



שם טוב
SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO)

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JEWISH SYNAGOGUES

The Religious Home in Toronto of God's "Ancient People"

By J. Ross Robertson

These are excerpts from an article that appeared in 1904 in Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto.

There are five places in Toronto used for Divine service by the Jews, God's ancient people, who reside here. One is on University Avenue, used by the Austrian Jews, another, and the principal one, is on Bond street. It is known as the Holy Blossom Synagogue, and supplemented the old building situated at 25 Richmond street east, which was for long years the religious home of all, or nearly all, the Jews of Toronto. For many years a Jewish congregation has assembled at a building on the corner of Elm and University streets, while there is yet another building at 123 Richmond street west, in which Jewish worshippers also assembled. The Jews also hold services in the building once used as a Coloured Methodist place of worship on Edward street.

The old Holy Blossom Synagogue was on the south side of Richmond, a few doors to the east of Victoria street, the principal entrance being on Richmond street. The interior was arranged in much the same manner as most Christian churches, part of the congregation being accommodated on the floor and part in galleries. Entering on Richmond street a small flight of stairs was ascended and one found himself, as is usual, in a small lobby. There stood an attendant who, if you were a Christian probably directed you not to remove your hat.

Over the southern end of the interior of the synagogue was, still is indeed, a Hebrew scroll, "Know before whom thou standest," and beside this are two tablets upon which are emblazoned the first two words of each command in the Decalogue. Over the front door on a tablet is engraved "Synagogue," underneath that, 5636, which according to Jewish chronology is the year of the world. Surmounting this is a scroll bearing the following text, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One God."

The following description of the services at the Holy Blossom Synagogue, and the services in the others are identical, gives an excellent account of a form of devotion with

which the great majority of Christians are wholly unfamiliar. It was first published in 1886, and is now republished in almost the same words as it then appeared.

* * * * *

About 125 persons were present, two-thirds of whom were men, and that they were present for an earnest, serious purpose was self-evident. The decorum, even on the part of the little boys that were too young to follow or possibly to understand the service was irreproachable. The impression made upon a visitor both by the appearance and manner of the men generally was most favourable both as to their intelligence and sincerity. And it may well be said

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Programs organized by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) at the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue - 470 Glencairn Avenue (unless otherwise noted)

Doors open at 7:30, program begins at 8 p.m.

Non-member fee: \$5.00 per meeting

Our meeting schedule for 2004-2005 has been tentatively set as follows:

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Speaker: Marian Press

Topic: Using Internet Search Engines Effectively for Genealogy Research

This presentation will deal with using both general and specialized search tools in family history searches on the Internet, and offer tips and tricks for making your results specific and relevant. Marian Press is a librarian at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She has taught a variety of courses on Web use and design for the FIS Professional Learning Institute at the University of Toronto, The National Institute for Genealogical Studies, the Ontario Library Association, and the Toronto Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society.

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

Speaker: Anna Shternshis

Topic: Jewish Families in the Soviet Union

Anna Shternshis, Assistant Professor of Yiddish and Yiddish literature at the University of Toronto, will discuss the transformation of Jewish family structures under the Soviet regime. Based on 300 interviews with Soviet Jews born in the 1920s and earlier, her presentation includes fascinating stories of love, courtship, and complex family relations among Jews during the most difficult years of Soviet history. Professor Shternshis is the author of Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923 -1939 (forthcoming, Indiana University Press), and is currently working on a study of Jewish

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The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada was founded in 1985 and currently has over 200 members. Membership costs \$36 per calendar year, \$18 for students. (Please note that the out of town reduction has been deleted). 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* and on our website at: www.jgstoronto.ca.

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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Officers of the Society:

President	CAROLYNNE VEFFER	president@jgstoronto.ca
Vice President	GORD MESLIN	vp@jgstoronto.ca
Secretary	LUCY SADOWSKY	secretary@jgstoronto.ca
Treasurer	G. ROGERS (Acting)	treasurer@jgstoronto.ca
Membership	NEIL RICHLER	membership@jgstoronto.ca
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Shem Tov Staff:

Editor	DIANE KRIGER	
Managing Editor	HENRY WELLISCH	shemtov@jgstoronto.ca
Contributing Editor	RUTH CHERNIA	
Layout and Design	DULCEY HOFFMAN	
JGS Copy Service	STAN ZEIDENBERG	
Contributors to this Issue	VALERIE SCHAZKER HENRY WELLISCH	

E-mail address of the society:

info@jgstoronto.ca

Upcoming Events *cont'd from page 2*

daily life during the Stalinist period.

Wednesday, March 30, 2005

Speaker: Dr. Rolf Lederer

Topic: Jewish Genealogy During the Last 30 Years (with special emphasis on the 20-year history of JGS Toronto) PLUS 20th Anniversary Celebration

For this special presentation on the 20th Anniversary of JGS Toronto, Dr. Lederer will offer tips on successful genealogy research, based on his own 30 years of research experience. The presentation will include audio-visual aids. There will also be a wonderful display of photos taken at JGS Toronto events over the years.

Dr. Lederer, together with Rayzel Robinson, founded the Jewish Genealogy Society of Canada (Toronto) in March 1985. He served as its Treasurer for three years, before becoming President. He was Secretary of the IAJGS for three years, before becoming Vice President. Dr. Lederer writes for several publications, including Shem Tov, Avotaynu and The Canadian Jewish News. He provided material for the Encyclopedia of Jewish Genealogy, and he was a co-founder of Stammbaum, the Journal of German Jewish Genealogy. He lectures frequently, at IAJGS meetings as well as to groups in Toronto, Oakville, Hamilton, New York, Washington, Winnipeg and Israel.

