



San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116

Aug. 1987

SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING

DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1987

TIME: 7:30 P. M.

PLACE: SUTRO LIBRARY
480 Winston Dr. San Francisco

PROGRAM: Short business meeting, Speaker, Refreshments

SPEAKER: IRWIN WIENER

TOPIC: SYNAGOGUE RECORDS

Mr Wiener is the executive director at Temple Emanu-El. He will discuss what sort of records were kept by Jewish congregations. What we can hope to find, how what records were kept by Jewish congregations differs from what was kept by other religions. An interesting subject we have not previously explored.

PENINSULA LOCAL GROUP

The Peninsula Group reported a very well attended August meeting. They are now planning their October meeting to be held at the home of Bob Weiss, 3916 Louis Rd. Palo Alto, on Monday, Oct. 12 at 7:30 P.M. The program is not yet definite but Bob has some very interesting ideas in mind. Contact Bob Weiss at 424-1622 or Inge Campbell at 368-1617 if you have any questions.

BOOKS DONATED TO SUTRO

Sutro's Jewish collection is still somewhat limited. Since they allow us the use of a very nice room and charge us nothing, we have been repaying them with books which add to their holdings and from a selfish point of view, increase what is available for us. A happy idea for everyone we think.

So far we have given them Ruth Rafael's Western Jewish History Center Guide and Sallyann Sack's Jewish Genealogical Research in Israel with Neil Rosenstein's Latterday Leaders, Sages and Scholars and Chester Cohen's Shtetl FINDER soon to come.

Let us hear from you if you can think of a book at a reasonable price that would be a nice addition to the library tell us about it. We will run out of ideas without a little help. When you are next at the library do check the catalog listing under Jews. You may be surprised to discover how much they do have. They are scattered widely on the shelves so you may not realize how much there is already.

We will try to have someone with a computer make up a good list for us which we can make available to you. It will however be out of date almost immediately since the holdings keep increasing.

Many of our members come early on meeting days to do a little research before the meeting

begins. We have never met in a place that seemed to please everyone as Sutro does. How rare it is not to have constant complaints, as anyone who has ever tried to find a place knows.

BOOK FUND

One of our members who would like to see some of the really expensive books on the shelves suggested that if everyone chipped in who was interested in a particular book, before long it could be bought. We cannot assess our members for anything under our by-laws as was pointed out to him. The upshot was the creation of the Book Fund by some of our members who agreed with him that there are books they would like to be able to consult but that are quite expensive for an individual to buy for their own collection since it would not be in frequent use. The book our member had in mind at the time was Sallyann Sack's book on the Russian Consular records which is around \$125.00.

One of those who agreed with the idea of a fund to which interested members only would contribute is Phil Kutner, 1128 Tanglewood Way, San Mateo, Calif. 94403, phone 593-2001. Phil agreed to handle the fund. Speak to Phil if you are interested in this fund.

HEBREW CALENDAR COMPUTER

Jim Serwer says " Did you ever translate the Hebrew inscriptions on a tombstone or the writing on a ketubah and find that you had the Hebrew calendar date but still did not know the civil date? Well, help is now available in the form of a computer program. With this program just key in the Hebrew date and the program displays the civil date. It is that simple. This program can just as easily translate the civil date to the Hebrew date. The program runs on the IBM PC and XT. It works for all dates from 364 C.E.

I am selling this program for \$25.00. (California residents must add 6%, 6.5% or 7% sales tax.) I can be contacted at P.O. Box 555, Cupertino, California 95015. People outside North America add \$2.00 for postage."

COMPUTER COLUMN

Since so many of our members seem to be computer oriented it is hard to understand why no one cares to become editor of a computer column in the newsletter. Your editor does not understand computers. We do however get various items in the mail referring to computers. We don't like to deprive you of information you might want, but in order to share it with you it will take someone who does understand computers to write it up. We have offered space to someone who will accept the material we receive and capsule it for a column.

