



# JGSCV

## VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF  
THE CONEJO VALLEY AND VENTURA COUNTY

October, 2012

Volume 8 Issue 1

### PRESIDENT'S LETTER

JGSCV held the second part of the panel program: *Ethics, Sensitivities, Sensibilities and Property Rights-Part II*. It was as successful as the first panel held in January. We were privileged to have four excellent panelists providing insight from four perspectives (left to right in photo right). Jan Meisels Allen is at far right):

- Rabbinical by Rabbi Richard Spiegel, spiritual leader of Temple Etz Chaim
- Genealogical by Hal Bookbinder, past president of the IAJGS and founding member of JGSCV
- Journalistic by Adam Wills, senior editor of the Jewish Journal
- Legal by Sandra Malek, JGSLA president and an attorney.

A summary of the highlights is on page 10. Hal Bookbinder provided handouts of the ethics statements from the IAJGS, Association of Professional Genealogists (APG), Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) and the National Genealogy Society (NGS). They are posted on the JGSCV website [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) under meetings, previous- September 2012.



### NEXT MEETING

**SUNDAY, Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> 1:30-3:30 PM**

### *Jewish Surnames*

Join Warren Blatt, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of JewishGen as he explains the history of Jewish surnames including their origins, types and etymologies.

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The Jewish High Holidays is a perfect time to commemorate the names of those on your family tree who perished in the Shoah at Yad Vashem by filling out pages of testimony at the Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project <http://tinyurl.com/93zwrjp>.

As I mentioned in the last issue of *Venturing Into Our Past* we had unexpected genealogical experiences during our trip to Europe for the IAJGS conference in Paris. Previously, I wrote about the *Paris La Raffle Du Vélodrome D' Hiver*: First-time Exhibit Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the French Police Rounding up the Paris Jews. This month on page 6 is the article on Belgium - WWII Archives on Deportation of Jews and Gypsies Digitized and Opened by Kazerne Dossin. Both were very moving and both advise about records that are not generally known.

It is that time of year again for board nominations. Those members who are eligible to run for the board have received an email from Nominations Committee Chairman Hal Bookbinder. You must send your completed application to Hal by September 28. Applications are on our website: <http://www.jgscv.org/> on the home page and under "contact us".

October begins our 2013 membership renewal campaign. If you are a regular attendee and have not yet joined, your membership will help JGSCV to continue its excellent programs. For \$25/\$30 per year, you get 11 programs, socialization, education, and fun! Dues paid members who are present at the December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting are eligible for wonderful genealogical Chanukah gifts, which will include a world deluxe subscription to Ancestry.com, Find Our Past subscription, Fold3 subscription, Family Tree Maker, Legacy Family Tree, Roots Magic software and more. A membership/renewal form is on page 13.

It's hard to believe that we will be celebrating our 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary at our October 7 meeting! (Light refreshments will be served.) We could not have done this without **you**-- our members, and of course our meeting co-sponsor, Temple Adat Elohim. **Thank you!** I hope all of you will attend the program with Warren Blatt, managing director of JewishGen and a founding member and board member of JGSCV talking on Jewish Surnames: The History of Jewish surnames – Their Origins, Types, and Etymologies. Looking forward to seeing you then!

On behalf of the JGSCV Board of Directors, have a happy, healthy, and safe New Year! L'Shana Tova!

*Jan Meisels Allen*



### **ABOUT JGSCV . . .**

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County meets once a month, usually on a Sunday. Meetings are oriented to the needs of the novice as well as the more experienced genealogist. Members share materials, research methods and ideas, as well as research success or failures. Members have access to the JGSCV library located on special shelves at the Agoura Hills Public Library. Members also receive our monthly newsletter, which is circulated by email.

2013 dues are \$25.00 for a single membership and \$30.00 for a household unit. To join, please send a check in the appropriate amount payable to JGSCV and addressed to Helene Rosen at 28912 Fountainwood St., Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Obtain the new/renewal membership form on our website at [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) by selecting the membership button.

