



# זְכֵרֹנוֹת *ZichronNote*

## The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

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November 2016

### Hungarian Research

**Vivian Kahn shares information about the latest updates to the JewishGen Hungarian Special Interest Group database. See page 5.**

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*Jewish community registers in Alexandria. Photo credit: Association Internationale Nebi Daniel (2010).*

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**ZichronNote**  
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**President's Message**

**2016 Seattle Conference Highlights**

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

Like everyone else, when the conference schedule was posted online I quickly downloaded the list and scanned it for subjects that would jump out as "must attend" lectures.

Hitting the ground running, so to speak, on Sunday when the conference officially opened I attended a Poland double-bill event. First was Stanley Diamond presenting the annual "What's New in JRI-Poland." This was followed by the JRI-Poland luncheon and associated lecture, "Jewish Family in Poland in 19th Century: Debunking Myths", by speaker Tomasz Jankowski. As the syllabus described it, Jankowski would talk about how to "place your own family's history in a broader context of social and economic changes in Poland over the last two hundred years." He showed by statistical analyses of census and other documents how Jewish families "stacked up" in terms of size, occupation, and so forth.

In keeping with the analytical approach, three lectures I went to were associated with DNA testing. These were given by Mary Kosy, Bennett Greenspan, and Israel Pickholz. What I came away with was that DNA testing (at least for Jews) is a double-edged sword. This is because on the one hand we have the problem of endogamy, which makes it much harder to figure out relationships. On the other hand we need to go out and get as many relatives as possible to agree to take an autosomal test in order to get as much DNA as possible. After the conference I posted to a specialized Facebook Jewish DNA group and asked about how I should strategize my approach, given limited funding. The answer was still to test everyone in sight!

I attended the presentation cohosted by Ron Arons and Gayle Kirschenbaum. This lecture focused on how to use people's psychological backgrounds as added tools for solving genealogical mysteries within families. As the syllabus described it, "mental health workers have used 'family systems theory' to analyze family dynamics through multiple generations."

Gayle's presentation even included a showing of her 2007 short documentary, *My Nose*, about Gayle's mother schlepping her daughter to various plastic surgeons. While the movie comes over as light-hearted, raising plenty of laughs, there is always the flip side, the more serious aspect to the story.

This was actually very personal for me 30+ years ago when I first embarked on my own family genealogy. I interviewed my father, and it was only after sitting him

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## SOCIETY NEWS

### New Members

David Campbell ..... [csnfdavid@aol.com](mailto:csnfdavid@aol.com)

Joanne Lafler ..... [jwlafler@gmail.com](mailto:jwlafler@gmail.com)

Elise F. Miller ..... [elisefmiller@hotmail.com](mailto:elisefmiller@hotmail.com)

In order to continue to receive *ZichronNote* and the SFBAJGS e-blast, please send changes in your e-mail address to [newsletter@sfbajgs.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbajgs.org).

### Research Scope of SFBAJGS

The San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society does not limit its scope to the San Francisco Bay area. While our meetings take place in various locations in the Bay Area, our research and pursuits include the entire world, as that's where our ancestors came from. Our members have extensive experience with genealogical research in every corner of the globe and with all types of historical records.

### Your Story Belongs in *ZichronNote*

Have you had a breakthrough in your family history, solved a family mystery through painstaking research, discovered a better way to use resource materials, or walked where your ancestors walked? Have you had success or made progress at the Genealogy Clinic with the Mavens? Do you have a brick wall you want to discuss? Did you meet a cousin at the annual conference, or make contact with a "tenuously, absurdly distant" cousin or a "relative of the heel?"

Tell us your story, share your discovery! We want to read about it in *ZichronNote*. Please submit materials to [newsletter@sfbajgs.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbajgs.org).

### It's Renewal Season!

You should receive your renewal soon. Please don't forget to send it in, and update your family names and contact information (especially your e-mail address)!

### Needed Now:

#### New Cemetery Project Coordinator

The society is searching for a dedicated volunteer to take over coordination of our Cemetery Project. Through this project we provide data for JewishGen's Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Register (JOWBR, <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/>; see their pages for what we/they do). To accomplish this we coordinate with cemetery offices in the Bay Area and obtain their approval to acquire data, find and supervise volunteers to transcribe the information to *Excel* spreadsheets, and then upload the info to JOWBR.

#### Skills needed:

- Detail-oriented
- Responsible, self-motivated
- Able to enlist volunteers
- Able to supervise volunteers

**Time commitment:** sporadic, a couple of hours at a time, usually at your discretion; possibly 8 hours a month, maximum, but not every month

**Appreciated but not required:** Ability to read Hebrew; knowledge of Jewish burial customs

Send a message to [cemetery@sfbajgs.org](mailto:cemetery@sfbajgs.org) if you are interested in helping us maintain this important project.

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### Meeting Times and Locations

Unless otherwise indicated, the SFBAJGS meeting schedule is as follows.

**San Francisco:** **Sunday. Doors open 1:00 p.m. Program begins at 1:30 p.m.**  
Rhoda Goldman Plaza, 2180 Post Street  
Parking available in Rhoda Goldman Plaza garage with entrance on Sutter Street.

**Oakland:** **Sunday. Doors open 12:30 p.m. Program begins at 1:00 p.m.**  
Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Avenue

**Palo Alto:** **Monday. Doors open 7 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m.**  
**NEW LOCATION** Congregation Etz Chayim, 4161 Alma Street

**See Back Cover for Calendar of Upcoming SFBAJGS Meetings**

## Genealogy Calendar of Events

### Local and Regional

Saturday, 3 December 2016. Lavinia Schwarz, "Intro to Genealogy." California Genealogical Society and Library, 2201 Broadway Suite LL2, Oakland. <http://californiaancestors.org/>

Saturday, 3 December 2016. Martha Teeter, "British Roots: Four Colonial Migrations." Solano County Genealogical Society. Moose Lodge, 623 Taylor Street, Fairfield. <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cascgsi/>

Sunday, 4 December 2016. Jim Baker, "Finding Ancestors Using DNA Research." Sacramento Central Library, Galleria West Meeting Room, 828 I Street, Sacramento. <http://www.saclibrary.org/>

Wednesday, 7 December 2016. Getting Started with Genealogy Seminar. Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. Santa Clara City Library, Redwood Room, 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara. <http://www.sccghs.org/>

Monday, 12 December 2016. Janice M. Sellers, "Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust: What's Buried in Cemetery Records." Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society. Congregation Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court, Pleasanton. <http://www.l-ags.org/>

Thursday, 5 January 2017. Dr. Jan Joyce Ahrens, "Create a Video of Your Family Research." Genealogical Society of Santa Cruz County. Santa Cruz Public Library, Downtown Branch, 224 Church Street, Santa Cruz. <http://scgensoc.org/>

Tuesday, 10 January 2017. Marty Brounstein, "Two among the Righteous Few." Mt. Diablo Chapter NSDAR. Fairway Room, Creekside Clubhouse, Rossmoor. <http://www.dar-mtdiablochapter.org/>

Saturday, 14 January 2017. Richard Rands, "U.S. Church Records", and Pam Fujii, "Genealogy and DNA: A Case Study." Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. LDS Church, 875 Quince Avenue, Santa Clara. <http://www.svcgg.org/>

Tuesday, 17 January 2017. Lisa Gorrell, "Focused Research." San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society. LDS Church, 2949 Stone Valley Road, Alamo. <http://www.srvgensoc.org/>

Wednesday, 18 January 2017. Patricia Burrow, "Legacy Planning: What Happens to Your Research after You Are Gone?" Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Avenue, Oakland. <http://www.oaklandfhc.org/>

