



זכרונות ZichronNote

The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

Volume XLI, Number 1

February 2021

How Many Marriages?

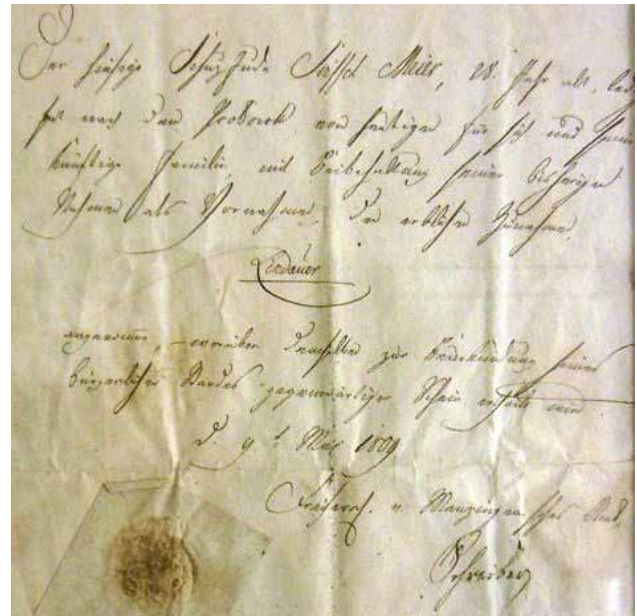
What do you do when you discover that your father was married prior to his marriage to your mother? Follow the clues, of course. See page 5.

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While Jeff Paull discusses Jewish surname adoption in the Russian Empire, the process was different in other areas.

This document shows the surname was established by baronial decree based on the individual's choice:

The local . . . Jew Sassel Meier, 28 years old, unmarried . . . has assumed for himself and for his future family the inheritable surname of Lindauer . . .

9 May 1809

Office of the Baron of Menzingen [Kraichtal, Germany]

See page 10.

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.

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People Finder queries are free to Society members. Nonmembers may place queries for \$5 each. Queries are limited to 25 words not including searcher's name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

Back Issues are available for \$10 per issue. Requests should be sent to SFBAJGS at the address below.

Display Advertising is accepted at the discretion of the editor. Rates per issue: business card-sized (3-1/2 x 2 inch) \$10, quarter page \$20, half page \$35, full page \$60. Ads must be camera-ready and relate to Jewish genealogy.

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

Society Addresses

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

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

Society Contacts

President: Jeremy Frankel, president@sfbajgs.org

Vice President: Preeva Tramiel, vicepresident@sfbajgs.org

Secretary: Shellie Wiener, secretary@sfbajgs.org

Treasurer: Jeff Lewy, treasurer@sfbajgs.org

Membership: Jeff Lewy, membership@sfbajgs.org

Programs: Janice M. Sellers, programs@sfbajgs.org

Publicity: Janice M. Sellers, publicity@sfbajgs.org

Webmaster: Barbara Stack, webmaster@sfbajgs.org

Transcription Project Coordinator: Jeff Lewy,

transcriptions@sfbajgs.org

Electronic Newsletter Coordinator: Dana Kurtz,

newsletterexchange@sfbajgs.org

Founder: Martha Wise

ZichronNote

Editor: Janice M. Sellers, newsletter@sfbajgs.org

Back Issues: sfbajgs.org/ZichronNote/ZichronNote.html

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

President's Message

Is There a Light at the End of the Tunnel?

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

This country has now passed the first anniversary of the COVID-19 epidemic. Since that time, we have lost far too many people and our way of life has been upended, but there does appear to be a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel.

We are seeing a slow but steady increase in numbers of vaccinated people, and the rates of people catching COVID-19 or dying from it seem to have peaked and are now dropping.

This doesn't mean, of course, we can throw off the shackles and return to the life we were leading back in January 2020. Science dictates that we take a slow and steady approach.

Your board is doing likewise. We still don't know when we shall return to face-to-face meetings, though I do believe we will — one day. Like everyone else, we're closely monitoring the situation, watching what the cities around the Bay Area are doing and advising.

As I write (first week in March), already there has been some relaxing of the lockdown, with indoor dining now being permitted, provided that various hygiene and distancing rules are followed.

Also, registration has just opened (1 March) for this year's IAJGS conference, being held in Philadelphia 2-5 August. The conference location will be the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel. The early bird registration ends 31 May, after which no refunds will be given. There will be a wait list if the fixed number of attendees is oversubscribed.

At past conferences our society has typically had a good turn-out of members. It will be really good (after a year's absence) to see people's faces again, not just staring at a Zoom connection. So I for one will be registering and look forward to seeing as many of you who feel comfortable attending as well.

The board wishes everyone well, so keep safe and healthy, and contact those cousins you always promised yourself that one day you would. I, just this week, made contact with a new (to me) 92-year old cousin. He's now assisting me get someone in his family to take a DNA test!



Society News

Ronald Sax (1933–2021)

It is with great sadness that we report the recent passing of our long-time member Ronald Jay Sax. He was born in Benton Harbor, Michigan. In 1967 a job opportunity beckoned in California, hence Ronald and his family made their home in Palo Alto. More about Ronald's life can be seen at <https://www.lastingmemories.com/memorial/ronald-jay-sax>. We send to Ronald's family our deepest condolences. (The Society thanks Rosanne Leeson for passing this information on to us, as Ronald was for several years her "neighbor" across the hallway at Moldaw.)

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.

Member in the News

The Spanish translation of member **Judith Berlowitz's** historical novel, *Home So Far Away*, has been published in Spain as *Diario de la Camarada Klara: Una enfermera de las Brigadas Internacionales* (<https://edicioneselboletin.com/>).

New Members

Judith Bloom jgoldbl@yahoo.com
Judi Finkelstein finkelstein@comcast.net
Tova Levi vota86@aol.com
Donna Brook Moss donna@borokmoss.com
Jane Applebaum applebaj@bellsouth.net
Janice Down downjc@aol.com
Lisa Halpern halpernlk@gmail.com
Philip Kutner fishl@derbay.org
Carlos & Nancy Laber carlos.laber@gmail.com
David Levine davidelevine@gmail.com
Gene Osofsky gene38@gmail.com
Debra Soled debra_soled@hotmail.com
Jerry Spielvogel spielvogel@prodigy.net

[Ed.: Some of these individuals became members in 2020, but ZN received the information only recently. Our apologies.]

