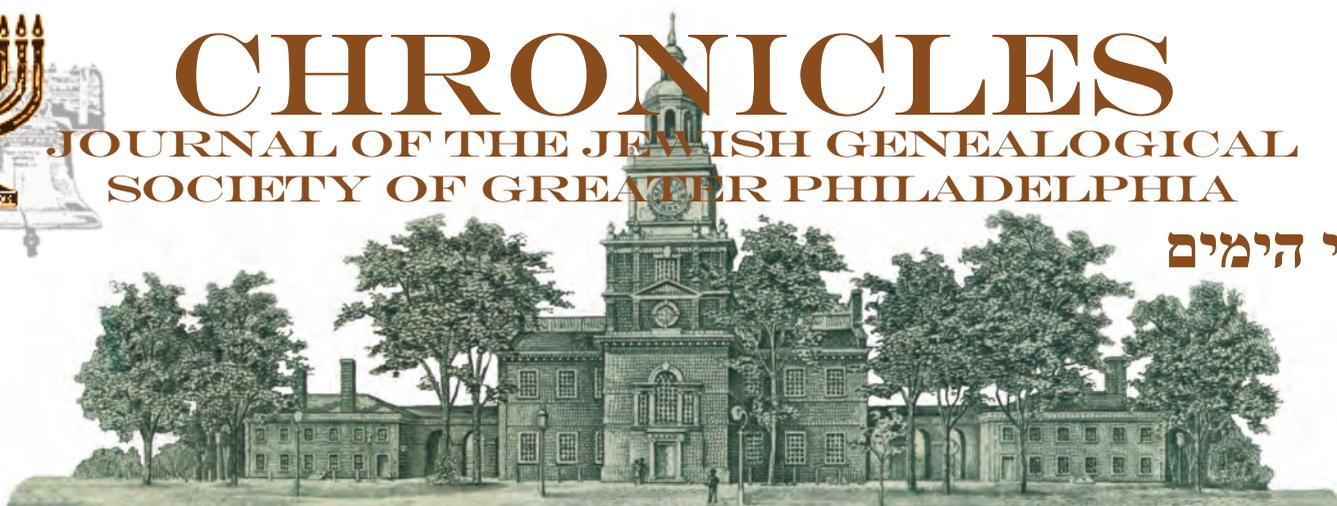




# CHRONICLES

JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

דברי הימים



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## REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR CHRONICLES TEAM



**D**id you ever wonder about the idiomatic expression, "see the forest for the trees"? When engrossed in the various projects we're working on, our vision is often limited to the mass of details confronting us, and we miss the broader picture.

Likewise, as *Chronicles* editor, I often get bogged down in verifying historical details, or clarifying content so I miss picking up some wonderful points of similarity among the articles we publish in a single issue.

Almost all of this issue's articles reflect personal involvement, on the parts of the authors and the subjects of those articles. I highlight this observation because I believe personal involvement is what distinguishes genealogy research and related accounts from history. All of us delve into research in order to glean what happened within our respective families. Hopefully we go the next step and cull the reams of information we've collected into a narrative that we can share. In essence, we breathe life into dry facts and transform them into a family chronicle in which we've been significantly engaged.

Consider how James Gross personalizes his "techie" article by citing his own genealogical pursuits to illustrate how Steve Morse's "Gold Form" works. Stan Sandler also humanizes the research tools he used in order to solve mysteries about his aunt and cousin. Ross Schriftman and Selma Neubauer describe the circumstances that launched or energized their respective genealogical journeys.

*(Continued on page 3)*

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## JGSGP MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues and contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Please make checks payable to JGSGP and mail to the address below. Please include your email address and zip+4 code.

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Submission of articles on genealogy for publication in *CHRONICLES* is enthusiastically encouraged. The editorial board reserves the right to decide whether to publish an article and to edit all submissions. Please keep a copy of your material. Anything you want returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

While email and other electronic files are highly preferred, the editors will be happy to work with you and your material in any form. If you have an idea, please contact Evan Fishman of the Editorial Board by email: [editor@jgsgp.org](mailto:editor@jgsgp.org) or by phone at 856-667-2077.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS - ADDRESS CHANGE

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*“(Reflections” from page 1)*

Steve Wenick shares his discoveries about previously unknown (or little known) relatives while Len Markowitz affixes his personal stamp on the establishment and development of the Yizkor SIG (Special Interest Group).

This issue’s travel articles focus on the important personal flavor that permeated those trips. David Mink salutes the staff that organized and conducted his trip to Poland last year, and I showcase how my sister-in-law’s aunt imbued her visit to her hometown of Brest with her own style, flair, and humanity and consequently poignantly impacted the relatives who traveled with her.

Let’s not overlook how our society’s monthly speakers (most recently Steve Schecter and Ellen Cassedy) often convey their own effusions of humanity and enthusiasm in their presentations. The piece de resistance is Harry Boonin’s insightful and humorous piece which fulfilled just about all the criteria which Steve outlined in his April presentation. Finally, we host genealogy fairs in order to impart knowledge and guidance but we do so through multiple stations staffed by competent and caring researchers.

Many of us are looking forward to attending the annual international Jewish genealogy conference in Boston between August 4-9. This will be a good opportunity to re-energize and to further personalize our respective genealogy journeys. ❖

*Evan Fishman, Editor*

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE



We hosted our third annual genealogy fair last month at Congregation Tifereth Israel in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. The fair was very well attended. Some of the attendees were very interested in the variety of research areas we provided and saw the value in becoming members of our society. I would like to thank all the members and non-members that spent their Sunday afternoon educating others. A special thank you to Steve Schecter and Jef Barnett for coordinating the fair.

Some positive developments have occurred recently. We’ve been in talks with the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center (PJAC) located at Temple University. I have been elected to its Board of Directors, and JGSGP will have an active voice with PJAC. This repository has hired a new archivist, and its records will be more easily accessible. We are also in discussions to move our wonderful library to PJAC where researchers will have better access to our holdings than at its present location.

This coming August 4th - 9th, the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) will host its annual conference in Boston, and many JGSGP members will be in attendance. If you are serious about research, Boston will be the place to be. We hope to have a gathering of our members at the conference. Please send me a message if you plan to attend ([president@jgsgp.org](mailto:president@jgsgp.org)) including your cell phone number, and look for a notice at the conference as to when and where we’ll be meeting.

Have a great summer, ❖

*Fred Blum*

## WE EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS (AND HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THE *ITALICIZED* NAMES THEY ARE RESEARCHING)

Joyce Adelman	Huntingdon Valley, PA	Larry Linton	Feasterville, PA
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Marilyn & Michael Golden	Bensalem, PA	Alix Maier	Newtown, PA
Timothy Graham	Philadelphia, PA	<i>Poltinikow, Ell</i>	
<i>Anflick, Karanczak, Snyder</i>		Pearl Meltzer	Newtown, PA
Susan Kauffman	Lumberton, NJ	<i>Zusis, Adelman, Rader, Goldstein</i>	
<i>Zumoff, Itzkowitz, Friedman, Sokolick, Blakeman</i>		Sam Pomerantz	Langhorne, PA
Phyllis Kauffman	Philadelphia, PA	Joyce & Jonathan Sherman	Bensalem, PA
		<i>Montzer, Sherman, Doskow</i>	

## IMPORTANT MEMEBERSHIP INFORMATION

If you haven't renewed your JGSGP membership for 2013, please print and fill out the membership form on p. 23 of this issue, include payment, and mail to: JGSGP, 1657 The Fairway, #145, Jenkintown, PA 19046.

Susan Neidich, Membership V.P., has been working tirelessly at maintaining the JGSGP membership directory and reaching out to lapsed members. Please support her efforts by notifying her at the above address, or [membership@jgsgp.org](mailto:membership@jgsgp.org), when your home and/or email address(es) or telephone number change. Volunteer to assist in welcoming new members at general meetings and maintaining ties with members who have missed a few meetings.

Information about upcoming meetings can be found on p. 24.  
Also check our website for the most up-to-date information: [www.jgsgp.org](http://www.jgsgp.org).

## IN THE BEGINNING. . .

by Steve Schecter



Looking at the events of 2012 reminded me of the need to make sure all our documents and pictures are safe. Be it a fire, a flood or any other catastrophe, the rationalization to get to it "mañana" simply does not work. How many times must we find ourselves saying: "I wish I would have / had. . ." when it is too late? Let the basic preservation of

our "stuff" not be one of these times. Here are simple steps for beginners -- and some experienced folks, too -- to get started.

1. Scan everything -- scan at the highest dpi (dots per inch) you can. (NOTE: If any of the terms in this article are unfamiliar or confusing, use Google and read the Wikipedia citation or other sites. This is the quickest way to learn and understand techno-speak.) Save scans and pictures as a TIFF or PICT format (again check Wiki for details). Scanners are relatively inexpensive, many for under \$50, or put a call out on our website or Facebook page to see if someone has one you can use.

2. For objects, take several digital pictures from several angles and save them to your computer.

3. Save everything to your photo program (Macs – iPhoto; PCs - typically Picasa) and be sure to identify everything with specific titles rather than the numbers your computer will often use.

4. Build an index where each picture and document is listed with a detailed description, typically at a minimum:

- what is it,
- who is named in the picture,
- date of issue or when the picture was taken,
- where it came from,
- when you acquired it, and
- any story or family lore attached to it, especially if it makes it more significant.

Putting this information into a database (such as Microsoft Access or FileMaker Pro) or an Excel spreadsheet will allow sorting your index by any of the descriptors you use.

5. BACK UP EVERYTHING! Back up your data to storage outside your computer. External hard drives are affordable, and you can also use "cloud back-up" (Mozy, Dropbox, and SugarSync are examples). Store your backup hard drive in another part of your home or, better yet, in a relative or friend's home. This way, should something unthinkable happen to your home or computer, your documents and pictures are safe. As a general rule I back up everything on the first of every each month.

