



SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Martha L. Wise 1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116

Dec. 1984

As you notice the newsletter is late this time. Sorry about that. It became a matter of getting the newsletter out or being able to put on the workshop at the announced time and place.

Since the room had been reserved a long time ago and the workshop publicized to had to be given priority with the newsletter left unfinished much to the regret of the editor who also happened to be the coordinator of the workshop.

We are happy to be able to report that the workshop was a success. The participants commented happily on the large, light room with comfortable seating at tables for some 35 to 40 people, the excellence of the speakers, the topics chosen to be presented, the large-ly home prepared luncheon, the contact with others also interested in genealogy, in short everything.

For many it was their first contact with a genealogical society. It brought new memberships for which we are very happy since the life blood of any association is its membership.

Constant Vaughn who spoke on passenger lists, ship conditions and related subjects has given us a list of sources of information which you will find attached at the end of this newlster. Thank you Connie.

NON-GENEALOGICAL HINT

Should you have occasion to want to use a coffee urn for hot water only do not remove the coffee basket and rod as unneeded. If you do it will moan and cry, wail and sigh, weep and lament until the signal light comes on showing the brewing cycle to be complete. If you leave the basket and rod in place it will heat up without a fuss. The fact that you do not intend to brew coffee makes no difference.

SALT LAKE CITY TRIP

The Salt Lake City trip led by Carolyn Sherfy in November success. Its members returned home feeling it had been time well spent. Many found things for which they had been anx-iously searching. They also enjoyed the social contact with their fellow researchers during the hours not spent in actual research. A chance remark, as we all know, can often open a whole new vista for a researcher.

Carolyn is an old hand at organizing these genealogical safaris now and her guidance kept first timers from feeling lost or uncertain.

COMPUTER INTEREST GROUP

This group is affiliated with the California Genealogical Society and at present is hold- ing bi-monthly meetings at the main library in the Commissioners Room on the 3rd floor subsequent to the regular meeting of CGS.

It concerns itself, as you would expect, with the use of computers in keeping genealogi- cal records, software adapted for genealogy and the like. The next meeting will be Jan. 12th at 3.15 PM.

For those interested in computer use in genealogy Jane Steiner 283-0867 or Jean Larson 546-6949 can supply further information, or you may write to the group in care of the California Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 42637, San Francisco, Calif. 94101.

JEWISH FAMILY GROUP SHEETS

Search reports that Judith R. Frazin, 1025 Antique Lane, Northbrook, Ill. 60062 has designed a new family group sheet that in addition to space for the usual type of information allows for such things as Hebrew or Yiddish names, surname changes and Yahrzeit dates. She has also designed a companion sheet for recording immigration and citizenship information although this later form is not specific to Jewish genealogy as is the first one. The price is not given.

DELLAR FAMILY REUNION

A Dellar family reunion is being planned for the descendants and relatives of Salomon Dellar. John Dellar, 1923 Pierce St. San Francisco, Calif. 94115, phone number 921-1755 is coordinating it. It is to be held June 22, 1985.

NEW AVENUE FOR LOCAL RESEARCH

Carlton M. Smith reported in the most recent newsletter of the California Genealogical Society that some little known records will soon be available on microfilm. It would seem that among the many records lost to the fire in 1906 were many records pertaining to property and the owners thereof. After the fire all too many people found themselves with no way to prove ownership of their own property. The state legislature therefore set up a procedure that enabled people to reestablish title. The result was material that can offer information on families of considerable genealogical value to those with local roots. These papers, which are indexed and until recently were available at City Hall to those few who knew of their existence, have since come to the notice of the Mormons. The Mormons realizing their value received permission to microfilm them. When this project is complete the microfilm will be available through the Mormons to all researchers. The sad part is that the original papers will then be destroyed. Presumably City Hall felt that the little used papers took up too much space so the Mormons may have rescued them from permanent oblivion. At least they will always be available, even if only on microfilm.

DR. MAX PLAUT

Those of us with ancestors who lived in Hamburg, Germany owe a considerable debt to Dr. Max Plaut. This gentleman had the foresight to turn all the Jewish community records for Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbeck, over to the state archives in Hamburg in 1939. This probably saved them from the fate of Jewish records in so many other places where they were commandeered by the Hitler forces and destroyed. In the state archives, as state property, they were safe, so due to Dr. Plaut's wise action they are still available today.

