



# זכרונות ZichronNote

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

Volume XL, Number 3/4

August/November 2020

### How did she do it?

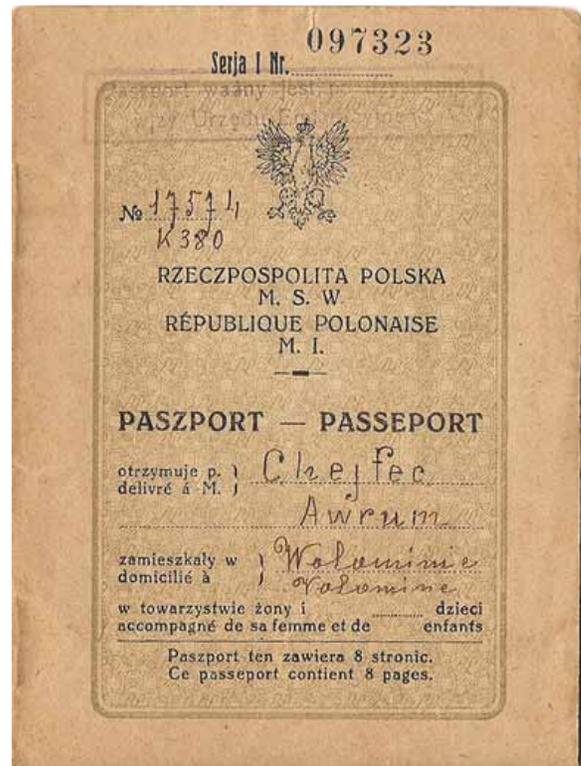
**Following the path of an elderly grandmother and her three grandchildren through Europe and to the United States just after World War I. See page 5.**

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*This page from the Polish passport of Avrum Chafetz (spelled as Awrum Chejfec) shows that he was living in Wolomin, a town near Warsaw, Poland.*

*See page 5.*

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

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**President's Message**

**COVID and Family History**

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

I think it's obvious to say that the COVID-19 pandemic is going to stick around a little while longer; probably a lot longer. Don't worry, I am not going to use this platform to apportion blame on how things could have been done differently. But being "always enthusiastic" in history and geography, something that was observed by my primary school teacher in her 1961 end-of-year school report after I had recently turned 9 years old, got me thinking about this pandemic and its effect on history and geography.

In all likelihood, I think the reason the COVID-19 pandemic affected the world so quickly is because of air travel. Just think, with vast numbers of planes and people flying to so many places in a very short time, is it any wonder that the pandemic took hold so quickly? Hence the most modern method of transportation has been partly responsible for the way many of us live our lives these days. We also don't know when or how it will end, or what form society will take in the future.

A little more than 250 years ago in England an event occurred that also totally disrupted nearly everyone's life: the Industrial Revolution. This wasn't something that happened overnight but took many years, about fifty years in all. A combination of technological events had reached a critical mass that caused the Industrial Revolution to take place. The disruption had both positive and negative effects. It too was helped by a new transportation system that changed the way people lived—canals.

On the one hand there began the huge shift by people off the land and into cities as fledging industries took shape; they needed workers by the hundreds. Goods had previously moved at the slow pace of a plodding horse, pulling a wagon loaded with maybe half a ton of goods.

But over those fifty years, the building of several thousand miles of canals all over country, linking cities and towns, rural areas to urban areas, and boats moving at 4–6 miles an hour, loaded with forty tons, meant much more freight could be moved, and much more quickly. If you don't believe me, just read the story of Josiah Wedgwood. However, by the end of the Industrial Revolution the canals were about to be superseded by a railroad network; people and freight were about to move even faster.

*Continued on page 19*

## Society News

### New Members

Vicky Furstenberg Ferraresi ..... viferra@outlook.com  
Glenda Rubin ..... glendathree@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).

### 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).

### Errata

Corrections to the May 2020 issue of *ZichronNote*: In the article about Samuel Hyman Cohen, in the sentence on page 9, “[Samuel Hyman Cohen] was buried in Home of Eternity Jewish Cemetery in Colma, south of San Francisco.”, the cemetery name should have been HILLS of Eternity. On the front cover, “Gold Ruth” should obviously have been “Gold Rush”, but perhaps Ruth enjoyed being gold.

### Member in the News

Member **Robinn Magid** was awarded the IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2020 IAJGS Virtual International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Read tributes to her on page 15.

### SFBAJGS 40th Anniversary

Board members knew that the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society’s 40th anniversary was imminent, but we couldn’t find concrete evidence of whether it was formed in 1980 or 1981, and as we all know, genealogy without documentation is mythology. Well, after having searched in several places, President Jeremy Frankel finally discovered a notice in the *Jewish Bulletin* stating that the society was formed 22 August 1980. Of course, that meant the 40th anniversary fell during COVID! Since we were unable to meet in person in 2020, we have postponed the big party to 2021 so we can celebrate together.

That said, as we are all still in pandemic mode, the celebration won’t be happening immediately, so we have even more time to prepare. (How’s that for putting a positive spin on it?) And this is where you come in! We would like to start collecting your memories of SFBAJGS: events, classes, get-togethers, and other ways in which you have enjoyed being a member and benefited from our work. Did you make a great discovery because of something you learned at a talk? Meet a cousin? Help someone else with information you had? Tell us about what the society has meant to you over the years. Please send your contributions and comments to [newsletter@sfbajgs.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbajgs.org).

### Kirkuty Project Update

Because of the pandemic the photographer could not travel and visit new cemeteries. He did however compile

*Continued on page 19*

### Meeting Times and Locations

This is the normal SFBAJGS meeting schedule when not affected by pandemics:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>San Francisco:</b> | <b>Sunday. Doors open 12:30 p.m. Program begins at 1:00 p.m.</b><br><b>NEW LOCATION:</b> San Francisco Public Library, 100 Larkin Street, Latino/Hispanic Room<br>Easily reachable by BART: across the street from Civic Center BART station. |
| <b>Oakland:</b>       | <b>Sunday. Doors open 1:00 p.m. Program begins at 1:30 p.m.</b><br>Oakland FamilySearch Library, 4766 Lincoln Avenue  |
| <b>Palo Alto:</b>     | <b>Monday. Doors open 7:00 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m.</b><br>Congregation Etz Chayim, 4161 Alma Street  |
- See Back Cover for Calendar of Upcoming SFBAJGS Meetings**

## Genealogy Calendar of Events

### Local and Regional

Monday, 25 January 2021. "Researching Women in the 1800s in the US." Oakmont Genealogy Club. Zoom. <https://sites.google.com/site/oakmontgenealogyclub/>

Sunday, 31 January 2021. Rabbi Peretz Wolf-Prusan, "Italian Illuminated Ketubot." Jewish Community Library. Zoom. <https://jewishlearning.works/jewish-community-library/jewish-community-library-events/>

Monday, 8 February 2021. Stewart Blandón Traiman, "Citations: Easier Than You Think." Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society. Zoom. [program@l-ags.org](mailto:program@l-ags.org)