Wednesday, April 20, 2005

Tour of Toronto Archives

Wednesday, May 18, 2005

Speaker: Professor Irving Abella, York University

Topic: Becoming Canadian: Jewish Immigration to Toronto 1900 - 1930

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

Annual General Meeting and Member Breakthroughs

For further information visit our website at www.jgstoronto.ca or watch the "What's New" column in the Canadian Jewish News.

Spotlight on Members and Friends

Are you interested in volunteering on a genealogy project? Would you like to get some ideas for a project of your own? In this column we will profile some members and friends of our Society, who, in addition to researching their own family trees, are undertaking projects of interest to the general community.

As **Ellen and Sonny Monheit** have discovered, one issue inevitably leads to ten others in genealogy research. The Monheits' family-tree research focuses in particular on Iwaniska, Wierzbnik, Kielce, and Kiev, as well as Canada, the U.S. and South America. But as Ellen explains: "In the process of trying to discover information about our respective families, we've become sidetracked with lateral information that has led to other projects."

Their major "extracurricular" work relates to Iwaniska (or Ivansk), Poland, the shtetl of Ellen's paternal family. There is a project underway to restore the Ivansk Cemetery, or at least to erect a monument to those who were known to have been buried there. Ellen notes: "We are gathering names and dates from oral histories we're doing, ship manifests, and family trees we're collecting."

Another of their projects is to unearth data about the Kielce Pogrom of 1918. Interest in this subject was precipitated by a totally unexpected revelation from a newly found cousin in Argentina: Ellen's uncle, of whom she had been unaware, had been stabbed to death in this pogrom. Ellen has also learned that both her great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather were eminent Rabbis in Kielce.

A third project is to research the Kensington Market area, particularly a family home at 13 Kensington that is still apparently intact.

The ultimate aim is to produce a book. The Monheits would welcome information relating to any of these projects - in particular, old passports, pictures and other documents. Start searching the attics and basements, everybody, and contact the Society at shemtov@jgstoronto.ca if you would like to be put in touch with the Monheits.



מרים בעקערמאן

Miriam Beckerman
Yiddish translator

416 489-7771

in this connection that whatever their provincialisms and business habits, the Jewish people do not furnish the criminals of society; they are never identified with dynamite or anarchy; they are always good citizens. Although scattered the wide world over with no national home of their own, they never abuse the freedom of a foster country by converting that freedom into lawlessness. The thrift and economy of the Jews are proverbial; whatever of prestige modern civilization imbibes from Christianity is drawn from a Jewish source, because Christ Himself was a Jew and His mother was a Jewess. All the beauty and purity embodied by art in its portrayal of the Madonna come to us from the divine character of the Jewish maiden who is so tenderly enshrined in Christian affection and thought.

It is the custom for the men to wear a long scarf called a Tallis, with fringes at the ends according to a command given in the Old Testament. The garment is either silk or woolen and more or less richly embroidered, according to the means and taste of the wearer. It was noticed that that of the Parnas was an exceedingly beautiful vestment with gold embroidery. There is no distinction of office or rank betokened by these garments; some of the men before putting on the robe reverently kissed it and folded it over the face a moment in silent prayer.

Rabbi Phillips occupied the platform and with exceedingly musical and well-intoned voice chanted the Hebrew ritual, which, with its low, wailing sound varied with frequent guttural tones, is not only novel but impressive. All the men prayed, using books printed in Hebrew, and some were so enrapt with the spirit of devotion that the body kept swaying back and forth in rhythm with the low, murmuring, rumbling tones of the service. The chanting was generally heavy, with a bass-like sound as an undertone, relieved by an occasional lighter intonation that rose and fell in and out of the harmony, giving it a weird-like movement. Occasionally, in response to some peculiarly expressive sentence that fell from the rabbi's lips an outburst of voices carried the chant up in loud almost ferocious tones, but it soon sank down into that low cadence like the soft, murmuring play of the waves upon the shore when the day is dying and night is coming on.

After this chanting had continued some time the curtain was drawn from before the ark by one of the members, and the sacred scroll, after being kissed, in token of the Jews' reverence for the Law, was carried to the reading desk. It is written upon parchment, in Hebrew, of course, and is rolled from both sides according to the ancient custom. What is the back part of a book in English is the front part in Hebrew, and the reading is therefore done from the right to the left instead of the opposite way.

There have been substituted for three of the original life trustees Messrs. A. D. Benjamin, Samuel Wolf and J. Singer. These trustees hold the property in behalf of the congregation, the president of which is B. Rosenthal, who officiates at the business meetings; the treasurer, or Gabba, is Mr. Kassel. These officers, with the seven trustees, constitute the governing board. But there is another president called Parnas, who conducts the ritual in the public service, and this official

is Mr. A. D. Benjamin. The Rabbi, the Parnas and the assistant reader are stationed on the platform and conduct the reading of the Torah. The Pentateuch is divided into fifty-two parts, one for each Sabbath day's reading; seven members each Sabbath are called from among the men indiscriminately to participate in the reading. When he is called he puts on the Tallis, if not already vested, and after the reading, whispers to the assistant reader what amount of money he contributes, and that officer then repeats a blessing in behalf of any one mentioned by the donor. This is called the votive offering, and takes the place of the ordinary collection; it is the offertory of the Jewish service; no money is received directly, but it is pledged in this way and paid afterwards.

