



Hunting for Grampa's Family: A Tale of Happenstance, Persistence & Patience

By Louisa Rose Feldman Livingston

I had always felt close to my father and grandfather, although I knew little about them. In 2003, 40 years after the death of my Grampa, Albert S. Feldman, and 10 years after my father, Albert Feldman (born Abraham), passed away, I decided to delve into their history, as a means of deepening my bond with them. My mother and her parents had researched their Protestant Dutch family years ago. Without knowing how much I could discover and without any genealogical experience, I began by reading books about the 1800's in parts of Poland annexed by Russia, and about the emigration process. My search brought me far more than I could ever have imagined -- much factual information and new family members, both living and dead. This article demonstrates how intuition and happenstance, combined with a good dose of patience and persistence, permitted me to expand my grandfather's extended family, thanks to the accidental discovery of the maiden name of my paternal great grandmother.

Happenstance #1

At two key moments happenstance brought someone special into my life, who gave a crucial boost to my search. The first instance occurred right at the beginning. A distant relative from my father's family, Sherrie

Bergman, who was about my age, and whom I had met briefly in grade school, reappeared in my family circle around 2003. She had heard that my brother's daughter had recently married a Jewish man and was converting to Judaism. Sherrie wished to give the bride a few items that had originally belonged to my grandparents. I promptly contacted Sherrie and learned that we were second cousins, because my grandfather and her grandmother were siblings. One of Sherrie's many inherited treasures was a Feldman family photograph taken in New York City in 1920. It contained the images not only of our respective grandparents, their brothers, spouses, and their children, but also my grandparents' parents. The names of all the family members were written on the back of the photograph. Suddenly, I had a full list of names of my immediate and my extended family, plus their relationships to each other and their faces -- the beginnings of a real family tree. This lucky break ignited my research efforts.

Grampa was very close to Sherrie's grandparents and father, the Bergmans, throughout their lives. Grampa and Sherrie's grandfather, Louis Bergman, both glove makers, worked together in Gloversville, New York.

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We support organizations, repositories, and archival projects through generous annual donations to insure the preservation of many of the Jewish community's treasured documents and to provide greater public access to them. Some of them are American Jewish Historical Society, American Sephardi Federation, Center for Jewish History, Center Genealogy Institute, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, JewishGen, Jewish Records Indexing-Poland, Leo Baeck Institute, National Yiddish Book Center, Ronald S. Lauder Foundation Genealogy Project at the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

Membership benefits:

- free admission to our monthly meetings (September through June), featuring guest lecturers from a variety of disciplines, and field trips to libraries and archives;
- discount on admission to JGS events, such as all-day seminars;
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President's Postings by Roni Seibel Liebowitz

It is hard to believe that the summer is nearly over and the next academic season is almost upon us. For those who attended the IAJGS conference in Paris, I hope you had a good learning experience and did lots of networking with fellow genealogists. The Lucille Gudis Fund sponsored the Paris conference lecture given by Dzianis Liseichykau from the National Historical Archives of Belarus.

We held our very first brown bag lunch and learn session in the Kovno Room at the Center for Jewish History before the June 10th presentation. Members were invited to bring their lunches and their genealogy questions, techniques, brick walls, etc. to this informal setting. A great deal of give and take occurred. For example, one member was able to provide suggestions to another who was facing similar issues in advancing his family search. In addition to several Executive Council members, we were very fortunate to have expert Miriam Weiner join us. Her responses were invaluable to the group. At the end of the hour, the attendees indicated that they would like these sessions to continue.

JGS suffered a great loss with the passing of former President, Steven W Siegel, z"l. He was a member of the Executive Council continuously from its inception in 1977. We are planning a special program in his memory for the spring of 2013.

On June 10, 2012, Executive Council member, Avrum Geller, missed our JGS meeting, but for a good reason. He represented the JGS, Inc. (NY) at a Genealogy

Fair hosted by JGS of Greater Philadelphia at Temple Beth Sholom in Cherry Hill, NJ. He was favorably positioned at a table front and center of the exhibition hall and was busy from then on fielding questions about New York City genealogical research. The event officially lasted four hours, and there was a constant line of people waiting to ask for assistance with their questions about searching New York City vital records, cemeteries, landsmanshaften, immigration and naturalization records, and locating family members who lived in New York. Thanks to Avrum for graciously representing JGS.

It's time to update the JGS Brochure. Your response to our request for photos of your ancestors, heirlooms, and records, was overwhelming! Thank you. The graphic artists will make the final selections for printing in the brochure. Even if yours does not end up in the brochure, collected photos may be used in another project in the future.

The Executive Council continues to explore ways to reach the community and stimulate more interest in genealogy amongst all age groups. If you know about a group at your synagogue, college, society, or other organization that may be interested in a presentation about genealogy, let us know.

If you haven't already done so, please return the survey you received.

Read about the past and upcoming JGS programs in this issue. I look forward to having you join us.

Roni

JGS receives generous gift from Kern Charitable Fund

JGS is pleased to announce receipt of a \$10,000 grant from the Kern Charitable Fund of the Westchester Community Foundation. This unrestricted gift, recommended by JGS member Robert M. Kern, will strengthen our capacity to support a wide variety of archival research projects, as well as our monthly lecture series and periodic workshops and seminars. We are very grateful to Robert Kern for his thoughtfulness and generosity.

Hunting for Grampa's Family

continued from page 1

The Feldmans and Bergmans lived and worked near each other, sometimes in the same large house, until the Bergman children finished high school. The Bergman family then moved to New York City, where they raised Sherrie, their only child. Grampa, a widower, visited the Bergmans often and moved to New York toward the end of his life. Sherrie was familiar with some of the family lore and was an invaluable source of information. In contrast, I grew up with my family in the Midwest and knew no other Feldman or Bergman relatives. An extra bonus was that Sherrie and I both felt very comfortable with each other and soon developed a close friendship. Armed with the names supplied by Sherrie and with some information from my younger sister, who had interviewed my father shortly before he died, I began searching for passenger manifests on www.Ellisland.org for my grandfather, his parents, his siblings, and their spouses. I knew the siblings' birth order, the dates of birth and death of my grandfather and grandmother and her maiden name. I also knew that Sherrie's grandmother was named Sadie, but her nickname was "Shusha" and that she was married in New York City in 1905. A family tree depicting the names of the primary progenitors and portions of the next few generations mentioned in this article is shown on the next page. This will help the reader visualize the relationships among the various individuals mentioned.

I found Grampa's passenger manifest soon enough, using both a Soundex search and looking through all the male Feldmans, knowing he was born in Warsaw in 1883. In America he was known as Albert S. Feldman. After many hours of intensive searching, I found an "Altie" or "Alter" (depending on how the letters are interpreted) Feldman, age 20 from Warsaw, who boarded a ship in Antwerp in 1903 and landed in New York City. Later my family sent me a few items pertaining to my genealogical research, including a copy of a letter written by the State Department to A. Feldman at one of my Grampa's old addresses, verifying that landing.

The search for the passenger manifest of Grampa's sister Sadie/"Shusha" was also rather easy. I was rewarded with "Feldmann, Schosse," a single female whose last residence was Warschau. She arrived in 1903, three months before her brother, sailing on the same ship, the Kroonland from Antwerp, that Grampa later used. Her manifest stated that she was staying with

