



זכרונות ZichronNote

The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

Volume XXVII, Number 1

February 2007

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.

Mon. Feb. 26, Los Altos Hills: *A Trip to Prague.* Long-time SFBAJGS member Jerry Delson will share his experiences from a recent trip. Includes video and an interview with Czech genealogy specialist Dr. Julius Muller. In 2001 Dr. Muller established Toledot (Jewish Family History Center), a public interest institution to gather and develop genealogy databases and provide research tools for Jewish records dispersed in the state archives of the Czech Republic.

Sun. March 18, San Francisco: *Program to be determined.*

Mon. April 16, Los Altos Hills: Irene Reti, Director of the Regional History Project at the University Library at UC Santa Cruz, will present *Listening to the past: An Introduction to Oral History for the Family Historian.* She is the chair of the publications committee of the national Oral History Association, which recently published *Oral History for the Family Historian: A Basic Guide.* Reti is also the author of *The Keeper of Memory*, a memoir about her life as the daughter of two Holocaust refugees, and the publisher of an oral history focusing on memories of Kindertransport and many other titles.

Sun. April 22, Berkeley: *Program to be determined.*

Sun. May 6, San Francisco — Note: location changed. *Visit to Holocaust Center of Northern California*, 121 Stuart Street, Suite 10.

FUTURE MEETING DATES:

Mon. June 18, Los Altos Hills

Sun. June 24, Berkeley

Sun. July 15, San Francisco

Sun. Aug. 19, Berkeley

Mon. Aug. 20, Los Altos Hills

Sun. Sept. 16, San Francisco

Mon. Oct. 15, Los Altos Hills

Sun. Oct. 21, Berkeley

Sun. Nov. 18, San Francisco

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.

Display Advertising is accepted at the discretion of the editor. Rates per issue: business card-sized (3-1/2 x 2 inch)-\$10, quarter-page - \$20, half-page - \$35, full-page - \$60. Ads must be camera-ready and relate to Jewish genealogy.

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
On Deadlines and Details

By Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

Deadlines, like sentences of death, are wonderful things for focusing the mind — especially mine, when the editor keeps sending me reminders to write the next President's Column. I admit that not only am I a master procrastinator, but I need a spark, something to get me going. I need to see, hear or observe some little thing I can mold, expand and expound upon. What is it this time around? Well, it's me. Today I am writing about myself.

It began when another editor wrote and asked if I would write something. It could be about anything you want, she said. Hmm, as anyone who really knows me, choice is not something that sits well with me. Too many choices and it all unfocuses into a blur. This reminds me of when I first came to America, back in 1987. I spent half a year traveling up and down the east coast, exploring U.S. history through its nineteenth century canals. (Canals were my obsession before genealogy took hold of my life.)

I planned this six-month sojourn, staying mostly in youth hostels and traveling by Greyhound bus. Sometimes to stretch my finances I would travel overnight, thereby saving a night's accommodation fee. Somewhere in America, in the middle of the night, the bus would pull off the highway for a pit-stop. In this "middle of nowhere" the passengers would stagger off, their eyes blinking as they became accustomed to the garish incandescence of the local burger joint. Behind the counter was a huge menu board listing a zillion items stretched across the wall. I stood there, slack-jawed, contemplating names and menu items that never existed in the England where I grew up. Somehow I survived and 20 years later I'm still here, occasionally still slack-jawed at menus and now at DVD rental stores as I try to contemplate the evening's entertainment.

The piece I am attempting to write is a memoir of sorts. It focuses on my paternal grandfather and the day I "met him," although he died eight years before I was born. That's the teaser, as they call it in the movie business. As I kept writing, remembering new things I had forgotten, I ended up putting more about myself into the story as it related to my grandfather, my father and me, and the printing business that linked the three of us. You could say that there's ink running through our veins. My father and grandfather were both printers, and I spent fourteen years as a cartographer.