Frequently during this reading the congregation rises and responds in a chanting refrain that is not devoid of interest. At the conclusion of the reading the sacred scroll is elevated, while all stand and unite in a chant. The scroll is then enclosed in a rich velvet case and entrusted to the care of any member that may be summoned for the purpose. The Haphtorah, or passage from the prophets, is next read and then, while all stand, the rabbi repeats prayers, in English, for the Queen, the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Royal Family, the Governor-General of the Dominion and the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, and these prayers are even more fervent and uttered with greater apparent sincerity than is done in some Church of England congregations attended by the writer. This is the only portion of the ritual that is given in our language, the Hebrew being used in every other part.

* * * * *

It must be borne in mind by the readers of this article that the foregoing description is in some of its details regarding individuals purely historical, but that in all other points it describes accurately the form of worship which obtains in the new synagogue as it did in the old.

Holy Blossom synagogue is a somewhat strange, yet beautiful structure, on the east side of Bond street, near Gould street, and receives more than common notice from all who pass its doors. The lower part is built of heavy chiseled stone, and the upper portion, to a considerable height, of grey brick, surmounted on either side by a peculiar looking dome, low and massive. It presents a strangely interesting picture to the passer-by.

The Jewish people of Toronto are justly proud of their beautiful synagogue. For years they met and worshipped in the little synagogue in Richmond street. But the Jewish population outgrew the accommodations of the Richmond street tabernacle. Thanks largely to the energy and generosity of Messrs. A. D. and F. D. Benjamin, each of whom subscribed \$5,000 towards the erection of the new synagogue, the Jewish people now gather in a tabernacle well befitting a people of much greater wealth and numerical strength than the Jewish people of Toronto.

Many people outside the Jewish faith, with commendable tolerance and with an entire disregard of bigotry, subscribed liberally to the erection of Holy Blossom synagogue. So generously did those of other faiths in the city of Toronto assist

the Jews, that Rabbi Lazarus, the late pastor of the congregation, expressed at the opening of the building, his unreserved opinion that in no other city in America could such assistance have been procured. Over \$40,000 was spent on Holy Blossom Synagogue, and remembering that the Jewish population in Toronto includes barely 150 members, the cost would have been an almost unconquerable obstacle without assistance from the outside.

Prayer for the Queen and Royal Family, the Governor-General and the Lieutenant-Governor was said in conclusion. The Rev. Solomon Jacobs became the rabbi of the Holy Blossom Synagogue on Bond street, in 1902, and remains there as pastor in 1904. At the University street place of worship the Rev. Isaac Berkowitz has been the rabbi since 1898, his predecessor having been the Rev. Alexander J. Neumann, who assumed his duties in 1889. The pastor of the Richmond street congregation is the Rev. J. Breslin, while there is no permanent rabbi attached in 1904 to the congregation meeting on Edward street.

* * * * *

AUSTRIAN JEWS

The Austrian and Polish Jews have a place of worship on the east side of Chestnut street, numbered 109, 111. It is a plain brick structure standing some five feet from the thoroughfare, and is entered by a short flight of steps from the street. Its interior is as plain as its exterior, there being though all the necessary furnishings for the conduct of divine service according to Jewish ritual. The building will accommodate about 150 worshippers, though the average congregation is not more than sixty or seventy. The synagogue was erected in 1899, the corner-stone being laid with all solemnity by Leo Gelber, March 18th, 1899. For two years all went well with this small assemblage of Israelites until on September 29th, 1901 a fire broke out in the eastern portion of the building which threatened to lay the whole structure in ruins. Fortunately though, through the efforts of the firemen the flames were soon subdued, no damage being done to any of the sacred scrolls or writings, which were when the fire broke out promptly rescued from the building and conveyed to a place of safety. The injury done to the building amounted to about \$600 in value and was within a very brief period after the fire fully repaired. There have been several occasional pastors at this synagogue, the present one (1903) being the Rev. Isaac Halpern, who entered upon his work in 1902.

Among all the various religious agencies at work in this city there is perhaps none conducted under such difficulties as that just described. The people are many of them strangers in a strange land, some cannot even speak English, and all are more or less estranged by language and early training from their English-speaking co-religionists.

Cemetery Committee Progresses on JOWBR Project

As you will recall, our Cemetery Committee has undertaken to collect and digitize all Toronto-area Jewish burial records for submission to the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR). Chair Shelley Stillman is pleased to report that the committee is well on its way to this goal for most of the cemeteries contacted:

- * Dawes Road: 13,000 burial records have been submitted to JOWBR, and will be on-line in the near future. We are also in receipt of a certificate from JOWBR acknowledging this submission.
- * Jones Avenue: Records from both sections have now been submitted to JOWBR.
- * Pape Avenue: Records now being entered into the database.
- * Lambton Mills/Royal York Road: Records forthcoming.
- * Pardes Shalom: Records forthcoming.
- * Roselawn: The database is about 500 entries from completion, and the sections are being mapped.
- * Mount Sinai, Shaarei Shomayim, Beth Tzedec, Holy Blossom: Initial contact made.
- * Bathurst Lawn: No progress to date.

Many thanks to Shelley and the members of the cemetery committee for all their work this year. If you have contact information that you think would assist with this project, please get in touch with the committee at <info@jgstoronto.ca>.

