Jewish family research in Romania is not like Jewish family research in North America. This is an understatement. My experience this past summer was, at least for me, a circuitous, serpentine, and sometimes clandestine act, occasionally resembling a Grade B movie, often resembling a slog through dense jungle. Though sorely tempted to machete my way through the endless frustrations and obstacles, I learned early that this does not work—that the only hope in making any headway was to thread my way through it as best I could. I learned as I went along, and I will attempt to chronicle in this article some of that learning.

Let me say first off that my experience with government archives in Romania had a decidedly Kafka-esque tone to it: vicious internal intrigues among archives employees (based either on the most serious political considerations or on petty personality rivalries, or both), sloppy and grossly inefficient service coupled with arbitrary bureaucratic roadblocks, payoffs at times expected and at times given (whether in cash or in kowtowing), rigid pecking orders at every turn, and—in the midst of all this—good work, genuine and generous help, and courageous risk-taking by some individuals for the sake of honest research. A taste of the shadow-world I entered: I was visiting the office of a person I had met some days earlier, someone of obvious integrity, highly knowledgeable in Romanian Jewish history and increasingly helpful to me in my research. There were only the two of us in the building. Within the general area of Jewish research, our topics were far-ranging, but when we touched on a particular topic (and quite honestly I cannot remember what that topic was), this person begged forgiveness, then walked across the office, turned on a radio, and then sat down again to resume our conversation. Our newspapers tell us that Romania had a revolution in 1989, but the fear in the populace—and perhaps the reason for the fear—remain.

I will try not to dwell any further, in this article, on the darker side of my visit to Romania. There is so much that I learned when I did come to “clearings in the jungle”, that I will now focus on that. I began this article by contrasting Romanian research with research on this side of the Atlantic. In actual fact my first important lead in my Romanian expedition came here, not there. In a conversation with Rick Bercuvitz, a fellow researcher of Jewish Romania from Vermont, who had gone on an expedition of his own earlier in the year, I learned that three censuses had been done of the Moldovan region of Romania (though Romania had not yet coalesced as an independent country), in the years 1822, 1836, and 1849. I learned further that in these censuses the Jewish inhabitants had been listed separately from other Romanians, and that these censuses existed intact at the State Archives of the County of Iasi, in the City of Iasi, but were difficult to
Upcoming Events and Meetings

Wednesday December 21, 1994 Time: 7:30pm
@ Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue
Topic: The Family Tree of the Jewish People & Its Genetic Diseases
Speaker: Dr. Joe Clark, Director Division of Genetics, Hospital for Sick Children

Wednesday January 25, 1995 Time: 7:30pm
@ Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue
Topic: Jewish Genealogical Resources at The Archives of Ontario
Speaker: Mr. Paul McIlroy

New Members
The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada wishes to welcome the following new members:

Ms. Melissa Axler
Ms. Abbee Corb
Ms. Cindy Klaman
Ms. Ricki Grushcow
Dr. David Mintz
Mr. Hartley Nathan
Ms. Fran Petersiel
Ms. Phyllis Waugh

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This knowledge gave me a mission, and a framework within which I might seek some of my specific family information. If I could find and somehow access these censuses, it could prove invaluable not only for my personal research, but perhaps for others as well. But when I arrived in Iasi, instinct told me to approach the Jewish community first, before attempting to penetrate the State Archives. True, I had acquired (after great difficulty) official permission from Bucharest, to do research in the Iasi archives; but something told me it would be important to make personal connections first, and as it happened, I was right. Aside from learning first-hand how intact the structure of the Jewish community is in Romania (ironically, despite its shrinking to less than 5% of its 1945 population), I was able to form connections and even friendships with a number of Jews with the knowledge, contacts, or positions of leadership that either opened doors for me or helped me navigate through the maelstrom.

I will describe three of these personalities here.

Odette Caufinan Blumenfeld is a professor of American literature at the University of Iasi, and the daughter of the late Simon Caufinan, head of the Iasi Jewish community until his death three years ago. With her help, I was given entree to the Jewish cemetery of Iasi, as well as to its “key”—the Hevra Kadisha register books at the Jewish community offices, which recorded meticulously the burials and their locations in that cemetery over the past century, perhaps earlier. She also introduced me to the other two rather amazing individuals in this description.

