The Weissensee Cemetery in East Berlin is possibly the largest Jewish Cemetery in Europe. In contrast to many other cemeteries, Weissensee represents practically the entire community in one locale. Here, in relative fair condition, one finds a complete set of 115,000 index cards, meticulously kept over the past 110 years, but stored virtually unprotected in the offices of the cemetery. Each card documents the name, date of birth and death, the plot location and last known address of the deceased, as well as names and addresses of chief mourners.

The historic importance of Weissensee is unique! These complete records, having survived some of the most horrific periods of Jewish history, must be preserved. Preserved for descendants of those who found their final resting place there, for future generations and for genealogists alike. As survivors we are fortunate indeed to be able to share this vast volume of documentation, a part of history, now threatened by sheer inertia! As genealogists we can only be deeply troubled about the future and safety of the Weissensee records.

Every serious family researcher soon realizes that many a research foundation lies in cemetery records, only to find before long what an arduous task lies ahead in locating pertinent material. The reconstruction of fragmented Jewish cemetery records by Jewish genealogical societies in North America appears to be only in its infancy, although the pace is quickening and numerous societies are beginning to appreciate the value of this race against time. But faced with a wide spectrum of Jewish communities, often divided along former geographic lines, genealogists can face the difficulties of gathering these sometimes incomplete records of Synagogues, Landsmanshaftn and Burial Societies, a difficult task by any standard.

The Weissensee records are neither fragmented nor incomplete. Weissensee offers the international genealogical community a unique opportunity to record for posterity what could be lost through negligence or sheer lethargy!

The aim must be a three-point plan:
1. Microfilming of all records.
2. Indexing of all records.
3. Making all records available to genealogical archives in Israel, Europe and the Americas.

The thaw in political East-West relations can only contribute favorably to this project.

As Jewish genealogical societies became more established through increased and enthusiastic membership, foundations were laid for serious research projects. The first decade of modern Jewish family research has produced such remarkable achievements as the indexing of the Russian Consular Records and the beginning of the Ellis Island project.

TIME HAS COME FOR A 'WEISSENSEE PROJECT'.

I urge the international genealogical community to gather, to establish a forum and take steps to initiate a programme of systematic documentation of the Weissensee cemetery records.

Peter Cullman,
Editor, JGS of Toronto
At our meetings

The first meeting on September 20th, after the summer recess, was partially devoted to the election of a new executive.

The following officers were elected:

President: DR. ROLF LEDERER
Corresponding Secretary: SELMA SACROB
Recording secretary: SHERYL ERENBERG
Membership secretary: ZELLA GORDON
Fundraising chairman: unfilled
Treasurer: ZELLA GORDON
Library: KAILA CRAMER
Editor: PETER CULLMAN

The second half of the evening saw a panel of experienced members answer questions on the subject of research facilities and resources.

At the meeting on November 29th, several members gave short but interesting presentations on their methods of recording research data. The trend to use the computer as the ideal recording tool, as far as plain data is concerned, was apparent, although it was noted that this will ultimately be only one facet of genealogical research, much weight will always be placed on oral and written family history.

Next Meeting: December 20, 1989.

Mr. YEHUDA LEVINSON, a Toronto Lawyer, will recall his interesting visit to Uman in the Ukraine, during Rosh Hashanah 5750.

The presentation will be followed by our annual Chanukah party, a timely and popular event for more congenial person-to-person contact among members and visitors.

Kaila Cramer’s skills as a librarian, coupled with eagerness and dedication have produced the first catalogue of the JGS’s growing holdings which has now been presented to the Library Committee for approval, to be available at the North York Central Library’s Canadiana Room soon (see “Field trip...”, page 5).

The long awaited promotion pamphlet of the JGS of Toronto has finally been completed. Several hundred copies were handed out at the recent Jewish Book Fair, others are now available at several libraries, including the Jewish Library and at the Jewish Information Service, the first step of the Society’s membership drive for 1990...

New Members

We are pleased to welcome several new members to our steadily growing Society:

Ms. BEVERLEY COLMAN, Mr. SOL EDELL, Mr. HERBERT GREEN, Miss ELLEN MORRIS, Ms. FRANCES LIPTON, Mr. LAWRIE WEISER, all of the Toronto area, and Ms. SYLVIA BERK from Windsor, Ontario.

Membership Renewals

As we are approaching the beginning of another calendar year we wish to remind all members to renew their memberships promptly to enable us to continue to grow and to tackle some of the projects envisaged for the coming year.

