



זכרונות ZichronNote

The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

Volume XXXII, Number 3

August 2012

Finding Sarah’s Siblings: How Probate Records Helped My Search
If you have not yet looked into probate records for your research, this story should motivate you to do so. **See page 5.**

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Vel’ d’Hiv Monument at the Quai de Grenelle. The translated inscription says:

The French Republic, in honor of victims of racist and anti-Semitic persecution and of crimes against humanity committed under the authority of the so-called “Government of the French State” 1940–1944. We will never forget.

(Photograph by Leonieke Aalders, 22 December 2011)

ZichronNote
Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area
Jewish Genealogical Society

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ZichronNote is published four times per year, in February, May, August, and November. The deadline for contributions is the first of the month preceding publication. The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions. Submissions may be made by hard copy or electronically. Please e-mail to newsletter@sfbajgs.org.

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

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

Membership is open to anyone interested in Jewish genealogy. Dues are \$23 per calendar year. The Society is tax-exempt pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. Make your check payable to "SFBAJGS" and send to: SFBAJGS, Membership, P.O. Box 318214, San Francisco, CA 94131-8214.

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Note: All URL's are valid as of the time of publication.

President's Message

Meetings and Musings

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

It sure is sad to think that this year's conference in Paris is now all but a memory, but a wonderful memory at that. As I wrote previously, it had been some time (1985) since I had last visited Paris. Then I had traveled on my friend's canal boat. This time I went by train from London to Paris. Strange to think this is now "normal travel" and uneventful. Architecture-wise, it was wonderful to see the restoration of St. Pancras Station as the London gateway to Europe.

Paris itself was a tantalizing distraction from the many lectures, and they were certainly different from the ones we are used to seeing during U.S.-based conferences. In fact, many of the "usual names" were notably absent from Paris, which also made this year's conference seem not as much the "same" as in previous years. (See you in Boston in 2013!)

The one lecture which stands out in my mind was the one given by Dr. Nicholas Evans of the University of Hull. It was a fascinating overview of Jewish immigration into Great Britain, a subject which really does need further investigation, as one usually is of the opinion that this is a subject where records are sorely lacking.

Afterward I spoke to him about UK Parliamentary subcommittee records (yet another neglected area that is chockfull of fascinating first-hand accounts of Jews arriving at UK ports). Nick gently reminded me that we had been in correspondence many years earlier, long before he became a professor. Oh, one's memory is a terrible thing to lose!

Paris was a wonderful city to explore. Two places stand out and typically both had Jewish themes. I was pleased to tag along with SFBAJGS Board member Pierre Hahn on a visit to the Jewish sections of Montparnasse Cemetery, a short walk from the hotel. The family mausoleums, from traditional to modern designs, were fascinating to view.

The second place was the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme (Jewish Museum of Art and History), which contained some fascinating exhibits and informative descriptions in several languages, including English. I just wish we had been allowed to photograph some of the displays. The library also contained some interesting materials, quite different from what I am accustomed to, as the collection was seen from a French and European perspective.

My favorite "non-Jewish" place was definitely the Musée D'Orsay, a very sympathetic renovation from

Continued on page 4

SOCIETY NEWS

New Members

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

Member News

President **Jeremy Frankel** will co-teach a class on Introduction to Jewish Genealogy at the Family History Day at the California State Archives on 13 October (see page 4 for more information).

Steve Morse's One-Step Website was named to Family Tree Magazine's 2012 "101 Best Websites for Genealogy" in the Online Genealogy Tools category: <http://www.familytreemagazine.com/article/best-online-genealogy-tools-2012>.

ZichronNote editor and board member **Janice M. Sellers** has been named the IAJGS Communications Editor.

SFBAJGS on Facebook

SFBAJGS has a Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/San-Francisco-Bay-Area-Jewish-Genealogical-Society/54214774804?ref=ts>. Friend us and visit often for updates between meetings.

Long-time Member Passes Away

Richard "Dick" Hoffman, a member of the society since 1995, passed away Sunday, 12 August. Until recently, Dick and his wife, Caroline, were well known attendees of our South Bay meetings held at Congregation Beth Am. The Hoffmans created the excellent library at Congregation Beth Am and devoted their time and energies to making it one of the finest on the West Coast. They did the same thing at the Moldaw Residence in Palo Alto, where they resided during the past few years. Before every meeting began, they always made sure the library was open and available for research by any society member.

Member Discount on Fold3.com

We have arranged a discount for society members on Fold3.com subscriptions. Fold3 has a significant online collection of original military and historical records, which can help with your research. For a limited time, you can receive a discount on an Annual All-Access Fold3 membership. If you already have a subscription, you can extend it for an additional year. Take advantage of this offer while it lasts! Go to http://go.fold3.com/San%20Francisco%20Bay%20Area%20Jewish%20Genealogical%20Society_society/?xid=791.

Seeking Stories for *ZichronNote*

Have you had a breakthrough in your family research, solved a family mystery through painstaking research, discovered a better way to use resource materials, or walked where your ancestors walked as part of an interesting family history trip? Have you had success or made progress at the Genealogy Clinic with the Mavens?

We want to read about it in *ZichronNote*. Please submit materials to newsletter@sfbajgs.org.

Meeting Times and Locations

Unless otherwise indicated, the SFBAJGS meeting schedule is as follows
NOTE: We have a new time and location for the San Francisco meetings.

San Francisco: **Sunday. Doors open 1:00 p.m. Program begins at 1:30 p.m.**
Rhoda Goldman Plaza, 2180 Post Street.

Oakland: **Sunday. Doors open 12:30 p.m. Program begins at 1:00 p.m.**
Oakland Regional Family History Center, 4766 Lincoln Avenue

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.