(Note: James Gross elaborates on backup options in his article in *Chronicles*, Volume 30-1, Spring 2013, p. 4).

In a future article, we'll cover how to preserve the physical pictures and documents. This is the stop-gap and immediate action to take until then. ❖

*Author Steve Schecter is JGSGP's Vice President-Programs and an active advocate for our society. His enthusiasm for teaching beginners and encouraging them to pursue their family connections is infectious and inspiring.*

*You can contact Steve at: [programs@jgsgp.org](mailto:programs@jgsgp.org)*

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF YIZKOR SIG

by Leonard Markowitz

Twenty years ago, Jewish genealogy was in its formative stage. Exciting new genealogical information became increasingly more available. JewishGen was also in its early stages and still is the glue that holds the Jewish genealogical movement together. At that time, *yizkor* (memorial) books became a vital source of Jewish genealogical information. These books were written by survivors of the Holocaust as a tribute and a memorial to specific *shtetlach* (small Jewish communities in Europe) and regions which were decimated during the *Shoah* (Holocaust).

*Yizkor* books were published in Israel and elsewhere by *landsmanshaftn* (immigrant benevolent organizations, formed by ex-residents of the same locality or town) or other groups describing a specific *shtetl* or area. Each of these books had one or more editors who would compile the recollections of Holocaust survivors about that horrible period of time. Included in many of these *yizkor* books were photographs of the Jewish inhabitants, scenes of the *shtetl*, maps as well as descriptions of various groups and associations which were active at that time. These recollections were then edited and published as a *yizkor* book, mostly between 1950 and 1970, although some were published later. It has been estimated that over 800 *yizkor* books are known to exist, and almost all of them are printed in Hebrew and/or Yiddish.

There are two other types of memorial books, which are usually included under the generic *yizkor* book designation. These are “memor” and *shtetl* books.

Memor books originated in the Middle Ages as communal prayer books and usually consisted of three parts. The first part was a collection of prayers to be recited on the *bimah* (platform in the synagogue on which stands the desk from which the *Torah* [first five books of the Old Testament] is read) during special occasions, such as blowing of the *shofar* (ram’s horn). The second part was a description of distinguished persons of local or general importance. Finally, there was a section allocated as a memorial to persons murdered and *shtetlach* vanquished during pogroms. As in the case of *yizkor* books, memor books were printed in Hebrew and/or Yiddish. Memor books can thus be considered forerunners of *yizkor* books. An undefined number of these books still exist.

*Shtetl* books also describe specific towns and their Jewish inhabitants. The descriptive history contained in these books usually begins with the first settlement of Jews in that town or region. *Shtetl* books may be printed in English, Polish, German or other languages, including Hebrew and Yiddish. Often, the authors are not Jewish and most of these books have been published after the Holocaust.

Because of the great interest in the information contained in *yizkor* books by members of JewishGen, I volunteered to form a Yizkor Book SIG (Special Interest Group) within that organization. Both Susan King, the founder and then president of JewishGen and the late Bernie Kouchel, a board member at that time (1994), encouraged me to head that group. Martin Kessel was invaluable in helping me form the Yizkor Book SIG. I decided to initiate the formation of the following databases and InfoFiles:

Database #1 headed by Martin Kessel, included a list of researchers, who were interested in specific *yizkor* books and who might cooperate on creating translations of these books into English.

Database #2 was originally intended as a repository of *yizkor* book translations; this effort however was temporarily abandoned because of copyright concerns.

Database #3, headed by Ray Stone, was a listing of all known *yizkor* books and other books relating to European Jewish communities.

Database #4, also headed by Ray Stone, was a listing of major library holdings of *yizkor* books.

InfoFile #1, headed by Selma Neubauer, was a list of libraries with collections of more than twenty-five *yizkor* books.

InfoFile #2, headed by Ray Stone, was a list of retail establishments which sold *yizkor* books

InfoFile #3, headed by me, was a list of translators capable of translating *yizkor* books from Hebrew or Yiddish into English.

In 1996, I was elected president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Philadelphia. I was also asked by Susan King to become a member of her JewishGen advisory board. Because of these additional responsibilities, I turned the leadership of the Yizkor Book SIG over to the able hands of

Martin Kessel. Since then, leaders of the Yizkor Book Project, including Susannah Juni, Joyce Field and Lance Ack-erfield have succeeded in developing the Yizkor Book Project to the invaluable source of information that it is today. Additionally, kudos should be given to Michael Tobias, who created automated email systems, which facilitated data acquisition. He was also indispensable in combining the aforementioned databases and InfoFiles into one, consolidated database. ❖

*Len Markowitz has lived in the Philadelphia area his entire life. A former aerospace engineer, he contributed to programs such as Star Wars, the International Space Station, and a number of classified programs. He has also made presentations to and worked with both the military and intelligence communities.*

*Len has been active in various aspects of the Jewish community, including service as president of Congregation Beth Chaim in Feasterville, Pennsylvania, president of JGSGP, and a board member of JewishGen Inc and the Jewish Community Council of Lower Bucks County. He published a book about the histories of his and his late wife's families and ancestors. Contact Len at: priluki2@verizon.net*

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## A USEFUL RESOURCE FOR TRACING IMMIGRANTS WHO ENTERED THE U.S. THROUGH ELLIS ISLAND

by James Gross

The topic of this column is to share a useful search technique which can be used when trying to trace Ellis Island immigrants from Europe to the U.S. I selected this topic as I recently finished developing two new family branches: a Seidel family from Postavy, Belarus, and a Steinberg family from Panevezys, Lithuania. Postavy was also known as Pastavy and Postavy. It was located in Disna uyezd, Vitebsk Gubernia. (1) Panevezys was located in Lithuania in the Panevezys District, Kovno, Lithuania. (2)

My primary tool, which I often use to locate relatives from the “old country”, is a passenger list search engine developed by Steve Morse who has a number of search engines on his website. (3)

This Steve Morse search engine is called the “Ellis Island Gold Form.” (4) which conducts an automatic deep search of the Ellis Island database. (5) Users need to have or create

a free Ellis Island user name and password as the user is prompted for this information when transferred to the Ellis Island website by the Steve Morse generated index link.

As Dick Eastman noted, the “...Ellis Island search form is capable of searching through the entire 25 million passengers in the Ellis Island Database for ships' passenger lists.” (6)

The Steve Morse “Gold Form” is very useful as it can be modified with screen listed options to search for family or relatives. There are a number of options to choose from including town of origin, year of immigration, and age of the immigrant.

The reason I typically use the “Gold Form” for my initial search is that I prefer to narrow down my choices based on the passenger’s surname and his/her town of origin. Though there is never 100% accuracy, many passenger lists include the passenger’s shtetl of origin and the person or relative to whom he or she is traveling.

So, as an example, I used the Steve Morse “Gold Form” and entered in the name of Seidel from the town of Postavy. The image below shows the generated index. (image has been split in half widthwise for space)

	Name	Residence	Age	Born*	Arrived
1	Seidel, Barnch	Bostaw	6	1886	1892
2	Seidel, Chaim	Postawy, Russia	1	1907	1908
3	Seidel, Chan	Bostaw	18	1874	1892

Passenger Record	Text Manifest	Scanned Manifest	Annotations	Ship Image
<a href="#">view</a>				
<a href="#">view</a>				
<a href="#">view</a>				

As you can see, the name of Postavy is shown with variations, due to the many variations in spelling of town names as found within passenger manifests. Several of the search fields, including the town field, give the user the option of selecting either “sounds like,” “starts with” or “contains.” In conducting the searches, users should try to use some creativity when entering the town and/or surname. It is my experience that the Ellis Island town listings often have spelling variations, so, be aware of this when doing your searches.

I usually first click the passenger record, and then click on

the scanned manifest. If I feel this person may be relevant to my research after reviewing the passenger list, I will make a hard copy of the passenger record page.

In summary, Steve Morse's, "Ellis Island Gold Form," is a very useful search engine and is well worthy of a bookmark for immigrant research. ❖

1. <http://tiny.cc/bsnkxw>
2. <http://tiny.cc/oqnkxw>
3. <http://stevemorse.org/index.html>
4. <http://stevemorse.org/ellis2/ellisgold.html>
5. <http://www.ellisland.org/>
6. <http://tiny.cc/sonkxw>

*Author James Gross recently graduated with a Master of Library & Information Science (MLIS) from Drexel University. He has been working on his family tree since the early 1990's and is a periodic contributor to various genealogy newsletters. James also has a genealogy website: <http://tinyurl.com/gross-steinberg> He can be reached at: [navistar96@yahoo.com](mailto:navistar96@yahoo.com)*

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## A BEGINNER STARTS HIS JOURNEY

By Ross Schriftman

In 2009, while my brother Roy was dying, he began researching our family history. I never asked him why he started this project but I suspect he had a desire to know as much about where he came from as possible as his final project in life. He probably also wanted to provide a legacy of information for his children to help them remember him as well as their ancestors.

He used Legacy software and listed family members of each branch. He even included the family tree of his in-laws. By doing this my late brother gave me a starting point to begin my own research.

I plan to begin with the Schriftmans, my paternal grandfather's family. Roy indicated in his research that they came from Staro Konstantinov, which is in today's Ukraine southwest of Kiev. At the last JGSGP meeting I flipped through one of Miriam Weiner's books, and there were several pages of information about my grandfather's little *shtetl*. Just looking at the pictures and realizing that this was the town that the Schriftman family left back in 1908 made it all real.

