

CHRONICLES

JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

דברי הימים



My Kastner—Ostfeld Family

*by Merle Kastner, great-granddaughter of
Mayer Moische & Shaindel Kastner*

CHRONICLES

JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

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CHRONICLES (ISSN 0893-2921) is the quarterly publication of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia. It is free to JGSGP members and to JGS's in the newsletter courtesy-exchange program. Printed and mailed back issues are available at \$4.00 each in the US and \$7.00 outside the US. *Chronicles* is published quarterly and distributed electronically in PDF format. Please supply the Vice President - Membership with your updated email address to ensure on-time delivery.

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Quiz #12 answer:
He is none other than Lew Tendler, lightweight boxer and mem-ber of the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame

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Cover Photo: Courtesy Merle Kastner. See article on p. 14.

REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR CHRONICLES TEAM



Rachel was the mother of a close friend of my brother and sister-in-law's. I attended her burial during the week before Thanksgiving. She was ninety-five years and nine months young and was survived by a loving son and daughter, their respective spouses, five grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. Over the years I saw Rachel when I attended services at my brother and sister-in-law's *shul* (synagogue) and had the pleasure of walking home with her. She was a spunky, vibrant, engaging woman who clearly enjoyed the company of anyone who was in her orbit.

Although she lived in Baltimore, Rachel was buried in a cemetery in central New Jersey, alongside her husband and her parents, near the town where she grew up. That fact itself provides some insight into her life. Many Jews visit the graves of their loved ones during the High Holiday season, and every year Rachel and her family followed suit, traveling from Maryland to central Jersey and back.

This annual pilgrimage began in 1996 when Rachel's beloved husband's gravestone was unveiled. As family matriarch she spearheaded what became a very meaningful gathering. In addition to the above family members, various cousins and friends were also in attendance. Each year Rachel created a special memorial booklet with cover art that she designed. She selected a theme, found readings that reflected that theme, and assigned specific passages for family members to read aloud. During the "service," Rachel would stand under the large tree behind the family headstone, which she used as a lectern, and delivered her thoughts and message. Then she'd call upon each designated attendee to read his/her assigned passage. They would conclude by reciting the *kaddish* [a hymn of praises to G-d, which magnifies and sanctifies G-d's name] and, as is the Jewish custom, gather stones to place on the various graves, all the while sharing stories about the deceased family members.

While this annual visit entailed twelve hours from start to finish, including three and a half hours of driving each way,

The commemoration of a stone marks the end of the mourning period. It is also a way of marking our memory. It is with this in mind that we now consecrate this small stone to Joe's memory, as a token of our love and respect.

We are pained by the gap in our lives. Yet, love can be stronger than death. The bonds love creates are eternal. And, ours is a blessing of memory through which the lives of our departed continue to be with us.

May we, at this time, also honor the memories of our beloved Maurice, our Mother and Grandmother, Yetta, and our Grandmother and Great grandmother, Huda Leah, who also lie in this hallowed ground.

(Larry with English Translation of the Kaddish)

Selection from Rachel's 1996 Memorial Book

when she died the year before). Jewish law requires that the grave must be filled at the time of burial and the casket fully covered with earth. When Rachel's great grandsons, aged seven and five, shoveled some dirt onto their great grandmother's coffin, I muttered to myself that this simple act demonstrated the concept of "from generation to generation." These two young boys will always remember saying "good-bye" to their "G-ma" with whom they definitely had a relationship. She was the one who encouraged their musical interests by exposing them to their first taste of opera.

I'm sure they were aware of the graves of other family members—their great grandfather and their great great grandparents (their "G-ma's" parents). I imagine Rachel talked to these young boys about them, and in their own way they developed a sense of family history, legacy, and continuity. She organically transmitted her family's history in the most direct fashion, which probably was how many (if not all) of us initially developed our own interests in genealogy.

Serendipitously I recently discovered a PBS series entitled *Our American Family*. The particular episode I watched showcased the Mays, a Jewish family with roots in Hoechst, Germany (near Frankfurt) who ultimately settled in Nashville, Tennessee and established a major hosiery manufacturing company that continued for several generations. Various members of the family shared their stories and perspectives on the earlier generations that had lived in Germany and then immigrated to the U.S., settling for a period in Laconia, New Hampshire, and then in Nashville. The family was instrumental in rescuing over 200 Jews from Nazi Germany. The tenor of the conversation during the program was quiet, informative, and without fanfare. Photographs were interspersed, and captions highlighted national or world events that affected the family.

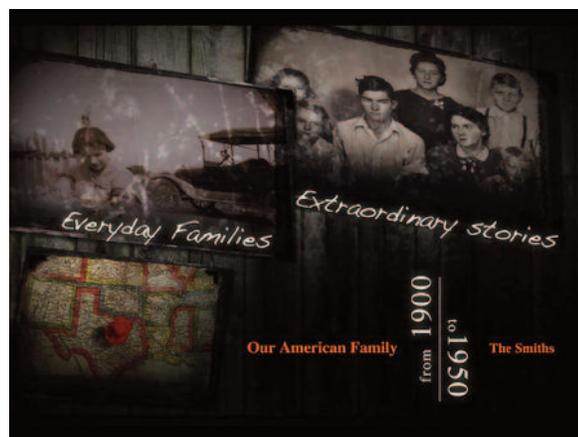
What impressed me was how effectively the story was conveyed so that both a stranger and a current family member could readily appreciate and truly understand this family's heritage, dynamic, and development. The premise underlying this series is as follows:

"Everyday families have extraordinary stories. *Our American Family* seeks to document our American family heritage, one family at a time, before those voices are gone."

"The first half of the 1900's represents the last era of American life that, for most families, began largely unchanged from the generations that came before. *Our American Family* captures the voices of the generation that experienced this simpler time and the change that followed. . . . The goal of that exposure is to **encourage all families to capture their stories now while they still can.**"

thirty minutes or so at the cemetery, and lunch with the family, nobody ever complained because they knew how important it was to Rachel, and everyone instinctively realized this tradition served to bind them as a family.

I was intrigued by the presence of Rachel's three, very young, great grandchildren at the burial. Her daughter explained that death is part of life, and it was ridiculous to shield these children from that reality. I thoroughly agreed with that philosophy which contrasted with my upbringing when I was excluded from family funerals until I was eighteen, when I attended my maternal grandmother's unveiling. (I was in Israel



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

Lee Arnold

Suzanne Austin

Rubenstein: Botosani, Romania, Philadelphia, PA;

Greenberg: England or Russia, Philadelphia, PA;

Rosenzweig: Kiev, Ukraine, Philadelphia, PA

Sherry Diamond

Evergreen Solutions, Inc.

Judith Glueck

Levinson: Philadelphia, Patterson, NJ,

Philadelphia, PA

Brentwood, NH

New York, NY

Morganville, NJ

Stillwater, NJ

Phillip Mendelsohn

Saundra Robbins

Bobman, Solodar, Kreiner from Ukraine & Russia

Rabbi Lance J Sussman

Warren Zalut

Axelrod: Russia; Neumark: Staviska, Poland;

Solotorow: Bialicrekow, Russia

Melrose Park, PA

Melrose Park, PA

Elkins Park, PA

Holland, PA

“ . . . Every day that passes is another day closer to a day when we will no longer be able to hear first-hand what it meant to be a family during this simpler time, before the world changed. To hear first-hand what lessons were learned that we can apply today.”

This series serves as a reminder and an additional motivation to pursue our research and present it in a form that’s accessible to our relatives and hopefully to successive generations.

Our esteemed member, Steve Schecter (z”l), often emphasized the importance of framing our research and stories within their appropriate context. Harry Boonin does exactly that in his article. He shares his personal perspective on life during World War II in “Bacon Fat & Ration Books” and urges us to include our own memories of similar events, even if we were very young then.

Donald Wittenberg shares some vivid memories from his trip to his ancestral town of Nemesszalok, Hungary, while Carol Robins gives a moving account of how she located her birth family back in the day when the internet didn’t exist. ‘Does anyone remember what that was like?!’ I personally believe that it’s beneficial to know how to conduct research “the old fashioned way,” when we had to get dressed and actually travel to repositories in order to cull their records!

Our “Tips, Techniques & Tools” section includes two articles explaining how to access specific records: the 1924 New York City voter registration list (thank you James Gross) and the New York State Southern District naturalization records (thanks to the JGS of Brooklyn). Merle Kastner introduces a different and very accessible format for publishing our respective histories called family books.

I’m always delighted to discover material for *Chronicles* in unexpected places. Hillel International has created a new model for engaging young Jewish adults. BASE revolves around a rabbinic couple providing a home base for this demographic. Together they develop a new, vibrant Jewish community. A recently ordained rabbi and his wife, whom my family knows, are the Brooklyn, New York BASE couple, and one member of that *kehillah* (community) put his unique spin on the place of surnames for Jews in “What’s in a Name?”

Keep warm this winter, and I hope we all achieve success in our genealogical research. ❖

Evan Fishman, Editor

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By the time you read this the holidays have passed. I wish you all a happy and healthy new year. As I have written in the past, one of our missions as genealogists is to find records and have them indexed so other researchers can get access and discover long lost family members. A longtime JGSGP member who has collected records over many decades has decided to turn over those records to our society to put them to good use. I have recently collected the records, and I am now in the process of putting them in order for volunteers to review and hopefully index.

This new material includes records of synagogues and cemeteries from the Philadelphia region. To date five people have stepped up to volunteer to assist in the indexing project, but we can always use more volunteers. You could compare this new project to the ethnic bank records indexing project we successfully completed several years ago. If you have time and are interested in helping others, please contact me at president@jgsgp.org.

We continue to have great speakers and are rotating our meeting locations so members from all geographic areas can attend. We meet in Elkins Park, Wynnewood and soon in Center City. I hope you will join us and continue to help integrate and help integrate new attendees. ❖

Fred Blum, President

BACON FAT AND RATION BOOKS

by Harry D. Boonin



I was in grammar school during World War II. I think my memory of the war years may be similar to that of other American Jews, and hopefully this little tale from long ago may start other Jewish genealogists from Philadelphia thinking along these lines. Even though you may have been very young during the war does not mean your thoughts and memories will not be an important part of your family story. This is my story.

In Russia, my father's parents had been forced to lease land outside their city limits if they wanted to farm. Like everyone else in the town, they grew and marketed cucumbers. Both of my paternal grandparents succumbed to pneumonia at relatively young ages in Russia because of the backbreaking work involved in bringing water from their well to the fields and transporting the crop to market—there to compete with the other Jewish cucumber toilers of the town, each scratching for a kopek. In 1911, a few years after their deaths, their orphaned children, including my father, came to this country and settled in Philadelphia.

My memory begins during the war. My father was elected air raid warden of our row-house block, and I was very proud of the stake hammered into our small lawn, the diagonal lines running through the circle at the top of the whitewashed board, advising one and all where the air raid warden lived if the services he provided were needed. We had the obligatory bucket of sand in the basement in case our house was bombed and caught fire. Plywood squares large enough to cover the windows in a blackout were stowed in the basement. I do not remember them ever being used.

During the war my father and I had contiguous victory gardens in fields not far from our home. It seemed everyone in the neighborhood had a victory garden there. The fields surrounded a massive four story poorhouse abandoned except for the shotgun toting caretaker and his family; I learned years later that it had been bolted shut in 1932. As I see the scene now in my memory, there were dozens upon dozens of people busy hoeing and raking their little gardens, backs bent to the task, the evening twilight hovering over that little patch of quiet but active civilian Americana. I was around eight years old, and had my own small plot

to till and weed; I could already handle a hoe. Cucumbers became my specialty. (Later in life my wife and I had a similar garden next to our house, and our young daughters would rummage around in it, looking for pea pods to pick off the plant, shuck and eat. The girls pulled carrots out of the ground and ripened tomatoes from our prodigiously productive plants.)

But to get back to the war. Mom canned vegetables grown in our gardens. The canning was to help the war effort. I didn't know how it helped, but I believed everything I was told. We had shelves built downstairs in the basement. There were about eight or nine shelves, always jam-packed with canning jars. In addition to canning, I remember how Mom would pour the bacon fat in a large jar and put the jar in the refrigerator. When the thick liquid congealed and the jar was full, it was my job to take it to Frankford Avenue and give it to our local butcher. He collected it for the war effort but I never knew what they did with it. This little bit of family lore will demonstrate conclusively that I was not raised in a kosher home—but I was raised in an American Jewish home sans a Christmas tree. I visited my friends at Christmastime (we lived in an Irish neighborhood) and always loved the smell of the tree in their living rooms, but I never wanted one, and we never had one.

Another responsibility I had during the war was to take the empty tin cans (after Mom opened them from the top and cooked the contents), remove the bottom lids with Mom's can opener, and stomp on the lidless cans to flatten them out. (It took a lot of stomping as I was a rather skinny kid.) When I had a few flattened cans I took them and the lids to the end of our alley (it was really a long driveway where all the mothers hung their wash to dry and cars could drive down the middle, but the kids called it "the alley"). There stood a gigantic can used to collect tin for the war effort. It was about five feet in height with a diameter of three feet. Of course I could not see into it, so I would toss the cans and lids up and over the top and listen for the sound. If it was a quick low thud, I knew it was almost filled, whereas a delayed tiny clank meant it was nearly empty. I was amazed at how often the can was empty.

Still, my favorite chore was to take the ration book with me when I was sent to the local A & P near our home to buy meat, butter, and other things that required a ration stamp. It was my favorite job because I was entrusted with the booklet, filled with small stamps and flimsy sheets of paper between each page of stamps. When I paid for the groceries and meats, I would hand the book to the cashier who would patiently explain to me which stamps were for what. She would gently tear out the stamps I needed that day to buy the food Mom told me to buy, and I would return home on my bike and put the book in the dining room cabinet where Mom kept her good silverware and dishes.

