



# זְכוֹרֹנוֹת *ZichronNote*

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

Volume XL, Number 2

May 2020

### A Small Subset of the Gold Rush

**Focusing on a smaller part of a large group can make it easier to find interesting stories.** See page 5.

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*Sherith Israel in 1906, after the earthquake.*

See page 6.

**ZichronNote**  
**Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area**  
**Jewish Genealogical Society**

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ZichronNote is published four times per year, in February, May, August, and November. The deadline for contributions is the 15th of the month preceding publication. The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions. Submissions may be made by hard copy or electronically. Please send e-mail to [newsletter@sfbajgs.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbajgs.org).

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

**President's Message**

**Life in the Times of the  
Global Pandemic**

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

A short time ago I got my "prompt" e-mail from Janice Sellers, our ZichronNote editor. As she does every so often, she wrote, "Good evening, Jeremy, Can you believe it? It's time to warn you that I need your column again."

Usually it's no big deal to come up with something relevant, but this time it seems almost irrelevant. After all, while many of us may be physically well, it's possible that we know someone who might be in quarantine with the coronavirus, or, worse, actually have COVID-19. (Back home in London, my next-door neighbor's grown-up son is in the ICU with it.)

If not that, then many people might be at home wondering if and when they will be able to go back to work. Or whether there will even be a job waiting for them! I recently "whatsapped" my cousin in London, who told me that her middle son "has no work at all."

And I worry for my mother, who, although she is in pretty good physical health, having just turned 89, there is always the thought that she might become compromised and fall ill.

Without wishing this column to be filled with just "doom and gloom", let's remember that many in the genealogical community have been saying it's also a very good time to reach out to relatives, both close and distant, or those you've never contacted before—do it now! Don't wait.

The organizers of this year's genealogy conference in San Diego recently announced that the conference will be presented in a virtual format and have just opened registration.. This took a while for them to be able to set up, but it is not surprising that it happened, considering that this year's ComicCon, scheduled to take place in San Diego two weeks beforehand, was canceled in May.

The board and I wish everyone and their families well in these very trying times. I look forward to the day when I can meet with you once again, face to face.



## Society News

### New Member

Claire Rappoport ..... insightclairer@gmail.com

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

### Research Scope of SFBAJGS

The San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society does not limit its scope to the San Francisco Bay area. While our meetings take place in various locations in the Bay Area (and currently virtually), 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).

### Members in the News

**Robinn Magid**, a long-time member of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society and the chair of this year's first-ever virtual IAJGS conference, was recently elected to the role of Assistant Director of Jewish Records Indexing-Poland. Robinn has been an active JRI-Poland leader for close to 25 years and will now officially serve as part of the infrastructure team backing up founding Executive Director Stanley Diamond.

*Family Tree Magazine* published its 2020 list of 101 Best Genealogy Websites, available at <https://www.familytreemagazine.com/best-genealogy-websites/>. **Brooke Schreier Ganz's** Reclaim the Records appears under Best Genealogy Records Websites. **Steve Morse's** One-Step Website is listed under Best Genealogy Apps and Tech Tools.

### 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, 30 August **online**. 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).

### Meeting Times and Locations

While these were our regular meeting locations, currently all activity is taking place online.

- San Francisco:** Sunday. Doors open 12:30 p.m. Program begins at 1:00 p.m.  
San Francisco Public Library, 100 Larkin Street, Latino/Hispanic Room  
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

Wednesday, 8 July 2020. Joel Weintraub, "Manifest Destiny: Names at Ellis Island." JewishGen Talks. <https://www.jewishgen.org/live>

Monday, 13 July 2020. Gena Philibert-Ortega, "The Records that Tragedy Leave[s] Behind." Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society, Zoom. E-mail [program@l-ags.org](mailto:program@l-ags.org) for meeting link.

Wednesday, 15 July 2020. Steve Morse, "From DNA to Genetic Genealogy: Everything You Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask." JewishGen Talks. <https://www.jewishgen.org/live>

Sunday, 19 July 2020. Victoria Arons, "Holocaust Graphic Novels and the Intergenerational Transmission of Memory." Jewish Community Library, Zoom. [https://jewishlearning.works/event/aarons/?event\\_date=2020-07-19](https://jewishlearning.works/event/aarons/?event_date=2020-07-19)

Tuesday, 21 July 2020. Judy Fambrough Billingsley, "The Children Left Behind in World War II." Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society, Zoom. E-mail [president@scchgs.org](mailto:president@scchgs.org) for meeting link.

Thursday, 23 July 2020. Gena Philibert-Ortega, "25 Websites Every Genealogist Should Know." Marin Genealogical Society, Zoom. E-mail [info@maringensoc.org](mailto:info@maringensoc.org) for meeting link.

