



VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

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

Volume 5, Issue 6

March, 2010

President's Letter:

Ron Arons regaled us on February 1 with his "Mapping Madness" presentation on how to use Internet-based on-line mapping techniques to find anyone, anywhere, anyhow. Ron's handout of resources is on our website www.jgscv.org under meetings. Click on prior meetings. See page 6 for a short list of local venues with maps. Ron is a great teacher and we learned, while laughing, at some of his examples including his waving at a Google truck taking photos on the corner on which he was standing. Ron tied some of the maps to infamous Jewish criminals—of course—especially Bernie Madoff. Ron has published a new book on criminals—not just Jewish criminal records, "*WANTED! U.S. Criminal Records Source and Research Methodology*". Many of us are finding we have some of these "interesting" ancestors on our family trees and may wish to find out how to look-up their records. JGSCV purchased the book and it is in our Traveling Library in Category C.



RON ARONS

JGSCV Board member Warren Blatt facilitated our Schmoozing Corner, where you can discuss your latest genealogical find or problem. Remember to come to the meetings 15 minutes in advance to take advantage of this new feature!

Carole Webber gave the book report on a four book series of historical fiction by Maisie Mosco. The stories are of a Jewish family who escapes from Russia to England and how they survive two world wars, anti-semitism and prosper. Judith Cohen will report in March on *The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia* by Harry Boonin (a book from our traveling library) the city where her family lived. If you are a 2010 dues-paid member, you may be able to borrow certain of our traveling library books (which is otherwise non-circulating) for the book report- a new benefit of membership. If you would like to participate in our new book review program please contact me at president@jgscv.org for more information. Non-members may also participate by reporting on their own or a public library genealogically-relevant book. All books selected for the book review need to be prior approved.

Recently, I presented an adaptation of "How to Begin Your Genealogy" (from our Jan. meeting) to the 6th grade class at Temple Adat Elohim. I used their teacher's family as the examples for census, ships manifest, Googling one self etc. The children were very engaged in looking up their family names in our Beider and Menk books. It is never too early to get your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews and other family members interested in their genealogy!

We return to our Sunday afternoon meeting time with our March 7th meeting. Our speaker is Steve Luxenberg, associate editor at *The Washington Post*, who has worked for 35 years as a newspaper editor and reporter. He will talk on his journey to find out about why his mother kept her sister's existence from him, which led him to write "*Annie's Ghost*". Steve will show how he used genealogical techniques to piece together the story of his mother's secrets, his aunt's unknown life, and the times in which they lived. Steve's research took him to imperial Russia and Depression-era Detroit, through the Holocaust in the Ukraine and the Philippine war zone, and back to the mental hospitals where Annie and many others languished in anonymity. You will have the opportunity to purchase Steve's book for \$20.00 cash or check only—this is a 20% discounted price from the regular retail price.

Jan Meisels Allen

Future Meetings Notices – 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.

2010 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 Fountainwood St., Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Obtain the new/renewal membership form on our website at www.jgscv.org by selecting the membership button.

UPDATE: THE FAMILY HISTORY CENTER

The Los Angeles Regional Family History Center closed in May 2009 for renovations and expansion. It was originally scheduled to reopen in November 2009. Unforeseen delays, including the addition of a new roof, have caused the reopening to be rescheduled for sometime in late May or June 2010. This is not a *guaranteed* reopening date. When there is an assured reopening date, JGSCV will schedule an exclusive research day for its members.

NAME CHANGES IN PALESTINE

The Israeli Genealogical Society website includes several databases available to non-members including a list called "Changes of Names in the Palestine Gazette (1921-1948)", described as a list of 28,256 changes of names registered in the Palestine Gazette during the British Mandate over Palestine <http://tinyurl.com/vbamlu6> Perhaps fewer than 50% legally changed their name. To see what other databases are available click on: <http://tinyurl.com/vdam2qr>

RALPH'S COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Ralphs Community Contribution program helps JGSCV with making contributions to us every quarter, based on the purchases made by participants in the program. Please visit our website under "notices" for the easy step-by-step instructions to register and have JGSCV benefit from your Ralphs purchases.

2010 IAJGS CONFERENCE IN LOS ANGELES

Mark your calendars! July 11-16, 2010 -- the 30th IAJGS Conference will be hosted by JGSLA and held at the JW Marriott Hotel at LA Live near the Staples Center in downtown LA. The JGSLA website is up at: <http://www.jgsla2010.com/> Conference registration is open and hotel reservations can be made now.

