



זכרון ZichronNote

The Journal of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

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Mysterious DNA Relatives

When they appear as matches, of course you want to know where these relatives fit into your family tree. **See page 4.**

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*William Gray in 1926. Is he the right man?
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Jewish Genealogical Society

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President's Message

Feedback!

Jeremy Frankel, SFBAJGS President

During the past year, the lockdown has meant, at least physically, that we have all become distant from one another. While we still have cell phones, e-mail, and Zoom, it's not exactly the same as meeting face to face. That said, your board continues to do an incredible job running the society.

This distance, and especially the isolation from our members, means we could become lulled into a sense of operating in a vacuum. Just as the board exists to serve the needs of the members, it's important for members to reach out to the board. We need to know that what we're doing meets with your approval.

Is there anything we're not doing that we could be? If we are doing something, is it to your satisfaction? Where might we be falling short? Is there anything new you'd like us to try?

That said, we're always on the look-out for new board members. Rather than say we're looking for "new blood", perhaps it's better to say we're looking for fresh perspectives. Maybe the COVID situation has meant early retirement for some of you, and you're wondering how to fill some of those hours. Well, we'd love to have you on board.

With respect to this year's Jewish genealogy conference, I apologize, I spoke too soon. As many of you will have read by now, the physical conference for this year has been cancelled and a virtual one is being planned instead. Maybe next year, if not in Jerusalem, I hope to see some of you at the 2022 setting for the conference.

In my last column, I mentioned I had made contact with a newfound 92-year-old cousin. This time, I'm happy to report that I managed to get two 90-year-old cousins in the UK to take DNA tests, and another (possible) cousin in France to do likewise.

I close with my hope, and that of the board, that you and your family are still keeping well, and your genealogical endeavors are proving fruitful.



Invite a Friend to Join SFBAJGS

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

Society News

New Members

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Joel Silverman joel@silverman.org

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.

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.

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! We were unable to meet in person in 2020, and 2021 isn't looking very good, so we have now postponed the big party to 2022 so we that can celebrate together, face to face.

The celebration won't be happening tomorrow, so we have time to prepare. (How's that for putting a positive spin on it?) And this is where you come in! We would like to collect 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.

SFBAJGS Board Meetings

SFBAJGS board meetings are open to members to attend, and we welcome you to do so! The next board meeting is scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, 8 August, **online via Zoom**. If you are interested in attending and learning more about how your board reaches decisions for the society (or possibly about serving on the board?), contact the editor at newsletter@sfbajgs.org.

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

Unraveling the Basis of a Mysterious DNA Match

Ann L. Fuller, Ph.D.

Ann L. Fuller is an Affiliate Scholar at Oberlin College and a Geni.com volunteer curator. She grew up in Chicago, Illinois, earned an M.A. in history and a Ph.D. in plasma physics, and served for 28 years as executive director of a social services agency serving low-income persons in Oberlin, Ohio. She started doing genealogy as a retirement activity in 2007 by joining Geni.com, the then-new genealogy-social networking site, and has since expanded her research interests into multiple geographical areas and DNA. She has been a member of SFBAJGS since 2010.

A Mysterious DNA Match

Over the past few years, I have researched the close matches of my family members who have done DNA testing. In June 2020, my late brother-in-law, Richard Gray (1928–2018), had a close match on MyHeritage to an unfamiliar French woman named Christiane R. Her family tree showed her mother's branch, but her father was unknown. Her ethnicity was primarily European but also showed 21.8% Ashkenazi and 5% Mesoamerican ancestry.¹ I assumed that her mother was not Jewish, so her unknown father must have had one Jewish parent.

I sent a message to Christiane on 25 June 2020² and pondered how she could be related to Richard. She was in her 70's and Richard would have been 91, so they had likely come from different generations. Her total match was 368.3 cM, and the longest segment was 81 cM. She had a 65% probability of being a 1C1R to Richard, according to a table on DNAPainter.com. Since Christiane did not match Richard's known maternal relatives, the origin of the match was his paternal branch, the Gray (formerly Groman) family. Her father could have been a first cousin of Richard.

I gathered information about Richard's family by talking with knowledgeable family members and using various genealogy sites. Richard's paternal grandparents, Max Groman (1863–1932) and Esther (Langer) Groman (1866–1948), had five children: Joseph/Joe (1886–1944), Fanny (1888–1939), William/Bill (1890–1948), Edward/Eddie (1892–1962), and Etta (1896–1956). The children were born in Siedliszcze, Poland, where Max served as a timber appraiser for an aristocratic landowner.³ The entire family immigrated to the United States between 1905 and 1908 and had Anglicized their name to Gray by 1908.

Richard's father was Eddie Gray, and his only known male Gray first cousins were his Aunt Fanny's son, Harold Jaffe (1922–1959), and his Aunt Etta's son, Gerald Marks (1921–1967). His uncles, Joe and Bill, had no known children. Bill had remained single throughout his life, and Joe, who had served in France during World War I, had married twice. Since I doubted that Harold or Gerald had been only half-Jewish, I wondered if either Joe or Bill

had fathered an unknown son with a non-Jewish woman. Only Joe had been in France, so my initial guess was that he might have connected with a French woman during World War I, resulting in the birth of Christiane's father.

Christiane R. and Her Story

Christiane responded to my initial message on 2 August 2020, six weeks after I had first contacted her. The next day, she commented on my theory of her parentage:

I must say that I am quite upset by this news. I was indeed born to an unknown father and my family has always refused to tell me about the circumstances of my birth. Only my mother told me that my father was an American soldier (whose first name I unfortunately forgot) and that she would tell me how it had happened when I was older. But she died very young and I never had any further information about it, so it cannot be the uncle you are telling me about and who was in France during the First World War. It can only be a family member of the next generation who was in France and more precisely in Marseille in 1946.⁴ If you could find out who he was and tell me about him, that would be the end of the questions that have haunted me all my life! It is true that my mother's untimely death and the mystery of my father's identity were very damaging for me. I am now almost 74 years old and I thought I had closed the book on all of this, but I realize that in fact I have not and that the idea of finally knowing who my father was is still too upsetting for me.⁵

Over the next few weeks, Christiane and I carried on an active correspondence. She knew little English, so I communicated with her in French with the help of Google Translate. I updated her on the progress of my research on the Gray family and my further exploration into her DNA matches. Meanwhile, she filled me in on how her family had dealt with her regarding the details of her birth after her mother's death at age 28. She also explained how she happened to take a DNA test.

My mother was Anne-Marie (known as Annie) DELOR and she had an older sister named Jeannine with whom I think she went out a lot at that time.

My membership in MyHeritage was made by chance by responding to an advertisement that was sent on the Internet and I admit that what decided me is the fact that this company is based in the USA. While doing this, I felt that I had thrown a bottle into the ocean! But for several months, the connections were still very distant, and I had therefore almost lost all hope and rarely read the e-mails they sent me. You can imagine the shock I had on discovering the one that told me I finally have this close relationship with Richard Gray! And as a bonus, your message!

And whatever happens now, I am very happy to have been able to talk with you because you allowed me to finally speak openly about this whole story. Of course, if you also manage to solve the riddle concerning the identity of my father, I will be eternally grateful to you!!!⁶

Christiane's family had refused to tell her anything about her biological father. Her aunt Jeannine had burned a packet of letters in English addressed to Anne-Marie, depriving Christiane of a possible source of information about her father's identity. I asked her why she thought they concealed the information.

You should know that silence has been my family's refuge, as if never talking about what bothered them could erase reality. . . . It's appallingly shortsighted but they all lived like that. Yet they were all intellectuals. . . . The problem is that they were also petty bourgeois Catholics, constrained by rules. . . .⁷

As for my aunt Jeannine, my mother's older sister, she lived for a long time with a married man whom she ended up marrying. . . . Of course everyone saw her as a free spirit, very intelligent and tolerant. And yet I discovered by chance that she had in her possession a whole series of letters in English addressed to my mother, and perhaps other things. However, when she died in 2006, I found absolutely nothing. . . . her friend confessed to me that my aunt had carefully burned everything before she died! . . . I suppose that with this information you will understand better how much they treated the story of my birth as an absolutely taboo subject. The misfortune was that my mother died so young. I not only lost everything but a heavy weight fell upon me.⁸

Christiane couldn't talk about her mother with the grandmother who raised her. Unable to get any information from her family, Christiane coped, but eventually her unresolved grief caught up with her.

