



SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

August 1985

1986 ANNUAL SEMINAR

At the seminar in New York this summer the subject of the next seminar was discussed. Salt Lake City was proposed as a site. Several people who were going to the National Genealogical Society's Conference there in early August were deputized to look into the possibilities.

Tentatively they have set a date of Sunday July 13-Thursday July 17, 1986, and chosen as a hotel the Howard Johnson Motel next door to the new Mormon Library. We are told the rooms are excellent and certainly the prices are most reasonable. Salt Lake, of course, is much lower on both food and lodging than any place we have had a seminar thus far.

The Mormon leadership assured the people looking into the matter that they would make available expert speakers on whatever topics might be requested by the planners.

Both the motel and the library however want the fact that a seminar is definitely to be held confirmed by October 1.

We were requested to notify our membership as soon as possible and request them to send a postcard to Malcolm Stern advising him if you would be interested and if so what topics you would like to see slated for talks. Send your card to 300 E. 71st St. #5-R, New York, N.Y. 10021. If it would be easier to phone us, feel free to do so and we will send a list on to Rabbi Stern but please do be aware that time is of the essence if the seminar is to be in Salt Lake City.

DUES

Dues we know are nobody's favorite topic but the date does come around every year and dues are now due. If you have not paid for this year, and our fiscal year runs from Aug. 1st of any year through July 31 of the following year, please send your check to our treasurer, Libby Greengard Rosenfield, at 142 Mateo St. San Francisco, Calif. 94131. Dues for full members are \$16.00 per annum. For associate members (out of area members who simply get the newsletter) dues are \$10.00.

ELECTIONS

Our officers serve a two year term which was up this year. At our August meeting we elected our officers for the coming two year term.

Other than the president any officer may be elected to succeed him or herself. The president may not serve two consecutive terms but may serve in any other office to which elected.

The present officers and board of directors are as follows:

Martha L. Wise	- President	Carolyn L. Sherfy	- Membership Chairman
Joan Morganstern Simms	- Vice President	Ingeborg Campbell	- Peninsula Group
	- Secretary	Beatrice W. Kirshenbaum	- Director at Large
Libby Greengard Rosenfield	- Treasurer	Walter S. Hertzmann	- Director at Large

As you see the position of secretary is vacant. We need a corresponding secretary and a recording secretary. Carolyn Sherfy has been our only secretary for the past term but she now has so many other duties that she does not feel she can be secretary again. Any volunteers? It is really not too demanding a job.

AUGUST MEETING

The optional breakfast at the August meeting was to have been held outdoors and the meeting itself indoors but the day was so fine and it was so pleasant in the little flagstoned garden area surrounded by the flowers and the apple trees that we just remained sitting right where we were for the meeting as well.

The less formal setting made for more comaderie. Elections were accomplished with dispatch followed by a talk on Gravestones and Cemetery Records by Carolyn and a talk on Naming Systems by Martha. The emphasis in both cases was of course on the clues provided for genealogical research by a knowledge of these subjects.

We enjoyed the day. If you were not among us we missed you.

A RESCUED CEMETERY AND RESCUED RECORDS

Member Michael Cohen has a booklet on the Jewish cemetery in Worms, Germany which he was kind enough to share with us.

Worms today is a smallish city as cities go but it was of considerable importance in the past. It is a very ancient city, so old the actual date of the first habitation there is lost in the mists of history. There was a town there before the current era. When the first Jews arrived is not known for certain either but there is a verifiable reference to the Jewish population going back to 588 according to the encyclopedia. There is a claim that Jews were there as long ago as nearly two thousand years.

The old Jewish cemetery dates from the 11th century, at least the oldest standing headstone is dated 1976. It goes without saying then that this ancient cemetery contains a great deal that is of historical and genealogical value. As the booklet says "When you have toured this cemetery you have seen not only tombstones, you have seen silent witness to a millennium of Jewish life in the town of Worms."