Thursday, 19 January 2017. "Digital Public Library of America." Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Avenue, Oakland. <http://www.oaklandfhc.org/>

Saturday, 21 January 2017. Ancestor Round-up Genealogical Seminar. Commodore Sloat Chapter NSDAR. LDS Church, 1024 Noche Buena, Seaside. <http://scgensoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2017-AR-Flyer-with-Reg-Form.pdf>

Tuesday, 24 January 2017. Jim Baker, "I Thought He Was My Ancestor: Avoiding Six Major Genealogical Mistakes." Sacramento German Genealogy Society. McMurdo Hall, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 2391 St. Marks Way, Sacramento. <http://sggs.us/>

Saturday, 28 January 2017. Martha Wallace, "Onomastics: Using Naming Patterns in Genealogy." San Mateo County Genealogical Society. Grace Lutheran Church Hall, 2825 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo. <http://www.smcgs.org/>

Sunday, 5 February 2017. Janice M. Sellers, "Freedmen's Bureau 2.0: A Better Way to Do Slave Research." Sacramento Central Library, Galleria West Meeting Room, 828 I Street, Sacramento. <http://www.saclibrary.org/>

Wednesday, 8 February 2017. Steve Morse, "One-Step Webpages: A Potpourri of Genealogical Search Tools." East Bay Genealogical Society. Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Avenue, Oakland. <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~caebaygs/>

Tuesday, 21 February 2017. Cath Madden Trindle, "Irish and Scottish Genealogy." San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society. LDS Church, 2949 Stone Valley Road, Alamo. <http://www.srvgensoc.org/>

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### Brainstorming with the Mavens

The San Francisco Jewish Community Library hosts a free genealogy clinic every month (except July and August) from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. Bring copies of family charts, documents, and other information and let experienced SFBAJGS Jewish genealogists help point you in the right direction in your research. 1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco. There is free, secure parking in the building. Call (415) 567-3327 x704 or write [library@jewishlearningworks.org](mailto:library@jewishlearningworks.org) for more information.

Upcoming dates:

4 December 2016

8 January 2017

5 February 2017

## JewishGen's Hungary Database

Vivian Kahn

Vivian Kahn, a long-time Oakland resident, is an experienced family researcher who has spoken at IAJGS annual conferences, at Jewish genealogy societies in California and Washington, and in Sighet, Romania, during a gathering of Sighet descendants in May 2015. She has used a wide range of archival, print, and online resources in Hungary and also in Slovakia, Romania, Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, and the United States to research her own family and help clients searching for their Hungarian roots. She is the coordinator of the JewishGen Hungarian Special Interest Group. She can be reached at vkahn@kmort.com. This is a revised version of an article that first appeared in the April 2016 issue of *Shemot*, published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain.

JewishGen's Hungary database, <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Hungary/>, is one of the largest on the JewishGen site, containing close to 1.5 million records from the area known as "Greater Hungary" or pre-Trianon Hungary. This includes all those lands that were once predominantly Hungarian-speaking in present-day Hungary and Slovakia and territory now within Romania, Ukraine, Austria (including present-day Burgenland), Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, and a very small part of Poland near the Slovak border. Before the end of World War I, when the Treaty of Trianon stripped Hungary of about two thirds of its land area, the country had a Jewish population of more than 900,000, comprising 5 percent of its population.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of the entries in the JewishGen Hungary database have been culled from vital and census records, dating primarily from the 19th century. Most of the vital and census records were transcribed by volunteers from JewishGen's Hungarian Special Interest Group (H-SIG) from microfilms made by the Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Hungarian State Archives in Budapest. More recently, however, H-SIG has uploaded a significant number of records transcribed from images of Jewish community registers and civil records found in branches of the Romanian State Archives and municipal archives in Transylvania.

With recent additions, the vital records collection provides information about more than 380,000 births, 80,000 marriages, and 185,000 deaths. The more than 10,000 records added since January 2015 are primarily from the formerly Hungarian counties of Bihar, Szatmar, and Szilagy but also from Nagykanizsa and Magyarhomorog in present-day Hungary. These include 55 registers from Bihar/Bhor and seven from Szilagy/Salaj that were photographed in Romanian archives and 1,120 death records for the years 1915–1938 from Kosice, Slovakia (Kassa, Hungary).

1. "Hungary before 1918", *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*; [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hungary/Hungary\\_before\\_1918](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hungary/Hungary_before_1918).



*The 1921 Treaty of Trianon divided Hungary. Image created by Sylvie Pysnak and reproduced here courtesy of the Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*

New records include information from the Chevra Kadisha of the Velence cemetery in Oradea, Romania (formerly Nagyvarad), and are being transcribed along with inscriptions on headstones in the Oradea cemetery.

JewishGen's Hungary database also includes more than 62,000 records from areas of pre-Trianon Hungary that are now in Maramures, Romania and adjacent areas of Ukraine that were once part of the Hungarian *megye* (county) of Maramaros. Recent additions include 5,063 births, 539 marriages, and 2,010 deaths. The Maramaros collection is ultimately expected to hold some 200,000 records created before October 1895 as well as thousands of civil records created in subsequent years as they are made available by the State Archives in Romania. The Maramaros Project has so far acquired images from all of the Jewish registers for years 1851–1895, and 392 of the 487 Civil Register books created beginning in October 1895. Due to Romanian privacy laws, the archives permit imaging only of records older than 100 years. The project now has registers for 1895–1913 and will continue to acquire more as they become available.

The Austro-Hungarian government maintained meticulous records about all of its Hungarian residents



Hungary before the 1921 Treaty of Trianon (Eötvös Loránd University, <http://lazarus.elte.hu/gb/maps.htm>)

and conducted special censuses of the Jewish population. The census portion of the JewishGen Hungary database includes names of more than 95,000 Jews from Conscriptio Judaeorum (Jewish conscription), a census compiled in 1848 that lists the members of Jewish households, their ages and birth places, and other information useful to researchers. The Hapsburgs also kept records listing special taxes, such as the so-called Tolerance Tax, imposed on Jewish residents. The database includes the names of Jews, sometimes identified only by their given names and the term *Jud*, that H-SIG volunteers extracted from 1828 property tax records. In addition, volunteers have extracted entries for close to 90,000 Jewish household members listed in the national census of 1869. These records are from twelve counties, most of which are now within the boundaries of present-day Slovakia but also from Győr, Komárom, Esztergom, Hajdusoboszló, and Nyíregyháza, which remain part of Hungary.

In recent months an additional 11,000 records from various population counts conducted from the late 18th century to the early 20th century have been uploaded, which increased the total records in this set to almost 83,000.

The most recent additions transcribed by H-SIG include more than 800 names of Jewish residents of the Michalovce district from the 1930 census of Czechoslovakia. Many of the newest additions are from tax and census records for formerly Hungarian areas of Romania, including 1869 Jewish census lists and tax records for 1773–1850 from Maramaros, and about 2,500 names from Des, Szolnok-Doboka, now known as Dej.

H-SIG volunteers are continuing to index Jewish vital records as JewishGen’s first partner project with Family Search. About 54,000 records have been indexed by H-SIG volunteers and more than 42,000 have been incorporated into the Hungary, Jewish Vital Records Index and are searchable at <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1787825>. JewishGen will be adding these records to the Hungary database during the coming year. This set of records, primarily from Budapest, Balkany, Moson, and Nyitra, dates back to the early 19th century.

