



San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116

Nov. 1987

NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

DATE: MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 1987
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: SUTRO LIBRARY
480 Winston Dr., San Francisco
PROGRAM: Short business meeting, speaker, refreshments
SPEAKER: Uncertain
TOPIC: Consanguinity in Marriage Under Jewish Law and Related Subjects.

Unfortunately we are not quite certain exactly who will speak to us. We are still working on it but cannot hold the newsletter for verification. Many people are startled by the degree of consanguinity they find in tracing their ancestry that Jewish law allows.

ELECTION RESULTS

As a result of our recent elections our current president is Armand Cohn, vice president, Martha Wise, treasurer Libby Rosenfield and Carolyn Sherfy membership chairman. We are still in need of a secretary, a recording secretary or a corresponding secretary or ideally one who will be an allround secretary. We do, of course, need a program chairman but no one has ever wanted that job so we wont hope for miracles but we do have a pressing need for someone to take minutes at meetings. Our board remains essentially the same however we have lost our East Bay representatives. As you know, the chairman of each local group is entitled to a seat on the board. At present only San Francisco and the Peninsula have local groups. The East Bay has twice had a local group which each time fell apart because no one wanted to be chairman. People were quite willing to take part but not to run it. Too bad. Marin has a limited number of SFBAJGS members but very probably enough for a local group if only someone would start one. The South Bay has more than enough but again someone must be willing to get a local group underway and to stick with it. We also have some directors at large on the board but the areas that lack local groups also lack directors at large. Too many competent people simply refuse when they are asked.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW PRESIDENT

Greetings! My instinct, like that of most other people, is "never volunteer", but in the case of a voluntary society such as ours, if only the old hands offer to work, it soon gets tiresome for them and organizational enthusiasm wanes. So, even though I'm a very new member and know little about genealogy. I am an experienced presiding officer and think I can make a contribution as a facilitator. My contribution will be in helping to organize and

to encourage every member to participate and contribute. If every one does a little I think we all will benefit and find the experience enjoyable.

Because none of you know me let me take just a moment to acquaint you with my purpose in joining. My interest is somewhat unique. I am endeavoring to write a history of my family, members of which came to San Francisco in the 1850s. I hope to find sources and learn techniques that will aid me in this endeavor.

At a recent planning session our board of directors reviewed the society's purposes as outlined in the by-laws. It was decided that the following should be done:

- 1) Continue the excellent meetings with guest speakers.
- 2) Hold workshops at times where newer researchers can learn techniques in genealogical research including such areas as organizing information, how to correspond with sources, locating local sources, plus any other activity that fits the workshop format.
- 3) Acquire for our own collection or to donate to Sutro, books of value to us.
- 4) Continue our own fine newsletter which tends to unify our activities and keep us aware of other societies and upcoming events, and lastly but importantly
- 5) The opportunity to meet with a fine group of people who have similar backgrounds and interests and enjoy an interesting evening.

If you have been a little bit lax, or hesitant, in participating in and contributing to your society's activities I hope you will take advantage of our meetings. Your participation will be enjoyable for all of us.

Although Armand views himself as president on a trial basis it is doubtful we will have to worry about another president until his two year term is up. Although rather new to genealogy and to JGSs he catches on fast and by the time his two years are up will be a seasoned genealogist. It looked as though we might well be without a president since a president can not serve two consecutive terms. Armand saved the day by volunteering to be of whatever help he could even though he felt that as a novice he did not know much about genealogy. He offered to fill the gap since no one else would do so. We are lucky to have him.

