



# זכרונות *ZichronNote*

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

Volume XXXIV, Number 1

February 2019

### Russian Records Online

**A fantastic online resource for Russian Jewish records that you can use even if you can't read Cyrillic.**  
**See page 5.**

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*SFBAJGS secretary Shelley Wiener (right) assisting an attendee at San Francisco History Days (see page 15)*

**ZichronNote**  
**Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area**  
**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.

**Society Addresses**

SFBAJGS, P.O. Box 318214, San Francisco, CA 94131-8214

Web site: <http://www.sfbajgs.org/>

**Society Contacts**

**President:** Jeremy Frankel, [president@sfbajgs.org](mailto:president@sfbajgs.org)

**Vice President:** Preeva Tramiel, [vicepresident@sfbajgs.org](mailto:vicepresident@sfbajgs.org)

**Secretary:** Shellie Wiener, [secretary@sfbajgs.org](mailto:secretary@sfbajgs.org)

**Treasurer:** Jeff Lewy, [treasurer@sfbajgs.org](mailto:treasurer@sfbajgs.org)

**Membership:** Jeff Lewy, [membership@sfbajgs.org](mailto:membership@sfbajgs.org)

**Programs:** Janice M. Sellers, [programs@sfbajgs.org](mailto:programs@sfbajgs.org)

**Publicity:** Janice M. Sellers, [publicity@sfbajgs.org](mailto:publicity@sfbajgs.org)

**Webmaster:** Barbara Stack, [webmaster@sfbajgs.org](mailto:webmaster@sfbajgs.org)

**Transcription Project Coordinator:** Jeff Lewy,  
[transcriptions@sfbajgs.org](mailto:transcriptions@sfbajgs.org)

**Electronic Newsletter Coordinator:** Dana Kurtz,  
[newsletterexchange@sfbajgs.org](mailto:newsletterexchange@sfbajgs.org)

**Founder:** Martha Wise

**ZichronNote**

**Editor:** Janice M. Sellers, [newsletter@sfbajgs.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbajgs.org)

Note: All URL's are valid as of the time of publication.

**President's Message**  
**Family Connections**

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

Sitting here, pondering what to write, I glanced at my calendar and noticed that we were a little more than two weeks away from Passover. (By the time you read this it is already behind us.) Passover is when the Israelites packed their bags and headed off on an unknown journey.

It was a slightly more recent Passover, 1985 to be precise, when I first started out on an unknown journey to learn about my family's history.

After all these years I seem to have reached a critical point in my research where I'm more likely to bump into people who are connected to me than I would have several years ago.

Case in point, at the special East Bay meeting in March when Daniel Horowitz came to speak, I was sitting at the sign-in desk with Barbara Stack (SFBAJGS Webmaster) and her research buddy Pearl Lipner. We were shooting the proverbial genealogical breeze.

The first attendee came in, signed her name, and alerted us that she was new and this was her first meeting. As we all do, Barbara (yes, she is also a Barbara) mentioned some family names, hers being from the UK. She was born there, immigrated to Canada as a child, then later came to America.

One name resonated with me, Lyons, because it had been "Anglicized" to Lynes. Hmm, I said, I have Lyons/Lynes in my family. I pulled out my laptop, opened up my tree, and began looking. Ahh, there it was. Turns out Barbara is my 4th cousin via marriage.

Second case in point: My Frankel family, formerly Frenkel, hailed from Gabin, Poland. It lies some 70 miles west of Warsaw and used to be called Gombin. There is a Gombin Society, so recently I joined it and sent my check to the membership director, Michael Kaplan.

Michael wrote back saying that his family wasn't actually from Gombin: "My wife is the Gombiner. The family name in Gombin was MANCZYK."

Another "hmm" escaped my lips. Again I pulled up my family tree and looked, then wrote to Michael: "My great-great-great-grandfather was Majer Simche FRENKEL (born 10 July 1829). I see from Akt 454 in the Gombin register that his mother was Frejda Manczik." Michael's wife and I are 4th cousins once removed.

Not very long ago, I opened my *haggadah* and began reciting those words I know so well.

May all your journeys into the unknown be enlightening and prove fruitful.

## Society News

### New Members

Ellyn Freed ..... ellenfreed@pacbell.net  
Arnold Friedman ..... afriedman21@gmail.com  
Dvorah Lewis ..... dvorah.lewis@gmail.com  
Nancy Siegel ..... nancysiegel22@gmail.com  
Lindsay Sweetnam ..... lindsaysweetnam@gmail.com  
Barbara Thurston ..... barbara.thurston@sbcglobal.net

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).

### SFBAJGS on Social Media

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

### 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).

### 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 Board Meetings

Did you know that SFBAJGS board meetings are open to members to attend? Well, they are! The next board meeting is scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, 11 August at a Peninsula location. If you are interested in attending and learning more about how your board reaches decisions for the society, contact the editor at [newsletter@sfbajgs.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbajgs.org).

### 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).

### Errata

In the August/November 2018 issue of *ZichronNote* (Volume XXXIII, Number 3/4), on page 18, "My Dear Good Rosi: Book Review", the letter from September 1935 was written before Rosi went to England. The name Mossbacher should have been spelled Mosbacher. Rosi died at the age of 93, not 88.

### 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>NEW TIME: Sunday. Doors open 1:00 p.m. Program begins at 1:30 p.m.</b><br>Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Avenue  |
| <b>Palo Alto:</b>     | <b>Monday. Doors open 7:00 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

Saturday, 1 June 2019. Sarah Clift, "Tips for Adoptees." Solano County Genealogical Society. Fairfield Adult Recreation Center, 1200 Civic Center Drive, Fairfield. <https://www.scgsca.org/>

Thursday, 6 June 2019. Pam Fujii and Dave McCready, "Getting Started with Genealogy: Organization." Free but registration required. Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. Santa Clara City Library, Redwood Room, 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara. <http://www.scchgs.org/>

Friday, 7 June 2019. "Friday Nights in the Archives in Napa." Napa County Historical Society, 1219 1st Street, Napa. <http://www.napahistory.org/>

Saturday, 8 June 2019. Vivian Kahn, "How to Dig Up Your Jewish Family Roots." California Genealogical Society and Library, 2201 Broadway Suite LL2, Oakland. <http://californiaancestors.org/>

Thursday, 13 June 2019. Ralph Severson, "Finding Obscure Sources on FamilySearch." Contra Costa County Genealogical Society. LDS Church, 1360 Alberta Way, Concord. <https://cccgs.net/>

Saturday–Monday, 15–17 June 2019. International German Genealogy Conference. Hosted by Sacramento German Genealogy Society. Hyatt Regency Hotel, Sacramento. <https://iggpartner.org/cpage.php?pt=73>

Friday, 21 June 2019. Lisa Lisson, "Researching Common Name Ancestors." Mt. Diablo Genealogical Society. Club Room, Rossmore Creekside Clubhouse, 1010 Stanley Dollar Drive, Walnut Creek. <https://mdgs.webs.com/>

Friday, 28 June 2019. Stewart Blandón Traiman, "Looking at Family History through an LGBTQ Lens." Sutro Library, CSUSF, J. Paul Leonard Library, 1600 Holloway Ave, San Francisco. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rainbow-prism-looking-at-family-history-through-an-lgbtq-lens-tickets-60906277315>

### State and National

Wednesday–Saturday, 30 May–2 June 2019. Genealogy Jamboree. Southern California Genealogical Society. Burbank Airport Marriott Hotel, 2500 Hollywood Way, Burbank. <http://www.genealogyjamboree.com/>

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

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

Tuesday, 12 November 2019. Lara Diamond, "Movement between Towns in Eastern Europe" (Webinar). Ukrainian History and Education Center. <https://www.ukrhec.org/civicism/event/info?id=55&reset=1>

### International

Sunday–Saturday, 30 October–28 November 2019 (Cheshvan 5780). International Jewish Genealogy Month. <http://www.iajgs.org/blog/ijgm/>

For more events, visit <http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/genealogy/calendar/> and <http://www.conferencekeeper.com/>.