Continued from page 1

Members at Large

Glen Eker
Sid Disenhouse
Valerie Fox
Ruth Sherber

Contributors:
Miriam Weiner, Glen Eker, Nora Freund, Gary Mokotoff.
Paul Pascal, Deborah Pekils
Prior to leaving on this trip, Gayle Schlissel Riley (another researcher of Romanian-Jewish roots, one from California) had told me about Odette and how to reach her. She also asked me if I could find out how to purchase a book she had heard rumors of, Jewish Cemetery Inscriptions in Iasi, by an Itsig Kara. As I sat in a small dingy room in the Iasi Jewish Comunate offices, combing the Hevrada Kadisha register books, a teenage boy sat at the next table, painstakingly learning to read Hebrew, under the guidance of an impish-looking man evidently in his eighties. When I took a break, Odette introduced me to him: it was Itsig Kara! When I returned day after day to that little room (for these register books represented no simple task), Kara was there each time. Soon we formed a relationship independent of simply being in the same place at the same time. I found out, among other things, that his book on cemetery inscriptions is not yet complete, but should be soon. I learned also that this book is but one of 15 that he has written, among the over 750 written pieces he has published since 1923 (he is 88 years old), in Romanian, Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and French, on the history and folklore of Romanian Jews, as well as fictional work. At his home, I was treated to his own collection of Jewish archival material—books, monographs, letters, and other materials pertaining to the history of the Romanian Jewish community, and I grew aware of their importance to the Jewish world at large. I came to understand that this unassuming man with the twinkle in his eye is one of the intellectual and spiritual giants of Romanian Jewish life today. Incidentally, when I came to services at the synagogue on Friday night and Saturday, Kara of course was there, in a position of prominence; but leading the services with fluidity and confidence, nuance and old-world tionation, was his teenage student! There was no evidence of the painful laboring that characterized his Hebrew reading in his tutoring sessions. In prayer, this boy was somehow blessed with complete mastery, as if he had taken on within him the Dibbuk of Kara or even Kara’s grandfather!

When Odette had me show up at the side of the Iasi synagogue one day, to view the Jewish Community Museum, I did not appreciate how significant would be my introduction to the curator of that museum. Dr. Silviu Sanie took me through the museum at a rapid pace, trying, it seemed, to give me an overview of his labor of love. The pace, however, was frustrating for me, since each museum piece I saw seemed to hold secrets of past Jewish life in Iasi and its surroundings, both in general and in particular, and I wanted to explore it, to record it, to absorb it. When I explained my difficulty to Sanie, he slowed down enough to indulge me somewhat. I met with Sanie several times during my twelve days in Romania. In the course of this time, he seemed to me to be a very sensitive, internal person, perhaps painfully so; by the time I left Romania I felt he was my friend.

Sanie is head of scientific research in history and ar-
Sanie himself, even more possibilities opened up, particularly growing out of two pieces of specialized terminology he taught me, pertaining to the study of Jews in Romania: catagraphy and sudits. I now understand that these two terms (particularly the second one) are so integral to the study of our ancestors in that country, that it seems amazing to me not to have somehow come across them before. To be fair, though, the first term is not to be found in the huge Oxford English Dictionary, and the second is nowhere to be found in the authoritative Encyclopedia Judaica. Catagraphy is the term Romanian historians use to refer to a fiscal census of the populace. It has been used to refer also to any census, not merely a fiscal one, though some purists among the Romanian historians object to that. Perhaps it is used by other historians, but I've never seen it in any other context. The Romanian word is catagrafia, but they translate it into English as catagraphy, not "census" or any form of that. Sudits is a very narrow term referring to foreign citizens living on Romanian territory under the protection of a foreign power, originally by special arrangement between the Ottoman Empire which governed "Romania" (between the fifteenth and early nineteenth centuries) and the various European states. As I learned from Sanie, the majority of Jews who lived in Romania in the nineteenth century were recently-arrived Sudits! This is an incredible discovery, in my view, and as I have already said, it seems to me amazing that this has not been common knowledge among "foreign" researchers of Romania! I for one had been laboring under the assumption that, because some Jews had arrived in Romania with Roman legionnaires in the second century, therefore my ancestry theoretically goes back that far in Romania. Wrong, wrong, wrong. Most Jewish Romanian ancestors came there relatively recently from some neighboring European state! An observation I made in the Jewish cemetery of Iasi seems indirectly to corroborate this; I saw many, many inscriptions for the deceased, even into the twentieth century, written in German! My great-grandmother's death certificate (issued in Winnipeg, 1932) listed her father's birthplace as Austria; nobody in my family today could explain or believe this—it came as a complete surprise. Now I understand that this kind of thing was the norm for Jews in Romania.

During my visit to Romania and with Sanie this summer, he was in the last stages of co-editing a book of articles about the Jewish Sudits of the last century. This seminal work, entitled Studia et Acta Historiae Judeorum Romaniae Vol. I, is coming out in October. A joint project of Sanie's institute and the Diaspora Research Institute in Israel, it explores the whole topic of Jewish Sudits, which, it explains, have until now never been the subject of a full study. This book will, I am sure, be a goldmine for genealogists of Jewish Romania, certainly those whose center of exploration is the Moldovan region of the country. But here's the kicker: this book is based upon catagraphy of Sudits in Romanian Moldavia 1824-1825! Could this have
been one of the censuses Rick Bercuvitz told me about (despite the discrepancy in the date by two or three years)? I decided to find out. Never published, and found only in the State Archives of Iasi, this huge register of Jewish catagraphy consists of 585 pages, bound in a red cardboard box under the call number "Transport 166, Opis 184, No. 23". (These details I learned as I perused the manuscript to Sanie's new work.) When I finally got to the State Archives in Iasi (remember, I decided to contact the Jewish community first?), I now had something very specific to ask for.

