



SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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GENERAL MEETINGS

In an effort to please those who complain about weekday meetings and those who complain about evening meetings President Joan Simms planned the April meeting in Palo Alto for a Sunday noon. It was held in a new and very nice Jewish Center.

The next general meeting is slated for September in the East Bay. As yet details are not available but it is to follow much the same lines as the April meeting.

A NEW REFERENCE BOOK

Another source of reference has become available to us with the publication of the book, *Jewish Genealogy: a sourcebook of family histories and genealogies*. Irwin M. Berent and David S. Zubatsky are the authors. David Zubatsky who spoke to us briefly at Palo Alto is a cousin of our own Irv Koppel who brought him to the meeting.

This book is over four hundred pages and thus obviously contains many more listings than does *Finding Our Fathers* which is not devoted solely to listing sources. Not all the listings in both books are identical. Ideally one should own both.

Since publication the authors have amassed so much more information they may have to consider a supplement. Like genealogies themselves, such works are never complete, there is always more from unexpected sources. The authors in this case appreciate hearing from anyone who can supply additional information.

LIBRARY

Up until now our library did not contain any actual books but now we are the proud owners of a copy of *Finding Our Fathers*. It was donated by Dorothy Romo of CGS and we thank her for her kindness and generosity in thinking of us. This book is now out of print but in the opinion of some of us a far more valuable book than most of the how-to books still in print. Possibly it will serve as a china egg and attract still more volumes until we truly do have a library.

Carolyn Sherfy, our librarian, will bring all of the material in her keeping to the September meeting. This will include the directory put out by the Jewish Genealogical Society in New York, booklets and pamphlets from Israel, newsletters from other societies etc.

SHERITH ISRAEL RECORDS

An effort to sort out and put in order all the material stored away at Sherith Israel and untouched for years has been underway for some years now. Adolph Rosenberg tells us that although there is still much to do

certain records are now sufficiently in order to be useful. Adolph Rosenberg aided by volunteer help has done a tremendous job of rescuing much valuable material from oblivion.

Fortunately it was there to be sorted out. Sherith Israel moved into its present building just in time to escape the fate of Emanu-el which was still downtown at the time. It was where 450 Sutter now stands and was largely destroyed and lost nearly all, if not all, its records.

Perhaps we should endeavor to find out how many other synagogues there were here at the time and what their fate was. If you know anything about any of the synagogues, or if you can find out anything, you might submit it to us and we can make a record of it. Possibly if we have enough to work with we might be able to prepare a printed sheet that can be handed out upon request.

NEW SOCIETIES

Ohio has two new societies, one in Cincinnati and the other in Cleveland. Another rather new society is the Jewish Genealogical Society of Orange County.

This later society has requested an exchange of newsletters, a request with which we are only too happy to comply.

Madge Perkel, formerly of Stanford and now down south reports that it is a thriving group with some very dedicated workers. That is, of course, what it takes, as their president said in their newsletter. He remarked that "a genealogical society is only as strong as the motivation of its members". Very true. There must be workers and if the burden all falls on too few some will burn out and drop away leaving even a greater burden on those who remain. Also stressed was the importance of an extensive membership and here again he is certainly right.

No genealogical society ever expects to see its full membership at any one meeting but if there is not a sufficient membership to provide a decent attendance at meetings prospective members will feel the society is probably not worth bothering with. A sizable audience with a palpable interest in genealogy send out an excitement that draws new comers in.

IDLE CHATTER

Too much is sometimes dismissed as idle chatter. At times that may be all it is, although even that helps people to know one another, however often some of the most valuable information for one's own research is gleaned not just from the speaker of the evening but from casual conversation. The chit chat before meetings and during refreshments will not always yield something of value. Only novices expect joining a society to provide them with an almost instant family tree. Often they fail to realize that a genealogical society is basically a support group and is certainly not a research service. More seasoned researchers know better and are happy with a bit of helpful information every now and then.

After all genealogy does require patience and persistence. Those who are unable to be patient and lack persistence will not get far.

NETWORKING

Contact not only with others close by, but with people in other cities and even in other countries, can set up a network that can yield dividends. At times, you know, the world is very small. The wider your contacts the better chance that through them you may unexpectedly stumble upon something. In trying to help someone else you may find a bonus for yourself such as finding that the person you are offering to help is actually a very distant relative.