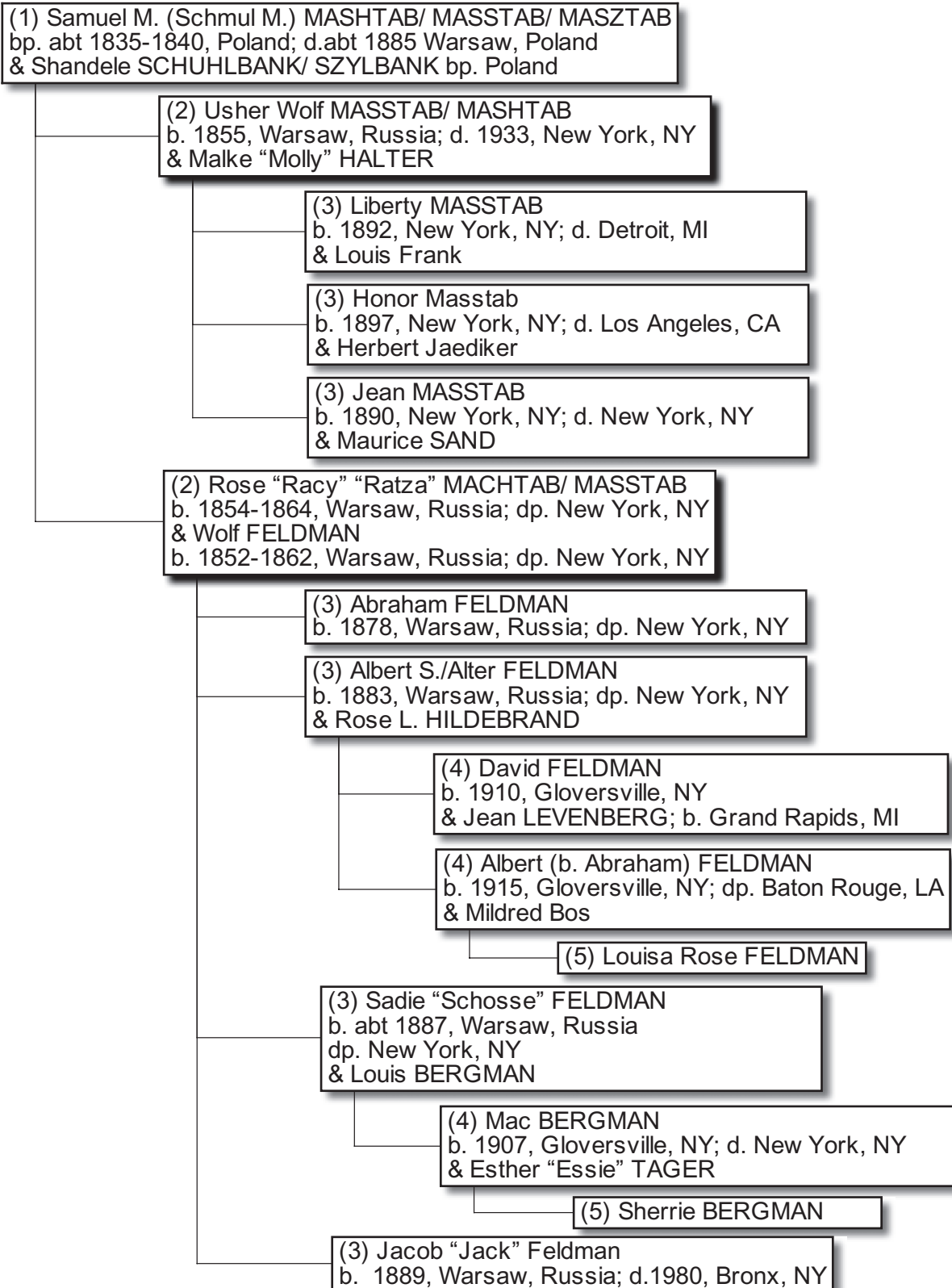
"uncle Masstab and Co. at 135 West ? The name of the street was undecipherable, but it looked exactly like the address that my grandfather had given on his manifest, although he stated that he was staying with his brother. I had no doubt that this "Schosse" was my great aunt. I learned more about "uncle Masstab" later.

In contrast to those two successes, I have as yet been unsuccessful in finding the manifests of my grandfather's two brothers, Abraham and Jacob, although I have since found each man on several U. S. Census reports and thus know about when they immigrated. How I wish the brothers did not have such common first and last names. Because Abraham traveled abroad for his business, I did find a 1921 passport application, which stated that his father, Wolf Feldman, was born in Poland and was alive for the 1920 Census.

It took much longer to locate passenger manifests for Wolf Feldman, my great grandfather, and Rose, my great grandmother. Eventually I found the record for Rose (or Rajze/ Raigze), and Wolf Feldman, whose last residence was "Warschau." Their ship departed from Antwerp (a popular port) in 1912. Their ages (50 and 48) were a little young, if they were understood correctly. However, it would have been possible for them to have birthed their oldest son, Abraham in 1878 and their other children, Albert S. in 1883, Sadie, born in 1887, and Jacob in 1889. Both parents were short (5 foot 1 and 4 foot 10) and Rose had blue eyes. (Other official documents such as the World War I draft cards support the notion that males in this extended family are relatively short and other supplementary items lend credence that the passenger manifests are indeed those of "my" Rose and Wolf Feldman.

Finally, in 2010, about seven years after I began this research, I discovered Wolf and Rose on the 1920 Census – the only other evidence I have for them, other than their children listing them on various documents. The reason it took so long was that their last names were misspelled as "Phelmon".¹ With them on the Census were two of their sons, although one was evidently simply visiting for the day. The Census also revealed that Wolf and Rose immigrated in 1911 (one year different from the passenger manifests that I had found; that neither of them could read or write English; and that Wolf did not speak English, while his wife Rose did. These details matched information I had gathered elsewhere.

Portions of Masstab – Feldman Descendant Chart: Five Generations



Rose's maiden name intrigued me, because it was unusual. She was listed as "Racy Machtab" on my grandfather's and grandmother's marriage license. How fortunate that she had an unusual surname, and not a common one like Feldman, although I was not certain that this was her "real" maiden name. As I continued seeking out marriage and death certificates and applications for Social Security numbers over the years, I found that Rose's children spelled her maiden name in various ways, among them: "Machtab", "Mastop", "Moshtob", "Mostoff", and "Masstab". Yet Beider (1996) found none of these names existing in Warsaw in the 1800's and early 1900's. The closest name for the family when they were living in Warsaw was "Masztab".²

I knew from my cousin Sherrie that Grampa had cousins with the unusual names of *Liberty* and *Honor*. She also had heard of a few other names, such as "Sand." In playing around on the internet, I happened on one large Masstab family living in New York City. I refer to them as a "Masstab" family because when the children in the family married around 1915, they usually took the surname Masstab. However, the head of the household, Usher Wolf, took the surname "Mashtab." On the 1900 Census, one of his daughters was named Liberty. I passionately searched for that family, but it took me longer to find Liberty's father in the 1920 Census, because the transcriber spelled the surname as "Mashlab". A few years later, I found the family in the 1910 Census. Again, the transcribers had misspelled the surname, this time as Usher *Mashtat*. That was a good reminder to always look at the original data when possible. So many errors occur and good data may be lost or misinterpreted. It is unwise to take someone else's word for how a name is spelled or the accuracy of a person's age on a document. Check several sources.

In my quest for individuals belonging to this particular Masstab family, I looked for birth, death, and marriage certificates. I combed through several online indices such as the index of Brides and Grooms prepared by the Italian Genealogical Group on www.italianguen.org and New York City Births, 1891-1902 on Ancestry.com, trying to locate potential Masstab marriage, birth, or death certificate numbers. Follow up consisted of viewing the certificates on the microfiche located at the New York City Municipal archives in person and pouring through the relevant boxes at the archives of various years.

I was drawn to Usher Mashtab's large family in particular because of the unusual names of the daughters, Liberty and Honor. Still another daughter's married name was Sand. I was almost certain they were Grampa's cousins.³ It was confusing that the birth certificates for the Mashtab children spelled the family last name differently on each birth certificate. Sometimes it was Maschtob or Mashtabr

or Mastub or Mastop.⁴ When the children married, they usually listed their surname as "Masstab."

Happenstance #2

Happenstance intervened a second time toward the end of the research. By this time, after five years of researching Usher Mashtab and his family, I strongly suspected that he and my paternal great grandmother Rose M. Feldman were siblings and that Usher Mashtab was in fact the "uncle Masstab" that "Schosse" Feldman, my Grampa's younger sister stayed with upon first arriving in America more than a century ago. In the summer of 2009, I noticed that someone on Ancestry.com had a particular interest in the branch of my family tree involving Usher Masstab's family. I sent a message to that person through Ancestry, hoping that we had a mutual interest and could help one another. That person was interested in the Masstab's in-laws; however, they knew someone indirectly who might be able to contact a different relative, who would hopefully give me contact information. In September, I received a message from someone with an unfamiliar name and an email address, informing me that this person knew or was the daughter of Honor Masstab!

On the afternoon of September 10, 2009, I cautiously worded and sent the following email:

Hello. I think and hope I'm sending this message to Ernestine Jaediker. I believe that we're related. I would love to ask you some questions and share some information with you, if you are willing and interested.

I am Louisa Rose Feldman Livingston. I've been researching my father's side for about 6 years.

My great grandparents, Rose Masstab Feldman and Wolf Feldman came to New York City from Warsaw, as did their four grown children, between 1900 and 1912. Their children were Abraham, Albert, and Jacob as well as Sadie, who married Louis Bergman. I have several reasons to believe that my great grandmother was the sister of your grandfather, Usher Masstab. The Moscow's from Ancestry.com gave me Jean's number because I had some questions about Herbert and Honor Jaediker. Jean wasn't feeling well and, perhaps because I was interested in Herbert and Honor, Jean said she couldn't help me and gave me your email. Do you recall anything leading you to believe that your grandfather Usher had a sister Rose

(or Racy)? I have other questions, but I don't want to throw too much at you!

You can email me or call me. I hope you have some mutual interest in genealogy and that I have found the right Jaediker..

Sincerely, Louisa

That evening, Ernestine replied:

Hello Louisa. We are cousins. My mother's father, Usher Wolf Masstab came to America first, from Warsaw around 1883 and sent for my grandma, Molly and their first two children. They had five more born in New York. His sister, Aunt Ratza (Rose) Masstab had blue eyes. I have a very worn copy of a group photo marked on the back with the following names: "Cousin Abe Feldman, Abe's wife Rose Feldman, Albert Feldman, cousin, Albert's wife, Aunt Ratza's husband, Jack Feldman (cousin), Fanny Bergman, cousin (Sadie's daughter), Tanta Ratza, Grandpa's sister."