My grandmother took care of me, but it was always impossible to talk to her about anything because the mere mention of my mother's name triggered fits of tears and

despair that terrified me. That's why, reluctantly, I ended up choosing silence.⁹

I believe that then, faced with my total inability to find answers, I decided that all of this did not matter to me. That's what it was like and I had to put an end to it. I sincerely believed for years that I had succeeded in forgetting everything, but in reality it influenced my whole life and at around 40 years old, my fragile balance broke and I had to turn to psychoanalysis. Today I took stock of things and I can tell you all of this calmly, but the road has been long.¹⁰

I was moved by Christiane's story and thought about the historical context, the aftermath of World War II in Marseille: "How horrible that your aunt tried to destroy all evidence of your heritage. You never really had the chance to mourn the loss of your mother, as it would upset your family, especially your grandmother. . . . I imagine your family would have struggled to recover after having suffered from a world war before you were born, their disapproval about the circumstances of your birth¹¹, and then losing your mother."¹²

She responded and went on to tell me how her family had handled her mother's illness and death:

And you are absolutely right. It was never possible for my family to console me since, as usual, silence ruled over all. But there is worse. My mother died of hemolytic anemia (at least that's what I was told . . .), which took her in 2 years. The first year, I was taken to see her regularly even though I found that not really enough. When her illness worsened, however, I was told that children were not allowed to come to the new hospital where she had been taken, and when she died, I had not seen her for months. And as if that weren't enough, I was not told right away so as not to have to take me to her funeral. As a result, I believed for months that this was not true and that I had been lied to for some obscure reason.

However, I need to say that they were all kind and had good intentions. Their affection for me was real but the errors in judgment added up, and by supposedly wanting to protect me they protected themselves. In the case of my aunt, it is much less clear because nothing can explain the gratuitous destruction of all these documents. . . . I was very angry with her for a long time, and I think I still am.

Finally, in telling you all this, I realize that I did not do so badly! I have always tried to see the bright side of things and no one around me has ever suspected the ordeal I went through sometimes. Thank you again for your great empathy.¹³

I felt a strong emotional connection to Christiane and was committed to helping her solve the mystery of her father's identity. Yet I was realistic about the limits of what I could find and made no guarantees. I pursued various directions while continuing to correspond with her: researching the Gray family, looking for and comparing photographs, and analyzing Christiane's DNA matches.

The Gray Family, 1905–1922

Max Gray and his oldest son, Joe, left Poland for the United States in February 1905, joining Esther's relatives in Maine and finding work in the Worumbo woolen mill in Lisbon Falls.¹⁴ Fanny came next. When 14-year-old Eddie arrived in March 1906, he had a job waiting for him at the mill. As described by Eddie's wife, Pearl Gray, in a series of interviews:

They blew the whistle at six o' clock in the morning, and you worked until six in the evening. Twelve hours, six days a week, in a woolen mill. When Eddie saw the conditions under which his job had to be performed in—it was terrible conditions, there were no child labor laws of any kind—he realized that if he stayed there, he would get sick from the conditions. They didn't ventilate or carry off the lint from the fibers. He said it was so thick in there, that to stay in that mill, to work there, you had to come out of there with a lung disease.

Eddie decided the mill was not for him. So, one day he played sick. His father came to the mill and said that Eddie was sick in bed. Eddie was very wise and smart. He went into the town and bought some little items. He put them in a box and went around door-to-door ringing farmers' doorbells. In those days, you see, immigrants could do that and make a living.¹⁵



Max Gray and sons Bill, Joe, and Eddie

Within a few years the family—now also including Bill—moved to Providence, Rhode Island, where more of Esther's relatives lived. At first Eddie worked in a machine shop and went to night school. Then he and a friend started a window-cleaning business.

They were kids, but they decided that they would hire people to do the work, and all they would have to do is drum up the business. They'd get buckets and sponges, hire boys, and show them how to wash windows. They gave it a name and got contracts with the office buildings in the town and made a company out of that for a short time. They were making a lot of money. Those two kids were studying at night and setting the world on fire in the daytime.¹⁶

Esther and the youngest child, Etta, joined the rest of the Gray family in Providence in 1908.

By 1910, according to the federal census, the family was living in Cleveland, Ohio, where Eddie started another window-washing business. Within a few years he sold the business to a competitor and headed further west.

He stopped in St. Louis, saw windows everywhere covered with grime from the Mississippi River steamboats, and decided to start another window cleaning business there.¹⁷

The family soon joined him in St. Louis.

[The] business grew into sand blasting stone facades. . . . He developed a cleanser manufacturing business and, sold janitorial supplies via a catalogue for a few years and also, during WW I, sold government War bonds from a store front until it was closed for lack of proper licensing.¹⁸

The name became M. Gray & Sons [later Missouri Home and Window Cleaning Company]; the father and three sons were all together in the business.¹⁹

Max and sons are listed as officers of the Missouri Home and Window Cleaning Company in various available St. Louis City Directories. Joe was president from 1913–1917. Eddie and Max ran the company when Joe and Bill were in the military during World War I. In 1920, Bill was listed as VP in the city directory, but he presented himself as the president when he travelled to sell the company's products and services.

In 1921 Eddie married Pearl Weinhouse, and in 1922 they moved to Chicago with their first child. Eddie soon started the Chicago Concrete Breaking Company, which specialized in demolition and over the years became a very successful business.²⁰ Eddie and Pearl had six more children.

Trying to Connect the Dots

Richard Gray's known male first cousins, Harold Jaffe and Gerald Marks, would have been the right age to have been Christiane's father. I found their World War II registrations but could not locate any documents that showed whether they had served and if so where. Both of their mothers had married Jewish men. Fanny had married a widower with children while in her 30's, and the marriage lasted only a brief time. Etta and her husband were in their early 20's when they married about 1919. It seemed unlikely that either Fanny or Etta would have conceived a son with a non-Jewish man outside of marriage, since the family was Orthodox and given the particulars of both their marriages. Gerald Marks' daughter, whom I located eventually, told me that Gerald had only served stateside during World War II and that it was unlikely that Harold, who had a disability, had served at all. She declined to take a DNA test, which would have provided more information about Gerald's ethnicity and would have shown how closely she matched Christiane.

Once I had ruled out Richard's known first cousins as Christiane's father, I focused again on his uncles, Joe and Bill, and tried to find out as much as I could about them from Ancestry, FamilySearch, and Pearl Gray's interviews.

Joe Gray

"Joe was a very handsome guy and very sweet and good-natured."²¹ When he came to the United States with his father in 1905, he worked in the Worumbo woolen mill in Maine. He subsequently held a variety of other jobs over his lifetime: frame maker in Providence, 1908; insurance agent in Cleveland, 1910; bookkeeper of Missouri House and Window Cleaning Company in St. Louis, 1920; proprietor of retail clothing store in Chicago, 1930; building contractor in Chicago, 1940; and employee of Eddie's company, Chicago Concrete Breaking Company, 1942.

Joe was drafted in 1917 and commissioned as a mess officer of a Negro unit, according to a newspaper article. He was promoted to lieutenant and sent to France. Pearl described the trauma Joe experienced during the war and the family's efforts to help him afterward:

He went to France, was in the trenches, and got gassed and shell shocked—the works. When he came back, he was in a veteran's hospital someplace near Washington. He was pretty badly beaten up from that war. The family decided that he would be better off at home. They didn't want him to stay in the veteran's hospital. That's where they took all the shell-shocked cases. His problem was that he never really recovered from that. He used to talk constantly about "The war, the war, the war."

His brother Bill, the second son (Eddie was the youngest), was into politics. He made a run for Congress, and got a big vote, but didn't make it. But he had some connections, so he went to Washington and told the Congressman, "Get him out. I want my brother home." You see, the government didn't want to let him go. He couldn't have gotten out if the Congressman hadn't helped. They wanted to keep him in the hospital; they were responsible for all these veterans that were injured. But Bill said, "We don't care; we want him home." So the Congressman made his call, and Bill went to the hospital and took him out and brought him home. But Joe was not in good shape; he never recovered from that. . . . He was a nice guy, but he wasn't very productive because of his ailment.²²

In 1919, after Joe returned to St. Louis, he married his childhood sweetheart, Pearl Trube, a cousin of Pearl Gray, but the marriage lasted only a few years. In 1924, Joe married Dora Korshak, another Jewish woman. Both marriages were childless. Joe died in 1944. While it is possible that he could have fathered a child with a non-Jewish woman, perhaps between his two marriages—we can't know for sure—Bill seems a more likely candidate.

