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ZichronNote

The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area
Jewish Genealogical Society

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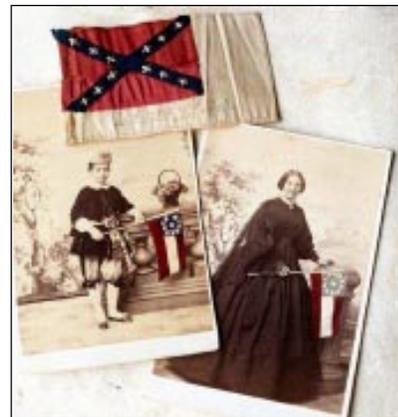
A Primer on Military Service Records of the U.S. Civil War
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If you had ancestors who fought on either side in the U.S. Civil War, remarkably detailed records may be available.



Dan Leeson asks, "Where is my file?" in his humorous but meaningful fable. See page 9.

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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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Society Address:

SFBAJGS, P.O. Box 318214, San Francisco, CA 94131-8214

President: Jeremy Frankel, (510) 525-4052,
president@sfbajgs.org

Vice President: Rosanne Leeson,
vicepresident@sfbajgs.org

Secretary: Dave Howard, secretary@sfbajgs.org

Treasurer: Jeff Lewy, treasurer@gsfbajgs.org

Membership: Larry Burgheimer, (415) 566-5168,
membership@sfbajgs.org

Publicity: Janice Sellers, publicity@sfbajgs.org

Cemetery Project Coordinator: Pierre Hahn,
cemetery@sfbajgs.org

Founder: Martha Wise

ZichronNote:

Editor: Beth Galletto, newsletter@sfbajgs.org

Proofreader: Roy Ogus, r_ogus@hotmail.com

SFBAJGS Web Site: sfbajgs.org

President's Message
Looking Back at 2009

By Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

Once again, the dark nights close in, signifying the approaching end of another year. As we look back, I hope that we can recall and savor those moments in our research when we plucked success out of a long slog at the computer, or we were blessed with one of those "a-ha!" epiphanies.

Next we want to share our find with people we know will understand and appreciate just what it took; and who better than fellow members of the genealogical society? A few months ago I and another Board Member had the privilege of speaking to a small group of people who had come together to pursue researching their family genealogy. Just as parents proudly watch as their offspring take those first faltering steps, we experienced genealogists are more than pleased when budding genealogists, their faces lighting up, actually "get it," and off they go, climbing up the rungs and disappearing into the tree of their family (no, make that trees in a forest!).

What does this have to do with us as members of the Society? These budding genealogists solicit our help in other ways as well. Several experienced genealogists help out every month in San Francisco at the Jewish Community Library, assisting with its One-on-One genealogical help sessions. We keep an eye out for newly published books we think will be of use, not just to genealogists but to anyone with an interest in Jewish history. And we also work with the Oakland Family History Center to purchase microfilms or records (not available on the Internet) that will benefit all the patrons who use the Center.

This past year has also seen many in this country struggling to balance their lives financially. I am pleased to say that your Board has been extremely mindful and judicious in how our income has been dispersed.

Unfortunately two of the places where we meet wish to start charging rental fees for the meetings. In both cases compromises could not be reached and the Board has worked hard to come up with alternatives. For 2010, East Bay meetings will take place at the Oakland Family History Center (same times as usual). The advantage is that parking will no longer be a problem, and as an added bonus we will be able to use all the library facilities after the meeting.

In San Francisco, negotiations continue. The city is a bit more of a challenge, but one we shall overcome, just as we have in the past.

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SOCIETY NEWS

New Member

Avner Yonai.....ayonai@hotmail.com

E-mail Update

Megan George.....mdgeorge@gmail.com

Bounced E-mails

David Hyams.....dhyams@earthlink.net

Martin Lefkovitz.....shamgram@yahoo.com

In order to continue to receive the SFBAJGS e-zine and *ZichronNote*, please send e-mail updates to newsletter@sfbagjs.org

Ballots Due for Election of Officers

The SFBAJGS Board of Directors has accepted the slate of officers presented by the Nominating Committee. They include President, Jeremy Frankel; Vice President, Rosanne Leeson; Secretary, David Howard; Treasurer, Jeff Lewy and Membership Chair, Larry Burgheimer. If elected they will all be continuing in office. Frankel, Leeson, and Burgheimer were re-elected to their offices for the 2008-2009 term. David Howard took over as secretary after the resignation of Jim Koenig.

All members have been mailed ballots and may vote for the proposed slate, or they may write in a different candidate if they choose. Ballots must be returned by December 31, 2009 to be counted.

Donation Made in Honor of Magnes Museum's Fromer

It was with great sorrow the SFBAJGS learned of the death of Seymour Fromer, the founder of the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley. He died at his home in Berkeley on Oct. 25, 2009, at the age of 87.

He had retired in 1998, by which time Magnes had become the third largest Jewish Museum in North America. The family has requested that any donations made in Seymour Fromer's memory be sent to the Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2911 Russell Street, Berkeley, CA 94705.

The SFBAJGS made a donation of \$250 in recognition of the museum's contribution to our knowledge of the Jewish history in California and the western U.S.

Sellers Selected Managing Editor of The Galitzianer

The new editorial team for *The Galitzianer*, the quarterly newsletter for Geshher Galicia, will be SFBAJGS board member Janice Sellers. She has worked as a professional editor for more than 20 years. Other members of the *Galitzianer's* new editorial team are Suzan Wynne and Leo Albert. Suzan was the founder of Geshher Galicia and the first editor of *The Galitzianer*. She will assist Janice, primarily as a contact with existing and potential authors and other contributors.

Leo will handle graphics and layout; he has extensive experience in creating corporate identity and communication packages for various industries.

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 .