Tuesday, 16 February 2021. Kathryn Marshall, "Researching War of 1812 Records." San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society. Zoom. <https://www.srvgensoc.org/>

Tuesday, 16 February 2021. Tom Calarco, "Persistence: The Rewards It Can Bring the Researcher of Local History." Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. Zoom. <http://www.scchgs.org/>

Saturday, 20 February 2021. David Brunzel, "DNA: Finding My Grandfather." San Mateo County Genealogical Society. Zoom. <http://www.smcgs.org/>

Sunday, 21 February 2021. Andrew Zalewski, "Galician Research." Jewish Genealogical Society of Sacramento. Zoom. <https://www.jewishgen.org/jgs-sacramento/>

Saturday, 27 March 2021. Grant Din, "Angel Island." San Mateo County Genealogical Society. Zoom. <http://www.smcgs.org/>

### State and National

Wednesday–Saturday, 19–22 May 2021. NGS Family History Conference, "Deep Roots of a Nation." Richmond, Virginia. <https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org/>

Monday–Thursday, 2–5 August 2021. IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. <http://www.iajgs2021.org/>

### International

Thursday–Saturday, 25–27 February 2021. RootsTech Connect. Online and FREE. <https://www.rootstech.org/>

6 October–4 November 2021 (Cheshvan 5782). 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

Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center. <https://acpl-cms.wise.oclc.org/genealogy>

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>

Jewish Genealogical Society of Long Island. <https://jgsli.org/>; <https://jgsli.org/youtube/> (recorded)

Jewish Genealogical Society of New York. <https://jgsny.org/programs-civi/year.listevents/2021/01/24/>

JewishGen. <https://www.jewishgen.org/live>, <https://www.youtube.com/user/JewishGen613/videos> (recorded)

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

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

Moment Magazine. [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7oVkadwPksjzJ\\_i0J1UZ6ulledRSclx2](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7oVkadwPksjzJ_i0J1UZ6ulledRSclx2) (recorded; several relevant to genealogy)

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

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

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

Utah Jewish Genealogical Society. <https://ujgs.org/blog/>

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



### **SFBAJGS Board Meetings**

SFBAJGS board meetings are open to members to attend, and we welcome your participation. The next board meeting is scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, 21 February over Zoom. If you are interested in joining us and learning more about how your board reaches decisions for the society, contact the editor at [newsletter@sfbajgs.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbajgs.org).

## 100 Years after the Pogrom: A Journey of Memory

Shelley S. Hébert

Shelley has held executive and board leadership roles in the San Francisco Bay Area/Silicon Valley Jewish community. She began her career as a journalist and currently focuses on strategic communications and writing.

This past July I had expected to be preparing for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Russia and Belarus, with a stopover in Warsaw, Poland—the culmination of a family history journey that began exactly two years ago. Despite having to cancel those plans because of COVID-19, however, the journey of discovery I have undertaken continues.

In July 2018, a startling e-mail from someone I did not know arrived in my inbox via 23andMe. The sender said that, in addition to a DNA match, her family and mine share two surnames: Smolkin and Heifetz. This unusual combination told me instantly that although I had not responded to previous inquiries from possible distant relatives, I could not ignore this one.

Within minutes of replying, I learned for the first time that I had a granduncle who was killed in a pogrom. His murder left three young orphaned children in the care of my paternal great-grandmother, for whom I was named but knew nothing about until that moment. A widow in her early 70's when the pogrom occurred in 1920, Shima Chafetz had somehow managed to get three of her grandchildren out of Russia and to the United States. Amazingly, the person who contacted me is a daughter of one of those rescued children, now a grandmother herself.

A flood of information and restored family connections soon followed. Into my inbox flowed a treasure trove of 100-year-old documents related to the pogrom and my great-grandmother's incredible journey. I was enthralled to realize that such precious items had survived for generations. Among them were a Yiddish newspaper article about the pogrom, original correspondence from the U.S. Consul's office in Riga to my great-grandmother, a complete passport for one of the children, and various documents related to their immigration and transit.

Decades-old audio and video interviews with long-deceased family members were shared with me, as well as a professionally produced family genealogy report. One day, a package appeared on my doorstep containing a book titled *WITSEC: Inside the Federal Witness Protection Program*. I was astonished to find that on page 354 is a paragraph about my great-grandmother. The book's co-author, Gerald Shur, is married to my newly found cousin Miriam Shur. He included stories about my great-grandmother in the book

as the possible source of Miriam's courage throughout his distinguished career in federal law enforcement.

A web page about a 17th-century rabbi in Venice, Italy (<http://brookwrite.com/chafetz/moshe.html>) who may be in our family line was also shared with me, created by another relative I did not know. I went searching for that relative online, thinking he was in Alabama (where many of my immigrant ancestors settled), and instead found him living nearby in the Bay Area and directing the Silicon Valley Shakespeare Festival.

### How Did She Do It?

In the midst of so many exciting discoveries, I found myself looking again and again at the old documents. A fragmented picture began to emerge. It showed me that for more than two years, my impoverished elderly great-grandmother had somehow traveled across Eastern Europe from her home in Zhuravichi (now in modern-day Belarus), keeping three young children fed, clothed, and sheltered. Where did they live? How did she do it? What route did they take? I knew that several of her older children were already in America when this occurred. Had they tried to help her? What were the conditions for Jewish immigrants fleeing pogroms in a time of political upheaval, violence, and social turmoil?

My research goals then became clear—to honor my granduncle's memory by learning as much as I could about the pogrom in which he died, and to tell the heroic story of my great-grandmother's journey. Two years later, I have made significant progress on both.

### Finding and Following Clues

The more closely I looked at the old documents, the more I saw details that offered clues about the route they likely traveled. Following each clue led to me to find others, using a wide range of sources.

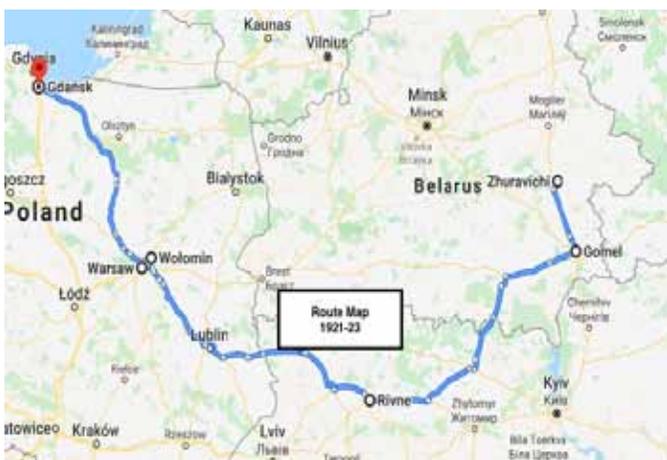
- **Correspondence.** From correspondence sent to my great-grandmother by the U.S. Consul in Riga, I learned that her sons in America were working with an Alabama Congressman's office to try to assist her. At a time when America was on the verge of closing its doors to immigrants and would soon for the first time enact legislation with legal quotas, Congressman John McDuffie chose to help my family.