More than two thirds of Hungary’s Jewish residents were murdered in the Shoah, and the Hungary database includes links to records that memorialize these martyrs and also list those who survived. Recent additions to

JewishGen's Holocaust database, <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Holocaust/>, include records for 5,046 individuals who received Wallenberg's "protective passports." When completed, this database, transcribed from German-language records provided to H-SIG by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, is expected to grow to well over 6,000 records. The database lists name, registration number, Schutzpass number, mother's name, date and place of birth, and place of residence. Other records recently added to the JewishGen Holocaust database include:

- 775 names of survivors from eastern Slovakia extracted from the 26-page "The Slovakian Manuscript" at the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance Library and Archives. The list includes names, birth locations, and birth dates.
- 3,440 Jewish attorneys listed in the 1944 edition of the official journal *Budapesti Kozlony* ("Budapest Bulletin"), together with the names of the lawyers' chambers with which they were associated, from records compiled by the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists.
- 217 names from the Holocaust memorial in Topolya, Serbia, increasing the project total to 23,657 records, and 785 records from a 1944 census of Jews in Csorna.

Also searchable from the JewishGen Hungary database are burial records and transcriptions of *matzevot* (headstones) from cemeteries in Hungary, Slovakia, Transylvania, and formerly Hungarian areas of Ukraine. Work in progress includes burial records from Miskolc, the third largest city in Hungary, and from Michalovce, Slovakia (formerly Nagymihaly, Hungary). JewishGen volunteers are also indexing close to 6,000 burial records and headstone inscriptions from Oradea, Romania, formerly Nagyvarad, Hungary.

More than 1,800 people researching their Hungarian Jewish roots are now participating in JewishGen's Hungarian SIG. For more information, check out our Web site at <http://www.jewishgen.org/Hungary/> and sign up as a subscriber to the H-SIG mailing list at [http://www.jewishgen.org/ListManager/members\\_add.asp](http://www.jewishgen.org/ListManager/members_add.asp).



*President's Message, continued from page 2*

down and his recalling his early life that I really appreciated what he had been through and why he was the person I experienced.

He had been raised as a child by nannies, sent away to boarding school at age 9. Then in 1945, at age 15, he was orphaned by the death of his father; his mother had died a year earlier. They both died from natural causes. As an only child, this obviously had a detrimental effect on him for the rest of his life.

I went to several other lectures and had wanted to attend many more, but to be honest, I had never visited Seattle before. As many of you can attest, there was much competition beckoning from outside the Sheraton Hotel. I will mention just one: I took the 2.5-hour locks cruise around Seattle. As some of you know about me, the world of canals is just as addictive as the world of genealogy. The opportunity to cruise through the most northerly lock in the United States was something I just couldn't pass up.

Finally, of course I attended the lecture given by Victoria Fisch. This was about the history of the Jews who populated Santa Cruz, California from Gold Rush days onward. She has been the editor, researcher, and writer (for the author!) for the past seven years, and there is hope that the book will finally see the light of day sometime this year.



*Society News, continued from page 3*

## Member News

**Frederick Hertz** and his cousin have published an edited version of their great-grandfather's diary: *A Continent of Glory: The Diary of a 19th Century Jewish Immigrant*, by David Blumenfeld.

**Steve Morse's** One-Step Website was #50 on *Genealogy in Time's* Top 100 Genealogy Websites of 2016: <http://www.genealogyintime.com/articles/top-100-genealogy-websites-of-2016-page02.html>.

**Roy Ogus** is the new *Avotaynu* Contributing Editor on South Africa. In addition, his article "Curious Story of the Paberze Jewish Cemetery Gravestone" was published in *Avotaynu* Volume XXXI, Number 4, Winter 2015.

## SFBAJGS on Social Media

SFBAJGS has a YouTube channel, <https://goo.gl/Siy5I2>. So far we have three videos on our page. If you have videos of society or other genealogical events you would like to share online, contact publicity director Janice M. Sellers at [publicity@sfbajgs.org](mailto:publicity@sfbajgs.org).

SFBAJGS also has a Facebook page: <https://goo.gl/23bkt4>. Friend us and visit often for announcements and updates between meetings.



**Invite a Friend to Join SFBAJGS**

<http://www.jewishgen.org/sfbajgs/about.html>

## The Frustrating Fate of the Record Books of the Jews from Egypt

Dani Haski

Dani Haski is a professional teleprompt operator with an extensive career in the entertainment industry, working in design and production roles across film, TV, and theater. Dani began researching her family history over a decade ago and has roots in Poland, Galicia, Lithuania, and Cairo. She is a member of the management committee for AJGS. This article originally appeared in the October 2016 edition of *Kosher Koala*, the journal of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society. Reprinted with permission. © Dani Haski 2016. All rights reserved.

In July 2016, the newspaper *Egypt Independent* reported the death of Lucy Saul. Saul's passing reduced the official Jewish population of Cairo to just six old and increasingly frail women. In an interview with the BBC a couple of years ago, Magda Haroun, the nominal head of the Cairo Jewish community, voiced her anguish at what would happen to the cultural legacy of this once thriving community. Unfortunately, Mrs. Haroun proved to be just as resistant as her predecessor, the late, formidable Carmen Weinstein, when it came to facilitating access to the large library of community registers housed in the various synagogues to those who have been fighting for decades to preserve this rich heritage, so her lamentations were somewhat disingenuous.

Then, in early April 2016, Mrs. Haroun gave the libraries of the Adly, Ben Ezra, and Abbaseya synagogues, in their entirety, to the National Archives of Egypt. She did this without consulting any of the organizations which had been fighting to digitize and preserve these records. Upon receiving these assets in Cairo, officials from the National Archives descended on the community in Alexandria, which had shown no such desire to surrender its heritage. M. Ben Gaon, the community leader, was pressured to hand over its collections to the archives as well. These included personal religious and civil identity registers dating back to 1830. Placing these records with the Egyptian Archives has not so far improved access. Those fighting to save them are concerned that the records will simply disappear into this vast collection, much like the Ark of the Covenant at the end of the Hollywood movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, never to be seen again.

Egypt and the Jewish people have a history going back to before Moses. In more recent times, Egypt was home to a thriving and successful Jewish community, numbering more than 80,000 through the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. In synagogues across the country, the day-to-day lives of the community—births, *brit milot*, *bar mitzva*s, marriages, divorces, and deaths—were dutifully recorded by hand in hundreds of leather-bound registers. No one foresaw the tumultuous turn the 20th century would take. Sadly, after World War II and with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the fall of the monarchy, and

the Suez crisis in the 1950's, the community was forced into what many today call the Second Exodus.

For individuals with roots in Egypt, it has been an increasingly frustrating and difficult exercise to access those vital genealogical records, records which are more than historical curiosities and can actually be crucial in matters of religious identity—often being the only way some people can verify their Jewish status for religious purposes.

The Association Internationale Nebi Daniel, based in France, has been working tirelessly for years for the opportunity to access, digitize, and preserve these record books. It was close to success in 2010, having secured a letter from the then Culture Minister, M. Farouk Hosni, acknowledging the legitimacy of its claim.

And then came Tahrir Square. The Arab Spring, which in Egypt started in January 2011, threw the whole project back to square one. Hopes were once again raised with the 2013 downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood administration, but after fruitless attempts to revive negotiations through official channels, Yves Fedida, from Nebi Daniel and the Heritage of Jews in Egypt Facebook page, initiated a Change.org petition (<https://goo.gl/XZAsGO>) addressed directly to President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and the current Minister of Culture, M. Helmy Namnam, exhorting them to urgently authorize:

- scanning of all existing Jewish archives, particularly religious and civil identity records, and making the scans freely available;
- donation to various Jewish community synagogues across the world of some of the 150 Torah scrolls which fall outside the 100-year Egyptian Antiquities rule;



Yves Fedida (left) of Nebi Daniel with M. Farouk Hosni, former Egyptian Minister for Culture, in 2010. Photo credit: Association Internationale Nebi Daniel (2010).