FRANCE AND GENEALOGY

Beatrice Kirshenbaum who has French ancestry submitted the following for our newsletter. "We are all aware that the interest in genealogy was tremendously spurred by the publication and the TV dramatization of "Roots" in this country. I recently read an article stating that in France there has been a great upsurge of research, also. As a result the French National Archives Office has been literally inundated with requests for information. I suppose we can assume that this situation also applies to the Regional Archives. Jean Favier Director of the Archives, offered a course in Paleography (the study of ancient or archaic writing) for amateur genealogists. The number of sessions had to be doubled because of the unexpected number of would-be researchers. All over France organizations of genealogists, experienced or not, are springing up.

When I started my research I went first to the National Library in Paris. There I was put in touch with regional offices. There is an office in Paris called the Consistoire in Mont-matre where a great deal of Jewish material is available. This is separate from the National Archives and its regional headquarters.

I was fortunate in knowing dates, the exact location of my grandparents' house, which is still occupied, and which I have been able to visit - even this year again. I was even allowed to handle the actual birth records for all my family born in that town as far back as the 1700s. I was later able to have copies made of these records. This week I came across another source of background material - a book which I purchased at the bookshop in the Palace of the Legion of Honor. It is called Jewish Art and Civilization. It has long chapters on each country, profusely illustrated."

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Several historical societies are now on our mailing list having requested an exchange of newsletters with us. Just what benefit a historical society can derive from a genealogical society newsletter only a historical society member would be able to tell you. Basically a historical society differs from a genealogical society in the matter of focus. The historical society concentrates on the history of its community with individuals only incidental thereto while a genealogical society focuses on research into individual families with the history of their communities incidental thereto. However in the course of compiling community history historical societies do gather some data on persons of importance in the community's history, and genealogists, of course, do like to know about the communities in which their ancestors lived.

You are welcome to check with us and if we have an address for a historical society in a city that interests you we will be happy to supply you with it. Possibly you might learn something by contacting them.

COURTESY COPIES

We supply courtesy copies of our newsletter to synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, Hillel societies and the like. In fact our mailing list for courtesy copies is just about as long as our membership mailing list. We are happy to make these copies available if they are wanted and will be used to further genealogy, but admittedly the object is to publicize our own existence and attract new members who otherwise might not know there are genealogical societies therefore it is disappointing to learn that very often no mention ever appears in their newsletters or on their bulletin board.

Not to long ago your editor was asked to speak on genealogy at a sisterhood luncheon. The questions from the audience indicated that many were interested in genealogy and some had even done some work on their own, yet the sisterhood was not aware that we provide them with a newsletter on a regular basis.

If this is the case in any synagogue, JCC or Hillel society to which you belong wont you please see if you can remedy that situation or if you can determine that they really dont want the newsletter please let us know and we can discontinue it. Postage is high and going higher. If they dont want it there is no point in sending it.

NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

The National Genealogical Society will hold its 5th annual conference in August 6-9 in Salt Lake City this summer. The full program information is not yet available. Last year the conference was held in San Francisco but offered precious little of value to the Jewish genealogist. This year it sounds as if a bit more may be offered on European research although of course it might well be chiefly on church records.

It will be some time before we know exactly what to expect but it has already been made clear that time has been allowed for personal research in the Mormon library and more than likely competent assistance will be provided for those unfamiliar with the library.

The many booths at these conferences may provide something of interest and of course there will be the inevitable computers and all that goes with them. There will also be computer sessions of various sorts for those who like computers.

The registration fee is \$60.00 through May 31st. and \$75.00 thereafter. Possibly if more Jews show up at these conferences in time more will be offered that is of value to us. Meanwhile the conference is probably worth your consideration.

IDLE CHITCHAT

Never feel that casual conversation is just a waste of time. Although it is no more reas-

onable to expect every conversation to result in some valuable tip than to expect to leave every meeting with valuable new information. You will attend many meetings that have little to do with your own areas of interest and have many conversations from which you expect nothing but the more contacts you have the better your chances that you will learn something unexpectedly. Networking is very important. It is one of the big bonuses offered by belonging to a society. A chance remark over coffee and cookies may just provide you with a valuable tip, or you may provide someone else with one which will give you a feeling of immense satisfaction. You cant expect that sort of thing. It happens when it happens and you may well go for years without it but you never know. Just remember that contact with one another and learning whatever you can from the newsletters you take and the books you read can be very worthwhile unless your expectations are unrealistic. Afterall the two things that are most needed for genealogy are, as they have always been, patience and persistence. If you become discouraged and are unwilling to wait out the dry spells you may not get far. Just keep plugging along. As membership in genealogical societies grows and more societies come into being there are more newsletters, more books more of everything. More sharing eventually results in more for everyone.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE COUPONS

These little coupons are often the best thing to use as payment for information from Europe. In Germany, for example, in many cases the post office serves functions we associate only with banks in this country. There the post office provides checking services of a type unknown to us as well as savings accounts. They can cash our checks if they will take them to the bank but they take forever to go through. There is also the international money order which is often very acceptable if you allow a bit extra for the fee they will have to pay to cash it. A draft in the currency of the country to which you are sending it is probably the best thing from their point of view but it is so expensive that unless you are sending a very large sum the cost of the draft may well exceed the sum for which it is written.

