2012 International Jewish Genealogy Month: 
Cheshvan – October 17 to November 14, 2012

2012 IAJGS Poster Contest Winners
Lynn Teichman and Tuvia Natkin, members of The Jewish Genealogical Society of Southwest Florida, were announced as winners of the 2012 International Jewish Genealogy Month Poster Contest at the 2012 IAJGS Paris, France Conference Gala. Both Teichman and Natkin have backgrounds in art and education.

International Jewish Genealogy Month
Cheshvan 5773 - 2012
October 17 to November 14
www.iajgs.org

Submitted by Jewish Genealogical Society of Southwest Florida
Design by Lynn Teichman and Tuvia Natkin

In This Issue
1 2012 IAJGS Poster Contest Winners
2 Message From the President
3 Upcoming Events • World War II Enemy Aliens
4 Photos from Who Do Think You Are: Jewish Style • A Jewish View of San Francisco
5 Holocaust Education Week Programme • New & Improved: Yad Vashem’s Central Database • Remembering the 22nd IAGJS Conference on Jewish Genealogy
6 Branching Out • New Members
7 Treading on Sacred Ground • Henry Blumberg Appointed to JewishGen Board of Governors
8 On a Personal Note
9 How to Buy Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories
10 Toronto-Centric
11 Cemetery Project Update • Archaeological Remains Found at Sobibor Death Camp
12 The History of JGS Toronto’s Cemetery Project
JGS Toronto programs are in full swing now that the summer holiday season has concluded. On September 23rd, Neil Richler is delivering his workshop on how to effectively use readily available resources to conduct your family research. This year there is a new twist to this workshop as we have engaged Ruth Burkholder of the Ontario Genealogical Society to co-present. Neil has presented this workshop many times and it is always well-received and well-attended. Please see Upcoming Events on page 3 of Shem Tov for the other programs and follow the calendar on both our blog and website to see updates of programs that have been arranged for you this fall and winter.

Last winter our website went down as a result of a virus. It took quite some time to recover what we lost and get us back online. Much credit has to go to Shelley Stillman who has been working very hard to restore key links to documents and resources that were previously available on the site. Fortunately, the back issues of Shem Tov are intact and are still fully searchable.

We are updating our website to make it a much better tool for communicating with our members. We are even considering embedding our blog into the site to allow for conversations between researchers who share common interests. In the not too distant future, we hope to also have webinars online that would further advance your training.

At present we are looking for candidates to take over the positions of Secretary and Treasurer. Please email me at president@jgstoronto.ca if you are interested in being an active board member or would like to volunteer for JGS Toronto in any capacity.

Wishing all of you and your families a Happy, Healthy New Year and I look forward to meeting you at our monthly programs.

Harvey Glasner

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**SHEM TOV WANTS YOU!**

Send your stories, recollections, discoveries and photos to Shem Tov!

Deadline for the next issue is November 15th.

Your comments and feedback are also welcome.

shemtov@gmail.com
UPCOMING EVENTS
Please check www.jgstoronto.ca for details of each programme!

Sunday, September 23rd, 1:30-4:30 pm
Edithvale Community Centre, 131 Finch Avenue W, Toronto
Workshop: Genealogy for the Beginner & the Less Experienced
Presenters: Neil Richler & Ruth Burkholder (see p. 2)

Wednesday, October 24th, 8:00 pm
Temple Sinai, 210 Wilson Avenue, Toronto
A Tale of Two Countries
Treading on Sacred Ground: A Visit to Poland
Presenter: Harvey Glasner
A Visit to Ukraine
Presenter: Les Kelman

Tuesday, November 6th, 7:00 pm
Holocaust Education Week Programme
Beth Torah Congregation, 47 Glenbrook Avenue (See p. 5)
“Hidden” for Decades, Poles Discover Their Jewish Roots
Presenter: Peter Jassem

Wednesday, November 28th, 8:00 pm
Temple Sinai -TBA

HOLD THESE DATES:
Wednesday, December 12th or 19th, 8:00 pm, Temple Sinai
Wednesday, January 30th, 2013, 8:00 pm, Temple Sinai
Wednesday, March 20th, 8:00 pm, Temple Sinai
Wednesday, April 24th, 8:00 pm, North York Library Auditorium
Wednesday, May 29th, 8:00 pm, Temple Sinai
Wednesday, June 19th, 8:00 pm, Temple Sinai

