

GENEALOGY DEPARTMENT

San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116

May 1989

Editor: Martha L. Wise

MAY GENERAL MEETING

DATE: MONDAY, MAY 15, 1989
TIME: 7:30 P. M.
PLACE: SUTRO LIBRARY
480 Winston Dr., San Francisco
PROGRAM: Short business meeting, speaker, refreshments
SPEAKER: Waverly Lowell, Director Regional Archives
TOPIC: The National Archives

PERIODICALS RECEIVED

MAY 11 1989

Allen County Public Library

Although we are all familiar with census records the National Archives can be a much richer source than many of us realize. Waverly Lowell, as director of the National Archives, Pacific-Sierra Branch in San Bruno, is eminently qualified to tell us what the Archives can offer us. What is new, what is to be expected in the future, what we may not have been making use of because we were unaware it was available to us. Waverly Lowell is relatively new to this area, but she is by no means new to National Archives.

JUNE WORKSHOP

Our program chairman, Sherrill Laszlo has planned a workshop afternoon for us for Sunday June 4, at the Jewish Community Library, 14th Ave. at Balboa St. The large meeting room on the second floor will be set up to allow plenty of work space for all. Sherrill says bring your pens, pencils, pads, notes etc. etc. Jonathan Schwartz, of the library staff will speak on what is available for the genealogist in the library.

The Holocaust Library is located in the same building on the lowest floor. It does have some table workspace but it is limited. The Library has a good photocopy machine. The Holocaust Library also has a machine. There is a charge for copying but it is nominal. The workshop will be from 12 noon to 4 P.M. Coffee and tea will be available at all time.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

The American Jewish Historical Society has sent notice of a conference to be held May 18 22 at the Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles. The Southern California Jewish Historical Society is co-sponsoring the event. Other historical societies across the country will be represented.

Although this is a historical society conference several very familiar names are mentioned among those who will speak, Sallyann Amdur Sack, Miriam Weiner, Karen Franklin and Dr Douglas Goldman. Historical Societies are showing more interest in genealogy these days.

If this interests you you had better call me at 564-9927 if you would like me to read the agenda or call (213) 852-1234 ext. 2116 if you seriously intend to go and need to make arrangements for full information. Time is getting short. Those who are planning any such event should allow a good six months if they want their event publicized since most newsletters are quarterlies and they don't all come out at the same time.

PHILADELPHIA SEMINAR

If anyone planning to go to Philadelphia this June has not received a hotel registration card, Jon Stein was kind enough to send some extras along with the sheet that lists the speakers and the subjects. So far we do not know which speaker will speak on which topic but we do have the speakers and the topics. There will also be birds of a feather group meetings but so far we do not know which such groups are planning to meet. So far we are aware of three people with definite plans to go.

THE NAME ON THE COVER

The name on the cover of a genealogy does not cover every family name to be found in that book. If the area is correct check the name index, you may just find a name you have been looking for. The name on the cover is generally that of the oldest ancestor but after all only a portion of his descendants will carry his surname. Of course not every genealogy will have a name index and others will have only a surname index but if you find a book check it out. Also if you have asked for information from a library or the like on a certain name and they say they have nothing on that name remember that it means they do not have a catalog card on that name, nothing more. It would be wonderful if every book could be checked for each name and a file maintained of the names and the volume and page on which each name appears. Unfortunately this is a tremendous undertaking and there is seldom anyone with the time or the dedication to take on such a task.

Leo Baeck Institute is not basically genealogically oriented nor is Yivo. This of course applies to libraries etc. as well. The Jewish books at Sutro and the genealogies and Yizkor books at the Holocaust Library all need such an index file but so far we still need help in just checking out the books in the Holocaust Library to determine which are Yizkor books and which genealogies and which are neither.

LITHUANIAN JEWISH BULLETIN

Chronicles reports that there is an international bulletin called Gachelet (The Spark) the international bulletin of Lithuanian Jewry. A free copy of this annual bulletin, which is in English, Yiddish and Hebrew, is available if you send a stamped (with 45¢ in postage) no. 10 (legal size) self-addressed envelope to Assistance to Lithuanian Jews, Inc. c/o Josef Griliches, President, 245 E. 11th St., New York, N.Y. 10003.

