JOWBR & THE GENEALOGICAL VALUE OF JEWISH BURIAL RECORDS

This was the title for JGS Toronto’s May 31st programme, a most fitting tribute to the memory of Allen Halberstadt z’l, JGS Toronto’s late Cemetery Project Coordinator. Nolan Altman of Long Island, who is JewishGen’s Vice President for Data Acquisition, gave a wonderfully informative presentation as a testimony to Allen’s contribution to JOWBR on behalf of JGS Toronto.

After introductory remarks by Kevin Hanit (who will continue Allen’s work on GTA cemeteries), Harvey Glasner and Les Kelman, Nolan’s presentation showed how to use JOWBR online; he also explained the importance of burial records in family research. He described the patronymic naming patterns in many cultures. He also showed what to look for on headstones, and gave numerous amusing (intentionally or not) examples thereof. We learned that there are about 2.4 million burial records presently at JOWBR from about 100 countries. For more about JOWBR, or to search Jewish burial records online, go to http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/

Nolan also talked about the importance of JewishGen’s Memorial Plaque project, which JGS Toronto has also become involved in. To learn more about this project, go to http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Memorial/

To volunteer for JGS Toronto’s efforts in recording either burials or memorial plaques (e.g. in synagogues), contact president@jgstoronto.ca.
IGRA Site Now Has Nearly 500,000 Records

The Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA) now has 440,000 records from 215 databases. They hope to reach the half-million mark in time for the annual conference in July. Its latest additions include files that deal with the illegal immigration to Eretz Israel from Atlit and the Central Zionist Archives and a 1939 deportation file from the Israeli State Archives.

IGRA has been approached by several municipal archives to help scan and index materials. They will need volunteers to help with this process. Their website also has a number of useful articles, many available to members only. Annual membership for non-Israelis is 120 NIS for Israelis and US$36 for others. Their site is at http://genealogy.org.il.

DIRECTORS OF JGS TORONTO

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<td>President</td>
<td>Leslie Kelman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:president@jgstoronto.ca">president@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Marla Waltman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vp@jgstoronto.ca">vp@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
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<td>Adena Glasner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:secretary@jgstoronto.ca">secretary@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>Paul Teitelman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:treasurer@jgstoronto.ca">treasurer@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Elaine Cheskes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:library@jgstoronto.ca">library@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Coordinator</td>
<td>Valerie Fox</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mentoring@jgstoronto.ca">mentoring@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Neil Richler</td>
<td><a href="mailto:membership@jgstoronto.ca">membership@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shem Tov Editor</td>
<td>Judy Kasman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca">shemtov@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Coordinator</td>
<td>Shelley Stillman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ststillman@jgstoronto.ca">ststillman@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Past President</td>
<td>Harvey Glasner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hglasner@jgstoronto.ca">hglasner@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>Gert Rogers</td>
<td><a href="mailto:grovers@jgstoronto.ca">grovers@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Administrator</td>
<td>Arthur Ryman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:comments@jgstoronto.ca">comments@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery Project</td>
<td>Kevin Hanit</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cemetery@jgstoronto.ca">cemetery@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Support</td>
<td>Kevin Hanit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Gella Rothstein</td>
<td><a href="mailto:program@jgstoronto.ca">program@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>Goodwill</td>
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<td>For Shem Tov</td>
<td>Judy Kasman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca">shemtov@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>Editor Emeritus</td>
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<td>Proofreaders</td>
<td>Isme Bennie</td>
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<td>Layout/Design</td>
<td>Sarah Gledhill</td>
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FROM NU? WHAT'S NEW?
The e-zine of Jewish Genealogy From Avotaynu
Reprinted with the kind permission of Gary Mokotoff, Editor
Volume 16, Number 17 | April 26, 2015
Canada celebrated National Volunteer Week from April 12-18 this year. Since this did not coincide with the publication of Shem Tov, our JGS Volunteer Appreciation Week was delayed until now.

Let us be frank: without volunteers we would not have a JGS. Our volunteers ensure that we have a framework to meet fellow genealogists and others involved with their family trees. Our volunteers ensure that we are kept well-informed with important genealogical information, using many methods and techniques. Our volunteers ensure that we have a “family” of like-minded people to support and help us. Our volunteers ensure that we have a presence in the Jewish community. Our volunteers ensure that we have cooperation with other genealogical and non-genealogical groups, such as the Ontario Genealogical Society (OGS), the Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation (PJHF) and the Ukrainian-Jewish Encounter (UJE). All of this supplements the hours we sit in front of a computer in our individual research efforts.

