



# San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116

November 1986

## JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

DATE: THURSDAY, JANUARY 1987

TIME: 7:30 P. M.

PLACE: PENINSULA TEMPLE SHOLOM  
1655 Sebastian Dr. Burlingame

PROGRAM: Short business meeting, speaker, question period, refreshments.

SPEAKER: Sallyann Amdur Sack PhD

TOPIC: The Russian Consular records

Temple Sholom is at the intersection of Sebastian & Rivera. The offramp from 280 is Trousdale. From 101 it is Millbrae.

Sallyann Sack in addition to having been active in the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Washington since the beginning is also the editor of Avotaynu, was involved with setting up the 1st International Seminar on Jewish Genealogy held in Jerusalem in 1984, is and has been very much involved with the work on the Russian Consular records in Suitland, Md.

No one could tell us any more about the Russian records at Suitland than Sallyann Sack. As we all know Russia is a very hard area to research and those trying to do so welcome any information on possible sources.

## OUR UNSMILING ANCESTORS

Too often people looking at old photographs will comment on how stern or how sad or even how frightened the subjects look.

Of course any of those things could apply but more often than not it is simply a matter of trying to judge another time by our own.

Holding a smile for the time it took to take a picture a hundred years ago would have been very hard and could only have resulted in a very wooden and unnatural grimace. In addition our ancestors had a sense of dignity people today do not have. It was very important to look dignified in a portrait and a photograph was intended as a portrait. The photographers were trying to offer their subjects a substitute for a painting. You rarely find broad smiles in oil portraits. It was serious business and proper decorum required a serious and properly dignified mien.

It was only when the snapshot came into being that smiling and a more casual pose came into being. Studio portraits continued to be either serious or just faintly smiling for some time.

Look carefully at old pictures and try to find the person in the picture. Certainly the clothing was different, so were attitudes. A hundred years hence our clothing will look strange and there can be little doubt that attitude will not be the same, yet we will expect that generation to see more than the differences.

## PHILADELPHIA SOURCES

Chronicles, the newsletter of the Philadelphia JGS devotes two pages to listing genealogical research sources in their city. If your ancestors lived in Philadelphia it would seem there is a good deal available there for the Jewish genealogist.

The Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center is now located at the Balch Institute, 18 South 7th St. The archives house a variety of material, social welfare records going back to the beginning of the last century, school, synagogue and beneficial organizations records are also included. Personal family papers and the like contributed by individuals, a small library of books, a photograph collection and the Jewish Publication Society's letters all add up to a genealogist's dream, and that isn't all, HIAS, the National Council of Jewish Women and three immigrant banks also contributed. They seem to have so much the rest of us can only envy them.

## GENEALOGY IN THE ROUND

This seems to be a popular type of meeting in Philadelphia. "Members share experiences on an informal basis". Apparently too some members relate experiences they have had in the course of doing genealogy.

CGS here in San Francisco, holds what it calls Ancestor Parties, which means that members who have prepared something to share are called upon to stand up and relate what they have learned about an ancestor in the course of doing genealogy. It is popular with CGS. Why is it that our own society will not even come to a meeting if that is to be the program?

## RUSSIAN CONSULAR RECORDS

The JGS of Greater Washington has been swamped with inquiries regarding the Russian Consular Records Project. Sallyann Sack has sent the various societies a letter enlisting our help in alleviating the problem by letting our members know the current status of the project. All material for the book has been sent to the publisher. If all goes well the book should be available before spring. Exactly what the book is to contain we are not certain but since we will be notified when it is ready no doubt all the information will be available at that time. Garland Publishing of New York is handling the job.

If memory serves the book is to be a guide to the films the Mormons are preparing, but we cannot find any information on hand to back this up.

As for the Mormon films, the microfilming continues but due to the fragile condition of the material the work goes slowly and it is not anticipated that the project will be complete before summer 1988 at the earliest. After that it must be processed so that it will not be available for some time yet.

As soon as a box has been filmed it is placed back on the shelf where the finished boxes can be checked by individual researchers in Washington or someone doing research for them. A particular folder or book can be checked and the material wanted photocopied. The woman who did the bulk of the indexing has agreed to be available for those who might wish to hire her services. Her name and address will be in the availability announcement. When we have it we will put it in the next newsletter.

John Butler, the Suitland archivist responsible for the collection, is willing to honor individual requests and to photocopy them if requested but the problem is that he does not read Russian and the folders are not labeled in English. It is a generous offer but not too much should be expected we are told.