### **GENEALOGY FOR BEGINNERS IN AGOURA**

Our own JGSCV president, Jan Meisels Allen will be presenting a 'genealogy for beginners' lecture at the Agoura Hills Library (29901 Ladyface Court) on Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. You may contact the library for more information: 818-889-2278.

### **1950-2000 CENSUS**

JGSCV member Stephen Weinstein reports that census records to 2000 are available – for a price. The government offer searches for \$65 per person at <http://tinyurl.com/7jv82jk> (including 1950-2000). The fee includes a limited data transcript. A full schedule is available for 1910-1960 for an additional \$10.

### **GENEALOGYINTIME MAGAZINE ADDS MILLIONS OF RECORDS AND PHOTOS**

About 55 million U.S. records and 6 million more from Canada have been added to the database of GenealogyInTime Magazine. Many of these have been archived in North American public libraries. Also added are 14 million vital records from Central and Eastern Europe and 2 million passenger ship records. Begin searching at <http://tinyurl.com/3dzxxu2>

### **MORE ON DRANCY**

Follow up to last month's excellent article on Vel D'Hiver and Drancy by JGSCV president Jan Meisels Allen with a story and video of the inauguration of the Drancy Museum commemorating the Drancy Internment Camp where nearly 65,000 Jews passed through on the way to the death camps.

Video: <http://tinyurl.com/cmdeszq>.

Story: <http://wapo.st/POYWb4>

### **FAMILYTREEMAGAZINE**

FamilyTreeMagazine has created a Genealogy Conferences and Events Calendar listing local, regional and national genealogy events. You can see what's available here or wherever you may be traveling: <http://tinyurl.com/8robket>



# Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County\*

(JGSCV) (\*and surrounding areas)

The JGSCV will hold a general meeting, co-sponsored with Temple Adat Elohim, on Sunday, October 7, 2012 at Temple Adat Elohim 2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

**Come Celebrate JGSCV's 7th Anniversary!**



## The Topic: "Jewish Surnames"

### Origins, Types, Etymologies

Learn when Jewish surnames were first used in various countries, how they developed, and their transformation upon immigration. This presentation will dispel several common myths about Jewish surnames. Classifications of surnames will include: patronymic/matronymic, toponymic, occupational, artificial, religious, and acronyms. Discover which Jewish surnames are the most common in the U.S., Eastern Europe and Israel, as well as sources for learning more about your surnames and how they may be accessed.

**Speaker: Warren Blatt**, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief, JewishGen, ([www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org)), an affiliate of the Museum of Jewish Heritage and founding member and board member of JGSCV. In 2004, Warren received the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) Lifetime Achievement Award. He is the author of *Resources for Jewish Genealogy in the Boston Area*, and co-author of *Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy*. Warren has over 25 years of research experience with Russian and Polish Jewish records, and is the author of the "JewishGen FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions about Jewish Genealogy," as well as many other JewishGen InfoFiles.

**In honor of our 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary light refreshments will be served**

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County is dedicated to sharing genealogical information, techniques and research tools with anyone interested in Jewish genealogy and family history.

# JGSCV UPDATES . . .

**T**raveling Library categories A and B will be at the next meeting.

Please check the website for the books included in each category



(<http://jgscv.org>). To request a book that is not in either category, please email Jan Meisels Allen at least 5 days in advance of the meeting at [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org).

**T**HE SCHMOOZING CORNER will now be open 20 minutes before each meeting where

a knowledgeable JGSCV member will be available to



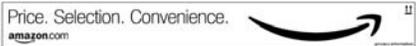
answer questions, offer direction and maybe even a solution to a brick wall or two. Hal Bookbinder will facilitate the Schmoozing Corner on Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>.

**R**alphs requires everyone to reregister every September for their community contribution program. Karen Lewy will be at the October meeting to help you register. IF you have a Ralphs card and are not yet signed up, Karen can help you, too. If you include JGSCV as your 'community', your groceries cost the same but Ralphs will send JGSCV a contribution. Last year only one in 10 JGSCV members were part of this program. Let's make that 10 of 10 next year! Contact Karen with questions: [Karen@jgscv.org](mailto:Karen@jgscv.org).