### 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 (MyHeritage). <http://familytreewebinars.com/upcoming-webinars.php>

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

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

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

Utah Genealogical Association. <https://ugagenealogy.org/cpage.php?pt=11>

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



### **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 June 2019

Then on hiatus until October

## J-Roots: An Incredible Resource for Russian Empire Records and Discussion

Dmitry Pruss, Ph.D.

A native of Moscow, Russia, Dmitry holds a Ph.D. in molecular biology and works in the field of human genetics. Since 2006, his projects have included solving heritable disease riddles by combining DNA testing with the classic kind of gumshoe genealogy. Dmitry is a volunteer moderator of the Onomastics section of the Jewish Roots portal and a contributing editor of *Avotaynu* magazine. He lives in Salt Lake City. This article first appeared as a post on Lara Diamond's *Lara's Jewnealogy* blog on 2 December 2018, at <https://larasgenealogy.blogspot.com/2018/12/an-incredible-resource-for-russian.html>. It is reprinted with permission.

If you have ancestors who lived in what was the Russian Empire, you need to know about J-Roots. This article discusses this resource and how English speakers can best interact with it.

Did your great-granduncle attend college in Odessa or St. Petersburg? Did your great-grandaunt take apprenticeship exams for a pharmacist or a midwife? Was their cousin sent to Siberia for antigovernment agitation, or perhaps a petty crime? Maybe an ancestor's signature graced a *shul* petition or a plea to the authorities asking for fire or famine relief?

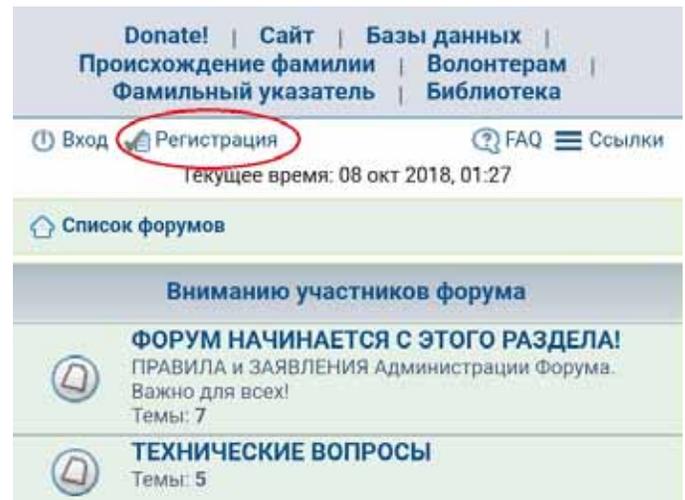
In the old country Jews interacted with the czar's oppressive government in a myriad of ways, always having to prove who they were, where they hailed from, who were their kin. Along the way, they left priceless breadcrumbs of genealogy information. That information is still there in Eastern Europe's archives. The vital records may have been lost as the local archives went up in flames during World War II [Note from Lara: Many do still exist, though, as you can see in many of my blog posts], but the authorities hoarded so much paperwork in their quest to suffocate the Jews that the tales of your family are still preserved in as unlikely places as Moscow, where millions of police file cards catalog all brushes of Jews with the system, or the kremlin of the ancient capital of Siberia, overflowing with correspondence about prisoners and exiles.

Over nearly a decade of its existence, Jewish Roots portal (<http://j-roots.info/>) has become the leading force in Russian Jewish genealogy research. It is busy uncovering and digitizing new genealogy sources in the archives of the former Russian Empire and building a valuable base of advice on genealogy searches, both for online investigators and for those doing their research on the ground, in archives, libraries, and cemeteries.

The users of J-Roots are scattered across many countries and speak many languages, but the vast majority of them have native knowledge of Russian, the principal language of the original genealogy-related records in the Old Country. To avoid a Babylonian-style incomprehension

between speakers of so many languages, since its inception, the portal has made it an official policy to use Russian throughout and to leave a small dedicated multilingual forum for those who don't know Russian (<http://forum.j-roots.info/viewforum.php?f=101>).

But it goes without saying that most of us in the West have roots in the old Russian Empire yet can't read or write the language (and machine translations between English and Russian are still quite lame). For those who would like to use the resources of J-Roots but are hampered by the language barrier, this article is the place to get step-by-step instructions.



### Registration for J-Roots

1. To register, go to <http://forum.j-roots.info/index.php> and click the "Registration" (Регистрация) link. You can also follow a direct link to registration at <http://forum.j-roots.info/ucp.php?mode=register>. So far everything is still in Russian, but another click will change that.

2. Go to the Language (Язык) pulldown menu. It has only two options, and luckily one of them is English. Now you can glide seamlessly through the rest of the registration process, and in the end, many of the menus will actually be in English. Whew!

**Еврейские корни**

Donate! | Сайт | Базы данных |  
Происхождение фамилии | Волонтерам |  
Фамильный указатель | Библиотека

Вход    FAQ    Ссылки

Текущее время: 08 окт 2018, 01:26

Список форумов

Язык: **Русский**

### Еврейские корни - Регистрация

Заходя на конференцию «Еврейские корни» (в дальнейшем «мы», «наш», «Еврейские корни», «<http://forum.j-roots.info>»), вы подтверждаете своё согласие со следующими условиями. Если вы не согласны с ними, пожалуйста, не заходите и не пользуйтесь форумами «Еврейские корни». Мы оставляем за собой право изменять эти правила в любое время и сделаем всё возможное, чтобы уведомить вас об этом, однако с вашей стороны было бы разумным регулярно просматривать этот текст на предмет изменений, так как использование конференции «Еврейские корни» после обновления/исправления условий означает ваше согласие с ними.

*Language Pulldown Menu*

**Еврейские корни**

Donate! | Сайт | Базы данных |  
Происхождение фамилии | Волонтерам |  
Фамильный указатель | Библиотека

Login    FAQ    Quick links

It is currently 08 Oct 2018, 01:26

Board index

Language: **British English**

### Еврейские корни - Registration

By accessing "Еврейские корни" (hereinafter "we", "us", "our", "Еврейские корни", "<http://forum.j-roots.info>"), you agree to be legally bound by the following terms. If you do not agree to be legally bound by all of the following terms then please do not access and/or use "Еврейские корни". We may change these at any time and we'll do our utmost in informing you, though it would be prudent to review this regularly yourself as your continued usage of "Еврейские корни" after changes mean you agree to be legally bound by these terms as they are updated and/or amended.

*Menu in English*

Once registered on the site, you can explore the portal's two most useful areas: the forum (<http://forum.j-roots.info/index.php>) and the database ([http://forum.j-roots.info/searchdb\\_form.php](http://forum.j-roots.info/searchdb_form.php)). The site also has a library of scanned books (<http://forum.j-roots.info/biblio.php>) and a variety of excellent educational and research articles in Russian, some of which may be of use to nonnative speakers as well, such as a guide to finding and exploring metrical books with vital records ([http://j-roots.info/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=491](http://j-roots.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=491)).

