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שם טוב  
**SHEM TOV**

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO)

Since 1985

VOLUME XXIX No. 1

March 2013 Nisan 5773

2<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL ONTARIO JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH



**JGS Toronto Celebrates  
Ontario Jewish Heritage Month  
May 2013**

We are proud to commemorate  
Ontario Jewish Heritage Month  
by presenting two programmes with and at  
Barbara Frum Library  
20 Covington Road, Toronto

**Tuesday evening, May 7<sup>th</sup>  
Four authors from**

***Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*  
Moderator: Henry Blumberg**



**Tuesday evening, May 28<sup>th</sup>  
*Travels of a Toronto Jewish Boy:  
From the Ward 4 Ghetto to the Wide World*  
Presented by Dr. Albert Engelhardt**

See p. 3 & 6 for information about our  
Ontario Jewish Heritage Month events!

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## Message From the President

Welcome to a new year of researching your family tree(s). The new JGS Toronto Board for 2013 has already met twice to plan for the year ahead. As you will note from the list of officers, the Board is comprised of some new faces and some long serving faces. (I would not want to use the phrase "old faces").

The biggest challenge for our Society is to find new ways of supporting our members in their individual research efforts. We aim for programs which will inform and entertain, but that at the end of the day will provide new ideas for your research. *Shem Tov*, our website and our Blog all strive to keep you informed about new resources, new research ideas, and to keep you current about the world of Jewish Genealogy.

On top of all that we need to find ways of sharing our experiences, with a "member help member" approach. Generally members are reluctant to be categorized as experts, but you don't need to be an expert to be able to help another member. Recently I wanted to find an Australian naturalization document, and I was successful. Am I an expert with Australian naturalizations? Absolutely not! Have I more experience than someone who has never searched for an Australian naturalization document. The answer is "yes". Could I help someone down that path, and again the answer is "yes".

Let us share our experiences, and we will all be further

ahead. Stayed tuned for initiatives from your Society to bring about more sharing of information and knowledge among members.

Please provide feedback to any member of the Board about any of our Society's actions and activities. Let us know the good, the bad and the ugly. We need the feedback to help us improve.

Warm regards,  
Leslie Kelman  
President, JGS Toronto

### From the Editor

Here's why you should write to [shemtov@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca):

- To send your comments and questions
- To submit items of interest, photos, research tips or details of your latest genealogical discoveries
- To write a personal account (up to 1,500 words) for On A Personal Note.
- To connect with one of the authors featured in this issue

The next *Shem Tov* deadline is May 21<sup>st</sup>.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Judy Kasman

#### vol. XXIX 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](http://www.jgstoronto.ca).

Contributions are invited. Please submit material to [shemtov@jgstoronto.ca](mailto: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.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Please see below for locations of each programme.  
For updates, please visit [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca)

**Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 8:00 pm**

**Temple Sinai**

*Searching the All-Galicia Database & Gesher Galicia Map Room Online*

Presenter: Pamela Weisberger, President & Research Coordinator, Gesher Galicia (see p. 12)

**Wednesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 pm**

**North York Central Library Auditorium,  
5160 Yonge Street**

*The Jews in Poland and Russia*

Presenter: U of T Professor, Antony Polonsky (see p. 5)

**Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 pm**

**Barbara Frum Library**

*Four authors from Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*

Moderator: **Henry Blumberg** (see next article)

**Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 to 8:30 pm**

**Barbara Frum Library**

*Travels of a Toronto Jewish Boy: From the Ward 4 Ghetto to the Wide World*

Presenter: **Dr. Albert Engelhardt** (see next article)

**Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 8:00 pm**

**Temple Sinai**

*History of the Ottawa Jewish Community*

Presenters: John Diener and Hymie Reichstein

**Wednesday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 8:00 pm**

**Temple Sinai**

*Brick Walls and Breakthroughs*

Presentations by our members

## JewishGen Announces Canada Database

**O**n February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Warren Blatt, Managing Director of JewishGen, announced this new database which presently includes burial records (JOWBR), Jewish FamilyFinder, and Montreal-centric records from the Canada Jewish Heritage Network, Hebrew Sick Benefit Association of Montreal membership listings (1897-1945) and Montreal Jewish General Hospital (from 1929).

[www.jewishgen.org/databases/Canada](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Canada)

In conjunction with the new JewishGen Canada Database, Blatt announced a major update to the JewishGen InfoFile, "Guide to Canadian Jewish Genealogical Research" compiled by Bruce Brown, at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/Canada.html>

## JGS Toronto Celebrates Ontario Jewish Heritage Month May 2013

**O**n Tuesday May 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. at the Barbara Frum Library, in honour of Ontario Jewish Heritage Month, JGS Toronto will present selected readings by contributing authors in its book, *Tracing our Roots, Telling Our Stories*. Our member authors, **Elaine McKee, Harvey Glasner, Cyril Gryfe and Neil Richler**, will share their moving stories of immigration, integration and identity. This event will be moderated by lawyer **Henry Blumberg**, a JGS Toronto member who is also a Board member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies.

JGS Toronto's anthology was originally inspired by a collective need to preserve and share personal stories with future generations. This is the precise mission of Bill 17, passed in February 2012 by Liberal MPP Mike Colle. The Act proclaims: "Jewish Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the inspirational role that Jewish Canadians have played, and continue to play, in communities across Ontario."

*Tracing our Roots, Telling Our Stories* is comprised of over 40 compelling and entertaining accounts written by members of JGS Toronto; the stories are accompanied with personal photographs and documents, recipes and short poems.



