

# CHRONICLES

JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

דברי הימים



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## REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR CHRONICLES TEAM

Winter 2014-2015



During my elementary and Hebrew school years I read young adult versions of biographies, often about historic personalities like Babe Ruth, Theodore Roosevelt, David (Mickey) Marcus, and Theodor Herzl. I read a wide scope of books now, but I seem to gravitate toward biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs. I'm particularly fascinated when these books focus on the family dynamics experienced by their subjects.

I recently enjoyed reading *Who She Was: My Search for My Mother's Life* by Samuel Freedman, *The Family: Three Journeys into the Heart of the Twentieth Century* by David Laskin, and *From Generation to Generation: How to Trace Your Jewish Genealogy & Family History* by Arthur Kurzweil. I found all three compelling. The first two provide in-depth coverage of the authors' respective family histories, exactly what we genealogists are encouraged to do with all the documents, anecdotes, and photographs we collect while pursuing our research. As indicated in his book's title, Kurzweil focuses on teaching and guiding us through the research process. In addition to giving us step-by-step instructions and an overview of resources available, he weaves in personal experiences from his nascent genealogical journey and incorporates anecdotes that provide riveting insights into the various branches of his own family.

As I mentioned in my book review of Freedman's work in our fall issue, we need to integrate the biographical, sociological, and psychological elements in our narratives. They offer explanations for why our relatives and ancestors acted as they did in reaction to various historical events. (*continued on p. 3*)

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JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

## 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 / postal code address.

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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.

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The mystery person is Menachem Begbin, and the group is the Beitar, the youth movement of the Zionist Revisionist Movement. The Revisionist Movement was founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky. When my uncle (Z"l) passed away in North Jersey in the 1990s, Jabotinsky's photo was still on his bedroom wall!

Answer - Quiz # 5

(from p. 1) The above-mentioned authors go the extra mile and ultimately demonstrate how personality traits can often pass from generation to generation, echoing Ron Arons' remarks during his presentation at our May meeting.

There is another dimension that these books share which transcends the narrow definition of "genealogical." All three authors delve into the profound, moving, underlying reasons why they wrote their respective tomes and how their Jewishness was affected. The title of Kurzweil's first chapter reflects both aspects: "Climbing Up My Family Tree: Jewish Genealogy as a Spiritual Pilgrimage." All three authors had either drifted away from Judaism or had limited ties to it before they began researching. I was moved by how their intense explorations resulted in profound changes in their connection to Judaism. Freedman and Laskin had drifted away and/or become alienated from Judaism; their respective explorations into their family histories renewed their interest in Judaism.

Freedman developed an abiding under-Jewish elements that characterized and mother and maternal grandmother. Al-mother's abiding concern for her World War II, he recognized the link living members of that European America. "I met the distant relatives in covered bond." (p. 322) At long last the for him; it was no longer an historical beyond her grave, my grandmother has taught me who and what my own line-mass murder and turned it personal." Maternal great grandparents of Arthur Kurzweil



standing of and appreciation for the explained behaviors displayed by his lowing himself to analyze his grand-relatives trapped in Poland during between himself as a Jew with the sur-branch who rebuilt their lives in South Uruguay... and we cherished our re-dis-Holocaust took on a personal meaning event that affected **other** people. "From made the Holocaust palpable to me, age lost, taken the massiveness out of (p. 322) He also began to understand the importance Israel had for his mother and her personal connection with the Jewish people. "When I look today on my mother's bust of Golda Meir on the shelf in my living room, I imagine in the furrowed, creased face a suggestion of Rose Mickiewicz Hatkin [his grandmother]..." (p. 322) "I found myself mentioning stray details from my mother's life... her dancing in the streets when the United Nations voted statehood for Israel." (p. 6)

The keynote speaker at the recent IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City, Laskin is married to a non-Jew. Descended from a line of Torah scribes (*sofrim*), he belatedly discovered his Jewish identity while researching and writing his book. In his introduction he states: "Though I have ceased to attend synagogue and don't claim my ancestors' knowledge or share their faith, I have come to love and revere the Judaism that sustained my family through the generations." (p. 7) He sums up his journey as follows: "Long ago, I walked away from their book, their faith, and their traditions, but in middle age I have come back to their stories. I used to think these stories could never be mine because fundamentally we had little in common:... I had left their path and chosen my own. I don't pray. I don't observe the cycle of the Jewish year. I rarely read the Bible. Thoughts of God, when I have them, arise not in synagogue but in wild solitary places." (p. 329) Laskin's closing sentiments cogently express the essence of genealogical narrative: "In telling their story I have made it my own... I have told this story out of reverence for my family but also, to be honest, because I can. It is their story, but in writing it I have claimed it... But it doesn't belong to me. It belongs to all of us." (p. 330)

While Kurzweil wasn't alienated from Judaism before he began to do genealogy research, he experienced a dramatic progression. After several years of focusing on his father's family, he shifted his attention to his mother's. While cleaning out her parents' apartment he found "a virtual museum of family history" (p.21) despite his grandparents' contention that they had saved nothing. Among the photographs that were unearthed was one of his maternal grandfather's parents. "My own great-grandfather was a Hasid! If not for this photograph, I might have never known... I was not raised in a traditional home, and this was partly because of my family history: my mother's parents were not traditional, and this affected my upbringing. Had my grandparents been, I too, might have had a different kind of life. But this feeling was dramatically resolved when I brought the newly discovered photograph of my great-grandparents to their son - my grandfather... (pp. 23-24) And today I connect once again with the tradition of my great-grandfather, through my family history research." (p. 24)

## WE EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS & HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THE NAMES & TOWNS THEY ARE RESEARCHING

|   |                       |   |                 |
|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------|
| Helen Smith   | King of Prussia, PA   | Edna Lamb   | Philadelphia PA |
| Sarah Cherry  | Steamboat Springs, CO | Lamb, Goldstein, Lankin, Bronstein, Mangold, Mandel -                   |                 |
| David Freiman   | Philadelphia, PA      | Elizabethgrad, Odessa, Russia, Philadelphia, PA & Lynn, MA              |                 |
| Lorraine Whitman  | Schwenksville, PA     | Jeanette Neumann Bernstein  | Eagleville PA   |
| Stanley Gornish   | Garnet Valley, PA     | Neumann, Zloczower - Berlin, Germany, Phorzheim, Germany                |                 |
| Hornish (Gornish), Gerson from Russia; Kallchinsky (Kall) from Volinksy, Russia | Philadelphia, PA      | Randi Jacobs  | Lancaster PA    |
| Gary Brownstein   |                       | Vianowsky, Shtulboim, Lasson - Gorodicz, Kiev, Ukraine; Dinivitz Russia |                 |
|   |                       | Lisa Steinberg  | Brooklyn, NY    |

During a subsequent interview, Kurzweil's mother's cousin, Maurice, mentioned that someone had once scolded him saying, "That's no way to behave, especially since you are an *ainicle* [literally grandson; in this case descendant] of the Stropkover Rebbe." (p. 24) Kurzweil picked up on this statement, and like any determined genealogist, wanted to find out about the Stropkover Rebbe. He relates the journey he underwent that ultimately led to his "discovery of being descended from the Stropkover Rebbe" which... "was another step in my personal quest to find my place in the Jewish religious tradition." (p. 33)

This issue of *Chronicles* focuses on this year's IAJGS conference and summer travel. JGSGP attendees came away with a new understanding of various topics and a greater appreciation for resources such as the Family History Library and lists of specific sources to enhance research. Tammy Hepps and Joel Spector reaped unexpected benefits from their respective interactions during the conference. On the summer travel front, Marilyn Golden shares the pluses and minuses of the family reunion she attended in Newport Beach, California. Mark Halpern and Avivah Pinski, traveled to Poland exclusively, while Jeffrey Barnett visited there after forays in the Netherlands; their experiences were heartwarming and extremely meaningful, resulting in a richer background and greater significance to the research efforts that preceded their journeys. ♦ Evan Fishman, Editor

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**A**s I write this message we are approaching a new year. During the past year we have had some great programming thanks to Mark Halpern and his committee. Next year we have some interesting programs already lined up. If you have not yet renewed your membership, please do so now. Your dues help us defray the costs of having great speakers and meetings. I would be remiss if I did not thank a few people that make my presidency successful. Susan Neidich has done an outstanding job with our membership retention and keeping me in line. I can't say enough about Evan Fishman, Ed Flax and the rest of the editorial team for the outstanding publication you are now reading.

As you do your research please don't forget about a wonderful resource we have in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center (PJAC). The archives are housed at the Special Records Collection at Temple University and are filled with rich histories of Jewish Philadelphia. They have HIAS and Philadelphia immigrant bank records for research as well as much more. If you are in possession of an interesting family collection and are interested in preserving your history, PJAC may be interested in preserving and housing your records. Stay tuned for an exciting announcement in my next President's Message.

Hope you all have a happy, safe and healthy new year. ♦ Fred Blum, President

## 2014 IAJGS CONFERENCE IMPRESSIONS

by James Gross



I recently joined other genealogists at the 2014 IAJGS conference which was held in Salt Lake City, Utah. This was my fifth visit to Salt Lake City, and my fifth genealogy conference, so I was knowledgeable in regard to conference expectations, availability of the nearby LDS Family History Library, as well as the need for some pre-trip record scanning.

For my week-long genealogy trip, I sought to travel with the smallest quantity of physical notes. I reduced my materials to a printed copy of the sessions and three thin reference binders. I also brought a thumb drive, a portable hard drive, a laptop, a multiplex wall adapter, an extension cord, and a three prong to two prong electrical adapter. (Note to myself: bring two laptop power cords for the next trip.) I had spent a week scanning my notes and hand-written trees and had copied most of my available electronic files.

While at the conference, I found it helpful to access my online gedcom tree as well as the family tree data which I had recently copied to my laptop. I had my electronic and some paper notes, but time was short, and I ended up relying on a printed descendants tree chart for one of my Fridman family line. I made a number of successful hits in my research for specific relatives who either reside in modern Israel or resided in pre-1948 Israel.

As I have attended previous genealogy conferences, I was aware of the need to have realistic goals. I knew that it would not be worthwhile for me to attend lectures which I had already heard in the past, so I avoided a number of good lectures such as those presented by W. Todd Knowles, Rabbi Gary Gans, Roy Ogas, and Stephen Morse. I did however attend the Litvak SIG and Ukraine SIG luncheons.

Unlike past conferences, this time I placed a lower priority on individual lectures and a higher priority on locating useful genealogy materials. I will admit that my decision on time usage was a tradeoff. While I did attend several lectures, I was more interested in spending time researching in the resource room and at the nearby LDS Family History Library.

I made daily visits to the conference resource room between lectures and made two visits, lasting about two hours each, to the nearby LDS Family History Library. The conference resource room had quite a lot of available laptops for use. Each one had a main page containing links to a number of popular subscription databases.

There was also access to some databases which I had not previously searched. These included two Israeli online databases: the All Israel Database available from the Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA) and the EIRI Search Engine, available from the Israel Genealogy Society. I was able to use the above-mentioned databases to locate a number of records on my Israeli Fridman relatives.

