

שם טוב

SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO)

VOLUME XII, No. 4

December 1996 Tevet 5757

A Letter To The Family

By Arnold Issenman

Mr. Arnold Issenman, one of our members, has distributed this letter to members of his family.

It all started with the research into family origins which led to the reunion in 1994 to mark the 100th anniversary of the arrival in Canada of Pinchus and Chaya Zisse Issenman and their six children.

The research revealed that Pinchus was born in Saad in Kovno Gubernya and that Chaya Zisse was from Latskeva. Reference to "Where Once We Walked" by Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Amdur Sack revealed that Saad was Seda and Latskeva was Laizuva.

So, piqued by natural curiosity and urged on by daughter Joanne in Edinburgh, this September 12 we (Betty and I) set off for Lithuania. We met Joanne and her partner Mike Griffiths at the airport in Copenhagen and travelled with them on SASS to Vilnius.

We were met at the airport by Regina Kopilevich with whom I had been in correspondence for two years and who had found archival records of the Berghaus (Silverman) family. Regina turns out to be a beautiful, dynamic young Jewish woman who speaks English, Hebrew, Lithuanian and Russian and has an intimate knowledge of Jewish and Lithuanian life and history. She was to be our intrepid guide for the week we were there.

Thus, on Rosh Hashanah, we found ourselves in Vilna, the famed former centre of Jewish cultural life. Regina had arranged for us to be invited to the secular Rosh Hashanah celebration held by the Vilnius Jewish Community; 300 people were packed in the hall of the Teachers' Union. In Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian and

Lithuanian we were entertained by groups of singers, dancers and fiddlers, keeping alive the rich Jewish cultural heritage in the face of the monstrous destruction of the Litvak communities during the Holocaust.

The next day we went to the Jewish State Museum of Lithuania. In front of the Museum is a sculpture of Senpo Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Vilnius who saved 6,000 Jews from death by issuing handwritten visas to them in the face of his government's opposition. Because Betty's father was Japanese, and because we have long known of Sugihara's heroism, this was of particular significance to us.

Inside the Museum we saw the record of the terrible destruction. Of the 240,000 Jews of Lithuania at the start of the war, 96% were massacred by the invading German armies whose first act on arriving was to seek

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out Jews to brutalize and murder - often assisted in their bloody work by willing Lithuanian collaborators. The Museum was founded in 1990 and is the sole institution in the Baltic States recording Jewish heritage. It is staffed by people, many of them volunteers, whose family members perished.

With this needed introduction to Lithuanian Jewish history we set off for Palanga, a lovely resort town with miles of beautiful white beaches on the Baltic, which was to be our base for several days and from where we drove to Seda, which turned out to be a small farming town with a few thousand inhabitants.

Our first action on arriving at Seda was to seek the Jewish cemetery. We found it close to the river. The grounds had been tended and ten gravestones are still standing, but most of the lettering has been obscured by the years. However, Regina, by running her hands over the stones, much as in braille, was able to decipher some first names. Family names were not traditional. Betty and I left a small pebble on each stone to mark our visit. Close by the cemetery is a large memorial erected by the Lithuanian State to commemorate the massacre on that

spot of 150 Jews of Seda. There are no Jews living in Seda today.

We went next to visit the remains of the old synagogue in Seda. The tradition in Lithuania is to build wooden churches. In keeping with this tradition the synagogue in Seda is wooden and must have been an imposing structure in 1890 when it was built. Today it is derelict with a leaking roof, broken windows, open to the elements. There is still a Star of David evident and one can see where the women's gallery would have been. My father John (Shepshel) was born in 1890 so he probably had his birth in this shul.

We next went to visit the local polyvalent school. Regina, who has the chutzpah of an Israeli Sabra, marched us into the Vice-Principal's office, introduced us to her and to other teachers and explained our mission to them - the search for roots. The VP couldn't believe that someone would come 10,000 kilometers or more - and spend so much money to do so. It turns out that the school, like the Lithuanian State, is impoverished. The school doesn't have a computer or copying machine so our pilgrimage must have looked extravagant.

However, we had a most warm welcome. I found

Volume XII, No. 4

SHEM TOV is published quarterly by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) and is distributed free to members. Current and back issues are available for \$4 per issue.

Contributions are invited. Submit material c/o The Editor, P.O. Box 446, Station A, North York, Ontario, Canada M2N 5T1.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada was founded in 1985 and currently has about 180 members. Membership costs \$30 per calendar year, \$20 for persons living beyond both Metro Toronto and its adjacent suburbs. Meetings are held September to June, usually on the last Wednesday of each month at 8:00 p.m. (doors open at 7:30) at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto (unless announced otherwise). Guests are always welcome. Details are usually printed 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 lecturers, 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 is registered as a non-profit charitable organization.

