



www.jgstoronto.ca

שם טוב

SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO)

Since 1985

VOLUME XXVIII No. 1

March 2012 Nisan 5772

LESSONS FROM A GENEALOGICAL SLEUTH: WHO WAS CHARLES ZWERLING?

by Neil Richler, JGS Toronto Membership Chair

Part 1

At a recent gathering of my father-in-law's family, we got to talking family history. My father-in-law, Don, is the youngest of four siblings and his three older sisters are a treasure trove of family information. Two of the sisters were there that day and we got to talking about how and when the family came over from Europe to Halifax.

Lesson #1: Never let an opportunity go by to talk about your family history, especially when several senior members of the family are together in the same place

I knew that Don's father, Saul Hoffer, came to Halifax, likely in his teens or early 20s. Somehow the conversation turned to a relative that Don's sisters, Evelyn and Harriet, referred to as "Charlie Swirling" (my spelling). I had vaguely recalled hearing this name before but pushed for more information. Evelyn said that Charlie was a relative and worked for immigration. To me "immigration" implied Pier 21, the gateway to Canada for many immigrants. Evelyn then said that Charlie brought Saul and his two brothers, Meyer and Eddie, over from Poland. She then added that their elderly grandmother came later too. I questioned Evelyn – you mean their mother? She repeated again that it was Saul's grandmother that came over, and confirmed that Saul's mother had remained behind in Europe. His father had already died and by the time Saul wanted to bring his mother and three sisters over, it was too late as WWII had started. I did not know that a grandmother of Saul had possibly come to Canada.

Lesson #2: As in the case of the "Charlie Swirling" story, even if you've had a conversation before, bring up old discussions with senior relatives as you might learn new details. I had no idea that my wife might have had a great great grandmother who came to Canada.

In our discussion, I tried to determine with Evelyn and Harriet exactly who Charlie Swirling was and how he might have been related. They were not sure and also weren't sure about the connection to Saul's grandmother. I figured that there might be common relatives but didn't have much to go on. While at this gathering, I went online to search some archives but did not have much success. I knew this was going to take some further research.

Continued page 4

In This Issue

- 1 *Lessons From a Genealogical Sleuth*
- 2 *Message From the President*
- 3 *Upcoming Events • Our Members: Speakers in the Community • Toronto Public Library: Find Your Way to Local History and Genealogy*
- 5 *Rabbi Gunther Plaut: In Memoriam • Tracing Our Roots, Telling Out Stories Entered for Award • Jewish Music Week in Toronto: From Bible to Broadway*
- 6 *Branching Out*
- 7 *From Nu? What's New? • Special Exhibit at Columbus Centre*
- 8 *At the Movies • Chadashot: News from Israel • Ontario Recognizes May as Jewish Heritage Month*
- 9 *I Reconnected with Long-Lost Family Members*
- 10 *Missing Links • New Members*
- 11 *On a Personal Note • July in Paris!*
- 12 *TV Genealogy • JewishGen Online Learning Center • Museum of the History of Polish Jews • JGS Toronto Seeks Volunteers*

Message From the President

Thanks to the efforts of Michael Keleman and Neil Richler, we now have a blog and a presence on Facebook. I am aware that social media might be anathema to many of you, but these new and innovative forms of communication can be very helpful for making family connections. The URLs for the blog and Facebook page are www.jgstoronto.blogspot.com and <http://www.facebook.com/jgstoronto> (Note: You don't have to be a member of Facebook to access this page and post comments/questions). Please try them out.

JGS Toronto is establishing a *Speakers Bureau* and so we are looking for those members who are interested in making presentations to social groups, synagogues, schools, etc. on family research topics. A number of people in our Society are speaking at locations as diverse as the Prosserman Centre, Miles Nadal Centre, Holy Blossom Temple, the JGS of Hamilton, and so on. Some of you are looking for opportunities to enrich your retirement years and speaking is a very rewarding way of sharing your knowledge and challenging yourself to keep current. Please email me at president@jgstoronto.ca or leave a message on our Society's phone line, 647-247-6414 if you would like to get involved.

We have an opportunity to have two 5 minute segments per month on Zelda Young's radio show on CHIN. Her show is on weekdays from 10:00 to 11:00 am and Sundays from 8:00 to 10 am. This is a wonderful way to showcase the work of our Soci-

ety's members. We need to find 1 or 2 sponsors in order to make this happen. Please contact me if you might be interested or if you know of a company that would sponsor us.

Les Kelman, our Vice President and Program Chair, will be succeeding me when my term ends at the end of December. As such, we are looking to find a replacement for Les as Program Chair. He should be congratulated for doing such a tremendous job over the years to find us speakers that have been both relevant and interesting. If you are interested in programming and would like to serve on the committee, or be considered for the chairmanship, please give me a call, or contact Les at program@jgstoronto.ca. Perhaps we can even find a way to delegate the responsibilities to several people.

Please let me know if you are planning to go to the IAJGS Conference in Paris this July. Merle Kastner is planning the Canadian Birds of a Feather breakfast and would like to have some ideas as to the number of people who will be attending. Lastly, I would like to congratulate Allen Halberstadt for winning the *Salute Award* presented by the International Association for Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) for his remarkable efforts in documenting burials in the GTA's Jewish cemeteries. His award can be seen at this URL, <http://www.iajgs.org/awards/Halberstadt.html>.

Wishing everyone a Happy Passover.