Another thing I remember about the war was that little planes would fly over our neighborhood and drop paper in the shape of a bomb. We would run around collecting these paper-shaped bombs from the airplane. The printed words would urge us to buy war bonds. I remember that in 1944 (I learned the year later), my father took me to the opening of a new airport in our area, about ten miles from our home. On display was a B-17. If you bought a \$25 war bond (cost: \$18.75) you could get a ride in a plane, I think it was the B-17 (now this story does not ring true to me, but it is what I remember).

I knew little about the actual war. My father was too old to serve and was turned down when he tried to enlist, although over my mother's objections he gave up his law practice to spend two weeks in Jersey digging potatoes. I had no older brothers. The war was not discussed in school. We talked a lot in our history lessons about the Civil War, and I remember we read poems from World War I, but the day-to-day battles raging in the Pacific and Europe were not part of my early education. At home, the war was not discussed, at least not in front of me. I do remember that on Sunday nights my uncle and his family would come over, and we would sit in the living room (I always sat on the floor), and gather around the little radio we had. I remember one particular broadcaster who would begin his broadcasts with words (I forget the exact phraseology): "Good evening ladies and gentlemen and all the ships at sea: Let's go to France." He would then describe the war, but I became lost in the game of blocks I was playing on the floor, understood little of what was said after his introductory words, and was happy that I was surrounded by my family. ❖

Harry D. Boonin is the founding president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia and a well-known genealogical researcher and writer. Harry is the author of "The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia: A History & Guide 1881-1930", "The Life & Times of Congregation Keshet Israel", and "Never Tell a Boy Not to Fight" a story of Jewish boxers from Philadelphia. Contact Harry at harryboonin@gmail.com.

MY TRIP TO NEMESSZALOK

by Donald Wittenberg



On Aug. 1, 2003 one of my longest held dreams came true – visiting Hungary and, especially, visiting some of the towns where my family had originated. One such town was Nemesszalok where the Greenfield (Grunfeld in Hungarian) family came from.

My grandmother, Regina Greenfield Pilzer, was born there. Her father, Lajos, and uncle, Kalman also lived there. In fact, during the trip, I found the grave of Kalman, but now I'm jumping ahead of my story.

On Friday, Aug. 1st, we left Budapest around 9:00-9:30 a.m. to drive out to the countryside. (By “we,” I mean my Hungarian cousins, Robert, Judit and Zsuzsa Kertesz, my wife, Bonnie, and myself). We made several stops before we arrived at Nemesszalok at 3:45 p.m. After arriving there we first stopped by the town hall (*polgarmeister*) which was surrounded by a large iron fence and was locked. The building was made from stucco and painted white. The adjacent building on the right appeared to be a dance school, and it too, was closed.

We didn't know what to do and were about to leave the town when we noticed several men standing in front of a building about half a block down the main street. We drove down to the porch where they were sitting. Their faces appeared to have been darkened by a combination of sun and alcohol.

We entered this small building and discovered that we were in a town bar/shop. There were no lights on in the smoky room we entered, and several men stood in the “back” of the bar – about ten feet from us. A barkeep/shop owner stood behind a small counter, and behind him were several shelves containing various items including packs of cigarettes. My cousin, Robert Kertesz, introduced himself to the bartender and told him that we (my wife Bonnie and I) were visiting from the United States and that my grandmother (his great grandmother) came from the town. He explained that we were very disappointed that the city hall was closed because we had come such a great distance. The bartender asked the other men in the bar if any of them remembered the Grunfeld family that had lived in the town. One older man (also with a red face) had been a child living on the same street as the various Grunfeld families. We asked where that block was, and he pointed to the street running perpendicular and ending where the bar was. Unfortunately all of the original houses had been torn down some time ago, and newer homes built there.

In the meantime, the bartender had taken it upon himself to call the mayor of the town and told us that the mayor would meet us at the town hall in about fifteen minutes. We were so pleasantly shocked and thrilled by this kind act. We drove back to the *polgarmeister* and since it was a fairly warm day, we waited in the shady area across the street. Fifteen minutes later we saw a man bicycling towards us. As he came closer we saw that he was about thirty-five years old, wearing paint clothes. He came up to us and introduced himself as the mayor. He then graciously welcomed us into the building and took us to a room containing a conference table. Very old, large binders were lying in a bookcase. His desk was to one side of the room. The binders were the town records, all from 1895 to the current period. There was nothing from prior to 1895. (I learned after returning to the U.S. that the earlier records are kept in Budapest in the National Archives, located in the Castle District). I was very excited to open the birth record binder and began to locate Grunfeld family members born in the early 1900s. I tried to copy as much information as possible. The hour was late, and the mayor, I felt, was being courteous, but probably looking forward to going home to his family or resuming the painting job he had left. I must have spent over a half hour writing down information. Unfortunately I never got to look at the binders for marriages or deaths. As we finished up with the genealogical information, the mayor was about to pour us glasses of wine, but we declined, since driving rules in Hungary are very strict about having even the slightest amount of alcohol in the system. He offered us water with “gas” (seltzer) instead, which we all enjoyed.

While we drank the seltzer he began to tell us of a project underway by the descendant of former Jewish residents of

the town to significantly improve the local Jewish graveyard. He wanted to show us the blueprints for the project, but, alas, this partner in the project had the plans, and they weren't in the town hall. The project involves improving the entrance to and egress from the cemetery. The only entrance is currently at the back of a farm belonging to one of the townspeople and is inconvenient in multiple ways.

We were very excited to learn there was a Jewish cemetery in Nemesszalok. The mayor offered to walk with us to the cemetery which was less than one block away.

The cemetery was located right behind an old house and is surrounded by a stone and cement wall. My guess is that the old woman in that house had the key to the wooden gate to the cemetery. We entered and found ourselves facing approximately 100 gravestones, some of which were in rows, and some were isolated. It was obvious that the grass had been cut recently. The cemetery was in nearly immaculate condition. In comparison, one of the largest cemeteries in Budapest that I had visited prior to coming to the countryside was not cared for – at all! Graves that were less than fifty years old were completely overgrown, and I had great difficulty finding my father's family there. We needed guides. In Nemesszalok, the conditions were the opposite. Every grave could be easily seen. One person and only one person (the son or grandson of one of the deceased Jewish villagers) has been taking care of the cemetery. What a mitzvah he's been performing!

The entire cemetery was no larger than one or two properties. Most of the inscriptions on the gravestones were in Hebrew, but a few were written in standard Roman lettering. I found a few that could very well be those of family members and one definite gravestone of Kalman Grunfeld and his wife, Terez Lowi. Kalman was the brother of Lajos Grunfeld, my great grandfather. All of us in the Greenfield family are descended from either Kalman or Lajos. Members of Regina Greenfield Pilzer's branch are descended from Lajos. Our cousins, the Rice family members, are descended from Kalman. Since it was late in the day, I couldn't stay to find Lajos and Sarah Grunfeld's graves. I am certain that they must be buried there too, possibly with Hebrew inscribed tombstones.

As we left the cemetery we were pleasantly surprised that the old woman (who was not Jewish) held a basin of water for all of us to wash our hands! It was a beautiful gesture for us. The mayor told us that the son of a husband and wife who are buried in that cemetery takes care of the cemetery and is spearheading the project to improve it. We were very moved by how meticulously the cemetery is being maintained. I expressed the hope that some of the Grunfeld family descendants around the world could help to partially fund the work that is being developed.

As we left Nemesszalok to drive to Lake Balaton, we saw a bird's nest and two pelicans resting on top of what resembled a telephone pole. What a beautiful way to leave the town!

While it has taken me many months to prepare this description of our visit to Nemesszalok, I am now completing it because I now have information about the man who is taking care of the cemetery. His name is Misi Winkler. I have no idea if he is related to us or not, but I know that he was friendly with the Grunfeld family in Hungary. Winkler is trying to raise about \$2,000 to complete work he has already begun in improving the cemetery of our ancestors.

He completed the new wall by 2006 and listed the names of those who contributed to its construction. I am proud that our names are included on the memorial plaque.

I'm hoping that photographs will be taken of all of the tombstones so that we can identify all of our family members buried there and learn both who are ancestors are and also remember them for future generations. ❖

Born in the Bronx, Donald Wittenberg's paternal and maternal ancestry came from Hungary. His father settled in New Jersey in 1936, while his mother's parents settled in Philadelphia in the early 1900s. Donald grew up alternating between living in the Bronx and Philadelphia. A teacher in the Philadelphia School District, he later became an elemen-

tary school principal, and finally a central office administrator.

Three roughly simultaneous factors led to his becoming “hooked” on genealogy: he wanted to research his late wife’s family because it was descended from a Hasidic rabbinic dynasty; he had recently read “Roots”; and he wanted to identify the more than 100 photographs related to his mother’s family that he had discovered after her death. Along with other discoveries, he later learned that his maternal grandfather was one of twelve children but knew nothing about them.

Surnames and towns he’s researching:

WITTENBERG(ER) in Asvany, Berhiada, Innotta, Kaposvar, Lazi, Polgardi, Sikator, and Veszpremsary, all in Hungary; METH in Olaszfalu, Hungary and Rabsicza, Galicia (probably near present day Ropczyce or Rzeszow, Poland); TWERSKY rabbinic dynasty in Cherkassy, Chernobyl, Korystechev, Makarov, Rotmistrivke, Skvira, Talne, and Trisk, and Okopy Ternopil Oblast, all in Ukraine. Contact Donald at dwittenberg@comcast.net.

MYSTERY SOLVED: HOW JERRY B. AND I ARE RELATED

by Evan Fishman



Shortly after I started doing genealogy research in 2000, I received a mysterious e-mail message citing “Matilda” and “Elizabeth M” and asking if I knew about them. Although I was a novice and eager to follow any lead, I cautiously replied offering very little detail. In a subsequent message Jerry B. mentioned the correct given names of my grandmother (Tillie) and her sister (my great aunt, Bessie) as well as my aunt (Grandma’s daughter, Ida) and indicated that they lived in Newark, New Jersey during the 1950s. Although this information was basically correct I was still skeptical. However, once he sent me a photograph of those three women at his Bar Mitzvah reception in Brooklyn, New York, I could no longer hold back. We began an ongoing correspondence that continued for several years during which we collaborated to try to find the link that tied our families together. Traveling to New York City was an unusual event for my grandmother and her sister, so their presence at this reception demonstrated a true connection.



Grandma Tillie, Great Aunt Bessie

Jerry and I didn’t know who the definitive relative was—his paternal grandfather or grandmother. Complicating the matter was the fact that his grandmother went by several different surnames in the course of her life, reflecting her changing marital and employment statuses. Although his grandparents lived in Philadelphia and all their sons were born there, Jerry didn’t know when or where his grandparents married. I later also learned that Jerry had met my Aunt Ida and her husband in the 1960s.

Jerry sent me additional photos of his grandmother, his parents, and his aunts and uncles, all from his 1956 Bar Mitzvah reception. I couldn’t discern any family resemblances. Jerry once related an amusing story describing a family function during which someone sang “Ave Maria.” My Aunt Bessie was surprised to put it mildly and commented in Yiddish, “What kind of song is this for a Jewish gathering?!”

Over the next several years Jerry and I explored various theories to explain how he and I were possibly related. One of



Jerry with his grandmother

the surnames that his Grandma Rose used was the same as my maternal grandfather's mother's maiden name. We wondered if a Samuel in his family was named for the same relative as some Samuels in my family who were grandsons of this great grandmother. I learned about his grandfather's quilting business and identified plausible store locations in Philadelphia. Unfortunately our explorations didn't provide the definitive link.

I asked my mother about this family, and she definitely remembered Jerry's father who had presented her with a baby quilt after I was born. Jerry even pinpointed locations where his family lived which were in close proximity to where I grew up. Mom also described Jerry's grandmother as a generally sad looking woman, which was exactly how she looked in a photograph taken at Jerry's Bar Mitzvah.

Sadly Jerry died of cancer while we were still pursuing this elusive search. Nevertheless I was determined to solve this mystery. He had mentioned that

his grandmother went by the name "Rita S." at one point, (note "Rita" instead of "Rose"; she certainly didn't make it easy to pinpoint her!), and he provided her death date and location. I was able to locate the associated Social Security Death Index citation for her, which in turn provided her Social Security number. I then requested a copy of Rita's original Social Security application card by submitting an SS-5 form, *Application for Social Security Number* [which] is a great resource for learning more about individuals who died after about 1960, and generally includes the following:

- Full name
- Full name at birth, including maiden name
- Present mailing address
- Age at last birthday
- Date of birth
- Place of birth (city, county, state)
- Father's full name
- Mother's full name, including maiden name
- Sex
- Race as indicated by the applicant
- Whether the applicant ever applied for Social Security or Railroad Retirement before
- Current employer's name and address
- Date signed
- Applicant's signature

(http://genealogy.about.com/od/online_records/a/ss5_request.htm)

When I received the copy of Rita's SS-5 form, the mystery was solved. Her maiden name (Presseisen) turned out to be the same as my maternal grandmother's mother's, not my maternal grandfather's who had several grandsons named Samuel! I deduced that Rita and my grandmother were first cousins. This discovery was totally unexpected because I had never even considered that connection. As far as I knew, my grandmother didn't have a great deal of contact with her mother's family who lived in the U.S., although she knew of farmer relatives in New Jersey who shared that surname.

Conclusion: all of us generate a paper trail, and digging up that paper trail can open up exciting new connections and yield positive results. ❖

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.

Evan is researching the following surnames, all in Ukraine: MANDELSTEIN--Starokonstantinov; LISNITZER--Luchinets, Izyaslav; ADELMAN--Krasilov; PRESSEISEN--Ostrog; UDIN--Kiev; BURSTEIN--Radomyshl; FISZMAN--Terespol, Poland & Brest Litovsk, Belarus

Contact Evan at editor@jgsgp.org.