Then, again at the Barbara Frum Library on Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup> from 7 to 8:30 p.m., **Dr. Albert Engelhardt**, a New Mexico electrical engineer and academic (Texas Tech University and Universite de Quebec), will present *Travels of a Toronto Jewish Boy: From the Ward 4 Ghetto to the Wide World*, his life story from his birth into the Toronto Jewish community and his education, not only secular but also traditional Jewish at the Talmud Torah Eitz Chaim on D'Arcy St.

To be presented are recent results of Dr. Engelhardt's genealogical research in digitized photographic form from 1900, including family photographs, newspaper clippings and government documents. Particular emphasis will be given to his attraction to a scientific career at a time when this was not a popular choice for Jews in Canada.

Dr. Engelhardt will then trace his professional career during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> and he will comment on the unprecedented changes that are taking place.



Our partnership with Barbara Frum Library in May is the perfect way to celebrate, commemorate and honour Ontario Jewish Heritage Month.

For further details of these upcoming programmes at Barbara Frum Public Library, 20 Covington Road, Toronto, call 416-395-5440 or go to [www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?R=LIB05Cached](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?R=LIB05Cached) - [Similar](#)

Or visit: [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca)

## Preserving History

by Harvey Glasner

Several months ago JGS Toronto received a phone call from Toronto resident Ann Sharpe (nee Wilder) who offered to donate her family photos to our Society. Ann was motivated to make this contribution to us in light of a column that she read in *The Canadian Jewish News* about the value of having historic family photo albums kept in the public domain.

We genealogists are of course torn between the need to have historic records open for us to conduct our research and the real fear of identity theft and other infringements of our privacy.

In the press recently were two stories that illustrate this dilemma. One was regarding a Winnipeg woman who discovered her image on a Canadian postage stamp that was issued to honour Raoul Wallenberg. She was shocked and yet thrilled to be reconnected to this saintly man who saved thousands of Jewish lives during the Arrow Cross roundups in WWII Hungary. The other story was about a British Columbia woman who recognized her father's image on the cover of a book that displayed an eerie street scene in the Lodz Ghetto. The book, *The Emperor of Lies* by Steve Sem-Sandberg, had been written to illustrate how the Nazis effectively used propaganda in an effort to cover their wicked deeds.

*Reflections*, the story that follows, was written by Ann's daughter, Sandee. It is a wonderfully told account of life in Poland before WWI and the challenges faced by their forebears in making a go of life in Toronto from the 1920s on. Anyone who grew up in Toronto in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century will enjoy this walk down memory lane.

### Bella & Max Wilder: Reflections

by Sandee Sharpe, granddaughter of  
Bella & Max Wilder

Part 1. Part 2 is to appear in next issue of *Shem Tov*.

Bella and Max Wilder were married for more than 50 years. They had three children, five grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Their lives covered two countries, two World Wars and one tiny house in downtown Toronto. From Poland to Canada, their lives touched family and friends and helped shape our lives. To understand ourselves, we must reflect on their experiences.

Bella Wilder was born on May 12, 1910 in Opatow, Poland within the area of Apt (pronounced Upt). Her father, Chaim Shlomo Goldbach, began his second family when he married Shifra Frimeth Schatz. As a result, Bella also had much older siblings. Her favourites were her three older brothers - Victor, Jack and Hymie. Chaim Shlomo earned a living with his horse and cart, bringing milk, cheese, cream, eggs and butter from a farm quite a distance away to sell in their town/village. Bella's father died when she was but 10 years old. Her mother, Shifra, was forced to sell the horse and cart for money for the family. It was difficult; however, Shifra was determined to make it work. The trips to the farm continued, although now, mother

and daughter used yokes to carry pails of milk, and used their hands to carry whatever they could to continue the family business and bring in money for the family.

Shifra insisted that Bella's brothers be educated in the Jewish religion and so she hired a tutor for them. Bella was allowed to sit and listen in and she too learned to read and write Hebrew and Yiddish, certainly rare skills for females at that time. Her oldest brother, Victor, in an effort to avoid joining the Polish Army for World War I, actually cut off two of his toes as Jews were frequently mistreated in the army.

In the 1920s, her three brothers began coming to Toronto. The brothers sent money back to Poland for their mother to come to Toronto, but Shifra refused to leave without her daughter. By 1936, Victor, Jack and Hymie had saved enough money for Shifra and Bella to come to Canada. They came to Toronto, while others left Poland to go to Israel or England. All of the family that remained in Poland died in the Holocaust.

Bella and her mother came to Toronto to live with Victor and his wife, Blanche. They arrived with all of their possessions in a shopping bag. Bella got a sewing job in a factory, a common job for Jewish immigrants. Within a year, Shifra was "matched" for another marriage and so Bella moved from her brother's house to her mother and stepfather's house on Dundas Avenue near Bathurst Street. Three years after arriving in Toronto at the age of 29, Bella met Max Wilder while walking at College and Spadina, a meeting that would ultimately change both of their lives.

Max was born on May 22, 1909 in the suburbs of Warsaw, Poland. Coincidentally, both Max and Bella's father shared the same name, Chaim Shlomo. Max's mother was Mary (Masha) Sosnovitch. When Max was 2½, his father's sisters sent money they had saved to bring their brother over to Toronto to make a better living for himself and his family. Chaim Shlomo came alone and opened up a small cleaning, pressing and alterations business with his sewing machine.