Of course, now I want to know the whole story. I was told

as a child that the Schriftmans walked from their village to Gdansk in Poland to board a ship to England and then another to New York. The story goes that they stuck an apple in the youngest child's mouth to keep him quiet while they snuck past various towns along the way. A foot trek across so much distance seems implausible since the journey would have been extremely difficult with small children.

How many little Schriftmans were there at the time? According to my Aunt Bea, my dad's sister, there were seven children that my great grandparents had. There was my grandfather Abraham, his brothers Murray, Jack and David, and their sisters Rose, Lena and Pauline. David changed his last name to Scribner. He was a labor attorney and also participated in the defense team for the Scottsboro Boys-- a group of nine black teenagers accused of rape in Alabama in 1931.

My grandfather went by the name of Al as an adult. He married my grandmother who I always knew as Shirley. It turns out that her given name was Sarah. So my grandparents were really Abraham and Sarah.

After researching the Schriftmans I plan to investigate the Dreiblatts (my grandmother's maiden name). They originally came from somewhere within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. My grandmother was born in New York and because of this, I'm assuming the Dreiblatt emigration must have occurred earlier than the other branches of my family.

I then will research the history of the Goldmans (my mother's paternal side). Harry Goldman was my mother's father, and the family came from Kiev.

Finally, there are the Berlows, my mother's maternal side, who immigrated from Riga in Latvia. My grandmother was Frieda Goldman (nee Berlow). Her sister, my Aunt Bettie, used to say that she was not Russian. She claimed that those people were all horse thieves. Instead, she was a proud Courlander with German ancestors. It is interesting how we get so parochial about our roots as if one group of people is better than another.

And so my journey of discovery begins. ❖

*Ross Schriftman is a member of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA and its brotherhood board. He is the author of My Million Dollar Mom which chronicles the life of his mother Shirley Schriftman. He can be reached at 215-682-7075 or [rfs270@aol.com](mailto:rfs270@aol.com)*

## WHAT I DID ON MY WINTER/SPRING VACATION: HOW GENEALOGY HELPED ME SURVIVE IT

by Selma Neubauer

In November 2004 I was diagnosed with a disease that required surgery. After pre-op testing, three procedures, and frequent examinations by the medical team of interns and resident physicians, the surgeon announced the problem was “fixed”, but not necessarily “gone”. I would need radiation therapy. “It’s not negotiable, the surgeon emphasized.

The nurse who interviewed me at the radiation facility asked what I do since I wasn’t working at the time. I told her that I was a genealogist and family historian. She told me that her family was one of the first to come to the United States, and that her great, great, etc. was the founder of Penn Charter School. After we finished our conversation, she left saying that the doctor would be right in. I imagine she told him about our discussion because he came bounding into the exam room and announced that he knew all about his family. He certainly knew a great deal more than many of us when we began our research. After he told me many family names and *shtetl* locations, I asked him if he had ever seen his father’s name on a ship manifest. He said, “No.”

Since this doctor provided me with all the family names, when they arrived in the 1920’s at Ellis Island, where they came from, and his grandfather’s occupation I promised him pertinent information the next time I would see him. It was now March, 2005, and I knew I could do this on my computer.

I found them on the Ellis Island database – my doctor’s grandparents, father, aunt and uncle. I typed all of the manifest information on a fancy piece of paper ready to present to him. However there was a glitch in the radiation machinery, and my treatments were postponed for two weeks while repairs were made. I had a new spurt of energy and made a trip to NARA to look for the family on the 1930 census, and specifically to learn if his grandfather was naturalized. Yes! I tied it all together. The family was on the 1930 census, and his grandfather had become a citizen. My doctor was thrilled and proceeded to give me more names, more *shtetlach*, and more family information.

It was now April, 2005, and I was facing six weeks of five days a week radiation therapy with medical teams consistently checking me. My doctor had given me so much family information that this project took on its own goal - to deliver answers to him every Wednesday during my appointment time.

During the second week I gave him ship manifest information about his great grandfather, two great aunts, and several unknown people from the same *shtetl*. Now we knew that although his grandparents had arrived in 1922, his great aunts had arrived in 1906 and 1909, and his great-grandfather arrived in 1911.

During the third week I had the list of people from the same *shtetl* who arrived at Ellis Island including another family with his surname.

My research continued for six weeks during which time I provided my doctor with his paternal family’s history. As for me, the project helped me maintain my sanity during this extended, stressful time of radiation therapy. Hopefully my condition was cured. ❖

*In a “previous life”, Selma Neubauer was a secretary, legal assistant and paralegal. As an active volunteer at NARA in Philadelphia she worked with several archivists and created numerous indices, including one to the Russian Consular Records. She spearheaded the indexing project of the Philadelphia immigrant bank records in conjunction with former Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center (PJAC) archivist, Don Davis. The immigrant banks were established as a means for recent immigrants to save money and arrange to purchase steamship tickets to bring their families to the U.S. Selma has researched both her parents’ families and is hard at work writing a book based on that research.*

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## CONFIRMING ORAL HISTORY OR “WHAT HAPPENED TO COUSIN ROSE?”

By Stanley R. Sandler, Ph.D.

In 2001, my cousin Jean gave me the passport of her mother, Rose Silverman who was from Kolomyja, Poland. She asked me to find genealogical information including vital statistics, as well as trace Rose’s eventual journey to the United States.



Rose Silverman's Passport

First, I decided to confirm family oral history that my aunt, Molly Sandler, traveled from the United States to Poland in 1924 to escort a prospective groom (Morris Silverman) for her niece, Rose. I used ancestry.com to locate documents verifying their trip together.

In my first search, I found the 1924 passport/visa applications of both Molly Sandler and Morris Silverman. His application stated that he was a 34 year old naturalized (1921) American citizen traveling to Kolomyja, Poland to visit and return with a wife. Other information on this document included his birth in Bukovina, Roumania on March 11, 1890 and 1904 arrival in the U.S. from Bremen, Germany. It also listed Simon Silverman as his father.

The passport photo matches the wedding photo shown below (Molly Sandler, standing, second from the left, next to Morris and Rose Silverman, standing center.) Morris departed the U.S. on August 2, 1924 aboard the S.S. George Washington



with Molly Sandler and married Rose on August 19 in Kolomyja, Poland.

This was a great deal of information to glean about Morris from one search!

Molly's American passport/visa stated that she was traveling to Kolomyja, Poland as a tourist and would return within three months with her sister and brother-in-law (she meant her niece and niece's husband). Like Morris Silverman, she stated that she was to sail on the S.S. George Washington. In a subsequent search on Ancestry, however, I found an actual entry on the New York Passenger List for October 3, 1924 citing Morris Silverman and Molly Sandler as passengers on the S.S. Republic from Bremen, Germany but without any mention of Rose Silverman.

These documents and the wedding photo confirm Molly Sandler and Morris Silverman's trip and their presence in Kolomyja, Poland, most importantly at his wedding to Rose, as well as their subsequent trip home without her. This left me with one question: 'What went wrong?'

Jean had shared additional oral history with me. After the wedding, Morris was unable to have Rose accompany him since he did not have enough money, and she did not have a passport. Rose, subsequently, had to obtain a passport while Morris saved the funds necessary to bring her to the U.S.

The next piece of the puzzle was to find out about Rose's eventual immigration.

According to the passport Jean had given me, her mother's name was listed as "Silwerman Rosie", it was first issued in 1925 and then reissued in 1926, both times in Kolomyja, Poland. The wording "Landed as Transmigrant under Bond [.]27 APR 1926 [.] IMMIGRANT OFFICER[.] LONDON" was also stamped on the passport. One hypothesis is that she traveled first by rail to the coast of France, then ferried to England, and ultimately by rail again to London where her passport was stamped by an immigration officer.

I decided to research the Ellis Island database (<http://www.ellisland.org>) for more information about Rose's immigration. Although the Ellis Island Passenger Lists for the years 1892-1924 was published online in 2001, Rose Silverman's arrival in 1926 was still not available in 2013. Perhaps it will be in the future.

I searched ancestry.com again for Rose Silverman and found a "Petition for Citizenship" dated May 4, 1934 which

indicated her date of birth as March 20, 1902 in Stanislaw (Kolomyja) Poland, her marriage to Morris as August 19, 1924, and her arrival at the Port of New York, NY as May 7, 1926 aboard the S.S. George Washington which had departed from the Port of Southampton, England. Success!!

I contacted our local Family History Center which in turn referred me to the toll free help line for genealogy questions (1-866-406-1830) as well as an email address: Support@Familysearch.org. A research assistant at the main Family History Center in Utah was assigned to my query, and in about a day the exact NARA roll with the page number for her ship was located. They also sent very specific directions as to how to access the Ship Passenger List online.

The actual citation indicated that “Roza Silverman” was going to her husband Morris who paid for her voyage to the U.S. It also confirmed that her last place of residence was Stanislawow (Kolomyja, Poland) and that her mother’s name was Rywka Cwir, residing in Kolomyja, on Jablonowska 19. She is also listed as arriving under a quota number (#2172) with a visa issued on April 15, 1926.

Based on my success story I highly recommend using the website <https://familysearch.org> as well as the helpline (Support@Familysearch.org). These are both very valuable genealogy resources and are available without charge. When you can’t find a passenger list on the Ellis Island site, there is a very good possibility it might be found with the help of Family Search.\*

I achieved most of my goal of tracing Cousin Rose’s 1926 journey from her home in Poland to the Port of New York. The only gap was how she traveled from Kolomyja to London where her passport was stamped. Fellow JGSGP member, David Brill, suggested that she might have traveled by rail to the French coast. I posted my query to the JewishGen discussion group ([jewishgen@lyris.jewishgen.org](mailto:jewishgen@lyris.jewishgen.org)) and received similar responses including one which stated that the ship line might have even arranged her itinerary. ❖

\* “FamilySearch is a nonprofit family history organization” operated by the Mormon Church, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, and “dedicated to connecting families across generations.”