Harvey Glasner

vol. XXVIII No. 1

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	publicity@jgstoronto.ca
Library Coordinator	ELAINE CHESKES	library@jgstoronto.ca
Website Administrator	ARTHUR RYMAN	comments@jgstoronto.ca
Immediate Past President	SHELLEY STILLMAN	stillman@jgstoronto.ca
Past Presidents	CAROLYNNE VEFFER	
	GARRY STEIN	
	GERT SOLNIK ROGERS	
	HENRY WELLISCH	
	BILL GLADSTONE	
	DR. ROLF LEDERER	
Hon. Life President	RAYZEL ROBINSON-PAULL	
Members-at-Large:	ALLEN HALBERSTADT	ELAINE CHESKES
	JUDY KASMAN	KAREN LASKY
	NEIL RICHLER	
Family Finder Coordinator	GERT SOLNIK ROGERS	
Cemetery Project	ALLEN HALBERSTADT	
Shem Tov:		
Editor	JUDY KASMAN	shemtov@jgstoronto.ca
Editor Emeritus	HENRY WELLISCH	
Layout and Design	DULCEY HOFFMAN	
Contributors to this Issue:		
	ELAINE CHESKES	HARVEY GLASNER
	JUDY KASMAN	RENATE KRAKAUER
	NEIL RICHLER	

info@jgstoronto.ca
www.jgstoronto.blogspot.com

Telephone: 647-247-6414



UPCOMING EVENTS

April, May & June programmes
at Temple Sinai, 210 Wilson Avenue, Toronto
Doors open at 7:30 pm
Be sure to visit www.jgstoronto.ca for updates.

Wednesday March 28th @ 8:00 pm

North York Library Auditorium, 5120 Yonge Street
(Location depends on strike—please check website)
LANDSMENSCHAFTEN* & MUTUAL BENEFIT SOCIETIES OF TORONTO

Presenter: Bill Gladstone

**Landsmanschaften*: Immigrant benevolent societies founded by new immigrants from the same village or region

Wednesday, April 25th @ 8.00 pm

Four authors of *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories* will talk about:

- Why that particular story
- Favourite part of the story
- Insights gained by author
- Insights gained from extended family
- Lessons learned from preparing and writing the story

Wednesday, May 30th @ 8.00 pm

Escape, Evasion and Revenge

Presenter: Marc H. Stevens

Marc will talk about his 18 year quest to discover exactly why his father had been awarded one of Britain's highest medals for bravery, the Military Cross.

Marc only discovered in 1996 (7 years after his father's death) that his father, Peter Stevens, was not only a German, but a German Jew who had fought for England against the country of his birth.

Wednesday, June 20th @ 8.00 pm

Brick Walls and Breakthroughs

Presentations by our members

HOLD THE DATE

Sunday September 23rd from 1:30-4:30 pm

Edithvale Community Centre

Toronto Public Library:

Find Your Way to Local History and Genealogy

Go to www.tpl.ca/history-genealogy for a quick new link at the Toronto Public Library's website for those interested in local history and genealogy.

For more information about *Find Your Way*, go to:
<http://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/local-history-genealogy/2012/02/find-your-way-to-local-history-and-genealogy-at-toronto-public-library.html>

Our Members: Speakers in the Community

On March 5th, JGS Toronto President **Harvey Glasner** & Past Presidents **Bill Gladstone** and **Henry Wellisch** spoke on "Tracing Our Roots: The Joy of Genealogy" at the Prosserman Centre. Both Harvey and Henry are authors of stories in *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*.

Also at the Prosserman Centre, on March 12th, JGS Toronto member **Lorne Miller** (whose writing also appears in *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*) spoke on "These days everyone can write a book: The secrets of self publishing"..

UPCOMING SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Sunday morning, April 15th

Holy Blossom Temple - Brotherhood Breakfast

1950 Bathurst Street, Toronto

Morning services 9 am; breakfast at 9:30 am,

Presentation at 10 am

Speakers are JGS Toronto authors Ruth Chernia, Nora Freund, Bonnie Lawrence, Dr. Edward Sheffman

All are welcome

Wednesday, April 18th at 7:30 pm

[Jewish Genealogical Society of Hamilton & Area](#)

Temple Anshe Sholom

215 Cline Avenue North, Hamilton

Karen Lasky, JGS Toronto author, will present her "Personal Ancestral Mission"

Tuesday, May 1st at 7:30 pm

Beth Tzedec - Sisterhood

1700 Bathurst Street, Toronto

Unlocking 50 Years of Secret Documents:

The Brest Ghetto Passport Archive

Speaker: Elaine Cheskes, JGS Toronto author

Thursday, May 3rd at 2 pm

The Miles Nadal Centre

750 Spadina Avenue @ Bloor Street, Toronto

Refreshments at 1:30 pm

Jewish Genealogy: Tracing Family History, Creating a Family Tree

Speaker: Henry Wellisch

Tuesday, May 29th at 12:30 pm

Temple Har Zion – Lunch & Learn

7380 Bayview Avenue, Thornhill

How to Find Your Relatives

Speaker: Karen Lasky



See your name in **boldface** in *Shem Tov* by becoming a speaker!

Please contact president@jgstoronto.ca for more information.