BEWARE

Those anxious to profit from the naivete of the unwary are busy again. Not that they have ever really disappeared, but they seem to be proliferating since genealogy has become so popular. One of the more recently heard from is Elizabeth Ross. This woman changes her middle name to match the surname of whomever she addresses. This conveys the notion that her own maiden name was the same as your name and she is thus specially interested in researching that name. Actually she doesn't really research anything anymore than the rest of the phonies. Beatrice Bayley's name is probably familiar to all these days. Mispacha and Chronicles list a few more, Sharon Taylor, Vicki Lee Kerr, Jenny's Inc., Walter Manning and Cynthia Dean. Some of these are not familiar to us but no doubt they too offer either a list of everyone with the same surname they could find in phone books and directories or in some cases you might get an actual tree but not one for any member of your family, simply a history of some long ago family important enough to have been recorded complete with such vital information as the family motto and the coat of arms. The latter type is, of course, not of any use to a Jewish family that does not count some 14th century knight among its ancestors. The Beatrice Bayley type is of value only if your name is so unusual that everyone with that surname is related. In that case you may get a handy list of names and addresses which will allow you to contact everyone else who shares your name. It does save looking through hundreds of phone books but if your name is not extremely you will be wasting money. If you receive a letter from one of these people notify S.S. Hoffman, supervisor, Management Operations Support Center, Eastern Region, Bala Cynwyd, Pa. 19004-9000 the post office is investigating these people.

GOOD ADVICE

Chronicles quotes the Chicago Genealogical Newsletter as advising that one request a death record of a marriage register rather than a certificate as these contain more information than a certificate does. Certainly worth trying since information is, after all what we are seeking, not official certification.

If you try this, do, please, let us know the results.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR IN LONDON

by Libby Greengard Rosenfield

Having been the only member of the SFBAJGS to attend this seminar, I can say that some very interesting sessions were missed by all. Delegates attending were, of course from the London area, from a number of other English cities, from Israel, France, Belgium, Australia, Scotland and West Germany. This country was represented by people from southern California, New York, both city and state, Pittsburgh, Florida, Connecticut, New Jersey, Maryland and Illinois, a total of 71 enthusiastic participants.

A few of the highlight talks were by Mr Harvey Kaplan, of Scotland, on the extensive availability of Jewish ancestry records, and the information revealed on certificates of birth, marriage and death, facilitating research greatly. Anyone with Scotch ancestry?

Another interesting talk was given by Gertrude Ogushwitz of Connecticut, who had just returned from Rumania where she was very successful in finding records of her ancestors, and along the way made friends with those who helped her. Also Dr. Neil Rosenstein related his experiences on a recent trip through Poland. He had numerous slides to show of the cemetery tombstones, and of relatives still living in Poland. And as always, Rabbi Malcolm Stern gave another of his interesting talks.

On Friday we took a walk through the old Jewish East End with David Jacobs as guide, visiting an old synagogue, still in use and beautiful inside, ending in a Kosher restaurant for lunch where we had, what else, gefilte fish and lokshen kugel (much sweeter than I make). A well spent day through old streets, very narrow and now occupied mostly by other ethnic groups.

Another day, a visit to the Jewish Museum, again with David Jacobs as guide. In the Sternberg center there was on exhibit a very interesting show of the Jewish Theater that thrived for many years, with wonderful photos of famous performers and plays.

Dr. Green gave a most interesting lecture on genetic diseases with illustrations of statistics concentrating on Tay-Sachs disease, interspersed with wry humor, very illuminating.

The seminar ended with a grand banquet with an excellent meal, lots of wine, a few talks created some laughs-- all very gemutlich.

The weather had been very hot throughout the week--no air conditioning, except at the banquet. The rains started a few days later and plagued the rest of my trip with cold all the time and sun only on a few days.

FURTHER ON THE SEMINAR

Avotaynu has a long and thorough report on the seminar by Sallyann Sack. Unfortunately it is too long to reproduce, but if you take Avotaynu or know someone who does, do read it. Sallyann says the seminar organizers announced that a complete packet of all presentations will be available for purchase some months from now at which time Avotaynu will advise its readers and tell them how to order.

It sounds as though what will be offered is more likely to be typed or printed sheets than cassettes, as has been the case after many previous seminars, but the main thing is that the information will be available. No doubt at that time we will have a full list of titles and be able to choose the topics of interest to us.

