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Karen Spiegel Franklin

**Director, [Family Research Program](#), Leo Baeck Institute, New York
City
and**

Author, [The Plaut Family: Tracing the Legacy](#)



Photo Courtesy of Jack Weinstein

The Plaut Family: Tracing the Legacy

From the Avotaynu Website:

*When Elizabeth S. Plaut began tracing her husband's family roots forty years ago, she had no idea how this undertaking would change her life and turn her into a serious genealogist. A trained researcher, she corresponded with hundreds of people around the world to glean information about the various branches of the family; scoured cemetery files, archives, and other available sources; and maintained copious files brimming over with her notes and charts. Beginning with her quest to find the roots of her husband's branch of the family from Willingshausen, Germany—many years before genealogy became popular—Elizabeth Plaut discovered families in dozens of small villages in Germany. She tracked the relationships between more than 11,000 people and separated the branches according to the many cities where the families originated. Impressive in its scope and in Elizabeth Plaut's meticulous commitment to detail, *The Plaut Family: Tracing the Legacy* will be of immense value to all those interested in knowing more about their roots.*

Karen is and has been an integral part of our Society for many years. Karen is a native of the Philadelphia area and her family have been members of Keneseth Israel since 1847. Karen is a life member of JGSGP and has spoken to our group and our German SIG many times.

Karen has a long list of credits in the arenas of Jewish Family History, Judaica and Art Museums, and as an author. Karen is the Director of Family Research at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, the pre-eminent organization for the study of the history and culture of Jews from German speaking areas. She also is on the Coordinating council of the German SIG and the Chair of the Advisory Committee of *Stammbaum*, the publication of the Leo Baeck Institute. Karen is also a member of the JewishGen Board of Governors, a genealogical consultant to the American Jewish Archives, and a past president of the IAJGS, the global umbrella organization for Jewish genealogical societies. In Karen's spare time, she consults with many organizations and museums involved in Nazi era looted art and she has used genealogical techniques to locate legal owners and heirs of such looted art. Karen wrote an article with two case studies that was published in September 2007 edition of *Chronicles*.

Rabbi Gunther Plaut is a very well known Reform Rabbi in Toronto, who is now 95 years old and is very poor health. Click [here](#) for more information about Rabbi Plaut. Karen's husband, Rabbi Steven Franklin was an assistant Rabbi in Plaut's congregation for a few years. Rabbi Plaut's wife Elizabeth was a genealogist and researched all PLAUTs even if they were not related to or from the same region as her husband. Elizabeth passed away before publishing the PLAUT genealogy. The Plaut children asked Karen to prepare their mother's research for publication with one provision -- no more research or updates. The contract was to compile and complete the work of Elizabeth Plaut without change.

Karen organized the Plaut files into ten file boxes. What Karen found, in addition to the family history charts of the Plaunts, were letters, articles, and other documents that provided a snapshot of world Jewry at that time (over 30 years of research). Examples of these snapshots are what Karen shared with us.

Karen did break her "contract" with the Plaut children. She used the [Yad Vashem Central Database of Shoah Victims](#) to honor the memory of the Plaut martyrs who perished in the Holocaust. The family did agree. Over 500 Plaut's were memorialized in Pages of Testimony.