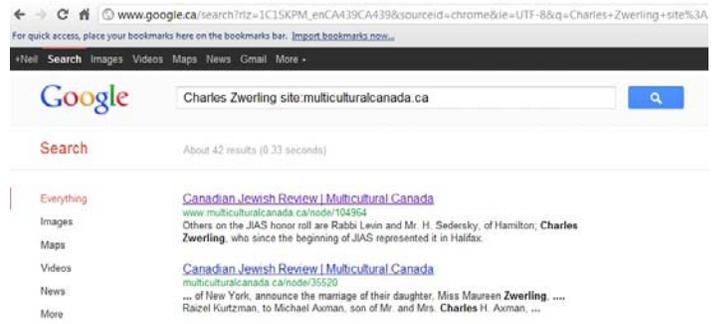
Lessons from a Genealogical Sleuth - continued

Later that evening, I decided on a course of action. I wanted to find proof that someone named Charlie Swirling existed and that he had some connection to an immigration department. The first site I tried was Nova Scotia's vital records which has birth, marriage and death records. I went to <http://novascotiagenealogy.com/> and at first found nothing when I searched for "Swirling". Then I recalled Don pronouncing the name with a "Z" at the beginning, so I tried "Zwirling". Still I had no luck, so then I tried other combinations, finally trying "Zwerling". I had success!

but another way to search is through Google. If you want to limit a Google search to a site, one would search like this:

Charles Zwerling site:multiculturalcanada.ca

This searches the words "Charles Zwerling" and limits it to only multiculturalcanada.ca. The following are the first two Google results with the above search:



Death record results from your search: 1		
Name [sort a-z]	Place [sort a-z]	Year [sort]
Zwerling, Charles	Halifax, Halifax County	1954

Lesson #3: Always try different spellings for names, no matter what pronunciations you may have heard or how sure someone is that "this is how it's spelled". Immigrants who did not speak English may have spelled their names with all kinds of variations, even within the same family. If an online search offers a Soundex or a "sounds like" search, then try this option too as you may find spellings that you had not considered.

Looking at the preview of the first one, it mentions Charles Zwerling and that he represented JIAS in Halifax. The actual page is an article, "Names in Jewish Immigrant Aid History", and contains a wealth of information about important figures in Jewish immigrant aid in Canada. The first link is a page from the *Canadian Jewish Review* in September of 1948. The relevant part of the page is as follows:

I was in luck since I found a marriage and death record for Charles Zwerling. The Nova Scotia vital records site allows ordering of documents but also shows a preview on the site. I wanted to confirm that this person who assisted Saul Hoffer was older than him. The certificate shown below clearly states that Charles Zwerling died May 11, 1954 and was born October 18, 1874. Saul Hoffer was born around 1900 so this fits that Charles was an older relative.

To these can be added the name of the late David Sweet, of Hamilton, who since JIAS inception worked hard for its development. Others on the JIAS honor roll are Rabbi Levin and Mr. H. Sedersky, of Hamilton; Charles Zwerling, who since the beginning of JIAS represented it in Halifax. The late Harry Kitz was of Halifax. There are Maurice Pollack, of Quebec City; the late I. Ellman, of St.

This confirmed for me that Charles Zwerling did have connections to Jewish immigration and may indeed have helped Saul and his grandmother come over from Europe.

Now I got to thinking – how were Saul and Charles related? The age difference is enough to be uncle and nephew. What if the grandmother in question was actually Charles' mother? This made sense to me but it was all speculation. I didn't know the grandmother's name nor did I know Charles' mother's name. At first I didn't think I knew Saul's mother's maiden name which could help in determining a family connection. Then I remembered that a few years ago I found what appeared to be

Now I knew that Charles Zwerling existed but how to link him to immigration? The *Canadian Jewish Review* newspaper was a major Canadian Jewish newspaper at the time. I hoped that maybe there was some mention of Charles Zwerling. Much of the newspaper has been digitized at <http://multiculturalcanada.ca>. There is a search engine on the site,

Lessons from a Genealogical Sleuth - *continued*

Saul's birth record through JRI-Poland, a records indexing project that aims to make Polish vital records available through indexes online. This birth record had the names of Saul's two brothers and three sisters. It also had his father's name which I had matched up against Saul's tombstone.

Givenname	Year	Type	Akt	Event	Page	Signature	Indexpage	Age	Sex	Father	Fathersurn	Fathertown	Fatherage	Mother	Mothersurn
Chana	1896	B	95			1922			F	Jacob	HOFRICHTER			Lea	ZWERDLING
Salomon	1897	B	448			1923			M	Jacob	HOFRICHTER			Lea	ZWERDLING
Blume	1898	B	505			2070			F	Jacob	HOFRICHTER			Lea	ZWERDLING
Rancie	1899	B	545			2071			F	Jacob	HOFRICHTER			Lea Bassie	ZWERDLING
Meyer	1901	B	416			2218			M	Jakob	HOFRICHTER			Lea	ZWERDLING

Sure enough, Saul's mother name was Lea Zwerdling which to me sounds a lot like Zwerling! Now I was even more convinced of Charles Zwerling being a relative.

To be continued in next issue of Shem Tov

Rabbi Gunther Plaut ז"ל, 1912-2012: In Memoriam

As Rabbi Dow Marmur wrote in the *Toronto Star*, February 20, 2012: "Had the Nazis not come to power in his native Germany, W. Gunther Plaut would have become a judge. But being barred from pursuing a legal career because he was a Jew, he dedicated himself to serving God and his people. That brought him to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, where he was ordained as a rabbi in 1939."

The course of Rabbi Plaut's life, like that of so many other European Jews, was impacted by the rise of Nazism in Europe over seventy years ago. In this instance, Plaut emigrated to the United States in 1935 and served as a U.S. army chaplain during World War II. In 1961 he arrived in Toronto to become Rabbi of Holy Blossom Temple, Canada's largest Reform congregation, until 1977 when he became the Temple's senior scholar. In addition, Rabbi Plaut authored numerous scholarly tomes.

Carolyn Blackman in the *Canadian Jewish News* of February 16, 2012, wrote: "In keeping with the social responsibility he taught from the pulpit, Rabbi Plaut was a former president of Canadian Jewish Congress and of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. He also helped found Toronto's Urban Alliance for Race Relations and served as vice-chair of the Ontario Human Rights Commission for seven years. Among the many distinctions and community honours that were bestowed upon him, he was made a companion of the Order of Canada, received the Order of Ontario and 19 honorary degrees from universities around the world, including the University of Toronto and York University."