As stated on the National Volunteer Week website: “Let us recognize that a volunteer action is like a stone thrown in a lake: its effect has a direct impact. At the same time, like ripples, volunteer efforts reach out far and wide to improve communities. Undeniably, volunteers rock.”

Currently JGS Toronto has 25 volunteers. (I hope and pray that I have not missed anyone.) Think how much more we could rock if we had 50 volunteers!

So next time you meet up with one of our many volunteers, listed below, please say thank you. They deserve that and more.

(In alphabetical order)
- Isme Bennie: Proofreader, Shem Tov
- Ruth Chernia: Welcome Desk
- Elaine Cheskes: Board Member and Library Coordinator
- Stephen Creed: Goodwill Coordinator
- Valerie Fox: Board Member and Mentoring Coordinator
- Adena Glasner: Secretary and Board Member
- Harvey Glasner: Board Member; Immediate Past President; Member of Website Committee
- Kevin Hanit: Cemetery Project Coordinator and A-V Support
- Judy Kasman: Board Member; Editor, Shem Tov; creator of programme flyers
- Michael Kelemen: Blog Administrator and Welcome Desk
- Leslie Kelman: President and Member of Program Committee
- Simon Kreindler: Member of Program Committee
- Arlene Lax: Tribute Cards
- Ruth Mallin: Member of Program Committee
- Ellen Monheit: Potential Member Outreach
- Linda Offman: Member of Program Committee
- Neil Richler: Board Member; Membership Coordinator; Facebook Administrator; Member of Website Committee: sender of emailed notices of events
- Gert Rogers: Family Finder Coordinator and Past President
- Gella Rothstein: Coordinator of Program Committee
- Arthur Ryman: Website Administrator
- Shelley Stillman: Board Member; Website Coordinator; Past President
- Paul Teitelman: Treasurer and Board Member
- Carolynne Veffer: Fielding emails sent to info@jgstoronto.ca; Proofreader, Shem Tov; Past President
- Marla Waltman: Vice President; Twitter Account Administrator; Member of Website Committee
- Henry Wellisch: Board Member and President Emeritus; Editor Emeritus, Shem Tov

Wishing all of you an enjoyable summer and looking forward to seeing you at JGS Toronto programmes this fall!

Les Kelman
President, JGS Toronto
president@jgstoronto.ca

FROM THE PRESIDENT
JGS Toronto’s Volunteer Appreciation Week

At the Ramada Hotel, Jerusalem
Visit www.iajgs2015.org for details and registration
We wish those attending the Conference a wonderful experience!

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

Jeff Gorewich • Allan Kosciuszko
Tamara Lohr
UPCOMING EVENTS
At Temple Sinai, 210 Wilson Avenue, Toronto, unless otherwise stated.
Doors open 30 minutes prior to events

Wednesday, June 17th, 8 p.m.
Our Annual Brick Wall and Breakthroughs
Come hear JGS Toronto members:
Linden Rees: Finding Delia: A Twenty-Five Year Search
Judy Kasman: What I Have Learned from a Lithuanian Internal Passport File
David Price: JRI-Poland’s Latest Towns Added During the Past Year
Jacob Shapiro: Preparing for a Trip to Belarus

Wednesday, September 30th, 8 p.m.
My Trip to Lithuania and Latvia
Speaker: Jo-Ann Goldwater

Wednesday, October 21st, 8 p.m.
Using Yizkor Books in Researching Your Family History
Speaker: Myrna Levy

Sunday, November 8th – Two Holocaust Education Week Programmes
1. Speaker: Henry Wellisch at Vaughan Public Library (Clark Avenue West & Bathurst), Daytime (time TBA)
2. Speaker: Anna Przybyszewska-Drozd, Associate Director of The Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center of Warsaw, at Lodzer Centre at 5 p.m., presented jointly with Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada

Wednesday, November 8th, 8 p.m.
The Story of Rhea Clyman
Speaker: Jars Balan

Wednesday, December 9th, 8 p.m.
Pictorial History of JGS Toronto (on the occasion of its 30th anniversary)
Speaker: Elaine Cheskes
Sherlock Holmes: The Jewish Connection
Speakers: Hartley Nathan and Clifford Goldfarb

Visit www.jgstoronto.ca for updates.