ELECTION

Since we are now meeting in the odd numbered months rather than the even numbered ones we must hold elections in September. Nominated so far, for vice president myself, Martha L. Wise, for membership chairman, Carolyn L. Sherfy. No one else has been nominated. No one else has entered their name as candidate for any office.

According to the by-laws a president cannot serve two consecutive terms, thus I cannot succeed myself in the same office. Not to mention that after two years of being president and newsletter editor I am tired. My doctor does not want me to continue under that much stress. I would also like to be able to do a little genealogy for myself.

Please realize that you are endangering the society by not participating in the election. It would be a shame to see the society go down the drain as St. Louis did, for example, after all we have been through.

We survived the period of meetings in three different areas in rotation. That was an effort to please everyone, which of course cannot be done. That system works well for Greater Washington where the membership is so large they can afford to do without members from an area when they hold a meeting too far away to attract them but since the membership is large they can draw enough for every meeting to make it feasible. When membership dropped a later administration decided to meet only twice a year on the theory that with so few meetings everyone would make sure to be present. They didn't. In fact many thought the society had disbanded. Now we are back on our feet. We have a satisfactory meeting place. We have a regular schedule of meetings and prospects should be bright. It is up to the membership to keep it afloat.

There is a card enclosed to help you keep track of meetings if we are able to continue.

RESEARCH IN HOLLAND

Simon Italiaander, is a friend we came to know when he and his wife, Annette, happened to arrive in Salt Lake City while the seminar was in progress last summer. Both are interested in genealogy and since they are Jewish, were also interested to learn about the JGSs here. In response to a request for information on where to search for ancestry in the Netherlands Simon sent us a good deal of information.

He says that as the majority of Dutch Jewry lived in Amsterdam, the Amsterdam Archives can be an invaluable source for many of Dutch descent. Other cities also have archives open to the public. Some smaller communities have combined their archives into regional archives. For reasons of privacy, records less than fifty years old are kept by the civil administration and only civil employees have access to them. If you can give a good reason, you may be able to obtain certain information, but flexibility in these matters varies from community to community and final decisions always rest with the particular civil servant involved. After fifty years records are transferred to the archives and are then available to the public.

The archives and civil administration may have differing addresses. To contact the archives simply address the letter to Gemeentearchief followed by the name of the city or town concerned. For civil administration, address it to Bevolkingsregister, again followed by the town name.

The address for the archives in Amsterdam is: Gemeentearchief Amsterdam, Amstelkade 67 1078 AK Amsterdam. Don't hesitate to write in English. Most people will understand it. Most places do charge a fee for research. The amount may vary considerably and in some cases advance payment may be required.

The information will be accurate but how exhaustive it may be, depends. Some give only the bare essentials and others provide all they can.

The Amsterdam archives are extraordinary. The facilities are excellent and there is a wealth of information available. The archives also house the city's religious documents, including the Jewish ones. Not only are the documents there, but most of them have been translated from Hebrew into Dutch. This helps considerably even if you know Hebrew since the old handwritten Hebrew can be difficult even for those who know some Hebrew. The few keywords of Dutch you need are easy to learn to recognize.

Simon also says that one should realize that in Holland, as in so many areas of Europe, the Napoleonic conquests resulted in changes in civil administration and in new laws, the Napoleonic Code which still is responsible for differences between British law, (British common law is still the basis for the laws in most English speaking countries) and Continental law, which governs the legal thinking of most of western Europe.

In 1809 Napoleon decreed that everyone had to have a permanent surname, and to register it with the civil authorities. For the first time Jews, (at least on paper) were given the same rights as any other citizen. Poor, illiterate Jews were often given such names as Azijnman (Vinegar maker) or Vissoonmaker (fish cleaner) by civil servants. Simon does not say so, but it would seem a reasonable bet that those who had the means could purchase a much nicer name, or retain the name they had been using for generations in cases where there was already a family surname.

