



www.jgstoronto.ca

שם טוב SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO)

Celebrating 25 Years: 1985 - 2010

VOLUME XXVII No. 4

December 2011 Kislev 5772

Book Launch
Red Carpet Gala

**Tracing Our Roots,
Telling Our Stories**

Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto)

North York Central Library Auditorium
Sunday, October 16, 2011
7:00 to 9:00 pm

In This Issue

- 2 *Message From the President*
- 3 *Upcoming Events • A Tale of Four Shuls • Missing Links*
- 4 *Jewish Records in Poland • Cemetery Project Update*
- 5 *Branching Out*
- 6 *From the Editor • Searching for the Babies • 32nd Annual IAJGS Conference*
- 7 *Merle Kastner Presents Family History Books • New Blog from Library & Archives Canada*
- 8 & 9 *Pictures from Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories Gala*
- 10 *Calgary's Congregation House of Jacob*
- 11 *Holocaust Testimonies Archive Comes to McMaster • New Members • Genealogical Research Leads to Formation of an Orchestra*
- 12 *Michael Goldstein's Presentation on Breaking Through Brick Walls • Sunday Morning at Edithvale with Marian*

Thanks to the Book Launch Gala Planning Committee -- Evelyn Steinberg (Chair), Harvey Glasner, Carolyn Peters, Debbie Sacrob & Judi Wagman -- for organizing a beautiful event to recognize and honour the efforts of our authors.

To see more about the book and Gala, go to pages 2, 5, 6, 8, & 9.



JGS TORONTO IS NOW ON FACEBOOK!

Message From the President

Dear JGS members,

A very inspiring book launch was held at the North York Central Library on October 16th to honour the 44 authors who contributed their writings to *Tracing Our Roots and Telling Our Stories*. We were pleased to see over 160 of our members and guests at this gala red carpet event. It was equally gratifying to see some of the very first members who gave so much to founding and growing our organization, such as Selma Sacrob, Rolf Lederer, Bill Gladstone and our current treasurer, Sid Disenhouse.

Since September when the book was first printed we have received numerous compliments that have affirmed the quality of the content as well as the design. Certainly that is reflected in sales, as we are now into our third printing.

For those of you who have not yet purchased a copy(ies), they are available at the following retail locations: Negev Importing, Israel's The Judaica Centre (<http://www.israelsjudaica.com/>), Matana Books, Battner Books, Aleph Bet Judaica, Israel Source, Baycrest Centre Gift Shop, Beth Tikvah Synagogue Gift Shop. You can also order copies by downloading the form which is found on our website (<http://www.jgstoronto.ca>), or by mailing in the one that was included in the September issue of *Shem Tov*.

I would like to remind everyone that dues for the 2012 year

are payable in January. The most convenient way of renewing your membership is through canadahelps.org. You will receive a tax receipt right away when using this very convenient web-based charitable payment site.

Wishing everyone a Happy Chanukah and looking forward to seeing you at our upcoming meetings and workshops.

Warm regards,
Harvey Glasner

To read reviews of *Tracing Our Roots and Telling Our Stories*, see p. 5 of *Shem Tov* and

Canadian Jewish News by Bill Gladstone, a JGS Toronto Past President:

<http://www.cjnews.com/culture/books-and-authors/genealogy-related-stories-preserve-family-histories>

The Jewish Tribune:

http://www.jewishtribune.ca/TribuneV2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4981&Itemid=53

vol. XXVII No. 4

SHEM TOV is published quarterly by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) and is distributed free to members. Current issues are available to non-members for \$4.00 per issue, back issues (with a one-year lag) are available free of charge on our website: www.jgstoronto.ca.

Contributions are invited. Please submit material to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca or to Shem Tov Editor, P.O. Box 91006, 2901 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, ON M2K 2Y6. Publication is at the Editor's discretion.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) was founded in 1985. Membership is \$40 per calendar year, \$18 for students. Meetings are held September to June, usually on the last Wednesday of each month. Programme details, including topic, speaker and location, can be found on our website. Guests are always welcome (\$5).

The goal of the Society is 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.

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the editor. Views and opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of SHEM TOV or the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto). ISSN 0843-6924. All rights reserved.

www.jgstoronto.ca

Officers of JGS of Canada (Toronto):

President	HARVEY GLASNER	president@jgstoronto.ca
Vice President	LESLIE KELMAN	
Secretary	FAYE BLUM	
Treasurer	SID DISENHOUSE	treasurer@jgstoronto.ca
Membership	NEIL RICHLER	membership@jgstoronto.ca
Programming	LES KELMAN	program@jgstoronto.ca
Publicity Chair	KAREN LASKY	
Library Coordinator	ELAINE CHESKES	library@jgstoronto.ca
Website Administrator	ARTHUR RYMAN	comments@jgstoronto.ca
Immediate Past President	SHELLEY STILLMAN	sstillman@jgstoronto.ca
Past Presidents	CAROLYNNE VEFFER	
	GARRY STEIN	
	GERT SOLNIK ROGERS	
	HENRY WELLISCH	
	BILL GLADSTONE	
	DR. ROLF LEDERER	
	RAYZEL ROBINSON-PAULL	

