

VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

NEWSLETTER OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
OF THE CONEJO VALLEY AND VENTURA COUNTY (JGSCV)

Volume 3, Issue 5

February 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE....

On January 6, 2008 the members and friends of JGSCV were treated to the premiere of a new presentation on types of resources available to assist researching our ancestor's immigration and naturalization records by the incomparable Marian Smith, historian, United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). It was a fantastic and informative presentation!

JGSCV was privileged that Ms. Smith started her west coast tour of seven JGSs and two NARA offices with us! Despite the heavy rains, we had a great turnout including guests from our local sister genealogy societies who attended this instructive program. The handout is showing a time line of available archival records from 1820 to 1954 is available on the JGSCV website (www.JGSCV.org) under "Meetings," select "prior" and the date.

USCIS has duplicate copies of all naturalizations regardless of where the person was naturalized (state, territory or federal courts) from 1906 forward. They do not have any of the records pre-1906, as their predecessor agency did not exist before then. Ms. Smith talked about the importance of C- files (Certificate Files), which on average has five pages, more documents than NARA files contain.

Ms. Smith emphasized, when requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), to ask for everything in a person's file not simply the naturalization papers. There may not be a naturalization document, and the file may have other genealogically relevant information, including correspondence, visa applications and other documents. Ms. Smith also recommended requesting a copy of the index of files for a person whose documents may have been transferred to the National Archives (NARA).

Jan Meisels Allen



SPEAKER MARIAN SMITH

To request information under FOIA:

The request form may be accessed at:
www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-639.pdf

For information on requesting information under FOIA, go to

<http://www.uscis.gov>

then go to "About USCIS" (center of page), then click on FOIA (left side)

To write:

U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Service
National Records Center
FOIA/PA Office
PO Box 648010
Lee's Summit, MO 64064-8010

Include in your letter: immigrant's name(s),
date/year of birth, place/county of birth,
approximate date of arrival,
date/place of naturalization

FOR SCHEDULE OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS, SEE PAGE 3

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.

2008 dues are \$25.00 for a single membership and \$30.00 for a household unit. To join, please send appropriate amount in check made out to JGSCV and addressed to Helene Rosen at 28912 Fountain wood St., Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Obtain new membership or renewal forms on our website at www.jgscv.org by selecting the membership button.

FHL RESEARCH GUIDES ARE AVAILABLE

Barbara Algabe informs us that the many Research Guides that are offered for purchase at the local Family History Center are now also available for free to read on your own computer and/or print on your own printer. The subjects include research in all the United States and Canada and many countries in Europe, South America, and Asia. Other subjects are Military Research and the new Jewish History Research Guide.

Check them out at:

http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/rg/frameset_rhelps.asp?Page=./research/Subjecta/Subjecta.asp&ActiveTab=Subject

When you get to the first page, click on to the letter that represents the subject you are researching. Then click on to the [PDF] next to the name in order to download the Research Guide to your computer. (The free Adobe Acrobat PDF reader must be installed on your computer in order to access the Guides.)

ON-LINE LITVAK SIG JOURNAL

For those interested in researching your Litvak family a good source of topical information related to your genealogical pursuits can be found on the website of the Journal of the Litvak Special Interest Group at www.jewishgen.org/Litvak/HTML/OnlineJournals/Journal.htm

SPECIAL BULLETIN:

Free access of Ancestry.com to patrons of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and the 13 largest regional family history centers has been restored (includes the LDS library in Los Angeles). Thus, full access is provided to more than 24,000 Ancestry.com databases and titles and 5 billion names in family history records.

Holocaust Archive Opens to the Public

The Red Cross and the German government announced that the last of the 11 countries that administer the International Tracing Service (ITS) archive in the German town of Bad Arolsen had ratified a 2006 agreement, thereby opening the files to the public for the first time. Families of Holocaust victims now have a chance to learn more about their relatives' fates.

The archive, which contains more than 50 million pages of documents stored in six buildings, represents a rich resource for Holocaust historians and will shed new light on the Nazi genocide. Until now, the files have mainly been used to help find missing persons and document atrocities as evidence for compensation claims. Few outsiders have ever seen the documents.

In order to provide researchers with more access to the files, the archive provided digital copies of the entire archive to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Yad Vashem Memorial in Jerusalem in August.

The decision to open the archive was taken by the 11-country governing commission in May 2006 in response to pressure from the US State Department and Holocaust researchers. However the ratification process took 18 months to complete, with Greece being the last country to file its ratification papers with the German Foreign Ministry.

