



# זכרון ZichronNote

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

Volume XXXVII, Number 4

November 2017

### Finding Information about Czech Jews

**Descendants and volunteers have worked together to document vital records, synagogues, and cemeteries for those researching their families. See page 5.**

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*Clay bust of St. Maarten's "lost Jew" and  
a cast of his skull (see page 8)*

**ZichronNote**  
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**Jewish Genealogical Society**

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**Membership** in SFBAJGS is open to anyone interested in Jewish genealogy. Dues are \$23 per calendar year. The Society is tax-exempt pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. Make your check payable to "SFBAJGS" and send to SFBAJGS, Membership, P.O. Box 318214, San Francisco, CA 94131-8214.

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**President's Message**  
**Getting the Word Out**

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

I've been involved with nonprofits for more than half my life. This began back in 1975 when I was a member of the Waterway Recovery Group, a nonprofit restoring old canals all over England. I served on several committees dealing with fundraising, event planning, and proposed development impacting canals, as well as organized the London chapter's monthly trips to work on canals.

After moving to the United States in 1987 I got involved again. This time I was hired as an executive director working on a canal project in upstate New York. After moving to California in 1993 I became involved with SFBAJGS.

All along I've repeated the same mantra: There is nothing more important than membership. Members are literally the lifeblood of any nonprofit.

That said, we also understand that for all sorts of reasons people come and go. They lose interest or move on to other things; there are myriad reasons. Still, it's the board's job to do what it can to "maintain the flow" by making it attractive for people to join and participate.

During the last week of October I was contacted by two quite different groups: 3GSF and Limmud SF. The latter is probably more familiar to you. Limmud means "learning", and all over the world there are annual long weekend retreats where Jews of all types come together to learn. I'm hoping that next year's Limmud will include a presentation on Jewish genealogy.

The other group, 3GSF, might not be as well known. It stands for Third Generation San Francisco—that is, the third generation of Holocaust survivors. These are people in their 20's and 30's who live all over the Bay Area, meet on a monthly basis, and attend Jewish-themed events.

What they have in common is that their grandparents were survivors of the war and the Holocaust. During one of their meetings it occurred to them that they really ought to learn more about researching their families. As we know, there is life on either side of the Holocaust.

What these two groups represent is yet another way to get the word out about SFBAJGS—who we are, what we do, and how we can help people research their family history.

You, our members, can do that too, acting as our ambassadors as it were to get the word out.

*Continued on page 17*

## Society News

### New Members

Dee Seligman ..... deese191@gmail.com

Sharon and Ted Block ..... sharon.block34@gmail.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).

### Get Involved and Get More Out of SFBAJGS

It is essential that more members contribute to the success of this organization. Think about what you want from our JGS and how you can participate in making and keeping the society strong. Not all commitments require large amounts of time.

We encourage you to volunteer in any way that interests you. You will certainly get more out of the society as an active participant. All of us who have volunteered can attest to that. Opportunities where contributions would be welcome include membership, program coordination, Web site maintenance and enhancement, publicity, hospitality (arranging for refreshments at meetings), *ZichronNote*, and the transcription project. For more information or to volunteer, contact President Jeremy Frankel at (916) 380-7953 or [president@sfbajgs.org](mailto:president@sfbajgs.org).

### Errata

In the August 2017 issue of *ZichronNote* (Volume XXXVII, Number 3), in "Identifying the Source of a Close DNA Match", in the first paragraph on page 5 and the second paragraph on page 9, the wife of Herman Leo Friedlander should have been stated as Regina Weiss, not Sarah Klein.

### It's Renewal Season!

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

### Ballots for Election of Officers

Due to the recently approved bylaws, only four officers appear on this year's ballot. President Jeremy Frankel, Treasurer Jeff Lewy, and Secretary Shellie Wiener stated that they are willing to serve another two-year term, and Preeva Tramiel is running for Vice President. Their names appear on the ballots that have been sent to current members. Members also may vote for write-in candidates if desired. Ballots must be returned by **15 January 2018** to be valid. If you have questions or comments about the electronic voting, contact Barbara Stack, Elections Coordinator, at [elections@sfbajgs.org](mailto:elections@sfbajgs.org).

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### 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).

### Meeting Times and Locations

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

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>San Francisco:</b> | <b>Sunday. Doors open 1:00 p.m. Program begins at 1:30 p.m.</b><br>Rhoda Goldman Plaza, 2180 Post Street<br>Parking available in Rhoda Goldman Plaza garage with entrance on Sutter Street. |
| <b>Oakland:</b>       | <b>Sunday. Doors open 12:30 p.m. Program begins at 1:00 p.m.</b><br>Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Avenue   |
| <b>Palo Alto:</b>     | <b>Monday. Doors open 7 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m.</b><br>Congregation Etz Chayim, 4161 Alma Street   |
- See Back Cover for Calendar of Upcoming SFBAJGS Meetings**

## Genealogy Calendar of Events

### Local and Regional

Wednesday, 3 January 2018. Martha Wallace, "The War of 1812: What Records? Where?" Genealogical Society of Santa Cruz County. Santa Cruz Public Library, Downtown Branch, 224 Church Street, Santa Cruz. <http://scgensoc.org/>

Sunday, 7 January 2018. Rev. Judson Gears, "Is There a Friend in Your Tree? Early Quaker Research." Sacramento Central Library, Galleria West Meeting Room, 828 I Street, Sacramento. <http://www.saclibrary.org/>

Tuesday, 9 January 2018. Steve Morse, "One-Step Webpages: A Hodgepodge of Lesser-known Gems." El Dorado Hills Genealogical Society. El Dorado Hills Library, 7455 Silva Valley Pkwy, El Dorado Hills. <http://www.edhgs.com/>

Thursday, 11 January 2018. Melinda Hess, "When a Filmmaker Learns That Her Dad Worked with Ex-Nazi Scientists." Jewish Community Library, 1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco. <http://www.jewishlearningworks.org/library/library-events>

Tuesday, 16 January 2018. Steve Minniear, "Writing a Personal History." San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society. Danville Family History Center, 2949 Stone Valley Road, Alamo. <http://www.srvgensoc.org/>

Tuesday, 16 January 2018. Marcia Murray Holstrom, "Fun with Maps." Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. Santa Clara City Library, Margie Edinger Room, 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara. <http://www.scchgs.org/>

Sunday, 21 January 2018. Oliver B. Pollak, "The Fleyshik State: Episodes in Nebraska Jewish History." Jewish Community Library, 1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco. <http://www.jewishlearningworks.org/library/library-events>

Monday, 22 January 2018. "Heritage Societies." Oakmont Genealogy Club. Oakmont West Recreation Center, Santa Rosa. <https://sites.google.com/site/oakmontgenealogyclub/>

Tuesday, 23 January 2018. Jill Morelli, CG, "Finding Dirk: Insanity in the 19th Century." Sacramento German Genealogy Society. St. Mark's United Methodist Church, McMurdo Hall, 2391 St. Marks Way, Sacramento. <http://sggs.us/>

Thursday, 25 January 2018. Robert Jackson, Ph.D., "Finding Your German Ancestors, Part 1." Marin County Genealogical Society. Marin Family History Center, 220 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael. <http://www.maringensoc.org/>

Saturday, 27 January 2018. Regina Mason, "The Slave Narrative That Freed Me: How I Found William Grimes." San Mateo County Genealogical Society. Grace Lutheran Church, 2825 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo. <http://www.smcgs.org/>

Wednesday, 31 January 2018. Pam Fujii, "DNA Basics for Genealogists." Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. Santa Clara City Library, Redwood Room, 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara. <http://www.scchgs.org/>

Wednesday, 7 February 2018. Junel Davidson, "Researching Local Land Records." Genealogical Society of Santa Cruz County. Santa Cruz Public Library, Downtown Branch, 224 Church Street, Santa Cruz. <http://scgensoc.org/>

Saturday, 24 February 2018. Steve Morse, "One-Step Website: A Potpourri of Genealogical Search Tools." Merced County Genealogical Society. Merced County Library, Gracie Room, 2100 O Street, Merced. <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~camcgs/>

Tuesday, 20 February 2018. Robert Jackson, Ph.D., "German Migration and History." San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society. Danville Family History Center, 2949 Stone Valley Road, Alamo. <http://www.srvgensoc.org/>

Saturday, 3 March 2018. Seminar, Blaine Bettinger, "A Day with the Genetic Genealogist." California Genealogical Society. David Brower Center, 2150 Allston Way, Berkeley. <http://californiaancestors.org/>

For more local events, visit <http://www.library.ca.gov/about/sutro/sfbaygenealogycalendar.html> and <http://www.conferencekeeper.com/>.