Tuesday, 18 August 2020. Elizabeth Williams Gomoll, CG, "Unlocking Notation Codes on Alien Passenger Lists." New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, GoToWebinar. <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/events/webinar-unlocking-notation-codes-alien-passenger-lists>

Sunday, 23 August 2020. Trudie Strobel, Jody Savin, and Maya Savin Miller, "Stitched & Sewn: The Life-Saving Art of Holocaust Survivor Trudie Strobel." Jewish Community Library, Zoom. [https://jewishlearning.works/event/life-saving-art/?event\\_date=2020-08-23](https://jewishlearning.works/event/life-saving-art/?event_date=2020-08-23)

Tuesday, 18 November 2020. Jane E. Wilcox, "Finding American Women's Voices through the Centuries: Letters, Journals, Newspapers, and Court Records." New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, GoToWebinar. <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/events/webinar-finding-american-women%E2%80%99s-voices-through-centuries-letters-journals-newspapers-and>

Tuesday, 19 January 2021. Janice M. Sellers, "Researching Historic LGBT Relatives." Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. Santa Clara City Library, Redwood Room, 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara. <http://www.scchgs.org/>

### State and National

Monday–Thursday, 10–13 August 2020. IAJGS Virtual International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. <http://www.iajgs2020.org/>

Wednesday, 2 September 2020. FGS Virtual Annual Conference (the final FGS conference). <https://fgs.org/conferences/>

Thursday–Saturday, 10–12 September 2020 (live) and 10–30 September 2020 (on demand). New York State Family History Conference @Home. <https://nysfhc.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/nysfhc-at-home>

### 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

BYU Family History Library. <https://fh.lib.byu.edu/classes-and-webinars/online-webinars/>

Center for Jewish History "Genealogy Coffee Breaks." <https://www.facebook.com/centerforjewishhistory> (previous programs at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/centerforjewishhistory/501317183869918>)

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>

Ontario Genealogical Society. <https://ogs.on.ca/webinars-2020>

Southern California Genealogical Society. <http://www.scsgs-genealogy.com/>

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

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



## English Jews in the California Gold Rush: Introduction

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

As someone who has been living and working in the San Francisco Bay area since 1993 as a genealogist and historian, I've cultivated an interest in the existence of a small subset of immigrants who, like others, may have been enticed by the California Gold Rush of 1849. This subset consists of English Jews who, for whatever reason, initially participated in the Gold Rush and then stayed, making a life for themselves afterward.

But first I need to define the criterion of these English Jews. For me it would be anyone who arrived within five years of the start of the Gold Rush, that is, 1849 to 1854. If they died in California (ahem), so much the better!

According to the 1852 California State Census, more than 260,000 people were living in the state. Of those, almost 8,000 stated they had been born in England, which is about 3.1%. (Figures for 1860 and 1870 are remarkably consistent: 3.3% and 3.2%, respectively.)

I should point out that I wouldn't use the figures from the 1850 U.S. Federal Census for two reasons. The first, being the most obvious, is that people were moving around so much that I'm quite sure a number of them would have been enumerated more than once—or not at all. The second reason is something that is probably less known, which is that the 1850 census returns for three major California counties are missing. These are Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and, perhaps most importantly, San Francisco counties. Yes, the names of some 20,000 inhabitants of San Francisco are missing from the 1850 U.S. Census!

It's impossible to know how many of these English immigrants were Jews, but population statistics at this time reported that about one percent of the general population in England was Jewish. So we could say that of those 8,000 English people who were in California in 1852, around one percent, or eighty English Jews, were living in California. For argument's sake, let's round it up to about 100 people.



England highlighted on the island of Great Britain\*

How would one work out who were the English Jews? One way would be to comb through various records, such as the U.S. Census, but this would be very time-consuming.

I thought I would "shortcut" the process by a much more attractive proposition: I would "perambulate" the Jewish cemeteries in Colma, seeking out the oldest headstones, and read the inscriptions for anyone who was a native of England. Another method was to search early California newspapers for the deaths of anyone where the notice also said that the deceased was a native of England. In both cases, there were people who were from London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool.

Once I had some names, it was a relatively easy matter to begin creating a family tree for each of them and see if anything "interesting" about them transpired. A number of them

may have done something good, bad, or notorious, or something untoward occurred that caused their names to appear in newspaper articles. Even for those people who led very ordinary lives, aspects of their lives might raise questions of interest to us today.

It is my fundamental belief that this very small subset probably has descendants somewhere in the world, one of whom might be a family historian. Hence we can shed light on these early English Jews and their families. And as Andy Warhol once famously opined, "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes." Now, immortalized in the pages of *ZichronNote*, and eventually digitized for our Web site, their "fame" will be ever-lasting and available when that family historian searches for a name of interest.



\*[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:England\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_and\\_Europe.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:England_in_the_UK_and_Europe.svg). This file is licensed under the Creative Commons ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Creative\\_Commons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/en:Creative_Commons)) Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>) license.

