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שֵׁם טוֹב SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF TORONTO

Serving the Greater Toronto Area since 1985

VOLUME XXIX No. 3

September-October 2013 Tishrei-Cheshvan 5774



2013 IAJGS Award for
Outstanding Publication
by a Member Organization



Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto

*Published by the JGS of Toronto in celebration of its 25th anniversary, **Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories** shares family stories, first-person narratives, and accounts of research and discovery written by 44 of the Society's members. This 248-page anthology spans two centuries and diverse locations to explore such themes as immigration, the Holocaust, and life in Eastern Europe and in new homelands. Its moving chapters illustrate the importance of recording personal histories to enrich the details found on genealogical documents. Effective publicity and sales of the book in a number of retail outlets also serve to introduce the larger community to the joys and challenges of genealogical research.*

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES

**MICHAEL GOLDSTEIN, PRESIDENT
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS - AUGUST 2013**

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Message From the President

Congratulations to JGS Toronto! At the recent IAJGS Conference in Boston, it was announced that JGS Toronto was the recipient of the 2013 IAJGS Award for Outstanding Publication by a Member Organization for its 2011 book, *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*. In my opinion, this book, composed of stories written by 44 of our members, deserves accolades for a number of reasons:

- The speed at which the book went from concept, to planning, to production, and ultimately completion, was incredible.
- The leadership from both the editors and producers was outstanding.
- Counting contributors, the project involved more than 30% of the membership of our Society.
- A legacy for future generations was created.

One thing is clear: without volunteers the book would not have happened. Our Society and its projects will always flourish when our membership contributes time and efforts.

We belong to JGS Toronto because of the support we receive from our fellow members, because of the information we gather at monthly presentations and workshops, and because of the networking opportunities when like minds meet.

The Board of JGS Toronto is developing a plan for volunteering opportunities. We will be breaking down all of the work required to maintain a thriving Society into small tasks, so that

no task is too onerous or time consuming for an individual.

Our goal is to ensure that all of our members receive benefit from their membership. As well as receiving, we need our members to contribute. So, when we call on you, please say yes and contribute some of your time, effort and experience to ensuring a successful JGS Toronto.

Les Kelman
President, JGS Toronto

From the Editor

Here's why you should write to 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 November 12th.
Looking forward to hearing from you!
Judy Kasman

vol. XXIX No. 3

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Advertisements related to genealogy are accepted. Rates are available upon request: shemtov@jgstoronto.ca.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto), now known as Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, was founded in 1985 and serves the Greater Toronto Area. It is volunteer-run and is registered as a non-profit charitable organization. Membership is \$40 per calendar year, \$18 for students. Programmes are held monthly from September to June. Programme details, including topic, speaker and location, can be found in *Shem Tov* and on our website.

The goal of JGS Toronto is to provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and information through programmes, workshop and guest speakers, thereby promoting an awareness of genealogy within the Jewish community. JGS Toronto is a member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (www.iajgs.org) and is affiliated with the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto.

New members are always welcome.

www.jgstoronto.ca

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Unless otherwise stated, all events begin at 8 pm (doors open at 7:30 pm) and are held at Temple Sinai, 210 Wilson Avenue, Toronto

Wednesday, October, 2nd

Toronto Historical Research: New and Important Resources

Speaker: James F.S. Thompson

Toronto 20th Century History and Genealogical Research

Discover a variety of resources which may be underused and which will assist JGS Toronto researchers in exploring Toronto's history (often from the comfort of home).

James F. S. Thomson has designed and taught over a dozen very popular advanced and expert-level family history courses co-sponsored by Toronto Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society and the Toronto Public Library. For these courses and in his articles and presentations at conferences and workshops, as well as in his capacity as a University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies instructor, James draws on over thirty years of experience of family and local history research. This is the second time he has spoken at a JGS Toronto meeting.

Saturday, November 9th

Shaarei Shomayim Congregation,

470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto at 7:30 pm

Speaker: Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

More than 3 Million Voices: The Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Program Director of the Warsaw Museum's Core Exhibition, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett will discuss the Museum's mission, supported by video, architectural images and developing displays.

This is the closing event of Holocaust Education Week. Please refer to p. 12 for details.

Wednesday, December 11th

Speaker: Ruth Frager

Spadina Sweatshops: Jews & Gender in Toronto's Labour Movement in the Early 1900s

Ruth Frager's presentation focuses on the history of the Jewish labour movement in Toronto, emphasizing the interactions concerning ethnic identity, gender, and class in the development of the unions in the clothing industry. She examines why so many Jews clustered in this sector and stresses the harsh conditions they faced, particularly in the interwar years. She highlights their struggles to improve their situation in the sweatshops and beyond, while focusing on the roots of Jewish activism.

Toronto Branch, Ontario Genealogical Society and Toronto Public Library Fall Programmes

Basic Genealogy and Family History

Wednesdays, October 2 to November 20, 1:30 – 3:30 pm

For those just beginning to research or looking to upgrade basic skills, this 8-week course will cover terminology, types of sources, on-line resources, libraries and archives, and record-keeping – to help you “think like a genealogist”.

Instructor: Jane E. MacNamara

North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, Toronto

Maps and Mapping for 21st Century Genealogists

Thursdays, November 7 to 28, 6:15 - 8:15 pm

This 4-week course, designed for intermediate and advanced-level genealogists, will explore sophisticated ways in which maps and mapping tools can contribute to family history research, analysis and writing.