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

Research Scope of SFBAJGS

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

Meeting Times and Locations

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

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

Calendar of Genealogy Events

Local and Regional

Tuesday, 6 April 2021. Junel Davidsen, "Keys to Obituary Research." Genealogical Society of Santa Cruz County. Zoom. <http://scgensoc.org/>

Sunday, 18 April 2021. Jim Rader, "DNA." Jewish Genealogical Society of Sacramento. <https://www.jewishgen.org/jgs-sacramento/>

Tuesday, 20 April 2021. Eric E. Johnson, "Researching Ancestors in the Old Northwest Territory, 1788–1803." San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society. Zoom. <https://www.srvgensoc.org/>

Saturday, 24 April 2021. Jeanie Low, "Family Stories in Cloth." California Genealogical Society. Zoom. <https://www.californiaancestors.org/>

Saturday, 24 April 2021. James Baker, "The Major Features of MyHeritage DNA." Sacramento Public Library. Zoom. <https://www.saclibrary.org/>

Sunday, 25 April 2021. Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, "The Memory Work of Jewish Spain." Jewish Community Library. Zoom. <https://jewishlearning.works/jewish-community-library/jewish-community-library-events/>

Monday, 26 April 2021. "Endogamy and Pedigree Collapse." Oakmont Genealogy Club. Zoom. <https://sites.google.com/site/oakmontgenealogyclub/>

Tuesday, 18 May 2021. Janice M. Sellers, "Researching Historic LGBT Relatives." Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society. Zoom. <http://www.scchgs.org/>

State and National

Friday–Saturday, 9–10 April 2021. Indiana Genealogical Society Annual Conference. Zoom. <http://indgensoc.org/conference.php>

Saturday, 10 April 2021. Nashi Predky Online Spring Conference, "East Meets West." Online. <https://www.ukrhec.org/nashi-predky-conference-2021>

Monday–Monday, 17–24 May 2021. International German Genealogy Conference, "Researching Together Worldwide." Online. <https://iggpartner.org/>

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/>

Wednesday–Friday, 11–13 August 2021. Foundation for East European Family History Studies. Online. <https://registration.feeffhs.org/>

International

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. <https://acpl.libnet.info/events>
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://jgsl.org/>; <https://jgsl.org/youtube/> (recorded)

Jewish Genealogical Society of New York. [https://jgsny.org/programs-civi/year.listevents/2021/01/24/-](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 (recorded; several relevant to genealogy)

National WWII Museum. <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/events-programs/events-calendar> (live); <https://www.youtube.com/c/wwiimuseum/videos> (recorded)

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

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

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

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



A Family Mystery: The Undisclosed Prior Marriage That Lasted Only Nine Months

Dana H. Shultz

Dana H. Shultz, a retired business lawyer, began his family's genealogical research in 1995. In 2000, he was among the first several dozen people to undergo genetic testing at Family Tree DNA. His Y-DNA haplogroup, Q-L315, appears to be unique, not having received any matches since it was identified in 2010. © 2020 Dana H. Shultz.

This story is about the greatest surprise I have encountered, and the greatest mystery I have not been able to solve, in my 20+ years as an amateur genealogist.

My 50-year high-school reunion was set for 21–23 July 2017 in Detroit, Michigan. My wife and I would fly in from the Bay Area.

We both were born and raised in Detroit, as were my parents. Her parents had come to Detroit after the War.

I thought it would be fun to take a “drive through time” to see the various places where our families, and my ancestors, had lived and worked. We would pick up my mother, the only surviving parent, in West Bloomfield. Then we would drive through Southfield and Oak Park to northwest Detroit, and from there to the “old neighborhood” where Detroit's Jewish community thrived a century ago.

The Old Neighborhood

I researched business and home addresses for my father, Morris Shultz, and his parents on Ancestry.com. I remembered, from childhood conversations with Dad, some of the street names that appeared: Glendale, Gladstone, Hazelwood.

Then I found a record that puzzled me. It seemed to state that Dad married a woman named Bernice Kashtan in 1946.

Our “Shultz” spelling is a bit unusual (no “c”, “Schultz” being more common). The marriage of another Morris Shultz in Detroit in 1946 was virtually impossible. This had to be a mistake.

I followed the link to the relevant Morris Shultz. Based on the names of his parents, I saw that this was, indeed, my father.

I was confused. I had trouble accepting the obvious implication: Dad had married another woman almost three years before he married Mom!

During the next hour I passed through a genealogist's version of Kubler-Ross' seven stages of dying: puzzlement, denial, confirmation, fear, research, acceptance, and disclosure (to my wife; disclosure to others would come later).

I needed to know how Dad had gotten to this point.

Name:	Bernice Kashtan
Gender:	Female
Race:	White
Age:	20
Birth Year:	abt 1926
Birth Place:	Detroit, Michigan
License County:	Wayne
Marriage Date:	2 Jun 1946
Marriage Place:	Detroit, Wayne, Michigan, US
Residence Place:	Detroit, Michigan
Father:	Jacob Kashtan
Mother:	Sadie Silverman
Spouse:	Morris Shultz
County File Number:	675529

Music with a Military Interlude

Dad was a musical prodigy. In 1929, when Dad was 8 years old, his parents bought a baby grand piano for him. During the Great Depression, they fell behind on the payments (Dad's family, previously comfortable financially, lost all of its savings because the bank failed). When men came to repossess the piano, Dad's father (my Grandpa) pulled out his axe and said that if they took the piano, they would take it in pieces. They left the piano. Grandpa eventually made all of the payments.

At Hutchins Middle School, Dad gave a piano recital and acted. At Central High School (graduation January 1939), Dad was in two orchestral ensembles and one choir, and he performed in two stage productions. Dad played with dance bands and at beer gardens to make money for the family.

Dad registered for the military draft in 1942, seven months before he turned 21. Rather than wait to be drafted,

Dad enlisted (once he overcame his mother's resistance). He joined the U.S. Army Air Corps, hoping to drop bombs on Germany. That was not to be. In 1943, Dad contracted cerebral meningitis. He was discharged in March 1944.

In September of that year, he enrolled at the Wayne University (now Wayne State University) College of Education. Focusing mostly on music classes, Dad received good grades.

At the end of his first year, in June 1945, Dad was accepted as a degree candidate in the Music curriculum. Dad was sufficiently talented that the Detroit Board of Education guaranteed him a teaching job as soon as he graduated.

Dad's education proceeded apace through that summer and the first semester of his sophomore year. During the second semester, however, Dad took only half as many classes. Then he stopped attending Wayne, right around the time he married Bernice (June 1946), who had graduated from Central High School in June 1943.

At that time, Dad was living in his parents' house. Although the house was not especially large (1,577 square feet, including one bathroom), there was room for Dad's wife, Bernice, to move in with them. Dad's brother had married and moved out in 1940; his sister, unfortunately, had died in 1944.

The traditional story was that Dad had dropped out of Wayne to join the family auto-parts business because it needed him. Now I understood the real reason: He had a wife to support.

But this left a profound question: Why did Dad abandon his passion, his musical career, to marry Bernice?

Further Research

I wanted to find out as much as possible about their marriage. Almost three weeks after the marriage took place, it was announced in the *Detroit Jewish News*.