## English Jews in the California Gold Rush: Samuel Hyman Cohen (1818–1890)

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

One of the fascinating aspects concerning San Francisco's very early Jewish history is the murkiness surrounding the split between the Jewish community during the time of the California Gold Rush.

We know that Jews were here right from the start, although obviously small in number. They lived and worked together, and of course prayed together. After a year or so conversation turned to formalizing their existence, and this included how they prayed. In a nutshell, two camps formed; one was more, shall we say, "modern looking", whereas the other was more traditional in its style of service.

Congregation Sherith Israel's "capsule history" on its Web site reads as follows:

### Gold Rush roots

In September 1849, mere months after the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill but still a year before California became a state, a small band of Jewish pioneers gathered in a wood-framed tent. They lacked rabbis and Torah scrolls but were determined to celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

These young Jews came from Prussia, Bavaria, England, France and the eastern United States. They worshiped together again during Passover and the High Holy Days in 1850, formed two benevolent societies to aid the needy and bought land for a cemetery.

### Sherith Israel's founding and early years

In April 1851, San Francisco's frontier Jews met again, this time to form a permanent congregation and elect officers. In typical fashion they split almost immediately, forming two synagogues. Congregation Sherith Israel followed the *minhag Polen* or Polish traditions of Jews from Posen in Prussia. Congregation Emanu-El chose to worship according to the German practices of Jews from Bavaria. The synagogues have been friendly neighbors ever since.<sup>1</sup>

The Wikipedia entry for Congregation Emanu-El has this to say:

Congregation Emanu-El of San Francisco, California, is one of the two oldest Jewish congregations in California. During the Gold Rush in 1849, a small group

of Jews held the first High Holy Days services on the west coast of the United States in San Francisco. This group of traders and merchants founded Congregation Emanu-El sometime in 1850, and its charter was issued in April, 1851. The 16 signatories were mostly German Jews from Bavaria.<sup>2</sup>

Numerous articles have been written about the cleaving of the Jewish community. There are also a number of books, such as Fred Rosenbaum's *Vision of Reform: Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco 1849–1999* and his *Cosmopolitans: A Social and Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area*, but none really points the finger at any one individual who, if not actually responsible, at least could be considered one of the leading players or the instigator.

One person comes to my mind: Samuel Hyman Cohen. I'm not aware of anything that has been published to date that suggests Cohen as the smoking gun, causing the split in the Jewish community in San Francisco.

Cohen had already led quite a colorful life even before he set foot in San Francisco. He was born in London, England in 1818. He does not appear in the first "useful" English census, conducted in 1841. This could mean that by age 23 he had already left the country. In fact, by 1843 he was living and working in China, of all places.

Cohen spent a total of six years there, four of them living in Shanghai. During this time, he also traveled into the interior of China.

In 1853 he wrote to Isaac Leeser, the editor of the Occident journal, published in Philadelphia, in which he described over the course of eight pages his life, first in China, then in San Francisco:

... if I recollect aright the place is called Kai-fong-fou but ... the Town is situated about 900 or 1000 miles inland from wher (sic), I lived in Shanghai but think it lays near the yellow River . . . .

Cohen never got a permit to go there, but he wrote:

... the disguise (sic) for a missionary to travel in must be the Chinese costume, your hair shaved close up to the crown with a long tail part of the eyebrows shave as allso (sic) face . . . I have been full seventy miles in Land without any pass was away three clear days



Auburn Placer County California  
August 25 1853

To  
Isaac Leeser Esqre  
Editor of the Occident.  
Philadelphia

Dear Sir

Having for the first time seen  
the Publication of the Occident which was lent to me  
by your Subscriber G. A. Hart of Greenwood Valley,  
my particular attention was drawn to No. 11 of  
Vol. 10 Page 575 of February 1853, wherein you call  
the Attention of the Israelites of this State to ende-  
-avour to send a messenger to our Chinese Brethren  
in the north of China, it is a source of pleasure that  
such has come to my knowledge as I am able to

First page of Samuel Hyman Cohen's 1853 letter to Isaac Leeser

in plain dress (no disguise) I found the people very hospitable . . . .

In another observation:

. . . I was the first foreign Jew that went to reside at Shanghai, Mr Lewis who is now dead was the second he represented the firm of Philips Moore & Co of Birmingham in England . . . .

All these comments of his were, alas, from memory, for he laments:

. . . I have lost the Journal of my Travels in one of the great fires in San Francisco . . . .

This may have been the "Great Fire" of 1851. After six years in China, Samuel Hyman Cohen sailed into San Francisco right when the California Gold Rush was literally "erupting."

