

# San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116

August 1989

Editor: Martha L. Wise

## SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING

DATE: MONDAY, September 18, 1989

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Sutro Library  
480 Winston Dr.

PROGRAM: Short business meeting, speaker, refreshments

SPEAKER: Sherrill Laszlo

TOPIC: Hungarian Research

Sherrill Laszlo and her family are spending the month of August in Europe where the Laszlos will be doing research in Hungary and in part of Czechoslovakia which prior to WWI was Hungary.

Sherrill knows a little Hungarian and her husband is fluent in it which will eliminate the problems people encounter when they cannot properly communicate. Sherrill will tell us what the situation is in that part of the world in regards to genealogical research, what records exist, whether the public has access to them etc. For those with Hungarian ancestry who have not yet tried to do too much for lack of information on existing sources, address and the like Sherrill's information should be very helpful.

## FUTURE SEMINARS

The 1990 seminar will be held in Los Angeles. Plans are already underway. This will be Los Angeles' second seminar. They have experience as well as enough members who will work to be able to do a fine job. Their 1983 seminar was excellent, and Los Angeles does have resources to offer.

The 1991 seminar will be held in Salt Lake City. Gary Mokotoff president of the Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, informed the AJGS delegates at our meeting that a hotel had already been chosen for 1991. It will not be the Howard Johnson again as Gary and his board felt the convention facilities were inadequate but he assured us that while the new hotel will be further from the library than the Howard Johnson, which is only about half a block, if you go out the front door and much less than that if you use a small door at the back, it will be only about two blocks away and it will be much less expensive.

In future the Association will apparently have a much greater hand in arranging future seminars which in the past had been arranged solely by the host JGS.

A number of people wanted to know when there would be a seminar in San Francisco. To that the answer had to be that we have no such plans. To begin with we do not have

the number of workers one needs for a seminar. It takes at least a dozen who will devote time to the project over at least a year's time and at least another half dozen who will contribute at least a certain amount of time and effort. San Francisco is one of the most expensive cities in the country. Finding a reasonable hotel would be difficult, but if we did find one and we did have the staff, what could we offer in resources? Not too much. Truthfully Philadelphia did not have too much to offer in the way of resources either but it is a historic city. We can offer scenery, but for the foreseeable future we are not in a position to host a seminar.

#### ELECTION RESULTS

As you know elections were held at the last meeting. All those nominated were elected and no office was in contention. All votes for president went to Armand Cohn however since our bylaws (article 4) state that incumbents may succeed themselves except in the case of the president who may not serve two consecutive terms, a second term for Armand requires suspension of that provision. The bylaws provide that a petition with five signatures may be submitted to suspend the ruling for one term. Bob Weiss, our newly elected secretary, has just such a petition with the required number of signatures to present for ratification at the next meeting. Election results were as follows: Martha Wise for Vice President, Bob Weiss for Secretary, Sherrill Laszlo for Treasurer, with Armand Cohn as the probable president. This leaves us without a program chairman again. We would like to hear from anyone interested in at least helping to find speakers.

#### DUES

We hate to bring up unpleasant subjects but dues are ~~due~~ and payable. \$20.00 a year is not an unreasonable sum. It does cost money to run a JGS. Postage, printing costs etc. all cost money and while they never go down, they do go up.

#### FAMILY FINDER MICROFICHE

The Jewish Genealogical Family Finder, as it is now called, has been growing larger and larger so Gary Mokotoff put the family finder on microfiche. It is still available in the old computer printout form and the printout will still appear at all meetings but we also came home from Philadelphia with microfiche. Armand donated one copy to Sutro Library. Another copy will remain with us, and Armand is placing other copies.

#### NEWSLETTERS

We have recently received our first copy of the Dutch newsletter, Mishpucha. It is a very nice newsletter. This issue includes an article on the various calendars, The current Gregorian calendar, the old Julian calendar, the Hebrew calendar, the French Revolutionary calendar ( a very shortlived calendar) and a Dutch calendar in existence for an even shorter period than the revolutionary calendar.

The French revolutionary calendar was used in parts of Germany that came under French influence in the Napoleonic era and you can see it on old civil records from areas along the Rhine. The names of the months are quite different.

We also received the first newsletter of the Sacramento JGS and the first newsletter of the Houston JGS. Sacramento is still a very new JGS and is happy to now have elected officers and a newsletter. Houston is older but did not have a newsletter until just now. Our best wishes to all.

#### OLD HANDWRITING

Diablo Descendants suggest that if you cannot read something on a census record you place a piece of paper on the reader glass and trace the letter. If you can find that same letter in a word or name you can recognize you can then identify the troublesome letter on your list and compile a guide to that census taker's writing. You can do the same thing with a document using a piece of tracing paper. Easier they say than searching each time for an example of the letter that gives you trouble.