## Forum

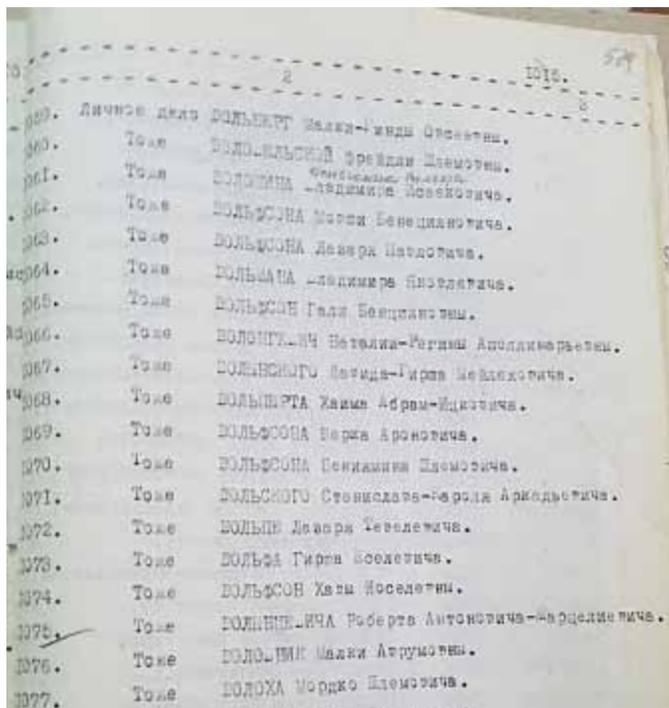
The portal's discussion forum has nearly 20,000 registered users and is the most active section of the site. This is also where you find the dedicated multilingual section, titled "My Russian Jewish Ancestry" (<http://forum.j-roots.info/viewforum.php?f=101>). The most active forum sections discuss researching historic Jewish communities, studies on specific surnames and families (with more than 1,200 discussion threads, and a surname index provided at <http://forum.j-roots.info/viewtopic.php?p=48565#p48565>), Jewish onomastics discussion (kindly assisted by Dr. Beider!), detailed expert advice on specific archives and online databases, Jewish education and school files, Jewish military draft and military files, occupational, professional, and trade guilds records, Holocaust materials and files, files and documents of political persecution of Jews both in Czarist times and in Soviet times, Jewish emigration records, etc.

## "Reading" in Russian

As error-prone as the online translation services such as Google Translate may be, they offer you the best chance to understand typed text. To grasp the meaning of text in images, you may need to learn the basics of the alphabet or how to crowdsource it to volunteers in social media, the way I often do if I need a translation of handwritten Yiddish.

## "My Russian Jewish Ancestry" Area

This is the proper area to post a new question if you don't know Russian. You may add a machine translation to Russian of your English text, but please do not post just a machine translation without the original English text! The automated translation services are still too lame to rely solely on them; it's better to rely on a bilingual forum volunteer to help fix the errors of machine translation (and to bring your message to the attention of the forum-goers in the right subforum area).



A sample document from J-Roots

### Typing and Searching in Russian

You probably need some sort of a virtual keyboard or an English-to-Russian transliteration service to “type” names in Russian. My favorite is the following free online service: <https://translit.net/>. The forum search widget is located in the upper right corner of the J-Roots forum page; this is a regular wildcard search. A J-Roots database search can look for similar-sounding surnames and localities.

### Using the Archive Links Database

Even though the vast masses of Jews never left the Pale of Settlement in the westernmost reaches of Russian Empire, an astounding number of their files ended up in the central archives of Russia, in Moscow and St. Petersburg. School graduates and applicants, leftist and Zionist activists, educators and physicians required to receive certificates of political loyalty, Jews seeking to move to the countryside or condemned to Siberia—all these types of people from the western provinces ended up having their documents filed away in the seats of the Empire. These records have largely escaped the attention of western researchers, and J-Roots is by far the best place to investigate them. The portal also maintains a rich library of historical and reference books in Russian.

The main database of J-Roots is a search engine for files in a variety of archives in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, etc. As genealogists know all too well, large numbers of census and vital records of the Jewish communities of the old Russian Empire have been lost, but their absence can often be replaced by congregation rosters and school files, military and police records, trade guild documents and real estate paperwork, etc. In addition, some census lists ended up mistitled or misfiled and can’t be identified without in-depth sleuthing in the archives. Much of the effort of J-Roots is directed toward this megaproject of uncovering hitherto unknown sources of genealogy information. For example, we’ve just added references to another 750 files relevant for Jewish genealogy from the Lithuanian State History Archive in Vilnius, including congregation election materials, synagogue and school construction petitions, correspondence on residential registration of Jewish families, personal files of Jewish Siberian exiles, and more and are halfway through with more than 3,000 personal files of students at Kiev University from the Kiev Municipal Archive. A very large data set from the National Historical Archive of Belarus is being processed. An additional database catalogs Jewish gravestones.

J-Roots is a cooperative project and online meeting place run by an informal crew of self-described “nerds and bookworms”—historians and educators, volunteers who combine pursuing their personal projects with assisting others, and, most importantly, “white-hat” private researchers who are eager to provide tons of invaluable genealogy information pro bono, while at the same time carving out important niches for their professional work. Our goal is to combine our joint experience and knowledge, to create an exhaustive catalog of genealogical sources, and to enable sharing of materials from archives, publications, studies, and personal collections. Our intended beneficiaries are Jewish genealogists who are fluent in Russian, from all across the globe (including Israel, Ukraine, the United States, and dozens of other countries). But the site is also experimenting with a Google Translate engine for the benefit of speakers of other languages.

Lastly, we operate on a shoestring budget of online ad revenue and donations, rarely exceeding a hundred dollars a month. Much of the former USSR remains a severely economically depressed area, and even the smallest donation makes a big difference.

**Invite a Friend to Join SFBAJGS**  
<http://www.jewishgen.org/sfbajgs/about.html>

## Not Just Another Dead End

Marc Seidenfeld

Marc Seidenfeld has practiced law since 1981 in the areas of probate and real estate. He now works only in probate and serves as a judge pro tem and as an arbitrator for the San Francisco Superior Court. His ancestors were Galitzianers who came to the United States from the 1880's through 1907, and he has been researching them for a number of years.

I've been working on my Galitzianer family genealogy on and off since the 1970's, but for the past several years, mostly off. In 2014 I received an e-mail message from Laura, a person unknown to me, asking about my Seidenfeld family. She had some Seidenfelds in her family tree and wanted to know if she and I had any connection. I had entered my family names in the Family Finders of both JewishGen and SFBAJGS years ago but had not had any contact with another researcher for many years.

Laura and I traded several e-mails but were not able to see any connection, and I promptly forgot about it. Just another dead end.

Then a few months ago, out of the blue, I received an e-mail from another person unknown to me, Helene, claiming to be the granddaughter of my grandfather's sister. She had seen that Laura was looking for Seidenfelds and had made contact with her. Although I had completely forgotten about my contact with Laura more than four years ago, Laura had kept my information on file. When Helene told Laura about her family, the e-mail exchange Laura had with me back in 2014 came to mind and she thought Helene and I might be searching for the same family, so she gave Helene my contact information.

When I interviewed my father back in the 1970's, he told me that his father, Jacob Seidenfeld, had three sisters. My dad knew the names of two of them and their children, that they had come to the United States, where they lived, etc. He could

not remember the name of the third sister, who had not emigrated to the United States but had remained in Europe. All he knew was that she was married in Europe and had children, one of whom had at some point immigrated to Israel. And that was *all* he knew—no names, no places, no dates.

The children and grandchildren of my grandfather's two other sisters also had no information on the sister who had remained in Europe or what had become of her. I assumed I would never find out anything about her.

I was wrong. Helene turned out to be the granddaughter of that missing sister. Her grandmother had indeed married and remained in Europe and had three children, two daughters and a son. She died in Europe during or after World War I, and her daughters ended up in a Jewish orphanage in Vienna after the war. Relatives in the United

States sponsored them and brought them here. One of those relatives was my grandfather, Jacob. My dad apparently had no knowledge of any of this. Helene is the daughter of one of those two girls rescued from the Vienna orphanage.

This missing sister's son, Jacob, survived World War II in Europe and after spending some time in DP camps went to Israel. As far as I know, he is the only member of my extended family to have lived in Israel. He is now deceased but we have four letters from him, written in Israel but in German, that he sent to family in Brooklyn. I am now trying to get them translated into English.

