Miriam Weiner: She Came, She Saw, She Conquered
By Bill Gladstone

Appearance of Renowned Jewish Genealogist 
Spurs Excitement and Some Significant Breakthrough...

A visit to Toronto by well-known Jewish genealogist Miriam Weiner on November 7th was the occasion for the largest gathering yet in the life of our society.

By 8 p.m., about 190 people had filled nearly every available seat in the Sisterhood Hall of Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, where Ms. Weiner — an animated, gifted speaker — regaled us for nearly two hours with a highly personalized outpouring of stories, humor, advice and information about the subject of 'mishpochology' that she knows so well.

Co-editor of the 'Encyclopaedia of Jewish Genealogy' and celebrated author of a well-syndicated newspaper column (regrettably not published in Toronto), Ms. Weiner began by recounting the oft-heard refrain that a particular family line can't be traced because the name was changed at Ellis Island, that all relevant documents were destroyed, or that the town was wiped out in the Holocaust. "I'm sure many of you have heard these before," said Ms. Weiner. "Well, they're not true, not true, not true..."

Miriam Weiner does not travel light. On a recent trip to the Soviet Union, she was accompanied by about ten suitcases as well as a portable photocopying machine, in case the Soviets were not equipped with technological devices beyond the sophistication of a manual typewriter.

Similarly, she arrived in Toronto with four suitcases filled with books, pamphlets and photocopied handouts for the crowd: all manner of publication, it seemed, except her passport, which she forgot at home, along with the rest of her personal ID. It was a good thing for Jewish genealogy in Toronto that she was able to talk her way past customs at the airport.

Our ancestors did not cross borders through entry points that casually, of course, and in those days records of their passage were almost always kept. Ms. Weiner produced a passenger list showing her grandfather's entry to the United States in 1912. She also displayed his 'first papers' of naturalization, which provide a short physical description ("Merchant, age 51, light-complexed, 5'2", 170 pounds") as well as the date and place of birth and marriage.

Applying to civil authorities in the Iowa town where her grandfather was supposedly married, she found that permission to marry had actually been denied because he could not provide proof of a divorce from a wife he had left behind in Russia. Surprises like these "are what makes a family unique," she said. Although lacking supportive documentation, she hypothesizes that her grandparents were married under rabbinic law...

Another aspect of her personal genealogy that she shared concerned her remarkable success at tracing several generations of unknown Soviet relatives. Her technique was brilliant in its simplicity: she picked up the telephone.

First, she tried to look up her mother's particularly rare maiden name, in the Soviet telephone books located in the U.S. Library of Congress (these may also be found in our own Metro Central Library): She found 12 listings of the name!

The difficult part came in the actual phoning. Highly inefficient, the Soviet phone system discourages one's fingers from doing the walking. But she persevered and made contact, aided by a Russian-speaking cousin in Amsterdam. In time she succeeded in documenting a family tree that now fills a scroll some twenty feet long.

On a more general level, Ms. Weiner described the encouraging inroads she has been making into the heart of the Soviet bureaucracy via several of its major archives — potential treasure-troves of genealogical information. Clutching a signed letter of cooperation from one archives, she said Soviet archivists have begun to realize that many North American researchers will pay good U.S. dollars for copies of civil records.

Let's hope her efforts prove fruitful. We have long been frustrated by our inability to attain vital records from the Russian-Jewish Pale of Settlement where so many of our ancestors once walked.

[cont'd on page 10]
At our meetings


In her illustrated talk "Dating photographs from Fashion" Ms. Palmer lead the audience through the various stages of fashion, explaining its cultural reflection of taste, aesthetics and style of an era, not forgetting that fashion can also be interpreted as a social, economic or psychological barometer.

Dating photographs from a fashion point of view can surely contribute to many a discovery in our quest for identification and verification.

Her question-and-answer session lead several of our members to have Ms. Palmer interpret numerous of their own old family photographs.

November 7: Miriam Weiner (see cover story on page 1)

November 27: Scott E. Meyer, president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois and associate editor of SEARCH was the guest speaker on this well attended evening, the theme of which was "Quirks and Quandaries in Jewish Genealogy."

Delving lively into his personal research history, Mr. Meyer's numerous anecdotes, amply illustrated with copies of shipping records and vital statistics documents, should well have inspired many a novice, but also reminding the captive audience that such documents were of course never intended to serve as genealogical tools, generations later. The mind of a detective remains at the root in all genealogical work, lest we forget that similarities in names, intentionally falsified birthdates at the time of life of the Pale of Settlement, or a stonemason's mistake, can easily get one off on a wrong tangent.