Cemetery project update

Gert Rogers reports that numerous favorable and encouraging responses have been received to date from the dozens of synagogues, Landsmanshftn and Burial Societies which were approached by letter, to make their often complete, sometimes scattered records available to our JGS.

Good responses derived also from Bill Gladstone’s well written and timely article on the JGS of Toronto, published in the Canadian Jewish News on November 6, 1989. A successful talk on the cemetery project was given by Gert Rogers and Bill Gladstone on November 5, at the annual breakfast meeting of the Amalgamated Dawes Road Cemetery Committee, and much goodwill for the cemetery project was created.

The realization that the gathering of burial records for this mammoth project will be an ongoing affair has not slackened the enthusiasm of the project team. This cemetery committee will most likely need years and a sizable budget, and last, but not least, a most dedicated group of members to bring the idea of a central burial register to fruition.
A most informative article on cemeteries, gravestones and their inscriptions can be found in MAajan, Heft 12, 1989 of the JGS of Switzerland.

The old Jewish cemetery of Breslau, now Wroclaw, has received further financial assistance from the West German Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung to continue the restoration programme that had begun several years ago. An informative guide to this locale, published in recent years, informs the visitor of the final resting places of many of the personalities in Science, Politics, Economy and Culture of the city's German era.

--- AUFBAU, November 10, 1989

Los Angeles will host the Ninth Annual Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, to be held from June 24-29, 1990. Excellent research facilities are at one's fingertips: the Simon Wiesenthal Centre at Yeshiva University, known for exceptional resources for Holocaust research; the Hebrew Union College Library and several others have extensive Yiskor book collections; the Los Angeles LDS Family History Library is second only to Salt Lake City with a uniquely extensive collection of Polish and European microfilms, the Russian Consular films and index, full US census records through 1910, as well as St. Catherine's House records of English births, marriages and deaths. For further information write to: JGS of Los Angeles, P.O. Box 25245, Los Angeles, CA 90025

LDS Family History Library Notes

The Family History Library has almost doubled its annual rate of preserving original sources on microfilm and is now conducting 180 microfilming projects in forty countries. Significant acquisitions include among others:

* 745,000 US passport applications, 1795-1918  
* 1,750 microfilm rolls of naturalizations from US federal circuit and district courts, 1806-1940's.  
* 2,250 soundex cards for Canadian border crossings, 1895-1924

Canada: More than 2,300 microfilm rolls of pre-1930 probate records have been acquired from provincial archives of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The library has received notarial records, dating from the 1780's to the 1860's, from the Quebec Provincial Archives.

Western Europe: New microfilming projects have been initiated in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.

--- News of the Family History Library, July/August 1989

The CJC National Archives has recently become the recipient of the settled case files of the United Restitution Organisation headquarters in Montréal. As the collection is comprised of over 200 boxes of material, special provisions were made to expand the Archives within the CJC headquarters in the Samuel Bronfman House in order to accommodate it.

The United Restitution Organisation was formed after the Second World War to handle Jewish restitution claims against the German government. The files, which are for the most part in German, contain correspondence between URO's clients and West Germany. Each file contains a testimonial of an individual's war experience. The information in this collection constitutes a valuable resource for studies of the Holocaust period. Testimonials include descriptions of life in the ghetto, experiences in forced labour camps and in hiding.

Researchers may use this collection on the understanding that no personal names and identification may be revealed.

--- National Archives Newsletter, Summer 1989

AVOTAYNU (Vol.V, No.3) reports that Susan C. Sherman of Houston, TX, has become the second Jewish genealogist to be certified by the Board for Certification of Genealogists in Washington DC. She thus joins forces with Miriam Weiner of Secaucus, NJ, who was the first such certified Jewish genealogist in 1985.

Information regarding the different types of certification offered by the board may be obtained from: Board for Certification of Genealogists, P.O. Box 19185, Washington DC 20036.
Book Review

'GLADENBACH UND SCHLOSS BLANKENSTEIN'
(1987), edited by Dieter Blume and Jürgen Runzheimer (Hitzeroth–Marburg, West Germany), 482 p. $ 40.00

Reviewed by Dr. Rolf Lederer

This attractive book, amply illustrated with well chosen photographs and maps and written in German by two historians, was commissioned for the 750th anniversary of the towns in Hessen (near Marburg). This book has much personal meaning to me since it describes a town to which my own great-great grandfather migrated from Bohemia in 1811, and where future Lederer generations, including my father, were born. The book deals with the history of Gladenbach and encompasses all aspects of life there. A special chapter is devoted to the Jews of this town ('Die Geschichte der Gladenbacher Juden'), pp 149–184. Though Jews are known to have settled in nearby Biedenkopf in 1298 and in Gießen in 1349, it was not until 1610 that the first Jew arrived in Gladenbach. The development of the Jewish Community is described through the ensuing centuries, detailing the Exodus (author's term) that started in 1935, by listing the names of all those who applied to 'migrate'. Mention is made of a few individuals who returned after 1945, and of subsequent visits by some former residents. This Jewish community was 104 strong in 1830, reached 178 in 1905, only to dwindle to 133 in 1933.