Instructor: James F.S. Thomson

Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street, Toronto

Tracing Forward – Searching for Relatives in Recent Times

Saturday, October 26, 9 am to 5 pm

Designed to provide researchers with new ideas, strategies and tools to help them trace members of their expanded family trees, people who might still be alive or recently deceased. This is a brand-new workshop topic for Toronto Branch. Please check the website for more information.

North York Central Library, Auditorium

For program details, speaker biographies and information on how to register for these courses, visit

www.torontofamilyhistory.org/courses.html.

About Face: Celebrated Ontarians

On September 18th a photographic display, *About Face: Celebrated Ontarians*, opened at the Lieutenant-Governor's Suite in the Ontario Legislature.

This display is a collection of 75 unconventional portraits; included are a number of Jewish notables. (You'll have to see the exhibit or visit the website to find out who they are!!)

The photos can be seen on the website (<http://arts.lgontario.ca/aboutface/visit/>), where they are grouped by time periods of the subjects' birthdates.

To book a tour of the exhibition and the Legislature, call 416-325-7500.

The Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario presents this exhibition in collaboration with Library and Archives Canada.

To March 31, 2014

JRI-Poland Search Results Linked to 74 Town Inventory Folders with Digital Images

by David Price, JGS Toronto member

Recently the following announcement was made on JRI-Poland:

Last month, JRI-Poland announced the Polish State Archives (PSA) schedule for placing scans of their Jewish vital records from the Lublin Archive on-line through their National Digital Archives (NDA) website, (www.szukajwarchiwach.pl).

At the end of June, the PSA published on-line images for 74 towns from eleven branch archives, almost of all of which have been indexed by JRI-Poland. There are also images of early 20th century (Russian language) records not previously indexed. Professionals will be doing the data entry of these "new" years to add to the JRI-Poland indices.

Linking of JRI-Poland search results to online images:

JRI-Poland search results have already been linked to the Digital Archive's folder with a detailed "Units" inventory for the town.

When searches in the JRI-Poland database turn up results for which there are already on-line scans, there will be a clickable link to the page that contains that town's scans. As JRI-Poland volunteers update each index with the appropriate links, each JRI-Poland search result will contain a link directly to the appropriate image for that record, but until that time, each town's results will contain the link to that town's collection of images.

Since the newly available digital images of records are scattered across many towns, and because it will take some time for the Digital Archives to complete their massive scanning project, searching their website directly presents challenges for even experienced researchers. We have taken this interim linking step to help everyone quickly access the available images.

Finding the images for records for your town:

The Digital Archives "Units" webpage (folder) for each town clearly indicates which years currently have on-line images, but they are not easy to navigate.

To find the images, take the following steps after being directed to the Digital Archives site for a town from the JRI-Poland search results page:

- 1) Click on the spot in the header of your town in the JRI-Poland search results that says "HERE". (A note of explanation and link will only appear in the JRI-Poland header of towns that have been linked to files online.) You will be taken to the Digital Archives webpage for your town's registers.
- 2) A red arrow saying "Series" will appear on a menu bar towards the top of the page. The page will list the records held by the archives for this town. The far right column will show a number other than zero for any collection that currently has online images. (If this column shows a zero,

it means that no online images are available for that collection.)

- 3) Click on any title or entry number that shows entries. You will be taken to a "Units" page that describes the archives holdings by year. Please note that this list is in folder number order and not necessarily chronological order. You can increase the number of entries shown on the page by clicking on a drop down menu near the top right corner of the webpage.
- 4) On the "Units" page, click on any "reference number" or title for year of interest. You will be taken to a descriptive page, like a library catalog card entry, for that register. From this "Units" page, you should notice the menu bar adds an option for "digital scans" to the right of the red arrow saying "units". Click on "digital scans", and you will see the images. Use your JRI-Poland search results as a guide to year and Akt (record) numbers to help you find the record image(s) for your family.

The following are lists for the towns online so far eg. Go to Bychawa, Lublin gubernia website. On page 2, go to 1878. Click Digital copies in which there are 73 BMD scans including indexes. On file #4 click the enlarge icon at the bottom right of the scan beside 'Z'. On the left of the image are two controls. Tools allow magnification beside the magnifying glass icon with +/- . Putting mouse on Preview control one can drag to any part of the image. Previous/Next is found at the top left and to right of the scan. More detailed instructions may be found at: http://www.jri-poland.org/help/NDA_Guide.pdf

Brzeziny, AP Białystok (Sokoly, Tykocin)

AP Kalisz (Wierusz)

AP Lublin (Baranow, Belzyce, Biala, Biskupice, Bobrowniki, Bychawa, Chelm, Chodel, Czemierniki, Dubienka, Firlej, Glusko, Gorzkow, Grabow, Hrubiescow, Irena, Izbica, Jozefow, Kazimierz, Koden, Komarow, Konstantynow, Krasniczyn, Krasnymstaaw, Krylow, Kurow, Lubartow, Ryki)

AP Piotrkow Trybunalski (Belchatow, Kamiensk, Opoczno, Piotrkow, Przedborz, Radomsko, Rozprza, Sulejow, Sulmierzyce, Szczercow, Tomaszow Mazowiecki, Ujazd)