LOCAL GROUPS

We still need people to head local groups in some areas. The need for functioning local groups is even greater now that we are to have only two general meetings per year. If there is no interim contact the society itself may fall apart.

Two people in the south bay area seem willing to try to get a group started there. We will, of course supply the names of all those on our mailing list for that area and possibly once a group begins to form others may be attracted to it who might not be willing or able to go too far from home.

We in San Francisco enjoy our informal gatherings, and we can only recommend such a group to the rest of you. You needn't plan a full scale meeting with a speaker or an activity. We just choose a topic for discussion for the meeting beforehand and mention it on the meeting notices.

For example if you have a number of people with German ancestry you can discuss sources for German records. If you have a group with a lot of Polish ancestry then that can be the subject. If you have a number of novices-those with more knowledge can bring their favorite forms and the discussion can center around that.

If you go home with a warm feeling the evening has been a success.

Incidentally this does not mean that we no longer need your help in finding speakers for the general meetings. If you know of someone who might make a good speaker do let us know. Bear in mind that we are not in a position to pay for speakers. That would be nice and would certainly help but for that we would need a very large membership to generate sufficient revenue to pay speakers.

SOCIETY FOR JEWISH HERITAGE (MORESHET BEIT SABA)

we have recieved some material from this Israeli based organization that purports to be a genealogical society. Certainly it does seem to be encouraging genealogy and even if it is fostering genealogy only as a means to its own ends there is value in it.

If this is the group whose aims and activities were reported on at the seminar in Los Angeles last year I can only tell you that after the speaker finished several people who had been in Israel and knew the heads of the group said its main thrust was not genealogy but orthodoxy and a desire to encourage people to discover how orthodox their ancestors may have been and to emulate them.

There is a questionnaire that is to be fed into a computer supposedly to provide a pool of genealogical information but it only takes in the parental and grandparental generations and focuses a good deal on non-genealogical information, or at least information that would seem more geared to drawing a statistical picture than to helping people really research their family tree.

It would seem however to have increased its emphasis on genealogy possibly as a result of having learned that without an emphasis on genealogy it would attract fewer genealogists and it does want its questionnaires filled out. This material will be brought to the September meeting and you may draw your own conclusions.

LITHUANIAN PHONE DIRECTORY

Walter Cohen of Austin, Texas has sent us a copy of a small portion of a pre-WWII Lithuanian phone directory. He had received a copy and photocopied it for societies around the country in case others also had ancestry from the town of Taurage (Tavrig), Kovno Gubernia or nearby areas. Gubernia, you know, is Russian for province or government and there is both the gubernia of Kovno and the city of Kovno just as is often the case in other areas where a main city and its state or province share the same name.

THE SEMINAR IN ISRAEL

Member Libby Rosenfield is preparing a report on the Israeli seminar. If a brief summary is received prior to completion of this newsletter it will be included. If not the entire report will be in Carolyn Sherfy's hands and will be brought to the September meeting.

CHICAGO SEMINAR

The fourth annual seminar on Jewish genealogy takes place in Chicago in July as you all probably know. Carolyn Sherfy and several other members will be present and will have a report on it for us when they return.

GENEALOGY CLASSES

Our Carolyn who always has at least a dozen irons in the fire at any one time will be conducting a course in Jewish Genealogy at the Jewish Center on California St. & Presidio Ave. in San Francisco beginning in September. It will be every other week on Monday evenings. There will be a charge made by the center but so far we do not have all the details. If interested you might call the center or Carolyn herself around August by which time the details will surely be available.

SALT LAKE CITY TOUR

Another iron in Carolyn's fire is a tour to the Mormon library in Salt Lake City. Carolyn has conducted several such tours in the past. She will arrange a package tour but the price has yet to be determined. Carolyn keeps it as low as possible by taking advantage of the best rates for hotels and planes. There will be an inexpensive but adequate hotel and if there is a demand a first class hotel as well. The hotel or hotels will be walking distance from the library. People are on their own for meals but usually everyone lunches in the library cafeteria where Carolyn says the food is good and the prices very low, especially low for Bay Area people, accustomed as we are, to prices so much higher than prices in Salt Lake. This is not specifically a tour for Jewish researchers, many will be members of the California Genealogical Society and other genealogical societies, but the library does have Jewish records, especially for Poland but also for other areas of Europe. They try for records wherever they are allowed to copy them but obviously not all areas are covered. They also have census records, ships records, etc. If you were thinking of going to Salt Lake anyway it is probably more fun to go with a group, less expensive because of group rates, and with someone who knows the ropes, probably more productive than going on your own.

