



# זכרונות *ZichronNote*

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

Volume XXXIX, Number 3

August 2019

### *The American Jewish Year Book*

**Revisiting and revising an article about an extremely useful resource. See page 5.**

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*Brooke Schreier Ganz of Reclaim the Records at the 2019 IAJGS Conference in Cleveland. Photo courtesy of Jeremy Frankel.*

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**President's Message**  
**Of Conferences and Cousins**

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

In this issue you will read the comments from other society members about their experiences at this year's International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, which was held in Cleveland, Ohio. It was officially revealed that next year's conference will be held in San Diego.

I'm always being asked whether it's worth attending a genealogical conference, especially given the combined cost of the flight, hotel, conference fee, food, and anything else you wish to splurge on. (Disclaimer #1: I just totaled it up, and this year's conference cost me about \$1,800.) But for San Diego, the flight portion will be cheaper, or you might want to drive and make a longer vacation out of it by being down there.

Earlier this summer I sat in at the board meeting of our neighbor society, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Sacramento. (Disclaimer #2: My wife, Victoria Fisch, is the president.)

During the meeting the subject of the Cleveland conference came up. It's a very small society, with fewer than fifty members. In fact, only one society member, Teven Laxer, attended, and that was only because he was a speaker. (Disclaimer #3: Teven is a personal friend of mine and we roomed together at the conference.) A choir of voices was raised in unison asking whether it would be worth attending San Diego next year.

Let's be perfectly clear, for many things in life, there is no substitute for personal experience. If you've never attended a genealogy conference before then I have only one thing to say, one word to say—go!

Yes, it can be exhausting. Yes, your normal dietary habits may well take a back seat for a week. Yes, you might even need a vacation afterward. But stacked against that are the benefits of spending a week with 800+ "cousins" and what you could learn from the smorgasbord of 250+ lectures.

Other than it possibly being held again in Los Angeles (which last hosted a conference in 2010), San Diego is probably as close a conference site as ever going to get to the Bay Area for a number of years.

If you've never "dipped your toes" into a Jewish genealogy conference, then as a primer, you can go to the IAJGS 2019 Program and Schedule page ([https://www.iajgs2019.org/program\\_schedule.cfm](https://www.iajgs2019.org/program_schedule.cfm)), where you can still download the PDF handouts of any lecture you might be interested in and get a sense of what it was like.

*Continued on page 18*

## Society News

### New Members

Christine Czarnecki ..... crczarnecki@gmail.com  
Gail Dolson ..... 39nurse@gmail.com  
Suzanne Kelting Myers ..... suzmyers59@gmail.com

### Bounced E-mails

Stan Greenberg ..... haskalah2@comcast.net  
Sydney Kapchan ..... russeki@gmail.com  
AGJUVE ..... JGSVenezuela@bellsouth.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).

### This Is an Election Year!

The four current officers of the society have stated that they are willing to serve another two-year term. President Jeremy Frankel, Vice President Preeva Tramiel, Treasurer Jeff Lewy, and Secretary Shellie Wiener appear on the ballots that will be sent to current members. Members also may vote for write-in candidates if desired. Ballots must be returned by **15 January 2020** to be valid. If you have questions or comments about the election, contact Barbara Stack, Elections Coordinator, at [elections@sfbajgs.org](mailto:elections@sfbajgs.org).

### Members in the News

**Phyllis Gold Berenson** has assumed the positions of Director of Ukraine Research and Ukraine SIG Coordinator for JewishGen.org.

*Family Tree Magazine* published its 2019 list of 101 Best Genealogy Websites, available at <https://www.familytreemagazine.com/best-genealogy-websites/>. Reclaim the Records, the brainchild of **Brooke Schreier Ganz**, appears on page 5 of the listings. **Steve Morse's** One-Step Website, which consistently is named to the list, also is on page 5.

### Research Scope of SFBAJGS

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

### Your Story Belongs in *ZichronNote*

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

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

### Meeting Times and Locations

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

**San Francisco:** Sunday. Doors open 1:00 p.m. Program begins at 1:30 p.m.  
**NEW LOCATION:** San Francisco Public Library, Main Branch, 100 Larkin Street  
Easily reachable by BART: across the street from Civic Center BART station.

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

**Palo Alto:** Monday. Doors open 7:00 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m.  
Congregation Etz Chayim, 4161 Alma Street

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

## Genealogy Calendar of Events

### Local and Regional

Thursday, 21 November 2019. Dave McCready, "Census 101: An Introduction to Searching the US Federal and State Censuses." Free but you must register. Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. Santa Clara City Library, Redwood Room, 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara. <http://www.sccghs.org/>

Saturday, 23 November 2019. Sharon Hoyt, CG, "Brick Wall Busters: Techniques for Genealogical Success." San Mateo County Genealogical Society. Grace Lutheran Church, 2825 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo. <http://www.smcgs.org/>

Sunday, 24 November 2019. Alti Rodal, "A Journey through the Ukrainian-Jewish Encounter." Jewish Community Library, 1835 Ellis Street, San Francisco. <http://www.jewishlearningworks.org/library-events>

Monday, 25 November 2019. Elihu Smith, "Jewish Immigration from Russia, Part 2." Oakmont Genealogy Club. Oakmont West Recreation Center, Santa Rosa. <https://sites.google.com/site/oakmontgenealogyclub/>

Monday, 9 December 2019. Madeline Yanov, "But He Was Just a Farmer!: How to Find and Add Context to the Story of Your Farmer Ancestor." Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society. Congregation Beth Emek, 3400 Nevada Court, Pleasanton. <http://www.l-ags.org/>

Sunday, 15 December 2019. Valerie Jordan, "Converso Conference in New Mexico." Jewish Genealogical Society of Sacramento. Albert Einstein Residence Center, 1935 Wright Street, Sacramento. <https://www.jewishgen.org/jgs-sacramento/>

Tuesday, 7 January 2020. Gail Burk, "Writing about Relatives." Genealogical Society of Santa Cruz County. Santa Cruz Public Library, Downtown Branch, 224 Church Street, Santa Cruz. <http://scgensoc.org/>

Friday, 17 January 2020. James Koenig, "Using Diminutive Names to Solve Genealogical Puzzles." Mt. Diablo Genealogical Society. Rossmore Creekside Clubhouse, 1010 Stanley Dollar Drive, Walnut Creek. <https://mdgs.webs.com/>

Saturday, 18 January 2020. Sue Severson, "Getting Started with DNA and Using It for Brick Walls." California Genealogical Society. Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Avenue, Oakland. <https://www.californiaancestors.org/>

### State and National

Wednesday–Saturday, 26–29 February 2020. RootsTech. Salt Lake City, Utah. <http://www.rootstech.org/>

Wednesday–Saturday, 20–23 May 2020. NGS Family History Conference, "Echoes of Our Ancestors." Salt Lake City, Utah. <https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org/>

Sunday–Friday, 9–14 August 2020. IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. San Diego, California. <http://www.iajgs2020.org/>

Wednesday–Saturday, 2–5 September 2020. FGS Annual Conference. Kansas City, Missouri. <https://fgs.org/conferences/>

### 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://mngs.org/eventListings.php?nm=38>

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



## The American Jewish Year Book As a Genealogical Resource

Judy Baston

An Oakland native, Judy Baston has worked as part-time volunteer staff at the Jewish Community Library in San Francisco for 27 years, coordinates its Genealogy Clinic, and is currently the Co-President of the Friends of the Jewish Community Library. In July 2015, she received the IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award at the organization's conference in Jerusalem. Judy serves on the Executive Committee and Board of both LitvakSIG and Jewish Records Indexing-Poland and moderates their discussion groups as well as that of BialyGen and the Lodz Area Research Group. She lives in San Francisco with her cat, Lida.