*Author Stanley R. Sandler is an active member of the JGSGP Board of Directors, was a co-chair of the hospitality committee at the 2009 JGSGP-IAJGS conference in Philadelphia, and a co-chair of JGSGP's first Genealogy Fair in 2011. He currently is*

*co-chair of the JGSGP Speakers Bureau and a frequent contributor to Chronicles. He has been doing research about his family for over 40 years, both in the U.S. and in Galicia, specifically in Kolomyja, Poland, and in neighboring towns, and also in Vienna, Austria.*

*Stan can be contacted at [stanshel@msn.com](mailto:stanshel@msn.com).*

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## MY SECRET FAMILY COMES IN FROM THE COLD

By Steve Wenick



It is not uncommon to have a family secret, but it is quite another thing to have a secret family.

Early one recent morning, an intriguing Facebook message from a stranger who happened to share my not so common last name asked, “Is it possible that we are related?” In addition to having the same surname, I looked very much like his dad; the stranger went on to say. And no wonder! The man in the photo posted with the message was my uncle Heshy, who I had not seen for at least a half century— since I was 10 years old.

“Yes we’re related; you’re my first cousin,” I replied once recovered from the shock.

Through further communication with my here-to-fore unknown Cousin Scott I learned that my uncle Heshy had divorced his wife Pearl, moved to St. Louis, remarried and had three sons, Scott, Todd and Rocky with his new wife Frieda McCann. He had also adopted Frieda’s son from a previous marriage (his name is Steve Wenick, same as mine).

Although his second wife was not Jewish, Uncle Heshy held fast to his Jewish roots in his own way. He attended services regularly, allowing his sons to drive him to synagogue when he grew too old to drive himself, but insisting that they wait in the car rather than accompany him inside. Having acceded to his wife’s wish to raise their children in a Christian home, he thought that attending shul might confuse them. One of those sons, who lives in Oklahoma, is a church lay leader, which seems ironic to me since my brother is an Orthodox rabbi.

The reason why some of my family members did not know about the Scott-Heshy clan was an estrangement resulting

from some inter-family blow-up of long forgotten origin. Agreeing that while we can never undo the past we are not obligated to relive it, my newly discovered cousins and I determined that nothing justified continuing the blood feud of generations past. It was time to move forward and connect today's kin and kind.

Over the next few months we shared memories and stories about parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters that affirmed our being family and helped strengthen our newly formed bond. As family legends and myths were exchanged and inaccuracies corrected, as discoveries were made and new facts revealed about cousins whose strands of DNA were the only connection until now, mutual recognition of common physical characteristics, personality traits, talents and idiosyncrasies evolved.

Remembering Uncle Heshy through the eyes of a 10-year-old, I was not surprised to learn that he observed the Yahrzeit of his sister Molly and other family members by lighting a candle and reciting the Kaddish for them. The fact that he also requested a traditional Jewish funeral when his time came also came as no surprise. I did find it intriguing that his Christian family, those closest to him, carried out his last wishes with the utmost respect.

My cousin Scott shared that he was impressed with the respect that the Jewish tradition accorded to those who passed. He was especially moved by the act of Krehah, rending of the clothing as a public display of mourning, just before the funeral service began, as well as the prayers recited at the grave and the setting of the headstone a year later. My Christian cousins Scott, Rocky, Todd and Steve recited the Kaddish daily for 11 months for their dad out of respect and love. They also observe his Yahrzeit every year.

This story has no ending because the discovery of my secret family is a saga that has just begun to be written. In some ways my newly discovered cousins and I are worlds apart but in other ways we are much alike. Together, stitch-by-stitch, we are working to mend a tear in the fabric of our family's history caused by real or imagined grievances of a generation past. Hopefully we will open what seemed a closed book and write a new chapter in the biographical account of the Wenick family. I would like to believe that by doing so we will fulfill the secret wishes of our fathers. ❖

*Reprinted from Attitudes: A Journal of Jewish Life and Style (Volume 15, Number 1, Fall/Winter 2012, p.44), a publication of the Jewish Community Voice of Southern New Jersey to which Steve Wenick is a frequent contributor.*

## FROM KOLKI, UKRAINE TO PHILADELPHIA, PA. USA TO CHINA AND THE WORLD

by Selma Neubauer

*(Introduction: Individual documents provide bits of information and can confirm or refute family lore. They assume greater significance when woven together, producing a coherent and continuous story. Longtime JGSGP member, Selma Neubauer diligently searched and examined a slew of documents related to her mother's first cousin, Oscar Wagman. The sum of all the individual parts results in a fascinating narrative, chronicling his professional life and concomitant international travel.)*

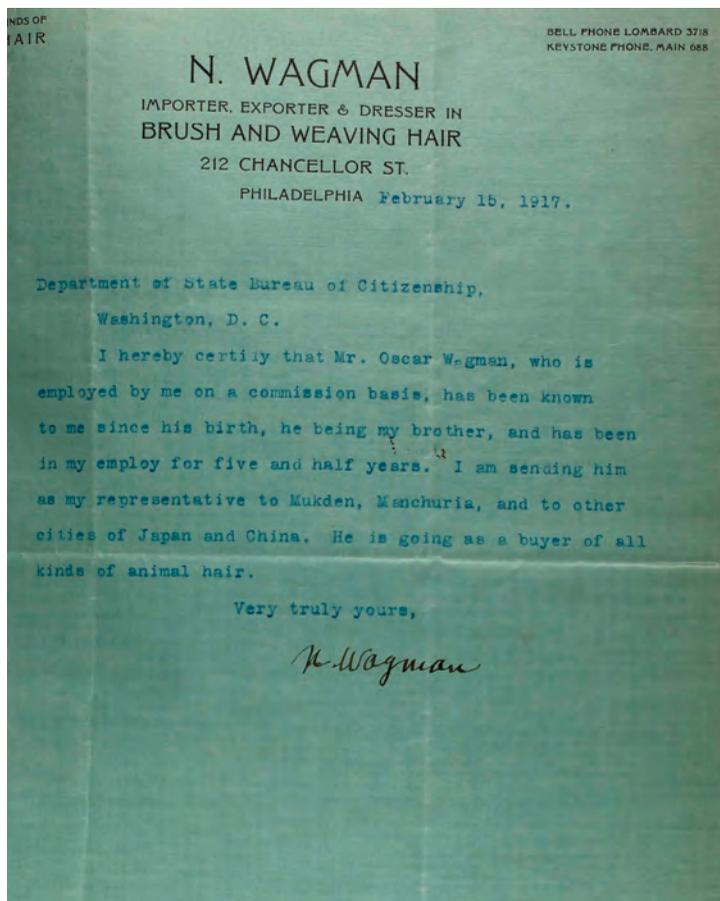
Naturalization documents and the Social Security Death Index indicate that Oscar was born in Kolki, Russia on June 10, 1894 and arrived in Philadelphia on July 12, 1911.

By 1917 he was a naturalized citizen, lived at 212 Chancellor Street in Philadelphia and worked with his brother, Nathan, in his brother-in-law, Sam Zuck's South Philadelphia business of horsehair dressing.

Oscar applied for a passport in 1917 in order to visit Japan and China for commercial business. Attached to this application was a letter (pictured on the following page) from Nathan Wagman which indicated that he [Nathan] was sending his brother as his representative to Mukden, Manchuria and other cities in Japan and China to purchase "all kinds of animal hair."

Rosenbaum Bank records (one of several ethnic banks in Philadelphia) document Oscar's travel by train from Philadelphia to Vancouver, British Columbia, where he boarded the "Empress of Asia" on March 15, 1917 bound for Manchuria via Nagasaki, Japan.

A year later, the United States was embroiled in World War I, and Oscar's military service status was in question. C. Carleton Baker, the American Consul General in Mukden, China, wrote a letter on March 25, 1938 to the Secretary of State in Washington, D.C in which he confirmed Oscar's legitimate residence in China in order to purchase horsehair and bristles for his brother's firm in Philadelphia and refuted any charge that he was evading his military obligations.



Later passport applications indicated that his business was known as “Oscar Wagman (sole proprietorship)”, located at 105 Taku Road, Tientsin, China, and involved in exporting hair, bristles, and furs. The business had a branch office at #7 Artillireiskaya Street in Harbin, China. I was able to acquire copies of all his passports from 1917 through 1965 at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. In reviewing his many travel documents I learned that Oscar traveled back and forth to China every two years and applied for a new passport prior to each trip. In addition he traveled to South America during World War II and to Europe after the war. The documents also enumerated the specific periods during which he resided in Mukden, China.

In March 1991, David H. Loeb, a student of Professor Vera Schwarcz at the University of Pennsylvania and an employee of Primus, Inc. (formerly Nathan Wagman’s company) wrote an essay entitled “The Wagman Family: A China-Jewish Connection.” Loeb interviewed Nathan’s son, Howard Wagman, and noted that “Oscar went to China in 1920 . . .” My study of the passport applications, which documented Oscar’s travels in March 1917 and June 1919 however, challenges this contention. Loeb later indicated, “In 1920 Oscar landed in Dalien and then ‘set off for Harbin.’ He was attracted to the large population of Russian

Jews and White Russians living in Harbin and spent a few years ‘learning the ropes’. His affinity for languages and raw enthusiasm enabled him to pick up Chinese rather quickly.” Loeb further stated that Oscar moved to the more accessible city of Tianjin and opened a factory.”

