

## CARVED IN STONE: THE FOUNDING FAMILIES OF THE OSTROVTZER SYNAGOGUE

By Cyril Gryfe



Today, a visitor to Toronto's legendary Spadina Avenue, searching for evidence of its rich Jewish past, will find few obvious traces, because of the area's current transformation as "Chinatown West". From Spadina Avenue just south of College Street, and into Cecil Street leading away to the east, the wanderer will not at first be encouraged to explore further for Jewish heritage. But a few steps along, the explorer immediately encounters the "Cecil Community Centre", and although its activities are advertised in Chinese, closer inspection reveals Hebrew characters on a stone beside the building's entrance. If curiosity prevails, a step inside will be truly surprising and rewarding.

Astonishingly, two large marble plaques, densely inscribed with gold-coloured characters, proclaim to the Hebrew reader, "These are the names of the people who took part in the inauguration of this synagogue and their names are carved in this tablet." See plaque header above.

Revealed is the erstwhile Ostrovtzer Synagogue, the first, and perhaps still the only religious monument in North America commemorating the lost Jewish community of Ostrovitz (Ostrowiec), Poland.

The four-column list preserves the names of 114 men, presumably donors, as well as the names of their fathers and of their wives, more than 300 individuals in all, and a veritable genealogical goldmine.

The idea for this article began as a plan to merely transliterate these names and submit the list to *Shem Tov*. Even this apparently simple task, in itself proved more of a challenge than anticipated. But before the explanations, a brief history of the congregation is offered.

The Ostrovtzer congregation did not actually begin on Cecil Street, and of course, no longer meets there. Its first informal services were in the home of Ivansker immigrant, Lazar BORENSTEIN, on Teraulay Street (now Bay Street).

It was "founded" in 1908 on Elizabeth Street, in the home of Leibish ZUKERMAN, who even more than 40 years later was able to recall the names of more than 20 fellow *landsleit* who participated. At the time, many Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire were arriving, severely destitute of possessions or employment prospects. It was clearly the intention of the congregation's founders to provide aid to these needy newcomers, when they chose the name, *Tifereth Israel Bikur Cholim Anshei Ostrovtze*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Programs organized by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto)

Unless otherwise noted, programs take place at the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue - 470 Glencairn Ave.

Doors open at 7:30, program begins at 8 p.m. Non-member fee: \$5.00 per meeting  
(exception: spouses accompanying members)

### Sunday, April 6, 2008

Lipa Green Building, 4600 Bathurst St, Rooms 419-420, 2-4 pm

Launch of member Bill Gladstone's new book; *One Hundred Years in Canada: the Rubinoff-Naftolin Family Tree*. Please RSVP by Friday March 28, 2008 (416) 635-2883 ext 170

### Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Speaker: Hubert Huebscher

Topic: *DNA and Classic Genealogy Join to Solve a Genealogical Puzzle*

The application of DNA to genealogy has made great strides since its origin in 2000. The benefits of combining DNA and classical paper-trail methodologies are becoming evident. The presentation is about an advanced genealogy project currently underway that had its beginnings in a conventional Y-DNA surname project. One of the earliest applications of DNA to genealogy has been surname projects, in which DNA testing is used to determine if persons with the same or similar surnames share a recent paternal ancestor. Basic 12-marker Y-DNA tests often are sufficient to prove or disprove, with a high degree of

certainty, the hypothesis of a common ancestor when surnames match.

### Sunday, May 3 - Sunday, May 11, 2008

Toronto Jewish Film Festival. For more information check online at [www.tjff.com/](http://www.tjff.com/)

### Wednesday, May 7, 2008

Tour of the JGS of Canada (Toronto) collection at the North York Public Library. Space is limited. Please refer to Page 5 for more information.

### Wednesday, May 28, 2008

Speaker: Jill Culiner

Topic: *Finding Home: In the Footsteps of the Jewish Fusgeyers*

### THURSDAY, June 5, 2008

Speaker: Ron Arons

Topic: *The Internet Beyond JewishGen and Steve Morse's Website*

### Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Topic: *Breakthroughs and Year-End Meeting*

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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](http://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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(The glory of Israel, caring for the sick, the people of Ostrovitz).

Mass emigration from the Russian Empire, provoked by an abortive revolution in 1905, created the first wave of Ostrovitzers to arrive in Toronto and in other havens around the world. A second wave occurred on the eve of the First World War, and resulted in the establishment of a separate Ostrovitzer *shul* on Chestnut Street, in the home of Shloime



**Original appearance of  
58 Cecil St.**

GROSSMAN. Conflicting differences were ultimately resolved and the two congregations merged to form the *Beth Haknesseth Hagadol Anshei Ostrovitze* (The great house of assembly of the people of Ostrovitz), with its goal of acquiring a dedicated venue for its activities.

The original dream was probably to construct a new synagogue building, but a more practical alternative presented itself in 1921 when the congregation of the Churches of Christ (Disciples) in Canada ('Church of Christ'), decided to sell its imposing edifice at 58 Cecil Street.



**Cecil St. as the Ostrovitzer shul**

Completed in March 1891, the structure was notable for its expansive balcony, grand brass chandelier, high dome and excellent acoustics. The sale was finalized in July 1922 at a price of \$20,000, which required a major subscription from the aspiring Ostrovitzer community.

It seems miraculous that the marble plaques commemorat-

ing these visionaries have not only survived, but remain in their original location, virtual witnesses to the many additional transformations the building has undergone in the past 85 years.