## WHERE TO WRITE FOR VITAL RECORDS

This is the title of a twenty two page booklet put out by the government printing office. This booklet lists the states alphabetically and gives the address to write to in each case and the cost of each type of certificate. Useful information since the cost of a birth, death or marriage certificate will vary even in the same place and costs vary widely across the country. There is also a remarks column giving such information as how far back the records go, who has jurisdiction over which records, whether personal checks are acceptable, to whom to make them if they are, and often even a phone number. It will come as no surprise that California fees are among the highest in the country. \$5.00 would seem to be a common fee in many states. There is even information on sending for foreign foreign birth or death certificates or for certificates of birth or death at sea, if those concerned were American citizens. Well worth its small price of \$1.00 we think. Send to the Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington D. C. 20402.

## GENEALOGY IN OREGON

As we reported last year Sandra Shapiro founded an informal genealogical group. This was the first effort at forming any sort of Jewish genealogical group in Oregon. More recently, Sandra Shapiro was asked to speak at a senior citizen group meeting. The seniors were so impressed they concluded they wanted to start a JGS of their own. The idea of joining the informal group did not appeal to them at all. They wanted a full formal set up with officers, dues and bylaws. At present they are still in the process of setting up their JGS. In due course they and the study group do plan to merge. The study group is made up of people who had been doing genealogy before the group was formed, but had nothing to join. The senior group consists of people with no genealogical experience but with lots of enthusiasm. Let us hope when the two groups unite they will form a successful JGS. Washington state still lacks a JGS but perhaps the idea will spread north from their neighboring state. British Columbia has no JGS either, perhaps if the idea spreads to Washington it may spread further to Victoria or Vancouver. Canada is still very light on JGSs although those it does have are doing well. At present only about a third of the states have a JGS although among those that do nearly half have two or more, up to five for a single state. One state lost its only JGS because its members wanted to belong but not work, and its founder finally gave up. No one since has been willing to try reviving it. No European country so far has more than one but they do things differently. Each society covers the entire country. Israel also has only one but it would not be too surprising to hear of a second one being formed there.

## ENGLISH RESEARCH

The newsletter of the Sacramento JGS reporting on their recent speaker's topic, English research and what Jews face in doing it, brings up something we have not mentioned previously although possibly we should have. That is that there was a period of centuries when no Jews were allowed to live in England. Prior to 1290 there were Jews in England but in 1290 they were expelled by Edward I. After Jews were once again able to live in England some of the first to arrive were Sephardim, Ashkenazim arrived later by and large. It was under Cromwell that Jews were readmitted to England. Not out of love for us, of course, but Jews did again settle in England in the middle of the seventeenth century. According to the report in the Sacramento newsletter, universal registration of vital statistics began in England in 1837 and in Scotland and Wales in 1855. Among other sources of possible information mentioned were a Jewish Year Book begun in 1896, a Gentlemen's Magazine that existed from 1731 to 1866 and the London Gazette. All in all it would seem the same thing applies to England as to the rest of Europe. Prior to civil records you have no one source where you can truly expect to find what you are looking for. Also one should remember in working with English records that Jews, not being members of the Church of England, will be listed as non-conformists. We have had no experience working with English records nor any reports on the subject from others but apparently the English system is different from those with which we are familiar.

## CANADIAN LANDSMANSCHAFTEN

Shem Tov, the newsletter of the Toronto JGS had a long list of Landsmanschaften which seem to be still existing groups. The list was provided to Shem Tov by Mr. Joel Verbin of the Toronto Jewish Information Service who is willing to answer questions. No address was given, but no doubt a Toronto phone book could supply it. A phone number is given (416) 635-5600. If your family was from Toronto this might be of interest to you. Shem Tov also included a short list of what it calls South African landsmanschaften. One is the Archives Department of the Jewish Board of Deputies, P.O. Box 1180, Johannesburg, 2000, Republic of South Africa, another is Association of Holocaust Survivors, P.O. Box 2779, Johannesburg 2000. The other three seem to be standard landsmanschaften.

## TURKISH SOURCES

Roots-key mentions some Turkish sources for Jewish research in its Spring 1989 issue. We will not quote them here since we do not know of any member who is researching in this area but should you be interested remember that Sutor Library keeps Roots-Key on its periodical rack.