New Members

The following new members are welcomed to our society:

Catherine Adam Susan Bracken Samantha Brown
Ruth Chernia Phyllis Cincinatus Dinah Eylon-Ripsman
Golda Fine Nora Freund Nathan Goldberg
Alexander Goldstein Elaine Gordon Stanley Gutman
Irwin Keltz Morton Knecht Louis Mallinick
Bryan Krikst Paula Lederman Richard Pivnick
Howard Patlik Marcia Piva Ruth Reuben
Alan Price Jacob Rabinowitz Saul Shiffman
Allan Ritche Elsie Rosen Murray Teitel
Leslie Singer Wendy V. Smith
Carolynne Veffer

1992 Summer Seminar on Jewish Genealogy

The 11th Summer Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, "The New York Jewish Experience", to be held July 26 - 31 in New York City at the Vista Hotel, will focus on the New York Jewish experience from the first Sephardic settlers through today's Soviet emigrés. For more information, contact:

Jewish Genealogical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 6398
New York, NY 10128

Please renew your membership!

The beginning of a new membership year is upon us again. We ask all members who have not yet sent in their 1992 membership dues: please mail your $30.00 membership cheque today! If you wish to remain on the mailing list your cheque must reach us before February 29, 1992.

As our society has experienced a tremendous growth over the past twelve months, we can look forward to a very lively and interesting year, filled with sessions of even better guest speakers, an enlarged library and improved sets of reference tools for all members.

Robarts' On-Line

Unbeknownst to many members of our society the following should prove to be one of the more convenient research tools available without leaving the house. A particularly convenient feature during the long winter months.

FELIX On-Line catalogue of the John P. Robarts Research Library, one of the best sources for Judaica in Toronto (with over 400 Yizkor books) has long been accessible to anyone with a personal computer and modem.

Dial access: the communication settings on your terminal should be: 7 bits, even parity, 1 stop bit.

Choose from the following phone numbers:

Modern speed Phone numbers
300 baud 978-3959
1200 baud 978-3959
2400 baud 978-7239

How to log on to FELIX:
When you see: CONNECTED... strike RETURN key.

When you see: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO COMPUTING SERVICES PACKNET *** NODE 2. SUBSCRIBER S01000067 - TYPE HELP FOR ASSISTANCE *** SERVICE?
You type: FELIX3 for service at: 300 baud or
FELIX12 for service at: 1200 baud or
FELIX24 for service at: 2400 baud or
FELIX96 at service at: 9600 baud

You then see: CALL IN PROGRESS
*** FELIX is up-to-date as of...
*** Valid Library Branches are: ROBARTS, etc...
BRANCH:
You type: ROBARTS (in upper case!)

FELIX will then prompt you to search according to various criteria. Brochures with more detailed search instructions are available at the Library. For more info call: 978-7634

The Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library will introduce an extensive on-line service in the spring of 1992.

New source for YIZKOR books

For a Yizkor book catalogue, 121 entries in Hebrew, available from a new source for Yizkor books and other books about Jewish communities, write to:

Chaim D. Zdialowski, P.O. Box 6413
Jerusalem 91063, Israel
Vital Statistics Transferred to Archives of Ontario

On August 29, 1991 the Registrar General of Ontario transferred Birth, Marriage and Death (BMD) registrations and their historical indexes to the Archives of Ontario (AO). These records cover Births 1869 - 1895, Marriages 1869 - 1910 and Deaths 1869 - 1920. Also included were some related historical records, such as registrations of deaths for Ontario residents overseas during and immediately after WW II. Future transfers will occur annually according to formal records schedules.

The main registrations are indexed first by year, then alphabetically by surname and first name within the year. Geographical location of the event is also given in the index.

The AO is awaiting a legal decision on how the Freedom of Information/Protection of Privacy Act will affect access to the birth and marriage records. The death records will not be restricted under the Act.

Records declared open under the Act will be made available in three stages:

1. Partial reference during microfilming (8 to 12 months from the transfer date.) While the AO and the Genealogical Society of Utah microfilm the records, written requests for information will be accepted. Searches will be limited to:
   a) people requiring certified transcripts for legal or other mandatory reasons;
   b) Ontario residents who provide the full name, date and place of the event to a maximum of four searches. There will be no charge.

   No requests will be processed until the access issue has been settled. Do not send search requests until the AO announces that the search service has begun!

2. After the first set of microfilms is complete, reels for all open records will be available in the Reading Room at the AO.

3. Two sets of the microfilms will be available for sale or loan nationally and internationally. The full set will consist of 500 to 600 reels.


Otherwise, you can call the Vital Statistics Hotline 24 hours a day for updates at (416) 327-1593.

Vital statistics records dated later than those indicated above are still held by the Registrar General; (see article below).

Registrar General's office in Thunder Bay

Ever since the Registrar General's office moved to Thunder Bay, Ontario, there have been delays in the issuing of certificates of birth, marriage and death and name changes. The switch to a computerized system at the same time as the move to Thunder Bay compounded the problem.