Most conspicuous, and in keeping to its new role as a synagogue, was the removal of the bell-tower, and its replacement with a re-oriented, more modest tower, capped by a small dome.

For more than three decades the *Ostrovitzer shul* was a vibrant Jewish venue. In 1950 the congregation celebrated its jubilee with a large banquet, and publication of a Yiddish-English commemorative book, containing a detailed history of not only the Toronto congregation but also of its root city in Poland, ravaged in the then recently concluded Second World War. The cost of producing the book was supported by the sale, mostly to members of the congregation, of page space for commercial advertisement and for celebratory statements. As can be seen in a rare copy held by the Ontario Jewish Archives, many of the Yiddish, non-commercial items were memorials to family members, and as such, a precious genealogical supplement to the marble plaques.

During the late 1950s and through the 1960s, the congregation dwindled as the founders passed away, and the next generation moved to the suburbs. In 1967, the building identified in the city directory as the "Ostrowiec Synagogue", was sold to the Catholic Diocese of Toronto, and briefly resumed an ecclesiastical role, as the Chinese Catholic Centre. After another brief period as a centre for the city's emerging gay community, the deteriorating structure was ultimately acquired by the City of Toronto and renovated to become today's Cecil Community Centre.

The virtually defunct Ostrovitzer congregation was essentially "homeless" for a few years, finally disappearing by its absorption by, or amalgamation with the Shaarei Tefillah Congregation in suburban North York. However, a Jewish presence still lingers in the previous home of the Ostrovitzer congregation, a presence more animated than the Hebrew characters engraved on the walls of the building. Almost as a ghostly echo, "Sh'mah Yisrael" can still be heard occasionally within its walls, when the Shir Libeynu, an unaffiliated "liberal, egalitarian, and inclusive congregation" holds its High Holy Day services there.

(Note: The table containing the names from the 114 families identified on the two marble plaques was too large to include in this issue, so it will be made available on our website in the near future.) Transliteration of the patronymics is fairly straightforward, and is based mostly on Kolatch's dictionary of first names. A simple, letter-for-letter transliteration of the surnames is of limited use without the ultimate vernacular rendering of some of these names (e.g. "HAFMAN" to HOFFMAN; "BAITSHER" to BYCHER). Consequently, I searched the Toronto city directories for the pertinent years, for probable versions of the surnames in question, among residents in the vicinity of the then synagogue. The 1950 jubilee book was also very useful.

Rendered surnames appearing in italics are instances where various Jewish sources yield a convincing version of

the surname in question. The Toronto city directories for the years 1920-25 do list most of these surnames, but at addresses more than 1 km. from the synagogue. I could only guess renderings for two very obscure transliterations (VALYES - וואליעס, PYARYE - פיאריע) and they are indicated by question marks. One name (HALSHTG - הלשטג) remains a mystery.

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## 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 *Shem Tov* editor for two years, Diane Kriger played a key role in the evolution of the publication. Her many contributions were generally unnoticed as she rarely took credit for the interviews and articles that she wrote. Since she has recently returned to her hometown of Ottawa, however, she will no longer be handling this role.

Diane became a member of JGS Toronto in 1994 after responding to an ad in the *Canadian Jewish News* seeking volunteers for our society's Roselawn Cemetery Project. She lived in an apartment building adjacent to Roselawn and so was readily available to help Henry Wellisch, Gert Rogers and Bill Gladstone photograph headstones and transcribe names to notepad. Diane was, in effect, *Ms. Roselawn*, JGS Toronto's resident expert and personal archivist. She also worked on the data entry and continued to go out alone to the cemetery to update the records with recent burials. She also responded to many requests for additional information. Always willing to lend a hand, Diane once went to Roselawn on a particularly cold day to take digital photos for an Israeli researcher who found a relative's name through JOWBR.

Diane had in her possession the original photos of the Roselawn Cemetery tombstones; she has handed them over to the Ontario Jewish archives at the Lipa Green Building, Toronto.

Diane's most gratifying accomplishment for JGS Toronto was to produce the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue of *Shem Tov*. This required reviewing all of the past issues and highlighting the growth of our society as well as noting special milestones.

On a personal level, Diane has been researching the surnames Kriger, Movshovitz, Israel, Lapidus, and Wideman. Her towns of interest are Friedrichstadt, Latvia; Gorzt, Yoch-abova and Kobilnik, Lithuania, and Manchester, England. Now that she resides in the Nation's Capital, she hopes to be able to continue her research at the National Archives.

Diane has most kindly promised to mentor Harvey and Judy as they assume her responsibilities for *Shem Tov*. Her friends at JGS Toronto wish her well.

## BRICK WALL

by Leslie Kelman

Have you run into a "Brick Wall" with your family tree research? Perhaps one of our members can help you!

With this thought in mind, we invite any member who has run into a "Brick Wall" to display their "problem" during the half hour prior to one of our meetings. This would be an opportunity to display a chart or a map or even some photographs, and to seek input and advice from our members.

We would set up a table and chair for you, and invite you to set up all your display material by 7:30 pm to be able to exploit the full half-hour before our program begins.

If you are interested in this opportunity please contact Les Kelman at [lkelman@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:lkelman@jgstoronto.ca). We only expect to accommodate one "Brick Waller" per event, so it is going to be "first come, first served".

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Remember, *Shem Tov* is now  
available to members on-line.