THE 1924 NEW YORK CITY LIST OF REGISTERED VOTERS

by James Gross



Thanks to genealogist Phyllis Kramer and the nonprofit group, *Reclaim The Records*, the “List of Registered Voters for New York City” for 1924 is now available for free online.

What is this data? This is a published list of everyone in New York City who was legally registered to vote in the 1924 election. It was originally compiled by the New York City Board of Elections and printed in the *City Record*, a daily government publication. Since this list was in the public domain, *Reclaim The Records* was able to acquire a copy from the New York City Municipal Archives under the Freedom of Information Act. ⁽¹⁾

Why is this data helpful? The names published in this list serve as an index to another set of historical documents, the handwritten one-page voter registration forms. Each form was filled out by someone who was registering to vote in the 1924 presidential election and may prove helpful as it may contain that voter’s date of naturalization and court of record.

Reclaim the Records is a not-for-profit group of genealogists, historians, researchers, and open government advocates who are filing Freedom of Information Act requests to get public data released back into the public domain. They are engaged in ongoing efforts to collect information about archival data sets that are not available online or on microfilm. They then use legal means, through the Freedom of Information laws and Open Data initiatives, to obtain copies of these data sets. Finally they place a copy of this information online for free access by the public. ⁽²⁾

According to *Reclaim the Records*, the 1924 NYC List of Registered Voters is important for the following reasons:

- 1) It was a presidential election year, so voter registration rates were likely to be higher, and there would probably be more names on the list.
- 2) Women had gained the right to vote nationwide in 1920 following the passage of the 19th Amendment, and in 1916 in New York State, so we could finally start to see female relatives’ names on the rolls. However, relatively few women's names appear on this list of registered voters. Fewer than fifty percent of the names on this list are female.
- 3) World War I had ended, so the men fighting overseas would have been back home to appear on the rolls too.
- 4) A significant percentage of the huge turn-of-the-century immigration wave to New York City would have completed the naturalization process by 1924, potentially appearing on the voter rolls. ⁽²⁾

The list is broken down by the five boroughs (counties) of New York City and each borough is further broken down by assembly districts. There are links to all five boroughs. Here are links to the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan scans:

Bronx - 8 assembly districts in 1924, <http://tinyurl.com/bronx1924>

Brooklyn - 17 assembly districts in 1924, <http://tinyurl.com/brooklyn1924>

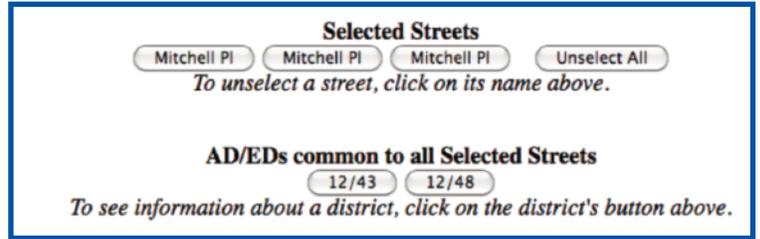
Manhattan - 23 assembly districts in 1924, <http://tinyurl.com/manhattan1924>

Within each assembly district (A.D.), the list is further broken down into election districts (E.D.) and then by street addresses. *Reclaim the Records* recommends locating a person using the following process:

- Look someone up in the 1925 New York State Census. Note the borough, A.D., E.D., and address on a person's census listing;
- Then look up that same location information in this new 1924 list. This method assumes, however, that your person of interest did not move or change his/her address between voter registration in late 1924 and the state census in early 1925.

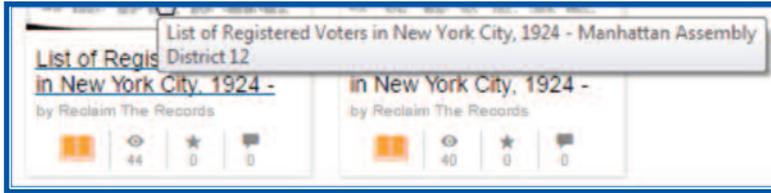
The scanned files are stored on the Internet Archive and can be searched word-by-word or downloaded for use offline.

The Internet Archive performed an OCR (defined in Wikipedia as “Optical character recognition . . . is the mechanical or electronic conversion of images of typed, handwritten or printed text into machine-encoded text, whether from a scanned document, a photo of a document, a scene-photo”) on all of the names on the pages. That means that even without a transcription project being organized, you can do a full-text search (“Search Inside This Book”) for a particular name or street address you’re seeking.⁽²⁾ The OCR scanning is not perfect, so don’t be surprised if you do not find every name you are searching.

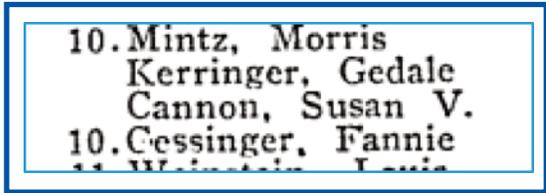


I performed a search for my cousin, Gedale Geringer, who lived at 10 Mitchel Place in Manhattan. I found this information from the 1920 census. I accessed the Steve Morse AD/ED page, entitled, “Obtaining AD/ED for the 1890-1925 New York State Census in One Step.”⁽³⁾

The Morse page indicated two possible ED’s: 12/43 and 12/48. I then searched the Manhattan pages on the Internet Archive using the link mentioned above (<http://tinyurl.com/manhattan1924>). If you pass your mouse over the images, the image title includes the AD #. I slid my mouse across the page which read “AD12” or “Assembly District 12.”



Next I downloaded the pdf image for AD#12. I did a “Find” search within the Google browser and located “Mitchel Place,” though the scanned newspaper had it misspelled as “Mitchell Pl.”



Listed at the left, at number 10, is my cousin, with his name misspelled as “Keringer, Gedale” instead of “Geringer, Gedale.” His wife is also listed with her name misspelled as “Gessinger, Fannie” instead of “Geringer, Fannie.”

If you’re patient, you may also be able to locate your relative’s name within this scanned copy of the New York City 1924 voter registration name list. You can then write to the New York City Municipal Archives or the New York City Board of Elections for a copy of your relative’s one-page voter registration form. As mentioned earlier, this one-page form may contain, among other data, the court name and date of his/her naturalization. See the article on voter registration by Jan Meisels Allen.⁽⁴⁾

In summary, the scanned New York City 1924 voter registration name list from the *City Record*, is available for free online and might provide additional valuable information. ❖

References:

1. Tanner, James, (2016), “Reclaim the Records Frees the List of Registered Voters for New York City for the Year 1924,” *Genealogy’s Star Blog*, retrieved 12/3/2016 from: <http://tinyurl.com/tanner1924>
2. Reclaim the Records, “Records Request #8, List of Registered Voters in New York City for 1924,” retrieved 12/3/2016 from: <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/records-request/8/>
3. Morse, Steve, (2016). “Obtaining AD/ED for the 1890-1925 New York State Census in One Step,” retrieved 12/3/2016 from: <http://tinyurl.com/morse1924>
4. Allen, Jan Meisels, “Voter registration records,” retrieved 12/3/2016 from: <http://tinyurl.com/meisels-voter>

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.

MY FAMILY BOOKS - THE PURPOSE THEY SERVE AND THE SATISFACTION THEY PROVIDE

by Merle Kastner



I began my genealogical research in 1993, following the unexpected loss of my mother, who was only seventy-four years old at the time and with whom I had been very close. My father had died twenty-three years before that, at the terribly young age of fifty-five.

As her eldest child and executor of her will, I had to go through her personal effects, a painful experience. In doing so, I found a box of old photographs and went through them one by one. Among them was a photo of my great grandparents, taken in 1895 in Montreal, with a baby who was my great aunt, my maternal grandmother's older sister. I knew who these people were, having seen the photo before, but also knew that my children and grandchildren would never know them, so I wrote their names on the back of the photo. I realized that the names were insufficient and began to formulate a rudimentary family tree on a very large, wide piece of paper.

Two years earlier, we had all gone to a family reunion at a downtown hotel in Montreal that my cousin, Irwin Miller from Stamford, Connecticut, arranged. More than 100 people attended. Irwin had done some research on our common Garbarski family (who became Goldberg and Gordon in Canada and Gilbert in parts of the U.S.) from Sejny, Suwalki *gubernia*, (equivalent of a province, administrative district in imperial Russia) Poland and gave a slide presentation about this. Unfortunately most people in attendance were really more interested in schmoozing with other relatives than in watching and listening to what he had to say.

I later contacted Irwin and expressed my interest in his research. He told me he'd be delighted if I took over the "job" as the family genealogist and subsequently snail-mailed me his handwritten family tree. I immediately spotted a number of errors, called to thank him and ask if he'd mind if I corrected these errors. He was even more delighted! And so, began my serious foray into genealogical research. This was when Stanley Diamond was organizing the Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal, and I immediately became a member.

I then contacted relatives and supposed relatives all over Canada and the U.S., writing countless letters and making even more phone calls. Each phone call/interview resulted in snippets of family stories and details, which I carefully documented. Shortly after conducting my numerous interviews, I acquired a computer, and all this research speeded up considerably especially after I installed the Family Tree software and loaded up names, dates, place names, etc.

I also visited local archives, consulted online resources, particularly JewishGen, and scanned family photos, some of which family members were kind enough to lend or mail to me. After several years, I had completed 200 pages of single-spaced family stories including countless photographs, maps and photos of ancestral homes. What does one do with this huge, precious treasure trove? I decided that it had to be preserved for my children and grandchildren in a format that they could appreciate when they reach middle age or even beyond. The younger members of my family are presently concerned with careers, businesses, schools, mortgages, family vacations, summer camps and so on, certainly not genealogy - yet!

The logical answer for me was to create a family book. Over the course of several years I spent untold hours on each book, compiling photos, stories, maps, displaying the family tree in several formats for all related branches, including still "unconnected branches." As each book was completed, I saved the entire file on a DVD and brought it to the local print shop for printing and binding. After ten years, I have an entire bookcase shelf of attractive, spiral bound family books - one for each branch of my family and for some peripheral branches as well. My children all have copies of each one, and there are copies in the Jewish Public Library in Montreal, the Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, YIVO in New York City, and the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. I omitted the

family trees in the books located in public places because I consider those details to be private.



My Kastner—Ostfeld Family
by Merle Kastner, great-granddaughter of
Mayer Moishe & Shaindel Kastner

*My Nathanson Family,
From Home in Romania to
Life in Canada.*

*A collection of anecdotes, stories,
research findings, photographs and
documents.*

By Merle Kastner,
granddaughter of Henry and Minnie Nathanson

© October, 2009

After all this, I created a power point presentation, a sort of “how to” on family books and devised a lecture to go with it. I’ve given this lecture several times, and it’s always been well received.

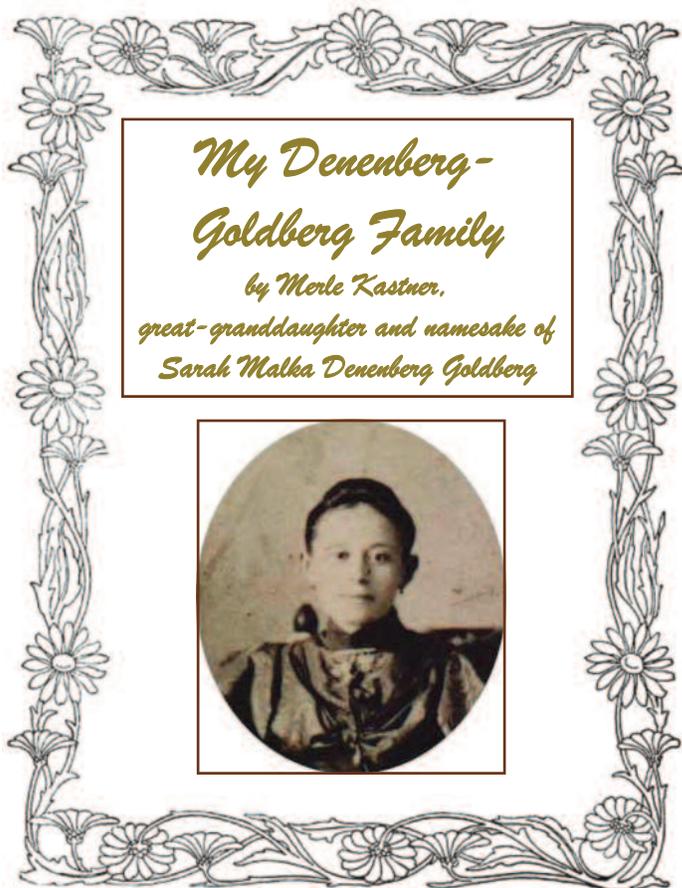
Since then, I have done the occasional research project, producing an accompanying book for several people,

and I’m now working on another for a friend. It is hard to describe the great satisfaction these people express when they see the actual book and the pleasure this gives me, too.

We are genealogical researchers, but what will happen to the results of our research unless it is documented? That is what spurred me on at the beginning. I urge fellow researchers to think of doing the same, in whichever way you choose and on whichever scale suits you. ❖

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 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.