Simon says that as far as genealogists are concerned Napoleon must be considered a blessing for his system of civil administration, which is still almost unchanged, not only in the Netherlands but also in Belgium, France and parts of Germany, making research easier. Births, marriages and deaths must all be registered with the civil authorities and the format is essentially the same in all the aforementioned areas. Almost always the names of the parents are given so that you can go on to the next generation until you reach 1809 which in Holland normally signifies an abrupt end to archival records.

However in Holland if you move into or out of, or within a community you must notify the authorities and a record is maintained. These records can also help in research.

Simon reminds us that although the civil records run out around 1809 there are still the old Hebrew documents to consult. You may find the name of a father, for instance in a civil record and then pick him up again in the old Hebrew mohel records. Thus you can continue your research a little further.

Simon, of course, feels that if you can possibly go to Holland in person it will be a great advantage. To those with Dutch ancestry he wishes you good luck or in Dutch, Veel Geluk. Thank you Simon. No doubt it is best to go in person, but for those who cannot do so all this information should be very valuable.

RESEARCH OFFER FROM ISRAEL

David Frost, whose name is familiar to many, has sent the following for publication. I will research genealogical works in Israel's libraries and archives for family names that interest you. If the surnames appear in family trees, I will send you descriptions of the relevant information.

A research fee will be charged only if you request a copy of the family tree. Send the surnames and their respective places to David Frost, P.O. Box 1349, Jerusalem 91013, Israel

DESCENDANTS OF THE VILNA GAON SOUGHT

Chaim (Keith) Freedman, also of Israel, is currently engaged in trying to trace as many descendants of the Vilna Gaon as possible. He is attempting to update a comprehensive work by the late Eliezer Rivlin, published some fifty years ago by adding generations born since that time as well as branches which may not have been included.

Like the descendants of other famous people, there are those whose family tradition includes descent from the Vilna Gaon but not all the necessary connections back to him.

Mr Freedman's hope is to be able to put the pieces together from what is submitted from various sources and what already exists in print or other form and thus eventually be able to produce a comprehensive family tree for descendants of the Gaon. Meanwhile he hopes that with information from various sources he may be able to help families seeking their connection to the Gaon to find some missing links.

He invites those claiming descent from the Gaon to contact him with all relevant details.

His address is Chaim (Keith) Freedman, Rothschild 97, Petah Tikvah, 49333, Israel.

Some years ago Mark Tedeschi of Australia was asking for information on descendants of the Baal Shem Tov. Whether he ever heard from any or not I do not know. I do know he heard from several descendants of Rabbi Lieber the Great of Berdichev from whom Mark's wife descends, but none who had their complete line back to Lieber the Great. Mark traced his wife's line back but she descended in a male line until recent generations.

Neil Rosenstein, who listed so many descendants of Saul Wahl in his book "The Unbroken Chain" discovered not so very long ago that there were descendants of the Wahl family who had migrated to Alsace Lorraine, and some later to France. Unfortunately most of these people only knew the family story but not the lines further back than the first ancestors to arrive in Alsace Lorraine. If he can straighten these lines out Neil will undoubtedly publish something on them as he did on the Margolis family when he discovered previously unfamiliar lines.

Anyone know of anyone else trying to find the descendants of some famous person whose descendants may know only that the family claims descent but can not get back? Those who know only the family tradition and those who are serious researchers of the line may all profit by being aware of each other.

Good luck to Mr. Freedman.

WOLKOWISKER YISKOR BUCH

Bob Weiss found a two volume yizkor book on the town of Wolkowisk, in White Russia, while he was in Jerusalem for the 1984 seminar. It was published in Yiddish in New York in 1949 which means there is a chance there could be copies to be found in this country if this is your area and if you can read Yiddish. Apparently nearby towns such as Liskowa, Swislocz, Wolpa, Porzewe and Kremianitze are included as well. The 990 pages are packed with the recorded history and culture of these towns east of Bialystok.