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myself addressing the 8th grade advanced algebra class (Regina translated) and then we were served a most pleasant lunch by the VP and the teachers. Food in Lithuania is good, nourishing and plentiful, including lots of what we think of as Jewish food: borscht with sour cream and potatoes, blintzes, challah. To repay the warm hospitality we said we would do our best when we got back to Canada and the United Kingdom to try to find a second-hand computer for the school, perhaps from the company Mike works for and whose presence we saw everywhere in Lithuania: Coca-Cola.

Next day Regina had arranged for us to meet the young priest who is in charge of the beautiful wooden church of the Assumption of Mary. He gave us a tour of the church which is an architectural gem set in this small town. Then the priest and the VP of the school accompanied us to Zydu Dvaras (Jewish fields), an area where Jews once farmed and probably where Pinchus and Chaya Zisse had the farm which they sold to finance their journey to Canada.

It was an emotional moment for all of us to walk the fields where my grandparents and their forbears walked and to think that but for their foresight our family would have been cut off at the roots along with the Jewish families that perished in Seda and throughout Europe.

Our itinerary took us then to Laizuva (Latskeva) in search of Chaya Zisse's family. This is a small town within sight of the Latvian border. We met with the local librarian and again had a warm welcome. She told us that the town was founded in the 16th century, now has 648 inhabitants, and is famous for its poets and philosophers. The librarian said 10 Jewish families were there before the war. They were taken by the local people to the nearby regional capital of Mazeikiu to be murdered by the Germans. She told us of one woman of the town who risked her life to save two Jewish children but unfortunately she was not in when telephoned. We were not able to find any family records there. The Jewish cemetery in Laizuva is neglected and overgrown. Some 40 stones still remain but are largely indecipherable. In Kaunas (Kovno) Regina led us to the State Archives where another warm welcome awaited us from Juozas Rimkus, the director, and from his staff who spoke excellent English. The archives are not

computerized but, within minutes of hearing our request, the archivist came up with a dusty old tax roll for Seda for 1846. She told us a special tax was levied on Jews to pay for the education of Jewish children. It was called a "candle tax." These were Czarist times so the roll was in Russian. To our delight and surprise one of the people paying the highest tax (8 kopecks) was Shepshel, son of Chaim Aizenman and wife Pessa. We know from the headstone over Pinchus' grave in Montreal that this is Pinchus' father and my great grandfather. We also derive from this the name Chaim, who was Pinchus' grandfather.

Two other Aizenmans appeared on the roll:

- Abramson, son of Meyer Aizenman and wife Zelda: 4 ½ kopecks
- Meyer, son of Abram and wife Chaya: 2 kopecks

We don't know their relationship to Pinchus. However, I paid for and left an application for further research to be done in the archives to see whether more records could be found.

On the way back to Vilnius we stopped at Plunge. Outside the town, on a hillock grove of white birch trees is a vine-covered mass grave of 2,200 Jews who were marched to this place and there massacred in the very early days of the war. The Lithuanian government has marked the place with a large memorial plaque detailing the villages the Jews came from and how many were killed. Another very moving memorial has been created there by Jacob Bunke, a Jewish sculptor. Following the Lithuanian iconic tradition of wood carvings of religious figures, Bunke has carved out of whole standing trees figures of the suffering of the Jews on this bloody hill. There are six such totemic trees, powerful witness to evil.

We met Jacob Bunke because Joanne was delivering Rosh Hashanah greeting cards from a friend in London to several Lithuanians and he was on her list.

Jacob Bunke was a carpenter before he started sculpting. He served in the Soviet Army that defeated the Nazis and has two wounds to show for it. He and his wife live today in Plunge, and he makes and sells small carvings that depict the shtetl life of the Litvaks of the

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past, but none so affecting as his tree of silent witness.

Our last night in Lithuania we dined with Leah Aizen and her husband Elyahu Levitas, because Regina thought that not only were our names similar but Leah and I looked alike. Also, Leah's father was a blacksmith and they came from Skuodas (Skud), which is not far from Seda. Whether or not Leah's family roots are the same as ours, Leah's story is heart-rending and typical. The day after the Nazis launched their invasion on June 22, 1941, Leah and a brother and sister decided to get out. Dressed only in summer clothes they walked to the nearby Latvian border and after some days of bureaucratic delays they were allowed to cross. They walked 350 kilometers into Russia, were sent to Siberia, later to Kazakhstan where they spent the war. Leah's father and the rest of the family, some 50 in all, were killed. People ask her why, after all this tragedy, she chose to return to Lithuania. She describes it as coming back to the nest, the only home she knows.