Well, I never did see any other Romanian census in the Iasi Archives besides the Sudits ones, and I do believe these are the censuses Rick was referring to, but I am not absolutely sure. I do know that this material is a blockbuster. If I have any kind of luck, some samples of it and its index will be sent to me on microfilm from the archives sometime this fall (though, to tell you the truth, I experienced enough of the "dark side" of Romania to say, "I'll believe it when I see it.") Sanie permitted me to copy just a few samples of this 1824 catagraphy from the appendix of his soon-to-be-published manuscript (which he had translated into English), and I'm here excerpting one or two, to whet your appetite:

#383 Litman Stern, born in Camenitza, Russia; currently residing in Jassy [Iasi]; nationality—Jewish; religion—Mosaic; under Russian protection; arrived in Moldavia 10 years ago; age—24 years old; civil status—married with a native; occupation—candle maker; material status—tenant; costume—Jewish; observations of the census commission—he is a Sudit.

#177 Hersh Faighelesi, born in Brody, Galicia; currently residing in Jassy; nationality—Jewish; religion—Mosaic; under Austrian protection; arrived in Moldavia 25 years ago; age—36 years old; civil status—married with a woman from Brody; occupation—fabric merchant; material status—he has a rented shop; costume—Jewish; observations of the census commission—free to leave the country.

My subsequent entry into the bowels of the State Archives in Iasi, where I then saw the originals of this catagraphy, was not done on my own, and in fact, would probably not have gotten very far had I attempted it on my own. Odette came with me, ran interference for me, translated for me, and after a bit of cloak-and-dagger on the steps of the archives, managed to secure for me an audience with an upper middle-ranking official—another "Silviu"—Prof. Silviu Vacaru. A man probably in his mid-thirties, but loyal to the rules of "official policy", he surprised me by permitting me to record the interview. which I present in edited form. Odette translated for both him and me, and occasionally added her own comments.

The following are recent additions to our Society's collection in the Canadiana Room of the North York Central Library as of July 30, 1994.

Beider, Alexander.
A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames From the Russian Empire

Cymbler, Jeff and Lucille Gudis
Concentration Camp Records : Index to Microfile records for Jewish victims of German concentration camps

Donegan, Rosemary
Spadina Avenue

Eker, Glen.
Jewish Residents of Greater Quebec Province in the 1871-1901 Censuses of Canada

Eker, Glen
Jewish Residents of the Maritimes in the 1891 Census of Canada

Eker, Glen and Deborah Pekilis.
Jewish Residents of Cape Breton County, Nova Scotia, 1901

Eppel, Cissie
A Journey into our Ancestry: Chronicles of the Roseheim, Levy, and Eppel Families, with an introduction by Bennie Linden

Fiedler, Jiri.
A Guidebook to Jewish Sites in Bohemia and Moravia

Figler, Bernard Q. C.
Canadian Jewish profiles: Rabbi Dr. Herman Rabinowitz, Lazarus Cohen, Lyon Cohen.

Gorr, Shmuel.
Jewish Personal Names: their origins, derivation and diminutive forms

Gordis, Patrick (compiled by)
Complete copies of genealogically relevant selections from 6 rare printed sources

Gruber, Ruth Ellen.
Jewish heritage Travel: a guide to Central and Eastern Europe

Gutkin, Harry.
Journey into Our Heritage: the story of the Jewish

The interview covering about 14 pages and dealing with details of the contents of the Iasi archives and their accessibility is available from Shem Tov for $3.00 (Outside Canada $3.00 U.S.)

People interested in Romania are encouraged to contact the Romanian Special Interest Group c/o Mr. Gen Starm P.O Box 52058, Longwood, Florida

Continued on page 10
SOME HELPFUL "HINTS" FOR VISITING ANCESTRAL TOWNS IN UKRAINE

by Miriam Weiner

AUTHOR'S NOTE: While I have visited more than 100 towns in Ukraine and the travel conditions are similar throughout the country, this article focuses on research experiences in Eastern Galicia: the current Ukraine Oblasts of Ternopol, Lvov and Ivano Frankovsk (formerly Stanislawow).