Bob Weiss has transliterated into English the names and pertinent data given for the Jews of Wolowisk. He has further alphabetized the names of each head of household and added a small list of the names of Auschwitz inmates from another chapter and the names of the more prominent Wolkowiskers for whom more extensive coverage was given in another chapter.

Bob will send a copy of the complete list, a map of the area between Bialystok and Slonim with the local stetlach identified, and a street map of the Jewish section of Wolkowisk for \$3.00. He will also search the list to determine whether specific family names are covered if you will send a SASE. If this is your area contact Bob Weiss at 3916 Louis Rd., Palo Alto, Calif. 94303.

THE PRINTED WORD

The power of the printed word is such that people often accept as true, things they might question if they heard them from an acquaintance or a friend. If they once appear in print the author is accepted as an authority even though for the most part publishers do not spend much time checking on the author's qualifications.

It pays to take a good deal with a grain of salt unless you find it backed up by others and even then there can be a problem simply because in researching many an author, probably most, will rely on what has previously been written on the subject. If some respected authority was in error then that error may have been carried forward for decades. As successive generations of writers copy an erroneous "fact" it quite naturally becomes accepted as true. Yet what choice does a writer on any particular subject have but to read what has previously been written?

LAS VEGAS JGS

Carole Montello of the Las Vegas JGS wrote to say their meetings are scheduled for the first Thursday of every month and held at Temple Beth Sholom in that city. She has invited any of us who might be in Las Vegas in time for one of their meetings to attend, and if they wish, to speak to them about researching in the Bay Area. Carole is secretary, Maida Dacher president pro-tem.

RUSSIAN RECORDS

Although the Russians love to say they have no records, they actually do have records which could be of considerable use to us. Miriam Weiner, in Avi Avot, mentioned the general census taken in Russia in 1897. Miriam says this was the only general census undertaken in Czarist times. Prior to that any population count undertaken was on a sporadic basis. In 1858, 1863 and 1865 estimates were made by the administration and police based on information from family registers. The census of 1897 covered the entire territory of the Russian Empire (except Finland). There were fourteen questions asked covering about everything one could wish. Even if your ancestors were already here by that time the chances are that they may still have had siblings or cousins still in Russia whose data might well be quite important to your research. Miriam lists five post-soviet censuses some of which might be of value to some and also lists well over fifty places where a census was taken in varying years of the 19th and 20th centuries. Not everyone will find their towns among those listed but some surely would. How wonderful it would be if the Russians could come to realize that no harm would come to Mother Russia as a result of releasing this information. For as long as anyone can remember everything in Russia has been a secret. Can it change in our lifetime?

LITHUANIAN JEWISH PAST

Avi Avot, in its winter 1986 issue, carried an article by Susan Jonas taken from The Annals of the Aarons Family which tells about Lithuania five and six hundred years ago and also tells about life in Russia in general, under Czar Nicholas I. Undoubtedly this genealogy includes a good deal more than just the family history and would be of interest to many for its information on life in Lithuania and Russia in times past. Unfortunately we have no idea who wrote this genealogy, whether it is available, where and from whom, nor anything else.

WE LIVED THERE TOO

This is the title of a book by Kenneth Libo and Irving Howe reported on by Gertrude Ogushwitz in Avi Avot. The book we are told, was constructed from unpublished diaries, memoirs and letters and details the story of the Jewish immigrants who did not settle in the big established cities but moved west to found new communities in the three hundred years from 1630 to 1930. It is available from Barnes and Noble Bookstores, 126 Fifth Ave, New York, N.Y. 10011 at \$13.95 plus \$2.50 postage and handling. Considering that it is 347 pages and illustrated as well, that hardly seems exorbitant even for a paperback.

If your ancestors fit this category this should be a worthwhile book.

SHARING CORNER

Genealogical Congress in Nancy

by Beatrice Kirshenbaum

I wish to share with you my experience at the recent French Genealogical Congress in Nancy, which emphasized the genealogy of Lorraine.