Masha was left in Poland with three young children, Lily, Max and another sister. Masha earned money for her family by plucking feathers from chickens and, at times, operating a vegetable stand. When the Cossacks came and the pogroms began with their relentless intention of capturing and killing Jews, Masha and her three children moved from *shtetl* to *shtetl* to escape the pogroms. Chaim Shlomo had no idea where to find his family in Poland as they had been forced to move so often. When a friend of his in Toronto went back to Poland to find his wife, Chaim Shlomo asked him to find his Masha. In an unbelievable stroke of good fortune, his friend was able to locate Masha and her children. Seven years later, Chaim Shlomo was able to send for his family to come to Canada. In all that time, the family had never heard from him. At this time, Lily, the oldest, was 16 and Max was 9½ years old. Although Chaim Shlomo sent tickets and money for his family of 4, only Masha, Lily and Max made the voyage. Max's older (middle) sister, whose name is unfortunately not known, had died from malnutrition.

They travelled to Canada by ship and were met by immigration officials. Max was suffering from an eye infection and the officials did not want to let him

*Continued on page 5*

**Bella and Max Wilder - continued from page 4**

through. Lily became quite angry and insisted that he was part of her family and that the family must stay together. Lily was successful and Max was allowed to enter Canada with his mother and forceful protective sister by his side!

The family joined Chaim Shlomo who by now had a store on Dundas near Spadina. Unfortunately, the business wasn't going well and so the family moved to Kensington. Chaim Shlomo used his sewing machine to work as a tailor to support his family. Chaim Shlomo and Masha had two more children in Toronto, Toby and Sara. At the end of Grade 8, when Max was 14 years old, he left Ryerson Public School and sold pencils and newspapers to help support the family. Since his Chaim Shlomo was a tailor, he taught Max to sew. Max got a job at a factory; however he was expected to work on the Sabbath even though the owner of the factory was Jewish. His parents wouldn't let him work on the Sabbath and when Max reported back to work on the Monday morning, the foreman promptly fired him.

Chaim Shlomo suffered from numerous headaches and when Max was in his early 20s, his father died from a brain tumour. Since Lily had married at the age of 18 and had already moved out of the house, this left Max as the sole supporter of his mother and two younger sisters. When he was 30 years old, after living in Toronto for more than 20 years, he met Bella...walking along College Street. Each time he would talk of that meeting, his eyes would light up and it was clear what a very strong first impression that beautiful woman had made on him!

Bella and Max were married on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1939 in the backyard of her mother's home. Without a honeymoon to speak of, they went to live with Max's mother in Kensington Market. A few years later, they moved to a flat on Dundas near Spadina. Bella took care of the home and Max worked at Superior Men's Tailoring on College and Bathurst Streets where they made men's suits. Ultimately, Max worked in that factory for more than 50 years, doing piecework and sewing zippers into men's pants. When Max retired at the age of 72, his hearing was quite impaired due to the constant noise of the sewing machines in the factory.



MAX WILDER  
POLISH NAME:  
MORYS WASLACH  
BORN 1909  
WARSAW, POLAND  
DIED 1999

BELLA WILDER  
YIDDISH NAME:  
BAYLA HANNOVIZ GOLDBECH  
BORN 1910  
DARTOUL, POLAND  
DIED 2002

MAX + BELLA WILDER  
MAY, 1993

**Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada  
(Toronto) and The Polish-Jewish Heritage  
Foundation of Canada  
in association with  
The Canadiana Department, North York  
Central Library, Toronto Public Library**

present

***The Jews in Poland and Russia:  
A Lecture by Professor Antony Polonsky***

**Wednesday, April 24 at 7:30 p.m.  
(Doors open at 7:00 pm)**

**North York Central Library Auditorium  
5120 Yonge Street, Toronto**

The history of the Jewish communities of these lands—where most of the Jews of Europe and America originated—is often the subject of woolly thinking and stereotypes. Antony Polonsky recreates this lost world in a way that avoids both sentimentalism and the simplification of the east European Jewish experience into a story of persecution and martyrdom. This is an important story whose relevance extends beyond the Jewish world or the bounds of east-central Europe.

Antony Polonsky was born in Johannesburg, and studied history and political science at the University of the Witwatersrand. He went to Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship in 1961 and read modern history at Worcester College and St Antony's College. He taught at the London School of Economics and Political Science from 1970 to 1992. Since then he has been at Brandeis University, where in 1999 he was appointed Albert Abramson Professor of Holocaust Studies, an appointment held jointly at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Brandeis University. He has also been a visiting professor at the University of Warsaw, the Institute for the Human Sciences, Vienna, and the University of Cape Town; Skirball visiting fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies; and Senior Associate Member of St Antony's College, Oxford.

A distinguished author of numerous books, Professor Polonsky is vice-president of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies and of the American Association for Polish-Jewish Studies. He is a member of the International Advisory Board of the Mordechai Anieliewicz Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Warsaw, and of the Executive Committee of the National Polish American-Jewish American Task Force, and an Associate of the Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University. In 2011 he was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of Polonia Restituta and the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of Independent Lithuania. In 2012 in Kraków, Poland he was awarded the 'Pro historia Polonorum' prize for the best book on the history of Poland in a foreign language published in the last five years.

## BRANCHING OUT

by Elaine Cheskes

New Acquisitions to the JGS of Canada (Toronto) Library Collection at the Gladys Allison Canadian Room, North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, 6<sup>th</sup> floor

1. JGS 940.5318132 SAU  
*Advokaten 1938: das Schicksal der in den Jahren 1938 bis 1945 verfolgten österreichischen Rechtsanwältinnen und Rechtsanwälte.* Barbara Sauer/Ilse Reiter-Zatloukal. Wien: Manz, 2010.  
(Translation of title: *The Fate of Female and Male Austrian Attorneys Who Were Persecuted in the Years 1938 to 1945.*)

Subject: Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) -- Austria  
Subject: Jews -- Persecutions -- Austria  
Subject: Jewish lawyers -- Austria -- Biography

2. JGS 305.6 GOT 1963  
*Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory, 1963.* Eli Gottesman. Montreal: Jewish Institute of Higher Research, Central Rabbinical Seminary of Canada, 1963.

