



San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116

Feb. 1989

PERIODICALS RECEIVED

DATE: March 13, 1989

MAR 8 1989

TIME: 7:30 P. M.

Allen County Public Library

PLACE: SUTRO LIBRARY
480 Winston Dr., San Francisco

PROGRAM: Short business meeting, speaker, refreshments

SPEAKER: Julius Blackman, Exec. Director, Hebrew Free Loan Association

TOPIC: History and evolution of the HFLA and the value of its records for the Jewish genealogist.

Sherrill Laszlo, our Program Chairman, says " Mr Blackman has been Executive Director since 1963. A genealogist himself, he will speak on the history and evolution of the HFLA and the value of its records to the Jewish genealogist. The HFLA was established 1897.

In addition Mr Blackman is the founding president of the Association of Hebrew Free Loans, a nationwide affiliation of 30 such organizations. This concept offers us the possibility of investigating records that exist in other localities as well as in San Francisco.

Trained as a cantor and having served at congregation Ner Tamid for a number of years. Our speaker therefore is well grounded in the religious traditions from which the concept of Hebrew Free Loans sprang.

Please note that the date given above is not the third Monday in March which would be our normal meeting day. As mentioned in the previous newsletter, the date had to be changed since March 20 is Erev Purim.

Your blue calendar cards do not reflect this since they were prepared and printed prior to our becoming aware of the date on which Purim falls this year. Sorry about that.

SUMMER SEMINAR

The dates for the national seminar in Philadelphia are Sunday June 25 through Thursday June 29. There is nothing planned for Thursday other than departure unless you choose to stay longer on your own. The hotel selected is the Holiday Inn, Independence Mall which has agreed to allow the special convention rate. Rooms will be the same price for one person or for two. We do not know exactly what that price will be. Philadelphia feels it has mailed

its preliminary form to every member of a JGS however since it is highly unlikely that they really do have a full and complete mailing list from each society (we can tell you right now that we were not asked for, nor did we send, a full mailing list) we will bring a number of the flyers which Philadelphia provided for us to the next meeting. If you need one you can pick it up.

They know the amount of time they will allot to their lecturers and the time of day but so far there is no mention of who will speak on what. As is usual there will be a choice of speakers at any given time. No doubt in due time they will notify us exactly who will speak on what but these things take time and are seldom all lined out this early. If you have been to previous seminars you will know this and probably understand why.

Sunday will be devoted to registration, socializing and sightseeing until 5 o'clock when activities begin. Monday through Wednesday there will be the usual visits to resource centers with talks beginning in the late afternoon. Wednesday evening there will be no talks because of the cocktail party at six followed by the banquet.

Full details will no doubt follow as they are worked out.

FOR THE YOUNGER RESEARCHER

For those young enough to profit from information from Social Security records, such information is available from your local Social Security office. Request form F, SSA-L997. Fill it out and return it with proof of your deceased relative's death. You will receive a copy of the deceased's application for a social security number. Much will be familiar no doubt, it includes only name, date and place of birth and parents names but if this is what you need and have not found this may be another source.

The Social Security act went into effect January 1937 but bear in mind that it was a while before a social security number was routinely required. Thus even though someone was more than old enough to apply they may not have done so for years.

My own s.s number begins 553 because until I went to work for the government at the end of 1942 I had not been required to have a number. My father who was self employed did not need a number at all but thought it was a good idea and applied right away. His number began 545 as did my brother's since he worked for our father and applied at the same time. On the otherhand my late husband had a much higher number because it wasn't until he returned from service in WWII that his company required a social security number although it was the same company as before the war. His number began 558.

So you see that prior to the time social security numbers became a necessity for any job the number is not necessarily a reliable guide to the age of the number holder.

Numbers were and still are issued in blocks so the number can tell you where the card was issued which can be a clue to where the individual was living at the time. The numbers for the north Atlantic area, N.Y. N.J. and the New England States had the lowest numbers beginning with 001. The mid-Atlantic states followed with numbers beginning with 135.

The southern states got 200 numbers, low 200 numbers since the Great Lakes region got numbers in the high 200s. Here in the west we got 500 numbers. This would not seem to cover every area but it is clear that the numbers began low in the north east and increased as they got further west.