BOSTON CEMETERY GUIDE

Dorot reports that the Jewish Cemetery Association of Massachusetts has issued its 1988-89 Guide to Jewish Cemeteries. In addition to a listing of Boston area cemeteries there are twelve pages of maps. The guide is free but contributions to the work of rehabilitating the old neglected cemeteries are much appreciated. If you had family buried in this area you may want a copy of the guide. Write to Jewish Cemetery Association of Massachusetts, 1340 Centre St., Newton Centre, Mass. 02159.

Many other cities are also trying to do something about documenting and rehabilitating old neglected Jewish cemeteries. Work is being done in Chicago and in Cleveland and as you know our own Dan Leeson and those working with him have been planning cataloging northern California's cemeteries.

Boston was probably the first to get into this work and thus the first to have a full fledged association but in general there is a considerable effort being made to save the cemeteries and the information they contain for posterity.

For those copying gravestone inscriptions the shaving cream technique seems to be superceding rubbings. It is easier and rubbings can smear. Shaving cream is used to cover the inscription and then the excess removed. The lettering stands out in white and can be photographed for further study or for translation.

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY

Nearly everybody is familiar with the term daguerrotype and has also heard the term tintype, but not too many have heard of ambrotypes. The daguerrotype was the first of these. It was on silver-plated copper and very fragile. Light was very damaging to it. The ambrotype appeared some twelve or fifteen years later and was on glass rather than metal. It had a black backing so the picture could be seen. Tintypes appeared not long after the ambrotype and since they were probably less expensive there may have been more of them. All of these were light sensitive.

Generally they had cases of some kind ranging from leather or velvet lined wooden cases to heavy paper. I believe a really well preserved daguerrotype or tintype can be photographed by someone skilled in so doing, but cannot make a definite statement. On the other hand a Danish relative found an old ambrotype dating we think from 1858, took it to a knowledgeable photographer and had a negative made from which ordinary photographs can be made. This is the earliest photograph we have. It is not perfect, faces are out of focus, but still it is valuable as a family record. In some respects it is amazing. Every detail of the cutwork edging the pantalettes of a then eight year old great aunt, is so clear you can almost see the embroidery stitches themselves.

True photographs on paper naturally caused the decline of the earlier fragile and unsatisfactory types of picture.

The carte-de-visit was very popular in earlier years. The name is French for visiting card because the pictures were the size of a large visiting card, something very common in the social life of the day. Later a larger size appeared called a cabinet card followed by a wider variety of sizes. These early photographs were often mounted on heavy paper board. You probably have a few of these. They generally have the photographer's name and the name of the town. Unfortunately although the city may help, if you need that, the photographer's studio is long out of business. If only that were not so the studio records might tell us who the subject was when we have unidentified pictures.

CRAM'S SUPERIOR FAMILY ATLAS OF THE WORLD

This atlas dates from 1902 and is therefore out of print. It is evidently a very detailed index and it is indexed. So many maps are not indexed making it very difficult to locate a town if you don't know just where to look for it. We would dearly love to be able to locate a copy of this atlas to present to Sutro Library but the only possibility would be a used book store. If any of you are given to hunting for books in used book stores do, please, keep an eye out for a copy of this atlas. The chances are remote but if enough of us are on the lookout for it who knows, someone may have luck.

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL FAMILY FINDER

In using the family finder bear in mind that while new submissions are added old ones stand as originally submitted. Deletions are not made nor are address corrections to be assumed to have been made. Thus if you do not get an answer consider that there may be a reason other than simply that the person did not choose to answer. There are of course those who will not answer letters unless they think they have something to gain and there are those who for one reason or another drop out of genealogy. There are also those who have died and those who have moved but failed to send in an address correction. Don't give up if it is really important to you try to check the address or find someone who has a phone number for the person you want to reach.

ROSTERS

We are not too surprised if guests do not know which register to sign even though they are marked, but we do expect members to sign the proper one and we request that members seated near a visitor to make sure the visitor has been given the guest register (the blue sheet) and has signed it. Names from the guest register are put on the mailing list in hopes they will take a real interest and not only return but join. We value members. The more members the greater the attendance at meetings. After all only a fraction of the total membership ever attends any genealogical society meeting.

DIACRITICAL MARKS

Not every keyboard allows for diacritical marks. In fact most do not, yet such marks are really important as they modify the sound of the letters with which they are used. Since English does not have diacritical marks their meaning is often lost on those who don't know any foreign language, yet they not only change the sound of words but in some instances may even change the meaning of the a word. It is not possible to produce most diacritical marks with a standard keyboard but if you can do so the effort is small and worth it. For an umlaut in German simply type in the vowel then backspace and hit the quotation mark key. The two marks over the vowel make a perfectly acceptable umlaut. In some languages there can be a slash through some letters. For this the diagonal will serve. Unfortunately there is nothing short of a special key that can produce the French accents, or the Spanish tilde but if you can put in the marks easily why not do so? Of course you can always put them in in ink but the result is much more finished looking if you can type them.