In 1930, the booklet relates, the archivist of Worms, a Dr. F. M. Illert was the person designated to show Heinrich Himmler around historic Worms. He included a visit to the old Jewish cemetery and later Himmler remarked that he had found it very interesting. When the Nazis announced a plan to raze the cemetery and use it as a building site Dr. Illert who had done such a good job of making the cemetery interesting to Himmler had something on which to draw. He argued that Himmler had a special interest in preserving that cemetery. He recommended that the would-be builders contact Berlin for permission before touching the cemetery. Apparently no one wanted to risk approaching Berlin about the matter and the cemetery was saved.

This same Dr. Illert also saved the Jewish archives which included two volumes of the Worms Mahzor dating back to the 13th century. We owe a great debt to Dr. Illert for preserving so much of such value for posterity.

The Nazis destroyed a great deal but of what did survive a good deal was saved because some decent men could not see wanton destruction without doing what they could to prevent it. In Celle the old synagogue was saved because of the stand of the area firemarshal. A stand that no doubt could have involved a real risk to himself. Since then the synagogue which had fallen into disrepair has been restored and rededicated by the city of Celle. The small Jewish population of postwar Celle could not afford to restore the building so the city took over and today part of it is still in use and the major portion is a museum. The items contributed when the synagogue was rededicated, with much civic fanfare, included religious items from Israel as well as from other sources.

HEADSTONE SYMBOLS

Carolyn Sherfy's talk on gravestones and cemetery records at our August meeting brought to mind an old custom rarely if ever seen today but once very common especially in Europe. This is the custom of adorning the gravestones of those who knew themselves to be descended from Kohanim or to be of Levitic descent with two hands spread in the traditional gesture of blessing for Kohanim and a pitcher or waterjug for a Levite.

Other symbols were also used at times but one would need to have made a study of such things to know the meanings of them all.

Should anyone know of a book on this subject please let us know. Understanding the meaning of all the various symbols could add so much to one's knowledge, especially if one should find a picture of an ancestral grave that included a symbol on the headstone.

HOUSE SIGNS

Much has been written about the signs which identified the homes of the Jews of Frankfurt but not much about the same sort of signs in other German cities of old where Jews lived in ancient times. This custom does not seem to have moved north with the Jews who first settled in the northern part of Germany. It seems to have existed chiefly in the places where the Jews first established themselves when they moved into Germany.

Most of us know that the Rothschild family took its name from the red sign or shield, roth today spelled rot, is German for red and schild is German for shield, that identified their house. Some houses had animals on their signs, others had various objects. The family that had a ship (schiff) identifying their home became the Schiff family. The house with a goose on its sign gave the Gans family its name. Some of the oldest permanent surnames trace back to the fact that others tended to identify families by the signs speaking of them by that name so that often they themselves used that name on a permanent basis.

The Worms cemetery booklet tells us this custom of house signs also existed in the Judengasse (literally Jews street as the Jewish quarter of cities and towns tended to be called) in old Worms and often later appeared on the tombstones of families who lived in those houses. In Worms the occupation of the deceased often was indicated by a symbol on the gravestone.

How much of this was common to other towns where Jews lived in early times? Did any of this exist in France for example or in Alsace-Lorraine or only in Germany? When did they stop using house signs and why? When did they first begin using them?

The more we learn the more we know we still have to learn.

SALT LAKE CITY TRIP by Carolyn Sherfy

Our eighth money saving journey to Salt Lake City is set. We will fly Western Airlines from Oakland leaving Wednesday, November 6 at 7:15 a.m. arriving Salt Lake City at 9:15 a.m. returning Wednesday, November 13 at 9:15 p.m. arriving Oakland at 9:59 p.m. We will have seven nights lodging at the Temple Square Hotel just 1 block from the new library. We will have a full seven days for library research plus one entire day (Sunday) to rest, organize and plan the next phase of our research and to sight-see. We are planning a pot-luck dinner on the Sunday before we leave for Salt Lake City. We will have a question and answer session about the trip and researching in Salt Lake City. Your airline tickets and some handouts will be given out.