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Town, Country</u>	<u>Member</u>
GOLDHECHT	Gora Kalwaria, Poland	Yonai, Avner
GOLUB	Lenino, Belarus	Yonai, Avner
RIBAK/RYPBAK	Gora Kalwaria, Poland	Yonai, Avner
SHTARKER	Bessarabia	Yonai, Avner

CALENDAR

Genealogy Events

Local and Regional

Thurs., Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m. **Contra Costa Genealogical Society.** Sue Allen presents “**Connecting the Past & the Future: Getting your children and grandchildren interested in Family History.**” How do you share your information about your ancestors with your descendants?

Wed., Jan. 20, 7:30 p.m. **San Mateo County Genealogical Society.** Sue Allen presents “**Connecting the Past & the Future: Getting your children and grandchildren interested in Family History.**” How do you share your information about your ancestors with your descendants? In connecting the generations, it can be as important to look to the future as it is to look to the past. Sue Allen was introduced to genealogy by her grandmother at age 12, and now enjoys sharing with her five children and nine grandchildren. Transfiguration Episcopal Church, 3900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo. For more information visit www.smcgs.org.

Wed., Feb. 17, 7:30 p.m. **San Mateo County Genealogical Society.** Noted blogger Stephen J. Danko presents “**Genealogy Gadgets and Gizmos.**” Danko will share information about innovative hardware, software and online technology that has made its way into genealogical research and has made finding, recording and sharing information faster and easier than ever. Today’s genealogist can research anywhere in the world, receive an education at their convenience and produce professional quality family books at a very reasonable price. Danko holds a Ph.D. in Botany and Plant Pathology and recently completed requirements for the Professional Learning Certificate in Genealogical Studies (PLCGS) from the National Institute for Genealogical Studies, University of Toronto. Transfiguration Episcopal Church, 3900 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo. For more information visit www.smcgs.org.

State and National

Sat., Feb. 27, 8 a.m.- 4 p.m. **The Whittier Area Genealogical Society** will hold its 27th Annual Seminar at the Masonic Lodge, 7604 Greenleaf Avenue at Mar Vista in Whittier. Professional genealogist Paula Stuart-Warren will speak on Finding ancestors’ places of origin and Major Midwestern Archives, among other topics. Go to www.cagenweb.com/kr/wags/seminar.html for information or registration.

SFBAJGS Meeting Locations to Change

As this issue is being completed, negotiations are going on regarding the dates and locations of future meetings of the SFBAJGS.

Future East Bay meetings will be held at the Oakland Family History Center, 4766 Lincoln Avenue, Oakland. The center is normally closed on Sundays but will be open specifically for our meetings and will be available for research after the meeting. Meetings are scheduled for February 21, April 18, June 27, August 15 and October 17.

South Bay meetings will continue to be held at Congregation Beth Am, 26790 Arastradero Road Los Altos Hills.

The site of future San Francisco meetings is still under discussion. For the most up to date information please check the SFBAJGS website, SFBAJGS.org.

Notes from Planners of the 2010 IAJGS International Conference

Plans for the 2010 IAJGS Conference in Los Angeles are moving at a fast clip. Mark your calendars for this exceptional 30th anniversary celebration, taking place at the JW Marriott in downtown Los Angeles from July 11 - 16.

The Call for Papers will close on January 15. If you’ve been thinking about submitting a lecture or workshop proposal or film for our consideration, there is still time to craft your topic and send it in. Go to www.jgsla2010.com and click on the “Call for Papers.” Speakers will be notified by mid-February, and the program should be online by the early spring.

Registration through the conference website www.jgsla2010.com will open in January.

This year, on the first day of the conference, Sunday afternoon, July 11, we will hold a “Market Square Fair,” where SIGs and BOFs can display their wares and attendees can get one-on-one research help from these regional experts. There will also be booths with other genealogically-related non-profits and educational groups along with craft guilds, historical map information, book signings and more. There will be beginners’ workshops on Sunday; and the vendor/exhibit room and resource room with LDS films, and databases from the Shoah Foundation and the USHMM, will also be open on the 11th, so you should plan to be in town by Sunday afternoon.

If you are thinking about arriving early, there will be Shabbat-friendly pre-conference learning at the Marriott on Saturday, July 10 and a Chabad house within walking distance of the hotel for services.

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A Primer on Military Service Records of the U.S. Civil War

By Jeff Lewy

Jeff Lewy, treasurer of the SFBAJGS, 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.

This article describes the voluminous primary records of individuals who saw either Federal (Union) or Confederate military service during the Civil War, and also how those records came to be kept in their current form. The records are often remarkably detailed. For any of us whose ancestors were in the United States by 1865, these records can give us specific data on their individual participation, and can also give us an idea of how their lives were affected, whether or not they saw military service. All these records are publicly available, and can be accessed in the U.S. National Archives as discussed below.

Background

The U.S. Civil War lasted from 1861 to 1865 and involved 3 million soldiers, almost 10 percent of the total population of 31 million counted in the 1860 US Census.

The war began with the secession of the first seven (of eleven) states in January 1861, and the first shots were fired at Ft. Sumter, South Carolina on 12 April 1861.

Six hundred thousand soldiers died in the conflict, and one in five of Confederate soldiers did not come home from the war. With statistics like these, almost every family North or South was affected in some way.

A description of almost all soldiers' service can be based on the Union and Confederate government records from the war that are preserved in the National Archives. This article describes how the records were preserved in such detail and how they came to be organized in a way that a specific soldier's record could be easily found.

Military record keeping -- administering the war

We know quite a bit about most soldiers' military service, thanks to careful and comprehensive military record-keeping during the war by both the Union and Confederate armies. All of these records found a home at the US War Department after the war and were subject to a massive re-organization starting in 1886 and lasting about 20 years.

From the start of the war, the US War Department was responsible for checking military and medical records in connection with Union claims for pensions and other benefits. Evaluating claims for individuals was difficult since almost all military records were organized only by regiment or other unit. After dealing with the records for 20 years after the end of the war, the War Department recognized the need for more efficient methods of substantiating claims for benefits and pensions.