Bill Gray

Bill joined Max, Joe, and Eddie in the United States in 1906 and worked as a streetcar conductor in Providence. In the 1910 census he is listed as working as an "operator" in a shirtwaist company in Cleveland. Once in St. Louis, Bill worked with his brothers and father in the family's window-cleaning business. During World War I, Bill, like Joe, served in the Army. Eddie was exempted because he was married with a 3-month-old child (more about that later).

Bill seems to have been the most outgoing and well travelled of the Gray brothers. He was the subject of various St. Louis newspaper articles about his activity in local civic and Jewish organizations.²³ Bill was naturalized on 11 September 1918 and appears to be the first family member to have obtained U.S. citizenship.²⁴

Bill made multiple business trips to Mexico in 1920. He applied for a passport on 11 March 1920 for a trip to Mexico City and Veracruz to sell Gray's cleanser. A letter attached to his passport application shows that he was in Laredo, Texas on or before 25 March 1920; he spent at least three weeks there before receiving his passport on 17 April 1920. Another document shows that he arrived back in Laredo on 17 May 1920, a month later. He took a second trip to Mexico sometime during the summer and returned to Laredo on 5 August 1920. His first passport expired



Bill Gray, 1920 passport photo

after six months, and in October 1920 he applied for a second one in order to return to Mexico City and Veracruz and also to visit Cuba. He applied for a third passport in October 1921 to go to the same places he had visited the previous year.

Although Eddie and family left for Chicago in 1922, Bill resided in St. Louis for the remainder of his life. He ran the window-cleaning company and, helped by Eddie's connections, engaged in real estate development.²⁵ "Gray's Grove", a picnic grounds and event place, was established in the 1930's on the outskirts of St. Louis. It was converted into a trailer park to house the families of defense workers during World War II, and Bill was appointed as its postmaster. He entered politics in the mid-1920's, running for Congress unsuccessfully as a Republican in the 1926, 1928, and 1938 elections. Bill died in St. Louis in 1948 of heart disease.

Comparing Photos

As our correspondence continued, Christiane wanted to learn more about the Gray family, so I sent her some family photos. One of Richard and his older brother Bob jogged her memory of an old postcard photo of Anne-Marie with an American soldier. It was undated but likely taken some time in 1946.

Thank you very much for the photos and for this beginning of a family chronicle. It reminded me that I had seen somewhere in the old photo albums of one of my aunts, a photo taken in Marseille on the Canebière by a street photographer and in which my mother was in the company of an American soldier. I immediately looked for it and to my surprise written on the back of the photo was "Anne-Marie and Robert." I believe that for you the diminutive of Robert is Bob. Do you think it is possible that it is the man in the photo? There was unfortunately no precise date but I think by comparison with other photos and given how my mother looks that it could correspond to the time before I was born.²⁶

I explained that her DNA match to Richard Gray was not close enough to indicate that Richard's brother Bob could have been her father.



Photo postcard of Robert and Anne-Marie, circa 1946

Soon after, Christiane found and sent me another postcard photo of Anne-Marie, with a different American soldier, this one named Bill. He had written an inscription on the back which read, "Taken in Marseilles / Feb. 10, 1946 / Bill & Anne Marie / Heading for someplace but who knows where? 6th Ord. Club? Could be! Jim & Janine are behind us." Since Christiane was born slightly more than 9 months later, on 22 November 1946, it seemed plausible that Bill could be her father.

The soldiers appear to be in their 20's in the photos. Each is wearing an Army uniform and overseas garrison cap which covers the top of his head. Robert's face is visible only from the side, whereas Bill is facing forward. I compared the two photos to those of Richard's immediate family and saw a resemblance between the soldier named Bill and the Grays. Although at that point I had no photo of Joe or Bill Gray, eventually I was able to find a picture of Joe in an advertising image of Max and his three sons and photos of Bill from a passport and a 1925 newspaper. Both Joe and Bill, despite being heavier and older, look like they could be related to the American soldier Bill.



Analyzing DNA Matches

DNA evidence led to the discovery of Christiane's relationship to Richard Gray and showed it came from his paternal branch. Christiane matched several of Richard's close Gray relatives—two nieces, a nephew, and a grandniece²⁷—each of whom was the child or grandchild of one of three different siblings. She also matched more distantly related Gray relatives.

Under ideal circumstances, Christiane would have tested at all the major DNA sites, but that was logistically difficult. While French residents have been able to purchase tests from 23andMe and MyHeritage without incurring a penalty despite the ban on direct-to-consumer genetic testing, Ancestry, which has the largest DNA database, won't ship to France. I was able to find more matches when Christiane gave me permission to upload her DNA file to several other sites.²⁸

Christiane had two more significant matches on GEDMatch.com: Shaya P. and Pamela D. I wrote to both, but only Pamela answered me. She matched Christiane but not Richard, so I assumed she was related to Christiane either through Anne-Marie or through Christiane's unknown paternal grandmother. I hoped Pamela would be able to fill in more family information, but she was adopted and did not know the identity of her biological father. Her birth mother had Mexican ancestry, but Pamela had not found a record for her beyond the 1940 census. While I was able to help her explore her own background, I couldn't figure out much about her relationship to Christiane. Somewhat later, however, Christiane convinced her only living Delor relative, a first cousin, to test. He did not match Pamela, which led me to believe that her relationship to Christiane was through the mysterious woman with some Mesoamerican ancestry who was Christiane's paternal grandmother.

Shaya P., as estimated on GEDMatch, was related to Richard three generations back and to Christiane 3.6 generations back. He did not match Richard's maternal Weinhouse or the more distant Gray relatives. I tentatively concluded that he must match Richard and Christiane through Richard's paternal grandmother, Esther (Langer) Gray, but I was not able to prove it by constructing Shaya's tree from available information. Several months later, however, by chance, I was able to figure out the connection when I read Pearl Gray's interviews, which described Eddie's early life and mentioned that Esther Gray had a sister who married a man with the P. surname. Eureka! I found a P. relative who had written a 2008 article about

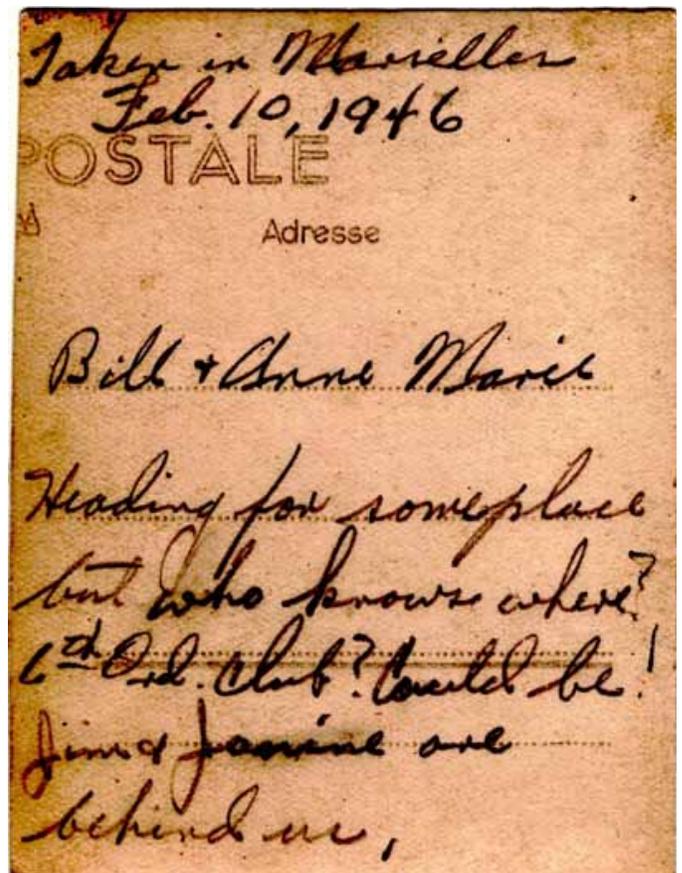


Photo postcard of Anne-Marie and Bill, front and back

the P. family. She put me in contact with Shaya's father, whose grandmother Rose was the aforementioned sister of Esther Gray. Although there was a discrepancy between Esther and Rose's recorded maiden names, they both had the same father's name inscribed on their tombstones. The DNA evidence made it probable that they were full siblings.

A Parallel Family Story

Several months into the process of looking for Christiane's father, I learned about another Gray family secret: Eddie Gray had fathered a child by another woman before he married Pearl in 1921. While this event was not directly related to the issue of Christiane's paternity, how Eddie dealt with it and why he may have hidden it provides some insight into how the family may have handled a similar situation involving Bill or Joe.