We will have a special orientation class and a tour of the new library on our first day at the Genealogical Library. Both Cordel Vail and I will be available in the library every day to help with research problems and to give suggestions on where to look next. In addition the library provides research specialists on each floor.

As part of our package we will have a banquet with a guest speaker on Saturday night, November 9 at the famous Lion House. We will also have a no-host dinner on Monday night, most probably at the Old Salt City Jail, now a well known eating place.

The per person prices for the tour including airfare, banquet at the Lion House and lodging are:

Single occupancy room, \$470.00

Double occupancy room, \$380.00

For those who wish to provide their own transportation the price of the ground package is as follows:

Single occupancy room, \$280.00

Double occupancy room, \$190.00

Space is limited to 20 persons and will be filled on a first reservations received basis.

To reserve your space send a deposit of \$230.00 (\$30.00 for those wanting ground package only) plus your name, address and phone number and choice of double or single (if double specify roommate's name, or if you want me to try to find you one specify smoking or non-smoking.) Make check payable to Carolyn Sherfy and send your reservation to 918 WILLOW STREET, ALAMEDA, CA. 94501. Full payment must be received 15 days prior to departure. Price is subject to change if airfare increases before you pay your deposit. If you have any questions you may call me, Carolyn Sherfy, at (415) 521-8593

REPORT ON THE FIFTH NATIONAL SEMINAR ON JEWISH GENEALOGY
New York City, July 1985

The New York Seminar was wonderfully informative, interesting and a lot of fun. The scheduled seminars covered the following topics: Holocaust Research, Gazetteers and Maps, Jewish Tombstones, Research in Poland, Computers in Genealogy, Landsmannschaften, Russian Consular Records, Unusual Research Sources and Locating Relatives in Israel. In addition, the New York chapter published what is literally a book (147 pages plus appendices and updates) on research Resources for Jewish Genealogy in the New York Area (Ed. Estelle M. Guzik, copyright 1985) which is by far the most comprehensive tome yet done on this topic. It was worth attending the seminar for this book alone.

All the above listed seminars were fascinating and informative. For example, Arthur Kurzweil spoke on Holocaust Research and, as always, was wonderful, warm, witty.

A charming lady (and former Californian) Miriam Weiner, gave a great talk on Unusual Research Sources. Miriam is a former law enforcement officer and has collected some interesting tips on accessing 1) Alien Registration Applications, 2) Social Security Applications, 3) Passenger Records, Galveston Immigrants, 4) Voters Registrations, 5) Photographs of Russian Towns, 6) Mortuary Records, 7) Landsmannschaften Society Incorporation Documents, 8) School Records, 9) Medical Records, 10) Insurance Applications, 11) Russian Telephone Directories, 12) Employment Records, 13) Address History, 14) Drivers License Records (copyright 1985, Miriam Weiner).

Researching in Poland was the fascinating topic of a panel discussion which concluded by mentioning the possibility of an extensive reasearch tour. I am sure that we will hear more about it as plans are firmed up.

Landsmannschaften were completely covered in a talk given by people from YIVO. They are vitally interested in these all but forgotten groups of "people helping people". YIVO has an amazing amount of Landsmannschaften material but much of it remains to be catalogued. Of course, all they need is money. Still, when it is finally done, it will be a fantastic resource for all of us.

A group of us visited the Lower East Side and ate (most appropriately) borscht, blintzes, herring salad and the like. It was delicious and a fitting finish to the 1985 seminar in the Big Apple.

Joan Morganstern Simms

Thank you Joan for a report that really makes those of us who were not able to attend the seminar feel we know exactly what was offered.

BOOKS AT DISCOUNT PRICES

Some genealogical societies have been purchasing books at a discount by ordering in quantity for their members. We had never done so but recently enough people expressed an interest in a book called the Jews of Poland for us to look into the matter. With an order for nine copies of the book plus an order for one copy each of three others ordered directly from the publisher the saving was well worth while and on top of that we did not have to pay special order charges as one does when ordering a book not on the shelves through a book store.