The Philadelphia records are to be filmed first and then the New York records because most, although by no means all, the Jewish records pertain to these two places.

When the book appears and the announcement thereof is sent we will also receive news of the progress of the microfilming. This will allow people to know if any of the boxes back on the shelf are of interest to them. Periodically we are to be informed of progress.

If anyone still has questions, Sallyann requests that they all be sent to one person (in this case your editor) for forwarding to Washington which will then answer them all at once and return the answers here for distribution.

## LONDON INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

There is now some information available regarding the plans for the seminar next July in

London. This will be the Second International Seminar on Jewish Genealogy. Our English friends are very busy trying to set up what they hope will be a successful seminar. They have arranged for a good rate at a London hotel. For those who wish to stay at the chosen hotel there is a package fee of £394 for the six day stay to include hotel, breakfast, coffee, lunch, tea and all seminar fees which includes bus charges. Everything but dinner. There is a banquet one night and it too is to be paid separately although the required £25 should be submitted at the same time as the £394 for the package.

The hotel does not serve kosher meals but they are making provision for those who require kosher food. They are bringing kosher food in in sealed packages to be heated in the hotel kitchen and served with paper plates and plastic utensils. Needless to say they must have requests for kosher food well in advance.

The banquet, for some strange reason is to be only fish or vegetarian. This will also apply to the daily lunch served by the hotel. For £25 this writer, at least, would expect something better than fish or vegetarian since £25 is a steep sum for dinner, even a banquet, if fish or vegetarian dishes can be made into a banquet.

Obviously they are trying to take care of the orthodox and the conservative attendees but possibly do not realize how many will probably be neither and would prefer meat or poultry without worrying about its being kosher.

For those who wish to make their own arrangements for lodging there is a registration fee of £120 for the six days to include everything, except lodging and breakfast, that is included in the for those staying at the hotel.

There is also a daily fee of £25 per day for those wishing to attend on a daily basis only. This will include all the daily activities and refreshments that would be offered to those arranging their own accommodations except for transportation. Bus fares must be paid separately.

Originally the focus was almost entirely on British genealogy but having realized that many people do not have British ancestry they have included talks on various portions of eastern Europe. So far nothing seems slated on western Europe although plenty of Jewish genealogists are looking for ancestors in Germany, France, Holland and all the other western countries. Since they would like all arrangements to be paid for by April if you plan to attend you should contact the Second International Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, 25 Westbourne Rd., Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3TX England, attn: Judith Joseph, before too very long.

They will send you an application form and all information. They do request that international reply coupons be included with all correspondence. They do not say how many but two are usual for Europe so they should suffice for England. No prices are stated in dollars, only in pounds. It can safely be assumed that they have made a real effort to keep things as reasonable as possible and the hotel they have chosen is very likely giving them a very good rate for England. London is simply not cheap.

#### RUSSIAN CONSULAR RECORDS

The JGS of Greater Washington has been deluged with mail from the many people anxious to know the latest regarding the Russian Consular Records. Since they cannot possibly answer each individual query they have asked our help. They would like us to ask our members if they still have any questions after reading the latest information, they send their letters to us instead of to Washington so that we can forward them all at once and they can then answer them all at the same time. They would then return them to us to be forwarded on to the various writers.

As for current status, everything has been forwarded to the publisher in New York. If all goes well the book should be ready within the next few months. Everyone who sent a contribution will receive a mailing with all pertinent information at that time. Since our society contributed as a group we will receive the information and be able to pass it on to those who did not contribute individually.

The Mormons are continuing to film but because of the fragile condition of the collection the work goes slowly. The filming is not expected to be completed until the summer of 1988 at best. After that the film must be processed before a listing can be prepared for the LDS catalogue. The film may be made available at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and in Salt Lake City before it is listed in the catalogue. Should this occur The Washington JGS will notify the other societies as soon as they hear about it.

Once a box of material has been filmed the box is replaced on the shelf, where it can be used

by individual researchers. The woman who did the bulk of the indexing is willing to do research for those who are not able to go to Washington and might wish to hire her services. Her name and address will be in the availability announcement. John Butler, the Suitland archivist responsible for the collection, will honor requests and even photocopy material if requested, as he does for other collections. Unfortunately the folders are labeled in Russian, not English, and the gentleman does not read Russian. The Philadelphia records are to be filmed first followed by those for New York. JGSGW will let us know the progress being made on filming periodically.

