Western researchers have recently gained access to many important collections of Judaica in libraries and archives in the former Soviet Union that were “terra incognita for 75 years,” says the head librarian of New York’s YIVO Institute of Jewish Research.

Since last August’s abortive Soviet coup, archival and library officials in various former Soviet republics are co-operating to an unprecedented degree with interested parties from the West, Zachary Baker said recently at the University of Toronto. “It’s not a question any more of gaining access. The question is how to get at this material now that the doors are open.”

The haste with which many Western individuals and institutional representatives are scrambling to get at the material “resembles the panic of a gold rush,” he said. “One element of this panic certainly has to do with a sense of precariousness. The door that was so recently opened could just as easily slam shut again.”

YIVO, a world-famous institute of Jewish studies founded in Vilna in 1925, has been attempting to co-ordinate the efforts of numerous parties trying to get at the untold millions of books and documents, many unique, which provide a wealth of information about the Jews of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union before, during and after the Holocaust.

Baker said YIVO is still attempting to negotiate an agreement with Lithuanian officials that would see the return of the part of its collection that the Nazis confiscated in 1942, which was presumed lost until it resurfaced in Lithuanian archives in 1988.

While in Toronto, Baker also spoke to a small gathering at the Robarts Library on the topic of Yizkor books.

ABOUT THE YIVO INSTITUTE


YIVO will respond to concise queries about its holdings, provided they are accompanied by an SASE or equivalent. Write to: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1048 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10028.
Volume VIII  No. 1

SHEM TOV is published quarterly by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada and is distributed free to members. The cost of a subscription is $4 each. Annual dues are $30 per calendar year. Contributions of articles of interest are invited. Please submit material to Bill Gladstone, 185 Vaughan Rd, Apt. 7, Toronto M6C 2M4, or to our Society's postal box. All contributions are subject to editing and become the property of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada.

For subscriptions or changes of address please contact Peter Cullman, P.O. Box 446, Station A, Willowdale, Ontario M2N 6T1.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada was founded in 1985 and has about 140 members. Membership costs $30 per calendar year. Meetings are held September to June, usually on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencarina Avenue, Toronto. Details are always welcome. Details are usually announced in the Canadian Jewish News.

The goals of the Society are to provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and information through meetings, outings, workshops and guest lectures, and thereby to promote an awareness of genealogy within the Jewish community of Canada. The Society is affiliated with the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto and has applied for status as a non-profit charitable organization.

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NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome these new members to our Society:

LESLEI KELMAN  SINAI PITTER
MELVYN A. STEIN  RICHARD ULSTER
BRYON WHITE

AT OUR MEETINGS

Wednesday December 18, 1991: Two members reported on their research. Dr. Rolf Lederer presented "Genealogical Gems," a slide-show in which he displayed old documents and photographs and explained how they were acquired. Bill Gladstone presented "Evolution of a Family Tree," a slide-show which detailed how he uncovered the name of the Russian-Polish shtetl where his great-grandfather was born.

Wednesday January 29: In commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, Rabbi Yehiel Benayon of Magen David Congregation, Toronto, presented "A Capsule History of Sephardic Jewry (For Genealogists)." After Rabbi Benayon's talk, a one-page bibliography of genealogical resources pertaining to Sephardic Jewry was handed out. (For a limited time, complimentary copies are available by writing the Secretary, JGS Canada; please enclose an SASE or equivalent.)

Sunday March 1: Chicago-area Jewish genealogist Judith Frazin spoke on "Unlocking the Secrets of 19th-Century Polish-Language Civil Documents." Her visit was co-sponsored by the Ontario Genealogical Society of Ontario. (See article.)

Tuesday March 24: Visit to Archives, Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto, hosted by Dr. Stephen Spelsman.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday April 5: The 2ND ANNUAL JEWISH GENEALOGY WORKSHOP gets under way with a full roster of speakers, displays, demonstrations, seminars and trouble-shooting sessions. Special guests include computer genealogist Lynn Morgan and Robarts map room librarian Michael Gold. Talks are to cover a diverse range of subjects from Jewish Surnames to Getting the Most from the Mormon Family History Library. Full report in next issue.