Oscar corroborated the factory’s existence on Form 213 Consular [Affidavit to Explain Protracted Foreign Residence and to Overcome Presumption of Expatriation and used to obtain a return passport]:

“... I arrived in Tientsin, China where I am now temporarily residing, on or about January 1920; my reasons for such foreign residence being as follows: I have my own factory at 138 Taku Road, Tientsin, for dressing Horse Hair and Bristles, under my personal supervision, for export to the United States. I represent here, an American firm, Mr. Nathan Wagman (my brother) . . . Owing to poor business and financial losses during 1930, I am compelled to remain in China for a further period of from one to three years. At the end of this period I expect to transfer my business as originally intended, and to return and reside permanently in the United States. My shipments of hair, bristles and furs from Tientsin are almost entirely to the United States; ...”

On March 4, 1931 Stuart Allen, American Vice Consul in Tientsin gave his opinion of Oscar’s affidavit:

“The Consulate General is convinced that the reasons set forth by the affiant constitute the true cause of his foreign residence. It is respectfully recommended that his registration application be approved for the full two years period of validity, at the end of which period applicant, by his own statement, plans to return to the United States. He states that he left the U.S. on January 16, 1930 and intends to return to reside permanently when ‘my business abroad terminates’.”

Further information about the factory and its operation from David Loeb’s essay:

Though Oscar’s older brother, Nathan, never went to China, he was quite knowledgeable about the family operations there. David saw some short silent footage of the factory in China. Shot by a hired professional in early 1939, the film remains a Wagman family treasure today and provides a concrete look at the factory, processes, and characters involved in the Tianjin based business. In being transferred to video, the quality of the film suffered somewhat. Further, before leaving China in 1939, Oscar’s film was censored by the Japanese at customs and therefore has occasional gaps. During the 15 minutes of film, the five foot tall man, Oscar, complete with cigarette and fedora, smile and style

and charm and charisma to match, appears on a number of occasions. ... Not only does he appear comfortable, at home in this distant setting, and eager to show his good relationship with the workers, but he seems proud as the cameraman tours the factory. The Tianjin factory remained in the Wagman family until it was occupied by the Japanese from 1939 through 1945. From 1945 until it was nationalized upon the Communist takeover in 1949, the factory was back under the wings of the Wagman family.

I'd like to add an interesting postscript to my research. During the 2003 IAJGS conference in Washington, D.C. I attended a lecture about the Jewish community in Shanghai before and during World War II. I began conversing with a gentleman sitting next to me and was pleasantly surprised to learn that his family had been involved in a similar business in China.

Hint: this is a wonderful fringe benefit that often occurs at IAJGS conferences! ♦♦

*Author Selma Neubauer's biography and contact information appear on page 8 at the end of her earlier article.*

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## THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THE TRIP

by David Mink

*This is part 3 of a series David has written about his summer 2012 trip to Poland. Previous installments were published in Vol. 29-3 (Fall 2012) and Vol. 29-4 (Winter 2012-2013).*

It's one thing to look at an historic building, and it's another thing to listen to Harry Boonin tell a story, give a little gossip, and bring the bricks to life. We were very fortunate on the Gratz College trip to Jewish Poland that we met someone at almost every stop who provided the inside scoop on what we were looking at or what significant event had happened. This was a tour that was led by experts as well as the participants who shaped the history of Poland today.

First and foremost is Michael Steinlauf Ph.D who led the trip. As Director of the Gratz Holocaust and Genocide Studies Program, he is one of the EXPERTS. Poland and Eastern Europe have been his life's work. He is the author of

*Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (1997) and has served as chief historical advisor and curator for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. He was in Poland in the 1970s when the Communists were forcing Jews to emigrate, in the '80s when Solidarity was rising, and in the '90s with the rebirth of Jewish life. With the Taube Foundation, Michael created an itinerary through which we met those who helped shape the events that made Poland what it is today. We also met young Poles who have been born since the fall of Communism and who are engaged in shaping the Poland of tomorrow.

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation partnered with Steinlauf in putting the trip together. Helise Lieberman is the director of the foundation and worked with Michael to create the itinerary. Born and educated in the United States, Helise has lived in Warsaw since 1994. She is a member of the International Task Force on Jewish Peoplehood Education and is helping shape the new Koret-Taube Initiative on Jewish Peoplehood based in San Francisco.

The Taube Center is dedicated to enriching Jewish life in Poland and to connecting Jews from around the world to their East European heritage. Through educational and cultural programs in Jewish studies, tourism, publishing, arts, and media, it cultivates knowledge of a living Polish Jewish heritage, drawing from its rich historical legacy and its contemporary expression. Pictured below are Michael Steinlauf and Helise Lieberman in front of the Nozyk Synagogue in Warsaw.



In Warsaw, we spoke with Rabbi Michael Schudrich, the Chief Rabbi of Poland. He is pictured on the following page in the Nozyk Synagogue, the only synagogue in Warsaw that survived the war. He is another American who calls Poland home.



Rabbi Michael Schudrich

As a student in the '70s, Rabbi Schudrich began traveling to Eastern Europe, leading Jewish groups and meeting with members of the Jewish communities in the former Eastern bloc. In 1992, he returned to Warsaw and in 2000 became the Chief Rabbi of Warsaw and Lodz. In December 2004, he was appointed to the position of Chief Rabbi of Poland. Rabbi Schudrich serves Poland's growing number of Jewish communities and as an official interlocutor between the Jewish community, the Polish government and the Catholic Church.

Two of the many Poles who added immensely to our experience were Jan Jagielski and Anna Sommer Schneider. Jan gave us the tour of the historic Jewish cemetery in Warsaw.



Jan Jagielski

In the early 1980s he began on his own to work on the preservation of sites of Jewish heritage, monuments, and cemeteries. In 1981 he co-founded the Social Committee to Care for and Preserve Cemeteries and Monuments of Jewish Culture. He joined the staff of the Jewish Historical Institute in 1991 and is now its chief archivist. His passion for Polish Jewish heritage and history is evidenced in the vast collections of photos

and documents he has assembled, the tours he leads, his work with municipalities around the country to ensure the preservation of local Jewish heritage, and his own publications.

Anna Sommer Schneider was born in Oświęcim, Poland, the town the Germans renamed Auschwitz. She received her Ph.D. at the Department of Jewish Studies in the Jagiellonian University, Krakow. She has taught there and at Emory University in Atlanta. Dr. Sommer Schneider has been serving as a professional guide at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum since 1998. Born in the town where the largest concentration camp existed, she has been drawn to it as her life's work. She is married and working in the United States now, but returns to Oświęcim in the summer to lead tours.



Anna Sommer Schneider

If you are planning to travel to Poland, contact the Taube Center <http://www.centrumtaubego.org.pl/>. Initially opened with temporary exhibits on April 19, 2013 (the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising) the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews is projecting the completion of its core exhibit by the end of this year. This surely will be a world class venue on the level of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Michael Steinlauf may be taking another tour in 2014. If he is, take it. ❖

*David Mink joined JGSGP in 2006 and soon became Vice President of Programs. He co-chaired the 29th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in 2009 which was held in Philadelphia. His trip to Poland was very enlightening.*

*He's researching MINKOWSKY from Zhitomyr, GREENBERG from Uman, PSENY from Seidlce, and HUBER from Siemiatycze David can be reached at: [daminker@gmail.com](mailto:damikner@gmail.com).*

## REVISITING THE PAST: A FORMER “BRISKER” & HER FAMILY TRAVEL TO BREST

by Evan Fishman

I've read many accounts of individuals traveling to ancestral towns in search of homes and businesses that once belonged to their parents, grandparents, or more distant ancestors. During my extended family's get-together this past Pesach, I had the pleasure of hearing the story of Tzipora, my sister-in-law's aunt, who returned to Brest (formerly in Poland, now in Belarus) to revisit her past.

Tzipora was born in 1914 in Brest Litovsk, and since turning ninety she expressed a strong desire to return to her hometown for a long overdue visit. Such an opportunity arose in 2007 when she heard about a Belarussian born tour guide, living in Israel, who was organizing a private tour to various locations in Belarus, including Brest. Three multi-generational families, all of whom shared a Belarussian connection, comprised the final group of twenty-five. Tzipora's Israeli contingent included her two sons, Dani and Amir, Dani's wife, Nava, three grandchildren (granddaughter Inbal and grandsons Asaf and Chagai). Her niece, Esther and her husband, Richard, flew from Boston in late May to join their Israeli *mishpacha* (family) and traveled with them to Minsk, Belarus, while her great nephew Noam traveled from Belfast, Ireland.

While Tzipora held steadfastly to her goal, her sons cautioned that she wouldn't find anything on her own. Locating Tamara, the tour guide, was serendipitous because this trip was going to coincide with the dedication of a new memorial plaque bearing inscriptions in Belarussian, English, Yiddish, and Hebrew commemorating the Jews in that area who had been killed by the Nazis. Tzipora was so deeply invested in the trip that she also encouraged her grandchildren to participate so they would personally learn about her life growing up in Brest Litovsk.

Tzipora was raised in a fervently Zionist home so it wasn't surprising that she decided to make *aliyah* (moving to Israel) and join the ranks of other *chalutzim* (pioneers) making their own personal contributions toward the development of the burgeoning Jewish state. She traveled to Palestine in 1933-1934, a year after her future husband Yitzhak, but in order to secure the requisite visa, she claimed to be his brother's wife. She joined Yitzhak at a moshav in northern Israel.

Tzipora can be characterized as a gutsy woman who looks at the humor in life and doesn't take herself seriously. She's very, very bright and speaks multiple languages, which came in handy during the trip back to Belarus. She is fiercely independent and still leads a very active life, attending classes for seniors, four full days a week without fail including exercising, swimming, music and intellectual seminars. She is so dedicated to her busy lifestyle that her American relatives have to work their schedules around her seminar days when they come to visit!