- restoration of existing synagogues and cemeteries—in particular, the Bassatine cemetery in Cairo, one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in the world—giving easy access both virtually and in person;

- development of a comprehensive inventory of the remaining communal assets and of a plan for their preservation; and

- creation, within one of the existing synagogues, of a museum of Egyptian Jewish heritage, which would encourage tourism.

A copy of the petition, which has, to date, gathered more than 1,500 signatures, was also sent to the Egyptian Ambassadors in France, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland, Israel, Canada, the U.S.A., Brazil, and Australia. Not a single diplomat has responded. (I contacted the Egyptian Consul-General to Australia in Sydney for comment, but, at the time of publication, none has been forthcoming.)

The main concern of Egyptian authorities appears to be a perceived threat of reparations being demanded by descendants of Jews who were expelled and whose businesses and properties were confiscated. The reality is that none of the registers in question has any connection to property ownership and cannot be used for this purpose. Separate cases for reparations have already been prosecuted in the Egyptian courts and settled by individuals.

There is, in fact, no good reason to withhold permission for access to, and preservation of, these records, particularly when Nebi Daniel has committed to footing the bill for the whole exercise, ensuring positive PR and media coverage for the Egyptian government, and leaving the physical registers in Egypt.

The Egyptian government is not blind to the value of its Jewish cultural heritage. In 2010, the government invested almost 8.5 million Egyptian pounds (US \$950,000) in restoring the Maimonides Synagogue in Cairo and opening it to the public as a museum.

As recently as early September of this year, a report in *Al Monitor* quoted the current head of the Islamic and Coptic Monuments Department at the Ministry of Antiquities, M. Saeed Helmy (who is also responsible for Jewish antiquities), as saying, “I know very well that the Egyptian monuments—including the Jewish antiquities—capture the attention of people all around the world. Therefore, I’d like to make it clear that Egypt pays considerable attention to its monuments, whether they are Islamic, Coptic or Christian . . . . However, we need the support of the countries that are interested in cultural heritage in order to protect these great antiquities.”<sup>1</sup>

Collection of the Jewish community registers might have been an unwritten part of this response, as on June 11, the Ministry announced the formation of a special committee, with Helmy as its chair, to take stock of Jewish antiquities and register them in the ministry’s records—an activity undertaken several times already by previous Antiquities ministers. But he admitted that, with the drastic fall in tourism revenue, the country had scarce funds to achieve its goals.



*Jewish community registers in Alexandria. Photo credit: Association Internationale Nebi Daniel (2010).*

But should the community registers be classified as antiquities or as artifacts? Their importance lies more in the information they contain than in the physical books themselves. Unfortunately, the Ministry has consistently ignored repeated offers of financial assistance from Association Internationale Nebi Daniel specifically to preserve these books and to help raise money for other preservation activities. It appears that this very public show of attention to part of Egypt’s recent history might simply, once again, be mere lip service, as it coincided with Helmy’s meeting with the U.S. cultural attaché in August 2016.

So what is to be done?

Egypt claims it wants to preserve these artifacts and records but cannot afford to. Members of the diaspora have repeatedly offered to help raise money and to pay for the preservation, digitizing, and indexing of important community registers, on the proviso that these records are available to the international community.

Are the Egyptian authorities deaf? Have the messages been lost in translation?

Or is the Egyptian government simply telling the international community what it wants to hear while continuing to do absolutely nothing?

Disclaimer: My father was a refugee from Egypt. I have a personal stake in wanting access to his records, along with those of his parents and grandparents, so that I can understand more of my family’s history.

1. Khalid Hassan, “Egypt Documenting Jewish Artifacts”, posted 4 September 2016. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/09/egypt-document-jewish-heritage-synagogues-records.html>



## In Search of the Greengards: A Roots Trip to Lithuania

Susan MacLaughlin

SFBAJGS member Susan MacLaughlin is an amateur genealogist, avid knitter, and intrepid traveler who lives in Alameda with her husband, Bruce Gordon. Three years ago, she discovered the power of DNA testing. Using genetic genealogy techniques, Susan enjoys discovering more about her extended family's roots and helping adoptees find their birth families.

Soon after my husband, Bruce Gordon, and I became engaged to be married in 2000, I sat down with his father to record birth dates and places for Bruce's parents and grandparents. I still refer to those early notes when I dig more deeply into the past. In the November 2015 issue of *ZichronNote*, I wrote about searching for Bruce's paternal grandfather's roots. This time, my story is about the Greengards, his paternal grandmother's branch of the family tree.

My search for my husband's Greengard relatives began in earnest in 2011. That was the year that Bruce and I were planning a trip to the Alsace region of France. I had the bright idea to seek out his paternal grandmother's ancestral home. Little did I know that it would take six years to put our feet on the ground where Greengards once walked—and that it would be in Lithuania, not on the German/French border. I unraveled the old family stories to learn the truth about my husband's heritage, culminating in a trip to his homeland.

My husband's grandmother, Lillian "Lily" Mitchell Greengard (1891–1955), was born in St. Paul, Minnesota. Lily was the youngest of Jules (also known as Julius) Louis and Betsy Rachel (Mitchell) Greengard's eleven children. According to the 1895 Minnesota state census and the 1900 U.S. federal census, Lily's parents and her eldest sibling, Bessie, were born in Germany. Several other siblings had been born in Detroit, Michigan, and the youngest children were born in Minnesota. Lily grew up on Lafond Street in St. Paul, where her father worked as a tailor. The family belonged to an Orthodox synagogue, Congregation Sons of Jacob, founded in 1875. They vacationed at White Bear Lake in the summer.

Lily's sisters married Jews, but her brothers married Christians. My father-in-law's cousin, Charlotte, revealed that their mother (her grandmother), Betsy, never spoke to her sons again. Lily married Philip Gordon, a Russian Jew, in 1914. Their son (my husband's father) was born in 1916. Lily named him Jule after her father, Jules. Lily dropped the "s" so that English speakers would not mispronounce his name. Jule grew up not knowing half of his cousins due to the rift in the family. Thanks to Ancestry.com, U.S. census records, and FindAGrave.com, I have discovered

Paternal grandmother's name Lillian Mitchell Greengard Gordon  
Nationality Polish/German-American  
Date of birth 7 July, 1889 Place of birth St. Paul  
Paternal grandfather's name Phillip Gordon  
Nationality Russian (Ukrainian)  
Date of birth 22 December, 1890 Place of birth Odessa, the Ukraine

*Early notes from 2000 on Bruce Gordon's family*

numerous descendants of Jules, some Jewish, some not. One of the Christian cousins in Los Angeles was surprised to hear that some of her living relatives are practicing Jews.

Lily's grandfather was Eliyahu Greengard. We knew little about him other than his name. Family oral history told us that in the old country, his wife (Lily's grandmother), Annie Greengard, used to cross the border into France to sell her crocheted doilies at the market. Annie gave birth to a son on the French side of the border in 1851. As a result, she gave him a French name: Jules Louis. Part of this story turned out to be true.