*My Denenberg-
Goldberg Family*
by Merle Kastner,
great-granddaughter and namesake of
Sarah Malka Denenberg Goldberg

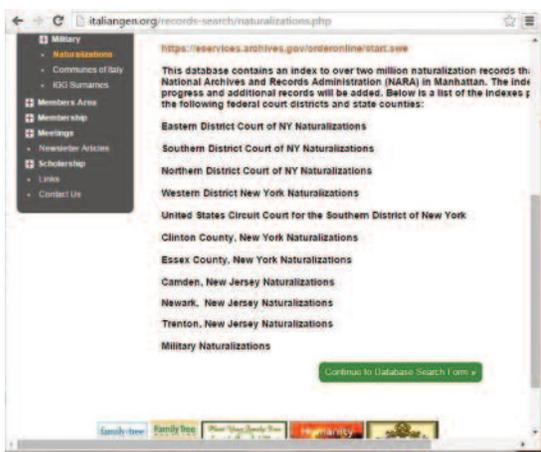
Back in June, Fred Blum and I received a message from Moishe Miller of the JGS of Brooklyn with an attachment of an article entitled "New York, Southern District, U.S District Court Naturalization Records," which provides a step-by-step method for viewing those naturalization records covering the period of 1824-1946. This is a nice example of inter-genealogical society sharing. Evan Fishman, Editor.

New York, Southern District, U.S District Court Naturalization Records

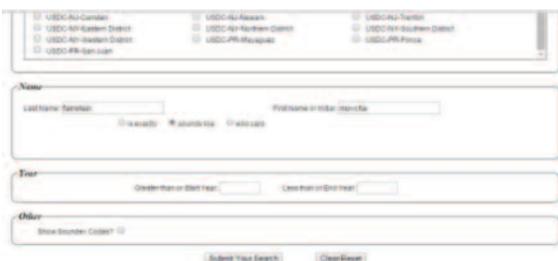
by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Brooklyn (JGSoB)

This article will describe a step-by-step method for viewing naturalization records from the New York, Southern District, U.S District Court Naturalization Records, 1824-1946.

Step 1: Go to <http://italiangen.org/records-search/naturalizations.php> to search the naturalizations.



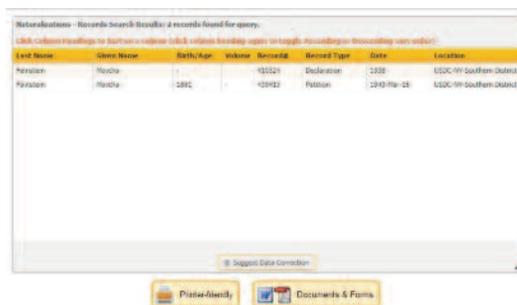
Step 2: Click the green **Continue to Database Search Form** near the bottom of the page.



Step 3: Input the criteria to use for the search. In this case the criteria were:

- Last Name: **Fainstein**
- First Name: **Movcha**
- And the "sounds like" radio button was selected

Step 4: Click on **Submit Your Search**. The resulting page shows two results that match. One is the Declaration of Intent and one is the Petition of Naturalization (#439413). The Petitions are ordered sequentially at the FamilySearch website.



Step 5: Go to the FamilySearch website at <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2060123?collectionNameFilter=false>



Naturalizations - Records Search Results: 2 records found for query.

Click Column Headings to Sort on a column (click column heading again to toggle Ascending or Descending sort order)

Last Name	Given Name	Birth/Age	Volume	Record#	Record Type	Date	Location
Feinstein	Movcha	-	-	410324	Declaration	1938	USDC-NY-Southern District
Fainstein	Movcha	1881	-	439413	Petition	1943-Mar-15	USDC-NY-Southern District

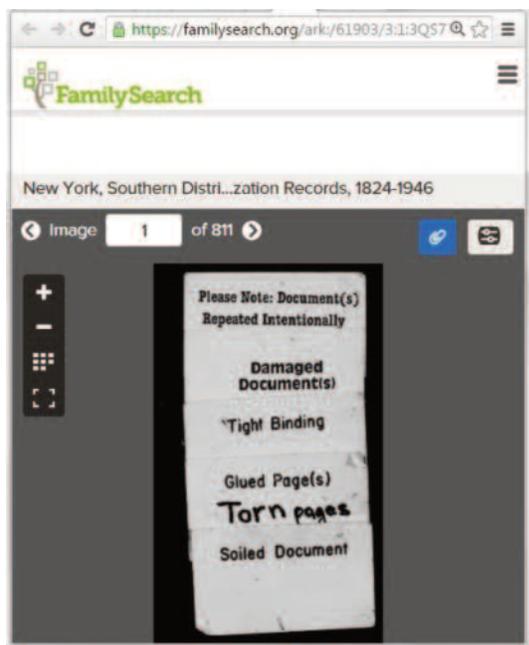
Step 6: Click on the link with “Browse through 2,187,206 images”.

Step 7: A list of all the films from 1824 to 1946 display. Press CTRL-F and type in the first 4 digits of the Petition number, “4394”.

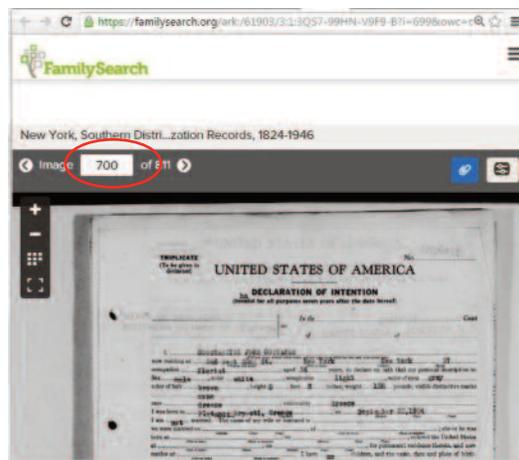


Step 8: Click on the link for the “Petitions for naturalization and petition evidence 1943 box 786, no 439301-439450” as 439413 is between the ranges of the list in box 786, closer to the end.

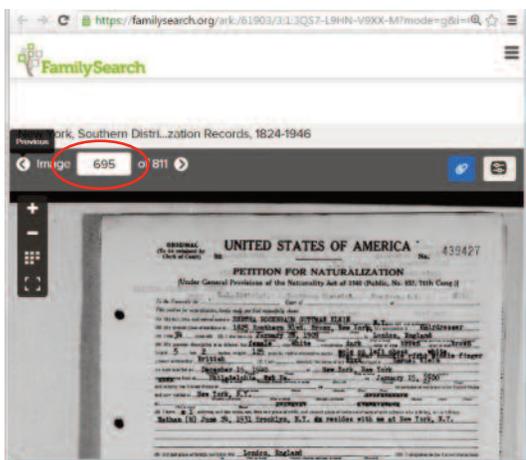
Step 9: A page will display allowing for browsing of all 811 images available in Box 786. Now it becomes a hunt-n-search through the records. As the recorded 811 images span 150 petitions, input a number close to the end as 439413 is close to 439450.



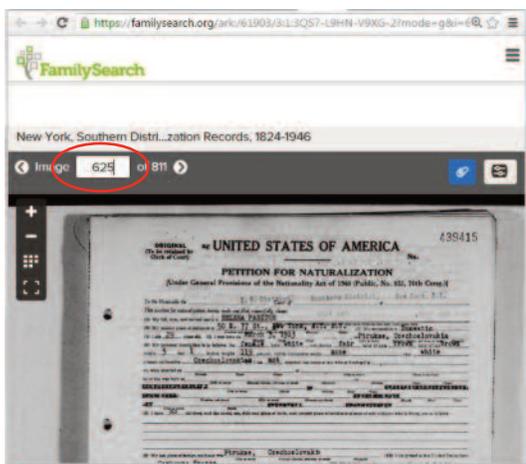
Step 10: Input 700 as the Image number and press enter. The resulting record is a declaration, so any number on it would not be relevant to the search. It is necessary to page.



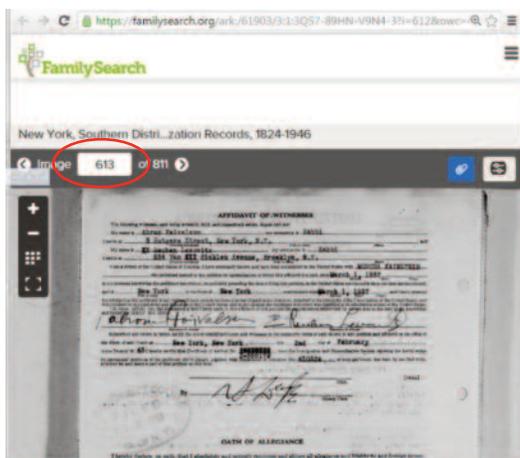
Step 11: Input 695 as the Image number and press enter. The resulting record is a petition. The number is 439247. That is still more than the search number of 439413. It is necessary to page.



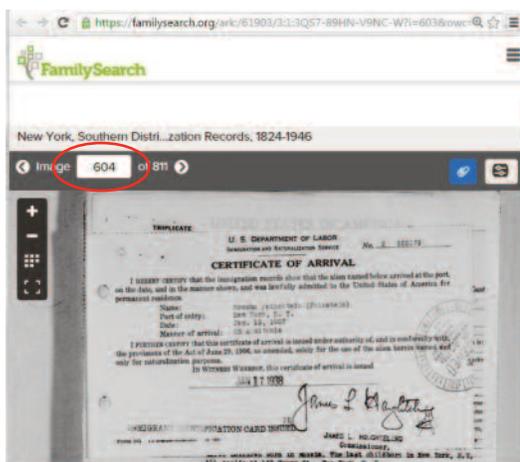
Step 12: Input 625 as the Image number and press enter. The resulting record is a petition. The number is 439415, still too high, but much closer to 439413. It is necessary to page.



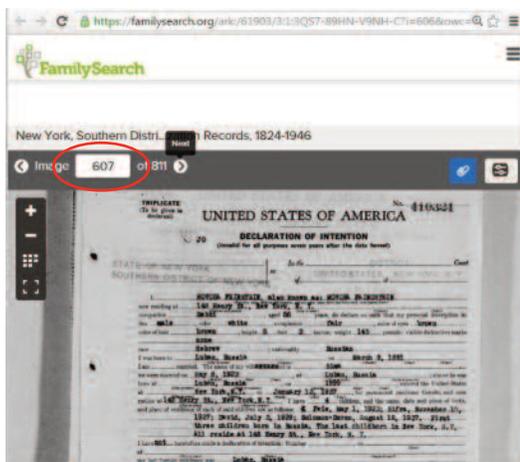
Step 13: Input 613 as the Image number and press enter. The resulting record is an affidavit of witnesses, the second page of a Petition. It does list the name Movcha Faiestein. It is necessary to page back, as the images typically include several copies of the Certificate of Arrival, Declaration of Intent and the two pages of the Petition for Naturalization.

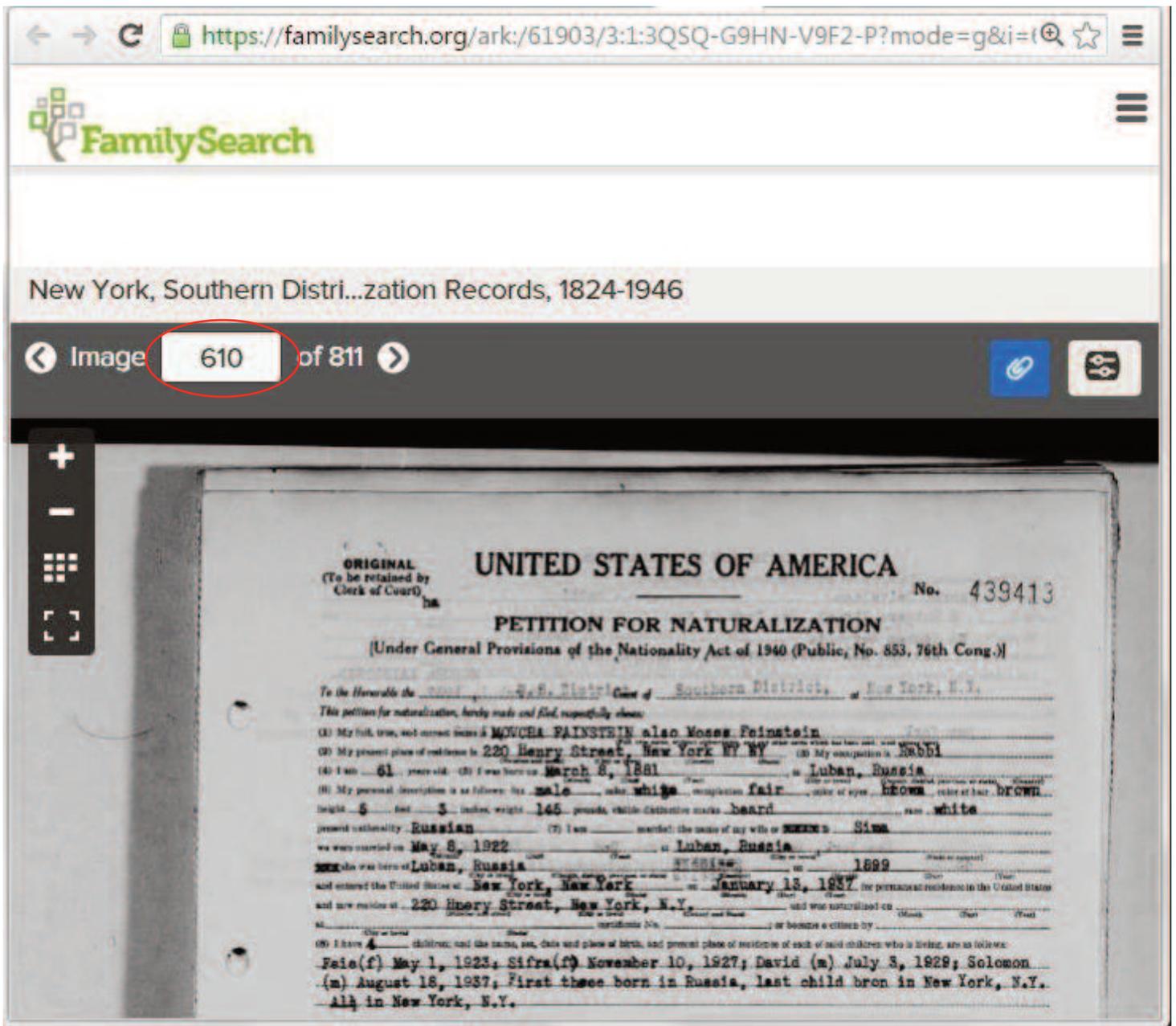


Step 14: Input 604 as the Image number and press enter. The resulting record is a Certificate

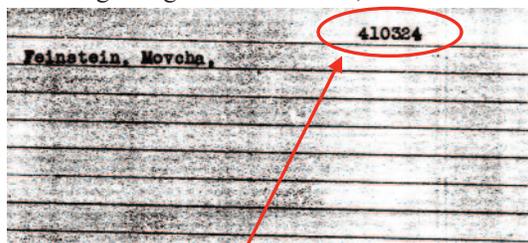


of Arrival for Movcha Fainchtein. Paging one-by-one through the pages, all of the detail related to the naturalization is available.