Annual Brick Walls and Breakthroughs

NEW: GENEALOGY PROGRAMMES AT SCHWARTZ-REISMAN CENTRE
9600 Bathurst Street, Vaughan

Sunday, October 14th, 10:00 am
Genealogy for Newbies
Presenter: Neil Richler

Sunday November 18th, 10:00 am
Effective Use of the Computer for Conducting Your Genealogical Research
Presenter: Bill Gladstone

Sunday December 2nd, 10:00 am
Accessing Holocaust Records for Family Research
Presenter: Henry Wellisch

There is a charge for these programmes.
Special rates for JGS Toronto members. Tel: 905-303-1821
http://prossermanjcc.com/schwartz-reisman/programs

World War II Enemy Aliens

PARKS CANADA:
WWII Enemy Aliens Sent to Canada Declared a National Historic Event

A special event took place on August 11th at the site of a former WWII prison of war camp in Ontario under the auspices of Parks Canada, which reported:
“The Honourable Peter Kent, Environment Minister and Minister responsible Parks Canada, today commemorated the national the historic significance of the ‘Detention of Second World War Military Prisoners of War and of Enemy Aliens Sent to Canada from Great Britain’, as a National Historic Event.

“This historical event was an important element of Canada’s contribution to the Allied war effort and defence strategy,” said Minister Kent. “Internationally, Canada’s fair treatment of military prisoners was noted, and it influenced the permanent post-war settlement of former detainees in Canada.”

The ceremony took place today at the site of former camp 100, now part of Neys Provincial Park near Marathon in Ontario. Between 1940 and 1947, there was a network of 26 permanent camps and dozens of work camps across the country. Several facilities were located in the remote Lake Superior region of Northern Ontario. A former prisoner of war at the Angler Lake Camp 101, Mr. Paul Mengelberg, participated in today’s commemoration.

Canada became the wartime home for about 34,000 military prisoners of war. The same camps were also used to intern close to 4000 of Great Britain’s enemy aliens; mostly German and Austrian civilians who had fled to Great Britain. Often, the experience of detainees in Canadian camps created a fondness for Canada, with hundreds of them eventually immigrating here after the war.”

Many Jewish men were among these German and Austrians who, living in Great Britain at that time, became wartime detainees. A good number of these individuals lived to become notable contributors to society and include Rabbi Erwin Schild of Toronto, Member of the Order of Canada; The Honourable Fred Kaufman, retired Acting Supreme Court of Justice of Quebec; and Walter Kohn, Californian Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry.

ENEMY ALIENS:
Exhibit at Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre

This exhibit, running to June 2013, tells the story of the Jewish internees of enemy alien camps in Quebec, New Brunswick and Ontario from 1940 to 1943.

This month, the exhibit becomes available interactively on the website, www.vhec.org

www.jgstoronto.ca
Photos from *Who Do You Think You Are: Jewish-Style* at the Toronto Jewish Book Festival on June 4th at the Bluma Appel Salon of the Toronto Reference Library, featuring *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*

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Those of you with San Franciscan roots, or who are interested in learning about that city’s Jewish history, will enjoy reading *Jewish San Francisco* by Rabbi Edward Zerin. The author, a retired rabbi and psychotherapist, came to reside in San Francisco in 2004, at which time he began to explore the city and delve into its Jewish past and history. The product of his research is his book which outlines the Jewish community’s 1849 Gold Rush origins and boasts many photographs of Jewish shops, community buildings and notables, past and present.

Having visited the City by the Bay over the summer, and having had the opportunity to visit the Contemporary Jewish Museum with Rabbi Zerin as a docent, the book had particular meaning for me.