Other publishers also offer a volume discount. Since we cannot always find the Jewish books we want locally we might consider ordering directly again if enough people want something from a certain publisher. This particular publisher did not care if the books were all the same or not as long as they were books they publish. This was the Jewish Publication Society of America but they are not the only publisher who will give a discount. Needless to say the books must all be shipped to the same address.

HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF MADISON, INDIANNA

We have received a request from Mrs. Jerry Weinberg, 1915 Hillview Ct., Madison, Ind. 47250 that we mention in the newsletter the fact that she is researching the history of the Jews of her community during the period of 1850 to 1880 and would like to contact anyone descended from people who lived in Madison at that time. She will gladly share any information

she has on the subject. Anyone out there with a connection to Madison, Ind.?

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

The former Genealogical Branch of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan has now become a separate entity, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Michigan. They now have their own newsletter to which one can subscribe like all the other societies around the country. Welcome to our ranks, Michigan.

AMERICAN GATHERING OF JEWISH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

This gathering took place in April in Philadelphia. The JGS of Philadelphia had a booth and Gary Mokotoff provided a computer center with a national register of holocaust survivors. Attendees filled out a form which was entered into a terminal and the computers in N.Y. or New Jersey, supplied whatever information on friends and family existed in the national register. Needless to say people were most anxious to avail themselves of this service. The JGS had several copies of the computerized Family Finder at its booth (supplied by Gary) and a good many people were able to check for their own family names or for their own native towns. Very possibly some people discovered branches of their family they had never known or branches with which they had long lost touch. They were very grateful and they also became aware of genealogy, if they had not been before.

Gary Mokotoff gets most of the credit for supplying all this. How he manages to do all he does, publishing the computerized Family Finder, printing Avotaynu, running his business and still finding time to do nice things such as the above, we don't know.

DUTCH GENEALOGY

Chronicles (the newsletter of the JGS of Philadelphia) gives sources for those seeking records in Holland that were found to be very helpful by one of their members, Dale Irvine. Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie, P.O. Box 11755, 2502 A.T. The Hague, Netherlands. Attention Mr. N. Plomp, Curator, and Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsteldijk 67, 1074 H.Z. Amsterdam, Netherlands. Attention Dr. W. C. Pietersen, Director.

The first is the Central Bureau for Genealogy and the second is a municipal archives. According to Mr. Irvine the archives, the second source listed, has somewhat more for Jewish genealogy than the bureau.

Mr. Irvine suggests that you give as much information as possible about the individual you are tracing as well as being quite specific about the information you need since he says they tend to give only the information requested.

The four digits and the capital letters before the city names are very important as they are the postal code (zip code).

GALICIAN RECORDS

Mispacha reports that Herb Unger, formerly one of their members when he lived in Washington D.C. and now president of the South Florida JGS, made a copy of a volume published in 1877 by the government of Austria re the collecting of vital statistics information on the Jews of Galicia. It does not list individuals but it does list the towns and cities designated as the collection points for the smaller places in their area which can help in locating an ancestral town or village. According to Suzan Wynne the material is not properly alphabetized so that finding what you are seeking may take hours of tedious work. She put out a call for someone with a computer and the time to spare to help in preparing an alphabetical index. Once that is done JGSW would be able to make copies of the volume and the index at cost for other societies that might wish to have copies. For anyone who would like to work on the index Suzan Wynne's phone number is 202-657-3389. The address is 3915 Livingston St. NW, Washington D.C. 20015

RUSSIAN CONSULAR RECORDS

Work is still proceeding on the Russian records at Suitland, Md. Unfortunately it has now been determined that there is much less for the pre-WWI period than had been expected.

ed according to an article in Avoyanu. One interesting bit concerns a letter written in 1913 to a man who wished to visit Russia after having become an American citizen. Since the man had taken American citizenship without permission of the Russian government the consulate could not issue him a visa.