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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:

7 January 2018

4 February 2018



## A Post-Communist Czech Republic Experiences a Renaissance in Jewish Heritage and Culture

Alexander Woodle

Alex Woodle is a member of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston and former Director of the New England Historic Genealogical Society's (NEHGS) Circulating Library. He has published articles on Jewish genealogy for NEHGS, *Avotaynu*, and *Mass-Pocha* and presented talks at local, regional, and international genealogical conferences.

The fall of Communism in 1989, the birth of the Internet in 1991, and the rise of the European Union in 1993 have opened the floodgates for new opportunities for descendants of Czech Jews to see clearly into the past and develop a picture of Jewish life going back two centuries or more. Vital records have been uploaded to the Internet, synagogues refurbished, and many Jewish cemeteries documented, photographed, and restored. This could not have been accomplished without the help of many individuals and organizations within and outside the Czech Republic, and by the descendants of Czech Jews living around the world who pushed for and contributed to a variety of projects to make access easier and more universal.

World War II devastated Czech Jewry, with about 85%, or 80,000 Jews, lost in the Holocaust. Many survivors fled the spread of Communism in the 1950's, a large number immigrating to Israel. The current Jewish population in the Czech Republic stands at about 3,900, with most living in Prague and a few hundred in larger cities.

Jews have lived in the Czech lands for around 1,000 years. The old Jewish cemetery in the Josefov section of Prague, together with seven synagogues including the oldest in Europe dating to the 13th century, are a testament to the foothold Jews have had in this magnificent city.

Over many centuries Jews were welcomed and expelled in the Czech lands as war and anti-Semitism waxed and waned. Jews sought refuge in smaller cities and then towns. When persecution flared in these new residences, the Jews melted away into tiny villages far away from population centers. Today we find their remains in 334 cemeteries scattered throughout the countryside. Many of these people had fled from discrimination in bordering countries as European events such as the Thirty Years War and the Chmielnicki Massacres in Poland overtook them. Wherever they went, however, the Jews brought their culture, religion, and traditions.

These small Jewish communities immediately bought land for cemeteries and established and built synagogues. Many of them (*Schutzjuden*) were protected by the nobles who owned these villages and realized the importance of

Jews to the local economy. My paternal ancestors were members of these small communities.

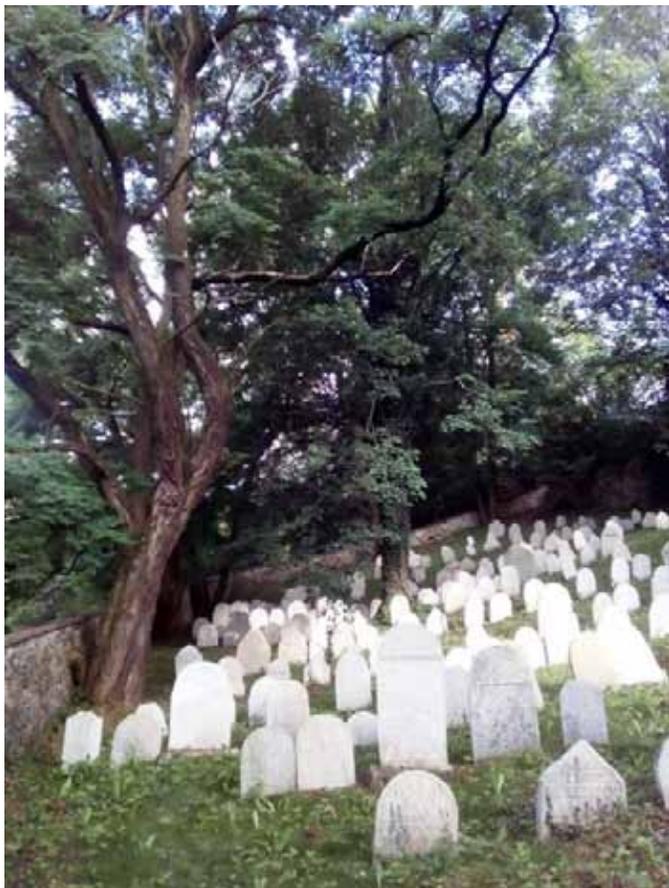
The vital records of the Czech Republic are a treasure trove of information, especially those from Bohemia. Many original records were destroyed during World War II; as a consequence, the Moravian records are, unfortunately, not as complete. A visitor twenty years ago would visit the Prague Archives to look at these vital records under the guidance of the staff and make photocopies or ask for copies on microfilm.

Today, through the enormous efforts of Lenka Matusikova, former archivist at the Czech National Archives, and donations from members of the JewishGen Austria-Czech Special Interest Group, the birth, marriage, and death records and Familiant books are only a click away on the Internet. Ms. Matusikova and her staff meticulously scanned all of the pages in the metrical books which had survived.

My ancestors came from western Bohemia. My fourth-great-grandfather, Moyses Wudl, a woolen merchant, lived in Prostibor and Darmysl. In 2001, I visited the Telice Jewish cemetery with two Czechs, Achab Haidler and Julius Muller, who have helped Jews discover their family



Telice Cemetery, 2001



*Ckyne Cemetery, 2016*

history. The cemetery would be easy to bypass if you didn't know its precise location. It is surrounded by cultivated fields and looked like a small isolated wood lot. Upon closer examination, one could discern a rectangular stone wall in severe disrepair surrounding scattered tombstones in various conditions. We were fortunate to find my great-great-grand-uncle Salomon Wudl, son of Moyses, born in 1771. We also found one of Salomon's daughters, Esther Wudl Eckstein.

My great-great-grandfather Jeremias, born in western Bohemia, moved to the south Bohemian town of Ckyne in 1830. He married, had a large family, and died in 1866. He is buried in the Ckyne Jewish cemetery, which unlike the Telice cemetery had been restored by volunteer efforts of a few local men led by Professor Jan Podlešák. Podlešák grew up in a small nearby village and completed Jewish studies at university. He felt the Jewish story was important to the fabric of Czech history. To that end he helped document and restore a number of Jewish cemeteries in south Bohemia. Jewish descendants are eternally grateful for his unselfish efforts to memorialize our ancestors. Podlešák passed away recently, but not before he saw another of his pet projects completed—the complete restoration and rededication of the Ckyne synagogue.

Only a handful of these Gentile individuals have committed themselves to restoring, preserving, and documenting the rich Jewish history of the Czech Republic. Of the more than 400 original synagogues that dotted Czech lands, only 200 remain, but since 1993, 65 have been rebuilt or restored and serve as cultural venues or history museums.

