



זְכוֹרונֹת ZichronNote

The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area
Jewish Genealogical Society

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Walking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors

**Beth Galleto describes her
trip to Poland and Ukraine
to learn about the lives of her
ancestors. Part I of two.**

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Beth Galleto, left, and her first cousins Jilliene and Alexander stand at the entrance to the Polish town from which their earliest known Bolker relatives came. See page 5.

29th IAJGS International
Conference on Jewish Genealogy
Philadelphia
2-7 August 2009



*For details about the Philadelphia Conference
see page 19.*

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Jewish Genealogical Society

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Society Address:

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

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

Vice President: Rosanne Leeson,
vicepresident@sfbajgs.org

Secretary: James Koenig, secretary@sfbajgs.org

Treasurer: Jeff Lewy, treasurer@gfbajgs.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
Whither the Future?

By Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

What do the *Star Telegram* of Fort Worth, Texas, *Jersey Journal* of Hudson County, New Jersey and the *Rocky Mountain News* of Denver, Colorado, all have in common? They are just three of scores of newspapers that have shuttered their doors this year.

Similarly, non-profit organizations are feeling the pinch as the economy lurches to find a place in a new paradigm. I have to confess that I don't know whether the way newspapers have traditionally served the public is similar to the way in which genealogy non-profits serve their membership; but the economy is also affecting the way non-profits operate.

Many of them, like ours, have taken the plunge and stated that their newsletters will now be sent by electronic means. This has both positive and negative effects; there are several savings: not buying paper and having to print, fewer people are involved in the process, and word searching becomes possible. On the other hand, we lose the familiarity of holding something in our hands (perhaps we're the last tactile generation!) and the pleasure we derive by taking time out to read something in our hands, again akin to reading newspapers.

Perhaps our voracious desire for information means that in the future we have no choice but to follow the electronic route.

There is another way in which the way the economy affects non-profit mirrors that of newspapers. Whereas newspapers have experienced reduced readership (which translates into reduced revenue), the SFBAJGS has experienced reduced attendances at its monthly meetings, particularly at the Berkeley and San Francisco venues. We have struggled even to attain *minyán* level!

What does this all mean; how does it translate? Well, it means a lot of work for your Board as it faces the double challenge of how to serve the existing membership while "re-inventing" the Society, making it attractive, relevant and appealing to the vast public who have never heard of us. Hence we are exploring avenues such as Facebook etc.

It seems rather ironic that in a time when newspapers are closing left, right and center, newspapers seem to be the next "big thing" in genealogy, a huge mountain where many of us will be able to find information on our long-gone ancestors. So it was that I discovered the Oakland Family History Center now includes the British

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SOCIETY NEWS

Welcome, New Members

Joan Peckham.....joan.peckham@sbcglobal.net
Elise Stone.....elisestone@comcast.net

E-mail Updates

Jane Reber.....jlr325@att.net

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

Next Meetings Cover Eastern European History, Archives, Sephardic Genealogy

SFBAJGS meetings in May and June will present a history of the Jews of Eastern Europe from earliest times to 1900; a “guided tour” of archives in Warsaw, Lviv, and Jerusalem; and a story of a Sephardic family history.

On May 17 in San Francisco Jewish educator, author, and Yiddish translator Ken Blady will present “The World of Our Great Grandparents.”

Over the past thousand years Eastern Europe has been both a harbor of refuge and a scene of horror for Jews. Here Jewish culture rose to some of its greatest glories; here Jewish society suffered some of its greatest tragedies. Blady will endeavor to portray Jewish life in Eastern Europe, specifically Greater Poland (which included Lithuania and Ukraine), from its obscure beginnings to the mass migration to New Worlds in the late 19th century. This will encompass historic and geographic background, everyday surroundings, family life and education, social and economic life, and religious activity.

Ken Blady was born in Paris, France and grew up in Hassidic Brooklyn, where he attended yeshiva and rabbinical seminary. A San Francisco Bay area resident since 1972, he has a B.A. in History from

the University of California at Berkeley and an M.A. in Clinical Counseling from California State University at Hayward. He is currently a lecturer at the American Jewish University in southern California in the Whizen Center and the Schurgin Elderhostel Program.

The program on June 21 in Berkeley will be “Warsaw-Lviv-Jerusalem: Adventures in ‘Archiveland’ and Beyond,” by Karen Roekard.

Many genealogists tour the “old country” and the Jewish homeland, but few ever visit their archives. This session is a “how to” guided tour: how to use these archives and how to integrate the material you find. Places to be discussed will include the AGAD archives in Warsaw, the State Historical Archives in Lviv, and the Central Archives of the Jewish People, Yad Vashem, and Kollel Galicia in Jerusalem.

Roekard will use the example of a Galician (rabbinically connected) family about which only three pieces of information were initially known: grandfather’s given name, occupation, and his place of origin — Belz, a town with no known Jewish vital records. Through use of these archives, a little *sekhel* (strategic smarts), and some *mazel* (luck), there is now information on the family going back to 1789 (though not yet complete).

Karen (Gitel Chaye Eta) Rosenfeld Roekard, award-winning author of *The Santa Cruz Haggadah*, combines a Yeshiva Flatbush education with an MBA subspecialization in strategic market intelligence to nurture her research passions. She gets lost for weeks at a time in archives in Eastern Europe, Israel, and the U.S. collecting data that allow the identification of unnamed Holocaust victims and the multileveled commemoration of two destroyed communities: Rawa Ruska and Belz, Ukraine. She studied Yiddish at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute and participated in the conference on the Holocaust in Ukraine (Paris, 2007).

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See Back Cover for Calendar of Upcoming Meetings of SFBAJGS

Please note: Unless otherwise indicated, the SFBAJGS 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, Doors open at 7 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m. Congregation Beth Am, 26790 Arastradero Road, Room 5/6.

Berkeley: Sunday, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. JCC East Bay, 1414 Walnut Street, North Berkeley.

CALENDAR

Genealogy Events

Local and Regional

Wed., May 20, 7:30 p.m. **San Mateo County Genealogical Society**. Steve Morse presents basic concepts of genetics as they relate to genealogy in **From DNA to Genetic Genealogy. Everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask**. He will be joined by his daughter, Megan Morse, a wildlife educator, who will discuss applications to the animal kingdom. Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 2440 West El Camino Real, Suite 300, Mountain View. For more information visit www.smcs.org.

Sat., June 13, 1:30 p.m. **California Genealogical Society**. Morse and Morse (as in program above) on **DNA and Genetic Genealogy**. California Genealogical Society and Library, 2201 Broadway, Ste. L12, Oakland. For information go to calgensoc.org.

Mon., June 15, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. **California Genealogical Society**. The CGS goes on the road to present a genealogy workshop at the Santa Clara Public Library, 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara. CGS President Jane Lindsey presents an overview of **Resources at the CGS Library**. Then Lavinia Schwarz discusses **Brick Walls of our Own Making**. RSVP at 408-615-2909. For information go to calgensoc.org.

Tues., June 16, 7 p.m. **Santa Clara Historical and Genealogical Society**. Jessica Hacker discusses **Canadian Research**. Santa Clara Public Library, 2635 Homestead Road. For more information visit www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cascchgs/main/meeting.html.

Wed., June 17, 7:30 p.m. **San Mateo County Genealogical Society. Your Genealogy Stay-Vacation on the Peninsula**, presented by panel of experts from the National Archives in San Bruno, Sutro Library, Stanford Green Library, SMCGS Library, and Menlo Park Family History Center. Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 2440 West El Camino Real, Suite 300, Mountain View. For more information visit www.smcs.org.

Wed., June 24, 7:30 p.m. **Marin County Genealogical Society**. Genealogy researcher and educator Barbara E. Leak will present **Yes Indeed! Answers in Land Records**. Marin Family History Center. 220 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael. For more information visit maringensoc.org.

Wed., July 22, 7:30 p.m. **Marin County Genealogical Society. Planning a Research Trip**. Cat Nielsen will explain how to put together a

productive trip. Marin Family History Center. 220 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael. For more information visit maringensoc.org.