Sallyann says that although the focus of the seminar was on Anglo-Jewry many other topics were addressed. Libby has mentioned some of them above. Also present was Mme. Rosine Alexandre of the Paris society, who spoke about the Jews of France and Alsace-Lorraine including a good deal of information on records and on history. If you have ancestry from France, or from an area formerly under French rule, such as in north Africa no doubt the packet with her report would be well worth ordering.

Herr Sielemann, the Hamburg archivist, gave what Sallyann describes as a masterly account on Jewish emigration illustrating it with slides from the archives collection. Since so many Jews from eastern Europe came via the port of Hamburg what Herr Sielemann had to say should interest a great many people of various backgrounds. Herr Sielemann also went to Israel in 1984 for the first international seminar. At that time he spoke about Jewish research in Germany. I have that cassette and value it highly. Herr Sielemann is not only knowledgeable, he is also very nice and very helpful.

Sallyann herself spoke on the still essentially sparse resources for Russian research and discussed the Russian Consular Records Project with which she has been so deeply involved. When we know where and when the seminar packets will be available and the cost we will pass along the information.

BOOKS ON THE JEWS OF KASSEL

Mishpacha tells us that in honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Franz Rosenzweig his native city of Kassel has published two books of value to those with a genealogical connection to Kassel. Both books are to be acquired by the Leo Baeck Institute and both are in German. Although no address was given for those who might actually want to purchase one or the other of these books for themselves but writing to the Stadtarchiv in Kassel will no doubt bring the needed information. One book is Israelitische Gemeinde zu Kassel in 19. Jahrhundert, (Israelite Community of Kassel in the 19th century) by Helmut Theile. It is 398 pages long and rather expensive at DM180, but it is a large book and a roster of all Jewish births, marriages and deaths in Kassel during the 19th century would seem to make it worth a great deal to someone with great many people in Kassel to trace.

The second book is a smaller volume, 248 pages, and covers only the Hitler years 1933-1945. Put out by the city of Kassel itself it is a memorial book, covering the fate of the Jews who lived in Kassel at that time. It is called Namen und Schicksale der Juden Kassels , 1933-1945 (The Names and Fates of the Jews of Kassel 1933-1945)

Mishpacha further tells us the Leo Baeck Institute and the JGSGW library are both to have a copy of a list of 60 Schutzjuden who lived in Simmern (near Coblenz) between 1672 and 1800. Please note the German postal guide lists three different towns with this same name. The list is for the Simmern that is near Coblenz.

PRUSSIA, BAVARIA, BADEN AND OTHERS

Very often these names appear on official documents as place of origin and confuse people who always understood the family roots were in Germany. They have heard that at one time Germany was not one single country and wonder what the situation was during their ancestors lifetime.

It is true enough that Germany was divided into a great number of kingdoms, principalities dukedoms and what have you, but all of them were and still are, Germany. There was a king who was over all of them although they were autonomous states. A small number of rulers were "electors". This was a very select group only seven in number in the 14th century and never more than eleven at any time. The electors would gather upon the death of the emperor and elect a new emperor from among their own number. In the late 19th century, in Bismarck's time, the country was united under one hereditary ruler, although there are still dukes and princes to this day, even if they do not rule.

If you find the name of a province on some document instead of just Germany you are ahead of the game. Although you can't tell exactly what town you are looking for at least knowing the province brings you closer than just knowing the country. Someday, maybe, those who are charged with responsibility for official records will learn the importance of giving as much and as accurate information as possible. As it stands now they not only do not go beyond recording the state for citizens or the country for the foreign born. They won't even correct an error if you find one unless you pay a hefty sum for the privilege. They are doing you a favor and couldn't care less themselves whether the records are accurate or not.