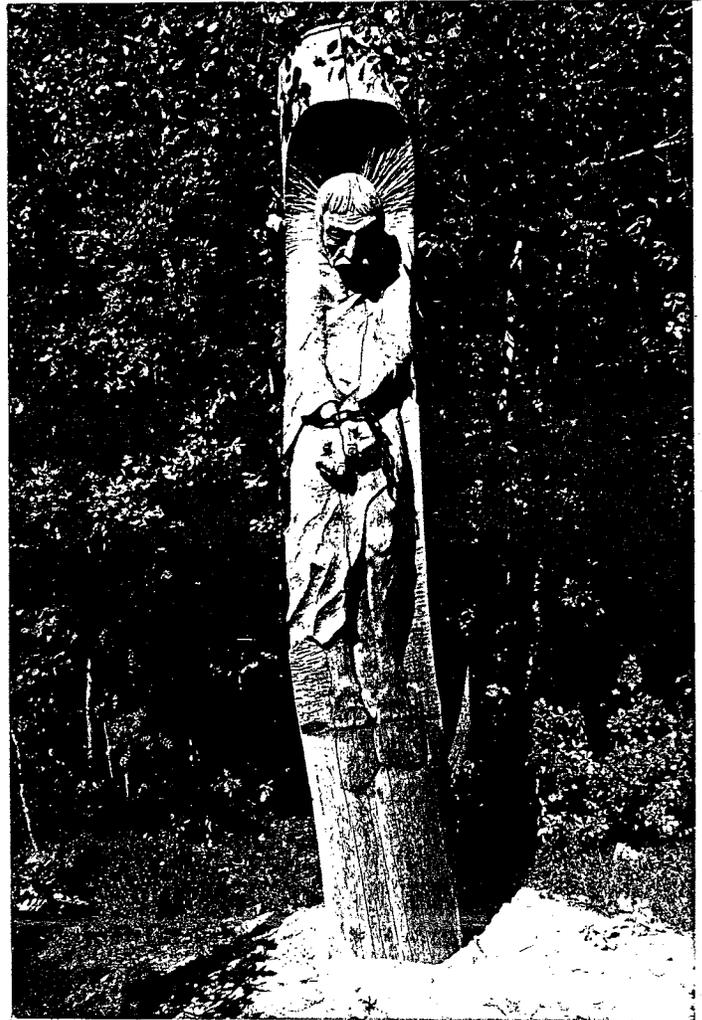
In my search for the family origins I underwent two experiences. One was to walk the good earth of my Zaida and Bubba and to glimpse what early life was like. The other was to walk the ground where so many Jews perished, to walk the streets of the ghettos of Vilna and Kovno, to visit the shrines and museums to their memory. It brought home the Holocaust in a way that all my reading had never done.

The two experiences are closely intertwined. I would dearly like to leave some memorial in Seda that says "Jews once lived here." The old synagogue seems to be that symbol of former Jewish presence. It would cost too much to try to restore the old shul but it would take very little to weatherproof it, patch it, protect it and preserve it for future generations. Is that something we as a family want to do and are willing to undertake? I pose it as a question. I would like to hear from you.

I'll be writing again if and when I receive documents from the Lithuanian Archives. Until then.

L'shana tova

Arnold Issenman
October 1, 1996 ☆



Jacob Bunke Tree

We Welcome These New Members To Our Society

Yale Brick

June Dennis

Ann Farrel

Gail Faust

Dr Fabian Gorodzinsky

Jeanette Harris

Ernie Runenstein

Some Messages from JEWISHGEN (Jewish Genealogical Discussion Group)

Jewish Preservation Committee of Ukraine

By Suzanne S. Waxman

To all concerned,

I E-mailed the Jewish Preservation Committee of Ukraine for specifics on how to engage their services and here is their reply:

The Jewish Preservation Committee of Ukraine is the non-commercial organisation that was founded under the Union of Jewish Religion Organisation of Ukraine. For the last three years JPC has prepared the most complete lists of existing Jewish landmarks, cemeteries, monuments and mass burial sites all over Ukraine. Today the Committee can offer access to this information to other interested people and organizations. JPC has made the solid contacts with municipal and state archives enabling us to carry out genealogical researches. We require some fee for these searches to compensate expenses of payment to people doing searches in archives, travelling to other Ukrainian cities and copying the archive's materials. We have to note that the most of Ukrainian archives especially in small towns and villages do not have any facilities to help searching such as computers, ordered catalogues of records and copying equipment. Typically this fee is about \$50 plus \$4-6 per hour archive searching for Kiev and about \$80-100 plus \$6 per hour for other cities. Of course, the cost varies depending of search difficulty. It is necessary condition to transfer approximately the half of expected value to Rabbi Bleich account as the payment in advance which will allow JPC to make preliminary work for searching. If our conditions are suit to you please fill down and send to us the following form. Then we will estimate the cost of search and indicate to you the value to transfer, bank account details and approximative time needed. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. We hope that will be helpful for you.