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## Branching Out

by Elaine Cheskes

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### New Acquisitions to the JGS of Canada (Toronto) Collection at the North York Public Library (Gladys Allison, Canadiana Room 6<sup>th</sup> floor)

Canadian Jewish Congress. *Canadian Jews in World War II*. 2 vols. Montréal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947-1948.

Charmatz, Konrad. *Nightmares: Memoirs of the Years of Horror under Nazi Rule in Europe, 1939-1945*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003.

Entine, Jon. *Abraham's Children: Race, Identity, and the DNA of "The Chosen People"*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2007.

Fifer, Susan. *A Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Poland*. Hertfordshire, Eng.: Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, 2007.

Goldberg Hilton, Nancy, comp. *Nechama's List: New Jewish Genealogical Records Added to the Family History Library Catalog: January 8, 2001 to November 8, 2006* [electronic resource]. 2006.

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Kirshenblatt, Mayer. *They call me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland before the Holocaust*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Kurzweil, Arthur. *From Generation to Generation: How to Trace Your Jewish Genealogy and Family History*. Updated ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Levi, Gershon. *Breaking New Ground: the Struggle for a Jewish Chaplaincy in Canada*. Montréal: National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1994.

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### Ancestry Library Edition

The Ancestry Library Edition research database is the Toronto Public Library's subscription version of the Ancestry.com family history Web site, and is available at **all** Toronto Public Library branches, but not from outside sources (i.e. unavailable from the home). There is **no charge** for its use whereas Ancestry.com and Ancestry.ca require a paid subscription.

If a researcher has the **full** Ancestry.com subscription, the Ancestry Library Edition will not give any additional information. However, subscribers to Ancestry.ca. are only able to access Canadian resources whereas the Library Edition will provide data from Canada and other geographic regions such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

The Ancestry Library Edition is a compilation of approximately 4000 databases and is one of the most important genealogical collections available today. It includes records from the Canada, United States and United Kingdom Census; birth, marriage and death records; military records; court, land and probate records; directories; newspapers and journals; maps and photos; passenger lists, and border crossings, etc.

#### Accessing Ancestry Library Edition:

1. Sign on to the **Main Menu**
2. Click on **Magazines, Newspapers, Encyclopedias, and Databases**
3. Click on **Title List of Databases in this Branch**  
Click on **Ancestry Library Edition**

The Ancestry Library Edition provides valuable research resources from a multitude of databases that enable the novice and experienced genealogist to explore their family histories.

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### Library Tour

**Looking for your Jewish ancestors?** The JGS of Canada (Toronto) Library, in conjunction with the North York Public Library, is conducting a tour of the library's collections that include key research resources that are relevant to Jewish genealogists. The tour will take place at the NYPL, 5120 Yonge Street, 6th floor of the Gladys Allison, Canadiana Room, on Wednesday, May 7, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Please register and indicate your preference for the **afternoon** or **evening** tour. The maximum number of members per tour is twenty, and registration is on a first-come basis. For one month prior to this tour significant works from the **Jewish Genealogical Society Library** will be featured in the showcases on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, and during the tour, members will have the opportunity to browse selected material from our collection. To register, email: [library@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:library@jgstoronto.ca).

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## Genealogy Postings and the Risk of Identity Fraud

by Ruth Chernia

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**O**n Wednesday evening 27 February, David Malamed, a Forensic Accounting Partner with Grant Thornton, captivated his audience with explanations of the Privacy Act, informed consent and how vulnerable genealogists are to identity theft.

### Identity Fraud

First he outlined what is entailed in identity fraud. He emphasized that we, as genealogists, are collecting information to benefit our families, not for profit. The people who steal identities or personal data usually are trying to make a profit from it. For example, a 21-year-old university student hacked into the university's computers and stole personal information on 37,000 students, faculty and staff.

The Canadian Social Insurance Number is a nine digit number determined by a mathematical formula. Anyone who knows the formula can compute a SIN. Another hacker managed to steal 55,200 identities through using a SIN formula.

David asked us who uses the name of a pet as a password – several people raised their hands. Who uses their mother's maiden name or the name of a child? Again, several hands were raised. David told us to change passwords frequently. These are the most common kinds of passwords and, particularly for genealogists, are liable to be guessed. In business settings, he's heard of people leaving their passwords under the mousepad or close to their workstations. One audience member pointed out that the Toronto District School Board requires that teachers change their passwords every 42 days!

### PIPEDA

After a caveat that he is not a lawyer and therefore cannot give out legal advice, David went on to talk about the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). As long as we are not collecting information for profit, we probably cannot be sued under the Act if there is a privacy breach. Still, we should be careful about what private information (anything beyond a name) we post on genealogical sites.

### Informed Consent

When collecting information from/about living persons we should always let them know why we are asking this and what use we intend to make of the information. That is informed consent.

### Security Concerns

Take care when posting information on social networking sites – Facebook, YouTube – we'd like to think we are all one big family but chats and pictures can be misused. Even photo sharing sites, such as Kodak or Snapfish, are not necessarily secure (that was not the intended purpose).

To protect yourself from identity theft, post as little information as possible and consider changing details. As an example, David's middle initial is S. but he uses X. in certain cir-

cumstances. If he gets mail or messages addressed to David X. Malamed, he knows where it originated or was stolen from. Audience members pointed out that would be counter-productive for genealogists seeking to ascertain whether you are a relative or not.