Three hundred thirty-four Jewish cemeteries are in the Czech Republic, with an additional 25 Jewish sections in municipal cemeteries, according to the Czech Heritage Action Initiative (CHAI). A number of these cemeteries have been restored, documented, and photographed.

The Federation of Jewish Communities of the Czech Republic is the umbrella organization that brings together the ten individual Jewish communities which own the Jewish sites within their geographic areas. The largest of these is the Prague community, which owns and administers 180 Jewish cemeteries. These cemeteries in turn are maintained by Matana, a corporation owned by the Prague Jewish community. While recent grants from the European Union have paid for the repair and rebuilding of synagogues, funding for the maintenance, repair, and restoration of cemeteries is limited. Cemetery restoration and documentation are costly. Volunteers have helped clear overgrown burial grounds and performed some reconstruction, but professional efforts are needed to ensure proper restoration.

CHAI (<http://www.chaiworks.org/>) is one organization whose mission is to build strong connections between the Jewish communities of the Czech Republic and those elsewhere in the world. It supports the restoration and preservation of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues in the Czech Republic. I have worked closely with this organization, which is led by Lisa Feder, and it was through her that I heard about the Muzeum Ceskeho Lesa, or Museum of the Bohemian Forest, in Tachov, Czech Republic. Since 2002, its Office of Jewish Cemeteries (<http://zh.tachov.org/>) under the leadership of Dr. Vaclav Fred Chvatal has been documenting, photographing, and restoring Jewish cemeteries in Bohemia.

I e-mailed Dr. Chvatal in 2012, and we began a discourse about his mission. Serendipitously, he was working on the Telice Jewish cemetery! In 2013 I bundled a trip for the graduation of an Austrian cousin, a visit to see the Ckyne synagogue restoration in progress, and a visit to Dr. Chvatal in Tachov. Remembering how degraded the Telice cemetery was on my first visit, I was surprised at the reconstruction progress that had been accomplished. Among the stones that had been re-erected was that of my



*Telice Cemetery, 2013*



*Telice Cemetery gates, 2016*

great-great-great-grandmother! The wall surrounding the cemetery was being repaired and a new gate forged. The final touch was signage placed at its entrance.

Each of these projects is tackled with meticulous care. The vegetative overgrowth is removed, and a map is prepared of the existing tombstones, cemetery border, and trees. When these small Jewish cemeteries were established, the land sold to the Jews was not always the best. Ravines, hillsides, or undesirable acreage became sacred permanent sites to bury the dead.

The next phases of restoration are to raise toppled stones and repair or replace broken stones. Following the Holocaust, many now abandoned cemeteries were vandalized and stones taken to be used in construction. When a cemetery restoration has been completed, the tombstones are photographed and the epitaphs noted and translated. Some research is being done to identify prominent families and look for their descendants.

Dr. Chvatal has published a number of books on his restoration work that are sold through the museum. He receives small grants from the Federation of Jewish Communities and private donations to help fund his work. Some labor is contracted, but progress is slow because of funding levels. In 2015, a nonprofit was formed, called Tachov Archives and Museum Society, or TAMUS for short. The Web site is <http://tamus.tachov.org/>. It also has a Facebook page, which has a map showing the documentation status of Jewish cemeteries throughout the Czech Republic (<https://goo.gl/wkzXgp>).

If you are reading this article because you have family history within Czech lands, I highly recommend you investigate and think about joining TAMUS in its efforts to memorialize our Jewish ancestors. Thanks to JewishGen's Austria-Czech SIG, you can make a tax-deductible donation to this organization by going to [http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen-erosity/v\\_projectslist.asp?project\\_cat=8](http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen-erosity/v_projectslist.asp?project_cat=8) and specifying the contribution be channeled to TAMUS.



### 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>
Gupperstein	Hrodna, Belarus	Dee Seligman
Kalnick/Kolnick	Novogrod, Lomza	Sharon and Ted Block
Silverstein	Odessa, Russia	Dee Seligman
Stein	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Dee Seligman
Teck	New York City	Dee Seligman
Tekovsky	Goniazd, Poland; Bialystok and Hrodna, Belarus	Dee Seligman

## The Lost Jews of St. Maarten

Dana Cohen-Sprott

Dana Cohen-Sprott has a BS in Economics from Russell Sage College and an MBA in International Business from George Washington University, and is a Wolcott Fellow recipient. She has lived and worked in the Caribbean for three decades and found Jewish communities that were older than Manhattan and unlikely places of refuge during World War II. She is a published author, lecturer, and researcher and led the international team that pinpointed the location of the lost synagogue and Jewish burial ground on St. Maarten. She divides her time between Florida and St. Maarten.

The first time I visited the half-French, half-Dutch island of Saint Martin/Sint Maarten, in 1991, I heard that it once had a Jewish community. St. Maarten/St. Martin is a 36-square-mile island in the eastern Caribbean located between St. Thomas and St. Eustatius. The Dutch side shares a “no passport needed” border with French St. Martin; has ribbons of beautiful white sand beaches, water that turns five distinct shades of blue, and great dining; and dollars, guilders, and euros are accepted. I had lived for six years in Jamaica and was familiar with its 500-year-old Jewish history, the twenty historic Jewish burial grounds, and a synagogue with sand-covered floors on Duke Street. But no Jewish history was evident on St. Maarten.

It was my good fortune to meet my beloved under a moonlit sky on St. Maarten in 1991 and in 1993 begin to call that island my home. I met the small local Jewish community that began in the 1960’s and was told there was once a Jewish community on the island. But when and where? All I heard was vague reference to the location of the Jewish burial ground, and I was shown crumbling remains of what was said to have been the synagogue and. Where were the marble tombstones that gave witness to the past? How did the community disappear without a trace, and who were they? How did we lose this piece of our Caribbean Jewish connection and history? I undertook to find some answers.

The research was like peeling an onion—one layer at a time, one source at a time, trying to piece together a lost history. It began with a chance meeting with a notary who spurred me on. (A notary represents both sides in a real estate transaction. The island of St. Maarten had one notary office and now has three.) The original notary’s office houses handwritten copies of land transactions going back to the early 1800’s in a fireproof safe. It was a coveted invitation to look at the files. Most of the

deeds were written in Dutch on old parchment paper and nearly impossible to read; they required translation, which took several years.

“Nothing remained of them, not even the memory,” said Baruch Spinoza in the 17th century about the Jews of Spain and Portugal, but he could have been referring to St. Maarten. There was nothing left of them, not even their ghosts. Let us remember them. Here is their story.

### Expulsion from Spain and Portugal

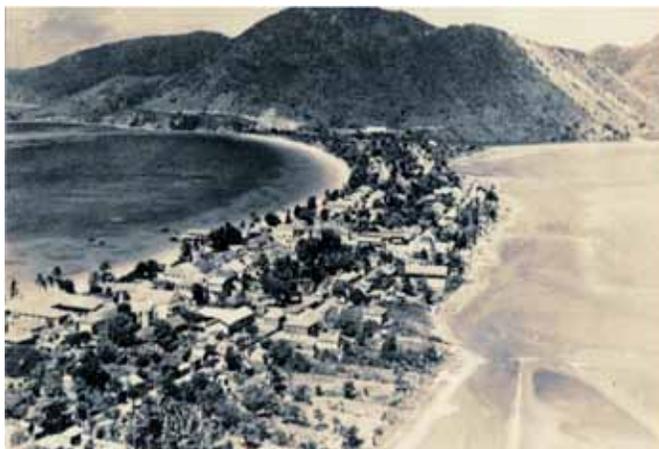
The expulsion of Jews from Spain (and later from Portugal) started in August 1492, which coincided with Columbus’ first voyage to the New World. Subsequently, more than 300,000 Jews left the Iberian Peninsula for communities around the Mediterranean. Jews settled in the Balkans, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, France, North Africa, and Turkey. Some Jews joined the adventurous and brave freedom-seekers and explorers who sailed to the New World and found islands and havens with freedom for Jews unknown in Europe.