3. JGS 30 LEO 2006  
*Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 2006* LI [vol. 51]. Leo Baeck Institute. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006.

4. JGS 305.6 GOTT 1965  
*Who's Who in Canadian Jewry 1965.* Eli Gottesman. Montreal: Jewish Institute of Higher Research, Central Rabbinical Seminary of Canada, 1965.

5. JGS 943.72004924 BRÁ  
*Židé v Boskovicích.* Jaroslav Bránský. Boskovice: Klub Přátel Boskovic, 1999.  
(Translation of title: *Jews in Boskovice*)

Subject: Jews -- Czech Republic -- Boskovice  
Subject: Boskovice (Czech Republic) -- Ethnic relations

### NEW MEMBERS

JGS Toronto is very pleased to welcome  
as new members:

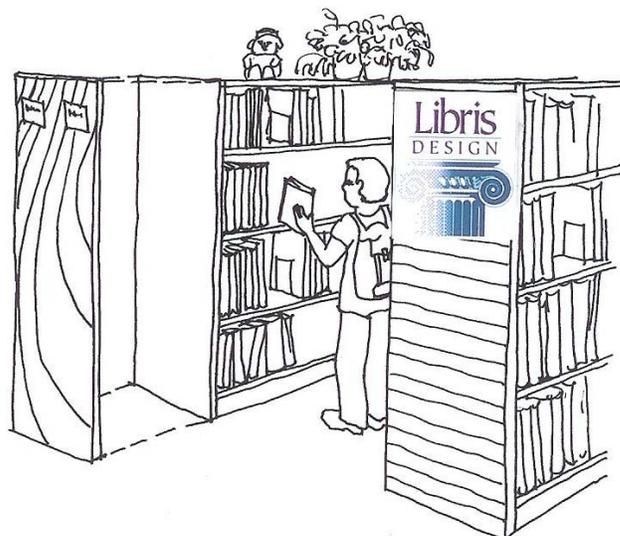
Isme Bennie	Arlene Lax
Harriet Szonyi	Connie Zwingerman

Post to our blog:  
[www.jgstoronto.blogspot.com](http://www.jgstoronto.blogspot.com)

### Downsizing and House Hunting

If you are in the process of downsizing your living accommodations and have discovered past issues of the IAJGS Conference Syllabi: **1997, 2009, 2012** or other major significant genealogical resources, the JGS Toronto Library stacks can offer them superb housing.

Price: "What a deal!" Free to patrons of the Toronto Public Library  
Desirable Location: NYCL, Canadiana Room  
Library Security: 24/7  
Lighting: Low illumination  
Humidity: Climate controlled  
District: Compatible Dewey Decimal neighbours



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### Donor Appreciation

A special note of appreciation to Henry Wellisch and Ralph Berrin for their donations of genealogical books to our JGS Toronto Library collection.

### JGS Toronto Event at Thornhill Library for Ontario Jewish Heritage Month

JGS Toronto's Librarian, Elaine Cheskes, is curating a special exhibit, *Tracing Our Jewish Roots: Selections from the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto Library Collection*. Please visit this display during the month of May at The Bathurst Clark Resource Library, 900 Clark Avenue West (just west of Bathurst Street), Thornhill.

## Jewish Culture Centre to be Founded in Armenia Near Medieval Jewish Cemetery

The story of the Jewish community in Armenia dates to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, when Mongol invaders devastated the region. Bishop Abraham Mkrtychyan wants to start a Jewish culture center alongside a medieval Jewish cemetery in the village of Yeghegis. The cemetery was discovered in 1996. The village, along the banks of a river by the same name, lies about 96 km. south of Yerevan, against the backdrop of Ararat Valley, and just 112 km. north of Iran. Professor Michael Stone of Hebrew University in Jerusalem reviewed photographs of the headstones, confirming the bishop's suspicion that what he had found was indeed a medieval Jewish cemetery. Professor Stone wrote: "The Jewish presence in Armenia provides a link between the old, well-established Jewish community in Iran, and other Caucasian and Pontic Jewish communities, and those even further north."

To read more about the ancient Jews of Armenia go to: <http://tinyurl.com/cbkbjvj>.



## New YIVO Website: Online Guide to the YIVO Archives

The YIVO Institute announced the launching of its new website, the Online Guide to the YIVO Archives at [yivoarchives.org](http://yivoarchives.org). The new site expands and upgrades the original *Guide to the YIVO Archives*, published in 1998 by offering information on several hundred additional YIVO collections, as well as detailed finding aids to selected collections. The new website provides information to YIVO's archive of about 23,000,000 documents, manuscripts, photographs, films, sound recordings, and art works and artifacts. The YIVO Archives holds materials about Jewish life around the world, with special focus on Jewish life in Eastern Europe, Yiddish language, literature and culture, the Holocaust and its aftermath and Jewish life in the United States with emphasis on the period of migration. YIVO will continue to update with newly cataloged and newly acquired collections. This was accomplished due to grant from the Kronhill Pletka Foundation. Second grant from them will enable YIVO to carry out Phase II by adding new databases and collections throughout 2013. Go to: <http://www.yivoarchives.org/> to access the archives and to read more about this project go to: [http://www.yivoarchives.org/index.php?p=pages/about\\_guide](http://www.yivoarchives.org/index.php?p=pages/about_guide).