An article in the Globe and Mail on July 6, 1991 quoted a ministerial assistant as saying that the ministry hoped to be back to normal in July or August. Long delays are, however, still common.

* * *

The Registrar General's office holds records of birth dated after 1895, marriages after 1910 and deaths after 1920. There is a fee of $21.00 per search.

For information write to: The Office of the Registrar General, P.O.Box 4600, Thunder Bay, Ontario. P7B 6L8. The phone number in Ontario is: 1-800-461-2156, and outside the province: 1-807-343-7420.

New Books...

"FOUNDERS AND FOLLOWERS",
Johannesburg Jewry 1887-1915

"Johannesburg Jewry is unique among Jewish communities throughout the world because its people joined with others to become the founders of a city. Numbering ten per cent of the white population from mining camp days in 1886 onwards, Jews made a significant contribution to the growth of Johannesburg", proclaims the dust jacket of this new impressive publication.

Mendel Kaplan, chairman of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency and well-known Zionist throughout the world, is the author of this fascinating, well researched, amply illustrated and annotated book. In collaboration with eight other writers, Mr. Kaplan tells the stories of the pioneers in the early days of the founding of the first Jewish congregation, acquainting the reader with life in the pioneer days of this city when Jews were accepted as among the founders of the city, as part of the very fibre of society. They came as traders, shopkeepers, artisans or bar-keepers, they became entrepreneurs and stockbrokers and created mining companies.

For family researchers with connections to this part of the world, and Toronto Jewry now has a rich heritage of that, this latest opus of Mendel Kaplan, published timely on the 150th anniversary of the founding of the first Hebrew Congregation in South Africa in 1841, will represent an important new source.

"Founders and Followers", 1991, 300 pp. ISBN 0 947461 094 Rand 120.00 (approx. $60.00)

Published by Vlaeberg Publishers, Cape Town, P.O. Box 15015, Vlaeberg 8018.

Edited by Mendel Kaplan and Marian Robertson

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"FIRST AMERICAN JEWISH FAMILIES:
600 GENEALOGIES, 1654-1988" •

By Dr. Malcolm H. Stern, Cincinnati, Genealogist of the American Jewish Archives, Waltham, MA. and American Jewish Historical Society. A revision of the author's "Americans of Jewish Descent". Genealogies for every family settled in America by 1840, traced to date; incl. a 50,000-name index.


* available in Jan. 1992 at Canadiiana Room, North York Central Library, part of the holdings of JGS of Canada.
American Jewish Archives

The American Jewish Archives has acquired the community history and genealogical materials pertaining to the German town of OBERWESSEL, containing a map of the local Jewish cemetery and articles documenting the Jewish residents of the town, including relatives of Dr. Alfred Gottschalk.

The material, described as printed in German, no date, Xerox copy, was received from Dr. Alfred Gottschalk who is president of Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion.

American Jewish Archives was established 1947; collecting material on the history of the Jews in its broadest sense and having probably the largest collection of source materials found anywhere on the Jewish American community. It publishes the semi-annual "American Jewish Archives, a journal devoted to the American Jewish Experience"; Editor, Mr Jacob R. Marcus.

Included under 1990 Selected Acquisitions in the Spring/Summer 1991 issue are the following acquisitions of Genealogies:

- CARDOZO family, 1433 - 1988
- MORGENTHAU family, 1770 - 1946
- SCHWAB family
- SCHLESINGER, Sigmund - list of descendants 1848 - 1981

For further information write:
American Jewish Archives,
3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220

New Jewish Genealogical Societies

Dedicated to researching the history of Jewry in Romania, a group of Romanian writers, all retired intellectuals, have established the Romanian Circle of Jewish Genealogists in Bucharest.

Although severely restricted by lack of resources in a country that is undergoing an extraordinary economic crisis, faced with a serious problem of anti-semitism, unprecedented in the past 50 years, the president of the new society, Mr. Dan Regenstreif, hopes that readers outside the country may wish to avail themselves of the group's services as researchers. Romanian, French or Yiddish are the preferred languages of correspondence; English is understood.

Write to: Mr. Dan Regenstreif,
B. Mihaii Kogaliniceanu 5, Et 7-Sector 5,
70601 Bucharest, Romania.

Two branches of an Australian Jewish Genealogical Society are to be formed simultaneously in Australia in 1992; the one in Sydney will be headed by Sophie Caplan, the one in Melbourne by Avram Schwartz.

Several new societies have been formed in the US: JGS of Georgia; JGS of Washington State and JGS of South Orange County (California). The Dallas Jewish Historical Society reported having formed a genealogical section.