Hon. Life President

Members-at-Large:

Family Finder Coordinator
Cemetery Project

Shem Tov:

Editor	JUDY KASMAN	shemtov@jgstoronto.ca
Editor Emeritus	HENRY WELLISCH	
Layout and Design	DULCEY HOFFMAN	

Contributors to this Issue:

RUTH CHERNIA	ELAINE CHESKES
HARVEY GLASNER	JUDY KASMAN
DEBBIE SACROB	BETTY SHERWOOD

info@jgstoronto.ca

Telephone: 647-247-6414

UPCOMING EVENTS

**NEW: December, January, February, April,
May & June programmes**
at Temple Sinai, 210 Wilson Avenue, Toronto
Doors open at 7:30 p.m. for evening programmes
Be sure to visit www.jgstoronto.ca for updates.

Wednesday, December 14th at 8 p.m.

How to Make a "Tribute" Video
(*Memories of Moshe, My Dad, My Hero*)
Presenter: Barbara Borenstein

Wednesday, January 25th at 8 p.m.

Introduction to Jewish Online Burial Registry (JOWBR)
Workshop led by Allen Halberstadt,
JGS Toronto Cemetery Project Coordinator
and foremost contributor to JOWBR
*BYOL optional

February TBA

Wednesday, March 28th at 8 p.m.

at North York Central Public Library,
5120 Yonge Street, Toronto
Landsmanschaften & Mutual Benefit Societies in Toronto
Presenter: Bill Gladstone,
Author & JGS Toronto Past President

HOLD THESE DATES

Wednesday, April 25th

Wednesday, May 30th

Wednesday, June 20th - Annual *Breaking Through Brick Walls*

presented by our own JGS Toronto members

*Bring Your Own Laptop

MISSING LINKS

Seeking Babies Born in Hofgeismar, Germany DP Camp from 1946-1949

Were you, like me, one of 929 babies born in the Hofgeismar, Germany DP Camp in the years 1946 to 1949? If so, I'm hoping you will come to a reunion to be held on May 12-15, 2012 in Hofgeismar.

For further information, please contact
museum@museum-hofgeismar.de or go to the museum
website, www.museum-hofgeismar.de. You may also
contact Julia Drinnenburg at judri@gmx.de

Hindy Halpren,
Dundas, Ontario

A Tale of Four Shuls

by Judy Kasman

David Gerbi was a 12 year-old when in 1967, he and about 38,000 others were exiled from Libya after Israel's Six-Day War. Since that time, he has been living in Italy and is now a psychoanalyst. Once Ghadafi was ousted from power this past summer, Gerbi returned to his homeland, trying to work with Libya's National Transitional Council to restore the main synagogue, Dar al-Bishi, in Tripoli. However, on Erev Yom Kippur, after being in Libya for several months, he was forced to flee the country when hundreds of protesters demanded that he be deported.

❧

On September 18th, west Toronto's Kneseth Israel Synagogue, known as the Junction Shul, marked its 100th Anniversary with festivities. The Shul's current President, Edwin Goldstein, a member of JGS Toronto, outlined the Shul's history in a piece entitled *The Junction Shul @100* which appears in our Society's anthology, *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*.

❧

The groundbreaking for a new synagogue on Spadina Road in Toronto's Lower Forest Hill Village took place on October 9th. This building will be home to the Temmy Latner Forest Hill Jewish Centre, a modern orthodox congregation which currently meets above a Starbucks a few blocks north of the new site. Frances Kraft writes in *Canadian Jewish News*, October 19, 2011: "The new building will replicate the façade of the Great Synagogue in Jaslo, Poland, which was built in 1905 and destroyed by the Nazis in 1939."

❧

Shabbat, October 29, 2011 marked the official launch of Holy Blossom Temple's beautiful new prayerbook, *Siddur Pirchei Kodesh*. This *siddur* was the culmination of twelve years of work by a small committee composed of Temple members Randi Garfinkel and Brenda Saunders, Rabbis Dow Marmur and John Moskowitz, and headed by Rabbi Yael Splansky.

Included at the back of the *siddur* in an essay by Professor Irving Abella on the history of Holy Blossom, Toronto's oldest synagogue, founded over 150 years ago.

It is noteworthy that one of the copy editors of *Siddur Pirchei Kodesh* was Diane Kriger z"l, Editor of *Shem Tov* from 2004 until 2007. Diane, who was a Talmud and bible scholar, sadly passed away in December, 2008 and so she did not see *Siddur Pirchei Kodesh* come to fruition.

Jewish Records in Poland

by Ruth Chernia, JGS Toronto member

On the weekend of 17–18 September 2011, Stanley Diamond, renowned genealogist and founder of Jewish Records Indexing-Poland (JRI-Poland), spoke at two venues in Toronto. On Saturday, he was at the One World – One Family Conference, a one-day conference hosted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of the Greater Toronto Area. On Sunday morning, he spoke to JGS of Canada (Toronto).