To sum up, I was able to make effective use of the conference computer resources as well as the nearby LDS Family History Library, and I walked away with a number of saved pdf's, useful scans, plus a few contact emails. ♦♦

*Author James Gross has been working on his family tree since the early 1990s. A periodic contributor to various genealogy newsletters, James volunteers regularly at the Cherry Hill, NJ Family History Center where he helps other genealogists in their research. He also has a genealogy website: <http://tinyurl.com/gross-steinberg>.*

*James can be reached at: navistar96@yahoo.com*

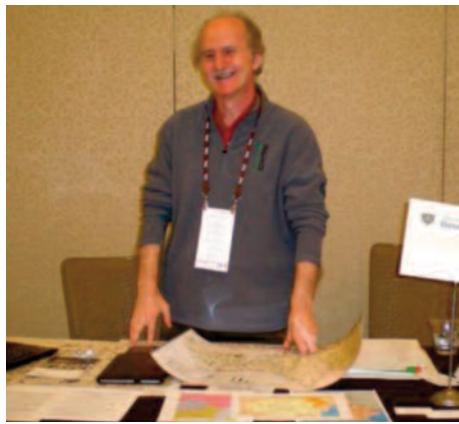
## 2014 - IAJGS CONFERENCE SNIPPETS

by Merle Kastner



**H**aving attended all but two IAJGS conferences since July, 2000 and two of these in Salt Lake City, I was a little skeptical about going back for a third time. However, I was pleasantly surprised by what I experienced. Attendance was down to only about 550, as compared to the usual 1,000, but this allowed for a stimulating and closer exchange of dialogue with other participants, which embodies the very essence and purpose of a conference like ours. I'd like to now share some highlights with fellow *Chronicles* readers.

I attended three sessions related to my continuing interest in things Bessarabian. I've been following Cassio Topolar's Facebook postings about his film, "Mamaliga Blues", for five years and enjoyed viewing it on Monday afternoon. He's done a very good job documenting his *shtetl* trip to Kishinev, Bessarabia (now Moldova). Check out his website: [http://www.mamaligablues.com/about\\_files/the\\_film\\_the\\_journey.pdf](http://www.mamaligablues.com/about_files/the_film_the_journey.pdf). The next day I attended the Bessarabia SIG luncheon where Kishinev expert archivist, Alla Chastina, outlined the newest developments in research resources, followed by the Bessarabia SIG meeting, both orchestrated by Yefim Kogan, the brilliant and dedicated originator of this SIG.



**Yefim Kogan-IAJGS Conference Share Fair Bessarabia Table**

It is amazing how much Yefim has accomplished in three, short years. I hope to visit Kishinev next year, as my great-grandmother, Liza Kushner Miller's Kushner/Kushner family emigrated from that area to Philadelphia in 1890. According to family lore my great-great-grandfather, Simon Kushner, managed a vineyard before their emigration. Yefim, however, contends that Jews were able to own land in Bessarabia then, so it is highly possible that Simon owned the vineyard instead of just managing it.

Also on Tuesday I had the privilege of introducing Nolan Altman, IAJGS Vice-President, prior to his always excellent, informative presentation, "JOWBR (JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry) & the Genealogical Value of Jewish Burial Records". Nolan talked about the amazing genealogical value of JOWBR and described how to upload photos and spreadsheets. He went on to outline the newest feature of JOWBR begun just last year – the Memorial Plaque database -- and explained how this database and its accompanying photos also offer surprisingly useful information for genealogists. I myself have sent photos and databases from Montreal and area cemeteries, as well as some from Lithuania and Romania. More recently, I submitted material about the memorial tablets from one Montreal synagogue, and I'm now working on several more. I should add that I am a great proponent of JOWBR, especially because I'm a long time member of the board of directors of Canada's largest Jewish cemetery, the Baron de Hirsch-Back River. I often receive emails from people as

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*Learn about the history of the Cemetery, Jewish burial laws and traditions and the stories of artists and authors, famous rabbis and infamous gangsters, war heroes and Holocaust survivors, a Titanic victim, and many others.*



**Sunday, August 24, 2014**  
**Tour begins at 10:30am**

**\*There is no charge\***

*Tour begins in front of the office, just past the main gate.*

**[NOTE: in the event of rain, the tour will be held on Sunday, September 14, 2014 – please contact our office to confirm]**

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far away as Europe, Israel and South America, asking for photos of graves, which I'm happy to send. As I also head the Special Events Committee, which organizes tours of our cemetery, (our fourth was held on August 24), I feel that cemeteries are very important to genealogists.

Later that afternoon, Judy Baston lived up to her consistently high standards at the Lida District BOF (Birds of a Feather) meeting when she showed newly translated records, discussed plans for further translations, and reviewed all existing sources of Lida District records including Litvak SIG and Belarus SIG. Part of the Lida district is now located in Lithuania, which I visited eight years ago, while the other part is in Belarus, where records are very difficult to obtain, so learning about the new resources was music to the ears of those of us in the room.

Dean Echenberg, filled in for Bukovina BOF co-chair, Bruce Reisch, and ran its Wednesday meeting. always a successful and informative session. He and I surprised the attendees by bringing in expert, Edgar Hauster of the Netherlands, via Skype. We orchestrated this several weeks in advance by coordinating the time of the session with Edgar's whereabouts on his annual, 33-day motorcycle trip through Eastern Europe. Edgar described some valuable new research resources that he had recently discovered. He's a great guy, fluent in about five languages, and incredibly helpful. Two years ago he met Sylvie Gsell and me at the Bucharest airport when we were waiting for our flight to Suceava, Romania. Edgar is a total gentleman and one of the most important contributors to the



Dean Echenberg, Bukovina BOF Meeting

and moved to Canada with her family in 1909. Merle has spearheaded indexing of Jewish cemeteries in her home area and attends IAJGS conferences regularly. She is researching: **Kastner, Ostfeld** (Bukovina); **Nathanson, Mendelssohn** (Piatra Neamt & Negulesti, Romania).

Contact Merle at [merlek@bell.net](mailto:merlek@bell.net).

#### Resources for Lida District Researchers

1858 Revision List, Additional Revision Lists, 1875 Alphabetical List of Jewish Males in the Lida District, 1888 Family List of Jews living in Small Places in the Lida District, Eisiskes 1904 Family List, and vital records for Eisiskes, Novy Dvor, Orlyta, Radun and Shechuchin can be searched in: the LitvakSIG All Lithuania Database <http://www.litvaksig.org/all.htm>  
the JewishGen Lithuania Database <http://www.jewishgen.org/Litvak/all.htm>  
the JewishGen Belarus Database <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Belarus/>

Lida town vital records can be searched in:  
the JewishGen Belarus Database <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Belarus/>

Lida District Research Group of LitvakSIG (password protected for participants)  
<http://lidadistrict.shutterfly.com/>

Lida landsmanshaft burials from New York can be searched in:  
<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/>

Lida landsmanshaft cemetery gate transcriptions:  
<http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/lia-sg-lida.htm>

Lida District Kehilalink: links and information on history, maps, towns, etc.  
<http://www.kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/lida-dist.htm>

Orlyta Kehilalink  
<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/orlyta/>

Lida District voter lists from 1906, 1907, and 1912  
<http://einehouse.0catch.com/vot-rec.htm>

Extraordinary Commission Lists for Lida, Radun and Vasilishki  
<http://einehouse.0catch.com/lida45.htm>  
<http://einehouse.0catch.com/rad46.htm>  
<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/vas-maryrs.htm>

1929 Polish Business Directory for Nowogrudek Province can be searched as part of JewishGen Belarus data base  
<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Belarus/>

There are thousands of listings for Lida District towns in this database.

Vizkor Book Translations  
<http://www.jewishgen.org/Vizkor/translations.html>

On this site are partial translations of Yizkor Books for the following Lida District towns: Lida, Nowy Dwor, Orlowa, Ostrynia, Rozanka, Szczuczyn, Wasiliszki, Voronovo and Zhaludok.

Discussion Groups  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/>

There are a number of discussion groups on Yahoo oriented to the Lida District and particular towns. Phrasestus is the official Lida District Researchers mailing list, which covers questions about Jewish research for all towns in the Lida District; LidaRoots is a mixed list with non-Jewish and Jewish researchers; EishyshokFamilyHistory and vasilshki deal with information for those two towns

*Prepared by Judy Baston [jrbaston@aol.com](mailto:jrbaston@aol.com) (This page includes all URLs from the presentation)*

Ehpes – Czernowitz-Bukovina Research Group mailing list. You can view the Ehpes website: <http://czernowitz.ehpes.com/> He also has a blog in which he documents his trips and research discoveries with dialogue and excellent photographs: <http://czernowitz.blogspot.ca/>

I can sum up the 2014 conference by saying that the programs were very varied, the speakers professional and the venues well arranged. Next year in Jerusalem! ♦♦

*Merle Kastner is vice president of programming for the JGS of Montreal. While she resides there, she has definite roots in Philadelphia. Her paternal grandmother, Esther Miller Kastner, was born in Philadelphia in 1894*

# MY RUSSIAN JEWISH POPULATION DATA

by Joel Spector



**A**t the 2013 IAJGS conference in Boston, I was wrapping up my role as IAJGS secretary and was able to attend a number of presentations, in addition to giving my own. One outstanding presentation was by Ambassador Neville Lamdan, Director of the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi Center in Jerusalem. He was also the recipient of the 2013 IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award. In his lecture, Ambassador Lamdan described the living situation of Jews in the village of Lyakhovich, located in Minsk Gubernia. He explained how life in villages differed remarkably from life in towns and cities. The situation in small villages placed residents in much closer proximity to each other, so dependence on one another in all aspects of life was much greater. Relationships between individuals became more intimate (and dependency much greater) than in the larger, more impersonal towns and cities.

At one of the conference luncheons, I spoke with Ambassador Lamdan, describing my own research in Russian town and city demographics\* and my presentation on the growth of the Russian Jewish population. My research seemed to interest him.

The 2014 IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City was different for me. Although I had assumed the position of volunteer director for the Ukraine SIG, the responsibilities were not too time consuming, so I looked forward to a lot of personal participation in the conference. In addition to giving my own presentation, I attended at least four others, as well as several luncheons. I had also volunteered to do some Russian translations, assisting people in deciphering handwritten Russian documents. I also spent two mornings researching at the Family History Library.

One luncheon that I attended (Belarus SIG) featured a presentation by Dr. Thomas Edlund, whose articles on the Russian census in *Avotaynu* formed the basis for part of my own presentation. Dr. Edlund spoke on "The Genealogy of Genealogy," asking such probing questions as "Why do we study genealogy and do what we do?" and "Why do we investigate so far back?" He also discussed some of the negative consequences of online research: there used to be knowledge found only in libraries, but it is now "unbound, unsettled and unconnected." The internet has also taught us to learn less, as spreadsheets and photo editing have limited how we do genealogy. He also questioned the social categories that are redefining our genealogical research (including homogenization of countries, ethnic groups and minority languages), DNA research that allows genealogical research to go way back, and how this analysis redefines the boundaries of genealogy. It was very thought provoking!

On Tuesday evening, I attended Ambassador Lamdan's presentation describing what had been accomplished to date at the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy. He spoke of the progress in creating a genealogy curriculum at the college level and possible coordination between the Institute, JewishGen and the IAJGS.

Later that day I ran into Ambassador Lamdan at the hotel, and we began to talk. He asked me if I would like to join him for a late dinner; I had already eaten (it was already close to 10:00 pm), but I decided to join him for a drink and some conversation. What a conversation!

I explained my research which involves documenting the populations of over 3,000 Russian towns and cities.\* When I told Ambassador Lamdan that the Russian encyclopedia that I use was inherited from my great uncle, Professor Solomon Zeitlin of Dropsie University, he responded that he knew of my great uncle, since he had at one time been a student at Dropsie! I further described the current state of my research: placing the derived population data into a spreadsheet and identifying some of the patterns that had already become evident:

First, populations of most towns increased over time. For example, the town of Korsun, in Kiev Gubernia, had a Jewish

population of 120 in the year 1737; by 1765, it had increased to 187, and by 1847 the Jewish population was 1,456. In the 1897 All-Russia Census, Korsun had a Jewish population of 3,799, which was 45.98% of the total town population of 8,262.