Albert Feldman used to visit us, also Jack Feldman and his family. If Jean Feldman married a dentist and lived in Detroit, I met her in 1941.

Isn't this fun? Ernestine

It was so heartwarming that Ernestine welcomed me readily. She immediately confirmed that her grandfather Usher Wolf and my great grandmother "Tante Ratza" (as she called her) were brother and sister. The next morning, I responded, sharing my excitement. I told her that it was great hearing her call my great grandmother "Tante Ratza" and how thrilling she had met my Grampa. I assumed that she had a different family photo with many of the same people. She mentioned "Jean", who was not in my photo; she was actually the wife of my grandfather's oldest son and would have been a small baby at the time of the photo. I told her my grandfather's name and that he was my great grandmother's second son. I attached a copy of the photo and listed the names of the people, in the order.

Ernestine quickly let me know that the photo I sent was the exact photo that she already had. She continued, "I remember your grandfather Albert very well. He was calm and quiet, a very fine looking man, and you could tell he was intelligent and refined. We liked him a lot. I think he lived in Gloversville, NY. I know my grandpa Usher Wolf was very close to his family and I'm sure they stayed with him when they first came over."

How fortunate that I had found a living relative of whom I could ask many questions. "Ernie" and I often emailed each other several times a week. In her words, we were "kindred spirits." Our relationship began from my desire to remain close to my father and grandfather and from my thirst for genealogical knowledge, and she generously gave me information. She told me how her mother's name had changed from Anna and Annie to Honor. Together, we puzzled over the conflicting ages that some of her mother's sisters had given on the census, marriage licenses, and other documents. She sorted through her old photos and sent me pictures of her aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents on the Masstab side when they were younger.

The relationship between Ernie and me grew as we came to know each other more personally. Several months after Ernie and I met through email, she let me know that the breast cancer she developed years ago had metastasized, and little could be done. In the early spring of 2010, I planned to attend a conference in Los Angeles and wanted to see Ernie in person in San Diego where she lived. We arranged for a visit if she felt up to it on that particular day. Fortunately, it worked out, and we had a meaningful, poignant visit of several hours at her apartment that I cherish. Several months later, she passed away.

Maybe there is a genealogical genie that guides these searches. Whether there is or not, I know that I am grateful that my genealogical quest enriched me far more than I could ever have imagined.

Reference Beider, Alexander. *Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Kingdom of Poland*, Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu, 1996.

Louisa R. Feldman Livingston, a member of JGS, recently completed The Masstabs and Feldmans of Warsaw: Five Generations, published in 2012. This article is based on that research. She is a psychologist and psychoanalyst with a private practice, who is on the faculty of psychoanalytic institutes in New York City and publishes in psychoanalytic journals. She received a doctorate in human development and clinical psychology from the University of Chicago. She and her husband live in Manhattan.

(Footnotes)

- ¹ I sent a correction of the surname to Ancestry.com.
- ² Because Rose, my paternal grandmother, died 10 years before I was born, I had little sense of her until I began this research.
- ³ I was aware of two other Masstab families living in New York City from the late 1800's to the early 1900's. I kept a file on them in case they were related. They turned out not to be.
- ⁴ If I am not mistaken, these represent two different D-M soundex codings. ☆

Upcoming and Current Events

Jewish Genealogical Society

September 9, 2012, 2 p.m.

Monthly Program: **“Researching Your Jewish Roots in Poland, Ukraine and Moldova”**

Speaker: Miriam Weiner, Author and Founder of the Routes to Roots Foundation

Location: Center for Jewish History, 15 West 16th Street, Manhattan, (between 5th and 6th Avenues)

Admission: JGS Members are admitted free of charge; guests pay \$5 at the door.

The Ackman and Ziff Family Genealogy Institute at CJH will open at 11:00 a.m. for access to research material and computers and for networking with other researchers.

Join us at 12:30 for a brown bag lunch and informal chat about genealogy in the Kovno Room on the second floor of the Center for Jewish History.

October 21, 2012, 2 p.m.

Monthly Program: **“Getting the Most Out of JewishGen”**

Speaker: Phyllis Kramer, the Creator and Vice President of Jewishgen’s Education Program and the Teacher of many of its Online courses

Location: Center for Jewish History, 15 West 16th Street, Manhattan, (between 5th and 6th Avenues)

Admission: JGS Members are admitted free of charge; guests pay \$5 at the door.

The Ackman and Ziff Family Genealogy Institute at CJH will open at 11:00 a.m. for access to research

material and computers and for networking with other researchers.

Join us at 12:30 for a brown bag lunch and informal chat about genealogy in the Kovno Room on the second floor of the Center for Jewish History.

Upcoming JGS Meetings:

November 18, 2012, Speaker to be Announced

December 25, 2012, Annual Meeting and Annual Holiday Brunch

New York City & Environs

October 26 and 27, “The Genealogy Event”, a 2 day event for those interested in genealogy and featuring a wide variety of exhibitors, learning opportunities.

Location: 125 West 18th Street, New York 10011, between 6th and 7th Avenues.

Exhibitors include: JGS, Ancestry.com, New York Genealogical and Biographical Society and many more. For more information visit www.bbnygroup.com

**October 30 – November 30, 2012
Thirteenth Annual Rutgers Film Festival,
sponsored by the Bildner Center for Jewish
Studies at Rutgers University.**

Schedule available at <http://bildnercenter/rutgers.edu/film>

Location: **The Regal Cinema Commerce Center**
2399 U.S. 1 South
North Brunswick, N.J.

Directions: 732-940-8343. ☆



JGS Program Reports

March 25, 2012

“We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust” by Steve Stein

Ellen Cassedy’s grandfather immigrated to the United States in 1911 at the age of 19. When her mother died more than 20 years ago, and she lost her last contact with the Yiddish world of her forebears, she headed back to Lithuania to learn Yiddish. Her talk at the March meeting was a recounting of her experiences discovering the world that the Holocaust destroyed and exploring its origins and manifestations, specifically in Lithuania.

Ms. Cassedy could not help but find herself drawn into the contradictions surrounding the Holocaust that remain today in Lithuania. She interviewed mainly women, both Jews and non-Jews. Some items are indisputable: Jews were massacred by the tens of thousands in 1940 and afterward, and only about 6% of the nearly quarter million Jews who lived in Lithuania at the outbreak of the war survived. Some Lithuanians were Nazi collaborators, but many also helped to rescue Jews. Though mass graves exist, the focus in Lithuanian histories is the victimization of ethnic Lithuanians at the hands of the Nazis. And to some, the Jews were linked with the KGB, which had victimized the Lithuanian populace as Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union.

An incident Ms. Cassedy related which is indicative of this tension was the attempted construction of a memorial at Tuskulenai that was planned for a site where many ethnic Lithuanians had been killed in 1945. Upon further investigation, it turned out that those killed were Nazi collaborators, and the memorial was halted. Eventually, the site was turned into a “Park of Quiet,” a place of reflection.



Author Ellen Cassedy at the March 25, 2012 JGS meeting describing her book on the Holocaust in Lithuania and her travels to that country.

Some education is going on in Lithuania, though perhaps not as extensive and organized as in other places. Ms. Cassedy met a number of women who are



Ellen Cassedy signing a copy of her book for a JGS member

developing curricula and other programs for Holocaust awareness.

One of Ms. Cassidy's side trips took her to Rokiskis, where she was told that there was a Lithuanian man who was dying and wanted to talk to a Jew before he died. Reluctantly, she agreed. What she heard was a confessional of how the man had witnessed the marching of Jews to their death and how he had attempted to pass them food. The experience served to raise hope in the accountability of Lithuanian society, but also showed the difficulty of having that accountability become a part of Lithuanian consciousness.

All of these experiences made it clear that there is still much progress to be made in Lithuania regarding the acceptance of the roles Lithuanians may have played in the Holocaust. An extensive question-and-answer session followed the talk.

Afterwards Ms. Cassidy signed copies of her book, *We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust*.



Anyone interested in obtaining a copy may request it on her website at www.ellencassedy.com.

The main talk was preceded by a short report by JGS Executive Council member Avrum Geller on the release of the 1940 United States Census by the National Archives as well as ancestry.com. The Census is not yet indexed but the images may be found at www.archives.gov/research/census/1940/ and www.ancestry.com (a paid site). Enumeration District (ED) finding aids



JGS member Avrum Geller explaining to the audience at the March 25 meeting some of the features of the newly released 1940 census and how to access it.

may be found at www.stevemorse.org. And for those researching in New York City, the New York Public Library is making available digitized images of the 1940 telephone directories from all five boroughs, to help researchers in locate where their relatives may have lived in 1940. It became available on April 2, 2012.

(Steve Stein is a member of the JGS Executive Council. He is a software systems professional in the telecommunications industry and has been researching his own and his wife's Eastern European genealogies for more than thirty years.)

April 15, 2012
"Special Tour and Program at the Museum at Eldridge Street"
by Steve Stein

In a change of pace and locale, the April JGS meeting was held at the Museum at Eldridge Street, an historic landmark and site of one of the most prominent and breathtaking synagogues on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The program was presented in two parts: first, docent Barry Feldman gave a fascinating historical narrative and visual tour of the sanctuary, and then historian and archivist Benjamin Feldman (no known relation) told a fascinating tale of Lower East Side history with a genealogical backdrop.