	Federal (Union)	Confederacy	Total
Population			
Free	21,500,000	5,600,000	27,100,000
Slave	500,000	3,500,000	4,000,000
Total	22,000,000	9,100,000	31,100,000
Soldiers	2,100,000	1,100,000	3,200,000
Killed in action	110,000	93,000	203,000
Died in other ways	250,000	167,000	417,000
Wounded	275,000	137,000	412,000

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Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR) – Federal Army

In 1886 the staff of General Fred Crayton Ainsworth, head of the Record and Pension Office in the War Department, began the ambitious project of copying and abstracting military service records for volunteer Union soldiers. The compilation of an individual's records is called a Compiled Military Service Record (CMSR). Each CMSR is as complete as the surviving records of an individual soldier or his unit.

The purpose of the CMSR system was to permit more rapid and efficient checking of military and medical records in connection with claims for pensions and other veterans' benefits. The abstracts were so carefully prepared that it is rarely necessary to consult the original muster rolls and other records from which they were made, such as muster-in and muster-out rolls, pay rolls, record-of events rolls, hospital records, military prison and prisoner of war records, accounts for subsistence, and other materials. The data from these records were copied verbatim onto cards. A separate card was prepared each time an individual name appeared on a document.¹

The card abstracts were then re-assembled for each individual soldier and were placed into a "jacket-envelope" bearing the soldier's name, rank, and military unit. This jacket-envelope, containing one or more abstracts and, in some instances, including one or more original documents relating specifically to that soldier, is the Compiled Military Service Record.

To give a sense of the scale of this effort, there were nearly three million soldiers in more than 1500 units. If each soldier had only nine records (and three of my relatives had 1, 9, and 21 records in their files), there were probably almost 30 million cards that had to be created, copied and annotated, proofed, and reassembled into CMSRs – by hand, in ink.

Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR) – Confederate Army

In 1903, the Record and Pension Office in the War Department, still under the direction of (then) Brigadier General Fred Crayton Ainsworth, began the preparation of similar compiled military service records for Confederate soldiers.

The Confederate CMSRs are abstracts of original records in the War Department Collection of Confederate Records and from documents borrowed by the War Department for the purpose of obtaining as full a service record as possible on these soldiers.

Like the Federal Army records, the compiled service records are arranged by unit, usually a regiment, and then alphabetically by soldiers' surname. The jacket-envelopes for each individual contain caption cards for muster-in and muster-out rolls, and record-of-events cards, indicating the activities of the unit during specific periods.

Why Confederate as well as Federal CMSRs?

Why did the US War Department create CMSRs for Confederate soldiers? Since Federal pensions were never paid by the US government to Confederate soldiers, widows or families, the need for proof of eligibility from Union records does not apply. Most of the former Confederate states did pay pensions and benefits to former Confederate soldiers.

Several possibilities are:

- ♦ Military historians are often as careful about the records of the losing side as the winning side in order to learn the lessons of war as fully as possible. Perhaps it was this meticulous sense of the value of the records for military history that preserved them.
- ♦ After the restoration of the Union, the records of Confederate soldiers were again part of the national history, and one could say they should be treated with the same respect as Union records.
- ♦ The Civil War was a fundamental part of the national experience, and deserved full recording for that reason.

Why did creation of the Confederate CMSRs begin only in 1903? Perhaps it was only then that the task of creating Union CMSRs had been completed.

Current location of the records

All of these cards for both Union and Confederate soldiers are now on microfilm in the National Archives, (only in Washington, DC). Some of the cards identify documents also available on microfilm. Because the cards are based on unit records (by regiment or battalion) one does not find complete records of a soldier's term of service, but they give a series of snapshots of the movements and activities of each soldier and each unit.

Accessing the records

At the headquarters office of the National Archives in Washington, DC, the public research rooms are reached through the entrance at 700 Pennsylvania

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Civil War, cont. from page 6

Avenue, where all of the Civil War-related microfilms are available for public use. There are Archives staff and genealogy volunteers available to help you navigate the system, as well as printed materials to guide you to the information you seek.

The basic process has three steps. The first step is to determine the unit in which your ancestor served. You may have this information from family knowledge or a book of personal or unit memoirs. If you do not know the unit, it can be found for free via Ancestry.com on the computers at the National Archives.

Once you know the unit, such as “2nd Battalion, Alabama Light Artillery,” or “13th Regiment, North Carolina Infantry,” the second step is to find and review the index roll of microfilm for that unit, such as “M374, Roll 37.” These microfilm indexes fill several hundred drawers, which are labeled by state and unit. The index roll will provide some background on the unit, and a list of all unit members. The index roll will also identify the roll number(s) where the personal cards of unit members may be found.

The third step is to find and review the rolls of personal cards, which show all the available cards of each unit member, in alphabetical order by member name.

You may make copies of anything you wish on the microfilm printers in the research room, at 50 cents per page (on 11” x 17” paper).

Although the compilation of the records is remarkable, there may be duplications or multiple sets of records for one individual. There may be more than one index record for a single individual, based on different spellings of the names, and perhaps the participation of an individual in more than one unit. There are separate records for active service, prisoners of war, and certain other categories of activity. Check all the available records and all the likely spellings, to be sure that you search all the possible places where records about your ancestor may appear.

Next steps

Unit histories

Once you know the unit name and number, it is valuable to search online, at Google, Worldcat, and at large research libraries to determine if there is a unit history. These histories were prepared for many units, as memoirs of the members of the unit, or by other groups such as the Daughters of the Confederacy. These histories may or may not mention your ancestor, but they will give you a more personal view of the daily activities and emotions of the soldiers.

Wikipedia website on the Civil War

Excellent descriptions of the battles and campaigns of the Civil War are available on Wikipedia. The descriptions include maps and charts of battle formations and movements, and describe the objectives of the campaigns and their outcomes.