AP Piotrkow Trybunalski in Tomaszow Mazowiecki (Bedkow, Brzezina, Inowlodz, Jezow)

AP Poznan in Konin Dabie (pow. Kolski) (Izbica Kujawska (pow. Kolski), Kleczew (pow. Koninski), Klodawa, Kolo, Konin, Pyzdry (pow. Wrzesinski), Slesin (pow. Koninski), Slupca, Sompolno (pow. Kolski), Zagorow (pow. Slupecki)

Przemysl 1790-1909

Sieniawa 1869-1887, 1891-1900

Continued on page 5

JRI-Poland Search Results - continued from page 4

Strjy 1858-1871, 1877, 1879-1881, 1889, 1894-1917

Posen

Gen.Baza websites, Album contents: *AP_Grodzisk* <http://metryki.genbaza.com/>

eg. Click on Belsk. One sees URL's for 1808-1871 births (including Alegata).

Belsk, Belsk CD, Biala Rawska, Biala Rawska moj (jewish records), Boglewice, Boguszyce, Borzencin, Brochow, Brwinow, Brzeainy, Brzeziny moj, Brzozow, Bledow, Blonie, Choinata, Chojnata aneksy, Czerwinsk, Drwalew, Gizyce, Gora Kalwara moj, Goszczyn, Grodziec, Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Gluchow, Izdebno, Ilow, Jasieniec, Jazgarzew, Jeruzal 1877-1908, Jeziorka, Kamion, Kampinos, Kaski, Kazun Polski, Kielpin, Kurzeszyn, Leoncin, Leszno, Lewiczyn, Lipce, Lipie 1826-1875, Lomna, Lutkowka, Lutowka, Makow, Michalowice 1826-1861, Michalowice, Mikolajew, Mistrzewice, Mogielnica, Mszczonow, Mlodzieszyn, Nadarzyn, Nowy Dwor, Ojrzanow, Osuchow, Pawlowice, Pecice, Piaseczno, Pieczyska 1808-1825, Pomiechowo, Poprawki, Prazmow, Promna, Przybyszew, Pszczonow, Radziejowice, Raszyn, Rawa, Rembertow, Rokitno, Rybno, Serock moj, Sierzchowy, skierniewice moj, Sobikow, Sochaczew, Szymanow, Slomczyn, Tarczyn, Trojanow, Warka, Wieliszew, Wilkow, Wiskitki, Worow, Wrociszew, Zakroczym, Zbikow, Zdzary, Zyrardow

HARTLEY NATHAN & CLIFFORD GOLDFARB:

Two Lawyers, Authors, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle experts and JGS Toronto Members!

by Judy Kasman

The cover of the September 2013 issue of *Canadian Lawyer* magazine boasts a photo of our member, lawyer Hartley Nathan, in his best Sherlock Holmes-ian attire. The magazine features an article by Jennifer Brown entitled "The Penang lawyer" which relates Nathan's love of all things Doyle.

Nathan and fellow JGS Toronto member and lawyer Clifford Goldfarb have written a new book to be launched this fall: *Investigating Sherlock Holmes – The Jewish Connection and Other Inquiries*. The article states: "Together, Nathan and Goldfarb have written nine papers on the Holmes-Jewish connection, which is the basis of their new book."

In the September 2008, issue of *Shem Tov* (Nov. XXIV, No. 3). p. 12, there was an article written by yours truly setting out Nathan's thesis regarding Jewish references in the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

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Editor's note: To refer to previous issues of *Shem Tov*, to go www.jgstoronto.ca, select Newsletters, then select Back Issues, where you can search by name, author or date.

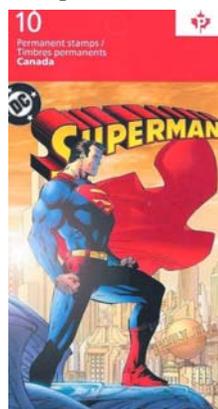
Truth, Justice & The Canadian Way

by Judy Kasman

Superman, the original comic book superhero, was created seventy-five years ago by two Cleveland, Ohio, Jewish high school students, Jerry Siegel (writer) and Toronto-born Joe Shuster (artist). Shuster had lived in downtown Toronto, attending Lord Lansdowne Public School, and moved to the United States at the age of 10. It is thought that *The Daily Planet*, the newspaper where alter-ego Clark Kent worked, was named after the *Toronto Daily Star*, a newspaper that Shuster sold as a boy.

The iconic character of Superman has lived on through the years in comics and in movies.

The Canadian connection to this legendary hero has been recognized in several ways. A Toronto street in the King & Dufferin area is named "Joe Shuster Way". In addition, this September, Canada Post unveiled five Superman postage stamps and the Royal Canadian Mint introduced seven commemorative Superman coins.



Superman #204 (2004)
Drawn by Jim Lee

Hamilton Project Tells Stories of Jewish Working Families

Working Family Stories and Treasures of the Hamilton Jewish Community is a workshop-based community arts project designed to tell the stories of Jewish working families and how they built a community in Hamilton over the last century. The project was delivered in schools, seniors' homes and community centres in 2011-2012. Participants (of all ages) attended a series of workshops in which artists led them from researching their family history to expressing their favourite family stories in creative ways.