State and National

Sun., May 17, 10 a.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Sacramento**. Ron Arons will present **The Musical Chicago and all that Genealogical Jazz**. Albert Einstein Residence Center, 1935 Wright Street, Sacramento. For more information visit www.jgss.org or call (916) 486-0906 ext. 361.

Mon., May 18, 7:30 p.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles**. Dr. Itzak Kerem, Professor of Sephardic Studies presents **Jews of the Diaspora: A Global Perspective**. Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 North Sepulveda Blvd. LA. For information visit jewishgen.org/jgsla.

Sun., June 28, 2 p.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles**. Maureen Taylor "The Photo Detective" explains how to find **Genealogical Clues in Old Family Photos**. For information visit jewishgen.org/jgsla.

Sun., July 12, 1:30 p.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles. The Influence of Yiddish Theatre and Music on American Culture**, by Hale Porter. For information visit jewishgen.org/jgsla.

Mon., July 20, 7 p.m. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Sacramento**. Joel Weintraub will discuss **Search Tools for the 1940 Census**. Albert Einstein Residence Center, 1935 Wright Street, Sacramento. For more information visit www.jgss.org or call (916) 486-0906 ext. 361. (Note: the SFBAJGS will present this program on July 19. See page 20.)

Aug. 16-23, **California Genealogical Society** will conduct a research trip to the **Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana**, known as the best public genealogy library in the U.S. For information call (510) 663-1358 or email jklroots@gmail.com.

NARA Presents Genealogy Workshops

The National Archives and Records Administration continues its series of workshops at NARA - Pacific Region, located at 1000 Commodore Drive, San Bruno. All workshops take place Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and are led by Rose Mary Kennedy, Genealogy Specialist.

Remaining topics and dates are E-VET Records Research, May 15; Military - Part I, Revolutionary War to Civil War, June 12; Military - Part II, Spanish American to Viet-Nam, June 26; Federal Land Records, July 17; and Preserving Your History, August 14. To Register and for more information contact Rose Mary Kennedy at (650) 238-3488 or rosemary.kennedy@nara.gov

Walking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors, Part I

By Beth Galleto

Beth Galleto is a member of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society and has been editor of *ZichronNote* since 2002. She is a free lance writer and editor and a former journalist and communications manager. She has been working on her family history, on and off, since 1978. In the summer of 2007 she and her cousin Jilliene Schenkel traveled together to parts of Poland and Ukraine from which their families originated. Beth is researching the **BOLKER, UNGREST, KOHN, OSHEROFF** and **LEVITIN** families, among others.

When my first cousin Jilliene and I traveled to Poland and Ukraine in July and August 2007, we wanted to walk in the footsteps of our ancestors. Our fathers were brothers; the common surname is BOLKER. Our trip was based on information I have found in researching our family history for 30 years.

There are non-Jewish Bolkers in the U.S. who apparently are not related to us, but the Jewish Bolkers belong to two main families who came originally from the same region in Poland. Although I have not yet found a common relative, DNA tests of male family members showed that the families are likely to be related a few generations farther back than we have been able to research. Thanks to the indexing work of JRI-Poland, I have been able to obtain vital records for Bolkers from Mlawa, Przasnysz, and Wyszkwow. Our branch of the Bolker family apparently originated in Sicztychy. All of these towns were places we planned to visit.

Evidence from manifests and documents here in the U.S., as well as family stories, said that our branch of the family traveled from Poland to Svinarin, a town in what is now Ukraine, where they worked in a turpentine factory. I hoped that during this trip we would find evidence supporting this family lore. Why did they make this move? That was one of the mysteries I hoped the trip would solve.

We flew to Warsaw, which became our headquarters for the week and from which we and our guide made mostly day trips to surrounding towns.

Our guide had arranged for us to meet Anna, a Polish woman who is making a study of Polish notary

records. She is interested in Jewish records and took us to see some of the main Jewish landmarks in Warsaw. The Nozyk Synagogue (Warsaw's Orthodox synagogue) was made into a stable by the Germans and the entire interior was destroyed, but that's how it survived World War II. It has since been rebuilt.

Presently the Jewish Community in Warsaw is 800 Orthodox and 600 Reform, according to Anna. Few of them were originally from Poland. The Jewish (Yiddish) Theatre, which was performing *Fiddler on the Roof*, is near the synagogue.

We walked to a street that had been just outside the Jewish Ghetto. Only a month before our trip ground was broken here for a new museum of Jewish life in Poland.¹



This house in what was once the Jewish section of Mlawa still looks like it did in the 19th century, except for the roof.

At the Jewish Historical Institute we found documents relating to Leizer Bolker, a Holocaust survivor from Warsaw. While there we watched their film about the Warsaw ghetto, which was very moving. We looked at an exhibit about the Warsaw ghetto uprising, in the course of which the entire ghetto was leveled to the ground.

For lunch we ate at a so-called "Jewish" restaurant. This is a strange phenomenon that shows the interest many Poles are taking in Jewish culture and history. Everything about these restaurants is supposed to be "Jewish" — except that there are no Jews. Then we visited the monument to the Warsaw ghetto. One side of an immense sculpture shows Jews who fought in the ghetto uprising; the other, those who didn't fight. A series of monuments have been set up on the path from here to the

Continued on next page

Footsteps, cont. from page 5

Umschlagplatz. A marker memorialized Mila 18, the location of the bunker that was the headquarters of the Warsaw Ghetto resistance movement.

The memorial to the Umschlagplatz — the square where Jews were assembled to be sent to the Treblinka extermination camp — is built to resemble the inside of a freight car. First names of some of the 300,000 Jews deported from this place are inscribed on the wall.

The next day our guide Krzysztof (Kris) drove us to Mława. Unfortunately this branch of the Polish State Archives, to which documents are transferred when they are 100 years old, was closed for summer vacation. Documents less than 100 years old are kept at the local Civil Records Office. We went to the Civil Records Office in Mława, where the woman in charge wouldn't let us see any records or take abstracts. The best we could do was to persuade her to read the facts of one death record from 1926 out loud to Kris.

Next we went to the public library, where Kris read and translated from two Polish books about the history of Jews in Mława. According to our notes from Kris' translation, in the 15th century five Jewish families were recorded in Mława. By 1765 there were 15 Jewish families. From 1755 to 1806, during Prussian occupation, life was difficult for Jews. Use of Hebrew language was banned and Jews needed specific permits to marry. Mława had 150 Jews in 1775. At that time there were 14 Jewish houses, a synagogue, and a cemetery. Jews took last names from 1805 to 1820 as part of the Warsaw Duchy. By 1846 Jews were 45 percent of all residents.

The religious leader in the 1930s was Rabbi Wolf Lifshitz. Jechiel Moses Segalowicz was the last rabbi of Mława. During World War II people from other districts were sent to the Mława ghetto. There were numerous deportations to Treblinka, the final on December 10, 1942. Some Jews returned to Mława in 1945. Others immigrated to West Europe, Israel,

Canada, and the U.S. Israel has a Mława landsmanschaft organization. In 1939 there were more than 8,000 Jews, one-third of the population of Mława. Now Mława's population is 30,000, and there are no Jews.

Next door was a museum, where three museum employees told us about Jewish life in Mława. There

were few Jewish items in the museum. One case showed items from Lublin. A man who worked in the museum, (we called him Jacko), accompanied us on a tour to see two old houses that still look like wooden houses from the 19th century, on what was once called Jew Street. Kris and Jacko spoke with two old men sitting on a bench nearby who remembered a Frankel hardware store and the tannery. The small house that was a Jewish tannery still exists. About 300 feet

from the two houses, there used to be a mikva. The synagogue, burned by the Germans, was 500 feet away.

The cemetery was completely destroyed by the Nazis. Pieces of headstones were broken and used to build an entrance gate to a training building in a nearby town. We tried to get through the gate to the cemetery, but we couldn't find anyone who had the key. Jill, Kris and Jacko climbed over the rough, rusted iron fence using a borrowed ladder. Inside they found two or three slabs above ground. A memorial menorah was only partially completed. Jacko believed they ran out of money. Pieces from tombstones had been placed in the menorah as well as on a flat memorial. The fence surrounding the cemetery needs repair. The cemetery itself is probably cleared of weeds and the hedges trimmed once or twice a year.