Please answer the following questions about person to search as complete as you can:

1. Name
2. Family name
3. Father's name of individual
4. Date of birth
5. Date of death
6. Place of birth
7. Other places (town, guberniya or region). If the person lived in more than one place please

enumerate them.

8. Profession (tradesman, physician, lawyer, pharmacist, hairdresser, musician, etc.).
9. Estate (merchant, peasant, etc.).
10. Education (which educational institution he attended or graduated from and in what place).
11. Had he served in the army, if yes, then please indicate where and when.
12. Was his family owners of real estate (houses, factories, others, where and when).
13. Any other data that can be helpful to the searchers.
14. The year of emigration.

Please reply to:

Yulia Zeveleva

Jewish Preservation Committee of Ukraine

Box 391-1, Kiev, 252034, Ukraine

Phone/fax: +380 44 416 07 84

E-mail: <jul@jpcu.freenet.kiev.ua>

Polish Physicians

By Leah Jordan Bisel

I want to publicly thank Amy Levinson for offering to look up Polish physicians in "Martyrdom of Jewish Physicians in Poland," a book which she had in her possession for a short time. She found my grandmother's 1st cousin for me! Information included date of birth, town of birth, university attended, graduate schools attended, the hospital where he practiced, time spent in the Polish army and date of death along with his wife and two sons.

Where else but on JewishGen? Thanks again!

Genealogy Software compared...on the web

By Phyllis Kramer

This is something I have searched for and finally found, and am passing it along to fellow jewishgeners. It is a wondrous page comparing most of the popular software available today, both features (from software developers) and pros/cons (from users). It contains prices, versions, developer information, demo availability and more. I saved the page to a file and printed it out for in-depth analysis.

And it's written in a clear crisp organized style.

Enjoy: Genealogy Software Springboard

<http://www.toltbbs.com/~kbasile/software.html>

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“I Wonder If We Are Related?”

By Sid Disenhouse

The goals of genealogy include the research of one's family tree, and by doing so, to perhaps find long-lost relatives. The story I am about to relate is one where, through a series of fortunate coincidences, I found a branch of my family tree that was completely unknown to me until very recently.

Last spring, I finally signed up with an Internet provider. In my exploration of various websites and services, I found a directory where I could register my name and E-mail address, and any other information I cared to make public. The information in this directory is available to anyone searching for names or E-mail addresses.

Early in June, about three days after I registered my E-mail address, I received the message that is the title of this article, and it was signed by Helen Disenhaus.

My surname is not a common one, and I have always felt that those who bore this name were related. It was only a matter of establishing how we were related. This very simple question from Helen Disenhaus started me, Helen, and many others, on a voyage of discovery which is related below.

I responded to Helen by telling her where my father was born and when he came to Canada. I received similar information from Helen. So far, nothing that would establish any relationship. My father and grandfather came from a small village, Poloniece (“Plunge” in Yiddish) in Kielce province in Poland. Helen's father came from a town near Warsaw. I responded that I had information going back about 200 years (compliments of my distant cousin, Judith Frazin of Chicago), and that, although my father and grandfather were born in Poloniece, the ancestral home before that was Staszow. The next response from Helen was promising. Helen had confirmation from her first cousin in Chicago, Leila Shaw, that the ancestral home of their family, before Warsaw, was also Staszow.

Soon my primary correspondence was with Leila Shaw, who kept closer tabs on the family and had information going back a few generations. I sent both Helen and Leila copies of my family tree, in the hope that something in my tree may ring a bell and establish a relationship. However, nothing developed. Helen and

Leila's grandfather was named Chaim Disenhaus, and his father's name was Izrael. Neither name appeared in my tree.

Much information was exchanged over the ensuing days, including family stories, names and places, and other information. However, none of the information that was exchanged seemed to lead to the establishment of a link.