See Back Cover for Calendar of Upcoming SFBAJGS Meetings

CALENDAR

Genealogy Events

Local and Regional

Monday, 10 September. **Jewish Genealogical Society of Sacramento.** Maria K. Sakovich, “**Angel Island Immigration.**” Albert Einstein Residence Center, 1935 Wright Street, Sacramento. <http://www.jewishgen.org/jgs-sacramento/>

Wednesday, 12 September. **Root Cellar Sacramento Genealogical Society.** Lisa B. Lee, “**Legacy Planning for Your Online Presence.**” Citrus Heights Community Clubhouse 6921 Sylvan Road, Citrus Heights. <http://www.rootcellar.org/>

Saturday, 15 September. **Sonoma County Genealogical Society.** Steve Morse, “**One-Step Website: A Potpourri of Genealogical Research Tools.**” Finley Community Center, 2060 West College Avenue, Santa Rosa. <http://www.scgs.org/scgs.html>

Tuesdays, 18 September–30 October. **California Genealogical Society.** Jane Knowles Lindsey, Susan Goss Johnston, Janice M. Sellers, “**Fall 2012 Beginning Genealogy Series.**” Preregistration required. 2201 Broadway Lower Level, Oakland. <http://californiaancestors.org/>

Saturday, 3 November. **San Mateo County Genealogical Society.** Tom Jones, “**Proven Methods for Genealogical Success.**” Menlo Park LDS Church, 1105 Valparaiso, Menlo Park. <http://www.smcgs.org/>

State and National

Saturday, 13 October. **14th Annual Family History Day at the California State Archives.** California State Archives, Sacramento. Free. <http://fhdnewsline.blogspot.com/>

Sunday–Friday, 4–9 August 2013. **33rd IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy.** Boston, Massachusetts. http://iajgs.org/2013_Boston/2013.html

International

Tuesday, 21 May 2013. **New Trends in the Historiography of Jewish Immigration.** Western Galilee College invites scholars to a conference and research workshop on new developments in the historiography of immigration. The workshop will be divided into sessions, with each session dedicated to a specific topic. Suggestions for topics are appreciated. Presentations are not limited to Hebrew. Send your proposal, including a short (one page) abstract and CV by **31 October 2012** to Dr. Haim Sperber at haims@wgaliil.ac.il.

Friday–Sunday, 6–8 September 2013. **Exodus: Movement of the People.** Hinckley Island Hotel, Watling Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire, UK. Deadline for submissions **30 September 2012.** <http://www.exodus2013.co.uk/>

Monday–Wednesday, 29–31 October 2012. **Jewish Life in the 19th and 20th Century Austrian-Hungarian Border Region.** Andrassy Gyula German-speaking University, Budapest, Hungary. ursula.mindler@andrassyuni.hu, <http://www.andrassyuni.eu/mitteleuropische-studien/aktuelles/judisches-leben-im-ungarischosterreichischen-grenzraum-des-19-und-20-jahrhunderts.html>



President's Message, continued from page 2

its former use as a Beaux-Arts railroad station to a museum.

As usual it was good to see a number of Society members in attendance and to catch up with folks I am usually only in e-mail contact with. I also fostered some new connections for when I need future research assistance.

Janice reminded me to say something about the current debacle about the possible lack of access to the Social Security Death Index (SSDI)/Death Master File. The back story is how these records are apparently being used for perpetrating ID fraud. Frankly, I find this very strange, as the very existence of this database ought to ensure this cannot happen. A simple thirty-second review of the SSDI would show if a Social Security number had already been issued. If someone was trying to buy something or open an account and proffered their supposed SS#, a simple check would prove whether it was genuine. I mean, if the number is in the SSDI, then the person to whom it belongs is deceased and so the person proffering it must be using it fraudulently!

Every genealogist ought to write to their Congress member and explain how the SSDI is and should be used: by genealogists AND as a way of PREVENTING the fraudulent use of Social Security numbers. A good primer on the situation is available at <http://www.fgs.org/rpac/2012/02/13/new-ssdi-call-to-action-kit/>.

On a lighter note, it is really gratifying to read of more databases coming online, especially those covering Eastern Europe. These will help many people with their research.

As summer slowly gives way to fall and temperatures recede from their summer highs, I will be planning research trips to the north and south of the Bay Area. I hope everyone has also had a good summer, met with family and friends, and recharged their batteries.



Finding Sarah's Siblings: How Probate Records Helped My Search

Jacob Koff

Probate records are often overlooked by researchers, yet they can yield incredible amounts of information.

I knew nothing about the siblings of my great-grandmother Sarah Lefkowitz. I did not even know if Sarah, the mother of my father's mother, had any siblings.

A chance reference by a cousin to Benjamin "Beni" Lefkowitz turned out to be extremely useful. This cousin said Beni was Sarah's brother and that he was in the shoe business in New York City. I gathered from some of the stories she told me—which had been told to her by her mother—that Beni was somewhat well-to-do. She also gave me a copy of the marriage affidavit of Beni and his wife Mary Feigenbaum.

I began to assemble facts about Beni's life. I found several *New York Times* obituaries for Beni from 1936. It was common then for organizations to publish death notices or obituaries when one of their members died. As there were several entries for Beni, it was clear that he was a member of many organizations and was active in several businesses.

I learned from these obituaries that Beni was an officer in several small banks. I then found two passport applications for him, one involving a visit to his native Hungary for a vacation. It was likely, then, that Beni was indeed wealthy.

Knowing his approximate date of death from the obituaries, and assuming that as a wealthy man he would have prepared a will, I set out to find his probate court file.

I contacted the State of New York Surrogate's Court and was told I would have to come into the courthouse to view the documents, after first requesting that the file be brought out from storage. Explaining that I was on the West Coast, a kind and gracious court clerk looked up the probate file number, ordered the documents from storage, and scanned the entire contents of the file, sending me the scan as an e-mail attachment! The file had 60 pages of documents.

The pages included Beni's will and a transcript of a court suit by the estate's trustee to recover certain property from one of the beneficiaries of the estate. In typical fashion, the will named various of his relatives as beneficiaries of his estate, describing them in general terms such as "my nephew" or "my niece."