Jilliene lit a candle and placed it on one of the memorial slabs. Nissan Bolker, brother of our great grandfather Joseph, was probably buried in this cemetery. Freda, one of our grandfather's sisters, who was sent back to Poland when the family arrived in the U.S. because she had tuberculosis, was probably

Continued on next page



The American travelers pose with a Polish family who offered coffee, cookies, and stories about the past.

buried there as well. Family lore says that Freda made her way back to Nissan's home in Mława.

We returned the ladder and were invited to have coffee with the family who had let us use it. They then invited us to have some homemade grape (or cherry) brandy, cookies and chocolates. We felt like diplomats for the Jewish community. All conversation had to be translated by Kris, and Jilliene and I heard that the old grandfather said that his grandfather was Jewish or was married to a Jewish woman.

We drove past Plonsk, where David Ben Gurion was born, and the next day visited the Warsaw Jewish cemetery, which the Nazis had not destroyed as they did so many others. There are 190,000 burials in the cemetery. They are being indexed and will be displayed on the JRI-Poland website.

Among the monuments we saw in the cemetery was a memorial to children killed in the Holocaust and a memorial to children who smuggled food into the Ghetto. A tram ran from the Ghetto through the Jewish Cemetery. Children would get out of the tram and climb trees in the cemetery to get out of the Ghetto.

There is a memorial to Janusz Korczak, a doctor, educator and writer of children's books who went to Treblinka with Jewish orphans from the Ghetto. Korczak was Jewish, but he was offered the opportunity to escape the transport to Treblinka. He refused, going with the children for whom he had cared. "At the end, Korczak, who had directed a Catholic as well as a Jewish orphanage before the war, had refused all offers of help for his own safety from his Gentile colleagues and friends. 'You do not leave a sick child in the night, and you do not leave children at a time like this,' he said."²

We noticed various ornamental styles of graves, such as the Hasidic House (Ohel) with inner graves, or graves for husband and wife that were joined together.

We drove through Radzymin, a town where in 1920 the Poles successfully fought against the Russians. Kris showed us a plaque marking the home where Isaac Bashevis Singer lived with his grandparents.

Thanks to JRI-Poland³ I have been able to find numerous documents in Polish archives that relate to my and my cousin's Bolker family, as well as to the other Bolker family that seems to be related to us. Most of the birth, marriage and death records for our branch were from Wyszkwow, reporting events happening in a nearby small town called Siczzychy, so both were on our list of places to see.

We drove through Wyszkwow and viewed the Bug River, which flows from Ukraine to Poland. When I began my research, I was told by older relatives that our family came from Svinarin, near the Bug River. Apparently this river held an important role in their lives. Though they eventually migrated from Poland to what is now Ukraine, they stayed near the Bug.

We crossed into Mazovia, of which Ostrow Mazowiecka is the closest large city. Some of our family births and deaths had been reported in

Ostrow. Kris told us that until 1941, one side of Highway 8 was Russian and the other side was German. Bunkers can still be seen on both sides of the highway. We also saw plenty of cows in the fields and storks on their nests. Storks migrate from Europe to Africa in the summer, gathering in groups as they go, and we watched for them on our travels.

As we drove on Polish highways we saw provocatively dressed women hitchhiking. Kris told us they were Ukrainian woman prostitutes. The roads were often under construction and were not well lit at night. Many roads only have a single lane each way, making it necessary to pass by moving into the lane of oncoming traffic. I was thankful I didn't have to drive.

We next drove to Tykocin, a town that has been preserved to look like it did in pre-war days. We drove over original cobblestones. Tykocin has a beautiful synagogue that was preserved because the Germans used it for a storehouse. We particularly noticed that the *bima* is built into the architecture of the entire building. Beautiful murals on the walls contain Hebrew writing. We were told that the congregation didn't need prayer books, they could read the walls. On a lower floor surrounding the main sanctuary

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Interior view showing murals in the Synagogue in Tykocin.

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(where the women prayed) was an exhibit of the history of Jewish life in the town, including photos and stories from the town's Yizkor book.

A museum connected on the second and third floors shows the rabbi's study and a Passover seder, with a wall chart explaining all the symbols. We walked around and saw houses that are still as they were in the 19th century, except for a large Pepsi sign on one building. The town's Jewish cemetery is completely overgrown.

Since I was fascinated with storks, Kris took us to a nearby area that seemed to be a nature preserve where there was supposed to be the biggest collection of storks in Poland. We took a walk on a wooden walkway over swamps to the river.

Then we saw the place in the woods where the Tykocin Jews were all killed. We were struck by the contrast between the peaceful, lush woods and what had happened in that place. Two areas are identified. When we

arrived there were two Yahrzeit candles already burning and Jilliene lit another at the far end of the second area.

That night we stayed at a bed and breakfast house called "Under a Black Stork." Jan, the owner, is the director of the Tykocin Museum. He wrote down the families we are researching in case he runs across their names. His son Julian has a website.⁴ Jan told us that Tykocin was a large community in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Kahal (Jewish Parliament) met here and in Krakow. In the mid 19th century the town's population was 5,000, and nearly 75 percent were Jews. There is a Tikliner Synagogue in Chicago founded by Jews who left Tykocin in the early 20th century. The Polish State Archives has conscript lists for this area in a special fond. People were registered when born.

I asked Jan why our great grandfather would move from Poland to Ukraine in 1880. He said that in the 1880s Ukraine seemed to be a place of great

opportunity, and that our family probably moved for business reasons. Jilliene wondered how Jan got interested in the history and culture of Jewish people in Tykocin, and he said that he was inspired by his professor, who after World War II taught Jan at Catholic University in Lublin. The professor lived in Warsaw and during the war he helped Jews and hid them.

Based on documents indexed by JRI-Poland, the Bolker cousins' great-grandmother Bella was born in Zareby Koscielne (note: a little mark under the e in

the Polish spelling of Zareby causes it to be pronounced like Zaremby). Merging information from the documents and oral history, we learn that her parents were both killed in an accident and she raised her two younger brothers. All three left Poland early in the 20th century. We went by a few old houses in Zareby Koscielne but didn't see much else there.

We went on to Sokolow Podlaska, about two and a half hours by car from Warsaw, to find records of Jilliene's

TAPER family from the Siedlce gubernia. On a laptop computer, Kris searched the JRI-Poland database for Tapers in Sokolow. He was able to deduce that the spelling of Taper in that time was TOPOR, which means "tree hatchet" in Polish. He found the list of Topor names by searching the database for Rebecca Rothfarb (Jilliene's paternal great-grandmother), who married a Topor.

We found at least two relevant records in the old books at the Sokolow Civil Records Office, an experience Jilliene found very moving. At 4 p.m., when the office closed, we looked for the place where the synagogue had been. It is now a store, but its roof and windows still look synagogue-like.

Kris read to us about Sokolow from books on Jewish culture and history in Poland. We learned that a Jewish community existed here as early as the end of the 16th century. On September 29, 1941 the Nazis created a Ghetto in Sokolow, to which they sent Jews

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The three cousins stand at the entrance to the tiny Polish town where their great grandfather was born.

How I Found My Great Grandmother Selde

By Jim Van Buskirk

Shortly after publishing "At the Museum of Jewish Heritage," an essay which explored his mysterious lifelong attraction to Judaism, Jim Van Buskirk was told a secret by his mother: "You are Jewish." She went on to show him his grandmother's suitcase filled with photographs, letters, and documents. He continued to look for answers to his family's history — and his own identity — by researching his genealogy, talking to previously unknown relatives, and examining the contents of his grandmother's suitcase. Jim Van Buskirk's essays have been featured in various books, newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, and websites. After working as Program Manager of the James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center at the San Francisco Public Library from 1992 to 2007, Jim is currently Book Group Coordinator at the Jewish Community Library.