David went on to talk about site security. More than 60 percent of data breaches are internal. So even if a site is password protected, there is still a danger. One way to protect yourself from metacrawlers (such as Google, which indexes every word in a text file, for example) is to post information as a picture – as a PDF. An encrypted PDF is even safer. [The instructions are straightforward. Ed.]

E-mail is generally safe. Those seeking to do harm with data theft don't usually target individuals but large collections of data – David calls that the "honey pot" for data thieves.

The audiences asked how we can protect ourselves and still continue what we are doing – posting files to JewishGen, for example. David suggested we find out whether there have ever been breaches of JewishGen.

He went on the answer some specific questions that had been submitted before the talk (some questions below).

1. Question - Is it ethical to reveal some family detail such as a same-sex marriage to the rest of the family? David's Response - Not without consent.
2. Question - In the past, lists of Jews have been used to harm them. Why should we participate in gathering such information at all? David's Response - Any information can be used for good or bad. For example, posting a photo of David with nasty comments on Facebook could embarrass him or cost him his job. If a person has obtained David's consent, he has no right to complain.
3. Question - Can DNA be used unethically? David's Response - It is not typically used for identity theft. Not yet!
4. Question - How can I post information securely? David's Response - This was answered earlier – use PDFs.

A question about the ethics of revealing certain information about divorce or crime in the family was answered that that is the subject of another talk entirely.

### *We Welcome Our New Members*

Marla Waltman Daschko      Deana Fishman

Mel Fishman                      Annette Otis-Fromer

Osneath Tittel

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## Science and Serendipity

by Harvey Glasner

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For those folks just getting into the pursuit of tracing family lineage, the task of undertaking research may seem overwhelming.

I often liken genealogy to our perception of what takes place during a criminal investigation. Modern T.V. series such as CSI focus on how scientific methodology is applied to quickly piece together obscure clues in the quest to find a culprit. They never give a hint as to how arduous and time-consuming the project may be.

It is definitely true that a genealogist must have the discipline and patience of a scientist when trolling through indexes, birth, death, naturalization records, ships' manifests, and so on. But, sometimes luck and serendipity play a remarkable role in achieving success.

Recently, our former managing editor, Henry Wellisch, handed me a pile of newsletters from JGSs in the U.S., Switzerland, and the U.K., in order to give me some background on how to put the Shem Tov together. Lo and behold, before getting past the third page of the **Newsletter of The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain**, I find the byline "Goldfield or Unerman family names?"

Well, my wife's grandfather, Isaac Goldfield (Goldfeld), was a mystery. We did know that he emigrated to Canada in 1912 from Sawichost Radom (now in the Ukraine), with his wife Malka (nee Shifrovitz).

Isaac was a hard-working, life-educated man who, with Malka, ran a grocery store on Markham Street in Toronto. Our only connection with his past was some poetry he wrote in Yiddish, intertwined with some Polish and Russian.

A few years ago we commissioned a Yiddish scholar to translate his writings into English, and discovered that Isaac had a talent. Having witnessed inhumanity at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Russian Poland, he later wrote powerful reenactments of war scenes. He also expressed hope that mankind would eventually overcome its brutishness and learn to better appreciate the natural wonders that G<sub>d</sub> had gifted to us.

Isaac made no mention, to Adena's mother and aunt, of any family connections in the 'old country'. Like many immigrants of that period, they chose to block out the pain. As there were no other clues to Isaac's past, Adena and her cousins felt that there was no hope of finding any other family.

Well, serendipity!! Jeremy G. Frankel [jfrankel@lmi.net](mailto:jfrankel@lmi.net), the president of the San Francisco JGS, placed a request in the aforementioned British newsletter on behalf of a client who had commissioned him to undertake a Goldfield search.

This connection is very promising because Mr. Frankel's client mentions names such as Rose Goldfield (my mother-in-law's maiden name) and Lil Goldfield, Rose's sister. Adena may have a solid lead. Obviously, though, there is much more work to be done to put the pieces together.

Now you have an idea of how the solution to a genealogical puzzle evolves.

It is great to find family connections but it is also good fun trying to put the clues together to solve the mystery. It is inconsequential whether you achieve success through highly disciplined scientific research, or some coincidental event

If you have any story or vignette on your research that you would like to share with your fellow members of the Toronto JGS, please email me at [hsglasner@gmail.com](mailto:hsglasner@gmail.com).

### A Digitized Version of the Frankfort Memorbuch

by Jan Meisels Allen

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The Jewish Community Library of Los Angeles (JCLLA) has shared information from the Jewish National and University Library, that The National Library of Israel, David and Fela Shapell Family Digitization Project has announced public access of a digitized version of the Frankfort Memorbuch, one of the most important sources of genealogical data on German Jewry.

The Frankfort Memorbuch is a 1,073 page manuscript documenting the deaths of important members of the Jewish community of Frankfurt am Main, one of the most important communities of Germany Jewry, over a period of almost 300 years (1628-1907). The notations are generally in the form of the yizkor prayer "May God remember the soul of ..." followed by biographical data, much of which is a description of the piety and good qualities of the deceased.

The site includes page and chronological indexes as well as an essay on the Memorbuch in both Hebrew and English by the late Cecil Roth (first published in 1965 and presented with permission of the Cecil Roth Trust).