A complete updated index of all Jewish Genealogical Societies worldwide will be available at regular meetings in the spring of 1992.

Winnipeg

By Dr. Rolf Lederer

About sixty people attended my address "Genealogy - Gateway to connecting with the past," on October 17, 1991 at the YMHA lecture theatre in Winnipeg. This "Alex and Sonia Shanas Memorial Lecture" was co-sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, the East European branch of the Manitoba Genealogical Society and the YMHA Jewish Community Centre.

It was a great personal privilege to be invited to deliver this lecture in which I traced the development of the Jewish Genealogical Societies in the past decade or so, and I lauded the efforts of the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada in establishing the Genealogical Institute. I also outlined the resources available for Jewish genealogical research - both general resources and more specific Jewish resources. I gave liberal examples of available avenues which can be pursued, culled from my own personal research, amply accompanied by documents and photographs.

My hosts treated me with warm western hospitality, and I was especially pleased to meet the leaders of the society including Harry Gutkin, Dr. Issy Wolch and Henry Trachtenberg, as well as making the re-acquaintance of Gerald Posner, whom I had met previously in Toronto.

It was gratifying to meet Rudy Lowenstein and his wife. Rudy had been in touch with me after reading an article about my ancestral town of Gladenbach, Germany, which I had written in SHEM TOV. During WW II, Rudy had been interned in Quebec as an "enemy alien", together with my father's cousin, Berthold Lederer (in Montreal). Now we had much to discuss, considering that we have friends in common and the fact that on several occasions he has visited family in Cape Town, South Africa.

When I left Winnipeg it was with the firm belief that the fledgling Genealogical Institute is certainly in the hands of a capable leadership, and that we should strive to continue strengthening the bonds between our two organizations.

In an all-Canadian context I am hopeful that the JGS of Montreal will soon be revived and perhaps a JGS could soon be established in Ottawa.

New German Jewish Genealogical Newsletter to be Published

As a "spin-off" at the recent Third International Seminar on Jewish Genealogy in Salt Lake City a group of five researchers with interests in German Jewish research decided to publish a newsletter that concentrates on this particular geographical area.

The new publication should serve to list sources, archives, libraries, books, magazines, old and new addresses of people and places which have been helpful in such research.

To contribute material or for more information write:
Mr. Stephen Weil, 3056 W. Jerome St., Chicago, IL 60645
-
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-from ROOTS-KEY, Summer 1991
Library of the JGS of Canada

By Kaila Cramer, JGS Librarian.

This article is geared primarily to the many new members who have joined our society over the past two years.

As our society receives a constant flow of newsletters, microfiches, journals and occasionally even genealogies from members and others societies around the world, it must be stressed here that this material is meant for the benefit of all members and that it represents important research tools, to be used by all!

The growing library of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada, Toronto Division, is housed at North York Central Library, in the Gladys Allison Canadiana Room on the 6th floor, at 5120 Yonge Street. The hours are: Mon.: 12.30 am - 8.30 pm; Tue. - Thurs.: 9am - 8.30pm; Fri.: 9.00am - 5.00pm; Sat.: 9.00am - 5.00pm; Sun.: (Oct 20th to 2nd Sun. in May) 1.00pm - 5.00pm. Tel.: 395-5623

The library can be reached by bus or subway (North York Centre station). By car, there is on-street metered parking on Beecroft Ave. (parallel to Yonge Street, one block west) as well as a metered parking lot on Beecroft Ave.

All material in the Canadiana Room is for in-house reference only. Please ask the librarians for any help you may need. The staff are there to serve you, but of course they cannot do your research for you!

Below is an alphabetical list of the holdings of JGS of Canada. More detailed information can be found in a catalogue, which is kept in a leaf binder and is brought to regular meetings of the Society as of 1992; several catalogue binders are also available in the Canadiana Room.