### The Brazil Connection

The Dutch controlled the northeastern part of Brazil for 24 years, from 1630 to 1654. During that period, two thriving Sephardic communities, one in Amsterdam, the other in Recife (known as Mauristaad), Brazil, led the world in finance, insurance, shipping, slave trading, and sugar. Modern-day piracy owes its roots to the legendary

Cohen-Henriques brothers, Abraham and Moses, two devout Jewish half-brothers of different mothers, who were the most clever and just plain nery of all the pirates of their day. They are credited with teaching pirates how to be pirates and with setting up the structure and hierarchy, and the infamous Pirate Code.

Judaism in the New World traces its roots to the



View of Philipsburg, St. Maarten, circa 1920. Courtesy of St. Maarten Museum, Philipsburg, St. Maarten

cataclysmic exodus of the Jewish community of Recife in 1654, when the Portuguese defeated the Dutch and regained control of the northeastern province of Brazil. Many Brazilian Jews returned to Amsterdam, and their arrival *en masse* altered Jewish life in the Netherlands. Other Jews settled in freedom-loving Surinam, while many went to Curaçao, making it a major Jewish center and the spiritual leader for America's first synagogues.

Some Jews settled on perpetually British Barbados, known as the Land of Coconut Milk and Sugar Cane, while others went to the short-lived Jewish community on Martinique, where the term chocolate was coined. Jews settled in Nevis and perfected the process of crystalizing sugar; many found fortune in pirate-loving Port Royal, Jamaica. A famed 23 managed to make it to New Amsterdam, which became Manhattan. In the 1700's, the communities of St. Eustatius, St. Maarten, St. Thomas, and St. Croix were established, creating a network of related New Christians and Jews with different surnames.

### St. Eustatius–St. Maarten Connection

From the early 1700's, the Dutch encouraged Jews to settle on the Caribbean island of St. Eustatius. They knew that a Jewish presence guaranteed a lively merchant community and trade, thereby bringing wealth to the motherland. By the start of the American Revolution, St. Eustatius was a mixed Ashkenazi and Sephardic community of more than 100 families on an 8.1-square-mile island; these elements often were at odds with one another.

At the start of the American Revolution, French King Louis XVI and Spanish King Charles III, who were cousins, formed the trading company Roderique Hortalez et Cie. The company was responsible for the purchase of weapons, gunpowder, and muskets which were transhipped from the island of St. Eustatius. This was the primary source of weapons and material for General Washington and his fledging American troops.

In 1781, British Admiral George Rodney attacked St. Eustatius with an overwhelming force and after occupation separated the more than 100 Jewish heads of household, stripped them of their wealth, and expelled 30 to the island of St. Kitts. Most of the rest of the community relocated to Danish St. Thomas. In the 1790's, the community reached 151 under the leadership of cantor Jacob de Robles. But the European wars fought on blue Caribbean waters led to the demise of business on the island of St. Eustatius, and by 1826, the last Jewish widow had died. No Jews remained on St. Eustatius.

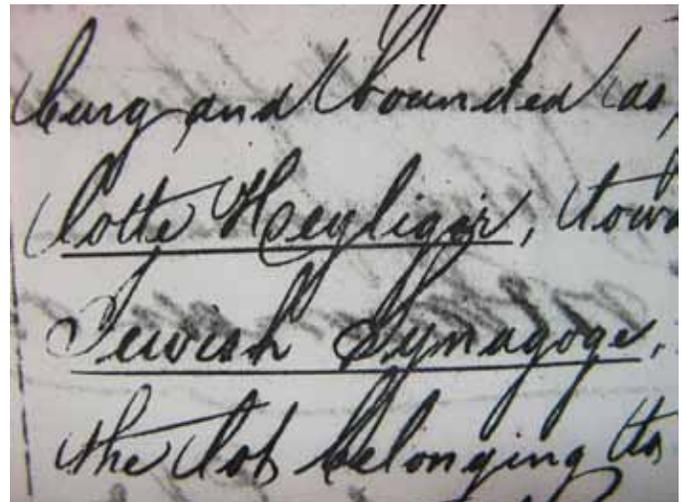
In the book *The History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles* (1970) by the husband and wife duo of Isaac Samuel and

Suzanne A. Emmanuel, one small reference spurred on my investigation of St. Maarten. The Emmanuels noted that two years after Rodney's attack on St. Eustatius' Jewish community, the St. Martin synagogue had grown to the point of needing a more permanent home.

On 6 November 1783, the leaders (known as the Machmad) of the Jewish community of (Dutch) St. Martin sought permission from the board of the Spanish Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam to approach the West India Company for authorization to form a congregation and draw up bylaws. The Amsterdam *parnassim* (synagogue administrators) delegated their secretary, Daniel Jesurun Lobo, to discuss the matter with the attorney for the company. The congregation of St. Martin asked for more prayer books and a torah. The tradition was that the Spanish Portuguese Synagogue would give a new congregation a torah with a red cover.

### Search for the Synagogue

My husband's cousin, Eligio Sommersaul, worked at the Kadaster, the St. Maarten land record office. At my behest, he received permission in 2010 for me to enter its back office and archives to see the records. In the records of land transfers on notarial deeds was the bombshell. Written in flawless script were the words "Jewish Synagogue" in English, evidence that there had been enough Jews on the island in 1783 to form a congregation and build a synagogue.



"Jewish Synagogue" as it appears on a 1783 deed

Other records showed that in 1879, a property was sold for \$150 Spanish dollars (the Spanish dollar was worth eight Spanish *reales*, hence Spanish dollars were "pieces of eight") and the notarial reference for its northern boundary was "two lots formally the Jewish Synagogue." Sixteen years later, in 1895, the property changed hands again,

and the boundary in the north was described as “the land called the Jewish Synagogue”, with a measurement of 10 meters and 20 centimeters (equal to 33.4 feet). The property was sold again in 1910 but with no reference to the Jewish synagogue. It had disappeared.

According to the many older residents on the island who shared recollections of conversations with their grandparents, and to Dr. Johan Hartog, who wrote *History of Sint Maarten and Saint Martin* (1981, translator A. H. Stronks), the synagogue stood on the property of the former West Indian Tavern, whose name was changed to Guavaberry. The property has the oldest ruin in the town of Philipsburg.

### St. Maarten’s Early Jewish History

The years 1770 to 1848 were the “age of sugar” for St. Maarten. At its peak in 1779, the island had 92 plantations, 35 of which grew sugar. St. Maarten also grew cotton and was known for its livestock. Slavery was prominent on both sides of the island. Slavery was abolished in all of the French Antilles in 1848 and on the Dutch side of the island during the American Civil War in 1863.

The first recorded Jew to settle on St. Maarten was Jacob Gomez, who came from Curaçao in 1735. Mrs. Silva, a widow who moved to the island with her son and daughter about 1740, followed him. During a legal proceeding in the 1740’s, Gomez insisted on swearing on the Five Books of Moses. Records also show a Jacob Dias Delgado lived in St. Maarten in 1778.

“Economic conditions between 1733 and 1783 showed a constant upward tendency under Philips and Heyliger, and among the many whites who settled on the island during that time were Jews” (Dr. J. Hartog, *History of Sint Maarten and Saint Martin*).

Other records document the lively and sometimes heated correspondence between the Pereiras, David Israel and his two sons Isaac and Moses, with the board of the Spanish Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam in the 1790’s. The Pereiras had been active in Honen Dolim on St. Eustatius, and David had been a St. Eustatius *machmad*, a board member of the synagogue.

