



www.jgstoronto.ca

שם טוב

# SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO)

*Celebrating 25 Years: 1985 - 2010*

VOLUME XXVI No. 4

December 2010 Tevet 5771

## A VISIT TO WARSAW

*By Ruth Chernia*

**A**fter spending what turned out to be three memorable days in Warsaw, I wanted to share some memories.

When I told people that my husband and I were going to Warsaw, many asked, "why?" The immediate reason was a crazy booking to fly to London on points, but once we had decided to fly to London via Warsaw, and were told we could stay over, we surveyed people we knew who had been there before us and got lots of advice.

Three days is certainly not long enough to fully appreciate this place. What we got was a taste of a vibrant central-European city. We arrived on a Sunday morning and expected everyone to be in church. We were wrong. They were all out walking around the old city (which is mostly a pedestrian zone). We were amazed by the fact that every building we saw, no matter how old it seemed, was actually only fifty to sixty years old. The results of rebuilding an 85 percent-destroyed city were astounding.

Then there is the absence – the absence of the Jews who were once more than a quarter of the pre-1939 population of 1.3 million. Walking down a street beside our hotel, we looked down and there was our first indicator of that absence – embedded in the sidewalk and street was a diagonal metal marker in several languages outlining the location of the Ghetto wall.

The next morning we set out for the Umschlagplatz – the point where the residents of the Ghetto were transferred to trains that took them to Treblinka. It is a movingly simple monument on a busy street, next to a school. From there we walked through the former ghetto itself, stopping at the mound that marks the location of Mila 18. The main street one block south of it has been renamed in honour of Anielowicz, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Further south, the monument to the Ghetto fighters once stood on a simple plaza but is now bracketed by apartments on one side and the half-finished Museum of the Jewish People in Poland (expected completion date 2012).

Our final stop that morning was the K synagogue. This building, opened in 1897 (?), was an orthodox synagogue that had stood just inside the ghetto but as the Nazis decreased the ghetto's size, the building was left outside it and it was transformed into a stable. Somehow it escaped the destruction of the

city and has since been refurbished and rededicated. And there we witnessed a miracle.

As we entered the sanctuary, we heard a man speaking. At first I didn't realize he was not speaking Polish but then quickly understood that he was speaking Hebrew. The entire main floor was filled with Israeli high school students from (we later learned) just outside Tel Aviv. They were there with their

*Continued on page 8*

### *In This Issue*

- 2 *Message From the President • New Members*
- 3 *Upcoming Events • Photo Gallery*
- 4 *Branching Out*
- 5 *Uncovering the Hidden Holocaust*
- 6 *The Accidental Archivist: Irish Jewish Records • New Cooperation Agreement Between JRI-Poland and the Museum of the History of Polish Jews*
- 7 *Mount Sinai Cemetery*
- 8 *Back to Lithuanian Roots*
- 9 *From A Short Trip, A Longer Journey • The Learning Never Ends*
- 10 *A Visit to the Center for Jewish History, NY*
- 11 *Missing Links • Who Do You Think You Are? • New National Museum of Jewish History • Nazi-Looted Art Objects*
- 12 *Everyone has a Story! Last Call to Tell Yours*

## Message From the President

Over the last several months, we have been requesting members to contribute a story for our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book Project. At this time, we have received 37 expressions of interest and 10 submissions. The offerings are wide-ranging – among others, we have an edge-of-the-seat escape down the river Danube in 1939; a 12 year-old's recollection of gas masks and Scuds in Israel during *Desert Storm*, and an immigrant's parody of the story of Genesis written very early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And there are stories that I know are coming which I can't wait to read...the history of the Junction Shul; discovering family in present-day Poland; "a character in my family that dramatically changed my life".

The deadline for submissions has been extended to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010, so you still have time to send in your idea for a story.

By the time you receive this issue of *Shem Tov*, our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration will have been taken place. I want to thank all of those members who worked on that event as well as the very fine book committee which is totally dedicated to getting the Anniversary Book published by the end of next year.