His Saturday talk was *Your Jewish Roots in Poland; The Records Survive, Now What?* He listed the various records that exist, how to find them and the all-important “What is Poland?” Using the town of Belchatow as an example, he used the Routes to Roots database to demonstrate how to determine what records exist for which towns. He then did the same with the Polish State Archives’ PRADZIAD Search Form and the LDS Family History Library Catalog to search for microfilms. Finally, he showed the results on the JRI-Poland’s “Your Town” Page to show the indexing status for all vital records from Belchatow.

What if your town is actually a tiny village that did not have its own Jewish record-keeping? Diamond used the example of Gac, using Wikipedia and then JRI-Poland; he found records from Gac under Lomza.

Next he detailed how to order records that have been found in the indexes. There are several sources for the records micro-filmed by LDS; for records from the Polish State Archives, you write/email directly to the branch concerned. It is important to order copies of the actual records and not rely on the indexes alone. Index entries are not considered proof and original records will have detailed information. Also you should order the records of siblings of the people you are researching because they may provide additional details.

Records were written in Polish from 1808 to 1868, in Russian Cyrillic from 1868 to 1917 and in Polish again from 1916. There are a few books that can help you transliterate/translate the records. One is *A Translation Guide to 19th Century Polish Language Civil Registration Documents* by Judith R. Frazin (available through the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois <http://www.jewishgen.org/jgsi/theguide.html>). Another is *In Their Words: A Genealogists Translation Guide to Polish, German, Latin, and Russian Documents – Volume I: Polish; and for Polish records in Cyrillic*, Volume II: Russian by Jonathan Shea and William Hoffman (available through AVOTAYNU www.avotaynu.com).

Once you get the records, what will you find? For example, in a birth record;

- Towns where those mentioned in the record were born or living
- Dates of birth and registration of the event
- Father’s first name, surname and patronymic (sometimes)
- Names and ages of witnesses
- Baby’s name
- Mother’s first name, maiden name and patronymic (sometimes)

- Often birth records include father’s and witnesses’ occupations.

Beyond indexes of Birth, Marriages & Deaths (BMDs), JRI-Poland has indexed Books of Residents and Census records for some towns. These often provide information that does not appear in vital records. There are also school records, cemetery lists, marriage and death notices and *Monitor Polski* (Polish Gazette) post-war announcements.

Finally, Diamond explained how to search so that you don’t get a flood of names that are not the one you are looking for using []. For example, searching Hamberg via Soundex will get you Konberg, Gamburg, Chamburg, Hanberk and Ganwerk and phonetically will yield Ajnberg, Chainberg, Gamberg, among others. He also demonstrated how to search by town.

He concluded the Sunday talk with a fascinating story detailing how an entry in the JRI-Poland *Monitor Polski* database directly led to a man in Israel discovering a brother he never knew existed. He thought his father’s first wife and children had died in the Holocaust. But the wife survived along with a son who was born after the family separated in Russia. The full story is too complex to tell here but the reunion only happened after the parents had died.

Stanley M. Diamond, winner of the IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award, is founding president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal and executive director of Jewish Records Indexing-Poland. His interest in genealogical research related to genetics ultimately led to the creation of JRI-Poland, www.jri-poland.org.

Cemetery Project Update

We have just completed indexing and translating the Beth Emeth/Hebrew Men of England Section at Lambton Cemetery. We had an original file from many years ago that did not have the proper plot locations. The records were not stored on a computer, so Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue’s Executive Director, Pearl Grundland, had over 100 pages of records photocopied for me. They had the correct plot locations and most of the names of the individuals who are buried at Lambton but only the dates of death on some. Some of the writing on the tombstones was illegible but fortunately, the records had the names.

Chaim Lax did the translating and I indexed the files, with the assistance of Kevin Hanit. I then gave the computer file back to Pearl who was so thrilled for the work that we had done. This file has been submitted to Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) and will be “Live” (i.e. online at JOWBR) in January 2012.

I would like to thank the many volunteers for helping this past spring & summer to either take headstone pictures, crop photos, or index records: Faye Blum, Kevin Hanit, Chaim Lax, Ronnie Lebi, Robert Lubinski, Gordon Magrill, David Trost and Carolynne Veffer.

Continued next page

BRANCHING OUT

Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories

Reviewed by Elaine Cheskes

Appause, Applause! A literary masterpiece! Vivid memories of cherished family members are brought to life and recollected with love and affection by the authors, members of the JGS (Toronto).

In many stories, the recurring theme of poverty and persecution prevail. However, in spite of these hardships, our ancestors demonstrate great courage, resourcefulness, and a stubborn tenacity to survive.

Other stories describe the cruel and harsh life that Jewish immigrants encountered in the "Golden Land". They were alienated by the locals upon whom their livelihood depended. Moreover, their failure to speak English and their observance of rituals and traditions cast them as outsiders.

We also observe that our "mishpocha" were self-sacrificing. Husbands left wives; children left parents. After many difficult years they were able to bring their relatives from Europe when adequate funding became available. With steadfast determination to preserve family unity, their dream became a reality.

Although some stories describe the many tragedies that our ancestors encountered, several episodes delight us with humorous anecdotes and relieve the intense seriousness of life and living.