RECENT PROGRAMMES
On March 25th, John D. Reid of Ottawa engaged the audience with his talk, DNA Testing for Genealogy: Not Just For Men, explaining how the powerful DNA tests offered by 23andMe, Family Tree DNA and AncestryDNA can assist genealogical research, each in its own fashion.

On April 29th, Prof. Erica Lehrer, from Concordia University, Montreal, spoke on the subject, Non-Jewish Poles and Jews Who Love To Hate Them, discussing Jewish heritage revival in Poland, which elicited both positive and negative views from the audience. This programme was co-sponsored by the Polish Jewish Heritage Foundation.

KEEP SHEM TOV RELEVANT!
Submit a personal story (up to 1,500 words) for On A Personal Note. And send in:
• helpful tips
• useful websites
• interesting anecdotes
• news of discoveries
• photographs
• travel information

Please email your submissions to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca.
The next deadline is September 1st.

June 2015 Sivan-Tammuz 5775
MISSING LINKS

My family is now third generation Canuck but with Ukrainian roots and our family name “Gurbin” shows up in Israel during online searches.

It is very new for me to think that my family has a Jewish branch.

Perhaps in some of our family’s past Ukrainian history, people moved or returned to Israel.

-C. Luke Gurbin, Sarnia

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I have found a death record of a baby buried in Toronto in 1929 in a cemetery called “Little York Jewish Cemetery”.

However I can’t find any information about this cemetery. Do you have any information that can help me find this burial? Thanks very much.

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Estella Goldstein (right) of Colombia meets Judy Kasman in Toronto.
This is further to the article in the March 2015 issue of Shem Tov about Estella of Colombia connecting with Krzysztof Bielawski of Warsaw’s POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

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ter musicologist Ben Stonehill would go the Marseilles Hotel on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and ask people to sing. He eventually recorded over 1,000 songs sung in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian and Polish, on a wide range of subjects.”

This 1948 project is the subject of a May 16, 2015 National Public Radio (NPR) broadcast by Ravenna Koenig.

As Koenig reveals, Stonehill had a flooring business in Queens, but he also was a folklorist with a love of Jewish and Yiddish culture. Going to the lobby of a hotel where many refugees were housed, he captured the songs using a wire recorder. People sang songs in Yiddish, Russian, Polish, Czech and Hebrew.

“Humorous songs, bawdy songs, religious songs, Zionist songs, homelessness, home – and homelessness is a big category,” says sociologist Miriam Isaacs.

In 2006 Stonehill’s recordings were donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and they have been studied and digitized since.

The Stonehill Jewish Song Collection, at The Center for Traditional Music and Dance (so far consisting of 66 songs), can be heard at http://www.ctmd.org/stonehill-search.htm.

To hear and/or read Koenig’s entire story, go to: http://n.pr/1ADcdjN

“WHO ARE YOU? WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?”

This was the title of an Adult Education genealogical program at Beth Tikvah Synagogue on May 6th, presented by our member Myrna Levy.

In Myrna’s presentation, she spoke about the hows and whys of genealogy and specifically delved into the history of her father’s family, which came from the Galician town of Borszczow. She also talked about the clues that one can obtain from old photographs and Yizkor Books. This was the perfect occasion for Myrna to introduce her newly-published book, Shattered Stones, Scattered Seeds: The Story of a Shtetl and Family Who Lived There.

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES WALKING TOURS

Sundays, July 19th, August 16th & September 27th
All tours begin at 11 a.m., rain or shine.
Cost: $15 per person; $12 for students and seniors

Travel back in time to an era when Kensington Market was a thriving Jewish village teeming with kosher bakeries, synagogues, and social clubs. On this tour, Jewish Toronto’s past – biographies of its former inhabitants; the sounds; the smells; Yiddish language; religious, social, and political attitudes – is brought to life. Visits to the architectural gems that remain in the area today are supplemented by photographs from the holdings of the Ontario Jewish Archives (OJA) as vivid reminders of a once vibrant community.