- **Passport.** Examining the passport of one of the children (Avrum Chafetz), I saw that it was issued by Poland, it was written in Polish and French, and his place of previous residence was indicated as Wolomin. I was able to identify Wolomin as a town 12 miles from Warsaw. Why would they have gone there?

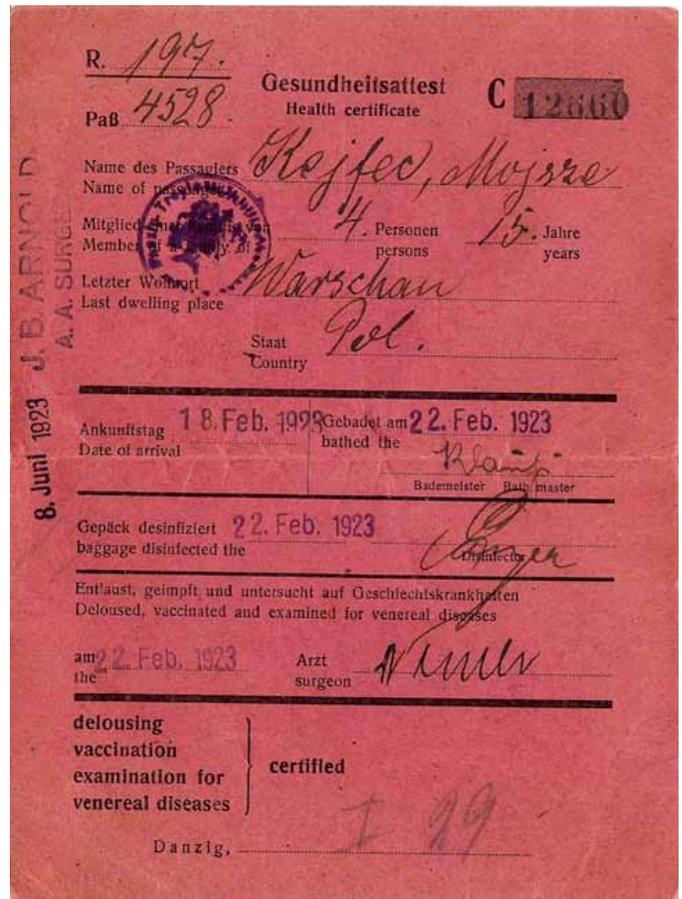
- **Newspaper Archives.** A search on the Historical Jewish Press site (<https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/newspapers/jpress>), founded by the National Library of Israel and Tel Aviv University, provided the answer. On 1 December 1921, an article in a French publication titled *Paix et Droix* ("Peace and Law"), under the heading "En Pologne" ("In Poland"), had the following headline: "L'Assistance aux Emigrés et aux Rapatriés de Russie" ("Assistance for Immigrants and Russian Refugees"). The article described aid being provided by L'Alliance Israélite to emigrants from Russia and Ukraine, focusing on *les principaux passages* ("the main routes"). It then described the resources being provided in Wolomin to 4,000 refugees "from border localities."

- **Audio and Video Interviews.** The hours I spent transcribing old video and audio interviews with long-deceased elderly relatives produced even more clues. As an elderly man, Morris Heifetz (one of the rescued children) told stories of the harrowing journey, mentioning places named Gomel and Rovno. With the help of Google Maps, I created a route from Zhuravichi (using its exact latitude and longitude, found on JewishGen) via Gomel and Rovno (now Rivne) to Wolomin.

- **Immigration and Travel Documents.** From documents related to their travel by ship, I saw that Shima received a



Using Google Maps, I was able to draw the likely route of travel that my great-grandmother and the children followed from 1921 until their departure by ship to the United States in 1923. The old documents and recorded interviews contained clues about the locations in which they stopped or lived.



This health certificate, issued for Morris in Danzig in February 1923, indicates that the family's most recent place of residence had been Warsaw.

postcard addressed to her in a place named Zoppot. This resort town on the Baltic Sea became part of the Free City of Danzig (now Gdańsk) in November 1920, just before the pogrom in which my granduncle died took place. A telegram to Shima from the Baltic America Line written in German instructed her to come to an office there with the required documents. This information made it possible to find the passenger list from June 1923, confirming that Shima and the children traveled from Danzig to New York on the S.S. *Polonia*. From the audio interview with Shima's son Morris, I learned that they had been forced to leave Poland when laws were suddenly changed, expelling immigrants. The Free City of Danzig may have been a place of refuge, as well as a port city from which they would later depart.

### Learning about the Pogrom

Among the documents I received from family members were two Yiddish newspaper clippings, which I was told were the way in which Shima's children in America learned that their brother had been killed. With help from several



This article is from the 30 December 1920 edition of the Jewish Morning Journal, a Yiddish newspaper published in New York from 1901–1971.

Translation:

*Robbers Carry Out Pogrom in Shturavitz*  
*(Special cable from our London correspondent C. Lavaros.)*  
 Copyright, 1920, by Jewish News Service, Inc.  
 London, Wednesday. — A private letter which was received here from Shturavitz [a town] near Maliev. A band of robbers carried out a pogrom.  
 Among the murdered were Yehuda Hamberger, Meyer Hilles, Shlomo Ber, Shlomo Mendes, Nachman Leizem, Yitzchak Velles, Fischel Hamberger, his son and two daughters, and Wolf Spintes.

Yiddish-speaking friends and later a translator, I discovered that these articles included lists of names of Jewish victims. Not only was my granduncle’s name (Yitzhak Aaron Chafetz) among them, but I was shocked to see that another victim had my maiden name, Smolkin. I knew that my paternal grandfather also came from Zhuravichi, so it is quite possible that more than one of my relatives was murdered in this pogrom. Through my research I was also able to learn that my great-grandmother’s maiden name was Zlotnikov—and then sadly saw that another victim in the same pogrom had that surname as well.

To understand the environment in which this tragedy occurred, I have been greatly aided by generous scholars who have done remarkable research about this dark time in Jewish history and recently published important books. Among them are historians Steve Zipperstein (*Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History*), Brendan McGeever (*Antisemitism and the Russian Revolution*), and Elissa Bemporad (*Legacy of Blood: Jews, Pogroms and Ritual Murder in the Lands of the Soviets*; <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/a-right-to-truthful-remembrance/>). I am grateful to each of them for offering suggestions to me that have proven to be valuable in my research.

Although I have yet to find a description of the pogrom in Zhuravichi beyond the testimonial of my cousin, who was a child that terrible Shabbat night, I did find another Yiddish newspaper article about it by searching in the Historical Jewish Press online archive. This was a painstaking process, since Zhuravichi has many transliterated spellings. That approach was actually not successful, but when I copied the exact Yiddish spelling of the word “pogrom” into the search bar (using a Hebrew font) and set the date range for December 1920, an article I had not seen previously appeared. A comparison with the articles from the family files confirmed it was indeed a story about the pogrom in which my granduncle lost his life.