Jacob Gomez de Mesquista is listed in the island census of 5 April 1791 along with his four male slaves, the legal limit for nonagricultural households. The birth of Samuel Sasso was recorded in 1805. (The Sasso family still has members in Jamaica and St. Thomas.) The archives also included a record of the death of Moses German of the “Portuguese rite” (which meant he was Jewish) in 1820, who was buried in the Jewish burial ground.



Remnant of the St. Maarten Synagogue

### What Happened to the Synagogue?

Records from the land office, the census, the personal files of former Lieutenant Governor Mathias Voges, scores of interviews, and the SPS notary office helped peel another layer off the onion.

The St. Maarten synagogue was likely built of wood with the eastern wall made of ballast stone, stones that were carried as ballast on ships arriving with small cargoes. A massive hurricane hit the island in 1819, leaving little standing. “Of the former existence of a synagogue at the east end of the Achterstraat (Front Street) to the part of the south, there remains nothing more than a heap of ruins covered with noxious weeds,” according to Marten Douwes Teenstra, a bookkeeper who visited the island in 1828 to study efficiency among the sugar plantations. His letter documents there was once a synagogue—and therefore Jewish life and life cycle events.

### Continued Jewish Life

Notarial records of land sales and wills helped prove there was Jewish life on the island during the 1820’s through to the 1850’s. A will in the file pertained to the property on which the synagogue was located. What originally was thought to be a misfile turned out to be the key to understanding how the synagogue property ended up with five different owners. It showed that the Jews who were on the island after the synagogue was destroyed in 1819 still had a semblance of a community. Each person owned a portion of the synagogue and eventually sold or willed that portion.

Samuel Henriques of Curaçao moved to St. Maarten, married, and fathered four children. He died on 25 September 1854 and was buried in the Jewish burial ground on St. Maarten. He owned two tenths of a share of the property where the synagogue had stood.

Moses Phillips was a well known St. Maarten landowner in the 1830’s and 1840’s with two huge properties—Little Bay Estate and Estate Industry, which until recently was the last undeveloped plantation on the island. It will now

be home to the world's longest zipline, called the Flying Dutchman. He was also a 2/10 owner of the property on which the synagogue had been located. In his will, he listed two executors—Judah Cappe, a Jew of St. Eustatius who lived on St. Thomas, and D. C. Van Romondt, a member of the island's largest land-owning family. He freed his slaves and left a legacy to the *yeshiva* in Dessau, Germany.

### **Last Jews on St. Maarten**

Without a physical synagogue since 1819 and faced with the abolition of slavery on the French side in 1848 and Dutch side by 1863, the Napoleonic Wars, and the diminishing plantation system, the Jews left St. Maarten. The Netherlands and the Dominican Republic had entered into a commercial treaty, and some families may have sent their sons to the Dominican Republic. Most of the St. Eustatius community went to St. Thomas, which is where their menorah is now. Panama was the bright star of the future, and the golden coasts of America always beckoned. By the time slavery finally was abolished in 1863, no Jews were likely left on the island.

### **Search for the Jewish Burial Ground**

"In Jewish religious community life—to a greater degree than elsewhere—establishment of common consecrated burial ground is a significant sign of permanent settlement" (Rabbi David de Sola Pool, *Portraits Etched in Stone*, 1952).

Knowing that the establishment of common holy burial ground is a sign of a community and with irrefutable notarial proof of the existence of a Jewish synagogue, the location of the Jewish cemetery needed to be confirmed. Paradoxically, that was both easy and difficult. Folklore indicated that the old burial ground was underneath what is today the former Radio Shack Building in Philipsburg. More than fifty local references, coupled with Dr. Hartog's *History of Sint Maarten and Saint Martin*, made it clear there had been a burial ground. "Up to this day, as we heard ourselves in 1977, a path along the former Jewish cemetery is still called in popular language 'Jewish Cemetery Alley'" (Hartog, 1981).

The first notarial proof of the existence of the Jewish burial ground of St. Maarten was recorded on 6 January 1855, in a deed that referenced the property's northern boundary as the "Jew's Burying Ground." When the property changed hands in 1920, that notarial deed referenced the northern boundary as the Jewish Burial Ground measuring 140 feet long, an indication of the southern boundary as well as the size of the cemetery.

Using an obscure law dating back to 1867 (501/85 references Article 173 from 1867, which allows the governor

jurisdiction to waive the ownership of government lands), Lt. Governor Beaujon of St. Maarten acted as seller of the Jewish burial ground in 1929. In a deed in May 1929 without notarial boundaries, he sold the land on behalf of the government to the Caines family, who owned it until 1980. A piece of the land was sold in 1948, and the family who built on the property found human bones.

At that time, no one was there to speak up for the Jewish community, and it is not known if anyone in Curaçao, which at that time administered affairs for St. Maarten, was aware of the sale and the ramifications for the future. The Cannegieter family purchased the property in the early 1980's and built a mixed commercial and residential building. They started the island's first electronics store as a Radio Shack franchise, and the building became known as the Radio Shack Building, which closed in 2015. All the surrounding deeds (nine in total) show the properties were sold or given by the government and reference them as lands that were part of the former *Voormalige Joodse Bergraafplaats* (Jewish burial ground).

With the permission of the property owners, Barbara and Diedrick Cannegieter, Dr. Jay Haversier, then the government archaeologist of the Netherlands Antilles, conducted an archaeological dig in August 2010 behind the Radio Shack Building. The site had been heavily built upon, with only a narrow alley between the Radio Shack Building and another building behind it. A trench of 6 feet by no more than 20 inches was dug. That was all the room available, and the land was soft from heavy rainfall.

The results were stunning. On the second day of the dig a skull was found at a depth of 120 centimeters, or four feet.

### **Who Was He?**

After watching enough *CSI*, *NCIS*, and *Law and Order*, I knew I needed expert help. I contacted Catyana Skory, a forensic artist then working in the crime lab of the Broward County Sheriff's Office, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. At that time, it was one of the few police departments that had a full-time forensic artist. It turned out that we were both graduates of George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and she agreed to give the man a face. The Broward County Sheriff's Office donated her services.

As it was impossible to transport human remains over international borders, a copy of the skull was made and my husband hand carried it back to Florida. Catyana's fortitude and talent over three years to give the skull a face were amazing. Using state-of-the-art facial reconstruction techniques and consultations with Dr. Albert Dabbah, a

*Continued on page 15*

## Zalmon Reuben Orlowsky: Jewish Russian Immigrant, World War I Veteran

Janice M. Sellers

Janice started researching her family history at the tender age of 13 and still has her original notes from interviewing her relatives then. When she isn't working on genealogy, either professionally or on a volunteer basis, she does freelance editing, indexing, and translation. She is the vice president of SFBAJGS, director of publicity and programming, and editor of *ZichronNote*.

Zalmon Orlowsky was the grandfather of a friend whom I've been helping research his family history for about fifteen years. We knew that Zalmon had been in the Army in World War I, but I hadn't tried to find much information about his service because of the loss of Army enlisted personnel records due to the 1973 fire in the National Archives branch that housed those records.<sup>1</sup> The 100th anniversary of World War I motivated me to look for more information anyway, which led to me writing about what I found.

