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

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

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS - ADDRESS CHANGE
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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Reflections from Your Chronicles Team

As your editor I’m the first one to see articles that are submitted for Chronicles. I usually have no idea what the content will be, so I’m pleasantly surprised to read what you’ve written. We’ve established a tradition of devoting our fall issue to reports from the preceding summer’s IAJGS conference. This is a useful way for us to learn from our society’s attendees. In fact, attendees learn what they weren’t able to personally take advantage of as well.

I’m very proud of the content we’re presenting here. I hope you’ll agree that the reports are not only informative, but also evoke genuine emotion. One almost by default must confront history when traveling in Europe. Attending a conference in Eastern Europe compels us to also confront the realization that current Jewish life is a mere shadow of what it once was. The Holocaust and its tragic ramifications are a constant reminder that a vibrant, widespread Jewish presence no longer exists. Nevertheless we endeavor to deal with that past in our continuing efforts to connect with our parents, grandparents, and other relatives.

Fred Blum took time to visit the Belzec Museum to see evidence of what transpired in the death camp there. His visit was useful on multiple levels. “Guest” contributor, Hymie London (from JGS Montreal) and Mike Krug share their experiences at various conference’s sessions. Both Mike and Zyppora Goldberg ventured outside of Warsaw hoping to find verification of their respective parents’ lives. They were both successful, and I think you’ll be pleased with and moved by their reports.

Stuart Bogom presents an aspect of genealogical research that transcends dates, locations, and actions. He was involved in discussions with an unknown relative of his wife’s family. In so doing he had to confront sensitive ethical issues. I commend him for perceptively handling this delicate situation.

As promised in our summer issue, Richard Scholnik shares his genealogy journey. I’m honored that I was able to guide his exploration. He now appreciates what we genealogists are able to uncover and is impressed with the process.
Finally, we present summaries of our September, October, and November meetings. We’ve been fortunate to hear outstanding speakers who’ve enlightened us with their expertise.

**We welcome submissions of articles. Everyone has at least one story to tell.**

Please send your material to editor@jgsgp.org. ❖ Winter issue deadline is Sunday, December 30, 2018.

*Evan Fishman, Editor*

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**PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

I’d like to bring the membership up to date. At our next meeting (Sunday December 16th at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel), we will be electing a new slate of officers for 2019. The slate is as follows:

- President: Fred Blum
- Vice President (Programming): Mark Halpern
- Vice President (Membership): Felicia Mode Alexander
- Secretary: Marilyn Mazer Golden
- Treasurer: Barry Wagner
- Directors: Linda Ewall Krocker, Evan Fishman, Mickey Langsfeld, Joel Spector

As I’ve written before, our library is housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), located at 13th & Locust Streets in Center City Philadelphia. So far, 122 books have been indexed; the remainder will be indexed by March 2019. HSP is an outstanding facility, and if you want to do research there, please contact me for a pass (president@jgsgp.org).

The board of the Philadelphia Jewish Archives (PJAC) has completed its goal of raising funds to house its collections at the Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) at Temple University. The funds will also provide compensation for an archivist. Since PJAC’s mission is now complete, it has decided to dissolve. Feel free to contact Temple if you would like to contribute to the collection. The SCRC is always looking for interesting family genealogies and records. Temple has completed the digitization of the Philadelphia Immigrant Bank Records which are available at their website.

Happy Chanukah and a Happy and Healthy New Year to you all. ❖

*Fred Blum, President*
The 38th annual IAJGS conference was co-hosted by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw. It was held in cooperation with the Polish State Archives. The conference took place at the Hilton Warsaw Hotel, located close to remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto walls which are identified by plaques on the walls and markers on the sidewalks where the walls previously existed.

While in Warsaw, my wife and I went to see the new POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews that is dedicated to 1000 years of Jewish life in Poland. We saw only a small part of the museum during our three-hour visit. The exhibits covered both the good and bad times of Jewish life in Poland in detail.

The following are summaries of a few sessions that were of particular interest to me:

**National Digitization Project of Poland**
The speakers discussed the status of and plans to digitize all collections in the PSA (Polish State Archives). These collections include Jewish vital records of towns in the current and former territories of Poland. Remember, over the centuries, the territory of Poland changed with each major war in Eastern Europe.

**Jewish Records Indexing - Poland: The Impact of Reaching Critical Mass**
JRI-Poland has 5.4 million records covering 550 towns including those in Poland and others formerly in Galicia and Germany. These records include:
- Napoleonic records covering Congress-Poland.
- Russian records covering the Grodno Gubernia and Galician columnar records.
- Prussian civil registers, which are preprinted records.

The Polish records run from 1826-1867, while the Russian era records begin in 1868.

Since 2016, JRI-Poland has been enhancing its functionality to support research involving record access by extracting all genealogically-relevant information. This includes linking the search results with Yiddish names that may identify a grandfather's name that was not in the Russian or Polish documents.
JRI-Poland’s strategies for further expanding its database and improving its ability to support genealogical research were discussed.

The PSA’s priorities are to scan the most fragile books first, those that need repair and restoration, and to focus on national history. There are currently 2.4 million scans online from many PSA branches.

JRI-Poland is one of only a few organizations that are permitted to perform the scanning. A benefit of scanning is to analyze the record and determine if there had been previous errors in interpretation of the handwriting for names, etc.

**Collections of Jewish Interest at the Polish State Archives**
The director of the PSA reviewed the collections held by the archives. The PSA is the primary source of:

- ✓ Jewish vital records
- ✓ Books of residents
- ✓ Kahal (or Jewish community council) records
- ✓ Judenrat (or Jewish community council) records
- ✓ Other municipal records such as tax, census, election and other civic records of interest to Jewish genealogists.

**Regulations Restricting Records Access**
While genealogists rely on access to records, some changes in privacy laws have made it harder to access records of genealogical interest.

The “right to be forgotten” movement began in the European Union in 2014 and has spread globally. On May 25, 2018 the EU GDPR (or General Data Privacy Regulation) became effective. This regulation includes prohibiting the publication of personal data of living persons, especially when it is considered “special” personal data and has caused archives to remove records from their web sites.

Other countries are also following the EU’s lead. Most recently, Canada, through the proposed Office of Privacy Commissioner’s Position on Reputation and Privacy, will invoke “right to be forgotten” regulations. Individual states in the U.S. are also trying to incorporate the right to be forgotten.

The key recommendations made during this session centered on enabling us to preserve records access regardless of where we reside in the world.

**Using Pre-1826 Polish Parish Records in Jewish Research**
While separate vital records registers for Jews began in Congress Poland in 1826, this session provided an information goldmine that can be obtained by researching in the 1808-1825 Catholic parish civil registers.

These records give insight into:

- ✓ The adoption of surnames and patronymic names.
- ✓ The lifestyle of non-town (rural) Jews, who were often innkeepers and liquor franchisees.

The geographic limits of each parish register were often different and more extensive than the later Jewish “town” boundaries.

**Jews of Lublin from 17th to 18th Century**
This session discussed studies on data concerning the Lublin Jewish community included in the city books from 1669-1733.
Municipal court records from the 17th to 18th century contain information regarding the patronyms, cognomens (i.e. nicknames) and professions of the Jewish Lublin residents. They also contain topographic descriptions of spaces owned and used by Jews.

The digital centralization of these data provides the means to study familial connections, neighborship dynamics and professional relations within the Lublin Jewish community. The data also shed light on Jewish-Christian relations and the presence of Jews in the Christian districts of Lublin.

The database is supplemented with information contained in old Lublin maps, which enables researchers to identify where the former Jewish homeowners lived and where public buildings existed.

**Insight into Jewish Surnames in Poland & Galicia**

As a result of the 1787 Edict of the Austrian Empire, Jews in the Zamosc district of Poland acquired Jewish surnames. At this time, Zamosc was an Austrian region. Zamosc was ceded to Poland in 1809.

The period before 1788 and beyond 1808, when civil registration by the PSA began, saw a variety of surname changes and adoptions.

Study of a unique family surname gives special insight into the history, adoption and regulation of Jewish surnames in Congress Poland, Galicia and Eastern Europe. This was illustrated by reviewing the history of Rabbi Yakov Koppel Likower (ca 1695 – 1769) and his descendants. Three of his grandsons founded famous Hasidic dynasties, the histories of which have been published.

This session also focused on an example of the genealogy of patrilineal descendants and the etymology of an unusual surname, phonetically Elbaum. Hidden messages left on a family *matzeva* (or tombstone) over 200 years ago solved the riddle. The presenters discussed the solution of this mystery on its 230th anniversary in Poland, where it all began.