Start here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_civil_war

National Park Service Civil War website

Another valuable source of information about the units and the campaigns in which they saw battle is the National Park Service site. Begin your research on this site at <http://cwar.nps.gov/civilwar/>

Sesquicentennial of the Civil War

The approaching 150th anniversary of the Civil War is sure to bring increased attention to the war, and a stream of new books. It may also bring new research and possibly new records to light. It should be an interesting time for those of us with an interest in the war and our ancestors' roles in it.

¹ www.archives.gov/genealogy/military/civil-war/#union, accessed 7 Aug 2009.



President's Message, cont. from page 2

If the Board could all stand and take a bow, I would ask them to do so. Instead I offer their names with praise for a job well done. So thank you to Larry Burgheimer, Judith Berlowitz, Dale Friedman, Beth Galletto, Pierre Hahn, Dave Howard, Jim Koenig, Rosanne Leeson, Jeff Lewy, Janice Sellers and Shellie Weiner.

We look forward to your support through 2010. If you can somehow find it within your means to give a bit extra, you can rest assured, knowing that collectively we will continue to perform a mitzvah and help everyone find their relatives. Who knows, perhaps that budding genealogist may be your long-lost cousin!

Expert Help With your Family Tree continues at Jewish Community Library

One to one family tree help sessions will take place one Sunday per month (generally the first Sunday of the month) at the Jewish Community Library, 1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco. There is free and secure parking in the building.

The session runs from noon to 2 and it's best to come promptly at noon. Sessions begin with a brainstorming roundtable with experienced genealogists from the Jewish Community Library and the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society. This is followed by individual attention using the Library's collection and Internet resources.

Make sure you bring copies of your documents and materials about your family (please don't bring original documents), as well as one or two questions that need to be answered before you can scale your "brick wall." Help sessions through the spring season will take place from noon to 2 p.m. on the following Sundays: January 10, February 7, and March 7, 2010.

2010 National Genealogical Society Conference will be held in Salt Lake City

The 2010 National Genealogical Society Family History Conference will be held at the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, Utah from April 28 through May 1.

Whether your family helped settle the nation,

LA Conference, cont. from page 4

This year we'll also be offering two evening theatrical presentations, or "literary cabarets," including a production of "The Bialy Eaters: The Story of a Bread and a Lost World," an adaptation of Mimi Sheraton's moving book, which is a tribute to the endurance and power of memory and how the search for a perfect "chewy crusty roll" echoes a deeper longing for vanished way of life.

Special Interest Groups (SIG) and Birds-of-a-Feather leaders should be hearing from our SIG/BOF coordinator, Vivian Kahn, shortly with information on how SIGs can co-sponsor an established expert to speak in July with the conference's support. Contact her at **SIGS_BOFS@jgsla2010.com**.

In January we will have a PowerPoint CD filled with conference news, previews and film clips which will be available to any JGS or Jewish community group who requests one. This presentation will also come with one beautiful LA2010 tee shirt to give away as a door prize.

migrated across the country, stayed in the same place, or recently arrived in America, this conference has much to offer. The family history resources in Salt Lake City, Utah, will provide a depth and breadth to your research. The Family History Library has an extensive collection of international records, and a major focus of the conference will be increasing research skills in foreign countries.

For more information, online registration, and a link to the program guide, visit **www.ngsgenealogy.org/cs/conference_info**.

Galitzianer Publication Needs Stories

Materials from both members and nonmembers of Geshher Galicia are needed for the group's publication The Galitzianer.

The group is looking for material to be published in the February 2010 (or later) issue of The Galitzianer. This includes articles and graphics, both original and previously published, relevant to Galician genealogical research: articles about recent trips to Galicia, reports on your own research, historical and recent pictures relevant to these matters. The deadline for the February issue is January 15, 2010.

If you think you have or can produce such material please contact Janice Sellers at **janicemsj@gmail.com**.

If you want to be up on all the late-breaking conference news, make sure to subscribe to our newsletter at: **www.jgsla2010.com/about/sign-up-for-the-announcements-newsletter/**

I join with my co-chairs, Sandy Malek and Lois Ogilby Rosen in sending New Year's wishes from the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles, and the entire conference committee, to Jewish genealogists everywhere. We hope to see you in July in sunny, palm-tree-swaying Los Angeles!

Pamela Weisberger, Program Chair



A Jewish Genealogic Fable

By Dan Leeson

In addition to Jewish genealogy, Dan Leeson has many interests and multiple professions. For 30 years he was a successful IBM business executive with a career in computing. He was also a professional performing musician and is one of the world's leading Mozart scholars. Although more genealogic information can be found online now than in 1996 when he composed this fable, its basic message remains true: a researcher still needs to do the work. The following is a JewishGen InfoFile, reprinted by permission from JewishGen and Dan Leeson.

In the form of a genuine welcome to all the new members of JewishGen, and also as an expression of pleasure to see so many new people hunting in the forest of Jewish genealogic research, here is a long, think-about-it posting on the general subject of the meaning of life and where to find a death certificate. No one is permitted to take this personally.

So many new people have joined JewishGen that I want to offer them my personal hello and hopes that they will find family going back to Adam and Eve (it's not impossible you know, though any such results would be considered very speculative). Nothing makes me happier than to find people digging up their Jewish roots. For the last 100 years, Jews (mostly Eastern-European Jews) doing genealogic study was not considered a very Jewish pastime, and that so many believed this to be true is testimony to our poor knowledge of Jewish history: for 25 centuries and more, Jews have been genealogic aficionados, fascinated by the subject! Interest in it went into decline during the latter part of the last century and did not pick up again until about 30 years ago. The reasons for this anomaly are complex and sociologic, probably due in large part to the desire on the part of immigrants to avoid even thinking about the miserable unpleasantness of the life that they had left behind them in what is now nostalgically referred to as "the old country." The idea that someday their grandchildren and great-grandchildren would be searching their brains out to find a maiden name here, a distant cousin there, and even take a visit back to beautiful downtown Slutsk would never, never, never have occurred to them.