Wednesday April 29: Guest speaker Henry Abramson on "Jews In the Ukrainian Crucible: Social Upheaval and Demographic Change, 1860-1992." 8 p.m. sharp (7.30 for earlybirds), Shaarei Shomayim.

Wednesday May 27: Program to be announced.

Sunday May 31: ROSELAWN BLITZ. Volunteers needed to help transcribe Roselawn Cemetery. Call 588-2318. (See article.)

Wednesday June 24: Annual general meeting. Election of new executive. Program to be announced.

Sunday July 26 to Thursday July 31: ELEVENTH SUMMER SEMINAR ON JEWISH GENEALOGY, Vista International Hotel, Manhattan. Five days of workshops, lectures, field trips, socializing and hands-on research. Titled "The New York Jewish Experience," there will be programs featuring the long history of Jews in New York City. For further information write: Jewish Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 6398, New York NY 10128.
Four Sources In Anglo-Jewish Research

by Bill Gladstone

Mr. Charles Tucker, a well-spoken British gentlemen with an apparently encyclopedic mind, conducted a Family History Workshop in London England recently which I had the good fortune to attend. About a dozen people sat around a table in a children's classroom, in turn describing an aspect of his or her genealogical research. After each, Tucker, who is the chief archivist to the Chief Rabbi of Britain (and who was filling in at the meeting for the absent David Jacobs), suggested potential avenues for each researcher to explore.

Held every six weeks or so, these workshops have been the only regularly-scheduled activity relating to Jewish genealogy in all of Britain. Astonishingly, despite a metropolitan Jewish population of about 300,000 and a national population half that again, there is at this writing no Jewish genealogical society in London -- a regrettable situation that Tucker and others in the community are working to rectify very soon.

RABBINICAL RECORDS

After the meeting, I provided Tucker with details of my grandmother's parents' marriage in 1880, my grandfather's parents' marriage in 1894, and my great-great-grandfather's second marriage in 1915; all had occurred in London.

Several days later, I visited him at his office in the Beth Din of the Chief Rabbi, and received a rabbinical record of each of these events, providing a wealth of genealogical information. Two of the documents gave the name of the Polish towns my ancestors had left in coming to England. The third, which to my disappointment indicated my great-great-grandfather's birthplace merely as "Russia-Poland," nonetheless listed the name of his father, which I had not previously known.

Rabbinical records are different than the civil registrations which British law requires. For instance, the civil marriage certificate for my great-grandparents' marriage in 1880 provides their names, ages, respective marital status (i.e. "bachelor" & "spinster"), addresses, and the names and occupations of their respective fathers.

The rabbinical record of the same event offers a great deal of complementary information, including "native of" (i.e. birthplace) and names of the bridegroom's brothers -- ostensibly in case the bride is widowed and seeks to remarry.

Apparently, the rabbinical records were not always filled out in full, and spaces were often left blank. Even so, they are potentially an excellent source of information.

According to Dr. Jeremy Phillips of the Beth Din, the approximately 240,000 marriage authorizations issued since 1880 and 350,000 burial authorizations issued since 1896 state the parties' place or country of birth.

Another genealogical source is the so-called certificates of evidence, which are immensely valuable, Phillips explains, "since they refer for the most part to people who were never naturalized and thus provide evidence as to their place of origin and/or marriage abroad which is recorded nowhere else."

In certain instances, according to Phillips, the Chief Rabbi has been required to confirm an individual's Jewish status before a marriage. "Sometimes it is necessary to investigate an applicant's..."
maternal line of descent for five to six generations before satisfactory evidence is uncovered," he relates.

If you wish a search of these records, write for full details as to cost to: Mr. Charles Tucker, Chief Archivist, Court of the Chief Rabbi, Adler House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HP.

ST. CATHERINES HOUSE

The fabled St. Catherines House is the home of the General Register Office. Most British births, marriages and deaths since 1837 have been registered and indexed. The indices are contained in thousands of heavy quarterly volumes that sit on metal shelves lining the large and usually very busy main floor of St. Catherines House.

