

SFBAJGS Activity Report for 2020

Jeff Lewy, SFBAJGS Treasurer

This annual report to our members covers our activities, financial results, and grants to other organizations in 2020.

This was a year like no other, for us as for so many other groups. We had no in-person meetings after February; they were replaced by online Zoom presentations. As a small, regional organization, we took advantage of online meetings, and we had watchers and listeners from all over the United States who have never had the opportunity to hear our presentations. Our largest audience had 54 attendees, more than double our recent largest in-person meetings. Our free online News continued to inform members of SFBAJGS and other subscribers about other groups' online activities, and our quarterly journal *ZichronNote* continued to present interesting articles about Jewish genealogy, many of them written by our members.

We are among the six largest societies in the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), with more than 200 members. Our members make us one of the most active Jewish genealogical societies, and we take active roles in moderating JewishGen Research Divisions (RD's) online and participating in additional efforts to find and provide public and online access to vital records and other records of genealogical interest.

Our name says that we are the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society, but we remind you that the "San Francisco Bay Area" part of our name merely means that we reside here. Our members and our interests are worldwide, as are our ancestors and living relatives. We can be as helpful to members with ancestors in Russia, Bohemia, Galicia, and South Africa as to those whose families have been in the Bay Area for four generations or more. All of our families, like yours, originally came from "someplace else", and we have knowledge of and connections to many of those places.

Many members attended the 40th annual conference of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), held virtually in August 2020, and several Society members helped put together the conference and made presentations, including Robinn Magid, the chief organizer for the first-ever virtual IAJGS conference.

Our members continue to make generous donations to the Society in addition to paying dues, giving us the opportunity to support our objectives:

- Support and improve online sharing of data useful to researchers everywhere doing Jewish genealogy
- Make available online formerly closed or unavailable records that support Jewish genealogical research
- Support efforts to research and remember existing and vanished Jewish communities

We support activities in the local area that are consistent with these objectives. We have ongoing volunteer projects to transcribe data from local cemeteries and other sources of birth, marriage, and death records and make those data available online for researchers everywhere. These projects are described below under Transcriptions.

Other work fulfilling these objectives takes place wherever Jewish communities and records are located, often far from us. Therefore, we continue our practice of making donations to other organizations that are working in those communities and archives. We support projects based on their value to the broadest possible audience of researchers, the need to preserve and protect fragile sites, and the need to record data where the repositories and archives are newly open or at risk of access restrictions.

Donations to Organizations Working in Ways That Support Our Mission

This year, we donated \$5,100 to eleven organizations for their activities. We present the purposes of our donations and the URL's of these organizations so that you can learn more about their activities if you wish.

Local

- **Jewish Community Library in San Francisco:** Maintain and expand the very strong collection of materials related to Jewish genealogy and history, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. <http://www.jewishlearningworks.org/jewish-community-library/>

- **Commission for the Preservation of Pioneer Jewish Cemeteries and Landmarks in the West:** Protect and maintain the seven Gold Rush-era Jewish cemeteries in the Sierra foothills. <http://www.pioneerjewishcemeteries.org/>

- **Oakland FamilySearch Library:** Expand its collection of materials for Jewish research and support our Oakland meeting location. https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Oakland_California_FamilySearch_Library/Contact_Information

National and International

- **Reclaim the Records:** A nonprofit organization that identifies important genealogical record sets that ought to be in the public domain but which are restricted by government archives, agencies, or libraries. Freedom of Information and Open Data requests or lawsuits are filed to force the release of that public data back to the public. Reclaim the Records then digitizes everything it receives and puts it all online for free on its site. It has already opened a variety of records in New York City, other cities in New York State, New Jersey, Washington State, Missouri, and Wyoming. Recent additions include death indices in Nebraska and Mississippi and the New York State marriage index. Reclaim the Records is pursuing continuing efforts at the federal level and in many states where officials have not previously allowed public access. <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/>

- **Italian Genealogical Group:** Support its ongoing online indexing of New York City records. This year it has added New York City death records and has begun to digitize the index for New York naturalization records. <http://www.italiangen.org/>

- **International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) Stern Fund:** Encourage nonprofit institutions and organizations, Jewish or not, to pursue projects, activities, and acquisitions that provide new or enhanced resources to benefit Jewish genealogists. <https://www.iajgs.org/>

- **Jewish Records Indexing – Poland:** Support ongoing digitization and indexing of Jewish records, primarily from Polish archives, but also from Ukraine and other locations where Polish records were formerly recorded. JRI-Poland now contains 5.8 million records from 550 Polish towns. <http://jri-poland.org/>

- **Kirkuty Jewish Cemeteries in Poland:** Support photography of Jewish cemeteries in Poland, both extant and desecrated, drawing attention to the remaining signs of the prewar presence of the Polish Jewish community. <http://kirkuty.xip.pl/indexang.htm>

- **JewishGen:** To its General Fund, supporting the primary online site of Jewish genealogical records and instruction for researchers. <https://www.jewishgen.org/>

- **Ukraine Research Division at JewishGen:** Support digitization and placement online of records from Ukrainian national archives. <https://www.jewishgen.org/Ukraine/>

- **Gesher Galicia Przemysl Project:** Identify the towns of origin of 577 Jewish index books held in the Przemysl State Archive in Ukraine and preserve at Gesher Galicia the images of these record books. <http://www.geshergalicia.org/>

Transcriptions

- We completed transcription of all burial cards and other burial data for Home of Eternity Cemetery in Oakland from the 1880's through 2020. These data were uploaded to JewishGen's Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) and shared with Home of Eternity.