DISAPPEARED TOWNS

Not being able to locate a town is a very frustrating thing. In addition to the towns that are no longer in the same country and now have different names, the towns that had one name used by the Jewish inhabitants and a different one used by the non-Jewish people and the tiny towns and villages too small to appear on most maps there are the towns that disappeared via incorporation. As larger towns spread out and became greater this or that they often swallow up smaller places that were once quite separate. These can be very hard to find since current maps don't show them, the consulate of that country may not know the name unless someone there is from that area and recognizes the name as the name of a section of town. This is as common in Europe as it is in this country. Of course going to the area from which those you are seeking came is the best way to clear up the confusion but not all of us can afford to do so. You can however remember not to give up hope and you can list the town in a family finder query. Someone else may pick it up and let you know where to find it.

FAMILY FINDERS

Speaking of family finders do be sure to take advantage of your entitlement to use the Jewish Genealogical Family Finder (formerly the Computerized Family Finder). If you have not yet doen so please ask for a form and do so. Your membership entitles you to sixteen entries. This goes all over the country and you never know who may write to you as a result of seeing a submission of yours. Gary Mokotoff,who has been responsible for turning this out ever since the beginning, is very desirous of making this family finder as all inclusive as possible. Every JGS has been requested to try for 100 percent participation on the part of its membreship. If the form intimidates you as it seems to in some cases, just ask one of the officers for help.

And dont forget our own family finder. It does not cover as wide an area since it circulates primarily to the membership with an exchange copy going to all the other JGSs.How many see that exchange copy we dont know, but once again, you never know. What do you have to lose? You might hesitate because of the cost where some family finders are concerned although it might pay off, but when it is free why make people ask for your particiapation?

FUTURE SEMINARS

The 1988 seminar, as no doubt everyone knows by now will be held in Washington D.C. June 26 to July 1, 1988. This is Greater Washington's second annual seminar. Washington offers some sources of information not available anywhere else since it is the capital and thus has the Library of Congress, the National Archives and other sources.

The 1989 seminar is slated for Philadelphia with Los Angeles planning to host the 1990 annual seminar. For Los Angeles this will also be its second seminar.

AMERICAN GENEALOGY INC.

This company seems to be the company responsible for the Elizabeth Ross "genealogies" that are nothing of the sort. This is the book offered to each addressee as not only a personal family genealogy but backs it up by inserting the addressee's own family name as Elizabeth Ross's own middle name to lure you into believing that she is also personally interested in that family name because it is her own maiden name.

The fact of the matter,as reported by Family Records Today,is that this is a ficticious name used by the company to better sell their books. This time something is being done about it. As a result of numerous omlplaints received various agencies a Pennsylvania judge issued an injunction to the Postal Service to withhold from delivery all orders for this book received in Scranton. The Post Office has filed an administrative complaint charging misrepresentation. Specifically they charge that the book does not represent genealogical research of the addresse's family but contains merely generalized information. Customer complaints re this book can be referred to Postal Inspector Gary Clayton, c/o Regional Chief Postal Inspector, P.O. Box 3000, Bala Cymwyd, PA. 19004-3609.

This covers only one of the numerous phony genealogies being offered today. They are increasing with great rapidity as you may have noticed. However if complaints to the Postal Service resulted in an investigation possibly complaing to psotal authorities about other non genealogies might put a spoke in the wheels of those who are out to profit from the gullibility of eager genealogists.

Just recently a card addressed to my husband (who incidentally has no interest in genealogy at all) offered a book called "Wises across America". A very special limited edition, of course, restricted to one book per household and to be printed only on his specifiic order. Since "Mary Whitney" the supposed compiler's address is akso in Pennsylvania it will go to Inspector Clayton. It's a different zip code but he will know how to deal with it. As for us,we will forego learning all about the Wise surname and its coat of arms.

PHOTOGRAPHS_OF_ANCESTRAL_TOWNS

Boris Felblyum, a native of Russia now living in the Washington D.C. area has a large collection of photographs, both historic and modern, as well as maps, engravings and documents. He is a photograoher by profession and can provide you with a copy of any photograph you in which you are interested in any of several sizes from 5x7 to large framed and matted copies. We have received a list of around 700 towns and cities covering eastern and western

Europe, England and this country. The smallest size, 5x7 is \$12.00 and it is up from there.