21. II. 1951.  
Liebe Schwestern und Schwäger!  
Erstens teile ich Euch mit, das  
ich schon Gott-seidank gesund bin,  
und hoffe, dasselbe, von Euch zu  
hören.  
d. Schwestern Ihr müsst mir, viele male  
entschuldigen, das ich habe Euch,  
nicht geschrieben, ich wahr aber  
krank, das Schlimmst wahr mir  
nicht so gut.  
Das Paket, habe ich bekommen,  
und ich danke Euch, viele mal.  
Ich Schreibe, in Euch beide, weil ich  
habe nicht Goldas Adresse.  
Was macht Ihr, meine L.? bei uns  
ist alles, in bester Ordnung,  
Was machen die L. Kinder? es ist  
schon, 35. Jahre her, das Ihr, seit  
kam mir, so weit entfernt,  
Ich habe, mit das Glück, zu  
kennen, meine Nichten, man es Euch  
möglich ist, so schick mir Bilder  
damit ich wenigstens so erkenne,

## Indexing for New Genealogy Insights

Marian Burk Wood

This article is an excerpt from Marian Burk Wood's book *Planning a Future for Your Family's Past*, available on Amazon.com. For more tips, see her genealogy blog at <http://climbingmyfamilytree.blogspot.com/>. This article was first published in *Quest* (newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Connecticut), Volume 29, Number 4 (Fall 2017), pages 6–10 and is reprinted with permission.

Did your ancestors leave you a packet of letters, a box of diaries, a wedding album, or a baby book listing visitors and gifts? I have a box of letters received by my mother, as well as 30 years' worth of minutes from family society meetings, my parents' wedding album, and my father-in-law's appointment diaries spanning 25 years.

These documents and albums are useful for filling in the blanks on the family tree and pinpointing dates. But there's another step you can take to tease out even more clues to your family's history: Try indexing.

### Why Index?

By indexing, you will make your documents and photos more user-friendly and more valuable for your current research and for future generations. The top four reasons to index the names of relatives and family friends:

- *Help the next generation.* Your relatives and heirs will be able to look up family members by name and turn to the page or photo where these people are mentioned or shown. This is a good way to spark interest in family history. Just as we used to check for our own names when we received a new phone directory, relatives will skim the index for their parents' and grandparents' names—and get a glimpse of the past.

- *Clarify discrepancies.* By comparing information in family documents and photos with data in official records, you may gain new insights to clarify discrepancies in birth, marriage, or death dates, among other facts. An index makes the content of your materials more accessible for this purpose.

- *Follow relatives through the years.* You can follow individuals over time and discern patterns by looking for changes and relationships not obvious without the index. If you're creating a timeline for an ancestor or writing a biographical sketch, indexing can help you find every mention of this person in your documents and photos.

- *Reveal clues that help solve family mysteries.* By combining what you learn from the index with your other family research, you may finally identify some "mystery" photos, reclassify "family friends" as relatives, or uncover new family ties. Indexing notes from 1940's family get-togethers

focused my attention on several "friends" who turned out to be cousins of my immigrant grandparents.

Consider indexing anything that might include the names of people in your family and FANs (friends, associates, neighbors), including family diaries and letters, scrapbooks, wedding albums, baby books, family society minutes, funeral sign-in sheets, oral histories, and on and on. Recently I indexed my mother's address book from the 1950's and after comparing names and addresses with other clues in my files, I identified two people as cousins, not family friends. Now I'm in touch with a descendant of those cousins, who's helping identify more faces in old family photos.

Indexing is an inch-by-inch process. Just jump in and index a specific part of your collection for an hour here and there. Handle only one item at a time, and have a clean piece of paper handy to mark your place when you stop, so you can return to the right spot later. Little by little, your index for those letters or diaries will take shape.

### Set Up Your Index Template

Before you begin, decide what specific information you want to extract and set up a blank index template accordingly. Figure 1 (see page 10) shows a sample template I've used for indexing diaries and letters, with five columns:

- Name of each person mentioned (surname first, so you can alphabetize later)
- Relationship (be as specific as possible; identify "guesses" as such)
- Date (year first, to facilitate sorting for timeline research)
- Place (be specific so you can track who's where from year to year and sort by place)
- Comments (details, context, significance; refer to other documents or photos if necessary, and explain why people might be mentioned or not mentioned)

I rule a legal pad into columns and take notes by hand when beginning an index. Later, I type these entries into a table created via a word processor or spreadsheet, so I can sort each column as I choose. For example, by listing

surname first, I can alphabetize that column A–Z or Z–A and see all entries for a single surname. Similarly, I can sort my date and place columns separately to create timelines for individuals or map ancestors’ movements over time.

Title the first index page to describe the documents or photos you’re indexing. Include details so other researchers (and your heirs) can quickly match the index to the right set of items. For example, the title might be “Index to Grandma Judy Sample Grand’s diaries, 1950–1980.” Include the physical location of these materials and note the date of your indexing or an “update date” so you can keep track of your most recent version.

### Six Easy Steps to Indexing

These are my six step-by-step instructions for indexing.

1. *Put items in chronological order, if possible.* Because you’re going to index each set of documents or photos separately, put all letters to or from one person in order, put one person’s diaries in order, and so on. That way, you’ll be able to follow along as the narrative unfolds, and you read about upcoming events or evolving relationships. I did this with the dozens of letters written to my mother during the time she met and began dating my father. It was exciting to read what led up to his proposal—and the letters also revealed a surprising dilemma about setting a wedding date.

2. *Focus on one item at a time.* Pick up one letter, one page in the photo album, one of anything in your collection and start to index. If you feel like doing more, continue in increments without getting overwhelmed. Just mark your place when you stop so you can resume later.

3. *Identify the people and their relationships.* The first time you see a name mentioned, write it down in full (with nicknames if it helps jog memories). Note the relationship to your family, if known. Also jot notes for the full reference (as genealogical evidence). If you see a name mentioned repeatedly, note it even if you don’t know the relationship. Then watch for clues to that person’s relationship with your family and keep a running list of questions to ask relatives who might know more.

4. *Compile your list of people, dates, and brief explanations.* For instance, if “Grandma Judy Sample Grand” mentioned Bob Brown in her diaries for the first time on 26 November 1964, my entry in the diary index would include the date and show the name as **Brown, Bob (Robert?)** (or **Brown, Robert (“Bob”)** if his full name were already known). The index would show the relationship (**Bob was Grandma Judy’s first cousin on her mother Nancy Brown’s side**). The index would also add details from the diary: **“Drove to Wabash where I had Thanksgiving dinner with Bob and family. Baby Linda is adorable.”** If Bob’s daughter Linda is mentioned in a later diary entry, I’d index her there also

Figure 1

**Index to Grandma Judy Sample Grand’s Diaries, 1950–1980  
(indexed by Mary Grand in July 2016; updated in September 2017)**

Judy Sample Grand, older daughter of Nancy Brown and Philip Sample, kept a diary for 30 years. The original diaries are in a box labeled “Judy Sample Grand diaries”, stored on the bottom shelf of the bookcase in the home office.

Name	Relationship	Date	Place	Comments
Brown, Robert (Bob)	Bob Brown was Judy’s first cousin on her mother Nancy Brown’s side.	1964 (26–27 November)	Wabash, Indiana trip	Quote from diary: “Drove to Wabash, where I had Thanksgiving dinner with Bob and family. Baby Linda is adorable.” Notes: Bob’s wife was Helen White, and his daughters were Phyllis and Linda. Linda was born on 5 May 1964 (according to Judy’s diary).

and include a relationship note: **Brown, Linda (younger daughter of Bob Brown)**. Don't forget that this index will help the next generation understand your family's history, so provide a little context for them.