The books are colour-coded: green for births, red for marriages, black for deaths. Counters alongside the shelves are usually filled with researchers in a noisy frenzy; pulling books down, flipping through them hurriedly, perhaps making notations, then reshelving them and taking the next in the series. When the sought-after reference is found, a form is filled out and a fee of £5.50 paid. Three days later, a certificate may be picked up or mailed.

Microfilmed British civil registration indices are available at the Mormon Family History Library in Etobicoke only until 1906 for births, 1903 for marriages and deaths. In London, I found references to two important family events in 1911 and 1915 and ordered the appropriate certificates, which were mailed to my Toronto address at no additional charge.

St. Catherines House is located at 10 Kingsway, London WC2B 6JP. Certificates may be ordered by mail by writing to: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, General Register Office, Postal Application Section, Smedley Hydro, Southport, Merseyside PR8 2HH.

A word of caution: Researchers who are able to visit in person are clearly given preferential treatment to those who order certificates by mail, since the cost for the latter is roughly twice as much.

For years, I’ve ordered British certificates through a London gentlemen recommended by the Mormon Library in Etobicoke. Dougald McKeown charges £7.50 per certificate for prompt, accurate delivery. Write to: Mr. Dougald McKeown, 180 Fortis Green Rd., Muswell Hill, London N10 3QV.

A short walk from St. Catherines House brings one to palatial Somerset House, where the public has access to a divorce registry and all British wills and probates since 1858.

SOCIETY OF GENEALOGISTS

Founded in 1911 to promote the study of genealogy and heraldry, the Society of Genealogists maintains a unique library filled with parish registers, family histories, London and regional directories, a card index of surnames, collections of newspaper cuttings, and much else. Of special interest to Jewish researchers are several special collections including the extensive Hyamson papers.

London city directories from the 19th century are not terribly comprehensive. Many list only the male heads of households, and only if he is employed in a reputable business. Others list only employees of government and crown corporations. The earliest London city directory I found at the library was dated 1839. None of the directories I consulted showed any trace of my ancestors whose addresses were well-established through census records.

Fees for non-members’ use of the library are substantial: £2.50 for an hour, £6 for three and a half hours, £8 for a full day. The Society is located at 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London EC1M 7BA.

ANGLO-JEWISH BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compiled by Charles Tucker, a 30-page bibliography of resources for Anglo-Jewish genealogy and history is to be deposited into our Society’s collection at the North York Central Library.

“Lost” Dutch archives found

Seized by the Nazis during their occupation of Holland in World War II, the long-lost archives of many Dutch Jewish institutions have been discovered in Moscow.

First stored in Berlin, the archives were moved to Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1943 to escape Allied bombings. They were found in a so-called “special archives” in Moscow established to contain material retrieved from the Nazis.

Russian authorities have promised to return the material.

[Source: Canadian Jewish News]
Our Cemetery Committee's Progress
At Roselawn

by Gert Rogers and Bill Gladstone

Dating from about 1903, Roselawn Cemetery is perhaps the fourth oldest of the dozen or so Jewish cemeteries in and around Toronto. Situated in the midtown Jewish neighborhood of Forest Hill, it contains thousands of graves in 22 separate sections, each administered by a separate synagogue, landsmanshaften, burial society or other Jewish organization. While burials still occur there, most of the sections are completely or nearly filled. For that reason, and because it is centrally located, we picked Roselawn as the best place to start the fieldwork of our Cemetery Project.

Collecting Existing Records

Our first self-assigned task was to collect existing records. To our disappointment, we soon discovered that no central authority administers this or most other Jewish cemeteries in Toronto. To obtain burial records for the 22 sections, we would have to contact 22 organizations.

In tracking down these organizations, we discovered that some were no longer in existence and that others had lost their records in fire and flood. Many generously granted us access to their maps and records -- which typically contained the names of the deceased and no more, and were thus of mixed value for genealogical purposes.