## JEWISH FARM FAMILIES

Dr. J. Sanford Rikoon of the University of Missouri in Columbia, Mo. would like to establish contact with anyone whose family ever lived on a farm in the midwest or the great plains areas. He feels the experience of Jewish farmers is an overlooked chapter in our history and plans to write a book about the Jewish-American farm experience. If any of your family or anyone you know of ever had farm experience Dr. Rikoon would appreciate hearing from you. His address is Department of Rural Sociology, Sociology Building Rm.108, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo. 65211.

## THE WAHLS OF ALSACE-LORRAINE

The name of Saul Wahl the one night king of Poland has become familiar to many of us through such books as the Unbroken Chain and other genealogical references. The book, The Unbroken Chain traces many lines from Saul Wahl and the forthcoming new, larger, amended edition will cover more, but many lines that do not descend from rabbinical families have little information. They have a family tradition of descent from Saul Wahl but cannot go back that far. This seems to be the case with the Jews of France and of Alsace-Lorraine with this tradition. Most of these French Jews can go back to Alsace-Lorraine but the trail usually ends with an ancestor who came there from Poland or Poland via a while in Germany, Not far enough back to tie in with known lines of descent.

## IS LITVAK A JEWISH TERM?

As a rule we assume that Litvak is simply what Jews call Lithuanians, however the following found in the Encyclopdia Britannica 1911 edition makes one wonder. "In the 10th century Lithuania was already known under the name Litva." Litva? Litvak, one from Litva? Could it be that Jews simply retained an old form in Yiddish long after the term was no longer in use? Seems reasonable doesn't it?

## OVERSEAS RESEARCH

Although Chronicles headed its article overseas research it would seem to relate to eastern bloc research. The entire article might be a bit overwhelming, enough to scare many people away from such research but undoubtedly the advice to write to those archives and libraries you expect to visit well in advance to ask if you will have access to the material you need to see, if you will need a permit, and if you do, where and how you go about getting it, seems good advice. We know that you need a permit for research in Leipzig (East Germany) which must be obtained from Berlin and that it can be a runaround. The person who hoped to do research in Leipzig was not Jewish and did speak German which should have made things easier for him (if you write to Leipzig you will get the distinct feeling that they

have no interest in being helpful to Jewish researchers. Their answers are polite, stiff, very formal and not in the least helpful) but then again possibly they don't like genealogists to begin with.

By and large genealogy is not well understood in eastern bloc countries and thus those doing research in such areas often encounter people who are not too helpful. You can always hope though, that you will encounter someone who is sympathetic and helpful.

If you write to another country it is of course helpful to be able to write in their language, especially if you are not addressing yourself to a large city. You should also remember to send international response coupons. They may or may not have a budget that includes much overseas postage.

#### GERMAN GENEALOGICAL SYMBOLS

The newsletter of the Immigrant Genealogical Society included some of the symbols used by German genealogies. Some have been given here before but others are new and interesting.

\* born            o-o illegitimate        oo married        oo1 first marriage        +died        ++ line is  
+\* stillborn        o engaged            o/o divorced        oo2 second marriage        = buried        extinct

The symbols for born, married and died are standard among German genealogists. The others are variations, not the first variations ever devised, since various researchers seem to have invented their own symbols to carry them beyond the simple basics, but easily comprehended and easily remembered. If you are doing German research although you won't find these symbols on official certificates as a rule, you may very well encounter them in other papers or if you hire a researcher he may very well use them assuming them to be international. The French have symbols too, but they are not identical with the German symbols.

#### THE NAME'S THE SAME

Sometimes in searching census records and the like you may find a family with the surname you are seeking and many of the first names you expect in that family but it is not the right family. Don't just cross it off. If you are using census records record that family on a census sheet for that year's census (they are available for every decade for which records exist) and put it aside. The day may come when you discover that while the family is not the ancestral one you were seeking, it may well be a collateral line whose existence you never even suspected.

Even today there are family names, but in the past they were so common that when a family has a number of the same first names as well as your family surname it is always possible that that family descends from a common ancestor. Do you really know all of your great grandfather's siblings? You might have found the line of his brother's grandson. Keep what you find. Put it on a census form or if it is in a book, photocopy it and put it aside. It may be valuable someday.

#### MAIDEN NAMES

Finding maiden names, as we all know, is not easy. An additional problem comes into the picture in instances of second marriage. Divorce, although it did exist, was not too common. The stigma attached to divorce was such that it was not often resorted to. Widowhood on the other hand was all too common, so that the name on a record may not be the maiden name but the name of the woman's first husband. Some records will reflect this, others may not.

#### ARGENTINA

Avotaynu for Summer 1989 contains rather lengthy articles on research in Poland and in Holland. They are too long to quote in their entirety here but if you have ancestry to search for in these countries you might want to check the summer issue.