We recognize from many stories that the colourful and vibrant Yiddish culture of Eastern Europe represents a bygone era that vanished forever.

Although we read the heart-wrenching accounts of families annihilated in the Holocaust, we also experience the excitement of discovering and reuniting with lost relatives.

From dusty family albums, faded photographs of loved ones emerge and enhance the textual descriptions. In addition, for some, the glossary provides a translation of Yiddish and Hebrew terms; for others, memories of words long forgotten are recalled.

The authors, through their dedication and commitment to genealogical research, have created with compassion and warmth a collection of narratives that represents the "family history" of the JGS (Toronto) members. *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories* is an exemplary legacy of genealogical memoirs -- a treasure for future generations!

Cemetery Project Update - *continued*

This January, you will see that over 2,000 records have been added since last year so that we will have over 71,000 names on JOWBR. Visit <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetery/>

The Cemetery Project never ends, so if anyone is interested in helping rename and crop pictures during the winter season, please contact me at ahalberstadt@jgstoronto.ca

Allen Halberstadt
Cemetery Project Coordinator

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto)

*Exhibit at the Beth Tzedec Congregation
curated by Elaine Cheskes*

The enhanced version of the exhibit, *Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto)*, opened at the Beth Tzedec's Reuben & Helene Dennis Museum on November 6th, continuing for five weeks.

Highlights of significant moments in our Society's history were displayed, featuring memorabilia including early documents and photos of workshops, conferences and anniversaries. Recent additions to the exhibit included items from the Red Carpet Gala that honoured the JGS (Toronto) authors of *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*.

New Acquisitions to the JGS of Canada (Toronto) Library Collection at the North York Central Library, 6th floor, Gladys Allison Canadiana Room

Gladstone, Bill. *A History of the Jewish Community of London Ontario: From the 1850s to the Present Day*. Toronto: Now and Then Books, 2011.

Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto). *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*. Toronto: Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto), 2011.

Karpman, I.J. Carmin, ed. *Who's Who in World Jewry: A Biographical Dictionary of Outstanding Jews*. New York: Pitman, 1972.

Libo, Kenneth. *The Obermayers: A History of a Jewish Family in Germany and America, 1618-2009*. West Newton, MA: Obermayer Foundation, 2009.

Rosenberg, Stuart E. *The Jewish Community in Canada. Volume 1, A History. Volume 2, In the Midst of Freedom*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970-1971.

Shea, Jonathan D., and William F. Hoffman. *In Their Words: A Genealogist's Translation Guide to Polish, German, Latin and Russian Documents. Volume One, Polish*. New Britain, Ct: Language and Lineage Press, 2000.

Sugarman, Martin. *Fighting Back: British Jewry's Military Contribution in the Second World War*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010.

Wolak, Arthur J. *Forced Out: The Fate of Polish Jewry in Communist Poland*. Tucson, AZ: Fenestra Books, 2004.

From the Editor

On a Personal Note

So many of us have been affected by the book, *Tracing our Roots, Telling Our Stories*.

The stories are inspiring to read; they underscore why we are committed to genealogical research and they affirm why we are members of this Society: to be among others who understand the passion behind this pursuit.

We are proud of the forty-four members who took the bold step of writing a story or memoir. Perhaps there are others who now are encouraged to write an account based on family history, memory or discovery.

This issue of *Shem Tov* inaugurates a new column called *On a Personal Note* with a story by our member, Debbie Sacrob. In future issues, I would like to continue to feature a member's story of up to 1,500 words in length, so please keep this in mind as you pursue your family research.

Work-in-Progress

Maybe 1,500 words is daunting. Instead, let me propose that you just tell other members about your genealogical research, in about 100 words. This will be the basis for another new feature in *Shem Tov* called *Work-in-Progress* since we genealogists know that our work is never-ending. Your piece might describe a brick wall, or a breakthrough. It might lead to a connection with another reader, or inspire, or spark an interest! Just let us know what you're working on.



If you have a submission for *Shem Tov*, please send it to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca. The next deadline is February 26.

Happy writing!
Judy Kasman
Editor, *Shem Tov*

JUILLET A PARIS – JULY IN PARIS!

**The 32nd IAJGS International Conference
on Jewish Genealogy
is being held in Paris, France
at the Hotel Marriott Paris Rive Gauche
from July 15-18, 2012**

*Hosted by the Cercle de Généalogie Juive
in partnership with
Jewish Genealogical Societies of
[Belgium](#), [Switzerland](#) and [Luxembourg](#)*

*A fully bilingual French & English Conference
<http://iajgs2012.org>*

On a Personal Note

Searching for the Babies

by Debbie Sacrob

We are a small family. My Mom has one sister. My Dad was an only child.

The following is sort of a footnote to the Sacrob story.

In the years following the birth of my father, my grandmother, Rose Sacrob, suffered two miscarriages. We know that the babies were boys, and nothing more.

In happy times as well as in sad times, I have wondered how our lives would have changed if either of those two babies had survived...Two uncles. Two brothers for my father, Lorne. Two more sons for Rose & William. Two more family members. I wonder what if...or what it would it have been like . . .