Esther related that the group spent mornings visiting cemeteries and related monuments and memorials in various locations in Belarus while local student cultural groups performed for them in the afternoons. Tzipora was delighted to locate the home where her family had resided beginning in 1918, after living in the country during World War I to escape harrowing and dangerous wartime conditions. This building served as both family business (her father repaired watches and was also an optician) and residence. Sadly she couldn't find the family's last residence during the 1930's nor did she meet any locals who remembered or heard of her family.

The most significant and moving part of the Belarussian journey was a ceremony in early June 2007 at Bronnaya Gora, a forest area between Brest and Minsk (approximately 65 miles northeast of Brest) where over 50,000 Jews were killed and buried in mass graves. Esther reported that her grandparents and other relatives were rounded up, forced into boxcars, and transported to Bronnaya Gora where they were shot.

[Andrea Simon relates the story of what transpired at Bronnaya Gora (a/k/a Brona Gora) in her book entitled *Bashert—A Granddaughter's Holocaust Quest*. The citation below corroborates Esther's personal account and appears at the Brest-Belarus website:

(<http://www.brest-belarus.org/bc/Bashert.i.html>)]

The Germans began procedures for executions in May 1942. They used about 600-800 local residents each day as well as explosive materials to prepare the mass graves. Between June and October 1942, 186 railroad cars came to Brona Gora, including one of the largest transports containing twenty-eight cars from Brest-Litovsk, which arrived in October 1942. Those who survived the journey in the airless cattle cars were unloaded onto a special platform, surrounded by barbed wire. They were then forced to

strip, pass through a narrow corridor also enclosed by barbed wire, descend down a ladder into a pit, and lie side-by-side, face down. The Germans shot all of them and then would force more people into the pits on top of the newly dead to face the same fate, thus filling the pit up layer by layer with corpses.

Over 200 people attended the moving ceremony at Bronnaya Gora. They were a diverse group: Jews, non-Jews, local Chabad (Lubavitch) rabbis, Leonid Levin (chairman of the Union of Belarussian Jewish Associations and Communities), the German ambassador to Belarus, and other officials. A local non-Jewish family voluntarily catered the huge luncheon that followed. They in turn were honored for their efforts to educate the local population about the massacres that occurred there, for maintaining the commemorative monument, and for organizing that day's events. Several local librarians and teachers have also been involved in this educational objective. Esther related how the German ambassador, Dr. Martin Hecker, wept while speaking, and two young women translated his remarks into Belarussian. In her own inimitable fashion, Tzipora told the ambassador not to feel bad about what had happened in 1942 because he hadn't been born yet. In her quest for accuracy she also corrected the translation from German to Belarussian!



**New memorial at Bronnaya Gora: Hebrew in the upper part of the red section, Yiddish beneath.**

One significant outcome of this trip was the very moving, thirty-one minute video that Tzipora's granddaughter, Inbal created, which focused on her grandmother's comments and feelings (verbal and non-verbal) before, during and after the journey to Brest. Click onto this link to watch it:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMIs8uYRMXo>. While the dialogue is in Hebrew with Hebrew subtitles, Tzipora's facial expressions convey the gamut of emotions she experienced and override any language barrier.

After returning to Israel, Tzipora and her Israeli family visited her husband's grave. One of the grandsons shared his perspective, and clearly elucidated the value of trips to ancestral homelands while family elders are still able to participate.

Addressing himself to his deceased grandfather, Yitzhak, Asaf said: "We learned all the stories about your childhood. While in Brisk we searched for your house overlooking the Bug River but we couldn't find it. Your whole street was gone."

"It would be *chutzpadik* (nervy) to say that we took *Savta* (Grandma) to Brisk. SHE took US. And for what purpose? Not to learn about Brisk but to finally know about you and her. We walked in the city where you walked when you were younger than we are now. All your children and grandchildren can't take your place." ❖



**Tzipora at the Bronnaya Gora cemetery along with family members. Grandson (front) reading text.**

*Author Evan Fishman is the editor of Chronicles and has always been interested in learning about his extended family. He began to methodically research his family history in 2000 and has been amazed by the stories and experiences he's encountered. All of this has enriched his life, resulted in very meaningful new connections, and provided profound insights.*

*Some of the surnames he's researching include Mandelstein, Lisnitzer, Adelman, Presseisen, Fishman, Udin, Burstein, Winarsky, all of which (except Fishman) originate in present day Ukraine. Evan also does private genealogical research.*

*Contact him at [editor@jgsgp.org](mailto:editor@jgsgp.org)*

## MORE THAN JUST A NAME - UPDATE

Rabbi Shalom Bronstein

Some articles assume a life of their own. Such is the case with the piece I wrote on the Ukrainian city, Belaya Tserkov, that appeared in *Chronicles* nine years ago. Over the years I have referred people to this article, and their responses have prompted me to share some of the interesting points raised. Following is a summary of the original article followed by an update that reflects comments and further information I gathered since the article originally appeared.

Numerous localities in Europe also had a particular Jewish name – that is, a name that Jews used for the town. The city of Belaya Tserkov had two completely different Jewish names, one in Hebrew and one in Yiddish. Many Philadelphia Jews can trace their origin to this town, which was also the birthplace of Yossele Rosenblatt, whom many consider the greatest cantor who ever lived. Located in the Ukraine, 75 kilometers south of Kiev, it had a pre-war Jewish population of 15,624 according to *Where Once We Walked*. (1)

Its Jewish community dates from sometime after 1550. It was destroyed during the Chmielnicki pogroms in 1648/49 and later re-established in the 18th century. The pogroms in 1905 did not bypass Belaya Tserkov nor did the 1919-1920 civil war in that area. Records tell us that more than 850 Jews were murdered by soldiers from the White Army, bands of local peasants and Ukrainian troops.

Belaya Tserkov, means “White Church.” Its Hebrew name is Sde Lavan, שדה לבן, meaning “white field.” This descriptive term was well chosen as the area was the breadbasket of the Ukraine. ‘White Field’ is a phrase utilized in the *Mishnah* (the first major work of Rabbinic Judaism), [*Shevi’it 2:1*] to describe fields where only grain is grown. Its Yiddish name was a well-kept secret used only by Jews. It is a play on the Ukrainian name and exhibits far more than meets the eye. It reflects both the suffering our people endured and expresses their resentment towards the local gentile population. They twisted the name by referring to the city as *Shvartztimme* (the Ukrainian Yiddish regional pronunciation). It combines Yiddish and Hebrew and means ‘Black Impurity.’ The first part of the name is Yiddish – *Shvartz*, meaning black; the Hebrew second part – Tum’ah (correct Hebrew pronunciation), means impure. Thus, its Yiddish name means ‘Black Impurity.’ This was an “in house” name and was rarely, if ever, used outside the Jewish community. Its name is translated as “Black Abomination” in the article on Belaya Tserkov in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, (vol. 4, p. 413). which

states that this term was found in Jewish folklore. However, this is not accurate, as this was the common name used by the Yiddish speaking Jewish residents for their town.

*Where Once We Walked* lists the name for the town as ‘Shvartz Stimme,’ which would translate as ‘Black Voice.’ JGSGP member, Joan Rosen, wrote to me that her late aunt, a native of the town, told her that its Yiddish name meant ‘Black Tower.’ That would be pronounced ‘Shvartz Turme’ [“Turem” being the Yiddish word for “tower”] which sounds very close to its actual Yiddish name. I am convinced that many of the town’s Jewish residents were not aware of the real meaning of the Yiddish term that they used for the town.

Prominently featured in my original article was Rabbi Mordecai Yohlin (1883-1942). The *landsleit* (people from the same home town) of Belaya Tserkov played an important role in his arrival in Philadelphia with his family in 1925. From that year to 1936 he served the synagogue known as Kehilat Kodesh Anshei Sde Lavan – the Holy Community of Sde Lavan (Schwartztimme/Belaya Tserkov) at Fifth & Mercy Sts. He then served Ateres Israel (Crown of Israel) at Sixth & Morris. Rabbi Yohlin died in 1942. He published a book *Kohelet Mordecai* in Poland in 1933. I ordered a copy at the National Library of Israel here in Jerusalem. I was quite surprised that the bookplate stated in Polish that it was donated in the 1930s by the “Warsaw Friends of the Hebrew University and the National Polish Library in Warsaw.”

The late Dr. Nathan Back related that his family attended that synagogue Kol Nidre night, September 20, 1942; the building was filled to overflowing but the rabbi had not arrived. The congregation waited and waited wondering what could have delayed the rabbi. Nate recalled vividly when the worshippers were given the shocking news that after blessing his children and grandchildren Rabbi Yohlin suddenly died at the onset of Yom Kippur.

Reuven Campagnano, a fellow Jerusalemite, is a restorer of books. He recently sent me a Hebrew article he wrote that will soon be published in a book here in Israel. He describes some of the curiosities that he has encountered in his work. In one book he found a page of a Jewish calendar in Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian that had been used as a bookmark. This page, which has the Hebrew date as the main entry, also includes both the Gregorian and Julian dates. It lists the *yahrzeits* (anniversary death dates) of three rabbis. Reuven writes that his attention was drawn to one rabbi in particular because of the curious name of the town – Rabbi Aharon Shmuel Hakohen, Head of the Rabbinical Court of Sde Lavan. When he described this page at a

lecture he gave, I told him about my research on the town. He incorporates the information in his article calling attention to the large number of Jews from the town who settled in Philadelphia.

Reuven, a native of Italy, was a hidden child during the Holocaust. His maternal grandfather, Umberto Cassuto, was a noted Bible scholar as well as professor in the Bible Department at the Hebrew University. His late mother, Hulda Compagnano, was a math teacher and member of Kibbutz Yavne. Our oldest daughter and her family are also members of the same kibbutz, and at one time Reuven's mother was our son-in-law's teacher. Again, the Jewish world is very small, and we are all interconnected.