Elizabeth Plaut, his wife who predeceased him 2003, did extensive genealogical research and published her findings.

Toronto and Canada were blessed to have had Rabbi Plaut as a distinguished religious and community leader and scholar.

TRACING OUR ROOTS, TELLING OUR STORIES ENTERED FOR AWARD

JGS Toronto's Book Committee is excited to announce that the Society's recently-published collection of its members' genealogical stories, *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*, has been accepted as an entry for the Helen and Stan Vine Canadian Jewish Book Awards. The awards ceremony will be held on the evening of Thursday, June 7th, 2012 at the Bram and Bluma Appel Salon at the Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street (just north of Bloor). The Award winners will be announced in May.

This Awards night is the closing ceremony of Toronto's annual Jewish Book Festival. A Proposal has been submitted to present a moderated Programme during the Festival featuring JGS Toronto authors relating their discoveries made through searches for their family roots. These stories will be enhanced by projected photographs which will be contributed by the forty-four authors of this anthology. We will keep everyone apprised of these exciting developments!

In the meantime, save the date: Thursday, June 7th, 8 pm.

Jewish Music Week in Toronto: From Bible to Broadway June 3rd to 10th

"...an exciting week-long festival of music, featuring concerts, recitals, lectures and musical programs throughout the Greater Toronto Area. This historical week is jointly hosted by synagogues, schools and Jewish organizations for the benefit of the entire community."

From www.jewishmusicweek.com

Check the website to see the schedule of diverse musical events.

Artistic Director: Aliza Spiro

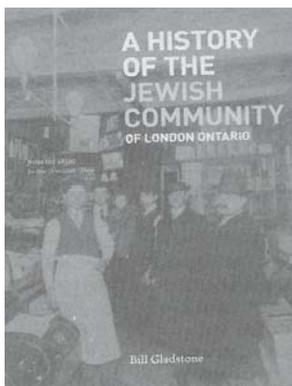
Sponsors: Koffler Centre of the Arts, Sonus Stage Productions, Zareinu, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto Jewish Book Festival, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, Baycrest, Mt. Sinai Hospital, Kensington Place, Bernard Betel Centre, Miles Nadal JCC



BRANCHING OUT

by Elaine Cheskes

New Acquisitions to the JGS of Canada (Toronto) Library Collection at the North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, 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.

Reviewed by Walter Zimmerman
Avotaynu Vol. XXVII, no. 2, Summer 2011
Reprinted with the permission of Bill Gladstone
Excerpted by Elaine Cheskes

While the title on the surface, does not seem to make this a book of Jewish genealogy, the author, Bill Gladstone, is one of Canada's leading Jewish genealogists, and the book deserves to be looked at from this perspective. Gladstone also wrote *One Hundred Years in Canada: The Rubinoff-Naftolin Family Tree*, and it was as a result of his incredibly impeccable, thorough research for that project that the Rubinoff family commissioned Gladstone to write this London, Ontario, history book.

David Rubinoff (1913-2008), was a prominent member of the London, Ontario, community, not just of the London Jewish community. He was the developer of what is currently the largest shopping mall between Toronto and Windsor, a major residential subdivision in north London, and the founder of the Commonwealth Holidays Inn chain. The Rubinoff family is among the 15 families profiled in this 248-page, fully indexed, heavily illustrated book.

The author searched through records of birth, death, burial, marriage, military attestations, border crossings, naturalizations, census records, and newspapers; he also researched this book in the archives of the University of Western Ontario, the London and Toronto Public Libraries, the Ontario Jewish Archives, and the Canadian Jewish Congress Archives in Montreal.

For the genealogist, the book provides details of marriages

from three early time periods. In total, the book documents 13 marriages in the 19th century, 64 between 1900 and 1918, and 24 between 1919 and 1924.

Of course, the book covers more than genealogy as it chronicles the growth of the community; the influence of Jews in commerce, the professions, education, the arts, and other areas of life; and of course, the history of the Jewish institutions such as cemeteries, the mikveh (ritual bath), synagogues, communal organizations and schools. The book is the only one of its kind on London's Jewish community and contains information that would be very difficult if not impossible to find elsewhere.

In addition, the production of the book also is excellent in every respect. The photographs were either carefully scanned from personal collections or made from photographic negatives carefully preserved by the *London Free Press*. The glossy paper, large-format pages, clear type, and the inclusion of maps, population charts and graphs, a bibliography, and an eight-page index make this a book that is easy to read cover-to-cover, but also a book to which one can refer for the kind of specific information of interest to a genealogist. This book is highly recommended for all Jewish libraries in Canada and for libraries anywhere with an interest in local Jewish history and/or genealogy. It can serve as a model for other communities everywhere.

A History of the Jewish Community of London Ontario: From the 1850s to the Present Day may be ordered from Now & Then Books: www.nowandthenbookstoronto.com



“Check Out” the Library Section of the JGS Toronto Website

The JGS Toronto website has recently updated its Library Section with new acquisitions of important genealogical research tools. Although the internet has proven to be an invaluable resource in searching for family histories and vital records, in many cases it cannot replace the printed word.

To access the JGS Toronto website, go to www.jgstoronto.ca
Click the: “Resources” tab under the top banner.
On the left side, choose the “Library” tab.

Author, Title, Subject files

Scroll down the alphabetical list of authors, titles and subjects in each file.

“Control F” key produces a search box.

Enter the author, title, subject or keyword to be searched. If a “hit” occurs, the exact position of the entry on the Excel spreadsheet is indicated.

New Acquisitions

The list of acquisitions to the JGS Toronto Library Collection has been updated.