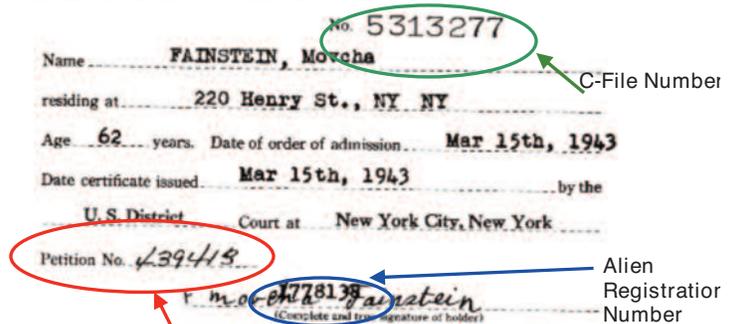


When searching for records using this method, always remember that the records are ordered by Petition numbers. Numbers from the Declaration of Intent or the Certificate of Arrival can be ignored for this search. Also note that if searching using another method, to check if the



Index, 1917-1950 Declarations of Intention, U.S. District Court, Southern Dist. of NY

index being used is for declarations or petitions. As per below, the petition index has the petition number on the bottom left of the card.



Index to Petitions for Naturalization filed in New York City, 1792-1989

FOSTER HOME ADMISSION (AND DISCHARGE) REGISTERS



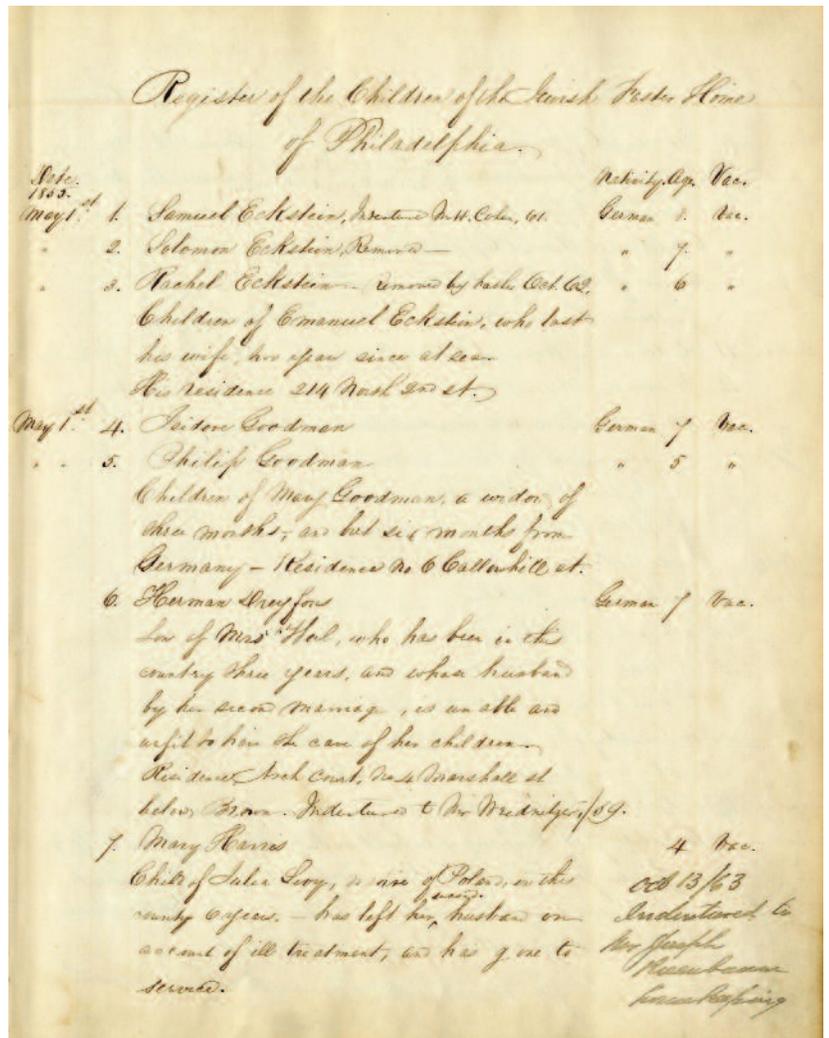
Special Collections Research Center (SCRC)

Acquired by Temple University Libraries' Special Collections Research Center in 2009, the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Collection documents the activities of the Greater Philadelphia Jewish community through the personal papers of civic and spiritual leaders and the records of cultural, educational, religious, and social service organizations established and operated by and for the Jewish community. Among the records, are foster home admission (and discharge) registers from the Association for Jewish Children, an institutional foster home and adoption placement agency founded in 1855 as the Jewish Foster Home Society.

Foster home admission (and discharge) registers

The admission registers produced by the Association for Jewish Children and its predecessor agencies between 1855 and 1950 record the names and ages of children entering the foster home, the date of entry, and, in some cases nativity, an abbreviated statement of reason for placement, and date of discharge. Some of the earliest admission entries also include indenture agreements or contracts signed by a parent or guardian binding the institution to provide food, clothing, medicine, and education for children placed there in return for a stated number of years of labor. Please note, that save for a few sporadic case summaries, this collection does not include adoption records or detailed case files on wards of the foster homes. Complimentary information about placement can be found in court reports produced by the Juvenile Aid Society on dependent and delinquency cases, documenting summary judgments for commitments and discharges of children placed at or under the care of the foster homes and, in some cases, state hospitals between 1920 and 1939. To learn more about the admission registers and the other records produced by the Association for Jewish Children and its predecessor agencies, view the online finding aid

<http://library.temple.edu/scrc/association-jewish-children>. ❖



Jewish Foster Home admissions register page, May 1, 1855
Image courtesy of Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Research Requests

The SCRC reading room is located on the ground floor of Temple University's Paley Library and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Due to the unique, rare, valuable and often fragile nature of the items in our collection, the use of these materials often requires advance notice for retrieval which can be done online using your SCRC Researcher Account <https://temple.aeon.atlas-sys.com/logon>. For general inquiries or questions about setting up your SCRC Researcher Account email scrc@temple.edu or call (215) 204-8257.

HOW I FOUND MY BIRTH FAMILY (THE HARD WAY) PRIOR TO THE INTERNET

by Carol Robins



This is an account of how I searched for my identity and original family. I'm using fictitious names because adoptions in the 1940s were transacted with the promise of privacy.

Adoption

It's one thing to search for ancestors when you know their names. What do you do when you don't know those names? When I was four years old, my mom told me that I was adopted. Today, some people might say that a four year old is too young to comprehend what being adopted means.. As the years went by I didn't think about adoption to the extent that it interfered with my daily routines.

My adoptive parents, Benjamin and Freda Robins, lived in Allentown, but because there were no Jewish babies available for adoption there, they went to Philadelphia. One Jewish boy in Allentown had been adopted from the same agency, the then called Association for Jewish Children. I presume my parents learned of this boy's adoption because they knew his parents in our small town Jewish community.

In elementary school, I told a girlfriend that I was adopted. I was sort of proud of it or at least had no negative feelings about it. When she insinuated that adoption meant that my mother must have been a bad person, I loudly defended myself and my parents. I was outraged because I had been told that my birth parents were married when I was born. I suppressed my curiosity for many years. When I finally looked at my only birth certificate, I realized that I could never know the correct information.

(Note the definitive disclaimer

"... which prohibits disclosure of any further information except to government agencies." in the adjacent image.)

Since I had never seen any other formal adoption certificate, I didn't know that mine was an "amended" one. I wasn't aware that a hospital name, birth weight, time of birth, or doctor's name should have been listed. Instead lines were just left blank.

Help With the Original Search

In 1976, I joined a group called ALMA (Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association), which helped adoptees locate their original birth certificates. The initial response I received from the Division of Vital Statistics of the Pennsylvania Department of Health indicated that I needed to supply my original birth name and birth parents' names in order to obtain my original birth certificate. That was impossible in my case, but I pressed on. According to a letter I received from ALMA, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania did in fact provide transcripts of original birth certificates although the names of the hospital were omitted. I needed to submit a letter of application for "my full copy original pre-adoption birth certificate, which I need for my genealogy," and supply Vital Statistics with my present name, adoptive name, names of adoptive parents, birth date, and birthplace along with a money order for \$2.00 and a self-addressed envelope.

I could not believe the search consultant's encouraging words. I didn't really expect any kind of response, however,

because my mom had told me that her lawyer had played a part in mandating that adoption records be closed. Ironically he was also an adoptive parent. Several weeks later I received an abbreviated document with my original name, the married names of my birth parents (Betty and Sam xxxx), Betty's maiden name, my birth weight (5.6 pounds), and time of birth (9:56 a.m.) - but no birth weight.

One day in 1977 I drove to Philadelphia and looked up Betty's maiden name in a telephone book at the main branch of the Free Library. I jotted down a few names that matched her maiden name, went back home to New Jersey, and when I got up my nerve, I made a call to someone I hoped would be related. I asked the woman who answered if she knew of Betty. "Oh, you might want to talk to Adina," she replied. It was if she knew who was calling. I soon called Adina and asked for Betty. Adina replied, "You must be the daughter." It turned out that she was Betty's sister, and thus my maternal aunt.

Reunion

I traveled to Philadelphia again and met Aunt Adina at her apartment in Rittenhouse Square. This was the first time I ever saw another living person who was related to me genetically, and I noted some resemblance. It was quite a moment for me.

Aunt Adina introduced me to her son, but not to her daughter, Linda, who wasn't receptive to meeting me then. Aunt Adina also did not want me to meet Betty. Adina still felt guilty because she hadn't been able to take care of me back then. She also wasn't in a position to raise me because she had just given birth to Linda seven months before I was born.

Aunt Adina also wasn't keen on my meeting Sam, my birth father. She did tell me, however, that he used to live on a certain street in Northeast Philadelphia. Since his phone number was unlisted. I returned to the Free Library, found his name, address, and telephone number in an older directory, but didn't have the nerve to call then.

In 1979, I moved to California. I wrote a letter to Sam from that safe distance, introduced myself, and expressed my interest in learning more about him. One day my phone rang. It was Sam. He had remarried a few years after he and Betty divorced and wanted me to meet his daughter, Esther, who lived fifty miles away from me. I took a train to her city and met my half-sister, although I didn't think enough to ask questions about relatives and their backgrounds.

Learning More in Philadelphia

After moving to Philadelphia in May 1980, I met Sam's other daughter, Alice, but she told me that her father didn't want to meet me. I dropped the idea at that time.

I met with a wonderful social worker at the Jewish Family Service (JFS) near 13th Street, who read my file to me while I took copious notes. (As "adopted children" we weren't allowed to read our own records). I learned many details about my birth parents' contentious divorce and the debate on whether one of them would keep me. I lived in at least two foster homes my first year. Betty was the youngest of seven siblings, but none of them wanted to take on the responsibility of raising me. Both Betty and Aunt Adina visited me in the foster homes, but my aunt's complaint about one foster mother resulted in my being transferred to a different home. Although I wanted to meet my foster mothers, I wasn't given their names. The adoption agency told my adoptive mom that Betty didn't visit me in the foster homes. Aunt Adina adamantly refuted this and told me that when Betty visited, she cried.

I was finally placed with a family in Allentown in February 1945 when I was eleven months old. My adoptive mom became pregnant three months later, and my brother was born in early 1946. I wasn't formally adopted in Lehigh County until June 1946 because JFS wanted to make sure the Robins couple wanted two children, when there had been none just a few months earlier.

During my sessions at JFS, I was able to comprehend what my inconstant first year as an infant was like. I was ex-

posed to three environments: the hospital from March to April 1944 and two foster homes from April to February 1945. The social worker who was then assigned to my case wrote about my progress in detail.

(See image of social service notes at the right).

Until the early 1940s Jewish children were placed in the Orphans Home. After then, it was felt that a foster home environment might be better for children.

In the fall of 1980 JFS notified me I could finally see my birth mother.

Betty lay comatose at Germantown Hospital and died from a stroke the next day. Since then I've always

wondered whether she stayed alive until I could visit her. 'Did Aunt Adina finally consent to this visit because her sister was comatose?' At least I got to see Betty as a living person and not just a photograph.

I began attending Adoption Forum meetings in Philadelphia and learned more about the challenges facing all members of the "adoption triangle." I bought every book on adoption I could find. Somehow I learned that I had been born at Temple University Hospital. I contacted them but it was too late; my birth records were "past retention" and no longer available.

In 1996, almost twenty years after my first contact, Aunt Adina told other relatives of my existence. Her daughter, Linda, turned out to be a good friend even though she had resisted meeting me years earlier. Coincidentally, Linda was a friend of the first woman I met when I moved to Philadelphia.