All artwork was exhibited at participating locations and at a city-wide city held at Hamilton's 'you me gallery' in October 2012.

The website for the Hamilton Project, filled with many stories, photos and multi-media artwork, was launched on June 23rd. Go to <http://wfst.ca/>

BRANCHING OUT

by Elaine Cheskes

New Acquisitions to the JGS Toronto Library Collection at the Gladys Allison Canadiana Room, North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, 6th floor, Toronto

1. JGS 361.740922713541 GOL
Book of Life: A Decade of Stories. Edited by Bonnie Goldstein and Jackie Shulman. Toronto: Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto, 2012.
2. JGS 968.004924 ISS
Jewish Migration to South Africa: Passenger Lists from the UK. vol. 1. 1890-1905 vol. 2. 1906-1930. Edited by Saul Issroff. Cape Town: Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, University of Cape Town, 2008.
3. JGS 968.004924 NEW
Jewish Migration to South Africa: The Records of the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter, 1885-1914. Edited by Aubrey N. Newman, et al. Cape Town: Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, University of Cape Town, 2006.
4. JGS 971.3541004924 KAY
Only Yesterday: Collected Pieces on the Jews of Toronto. Benjamin Kayfetz and Stephen A. Speisman. Edited by Bill Gladstone. Toronto: Now & Then Books, 2013.
5. JGS 325.71 THO
Pier 21: An Illustrated History of Canada's Gateway. Alexa Thompson and Debi van de Wiel. Halifax, NS: Nimbus, 2002.
6. JGS 929.1072 2010 BUR
Starting Out In Genealogy. Ruth Burkholder. 2nd ed. Milton, ON: Global Heritage Press, 2010.
7. JGS 296.60971 GLA
The Story of Beth Lida Forest Hill Congregation: A Toronto Synagogue's First Century (1912-2012). Bill Gladstone. Toronto: Now & Then Books, 2012.

Only Yesterday: Collected Pieces on the Jews of Toronto

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Ben Kayfetz and Stephen Speisman mix history and nostalgia in these 18 evocative pieces about Toronto's old downtown Jewish community.

Kayfetz's articles include an informative piece explaining the meanings of the names of many local synagogues, recollections of the city's once-influential Yiddish press and an assortment of biographical sketches of pioneers, prizefighters, community leaders and rabbis. He also chronicles how discrimination against Jews in the various professions turned to acceptance in the 1950s and 1960s as an increasingly cosmopolitan city became more open to minorities.

Speisman's articles include a primary essay on the vanished downtown neighbourhood of St. John's Ward where thousands of immigrant families settled upon arriving in the city a century ago. He also supplies a history of the once-vibrant Yiddish theatre in Toronto as well as profiles of Benjamin Brown, the city's first Jewish architect who designed many landmark buildings.

Only Yesterday presents an unprecedented number of photos of former Toronto synagogues that have either been demolished or converted to other uses; many were taken by Speisman and have never been printed before. Other sources of photos in the book are the City of Toronto Archives, Ontario Jewish Archives, Ontario Archives and various private collections.

Through the compilation of articles by Kayfetz and Speisman, Bill Gladstone, editor and publisher of Now & Then Books has skillfully created a rich and colourful history of Jewish Toronto in a bygone era. *Only Yesterday: Collected Pieces on the Jews of Toronto* may be ordered from Now & Then Books: www.nowandthenbookstoronto.com

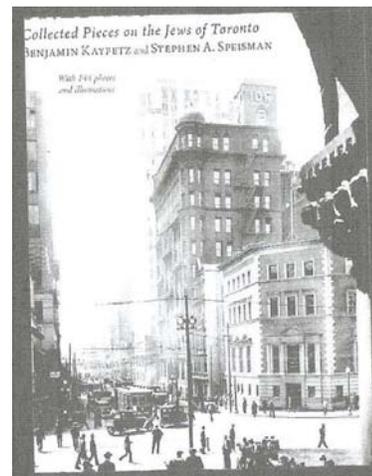
NEW MEMBER

JGS Toronto is very pleased to welcome
as a new member:

Mary Auerbach Rykov

HELP WANTED TO INDEX *SHEM TOV* ARTICLES FOR WEBSITE

Training provided.
Please write to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca or
call 647-247-6414.



The Jews of Cochin, India

by Judy Kasman

In the article “Quixotic quest to save homeland” which appeared in the September 8, 2013 *Toronto Star*, author Debra Black tells of two Toronto-area men, both born in the state of Kerala, India, who have joined forces to preserve the history of the Jews of Cochin. Kenny Salem is the grandson of A.B. Salem, an influential Indian-Jewish 20th century politician; Bala Menon, an artist and journalist, is Hindu.

The Jewish community in Cochin (in the state of Kerala) is over 500 years old and once boasted a thriving Jewish community; now there remain but 8 elderly Jews, including Kenny Salem’s parents. The only functioning synagogue Cochin is the grand Pardesi synagogue which is visited by tourists and hosts services on the holidays. Black writes:

Their combined efforts to preserve the story of the Cochini Jews are perhaps quixotic, but the two are determined....Their first effort has just been published: a social history of the community’s cuisine called Spice and Kosher: Exotic Cuisine of the Cochin Jews, by Menon, Salem and Essie Sassoon, another Cochini Jew who lives in Israel... Next up is a history of the community: its roots, its growth and its demise.