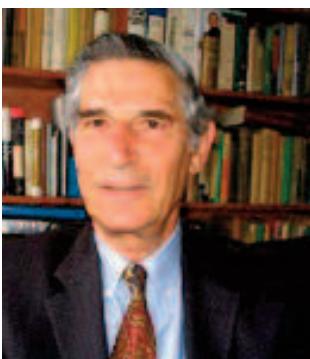
Second, some towns exhibited a slower population growth. Novui Dvor, in Grodno Gubernia, had a population of 12 Jews in 1558 and 299 in 1765. By 1840 the Jewish population had increased to only 394, and by 1897 there were 490 Jews, or 37.68% of the total population of 1,300.

Third, some towns, such as Igumen in Minsk Gubernia, had a Jewish population (990 in the year 1805) that exceeded the Christian population (186) in that same year.

Fourth, some towns lost Jewish population over time. Braslav, in Kovno Gubernia, was populated by 2,756 Jews in 1766. By 1847, the number of Jews decreased to 591, and only rebounded in 1897, to 1,234 out of a total of 1,501.

Fifth, some small towns, with less than 1,000 in total population, were entirely Jewish! The town of Demidovka in Voluinsk Gubernia had a Jewish and total population of 679 in 1897.

As Ambassador Lamdan and I discussed the data, he asked what I envisioned as the “next step” after the data input was complete; I had no ready answer for this question for I had not considered what would happen after the data entry process. He suggested a project to contextualize the data, to determine what events had occurred in the towns that resulted in the population changes. He then stated that the International Institute might be interested in collaborating with me on such a project, and further, that I should consider making a proposal for such a project to the Institute. I responded that I would give it some thought, but it sounded like a very positive idea.



Ambassador Neville Lamdan

I later received an email from Ambassador Lamdan indicating that the Institute board would very much like to have the results of my research posted on its website. What will eventually evolve from the data is still a question to be answered.

\*My research involves excerpting Jewish population data for all of the towns and cities in Russia, from the *Evreiskaya Entsiklopedia* (the Russian language Jewish encyclopedia printed in St. Petersburg, Russia between 1907 and 1913). The encyclopedia contains data on Jewish populations in Russia back to the 15th century and also includes some citations of earlier populations. The set of the *Evreiskaya Entsiklopedia* I am using belonged to my great uncle, Professor Solomon Zeitlin, of Dropsie University in Philadelphia, who also contributed an article in the encyclopedia.

I have thus far excerpted data from the *Evreiskaya Entsiklopedia* for over 3,000 towns and cities not only in the Pale of Jewish Settlement, but also from all of Imperial Russia, wherever they were cited. I am also incorporating data on population numbers from the 1897 All-Russia Census, available on Family History Library microfilms and a few other sources. All of this data is being entered onto a spreadsheet, in an attempt to determine where Jews existed in all of Russia and how those populations changed over time. ♦♦

*Past IAJGS secretary, Joel L. Spector is also a past president of JGSGP and former chairperson of its Russian SIG. With knowledge of both contemporary and pre-Revolutionary Russian language, Joel has given presentations on the Russian language and has provided translations of documents to individuals and groups. He has been conducting research in several historic Russian language encyclopedias for well over a decade and has completed an English language index to the “Evreiskaya Entsiklopedia”. He is researching the names **Zeitlin** and **Black**, primarily in Vitebsk Gubernia.*

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## COUSIN BAIT AT IAJGS 2014

by Tammy Hepps

**F**or me IAJGS 2014 stands out as the first time I spoke at an IAJGS conference. My talk, “The Margarine Moonshiners from Minsk,” took an in-depth look at the discovery which brought me into the Jewish genealogy community in the first place: the stranger-than-fiction story of how my great-grandfather, Jacob Wesoky, his brother, Louis, three of their brothers-in-law, and a couple of more distant family members were arrested for selling margarine as butter in violation of the Oleomargarine Act of 1886. Four of them, my great-grandfather included, served sentences ranging from fourteen months to two years in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, then a maximum-security prison.

This revelation created quite a sensation in my family because not only had we no idea there was such a skeleton in the closet, but we didn’t even suspect, as some families do, that there was a closet at all! My talk began with what I thought I knew about this great grandfather – how he had been a loving father, an active member in his synagogue, and a real estate genius. I then traced, step by step, how my accidental discovery of his inmate record on Ancestry.com led to a scandal spanning more than a decade and multiple cities across the Northeast and into the Midwest, though not Philadelphia; the only time our fair city got involved was when Jacob and Louis appealed their case unsuccessfully to the Third Circuit.

As with the other talks that comprised the conference program, the announcement went out in the spring. Naturally, it was primarily my fellow Jewish genealogists who saw the subsequent publicity, but, through the power of Google, word of my talk made its way to a small town outside of Boise, Idaho to Zach, a great grandson of Louis, who was just beginning to get interested in learning more about the Jewish branch of his family.

Zach introduced himself to me just a few hours before I was scheduled to speak. I was almost shaking when I realized who he was, and I had to keep from bursting into tears when it became clear that he had driven five hours to Salt Lake City with his wife and kids just to meet me and hear my talk!!! Throughout my presentation, I couldn’t believe how fortunate I was to stand on a stage and recite this unbelievable chapter from our family’s past to him. I kept looking at him to see his reactions to each crazy twist and turn in the story of our great-grandfathers’ ill-fated butter partnership. The talk would have been fun to give regardless, but having Zach there made the experience so much more meaningful.



Cousin Zach & Tammy Hepps - 2014 IAJGS Conference.

photo - Ed Flax

Afterwards we discussed the whole affair at length. I showed him all the records I had accumulated and explained the smaller details that didn’t make it into the talk; three-and-a-half years of research just can’t fit into an hour. I was thrilled that he was clearly as interested in the story as I and excited to become involved in the research himself. Best of all, I met his wife and kids the following morning to continue getting to know this part of the craziest branch in my tree. Of course, after we parted we reconnected on Facebook, and I started a private Facebook group for all of us far-flung descendants of the moonshiners to stay connected.

When I returned home, the high I was on gave me motivation to try again to find more descendants of the other moonshiners. Whereas I had previously become stuck, this

time I was successful, and soon I was in touch with four grandchildren of one of the other Leavenworth moonshiners. . . all of whom lived in Salt Lake City, where I had just been a few days prior! Though the timing was frustrating, I’ll be back in Salt Lake City in February for the annual RootsTech conference, so we will meet soon enough. In the meantime, all the research and organization I had completed for my IAJGS talk made it that much easier to share with them, as I had with the Zach, the story they never knew about their grandfather’s long-hidden criminal activity.

The “Google juice” generated by the publicity around my talk is only growing. Just last week I got an email from another “margarine cousin” in Maryland whose nascent interest in genealogy was quickly rewarded by the discovery of my talk and me. And in return, this cousin shared a forty year-old recording of the grandfather I never met! Amazing! I can’t wait to see what will turn up in my inbox next now that I’ve put my family’s story and myself into cyberspace.

I gave this talk because the story of the moonshiners is an entertaining case study in researching for color and context. I never dreamed that it would serve as cousin bait, but wow, nothing could have made the whole research journey more gratifying.

### Creating your own Google juice

You don’t need to give a talk about your family’s history at a national conference to create good cousin bait online. You also don’t need to be a web whiz, nor do you have to worry about the privacy issues around making your whole tree public.

First, be sure to post genealogy information on a website that doesn’t require a login. Ancestry and MyHeritage are not sites where the typical person, with only a casual interest in family history, would sign up.

My favorite way of creating intriguing cousin bait online is posting pictures in public photo albums using a site like Flickr or Picasa. I found a second cousin on my Hepps side through the picture she posted on Flickr, and a couple of "margarine cousins" found me a few years ago via my album of mug shots on Picasa.

If you want a richer site for your family, the easiest way is to start a blog on a free site like Blogger.com or Wordpress.com. You don’t need to use it as a blog, though. You can just create posts for the branches of your family you want to share.

If you want something that truly feels more like a website, try Weebly.com or Wix.com.

Of course, my website, Treelines.com, is an easy way to post selected parts of your tree along with stories and pictures. A possible Hungarian cousin found me through a story my father and I posted about a famous rabbi whom we think might be related to us. She’s helping us with the Hungarian research!

Whether on an album, a blog, or a website, make sure whatever you post lists people’s full names and any other identifying information that will let cousins feel more confident about a possible match.

Also make sure that anything you create online lists you as the creator of this information and provides a way for people to get in touch with you. Some of these sites allow users to comment on pictures, others have private messaging functionality, and some allow you to have a personal profile page. Putting yourself on a social network like Facebook, LinkedIn, or Google+ is the best way to make sure that not only can people find you to contact you, but you can also screen connections to avoid unwanted interactions. If you’re really adverse to social networks, a site like

Tammy posted this picture of her great grandfather's brother, Louis Wesoky, on Picasa, and it attracted the attention of two different cousins who were Googling his name.

Nikole Oct 2, 2011 This is my great-grandfather. How did you get this picture? I have been trying to get more information on his incarceration ever since I accidentally learned about it by doing genealogy research.

Tammy Hepps Oct 14, 2011 Hi Nikole! Sorry for not responding sooner - I was out of the country when you wrote. My ggf is Louis' brother, Jacob. I wrote away for their Leavenworth Prison records earlier this year, and I've gathered lots more info. as well. If you share w/ me your email (this thing doesn't show it), I'll send you what I've got!

Great to connect!

Jason Jul 19, 2012 this is also one of my relatives. crazy.

Tammy Hepps Jul 19, 2012 Jason, how are you descended from Louis? I have a lot more information on this family if you are interested in the genealogy - let me know.

Jason Jul 19, 2012 We are descended from his brother, Jacob. Jacob is my great-great grandfather.

<https://about.me> makes it easy to create a homepage yourself with a form for people to email you. Whatever kind of profile page you create, be sure to include links to any family albums or genealogy web pages you've created elsewhere.

If you're concerned about copyright, the Legal Genealogist ([LegalGenealogist.com](http://LegalGenealogist.com)) has a lot of useful information about copyrights, both protecting your own and avoiding violating others'.

Please note that no matter how much work you do posting cousin bait, there are factors beyond your control. Google's algorithms are complicated and constantly evolving, and if your family names aren't particularly unique, your content may be buried under pages of search results. But the more you share publicly, the greater the odds a cousin will find it, and you! ♦♦

*Tammy A. Hepps is the creator of Treelines.com, a family, story-sharing website and winner of the RootsTech 2013 Developer Challenge. She has a degree in computer science from Harvard as well as fourteen years of experience in digital media, leading a diverse range of technology initiatives. She has been working on her family tree for more than twenty years and combines the depth of her knowledge in genealogy, technology, and storytelling into her Treelines website.*

*She serves on the boards of directors of JewishGen and the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center (PJAC), and the board of advisors of the New York Family History School. You can hear Tammy's talk at <http://tammyhepps.com/storytelling/#margarine>. Tammy can be reached at thepps@gmail.com*

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## THE FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY IN SALT LAKE CITY

by Ruth Kurschner



A most impressive place—which I discovered when I attended the IAJGS conference in Utah in July 2014. It is a completely professionally run resource, with friendly men and women who greet you as you walk in, ask if you are a “first timer”, and direct you to the appropriate floor. Although the members of the LDS—the Latter Day Saints—commonly known as the Mormons—have their specific religious reasons for documenting families, they have made their resources available to the public, and admission is free.