**Continuing the Journey of Memory**

There is no date on the annual Jewish calendar when we remember the thousands who lost their lives in pogroms. When I realized that 2020 was exactly 100 years since the pogrom took place that changed so many lives in my family, it brought an extra measure of meaning to the research I have undertaken. My cousins Miriam Shur, Aaron Heifetz, and Warren Brook have spent numerous hours on family history calls with me, and my brother Stuart Smolkin has collaborated extensively.

Preserving and sharing this story with the extended family I am so fortunate to know now has been truly gratifying. It was DNA that enabled me to reconnect with them, and in this time of enormous challenge for everyone, I draw strength from knowing that the courage and perseverance of my great-grandmother is in my DNA as well.



## Ten Reasons Why Jewish Genealogy Is So Challenging: Part 1

Dr. Jeffrey Mark Paull

Jeff was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After a career as an environmental toxicologist and scientific expert in the field of occupational and environmental health, he has devoted himself to his passion for Jewish genealogical research and writing. Information about his genealogy and family history projects may be found at <https://www.ANobleHeritage.com/>.

This is a summary article written expressly for ZichronNote. The original article from which it was excerpted, "Why Is Jewish Genealogy So Challenging?", may be found at [https://www.academia.edu/41737962/Why\\_Is\\_Jewish\\_Genealogy\\_So\\_Challenging](https://www.academia.edu/41737962/Why_Is_Jewish_Genealogy_So_Challenging).

### Introduction

When I first began researching my family history, in 2008, I had no idea how challenging it would be. But, in a little less than one year, with no prior genealogical experience, I had succeeded in tracing my family's roots over a millennium of history, all the way back to the Medieval era and the legendary rabbi Rashi (A.D. 1040–1105). Four years later, I published a book on my family's genealogy and history, titled *A Noble Heritage*.<sup>1</sup> As a novice genealogist, I recall thinking at the time, "*This Jewish genealogy thing is not so difficult after all.*"

I did not realize how fortunate I had been until I began receiving feedback from other genealogists and family researchers. Some of them told of losing their entire family in the Holocaust and of having no links to the past. Others had stories of having to start family trees from scratch and of their parents not knowing the surnames of all four of their grandparents. Nearly all were astounded that I was able to find so many existing Ukrainian vital records and censuses with my ancestors in them. In contrast, their ancestors were from places where Jewish genealogical records either had not survived or were fragmented and incomplete.

It was only then that I began to appreciate that in tracing my Jewish ancestry so far back, I had succeeded in doing what so many other family researchers, many of whom were far more experienced genealogists than I, could not. The level of success that I experienced over a relatively short period was far beyond what they had been able to achieve over their many years or decades of dedicated genealogical research. I began to wonder about the reasons for my unusual success story.

Asked by Arthur Kurzweil, "Why do some genealogists have more success than others," Miriam Weiner responded:<sup>2</sup>

Many factors come into play here. For instance, researching an unusual name from a small (but not tiny) locality is easier than researching the Cohens from Warsaw. Coming from a rabbinic line increases the possibility of tracing back further because there is significant documentation of rabbinic families.

Country of origin also makes a difference. Although some material has become accessible in the former USSR, the lack of indexes and inventories, coupled with difficult travel conditions, makes it very difficult for the average traveler to successfully research this material. Finally, luck does play a part.

My genealogical research checked all those boxes. I was researching an unusual name (Polonsky) from two small (but not tiny) neighboring localities (Shpola and Ekaterinopol). My ancestors were descendants of a rabbinical line; Rabbi Shmuel Polonsky married the daughter of the renowned Rabbi Pinchas Shapira of Korets, and he and his descendants served as heads of the rabbinical court (*Av Beit Din*) of Ekaterinopol for more than a century.

Although I did not realize it at the time, my ancestors inhabited the rare "Goldilocks Zone" of Jewish genealogy. I was also very lucky—the critical vital records and census documents that I needed to link my family to our Polonsky ancestors existed in the Russian archives, and I was able to obtain images of all needed documents.

Over the past ten years, I have conducted numerous autosomal<sup>3,4,5</sup> and Y-DNA research studies of both Jewish<sup>6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14</sup> and non-Jewish populations<sup>15,16</sup> and have had the experience of researching and comparing their family trees and genetic markers.

Through these many research studies, I have experienced both the triumphs and frustrations of Jewish genealogical research. Out of these experiences came published articles: "Challenges Involved in Conducting DNA Tests of Pedigreed Descendants of Rabbinical Lineages"<sup>17</sup> and "When Y-DNA and *Yichus* Tell Different Stories."<sup>18</sup>

Suffice it to say that I long ago disabused myself of the naïve notion that Jewish genealogy is not challenging. In his seminal book, *Finding Our Fathers*, Dan Rottenberg summarized the state of American Jewish genealogy very succinctly:<sup>19</sup>

We know a great deal about the history of the Jews, yet remarkably little about the lives of individual Jews who may have been our ancestors. Until

recently, genealogy in the United States has been primarily the preserve of Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and with good reason: WASPs stay pretty much in the same part of the world from one century to the next, they keep neat and well-preserved records, their ancestors spoke the same language they do, and they have ancestral homelands that aren't behind the Iron Curtain. Most Jews, on the other hand — chased from country to country, their records obliterated, their synagogues and cemeteries destroyed — have assumed that it's simply impossible to trace their ancestries back more than a few generations, and so they haven't even tried.

Rottenberg's words "and so they haven't even tried" struck a familiar chord for me. At the outset of my genealogical journey, I vividly recall wrestling with the same negative thinking. "It's an impossible task," I told myself. "Don't bother to look—the records are gone, and you're not going to find anything. You are going to be disappointed. Save yourself the time and trouble."

So, what is it about Jewish genealogy that makes it so challenging and difficult? As someone who has been successful at tracing his family's Jewish ancestry back to the Middle Ages<sup>20</sup> and who has also encountered his share of genealogical challenges and brick walls along the way, I thought that it would be useful to share some of my experiences and insights regarding this very important question.

In this article, the main factors that are responsible for making Jewish genealogy so challenging are divided into ten main categories: (1) destruction of Jewish records, (2) difficulty in finding surviving Jewish documents, (3) language barriers, (4) history of Jewish surname adoption, (5) nature of the Jewish surname adoption process, (6) Americanization of Jewish surnames, (7) Jewish endogamy, (8) historical lack of family trees and paper trails, (9) the Holocaust, and (10) the Jewish immigrant experience in America.

Each of these ten factors is presented and briefly discussed in this article. It is only by fully understanding the challenges, problems, and difficulties faced by Jewish genealogists that effective strategies can be devised to deal with these issues and to find solutions.

## 1. Destruction of Jewish Records

Jewish vital records, including births, deaths, and marriages, were not generally recorded by civil authorities during the Middle Ages. Jewish communities, for the most

part, were permitted to govern themselves according to their own rules, and vital records were retained by local synagogues and, in some countries, by the churches. With rare exceptions, however, the fortunes of the Jewish community were often such that these records were eventually either lost or destroyed. Frequent expulsions and persecutions of Jews in Europe, in combination with numerous wars and border changes, contributed to the destruction and loss of most Jewish civil records prior to the 18th century.