. . . in this county in December 49 I was one of the five who proposed & collected subscription for a Jews Burial Ground in 1850 when the two congregations was (sic) endeavouring to join but could not agree . . . .<sup>3</sup>

In July 1851 the *Jewish Chronicle* newspaper of London published part of a letter Cohen had written to his sister describing the events in San Francisco:

As every matter relating to this part of the world is of interest, we give an extract of a letter from Mr. S. H. Cohen to his sister, under date of the 8th May, 1851:

"We have Kosher meat, a burial-ground, and a synagogue which was formed, three days before Passover, by twelve single young men and one married man. We have now forty-two members, principally English, and we have some old married men to lead us the correct way. Our form of prayers is of that of the Great Synagogue. We voted in our officers, who are all married men except two. I was elected honorary secretary, and had thirty-eight out of forty-two votes. There was a congregation formed last year but they could not agree; they have, however, again formed themselves into a congregation, and number sixty members, Germans, Portuguese, and Americans, but it is not supposed it will last long. Ours is considered



the correct congregation, as we have a shochet, but for which office they have no competent person. Our president is Mr. Joseph, an American; our Treasurer, Mr. Hart, a Pole, Mr. Isaacs, of Brown's Lane, baked the matzos for Passover, with whom twelve of us youngsters passed the festival. I do not think that the Jews in any part of the world could have kept the Passover more strictly than we did, and I am happy to say he intends to keep a Kosher house all the year round, so that we shall be enabled to eat lawful meats."<sup>4</sup>

The burial ground mentioned here was the one at Vallejo and Broadway streets. The "Great Synagogue" was the earliest Ashkenazi synagogue built in London after Jews were permitted to return to England in 1656. The synagogue was built around 1690.

A research colleague of mine, Ava Kahn (a Bay Area native), used Cohen's letter to his sister in her 2002 book, *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849–1880*, to amplify Cohen's view of early Jewish history in San Francisco. Kahn added that "Cohen's hostility to the members of Emanu-El probably was due to the split."<sup>5</sup>

I think it may have been the other way around. Cohen's strict adherence to his religion, praying style, and keeping kosher may have been seen by others as being somewhat inflexible. I believe it was this unwillingness to yield that caused the split.

In his letter to Leeser, he also wrote:

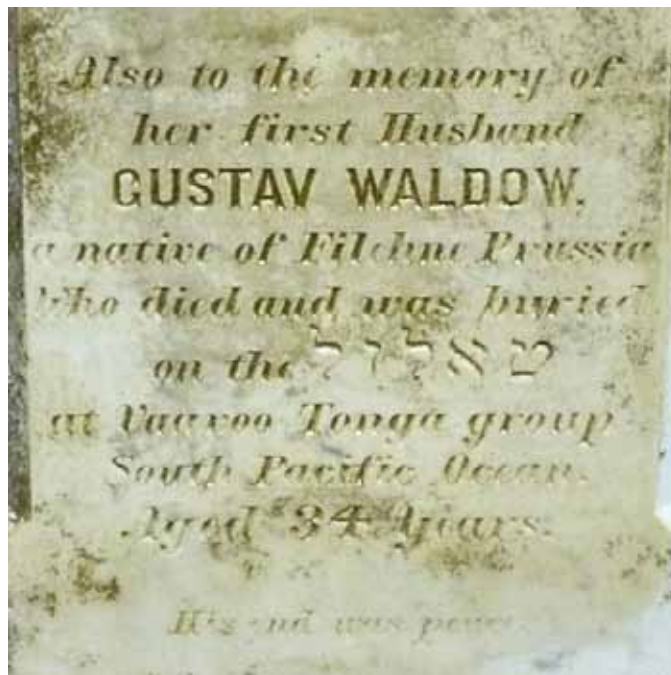
... they proposed to Give me a Salary but I strongly protested against any such proposition as it was only out of pure Love for my Religion that I accepted the office, during the time I held that office I transacted no Business on our Sabbath day, the following year I resigned as Business called me to the interior, the committee of the congregation Shearith Isreal (sic) which was the name of it slated a Letter of thanks for my services.<sup>6</sup>

Given his strong views, which he was not afraid to publicize, I think that Samuel Hyman Cohen is someone who could have been, if not the one who effected the split, certainly someone who was vocal about his opinions on the *minhag Polen* style of service and maintaining a strict kosher lifestyle. The fact that he was also elected Secretary to what became Sherith Israel possibly lends further credence to this idea.

In 1858 his business in the interior led him to travel to Victoria, British Columbia, which he did with his brother, Joseph Cohen. Very little is known of what they were doing in Victoria, but David Rome's 1942 publication *The First*

*Two Years* mentions Samuel Hyman Cohen as having left Victoria for San Francisco to be married.<sup>7</sup>

The woman who caught his attention was Mrs. Sophie (née Myers) Waldow, a widow and a piano teacher, living in San Francisco since 1850. She was born about 1818. She had been previously married to Gustav Waldow, about whom little is known save the inscription on her headstone:



Waldow placed advertisements in the San Joaquin newspaper, offering 500 chickens for sale, and an advertisement for renting a house, both in 1852; after that nothing more has been found. We can presume he had been on a ship in the Pacific Ocean when he ran into trouble of some kind on the island of Vava'u. The island lies 193 miles north of Tonga.