Curious about the origins of the Greengard family, I wondered if they might have come from the Black Forest area of Germany across the Rhine River from Alsace, France. I hoped to visit the town where his ancestors were born, so I posted an inquiry on one of the JewishGen.org e-mail lists. I learned quickly that all Greengards are related and trace their roots to the town of Virbalis (also known as Virbaln or Wirballen), Lithuania. What?!

Further research revealed that Jules, Betsy, and Bessie had been born in Poland (aka Lithuania), not Germany. I learned that had the Greengards been German, they likely would have belonged to a Reform synagogue, not an Orthodox congregation. It turns out that Sons of Jacob in St. Paul was founded by Polish Jews. Jules was buried in the Sons of Jacob cemetery in 1910. There, thanks to a cyber-cemetery project that catalogued all of the burials, I found a headstone for another "son of Eliyahu", Joseph Greengard, who turned out to be Jules' brother. Like Jules, Joseph had many offspring. Our Greengard family tree was growing quickly.

About this time, my online Greengard relatives connected me with Alex Friedlander, to whom I will be forever grateful. Alex introduced me to DNA testing, explaining patiently how it worked. He had organized a project group

to test the Y-DNA of male Greengards in hope of matching today's descendants with their Greengard ancestors (to great success, I might add). My father-in-law wasn't a candidate for Y-DNA testing since his mother, not his father, was the Greengard. So we tested his autosomal DNA instead. The results confirmed a second cousin relationship with a grandson of Joseph Greengard's, also named Joe. The latter was kind enough to share his *Family Tree Maker* data with me. Jules and Joseph had five brothers and a sister. Along with Michigan and Minnesota, they settled in Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, New York, and North Dakota. Some of their offspring migrated west. Happily, I added more branches to the family tree.

This still didn't answer my question about Lithuania. Why did my father-in-law believe that he was of German/French heritage if he was in fact Lithuanian/Polish? One of the more serious extended-family genealogists, Alison Greengard, helped me make sense of the information. The Virbalis KehilaLink on JewishGen filled in some of the remaining blanks. Virbalis is a border town in what today is Lithuania, perched on the edge of the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. It is 100 miles west of the Lithuanian capital city of Vilnius. When Bruce's relatives lived in Virbalis in the 19th century, control of the area changed frequently. It was ruled by Lithuania, Poland, Prussia, and Russia. East Prussia—not France—lay on the other side of the border when Jules Louis Greengard was born in the mid-1800's. At that time, more than fifty percent of the residents of Virbalis were Jewish. It was a progressive community in which Jews were merchants and landowners. Wealthier Jews spoke German, not Yiddish, and sent their children to Königsberg, Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia) to be educated. The surname Greengard (also Greengarden; originally Gringard or Gryngardt) reflects their occupation as farmers; they owned orchards.

Another family member, my husband's second cousin, shared a story that had been handed down to her. Lily's parents, Jules and Betsy, met at a wedding in what I now know to be Virbalis. Betsy was Polish. According to the story, the young people were promised to others. But it was love at first sight, and they ran off together to America. In reality, Jules and Betsy married as teenagers in Virbalis. They and their young daughter, Bessie, immigrated about 1870, possibly so Jules could avoid conscription into the army. Many others left the area then also. One reason might have been the famine that Lithuania experienced in the late 1860's. Also, when the Russians built a railroad to connect the port city of Kaliningrad with Moscow, the new route bypassed Virbalis. Thus, the border crossing

shifted away from Virbalis, and the town lost much of its prosperity. In addition, many Jews left to escape increasing anti-Semitism in the area.

Alison, my genealogist friend, and her husband, Tom Greengard, went to Lithuania in 2015 on a Jewish heritage trip organized by people associated with the Litvak SIG. (See <http://www.litvaktrip.peggyspage.org/> for information.) A private guide took them to Virbalis, where they met with a local historian, a librarian, and the only Jewish person living in the area. After she returned, Alison shared her fabulous photos with me. Seeing them, I knew I wanted to go, too.

In May 2016, my husband, Bruce, and I traveled to Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Although our main purpose for visiting the Baltics was tourism, seeing the ancestral town of the Greengards was an essential part of our itinerary. We hired the same guide whom Alison and Tom had used, Loreta Pozerskyte, to take us to Virbalis. She warned me that Virbalis today is little more than a wide spot in the road, about two hours by car from Vilnius. In other words, it's in the middle of nowhere. No matter. It was important to put our feet on the ground and walk in the steps of Bruce's ancestors. Antonas Zilinskas, the local historian, joined us. He presented us with a copy of his new book on the Jews of Vilkevishkas (in Lithuanian).

The first thing I noticed about Virbalis is how empty it is. The synagogue is long gone. Nothing remains of the traditional market square that bustled with activity during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Everything was destroyed during World War II. A public park marks the spot, and a handful of original houses still stand. These structures face the old road to Vilnius and are believed to be former Jewish residences and businesses.



Remnants of 19th-century Virbalis, May 2016



*Virbalis marketplace, circa 1912*



*Site of Virbalis marketplace, May 2016*

Loreta took us to the Jewish cemetery so we could pay our respects. A farmer was mowing the long grass with his tractor. Antonas, the historian, pointed out a couple of Greengard headstones, including one for Yehuda Greengard. This stone may mark the final resting spot of one of my husband's ancestors.

For Bruce and for me, it was sobering to realize, in an up-close and personal way, that the once-thriving Jewish community in Virbalis no longer exists. Of course, we knew that before we went, but it is different to be there and feel the absence. The surrounding countryside, so green and pastoral, masks the dark history of the place. I asked Bruce if he felt a deeper connection with his Jewish roots after making the trip. Mostly, he says he feels angry—angry that local people collaborated with the Nazis to kill their neighbors, and angry that so many died needlessly. Still, we are glad we went.

Researching Bruce's Greengard ancestry has been enlightening. Through it I discovered DNA testing and the world of genetic genealogy. I became acquainted via e-mail with lots of Greengards. They all have been welcoming and very helpful. No wonder genealogy is a favorite hobby for us.



*Headstone of a Yehuda Greengard in Virbalis cemetery*

## Unlock the Jewish History Hidden in Your DNA!

Debra Katz

Debra Katz retired recently from her communications career and now spends most of her time on her mission to trace back to her ancestral ameoba. She can be reached at [dnadeb@gmail.com](mailto:dnadeb@gmail.com).

Whether you have hit a brick wall on some of your ancestral lines, or simply want to get a bigger picture of how your family's threads weave into the fabric of Jewish history and migration, then I heartily recommend you consider doing some genetic testing. You may not wish to be a fanatic like me—I have tested the maternal or paternal genetic lines of 14 out of my 16 great-great-grandparents, along with the total DNA ancestry of myself, children, and parents. But even checking out one or two particular family lines of interest can open up a world of understanding for you, and if you choose to let your results be available anonymously to researchers, you can contribute to the worldwide picture of which peoples branched off from whom, where, and when.

In a nutshell, there are three basic kinds of DNA tests for ancestral research:

### Y-DNA Tests

These tests look at the direct paternal line (dad's dad's dad, etc.) via the Y chromosome and can be taken only by men. (Hey, women, got a brother, father, or paternal-line uncle or cousin? You can test them to get the skinny on your pappy!) You can test up to 111\* Short Tandem Repeat (STR) mutation markers and /or test for Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs), which are the major mutations that mark branching groups of people. (\*Testing fewer than 37 is not sufficiently accurate to be worth the money.)