**Jewish Pogroms**

At different times, pogroms swept through many countries where Jews lived.

Most pogroms occurred in Russia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Historians usually discuss four of the pogrom waves of:

- 1821-1871
- 1881-1884 — after the death of Alexander II
- during the revolution of 1905-1907
- during the Russian Civil War.

The session outlined the records connected with these periods that are contained in documents of the Ukraine archives.

**Tracing Pre-1700 Jewish Ancestors**

This session described research based on a conjectural hypothesis that eventually led to a wealth of significant pre-1700 family history, including the discovery of an unanticipated Polish rabbinical line.

First the research focused on merging information from:

- Post-1808 metrical (or vital) records
- Extrapolated pre-1808 metrical records
- Yizkor book chronicles
- Rabbinical sources
- A rare record book of Pinkas Kahal (i.e. Jewish community council)
As a result of a stunning discovery during an incidental chat with a Hasid from Brooklyn, researchers were able to reconstruct a formal family tree through twelve generations from about 1685 to 2018.

This research success was aided by the book *Otsar Harabanim* (Rabbis' Encyclopedia) by Rabbi Nathan Zvi Friedmann.

### Final Observations and Benefits

I have attended the annual IAJGS conferences since 2007. Clearly, it is impossible to attend every session as multiple sessions are held concurrently. The 2018 conference had 164 sessions over five days. Each year it is very hard for me to decide which sessions will be most worthwhile. Usually my choices are very beneficial, although sometimes not.

In my opinion, the most significant benefit of any conference is renewing friendships that I have made over the years and getting personal assistance with genealogical issues from recognized experts, who are usually among my friends.

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_Hymie London is an executive officer of JGS of Montreal. He was trained as a theoretical mathematician and currently serves as president of Systems Canada which provides consulting advice to clients with respect to receiving R&D tax credits and e-business tax credits._

_His interest in genealogy began as a youth when he learned that his maternal grandparents were first cousins. Surnames and related town, all in present day Ukraine: VACHOTENSKY from a shtetl east of Kaniv; ARONSKY from either Dnepropetrovsk or Ekaterinoslav; Loksz from Rozhishche; GREENBLATT (or GRUNBLATT) and BRENZENSKY from Ustyluh. So far he’s had limited success in finding relevant records. Contact Hymie at: hy@systemscanada.com_

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**TRIP TO POLAND**

*T*his past August I traveled to Warsaw to attend the IAJGS annual conference. The conference gives the attendee the opportunity to hear some very interesting talks, learn new research tips, reconnect with old friends and distant cousins, and make new connections.

One of my main reasons to travel to Poland was to visit the museum at the Belzec death camp. This is the site where about 500,000 Jews were murdered during an eighteen-month period. After the camp was closed in December 1943, the Nazis destroyed everything there to try and hide their horrendous crimes. This is the site where many of my relatives perished. I last visited the area in 2002 when I saw a small monument on the grounds.

In 2004 a museum was proposed for the site. My first cousin once removed, Joseph Schrage, lost his entire family in the Holocaust. He was the only survivor by hiding in the forest for twenty months in the area where he lived in Poland, near the towns of Radziechow and Lopatyn. Joseph’s father, Abraham, was a younger brother to my mother’s father Jacob, who was the only grandparent I knew.

When I learned about the museum, I put Joseph in touch with the curator. No records were kept at the camp since it was only a death camp. Victims were sent from the train to an undressing room and then into the gas cham-
ber. The Nazis used diesel engines to kill these poor souls. Joseph’s parents were murdered there.

When I arrived at the museum, the first question I asked was, “Do you have any photographs of victims.” The young girl behind the window pulled a book off the shelf and looked to see if any of my Schrage relatives were listed. I was shocked and stunned to see a photograph (left) of Joseph and his parents, two brothers, and his sister. It was a very emotional moment to see the faces of relatives I would never meet. A feeling of deep sadness fell over me for quite some time. I was very close to my grandfather, and I can’t imagine what it would have been like to learn that your brother and his family were murdered. There were many other Schrage relatives lost in Belzec by the Einsatzgruppen Schutzstaffel (SS) paramilitary death squads of Nazi Germany that were responsible for mass killings, primarily by shooting, during World War II (1939–45) at Kamionka Strumilowa.

The museum was done very well with many photos and descriptions. It is so hard to fathom the enormity of the crimes committed throughout Europe.

Fred became interested in his family history in 1998 and has since been able to locate his ancestors dating back to 1810. To date he has identified over 1200 family members.

Licensed as a private investigator in 1988, he has applied his skills in many other situations. A native Philadelphian and active member of the 1967 graduating class of Northeast High School, he has been able to locate almost all of his 1185 fellow alums.

Building on the expertise and knowledge he acquired, he decided to become a volunteer for the International Red Cross Holocaust Tracing Service in April 2005, hoping to help the IRC in reconnecting Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian Holocaust survivors. The following year he was awarded its local and international “Volunteer of the Year” award. Since 2011 Fred has also volunteered for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and assists in locating European children that were orphaned between 1933 – 1945. Fred has been president of JGSGP since 2007. Contact Fred at president@jgsgp.org.
It's impossible to say what remains of a life departed. To loved ones, vivid memories, for sure. To those who came in more casual contact, moments of memories less vivid. To those who never knew the departed, perhaps an awareness of who they had been in life.

What is left of those who were never known, who had no visible impact on our lives? Those of us who believe we are all one life force may say that each death leaves a minute tear in the fabric of that force. Others may believe, a la six degrees of separation, that their lives impacted others, and those impacted still others. The web that was created ultimately reached us, even if we were unaware.

In Warsaw, at the Jewish Genealogical Conference, with an overwhelming amount of data and experience and emotion filling up whatever brain space I had, my most profound experience was meeting a woman exhibitor who helped to run a tiny company called Mi Polin. These are people who travel to towns and villages throughout Poland in order to see if there are any buildings left standing in which Jews used to live.

Once they find such a building, they look for evidence of a mezuzah that used to be nailed to an exterior door frame. Every Jewish home had one. When many Jews fled or were taken, the last item they would have pulled out of the door frame would have been their precious mezuzah. Or, when non-Jews took over the building, the first items they would have trashed would have been the mezuzah. In either case, if enough layers of paint had been applied over time before the mezuzah was removed, there would have been an impression left of the outlines of the mezuzah the door frame.

This impression is what the people who run Mi Polin call "tracings." [Mi Polin is the first Polish Judaica company since World War II and aims to preserve and reinforce Polish-Jewish identity.] In many cases there are no loved ones to mourn these dead, no friends or acquaintances to recall the merchants they bought from, the teachers who taught their children, the tailors who mended their clothes, the midwives who delivered their babies. In many cases, these tracings are the sole evidence that lives were lived.

If Mi Polin finds a tracing, they make a wax mold of that tracing on site. They then cast the mold in bronze. The result is beautiful but is nothing one can readily identify, unless one knows what one is looking at. At the conference, I looked at the tracings Mi Polin had on display. And then I found a part of me that was capable of even more emotion than I had already expended when visiting Auschwitz, the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto, and in hearing the countless stories told by genealogists, and in listening to a panel of Polish Christians who had saved Jews during the war.

My tears seems to come out of nowhere. I cried for the people whose lives were represented on the table in front of me. I cried for my own lost family members. And I cried in gratitude that the people of Mi Polin were giving something back to those who had lost so much.

When I stopped crying, I asked them if they would considered going to Pinsk, where my father was born. They said they had been discussing that. I was elated. I gave them my uncle's address, on a street called Dominikanska. It was his last place of residence before being taken away. I had the address, because he had been communicating steadily with my father, heartbreaking postcards that stopped suddenly in 1941.

After a few months, Mi Polin went to Pinsk. And after several weeks, I received an
email, simply saying "Amazing. We never expected this."
Shortly after, I received photos of a small, decrepit apartment building, sitting alone. No building flanked it, only an empty lot. Interior photos showed an apartment, now unlivable, that might have been lovely at one time. The last two photos showed a mezuzah tracing on the door frame.

The street sign attached to the building exterior was not the street my uncle lived on. It didn't matter. This would be as close as I could get to my father's life and my family's existence. I knew I would buy that tracing, after it was cast. But as an aside, I asked the woman from Mi Polin if they ever found Dominikanska Street. The answer she sent was accompanied by an ancient street map. The explanation: "This street was called Dominikanska until after the war. We even found, on another exterior door frame, not only a tracing, but half of the mezuzah still in place. That almost never happens."