EASTERN EUROPEAN TOWN NAMES

As we all know many eastern European towns were not called the same thing by their Jewish inhabitants as by the non-Jews. For the most part we have assumed that this was simply a matter of Yiddish speaking Jews rendering the names differently. It would seem however that there were instances in which the name was deliberately altered because it was religiously offensive. Such names as San Francisco or Los Angeles would have been quite unacceptable to the eastern orthodox no doubt. If the names offended them they simply changed it into something they found acceptable.

Another interesting fact is that rabbinic writers quite often rather than transliterate the name into Hebrew characters would, where feasible, translate into Hebrew. If the town had a name meaning new town or white fields for example would simply translate it into Hebrew so that in order to determine the actual name of the town it must be translated back into the language of the country concerned.

KEST

The term kest was very familiar to all Jews at one time. It disappeared from western Europe first as marriage customs changed from arranged marriages earlier there. It was still to be found in orthodox marriage contracts, ketuboth, into modern times but only as a form where once it had been a very important matter.

Kest was the upkeep of a young married couple by parents. In the days when young people were married off while still really children not yet able to support themselves, they were to be provided for until they were old enough for the young husband to take over. In western Europe marrying girls off at the age of twelve, thirteen or fourteen to boys not much older, died out long before it did in eastern Europe where it still occurred in the early 1800s and where even in the later 1800s the girl not married by the age of twenty was regarded as an old maid.

The very early marriages were, of course, arranged marriages. Nothing else ever occurred to anyone. How would mere children know how to pick a suitable spouse? Love was not a deciding factor. That would come after marriage. The parents, generally the fathers, betrothed their offspring at an early age, followed by an engagement of a couple of years or even longer.

The arrangements entered into by the parents included specific amounts of money to be given not only as a dowry for a girl, but also for a boy, to provide a start in life. Also included was an agreement to provide upkeep for the young couple for a given length of time. They might live with parents of either bride or groom for a period of time. Sometimes they were entitled to live with first one set of parents then the other often depending on the parents ability to provide.

If you have read the Journeys of David Toback you may remember that at one point David comes to know a perpetual Talmud student supported by his wealthy father-in-law. Such an individual was called a "kestkind". In eastern Europe a student was such a jewel in the family crown that having him earn a living would have been a waste of his talents. In western Europe while students were appreciated, making a living was to be expected of a young man who would make a good husband, wealthy father-in-law or not.

In the Memoirs of Glückel von Hameln (a real person born in Hamburg in 1646) she tells us her parents and her husband Chaim's agreed to provide two years of board and room each. Chaim was the youngest of nine children while Glückel still had younger siblings at home so they stayed first with his parents. Glückel loved his parents but found Hameln an ugly, dismal town and yearned for her native Hamburg, a much larger town, with other Jews to associate with. Chaim was an enterprising young man who tried to earn what he could in Hameln but could not see too much future in Hameln. Hamburg beckoned both so they moved to her father's home where they spent another year that saw their first child into the world. They were entitled to another year in each parental home but by then Chaim had established himself and was doing well and the young couple moved into a home of their own.

Both these books are the true stories of real people although more than two hundred years separated Glückel from David Toback and while she was born into a wealthy home in Germany and he to poverty stricken parents in Russia, reading such books widens one's horizons.

YIZKOR BOOK SOURCE

More than one newsletter has mentioned J. Robinson's Booksellers of 31 Nachlat Benjamin St. Tel Aviv as one of the best sources of yizkor books. The books are used and condition varies. Some seconds are also available. Shipping is extra but apparently they will accept a personal check. So much easier than coping with foreign exchange. Selection varies constantly as books are sold and new ones received. They will send you a list upon request and we presume international response coupons to cover the expense.

GALICIAN GAZETTEER

Suzan Wynne of JGSGW speaks of an Austrian document showing the administrative districts which were responsible for the vital statistic records of the Jews of Galicia. While the original document gave a complete list of Jewish towns in Galicia everything was by administrative district and not in alphabetical order. Many months of work produced a computerized version, alphabetized and keyed to the proper administrative and sub-administrative

districts. Rabbis were responsible for seeing that Jews in their districts registered births, marriages and deaths. Rabbis in larger communities oversaw the collection of records from the smaller surrounding towns and villages. The document, we understand, covers 1847 through 1942.

Suzan has offered to answer all mail inquiries that include a SASE. Her address is 3128 Brooklawn Terrace, Chevy Chase, Md. 20815.

This offer appeared in Mishpacha and perhaps was intended only for JGSGW members. We would not want to be responsible for swamping poor Suzan as could easily happen given the number of people with an interest in the area.