Members of one group, the Judean Benevolent Society, responded nobly to our request: they transcribed their section on their own. We wish other groups would follow this golden example.

Our Methodology

Last spring we began to transcribe tombstones. At first we recorded everything that appeared on each stone, including descriptions like "Beloved Mother, Grandmother, Sister and Aunt," poignant couplets and poems in Hebrew.

We soon abandoned this meticulous approach after calculating that at the rate we were proceeding it would take approximately 150 years to complete the cemeteries of Ontario. By then we figured we'd be too worn out to attempt the rest of Canada!

Reluctantly, we limited our collection of data to the following: full name of the deceased; name of the father of the deceased (usually in Hebrew); dates of birth (if shown) and death, or age in years; birthplace, if indicated; and any genealogically relevant symbols or indications of tribe (Cohen or Levi).

Over the summer, up to a dozen volunteers converged on Roselawn each Sunday morning and worked for three or four hours. The fieldwork wound down in late October, when it became too cold to continue. So far we've transcribed about one-third of the cemetery. Volunteers are currently working to enter the collected data into a computer. We're using the winter and early spring to plan our work for next season.

Roselawn Blitz on May 31ST

We are convinced that many people in the community support our project wholeheartedly but are unable to help us on a weekly basis throughout the summer.

If you believe as we do in the importance of preserving the names of Toronto's Jewish community, please give us a few hours of your time on May 31st, 1992, morning or afternoon.

On that day, we hope that well-organized teams of volunteers will go into Roselawn and transcribe many of the markers that lie between us and the completion of our project.

As a volunteer, you will be shown our method of transcribing, then assigned a specific row. Assistance will be readily available if you encounter a problematic or illegible stone. Knowledge of Hebrew is not essential, since our committee members will go back over a row and fill in just the Hebrew words.

Please join us for the Roselawn Blitz and help us complete our important mission.

Gert Rogers is chairperson of the Cemetery Project.

ROSELAWN BLITZ DAY
SUNDAY MAY 31ST
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

PLEASE CALL 588-2318.
"Ridiculous"
Jewish surnames

Maria Theresa, the Empress who ruled the vast Habsburg Empire for 40 difficult years between 1740 and 1780, has left a favorable impression with historians. However, non-Jewish sources usually do not reveal that the fervently Catholic monarch intensely disliked Jews and insisted that a screen be placed between her and any Jewish merchant, banker or businessman with whom she was obliged to come into contact.

By contrast, her son and successor, Joseph II ("The Tolerant"), who ruled until 1791, sought to alleviate the squalor and suffering of the empire's ghettoized Jews by aiding their assimilation into society. On July 5, 1787, Joseph's well-intentioned "Edict of Toleration" required all Jews in the realm to adopt German family names.

Although some Jewish families had been using acceptable surnames for centuries, this was the first time that all Jews in a region were required by law to do so. Over the next century, many other European localities adopted this requirement for Jews.

Some sources contend that as many as two-thirds of the new Jewish surnames were derived from place names. As Ben Zion Kaganoff outlines in his "Dictionary of Jewish Names and Their History" (1977), names were also derived from occupations, Hebrew acronyms and abbreviations, patronymics and matronymics, personal characteristics and signs that adorned houses in the ghetto.

Some names also derived from the imaginations of civic authorities responsible for registering new names. Just as Ellis Island customs officials were notorious for arrogantly renaming immigrants with difficult surnames, so too their early counterparts in 18th-century Europe apparently took occasional glee in attaching the most prosaic or ridiculous family names to the intimidated persons who stood before them.

Borchensius describes the quandary some Jews felt themselves at having to make such a momentous decision on such short notice. Borchensius writes:

"There were towns where the new regulations were introduced precipitately and brutally. The Jews were summoned before a commission which decided the case. The small bewildered frightened ghetto Jew trembled when the question what did he want to be called was roughly barked at him. If he did not have the answer pat, the official in question, usually a non-commissioned officer, decreed what the Jew and his family had to call themselves.

