

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY EXHIBIT MAKES EARLY TORONTO JEWRY COME ALIVE

Stories by Atara Beck Tribune Staff Writer

TORONTO – At the current Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) – JGS – exhibit at North York Central Library, “early Toronto Jewry comes alive,” enthused librarian Elaine Cheskes, who selected the material for the display, *Tracing Our Jewish Roots*. The purpose is to familiarize the public with the resources available at JGS as well as the genealogical collection in the Gladys Allison Canadiana reference room on the sixth floor of the library.

Cheskes chose resources she thought would be most appealing to genealogists and the general community, including research guides, directories, maps and gazetteers, Holocaust reference material, archival resources, statistical records, memorial books and Canadian census records going back more than a century. Among the intriguing documents are directories of Jewish Canadian veterans of WWI and Holy Blossom Temple records dating back to 1871.

“There’s a wealth of information in our collection,” including photos of the early Toronto Jewish community and a history of Quebec Jewry, Cheskes said. “All of these are valuable resources for the novice and the advanced genealogist.”

Cheskes is eager to help anyone interested in pursuing a family history.

“That’s what we’re all about. I’m here to answer questions,” she said, citing web sites and links for accessing information.

In fact, her husband, ophthalmologist Dr. Albert Cheskes, had decided to research his own family history.

“He knew facts from his father, who left Europe before the war,” she explained. “Still, we saw documentation, signatures. It was like seeing the ghosts before him – grandparents, aunts and uncles, taken from their towns and shot. To see it at home, in your own computer room, and to see these names that you recognize, and their signatures – it was an eerie feeling.”

Much of the material on display represents the culture of Jews from the shtetls of Eastern and Central Europe and follows emigration to Canada and the building of settlements from the Atlantic provinces to the Pacific coast. Included are books by well-known local personalities, including Rosalie Sharp and Irving Abella, as well as *Pioneer, Ploughs & Prayers: The Jewish Farmers in Western Canada*, by Cyril Edel Leoniff, and *Salt Fish & Sbmattes – History of the Jews in Newfoundland & Labrador* from 1770, by Robin McGrath.

The *Auschwitz Chronicle* documents deportations, names, dates and places. *Finding Home: In the Footsteps of the Jewish Fusgeyers*, by Jill Culiner, won the Canadian Jewish Book Awards (history, 2005). The fusgeyers (Yiddish for ‘foot-goers’ – wayfarers) fled persecution in Romania in the early 1900s and ended up in North America. (Culiner addressed the monthly JGS meeting on May 28.)

Of interest to Sephardic Jews is *Jewish Remnants of Spain: Wanderings in a Lost World*, by Sidney David Markman. *Izmir*, named for the third-largest Turkish city, is a document listing 7,300 names of Jewish brides and grooms who married there between the years 1883-1901 and 1918-1993.

“Of great interest are the ancestral trees of notable families and significant journals of international genealogical societies,” Cheskes said.

For more information or to contact Cheskes, email library@jgstoronto.ca.

Tracing our Jewish Roots, a joint effort of JGS and North York Central Library, is on display until Saturday, July 5, 2008.

TWO PROJECTS SHED LIGHT ON DNA-BASED FAMILY MATCHES

TORONTO – Among the monthly programs at Shaarei Shomayim synagogue sponsored by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) was a fascinating lecture held recently about the role DNA can play in tracing one’s ancestors.

Guest speaker Herbert Huebscher, a retired electrical engineer from Long Island, NY, discussed two DNA-based Jewish genealogical projects: the Hubscher Family project (tracing families with the surname Hubscher, including alternate spellings, such as Heubscher’s) and the Wirth Group, a research project linking more than 47 seemingly disparate families to a common ancestor.

The Hubscher project disproved the hypothesis that all people sharing that name had one or two common paternal ancestors; evidently, different families in diverse locations adopted the surname. Nonetheless, Huebscher did discover a new relative; although his 12 DNA markers didn’t match any Hubscher, they matched a Dr. Saul Issroff, who was on the genealogical database.

The Wirth (Wolinsky, Issroff, Russoff, Tenenbaum, Hubscher) Group project estimated the deep ancestry of the families as far back as 2,300-2,900 years ago in a fertile Middle Eastern region. Other remarkable results of this DNA-based research included the discovery by a sperm-donor child (now an adult) of his true paternal roots, which were also Jewish.

The local Jewish Genealogical Society (JGS), established in 1985, is a member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies.