When I first began visiting Ukraine on a regular basis a few years ago, it soon became clear to me that I would need to pack differently and carry many additional items with me. During the first few trips, it was not unusual to be distracted and/or disabled by the lack of goods and services which I took for granted, I admit, in America. Some of these incidents were amusing at the time and others I could only laugh at later. Because I am now spending almost half my time in Eastern Europe, I bought an apartment/office in Ukraine in order to leave office equipment, reference books, clothing and other essentials in one secure place. It was not feasible to continue transporting all of this for each trip. For the past year, it has been necessary to carry gasoline in canisters in the trunk and on top of the car because, in general, the stations have been closed. Recently, gasoline has become available again, at greatly increased prices and in limited quantities. While enroute to my apartment from visiting several towns (June, 1994), my driver and I stopped at a gas station and we proceeded to wait in line for one hour. Since gas stations (with gas) are very few and far between, we knew we had to wait. Just when it was our turn, the attendant announced he was closing for 1-2 hours in order for an audit to be completed by an accountant. I knew from experience that this 1-2 hours could easily be 3-4 hours and we desperately needed gas in order to continue. My driver went to the back door of the gas station to speak with the attendant where he offered considerably more money if we could get the gasoline now. The attendant replied, "I don't need the money, but if you can give me a good bottle of vodka for the accountant, I will sell you the gas now." My driver returned to the car, took a bottle of vodka from the trunk (from a small supply of vodka, cognac and wine which we carry for similar purposes) and shortly thereafter, we were on our way. The attendant told us we should tell the others waiting in line that we were in a rush and were permitted to buy the gasoline now due to a telegram we had just received, but this didn't fool anyone as they saw the vodka as it went from the trunk to the paper bag. Some things you will NOT find along the highways in Ukraine: service areas, toilet facilities (excepting an occasional outhouse); maps; adequate highway signs (especially on the side roads); car repair facilities; telephones, a 7-11 Market or AAA Auto Club service. The single most important thing to bring with you is more patience than you dreamed you had. Everything takes much longer to accomplish (if at all), including telephone calls, service in restaurants and government offices, hotel registration, and the inspection of documents at borders and along the highways (the random stopping of cars for the inspection of documents is continuous). Another item which is with me always is a vinyl bag for keeping items cold (using the blue chemical packets which are frozen prior to use). The pack is large enough to carry several small juices; fruit; vegetables; water and soft drinks. It is very handy to carry small packets of wet towelettes and also small packets of tissu which serve a multitude of purposes...

You can never have enough of these! During my first trip to the former U.S.S.R. in 1991, I suddenly needed a new battery for my camera. I spent three days in Moscow looking for it and was grateful to pay $20 when I found one. Thereafter, I carry sufficient film and batteries along with cassettes for my video camera. While you may be able to find them in a very large city, the time you will spend looking will frustrate you beyond words. One of the many new specialties to arise from my frequent trips to Ukraine is my added knowledge about automobiles. I now carry a set of spark plugs with me, a tow rope, tire inflator, a spare set of windshield wipers, a can of WD-40, flares, motor oil (I bought a case from America) and a strong flashlight. This interesting collection is a result of incidents where we have needed these items suddenly and could not find them wherever we happened to be. Therefore, the automotive repair capabilities of my driver became equally important to his other qualifications. Another item which goes everywhere with me is a small bag, similar in size to a carry-on luggage. In this bag, I carry a first-aid kit and an assortment of presents for the many helpful people I continually meet in my travels. These souvenirs from America, consisting of office supplies, gifts for children (dolls, crayons, toy trucks), cosmetics, watches, etc. are one method of returning the many kindnesses I receive from government officials, the local people on the street and members of Jewish communities throughout Ukraine. Although many Jewish documents were destroyed, the number which survived has been a big surprise to me as I see them in various archives. Some of these books have not been opened maybe for 50 years. The pages are stuck together and the books are very fragile. Since copy machines are the exception in Ukraine, I travel with a Canon copier,
transformer/convertor, extra cartridges and paper—all added weight to the carrying in and out of hotels. It isn’t advisable to leave valuables in the car. Additionally, I usually carry extra copier cartridges for the Lvov archives as often they have none and rely on what I bring. I have visited and worked in many towns in Eastern Galicia, including: Brody, Lvov, Jaworow, Bolechoir, Probezha, Ternopol, Dolina, Snyatin, Buchach, Podgaysy, Berezhany, Drohobych, Sambor, Monastyriska, Chortkov, Ozeryany, Skala Podolskaya, Korolovka, Ivano Frankovsk (Stanislawow), Borszczow, Roznato, Zabolotow, Zolochow, My town visits include photographs and video of general views and remaining Jewish sites (Jewish cemetery, synagogue, new Holocaust monuments/not uncommon now in Ukraine, Jewish schools and hospitals); interviews with governments officials and people in the Jewish community; local archival research and meetings with town historian; obtaining map of town where possible with Jewish sites marked; and locating former ancestral homes where address or map is provided. I have discovered previously unknown relatives for several clients. Some people have asked me to do archival research which can be in as many as four locations for one town. For example, Jewish documents for Ivano Frankovsk/Stanislawow are located in the local ZAGS archive in Ivano Frankovsk, the Lvov Historical Archives and in two separate archives in Warsaw. It is not uncommon for me to find Jewish documents dating a particular family back into the 1700’s. For example, I recently completed a research assignment for Jeanne Andelman, where I found over 700 documents on her family members from Melnitsa Podolskaya. For Dr. Dickstein in Youngstown, Ohio, I found more than 500 documents about his ancestors in Ozeryany, Korolovka, Skala and Borszczow. To date, I have worked in 13 Oblast Archives in Ukraine. In the winter, heating is scarce and people often wear coats inside. In the summer, there is no air conditioning and heat is stifling. I remember once in the Lvov Archives, there was no electricity and since my driver/associate is a man of many talents (a former engineer), I was not surprised to find him on a ladder repairing the wiring and within a short time, the lights came back on. Of course, there is very little air conditioning to be found in Ukraine. Some individuals have small window units in their apartments and few successful businessmen have them in their offices. During my first few visits, it was difficult for me sometimes to hold back the words, “but in America we do it this way...” Actually, the people in Ukraine ARE interested in how things are done in America, but unfortunately, they cannot do whatever it is the same way. It is not only the computer age, but also a way of thinking and habits that will take a very long time to change. Maybe the best advice I received was from a friend who came to America from Kiev a few years ago. He told me, when you come to Ukraine, pack your patience and leave your “shpilkis” at home. It was good advice.