ADVERTISING RATES

SHEM TOV is now accepting display advertising for publication. Advertisers are requested to supply camera-ready art and payment by February 2005 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 (one 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, Toronto, Ontario M2N 5T1.

Review:

Of Human Agony

By Carl and Irene Horowitz. New York: Shengold Publishers, 1992.
(To order, contact the authors at 2719 Whitman Drive, Brooklyn, New York, 11234.)

Sara's Blessing

By Edwin Langberg, with Julia Langberg. Lumberton NJ: Emethas Publishers, 2003.

by Valerie Schazker

Of Human Agony, published about a decade ago and now difficult to find, tells the story of Irene Horowitz from Boryslaw, alternating with that of her husband, Carl, who came from the Lwów area. First-hand accounts of survivors' stories of this region are rare. Those that exist fill the historical void with facts about the extermination of the Jewish communities of this district. Edwin Langberg's account, released last year, adds much to our knowledge of the Holocaust in Drohobycz.

In the simple and direct manner in which both he and his wife write, Carl Horowitz tells of hiding for a while on false papers, working in Lwów and Cracow, until he was betrayed and sent to Plaszów concentration camp.

Carl's account reveals much about the attitudes to Jews in eastern Poland. Like many survivors he is able to tell of the unexpected kindnesses of many but also of the viciousness of others, particularly those in the Lvov area: *Generally, I found the people of Cracow to be much kinder to the Jews who were hiding there than the people from my hometown of Lvov. The daughter of my landlady worked for the Gestapo, but she never denounced me. I am sure that she must have heard the rumors about my being Jewish. In Lvov, hoodlums had stood at the Main Railroad Station and accused every traveler of being a Jew.*

Like Carl, Irene had enjoyed a life before the war not much different from that of any other middle class girl in North America. She had persuaded her accountant father to allow her to attend Boryslaw's gymnasium, where she was a good student. Although the Russian occupation from 1939 to 1941 brought hardships to the town, Irene was able to stay in school, participating in the choir and dance classes, and performing in a musical. Indeed, she found that the Soviets encouraged a more open method of teaching, free from the rigidity and prejudice of the old Polish system.

On July 1, 1941 the Germans invaded. The terror and confusion faced by the Jews as the Germans rounded them up is vividly described. Irene is able to recall events in great detail, such as the moment when she and her father made a split-second decision not to line up for work as the Germans demanded. Instead they left through another exit,

hid in an attic and managed to escape being beaten or killed in the streets or deported. The month long pogrom in August 1942 claimed 6,000 of Boryslaw's Jews, one third of the pre-war population, including Irene's mother. With the warning of another "action" in October, her only hope was to find refuge with friendly Poles. She hid with a courageous family in Truskawiec, not far from Boryslaw; but, when her presence was suspected by a neighbor, she had to leave for her own and their protection. Farther from the town Irene found a new refuge where she was hidden for several months in a hole in the side of well not high enough to stand in.

For Edwin Langberg's family, the Soviet occupation was more brutal. His uncle was killed in prison for the crime of being a lawyer and Zionist supporter, and his entire family was deported to Siberia.

In June 1941, when the Soviet forces marched out of Drohobycz, they drafted Langberg's father, a physician, to accompany the troops. Eighteen-year-old Edwin was left to protect his family of four women and an infant from the hardship and terror of the Nazi occupation. Before she died in 1942, his ailing grandmother, Sara of the book's title, predicted that he would survive the war. Now after fifty-eight years, Langberg has revealed his story of foresight, incredible daring, hair's breadth escapes and miraculous luck. The plot of this intrepid teenager's struggle to survive is stranger than fiction. It is a gripping book, difficult to put down.

Soon after the atrocities began, Edwin resolved not to be one of the passive victims. Forced, as all Jews were, to sell most of his belongings in order not to starve, he despaired of finding the means to flee until, in one of many crucial instances of luck, he discovered valuables in the trunks left behind by a relative who had been deported to Siberia. After the brutal "action" in August 1942, when Edwin barely saved his life by hiding in a culvert for many hours, he knew that he had to escape immediately. The valuables he had found enabled him to arrange hiding places and money for the women of his family and leave enough for his escape.

With a birth certificate obtained from one of his Pol-

ish schoolmates, he and a friend fled to Lwów. However, since the danger there for Jews on false papers was acute, Langberg took a chance and joined recruits to work for a German company in Kiev. In occupied Ukraine he moved from one dangerous situation to another, escaping from a Romanian controlled prison in Odessa, working briefly for the Soviet underground, ending up in a Russian prisoner-of-war labor camp, and finally joining the Russian controlled "Polish" army which "liberated" Poland. From Poland he was able to escape to Prague and from there to the United States.

Langberg also tells of his personal experiences with Drohobycz's Judenrat. It is obvious that Langberg has been haunted by this issue for his entire life and feels that it must be discussed more honestly. While appreciating the problem of blaming the victims and cognizant of the eastern European tradition of Jews dealing with the Gentile community through councils, he is also aware of personal conflict that compromised many members of the Judenrat: *After December, the pressure for the Judenrat to compromise increased. The guarantee of safety for Judenrat members and their families became priceless. Fear corrupts. The power to decide who goes on the next resettlement list and dies and who stays and lives was staggering. Power corrupts.*

Throughout the book Langberg vividly recreates the characters that played roles in his story, among them his pre-war Polish classmates who were helpful, a wily Soviet partisan he met in the Romanian jail, and Hugo Weisgall, a composer, who was the Assistant Military Attaché to the US embassy in Prague and who managed Langberg's escape to the West.