Last August, my partner Allen and I decided to celebrate my 56th birthday in New York. While he planned all the Broadway shows he wanted to see, I prepared to pursue genealogical research. I noted addresses and hours for the New York Public Library, New York Municipal Archives, the YIVO Institute and the National Archives. I didn't really have high expectations, but I wanted at least to visit these repositories I'd heard so much about, so that if I was able to hire a researcher, as I someday hoped to do, I'd at least be able to visualize the facilities.

I put together a packet of copies of documents and a list of information I might look for. I included my grandfather's WWI draft application — in which he reveals he was born not Theodore Burns in Brooklyn on July 7, 1891, as he indicated on all of his subsequent documents, but Bernstein in Pereyaslav, Poltava, Russia in 1893. I added the ship manifest showing his mother Selde Bernstein and her five children, including my ten-year-old grandfather, arriving in New York from Rotterdam on the S.S. Noordam on April 11, 1906 to visit Jacob Bernstein at (what looks like) 319 E. 102 Street. I hoped to find something documenting my family's life in New York before the children scattered to California.

Our first afternoon while Allen was at a matinee I went to the New York Public Library. I had been there many times as a tourist, though never as a researcher. Everyone who assisted me was pleasant and helpful as I tried to find my grandfather's family. Using the online database of digitized records of the City Directories and Death Index seemed like it would be easier and more fun but it was actually frustrating to use and I soon resorted to microfilm. Looking up Selde Bernstein, as she was listed on the ship manifest, or Jennie/Jenny, which my mother insisted her grandmother was called, I found four possible listings. I jotted them all down, only to be informed that the documents themselves were at the Municipal Archives across town. I seemed to have exhausted if not the library's resources, at least my stamina for using them.

Another day I tried the National Archives. I told the clerk that I'd written and received notification that naturalization records for my grandfather had not been found, but was wondering if there was anything I should look at while I was there. The clerk said that Theodore's passport applications would indicate his naturalization status. When I suggested my genealogical advisors and I would surely have noticed that information, he snapped that he worked with these documents daily and that the information was definitely there. I quickly backpedaled as he speedily searched the database for the passport applications, copies of which I'd failed to bring. He was surprised when the documents merely indicated that Theodore had been born in Brooklyn. I wanted to gloat, but managed to refrain as I got a glimpse into the dynamics of my former role as a reference librarian. I searched briefly on the online databases and soon left.

I still had a little time that afternoon before I was to meet Allen, so I headed over to the Municipal Archives. It was a longer hike from the subway station than I'd realized on this warm day. I approached the 1911 building with its French Empire façade of monumental sculptures. Even draped in dark construction netting, it reminded me of the Paris Opera. Security was the highest I'd ever seen. I had to have my picture taken for a temporary visitor's badge.

The interior was equally dramatic: marble floors and walls glistened under an Egyptian tile mosaic ceiling. A grand double staircase seemed inappropriately ornate even for the final resting place of the city's important records. Pushing open the padded doors, I was informed there was a five-dollar per day use fee. It was already 3:30 and they closed at 4:30. The clerk seemed to suggest it might not be worth starting so late. I considered coming back another time, earlier in day. But I was here, so I paid the fee. The clerk gave me a perfunctory overview of how the room worked. I realized that he

Continued on next page

Selde, cont. from page 9

gave the same explanation many times every day. Again, I realized that this is what I must have sounded like by the end of my time on the reference desk at the San Francisco Public Library.

I started to use the resources without knowing what I was doing. Then I remembered the information the librarian at the NYPL had jotted down for me. "AD 24 ED 17" was the first one. It looked like a secret code. I concentrated to figure out how the peculiar numbers and letters translated to the rolls of microfilm in beige cabinets lining the room. I found the first box and took it to a microfilm reader. Scrolling through the microfilmed documents I stopped at the one indicated. It didn't seem to have anything to do with any Jennie Bernstein. I rolled back and forth, but nothing in the proximity was right either. I rewound the film, replaced it and tried the next one. This was a Jennie Bernstein, but I could tell it wasn't the right one. I kept going. No luck. More confident in what I was doing, I returned to the first one. I saw the mistake I'd made, looked again, and there was a Certificate of Death for one Jennie Bernstein.

This woman had died of peritonitis at New York Post-Graduate Hospital on January 26, 1908 at the age of 33, after residing in New York for two years. My mother always insisted that her grandmother died young. Jennie's father was listed as Hedar Gobleman and her mother Lena Revwin, both from Russia. My great grandmother's name had been listed by her various offspring as Gobert and Houberman, so Gobleman seemed close. Could this be my Jennie? I wrote down the basic information as best I could decipher the difficult-to-read script, before realizing I should have a photocopy of the document.

I filled out the form, paid the eleven dollars, and handed it to another clerk. I said I realized that I'd missed the cutoff for same-day copying and asked how long it would take to receive. Just a few days, she assured me. Good, I should be home by then. She looked at me strangely until I told her I lived in San Francisco. Without a word she made copies of the documents and handed them to me. I smiled and thanked her. I was hopeful that I'd found my great-grandmother, but I did not allow myself to get too excited.

I thought of Selde/Jennie as Allen and I visited Ellis Island. She and the five children would have come through here in 1906. We learned about the health inspections and the interrogations. She must have been nervous. Along a wall of postcards of ships that had transported immigrants, I found an image of the S.S. Noordam. As I pointed it out to Allen, all the exhibits were becoming more real. My family had

been among the millions of immigrants processed here on their way to a new life.

A few days later Allen and I visited the Eldridge Street Synagogue. I had read about the 20-year restoration of 1887 synagogue in *Preservation Magazine*, and I was eager to see the magnificent edifice. We learned that it was the first Yiddish-speaking synagogue, the Eastern Europeans' response to the disdain shown to them by their Germanic counterparts. What I didn't realize at the time was that the synagogue was only a few blocks from the address of the last residence listed for Jennie Bernstein. Although 452 Cherry Street no longer exists, it seemed possible that the Eldridge Street Synagogue had been her place of worship.

For my birthday we spent the day at Coney Island, now a tacky shell of what it must have been in its heyday. As we strolled the boardwalk I wondered if my grandfather had ever come here with his family or as a young man. Just before leaving New York, we paid a quick visit to the YIVO Institute, where I was impressed with their resources and personnel. I didn't have time to really delve into the materials, but promised myself to return on my next trip.

When I was home, I shared my news with genealogist Judy Baston. She noted that Jennie had been buried in Washington Cemetery in Brooklyn and suggested calling for more information. When I did, the woman quickly gave me the information: Cemetery #2, Post 187, Row 4, Grave 6. She confirmed that Jennie was buried on 1/27/1908, aged 33, and had died of peritonitis. She patiently spelled out SFARD ANSHE PERALSLAW. I had trouble hearing so she had to repeat the letters several times. Hoping that I transcribed it correctly, I thanked her and hung up.

The next day Judy explained the peculiar letters: Jennie Bernstein was from Pereyaslav. This was the last piece of information to confirm that I had the right person. Now I allowed myself to get excited. I had found my great grandmother.

I e-mailed a scan of the document to my mother's cousin Arleen, a nurse in Seattle. She responded quickly. "I'm interpreting the cause of death to be 'general peritonitis and intestinal obstruction following laparotomy for retroversion of uterus (backward tipped uterus) and varicocele of left appendage (varicose vein on ?appendix or part of female anatomy?)'. Sounds like she went in for surgery for pelvic pain and got an infection and obstruction and died from sepsis. Antibiotics weren't being used yet ..." Arleen's medical expertise helped me understand what had been merely words.

Continued on next page

Six months later as Allen and I were planning another trip to New York, Judy recommended going to visit Washington Cemetery. She suggested there might be useful genealogical information at my great grandmother's grave. She advised me to take pictures not only of the headstone but also of the surrounding markers.

for directions. I showed him what I had been told when I called months ago. He checked the files and confirmed that Jennie Bernstein was buried in Cemetery II, Post 187, Row 4, Grave 6. On a photocopied half-sheet map of Cemetery II, he drew the short route we were to take: down Cypress Avenue, left on Cedar Avenue until we reached 187, which he circled. I was surprised this was all so straightforward. I hadn't known how much time to allow but this was

Jim Van Buskirk stands behind the gate to the section in Washington Cemetery in Brooklyn in which Selde Bernstein is buried. It is inscribed with the words "Unterstützungs Verein der Chevra Sphard Anshe Pereyaslav."