#### ENGLISH RESEARCHER

An Englishman named Roy Townsend has written us to say he has a great interest in pioneer stories and would love to hear the story of any "pioneer" family that settled in this country. I get the impression that to him the term pioneer includes English families who found their way from their port of entry to other parts of this country. He would like to help people who have lost touch with English relatives or friends. He looks forward to hearing people's family stories and hearing about their research efforts. His rates, he says, are reasonable. His address is 102 Coniston Ave., Dalton, Huddersfield, Yorkshire HDS 9PZ, England.

#### SWISS JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

There is a new Jewish genealogical society in Europe. This one is in Switzerland, in Zürich. Its publication gives its name in three languages, German, French and English. The English name is the Swiss Society for Jewish Genealogy. Their publication, Maajan is in German. The October issue was their first. Their question and answer column is a family finder column. In the first issue there are only questions. They are obviously not novices at genealogy, but have felt the need for a Jewish genealogy society in their home area. Now there is a society in Paris, one in London and one in Switzerland and it is no doubt only a matter of time before they proliferate. The first issue of their "bulletin" includes an example of a simple pedigree chart, however instead of the individual whose pedigree it is, being shown on the left with each succeeding generation further to the right, this begins with the individual shown on the far right with the pedigree then expanding to the left. Just exactly the opposite of the way we do it. Another surprise is the use of an accent grave to indicate died. This seems more attractive than the cross or the tiny coffin used in Germany but if you don't have a typewriter or computer with French diacritical marks there is nothing on our keyboards to substitute for it. An accent grave looks like this <sup>^</sup> and is used over vowels when appropriate. There is also a dash under the the accent when they use it to denote death, thus <sup>^</sup>\_. Of course in a tiny country that has three official languages, German, French and Italian, and in which every well educated person speaks at least two languages it is no doubt easy to find typewriters and computers that can handle more than one language. The symbol used for birth is the familiar \*, and the symbol for marriage the double rings, oo, which are also familiar. It goes to show that even when you think there is a universal system in use there are variations on it.

#### HUNGARIAN CENSUS RECORDS

Search published an article by Daniel Schlyter telling about the Hungarian census records on film in Salt Lake City. He mentions particularly the census of 1848 which includes a good deal of information on the individual including age, place of birth and employment. There is a list of counties and cities for which the Mormons have records. If you have Hungarian ancestry this would seem to be a wonderful source to investigate. It is in Hungarian, of course, but the Mormons can tell you what the headings mean if you can find your name. It goes beyond the boundaries of modern Hungary and includes the areas that were Hungary in 1848.

At that time Hungary was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Austrian Empire was apparently responsible for the idea of a census. Earlier censuses were taken but they were only head counts without names.

The Mormons do not have the complete 1848 census but they do have quite a bit.

## ALIEN LISTS

The fact that aliens from countries with which we were at war were required to register during WWI, just as they were during WWII, may be of use to you if you are seeking information on someone who at the time of WWI was not yet a citizen but was in this country. Immigration and Naturalization has a form for requesting information from the alien lists. Needless to say they will not give out information without knowing to whom and why. They will give out information for genealogical purposes. If the person changed his name to something more American you may want to give both names unless you know for certain which name he was using at the time of WWI. Germans are rather precise people so even if someone was using an Americanized name prior to being sworn in as a citizen, at which time a name can be officially changed, he might well have given his original name to the government. Whether this would also apply to those who were enemy aliens as recently as WWII we can not say. If you are looking for anyone who arrived that recently you might want to check to find out.

## AUSTRALIAN RESEARCHER

Roots-Key tells us that Mrs. Irene Rothenberg of Edgewater Bay, 20/18 Wolseley St. Drummoyne, New South Wales 2047, Australia, is willing to undertake Australian Jewish research for a fee. She will research records for other states as well as New South Wales.

## ELECTRONIC BULLETIN BOARD

Roots-Key also tells us about Branches & Twigs, an electronic bulletin board service for genealogists with a computer and a 300 Baud Modem who would like to exchange a surname query with others, leave electronic mail etc. Vivian Lynes, who operates the system, will keep a record of all names submitted and will advise participants if what they are looking for comes across.

For those who do not have computers but would like a surname index posted on the board it can be done by submitting it by mail and including a SASE for any response to your query. For more information contact Vivian Lynes, P.O. Box 1197, Poway, Calif. 92064.

## SOFTWARE FOR THE JEWISH GENEALOGIST

Some of the members of the JGS in New York, feeling that there was a need for software suited to Jewish genealogy, are currently reviewing what is commercially available, with an eye to finding something that can be modified for the specific needs of the Jewish genealogist. All of the items Dorot lists as requirements are not truly comprehensible to one who does not use a computer, one, however, is that the company must be reputable and willing to work with the JGS on modifications. They want the price to be reasonable and adaptable to a variety of different computers.