Mr. Feldman (#1) placed the development of the congregation in the historical context of a growing Jewish presence in lower Manhattan in the late

19th century, first in the Five Points area where the congregation began, and later in the 1880s where temporary quarters were set up on Allen Street while the Eldridge Street building was being erected. Situated on three lots purchased for about \$36,000 dollars, the

mitzvahs were held in the early 1950s, and eventually the small congregation's use of the building was restricted to the first floor of the building.

The synagogue's disrepair reached its worse point in the 1980s, but then it became the object of the Eldridge Street Project. Nearly \$20 million was raised for the restoration of the building, which had been designated a National Historical Landmark. The restoration was completed in 2007. One cannot begin to describe the magnificence of the restoration, both original and new, in this small space. If you cannot visit the Museum in person, check out the photos on the Museum website at www.eldridgestreet.org.

One can imagine what the ornate architecture, reminiscent of Eastern European styles coupled with Spanish influence, represented for recent immigrants from lands of persecution, where synagogues were always required to be smaller and plainer than churches. Everything about the Eldridge Street Synagogue symbolized that the immigrants were now in the land of equality, where a Jewish building could be as big and ornate as any in America.



Scenes at the well attended JGS meeting at the magnificent Eldridge Street Synagogue on April 25, 2012.

building was completed in less than a year.

The building flourished as both a house of worship and a gathering place during the principal years of Eastern European immigration and up through World War I. As immigration slowed in the 1920s, membership began to decline. Jews became more prosperous and began to move to more spacious homes in the Bronx, Brooklyn and elsewhere. The demographics of the Lower East Side continued to change in the 1930s. By the end of World War II, as returning vets flocked to the suburbs, the synagogue was in sharp decline. The last two bar

The JGS attendees then went upstairs. From the vantage point of the women's balcony, the full impact of the restoration could be seen. One could imagine what it was like for women in that era, as such a sizable women's section in an Orthodox synagogue was somewhat an innovation at that time. Mr. Feldman described the function that the synagogue played in the social structure of the community, as a place for socialization; and for mothers eager to marry off their daughters, a wonderful way to spot potential matches down below!



After the tour, the group reassembled in the men's section as Mr. Feldman (#2) related the story of how a change purse he found at a flea market, marked as a promotional give-away by the gilt-lettered advertising of a Lower East Side establishment, sparked his curiosity and led him on a hunt for relatives not even his own. A little knowledge of the format of the telephone number on the change purse helped him place the object in the World War I time frame. Using both standard and imaginative genealogical techniques, he followed the proprietor, one Sol Goldberg, and his businesses through the 1910s and 1920s, into the Prohibition era, and to Brooklyn and on to their disappearance.



Note to serious genealogists: Mr. Feldman was able to research Mr. Goldberg's travels partly by finding documentation of a loan he secured by placing a lien on his store's lease. The surprise end of the story led Mr. Feldman to an award-winning playwright, son of Mr. Goldberg. Read the entirety of Mr. Feldman's story on his blog at www.new-york-wanderer.blogspot.com for Friday, June 24, 2011.

Docent Barry Feldman explaining the history and restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue



Feldman gives a detailed accounting of the resources he used in his project, and shows photographs of the various places he visited, both openly and surreptitiously, in his quest.

May 20, 2012

**“Jewish Chocolate Radar (Choco-Dar) Through the Generations”
by Steve Stein**

Attendees at the May meeting got a somewhat different “taste” of Jewish history from Rabbi Deborah Prinz, with a preview of her upcoming book, *Jews on the Chocolate Trail: Stories of Jews and Cacao*. Her book will be published in October of this year.

Historian, author and archivist Benjamin Feldman describing how an old change purse led him to discover the history and times of an unknown business man.



Rabbi Deborah Prinz at the May 20th JGS Meeting

We all know about some of the obvious connections between Jews and chocolate – Chanukah *gelt*, the Israeli chocolate brand Elite, the imagery of soldiers giving chocolate to liberated concentration camp inmates. Less well known is the origin of the chocolate trade throughout Europe and the Western Hemisphere, largely attributed to Jews. First mentioned in Inquisition documents, it is believed that Columbus and Jewish members of Columbus’ crew helped bring cacao beans back to Europe from a shipment found in the Bay of Honduras in 1502 on Columbus’ fourth voyage. Cacao beans were already valued by the natives and used for currency, but Columbus’ crew mistook them for almonds. Eventually, Jews carried chocolate to Brazil, Jamaica, Curacao and other Western Hemisphere locales.

In the early 17th century, Saint-Esprit in Bayonne in southeast France became a center of the chocolate manufacturing industry in Europe. Brought there by Jews fleeing the Inquisition, chocolate became a cultural staple, as many Jews set up business there, and specialty shops were everywhere. At that time, chocolate’s form was limited to powder, for use in making hot chocolate beverages. This usage spread to England, Amsterdam, and Martinique until Jews were expelled in 1685.

Chocolate became popular in the American colonies as well. Such noted Jewish figures as Aaron Lopez, the Gomez family and others were involved in the chocolate trade.



Chocolate stamps

The Sachertorte, a famous chocolate cake, was developed by Franz Sacher, an Austrian Jew, in the 1800s. And most notably, Stephen Klein, another Austrian Jew, fled in 1938 to America following the *Anschluss* and founded Barton’s, always kosher and inextricably linked with Passover by virtue of the *haggadah* imprinted with the Barton’s name.



Map of the International Chocolate Trade

Rabbi Prinz noted that Latvia also became an unlikely center of chocolate manufacturing, with a distinctly Latvian taste. That tradition likely was transplanted to Israel following World War II, where many feel that the Elite brand embodies that tradition.

So by virtue of their enterprising nature, combined with the perpetual need to flee persecutions, Jews managed to carry chocolate and the love of chocolate throughout Europe and the Americas over the course of more than 500 years.

Rabbi Prinz brought along a selection of chocolate – kosher, of course! – for all the attendees. Watch for her book later this year – the title, listed above, is subtitled “A Delicious Adventure Connecting Jews, Religions, History, Travel, Rituals and Recipes to the Magic of Cacao.” Copies can be ordered now from her website at www.jews-onthechocolatetrail.org.

June 10, 2012

“What, Where and How to Search for Displaced Persons”

by Steve Stein

The June meeting helped attendees focus on some of the issues surrounding the researching of Holocaust survivors who spent time in Displaced Persons camps after the war. Our speaker, Valery Bazarov, JGS member

and Director of the HIAS Family History and Location Services, reviewed the roles of the various agencies housing such records, and walked through some case histories that demonstrate what can be learned from such research. The talk was an update to one that Valery and his colleague Marian Smith of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), prepared for last summer’s IAJGS conference in Washington.

Valery reviewed the missions and roles of the three main agencies that such individuals may have encountered. The International Tracing Service (ITS), in Bad Arolsen, Germany houses documentation of Holocaust victims and survivors who either were associated with concentration camps, death camps or DP camps, or whose families were searching for them after the war. Once individuals left the DP camps, they may have come in contact with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and potentially the USCIS, if they attempted to immigrate to the US.

Valery provided a handout which summarized the resources involved in the cases he subsequently discussed. As described in previous talks, ITS records were effectively sealed against public inquiries until just a few years ago. This collection contains original documents from concentration camps, copies of identification cards issued by Allied occupation forces, and much more. These records are being copied to several sites around the world, among them the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC. This transfer will take another few years. One should begin a search at http://www.its-arolsen.org/en/requests_of_victims_and_family_members/index.html. The USHMM can increasingly be used as a finding aid for Bad Arolsen records. Often, one can find information about the pre-war occupation and/or genealogical information about these persons, as well as post-war correspondence regarding them.



JGS members holding a lively discussion of genealogical issues at a pre-meeting session on June 10

Chronologically, HIAS was often the next agency where such individuals were documented. Often, the file begins when the displaced person applied to immigrate. The HIAS Collection is maintained by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, housed at the Center for Jewish History. Valery has spoken often on this topic as well. To request information from HIAS Family History and Location Service use the link <http://reunion.hias.org/en/pages/locate-family-friends>.

If the displaced person immigrated to the US, he or she will have an official USCIS case file. Resources at the USCIS include the A-File (Alien File) and C-File (Naturalization Certificate File). Several hundred displaced persons were admitted temporarily in 1944 when it was thought that they might return home after the war. An Executive Order in 1945 enabled many of them to stay. The 1948 Displaced Persons Act formalized the process for those who were to follow, creating procedures for the recreation of important vital records where they no longer existed or were not accessible.

For any given individual, what records exist will vary greatly, depending on the journey and personal circumstances of each individual. Valery then described three cases in detail which wove together the use of these three resources in conjunction to create a narrative of these individuals' histories. And the records may need to be searched in reverse chronological order, depending on the information available.