This backed up something already encountered and shows that Russian citizens were required to obtain permission of the Russian government prior to becoming citizens of another country. Presumably this Russian rule must have been regularly flouted. One can scarcely imagine that very many Russian immigrants, knowing the ways of the Russian government, would have been too anxious to let the Russian authorities know where they were, not while still Russian subjects. This rule must have been rescinded under the communist government since I know personally that a cousin of my grandmother's who left Russia in Czarist times was, after tensions between this country and Russia had eased a bit and the new government had been recognized, able to visit his sister who was still in Russia.

Why didn't I ask all the questions I would today? Probably because it is not until we actually get into genealogy in earnest that we realize how much we could have found out that it is now too late to ask since those with the answers are no longer living. The eternal sad plaint of the genealogist seems to be " Why didn't I?"

TEL AVIV GENEALOGY CENTER

In June the new computer based genealogy center opened in Tel Aviv. This is the project mentioned in Libby Rosenfield's report on the 1984 seminar in Israel. It is the brainchild of Dr Douglas Goldman, a San Franciscan whom some of us know from seminars.

To enter your family into this computer you send \$5.00 to the Beth Hatefutsoth Genealogy Project, Dept. A, P.O.Box 39352, Tel Aviv 61392, Israel for a Submitter's Kit. The kit includes instructions, forms etc. The forms are to be completed and returned and will then be entered into the computer.

Any family tree must be at least five generations and include no fewer than fifty family members. In order to cover salaries a charge of \$1.00 for each name submitted is required for up to 500 names. The next 1500 can be entered for 80¢ each after which the price drops to 60¢ for any future names.

Any museum visitor may arrange for the use of an individual computer terminal and will be guided in its use for tapping the material recorded. At present there are ten thousand names or at least that was the current count earlier this summer. For the most part they are the names of members of well known German-Jewish families. Eventually they hope to have a huge data base of millions of names.

Avotaynu tells us that some printouts and charts will be made available and explains the manner in which things will be displayed on the computer. Apparently there will be more than one display format but it is not possible for one who does not understand computers to give an accurate summary of it. Suffice it to say that help will be given and there will be some material to carry home for one's permanent files. For some of the printouts etc. there will be a charge.

The computer will take note of the same family name entered as already exists in another family tree and alert the researcher or the personnel entering new data to that fact so that a link can be checked for between the two families.

If you wish to submit information without using the Data Entry forms which come in the kit if Beth Hatefutsoh determines to accept your tree they will enter the data themselves however in that case the fee for entering each name is doubled.

A plan for the future is to link up with other institutions for the mutual benefit of all.

MEMBERS FORUM

This column is for members to air opinions and share ideas. If you have found a new resource, even if it has not produced anything for you, that you feel might be something others might wish to know about why not put it in this column. It may elicit further comment from someone who has additional information on it or who has a question.

NEW COLUMN TITLE

Sharing Corner will be the permanent name of the following column. This is the third time this column has appeared but the first time we have had a really good name for it. This name was originated by a member of the JGS of Illinois for their newsletter, Morasha. We

were so taken with it we asked permission to use it too. It seems to express exactly what we would like this column to be. Our thanks to the JGS of Illinois and to the originator for allowing us to use this title. We hope you like it as well as we do.

SHARING CORNER

As an amateur genealogist, whenever I visit a strange city I try to do some modicum of research, however limited it may be. So when I visited New York for the first time several years ago, I did a very simple thing. I went through the Manhattan telephone book. Now if you are searching for a name like Brown, Smith or Jones, searching the Manhattan telephone book won't be the answer, unless you have a lot of time. However the names I am researching are: Shatzkin, Shmurack, and Semelman ... unusual enough to prove fruitful quite often with this technique.

At this particular time, there were seven Shatzkins listed in the phone book (the other names were not mentioned). I called them all.