So all this got me thinking: here we are spending inordinate amounts of time chasing down details of

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SOCIETY NEWS

Welcome, New Members

Martha Millermkm@sonic.net
 Martin Sherman ...martin_sherman@sbcglobal.net
 Hal Smith.....hmstahoe@sbcglobal.net

E-mail Updates

Karen & Gerald Apell.....J190618@comcast.net
 Treva Jo Marcus.....tjm@sftmail.com

Please send updates to **dlkurtz@ix.netcom.com**

Donations from SFBAJGS for 2006

The following are the donations and contributions made by the SFBAJGS in 2006 to organizations that assist this organization and genealogical research in general:

- Mr. Joseph Pham,
Custodian at Congregation Beth Am\$50
- Congregation Beth Am.....\$100
26790 Arastradero Rd., Los Altos Hills, CA 94022
- Berkeley-Richmond JCC.....\$100
1441 Walnut Street, Berkeley, CA 94709-1404
- Jewish Community High School of the
Bay.....\$100
1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco, CA 94115-4003
- JewishGen.....\$250
(Host of our website and an indispensable resource)
2951 Marina Bay Dr., Suite 130-472
League City, TX 77573
- Western Jewish History Center\$250
(Donation towards the filming of the Sinai Memorial Chapel records)
2911 Russell Street, Berkeley, CA 94705
- LDS Family History Center in Oakland\$500
for 59 reels of the 1892 New York City "Police Census." (Special donation in honor of SFBAJGS 25th anniversary)

2007 Membership Dues Now Payable

All members were mailed a membership renewal letter and form. If you receive a paper version of ZichronNote and you have not paid this year's membership, your address label will have a yellow stripe on it. Send us your \$23 membership renewal — and a donation if you wish. If you receive ZichronNote in pdf form, you will be reminded by e-mail if you have not yet paid your dues. For those who have already sent in their renewals and contributions, a big thank you.

SFBAJGS Family Finder Update

The surnames and towns being researched by our newest members are listed below. This database is maintained for the benefit of our membership. If you have a correction or update, please write to SFBAJGS at P.O. Box 471616, San Francisco, CA 94147 or send an e-mail to Dana Kurtz at dlkurtz@ix.netcom.com.

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Town, Country</u>	<u>Member</u>
JUSTMAN(N)	Anywhere	Sherman, Martin (Sunnyvale)
KAPLAN	Lithuania; New York	Miller, Martha
MILLER	Baltimore, MD; New York; San Francisco	Miller, Martha
RAM(M)	Biala, Bialystok, Poland	Sherman, Martin (Sunnyvale)
SCHMIED	Zaskevichi, Belarus	Smith, Hal
SHERMAN	Miedzyrzec, Poland	Sherman, Martin (Sunnyvale)
SIEGEL	Romania	Sherman, Martin (Sunnyvale)
SPIEGEL	Romania	Sherman, Martin (Sunnyvale)
STERN	France	Sherman, Martin (Sunnyvale)
STERNFIELD	France	Sherman, Martin (Sunnyvale)
WEINER	Shpikov, Russia	Sherman, Martin (Sunnyvale)

Note: Two people with the same name — Martin Sherman — recently joined the SFBAJGS. One is from Sunnyvale; the other, from San Francisco.

CALENDAR, cont.

More Genealogy Events

Regional

Thurs., Mar. 8, 7 p.m. **Contra Costa County Genealogical Society**. Nancy Peterson talks about how to research pre-1906 San Francisco. Her book, *Raking the Ashes*, specifies which records survived the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 and suggests strategies for dealing with record losses. LDS Church, 3700 Concord Blvd., Concord. For information visit www.cccgs.org

Wed., Mar. 28, 7:30 p.m. **Marin County Genealogical Society. WPA Depression Era Jobs Turn Into Great Gifts for Genealogists**. Presented by Pamela Dallas. The Works Project Administration was responsible for employing more than eight million Americans. Many of them transcribed and created records valuable to genealogists today. Discover what records were created, where to find them and how to use them. Marin Family History Center, 220 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael. For information call (415) 479-2200 or visit www.maringensoc.org

State and National

Sun., Mar. 18, 10 a.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Sacramento. The Jewish Calendar Demystified**. Steve Morse will focus on the Jewish calendar, which is important to genealogists because Jewish vital records and tombstone engravings use Jewish dates. Morse plans to help the audience gain an appreciation for what's involved in calculating Jewish dates. A method for converting between Jewish dates and secular dates will be given, and errors in the Jewish and secular calendars demonstrated. Albert Einstein Residence Center, 1935 Wright Street, Sacramento. For more information visit www.jgss.org or leave a message at 916-486-0906 ext. 361.