**T**his month's Five Minute Genealogy Hint on "The Port of Dreams: Ballinstadt Emigration Museum (Hamburg)" will be presented by Diane Wainwood.

**A** one-page genealogical questionnaire for grandparents to complete with their grandchildren appears on our website under the September meeting date. It was created by archives.com on the occasion of Grandparents Day.

**Y**ou can also help JGSCV when you shop at Amazon.com by simply entering the Amazon site from JGSCV's home page. Start at [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) and scroll to the bottom to click on the Amazon graphic (like the one below). This will take you to the same page you always start at – except JGSCV will receive a marketing fee at no cost to you.



**Correction:** The photograph on page 1 of the September issue had JGSCV librarian's first name misspelled- the correct spelling is Tammy Williams-Anderson. Also, included in the Highlights of the August program on page 11 of the August issue, the correct information should read: Tammy Williams-Anderson focused on keeping an open mind as one may not necessarily find what they were looking for—at first she did not know what she was looking at. She found her grandmother's name (and the grandmother's brother's name) as witnesses on a naturalization record for a sister's husband and also got the city she--the sister--was born in, in Russia, which was new information. Tammy found relatives on the census living in the same building and used revision (census) lists from JewishGen to help go back on her family tree.

# Belgium - WWII Archives on Deportation of Jews and Gypsies *Digitized and Opened by Kazerne Dossin*

By Jan Meisels Allen

“Kazerne Dossin was the antechamber of death. From here, 25,835 men, women, children, and senior citizens were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau between 1942 and 1944. This figure was composed of 25,484 Jews – almost half of Belgium’s registered Jewish population – and 351 Gypsies. The youngest deportee was 35 days old, the oldest 93 years of age. Of these 25,835 people, 576 escaped during the journey. 24,019 of the remainder would die: they were either gassed in Birkenau or died in the slave labour (sic) camps or during the subsequent death marches. Just 1,240 deportees – or less than 5% – returned to Belgium after May 1945. Thirty-two Gypsies were among the survivors. The transportation of over 25,000 Jews and Gypsies was a German crime, carried out by the Nazis. However, their plan could not succeed without the cooperation of:



- the Belgian civil service that, as a whole, principally accepted the registration of the Jews and within the framework of the law, cooperated with the occupier; and
- Belgian collaborating right wing parties and their paramilitary organizations who would present themselves as Jew hunters.

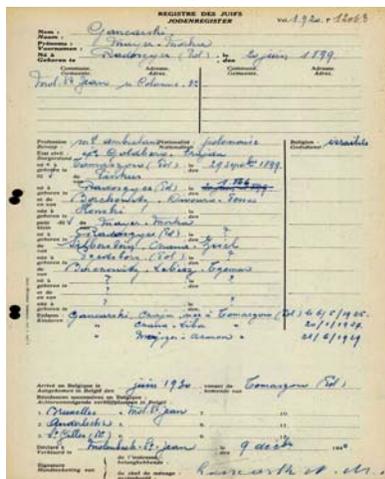
This cooperation strongly contributed to the end result: a death toll of 44% of the registered Jews. With this, the figures of the ‘Final Solution’ in Belgium lie between those of France (25%) and the Netherlands (80%). “<sup>1</sup>

Following the IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Paris this summer, Tom, and I travelled to Belgium—our first trip to this country. Our friends from Antwerp, Erwin Joos [who spoke to JGSCV in 2010 about the Eugene Van Mieghem paintings of immigrants leaving Antwerp for North America on the Red Star Line] and Nadine Trahe drove us to Brussels, and en route, they took us to Mechelen to tour the *Kazerne Dossin, Memorial, Museum and Documentation Center on the Holocaust and Human Rights*. When we arrived, we found the Museum closed—they are building a larger and newer Museum, which will open at the end of November. However, Director Ward Adriaens (below) was working in his office this Sunday and was most gracious and spent 90 minutes with us.