LATVIAN ARCHIVES

According to Chronicles archival records for Latvia do exist. Edith Kosmin discusses books on Latvia in an article in Chronicles and mentions that Patricia Grinstead in one of her books lists Latvian archives. Access to most of these is currently not possible but it may be of some comfort to those with Latvian ancestry to know that there are records which some day in the future may be available to genealogists. At least it means all records have not been lost.

Edith Kamin also lists some histories, a couple of Yizkor books and some maps. Some books are on Latvian Jews, others just on the country itself. The languages range from Latvian through English, Yiddish, Hebrew and German. The Grinstead book is available at the University of Pennsylvania library, as are some of the other books mentioned in the article. A few others are available at other Pennsylvania libraries.

'TAINT NECCESARILY SO

It is sad but true, that official vital statistics are not always accurate. If you cannot find a grave in the cemetery indicated on the death certificate consider that there may have been an error and the person may actually have been buried in another cemetery. How this occurs is not quite clear but there is no doubt at all that it does happen. The information for a death certificate is asked of the next of kin who is often not yet thinking clearly. A review a couple of months later and before the record is sent off to become a permanently filed record would insure greater accuracy of records but the sad fact is the agencies responsible for our vital statistics records seem not to care at all whether or not they are accurate. If you want to correct a certificate the fee is high. You are putting them to trouble. Death certificates in the past were sometimes filled out by the attending physician who left blank whatever he didn't know although the information could have been easily obtained from the family.

Birth and marriage certificates are also subject to error. Since we rely so heavily on official records it is too bad that officialdom does not subscribe to the old saying "Anything worth doing at all is worth doing well!" Perhaps as they come to realize how many people are seeking records and why they want them they will recognize the importance of accurate and full information.

DELAYED BIRTH CERTIFICATES

In the days prior to mandatory birth registration certificates were often filed as much as several years after the birth of the child. If you cannot find a certificate and you know when and where it should have taken place consider that it might not have been filed on time.

FIRST NAMES

Today we are all much quicker to use first names than our grandparents would have been, but there are still limits. If you are calling someone or writing someone in hopes of acquiring some genealogical information beware of offending them by using their first name

too readily. If you know you are addressing someone young they may consider it friendly but if they are older people they may take offense. If you want something that's not the best way to go about it.

In a social setting or at a JGS meeting an older person may invite you to use their first name but a letter from a total stranger is another matter, as is a cheerful young voice using a first name before even stating who they are or why they are calling.

These days even people trying to sell you a subscription to the paper you've been taking for forty years feel quite free to address someone to whom they hope sell something by the first name. It does not sit well with the older generation.

If you want to be on a first name basis you can invite the individual to use your first name and wait for an invitation to reciprocate. If not don't push it.

GENEALOGICAL FAIR

It is now definite that we are taking part in the genealogical fair being held by the California Genealogical Society Friday June 16 and Saturday June 17. Two years ago when the fair was held at the University of San Francisco we had a table. Last year for want of sufficient people to man a table we did not participate although some of us did attend. This year we could use more help but we have sent our check for a table and will be there.

It is being held at the Conference Center of St. Mary's. The conference center entrance is on Gough St. The hours on Friday are 1 P.M. to 9 P.M. and on Saturday from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. If you have never been to a genealogical fair there are tables for many genealogical societies, tables selling almost anything you can think of for genealogical use, and tables offering services such as photographers who will copy your old pictures etc. There are tables and tables of books for sale but most of them are of little use to the Jewish genealogist. The various pedigree forms and other genealogical supplies are another matter. You generally come home with at least something. Needless to say there are computer groups represented and all sorts of computer supplies for sale. There are also lectures much as there are at a seminar if you have attended one.

There is an admission charge. We do not know how much it will be, and a charge for each talk. Food we are told will be available, probably coffee, tea and cookies all day and lunch only for a certain time. If you can see your way clear to help out for a while please contact either Armand Cohn or Martha Wise, we would be grateful.