"These sergeants were not always noted for delicate feelings, if anything they were eager to show their power. So they often threw the Jew out through the door with a name like Eselkopf, Ochsenschwanz, Temperaturwechsel, Stinker, Bettelarm or Lumpe -- Ass's head, Oxtail, Change of Temperature, Stinker, Pauper or Scoundrel. Railing and Butterfly were two of the best names.

"At a trial in Vienna in 1787 some witnesses were heard whose names spoke of such treatment. What else can we make of them -- Powder ingredient, Engine wire and Nutcracker? Many of these caricatures of names have clung to the families. But the families' achievements have wiped out the odious wound inflicted on them. The Heilbuth's were named after a fish, the halibut, but no one gives it a thought today."

It is ironic to consider that many a Jewish surname has survived despite having originated centuries ago in the momentary amusement of a mean-spirited civic official long since forgotten.

New censuses available
in U.S., Britain

The National Archives in Washington, D.C. released the U.S. census for 1920 in March.

The 1920 census is thus the latest in a series of American censuses, taken at 10-year intervals since 1790, to be available to the public. The main exception is the 1890 census, most of which was destroyed by fire.

The 1920 census contains a wealth of data, including address; name; relationship to family head; sex; race; age; marital status; year of immigration if foreign born; whether naturalized and in what year; school attendance; literacy; birthplace of person and parents; mother tongue of foreign-

(continued on next page)
of Interest

(Continued from previous page)

born; ability to speak English; occupation, industry and class of worker; home owned or rented; if owned, whether mortgaged; and financial data pertaining to mortgaged property.

To protect individual privacy, personal census data are restricted for 72 years in the United States, 100 years in Britain. In January, British authorities released the census for 1891, precipitating a mad rush by thousands of die-hard genealogists.

Both the U.S. and British censuses are available through the Mormon Family History Library. To determine when the most recently released censuses of either country will be available, telephone the Etobicoke branch of the Mormon Library at 621-4607.

For further information about the 1920 U.S. census, contact the Reference Services Branch of the National Archives at (202) 501-5400 or write: Reference Services Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C. 20408.

New developments in the Ukraine

Well-known New Jersey-based Jewish genealogist Miriam Weiner, who lectured before our Society last November, has issued a two-page press release outlining her remarkable progress in attaining access to Ukrainian libraries and archives containing Jewish holdings.

Weiner, who visited the Ukraine four times last year, reports that she has achieved significant signed agreements with several archival institutions.

One agreement, already signed, calls for Judaic material in the Lviv (Lwow) Historical Archives, pertaining to Lviv, Tarnopol and Stanislav oblasts, to be microfilmed this year and deposited in an American archives or library.

Under the terms of another agreement, researchers may soon be able to apply for documents by mail and be permitted to visit various Ukrainian archives and libraries individually or in groups.

An inventory of Jewish holdings in Ukrainian archives may be published as early as next year, Weiner reports.

The press release also describes the "Routes to Roots" tour of the Ukraine that Weiner is planning this July along the lines of her previous tours for Jewish genealogists in Poland.

Many Ukrainian archives and libraries have evidently agreed to admit tour participants and extend "the opportunity to obtain xerox copies of documents (pertaining to one's own family only), and photo-video opportunities where it does not disrupt the archive's routine."

On her last visit to the Ukraine, where all four of her grandparents were born, Weiner apparently broke new ground by attaining photocopies of more than 60 civil documents relating to her relatives. Dating from 1840, the documents were located in the Pribuki branch of the Chernigov Oblast Archives.

Her Ukrainian "Routes to Roots" tour will include visits to Kiev, Lviv, and Warsaw, Poland. Tour dates are July 7 to 21, 1992. For further information, write to: Miriam Weiner, 136 Sandpiper Key, Secaucus, N.J. 07094.

Weiner regrets that she cannot respond to individual mail or telephone requests for information about the availability of records for a specific locality.

"The small bewildered frightened ghetto Jew trembled when the question what did he want to be called was roughly barked at him."