Sun., April 23, 1 to 4 p.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles. Recreating an Eastern European Shtetl**. Presented by Nancy Biederman, David Hoffman, and Sonia Hoffman. Valley Beth Shalom Synagogue, 15739 Ventura Blvd., Encino. For more information visit www.jewishgen.org/jgsla

July 12-14, **Federation of East European Family History Societies (FEEFHS)** annual conference in Salt Lake City. For information visit www.feefhs.org/.

Genealogy Workshops Scheduled at NARA

The 2007 schedule for workshops at the National Archives and Records Administration has been announced. All workshops will be held on Fridays, and all are scheduled to take place between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. except for the program on March 23, which will end at 12 noon.

- March 23 - Census Records Research
- April 20 - Passenger Arrival and Naturalization Records
- May 18 - E-VET Records Research
- June 8 - Military - Part I, Revolutionary to Civil War
- June 22 - Military Part II, Spanish-American to Viet-Nam
- July 20 - Federal Land Records
- Aug. 17 - Preserving Your History
- Sept. 14 - Federal Land Records

All workshops will be held at the NARA - Pacific Region (San Bruno), 1000 Commodore Drive, San Bruno, CA 94066, and will be taught by Rose Mary Kennedy, Genealogist Specialist. To register and reserve a space, contact her at (650) 238-3488. Fees are \$15 payable in advance.

One-on-One Help Sessions Continue

One-on-One Help sessions continue from noon to 2 p.m. March 4, April 1, May 6 and June 3 at the Jewish Community Library, 1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco (on the campus of the Jewish Community High School of the Bay).

Bring your materials and take advantage of the library's extensive reference collection and Internet connection to countless searchable databases, together with one-on-one guidance from experienced genealogists. Veteran researchers from the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society will help with brainstorming and individual problem-solving.

Access free parking on Pierce Street, between Ellis and Eddy Streets. Registration is requested but not required. Call (415) 567-3327, ext. 704. For more information e-mail library@bjsf.org

Register for 2007 IAJGS Conference

Registration is now open for the 2007 Conference in Salt Lake City, scheduled for July 15 through 20 at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center. Visit the conference website at www.slc2007.org to register, book rooms at the Hilton, and learn what the conference and Salt Lake City have to offer.

Passports and Passport Applications

By Jeff Lewy

Jeff Lewy is a retired airport consultant who became interested in genealogy to make sense of family photos going back four generations in the U.S. and to learn about the people in the photos. Most of his family lines had settled in Chicago by 1870 (having arrived in the U.S. in the 1840s and 50s) after living in Alabama. His family tree keeps growing and now extends back six generations in some cases. Jeff is interested in **KAHNWEILERS** in Rhineland Pfalz, **LEWYS** in Ostrow (now near Poznan, Poland), **LOEWYS** in Bohemia and **LOEWENTHALS** in Mecklenburg.

I found many details about a number of my relatives from old passport applications. The application is a very informative document – more useful than the passport itself. I have been able to locate “new” relatives, and more precise information on immigration, family members, and occupations from this data.

Passport not required before 1945

The U.S. formally required all citizens to have a passport for international travel in 1945. Passports were required only in a few earlier years, such as during part of World War I. However, it issued passports on request as early as 1795. Many people applied for and used passports during the 19th century either because it was easier, or because a visa was required by other countries and a passport was a convenient way to certify the bearer of the visa.

Women and minor children might not have their own passports, but would travel on the husband’s or father’s passport. The application included information on all travelers covered by the passport.

Passport period of validity

Early passports were valid for a variable period of time, sometimes a few months, sometimes up to two years, so a traveling merchant might have a series of applications. Later applications sometimes just referenced earlier ones.