From the will I learned about many of Beni's relatives. While the familial descriptions of relationships were helpful, they did not specify exactly how Beni and his various beneficiaries were related.

Under the terms of his will, Beni established a trust and named his nephew William Domroe, the son of his wife's sister, as co-trustee and beneficiary. When Mr. Domroe died in 1962, the surviving co-trustee filed a petition in New York Surrogate's Court to dissolve the trust and distribute its assets. The petition and its attendant documents were part of Beni's probate court file.

In connection with that proceeding, the co-trustee filed with the court birth certificates, death certificates, and other related documents for each person named in the will. Apparently, the court required detailed information about each beneficiary.

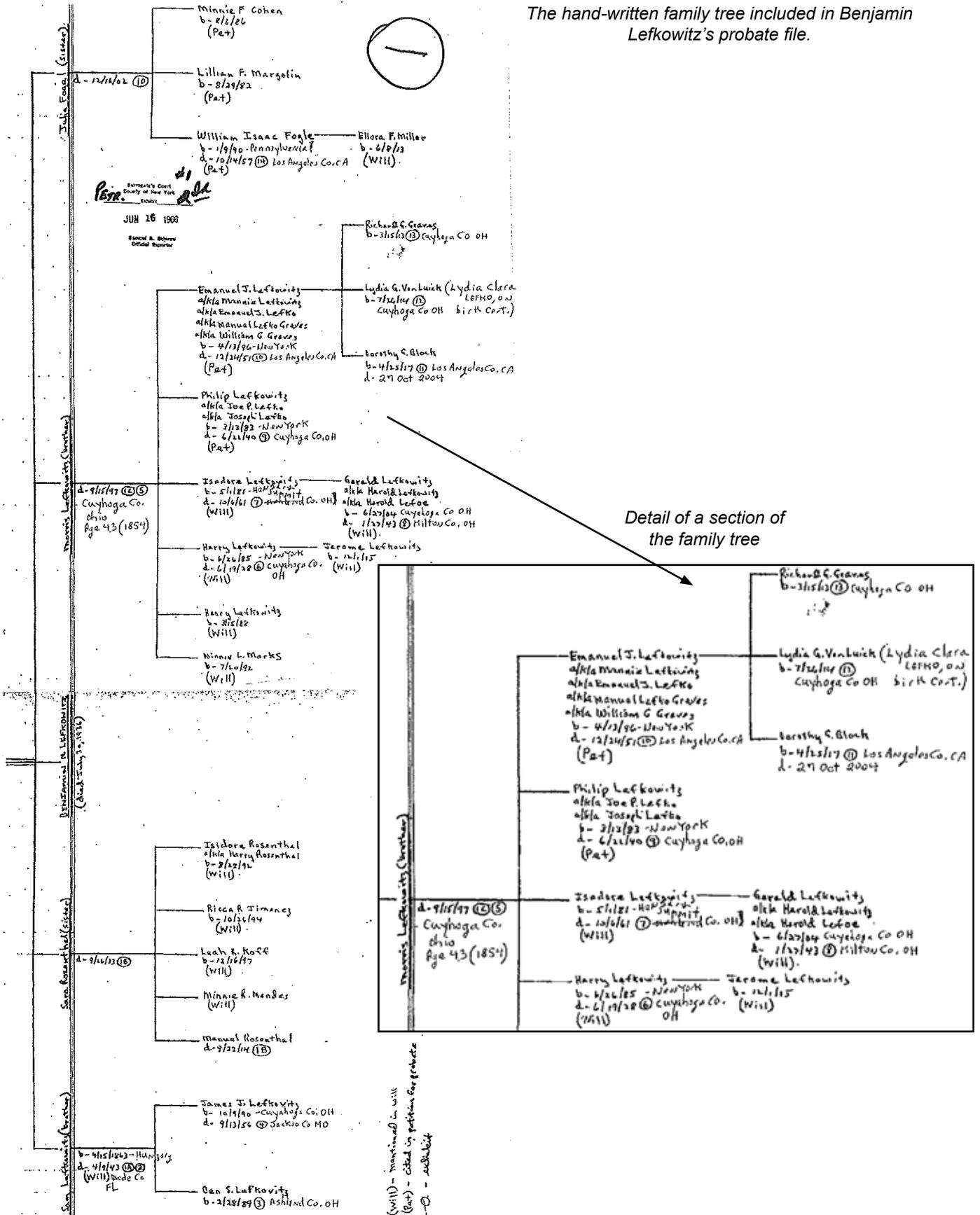
Among the documents filed, the most amazing one by far was a hand-drawn genealogy chart (see page 6) showing the descendants for three generations of each of Beni's siblings, including my great-grandmother Sarah. This not only gave me the names of relatives but told me their exact familial relationships to each other. The chart also gave birth and death dates for each person, when known. This was an astonishing document!

Using this information, I was able to work forward in time and contact many of the descendants of those named in the chart, greatly expanding my family connections. Having the names of Beni's siblings, I was able to find my family in the 1869 Hungarian census index and to obtain a copy of that record.

While it is likely that few probate files will contain the breadth and depth of documentation that Beni's did, it is clear that such records can sometimes be an invaluable source of information.



The hand-written family tree included in Benjamin Lefkowitz's probate file.



French President François Hollande's Speech for the 70th Anniversary of the Vel d'Hiv

Translation by Rosanne Leeson and Janice M. Sellers

Hollande's speech was delivered 22 July 2012. The speech may be read in the original French at <http://jssnews.com/2012/07/22/hollandehistorique/>.

Mr. Prime Minister,
President of the National Assembly,
Your Excellencies,
Mayor of Paris,
Mr. Chairman of the Representative Council of
Jewish Institutions in France,
Mr. Chief Rabbi,
Distinguished religious representatives,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We gather this morning to recall the horror of a crime, to express the grief of those who lived through the tragedy, to evoke the dark hours of the collaboration, of our history, and therefore the responsibility of France.