Several days ago, as I was awaiting my tracing to arrive in the mail, I learned that eleven more Jews, eleven more human beings, had been deprived of life for no reason other than being who they were.

In this overly documented world, no one will have to search for evidence of their lives. It will be found in thousands of photos, videos, and bits of memorabilia. No mezuzahs have been ripped out of their door frames. None of them either fled or were taken in the night. Their lives were lived in daylight, with a belief that they were secure from what others had been subjected to.

But their loss is no less. It is as profound as any other loss. It deprives all of us of whatever love these people could have given, whatever contribution these people could have made.

In the end, these people's lives are all tracings. Some of them leave tracings on our hearts. All of them leave tracings on our humanity.


A native of Philadelphia, Renee was a special education teacher and is now a realtor. She's also a novelist, short story writer, and has co-authored two books about life over fifty. Her blog is https://lifeintheboomerlane.com .

While she’s always been interested in genealogy, her cousin and JGSGP member, Linda Ewall-Krocker, has been her inspiration and has done the legwork. Linda motivated her to attend the 2018 IAJGS conference in Warsaw.
Renee is searching: FISZELOW (Fisher) from Pinsk, now Belarus; SLOSSMAN from Starokonstantinov, Ukraine.

VISITING POLAND, MY PARENTS’ FORMER HOMELAND
by Zyppora Goldberg

When I found out that the 2018 IAJGS conference would be held in Warsaw, Poland, I felt compelled to go. I am the daughter of Holocaust survivors whose families lived in Poland for generations until their communities were obliterated in World War II. I knew that some family members and friends would disapprove. I also had my own misgivings, particularly when I heard about the controversial law that was recently enacted which outlaws blaming the Polish state or people for involvement or responsibility for the Nazi occupation during World War II. Despite all the negativity, I decided to go because this was probably the only chance I would have to see the places I had heard about, to obtain family records that are not easily accessed or available online, and to learn more about the history of Polish Jewry. As painful as it might be, I also wanted to visit some of the camps and ghettos where so many of my close relatives were imprisoned and perished.

Warsaw
Attending the conference in Warsaw had special meaning for me because my late father was born and raised in the city. He never spoke of his life there, but I found his family’s address recorded by the Nazis in his wartime papers. Marianska Street still exists, and it is within walking distance of the Hilton Hotel where the conference was held. My father’s residence and
the original buildings on his block are gone. One pre-war building that previously housed a pharmacy and the Jewish Nurses School remains on another part of the street.

My father’s former street is in the neighborhood of the Nozyk Synagogue, the only synagogue in Warsaw to survive World War II because the Nazis used it as a stable. On the Friday night before the conference, I attended Shabbat services there with other conference attendees, a large group of students from South America, and members of the local community. I sat next to a woman who told me she had discovered her Jewish heritage only two years before. I was overcome with emotion seeing the synagogue filled with Jewish worshipers. I don’t know if my father ever went to this synagogue, but being there gave me a sense of connection to his past life in Warsaw.

The Hilton Hotel, the Nozyk Synagogue, and Marianska Street are all situated within the former boundaries of the Warsaw Ghetto, which is delineated by pavement markers and wall plaques. Two metal structures with visual representations mark where the footbridge between the large and small ghettos was. Almost all the ghetto is gone, but I saw a fragment of the ghetto wall and the monument at the Umschlagplatz, where the ghetto inhabitants were assembled for transport to Treblinka and other camps. My father may well have stood there, since he was in the ghetto from its start in 1940 until April 1943, when he was transported to the Bedzin labor camp near Lublin.

The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, in its original pre-war building, is well worth a visit. It contains an exhibit on the Ringelblum Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto and displays one of the milk cans in which the documents were found. When I visited in August, the institute featured a special exhibit by American photographer Chuck Fishman, showing the regeneration of the Polish-Jewish community from his initial visit between 1975-1983 to his second visit in 2013.

I contacted the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center at the Jewish Historical Institute before my visit and inquired about any records for my relatives who lived in Warsaw at the outbreak of World War II and are presumed to have died either in the ghetto or in a concentration camp. I was told it is very difficult to find any information for Warsaw residents during the war. I was lucky to have discovered a Warsaw Ghetto death certificate for my father’s sister on the JRI-Poland website, and the institute provided me with a scan of the original. My father never talked about his siblings, and I still do not know how many he had, so being able to identify even one was a major revelation. I cried when I learned that she died at age twenty-six of starvation due to the extreme food rationing imposed by the Nazis on Jews in the ghetto. I plan to include my aunt in my yizkor prayers (recited four times during the Jewish calendar year for deceased loved ones) going forward.

The institute's research center also holds the entire set of pre-World War II Jewish records for the small town of Zareby Koscielne where my maternal grandmother and her ancestors lived. I was surprised and thrilled to be able to hold the actual handwritten record books from the 19th and early 20th centuries in my hands. I had written down the index entries from the JRI-Poland website and took photos of my records of interest.

Many of my relatives died in the Warsaw Ghetto, and consequently, I tried to find out where they were buried. Some of the victims were buried in the Okopowa Jewish cemetery. Before going to the cemetery, I e-mailed the
caretaker and asked him to search his database for tombstones or markers for my family names. He did not find any, but there are some unmarked graves in the cemetery itself and in a fenced-in field outside the cemetery walls. I was disappointed that the gate to that field was locked when I went there on a Sunday. I struck up a conversation with a local, non-Jewish, Polish man who was standing nearby. When I told him I wouldn’t be able to come back, he volunteered to take pictures for me on another day when the gate was open and e-mail them to me. He kept his promise, and I thanked him for his kindness.

Another point of interest to me in the Okopowa cemetery was seeing a sewer hole that was supposedly used to go between the ghetto and the cemetery. I was amazed that anyone could climb up such a deep hole using the small, jagged steps inside. The original cover has been replaced with a commemorative grate with a Jewish star on it. The cemetery also contains some very elaborate tombstones and the graves of prominent Jewish Varsovians.

The one must-see for all Jewish visitors to Warsaw is the POLIN Museum with its core exhibit that tells the 1,000-year history of the Jews in Poland juxtaposed against the history of the country. I also saw the special exhibit, “Estranged: March ’68 and Its Aftermath,” detailing the round of anti-Semitism that touched off mass Jewish emigration at that time. Named one of the best museums in Europe, POLIN Museum contains a wealth of information that can seem overwhelming in one visit. Instead, I recommend taking multiple, shorter visits in order to fully absorb all the exhibits.

Treblinka
I learned from my research that many of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto were sent to the Treblinka extermination camp. I decided to visit it because of the likelihood that some of my relatives died there. The camp is literally in the middle of a forest, so it can only be accessed by car or a tour bus. The original buildings were destroyed and the mass graves hidden by the Nazis, but walking the grounds of the camp and reflecting on what took place there still evokes a powerful response. I followed the railroad tracks that led into the camp, toured the museum, and stood before the rows of commemorative tombstones that indicate how many people died and the towns they were from. I happened to visit on August 2 which was the anniversary of the 1943 prisoner revolt at Treblinka. The commemorative ceremony was attended by many Polish dignitaries, priests, Poland’s Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich, and the widow of Samuel Willenberg, one of the few prisoners who survived. It was a memorable experience.

Ancestral Towns
During my trip to Poland, I arranged to visit several of my families’ ancestral towns. My father was born in Warsaw, but his family moved there, and his ancestors originated from the city of Lodz, west of Warsaw, and from the smaller towns of Brzeziny, Grojec, Warka, and Glowaczow, near Warsaw and Lodz. My mother and her paternal ancestors were from Pultusk.

To prepare for my trip, I joined Facebook groups for Jewish heritage for two of my towns of interest. As a result, I became acquainted with two wonderful Polish volunteers from the Forum for Dialogue who agreed to show me around Pultusk and Grojec. This is the largest and oldest Polish non-governmental agency that fosters communication between Poles and Jews and educates Polish school children about the lost history of Jews in many of their towns. [See Mark Halpern's article about Forum for Dialogue in Chronicles, Vol. 30-1, Spring 2013, pp. 11-14] I hired a researcher who was recommended to me by a relative and some fellow JRI-Poland researchers for my tours of Brzeziny and Lodz. I did not have time to travel to Warka and Glowaczow, but I did hire a researcher to obtain records from those towns. To get to my destinations, I took trains and buses or hired a driver when the heritage sites were not close together or were difficult to get to.