More than a half a century after the events, new details about the horror of the Second World War are brought to light. Edwin Langberg and Carla and Irene Horowitz undertook a painful task in telling their stories. In doing so they have not only revealed important and objectively told eye-witness accounts of the events but have also given us the insight that the passage of time has brought to their evaluation of them.

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF SHEM TOV

We are interested in relevant material for Shem Tov. If you have something to report, don't hesitate to contact us at:
shemtov@jgstoronto.ca

Survivors' Memoirs and Genealogy

The arrival of Holocaust Education Week reminds us of why it is essential to read, and re-read, the wealth of material contained in survivors' memoirs.

As genealogists, we have, of course, an interest in history. Yet our collective history is often under attack - denied, ignored, or its terminology usurped so as to devalue its significance. How important it is, therefore, to educate ourselves, and to ensure that each voice is listened to, both compassionately and fairly.

As genealogists, we also approach history at the "micro" level. We are aware that behind every list, every entry on a ship's manifest, every tombstone inscription, there is a story: of split-second decisions, of chance meetings, of unbelievable luck, good or bad. This human context is what we wish to "collect," as much as our records of names and dates. We can have no better instruction in the complex art of portraying humanity than survivors' memoirs.

IAJGS Updates

A Call for Papers has been issued for the 2005 IAJGS Conference, to take place in Las Vegas, Nevada, 10-15 July. Those interested in presenting a paper should submit a 50-word biography and a 150-word synopsis to jgssn2005@yahoo.com by December 31, 2004. The program committee's areas of interest are Eastern Europe, South America and Israel; they will also consider papers on emigration/immigration records (specifically from Hamburg, Bremen, Rotterdam and Liverpool); methodology; and little used or little known resources. The program committee will give notification of its decisions by January 31, 2005.

This Conference is being hosted by the JGS of Southern Nevada. For Conference information, go to their web site at www.jgssn.org and click on the link to the Conference.

It has just been announced that the 2007 Conference will take place in Salt Lake City.

Ask Our Experts

Based on feedback from the Programming Survey, an "Ask the Experts" resource has been instituted.

You can now e-mail your specific genealogy questions to asktheexperts@jgstoronto.ca, and they will be directed to one of our group of experienced genealogists (who have kindly volunteered their time). The questions and answers will be read out at the general meetings, at an Ask the Experts session to take place from 7:45 to 8:00.

JEWISHGEN PLUS

News from JewishGen and Jewish Genealogy Newsletters,
Compiled and Annotated by Henry Wellisch

New Holocaust Data Sets at JewishGen

JewishGen is pleased to announce the addition of 100,000 new records to the JewishGen Holocaust Database. There are ten new data sets:

- * Survivor list published by the "Central Committee of Jews in Bavaria" in Munich
- * Persons moved from Bergen-Belsen to Sweden
- * Tirgu Mures (Maros-Vasarhely) deportation list
- * Tirgu Mures ghetto list
- * Jews from the Regat (pre-WWI Romania) who sent money to Jews in the ghettos of Transnistria
- * Hechalutz Zionist youth group murdered in Zasavica near Sabac (Serbia)
- * Jewish women in Dortmund, Germany
- * Polish child survivors
- * Polish refugee children in Persia
- * Hungarian Jewish KMSZ (Military Forced Labourer) list

There are also additions to two data sets: Dachau Indexing Project and North Bavarian Jews.

The JewishGen Holocaust Database is a collection of 74 data sets, containing over 900,000 entries about Holocaust victims and survivors. It can be searched at <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Holocaust>.

Steven Morse's Ship-Lists Project

Diane Jacobs, New York, reports on JewishGen:

Several months ago I posted a message stating that Steve had a list of every ship arrival into Ellis Island, and for most of them he even had links back to the manifest pages. It was part of an ongoing project.

Now I learned that Steve has just completed this project after working on it for two years. His team of over 50 volunteers went through every one of the 3700 rolls of Ellis Island microfilms from 1892 to 1924. For each arrival they found, they recorded the roll, volume, frame, date, ship-name, and ports.

Now that it is complete, there exists for the first time a searchable list of every ship arrival along with links to the associated manifest pages. The list consists of a total of 84,000 ship arrivals.

The searchable list can be accessed by clicking on the "Ship-Lists" link in the Ellis Island section of Steve's web site at <http://stevemorse.org>.

Genealogy and Family History Internet Web Directory - Update

This web directory, with links to thousands of sites of genealogical interest, can be found at <http://www.academic-genealogy.com>. The Directory's creator, Tom Tinney, Sr., reports:

A complete links check was done and updated to current findings, throughout the whole directory. I can be specific by giving an example under Religion and Culture, at: <http://www.academic-genealogy.com/archives.htm#Religion> The American Jewish Archives reference to their large and growing genealogy collection has been added.

I do not present statistical analysis above and beyond the general intent of the creation of the Directory in the first place; namely, to provide "Free Coverage of the Genealogy World in a Nutshell." For example, Cyndi's List notes that they now have more than 236,650 links. At the same time, Linkpendium (USA centered), "developed by Karen Isaacson and Brian Leverich, founders of the extremely popular Roots Web genealogical community site," contains 1,021,009 links, according to the last posted count. Portals to the Word, from the Library of Congress, is now beginning to include selectively, for some countries, genealogy sections, such as that for the Country of Lithuania, at: <http://corc.oclc.org/WebZ/XPathfinderQuery?sessionid=0:term=5836:xid=LCP>

Since all of these sites, and thousands more, are included in The Genealogy and Family History Internet Web Directory, (most of which change and expand on a daily rate), the content itself automatically provides an encyclopedic worldwide perspective. Independent concurrent evaluations of the trends and direction of genealogy and family history on the Internet can be acquired by reviewing regularly, "What's New in Genealogy & Family History Resources?"