As an aside, I must mention my surprise in noticing in the showcases of San Francisco’s grand Congregation Emanu-El (the oldest congregation west of the Mississippi) a special exhibit of photographs (with text) of Toronto resident Faye Schulman, who was a teenaged photographer and resistance fighter during wartime Poland. (Her book is *A Partisan’s Memoirs*, published in 1995 by Second Story Press)

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION WEEK PROGRAMME
Jointly Sponsored by
Chenstochover Aid Society and
the Jewish Genealogical Society of
Canada (Toronto)
at Beth Torah Synagogue,
47 Glenbrook Avenue, Toronto
Tuesday, November 6th @ 7 pm

“Hidden” for Decades, Poles Discover their Jewish Roots
Speaker Peter Jassem, a contributing author for JGS Toronto’s recent publication, Tracing our Roots, Telling our Stories, will share his profound story. He will be speaking about the importance of preserving memory, especially those stories lost through the Holocaust.

As a result of the trauma and upheaval caused by the Holocaust, combined with the uncertainty of what the post-war situation in Poland might bring, many survivors decided to hide their Jewish identity, to abandon their tradition, and, often, to change their names, to intermarry, and to raise their children as gentiles. Years later, coinciding with the fall of Communism and its censorship, and in the time of the new openness in Polish-Jewish topics in Polish society, the survivors’ children have suddenly discovered their Jewish roots and, as a result, their lives often take unexpected turns. Peter, one such survivor’s child, explores his own experience and that of others.

Speaker’s Biography:
Peter Jassem is a Polish-born architect who lives in Toronto. His interest in Polish-Jewish heritage started with the discovery of his Jewish roots some 16 years ago.

A former Board member of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto), Peter chaired programming of the annual conference of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies in Toronto in 2002. He is on the Board of Jewish Record Indexing – Poland, an organization that has created the world’s largest searchable online database of over 4 million Jewish records from Poland. Since 2002, he has served as a chair of the Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada in Toronto. As a Canadian representative of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Peter also promotes this outstanding upcoming institution among Canadians.

Peter writes and speaks on Polish-Jewish heritage and promotes dialogue between Poles and Polish Jews in Canada.

Post to our blog:
www.jgstoronto.blogspot.com

New & Improved: Yad Vashem’s Central Database

This past April, Yad Vashem launched a new platform for its Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names. Since this database first went online in 2004, 1.3 million names have been added to the records at Yad Vashem, bringing the total number of Holocaust victims listed to about 4.1 million. This new database version is more technologically advanced so that we, the end-users, will find it easier to search names, to add Pages of Testimony, photos and documents, and to make corrections to online Yad Vashem records. Until now, Pages could be submitted online in English, Hebrew and Russian; now this can be done in Spanish as well. To read more about the changes, please read the article by Deborah Berman which can be accessed through the piece entitled New Interface for Names Database on Yad Vashem’s Newsletter No. 17, April 2012 at: http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/newsletters/names/newsletter.asp?cid=2042012

Yad Vashem’s website is www.yadvashem.org. It is chock full of information for those researching the Holocaust and its victims.

Remembering the 22nd IAJGS Conference on Jewish Genealogy

In 2002, Toronto hosted the 22nd IAJGS Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Here is a photo taken at that time.
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

Book Reviews

Kravetz, Nancy R. Remember Me To the Little Ones: A Family History.
Lagnado, Lucette. The Arrogant Years: One Girl’s Search for Her Lost Youth, from Cairo to Brooklyn. New York: Ecco, 2011.

MONUMENTAL 7-VOLUME ENCYCLOPEDIA


Although the JGS Toronto library collection does not have the Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, it is readily available as a reference resource at the North York Central Library and the Toronto Reference Library. Presently, two volumes of the seven volume set have been published.


The first volume covers three groups of camps: the early camps that the Nazis established in the first year of Hitler’s rule, the major SS concentration camps with their constellations of subcamps, and the special camps for Polish and German children and adolescents.

The second volume offers a comprehensive account of how the Nazis conducted the Holocaust throughout the scattered towns and villages of Poland and the Soviet Union. It covers more than 1,150 sites, including both open and closed ghettos.

Three extensive indices provide an excellent resource for the genealogist who is searching for specific information on the Holocaust. Volume I, Part B, lists names of internees, guards, Nazi officials, civilians, and Allies. The places index records camp names, towns and cities, whereas the organizations and enterprises index lists entities such as industrial firms, governmental agencies, political parties, educational institutions, private associations and small businesses mentioned in the text. Volume II, Part B, includes similar indices.

The Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos is an in-depth historical study of the camps and ghettos constructed by the Nazis and their Allies. These volumes demonstrate the methodical, meticulous, and systematic measures that were implemented with the sole purpose of exterminating the Jews.

NEW MEMBERS
JGS Toronto is very pleased to welcome as new members:

Ruth Mallin Evelyn Pancer
A JewishGen Announcement: Henry Blumberg Appointed to its Board of Governors

Henry Blumberg (JGS Toronto member) has been the President of Latvia SIG for three terms. He is particularly interested in Latvian, Lithuanian and South African genealogy as well as the evolving nature of web related internet research. He has presented many papers on genealogy-related subjects. He was a speaker at the launch of the Names and Fates Project in Riga in June 2008 and at the 8th International Conference: Jews in a Changing World in Riga in 2011. He supported the erection of memorials in Latvia to Jews murdered during the Holocaust.

Born in South Africa, Henry immigrated with his family to Canada in 1980. Currently he practices as a Barrister and Solicitor in Toronto and is the Managing Partner of Blumberg Segal LLP.

He has been involved in many volunteer organizations. In 2008 he was presented with an Humanitarian Award by the Consul General of South Africa in Canada and was also presented with the Vice-Chancellor's Medal of the University of Cape Town in 2011.

The JewishGen Board of Governors is an advisory board that works with the staff, volunteers and users of JewishGen to create a vision for the organization, and aids in strategic planning and outreach.

Karen S. Franklin
Gary Mokotoff, co-chairs

Editor’s note: JGS Toronto wishes Henry Blumberg mazal tov on this appointment!

Treading on Sacred Ground
by Harvey Glasner

This past July, my wife and I spent several days touring Galicia (southern) Poland, hoping to unearth some link to my Nowy Sacz ancestry. As well, we visited my grandmother’s roots (Ettel Osterreicher b. 1878) in the fortress city of Przmysl.

I also wanted to find paper evidence that identified a common male ancestor to my cousin, Dov Glasner, of Santiago, Chile whose parents were born in Nowy Sacz, the same city which my grandfather, Chaim Glasner (b. April 1877), was from. We had confirmed our blood relationship through DNA testing.

Galicia’s topography is very beautiful. The neat villages, dwors (country estates), churches, and farms are reminiscent of Bavaria, or perhaps even Switzerland. It was not until we arrived at the old Jewish cemetery in Nowy Sacz that we were overcome with emotion.

Tomasz, our guide, had arranged for the caretaker to open the cemetery gate. She took us into the overgrown field where we saw matzevot (headstones) that had their tops squared off. It was explained that Hamann, the Nazi officer who commanded the area during the war, had them removed and squared to use as paving stones. He even used the matzevot to create sties for his pigs on the estate that he commandeered as his personal residence.

Hamann (appropriately named) was very cruel and sadistic. He transported Jewish and Polish residents to this cemetery and committed mass executions. Those victims who fainted before being executed were buried alive. Afterward, Sacz residents spoke of the ground moving!

This was not enough for Hamann, the beast. He marched thousands of others to the railway station 4 km away and had phosphorus placed on the platform to burn their feet before transporting them to Auschwitz.

When we left the cemetery’s prayer house, an enormous flock of crows filled the sky above. It was as if the souls buried there were delivering a poetic message to us to not forget them! Needless to say, there was no sleep for us that night.

Thanks to the work of Mr. Jakub Miller, a survivor, many of the matzevot have been recovered and returned to the cemetery. Some have been built into its wall.

The week before we came to this place, several thousand Chasidim were in “Tsantz” to celebrate the birth of their famed Rabbi Isok Chaim Halberstam. Remarkably, his grave was not desecrated.

It is now late August and we still have not received any records from the Sacz archive functionaries. (We did not know that you had to be there between Monday and Wednesday for them to complete a search while you wait.) Unfortunately, we came on a Friday. If nothing is found, it won’t be for naught as we learned so much about our past, our endurance, and our unshakeable optimism.

My Chilean cousin, Dov, is determined to make the same trip and pay respects to those who perished. It is the least we can do.
The Joys and Challenges of Genealogy
by Valerie Miller Fox

My genealogical quest lies in Hawkesbury, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec in the early 1900s, specifically 1904-1917. My father’s mother, Mary Merktke Gallay, her parents, Meyer and Rose (Raizel Davidovsky), and her siblings lived in the small town of Hawkesbury, situated halfway between Ottawa, Ontario and Montreal.