It had been pre-arranged that I would go from Paris with a couple I had never met. They were going to drive, staying overnight in Metz, the capital of Lorraine, then proceed to Nancy. Even my hotel reservations were made for me.

When M. and Mme. Langlois called for me at my Paris hotel I learned that she had been in the audience the night I made an impromptu speech to the Cercle de Genealogie Juive on my previous trip.

At lunchtime we left the Autoroute (freeway) to the east and headed through places made famous in World War I; the Argonne Forest, Verdun and to Varennes made famous by the flight of Louis XVI at the beginning of the French revolution, and depicted in a fairly recent movie. Before continuing to our destination we had lunch on the trellised veranda of a village inn in Flòrent.

The weather in Metz was uncomfortably hot, as it had been in Paris. We arrived at the hotel as Mme. Alexandre was arranging parking for the car in which she had arrived. We were to be ready for a reception at the Jewish Community Center she told us.

The reception was a meeting around a long table in a directors' room. Mme. Alexandre opened the meeting and spoke for some twenty minutes or more. Then M. Hayem, the leader of the Jewish community said calmly and flatly, as he looked at her across the table, that he disagreed with her completely.

When time ran out the meeting broke and we proceeded to our next appointment. This was a dinner hosted by a couple, in their art, book and treasure filled apartment. The guests were the five of us from Paris plus M. Hayem. We had a sumptuous kosher meal and great conversation.

Next morning we all went to the Municipal Archives where M. Gilbert Cahen, head of the Jewish section of the Regional Archives, gave us a talk. Lunch was at the Jewish Center, after which we left for Nancy.

The program had been well planned. Mme. Alexandre, in making my reservations gave my address as in care of her own Paris address therefore neither my name tag nor my listing among the attendees identified me as the only person present from overseas.

That evening we were the guests of the mayor at City Hall. First, a champagne reception on the main floor, followed by a sumptuous buffet dinner described as "country style".

The whole level above the ground floor was covered with long tables the buffet lining the whole wall. The food, wine and desserts were inexhaustible. The view of the Place Stanislas, one of the most impressive in the world, added to the elegance. Son et Lumiere was to begin at ten P.M. Since the Langlois and I had seen it before we did not stay but returned to our hotel.

The sessions began at 8:30 A.M. Each workshop ran two hours. The choice of topics was wide. Many ran concurrently. The site of the congress was a large building set in a wooded park on a slope at the edge of the city. The Jewish group had a "stand", a table screened on three sides, where informational materials could be displayed and explained by volunteers. Several other members had joined our group in Nancy. One of these was the president of the Jewish society for all of France. Since I was part of the insider group, and also knew two of the workshop leaders, I never felt as though I were a stranger.

Lunch and dinner that day were served at the Maison d'Annee, the convention center.

That evening we had a cultural treat in the adjoining chapel. A professor read his doctoral thesis on Chopin's roots in Lorraine. An excellent pianist played a variety of Chopin compositions.

The next morning's wrapup took place in the chapel. Since Mme. Alexandre was among those who left early to attend the international seminar in London, Mme. Langlois read her summary. The most important message I brought away from my attendance at the sessions is the importance the French government, through the Educational system, attaches to the study of genealogy. Until recently the subject related only to royalty and nobility. No more; it is a subject being taught in school to give children the feeling that history is a personal thing. That one's ancestors lived, felt and had occupations that make history, anthropology, demography, genealogy link together. The children are being made to feel that their own ancest-

ors all were participants. Urbanization has brought feelings of rootlessness in France as elsewhere; there has been a great influx of immigrants from former colonies, as well as victims of persecutions. It is felt that genealogy can help to integrate the various elements of the population. The government has signed an agreement with the Mormons, and microfilm, microfiche and computers are speeding the dispersal of information to those in search of it. Genealogy in France is serious business, not just a pastime for the idle or the mere hobbyist. Archives are well guarded and preserved by respected custodians who are real professionals.