My knowledge of Eddie's secret unfolded slowly as different family members revealed the limited details they knew. The child had apparently played no part in Eddie's family of seven children with Pearl, but her existence became known because she was listed as an heir in Eddie's 1962 Cook County, Illinois probate record, which also included a divorce decree listing the first name of his child and wife. From that limited information, I was able to find relevant records on Ancestry and FamilySearch that filled out the picture. The divorce proceedings from the Circuit Court of the City of St. Louis showed that Edward Gray had married Irene Florence Folkers on 28 February 1917 in Union, Franklin County, Missouri, 45 miles from St. Louis, where both resided. Their daughter, Jane Agnes, was born 10 March 1917. The divorce file states that they did not live together after the marriage, and Irene filed for divorce on 14 September 1917 on the grounds of desertion and adultery. A divorce was granted 4 November 1918. The divorce decree for *Irene Gray vs. "Edwin" Gray* shows that she was awarded a lump sum of \$1,000 in alimony and \$4/week in child support.

How Eddie and Irene met is unknown, but he probably married her to legitimize Jane's birth. He and Irene left town for the ceremony, conducted by a minister, and they falsified some details on the marriage license, as if they were hiding their identities. Irene's presence in Eddie's life and her pregnancy likely were a source of shame to Eddie and his family. Eddie came from an Orthodox Jewish background and was active in the local Jewish community, but Irene was not Jewish. In addition, they came from different socioeconomic classes. According to some family members, Jane was never acknowledged by Eddie's second family, but he provided her with periodic financial support.

My Conclusions

I encountered many barriers to solving the mystery of Christiane's paternity. All the people with direct knowledge were dead. The Delor family had worked hard to conceal information about Christiane's father, including burning English-language letters to Anne-Marie that were possibly from him. The Gray family also left no relevant record. Christiane couldn't maximize the number of DNA matches to aid my research due to the restrictions on testing in France. In addition, some Gray family members I approached were reluctant to test, to share their existing DNA test results, or to supply family information. Despite these barriers, I was able to uncover significant information about Christiane's father's family.

Christiane's DNA match to Richard indicates that her father was most likely Richard's first cousin who was about 50% Jewish, a Gray family member who was probably born in the early 1920's. Richard's two known male paternal first cousins were the right age and one served in World War II, but neither was only half Jewish, and the cousin who served in the military did not go abroad. Consequently, it appears more likely that either Joe or Bill Gray, Richard's paternal uncles, had an unknown son. Joe, who suffered from a mental disability due to his service in World War I, could have fathered a child in St. Louis or Chicago between his two marriages. Bill never married but was active in civic life in St. Louis. In addition, he travelled to Latin America for the family business, which could have created opportunities to connect to a woman with some Mesoamerican ancestry.

One of the American soldiers with Anne-Marie in the two 1946 postcard photos is probably Christiane's father. While the photo with Robert is undated, the one with Bill was taken within a few weeks of Christiane's conception. To my eye, Bill bears more physical resemblance to the Grays than Robert.

In the absence of another direct descendant and without relevant records, it is impossible to confirm the hypothesis that either Joe or Bill Gray had an unknown son. It seems plausible, however, based on circumstantial evidence, that the American soldier Bill was an unacknowledged son of Bill Gray. Bill Gray was the most widely travelled of the brothers. He promoted the Missouri Window and Home Cleaning Company business in Mexico and Cuba. In 1920 he spent several months in Laredo, Texas, with its heavily Hispanic population. In one of these places, he may have connected with a woman with partial Mesoamerican ancestry, resulting in the birth of a son. While Bill is a common name, perhaps the American soldier Bill was

named after his father. If that happened and the Gray family knew about it, based on our knowledge of how Eddie Gray's first marriage and child were treated, they would have kept it a secret. In Eddie Gray's case, I was able to ferret out the name of his first wife and child from a probate record. No similar documentation may exist or be findable for Christiane's father.

While I have shed light on Christiane's previously unknown paternity, I have not been able to determine her father's exact identity with certainty. I have built on the clues she provided, researched Gray family history, compared photos, and analyzed her DNA matches. However, Christiane may never truly know the identity of her father given the longstanding stigma attached to illegitimate births. DNA testing is the only avenue for further exploration; it is possible that additional close matches will emerge in the future which will shed further light.²⁹ Despite all the barriers and setbacks, however, I was able to give Christiane some information about her paternal background, which I hope will help her find some peace of mind about her birth.

Endnotes

1. 2% on Family Tree DNA.
2. I usually ask close matches if they are interested in working together to identify the common ancestor. At the same time, I research their trees independently. Family Tree DNA provides a match's e-mail address, but 23andMe, Ancestry, and MyHeritage require messaging within the site. Often people don't check back after they have seen their original matches, so there is no guarantee that they will see messages that are sent after that.
3. Siedliszcze, a town in Chełm County, Lublin Voivodeship, in eastern Poland, is the seat of Gmina Siedliszcze. It lies approximately 23 km west of Chełm and 42 km east of the regional capital, Lublin.
4. Marseille is an important port on the Mediterranean. During World War II, the port, its facilities, and the rail and road links up the Rhone Valley were essential to the defeat of German forces. The Germans occupied Marseille from November 1942 until August 1944, when the Free French army liberated it with the help of the United States 7th Army. Demobilization occurred slowly after the war. Most American GI's had left France by the spring of 1946.
"The American military maintained a small presence in France for many years after the war: the United States kept small bases in the north and east of France and a presence in Marseille, mostly to support logistics for US occupation troops in Germany. These soldiers required support troops and staff, such as transportation troops to move them and MPs to police them." Robert L. Fuller, *The Struggle for Cooperation: Liberated France and the Military, 1944–46*, Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2019, page 204.
5. E-mail from Christiane R., 3 August 2020.
6. E-mail from Christiane R., 8 August 2020.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. E-mail from Christiane R., 8 September 2020.
11. By the time the war ended, the people of Marseille had endured occupation twice, first by the Germans and then by the Americans, and were suffering from shortages of food and other essential goods. There had been ongoing tension with the Americans over the running of the port and because of the drunken behavior, sexual promiscuity, and black-market participation of some American GI's. (For further discussion of these issues, see Robert L. Fuller, *op. cit.*, and Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.)
12. E-mail from Christiane, 8 September 2020.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Wikipedia contributors, "Worumbo Mill", *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 18 February 2021; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worumbo_Mill (accessed 20 May 2021).
15. "Visit with Grandma Pearl: Interviews with Pearl Weinhouse Gray (1902–2000)", compiled by William Ury, 21 June 2000.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Melvin Gray, "Edward and Pearl Gray Family Web Site" (private), MyHeritage, 18 May 2021; <https://www.myheritage.com/FP/entry.php?s=120228351> (accessed 20 May 2021).
18. *Ibid.*
19. "Visit with Grandma Pearl."
20. Graycor, Inc., "The History of the Graycor Companies", *Graycor*, 2021; <https://www.graycor.com/about-us/history> (accessed 20 May 2021).
21. "Visit with Grandma Pearl."
22. *Ibid.*
23. The only newspaper references I found for Joe were about his World War I military activity.
24. Joe filed a Declaration of Intention to become a citizen in Providence in 1908 and is marked naturalized in the 1930 census. Max and his three sons all filed Declarations of Intention for citizenship in 1915. Max is marked naturalized in the 1920 census. His three sons are marked as having their first papers, although Bill had already been naturalized. Eddie didn't become a citizen until 1932.
25. Bill's profession is listed as "manufacturer" on his 16 May 1920 Laredo arrival document and "land agent" on his 15 August 1920 Laredo arrival document.
26. E-mail from Christiane R., 31 August 2020.
27. Christiane's initial Gray matches were Richard and his grandniece. Two nieces and a nephew agreed to test months later. The matches to Christiane were Richard's niece (448 cM), niece (260 cM), nephew (354 cM), and grandniece (89 cM).
28. Family Tree DNA, GEDMatch, LivingDNA, and Geneanet.
29. Three previously unknown close paternal matches to the Grays appeared in the months during which I was researching Christiane's paternity—two on 23andMe and one on MyHeritage. The 23andMe matches were adoptees; the MyHeritage match, a close match to Christiane, had an unknown father (whom she has subsequently identified). Definitive information is available about the paternity of one of the adoptees on 23andMe, but he has not responded to family members' messages so far. Unless and until the 23andMe matches upload their data to MyHeritage, I will be not be able to determine the extent of their match to Christiane.