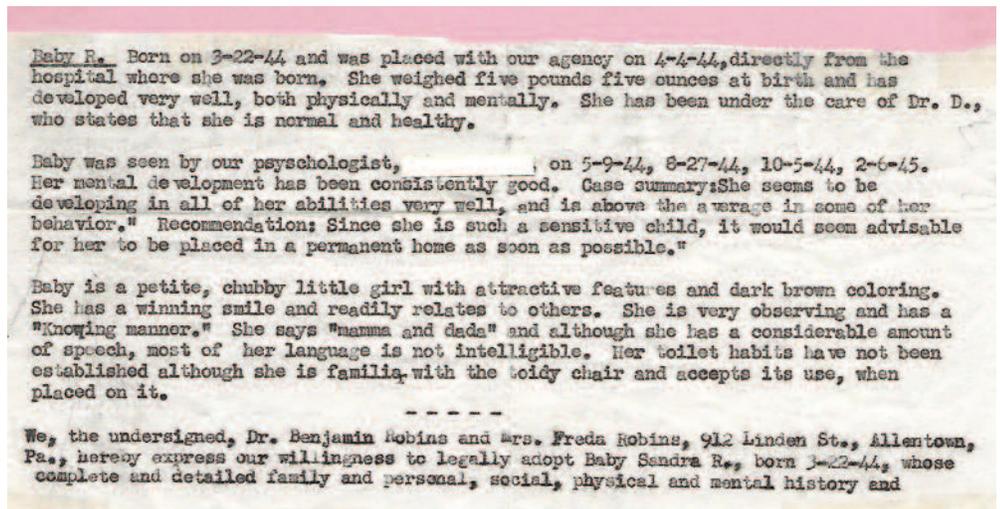
My maternal grandparents, Deborah and William, were from Latvia. He was a quiet man who did not talk very much to his sons. I was originally named after an aunt (my birth mother's sister) who died in 1934 at the age of twenty-one, but my name was changed upon adoption. William died in 1943, eight months before I was born, and his widow died a year to the day after him. Deborah didn't want to live without him. As a result, by the time I was born, my birth mother, Betty, literally had no one to help her.

I now have a large scrapbook and photo albums of the relatives, a family tree, a *yahrzeit* (anniversary of death) certificate for Betty, death certificates, and letters from relatives whom I met. My grandparents, the aunt for whom I was originally named, and my great grandparents are buried at Montefiore Cemetery in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.

Finally knowing my ancestors' medical history has filled in a lot of gaps. Previously I had been unable to answer questionnaires in doctors' offices. I learned that my two half-sisters, as well as another first cousin, had the BRCA gene mutation. One half-sister and a daughter of one of Sam's brothers have since died of breast cancer.

It has been gratifying to hear about the psychological aspects and family dynamics of my biological relatives. I was fascinated to learn their earlier addresses and how William traveled from Kensington to Dock Street to fill his cart with groceries for the store. At one point the family lived in Waltham, Massachusetts where William was a pawnbroker. I sometimes felt more interested in Judaism than some members of my adoptive family and wondered if that came from William's reputation as a "rav" in the community.

I was disheartened to learn that Betty had spent time at the "infamous" Byberry Hospital because of her psychological



condition. She had not remarried. When I couldn't locate her grave at Har Nebo Cemetery, my first cousin, Linda, and I purchased a stone from Nathan Shapiro & Son Monuments, and another first cousin performed the unveiling.

I didn't keep in contact with Sam's daughters. Sam died in 2004. A few years ago, I met one of his brothers who explained that Sam wanted to raise me, but "circumstances forced his hand." Aunt Adina had told me the opposite-- that Sam did not want to support Betty or me. The records showed a prolonged "custody battle" with court hearings about plans and support.

Fascinating Coincidences

My adoption had been a closed one in Philadelphia, and neither my adoptive parents nor my birth parents knew one another. I must emphasize that my adoptive mother did not want to know their identities. I was listed as just "Baby R" on the records before my adoption.

1. Years after I found my birth relatives, I learned that Aunt Adina's second husband was a business partner of my adoptive mother, Freda's first cousin's husband. What a small world!

2. My biological first cousin, Linda, told me she knew my adoptive first cousin. They were a few months apart and in the same class at Overbrook High School.

The Search Is Not Quite Over

I learned that Betty also relinquished a son, born seven years after me, who was adopted when he was one day old by a couple who later moved away from Philadelphia. I have procrastinated finding him, but I look forward to doing more genealogical research online and by mail.

Pennsylvania Statute

The loophole that enabled me to secure a copy of my original birth certificate and learn my identity was closed in 1984.. However, on November 3, 2016, Governor Tom Wolf signed House Bill 162 into law that will give adoptees at age eighteen the right to obtain their original birth certificate for the first time since 1984. Descendants of deceased adoptees may request a copy.

Birth parents will be permitted to have their names removed from the birth certificate, but they must file a medical history form to be given to the adoptee. "There can be no legally protected interest in keeping one's identity secret from one's biological offspring; parent and child are considered co-owners of the information regarding the event of birth." -- *Federal Register*; Model State Adoption Act, 1980.

Some Final Thoughts

I truly know and love only one set of parents whom I miss greatly. My adoptive dad died from a heart condition in 1956 when I was twelve. Mom died in 1992.

I am aware that adoptive parents might be uncomfortable if their child searches, but the information gained can be very valuable. Each case is different.

ALMA founder, Florence Fisher, once wrote: "There are no illegitimate children, only illegitimate laws" that prevent many adoptive children [like myself] from knowing our backgrounds. ❖

A Penn State graduate, Carol Robins was a writer for "Prevention Magazine" and a technical editor at HRB-Singer and Bell Labs. She also proofread for the "Asbury Park Press." Later she edited medical books at W.B. Saunders in Philadelphia for twenty years and a pharmacy journal at MediMedia in Yardley, PA for eleven years. She volunteers at KleinLife, Hadassah, and Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC). Carol is researching: LIPSKY, (Bikov, Belarus), ESKIN, HASKIN (Minsk, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova??), RABINOWITZ (Zaklikow, Poland), ABELEW, FINDERSH and ANGERT (Tiraspol, Moldova). Contact Carol at cjrobins22@hotmail.com.

IN SEARCH OF CARRIE FISHER & OTHER CELEBRITIES

by Evan Fishman



Like many other Americans, I followed the unfolding developments in the late Carrie Fisher's final medical crisis in late December. One of my online sources was the electronic version of the *Forward*, which provided links to previous articles about Ms. Fisher from its archives. The genealogical implication of Marla Brown Fogelman's piece entitled "Let's Do Coffee, Cousin Carrie" (<http://forward.com/articles/150638/lets-do-coffee-cousin-carrie/?attribution=tag-article-listing-1-head-line>) lured me in. Mrs. Fogelman explained her connection:

Although writer and actress Carrie Fisher and I have never met, we are related in that four-degrees-of-separation way that many Jews and half-Jews are — that is, my maternal great-aunt was married to her paternal great-uncle. I doubt that Ms. Fisher ever knew Aunt Rebecca and Uncle Jack, who are long deceased, and I only remember meeting them once as a child.

Yet, despite our tenuous familial connection, I have felt a kinship with Ms. Fisher ever since the early 1990s, . . . In fact, I loved "Postcards" [Ms. Fisher's novel, *Postcards from the Edge*] so much that I wrote a fan letter to Ms. Fisher, mentioning our shared Jewish-Communist Chicago relatives as well as what I viewed as our similarly acerbic writing styles. In the letter, I suggested that we might meet for coffee, since I was coming to Los Angeles anyway, and sent it to an L.A. lawyer friend who knew an entertainment lawyer who knew Ms. Fisher. Though the letter apparently ended up in the entertainment lawyer's recycling bin, I continued to root for Ms. Fisher to find her way into a good life.



I contend that Mrs. Fogelman's interest in Ms. Fisher was motivated in part by a fascination with celebrities and a desire, that many of us share, to add some pizzazz to our respective family histories. One of my more colorful genealogical explorations centered around American concert pianist, Eugene List, who first won international fame when he was selected to perform for Harry Truman, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin at the Potsdam conference in 1945. Later List "gave private concerts for President Truman, who sat next to him and helped turn the pages." (Schonberg, Harold C. *New York Times*, March 2, 1985.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1985/03/02/arts/eugene-list-66-concert-pianist.html>). List was born in Philadelphia, and his father's original surname was Lisnitzer, also my maternal grandmother's maiden name.

Years before, I accidentally discovered the Philadelphia branch of the Lisnitzer family while perusing microfilm abstracts of immigration records at the Philadelphia branch of NARA. They hailed from the town of Mezhirov, Ukraine. This unexpected discovery intrigued me, and I later learned that Mezhirov is located near Luchinets, the town name on which the Lisnitzer sur-

name was based per noted researcher in the etymologies of surnames, Alexander Beider. More recently I followed the thread of this branch and ultimately learned that Eugene List was a descendant. I eagerly attempted to confirm that I was related to this prominent pianist. I located and contacted living descendants of the Philadelphia Lisnitzers, including a nonagenarian in Massachusetts who remembered hearing List play during a family visit in Philadelphia. I even went to a local cemetery in the hope of finding a given name that matched one I already knew. This search proved elusive and reached its culmination during a conversation with a fellow genealogist. My friend suggested that since Lisnitzer

was a geographically based surname, perhaps List's ancestors were given the name because they lived in the area around Luchinets. 'Boy, did that theory burst my bubble.' Although that dose of reality was disappointing, I enjoyed how the possibility of being related to a celebrity spurred me on and energized my search.

I shared this story with fellow JGSGP member, Ed Flax, who reminded me of a definitive celebrity connection he had identified in an earlier issue (*Chronicles*, vol. 31-3, p. 6). Al Jolson is related to him by marriage because Jolson's older sister, Rose, was married to Nathan Flax, Ed's first cousin, twice removed. Ed admitted that he shared this tidbit during his talk on genealogy to his *chavurah* [Hebrew for "fellowship," is signified by a small group of like-minded Jews who assemble for the purposes of facilitating Shabbat and holiday prayer services, sharing communal experiences such as lifecycle events, or Jewish learning] several years ago in order "to complete the presentation on a high note."

I invite you to share your pursuits of celebrities (elusive or successful) in future issues. ❖

Evan Fishman's biography can be found following his article on p. 11.

BRICK WALL

SAME SURNAMES, TOWNS & JOURNEY - BUT NO CONNECTION

by Renee Fishman



What do you do when you hit a brick wall? Same surnames, same towns, same journey, but no connection? When I started researching my family tree I realized very quickly that there were many relatives of whom I had no knowledge. While trying to think outside the box in my quest to learn more, I came up with the idea to search the Philadelphia immigrant bank passenger records from 1890-1949.

I searched for all of the people that came into the port of Philadelphia during that time period with the same last name as my grandfather and in the same way my grandfather had done. It wasn't a very long list. Was it a coincidence that one of those new discoveries had the same last name, came from the same town as my grandfather, and happened to come to the same port in America?

My grandfather's last name was Chaitt. His wife's (my grandmother) maiden name was Atkins. My grandfather was born in Berzai, Lithuania and my grandmother in Ukmerge, Russia.

I was frustrated that I couldn't find a connection until Ancestry did its thing and sent me a leaf. That led me to the great grandson of one of those Chaitts; he had a beautiful family tree, pictures and all. Unfortunately not one of them had a trace of family resemblance to anyone I know. Upon further examination, however, I had to gasp. His great grandfather's brother married an Atkins. Like me he had a family tree with Atkins on one side and Chaitts on the other. Another coincidence? To add to the coincidences, his Chaitt was born in Ukmerge where my grandmother was born, and died in Birzai where my grandfather was born. What do you do when you hit a brick wall? ❖

If you can help Renee, please contact her at phillypa29@aol.com.

Renee says, "I actually started tracing my family tree when one of my co-workers found out his great grandfather was in the Smithsonian Institute as a great warrior. He naturally was beaming with pride and wanted everyone he knew in his life to find that same bliss . . . A native Philadelphian, Renee now lives in Montgomery County. She's excited about belonging to our society. She wrote: "JGSGP is AMAZING!!!" She is researching the following surnames: CHAYTOWICH in Makovetz, Poland, 45 miles SSE of Warsaw; LUSTER in Philadelphia.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Gregory Uzelac



Especially in the United States, we Jewish folk have a very awkward relationship with our names - our surnames that is. While we enjoy making jokes about “Jewish last names,” like *Goldberg*, *Rothstein*, *Moskowitz*, *Singer*; etc. (I’ll put money on every reader knowing multiple *Goldbergs*), and have a vague geographic sense of where they come from, most Jewish people have no idea why their names are what they are, let alone what they mean. This makes sense when you realize we’ve only had surnames for 200 years. Yes, I too am disappointed there was never a high priest named Melvin Cohen-Weissberg at the Second Temple.

Like in many other cultures, in ancient times Jewish people would be known as their father’s child for purposes of distinction in the community and filial respect. If Yehudah had a son named Moshe, Moshe would be Moshe ben Yehudah - Moshe, son of Yehudah. Similarly if he had a daughter named Sarah, she’d be Sara bat Yehudah, or maybe even Sarah bat Rivkah, for her mother Rivkah, amongst other women.

Alas, the world can be very confusing if you just relate to people generationally. Moshe? Which Moshe? Moshe ben Daniel or Moshe ben Yehudah? Moshe ben Yehudah? Which Yehudah? Yehudah ben Moshe or Yehudah ben Yehudah? Yehudah ben Yehudah? Wait, which Yehudah?!

This naming tradition still exists in Jewish culture ceremonially. Think about any time you or someone has ever been called up to read Torah. At my Bar Mitzvah, for example, I was called up as Shai ben Nik ve Chanah. Uzelac, a name I wear proudly with its own history, becomes irrelevant on the *bimah* [raised platform in a synagogue from which the Torah is read]. Our surnames are not important when we read Torah, the Book of Life; it’s just us and those who gave us life.