5. *List people alphabetically by surname and cross-reference where necessary.* You can sort your index alphabetically by surname so it's easy to find an ancestor mentioned in the documents. Consider how people in the future—descendants not as steeped in the family's history—might use your index. You might want to cross-reference entries to women under their maiden names as well as their married names, for example. In this example, Bob Brown's wife might be shown in the index as **White, Helen (see entry for Brown, Helen White)** as well as **Brown, Helen White (married to Bob Brown)**.

6. *Put your index to work.* Store a copy with the item(s) you indexed and put copies inside your genealogy research files or binders of the main surnames mentioned. I have a four-page index tucked into the box with my father-in-law's diaries and a copy of the index filed inside the folder with his family's research. Bring the index to family gatherings and ask other relatives if they remember hearing about a person or an event. You may get lucky and jog someone's memory.

### After Indexing, Look for Clues

Here are some ways you can use an index to deepen your knowledge of family history and possibly solve a family mystery or two.

- *Watch for groups of people and repeat appearances.* If certain names pop up regularly, especially on significant dates (such as a birthday or a holiday), they probably have some close connection to your family. Watching for groups and repeat appearances will help you figure out which people you should be following closely and which people seem to be just casual friends. Maybe you can even match the mentions to some photos in your collection, as I did. Not only could I date these few photos more precisely as a result of the index, I also put more names to faces.

- *Watch for disappearances and enigmatic mentions.* Sometimes people are mentioned only once—did they move away, did they break with the family, did they pass away, was there a divorce? Indexing can both raise questions and answer them. Someone else in the family might have some insight if you ask questions. My father-in-law's diaries had one sentence about someone moving to another city, then my sister-in-law remembered a distant cousin of that name at her wedding. With those clues, I was able to check the census and marriage records and link this

person to the right part of the family tree.

- *Check dates against what you know.* Does the index help you narrow down possible birth, marriage, or death dates? Does it fill in the blanks on where ancestors were during certain periods? Who is missing on key dates or occasions? During indexing, I noticed that a grandaunt was not mentioned in family society minutes after a certain year. That was a clue to her approximate death date, which I'd been unable to determine—until then.

- *Look at relationships.* Does the index shed light on whether family members were estranged or close? Who is present at family gatherings, and how often do these people show up? One set of family meeting minutes I indexed showed how warmly and frequently a widowed in-law was welcomed, along with her second family. The same index reflected the rare attendance of an uncle whose marriage outside the faith was frowned upon. These insights into family dynamics might not be obvious without systematic indexing.

- *Look at occasions.* Who's visiting on holidays, and who hosts which gatherings? Are weddings, birthdays, funerals mentioned? Who's giving gifts, who's receiving gifts, where and when? One baby book I indexed gave me a clue that someone was more than a "family friend" because she gave a really valuable gift. She turned out to be the ex-wife of the baby's uncle.

- *Cross-reference the index against other items.* Do you have photos of the people mentioned in the index during the period covered by the documents? The index might help you identify mystery people in your photos or give you more context for when, where, and why the photos were taken. Also compare one index against another, person by person, to deepen your knowledge of each ancestor—and turn up clues to why someone is not in a photo album, for instance. Sort by date or place for more comparisons.

- *Check key details.* If a diary or letter mentions someone's birth, marriage, or death, compare the date with official documents to confirm a fact or resolve conflicting information. Also use the index to find a name variation that you can use when you research that person. I discovered the actual first name of an in-law nicknamed "Buck" because the diary gave the date of Buck's death and the names of others attending the funeral. A few clicks later, I had Buck's given name and was able to continue my research.

Indexing takes time, but it pays off by making documents more accessible and helping you make connections that deepen your understanding of your family history.



## Sephardic Jews in Eastern Europe: A Response

Harmen Snel and Jits van Straten

Harmen Snel works for Stadsarchief Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Jits van Straten is an independent scholar in Bennekom, The Netherlands. Both are members of Nederlandse Kring voor Joodse Genealogie ("Netherlands Society for Jewish Genealogy"). This article first appeared in *Shem Tov* (newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto) Volume XXXIV, Number 4, December 2018, pages 9–11, in response to Kevin Brook's articles about Sephardim in Eastern Europe and is reprinted with permission.

In 2015, Kevin Brook wrote an article in *Shem Tov* about the presence of Sephardic Jews in Eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup> In the Netherlands, and especially in Amsterdam, we have a lot of genealogical experience with both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, thanks to extant Hebrew registrations of both communities.

When one wants to determine whether a person is Sephardic, it is first of all important to define the term Sephardic. We stick strictly to the original definition: Sephardic Jews are descendants of Iberian Jewry. We mention this because nowadays it appears that historians and geneticists often do not follow this definition.

Another important point with regard to a Sephardic origin is the phenomenon that Ashkenazi Jews sometimes try to demonstrate they are of Sephardic descent because the Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam were the rich and influential ones; Ashkenazi Jews were the poor guys. Sephardic descent presumably provided a better social status. It is possible that a somewhat similar reason lies behind the conclusion that Turkish Jews are the continuation of Sephardic Jewry<sup>2</sup>, despite all the historical evidence that this is not the case. Perhaps it gives more status to say that one is of Sephardic descent than of Turkish-Jewish descent. When dealing with genealogy and genetics, it is important not to be misled by what one would like to be.

Finally, a few hundred years ago, people could adopt any surname they wanted. Sons could adopt family names that differed from the father's family name, or adopt that of their mother. The latter was especially the case when the mother was the daughter of a famous father.

It is for the abovementioned reasons that we would like to respond to Brook's article. We will start with an attempt to classify the surnames mentioned in the article.

### Confirmed Sephardic Surnames

Castiell, De Campos, Montalto, Nasi, Zacuto

### Surnames from Italy

- Włochowicz, called "Szafardi": The man was born in Italy. The name "Szafardi" doesn't mean much, as Jews in Eastern Europe were probably unaware of the fact that

Italian Jews are not *a priori* *sfaradim*. Only genealogical research can show if the man was really a *sfaradi*.

- The Sephardic physicians Salomon Calahorra and Isaak Hispanus: Both names refer to Italy. Calahorra is a castle in Italy (it may also be a county or community in the Spanish province of La Rioja), and Hispanus is a surname we can find in Rome as early as 150 BCE: Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Hispanus was a praetor in 139 BCE. The title means that he was either a commander of an army or an elected magistrate. His father was Gnaeus C. Sc. Hispallus, consul prior in 176 BCE.

- de Mosso: Mosso is a community in Italy.

- The fact that the "Sephardic" Jews invited by Zamojski were all called "Italikus" makes a Sephardic origin questionable.

Brook considers Italian Jews Sephardic. But are they? Italian Jews don't consider themselves Ashkenazi or Sephardic. This is logical because Ashkenazi Jews originated from Germany, Sephardic Jews from Spain/Portugal. At the beginning of the 17th century the Italian congregations in Istanbul were mentioned separately from the Sephardic, Ashkenazi, Hungarian, and Romaniote congregations. This means that we have to be careful when we define Italian Jews. When Italian Jews arrived in the Netherlands in the 17th and 18th centuries, they joined the Portuguese Jewish community, probably because it was the richest community and therefore could offer more financial assistance if necessary. The Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam didn't consider Italian Jews to be Iberian.

### Questionable Sephardic Surnames

- Algazi: not Sephardic.

- Bondy: According to the *Dictionary of American Family Names*, "the surname Bondy was borne by a family of Sephardic origin that settled in Prague." What definition did the dictionary use to conclude that the family originated in Iberia? According to <https://www.houseofnames.com/bondy-family-crest/Italian>, the surname Bondy was first found in Sardinia. It comes from the word *biondo*, Italian for blond. Is the Bondy family Sephardic or Italian?

- Dershowitz: “autosomally” related to Jessica Alba, Mexican-American actress. Is Alba Jewish? How does Dershowitz become a Sephardic Jew this way?