NOTE: Having shpilkis is “sitting on pins and needles” and in the above context, also denotes restlessness, nervous energy and impatience.

Miriam Weiner is an author and lecturer in the field of Jewish genealogy and Holocaust research. She has worked in archives throughout Poland since 1989 and in the former USSR since 1991. For information on “town visits” and/or archival research, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to Weiner at 136 Sandpiper Key, Secaucus, NJ 07094. Be sure and include the name(s) of your ancestral town.

Uncovering My Family Roots
by Nora Freund

Now that regular contacts have been reestablished with the countries of the former Soviet Block, it is possible to access the archives of the Czech Republic and to visit the cemeteries which have been unused and neglected since the Nazi takeover of the Sudeten area in 1938. Therefore, I now took the opportunity to trace my ancestry back as far as the records would permit. As part of this effort I visited the cemetery of the community of Kolleschowitz-Dereisen. (Kolesovice/Zderaz) a cemetery serving a number of small villages about half way between Prague and Karlovy Vary in western Bohemia. There I found, in the middle of a large grain field, a broken wall with an overgrown gateway. One end of the wall was destroyed. Just inside the gateway, the chapel where the bodies were prepared for burial still stood, partly roofed with falling bricks and plaster, overgrown with shrubs and bushes. The cemetery itself was very overgrown with bushes and long grass as well as a large number of trees.

I had written to the Jewish community in Prague telling them that I was interested in doing some clearing and recording of the stones in this cemetery, but received no replies. The idea of bringing several people from outside to help with this work also did not materialize. Nevertheless, I persisted. When I arrived in Prague, I visited the office of the persons to whom I had written letters and found that on a personal basis they were very forthcoming and helpful, even if they did not return letters.

They told me the following story: In 1984 the Jewish
community (still under Communist regime) decided that they had no further use for this cemetery and signed it over to the community of Oracov, the nearest village. The authorities then decided that they would demolish the cemetery, but one old resident, a Mr. Wachtel, felt that the Rabbi should be present at the time, perhaps to deconsecrate? In any case, this prompted the officials of the Jewish community to come to examine the stones, and they felt that these were important historic relics and should not be destroyed. They managed to stop the destruction and attempted to have the site declared a local historical monument. the wheels of bureaucracy move slowly however, and by 1989 nothing had been done, and things were left in limbo. After the collapse of the Communist regime, the Jewish sites were for the most part returned to the Jewish community, but this cemetery was not.

Now, here comes Nora Heller Freund, descendent of the Hellers, of Oracov, stirring up the old tale. When I spoke to Mrs. Wolfova, who is in charge of the Jewish cemeteries of western Bohemia, she immediately arranged for the Hebraist Ms. Hamackova of the Jewish Museum to accompany us to survey the situation. Since no one had any objections, we made arrangements with Mr. Bocanek, Mayor of Oracov, to begin clearing the underbrush and overgrowth and to start the recording of the stones. He was able to arrange for us to hire three young students who would help with the heavy work.

One of these young men was named Vachtl, the grandson of the man who had saved the cemetery several years earlier. Later, after we had cleared an area, we found the name of one of the stone masons who had carved the monuments was Wachtel, which thrilled the young man.

Two days of hard physical labour resulted in a large area, perhaps about 15% of the site, being cleared. We exposed many stones, and found that a large number of them had been vandalized. Some were broken, and some just knocked over. Many stones were very old, and had been all or nearly effaced by the elements. The stones were of different materials, a red slate-like stone, granite, composite, and marble. Most were fairly small, and quite simple, with rounded tops, and small decorations. A few stones, however, were quite elaborate. There were a number of stones that had the hands of the Kohanim engraved and a few that had other designs. One stone in particular was of special interest as it had both the hands and a Mohel’s knife design. Many were in Hebrew only, some in Hebrew and German. The ones we were able to read were mostly from the 1800s. As I had hoped and expected, there were quite a few Hellers, including to my great delight, the graves of my great grandparents, and, I think of my great great grandparents as well.