From Nu? What's New?
The E-zine of Jewish Genealogy From Avotaynu
Gary Mokotoff, Editor

Volume 13, Number 9 | February 26, 2012

The JewishGen's Ukraine Special Interest Group website has a new look courtesy of the SIG's webmaster Ariel Parkansky. It is located at <http://www.jewishgen.org/Ukraine/>. The new look is oriented toward town and district pages—more than 800 of them. Each town page serves as a portal to all the information known about the town, both on JewishGen and other websites.



Volume 13, Number 10 | March 3, 2012
**Joint Distribution Committee Archives
now Online**

An index to the holdings of the American Joint Distribution Committee archives is now online at <http://archives.jdc.org/>. An exciting aspect is that it often includes the source document. The "Joint" is an international relief and rescue organization established in 1914 that focuses on Jews who are in trouble. Its archives contain more than 500,000 names and 100,000 photographs.



Jewish Heritage Europe Website

Ruth Ellen Gruber, a writer and longtime researcher on Jewish heritage issues, has established a "Jewish Heritage Europe" website that "will serve as an online clearinghouse for resources, news and information on Jewish monuments and heritage sites all over Europe." It is located at <http://www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu>

The site organizes information in individual sections for 48 European countries—from Portugal to Turkey; from Norway to Greece. Major sections for each country include Communal Contacts; Heritage & Heritage Sites; Museums, Memorials & Cultural Institutions; News; Publications & Sources; and Tourism & Genealogy.

The site is still in its infancy with little to no information about a number of countries.

JHE's primary focus is Jewish-built heritage: synagogues, cemeteries, mikvaot, Jewish quarters and other physical traces that attest to a Jewish presence on the continent stretching back to Antiquity. It also includes material on Jewish museums and other cultural institutions.



**World Memory Project Reaches One Million
Records**

The World Memory Project, a joint venture between the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Ancestry.com, now has more than one million records online. The project provides an index to individuals named in the museum's collection of Holocaust-related records—from children in Germany to Jewish prisoners at camps in Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia, and Ukraine. This information is searchable at the Ancestry.com site, <http://tinyurl.com/7dkyw4l>, at no charge. USHMM reports that 2,400 contributors donated 28,000 hours to help them build the index. The project is ongoing. Information about volunteering can be found at <http://www.ancestry.com/wmp>.

Special Exhibit at Columbus Centre

The Joseph D. Carrier Art Gallery of the Columbus Centre, 901 Lawrence Avenue West at Dufferin will be hosting *Icons of Loss: The Art of Samuel Bak*. This exhibit consists of over two dozen painting by Bak, a painter who was born in Vilna, Lithuania in 1933. About half of the paintings are based upon a 1943 photograph of a small boy at gunpoint during the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Bak, as an adolescent, had met Gerda Freiberg in a displaced person camp after WWII. Bak and his mother then emigrated to Israel. Many of our readers will be aware that Freiberg subsequently became a Toronto resident who over the years has been an exemplary Holocaust educator. Now, many years later, Freiberg has been instrumental in bringing this collection of Bak's paintings to Toronto. It is presented with the support of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and the Pucker Gallery, Boston, in cooperation with the artist (who now resides in Boston), and will run until April 30th.

The Carrier Gallery is open Monday to Friday from 10 am – 5 pm and Sunday, April 1st from 9-11 am.

Admission is free.

For further information, please call 416-789-7011x300.

To read more about the exhibit and the artist, or visit:

<http://www.holocaustcentre.com/Programs-Exhibits/Upcoming-Exhibitions> and

http://www.villacharities.com/carrier/carrier_main.asp?View=Events

The latter site enables the visitor to view some of Bak's paintings.

At the Movies

In *Darkness*, directed by Agnieszka Holland, was Poland's entry for a 2011 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. As Sheldon Kirshner wrote in the February 2, 2012 *Canadian Jewish News*: "In *Darkness* is set in the Nazi-occupied Polish city of Lvov. It tells the true story of an antisemitic sewer-worker-cum-thief who saves a group of Jewish men, women and children." The screenplay was written by Toronto resident David Shamoon who was inspired by a newspaper article by Sir Martin Gilbert about Righteous Gentiles, and Robert Marshall's book, *In the Sewers of Lvov*, written about sewer-worker Leopold Socha. Shamoon was able to obtain the film rights to this story. The film, which is in Polish, Ukrainian, Yiddish & German, was also nominated for three Genie awards.

To view a recent interview in English of Ms. Holland at the Polish Embassy of the United States, please go to <http://washington.polemb.net/index.php?document=1307>



Turkish Passports is a docudrama released in 2011 that tells the story of Turkish diplomats who saved tens of thousands of French Jews during World War II by issuing them Turkish passports so that they could escape from Europe to Turkey by train.

This film, produced after four years of research, was directed by Burak Cem Arliel and written by Deniz Yeşilgün and Gökhan Zincir, all Turkish. It incorporates interviews with escapees and diplomats and their family members, and re-enacts scenes of the time in question.



Barbara Borenstein presenting *How To Make a Tribute Video*, where she showed the hows and whys of the video she produced about her late father, Moshe Borenstein, *Memories of Moshe, My Dad, My Hero* on December 14th

Chadashot: News From Israel

by Judy Kasman

"Abba Kovner, a ghetto fighter in Lithuania who came to Israel and became a great poet, named the museum he conceived for the founder and former president of the World Jewish Congress. When Beit Hatfutsot opened its doors in 1978, it was considered one of the world's most innovative historical museum in its technology and design".

From Beit Hatfutsot website

Beit Hatfutsot, on the campus of Tel Aviv University, was thus named the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora. This Museum has been the repository for Jewish family name searches, well before the internet came into play. However, as the building and its resources became outdated, the attendance dropped substantially and so a plan for the Museum's renewal was developed.