This site includes: New information, news and current issues about the Genealogy and Family History Community: conferences, transactions, personal activities, research, publications, social interactions and contacts with supporting institutions and public leaders, at: <http://www.academicgenealogy.com/whatsnewingenealogyfamilyhistory.htm> Selective sampling of forthcoming books are noted at: "What's New in Genealogy & Family History Books?" <http://www.academic-genealogy.com/whatsnewbooks.htm>

JEWISHGEN PLUS

News from JewishGen and Jewish Genealogy Newsletters,
Compiled and Annotated by Henry Wellisch

Genealogy on eBay

Dick Eastman, in a recent Eastman Report, writes about the usefulness of eBay, that "huge online garage sale," as he puts it, in finding books and records of genealogical interest:

Indeed, old records and genealogy books are available by the hundreds on eBay. You can go to <http://www.ebay.com> and search for almost anything. I did a search on the word "genealogy" and found 3,094 items listed. Some eBay sellers apparently cannot spell too well: I also did a search on the misspelled word "geneology" and found another 45 items listed for sale!

...As when searching through garage sales and flea markets, be prepared to sift through a lot of junk in order to find the gems of interest. You will find books, reprints of books, scanned books on CD-ROM disks, reprints of Virkus' Compendium (a series of pseudo-genealogy books printed from the 1920s through 1940s and generally considered to be worthless), genealogy software (always verify that you will receive a legal software license), family Bibles, and more. One of the greatest treasures I ever found was a handmade coverlet made about 1840 by a man in my extended family tree, not a direct ancestor but a great-great-great uncle. The quilt included a handwritten letter from the man's granddaughter written in the 1930s describing her grandfather and how she came to inherit the coverlet.

Other items listed on eBay are not worth much. You can find collections of family group sheets, both on paper or even on CD-ROM. The odds of finding an ancestor on those sheets are slim. Besides, you can search through millions of equivalent records online at no charge; so, why pay five or ten bucks to purchase a tiny fraction of that information?

I have also found listings of CD-ROM disks that contain scanned images of all sorts of books, including a few that are still under copyright. Of course, selling copyrighted material is a Federal offense. Anyone doing so risks receiving an unpleasant letter from the copyright holder's lawyers. If you see such disks listed, you might drop a note to the seller. I have done that and have always received pleasant "thank you" messages in which the seller claimed that he or she did not know that the copyright was still in effect.

Scanning through other items listed on eBay shows that most everything genealogy-related can be found there. In fact there are so many genealogy-related items that there are too many to find by using a simple one-word search of "genealogy." Luckily, there is an easy solution: narrow the search down for specific terms by using more words.

I did a search for "Eastman genealogy," which specifies the results to show any listings that have both those words in the titles. There were none on the day that I searched. However,

by clicking on "Search title and description," I was able to look for those two words in both the short title and the longer descriptions entered by the sellers. This time I found 43 items listed. Some were of interest while others were referring to items previously mentioned in this article. However, searching through 43 items is much easier than searching through thousands.

Too busy to go to eBay every few days to find items of interest? There is an answer for you as well. eBay will automatically conduct daily searches for any words or combinations of words that you are looking for. If found, eBay will send an e-mail to you, listing the item(s) found. You do not even need to visit eBay at all until you find something to bid on. You can find more information at http://pages.ebay.com/My_eBay/.

Auschwitz Database Accessible in English

Adelle Weintraub Gloger, Shaker Hts., Ohio, reports on JewishGen:

About a year ago (Aug. 2003) there was some discussion on this list about the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum searchable database. At that time the search facility was in Polish only, although some of the web site was in English. Today I revisited the site. To my surprise the search facility was in English. In fact the entire site can be accessed in English.

The site is: <http://www.auschwitz.org.pl/html/eng/start/index.php> The main site is: www.auschwitz.org.pl

The total number of records in the database remains at 69,000 and the search will still display no more than 40 names at a time even if there is indication that many more are in the database. In the FAQ there is an explanation of the use of 'wildcard' entries.

Finding a Grave in Israel

Stan Finkelstein reports on JewishGen:

Regarding finding of a grave in Israel, I would contact the Chevrah Kedushah in Jerusalem who may be able to help. I have a telephone number for them but I'm not sure of the prefix. The number is 972-2-538-4144. There is also available a burial record for everyone buried on the Mount of Olives from 1760-1906. All of you who are trying to find relatives buried on the M of O might try to contact Mathilde Tagger of Jerusalem. She delivered a presentation at the 24th IAJSJ Conference in July: <tagger@actcom.co.il>

European Union Passports for Israelis

The Austrian Press Agency (03/16/04) has an interesting article headed "Over One Million Israelis Could Soon Have a Passport from an EU Country." Many Israelis were expected to make such passport applications as of May 1, when the EU added eight new member states from Central Europe, together with Cyprus and Malta.

The article goes on to explain that some 360,000 Israelis already possess a passport from one of the EU member states; another 700,000 are eligible to apply because either they or their parents originally came from one of the older or newer member states.