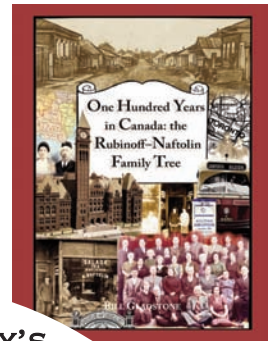
Aside from its monthly discussion groups, JGS holds workshops in consultation with local genealogists and runs a number of projects, including a quarterly newsletter, *Shem Tov* (Hebrew for good name). For more information, go to jgstoronto.ca or email info@jgstoronto.ca.

◀ This is a list of family members found online (surnames blacked out). This list was of people who were in the Brest Ghetto during the Holocaust before being murdered.

| Rec No | Name | Parents | Born | Passport Issued | Signature Info |
|--------|--------|--------------------------|------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1100 | Chana | Lejzer i Fryda | 1921 | 19 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1101 | Genoch | Szymel Abram i Chaja-Hka | 1891 | 23 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1102 | Chana | Szlomo i Sara | 1892 | 23 Nov 1941 | Cyrllic |
| 1103 | Motel | Szymel-Abram i Chaja-Hka | 1888 | 23 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1104 | Chaim | Hosoch i Penia | 1916 | 23 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1105 | Ruchla | Hosoch i Penia | 1925 | 23 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1106 | Chana | Hosoch i Penia | 1922 | 23 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1107 | Gdala | Szlomo i Chaja | 1922 | 23 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1108 | Ewalia | Szymel i Hka | 1900 | 23 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1109 | Penia | Abram i Ruchla | 1893 | 23 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1110 | Ruchla | Szlomo i Chaja | 1918 | 24 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1111 | Szlomo | Szymel i Fania | 1886 | 24 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1112 | Malca | Abram i Rejzla | 1924 | 25 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1113 | Rywa | Abram i Rejzla | 1927 | 25 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1114 | Ida | Szlomo i Chaja | 1925 | 24 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1115 | Chaja | Jankiel i Mejza | 1889 | 24 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1116 | Samuel | Szymel i Malca | 1865 | 25 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1117 | Rejzla | Jankiel-Mejza i Chana | 1900 | 26 Nov 1941 | Latin |
| 1118 | Elza | Eli i Rachela | 1897 | 4 Dec 1941 | Latin |
| 1119 | Jewel | Szlomo i Chaja | 1928 | 23 Apr 1942 | 2nd official's signature |

Click here for information about this database

Below is a cover of a fascinating book on Toronto’s Rubinoff-Naftolin family by one of the family members, writer Bill Gladstone.



TORONTO FAMILY’S HISTORY IS COMMUNITY’S HISTORY

TORONTO – An ardent local genealogist, Bill Gladstone has completed a remarkable oeuvre on his own family history, *One Hundred Years in Canada: the Rubinoff-Naftolin Family Tree* (Now & Then Books, 2008). After only six weeks, it went into a second printing. The enjoyable book is indeed a treasure of information for Torontonians, with its inclusion of photos, documents, anecdotes and clippings dating back to the early 20th century.

For many who remember Toronto even 40 years ago, reading this book could become a moving nostalgic experience. The Rubinoff-Naftolin family history is also a history of the Toronto Jewish community, with its photos of the city’s early Jewish landmarks and family data that, surprisingly, encompasses so many other well-known Toronto names (Rosensweig and Dropkin, to name a couple) and institutions, such as Pride of Israel synagogue. The section on ‘Movin’ Uptown’ parallels the experiences of most members of the Toronto Jewish community in the ‘60s.

“It’s a great feeling to have published this book after more than 20 years of research,” Gladstone said. “This project has strengthened my sense of the unity of the Jewish people and made me more aware of our spiritual mission.”

Gladstone’s research into his maternal origins (his mother’s maiden name was Naftolin) includes rare shtetl photos from the early-19th century. He provides unique maps of Russia, from where his ancestors hailed, and his discoveries include family records of births and other milestones.

According to the author, thousands of people around the world are related to Toronto’s Rubinoff and Naftolin families.

Gladstone, a writer and former president of Toronto’s Jewish Genealogical Society, has managed to create a book of close to 400 pages on his own family roots that nonetheless would captivate many readers, related or not. His accomplishment is indeed an inspiration to those who have dreamed of exploring their roots.

To order, email rubnaft@sympatico.ca. The cost is \$40, including tax, plus shipping if required.



Librarian Elaine Cheskes, who selected the material for the North York Central Library display, *Tracing Our Jewish Roots*, says the exhibit brings early Jewish Toronto to life.