Information in the application

Early applications might have only the name, address and age of the applicant. However, by the end of the 1850s, the application already required:

- Name
- Home address and/or business address
- Certification of citizenship (native-born or naturalized)
- If naturalized, date and court where naturalized
- Birth date or age
- Birth place
- Occupation
- Purpose of the trip

- Countries visited
- Personal characteristics (age, height)
- Description of personal characteristics (forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, chin, hair, complexion, face)
- Signature
- Declaration of support of the U.S.
- Constitution

By 1890, the application adds:

- Family members to be included on passport
- Place and date of birth
- If not native born, date, port and ship name of immigration arrival (Might show father’s arrival if the applicant arrived when a minor)
- Location of permanent residence
- Occupation
- Intended date of return to the U.S.
- Certificate of a witness to the identity of the applicant, with address (often another family member or business associate)
- Address where passport should be sent

Starting sometime before 1920, the application also included a photo of the applicant. I have a number of formal photos of relatives I now know were taken to be used for passport applications!

The application file might also include any other information the applicant provided, such as cover letters with the reason for the trip or the need for rapid processing, supporting requests from others to issue the passport, and certificates from family members where data on birth or immigration was not otherwise available.

Most applications were two pages – some were several pages longer.

Applications at the National Archives

The National Archives has microfilms of almost all passport indexes and applications as early as 1795. The applications are available to the public through

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27th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy

Sunday, July 15—Friday, July 20

Hilton City Center

Salt Lake City, Utah

**Network with international
researchers, experts and archivists, and
access the world's largest genealogical library**

World-famous speakers

Film Festival

Focused SIG programming

DNA & Genetics Track

Computer Workshops

Breakfast with Experts

Special Photo Exhibit

On-site Resource Room

Free WIFI Access

For all event details, program and registration

www.slc2007.org

Register by May 1 for reduced rates.



Jewish Genealogy Month

Nisan 5767

March 20—April 18, 2007

Celebrate
your family
heritage
during
Jewish
Genealogy
Month
and all year
round.

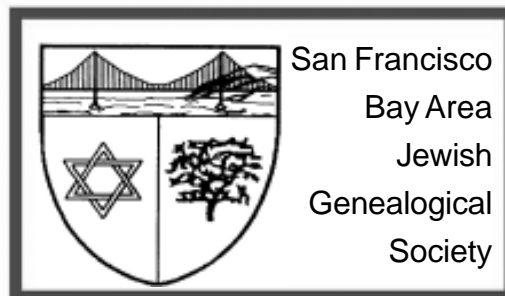
“[This] is unique to the Bible in the literature of the ancient world. No other people, as far as is known, had a genealogical concept of history. Clan, tribal and national relationships are expressed through the ascription of common ancestry to a single individual, the eponymous ancestor.”

Nahum M. Sarna.

Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel.
1966



www.iajgs.org



San Francisco
Bay Area
Jewish
Genealogical
Society

Libraries Now Offer Much More Than Books

Public libraries now offer online databases useful to genealogists, many of which can be accessed from your home computer. All you need is a library card.

By Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

One way libraries are making themselves more useful and relevant in the 21st century is by the acquisition of online databases. The advantage of these online services is that you don't have to get dressed, drive downtown and fight for a parking space. You can do all of this from the comfort of your own home and your own computer. All you need is a library card and your patron number (usually on the reverse of the library card, under the bar code).

Perhaps I ought to repeat here what has been mentioned at many of our meetings: there is a California law stating that if you are a resident of California, you can join any public library system in California. Hence, I belong to various Bay Area library systems. I also have a life membership in the Cal Alumni Association, and one of the benefits is a library card. (If anyone ever steals my wallet, they're in for a big surprise: no credit cards, just library cards!)

As you might imagine, there are a whole host of wonderful databases that can help advance your genealogical research. Mostly you will find "fill-in" background information, material that will provide contextual information such as a better historical, religious, geographical (fill in the blank) perspective. However, in some cases you may actually find real information on various family members. So exactly what online services do these libraries offer?

Alameda County

Under the genealogy heading, there are only two databases offered. One is the Ancestry Library edition — which, according to the terms of use, can only be accessed in the libraries. The other is HeritageQuest, with its standard suite of services. These include the US Federal Censuses; 25,000 family and local history articles; the PERSI index, and Bounty Land records.