FAMILY REUNION

Walter Cohen who was previously mentioned is organizing another reunion of the Dan(n), Den(n), Dun(n) family. He has organized three so far in various parts of the country. If you have this name in your family tree please contact Mr Cohen at 3221 Cherry Lane, Austin, Texas 78703. This family seems to have originated in Lithuania although many branches have been in this country for over a century. Mr. Cohen is also seeking for people named Solomonovich, Solomovich and Zalmanovich all originating in Kovno Gubernia, Lithuania.

MEMBERS FORUM

With this issue we are initiating the members forum, a column in which you can express your opinion.

Ruth Kelson Rafael, Archivist, Western History Center

I believe that two meetings a year are not enough to sustain interest in the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society. The Bay Area has always had trouble maintaining new Jewish organizations which have not been connected with a national agency or sponsoring institution.

I feel it is too soon to despair. The staff of the Western History Center of the Judah L. Magnes Museum can attest to the wide spread interest in Jewish genealogy. Perhaps four meetings a year would be a good compromise for all concerned.

Beatrice Kirshenbaum

I am writing to deplore the fact that the society seems to be drifting toward a slow and premature death.

When I joined there were meetings scheduled regularly and in a regular spot. Now there are virtually no meetings.

Prospective members can only be attracted when a program is offered. Those already enrolled tend to forget the existence of the group if not reminded by a meeting notice.

This point was brought home to me last week at an executive committee meeting of another organization which had cut the number of meetings in order to cut costs. Upshot of the complaints: in order to make goal accomplishment possible the number of meetings was restored.

Apparently I misjudged our society as a young organization with growth potential.

FAMILY FINDER

K-2 Beatrice Kirshenbaum, 2518 Gough St. San Francisco, Calif. 94123
(415) 474-1344

Searching for the Nathan family of Oberwesel am Rhein, West Germany, prior to 1850. Also Thalsheim, Dalheim or Dalsheme, Alsace/Lorraine.

P-1 Miriam Pearl, 768 Trestle Glen Rd. Oakland, Calif. 94610 (415) 893-1783
Seeking information on the descendants of Robert Myers and his wife Rachel, nee Schnell, who lived in New York in the 1800s. Known children are Jacob Myers, Bertha Silberstein, Mary Harris, Henrietta Oppenheimer and Jennie Greiff. Jennie came west about 1906. The others presumably remained in the east.

S-1 Carolyn Sherfy, 918 Willow St. Alameda, Calif. 94501 (415) 521-8593
Searching for all descendants and ancestors of Cohen, Sachs (Saks) Diamand and Abramovitz (Abramavitz) all from Kovno Gubernia, Lithuania. Later in St. Louis, Mo.

U-1 Bessie Udell, 3766 Brookdale Blvd. Castro Valley, Calif. 94546 (415) 886-3119

Seeking information on the parents of Rose Lillian Jacobson or Rose Lillian Greenberg who arrived in New York at the end of the last century in company with her widowed mother and four siblings. Her mother's name was either Bella, Bertha or Bessie. The deceased father was Salomon. The children were Rose Lillian, Bernard, Louis, Jessie and another brother whose name is not known. The mother later remarried. Her second married name was Cohen.

DUES

Sorry to end on an unpleasant note but dues are very soon due you know. It is \$15.00 plus an extra dollar for the national fund to which we give that amount regularly. It goes for work that provides more sources for genealogists. In all it is \$16.00. You may submit your dues at any time now and they will be credited for the coming fiscal year. Or, of course, you may pay them at

the September meeting.

We have been rather lax in the past about keeping names on our mailing list past the three newsletters allowed or the three meetings allowed prior to being expected to decide whether or not to join.

It has become rather too expensive. We will not be able to go beyond the limit in future.

However we have discovered that some who do not find it possible to attend meetings still would like to receive the newsletter. Although the editor is not at all sure it is that valuable, still, if you care to flatter us by wanting it and would like it at a special subscription rate let us know and we will see what can be set up for those who are out of our area.

We have also decided to set a fee for the Family Finder column for non-members who lived out of the area. We have set the rate at \$2.50 per entry which we feel is a reasonable rate. That will include a copy of the newsletter in which the entry appears.

See you in September we hope.