As a constitutional and parliamentary state since 1830, Belgium does not list the ethnicity nor religion of their citizens—therefore, the occupying German administration did not know which of the Belgian inhabitants were Jewish. However, by



the German ordered registration during WWII we now know that 90% of the registered Jews, including those deported from Belgium, were "foreigners" – those who fled to Belgium starting with the czarist pogroms to the economic, racial and politic migration in the 1930's from various eastern and south European countries. Of the 56,000 people the Nazi's had registered as "Jews", some 90% had to file a "foreign police report". In the



Page from the Jewish register, including parents and grandparents, by the Belgian municipality Sint-Jans-Molenbeek © Community of Sint-Jans-Molenbeek

three million files held by the Foreign Police (now conserved by Belgian General State Archives <sup>2</sup>) the Kazerne Dossin staff were able to trace back the files of 13,000 deported Jewish families. Supported by the Claims Conference <sup>3</sup>, Kazerne Dossin digitized some 600,000 documents. Forty percent of the deported 25,000 Jews were originally from Poland and then there were many from Germany, Hungary and other countries.

The Belgians were able to acquire the Nazi documents as the Nazi's left them behind when they fled after the Allies arrived in Belgium. The Allies liberated Antwerp-Brussels or the western part of Belgium shortly after landing in Normandy—the first week of September 1944. <sup>4</sup> The city of Mechelen was liberated on September 4.

Museum Director Ward Adriaens shared with us a power point presentation that depicts

many of the digitized documents that we would not otherwise have seen:

- Foreign Police files (600.000 documents on 13,000 families currently)
- 17 anti-Jewish laws that were published and posted
- Registration of Jews by Belgian municipalities (83,000 documents, 56,000 names)
- Registration of members of the *Judenrat* <sup>5</sup> (33.000 names)
- *Transportliste* (6.000 documents, 25.000 names)
- Collection of portraits of some 19,000 persons deported from Mechelen to Auschwitz

These were depicted by: digitized photographs, documents with important biographical information such as country of origin, occupation, birth dates, dates when they fled to Belgium, Nazi-required municipality lists of registered Jews, letters from collaborators telling the Nazis which Belgians were hiding Jews, information on the 3,500 children that were taken into hiding by the resistance, transport lists and much more. These records are digitized for conservation reasons, but are not on the Internet, nor will they be placed on the Internet to protect the living. They shall be accessible for the larger Holocaust scientific research institutions.

The information contained in the documents is important genealogically and historically. The documents include information on the place of birth, country of origin, occupation in Belgium, including over 20,000 photographs and more. The Museum digitized over 800,000 documents and has a second-phase project to digitize the Foreign Police files on "persecuted-hidden Jews" estimated to double the digitized documents over 5-years. With only three staff

people working on the project it is taking longer than some would prefer.

The German “Jewish policies” began in July 1940—one month after Germany invaded Belgium. In October 1940 the first of 17 anti-Jewish laws—that were promulgated through September 1942—emerged. These “laws” were published in every Belgian town so no public servant could say they did not know about the discriminatory measures taken against the Jews. (The list of the 17 “laws” is on the Museum website.)<sup>6</sup>



Anti-Jewish measure concerning the star of David (June 1, 1942) © Kazerne Dossin, Mechelen

The barracks at Dossin were opened in July 1942 as a collecting camp—located between Antwerp and Brussels—the cities where most of Belgium’s Jews resided. The railway line ran next to the camp—with the Nazi’s determining the location was “ideal” for the purpose of transporting the Belgium Jews to the east.<sup>7</sup> Deportation started when 12,000 Jews were ordered for so-called labor to Mechelen and told to bring a blanket and food. Only 4,000 of the 12,000 reported to Mechelen as they understood what was being told to them was not truthful. The Nazi’s then took action to capture by raiding and hunting the remaining Jews for the rest of the war. There are photographs in the Museum that shows that those who entered Mechelen fell in the hands of the SS, who took all their belongings. Once in Kazerne Dossin they were sent by 26 train transports to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the Kazerne Dossin, the conditions were horrid, including poor sanitation, brutality and overcrowding but nothing to be compared to what was waiting for them in Auschwitz.