Although we cleared only a small area, we did take some photos of stones, from a central area which we did not have time to clear.

As we cleared, starting in one corner, we made a chart describing each stone and photographing it with an index number. We recorded only the first four rows and only about 2/3 of the way across as the rest of the area was not cleared. To complete this work would require quite a bit more time than we had available to us. However, the work is very satisfying and I hope that either I or someone else will make the effort to continue.

The photographs which we made, although not of professional calibre, are at least a record of part of the heritage, and deserve to be deciphered.

Nora Freund, one of our veteran members, has done some extensive research into her family. With the help of the Czech archives, she has been able to trace her family back over 6 generations, to the early 18th century.

Recent Developments in East European Research

Gary Mokotoff, publisher of Avotaynu, and President of the Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (AJGS) addressed the annual meeting of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston in June of this year. These are some of the highlights of his talk as published in Mass-Pocha, the newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston:

(See also Shem Tov, Volume IX, No.2, June 1993)

Eastern European Access:

There are basically four ways to access records in Eastern Europe:

1. Write to archival repositories.
2. Hire a local researcher.
3. Visit the country for on-site research.
4. Borrow records microfilmed by the LDS Family History Library (Mormons).

Private Researchers. There are three American based record searching services that are popular among Jewish genealogists: RAGAS, FAST, and Routes to Roots. All claim to service all of the countries of the former Soviet Union, but each is stronger in only certain countries.

RAGAS, the Russian-American Genealogical Archival
Service, was founded by the Archives of Russia and the National Archives Volunteer Association. RAGAS' strengths are in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and charge $6 an hour. Requests typically take six months to one year to complete because there are no finding aids, and therefore can cost about $200 to $300.

FAST was founded by two emigres from Lithuania with contacts in the Lithuanian archives. Turnaround time for requests is three months to a year, and cost is $300 to $800. Their strengths are in Lithuania and Ukraine.

"Roots to Routes" is run by Miriam Weiner, who travels to Poland and Ukraine several times a year. Her rates average $800 a day, and requests typically take two days. She provides the fastest service, and can accurately schedule her trips. Her specialties are Ukraine, Galicia, and Moldova.

LDS Microfilming. News about microfilming projects by the Mormons is both good and bad. The good news is that out of 100 microfilm cameras currently operating in Europe, 30 are now in Eastern Europe; they have diverted resources to this new focus. The bad news is that it will be a long time before any Jewish records are filmed. Because of the Mormons' priorities, Protestant records are usually filmed first, followed by Catholic records, and then Jewish records. It might be many years before Jewish records are filmed. The one exception is Estonia, which had a very small Jewish population—they have already filmed all Jewish birth, marriage and death records in Estonia, and these should be available within a year.

Archival Repositories. Eastern European archives have generally gone through three phases, after their opening to the West:

1) archivists are taken by surprise by interest in their records by Americans, and are very helpful, but have no formal rates or plan; 2) traffic increases, they realize that they have a valuable resource, and they shut down for a while, until they figure out what to do; and 3) formal methods for genealogical inquiries are established, with fixed rates. Some countries are now at phase three, but some are still in earlier stages. You can write to the archives in English, and they will reply in their native language.

On-Site visits. Write to the country's central archives first, to gain access to regional archives. This can often help with local bureaucrats. Travel conditions are often very primitive.

A country-by-country report:

**Belarus.** Still in phase one. You can write to the Central Archives in Minsk, and receive a response. Use RAGAS. LDS has started filming.

**Czech Republic.** Good archival research service, but no local researchers for hire. They are not dealing with the Mormons now.

**Estonia.** The archives are responsive, and LDS has completed microfilming Jewish records there.

**Germany.** There has been much microfilming activity in Leipzig and Berlin for a number of years. There is public access to the archives, but strict privacy laws.

When East and West Germany united, previously inaccessible East German archives came under the jurisdiction of the West German archival system. Some vital records from areas occupied by the Nazis were among the East German holdings. Thus, records from Bukovina (northeastern Romania and adjacent Ukraine) are now available in German archives, and will be filmed by the LDS.

**Hungary.** LDS microfilming is ongoing. A private service Hungarogens, provides genealogical research services. The Hungarian Jewish project at Yad Vashem in Israel is planning to publish much Holocaust-era material, including a census taken in the early 1940's which includes much information on ancestry.

**Latvia.** The archives will accept inquiries, and private researchers have been successful. LDS is microfilming.

**Lithuania.** The situation in Lithuania is still a problem. The archives have not yet developed policies. Use FAST. LDS has just signed a contract. Miriam Weiner has successfully researched there.

**Poland.** The situation in Poland is good for genealogical researchers. Poland has the most organized archival system in Eastern Europe for handling genealogical inquiries. The State Archives in Warsaw is very responsive, efficient and competent. If you write, they'll reply quickly, asking for a deposit. The archives will now do general research, as well as specific record request services. The archives charge $15 per hour, and require a $30 deposit. A response can be expected within 6 months.

