



San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116

Nov. 1988

DATE: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1988
TIME: 7:30 P. M.
PLACE: SUTRO LIBRARY
480 Winston Dr., San Francisco
PROGRAM: Short business meeting, speaker, refreshments
SPEAKER: Jane Brenner
TOPIC: Decorative Charts of Family Histories

Jane Brenner, trained as an artist has combined her interest in family history and her artist's training to devise ways of turning family trees into decorative charts, accordian books, even wall hangings. We will be shown examples of Jane Brenner's work to let us know what can be done with our family trees and memorabilia to produce beautiful, decorative family records to be enjoyed now and passed on as heirlooms to future generations.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

The September meeting brought new prospective members attracted by the area under discussion by our speaker, Dan Leeson. Apparently there are more people than we realized whose interest is centered in the Alsace-Lorraine areas.

Later Dan Leeson told us about a project he had in mind. A small group interested in his idea and willing to work with him on it gathered after the meeting to discuss plans. What Dan has in mind is cataloguing the Jewish cemeteries of northern California, so that those who are looking for an ancestor will be able to check a book that will give location of the grave rather than the often inadequate and in smaller northern cemeteries often non-existent records maintained by the cemeteries.

If you care to participate in this effort contact Dan Leeson. He is looking to those who enjoy working in cemeteries and feel the project will serve an important need. Contact Dan Leeson at 1821 Granger Ave. Los Altos, 94022-6716, phone 964-9657.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next two meetings will not be on the usual third Monday of the odd numbered months. The third Monday in January is Martin Luther King Day and the library is closed on that day.

The third Monday in March is Erev Purim and the orthodox among us attend services on

that evening to hear the reading of the Megillah Esther.

The new dates for the January and March meetings will be January 23rd and March 13th. Please note these changes on your meeting date cards. It has now been impressed on us that the third Monday in January is Martin Luther King Day which will necessitate an alternate date every January and we will set the new date well in advance from now on. We will also try to obtain a Jewish calendar which gives more than one year at a time in order to be certain of not to miss knowing about it when a holiday falls on or too close to a third Monday.

RUSSIAN CONSULAR RECORDS INDEX & LIST OF RUSSIAN REFUSENIKS

We now have the Russian Consular records Index book on hand, purchased with funds contributed by the book fund. We will present this book to Sutro after the next meeting, however since all books must first go to Sacramento for cataloguing before they can be placed on Sutros shelves it was decided at the recent board of directors meeting to put the book out on the table for members to check prior to donating it. Bob Weiss will also permit the members to view his copy of a listing of Russian refuseniks before he donates it to Kol Emeth in Palo Alto. So if you wish to see either or both of these books before they are donated remember that they will be there at the November meeting.

PROGRAM CHAIRMAN

At the recent board meeting Sherill Laszlo was officially named Program Chairman and designated a member of the board. She has been acting as program chairman for the last few months and now it is official.

PENINSULA GROUP MEETING

The Peninsula Group announces its next meeting will be held December 19 at 7:30 PM in Burlingame rather than in Palo Alto. Rabbi Irvin Ungar will speak on Uncommon Genealogical Sources. The address is 1200 Edgehill Dr. Burlingame.

RIDES

The problem of transportation for many of our members and would be members was discussed at the recent board meeting. A number of people who would like to attend meetings are unable to do so because they do not drive, because they cannot drive at night due to night blindness, they no longer drive because of age etc. Public transportation is not an answer. There are too many just waiting to take advantage of grey haired individuals because they look like easy prey. Taxis are not feasible because they are very expensive and after meetings there is not even a phone available to summon one, even if you can afford a \$10.00 or more fare each way.

If you can offer a ride you will be doing a mitzvah. If you don't know of anyone in your area in need of a ride, ask us. We may know of someone anxious to attend meetings but in need of a way to get there. We do not want anyone to feel obligated to pick up someone whether it fits their own plans or not but if for any given meeting you can offer a ride do consider it.

ORAL HISTORY CLASS

Bob Weiss is much interested in the oral history class being offered by the Holocaust Center to teach people how to take oral histories from holocaust survivors. He plans to gather a peninsula group to attend together and hopes other JGS members will join them. The center is in the Jewish Community Library building at 14th Ave and Balboa. The dates are Dec. 6 & 13, the time 6:30 P.M. The technique should work for genealogy as well.