The certificate of marriage was signed by Rabbi Joshua S. Sperka, who, I determined, was the rabbi at Congregation

Bernice Kashtan and Morris Shultz Wed



—Keith-Newman Photo

MRS. MORRIS SHULTZ

The marriage of Miss Bernice Kashtan, daughter of Mrs. Sadie Kashtan of Boston Blvd. and the late Jacob Kashtan, and Morris Shultz, son of Mr. and Mrs. B. Shultz of Lawrence Ave., was performed on Sunday, June 2.

Marriage announcement of Bernice Kashtan and Morris Shultz in the Detroit Jewish News, 21 June 1946

B'nai David. B'nai David's current president informed me, by e-mail, that the congregation no longer meets and that relevant records were scattered or destroyed. Consequently, he could not help me with my research.

On 10 March 1947—a bit more than nine months after their wedding—Dad was granted a decree of divorce from Bernice.

By 2017, Bernice (who remarried in 1949) had died. Her husband had posted on JewishGen years earlier. At this point, however, he was in a senior care facility. He did not reply to my JewishGen inquiry.

They had two sons and a daughter. Each died at a relatively young age, the daughter around the time I was conducting my research. Bernice's sole sibling had predeceased her. It appears no individual is now living who knows why Bernice and Dad had married, then divorced so quickly.

Discussion with Mom

My wife and I flew to Detroit. We picked up Mom for the drive through time.

I assumed that Dad had told Mom about his prior marriage. Indeed, he had, though all Mom knew was, "It didn't work out." Mom then provided

a real surprise: She had attended Dad's first wedding!

Mom and Dad weren't just spouses—they were also second cousins. So, when Dad had his first wedding, Mom, then a teenager, attended with her parents and siblings. She does not remember any details, other than it being held in a home rather than a synagogue.

Speculation

As I gathered more information (many documents and details beyond those described above), I discussed my findings with one of my sisters. We concluded that Dad must have married Bernice because she was pregnant. Marrying Bernice, and working to support her, would have been the right thing to do. Dad believed in doing the right thing.

Continued on page 18

Late Postscript to the 2019 Cleveland Conference: A Twist on Genealogy's Biggest Myth

Jeremy Frankel

Jeremy Frankel is the president of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society.

At the 2019 IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Cleveland, Ohio, the Thursday evening banquet was headlined by a special guest speaker, local boy made good Michael Krasny. I thought it was a bit strange that we who live in the Bay Area could listen to Michael nearly every weekday on KQED public radio, but here we were, traveling nearly 2,500 miles to listen to him in person.

Michael's speech was a topic dear to his heart—Jewish humor. A table had been set up outside the banquet hall where one could purchase his 2016 book on the subject, *Let There Be Laughter*.

Naturally I bought a copy and stuck it in my bag to read after I got home. The book is divided thematically, and it was a pleasurable read until I got to page 187, when that old *bubbe meise* once again reared its head. Michael had written:

"When my high school friend Susan Venig's grandfather escaped to America from Germany and was asked his name, he thought he was being asked how much money he had since everything he had heard about America was tied to money. His last name was Howard. Not knowing a word of English he told the immigration officer he had twelve pfennig. Which is how the family name became Venig."

I put the book down and shook my head, then grabbed my laptop and began searching. My first thought was, how many Venigs could there be in Cleveland?

As an aside, I had looked up Michael Krasny's Wikipedia entry and learned he had been born in 1944, so his high school friend Susan should have been born around the same time. My first thought was to look in the 1940 U.S. census for any Venigs living in Cleveland. There were just eighteen Venigs in all of America; two of them were a married couple, Morton and Annette Venig, living in Brighton, New York, but they were from Cleveland, Ohio. Morton was 34, Annette was 23.

I usually assume as a rule of thumb that parents would be about 25 years old when they married and had their first child. Annette was right in the ballpark, but Morton was considerably older.

Morton had been born in Ohio, so I went back a decade to find him in the 1930 census, which I did successfully.

There he was with his sister Fay and, more importantly, their parents, Sam and Sarah Venig. In this census, Morton was 24, agreeing with the age reported in 1940 and meaning he had been born around 1906. His parents stated they had immigrated in 1898 and 1899, respectively.

It turned out that Susan's grandfather was named Samuel Venig. Now I was on the trail of Samuel Venig and his immigration path to America. Working backward, a Samuel "Vwenig" was living in New York City in the 1900 U.S. census. The immigration year listed was 1898.

I turned to my good friend Steve Morse's One-Step Website. I pulled up his Ellis Island Gold Form and plugged in "Samuel" for the first name and "sounds like" "Venig" for the last name, with an immigration year of 1895 to 1900. There were only three hits, the last one being 14-year-old Samuel Wenig from Rymanow, Galicia. He immigrated in 1898. Wow, this was almost too good to be true!

Another rule of thumb: I always remind myself that any name beginning with the letter "W" is going to sound like a "V", not a "W." I think I had my man, or rather, in this case, a 14-year-old boy.

Seven years after setting foot in America, Samuel Venig married Sarah Zahler in Cleveland, Ohio, where they raised three children, Morton, Edna, and Fanny. In 1938 Morton married Annette Kaufman, and they had two children, Susan and Charles.

Why Michael Krasny wrote "His last name was Howard" I just don't know. Maybe he or Susan misheard or misremembered something. What is known now is that Sam was born a Venig, lived his whole life in America as a Venig, and died as a Venig.

I guess because there weren't too many Venigs in America, and it is a slightly strange-sounding name, one could be forgiven for thinking it might have formerly been something else. And so we picture this genial grandfather trying to be nice to his granddaughter when she inquired about his name. Hence he trotted out that oft-told, well worn myth, that his name had been changed at Ellis Island.



Using the Cleveland Jewish News Free Digital Archive

Sean Martin

Sean Martin is Associate Curator for Jewish History at Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. He oversees the Cleveland Jewish Archives, collecting and preserving material related to the Jewish history of Northeastern Ohio. This article first appeared in *The Kol*, Volume 29, Number 2, Summer 2020, published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Cleveland, and is reprinted with permission.

One of the most important sources for genealogists with an interest in Cleveland is the Archive of the *Cleveland Jewish News* (<http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/ClevelandJewishNewsFree/default.aspx>). Thanks to the foresight and generosity of the Cleveland Jewish News Foundation, researchers have access to all (or quite nearly all) of the Jewish press published in Cleveland since 1889, the date of the appearance of the first newspaper aimed at the local Jewish community.

This free digital archive provides access to *The Hebrew Observer*, *The Jewish Review*, *The Jewish Review and Observer*, *The Jewish Independent*, *Cleveland Jewish News*, and the Yiddish-language title *Die Yiddische Velt* (spelled according to its usual transliteration; “The Jewish World”). *The Hebrew Observer*, the city’s first Jewish weekly, was established in 1889. Its appearance was followed by the establishment of another weekly, *The Jewish Review*, in 1893. The two titles merged in 1899. *The Jewish Review and Observer* was soon joined, in 1906, by *The Jewish Independent*. These titles were family enterprises, run by the Wertheimer and Weidenthal families, respectively. They merged in 1964 into the independent group, the Cleveland Jewish Publication Co., publisher of *Cleveland Jewish News*. *Die Yiddische Velt*, published by the Rocker family, appeared from 1911 to 1952, for much of that time as a daily. It should be noted that while the Cleveland area’s first Jewish immigrants in the 1830’s and 1840’s spoke German, no German-language Jewish newspaper was established in Cleveland. The titles online are the major newspapers of the Cleveland Jewish community.