You Can't Force Family, Or The Wrong Way to Introduce a Cousin You Find through DNA

Preeva Tramiel

Preeva Tramiel is the vice president of the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society.

I am an only child who grew up with 20 first cousins. Every Sunday was reserved for family. Our little family of three drove from the Bronx to Rockland County, or Queens, or Westchester County. We corresponded regularly with my two cousins in Israel. We went to Manhattan once a month for the Abraham Spilka Ripner Family Circle meetings. "Your cousins are like your brothers and sisters," my parents were fond of saying, perhaps to assuage their own sorrow at not being able to give me a sibling. They may even have believed it.

Hah.

I must say, my aunts and uncles were there for me, especially when my father was very ill and I was in high school (he died when I was 16). But my cousins were a mixed bag. None of them was openly hostile when I was young (and their parents were watching), and about half of them have become close friends over the years. About a third of them were indifferent to me, holding me at arm's length while we lived our separate lives. But a couple of them have absolutely baffled me. One in particular appeared to be poised on the brink of open resentment for years, using the slightest opportunity to take offense. Or taking a huge opportunity, as you will see later in this story.

Perhaps this emphasis on family was what led me to genealogy as I entered my 50's. I signed up for JewishGen in 2008 and attended my first IAJGS conference in 2011, followed by the 2012, 2014, 2015, and 2016 conferences. I was gratified to find that I was not the only person who obsessively counted cousins, or tried to. I traveled to my father's town in Ukraine, Mukacheve, in 2010 and created a booklet the next year for my cousins on that side of the family, which was well received. I submitted my DNA to Family Tree DNA in 2015 and to 23andMe in 2017.

Neither service showed any close connections, until February 2021, when two second cousins I had been unaware of popped up on 23andMe, one from my mother's side and one from my father's side, and contacted me. They had tested on 23andMe because there was a sale. These cousins were the real deal. I could trace my path to them directly through my documented research, and in one case their parents were at my wedding. I guess my parents' zeal

in connecting me to cousins extended only to first cousins. I don't blame them. There is only one Sunday every seven days, and how many people can you visit?

This discovery of new cousins in February 2021, and boredom with being shut in because of the COVID-19 pandemic, rekindled my interest in creating family trees, and I hired a research partner who was relentless and invested in finding family (not coincidentally, she was also an only child). "Try uploading to MyHeritage," she said. "You will be surprised with what you find." And I was surprised. Boy, was I surprised. There in the results, to my astonishment, was someone with whom I shared 13.5% of my DNA, 990 centiMorgans, a woman whose profile was managed by her husband, either a first cousin or grandaunt in Canada I had not known about!

Naturally, I contacted them directly. Long story short, this woman, who had long considered herself German, was 50% Jewish. My assumption leapt immediately to the obvious: She was the offspring of one of my two uncles who were young and unattached in postwar Europe. Whoa! I felt like Lois Lane uncovering a hot story. I was very proud of myself. I got arrogant and stupid. I sent out a group e-mail to six of my seven living cousins on my father's side with an announcement that went like this (names removed to protect privacy):

Hello, Cousins!

Through the scientific advances of "DNA Tourism", we now have found a cousin in Canada!

Her name is X, she was conceived by one of the Bs and a young (16) W, who was herself an orphan raised by her grandparents, in a tiny town outside Marienbad, which was Czechoslovakia between the wars but also part of the Sudetenland, in July of 1946. Unfortunately the Z family was of German origins, so they got kicked out of that village and displaced to the **** DP camp, and X was born there in 1947. In 1958, X moved to ****, Canada, where she graduated high school and met her husband. She went to school at **** and got a teaching credential.

She lives in **** now, with her husband **** and has two grown children and four grandchildren.

Pictures attached.

Two cousins thanked me for the information. Two I had spoken to privately, so they were not shocked. Two flew into a rage, unfriended me on Facebook, and called my quest to find family “destructive” and my curiosity about out just WHICH ONE of my uncles was the father “mishigas” and “needless family drama.”

Needless family drama? Michigas? What? Their fathers were young unattached men in July 1946, one in the Soviet army, one fresh out of the partisans. They had both survived. I had to consider the source: two women whose fathers had just been accused of sowing wild oats with an underage girl. Of course they reacted strongly! In point of fact, my assumption that X was the product of my uncle sowing wild oats was not how they saw it. I can only assume they thought I was insulting their fathers!

But did the timelines work out? According to the Czech census of 1930, these were the ages of my uncles, so it appears plausible:

Sex	Birthdate	Age	Marital Status
male	1911	19	single
male	8 August 1916	14	single
male	1918	12	single
male	1921	9	single
male	28 October 1924	6	single

If you discover cousins through DNA tourism, be very careful when it comes to telling relatives. As one of my wiser cousins told me, communication between people is an art, and people can be sensitive. But 990 centimorgans is a telling amount of shared DNA, as you can see by the chart below, borrowed from the DNA Detectives group on Facebook.

So when you discover new cousins, be careful how you share the information. Announcing that not only have you found a first cousin, but you’re laying the parentage on one of the dear departed fathers of two of your other first cousins (even if it is true), is not only insensitive, it IS a mistake. It is much more appropriate to make such an announcement privately and present it as what it is—a wonderful mystery, and a question to be answered together.



DNA Detectives Autosomal Statistics Chart						
cM (centimorgans)*		Percentage (%) of Shared DNA**		Group	Relationship	Notes
Average	Range	Average	Range			
3,600		50%			Parent - Child	
2,650	2300 - 3900	37%	32%-54%	Group A	Full Sibling	Ancestry, FTDNA and GEDmatch (HIR only)
3,600		50%				23andMe (FIR included)
1,800	1300 - 2300	25%	18%-32%	Group B	Half Sibling Aunt/Uncle/Niece/Nephew Double First Cousin Grandparent/Grandchild	3/4 Siblings***
900	575 - 1330	12.5%	8% - 18.5%	Group C	First Cousin (1C) Half Aunt/Uncle/Niece/Nephew Great-Grandparent/Great-Grandchild Great-Aunt/Uncle/Niece/Nephew	
450	215 - 650	6.25%	3% - 9%	Group D	First Cousin Once Removed (1C1R) Half First Cousin (1/2 1C) Half Great-Aunt/Uncle/Niece/Nephew	
224	75 - 360	3.125%	1% - 5%	Group E	Second Cousin (2C) First Cousin Twice Removed (1C2R) Half First Cousin Once Removed (1/2 1C1R)	
112	30 - 215	1.56%	0.42% - 3%	Group F	Second Cousin Once Removed (2C1R) Half Second Cousin (1/2 2C) First Cousin Three Times Removed (1C3R) Half First Cousin Twice Removed (1/2 1C2R)	
56	0 - 109*	0.78%	0% - 1.52%	Group G	Third Cousin (3C) Second Cousin Twice Removed (2C2R)	-10% of 3Cs will not share DNA*
30	0 - 75**	0.4%	0% - 1%	Group H	Third Cousin Once Removed (3C1R) Other Distant Cousins	-50% of 4Cs will not share DNA**

*cM = Ancestry.com & FTDNA
 **Percentage of DNA = 23andMe
 *** 3/4 Siblings are a combination of half siblings and 1st cousins, FIRs are included.

Groups A & B: 99% within the ranges given
 Groups C - H: 95% within the ranges given

Jewish Americans Changed Their Names, But Not at Ellis Island

Kirsten Fermaglich, Associate Professor, Michigan State University

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A well worn joke in American Jewish culture goes like this: A Jewish immigrant landed at Ellis Island in New York. The procedures were confusing, and he was overwhelmed by the commotion. When one of the officials asked him, "What is your name?," he replied, "Shayn fergessen," which in Yiddish means "I've already forgotten." The official then recorded his name as Sean Ferguson.

Today, members of many white ethnic groups—including Jews, Italians, and Poles—believe that insensitive or ignorant Ellis Island officials changed their families' names when they arrived in the U.S. to make them sound more American.

But there is actually much more evidence demonstrating that Jews and members of other white ethnic groups changed names on their own. In the research for my book [*A Rosenberg by Any Other Name. A History of Jewish Name Changing in America*, New York University Press, 2018; please see the review following on page 16], I looked at legal name-change petitions in New York City throughout the 20th century, which showed that thousands of Jewish immigrants and their children changed their own names.

As American Jews celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month in May, it is worth revisiting where and why the portrait of coercive Ellis Island name changing emerged.

No Evidence in Popular Literature

Historians Marian Smith and Vincent Cannato argue convincingly that insensitive Ellis Island officials did not forcibly change immigrants' names. In fact, immigration procedures did not typically include the question "What is your name?" Bureaucrats simply checked immigrants' names to make sure they matched the names already listed on ships' passenger lists.