Many of the new contributors to the JewishGen Discussion Group appear to be rather new at what I call the "Yichusology business." That's no crime. We were all new to genealogic matters when we started and I see, in the questions of many of the submitters, the same problems that I had to dig my way out of. The biggest problem that faced me when I began, and that I see facing some of the newcomers, is not genealogic. It is expectational. Let me explain.

When I began to find my roots, I was absolutely convinced that "my family's file" was out there

somewhere, that it contained all of my history in all branches, and all I had to do was find out where it was located; i.e., genealogy was the hunt for a complete but already-created file that was all about my family.

I envisioned armies of government workers (Department of Commerce???) preparing my file as I headed towards and through puberty, and now that I was old enough to have this intense interest in where I came from, my file was there waiting for me. It would tell me my Bube Sprintze's maiden name (which my mother had forgotten), and what the original family name of my grandfather, Alazar Yusof ben Avraham had been (my father never really knew), and those thousand questions that would enable me to know who I was and how did I get to where I am. And best of all, this file would document, in considerable detail, the travels of all of my ancestors from the year of the destruction of the second temple, maybe even the first. Who's got my file, please? Would whoever has it please notify me by Tuesday next? Would that inconvenience anyone?

So I started my genealogic quest by presuming the existence of such a file and this made my search easy. I would keep asking "where" all my data was and never have to bother with actually researching it. I went to the New York Public Library and asked if they had my file. Then I tried Yeshiva University, the Jewish Theologic Seminary, Hebrew Union College, the American Jewish Historical Society, and finally the Ponnovez Yeshiva. Hmm. No file. Maybe I'm asking the wrong questions. It's kind of like trying to locate a misplaced library book.

Of course there was no Internet then, only mail. So I sent out a million letters asking everyone if they knew where my file was. It would be easy to spot. My Bube Sprintze died in Lodz sometime after WWI, and I think my grandfather was from Sidzun or maybe it was Radviliskis, I'm not sure. But he had red hair, that I am certain of. All good data, of course, no silly family stories and other stuff like dates and precise locations. Just solid evidence like "red hair." But no one seemed to have my file. Did the Department of Commerce spend all of that taxpayer money to make a file on me only to lose it?

Continued on page 10

Fable, cont. from page 9

One day, in the NY Public, I met a woman who was doing her genealogy and she had a file!!! It was a foot thick and wandered through the middle ages with the same ease that I wandered through Moskowitz and Lupowitz' dairy restaurant. So I asked her where she found her file (mine would be bigger and more impressive, of course, because I'm sure that there was royalty in my family) and she looked at me as if I had asked her where to buy a size 19 bustle frame.

"What the hell are you talking about?" she said graciously, full of the warmth and charm of someone suddenly disturbed. "This file has already taken me 23 years to put together. Every scrap of paper in it was lovingly found by me. What's with you? You think someone has already done your genealogy for you? You have to do it yourself, you yutzl!"

I smiled condescendingly at her outburst. Clearly she did not understand. "Of course," I said. "I know that I have to do it, and that is exactly what I am trying to do. I am doing my genealogy by locating my file. When I find it, I will have done my genealogy. It will all be there and my genealogy will have been both found and completed by the act of finding the file and then I can go on to something else in life."

"Gevalt!," screamed the lady, causing armies of librarians to say "Sssshhh." "I have the misfortune to be in the presence of a class A, gold-medal meshuggah! There is no file on you, Mr. Crazy, dopey-in-the-head. All there is about you and your family in the world consists of little remnants of what your ancestors left as they passed through this mortal coil." (Now that lady had a flair for language. "Mortal coil" is hot stuff. I wonder how to say "mortal coil" in Yiddish? But I woolgather.)

"What do you mean?" I said.

"You imbecile, you! Four hundred years ago one of your ancestors, a tinsmith by trade, made a pot that he sold in the central market in Ehrfurt, Germany at a price that was considered by the buyer to be way too high. Your ancestor was sued by the buyer and taken to court. The court record, (Vol. 524, page 361, subfolio CIX, city of Ehrfurt, now located in the federal archives in Berlin) records his name, the name of the suing party, and the price of the pot as well as the fact that your ancestor was found guilty of price gouging and spent one month in the slammer."

"I don't want that information!," I said. "I want his birth certificate, full name, name of wife (including maiden name), date of death, death certificate, plus the names of all his children as well as the full names of all their spouses. That's what I want. What do I care for a lawsuit in 1695? And besides, no one

in my family was ever in, as you indelicately put it, 'the slammer!'"

"You better start learning to love the kind of information that is out there," said my new-found friend, "because that is what you will get if you are very, very fortunate. Besides, birth certificates and last names are a relatively modern invention. With any luck there might be a record of this man's circumcision if a mohl book were kept in Ehrfurt at that time, but only if the mohl book still exists and he were born in Ehrfurt, which I am convinced he was not."

"How do you know all this," I countered, "and how did my ancestor get to Ehrfurt if he wasn't born there? My family came from Lithuania and Poland."

"Like hell they did," my friend replied. "Nobody came from Lithuania and Poland because they came from somewhere else until they eventually went to Lithuania and Poland and, eventually found residence in those countries. And how I know this is because it happened to one of my ancestors and I was telling you this story in the hopes of getting through that thick Polische dripke skull of yours." (Please do not ask for a translation of "Polische dripke." My mother would have been ashamed if she even thought that I knew what that meant.) "Finding that court record about that pot is what genealogy is all about. And finding out how your Jewish ancestor got to Ehrfurt in the first place is also what Jewish genealogy is all about. It took me four years to find out about the pot and the day I did I treated myself to a bottle of Dom Perignon 1927 and a large plate of very greasy kasha varnishkas!!" (In addition to our many other fine qualities, Jews have a very cultivated and discriminating sense of haute-cuisine.)