I said, "Hello. You don't know me but we may be related. Do you know the names?" Of the seven people I contacted two are directly related and the other five are related to each other. I may have found some of their distant relatives since and we may yet get a connection which ties us all together.

The two cousins I found did not know of my existence and had been out of touch with the family for over fifty years. I was able to meet with both during my next trip to New York and just this year one cousin and his wife visited San Francisco and I was able to arrange a mini-family reunion to introduce new cousins and reintroduce cousins who had not seen each other in over fifty years!

Needless to say, it was a fantastic, rewarding moment for me. An experience like this makes those long hours slaving away in front of a microfilm reader worthwhile.

Joan Morganstern Simms

WHO'S NEXT?

If you have anything to share with others please remember the Sharing Corner and the Members Forum. The Sharing Corner is for sharing any experience you would not have had but for your involvement with serious genealogy. Any happy experience that may bring hope to others and will brighten their day.

There is also our much neglected Members Forum, your way to communicate with the rest of our society.

BOOK

The newsletter of the JGS of South Florida mentions a still available book entitled "Corresponding Dates of the Hebrew and Civil Calendar for 216 Years(1784-2000) by Rabbi S. W. Freund. The book is in German but it is easy to get a list of the names of the weeks and months in German. A bigger problem would be the fact that the Hebrew dates are in Hebrew characters. However often when we find Hebrew dates they are in Hebrew characters anyway. It is \$9.00.

FAMILY FINDER

C-4 Michael M. Cohen, 183 Palo Verde Tr., Santa Clara, Calif. 95060 (408) 426-4888

Seeking information on descendants and ancestors of the following families:

1.Langsam from anywhere (especially Galicia) 2. Landesman from anywhere (especially Galicia)
3. Lembeck from Lvov area 4. Warsztatnika/Wetstein from Grajewo, Pol. 5. Rojevsky/Rozafsky/
Rosen from Grajewo 6. Koichen/Cohen from Bialobrezeg/Warsaw. 7. Nisenbaum from Warsaw 8.
Federbush from Warsaw.

S-1 Carolyn Sherfy, 918 Willow St. Alameda, Calif. (415) 521-9593

Seeking information on Fred Schwartz died in Portland, Ore. during the first quarter of this century. Daughter, Fanny or Frieda married a Bombeck. There were two sons, Alfred and Harold.

T-2 Fayra Teeters, 21465 Aldercroft Hts. Rd. Los Gatos, Calif. 95030 (408) 353-3929

Looking for parents of R. Jacob Shavinovich and Helen (Hice Lozowick) Shavinovich both born in Poland. Arrived in this country early in this century. Also researching the families of Chaim and Rivka Malamut from Kiev.

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Enclosed with this newsletter is our most current roster. It includes everyone from whom we have received dues for the 1985-1986 Society year, which is August 1 - July 31. If you are not listed, send me your dues and membership form. If your surnames are not listed send me a completed form. A revised roster will be included with the next newsletter. Annual dues are \$15.00 plus \$1.00 for the fund to produce finding aids for the National Archives. This fund is the pet project of Rabbi Malcom Stern and is administered by the Federation of Genealogical Societies of which we are a member. This makes a total of \$16.00 per year to be a member of our society, borrow books and tapes from our library and receive the newsletter. We also invite new members. Make your check payable to the SFBAJGS and send it along with the form below to our membership chairman: Carolyn Sherfy, 918 Willow St., Alameda, CA 94501.

MAIDEN NAME

(IF FEMALE)

NAME _____

ADDRESS INCLUDEDE _____

CITY STATE ZIP _____

PHONE _____ OCCUPATION _____

FAMILY SURNAMES OF INTEREST

INCLUDE PLACES AND DATES _____

I AM WILLING TO HELP ON THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES:

PROGRAM [] MEMBERSHIP [] NEWSLETTER [] HOSPITALITY []

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE _____

MRS. WARREN R. WISE
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