A given name is something you keep close to you. For those of you who watch *Game of Thrones*, you know that to become no one, “a girl must have no name.” Arya Stark must renounce her identity in order to become invisible. Obviously, Jewish people do not worship “The Many Faced God” but we also recognize the importance of a name. A name is precious because if all else is taken away, a name preserves your humanity and reminds you of your importance in the universe. Without it you are no one; lost. Names are also damned fascinating.

I’m obsessed with names. Origins, phonetics, history, statistics - the whole nine yards - if I can learn about a name I will investigate all its ins and outs. Discovering the etymology of a mysterious name ranks on my list of pleasurable experiences around the same mark as winning free tickets to “Hamilton” and surviving a shark attack. Like studying a section of Talmud or composing the perfect first Tinder message, when you invest time and enthusiastic scholasticism into something even as small as one or two words, the payoff is seismically satisfying.

Jewish surnames are my particular fixation, and the dichotomy of importance versus common knowledge in our community it’s a main fuel source. On the one hand we have rich customs about given names, for example [the *Ashkenazi* custom] that newborns are not to be named for any living relative. On the other hand though, family names (Goldberg, Cohen, Eskinazi) are shrouded in mystery for many Jewish people, especially the *Ashkenazim* of central and eastern Europe due in thanks to their artificialness. Fun fact: They, like many surnames the world over, are the product of European imperialism.

As late as the 18th century, the majority of Jewish people did not even use surnames or family names, at least not officially. It was only in the Enlightenment when the beginnings of modern welfare states and citizenship truly started forming (and when Europe’s rulers decided their Jewish subjects were an untapped tax and military drafting source) that surnames became not just common, but compulsory. To be counted in government records, one needed a name for counting.

The name adoption process began during the reign of Joseph II of the Austrian Empire. After his 1782 Edict of Tolerance, the Hapsburg emperor quite bluntly stated that his Jewish subjects were to become “more useful and serviceable to the State.”

For taxation and military service, this Edict finally allowed Jewish people to practice their religion freely (as well as own property and take up new trades), and another decree was made five years later requiring the Jewish population of the empire all assume family names to really get the system running efficiently.

Initially in Habsburg territories, names were decided upon with constraints, the big ones being that Hebrew and Yiddish were prohibited. Have you ever wondered why so many Ashkenazi names involve the words Roth (red), Blau (blue), Rosen (pink), Weiss (white), Schwarz (black), and Gruen (green) (I think I just summoned the Jewish Power Rangers)? They're all just colors, mixed and matched with regional suffixes like -berg (mountain), -stein (stone), and -man (to denote occupation or trait). And what about Perl (pearl), Diamond, Gold, Silber (silver), Eisen (iron), and Kupfer (copper)? They're precious metals.

Basically, the German Jewish names are all made up from elements, chosen either because of a family patriarch's trade, or quite frankly because it sounds fancy. Protestants were likely taking these names as well, hence why it is a misnomer to completely label the German variants as "Jewish names." The Austrian government sought assimilation and standardization - the very antithesis to the distinct allegiances that names represent. But how terrible was this for the majority of Jewish people who were harshly disenfranchised, even in their own ghettos?

Think if you were given the chance to start a new life, free of association with your father, your reputation, or your tribe (people named Cohen/Kohen/Kahn/Kahane consider themselves descended from the ancient priestly caste). Would you take it? If someone gave you the option to choose what your family name represented, freeing you from barriers, you might want to associate with Austrian gold, silver, and diamonds too or maybe the fantasy of a beautiful field, a Schönfeld in German, Sheinfeld in Yiddish. Who knew that the poor daydreamer Sheinfeld's descendant would become so wealthy telling jokes one day that he would actually own multiple beautiful fields!

The limited options, many of which were then copied or reconfigured, are why so many Ashkenazi names are similar. More principalities and provinces in central Europe as well as kingdoms and empires in the East with large Jewish populations would also adopt "tolerance." This newfound way to up the tax revenue and military size, was attractive to forming nation states, including Iran and the Ottoman Empire where *Sfardim* lived, many retaining Ladino names that told the story of their exodus from Spain and the places they traveled along the way.

As attitudes towards Jewish people changed and households began to own property and settle, the set list of words was not enforced and Jewish people began taking up names like their Christian neighbors based on occupation (butchers might become Fleischer in German lands, Fleishman in Yiddish lands, and Reznik in Russian ones) or city (Moskow-itz, Berlin-er, Friedland-er). Once this legislation reached the Slavic region - the constantly fluctuating Russian Empire and Poland - the German names were fully Yiddish, with occupation-based names coming from local languages, mostly Russian and Polish.

What happened then? Well, almost as soon as Jewish people were forced to take up names, things also started getting dangerous. Pogroms rose in frequency towards the end of the 19th century and of course the forty years after that devolved into the hate of the Holocaust.

Two generations into my mother's family taking up the name Kawalsky (blacksmiths, from the Polish/Russian for anvil, koval), my great grandfather left his shtetl for South Africa. Unless you were a Rothschild (red shield) that earned a title hundreds of years prior through wealth, Jewish people barely had time to settle into their names. Surnames were transliterated and mangled as families moved (by choice or not). I am related to Kawalskys and Kavalskys - the two sides of the same family grew up in the same city with two spellings. "Nu," my great grandfather likely said to his brother upon their arrival in Cape Town, "what's in a name? I'm not planning on being a blacksmith like *Zeyde!*"

That is how the pre-Shoah generation of Jewish people felt about surnames. They were mostly a formality. Especially when most Jewish people were illiterate in English, the spelling and phonology (sounds) of their names changed when coming to America. The meanings were lost in the careless, linguistic chop suey of poor Jewish people with little affinity for a foreign

concept of identification and government officials with little affinity for Jews.

Recently, I decided to revisit two surnames that have been giving me some grief: Kagan (pronounced Kay-gan) and Kasanoff. They all sounded vaguely similar, but I couldn't pin down their roots. Many of my sources hypothesized a connection to Turkic word for chief, khagan (related to the same word khan in Gengis Khan) which Jewish people would have come into contact with in Russia through Mongols, Huns, and the Khazar people, a Turkic khaganate that was rumored to have converted en masse to Judaism during the Byzantine period.

I realized something though. There is no Russian equivalent as soft as the English, Yiddish, and Hebrew letter 'h', nor is there as harsh an equivalent as the Yiddish and Hebrew 'ch' as in Chaim. The Russian authorities would likely have replaced these letters with something pronounceable - and it hit me. Kagan is Kahan. Kasanoff? No doubt it had previously been Kazanov, with the Yiddish 'z' and 'v,' instead of an 's' and double 'f,' changed when they sought to assimilate in the U.S. It's not Kasanoff, it's Chazanov - son of the Chazan! One Kohen and one Chazan. We're dealing in some seriously pious ancestors here.

I wondered if the carriers of these names today even know that they come from religious leaders. The first Kagans and Kazanovs were fortunate and wily enough to cheat the system meant to strip them of distinction. They were people who deemed their heritage and religion as too important to simply become lost as another name in a book. These names are distinctly Jewish.

What's the point of writing this incredibly abridged breakdown? I didn't even get to *Sfardim* and *Mizrahim*, whose communities and names have just as rich a history!

The point is that our surnames -- the parts of our identities that we carry with us and many of us have little insight into -- these are constructed. They are not definitive of who we are, unless we take hold of them -- wrestle the power back. Jewish people could have all been named Schmidt (Smith), in one foul swoop, but instead, we found a way to maintain our individuality. We adapted, only to let our guard down in modernity.

Your name is your connector to the past, a stabilizer for the present, and an informant for the future. I encourage every Jewish person to ask questions about how they got where they are; what sacrifices, challenges, and even complacencies occurred before this very moment. Your name is the best place to start. ❖

Gregory Uzelac is a writer and satirist from New York City, currently based in Brooklyn. He is a graduate of Northwestern University and is passionate about social politics, ethnic identity, and "Star Wars" (even the prequels). More of his work can be found on www.guzelac.com, and he is on Twitter and Instagram as @greguzelac.

A LAST LOOK AT SEATTLE

We covered the recent IAJGS conference pretty thoroughly in our fall issue, but there was one glaring omission.

Here's Joel Spector, JGSGP member and conference program chair, showing off the "Sleepless in Seattle" nightshirt he was given. A nice, unexpected souvenir for all his hard work! ❖

Congratulations Joel on a job well done!



OCTOBER 30 MEETING SUMMARY

“LOCATING PEOPLE THROUGH GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH”

by Linda Ewall-Krocker



Our own president, Fred Blum, works as a private eye when he isn't doing genealogy. He has worked finding people for the Holocaust Museum, the International Tracing Service, Red Cross, and others.

His philosophy is “Remember the people who came before us and honor their memory.” He began his tales by recounting Louis Katz, the late owner of the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, and a second cousin; their grandfathers were brothers. To understand their connection, he had to weed out the *bubbe meises* (literally grandmother's tales, somewhat like an old wives' tales, but with more credibility) from accurate family lore.

He researched at:

- The Free Library of Philadelphia
- Historical Society of Pennsylvania
- Ancestry.com
- JewishGen.org
- Salt Lake City Family History Center
- Filed a letter with Yad Vashem to honor the life of his first cousin once removed (Joseph Schrage, later DeShrage) who was sheltered by the Tokarski family in the town of Lopatyn, near Brody, who are now listed among the “Righteous Among the Nations” as a result
- Italian Genealogy Society has indexed marriage records in New York City from 1864-1937
- Red Cross Holocaust researchers (23rd & Chestnut Streets) – Trace Request Form
- U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Displaced Children – “Remember Me”
- Obits archive

DNA Testing:

FamilyTree DNA is owned by Bennett Greenspan; it conducts more Jewish tests than the other companies. My Heritage and Genie are also doing matching. My Heritage bought Genie, but they maintain separate websites

Art of Cold Calling:

Fred recommends identifying yourself, who you are, and what you're doing (you're not the IRS, or a hacker. You are just trying to find information on so-and-so's family)

“My mother and father were . . . and I think we are related.”

”Just one more question” – like TV detective, Columbo

CONCLUSIONS:

- ASK QUESTIONS AND TAKE CAREFUL NOTES
- THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX
- USE ALTERNATE SPELLINGS FOR NAMES AND TOWNS
- REVISIT YOUR RESEARCH ❖



Fred Blum

NOVEMBER 20 MEETING SUMMARY

“NEVER TELL A BOY NOT TO FIGHT”

by Marilyn Mazer Golden



Harry Boonin had taken a walking tour of London and was inspired to do likewise in Philadelphia. The walking tour he created led to his first book entitled *Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia*. He was inspired to research further and focused on Congregation Keshet Israel on Lombard Street which became the basis of his next book, *The Life and Times of Congregation Keshet Israel*. He discovered that many Jewish families had boxers in their families. Phil Glassman, a boxing manager, was also a congregation member.

Ten years ago the Jewish Museum (then located at 5th street, north of Market Street) produced a stunning exhibit about boxers, and Harry came across many photographs showing the "climate" of the times.

1908: A photo of Cincinnati newsboys in training was featured. Newsboys had to fight to keep their corners at the Philadelphia Reading Railroad stations too!

1910: Girls read books, but the boys fought in the schoolyard.

1918: The Neighborhood Center at 422-28 Bainbridge Street was a popular location for boys to learn boxing. There is also a photograph in the Philadelphia Museum of Art by Thomas Eakins that depicts the first boxing hall where a Jewish boxer and promoter were introduced to the sport.

- Boxing started after the Civil War. It became popular quickly, and by 1892 it was seen at the Winter Circus, the old Cyclorama, on the northeast corner of Broad and Cherry Streets.

- In 1894, the popular venue was run by Harry Pincus, a Jew. This entertainment center turned into a boxing arena due to public demand. At one point, the police shut it down when attendance (5,000) far exceeded police predictions.

Harry focused his discussion on four Jewish boxers from Philadelphia. He researched their lives and the role they played in immigrant America.

- **Izzy Strauss** boxed from 1893-1905. His *nom de guerre* was the “Hebrew Cyclone”. He was known to bite and kick his opponents but Harry couldn't locate the reasons for his unexplained roughhousing, as the local newspapers refrained from delving into anti-Semitism.

- **“Harry Lewis”** (real name Harry Besterman) fought Joe Gans, an African American champion, and both were treated with equal respect. On June 15, 1906, there was a scheduled protest in Philadelphia against the Russian pogroms. Many of the Ukrainian Jews who had traveled from Russia to Philadelphia were now making a living in the regulated sport of boxing. Jews chose to attend the boxing match at the National Boxing Club instead of attending protest meetings the night of the fight. This demonstrated how important boxing had become in Philadelphia at that time. The referee of the fight was Jack McGuigan, an Irishman. He picked a Jew to fight because he knew that the Jews would support the match. Both fighters shook hands, before and after the fight. Everyone got along. There was no doubt that America was different from Russia for the immigrants.

There was some anti-Semitism noted in a mild form. In a fight between Howard Baker and Harry Lewis in Denver, the tale of the tape identified Baker's nationality as "Irish American," while Lewis was listed as a "Jew" not as a “Jewish American.” To try and thwart anti-Semitism, some boxers fought under Irish names (Morris Paley fought as Eddie O’Keefe). For unknown reasons some changed their names to other Jewish names: Jacob Flinkman fought as Benny Kaufman; Samuel Rosetsky became Sammy Smith; and Benjamin Bass was known as "Benny Bass." He grew up in Ukraine and was a "newsie" in Philadelphia. He was the featherweight champion in 1927 and the lightweight champion in 1930.