Evidence from popular literature further supports their argument. Between 1892 and 1920, when thousands of immigrants passed through the immigration station on Ellis Island each day, there were no descriptions of Ellis Island name changing in popular magazines or books. Even after immigration slowed significantly in the 1920's, popular books and magazines for the next four decades did not typically describe Ellis Island officials changing immigrant names.

During this period, popular literature explored a variety of relevant topics, such as the origins and usage of names, the social psychology of name changing, Jewish humor, and Jewish immigration, but none addressed name changing at Ellis Island. Indeed, one 1969 Jewish humor book even told a joke with the Sean Ferguson punchline. But the joke was about a Yiddish actor who went to California to become a movie star. All through the train ride, he worked on memorizing a stage name, only to forget it when he came face to face with an imposing Hollywood producer.

Cultural Changes of the 1960's and 1970's

It was not until the 1970's that the image of Ellis Island name changing took hold of the American imagination. One popular 1979 book about Ellis Island and the immigrant experience, for example, described officials who were "casual and uncaring on the matter of names." Francis Ford Coppola's 1974 film *The Godfather, Part II* featured an insensitive immigration officer giving young Vito Corleone his name.

What I'd like to argue is that the culture of the late 1960's and 1970's shaped these portraits of Ellis Island name changing. After the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act



Will Rossiter, "I've changed my name from Finkelstein", lyrics to the song "Yonkle the Cow-Boy Jew", circa 1 July 1908.

Library of Congress;
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2013649116/>
(accessed 20 May 2021).

eliminated the discriminatory quotas that had restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe, American popular culture began to tell new stories that valorized the success of immigrants from those very regions.

Ellis Island itself—where Lyndon B. Johnson signed the 1965 act—transformed in the public mind from a set of abandoned buildings to a prominent symbol of European immigrants' struggles and triumphs.

The late 1960's and the 1970's also witnessed significant challenges to the authority of the U.S. government: The Pentagon Papers showed that the government had misled the American people, as the United States committed more and more troops to Vietnam. Riots exploded in cities throughout the country regarding persistent racial inequality. And the Watergate scandal exposed criminality and obstruction of justice at the highest levels of government.

Portraits of involuntary name changing at Ellis Island fit both with the island's new prominence as a symbol of immigration and with growing distrust of government authority.

Name Changing a Betrayal of Family Values?

Ellis Island name changing also fit another emerging theme in American culture in the 1970's: a quest for authenticity. Historian Matthew Frye Jacobson has documented the quest during this era of many white ethnic groups, including Jews, to seek "authentic" culture to bolster their ethnic identities.

With films such as *The Godfather* and *Hester Street*, which portrayed the challenges immigration posed for one young Jewish family in New York, American culture turned to the Old World—the European countries from which white immigrants had emigrated—as a source for family values and communal integrity. Within this context, changing names seemed like a betrayal of family, community, and identity.

From the 1970's through the 1990's, novels, films, and plays that portrayed Jewish life, such as Wendy Wasserstein's play *Isn't It Romantic?* and Barry Levinson's movie *Avalon*, represented name changers as phonies or sell-outs.

Although Jews were not the only ones to experience this longing for authenticity, my research suggests they changed their names in disproportionate numbers compared with other groups, in response to American anti-Semitism.

In a culture that had begun to embrace the Old World as a source of authentic values, the fact that their parents and grandparents voluntarily changed their own names from their original Jewish ones may have been painful for many American Jews to accept. Blaming insensitive government officials at Ellis Island for erasing Jewish names was a much easier task. But this emphasis upon Ellis Island only obscured the complicated reasons why Jews actually changed their own names.

The Sean Ferguson joke is thus more than a simple joke. It illustrates the ways that Jewish people have struggled, and continue to struggle, with their identity in America. It shows how hard it is to grapple with the past, but also how important that grappling is.



Yoichi Okamoto, "President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Immigration and Nationality Act on Liberty Island", 3 October 1965. LBJ Presidential Library, <http://www.lbjlibrary.org/lyndon-baines-johnson-/timeline-lbj-on-immigration> (accessed 20 May 2021).

A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America

Book Review by Johannes Czakai, Free University of Berlin/Hebrew University of Jerusalem

A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America (Goldstein-Goren Series in American Jewish History, 9) by Kirsten Fermaglich. New York: New York University Press, 2018. 256 pages (hardcover). ISBN-10 1479867209; ISBN-13 978-1-4798-6720-2, \$28; eBook 9781479872992; Kindle ASIN B07C5WCR1H, \$15.12.

This review was originally published in German: Johannes Czakai, Rezension zu Fermaglich, Kirsten, *A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America*; New York 2018; ISBN 978-1-4798-6720-2, in H-Soz-Kult, 9 July 2020; <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-28907>. It was translated by Roland Geiger (and Mr. Bing) and is reprinted with permission.

Changing first and family names is a recurring theme in migration histories and thus also in American immigration history of the 20th century. So far, this phenomenon has not been systematically analyzed for any ethnic group. Kirsten Fermaglich's 2018 study examines name changes of American Jews and finds that the Jewish population changed their names far more often than any other migrant group. Fermaglich asks about the reasons and analyzes the history of this "Jewish phenomenon" (page 118) using historical, sociological, film, and literary approaches.

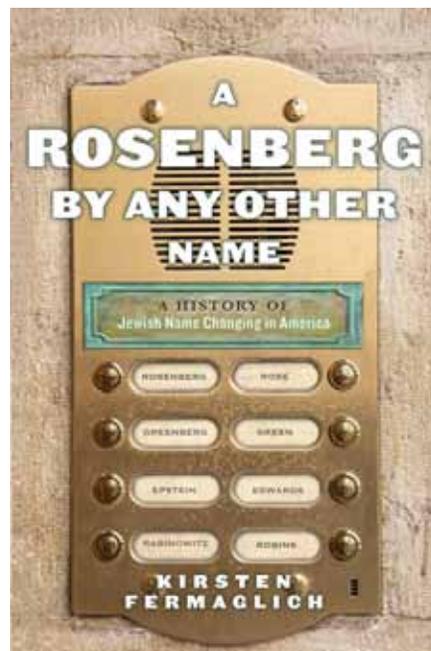
Based on name-change petitions from the New York City Civil Court from 1917 to 1967, the author presents chronologically how the requests changed in content and quantity, and confirms that Jews were always overrepresented. Throughout, about 50 to 66 percent of the applications came from people with Jewish-sounding names, although Jews made up only about 24 to 30 percent of the city's population during the observation period.

Fermaglich's basic thesis is that changing first and last names was primarily a strategy to prevent anti-Semitic discrimination. Everyday anti-Semitism in the United States was expressed during the observation period, especially in the unofficial and public sphere: Hotels refused Jews overnight stays, employers rejected Jews, and universities introduced quotas to exclude Jewish students. Since Jews were recognizable as "members of a distinct racial group" (page 28) by a variety of distinctive family names in the non-Jewish environment, changing a name interpreted as "Jewish" to an inconspicuous English name (such as Lipschitz to Lipson) meant an advantage in choosing an occupation and in the social world. The occupations targeted were mainly in the academic, medical,

and service sectors; changing names is thus closely linked to the rise of the second generation of Jewish Americans into the middle class.

In addition to anti-Semitism, the second important reason for name changes was the growing importance of government management mechanisms, or "the growing federal demand for citizens to be easily identified through one consistent name" (page 16). Name changes were long considered a private matter and did not need to be officially documented [*Ed.: And to a great degree still don't need to be.*]. The entry of the United States into war in 1941, however, promoted an explosion of government bureaucracy and the need for documents that all had identical information. Differences between the current name and the name on a birth certificate could lead to legal problems, such as with paying pensions. Names therefore always express a relationship between the government and its inhabitants.

From the very beginning, the author faced the methodological challenge that the justifications in the petitions are usually rather limited and that the applicants almost never openly named anti-Semitic experiences. Still, she convincingly points out that the two were closely linked, and name changes are an indicator of anti-Semitic resentment in the United States. She notes that, contrary to widespread legends, it was not only opportunistic young men who changed their career-inhibiting names. On the contrary, Fermaglich proves that often entire families changed their names together and that many young women were among the applicants. The author also refutes the myth that the departure from the old names amounts to a departure from Jewish origin, religion, and identity. Admittedly, some name



changes were certainly the result of an alienation from Judaism, and its bearers took the opportunity to lay down their Jewish identity by name. In most cases, however, the name change meant shielding (page 184) from anti-Jewish hostility to the outside world, while membership of the Jewish community was not called into question. Although Jews who Americanized their names encountered criticism within their own community, the Jewish communities and their officials were aware that it was primarily a protective measure in an anti-Semitic environment and was therefore tolerable. Fermaglich concludes, therefore, that the intra-Jewish debate about name changes helped question one's own cultural identity and reposition oneself within American society and its middle class.