In 2003, I must have been hit by lightning. Something told me to search for these infants. I was given a signal. *There is some information out there, Debbie, waiting for you to find it.* So I began my search . . .

My grandmother, in her dramatic way, always made sure to tell the story of her two miscarriages. It was her story. She had to tell it. After she gave birth to my father, she was pregnant twice more. Sadly, neither child survived.

No one ever talked much about events surrounding this sad chapter. My father's generation were all small children at the time and I don't think they knew too much. It wasn't something to ask questions about. In recent years, I asked my dad's cousins if they knew anything but they didn't. What I remember from stories I heard as a child is more than they even know or remember.

I remember the reaction of my grandmother's more outspoken sister. Whenever the topic came up, she blamed the doctor for these losses since she had no faith in him.

Recently, my brother Steven & I were speculating about the two lost souls. Steven suggested that somewhere there must be some record of these births/ deaths/stillbirths. This is how my mission began. We figured out an approximate timeline. My father was born in 1929. One of these siblings was born in the mid 1930s and the other when my dad was around 12, being the early 1940s.

I wrote a detailed letter to the Ontario birth/death registrar explaining what I was searching for. I thought that the more information I could give them, the better my chances were. I filled out two applications and I mailed everything away including a cheque, hoping that maybe something would come back.

Some people wondered why I did this. Others understood my quest. Sometimes in life there are things you want to know--things about yourself, your family, what factors make you the person that you are. These babies never got to enjoy life, but they are somewhere in the fabric of my family history and I have a right to know about them. So I take this search as far as it will take me.

During the years, my father often tried to locate graves for these two babies, his brothers.

In the summer of 1983, I walked with my Dad through

Dawes Road Cemetery, where all the Sacrobs are buried. A man at the cemetery office showed us a large area within the Cemetery, stating that it was the burial location for stillborns and preemies. There were no gravestones. He said that we were welcome to put up a gravestone, but he couldn't guarantee who was buried there. Interesting that in my recent quest (2003), I called the Dawes Road Cemetery office and spoke at great length to a very understanding gentleman. He was quite surprised and shocked by what we had been told in 1983. Apparently that is not Cemetery policy. He also mentioned that rules and laws around burials and cemetery records have changed a lot since the early forties and since 1983.

He also indicated that there was no record of burials for infants with the last name Sacrob. This sort of burial, back in the thirties and forties, was done quietly and quickly. The information, location and any other pertinent details probably died with the person who looked after things, in this case Abraham Sacrob, my great grandfather.

Flash forward to my application of 2003. Three months after I mailed the application, I received from the Province of Ontario a Certificate of Stillbirth for baby boy Sacrob who was born June 4, 1941 and died June 5, 1941! He was the son of my grandparents; he was a brother to my father. He was buried at Dawes Road Cemetery through Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel. Ironically, fifty years later, it would be Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel who would arrange the burial of my Father. Incidentally, Benjamin's has no record of the 1941 burial.

This Certificate was the first and only tangible evidence I ever got of the existence of one of these babies (other than my grandmother's stories). The day it came in the mail, I just held it, staring at it in disbelief! It was the oddest feeling. Suddenly I had a link to this strange and sorrowful past. I regret that my dad never saw the Certificate.

So now I found a link to one of the babies. Presumably he was the second of the two, making him the third child.

The baby was born at Toronto General Hospital. I contacted Patient Archives, hoping that they would have something; unfortunately their records do not go back to the early 1940s.

The Certificate of Stillbirth also mentioned that a police permit had to be obtained. I contacted the archives of the Toronto Police. No records.

Abraham Sacrob was mentioned on this Certificate as grandfather to the infant. He was also an important figure at the McCaul Street Shul. I suspect that he would have done everything to facilitate an easy burial for this child, helping his son William and daughter-in-law Rose through their loss. The McCaul Street Shul became the Beth Tzedec Synagogue. I corresponded at great length with the very cooperative archivist/curator of BethTzedec but there were no records there, so I guess this is as far as I can go with this child.

There is still the mystery of the first boy. I have submitted subsequent applications, to no avail. I have gone to the Archives of Ontario and spent hours searching through microfiches. No luck. I have had lengthy discussions with officials at Dawes Road Cemetery.

At Service Ontario, I spent quite a bit of time discussing

the years I should search in the 1930s. My applications allowed for an extensive window of opportunity. Sadly, I have not been able to find anything at all about this baby boy. Perhaps it was a miscarriage, not a full term infant, and so there was no burial. There doesn't appear to be record of it in the Province of Ontario.

What is the lesson here? Now I have some proof, so I guess, in a sense, it is closure.

This story is dedicated to my dad, Lorne Sacrob, and my grandparents, Rose and William Sacrob, because it is their story. And always to Selma & Steven.

Merle Kastner Presents Family History Books

by Judy Kasman

Merle Kastner was the first of three Montreal genealogists to speak to our Society this fall. On September 21st, Merle presented *How to Create a Family History Book – easily, inexpensively and with flexibility, on your own computer, using programmes you already know.*

The title says it all! Merle's talk was enhanced by both actual and photographic examples of books that she has lovingly and thoughtfully created for family & friends.