This article was first published in the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles' *Roots-Key* issue of Fall/Winter 2009 and was reprinted in *ZichronNote* Volume XXX, Number 2 (May 2010). The article has now been updated to reflect current electronic availability of the *American Jewish Year Book*.

Published yearly since 1899, the *American Jewish Year Book* (*AJYB*) is a valuable but frequently overlooked genealogical resource. Despite the name of this publication, it is a research aid not only for the United States but for Europe as well. Because the *AJYB* is digitized and searchable on the Internet, it has become a far more accessible resource for genealogical research.

The *American Jewish Year Book* was published for its first decade under the auspices of the Jewish Publication Society of America, based in Philadelphia. In 1908 the American Jewish Committee (AJC) took over the task of compiling the volume, and since 1994 AJC has been its sole publisher.

In the earlier decades of its publication, the *AJYB* volumes contained a significant number of directories, lists, and other material that includes names of individuals and towns, which would be considered of value to genealogical researchers.

But as the Jewish community began to grow throughout the United States, the lists that were possible to compile and include in the 1910's and 1920's would have been far too long for the volumes and far more difficult to compile. So in later decades, and in particular beginning after World War II, the *AJYB* contained fewer lists and more articles of historical and sociological analysis of Jewish demographics and trends in the United States and worldwide.

In the mid- to late 1990's, the Jewish genealogical community took some notice of the *AJYB*, and recognition of its potential use in genealogy was reflected in the occasional message on the JewishGen Discussion Group. At that time, a useful InfoFile on the subject was published on JewishGen. The InfoFile can be found at <http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/ajyb.htm>.

Since that InfoFile was created, AJC has enabled online access to the *AJYB* through PDF files of each volume. Later in this article, I will discuss those files and methods of finding information in them.

Below is a summary of some of the lists and features of the *AJYB* that I believe are the most useful for genealogical research—either directly, by providing names of family members, or indirectly, by giving information about and a sense of the Jewish community in a particular town at a particular time.

They include:

- Directories of local organizations (and national organizations that have local chapters)
- Obituaries and necrologies
- Lists of subscribers to the Jewish Publication Society
- International information and specifically a table of pogroms
- Lists of Jews who fought in certain wars
- Collections of biographical sketches of rabbis, cantors, "Jewish Communal Workers", and "Jews in the Professions"
- Occurrences in the Jewish community by year

### Directories of Local Organizations

Perhaps the most interesting features of the *AJYB* for both family and community historians are three long and comprehensive directories of local Jewish organizations and institutions throughout the United States. They were published in Volume 1 (1899–1900), Volume 9 (1907–1908), and Volume 20 (1919–1920).

In addition to *landsmanshaftn* (hometown associations), these local organization listings also include cemeteries, charities, educational societies, trade unions, and other types of organizations.

The list in Volume 1 can be found on pages 105–270. The list contains many established congregations and 294 *landsmanshaftn*. A list of the towns represented in the *landsmanshaftn* of these three directories was compiled by Ada Green of New York and may be found on the site of the Jewish Genealogical Society of New York at <https://>

jgsny.org/searchable-databases/indexes-to-jewish-organizations/american-jewish-year-book.

These “Directories of Local Organizations” are in alphabetical order by state and then by city or town within the state. They include the date of an organization’s establishment, names of officers, and mailing address.

Of course, the largest number of local organization listings is for New York City and other boroughs. If someone is interested in seeing where a *landsmanshaft*’s headquarters might have been located, or whether a granduncle was, in fact, an officer, these directories are very useful.

But what if your grandfather ended up in a town nowhere near New York, and you want to try to learn a little bit about what sort of Jewish community, Jewish institutions, and Jewish life would have existed for your relative at that time?

Looking at the beginning of the 1907 section for West Virginia, which had a total of 1,500 Jews at that time, provides an example of information contained in the *Year Book* about areas more sparsely populated with Jews. This section shows that there were congregations in Bluefield and Huntington; Charleston, with an estimated Jewish population of 190, had a Hebrew educational society, an Orthodox congregation, the Germania Club, the Phoenix Club, and the Spring Hill Cemetery. This listing also refers us to the section in the 1907 *Year Book* on national organizations for Charleston, West Virginia.

### Unraveling My Grandfather’s Mystery

My own first use of the *AJYB* in family history research came three decades ago, when I was trying to unravel some then newly discovered—and mysterious—information about my grandfather, Anchel Garfinkle, who had come to Oakland, California in 1911, a year after he had landed in the United States at the port of Galveston, Texas.

He was one of the 10,000 Russian and Polish Jews who were part of the Galveston Plan, the effort by Jacob Schiff and some other leaders of the Jewish community in the early years of the 20th century to disperse Eastern European

New York]

## LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Jews away from the crowded urban centers of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. These immigrants were not sent to California but to cities in the heartland: in Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Texas, and, in my grandfather’s case, as I found out form his passenger list, Minneapolis,

## NEW YORK CITY (continued)

## CONGREGATIONS (continued)

Ahawath Achim Anshe Lida, 109 Madison. Pres., D. Herman, 217 Madison.

\*Ahawath Achim Anshe Minsk, 98 Forsyth. Org. 1892. Pres., Moses Sigolowitz; Treas., H. Levine; Sec., N. Smith, 35 Essex. Members, 65; income, \$1000. Services: Sab. and holidays.

Ahawath Achim Anshe Oshmine, 68 E. Broadway. Org. 1888. Pres., Hyman Hurowitz, 150 E. Broadway; Treas., Joshua Liebman, 77 Madison; Sec., Abraham Sherira, 100 Henry. Members, 100; income, \$1200. Services: Daily, in Heb. School: Teachers, 1; pupils, 25.

\*Ahawath Achim Anshe Radomysl, 93 Attorney.

\*Ahawath Achim Anshe Rizda, 56 Orchard. Members, 85.

\*Ahawath Achim Anshe Tomashower u-Fietrikov, 177 E. Broadway.

Ahawath Achim Anshe Uda, 103 E. Broadway. Org. 1887. Rabbl. Rapport. Pres., M. Finkelstein; Treas., A. Slutskia; Sec., N. Smith, 35 Essex. Members, 90; income, \$1500. Services: Daily.

Ahawath Achim Brisk de-Lito, 32 Ludlow. Org. 1886. Pres., Feldman, 221 Henry; Treas., Goldstein, 158 Wooster; Sec., M. Metchik, 37 W. 114th. Members, 85. Services: Daily, in Heb.

\*Ahawath Achim Krasker, 306 Madison.

Ahawath Achim. Melawer Chevra. 232 Broome.

*Local organizations in New York City, from 1907 AJYB*

Minnesota. No one in our family had ever heard of the Minnesota piece of my grandfather’s history, and since Galveston had been an organized immigration plan, I thought perhaps the Minnesota destination might have been a sort of legal fiction that had no reality beyond the passenger list.

I first contacted the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, whose archivist referred me to the American Jewish Historical Society, which houses the collection from the Galveston Plan. In the files of correspondence with David Bresler of the Industrial Removal Office (IRO), AJHS archivists found a letter from my grandfather written in September 1910 in which he noted that “the winters in Minneapolis are very cold” and bemoaned that having been a wheat trader in Poland had not prepared him for a winter in Minnesota. My grandfather asked about Washington, D.C., where a first cousin was living, and then added, “I do not care to settle in a place which is already overcrowded with Jews.”