### mtDNA Tests

These tests look at the direct maternal line (mom's mom's mom, etc.) via the mitochondria that swim outside the nucleus of each cell and can be taken by both men and women. If you do this test, it pays to do the entire mitochondrial genome or "full sequence" test—it is the only maternal test you will then ever have to take, and the results are significant in terms of matching others and indication of ancient migration paths. (Lower level "hypervariable region" mtDNA results are not significant in terms of either!)



### Autosomal DNA Tests

Autosomal tests look at the DNA in your cell nucleus and so reflect all your family lines. The catch is, when you match someone else, you have no idea on which family line you share the common ancestor. These tests usually give you general information about your ethnic heritage (e.g., percentage northern European vs. Ashkenazi Jewish vs. Sub-

Saharan African, etc.) Some labs specialize in "African ancestry" or "British ancestry", but I caution you against assuming these refined perspectives are completely accurate.

Whole genome sequencing is becoming low enough in price for the average person to consider it (down to under \$1,000 in some labs), but it's definitely not a "first step" to take and is less useful at present for ancestry purposes. Learn more about this from the International Society of Genetic Genealogists (ISOGG), which is a great resource on all DNA topics (<http://www.isogg.org/>).

ISOGG has a fairly complete run-down of DNA testing labs at [http://isogg.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_DNA\\_testing\\_companies](http://isogg.org/wiki/List_of_DNA_testing_companies). I've done testing at dozens of labs, and from my personal experience, I recommend the following for ancestry purposes:

### National Geographic "Geno 2.0"

This test gives you the biggest genetic bang for the buck. You get Y-DNA (if you are a man), mtDNA, and autosomal results all at once for what is currently a low price of \$180. What you don't get is a database of matches you can contact, but you have the option of transferring your results to Family Tree DNA, which does have such a database, although it charges a fee (\$39) to format your results to make them compatible with FTDNA's Family Finder program. It then assigns matches from its Family Finder database. <https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/>

## Family Tree DNA

*Genealogy Events, continued from page 4*

In addition to its Family Finder test referenced above, FTDNA offers a variety of Y-DNA and mtDNA testing. Founded and operated by Jewish genealogists, this lab has expanded since 2000 to become one of the largest, most reliable operations in the world, and its database is gigantic. Your odds of finding relevant matches there are great. Note that a relevant match may not be someone with whom you can figure out a paper trail connection—although sometimes you can!—but may be someone with a story relevant to yours because the DNA tells you that your common ancestor lived within a given historic time period. As just one of dozens of examples I could give, on one line I discovered that my “Ashkenazi Jewish line from Kiev” was actually an offshoot of a major Sephardic Jewish line, many of whose descendants went to France, camouflaged themselves as Huguenots, and settled in Acadia! Based on your results, you also can join various group projects (for free) where knowledgeable administrators help you make sense of your results. Costs range from \$99 to \$600, and the key is to be strategic so you get the best information for the money you are spending. <http://www.familytreedna.com/>

### Genes for Good (for Facebook users)

In addition to joining the many Jewish and generic genetic-genealogy-related groups there, you can also add this free app. After taking a series of short health questionnaires, you become eligible to donate your DNA (via spit) for free. The site promises all the raw data, plus specific results for health and ancestry will be available to you and for medical research as well. (It offers lots of privacy guarantees, and when your data is used for research it is stripped of your personal identifiers.) A good cause for all of us and a no-cost way to dip your toes into the DNA testing waters to see what you think! <https://apps.facebook.com/genesforgood>

Note: I do not work for nor do I receive kickbacks from any labs. Contact me for specific feedback about labs I chose not to list here.

I’ve glossed over a lot of specific—and fascinating!—detail here, as entire books have been written on the subject of genetic genealogy. My goal is to encourage those of you who have not considered this genealogical path to take a first step. I also hope any of you who have done some testing but don’t feel clear on how to get the most out of it, will inquire more. I’m happy to answer questions about how genetic genealogy might augment your ancestral quest, which tests make the most sense for you, and/or how your results might benefit the tribe!



Tuesday, 8 April 2017. Spring Seminar, Michael Lacopo, DVM. Sacramento German Genealogy Society. McMurdo Hall, Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church, 11427 Fair Oaks Boulevard, Fair Oaks. <http://sggs.us/>

Saturday, 22 April 2017. Annual Seminar, Tom Jones. Sonoma County Genealogical Society. <http://sonomagensoc.org/>

For more local events, visit <http://sfbagenealogy.blogspot.com/>.

### State and National

Sunday–Friday, 23–28 July 2017. 37th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Orlando, Florida. <http://www.iajgs2017.org/>

Friday–Saturday, 28–29 July 2017. 2017 International Germanic Genealogy Conference. Minneapolis, Minnesota. <http://www.ggsmn.org/>

Wednesday–Saturday, 30 August–2 September 2017. FGS Annual Conference. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. <http://www.fgsconference.org/>

Wednesday–Saturday, 22–25 August 2018. FGS Annual Conference. Fort Wayne, Indiana. <http://www.fgsconference.org/>

Wednesday–Saturday, 21–24 August 2019. FGS Annual Conference. Washington, D.C. <http://www.fgsconference.org/>

### International

Tuesday–Thursday, 25–27 July 2017. Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies Annual Conference. Puerto Rico. <http://cryptojews.com/events.php>

Sunday–Saturday, 22 October–18 November 2017 (Cheshvan 5778). International Jewish Genealogy Month. <http://www.iajgs.org/jgmonth.html>

### Free Webinars

Florida State Genealogical Society. <http://www.flsgs.org/cpage.php?pt=253>

Illinois State Genealogical Society. <http://ilgensoc.org/cpage.php?pt=234>

Legacy Family Tree. <http://familytreewebinars.com/upcoming-webinars.php>

Southern California Genealogical Society. <http://www.scsgenealogy.com/>

Minnesota Genealogical Society. <http://mngs.org/eventListings.php?nm=38>

Wisconsin State Genealogical Society. <http://wsgs.org/cpage.php?pt=127>



## Google Translate: Fetus Farms and Swanky Oxen

Fred Hoffman

William F. "Fred" Hoffman is the editor of *Gen Dobry!*, the e-zine of PolishRoots®. He can be reached at wfh@langline.com. This article was previously published in *Gen Dobry!*, Vol. XVII, No. 10, 31 October 2016, PolishRoots®: <http://www.PolishRoots.org>. Issues of *Gen Dobry!* can be downloaded free from <http://polishroots.org/GenDobry/tabid/60/Default.aspx>.

I've been doing a lot of translating this last month, and it has reminded me of my ambivalent feelings toward Google Translate. I know I've discussed this before, but I keep seeing people online relying on translation software, and especially Translate, because it's the most convenient one around. I cannot in good conscience recommend that researchers place too much reliance on any translation software. Yet it's clearly unfair to say you should never ever rely on any of these programs. They have their uses.

You may be thinking, "This guy's a translator. Of course he doesn't like competition from computers!" There's a lot of justice to that objection. No human wants to admit a machine can do his job better than he can; it's natural for us to resist saying so until we no longer have any choice. I remember when chess masters laughed at the notion computers could beat them. But for two decades now, there's been no laughter; the best computer programs routinely destroy the best human players. There are things machines can do better than we can; as the years go by, the list of those things will probably grow longer.

I can honestly say, however, I don't have much of a vested interest in this, because I don't do much translating for pay anymore. Between editing periodicals, writing books, and publishing, I don't have the time. When I do translate, it's usually material I plan to use in one of the publications I work on. This last month, for instance, I have spent quite a bit of time translating two Polish-language texts: a chapter from Jan Słomka's book *Pamiętniki włościanina* ("Memoirs of a Peasant"), and the entry for Galicia in the massive Polish-language gazetteer *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego* (SGKP, "Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland"). Both feature Polish that dates from at least a century ago.