I strongly recommend having a Polish speaker with you when you visit small towns. Very few people in the small towns spoke fluent English, and it would have been impossible to get records or do research without being able to communicate in Polish.
Unlike Warsaw and Lodz, there is no Jewish community in the small towns I visited, and their Jewish cemeteries were destroyed. The Nazis tried to eradicate all traces of Jewish life, including ripping out tombstones and using them to pave streets and in other construction projects. I had read about this beforehand, but I still wasn’t prepared for how I would feel when I saw the desecration in person.

Pultusk
I walked through the former Jewish quarter, off Kolinski Street, which is marked by a monument. The building that housed the synagogue remains but is vacant and in disrepair. The Jewish cemetery survived the Nazis but has succumbed to the Communists. A big apartment building sits on the site of a former cemetery. A small, fenced-in memorial composed of broken fragments of tombstones is all that is left to mark the area. My guide from the Forum for Dialogue holds the key to the gate, so I was glad I had come with her and was able to get inside. Since no records are available in Pultusk before 1850, the loss of tombstones in the cemetery further limited my research sources.

I stood on the bridge over the Narew River where the Jews of the town were forcibly rounded up and then expelled in September 1939. In fact, many were killed before they even made it over the bridge. I can only imagine the terror my mother, grandparents, and uncles must have felt. They were lucky in the long run, since they were given the chance to live. They fled on foot with the other Jewish refugees to Bialystok and were then deported to various regions of Russia.

My guide also took me to the former bishop’s castle, which has been reinvented as the Hotel Zamek. She introduced me to a director there, and we looked through a book of local history for any references to my surnames of interest. We found a graduation record for one of my great uncles and learned that the school he attended was very selective, so he must have been an excellent student.

I made the biggest discovery of my trip when I obtained my mother’s birth certificate from the Pultusk town hall. There had been some speculation about my mother’s true age when she died, but I was shocked to find out that she was seven years older than she claimed on all her official documents in the U.S. I suspect she adjusted her age when she married my father, who was five years younger. I also obtained the birth dates of my uncles, but I was not permitted to get actual certificates because I’m not a direct descendant (child or grandchild).

I learned through the conference website about the Polish Declarations of Admiration and Friendship for the United States which commemorated the 150th anniversary of our country’s independence in 1926. The original manuscripts are housed in the Library of Congress and have been digitized. This collection of 111 volumes includes the signatures of more than 20,000 elementary school children representing 235 school districts throughout Poland. I was very excited to find my mother’s elementary school in Pultusk represented and to see her signature (arrow above) when she was eleven years old.

Lodz
Lodz has an active Jewish community which maintains a Jewish hotel and dining room and an information center. I had limited time and was unable to visit the Jewish cemetery which is still intact. My guide drove me through the area of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto and to the Radogoszcz (Radegast) train station from which Jews from the ghetto were transported to concentration camps. I also visited the palace/museum of the Jewish industrialist, Izrael Poznański.
Brzeziny and Grojec
The grandmother I am named after was born in Brzeziny, so the town was a crucial stop for me. The Brzeziny regional museum has exhibits that describe the history of the town as a textile center and include information on the Jews who lived there. The museum director looked through local property records for my family names and found the address for a previously unknown relative. My guide later drove me through the former Jewish area of the town and showed me where that particular building was located. I also saw a few vacant pre-war buildings, one of which retains the imprint of a mezuzah (a case containing parchment inscribed with Jewish religious texts) on the door frame. The Jewish cemetery is overgrown with weeds and strewn with empty bottles. It’s fenced in and contains a monument and a random tombstone here and there. Some broken, rescued Jewish tombstones are piled up in front of the regional museum but have not been catalogued.

The Grojec town hall displays photographs of some members of the Jewish community before World War II. My guide showed me the areas where Jews had lived, but there are no longer any traces of Jewish life there. The cemetery has been reduced to a vacant, fenced-in field.

Final Thoughts
Am I glad I went to Poland? It was a bittersweet, emotionally wrenching trip for me in many ways, but I accomplished a number of research goals and got some unexpected bonus information. It was important to me to see where my immediate and extended family had lived and to pay my respects to the deceased by visiting the camps, memorials, and what is left of the cemeteries.

The most frequent question I was asked after I returned to the United States was, “As a Jew, how were you treated by Poles?” I can only answer that the local people I personally interacted with were very gracious and helpful, so despite everything we hear in the news, there are still good people wherever we go.

A first-generation American and daughter of Holocaust survivors from Poland, Zyppora Goldberg hails from Philadelphia and now lives in Horsham. She got a jump-start in researching her family’s lost history by attending the IAJGS-Philadelphia conference in 2009.

Zyppora is researching in Poland: GLODOWSKI, ROSENBLUM / Pultusk; JURKOWICZ, HERYNGER / Pultusk / Zareby / Stoczek; FREIDENREICH, HERSZENBERG, BORENSTEIN / Warka/Brzeziny / Lodz: GOLDBERG / Warsaw / Glowaczow.

Zyppora is a technical writer, currently working in the healthcare field. Contact Zyporra at: tktr@yahoo.com

MY FIRST IAJGS CONFERENCE – WARSAW, POLAND
by Mike Krug

When our illustrious editor, Evan, heard I was going to attend my first IAJGS conference in Warsaw, he politely told me, “You will write an article for Chronicles.” With thanks to Evan for his mentoring, here is a travelogue of my first IAJGS conference.

I decided to attend the conference in Warsaw for three reasons:

1) Attending the IAJGS conference in Warsaw was my opportunity to achieve one of my retirement bucket list entries. It helped me justify a visit to Poland and my father’s ancestral home in Chelm. YES CHELM!

My father spoke very little about the Holocaust, leaving me with many questions. He was the only member of his family to immigrate to the U.S. His parents married in 1897 in Chelm, Poland, and all seven of their children were born there. His family started leaving Chelm in the 1920s, some by choice and some by circumstances, and moved to various places,
including, Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, Paris, and eventually DP camps. After the liberation, two stayed in Russia/Lithuania, two settled in Paris, my grandparents and an aunt made aliya (immigration to Israel) in 1948 and settled in Safad/Tzfat. Only one brother was killed by the Nazis in Majdanek.

2) To visit Majdanek concentration camp where my Uncle, Yiddel Kruk, my father’s youngest sibling, was killed.

3) To say kaddish (an ancient Jewish prayer sequence regularly recited in the synagogue service, including thanksgiving and praise and concluding with a prayer for universal peace; a variation of kaddish is recited for the dead) at the Chelm cemetery and in Majdanek.

THE CONFERENCE

The conference was my first experience of a global genealogy event. It was overwhelming in a good way with an amazing selection of simultaneous workshops, SIG (Special Interest Group) meetings/luncheons, meet and greet sessions, and evening programs. In many respects the conference was like a gigantic bar mitzvah, hosted by Robinn Magid, Lead Conference Co-Chair and Ken Bravo, IAJGS President. In attendance were 750 of our closest mishpacha (family) from thirty countries. The American contingent was the largest in number, followed by Israel. Special thanks to Robinn Magid and Avraham Groll, Executive Director of JewishGen, for their care and concern in arranging to have kosher food available and scheduling minyanim (quorums for prayer services), especially for those saying kaddish.

IAJGS FACEBOOK BLOG

The conference started for me the day IAJGS rolled out its blog on Facebook. Any and all questions and discussions were posted and responded to generally within twenty-four hours. I wanted to be as prepared as possible for the conference. I felt a loss when the site closed down at the end of August because it had become my daily companion. I now had to deal with breaking the addiction, warranting a great deal of post-conference intervention!

The power of the blog was unbelievable. As an example, I posted that I was looking for someone to share a post-conference tour to Chelm, Majdanek, and Lublin. Needless to say there were not many responses, but all you need, though, is one really good one. Within a day an organizer of the Chelmer Organization of Israel contacted me to tell me about the group’s resources including a website and a global Whatsapp network of 170 Chelmers, actively discussing Chelm and sharing pictures to keep the memory alive. Many of the shared pictures are of people they do not know, in the hope that someone will recognize a relative or family friend. The site was invaluable, with participants providing me with contact information for an English-speaking high school teacher in Chelm, Mariusz Klimczak, as my tour guide, and a Polish historian, Zbigniew Lubaszewki, who has been archiving and researching the Jewish community in Chelm for over twenty years. This historian has published a book in Polish describing the Chelm Jewish community block by block, providing the names of those who lived on each block. My family name, Kruk, was there. The book is currently out of print but is being updated and translated into English. Both individuals are Christians dedicated to keeping alive the history of Jewish Chelm and klezmer music with a group called Shalom Chelm, currently touring Israel.