The *CJN* free digital archive allows you to search for any search term in any of these titles. To search the archive, visit the site of *Cleveland Jewish News* and select Archive, at center or center right. The welcome page offers a brief introduction and list of partners. Get started right away

by typing in a name in the search box at the top. This will search across all titles for the appearance of that name in these newspapers.

Alternatively, start by clicking “Search” and limit your search from the beginning by including additional search terms or limiting the dates. “Refine Search” will also come up, allowing you to limit your search by date or specific titles. Note that “All Titles” is selected. I recommend searching across all titles to start, but you may want to limit your search to one or two titles as you move on to more advanced searching. Some refinement of your search may be needed, even if only by both first and last name; searching for “Goldberg” leads to more than

15,000 results! The more you refine your search terms, the likelier you will have a more precise hit that gives you the information you’re looking for.

The search tool allows you to choose to view only Articles, Pictures, or Ads. You can also sort by relevance and by newest

and oldest. Note that issues from the past ninety days are not available in the archive; to access recent issues, visit the site of the Cuyahoga County Public Library (<https://cuyahogalibrary.org/>), choose Research at center right, then Resources, and scroll down for “Cleveland Jewish News.” You will also see “Cleveland Jewish News Archive” there; this takes you to the *Cleveland Jewish News* site that I am describing here. For recent issues, choose the one at the Cuyahoga County Public Library that is not the archive.

Once you have a result you’re interested in, the easiest way to view it is to click on the text and not the actual image of the newspaper. A warning, though: This text uses OCR (optical character recognition) to convert the text, and you will discover that it often has many errors. You are better served by clicking on the image of the newspaper. This will open the entire issue to the page you need, with your search term highlighted in yellow. You can then



The screenshot shows the website for the Cleveland Jewish News digital archive. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a search icon and links for Home, Search, Browse, Viewer, and My Collection. The main heading reads "Welcome to the CJN's Free Digital Archive!". Below this, there are several paragraphs of text: "You have access to the past 125 years of Jewish history in Cleveland, Ohio... As reported by the Cleveland Jewish News and its predecessor newspapers.", "For the most recent 90 days of archives, get a Cleveland Jewish News digital subscription.", "Begin your Search", and "For technical assistance, contact us.". A section titled "The CJN digital archives were procured with the assistance of Western Reserve Historical Society and Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Learning. Gaps in archives will appear due to inability to procure physical manifest for digital archiving." is followed by another "CLEVELAND Jewish News" logo. Below the logo, it says "The Cleveland Jewish News Archive" and "The CJN Archive contains the entire run of the Cleveland Jewish News, an independent community newspaper continuously published weekly since October 30, 1964. More than 120,000 newspaper pages are presented here just as they appeared in print. More recent issues, converted from PDF, are full-color. Every edition is fully indexed and text-searchable." On the right side of the page, there is a list of donors: "We would like to thank all the foundation's supporters and recognize the following sponsors for their significant generosity: PNC, Jane and Michael Horvitz University Hospitals, Nina and Norman Wain, Lynn and Barry Chesler and Family, Peggy and John Garson, Susan C. and Dr. Howard Levine, Joseph C. Mandel, Lois and Martin H. Marcus, The Ratner Families and Forest City Enterprises Charitable Foundation, Nadia and Michael Ritter, SS&G Financial Services, Ellen and Dan Zelman." At the bottom of this list, it says "Special thanks to the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland Endowment Fund for its considerable support, and to the Federation's Nathan L. and Regina Herman Charitable Fund."

zoom in and read the article. As you scroll through the page, you'll notice that entire articles will be highlighted in yellow. Click, and you'll see the text of the article as rendered by OCR, and you'll also have the choice to view again by "Image", which will show you just the image of that article as it appeared in the newspaper. From here, you can e-mail the article to yourself, copy the link, print the article, or share it via Facebook or Twitter. You will at least want to note what you have searched for and what you have found that is relevant to your family history. You can do that by taking notes with pen and paper or in *Word*, *Excel*, or some other program, or you can save your results by e-mail or by printing the article. Note that it is sometimes difficult to print newspaper articles from databases like this. You will see the options to rotate the article and to retain the original size or scale it to the page. It is possible to print an entire page of a newspaper this way, but the printout will not be legible; the original is too large, and the printout paper too small. If you do decide to print, I recommend printing only the article you need and checking your settings carefully before clicking "print." Remember, too, that you can always simply return to the database and search again; in that case, it helps to have a record of what you've already searched for.

An important feature of the site is the "Browse" function, next to "Search" in the upper right. This allows you to browse through each issue of each newspaper. This is going through the newspaper page by page. It is the easiest

way to get a sense of what the newspaper was like and of the kind of news that appeared, and it also makes you feel like you're actually reading the paper. Once you find a mention of a relative, try browsing a few issues before or after the one you've found to see what was going on in Jewish Cleveland at the time.

A note on searching *Die Yiddische Velt*: Unfortunately, there is no proper Yiddish-language search interface for the CJN archive. But the search tool does search *Die Yiddische Velt*. This means that if you put in an English search term, and that term appeared in *Die Yiddische Velt* in English, the result will show up along with others (try searching "Rocker", for example). *Die Yiddische Velt* did include some English-language advertisements, and so it might be worth a search. You might also just want to browse *Die Yiddische Velt* for certain dates. Though you might not read Yiddish, it's worth seeing what the paper looked like. At about twelve pages long, *Die Yiddische Velt* was much shorter than the other Jewish newspapers, but its status as a daily attests to the rather substantial presence of Yiddish among Cleveland's Jews in the first half of the 20th century.

The CJN Archive is an invaluable source for those interested in Cleveland Jewish families. If you have found it to be helpful, consider a donation to the Cleveland Jewish News Foundation (<https://www.cjn.org/donate>). Their work has made ours much easier.



Ten Reasons Why Jewish Genealogy Is So Challenging: Part 2

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.

Footnotes in this article continue numbering from Part 1.