The international response coupon can be exchanged for stamps and apparently always welcome. Dont forget to include two extra coupons for an airmail response.

ITALIAN RESEARCH

A friend in Australia with Italian ancestry made a trip to Verona and found some old registers of considerable value. He also found and was able to copy, a plan of the Verona ghetto as it was in 1760, which showed every house and the name of every householder. This plat even showed him the home of his five times great grandfather which must have been quite exciting.

It would seem those with Italian ancestry can certainly hope for success in their research.

NAME VARIATIONS

We are all aware of name changes, sometimes the individual's own idea, sometimes the idea of an immigration officer or simply a matter of bowing to other people's misunderstanding of the name, but often we fail to realize how many variations there are to some very familiar names such as Cohen. Nearly everyone has a Cohen or Cohn somewhere in their family or in a relative's family but while we may realize that such names as Kahn, or Kohn are the same in meaning as Cohen sometimes we do not realize that Kogen and Kagan are Russian versions of the same thing. In Russia the h tends to become a g because in those Slavic languages that do not have an h sound g is often substituted. There are also variations on Cohen or Kahn such as Kaganoff, Kohanski, Barkan (son of Kahn) Katz, an acronym and too many others to count that all indicate descent from kohanim. Looking up the meaning of surnames can be very interesting although at times a name can not be pinned down beyond a shadow of a doubt.

There are also some names that mean one thing if they originated in one area and some-

thing else if they originated in another.

Son, sohn, sen son, witz, vitch etc. all mean son of course. Eff, off ov and the like indicate descent from. Ski or sky is a suffix indicating from and er of course has the same value it would in English.

COMMON ERROR

A very common error is to assume that the same rules and the same circumstances governed the lives of all Jews simply because they were Jews. Actually things varied greatly with the place of residence, the financial standing of the individual and many other factors. It is true that the bulk of Jews did not adopt surnames until they were required to do so by their respective governments. It is not true that no one had a surname prior to that time. Some families used surnames as early as the 17th century and even sporadically before that. That is this was the case in most of Europe but among the Sephardim it was not the same. The Sephardim lived in comparative peace and freedom under the Moorish reign in Spain. It was after the Moors had been vanquished and Catholicism became the only religion tolerated in Spain that the Sephardim who had adopted many customs common to those among whom they lived, encountered the horror of the inquisition and the need to flee the country or adopt christianity against their will. Those who fled to other parts of Europe took with them customs that differed from those of the Jews in their new countries. Sephardim had surnames earlier than others. However among the rest of us surnames, permanent surnames, became universal quite late but they did exist in some instances long before they were required.

Many families whose roots go back to Frankfurt am Main took names that originated there to many other parts of Germany. The houses there were identified by signs in the days when reading was not a common ability of the general populace. The color of the sign or the object or animal depicted on the shield often became the name commonly used for the family that lived in that house.

It is true that some names were assigned in various ways but it is also true that some people had a choice. In some areas the rabbis were asked to assign names, in some the task was entrusted to officials of various sorts. Some permitted people to choose their names, others extorted as much as they thought they could for the privilege of choosing a decent name. Some sadistic individuals assigned horrible names and then charged to delete a letter to make the name a bit less offensive. In parts of the world, in Hungary according to an authority, the heads of household were often assembled in the village square and divided into four groups by height and by hair color. The tall men were told they would henceforth use the name of Gross. The short men were given the name of Klein. The dark haired men became Schwarz and the blondes and redheads were to be known as Weiss. Gross means large, klein, small, schwarz is black and weiss is white, in Yiddish or German though not in Hungarian. That raises the question of who thought up that system.

It is a very interesting study although to do it justice would take years of careful research. There are however books on the subject and owning one is well worth the price.

5th ANNUAL SEMINAR

The 5th annual seminar on Jewish genealogy takes place in New York this summer. This is a return to the place where the first seminar was held in July of 1981. It was a success and from it grew the annual seminars we now take for granted.

The second seminar was in Washington D. C., the third was in Los Angeles and the fourth in Chicago last summer. The international seminar in Israel last spring may have been the start of annual international seminars, who knows? At present we know of none being planned however.