- Annals and deeds in family history. No. 2. 1989
- Black book of localities whose Jewish population was exterminated by the Nazis. C1989. 2 microfiches.
- Family History Library subject catalogue of Jewish sources 1989. The Jewish holdings of the Mormons' genealogical library in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- "First American Jewish Families", 600 Genealogies, 1654-1988. Third edition, updated and revised, complete index with over 50,000 names. Compiled and edited by Dr. H. Malcolm Stern
- A list of towns and cities which had Jewish populations.
- Gazetteer of Eastern Europe; Daich-Mokotoff soundex sequence. C1989. 8 microfiches.
- Same as above, but arranged to allow for variant spellings.
- A memorial book to German Jews who perished in the Holocaust (covering former West Germany and West Berlin only).
- Index to "Memorial to the Jews deported from France". C1989. Microfiche.
- Name index to the work by Serge Klarsfeld.
- Soundex index to the names contained in these records.
- Jewish genealogical family finder. Directory of research being done by Jews around the world.
- Jewish Genealogical societies publications. 1990. Microfiche reproductions of several societies' newsletters including an index.
- NEWSLETTERS AND JOURNALS (Consult our catalogue for exact holdings)
- "Avotaynu", The international review of Jewish genealogy
- "Branches" - JGS of Greater Miami
- "Cercle de Genealogie Juive" - Bulletin trimestriel (France)
- "Chroniques" - JGS of Philadelphia
- "The Cleveland Kol" - JGS of Cleveland
- "Discovery" - JGS of San Diego
- "Dorot" - The Journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society
- "Family Finding" - JGS of Wisconsin
- "Genealogy" - JGS of Cincinnati
- "Generations" - JGS of Michigan
- "JGSLI Lineage" - JGS of Long Island
- "Kol bina" - Congregation Bina, formed by Jews from India.
- Local Jewish historical society news - American Jewish Historical Society
- "Maajan"-Schweizerische Vereinigung für Jüdische Genealogie, Switzerland.
- "Hispana" - JGS of Greater Washington
- "Horascha" - JGS of Illinois
- National Archives newsletter - Canadian Jewish Congress
- News of the Family History Library - Mormons
- Newsletter - Illiana
- Newsletter - JGS of Oregon
- Newsletter - JGS of Sacramento
- Newsletter - New Mexico Jewish Historical Society
- "Quest" - JGS of Connecticut
- "Remember" - JGS of Pittsburgh
- "Roots" - Society for Jewish Family Heritage, Israel.
- "Roots-Key" - JGS of Los Angeles.
- "Search" - International journal for researchers of Jewish Genealogy.
- "Shashter Ham-dorot" - Israel Genealogical Society
- "Shem Tov" - JGS of Canada (Toronto Division)
- "Tayerer Landsman" - JGS of South Florida
- "Vichus" - JGS of North Jersey
- "Zichron Note" - JGS of San Francisco Bay Area

New acquisitions will be publicized in future issues of SHEM TOV. If any of our members has relevant material to donate, we will be glad to consider it for our collection. Books, magazines, newsletters and audio-visual material are welcome as well as family trees and family histories. We will also consider suggestions for purchase, as funds allow.

Please direct all inquiries to Kaila Cramer, Tel. 738-2239.
Dr. Rolf Lederer

When I started my genealogical research in 1976, I had not the faintest idea where it would lead to. I was privileged to know both my grandmothers before they died in my early youth, and I was acquainted with my grandfathers' names. I was also vaguely aware that my grandparents had siblings, only one of whom was known to me. I knew that my maternal grandmother was one of 7 children and I could identify them and their order of birth since my mother sometimes listed them in this sequence; at times I had wondered who started this role, and for what purpose...

The past fifteen years have been most fruitful and rewarding in tracing back the four major ancestral lines (Lederer, Rosenthal, Garcia de los Reyes and Gottlieb) and I have also started researching the Schiffs (the maiden name of one of my great-grandmothers). My father provided me with the names of his grandparents, as well as those of my late mother’s. By contacting various relatives scattered throughout the world, Israel, USA, South America and England, I obtained limited additional information as well as photographs and memorabilia, which I had specifically requested.

My quest eventually widened by writing to various civil authorities for vital records (birth, marriage and death) and on my travels I spent many hours in libraries, archives and cemeteries. I was determined to leave no stone unturned, (no pun intended).

One of my approaches was to contact every Lederer listed in the Israeli telephone directories (1980). The response to this was encouraging and spectacular (more than 50% replied), but unfortunately none of them seemed to be related. I also issued the (Lederer) newsletter between 1980 – 1985, giving members of the family information of my progress. Various pressures interfered with the continuation of this project though.

In 1977, a year after I started, I met my father’s cousin, Julius, from Detroit, MI, who had lost touch with my father for almost 50 years. Julius told me he regarded himself as the family “historian”, having avidly pursued this hobby in the 1930’s in Germany and he showed me the family tree which he had compiled. I was greatly impressed, but it wasn’t until many years later that I realized what a great find this proved to be. In an instant I learned the names of my great-great-grandparents and their parents, going back in time to the mid-18th century to Bohemia! "Discovering" Julius also dispelled the notion that I was the first Lederer in my immediate family to settle in North America. Julius had preceded me; but there were also family members who had immigrated in the mid-19th century. Julius had unsuccessfully attempted to trace descendants of these early settlers. By careful detective work, I have contacted 4th cousins in Texas and New York (meeting the latter several years ago) and finding records in San Francisco of others. Another branch has so far been quite elusive (they supposedly lived in Richmond, VA and in the Chicago area).

For more than a decade I tried to obtain information from Czechoslovakia on my great-great-great-grandfather.