SHORES OF REFUGE

Shores of Refuge: A hundred years of Jewish Emigration by Ronald Saunders is a book reviewed by Suzan Wynne in the same issue of Mishpacha. She highly recommends it for its information on the causes of emigration, the problems and hardships of immigrating, travel in the days of heavy immigration and much more. It is a 600 page book costing \$27.95 published by Henry Holt & Co.

GENEALOGICAL FAIR

Once again the California Genealogical Society will be holding a genealogical fair. Two years ago we participated. At that time Carolyn Sherfy already had reserved a table for herself. She offered to let us pay half the cost and share the table, which we did. We picked up some new memberships through this venture and would have repeated it the following year except that the dates conflicted with the seminar in Washington and Carolyn, the dependable old hand at running tables, was going to Washington. At the last minute we almost decided on a table anyway when several people expressed a willingness to help however it was on a Saturday and Sunday which ruled out the first day for some of our people. Others offered an hour or two which was insufficient.

If we are to have a table we must have enough help. Carolyn and yours truly are both willing to work but neither of us is willing to see a repeat of two years ago when we were stuck in one place for almost the entire day. We each had a lunch break and Carolyn took time to give her scheduled talk but I could get in only half of the talk I had paid to hear. We, too, want to be able to attend a lecture or two and to have time to visit the other exhibits and that means ADEQUATE help. If three other people volunteer but only wish to give an hour or at most two, how much time will that allow us, given that the fair lasts for two days? That means two eight hour days. There are lulls of course, but also busy periods when extra help is needed. Also Carolyn and I will need time away from the table if we are to hold out for two days.

It is up to the membership. If you want a table, and last time it did bring in new members, then we must have enough help.

The dates are Friday and Saturday, June 16 & 17. This is closer to the date of the seminar in Philadelphia than one would like since some of our members will be going and will be busy preparing. Friday and Saturday are not ideal days for us either however that is the way it is. Let us know if you want to participate or not.

MOSTLY QUERIES

In our last newsletter we mentioned this little publication however shortly thereafter we heard from Ruth Parker its editor that publication had been discontinued. Ruth hopes eventually to be able to resume but for the present a physical problem has made it necessary to call a halt for some time. Especially where this has been largely a one woman project so that with Ruth incapacitated there is no one to carry on. All fees were returned but we wish Ruth Parker well and hope the day will come when she can resume.

WARSAW VISIT

Roots-Key for Winter 1988 contains a report by David Einsiedler on a trip to Warsaw last October. It is far too long to reproduce here in its entirety but too worthwhile to capsule. David is himself Polish born and thus understood what he saw and heard as one who does not speak the language and has no memory of the city as it was formerly could not.

It is interesting reading even for one with no Polish ancestry and should be that much more interesting to those who do.

If you do not have access to a copy of Roots-Key Sutro always has the latest issues on the newsletter rack. You can read it there or photocopy the article to peruse at leisure at home.

WRITING TO EAST GERMANY

While West Germany raises no objection at all to that designation, East Germany insists on being called the DDR. They are officially the Deutsche Demokratische Republik although they are scarcely what we would call democratic nor is it our idea of a republic. Still if you must deal with them you must play by their rules. They will accept the term DDR and that is certainly shorter than German Democratic Republic, so use that.

West Germany's official designation is Bundesrepublik Deutschland or Federal Republic of Germany but they, as mentioned before, have no objection to the term West Germany.

You are not likely to get anything much from East Germany but they do have what they call a genealogical center to which you can write. The address is Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Georgi-Dimitroff Platz 1, 7010 Leipzig, D.D.R. You may just be luckier than others have been but do not expect too much. Although it is a center for genealogy the personnel seem to have very little if any interest in genealogy, and no interest at all in people who are seeking their ancestry. However should you be the lucky one, do let us know about it.

DEALING WITH THE SOVIET UNION

Roots-Key also has an article by one, Hillel Don Lazarus, in which he relates his experience in attempting to find his ancestry. Both the families he is seeking were from what in 1870 was Imperial Russia. One town is near Vilna, the other near Minsk. It makes little difference as far as getting any help is concerned. The article details a frustrating search. He says "Letters of inquiry usually result in 1. absolutely no response at all, no matter how long you wait; 2. a response, after a long wait, stating that that particular agency does not respond to genealogical inquiries; and 3. a response, after a long wait, stating that no records of ancestors in question exist in their files. In short, even the rare response is a non-response."