WORKSHOPS/SESSIONS

Starting with the Sunday morning program for first time conference attendees like me, the sessions ran daily from 8 am to 5 pm. Every time slot offered eight to ten workshop/session offerings to choose from. Making a choice as to what to attend was not an easy task. For example, I had trouble choosing between an “Intro to JewishGen.org,” a session on Polish Jewish records, or “Shtetl Routes: Genealogical Aspects.” A gala dinner was held on Thursday evening, when our very own Mark Halpern was awarded the annual Lifetime Achievement Award. The conference ended mid-day Friday.
CONFERENCE APP
Thank heavens for the conference app that I was able to download to my iPhone. It included a calendar to organize your schedule of workshops/sessions, workshop descriptions, presenters’ biographies, attendees list, speakers list, map of the conference rooms, and downloads of handouts. I did not schedule any workshop that would be available on OnDe after the conference. OnDe (or On-Demand!) includes more than forty workshops that were taped for future viewing and will be available until July 2019, just before the start of the Cleveland conference. For those who did not attend the conference, you can still buy access for $209.00. Go to www.iajgs2018.org to register. Even with the ability to view OnDe after the conference, how would I catch all the workshops I wanted to see and when would I sleep?

IDENTITY CRISIS
In addition to attending many sessions focused on Eastern Poland (Galicia), where my father’s family was from (Chelm), I also spent time learning about Lithuania, where my mother’s family came from. I only became aware of my Lithuanian roots when I received an e-mail four years ago from Ancestry.com, notifying me that a cousin from my mother’s side wanted to contact me. I don’t think my mother even knew this cousin existed, and we now correspond by e-mail. After many hours of soul searching I am proud to admit being half-Galitzianer and half-Litvak. Surprisingly, both sides of my family are still talking to me! Recently I became aware that two of my father’s siblings had left Chelm before 1939 for Vilnius, Lithuania, the same city my maternal grandmother’s family was from. Who knows, they might have been neighbors!

RESOURCE ROOM
More than twenty organizations were represented in the very helpful resource room. These included JewishGen, POLIN Museum, Yad Vashem, Polish government representatives providing information on Polish (EU) citizenship, Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA), Ancestry, Family Tree Maker, Beit Hatfutsot, Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries in Poland, International Tracing Service, Joint Distribution Committee, and more. I spent time talking to the vendors, but I definitely could have spent more time there. Mentors and translators were available as well.

TOURS
I managed to sneak out of the conference for two afternoon tours of the Warsaw Ghetto. The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, the official conference tour group and platinum conference sponsor, provided excellent guides and air-conditioned buses (the temperature was in the 90s). My father and an uncle had been in the Warsaw Ghetto, and I was hoping to see more of it. The Germans tore down ghettos so the world would not have evidence of their wartime atrocities. The only current evidence of the ghetto can be seen in a few spots where the walls are still in place in backyards and courtyards.

MUSEUMS
Although I am not a museum goer, I did visit two museums in Warsaw. The POLIN Museum was established in 2005, opened in 2013, and is located on land that was part of the Warsaw Ghetto. The museum is dedicated to showcasing 1,000 years of Polish history and concurrent Jewish life. I did a self-guided audio tour in English. The exhibits are unbelievable and a “must-see” if you go to Warsaw. The art work and detail of the exhibits describing all aspects of Jewish life in Poland were fascinating. The tour took over three hours. Thankfully there were lots of benches to rest on along the way. I was so exhausted by the end that I could not appreciate the twentieth century segment in which I was most interested. Had I had more time in Warsaw, I would have gone back for another visit.
The Emanuel Ringelblum Archive, located at the Jewish Historical Institute and under the overall auspices of the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, is a unique collection of documents that provides some of the world’s most meaningful testimonies about the extermination of Polish Jewry. Dr. Ringelblum, a historian, formed a small secret group in the Warsaw Ghetto named the Oneg Shabbat (Hebrew for “joy of the Sabbath”) organization. Realizing that many would not survive the war, this group’s mission was to gather and develop documentation on the fates of Jews under the German occupation. Between July 1942 and February 1943, members of Oneg Shabbat (so named because the group tended to meet on Shabbat to discuss the progress of their collection and documentation efforts) placed the collected records in ten metal boxes and two commercial size milk containers and buried them in the basement of one of the ghetto buildings. The containers were not waterproof, and the documents were moldy and damp when found, but they were well enough preserved. The records include lists of residents, commentary on life in the ghetto, letters, etc.

**MY BUCKET LIST – VISITING CHELM & MAJDANEK**

As mentioned earlier the IAJGS conference in Warsaw was my opportunity to justify a visit to Poland and my father’s ancestral home in Chelm. I hired an English-speaking driver, referred to me by Chabad (or Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement), who stayed with me for two days. Chelm is a four-hour drive from Warsaw and about forty kilometers from Ukraine.

Like many survivors, my father did not speak to me about the Holocaust. Most of what I know of his experience is from things he told my mother. I was able to obtain my father’s German reparation appeal documents during a visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum three years ago. I’m still trying to get the original application. Roger Lustig translated the documents for me, and they were quite an eye opener.

I visited the Jewish cemetery in Chelm, which was fenced in and overgrown. I was not able to read the headstones. Many had plaques attached to them in memoriam, donated by descendants who contributed to preserving the cemetery. Contemplating the horror of the destruction of gravestones (matzevot) by the Germans, who used them to build roadways, numbed me.

Majdanek concentration camp, located between Chelm and Lublin, has been preserved by the Poles as a memorial to the deaths of 60,000 Jews (as reported by the Majdanek Museum). The hardest section of the immense camp for me was not the gas chamber, but the overcrowded barracks lined with multiple levels of bunk beds and the crematorium.

The highlight of my sixteen days in Poland was meeting with Zbigniew Lubaszewski, the Chelm historian. He took out a piece of paper that listed the addresses where my father’s family lived, ironically across the street from where we sat, as well as the locations of my grandparents’ business around the corner, and my aunts’ businesses, etc. Despite the fact that my father and I were not close, I felt like a little boy discovering where his family had lived, prayed, went shopping, etc. We also discussed the various labor and DP camps where my father had been held until he finally hid in the woods and was liberated by the Russians.

**IN SUMMARY**

Would I go back to Poland? Probably not. This was my one and only visit to the country where our brethren were killed. When I asked my tour guide what percentage of the people in Chelm are anti-Semitic, he replied, “Probably more than half, and the young people do not know the history of the city during the early 1900s.” I am thankful that there are people who are concerned about pre-
A dear friend asked me what I will do with my family research. My answer was that I hope to put my findings into an informative format, so my grandchildren, nieces and nephews may have it available and take interest to learn their own history. There are fewer survivors and more deniers to this history. We must tell the story so history does not forget our six million co-religionists.

Mike Krug is a snowbird since retiring in March 2014, spending winters in Boynton Beach, Florida enjoying JGSPBC meetings. At the time of retirement he worked for the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, underwriting corporate tax incentive grants to entice companies to locate in New Jersey. He grew up in the heart of Flatbush, in Brooklyn, and moved to Cherry Hill, New Jersey in 1979, where he currently resides. Mike & Elyse have two sons and two beautiful grandchildren. Mike’s interest in genealogy dates back many years. In addition to researching the KRUK & AJL (paternal grandmother) families, (Chelm, Poland, Turisk, Ukraine, Vilnius, Lithuania) he also follows on his mother’s side the MODUCHOWITZ / BOONE family (Vilnius, Lithuania). Contact Mike at: mikekrug@verizon.net

A GENEALOGY JOURNEY - PART 2

by Richard Scholnik

What started out for me as curiosity about a few deceased ancestors this past June has turned into an expanding network full of living relatives with whom to communicate and share . . . and even meet for the first time!

After Evan (Fishman) found the connections I had with those few deceased ancestors in Montefiore Cemetery, I thought it would be fun to meet one of their living descendants for lunch right after my sisters and I visited their Long Island graves in July. (see photo in Chronicles Vol. 35-2, Summer 2018 p. 3).

Evan worked his magic and somehow found the street address of Alvin R., a second cousin I didn't know existed. It was exciting to be able to write to him, introduce myself, describe how we are related, and tell him what I wanted (not money!). He passed my letter along to one of his three brothers, Aaron R., who e-mailed me. It turned out that Aaron also is interested in family history, and, over time, he sent me some fascinating pictures, videos and stories. Unfortunately, he and his brothers had long since moved too far away from Long Island for lunch, but they were having a family picnic/reunion later that summer farther up in New York State, about three hours north of where I live. My sisters couldn't make it, but one of my daughters, Jackie, could.