So let me confess: I frequently check my rendering versus Google Translate! On occasion, the program will recognize a word or phrase I'm not familiar with, or will find exactly the right word that eluded me. As long as I don't spend too much time on it and use good judgment in following the software's suggestions, Translate provides modest help in producing good results.

I do need to use good judgment, however, because much of the time, Translate produces gibberish. Experience reading Polish is what helps one spot inaccurate or downright wrong translations. I typically do my version first, then check to see if Translate can improve on anything I said. When Translate comes up with a word or phrase better than my first choice, I'm not too proud to use it.

It's odd, though. Translate will handle two or three sentences just fine, yielding perfectly comprehensible English. Then, suddenly, it will go completely off the rails and botch a phrase a student in Polish 101 would get right. It's never wise to simply copy and paste anything Translate produces.

Something else I've noticed is of great importance for genealogical researchers. Again and again, Translate simply cannot deal with older terminology. This should be no great surprise, really. Translation software is designed mainly for use in modern communications, especially in a business or conversational context. There isn't much of a market for verbiage that sounds straight out of Charles Dickens. Unfortunately, much of what researchers need translated is archaic. Nineteenth-century parish records and even historical articles used plenty of words that puzzle modern-day Poles just as much as they do Americans.

Let me share a few mistranslations I found amusing and memorable.

In Jan Słomka's memoirs, he included several paragraphs about a brickyard he set up on his land. He wrote:

*Więc wziąłem się stanowczo do wyrobu cegły . . . i od roku 1876 przez 30 lat cegielnia ta była ciągle w ruchu. Wypalało się w niej przeciętnie po 150.000 cegieł rocznie, w latach zaś, kiedy odbył na cegłę był najlepszy, wypalałem przez lato 10 pieców po 22.000.*

I translated it: "So I took to making bricks on a regular basis . . . for 30 years, since 1876, that brickyard was constantly in operation. It fired an average of 150,000 bricks annually; and in years when the market for brick was best, I operated ten kilns a year, 22,000 bricks apiece."

Here's how Google Translate handled that:

"So I took a firm for the manufacture of bricks . . . and since 1876, 30 years brickyard was constantly on the move. It burned in the average of 150,000 bricks per year, while in the years when the anus brick was the best, burned by the summer 10 furnaces at 22,000."

When I compared Translate's version to mine, I was amused at the mental image of that brickyard always on the move. It's not a huge blunder to render *ciagle w ruchu* as "constantly on the move" instead of "constantly running" or "constantly in operation." But I collapsed in laughter when I read about the superior quality of anus brick!

Where on earth did that come from? Well, I checked a really good Polish dictionary from 1902, and it showed that the word *odbyt*, for which "anus" is the first translation these days, could also mean "sales" or "outlet", in the sense of goods going out the door. That's clearly how Słomka meant it. I don't think a Pole would use the term that way these days, but I guess it was OK back then.

This is precisely the sort of error humans catch, but computers miss. It's also the sort of error you never, ever want to make!

I also got a kick out of this one. The Polish original said, *Grunt był wprowadzie dawniej tani, ale zato o pieniądze było bardzo trudno*. That means, "It's true, land used to be cheap, but money was very hard to come by." I ran the sentence by Google Translate to see if it had any suggestions I should heed. It came out with this: "Although the ground was formerly cheap, but sinus money was very difficult."

Sinus money? What, is there a bounty on sinuses now? No, actually. Translate didn't recognize the word *zato* (more often spelled *za to*), which means "however" or "whereas." The software apparently decided *zato* is short for *zatoka*, which means "sinus" (also "gulf", "bay", "recess"). Well, what the hell, one word's as good as another—unless you're a human being who doesn't want readers laughing out loud at what you write . . .

Translating can be dry work, so I wasn't entirely sorry for the laughs. Finally, I had finished the Słomka text and moved on to the Galicia entry from the SGKP. All was going well until I got to this paragraph:

*Po płodach gospodarskich rolnych najważniejszym artykułem wywozu jest bydło i produkta z chowu zwierząt otrzymane. Wywożą więc za granice konie (1000 sztuk rocznie), woły wypasione (100000 sztuk) . . .*

This means, "After agricultural products, the most important article of export is cattle and products from animal husbandry. And so, horses are exported (1,000 yearly), fattened oxen (100,000 head)", etc.

Here's what Translate turned that into: "After fetuses farm agricultural exports is the most important article cattle and produkta of animal husbandry received. Deport so abroad horses (1,000 per year), oxen swanky (100,000 units) . . ."

Fetus farms are bad enough (sounds like something out of *The Matrix*), and I got a chuckle out of the idea of deporting horses (build a border wall, damn it!). But the swanky oxen sent me into convulsions.

I realized *wypasiony* means "pastured" or "fed", so it made sense that the oxen had been fattened for the market; that's how the author had used the word. But a little checking told me *wypasiony* can be used in modern colloquial Polish as a synonym for *fajny*, meaning something along the lines of "fine" or "cool." I guess Translate decided to be hip and gave us the image of oxen pimped out and ready to ride dirty—although these days, it would be more appropriate to say they were "swaggy", not "swanky." Maybe the next updates will change that.

Now, in all honesty, it is unfair for me to cherry-pick Translate's errors and ignore the many instances it does an adequate job. You could do the same thing with the work I've produced, and come up with some pretty embarrassing blunders!

My point is, language can be tricky, full of imaginative twists and turns. Until software reaches a point where it can mimic the activity of a human brain, it will make mistakes like this. If Translate makes these mistakes turning Polish into English, how does it handle English to Polish? (Hint: not well.) You need to know that before you write your Polish relatives a note translated into Polish by Google Translate and full of references to anus brick, fetus farms, and swanky oxen.



## Some SFBAJGS Member Perspectives on the 2016 IAJGS Conference

Seattle, Washington, 7–12 August 2016

### Carol Ware

This was my first conference. I attended with Deborah Blankenberg, and we both got a lot out of it, in the sessions and from talking with other people who attended. I met a lot of people, including many who are my DNA matches, a delightful woman who went to Ohio University as I did but earlier, a woman from San Mateo, one from Oakland, and a man born in the same hospital I was in New York. I found that most people were gracious, generous with their knowledge, and very interesting. We also learned from the conference pros that one has to poke one's head out of the conference hotel and do some sightseeing. It was the newbies like us, I found, who looked as exhausted as we did from trying to go to too many sessions without breaks. Yet another example of lifelong learning: One can't do it all, even though the presentation options were so tempting.

### Janice M. Sellers

The highlight of the conference presentations for me was, by far, the keynote address by Dr. Devin Naar, "Sephardic Family History as Jewish Family History." He talked about how he became interested in family history when he was young and began serious research when someone sent him information about another family named Naar, wondering if they were related. He traced the other family backward from New Jersey to the Caribbean, Netherlands, and eventually Portugal and Spain. Though it is almost definite that Devin's Greek Naar family came from Spain and is probably connected, he can't trace his family out of Greece, primarily due to a lack of records. He integrated the stories of both families into the broader scope of world history, explaining events that affected them. He even clearly explained the difference between Ladino and Spanish. The fact that he is still stuck on his own family made his journey that much more realistic, because everything wasn't all wrapped up in a neat, pretty package at the end. And he was an energetic, enthusiastic speaker. The most memorable line of his talk for me, however, wasn't actually about his research. It was a translation of a Ladino



saying: the "relative of the heel." This is someone who is probably related to you, but you don't quite know what the relationship is, or he might be a distant relation, or perhaps an in-law of an in-law, or might really just be an old, old friend of the family with no blood connection at all. It reminded me of our president, Jeremy Frankel,

and the "tenuously, absurdly distant" cousins he writes to, hoping that they have a photo or some snippet of information about the family.