BOOKS

It is simply too big a burden to expect one or two people to find suitable books for us to present to Sutro at each meeting. Everyone must help. About \$20 to \$25.00, \$30.00 at the very outside is as far as the budget can stretch. Please be thinking of books and let us know if you have a suggestion. They already have the basic how-to books.

MEMBERS FORUM

Using the French "Minitel" for Genealogical Research by Harry Saal

While on vacation in France recently, I had the chance to explore the French "Minitel" system. Minitel is a wonderful system available to virtually every household in France at no cost. The French Telephone Co. (a government run monopoly) invested in the development and wide deployment of a "home information" terminal, a small keyboard, display and digital access unit (modem) and software to make it useful for more than you ever imagined (or wanted!) If you have a telephone you can get Minitel installed free. You can then perform all directory assistance lookups (by name, company, street etc.) throughout the entire country, at no cost. (I suppose you do pay through the basic monthly rate).

My French hosts were quite proud of this system, and showed me how to use it, encouraging me to experiment. So I set to work trying to explore possible family relations using Minitel. I found I couldn't just enter my last name and get a list of all the Saals throughout France. The system required me to enter at least one more piece of information, such as a city, but my host said I need only enter a department (roughly similar to a state). In fact I really didn't even need to know how to spell the name of the department since they all had numbers and I could give the number instead.

So I began and found a wealth of names, addresses and numbers to pursue. All up to date and for the entire country. As an extra plus, after it gives you all the names that match the one you provide it goes on to give other similar sounding names (it appears to be based on a soundex type code, so any Saals or Zahls showed up in one scan).

I finally gave up after half an hour of searching and copying from the screen. I had found a gold mine accessible to anyone at no charge. All I wished for was an automatic service which would press the repetitive keys as I went from one department to another and print, on paper, the screens as they came up. Hmmm, sounds like an idea for a small business ... anyone interested?

Visiting the American Jewish Historical Society by Daniel Peletz.

I was recently in Boston on business and had the opportunity to use the archives of the Woodbine Agricultural School at the American Jewish Historical Society. The AJHS is located on the campus of Brandeis University, 1 Thornton Rd., Waltham, Mass.

Dr. Nathan Kaganoff, librarian for the society, was extremely helpful and most generous with his time and the use of the records. The stacks are closed but an assistant wheeled a cart holding fifteen archive boxes to the tables where I was working and I was able to go through the materials. The reading room is very comfortable and the entire staff very helpful.

The Society welcomes genealogical researchers and has issued a pamphlet on their genealogical resources. Incidentally, Dr. Kaganoff is a brother of Rabbi Ben Zion Kaganoff, author of the Dictionary of Jewish Names and their History.

You can imagine how refreshing it was to find an institution that welcomes genealogical research.

Ed. Note: The French Minitel sounds like a computer but one that would tempt even a computer hater like your editor to use it. However since by no means all our members dislike computers and your editor does not understand them, we still need someone to be editor of a computer column. Someone to whom we could turn over material pertaining to computers sent us by various computer genealogy groups for them to sort out and write up for us so our interested members would not miss out on information they would want simply because your editor does not understand what it is all about.

Since my paternal grandmother's maiden name was Hess the name always catches my attention. While reading through all the numerous newsletter we receive in exchange for our own, I noticed the name William Hess several times while reading Mishpacha. Although I usually check each new update to the Jewish Genalogical Family Finder I had not yet checked the latest one for new people who might be researching my ancestral names. I found Bill Hess and found he was researching in a different area of Germany than I but since from what I saw in Mishpacha I had concluded that he really was familiar with Germany, I decided to call him anyway. It didn't take us too long to establish that there was no relationship between our two families, we did discover a family connection however. In the course of conversation I mentioned that a cousin of my father's, Loni Bender, had married a man named Hess and thus had as her married name her mother's maiden name, however she and her husband had not found any connection between their two families. As soon as I mentioned Loni Hess, Bill said "We had a Loni in our family too". Before long we had established beyond doubt that Bill's father's brother had married my father's cousin! They had lived in Frankfort and with the advent of Hitler emigrated to Santiago de Chile.