Another article "Argentina, the Other Golden Land" tells us that there were a lot more Jews who emigrated to Argentina than many of us would have thought. It also speaks of the author's relatives in Argentina and his successful effort to locate still others. He hired a local researcher with access to records the average person could not use and found it worth his while.

## AVAILABLE FROM OVERSEAS

Several different items are offered by overseas contributing editors in the summer issue of Avotaynu. The "Proceedings of the Second International Seminar on Jewish Genealogy" can be had for £16.50 by ordering it from Mrs. Judith Joseph, International Jewish Genealogical Resources, 25 Westbourne Rd. Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3TX, England. This document would seem to include some updated information as well. Postage included in price.

David Jacobs, London's Museum of Jewish Life, 80 East End Rd. London N3 2SY, England, can offer a complete listing of London Jewish cemeteries, including information on who owns them, when they are open etc. for \$5.00 postpaid.

Michel Mayer, president of the Cercle de Genealogie Juive (the French JGS), announces the publication of Histoire d'un Genealogist Juedo-Comtadin, a historical and genealogical work on the 18th and 19th century Jewish way of life in the area of southern France that was the papal state from 1378-1417, that includes such towns as Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon and Isle-sur-Sorge. Documents, maps and texts are included. The price is \$25.00 postage included. If you have ancestry from this area it might be of interest. Order from M. Michel Mayer, 15 ave du Mai, 95200 Sarcelles, France.

Holland too has a book to offer, expensive and no doubt exhaustive since it is 850 pages. It is called Memorbook, Pictorial History of Dutch Jewry in the Netherlands, From the Renaissance to 1940, by Dr. M. Gans. It has been translated into English. It sounds as though it might be everything a genealogist researching Dutch ancestry could wish for but of course being 850 pages it is expensive, 141.50 guilders or about \$70.00 postage not included. Postage can run as much as \$15.00 surface mail. If you are interested it can be ordered from Joachimsthal Boekhandel, Europeplein 85, 1078 GZ Amsterdam, Holland.

### "TRANSLATED NAMES"

Often new arrivals in this country wanted to Americanize their names even if the immigration officers had not done it for them. Immigration would change names that were not familiar to them, but familiar first names simply became their English equivalent, Avrom became Abraham, Yitzhak became Isaac etc. When the children came along the parents wanted what they considered to be American versions of the chosen names for them. Some theories on this subject, although erroneous, were quite widespread, such as the idea among eastern European Jews that Shaindel in English is Jenny. This we have found in entirely unrelated families. Most name dictionaries show nothing to back this notion up although one does show Jenny as deriving from Guinevere, (Fair Lady) which would be close enough to Pretty One, the meaning of Shaindel, but how would recent immigrants know that? Another name that seems to have had an accepted translation is Leib which often was rendered in English as Louis. Lets hear from you if you know other names that frequently are given the same translations by people who never knew one another. Names considered to be accurate translations with little or nothing to back up the idea.

### SHARING CORNER

by Mallory Schoen

It's frustrating enough when the inaccuracy of printed records trips us up in our search for genealogical truths....it's even more so when plain old human vanity gets in the way! As every family tree climber knows, the first step in gathering information is to contact one's oldest relatives. I got in touch with one such aunt who informed me she was born in October 1911. She didn't know her younger brother's birthdate but put me in touch with his widow, who promptly informed me that he was born in July of 1911! Not only would they seem to be three months apart, but suddenly he was the older! What had happened was obvious, but how to confront my aunt delicately??? I wrote her again, pointing out the discrepancy and wondering if I would ever hear from her again. I did, with the comment, "I must be lying about my date". Not only did she admit to a birthdate in 1909 but she included the street address of the home in which she had been born in Brooklyn, N.Y. Armed with that information I was able to track down the family in the 1910 census in about two minutes flat, and I also learned that her "Americanized" first name had been Miriam at birth. This revelation I decided to keep to myself. In any event I'm sure my aunt will be glad to receive the 80th birthday card I intend to send this fall.

## OVERSEAS QUERY

Dorothy Annesser of CGS does some volunteer researching in certain instances and in that capacity was presented with a letter in English addressed to the Mayor and requesting his help in finding the writer's cousins with whom contact has been lost. The writer, a named Altshuler, is seeking the children of his mother's three sisters all of whom should be more than middle-aged by this time. It is a needle in a haystack proposition since all he knows is that his mother and her sisters originated in Divenisk, a village in the Vilna area, that his mother, Yudit and her sisters, Zelda, Reise-Chaya and Libe all born Galperin, left the village. Yudit remaining in the eastern zone and the three sisters living in San Francisco. Correspondence was cut off by the war. The married names and addresses of the aunts and their addresses have been lost, not even the names and sexes of their children are given but if by chance any of this rings a bell please let us know.