Menon ...also plans to write a biography of Salem’s grandfather, Abraham Barak Salem. In the early 20th century, he helped break the colour barrier that had been imposed by the Portuguese when they colonied Kerala hundreds of years before, differentiating between member of the Jewish community based on skin colour, and thus creating the ‘black Jews.’

Meanwhile, Salem and a cousin in Los Angeles have set up a trust fund to help administer and keep the community’s last synagogue open. The dream is ‘to keep it as a Jewish place in Kerala for nay Jew to come and Pray,’ says Salem. ‘They’ve appointed a couple of people who live there who are non-Jewish who have grown up with us’ to look after the synagogue once no one in the community is left.”

You can visit Menon’s blog, jewsofcochin.blogspot.ca

Excerpts from “Quixotic quest to save homeland” reprinted with the kind permission of the *Toronto Star*.

Announcements From Library and Archives Canada

Library and Archives Canada Website Posts 1921 Canadian Census

The 1921 Canadian Census is now available to researchers <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx> (Editor’s note: Must subscribe to *ancestry.ca*, which is free at public libraries). The census was taken on June 1, 1921 and covered 8.8 million people. Information for the census was collected on the following five subjects: population; agriculture; animals, animal products, fruits not on farms; manufacturing and trading establishments. Canada has a 92-year privacy requirement.

~*~

Library and Archives Canada and Canadiana.org partner on digitization, online publication of millions of images from archival microfilm collection

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and Canadiana.org have strengthened their long-standing partnership to considerably increase access to Canada’s documentary heritage by way of a large-scale digitization partnership involving about 60 million images from numerous collections. Over the coming years, this partnership will triple LAC’s digital content on the Web, and allow Canadians to access tens of millions of additional images regardless of where they live, at no charge.

Canadiana.org is a not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to building Canada’s digital preservation infrastructure and providing the broadest possible access to Canadian documentary heritage. Members of Canadiana.org include a Canada-wide network of public and research libraries that share tools and capacity, lead innovative open-access initiatives, and plan the future of digital preservation in Canada.

LAC’s 10-year agreement with this longstanding partner covers the digitization, indexing and description of millions of personal, administrative and government documents, as well as land grants, war diaries and photographs. There will be no change for those Canadians who wish to access these collections at LAC.

Canadiana.org will also transcribe millions of handwritten pages, and create related descriptions. Enhanced search tools facilitating access to these records will be available to Canadians free of charge at LAC, as well as at hundreds of subscribing libraries in regions across Canada. For a small monthly fee, Canadians will also be able to use the enhanced tools online to conduct advanced searches without leaving home.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE - Letters Home by Lil Blume

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

In February, 1945, my uncle George Halpern wrote a letter to his father in Ottawa. The letter begins: “A few hours ago I returned to my base in Glasgow from nine days’ leave in London. I have great news of especial interest to you.” He had located my grandfather’s family in wartime London.

My two uncles, George and Abe Halpern, were in the Canadian navy during World War II. Before they headed overseas, my grandfather, Reuven Meyer Halpern, gave each of them a list of family members living in London. Upon finding a relative on the list, my uncles were told to say, “I am the son of Meyer Halpern from Warsaw who lived in Aunt’s house on Commercial Street in 1909.”

There were no details of who this “aunt” was. Was she a sister of his father or mother or even an aunt through marriage? He instructed my uncles to find the families of Israel and Beila Metz and Avram and Rachel Brilliantstone.

Who are the Metzses and Brilliantstones who sheltered my grandfather, a 26-year-old revolutionary, in 1909?

My grandfather was captured and sent to Siberia after the failed Russian uprising of 1905. He escaped by sleigh and found his way to Finland. From there, he went to England, joined a British shipping company, and went to Africa.

Why would a Polish Jew from Warsaw, fluent in several European languages, go to England?

This letter explained: he had close family, an aunt in London who could help him. His request to his sons to find the Metzses and Brilliantstones was evidence of his fondness and concern for them.

He provided my uncles with no addresses, assuming correctly that between 1909 and 1941, the families had moved on from the Jewish immigrant neighbourhoods of East London. Once in London, my uncle simply looked in the phone book. Uncle George’s letter describes meeting Hilda, Mitzy, Becky, and Kitty Metz, by then middle-aged with children. They remember meeting my grandfather in 1909 when they were young women. My uncle wrote: “Becky was so excited and delighted to find her name on the list. ‘He remembered me all these years! He remembered ‘Becky’....!’ She evidently thought a great deal of you. She told me how for years afterwards, her mother, Beila Metz, would always say: ‘Myer said... (this) and Myer said (that)...’ Becky says you were so clever, so brilliantly clever...and, even as a child, Becky admired clever men.”

In his letter, my uncle also reports, “your first cousin Leah is dead. Your Aunt Mulkie is dead. Keila is dead,” and A. Brilliantstone was very sick, in hospital with no hope for recovery; however his wife Rachel was well.

By the time I found this letter, Uncle George was dead. I asked Uncle Abe how we were connected to the Metzses or the Brilliantstones, as he had also searched for them on a different occasion, but at age 85, he could not remember. No other living relative had ever heard of them.