Finally, as a result of the recent changes in Eastern Europe, I obtained, this year, from the State Archives in Prague, information on my ancestor. I learned that he was a resident of Rakovnik (near Prague) and that he had changed his surname from Simon to Lederer when he was admitted to the List of Familiants (Familiant – Jewish man in Bohemia – one of 7600 – permitted to marry and have children, 1780 – 1846). These documents also gave the names of my great-great-great-grandparents. Furthermore I was also provided with the birth record of two of my great-great-grandfather’s brothers – one of whom moved to the USA and who died in Albany in 1878, whose tombstone I saw in the cemetery there.

The Rosenthals have also been traced back to my great-great-grandfather, Liebman, who was born in Mauswinkel, Germany in 1751. In addition to my own research, I have been helped by another descendant, who is a member of the Weil family.

My maternal grandfather was a member of the Sephardic community in Hamburg. Using information obtained from the archives in Hamburg, I traced the Garcia de los Reyes family to the beginning of the 19th century when the family arrived there from Amsterdam. The archives in Amsterdam provided me with additional information and as a result of a recent publication ("Index to Ketuboth of the Portuguese-Israelite Congregation in Amsterdam 1650 - 1911"), I received copies of the Ketuboth of my great-great-great-grandparents (1761) and the bride's parents (1735). Unfortunately, there are no males in the present generation to carry on this venerable name.

The Gottliebs have been traced to Hamburg to the latter part of the 18th century to my great-great-great-grandparents. Again there are no males to carry on the name. Today, descendants of the Gottliebs are found in Sweden, Israel, South Africa, England, Canada and the USA.

My great-grandfather Lederer married a lady from his home town Gladchenbach in Germany, and in the past year I have been researching the Schiff family. I have received a lot of help from a historian, Jürgen Runzheimer, in Gladchenbach. In addition, I have made contact with several members of the Schiff family in the USA, England and Israel and have obtained information on a related family – the Jonas family. Sadly, contact with the Schiff family has lengthened my family's Holocaust victim list.

I now have photographs of seven of my eight great-grandparents and live with the hope that somewhere a picture of the missing relative will turn up. I have been given various treasures: a gold medal presented to a great uncle in 1915, a book presented to Joseph Lederer in 1635 (he emigrated from Germany in 1845) and letters my grandmother wrote to a niece.

With my son's recent marriage, I have now begun researching my daughter-in-law's family...

My feeling is that the research is of course never complete and more and more information is constantly coming to light.
From Schneidemühl to Australia

By Peter Cullman

The proverbial needle in the haystack, one of genealogy's quintessential ingredients, may often remain no more than an illusion. In the following case though, sheer luck prevailed.

Little did I expect when, in good spirit, I included in last year's winter issue of SHEM TOV a brief mention of my sizeable holdings of documentation on the once Prussian town of Schneidemühl, the ancestral town and centre of my research efforts. A reprint of this notice appeared in AVOTAYNU and through one of life's incredible coincidences I received an enthusiastic reply from a researcher in Australia!

I could barely believe my eyes when reading the letter from the secretary of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in Victoria, inquiring if my holdings of records of the Jewish community of Schneidemühl could possibly contain any references to such family names as Simonstein and Loewenthal, families in Australia she has recently researched on behalf of friends. To think, that I have literally scoured the earth for nearly ten years in search of Simonsteins, members of my late mother's family. I had concluded that none of them had ventured further than the Americas or Israel, and not voluntarily at that, in the face of the Holocaust.

Several months had to pass before my immediate reply yielded answers. Then, hard on the heels of a national postal strike, a more detailed report from Sydney arrived, telling me of descendants of a brother of my great grandfather who had arrived in Australia in 1865. The expression "branching out" had a new meaning...

Now I learned that the two families had emigrated from the same town, that they were related by marriage and that living descendants of both families could apparently still be found in Sydney!

The Australian Jewish Historical Society in Sydney spared no effort on my behalf in finding numerous documents. The secretary sent me charts with names of dozens of relatives, locating copies of several of my newly found family's marriage and death records, some from The Great Synagogue in Sydney. I received copies with exact details from the Shipping master's office of Isidor Simonstein's arrival in Australia: "May 9th, 1865, aboard the 854 ton ship 'Dora', 28 crew, 13 passengers, master Robert McCarty, from London to Sydney"; (a stormy voyage at best...).

A veritable genealogical mine of information in one fell swoop, the crowning result being the name and address of one of that family's last living descendants in Sydney!

Through sheer luck I was so fortunate to add over fifty new names to my family. I was lead to discover one entire unknown branch of my family who was spared the Holocaust because 155 years ago one ancestor thought to seek his fortune elsewhere.