It is gratifying to see that so many of our members have stepped up and committed themselves to work for the benefits of our Society, not only by writing, but by working on our web-

site, collecting data at our Jewish cemeteries, photographing *matzevot* (headstones), delivering workshops, contributing to our newsletter, mentoring newbie genealogists, and so on.

The continued success of JGS Toronto into the next 25 years depends on the dedicated efforts of our members.

*Harvey Glasner*  
President, JGS of Canada (Toronto)  
president@jgstoronto.ca

### NEW MEMBERS

JGS Toronto is very pleased to welcome  
as new members:

Stephen Albert	Faye Blum
Lil Blume	Gary Goldlust
Erica Oielgisser	Peter Rubin
Beverley Sidney	

vol. XXVI No. 4

**SHEM TOV** is published quarterly by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) and is distributed free to members. Current issues are available to non-members for \$4.00 per issue, and back issues are available free of charge on our website [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca).

Contributions are invited. Please submit material to [shemtov@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca) or to Shem Tov Editors, P.O. Box 91006, 2901 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, ON M2K 2Y6. Publication is at the Editor's discretion.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) was founded in 1985. Membership is \$40 per calendar year, \$18 for students. Meetings are held September to June, usually on the last Wednesday of each month at 8:00 p.m. (doors open at 7:30) at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto (unless announced otherwise). Guests are always welcome. Details are usually printed in the *Canadian Jewish News* and on our website at: [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca).

The goal of the Society is to provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and information through meetings, outings, workshops and guest lecturers, and thereby to promote an awareness of genealogy within the Jewish community of Canada. The Society is affiliated with the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto and is registered as a non-profit charitable organization.

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the editors. Views and opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of SHEM TOV or the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto). ISSN 0843-6924. All rights reserved.

[www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca)

### Officers of JGS of Canada (Toronto):

President	HARVEY GLASNER	president@jgstoronto.ca
Vice President		
Secretary	LUCY SADOWSKI	secretary@jgstoronto.ca
Treasurer	STEVE GORA	treasurer@jgstoronto.ca
Membership	NEIL RICHLER	membership@jgstoronto.ca
Programming	LES KELMAN	program@jgstoronto.ca
Library Coordinator	ELAINE CHESKES	library@jgstoronto.ca
Website Administrator	ARTHUR RYMAN	comments@jgstoronto.ca
Immediate Past President	SHELLEY STILLMAN	sstillman@jgstoronto.ca
Past Presidents	CAROLYNNE VEFFER	
	GARRY STEIN	
	GERT SOLNIK ROGERS	
	HENRY WELLISCH	
	BILL GLADSTONE	
	DR. ROLF LEDERER	
Hon. Life President	RAYZEL ROBINSON-PAULL	
Members-at-Large:	STEPHEN CREED	HARRIET DE KOVEN
	LES KELMAN	MYRNA LEVY
	NEIL RICHLER	
Family Finder Coordinator	GERT SOLNIK ROGERS	
Cemetery Project	ELAINE SLAVENS	

### **Shem Tov:**

Editor	JUDY KASMAN	shemtov@jgstoronto.ca
Editor Emeritus	HENRY WELLISCH	
Layout and Design	DULCEY HOFFMAN	

<b>Contributors to this Issue:</b>	RUTH CHERNIA	ELAINE CHESKES
	MARTIN REGG COHN	HARVEY GLASNER
	ALLEN HALBERSTADT	JUDY KASMAN
	RICK RICHMAN	

[info@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:info@jgstoronto.ca)

---

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Programs organized by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto)