Please contact the Ontario Jewish Archives to register, or to obtain further information: call 416-635-5391 or visit http://www.ontariojewisharchives.org/Programs/Walking-Tours

ELLIS ISLAND NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IMMIGRATION

To reflect its new mission, Ellis Island is now known as Ellis Island National Museum of Immigration. What distinguishes the new Museum from its previous incarnation is that it now also includes the stories of immigration prior to the processing center that opened in 1892 and after it closed in 1954. The new galleries, known as Peopling of America, opened on May 20th. See the details of the new exhibits at http://tinyurl.com/kpwuaxp

You can continue to search passenger lists at www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger
BRANCHING OUT
by Elaine Cheskes, JGS Toronto Librarian

YIZKOR BOOKS

Our sincere appreciation to our member, Sarah Faerman, for her donation of Dubossary Memorial Book to the Jewish Genealogy Society of Toronto’s Library Collection at the Gladys Allison Canadiana Room, North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, 6th floor, Toronto.

JGS 947.08 DUB


(See March 2015 issue of Shem Tov for Sarah’s story about the Dubossary Yizkor Book.)

To view the JGS Toronto Library’s complete collection of Yizkor Books, access our website: www.jgstoronto.ca; click Resources > click Library > click Subject file, > Control F > Yizkor Books

TORONTO REFERENCE LIBRARY
YIZKOR BOOK COLLECTION

The Toronto Reference Library (TRL), 789 Yonge Street, just north of Bloor Street, has purchased a selected series of Yizkor Books that are available on the 2nd floor in the Genealogy and Local History collection. The TRL list is arranged alphabetically by geographic name since the titles have slight variations.

Antopol, Belarus
Buczacz, Galicia
Czenstochow, Poland
Horodenka, Ukraine
Lyubcha and Delyatichi, Belarus
Orhei, Moldova
Podhajce, Ukraine
Ruzhinoy, Belarus
Yampol, Ukraine
Brzeziny, Poland
Ciechanow, Poland
Dzialoszyce, Poland
Jaslo (Yaslo), Poland
Novogrudok, Poland
Ostrow Mazowiecka, Poland
Rozniatow (Rozhnyatov) and environs, Ukraine

JEWISHGEN YIZKOR BOOKS IN PRINT CURRENTLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

JewishGen has made available fully-translated Yizkor Books in Print. These titles may be viewed online: www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor

Click: Yizkor Books in Print (6th section on header)

If you have a particular interest in any of the Yizkor Books in Print please indicate the titles and email: library@jgstoronto.ca

I will consider the purchase of these copies for JGS Toronto’s Library Collection. A five-book minimum order is necessary to purchase these books from JewishGen, and book prices vary. However, I do not want to duplicate those Yizkor Books that are in the Toronto Reference Library’s collection.

YIZKOR BOOKS: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, at Robarts Library (120 St. George Street) at the University of Toronto, has a large collection of Yizkor Books. The titles may be found by accessing its online catalogue: http://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca

The New York Public Library has a comprehensive digital collection on its website: http://www.nypl.org/collections/nypl-recommendations/guides/yizkorbooks

ANCESTRAL EVIDENCE – NAMES, PLACES, AND DOCUMENTS

East European Genealogical Society Seminar
August 1st in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Featured presentations include internationally renowned authorities – William “Fred” Hoffman (Houston, TX), Matthew Bielawa (Newington, CT), and John Pihach (Yorkton, SK).

Understanding Language Variations of East European First Names (Hoffman): Learn how to identify name equivalents in Latin, English, and eight European languages (Polish, Ukrainian, German, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian, and Lithuanian).

The How and Why of East European Place Name Changes (Hoffman): Discover many place names rendered in more than one language such as Polish, Ukrainian, and German.


Beyond Vital Records: Galician Documents of Genealogical Value from Poland and Ukraine (Pihach): Explore numerous non-vital documents from the archives in Poland and Ukraine.


Presentations and Lunch Cost Only $60 for EEGS Members; $65 for Non-Members! Register online at www.eegsociety.org/Seminar2015.aspx

Folklorama (Winnipeg, Manitoba) August 2 to 15, 2015, the largest and longest-running multicultural festival of its kind in the world. www.folklorama.ca/
LUZNA, POLAND – In October 1915, just days after giving birth to my father, my grandmother received a pink postcard in the mail. In a fine pencil-written script, one Bela Schwartz wrote the following, in Hungarian: “We regret to inform you that your husband, on the 2nd May this year in the district of Luzna (Galicia) was shot by enemy fire. Let his memory be blessed. He died for his country.”

A little over three years after my grandfather, Gabor Csillag, was felled by a Russian bullet on the Eastern Front of the First World War, the country he died for – the patchwork that was the Austro-Hungarian Empire – would be dismantled.