On the discouraging side is the continued lack of access to records from Galicia (today, Southern Poland). Letters from the archives state that "Records don't exist," but American tourists have been able to get these records from town halls in Galicia. Mr. Mokotoff said that he will follow up on this situation with the archives, citing specific examples. The Genealogical Society of Utah, the acquisition arm of the Mormon Family History Library in Salt Lake City, has an extensive collection, but has not been allowed to microfilm Jewish records in Polish archives for a number of years.
Romania. The situation is very negative. The archives won’t answer requests, and LDS has no access. Some on-site visits, however, have been successful.

Russia. LDS has started filming, but only in interior areas where there are virtually no Jews. Use RAGAS.

Slovakia. Recent news has been good, and the archives have been responsive. LDS has been microfilming and records from Eastern Slovakia, which had a large Jewish population should be available next year.

Ukraine. The archives are just getting their act together. Finding aids are primitive or non-existent. They have constant funding problems. RAGAS, FAST or Miriam Weiner. LDS has begun filming.

“Yugoslavia” This situation is very unstable with many unknowns. LDS has filmed some Jewish records from Slovenia.

See ‘Resources and Contacts’ on page 12

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF NEWFOUNDLAND

by Glen Eker

The earliest known contact between Jews and Newfoundland occurred in 1677 when Labrador was claimed for England by Joseph de la Penha, a Jewish merchant from Holland. In 1697 he was granted title to Labrador after rescuing William III from a sinking ship.

The first Jewish settler in Newfoundland was Israel Palmer, a settler in the George’s Brook area in the early 1800’s. He was an English Jew who was engaged in the fur trade. During the first half of the nineteenth century several other Jewish families settled in the colony, primarily outside of St. John’s. These early settlers were Jewish merchants named Peter Ezekiel, Philip Tocque, and a Mr. Levi. Ezekiel was a businessman in the West Country while Tocque and Levi ran a business firm in Carbonear. Ezekiel married in Newfoundland the daughter of either Tocque or Levy. These families eventually assimilated in the general population. The Ezekiel family is still found in Newfoundland although their descendants are no longer Jews and they have little knowledge of their Jewish origins.

The first Post office officials, Simon and William Solomons are generally considered to have been Jewish. The real history of Jews in Newfoundland however begins with the arrival of Israel Perlin from New York in 1891. Originally from Tinkovich, Minsk, Russia, Perlin had settled in New York in the 1880’s where he had been a merchant. Low wages and poor living conditions caused Perlin to leave and seek a locality with better opportunities. When he left New York and arrived in Newfoundland in 1891 he began to sell dry goods in the isolated communities of Placentia and Fortune Bay. His brother Frank arrived a short time later and in 1893 they opened a wholesale and retail store on Water Street called I.F. Perlin and Company. They then began to bring to the province friends and relatives from Europe to work as peddlers in small communities throughout the province. By 1905 Israel Perlin was selling wholesale clothing and merchandise. He also began to manufacture his own line of clothing. Other peddlers eventually began arriving from Europe and set up their own businesses on Water Street. These included Isidor Wilanski of Vilna, Lithuania, Sam and Simon Levitz of Krivitz, Poland, and Abraham Cohen of Vilna, Lithuania. They also sent for their friends and relatives from Europe to work as peddlers in the small communities throughout the province.
These peddlers began work immediately upon arrival and knew little English. They would spend most of the year walking or occasionally travelling by steamer from one rural community to another. They would carry everything from jewelry and stationery to clothing and any small articles that could be easily transported. They were especially welcomed in the rural communities where goods were scarce. Peddlers generally returned to their homes only to observe the High Holidays. Profits were low and the work was hard. It did however provide the new immigrant with the opportunity to learn English, meet people and gain the skills and knowledge necessary to establish a business in a larger community such as St. John’s or Corner Brook.

By 1909 a large number of Jews worked or owned a business in St. John’s. Israel Perlin helped establish the Hebrew Congregation of Newfoundland at 170 Water Street with J.L. Plotsky as its spiritual leader. Most Jews in St. John’s lived or worked on or near Water Street and most religious services were held at various locations within the area. A cemetery was established in 1913 and in 1924 fund-raising began for various local Jewish causes. By 1926 a temporary synagogue had been established on the upper floor of the A.M. Penman Building on Prescott Street, a men’s brotherhood and a women’s sisterhood organizations were functioning, and a chapter of Hadassah-Wizo had been created.