That line has always intrigued me. Clearly it reflected the aim of IRO and the Galveston Plan, and perhaps someone urged my grandfather to include that sentiment in the hope his letter would be met with greater favor in the IRO office. But I also remember that my grandfather was quite a loner, as well as a “freethinker” who regularly read the Yiddish paper. Could that sentiment have simply come from him?

The AJHS archivist found not only my grandfather’s letter (in the original Yiddish and an English translation) but also the reply from the IRO’s Bresler, translated from his original English into Yiddish for my grandfather to read. Bresler’s reply suggested that before taking any action, my grandfather speak with Joseph Schanfeld in Minneapolis. But who was Joseph Schanfeld? Since he may have been the one whose proverbial advice of “Go west,

## HIBBING (continued)

CHARITY  
Sisters of Peace. Org. Jan. 21, 1907. Pres., Mrs. Chap; Treas., Mrs. M. Rogalsky; Sec., Mrs. M. S. Greenblatt. Members, 25. Purpose: To collect funds for a synagogue.

## MINNEAPOLIS

Est. Jew. pop. 6000

## CONGREGATIONS

Adath Yeshurun, 9th St. and 12th Av. S. Re-org. 1906. Rabbi, M. Rivkin, 9th St. and 12th Av. S. Pres., Abr. Goldman, 927 14th Av. S.; Treas., J. Ravica, 109 Washington Av. S.; Sec., J. H. Schanfeld, Guaranty Bldg. Members, 50. Services: Daily, in Heb. School: Teachers, 5; pupils, 107.  
Agudas Achim, 1900 17th Av. Org. 1903. Rabbi, S. Josifovitz; Cantor, I. Segal; Pres., S. Selcer, 912 15th Av. S.; Treas., H. Harman; Sec., Jos. Silverman. Members, 55; income, \$800. Services: Daily, in Heb.

## Minneapolis listings in the 1907 AJYB

young man" led my grandfather to be the first from his family to settle in the San Francisco area—to be followed by all of his siblings and most of his first cousins—it was important for me to learn who this man was who possibly had had such an influence on the migration patterns of an entire family branch.

Checking under Minneapolis, Minnesota in the "Local Organizations" section in 1907, I discovered that Schanfeld had been at that time the secretary of Adath Jeshurun, the Russian and Romanian congregation on the south side of Minneapolis, near where my grandfather was living. Other resources helped me learn that Schanfeld, himself a Romanian immigrant, was an insurance agent who worked along with the B'nai B'rith to greet new immigrants in Minneapolis and help find them jobs.

In ensuing decades, he became very prominent in the Minneapolis Jewish community, but what I found in the *Year Book* was contemporaneous information about Schanfeld's place in the community close to the time when he would have interacted with my grandfather. While subsequent historians may write about an individual or community organization with the benefit of historical perspective, if one also wants a contemporaneous reflection, then the *Year Book* is by far the best place to find it.

### Finding Obituaries in the Year Book

Each edition of the *AJYB* carries death notices of recently deceased persons who may have been known in their Jewish communities. These can range from short listings under "Necrologies" in "Events by Country" in earlier editions to longer notices in later volumes under "Directories, Lists and Necrologies."

The American Jewish Committee compiled a "Cumulative Index of Obituaries" from volumes 51–96. Through the cooperative efforts of AJC and JewishGen, names of more than 3,000 Jews who died between 1948 and 1994 can now be searched by name in a database, and search results will list the *AJYB* volume number and page reference.

Not all *AJYB* obituary listings appear in the volume that covers the year of a person's death, so it is important to search this index on JewishGen for the years it covers. The obituary index is available at <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/USA/ajybweb.htm>.

In late 2008, a woman came into the Jewish Community Library in San Francisco, where I work part-time, and asked whether we had the obituary of her former rabbi in Boston, Joshua Liebman, who had died—she thought—in 1947. We have the full run of the *AJYB* at the library, so I started by pulling 1947 and 1948 off the shelves, but I found nothing in either volume for Rabbi Liebman.

I then checked the *AJYB* Obituary Index database on JewishGen and found that Rabbi Liebman had died in 1948, but his obituary was in the 1951 *Year Book* volume. A number of listings in that search result show obits published a year or two after a person died.

The patron was thrilled to see the obit for her former rabbi, which contained a significant amount of information about his background and education.

**LIBEMAN, JOSHUA LOTH**, rabbi, author, teacher, radio preacher, Zionist; b. Hamilton, Ohio, April 7, 1907; A. B. Univ. of Cincinnati 1926 (tutor in German dept. 1925-26, Taft Teaching Fellow in philosophy and lecturer in Greek philosophy 1926-29); student at Hebrew Univ. in Jerusalem, Harvard Univ., and Columbia Univ. 1928-30; ord. Hebrew Union Coll. 1930 (awarded prize for highest academic honors), D. H. L. 1939, hon. D. D. 1948; rabbi KAM Temple, Chicago, Ill., 1934-39; rabbi Temple Israel, Boston, Mass., 1939—; mem. exec. bd. Central Conf. of Am. Rabbis 1939-41; radio preacher on *The*

### Subscribers to the Jewish Publication Society

Since the *AJYB* was founded by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), lists of more than 50 pages in each of the volumes through 1941 contain names of subscribers to JPS. The lists are organized alphabetically by state and alphabetically by town within each state.

It is interesting to see that the lists from many towns grow numerically, and also to see that as the decades pass, the surnames of subscribers in many towns reflect the growing Jewish population of immigrants from Eastern Europe. The JPS reports continued after 1941, but subsequent reports did not include the names of subscribers.

#### Oakland

Abrahamson, Henry, 465 13th  
 Abrahamson, Hugo, 576 Albion  
 Coffee, Mrs. M. H., 763 14th  
 Frank, Miss Esther, 81 Pearl  
 Jonas, Abraham, 1051 Broadway  
 Jones, Mrs. M., 638 12th  
 Oakland Lodge No. 252, I. O. B. B.,  
 214 San Pablo Av.  
 Samuels, Hon. George, 605 Union  
 Sav. Bank Bldg.  
 Samuels, S., 1269 West

A TABLE OF POGROMS FROM 1903 TO 1906 - Continued

No.	Date	Town	Gubernia	Population	Jewish Population	Damage	General Remarks
36	1904 Nov. 4	Dikovka	Kherson			All the Jewish shops looted and demolished	
37	Nov. 4	Ovidiopol	Kherson	5,296	360	11 Jews killed; 212 wounded; all Jewish houses without exception looted and then burnt	
38 39	Nov. 6 Nov. 16	Samara Rakisbek	Samara Kovno	91,672		4 Jews wounded seriously; many shops looted	
40	Nov. 16	Slonim	Grodno	15,893	10,588	Many Jews killed and wounded; many shops looted	The outrages committed by reservists; the Jews defend themselves

List of pogroms from the 1907 AJYB

### International Information

Even though the publication is titled the *AMERICAN Jewish Year Book*, significant information from outside the United States is in these volumes. Of special interest is the long selection in Volume 8 (1906–1907), “From Kishnieff to Bialystok—A Table of Pogroms from 1903–1906.” The table includes date, town, gubernia, town population, Jewish population, damage done in the pogrom, and general remarks for 254 separate incidents. The table is in chronological order, followed by an alphabetical list of towns.