As the last advertisement Gustav posted was in April 1852, he may have died either in late 1852 or in 1853.

It is not known how Samuel Hyman Cohen met Sophie Waldow, but on 25 February 1859 the couple were married; the ceremony was performed by the Rev. Julius Eckman. This is interesting, because Eckman was the first rabbi to serve Congregation Emanu-El (1854–1855). This was the congregation that Cohen had spoken so lowly of in his letter to his sister. Eckman left Emanu-El because he was not willing to accept some of the more liberal leanings of the congregation, however. By 1859 Eckman had given up the pulpit and established an Anglo-Jewish newspaper in San Francisco called *The Daily Gleaner*.



*The First Two Years* also recorded that in 1862 Cohen made a \$20.00 donation to the synagogue building fund in Victoria, but I believe after the marriage he stayed in San Francisco. The 1862 city directory records Samuel and Sophie living at 1505 Stockton Street.

On 18 June 1890 Samuel Hyman Cohen passed away in San Francisco, aged 72 years. He was buried in Home of Eternity Jewish Cemetery in Colma, south of San Francisco.

“Madame Waldow Cohen” always described herself as such in San Francisco newspaper advertisements. Her last “appearance” was in August 1890, at age 75. The fact that she always used a double-barreled surname may indicate that her love for her first husband was never extinguished. On 4 December 1903 Sophie Waldow Cohen passed away in San Francisco, aged 87 years. She was buried next to Samuel. It was only when I first visited their graves, in April 2010, that I became aware of Sophie’s first husband.

Another mystery was awaiting me there. Sophie was buried on one side of Samuel’s grave, but on the other side is a headstone that marks the burial of Mrs. Louisa Joseph, “a native of London, England, Born Oct 31, 1812, Died Feb 12, 1883. Sister of Samuel H. Cohen.” Who was she? It was time to call in reinforcements.

My partner in genealogical crime, Victoria Fisch, went to work and discovered that Louisa had lived most of her life as a spinster. A Solomons cousin living in South Carolina (of all places) may have sent word back to family in London that a “wife was needed”, so Louisa came and married Joseph Judah Joseph. It’s a long and complicated story, but suffice it to say that Joseph appeared to have left his first wife and an older child behind, then took the younger son with him and Louisa to the West Coast.

Joseph, his son Joseph, and Louisa were enumerated in the 1860 U.S. Federal Census in Butte County, California. Whether Louisa and Joseph were legally married we may never know, but the marriage apparently didn’t last, and Louisa ended up in San Francisco, where she died in 1883. Joseph’s former wife also ended up in California. Maybe she was chasing after him!

Perhaps the final “kicker” transpired when I was researching two of Samuel’s relatives. In his 1853 eight-page letter to Isaac Leeser, the closing paragraph lists the names of two references. One was the Rev. Moses N. Nathan, his first cousin, who, at the time of writing, was serving the English congregation in New Orleans; the other was Moses Eliazer Solomons, his uncle in London, who passed away in 1854.

I Googled both names and perhaps not unsurprisingly found a hit for each one on Geni.com. Curiously, Samuel Hyman Cohen himself doesn’t appear on Geni. On Ancestry, a search for him generated hits on five trees, but three of them state nothing about him other than the basics of his birth, marriage to Sophie, death, and burial. Two of them mention that Louisa was a sister, and one mentions a brother (Nathan). Two mention his parents, although the trees include no citations.

In casting my research net far and wide, I encountered a reference on Cemetery Scribes for a Solomon Hyman Cohen, his wife Ann (née Davis), and their children. Solomon’s father was Haim Benjamin HaCohen. Later research in the *Jewish Chronicle* revealed an 1883 death notice submitted by Solomon Hyman Cohen, who “deeply regretted” the death of his sister, Mrs. Louisa Joseph of San Francisco.<sup>8</sup>

Louisa appears in the 1841 English Census with her brother Nathan and parents Benjamin Hyman and Miriam Cohen. Hence Louisa now connects Samuel to Benjamin Hyman and Miriam. The two relatives he mentioned in the Leeser letter allow us to theorize that Miriam’s maiden name was Solomons.

This is why I think it’s important to illuminate these early English Jews who came to California around the time of the Gold Rush. Many descendants are probably unaware of an ancestor who came for the Gold Rush or arrived shortly thereafter. Every one of them has a story waiting to be told.