Enter Catherine Youngren, President of the Jewish Genealogical Institute of British Columbia. Catherine and I had connected through the workshops I hold in Vancouver on writing

Jewish family stories. I told her about the mysterious family members in England, and Catherine responded, “I am always up for a genealogical challenge – please send me a copy of the letter.”

Catherine’s own particular research is focused on the UK, and especially East End Jewish London, so if anyone could discover the family connection from Uncle George’s letter, it would be her.

First, she carefully reviewed the letter, and did some initial diagrams that started to illustrate the connections between the individuals mentioned in the letter. Then she concentrated on the surnames, METZ and BRILLIANTSTONE. Beginning with BRILLIANTSTONE, the most unique of the two surnames, she checked the 1911 UK Census on the “findmypast.uk” website, and immediately found Abraham and Rachel and three of their children still living at home. The census page also noted that Rachel and Abraham had a total of 9 children, but only 3 had survived into adulthood.

Checking both the 1891 and the 1901 UK Censuses, Catherine found no mention of the family and assumed that they probably arrived in the UK after 1901.

Then she did the same search for the METZ family. An “Israel and Bella Metz” first appear in the 1891 UK census. The 1911 (UK) Census shows that the Metz parents had had 13 children of whom 10 were still alive.

Referring back to Uncle George’s letter, and to the information she had gathered from the censuses, Catherine used “findmypast.uk” to find the births, marriages and deaths of the persons enumerated and noted. With marriage registrations, she was often able to move forward a generation or two hoping to discover living family members that I might be able to contact.

As with all genealogical research there were challenges. Catherine couldn’t always be sure she had found the right people. Some family members used their middle name rather than their first. In the case of the Brilliantstones, over time, some of the family elected to shorten the surname to “Brilliant” while others took “Stone.”

Catherine crosschecked the information she was collecting by using “ancestry.com” to check city directories, voters’ lists, marriage indexes, and passenger lists. She used the archival website for the London “Jewish Chronicle” to check for birth, engagement and marriage, and death announcements. She used the websites for the *London Gazette* and The British Newspaper Archives, looking for articles about family members.

On one occasion Catherine simply Googled the surname “Brilliantstone,” and discovered an article written at the end of the nineteenth century entitled, “Odd Corners on London; Diamonds in the Ghetto,” by Brian Bellasis. He writes about the six jewelry shops in Black Lion Court, and their “blaze of stones.” He comments that other shops and businesses in the Court are rather dingy, but, “only the milliner’s and the corset establishment of Mrs. Rachel Brilliantstone make any attempt to vie with the jewelers in matters of appearance.”

Continued on page 9

On a Personal Note - continued from page 8

Hatmaking work continued in the family as Uncle George wrote:

I called at Hilda Metz's neat hat shop on Grosvenor St. off Bond, (not far from Picadilly)... I was very much impressed with some of the beautiful women's hats she produced with her own hands whilst carrying on an intelligent and interesting conversation with me during the course of two or three hours.

There is no question that the Metzses and the Brilliantstones are related. Perhaps Hilda Metz began her millinery career in Rachel's hat store.

Late into her research, Catherine went back to ancestry.com, and searched "Brilliantstone" once more, this time checking the "family trees" section of the site. There were only two trees, both authored by a contact shown as "JAAlter." While searching the findmypast.uk, Catherine had found out that a granddaughter of Abraham Brilliantstone was named Judith Alterman. So Catherine decided to email "JAAlter," and ultimately we got in touch with each other directly.

But we still had no definite understanding of how we were connected.

Judith wrote me that she had once heard from her cousin Suzanne that her mother's mother came from "Haupens" – Data Point #1.

However Rachel Brilliantstone, Judith's grandmother, had the birth name of Klauser.

Then I found another war letter, an earlier one. It was written by my grandfather to my uncle Abe on April 7, 1944, and asks him to locate A. Brilliantstone, 34 Upper Tooting Park, London, SW 17.

My grandfather wrote, "His wife Rachel is my aunt Malke's daughter. Tell them that you are the son of Majer Halpern from Warsaw. Shloime's son."

Data Point #2: My grandfather wants the relatives to know that Abe is from Majer - *Shloime's son*. This strongly implies that the connection is through the Halpern branch. Shloime was the name of my great-grandfather referred to in one biography as the "Gaon and Tzadik, Reb Shlomo Halevi Halperin."

I speculate that Shlomo Halpern had a sister Malka, making Malka a "Haupen" or Halpern and my grandfather's "Aunt Mulkie." Malka married a Klauser and had a daughter, Rachel Klauser, who married Avram Brilliantstone and immigrated to England. Perhaps they brought her mother Malka with them. Perhaps that is what my grandfather meant when he wrote that he "lived in Aunt's house" – or maybe the aunt was on the Metz side. In any event, the mystery began to be solved with the discovery of Judith.

I can speculate endlessly of course. It seems from Uncle George's letter that in 1909, Meir fraternized quite warmly and closely with the Metz sisters. Was their mother Beila Metz, or her mother, another sister of my great-great grandfather, Shlomo Halpern? I will have to find more letters and the Metzses to solve that mystery.

Sharing great-great-grandparents with Judith Alterman may seem to be a pretty trivial connection, but I see it this way: Both my grandfather and Judith's grandmother found

their way out of the poverty and pogroms of Poland. They were able to leave before the destruction of European Jewry. They survived. Many of the family did not. We are connected through the help given to my grandfather in the early decades of the last century, and we are connected through the letters written 68 years ago.