There were many facets to the meeting. Subjects such as heraldry were dealt with. One "stand" displayed handsome chess sets whose pieces were modeled after the figures in the Bayeux tapestry of the Battle of Hastings.

Mme. Alexandre, founder of the Cercle complains that she has no one willing to relieve her of any of her responsibilities. Others complain that she is dictatorial, also that they have other duties taking their time. The usual interminable battle, but meanwhile there is continual membership growth.

It was a great experience, well organized and run by serious members.

MEMBERS FORUM

Dan Peletz sent a note as follows: "Enclosed are photocopies of excerpts from the current issue of Family Travel times regarding family reunions and some books for children on genealogy and related subjects.

Although the material is not strictly genealogy, the topic is certainly of interest to those of us studying family history. I thought you might be interested in including some of this material in one of the newsletters. Many people I know working on family history are concerned that none of the younger generation share their interest and worry that a lot of hard work will be forgotten or ignored when they are no longer around. A family reunion is a great way to stimulate interest. I hope you will find it useful."

The material covers many points to be considered in planning a reunion, places, budget, special requirements to consider, trying to allow for the interests of varying age groups and much more, however it is too much for the newsletter. For anyone who would like a photocopy we will be happy to make one. There is also a list of books for children on family subjects of various sorts, from old familiar books such as Louisa May Alcott's Eight Cousins, to recent books published within the last decade or so. Several actual genealogy books are included, none specifically for Jewish youngsters which means that no doubt they would include a good deal of advice on how to use church records and the like but still some of the basics are no doubt fine for everyone. This list too, will be copied for anyone who wishes a copy.

FAMILY FINDER

K-5 Ann Krumholz, 689 W. 42nd Ave. San Mateo, Calif. 94403 (415) 345-5571
Seeking information on the family of Sarah (Sara) Pozin nee Krupkin who arrived in this country in 1923 from Liady, Russia. Lived in Passaic N.J. also seeking whereabouts of Joseph Meyer, son of Chansel Meyer, nee Krumholz who was from Hariniawa (Gariniawa). Joseph was last known to be living in Westchester, N.Y. and Shirley Goldberg nee Pozin whose last address was Clifton, N.J.

5-8 Jim Serwer, P.O. Box 555, Cupertino, Calif. 95015 (408) 296-4763
Looking for ancestors and collaterals of Louis (Eliezer) Goldberg from Lachowicze (also Liachovitch, Lachovitch or Lyakovichi) Byelorussia, who arrived in this country around the 1880s. All family members in this country are known.

W-3 Bob Weiss, 3916 Louis Rd., Palo Alto, Calif. 94393 (415) 424-1622
Searching for ancestors and descendants of Rabbi Simcha Zissel Braude (Broida) who lived from 1824 to 1898 in Kelme, Lithuania.

W-2 Martha L. Wise, 1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116 (415) 564-9927
Seeking descendants of the Hess family of Moising in the 1700s, Hamburg in the 1800s. Both towns in Germany.

1988 SEMINAR DATES

Mishpacha announced in its spring issue that the next national seminar on Jewish genealogy will be in Washington, D.C. The dates are Sunday, June 26 through Friday July 1. The hotel is to be the Capitol Holiday Inn on C st. where the 1982 seminar was held. Room rates wqll have been determined by now but were not yet set when this information was received. Plans are already underway for research activities and for programs for the seminar.

BOOK' DONATIONS AGAIN

Mention should have been made earlier of the fact that in addition to what the JGS has donated to Sutro a couple of members with books they did not want to keep on their own shelves for lack of space or for which they had no current need have donated them to Sutro. That way the book remains in good hands should the original owner ever want to see it again and it can possibly be of use to others. Of course no one has given a book they use and wish to keep on their own shelves, only a book or two they did not want to discard but did not want to keep at home either.

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