## Endnotes

1. “History”, *Congregation Sherith Israel*, <https://www.sherithisrael.org/history.html> (accessed 18 June 2020).
2. Wikipedia contributors, “Congregation Emanu-El (San Francisco)”, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregation\\_Emanu-El\\_\(San\\_Francisco\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregation_Emanu-El_(San_Francisco)) (accessed 18 June 2020).
3. Samuel Hyman Cohen, letter to Isaac Leeser, 25 August 1953, *Gershwind-Bennett Isaac Leeser Digital Repository*, Penn Libraries, [http://leeser.library.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx1FF10\\_52](http://leeser.library.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx1FF10_52) (accessed 18 June 2020).
4. “San Francisco”, *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 July 1851, page 327, column 1.
5. Ava Kahn, *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849–1880*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002, page 70.
6. Samuel Hyman Cohen, letter to Isaac Leeser.
7. David Rome, *The First Two Years: A Record of the Jewish Pioneers on Canada’s Pacific Coast, 1858–1860*, Montreal: H. M. Caiserman, 1942.
8. G. Laws and A. Shire, “Cohen Solomon Hyman”, *Cemetery Scribes*, <http://www.cemeteryscribes.com/getperson.php?personID=13703> (accessed 18 June 2020).



## Google Translate versus Professional Translations

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 currently the acting president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Oregon.

As a professional genealogist, one of the things I do is translation. I used to be a member of a group of professional genealogy translators who wanted to raise awareness of the benefit of using a professional translator with specialized genealogical knowledge. We didn't make much progress, which was often a topic in our monthly meetings. The lack of progress was also the main reason the group dissolved.

The biggest problem we seemed to have was conveying why it's better to use a professional translator, particularly one with specialized genealogical knowledge, as opposed to simply popping over to Google Translate and using its "automagic" translation. Google is awesome, right? It does so many cool things, and the translation is always improving. Why should I go out and actually pay someone when I can get it for free at home?

Well, for one thing, machine translation is far from perfect. Yes, it's improving all the time, but it still misses the mark quite often. An entertaining article by Fred Hoffman (a professional translator) that points this out was reprinted in the November 2016 issue of *ZichronNote* ("Google Translate: Fetus Farms and Swanky Oxen"). Another article by Fred ("The Right Word and the Wrong Word"), this one reprinted in the February 2011 issue of *ZichronNote*, truly makes clear why relying only on modern machine translation is no substitute for effort taken to find the correct meaning of an obscure obsolete word.

Then what's a genealogist to do? To be fair, Google Translate does have its place. If you don't understand the language a record or document is written in, absolutely go to Google Translate, enter the text, and see

what Google comes up with. It is rarely perfect, but you should be able to get the gist of what's going on. After that, if it seems as though the document is relevant to your research, find a professional translator to do a more accurate, more nuanced translation. A genealogical translator will often also be able to give you historical context around the record that is being translated and the locations that are mentioned in it.

But why not just settle for what Google gives you? I equate that rough translation Google Translate gives you with the ubiquitous family trees on Ancestry.com and other sites. Since the vast majority of those trees have no sources listed, I look at them as hints and possibilities. I use them to mine for ideas for my research. But I never rely only on them, because I have no idea where the information came from. They're stepping stones on a journey, but not the final destination.

Google Translate gives you hints. It's a "rough draft" of the meaning of your original text. But translation is an art, not a hard science, and machine translation still has many years to go before it can truly compare with what a professional translator can do (if it ever will). So it's a stepping stone on your journey to an accurate translation of your document.

Another suggestion you might hear for inexpensive translations is to try to find someone at your local college

or university, a native speaker who, as a student, is almost always looking for ways to supplement her income. The reason that is not your best choice is similar to the negative aspects of finding a translator through ATA (see below). Most



<https://pixabay.com/illustrations/globe-world-languages-translate-110775/>

people who speak a language, even as a native, are not familiar with obsolete words or with the specialized vocabulary we as genealogists deal with every day. In addition, just because someone speaks a language does not mean he is going to be a good translator. As with any specialized occupation, skill comes with experience. Unless that student has actual experience working as a translator (or possibly as an interpreter), consider it to be like Google Translate: You will get the gist of the meaning, but then go to a professional for the more complete translation and context.

And once you've decided you want to find a professional translator, where should you look? Well, for genealogy, I recommend going to the Association of Professional Genealogists site (<http://www.apgen.org/>), mousing over the "Find a Professional" link on the upper navbar, and clicking on "Directory." On that page, scroll down and choose "Translator" from the "Non-Research Specialties" and your desired language a little below that. Then look through the results.

APG translators cover a wide range, but not every language is available. The major languages are well represented, with 56 German, 46 French, 41 Italian, 35 Spanish, and 24 Latin translators. Languages thought of as more directly relevant to Jewish research also have decent numbers: fourteen Russian, ten Polish, eight Hebrew, and four Yiddish. There are even four each listed for Ukrainian and Serbo-Croatian; three Czech; two each for Arabic, Hungarian, Romanian, and Slovak; and one each for Lithuanian and Slovenian (relatively recent additions). But no listings come up for Latvian or Moldovan. So what to do if no APG member works in your language?