One of the stories, which Aaron had shared, concerned another group of new second cousins nicknamed "the Pickle Sisters,” (so named because their father co-owned a produce store with his brother and pickled some of their merchandise). The two families (Aaron's and the Pickle Sisters') often visited with each other in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s. Thanks to a recent obituary, I was able to contact Robert W., a son of one of the five Pickle Sisters. Emboldened by my success with Aaron and the reunion, I sent Robert a letter. A few weeks later, I received an angry, actually aggressive phone call from Robert's aunt, Bernice H., the last surviving Pickle Sister. She was very suspicious of me and my motives. It took a long while and a lot of name dropping before she calmed down, began opening up... and eventually invited me down to Florida to visit her! Over time, Bernice has turned out to be not only delightful, but a fountain of information about her immediate family. She also remembered encounters with my dad’s brother! When she referenced Aaron's family, I offered to send her pictures from
the reunion. Bernice was genuinely thrilled and very grateful to receive them. At one point, she referred to a couple of Mexican branches of our family.

So... 1) Bernice mentioned the same Mexican branches on the phone that I had heard about from 2) My cousin, Aaron S. from Canton, Ohio, while on vacation two years ago... and it turned out that 3) Aaron R. had e-mailed me a crude family tree that had a partial list of a few Mexican relatives, as well! 4) Later on, another relative, Ted S., literally stunned me with the exact same crude tree of Mexican relatives!!

All of this was too much to ignore. Bernice had current addresses for three of our Mexican relatives, so I wrote to all three and got a response from Monica S., now living in Texas. She ended up being so helpful with her grandfather, Isadoro's branch that I didn't know where to fit everyone (eighty people in one fell swoop) on the family tree! To get information about the other half of my prolific relatives south of the border, (Monica's great uncle, Bernardo's branch), I've been trying to communicate with fifty to sixty second cousins once and twice removed on Facebook, sometimes using Google Translate to translate their responses to English. To date, almost all of my information has come from seven or eight of my new Facebook "friends." I probably now have at least 140 names and birth dates of Mexican relatives which I've added to my exponentially growing family tree, and I’m still hunting for a few more I know are missing!

At this point, I had so much more than I had bargained for! A few short months ago I didn’t even know the names of all my paternal grandfather’s siblings. Of the eight siblings who survived to adulthood and immigrated to the U.S. during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, six had children that I know of. I had found living descendants of four of those six; and I’ve since become acquainted with them... my new family.

Then came an unexpected breakthrough. One of the two missing links from the past was missing no more! Evan had traced another of the six brothers to his great grandson, Brian R., and two great great granddaughters, Nancy L. and Susan B. After writing an introductory letter to each of them, I started e-mailing back and forth with Brian and Susan. I also sent both Brian and Susan the other’s e-mail address, and those long-lost cousins-once-removed couldn't thank me enough for reuniting them! Susan and I enjoyed our e-mails very much. It was different with Brian, however; I couldn't get a feel for who he was, perhaps because I was in touch with just too many new people at one time, so I asked him to write me a little about himself. What he sent me was unbelievably well-written and informative! I was truly impressed and henceforth enlightened, and, from then on, I felt very good about what was happening through our e-mails. In fact, several weeks ago, I actually invited myself to his home to meet him and his wife! We settled on October 30th, and I drove three hours up to Brian and Audrey's home during the peak autumn foliage (coincidentally, very close to where the summer picnic/reunion had been). The three of us couldn't have been more natural and at ease if we had been old friends who were catching up around the kitchen table. Six and a half hours later, I reluctantly took my leave... only because it had gotten dark and was near dinner time. (Brian and Audrey had already provided lunch.)

For my whole life, I have personally known just a small handful of relatives. As a result of this exploration into my ancestry, I am now in touch with and feel surrounded, even supported by, not only great uncles and great aunts from the past, but also by the dozens of newly discovered cousins presently living all around me. This winter, I can't wait to get on down to sunny Florida and meet three or four more of them!

Richard Scholnik A retired math teacher from the Philadelphia school system, Richard recently discovered an interest in genealogy when he came across unknown Scholniks near his grandparents' graves at Montefiore Cemetery in Springfield Gardens, Queens, New York. Since then, his sense of family has expanded immensely and been enriched by the connections he is making with newfound cousins. Richard continues to look for descendants of Srl and Tema SCHOLNIK (various spellings) from Mielnica, Galicia, now Melnytsya-Podilska, Ukraine; ADELMAN and FIDELHOLTZ from Gorodok, Belarus; and especially Herman and Lea (nee Lonkert) BERNSTEIN, who came to New York City (probably on a ship from Turkey) with their approximately 10-year-old daughter, Bessie, around 1884 or 1889. Contact Richard at richardscholnik@gmail.com
A bout a year ago my sister gave me a gift of an Ancestry DNA test. I wasn’t really planning on getting involved in genealogy research at that point in my life, but I got hooked, and I’ve had several adventures since. Here is the story of one of these, a story that speaks to the mysteries we are able to solve with our modern tools and the ethical dilemmas we sometimes encounter along the way.

My wife’s family has a somewhat exotic history. While my grandparents were escaping Russian/Ukrainian pogroms in the early 1900s by going west to America, her grandparents went east, to China. They found refuge in the European treaty ports dotting the Chinese coast – specifically Tientsin, Harbin and Shanghai. Her parents were born there and lived in relative safety and prosperity until the Chinese Revolution brought the treaty ports to an end in 1948. Then the Jews of China dispersed throughout the world; her parents each went to Israel where they later met and married.

I was in Israel in the fall of 2017 and spoke to one of my wife’s cousins about the family’s history. His mother, Vera, grew up in China and was a first cousin to my father-in-law. Vera’s husband, Iky, was born and grew up in Shanghai before coming to Israel in 1948 where he met and married Vera. Knowing of my interest in family history, their son asked me to help him with a family puzzle.

He told me that his father, Iky, had not been raised by his birth parents. He was born in 1930, but shortly afterwards his parents divorced. As part of the divorce arrangements Iky’s mother, Esther, had relinquished all rights to her son. His father gave the infant Iky to his sister and brother-in-law to raise. Iky was raised in Shanghai by his aunt and uncle, believing them to be his birth parents. They in turn had an older daughter, Iky’s cousin, whom he believed to be his sister. Iky’s birth father died some time later in China.

As an adult in Israel, Iky learned his true family history. All he knew about his birth mother was her name and that she had married an American serviceman and left China for the U.S. ten years after he was born. Iky had a desire to meet his birth mother and tried to locate her but was never successful. Iky’s son, my wife’s second cousin, asked me to help. I offered to try.

With the advantage of modern tools, I quickly found the record of Esther’s arrival in California in 1940 and her marriage to an American marine three days later. I learned that she had lived in California until her death about ten years ago and had three children. I located a loving obituary written by the family. After reading it, I could tell that, although they knew about Shanghai, her second family knew nothing about her first marriage and child there. It seemed clear that her second family was Christian. I didn’t know if they knew that Esther was a Jew.

I had an ethical dilemma. It seemed clear that Esther had not shared her full history with her American family. Did I have the right to tell them? There was a lively debate in my own family about the ethical course of action. I asked Iky’s son for his guidance. His perspective was that he wanted to fulfill his father’s wish (and his own curiosity) and reach out to Esther’s second family.

My perspective was that if Esther had been alive, I would have reached out to her and, if she did not want to pursue the connection, I would have deferred to her wishes. But with her death, I no longer felt bound by that assumption. I decided to contact Esther’s children. I was aware that the information I was bringing to them - that they had a half-brother that they never knew - could be painful, so I decided to do it in a gradual way, giving them the information piece by piece so that they could choose to halt the process if they wanted. I also wanted to act as an intermediary between the two families primarily because, although the Israeli family speaks very good English, I thought that this introduction required a nuance of language that was best navigated by a native speaker.
I found the phone number for one of Esther’s daughters and screwed up my courage to call her. I informed her that I was looking for Esther’s family and that I had information about her family that she might want to know. She was appropriately very cautious, but she did stay on the phone. I told her that she had family that she might not know about that lived in another country. I told her that the family was interested in making contact.

My plan was to stop the conversation at that point and let the California family think over whether they wanted to know more before giving additional information, but Esther’s daughter asked some probing questions. Almost immediately she asked if there had been another child. “Yes,” I replied. “Was the child alive?” “No, but his children are.” “Had it been a man or woman?” “Man.” “What country did they live in?” “Israel.”