Perusing the right side of the table, which shows the damage and general remarks, we can see that in some towns Jews were killed and wounded, and it is noted repeatedly that the pogroms were caused by military reservists. This table of course includes details of well known pogroms such as Kishinev and Bialystok, but it also includes details from many smaller towns of incidents that are far less known, and could provide clues for researchers interested in the histories of their ancestral communities.

Other early international features of interest include, on pages 19–39 of Volume 16 (1914–1915), an article, “The Beilis Affair”, which includes several appendices of protests in various countries with names and lists of signatories. On pages 257–272 of Volume 17 (1915–1916), the section “European War—General Events Affecting Jews; Russia” includes information on a number of specific towns and individuals.

### Jews in the Spanish-American War

The “Preliminary List of Jewish Soldiers and Sailors Who Served in the Spanish-American War”, in Volume 2 (1900–1901), is arranged by location and unit and includes a soldier’s rank or role and often the town from which he came. The list includes some comments—for example, that

a group of soldiers is listed as having attended Yom Kippur services in the Philippines even though they weren’t on the California roster.

### Biographies of Rabbis and Other Jewish Communal Leaders

If someone in your family was a rabbi a century ago, the “Biographical Sketches of Rabbis and Cantors” in Volume 5 (1903–1904) give significant information, including place and date of birth, where he studied, who conferred rabbinical *smicha*, father’s name, and sometimes even mother’s maiden name. There are also biographical sketches of “Jewish Communal Workers in the United States” and of “Jews Prominent in the Professions in the US.”

### Using the “Yearly Events” Section

Up to now this article has focused on lists of individual names or town names, which on the face of it might seem the most genealogically relevant. But a note from my Lida District *landsman* Alan Rems showed that a diligent researcher can make excellent use of the section in every *AJYB* that reviews the events of the previous year in Jewish communities around the world. Alan details a case study on how this section can provide key clues to help solve a family mystery.

Alan writes, “My renewed knowledge of Yiddish was fully put to the test in following the life and career of Rabbi Yitzchak Ze’ev, in America known as Rabbi Isaac. Irving Wendrovsky shared with me his substantial cache of Rabbi Isaac’s papers. One of the most intriguing items was a group photograph showing Isaac and other rabbis, inscribed ‘Spring, Mass 1905.’

“Wondering what was the occasion, I finally thought of consulting the *American Jewish Year Book*, an annual compendium of facts relevant to the Jewish community

that began publishing in the first years of the 20th century. In the volume covering the events of 1905, reference was made to a convention of the American orthodox rabbinate in Springfield with the specific dates.

“At the Library of Congress, I consulted the Tageblat newspaper for those dates. In addition to a report of the proceedings that dealt with a very real religious crisis, I found a detailed account of how the rabbis gathered in the garden for the group photograph that had so intrigued me.”

This shows that sometimes the *AJYB* provides but part of the picture, but can act as a crucial map to finding additional information.

### **Finding the American Jewish Year Book**

With one's appetite for the information in the *AJYB* somewhat whetted, how does one find this little-known resource?

Hard copies of the *AJYB* are available in many university, public, and Jewish libraries and in the libraries of larger congregations. In the San Francisco Bay area, one may find a complete run of the *AJYB* at the Jewish Community Library, 1850 Ellis Street, San Francisco, CA 94105; telephone (415) 567-3337; <http://www.jewishcommunitylibrary.org/>.

Fortunately for researchers, AJC has digitized and put images of all volumes of the *AJYB* online as PDF files. There are two basic ways of approaching these online files: using the links and portals provided by AJC, and searching through Google.

Using the AJC gateway to the PDF files, the main portal to these volumes can be found at <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=40>.

The portal is divided into 20-year segments, and within each segment is a link to each individual year. Especially helpful to researchers is an index to subjects and articles (not a name index) from the first twenty volumes, which can be found in Volume 20, 1918–1919.

[http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/1918\\_1919\\_8\\_MultiVolumeIndex.pdf](http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1918_1919_8_MultiVolumeIndex.pdf)

Each year's index begins with a descriptive portal with gateways that—at least in earlier volumes—may change from year to year. For example, in Volume 2, “Directory of Local Organizations” is under “Local Jewish Life”, but for Volume 9, there is no such listing as the latter, and the “Directory of Local Organizations” is under the section for “Directory of National Organizations.” It is always helpful to check the table of contents (the first item on each portal). Following are the URL's for each 20-year segment.

Volumes 1–20, 1899–1919, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=10031>

Volumes 21–40, 1919–1939, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=10052>

Volumes 41–60, 1939–1959, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=10073>

Volumes 61–80, 1960–1980, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=10094>

Volumes 81–100, 1981–2000, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=10115>

Volumes 101–106, 2001–2007, <http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupId=10136>

Especially for those researchers using the AJC portals to the PDF files, it is important to remember the two online finding aids cited earlier in this article: the list of *landsmanshaftn* in the “Local Organization” directories and the “Obituary Index” on JewishGen.

In addition, a Cumulative Subject Index, published in 1959 and available only in print, covers material in the first fifty volumes. As far as I can tell, this has not yet been digitized for Internet availability.

Because the PDF files of the *AJYB* are available on the Internet, in most cases, optical character recognition (OCR) makes it possible for a Google search to yield information from the volumes.

For example, if someone is searching for a surname—the more distinctive the better—a Google search for that surname as well as “American Jewish Year Book” should yield a link to the PDF that contains the listings. Since most of the PDF's in the *AJYB* online are quite large, a researcher can then use the internal PDF search capability to go to the specific page with the surname of interest listed on it.

If one is searching for information about a town, however, spelling variants can come into play. For example, the town of Ostrow Mazowiecka is listed as “Ostrov” in the pogroms table, and a search for “Ostrov” would miss the spelling variant.

Browsing through the PDF files using the AJC portals can be a fascinating form of time travel, with a broader context, which a more narrow Google search can miss. But it is useful to know that if you are searching for a distinctive surname in the *AJYB* volumes, Google may well get you there more directly.



## Finding and Following the Paths of My Cuban Cousins

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 SFBAJGS director of publicity and programming, and editor of *ZichronNote*. She is also the vice president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Oregon. This article first appeared in *Avotaynu* Summer 2016; Janice would like to acknowledge the invaluable commentary of Heidi Lyss on crafting this revised version.

When I travel, I always check to see if I have relatives in the area whom I can meet. In 1999, when I was in Seattle for a conference, I met one of my grandfather's nieces (my first cousin once removed). I learned from her that we had cousins who had gone to Cuba when they fled Eastern Europe in the lead-up to World War II. Aviva didn't know the names of, or any other information about, those who had gone to Cuba, so I was left with an intriguing story but nothing more. I discovered quickly that Cuba is a very difficult country for research, due to its status with the U.S. government. Particularly with no names to work from, I put my Cuban research on the back burner for several months.

It was through another cousin that I learned the names of my Cuban cousins. Later in 1999, while visiting my grandmother in southern Florida, we met up with another cousin from my grandfather's side of the family. Mort (my first cousin twice removed) had created a basic family tree showing the names of all the relatives he knew about. On my Nowicki line, I learned that my great-grandmother's first cousin Ethel Nowicki had a daughter, Rojzla Perlmutter, who married Chananiah Szoherman. Mort had noted that three of their children — William, Max, and Rifka (my third cousins once removed) — were the cousins who immigrated to Cuba. Now that I had names, I began to look for information about them but at first found little.