My grandfather visited his aunt, Judith's great-grandmother, in 1909. Now it's up to me to visit Judith and solve more mysteries.

Brick Walls & Breakthroughs



JGS Toronto members featured at our June 19th programme.

From left: Moderator, Lucy Sadowski; speakers Linda Offman, Jerry Scherer, Elaine Cheskes



**Special thanks to member Ruth Chernia for the samples of Wissotzky tea, direct from Israel!!
(This related to her family tree!)**

Thanks for our moderator for organizing the event and to the presenters for their fascinating talks!

MISSING LINKS

I am from Colombia but my parents, Jonas Goldsztejn and Haiche Bursztyń, were from Poland. They survived by hiding in the forests close to their hometown of Siennica. My mother wrote a diary during the war with their story and I just took it to the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. where it is now exhibited. Doing research there, I found that my escaped Siennica with a group of friends and hid with them for a while.

One of their friends, Ben Shedletsky, came to Toronto and probably married and raised a family. I have been trying to get in touch with his family in Toronto but I have been unsuccessful. Do you have any information about Ben or his family?? I would love to talk to his son, daughter or whomever in his family and maybe fill in some of my (or their) blanks.

I still live in Colombia. I am the President of Zahor, an organization of Shoah survivors and children of survivors. I have recorded some of the survivors there, published a book about them, distributed 5,000 copies of Anne Frank's book, organized an exhibition, etc... We still have some survivors there, but not many. Only this year we lost like 6 of them...

I really appreciate your help as I have been devoting a lot of time and effort to try to understand what really happened to them and to the rest of the family.

Thank you in advance for your help

Estella Goldstein
Colombia



I am trying to determine if someone in your community might know my father or know if these pictures show that my father might have been a partisan fighter during WWII. The emails below provide some more detailed information about my father.

My father, Sam (originally Yehoshua or Shia) Weiger, was born in Lublin, Poland in 1921 to Abish and Rachel Weiger. He lived in Kovel (Kowel) Poland (now the Ukraine) in the 1930s. This area was known as the Volhynian region. He had a first cousin named Bronia Goldstein (later Bronia Hatfield – photo shows my father & Bronia) who ultimately escaped to Australia. My father left Kowel in the 1939-40 timeframe to join (he was recruited by) the Soviet army during the Soviet occupation. He remained in the Soviet Union until the war ended. I do not know what he did in Russia, but I assume he was involved in the war against Germany in some capacity. He ultimately returned to Poland, and then went to an American displaced persons camp in Salzburg, Austria. From there, he went to America and lived in Brooklyn, NY.

My father also had a brother Alex (Sanya) who was also recruited into the Soviet army once the Soviets occupied Kowel during the war.

I am trying to determine if there are any Holocaust survivors in Toronto that might recognize my father or the outfits that he is wearing. Based on some coordination with other experts, some think that my father might have been a Jewish police officer at a displaced persons camp in Salzburg, Austria.

Also, do you have any connections to Jewish organizations in Argentina? I have a picture of a woman my father befriended who might know more about my father. She left Poland and went to Argentina prior to the war.

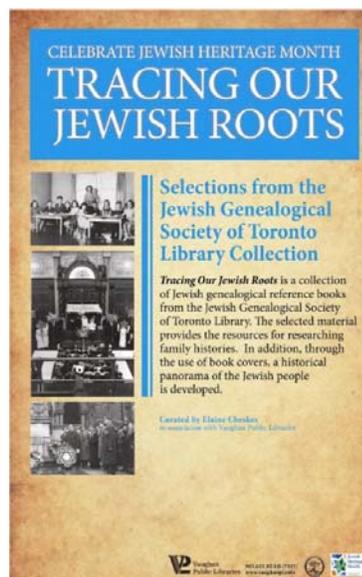
Thanks for any help you can provide.

Ben Weiger
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If you have any information for
Estella or Ben, please write to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca

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The Boston IAJGS Conference: A highlight of my genealogical year

by Marla Waltman, JGS Toronto member

I was excited to attend the 33rd International Jewish Genealogical Conference in Boston this past August. The Boston conference was just the second IAJGS Conference I had ever attended; my first was the excellent one held in Toronto in 2000. At the time I lived in Ottawa, so I was a regular participant rather than one of the many volunteers who are needed to make a huge conference, such as this, be successful.

The IAJGS Conference, sponsored by the International Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies, has become a much attended annual event by large numbers of Jewish genealogists from around the world. My time at this year's conference proved once again why it should be an essential part of any Jewish genealogist's year.

The most noticeable change from the Toronto Conference was the impact of technology. Rather than produce a huge print syllabus that was handed out to each attendee upon arrival, the Boston conference organizers created a comprehensive website that contained, among other things, a complete schedule for all conference programs, a Daily Planner, a link to basic conference information to aid planning a visit to Boston, and a Conference smart-phone App (mobile application). In addition, each participant received a memory stick in their conference bag, which contained all of the information on the website. The electronic program, which was constantly updated, also contained pdfs of the information sheets for most of the individual sessions. A participant could either print the background information, or load it onto his or her laptop, phone, or tablet for easy access during the conference.