It is most instructive to read the subscription list [*Prenumeraten*] of the 1933 edition of Rabbi Yohlin's book. This list of contributors who enabled the book to be published includes Cantor Joseph Rosenblatt [popularly known as Yossele Rosenblatt] along with many of the leaders of Philadelphia's Jewish community of the early 1930s. A number of people listed were actively involved in the early years of Har Zion Temple including their spiritual leader, Rabbi Simon Greenberg. Perhaps some of them also had roots in Belaya Tserkov. I leave it to future researchers to find the connection.

Two Torah scrolls from Rabbi Yohlin's synagogue were donated in 1983 to Young Israel Claremont Parkway-Givat Shaul, 28 Ben Zion Street, Givat Shaul, Jerusalem. (This is the official name of the synagogue and commemorates the now defunct Young Israel of Claremont Parkway. Proceeds from the sale of this shul (synagogue) building were applied toward the purchase of the apartment which presently constitutes YICP-GS.) Today the shul is referred to by locals as the Young Israel of Givat Shaul.



Translation: "Two Torah scrolls were donated to this synagogue by Kehilat Kodosh Anshei Sde Lavan in South Philadelphia, US. Av 5743 (July/August 1983)".

The National Council of Young Israel in America was very helpful in arranging the shipment of the scrolls to Israel, and Jacob

Berkowitz, a shul member at that time, was instrumental in the transfer. He chose the Young Israel of Givat Shaul because his son, Rabbi Simcha Berkowitz, originally from South Philadelphia, has *davened* (prayed) there since it opened in 1972. ❖

1. Gary Mokotoff, Sallyann Amdur Sack, *Where One We Walked: A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust* (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu Inc., 2002)

*Native Philadelphian Shalom Bronstein graduated from Temple University and Gratz College in 1964 and holds a master's degree, rabbinic ordination, and an honorary doctorate from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. After serving as a congregational rabbi for sixteen years, Shalom came on aliyah with his family in 1986 and settled in Jerusalem.*

*His articles have been published in Avotaynu, Chronicles, Sharsheret Hadorot, Et-Mol, and Yad Vashem Jerusalem Quarterly Magazine, and he composed the section on Israel in the Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy. He served as president of the Jerusalem branch of the Israel Genealogy Society, lectured at the 2004 and 2009 IAJGS conferences, and is currently involved in transcribing necrology lists from Hebrew and Yiddish into English for JewishGen's Yizkor Book Project. Contact him at: syгаа@netvision.net.il*

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## MEETING SUMMARIES

### APRIL 2013 MEETING: STICKY WRITING; WRITING SO PEOPLE WANT TO READ IT

While many of us diligently research and record our respective family histories, our family members may not share our enthusiasm; consequently what we hope will be a meaningful family legacy too often becomes yet another item gathering dust on a shelf.

Steve Schechter presented "Sticky Writing: Writing So People Want to Read It" at our April 8 meeting and educated us as to how to heighten interest in our written family histories. He highlighted a series of principles, based on Chip and Dan Heath's book *Made to Stick* and designed to get people to want to listen or read and retain more.

1. Make writing concrete; creatively prepare a narrative, not a reference book, by developing a timeline and including documents, pictures, and contextual events.

2. Make the material "reader-centric". Focus more on what a prospective reader wants to know. Start off with a bang

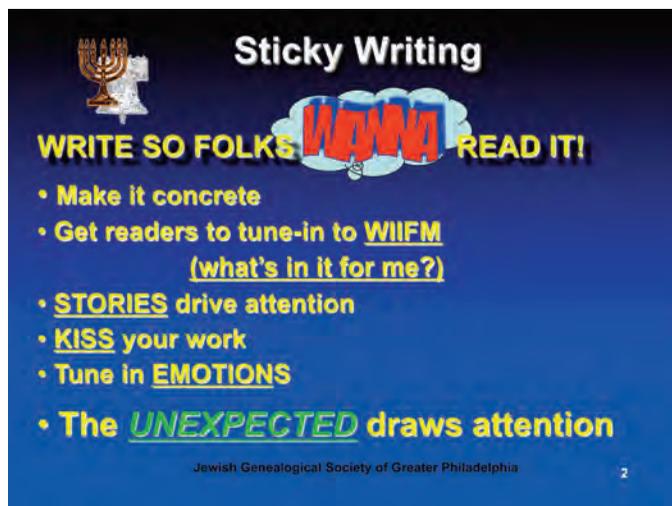
to hold and energize the reader - to grab him or her in their *kishkes*.

3. Stories are the key; enhancing them with pictures brings these people to life.

4. KISS (Keep It Short & Sweet). Create bite-sized chapters, and remember that a picture is worth a thousand words.

5. Maximize emotional reactions, particularly laughter and tears. Engage the reader to want more, which will help them care about the content.

6. Whenever possible and appropriate, surprise them with the unexpected twist to a story.



Steve accentuated these common sense principles with helpful hints. Hopefully, he practiced what he preached and made his presentation “sticky”!

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## WRITING YOUR FAMILY STORY

by Harry Davidow Boonin

**A**pril’s meeting, at heart, was a tutorial on how to write a book/story/piece of paper about your family. No charts; just narratives were discussed.

I would like to expand on what was presented. It was all excellent, but rather than tell you about the meeting itself, I would rather explain the impression it made on me. Let me start at the beginning, or somewhere thereabouts. My cousin and I finished our family book about twenty years ago. Then why did I attend the meeting? Good question. I find the subject interesting.

Most interesting are the impediments that folks dream up to prove why they cannot write a story about their family. Balderdash. (That is a technical genealogical word that means, drivel, nonsense, or baloney.) First of all, the greatest thing about writing a narrative (I am talking “no” charts) is whatever you write can’t be wrong. There are not many things you can do in life where you can’t be wrong. Believe me, I know. So start out and go to wherever you want to go. I’ll give you examples.

In our book my cousin wrote one of the best love stories of all time. It is about her grandmother. The grandmother’s sisters had married for love; she wanted to also, but her parents insisted that hers would be an “arranged” marriage. This was in Russia. The young maiden had a fit. The boy and his family were invited over to her home to meet her and her family, but she locked herself in her room. After an hour or so of listening to laughter coming from downstairs, she opened her door, snuck quietly down the stairs, and peeked at the gathering. She identified her intended, whom she had never seen before, as the most handsome man she had ever seen. Excited, she ran back upstairs, put on her best dress, went downstairs, and eventually the two were happily married. When my cousin’s grandmother was asked later in life about how she met her husband, she said, “I fell in love through a crack in the door.”

You may say, “Well, that is all fine and good, but I have no stories like that one.” (Not many people do.) O.K. No big deal. Just make one up. That is what my cousin did. Sure we had our ship arrival record, and sure he knew who came when, and sure he knew that when the family left Russia they were poor, but he had no story. Or did he? This is how he began it. “On April 14, 1906, Marcus Davidovskii (later known as Harry Davidow) stood on the dock at Rotterdam, Holland, waiting to board the ship that would complete the 4,000-mile journey from Elizabetgrad, Russia, to New York City. Forty-three years old, an unemployed bookbinder, Davidovskii was traveling with his forty-year-old wife, Lizi, and seven of their eight living children.”

A few paragraphs further he writes, “The Statendam arrived in the New York harbor on Monday, April 23, 1906. The day was marked by snow flurries, the latest date for snow since 1884. If the steerage passengers were able to read the local papers, the headline news was the terrible San Francisco earthquake... On a lighter note, Broadway was featuring Maude Adams in “Peter Pan” at the Empress Theater; “Charlie’s Aunt” was still at Marshall’s Theater and “Barnum and Bailey’s Circus” was at Madison Square

Garden. There was also mention of Mark Twain's 'Farewell' lecture at Carnegie Hall."

But your family may not have arrived on a day like ours did, no problem. Maybe there were real problems. One relative believed his mother had married a man who had been married before and left a family in Canada to marry his mom. But the man, who was the father of the relative writing the story, married in Trenton. His wife, the mother of the writer was still living many years later when the "riotous history" of our family was first being recorded. The son of this marriage asked his mother whether she thought her husband of many years (but then deceased) was a bigamist. They both laughed at the question. This is how he handled it.

He wrote in our family book that later in life his mother was contemplating a trip to Israel and it was necessary to delve into her marriage. In talking to her son about her marriage, she said she knew very little about his life in Canada, and for the first time confided to her son that she thought he "might have been married before." Her son told her that her children were too old to learn at that late date "that they might be bastards and to simply forget about it." Great advice. A greater story.

But you can do anything. Bankruptcies can be ignored; real problems can be skirted; good times can be exaggerated; bad times—never happened, or if they did, you can handle them with care and understanding. How you handle problems is as important as the facts you describe.

Another story. One of our members, whose name I will not mention, had a grandmother who owned a candy store in Strawberry Mansion [a neighborhood in Philadelphia]. As a boy of ten or twelve, he worked in the store and took his first smoke there. The stories of the store are endless. His entire book about his mother's family is written around the store. It is a wonderful book, full of color and fun. It could be published.

Perhaps the things we remember best occurred between ages ten to twelve. Most people love those carefree years, but not all. If your early years were not good, write about someone else's. Write about what jumps out at you from your memory. As long as it is detailed, descriptive, and real, it will grab readers and thrill your family. Let me end with one of my own family stories.

