

What can I do if there is no Yizkor Book for my town?

Most Yizkor books mention people and events in the surrounding towns, so look for Yizkor books written for towns near your town. Phil Spiegel, a member of the SFBAJGS, decided to write a Yizkor book for his town. His effort was so successful that Yad Vashem acknowledged his book as an official Yizkor Book. See Phil's report in *ZichronNote*, August 2003, page 10.

Why have only a few chapters of my town's Yizkor Book been translated?

Many Yizkor book translation projects have to raise money to pay their translators. The translation of the Rzeszow Yizkor book, which I coordinate, has been in progress for four years. It can cost \$8,000 to translate 600 pages. In addition, the pace of the translation depends on the translator's, coordinator's and proof-reader's time.

Contact the coordinator of your town's Yizkor book translation to see how you can help with a contribution.

Marian Rubin, Ron Arons, Dana Kurtz and I are available for "one-on-one" genealogical assistance for two hours on the first Sunday of each month. We use the various library books and go online in order to assist people who have that proverbial brick wall that needs knocking down. The pilot program for the first four months worked so well that this service will continue until June and then probably break for the summer.

Thanks to Jerry Hamerman's generous donation and our appearance at the Palo Alto Street Fair, David Silber of Foster City, who attended the event, came to the "one-on-one" session at the JCL in December. I think this proves that outreach is an important function of the Society.

The Board of the SFBAJGS wishes everyone a healthy and genealogically prosperous 2004.

Jeremy G. Frankel
President, SFBAJGS

PAST MEETINGS

Probate Records as a Source of Genealogical Information

by Marc Seidenfeld

Marc Seidenfeld is an attorney and has practiced law for more than 20 years. He coordinated the translation of the Yizkor Book for Dembitz (Dembica) Poland and has served as treasurer on the SFBAJGS Board of Directors.

Introduction

“Probate is the act or process of proving a will. The word itself comes from the Latin word for “truth.” It is the root of “probative” and other English words.

The “act or process of proving a will” means bringing a document before a duly authorized court or person and asking for official recognition that it is the last will and testament of a particular deceased person. Probate also refers to a judicial determination or act of a court having jurisdiction establishing the validity of a will.

In American law probate is now a general term used to include all matters of which probate courts have jurisdiction. That includes the administration of estates of persons who die without a will (intestate) as well as the administration of estates of persons who die with a will (testate), proceedings to establish the fact of death or dispose of the property of a missing person, proceedings to transfer to the spouse of a deceased person his or her share of community property, the administration of trusts, and quite a few other matters.

Every state in the United States has some version of a probate court. In California, the probate court is a department of each county’s Superior Court. In some states probate courts have different names. In New York, it is known as the Surrogate’s Court.

Probate records in California are (with rare exceptions) public and are maintained indefinitely by the courts. Each court also maintains a registry of wills listing each original will in its files. The original of every will is supposed to be filed with the court within 30 days of the decedent’s death (even if there is not going to be a probate proceeding) and these records are also open to the public.

In England, probate courts first came into existence in 1857. Before that, the entire subject was handled in the ecclesiastical courts. In the U.S. probate has always been a civil matter handled in the civil courts.

There are books available in genealogical libraries containing indexes to early wills filed in American courts, collections of the actual texts of wills filed in American courts, and collections of the actual texts of wills and probate records for many counties in the U.S.

The Sutro Library in San Francisco has some of these. Since most of these books concern wills and probates from the period before 1880 (when large scale Jewish migration to the U.S. began), they are unlikely to be of much help for most Jewish genealogists.

Probate Procedures in California

Each will is supposed to name a person or persons as executor of the will. Typically, the executor hires an attorney to handle the probate of the will (usually but not always, the attorney who wrote the will). A petition is filed with the probate court asking that the will be admitted to probate and a hearing is set for at least 30 days later. Every person named in the will and every person who would be an heir at law must be given notice of the filing of the petition. The names and addresses of those persons are attached to the petition and to the notice of hearing, so that the court and each person involved is made aware of who the heirs and beneficiaries are.

At the hearing, the will is usually admitted to probate, which means that the court has determined that the offered document is in fact the last will and testament of the decedent. The court most often appoints as executor the person named as such in the will.

The executor’s job is then to collect the assets of the estate, pay the decedent’s debts and taxes, wind up his or her affairs and then report back to the court and, with the court’s approval, distribute the assets of the estate to the beneficiaries or heirs.

To close the estate, the executor must file a petition with the Court describing everything he or she has done in administering the estate, stating that the estate is ready to be closed, and asking that the court order the distribution of the assets and that the estate be closed. All parties must be given 30 days advance notice.