Avotaynu publisher to Speak at NGS Conference

"Recent Developments In Jewish Genealogy" and "Shtetl Geography: The Changing Face of Central and Eastern Europe" are two talks that Gary Mokotoff is scheduled to present soon in Jacksonville, Florida.

Mokotoff, publisher of Avotaynu, the international journal of Jewish genealogy, is one of dozens of speakers scheduled for the 1992 National Genealogical Society Conference in conjunction with the Second International Congress on Family History.

In all, nearly 200 talks will be presented in the four days from April 29 to May 2, 1992.

Topics are wide-ranging and deal with revolutionary war records, computers, the U.S. census, Germany since reunification, genealogical methodology, genetics and much more.

For further information, write to: 1992 NGS Conference, 4527 - 17th St. N., Arlington, VA 22207-2399. Fax: (703) 525-0052.
Frazin visits Toronto, unlocks secrets of old Polish documents

A sizeable crowd attended Judith Frazin’s informative talk on Sunday March 1 at the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue. The talk was entitled, “How To Unlock The Secrets of 19th-Century Polish-Language Civil Records.”

Frazin, a Chicago-area Spanish teacher and an accomplished Jewish genealogist, walked the audience through a 19th-century Polish-language birth record, section by section, pointing out the key words that act as section indicators and the information that usually follows these mileposts.

For genealogical novices and those unfamiliar with 19th-century Polish-language civil documents, she explained the process through which Polish records are available through the Mormon LDS Family History Library. (The Etobicoke branch of the library can be reached at 621-4607.)

The program was jointly sponsored by our Society and the Ontario Genealogical Society, whose co-ordinator, Toronto-area genealogist Brian Gilchrist, brought greetings.

Judith Frazin is the author of “A Translation Guide to 19th-Century Polish-Language Civil-Registration Documents: (Birth, Marriage and Death Records).” The book, which received a favorable review in SHEM TOV last September, should be useful to anyone researching their Polish roots, Jewish or non-Jewish.

It is available from The Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois, c/o 1025 Antique Lane, Northbrook IL 60062 U.S. The cost for Canadian mail orders (including postage) is US$24.50.

Several members of our Society are compiling a glossary of additional words and phrases that Frazin’s book doesn’t cover. Those with contributions are requested to notify the Editor.

Survivors list, Yizkor books, among materials at Holocaust Memorial Center

Founded in 1985, the Holocaust Memorial and Education Center of Toronto, located at 4600 Bathurst Street, 4th floor has a growing collection of Holocaust research materials.

Included are about a dozen Yizkor books involving the following localities: Beben, Belgium, Suwalk, Theresienstadt, Ulm, Wierzmin, Yindzoiv, Zborower and Ziglembia. The Center also has a copy of the large Gedunkbuch listing German Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

According to director Pnina Spetgang, most other books in the Center’s 400-volume library date from 1980 or after.

The Center recently acquired the National Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, a publication that lists approximately 10,000 survivors by name, town, and place of incarceration during the war. It was issued by the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

In responding to written or telephoned requests for information, staff at the Center will send out a photocopied page or two by mail. The phone number is 635-2883, ext. 144.

Because its mandate is to commemorate and to educate the public about the Holocaust, the Center is busiest each year around Yom Ha-Shoah which falls on April 30 this year. Another busy time is Holocaust Education Week each November when it co-ordinates many educational programs throughout the community.

The Center co-sponsored a joint program with our Society last fall, when American genealogist Miriam Weiner addressed close to 200 people at one of our regular meetings. The program was offered as part of the 11th Annual Holocaust Education Week.
Books

“Encyclopedia Genealogica”

“Encyclopedia of Jewish Genealogy, Volume I: Sources in the United States and Canada.”
Edited by Arthur Kurzweil and Miriam Weiner.
Large format, 226 pages; published by Jason Aronson Inc., N.J.; $39 in Canada.

“Between 1880 and 1914, almost three million Jews left Eastern Europe, representing the most extensive migration in Jewish history since the expulsion of the Jews from Spain at the end of the 15th century.”