NARA REGIONAL ARCHIVES MOVING

The (US) National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) located in Laguna Niguel (Orange County) California is moving to a new site in Riverside County California. The current location at the Laguna Niguel site closes on February 19th. The move to the new site will be completed on March 1, 2010. The move is being made for cost-savings to the Federal government.

Some records are in the process of being transferred before, going to the Laguna Niguel Archives, check with them to determine which are still available. You may call them at (949) 448-4931. Some records were "closed" as of the end of January for transferring to the new site. A list of records that are no longer available and now transferred to the new location is available at <http://tinyurl.com/yewkx7r>

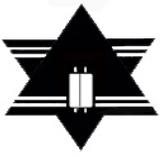
The address for the new regional archive is: National Archives at Riverside 23123 Cajalco Road Perris, CA 92570

YOUR JGS WANTS YOU!

... to help with publicity. JGSCV needs a volunteer for the Publicity Committee who can devote about one hour per month to send out meeting notices. The notices are time sensitive so the dedicated hour is specific each month. You must have access to Microsoft Word. Please contact Jan Meisels Allen at president@jgscv.org

COLLECTIONS OF JEWISH CULTURE

Ten institutions across Europe have joined forces to provide online access to their Jewish culture collections. The joint project, called "Judaica Europeana," is part of an effort to digitize many of Europe's cultural resources. The European Commission provided a major grant for Judaica Europeana. The first phase of this project can be visited at www.judaica-europeana.eu.



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

Sunday, March 7, 2010 1:30-3:30 p.m.

at Temple Adat Elohim

2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks

"Genealogy From the Inside Out"

The Story of *Annie's Ghosts*



Annie's Ghosts...is "a great non-fiction read for genealogists" —Jan Alpert, president, National Genealogical Society, in the society's July '09 newsletter

"My mother was an only child. That's what she told everyone, sometimes within minutes of meeting them. When I heard that my mother had been hiding the existence of a sister, I was bewildered. A sister? I was certain that she had no siblings". Part memoir, part detective story, part history, *Annie's Ghosts* revolves around three main characters (the author's mom, her sister and the author, narrator/detective/son), several important secondary ones (including several relatives whom he found in the course of reporting on the book), as well as Eloise, the vast county mental hospital where Steve's secret aunt was confined—despite her initial protestations—all of her adult life. Steve will show how he used genealogical techniques to piece together the story of his mother's secrets, his aunt's unknown life, and the times in which they lived. Steve's research took him to imperial Russia and Depression-era Detroit, through the Holocaust in Ukraine and the Philippine war zone, and back to the hospitals where Annie and many others languished in anonymity.

Speaker: Steve Luxenberg, an associate editor at *The Washington Post*, has worked for 35 years as a newspaper editor and reporter. Steve's career began at *The Baltimore Sun*, where he worked for 11 years before joining *The Post* in 1985. He has headed *The Post's* investigative staff, succeeding Bob Woodward, and directed *The Post's* Sunday commentary section. Reporters working for Steve have won numerous awards, including two Pulitzer Prizes.

There will be an opportunity to purchase the book at the meeting—checks or cash only. See the review by JGSCV and JGSLA member Marion Werle on the next page.

Meeting co-sponsored with Temple Adat Elohim. There is no charge to attend the meeting. Anyone may join JGSCV.

2010 JGSCV Meeting Dates

**All Meetings are held at Temple Adat Elohim
2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks**

April 11 Sun. 1:30-3:30 PM

Nat'l Geographic Channel documentary "Hitler's Hidden Holocaust" and Bob Rich "Red Cross Holocaust Tracing Services"

May 2 Sun. 1:30-3:30 PM

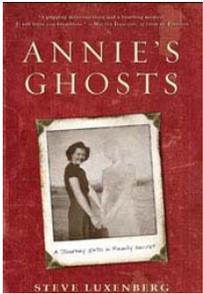
"Genealogy in the Round: Share your Successes, Failures, Artifacts and Brick Walls"

June 6 Sun. 1:30-3:30 PM – TBA

June 27 Sun. 1:30-4:15 PM

Daniel Horowitz, "Genealogical Resources in Latin America" and "Genealogy Super Search Engine"