Leibish Blaufuks escaped Austria in 1940, went to Yugoslavia, and ended up in Italy in 1944 from where he filed papers to come to the US, where he had relatives. After spending some time as a temporary resident in the US, at the end, in 1949, the US sent him to Niagara Falls, Canada, so he could "enter" the US as an immigrant.

Husband and wife Zaywel and Malka Langlieb have index records at USHMM, showing that they were in several (but different) camps. Through ITS records, Valery was able to recount various aspects of their experiences during the war, culminating in their reunion afterward. HIAS records helped document their arrival in the US, where relatives initially hospitable to them forced them out. HIAS helped them establish their independence in the US.

Last, Valery related the story of Joel Taubenblatt. A young woman, who had been brought to the US and discovered



Speaker Valery Bazerov chats with old friend Miriam Weiner at the June meeting

only as a teenager that she was adopted, came to Valery to help her find her "story." Through HIAS and later USHMM and USCIS records, Valery reconstructed the story of her birth father Joel Taubenblatt, her Christian birth mother, and the convoluted series of events that led to her adoption and immigration to the US. Ultimately, with the help of dedicated staff at Bad Arolsen, he was able to find the pictures of her parents she was seeking.

In all these stories, use of these collections, along with the help of dedicated archivists, researchers, and others was instrumental in bringing stories of both victims and survivors to life.

Addendum:

The regular meeting was preceded by an informal gathering in the Kovno Room of the CJH of JGS members and Executive Council members, for sharing stories, questions and answers. The session was attended by about 30 people, ranging from beginners to experts, and there were several lively exchanges on different topics. All questions were fair game, and everyone who attended felt the session was helpful and enthusiastically supported having more such sessions.

Please let us know if you think the format of these sessions is beneficial, or if you would like to have discussions dedicated to specific topics, such as geographic areas, or the census or naturalization. Perhaps you would like a different format. We are open to helping you with your research needs and listening to your suggestions. ☆

Dorot mourns the recent passing at age 100 of Louise Stern, the widow of the late Rabbi Malcolm Stern, z”l, who was widely considered the dean of American Jewish genealogy..

JGS member Karen Franklin and the late Steve Siegel regularly visited Mrs. Stern. Ms. Franklin reported, “Although she had Alzheimer’s disease for many years, she never tired of hearing how Malcolm’s name was remembered by Jewish genealogists, about his IAGS award, the American Jewish Archives and how important his book was. Although her functioning was quite limited in the end, I still got a ‘stern’ correction when I tried to pronounce Chillicothe.”

Gary Mokotoff in his online newsletter *Nu? What’s New?* Described Louise Stern as always charming and witty. For example, when Rabbi Stern developed a skin problem that required him to keep his hands covered with ointment, he decided to go to sleep wearing gloves. When Mrs. Stern got into bed and saw the gloves, she said, “I did not realize we were going to sleep formal.”

During a trip to the Caribbean upon arrival at each port, the Rabbi would spend all his time ashore studying the Jewish presence on the island, including visiting cemeteries. Mrs. Stern tolerated his activities for a time, but at the next port, she told him, “If you get off this boat and go searching for one more dead Jew, I am flying home!”

Malcolm Stern was a charter member of the New York Jewish Genealogical Society and was its president from 1979 to 1984. He was also the founder of the Jewish Historical Society of New York and its president from 1979 to 1989. He was the genealogist for the American Jewish Archives, a trustee of the American Jewish Historical Society and a trustee of the Federation of Genealogical Societies, serving as vice president from 1985 to 1988. Rabbi Stern wrote many articles for genealogical and historical publications. His best known book was *Americans of Jewish Descent: 600 Genealogies (1654-1900)*. A tribute to Rabbi Stern was published in *Avotaynu*, Volume IX, Number 4, Winter, 1993.

Bert Shanas, a longtime JGS member and former reporter and editor on the *New York Daily News*, has placed his 573-page family history book on the Web, adding audio and video components that help tell the story.

The online book called “The First Generations,” which was demonstrated at last year’s IAJGS conference, tells the story of the author’s family going back to the 1830s in Ukraine, and tracing the family from there to Canada, the U.S. and Israel. The story itself would be of interest to more than just family members because it is set against the social, economic and political events that created certain family situations. From a technical point of view, the book would be of interest to anyone thinking of going online with their family history projects.

Upon request, the author will send instructions on how to download the book from his password-protected Web site. Write to bshanas@aol.com.



Online News

New York Public Library has NYC Phone Books Online

The Library's email address for online phone books is <http://directme.nypl.org>. The site with its FAQs explains how to use old telephone directories to locate addresses to unlock the 1940 federal census. Once you have the address of the person you are seeking, you may find it easier and quicker to find the Enumeration District by using Steve Morse's One Step Universal 1940 Census Image Viewer to get the census page numbers. See <http://stevemorse.org/census/1940edmaps.htm> or stevemorse.org/censustracks.html

JRI-Poland Announces the Surname Distribution Mapper

This is a new tool to help genealogy researchers to graphically understand where their family names first appeared in the 19th century records and to visualize how the family spread throughout Poland from the early 1800s into the first part of the 20th century. It is based on JRI-Poland's 4.5 million records from more than 500 Polish towns. The "Surname Distribution Mapper" can be reached by going to www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl and following the instructions.

Find YIVO on Facebook

YIVO's Facebook page contains articles from the *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, photos from the archives, news about upcoming events, videos that can be shared, and links about YIVO in the news. You can find YIVO on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/pages/YIVO-Institut for Jewish-Research/197321186967584/](http://www.facebook.com/pages/YIVO-Institut%20for%20Jewish-Research/197321186967584/)

Family Tree Magazine Lists Best State Websites

By going to www.familytreemagazine.com/2010-best-state-websites one can find the email addresses of the

archives of all the states and a brief summary of what they contain and which records are searchable online.

For example, the New York State archives (www.archives.nysed.gov/a/research) contains vital records, military records, and naturalization records for cities and towns outside New York City.

The New Jersey archives (<http://glic.nj.statelib.org/NJ-Information/Dijital-Collection>) has a list of New Jersey city directories (most on microfilm) for Asbury park, Atlantic City, Freehold, Irvington, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, Rahway, Red Bank, Trenton, Union and Vineland, to name just a few places that had large Jewish populations. j

College Newspapers Online

One place to look for college newspapers is www.xooxlanswers.com/free-newspaper-archives/college-newspapers-archives, a new site that aims to digitize many college newspapers. Not all colleges are yet listed, but the site will grow over time.

Cleveland Jewish Cemetery Database

Thanks to the JGS of Cleveland, one can find a list of Jewish cemeteries in Cleveland; type in a name such as Stein and find all the Stein graves. The site is <http://accessjewishcleveland.org> and then click on Jewish cemeteries.

New Features on the Geshher Galicia Database

One can now search for everyone with a specific surname who lived within 15 km of any town. For example, one may search for all the persons with the surname Cohen who lived within 15 km of Lviv (Lwow) or everyone with the given name "Rifka" who lived within 75 km of Nadvirna(Nadworna). The site address is <http://search.geshhergalicia.org/>. ☆

SPECIAL NOTE!

Genealogical Resources in New York, edited by Estelle Guzik, is now on sale for a greatly reduced rate of only \$12 +\$3.50 shipping in US.

For more information check our website www.jgsny.org

Metro Area Repository Round-up

The JDC Global Archives Website Features Thousands of Names, Photographs, and Documents Relating to Events from 1914 to 1957

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee has recently launched a new website, searchable at <http://archives.jdc.org/>. The new website brings to life the history of the organization, commonly referred to as “the Joint” or JDC, which is the world’s largest Jewish humanitarian assistance organization.

The website features a Names Database of over 600,000 names, 50,000 searchable photographs, including 67 curated galleries, and documents from 1914 to 1977.

The Photo Galleries hold thousands of photographs of people in Eastern and Western Europe, North America and Palestine. If you recognize someone in a picture, the JDC asks that you submit your information online.

To date there are four well organized photographic exhibits online: “A Joint Effort: JDC’s Beginning, 1914-1918; “Beyond Relief: JDC’s Work in the Ukraine and Crimea Between the Wars;” “Everything Possible –JDC and the Children of the DP Camps;” and “In Memoriam: The Story of JDC Employees Who Died in the Line of Duty.” Each exhibit provides background information.

The Names Index consists of over 600,000 names of people who received financial, diplomatic or material aid directly from the JDC or through the good offices of the organization. The index links to thousands of documents, and you may well find a relative who received a remittance at some time during World War I, between the wars, during World War II or afterward. There are 35 separate lists, covering aid to Jews in many 80 countries, which can be found at <http://archives.jdc.org/researchers/searchable-lists.html>.

Among the digitized lists available are

a. 1915-1919: Early Remittance Lists to People in Poland, Russia, Romania, and Palestine, 1915-1919

b. 1914-1921 Period: Jewish Men from Rohatyn, Poland Imprisoned in Siberia; Aid to Rabbis in the Russian Empire & Palestine; Jews from the Russian Empire Requesting Contact with Relatives; Lists of Polish Jews, Grouped by Towns, Requesting Assistance

from U.S. Relatives; Prisoners Released from Siberia, 1921

c. Lists from the Nazi Period & Its Aftermath

In addition, select institutional records from 1914-1977, describing JDC’s work in over 80 countries are available online and have Finding Aids. Among the seven Finding Aids available is the one pertaining to JDC’s work in the Jewish settlement of Sosua, Dominican Republic.