Reflecting the desire for a philosophical and physical revitalization, the Museum is now known in English as The Museum of the Jewish People and a \$25 million renovation, under the helm of noted American designer Patrick Gallagher, will commence in 2013. The work is slated to be completed the following year.

A visit to the website, www.bh.or.il, will reveal the plans for the Museum. While at this site you can tour the Virtual Exhibits. At the time of this writing, two of these Exhibits were *The Story of the Capture of Eichmann* and the *Game of Their Lives: Jewish Athletes Prior to 1948*.

Footnote: As I refer to Abba Kovner (1918-1987) above, I must mention the passing of his wife, Vitka Kempner Kovner, who died this past February 15 on Kibbutz Ein HaHoresh. Kempner Kovner was also a partisan in the Vilna Jewish Ghetto underground from 1943-5. Each emigrated to mandatory Palestine in 1946 where they married and resided on the Kibbutz until their respective deaths.



Israel Genealogy Research Association is a newly-formed organization. Visit <http://genealogy.org.il> to find news and resources. You can register (no fee) in order to have access to the various databases which can be found on the website.

Ontario Recognizes May as Jewish Heritage Month

On February 23, 2012, Bill 17 was unanimously passed in the Ontario legislature, proclaiming May as Jewish Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the contribution of Jewish Ontarians, past and present, to this Canadian province.

Eglinton-Lawrence MPP Mike Colle was instrumental in introducing this Bill; the co-sponsors were Thornhill MPP Peter Shurman and Parkdale-High Park MPP Cheri DiNovo.

Stay tuned for the June issue of *Shem Tov* for a report on this inaugural Heritage Month.

I Reconnected with Long-Lost Family Members

by Renate Krakauer

The Globe and Mail, February 5, 2012

Reprinted with permission of the author

The voice on the phone message was male with a heavy German accent. “Are you the daughter of Charlotte Mandel?” he asked. “If so, please contact me.”

The caller said he had some interesting information for me and left his name and a telephone number. Being of a suspicious nature, I asked my husband whether I should call back. Perhaps this was just a telemarketing scheme promising me a free vacation to some exotic destination, or someone who wanted to confirm my bank account number so he could deposit millions of dollars.

But this was not the case. My husband googled the caller’s name and reassured me that he was a respected professor of German visiting Queen’s University. That was how I started to reclaim a family I had all but forgotten for more than 50 years.

My parents and I were Holocaust survivors. After the war, we made our way to Canada, leaving behind the country of our birth, Poland (the region now part of Ukraine), soaked with the blood of my parents’ siblings, parents and large extended families.

In Canada, I grew up as an only child with no close relatives. I envied all my friends who had grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles whom they took for granted. How I longed for an extended family, for which no amount of friends could compensate. Holidays such as Hanukkah and Passover were especially difficult with only the three of us around the table.

Both of my parents came from large families. My father had four sisters, only one of whom escaped Nazi extermination by leaving for Palestine in 1939. My mother had six siblings. Four were murdered with their families. Two brothers escaped by going to the Soviet Union before the German invasion of our city.

The elder of these brothers was my mother’s favourite. Handsome, brilliant and generous, he funded her pharmacy studies in Prague when her father could not afford to do so. His primary allegiance upon returning to Poland was to his country and to his Catholic wife and child, so he disclaimed any connection to his Jewish heritage.

This didn’t sit well with my father after what he and my mother had suffered and the losses they had endured. So when we left for a new life in Canada, all contact with this uncle and his family was severed. This pained my mother, but she went along with my father’s wishes, entertaining a secret hope, once shared with me, that perhaps some day she might see her beloved brother again.

That wasn’t to be. My uncle died in 1968 without a word exchanged between the two of them for more than 20 years.

Enter my German telephone caller 38 years later. It turned out that he was the husband of my uncle’s granddaughter. In her

teenage years, she had questioned her mother about her grandfather’s surname – Mandel – which is not a Polish name. Her mother acknowledged that it came from his Jewish ancestry. On further questioning and over the years, Joanna found out he had a sister somewhere in Canada.

Many years later, in 2007, when Joanna’s husband, Werner, brought his family to Kingston for a teaching assignment at Queen’s University, her search began in earnest. At first, the results were discouraging. My parents had moved to Toronto, where my mother became a resident in a nursing home, making the discovery of their address and telephone number in Hamilton, where they had lived for 43 years, invalid.

Then the magic of the Internet came to the rescue. When Joanna googled my mother’s name, a picture of her in the arts-and-crafts room of her nursing home appeared in the institution’s online newsletter. Accompanying the picture was a brief comment from me. Having my name was the key Joanna needed to complete her search.

In the past four years, we have met Joanna and her family in Toronto several times. I have e-mailed with Joanna’s mother, my first cousin, in Warsaw. She has put me in touch with two other cousins: the son of my other uncle who escaped the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, and my aunt’s son, who was hidden during the Holocaust and immigrated to Australia after the war. She has also connected me with the daughter of a cousin who was my mother’s dearest childhood friend, in Gdynia, Poland.

Sadly, after suffering from dementia, my mother died in 2008, just before a visit could be arranged with Joanna and her family. But my father surprisingly welcomed them in her stead. He told Joanna, “I feel a real affinity with you.” My mother would have approved.

The family connections continue to flourish in the younger generation. Joanna’s daughter spent four and a half months with us this past summer, helping to take care of my two young grandchildren. And in November, Joanna joined me and my two daughters on a women’s tour of Israel. Joanna is working on learning more about Judaism and is proceeding toward conversion. Although this was not my goal, I know my mother would have been delighted.