Reviewed by Marion Werle for JGSLA's RootsKey*



Imagine finding out that your mother, who made a point of telling people that she was an only child, actually had a sister. That is exactly what happened to Steve Luxenberg, a Senior Editor for the *Washington Post*. A few years before his ailing mother died, the author's sister got a call from her mother's social worker, saying that the mother had mentioned having a disabled sister who was institutionalized as a young child. After his mother's death, the family received forwarded mail from a local cemetery offering to plant flowers at three gravesites – those of the author's maternal grandparents, Tillie and Hyman Cohen and an unknown "Annie Cohen". Thus began the author's investigation into the life of his missing aunt, a personal quest that is at once a search for understanding, an adventure in genealogical research, a history of attitudes toward disability and mental illness, an evolving history of how society has dealt with mental and physical disabilities, a history of a Jewish family, a history of Detroit, and a debate about the privacy of personal records, even though the subject has long since died. The author is a journalist by profession, and he wears

two hats throughout the book: a son trying to uncover a story and understand his mother's motivation for keeping such a secret, and an investigative reporter, managing somehow to control his emotions while researching a subject very close to his heart.

I first read about *Annie's Ghosts* in the most recent edition of *Upfront with NGS*, the online newsletter of the National Genealogical Society. I immediately downloaded a copy from Amazon.com and became engrossed in the fascinating story of how the author unearthed his family secret – his mother actually had a physically and mentally disabled sister who was institutionalized just before she turned 21 (not as a child, as she had told the social worker) and lived out the remainder of her life in various institutions, chiefly Eloise Hospital, a public mental hospital located outside of Detroit.

The author was a complete novice to genealogy. Typical of many of the immigrant generation, the older generations of his family "seemed to have a collective amnesia about anything sad, tragic, or pre-American". His maternal grandparents were "Polish or Russian Jews" and his paternal grandparents were from "somewhere in what is now northeastern Poland, and all of them, from both sides, had arrived before 1920."

In addition to tracking down living relatives including one cousin of his mother, who was a Holocaust survivor, he also attempted to find friends of his mother from the old neighborhood where she grew up, people who might have known of the missing sister. I didn't realize until the acknowledgments at the end, that this project was conceived as a book, and as such, the author had access to many experts that the novice genealogist doesn't have, except through books and lectures. Among others, the author credits Marian Smith, who "guided me in obtaining records that I had no idea existed" and Loretto Dennis Szucs of ancestry.com who "shared names from her Rolodex as well as her extensive knowledge of how to find family records".

The narrative is very compelling throughout, although it falters a bit towards the end (at one point he segues into an investigation of his father's military service and discovers a secret which is not really germane to the overall story). Each chapter begins with a photo, followed by personal memories of the author, printed in italics. The remainder of each chapter continues with the results of his unfolding quest, interspersed with historical interludes to put the material in context. A good deal of time is spent describing the legal morass he encountered while trying to uncover his aunt's medical history, and running into laws restricting access to medical records, ostensibly due to privacy issues, even though the subject died in 1972. The author interviewed a number of medical and mental health professionals, including a former psychiatrist at the institution where his aunt lived for so many years, to determine how patients were treated and to help decipher the medical records he was ultimately able to obtain.

In the end, he found answers, but like everybody who embarks on a journey into family history, the answers were not complete, and many conclusions are speculative. After exploring the background and social world of his poor immigrant grandparents, he conjectures that they had few options and simply followed the advice of the medical experts of their time. He never did find out why his mother kept her secret throughout her entire life, although he uncovered some possibilities. Like all of us, he found that some records had been destroyed, and simply weren't available, so he never determined precisely what was wrong with his aunt, other than that she was both physically and mentally disabled. As to whether she was truly "insane", it is impossible to determine either the nature or severity of her mental illness. What is certain is that attitudes towards disability and mental illness have changed dramatically since 1940, and that Annie Cohen most likely would not have been institutionalized for the rest of her life had she been born in contemporary times.

The author has a website and a blog at <http://www.steveluxenberg.com>, which includes a photo of the headstone that the author and his siblings purchased for their aunt's previously anonymous grave. Steve Luxenberg's book has given Annie the recognition that she never received during her tragic lifetime, even from her own family.

*Originally appearing in Roots-Key the quarterly journal of JGSLA Fall/Winter 2009, Volume 29 Issue 3/4Hyperion Books, 2009. 416 pp. Hardcover, \$24.95. Also available as Kindle edition. www.hyperion.com

JGSCV UPDATES . . .

THE SCHMOOZING CORNER was led by JGSCV Board Member Warren Blatt who fielded genealogy questions from JGSCV members. Remember, you can



find The Schmoozing Corner on the right as you enter the meeting room at Temple Adat Elohim; near the front of the room. There will be a knowledgeable JGSCV member available to help with your own specific research issues. The Schmoozing Corner is open for 15 minutes immediately prior to the start of the meeting. Look for the sign. Debra Kay Blatt, JGSCV Board Member will facilitate the March 7 Schmoozing Corner.