The next place to look is the American Translators Association, or ATA (<http://atanet.org/>). Near the top of the page you can search for a translator by your beginning (source) language and then the language you want it translated to (target). ATA of course has members who translate from French, Italian, Russian, and Czech, but you can also find the Latvian and Moldovan that were missing at APG. The advanced search allows you to look for a specialized knowledge area; unfortunately, ATA doesn't include genealogy on the list, which is why you're better off starting your search at APG. Professional genealogists are generally more familiar with terminology that appears in documents pertinent to family history research and often have come across obsolete terms. Most ATA translators focus on modern-day language and may misunderstand older terms.

After your translator is finished, two recommended final steps are:

- Read the translation carefully to be sure you understand it all. If there's anything that is unclear, ask the translator to explain it. Words often have multiple meanings, and occasionally the translator might pick the wrong meaning, especially in translating colloquial materials, such as family letters.
- Have the translation reviewed by an editor who is skilled in the target language, particularly if your document is something less straightforward than a vital record, such as a letter or memoir. The editor can help you make sure that the translation sounds natural and has the right tone in the target language.

Remember that translation is an art, not a science, so judgment is required to do it well.



### Invite a Friend to Join SFBAJGS

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

### SFBAJGS Family Finder Update

The surnames and towns being researched by our newest member 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>    |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Rappoport         | Belarus; Russia      | Claire Rappoport |
| Schepps/Scheppski | Poland               | Claire Rappoport |

## The IAJGS Virtual Conference, 10–13 August 2020: From the Comfort of Your Own Chair

Robinn Magid

Robinn Magid serves as the volunteer chair of the IAJGS 2020 virtual conference and also served as chair of the IAJGS 2018 Warsaw conference. She lives in Berkeley, California, and can be reached at [chair@iajgs2020.org](mailto:chair@iajgs2020.org) or [Robinn.Magid@gmail.com](mailto:Robinn.Magid@gmail.com). She is a long-time member of SFBAJGS.

Registration is off to a good start for the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, which will be held 10–13 August 2020 in the middle of a pandemic instead of a hotel in San Diego. Being adaptable and blessed with electricity and dedicated volunteers, we have converted to a virtual conference that will still feature intriguing topics ranging from DNA testing to the “How To” sessions that our attendees have come to love. Recognizing that our diaspora lives across time zones, this conference will feature a video archive of recorded presentations, selected from the 100+ speakers who were accepted to speak in San Diego. The video archive will be available for convenient viewing by paid attendees for up to 60 days following the end of the online conference.

Our deep content may be primarily prerecorded, but this special 40th anniversary conference will feature four days of live streamed events including plenary sessions, panels, and game shows to provide an interactive and entertaining learning environment with sufficient breaks to combat “viewer fatigue.” Topics include choices for all levels of genealogists, and the tentative program appears on our Web site.

Arthur Kurzweil, the founding father of our movement in many ways, will be on hand with Sallyann Sack-Pikus, editor of *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, in a conversation about the evolving story of



these Jewish genealogy conferences. Arthur served as cochair of the first “seminar” on Jewish genealogy and authored the inspirational classic, *From Generation to Generation*, regarded by many as “The Bible” of Jewish genealogy. Sallyann cochaired more than one of these conferences (back in the day when hundreds of people could meet in person). What a great year to explore how Times Have Changed! They’ll even honor the person or persons who

have attended the greatest number of these conferences. Join us to find out who that is!

Our speaker roster includes some of the biggest names in genealogy: Adam Brown (AvotaynuDNA), Janine Cloud (Family Tree DNA), Kitty Munson Cooper ([blog.KittyCooper.com](http://blog.KittyCooper.com)), Crista Cowan (Ancestry.com), Schelly Talalay Dardashti (MyHeritage and Tracing the Tribe), Stanley Diamond (JRI-Poland), Daniel Horowitz (MyHeritage), W. Todd Knowles (FamilySearch), and Randy Schoenberg (Geni.com and Jewish Genealogy Portal).

We’ll provide meeting time for Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and Birds-of-a-Feather groups (BOFs), groups which share topical or geographical interests. Come visit our site at <https://www.iajgs2020.org/>, where you can register for the conference. Join the discussion on Facebook by requesting membership at IAJGS Conference Discussion. Early bird discount pricing is available until **5 July 2020!** See you online!





## SFBAJGS Activity Report for 2019

Jeff Lewy, SFBAJGS Treasurer

This annual report to our members covers our activities, financial results, and grants to other organizations in 2019.

