

Jewish Genealogy Yearbook 2006

SIGs: United States

Early American SIG

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Membership: 300

Mission: We are dedicated to those whose ancestors were in the United States in the 1880 census. The purpose of this SIG is to be a resource for genealogists researching families who came to the US before the larger immigration wave of the 1880s and later. We share our knowledge and methods with each other by answering queries on the SIG mailing list as well as through links on our web pages. The web pages are organized geographically (by state) in order to give advice and information that is as specific as possible.

Update: Our Website was revamped thanks to Joshua Levy, our Webmaster. It gives information on how to look for relevant databases. It is especially helpful for those starting to find their early American ancestors. There are about 300 members who lived in or were working on their families in 35 of the 50 United States. Genealogists who are researching early Jewish immigrants to the US (pre-1880) have a different set of challenges and issues from the majority of Jewish Genealogy researchers. Unlike the majority, we do not have complete immigration records, nor living relatives who might remember "the old country" or what town the family came from. We may be 150 years or more removed from European roots. Most immigrants pre-1880 were spread out among small towns and rural areas in the south and midwest and blended in with their non-Jewish neighbors rather than collecting in urban areas and keeping their culture. For these reasons, many times our research methods and resources have more in common with standard American genealogy, but with a few twists.