CORRECTION: The JewishGen Blog.com name was incorrectly listed in the March issue of *Venturing Into Your Past*. The correct name of the blog is JewishGen Blog . The url (address) was listed correctly with ""blogspot" in the address: <http://www.jewishgen.blogspot.com>. The url must have "blogspot" included in order to connect correctly.

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE JGSCV TRAVELING LIBRARY

Since we reported in December 2009's newsletter the following books have been added to the JGSCV traveling library. If you have genealogically relevant books that you would like to donate, please contact Jan Meisels Allen at president@JGSCV.org. The books in the traveling library are categorized A, B, or C determining which come to which monthly meeting. All A books come to every meeting. Categories B and C alternate which month they are brought to the meeting. A full list of all of our permanent and traveling library holdings may be found on the website: www.jgscv.org.

Ellis Island Interviews Immigrants Tell Their Stories In Their Own Words Peter Morton Coan Barnes & Noble Books 2004 (Category C)

Old Bohemian and Moravian Jewish Cemeteries Petr Ehl, Arno Pařík, Jiří Fiedler. Paseka Prague 1991 (Category C)

Ours to Fight For: American Jewish Voices From the Second World War Museum of Jewish History: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust 2003 (Category C)

Tell Ye Your Children A Book About the Holocaust in Europe 1933-1945 The Living History Forum Stockholm Sweden 1998 (Category B)

The Cross and The Pear Tree: A Sephardic Journey Victor Perera Alfred Knopf New York 1995 (Category C)

The Guggenheim/Wormser Family A Genealogical 300-Year Memoir Elizabeth S. Plaut KTAV Publishing House New Jersey 1996 (Category C)

The Gumprichs of Münster/Westphalia: A Tale of Four Continents Elizabeth S. Plaut Abbeyfield Publishers Toronto, Canada 2000 (Category C)

The Locator: A Step-by-step Guide to Finding Lost Family, Friends, and Loved Ones—Anywhere, Anytime. Troy Dunn. Doubleday NY 2000 (Category C)

The Southern California Jewish Sports Hall of Fame 1990-1999 Eli Sherman and Joe Siegman Southern California Jewish Sports Hall of Fame Los Angeles 1999 (Category C)

The Spanish Jews Felipe Torroba Bernalso de Quiros Third Edition Madrid 1959 (Category C)

Wanted! US Criminal Records Sources and Research Methodology Ron Arons Criminal Research Press Oakland CA 2009 (Category C)

World of Our Fathers: The Jews of Eastern Europe Milton Meltzer Dell Publishing New York 1974 (Category B)

1939 United Kingdom National Registration is Available



The 1939 UK National Registration is a genealogical valuable resource for those had ancestors living in England and Wales on September 29, 1939. The National Health Service Information Center (NHS IC) is providing this information. The national registration was required by Parliament as an emergency measure at the beginning of World War II. This was the beginning of the requirement of identity cards that everyone was required to have. The registration number was assigned after the following information was collected on everyone in the household: names, sex, age, occupation, profession, residence, marriage status, membership in the military or civil defense.

For information on how to apply for the registration and more information go to: <http://tinyurl.com/ydhsy67>

The charge for searching for the information--regardless if it is found or not - is £42. No refunds will be given once the search is started. This information was previously not available. Data will only be released for those individuals who are deceased and recorded as deceased. According to the website providing a death certificate may not be sufficient evidence. Because the entries are over 70 years, some of the entries may not be complete, legible, or illegible due to natural deterioration.

Great Britain has a 100 year rule before releasing census information, and the last UK census released is 1911 (for England, Wales and Northern Ireland which released it 2009 a bit ahead of the 100 years-- Scotland- will not be released until 2011). Therefore, the registration information may be the most recent information available on those living in the UK.

Scotland

The National Registration register has been kept secret because the 1939 Act prohibited publication of the information but thanks to an application under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 that restriction has been reviewed and details about people who have since died are now being made available. The fee is £13 and evidence of the death of the person who is the subject of the enquiry. For information on where to send the inquiry go to: <http://tinyurl.com/yc3hpjs>

Northern Ireland

Currently it is not clear how access will be managed for the Northern Ireland part of the National Register as the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) recently admitted that the collection, which comprises many hundreds of volumes, "is extremely large, is completely uncatalogued and is stored in our offsite storage facility.

Laurence Harris, Immediate Past Chairman - JGS Great Britain and professional genealogist provided the source for the information.

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