To access the Memorbuch in English: [http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/heb1092/index\\_eng.html](http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/heb1092/index_eng.html)

To access the Memorbuch in Hebrew: <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/heb1092/index.html>

The digitized manuscript is presented in the DjVu format which provides high quality, magnifiable images compressed into relatively small files for easy downloading. In order to view these images it is necessary to download and install the free DjVu viewer program. [http://www.lizardtech.com/download/dl\\_options.php?page=plugins](http://www.lizardtech.com/download/dl_options.php?page=plugins)

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## Online Resources

by Carolynne Veffer

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**A**s genealogists we can never have enough information available online. Especially when you need to access records that aren't available locally.

So for those of you who have/had relatives in Canada (particularly Toronto), I thought I would provide a summary of some of the FREE online databases with NAME SEARCHES, which you can access from any where, any time.

There are other great resources that require payment e.g. Ancestry.ca, InGeneas or online newspapers e.g. The Toronto Star, but they aren't included here.

I am concentrating on Toronto resources. But most of these websites have data for all of Canada, or all of Ontario. And as you browse around the websites which include search engines, you'll find other information that you may find useful in your research into your Canadian relatives.

### Online Telephone Listings

Something as simple as an online telephone list can provide valuable contact information for living relatives. You can use this for all of Canada or select an individual province. It also provides a facility to search by phone number or address. If you are searching for a relative in Toronto, don't put just Toronto in "City". Your relative could very likely be in a Toronto "suburb" e.g. North York and Thornhill are particularly likely for Jewish relatives. So first leave City blank and just select Ontario and see what happens. <http://findaperson.canada411.ca/>

### General

Library and Archives Canada now provides a generic search of all their content. Plus one specifically for "ancestors". <http://search-recherche.collectionscanada.ca/archives/search.jsp?Language=eng>  
<http://search-recherche.collectionscanada.ca/ancestors/search.jsp?Language=eng&QueryTextValue=>

### Census

What more needs to be said. Census records. The latest available is 1911. [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02012201\\_e.html#a](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02012201_e.html#a)

1871 - Federal Census - Ontario Index  
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/1871-ontario/001016-100.01-e.php>

1901 - Federal Census  
<http://automatedgenealogy.com/census/Province.jsp?province=ON>

1911 - Federal Census  
<http://automatedgenealogy.com/census11/Test6.jsp?province=Ontario>

### Birth, Marriage & Death Records

Unfortunately none of these is available online in a searchable database (except divorces - see next entry). Canada does not have the equivalent of the US online Social Security Death Index.

### Divorce Records

Canadian Divorce Records: 1841 - 1968  
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy/008/022008-100.01-e.php>

### Burial/Cemetery Records

JOWBR: The Toronto JGS has almost completed a project to add basic cemetery information for all the Toronto Jewish cemeteries. We have added over 50,000 records. Usually the entries include name, date of death or date of burial, and plot location. However, in some cases there were no dates available. On JOWBR select Region: Canada/Ontario  
<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetery/>

Benjamin's Funeral Home: There are currently two Jewish Funeral Homes in Toronto: Benjamin's and Steeles Memorial. Benjamin's has a great online search for burials since the mid-80s. It can be a real treasure trove of information if you get a hit: relatives' names, Hebrew name, father and/or mother's Hebrew name, cemetery and section, date of burial etc.  
<http://www.benjamins.ca/index.cfm?fa=home.AdvancedSearch>

Ontario Genealogical Society: The Ontario Genealogical Society has documented some Jewish cemeteries in Ontario towns outside of Toronto, e.g. Beth Israel in Kingston, Beth David in Brantford, Beth Jacob in Waterloo.  
<http://ogs.andornot.com/CemeteryIndex.aspx>

### Immigration/Passenger Records

1925-35 database (not just for Ontario - all passenger lists - courtesy of the hard work of volunteers at the Ottawa and Montreal JGSs). <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/immigration-1925/001012-100.01-e.php?PHPSESSID=ndc16e81aq46on6lqff405d7q5>

Rotenberg Ledger (this time thanks to the hard work of Toronto JGS volunteers); These are available on the Toronto JGS website. Not exactly passenger lists - it's an agency through which people bought ship and rail tickets. The dates cover 1911 to 1917. <http://www.jgstoronto.ca/Rotenberg.html>

Immigrants from the Russian Empire: Documents created between 1898 and 1922 by the Russian Consular Offices in Canada. It includes passport applications and questionnaires.  
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/li-ra-ma/001046-100.01-e.php>

Nanaimo Historical Society: This Society has a growing database of Canadian passenger lists. Currently it includes Quebec Ports from Sep 1907 to Oct 1910  
<http://members.shaw.ca/nanaimo.fhs/>

### Naturalization Records

Canadian Naturalization Records - 1915 to 1932  
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/022/022-505.004-e.html>

### City Directories

Toronto City Directories: This can help you pinpoint when a person arrived in Toronto. There is a full set of directories in the Toronto Reference Library at Bloor & Yonge. But there are

a number now available online at the Ontario Archives site. And two at the Ontario Jewish Archives site (1925 & 1931). <http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=title%3A%28Toronto%20City%20Directory%29>

Ontario Jewish Archives (1925 and 1931 Directories): This one is easier to search than the Ontario Archives site. But Ontario Archive has more years available.

<http://www.ontariojewisharchives.org/>

#### Military Records

There are lots of sources for Military information.