Following Jewish emancipation in Europe,<sup>21</sup> governments began keeping Jewish civil records, including birth and death records and censuses.<sup>22</sup> Some countries did a better job of this than others. According to Dan Rottenberg: "it is in Eastern Europe that the greatest persecutions of Jews took place, along with the sloppiest record keeping, and so the problem of tracing ancestors there is greatest."<sup>23</sup>

The vast majority of American Jews have their roots in the former Russian Empire,<sup>24</sup> which contained within its borders Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Finland, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Baltic republics, and significant parts of Poland and Turkey.<sup>25, 26</sup> In the former Russian Empire, only a fraction of Jewish vital records and censuses have survived, and their availability varies widely from region to region.

Undoubtedly, the widespread destruction of Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues that took place during the numerous pogroms that swept through the Russian Pale of Settlement during the late 19th and early 20th centuries,<sup>27, 28</sup> in combination with virulent anti-Semitism in Russia and Ukraine both before and after World War II, is responsible for much of this destruction.<sup>29, 30</sup>

In addition, after centuries of neglect and improper storage, the scattered Jewish records that have survived in the Russian and Ukrainian archives are in an advanced state of degradation and decay. The archives are woefully underfunded and lack the technology and equipment for proper preservation, digitization, storage, fire protection, and security of records. This was demonstrated by the 2003 fire in the Kamyanskyi Podilskyi archive in Ukraine, the official cause of which was never made public, which destroyed many records.<sup>31</sup>

Many documents from the Kamyanskyi Podilskyi archive were salvaged but were damaged by fire and/or water. Now housed in the Khmelnytskyi archive, the documents are in the process of being restored and digitized, but, due to chronic underfunding of the archives, progress is extremely slow.

## 2. Difficulty of Finding Surviving Jewish Documents

Jewish civil records in the former Russian Empire, including Ukraine, were virtually inaccessible until the 1990's, following the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>32</sup> During the 1990's and well into the 2000's, obtaining a record from Russian or Ukrainian archives meant physically traveling to the archive and personally examining the metrical books and census records, or hiring a genealogy consultant or local archivist to search the archives. This was a very time-consuming and expensive process.



Documents damaged in the Kamyanets Podilskiy archive fire

Over the past decade, many vital records and censuses from Russian and Ukrainian archives have been digitized and made available online through JewishGen and other online Jewish genealogy sites, thereby eliminating the need to travel to the archives. This has greatly improved access to the records and has made it possible for many more people to find records for their ancestors.

One of the main problems, however, is that the availability of records is still very limited. For some towns and regions in Russia and Ukraine, no records exist at all; for others, only limited vital records and/or censuses for certain years survived. Miriam Weiner's Routes to Roots archive database provides a basic list of surviving documents and is a good place to start.<sup>33</sup>

In the Kamyanets Podilskiy archive, which had the fire in 2003, many documents were salvaged but were damaged by fire or water. They are in the process of being restored and digitized.

Many of the surviving Ukrainian records are in books for each town, and most are not digitized, nor are they indexed, translated, or freely available online. Researching these records often requires traveling to an LDS Family History Center and going page by page through hundreds or thousands of records written in old-style Russian script—a very tedious process. This situation is gradually changing, but again, progress is slow.

Potential pitfalls in searching the existing records are associated with identifying where one's ancestors were from. It is not always as straightforward as going by the town name that was entered on an immigration or a naturalization record. Often immigrants who were from a small town or *shtetl* just gave the name of the nearest large town, the province, or the country (*e.g.*, Russia) on their immigration and naturalization records.



1834 Kiev revision list

Yet another complicating factor was the way in which revision lists (censuses) in the Russian Empire worked. People were not necessarily included in a census according to the community in which they lived at the time of the census. Rather, they might have been included in the census for the community to which they (or their ancestors) originally belonged. Hence, you might be surprised to search a Berdychiv census for your family, only to find that they belonged to the community of Zhytomyr.

Another potential pitfall is that many censuses were conducted only for men, because their main purpose was for military conscription. Vital records and some censuses do include women, but there are few such surviving censuses from the early 1800's and even fewer vital records.

## 3. Language Barriers

Language barriers are a well known problem in conducting Jewish genealogical research. Our immigrant ancestors primarily spoke Yiddish, Polish, Russian, German, and/or Hebrew, whereas most of us speak English. This language barrier has proven to be a significant obstacle and has prevented many American Jews from even attempting to search for records for their ancestors. Most records from the Russian Empire, even when available in digital form, are not yet translated into English.

European civil records (*e.g.*, censuses) were written in the official language of the country at the time the record was created, while metrical records (registrations of birth, death, marriage, and divorce) were kept by the clergy of various faiths and written in the language used by the faith (*e.g.*, Hebrew for Jewish records).

The alphabet used for the record may present additional challenges. Although Czech, Hungarian, Polish, and Romanian records use Latin script (with some additional

characters, accent marks, and diacritical marks), documents in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were often written in old-style German script, and those in Russian and Ukrainian archives were written in an old form of Cyrillic; the handwritten, cursive, old-style script is challenging to decipher. Similarly, rabbinical texts documenting lineage are often written in an older form of premodern Hebrew,<sup>34</sup> which is also extremely difficult to read and translate.

Sephardic researchers face challenges due to the wide range of languages in which information is recorded; restrictions on access; informal archives; decentralized, small communities where Sephardim lived; and unusual handwriting in records. Sephardic Jewish records were written in Hebrew, Ladino, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, and other languages associated with their geographic locations.<sup>35</sup> Additional traces of Sephardic families are found in even more languages across western, central, and eastern Europe and wherever Jewish communities existed.<sup>36</sup>

Another often overlooked problem that is created by language barriers is in the creation of the records themselves. If Russian civil authorities did not speak or understand Yiddish, then mistakes, such as incorrect spelling of family names, parents' names, or town names, could easily occur in the censuses or vital records. The same thing is true of American census takers. This complicates the task

of searching the archives and online databases and could potentially cause the correct records to be overlooked or rejected.

Jewish tombstone inscriptions are generally written in Hebrew. Although this used to present a problem for descendants who were unable to read Hebrew, now it is relatively easy to post a photo of a tombstone inscription on a Jewish social media site and obtain a translation.

*Tombstone of the author's great-grandfather*



#### 4. History of Jewish Surname Adoption

For many Jewish genealogists, myself included, it came as something of a shock to learn that as recently as the early 1800's, most Ashkenazi Jews did not have surnames. For most of Jewish history, Jews did not use surnames as we know them today; use of surnames by Jews is a relatively recent custom.<sup>37</sup> This is a major genealogical handicap that is endemic to Jewish genealogy.

Steven Weitzman, director of the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, stated, "A lot of us, we don't know a lot about our ancestors prior to our grandparents." Weitzman indicated that the popularity of DNA testing among Jews "might be connected to how hard it is for most Ashkenazi Jews in this country to trace their roots; Jews in Central and Eastern Europe didn't have last names until the 18th or 19th centuries."<sup>38</sup>

To truly understand the complexities of Jewish surnames, and the challenges that they pose for conducting Jewish genealogical research, it is important to understand both when and how Jewish surnames were adopted.