This year the seminar in New York begins Sunday July 7th and runs through Thursday July 11th. Details such as registration fee, agenda and hotel are not yet available. We will let you know when the information is at hand.

POLISH RESEARCH TRIP AND SEMINAR

The JGS in New York is sponsoring a special trip to Poland this summer directly after the annual seminar. Actually it will leave New York Wednesday July 10th which is the day prior to the announced final day of the seminar. It leaves in the evening on the 10th and returns July 24th. A third optional weekend is also planned for those wishing to stay longer.

There will be three days of seminar in Warsaw with the remaining time allotted to personal research in whatever place or places the participants chose to do research into their own ancestry.

The entire expedition will apparently be under the continuing guidance of knowledgeable persons, both local Polish people and Americans with research experience in Poland. There are to be some 18th and 19th century census records from Byelorussia (White Russia) and the western Ukraine. There will also be some tax records from Lithuania.

It will be interesting to learn just how much those interested in Russia and Lithuania succeed in finding in these records.

No one with Russian ancestry needs to be reminded of the problem of getting information out of the Soviets who do not comprehend genealogy at all and for whom so very much is always rather secret information, although why it should be is somewhat hard to fathom.

If these sources prove fruitful it will be very heartening for those interested in these areas.

For anyone doing serious Polish research this would seem to be a great opportunity to find ancestry they might not be able to find as well if they went to Poland on their own and unable to speak Polish.

The expedition is limited to 60 participants so if you are interested contact the Jewish Genealogical Society Polish Research Expedition in care of David M. Kleiman 255 West 93rd St., New York, N.Y. 10025 for full details.

MEMBERS FORUM

No one has any comments this time but as long as there are no brickbats we are not complaining.

FAMILY FINDER

C-1 Ingeborg Campbell, 668 Barbour Dr. Redwood City, Calif. 94062 (415) 369-4491
Searching for the Warhaftig family from Brest-Litovsk or Lodz, also Alpern from the same area.

H-2 Allan T. Hirsh Jr. 11 Slade Ave. Apt. 710, Baltimore, Md. 21208 (301) 484-2100
Seeking the following: Adler from Feuchtwangen, Bamberger from Kairlindach and Schlopfloch or Ottenheimer from Bonfeld, Heinsheim or Gemmingen. Also Goldsmith from Hainstadt, Hirsch and Lowenstein from Breidenfeld, Feldenheimer from Hengstfeld and Schwartz from Busenberg. All from southern Germany.

R-5 Mike Rabin, 90 Keats Dr., Mill Valley, Calif. 94941 (415) 388-0621
Seeking information on Benjamin Rabinowitch and Kate Granik Rabinowitch who arrived in this country around 1907 via Canada. Originally from the Ukraine. Also Aaron Napshin (Napchin) and Bluma Orenstein Napshin from the same area.

S-6 Stan Stein, 3049 California St. San Francisco, Calif. 94115 (415) 921-3769
Searching for the Mondral family of Razanow, Poland. Simon Mondral, approx. 1820-1900 never left Poland. The family in America changed the name to Monroe.
Also seeking information on the family of Moshe Saphirstein, birthplace unknown but lived in Rabzanow, Abraham Saphirstein of Rypin, Poland and Hershel Kronenberg. The Saphirstein name was shortened to Stein in this country.

There is no charge for this column. We have been asked so we repeat that we do not charge our members and make only a nominal charge for non-members.
We feel this should not be used as a source of revenue.

PASSENGER LISTS

HAMBURG PASSENGER LISTS, Direct Series, 1850-72; Indirect, 1855-73

LDS Films

Historic Emigration Office, Museum fur Hamburgische Geschichte
Holstenwall 24, 2000 Hamburg 36, W. Germany

U.S. CUSTOM PASSENGER LISTS, 1820-1905

U.S. IMMIGRATION PASSENGER LISTS, 1883-1945

William Filby & Mary Meyer, PASSENGER & IMMIGRATION LISTS INDEX, A GUIDE
TO PUBLISHED ARRIVAL RECORDS OF 300,000 PASSENGERS WHO CAME TO
THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA IN THE 17th, 18th & 19th CENTURIES

Morton Allan, DIRECTORY OF EUROPEAN PASSENGER STEAMSHIP ARRIVALS (New
York, 1890-1930; Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, 1904-26)

Michael J. Anuta, SHIPS OF OUR ANCESTORS

The Steamship Historical Society of America, Inc.
414 Pelton Avenue, Staten Island, N. Y. 10310

Steamship Historical Society Collection
University of Baltimore Library
1420 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, Md. 21201

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