A further report was to have been given in the next issue of Dorot however since that issue did not include a report possibly the committee might still be interested in hearing from anyone wishing to aid in this project, as they were at the time of the original article. At that time they wanted suggestions (and/or software samples) to be submitted to Software Evaluation Committee c/o Jewish Genealogical Society, Inc. P.O. Box 6398, New York, N.Y. 10128. Sorry this item was not included in the previous issue but space did not permit.

## GALICIAN RESEARCH

According to Avotaynu research in Galicia is not easy. Arye Barkai solved his problem by going to Europe and looking for himself. This is always the best way to do genealogy but it is scarcely within everyone's budget. Galicia, like Posen, is included in present day Poland but unfortunately these areas are not among those areas for which the Mormons have microfilm. The Mormons can have only what they are allowed to film. Why they are allowed into some areas and not into others probably only the Polish authorities know. What we do know, however, is that there is too little on some areas on microfilm. Still Arye was allowed to check records when he was in the country. He did go armed with a letter in Polish saying his family had lived in his particular town for generations and had strong ties with it.

We should not simply give up if we have difficult areas to deal with. If we can go to Europe to do reearch we may have luck but even if we cannot we can still keep plugging away and hope that in due time things will open up. One could hardly suggest holding one's breath until the Russians come to understand that genealogy is no threat and that genealogists will gladly pay for information but other areas, now difficult, may become less so with time.

#### SHTETL FINDER

Many people have asked where they could purchase the Shtetl Finder but we did not know the answer. At one time the book was offered and there was an address but it has been years since then. Now we know that it can be obtained by asking Bob & Bob of Palo Alto to order it. They do not stock it, although possibly, if they realized there was a market for it they might do so.

This is the book that lists east European towns including those little places people often do not know how to find on the map. It will tell you just where each is located and a bit about the town in some cases.

#### STATES AND PROVINCES

In France the equivalent of a state is called a department. In Russia a province is a gubernia. This term also applies to areas under Russian control such as Lithuania. In Germany the term is staat. Staat should not be confused with stadt which means city. Each such state or province has its own government just as our own states do. Sometimes such a political division includes a town with the same name and occasionally people confuse the two, assuming an ancestor came from that town, instead from that province but from another town.

#### TARNOW CEMETERY

Estelle Guzik of the New York JGS visited the Tarnow, Poland cemetery last spring and found that the surrounding wall has been damaged causing the few elderly Jews who still live in Tarnow to hesitate to go there, for fear of intruders who have easy access. Many stones are still in good condition and Estelle would like to form a committee of others with ties to Tarnow who would like to help provide for regular maintenance and repairs when necessary. She can be contacted at 108-24 71st Ave. Forest Hill, N.Y. 11375. Actually many, many European Jewish cemeteries and even many American ones no longer in use need help. Boston, as mentioned in the last newsletter, is currently working on repairing and maintaining some of their old Jewish cemeteries that once belonged to burial societies that no longer exist. They have been neglected and allowed to become overgrown with poison ivy and other growth. There are also cemeteries in Germany that probably need help from overseas since there is no longer a Jewish community nearby to care for them.

#### AVOTAYNU TRAVEL FILE

Avotaynu has in mind building a travel file and would like to find those who have recently made trips to their ancestral towns. They have a set of questions for the traveler ask-what most people would like to know before they themselves make the trip. The information gathered would be made available to others upon request and they in turn would answer the questions on their return. Sounds like a good way to build a fund of information. They request anyone who likes the idea to please help them find those who have done research abroad. Write to them and as soon as possible they will begin their file. As soon as the file is adequate to answer questions they will publish that fact in Avotaynu.

#### MEMBERS FORUM

Sorry but there has been no submission for this column this time.

#### LOCAL GROUP MEETINGS

The San Francisco-Daly City Group will not hold a meeting in December. Too many people are not going to be available.