Zalmon Reuben Orlowsky was born about 1891, probably in Bachmach or Glukhov, Chernigov Gubernia, Russian Empire (now Bakhmach and Hlukhiv, Chernihiv Oblast, Ukraine).<sup>2</sup> When he immigrated to the United States, arriving in New York City on 30 October 1906, his father was most likely already dead, as he listed his mother, Elke Orlowsky, as his closest relative in the "old country." His occupation recorded on the ship manifest was merchant. A family story says that he taught himself to read English by going back and forth between Russian and English versions of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

By 1910, Zalmon, by that point going by the last name of Orloff and sometimes the first name of Sam, was living in New Haven, Connecticut and working as a shop laborer.<sup>3</sup> On 16 December 1914, he was naturalized as an American citizen in New Haven. He registered for the draft on 5 June 1917, while living at 31 Anne Street in New Haven.<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, he does not seem to have been enumerated in the 1917 Connecticut military census, or at least he has not yet been found in the database on Ancestry.com.

The state of Connecticut, to show its pride in its citizens who had served during the "War to End All Wars", published a three-volume work in 1941 with details on those citizens' service. According to the entry for Zalmon, he was inducted into the National Army on 3 October 1917 at Local Board 2.<sup>5</sup> Local boards were established by the federal government for each county or similar subdivision (such as parish) in each state, and for each 30,000 persons or so in each city or county with a population over 30,000. Local boards were in charge of registration, determining order and serial numbers, classification, calling up, and transportation of draftees.<sup>6</sup>



*A few days before shipping out to France, Zalmon posed in uniform for a photo postcard. The back of the card has an inscription to his cousin: "In remembrance to Henry Orlove / from Zalmon / May 15, 1918."*

In letters Zalmon wrote to his sweetheart while he was in the Army, he described his basic training at Camp Gordon, Georgia. His tour with the American Expeditionary Forces later took him to France, where he was near the front lines. As with many soldiers, he was deeply affected by what he saw during the war. These excerpts are from some of his letters.<sup>7</sup>

*With the AEF in France, August 1918*

"The night before last was the night when I began to lead the life of a real soldier. ... [W]e camped in the woods on the grass without blankets even. German aeroplanes circled over the woods unceasingly. ... In the morning we were awakened by a whiz of a shell flying overhead, the noise repeating itself every minute and a half. No matter how hard we tried to see the shells flying through the air it could not be detected."

*France, September 1918*

"First, I am at the present moment in a ... dugout which a few of my colleagues and myself have located in the neighborhood. ... Second, my elbow is touching a fully loaded Colt, which may be needed any moment, as all kind of untoward persons prowl about the vicinity. Third, one of my best friends—the gas mask—is in alert position, as the Germans are likely to send over some of their nasty perfumes at any moment ...."

*Still in the woods, October 4, 1918*

"All of a sudden bombs began to explode right near us, and the light of the explosions simply blinded us. All of us instinctively fell to the ground and stretched ourselves flat, for that is the best protection from shrapnel and splinters. In fact, the bombs fell so near our barracks that pieces of the steel casing were to be found everywhere around them."

Zalmon was assigned to the Headquarters Company of the 319th Field Artillery Regiment for his entire time in the service. He was promoted to corporal on 7 December 1917 and to supply sergeant on 1 February 1918. He served with the AEF from 19 May 1918 to 25 March 1919, and was honorably discharged on 4 April 1919.<sup>8</sup>

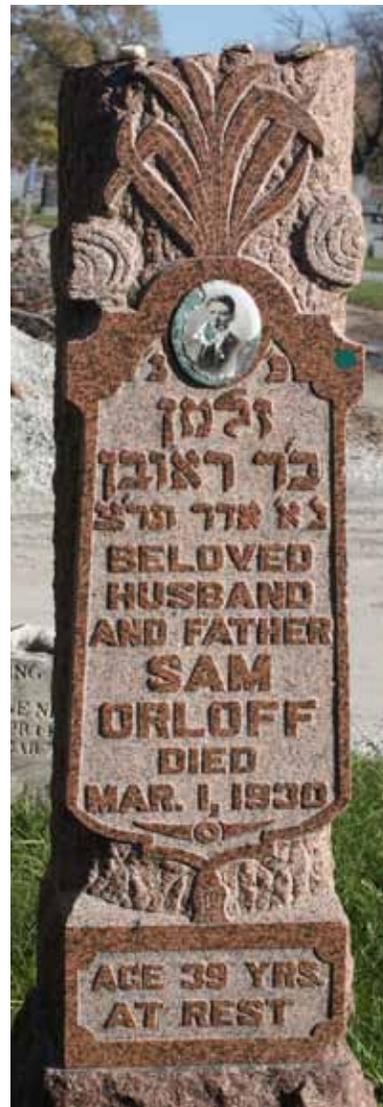
Sometime between his discharge in 1919 and the 1920 census, Zalmon moved to Detroit, Michigan, where he worked as a mechanic.<sup>9</sup> In 1921 he married in Chicago<sup>10</sup> (not to the same sweetheart to whom he wrote the letters), and in 1923 his son was born in Detroit. By 1927 the family had moved to Chicago, where some of Zalmon's cousins lived. He had trouble getting good work, however, and was a paper hanger from 1924 to 1930.

Zalmon survived the Great War, but he did not make it through the Great Depression. He died 1 March 1930 in Chicago.<sup>11</sup> His death was unexpected; he was buried in a section of the cemetery where the plots were sold individually, on an "as needed" basis. He is not far from a family member, though—his sister-in-law had died the previous year in a car accident, and she is only two plots away. A friend in the Chicago area tries to visit Zalmon's

grave on Veterans Day every year to let him know he is not forgotten.

## Endnotes

1. National Archives at St. Louis, "The 1973 Fire, National Personnel Records Center", *National Personnel Records Center*, St. Louis, Missouri: National Archives at St. Louis, last reviewed 2016; <https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/fire-1973.html>, accessed 14 August 2017.
2. United States, Selective Service System, *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918*, microfilm publication M1509 Washington, D. C., National Archives and Records Administration; New Haven County, Connecticut, 3rd Precinct, No. C2134, Zalmon R. Orloff, 5 June 1917.
3. United States 1910 Census, Connecticut, New Haven County, New Haven City, sheet 2B, line 54.
4. *Service Records: Connecticut Men and Women in the Armed Forces of the United States during World War, 1917–1920*, Hartford, Connecticut, Office of the Adjutant General, State Armory, volume 2, page 1955; the number cited for Zalmon, 1,912,305, isn't explained in the book but might be his service number.
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6. National Archives and Research Administration, "World War I Draft Registration Cards", *Military Records*, Washington, DC: National Archives and Research Administration, last reviewed 2016; <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1/draft-registration>, accessed 14 August 2017.
7. Zalmon Orloff, unpublished letters; copies held by author.
8. *Service Records: Connecticut Men and Women*, page 1955.
9. United States 1920 Census, Michigan, Wayne County, Detroit, 7 January 1920, sheet 9A, line 9.
10. Cook County Clerk, *Cook County Marriage Index Years 1912 through 1942*, page 7970, Ruth Oberstein and Zalman R. Orloff, #0915203, 2 July 1921.
11. Zalmon Orloff, certificate #6006455, death date 1 March 1930, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois State Archives, *Illinois Death Certificates Database, 1916–1950*; <http://www.ilsos.gov/isavital/idphdeathsrch.jsp>, accessed 27 June 2014.



*Tombstone of Sam [Zalmon] Orloff, Progressive Order of the West section, Waldheim Cemetery, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. Photo courtesy of Carol Townsend.*

## Finding Family

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

The following story is all true, save their names. In the interest of preserving the family's privacy and because of what happened some seventy years ago, I think it's only fair to let the family tell the story of their newfound connections themselves to those they choose.