An additional bonus is that when we spoke of the difficulties in trying to research in East Germany and I brought up the name of a little town called Schwarza in the scenic area of Thuringen which had caused me problems because there were three towns of that name in the Postal Guide, all in East Germany and I had not known which was the proper one. Eventually I did discover the proper one and it was the very one where Bill's family on his mother's side had lived. I have been trying to find the parents of a great uncle by marriage, Simon Epstein, who I thought had been born in Halberstadt because it was there that he and my great aunt, Marianne, still another of the Hess sisters, had lived during their marriage. There that they raised their family and there that a brother of Simon Epstein had also lived.

I had finally succeeded in getting a death certificate for great Uncle Simon but like all East German certificates it was only an abstract including no parental names although it did tell us he was born in Schwarza, not Halberstadt, as we had thought. Since he was born about 1839 I have yet to find the needed information. Bill knows of no Epsteins in his family but he does know something about the town and may be able to help me.

I have found a friend and a family connection.

FAMILY FINDER

C-5 Armand S. Cohn, 40 West 3rd St., San Mateo, Calif. 94402 (415) 342-3458

Seeking ancestors and siblings of Marcus Cohn and his wife Doris Michalsky of Lobsebs/Lubsence, Prussia. Marcus never left Germany but some of his children as well as a grandson did come to San Francisco in the 1800s. Samuel, Adolph, Henriette, Hulda and Herman were the children, Heyman a grandson whose parents did not come.

Also searching for ancestors and siblings of Abraham Rotenberg, born 1826 and his wife Rachel Oppenheim who arrived in San Francisco in the mid-1800s.

R-1 Ruth Rafael, 141 Carmel St., San Francisco, Calif. 94117 (415) 564-7857

Seeking information on the Speiser/Spicer/Speicer family from Zbarah, Galicia, Austria, now Poland.

S-1 Carolyn L. Sherfy, P.O. Box 157, Knightsen, Calif. 94548 (415) 625-4280

Looking for all descendants and ancestors of the Cohen, Sachs(Saks), Diamand and Abramovitz/Abrahamavitz families of Kovno Gubernia, Lithuania and later of St. Louis, Mo.

W-2 Martha L. Wise, 1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116 (415) 564-9927

Looking for descendants of Heymann Jacob Hess died 1797 in Moisling (Lübeck) Germany. Sons were Jacob Heymann Nathan, and Joseph. Levin the youngest was childless. There were also five or six sisters. names unknown. Most descendants moved to Hamburg in the mid 1800s. Also parentage of Jette Hess of Moisling, wife of Jacob Heymann Hess probably her maiden name was either Samuel or Wolff. Would like to hear from anyone having ancestry from Moisling or Lübeck, Germany. Particularly interested in finding women with the maiden name of Hess, and in family trees for the Samuel and/or Wolff families of Moisling in the late 1700s

PENINSULA GROUP MEETING

The December meeting of the Peninsula Group of the SFBAJGS will take place at the home of Mr & Mrs Robert Weiss in Palo Alto on Monday, Dec. 7 at 7:30 P.M. David Langenberg, Jewish Studies Bibliographer, Stanford University Library and will discuss the Taube/Barron Collection of Jewish History and Culture, and its potential use in genealogy. The Weiss address is 3916 Louis Rd. Palo Alto, a block and a half from East Charleston. Take the San Antonio Rd. exit from 101 (toward Los Altos) make a right turn onto Louis Rd. one block past the next traffic light.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION IN NEW YORK

Reports of the tenth anniversary celebration of the JGS in New York are glowing. This was the first JGS. The intervening ten years have seen around thirty JGSs founded world wide. There have been half a dozen annual seminars and two international seminars all an outgrowth of the first JGS. The honoree was Rabbi Malcolm Stern. We received a note of thanks for our congratulatory card.

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