Her view of the public discourse on name changes also offers a new perspective on the then unclear and contested "racial" affiliation of American Jews. In contrast to other minorities who suffered racial discrimination, Jews were able to use a name change to become "racially unmarked" (page 102) or "invisible." Fermaglich also argues that the defensive struggle and antidiscrimination campaigns of Jewish organizations had a significant impact on the civil rights movement. Name changers and civil rights lawyers "helped to construct Jewish identity as a white identity" (page 10). Referring to contemporary migrant groups and their attitudes to name changes (especially of Muslims after 11 September 2001), she concludes that the conditions under which Jews chose to change their names were singular and not comparable to any other group of migrants or ethnic minorities.

Since the author focuses on New York and the name changes there, the exact extent of name changes in the United States remains unclear at times. The figures first show that only a small minority of the Jewish population decided to take this step. The author repeatedly bypasses this quantitative blurring by talking about "many" and "some" (Jews, Americans . . .) without making it clear how many she actually means. These somewhat lax generalizations in no way diminish the research results, however. Instead, the author convincingly demonstrates that, despite the rather low number of cases, the phenomenon was well known to the American-Jewish public and had a far-reaching influence on it.

Only the achievements of the civil rights movement and antidiscrimination laws, as well as simultaneous suburbanization, initiated a significant decline in Jewish name changes, so that they can hardly be proved in New York at the latest since the 1980's. In the last third of the book, the author therefore deals primarily with the

culture of remembrance. Impressive is the realization that the struggle for names after the 1960's quickly fell into oblivion and was replaced by a "cultural amnesia" (page 146). Instead of remembering the experience of discrimination manifested in the active decision to change names, the narrative in popular culture shifted to the image of passive and unsuspecting immigrants whose "authentic Jewish names" (page 142) were arbitrarily Americanized by grumpy immigration officials. Although such a process is historically unsustainable, Ellis Island, the place of remembrance, developed into a symbol of cultural extinction.

Fermaglich's approach of using names to write a multifaceted picture of everyday Jewish history is clearly in the tradition of Dietz Bering's 1992 work *The Stigma of Names*.¹ Although her study is a successful and pleasing example of how Bering's approach can be adapted and continued with new scientific concepts, it sometimes falls short on its possibilities compared to its linguistic attention to detail. The author herself identifies an obvious methodological problem, namely the question of which name is actually considered a "Jewish" name. She correctly recognizes that there was not "a" Jewish name, but that different names were perceived as "Jewish" by Jews and non-Jews at different times. It remains unclear, however, which family names the author defined as "Jewish" and even included in her corpus. She does not offer a clear definition, does not differentiate the names by origin, and does not investigate whether, for example, name changes of Galician-Jewish immigrants differ from those of Russian-Jewish or German-Jewish immigrants. The historical origins of the names in Europe are therefore also neglected. Thus, the author cannot explain why family names, which were still ignored in Eastern Europe as an imposed state construct, were suddenly an expression in America of a Jewish identity that had to be preserved and protected against Americanization. This occasional weakness in dealing with the "name" factor does not change the main argument of the work, which is that anti-Semitic experience was the dominant motive for its amendment.

Fermaglich's study proves how profitable the exploration of the cultural history of names can be. It shows how a supposedly self-evident fact that does not need to be explained can be a starting point for reconstructing a buried and distorted aspect of everyday Jewish-American history.

Endnote

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Ten Reasons Why Jewish Genealogy Is So Challenging: Part 3 (conclusion)

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 2.

9. The Holocaust

The Holocaust (1933–1945)⁹⁹ was a cataclysmic event from which the Jewish people are still rebuilding, and the loss to Jewish history and Jewish genealogy is incalculable. Six million Jews perished in the Holocaust, their property and possessions stolen, and their communities eradicated. Nearly all major synagogues of Europe, which were the repositories of many Jewish birth, circumcision, confirmation, bar mitzvah, marriage, Jewish education, and Beit Din records, were destroyed during the Holocaust.

In addition, many Jewish cemeteries were destroyed during World War II and its aftermath. With their destruction, countless tombstones, with their priceless genealogical information, were lost.^{100, 101} Sadly, this destruction didn't stop with the Holocaust; Jewish tombstones in many countries around the world, including the Czech Republic¹⁰², Denmark¹⁰³, France¹⁰⁴, Germany¹⁰⁵, Great Britain¹⁰⁶, Greece¹⁰⁷, Poland¹⁰⁸, Slovakia¹⁰⁹, and the United States,^{110, 111} are still being vandalized and destroyed.

After World War II, there was a widespread belief among American Jews that all Jewish civil records in Europe were deliberately destroyed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. This belief discouraged many American Jews from trying to trace their ancestry.



A memorial to Jewish children murdered by the Nazis, at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Photo credit: Avishai Teicher via Wikimedia Commons.

The reality regarding the destruction of Jewish records during the Holocaust is more complex:

During the Holocaust, the Nazis killed people, burned synagogues and wiped out towns, but they did not destroy vital records. Quite the contrary, they carefully preserved synagogue records of births, deaths and marriages back to the 1840s, so they could identify Jews for extermination.¹¹²

Hence, in Germany, ironically, there are many surviving Jewish records. For example, personal data about virtually every Jew buried in the once-important Jewish community of Frankfurt am Main, Germany, circa 1240 to 1900, is recorded in the German-language publication *Ele Toldot* ("These Are the Generations").¹¹³

Jewish civil records survived, although often not completely intact, in many other European countries as well, including Austria, France, Great Britain, Poland, and Ukraine. The Nazis did destroy records pertaining to Jewish communities and organizations, as well as records pertaining to the concentration camps, in a failed attempt to erase Jewish culture and cover up their crimes against humanity:

"For most of the last six decades, people believed that one could not study the action of Jews in the Holocaust period because the Nazis systematically destroyed the records of Jewish communities and organizations," said Paul Shapiro, director of the Holocaust museum's Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies. "Most Holocaust scholarship has been written based on the documentary record created by the perpetrators of the Holocaust."¹¹⁴

However, some of these types of Jewish records have survived as well. One of the largest caches of Holocaust archives was found in Vienna in 2000.¹¹⁵ These records have enabled historians to understand how the Holocaust unfolded, and they provide a window into the daily life of Vienna's Jews.

It has been said that genealogy is simply history on a personal scale.¹¹⁶ Six million Jews perished in the Holocaust, and with them, their personal and family histories. The mass migration of Jews before and after the

beginning of the twentieth century, in combination with the destruction of European Jewry during the Holocaust, had the devastating effect of cutting Jews off from their identities.¹¹⁷

It is therefore not surprising that the Holocaust has had a chilling effect on Jewish genealogy. As stated by Rottenberg, “Most Jews—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.”¹¹⁸

10. The Jewish Immigrant Experience in America

Following the wave of Jewish emigration from the Russian Empire during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jews were finally free to live in peace and prosperity, and to enjoy their newfound independence and freedom in America. At last, they were able to seek answers to their questions regarding their own identities, who their ancestors were, and where they came from. As Dan Rottenberg put it:

Today, at last, there is time for most of us to ponder these questions. The Cossacks and the Nazis are no longer at the door; the Spanish Inquisition is over; the Crusaders have vanished; Pharaoh is dead. Jews whose families have been in North America for two generations or more have both the freedom and the self-confidence to assert their backgrounds. And in the relative security of twentieth-century America we find not merely Jews but Italians, Poles, Irish, Latins, Greeks and blacks aggressively taking up genealogy, the hobby of tracing family trees — in addition, of course, to the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, who have been doing it all along. And all to one end: to discover who we are.¹¹⁹

As Rottenberg states, it did take at least “two generations or more” before Jewish Americans had “both the freedom and the self-confidence to assert their backgrounds.” But what was the reason for this two- to three-generation delay?