SFBAJGS LIBRARY

Henceforth our librarian, Carolyn Sherfy, will have our library collection in her car available to any member desiring to borrow a book or tape.

Our library is not large but we do have some books and some tapes from seminars. We plan to add tapes from the Washington seminar shortly.

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL GENEALOGISTS

During the national seminar in Washington this summer an association of professional genealogists was formed. It is headed by Eileen Polakoff of New York. This new association should be very helpful to the Jewish genealogist. We will now know whether or not there is a Jewish genealogist who can work in the area where we need and want help, and find information on those who do genealogical research for a fee. There are times when one does need someone who can check things we cannot check by mail and we cannot always go to every area in person much as we might wish to do so.

L'DOR V'DOR

L'Dor V'Dor genealogical Publishing company is a new project of Naomi Feller. Naomi will read new books of possible interest to a genealogist and provide reviews of them for the benefit of Jewish genealogists who often do not know which books might be worth purchasing and which have no genealogical value. So often we look at the lists sent out by the various publishing companies and wonder which of the books would be of value and which not. One can not always tell from the blurbs. Naomi, on the otherhand, knows our interests and will be providing a very valuable service for us.

NATIONAL CEMETERIES

To learn in which national cemetery an ancestor who was a veteran of the civil war period or later, was buried, write to the Director of National Cemetery Systems, Veterans Administration at 810 Vermont Ave. N.W., Washington D.C. 20420

RUSSIA

Ruben Cofsky's account of his trip to Russia in the newsletter of the San Diego JGS bears out what we have been hearing, namely, that things are easier today for the would-be Russian researcher. People have been able to visit ancestral towns that once would have been off limits for foreigners with no trouble at all. Ruben Cofsky simply requested a car and an Intourist guide and they were supplied. An Intourist guide is a must but unless one speaks fluent Russian the guide is an absolute necessity for the traveler. Amenities we take for granted here, he soon found to be something else again in Russia. Glasnost has clearly brought improvement in many ways but nothing changes overnight. Being allowed to visit small towns is a big step. Illness kept him from going to the Kiev archives so we do not know how much they might have let him see, but the fact that he was even referred to the archives gives us hope that the day is not far off when we may actually be able to get records for our Russian ancestors.

ARCHIVE NAME CHANGES

Dorot tells us the federal government has decided to rename its national archives branches. Rather than identifying them by the name of the closest large city which sometimes can be a considerable distance away as in the case of Los Angeles. The Los Angeles archives are in Laguna Niguel, a good two hours or more away from the city. The New York archives are in Bayonne, New Jersey although scheduled to move to the city before too long. The distance from New York to Bayonne is not that great but it is in another state. Our own archives are in San Bruno. The future plan is to identify the archives by the region served. New York will become Northeast Region, Boston is to be called New England, Philadelphia-Mid-Atlantic, Atlanta-Southeast, Chicago-Great Lakes, Kansas City-Central Plains, Fort Worth-Southwest, Denver-Rocky Mountain, San Francisco-Pacific Central, Los Angeles-Pacific Southwest and Seattle-Pacific Northwest.

We will have to learn new names but we may wind up with a better idea of where all the eleven branches are and what region they serve. If you look at the list you will see that the east and west coasts are well taken care of but the entire mid-west has only Chicago and Kansas City. We can consider ourselves very lucky to live in an area so well covered and to have an archives of our own not too far from us.

HANDWRITING

Although the importance of a clear and legible hand was stressed to all young students in the days when all paperwork was performed handwritten even then not every old record is in a legible hand. Familiar words are usually legible enough unless the writing is very difficult, however problems arise when it comes to names. Confusing a u with an n, an a with an o, can be all too common, combinations of letters can also be misread such as wi for un in for m etc. If this occurs in a family name with which you were not previously familiar it can really throw you off.

The older the document the greater the problem. At one time standard spelling did not exist and as a result things were often spelled as the writer felt was correct. Add to that the fact that writing styles change over the years and vary with the area of the country not to mention varying with different countries.