My ancestor, Simon Lederer, arrived from Chinow (Bohemia) in 1811, was admitted as 'Schutzjude' in 1813 and married a daughter of the Gladenbach family Stern. He was appointed Chazan and Melamed after the Rabbi departed in 1815. There is also information on my great-grandfather and my grandfather. Mention is made of my grandmother, Hilda Lederer, who left in March 1939 (and who mercifully arrived safely in Cape Town, South Africa, a few months later). My father, Benno Lederer, was invited to describe his youth and early adult life in a series of reminiscences: "I remember...". Describing what life was like in Gladenbach in the opening years of the 20th century, he has memories of WW I, and recalls some of his friends, neighbours and teachers, explaining the family business and his interest in the enterprise.

In finding literature of this nature one is able to transcend the barriers of time, in small measures reliving the lives of our ancestors as well as history on a very personal level.

Members' Forum

When I was a little girl, my grandmother used to tell me stories of her family's life in Poland. She related how she grew up, got married and had children of her own and also about how the family "came to Canada", in steerage. I even know the ship's name and the date it landed in the 'Castle Garden' immigration port of New York.

These stories were the most marvellous adventures to my little ears and I never tired of hearing them, over and over again.

Too late of course, now that I am older and somewhat wiser in the ways of the world, do I have some questions to ask. Questions not too personal, but perhaps more technical:

I often wonder just what was needed in order to leave Poland; Passports, Visas, Exit permits? Or was their home country only too happy to get rid of four extra Jews...? How was the journey from their shetl to Hamburg, whence they set sail? What of their belongings? What to take and what to leave? (though judging from my grandmother's tales, not too much was left behind, hearing of her 'standard of living'...) I know that relatives already living here in Toronto took the new immigrants in, so food and shelter were taken care of in the beginning, - but, oh, what of the foreign language in the day-to-day beginnings? And how long did it take the postal system of the 1880's to convey mail between Toronto and Poland...?

My grandmother's tale was not complete: - to compare notes with others could fill the gaps...

Selma Sacrob

> 'SHORES OF REFUGE: A HUNDRED YEARS OF JEWISH EMIGRATION', by Ronald Saunders, describes causes of emigration, the problems and hardships of immigrating, travel in the days of heavy immigration, etc. Published by Henry Holt & Co. 600 pages, $27.95

--- San Francisco Newsletter, February 1989
Field Trip to the Canadiana Room

By Kaila Cramer

On the evening of Wednesday, October 11, nine of the Society's members gathered on the sixth floor of the North York Central Library for an orientation tour of the Gladys Allison Canadiana Room, the new locale for the Society's own growing library and acquisition; our host was librarian David Bain.

Those who have not yet paid a visit to the 'Central' don't know what they are missing. This brand new structure is beautiful as well as an excellent resource centre. Here one can find anything from trashy novels to scholarly works, with videos, magazines and children's and teens' departments thrown in for good measure. Genealogists will, of course, want to make a beeline for the main floor elevator which takes them to the Canadiana Room. On the evening of our tour, Mr. Bain introduced us to some of the most-used resources. He pointed out that, as the name of the department implies, the stress is on collecting materials of Canadian interest. There are items on many aspects of Canadian history and culture, not just genealogy. Nevertheless, the genealogical holdings here reach beyond Canada's borders and make the Canadiana Room one of the best such research centres in the Toronto region. The materials of interest here include NYPL's purchases, the Ontario Genealogical Society's collection, and the library of our JGS of Toronto.