Assuming that the court grants the petition, an order is then issued directing the executor to distribute the assets of the estate. The order will also list the beneficiaries and what they are to receive.

This is the briefest possible description of what is an extremely complex process, and it does not

Continued on next page

Probate, cont. from page 13

address what happens with the estate of a person who died intestate (although that process is similar in many ways).

In California probate takes a minimum of six months. Many things can cause a probate to be prolonged and some go on for years. There are will contests (different wills presented by different beneficiaries), disputes about whether property should be distributed in cash or in kind, whether the testator was competent or under undue influence at the time the will was made, the exact identification of poorly described property, etc. There may be a going business concern or real property in the estate which must be sold or liquidated.

The Value of Probate Records for Genealogists

Probate records are a gold mine for genealogists. Typical wills start out by declaring that the testator (the person making the will) is married or unmarried, stating the name of the spouse, whether or not the person has been divorced and if so, the name of the former spouse and the date and place of divorce, the names of his or her children and often their ages, and the names and relationships of other beneficiaries.

The petition for probate filed with the court by the executor will contain the names and addresses of each of the beneficiaries and heirs, state whether they are over 18 or not, and list their relationship to the decedent.

The report of the executor and petition to close the estate will describe in considerable detail the size and nature of the estate and again, list each of the beneficiaries and their addresses and state what each of them is to receive.

How to Access Probate Records

To access these records you usually have to go to the courthouse of the county in which the probate occurred and ask for them in the court clerk's office. Probate is usually, but not always, done in the county in which the decedent resided at the time of death (it can also be done in a county where the decedent owned real property). Look at the death certificate to determine the county of residence at the time of death and check with that county's court first.

Most courts in urban areas of California are not easily accessible by telephone. If you are lucky and can get through to the clerk's office by telephone, ask for the probate clerk and see if he or she can tell you if a probate has been done for the person you are seeking or if there is a will on file. If a probate has been done, get the case number from the clerk.

You are more likely to find what you are looking for if you actually go to the courthouse. The courts usually identify files by case numbers and not by names. If at all possible, bring the case number with you when you visit the courthouse. If you don't have a case number, see if they have an index by name. Most probates are done under legal names, not nicknames. Be aware that if the probate is more than a few years old, it is unlikely that the actual file will be in the courthouse. It is more likely to be stored in an off-site warehouse, and the clerk will have to order the file for you. Bring money with you because there is a fee for this service, which usually takes three or four days. In San Francisco you can pay extra and get the file the next work day.

Be prepared to stand in line to talk to a clerk to get the form to request the file. You will have to stand in line again to request that the file be ordered from the warehouse if it is not present in the courthouse. You may well have to stand in line again to pay the fee because only some of the clerks can accept money. Bring cash. Some courts will not accept checks from non-attorneys.

When you do examine the file, bring paper and pen with you to take notes because the court will charge fifty cents to a dollar for every page they copy for you.

Be aware of reduced hours in clerks' offices. The records room in the San Francisco courthouse (which is at 400 McAllister Street, corner of Polk Street, Room 103) opens at 10 a.m. and on Wednesdays, the entire clerks' office closes at noon.

In short, court clerks' offices are not particularly user friendly. Nevertheless, if the records are there, you can inspect them and learn a lot about your family.

Some San Francisco probate records are available online. These are searchable by name as well as case number. The court's website is a www.sftc.org/ If you are searching for relatively recent San Francisco records, check the website before going down to the courthouse.

Texas Probate Records Available On Line

By Rodger Rosenberg, former president and program chairman of SFBAJGS

If your relatives died in Texas, probate records may be found at the following website:

three-legged-willie.org/texas.htm

A W.P.A. project of the 1940's generated indexes for probate records housed in at least 30 Texas counties. This project brings 11 of those counties together into a single alphabetical listing. Over 26,000 probate cases are represented in this data.

How to Work with Courthouse Staff

by George G. Morgan: "Along Those Lines."

Author, columnist and speaker George G. Morgan writes an award-winning weekly genealogy column, "Along Those Lines," published on the **Ancestry.com** website.

I wish I had a dime for every letter I've written to courthouses over the course of my years of genealogical research. I could probably take a nice vacation-and do some more genealogy research. (Yes, I have MY priorities right. When was the last time YOU took a vacation that didn't involve something to do with genealogy?)