These are gifts that would be appreciated by more than just genealogists!



From left: Bill Gladstone, Henry Wellisch, Merle Kastner, Shelley Stillman, Carolynne Veffler and Les Kelman

New Blog From Library & Archives Canada

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) has just announced the following: The (LAC) Blog provides useful tips and recommends tools to help you discover your documentary heritage and navigate the LAC website."

This is a four-month pilot project to provide you with "quick and easy access to the LAC collection. The blog also connects you with LAC and other people who share an interest in Canadian history."

To learn more, visit the About the Blog at <http://thediscoverblog.com/about/>.

BOOK LAUNCH GALA



Lenke Lichtenberg provides musical prelude to the event



Committee: (from left) Harvey Glasner, Debbie Sacrob, Evelyn Steinberg, Judi Wagman, Carolyn Peters



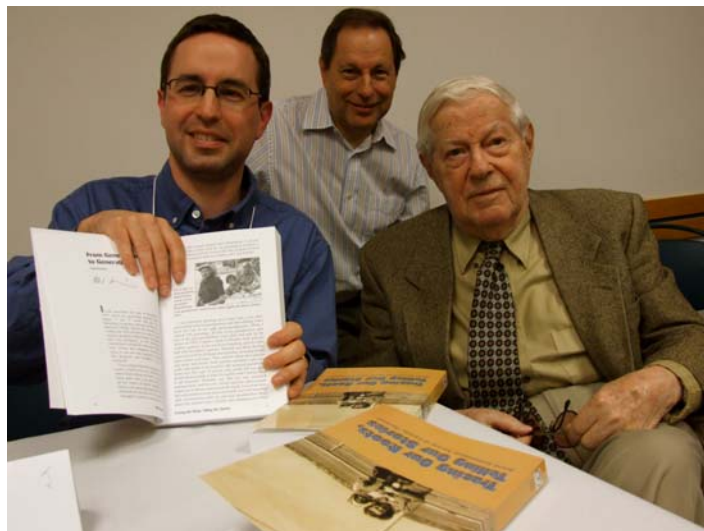
An appreciative audience awaits the arrival of the authors



Members of Book Committee and authors: Ruth Chernia, Lorne Miller, Karen Lasky & Myrna Levy



Our distinguished authors



Three generations of Richlers

BOOK LAUNCH GALA



Authors Rachel Aber Schlesinger & Ben Schlesinger



Authors from left: David Price, Judith Ghert,
Dr. Rolf Lederer & Henry Blumberg



Proud grandfather with granddaughter, co-authors



Autographs from authors



Authors Simcha Simcovitch & Anne Stein



A sumptuous reception buffet

Calgary's Congregation House of Jacob

by Betty Sherwood

It was a proud and upbeat crowd that assembled on November 1, 2011, when a historic plaque was unveiled in downtown Calgary to commemorate the opening of Calgary's first synagogue, Congregation House of Jacob, at Rosh Hashanah, 1911. As had been said earlier that day, we are so fortunate and must always be grateful that our forebears were able to settle and prosper as Jews here.

Several Jewish merchants are known to have passed through Calgary in the early 1880s, but the first permanent Jewish residents were Rachel and Jacob Diamond who arrived in 1889. Travellers and settlers often gathered at the Diamond home for High Holiday services. The first *minyán*, held in 1894, consisted of a group of residents, area farmers and a travelling salesman.

The death of an infant, Goldie Bell, in 1904 prompted the purchase of land adjacent to the city's Union Cemetery. The *Chevra Kadisha* (burial society) became an independent society in 1907 and received its provincial charter in 1914. It remains an important facet of the Jewish community until today.

Although the Jewish community grew slowly at first, Jacob Diamond in Calgary and his brother William in Edmonton petitioned Canada's Chief Rabbi to send someone West to fulfill the duties of a rabbi. Rabbi Hyman Goldstick, then working in Toronto, was interviewed in Montreal and was hired immediately. Beginning in 1906 and continuing for several years, Rabbi Goldstick officiated for both the Edmonton and Calgary communities since even in 1907, there were just 12 Jewish families in Calgary.

The Congregation's minutes, which were begun in March 1908, are both charming and informative. Here are some excerpts (translated from the original Yiddish):

March 27: It was moved that the President should appoint two members to be in charge of bringing in new members. This motion was passed. It was moved that member's dues should be \$0.50 per month. This was also passed. It was moved that a member who is behind three months in his dues cannot be suspended from membership but will not get a vote. He will get 12 months to pay. This motion was passed. It was moved that the congregation should carry the name Beit Yakov and that the first synagogue to be built should have this name and that it may never be changed. This motion was passed. Mr. Diamond said that since his name is Yacov he would therefore give the congregation a gift of \$5.00. It was then moved that the President find out how much it would cost to get a charter. Motion carried.

August 30: It was moved that the President rent a hall for the High Holidays. He has the authority to choose the best option.

October 11: A member expressed the need to organize an evening party in a hotel and to invite everyone. Various members pledged their contributions to the upcoming event: two barrels of beer, four dozen seltzer water, one box of apples, one barrel of herring, ten pounds of pickled meat and a dozen bread. All accepted with thanks.