### Heidi Lyss

This year's IAJGS Conference in Seattle was my second encounter with the cornucopia of Jewish genealogical presentation topics available through the annual gathering, with my first experience being in Salt Lake City in 2014. The Seattle conference offered an array of topics at least as rich, with many new subjects covered, along with some updated versions of talks also given in Salt Lake City.

Although my Jewish ancestry is, as far as I know, Ashkenazi, I find Sephardic and Crypto-Jewish studies fascinating, and this year I noticed more options in these areas than in the Salt Lake City conference, including topics on Sephardic genealogy in Romania, the emigration of Sephardic Jews from Rhodes and Turkey to Seattle, and a review of a Sephardic-Mizrahi archive. I later learned that conference organizers intentionally opted to include more programming connected with Sephardic studies because of the large Sephardic community in Washington. The geographic and topical coverage truly extended around the world, however, with "The Wandering Jew" serving as one of the conference themes. I felt both intrigued and pleased to see coverage of everything from Jewish migration to Finland, to Jews in China, Quebec, and Australia, migrations from Aleppo, and Jewish relatives in Cuba (from our SFBAJGS's Janice Sellers).

One entertaining and helpful presentation I attended was by Avroham Krauss, "Tools for Building an Accurate Tree." Avroham focused on techniques to deal with multiple competing "facts" as well as with information gaps. While

he lives in Israel now, he shared a case study of American immigrant ancestors and his process of charting to assess contradictions and missing information. I was reminded of the importance of weaving together myriad small clues to understand the basics of our ancestors' lives. Avroham's approach came to mind just two weeks ago, as I assessed and then deleted two possible constructions of part of my family tree (actually a Quebec Catholic/Huguenot lineage!) and plunged into developing my third, more solid (so far . . .) version. His presentation served as a key reminder to flag and follow-up on those small details that, while perhaps easily rationalized or explained, still don't seem quite right.

Part of the beauty of a conference is the possibility for networking, and I appreciated the conversations I had with people who hail from across the U.S., Australia, and Ukraine. And seeing so many of our own SFBAJGS society members in Seattle, both as attendees and presenters, was a pleasure.

A perennial challenge I face in conferences is the desire to attend multiple seminars at once and also to see some of the local area. To resolve the "multiple seminar" dilemma, one can fortunately purchase some of the conference recordings from Fleetwood Onsite ([http://www.fleetwoodonsite.com/index.php?cPath=402\\_519#.WAVkkDKZORs](http://www.fleetwoodonsite.com/index.php?cPath=402_519#.WAVkkDKZORs)). Though I do not have ancestors from Seattle, as I explored the local area I was reminded of how a journey to the places where our ancestors have lived can help us touch their lives in other ways, as we see the landscapes of their homelands, taste the local foods, and become familiar with the scents of the place, the feel of the air. I look forward to future conferences, including Warsaw in 2018.

### **Rosanne Leeson**

The Rom-SIG was thrilled to be informed that we had been awarded the \$3,000 John Stedman Award, which will enable us to send our researcher back to the archive in Iasi, Romania, so that we can obtain a large number of death records from that area. This was the largest Jewish

community in Romania at one time! The grant was due to the excellent letter of support from the board of SFBAJGS. We are so grateful! Just wanted everyone to know how well your funds are cared for and spent! We are still struggling with the death of our Research Coordinator, Bob Wascou z"l, and are slowly pulling together, trying to identify the locations of all the records he had previously acquired, and stirring up our members to once again come aboard to volunteer to get data online on our database. We are also in the course of training an excellent volunteer to take over from me as the SIG Coordinator. Time to retire, and I hope to work on my own genealogy again!

Pierre Hahn is now working on the first database for the French SIG, and our excellent Cemetery Chair, Eric Feinstein, and his helpers have added many thousands of burial records from many French cemeteries. Here again, Pierre and I are looking for replacements to train, as to our surprise, we are no longer 21. It is time for some new blood. Anyone interested, do contact us!

### **Pierre M. Hahn**

I spent five days at the conference and skipped Friday because I was saturated. With Rosanne on Sunday I kept the French SIG table occupied and responded to many queries and quick translations until someone asked me to translate a whole book. It was fun to be able to help, working with a live person rather than an e-mail. The rest of the week I attended various lectures; a couple I was unable to hear because the rooms were overflowing. I concentrated on Geni.com, as I found that with the help of the cooperative building of genealogical connections and my documented research a 20-generation ancestor tree could be obtained. The other area I listened to and tried to grasp its possibilities was DNA in genealogy.

Start planning ahead for next year's conference! It will be held in Orlando, Florida from 23–28 July. Follow developments at <http://www.iajgs2017.org/>.



37<sup>TH</sup> IAJGS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
**JEWISH GENEALOGY**  
23-28 JULY 2017 • WALT DISNEY WORLD SWAN RESORT ORLANDO, FL

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## SFBAJGS Family Finder Update

The surnames and towns being researched by our newest members are listed below. This database is maintained for the benefit of our membership. If you have a correction or update, please write to SFBAJGS at [familyfinder@sfbajgs.org](mailto:familyfinder@sfbajgs.org) or at P.O. Box 318214, San Francisco, CA 94131-8214.

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Town, Country</u>	<u>Member</u>
Friedman	Vynohradiv, Ukraine	Elise F. Miller
Greenberg	Evansville, Indiana	Elise F. Miller
Grynberg	Liubavas, Lithuania	Elise F. Miller
Kantor	Vilkaviskis, Lithuania	Elise F. Miller
Leichter	Negresti Oas, Romania	Elise F. Miller
Nichamchin	Belarus, Lithuania	Joanne Lafler
Prusow	Belarus, Lithuania	Joanne Lafler
Sidor	Kalvarija, Lithuania	Elise F. Miller
Sklovsky	Belarus	Joanne Lafler
Wolffson	Belarus, Lithuania	Joanne Lafler

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## Upcoming SFBAJGS Events

**Sunday, 22 January, Oakland:** *A Kindertransport Survivor Tells His Story.* Ralph Samuel will talk about his experiences, including his reunion with his mother in England. He encourages (and expects!) questions and interaction during his presentation.

**Sunday, 12 February, San Francisco:** *From Cottage to Estate in One Generation: A San Francisco Family.* David Fleishhacker, scion of an old San Francisco Jewish family, will discuss his immigrant ancestor's business success in gold country and beyond.

**Monday, 13 February, Palo Alto (see page 3 for new location!):** *Writing Your Family History.* Board member Heidi Lyss will review how to share your genealogy research by writing narratives, including fun formats you can try and what to do when you feel you have too little, or too much, information.

**Sunday, 26 March, Oakland:** *Digging for Gelt on JewishGen.org.* Overwhelmed by the resources on JewishGen? Vivian Kahn, coordinator of the Hungary SIG, will give an overview of what is available and how it can help you in your research.

**Sunday, 2 April, Palo Alto:** *The Western Sephardim, a Minority in a Minority in a Minority.* Harold Rabbie will tell the story of the earliest Jewish communities in the Netherlands, England, and the Caribbean, founded by expelled Spanish and Portuguese Jews.

See page 3 for meeting locations and times and page 4 for other events of interest.

For more program information visit <http://www.sfbajgs.org/>.

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