I wish I could tell my mother that finally, in my senior years, I have the riches of relatives such as I never imagined possible. I wish I could tell her about how the tear in our family fabric has been mended. But even though she isn’t here for me to share the joys of my reconnection to the family tree, I feel the warmth of her presence every time I receive a new e-mail message from Poland, Germany or Australia.

Renate Krakauer lives in Toronto.

MISSING LINKS

Helen Klein (nee Kohn) rarely spoke about her life in Austria and, what was then Czechoslovakia, but we do know that she born in Hodonin in 1918 had 2 sisters, Gertrude and Marianna. Her father, Viktor Kohn, owned a very successful parquet wood manufacturing plant and the wood lots to support it. Helen was the only known member of her family to survive the Holocaust. We know that from 1935 through 1937, Helen stayed with her grandmother in Biel-Bienne, Vienna while she went to school. They lived above the Coffee & Tea Import Shop that her grandmother owned. In 1939, she returned to her family in Brno, where at some point that year she boarded a train and said goodbye to her mother, Otilie, and sister, Gertrude, for the last time. She travelled to Trieste where she caught one of the last ships to leave the port before it was closed. After a traumatic voyage, which she never spoke of, she arrived in Mombassa, Kenya and met up with her fiancé, Peter Klein, whom she later married and had 3 daughters with.

After many years and many unanswered questions, Helen Kohn Klein's daughters are only now trying to put the missing pieces together in search of some answers, especially regarding the confiscation of the property and established company owned by their grandfather, Viktor Kohn.

Recently some information has been discovered regarding a parquet manufacturing plant in Hodonin (1920-30s), owned by an Adolph Kohn and then handed down to his son, Viktor Kohn. It is believed that this Viktor Kohn and Helen Kohn Klein's father are one and the same. In 1928, the Hodonin plant discontinued manufacturing parquet and started manufacturing plywood. Historical documents state that then the plant was involved in an allegedly speculative bankruptcy proceeding in 1932 and taken over by the CZ state in cooperation with Nazi Germany. The company was shut down for 4 years. Then in 1935, an auction was organized to sell Kohn's property. More than 2 million CZK was paid by the Ringhoffer-Tatra concern and in early 1936, it took over the plant and the previous manufacturing was resumed. By 1937, the 1800 square metres was extended to nearly triple the size. Ringhoffer-Tatra was part of one of the largest enterprises of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (and later of Czechoslovakia) and operated with a certain level of cooperation with the authorities of the "Third Reich". Ringhoffer-Tatra was nationalized and dissolved after the liberation and restoration of Czechoslovakia in 1945. Curiously, nothing more is mentioned about Viktor Kohn and in 1946, the new company is "Mundus-Thonet".

Over the years there have also been questions regarding a connection between Viktor Kohn's wood manufacturing plant and the well known wood furniture company, Thonet-Bentwood. It is known that in 1914, a furniture-manufacturing company in Hodonin, called Mundus, merged with J. & J. Kohn (a wood manufacturing company) due to the economic slump from WWI, and then again in 1922 with Thonet. The company became Thonet-Mundas-Kohn.

How many Viktor Kohns from Hodonin, Czechoslovakia

would have owned parquet wood manufacturing plants (that later switched to plywood manufacturing)? With so many questions and just as many coincidences, Helen Kohn's daughters are planning a trip to Hodonin, and Brno, CZ to finally try and connect the dots.

☪☪☪

If anyone has any information to share with the Kohn family, please send a message to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca.

NEW MEMBERS

JGS Toronto is very pleased to welcome
as new members:

Rhonda Cohen Kenneth Wolfe Golish
Beth Weizman



Allen Halberstadt presenting *Introduction to Jewish Online Burial Registry (JOWBR)* on January 25th

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

We are pleased to present another story written by a JGS Toronto member.

My Chilean Connection

by Harvey Glasner

My father never spoke at all about his parents and I never was curious enough to ask questions. My father's two brothers here in Toronto were not close. Morris, the youngest, was profoundly deaf and I only saw him on occasion. Uncle David and my Dad rarely spoke, so there never were any family occasions that would spawn a conversation about our history.

I became interested in genealogy in 1996 during a trip to Israel. My wife came across a young man at Ben Gurion Airport who was on our flight. He was schlepping a duffel with our surname printed in very large letters. That was odd. We thought that we were the only Glasners in Toronto. In fact, we thought that our name was quite rare.

Daniel Glasner was in Israel as part of Camp Biluim. He travelled from Vancouver and that was all we knew. On returning to Toronto we were contacted by Daniel's father Ken from Vancouver. Ken discovered my brother through the lawyer registry and from there, Ken found me.

Ken knew that his family came from Tarnow in Poland and that his grandfather took on his mother's name, but no connection between us could be established.

I joined JGS Toronto and subscribed to jewishgen.org. Thanks to Stanley Diamond and the Montreal branch of JGS, naturalization records in the early 20th century were indexed and placed on the National Archives of Canada website. That is how I made my first breakthrough.

Chaim Glasner, my grandfather and namesake, applied for Canadian naturalization in 1923, 18 years after arriving in Canada! He was born in 1875 in Tsanz or Nowy Sacz, south of Krakow in Galicia, Poland. He married Ettel Estraicher of Przemysl, Galicia.

I placed my name on jewishgen.org as a Nowy Sacz researcher, which led to an email from Dov Glasner of Santiago, Chile. His parents were born c. 1913 in the railroad district of Nowy Sacz. What a coincidence! Perhaps I struck pay dirt. Dov and I exchanged emails but neither of us could establish a paper trail. Dov was my only lead to finding my Glasner past and we were not getting anywhere.