Leila next put the question on the Jewishgen.usenet, asking if anyone had information on Disenhouse genealogy (I will use my spelling of name so as to avoid confusion). The next day she received a reply from Heshel Teitelbaum who, through his family ties, had researched the Disenhouse family tree and had information going back two generations prior to the earliest of my information. And, one of the many coincidences that this journey takes, I had attended Harbord Collegiate in Toronto with Heshel back in the early 1960s.

While we anxiously awaited for a copy of Heshel's charts by “snail mail,” he did send some tidbits of information by E-mail. I said earlier that Helen and Leila's great grandfather was named Izrael. Heshel's note indicated a number of Izrael Disenhouses born at approximately the same time - in the 1850s. Two were the sons of brothers, whose father was Rabbi Herszel Disenhouse of Staszow. A third Izrael was the son of two first cousins who had married - Isaac Leibish and Shaindli Disenhouse, who were the grandchildren of Isaac Disenhouse. Heshel had indicated that Herszel and Isaac Disenhouse were brothers.

Now we were getting close. I already knew that Isaac Disenhouse was my GGG grandfather, and that Isaac Leibish was my great grandfather's older brother. The question now was from which Izrael Disenhouse Helen and Leila were descendant. If they were descendant from my great grandfather's older brother, then they were long-lost third cousins. As it turned out, they weren't.

One of the sons of Rabbi Heshel Disenhouse was named Yeshrun. After Leila checked with some of her relatives and notes she had made years earlier, it turned out that the Izrael Disenhouse she was looking for was

the son of Yeshrun. So, we were not third cousins, but we were fifth cousins, descendant from two brothers who were born over 200 years ago.

Another coincidence: The cousin that Leila contacted to obtain additional information told her that a family reunion was planned for those who were descendants of Eche Hersh Disenhouse for no other reason than to get together, establish how they were all related, and to have a good time. Those in attendance had a Disenhouse somewhere in their family tree, but few were certain of how they were all related. None of the attendees bore the Disenhouse name.

The reunion was at the Novotel on the weekend of July 12-14, and Leila, at the last minute, decided to attend. I contacted the organizer of this reunion, explained what had transpired over the previous 6 weeks or so, and was invited to attend. That weekend, not only did I meet Leila, with whom I had corresponded only by E-mail (except for one telephone call), but I also met her brother and a multitude of other cousins who I never knew existed. For Leila it was also the first time she met these people who were her cousins. Unfortunately, Helen could not attend as she was on a business trip. When I finally had a chance to study the material and information that was distributed, it turned out that many were descendants of my great-great grandfather's younger brother.

Just to add to the coincidences, I had a family get-together planned at my home on July 14 as well. I invited Leila, her brother, and their families to join us so they could meet a few more long-lost cousins.

Yet another coincidence! During casual conversation, Leila mentioned that her daughter Jessica had travelled and studied in India a number of years ago. Her studies took her to Poona where she met a number of people from the small Jewish community there. My wife, Regina, was born in Bombay India, and her aunt still lives in Poona. Leila's daughter had not only met my wife's aunt, but had been invited to her home for a Shabbat meal.

When I tell the story of how we met through the Internet, many find it unbelievable that this could have happened. When I look back at it, I also find it hard to believe, but it did happen.

Sid Disenhouse is one of the longterm members of our society.

JEWISHGEN - cont'd

(Continued from page 5)

Please be advised that I received a letter dated 11/7/96 from Rabbi Schachter. He advised me to send any future requests for pages of testimony by mail and NOT by e-mail. He said that they are having internal problems processing e-mail and that is why my request was misplaced for a month.

Their address is in the Hall of Names faq [frequently asked questions] and is:

Yad Vashem
Hall of Names
Attn: Rabbi Schachter
P.O. Box 3477
Jerusalem, Israel

James Gross
Cherry Hill, N.J.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Wednesday, January 29, 1997 - 8:00 p.m.

At the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue
470 Glencairn Avenue

Wednesday, February 26, 1997 - 8:00 p.m.

At the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue
470 Glencairn Avenue

Wednesday, March 26, 1997 - 8:00 p.m.

At the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue
470 Glencairn Avenue



Please watch the "What's New" column in the Canadian Jewish News for the program of these meetings.

Genealogical Information in American Naturalization Records

By Glen Eker

American naturalization records are an excellent source of personal information on a particular individual. They provide both proof that this person is an American citizen and valuable genealogical information that will lead the researcher to survey other potential sources of family history. American naturalization records are available from three sources:

1. The Family History Centers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon)
2. The United States National Archives in Washington, DC
3. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Washington, DC.