If you are dealing with not only a foreign language but a very different script such as German script the problem is so great you probably cannot cope with it and must ask someone to transliterate it. Do not assume however that just because they are familiar with German script they will not encounter problems. All the above problems exist where script is concerned too.

Printed script is another story. If you can read old English script you should be able to read printed German script as well. It is the cursive script that is difficult for most people. In case you would like to try your hand at script here are two charts, one lower case and the other upper case, showing the difference between cursive German script, printed German script and what the Germans call "latin script", our common type of printing.

Das kleine Alphabet. The Small Alphabet

GERMAN SCRIPT ALPHABET

Das große Alphabet. The Large Alphabet

a b c d e f g h i j
a b c d e f g h i j

k l m n o p q r s s
k l m n o p q r s s

t u v w x y z lz ss
t u v w x y z lz ss

ä ö ü au äu eu
ä ö ü au äu eu

ei ai ch sch st qu
ei ai ch sch st qu

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A B C D E F G H
A B C D E F G H

I J K L M N O P
I J K L M N O P

Q R S T U V W
Q R S T U V W

X Y Z - Ä Ö Ü
X Y Z - Ä Ö Ü

Au Äu Eu Ei
Au Äu Eu Ei

Ch Sch St Qu
Ch Sch St Qu

Today German script is not much used in Germany but it is well within memory that every German child learned to write script first. Most of those around today stopped using script as they learned "latin" writing.

In working with German documents such as birth, death or marriage records you will generally

find that names are written in "latin script" and the rest of the handwritten part in German script. The forms themselves will be printed (in German script, of course) but they are more likely to have been filled in by hand than by typewriter unless they are of rather recent vintage.

You can, of course, obtain an abstract in English but you might miss something you would not willingly forego or you might miss seeing the signature of an ancestor, the only sample of his writing you may ever see.

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL GENEALOGISTS

At the seminar in Washington this past summer an association of professional Jewish genealogists was formed to be headed by Eileen Polakoff. So far we have not received any list of members nor been invited to write for a list but all in due time we suppose. It will be wonderful to know just who is available to do research for us when we need someone and someone who understands the needs of the Jewish genealogist.

NATIONAL CEMETERIES

If you are seeking someone who was a veteran and could have been buried in a national cemetery you can get information for veterans from the Civil War period or later by writing to the Director of the National Cemetery Systems, Veterans Administration, 810 Vermont Av N.W. Washington, D. C. 20420. They will check to see in which national cemetery the person you seek may have been buried.

SHAHOR FAMILY HISTORY

Yaakov Shahor of Rehov Matityahu 31, Bnei Brak 51604, Israel advises that he is compiling an extensive history of the Shahor family. He would like anyone related to this family to send him whatever they may have concerning this family so that his family history and the comprehensive family tree it is to feature can be as comprehensive as possible. He states that this name has never been changed in any way and all those bearing this name belong to the same family.

VITAL STATISTIC CERTIFICATES FROM POLAND

Lineage, the newsletter of the JGS of Long Island reports two recent incidents of outrageous charges by Polish Archives and would like to hear from anyone who has had previous experience with Polish archives. One person did receive some information but was charged \$40.00 for a bit of basic information requiring minimal research. The other person was charged \$18.00 for a certificate of no record!

Although JGSLI is justifiably shocked and outraged at this gouging it is not really anything new. Some dozen years ago or so a man in Chicago paid \$5.00 and received a certificate of no record. Three or four years later another researcher received a printed notification from the Polish consulate informing her through a checked off box that for \$11.00 she could send for a certificate of no record. This researcher did not write but called the consulate to ask why anyone would want to pay for a certificate of no record. The answer was that it could be used for Social Security purposes. Scarcely likely, since the requested record was an 1810 birth certificate. Their excuse for the high charge was that others were charging as much. Obviously the only change that has occurred is that the charges have been raised. Apparently they are raised regularly. Since the JGSLI is collecting data on this if you know of a similar instance of Polish overcharge please let Naomi Feller know.

Meantime JGSLI mentions a technique that has apparently worked for some. In writing to a Polish "Urząd Stanu cywilnego" which we presume is a civil registry office, enclose a \$5.00 bill in your envelope. A much smaller amount than demanded by the consulate charges but if it can be kept by the office receiving it and they need not report it to higher ups they may find it an acceptable sum. If you try this and it works, let us know and we will spread the word. So many people would like information from Poland. We know they do have records even in areas where they say they don't.