Thank you to Saul Issroff for alerting us to this new website for the YIVO Archives.



The above items are reprinted courtesy of Jan Meisels Allen, IAJGS Vice President and Chairperson, IAJGS Public Records Access Monitoring Committee.

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

### From Volume 13, Number 50 | December 16, 2012 Finding Aid for Toronto Census of 1911

A few years ago AVOTAYNU Book Review editor, Bill Gladstone, developed a website containing useful and background information about the Jewish presence in Toronto. It is located at <http://www.billgladstone.ca>. He regularly adds items to the site.

His latest addition is a finding aid to the 1911 Canadian census for the area of Toronto that was heavily populated by Jews. It is located at <http://www.billgladstone.ca/?p=8245>. The "Street Guide to the Jews of Toronto in the Canadian Census of 1911" offers researchers a way of finding relatives in the 1911 census who do not turn up in a nominal search at Ancestry.com. As the article explains: "Frequently the problem occurs because a family name is terribly misspelled in the index due to messy handwriting, or due to a faded, smeared or otherwise illegible census page."

The Street Guide allows researchers to find a family using the street address alone, something you cannot do at Ancestry or on the Library and Archives Canada website where the 1911 census is also accessible. Essentially it lists each page of the census in the Toronto area, shows the addresses on the page, and gives a rough indication as to how many Jewish families were living there. The Street Guide includes a street map of Toronto ca. 1911 (many of the streets have changed and some no longer exist) as well as a sketch map of the various electoral districts at the time.

If you want read a taste of what Jewish life was like in Canada in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, visit the site. There are numerous articles gleaned from this period. Examples from 1909 indicate that the Toronto police raided the National Matzo and Biscuit Company because they were operating on Sunday. Also there is a list of European Jews seeking relatives in Canada, 1922.



### From Volume 14, Number 5 | February 3, 2013 An Amazing Internet Conversation

Recently I had an amazing conversation on Skype with a woman who lives in Poland regarding a project she is doing to commemorate the Jews of the town of Przedecz. What was amazing was that she does not speak English and I do not speak Polish. We communicated using Google Translate (<http://translate.google.com>). Google Translate has an option to listen to the translation. I typed my words in English and clicked the speaker icon on the Polish side, allowing her to hear in Polish what I had to say. She then typed her response in Polish and clicked the speaker icon on the English side giving a verbal translation to what she said. Through Skype, we heard each other's words in our native language.

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## The Prajs\* is Right: A JRI-Poland Success Story

by David Price, JGS Toronto member

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With the passage of time, the possibilities of reuniting families through living memory alone become less and less possible. The task to find how families are connected is then inherited by the family historian.

I have been documenting my Prajs family from Kielce, Poland and nearby towns since 1995. In the past 18 years, I charted virtually all the branches...or so I thought. Last month, that assumption changed - dramatically.

Judy Golan of Israel is an Israeli genealogist who has documented her large Prajs family of the Polish towns of Wislica and Kielce. Along the way, I was excited to translate the records found through JRI-Poland in the hope that I would find the connections between our two families. We ultimately concluded that we are not related even though our towns are close. But from our research, it was also clear that there were only two PRAJS families in Kielce, Judy's and mine.

On Sunday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Judy was contacted by Chaim PRAJS, also of Israel. Chaim's father had died last year age 88, and, as a Holocaust survivor, he spent the last 70 years looking for family, but to no avail. His last wish was for his son Chaim to discover if there were any living Prajs's from Kielce.

After Judy determined that Chaim's ancestors were not on her tree, she thought that it was likely that they would be on mine. She remembered that I had once told her that my Prajs's were in the lumber business. Sure enough, Chaim said that so were his ancestors, and so Judy quickly suggested he contact me.

Chaim told me that his father, Moishe, who lived in Germany after the war, survived the Holocaust doing slave labour as a carpenter and other forced work, but his mother, his sister and all of his brothers perished. Moishe also survived Auschwitz and other camps. He had been looking for relatives since the War. In 1982, he gave his information to Yad Vashem. In 2000, he learned of a 1958 Page of Testimony submitted by a brother-in-law but he could not find him by that time.

Moishe told his son Chaim that he remained in Germany because that's where his fellow survivor friends were. To Moishe, they were his only family. Together, they built clubs and bars for the American soldiers. Moishe married another survivor and they had two boys: David lives in Germany, while Chaim, named after his grandfather, emigrated to Israel three years ago. Moishe had helped rebuild the Jewish community in Stuttgart, Germany.

The following day, I replied to Chaim with the news that his ancestors' names matched mine and explained how I had created a Prajs family tree based on the 1885-1911 records I obtained through Jewish Records Indexing-Poland (JRI-Poland).

Chaim's lumber business story matched mine as well. He told me about David, his great grandfather; he sold the wood brand he created, "Breitlach", in Kielce. When the Germans took over Kielce on about September 7, 1939, David and other Jews were taken prisoner. They were released after the community paid money. David was shot and killed in 1940 while bringing food to Moishe's mother, sister and brothers in Kielce.

Moishe's father, Chaim, was in a Krakow hospital for stomach surgery, after suffering pain for a long time. The Germans were already in Kielce and Chaim traveled illegally to Krakow because it was forbidden for Jews to leave Kielce. Chaim died in hospital on *erev Shavuot* in 1940 and his gravesite is unknown to his grandson.