October 2012

Many Belgians were horrified as to the way the Jews were being treated and helped hide Jews. Thirty-five hundred children were successfully hidden. This was organized by the *Comité de Défense des Juifs*, initiative of the most active resistance movement *Front de l’Indépendance*, mobilizing communists, left and right Zionists, liberal bourgeois women and

Sister Marie-Aurélié from the convent of the Most Holy Saviour in Anderlecht (Brussel) and the children Poler who were hidden there © Kazerne Dossin, Mechelen



many Catholic institutions. Most of the children were well accepted and loved by their foster parents. Some of the children were baptized and following the War some of them were “kidnapped” back in the Orthodox Jewish community.

The Museum website has examples of photographs and more historical information and you are directed to read and view for more information <http://tinyurl.com/8dbdpp6>.

If you wish to inquire if the records hold something of interest on your family - remember most of the deported Jews came from other European countries so this holds a potential genealogical trove of records for many without Belgian ancestors--you can request assistance from Director Ward Adriaens at: [info@kazernedossin.eu](mailto:info@kazernedossin.eu) or view the website at: <http://www.kazernedossin.eu/en/>.



**The Barracks Today: Apartments**  
(continued on next page)

Donations are most welcome to help the Museum and the work to continue digitizing the records.

The Kazerne Dossin documentation center is located at:

Kazerne Dossin

Gaswin de Stassartstraat 153

2800 Mechelen-Belgium

### Endnotes

1. <http://www.kazernedossin.eu/en/content/history>
2. [http://arch.arch.be/content/view/389/175/lang.en\\_GB/](http://arch.arch.be/content/view/389/175/lang.en_GB/)
3. Claims conference on Jewish material claims against Germany for justice for Jewish victims of Nazi persecution
4. [http://ww2db.com/battle\\_spec.php?battle\\_id=193](http://ww2db.com/battle_spec.php?battle_id=193), <http://www.brussels.be/artdet.cfm/5562>
5. *Judenrat* were administrative bodies during WWII that the Germans required Jews to form in the German occupied territory. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judenrat>
6. <http://tinyurl.com/8l6wliq>
7. <http://tinyurl.com/9fdpei6>

## 2012 FUTURE MEETING DATES

**Sunday, Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>** 1:30-3:30 PM *"Jewish Surnames"* – Warren Blatt

**MONDAY, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>** 7:00-9:00 PM *"From the Spanish Inquisition to the Present: A Search for Jewish Roots"* - Genie Milgrom

**Sunday, Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>** 1:30-3:30 PM *"Getting The Most Out Of Ancestry.com"* – Crista Cowan, 'The Barefoot Genealogist' Ancestry.com

## 2013 FUTURE MEETING DATES

**Sunday, Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>** 1:30-3:30 PM *"Jewish Genetic Disorders Across the Diaspora"* Gary Frohlich, Genzyme and Catherine Quindipan, Cedars Sinai Medical Center

**Sunday, Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>** 1-5 PM *"Annual Assisted Research Afternoon"* – LA Family History Library

**Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>** 1:30-3:30 PM *"Researching Your Canadian Family"* – Marion Werle

**Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup>** 1:30-3:30 PM TBD, Yom Hashoah Day

**Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup>** 1:30-3:30 PM *"Obscure Records of Citizenship and Nationality"*, Marion Smith, USCIS

**Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>** 1:30-3:30 PM *"Lodz, The Manchester of Poland"*, Debra Kay Blatt

**Sunday, July 14<sup>th</sup>** 1:30-3:30 PM *"Genealogy In The Round"*

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM ETHICS, SENSITIVITIES, SENSIBILITIES and PROPERTY RIGHTS – PART II

Panelists were (l-r below) Rabbi Richard Spiegel, spiritual leader, Temple Etz Chaim; Hal Bookbinder, founding member of JGSCV and past president of the IAJGS; Adam Wills, Senior Editor, Jewish Journal; and Sandra Malek, attorney at law and president of JGSLA. JGSCV



president, Jan Meisels Allen, moderated the panel. The program started with a series of four questions and then was open to the audience to present questions.