- Elion (עליאן, עליין): is just a Hebrew surname. In Amsterdam, the name Elion appears in 1762 in the burial books of Zeeburg, the Ashkenazi cemetery (poor people and children) of Amsterdam. The fact that such a family lived in Thessaloniki is not proof that they were Sephardic Jews. For example, around 1500, Thessaloniki had an Ashkenazi congregation of 68 households.<sup>3</sup>

- Maimon, Maiman, Meiman: “presumably authentic descendants of Sephardic Maimons.” Members of the Maimon family lived in Thessaloniki. Maimon is not specifically Sephardic; it can also be Ashkenazi.

- Marcus: patronymic, can be anything.

- Spanierman, Spanier, Sfar: The surnames may have an “obvious meaning”, as Brook writes, but they do not necessarily mean that the persons came from Spain. Dietz warned against assuming that such a name means that the person originated from that place.<sup>4</sup> The person may have had trade relations with the country in question.<sup>5</sup> Almost all Iberian Jews had (double) surnames. Why would a Sephardic Jew in Eastern Europe adopt an Ashkenazi surname such as Spanierman or Wlochowicz?

- In the first half of 19th-century Latvia, there was a large family named Sur(i)namer. Their surname was derived from a wealthy granduncle who a century earlier had moved to Suriname.<sup>6</sup>

- Askenazy, Biterman, Cymet, Kurzweil, Berman: all Ashkenazi surnames. How reliable is the “oral tradition” when it comes to differentiating between Sephardic background from Italy or Iberia, or to determine if the person is Sephardic at all? In Amsterdam, there is an Ashkenazi family named Kokernoot (coconut). Oral tradition gave them Sephardic roots because their grandfather always had a Portuguese flag hanging over a chest and the coconut is a tropical fruit.

### **Jews from Turkey**

- Czelebi, Diniz, Sydis (Sidi is found as well), and Passis (Passi is found as well).

- Wolinsky: “partial ancestry from Turkish Jews.”

How does the author know that they were Sephardic Jews? Why not Romaniote, Italian, or Ashkenazi? “Well into the seventeenth century” the largest Jewish group in Istanbul consisted of Romaniotes.<sup>7</sup>

In 2017, one of us wrote a comment<sup>8</sup> on an article by Behar *et al.*, who stated that Turkish Jews are the continuation of

Sephardic Jewry.<sup>9</sup> Historical research showed that this is not the case. The authors mention the heterogeneous genetic composition of Sephardic Jews, because Sephardic Jews in Turkey show a high overall mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) diversity. However, this may have nothing to do with the composition of mtDNA of Sephardic Jews, but rather the fact that the Turkish Jewish community is composed of Ashkenazi, Karaite, Italian, Sephardic, and Romaniote Jews. So, how do we know if a specific mtDNA belongs to a Sephardic Jewish line? “[A]t the turn of the seventeenth century, the Sephardic congregations accounted for . . . less than 29 percent of all Jewish households [in Istanbul].”<sup>10</sup> In an earlier publication, Behar *et al.* stated that the subclade HV0 (mtDNA) was found among Turkish Jews. It was defined as a Sephardic subclade because a few Jews from Belmonte, Portugal also had this subclade.<sup>11</sup> However, this mtDNA was not common among today’s Portuguese Jews.<sup>12</sup> In addition, HV0 was also common among Macedonians, who were once part of the Ottoman Empire. For a more extensive discussion of the assumption that Turkish Jews are Sephardic, see van Straten. Geneticists who deal with Ashkenazi or Sephardic genetics should be more knowledgeable about Jewish history.

DNA results from commercial firms are not always a guarantee of reliability. We know of a family whose family tree was traced back all the way to archfather Abraham. We don’t know if the person who obtained this beautiful family tree had to pay for it. The tree started out with Levites, passed along famous rabbis (who weren’t Levites!), then through kings, and so on until good old Abraham himself. The use of a typical DNA haplotype for Levites that belongs to the R1a group is very impressive. But did it ever occur to today’s Ashkenazi Levites that the haplotype they have, and which may be the most common among Ashkenazi Levites in Europe, may just be the result of the very few people who came to Europe, called themselves Levites, and multiplied there? How do we know if this one haplotype belonged to a Levite in the land of Israel, not to mention Abraham himself, to whom the firm led us? If the company that takes us back to Abraham uses such a haplotype, how is it possible that Abraham’s descendants belonged to at least five haplogroups that were part of the ancestral gene pool (E, G, J, Q, and R)?<sup>13</sup> If we all trace our ancestry to Abraham, all Jews should be in one haplogroup, but that cannot be the case if all this happened for the last 3,000 years or so. Mutations occur, yes, but not to these completely different haplogroups, at least not during this last short period.

Taking another look at the abovementioned “Sephardic Jews”, it appears that from the 32 names characterized by

Brook as Sephardic, only five are clearly Sephardic—16 percent. To have a far-removed Sephardic member of the family doesn't mean that the family is Sephardic.

It is not a good habit to write in an article that people are "presumably" Sephardic without thorough genealogical evidence. Mentioning Beider's "dozens of Turkish-Jewish families" is not of much help, because it gives the impression that any Jew from Turkey is a Sephardic Jew. Czelebi is a Turkish surname. What makes his family Sephardic?

For some people, it is quite important to know if they are of Ashkenazi or Sephardic descent. Therefore, when the presence of Sephardic Jews in Eastern Europe, or any place for that matter, is discussed, solid evidence should be provided, especially because the word "Sephardic" is also used for Jews of other descent (Turkish, Bulgarian, Moroccan).<sup>14</sup>

To conclude, genealogical research is necessary. The ancestral line has to be followed until one finds the origins of the oldest ancestor documented on paper. The local situation, whether in Spain/Portugal, Eastern Europe, or Turkey, is of the greatest importance. Without knowledge of the local situation and language it is impossible to determine the origins of a surname.

Genealogy is not an exercise in wishful thinking. It should be carried out in a careful way. It is questionable whether firms that make money on this should be trusted *a priori*.

### Endnotes

1. Kevin A. Brook, "Sephardic Jews in Galitzian Poland and Environs", *Shem Tov* 31 (3), March 2015, pages 13–15.

2. Doron M. Behar, Ene Metspalu, Toomas Kivisild, Saharon Rosset, Shay Tzur, Yarin Hadid, Guennady Yudkovsky, Dror Rosengarten, Luisa Pereira, Antonio Amorim, Ildus Kutuev, David Gurwitz, Batsheva Bonne-Tamir, Richard Villems, and Karl Skorecki, "Counting the Founders: The Matrilineal Genetic Ancestry of the Jewish Diaspora", *PLoS One* 3, 30 April 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0002062>.

3. Avigdor Levy (editor), *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton, New Jersey: Darwin Press, 1994, page 6.

4. Dr. Alexander Dietz, *Stammbuch der Frankfurter Juden*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag von J. St. Goar, 1907, page 8.

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7. Levy, page 61.

8. Jits van Straten, "Are Turkish Jews Sephardim?", comment on Behar *et al.*, "Counting the Founders: The Matrilineal Genetic Ancestry of the Jewish Diaspora", 19 September 2017.

9. Doron M. Behar, Lauri Saag, Monika Karmin, Meir G. Gover, Jeffrey D. Wexler, Luisa Fernanda Sanchez, Elliott Greenspan, Alena Kushniarevich, Oleg Davydenko, Hovhannes Sahakyan, Levon Yepiskoposyan, Alessio Boattini, Stefania Sarno, Luca Pagani, Shai Carmi, Shay Tzur, Ene Metspalu, Concetta Bormans, Karl Skorecki, Mait Metspalu, Siiri Roots, and Richard Villems, "The Genetic Variation in the R1a Clade among the Ashkenazi Levites' Y Chromosome", *Scientific Reports* 7, 2 November 2017, article 14969.

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11. Doron M. Behar *et al.*, 2008.