And ever since that fatal encounter with that lady in the NY Public, I have been looking for those little fragments that my ancestors left in this world as they passed through it. On good days, I find nothing. On bad days I find contradictory information or data that shows unequivocally that I have been slogging through the wrong family for three months. On very bad days the microfilm reader at the local Mormon stake is busted beyond human recognition, the part needed to fix it is in Pakistan, and seated next to me at the only functioning reader is a researcher who asks me if I ever considered the advantages of both a good insurance program and becoming a tree worshiper?

Now this whole megillah is being posted for the sole purpose of trying to help all the new JewishGen researchers to get their expectations set at the right

Continued on next page

Fable, cont. from page 10

level. The rules are these:

1. There is no file. The Department of Commerce never heard of you. They are doing the other person's file.

2. Once in a while you'll find a cousin who has genealogic data, but it is probably all wrong, your name will be misspelled, and s/he will have you identified both as a bastard and an adoptee which, according to Jewish law is going to give you and your descendents trouble for the next seven generations.

3. If it is out there, you have two problems: (1) identifying "there" and, (2) finding "it," whatever it is. When you do find "it" it will probably be a report of the death by venereal disease of your direct paternal five-times grandfather. Now that's genealogic success!!

4. If you don't know much, other genealogic researchers will help you for about three milliseconds and then drop you like a "heise kartofel" when they find out you are not a relation.

5. The joy of genealogy (it's up there on the bookstore shelf next the *The Joy of Sex*) is as much in the search as in the find. Oh the things you will learn about living as a Jew in Turkey in 1542, life in the Pale in 1875, the main consequences of the expulsion from Portugal just before the beginning of the 16th century, the exquisite scholarship of my Litvak ancestors in Vilna, the Jerusalem of Lithuania, and a good recipe for cheese kreplach (called "salte noces" among the Litvak cognoscenti and made mostly of fat and flour and other artery clogging things).

So those of you out there who are posting questions such as, "How do I find out about my uncle Mordechai who had blue eyes?", keep posting, but it is very unlikely that anyone will respond to tell you that your uncle Mordechai became the leading brain surgeon in Omaha, ca. 1913 where he did the first Nebraskan brain transplant, putting the brain of a Litvak schnorrer into the body of Rumanian Zionist. The resulting composite schnorred his way to Haifa where he became mayor in 1921 and still schnorrs. He may still be mayor for all I know. And the reason why no one will tell you this story is because it is buried in Omaha newspapers all of which you are going to have to research, yourself, alone, in a dusty corner of the Omaha Public Library as penance for not realizing what a terrific history your family has.

I conclude by pointing out the obvious. A vast body of literature has grown up about "How to do your genealogy" and even specialized subsets such as

"How to do your Jewish genealogy." It can be even more precise: "How to do your German Jewish genealogy." The volume of this helpful literature is now so large that becoming acquainted with it has become almost more forbidding than doing your genealogy. The preparation and publication of helpful genealogical literature is a cottage industry in America and elsewhere. Little firms in Arkansas and Utah are cranking out brochures that are sold for very modest amounts about "Cemeteries in Cape May County, New Jersey" or "Swedish Immigration To Minnesota" (which is probably not going to help you much).

Suppose you pose to yourself a question as simple as "How do I get my uncle Mordechai's death certificate from Omaha?" Eventually you will learn that there are several books that deal with obtaining vital records from every corner of America. And, therefore, doing your genealogy partly involves devoting the time needed to become familiar with the basic genealogic "How" and "Where to" literature.

And that is what the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are trying to do for you. The FAQs describe the basic elements that you need to learn about in order to get off the ground. I know that it's easier to post a question to the board about "Where do I go for Omaha, Nebraska death certificates?" than to do the research needed to get the same answer, but in the long run, and for the serious genealogist, there is no other good long-haul way of working. In order for the many experts on the board to be able to help you, you must know what to do, how to do it, where to search, how to search in those places, what's right, what's not likely to work, etc., etc., etc., before you pose your question. And if you avoid this learning process, those who can help are not going to want to; i.e., they are not motivated to help those who give the appearance of not being ready to do some heavy-duty research on their own.

One of the things that one will learn about from these FAQs is what the "Social Security Death Index" is, and how to get death certificates from Passaic, NJ, and which researchers in Lithuania might be able to help you (and how much it will cost, and who to write to, and what the protocol is when in this mode). There is a lot of sorting out of things that have to take place in your head before you can do optimally productive genealogic work. It is not dissimilar to studying any advanced technical discipline in that one needs time to prepare to study at an advanced level.

It depends if you want to work hard or want to work smart. If you want to work hard, ignore the FAQs, post requests on genealogic lists asking for your

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COMPUTER/ONLINE NEWS

Online Museum Adds Information on Pogroms

The virtual Museum of Family History, a project created and maintained by Steven Lasky, has added a report and a table of pogroms committed between 1903 and 1906. It can be accessed at the following site: www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/ajc-yb-v08-pogroms.htm. The information includes an introduction and commentary published by the American Jewish Committee in their American Jewish Year Book, Volume 8 (1906-1907).

The display includes a table of more than 250 towns and cities in Europe where pogroms occurred, with information about damage caused in these locations (when available), as well as some general remarks made about each pogrom. Most listings include the date of occurrence, the name of the town or city, the gubernia, the overall population of the location and the Jewish population.

To make the town search easier, there is also a table that lists all the locations alphabetically, with

a reference for each to the entry number in the large table.

Says Lasky, "Most interestingly, though thoroughly depressing, is the Report of the Duma Commission of the Bialystok Massacre that occurred in June 1906. A goodly report is presented to you here as it reviews in detail many incidents that occurred during the pogrom, especially to the Jewish population. Those of you who might have had families that lived in Bialystok may wish to read the report thoroughly to see if any family names are mentioned. For those of you who have an interest in a particular town, this report and its included tables are for you.