The Family History Centers of the Mormon Church have available naturalization indexes, petitions for naturalization, and other naturalization documents for various courts, districts, and states. Dates and time periods may not be the same for all geographic areas. In order to see what material is available, the Family History Library Catalogue should be examined by state, district within the state, and then city, town, or village within the district and state. All material is on microfilm and is available for loan periods of three or six months or for an indefinite period. There are Family History Centers in Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, Brampton, Hamilton, Kitchener and other places in Canada.

At the United States National Archives in Washington, DC, are naturalization records for the period up to 1906. To receive an information package of all their holdings and application forms, write to National Archives, Washington, DC 20408, U.S.A. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Washington, DC, has all naturalization records from 1906 to the present. Application forms may be obtained by writing to Immigration and Naturalization Service, Freedom of Information, 425 I Street Northwest, Room 5304, Washington, DC 20536, U.S.A. Application forms may be xeroxed when obtained. Note on the form that it is a Freedom of Information Request, that all documents or records are desired, and that "genealogical research on my family" is the purpose for which documents or records are requested.

There is now a master name index of all individuals naturalized by the INS. Therefore, it is important to provide the family name and the given name that the

person may have been naturalized under, any other names used by the person, and the name used at the time of entry into the United States, if it is known. It is also important to provide the country of birth (exact place also if known) and an approximate date of birth (you may provide a time span of up to ten years). Any other information known should also be stated on the form, especially where the person may have lived at the time of naturalization. While as much information as possible is helpful, the INS requires only the correct name, place and date of birth, and where the person lived in the United States to locate a record.

Where the form asks for authorization and consent, simply write "not applicable." Proof of death is required for a person who was born less than one hundred years ago.

The Family History Centers of the Mormon Church have the Social Security Death Benefit Index on computer. This index lists information on all individuals who died between approximately 1962 and 1994 who made social security application for which benefits were paid. There may also be some earlier records listed. The index is also updated at various intervals. A computer printout of a person's record may be sent to the INS as proof of death.

The Family History Computer of the Mormon Church, which includes among other CD-ROMs the Family History Catalogue and the International Genealogical Index (IGI), may also be accessed on the fourth floor of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library at 789 Yonge Street, Toronto. It is best to phone ahead and reserve time on the computer at all locations since they are often booked weeks in advance. The Social Security Benefit Index may now be accessed also on the internet at: <<http://www.familyhistory.com/>>

The material contained in the naturalization record may include:

1. The Declaration of Intention,
2. The Petition for Citizenship,
3. The Certificate of Citizenship.

If other correspondence, documents, or records are contained in the file, they will also be sent.

The Declaration of Intention lists the court of naturalization declaration; name, age, occupation, description, and exact place and date of birth of the individual; country of emigration; method of arrival; last

foreign residence; name, place of birth, and residence of spouse. The Declaration of Intention may also contain a photograph of the individual.

The Petition for Citizenship will include the location of the naturalization court; exact date and place of birth; race; date and place where the person first declared intention to become a citizen; name, date, and place of birth of spouse; date and place of marriage; date, place, and method of entry into the United States; last country of residence; name, date, and place of birth of children; and names, addresses, and occupations of witnesses.

The Certificate of Citizenship will include a description of the individual, a photograph, and the place and date where the naturalization occurred.

The American naturalization records are important because they provide exact dates and places of birth of the individual and his spouse and children, the maiden name of the wife, and the exact date, place, and method of arrival of all family members into the United States. This may lead the genealogical researcher to other sources of information such as city directories, ship passenger manifests, birth and marriage records, and other available documents. There is no charge for obtaining naturalization records from the INS. Upon receiving an application, the INS sends the requester a letter with a file number stating that the request is being processed. The requester may receive the results quickly, within one or two months, or it may take any time up to a year or more. ☆

Glen Eker, a member of our society, is a frequent contributor to Shem Tov.

ADVERTISING RATES

SHEM TOV is now accepting display advertising for publication. Advertisers are requested to supply camera-ready art and payment by February 1997 for the Spring issue. Please indicate how many insertions you would like. As the chart indicates our basic rate is discounted for advertisements placed in four consecutive issues (one year) instead of a single issue only. By placing an ad in SHEM TOV, you are reaching a growing number of readers in Toronto, across Canada and internationally, and helping to support a unique and vital journal.

	One Issue	Four Issues (1 year)
Full Page	\$60	\$200
Half Page	\$30	\$100
Quarter Page	\$18	\$ 60
Eighth Page	\$10	\$ 32

Search ads are also available. Rates are \$5 for the first 25 words and 25¢ per word thereafter, your name and address are free. Please write advertisement clearly with family surnames you are researching in UPPER CASE letters. Make your cheque payable to Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) and mail to : JGS of Canada (Toronto), P.O. Box 446, Station A, Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5T1.