October 15: The purpose of this gathering is to raise money in

order that the congregation can buy property for a site for a synagogue. Each went up to the table to pay cash and make a pledge. Twenty-eight people pledged a total of \$1,057 and \$295 was received in cash. The audience was overjoyed and with great hopes everyone went home at 11:30 PM.

The Congregation House of Jacob was founded in 1909, becoming the first incorporated Jewish religious society in Alberta. Property on 5th Avenue East was purchased for \$2,300 and fundraising began in earnest with the goal of building a 500-seat synagogue. Meanwhile two small buildings were built on the chosen site to serve as sanctuary, Hebrew school and *mikvah* (ritual bath). It is said that when approached by congregation members with an application for a building permit, a harried city bureaucrat cried something like: "What an ego! Someone wants to build a house and name it after himself!"

On August 8, 1911, founding President Jacob Diamond presided at the cornerstone-laying ceremony at 323-5th Avenue East. The general public was invited through invitations in local newspapers and Rabbi Marcus Berner of Hirsch, Saskatchewan was brought in to provide a rabbinical presence. Calgary had no full-time rabbi at that time but Mr. Hirsch Sosinsky was employed as *shoichet* (ritual slaughterer), *chazzan* (cantor), and teacher.

The *Morning Herald* reported:

"That the Hebrews were as loyal to the flag of their adoption in Canada as Canadians themselves was the keynote of an eloquent address by Rabbi Marcus Berner" and "The tenor of the address was the levelling of the barriers between Jews and Gentiles."

The most well-known of the dignitaries present was Richard B. Bennett who was elected member of Parliament for Calgary a few weeks later and would become Prime Minister in 1930. The cornerstone was put into place by member Charles Bell, whose auction bid of \$400 had won him this honour a few weeks earlier. His brother Alexander and Jacob Polsky made considerable donations as well and their names also appear on the cornerstone. Congregational minutes provide the names of other early families: Bercov, Bercuson, Cohen, Cooper, Geffen, Greisman, Hart, Kravitz, Malkin, Margolis and Sereth. Perhaps you are among their descendents.

Construction of the House of Jacob was completed in a mere six weeks and it saw its first service on Rosh Hashanah September 22, 1911, led by Mr. Sosinsky. If you have seen William Kurelek's painting "Wedding in Calgary", you are familiar with the façade of Calgary's original synagogue. Of course, the pediment with the Hebrew date of 5671 in stone corresponds to the secular 1911. The modest red brick building was designed in the traditional style with the *bimah* (dais) in the centre facing the *aron kodesh* (holy ark) and with the women's section in the balconies. Four hundred worshippers could be seated comfortably in the sanctuary.

The Congregation was responsible for the supervision of *kashruth* and operated the community's ritual bath. Long-serving and beloved rabbis included Shimon Smolensky from

1917 to 1935 and David Barenholtz from 1959 to 1968. Untold numbers of services and community events took place at Calgary's first synagogue until 1968, when it was demolished as part of the downtown renewal program. Several temporary venues served its members until a 1979 meeting was specially convened to revitalize Orthodox Judaism in Calgary. With the participation and enthusiasm of several young families, land was purchased on 92nd Avenue South West with a new permanent home in mind. The groundbreaking ceremony on June 5, 1983 included the laying of the original cornerstone onto the new location. As well, some interior elements and furnishings of the original building were incorporated into the new.

The renamed Congregation House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel was opened in 1986 in the Pump Hill district and today serves approximately 175 families. It was through the generosity of the Israel Koschitzky Family Foundation of Toronto that the Congregation could erect its current building and it was pleased to add Mikveh Israel to its name. The Koschitzky family came to Canada as Holocaust survivors, arriving in Calgary in 1949. Their earliest business endeavours started here, and both Israel Koschitzky and his son Saul were involved in community activities.

The year 2009 saw the Congregation marking its centennial with numerous undertakings and special events, including the publication of *The House that Jacob Built* and an 18-month Centennial Daytimer; a centennial quilt; writing of the first letters of a centennial Torah; a documentary video; a Stampede parade float and a kosher Stampede breakfast.

The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta commissioned the 1911-2011 centennial plaque which was unveiled on the site of the original synagogue by Mayor Naheed Nenshi and Jonathan Joffe, great grandson of Rebecca and Jacob Diamond. Since the site is now occupied by Bow Valley College, the master of ceremonies reminded all present that, fittingly, one of the Hebrew terms for synagogue is house of learning. To find out more, please visit:

House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel: www.hojmi.org

Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta: www.jhssa.org

Author Betty Sherwood is a JGS (Toronto) member who now lives in Calgary and is a granddaughter of Hirsch Sosinsky.

***SHEM TOV* is Going PDF!**

All future issues will be delivered to your inbox.
A printed version will be available solely for those without an email address.