The presence of mobile technology made conference attendance very different from 2000. While some attendees still prefer to take hand-written notes during sessions, a large number of others, of all ages and stages of genealogical skill, wrote their notes directly in the conference program on their smartphones, tablets, netbooks, and laptops. It was remarkably different from any other genealogy conference I have ever attended.

Another conference first was *IAJGS Conference LIVE!* which used video streaming technology to broadcast live from the Boston Conference. The technology allowed anyone in the world to "attend" the event. *LIVE!* broadcast approximately 50 sessions over five days from the Boston venue and participants (who joined for a fee) were able to view the sessions in real time via an Internet connection to their computer, tablet or smartphone. It's a pretty remarkable achievement and one that I expect will play a larger role in future IAJGS Conference planning. As I was present in Boston, I didn't sign up for the broadcast, but should it be continued, it will be a viable option if I cannot attend a conference in future years.

The number and scope of presentations at the conference reflected the growth of Jewish genealogy and the increasing skill development of Jewish genealogists. There were more than 250 programs, and over 1,200 participants attended from 17 countries. In addition, there were excellent films screened

every evening, along with other programs, tours, computer workshops, a resource centre and library, meals with speakers, and BOF (Birds of a Feather) and SIG (Special Interest Group) meetings that filled each day from 7:00 am to 10:30 pm.

The huge range and choice of events were often overwhelming and it was hard to choose between up to ten competing sessions in each time slot. I rarely made it out of the hotel, other than a couple of times to meet other participants for dinner, so the conference could have been held in Istanbul, rather than Boston, as I squandered the opportunity to see the city. But I was there for the conference and I wanted to make the most of it!

One aspect of the conference that I appreciated was the range of sessions that covered research methodology, historical context, regional genealogy, as well as specialized subjects such as DNA testing and computer software. As my family came from Poland and Ukraine, I was able to attend a number of sessions by highly skilled researchers and historians that increased my understanding of the history of those countries, their cartography, languages, and the new archival collections that are increasingly becoming available. As a person who has trouble managing paper and data, I also appreciated the sessions on computer programs, clutter, dealing with photographs and paper, etc.

Finally, of course, one attends an IAJGS Conference to meet other genealogists, to learn from their experience, and one always hopes, to meet others with an interest in the same town or family. I got lucky in both instances. I met a fellow with whom I had exchanged emails over 10 years ago who, now that we are both further along in our research, turned out to be a distant cousin. We shared our trees and he hooked me up with family in Toronto whom I had never contacted before. I also was happy to meet others from one of my towns, with whom I shared information, and who encouraged me to develop Kehila-Links for my other family shtetls in Podolia.

A suggestion I would give to anyone attending an IAJGS Conference is to plan one's time carefully and to contact others prior to the event. I would have liked to have planned more meetings or meals together to ensure that we could meet at the conference. I found that there were so many people in attendance, and such a short time available, that it wasn't always possible to meet everyone whom I would have liked to.

Overall, my attendance at the Boston Conference was a huge success. I enjoyed myself, met many interesting people, learned a lot, and improved my understanding of what I need to do to be a better genealogist. What more could I ask for?

JGS Toronto Co-Sponsors Holocaust Education Week Closing Programme

More than 3 Million Voices: The Museum of the History of Polish Jews
SATURDAY NOV 9th at 7:30 PM
Shaarei Shomayim Congregation
470 Glencairn Avenue | Toronto | 416-789-3213

2013 marks the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The new Museum of the History of Polish Jews, built on the site of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, honours and celebrates 1,000 years of Jewish life and culture in Poland and speaks for more than 3,000,000 Jewish lives and culture and history lost during the Shoah.

"The Museum is in a geographical place of memory; you cannot be in the place of the Ghetto Uprising and not feel something very deep. There were 1,000 years of Jewish history in Poland; 1,000 years of activity, of extraordinary aspirations and endeavors and dreams and metamorphoses; 1,000 years, which must be studied and communicated and shared." —
Elie Wiesel

Keynote speaker **Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett** is Program Director of the Core Exhibition. She will discuss the museum's mission, supported by video, architectural images and developing displays.

Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is a scholar of Performance and Jewish Studies and a museum professional. She was born in Canada during the Second World War to Jewish immigrants from Poland. Professor of Performance Studies at New York University since 1981 (and distinguished University Professor since 2002), she is best known for her interdisciplinary contributions to Jewish studies and to the theory and history of museums, tourism, and heritage.



Closing Night will also include a candle-lighting ceremony commemorating the 75th anniversary of *Kristallnacht*.

Co-sponsored by the Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada and the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland.

Co-presented by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto and the North American Council for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.

The program is generously co-sponsored by Joseph Gottdenker in memory of the Gottdenker and Zuckerbrot families who perished in the Holocaust, and by Aaron & Joyce Rifkind.

We are grateful for the generous support of the Bank of Nova Scotia Bathurst/Sheppard Branch and Martin and Eleanor Maxwell, in memory of his sisters, Josephine and Erna Meisels, who died in the Holocaust.

❧

Holocaust Education Week: November to 3rd to 9th

See a comprehensive list of events at

<http://holocaustcentre.com/Programs/Holocaust-Education-Week-2013>

WITHOUT A PAST THERE IS NO FUTURE ♥ REACH OUT

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