Other records may require a visit to the JDC office. One may submit an online request for records of a particular time or place. High quality photographs are available for a fee.

The JDC archives include over three miles of text documents, 100,000 photographs, 1,100 audio records, including 95 oral histories, 157 recorded historic speeches and broadcasts and 1,300 video recordings.

The work of entering all these names has been done by JGS members Linda Cantor, Merle Goldstein, Claus Hirsch, Simah Kraus, Susan Viuker-Lieberman, and Toby Carliner Sanchez, under the direction of Naomi Barth, JDC’s Indexing Project Specialist.

Five New E-Resources in the Center for Jewish History’s Lillian Goldman Reading Room

The five new resources, which are accessible only in the Lillian Goldman Reading Room, are:

1. The Historical Newspapers: American Jewish Newspaper collection enables researchers to investigate Jewish immigration, genealogy, history and many other topics by searching *The American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger (1857-1911)*, *The Jewish Advocate (1905-1990)*, *The American Israelite (1854-1922)* and *Jewish Exponent (1887-1990)*.

2. Eretz Israel Records Indexing (EIRI), which has more than 100,000 records and approximately 20,000 different surnames of individuals.

3. Index to Hebrew Periodicals provides bibliographic information about articles in Hebrew periodicals and monographs from 1977 in Hebrew, English and other languages. The database currently contains over 715,000 items.

4. Shoreshim is a genealogical database relating to the Jewish communities of Poland from pre-19th century to the 20th century. The data include vital statistics, Holocaust survivor records, army and ghetto records, census data and more.

5. The Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online (EJIW) is the first cohesive reference work that covers the Jews of Muslim lands, from the late medieval, early modern and modern periods. It has been updated with newly commissioned articles, illustrations, multimedia and primary source material.

National Museum of American Jewish History Is Online with Stories of American Jewish Life at www.nmajh.org/

The site, “Telling Our Story,” invites online viewers to submit a story from their family history and to read

the stories of others. The section on American Jewish camps contains 3269 camp photographs and a directory of camps.

New Online Resources from the New York Public Library’s Dorot Jewish Division

The Dorot Jewish Division has completed name and subject indexes for the *Forward* from Jan. 2000 to Dec. 2001 and the *Jewish Week* from Dec. 1993 through August. 2001. It has a Finding Aid to the Oral History Collection of the American Jewish Committee, which contains 156,000 pages of transcripts and 6,000 hours of taped interview with 2,250 informants. Also, it has 650 yizkor books online, the largest collection in the U.S. to date. These new materials are listed under Special Projects, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library or www.nypl.org/locations/schwarzman/jewish-division. ☆

Notes from All Over

Derivative Citizenship for Wives and Children Explained by Phyllis Kramer, VP of Education for JewishGen

“Derivative Citizenship” is citizenship conveyed to wives and children through the naturalization of a parent or spouse. When searching for U.S Naturalization documents for wives and minor children, one must be aware of the various changes in the naturalization laws during the period 1900 to 1940:

1. In 1906 new immigration laws required all courts to use the same forms
2. After 1912 the names of wives and minors who obtained “Derivative Citizenship” through the husband/father appeared on the Declaration of Intent and the Petition for Naturalization. Before 1912 minors and wives were entitled to apply for a certificate directly to the INS (Immigration & Naturalization Service), not through the courts.
3. Until 1922 both wives and children of the applicant were granted Derivative Citizenship.
4. From 1922 to 1940 only minor children received Derivative Citizenship.

Obituaries Provide Much Information for the Family Tree

Obituaries are an often overlooked source of information about the entire family of the deceased. The first part of any obituary talks about the deceased, but the second part talks about the family of the deceased, listing the spouse, the parents, brothers and sisters, children and grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc. Obituaries are fairly accurate, because they are written by a close family member.

More News about Congressional Restrictions on the Use of Social Security Death Records, Social Security Numbers of the Deceased and Applications for Social Security Numbers

In the Spring 2012 issue of *DOROT*, we reported on page 16, “Action Requested,” that the Social Security Sub-Committee of the House Ways & Means Committee is proposing to completely shut access to the Social Security Death Index to genealogists and others, because of “misplaced concerns regarding identity theft.” Jan Meisels Allen, President of the Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley (California), www.jgscv.org urges the genealogical community to “educate the Congressional leaders to understand that genealogy is not ‘just a hobby,’ but a

critical tool in detecting family inherited diseases, and it is essential to have access to full records to assure that we are looking at the correct information. Knowing a deceased person's Social Security number is a way of tying different records to the correct person, especially for those with common names, such as Sara Cohen and Joseph Goldberg, etc."

Because of the concern about identity theft, the Social Security Administration on July 27, 2011 extended the restriction on obtaining a copy of the original Social Security Application (the SSA-5) to 100 years from the date of birth of the applicant. This means one would only be able to obtain the actual record, which includes parents' names, for those born prior to 1912. The official notice states, "Under this policy, we assume that a person is alive unless their birth date

exceeds 120 years or we have proof of the person's death. We normally do not assume that an individual is deceased without proof of death (e.g. death certificate, obituary, newspaper article, or police report." The 120 year restriction applies when there is no proof of death at all. Therefore, Ms. Allen reports, "If the person who is applying for the Social Security Administration application can prove the applicant is deceased and their birth date exceeds 100 years, they will be able to order the SSA-5 application without redaction [editing out] of the parents' names." The SSA-5 is a very useful source for finding the maiden name of the applicant's mother.

To apply for a deceased person's Social Security card application and read the requirements, go to www.socialsecurity.gov/online.ssa-711.pdf/. ☆

New, Recent, and Noteworthy Publications

SPECIAL NOTE!

Genealogical Resources in New York: The most comprehensive guide to genealogical and biographical resources in New York City and Albany, edited by Estelle Guzik is now on sale at the greatly reduced price of only \$12 plus \$3.50 for shipping in the U.S. For more information, check our website at www.jgsny.org/

About Jewish Life in Eastern Europe

Gur Alroey, *Bread to Eat and Clothes to Wear: Letters from Jewish Migrants in the Early Twentieth Century*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011. 240 pp. \$29.95

From the publisher: "Although many studies have addressed how the 2.7 million Jews from Eastern Europe left their countries and were absorbed into their new destination countries, very little has been written on the process of deciding to migrate. In this book author Gur Alroey fills this gap by examining letters written by Eastern European Jews embarking on their migration. He discusses the establishment of immigration information bureaus and then translates and annotates 66 letters from potential migrants. Readers learn firsthand of the migrants' fear of making a decision; their desire for advice and information before making a decision; the growing anxiety of women whose husbands had already sailed for America; the danger of pogroms; and the changes that emigration brought about within the Jewish family."

Hava Bromberg Ben-Zvi, *Portraits in Literature: The Jews of Poland, An Anthology*. Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011, 331 pp. \$74.95

From the publisher: "This anthology gives a broad picture of life in Poland from the late 19th century to contemporary times. Divided into three chronological sections which basically cover the pre-war, Holocaust, and post-war time periods, this collection contains stories, essays, letters, poems, memoirs and other literary forms. The topics cover many aspects of daily life and life cycle events as well as politics and war." Ruth Gruber said, "*Portraits in Literature* is a delightful, comprehensive, and poignant anthology that brings to life the rich culture created by the Jews of Poland," and Deborah E. Lipstadt said, "I was mesmerized by some of the selections. They give a broad sweep of the portrait of Polish Jewry." The book was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in 2011.

Sam Aaron, *A Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Lithuania*. London: Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, 2011 (revised edition). 163 pages paperback, 9.50 British pounds, including postage and packing.

From the publisher: "Genealogical research in Lithuania is often difficult because so many of the old records from czarist times (1794–1917) were lost or destroyed. Here is a practical Guide that will tell you what types of records there were, which have survived for each of the three provinces of Lithuania, how to access them, and what information you can expect to find. The Guide

describes the large amount of information that can be directly accessed in online databases, provides an up to date list of all these resources, and should help you make quicker progress with your researches. Included are suggestions as to where you can look for clues to your ancestors in UK, USA, Israeli and South African records.

About Jewish Life in the Sephardic Lands

Haim Henry Toledano, *The Sephardic Legacy: Unique Features and Achievements*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, distributed for the University of Scranton Press, 2010. 359 pages, \$25 paper.

From the publisher: “The Sephardic legacy has long served to bind together the various Jewish communities of the Mediterranean basin. Henry Toledano immerses readers in the medieval historical context that gave rise to the Sephardic tradition, arguing that the golden age of Jewish culture in Spain would not have been possible without the stimulus and inspiration of Islamic civilization. Along the way, Toledano covers such topics as the flourishing of Jewish culture and science, Hebrew poetry, the systematic codification of Jewish law, Jewish philosophy, and the impact of Islamic civilization on the development of critical biblical exegesis.” A reviewer writes, “The late Dr. Toledano wrote as an historian, but also as one who was personally connected to the topics of his academic research. He is himself a living representative of a flourishing Sephardic civilization that had existed in Morocco in years past. He argues that ‘Sephardic’ really refers to a larger Jewish tradition going back to Babylonia, and it continued to flourish after the Jews were expelled from Spain. Dr. Toledano was one of the special treasures of the Jewish people.”