When I was ten years old, my uncle, aunt, and their two sons and I drove to the mountains. We were going to Coop-

erstown to see the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1947, and it was a very special place then to ten year-old boys—and still is. It was a long ride to Cooperstown, and on the way we stopped for gas or something. My uncle let us do whatever we wanted so we snuck into a nearby drug store and ran our hands over the goods being sold. We were looking for something sweet and chocolate. Our fingers finally went over something called, "Ex-Lax," so we bought it, snuck in the back of the car, and ate it. I'll leave the rest of the story out, but we both lived through it. Everyone has stories like this one. There are a million of them. ❖

*Author Harry D. Boonin is the founding president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia and a well-known genealogical researcher and writer. Harry is the author of "The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia: A History & Guide 1881-1930", "The Life & Times of Congregation Keshet Israel", and is researching Jewish boxers from Philadelphia. Contact Harry at: [harryboonin@gmail.com](mailto:harryboonin@gmail.com)*

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## MAY 2013 MEETING: THE LITHUANIAN HOLOCAUST EXPERIENCE



Ellen Cassedy was the speaker at our May 13th meeting. She spoke about her book, *We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust* and the trip she took to research it. While in Lithuania she learned Yiddish and much more. Ellen's mother had drawn her a family

tree and told her of Jewish life in Lithuania prior to World War II. She described a community with little tension as Jews and Lithuanians lived side by side for centuries. While there would be petty conflicts and competitive disagreements, people generally concentrated on making a living with a "live and let live" mentality.

Shockingly all that changed dramatically with the rise of Nazism. In an attempt to curry Nazi favor, Lithuanians used the pretext of an impending German invasion as an opportunity to confiscate possessions by beginning to slaughter their Jewish neighbors. By the time the Germans invaded in 1941 the slaughter of Lithuania's Jews was well underway. Thanks to continued Lithuanian complicity no Jews remained by the end of the war. This horrific story demonstrated how neighbors turned on each other so quickly and how a thin veneer of humanity and empathy

was so easily shattered. Despite the extensive savagery there were some examples of bravery as some Lithuanians sheltered and hid Jews.

During the post war era of Soviet repression many Lithuanians were deported to Siberia, and the country was ravaged until independence in 1991. Many developed a perverse perspective which enabled them to compare the Lithuanian repression to the Jewish slaughters as if to say, "So you think you had it bad, look what happened to us", an attitude which served to rationalize and justify their behavior while avoiding questions of reparations and guilt.

The Lithuanian story, however, is not all bad news. About 4,000 Jews now live in Lithuania, cemeteries and synagogues are slowly being restored, and Yiddish is now taught to a new generation. This was the initial attraction that drew Ellen to her ancestral homeland. While learning Yiddish she met with educators who are teaching about the Holocaust and also had the opportunity to meet and interview many individuals about their memories and feelings concerning Lithuanian behavior during World War II. The reactions ranged from sorrow about what happened to self-justifications. During this process, Ellen found herself conflicted in trying to understand and accept people who had behaved so barbarically. In one particularly poignant story, she recounted how she wrestled with herself while trying to decide whether to meet a Lithuanian who had participated in the slaughter but who now wanted to meet and speak with "a Jew." "What purpose would be served?" She ultimately decided that learning was more important than blaming, and in any case, she didn't have the power to offer absolution anyway.

In summary, Ellen is a skilled writer who presented a compelling story. Her book is excellent, and she throws light onto a very dark period of history while confronting her own personal feelings. Her website is <http://www.ellen-cassedy.com>. ❖

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### **JUNE 2013: THE JGSGP JEWISH GENEALOGY FAIR**

Our third consecutive Jewish Genealogy Fair was a success thanks to the extra special support of Jef Barnett and the many who gave up their Sunday afternoon to help. About 100 people engaged a variety of genealogy experts and

were impressed with the helpfulness, patience, and expertise of the people managing the various stations and the relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.

The stations included:

- Felicia Alexander - German Roots;
- Stanley Bergman - translations;
- Fred Blum - Brick Walls;
- Harry Boonin - Russian Genealogy  
(filling in admirably on short notice);
- Bernie Cedar - Reference Books;
- Patrick Connelly & Gail Farr – NARA;
- Bette Epstein - NJ State Archives;
- Shamele Jordon -  
Cherry Hill Family History Center;
- Mark Halpern - JRI Poland;
- Susan Kobren from JGS of North Jersey;
- Lew Meixler & Phylis Anker from  
Beth El Jewish Genealogy Club, East Windsor, NJ;
- Cindy & Jim Meyer - JGSGP Book Orphanage;
- Chris Roberts & Ann & Jack Kauffman  
Bucks County (PA) Genealogical Society;
- Walter Spector - Conducting JewishGen searches  
(filling in admirably on short notice);
- Steve Stein - JGS of NYC;
- Barry Wagner - searching Ancestry;
- Steve Schecter - helping people to get started or  
restarted mostly by directing attendees to other stations.

Susan Neidich encouraged ten new people to join, and Stan and Shelda Sandler were great, as usual, in pointing folks in the right direction. Jef Barnett, Felicia Mode Alexander and Congregation Tifereth Israel provided much appreciated refreshments.

We will discuss next year's fair and who will lead it at a future board meeting. Volunteers are always welcome! ❖

**Photos from the Fair courtesy Gene Hurwitz**



Stan Sandler & Susan Neidich at the Welcome Desk



Attendees “adopt” needy books at the JGSGP Book Orphanage



Ed Flax & wife Dee Silver studying US & New York State census records from 1900 - 1940 for his Schindelman family

done, we’ll have more Public Access Computers, including a set for hands-on instruction, fewer microfilm machines, more secure space for using original records, and a better flow.

You’ll still reach Research Services the same way to ask a research question or submit a reference request: Philadelphia.archives@nara.gov or 215-606-0100 or order online <http://www.archives.gov/research/order/> for Naturalizations. ❖



Susan Kobren, JGS North Jersey assists an attendee

## QUERY

I am a member of the JGSLA (Los Angeles). I have done extensive genealogical research on my family. However, I have not been able to find anything about the family of my maternal grandmother. Her maiden name was Wahrhaftig. There seem to be many Wahrhaftigs living in Philadelphia. I was wondering if you had any Wahrhaftigs as members of your organization or anyone who might have Wahrhaftig listed as part of their research. I would be extremely appreciative if you could check this for me. If there should be someone, they could reach me at the below information.

Karl L. Seligman, MD  
5877 Maury Avenue, Woodland Hills, CA 91367  
818-888-6189 [kseligman@socal.rr.com](mailto:kseligman@socal.rr.com)

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### NATIONAL ARCHIVES at PHILADELPHIA

Making Improvements: Summer and Fall 2013  
We will be closing our Market Street facility for on-site research and reference, as well as our Exhibit Gallery and on-site programs, beginning Monday, 29 July. We expect to reopen the facility in late October.

Why? We have just begun the final phase of our improvements: renovating the research and reference areas. Once

**ATTENTION: JGSGP members attending Boston IAJGS conference**  
Please notify Fred Blum ([president@jgsgp.org](mailto:president@jgsgp.org)) if you’re planning to attend so we can organize our own get-together during the conference. Include your cell phone numbers. We hope you’ll all have fascinating stories about your conference experience that you’ll want to share in the fall issue of *Chronicles*.  
Send your material to [editor@jgsgp.org](mailto:editor@jgsgp.org). Deadline: Friday, August 23.



Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia  
**2013 Membership & Renewal Form**  
 Enjoy *Chronicles*, Our Award Winning Quarterly Publication

Please print, complete and mail this form with your check to our **NEW ADDRESS:**  
 JGSGP, 1657 The Fairway, #145, Jenkintown, PA 19046

Membership Categories and Contributions	New Member	Renewal	Amount
Individual - \$25			\$
Family - \$35 (2 Members, Same Household)			\$
Sponsor - \$50			\$
Patron - \$100			\$
Non-Resident \$15 (more than 100 miles from Phila.)			\$
Overseas \$21			\$
Voluntary Gift to the JGSGP Library / Digitization Fund			\$
Voluntary Gift to the JGSGP Program Fund			\$
A check is enclosed for the amount of:			\$

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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Address 2 \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

(Dues are for the calendar year, January 1-December 31. Members joining after September 30 will receive membership through the end of the following year.) Contributions and dues are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

What are the most important surnames and their associated ancestral towns that you are researching?  
 Provide up to six surnames, towns and countries which will later be shared with other members.

Surname	Town	Country



**Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia**  
1657 The Fairway, #145  
Jenkintown, PA 19046  
[www.jgsgp.org](http://www.jgsgp.org)

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

## **JGSGP CALENDAR & REMINDERS**

**Please note that our mailing address has changed to: 1657 The Fairway, #145 Jenkintown, PA 19046**

Please direct all U.S. mail correspondence to this new address.

Look for information about other IAJGS member societies: <http://www.iajgs.org/members/members.html>

Join the JGSGP Facebook group: <http://tinyurl.com/jgsgp>. Our members are continually posting fascinating news and developments which impact on genealogy and important related areas.

**The first thirty minutes of each meeting are devoted to browsing reference books and getting help from mentors.**

**Program details will be posted on the JGSGP website as soon as they are complete: [www.jgsgp.org](http://www.jgsgp.org)**

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**Monday, SEPTEMBER 16 6:30 PM at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel (KI)**  
**8339 Old York Road • Elkins Park PA 19027**

**Sunday, OCTOBER 20 1:00 PM at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel (KI)**

**Sunday, NOVEMBER 17 1:00 PM at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel (KI)**

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### **TENTATIVE Meeting Dates**

**Sunday, DECEMBER 8 at Rodeph Shalom (RS) Center City or Main Line Reform Temple**

**Sunday, JANUARY 12, 2014 at Rodeph Shalom (RS) Center City or Main Line Reform Temple**

**Sunday, FEBRUARY 9, 2014 at Rodeph Shalom (RS) Center City or Main Line Reform Temple**

**Sunday, MARCH 9, 2014 at Rodeph Shalom (RS) Center City or Main Line Reform Temple**

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**For program information, check your JGSGP emails or our web site for complete details: <http://jgsgp.org>**