As more records became available online, I continued to search for information about my Szoherman cousins. About 2009 I found naturalization index cards from the 1970's and 1980's for family members on Ancestry.com and began to piece together some basic family structure, tentatively working out marriages and some children's names. This allowed me to look for those names in other databases. I found some of the names on Facebook but didn't yet feel comfortable enough to contact anyone, as I was not completely sure that the people I had found on Facebook were the right ones. Searching on Google, I found one of the Cuban cousins living in Portland, Oregon. There was enough information on Robert's business page that I was pretty sure he was from my family. I sent him several messages, but he never responded.

The step I took that turned out to be the most important in connecting with my cousins was posting a list of the family names I am researching, along with where the families lived, on my personal Web site. I included my e-mail address on the page. In late 2011, a cousin who was searching the Web for her maiden name found my page and contacted me. We confirmed our connection, and she rapidly helped me identify several of my photographs as being of more members of this Cuban branch of my family, and shared even more photos with me. Vivian (my fourth cousin once removed) was born in New York after the family left Cuba following the rise of Fidel Castro to power. She knew many names and was able to tell me who had actually been born in Cuba, which turned out to be only the children of the three immigrants. She was particularly happy about my blog post mentioning the short documentary *Jubanos: The Jews of Cuba*, which I had seen at the 2011 IAGJS conference in Washington, D.C. She appreciated the fact that I had acknowledged the unique culture of Cuban Jews.



One of the photos Vivian identified for me, originally labeled only as "Cuban relatives"

A couple of years later, another cousin found me the same way, through the page listing my family surnames. She is the daughter-in-law of one of the cousins born in Cuba and put me in touch with him. They added greatly to the information I had on the family and were able to identify additional photos I had. One of the most interesting things

I learned from Sam (my fourth cousin) was that his parents were supposed to have been cousins, and the maiden name he had for his mother sounded linguistically close to Nowicki. So she might be related to me also through the same Nowicki line (hooray for endogamy!).

I was happy to be in contact with all these cousins, but being a genealogist, I also wanted to find documents relating to their time in Cuba. This at first seemed to be an insurmountable problem. I didn't know anyone in Cuba and couldn't find any researchers in Cuba. Then I did research for someone else that involved some family members in Cuba (albeit in an earlier period, the late 18th and early 19th centuries). The person for whom I was doing the research said she had a researcher she used who was able to obtain Cuban records. For whatever reason, it took her three years (!) to send me the information for the researcher, whom I contacted in early 2015. I was so optimistic, thinking I would finally be able to obtain documents about my family members.

My enthusiasm was short-lived. Documents would cost \$35 each if I knew exactly in what district they were in Havana, which is where I was told all members of my family had lived. If I didn't, the cost would soar to \$200 to conduct a citywide search. I asked Sam, the Cuban-born cousin with whom I was in contact, what he knew of where and when his parents, uncle, and aunt had been married and relayed that to the researcher. After several months she told me one record had been found, and it would cost \$200. Obviously dismayed that she hadn't bothered to let me know a citywide search had been made, I decided to pay anyway, thinking I was at least going to have a marriage record for one of my cousins. When I received the record, I was doubly disappointed: Not only was it not for one of my cousins, the names bore no resemblance whatsoever to any of the names I had supplied, and no, the researcher I was in contact with had not bothered to mention that. When I asked her about it, she apologized (but didn't offer to refund any of my money) and said that the person in Cuba had told her that was the only record to be found. And that's when I learned that this vaunted researcher wasn't actually in Cuba at all, but was in the United States and working remotely. So much for working with her again.

I wasn't giving up yet, though. In 2015, through someone for whom I do volunteer work, I had an opportunity to visit Cuba during the summer as part of an organized group. This was after the U.S. administration had begun a thaw in its relations with Cuba. I decided I should go before Cuba was opened to the American public again and tourists began to flood the island.

I spent a week in Cuba in July 2015. The organized group with which I traveled was (nominally) focused on volunteer humanitarian work, in which I was happy to participate, but I went to conduct research into my family history. The research wasn't going to focus on people, because I had already learned from my cousins that I had no relatives left in Cuba, almost all of them having left before or soon after Castro came to power. The one cousin who had remained in Cuba during the Castro era made *aliyah* to Israel a few years ago. Instead, I wanted to try to visit locations associated with family members, as none of my cousins apparently has any photographs of any of those places.

The one absolute success I had at the time was finding the Patronato Synagogue in Havana, where my cousins used to be members. I took photographs of the exterior and interior, and of plaques and photos inside. I also spoke with a very nice man who did not recognize the names of any of my cousins, but considering how long ago they left, I was not all that surprised.

Later I was able to visit the Cuban Jewish Community center, which is next door to the synagogue. This time I met Adela Dworkin, the internationally known president of the synagogue. While speaking with her I discovered she knew one of my cousins, who had been actively involved in the community. Adela remembered when Marta (another fourth cousin) moved from Cuba to Israel. It was gratifying to find one personal connection on my trip.

I also had two old home addresses to search for. The one on Calle Hospital (Hospital Street) in Havana didn't pan out — there's an apartment building there, but it looks very blocky and post-1959. I took a photo of it just in case, along with one of a turn-of-the-20th-century apartment building a couple of blocks up the street. I suspect where the blocky building is now there used to be buildings of the older type. Sam confirmed that he had not lived in the blocky building but did not comment about the older building.

Looking for the other address proved to be one of the more exciting things I did while in Havana. Through my hotel's tourist information desk, I worked out an arrangement with Elaine, a hotel employee who happened to live in the same suburb (Guanabacoa) where the address is, to go with me and help me look for the building. I learned that maps are not commonly used in Cuba; most people get around by asking others for directions. So having someone who knew that area was going to be a big advantage.

I arrived early for our scheduled excursion, because that's what I usually do. She was working on Caribbean time, however, and showed up almost half an hour late, causing

me a little bit of stress. The taxi we took was a 1956 Buick Roadmaster, one of the classic old cars that Cuba is famous for. It had a Toyota emblem attached to the grill, a Ford gear shift, and a very modern pop-out digital radio. Heaven knows what kind of engine was under the hood — I was told that most of the old cars now have newer engines, because it's easier to keep those running.

Off we headed to Guanabacoa, to the east and a little south of my hotel in Vedado, one of the districts in Havana. On the way out of Havana we passed through an ominous-looking government checkpoint but didn't have to stop. (I went through another of these checkpoints when my tour group took a day trip west of Havana. I'm willing to bet there's one in the south direction to match.) While the car belched gas and oil fumes (maybe this one had an old engine after all?), the driver tried to avoid as many potholes as possible, but there were just too many, and he still hit quite a few.

After half an hour of this entertainment, we reached Guanabacoa, and Elaine gave the driver instructions to find Estrada Palma (Palm Street), from the address my cousin Sam had given me. When we found it, we of course turned the wrong direction. After about six blocks of watching the house numbers go up instead of down, we turned around and headed back. We eventually found #59, an apartment building with a ground floor and two upper stories with apartments.

Elaine asked the neighbors and some women walking out of the building if they recognized the name Szocherman, my cousins' family name, which no one did. But one woman from the apartment building invited us to come upstairs and look around. She let us visit her apartment and allowed me to take photographs of the rooms. I checked the door frames of all ten apartments (five on each floor), and none had even a vestige of a *mezuzah* having been hung there, but it had been more than 60 years. The woman was pretty sure the building had been there in the 1950's, so I thought it might be the right place.