Finally, I was able to end the call by asking her to consult with her two siblings and let me know if they wanted to learn more. Again, being cautious, she did not give me her email address but took mine so that she could reach out to me if she wanted to take the next step. A few days later I received an email; they wanted to know more.

I continued my incremental approach. Over the next few days I sent three e-mails: the first about the Jews in China, to set the context; the second about Esther’s first marriage, childbirth, and divorce; the last about Iky’s life. I knew I had to present as much proof as I could in order to make a convincing case to a skeptical audience. I was lucky to have a photo of the original divorce/custody agreement written in Russian (and translated to English), signed by a prominent Shanghai rabbi, which included Esther’s signature. I also included photos of Iky at different stages of his life.

Several days later I received a response. To my great relief they were overcoming their natural skepticism. Esther’s daughter wrote: “As you said, this is all new for us. We started out fairly skeptical, but your very thorough and thoughtful emails told a story that, although new to us, is one that we find compelling.”

I think one of the most convincing pieces of evidence at this stage was the strong physical resemblance between Iky and Esther’s younger son as well as the resemblance between Esther and Iky’s daughter.

I put the Israeli and California families in direct contact with each other. We also began a search to try and corroborate the story. We looked for people who knew Esther and/or Iky in Shanghai. Initially, everyone we could identify was either deceased or unaware of her first marriage.

The suggestion was made that the families have a DNA test. Finally, the California family remembered a close friend of Esther’s from Shanghai who had an elderly son that was still alive. They reached out to him, and he confirmed that Esther had had a child in Shanghai. With this independent corroboration, there was no more doubt.

For the Israeli family, this is a story of finding their biological roots and honoring their father by fulfilling his long-time
wish. For the California family, this is a story of finding new relatives completely out of the blue – an event to which they reacted with openness and grace. They have also struggled to understand the circumstances that would have led their mother to give up rights to her child and never speak to them about him. For me, this is a story about an opportunity to honor Iky and his family and reconnect two parts of a family that had been separated by historical events large and small.

It’s now been a year since I was first asked to find Esther. I’m happy to report that I am writing this on the airplane as I travel to Israel to join Iky’s children and two of the children from Esther’s California family as they meet in Israel. Almost eighty years later, Esther’s family will be whole.

Stuart Bogom started working on family history in 2017. He's interested in the Russian/Ukrainian shtetlach northwest of Uman such as Sokolivka/Justingrad, Lukashevka, and Monastyryshche. Surnames associated with these shtetlach are: BOGOMOLNY, SCHECTMAN, ROSICH, RUSSOKOVICH. Also interested in VIDUMSKY, ZUBITSKY, POOK, and FRIEDMAN -- Russian Jews who were living in China between the world wars. Contact Stuart at: sbogom@voicenet.com

SEPTEMBER MEETING SUMMARY

“GENEALOGICAL RESOURCES IN THE PHILADELPHIA JEWISH ARCHIVES COLLECTION”

SPEAKER: JESSICA LYDON, ARCHIVIST, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

by Marilyn Mazer Golden

The Philadelphia Jewish Archives Collection was created in 1972 by a collaboration of the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Federation of Philadelphia. The collection was located at the Curtis Building (1972-1985), the Balch Institute (1985-2005) and the ArchWorks Building (2005-2009). In 2009, the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Collection was given to the Temple University Library. The collection is now part of the SCRC (Special Collections Research Center) of Temple University Library, located at Samuel Paley Library, 1210 Polett Walk.

The collection includes the personal papers of community leaders and the records of cultural, educational, religious, and fraternal organizations and is the most extensive and varied documentation of any Jewish community outside New York City.

Genealogical resources in the collection include the following:

1. Community Newspapers – *Jewish Exponent*; *Jewish Record* (Atlantic City); *Jewish Times* and the Philadelphia *Forward* (1943-1947 on microfilm); synagogue newsletters. Some items in print, some in photo files.
2. Vertical Files- Family histories; photographs; pamphlets, flyers, descriptions of organizations; books of remembrance (*yizkor* books) from synagogues.
3. Social Service Organizations- covering 1850-1950: Association of Jewish Children; Nursery and Shelter case files; Juvenile Aid Society; foster homes. Case files from orphanages exist, but the most recent 75 years are privacy restricted.
6. Synagogue Records- most useful from a genealogical perspective: life cycle events, seat purchases, member lists, newsletters. Some are in the vertical files.

Jessica Lydon
7. Rabbi’s Papers- Rabbi Pinchas Chazin—marriage licenses; Rabbi Bernard Levinthal (Congregation B’nai Abraham)—marriage licenses, gittin (divorce papers); Rabbi David Wice (Congregation Rodeph Shalom 1947-1981)—child naming, circumcisions, conversions, marriages, funerals.

8. Jewish Hospital Registers - Einstein Hospital - incl. accident cases, Mathilde Adler Loeb Dispensary (1882-1887), Home for the Aged (1866-1951).

9. Steamship Ticket Purchase (Immigrant Bank) Ledgers—over 140,000 entries. Indexed at JewishGen. JGSGP worked on these. Addresses of immigrants’ homes before departure often listed. Check out the Temple University website.

10. HIAS Pennsylvania (1914-1952) - Case files—anything HIAS did to locate other family members; port of entry and arrival records from 1911-1947 (including passenger lists); Refugee Resettlement Committee cards from Nazi Germany.

11. Other SCRC Resources—Amalgamated Clothing Workers; Housing Association of Delaware Valley; Newspapers—Inquirer, Evening Bulletin (defunct since 1982), has clipping files in alphabetical order, plans to digitize same.

The collection’s hours are 8:30-5:30 M-F. Call or email before visiting to make sure records are available: 215-204-8257 or scrc@temple.edu. Create an online researcher account prior to requesting records to view. Please see the handout from this meeting on our website: https://jgsgp.org. The handout is located in the “Archives” menu item (Meeting Summaries and Handouts).

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OCTOBER MEETING SUMMARY

“ALEXANDER HAMILTON: THE MAN, MYTH, MUSICAL, & MENSCH”
PRESENTER: ROBERT WATSON, PHD, DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN STUDIES & PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN HISTORY AT LYNN UNIVERSITY

by Linda Ewall-Krocker

Alexander Hamilton’s early life was tempestuous. His mother, Rachel Faucette, was married to Johann Levien who was twice her age. Both of them advertised they were coming into money, but in reality they were both broke. She was later imprisoned for the “world’s oldest profession” when Lavien saved his own neck by testifying against her. Some contend that Lavien was Jewish and that Rachel converted to Judaism before marrying him.

She later moved to St. Kitts where she met James Hamilton, and then had two sons out of wedlock, the younger of whom was Alexander. Some believe that Rachel raised her sons as Jews. James later abandoned the family; Rachel moved to St. Croix with her two sons.

Alexander was prohibited from attending the local Church of England school because his parents weren’t married. A Jewish headmistress invited him to her school where he learned Hebrew. At the time, one out of three whites on St. Croix was a Jew.

Rachel opened a business, and Alexander assisted her. Shipping captains knew her and gave her their business. Eleven-year-old Hamilton would do the books for ships. He and his mother came down with yellow fever, and Rachel died. Alexander was thrown out of his home and had to borrow shoes from a minister for his mother’s funeral.

Beekman & Cruger, a rival international shipping company, hired Hamilton, the teenage bastard son of a whore and Jew, to keep its books. His ultimate goals were to go to war, work with a famous man, and use his writing talent.
After immigrating to the U.S. in 1772, he met Aaron Burr and wanted to be his fellow student at Kings College (now Columbia University). He “wowed” Myles Cooper, the college president, because he was “gorgeous, audacious, and brilliant.” Cooper allowed him to attend for free. Hamilton later saved him from tar and feathering.

Author, Ron Chernow met with actor, Lin Manuel Miranda, who was so inspired by Chernow’s book that he wanted to portray Hamilton in a rap play with non-traditional ethnic characters. The author thought the idea was crazy until he heard Miranda rap the essence of Hamilton in what it had taken Chernow 1000 pages to write. Dr. Watson then rapped the opening of “Hamilton.”

Hamilton left college and formed a unit to hold off the British long enough for Washington’s army to escape. Hamilton was the first one on the scene at the Battle of Princeton and served Washington as his chief aide, writing his speeches and correspondence and communicating with the French. The two men developed a father-son relationship.

A group of four young men became Washington’s military family: Hamilton, Marquis de Lafayette, John Laurens, and Hercules Mulligan, who became a spy. John Laurens, an abolitionist, believed in women’s equality and became Hamilton’s best friend. Interestingly, the fact that Hamilton, Lafayette, and Mulligan were all immigrants inspired the song “Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)” in the “Hamilton” musical.