Historically, Jews used Hebrew patronymic names. In the Jewish patronymic system, the given name is followed by either *ben* ("son of") or *bat* ("daughter of") and then the father's given name.

Fixed family surnames gained popularity among Sephardic Jews in Iberia and elsewhere as early as the 10th or 11th century but did not spread widely to the Ashkenazi Jews of Germany or Eastern Europe until the 18th and 19th centuries, when the adoption of German surnames was imposed in exchange for Jewish emancipation.<sup>39</sup>

The process of assigning permanent surnames to Jewish families began in Austria. On 23 July 1787, five years after the Edict of Tolerance, the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II issued a decree called *Das Patent über die Judennamen*, which compelled Jews to adopt German surnames. Prussia did so soon after, beginning with the city of Breslau in 1790.<sup>40</sup>

Napoleon, in a decree of 20 July 1808, insisted that Jews adopt fixed surnames. His decree covered all lands west of the Rhine; many other German states required surname adoption within a few years. The city of Hamburg was the last German state to complete the process, in 1849.<sup>41</sup>

Between 1772 and 1815, the map of Eastern Europe changed dramatically as a result of three partitions of Poland and the Napoleonic wars. Prior to this period, although a great many Jews lived in Poland, they had been prohibited from living in the Russian Empire. Over the centuries, many regulations had made it impossible for

Jews to come into Russia, the last of which appeared on 4 December 1762, in a manifesto signed by Czarina Catherine the Great proclaiming that henceforth all foreigners were permitted to live in Russia, except Jews.<sup>42</sup>

In 1772, 1793, and 1795, Russia annexed Polish territory, each time acquiring large Jewish populations. As a result of these territorial changes, a massive Jewish population abruptly became subjects of the Russian czar. On 23 June 1794, the Pale of Settlement—the only area in Russia in which Jewish settlement was permitted—was defined. Migration of the new Jewish subjects into other areas of the Empire was vigorously restricted.<sup>43</sup>

This large Jewish population generally did not have surnames. The standard naming pattern used at that time in all Russian documents for Jewish men was to list the given name and a patronymic that ended in *-ovich* or *-evich*, meaning “son of.”<sup>44</sup>

The lack of surnames created great difficulties for the governing of this Jewish population. Especially complex was the procedure for checking tax collections. To address this problem, on 9 December 1804, Czar Alexander I issued an edict under the heading, “Obligation of Jews regarding above-mentioned estates,” which stated:

During the census every Jew shall have or accept a known inherited family name or surname / nickname that shall be used in all documents and lists without any change, with the addition of a name given by faith or at birth. This measure is necessary for a better establishment of their Citizenship conditions, for better protection of their property and for reviewing litigation between them.<sup>45</sup>

The second edict concerning Jews, issued on 31 May 1835 by Czar Nicholas I, defined the final state of the Jewish Pale of Settlement and included the following provision regarding Jewish surnames:<sup>46</sup>

Every Jew, in addition to a first name given at a profession of faith or birth, must forever retain, without alteration, a known inherited or legally adopted surname or nickname.

The fact that this provision was included suggests that the Jewish surname law of 1804 had not been followed as rigorously as had been hoped, and that a significant number of Jews had either not adopted surnames or had changed them once adopted.<sup>47</sup>

With respect to Jewish genealogy, the most important conclusions to be drawn from the history of Jewish surname adoption are:

- The vast majority of the two million Jews in the Russian Empire’s Pale of Settlement did not have surnames until at least 1804.
- Once Jews adopted or were assigned surnames in the Russian Empire, they were difficult to change, particularly after 1835.
- Because Jews were listed on all censuses prior to 1804 without surnames, it is extremely difficult to trace Jews in the Russian Empire further back than 1804.

*To be continued next issue.*

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45. Alexander I, Czar of Russia, "Imperial Statute Concerning the Organization of Jews", Article 32, 9 December 1804.

46. Nicholas I, Czar of Russia, "Imperial Statute Concerning the Organization of Jews", Article 16, 31 May 1835.

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## The 1918 Pandemic Impacted San Francisco Businesswomen

Diane J. Lindauer-Levinson

Diane Levinson was both a teacher and social worker. Genealogy has become her addictive hobby for the last 30+ years. She has seven grandchildren to pass the past on to.

This photograph of my grandmother, Hattie (left), taken in November 1918 complete with mask, tells a lot of her story in the early 1900's, even though she never mentioned the "Spanish flu" that killed an estimated 50,000,000 worldwide. (Remember there were no antibiotics back then to medicate victims who developed pneumonia.)

Hattie Rosener and her cousin Pearl Schier were single "businesswomen", rare in their day at age 30. They both worked in the clothing industry. Hattie was a buyer for a large Emporium-style department store, and Pearl worked at Sommer and Kaufman's, a premier shoe store in San Francisco. Hattie eventually went to New York to buy for S & N Woods and met her future husband there. Pearl had a twin sister, Martha, who was developmentally delayed, and in order to be able to continue life protecting her sister at home, she chose to forego marriage.

They must have been going to some kind of fashionista event, as they are "dressed to the nines" in the photo.



They are wearing the latest in furs. I remember that foxes were very popular for that generation. For me, however, the fox eyes were just "over the top" disturbing. Floppy large hats must have been all the rage at the time. Notice, too, the white gloves, indicating a trip "downtown." I found the photo in my family's oldest album; there is no companion one without the masks.

The fact that Hattie and Pearl posed for the photograph with masks indicates to me that they took the admonition to wear masks quite seriously. Most people have seen photos of the flu era as hospital scenes. This photo appears to be rare. I've shared it in the hope that it goes viral (no pun intended) with the message for 2020 and 2021: "Wear a mask!!"



Caption on photo: "Flu Mask" Nov. 20/1918

**Tribute to Robinn Magid**  
**Winner of 2020 IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award**

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

As many of you know, 2020 is going down as a year with many twists and turns, and learning on the fly how to do things we've never done before. Hands up, how many of you had even heard of Zoom before this year? (I hadn't!) Now everyone knows, and it's probably going to enter our vocabulary, not just as a noun and an adjective, but as a verb!

Many of us began this year looking forward to seeing each other as our great state was to host the 2020 IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in San Diego. There couldn't have been a better place to have the event. It was not to be, however. Being told that the conference wasn't going to happen was, for those of us of a certain age, the same thing as the cinematic device of watching a record being played, then the needle skating across the groove and the music suddenly ceasing, followed by silence. The pandemic had put paid to us meeting in person.

Our long-time member Robinn Magid was the main conference organizer. Robinn had spent countless days and nights working her magic to make this an unforgettable event. It almost ended up being unforgettable for not



taking place, but Robinn and her team may have been down but were certainly not out. From the ashes arose the virtual conference. And in record time, too!

Slightly shorter than usual, slightly fewer programs than usual, and lacking a few of the other niceties we usually associate with the event, but still it was a conference. And as Gary Mokotoff recounted in "Nu? What's New?", "There were 2200 registrants from 28 countries, a new record for the annual conference."