We are here also to transmit the memory of the Shoah, of which the raids were the first step, to lead the fight against forgetting, to be witness to the new generations of what barbarism is capable of doing and what resources humanity may hold within itself to defeat it.

Seventy years ago, on 16 July 1942, at dawn, 13,152 men, women, and children were arrested at their homes. Childless couples and the unmarried were interned in Drancy, where this fall a museum created by the Shoah Memorial will be erected.

Others were taken to the Velodrome d'Hiver. Crammed for five days in inhumane conditions, they were transferred from there to the camps of Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande.

A clear directive was given by the Vichy administration: "Children may not be sent in the same convoy as their parents." So, after agonizing separations with parents on one side, children on the other, they left for Auschwitz-Birkenau, where those deported from Drancy had preceded them by a few days.

They were murdered. Simply because they were Jews.

This crime took place here in our capital, in our streets, in the courtyards of our buildings, in our stairwells, in our school yards. It would pave the way for other raids, in Marseille and throughout France, on both sides of the line of demarcation. There were also other deportations, notably that of the Gypsies.

The infamy of the Vel d'Hiv was part of an assault that had no precedent and cannot be compared to anything else: the Holocaust, the attempted annihilation of all Jews of Europe.

Seventy-six thousand French Jews were deported to death camps. Only 2,500 have returned.

These women, these men, these children could not have expected the fate that awaited them. They could not even imagine it. They had confidence in France.

They believed that the country of the Great Revolution, of the City of Lights, would serve as a refuge. They loved the Republic with a passion inspired by gratitude. It was indeed in Paris in 1791, under the National Constituent Assembly, that for the first time in Europe Jews had become full citizens. Later, others found in France a land of welcome, a chance at life, a promise of protection.

It was this promise and confidence which were trampled seventy years ago.

I recall the words that the Chief Rabbi of France, Jacob Kaplan, wrote to Marshal Petain in October 1940 after the enactment of the odious regulations against the Jews: "Victims," he wrote, "of measures that wound our dignity as men and our honor as Frenchmen, we express our deep faith in the spirit of justice of eternal France. We know that our ties to the great French family are too strong to be broken."

There lies the betrayal.

Beyond time, beyond mourning, my presence this morning demonstrates the willingness of France to cherish the memory of her children who disappeared and to honor the dead without graves, those souls whose only grave is our memory.

This is the meaning of the requirement imposed by the Republic: that the names of these victims do not fall into oblivion.

We owe to the Jewish martyrs of the Velodrome d'Hiver the truth about what happened there seventy years ago.

The truth is that the French police, on the basis of lists that they themselves had created, were responsible for arresting the thousands of innocent people caught in the trap on 16 July 1942. It was the French Gendarmerie that escorted them to the internment camps.

The truth is that not one German soldier, not a single one, was mobilized for the entire operation. The truth is that this crime was committed in France, by France.

The great virtue of President Jacques Chirac is to have recognized this truth right here, on 16 July 1995.

“France,” he said, “France, homeland of the Enlightenment and of human rights, land of welcome and of asylum, France, that day, accomplished the irreparable.”

But the truth is also that the crime of Vel d’Hiv was committed against France, against its values, against its principles, against its ideals.

Its honor was saved by the Righteous, and above all by those who knew how to speak out against the barbarity, by the anonymous heroes who here, hid a neighbor; who there, aided someone; who risked their lives so that those of innocent people would be spared. By all those French who allowed three quarters of the Jews of France to survive.

The honor of France was embodied by General de Gaulle, who arose 18 June 1940 to continue the fight.

The honor of France was defended by the Resistance, that army of shadows that did not resign itself to shame and defeat.

France was represented on the battlefield, with our flag, by the soldiers of Free France.

It was also served by Jewish institutions, such as the work of Save the Children, which surreptitiously organized the rescue of more than 5,000 children and orphans and which cared for the orphans after the Liberation.

Truth does not divide. It brings together. It was in this spirit that this day of commemoration was established by François Mitterrand, and that, under the government of Lionel Jospin, the Foundation for the Memory of the Holocaust was created. It was under the same government, under Jacques Chirac, that the commission to compensate victims of anti-Semitic attacks was established, whose goal was to redress what could happen again.

It comes to me now, in the chain of our collective history, to pursue this joint undertaking of memory, truth, and hope.

It starts with sharing information. Many abuses are rooted in ignorance. We cannot resign ourselves to the fact that two out of three young Frenchmen do not know what the Vel d’Hiv round-up was.

The schools of the Republic, to which I here express my confidence, have a mission: to instruct, to educate, to teach the past, to make it known, understood, in

all its dimensions. The Holocaust is on the agenda of the CM2, from the third to the first levels.

There should not be in France one school, one college, one high school, where it cannot be taught. There should not be here a single institution where that history is not fully understood, respected, and reflected upon. There cannot be, there will not be, for the Republic a lost memory.

I will personally be watching.

The challenge is to fight tirelessly against all forms of distortion of history. Not only against the outrage of Holocaust denial, but also against the temptation of relativism. Sharing the story of the Holocaust is in effect to teach its terrible uniqueness. This crime is, by its nature, by its dimension, by its methods, by the frightening precision of its implementation, a unique abyss in the history of mankind. This singularity must be constantly recalled.

Finally, sharing this memory is to remember all of its lessons. It is to understand how ignominy was possible yesterday, so it can never reappear tomorrow.

The Holocaust did not spring from nothing and from nowhere. Certainly, it was implemented by the unprecedented and terrifying alliance of perverseness in racist delirium and businesslike rationalization in its execution. But it was also made possible by centuries of blindness, stupidity, lies, and hatred. It was preceded by many warning signs which were not recognized.