East Germany and all the eastern European countries are very uncooperative with genealogists but perhaps someday it will change.

COMPUTER ACTIVITIES

Despite the interest so many of our members show in computers we still do not have anyone willing to write a short computer column for us. It is also surprising that no one has suggested forming a computer interest group as has been the case with so many other genealogical societies, Jewish and not Jewish. Since not everyone understands computers, or wants to, the subject is not suitable for a general meeting. However computer interest groups can get very technical and enjoy their meetings immensely.

MIRIAM'S MISSING COLUMN

Have you noticed that Miriam Weiner's column has not appeared in the Jewish Bulletin recently? Although we know they do not give genealogy any great weight the column had been appearing with a reasonable degree of frequency. During the Bulletin's move when the paper was considerably reduced in size, it was not too surprising that Miriam's column was one of the missing features. It has now been back up to its former size for some time but still no genealogy column. Maybe the time has come for our members to call or write and ask why not. If they know we have missed it, they may resume it. Reading the column makes people aware of genealogy and we sorely need that.

YIZKOR BOOK SOURCE

According to Lineage one of the world's best Yizkor book sources is J. Robinson & Co. 31 Nachlat Benjamin St. Tel Aviv, Israel. The editor notes that books she has ordered were used but in good condition and ranged in price from \$40.00 to \$75.00 plus shipping. Service is prompt and personal checks are accepted. Many books are single copies and stock changes.

MEMBERS FORUM

Bob Weiss submitted the following

Peninsula Group - 1 Year Retrospective

The Peninsula Group has been meeting for the past year on the third Monday of the even months at congregation Kol Emeth in Palo Alto. The on the subject of Identifying and preserving Family Photographs marked the beginning of the second year of dynamic programming by Bob Weiss, the group chairman. Other programs have been on History of Photography, The Taube/Baron Collection of Jewish History and Culture, Unusual reference Sources and Document Preservation. Many members are introducing personal computers into their research and lively PC VS Mac Discussions may frequently be heard. Meetings begin at 7:30 P.M.

SHARING CORNER

WHERE, OH, WHERE IS MY GREAT GREAT GRANDPA?

By Sherrill Rae Laszlo

About 2½ years ago I became interested in genealogy and began my initial research with the family that had been in this country the longest --- certainly there must be an abundance of information on these people. Wrong!

My paternal great grandmother was born in Baltimore in 1866. Her maiden name was Pereles. Not a name you see everyday so I got right into checking census records for the applicable years and writing for vital records. Came up with zip.

This past summer I attended the Jewish Genealogy Seminar in Washington, D.C. and found my great grandmother's father, Joseph, listed in the Baltimore city directories on microfilm at the Library of Congress for the years 1866-1877. For 1878-1879 only his wife was listed. I made the assumption that Joseph had died in 1877/78 although I had not acquired any documents to back my assumption. Fortunately later in the summer I had an opportunity to spend several days in Baltimore and proceeded to do some heavy on-site research. I began at the Baltimore City Archives in their Historical Records Survey File, a treasure trove of very interesting original documents, all neatly indexed over 50 years ago as part of a WPA project. I looked up Pereles and found a couple of cards. Each card represented a box of documents I would have to scan to find "my man".

One of the items was a petition by Joseph Pereles in 1867 to the Baltimore City Council to produce matches in a warehouse on the waterfront. It was written in his own handwriting and used a good amount of faulty English. The original city council resolution granting the petition was also in file. The second item was perhaps reflective of the times, the neighborhood and the economic circumstances in which my people found themselves: it was a complaint brought in November 1869 by my great great grandmother Pereles against a Mr. John Jones for "abusing her". He counter-complained that she had assaulted him. Jones "defaulted the bail for peace".