Simple and illuminating, this sentence opens Jurgen Sielemann’s worthy article on Jewish emigration through Hamburg in the recently-published first volume of Encyclopedia of Jewish Genealogy. The volume, the first of a proposed trilogy, offers numerous insights that, similarly, put the migrations of our 19th-century ancestors into the wider context of Jewish history.

There are many praises to be sung about this volume. Focusing on North American resources, it features numerous articles by luminaries like Kurzweil and Weiner, and offers much information about resources in some 25 American states and five Canadian provinces. The text, except perhaps when listing minor resources in obscure places, is sometimes compelling, occasionally sparkling. If you're interested in the subject, you'll find it hard to put down.

The first chapter, which deals with American “Immigration and Naturalization,” provides clear instructions on how to attain passenger lists, naturalization records and other genealogical data from the U.S. government. It also offers articles on Hamburg and Galveston, Texas – “The Other Ellis Island”. For the many members of our Society who possess at least one ancestor who sailed initially to a U.S. port, this material is essential.

The second chapter provides a state-by-state listing of U.S. resources. Skip the entries on Omaha, Oregon and Oklahoma City if you like, but don't miss New York, Washington or Utah. The Leo Baeck Institute, the New York Public Library, YIVO and other shrines of our specialty are given the thorough treatment they deserve. Daniel Schlyter’s summary of pertinent resources at the Mormon Family History Library in Utah and Suzan Fisher Wynne’s treatment of Washington DC and the Library of Congress are particularly good.

The third chapter handles Canada; unfortunately, like the country, it seems somewhat fragmented. It begins with an informative article on “Sources for the Study of Jewish Family History in Canada” by archivist Lawrence Tapper of the National Archives. There are several short essays, including a book review by Dr. Rolf Lederer of our Society and a summary of Montreal resources by YIVO head librarian Zachary M. Baker, who worked at the Jewish Public Library there for six years. More information about Canadian resources is presented here than anywhere else. What’s missing, however, is a balanced overview.

The National Archives, Ontario Archives and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society receive generous treatment. So does the Toronto Board of Education, which maintains old school records that may provide clues about your grandfather's family when he was a child. There is even a mention of the Toronto Records Center in Markham, which apparently keeps century-old banking records. But the awesome Robarts Library is dismissed in one sentence, and the North York Public Library, with its passenger lists and other pertinent holdings, is entirely ignored.

Among the book’s 17 appendices are listings of international Jewish genealogical and historical societies. Other appendices contain an index of Hamburg passenger lists available through the Mormon Family History Library, and French, German, Hungarian and Polish Jewish records in Salt Lake City. Many of us have cause to refer to these items frequently.

With interest in Jewish genealogy on the rise, the Encyclopedia appears at an auspicious moment. It is the first comprehensive treatment of the subject since Dan...
Russian translation manual does the trick

"Russian Language Documents from Russian Poland: A Translation Manual For Genealogists." By Jonathan D. Shea. Large format, paperback; 73 pages; published by Genun.

In 1868, as a consequence of a failed Polish uprising three years before, an edict from the Russian Tzar came into effect stipulating that civil registration documents in Russian-Poland were henceforth to be written in Russian, not Polish.

Russian continued to be the language in which all Polish births, marriages and deaths were registered until the re-emergence of Poland as a political entity in 1918.


Frazin's model translation manual provides a chart of the Russian cyrillic alphabet but no guidance for translating Russian-language documents, which after all was entirely beyond its scope. For that, I tried Jonathan Shea's translation manual, which first appeared in 1989.

The book contains chapters on the Russian alphabet; expressions of time, dates and age; first names and surnames; birth, death and marriage records; even a section on translating passports and other Russian government documents. As well, it provides numerous sample documents, translated line by line.

For most of us, the first task in translating Russian documents is to learn the handwritten alphabet and how it may have been abused by a sloppy civil clerk in a hurry.

The best way to do this is through minute examination of the documents provided in Shea's manual. First, look closely at a sample document; write down what you think each letter represents, then compare your version with the translation provided. Through repetition of this arduous exercise, you should eventually master the cyrillic alphabet.