My sister and I decided last year we would be the first relatives to visit his grave – on the 100th anniversary of his death, to the very day.

My son, Gabriel, is named for my grandfather, and this story begins with a blotchy, sepia-hued photograph of Gabor that we placed on leave of absence after disciplinary punishment.” I would tell my son the story, the little I knew, until one day, he asked, “OK, but where is he buried?”

I had no idea. No one in my family did either, or had ever inquired. I suppose we believed he was interred in some unmarked or mass grave in central or eastern Europe. Who could know?

In 2012, with help from Hungary’s embassy in Ottawa, I contacted the Military History Institute and Museum in Budapest. Within days, I received a response from the archivist: “Your grandfather, Csillag Gábor, was a Honvéd [Homeguard] soldier and served in the Royal Hungarian 9 Infantry Regiment. He was buried in Luzna where you can find three (Nr. 120, 122, 123) military cemeteries. Your grandfather lies in the cemetery Nr. 120. The number of the grave [is] 130.”

Archives in Budapest and Vienna said they did.

Inquiries to archives in Vienna turned up Gabor’s army-issued “death card,” noting he was killed in the vicinity of Gorlice and Tarnow, towns in today’s Poland, and another document confirming the place of his burial.

Even more drilling down revealed that his trousers and coat were slate-Gray, his tunic was “pike grey,” his buttons were brass. There was no helmet.

All other documents, including draft and recruitment lists, I was told, were destroyed in Second World War bombings.

This is all I learned about Gabor Csillag: He was born in 1874 in the Hungarian town of Poroszlo, on the west side of Lake Tisza. His handwritten military service records show he was conscripted into an “Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment” in 1896 but “was placed on leave of absence after disciplinary punishment.” I would dearly love to know the reason.

He was, according to a cousin who’d heard stories, rowdy, fiercely anti-religious, and he once ran unsuccessfully for public office on the socialist ticket. Not a career military man, he became a carpenter and woodworker. He had 10 children, eight who survived infancy, and the last of whom – my father – was conceived, possibly, while Gabor was on Christmas leave from his unit in 1914. My father never met his father.

Here in southern Poland, in the former Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia, which today straddles Poland and Ukraine, First World War cemeteries dot the emerald countryside. The signs in them are faded but clean, the tombstones straight, the grass mown.

My sister Judy and I, fresh from Toronto, tramp through a wet meadow toward cemetery 120 in the village of Luzna (pop. 8,500), 130 kilometres southeast of Krakow.

No family member has ever done this. Gabor Csillag was killed in action on May 2, 1915. Today is May 2, 2015. I shiver slightly at the thought. Poor guy. Eight kids at home and he dies in some field at age 41.

A plaque greets the visitor: “Buried: 417 soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian Army; 27 in mass graves, 115 in individual graves. Cemetery designer: Jan Szczepkowski.” Such was the care afforded to the 400 or so war graveyards in western Galicia that prominent artists and architects were hired to design them.

We open the wooden gate. The hinges sing. The birds respond in the cool drizzle. We have a hand-numbered cemetery plan I found in my research.

There’s a problem.

There is no grave 130. In fact, my map, which shows 142 graves, bears no resemblance to the cemetery before me, which holds just 52 tombstones. None is marked or numbered.

Our guide shrugs. “It was 100 years ago,” she says. But she offers to take the crestfallen Canadians to the local town hall, where a well-meaning clerk, his desk piled high with battle centenary booklets and posters, produces the exact same map I have and a list of soldiers buried in the cemetery, with my grandfather in grave 130.

He is joined by another official. Neither can explain the discrepancy.

I heave a sigh at the possibilities: My grandfather is somewhere in this cemetery or in the one erroneously labelled as no. 120, wherever it is. It’s unlikely he was disinterred and moved.

I’ll have to settle for coming close and chalk up the snafu to the fog of war.

Our final stop was a re-enactment of the battle in which my grandfather died, held in the nearby village of Sekowa. Before thousands of spectators standing five deep, re-enactors regaled in the uniforms of both sides and armed with rifles, cannon and artillery took to a huge, verdant plain, dug in and opened fire. Fake war

continued on page 9
is ear-splitting. I can’t imagine what the real thing sounded like.

Gabor Csillag died in a victorious battle on the losing side
and left much behind, including a wife and children who would
be persecuted for belonging to the very religion he had spurned.
As for me, I’ll continue looking.