Cemetery Committee Report

By Howard Shidlowsky



The cemetery project, with the help of a determined group of transcribers and enthusiastic photographers, completed all the recording at Roselawn. While there is still some checking to do and some stones must be photographed again (mainly due to poor lighting), all our volunteers should take a bow. Thank you so much to all the volunteers who have helped us over the past six years. I can't mention all the names in such a short space but special praise must go to Paul Pascal for the sign and Diane Kriger, who came out rain or shine and stored the sign for us in her apartment.

While we congratulate ourselves on this tremendous accomplishment, we should not lose sight of our goal - a computerized database holding all the information gathered. The effort for this portion of our task has already begun. The better part of 2 sections of Roselawn are on computer now. The cemetery committee is working on a way to allow other volunteers to help us with data entry. We realize this will take quite an effort but we are confident that the society is up to the challenge. The committee has only to point in the right direction.

As the data entry comes into focus, the Cemetery Committee will already be planning for the spring and summer. As the weather turns cold and we wait for winter to end, the committee will meet to determine which aspect of the overall project will be tackled next.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their time and effort over the past few years, both volunteers and committee members. While it has not been an easy task, I have enjoyed the time spent as project co-ordinator. Unfortunately I can no longer give the project the attention it deserves. I will not be leaving the project, but will be focusing on the computer database for the next few months. I expect that Len Green will receive the same appreciation, respect and help from the members and the committee that I did. I look forward to helping Len move the project forward as smoothly and quickly as possible. ☆

Howard is the outgoing coordinator of the Cemetery Committee and has been associated with the project since its inception.

The Records of the Baron de Hirsch Institute 1892 - 1914 A Genealogical Resource

By Henry Wellisch

You may remember the article entitled "The Jews of Merthyr, Wales and Woodstock, Ontario" which appeared in the March 1996 edition of *Shem Tov*. While I was researching the sources dealing with this article, I was informed by the archivist of the Canadian Jewish Congress that the National Archives of Canada have on microfilm some of the Montreal records of the Jewish Colonization Association.

These records could help me, I was told, in finding out more about the people who came to Canada from Wales. So, in December 1995 I requested these records from the National Archives in Ottawa with the help of the North York Public Library through the inter-library loan system. Nothing happened. I sent in a second request through the North York library to Ottawa, but there was no reply. I then gave up and wrote the article without waiting any further.

In October 1996, ten months after my initial request, I received a call from the North York library that the material which I had asked for in December 1995 had finally arrived and would be at my disposal for about ten days. There were, I was told, eight microfilms in the collection. Over the next few days I spent many hours going through this material, which consisted mainly of the correspondence between the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society of Montreal and the Head Office of the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) in Paris. It seems these two organizations were combined in Montreal as the Baron de Hirsch Institute (BHI), named after the founder of the ICA.

Maurice, Baron de Hirsch de Gearuth (1831-1896), a German-Jewish multimillionaire and railway tycoon, was one of the greatest Jewish philanthropists of the 19th century. Since he was responsible for the construction of railways in the Turkish Empire, he was also known as "*Turkenhirsch*."

The period covered in the BHI files on these

microfilms extends from 1892 to 1914. I could not find anything in these records on the Jews from Wales who came to Canada in 1903. During the period covered in these records many thousands of Jews, mostly from Russia, Poland, Galicia and Rumania were arriving in Canada, and it was the task of the BHI to help them settle into this country. Great efforts were also made to distribute these immigrants to other places than Montreal and Toronto.

One of the aims of Baron de Hirsch was to establish Jewish agricultural colonies in Canada, U.S.A., and Argentina and transform these city and shtetl dwellers into farmers. To this end with the help of the BHI and the infusion of large sums of money by the ICA (mostly from the Baron), some Jewish colonies were founded in Quebec, Ontario, and a larger number in Western Canada. The BHI played an important role in this endeavor, and a large part of the correspondence deals with the establishment of various colonies in Western Canada, especially the colony of Hirsch (named after the Baron) in the area then known as the Northwest Territories and now part of the Province of Saskatchewan.

For those who are researching families of Canadian/Jewish background, the most interesting parts of this collection of documents are the numerous lists of immigrants and settlers, mostly in the Canadian West, that have been preserved. Here are some of them:

- Complete list of settlers (Heads of Families) in Hirsch (1896)
- Partial list of settlers (Heads of Families) in Qu'Appelle (1905)
- Partial list of Agricultural School Graduates, Winnipeg (1908)
- List of Galician boys due in Canada (1908)

Among the hundreds of documents preserved are many applications for farm loans by Jewish settlers, and from a typical example (see Document No. 1 on the

back page) one can see the detailed information which can be found there. (I wonder if Otilie Brudy's descendants are still living here in Toronto.)