I sent a copy of the Prajs family tree to Chaim who is planning to go to Kielce with his rabbi to say *kaddish* for his father. I told him that in person, he can get copies of the 1912-1940 Prajs records from the Kielce Civil Records Office. Chaim noticed on my tree the name "Hershel Prajs", a name his father had mentioned but Chaim did not know how Hershel was related.

Hershel was my great grandfather, and also Moishe's grandfather. Five of Hershel's six sons learned the lumber business, but the sixth son, Boruch, my grandfather, was sent to yeshiva in Warsaw to become a teacher. My grandfather married and had six children. When anti-semites burned down the yeshiva, Boruch's step-brother, Abraham, came to Toronto at age 16, helped by Laura Shopsowitz (Shopsy, the hot dog king's wife, had an office in Poland to help people emigrate). Abraham sent a letter to Boruch urging him to leave as there was nothing but poverty and hate in Poland.

My grandfather came to Toronto with his oldest daughter, my aunt Minnie, in 1920. When he earned enough money, he sent for the rest of his family. Unfortunately, when they were ready to leave Poland, my bubby came down with trachoma, a common contagious eye infection. Immigrants were not allowed to travel with this condition so she had to find a place for her and her five children to live. David Prajs, her brother-in-law, who had five children of his own, took them all in to their small home for three years. She then came to Canada with her family in 1924. That same year, Moishe Prajs was born in Kielce and he remembered that his grandfather had many times told him about the family that went across the ocean!

After the War we all thought that the Prajs's of Kielce all perished at Treblinka, having no idea that Moishe had survived. There were Prajs's from Lodz who survived and submitted Pages of Testimony to Yad Vashem but Moishe never knew that side of the family and did not recognize their names when he had checked.

Moishe lived 70 years after the Holocaust without ever being able to find any relatives. He did not even have a picture of his parents and barely remembered what they looked like. He would wake up at night, Chaim told me, screaming from his memories. I remember that my Aunt Minnie told me that in Poland, she used to visit her cousins and still had an old photo of them. I emailed Chaim that that I would send it to him in the morning. Chaim, a body builder who was Mr. Israel in 2009, later told me he was crying and trembling all night in anticipation. It turns out that it was picture of Moishe's uncle, Shmuel Prajs, and his family.

One of the records on JRI-Poland was a shock to Chaim: his

*Continued on page 9*

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## The Prajs is Right - continued from page 8

grandfather had a twin sister, Maitla, who died at 9 months of age. The record gave the date of *yahrzeit*, which Chaim was grateful to now have. Another record gave the name of a previously unknown brother, Jakob, who died at 11 months of age. Also obtained was the maiden name of the great grandmother.

One of the stories we both knew was that a great uncle cut off his toe to avoid being drafted into the Polish army. We also shared the knowledge that there were a lot of stomach disorders in our families e.g. Crohn's disease, diverticulitis. His dad and grandfather died of these disorders. So too did my grandfather and a cousin. I know of other family members with related problems.

Moishe had shared stories of his family and of his Holocaust experiences, mostly with his firstborn, Chaim. He was caught smuggling potatoes into the Kielcer ghetto after slave work outside the ghetto and was sentenced to ten lashes with a wooden stick. A Jewish kappo took the stick from the German guard and said, "I will take care of this pig." He then faked hitting Moishe, who screamed as if it hurt a lot worse; this Jewish kappo saved Moishe's life. A few weeks later, his mother, sister and brothers were gassed in Treblinka. His father-in-law Selig wrote a Torah in the ghetto, refusing to eat, and he gave his bread to Moishe. According to Moishe, he died after finishing the last letter of the Torah.

Some questions are still to be answered. Where was Chaim's grandfather buried after he died in a Krakow hospital? Some of my relatives claim Prices are Levis while others say Israel. Chaim says they are Israel. Who is right? To the question "Are we related?", we are doing a DNA test. To the former questions, we may never know.

*\*Prajs is pronounced Price.*

## Announcement From JRI-POLAND Executive Director, Stanley Diamond

**O**n Friday, Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, the Polish State Archives (PSA) and Jewish Records Indexing-Poland (JRI-Poland) entered into a new multi-year agreement that will expand access to Jewish records for thousands of family historians.

The agreement will enable JRI-Poland to rapidly expand its current online database of indices to five million records. With the support of researchers from the hundreds of towns with records in the JRI-Poland database, indices to more than one million additional records are expected to become available within a year.

The agreement reflects a resumption of cooperation between the PSA and JRI-Poland, whose landmark agreement from 1997-2006 resulted in the indexing of more than four million records whose listings are searchable in the JRI-Poland database.

Entire announcements, photos and a video are available on the website [www.jri-poland.org](http://www.jri-poland.org).

## NEW ONLINE RECORDS FROM FAMILYSEARCH

### Ontario Births, 1869-1912

Index to birth records. Some entries in this index are missing the registration year and number. <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/show#uri=http://familysearch.org/searchapi/search/collection/1784212>

»»»

### Germany, Brandenburg, Bernau bei Berlin, Jewish Records, 1688-1872

Jewish records from the Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv (Brandenburg Main State Archive). Records include censuses, lists of Jewish families, registers of Jewish passports, and certified copies of Jewish birth, marriage, and death certificates. [https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany,\\_](https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany,_)

## Warsaw's Museum of the History of Polish Jews Opening in April

*by Judy Kasman*



**A**fter more than five years of construction, the Core Exhibition of Warsaw's brand new Museum of the History of Polish Jews will open this April. The goal of the Museum, built on the site of the Warsaw Ghetto, is to focus on one thousand years of rich Jewish civilization in Poland. The educational and cultural programming of the Museum will begin on April 19<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and commemorative events are to be held.