Hamilton hated religious persecution as did his friend, Haym Salomon, a major donor to Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. Salomon was among the group of prominent Jews involved in the successful effort to have the Pennsylvania Council of Censors remove the religious test oath required for office-holding under the State Constitution. As an attorney, Hamilton took every pro bono legal case for women, Negroes or Jews. He wrote to several rabbis about commitment to political and religious freedom. He also counted Gershom Mendes Seixas, the longtime religious leader of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City and fellow ardent defender of religious liberty, among his friends.

Thomas Jefferson was Hamilton’s lifelong enemy. Jefferson represented old money, was a slave owner, and favored small government. Hamilton on the other hand had new money, was an abolitionist, and favored big government and federal oversight of banks. Jefferson was Secretary of State, while Hamilton was Secretary of the Treasury under George Washington. In 1800 the Electoral College reached an impasse in deciding the presidential election; Jefferson and Aaron Burr were tied. Despite his enmity for Jefferson, Hamilton considered him the lesser of two evils. His position resulted ultimately in Jefferson’s victory over Burr.

Hamilton was hated because he was “so handsome, smart, and articulate.” Several phrases in George Washington’s famous letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island (Touro Synagogue), in which he supported the concept of religious liberty, were originally written by Hamilton.


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**NOVEMBER MEETING SUMMARY**

**“USING FAMILYSEARCH.ORG FOR JEWISH RESEARCH”**

**PRESENTER: W. TODD KNOWLES, AG**

by Marilyn Mazer Golden

What is Family Search? Founded in 1894 as the Genealogical Society of Utah, it currently contains over 6 billion names from all over the world. There are over 4800 family search centers worldwide.
1. Books (Look under search button) Over 350,000 scanned-in books are available 24/7 to peruse. For example, you can type in “Jewish family” and see there are 89,000 titles available. Some books are only available if you have an account. It is FREE to sign up for a FamilySearch account. You will be asked to log in every two weeks. If you see a camera icon on the right side of the page, then pictures are available for you to view. Otherwise, these books may only be available at one of the family search centers. Not all books are in English. Some may be translated.

2. Wiki You can use the WIKI pull down to look for family names, communities, etc. Use the spelling that your ancestor used if they had written it. If you enter “Polish genealogy,” you will bring up many “how to” research videos, research strategies, etc. Enter “Poland Jewish records,” and you will bring up an entire research help page that connects to JewishGen, JRI-Poland, Gesher Galicia, the Knowles Collection (see below), and many other useful databases.

3. Digitized Records There are three ways to search historical records. (a) Go to “Search,” then “Records.” You can enter a person’s name on the left side of the search page which will result in a search of over six billion names. Search may be slow and bring up many irrelevant names. A better way to search is to: (b) Go to “Search,” then search by “place” or “topic.” For example, enter “Poland, Bydgoszcz, Fordon” (this is where Todd’s great grandfather came from); three different choices of records come up. One of them is “Jewish Records.” He was able to find his great grandfather’s birth records! (c) You will see a map of the world. You can also hover over an area and click on it to choose that location. It’s possible that Family Search has the rights to the records, but they haven’t been translated and/or put online yet, or, the records may not be available.

Sometimes records were mixed in with another community. Jewish records have been found mixed in with church records. Don’t skip over records from a church during the same time period in the town you are searching.

4. Records. Not all records have been indexed yet. FYI: All ports have digitized records online including New Orleans and Louisiana. In Philadelphia, the petitions for families to come over from Europe are also online. If you were naturalized, you had the right to make a request for a friend or relative. Ancestry.com may have the same or different records available. Make sure to always check both sites for records! Options: (a) Search by name (b) Browse all published collections (c) Search by location. When following a paper trail, make sure the dates and locations make sense.

The Mordy Collection: Isobel Mordy, of the London Genealogical Society, attempted to document the pedigree information of 155 British Jewish families linked by numerical codes. His notes were very difficult to follow; names were omitted. It was not a very useful index. Now part of the Knowles Collection as “The Jews of the British Isles.”

THE KNOWLES COLLECTION:
When Todd was a child, he showed an interest in his grandmother’s past. When she turned eighty years old, she gave him a present: his great grandfather’s journals which documented his path from Poland to London to San Francisco. He was Jewish! His parents wanted him to become a rabbi. He became a merchant instead, never learning to speak English. His business partners asked him to move to Utah and then he assimilated. Todd was raised in the Mormon church and recognizes his Jewishness as well. He continues to research his own family in addition to helping build the Jewish family research databases on FamilySearch.org.

The Knowles Collection categorizes Jews according to their locations: British Isles; Europe; North America; Caribbean and South America; South Pacific; Africa, the Orient, and the Middle East. It contains over 1.4 million people and over 2500 different sources from 200 different countries; people are linked as families; records are name searchable and free. For more information: Knowlescollection.blogspot.com, knowleswt@familysearch.org
JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

2019 Membership and Renewal Form

Member Information (Please Print)

Name (s): ___________________________ Date: ________________

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Street Address __________________________ Apartment/Unit # ________

City __________________________ State ________ ZIP Code ________

Phone: __________________________ Email: __________________________

Membership Status: ______ New Member ______ Renewal of Membership

Membership Categories (Check box on left)

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TOTAL AMOUNT

All members receive e-mail copies of CHRONICLES. If you would like to have a paper CHRONICLES mailed to you, include an additional $10 with your dues. Dues are for the calendar year, January 1 – December 31, 2019. YOU MAY PAY YOUR DUES USING PAYPAL on our website: https://jgsgp.org

If you are mailing your membership form and check, mail to: JGSGP, 1657 The Fairway, #145, Jenkintown, PA 19046. Make check payable to: JGSGP

Research Information

For New Members Only: Please list the surnames you are researching. Include the associated ancestral town and country. Use the back of the form if needed. This list will be shared with other members.

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Sunday, December 16, 2018 3:30 pm (please note later starting time)
Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, 8339 Old York Road, Elkins Park PA 19027
“Passports for Life: The Bernese Group Rescue of Polish Jews in World War II”
Speaker: Jeffrey Cymbler, co-chair of the 11th Annual Conference on Jewish Genealogy and program chair of
the 19th Annual Conference

“Passports for Life” is a presentation dedicated to Aleksander Lados, the Polish envoy in Bern, his
subordinates, and members of the Jewish community in Switzerland who acted hand in hand during
World War II in saving hundreds of European Jews. The members of the so called “Bernese Group”
embarked on an illicit operation aimed at massive forging of passports of Latin American countries
and smuggling them to the ghettos in Poland, Holland, France and other places in German-occupied
Europe. Jeff earned his BA from Yeshiva University and a JD degree from Boston University School
of Law. A child of Holocaust survivors, he has been an avid genealogist since 1983.

Sunday, January 27, 2019 1:30 pm
Main Line Reform Temple • 410 Montgomery Avenue • Wynnewood, PA 19096
DNA 101: How to Use Genetic Testing for Genealogical Research
Speaker: Lara Diamond, President, Jewish Genealogy Society of Maryland

In this session, Lara Diamond will share insights on how to use genetic testing for genealogical re-
search citing various types of tests available (including autosomal, yDNA and mtDNA). She will
explain the types of genealogical questions each test can help answer, how each company presents
results, the strategies for transferring results from one company to another, and how to benefit from
each. Lara has been researching her family for twenty-five years. She blogs about her mostly Eastern

Sunday, February 10, 2019 1:30 pm
Main Line Reform Temple • 410 Montgomery Avenue • Wynnewood, PA 19096
The History of the Joint and What We Have To Offer Jewish Genealogists
Speaker: Linda Levi, Executive Director of JDC’s Global Archives

"The Joint" has borne witness to the most pivotal events of twentieth century Jewish history. The
JDC Archives documents JDC operations and activities overseas, serves as a record of life in Jewish
communities throughout the world, and testifies to JDC’s mission of providing rescue, relief, and re-
habilitation services to global Jewish communities and individuals in need worldwide. Its extensive
holdings include eyewitness accounts, correspondence, reports, logs, passenger lists, emigration
cards, and much more, including an astonishing collection of approximately 100,000 photographs,
which document the organization’s global activities. The presentation will focus on the Joint’s work
over the last century and provide sample documents, film clips, and photos of interest to Jewish genealogists. Participants
will learn how the Archives is organized, view examples of rich genealogical records, and discover how to conduct re-
search in its repositories.

Deadline for submission of articles for our winter issue is Sunday, December 30, 2018.
Please send material to: editor@jgsgp.org.