Here one can consult all the available Canadian censuses, as well as various Ontario censuses 1798-1920, and the staff will order any microfilms which one may request from the US censuses. The library also has the Mormon's International Genealogical Index (IGI) on microfiche. This can be a great time-saver for those who used to go to the LDS library in Etobicoke to consult this index. The Canadiana Room has indexes to microfilms of published ship's passenger lists, (Halifax 1881-1919, New Brunswick 1816-1918, Quebec City 1865-1919). Among the large selection of Canadian and other atlases there is the Times Atlas of the World from the 1920's, which is excellent for determining the exact location of European towns which were destroyed during the Holocaust and which is the international standard for completing the JGS application form for the (computerized) FAMILYFINDER. Numerous Canadian City Directories, (Hamilton 1853-1935, Ottawa 1861-1960, Toronto 1861-1963, Montreal 1819-1978, Calgary/Regina/Edmonton 1911-1953), are available. Most of the materials, with the exception of indexes, finding aids and atlases, are not kept on the shelves and can only be accessed by leaving one's library card with a filled out request slip at the counter. All materials are for reference only, of course.

As it was pointed out, there are too many resources to discuss during a short tour. But one valuable source of help should not be neglected – the staff itself. The librarians here, as exemplified by Mr. Bain, are eager to please and are used to fielding reference questions. One should keep in mind that, although they cannot carry out research for patrons, they provide one gladly with pertinent materials. If librarians do not have the books or microfilms requested, they will attempt an interlibrary loan, including requests to American libraries; NYPL carries any fees charged by the loaning institution.

We were grateful for the time Mr. Bain spent with us, and doubtless, many members will soon take advantage of these new and convenient facilities.

The Central Library is located at 5120 Yonge Street, has limited parking in the area but is easily accessible by bus or subway (North York Centre station, just north of Sheppard station).

For further information call: (416) 395-5623

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An updated Membership Directory, as well as a new Member's Research Guide with indexed surnames, places and languages will be made available in 1990.

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"All happy families resemble each other, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

Leo Tolstoy
1828-1910
Choosing a Genealogy Program
By Howard Shidlowsky

Many people use computers both at work and at home. Why not use the computer for genealogical research? A computer program can do the repetitious clerical work: keeping a record of correspondence, updating research notes, printing form letters to record offices and keeping charts and trees current. Once family data is entered and saved, many of these processes are automatic, quick and painless. Other benefits include neat, orderly pedigree charts and family group sheets which can be quickly and easily printed. Errors can be corrected speedily, new information added easily, records can be readily copied and stored and relationships can be checked in seconds. Your relatives will receive a diskette or a chart which they can examine at their leisure. A computer program also imposes its own order and numbering scheme, which is excellent for those whose record keeping tends to be more 'informal'.

Choosing a genealogy program is a matter of selecting the program which best fits your needs. One program will have one set of features, a second one may add more features, while a third will replace some features with its own. You need to decide which features are important to you. Be prepared to settle for a program that has most, but not necessarily all of the features you want.

Start with the same checks which you made for other programs. The program must run on your computer under the same operating system as you usually use. It must fit in the computer memory, use the same number of disk drives and you should be able to run the program from a hard disk. Check the printer requirements. Some genealogy programs print charts that are 132 characters wide, - not all printers can do this. You will probably want a printer that you can use for correspondence as well as for printing charts and trees.

Can you read and understand the manual? Some manuals are printed so poorly that no one can possibly read them. A beautifully produced manual that you can't understand, on the other hand, is just as useless. Some programs, notably shareware, do not include a printed program at all, instead, the manual is on the disk and you must print it out first. Beware. Many are long, unformatted files and you may not be happy with the look and/or legibility of the result.

Talk to people who use computers to help with their family tree records; find out what program they use and how they feel about it. Ask about support: response to questions and problems, error fixes and upgrades. Don't forget about additional programs; you may not need them now, but you might later on. Ask for a demonstration: you should get samples of the various trees, charts and forms which you can examine at your leisure. If you don't know anyone who uses a particular program, write to the company for a demonstration disk. If they don't have one, at the very least they should send sample trees, charts and forms.

What should you look for in a genealogy program? Let us consider a single family member. At a minimum, we want to record name, sex, birth and death dates. Most of us would want to include locations too (city/town, province/state, country); and the same for marriages. Consider other data such as education, military service, places of residence, occupation, emigration and immigration dates, and ports of departure and entry. We certainly need to record how this family member is related to others in the family; this includes parents, siblings, children, marriages and adoptions.

Let's go over that list, starting with names. There should be lots of space here, though much depends on how you record names. You need space for first and last names, preferably in separate fields. There may not be as much room as some of us would like. For example, my great-grandfather was Herzl Shidlowsky, Mordechai Naftali in Hebrew, and Louis in English. I recorded him as Herzl Shidlowsky and listed the other names in a comment area. How you choose to do this depends on your personal
preference, just make sure that you can record names the way you like like. Dates should not be a problem. Whether the program uses month and then day, or day followed by month is not important, as long as it is consistent. Some programs use numbers for the month, others use names. Choose whichever one you find the easiest to work with.