Because of the extreme July heat in Utah, I walked the three blocks from the conference hotel to the Family History Library every morning at 7:30 a.m. People were already sitting outside waiting for the 8:00 a.m. opening. B-2—the International Floor—was my destination since I was researching my Galician and Viennese roots. The LDS men and women with badges (“Sister” was the designation for the women and “Elder” was the men’s designation) were friendly, knowledgeable, and willing to assist me, in both the computer research and microfiche usage, and also the extensive REAL book library section. If one person could not assist me, either because of lack of familiarity in that particular area or because he or she was working with other people, I was immediately referred to “Elder \_\_\_\_\_ —that is his field of expertise”. There is a great spirit of cooperation, rather than one of competition, and a true desire to assist the researchers among the people who work at the library.



Since I already had an Ancestry.com account, I used that to build my family tree, and so most of my work was done on the computer. A huge number of computers are available to the public; there is no waiting. There are also a great

many microfiche machines. If you have VERY good eyes and some knowledge of a foreign language, you may have success with the microfiche records, but I didn't stay there long . A tip for people who wish to use the records which are on microfiche: I met a man from Canada at the conference who informed me that he had the exact numbers of the microfiche records that he intended to view; he had obtained these reel numbers by researching them at home before he arrived in Salt Lake City. He knew that these reels would be at the Family History Library, so he believed that he would find his specific family information. He had come fully prepared. I, on the other hand, came to the conference and the library wide-eyed and with a limited amount of knowledge. Even so, I was able to obtain a great amount of family information—ship manifests, naturalization records, entry to Palestine records, and, with slight variations of surnames, even more family facts came to light. Both the conference and the Family History Library provided me with a positive and extremely helpful experience. ♦♦

*Armed with a B.A. in English from Rutgers and an M.A. in Writing from Rowan University, Ruth Kurschner presently teaches English composition at Camden County College. In a “previous life” she worked as a legal secretary for forty years.*

*Ruth is researching: Kleiner, Kauftheil and Kornblau from Vienna and originally from Tarnow and Hsuyatin, Galicia; Kurschner, Rotenstreicher originally from Monasterzyzka, Poland.*

*Contact Ruth at: ruthkur@comcast.net*

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## MY CONFERENCE EXPERIENCES

by Leah Jordan Bisel



The IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City was an opportunity to meet with old friends, see distant cousins, and check out the genealogy candy store, better known as the Family History Library. It was my fifth trip to this facility, and although dozens of films were added to my list of towns previously seen, I did not discover any new ancestors. Nevertheless, the search was exciting. It was good to have an extra five days to do this before the conference began.

The lectures this year were extraordinary. I concentrated on topics dealing with DNA, Sephardic genealogy and Crypto-Jews. It was hard to pick a favorite. Much was learned from Daniel Horowitz's talk "The Jews Who Left Spain and Their Genealogy." Imparted was a lot of information about names: Gonzalez = son of Gonzalo, Perez = son of Pedro. There were topographic names like Cordoba and Valencia which corresponded to places from where they came at that moment. "Del" and "De La" also indicate a place: Del Rio. There were professions related to the synagogue: Katz = devoted priest, Hazan = cantor, Melamed = teacher and Dayan = judge.

The Inquisition started in 1478. The church wanted more people to be Catholics. The solution was conversion (Act of Faith). Names had to be according to the religion (example: Salvador, Jesus). There was an interesting legend about the name Rojas which means "red." The Hebrew word "zachor" means "remember" and if you read it right to left, it comes out "rojas." Bad names were also given out: Danado means impaired, Feo means ugly and Cerdá means pig.

Horowitz spoke about Christopher Columbus and intimated that Jews were aboard his ships so he would take them away. He also talked about Jews being persecuted in Italy after they emigrated from Spain. The word "ghetto" is an Italian word. The name Castelanski means people coming from Castilla. The name Luski comes from Huesca, a city in northern Spain.

In 1787 Austrian Emperor Joseph required Jews to take German surnames. Rosenthal and Goldstein were "expensive" names. Examples of simple names: Stahl = pewter, Holz = wood. If people couldn't pay, they were assigned free names that were derogatory in meaning: goat head, kiss me, oxtail, bugs killer.

In 1811 Napoleon made registration of family names mandatory, and Horowitz said we should thank him for that! In 1821 surnames had to be taken in Poland, and in 1844 in Russia.

Horowitz is from South America and delivered his talk with a delightful Spanish accent and great humor. ♦♦

*Leah Jordan Bisel, from West Bloomfield, Michigan, has been a member of the JGSGP since its inception. Her grandparents settled in Philadelphia in 1906 from Skvira, Ukraine. A retired elementary school teacher, Leah has researched her family tree for 35 years. She volunteers for JRI-Poland and CRARG, the Czestochowa Radomsko Area Research Group.*

*You can contact Leah at: ljbisel@comcast.net*

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## SEARCHING THE CENSUSES OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

by Bernard Cedar



One of the lectures I attended at the 2014 IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City was the above cited presentation by Joel Weintraub, an emeritus professor at California State University, Fullerton and software specialist, who served as a volunteer at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) for nine years. As part of the volunteer team, Weintraub produced locational tools for the 1900 through 1940 U.S. censuses and the New York City part of the New York State censuses for 1905, 1915, and 1925. These tools are all part of the Steve Morse “One-Step” website ([www.stevemorse.org](http://www.stevemorse.org)). He, Steve Morse, and a volunteer team are currently working on locational tools for the 1950 census to be released in 2022. Mr. Weintraub has written and given presentations about censuses, biographical research, and Jewish genealogy.

Mr. Weintraub’s presentation was interesting, enlightening, and entertaining. His lecturing style was easy going. Instead of remaining fixed at the podium he floated within the audience with his microphone and remote in hand to advance his power point illustrations.

I was interested in this presentation partly because of my professional background. As a staff member of the New York City Planning Department from 1959 to 1966 I used information from the 1940, 1950, and 1960 censuses. Small area information was available down to the block level, but not the raw data. By law, household and personal information is withheld for seventy-two years before it is released. I continued to use census information in my work until I retired in 2002. My interest in genealogy brought me back to working with census information, but now in the context of the population and household information that had become available.

Weintraub’s presentation began with a brief history of New York City’s political geography and the formation of the several counties that were consolidated into the “City of New York” in 1898. He remarked that knowledge of how the city was formed presents a researcher with managing information over periods of time. The Dutch initially settled the area they named *Nieuw Amsterdam* in 1624. When the British took control in 1664, they changed its name to New York. The city was limited to Manhattan Island. Rapid growth occurred in New York City and the western areas that became New York State after the Revolutionary War. Following the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, the great influx of immigrants began. In 1840 New York City workers developed the Croton Reservoir and Aqueduct, bringing water from upper Westchester County, north of the city, to a reservoir at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street. To better control the route of the aqueduct, the city annexed part of Westchester County, now the West Bronx, in 1870. Further annexation of the East Bronx took place in 1893.

By the 1850s New York had become the largest city in the United States, its financial center, and the largest port with a large manufacturing base. The adjacent areas across the East and Harlem Rivers also experienced rapid growth. By the 1890s there

was pressure to bring these expanding areas under one government. Consolidation took place in 1898, bringing together Kings County (Brooklyn), part of Queens County, Richmond County (Staten Island), New York County (Manhattan) and the previously annexed part of Westchester County. These all became part of the City of New York. The city's major subdivisions are the boroughs of Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, Richmond, and Manhattan.

Mr. Weintraub wasn't able to complete his presentation because of time restraints. His outline, however, indicated what additional material he had planned to cover including the New York State Censuses of 1905, 1915, and 1925 and original documents from the 1875 census. His outline mentions difficulties in enumerating the immigrant populations in New York City who were distrustful of authority. He had also planned to discuss the kinds of information collected in these state censuses, how to access them, and why the 1925 census was the last one taken. He remarked that the 1925 census is especially valuable for finding information about which courts of naturalization immigrants used during the naturalization process. He also wanted to talk about difficulties in finding locations because of street name changes. Mr. Weintraub left an extensive list of "selected references." I think his report is valuable for anyone seeking information about people living in New York City in the 19th and 20th centuries. ♦♦

Bernard Cedar became interested in genealogy when his cousin, who was doing research on his mother's family, asked him to attend a Jewish genealogy conference in New York City in 1999. While they attended for only one day, Bernie was hooked. In 2001 he bought his first computer, and by then he had enough free time to indulge. Bernie has been involved in the workings of various Jewish genealogical groups like our JGSGP, and before that, groups in New York City and North Jersey.

*He is researching Sudarsky from Lithuania, the U.S. and Israel; Cedar in the U.S. and U.K.; Banilower and Yaeger from Bukovina, Galicia (in Austria, now Ukraine) and the U.S. Contact Bernie at bernardcedar@yahoo.com*

# FINDING MY GRANDFATHER

By Jeffrey Barnett





**M**y maternal grandfather, Abram Grossman, died in 1910 when my mother was less than two years old. I remember her telling me that my grandmother, Rebecca (nee Greenspan), sent her husband back to Europe (from Asbury Park, NJ) for a “rest”, soon after my mother was born in July 1908. He went to visit his sister or my grandmother’s sister (the story is unclear) who had to remain in Belgium and couldn’t come into the United States with the others from Poland because she was deaf or mute or both (again conflicting stories remembered.) The U.S. government would not accept immigrants who might require government financial aid because of an impairment or disease. Consequently, my great aunt stayed in Belgium with some “relatives”. Who they were and why they lived in Belgium was again a mystery. I do have a photo, taken in the 1930s of this aunt and the family with whom she was supposedly living, in an album that belonged to my mom.

My primary goals were to find out where and how my grandfather died and where he is buried. My secondary goals were to determine who this aunt was and who were the relatives with whom she stayed.

When I started getting interested in genealogy around twelve years ago, my mom had already passed away as had all of her siblings and most of my first cousins. My remaining relatives did not know any more than I did. While I wanted to find out what happened to my grandfather, I didn't know where to start. I therefore took the easy way out. . . . I started my genealogy search on my paternal side, since I knew a lot more history there!

I resumed my interest in finding more about my maternal grandfather, Abram Grossman, after I found his *yahrzeit* (anniversary of death) date in some of my mom's old papers and was then able to determine the corresponding Gregorian date of his death in 1910. In September 2007, I posted on the listserve of JewishGen.org requesting suggestions as to where I might find records in Belgium. It was amazing how quickly the responses came in. Several people told me that the police used to keep files on all "aliens" entering Belgium, and these records still existed. First I contacted the Belgian Department of Federal Immigration which eventually referred me to the State Archives of Belgium in Brussels and the records of *La Police d'Etrangers* (Police Immigration). One archivist wrote that he couldn't find any record of my grandfather residing in Belgium between 1908 and 1910. A few days later, he contacted me again and said that upon checking the online records for the city of Antwerp, he found a listing that appeared to be my grandfather! The researcher was very surprised that the Antwerp files were not a mirror image to the ones in the State Archives in Brussels, and he was glad he thought to check both places. He explained how to access the file number from the website which was in Flemish. After I had downloaded the copy, I submitted it to the Viewmate feature at JewishGen.org and asked for help in translation.

This is a handwritten record from the Antwerp Police Immigration files. The header reads 'VILLE D'ANVERS' and 'Domicile Rue de la Fourche n° 1049, 2e étage'. The record is filled with handwritten text in French and Flemish. Key entries include:

- Name: Grossman Abraham
- Date of birth: 1863
- Place of birth: Warsaw
- Occupation: Merchant
- Spouse: Grunspan Becky
- Date of arrival: October 26, 1909
- Passport number: 14570
- Issue date: October 26, 1909
- Length of stay: Indefinite
- Address: Rue de la Fourche n° 1049, 2e étage
- Signature: Grossman

Abraham Grossman - Antwerp record p. 1

Note: Since Jef's original search through the Antwerp records, they have been uploaded to the Family Search and Ancestry sites. For an explanation of these files, see, [https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Belgium,\\_Antwerp,\\_Police\\_Immigration\\_\(FamilySearch\\_Historical\\_Records\)](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Belgium,_Antwerp,_Police_Immigration_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records)). The link to use to search for specific records is <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2023926> (Belgium, Antwerp, Police Immigration, 1840-1930).