City of Berkeley

While the Public Library system does have a wide range of electronic databases, few are geared to the genealogist. However, they do have Newsbank, which, as the description states, includes full text access to *Oakland Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Berkeley Voice*, *San Jose Mercury News* and *West County Times*, as well as hundreds of other newspapers throughout the United States. No other Bay Area library system that I have looked at appears to have this database.

Berkeley also subscribes to the ProQuest suite of five major newspapers, including the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*. Note: these are current newspapers, not historical ones. Some date back to about 1980; precise coverage varies with each newspaper.

City of Oakland

Oakland doesn't have much to offer genealogists although they do subscribe to the ProQuest current newspapers as does Berkeley. They also have an Oakland Newspaper Index and an archive of *Oakland Tribune* articles but these only date back to 2001. (Hint: Ancestry has a word searchable *Oakland Tribune* dating back to the turn of the century. However, the service doesn't highlight where the searched word is in the newspaper page.)

Oakland subscribes to Ancestry Library, but again, as a condition of use it can only be accessed in the libraries. Oakland also subscribes to HeritageQuest.

City of San Francisco

San Francisco has the largest and most genealogically appropriate databases. On the left side of the home page you will see the phrase *Articles and Databases*. Click on this and a list will appear of all the databases available from home. (Caveat: SFPL also subscribes to Ancestry, the Library edition, but this is only available at the libraries.) The database list can be organized in various ways such as by category; one of these is "History and Genealogy." Here you will find:

History Resource Center (US, 1893 to present) and History Resource Center (World, 1980 to present), both offered by Gale.

The Heritage Quest suite of services, which includes the US Census, PERSI Freedman's Bank records, local and family histories.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Here are 660,000 high resolution, detailed maps covering principally the business downtown areas of cities in California. Fire insurance maps were first created in 1867. Using a highly detailed and specialized legend, insurance companies could see what materials were used in a building structure, how many stories there were, whether the roof was peaked or flat, and

Continued on next page

Libraries, cont. from page 8

numerous other structural details. This allowed them to assess the premium based upon the building's structural materials.

I found the maps extremely useful when researching families in Chico, Butte County, during the latter part of the Gold Rush era. I had discovered that a Jewish immigrant was listed as a tailor in the 1883 Chico city directory. The 1884 downtown map depicted only one business described as a tailor shop, so I felt confident saying that this was his business.

Other useful databases include the *New York Times*, word searchable from 1851 to 2003. Additionally ProQuest offers its own newspaper database, covering 300 US and international newspapers from 1979 to date. There are also Russian newspapers dating back 25 years. JSTOR is an unusual but potentially useful tool, full text academic journals dating back to 1838.

Finally, one of the most fun databases to search or browse through is San Francisco Public Library's own Historical Photograph Collection. Simply type in a street name and up will come all sorts of images from their 30,000 plus collection of photographs covering San Francisco and California from 1850 onwards.

Santa Clara County

Santa Clara County Library offers Ancestry Library (like the others, only accessible inside the library) and ProQuest in the Genealogy section, it also offers the historical *New York Times* (1851-2003).

That said, one should never neglect the opportunity actually to visit a library. The day is still far off when everything in the library has been scanned, digitized, made word searchable and available on your computer. Today's researcher has to be equally conversant with searching Internet databases from home as well as with knowing where material is housed inside the library.

Discarded Book Sale Offers Unexpected Treasures

By Jeremy Frankel

Many of you are aware that most public libraries have an active volunteer non-profit that raises funds for various items the library needs. Probably the most common way to raise funds is to sell off discarded library books as well as those donated to the non-profit by the public. The San Francisco Public Library has two main sites where bargain-priced books can be purchased every day.

One place is in the downtown San Francisco Public Library; the other has been a 30 by 20 foot room at Fort Mason. Last December the Fort Mason site relocated within the same building (Building C) to a much larger room, about 20 times the size of the previous location. Naturally, this means far more books can be displayed.

I have found some wonderful bargains there, some of a genealogical nature. On my most recent visit in

January I picked up a copy of Fred Rosenbaum's *Free To Choose*, the history of Oakland Jewry. Fred Rosenbaum is the premier author of Bay Area Jewry and the founder of Lehrhaus Judaica.