ALL ABOUT U.S. PASSPORT APPLICATIONS

Ancestry.com makes available (for a fee) a rich database containing data extracted from U.S. passport applications for the period 1795-1925 at

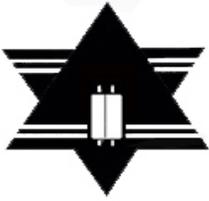
<http://content.ancestry.com/iexec/?htx=List&dbid=1174&offerid=0%3a7858%3a0>

This database also includes emergency passport applications (passports issued abroad) from 1877-1907 and passport application registers for 1810-1817, 1830-1831, and 1834-1906. Passports issued March 4-5, 1919 (numbers 67500-67749) are missing from the NARA collection and therefore, missing from this database.

Passport applications can provide a wealth of information, including:

- Name of applicant
- Birth date or age, Birthplace, Residence
- Date of application or issuance of passport
- Father's and/or husband's name
- Father's and/or husband's birth date or age
- Father's and/or husband's birthplace
- Father's and/or husband's residence
- Wife's name
- Date and place of immigration to the U.S.
- Years in which have resided in the U.S.
- Naturalization date and place
- Occupation
- Physical characteristics

Come to the Jewish Genealogical Society of the
Conejo Valley and Ventura County*
(* and surrounding areas)



Sunday, February 10, 2008 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
at Temple Adat Elohim
2420 E.Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks

The Topic: **Using Maps In Genealogical Research**

Basic to all genealogical research is identifying the precise location of ancestral towns. Dr. Sherins will review procedures for obtaining exact map coordinates, locating the smallest villages within countries where national borders have shifted, and the use of atlases and gazetteers. Also covered: guidelines for advanced research using internet resources for cadastral, panoramic-perspective maps, and satellite technology access.

Guest Speaker: Robert Sherins, M.D. a past board member of the Polish Genealogical Society of California, retired ophthalmologist and a well-informed map researcher. Dr. Sherins has made presentations before several genealogy societies and has published 100 articles in various Internet publications, JGSLA's *RootsKey* and Polish Genealogical Society of California's *BULLETIN*.

Meeting co-sponsored with Temple Adat Elohim
There is no charge to attend the meeting. Anyone may join JGSCV.
For more information contact information@JGSCV.org
See: www.JGSCV.org or call Jan Meisels Allen @ 818-889-6616

Future JGSCV Meeting Dates
All Meetings are held at Temple Adat Elohim
2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks

March 2, 2008: "100 years of the Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring," presented by Eric Gordon.

April 6, 2008: Research Day at the Los Angeles Regional Family History Center for paid-up members

May 4, 2008: Film "Hiding and Seeking: Faith and Tolerance after the Holocaust," a documentary commemorating Yom Hashoah Day (Holocaust Memorial Day)

June 1, 2008: "Genealogy in the Round: Share Your Successes, Failures, Artifacts and Brick Walls"

Persistence Pays...You Just Have to Keep Trying

Helene Rosen
Agoura Hills, CA

For sure, Lance Bell and I are cousins. But we don't know how we are related. That information was known a generation ago but now it is lost. And I am the family genealogist who wants to figure it out again.

We know that our families came from Merkinė (formerly Mertz), Lithuania, a small shtetl near Vilna. My grandmother Mary Rosen, her mother Sarah and two sisters, left their home for America in 1899, traveling by ship to Baltimore. My grandmother's sister remembered seeing soldiers returning from the Spanish American War when she arrived there. Subsequently, they met up with my great grandfather Louis Rosen and two siblings who had emigrated earlier and were living in Pittsburgh. In the thirties, some of my family moved to California and others had ended up in New Mexico. That is how I got to the Los Angeles area and Lance Bell to Sante Fe.

I have two 90+ year old living twin cousins, Irma and Myrna, who remember visiting their New Mexico relatives during the 1930s. They corresponded with one of them until the 1990s but they too have forgotten the relationship. They do recall that it was a cousin in New Mexico who informed the family that the Jews of Merkinė had been wiped out by the Nazis and that no one was left. They suspect that a cousin of great grandmother Sarah is the link to the New Mexico family.

Now I enter the picture. I have always been interested in genealogy. I developed a family tree containing over 850 names. Then I let it rest for a number of years before renewing my interest two years ago. Using the Internet, I was able to add over 300 more names to my tree. But Lance's family is not included and I don't know how to connect them.