Walter P. Zenner, *A Global Community: The Jews from Aleppo, Syria*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000. 256 pp., 29 illus. \$44.95.

From the publisher: “A *Global Community* is a comprehensive scholarly interpretation of the historical experience of this unusual community in Syria and the other places to which Aleppan Jewry has immigrated. Their incorporation into the nation-states of the Middle East, Europe and the Americas has forced Syrian Jews to change their modes of identification as Jews and reshape their culture while maintaining international familial and communal ties.”

About American Jewish Life

Cornelia Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B’nai Brith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity, 1843-1914*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011, 376 pp., 17 illus. \$44.95.

From the publisher: “Founded in New York City in 1843 by immigrants from German or German-speaking territories of Central Europe, the Independent Order of B’nai Brith sought to integrate Jewish identity with the public and civil sphere in America. Author Cornelia Wilhelm details the founding, growth and evolution of these two male and female organizations as fraternal orders and examines how they served as a civil platform for Jews to reinvent, stage, and voice themselves as American citizens. She discusses the challenges, the growth of competing organizations, the need for a democratic ethnic representation, the difficulties of keeping its core values and solidarity alive in a growing and increasingly incoherent mass organization, and the iconization of the Order as an exclusionary ‘German Jewish elite.’ It offers new insights into B’nai Brith’s important community work, its contribution to organizing and financing a nationwide hospital and orphanage system, its life insurance relationships with new immigrants and much more. Based on extensive archival work, Wilhelm’s study demonstrates the central place of B’nai Brith in the formation and propagation of a uniquely American Jewish identity.” ☆

Dear Readers,

DOROT would like to receive your suggestions on how you plan to preserve your family records for future use by your relatives. What steps have you taken to preserve and pass on your material? Send your replies to info@jgsny.org. Thank you.

JGS on Facebook



Facebook©

JGS, Inc. has created a group page on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), an online social networking facility. After you join Facebook, you can reach JGS's page in any of these three ways:

- (1) Go to the JGS website (<http://www.jgsny.org>) to link to the page.
- (2) Go directly to the page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/62112838856/>.
- (3) Log in to Facebook and search for "Jewish Genealogical Society–New York."

We hope you will join the more than **580** members of the JGS Facebook group. The page includes details about our upcoming meetings and follow-up reports about the presentations. We welcome comments and reactions to the meetings as well as suggestions of topics for monthly meetings.

The Jewish Genealogical Society website opens the door to

- Jewishdata.com (accessible by members of JGS)
- NY Naturalizations: Database of the Index to Brooklyn Naturalizations (1907–1924); Other New York Area Naturalizations: links to searchable online New York State naturalization indexes by county
- Cemeteries: Map of New York Area Jewish Cemeteries; Directory of Jewish Cemeteries in the Metropolitan New York Area; Burial Societies in the New York Metro Area; New York Area Cemetery Directions
- NY Area Resources: a comprehensive list of repositories in the metropolitan New York area
- Dorot: downloadable issues: spring 2000-winter 2005–2006; list of highlights of back issues: 1979-2008
- Events: Announcements of upcoming JGS monthly programs and events
- New York Landsmanshaftn and Other Jewish Organizations: links to indexes, databases, and directories, such as *American Jewish Year Book*; Landsmanshaftn and other town and country-related organization organizations incorporated in New York County, 1848-1920; WPA Survey of New York City Synagogue Records, 1939
- Memorial Database of Jewish Soldiers, Partisans and Workers killed in action during the Nazi era
- Inventory of LDS Microfilms and Microfiche on Indefinite Loan at the Center for Jewish History
- Other: links to other sites that may be of interest to the JGS community



<http://www.jgsny.org>

QUESTIONING THE EXPERTS

DOROT questions JGS members about their genealogical adventures and elicits their advice for those embarking on similar paths

Interview with Valery Bazarov, Director of HIAS Family History & Location Services

DOROT: Valery, please explain what you do at HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

BAZAROV: My official title, Director for Family History and Location Services, was concocted by me - that's why it's so long and awkward. And yet it reflects exactly what I'm doing here. Sometimes people associate "location" with the real estate term- "places." It's not places. It's people. We locate the people who lost connections with their loved ones, with their friends, be it one year ago or 100 years ago. This service was founded almost immediately after HIAS' inception in 1881 as a means of re-uniting immigrants with those who had been left behind, because when the people leave their old country they sever connections with their past, but when they settle in the new country, they start to look for ways to re-unite with those they left behind. In the United States it was more difficult because there were different waves of immigration. And each wave had connections with the old country and with those who came before them in the new country.

The activity of the department was up and down in different time periods. If there was a demand, there was a response. Most of the workload was, of course, immediately after World War Two when hundreds of thousands of people didn't know what happened to their loved ones. That's when the department had more than 50 people.

I started to work for HIAS almost immediately after my immigration in 1988; I knew English and I knew Russian. There was an upsurge of Russian Jews fleeing the Soviet Union, so HIAS needed people who knew both languages. The first 12 years I was meeting refugees at the airport. By 2000, the flood had dried up

and the department had started to shrink, so I went to my vice president and asked her to give me something more to do. She said HIAS had a dying department, Location Services. They received about two or three letters a month, that someone lost someone. And Location Services would place an advertisement in a Jewish newspaper. That was all, there was no search mechanism.



Valery Bazarov

The Creation of a New Location Services Department

However, when I looked at what we had, the arrival records from 1909 until this day and interdepartmental correspondence covering HIAS activity for about 100 years including case files of the people who came during the Holocaust era, I realized that I was looking at an invaluable treasure chest, and I rushed back to the vice president's office and said, "Listen, we should have a department here, because there are no limits to the work that we can do. It's

the history of Jewish immigration. It's family history. And, of course, it is reunion, but rather reunion with the past, restoring the family history line that divided many, many years ago." HIAS was in the center of the first wave of immigration as well as the second wave and also of the third wave. So, we have the arrival records of all of them. Well, not all but many of them. Instead of going straight to the former Soviet Union - to Ukraine, Belarus, etc. - and looking in the dusty corners of the archives there in search for the connections with the old country, researchers can start here by checking our arrival records. Then we can trace the descendants using our search mechanisms and so save researchers thousands of dollars in addition, while earning some revenue that HIAS needs so much.

Genealogy without History Is an Empty Empty Place!

I wouldn't say I won the confidence of HIAS management immediately, but at least nobody put any

stumbling blocks in my way. Vice versa, they started to clear the way. As a result, after 12 years of my work in this capacity, my department that now consists of two people, evolved into a scientific research institute – genealogical and historical. In my opinion, genealogy without history is an empty, empty place and I always say that when you look at the family tree with the two dates under the name, date of birth and date of death, the main focus should be on the dash between the two dates. And we have information, thousands of files, on what, for example, HIAS was doing in terms of immigration from Arab countries, how HIAS was working with Mossad, how HIAS was working with the French resistance. We have information on what HIAS was doing during the war. There are only two books dedicated to HIAS history, Mark Wischnitzer's *Visas to Freedom* and Ronald Sanders' *Shores of Refuge*. The first one was written in 1954 and the second was written in the 1980s. I found a lot of additional things that HIAS was doing in the occupied countries, such as Czechoslovakia. The well-known Gisi Fleischmann was heading the HIAS office in Slovakia. Nobody mentions that. HIAS had offices in France from the first day of the war until the last day of the war. I am going to the IAJGS conference in Paris with a presentation called "HIAS and the French Resistance."

Authors and researchers address our department for help to learn about immigration conditions during various periods. People who are interested in their own genealogy and are writing the history of their families want the background, and we can give them that background. However, I would like to mention that with all the richness of the HIAS archive, it is part of the whole Jewish heritage preserved by other resources as well, such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, YIVO, the American Jewish Historical Society and others. I also would like to point out that my work in this area gave me a wonderful opportunity to meet and work together with brilliant and dedicated people, many of whom became my friends. The complete list would be extremely long, but I am happy to name Miriam Weiner, Gary Mokotoff, Sallyann Sack, all my colleagues from the JGS Executive Council. I could go on indefinitely. I learned a lot from all of them; they patiently endure my questioning and requests. I regret to say that some of those whom I loved and respected are no longer with us. The world definitely darkened with the departure of such people as Lucille Gudis and Steve Siegel.

DOROT: Have you ever looked at how people at HIAS, 75 years ago or 50 years ago, carried out their

The HIAS Location Service During the 1940s

HIAS, 75 years ago or 50 years ago, carried out their "location" work?