- We are transcribing burial records for Sherith Israel Synagogue in San Francisco dating from about 1861 to 1889. These records come from synagogue meeting minutes and copies of the related City health records kept by the synagogue. These records are particularly valuable as they provide a partial substitute for San Francisco City records destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fires.

- We are transcribing more than 40,000 burial records from Sinai Memorial Chapel in San Francisco dating back to the early 1920's, when Sinai Memorial was established. As a funeral home, Sinai Memorial arranges for burials at cemeteries throughout the Bay Area and in other cities in the United States and overseas. Sinai Memorial also records cremations, which may not appear in cemetery records.

- We are transcribing about 36,000 records from Eternal Home Cemetery in Colma from six ledgers covering the years from the opening of the cemetery in 1903 until 2010. Information after 2010 is maintained by the cemetery as computerized records.

Financial Results for 2020

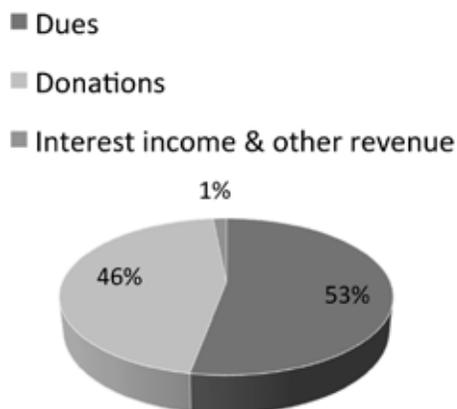
Revenues for 2020 were just under \$9,400, just slightly more than in past years, with about \$5,000 in dues from 221 members and about \$4,300 in donations and other income. Thank you for your membership dues and generous donations, which support our activities and those of other groups doing work of great value to you, our members, and to the worldwide Jewish genealogical community.

Expenses totaled about \$7,900, generating a surplus of about \$1,400. This surplus was generated even though we granted \$5,100 in contributions to other groups. Those contributions are described above. Other significant categories of expenses were publication of two issues of *ZichronNote*, \$500; membership acquisition, \$400; and Web site maintenance and management, \$600. All other expenses, including insurance and other administrative items, totaled about \$1,300.

Below are simple pie charts showing the primary categories of revenue and expenses.

We thank you again, as we do every year, for your membership, your donations, and your interest in Jewish genealogy and family history. Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions to improve our performance and activities, and how we can most effectively help you with your research. Also let us know if you have suggestions for projects or activities you would like to see us undertake or support. We look forward to another year of accomplishments in 2021 and hope we will be able to return soon to in-person meetings.

SFBAJGS Revenue - 2020



SFBAJGS Expense - 2020



Invite a Friend to Join SFBAJGS

<http://www.jewishgen.org/sfbajgs/about.html>

We then speculated about why Dad and Bernice might have divorced so quickly:

- *Was the baby aborted?* Almost certainly not: Dad would not have had Bernice undergo a dangerous, illegal medical procedure.
- *Was the baby put up for adoption?* Not likely: Dad would not have given his child away.
- *Did the pregnancy end in miscarriage?* Possible, but not too likely: Only a minority of pregnancies end that way; furthermore, a miscarriage would not necessarily have led to divorce.

Shortly thereafter, I was discussing this matter with a longtime friend. His hypothesis: Dad divorced Bernice once it became clear that she was not actually pregnant!

This struck me as the most likely possibility. Dad would not have wanted to stay with someone who had lied about such a matter, upending his life and derailing his musical career.

I have examined relevant court documents (whose allegations one should not take as literal truth, particularly in an era when no-fault divorce was not available):

- On 3 January 1947, after seven months of marriage, Bernice left Dad, moving back into her mother's home.
- Four days later, Dad sued for divorce, alleging cruelty on Bernice's part.
- Bernice filed a counterclaim for divorce, alleging cruelty on Dad's part and on his mother's.
- The divorce was granted. Dad's sole financial obligation was to pay Bernice \$2,300 (equivalent to almost \$27,000 today), the approximate value of premarital war and savings bonds that Bernice had given to Dad to invest in the family business.

The mystery remains.

Epilog

During his third year at Wayne (beginning while married to Bernice and ending after the divorce, while still working in the family business), Dad took a half load of nonmusic classes. He received middling grades. The following year he withdrew from Wayne.

Once Dad and Mom married, Dad's piano joined them. He occasionally played classical or popular music, though my strongest memories are of family sing-alongs on Sundays and special occasions, such as birthdays.