Last February my wife Adena and I took a trip to Chile to begin a South American cruise. This was a great opportunity to meet Dov and see if he had any documents, records, photos etc that would connect our families. Dov met us at our hotel in Santiago a short time after we arrived. He took us on a tour of the city and then to his lovely home in the foothills of the Andes. It was a magical night as we looked over the sprawling city from his garden while having dinner with his family. After dinner, Dov related the story of his parents' escape from the Nazis. At the onset of the war they went north to stay with his mother's cousins who lived near the Russian border. Dov's father, Markosz, hated the communists and decided to go back

to Tsantz. Fortunately, the train that they boarded took them east into Russia and ultimately to Siberia. Meanwhile, the Jews of Tsanz were rounded up and met their fate in Belzec.

After the war, these Glasners went to Israel and then to Chile. Since we hit the proverbial brick wall, Dov and I decided to go the DNA route. Bennett Greenspan, the founder of Family Tree DNA, was in Toronto last March to speak to our Society at the North York Central Library. Bennett suggested that Dov and I take the Y37 chromosome test. That would establish if we had a common male ancestor within the last 4 generations.

Dov wrote to me shortly after we learned that we were indeed an exact genetic match: "I always felt that there must have been a branch of the family that also was able to survive the Nazis." I was profoundly moved, as Dov's family's story of survival added more yeast to *proofing* our relationship.

This summer my wife Adena and I are going to Poland to visit the local archive in Tansz (Nowy Sacz) in an attempt to find the records of our grandfathers. Was his grandfather, Bernard my grandfather's brother? If they were brothers, will we ever know why Chaim immigrated to Canada in 1905, while Bernard remained in Galicia?



Please submit your story of up to 1,500 words for a future On a Personal Note column to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca

JUILLET A PARIS – JULY IN PARIS!

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

*Hosted by the Cercle de Généalogie Juive in
partnership with Jewish Genealogical Societies
Of Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg*

**Academy Award nominated director,
Agnieszka Holland (please see p. 7),
will be the featured speaker at the
Gesher Galicia SIG Luncheon.**

**Arrangements can be made for genealogical trips
to other European countries and Israel both
before and after the Conference.**

**Please visit the website for details:
<http://www.paris2012.eu/>**

TV Genealogy

THEM (CELEBRITIES): They set out the names of their ancestors. They are whisked away by automobile or plane to the relevant locale (of birth, marriage, death). They are met by a guide and/or expert (professor, archivist) and together they visit a library or archive where they are immediately presented with the necessary record(s), translated into English, if necessary. Sometimes, this process is repeated in different towns or cities. They are thrilled/surprised by what they find.

US (NON-CELEBRITIES): We go to JewishGen and search for names of relatives. We send emails to other researchers and archives. We go to other websites. We email other researchers and archives. We go to libraries, archives and cemeteries. We post questions online and seek help with translation of documents. If we are lucky, we travel to other locales to search the archives. We are thrilled/surprised by what we find. We continue researching-- it never ends.

This dichotomy struck me as I watched the first few episodes of season 3 of NBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?*, where each week a different celebrity's ancestry is traced. Being neatly wrapped up in a one-hour packages, viewers don't see all of the work that goes behind the discoveries; only genealogists would appreciate that! Nonetheless, it is fascinating television, and we get caught up in the excitement of the findings. This series of 12 episodes began on February 3rd and will continue on Friday nights at 8 pm into the spring.



Sunday, March 25th marks the premiere of Professor Henry Louis Gates' new series, *Finding Your Roots*, on PBS. There will be 9 further episodes on subsequent Sundays at 8 p.m. As in the NBC show, each episode features a celebrity's search. Barbara Walters is featured on the April 1st telecast.

It is interesting to visit this show's website <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/finding-your-roots/> where under the heading of *Share Your Stories*, you can read genealogical submissions of non-celebrities.

JewishGen Online Learning Center

Most of us are wanting to increase our level of genealogical expertise. A great way to achieve that goal is to enroll in the various online, interactive courses available at JewishGen. Visit www.jewishgen.org/education/ to peruse options. Please note that these courses are tuition-based and enrolment is required. Most courses consist of a lecture and 8 sessions.

Please note that posted below the list of courses is a list of free 5-minute educational videos that are worth exploring.

Museum of the History of Polish Jews

by Judy Kasman

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is a Toronto-born Professor of anthropology and art at New York University. Among her many accomplishments was the beautiful art/history book, *They Called Me Meyer July*, which was a collaboration with her late father, Meyer Kirshenblatt, featuring his paintings which were reminiscences of his hometown of Opatow (Apt), Poland.

One current major role of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is that of head of the core exhibition development team for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews (MHPJ) which is being built on the site of the Warsaw Ghetto. The interactive exhibits will be in eight galleries in a space of about 4,000 sq. metres.

The Museum, designed by Finnish architect Rainer Mahlamaki, will be an education and cultural centre; it is slated to open this year, and the exhibits are to be ready for 2013.

Please visit www.jewishmuseum.org/pl/en to see more about this Museum and to view many other interesting articles and photographs.

For those of you researching Polish roots, I strongly recommend you to visit the Virtual Shtetl portion of this website. At Virtual Shtetl, you can select many Polish towns and cities, listed alphabetically. Once you select a town, you will see a map, photos, information about the town's past and present, and so much more.

There are so many interesting things to see at this site, but I'm sure that the Museum itself will be outstanding. If you have occasion to visit Warsaw and tour this Museum, please be sure to share your experiences with your fellow genealogists in a future issue of *Shem Tov!*

JGS Toronto Seeks Volunteers

- Mentors
- Speakers
- Photographers
- Website assistance
- People for Programming Committee

There lots of opportunity for you to get involved in YOUR Society!!

president@jgstoronto.ca

647-247-6414