NEW ZEALAND JEWS

Mishpacha tells us there is a book called Not Strictly Kosher: Pioneer Jews in New Zealand by Odeda Rosenthal. It is available from Starchand Press, P.O. Box 468, Waincote, N.Y. 11975

ABRAVENAL FAMILY

Allan R. Abravenal of 111 S.W. 5th Ave. Portland, Ore. 97204 a descendant of the famous Abravenal family of fifteenth century Spain has started a family newsletter for Abravenal descendants. If you are a descendant of Don Isaac Abravenal or another member of this family you might want to contact Allan Abravenal.

THE SHTETL FINDER

Roots-Key says the Shtetl Finder is now out of Print. This is sad news since it has been a valuable part of so many Jewish genealogists library and a book so many new genealogists are anxious to own. Chester G. Cohen copyrighted it in 1980 but it was never for sale in bookstores as far as we know. As a result many people who would have liked to buy a copy believed it to be out of print long before it really was. The address was Periday Co., Box 583, Woodland Hills, Ca. 91365. Whether the book will ever be reissued or not we don't know. Possibly if enough people wanted it it might be, maybe not.

BATKIN FAMILY GENEALOGY

Roots-Key says Melinda Bronte reported that J. Roth Bookstore has a copy of the Batkin Family Genealogy. Whether they might still have it no doubt depends on how many Roots-Key

readers are interested in this family, but judging by the Family Finder there shouldn't be too many leaving a chance for anyone who is interested to contact the store at 9427 Pico Blvd. Los Angeles 90035 or phone them at (213) 557-8284.

NEW SOCIETIES

There are two new JGSs in Florida, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Miami, 6310 S.W. 33rd St. Miami, Fl. 33155 and Jewish Genealogical Society of Broward County, 9341 Chelsea Dr. South, Plantation, Fl. 33324.

The JGS of South Florida is no longer in Miami but Herb Unger who has moved to Coconut Creek (near Ft. Lauderdale, Fl.) has every intention of reestablishing the JGS of South Florida in that location. His usual newsletter arrived from the new location as usual. There is also another new JGS in New York state, this time in upstate New York. It is the Jewish Genealogical Society of Capital District, 55 Sycamore St. Albany, N.Y. 12208. We would not want to guaranty that this should not be Capital District Jewish Genealogical Society but we can only copy what we see in print.

ELLIS ISLAND ARRIVALS

There is a project afoot to computerize the Ellis Island records so that it will be possible to find a record simply by name without the need to know the name of the ship and the date of arrival. This will no doubt be of immense value to those who do not know the exact date and the name of the ship. The project should be completed by 1992. Currently it is planned to have this information available at Ellis Island but they are already considering copies for other locations. Knowing genealogists it would seem pretty certain that there will be requests to make the information available to those who cannot go to Ellis Island to make their search.

Meanwhile the project will be expensive and how soon it can be completed depends on how much money is available to finance the project. The Ellis Island Restoration Commission would like donations to be sent to the commission at Federal Hall, 26 Wall St. New York, N.Y. 10005 if you want to help. Donations are tax deductible.

Ellis Island began processing immigrants in 1892 prior to that people landed at Castle Gardens at the Battery at the tip of Manhattan so if your people came before 1892 they may not have come through Ellis Island and if they came first class they were probably checked through by immigration officers aboard ship. And yes, there were those who came second class and first class. The bulk of the eastern Jews had to come steerage because even if they had money they were not able to take it with them unless they could find a way to secrete some money or to take something past the authorities in their own country they knew was salable but that the authorities did not recognize as being of any value.

POLISH RESEARCHER

David Einsiedler recommends Richard Schnepf, ul.Czackiego 19m.24, 00-043 Warszawa, Poland as a reliable person to do research or procure documents. He is the son of the director of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, an associate professor of history at the University of Warsaw and a personal friend of David's. On top of all of this Richard Schnepf was a visiting professor at Indiana University in Indiana for a year which means there would be no language barrier in dealing with him. He is also a research assistant at the Jewish Historical Institute. What a wealth of qualifications, and David says he is reasonable to boot!