Canadian Virtual War Memorial - <http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=collections/virtualmem>

Jewish War Veterans of Canada

<http://www.yorku.ca/cjv/db/directory.php>

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

[http://www.cwgc.org/debt\\_of\\_honour.asp?menuid=14](http://www.cwgc.org/debt_of_honour.asp?menuid=14)

Soldiers of the First World War

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/cef/001042-100.01-e.php>

Soldiers of the South African War

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/south-african-war/001002-100.01-e.php>

Canadian Merchant Navy War Dead Database

[http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=history/secondwar/atlantic/merchant\\_search](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=history/secondwar/atlantic/merchant_search)

Canadian Post-War Military and Dependents Graves

<http://admieapp.forces.gc.ca/pwg-tag/index.asp?lang=e>

Heroes remember e.g. Robert Horowitz, Barnet Danson - not many Jewish entries

<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=collections/hrp/alpha>

Court Martials of the First World War

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/courts-martial/001006-100.01-e.php>

#### Patents - 1869 to 1894

You never know. Your ancestor may have been an inventor (and came to Canada very early - there are a few Cohen patents). <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/patents/001038-100.01-e.php>



**Cyril Gryfe's grandfather, Shloime Gryfe (circa 1912) of Toronto's famous Gryfe Bakery family. Photographed in Hamilton where the Gryfe's first settled before coming to Toronto.**

## Is Genetic Testing Relevant to Genealogical Research?

*by Harvey Glasner*

**S**ignificant breakthroughs that have been made in the field of genetics are offering some interesting opportunities for genealogists.

Recently new light has been shed on the origins of the Ashkenazi in Europe as a result of the work done by Doron Behar and Karl Skorecki of the Technion and Rambam Medical Centre in Haifa. They and others report that just four women who may have lived 2,000 to 3,000 years ago, are the ancestors of 40 percent of Ashkenazi alive today. The Technion team's analysis was based on mitochondrial DNA, a genetic element that is separate from the genes held in the cell's nucleus and that is inherited only through the female line. Because of mutations – the switch of one DNA unit for another – that build up on the mitochondrial DNA, people can be assigned to branches that are defined by which mutations they carry.<sup>1</sup>

Genealogical DNA testing can trace your patrilineal ancestors (**father's father's father's ... father**) by testing the Y chromosome and your matrilineal ancestors (**mother's mother's mother's ... mother**) by testing mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). The Y chromosome is passed from father to son, so only men can be tested for it. mtDNA is passed from a mother to all her children, so both men and women can be tested for it. However, men do not pass their mtDNA down to their children, so the only continuous path for mtDNA is through the direct maternal line.<sup>2</sup>

On April 30<sup>th</sup> Herbert Huebscher will be addressing our society at the Shaarei Shomayim (doors open at 7:30 p.m.) to outline the "WIRTH" genealogy research project which links a number of seemingly disparate families to a common ancestor. He will explain how forty of these families have been identified with a common paternal ancestor who lived several hundred years ago. The families have different surnames and different known geographical origins, yet exhibit matching or near-matching Y-DNA characteristics. That they have a common virtual ancestor is a virtual certainty.

A number of our members have made use of DNA testing to establish familial relationships. Come and hear this lecture by Mr. Huebscher and listen to the testimonials of fellow genealogists who have been tested.

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Wade, New Light on Origins of Ashkenazi in Europe, New York Times, Jan. 14, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Jewish Genealogy by Genetics, <http://www.jewishgen.org/DNA/>

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## What's in the Archives of Ontario... and how do I find it?

by Jane E. MacNamara

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**W**hile most family historians are comfortable—or at least familiar—with libraries and their filing systems, archives are very different matter. Many of us will have never visited any archives before we became family historians, but we've been going to libraries since we were children. Libraries, museums and archives have complementary roles. Generally, libraries collect published material (books, microform, published sound and visual recordings, and digital publications). Museums collect artifacts, and archives collect unique documentary material (manuscripts, photographs, artwork, sound and visual recordings). We must acknowledge the fact that there is overlap—many libraries hold some archival material and perhaps artifacts; museums often hold some documents and published material that supports their collections of artifacts; and the Archives of Ontario, for example, has a fine library and quite a few fascinating artifacts.

### **How are archival records organized?**

Because of the diverse nature of their collections—and the varied users who need to access them—archivists deal with records quite differently than librarians.

Librarians work with published material, written or compiled by an author who has given the item a title, and probably explained the contents in an introduction. The library catalogue must include the title, author, publishing information and some subject listings drawn from the book itself. The librarian may also have “cataloguing in print” with which to work.

But an archivist may have none of these things. The archivist must come up with a name for each collection of material, or “fonds,” determine what person(s) or organization(s) created the records and when they were created, understand and evaluate the different types of records within the fonds and, finally, decide how best to make the material available and useful for researchers. Almost like the author of a book, the archivist creates what amounts to a title, author, chapters, a table of contents, an introduction—and in the right circumstances, an index.

An archivist must also consider that some researchers may be just as interested in how the creator arranged and used the records, as they are in the records themselves. In almost all cases, records may be moved to new archive-quality containers, but they are kept in the same groupings and order as they were received by the archives.

Rather than cataloguing like a librarian, an archivist “describes” records. And it is important to consider this process to understand the best ways to locate just what you want.

The collection of records from one creator—an individual, a family, a business, an organization or a government body—is designated as a “fonds.” It is given a name, usually that of the creator or collector, but sometimes more descriptive of the fonds' contents. The archivist then writes a general description of the fonds and its creator. If the fonds is small, or consists of all the same type of document, the “description” may stop

there. Many fonds at the Archives of Ontario have only a “fonds-level” description.