Peter Jassem, an active JGS Toronto member, is Chair of The Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation (Toronto) and is a Representative of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

If you have the opportunity to visit the new Museum, please consider writing an article about it for *Shem Tov!*

To learn more about the Museum, go to: <http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/en/cms/home-page/>

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## ON A PERSONAL NOTE

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

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### Closing Some Gaps

*by Isme Bennie, a new JGS Toronto member!*

*This is the second of two parts. Part I appeared in the December 2012 issue of Shem Tov.*

I know Amalia, the relative whose story I have been researching, is a Jacobson relative. My mother mentions her. She wrote to my grandmother, and in 1904 sent her a photograph of her baby, Victor, the first of her three children. My great uncle Meyer mentions her in letters. We see her visiting Durban where she had an apartment in her later years and where I visited her.

As Jews exited from Europe at the turn of the century, Amalia also left, to marry Herman Hepker. He was from Goldingen (Kuldinga) in Courland, according to the Hepker family tree which was made available to me. He had settled in the Rhodesias with his brothers and sisters in the late 1890s and then sent for Amalia. According to Hepker family mythology, the telegram said: *I have decided to marry you.*

From an online search, I found Hepker details in Eric Rosenthal's *Rhodesian Jewry and its Story, Part IV*. Herman and his four brothers had settled in what is now Zimbabwe and Zambia, and became successful businessmen, starting with a strong butchery business in Bulawayo, later going into mining, then lumber. Herman and Amalia eventually left for Johannesburg, where Herman died in 1940 and Amalia, born 1877, died in 1964.

From postcards, I know that Amalia and Herman Hepker visited Meyer and Nany David in May 1926. They went on a European tour together. There they are in Marienbad, the photograph signed *with love from A. Hepker*. Amalia writes to my grandmother Paula in South Africa from Turin that they had seen the opera *Carmen*, and were leaving the next day in Meyer's "motor car" for Genoa, then on to Usica (sic), then back to Libau, Meyer and Nany's home.

On the Hepker family tree, Amalia's maiden name is Schatz. I search the jewishgen.org. but find no records of an Amalia Schatz. On the Jewishgen Discussion Group SIGlists I find a Schatz family story but cannot connect it to Amalia. But one strange item appears on the Hepker family tree: "*Still need to connect to Lilly Weinbren...*" Why, I ask myself is Lilly appearing on the Hepker family tree?

Some of the Hepkers must be my direct relatives through my relationship to Amalia. I contact Amalia's granddaughter Lyrice in Cincinnati. She knew nothing about Amalia's Jacobson background, but I find out that her family was friendly with Lilly in Johannesburg, although she wasn't sure what the relationship was.

Lyrice believes that her grandfather, Herman Hepker, Amalia's husband, brought "poor cousin Lilly" Jacobson and her mother to South Africa. The two gaps in my family tree suddenly converge!

If Lyrice is correct, "poor cousin Lilly" most likely came to

South Africa pre-WWII as arranged by Herman and Amalia Hepker.

The South African Jewish Rootsbank (<http://chrysalis.its.uct.ac.za>) shipping records show a Lena Jacobson of Goldingen, born 1883, accompanied by a daughter Yetta (Lilly?) aged 15, arriving in Cape Town on the Armadale Castle in 1927, naming their contact on arrival Joseph Sebba of 5 De Lorenz Street, Cape Town. Sebba's name is also found on the Hepker family tree. He was married to Rachel, Uri Hepker's sister-in-law. More connectivity! Joseph Sebba died in 1934. Both he and his wife are buried in Cape Town's Maitland Cemetery.

I find a record of Lilly's grave in Johannesburg's West Park Cemetery with her birth date of 1912, so she would have been 15 in 1927. The ages match! Her grave names her parents as Simon and Lena. There is a record of a Simon Jacobson of Goldingen on a 1906-7 Goldingen Voters List. There is a record of a Simon Jacobson, a butcher (in common with the Hepker brothers?), spending two days at The Poor Jews Shelter in London en route to South Africa in 1913. Though the dates don't quite fit, he could be Lena's husband and Lilly's father. There is a Simon, born 1882, buried in Johannesburg's West Park Cemetery in 1962. Lena Jacobson, who died in 1959, is also buried there.

Though I am looking for information about Amalia and Lilly, I keep checking back on Meyer and Nany, and trace from the Yad Vashem records the sad story of their lives. I have some of their correspondence (which I had translated from Suetterlin Script) from 1937 to 1940, the years before WWII. Then there is no word until a letter from Saldus dated 15 July 1948. Then again, silence, until 24 October 1955, when Meyer writes in his excellent English: "*you will be rather surprised, after such a long silence again to hear from us, to see that we are alive (sic), yes we are still alive (such is life).*" The letter is addressed from Kasatchinskaye, in Siberia, the Gulag!