Ron Csillag is a Toronto writer who has kindly granted
permission to excerpt his article, which appeared in full in the

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS FOR
TORONTO’S RABBI ERWIN SCHILD

May 31st was the date chosen to celebrate two special mile-
stones in the life of Rabbi Erwin Schild: the recent 70th
wedding anniversary of the Rabbi and his wife Laura,
and the Rabbi’s 95th birthday.

Rabbi Schild has a long history in Toronto, having served
from 1947 to 1989 as the spiritual leader of Adath Israel Congre-
gation (established in 1902 in downtown Toronto as the First Rou-
manian Shul Congregation Adath Israel), and as Rabbi Emeritus
ever since. Rabbi Schild was born in Cologne, Germany, was im-
prisoned in Dachau, and while studying at a seminary in England
in the early 1940s, was rounded up as an enemy alien and shipped
to Canada where he was interned with other German refugees in
a lumber camp. Upon his release, Schild was able to come to To-
ronto study and become ordained as a Rabbi. He has spent many
of his years in interfaith dialogue and has returned to Germany
times as a speaker and bridge-builder. (Read Rabbi
Schild’s personal account, The Very Narrow Bridge, co-published
by Adath Israel & Malcolm Lester in 2001.)

Many family members came from far and wide to attend this
special event, as did numerous congregants and community lead-
ers, including Walter Stechel, Consul-General of Germany. A new
chuppah, designed and sewn by shul-member Stephanie Kepecs
for her son’s recent wedding, was donated to the shul; it is now
known as the Schild Chuppah.

A NEW 1938 VILNA
VEGETARIAN COOKBOOK
by Judy Kasman

How can a cookbook from 1938 be new?, you might ask.
Well, Fania Lewando (born in Poland in 1887) owned a
vegetarian restaurant in Vilna, Lithuania where, in 1938,
she published a cookbook (in Yiddish, of course) called Vegetar-
ish-Dietisher Kochbuch: 400 Shpizen Gemacht Oisshlichlech Fun Grinsn,
which translates as The Vegetarian Dietetic Cookbook:
400 Dishes Made Exclusively From Vegetables.

Both Lewando and her husband perished in the Holocaust
and the cookbook apparently vanished as well. However, in 1995
a copy of the book was discovered at an antiquarian book fair
in England; it was purchased and then donated to YIVO in New
York. Two New York women happened upon the book at YIVO
and made it their mission to revive it, and YIVO subsequently
commissioned a translation. So now there is a newly-published
English edition of this book: The Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook –
Garden-Fresh Recipes Rediscovered and Adapted for Today’s
Kitchen, translated and modified for today by Eve Jochnowitz.
(Hardcover, Schocken Books. Available at Amazon)

As my mother was from Vilna, I was compelled to purchase
this book. Now that I have had a chance to see it, I must say that
it is much more than a lovely cookbook. The foreword, by noted
cookbook author Joan Nathan, and the chapter entitled Fania Le-
wando: A Lost Treasure From Jewish Vilna, written by Efraim
Sicher of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, give the book an
historical background and context. We get a glimpse into Vilna
pre-WWII. We also learn that Lewando was a strong proponent
of the benefits of vegetarianism. In one preliminary chapter, called
To the Housewife: A Few Words and Practical Advice, Lewan-
do describes, among other things, how fruit and vegetables are
healthier than meat and are also more humanitarian. Other sec-
tions, written by experts of the day, are called Why Fruits and
Vegetables Are So Important for the Organism and Vegetarianism
as a Jewish Movement. Lewando was truly a woman ahead of her
time!

The Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook also bears comments from
notable visitors to Lewando’s Vilna restaurant: there are trans-
lated excerpts from the restaurant’s Guestbook (e.g. artist Marc
Chagall, writer Yitzik Manger). Writer Yudel Mark of Kovno,
Lithuania & New York, wrote: “Everyone could be a vegetarian
once in a while.” The Guestbook comments are followed by “Bio-
ographical Sketches From the Guestbook”.

If anyone tries any of the recipes in The Vilna Vegetarian
Cookbook, please write to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca to let us know
the outcome!

Enjoy!