My experiences with courthouse staff have been mixed, as I'm sure yours have been too. Some courthouse employees were very helpful, even to the point of going way above and beyond the call of duty. Others, however, were more problematic. Let's not say that they were nasty or uncooperative, because I don't know what was going on in the background. They may have had directions from their supervisor not to waste time with genealogists, or they may have had personal problems of their own. Regardless of the situation, I've learned that there really is a right way and a wrong way to work with staff to gain access to the materials you need. In "Along Those Lines." this week, I want to share some tips to help you.

The Golden Rule

Courthouses are no different than all other branches of government these days, suffering from economic shortfalls and budget constraint. As a result, staff and clerks in courthouses clerks who work in courthouses are overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. Let's face the facts. These people are under a lot of stress and they are subjected to a lot of grief in the course of a day. Too many members of the public treat these public servants like slaves and not like the invaluable, knowledgeable, and helpful citizens they really can be.

I have found that the "Golden Rule" goes a long way toward turning a sour experience into a positive exchange. You remember the "Golden Rule," don't you? Treat others as you would want them to treat you. Put yourself in the place of the person on the receiving end of your communication, regardless of whether you write a letter or e-mail, telephone the courthouse, or make an in-person visit.

Begin your letter, call, or visit on a positive and friendly note. When sending written correspondence, make your request less terse and impersonal. I often start a letter with the following paragraph:

"I am searching for several documents about members of my family and I hope you will be able to help me. I recognize that you have a heavy workload in the courthouse and that there are many records there, and that my request may require searching through older records which may be in storage, perhaps off-site away from your facilities. However, I really would appreciate your assistance in helping me access and obtain copies of these materials for members of our family."

If you call or visit the courthouse, always begin with a smile on your face. Yes, even a smile on your face while speaking on the phone can be heard in your voice. A smile and a friendly greeting can set the stage for a positive exchange. Even if you get a surly type of response initially, do your best to maintain a positive tenor for the exchange. It really can pull the other person into the mood. Start the conversation with a statement such as, "I know you are very busy here, but you are the expert in this area and I need your expertise and help." You're showing respect and setting an expectation of success all at once. You'd be surprised at how that changes a scowl into an interested expression and gets someone's attention.

Be Professional

Besides the verbal abuse staff and clerks receive every day, they also must address what certainly must seem like a lot of stupid questions by people who are unprepared. As a genealogist, I would expect that you've organized and prepared yourself for writing your letter, making a call, or visiting the courthouse. Don't just show up and say, "Do you have any documents here in the courthouse for my ancestors?" You should have an idea of what documents you want to search for that relate to specific ancestors as well as the department of the courthouse in which you will inquire. For example, in the United States you would visit the probate court's office for wills and estate packets, the recorder of deeds for property records and plat maps, the tax assessor's office for tax lists, the clerk of court for jury lists, the election commissioner's office for voter registrations, and other offices for access to marriage and divorce records. If you are seeking birth records, death certificates and coroner's

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reports, burial permits, adoption records, guardianship records, or other materials, it pays to know beforehand who to contact and where that office is located.

Before you make contact in any form, take a few minutes to learn about the organization of the governmental entity you are researching. I often visit **VitalRec.com**. This site provides access to governmental information for all states, counties, and U.S. territories as well as some foreign countries. The link at this site labeled "Guidelines" provides excellent advice for requesting information. If I click on the State of Georgia, for example, I will find a link to the Georgia Vital Records Office. I'll also find a link for County Offices. If I click on Gwinnett County, I will find links to that county's official government website, and there I can visit the list of departments and learn more about what organization does what. There is a specific link to the county courts too, and there is a very detailed list of courts and you can research each one's area of responsibilities.

For those counties without a direct link to a website, you can always use your favorite search engine and type the name of the county and the state, such as: "grayson county" tx

The quotation marks around the county name make it an exact phrase, and the addition of the abbreviation for the state of Texas, help me narrow my search to quickly locate the county website.

While you may not always immediately locate the precise information you need, you can always call the main telephone number of the county offices and they will direct you.

Once you know what department or division handles what materials, prepare your inquiry. Be able to describe exactly what you want: name (including nicknames), date(s), location, type of document, and/or what you are trying to establish. The recipient of your request will appreciate a concise, well-worded explanation and can much more easily accomplish the task of locating the materials. If he or she has to be a mind reader to determine what you need, the chances are that you both will be disappointed with the experience and the results.

Ask Open-Ended Questions

I've learned that some of the people in courthouses seem reluctant to talk. Are they shy? Are they afraid of genealogists? If not, why do I sometimes get these monosyllabic answers?