The day we left I impulsively purchased, with a friend's assistance, a small digital camera. I figured I'd learn how to use it on the trip. On Tuesday, March 17, 2009, Saint Patrick's Day, Allen and I rode the F train to Brooklyn, partly to avoid the green-clad vomiting revelers who had taken over Manhattan.

As we descended the train at Bay Parkway, the cemetery spread out across the suburban landscape on both sides of the raised platform. I sensed I was surveying a miniature city with low- and mid-rise edifices studded with ornate skyscrapers. Cars sped by, trains thundered overhead and pedestrians passed without a thought to the thousands who had been buried here during the last century.

We headed toward the office building with its dramatic mansard roof. Entering the dingy room, we waited for the clerk to come to the desk so I could ask

not going to take all day as I'd anticipated.

It was a beautiful sunny day as Allen and I strolled through the cemetery. We admired the many different styles of markers, modest stones with small oval glass-covered photographs, more recent stones with images etched into their surface. There was traditional iconography including lambs (for children), open books, and draped urns. There were Stars of David, menorat and the two Hebrew characters, *po nikba*, which I later learned simply means "here lies."

We continued to count out the posts: 212, 204, 198, 195, here we are at 187. A waist-high wrought iron gate painted silver was propped partially open. Across its bell curve banner read "Unterstützungs Verein der Chevra Sphard Anshe Pereyaslav." I recognized the important word: Pereyaslav. This was an area of

Continued on next page

Selde, cont. from page 11

the cemetery where the members of the landsmanschaft were congregated.

The enclosed area was approximately 20 by 40 feet studded with a variety of sizes and shapes of white and grey tombstones. As I searched for row 4, grave 6, I quickly realized that many of the markers were so old and of such porous stone that they no longer bore any legible markings. Not knowing from which direction to count — front to back? Left to right? — I took out my cell phone and called the office. The clerk patiently explained it was likely four rows from the back of the enclosure and then six graves over.

As we continued our search, Allen astutely suggested that it would likely be one of the small markers, not one of the larger, newer constructions. We kept counting until we finally agreed we'd found the right one. But we couldn't be absolutely sure: there was nothing legible on the face of the headstone. I hadn't counted on this. With my new camera Allen took photos of me placing a small stone on what I hoped was my great grandmother's grave. Time had eroded all evidence of Jennie Bernstein's final resting place. It was unlikely anyone had visited this site for many decades. After taking a few more photographs, there was nothing more to do but wander back out of the cemetery. I was disappointed that our visit would not add to my genealogical research.

As we climbed back up to the subway platform I looked down upon this suburban city of the dead, mentally multiplying Jennie/Selde's story by the myriad headstones I surveyed. Then I multiplied that by the number of similar cemeteries throughout the country. It was overwhelming; my great grandmother was as significant as a speck of sand. But I was grateful that I had taken the opportunity to place a stone on her grave indicating that she was not forgotten. I saw my pilgrimage as part of my spiritual quest to reclaim my family's participation in the Jewish Diaspora.

I figured out how to download the images we'd taken and e-mailed a couple to Howard Freedman, my colleague at the Jewish Community Library. With some difficulty he was able to make out the Hebrew characters, and using *A Field Guide to Visiting a Jewish Cemetery: A Spiritual Journey to the Past, Present, and Future* by Rabbi Joshua L. Segal, he told me that it read Tet Adar 5635. I put this information into an online converter from Hebrew to Gregorian calendars and instantly achieved the date 14 February 1875. That sounded approximately right, and when I got home I looked again at the Certificate of Death I'd found on the previous trip. I confirmed she was 33 on January 26, 1908. Subtracting her age from the

date of death, I quickly came up with 1875. This must indeed be she. I called Allen to tell him the good news: our pilgrimage had not been in vain. We had indeed found her grave and her birth date as well.

When I told Howard the next day he seemed skeptical so I looked more closely at the *Field Guide*: "The date of birth is rarely given in Hebrew." Where did that leave us? I felt like I was on a Coney Island rollercoaster: up and down, back and forth, my hesitation and elation trading places with increasing speed. Would I ever really know the truth about my elusive relatives?

One thing is certain. As each piece of information leads to more questions I am proud to be making this spiritual pilgrimage.

Programs, cont. from page 3

On June 22 in Los Altos Hills the program will be "Writing My Lost Family History: Sephardic Genealogy" by Mark Cohen, the author of *Last Century of a Sephardic Community: The Jews of Monastir, 1839-1943*, a widely praised original history of a model Sephardic community. He was born in New York, was raised there in an extended Sephardic family, and graduated from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. He is a widely renowned specialist in Sephardic history and genealogy. Cohen's writing has appeared in newspapers and scholarly publications including the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Newsday*, *Daily News*, *Midstream*, *Saul Bellow Journal*, *American Jewish History*, *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, *Journal of Jewish Studies and History of Photography*.

For more information on these and other meetings see pages 3 and 20, or visit sfbajgs.org.

President's Message, cont. from page 2

Library 19th Century Newspaper Project as part of their subscription databases. I struck it lucky, discovering an article written in August 1889 about my uncle, Harris Koenigsberg, and his fur business. It was alleged that three workers attempted to call a strike and that "... (sewing) machines and cottons were destroyed and damaged, and a large quantity of fur capes and caps cut to pieces..." This was reported in the (London) *Daily News*, a newspaper that doesn't exist today; but thanks to the miracle of technology, I can read something that was written almost exactly 120 years ago.

Are meetings still relevant to a non-profit? I know that Rosanne and I spend a lot of time organizing speakers and venues. Where does our future lie? We need to hear from you! Please let us know what you think.

Now Online

By Marilyn Dornhelm

Juicy Bits of Jewish Genealogy

In this column I will share what's new in online indexes, digitized archival material and tools. The main source for these will be JewishGen and the many SIG digests that I check out daily.

Note: Thank you to SFBAJGS member Randy Stehle for his contribution and kind words of appreciation for this column. See Missouri, USA below.

(Editor's Note: In *ZichronNote*, URL notations are in boldface and the "http://" notation is omitted to save space, unless needed to make a link in the pdf version of *ZichronNote*.)

Review for February 7 to April 13, 2009

In the USA

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles, California Address Directories
WOW! Selected Los Angeles city directories and address directories from 1915-1987 are accessible at <http://rescarta.lapl.org:8080/ResCarta-Web/jsp/RcWebBrowse.jsp>

The search engine will indicate which of the directories has the surname requested. From *Avotaynu*, March 3, 2009.

MARYLAND

Baltimore, Maryland Jewish Cemeteries

www.jewishmuseummd.org/html/cr_geneology_fhc.html

The Jewish Museum of Maryland has five pdf files available for download that have the burial listings for the cemeteries of Baltimore, Maryland. From Steve Lasky, *JewishGen Digest*, Feb 9, 2009.

MICHIGAN

Michigan death certificates

This is a work in progress, and currently about 250,000 death certificates have been uploaded. About one million death records from 1897-1920 have been uploaded.

<http://seekingmichigan.org/discover-collection?collection=p129401coll7>

Starting April 20 for six weeks the website may be temporarily down. For more information on the Archives of Michigan go to:

www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17445_19273_19313--,00.html

For other states with on-line death records (free and pay) you may find this site of interest:

<http://genrootsblog.blogspot.com/2008/06/online-death-certificates-updated.html>

From Jan Meisels Allen, *JewishGen Digest*, March 18, 2009.

Michigan - Yearbooks

www.michjewishhistory.org/yearbookproject/yearbooks.php

This is a yearbook project created by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan that has a search engine for many schools in Michigan. From Steve Lasky, *JewishGen Digest*, April 8, 2009.