12. Inês Nogueiro, João Teixeira, António Amorim, Leonor Gusmão, and Luis Alvarez, "Echoes from Sepharad: Signatures on the Maternal Gene Pool of Crypto-Jewish Descendants," *European Journal of Human Genetics* 23 (5), July 2014, pages 1–7.

13. Harry Ostrer and Karl Skorecki, "The Population Genetics of the Jewish People", *Human Genetics* 132 (2), February 2013, pages 119–127.

14. Doron M. Behar *et al.*, 2008.



## 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>
Ajzenberg	Radom and Zamlynie, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Ajzman	Glowaczów and Wierchowiny, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Anklowicz	Gniewosów, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Borensztajn	Kadlubaska Wola and Przytyk, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Brooks	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Dvorah Lewis
Bross	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Dvorah Lewis
Cohen	Los Angeles, California	Arnold Friedman
Cohen	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Dvorah Lewis
Cukierman	Przytyk, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Eichel	Rohatyn, Ukraine	Nancy Siegel
Erlin/Irlin	Bykhov, Belarus	Nancy Siegel

Continued on page 18

## SFBAJGS Activities with Other Local Groups

Janice M. Sellers, SFBAJGS Publicity Director, and Jeff Lewy, SFBAJGS Treasurer

Your society believes strongly in public outreach. We attend events held by other groups in the San Francisco Bay area to raise awareness of Jewish genealogy and our role in assisting people who are learning how to research their Jewish ancestry. This outreach directly supports the objectives of the society:

- encourage Jewish genealogical and family historical research
- promote and assist in the development and preservation of, and access to, Jewish genealogical records and resource material
- instruct our members and the general public in genealogical research techniques and inform them about the availability of research materials
- foster the careful documentation of family histories
- encourage and assist in the study of Jewish history, geography, and culture
- remember and research Jewish communities, existing and destroyed

We attend as many local events as we can. We find people who have not heard of SFBAJGS, and every time that happens, it underscores the importance of our presence at events like these.

So far in 2019 we have participated in two events. It was our eighth year at **San Francisco History Days**, <http://www.sfhistorydays.org/> (including the prior version known as San Francisco History Expo). This is a free two-day event at the Old Mint in San Francisco that brings the public together with historians, archivists, genealogists, archaeologists, researchers, educators, and enthusiasts interested in learning about and sharing the history of San Francisco. About 7,000 people attended this year.

Genealogy was not represented at the first History Expo event. SFBAJGS President Jeremy Frankel pointed out to the organizers that there is no history without family history, and several local genealogy groups have been included every year since.

Our second outreach event this year was **The Art of Aging Gracefully Resource Fair** (<https://www.jccsf.org/adult/older-adults/wellness-fairs-forums/the-art-of-aging-gracefully/>), held at the Jewish Community Center in San Francisco. The theme was “Stay Vital, Healthy, and Fit”, and we described how to research your family history, as we absolutely believe that this activity can help keep you mentally healthy and fit!



*Top: SFBAJGS member Dee Seligman speaking with a visitor at San Francisco History Days*

*Bottom: SFBAJGS president Jeremy Frankel and board member Pierre Hahn at The Art of Aging Gracefully*

We enjoy having volunteers at our booths for these events. A volunteer shift is usually two to four hours, where you can talk to people about one of your favorite things, genealogy! You are welcome to explore the event the rest of the time you're there. Sometimes a request for volunteers is included in our e-mail announcements. If this might interest you, keep an eye out for those announcements. Send a message to [publicity@sfbajgs.org](mailto:publicity@sfbajgs.org) if you would be willing to have us ask you in advance about your availability when something is being planned.

## SFBAJGS Activity Report for 2018

Jeff Lewy, SFBAJGS Treasurer

SFBAJGS enjoyed another productive and educational year in 2018, our 38th year. We held fifteen meetings presenting personal family histories and describing a range of genealogical sources and research techniques. We also cosponsored three additional presentations in the Bay Area and participated in San Francisco History Days, a jamboree of many local groups interested in local history.

We are among the six largest societies in IAJGS and one of the most active in supporting its goals of educating members and others on finding and using the widest variety of techniques and sources for their genealogical research.

Although our name says we are the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society, the “San Francisco Bay Area” part of our name merely means that we reside here. Our members and our interests are worldwide, as are our ancestors and living relatives. We can be as helpful to our members with ancestors in Russia, Bohemia, Galicia, and South Africa as to those whose families have been in the Bay Area for four generations or more. All of our families, like yours, originally came from “someplace else”, and we have knowledge of and connections to many of those places.

Several members attended the 38th annual conference of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), held for the first time in Warsaw, Poland in August 2018. One of our members was the cochair of the conference, and two society members made presentations.

Our more than 225 members are generous in paying dues and making additional donations to the Society, giving us the opportunity to support our objectives:

- Support and improve online sharing of data useful to researchers everywhere doing Jewish genealogy
- Make available online formerly closed or unavailable records that support Jewish genealogical research
- Support efforts to research and remember existing and vanished Jewish communities

We support activities in the local area that are consistent with these objectives. We have ongoing volunteer projects to transcribe data from local cemeteries and other sources of birth, marriage, and death records and make those data available online for researchers everywhere.

Other work to fulfill these objectives takes place wherever Jewish communities and records are located, often far from us. Therefore, we continue our practice of making donations to other organizations that are working in those communities and archives. We support projects based on their value to the broadest possible audience of researchers, the need to preserve and protect fragile sites, and the need to record data where the repositories and archives are newly open or at risk of access restrictions.

This year, we donated \$4,600 to ten organizations for their activities. We include the purpose of our donations and the URL's of these organizations so that you can learn more about their activities if you wish.

### Local

- Jewish Community Library in San Francisco: maintain and expand the very strong collection of materials related to Jewish genealogy and history in the San Francisco Bay Area. <http://www.jewishlearningworks.org/jewish-community-library/>
- Commission for the Preservation of Pioneer Jewish Cemeteries and Landmarks in the West: protect and maintain the seven Gold Rush–era Jewish cemeteries in the Sierra foothills. <http://www.pioneerjewishcemeteries.org/>
- Oakland FamilySearch Library: expand its collection of materials for Jewish research and support our Oakland meeting location. [https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Oakland\\_California\\_FamilySearch\\_Library/](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Oakland_California_FamilySearch_Library/)

### National and International

- Reclaim the Records: A nonprofit organization set up just a couple of years ago that identifies important genealogical record sets that ought to be in the public domain but which are restricted by government archives, agencies, and libraries. Freedom of Information and Open Data requests or lawsuits are filed to force the release of that public data back to the public. Reclaim the Records then digitizes everything it receives and puts it all online for free at the Internet Archive. It has already opened a variety of records in New York City, New York State, New Jersey, Washington State, Missouri, and Wyoming. Reclaim the Records is pursuing efforts in many states where officials have not previously allowed public access (see <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/to-do/>). <http://www.reclaimtherecords.org/>

- International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) Stern Fund: encourage nonprofit institutions and organizations, Jewish or not, to pursue projects, activities, and acquisitions that provide new or enhanced resources to benefit Jewish genealogists. <http://www.iajgs.org/>

- Jewish Records Indexing – Poland: support ongoing digitization and indexing of Jewish records, primarily from Polish archives, but also from Ukraine and other locations where Polish records were formerly recorded. <http://jri-poland.org/>

- Kirkuty – Jewish Cemeteries in Poland: support photography of Jewish cemeteries in Poland, both extant and desecrated, drawing attention to the remaining signs of the prewar presence of the Polish Jewish community. <http://kirkuty.xip.pl/indexang.htm>

- JewishGen: to their General Fund, supporting the primary online site of Jewish genealogical records and instruction for researchers. <http://www.jewishgen.org/>

- Ukraine SIG at JewishGen: support digitization and placement online of records from Ukrainian national archives. <https://www.jewishgen.org/Ukraine/>

- Ukraine Scanner Project: A GoFundMe project to pay for scanners to be used at regional archives in Ukraine to accelerate the digitization and placement online of records recently made available to the public for the first time. <https://www.gofundme.com/scanners-for-the-ukrainian-archives>

### Transcriptions

We continue to transcribe more than 40,000 burial records from Sinai Memorial Chapel in San Francisco dating back to the early 1920's, when Sinai Memorial was established. As a funeral home, Sinai Memorial arranges for burials at cemeteries throughout the Bay Area and in other cities in the U.S. and overseas.