Lastly, the debates that occurred in the Duma as the report was being presented is interesting to read too. You can also read of the resolutions proposed and passed within the U. S. Congress from 1905-1906."

Lasky is presenting this information courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives.

Yizkor Book Translation Continues to Advance

Lance Ackerfeld, Project Manager of the JewishGen Yizkor Book Project, reported that several new translation projects were added in November, and a number of existing projects continued to grow.

These include the following four new projects:

- ♦ Bielsko Biala, Poland
- ♦ Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- ♦ Ratno, Ukraine
- ♦ Tasnad, Romania

New entries have been added in the following:

- ♦ Anyksciai, Lithuania (Pinkas Lita)
- ♦ Hajdusamson, Hungary (Pinkas Hungary)
- ♦ Hodmezovasarhely, Hungary (Pinkas Hungary)
- ♦ Narayev, Ukraine (Berezhany Yizkor Book)

And finally, 19 existing projects have been updated, including:

- ♦ Bedzin, Poland
- ♦ Berezhany, Ukraine
- ♦ Brzeziny, Poland
- ♦ Czestochowa, Poland
- ♦ Dabrowa Gornicza, Poland
- ♦ Dembitz, Poland (Polish pages)

- ♦ Dusetos, Lithuania
- ♦ Goniadz, Poland
- ♦ Kaluszyn, Poland
- ♦ Katowice, Poland
- ♦ Kutno, Poland
- ♦ Lithuania (Lite)
- ♦ Lubartow, Poland (addition of necrology)
- ♦ Nowy Sacz, Poland (Sandzer Memorial Journal)
- ♦ Ruzhany, Belarus
- ♦ Ryki, Poland (Polish pages)
- ♦ Svencionys, Lithuania
- ♦ Tighina (Bendery), Moldova
- ♦ Zelechow, Poland (Polish pages)

These may be found at www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/translations.html. New additions are flagged to make them easier to find.

Ackerfeld notes that financial assistance to any of these growing projects would be welcome.

PAST MEETINGS

Dave Howard Explains DNA for Non-scientists

“DNA Demystified” was the topic of Dave Howard’s presentation on December 6 at the Jewish Community High School in San Francisco, a repeat of a similar program he presented in November in Los Altos Hills.

Promising to present simple, clear answers to all our questions about DNA, Howard managed to deliver on his pledge. He used many creative demonstrations — such as strings of wooden beads to show DNA sequences — making it easy to visualize his topics. He explained what genealogical knowledge it is possible to get through DNA testing and what is not possible (you won’t be able to locate your fourth great grandfather in Lithuania — but you may learn that you and someone else are likely to have a common ancestor a number of generations in the past.)

Getting a DNA test involves scraping cells from the inside of your cheek and sending them off in a special package received from your DNA testing company.

Howard explained that humans have 22 pairs of autosomal chromosomes that recombine with each other and mix up every generation. These are enormous molecules with billions of markers that contain the genetic information that make us who we are. Humans also have a pair of sex chromosomes, an X from mother and either X or Y from father. If a person’s combination is XX, she is female. If it is XY, he is male.

Since the Y chromosome (yDNA) comes directly from the father and does not mix with the mother’s DNA, it can be tested to show relationships to other males in a person’s ancestry.

Both men and women also have mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), which is passed on through the mother’s egg cells. This is what is analyzed when women have their DNA tested for genealogical purposes.

DNA is composed of two strands, with four base pairs that match up and recombine like a zipper when the molecule replicates. The bases are referred to in short as A, T, G, and C. Scientists have found that there doesn’t seem to be a genetic purpose for some of the sequences of base pairs, and these sequences are referred to as “junk DNA.”

As DNA is passed from generation to generation, from time to time small errors (mutations) occur in the replication and match up. They are called SNP

(Single Nucleotide Polymorphism, pronounced SNIP) and STR (Short Tandem Repeat, pronounced S-T-R). These SNP or STR spots in the DNA sequence are called markers, and they are what is compared when you send your sample in for genealogical testing.

SNP refers to one mutation at one exact spot on the DNA. (For example a spot that would normally be an A might be a T, or a G is a C.) These are rare mutations, which occur every 5,000 to 10,000 years.

STR is a chain of repeating sequences of ATGC combinations starting at a specific location (DYS). The number of repeats from a certain starting point will change over relatively short periods of time, 10 to 20 generations. These are in the strands of “Junk DNA” on the various chromosomes.

By analyzing the yDNA or mtDNA, humans can be grouped based on shared SNPs and associated with specific regions of the world. These are called haplogroups. They have been used to trace the migration of mankind from “Adam” and “Eve” 50,000 years ago in Africa to all parts of the world.

Dave Howard is not a scientist. He is a retired tax lawyer/CPA who used to develop tax strategies for large multinational corporations and then had to explain those strategies in simple terms to corporate officers. This gave him a lot of practice explaining complicated subjects in simple terms.

He has been a family genealogist for more than 30 years, and has been the Family Tree DNA Group Administrator for the Jewish_Q group and the Horowitz Surname project for more than three years. Dave is also on the Board of the SFBAJGS.

His handout at the meeting included a number of links for further investigation, some of which are listed below. Dave’s email address is dave@davehoward.net.

Links for More Information

<http://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/>

Everything you might want to know about DNA and genetics as explained by the National Institute of Health (US Government).

<http://23andME.com/>

You can browse the site. They will decode over 600,000 markers on all your DNA for a reasonable fee. Watch for sales and special offers. They do not help you find relatives but you can find special groups.

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www.jewishgen.org/DNA/

For information and special prices for DNA testing. This is the place to sign up for testing at FamilyTreeDNA at reduced prices.

<http://FamilyTreeDNA.com/>

They have a lot of information in general and probably the greatest information about Jewish DNA. They have several "surname projects" that are for Jewish families. Following are a few of those projects:

www.familytreedna.com/public/Hebrew/default.aspx

Hebrew DNA Research Project.

www.familytreedna.com/public/Latvia/default.aspx

Latvia project.

www.familytreedna.com/public/horowitz/default.aspx

Horowitz surname project.

www.familytreedna.com/public/Jewish_Q/default.aspx

Dave Howard's yDNA Haplogroup Q1b.