THE JEWS OF KASSEL

The city of Kassel, Germany has published a book called Namen und Schicksale der Juden Kassels 1933-1941, ein Gedenkbuch (Names and Fate of the Jews of Kassel, a Memorial Book 1933-1941) by Beate Kleinert and Wolfgang Prinz. This covers a very short period but it the period dating from the rise of Hitler to a period when all those who had not managed to leave the country had been taken to concentration camp so if you had relatives in Kassel whose fate during that period is unknown to you this book may be of value. Write to the Stadtsmagistrat, 3500 Kassel, West Germany, for information. We do not know the price. Ask if they would prefer a money order or international response coupons. Such a

book would be chiefly of interest to overseas Jews rather than to the current population of Kassel. That means postage and coupons might be useful to them. They do not pay a fee for exchanging the coupons as they do to cash a money order and if they will tell you exactly how many coupons you won't have to worry about exchange rates. Don't forget to send a couple of coupons for a response. We forgot to say it has a name index, biographies and photographs.

AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETERIES IN FRANCE

Write to Mme. Floriot de Langle, American Battle Monument Commission, 68 Rue du 19 Janvier, 92380 Garches, France if you are seeking information on someone buried in an American Military cemetery in France. Include as much information as you have and don't forget to enclose a couple of international response coupons here too. Even if this is a free service, as it seems to be, a couple of coupons do a lot to build good will. By the way does anyone know what happened on January 19th for the date to be memorialized in a street name?

NUMBERING OF FRANKFURT HOUSES 1776

In 1776 the authorities in Frankfurt am Main, Germany concluded that identifying houses by plaque or shield should be discontinued and the houses assigned numbers. This did not sit well with the owners of homes that had long been known by their shields. Many Jewish family names originated from the habit of identifying the inhabitants of the various houses by the shields that identified their homes, thus we have Rothschild (red shield), Schwartzschild (black shield) Kahn (a small, light boat) Gans (goose) Schiff (ship) Stern (star) and many others.

The inhabitants of the houses in 1776 objected to the change but of course progress won out. By that time everyone could read and the signs no longer served any purpose.

MEMBERS FORUM

Bob Weiss rightly states that research can be made much easier if others have prepared the ground for us. To this end he is spearheading several projects as follows:

Local Resource Directory This is a directory of research locations in the Bay Area. It will include information on the research facilities, location, resources, finding aids and hints on making the best use of what is available. The directory is modeled after Resources for Jewish Genealogy in the New York Area first published in 1985 and now updated. For this project we need volunteers to visit local research facilities, libraries, synagogues, archives etc., sit down with the director or archivist and fill out a prepared form. This should take less than an hour of your time.

Yizkor Book Index for Holocaust Center This is an index of the extensive Yizkor book holdings of the center including Polish/Russian holdings for the most part in Hebrew or Yiddish and German holdings in German chiefly. This requires visiting the center to verify the listed references and then entering the information on a word processor.

Ed. note: Possibly also the genealogies on hand at the center.

Index for the Oral Testimonies at the Holocaust Center There is currently no index of family or shtetlach names for the oral testimonies on file. This index will include that plus references to specific concentration camps. These testimonies are in English but we need volunteers to read them and create identifiers under which things can be indexed. This can be done at home.

Taking Oral Histories The Holocaust Center's Oral History Project needs volunteers to meet with survivors and record their testimony on cassette tape. Training can be provided at the center. Actual interviews can be arranged at locations convenient to the interviewer. Contact Bob Weiss at 424-1622 if you are willing to volunteer for any project.

SHARING CORNER AND FAMILY FINDER

Nothing was submitted for either of these columns this time. Perhaps someone will find something at the seminar to share with us for next time. Also please remember the family finder. You never know when you may get an answer.

MINI RESEARCH DICTIONARY

This is not an ordinary dictionary. It has word lists in various languages Danish, Dutch, German, Norwegian and Swedish. In each case there is a section in the foreign language and a reverse section with English first. The words are those one needs for genealogy. Since words you need for genealogy are often not included in an ordinary dictionary this little volume sounds very useful. It costs only \$2.95. It can be ordered from Everton Publishers, Inc. P.O. Box 368, Logan, Utah 84321. Ask for Mini Dictionary for Research in Foreign Genealogical Records Vol. 1, Order No. 8104.

We realize that this will not help with eastern European languages but it is volume 1 which seems to indicate that a second volume could follow. This is a paper covered $5\frac{1}{2}$ x $8\frac{1}{2}$ inch book.

Officers SFBAJGS

Pres: Armand S. Cohn

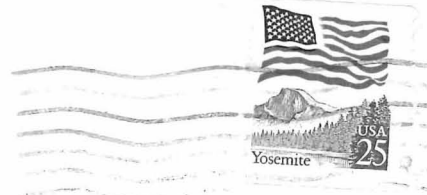
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