I made a major discovery recently that has set me on a new path. A key fact had been most illusive. I wanted to find my grandmother Mary's steamship record confirming her journey to Baltimore. I had thoroughly searched Ancestry.com to no avail. I spent hours looking for Mary Rosen, her mother Sarah and the two sisters. I tried different years, different ports even though I knew it had to have been Baltimore. I just didn't know what else to do.

In July 2007 I attended the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies Conference in Salt Lake City. It was a week full of fascinating speakers, movies and special events. This city had been selected because of the superb research facility at the nearby Mormon Family History Library. Before I left for the conference, I learned that the Jewish records from Merkinė had been microfilmed and were indeed at the library. The problem was the challenge of the 100+ year old Russian handwriting. I looked at the records anyway and, even with indices in Latin style letters, I was unable to find my Rosen family.

One speaker at the conference was Steve Morse. His website is considered to be one of the premier genealogical tools since it allows you to search database records in a "one step" form. I had not tried his site before and upon returning home, I decided to give it a shot. (www.stevemorse.com)

I entered all my known information in the Morse provided form which searched the Baltimore Passenger database available on Ancestry.com. To my amazement, up popped what I had been looking for so long! The search for surname Rosen yielded my great grandfather Louis Rosen not as a passenger, but rather as the contact point in Pittsburgh for my grandmother and her accompanying party who travelled under the completely unfamiliar name of Paretzki. Age and sex matched all of the four travelers to my previously known data. It was a major success without a doubt. I couldn't believe that I had found, at last, what I had been searching for all these years.

There had always been some question about what the family name might have been in Europe. It was thought that it was not Rosen. It might have been something else that no one remembered. This turned out to be correct. I discovered that the original family name to be Paretzki. Furthermore, I learned the original first names for all four travelers. I had only known my grandmother as Mary but this citation showed her original name to have been Mascha. Upon telling Irma of my discovery, she said yes, that sounds right, sounds familiar.

Armed with this information, perhaps I can go back to the records from Merkinė since I now know what I am looking for. Perhaps I can find someone who can read Russian to help me find the Paretzki family. Perhaps I can find Sarah and her cousin, the one who is Lance's ancestor. Perhaps we can reconnect our families again.

New Additions to the JGSCV Traveling Library

Books:

A Dictionary of German-Jewish Surnames, Lars Menk, Avotaynu 2005.

My Generations; A Course in Jewish Family History, Arthur Kurzweil, Behrman House 1983.

Sephardic Genealogy: Discovering Your Sephardic Ancestors and their World, Jeff Malka, Avotaynu 2002.

Their Father's House: Studies and Sources in Family History, Nos 3-4, Israel Genealogical Society, May 1990.

The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb, Irving Cutler, University of Illinois Press, 1996.

The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot Marranos and Other Secret Jews, Trudi Alexy, Harper Collins, 1993.

There Once Was A World: A 900 Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok, Yaffa Eliach, Little, Brown & Company, 1998.

Jewish San Francisco, Edwin Zerlin, Arcadia Publishing 2006

Schindler's List (Copy of Original), April 1945

Journals:

American Jewish Archives: *The East European Immigrant Jew (In America 1881-1891)*, Guest Editor: Uri D. Herscher Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH, April 1981.

American Jewish Archives: *Sephardim in the Americas*, Guest Editor: Martin A. Cohen Vol. XLIV, No. 1, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH, Spring/Summer, 1992.

Pamphlets:

Jewish Communities in Slovakia, Nase Rodina, Czechoslovak Genealogical Society Dec. 2006.

The Jews of Galicia in 1839, Andrew A. Bonar and Robert Murray, M'Cheyne- Geshet Galicia 1839, originally published, GG publication 1997.

We welcome contributions from our members regarding their genealogical research experience. Submit your story to this Newsletter at newslettereditor@jgscv.org.

Future IAJGS Conferences

The 2008 IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy will take place at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, on 17-22 August 2008. For further information refer to the website www.chicago2008.org. To get a head start on research possibilities in Chicago go to Mike Karsen's website www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/Chicago. A Google search for "Jewish Chicago" will also lead to many interesting items. The 2009 IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy will be in Philadelphia, PA in the period August 2-7, 2009 at the Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS: Dan & Barbara Elman, Ellen Husted, Catherine Pens, Barbara and Tony Saucedo

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