We held seventeen meetings presenting personal family histories and describing a range of genealogical sources and research techniques. We participated again in San Francisco History Days, a jamboree of many local groups interested in local history. We also participate in the monthly "Help With Your Family Tree" events at San Francisco's Jewish Community Library, where people interested in developing their family history and genealogy bring their "brick walls" to moderator Judy Baston, and we help Judy offer research suggestions as homework to knock down those walls.

We are among the six largest societies in the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), with more than 200 members. Our members make us one of the most active Jewish genealogical societies by taking active roles in moderating research divisions (formerly special interest groups) online for JewishGen and participating in other efforts to find and provide public and online access to vital records and other records of genealogical interest.

Although our name says we are the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society, the "San Francisco Bay Area" part 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.

Sixteen members attended the 39th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, held in Cleveland, Ohio in August 2019, and seven society members made presentations at the conference.

Our 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 formerly closed or unavailable records that support Jewish genealogical research available online

- 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 that information 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 \$4,950 to eleven organizations for their activities. We include the purpose of our donations and the URLs 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://www.oaklandfhc.org/>

### National and International

- Reclaim the Records: A nonprofit organization set up just five 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 its site. It has already opened a variety of records in New York City, other cities in New York State, New Jersey, Washington State, Missouri, and Wyoming. Recent additions include death indices in Nebraska and Mississippi and the New York State marriage index.

[https:// www.reclaimtherecords.org/](https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/)

Reclaim the Records is pursuing efforts in many states where officials have not previously allowed public access (see <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/to-do/>).

- Italian Genealogical Group: support its ongoing online indexing of New York City records. This year it has added New York City death records and has begun to digitize the index for New York naturalization records. <http://www.italiagen.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. JRI-Poland now contains 5.8 million records from 550 Polish towns. <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 the 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: pay for scanning of records at regional archives in Ukraine. These records became available only a couple of years ago. Our grant pays for scanning these records to accelerate their digitization and posting online. The work is ongoing but may be halted by changes in the management of the archives. <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 completed the transcription of about 5,000 burial records from the former Beth Israel Synagogue in San Francisco, covering the years from 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. The records are now online at JewishGen's JOWBR site, and the original register has been given to the History Center at the San Francisco Public Library for archival storage.

We have also continued work on two other projects:

- Burial records for Sherith Israel Synagogue dating from about 1861 to 1889. These records are particularly valuable since they provide a partial substitute for San Francisco City records destroyed in the 1906 earthquake.

- Burial cards for Home of Eternity Cemetery in Oakland from the 1880's until 2000

## Financial Results for 2019

Revenues for 2019 were just over \$9,300, slightly more than in past years, with about \$5,000 in dues from 221 members and about \$4,300 in donations. 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 \$10,900, generating a loss of about \$1,600. This loss was incurred on purpose to make use of our past surpluses and was primarily a result of the \$4,950 in contributions to other groups. Those contributions are described above. Other major categories of expenses were costs of meetings and publicity, \$1,600; publication of five issues of *ZichronNote*, \$1,500; and Web site maintenance and management, \$500. All other expenses, including insurance and other administrative expenses, totaled about \$2,300.

On page 15 are simple pie charts showing the primary categories of revenue and expenses.

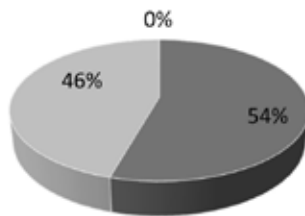
We again thank you for your membership, your donations, and your interest in Jewish genealogy and family history. Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions to improve our performance and activities, and how we

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 another year of accomplishments in 2020.



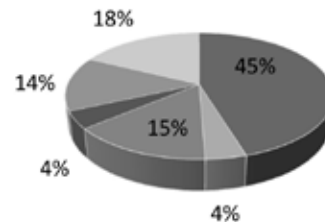
### SFBAJGS Revenue - 2019

- Dues
- Donations
- Interest income & other revenue



### SFBAJGS Expense - 2019

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



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Samuel J. Salkin, Executive Director (FDR 3371)

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[www.sinaichapel.org](http://www.sinaichapel.org)

## Upcoming SFBAJGS Events

**Sunday, 19 July:** *Bring Your Own Brick Wall.* Bring your problems, questions, and documents (copies, please, no originals), and a panel of experienced researchers will brainstorm to provide information and suggestions that will show your next steps and may help you solve some of your family mysteries. *We are working on converting this to an online format.*

**Monday, 24 August:** *Getting Ready for the 1950 Census: Searching with and without a Name Index.* Steve Morse will discuss the various tools on his One-Step Website that will be helpful when the 1950 census is released in less than two years. *We are working on converting this to an online presentation.*

**Sunday, 13 September:** *20th Century Immigration and Naturalization Records.* Marisa Louie Lee will discuss Alien Case Files (A-Files), who and what is in them, and how to find and access them. *Zoom presentation.*

See page 4 for other online events of interest.  
For more and updated program information visit <http://www.sfbajgs.org/>.

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