Genealogy presents many challenges. I believed that I wouldn’t encounter too many brick walls. Firstly, my research was within a short time span. Secondly, I was “on home soil” so it would not be too difficult to obtain local, provincial and federal records. Thirdly, since the records were mainly in English (with a few in French), I felt there wasn’t a language barrier. Yet I did encounter brick walls and challenges, which I will now relate.

In 1904, Meyer Gallay, age 35, left his family in Belarus and sailed from Hamburg to New York. The ship’s manifest showed he was “in transit” to his brother Josef Gallay who lived in Montreal. However, I doubt they were brothers because on their tombstones, their fathers’ names differ.

Mary, the eldest of Meyer and Rose’s children, was born in 1890 in Baranavichy, 82 miles SW of Minsk, Belarus. In 1900, Baranavichy’s population was 2,171 (Jewishgen.org); Hawkesbury’s population was 4,400 (1911 Canada census). However, Baranavichy’s Jews represented 50% of its population, whereas Hawkesbury’s Jewish population consisted of about seven Jewish families, two of which were Gallays (1911 Canada Census). I truly admire the challenges my family faced as Jews who only spoke Yiddish. By 1908 the family was reunited.

My grandparents were first cousins. Mary’s father, Meyer, and Elka, the mother of my grandfather, Harry Miller, were siblings. Harry and Mary had lived 13 miles from each other in Belarus. Harry’s naturalization papers were a delight—full of information I didn’t know before. For example, I discovered where he sailed from, the ship’s name and the date it sailed. I received a photocopied of an illegible nominal card stating “Minsk,” “Russian,” “Merchant,” “6th May, 1915,” “L’Original, Ont.” According to Library and Archives Canada, “Before 1918, naturalization was handled by the local government…Original records dated between 1854 and 1917 have been destroyed.” [See jgsmontreal.org for records indexed for “the Montreal Circuit Court”]. My hopes were again dashed.

One of the greatest challenges I continually face is that the records I need are located in Quebec, not in Ontario, and are only available in person. For example, my Uncle Abie’s birth is not in the Drouin Collection and therefore not on the internet. In addition, the Province of Quebec’s “Statistical Return of Marriage” contains important genealogical information such as the person’s date of birth, address, occupation, place of marriage. In the 1990s, I spent several summer days in Montreal to do hands-on research, staying at a McGill University residence. I was fortunate to be able to photocopy the microfilmed records that I found.

Meyer’s grandson said that his parents allowed only one calendar in the house because, “Someone set off in a horse and cart on the wrong day of the week and got killed.” Here was a new clue and I couldn’t travel to Montreal for research. Hopeful, I went to the Richmond Hill Library’s genealogy room and searched the microfilm of the “Vital Statistics Index” for Ontario. I was mystified when I found two Gallay names in the Death indexes. At that time, the records were not on the internet.

GALLAY ABRAHAM M 91 Hawkesbury Co.46 l00812 Registration No. 026657 Registration year 12
GALLAY WILLIAM M91 Hawkesbury Co. 46 072413 Registration No. 027762

Registration year 13
Her occupation was listed as a cigarette maker. I knew she met her husband while working in a cigar factory. One line below her was “Galye Mary,” “Boarder.” My grandmother? Year of Immigration--1908. My aunt Alice z”l was correct.

Occupation--dressmaker. Correct. She sewed wedding dresses. Year of birth. 1889. Perhaps. One of my greatest joys was seeing my grandmother’s name. I had searched for my family on the 1911 census without luck. To complete the family circle, Meyer and Raizel had another daughter, Ida Esther. The first record I have for her is her marriage in Montreal in 1922.

The challenge to find evidence of my family before 1917 was frustrating and disappointing, yet exciting and fascinating. Whenever I have found tidbits of information, I have considered them to be gems--precious and scarce. Along the way, I discovered two great uncles and learned about relatives I never knew. But most of all, I had the opportunity to do research in my hometown of Montreal.