The opening question to the panel asked, “What is the role of the family historian on truth vs. not hurting people?”

Rabbi Spiegel began by discussing the east coast-west coast sense of roots, with the west coast being more open and willing to change things. In Judaism, truth is a virtue. He related the story from Genesis of how Sarah and Abraham were told by G-d to have a child, and Sarah saying to herself how can we have a child we are too old? When she told Abraham, she left out telling G-d that Abraham was too old too. This is a “white lie” and to prevent friction between spouses, sometimes one does not tell the “whole truth”. This raises the question of what is divulged—or not—and to be careful in what one divulges. In the case of genetic testing, if there is a genetic disease it is important to divulge it to prevent a worse

August 2012

situation - and to possibly save a life. If a situation is embarrassing, do not bring it “out”. Adam Wills asked, “Does the presentation change the narrative of the story?”

Sandy Malek said it depends on whether telling the truth is liberating. She gave an example from her family of whether to tell a story going back to the early 1900’s to the descendants today where it was decided - after speaking with the current generation - that telling a member of the older generation would cause pain.

The second question involved sensitivity in interviewing. Adam, as a journalist, suggested starting the interview with “softball” questions to put the person at ease, especially if the issue may be embarrassing. Then move on to the more difficult questions, and make the person being interviewed know they are free not to answer. We have to understand that some information is not for consumption. Hal Bookbinder said while we have a “drive” to get information, be cautious and do not “overdo”. They are giving us a gift by sharing information and reminded us not to push too hard. If there is a difference in stories between family members, convey both sides in the narrative— Adam concurred saying different people at the same event have different perspectives.

The third question involved posting family information and integrating DNA into the family tree. DNA testing is a tool and just because there is a “green shaking leaf” on the tree does not mean you are related! This requires further research to find if there is a common ancestor. Hal admonished, that since we are not able to control some people—some people put anything in or anyone on their tree— while

those who are serious about genealogy, understand the necessity for documenting people and stories.

The fourth question related to “shanda’s” (something to be ashamed of) and the “politics” of family trees, with different expectations of privacy. Rabbi Spiegel said that Judaism teaches not to embarrass or humiliate people. Hal agreed about not embarrassing people and while telling the truth may be liberating, it is at the expense of people who are the focus of the story. Adam gave an example from his family that turned out to be liberating by allowing his mother to finally discuss family dynamics after many years. Jan gave an example in her family of a secret kept so as not to hurt others . . . and people never told until after the deaths of the ones’ being protected.

Issues brought up from the audience included: Does one need permission to place a person on their tree and if it is posted on the Internet what about the issue of identity theft? A member found they were included on someone’s online tree without permission. There was discussion about various programs that permit this and how, if at all, someone may or may not be removed from another person’s tree. Some programs have the option to making the tree “private” especially for living people. The rabbi stated, if one has to ask then it is “traif”—indicating that by the act of asking, the person asking knows it is not the right thing to do.

Other questions included if a child is born out of wedlock should that person (and/or their offspring) be on the tree? This led to further discussion if people who are related by marrying into the family and their children from previous marriages, or non-Jewish relatives should be included on the family tree. There is no standard practice indicated by the



comments from the panel and audience, which varied from including all people in the family, should be on the tree to those only with direct “blood” lines. Hal looked up the etymology of the word “genealogy” and the root is from the Greek “genealogia” tracing of a family, generation, descent. Rabbi Spiegel reminded us that people had large extended families in biblical times.

There was also a discussion of accessing records of people who suffered from mental illness and were institutionalized. In previous eras, it was a “shanda” if someone suffered from this disease and it was kept hidden. It was brought out that medical family history is very important, especially if the knowledge about the family diseases such as breast cancer or colon cancer can be used to prevent illness or death by taking proactive stances with the knowledge it is part of the family heredity.



What is a “family tree” was also discussed. Is it a chart of names and dates or does it also include the narrative of history and family stories?

Part of the ethical issues considered was the issue of plagiarism or misrepresentation. Hal noted that it is incredibly important to be honest, recognizing and recording the sources and not to misrepresent the work as your own if it is not your own work. Adam added to use as many sources as possible to get diverse opinions.