NEW MEMBERS

JGS Toronto is very pleased to welcome
as new members:

Chaim Lax

Frances Unger

Holocaust Testimonies Archive Comes to McMaster

by Judy Kasman

Renowned film director Steven Spielberg founded the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation in 1994, after he created the movie, *Schindler's List*, in order that survivors' stories be preserved. About 52,000 videotaped testimonies of Holocaust survivors were conducted between 1994 and 1999; in 2006, they became part of the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation Institute's Visual History Archive. According to McMaster University's November 2, 2011 press release, McMaster, in Hamilton, Ontario, became the "first Canadian Institution to offer full access" to the records,

The interviews can be accessed by computer or by secure access at McMaster University Library. About 3,000 of these interviews were of Canadians, with 34 having been conducted in Hamilton.

On November 3rd, a launch event took place at McMaster, the keynote speaker being Branko Lustig, producer of *Schindler's List*. Lustig himself is a survivor whose own testimony is in these archives. You can find an article about Branko Lustig in the June 2011 issue of *Shem Tov*.

McMaster's Library site for these archives is <http://library.mcmaster.ca/archives/vha>. The telephone number is 905-525-9140, x27790.

For more information about the USC Shoah Institute, see dornsife.usc.edu/vhi.

Genealogical Research Leads to Formation of an Orchestra

by Judy Kasman

In researching his ancestral family from Gora Kalwaria, Poland, Avner Yanai, a *sabra* who resides in San Francisco, discovered that his grandfather and two great uncles had been musicians: specifically, he learned that in the 1920s & 30s, his grandfather and younger brother both played mandolin in an 11-man mandolin orchestra, while an older brother was the bandleader. Sadly, these relatives perished in the Holocaust.

The outcome of this revelation, however, is that Yanai founded a modern-day mandolin orchestra which is based in San Francisco. Due to the orchestra's success, it performed in Poland this past September.

There is a Toronto connection to this story as Eric Stein, musician, is a member of this Orchestra and hopes to bring it to Toronto for next summer's Ashkenaz Festival, of which he is Artistic Director.

Here is the youtube clip where you can hear the background of this Orchestra and see/hear clips of performances: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUNy9_gv_y8&feature=related

Michael Goldstein's Presentation on Breaking Through Brick Walls *by Judy Kasman*

On November 17th, JGS Toronto was pleased to welcome back Michael Goldstein, the 3rd Montrealer (well, former Montrealer) to speak to our Society this Fall. Michael, who is a professional genealogist, made *aliyah* 23 years ago and is the current President of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS).

He used examples provided by our own members (including the writer) to show how our brick walls can be penetrated. He stressed the importance of:

- applying for actual Naturalization documents (more than just the Certificate) from the Canada government
- using the Routes to Roots Foundation website, www.rtrfoundation.org, specifically to see what information is available in various towns
- using the population registry in Israel
- submitting multiple names when wiring funds to a Polish archive for data listed in the JRI-Poland Index so as to stretch the bank charge
- to looking at nearby larger towns when small towns don't have records
- for females wishing to undergo a DNA test, using www.familytreedna.com

In addition to the above tips, Michael provided us with a hand-out on Brick Walls which stems from his own experience. The following is re-printed with permission from Michael Goldstein:

Brick Wall Yes or No?

©Michael Goldstein

"A Brick Wall is a dead-end that you have reached in your genealogical research. It may be a small problem or a much larger one. You may have exhausted every avenue of research and are totally frustrated and at a loss." (*Jeanne Lund, Belaugh Research Services*)

You cannot say you have hit a brickwall unless you...

Have a research plan

- Use a system to store the information you have acquired
- Keep results in a sourced genealogy program
- Maintain a log that records the what, when, success or failures of you searches.
- Have gone back and re-examined what you examined in light of newly emerged data

Have you?:

- Registered on JewishGen & Become familiar with resources for your area of research
- Examined your surname
- Posted your surnames on JewishGen
- Searched out your ancestral towns
- Examined status of remaining documents for known ancestral towns
- Posted your town searches on JewishGen
- Sent a query to JewishGen discussion Groups
- Posted your privatized tree to JewishGen, Rootsweb and other reputable locations
- Researched relevant sites such as isragen.org or sephardicgen.com or familysearch.org
- Considered acquiring documents that have survived if relevant
- Acquired records and relied not just on indexes.
- Done DNA testing www.ftdna.com
- Searched out and talked to any relative who may have information

Sunday Morning at Edithvale With Marian

by Judy Kasman

Those who came to Edithvale Community Centre on Sunday morning, October 18th were treated to two great presentations by Marian Press.

Marian by profession is a Librarian at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). She is also an experienced hobby genealogist, so her talks, one on blogs and the other on wikis, were based on her personal research and were very practical. Marian customized her talk for JGS Toronto by using examples of blogs and wikis for those researching Jewish roots.

As Marian described, it is relatively easy to establish one's own blog; this is a very good alternative to having a webpage. A wiki, being the Hawaiian word meaning *fast* (rapid), is a means of contributing material (in this case, genealogical) to the web.

Fortunately for us all, Marian was kind enough to provide us with the links to her presentations. Here they are:

Blogs: http://itsmyancestry.com/blogs_and_genealogyjgs.pdf

Wikis: <http://itsmyancestry.com/Wikisjgs.pdf>