In closing, I must mention one interesting postscript: When I proudly reported my sensational finds to elderly cousins in Chile and New York, lo and behold, I set off a spark in their memory. Yes indeed, they remembered now that in the 1930's they had both tried in desperation and in vain to obtain affidavits from possible relatives in Australia, descendants of an uncle who was rumored to have gone to the island continent a long, long time ago and was never heard of again.

My probing fifty years later had rekindled their memory...
Surname and Place Index to "In Search Of"
This index was compiled from search ads placed in SHEM TOV, covering the period 1988-1991.
(sp - Spring, su - Summer, fa - Fall, wi - Winter. Example: su89 - SHEM TOV issue of Summer 1989)
For inquiries refer to relevant issue of SHEM TOV or the alphabetical list of contributors on page 10.

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Surname and Place Index to "In Search Of"

This index was compiled from search ads placed in SHEM TOV, covering the period 1988-1991.
(sp = Spring, su = Summer, fa = Fall, wi = Winter. Example: su89 = SHEM TOV issue of summer 1989)

For inquiries refer to relevant issue of SHEM TOV or the alphabetical list of contributors on page 10.

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Miriam Weiner

Next came "show-and-tell": Ms. Weiner held up books like "Where Once We Walked", "The Ghetto Anthology", "The Dictionary of Jewish Names", "The Black Book of Poland", "The Einsatzgruppen Reports", a report from the Yad Vashem Archives. All had been plucked from the shelves of her 2,000-volume library in her home in New Jersey.

Briefly, she explained the purpose and practicality of each book, then ended her talk and took questions from the audience. These had to do with computer software (she recommends Roots III!), the availability of records from the Austro-Hungarian Empire ("good"); the location of a particular town that someone had long been trying to locate (referring to "Where Once We Walked," she found it within seconds); the date European Jews were first legally compelled to adopt surnames (1787); and how far back one can go in tracing a genealogy (no easy answer).

After two prolonged, well-deserved ovations from the audience, Ms. Weiner, by this time surrounded, began arranging her folders of hand-outs. "All right. Anyone with roots in Argentina? Argentina?" she called out, like a fruitmonger at a farmer's market. "Denmark? Yugoslavia? France? Switzerland?" Thus she went, calling names of many nations once we walked, stopping after each to dispense her goods to the needy.

By all accounts, this was an exciting talk. There was electricity in the air generated by Ms. Weiner's knowledge and her willingness to share that knowledge. Several people told me they made significant breakthroughs in their research as a result of her talk. Our society also gained twenty-four new members - welcome all - a reflection of the increasing interest in Jewish genealogy in Toronto.

One of our new members is a cousin of mine with whom I have been working for two years to computerize the thousands of names on our mutual family tree. "I had no idea of all the sources of information available out there," he told me after the lecture. "I've been telling you this for ages," I responded. But apparently he never got the message until November 7th...

Did You Know...?

In Ontario...

- In 1870, only 1/5 of all deaths, 1/3 of all births, and 2/3 of all marriages were reported to the office of the Registrar-General.
- By 1880-81, it was calculated that 90% of marriages, 70% of births, and 60% of deaths were being reported.
- In 1891, however, birth returns were down so far from estimated birth rates in one city (Ottawa) that some contemporary observers considered the statistics to be worthless.
- As late as 1893, the inspector appointed under the Vital Statistics Act concluded that registration of vital events in many communities was still a "dead letter"; local clerks feared in some cases to prosecute persons who failed to make returns. The deaths of young children were said to be among the least often reported events.

It was only in the late 19th century that a series of legislative changes began to improve the reliability of the vital statistics returns. These included:

- the 1881 Ontario Registration Act, which required cemetery caretakers to advise divisional registrars of any burials made without death certificates.
- the 1896 Ontario Registration Act, which forbade clergy, undertakers or cemeteries to bury a body without first obtaining a death certificate.
- an 1897 amendment to the Registration Act, which required physicians to report births which they attended, and deaths where they occurred.
- the 1919 Ontario Registration Act, which required physicians to report births within 48 hours and deaths within 24 hours with causes, within 24 hours.

Onomastic:

(...adj. [Greek: onomatikos. of naming]: "of or pertaining to, or consisting of, names or a name." - WEBSTER'S New Collegiate Dictionary.)

Fascinating reading and essential to Jewish genealogy...

This is the last in a series of columns, retrieved, correlated and translated by Peter Cullman from this veritable mine of information: "Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft fur Judische Familienforschung". Though more than six decades have passed since a group of dedicated scholars in Berlin, headed by Dr. A. Cz Carroll, began the study of genealogy in all earnest, there is essentially nothing new in our quest - we still search for the origin and meaning of our names, the answers may only sometimes be forgotten...

Throughout the fourteen years of that quarterly publication, members were invited to submit questions and answers, and as we may see from time to time, the published answers were enlightening, though occasionally confusing and not always totally satisfactory...