I telephoned the Archives of Ontario in Toronto. I was informed that the microfilmed documents would be open to the public for the first time in a few days. Two days to wait! Just imagine my amazement when I read “Meyer Gallay and Raizel Davidovsky” listed as the parents. Abraham died from meningitis as result of an accident (1912). Yes, the horse and cart accident! William died from tuberculosis (1913) which he had contracted two years earlier. My relatives had never mentioned Abraham and William, and those living never heard of them. It took me five years to find their resting places. Their names were recorded in Montreal’s Baron de Hirsch Cemetery’s records. Because their graves have no headstones, their names are not in the computer nor on JOWBR. Sadly, I could place Meyer and Raizel in Hawkesbury in 1912 and 1913. In 1926, Meyer and Raizel’s youngest child, Louis W., petitioned for his own Certificate of Naturalization. I requested his papers to see if I could find what ship the family came on and any other pertinent information. With his application, he sent his father’s “Certificate of local naturalization petition” which stated that he came to Canada from “Russia via Liverpool, England” and arrived at the port of “Quebec, Que. Canada” in the “summer of 1907” “on the vessel,” that is, the ship’s name was not indicated. Again, I didn’t get the information I wanted.

Montreal’s Lovell’s Business Directory is my source for “who lived when and where.” In the 1914-1915 directory, I found a “M. Gallay” who resided in Montreal and had a second-hand store. Firstly, how could he have travelled every day to Montreal by horse and cart to open his store if he lived in Hawkesbury? Today, that trip takes close to two hours by car. Secondly, if he was living in Montreal by 1914 or 1915, why would he be naturalized in L’Orignal and not in the Montreal Circuit Court which also granted naturalizations? Did it take months or years to naturalize? This was a conundrum.

I discovered Automatedgenealogy.com/census11. The website states that their volunteers have transcribed 100% of Ontario for the Census records of 1911. Meyer, Raizel, Mary and her siblings would instantly appear! I went to Provincial Summary. No match. I tried District Name, “Prescott.” I typed “Gallay” and “G” under Surname Search. Automatedgenealogy.com uses a soundex system. Using G400, there were 170 name variations, of which two were plausible. “Galley” and “Gally.” They were J.M. Gallay’s and Hillel Gallay’s families. Dr. Wilfred Gallay, who was born in Hawkesbury, told me that his father, Hillel, was first cousin of Joseph Gallay of Montreal, the same Joseph Gallay that Meyer had referred to a “brother” on the ship’s manifest. I tried every name listed for all the towns for Prescott. No luck. Frustration set in.

Harry’s older sister, Rachel Leia, came by herself to Montreal. Her daughter Alice told me that her mother never changed her maiden name. Recently, I tried Automatedgenealogy.com/census11 again. I clicked on “Quebec” “District Name,” “Montreal-St. Laurent, St. Louis.” Letter “M.” I scrolled down--“Milachavitzky” appeared. When I clicked on Page 33, her name appeared highlighted in yellow.

243 Milachavitzky Rachel F Boarder S May 1888 23
243 Galye Mary F Boarder S Jun 1889 22

On a Personal Note - continued from page 8

The book is available for purchase for $25 online through http://www.familychronicle.com/books.htm It also may be purchased at these GTA Judaica shops:

- Aleph Bet on Bathurst Street
- Israel’s, both Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto, and Clark Avenue, Thornhill locations

Books are sold at JGS Toronto programmes for $20 (members’ price).
The majority of the service establishments in the area were by this time operated by Jews.

The exhibit displays photographs, maps and newspaper clippings from the past as well as present-day photos of the area by Susan Dobson.

**SHUL NEWS**

Two Toronto landsmanshaft-based shuls celebrated their 100 anniversaries this year:

Originally named Shearith Israel Anshe Lida Synagogue, Beth Lida is a small house-like structure at 22 Gilgorn Avenue, north of Eglinton & east of Chaplin. It marked its milestone anniversary in June by dedicating a new torah scroll. The congregation, which even today has a dedicated community of daveners, was founded in 1912 on Terauley Street in the Ward (see below) by landsleit from Lida, a town now in Belarus. The next move was to Augusta Avenue in Kensington, followed by relocation to its present location, a former church, in 1953.