## SHARING CORNER

A year or two ago the name Rachel Grün was to me simply a name on a rather sketchy family tree that had been drawn up by a cousin of my father's some eighty years ago when his family was still young. Rachel's name was given and her birthdate but she certainly wasn't one of Frederik's children and she was out of place for one of his siblings. I should have asked his son, Felix, who had been kind enough to photocopy the family tree for me but I just assumed Rachel was one of Frederik's siblings even though she was in the wrong place. Then one day I was surprised by a letter from a friend who was writing a book about a certain family that fitted into other genealogies he had written. He had written to another genealogist in Denmark asking for information on Rachel and her husband and family. Although he knew Grün was the name of my father's family as well as that my grandfather was Danish it had not occurred to him that in this case he was dealing with a branch of my family until he heard from Denmark that Rachel had married Frederik Grün. A little family tree had been sketched out for him, from memory the writer said, although he could check out details if they were needed. On the back of that letter was a notation that there was an expert on the Grün family in this country and giving my name and address! How did he know me? Neil couldn't answer that. I told Neil who Frederik's parents were and that he was my grandfather's first cousin. That surprised Neil, showing as it did, how small this world is. He gave me the address of the man in Copenhagen who had given him information that was news to me and I wrote to Henry to find out how he knew about me. As it turned out Henry knows many members of my family and had known Frederik and Rachel from the time he was a small boy ( he's well into his 80s now) and had been given my name by a cousin of mine in Copenhagen. Actually Henry knows more about my family than I do since he is Danish and I am not. I now have another friend. We are not related as far as we know except very, very distantly. Henry and his wife both descend from an ancestress who lived in the 1600s, and who is also my ancestress but I descend from her first marriage and they descend from her later marriage after she was widowed. Now I have another friend who has been interested in genealogy since he was very young. His father was interested and there is a book compiled from what they had researched for their own family. It goes back for centuries and touches at times on my family too. It can be even more fun to find long ago relationships than to find more recent ones. The so-called shutzjuden of Germany and Denmark were very much interconnected.

## FAMILY FINDER

- R-6 Arnold Rosenberg, 676 Duncan St., San Francisco, Calif. 94131 (415) 641-9468  
Seeking the Golden family of Vasilui, Bessarabiá who in 1904 went to Hamilton, Ont. Canada.  
Also looking for Bialik from Proskvitz (Przasnysz) Poland. Arrived in Philadelphia in 1904.
- S-1 Carolyn L. Sherfy, P.O. Box 157, Knightsen, Calif. 94548 (415) 625-4280  
Searching for information on Fred Schwartz, died in Portland, Ore. during the first quarter of this century. His daughter, Fanny or Frieda, married a Bombeck and had two sons, Alfred and Harold.  
Also seeking all descendants and ancestors of Cohen, Sachs(Saks), Diamand and Abramovitz (Abramavitz) families of Kovno Gubernia, Lithuania and later of St. Louis, Mo.
- S-7 Linda Silverman-Jann, 227 Ada Ave. Mountain View, Calif. 94043 (415) 964-9120  
Searching for descendants and ancestors of Alia and Leah Gordon from Kherson, Ukraine (just north of Odessa). Their children were Michal Lazar (Max Louis), Benzion Yom (Jacob) and Anna Gordon Torgan, all of whom came to this country around 1902 and settled in Rhode Island. Also seeking Abraham Snopasky, son of Ya'acob and Bertha, from Fastov (a suburb of Kiev) Russia. He came to the U.S. in 1907. He had a brother and a sister, names not known. The sister went to Canada. Abraham Snoparsky himself settled in Providence, R. I.
- W-2 Martha L. Wise, 1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116 (415) 564-9927  
Seeking the descendants of Friedchen Hess and her husband Joseph Michael Their children were Jacob, Michael, Bernard, Dina, Rosalie and Sophie. Two of the Michael girls, Rosalie and Sophie married Hess cousins. Friedchen and Joseph were married in 1823 in Hamburg, Germany. All members of the Hess family or the Michael family of Hamburg or Lübeck, Germany are of interest.

## GUIDE TO WESTERN JEWISH HISTORY CENTER

Our own Ruth Kelson Raphael has completed a guide to the archival and oral history collections of the Western Jewish History Center. It is a soft cover volume with 40 illustrations. It is more than just a guide containing information on Western Jewish life since the Gold Rush. The foreword is by Prof. Moses Rischin. The price will be \$24.95 when the book appears early next year. It will be available from the Judah Magnes Museum in which the Western Jewish History Center is located.

## LITHUANIAN LEGATION

This is a group of Lithuanian refugees representing independent Lithuania. They own or have access to books about Lithuania in English. They also have a list of books in English on Lithuania which can be purchased from Draugsa, 4545 W. 63rd St. Chicago, Ill. 60629. If you are of Lithuanian descent the Lithuanian Legation, 2622 16th St. N.W. Washington D. C. may well be able to help you to learn more about your ancestral Lithuanian towns.

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