MISSOURI

Missouri death certificates

"I would like to add a great place for Missouri death certificates. I have not seen it mentioned on JewishGen or anywhere else. The website is run by the MO Secretary of State and covers the years 1910 to 1957. There is a searchable database that allows you to download images of actual death certificates for free. I made an important discovery on one of my branches with the help of this site. The URL is: www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/deathcertificates/." Contributed by Randy Stehle, SFBAJGS member and reader of *ZichronNote*.

NEW YORK

Brooklyn, New York - Yearbooks

Thomas Jefferson High School Yearbook Project:
"... I now have more than 60 (!) yearbooks, covering the years from 1927 to 1987. One can search any of the books online, from cover to cover, or one can search (using the Steve Morse one-step searchable database) the entire database by first name, family name, yearbook year and even by address. Not all yearbooks have addresses of the graduates (the ones with addresses so far are 1931-1936 and 1946-1963), but the total number of names available to be searched tops 40,000."

www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/tjhs.htm

Steve Morse has created a similar database for nearby Samuel Tilden High School. For a link to Steve Morse's Tilden High School database:

www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/sths.htm

From Steve Lasky, *JewishGen Digest*, April 7, 2009.

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee, Wisconsin Jewish burials

www.jewishmuseummilwaukee.org/history/statistics/burial/index.php

"This Wisconsin Jewish Death and Burial Index is

Continued on next page

Now Online, cont. from page 13

a compilation of information from many sources, including data gathered from death notices published in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*. Additional research was pursued through cemetery records and recorded pertinent data.” From Steven Lasky, JewishGen Digest, March 12, 2009.

U.S. JEWISH ORPHANAGES

www.hnoh.com

This website will amaze you. Many pages on the HNOH web site were just updated. There are unfortunately too many new and updated databases to list here. Please go to **jewishgen.org** and search the digest archives for Marge Soloff’s post of Feb. 22, 2009, subject “HNOH-Jewish Orphanages in U.S. web site Update” for all the update details. From Marge Soloff, JewishGen Digest, Feb. 22, 2009

Other Countries

AUSTRALIA

Australia Immigration/Naturalization Records

The National Archives of Australia has online immigration records 1920–1950 and naturalization records as early as 1852 at **www.naa.gov.au/collection/recordsearch/index.aspx**.

The Public Records Office of Australia also has information online about nearly 1.7 million people who immigrated to the country. The information is located at **www.access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/PROVguides/PROVguide050/PROVguide050.jsp**.

It consists of:

- Index to Unassisted Passengers to Victoria from British (UK) and Foreign Ports, 1852-1923, with 1,503,856 names
- Index to Registers of Assisted Immigrants, 1839–1871, has 173,316 names
- Index to Outward Passengers to Interstate, U.K. and Foreign Ports, 1852-1896.

From *Avotaynu* digest Nu? What’s Nu?, April 12, 2009.

AUSTRIA

Vienna, Austria Jewish Newspapers during the Nazi period

http://deposit.d-nb.de/online/jued/jued.htm

“This site presents Jewish newspapers during the Nazi period. Of particular interest to me is the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt Wien*, which covers the period of 1938 to the end of 1943 and documents the most horrific restrictive Nazi laws against the Jewish population. For one who has lived through part of this period (March 1940), it brings back some very bad

memories.” From Frank Eisinger, Austria-Czech SIG, March 10, 2009.

CANADA

Canadian Census 1891

“For those researching their Canadian roots, the Library and Archives of Canada has a new, searchable database:

www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/census-1891/index-e.html

“The Census of 1891 includes the population of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia and the North-West Territories (which at the time covered much of modern-day Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, northern Ontario, northern Quebec, Labrador, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut). You can access digitized images of the original census returns. They list the name, age, country or province of birth, nationality, religion, and occupation of Canada’s residents.” From Jan Meisels Allen, JewishGen Digest, Feb. 17, 2009.

Montreal and Quebec City, Canada -Directories

www.banq.qc.ca/portal/dt/collections/collection_numerique/archives/archives.jsp?categorie=1

“The Lovell’s Montreal City Directory covers the years from 1842-1977. The site is in French, although many of the directories are in English, particularly the older ones. They are searchable by name as well as street.

The Almanach de Quebec covers the years 1780-1841. It doesn’t appear to be as flexible in the search options.”

http://bibnum2.banq.qc.ca/bna/almanachQuebec

From Carol Gurstelle, JewishGen Digest, April 11, 2009.

Montreal/Quebec Jewish Vital Records of 1841 – 1942

www.jgs-montreal.org/

JGS-Montreal has done amazing work. “The fourth item on the home page is ‘Jewish Vital Records of Montreal/Quebec, 1841 – 1942’, which they’re indexing. They can provide you with a copy of the record, too, and I’m sure if they haven’t indexed the name you need, they can tell you what to do.” From Hilary Henkin, JewishGen Digest, April 3, 2009.

Ontario, Canada Cemetery Finding Aid

www.islandnet.com/ocfa/search.php

It can be searched with a “sounds-like” option. You can also enter other parameters, such as the word

Continued on next page

“Jewish” to limit the cemeteries that come up. From Barbara Zimmer, JewishGen Digest, Feb. 26, 2009.

HUNGARY

Hungarian Translation Tools

Google has finally updated its translation tool to include Hungarian at:

<http://translate.google.com/>

Another tool that does a better job with Hungarian is:

www.webforditas.hu/?show=textTab&lang=english

From Vivian Kahn, H-Sig Digest, Feb. 17, 2009.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand historical BMD records

New Zealand's government has a new website where you can search 11 million birth, marriage and death records:

www.bdmhistoricalrecords.identityservices.govt.nz/Home/

There are certain limitations to accessing the records to preserve a living person's privacy: Birth records are available after 100 years (they started being recorded in 1848); Still births are available after 50 years (they started being recorded in 1848); Marriages and civil unions are available after 80 years (have been recorded since 1854); Deaths are available after 50 years or if the deceased's date of birth is at least 80 years ago.

“There is no charge to search the records. Prices for the actual records are listed on the website in New Zealand dollars. There is an excellent FAQ which you are encouraged to read before you start your search.” From Jan Meisels Allen, JewishGen Digest, Feb 27, 2009.

POLAND

Warszawa, Poland - Warsaw Jewish Cemetery at Okopowa Street

<http://cemetery.jewish.org.pl/>

Search by surname and get a list with details and a photo of the tombstone. The data is still being collected – expected completion in Spring 2010. Approximately 70 percent of the inscriptions and grave photos have been entered. From Warszawa Research Group Digest, April 13, 2009.

ROMANIA

Arad, Transylvania region, Romania - 1942 Jewish Census

www.jewishgen.org/databases/Holocaust/0146_Arad_Census.html

“In case any of you might have missed it, there is a recently added database for Romania in the Holocaust database of JewishGen.” From Rosanne Leeson, Romania SIG, Jan. 19, 2009.

UK

England and Wales 1911 Census

The indexing of the 1911 Census of England is now complete. Search it online at:

<http://1911census.co.uk> or **www.FindMyPast.com**

Some of the information on the 1911 census will NOT be released until January 2012 — that relating to an individual's infirmity as listed in the census (e.g. deaf, dumb, blind etc). You will see the actual documents written in the person's own hand! The 1911 census records show the name, age, place of birth, marital status and occupation of every resident in a household, as well as their relationship to the head of household. For married women, there are also questions on how long they've been married and how many children were born from that marriage. You may search for free; however, to view the actual images does require purchasing credits. From Jan Meisels Allen, JewishGen digest, Jan. 13, 2009, and *Avotaynu* April, 2009.

UKRAINE

Jewish Agricultural Colonies in the Ukraine - new material

www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Colonies_of_Ukraine/

Recent additions to the site include:

1) Translation from Russian of a list of over 700 Holocaust victims killed in the Jewish colony Novozlatopol.

2) Full translation of the 1858 Revision list from the colonies Graftskoy (Prolotarsky) and Mezeritch.

3) Full translation of the 1852 list of settlers on Novozlatopol who came from Latvia in 1846, mainly from the town Lutzin (Ludza).