5. Nature of the Jewish Surname Adoption Process

Although the exact years of the assignment of surnames is unknown, it appears from revision lists that most Russian Jews acquired their surnames during the decade that followed the Czar's decree of 1804.⁴⁸ The era commencing with the Jewish surname edict of 1804 is often referred to as "the Jewish surname era."^{49, 50, 51}

Numerous examples of censuses from the late 1700's and the early 1800's illustrate how Czar Alexander I's Jewish surname edict was interpreted and implemented in the Russian Empire. These censuses showed that in the years immediately following the surname edict, members of the same family who lived in separate houses adopted or were assigned different surnames.⁵²

Prior to 1827, according to a ruling by Czarina Catherine the Great, the Jewish community was not summoned to the army; instead, Jews had to pay double taxes.⁵³ Taxes were based on the number of males in the household, which would have created a powerful incentive to divide families into smaller units by adopting different surnames. After 1827, according to a law issued by Czar Nicolas I, Jews were liable for conscription.⁵⁴

Being drafted into the Czar's army was a particularly onerous and menacing proposition for Jews in the Pale, and they tried to avoid the draft by "fiddling around" with their surnames, *e.g.*, having boys registered as belonging to another family which had no sons, hiding sons from the census takers, and doing other things to make it difficult for the Russian authorities to find them.⁵⁵

While related heads of different households were acquiring different surnames, implementation of the surname edict resulted in all members of the same household adopting the same surname as the head of the household.

Due to the practice among religious Jews known as *kest*, it was quite common for a man to be supported by his father-in-law for a period of years, so that he could study *Torah*

and learn the customs of his wife's family. Alternatively, the newlyweds might live with his parents, giving the young bride the opportunity to gain experience in household management under the tutelage of her mother-in-law. If a son-in-law was living with his wife's family during the surname adoption period of the early 1800's, he would acquire the same surname as his father-in-law.⁵⁶ Any other relatives or household staff living in the home during that period would also acquire the same surname as the head of the household.⁵⁷

It is likely that the surname adoption policy in the Russian Empire resulted in the creation of many thousands of new surnames for related people, while simultaneously resulting in many unrelated people having the same surname.⁵⁸ Both outcomes of the Jewish surname process in the Russian Empire have greatly complicated tracing Jewish surnames.

The Jewish surname adoption process in the Russian Empire has also greatly complicated genetic genealogical research. Hereditary surnames contain information about relatedness within populations, and the general validity of the principle of associating Y chromosomes with surnames has been demonstrated in numerous studies.⁵⁹ However, for the aforementioned reasons related to the Jewish surname adoption process in the Russian Empire, the usual assumptions regarding the association of surnames and pedigree often do not apply to the same extent for Ashkenazi Jews.

As a result of Russian surname laws and mandates, many unrelated Jewish individuals acquired the same surname, while many related people acquired different surnames. Hence for Ashkenazi Jews of Russian ancestry, surnames may confer little information regarding kinship.

This situation has created many challenges and has placed many brick walls in the paths of genealogists who try to trace their ancestry or locate descendants of a particular Jewish lineage, many of whom have different surnames. It also makes it difficult to interpret the results of DNA tests for Jewish descendants, who might be assumed to be related because they share a common surname.

6. Americanization of Jewish Surnames

One of the first challenges that many individuals face when they try to trace their Jewish ancestry is identifying what their family's surname originally was. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia Anglicized their surnames to more American-sounding names.

Contrary to popular myth, no names were ever changed at Ellis Island, and immigrants almost always changed them at their own discretion.^{60, 61, 62} Immigration officials only checked the people passing through the immigration center against the records of the ship on which they arrived—records which were created at the time of departure, not arrival.⁶³ Many Jewish immigrants changed their surnames so soon after arrival in America that their families came to believe that the name change occurred at Ellis Island.

Why did our Jewish ancestors frequently change their surnames after immigrating to America? To answer this question, it is important to understand the social and political forces that confronted immigrants in America during this period.

From the very beginning of the mass migration that spanned the years 1880 to 1924, an increasingly vociferous group of politicians and nativists demanded increased restriction on immigration.⁶⁴ As far back as the 1890's, the invidious comparison between "old" and "new" immigrants was applied with particular intensity to Jews.

Anti-Semitism in America reached its peak during the interwar period (1919–1939). One element in American anti-Semitism during the 1920's was the identification of Jews with Bolshevism. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920's, the violent anti-Semitic works of Henry Ford, and the radio speeches of Father Charles Coughlin in the late 1930's indicated the strength of attacks on the Jewish community.⁶⁵

Thrust into this new and unfamiliar social environment, Jewish immigrants felt enormous pressure to assimilate into American culture as quickly as possible and to escape the stigma that was associated with being Russian Jewish immigrants. Most of them were married with young children to support, so they bore the added financial burden of having to earn a living and provide for their families.⁶⁶

Although Jews were not the only ones to experience this pressure to assimilate, research suggests that they changed their names in disproportionate numbers compared with other groups, likely in response to American anti-

Semitism.⁶⁷ Hence, shortening or Anglicizing surnames was extremely prevalent among immigrant Jews during the late 1800's and early 1900's, not only to make their names easier to pronounce but also to facilitate assimilation and reduce discrimination in applying for jobs, earning promotions, moving to residential areas that had restrictive covenants, gaining admission into private schools and colleges that had quotas for Jews, and striving for upward social mobility.

Changing one's surname during the era prior to the issuance of Social Security identification numbers in 1936 was extremely easy to do. There were no rules and regulations, and no official government registration was required; an immigrant often entered the Americanized surname on a marriage record, naturalization petition, birth certificate, or census document or simply began doing business under the new name.

As a result of this widespread Americanization of Jewish surnames that took place among our immigrant ancestors, many American Jews are unaware of their original ancestral surnames. Moreover, because official records documenting the surname change were rare, learning what the original surname was several generations later can be difficult and challenging.

When researching Jewish ancestry, it is important to refrain from assuming too much regarding relatedness, or nonrelatedness, based simply on paternal surnames alone. Unfamiliar surnames could be attributable to the surname adoption process that took place more than two centuries ago in the Russian Empire, or they could relate to events that happened when Russian Jews immigrated to the United States and Americanized their surnames.

ORIGINAL (To be retained by clerk) 28 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA PETITION FOR CITIZENSHIP No. 208041

To the Honorable the US District Court of Southern District New York, NY

The petition of Samuel John Sontag hereby filed, respectfully shows:

(1) My place of residence is 135 E. W. 168th St., Bronx, NY (2) My occupation is salesman

(3) I was born in Minsk Russia on March 14, 1899 My race is Hebrew

(4) I declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States on March 8, 1926 in the US District Court of Southern District at New York, NY

(5) I am married. The name of my wife Lily we were married on March 14, 1926 at New York, NY I was born at New York, NY on June 25, 1902 entered the United States as immigrant for permanent residence therein, and now resides at 135 E. W. 168th St., Bronx, NY I have 1 children, and the name, date, and place of birth, and place of residence of each of said children are as follows: Richard Max, May 23, 1928, New York, NY and resides at 135 E. W. 168th St., Bronx, NY.

(6) My last foreign residence was Minsk Russia I emigrated to the United States of America from Liverpool England Boston, Mass. under the name of Schmueel Sondak on November 22, 1907 on the vessel Saxonia as shown by the certificate of my arrival attached hereto.