After returning from Cuba I shared all my photographs with my cousins. Sam eventually confirmed that the building in Guanabacoa was indeed where he used to live, in apartment #1. So it turned out I actually had two successes on my trip.

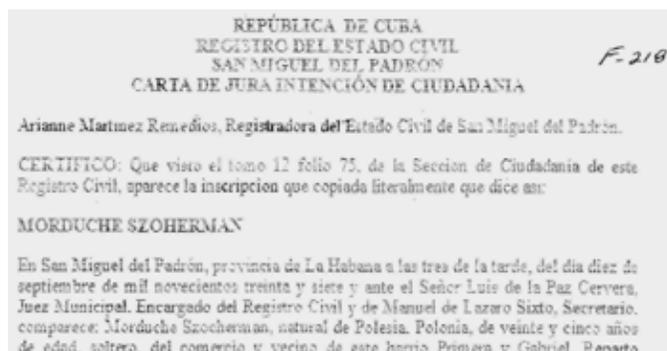
I learned that the second relative who had contacted me lived in the Portland, Oregon area, where I was headed that December to visit my grandchildren. I took advantage of the trip to arrange a meeting with my cousin Jake (Sam's son and another fourth cousin once removed) and his wife, Robin, so they wouldn't be just names on my computer.

We had a wonderful time looking at family photos and talking about the research I am doing.

When I picked up my research again after the December holidays, I found more documents and information about the family had been added to various databases and Web sites. I was able to add more to the family tree I had created. I even found a photograph of one of the three cousins who had immigrated to Cuba, back when he was young and still living in what is now Belarus.

The one thing I didn't have yet, however, was any documents from Cuba about the family. I returned to that quest. Someone told me about a Facebook group for Cuban genealogy research, and I joined that. Most of the people in the group appear to be of the same generation as my cousins who were born there, with none of them living in Cuba anymore. They're using the same databases I am, taking DNA tests, and trying to make connections.

Finally, one day someone mentioned a researcher he used, a person actually in Cuba. He didn't publish her name, but when I wrote to him directly he gave me her contact information. She conducts research and doesn't charge until she finds a document. Her prices were also high — \$50 (now \$55) for a document — but the idea of not having to pay until she confirmed the document made it a much more attractive proposition than the \$200 debacle I had already experienced. So I set her on the hunt for the marriage records of the three immigrant cousins. She found the one I wanted the most, along with two birth records and a citizenship document for Max. Later she contacted me with a possible additional document, but when she sent me a scan of the part showing the name, it was clearly Scherman, not Szocherman, and not a given name for my family. Because it wasn't for my family, however, she didn't charge me. It's slow going, but I have made progress.



*Max Szocherman's declaration of intention to become a Cuban citizen*

## SFBAJGS Commentaries on the 2019 IAJGS Cleveland Conference

Cleveland, Ohio, 28 July–2 August 2019

### Miriam Loewenstein Zimmerman

#### My First IAJGS Conference

At the 2019 IAJGS conference in Cleveland, the first thing I noticed was that eye contact suffered. Because of the detailed name badges, with space for up to five family names and geographical locations, participants read one another's name tags instead of looking in the eyes of new and old friends. Whom did they hope to find—a long-lost sixth cousin, removed once or twice?

I confess the genealogy bug has yet to bite me. So what was I doing at the conference? My never-lost first cousin Michael Loewenstein and I presented at our first IAJGS conference, thanks to Richard Zimmerman's suggestion that I write a proposal. Full disclosure: Richard is my husband.

On the first day of the conference, Michael and I talked about our family's recent German Stolpersteine installation ceremony, in Gelsenkirchen-Buer. Four "stumbling stones" honored our grandparents and our fathers, all of blessed memory. Michael talked about our subsequent tour of our ancestors' small towns in North Rhine-Westphalia and the cemetery research he did to find them. In addition, I talked about the process of becoming a German citizen.

I expected to enjoy the rest of the conference hanging out with my cousin and my sister, Ruth Loewenstein, who traveled from Chicago to attend. It was her first IAJGS conference as well. I did not expect to find presentations that would interest me in nearly every time slot, yet all of us did.

The best speaker I encountered was Crista Cowan of Ancestry.com. I attended a second session of hers because I so enjoyed my first. The funniest line of the week for me was her admonition that "they don't call it 're-search' for nothing!"

The most moving presentation I attended was by a lovely Ukrainian woman, Kateryna Duzenko, of Yahad-In-Unum. This NGO documents the work of the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing squads) in Eastern

Europe during the Holocaust. As this work draws to a close, the organization now does the same documentation for contemporary genocides. Duzenko began as an interpreter during interviews of eyewitnesses to the shootings and is now "a Project Manager of the In-Evidence interactive map, and also participates as educator at the seminars and workshops given by Yahad-In Unum throughout Europe", according to her conference bio.

Her bio was readily accessible on my phone, as was the full conference schedule, thanks to the conference app. I really appreciated the convenience of navigating through the myriad sessions on my phone, thanks to Richard's having downloaded the app in advance.

True confession: I did not enjoy the opening reception at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and gave it a thumbs down. Perhaps expectations were too high, derived from several of my California friends who told me it was a Cleveland must-see. Perhaps the struggle to find the disappointing food contributed to my malaise. More likely, it is my lack of interest in rock and roll that was the decisive factor.

At the conference, Richard and I purchased DNA kits and have already mailed them in. For years, I have resisted doing so for privacy reasons. The conference convinced me otherwise. But what, exactly, do we expect to find?

During the Q&A after my presentation, people did not seek information from Michael and me so much as they seized the opportunity to tell their family's stories. It was an "aha moment" for me. In an early session, a speaker (if memory serves, it was Crista) coached her audience on how to ask questions at the conference (paraphrase): Skip your family story and cut to the chase.

But it seems to me that the underlying force driving people to do genealogical research is the opportunity to do just that: find and tell their family stories. The more information they discover, the more complete the story. In so doing, they honor their ancestors and keep their memories alive. What could be a nobler endeavor?



## Janice M. Sellers

This was my seventh IAJGS conference. I know I'm far behind many others, but I feel like a veteran at this point.

My favorite session of the week was about the Jewish presence in central Ohio. The presenters discussed Jewish immigration into the area beginning in the 1830's and going through Soviet Jewish immigration late in the 20th century, and showed images of many documents and artifacts held at Ohio History Connection and the Columbus Jewish Historical Society, including a *mohel's* record book covering 1873 to 1904. This was entirely new territory for me, and the *mohel's* book looks really cool. I hope they transcribe the names and dates in it and share that information.

On the socializing front, we had 21 SFBAJGS members at the conference (eight of whom were presenters). It was enjoyable to see so many familiar faces I don't get to see regularly now that I live in Oregon. It was also great to hang out with my "conference buddies", those people I have met at the conferences over the years. Plus I met the new president of the JGS of Oregon, my current hometown society.

From a research perspective, one of the activities I look forward to the most at the IAJGS conferences is the Resource Room, because of all the databases we have access to for the week. I found several new articles in ProQuest newspaper databases, and documents about my family members who immigrated to Israel on the IGRA site.