4) Prenumeranten list of 2000 names in colonies and towns of Yekaterinoslav and Kherson Guberniyas, from 'Imrei Shmuel', Part three, 1912. (in Hebrew). From Chaim Freedman, JewishGen Digest, March 12, 2009

WORLDWIDE GENEALOGY

World Gazetteer

Try **www.fallingrain.com** as a supplement to JewishGen's ShtetlSeeker.

www.fallingrain.com/world/ is direct to the index.

Continued on next page

Now Online, cont. from page 15

Gazetteer information is given. From David Rosen, JewishGen Digest, March 27, 2009.

European digitized texts, media, video and sound

www.europeana.eu/portal/

European libraries have digitized texts, images and multi-media material, including antiquarian books from Eastern Europe. All are searchable on key words, topics, places, names, subjects, and dates. Some books are in English. Contributing institutions include the Austrian State Archives, the Polish National Library, the Romanian Institute of Cultural Memory, and national libraries and other cultural and historical institutions in the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Serbia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. From Tony Kahane, Geshet Galicia SIG Digest, 10 Feb 2009.

Note: Downside — you can read but not search the book itself.

HOLOCAUST/WWII

Holocaust Reparations

The best place to keep informed about Holocaust-era reparation programs is the Claims Conferences site:

www.claimscon.org/

On this page, on its rightmost side, you will find the links to most compensation programs. From **H-Justice@yahoogroups.com**, April 1, 2009.

Footsteps, cont. from page 8

from Lodz, Kalisz and northern parts of Mazovia. About a year later 1,500 Jews were shot in the town and buried by the Nazis. The rest were taken to Treblinka. The Jewish cemetery has been completely destroyed.

There is a memorial in a yard at 33 Piekna in Sokolow. A flat concrete slab in the backyard has an inscription that reads to "Victims of Fascism."

After returning to Warsaw, we attended Friday night services at the Orthodox synagogue near our hotel. We had to sit in the separate women's section behind a screen. The congregation clapped and sang — everybody seemed to know the place in the service without direction. After the service we wanted to mingle but the crowd wasn't very welcoming. The only people we met were three men from LA, who were excluded just like we were.

On Saturday Jilliene's brother Alexander came from London to join us for the weekend. We spent some time at a roadside café where we discussed

Miscellaneous

GENEALOGY SOFTWARE

Tool Converts GEDCOM to Excel, Access or CSV Files.
There is a free utility that will convert a GEDCOM file into an Excel, Access, or Comma Separated Values file. Called GEDxlate, it can be downloaded free of charge at

www.gedmagic.com/GEDxlate.htm.

Looking at a genealogical database in another system, such as an Excel spreadsheet, provides the opportunity to view the data in a different format. For example, an Excel spreadsheet shows the data in columnar form. Glancing down a column of names might identify misspellings more easily. Sorting a column, such as the birth date field, might uncover inconsistencies in the data. From *Avotaynu* digest Nu? What's Nu?, April 12, 2009.

Be sure to check these websites for important additions/updates:

www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org

Shtetl websites.

<http://genealogyindexer.org>

Historical Directories with portals by Logan Kleinwaks

<http://stephenmorse.org/>

Amazing online tools.

www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/translations.html

Yizkor book translations

the family tree and how it relates to Wyszkow and Sieczychy. Our great grandfather, Joseph (Yosko) Moskovich Bolker, born in 1859, apparently left with his wife Bella and their eldest child Moshek Gersh, and headed south to what is now Ukraine. Abraham, our grandfather, born in 1883, was apparently born in Ukraine. Before they left, they lived in Sieczychy.

We drove to Treblinka where the monument is a beautifully designed field of stones of various sizes. Small stones represent cities in Poland. Large stones at the entrance represent countries from which Jews were deported. At Treblinka the Germans had completed their work — killed 800,000 Jews. They tried to destroy all evidence as they retreated from the Russian advance.

According to Kris, transports would come every day, and within two hours 6,000 people would be killed. It's a beautiful spot in the forest, making it hard to imagine such things. In Poniatowo, the nearest village, people who were there at the time remember the terrible stench of burning flesh after each train came through.

Continued on next page

Footsteps, cont. from page 16

We met Wojciech, the former Wyszkwow City Council president, at a restaurant in a wealthy section of Wyszkwow (pronounced Vishkov). On the 60th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising he organized a commemorative monument and dedication ceremony for Mordechai Anielewicz, the leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, who was born in Wyszkwow. A devout Catholic, Wojciech told us, "Knowledge of other people's faith mobilizes you and commits you to do something." When the monument was finally built, he had to take on the entire project, because no one else wanted to do it. He said that in spite of opposition he always thought he was doing the right thing and took strength from meetings like ours. The ambassador to Poland from Israel came for the monument's unveiling — on May 8,

2003, the sixtieth anniversary of Anielewicz' death — along with representatives from the Polish parliament, senate, the president, the church, the army, the most important newspapers, and the wartime Polish under-ground. He also honored the chair of the Wyszkwow landmanshaft organization. Before the war there were 6,000 Jews and a like number of Poles in Wyszkwow. Now there are no Jews.

Kris said that the forest around Wyszkwow is called the White Jungle. Hidden deep in the forest 150 years ago, Sieczychy, the village where Jilliene's, Alexander's, and my great grandparents Joseph and Bella Bolker lived with their children before moving to Ukraine, is still hidden today. Kris stopped to ask who the oldest woman in Sieczychy was. Since the oldest woman had dementia, we visited with Balynska — the second oldest woman in the village. Dressed in colorful clothes, she said she was born in 1921. But she was not born in this village, she came here to marry. She cried over Jews that were murdered. As a close friend of many Jewish girls she knew Jews by their first names. She said she was 18 when they took her for forced work and spent five years in Germany in a slave labor camp. She said

she tried unsuccessfully to escape and can't get over hearing that Jews were burned alive in the camp. She said that Jews had lived at the far end of the village, on the way to Dlugosiodlo, where they made a living from trade such as buying and selling calves.

The third oldest woman, called Babsha (which I think means grandmother) lives at the end of the village with one of her seven children, (her son, his wife and their two daughters). Babsha was born in Sieczychy in 1926. Her husband went to America and never came back. She and her family first said she thought we came from him. She remembered that before World War II there were eight Jewish families in the town: six traders, one farmer, and one man with a horse and buggy business who transported wood cut in the forest. She remembers first names, not last. She said the Jews were honest, and all lived



Wyszkwow memorial commemorates the birth of Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

from trade. Jews went to school with Poles, but they didn't participate in religious classes in school. There was no synagogue in Sieczychy, but two to three kilometers away in Marianowo there was a Jewish trader or farmer, a big landlord, who had a small prayer house or *shtible*. His name was Yankel. Jews who died in Sieczychy were buried in Dlugosiodlo Cemetery.

During the war Jews were forced to leave. Jews walked to Malkinia near Treblinka. Babsha said her husband's brother-in-law took them in his buggy. They told him to take what was left behind. After the war nobody came back, but one Pole who settled in a Jew's house was contacted by mail and asked for compensation for the property. The Pole wrote to the Jew, "If you come back you can have the house back." Nobody wrote again.

In the 1880s Ukraine and Sieczychy were under Russian rule so the Bolker family could have moved easily from Sieczychy to Ukraine. Sieczychy was a poor area, and everyone knew in Ukraine there was rich farm land.

Continued on next page

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Babsha said that as far as she could recall, her family always lived here. Before her lifetime the area was forested, but the trees were cut to make a meadow. There are now more than 100 homes in the village, a population of about 500, fewer than before the war. The family grows hay and breeds cattle. Small farms have been consolidated into bigger ones.

She said that today people are moving in two directions. Local people move to town, even to Warsaw, and now some city people are moving back to the country. Siczzychy is known for mushrooms. Some people have summer houses on the Narew or Bug River. If there was a good commuting route the area would be infested with seasonal residents. Now authorities are thinking of building a road from Wyszkw to Ostrolenka. The family regrets this because it may be the end of tranquility for them. But they would have an easier life in winter when they are stranded because the road is impassible.

After tea and cake with this Polish family we drove to the schoolhouse to see if we could obtain any school records, but we learned that the Nazis used the school house for a garrison and all the school records were destroyed.