For this and her many years of service to JRI-Poland, IAJGS, and several other Jewish genealogical groups, it was only right that at this year's conference IAJGS saw fit to honor Robinn with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

Robinn shared this year's award with Hadassah Lipsius, another stalwart of IAJGS and also of the New York JGS. Like Robinn, Hadassah's involvement with JRI-Poland stretches back to 1997.

The SFBAJGS Board and membership salute Robinn and recognize her many years of experience, enthusiasm, and consistent support of the world of Jewish genealogy.

**Berkeley Resident Awarded Lifetime Achievement Award at IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy**

Sandra Golden, IAJGS Publicity Chair

Robinn Magid has been awarded the 2020 IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award for her lifelong commitment to Jewish genealogy. The award was presented August 12 at the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies 40th International Conference on Jewish Genealogy at its first virtual conference.

Among many achievements in her 30 years of experience in Jewish genealogical research is Robinn's involvement with Jewish Records Indexing - Poland. She recently was elected to the new position of assistant director and took over as the project manager of JRI-Poland's NextGen relational database, search engine, and Web site, its first major overhaul in 25 years.

Robinn's leadership as a board member for JRI-Poland earned her a city medal in 2017 for inspiring the cultural

identity of her family's hometown of Lublin, Poland as part of the 700th birthday celebration of that city.

She served as chair of the 2018 IAJGS Warsaw Conference, the first IAJGS conference in Eastern Europe, and established the IAJGS Conference Discussion Facebook Group. She also worked on the committee that recently updated the IAJGS Conference Planning Manual.

She chaired the 2020 IAJGS conference, which initially was scheduled to be in person in San Diego. When it had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, she created and chaired a financially successful, new IAJGS virtual conference with just a few months to arrange it.

*[Ed.: This press release has been edited for publication.]*



## Persistence, Technology, and a Few Bits of DNA

Debra Soled

Debra Soled is a freelance editor who has been working on her family tree for about 15 years. Her family came from all over Eastern Europe (Kurliantsik in Kupiskis, Lithuania; Weidenfeld and Trachtenberg in Siret and Bakal in Adjud, Romania; Tzipkin in Gomel and Kolodny and Wajnstejn in Pinsk, Belarus; and Goldberg in Kamen Kashirskiy, Ukraine).

It began with a photo, one among a hundred or so in a carton that sat undisturbed for about 20 years in my mother's basement, given to her by my grandaunt on my father's side (his father's sister) not long before she died. Like so many others, it was unidentified, other than to say "Portnoy wedding" on the back, with no location, no clue as to who the Portnoys were, let alone the people gathered around the happy couple, sitting on chairs in the middle of the photo. It was taken around 1955.

From time to time, as I managed to identify most of those people by channeling Sherlock Holmes, based on other photos and deduction, I returned to this one but was still stumped by the central characters. I put it aside, moving on to the vast task of organizing the rest of the photos. To this day, there are still about five to ten that I haven't cracked. But this one stayed with me.

Meanwhile, I had moved to California and, among other things, hired Yuri Dorn to look into my father's paternal line in Belarus, about which we knew close to nothing except the surname and the story that my great-grandfather had been a timber merchant in Pinsk and lost his business in the 1920's, driving the family into poverty at a time when that was a common story in Poland. It took months before I heard back, and when I did, Yuri presented me with a tree filled with people back to 1776 whom I had never heard of, but with my great-grandfather at the bottom. The tree went no further than the turn of the 20th century, though it did go back several generations. After trying and failing to find any of the people listed in it in any sources available to me, I shared it with my dad, who was still living at the time, and then put it aside.

This year, some 10 years later, I decided to take the plunge and spit into the tube for Ancestry's DNA analysis, hoping to confirm a connection to someone on my mother's father's side—a totally different task. I dutifully sent the sample back to Ancestry and waited. And waited. And waited. Pandemic time.

Finally, I was notified that the analysis had been completed, and I studied the results with all the



Credit: Peggy und Marco Lachmann-Anke on Pixabay, <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/dna-white-male-3d-model-isolated-1889085/>

comprehension of a kindergartener sitting in on a calculus class. I stared dumbly at the list of names, not recognizing anyone. But one person floated to the top of the list when it was sorted by the number of centiMorgans. 228 cM: That had to be someone close, right? So I e-mailed the woman and got a reply from her husband. Her grandmother, whose maiden name was the same as my great-grandfather's, had been born in Pinsk. My eyes widened, and I could feel my heart race. Was it possible?

My father had come to the United States in 1938 at age 6, brought here by that grandaunt to be adopted by her soon-to-be brother-in-law. My father had been able to get out of Poland owing to the adoption papers that were signed and witnessed before he got on the boat. My grandaunt had been able to leave because she was engaged to be married. The rest of my father's family (his parents, his sister, a brother born after he left, not to mention aunts, uncles, grandparents on both sides), lacking those legal channels, was mostly not so lucky. About her father's family and so many other things, this aunt told us nothing, other than mentioning one sister, Lola, who had survived the war in part by being sent to a labor camp in Siberia for a few months and who after the war immigrated to Israel. The rest, a blank slate. And that sister was now long deceased as well. So anything about his father's family would have been a revelation.

I got a phone call, we chatted, I pulled out my little tree. A match! Her grandmother—and the grandmother's two sisters—were my great-grandfather's second cousins, all on the male side of his family. They were not on the tree (very few women are), but their parents were. Two of the three sisters left Poland in the 1920's (before my father was born), one bound for the U.S. and one for the UK. The third had died in the 1918 influenza epidemic, and her children had tried to get into the U.S., but alas they had waited too long; the immigration laws had changed, so they went mostly to South America, whose doors were still open. Three sisters: Nishke, Itke, and Henke. Nishke not only went to

New York City but lived in the Bronx near my grandaunt, whom her children, and grandchildren, visited; one of her sons had my parents' address in his phone book. He was the father of my new DNA cousin, who had long lived in New Jersey, in the town next to where my parents have been for 35 years. We could have been right next to each other in the supermarket or at the mall and never known. My father, who died last year, most assuredly did not know about them (my mother is still living and confirms this).

So I set to work building a tree for the three sisters, using Ancestry, MyHeritage, FamilySearch, FindMyPast, Google, BMD, Billion Graves, FindAGrave, LinkedIn—in short, everything (with a big assist from an expert Londoner—thanks!). Henke's many children were spread all over the world, with some having come to the U.S. later, others departing for Israel, one who had not left Pinsk, and the rest remaining in Uruguay (some rumored to have disappeared into the underworld in Argentina as well, but that's another story). All told, the descendants of the three sisters could total as many as 100.

Many, if not most, of the living descendants, it turns out, are on Facebook; some had even formed a Facebook group.

My new cousin's husband has a Zoom account. So we did what modern people, spread all over the world, do in a pandemic: We had a Zoom party, across five time zones! The session, which included a PowerPoint slideshow I prepared, was recorded and made available on YouTube for those who could not attend, and the slideshow was distributed as a PDF. (Since then, several of the participants have either posted more photos on the group site or sent them to me directly. We plan to put them all on a shared cloud drive.)