Every week I get a newspaper from New York and devour it from cover to cover, reading every article, including the page of advertisements. A few years ago I noticed a very small boxed advertisement run by someone seeking his birth mother. I am typically overloaded with a number of genealogical projects, so I left it alone. The weeks went by and the ad was still being run, however. My genealogical funny bone wouldn't stop tickling, so I had to write to the e-mail address and ask if anyone else had responded—one had.

A big sigh from me before I plunged in and asked the obvious question: What do you know? My respondent, let's call him "Derek R", told me that he had contacted the adoption agency, which had supplied him with what we would typically call "nonidentifying information."

It turned out that it was not Derek who had been adopted. He had been in a gay relationship for more than forty years, and his partner was the adopted son. Let's call him "Derek P." Yes, they share the same given name. This Derek had been born in January 1941 to a 20-year-old woman, "Stella", who was not married. She had Russian-born Jewish parents and they lived in New York State, but not New York City, at the time of his birth. I was also given the family name. Stella had been in a relationship with a non-Jewish man three years her senior, whose parents were Italian. Stella had harbored the idea they might marry, but once he discovered she was pregnant he left her. There was no way that Stella, a student, could keep and raise the child by herself; the child would have to be put up for adoption. This was all I had to go on.

So I fired up my computer, logged on to Ancestry.com, and ran a search of the 1940 U.S. census with the appropriate variables. I figured there were going to be a bunch of hits. I pressed the button and waited and waited. The results page appeared, and I stared at the screen with disbelieving eyes. I didn't get it; there was JUST ONE HIT! How could that be? Of course, it all hinged on the young woman's age; was she really 20, had she turned 21? I could easily be off by a year. But still, just the one hit!

But I had a feeling, so I ran with her and her family. I traced them back to Manhattan. I found the parents with two sons, Solomon and Morris. By 1930 the family had moved out of Manhattan to a small town some ninety miles away. The father was still in the same business and there was now a 10-year-old daughter, Stella. In 1940 the family was still in the same town; the father was still in the same business. Now there was another son, 6-year-old Alan.

I jumped on to a New York site with old newspapers and found that Stella had married in late 1942, although it wasn't reported until the following year. The couple went on to have two daughters, Betsy and Ella, who naturally grew up, married, and had children of their own.

More amazingly, Stella was still alive, at age 93 and now in Florida! What to do now? Was she really the mother? I found Betsy's phone number and left messages—nada. I wrote her a letter—no response. I tried calling Stella's younger brother, Alan. All I got was his answering machine, but in his message he did leave a cell phone number.

I had relayed all of this to the two Dereks in several e-mails back and forth. Up until now Derek P had been, I must confess, somewhat curt and tense, and a little standoffish. Then in one message I happened to mention I was English. After all, it's not obvious from reading e-mails what country one is from! That was the ice-breaker. Both Dereks apparently are huge Anglophiles, like many Americans, watching every English period production on public television and augmenting this with trips to England for a month every year to roam around the countryside. His attitude to me changed completely.

Then Derek P called me out of the blue. We hadn't arranged to talk, so it took me a little by surprise. During the conversation in which Derek was asking me how I had found out the information I had relayed to him, he casually mentioned Stella's father's occupation: He owned a laundry. I sat there with goosebumps running up and down my back. How did he know this? It wasn't something I had mentioned. "Who told you that?" I asked. "The agency," Derek replied. Well, that sealed it: Stella's father had owned a laundry in Manhattan, then moved the family and purchased the laundry in the town to which they had relocated.

After the weekend I called Alan's cell phone number. He was busy and had to go out right away but gave me

a couple of minutes. Question one: Was he the Alan who grew up in the little town—yes! Question two: Was his father related to any of the other families with the same name in the town—no! Alan explained why the family had relocated. That quickly solved a mystery I had had, wondering why the family had moved to the Catskills. But before I could broach the BIG question, he had to go. He said I could call him again the next day. I had hardly put the phone down when it rang again. I couldn't believe it, it was Betsy getting back to me.

Incredibly enough, she had just been bitten by the genealogy bug herself and had met with her uncle Alan in Florida while checking on her mother, to go over some family documents. Betsy had just signed up with Ancestry. She was now back home in South Carolina and had opened my letter. She had previously thought the phone calls I had made were crank calls. That was a good thing to remember for the future: Always follow up with a letter of introduction.

We talked about her family, and she was naturally amazed at just how much I knew. I guess she really was new to Ancestry. Then I took a deep breath. I told Betsy I was helping this guy find his birth mother and although I had very few details, which I described, they seemed to point to her mother.

There was no slamming down of the phone, just the time ticking by as Betsy wrapped her head around the idea of what her mother had been up to seventy-plus years ago as a young unmarried woman. Not only that, but now she possibly had a gay half-brother, three years older than she was, who lived less than 90 minutes away. We talked a bit more about her own genealogical research. I told her about JewishGen. I gave her my e-mail address to contact me if she got stuck and then I asked her for her cell phone number. I was going to call the two Dereks and have them call Betsy.

I asked Derek R to send me an e-mail message at his leisure once he had finished talking with Betsy. He thanked me profusely.

Postscript: They were still in touch with one another but unsure how to approach Stella, especially as she was suffering from dementia. Derek P had originally contacted me because he had been superficially interested in knowing what had happened to his birth family but had had no interest in contacting them. Of course, when I got back to him with the news of my discovery, everything changed. Derek had two half-sisters and their families to add to his adopted family.



world-renowned plastic surgeon in Boca Raton, Florida, for tissue markers, Catyana was able to recreate the skull and then create a lifelike clay bust. Engineering and Manufacturing Services offers 3D scanning, 3D printing, and rapid prototyping, and President and CEO Mark Kemper kindly donated his company's services to scan the clay reconstruction and print out a 3D model.

DNA from the skull was submitted for testing to Dr. Chris Craig of William and Mary College, Williamsburg, Virginia. The DNA confirmed that the man was Jewish. He belonged to haplotype group U of the Sephardic Jewish ancestral group, with ties to St. Eustatius and Barbados. Dr. Anthony Falsetti, a former University of Florida forensic anthropologist, came to the island and viewed the original skull. He determined that the remains were those of a man about 48 years old when he died, most likely of a tooth abscess.

Copying of the evidence and recreation of the face of the unknown Jew of St. Maarten attracted the attention of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. "The 19th Century Jewish Cemetery in St. Maarten – Historic Facial Approximations Using Modern Technologies – Doorway for Forensic Cases" was presented by Catyana Skory Falsetti (who had married Anthony Falsetti) in Washington, D.C. on 22 February 2013 at the American Academy of Forensics annual meeting. It was a landmark case because copied evidence was used for identification and facial reconstruction, since the human remains could not be moved over international borders.

### **Jewish St. Maarten Today**

In 2012, the community erected a plaque denoting the historic Jewish burial ground of St. Maarten, with the permission of the Cannegieters and the sponsorship of Diamonds International. The St. Maarten Museum has an exhibit with an informational panel and the original bust created by Catyana Falsetti, along with a copy of the skull.

The island of St. Martin, encompassing both Dutch St. Maarten and French St. Martin, has an active Jewish community today with no borders. Jews from Curaçao moved to the island in the 1960's and established businesses. As the island's tourism grew, a small local community developed that is joined by visitors. In 2010, a Chabad House was established to serve the Jewish communities and visitors on both the Dutch and French sides of the island.



## Join SFBAJGS at the 2018 IAJGS Conference in Warsaw, Poland!

Robinn Magid

Robinn is a long-time member of SFBAJGS and a co-chair of the IAJGS 2018 Warsaw Conference. Write to her at [info@iajgs2018.org](mailto:info@iajgs2018.org).