www.bethlida.org

Kensington Market’s The First Russian Congregation of Rodfei Shalom Anshei Kiev (commonly known as the Kiever Shul), had its first founding meeting on January 4, 1912. The current building, at 25 Bellevue Avenue, was built in 1927, designed by architect Benjamin Schwartz. Its history is outlined at the Ontario Jewish Archives’ website, early Toronto Synagogues: [http://www.ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/TorontoSynagogues/index.html](http://www.ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/TorontoSynagogues/index.html)

Continued on page 11
Toronto-Centric - continued

Currently, the Kiever Shul is conducting an Archives Project: it is actively seeking shul-related memorabilia and for preservation and to create a gallery. See www.kievershul.com

Stashover-Slipia Congregation

In about 1910, *landsleit* from the Polish towns of Staszow and Slipi, each had their own prayer *minyanim* in downtown Toronto. In the 1960s, when the Jewish population of Toronto had migrated north along Bathurst Street, both groups joined forces to form one shul at the then-new building at 11 Sultana Avenue; hence the hyphenated name.

Educator and textbook author Dr. Jack Lipinsky, who has been leading services at this shul for over thirty years, was recently awarded the Ontario Historical Society’s Joseph Brant Award which honours the best book on multicultural history in Ontario published in the past three years. www.stashoverslipia.org

**JEWISH YACHT CLUB’S 60th ANNIVERSARY**

This year, Toronto’s only official Jewish sailing club, the Island Yacht Club (IYC), celebrated 60 years since its members first launched their boats on the waters of Lake Ontario. The Club arose because in those days, Jews were not permitted to join other (i.e. non-Jewish) sailing clubs.

At this time, however, since membership has dwindled over the years, there are discussions about merging with another Toronto yacht club.

Toronto’s *Shaarei Shomayim* Congregation was founded in 1928, holding services on Christie Street. In 1947, its home was a newly-built yellow brick building on St. Clair Avenue West at Winona, boasting stained-glass windows in the sanctuary seating over 1,000 people - there had been a large Jewish presence in the area (which has in the last ten years seen a resurgence).

In the early 1960s, moving further north with Toronto’s Jewish population, this building was sold and it became the Hungarian House, a cultural centre; the stained-glass windows remained. Meanwhile, Shaarei Shomayim built its new synagogue at 470 Glencairn Avenue, opening in 1966.

Now the St. Clair Avenue building has been sold again, this time to a condominium developer, and it and its stained-glass windows are soon to be no more.

**Cemetery Project Update**

*By Allen Halberstadt, Cemetery Project Chair*

In July and August, Stephen Creed and I went west of Toronto to record data and photograph the headstones at the Jewish cemeteries in Kitchener, London, Mississauga, Oakville, Cambridge/Galt, Brantford and Adas Israel cemetery in Burlington. I single-handedly did the cemeteries in Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and six cemeteries in Burlington/Hamilton.

I hope to have all the cemeteries on www.jewishgen.org’s Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) in January 2013.

Next year our goal is to cover the Jewish cemeteries east of Toronto such as Belleville, Pickering, Ajax and Kingston. By year end, all of Toronto will be updated.

**Archaeological Remains Found at Sobibor Death Camp**

Israeli archaeologist Yoram Haimi has for the past five years been conducting archaeological digs at the site of the Sobibor death camp in eastern Poland. This project began when Haimi was researching his family’s Holocaust history. According to an American Press article that appeared in *The Globe and Mail* on August 22, 2012: “After an October 1943 uprising at the camp, the Nazis shut it down and levelled it to the ground, replanting over it to cover their tracks.”

Haimi has unearthed thousands of items such as rings, dentures and watches and has remapped the camp. It was originally thought that about 250,000 Jews were murdered as Sobibor over an eighteen-month period, but now it is thought that the number might be higher.
The History of JGS Toronto’s Cemetery Project
by Gert Solnik Rogers, past president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) and one of the Founding Chairs of JGS Toronto’s Cemetery Project

If no effort is made to record the information on headstones, a valuable portion of our Jewish history and culture will be lost forever.

Before computers, before we even formed our original cemetery committee, two people – Ralph Berrins and Abe Goldberg – saw and understood the importance of recording our Jewish burials in Toronto and surrounding areas. They recorded information from Jones Avenue and Pape Avenue Cemeteries, two of the first Jewish cemeteries in Toronto, located in the east end.