I also picked up Daniel Mendelsohn's new book *The Lost; the Search for Six of the Six Million*. Some of you will recall the almost sold-out and riveting book reading he gave last November at the Jewish Community Library. I managed to get this for less than one third of the cover price. I often buy "gently used" or almost brand new books to give as presents or to replace those in my collection with better quality copies.

Do bear this in mind when you find yourself either in downtown San Francisco or out at Fort Mason. Incidentally, although Fort Mason has now instituted a paid parking policy, the first hour is free.

Canadian Database Completed

By Donna Dinberg, Librarian, JGS of Ottawa

Library and Archives Canada has announced the completion of the database of the Likacheff-Ragosine-Mathers (LI-RA-MA) collection. Created between 1898 and 1922 by the consular offices of the Tsarist Russian Empire in Canada, the approximately 11,400 files pertain to Jewish, Ukrainian and Finnish immigrants who came to Canada from many locations within the Russian Empire. The files include passport applications, identity papers and questionnaires containing general information. Since the initial

release of the database in October 2006, 35,000 digitized images have been added, bringing the total number of images to 55,000. The LI-RA-MA collection is located at: www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/li-ra-ma/index-e.html Click the "Search" link on the left to search the database. The LI-RA-MA database is one of several launched recently as part of LAC's "Moving Here, Staying Here" project. For more information, please contact the project manager at webservices@lac-bac.gc.ca.

Passport Applications, cont. from page 5

March 1925. The full set of microfilms is available in Washington, DC. The films are not available at regional locations.

The primary microfilm sets for the indexes are M 1371 and M 1848. The primary microfilm sets for the actual applications are M 1372 and M 1490.

Although most of these microfilms are available through the LDS Family History Library, the size of the collection and the separation of the indexes and the applications makes research cumbersome to attempt through the Family History Library.

Caveat: Like any other bureaucratic process, the indexing is not completely consistent over time. Some periods are missing and some are indexed more than once.

Structure of the Application Records and Finding the Right Ones

The applications are numbered and microfilmed sequentially by date. However, the numbers start over every few years. The applications are filed in groups covering two to 20 years, usually related to when the numbering started over again.

Indexes or register books were kept as applications were processed, and the indexes cover a few years each. Each index had sections for each letter of the alphabet, so all applications from 1851 to 1853 beginning with the letter K, for example, are listed on consecutive pages – showing the full name and date, but alphabetized only by the first letter, and posted to the index chronologically. I found it relatively easy to look through the dozen pages of entries under “K” for this three-year period, to see if any of my Kahnweiler ancestors were there and to find the application numbers and dates for them.

Finding applications is a four-step process.

Step 1, you locate the index microfilm roll that has the date and name ranges you want.

Step 2, you look through that index roll for the application number and date (in two series of microfilms totaling 74 rolls).

Having found some “likely” applications by searching the indexes, you then go to Step 3 and find the microfilm roll (in two other series totaling 3,434 rolls!) that has the appropriate application numbers and time periods.

Step 4, scanning this microfilm roll, you will find the application itself.

Time Needed to Find Applications

As a general guideline, my own experience may give you an idea of how big a job you may be undertaking. I was able to review all the indexes from 1850 to 1924 for family members whose last names began with four different letters of the alphabet in about a day. I then found about 20 applications and made copies of them in another full day. I was bleary-eyed but happy by the time I was done, and might not have been able to see well enough to do more!

All of the microfilms are in a huge set of cabinets in one area at the National Archives in Washington, DC, and have open access. There are lots of readers and printers a few steps away. There is no need for contact with Archives staff (although they are very helpful) and you may retrieve, use, and copy the microfilm on a self-service basis. There is a cost for making copies but you can buy a “copy card” to make the process simple.

In summary, I found interesting data that made my ancestors much more real to me and confirmed many stories of “family lore.” I also found many new names and dates to use as leads in searching other records.

It may or may not be worthwhile to make a special trip to Washington to investigate the applications, but this is certainly a good reason to extend a trip east.