Our vigilance must never be compromised. No nation, no society, no person is immune to evil. Let us not forget the pronouncement of Primo Levi about his persecutors: “Without exception they were not monsters; they had our faces.” Remain alert and know how to detect the return of atrocity in its most innocuous aspects.

I know the fears expressed by some of you. I want to respond to them.

Aware of this history, the Republic will hunt down with the greatest determination all anti-Semitic acts, but also all speech which causes the Jews of France even to feel uneasy in their own country.

In this matter, nothing will be treated with indifference. Everything will be fought with the utmost vigor. To hush up anti-Semitism, to conceal it, to explain it, is already to accept it.

The safety of Jews in France is not the responsibility of the Jews, it is that of all Frenchmen, and I mean that it is guaranteed at all times and in all places.

Four months ago, in Toulouse, children were dying for the same reason as at the Vel d’Hiv: because they were Jews.

Anti-Semitism is not an opinion, it is contemptible. Because of this, it must first be looked in the face. It must be named and recognized for what it is. Wherever it spreads, it will be unmasked and punished.

All ideologies of exclusion, all forms of intolerance, all fanaticism, all xenophobia, which are attempting to follow the logic of hatred, will find the Republic on their trail.

Every Saturday morning, in every French synagogue, at the end of the service, the prayer of the Jews of France rings out, which they send up for the salvation of the country they love and want to serve: "May France be happy and prosper. May she be strong and great through union and harmony. May she enjoy lasting peace and maintain her noble spirit among the nations."

This noble spirit, it is France as a whole which must be worthy.

Tirelessly teach historical truth; watch scrupulously over the values of the Republic; constantly remember the necessity of religious tolerance, as part of our secular laws; never yield on the principles of liberty and individual dignity; always promote the promise of equality and freedom. These are the measures to which we need collectively to commit ourselves.

It is in thinking of the lives that could not be fulfilled, of those children deprived of a future, those destinies cut down prematurely, that we must raise to an even higher level the callings of our own lives. It is by rejecting indifference, neglect, and complacency that we become stronger together.

It is by being clear about our own history that France, thanks to the spirit of harmony and unity, will attain the best of its values, here and around the world.

Long live the Republic!

Long live France!



2012 International Jewish Genealogy Month

International Jewish Genealogy Month falls during the Hebrew month of Cheshvan, which in 2012 runs from October 17 to November 14. The purpose of International Jewish Genealogy Month is to make the Jewish public aware of the hobby of genealogy and the fact that local Jewish genealogical societies can help people get started researching their families.

This year's International Jewish Genealogy Month poster was designed by Lynn Teichman and Tuvia Natkin of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Southwest Florida. Their comments on the winning design:

The hand, the tree of life, reaches out for our past. Searching, we grow as a tree grows.

The family names are from the archives of our local chapter, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Southwest Florida.



International Jewish Genealogy Month



Cheshvan 5773 - 2012
October 17 to November 14
www.iajgs.org

A Wonderful Paris Conference!

Rosanne Leeson

The 2012 conference of the IAJGS in Paris was a wonderful and fascinating event. With 850 attendees from thirty different countries, it was truly the most international IAJGS conference ever held.

There were many speakers from countries which have never had representation previously, such as French Jews from Africa, Tunisia, Algeria, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Malta, and Belgium. All these were in addition to the usual ones from Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Germany, Lithuania, etc. In other words, it was a richness of information such as I have never before experienced at a conference. The packed schedule made it very difficult to get to all of this, alas, with 250 presentations, workshops, and meetings. The translation headphones were very easy to use and did an excellent job regardless of the language in which the material was being presented.

Among the meetings that I found most interesting was an opening roundtable, "Jewish Genealogy in Europe." Participants were Michael Goldstein (IAJGS; moderator), Bruno Bloch (France), Louis H. Cohen (Netherlands), Daniel Dratwa (Belgium), Thomas Fürth (Sweden), René Loeb (Switzerland), Laurent Moyse (Luxembourg), and Mark Nicholls and Laurence Harris (UK). Each spoke about the work of his individual Jewish genealogical group and gave information about projects, most of which were eye-opening for those not aware of the work going on in these countries.

Another session that interested me was a presentation on researching in the archives of Moldova, delivered by Alla Chastina, who has assisted the Rom-SIG and many of its members in the past. She discussed both civil and some Jewish community records. This was the first such report on the Moldovan archives, and a number of people were up in the aisles photographing the very clear pictures of the various documents that were shown in a PowerPoint display.

Finally, an interesting talk was one given by Jaques-Henri Gougenheim about the famous Guggenheim family of New York, their origins in Switzerland, their arrival in the U.S., the accomplishments of the first generations, and what has happened to them in today's world.

The conference also featured a number of very interesting and well done family trees, which were posted along the walls of the conference center.



Unfortunately, my involvement as a coordinator for two different SIGs and being called in to translate and assist people in my two areas of research caused me to miss a good number of other speakers whom I very much wanted to hear. However, in the course of doing everything I found two more cousins and now have their lines to add to my tree!

The great breakfasts that were served free (even though they had bacon and pork sausage!) provided an enormous and delicious choice of goodies as well as an opportunity to meet and mingle with friends—old and new—as each day began. And it was good to see so many of our members sporting yellow SFBAJGS ribbons attached to their badges.

All in all, kudos must go to Anne Lifshitz-Krams, Bruno Bloch, and the entire team of hard-working members of the Cercle de Généalogie Juive! Well done!



2012 IAJGS Awards

Outstanding Contribution to Jewish Genealogy via the Internet, Print or Electronic Project:

Logan Kleinwaks. His creation and management of the Genealogy Indexer is a unique innovation in the field of Jewish genealogy. His free Web site makes available searches of original documents which have not been indexed, from many sources around the world, primarily from central and eastern Europe.

Outstanding Program or Project Award: JewishGen ViewMate Project. Conceived and initiated by Bernard Kouchel, this innovative tool allows researchers to share images with peers, who volunteer to provide translations and explanations.