One place that original names of Jewish (and other) immigrants can be found is on U.S. naturalization documents. For this 1936 Petition for Citizenship, Samuel John Sontag stated in question 6 that he arrived in Boston in 1907 under the name of Schmueel Sondak.

Morris Gordon

now residing at 2187 2 4th Street, Brooklyn, New York

occupation Currier and Presser aged 28

sex male color white eyes blue hair brown

height 5 feet 8 inches weight 145

religion Hebrew

place of birth Kishinev, Russia

date of birth November 29, 1914

date of arrival in U.S. October 2, 1914

name of last foreign residence Kishinev, Russia

name of last foreign residence before that Kottorad, Holland

date of arrival in U.S. from last foreign residence April 10, 1914

name of last foreign residence before that Moische Gorodetzky

I have **not** heretofore made a declaration of intention.

I have **not** heretofore made a declaration of intention.

To the Honorable the Court of

This petition for naturalization, hereby made and filed, respectfully states:

(1) My full, true, and correct name is **SARAH GORDON** formerly **Sore Breinin**

(2) My present place of residence is **221 Levoia Ave., Brooklyn, Kings Co., N.Y.**

(3) I am **54** years old. (4) I was born on **November 30, 1890** at **Krasberg, Latvia**

(5) My general description is as follows: Sex **Female**, color **white**, hair **fair**, eyes **brown**, nose **straight**, mouth **well**, complexion **fair**, visible distinctive marks **none**

present nationality **Latvian**

we were married on **April 4, 1914** at **New York, N.Y.**

name of my husband **Joseph**

place of birth **Russia**

date of birth **1890**

date of arrival in U.S. **1900**

name of last foreign residence **Latvia**

date of arrival in U.S. from last foreign residence **Aug. 5, 1914**

name of last foreign residence before that **Brooklyn, N.Y.**

date of arrival in U.S. from last foreign residence **Aug. 5, 1914**

name of last foreign residence before that **Brooklyn, N.Y.**

date of arrival in U.S. from last foreign residence **Aug. 5, 1914**

(6) **Sidney (my) Dad. 23, 1915; Alex (my) Mom. 17, 1917; William (my) March 8, 1929.**

All born **unmarried** at **New York, N.Y.**, **Sidney** is in **U.S. Army**, **Alex** resides at **Miami Beach, Fla.**, **William** resides at **Brooklyn, N.Y.**

The layout and questions on naturalization documents changed over the years, but the same information is usually there. (Top) This 1940 Declaration of Intention for Morris Gordon indicates that he immigrated in 1914 under the name of Moische Gorodetzky. (Bottom) Sarah Gordon’s 1945 Petition for Naturalization shows on the first line that she was formerly Sore Breinin.

7. Jewish Endogamy

Yet another factor that has greatly complicated genetic genealogical research is Jewish endogamy. Endogamy is the custom of marrying within the same ethnic, cultural, social, or religious group or within the limits of defined communities, tribes, or clans.⁶⁸ In an endogamous population, everyone descends from the same small gene pool, and members of the group are related to each other in a recent genealogical timeframe on multiple ancestral pathways.⁶⁹ The same ancestors will, therefore, appear in multiple places on someone’s pedigree chart.

Ashkenazi Jews are one of many known endogamous populations. Endogamy among Ashkenazi Jews was internally mandated through religious and cultural tenets that endorsed marrying other Jews, and externally imposed through laws that prohibited marriage to non-Jews.⁷⁰ In addition, severe restrictions were placed upon Jewish movement, places of residence, and marriage rights within small *shtetlach* in Eastern Europe and the Russian Pale of Settlement.

As a result of all these factors, the Ashkenazi Jewish population is highly endogamous.^{71, 72} Hence, different Jewish communities around the world share more than just religious or cultural practices—they also have strong genetic commonalities.^{73, 74}

In a recent DNA study of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish communities from around the world, the authors stated, “The shared genetic elements suggest that members of any Jewish community are related to one another as closely as are fourth or fifth cousins in a large population, which is about 10 times higher than the relationship between two people chosen at random off the streets of New York City.”^{75, 76}

The interpretation of DNA results from endogamous populations can be particularly challenging because such people will typically have large numbers of genetic matches in the DNA databases.

In an autosomal DNA study conducted by the author, it was found that, on average, a Jewish person who takes a Family Tree DNA (FTDNA) Family Finder test genetically matched more than half (54.5%) of the other Jewish testers in the FTDNA database. This compares to a genetic match rate of less than one percent (0.8%) for a non-Jewish tester, for a genetic match ratio of 68 to 1 between the two groups.⁷⁷

According to the International Society of Genetic Genealogy (ISOGG):

The interpretation of autosomal DNA matches can be particularly difficult, especially in the case of endogamous populations where the pedigrees cannot be traced back beyond the 1800s. The relationships will often be more distant than predicted.⁷⁸

To attempt to correct or adjust for this “overpredicted” relationship problem, including excess matches, DNA testing laboratories have employed various adjustment or “down-weighting” factors. To cite one such example, for individuals of Jewish ancestry, FTDNA presents the following message on its Learning Center pages:

Using Family Finder results for genealogy is more challenging for individuals of Jewish ancestry because of a lack of genealogical records, surname changes, and frequent intermarriage.

The lack of genealogical records means that finding the connection with even a third cousin may not be possible. It is important then to focus on those matches who come from the timeframe of available records.

Name changes are, as always, one of the biggest challenges of Jewish genealogy.

As a result of frequent intermarriage, a Family Finder cousin match may show a total value of centiMorgans composed from the combination of different lines. That is, they are a more distant cousin who is related in multiple ways.

Beginning on April 21, 2011, we have modified our Family Finder matching algorithm to address this. The changes affect the match list for Ashkenazi Jews. The outcome is calculated Family Finder relationships that more accurately reflect relationships to other Ashkenazi Jews.⁷⁹

Jewish endogamy represents yet another unique challenge to Jewish genealogy, and one that needs to be understood and accounted for when employing autosomal DNA testing to research Jewish lineages and ancestry.

8. Historical Lack of Family Trees and Paper Trails

One of the challenges of Jewish genealogy is the paucity of information regarding Jewish ancestors. With the exception of families of rabbinical descent, it is rare to find an individual of Jewish descent who has a well documented family tree and who knows who all eight great-grandparents were, let alone more distant ancestors. One of the most common causes for this lack of information is an absence of family trees and paper trails. The lack of Jewish paper trails was alluded to in a recent DNA study of Sephardi, Mizrahi, and Ashkenazi Jews:

In the genealogical/familial area there has been a large increase of interest in DNA. After gathering as much information as possible about relatives by using the traditional methods of checking paper records (censuses, immigration records, wills, burial records, Social Security records, etc.), in effect exhausting the “paper trail,” an increasing number of Jewish people are turning to DNA. Jews, perhaps more than members of many other groups, are likely to turn to DNA because “paper trails” frequently are more nonexistent. Frequent migrations, persecutions, and name changes have decreased the possibilities of paper trails in many cases. There are indications that there is more interest in DNA testing in the Jewish community than in the non-Jewish community.⁸⁰

The lack of family trees and paper trails is a pervasive problem among Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Mizrahi Jews, for reasons which have not been adequately explained. It might lead one to conclude that genealogy was not important in Jewish culture and tradition, but, from a historical perspective, that is clearly not the case.