Most fonds, however, must be described in greater detail. For instance, a fonds created by a business might contain accounting records, correspondence, catalogues and personnel records. Each type of record within a fonds is called a “series.” If a series is large or varied, it also can be broken into a number of logical “sub-series.” Many fonds at the Archives of Ontario are described to the “series level.”

A series (or a sub-series, if it has been broken down) is made up of “files” or “items.” These can be as small as a single page or as large as a 300-page ledger. A group of papers kept together in a file, for instance, would also be considered one item. Relatively few fonds at the Archives of Ontario are described at the “items level.”

To summarize, every collection of documents at the Archives of Ontario will be described at the fonds level. The majority of those fonds are further described at the series and sub-series levels. Many fewer fonds are described at the “files and items” level.

### **What's in the Archives of Ontario?**

The collection includes more than

- 240 thousand cubic feet of paper records
- 1.7 million photographs, from the 1830s to the present
- 4,000 documentary artworks (paintings, drawings, caricatures and posters) from as early as the 1790s
- 190,000 architectural drawings, from the 1820s to the 1990s
- 35,000 maps, from the early 18th century to the present
- 21 thousand hours of film, video and sound recordings including government films, home movies and oral history recordings

The Archives is a part of the Government of Ontario, and its main purpose is to look after the records of government. Approximately 70 percent of the holdings are Ontario government records.

These government records are designated with a fonds number prefaced by the letters “RG.” Some of the most important fonds for genealogists are RG 80: Office of the Registrar General, RG 22: Court Records (which includes estate files), and RG 1: Crown Land Department Records.

The other 30 percent are private records - “private” by this definition meaning simply not generated by the Ontario government. These include records created by individuals, families, businesses, organizations and municipalities. The Archives of Ontario holds more than 2,600 fonds in this category. Private fonds are given a number prefaced by either an “F” or a “C.” Those with a “C” contain predominantly illustrations or photographs. The Archives of Ontario private fonds include an amazing array of material for family historians, depending on the area of the province and time period—including many municipal and religious records.

Beyond government and private fonds is the “diffusion”

collection. These are copies, usually on microfilm, of Ontario records at other institutions. The majority of this material is from Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa. Some of the most important items for genealogists are the films of census records for Ontario and early land records, including the Upper Canada land books and petitions. The Archives of Ontario has also acquired copies of microfilm of Ontario land, municipal and church records from the Genealogical Society of Utah.

And although it does not fall strictly within our definition of what should be in an archives, the Archives of Ontario Library holds about 70,000 books, pamphlets, periodicals and government publications. For genealogists, city directories and voters lists are of particular interest.

#### **And how do I find it?**

Once an archival fonds is processed, its description is added to the Archives Descriptive Database (ADD), available on the Archives of Ontario website ([www.archives.gov.on.ca](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca)). Look for the "Search the Collections" button. Except for very recently acquired material, virtually all fonds have a fonds-level description in the ADD.

You can search the full fonds descriptions in the ADD by keyword (Option 1 on the search page). In most cases, this option will be the best choice to start with. Option 3, "Advanced Search," will give you three options:

- clicking "Groups of Archival Records" will let you search the fonds, series and sub-series levels;
- choose "Files and Items" to cover those fonds described in greater detail; search by "Record Creator" to fonds linked to the creator.

You'll find an excellent orientation linked to the Help button on the main ADD search page

Your ADD search results will lead you, either directly or via a paper inventory, to the location of the records—either original documents or on microfilm. The records have not been digitized. The records can be viewed in the Reading Room, and many of the important genealogical records are available on microfilm for inter-institutional loan.

More than 5,000 photos, maps, architectural drawings and documentary artworks are available in the Archives of Ontario's Visual Database, although this is just a small fraction of the more than two million images at the Archives. The Visual Database is also available on the Archives website. Look for the "Search the Collections" button. The "Advanced Search" allows you to browse from standard lists of places and subjects. You can use the Reference Code you find to look for more details (and perhaps more images) in the ADD. Original material must be viewed in the Special Collections Reading Room.

Two very different finding aids must be used to search the Archives of Ontario Library holdings. The web-based catalogue BiBLION covers all material acquired after 1990, as well as the entire pamphlet collection. Although BiBLION is growing, most material acquired before 1990 must be found using a traditional card catalogue in the Reading Room.

Archives staff members have created many wonderful Research Guides for specific fonds that lead you through a search. Most of these are now available both in the Reading Room and on the Archives of Ontario website—for example, Guide 206: How to

Find a Will. There is also a growing selection of Research Guides for a particular subject, covering a number of different fonds—for example Guide 213: Records Relating to the War of 1812, and Guide 299: Sources of Family History.

The Archives of Ontario website ([www.archives.gov.on.ca](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca)), with its databases, finding aids, and fascinating online exhibits, has become a great place to discover more about our province's history, and the wonders of the Archives of Ontario.