Outstanding Publication by an IAJGS Member Association:

Shemot. The journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain is published with a distinct theme three times each year. Each issue attracts contributors with expertise in the theme and provides articles with breadth and depth. The content of this relevant and informative journal reflects the skill set of a strong network of member and nonmember contributors.

International Jewish Genealogy Month Poster:

Lynn Teichman and Tuvia Natkin, Jewish Genealogical Society of Southwest Florida.



Opening of A-Files to the Public

Jeremy Frankel

On Tuesday, 22 May, I was in attendance, representing the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society, at NARA San Bruno, California for the official opening of the A-Files.

The PR announcements that publicized the event had been a little vague as to whom the files related. Some sixty million case files will be released over time, as the 100 years from birth ruling applies. Some 40,000 files are now at San Bruno and a larger number at the Kansas City NARA branch. All the files would have been stored at Kansas City if it weren't for the Bay Area Asian community, which wanted local files to be held at the local NARA facility.

As you may have read elsewhere, the move to have these USCIS records transferred to NARA was spearheaded originally by Representative Tom Lantos, and after his death in February 2008 by Representative Jackie Speier. Local groups had banded together as SONA (Save Our National Archives), of which the SFBAJGS was a member.

The Alien Registration Act of 1940 required the creation of an Alien Registration record for each immigrant in the United States. Then, in 1944, case files were developed into the "Alien Files", or "A-Files" as they are commonly known. Some "A-Files", due to official need to pull older case files for government purposes, include immigrants who entered the U.S. as much as forty years earlier than 1940.

USCIS has to comb through all their files seeking those where the alien was born before 1910. Their challenge lies in the fact that all the files are kept in "date creation" order. In theory the files followed the aliens around the country, wherever they were living, and, as the official government phrase states, "wherever their activities 'touched' the Government."

Hence Jewish genealogists will find that several of their ancestors probably had A-Files. These files contain an amazing array of documents which will help us further understand our families' histories while living in America.

Each A-File contains documents related not only to an individual's immigration and personal history, but historically significant records key to understanding U.S. immigration policy, its influences on global migration, and sociological patterns from the 20th century onward. Sample documents include family photographs and letters, birth and marriage certificates, family genealogies, INS investigations, and transcripts of interviews and deportation hearings.

Immigrants may have been Jewish Holocaust survivors. Of particular interest to the Bay Area are thousands of individual files from the Angel Island Immigration Station.

As the NARA PR announcement stated:

The holdings of the National Archives at San Francisco will include many case files created at USCIS District Offices in San Francisco, California; Honolulu, Hawaii; Reno, Nevada; and Agana, Guam, American Samoa, and the American Territories. The National Archives at Kansas City will maintain A-Files for all other INS District Offices nationwide.

A-Files may be viewed in person by appointment or copies may be ordered for a fee. Researchers may contact National Archives staff at AFiles.SanBruno@nara.gov to search A-Files holdings for a particular file. Beginning Tuesday, 29 May, an online database will be available through the National Archives at San Francisco website [<http://www.archives.gov/pacific/san-francisco>].



Visa of Praskovia Strelkova issued by the American Consulate in Harbin, China, September 1923

Family History Statistics

Kim Sheintal

Kim is the president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Southwest Florida. This article first appeared in *Mishpochology*, volume 16 number 1, March 2011, the newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Southwest Florida.

The book *Guinness World Records* collates and publishes notable records of all types, from first and best to worst human achievements, to extremes in the natural world and beyond. I started to make a list of my personal genealogy records.

- Most separate branches of one surname not connected to another branch with that same surname on my family tree is 17.

- Most number of children by the same mother and father on my family tree is 10.

- Longest surname on my family tree is 11 letters.

Here are the same records listed above and others for you to look for within your own family tree:

- Most separate branches of one surname not connected to another branch with that same surname is ____.

- Most number of children by the same mother and father is ____.

- Longest surname is ____.

- Longest given name is ____.

- Most names for a person (first and middle names, surname) is ____.

- Most number of sons in a row without daughters by same mother and father is ____.

- Most number of daughters in a row without sons by same mother and father is ____.

- Biggest age difference between siblings (with no one born in between) born of the same mother and father is ____.

- Biggest age difference between oldest and youngest siblings born of the same mother and father is ____.

- Youngest mother on family tree is age ____.

- Youngest father on family tree is age ____.

- Oldest mother to have a baby is age ____.

- Oldest father to have a baby is age ____.

- Most years married by the same two people to one another consecutively is ____.

- Most marriages by one person is ____.

- Oldest birth record is from the year ____.

- Oldest death record is from the year ____.

- Oldest marriage record is from the year ____.

- The most generations traced on one family line is ____.

- The most different spellings found for the same surname is ____.

- The most number of babies born on the same date (but not necessarily same year) is ____.

- Most sets of multiple births by the same mother and father is ____.

- Oldest age at death is ____.

- Biggest age difference between a husband and wife is ____.

- Smallest age difference between a husband and wife is ____.

- Most number of siblings within a family to have the same birthday is ____.

There are many more possible categories. Please let me know your results in the above categories and ones you create. If you try this, please let me know your answers at klapshein@aol.com.



The Galitzianer Request for Submissions

The Galitzianer is the quarterly journal of Geshet Galicia. Submissions may be articles and/or graphics, both original and previously published, relevant to Jewish genealogical research in Galicia: articles about recent trips to Galicia, reports on your own research, research techniques, historical and recent pictures relevant to these matters, lists, book reviews, etc.

Electronic submissions are preferred, though not required. Submissions are accepted from both members and nonmembers of Geshet Galicia.

Though submissions are accepted year-round, the deadline for the December 2012 issue is **15 October 2012**. To send a submission or if you have any questions, contact Janice Sellers at janicemsj@gmail.com. For more information see <http://www.jewishgen.org/galicia/newsletter.html>.