Sunday morning we went with Kris to see the monument to Mordechai Anielewicz that we had heard about the previous day. It is near the Bug River in Wyszkw, where Anielewicz was born. The monument is in three parts, one for each of three languages. Each section of the base resembles the town's crest.

We met with another Wojciech, an architect who designed the monument. The architect's office is in a building that survived World War II. He showed us photos of early Wyszkw. The Bug River is now too low for boating but before the war it was higher and there was a steamship.

We went to the Jewish cemetery, where there is now a monument. At the time it was defaced with graffiti.

We wanted to go to the Pultusk branch of the Polish State Archives to get records from Przasnysz (pronounced like shashnish, Prushnitz in Yiddish), the origin of the other branch of the Bolker family. We first had to go to the main archive in Warsaw and fill out some forms for the head archivist.

We drove over the Vistula River to the state archives in Pultusk, where we knew there were three vital records from Przasnysz that I was looking for. The archivists remembered my name and that I had ordered records before. We had only an hour during which we obtained the three records we knew about for 1904, then looked through 1905 and 1906 without finding anything.

We drove to Przasnysz and met a historian of the local community, Mariusz, who is interested in Jewish history. Also the editor of the local newspaper, he wrote a book about the local high school, going year by year. He promised to look in the civil records office for any later records for us.

In Przasnysz, before WWII, there was a Jewish School with six grades. Above that Jews attended Polish schools. Thirty years ago, when Mariusz first got interested in the town's history, he found out there had been Jews there. He invited a professor of history to help him find Jews from Przasnysz. He thought all were killed in Holocaust, but he found 30 Jews from the town who live all over the world. Many Jews in Israel have roots in Przasnysz, and many come to visit. Mariusz has visited Israel twice.

After the war, Przasnysz Jews were afraid to come back because Poles were killing Jews. Mariusz said that the town had a problem with some Jews who survived Auschwitz, and then claimed they owned properties that didn't belong to them. After the war, Poles destroyed records so no property records remain, and there is no way to find out whether or not this story is true.

During the 17th Century and until the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery was built, Jews from Warsaw buried their dead in Przasnysz. The Germans destroyed all records and the pavement we were walking on was once part of the Jewish cemetery.

The memorial to the Jews of Przasnysz, a concrete monument with found headstones plastered into it, was built in 1986 without Jewish money and without Jewish inspiration. I noticed that one of the headstones was plastered in upside down. We were told that only one or two of these headstones are actually from Przasnysz. Some headstones were found in pavement or in people's yards. Mariusz has one or two headstones in his yard. Mariusz wanted to give a lecture when the monument was dedicated, but the Communists wouldn't let him. The translated inscription is different in Hebrew and in Polish. One says "To the memory of Jews who lived among us" vs. "To the memory of those who lived among us."

The next day we began the second part of our journey, our visit to Ukraine. Please see Part II of this story in the next issue of *ZichronNote*.

1 For information on the new Museum of Jewish Life in Poland see www.JewishMuseum.org.pl. Click on the American flag for information in English.

2 From korczak.com biography written by Jean Lifton.

3 www.jewishgen.org/JRI-PL/

4 www.tykocin.hg.pl



29th IAJGS International
Conference on Jewish Genealogy
Philadelphia
2-7 August 2009



The 29th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Philadelphia, August 2-7 at the Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel, will include programs featuring archivists, researchers and genealogists from around the world, including Israel, Latin America, Eastern Europe, South Africa and Germany. More than 1,000 are expected to attend.

Now available to review at www.philly2009.org, an extensive guide to the Philadelphia area's Jewish and genealogical resources can help researchers with a comprehensive listing of research sites and places of Jewish history in southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware. Each entry includes name, address, phone number, key staff, web site, e-mail, hours, fees, accessibility, public transportation, driving directions, Jewish interest holdings and research advice.

The guide is an evolving document to be periodically updated to reflect an evolving community and changing resources. Helpful for researchers around the world, this will be especially useful for attendees of this summer's IAJGS International Conference.

Online registration is now available at www.philly2009.org/registration_information.cfm. All registrants will receive a conference CD; those who would like a printed copy of the conference syllabus will need to order it when they register, for pick-up at the conference.

According to the event's organizers, "This is a wonderful conference for anyone who's interested in finding out more about their roots, whether they're just getting started or are an experienced genealogist. Our programs will include gripping speakers, educational sessions and some fun events."

Distinguished French priest, author and humanitarian Father Patrick Desbois will present the opening session keynote address, "The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews."

The grandson of a deportee to the Nazi Rawa Ruska forced-labor camp in Ukraine, Father Desbois is best known for his work in searching for and uncovering mass graves in Ukraine and for his book, *The Holocaust by Bullets*. "My book is an act of prevention of future acts of genocide," Debois says. Winner of the B'nai B'rith International Award for Outstanding Contribution to Relations with the Jewish People,

Father Desbois is secretary to the French Conference of Bishops for Relations with Judaism, advisor to the Cardinal-Archbishop of Leon and advisor to the Vatican on the Jewish Religion. Father Desbois is the president of YAHAD-IN UNUM (www.yahadinunum.org), whose mission is to increase knowledge and cooperation between Catholics and Jews.

The following excerpt from an article by genealogy blogger Schelly Talalay Dardashti, published in *Avotaynu, the International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, gives an idea of the scope of the conference programs:

"A sampling of events includes the following:

- A program on the archives of the Joint Distribution Committee will offer information about this valuable resource.

- Ukraine is in the spotlight at this year's event, with a photo exhibit of contemporary Ukrainian Jewish life being planned. Lectures will include Valery Bazarov speaking on Jewish tradition and life in Odessa, Ukrainian Jewish research by deputy director Olga Muzychuk of the Ukraine Archives system, two talks by Dr. Zvi Gitelman of Michigan on Jewish emigration from Ukraine and roles played by Ukrainians in the Holocaust, and new archival projects in Ukraine with Miriam Weiner. Muzychuk and Weiner will also lead a Ukraine Breakfast with the Experts.

- First-time tracks include Jews and Food (programs include the impact of Jewish traders and merchants, and Turkish cooking) and Jews in Sports.

- DNA and Genealogy programs include talks on Jewish genetic diseases and genealogy in conjunction with the Victor Center for Jewish Genetic Diseases at the city's Albert Einstein Medical Center and Genzyme Corporation."

Another first at the conference will be the attendance of the Director-General of the Romanian National Archives, Dr. Dorin Dobrinu.

Full conference registration is \$295.00 from May 1 through July 24, or \$325.00 after July 25, including on-site registration.

Conference details are available at www.philly2009.org.

Sun. May 17, San Francisco: *The World of Our Great-Grandparents: A History of the Jews of Eastern Europe from Earliest Times to 1900.* Ken Blady, Jewish educator, public speaker, author, and Yiddish translator, will discuss Jewish life in Eastern Europe from its obscure beginnings to the mass migration to New Worlds in the late 19th century. This will encompass historic and geographic background, everyday surroundings, family life and education, social and economic life, and religious activity.

Sun. June 21, Berkeley: *Warsaw-Lviv-Jerusalem: Adventures in "Archiveland" and Beyond.* SFBAJGS member Karen Roekard provides a strategic "guided tour" to archives in various locations.

Mon. June 22, Los Altos Hills: *Writing My Lost Family History: Sephardic Genealogy.* The speaker is Mark Cohen, author and renowned specialist in Sephardic history and genealogy. Cohen's writing has appeared in newspapers and numerous scholarly publications.

Sun. July 19, San Francisco: *Preparing Locational Search Tools for the 1940 Census Opening.* Joel Weintraub will discuss the planning, unique aspects, questions, and undercount of the 1940 census, why we wait 72 years to see a U.S. census, and the tools that may be available to help us use it.

Mon. Aug. 17, Los Altos Hills: *Using Personal Photographs to Trace Ancestral Roots.* Photographer and photo restorer Jason Rose, a member of the SFBAJGS, will present a "before and after" slideshow and share some tips for photo restoration while preserving the integrity and spirit of the original.

For more information about these and other programs of interest, see pages 3 and 4.

For the latest program information visit sfbajgs.org

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