We as genealogists have a responsibility to be ethical and sensitive to others. If we are given the privilege of being told family history by others, we should be sensitive and sensible about what we publish or post regarding the impact it will have on those who told us the information as well as those who are the subject of the information.

# Finding a Cousin and Coming Full Circle

By Sue Geiger

If you are looking for inspiration and ideas about how to search for your family's roots, Susan Lederer Geiger is a wonderful role model for success. Several years ago, Sue visited the JHSCJ in search of her great-great-grandparents, Samuel and Marie Abeles Lederer, and their roots in New Brunswick\*. When they were teenagers in the 1850's, Samuel and Marie emigrated separately from Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) to New York City. Both of their families were in the leather business. After they married, the couple moved to New Brunswick, New Jersey, and established a tannery on the outskirts of town, where the foul odors wouldn't be as offensive to their neighbors. There they flourished and raised a family of eleven children, all of whom survived to adulthood. Their business, Lederer & Sons, provided leather goods including saddlebags to the Union army during the Civil War. The Lederers were among the founding members of Temple Anshe Emeth (now Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple) in New Brunswick. Recently, a descendant of Samuel and Marie Lederer joined the congregation: Sue Geiger's cousin Marylu Simon. Marylu lives just thirty minutes away from New Brunswick, but before Sue contacted her last autumn, she didn't know that she had any family connection to the city or to Anshe Emeth.



It all began with a photocopied page from a family Bible that had belonged to Sue's 2<sup>nd</sup> great grandparents, Samuel and Marie, and which listed the names and birth dates of their children. Sue resolved to track down as many of their living descendants as possible. By 2011 she had found and established contact with cousins descended from seven of Samuel and Marie's children, but none from the one who had moved west in the 1880's, the eldest son, Samuel. He established himself in St. Louis, Missouri, where he operated a successful construction company that built many of the prominent buildings that still stand in the city. Samuel returned to New Jersey for his father's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party in 1894 and his parents' Golden Anniversary celebration in 1902, but after that the East Coast and Midwest branches of the Lederer family lost touch for over one hundred years!

Last fall, Sue "Googled" the name of one of Samuel's daughters, Lucile Lederer, together with "St. Louis". One of the hits was a book listing a member of the Washington University Alumni Club of New York as Lucile Lederer Tilles, AB,'10". Now Sue knew Lucile's college graduation year (1910), her married name of Tilles and the fact that she lived in New York in 1924. Census records and online research helped Sue locate Marylu Simon, Lucile's granddaughter. Marylu later told Sue that she always proudly carried a photo of Lucille taken on the day her grandmother graduated from college. Lucile was described at the time as one of nine women graduates and "the only Jewess" in the Class of 1910. Lucile was the link that connected Sue with her third cousin, once removed, Marylu.

Marylu was understandably excited at being "found" by Sue Geiger, and amazed that her family had such a close association with New Brunswick. She shared this story with some close friends, who turned out to be members of Anshe Emeth. They suggested that Marylu contact Rabbi Miller at the temple, and she visited for the first time last spring. There she learned more about the Lederer family's connection to the temple and that they had donated a Torah to the congregation, a gift that was confirmed by a silver plaque with the

Lederer name. The Torah is still used regularly by the congregation, and Rabbi Miller opened the ark and showed it to Marylu. She writes, "I can't begin to tell you what it felt like when Rabbi Miller handed me the "Lederer Torah" It's a moment I will never forget."

Marylu Simon is now a member of the temple her great-great grandparents helped establish well over 100 years ago. And, she is working with her cousin Sue Geiger, researching the St. Louis Lederers to fill in some of the blanks in the Lederer family tree. If you have an interest in genealogy, the Internet, online newspapers and books, online census records and directories may lead you, too, to a long-lost cousin or even a lost family heritage.

\*If you would like to read about Sue Geiger's visit to the JHSCJ in the Winter 2007 Newsletter, it is available at <http://www.jewishgen.org/jhscj/Bulletin.html>.



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