Researching When Records are Gone

Beth Galletto

Nancy Peterson, author of *Raking the Ashes: Genealogical Strategies—Pre-1906 San Francisco Resources*, spoke before an audience of about 20 at Rhoda Goldman Plaza in San Francisco on Sunday, 15 July. While Peterson's book focuses on finding records that evaded destruction in San Francisco's 1906 earthquake and fire, she was quick to explain that her approach is applicable to damage caused by floods, fires, wars, hurricanes—in fact, any disaster, natural or man-made—anywhere in the world.

Peterson began her presentation with historic photos of Chicago after the great fire of 1871 and Johnstown, Pennsylvania after the flood in 1889, ending with photos of San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. Her handout introduced her approach: "Some have written that the Chinese word for crisis is synonymous with opportunity. This is not an accurate translation, but it is true that every genealogical crisis produces an opportunity for both growth and progress. The loss of records forces us to discover new sources and techniques. We not only become more skilled, but we create in many cases a far richer family history."

Her method has two main premises: First, not all old records were destroyed in the disaster. Second, if the records you need really cannot be found, you may be able to find satisfactory, or at least helpful substitutes.

The first step is to determine the extent and magnitude of the disaster. The records you need may not really be gone. They may not have been stored within the area of destruction, or even if they were they may have escaped damage. Using a map of the San Francisco fire, she showed the boundaries of the destruction.

Records from cemeteries outside the burn area were likely to survive. A death register from Letterman Hospital, mostly of military deaths, was saved and can now be found at NARA. Some records from the former San Francisco City Hall and the Hall of Records, including some birth, death, and marriage registers and some deeds and other land records, survived. Some of the land records did not burn because they had been stored in strong boxes and safes. The federal courthouse was inside the burn zone but was unscathed. She noted that some of these surviving records can be found at <http://www.californiaancestors.org/> and <http://www.familysearch.org/>.

The records you need may have been rescued just in time to be saved. Examples include church ledgers and business ledgers. Some records from Chicago were sent to the middle of the lake before they could be damaged in the fire. In San Francisco, the enrollment ledger of the Society of Territorial Pioneers, from the 1860's, signed by each person listed, was rescued. Abstracts of some ledgers may be found at the California Genealogical Society.

Perhaps a transcription of, recording of, or index to the records you need was sent away before the disaster. For example, the U.S. Immigration Service transcribed death records for Chinese names prior to 1906. Voter registers that had been sent to Sacramento say where a person was naturalized.

Necessary records that had been destroyed were reconstructed or replaced. These include land and tax records such as reconstructed probate proceedings, land ownership, and naturalization records.

If it turns out that a record is really gone, the information you want may be found via an acceptable substitute. The best of these are pension, military, church, court, and bible records; newspapers; and family-retained duplicates. Passport applications with information about birth date and place may be found on Ancestry and Fold3. Pension claims may be obtained from NARA. Peterson also suggested looking at 1918 alien registration forms and at old newspapers.

Peterson's book, which provides detailed information on the sources mentioned in her talk and more, has recently been updated and expanded to include newly released records. It provides a method for those searching for hard-to-find records anywhere. In summary, Peterson said, "Use your gray matter and think outside the box."

Raking the Ashes may be purchased through the California Genealogical Society at <http://www.californiaancestors.org/>.



Rediscovering Traces of Memory: The Jewish Heritage of Polish Galicia

A Book Review by Nancy Schlegel

Rediscovering Traces of Memory: The Jewish Heritage of Polish Galicia by Jonathan Webber; photographs by Chris Schwarz. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009. 192 pages. ISBN 9780253221858. This review was first published in *The Galitzianer*, volume 18 number 3, May 2011, the journal of Gesher Galicia.

This book is a collection of 74 haunting photographs selected from the permanent exhibition “Traces of Memory” at the Galicia Jewish museum in Kraków. The images in the exhibit were in turn selected from roughly 1,000 photographs amassed over a decade between 1993 and 2002 during the collaboration of author and photographer. The museum was created in 2004 by photographer Chris Schwarz, after a diagnosis of terminal cancer, and this book was published two years after his death in 2007.

From 1993 to 2004, author and photographer collaborated on identifying and photographing traces of Jewish heritage remaining in what had been Galicia, creating a collection of roughly 1,000 images, and creating a book outline of five themes. The first three themes capture the destruction and loss of both human life and Jewish Galician culture:

- Jewish life in ruins
- Jewish culture as it once was
- Holocaust sites of massacre and destruction

while the final two themes demonstrate physical preservation and human remembrance in present-day Poland:

- how the past is being remembered
- people making history today

Far more than a collection of photographs, I found the images in this book to be more like art, crafted to convey the messages of both author and photographer, yet evoking personal reaction and interpretation. Three photographs have especially stayed with me:

image 5: “a lone Jewish tombstone . . .”

The aloneness of a single stone, dark against the large empty snowy field, for me encapsulates darkness and bleakness.

image 31: “mass grave in a forest for eight hundred Jewish children”

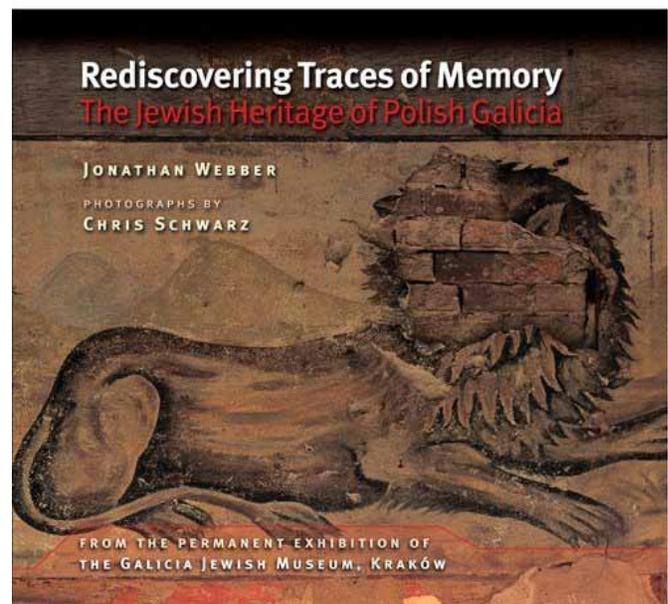
Completely surrounded and hemmed in by tall dense shadowed foliage, an overgrown patch that seems too tiny to hold 800 children—just as the concept of killing any child, times 800 in this case,

seems too enormous to grasp—highlighted by just a bit of daylight.