There have been times when I've phrased a question in such a way that I can almost guarantee

that I'll learn nothing of substance, such as, "Do you have the marriage records for this county for 1908?" I'll either get a "Yes," followed by more information about where and how I can access them, or a "No." Nothing more, just a "No."

What you must learn to do is ask open-ended questions. Those are the ones that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. I could restructure my question above to say, "Where in the courthouse or here in the county would I find the marriage records for 1908?" and am much more likely to obtain useful information. If the response is, "I don't know," your next question should be, "Who would know that information and where will I find that person?"

When writing a letter or e-mail and requesting information or copies of documentary materials, always include a sentence that says, "If you do not have these materials in your office, could you please tell me who and where I can contact in order to locate them?" Just asking the question places a burden on the person who ordinarily might not think to provide that information to give you more details. Also, always provide a SASE to encourage a response.

Be Grateful

Your mother was right; always say "please" and "thank you." Over the years, I have written many short thank-you notes to people in courthouses who have sent me information, sometimes much more than I had requested or hoped to obtain. Since I have more than one ancestor in a given county, I can expect to contact the same courthouse any number of times in the course of my research. I sent a written thank-you note to a clerk in one particular courthouse in Georgia. She told me later that she'd never received a note from anyone before! Over the years, we've been in contact a number of times. She always responds quickly to my requests and on a few occasions has sent me copies at no charge. Imagine that!

Summary

Positive experiences with people working behind the desks and in the records backrooms of courthouses are possible. Approach the people with respect, and be prepared to tell them exactly what you need. Be sure to let the persons you deal with know that you sincerely appreciate their help. You never know what that small gesture will mean to them or to your research in the future.

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there was no sign; the building had been completely refurbished. But then I noticed that Julius had moved to what seemed to be the property next door, and was peering over the fence. "Look," he exclaimed, "Here's the entrance." And indeed, the elegant arched doorway seemed to be the main entrance. We rang the doorbell, which was soon answered by a carpenter and his wife. They had bought this half of the building — which had been used as a theater after a fire in the synagogue — for a carpenter's shop. We asked to see inside, and they kept asking if we were going to take it back. "Nikdy! Nikdy!" ("Never!"), Julius kept repeating, as I thought, "But I wish we could..."

Before heading for Morina, our final stop, we dropped by the cemetery in Revnice to see if perhaps a Jew had been buried there. We found some Jewish names, nothing definite; but then, below an enormous cross, Julius spotted the tomb of the family of Architect Weiss!

"The Grave is Not the Goal"

Next we reached sleepy, dusty Morina, birth town of my earliest ancestors. From Achab's map we found one birth home and what remained of the synagogue with little difficulty, but were having trouble locating the cemetery. A little boy passed us on the street and cheerfully greeted us: "Dobrý den!" At the end of the street he took the hand of an older man and they turned back towards us. Julius asked the man if by any chance he knew where there was a Jewish cemetery. "Oh," the man answered, "my son-in-law is the caretaker of the Jewish cemetery. The Jewish Community in Prague pays him to do it." He turned and pointed to a hillside on the outskirts of the village. "It's up there."

We arrived at the foot of the hill, which we had to climb on foot. Julius pulled a kippah out of the trunk of his car and handed a cotton shtetl cap to Cy. Picking our way through the crumbling stone walls, I wondered what the little cemetery would have looked like without the caretaker. Many stones were falling, and weeds covered others. We looked at

Achab's chart and tried to match his orderly designations with the apparent chaos before us. Then Julius handed me the photo showing the grave of Sender Zodek (Alexander Froeschl), saying, "This is your task: to find the gravestone of your ancestor." I hardly looked at the photo, simply turned around,

walked farther up, and there it was. Only slightly disfigured, the Hebrew inscription showed that both Alexander and Anna were buried there. I placed a stone, and then had another impulse: I put photographs of our daughter, Ana, and grandson, Alejandro, beneath the stone. Julius asked me, "Did you know these names before naming the children?" Of course, no one did.

We next found graves for Abraham and Rosalia (Reyzl). Julius and Cy walked back out through the walls, leaving me to pray and weep for my newfound family and for those whose graves will never be found.

Now back home in Berkeley, I continue to search for my Bohemian ancestors (with Julius' assistance) and to extend my search through the branches for more of my "shmata kings."



Revnice synagogue/pizzeria.

Photo by Judith Berlowitz

Sources:

Beit Simcha, Prague

www.bejtsimcha.cz/

Beit Terezin

www.cet.ac.il/terezin/dapeijane98.htm

Günter Bartoš Photography

gunterbartos.net/fotoserie.htm

Jewish Family History Centre

www.jewishgen.org/bohmor/familianten.html

Wittmann Tours

www.wittmann-tours.com/

PAST MEETINGS



Dana Kurtz conducts the Beginners' session.