New ShtetlLink for Brest-Litovsk (Belarus)

A ShtetlLink at JewishGen has been started for Brest-Litovsk (Brisk), Russia (now, Brest, Belarus). This can be found at: <http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/brest/home.html>

The Brest Research Special Interest Group reports:

One of the most important projects that the Brest, Belarus Research SIG is undertaking is the research of our ancestral records that are currently housed in the Minsk Archives. More information about this research project can be found at: http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/brest/Research_Minsk_Archives_2004.html

Also in December 2003, there was some private research done in the above-mentioned Archives by four individuals. Part of the results of this research can be found at: http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/brest/Research_Minsk_Archives_Dec_2003.html The Group is planning a trip to Brest in 2005. More information can be found at: http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/brest/Brest_Trip.html In addition, a group of Briskers have organized the Brest, Belarus Research SIG. After just 60 days we have 117 members. It is a strong, very active and growing research group. For anyone interested in joining this FREE site it is: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/brest_belarus/

By the way, the Belarus SIG in general is one of the most active. At the recent Conference in Jerusalem of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), this SIG was recognized for Outstanding Project, including the "All Belarus Database" on JewishGen.

More Data to be Available from Israeli Archives?

One of the many successes to come out of the Jerusalem IAJGS Conference was the increasing interaction between genealogists and Israeli archives. As reported by Martha Lev Zion, IAJGS director and member of the Jerusalem Conference Organizing Committee:

The various archives around Israel suddenly sat up and took notice of the advantages of the Israel Genealogical Society [IGS], which was an unexpected boon. We developed a special rapport with the various archives and archivists and are now working hand in glove to database information that will in turn bring in more researchers. (There is nothing sadder than an unused, unknown archive.)

"Nu? What's New?"

News about Jewish Genealogy from Avotaynu
Gary Mokotoff, Editor

Help Test the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names

On Monday, November 22, Yad Vashem will make available to the public their Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names. It provides information about more than three million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Central to the database are more than two million Pages of Testimony (PoT) submitted primarily by relatives to memorialize members of their family.

Yad Vashem would like the genealogical community to preview the system so they can get an increased level of volume testing of the system. Yad Vashem state it will be available at their home page, <http://www.yadvashem.org>, sometime Thursday evening, Israel time, November 18. Go to the site and search for the names that are important for your genealogical research.

Some people have experienced problems using the database due to conflicts with firewall software. The Ad Blocking feature of Norton Personal Firewall apparently prevents the results of a search from being displayed. If you have difficulty with the system, temporarily turn off your firewall to determine if the problem goes away. If it does, bring up portions of the firewall until you determine which function is preventing proper access to the site.

Persons who used the system when it was available briefly after the annual conference on Jewish genealogy in 2003 will find the functionality little changed. Most of the external changes in the past year have been cosmetic; ways to make the system easier to understand by non-researchers. The powerful and comprehensive search facilities are all still there.

There are two search facilities: the basic search that appears on the initial screen and an advanced search. The basic search permits the user to search by last name, first name and place. The advanced search allows access to most fields on the Page of Testimony including last name, first name, father's first name, mother's first name, date of birth (approx), place of birth, place of residence, spouse's first name, profession, date of death (approx), place of death, submitter's first and last name.

Most fields may be searched by Exact Spelling, Fuzzy, Synonym or Soundex. Fuzzy search is an algorithm which assumes the search information is only close to correct. For example, searching for "Sarah" also will produce results for "Sarha." The Synonym feature is very powerful. Yad Vashem has compiled a list of both last and first names and determined which are synonyms of the other. This feature is especially useful for given names. In one example, searching for a person whose name was Rose, identified women whose given names were Raizel, Reize, Riscl, Raizela, Royze, Roza, Roze and Ruza.

The last name search automatically includes searching for maiden name. Thus a search for anyone named "Mokotoff"

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includes among the results married women whose information on the Page of Testimony indicated their maiden name was "Mokotoff." My family tree includes a number of female Holocaust victims whose married names were unknown to me. Locating the PoT of a woman who was born a Mokotoff not only provided me with her married name but invariably the name of the husband.

You can even search by submitter name. In the past 15 years I have submitted scores of PoT but lost control of which family members I had identified as Holocaust victims. Using this feature, I was able to determine that I had submitted 77 documents. There is provision at the site to add new Pages of Testimony.

The database currently consists of the Pages of Testimony plus name lists from France (Klarsfeld deportation lists), Germany (Gedenkbuch), Greece, Hungary (Nevek project), Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, and Mauthausen and Theresienstadt concentration camps. Pages of Testimony are one of the most important collections for Holocaust genealogical research. For those not familiar with Pages of Testimony, a description can be found at <http://www.avotaynu.com/holocaust/pages.htm>. More names will be added to the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names as they become available.

Once there is public access, anticipate many success stories in the news media about families discovering surviving members. I personally had two experiences in this area. I discovered that the family of a grand-aunt whom I thought were all murdered in the Holocaust actually had a surviving daughter who went to Israel after World War II. In a second situation, while researching an estate case of a Holocaust survivor who died without leaving a will, I discovered she had a cousin living in Israel who thought she had died during the Holocaust because he submitted a Page of Testimony for her. Evidently, neither knew the other had survived the Holocaust.