This sort of thing is familiar to anyone who has tried to get anything from an iron curtain country.

Eventually this man filled out a Soviet form to be mailed to the Soviet Embassy in Washington with a money order for \$15.00. This form was a surprise to the embassy since they had not yet heard of it. It is the product of glasnost, however they duly processed it with the predictable result. The form requires all sorts of information and is to be filled out in English and in Russian or the language of the region in question.

The author says if he had all the information they require to do a genealogical search he would have no need for such a search. Also included is a copy of the form. It is all in Russian so if you cannot read the cyrillic alphabet you will need a translator. An addendum tells us there is a new form. This time the search fee is \$35.00. Not returnable if the search produces no results, of course, and the search request will only be processed if it is filled out in exact detail in English or Russian or the local language of the area in question.

There is also a list of addresses to which you can write "If you choose to enter into this frustrating business".

Personally this editor although of Russian ancestry on one side will not attempt to deal directly with the Soviet until there is more hope. Someday perhaps there will be.

CZECHOSLOVAKIAN RESEARCH

The Cleveland Kol includes a report by Nancy J. Deutsch-Sinderbrand of Forest Hills, N.Y. on the results of her efforts to trace her Czech ancestry.

Czechoslovakia seems to be far the best place in the iron curtain area to attempt to do research. This is not the first time we have heard of success there. In doing genealogy luck always plays a great part. Do records still exist? Does the person researching for you have a real interest in genealogy? etc. But when you strike it rich as Nancy Deutsch-Sinderbrand did it puts you on cloud nine.

The research had been requested via the Czech embassy in Washington. Six months later a letter arrived stating that the results had arrived and requesting an additional \$10.00. The requester had made a deposit of \$50.00 and stipulated that her upper limit for each family was \$100.00.

Having heard some horror tales like those in the foregoing item, she called the embassy and asked the size of the report. Dr. Brenka, the official in charge of genealogy answered his phone in person and said the report was two pages long. A money order for \$10.00 brought the long awaited material. Enough to delight the recipient who now plans to try again with other families on her family tree.

She learned that while her family had lived in the town she considered their town of origin they were actually not from that town at all. Instead her great great grandparents were from two different towns whose names she now knows. Although some of the birth years Nancy D-S had submitted were not accurate all the birth records were found. Also the names of the great great great grandparents are now known including the maiden names of the women. There are competent people out there who understand genealogy and want to help. If you are lucky you may find them.

CZECH NATIONAL SOCIETY

A Minneapolis society is expanding into a national society with membership open to anyone with ancestry from what is now Czechoslovakia. That means people of varied heritage since the country was created after WWI out of areas that had been Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary, Austria etc. Both Jews and gentiles are welcome. They hope to promote genealogical research, collect and publish material pertaining to the country and create interest in Czech ancestry and its varied heritage. There will also be periodicals. Membership is \$10.00 per year. Contact Czechoslovak Genealogy Society, P.O. Box 16225. St. Paul, MN. 55116.

WHERE TO WRITE FOR RECORDS

A booklet entitled "Where to Write for Vital Records; Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorces" is available from the Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 20402 for \$1.50. Order number GPO 017-222-009.

DRAFT REGISTRATION CARDS

There are registration cards for almost every male resident of the United States born between 1873 and 1900. Some 24,000,000 registration cards are now on microfilm. For a fee, the amount of which we do not know, you can get information. Whether a printout or something else is again not stated however if this could be of use to you, contact Archives Branch, Federal Records Center, 1557 St. Joseph Ave., East Point, Ga. 30044.

NEW SOCIETY

A brand new JGS is being formed in Connecticut. Headed by Gertrude Ogushwitz, whose name is very familiar to anyone who has been in genealogy for any length of time, it should do very well. Its address is JGS of Connecticut P.O. Box 225, Storrs, Ct. 06268. We plan, of course, to suggest an exchange of newsletters.

SHTETL ATLAS

Randy Daitch, 206 5th Ave. Venice, Calif. 90291 can make available a copy of the Shtetl Atlas for \$45.00. This is an 8½ x 11 spiral bound booklet of maps covering most of eastern Europe. It includes the names of 4,000 towns and villages. There is a separate index for Poland. A magnifying sheet accompanies the package and postage is included in the price. Still rather expensive, but if you can afford it, no doubt very useful.