Post Script: While writing this article I received an email
from Howard Skolnick of London, England, stating that he is a
great nephew of Fania Lewando. He found online the March 2010
issue of Shem Tov in which I had written an article about YIVO,
specifically mentioning that the Yiddish cookbook by Lewando
had been donated to YIVO in 2009!
FROM THE YIDDISH BOOK CENTER, MAY 2015

ECHOES FROM THE BORSCHT BELT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARISA SCHEINFELD

Photographer Marisa Scheinfeld grew up in the area of the Borscht Belt, (part of the Catskill Mountains in New York State, given its moniker years ago due to the large number of Jewish hotels, clubs and resorts there).

“For much of the 20th century the Borscht Belt was a thriving vacation destination, home to hundreds of hotels and motels, from famed high-end resorts such as Grossinger’s and the Concord to modest bungalow colonies. In its heyday, the area was known especially for its nightlife, with top comedians and other performers appearing regularly there.”

Scheinfeld’s images depict what’s left of these once-flourishing establishments which started to lose their popularity in the early 1980s for a variety of reasons. An exhibit of her works, developed and curated by Yeshiva University Museum, is on display until the end of October at the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts. The photos can also be viewed online at: www.yiddishbookcenter.org/blog/15/03/echoes-from-borscht-belt

You can listen to an interview in which Scheinfeld talks about her project: http://bit.ly/1d7ViLb

WEXLER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Featured is a 2013 interview, in Yiddish with English subtitles, with Vilna-born Yale professor Benjamin Harshav z”l wherein he describes how, as a student of folklore, he collected curse words from the street vendors in Vilna in the 1930s. Harshav “…became an eminent translator and scholar of Jewish and Yiddish literature, history, and culture.” http://bit.ly/1PXfGjV

GENEALOGY BOOK FOR CHILDREN

My Family Tree and Me is a new book by local author and illustrator Dusan Petricic (published by Kids Can Press, for ages 3 to 7). The front of this picture book traces the father’s family while the back of the book (starting at the back) shows the mother’s, with the “Me” of the story, the boy, at the centre, showing a blend of the characteristics from the two sides.

A trailer for the book can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXUMZlMFHyk

If you have an event to include on the calendar, please send it to info@jgstoronto.ca and it will be forwarded to our website, blog, Twitter and Facebook accounts, and printed in Shem Tov as appropriate.
A TOUR OF THE PAST: HARBORD VILLAGE

by Isme Bennie, JGS Toronto member

For many local Jews, the downtown Toronto area bounded by College and Bloor Streets, Spadina Avenue and Bathurst Street, is the place where their families started out their lives in Canada. And for those wishing to explore those roots, Mapping Harbord Village: Stories of a Neighborhood, a recently-completed oral history project which examines the urban life of this very specific piece of Toronto, is an interesting and unusual resource.

Through interviews with more than 100 residents of the area, both present and former, both Jewish and non, life in the neighbourhood between the 1930s and 1980s is vividly recalled.

These oral histories highlight the people, cultures and traditions that have helped shape the area, and they recreate the sense of the neighborhood, with three common themes – foods, laneways and porches – prevailing.

All the material is now accessible online at www.harbordvillagehistory.ca. This interactive site includes the original interviews in their entirety, listed by name, and available in both audio and written form with a searchable index; short clips on a wide range of topics excerpted from the interviews, and photographs that enrich the memories of the Harbord Village experience.

But the project also has an additional element: a physical street presence!

The project came about when members of the Harbord Village Residents Association (HVRA) saw an opportunity to help both local inhabitants – and Torontonians in general – learn about an important era in the city’s history.

It was developed by the Harbord Village Residents Association in partnership with the Master of Museum Studies in the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. It also received a Trillium Foundation Grant.

The area of the project, today identified as Harbord Village, started off as poor, one through which successive waves of immigrants passed, and then moved on from once they accumulated the money that allowed them to do so.

In the 1920s it was very Anglo-centric, but it soon became the destination for a growing community of Jews who were emigrating from Europe to escape persecution and pogroms. The immigration restrictions imposed by the United States in 1924 would have also brought more Jews to the area.

The Jews generally established a distinct domicile, often determined by employment opportunities, as in the case of the Spadina district, a hub of the garment industry. They often formed the ethnic majority in the areas in which they settled, establishing within it their Jewish institutions. The First Narayever Congregation, subject of Sharoni Sibony’s recent talk, sits in the heart of Harbord Village.

In the 1950s the Jewish community started moving northwards, replaced in the area by Italian and Portuguese immigrants, then by Chinese Canadians in the 1970s.