We have nearly completed the transcription of about 5,000 burial records from the former Beth Israel Synagogue

in San Francisco, covering the years 1892 through 1929. These burials took place at Salem Cemetery in Colma. The records for the period before April 1906 provide a substitute for some of the death records destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire.

### Financial Results for 2018

Revenues for 2018 were just over \$8,900, slightly more than in past years, with about \$5,200 in dues from 229 members, about \$3,400 in donations, and about \$300 in interest and other income. Thank you for your membership dues and donations, which support our activities and those of other groups doing work of great value to you, our members, and to the worldwide Jewish genealogical community.

Expenses totaled about \$9,600, generating a loss of about \$700. This loss was incurred deliberately to make use of our past surpluses and was primarily a result of the \$4,600 in contributions to other groups. Those contributions are described above. Other major categories of expenses were costs of mailing for membership communications and renewals, \$1,600; meetings and publicity, \$1,100; and Web site maintenance and management, \$700. All other expenses, including insurance and other administrative expenses, totaled about \$1,600.

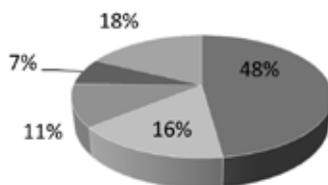
Below are simple pie charts showing the primary categories of revenue and expenses.

We want to thank you for your membership, your donations, and your interest in Jewish genealogy and family history. Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions to improve our performance and activities, and how we can most effectively help you with your research. Also let us know if there are any projects or activities you would like to see us undertake or support. We look forward to an enlightening and rewarding year in 2019.



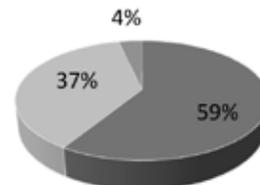
### SFBAJGS Expense - 2018

- Grants to others
- Meetings & publicity
- Administration & other
- Membership
- Website management



### SFBAJGS Revenue - 2018

- Dues
- Donations
- Interest income & other revenue



## 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>
Frazensky	Marijampole, Lithuania; England	Lindsay Sweetnam
Frazier	England	Lindsay Sweetnam
Freedman	Leuben, Latvia	Ellyn Freed
Friedman	Radom, Poland; California; Florida; Pennsylvania; Virginia	Arnold Friedman
Frydman	Kazanów, Przytyk, Radom, and nine more towns in Poland	Arnold Friedman
Garfinkel	London, England; Australia	Barbara Thurston
Glanzberg	Rohatyn, Ukraine	Nancy Siegel
Goldberg	Kazanów and Radom, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Goldfarb	Zwolen, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Goldmann	Los Angeles, California	Arnold Friedman
Hollander	Austria; Poland	Barbara Thurston
Ickow	Kazanów and Zwolen, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Jakubowna	Warka, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Kahn/Kohn	Leuben, Latvia	Ellyn Freed
Kaplon	Kazanów, Mecziszów, and Zwolen, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Karpenkop	Cecylówka, Glowaczów, and Warka, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Krost	Kedainiai, Lithuania	Lindsay Sweetnam
Laja	Zwolen, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Langfus	Katowice, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Lederman	Katowice, Radom, and Zwolen, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Lejubsiewicz	Kazanów, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Lejzorow	Branków, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Lewis	Missouri	Dvorah Lewis
Lichtgarn	Rohatyn, Ukraine	Nancy Siegel
Lisobitsky	Peteczawigec, Deuble, Mengelish, and Peltzanitz, Poland	Nancy Siegel
Lyons	London, England	Barbara Thurston
Matzkin	Bykhov, Belarus	Nancy Siegel
Nathan	London, England	Barbara Thurston
Nutkowicz	Blotnica, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Perelman	Radom, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Perelmutter	Radom and Zwolen, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Plotkin	Bykhov, Belarus	Nancy Siegel
Pomaranec	Branków, Kadlubaska Wola, and Warka, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Remez/Remis	Bykhov and Mogilev, Belarus	Nancy Siegel
Rozensztein	Radom, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Saffier	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Dvorah Lewis
Schwartz	Bykhov, Belarus	Nancy Siegel
Shulman	Rohatyn, Ukraine	Nancy Siegel
Sznajder	Przytyk and Radom, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Szpiigelman	Kadlubaska Wola, Kazanów, and Zwolen, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Szwarcburd	Kadlubaska Wola and Kazanów, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Tenenbaum	Kazanów and Radom, Poland	Arnold Friedman
Weiss	Rohatyn, Ukraine	Nancy Siegel
Zurkowicz	Mecziszów and Zwolen, Poland	Arnold Friedman

## A Formidable Reference Book

Pierre Hahn

Pierre is a longtime SFBAJGS board member, co-moderator of the JewishGen French SIG e-mail list, and collator of the collection of 22,000 Jewish marriages in Alsace, from 1792–1899, that is now available on JewishGen.

Last year (on 12 April 2018) I attended the monthly lecture of the Cercle de la Généalogie Juive (<https://www.genealoj.org/>). The subject was a book about one of the cemeteries in the town of Sierck-les-Bains (Moselle). I was interested, in that the maternal side of my family had been in that region in the mid-1800's.

Sierck is a small town situated some 5 km south of the French-Luxembourg-German border on the river Moselle. Jewish activity as early as 1680 has been found in notarial acts. The town has three Jewish cemeteries, used in progressive order: #1 starting in 1690, #2 from 1819–1862, and #3 from 1861–today. Very little remains of #1; the focus of the book and lecture was #2.

In particular, an attendee at the lecture (also a cousin, and one of the book authors) greeted me and said I would not



believe what I would see and hear. In short, our fourth-great-grandfather's tombstone was located face down and partially buried. The headstone had been unburied, cleaned, and returned to its proper vertical position.

The recently published book (with six co-authors) is *L'ancien cimetière israélite de Sierck-les-Bains (Moselle) 1819–1862*, by B. Bloch, A. David, G. Lévy, A. Malthête, P.-A. Meyer, and J.-J. Weimerskirch, published by Cercle de Généalogie Juive (2018), ISBN 978-2-91227856-6-4, 230 pages, A4 format. The

book has a historical background of Sierck and includes color photographs of the headstones, translations of the Hebrew inscriptions, and a short genealogical note on each of the 220 headstones that were recovered, including my fourth-great-grandfather's. The only word I can come up with is FORMIDABLE.



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## Upcoming SFBAJGS Events

**Monday, 24 June, Palo Alto:** *Bring Your Own Brick Wall.* The first time on the Peninsula for the session where we brainstorm ideas that might help you advance your research and knock down those brick walls.

**Sunday, 14 July, Oakland:** *Jewish Records Indexing Day.* Pay it forward, fellow genealogists! Help us make more records accessible to genealogists around the world! There will be food and prizes for volunteers!

**Monday, 19 August, Palo Alto:** *Finding Presidents and Their Ancestors in the Strangest Places.* Steve Morse will discuss the problems and some solutions in searching census and ship records, using this country's presidents as examples.

**Sunday, 15 September, Oakland:** *Using Cluster Research to Understand Your Ancestors: When a Tree Isn't Enough.* Rescheduled from last year (when the fires forced a cancellation), Anne Gillespie Mitchell will show how a person's FAN Club (friends, associates, and neighbors) can help break down brick walls.

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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