QUERY FROM ABROAD

The Shahor family of Israel is seeking family members. The surname they say is not a translation nor has it ever been changed. They request any possible family member to contact Yaakov Shahor, Rehov 31, Bnai Brak 51504, Israel.

MEMBERS FORUM

Computers in Genealogy

by Walter Hertzmann

My genealogical efforts go back about 20 years when I decided to find the answer to the puzzle regarding my father's cousins who were here when he came here.

I began in the usual way to tabulate relationships, first alphabetically, then mixing alphabet and numerals but I noticed that each time I added more material I had to revise the listing.

I discussed the problem with my youngest son and he made two suggestions, Abandon the usual numbering and adopt a mechanical system in which each numeral would indicate a generation, then put it all on computer.

That system worked well as long as there were no more than nine children in a family. In such an instance I had to devise a new system for the further offspring.

My first computer was an Apple II Plus. Why? My son had one and I depend on his computer expertise. As the family trees grew so did the problems as I have about 2,000 names in the larger genealogy.

We decided on a new computer last June, an Apple IIGS with a Word Perfect version 2.0 program. Besides giving me flexibility it operates faster. Right now I am learning to footnote. The computer has that capability. A great benefit of footnoting is the cooperation I am receiving from professional sources.

I have reviewed some of the genealogical systems and have come to the following conclusions. First: No special computer programs other than the basic word processing programs are needed for genealogy.

Second: Jewish genealogy is different. I have no religious compulsion to find my ancestors in order to convert them. I am satisfying my personal and family curiosity as to who our forebearers were and when possible a bit about their personal histories.

SHARING CORNER

Unfortunately this column is not filled in this issue. Don't forget to submit anything you think may be encouraging to others. If you found something you had never hoped to find, if a chance encounter gave you a clue that led to a valuable genealogical find, if you found something because you learned of a new path to pursue. Anything that will help others to feel hopeful and continue their own search with renewed hope or with a new tack to pursue. Something they might not have thought about had they not read of someone else's good luck trying the same thing.

Most of us enjoy reading such tales. If you have one to share don't forget to do so.

Avotaynu for Fall 1988 had almost exclusively such items. This was the second time they had such an issue because it was so popular the first time.

FAMILY FINDER

H-1 Walter S. Hertzmann, The Sequoias, Box 8134, 501 Portola Rd., Portola Valley, Calif. 94025 (415) 424-4469

Searching for Samson Maier (Mayer) born in Mainz, Germany May. 10, 1815. Believed to have died in San Francisco in 1893. Known children, Rosalie 1849, Martin Samson 1852, Abraham 1854, Flora 1856, Julia 1858, Alexander 1861, Isador 1863, Clara Leontine 1869, Leon birth-date not known. Whether all children were born in California or not is unknown.

L-2 Sherrill Laszlo, 34 Craig Ave. Piedmont, Calif. 94611 (415) 655-6789

Seeking information on Richard Newman, son of Joseph Newman and his first wife, Alice Cecile Englander. Last known to have been in Cleveland, Ohio around 1940.

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

Seeking all Stepakoffs from Russia.

W-3 Robert Weiss, 3916 Louis Rd. Palo Alto, Calif. 94303 (415) 424-1622

Looking for ancestors and descendants of Rabbi Simcha Zissel Braude/Broida from Kelme, Lithuania, 1800s. Also interested in anything pertaining to Kelme.

RABBI STERN HONORED

The Federation of Genealogical ^{Society} Newsletter tells about the awards given at the New England in Your Blood Conference held last summer. The first award recipient listed is our own Rabbi Malcolm Stern. He has long been active with the Federation (not to be confused with the Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies founded only a couple of years ago, more or less on the same model, but to serve our specific needs) of which our JGS is a member. They say " Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern was the Federation's unanimous choice to receive its highest honor, the George E. Williams Award, presented to an individual in recognition of extraordinary contributions to FGS, a member organization or both." They go on to list at some length Malcolm Stern's many contributions and accomplishments in the world of genealogy both Jewish and general. The honor has been well deserved, Malcolm Stern has played a very important part in efforts to preserve heritage, further genealogy, work with his own JGS and others, with the FGS, the young AJGS, write books, sit in on conferences aimed at easing matters for genealogists concerned with Russian records. The list is as long as your arm. Congratulations.

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Allen County Public Library
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Attn: John Beatty

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