*Jane MacNamara is a long time member of the Ontario Genealogical Society and a founding director of the Friends of the Archives of Ontario. She teaches and lectures about family history research throughout southern Ontario, is the author of the "Researching Toronto" pages at [www.torontofamilyhistory.org](http://www.torontofamilyhistory.org), and has led a unique hands-on program, Genealogy Summer Camp, for the past 12 years.*

### **Help Grow the Shoah Victims' Names Database**

Yad Vashem wants volunteers who are willing to contact local institutions and individuals to grow the Shoah Victims Database whose principal documents are Pages of Testimony. With the aid of promotional materials Yad Vashem has developed, volunteers will reach out to survivors and their families and assist them in registering the names of Jews who they know were murdered in the Shoah. This will be done through synagogues, Holocaust centers, Jewish Community Centres, Jewish student organizations, senior centres and social service agencies. To volunteer, send your name, address, phone number and e-mail address to [names.outreach@yadvashem.org.il](mailto:names.outreach@yadvashem.org.il) with the subject heading "Names Volunteer".

To submit a Page of Testimony, there is a link on the left portion of the screen from the Basic Search page at [http://www.yadvashem.org/lwp/workplace/IY\\_HON\\_Welcome](http://www.yadvashem.org/lwp/workplace/IY_HON_Welcome).

### **ADVERTISING RATES**

SHEM TOV is now accepting display advertising for publication. Advertisers are requested to supply camera-ready art and payment by May 2008 for the Summer 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 91006, 2901 Bayview Ave., Toronto, Ontario M2K 1H0.

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## From the President, Shelley Stillman

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It is important to recognize the contributions of the JGS Toronto members who served on the 2007 Executive. I'd like to thank; **Penny Rubinoff** - Vice President, **Lucy Sadowski** - Secretary, **Sid Disenhouse** - Treasurer, and Members-at-Large; **Les Kelman, Merle Levine, Gord Meslin, Neil Richler** and **David Trost**.

Thanks also go to Past Presidents, **Gert Rogers, Henry Wellisch**, and **Carolynne Veffler** (by email), for their continuing support and involvement.

It was a pleasure to work with the 2007 Executive. Their attendance at Executive meetings was invaluable; they shared their expertise as we worked together to provide leadership and direction for our Society.

At the risk of sounding like the Academy awards, it is also important to acknowledge numerous other members – some of them are faces you see and others work behind the scenes: **Elaine Cheskes** - librarian; **Michael Keleman** – greeter; *Shem Tov* staff: **Diane Kriger** - editor, **Henry Wellisch** – managing editor, **Dulcey Hoffman** - layout and design, **Henry Wellisch, David Price** and **Frances Lipton** for mailing out *Shem Tov*, **Ruth Chernia** and all contributors; **Stephen Creed** – refreshments; **Terri Rothman** - webmaster; **Stan Zeidenberg** - charitable donations coordinator; **Neil Richler** – membership. Program Committee: **Les Kelman** – Chair; Members: **Linda Offman, Lucy Sadowski, Karen Sanders, Sharon Singer, Shelley Stillman, and Stan Zeidenberg**.

Telephone Committee: **Sara Faerman** - Co-ordinator; Members: **Jytte Birnbaum, Nora Freund, David Birenbaum** and **Linda Offman**.

Cemetery committee members were thanked for their efforts in the December 2007 issue of *Shem Tov*

Website Redesign Committee: **David Trost** - project leader; Members: **Neil Richler, Arthur Ryman** and **Shelley Stillman**

Whenever you start to thank people, you run the risk of leaving someone out, and so I apologize if I missed you! If you or someone you know has played a role behind the scenes for the benefit of the Society, please let me know so that their contribution can be noted in a future issue of *Shem Tov*.

One of my goals has been reached: we have submitted burial data for all of the cemeteries in the GTA. However, there is still work to be done in updating the information and digitally photographing the headstones at those cemeteries. Another goal I have is to obtain burial information for all of the Jewish cemeteries or sections of all cemeteries across Ontario and submit those records to JOWBR.

With your help, I'd like to increase our membership. How about buying a membership as a gift for a friend or relative? Or bring an interested guest to an informative monthly meeting.

We welcome your suggestions for new programs. As well, we welcome your participation in whatever capacity you can. Please let us know if you have some time and we will try to find a project or committee that might interest you and will allow you to put your skills to good use. And the best part is... you get to work with and get to know an amazing group of people, your fellow genealogists.

I look forward to working with the new Executive that was elected at our general meeting held on December 12, 2007:

### Executive for 2008

President - Shelley Stillman

Vice-President -

Secretary - Lucy Sadowski

Treasurer – Steve Gora, new to the Executive

Members at Large:

Les Kelman, Neil Richler, David Trost, Stephen Creed (new Board Member, also handling refreshments; Society member since 1999)

Congratulations to everyone!

Looking forward to seeing you at JGS Toronto events.



### 2008 Executive

From left to right; Steve Gora, Shelley Stillman, Lucy Sadowski, David Trost and Stephen Creed.

Absent from this photo; Les Kelman and Neil Richler

## Volunteers Needed

- 1) Digital Photography of Cemeteries  
This project will resume as soon as the weather allows.
- 2) Membership – learn about and maintain our membership database
- 3) Webmaster – update and post new material on our website
- 4) Cemetery Project – update burial data for all GTA cemeteries; coordinate data for cemeteries across Ontario
- 5) Photographer – to take photographs at all meetings and events
- 6) Publicity – to increase our visibility in the community
- 7) Community Outreach Coordinator – prepare materials and staff our table at the Jewish Mosaic Festival June 1, 2008 and at other community events

For more information, please contact [info@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:info@jgstoronto.ca)



JRI has an urgent need for volunteers to input data for Bedzin indexing, 1918 to 1943. Anyone interested should contact Stan Zeidenberg at [stan@firstport.com](mailto:stan@firstport.com)