Later, members of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) helped the Ontario Genealogy Society record some burials in St. James Cemetery and also in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, where Jewish graves were found.

Then, in 1989, the JGS Toronto established a formal committee to record information from all of the Jewish cemeteries in Ontario.

We began by meeting at different members’ houses to discuss how this project should proceed, and to see if we could find a computer program that was available and portable. We worked on this idea for years! Lawrie Weiser, our computer expert, would tell us about the latest technology – but it seemed that laptop computers were new and expensive. We simply couldn’t afford one.

In an era that predated the internet and digital photography, the task of gathering burial lists, photographing tombstones and organizing the collected data was daunting. We had no funding, but were determined.

We had friends and families make phone calls to the various synagogues and landsmanshaft organizations to see if any of this had already been done – we didn’t want to duplicate pre-existing work. Some said they weren’t doing it, didn’t think it was important, or had other priorities. We persisted, and some of the organizations decided they would see if they had any information in their records. We checked Pape & Jones cemetery data with the list we had, and Bill Gladstone took some pictures.

We approached many organizations to see if they had maps, documents… anything to help. Merle Levine spent a lot of time getting in touch with entities that were not providing us with their information. We had to convince numerous people that at no time would we sell any lists that we were given.

After lots of deliberation, we decided to tackle Roselawn Cemetery, just north of Eglinton, off Bathurst Street. With no computers, just pads and pencils, we took down the names of thousands of tombstones, which were later entered on a spreadsheet.

We went every Sunday morning to record the names in all the sections. We could only work in the morning in the summer (it got too hot in the afternoons), and one year it rained every Sunday during the summer… so not much got done.

We had a huge sign made to let the passersby know what we were doing. People stopped by and discussed the history of their own families. In the long process of recording the stones, some members discovered relatives they had not known about.

There was great camaraderie amongst the group. Some dropped by to help with the Hebrew translation, others just to do a row or two.

Some of our committee members were: Harvey Glasner, Diane Krieger z”l, Bill Gladstone (then Vice President of our Society) and Shelley Stillman. I, followed by Howard Shidlowsky, and then Len Green z”l, served as Chairs of our committee. Sarah Faerman, besides translating the Hebrew, entered many names on the spreadsheet. Others who worked on this project were Dave Goldberg, Robert Gutman, Howard Markus, Harvey Poch, Lawrie Weiser, Zella Gordon, Yetta Kendal, Ellen Morris, and Dr. Rolf Lederer (President of our Society at that time who also translated). Also active were Henry Wellisch (who did a lot of the Hebrew translation), and Harold Nissenthal z”l, who wanted to digitize all of the pictures we took. David Trost joined us later in the process. Valerie Fox and Sheryl Adelkind helped out. Len Green kept a lot of materials in his house, as did Diane Krieger in her tiny apartment. Harold Nissenthal had so much in his garage that it eventually became too difficult to open his garage door! Toba Ajzenstat came out to help with the transcriptions, and David Price put about 5,000 names on a spreadsheet. Everyone was devoted to this project.

That said, we were considered strange – pioneers.

We had people from California, from New York, and groups in Toronto and the suburbs questioning us about the project. It was really unique. Jewish and non-Jewish groups from far and wide wrote to us, seeking advice on how to preserve the gravesites of their own cemeteries, e.g. in Timmins and North Bay.

One of our project’s biggest challenges can be summed up in this quote from a letter Bill Gladstone wrote at that time: “Since our own cemetery committee was formed in 1989, we have been occupied with the formidable logistical task of collecting burial information for every Jewish person buried in the province of Ontario. This has proven to be most difficult because there’s no central body overseeing the dozen or so Jewish cemeteries in Toronto and the numerous others scattered around the province.”

By the fall of 1991, about 50% of Roselawn Cemetery was recorded, with burials dating back to 1903. After we stopped recording, it was decided to take photographs of the balance of the gravestones, put them in albums, and then eventually digitize them. We finished taking all the photographs, but came to a standstill – Harold Nissenthal, who would have done the digitizing, passed away suddenly. Dianne Krieger, who was also Editor of Shem Tov at the time, sadly passed away as well.

The Cemetery Project was an epic undertaking – and I am so proud to have been a part of it.