The file showed that an Abraham Grossman arrived in Antwerp on October 26, 1909. His wife was Becky Grunspan of Asbury Park, NJ, and it referenced a U.S. passport number and its issue date. Could Becky Grunspan be my grandmother, Rebecca Greenspan? Once I found a copy of the matching U.S. passport number on Ancestry.com I knew I had found my grandfather's file! The document also indicated that my grandfather was living "with the family Grunspan" at a certain address in Antwerp. Since Grunspan was my grandmother's maiden name, this made some sense.

The file also provided me with new information about both of my grandparents. It indicated their respective birthplaces and their marriage in Poland, as well as my grandfather's parents' names, and their respective birthplaces. Eventually, I hope to be able to use this information to find more records in Poland.

This is a handwritten record from the Antwerp Police Immigration files. The header reads 'Date de l'arrivée en Belgique: Octobre 26. 1909' and 'Signature de l'étranger: A. Grossman'. The record is filled with handwritten text in French and Flemish. Key entries include:

- Date of arrival: October 26, 1909
- Residence previous to Belgium: New York
- Date of arrival in the commune: October 26, 1909
- Nature of papers: Passport issued to him by the United States of America
- Political activity: None
- Accidents: None
- Arrived in the country for a short time: No
- Remarks: None

At the bottom right, it says 'Anvers, le 1er novembre 1909' and 'Le Commissaire de Police: A. Schellings'.

Abraham Grossman - Antwerp record p. 2

Over the next few months, several Genners suggested that I should get the files for every Grunspan in the Antwerp files and examine the census reports of who else was living at the address indicated in the file. Remember, I was also trying to find out who the mysterious sister or sister-in-law was that Grandfather Abram went to visit. Several people offered to look up the census records during their next trip to the Antwerp archives.

Around the end of March 2008, I received an email from a Kurt Moens of Mechelen, Belgium who offered to travel to Antwerp and do the research for free. By using the census files he was able to determine which Grunspan family was living at the residence and obtained copies of their files from *La Police d'Etrangers*. He also copied and emailed me the files for all the Grunspans so that I could try to identify the mystery woman. I was hoping to compare parents' names, birthplaces, etc., to find a possible relationship to either of my grandparents. Unfortunately, examination of the other files did not shed light on the mysterious aunt. More importantly, the relationship of the family my grandfather was staying with did not give me any clues as to what happened to him after he arrived in Antwerp in 1909.

I had hit a "brick wall."

Here is where one kind and generous soul, Kurt Moens, went far beyond anything I would have expected a Genner to do. He first contacted all the local authorities at the large hospitals around Antwerp hoping to find relevant death records. He eventually found my grandfather's death certificate at the city hall of Mortsel, Belgium. It showed that my grandfather had died at a Catholic charity hospital in Mortsel. Kurt assumed that my grandfather was buried in the cemetery attached to that facility, but he couldn't verify this because it was later destroyed.

My search for my grandfather seemed to be over until I received another e-mail from Kurt seven weeks later. While on vacation in France, he thought about my grandfather's burial location and wondered: 'Why was the undertaker listed on the death certificate from Antwerp when my grandfather was actually buried in Mortsel?' Kurt then contacted the various Jewish organizations in Antwerp in search of information from their files.

In the interim he and his wife traveled to Putte in the Netherlands to visit the three Jewish cemeteries where Jews from Antwerp were buried. They spent three days walking around the cemeteries looking for the grave of Abram Grossman! They found one who died in 1981, but another looked more promising. Kurt found graves from the former Kiel cemetery that had been relocated to Putte. The name "Grossman, A." was etched into a *matzevah* (tombstone) covering one of the three mass graves in the Shomre Hadas section of the Putte cemeteries.

What became apparent was that before World War II the Kiel cemetery of Antwerp was relocated about fifteen miles north across the Belgian-Dutch border to Putte, the Netherlands. Belgian laws concerning gravesites do not allow for ownership eternal so the Antwerp Jews moved their cemeteries to the Netherlands where it is possible to own the gravesite in perpetuity. See <http://www.iajgsjewishcemeteryproject.org/netherlands/putte.html> for a more detailed explanation.



Jef Barnett at his grandfather's grave, Putte, the Netherlands

Upon returning to Antwerp, Kurt was in contact with one of the Jewish organizations and obtained records showing the original burial location in the Kiel cemetery matching my grandfather's name, date, and place of death. He also

learned that when the cemetery was moved, the deceased individuals who didn't have surviving relatives or whose surviving relatives couldn't be located were moved by a charitable organization and placed in the mass graves and their names noted on the large *matzevot* (monuments).

(For a more detailed explanation about Antwerp burials please see: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/p/pod/dod-idx/jews-cemeteries-and-the-city-a-perspective-from-antwerp.pdf?c=fia;idno=11879367.2008.006>)

Kurt had found my grandfather!

He sent me Google links to satellite photos of the gravesite and the cemetery gates as well as copies of the original burial records. He said to contact him if I ever came to Belgium, and we could go to the cemetery together. Six years later (in August 2014) I had the opportunity to stop in the Netherlands on our way to Poland (that's another story). I contacted Kurt but by then he was bedridden and unable to meet us at the cemetery.

On August 17th, I traveled from Amsterdam to Putte with my wife, sister, and brother-in-law. Using the information Kurt had sent me, we were able to find my grandfather's grave! We were the first of our family to visit from America and recite the traditional *El Malei Rachamim* (funeral prayer used by the Ashkenazi Jewish community) in the over 100 years since my grandfather's death. It was a truly moving experience for all of us.



**Kurt Moens & Jef Barnett, Mechelen, Belgium, August 2014**

To complete this journey we drove to Mechelen, Belgium to visit Kurt and his family. (Ironically, 25,000 Jews were deported from the Mechelen transit camp to the labor camp at Heydebreck-Cosel and the concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland between August 1942 and July 1944. The Shoah Museum in Belgium now stands in the town.) I wanted to personally meet and thank him for the wonderful gift he gave us.

We met him along with his wife and daughter. Kurt remembered most of the story, and his wife certainly remembered the three days they had spent wandering around Jewish cemeteries looking at graves. Our eyes filled with tears of joy as we hugged, and I reiterated to his family how special a person Kurt was for giving so much of his time and expertise to complete strangers almost 4,000 miles away.

My grandfather lost his life at a young age. He left behind his wife and eleven children. I am certain his intention was to return to America to provide a better life for his family. This did not happen, and he died in Belgium never to see his family again. Our family could not properly grieve his loss. I now feel satisfied that we visited his grave and put closure to his passing.

“May my grandfather's memory be a blessing.” ♦♦

*Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Jeffrey Barnett started his genealogy hobby in 2002. His family roots are all from Poland; he is researching family names **Bandrymer, Bulman, Kraska, Solarz, Zilberberg, Grossman and Grunzspan**.*

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# SOME PEOPLE ARE BAD, SOME PEOPLE ARE GOOD

by Avivah Pinski



**I**t's now over fourteen years since I first listed my family towns on JewishGen's Family Finder. Not too long after I got on the list, I received several emails from people offering to assist me. Cautious about possible scams, I ignored the emails. However, one email caught my eye, so I followed my gut feeling and responded.

This email was from Rafał, a young man and graduate student at the University of Warsaw. He was from Sarnaki, one of the towns that I had listed because my grandfather was from Sarnaki. Rafal was studying local history and writing an article for the local paper about Jewish businesses there before World War II. He had a photo of a shop in Sarnaki and wondered if I knew anything about it. I was able to identify the individuals in the photo; they were my cousins who had survived the *Shoah* (Hebrew term for the Holocaust, literally meaning "catastrophe") by escaping to Siberia. Rafał subsequently sent me copies of my cousins' school records from Sarnaki! We kept in touch, and I noticed that he was also assisting in one of the cemetery restorations in the area.

Except for several relatives, most of my grandmother's family from Drohiczyn nad Bugiem, a town near Sarnaki, perished in Treblinka. My great aunt Beila, great uncle Hershel, and their three grown children all survived by continuously running and hiding. After the war and Displaced Persons camp, Beila and Hershel, their married daughter, Helen, and Helen's husband moved to Montreal. One son went to Detroit; the other, to Israel. We made a number of trips to visit the family, and Helen and I spoke on the phone with some regularity. When we visited Helen in Montreal in 1995, my husband caught part of a spontaneous, early morning, breakfast table conversation on tape. Helen was telling me about her experience in hiding and the families who hid her parents and her.

Helen was a very positive person who not only talked about her experiences but also was actively involved in *Shoah* awareness. She did not attend my daughter's Bat Mitzvah because she went instead to Poland to attend the wedding of one of the daughters of the second family who had hid them. Helen and another survivor cousin who frequently goes to Poland were the individuals who finally helped me overcome my feelings about visiting Eastern Europe. Last summer's trip to Poland was very difficult. We traveled with a group from Gratz College, and during those hectic ten days, we visited four of the major death camps, many *shtetlach* where we saw renovated synagogues but where not a single Jew lives, and visited numerous cemetery sites. It felt as though we were saying *Kaddish* (Jewish memorial prayer) almost continually.

When I knew that we were going to Poland, I contacted Rafał and asked him if he could or would like to accompany us to Sarnaki, Drohiczyn nad Bugiem as well as the surrounding area. We arranged to rent a car and spent two days with Rafał after our ten-day group trip ended.

While doing my homework to prepare for the trip, I checked out the website (<http://www.polin.pl/en>) for the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews located in Warsaw and emailed "sztetl@polin.pl" in order to subscribe to its *Virtual Shtetl Newsletter*. I linked to the town of Drohiczyn, then to "Polish Righteous" and to "Jozefa Zaleska." Jozefa had hidden my cousin Helen and her parents. Someone had interviewed her, but Jozefa said very little and did not answer their question as to where she had hidden my family. The next time I checked the website, I found that some information from a book had been added. This information was erroneous.



Museum of the History of Polish Jews (background) and back side of Memorial to Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto (foreground)

Helen's story about what Jozefa had gone through was terrifying. Sadly, Helen (*z”l*) has since passed away, so I therefore decided to convert the tape to a DVD so that we could take Helen's first person story with us and give it to the museum to fill in their missing information and correct the misinformation. I also wondered if we might be able to find Jozefa.

Shortly after we got to Poland I contacted Rafał and asked him if he could locate Jozefa. Through his contacts at the museum, he was able to reach her great niece who speaks English. All this took some time, so it wasn't until the end of our sixteen-day trip that we were able to make contact. Jozefa, now ninety-five years old, no longer lives in Drohiczyn, and is now in a retirement home in Warsaw. Jozefa's niece, her niece's husband, and her great niece also live in Warsaw, and they made arrangements to pick us up at our hotel and take us to visit Jozefa.

The very last night of our trip turned out to be the highlight. We had reviewed Helen's tape before the trip so we were quite familiar with her story. Helen related how, after she and her parents ran around and hid in the woods, they came to stay with Jozefa, Jozefa's parents and her sister. Jozefa may have been in her early twenties. Her brother and Helen's brother were classmates, which explained how they knew each other. Jozefa's father was a wealthy landowner who had a large property in a village a short distance from Drohiczyn. Helen thought that Jozefa's brother was in a concentration camp, but she did not know where. When they arrived at Jozefa's house, they felt like human beings for the first time in a very long while. Jozefa's family treated them like houseguests: they ate together at the table and were generally comfortable. However, they hatched a hideout plan in case the Germans came.