Genealogy or *yichus* has always been an important topic within Jewish tradition and has played a part in the lives of Jews from ancient times to the present.^{81, 82}

This historical interest in *yichus* remained a constant in Jewish culture throughout the Middle Ages, and, despite the many expulsions and migrations of the Jews during this period, *yichus* remained an important value in Poland, Eastern Europe, and the Russian Empire during the 18th and 19th centuries. Isaac Levy, writing about *yichus* in the *shtetl*, stated:

The term [*yichus*] has never borne the connotation of vain pride, but rather has acted as the guarantee that the union shall be established on firm foundations . . . which shall accord with the long-cherished traditions associated with the Jewish Home. It is because the influence of family background plays so large a part in domestic Jewish life.⁸³

Given Jews’ long-standing interest in genealogy from the very beginning of Jewish history, and the fact that genealogy is encoded in their cultural DNA, how do we explain the pervasive lack of family trees and paper trails among American Jews? To understand the roots of this problem, we need to take a quick look back at Jewish history.

The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE marked a watershed moment in Jewish history. The elimination of the symbolic center of Judaism and Jewish identity resulted in Jews having to adjust to the prospect of an indefinite period of displacement in the Jewish diaspora.⁸⁴

Without a country of their own, the Jews of the diaspora were convenient scapegoats in times of trouble and experienced numerous exiles, expulsions,^{85, 86, 87, 88} ethnic cleansings,^{89, 90} migrations, wars, pogroms,⁹¹ persecutions, blood libels, and hardships in their host countries, from the Middle Ages on, culminating with the Holocaust.⁹²

During these unsettled and chaotic times, genealogy, by necessity, took a back seat in Jewish culture and daily life. More pressing concerns, involving religious repression and persecution, harsh and restrictive laws regarding where they could live and the professions they could engage in, poverty and the lack of economic and educational opportunities, compulsory military service, and the ever-present threat of anti-Semitic pogroms, violence, and ethnic cleansing took precedence.

It is well documented that, along with the loss of life and destruction of property, many Jewish women were raped during the numerous pogroms that swept through Ukraine.^{93, 94} Illegitimate children were stigmatized, and

documenting the parentage of children born to Jewish rape victims in the aftermath of these pogroms would have been difficult and emotionally painful.

Other factors that may have contributed to suppressing interest in documenting Jewish ancestors in 18th-century Eastern Europe included social class distinctions. According to Hundert:

In eighteenth-century society, questions of honor and deference were a central preoccupation shared alike by Jews and non-Jews. This focus on social status was made visible in civic and religious rituals, in public office and behavior, in dress and occupation. A strict formality, which concretized distinctions in rank and status, governed behavior in many dimensions of social and religious life. Particularly during the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century, a kind of Polish-Lithuanian Jewish aristocracy existed. Members of a relatively small number of families held an astonishing number of rabbinical and communal offices. Among these families were the Ginzburgs, Heilperins, Horowitzs, Rapoport, and Katzenellenbogens.⁹⁵

The Polish-Lithuanian Jewish aristocracy were all rabbinical families. For the most part, rabbinical families placed a great deal of importance on *yichus* and kept well documented family trees. Some of these trees for the older rabbinical lines, such as Shapiro and Luria, date back to the Middle Ages.^{96, 97, 98}

Following the annexation of Poland and the creation of the Pale of Settlement, the vast majority of Jews in the Pale were poor and uneducated. Unless they were from rabbinical families, their children had little chance of marrying into a family with *yichus*. Poor Jewish families, without the status that *yichus* confers, may have felt no need to keep track of their ancestors. Hence, social class considerations may have played a role in suppressing interest in documenting family trees among the Jews of Eastern Europe who were not part of the religious aristocracy.

Religious repression, expulsions, migrations, pogroms, the constant threat of violence, poverty, class distinctions, and the de-emphasis of *yichus* in determining social status—most likely it was a combination of all of these social, political, and economic factors that discouraged Jews from engaging in the cultural and educational pursuits that residing in a more stable society allows. Documenting their ancestors was likely just one of many cultural pursuits that suffered under the harsh conditions of the Pale of Settlement.

To be concluded next issue.

Endnotes

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58. Jeffrey Mark Paull and Jeffrey Briskman, “The Jewish Surname Process in the Russian Empire and Its Effect on Jewish Genealogy”, *Avotaynu Online*, 21 August 2015; <https://avotaynuonline.com/2015/08/the-jewish-surname-process-in-the-russian-empire-and-its-effect-on-jewish-genealogy/> (accessed 28 December 2020).

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SFBAJGS Activity Report for 2020

Jeff Lewy, SFBAJGS Treasurer

This annual report to our members covers our activities, financial results, and grants to other organizations in 2020.

This was a year like no other, for us as for so many other groups. We had no in-person meetings after February; they were replaced by online Zoom presentations. As a small, regional organization, we took advantage of online meetings, and we had watchers and listeners from all over the United States who have never had the opportunity to hear our presentations. Our largest audience had 54 attendees, more than double our recent largest in-person meetings. Our free online News continued to inform members of SFBAJGS and other subscribers about other groups' online activities, and our quarterly journal *ZichronNote* continued to present interesting articles about Jewish genealogy, many of them written by our members.

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, and we take active roles in moderating JewishGen Research Divisions (RD's) online and participating in additional efforts to find and provide public and online access to vital records and other records of genealogical interest.

Our name says that we are the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society, but we remind you that the "San Francisco Bay Area" part of our name merely means that we reside here. Our members and our interests are worldwide, as are our ancestors and living relatives. We can be as helpful to 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.

Many members attended the 40th annual conference of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), held virtually in August 2020, and several Society members helped put together the conference and made presentations, including Robinn Magid, the chief organizer for the first-ever virtual IAJGS conference.

Our members continue to make generous donations to the Society in addition to paying dues, giving us the opportunity to support our objectives:

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

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

Other work fulfilling 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.

Donations to Organizations Working in Ways That Support Our Mission

This year, we donated \$5,100 to eleven organizations for their activities. We present the purposes of our donations and the URL's of these organizations so that you can learn more about their activities if you wish.