Usually I focus on the positive aspects of the conference, but there were a couple of particularly annoying things that happened this year (far fewer than Vivian's list!). The worst was the new mandatory meal fee. Not only did the conference organizers not warn people ahead of time (after you finished your registration online, up pops a message telling you that there's a \$65 mandatory fee that everyone has to pay, including speakers), it was impossible to get any of the food options to actually add up to \$65. So you either left money lying on the table or ponied up even more. I settled for three box lunches at \$20 each and gave up on the remaining \$5. And at the conference, they couldn't even get something as simple as a box lunch correct. All I did was order beef pastrami. So on Tuesday, what happens? Turkey pastrami. I don't happen to like turkey, so I raised a stink. A manager finally went and got me a beef pastrami sandwich.

The other problem is probably more significant, because it relates to programming. Before the conference, I try to download the handouts for the sessions I plan to attend so I have them handy. This year, it seemed that fewer than

half of the speakers had deigned to submit their handouts on time. As long as IAJGS is going to stick it to us on meals, they should do some kind of enforcement on providing handouts.

## Vivian Kahn

One of the best things about the conference was the opportunity to meet my fourth cousins Sandy Herskovitz and his sister Phyllis Herskovitz Wapnick, whose mother, Margit Kahan, was my mother's third cousin. Our great-grandfathers Shlomo Kahan and Dov Berisch Kahan from Sziget were first cousins. Sandy has a butcher shop and deli in Cleveland, following in the family tradition of *shochets*, butchers, and leather workers that dates back at least to our third great-grandfather Zev Wolf Heller Kahan, who was the *shochet* in Kabolacsarda, Maramaros, Hungary, near, and now part of, Sighet, Romania, formerly Sziget. We sorted out the family members and I copied a number of photos while enjoying a superb pastrami on rye at Mister Brisket, Sandy's place on South Taylor Road in Cleveland Heights (<http://www.misterbrisket.com/>).

The sessions I attended were excellent with one exception, a speaker for whom English was not a first language and who was difficult to understand. I also appreciated the fact that the Share Fair and exhibitors were in adjoining spaces.

My gripe list, however, is lengthy:

- No access to power connections from the Share Fair tables.
- The opening reception had virtually nothing to eat, despite the fact that we were promised "hearty kosher appetizers."
- While the Hungarian SIG luncheon was fine (salad that appeared to be from Au Bon Pain around the corner), I object to the \$65 mandatory meal fee. I would prefer that the organizers negotiate a price for hotel rooms that covers the cost of meeting rooms. Also, one of our speakers who had ordered gluten-free kosher meals was offered a sandwich for his lunch! When I inquired about a refund, I was told that I should have raised this issue during the luncheon, which was impossible since I was introducing the speaker, who didn't discover the error until his presentation ended.
- I went to the Thursday night banquet to hear Michael Krasny speak on Jewish humor, but aside from his talk, the banquet was the worst I have attended in years of IAJGS conferences. There was no time set aside to mingle before the dinner, the food was awful, and a number of us weren't able to get the meals we had ordered (although the salmon I



Keith Gendler, Mike Maidenberg, Ann Rubin, Eileen Shulman, Jeff Lewy, Beth Galleto, Richard Zimmerman, Betty Wood, Miriam Zimmerman, Janice Sellers, Roy Ogus, Robinn Magid, Ann Fuller, Ross DeHovitz, Jeremy Frankel. Photo courtesy of Ken Bravo.



Eileen Shulman, Jeff Lewy, Beth Galleto, Richard Zimmerman, Phyllis Gold Berenson, Betty Wood, Jeremy Frankel, Janice Sellers, Roy Ogus, Robinn Magid, Ann Fuller. Photo courtesy of Ken Bravo.

did get appeared to be better than the nonkosher chicken, which is what I had ordered). Moreover, although my friend Sandy Malek and I had signed up for the same table, when we arrived only one seat was left. We should have been advised that we could purchase wine to bring to the dinner (the notion of a dinner without wine is inconceivable to this California oenophile). Moreover, there was no reason to require raffle winners to be present. Given that I already have all of the subscriptions that were offered as prizes, I should have just walked out!!

- Finally, it was unfortunate that the exhibitors shut down on Wednesday, given that sessions ran through midday on Friday. What was that about?

### **Beth Galleto**

This was my first time in the state of Ohio, let alone in Cleveland. Tick another state off my list!

This conference was special to me for several reasons. I enjoyed being with friends from California, many of whom I had not seen since 2016, when I moved to Washington, D.C. It was a joy to reconnect with them. On the other hand, I was also able to spend time with some of my newer friends from DC and get to know them better.

I was able to meet a DNA “cousin” from Ohio whom I had been e-mailing for years but had never met before. I first responded to her because she had the last name Levitin, my maternal grandmother’s maiden name. Of course, it turned out to be this woman’s married name. I arranged to have her husband tested as well. Although his family came from the same geographic area as my Levitins, the DNA results were inconclusive. I still think there may be a connection, however, just too far back in time to see easily with DNA. (Unfortunately a Y-DNA test was not helpful because my branch of the family includes no known descendants of Levitin men.) My DNA connection to my correspondent may be through the Hungarian sides of both our families. In any case, it was wonderful to meet her after all these years and to share family photos and other information.

Also memorable were two talks I attended about the work being done by the organization Yahad-in-Unum to investigate the holocaust by bullets perpetrated in many parts of Eastern Europe. I had heard of this group before, but I did not know about the painstaking, detailed crime scene investigations they are carrying out. I found Pochep, my mother’s parents’ ancestral town, on their site showing all the mass murder locations. People killed at these sites were not deported to concentration camps, they were taken out to places in the woods and shot *en masse* by murder squads. Yahad-in-Unum has interviewed witnesses who

were children at the time but who still vividly remembered what happened because they were so shocked by what they saw. You can read about the organization and what it does at <https://www.yahadinunum.org/>. The town-by-town map of its work is at <https://yahadmap.org/#map/>.

### **Ann Fuller**

This was my sixth IAJGS conference and for the first time located near my home. (I am an out-of-town SFBAJGS member.) The hotel had a great view of Lake Erie and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The nifty conference app, which could be synced on two devices, simplified conference navigation: On it, you could view the entire schedule, pinpoint locations, bookmark your personal schedule, download handouts, and rate the presentations. I concentrated on Austria-Czech and Hungarian offerings, for which there were fine U.S. speakers and foreign experts, some familiar and some new, who gave presentations on such topics as Bohemian naming patterns, migration from Czech lands to upper Hungary, and interpreting Hebrew gravestone inscriptions. It was wonderful to network with Austria-Czech SIG members and get together in sessions and over meals with friends made at previous conferences. A thank-you dinner for Geni.com volunteer curators, given by company staff, provided another chance for valuable contact.

### **Jeremy Frankel**

I began writing this from 39,000 feet as I sped away from Cleveland heading toward Sacramento, while it was still fresh in my mind. I missed the last two conferences (Orlando and Warsaw), so I had really been looking forward to this one.

I had my hands full trying to get to all the lectures I had penciled in. But downloading the app helped a lot (more about that later). I was also renewing my acquaintance with people I last saw in Seattle as well as making new friends.

My focus was weighted toward several lectures given on DNA. Lara Diamond gave a talk titled “Finding Relatives, Even When Dealing with Endogamy”; Debra Kay Blatt’s lecture was “Blue Eyes, a Hanger, and DNA: Solving the Mystery of a Hidden Child”; and Schelly Talalay Dardashti’s presentation was “Jewish Ethnicity and DNA: Ashkenazi and Beyond.”