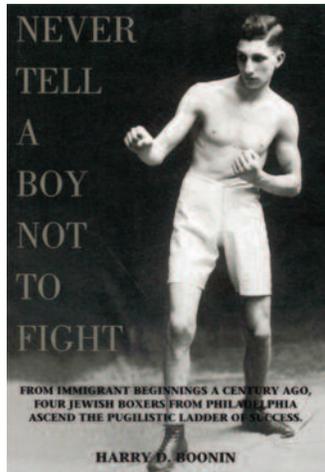
Lew Tandler had sixteen fights under his belt by the time he was sixteen. He was supposed to fight his Jewish pal Morris Paley, a/k/a Eddie O’Keefe, but couldn’t hit Eddie because of their friendship. He was very popular and sparred with all different types of people, including



Harry D. Boonin

a millionaire's son in Delanco, New Jersey in 1918.

Tendler continued to sell newspapers during his early ring years, even though he was earning \$100 per night fighting. He wanted to ensure that the immigrants would get the news. In 1933, he opened Tendler's, his famous restaurant at the corner of Broad and Locust Streets. Al Rosen, the "Hebrew Hammer," brought his entire [Cleveland Indian] baseball team there for dinner. Common Pleas judges and gamblers often dined in his restaurants under one roof but in different rooms. At one time Lew owned four restaurants: one in Miami, two in Atlantic City, and one in Philadelphia.



Boxing's popularity increased during World War I. The most popular club in Philadelphia featuring Jewish fighters at that time was the Olympia Boxing Club at Broad and Fitzwater. In 1921 betting on boxing was illegal, but police were bribed, and the pretense of an athletic club enabled boxing matches to thrive. By 1928 there were more Jewish boxers nationally than there were in any other ethnic group in the country, including the Irish and African Americans.

Harry Boonin's latest book, *Never Tell A Boy Not To Fight*, is a collective biography of four Jewish boxers from Philadelphia who fought a century ago and includes the first full account of the Benny Leonard vs. Lew Tendler lightweight championship fight in 1923 at Yankee Stadium, which was attended by over 58,000 fans. This fight still remains the most famous contest involving two Jews. ❖ *You can purchase Harry's book online at www.judaicashop.net or at the National Museum of American Jewish History (5th & Market Streets, Philadelphia). Half of the sale price (\$24.95) will go to the museum.*

DECEMBER 11 MEETING SUMMARY

"THE GOLDEN AGE OF PHILADELPHIA"

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman, Ph.D., Senior Rabbi at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel

by Linda Ewall-Krocker



In this presentation on "The Gilded Age 1866-1911," developed in conjunction with Joan Nyerson Shrager, M.Ed., Sussman highlighted Philadelphia's rich Jewish life during that period against the backdrop of the opulence of the gilded age.

Philadelphia was the epicenter of Jewish cultural renaissance. The 1876 Centennial, attended by millions, was the defining event of the 19th century in Philadelphia. The famed "Religious Liberty" statue, designed by Confederate Civil War veteran and American Jewish sculptor, Moses Jacob Ezekiel, was dedicated to the people of the United States. Unfortunately it arrived too late for everyone to see at the Centennial celebration. It's now located at 5th & Market Streets, in front of the National Museum of American Jewish History.



Rabbi Lance J. Sussman

Several Jews were involved in the department store industry (Gimbels, Lit Brothers) including Lessing Rosenwald (1891-1979), president and chairman of the board of Sears Roebuck and a collector of art and rare books, which he bequeathed to the National Gallery of Art and the Library of Congress. He was responsible for opening a catalog supply center for the growing mail-order company in Philadelphia and also active in rescue efforts of European Jews.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Simon and Moyer Fleisher, sons of German Jewish immigrants, founded one of the country's first worsted woolen mills, the Fleisher Yarn Company in southwest Philadelphia. Samuel Fleisher, Simon's son,

believed that workers who encountered routine and sameness in their work should have the opportunity to experience and participate in the arts. In 1898 he established art classes for lower income, neighborhood children, many of whom were the sons and daughters of the mill's employees. When he died in 1944, he left his estate in trust for the perpetuation of the program now known as the Fleisher Art Memorial, one of the nation's first community arts centers.

North Broad Street hosted numerous American Jewish institutions, (see below), many of which were established by German Jews during this period. Other German Jews played a significant role in local business life. Philadelphia was the heart of movie making before Hollywood, thus enhancing Jewish wealth. Sigmund Lubin, at one time was owner of the largest chain of movie theaters in the nation and the largest and most advanced movie studio in the industry, Betzwood Studios, located in suburban Philadelphia. Jules Mastbaum, movie theater magnate, donated the Rodin Museum and its collection to the city of Philadelphia.

Adath Jeshurun Mikveh Israel—its fourth building was located at Broad and York Streets Dropsie College (now the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania) Gratz College Congregation Rodeph Sholom	Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, headed by Rabbi Josep Krauskopf Mercantile Club—elite Jewish businessmen's club, located at Broad & Jefferson Streets Jewish Hospital of Philadelphia, established 1864, moved to Old York Road in 1873. YMJA (precursor of Gershman Y) was established at Spring Garden & North Broad Streets
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Other notable German-born, Jewish leaders (with one exception) who left their mark, thus enriching local Jewish life which extended into New York City:

- Isaac Lesser (1806-1868) was instrumental in the establishment of the Hebrew Education Society in 1864, completed a translation of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament), and paved the way for Maimonides College, the first rabbinical school in America, in 1867, and the original Jewish Publication Society.
- The Honorable Mayer Sulzburger (1843-1923) was an outstanding jurist and Jewish lay leader. He was one of the founders of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, active in the Jewish Hospital of Philadelphia. chairman of the publication committee of the Jewish Publication Society, an original trustee of the Baron de Hirsh fund, and involved in the establishment of agricultural colonies in Woodbine, New Jersey and Connecticut. He also owned one of the best private libraries in America; it contained a very large number of Hebraica and Judaica, together with many other early Hebrew printed books (including no less than forty-five *incunabula*), and many manuscripts, all of which he presented to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, at whose reorganization he assisted and of which he is a life director.
- Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf (1858-1923), a friend of President Theodore Roosevelt, founded the National Farm School in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, today known as Delaware Valley University. He was also known for revitalizing the Jewish Publication Society.
- Henry S. Morais (1860-1924) founded the *Jewish Exponent* in 1887 and wrote *The Jews of Philadelphia*, the first major American Jewish community history, in 1894.
- Marcus Jastrow (1829-1903), born in Poland, became the rabbi of Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia in 1866, and in 1886 began publishing his most significant work, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* in pamphlet form. It was later compiled into a two-volume form.

WASP top-down anti-semitism blocked German Jews from settling on Philadelphia's Main Line and from joining institutions like the Union League and the Germantown Cricket Club. German Jews responded by creating their own mirror image of WASP elitism, such as the Mercantile Club (1899). The Plessy vs. Ferguson case in 1896 led to separate but not equal facilities, displaying American animus and global racism. By the end of the twentieth century, many of these institutions needed money, so membership was extended to Jews, women and other "undesirables."

Growth of Jewish population in Philadelphia is depicted below: ❖

1820	500	1850	5,000	1880	12,000 (preceding the mass Eastern European Jewish immigration)
1830	750	1860	8,000		
1840	2,000	1870	10,000		

JGSGP GENEALOGY QUIZ

QUIZ #12:

by David Brill

What little boy on this page from the 1910 census soon moved into the tough occupation listed for his older brother, Morris, and eventually learned to use his fists on the streets of Philadelphia?

The answer appears at the bottom of p. 2.



Photo by Gene Hurwitz

STATE Pennsylvania DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS SHEET NO. 6
 COUNTY Philadelphia THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910—POPULATION (SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT NO. 1 ENUMERATION DISTRICT NO. 287)
 TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY X NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE X WARD OF CITY First 4651
 NAME OF INSTITUTION X ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE fourteenth DAY OF April, 1910. William J. Keeney ENUMERATOR

LOCATION.	NAME	RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.	BIRTHPLACE.			CITIZENSHIP.			OCCUPATION.			EDUCATION.			REMARKS.							
				Place of birth of each parent and parent of each parent, if born in the United States, give the State or territory. If of foreign birth, give the country.	Place of birth of this person.	Place of birth of father of this person.	Whether able to speak English in 1910. If not, give language spoken.	Trade or profession of, or occupation of, in 1910. Give by this person, or by another, if different, for every year, the number of years.	Number of years of school attended in 1910. If not, give number of years of school attended in any year.	Whether able to read English in 1910. If not, give language spoken.	Whether able to write English in 1910. If not, give language spoken.	Whether able to speak English in 1910. If not, give language spoken.	Whether able to write English in 1910. If not, give language spoken.										
1316	101	Shulman Samuel	Son	M	18	18	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	Wagon Driver	Factory	Stone	W	0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
		Samuel	Daughter	F	16	16	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	Wagon Driver	Factory	Stone	W	0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
		Benjamin	Son	M	23	23	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	Wagon Driver	Factory	Stone	W	0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
		Sara	Daughter	F	23	23	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
	102	Bragan Joseph	Head	M	30	30	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	Brass Worker	Brandy	W	0	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
		Abba	Wife	F	24	24	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Julius	Son	M	3	3	Pennsylvania	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Julia	Daughter	F	3	3	Pennsylvania	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
	1520	103	Lendler Morris	Head	M	44	44	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Morris	Daughter	F	18	18	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Morris	Son	M	17	17	Pennsylvania	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Abraham	Son	M	15	15	Pennsylvania	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Louis	Son	M	13	13	Pennsylvania	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
	104	Forstater Sanders	Head	M	28	28	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	Brass Worker	Factory	W	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
		Thomas	Daughter	F	25	25	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Morris	Son	M	14	14	Pennsylvania	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Patric	Daughter	F	13	13	Pennsylvania	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
	1320	105	Falloff Herman	Head	M	58	58	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Sarah	Wife	F	60	60	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Isaac	Son	M	24	24	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Isaac	Son	M	22	22	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Isaac	Son	M	20	20	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
	106	Paganis Ida	Head	F	50	50	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Joseph	Daughter	F	15	15	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Monty	Son	M	21	21	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Samuel	Daughter	F	21	21	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Samuel	Son	M	21	21	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
	1324	107	Wittrilly Harry	Head	M	60	60	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Samuel	Wife	F	34	34	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Morris	Son	M	23	23	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Morris	Son	M	21	21	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
		Sarah	Daughter	F	19	19	Russia	U.S.	U.S.	U.S.	1905	English	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	

JGSGP SPEAKERS BUREAU HAVE EXPERTISE IN GENEALOGY, WILL TRAVEL

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

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 for more details. Our publicity flyer can be found at: 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 2017 Membership & Renewal Form

Enjoy *Chronicles*, Our Award Winning Quarterly Publication

Please print, complete and mail this form with your check to
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/>

All members receive e-mail copies of *Chronicles* as part of their dues. If you would like to have a paper *Chronicles* mailed to you, please check the & include an additional \$10 with your dues to help cover mailing and printing.

Membership Categories	New	Renewal	Paper <i>Chronicles</i>	Amount
Individual - \$25			<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	
Family - \$35 (2 Person Household)			<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	
Sponsor - \$50			<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	
Patron - \$100			<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	
Additional Voluntary Contribution				
Please enclose check payable to JGSGP in the amount of:				

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, 2017.

(New members joining after September 30, 2016 receive membership benefits through December 31, 2017.)

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

Our U.S. mail address is: 1657 The Fairway, #145 Jenkintown, PA 19046

JGSGP is on the web at: <http://www.jsgsp.org>

Look for information about other IAJGS member societies:

<http://www.iajgs.org/members/members.html>

Join the JGSGP Facebook group: <http://tinyurl.com/jsgsp>.



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

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

Sunday, January 29, 2017 1:30 PM

Main Line Reform Temple, 410 Montgomery Ave, Wynnewood Pennsylvania 19096

Israel Pickholtz, Author of *Endogamy: One Family, One People*

Are you concerned about understanding and interpreting your DNA test results? DNA results are especially complicated for Jews, who have largely married “within the tribe” for hundreds of years, a practice known as endogamy. In this presentation, Israel Pickholtz will tackle this challenge head on. Following the talk, copies of his book will be available for purchase and signing.



Sunday, February 26, 2017 1:30 PM

Note: This is a new location for a JGSGP meeting.

Congregation Rodeph Shalom, 615 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Elizabeth Rynecki, Author & Filmmaker

Elizabeth Rynecki is the great granddaughter of the Polish-Jewish artist, Moshe Rynecki (1881-1943). In 1999, Elizabeth designed the original *Moshe Rynecki: Portrait of a Life in Art* website. Today, she continually updates it to keep it current regarding academic research, educational resources and tracking lost Rynecki paintings. Elizabeth has a BA in Rhetoric from Bates College and a master’s degree in Rhetoric and Speech Communications from the University of California, Davis. Her master's thesis focused on children of Holocaust survivors. Elizabeth has written a book, *Chasing Portraits*, the story of her quest to find her great grandfather’s art. Her documentary film, also titled “Chasing Portraits,”



is currently in post-production.

Topic: “Recovering a Lost Art Legacy

Moshe Rynecki’s body of art work, which depicted the everyday lives of the Polish-Jewish community, reached close to eight hundred paintings and sculptures before his life came to a tragic end.

His son George left behind journals detailing the losses the family endured during World War II, including Moshe’s art. In turn, George's granddaughter, Elizabeth, knowing that her family had only recovered a portion of Moshe's art, set off on a quest to recover the lost art. She tells her story of the devastation of war and of the healing she found as she set out to find her great grandfather’s lost art legacy.



Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

The JGSGP genealogy library collection is housed at the:
Historical Society of Pennsylvania,
1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, 19107, (215) 732-6200,
www.hsp.org

You can arrange a visit there to view the *reference only* collection on the HSP website.

Our president, Fred Blum often has free passes available for HSP. Contact Fred at president@jsgsp.org.

Deadline for submission of articles for our spring issue is Sunday, March 12, 2017.

Please send material to: editor@jsgsp.org.