Family Tree DNA sponsors sites for people to share results from any lab, such as:

www.ysearch.org

For sharing and finding yDNA matches.

www.mitosearch.org

For sharing and finding mtDNA matches.

www.isogg.org/successtories.htm

Inspiring genealogy success stories using DNA.

New Legislation Removes Mothers' Maiden Names from Marriage Records

Jan Meisels Allen, Director, IAJGS and Chairperson, Public Records Access Monitoring Committee

On the last possible day for the Governor of California to sign bills into law or veto them, October 11, 2009, he signed AB 130 into law. This law becomes effective January 1, 2010.

This will provide for informational copies of marriage records, and non-comprehensive indices with mothers' maiden names removed. As with birth and death records (legislation was enacted in 2002 addressed those vital records) marriage records will be subject to the Vital Records Image Redaction and Statewide Access Program (VRIRSA). At this time it is not known what, if any, additional redactions they may require from informational marriage records. Currently, they require redaction of Social Security Numbers, any signatures and any sensitive medical information from informational on copies of birth and death records.

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) submitted letters of opposition to the redaction of mothers' maiden names throughout the bill's legislative history -- before Assembly and Senate committees -- and submitted a letter to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger requesting he veto the bill.

You may read the new law at: <http://tinyurl.com/yh3vft8>.

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grandmother's maiden name, and then sit back and listen to the unproductive silence. If you want to work smart, find the FAQ that deals with documents and records in the country where your grandmother was born, and then start poking there. Make no mistake; you will also have a lot of silence here too, but it is productive silence.

Genealogy is, if I may paraphrase Einstein, 99 percent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration, though the percentages may be somewhat inaccurate. As much as I would like to find someone to do the 99 percent part, I always wind up doing it myself, and in the long run I am happy that I did do it because the voyage was as fascinating as its conclusion.

Now I must go. There is a microfilm waiting for me in the Mormon stake of San Jose that deals with the Jewish community of Ehrfurt in the 16th century. Maybe there will be something in it about pot makers. Probably not. But I am going to look anyway. And who knows...?

Oh yes, does anyone out there know where my file is?



Hearing Held on Changes in Research Use of National Archives in DC

The National Archives is proposing some major changes that will significantly reduce the space and services available to researchers who wish to use NARA records in Washington, D.C. Specifically, the proposal is to relocate the Finding Aids/ Consultants room to a smaller, open space within the library, reduce the number of microfilm readers, and replace self-serve microfilm access with a "pull on demand" process that requires staff to retrieve each film as someone requests it.

A House Subcommittee held a hearing in mid December in Washington, D.C. to define the mission of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and discuss the proposed changes. The title of the hearing, "History Museum or Records Access? Defining and Fulfilling the Mission of the National Archives and Records Administration," defines the options before the subcommittee, The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census and National Archives.

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) submitted a written statement. The Records Preservation and Access Committee (RPAC) of which IAJGS is one of the three voting members, also submitted a statement. Jan Alpert, President, National Genealogical Society (NGS) testified on behalf of the genealogical community. The NGS statement and diagram of proposed changes may be accessed at: <http://tinyurl.com/ygv7sjz>. The newly appointed US Archivist, David S. Ferriero testified at the hearing.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) held an open forum/public meeting, the following day at NARA, specifically to discuss the proposed changes. As this was a public meeting and not a public hearing different procedures were involved. At a public meeting, NARA staff may answer questions. In a public hearing, NARA staff may not answer questions due to potential differences of what is said at the hearing vs. what is printed in the Federal Register.

The National Archives responded that changes are proposed, but research space will increase, the microfilm reading room and self-service microfilm will *not* be eliminated, and the lecture room will remain.

NARA stated the Finding Aids/Consultants Room will be doubled in size and increase the number of consultation tables. They are considering reducing the number of microfilm machines to 30 based on the reduction of microfilms being utilized due to the

increase in digitization and newer technology, and increasing the number of public access computers to meet the demand for the newer technology. NARA said it would maintain the number of microfilm machines at a level that is needed by those researchers who continue to have the need for microfilm. NARA also stated they would not be eliminating the self-service microfilm. To read their full press release see:

www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2010/nr10-10.html

For further information go to the IAJGS website at www.iajgs.org/pramc/Latest_Alert.doc

David S. Ferriero Confirmed as 10th Archivist of the United States

In November the United States Senate voted to confirm David S. Ferriero as the 10th Archivist of the United States. Mr. Ferriero was the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries and is a leader in the field of library science. He was nominated by President Obama in July and succeeds Professor Allen Weinstein, who resigned as Archivist in December 2008 for health reasons.

As the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries (NYPL), Mr. Ferriero was part of the leadership team responsible for integrating the four research libraries and 87 branch libraries into one seamless service for users, creating the largest public library system in the United States and one of the largest research libraries in the world. Mr. Ferriero was in charge of collection strategy; conservation; digital experience; reference and research services; and education, programming, and exhibitions.

Before joining the NYPL in 2004, Mr. Ferriero served in top positions at two of the nation's major academic libraries, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA, and Duke University in Durham, NC. In those positions, he led major initiatives including the expansion of facilities, the adoption of digital technologies, and a reengineering of printing and publications.

As Archivist of the United States, Mr. Ferriero will oversee the National Archives and Records Administration. Its 44 facilities include the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, the National Archives at College Park, 13 Presidential libraries, and 14 regional archives nationwide. The National Archives also publishes the Federal Register and administers the Information Security Oversight Office.

ZichronNote

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Programs for 2010 are still being planned as this issue is being completed.
For information about SFBAJGS programs and other programs of interest, visit
sfbajgs.org.

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