These items did not represent a great breakthrough but there was one more bit of information which helped me. The City Directory listings, alluded to earlier, showed Joseph as engaged in a series of occupations. After his petition for match production was granted he moved into china, beer, cabinetmaking, laborer, second hand stoves and second hand clothing. These trades or occupations did not seem to relate to each other in a logical way nor did they appear to be steps up the economic ladder. Again I made an assumption: this was a man who was having a rough time. I decided to follow my instincts on this. My next stop was the Jewish Historical Society of Maryland. The director assured me that there was nothing in their holdings dated early enough to aid in my research unless the family was a prominent one. However I managed to enlist the sympathies of the archivist who, realizing that I was there "all the way from California" (you'd be surprised how well this one generally works), agreed to pull a few items from the locked archives.

I requested the records of donations and case files and minute books of the Hebrew Benevolent Society among other things, and spent the better part of a hot afternoon reviewing records. Paydirt! My great great grandfather, Joseph Pereles, a poor immigrant from bohemia with six children to support, had had to look to the generosity of his own people to help him survive. There were entries covering the four winter months of 1877 in which he was given disbursements of coal and cash.

The story ends here because I have not yet followed up on implications of this find. To me it means a subsidized burial by the Hebrew Free Burial Society. The family did survive because my great grandmother was this man's daughter and I have a lot of pride in knowing that he did what he had to do. I just wish it wasn't so hard to find.

FAMILY FINDER

K-6 Leslie Kline, Cadillac Hotel, 380 Eddy St. San Francisco, Calif. 94102
Seeking ancestors of Louis Kleinman and his wife, Sarah. Also Jacob Cohen and his wife, Anna. Both men were from Ostropol, Ukraine. The son of Louis and Sarah Kleinman became Joseph Kline.

L-2 Sherrill Rae Laszlo, 34 Craig Ave. Piedmont, Calif. 94611 (415) 655-6789
Seeking descendants of Joseph Pereles (Perelis or Peerless) born Bohemia, date unknown. Died c. 1877-78. Lived in Baltimore, Md. from 1866 on. There were six children: Gerson, Abe, Morris, Dora, Edward and Bertha. Edward was born in 1863 in Pennsylvania (city unknown). Bertha born in 1866 in Baltimore.

M-1 Madeleine E. Mitchell, N.E. 430 Oak St. Apt. #3, Pullman, Wash. 99163 (509) 332-3639
Seeking to exchange information with descendants of Jacob and Deborah Benjamin (nee Boynton) of the Emanuel congregation, born 1820s St. Thomas, West Indies. Issue: (1870 U.S. Census shows them in San Francisco) Moses, Abraham, Thadeus, Rachaël, Alfred, Alexander, Wallace, Phillip, Daniel and Grace. Grace probably named for her aunt, Grace Constance Boynton. The later died San Francisco 1910. wife of Henry Levy, born 1819 in London, England. Henry died 1872 in San Francisco, Buried at Home of Peace. One Benjamin daughter married Joseph Marks.

W- 2 Martha L. Wise, 1990 20th Ave. San Francisco, Calif. 94116 (415) 564-9927
Seeking information on Robert Grün born 1855 in Copenhagen, son of Louis and Pauline Grün. Arrived in this country via England. Lived in New York and when last known had moved to Chicago. Failed to maintain contact with his family in Denmark. Known to have had two sons. Descendants may still be in the Chicago area.

MOSTLY QUERIES

This little publication, as its name implies, is concerned chiefly with queries and although at present they have few Jewish queries they do hope for more. Their aim is to cover as much territory as possible. A one year subscription is \$13.50 and includes entitlement to two 40 word queries per bi-monthly issue. A query might just reach an area you have not yet reached once they have a larger number of Jewish queries. If you are interested we can photocopy the little subscription form for you. The address is 44 Wexford Rd. Dewitt, N.Y. 13214 . That is the Syracuse area.

CHICAGO RECORDS

From Morasha: Thomas Burke discovered voter registration records going back before 1900 in the Chicago City Hall gathering dust and apparently unknown to the staff there. They covered the period of the destroyed 1890 census, he realized in working with them. Information includes not only names and addresses but birth places and naturalization dates as well. He is concerned about the fate of all this material. If you wish to reach him his address is 10012 S. Karlov Ave. Oak Lawn, Ill. 60453.

RUSSIAN TRANSLATOR

The San Diego JGS recommends Raia Rechaim, a teacher of Russian at UCSD, as an excellent translator, should you have any Russian documents to be translated. Her address is 4555 71st St. No.5, La Mesa, Calif. 92041.

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