For more than 50 years, Yad Vashem has served as the world's center for remembrance of Jewish victims of the Holocaust and education about the Shoah. The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names is yet another example of this institution's role in memorializing the millions of women, men, and children who perished, this time with a searchable database. Using the latest technology and a team of experts in geography, linguistics, and data systems, Yad Vashem will continue to offer the most comprehensive accounting of the lives and deaths of millions of Holocaust victims, while seeking to collect those as yet unaccounted for.

More on Yizkor Books: Yiddish Book Center Makes Yizkor Book Reprints Available

Yizkor books are classified as rare books. When copies become available, they often cost hundreds of dollars. The Yiddish Book Center is now selling reprints of hundreds of yizkor books at a cost of \$90.00 for Yiddish Book Center members and \$120.00 for non-members. Tax-deductible membership is only \$36 per year. The reprints were made using the new digital printing technology. Original yizkor books were scanned using high resolution equipment, and the images were then used to produce the reprints. Samples were on display at the International Conference on Jewish Genealogy last summer in Washington. The quality of the text was quite good; the picture reproduction was only fair. The Center's web site is at <http://www.nationalyiddishbookcenter.org/+10151>.

Meanwhile, the New York Public Library (NYPL) announced plans to put digitized images of its complete collection of yizkor books - more than 700 books - on the Internet. It has already placed 9 of these books representing 12 towns at their site. The portal to this collection is at http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/jws/yizkorbooks_intro.cfm

Yizkor books are Holocaust memorial books. After World War II, the remnant of European Jewry published these books to memorialize the towns and townspeople destroyed in the Holocaust. More than 1,200 have been published, each for an individual town or region. The largest collection is at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Yizkor books provide a history of the Jewish presence in the town. Also included are articles written by survivors that often provide a great deal of information about specific individuals. Many include a necrology - a list of townspeople murdered in the Holocaust. Most are written in Hebrew and Yiddish.

[Editor's note: Robarts Library in Toronto also has an extensive collection of Yizkor books. The Society's Library has a list of holdings.]

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Genealogical Resources at the Toronto Reference Library (Yonge Street, North of Bloor Street)

by Henry Wellisch

- **Remote Access:** The library is accessible remotely, providing access to online magazine indexes, encyclopedias, directories, search aids and the library catalogue. As well, the Virtual Reference Desk allows you to send questions in by email and get reference help from the library staff.
 1. Visit: www.tpl.toronto.on.ca
 2. Click on the "Ask the librarian" button
 3. Submit a question
- **Microfilms and microfiches from the Family History Library** (Mormons) can be ordered from this library.
- **City Directories** are available in various formats:
 - Toronto: Complete holdings from 1833 onward are available in paper and on microfilm (Film T68694). Bibliography of Canadian Directories 1790-1987, available at information desk.
 - Montreal, 1842-1977 (Microfilm L9105).
 - Hamilton, ON, 1853-1935 (Microfilm H2928), 1936-1980 (Microfilm V543).
 - London, ON, 1896-1961 (Microfilm C5813).
 - Prairie provinces: Pre-1953 directories are available on Peel microfiche.
 - Pre-1900 Canadian directories are available on CIHM microfiche.
 - London, England:
 - 1677-1899 (Microfilm L847);
 - 1901-1967 on paper (910.421 P59) or on Microfilm (K2928);
 - 1972-1991 on paper (914.21025 K25).See finding aid at information desk.
- American directories:
 - 1665-1860 on microfiche (Film F C5815);
 - 1861-1901 on microfilm (Film C5809).
 - The finding aid *City Directories of the United States, 1801-1901* is available at the information desk.
- **Maps & Gazetteers for Genealogy:** The library has a large collection of maps of:
 - Great Britain and Ireland; also a good collection of US maps.
 - Europe:
 - Lenius, Brian J. *Genealogical Gazetteer of Galicia*. MAPS- Gazetteer 929.34771 L25
 - Uncapher, Wendy K. *German Maps & Facts for Genealogy*. MAPS-Atlas 929.1072 U54
- **Telephone Directories:** Current telephone books are available on the 1st floor. The retrospective telephone books listed below are in Special Collections, Genealogy & Maps, on the 4th floor.
 - Bell Canada directories for Ontario and Quebec are available from 1878 to the present, with some gaps.

Directories from 1878-1879 are on microfilm No. B4355. Directories from 1979 onwards are on microfiche at the information desk.

Toronto directories on paper (white and yellow pages) from 1957 onwards are in the directories area.

Other Canadian directories for areas not serviced by Bell: the library has copies from 1975 onward. Some directories from earlier areas are available at the information desk.

American and British directories: American telephone directories from 1979 onward and British telephone directories from 1988 onward (incomplete) are available on microfiche at the information desk.

- **AncestryPlus:** The AncestryPlus research database is the library version of the www.ancestry.com family history web site. Most of Ancestry.com resources, including the subscription databases, are available to library users through AncestryPlus.

Some highlights:

U.K. Census Collection – digital images of the 1891 census of England, Wales and the Channel Islands.

U.S. Federal Census - digital images of original census returns, 1790-1930.

Passenger & Immigration Lists Index – over 2.8 million records of immigrant arrivals in the U.S. and Canada.

Parish and Probate Records for Great Britain and Ireland (1500's – mid-1800's).

Census indexes for some Canadian towns (1901 census).

Canadian Immigrant Records – close to 200,000 records from 1780-1906.

We Welcome These New Members to Our Society

Shelley Davis

Michael Links

Alexandra Gamulka

Ron Schwartz

Sol Hermolin

Bernard Shoub

Lloyd Lindsay

Barry Spinner