The amount of space you need for locations depends entirely on how specific you want to be. If you don't record countries then you require less space. If you wish to list the various names of a city or town then you will require more space. You may want to record the most common name and maintain a separate list of city and town names, apart from your family records. For many European towns and cities you will want to have enough room to specify the province too. You may save space by using codes, e.g. 'P' for Poland, 'C' for Canada, etc., but then you will have to interpret these codes for others.

Don't ignore the other bits of information I listed. Some may help you to distinguish between relatives of the same name; even if it isn't vital, the information tells us something about the individual. Some programs will have separate fields for each of these, especially occupation and education; in other programs you must use the general comment area.

I seem to keep adding to this 'general information' section. By now it seems clear that one needs more room here than for any other item. How big should it be? If you record various names, education and occupation data and passport, birth and death certificate and naturalization data and numbers, 10 lines of 80 letters each fill rather quickly. You may prefer a program which includes separate areas for most of these, especially occupation and education; in other programs you must use the general comment area.

Enter a few individuals and define various marriage and parent-child relationships; there should be no limit on the number of marriages recorded for an individual. Adoptions should be clearly designated. Make sure you try adding children to a person who is not married (in case you don't know a spouse's name). You may have to add a spouse with a 'made-up' name to do this. All other relationships, for example, seventh cousin, great-great-grandmother, aunt, nephew, etc., should be defined automatically. There are a number of ways to verify these family relationships. Some programs include a utility to describe how two people are related. If this feature is not available then generate some family group sheets, descendant and ancestor lists and pedigrees. Try displaying them on the screen only, make any necessary corrections, then print. Do you like the output? Can you print only selected pages? Can you stop the print before it is completed? Do the charts/trees/forms display the information you want in a readable fashion? Too much data? Or not enough? Can you include spousal information on ancestor and descendant charts? What about adopted children? Can you change the date format if you wanted to?

Now having used the program, you will have some 'feel' for it. Is it as easy to use as you would like? If you forget how to do something, can you remember by checking a menu or the 'on-line help'? Is adding new family members cumbersome? Can data be corrected easily? In short, are you satisfied with the program? If you are not sure, try another program; you can always go back to an earlier one.

For more information on computers and genealogy: 'Computer Genealogy: A guide to Research through High Technology' by Paul A. Anderick and Richard A. Pence (published by Ancestry Inc. and available for loan at the North York Central Library) is an excellent introduction to both computers and genealogy. The book takes the reader through one particular program and gives a good idea of what computers can do in this area. The magazine 'Genealogical Computing' (available at the Toronto Reference Library) publishes a directory to genealogical software in each bimonthly issue.

--- COMPUTEREDGETE, Sept. 22, 1989

HaYom On-Line Hebrew Calendar, a programme developed for the Macintosh by A. G. Reinhold. It calculates Jewish holidays for any year, converts between Hebrew and civil dates, lists Hebrew birthdays and Yahrzeit. For more information: A. G. Reinhold, 14 Fresh Pond Place, Cambridge, MA 02138, Tel. (617) 491-4937

--- COMPUTEREDGETE, Sept. 22, 1989
SHEM TOV, the quarterly Newsletter published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, is free to members; single and back issues are $4.00. Membership fees are $25.00 per calendar year. The Society was founded in 1985 and currently has over 40 members. Meetings are held September to June, usually on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto; notices of meetings are also announced in the Canadian Jewish News (Miriam Herman Column). Guests are always welcome.

The goals of the Society are to promote an awareness among Jewish community members of the possibilities of tracing their ancestors, to foster an ongoing interest in our heritage, to encourage the sharing of research techniques and to disseminate information on genealogical research to family historians and professional genealogists alike. SHEM TOV is dedicated to publish articles of personal research experiences, inform its members of new and tried pertinent research sources and act as part of a growing international network for experienced family historians and beginning genealogists.

The officers of the Society are:

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Contributors to this issue were:
Kaila Cramer, Dr. Rolf Lederer, Howard Shidowsky, Peter Cullman.

If you wish to submit an article to SHEM TOV, please send typewritten material to the editor, Peter Cullman, 99 Yorkville Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 3K5, Canada, Tel. (416) 964-2196

For subscriptions, membership or changes of address please contact the secretary, Selma Sacrob,
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