Join us in Warsaw for the 38th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, 5–10 August 2018, as we celebrate the first conference east of Paris. I've been to Warsaw six times in the past 15 years and have the good fortune of being the IAJGS Co-chair for this event. I wanted to take some time to write to all of you, my local JGS friends, let you know a bit about how great a place Poland is to visit, and personally invite you to join me for a terrific event.

As a member of the European Union, Poland is easy for us Americans to visit. No visa is required (unlike the USA, which requires visas for Polish visitors). It's a friendly and affordable place to vacation.

Warsaw today is a wonderful tourist destination. The capital city is flat and "walkable." There are Uber cars in the city (but not outside of Warsaw), buses, and light rail, and traffic is rather like San Francisco city streets in the financial district—slow during meal and commute times. People are friendly. Most people under 50 speak English, and streets are safe at night.

In Warsaw, the food is GREAT, and there are terrific kosher restaurants as well as what I call "Polish-world fusion" restaurants. Try "empanadas" at a Latin/Mexican restaurant in Warsaw, and okay, they are more like pierogi with jalapenos stuffed in them, but they are enjoyable and memorable. Polish food is very fresh, and you will eat well at reasonable prices. Vegans can find plenty of good food there too. And, yes, the kosher restaurants are great, even if you don't keep kosher. I love them both.

Our conference hotels will be the Warsaw Marriott and the Hilton Warsaw. Both are really nice hotels and up to American standards. I've eaten at both and stayed in one of them before. There are also nice boutique hotels in the area and other less expensive American chains. I've stayed at many good hotels in all those categories. Things in Poland are reasonably priced for us Americans. (And

how can you not love a town whose main drag is called "Jerozolimskie Street"?)

The conference itself promises to be unique and interesting. Our concept is to recognize that this will be an "experiential" conference, on the playing field of our genealogy research. In this respect, it will be a different conference than usual. Imagine attending great genealogy lectures in the morning at the award-winning POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, grabbing pierogi and a local beer in the Stare Miasto (Old Town) for lunch, and saying *kaddish* at Mila 18 in the late afternoon. You can have it all in Warsaw.

You and your family can enjoy the amazing POLIN Museum together. It's highly interactive, and the restaurant food is very good there too. I'd also recommend spending time at the Okopowa Street cemetery, so you can see what a Jewish cemetery WITH tombstones looks like. It's a rarity in the post-Holocaust world and is an interesting visit. Don't miss visiting the grave of Zamenhoff, the founder of Esperanto—the language designed to bring the world together.

Don't forget about *The Zookeeper's Wife* and their villa at the Warsaw Zoo and other important things to see and remember about the "Righteous Among the Nations", such as Irene Sendler, in Warsaw. Our plan is to create several "treasure hunt maps" for genealogy visits to these and other places, in person and online. We'll offer walking tours and maybe even a bike tour, so arrive in time to explore Warsaw on Sunday, 5 August. Also consider spending Shabbat either before or after the conference with the local Jewish community and Rabbi Schudrich. You can sign up for their inexpensive (but tasty) dinner on Friday night and/or Saturday and pay in advance.

Details about the conference are still being worked out, but you can visit Trip Advisor online to learn more about Warsaw and its best-known sights. Taube Tours has been



enlisted to provide touring trips both before and after the conference, and several *landsmanschaftn* have contacted me already about their ideas to organize commemorative trips to their shtetlach before or after the conference as well.

We're planning an early conference registration date, so we have an idea of how many people might be coming, as it's a unique situation for IAJGS. We encourage you to take advantage of Taube Tours through your conference registration.

In summary, plan now for a summer you'll never forget. Learn about the Austrian-Prussian-Russian territories that were sometimes called "Poland" and about our people's 1,000-year history there. Whether your family was from "Poland" or not, you'll enjoy a great city, meet lovely people, and pay your respects to the martyrs of our people while you learn about Yiddish culture and Jewish history and research your own family background. Visit <http://www.iajgs2018.org/> for more information.

There are two moderated, closed Facebook groups to keep you informed and up-to-date about the conference. Please join them to benefit from and share information to plan your conference / summer experience. The 2018 IAJGS Warsaw Conference group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/IAJGS/>) is the online meeting place to share conference announcements and bulletin board for genealogists to share information and questions about the upcoming conference in Warsaw. The Kosher SIG (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/KosherSIG/>) is the online meeting place to share information and ask questions regarding kosher food and *minyanim* opportunities at this and future IAJGS conferences.

If you don't use Facebook, there is also a conference e-mail list available. Information about it, including how to sign up, can be found at [http://s4.goeshow.com/iajgs/annual/2018/discussion\\_list.cfm](http://s4.goeshow.com/iajgs/annual/2018/discussion_list.cfm).

Also look for our blog and Twitter feed, which will be coming soon!



*President's Message, continued from page 2*

This is the last ZN for 2017. As we turn toward the new year and tear the 31st December page off the calendar, let's make a simple new year's resolution. Forget about losing weight or some other exotic, hard-to-attain result. Let's get the word out about the society.

Happy Chanukah and Happy (Goyische) New Year!



*Society News, continued from page 3*

## 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.

## SFBAJGS on Social Media

SFBAJGS has a YouTube channel, <https://goo.gl/Siy5l2>. This gives us an opportunity to share our activities, lectures, meetings, participation in events, Mavens, etc. So far we have three videos on our page, including one shot at the 2015 San Francisco History Expo with Emperor Norton himself! 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.

## Member Benefit

The researcher who photographs the *matzevot* in Jewish cemeteries in Poland for the Kirkuty project, a project which SFBAJGS supports with donations made possible by our generous members, can accept requests from SFBAJGS members in good standing for photography in cemeteries in specific towns. The towns must be in Poland. Send your request to [membership@sfbajgs.org](mailto:membership@sfbajgs.org).



**Invite a Friend to Join SFBAJGS**

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

Genealogy Calendar, continued from page 4

**State and National**

Wednesday–Saturday, 28 February–3 March 2018. RootsTech. Salt Lake City, Utah. <http://www.rootstech.org/>

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

Sunday–Friday, 28 July–2 August 2019. IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Cleveland, Ohio. <http://www.iajgs2019.org/>

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

**International**

Monday–Friday, 6–10 August 2018. IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Warsaw, Poland. <http://www.iajgs2018.org/>

Sunday–Saturday, 10 October–8 November 2018 (Cheshvan 5779). International Jewish Genealogy Month. <http://www.iajgs.org/jgmonth.html>

**Free Webinars**

FamilySearch. <https://sites.lib.byu.edu/familyhistory/classes-and-webinars/online-webinars/>

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

Georgia Genealogical Society. <http://gagensociety.org/events/webinars>

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>

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. <https://www.uscis.gov/HGWebinars>

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



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## Upcoming SFBAJGS Events

**Sunday, 21 January, Oakland:** *From DNA to Genetic Genealogy: Everything You Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask.* Steve Morse will make genes, chromosomes, and how DNA is inherited understandable and explain how learning about them can help you in your family history research.

**Sunday, 11 February, San Francisco:** *Oral History: Interviewing Family Members.* Oral historian Basya Petnick will discuss how to go about conducting a family history interview.

**Monday, 12 February, Palo Alto:** *Bloggging Your Family History.* If you have wondered how a blog can help you make progress with your research, Craig Siulinski will not only explain that but will show how easy it is to get your blog up and running.

**Sunday, 18 March, Oakland:** *Genealogy Beyond the Y Chromosome: Autosomes Exposed.* Following up on his February presentation, Steve Morse will explain the benefits and limitations of autosomal DNA in family research.

**Sunday, 15 April, San Francisco:** *Intimate Histories: Genealogy and American Jewish Religion.* Professor Rachel Gross will explore how genealogy functions as a *mitzvah* for many American Jewish genealogists.

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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