“There was also a black community in the neighborhood that went way back and still exists” says Dr. Nicole Schulman, Coordinator & StoryPost audio editor of the project. “It was always a very mixed community, but you can see demographic shifts.”

“In the ‘30s, ‘40s and even ‘50s, many of the homes were divided into multiple units and could have as many as 11 people living in them” says Dr. Schulman, describing neighbourhood life of that era. “It was in the 1980s that gentrification started and many homes once again became single family dwellings.”

Mapping Harbord Village: Stories of a Neighborhood has garnered several awards. Interviewer Eleanor Levine was honoured at the MPP’s Second Annual Community Appreciation Event in October 2013. In November 2014, Heritage Toronto gave the History Project both the Community Heritage Award for the Toronto/East York area, and the Members’ Choice Award as voted by the Toronto Heritage membership. The History Project was also recognized at Rideau Hall in Ottawa with an honourable mention in the competition for the Governor General’s History Award for Community Programming.

continued on page 12
This May, one of the last elements was added: a series of “storyposts” – plaques mounted throughout the neighborhood containing sound clips from relevant interviews which can be listened to via a smartphone.

Spending a few hours on a nice day, walking around the area to listen to the posts, and perhaps to stop for a meal or a coffee in one of the many local eateries, could be an enjoyable and different way of immersing in the past and learning about the community that started its life in these very environs.

Following are the StoryPosts which mark focal points of the HRVA neighborhood history. More information is available on the website [www.harbordvillagehistory.ca](http://www.harbordvillagehistory.ca)

1. Albert Jackson – Escaping slavery & confronting prejudice
2. Chestnuts – When the cool toy was a chestnut
3. Black & White – Racism and integration
4. Boys of Major Street – The boys of WWII
5. Anti-Semitism – Cultural tolerance and intolerance
6. Chickens – Back when chickens were raised right here
7. Convent – Legacy of the Anglican Sisters of St. John
8. Discipline – Physical discipline once allowed at school
9. Fish – Visiting the popular Harbord fishmonger
10. Horses – The horses of our laneways and streets
11. Laneways – Hanging out: laneway social life
12. Milk – The delivery milkman and local dairies
13. Traffic Maze – The first traffic calming maze in Canada
15. Candyshop – Recalling the local candy shops
16. Cornerstores – The role of the corner grocery store
17. Movies – Cinemas before the age of television
18. Dating – Postwar dating in the Jewish community
19. Crowded Homes – Crowded homes: How many people shared a house
20. Drugstores – Local druggists as essential neighbours
21. Education – Careers for boys, marriage for girls
22. Shopping in Kensington – Fish, fowl and frenzy
23. Bakeries – Fresh bagels and bread.
24. Porches – The social life of the front porch

And as a footnote:
The neighboring and closely-related Kensington Market area has taken inspiration from the HVRA History project and has created its own set of oral histories General Eclectic: Oral Histories of Kensington Market, an online collection of stories from current and former residents.

For further information visit [www.kmhs.ca/general-eclectic/](http://www.kmhs.ca/general-eclectic/).


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**A JOURNEY THROUGH THE UKRAINIAN-JEWISH ENCOUNTER: FROM ANTIQUITY TO 1914**

The Ukrainian Jewish Encounter (UJE) is a privately organized, multinational initiative launched in 2008 as a collaborative project involving Ukrainians of Jewish and Christian heritages and others, in Ukraine and Israel as well as in the diasporas. Its work engages scholars, civic leaders, artists, governments and the broader public in an effort to promote stronger and deeper relations between the two peoples.

The UJE is sponsoring a community exhibition entitled *A Journey through the Ukrainian-Jewish Encounter: From Antiquity to 1914*. (It was shown from May 27th to June 7th at the Schwartz-Reisman Centre in Vaughan). The exhibition will then travel to Winnipeg for two weeks and return to Toronto, where it will be shown from July 7th to 19th at St. Vladimir’s Institute, 620 Spadina Avenue, just south of Harbord Street. Subsequently it will travel to Edmonton and Montreal.

For more information about the UJE, visit [http://www.ukrainianjewishencounter.org/](http://www.ukrainianjewishencounter.org/).

Editor’s note: You can see this exhibition when you go to Harbord Village to read the StoryPosts!

**HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL?**

Let our Mentoring Coordinator try to help you break through it! Contact Valerie Fox at mentoring@jgstoronto.ca.