After practicing the above exercise using Shea's book for several weeks, I felt ready to search the post-1868 civil registration microfilms (available through the Mormon Family History Library) for the records I wanted. Scanning the indexes with painstaking care, I eventually recognized the names I was after in their Russian spellings. Shea's guide helped me make sense of the family documents I acquired.

Shea's translation manual does not compare favorably with Frazin's. Using it can be frustrating. Its vocabulary lists are scattered throughout the book and its two-page glossary at the back is inadequate. However, it gets the job done. Without this book, I may have had to hire a translator.

"Russian Language Documents from Russian Poland: A Translation Manual For Genealogists" is available from Genealogy Unlimited Inc., P.O. Box 537, Orem, UT 84059-0537 U.S. The price is $US12 plus $US4 postage and handling to Canada.

MULTILINGUAL TRANSLATION GUIDE AVAILABLE

A foreign-language educator, Jonathan Shea is president of the Polish Genealogical Society of Connecticut. He and William F. Hoffman recently co-authored a 200-page book that displays, analyzes and translates documents in German, Swedish, Russian, Czech, Polish, Italian, French, Spanish and Latin.

"Following the Paper Trail: A Multilingual Translation Guide" also contains brief sections on Hungarian, Lithuanian, Romanian and Portuguese. The price is $US25. For more information, write to William F. Hoffman, 60 Old Northville Rd., New Milford CT, 06776-2245.
Lithuanian Yiskor Book now available in English


The definitive history of the fate of the Lithuanian Jewry is contained in a quartet of volumes written in Hebrew and Yiddish.

These books appear as nos. 194 and 195 in Zachary Baker’s list of yiskor books [Toledot, Fall 1979/Winter 1980] Each is a two-volume set. No. 194 consists of “Lite Bukh Eins” (“Lithuania, Book One”), by Sudarsky, Katzenellenbogen and Kissin, N.Y., 1951, and “Lite Bukh Zwei” (“Lithuania, Book Two”), edited by Leikowicz, Tel Aviv, 1965. No. 195 is entitled “Yahadut Lita” (“Lithuanian Jewry”); the first volume is by N. Goren, L. Garfinkel et al., Tel Aviv, 1959; the second is by R. Hasman, D. Lipiec et al., Tel Aviv, 1967.

Thanks to Nancy and Stuart Schoenburg, who undertook the monumental task of translating the first part of “Yahadut Lita,” this authoritative guide to the fate of Lithuanian Jewry in WWII is now available in English for the first time.

The second chapter, “Jewish Communities of Lithuania,” fills about 350 of the book’s 500 pages. It provides an alphabetical list of towns and information on their region, their specific histories during WWII, and prominent individuals. Maps from the Hebrew edition and some details about the Holocaust from the second part of “Yahadut Lita” have been included.

Appendix 1 provides geographical locations of the towns included in the second chapter and attempts to standardize their spellings. Appendix 2, an extensive list of Lithuanian Jews, has appeared in various other sources. Appendix 3 provides an partial list of resources for Lithuanian Jewish genealogy -- including books, archives, organizations, newspapers, the “Family Finder,” and the addresses of the Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, South African Board of Deputies, and YIVO. A glossary explains certain words contained in the text.

The abbreviated history of Lithuania and Lithuanian Jewry provided in the first chapter does not really seem pertinent to the major thrust of the book and should have been omitted, or at least enhanced by the inclusion of relevant maps.

The translators-editors are to be commended, as is Garland -- this is volume 1321 in Garland’s reference library of the humanities -- for making this text available for English readers. Descendants of Lithuanian Jews, whether in North America, South Africa, England or Israel, will find it a useful tool.

-- Dr. Rolf Lederer
PASSOVER SEDER, LONDON ENGLAND, CA. 1900: Candlesticks, matzah, wineglasses and mishpoche ... some of the traditional elements present at seder tables in Jewish homes around the world each Pesach. An article about Anglo-Jewish genealogical research begins on page 3. [Photo courtesy London Museum of Jewish Life.]

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