Stephen Morse explains his many research tools.



Participants listen intently during a workshop session.



Robinn Magid presents tips on travel to ancestral shtetls.

First Workshop in JCHS is a Success

The SFBAJGS Annual Workshop, held in November, 2003 at the Jewish Community High School in San Francisco, was a good fit for the new site. The many attendees enjoyed and learned from the presentations, geared to beginners as well as intermediates and experts. Among other activities, the Jewish Community Library was available for use, translators were on hand, and valuable contacts were made in the snack and shmooze room.

Library Hours for SFBAJGS Resources

The SFBAJGS has distributed many of its reference materials among the libraries at its three meeting places. These libraries also keep books and periodicals in their own collections that are of interest to Jewish genealogists.

**Jewish Community Library,
1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco**

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.;
Tuesdays, 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.; Thursdays, 12 p.m.
to 8 p.m.; Sundays, 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. Call (415)
567-3327 for parking instructions.

**Congregation Beth Am,
26790 Arastradero Road, Los Altos Hills**

Tuesday through Thursday afternoons 3:30 p.m.
to 5:30 p.m.; Open Sunday during religious school.

**Berkeley-Richmond JCC,
1414 Walnut, Berkeley**

Monday through Thursday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.;
Wednesday 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

All of these libraries are closed Fridays,
Saturdays and Jewish holidays.

COMPUTER/ONLINE NEWS

JewishGen Launches All UK Database

By Warren Blatt, *JewishGen*

JewishGen, in conjunction with the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, has launched the "All U.K. Database," now online at www.jewishgen.org/databases/UK. This is a multiple database search facility, containing over 50,000 entries referring to people in the United Kingdom — England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These databases have been contributed by the "Jewish Communities and Records — United Kingdom Special Interest Group" (JCR-UK) and individual donors. The JewishGen "All U.K. Database" allows a person to search all of the following resources simultaneously:

- United Kingdom Marriages, 1838 to 1972: from all areas of the United Kingdom.
- Wales Census Returns: 1,800 records from the

1851 and 1891 censuses.

- London Jews (pre-1850): over 9,000 Jewish traders based in London.
- Jewish Traders/Businesses in London - 1769-1839: names of over 5,000 Jewish traders based in London.
- JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF): more than 10,000 entries by Jewish genealogists researching families in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR): 25,000 records from cemeteries within the United Kingdom.

The database is a work in progress and new entries are being added regularly. These databases are made possible only with the working involvement of many volunteers and your financial contributions.

More Records Added to All Hungary Database

By Warren Blatt, *JewishGen*

JewishGen has added over 30,000 records to the JewishGen "All Hungary Database", located at www.jewishgen.org/databases/Hungary

There are three new and updated datasets:

1. Updates to the 1869 Census database, including all Jews listed in Saros megye (Saros county) as well as Jews from Vranov and Cigand in Zemplen megye (Zemplen county). There are now a total of 13,472 records in the 1869 Census database.
2. A new database containing transcriptions of tax

lists and census lists other than the main census databases of 1828, 1848 and 1869. These records include records from the Hungarian SIG's Trencin census transcription project, as well as records moved from the Hungarian SIG's website into the All Hungary Database. There are a total of 8,840 records in this database, ranging from 1795 to 1850. All records include surnames.

3. A new database containing 8,644 names of Hungarian Jewish concentration camp survivors, which were published in 1945 in the Hungarian periodical "Hirek az Elhurcoltakrol".

Search for Passport Applications On Line

By Renee Steinig, *JewishGen*

Passport applications are chock full of information. Copies of records from 1925 on are available from www.travel.state.gov/passport_records.html or by mail from the Research and Liaison Section, Passport Services, Department of State, 1111 19th St. N.W. Room 500, Washington DC 20524-1705. The cost of a search is \$45. Unless the owner of the passport was born 100 or more years ago, his or her death certificate is required.

Records created before 1925 are at the National Archives. They can be found online at www.archives.gov/research_room/genealogy/research_topics/passport_applications

[_microfilm.html](#). Microfilmed copies of indexes and applications are also at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. For film numbers, go to www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp and do a subject search for Passports - United States.

Two things to keep in mind:

- U.S. passenger arrival records list travelers as well as immigrants. Check them to determine dates of travel.
- Years ago passports were valid for much shorter periods of time than they are now. A frequent traveler might have several applications on record.

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Contributors to this Issue

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