In 1928 the community sought to purchase a site for a permanent synagogue. It was opened on Henry Street in downtown St. John’s in 1931. In 1941 a second synagogue was established in Corner Brook. A Hebrew school was established in St. John’s in 1928 with limited instruction. The community had difficulty in finding a permanent teacher. The St. John’s Congregation’s first rabbi, Dr. Berend arrived in 1948 and as a result a wide range of new adult and children’s activities were established. A new synagogue, Beth El Synagogue, was opened in 1960 on Elizabeth Street. The Corner Brook synagogue was however closed in the 1960’s as the community declined. Jewish businesses in St. John’s during the 1930’s included Wilanski and Sons Ltd., National Clothing, The Model Shop and Progress Clothing Store. The Levitzes owned several dry-goods stores, a corner store, and a beauty parlour. The Cohens owned The Cheapside and Broadway House of Fashion; the Epsteins owned Modern Clothing Store and Popular Clothing Store, Sheffman Bros., Goldstones London, New York, and Paris, L. Rosenberg and Co. Ltd.; D.C. Saxon owned Premier Garment. There were also small Jewish owned businesses located in many of Newfoundland’s small communities.

The Newfoundland Jewish community has always been small, never numbering over 400 persons. In 1935 there were only slightly over 200 Jews in the province. By 1971 there were over 300. Today there are less than 200 Jews in the province.

The majority of the community has always lived in St. John’s and that is where the only functioning synagogue is today. Numbers were too small to maintain congregations in smaller communities. There have been continual changes in rabbis and teachers in the St. John’s congregation making the continuity of services and programs difficult. The younger people are moving out of the province to find better educational and employment opportunities. Their parents are often following them. This has led to a general decline in the number of Jews in the province. New Jewish immigrants to Canada generally go to Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver.

Genealogists may trace Newfoundland’s Jews through the Newfoundland censuses of 1921, 1935, and 1945. All are available at Metro Toronto Reference Library on the History Floor and at North York Central Public Library in the Canadiana Department on the sixth floor. Genealogically important information in these censuses include: exact year, month, and day of birth; town and country of birth; year of immigration to Newfoundland; year of naturalization; nationality; religion; and employment information. Relationships between family members are also provided. There is a finding aid to these censuses. It however provides only the name of the provinces districts and the microfilm reels on which they can be found. In order to find a specific city, town or village, you must know the district where it is located. The St. John’s area is listed as a separate district so locating Jews in this city is a fairly easy task. The microfilm reel numbers for Corner Brook in the three censuses are listed separately at the front of the finding aid.

Glen Eker, a member of our society, has published a number of studies of Jews in various parts of Canada. His latest is a monograph entitled “Hebrew Ancestry of a Canadian Metis family”.

**Attention, Attention!!!**

Stan Gutman, Membership Co-ordinator is interested in hearing from members who own a modem. If you have access to an e-mail server such as Internet, CompuServe, etc... and would be interested in participating in a Beta test, you are asked to contact Stan Gutman at 416-633-0584.

Stan is currently trying to organize the test which would involve an electronic copy of Shem Tov being distributed to interested parties. Your participation is encouraged. Thank you.
Continued from page 10

Mokotoff, Gary and Sallyann Amdur Sack. Where Once We Walked: a guide to the Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust
Lawrence F. Tapper for National Archives (Canada). Archival Sources for the Study of Canadian Jewry.
Ontario Genealogical Society. Ohev Zedec Cemetery: a genealogical record
Polish Tourist Information Centre for the State Office for Sport and Tourism.
They Lived Among Us: Polish Judaica

Rosenstein, Neil. The Unbroken Chain: biographical sketches and genealogy of illustrious Jewish families from the 15th - 20th century
Tapper, Lawrence F. A Biographical Dictionary of Canadian Jewry. 1909-1914 From the Canadian Jewish Times
Shapiro, H. Toronto Jewish City and Information Directory for the Year 1925.
Wellisch, Henry and Peter Cullman, eds. Yiskor Books in Canadian Librarries: a bibliography

Resources and Contacts

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Central State Historical Archive of Belarus u. Kotiova 26, 220438 Minsk, Belarus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Stani Ustredni Archiv v Praze, Malasrana Karmelitska 2, 118 01 Praha 1 Czech Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Staatsbibliothek -Unter den Linden 8, Postfach 1312, 0-1086 Berlin,Germany Zentralstelle fur Genealogie- Georgi-Demiroff-Platz 1,0-7010, Leipzig (vital records for more than 400 communities Bundesarchiv- Berliner Strasse 98-101,0-1561 Potsdam, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Hungarogens Josef krt. 50 H-1085 Budapest Hungary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Lithuanian State Historical Archives Gerosias Vilies 10, Vilnius 2015, Lithuania</td>
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<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Lithuanian Main Archival Administration Mindaugo 8 Vilnius Lithuania</td>
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<td>Moldova</td>
<td>Naczelnia Dyrekcja Archiwow Pustowowych ul.Bloga 6 SKR Pocz 1005 00-950 Warsaw, Poland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Centarl State Archives u. Bolshai Pirogovkaia 17, Moscow 119817 Moscow, Russia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Statny Ustredny Archiv Cesta 42 Bratislava Slovakia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Central State Historical Archive u. Solomenskaya 24 252601 Kiev, Ukraine</td>
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<td><strong>Compuserve - Go Roots</strong></td>
<td><strong>Internet NewsGroup- JewishGen</strong></td>
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