Some documents do have a certain historical importance such as the sharp letter by the President of the BHI to Premier [sic] Sir Wilfried Laurier. This is not purely genealogical, but here it is anyway:

Hon. Sir Wilfried Laurier G.C.M.G.

Premier

Ottawa.

Dear Sir,

About two weeks ago I wired you asking if it would suit your convenience to have an interview with me as President of the BHI and it is with deep regret that up to this date no answer has reached me. It was simply to prepare for the reception in this country of 600 to 700 Jewish immigrants [sic] and you will have read from our papers of yesterday & today the awful state they are placed in by our Government inducing them to immigrate and in landing at Quebec being told that the laws of the country forbid that they should go inland without having \$25.00 per capita.

These unfortunates have been misled by the agents of the Government and I think in the cause of humanity that they should not be turned away from our shores. In appealing to you I need not enlarge on the subject as your own sense of fairness will lead you to devise some means of rectifying the unjust action of your Government.

The immigrants were not advised or prepared for such a severe monetary demand made without an hours notice.

Your immediate attention to the above will oblige.

Yours very truly

D. A. Ansell

This letter points to just a few of the problems the BHI had to deal with. Most of the correspondence is in English, but there are various letters written in Yiddish and German by Jews in Europe and Canada, some addressed to the Head Office of the ICA and others to the Montreal office of the BHI asking for assistance.

Two of the microfilms consist of the correspondence between the Head Office of the ICA in Paris and the representative of this organization in Buenos Aires. This part of the collection deals mostly with the planned establishment of Jewish colonies in Argentina.

I would also like to mention that, when I discussed this whole matter with our veteran member and Membership Coordinator Stan Guttman, he asked if there was anything in the BHI files on some of the Jewish colonies in Alberta. He explained that his family, after coming from Rumania, had originally settled there. I did check and found a four-page letter (in German) dated September 12, 1908 from the Waterman family to the ICA in Paris asking for a loan to improve their farm. As it turned out, these people were relatives of Stan and their descendants now live in Calgary.

Before I close I would like to mention that I brought this material to the attention of our member and former President Bill Gladstone, who published an article about these records in the Canadian Jewish News. ☆

Those of our members who came to our meeting on October 30, 1996, may remember that our scheduled speaker Mrs. Anne Joseph had to cancel at the last moment and it became necessary to provide a substitute. I was able to show, with the help of an overhead projector, a number of the documents which I had copied from this collection. To those members who now see some of the material for the second time, I apologize for the duplication.

SHEM TOV INVITES FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY TO SUBMIT ARTICLES, COMMENTS, ETC., RELATED TO THEIR JEWISH GENEALOGY.

Farm Loan
Application for \$ 250.

Lipton, Sask., Date Feb. 19th, 1906.

Name Alexander Brudy

Filed at Yorkton Jan. 8th, 1906

P.O. Address Lipton,

on S.W. 1/4-S. 36-T. 24-R. 12-
Name of farm W. End Town

province
Saskatchewan State Canada.

Name of husband Alexander Brudy
Canada

Birth date 1858

Birth place Roumania

Year of arrival in U.S. 1904
Occupation abroad Merchant

of present location
Occupation U.S.-Canada
1 year in Toronto Tailor

of naturalization
Present occupation farmer.
No Weekly earnings

Name of wife
Rebecca

Birth date
1870

Birth Place

Occupation and earnings, if any
Roumania (Wife still in Roumania)

Children	Birth	Arrival U.S.	Present Location	Occupation	Earnings
Otilie	1886		Toronto (married)		
Annie	1888		farm		
Ernestine	1890		Roumania		
Leon	1892		"		
Lazar	1893		Farm		
Paga	1895		Roumania		
Pasqua	1899		"		
Frieda	1901		"		
Josel	1904		"		

Other relatives living with this family

In what shape

Sources

Capital possessed by this applicant None

Has applicant or vendor had any dealings with this Society or Baron de Hirsch Fund? His brother Hyman Brudy one of the old Roumanian Colonists and a friend Marcu Sandbrandt also a Roumanian colonist have signed notes for the cost of transportation of the members of Alexander Brudy's family still in Roumania and I have recommended and you have heretofore approved of my recommendation that they be sent to Canada.

Personal impressions regarding this family. Good industrious man.

Can. Govt. Homestead.