Question Nr. 190/ Vol. VIII, March 1932.

How can the name MASCHKE be explained, found particularly in Westprussia as a Jewish name? The derivation from Moschko = a diminutive of Mosche, does not appear convincing since the name also occurs among non-Jews.

M. Peiser, Stettin

Answer Nr. 1/Vol VIII, June/September 1932

The name MASCHKE among Jews is indeed only a pet name for the name Mosche, patterned after the Polish name Moschko, meaning 'little Moses'. The similarity to the east German name Maschke is purely coincidental; although also slavic in origin, it is a diminutive of THOMAS. From the name of the Christian Saint Thomas the names Tomaschke and Damaschke were derived, eliminating the first syllable "To" and "Do", because the accent rested on the second syllable.

The best known analogy is the name Meyer. The German Meyer stems from the Latin word Major = a landowner's steward, a leaseholder or a manager of a Tavern, the Jewish word is a derivation of "Meir", the Hebrew word for luminary.

Heinrich Loewe, Berlin

Answer Nr. 2/Vol VIII, June/September 1932

I tend to assume that MASCHKE stems from the Hebrew and means a licensed victualler, a publican.

Dr. Nathan, Hamburg

Answer Nr. 3/Vol VIII, December 1932

Contrary to answers in the previous issue it appears to me that MASCHKE stems from the aramaic "maschcho", analogous in the Syrian, Arabic and Assyrian usage to "maschku" = skin, pelt from an animal. In my opinion this does not represent anything specifically Jewish, it is rather a part of the Semitic vocabulary.

Ernst Lewy, Berlin

In search of...

SHEM TOV's search column in which readers may advertise their personal field of research in terms of names and localities they are seeking, thus discovering others in pursuit of similar or identical families.

K-1/W191
Kranz, Sharlene
4336 Albermarle Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016 U.S.A.

I would like to find my cousins Mel, Marlene, and Carol GARDNER, children of Rose KRAZT GARDNER and Sigmund GARDNER.

Any information, please call collect: (202) 363-7910

The name game

There is a story in almost every Jewish surname. Toronto lawyer FRED M. CATZMAN has been researching their origin over the past few years.

[The following article is a reprint by kind permission of Mr. Fred M. Catzman and The Canadian Jewish News.]

> TROSTER <

Tragedy was inflicted upon the Jews throughout its history in inordinately massive measure. The rate of mortality was disproportionately heightened by continual persecution and rose to peaks through the butchery of the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the pogroms in Eastern Europe and the Holocaust.

The extraordinary incidence of bereavement elicited compassion by fellow Jews for the victims of these excesses. Menachem Ovel (consolation of the mourner) was elevated to a mitzvah.

Nachem, which is the Hebrew word for comfort and consolation, is at the root of a variety of given names such as Nechemia (the prophet Nehemiah), Nachum, Nachman, Tanchum and Menachem.

When Jews were required to adopt surnames and where the adoption of a Hebrew name was forbidden (with a view to breaking up the identity of the Jew in isolation from the rest of the community), the German translation of consolation (trost) served as a substitute.

Menachem (a person who consoles) became Troster (Troster), its German equivalent.

The surname of the celebrated violinist Yehudi Menuhin is a variation of Menachem.

The People Finder

At the recent Third International Seminar on Jewish Genealogy in Salt Lake City a logical extension of the "Family Finder" was introduced: "The Jewish Genealogical People Finder". Rather than collecting surnames and towns, JGPF will collect entire computerized family trees, comprising data about individual members, i.e., a person's name, sex, date of birth, place of birth, date of death, place of death, father's name, mother's name, spouse(s)'s name. Diskettes in GEDCOM format shall be submitted to a data base in New Jersey. Distribution of the data base will be by way of microfiche, each containing ca. 15,000 entries, available at $1.50 per fiche, there is no charge to submit family trees to JGPF.

More information and details in the next issue of SHEM TOV.
SHEM TOV, the quarterly newsletter, published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada, Toronto Division, is mailed free to members: single and back issues cost $4.00. Membership fees are $30.00 per calendar year. The Society was founded in 1985 and currently has more than 120 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 Glencarin 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 the Jewish community of the possibility of tracing their ancestors; to foster an ongoing interest in our heritage; to encourage the sharing of research techniques and to disseminate information on Jewish 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.

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Typewritten contributions of notes, book reviews or feature articles of interest to readers of SHEM TOV are welcome; all contributions will become the property of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada and will be subject to review and editing if they are published. Material should reach the editor by or before the last day of January, April, July, October, addressed to: BILL GLADSTONE, 195 Vaughn St., Toronto/Ont., M6C 2T4, Canada. (416) 656-9246.

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