Specific Microfilm References from the National Archives

- *Registers and Indexes for Passport Applications, 1810 - 1906*. NARA microfilm publication M1371, (13 rolls).
- *Index to Passport Applications, 1850-52, 1860-80, 1881, 1906-1923*. NARA microfilm publication M1848, (61 rolls).
- *Passport Applications, 1795-1905*. NARA microfilm publication M1372, (694 rolls).
- *Passport Applications, Jan. 2, 1906 - Mar. 31, 1925*. NARA microfilm publication M1490, (2,740 rolls).
- *Emergency Passport Applications, (Passports Issued Abroad), 1877-1907*. NARA microfilm publication M1834, (56 rolls).

Ellis Island, Castle Garden, and Others – Not Just Immigrants!

By Jeff Lewy

“Everyone” knows that Ellis Island records document the waves of immigrants who came through the Ellis Island Immigration Station in New York after it opened in 1892.

But more broadly, the “Ellis Island records” and other “immigration” records document ALL ship arrivals to U.S. ports.

Many of my relatives returned to the old country at least once. Some went back to find, marry, or collect a wife. Some went back to bring other family members to the U.S. Some were merchants who had business dealings in the old country or elsewhere in Europe and went back on business. Others just went on holiday with their families, to show their (often) American-born wives and children where they came from, or to show off their American families to those who stayed behind.

They didn’t have to be wealthy to make the trip. It was well within the reach of many immigrants, who made much more in the U.S. than people “at home.”

After becoming naturalized U.S. citizens, it was easier to travel back and forth, bring other family members over, and prepare the new arrivals for their experience at Ellis Island.

So, don’t focus only on the year of immigration. Look for your immigrant family names in any year.

Remember that the “home town” will be in the U.S. on those later trips, and the name may reflect any changes the immigrant made to be “American.”

Your Story Belongs in ZichronNote

If you have made a trip to your ancestral shtetl, made a breakthrough in your research, or discovered a resource that can benefit other genealogists, share your story with readers of ZichronNote. New articles are always welcome. For more information, contact editor Beth Galletto at galletto@pacbell.net.

Correction

An article about the IAJGS lectures and syllabus on page 11 of the November/December 2006 issue of ZichronNote quotes a cost for shipments “within North America.” Please note that the paper version will only be shipped within the United States, not to Canada.

President’s Column, cont. from page 2

our ancestors, trying to piece all this together in some coherent fashion, a story of the past we can shape and package and then hand off to future descendants. But what about ourselves? Are we willing to allow some descendant of ours to try to piece together our life and write it the best they can?

Heaven knows how much harder genealogy will be in 50 years. How much will be available? Will future privacy and national security concerns mean the end of the kinds of information we have become so used to accessing at the touch of a button, the click of a keyboard? I’m not sure we can afford the luxury of taking that chance. We revel in being able to look at passenger manifests of our ancestors who arrived on these shores a century ago. But that’s not the case any more. I arrived by plane in October of 1987. Do my flight records still exist? Will the National Archives have copies of every airline flight that landed at U.S. gateway airports? Somehow I don’t think so.

Just as Beth, our ZichronNote Editor, is pleading with me for this column, I am asking all of you to think about putting pen to paper, or digits to keyboard, and start writing about your life. Don’t worry about style or format, just start writing and keep writing. An acquaintance of mine, Chris Baty, a local journalist, came up with an idea that he and some friends thought would be fun. All of them figured they had a novel inside that needed teasing out. But with life the way it is, no-one could make the time to write. So Chris came up with NaNoWriMo: National Novel Writing Month.

For the past eight years or so, every November, people commit to writing 50,000 words during that month. “Just write” Chris said. As the title of his how-to book states, “No Plot, No Problem.” Last November some 90,000 people all over the world participated. If they can do it, so can you. We don’t want to leave the future to chance, and I don’t know if you want to leave the story of your life to an unknown descendant, no matter how well-intentioned he or she might be.

Think about setting aside one evening a month, and begin the process of putting down on paper all that you can recall, no matter how unimportant you think a particular event might have been in your life. As we know from our genealogical research, the devil is in the details; and all the details you can write about will mean that your descendants will have much less to surmise about how we lived.

Jeremy

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