Between 1880 and 1924, approximately three million Jews immigrated to America from Eastern Europe, the vast majority of whom were from the Russian Empire.¹²⁰ Following this mass immigration, there appeared to be little interest or movement on the Jewish genealogy front, until a resurgence of interest in Jewish genealogy during the 1970’s.^{121, 122} In contrast, interest in genealogy among American Christians coalesced during the early 19th century and has grown steadily since.¹²³

There are several possible explanations for this dichotomy. To understand the plight of the Jewish immigrants who fled the Russian Empire during the mass exodus between 1880 and 1924, it is important to understand what life was like for them there. Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement was eloquently summarized by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in an episode of *Finding Your Roots*:

The town was located in a part of the Russian Empire known as the Pale of Settlement, where beginning in the late 1700’s, Russia confined and severely restricted its Jewish population. Within the Pale, Jewish people suffered all sorts of humiliating restrictions. They were prevented from holding government positions. They were barred from owning farmland. They were forced to pay additional taxes, and they were vulnerable to violence at any time. Most ended up in low-paying trades, and many struggled just to feed their families.¹²⁴

These are not the kind of conditions in which erudite pastimes such as genealogy thrive. None of the three guests on that episode of *Finding Your Roots* knew anything about their Jewish ancestry. All three mentioned that their grandparents refused to talk about their lives in “the old country” at all.

This is the typical Jewish immigrant story. The Jewish immigrants who fled the harsh conditions of the Russian Empire and came to America during the period of mass immigration did everything in their power to put as much distance between themselves and the painful memories of their past lives as possible.

Unfortunately, this often meant not sharing stories about life in the “old country”, including the towns where their families lived, who their relatives and ancestors were, or even what their original surnames were. This resulted in a “genealogical blackout period” during which essential genealogical information was not passed down to the next generation.

Their children, members of the Greatest Generation (born between 1901 and 1927),¹²⁵ who represented the first American-born Jewish generation, were anxious to assimilate and fit in. Although they often understood Yiddish, because it was spoken at home, their first language was English. They adopted American culture, lifestyle, and values, and many of them were not particularly interested in hearing stories of the past. They served in World War II in record numbers to prove that they were as American as everybody else.

Unfortunately for the Baby Boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1964)¹²⁶, who thirsted to rediscover their

Jewish roots, this genealogical blackout period overlapped with the very time period for which genealogical information was the most difficult to obtain . . . the time period during which their grandparents and great-grandparents immigrated to America. By the time the Millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1996)¹²⁷ arrived on the scene, virtually no one was left from either the immigrant generation or the first American-born generation to ask about the family name, ancestral town, or family tree.

There is little question that the historical influences and sociological factors surrounding the Jewish immigrant experience in America resulted in a blackout period which has greatly hindered Jewish genealogical efforts. As a result, much of the valuable genealogical information that Jewish immigrants knew was not shared or passed on to their descendants, and the generations of Jewish Americans who followed lost their links to the past.

Interest in Jewish Genealogy in America

For many of the reasons previously discussed, it is generally acknowledged that “in the past, most Jews were not as interested in documenting their pedigrees as gentiles were.”¹²⁸ As many authors have noted, however, the 1970’s marked the beginning of an era during which there has been a surge of interest in Jewish genealogy, which has only seemed to accelerate in recent years.

In response to Arthur Kurzweil’s question, “Why do you think there has been such a growing interest in Jewish genealogical research over the past few decades?”, Robert Friedman, the former director of the Genealogy Institute at the Center for Jewish History in New York City, gave a particularly enlightening response:

From a practical standpoint, the opening of Eastern European archives since the fall of communism and the explosion of data and communications on the Internet have facilitated a tremendous growth in Jewish genealogical activity. However, these developments by themselves do not account for the current level of interest.

I think we are part of a grassroots movement involving many ethnic groups and nationalities with some aspects that are unique to the Jewish experience. Since the landmark television broadcast of Alex Haley’s “Roots” in the 1970s, ethnic pride has motivated millions of Americans to search for their personal heritage. But most genealogists also want to know how their family history fits into the fabric of social history and world history.

Earlier generations arriving in the United States often rejected contact with the societies whose harsh conditions they had fled. Particularly for Jews, restricted immigration after World War I, the Holocaust, and the Iron Curtain created immense barriers that further separated Americans from their overseas relatives. These trends have reversed during the past few decades. The generation that immigrated prior to World War I has largely died out, and as the second and third generations grow older, we are looking back at the events of the past century and trying to make sense of our collective experience.

Many Jewish genealogists are also trying to document the fate of relatives who perished during the Holocaust, so that their names and lives can be commemorated. Finally, the recent exodus of Jews from the former Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries has led many of the new immigrants to seek connections with the descendants of family members who emigrated more than 75 years ago.”¹²⁹

Regarding the growing interest in Jewish genealogy, Kurzweil offered his personal observations: “When I began my own research, for example, there was no such thing as a Jewish genealogical society. Today, there are dozens of them throughout the United States and the world, as well as the International



The Jewish Immigrant, New York Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), which holds an annual conference.”¹³⁰

Currently nearly ninety national and local Jewish genealogical society groups around the world are associated with IAJGS¹³¹, and more than 500,000 people are registered users of JewishGen’s online services.¹³² This interest in Jewish genealogy has also led to a dramatic increase in the popularity of DNA testing, particularly among Ashkenazi Jews.¹³³

Conclusions

There is no single answer to the question “What makes Jewish genealogy so challenging?” Rather, a host of historical, political, socio-economic, and cultural factors and influences have all contributed. Some of these factors contributed to instability and disruption of the Jewish community to the extent that research and documentation of family ancestry became difficult, if not impossible, to conduct. Among these factors were frequent expulsions and migrations, persecutions, blood libels, pogroms, poverty, and the Holocaust. The fact that many rabbinical families were able to successfully document and preserve their *yichus* from the Middle Ages on, however, indicates that socio-economic factors and religious and class distinctions may have also played a significant role.

Other factors have either discouraged or complicated conducting Jewish genealogical research in America, including the lack of Jewish surnames prior to the 19th century, the manner in which surnames were adopted in the Russian Empire, the paucity of existing Jewish records, barriers to access of records, language barriers, surname changes, Jewish endogamy, and the historical lack of family trees and paper trails.

Not surprisingly, these many disrupting factors and influences have resulted in stunting the interest, development, and growth of Jewish genealogy, both in “the old country” and here, in America. The ability to search records online, however, made possible by the Internet, together with the availability of low-cost consumer-based DNA genetic testing services, has changed the game for conducting Jewish genealogical research. The resultant resurgence of interest in Jewish genealogy in America is both remarkable and encouraging for the future of the Jewish community in America and around the world.

Acknowledgments

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Genealogy Events

Sunday–Thursday, 1–5 August 2021. IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Virtual conference online. <http://www.iajgs2021.org/>

6 October–4 November 2021 (Cheshvan 5782). International Jewish Genealogy Month. <http://www.iajgs.org/blog/ijgm/>

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

Free Webinars

Allen County Public Library. <https://aclp.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-civil/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.scsgenealogy.com/>

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

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



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.

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Town, Country</u>	<u>Member</u>
Bernstein	Seredzius, Pilvissok, Lithuania	Barry Press
Chemerinski	Motol	Joel Silverman
Cohen	Lipshire, Russia	Joel Silverman
Freilich	Rozdol, Knihinicze, Galicia, Kraków, Presque Isle	Joel Silverman
Ginsberg	Sakiai, Lithuania	Barry Press
Maus	Brzozdowce	Joel Silverman
Nachtengal		Joel Silverman
Paderewski	Motol; Chomsk, Kobrin, Grodno gubernia	Joel Silverman
Press	Vilkija and Seredzius, Lithuania	Barry Press
Rovner	Kovel, Ukraine	Barry Press
Schlags/Schlaks/Szlags	Rozdol	Joel Silverman
Vortsevitsky/Worcewicka (Bernstein in U.S.)	Lipniki, Brest, Belarus	Joel Silverman
Wolkenfeld-Krakoff	Rzeszów, Galicia	Joel Silverman
Zuchowitzky (Siverman, Levine in U.S.)	Russia	Joel Silverman

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Upcoming SFBAJGS Events

Currently all scheduled events are being held online with Zoom.

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 Praetzellis will talk about some archaeological locations in San Francisco related to Jews and his use of archival records in researching them.

Monday, 23 August: *Jewish Ethnicity and DNA: History, Migration, Genetics*. Shelly Talalay Dardashti will discuss Sephardic history and DNA, and Maria Apodaca will relate her personal story of discovery and her return to Judaism.

Sunday, 19 September: *Holding a Family Tree-union on Zoom*. Member David Milgram will describe how he put together a socially distanced online family reunion during the COVID pandemic.

See page 22 for other events of interest.

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