## NON-MEMBER QUERIES

Leah J. Bisel, 7285 Ward Eagle Dr., West Bloomfield, Michigan 48322 (313) 855-9642  
Seeking descendants of Meyer and Edith Katz of San Diego. Their son, Morris and daughter, Ruth graduated high school around the time of WWII.

Dr. Rolf Lederer, 100 Antibes Dr. #1704, Willowdale, Ont. M2R 3N1 Canada. (416) 663-5159  
Seeking descendants of Theodore and Rose Steiner of San Francisco, died 1924 and 1928 respectively. Rose Steiner is presumed to have been the daughter of Max and Theresa Englander. Samuel and Marcia Ziegler were also related to this family. Any information on the Steiner, Englander, Ziegler family appreciated.

## FAMILY FINDER

C-6 Gail Call, 19684 Glen Brae Dr. Saratoga, Ca. 95070 (408) 867-7554  
Seeking siblings and ancestors of Gertrude Loesberg, daughter of Barnard Loesberg and Rebecca Kupferberg of Tysmenitsa, Ukraine (Galicia?) Gertrud's children were Louis, Esther who married a cousin, Abraham Loesberg, Sabrina Soffer, Jacob Stepper and Itzaak who stayed behind in Europe. Gertrude's brother was Jacob Paul Loesberg, founded Loesberg Institute in New York. A sister was Charlotte Ruth Horowitz, mother of Jacob, Esther, Abraham who married Gertrude's daughter, and Clara whose family moved to Massachusetts. Another brother stayed in Europe but a son of his, Daniel, settled in New Jersey. Also seeking family of Joseph Stepper of Tysmenitsa who never left Europe.

S-9 Denise Selleck, 1332 16th Ave. San Francisco, Ca. 94122 (415) 731-1474  
Seeking information on descendants of Marcus and Yetta Lesser who came to San Francisco around 1870 or 1880 from Nakel, Prussia. Their children were Flora, married Jacob Selleck, Mary (Barnett) Louis, Herman, Jacob and Isaac. Information on any Sellecks or Lessers desired.

S-2 Carolyn L. Sherfy, P.O. Box 157, Knightsen, Ca. (415) 625-4280  
Searching for all descendants and ancestors of the Cohen, Sachs (Saks), Diamand and Abramovitz (Abramavitz) families from Kovno Gubernia, Lithuania and later St. Louis, Mo.

V-1 Sara Verschleisser, 3200 W. Strathmore Ave., Baltimore, Md. 21215 (301) 764-7777  
Seeking any Sandmiller originating from the Warsaw area. Ida Sandmiller arrived in this country around 1881 with her husband, Louis Weinberg. Sandmiller cousins are said to have lived in Seattle.

W-3 Robert Weiss, 3916 Louis Rd., Palo Alto, Ca. 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.

W-2 Martha L. Wise, 1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Ca. 94116 (415) 564-9927  
Searching for descendants of Jeremias and Jeanette Blumenthal of Harburg, Germany. Also any Blumenthals from Wöllmarshausen, Germany. 17 and 18 hundreds.

1989 JEWISH FAIR

Five of these fairs are to be held Sunday at various places in the Bay Area as you have possibly seen advertised recently.

Armand Cohn has arranged for us to have a table at the fair in San Francisco at the Jewish Community Center at 3200 California St. and another table in Belmont at the Peninsula Jewish Community Center 2440 Carlmont Dr. There will be a third fair in Berkeley but whether or not we have a table there depends on whether there will be someone to man one.

We did pick up a few memberships as a result of having a table at the California Genealogical Fair in June.

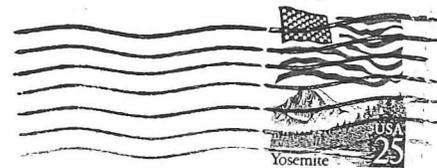
That was a genealogical fair, this will be a Jewish fair featuring many different things. We will see if any attendees show an interest in genealogy. We certainly hope so.

Sunday, September 10 is the date for all the fairs. The hours for San Francisco are noon to 4 P.M., Peninsula 1 to 5 P.M., Berkeley will also be noon to 4 if we do have a table there.

Officers SFBAJGS

Pres. Armand S. Cohn  
V.P. Martha L. Wise  
Secty Robert Weiss  
Treasurer Sherrill Laszlo

San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society  
1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116



Armand S. Cohn  
40 W. 3rd Ave.  
San Mateo, Ca.  
94402