BAZAROV: Yes. I have the files that reflect the work of HIAS Location Services in the 1940s. As I mentioned before, mostly they used publications in newspapers - such-and-such is looking for such-and-such. Immediately after the war there was another way of finding people or reaching out to people. I have a photograph of people that I like to show in almost all my presentations: a line of people in front of the HIAS building, waiting for their turn to enter and have a look at the lists placed on the walls of the HIAS office. Immediately after the war, there were hundreds of committees in different countries that had been occupied by the Nazis. They were collecting the names - they wanted to find out who survived and who did not. All these names were sent to different organizations including HIAS. HIAS posted all the lists on the walls.

DOROT: These were the names of survivors?

BAZAROV: Yes. If they found the name, it was ok. If they didn't find the name, it didn't give them any information; there was no closure, of course.

HIAS Files on Ellis Island Detentions, 1906-1924

Before that, we know that people were sometimes detained at Ellis Island. Why were they detained? Perhaps nobody had met them. For example, young women were not allowed to go until somebody picked them up. There was a HIAS office at Ellis Island that was trying to help. At that time it was not that difficult because they knew the area, such as the Lower East Side. The HIAS people were local, they knew in what synagogues the needed information could be found, and these connections helped them. Sometimes it was not that easy, if the immigrants were going not to New York, but, let's say, to Philadelphia. It took more time and effort.

Now the search mechanism is absolutely different –we have Ancestry.com, Steve Morse's web site, Gary Mokotoff supplies us with up to date search opportunities in his absolutely fabulous *Nu? What's New?* Besides, we have our special secret data bases that help us to follow up. We do it very discreetly. Privacy is the foremost issue.

There was another problem: people would come, especially in the 1920s, when the quotas started to have an impact on immigration. People would arrive and the immigration office said, no, they cannot stay, because the quota is overbooked. That's when HIAS needed to step in with great force and try to do something about it. We come to the question, what information is available about this? At the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (at the Center for Jewish History at 15 West 16th Street in Manhattan) in the HIAS-YIVO Collection, there are a few files with the title, "HIAS Ellis Island Bureau." It contains more than just arrival records - it contains the files 1906-1924. You can find there absolutely amazing information about what happened to the people who, for different reasons, were detained and ordered deported.

DOROT: If researchers are interested in exploring what is available at HIAS, what's the best thing for them to do?

BAZAROV: The best thing for them to do is to open this genealogical bible, revised and edited by Estelle Guzik, *Genealogical Resources in New York*, open to page 85, and read what is there. This is absolutely adequate, complete information about how and where to find the information that sits in our premises at HIAS and at YIVO. It's all about finding aids, microfilms, arrivals, etc.

DOROT: What about the records at YIVO from the HIAS Ellis Island Bureau?

BAZAROV: The file can be found in the finding aid at YIVO. The file is arranged alphabetically by the name of the person detained. A case can include from just a few letters to 40 to 50 pages. Mind, the other half of the correspondence is in Washington, which is why I and Marian Smith, Chief of the Historical Branch at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, very often work together because we can dig up much more if we join our forces.

Bazarov's Personal Research

DOROT: Have you done your own genealogical research?

BAZAROV: It's funny – the cobbler always going barefoot. There are two directions of my personal genealogical research, one on my wife's side, one on my own side. Let's start on my wife's side. It's a very interesting story. My wife's ancestors were from Talnoe, a Kiev suburb, a shtetl. Unfortunately, no documents

have been preserved from Talnoe. Her ancestors left Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century. Some of them went to the United States directly, most of them went to Argentina to a Jewish agricultural colony founded by the Baron de Hirsch Fund. After World War Two, they started to look for their relatives in the Soviet Union. By this time, my father-in-law's family had been killed: his mother, his brother and his grandmother. His father died before the war. He himself was saved because he served in the army. By this time, he was already married and there was a famine after the war. They lived in Odessa, but the Argentine family found them and would send them loaves of bread with gold coins baked inside them. That's what saved them. Later the connection was lost because under the Communist regime corresponding with people abroad was a felony punished by the GULAG. When we came here and I started to work at the location department, my wife and her mother started to bug me – find the family in Argentina, we want to thank them. Under the Communist regime, all connections were eventually lost. I started to search for the "lost tribe." I was given the name, which turned out to be the wrong name, and I wrote about 300 letters, translated into Spanish, to different addresses in Argentina. There were a few responses, but not a single one from the people I was looking for. In 1991, my wife and I went to Israel, and we left in Yad Vashem the names of her loved ones who perished during the Holocaust in the Odessa ghetto. One morning in the fall of 2005, as I was preparing to send my younger son to school and was not in the mood for polite discussions and time was pressing, the telephone rang. I picked up the handset with no desire to talk. However, when I heard a nice voice with a wonderful Israeli accent, all my irritation immediately faded away. The voice asked "Can we speak with Mrs. Bazarov?" And I said, very politely, "Who are you?" The young voice said, "Can anybody there speak Hebrew or Spanish?" I was immediately enlightened, and said, "By any chance are you the Argentine lost relatives?" He said, "We are." So that's how it started. In a year, I had information from all of the relatives all over the world, including the United States. So currently the family tree consists of about 300 people. It was so amazing that the next year, in 2006, we went to Israel for a reunion. But with our big Jewish mazel, we went the day the second Lebanon war started, so we couldn't go anywhere, but the reunion took place with about 150 people, half of the tree. The twice removed cousins of my wife, whom she never knew existed, look like her twins. And they keep the same line of family occupations, doctors and teachers. The matriarch of the family, Sarah, is 98 years old.

DOROT: Where does she live?

BAZAROV: In Israel. But we have some relatives in Argentina as well. This is my wife's side. Mine is also interesting, but not so long, because actually I don't even know my real name. If you're familiar with Russian literature of the 19th century, you will remember that Bazarov is the name of a Russian nihilist, the character in a novel, *Fathers and Sons*, by the Russian writer, Ivan Turgenev. My father, who was born to a very wealthy family in Riga in 1900, was very talented. He was accepted by the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg when he was 16. In 1918 he severed all his ties with his family and took the name Bazarov, because he was a very educated person. He went to serve the Bolsheviks. He entered the Communist Party and all his life he served in the army, in the border guards. In 1957, when Khrushchev purged the Jews from the army, my father was purged and since his whole life had been connected to the army, he passed away the next year, 1958. He was just 58 years old. But what's my name? His sister died long ago. There is nobody left who could tell me. I started to request the documents from the military archive in the Soviet Union. They sent me the file from my father's first days in the army until 1924, but they didn't give his real name, although I am absolutely sure that it's still there somewhere. But KGB archives don't want to part with any chunk of it. My request for a search is still pending. My other hope is the archive in Dnepropetrovsk, where my late aunt, my father's sister, worked as a dentist all her life. She should indicate her maiden name in her biography. Her maiden name is my real name. When I will have time to do this research is anybody's guess.

DOROT: Are the archives, etc. in Russia and Ukraine receptive to queries?

BAZAROV: I am the wrong person to talk about it. There are a lot of people who have much more expertise, like Miriam Weiner. If I need something, I ask her. My gut feeling is that the accessibility of the archives in the former Soviet Union will not last long, and they will be closed sooner or later. I hope I am wrong on this issue.

DOROT: What part of Russia did your family come from before the war?

BAZAROV: My mother was born in a shtetl by the name of Ingulets, and my father was born in Riga, and do you know how they met? He put her in jail because she was a Zionist. Then he fell in love with her.

DOROT: Do you intend to keep pushing in terms of your personal research?

BAZAROV: Unfortunately, I'm not pushing; I should push much harder. That's my guilt. Remember, I'm still a full-time employee at HIAS, and although the work gives me so much enjoyment, it does not leave me any time to spare on my personal research. Moreover, I am afraid the situation will extend to my retirement. When I retire, I have three goals to accomplish, including writing two books. One book is almost ready. I have to collect all my stories, most of which have already been published, in one book, the stories based on my research at HIAS on the people who I have found and reunited. Those are amazing stories, but no less interesting is how they were reunited. It's detective work.

DOROT: Book number two?

BAZAROV: It's about HIAS activity during the war. It's interesting how the Holocaust perception changed over time. Immediately after the war, everybody was shocked by this incomprehensible figure: six million who perished. Later, the world realized (some with disappointment) that not all Jews perished. They started to talk about the survivors. Then they realized that somebody helped them to survive, and they started to talk about righteous gentiles, or a better term would be the righteous among the nations. Then they found out that the bulk of the rescues were in the hands of the Jews themselves. The Jews were helping the other Jews to survive. But let's go further. I found out that during the war, the Jews – persecuted, hunted and murdered Jews – helped non-Jews to survive. I have a report of the HIAS director in France, in which he tells the story of how 7,000 non-Jews, including hundreds of Polish officers, Czechoslovak and Belgian non-Jewish refugees were smuggled out of France. The Austrian socialists, non-Jews, were also smuggled across the border of France. French non-Jews who wanted to join the Free French were helped by HIAS. So maybe we have come to the point when the non-Jews will establish a special title for Jews who rescued the non-Jewish population.

DOROT: So, two books. And the third project?

BAZAROV: To find my lineage. Three assignments: two books and my lineage.

DOROT: Thank you. ✨

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