Local

- **Jewish Community Library in San Francisco:** Maintain and expand the very strong collection of materials related to Jewish genealogy and history, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. <http://www.jewishlearningworks.org/jewish-community-library/>

- **Commission for the Preservation of Pioneer Jewish Cemeteries and Landmarks in the West:** Protect and maintain the seven Gold Rush-era Jewish cemeteries in the Sierra foothills. <http://www.pioneerjewishcemeteries.org/>

- **Oakland FamilySearch Library:** Expand its collection of materials for Jewish research and support our Oakland meeting location. https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Oakland_California_FamilySearch_Library/Contact_Information

National and International

• **Reclaim the Records:** A nonprofit organization that identifies important genealogical record sets that ought to be in the public domain but which are restricted by government archives, agencies, or 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 on 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. Reclaim the Records is pursuing continuing efforts at the federal level and in many states where officials have not previously allowed public access. <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/>

• **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.italiangen.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. <https://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 its General Fund, supporting the primary online site of Jewish genealogical records and instruction for researchers. <https://www.jewishgen.org/>

• **Ukraine Research Division at JewishGen:** Support digitization and placement online of records from Ukrainian national archives. <https://www.jewishgen.org/Ukraine/>

• **Gesher Galicia Przemysl Project:** Identify the towns of origin of 577 Jewish index books held in the Przemysl State Archive in Ukraine and preserve at Gesher Galicia the images of these record books. <http://www.geshergalicia.org/>

Transcriptions

• We completed transcription of all burial cards and other burial data for Home of Eternity Cemetery in Oakland from the 1880's through 2020. These data were uploaded to JewishGen's Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) and shared with Home of Eternity.

• We are transcribing burial records for Sherith Israel Synagogue in San Francisco dating from about 1861 to 1889. These records come from synagogue meeting minutes and copies of the related City health records kept by the synagogue. These records are particularly valuable as they provide a partial substitute for San Francisco City records destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fires.

• We are transcribing 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 United States and overseas. Sinai Memorial also records cremations, which may not appear in cemetery records.

• We are transcribing about 36,000 records from Eternal Home Cemetery in Colma from six ledgers covering the years from the opening of the cemetery in 1903 until 2010. Information after 2010 is maintained by the cemetery as computerized records.

Financial Results for 2020

Revenues for 2020 were just under \$9,400, just slightly more than in past years, with about \$5,000 in dues from 221 members and about \$4,300 in donations and other income. Thank you for your membership dues and generous 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.

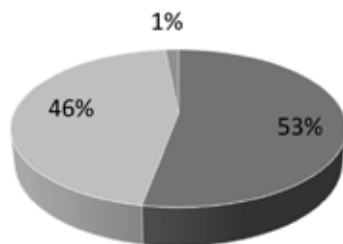
Expenses totaled about \$7,900, generating a surplus of about \$1,400. This surplus was generated even though we granted \$5,100 in contributions to other groups. Those contributions are described above. Other significant categories of expenses were publication of two issues of *ZichronNote*, \$500; membership acquisition, \$400; and Web site maintenance and management, \$600. All other expenses, including insurance and other administrative items, totaled about \$1,300.

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

We thank you again, as we do every year, 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 you have suggestions for projects or activities you would like to see us undertake or support. We look forward to another year of accomplishments in 2021 and hope we will be able to return soon to in-person meetings.

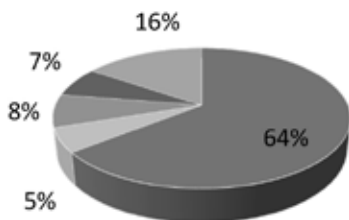
SFBAJGS Revenue - 2020

- Dues
- Donations
- Interest income & other revenue



SFBAJGS Expense - 2020

- Grants to others
- Website management
- Administrative & other
- Membership
- ZichronNote journals



We then speculated about why Dad and Bernice might have divorced so quickly:

- *Was the baby aborted?* Almost certainly not: Dad would not have had Bernice undergo a dangerous, illegal medical procedure.
- *Was the baby put up for adoption?* Not likely: Dad would not have given his child away.
- *Did the pregnancy end in miscarriage?* Possible, but not too likely: Only a minority of pregnancies end that way; furthermore, a miscarriage would not necessarily have led to divorce.

Shortly thereafter, I was discussing this matter with a longtime friend. His hypothesis: Dad divorced Bernice once it became clear that she was not actually pregnant!

This struck me as the most likely possibility. Dad would not have wanted to stay with someone who had lied about such a matter, upending his life and derailing his musical career.

I have examined relevant court documents (whose allegations one should not take as literal truth, particularly in an era when no-fault divorce was not available):

- On 3 January 1947, after seven months of marriage, Bernice left Dad, moving back into her mother's home.
- Four days later, Dad sued for divorce, alleging cruelty on Bernice's part.
- Bernice filed a counterclaim for divorce, alleging cruelty on Dad's part and on his mother's.
- The divorce was granted. Dad's sole financial obligation was to pay Bernice \$2,300 (equivalent to almost \$27,000 today), the approximate value of premarital war and savings bonds that Bernice had given to Dad to invest in the family business.

The mystery remains.

Epilog

During his third year at Wayne (beginning while married to Bernice and ending after the divorce, while still working in the family business), Dad took a half load of nonmusic classes. He received middling grades. The following year he withdrew from Wayne.

Once Dad and Mom married, Dad's piano joined them. He occasionally played classical or popular music, though my strongest memories are of family sing-alongs on Sundays and special occasions, such as birthdays.



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

Surname	Town, Country	Member
Feigenbaum	Debiça, Gogolow, Rzeszow, Poland; Komano, Slovakia	Jerry Spielvogel
Haller	Kraków, Tarnów, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Lobsower	Kraków, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Muckenbrunn	Debiça, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Munk	Kraków, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Nachsatz	Kraków, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Nath	Dabrowa Tarnowska, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Ravitz/Rawitz/Revitz/Rewitz	Brzostek, Debiça, Katowice, Nawsie/Nawsie Brzosteckie, Ropczyce, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Spielvogel	Dabrowa Tarnowska, Kraków, Podkosciele, Tarnów, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Steringer	Dabrowa Tarnowska, Poland	Jerry Spielvogel
Storch	Ropczyce	Jerry Spielvogel

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Upcoming SFBAJGS Events

Currently all scheduled events are being held online with Zoom.

Monday, 19 April: *Organizing Family History with Photos*. Member Susan Gerbic will discuss setting goals for organizing photos for family history projects.

Sunday, 23 May: *How a Record Match Almost Led Me to an Insane Asylum*. Daniel Horowitz, the Genealogy Expert at MyHeritage, will explore Holocaust records at Bad Arolsen and Yad Vashem.

Monday, 21 June: *Finding Your Eastern European Jewish Family on JRI-Poland.org*. Member Robinn Magid (2021 IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award winner) will demonstrate how to use the JRI-Poland database and what can be found there.

Sunday, 11 July: *The Archaeology of San Francisco Jews*. Retired anthropology professor Adrian Praetzelis will talk about some archaeological locations in San Francisco related to Jews and his use of archival records in researching them.

See page 4 for other events of interest.

For more program information and to register for a presentation, visit <http://www.sfbajgs.org/>.