Among the photos posted on the Facebook group page by one of my newfound cousins: a wedding, the happy couple at the center identified, with the date, the location, but not the names of all the people surrounding them. The groom is labeled Yitzhak Portnoy (Henke's grandson via her daughter who stayed behind in Pinsk; she as well as three of her children perished there, as documented in Soviet lists on Ancestry, but he survived and went to Israel) and his bride, Yetti. They are both gone now, but their children and grandchildren have joined the Facebook group, and now we are not just family but "friends."

Now on to those other mystery photos . . .



### 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>
Baum	Gdansk	Vicky Ferraresi
Bike	USA	Glenda Rubin
Bookbinder	Ukraine	Glenda Rubin
Freystadt	Berlin; Sweden	Vicky Ferraresi
Fuerstenberg	Gdansk; Berlin; Shanghai	Vicky Ferraresi
Greenberg	Ukraine; USA	Glenda Rubin
Heymann	Berlin; Israel; Geneva	Vicky Ferraresi
Janofsky	Ukraine; USA	Glenda Rubin
Krochak	Ukraine; USA	Glenda Rubin
Mirapolsky	Ukraine; USA	Glenda Rubin
Obodov	USA	Glenda Rubin
Prochownik	Bydgoszcz; Berlin; Shanghai	Vicky Ferraresi
Quiatowsky	Berlin; Ujest/Ujazd	Vicky Ferraresi
Schulvalter	Berlin; Brazil	Vicky Ferraresi
Segal	Mexico	Glenda Rubin
Silberstein/Silver	Gdansk; Chicago	Vicky Ferraresi
Spevak	Ukraine; USA	Glenda Rubin
Stryzewski	Ukraine; USA	Glenda Rubin
Wernick	Ukraine; USA	Glenda Rubin
Wexler	USA	Glenda Rubin

## Cemetery Records: Transcription Progress Continues

Jeff Lewy, Transcription Project Coordinator

The volunteer team working on transcriptions of Bay Area cemetery records has been making excellent progress. In the last few months, we have focused our attention on Home of Eternity Cemetery in Oakland and Eternal Home Cemetery in Colma.

Home of Eternity's nearly 7,000 records from the late 19th century to about 2019 were photographed and have been transcribed from the original cards, checked against those cards, and checked again against the recent review of records carried out by the staff at Home of Eternity. We expect to put these records online early in 2021.

Eternal Home's five ledgers contain more than 30,000 entries from 1903, when the cemetery opened, through 2010, when a computerized system was introduced. All of these entries, of which about half were handwritten (from 1903 through 1956), have been photographed and transcribed, and about two thirds have been checked. These records may be ready to go online in late 2021.

We are also working with some early records of deaths and burials recorded by Sherith Israel synagogue in San Francisco, along with burial permits issued by the City Health Department. All 1,850 records have been transcribed, and so far we have checked about 250 of them. These records cover the years from 1866 to 1886, before the cemeteries in San Francisco were relocated to Colma. We believe that many of these records have the only

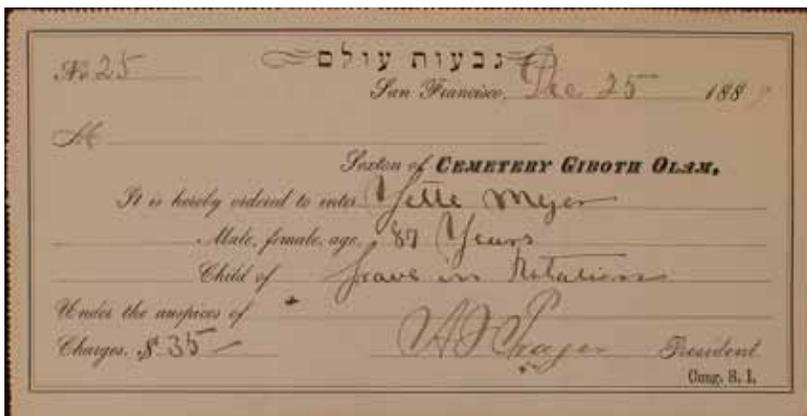
existing cemeteries and recorded again there, particularly at Salem Memorial Park in Colma. Parts of these records are illegible, so we are not sure if they can be put online.

I want to recognize the volunteer team that has been working steadily on these projects. Some volunteers began as much as two years ago, but the pace quickened after shelter in place was mandated in March. I hope these folks have at least kept boredom at bay by helping! The volunteer team members are, in alphabetical order:

Barbara Coats  
Andrea Daniel  
Hilary and Stan Farkas  
Ellyn Freed  
Susan Goldsmith  
Pierre Hahn  
Stacey Henderson  
Stephanie Hoffman  
Len Jacobson  
Stuart Kirsch  
Dana Kurtz  
Stephanie Leveene  
Suzie Myers  
Peter Persoff  
Ann Ross  
Amy Shutkin  
Ellen Stack  
Barbara Thurston

My apologies if I missed anyone! Everyone is appreciated.

And we have more cemeteries to work on. Volunteers continue to be needed, including anyone who wishes to help now or in the future! Contact Jeff Lewy at [transcriptions@sfbajgs.org](mailto:transcriptions@sfbajgs.org) to join us.



Sample burial record from Sherith Israel

remaining information about these early deaths, as they all occurred before the 1906 earthquake and fire, when the city's records were destroyed. Once we finish checking, we will attempt to determine if these burials were moved to

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

What has this to do with us, you might ask? Well, maybe we could look at the COVID-19 situation we're in as a way of having forced us to think anew about how we do things. Hands up, how many of us have now engaged in Zoom meetings? Okay, I think that's nearly everyone.

Corporations and businesses, as well as hobbyist societies, are embracing this technology to reach out to board members, employees, and society members. In the case of societies it has also become a great "democratizer", allowing people all over the world to participate.

Once the dust settles on this "revolution", how will our world then look? Will we go back to the way things were? I'm not so sure. We may wish to resume having "real" meetings, but perhaps we will now be hooked up for complementary Zoom engagement as well. This could well place additional challenges on societies to up their IT abilities. The future awaits us, just around the corner. As genealogists, it will be our job to document how it affected our families.



or purchase lists of *matzevot* from a few cemeteries and is now compiling a list of *matzevot* from Ternopil (Ukraine), which should be ready soon.

Czechowice-Dziedzice, <http://www.cmentarze-zydowskie.pl/czechowiced.htm>

Łowicz, <http://cmentarze-zydowskie.pl/lowicz.htm>

Pyskowice (German: Peiskretscham), <http://cmentarze-zydowskie.pl/pyskowice.html>

Warta, <http://www.cmentarze-zydowskie.pl/warta.htm>

Zabrze (German: Hindenburg), <http://www.cmentarze-zydowskie.pl/zabrze.htm>

### Back Issues of ZichronNote

Back issues of *ZichronNote* are freely available online at <https://sfbajgs.org/ZichronNote/ZichronNote.html>, up to the most recent two years. The latter issues are available only to current SFB AJGS members.



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**Upcoming SFBAJGS Events**

TBA

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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