Two lectures discussed the issue of privacy. One focused on the possible impending lack of access to records and was given by Jan Meisels Allen and Randy Schoenberg, representing PRAMC (Public Records Access Monitoring Committee). The other was given by SFBAJGS member

Brooke Schreier Ganz, representing Reclaim the Records, which uses the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and freedom of information laws (FOIL) to pry open indices which are unjustifiably guarded by many state agencies.

Other lectures that tickled my genealogical funny bone included the UK-SIG meeting; the Mac Users Group; a fascinating lecture about the Industrial Removal Office, given by Renee Carl; and our own Ron Arons sharing information about his wayward great-grandfather. (Mark Halpern, a board member of JRI-Poland, in his postconference write-up said, "One of the best talks of the Conference (IMHO) was Ron Arons talk on Sunday about his bigamist (married 4 times and never divorced) great grandfather"). Robinn Magid updated us about JRI-Poland. I also saw a lecture about Gombin (my Frankel home town) and one about location maps.

Some lectures given by SFBAJGS members clashed with ones I wanted to attend, so I never got to them, for which I'm really sorry. But hey, they were running ten tracks of lectures every two hours, so it was really tough trying to pick just one. I'm sorry I missed our very own Janice Sellers, who gave no fewer than three talks. Maybe next year.

With respect to apps, I have to admit that in general I'm not a big fan or user of them. (Okay, I have one for my hearing aids, but otherwise, no, I never use them.) However, my roommate, Teven Laxer (plug: he's the director of the Sacramento Jewish Film Festival and was one of the presenters), persuaded me to download the conference app, and boy was it worth it. As well as listing all the lectures with brief summaries, one could review the speaker's bio, download the handout, and, most importantly, click on a star to select the lecture. By doing so, you could create your own personalized conference schedule. It was shown in chronological order along with the room names. Very handy when dashing from one meeting to another. I'll certainly be using it next year. Oh, and all the previous years' conferences are there too.

What is a conference without schmoozing! Whether it was a swift five minutes as one trotted from one meeting to another, or "propping up the counter" in Bar 32 on the 32nd floor, which, incidentally, provided a spectacular view of downtown Cleveland's skyline over the lake.

Were there any downsides? I think that the Sunday night private (for us) opening of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame was a bit overrated and the food was underwhelming. The gala banquet featured, would you believe, Michael Krasny of KQED's weekday *Forum* program. It seemed very strange to travel 2,000 miles to see and hear someone

we hear every weekday in the Bay Area, but then Michael grew up in Cleveland. While Michael's talk about Jews and humor went down very well, for some reason, the drawing for prizes donated by genealogy companies was held afterward—and one had to be in the room to get the prize. I don't get it. The drawing should have taken place before Michael stood up to speak—and I'm not sure he should have had to stand almost another hour turning the drum and choosing cards with attendees' names on them. I felt that was rather embarrassing.

But overall there were more pluses than minuses. And I did come away having discovered another cousin! But that's a story for another time.

It was an enjoyable conference. Don't forget next year will be in San Diego, 9–14 August. I hope the society has a good turnout. Long-time society member Robinn Magid will once again be organizing the event. To keep up-to-date with the San Diego conference, please join the Facebook IAJGS Conference Discussion Group. If you have suggestions and ideas for the conference, Robinn invites you to write her at [Chair@IAJGS2020.org](mailto:Chair@IAJGS2020.org).



*Jeremy Frankel and Judy Baston.  
Photo courtesy of Jeremy Frankel.*

**Invite a Friend to Join SFBAJGS**

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

## Overlooking and Looking Over Valuable Record Sets on JewishGen: The USA Database

Jeff Lewy

Jeff Lewy became interested in genealogy to make sense of family photos going back four generations in the United States and Europe and to learn about the people in the photos. Most of his family lines arrived in the United States in the 1840's and 1850's, mostly in Alabama, before settling in Chicago by 1870. His tree now includes seven or more generations for most of his family names. He is the Treasurer of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society.

I've been a member of JewishGen for about 15 years, and like many of you, I've never explored all of it. I've looked in lots of databases, and I have registered my data for the Family Finder and my surnames and towns of interest. I belong to several special interest groups (SIG's) for the countries where my ancestors lived, and I search periodically for new records, including those in JOWBR, the burial registry.

But there's a group of databases that I have overlooked until recently, and I recommend them to you. They are located in the JewishGen USA Database. These databases can be accessed by clicking the tab on "Databases", then the "Complete List of Databases", then select "United States", then "The JewishGen USA Database." Or you can go directly to <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/USA/>.

The databases include almost two million records. Some that were new to me include vital records from a number of Jewish publications in various cities, including

Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Houston, and Philadelphia. These may include announcements of deaths, obituaries, engagements/marriages, and "seeking kin."

Other record sets include:

- rabbis' records, which often include marriages
- "bank passage" records, identifying payments for immigrants made by people already in the United States
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) records of immigrant arrivals assisted by the Boston office
- Other miscellaneous record sets that do not fit anywhere else

Using the USA Databases will also bring up JOWBR records in the United States and any other records where there is "US" in any field, such as the Memorial Plaque database.

So look them over. You'll find a variety of gems to add sparkle to your data.



*President's Column, continued from page 2*

Attending a conference is a bit like attending a huge family reunion. I espied an attendee (Joy) with a name tag whose last name was a name in my family tree. Okay, the person in my tree with that name was actually married to a woman whose grandfather's sister married my grandfather's brother. (Oy, I should be so fussy about who I'm related to.)

After I got home I was playing around with my AncestryDNA results, and for fun I typed in the last name. BANG! There was Joy, and her brother! Turns out they are actually blood-related cousins to me. See, it happened to me. It could happen to you.

Looking forward to seeing you in San Diego, 9-14 August 2020. In hindsight, it's not something you want to miss!



### 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:

8 December 2019

5 January 2020

2 February 2020

## 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>
DeYoung	Netherlands; Philadelphia; St. Louis; San Francisco; Mississippi	Suzanne Kelting Myers
Dolsky	New York City; St. Louis; Argentina; Poland; Russia	Gail Dolson
Dolson	New York City	Gail Dolson
Givisdolska	New York City; St. Louis; Argentina; Poland; Russia	Gail Dolson
Guntmacher	Chisinau, Moldova	Christine Czarnecki
Jaffe	Mir or Minsk, Belarus	Christine Czarnecki
Markowetz	Chisinau, Moldova	Christine Czarnecki
Posner	United States	Christine Czarnecki
Rhine	Bavaria; Philadelphia; Kentucky; Mississippi; Texas	Suzanne Kelting Myers
Smilken	New York City; Austria; Germany; Russia	Gail Dolson
Troubovitz	Mir or Minsk, Belarus	Christine Czarnecki

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**Planned 2020 SFBAJGS Calendar — Speakers and Topics to Be Announced Soon**

Sunday, 19 January, Oakland	Monday, 15 June, Palo Alto
Sunday, 23 February, San Francisco	Sunday, 19 July, Oakland
Monday, 24 February, Palo Alto	Sunday, 23 August, San Francisco
Sunday, 15 March, Oakland	Monday, 24 August, Palo Alto
Sunday, 19 April, San Francisco	Sunday, 13 September, Oakland
Monday, 27 April, Palo Alto	Sunday, 18 October, San Francisco
Sunday, 17 May, Oakland	Monday, 19 October, Palo Alto
Sunday, 14 June, San Francisco	Sunday, 8 November, Oakland

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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