The eminent historian and scientist Edward Anders, author of *Jews in Liepaja/Latvia 1941-45*, passed on the following from Ella Barkan in Israel: "*here is more information from Moshe...Aneta Lipert was deported to Siberia in the same wagon as Moshe. She lived in one room with Paula Zebba and Necha David.*"

Meyer continues through the next several years to correspond with my mother in South Africa. On 19 December 1955 he writes:

*The last years has been very hard time for us, my dear Nanny is all the years seriously ill with her heart...*

*I am financially very hard up, I myself must still work which is very hard for me in my age 74 years. I am also not well, besides my work, at my place I must do all the house work, because Nanny cant do anything....I am very sorry to tell you all of this, but we are here alone, we have nobody to put out our sore heart, you are all so far away from us, and as you know "out of sight, out of mind."*

*Continued on page 11*

## On a Personal Note - continued from Page 10

In another letter Meyer refers to Amalia:

*I am glad to hear that Ismie has seen Mrs. Amalia Hepker, and that she is keeping well, she is much older than myself. I am 76 this October next she must be more than eighty, what is about her husband Herrman Hepker is he still alive? How is her position financially, he was a rich man.*

Then on June 19, 1956 Meyer writes that Nany died at 8:40 am on the morning of April 29<sup>th</sup>, after four months of heavy suffering.

I am fortunate to have Meyer's correspondence, and to be able to follow his journey after Nany dies and he receives permission to leave Siberia. The banker who visited European spas like Marienbad is now a pathetic old man going from Minsk to Tallinn to Nemencine in search of somewhere to stay, often a crowded room.

The last letter I have from him was written from Nemencine on 19 December, 1959. From the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry, I find a record of Meyer's grave. He was buried in the Saltonishkiu Cemetery, Vilnius, Lithuania on 22 January 1960, a few weeks after he wrote his last letter, Nany has been inscribed in the Liepaja Holocaust Memorial Wall in the Liepaja Jewish Cemetery.

The grave keeper in the Liepaja Jewish Cemetery told me that my great grandmother Berta's grave was destroyed in the War, though he has been able to identify the spot where it had been. There is no record of Moritz' grave but there are graves still standing of a Behr and Gite David, almost certainly Meyer's parents.

I did find the graves of other people who feature in my story, poor cousin Lilly's of course, in Johannesburg's West Park Cemetery, buried in 1977. I found Amalia's grave. She was buried 12<sup>th</sup> June 1974 aged 87 in Johannesburg's old Brixton Cemetery near her husband Herman. I still don't know what Lilly or Amalia are to me, but in the search for connections, I have been able to follow Meyer's story literally to the grave.

## Cemetery Update

The Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetery/> was updated last January and now has over 80,000 burials and a capture rate of 98% of all burials in Toronto. We have expanded our data to include cemeteries west of Toronto such as Hamilton, Burlington, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, London, Brampton, Brantford and Mississauga. We have two sections to go at Mount Sinai for translating the Hebrew of the headstones and all future updates should appear on JOWBR this May.

Thanks to my team members, Kevin Hanit, Robert Limberski and Linda Offman, for their hard work.

<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/cemetery/>

Allen Halberstadt,  
Cemetery Project Chair

## 33rd IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy

August 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel

co-hosted by the

International Association of  
Jewish Genealogical Societies ([IAJGS](http://iajgs.org))  
and the  
Jewish Genealogical Society of  
Greater Boston ([JGSGB](http://jgsbg.org))

**Keynote speaker: Aaron Lansky,**  
Founder and President of the National  
Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts

A bus tour of the Center will be available during  
the Conference.

**Conference registration is now open.**

<http://iajgs2013.org>



## Varda Hall Berenstein ז"ל

by Judy Kasman

JGS Toronto was privileged to welcome Varda Hall Berenstein as its featured presenter on December 14, 2012. The audience was captivated by Varda's personal account, delivered eloquently, of growing up in Switzerland during the years of World War II. Her presentation was rendered all the more poignant upon hearing the news of her death on January 30<sup>th</sup>.

JGS Toronto extends condolences to the family of Varda Hall Berenstein.



Our member, Gella Rothstein, introduces her friend, Varda Hall Berenstein, at our December 14<sup>th</sup> programme.

## Galicia Maven Pamela Weisberger Speaking on March 13<sup>th</sup>

Pamela Weisberger is the 1<sup>st</sup> vice president and programme chair of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles; she is also president and research coordinator for Geshher Galicia, Inc. JGS Toronto is fortunate to be welcoming Pamela, a professional genealogist, to speak to our Society on the topic, *Searching the All-Galicia Database & Geshher Galicia Map Room Online*, at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at Temple Sinai.

**Wishing all of you and  
your families  
a Happy Passover!**

## Searching for David Nowakowsky, Music of a Forgotten Master

by Judy Kasman

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, Cantor Ron Graner, a JGS Toronto member, presented the story of the circumstances which led to the discovery of the music of the late Russian composer and musician, David Nowakowsky, and the extraordinary efforts made by Graner himself to preserve and keep this music alive. We viewed the short film produced by Graner that enacts the literal discovery of sheet music, and we were also able to hear audio clips of some of the music.

We also heard about the play written by Graner about Nowakowsky that recently appeared at the New York and Toronto fringe festivals.



## MISSING LINKS

The following email recently arrived from D, a reader in Israel:

*I recently came across the Volume IX No. 3 September 1993 edition of Shem Tov – "Personalities I Have 'Met' In the Course of My Genealogical Research" where Alex Korn discusses Rabbi Meir Orbach's history in Dzialoszyn, in addition to other figures and facts about the town. I am very interested in obtaining more information, both about Rabbi Meir Orbach and about specific individuals from Dzialoszyn. Alex presents thorough information, based on documentation that I cannot get my hands on.*

*Is there any way for me to contact Alex?*

*Thank you very much,  
D*

Editor's note: I subsequently heard from D who reports that he in fact was able to contact Alex Korn. He wonders if other readers might also have information on Rabbi Meir Orbach and/or Dzialoszyn.

If you do, please let me know at [shemtov@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca) and I will contact D.