image 65: “girl expressing her grief at the ruins ... in Auschwitz-Birkenau”

Without including any physical reminder of the horrors of Auschwitz, this image is solely focused on the obvious grief in the covered face, slouched back, and drooped Israeli flag in hand, posed against a tranquil and beautiful background of leafy trees and green grasses.

Each photograph is accompanied by a few lines of description by the author, and further detail is found in the “Background Notes” section, with the specific page reference included with each photo. The book begins with a map of Polish Galicia, annotated with places photographed and places referred to in the text. An extensive bibliography is included, a mix of English and Polish literature.



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 318214, San Francisco, CA 94131-8214.

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Town, Country</u>	<u>Member</u>
BEERMAN	San Francisco, California	Kit Crawford
DZENELSKY	Kozlovshchyzna, Belarus	Harry Cornbleet
FRIEDMAN	Stropkov, Slovakia	Harry Cornbleet
KLAUBER	Praporiste, Czech Republic	Harry Cornbleet
KORENBLIT	Murovani Kurylivtsi, Ukraine	Harry Cornbleet
LUST	San Francisco, California	Kit Crawford
MARKS	Oakland, San Francisco, and Yuba City, California	Kit Crawford
RAPHAEL	Oakland and San Francisco, California	Kit Crawford
SCHWARZKOPF	Dlouha Ves, Czech Republic	Harry Cornbleet
VINIK	Katerynivka, Ukraine	Harry Cornbleet

Obermayer German Jewish History Awards

Call for Nominations

The German Jewish Community History Council, GerSIG, and the Berlin Parliament are pleased to announce the call for nominations for the annual Obermayer German Jewish History Awards to be given to non-Jewish Germans who have made extraordinary contributions to preserving vestiges of former Jewish life in their local communities, including historical records, cultural material, cemeteries, and synagogues. The call for nominations can be found at <http://www.obermayer.us/award/nominate.htm>.

The deadline for submission is Monday, **24 September 2012**.

Thousands of Germans have carried out such activities as volunteers because they feel it is the right thing to do. The preservation of Jewish material is one of the few ways in which they can respond constructively to their country's past.

This award provides Jews throughout the world with the opportunity to recognize and honor German individuals who, in many cases, have devoted their lifetimes to such important endeavors. As Jewish genealogists, we have been the recipients of their good work.

Many of you have previously submitted worthy nominations. Those nominees who have already received Certificates of Commendation are prime candidates for this year's awards. They will only require updating of prior submissions.

This will be the thirteenth year for the awards, which will be presented on 28 January 2013 in Berlin. Each awardee and his/her spouse will be invited on an all-expenses paid trip to Berlin to receive the award at the Plenary Chamber of the Abgeordnetenhaus, the home of the Berlin Parliament. Successful nominators are also invited to attend all of the award ceremony events in Berlin, where they will meet with the award recipients they have chosen to honor.

The honorees will each receive a framed certificate and an honorarium to be used for the furtherance of their work. Awardees' contributions will be described to attendees and to local, national, and international news media. These awards have in the past received extensive worldwide media coverage (see <http://www.obermayer.us/award/news.htm>.)

If you know someone who may be appropriate for nomination, further information, including the call for nominations and profiles of previous award winners and the jury, can be found at <http://www.obermayer.us/award>.

You may obtain a hard copy of the call for nominations by sending an e-mail to

germanaward@hotmail.com

or a letter to:

German Jewish Community History Council
239 Chestnut Street
West Newton, MA 02465 USA



The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

Volume XXXII, Number 3

May 2012

Calendar of Events

Sunday, 9 September, San Francisco: *A Torn Family Reunited through Discovery of an Ancestor's Diary.* A Jewish man who immigrated to the United States in 1884 wrote a semifictional diary about his family's life in Latvia and their first 30 years here. The diary was lost to his descendants for more than 50 years but was rediscovered in 2009. One of his descendants will talk about the diary, its revelations, and the plans to publish it.

Sunday, 21 October, Oakland: *Applying the Scientific Method to Genealogical Research.* This presentation will show how the scientific method, a process usually applied to laboratory experimentation, can be used to help solve genealogical problems.

Monday, 22 October, Los Altos Hills: *Researching When Records Are Gone.* Nancy Peterson, author of *Raking the Ashes*, will discuss research techniques to use when records have been destroyed or are missing, whether in San Francisco or Eastern Europe.

Sunday, 18 November, San Francisco: *Secrets to Searching Ancestry.com.* Learn alternative ways to search for your ancestors when their names have been mistranscribed, how to find records in lesser-used Ancestry databases, how best to set up Ancestry charts, and how to keep your chronological records on Ancestry useful.

Sunday, 13 January, San Francisco: *Hard Drive Organization: Making Better Use of Your Computer File Folders.* How to name files for easy identification, organize folders to make it easy to find them, and identify scanned photographs properly.

Sunday, 17 February, Oakland: *From DNA to Genetic Genealogy: Everything You Wanted to Know but Were Afraid to Ask.* Our very own Steve Morse will present his updated talk on what DNA means for your family history research.

Also see pages 3 and 4. For more program information visit <http://www.jewishgen.org/sfbajgs/>.