**Example of medal given by Yad Vashem to Righteous Gentiles.**

One day, while Jozefa's parents and sister went into town, Helen and her parents were in the house, talking with Jozefa, when Helen looked out the window and saw some SS men approaching in the distance. According to the plan, Helen and her parents quickly got into a pantry. Jozefa closed the pantry, covered the pantry with a tapestry, and pushed a chest in front of it. Helen related how she could hear the SS agents holding a gun to Jozefa's head, insisting that there were Jews in the house and that she had to tell them where the Jews were. Jozefa did not answer. The SS then searched the whole house. Helen could hear them going up and down and searching everything. The SS agents came back and again threatened Jozefa. After a second search of the house, the SS finally said that they would be back and left.

After they finally came out of their hiding place, Helen asked Jozefa how she was able to stand up to the SS like that. Helen explained that Jozefa was very modest and just said that she had done the right thing and that she could not have lived with herself if she had given them up. Helen always emphasized how there were “good people and bad people in this world.” After this incident, Helen and her parents had to flee again, but another good family in the area hid them until the war ended.

Helen made sure that Jozefa was named a “Righteous Gentile” and began receiving a pension from Yad Vashem. She also arranged for Jozefa to travel to Israel in 1991 at the same time that Lech Walesa visited Israel. When we visited with Jozefa, she pulled out her photo album of her trip to Israel. We put the CD into a player, and even though she does not understand any English, Jozefa watched quite intently. Her great niece translated some of it into Polish. We left the CD with the family so that they could watch it at their leisure.

We asked about Jozefa's brother; the family told us that he was in Auschwitz at the time that his parents were hiding my relatives! The Nazis imprisoned the university professors and the sons of the landowners in Auschwitz. He survived and lived to an old age. After the war, the Communists took the family's land from them, and they are now in court trying to get their property back. In fact they had a court date the day after we were there!

We had the clear impression that although the family knew that Jozefa was among the Righteous Gentiles, had saved



(Seated) Avivah Pinski with Jozefa Zaleska.  
Jozefa's family standing

Jews, was getting a pension, and had been awarded a trip to Israel, they didn't really know the details of what Jozefa had gone through. We were very glad to be able to leave them with the CD. Jozefa has always been very humble about what she did and always told her family that she just did the right thing that anyone should do

It was incredibly uplifting to have been with someone who was such a light in the midst of all the horror that was around her, a horror that was still apparent as we visited Poland seventy years later. Having the opportunity to spend the last evening in Poland with Jozefa and her warm and generous family was an incredible experience and can only renew one's faith in humanity, because, as Helen said "there are good people." ♦♦

*A longtime civil rights attorney in private practice in Bryn Mawr, PA, Avivah Pinski also volunteers at HIAS Pennsylvania, which provides non-profit legal and social services for immigrants and refugees.*

*Aviviah is researching: **Zuchman** in Sarnaki & Karczew Poland, **Reznik** in Drohiczyn nad Bugiem & Siemiatyce Poland, **Koifman** in Secureni (Bessarabia) now Ukraine; **Pinski** in Mohilev, Belarus; **Kopekin** in Polatsk, Belarus & Vienna, Austria; **Rifcze** in Lviv (Lemberg), Ukraine & Vienna, Austria.*

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## REUNIONS, BROKEN BRANCHES & MENDED ONES A CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF MARILYN GOLDEN'S EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE A FAMILY REUNION THIS PAST SUMMER

by Marilyn Mazer Golden

July 13, 2014



I just attended a funeral for my husband's uncle. It became a mini family reunion, as these life cycle experiences usually are. West Coast cousins flew into Philadelphia for the first time in twenty years. The cousins immediately responded to each other with greetings and hugs, bonding over the common loss of their beloved uncle/great uncle/and grandfather. We exchanged email addresses and phone numbers. I shared part of my genealogy research. As we parted, everyone looked forward to the next planned gathering. Two different events were planned for the future before we said good-bye. Uncle Micky would be so happy that he was the catalyst for a family get-together with storytelling and jokes from his burlesque days. Even the rabbi got into the act. This event motivated me to bring together my own family in a similar reunion. Little did I know what would be involved!

July 21, 2014

I researched the Nathanson family (my mother's family) for almost two years. My mother died at a young age after a long illness (when I was twelve), and I knew very little. Planning this reunion took on an added importance for me. In a previous article (Vol. 31-1, Spring 2014) I wrote about discovering a new branch of my family. I visited with one

cousin for the first time in forty-six years, and she identified my great uncle Joe, whom I never knew existed! He was married to Fanny and had two sons (Ray and Harvey) and a daughter (Dolly). Ray had two sons and four grandchildren. Harvey had one daughter, three sons, and seven grandchildren. Dolly had three daughters, six grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren. My family tree had doubled in size!

I personally contacted everyone I had located. Many of my cousins live in southern California, so last winter we discussed the possibility of a family gathering there. Everyone responded positively! My siblings and I, from Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Philadelphia, arranged our flights and hotel stay in Newport Beach, California! I sent out hotel suggestions and arranged two dinner meetings for our family. Saturday night would be our big reunion "meeting" event. Since everyone had agreed, I arranged a private dinner in a restaurant and started gathering deposits as we were booking the entire restaurant.

Then something strange started to happen. Cousin Stan warned me that others might not attend because they had a problem with him. Judy might not attend because she had a problem with Cheryl. Carl didn't want to see Chuck. Rob cancelled his reservation. Rick cancelled Saturday and said he'd come on Friday instead. I asked him to come to both. He changed his mind and agreed to Saturday. Finding a reasonably priced venue at the beach proved difficult, and now my well thought out plans were dissolving.

After sending out a call for help, my cousin Heather (Stan's daughter) offered her home for the Saturday night party. My problem was solved! I quickly sent out the new information and cancelled the restaurant reservation. I was thrilled!

The cancellation call from Rick was disappointing. Years ago his four siblings had problems with cousin Stan, and therefore none of them would attend. They decided to "cut" him out of their lives. He was a "very nice person", but not to be trusted. I asked him not to disclose what happened between them. I really didn't want to know. I am not one to hold grudges. I didn't want to prejudge someone I had never met. I asked him to reconsider his position, as he would never have the opportunity to meet my siblings again.

The bottom line was that Rick's mother had said not to trust Stan's mother. Both mothers had died in the late '90s! This branch was broken by the previous generation, and the children are making sure it won't be reattached! How long can this go on? Apparently, forever.

August 10, 2014

Despite some stress, everything was falling into place with the help of others.

1. Family tree document completed and sent to Heartland Family Graphics to be printed and sent to my cousin's home for the reunion. ([www.familygraphics.com](http://www.familygraphics.com)) They did a great job with the tree.
2. Descendant Report completed and ready for distribution through email.
3. Photo chart labeled with reunion attendees, email addresses and phone numbers included: emailed to all.
4. Name tags – Wendy.
5. Order food – Heather.
6. Bake – Stan.
7. Nathanson Facebook page – Sheridan.
8. Research updates-me.
9. Videotaping of the event – Michael.



A relative at the reunion gave me this photo of my great grandparents, Leah & Solomon Nathanson

August 15, 2014

Rob and Rick wanted to meet us for lunch on Friday afternoon, so my sister, Roz, and I went with our husbands to have lunch with them. I really didn't know what to expect, but it turned out to be a fantastic meeting. We all had so much to talk about that the few hours we spent together went by very quickly.



Finding someone on the fifteen-foot long family tree



Studying the descendant report

They treated us to lunch and were so grateful we included them in our plans. They mentioned their cousin Stan and wanted to discuss him with me later, after our reunion dinner. I just shook my head and let it pass.

August 16, 2014

Thirty-five people attended our family reunion. There were four generations ranging in age from five to seventy-four. I gave a presentation about our family history and provided a family descendant report printed from my "Reunion" for Mac software program. I displayed the fifteen-foot long family tree.

Everyone in attendance was given an opportunity to speak. I wanted to make sure all were included. I felt fabulous about meeting cousins that I had only heard about many years ago as well as those I didn't know existed. Cousins who wanted to share information did so for the first time.

So what did I learn?

Rick and Rob are great guys, but sadly they chose not to attend the reunion. They had a tough life; they were kicked out in their teens to fend for themselves. Judy raised her sister Evelyn's daughter, Sara Rose. Coincidentally, my daughter's name is also Sarah Rose. Some of my cousins have had problems with drugs and "run-ins" with the law. Cheryl is kind and loving and not the brat I knew as a child. Artistic talent runs through several generations. My mother was artistic as are my siblings, Carl (a noted graphic designer) and Sheila, my first cousins, Rick and Sandy, and David, my first cousin once removed. My first cousins (seven of them) were sent out of the house after high school to work. None of them went to college. Most of the cousins living in southern California did not even know each other. I hope that after this family gathering, some of that will change. Sadly, there were also some cousins living close by who chose not to attend. Those who did were thrilled and grateful!

A quote from my cousin, David:

"Going to the reunion last night was literally a lifetime of fun listening to the stories everyone had. I got a chance to go down memory lane and got to share it with my extended family. I learned that my great grandma Sarah was the key that united us all. I'm appreciative of the tireless work Marilyn did putting it all together; it just turned out great! I'm glad to meet you all and "thank you Heather" for inviting me in to your lovely home. (Our family tree is firmly

grounded. Tall with Generations of families, and Blooming with Beauty, Knowledge, and creative intellectual souls.)"

A quote from my cousin, Eddie:

"Hi All. It has been almost a week since our reunion, and I have to say for me that it was more of a history lesson, an education, but the best part was meeting everyone and sharing our connections in time."

A genealogist's work is never finished. But that I already knew! ♦♦

*Marilyn Mazer Golden is a retired speech/language pathologist. Married to Michael, she has two children, Eli and Sarah. Her interest in genealogy has become a passion. She is researching **Mazer** from Elinetz, Ukraine; **Shusterman** from Gaysen, Ukraine; **Nathanson** from Odessa, Russia; **Lockman** from Rzeszow, Poland; **Gogol** from Savran, Russia; **Slotkin** from Smela, Russia; **Clouts** from Telsiai, Lithuania, Glasgow, Scotland, and England.*

*She enjoys helping others and can be reached at mazergolden@gmail.com.*

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## ZACHOR – MEMORIES OF THE JEWS OF BIALYSTOK

by Mark Halpern



**M**y mother was born in Bialystok (Poland) in 1910, and consequently, that city is especially important to me. I first visited it in 1996 while on a business trip to Poland. I walked in the footsteps of my ancestors through the areas that once were home to thriving Jewish communities, through the old cemeteries where my ancestors were laid to rest, and through the streets where historical monuments and plaques identify important people, events, and places in the lives of my people. The 1897 Russian Census indicated that the almost 48,000 Jews then living in Bialystok constituted roughly three-quarters of the city's population. Before World War II it was a majority Jewish city. Now only a handful of current residents can claim Jewish ancestry, and only one individual lives outwardly as a Jew. I learned there was an annual ceremony memorializing the victims of the Nazi extermination machine every August, but was the memory of that tragedy the only memory? Absolutely not! I knew that some current Bialystok residents as well as former Jewish residents cared about this history. I have returned to Poland at least eight times since that first, fateful visit, and I always carry many of these memories.

During the 2004 IAJGS Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Jerusalem, I joined other descendants of Bialystoker Jews in a day of events at Kiryat Bialystok ([http://www.zchor.org/bialystok/kiriat\\_bialystok.htm](http://www.zchor.org/bialystok/kiriat_bialystok.htm)), a community built after World War II for survivors from Bialystok and funded by donations from the Bialystoker Center in New York City and other Bialystoker *landsmanschaften* [benefit societies or hometown societies of Jewish immigrants from the same European towns or regions] around the world. Soon thereafter the Organization of Former Jewish Residents of Bialystok and its Surroundings in Israel was established. The people we met at Kiryat Bialystok told us about a Jewish woman living in Bialystok who fosters and preserves Jewish memory in their ancestral homeland. Her name is Lucy Lisowska. She is now the only openly Jewish person living there and serves as the official representative of the Jewish community of Warsaw in Bialystok. She is the founder and President of Poland-Israel Civic Education Center, <http://www.bialystok.jewish.org.pl/en/>.



Lucy Lisowska

Lucy Lisowska is a force for good, representing the Bialystok Jewish diaspora. She has cleaned up the remaining Jewish cemetery, secured it with fencing, walls, and locks, and slowly is restoring tombstones and monuments. She

organizes the annual memorial in August that commemorates the liquidation of the Bialystok Ghetto. In 2008, Lucy and some friends initiated a weekend festival of Jewish culture, which she named *Zachor* – (“remember” in Hebrew). Four years later, the weekend festivities were expanded with the advent of an academic conference about the Jews of Eastern Poland.

Lucy and I have become friends over the years. We regularly exchange emails, and whenever I am in Poland, I always visit. None of my visits, however, ever coincided with the *Zachor* Festival. After many years of broken promises, I finally made a commitment to Lucy in November 2013 that I would attend in June 2014 and also recruit some Jewish entertainment.

That night I contacted my second cousin, Yaron Gershovsky, a jazz pianist, composer and arranger as well as the musical director of the Manhattan Transfer, <http://www.yaronmusic.com/>, and asked him to join me in Bialystok. His grandmother, Fania, and my grandmother, Chana, were sisters. While Chana, my mother, and other family members immigrated to the U.S. in 1923, Fania immigrated to Mandate Palestine in 1936. Since Yaron had never traveled to his mother’s birthplace, he readily agreed.

*Chronicles* is a genealogical journal, so let me share four *bashert* (fortuitous) events of genealogical connection that occurred over those three days in Bialystok.

The first event of the weekend was the opening of the International Scientific Conference: Jews of Eastern Poland – Jewish Women

([http://wschodziachod.uwb.edu.pl/files/program\\_konf\\_zydowska\\_14.pdf](http://wschodziachod.uwb.edu.pl/files/program_konf_zydowska_14.pdf)) with a reception at the University of Bialystok. I overheard Lucy speaking in English with a couple at an exhibit of Israeli illustrators nearby. I joined the conversation and asked the couple why they were in Bialystok. They answered that they were tracing the footsteps of the wife’s Bialystok Jewish family. Of course, I asked the surname, which she said was PERLIS. I almost jumped out of my shoes. My mother’s maiden name was PERLIS! We exchanged names of grandparents and great-grandparents but didn’t find a connection. Eloise Perles Spitzer lives in Victoria, British Columbia. We will be in contact to research the connection and possibly do some DNA testing.



Poznanski Matzevah,

Bagnowka Jewish cemetery, Bialystok

Yaron and I came upon our second connection during a walking tour of one of Bialystok’s historic Jewish neighborhoods. We saw a Bialystok Wood Architecture Trail plaque at Mazowiecka #31 which indicated that a similar wooden house, located at Mazowiecka #7, was the birthplace of Ryszard Kaczorowski, the last (1989-1990) President of the Republic of Poland in exile. Yaron then realized we were in the neighborhood where his mother was born. The entry (“Sister: Fania Szkolnik, Bialystok, Marzoweka 7”), in the column entitled “The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came” on my grandmother’s 1923 Ellis Island passenger list, confirms this address.

A Bialystoker friend, who also attended the *Zachor* festival, experienced the third genealogical connection. Karyn’s maiden name was POSNER, but her Bialystok family name was POZNANSKI. She had traveled to Bialystok from Budapest, where she is a councilor for the U.S. Embassy. While my cousin Yaron and I walked through the Bagnowka Jewish cemetery on Sunday, we stumbled across a broken, but well-preserved *matzevah* (tombstone) for Rifka SCHEFFLER, wife of Eliezer and daughter of Shmuel POZNANSKI. We also read an inscription in Yiddish on the base of the *matzevah*: “provided to a loving aunt by Nadia and Saul TALLIN from Philadelphia”.

An open-air concert in the town square later that day was the setting of our fourth connection. An Israeli rock band led by Shachar Gilad (<http://www.shachar.com>) was performing. Since he has Bialystok ancestry (see

<http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/cms/news/3370,shachar-gilad-will-perform-in-poland/>), I asked him for his Bialystok surname, which was GOLDREICH. He later told me that in addition to Bialystok, his Israeli family has roots in Belarus, other Eastern European countries, and Greece. I told him that one of my Israeli cousins, Tova KAPLAN had married a Romaniote Jew from Ioannina named Siman Tov MATZA. This was also the surname of Shachar's Greek Jewish family. Later, cousin Yaron confirmed with Tova's daughter that the two MATZA families are, in fact, related.

The Zachor Festival has become so important to me because it is about life, about the lives my ancestors lived before immigrating to the United States, Israel, and other countries. Zachor is an opportunity to use Jewish culture and history to enable the current residents of Bialystok to learn about their town's history and to engender tolerance toward Jews. I spent four days in Bialystok and did not experience anti-Semitism. On the contrary, I met many people who are interested in the Jewish past of their city. I am not naive enough to think that there is no anti-Semitism in Bialystok, but progress comes slowly and Zachor is not only a great weekend of entertainment and study, but also a bit of progress toward a more tolerant city.

The cultural opportunities offered by the Zachor Festival were substantial and diverse. During his own 90 minute set of jazz, Yiddish and Israeli songs, my cousin, Yaron, honored his Bialystok born mother's memory by displaying her photograph on an easel in front of his piano. Yehudit Szkolnik Gershovsky died in 1973, at age 51, never having the pleasure of seeing her son perform professionally. Yaron remarked that "to perform in the city where my mother was born and to walk in her footsteps" was "a once in a lifetime experience". This was his opportunity to acknowledge the spirit of his ancestors in a very significant way. Both my cousin and I left Bialystok hoping to replicate our unique experience in the future. ♦♦♦

*Please click on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/mswlvlf> to read Mark's full address at the International Scientific Conference at the Zachor Festival, which he dedicated to his grandmother and great aunt. You can also examine the full 2014 schedule as well as those from previous years, and view an extensive photo album.*

*Some links of special interest about aspects of the festival:*

- <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn37254>, an interview with the late Chasia Bornstein-Bielicka, who became a liaison with the Jewish resistance while stationed in Bialystok and to whom the weekend's conference on Jewish women was dedicated.
- Urjane Kenžikajewa is a pianist, composer, and university professor, and sings in Tatar, Russian, Ukrainian, French, and Polish. A video clip of her performance can be at <http://www.poranny.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140615/BIALYSTOK/140619768>.
- Yaron Gershovsky, was the headliner at the Podlasie Opera & Philharmonic3—European Art Centre in Bialystok. A brief sample of his concert (<http://www.poranny.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140615/KONCERTY/140619787>) is found embedded in an article in a local Bialystok newspaper. A sample from a previous concert can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THuHJ9XtH-E>.

*Mark Halpern, Vice President - Programs and Immediate Past President of JGSGP, is a member of the JRI-Poland Board and Executive Committee - <http://www.jri-poland.org/> He is actively working on projects for the upcoming IAJGS conference this summer in Jerusalem, Israel. Contact Mark at mark@halpern.com*



**Yaron also conducted a workshop for a small group of young and aspiring musicians, many of whom performed later. The highlight was a rendition of "Hava Nagila" by a teenaged girl, accompanied by Yaron.**

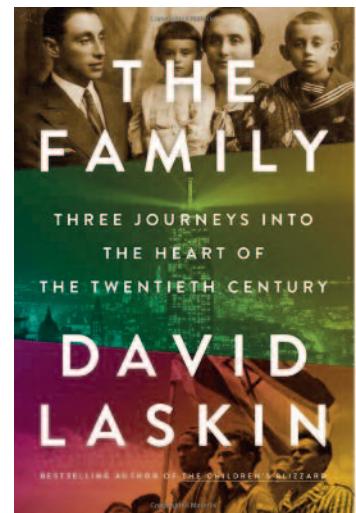
## BOOK REVIEW:

### DAVID LASKIN'S *THE FAMILY: THREE JOURNEYS INTO THE HEART OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*

by Evan Fishman

While I didn't have the pleasure of personally hearing David Laskin's keynote address at the recent IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City, I happened to concurrently read his latest, riveting work, *The Family: Three Journeys into the Heart of the Twentieth Century*. This memoir reads like a novel but is based on the actual circumstances of three branches of the author's mother's family: one that came to the United States, one that stayed in the Vilna-Volozhin-Rakov area (currently located in Lithuania and bordering Belarus), and one that immigrated to Palestine, a three-pronged trajectory common to many Jewish families during the 19th and 20th centuries. I could imagine this story being translated into an epic movie, not unlike the two 1980s TV miniseries based on Herman Wouk's *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*.

Blessed with a trove of 281 family letters written in Yiddish that his Israeli cousin, Benny Kaganovitz, provided, Laskin subsequently applied his own diligent research and utilized his mother's substantial storytelling talents and his oldest daughter's strong grounding in Russian and Russian history. He composed a compelling narrative of his family history, beginning with his great great grandfather, Shimon Dov Hakohen (1835-1917), one of a long line of *sofrim*, (Torah scribes). He provides a five-generation family tree immediately after the table of contents, which is of immense help to the reader. Laskin then proceeds to delve deeply into the personalities of many of those enumerated relatives and simultaneously interweaves their lives with the broader panorama of major national and world events. I was immersed into the revolutionary mindset of his great aunt, Itel, who channeled her fledgling entrepreneurial skills into ultimately establishing the well-known Maidenform Bra Company. Laskin conveyed the horror of his great uncle Hyman's service as a doughboy during World War I and tellingly described the vagaries of the American economy that three siblings (his grandfather and two brothers) encountered between 1911, when they opened their own storefront on the Lower East Side, and the post World War II era.



The aforementioned letters not only chronicle the family's journey but also convey the roller coaster of emotions that various relatives experienced. I reacted with pride while reading how one branch assumed a significant foothold in American business life while other relatives persevered despite very harsh conditions in Palestine and established a viable cooperative village at Kfar Vitkin. The tugs of family dynamics were clearly described; the tension palpable; the resulting disappointments, disillusionments, and bitterness would register evocatively within the consciousness of many contemporaneous Jewish families. While the events of the *Shoah* are already well known, I was nevertheless saddened and enraged while reading Laskin's portrayal of that horrific period through the lens of his own relatives. I found their lives compelling, memorable, and totally relatable.

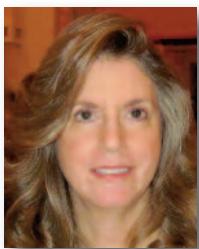
I heartily recommend reading *The Family* for its rich characterizations and thrilling sweep through 150 years of tumultuous Jewish history. Its author's work embodies the essential elements requisite in an excellent family history narrative.

Please click on <http://forward.com/articles/204417/a-report-from-the-jewish-genealogists-summer-ca/> to read Laskin's report of his personal experiences at the IAJGS-Salt Lake City conference. ♦♦♦

*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. Contact Evan at editor@jgsgp.org*

# NOVEMBER MEETING SUMMARY

by Linda Ewall-Krocker



**A**t our November 16 meeting Allan Jordan presented a thorough overview of the potential value of probate records for genealogists. They are public records that are available for research in a surrogate's court. There are separate files for people who died with a will (testate) and those who died without (intestate). Probate records contain basic genealogical information but may hold hidden treasures. If someone owned property (house or land), owned a business, held a bank account with a sizable balance or a safety deposit box, or had "meaningful" assets that could be contested, then a probate record probably exists.

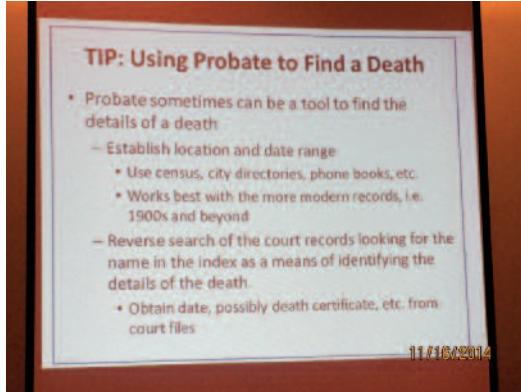
## What can a genealogist find in a probate record?

- Name of person, date of death, address
- Marital status and details on spouse
- Children: living or dead, possibly including ages, married names, addresses
- Grandchildren
- Extended family members (including how they are related)
- Details of burial (invoices for burial, burial plot, tombstone)
- Occupation or trade
- Citizenship
- What they owned (house, business, money, jewelry, etc.)
- What they thought about family members
- What else? You never know until you look



Speaker, Allan Jordan

## Typically a probate file for a testate contains:



- Copy of a will
- Death certificate
- Estate inventory – property, bank accounts, etc.
- List of heirs: spouse, children, siblings, (including addresses and married names, maybe even birth dates or ages), and organizations
- Release forms and other contact with heirs
- Funeral details, purchase of burial plot and stone
- Lots of legal papers, especially if there were disputes
- If trusts were established, there can be records from the trust for many years after death.

## Without a will, administrations can be great treasure troves and sometimes, even better

- When there is no spouse or child to administer the estate the court appoints an administrator
- Administration papers establish date of death, where person lived, list of assets, list of heirs with names, addresses, relationships, ages, etc. Lost family members could show up years later when trying to belatedly sell a home. Names may have been changed, but relationships will be established.

Jordan recommended that when requesting death certificates or information from a government institution, people should avoid using the term "genealogy" and instead use the phrase "family records" or "family medical research".

Details about how and where to research probate records can be found on the JGSGP website ([www.jgsgp.org](http://www.jgsgp.org)). ♦♦

*Thanks to JGSGP member, Linda Ewall-Krocker, for her summary of our November meeting. Linda has been interested in ge-*

nealogy since the early 1980s, fortunately starting shortly before her dad passed away, so that she did get some information from him. His little funeral prayer books have also been a helpful resource for when family members were buried, though not where, since he knew that and didn't jot it down; the information died with him.

Names and towns Linda is researching: **Fishelov (Fisher)** in Kachinovichi (suburb of Pinsk, Minsk Gubernia, Belarus); **Weiss** in Kamyanets Podilsky, Khmelnytsky, Ukraine; **Goldman** in Somes, Russia (or Rava-Rus'ka in Lviv Oblast of western Ukraine); and **Greenberg** in Odessa, Ukraine. You can reach Linda at: cappuccinoholic@gmail.com

## DECEMBER MEETING SUMMARY

(based on notes from Linda Ewall-Krocker & Marilyn Mazer Golden)

In a very moving presentation on December 7, journalist, Sarah Wildman shared the journey she took to learn about her deceased grandfather's "true love." Her book, *Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind*, was the result of more than six years of research and writing.

After her grandfather, Karl Wildman's death, Sarah found letters and an album filled with many pages of photos of a young woman named Valy. Her grandmother explained that Valy was a brilliant student her grandfather met at the University of Vienna Medical School, and they quickly fell in love. As the situation for Jews deteriorated further in 1938, they made plans to run away together from Austria, but instead, her grandfather escaped with his mother, sister, brother-in-law, and nephew, leaving Valy behind. Between 1939-1941 Valy and her mother went to work as teachers while experiencing increasingly virulent anti-Jewish laws that went so far as to prohibit Jews from buying new clothes or shoes and later from resoling their shoes.



Sarah Wildman

Beginning with her discovery of a box of papers, a small collection of "patient files" (letters from Valy), including Valy's urgent appeal for money to purchase two visas in order to escape, Wildman embarked on a journey to retrace Valy's steps during the war years and afterwards. While attending a conference in London, Wildman found a relative of Valy's who helped her piece together events in Valy's life.

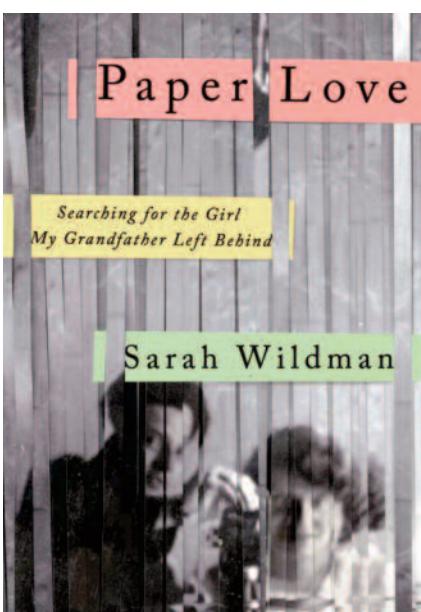
Wildman learned about the "forgotten camps of Paris", three camps whose 800-1000 internees were forced to assist the Nazis loot the Jews of France, then catalogue, sort and pack the goods belonging to 76,000 Jews who occupied 40,000 Parisian apartments and were subsequently deported to concentration camps. All personal effects -- school notebooks,

photographs, letters -- were burned, obliterating any trace of their lives. After the war, the French press wondered how the circumstances at these camps were "unknown" while so much was known about the deportations. "Why this silence?"

Wildman spent a great deal of time doing research at the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolsen, Germany. While there are many experts at ITS, there is little interconnectedness among them. In addition, ITS was established as a tracing service in order to compensate survivors, not a site for research. There is a bizarre system of locating names because of variations of spelling. Consequently, Wildman's efforts were complicated, and she had to learn to ask the right questions.

Fortunately, records are being transferred to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum where there are ITS specialists. The records are not available online, so you must research onsite. Files are created only after someone submits a request for records; these requests generate a research process. ♦♦♦

Thanks to members, Linda Ewall-Krocker & Marilyn Mazer Golden for their notes on our December meeting. Biographies and contact information follow their articles earlier in this issue.



## JGSGP PHOTO QUIZ #5:

*by Avivah Pinski*

My husband Gabriel and I were on a sixteen-day trip to Poland this past summer, the first ten days with a group from Gratz College accompanied by Dr. Steinlauf. On our second day in Warsaw we visited the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which will officially be opening this month, (*ed. October 2014*). As I neared one of the exhibits, I was greeted by a photo blowup on the wall, which included my uncle. The photo was very familiar to me as I have several that were taken at the same time. My uncle, David Zuchman, is the second person going back from the left, wearing a tie. Uncle Dave was an active member of the group pictured here, came to the U.S. in 1938, was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1941, and fought under General Patton in Europe.

**Can you identify the important individual in the center of this photo which was taken no later than 1938, and explain what the group is? If anyone knows who the other individuals are that would be terrific as I have many more of these pictures.**

**You'll find the answer to this issue's quiz on the bottom right hand side of p.**



## JGSGP SPEAKERS BUREAU

We are proud of our Speakers Bureau and wish to reach a broader audience in the greater Philadelphia Jewish community.

Our motto is: "Have expertise in genealogy, will travel." We have speakers available for synagogue groups and organizations to help their members get started in tracing their family roots. Please contact Stan and Shelda Sandler at [stanshel@msn.com](mailto:stanshel@msn.com) for more details. Our publicity flyer can be found at: [http://www.jgsgp.org/Documents/Speakers\\_Bureau.pdf](http://www.jgsgp.org/Documents/Speakers_Bureau.pdf)

The following Speakers Bureau guidelines have been approved by the JGSGP board of trustees.

- There is a \$100 fee for a speaker.
- The fee will be waived if five attendees join the JGSGP after the presentation: speaker receives five completed JGSGP membership applications and a \$25 check with each.
- Presentations are given to groups of at least ten adults interested in genealogy.
- Presentations can be made at synagogues and affiliated groups such as men's clubs, sisterhoods, and organizations like ORT and Hadassah, within a 20-30 mile radius of Philadelphia.

Schools, JCC's, and retirement homes will be considered on a case-by-case basis as long as they agree with the above guidelines.



# Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia 2015 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

You may also complete our online form and pay your dues using Paypal on our web site:  
<http://www.jgsgp.org/>

| Membership Categories                         | New | Renewal | Amount |
|---|-----|---------|--------|
| Individual - \$25                             |     |         |        |
| Family - \$35 (2 Person Household)            |     |         |        |
| Additional Voluntary Contribution             |     |         |        |
| <b>A check is enclosed for the amount of:</b> |     |         |        |

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

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

Address 1 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Family Membership second email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dues are for the calendar year, January 1-December 31, 2015.**

**(New members joining after September 30, 2014 receive membership benefits through December 31, 2015.)**  
**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 three surnames, towns and current countries which will later be shared with other members.

| Surname | Town | Country |
|---------|------|---------|
|         |      |         |
|         |      |         |
|         |      |         |



## 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 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.

**A thirty minute period before each meeting is devoted to browsing reference books and getting help from mentors.**

**We schedule meetings to accommodate our members and excellent speakers who lead complicated lives.\***

**Please check your JGSGP emails, our website (<http://jgsgp.org>) and our Facebook page (<http://tinyurl.com/jgsgp>) for complete and up to the minute program information.**

**Sunday, February 1, 1:30 pm**

**Main Line Reform Temple, Circular Lounge**

**410 Montgomery Ave., Wynnewood, PA 19096**

**Glenn Kurtz, PhD, author of**

**“Three Minutes in Poland: Discovering a Lost World in a 1938 Family Film”**

Traveling in Europe in August 1938, one year before the outbreak of World War II, David Kurtz, a Jewish immigrant to the U.S., captured three minutes of ordinary life in the small, predominantly Jewish town of Nasielsk, Poland on 16 mm Kodachrome color film. Through the brutal twists of history, these few minutes of home-movie footage became the sole surviving moving images of this town.



Photo by Franziska Liepe

**Sunday, February 22, 2015, 1:30 pm, Main Line Reform Temple**

**Karen Franklin, Director of the Family Research Project, Leo Baeck Institute, New York, NY**

**“New Strategies for Researching German-Jewish Ancestry: Do We Still Need Archives?”**

**Sunday, March 8, 2015, 1:30 pm, Adath Israel**

**250 N. Highland Ave., Merion Station, PA 19066**

**Jay Sage, PhD**

**“DNA Testing for Genealogy”**

**Monday, April 13, 2015, 7:30 PM**

**Location still to be determined**

**Yuri Dorn**

**“Researching Your Jewish Ancestry in Belarus”**

**Sunday, May 17, 2015, 1:30PM**

**Location still to be determined**

**Ruth Ellen Gruber**

**“Jewish Heritage Travel in Eastern Europe”**

*\* With a wink and a tip of the hat to the Night Life listings of the “New Yorker”*

**T**he *Chronicles* team thanks all our contributors for the outpouring of material we've received for our fall and winter issues. Your strong participation resulted in two much longer issues, each totaling thirty-two pages instead of the usual twenty-four.

**Deadline for submission of articles for our spring issue is Sunday, February 22.**

**Please send material to: [editor@jgsgp.org](mailto:editor@jgsgp.org)**