**Please carefully note the venue for each programme.**

**For all evening events, doors open at 7:30 pm**

*Non-member fee: \$5.00 per meeting*

*(exception: spouses accompanying members)*

**Be sure to visit [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca) for updated information.**

---

### **Wednesday, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 8 pm**

at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue

#### **Elections**

*Building an Online Family Tree at Ancestry.ca*

Speaker: Ruth Burkholder, Genealogist, historian, and educator

### **Wednesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue

**“Helping You Get Started” session at 7:45 pm**

**Programme at 8 pm:**

*Latvian Records and How to Use Them*

Speaker: Henry Blumberg, JGS Toronto member

### **Sunday, February 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Workshop - TBA**

### **Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8.00 pm**

at North York Public Library Auditorium

***What We Can Learn from DNA Testing to Help Our Genealogy Research***

Speaker: Bennett Greenspan

An entrepreneur and life-long genealogy enthusiast, Mr. Greenspan founded Family Tree DNA in 1999, turning a hobby into a full-time vocation.

### **Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>**

at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue

**“Helping You Get Started” session at 7:45 pm**

**Programme at 8 pm:**

*A Trip to Poland: Planning, Travelling and Discovering*

Speakers: Mel & Deana Fishman, JGS Toronto Members

### **Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup>**

at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue

**From 1-3 pm**

***Yad Vashem Records and What You Can Learn from the Pages of Testimony***

Speaker: Steve Brock, Hamilton JGS

### **Wednesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>**

at Lipa Green Building, 4600 Bathurst Street

**“Helping You Get Started” session at 7:45 pm**

Programme TBA

---

### **Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 8 pm**

at Lipa Green Building

**Annual General Meeting**

2010 Financial Statement will be presented.

***Brick Walls and Breakthroughs***

Speakers: Society Members

---

## Photo Gallery



*Photo by Neil Richler*

**Keen participants at Neil Richler's October 17th workshop.**



*Photo by Neil Richler*

**Harvey Glasner addresses workshop attendees.**



*Photo by Harvey Glasner*

**Harriet De Koven introducing guest speaker, Joe Schlesinger, at our Holocaust Education Week programme on November 3rd.**

---

## BRANCHING OUT

by Elaine Cheskes

❧❧❧

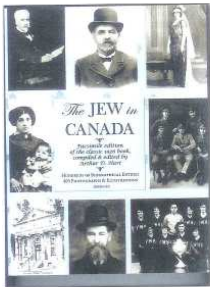
❧❧❧

### New Acquisitions to the JGS of Canada (Toronto) Library Collection at the North York Central Library, 6<sup>th</sup> floor Gladys Allison Canadiana Room

---

Hart, Arthur Daniel, comp. *The Jew in Canada*. Abridged facsimile ed. Toronto: Now & Then Books, 2010.

Reviewed and Adapted by Bill Gladstone  
*Avotaynu* Spring Vol. XXVI, no. 1, 2010



*The Jew in Canada*, edited by Arthur D. Hart, is a little-known classic of Canadian Jewish history. It was first published in 1926 and has been out of print and almost impossible to find ever since. It offers profiles and photographs of hundreds of prominent personalities and community leaders in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Vancouver and a host of other Canadian cities. Many entries give the year and place of birth of an individual, as well as his or her immigration history and the names of family members. *The Jew in Canada* also presents many descriptions and illustrations of synagogues, Hebrew schools, Talmud Torahs, business enterprises, women's activities, charitable organizations, and other community endeavours.

The new volume contains all of the biographical and genealogical material of the original, but the opening chapters, outlining Canadian Jewish history before about 1900, were not included as they are readily available elsewhere. A few other peripheral essays were also omitted.

It may be observed that *The Jew in Canada* seems to concentrate on the "landed gentry" -- the "Jewish 400". you might call them -- who arrived anywhere from the 1860s to the early 1920s. Its pages spotlight the well-to-do businessmen, doctors, lawyers, rabbis and top community leaders and workers, both men and women. *The Jew in Canada* is 466 pages, and has a biographical index.

*The Jew in Canada* may be ordered from Now & Then Books: [www.nowandthenbookstoronto.com](http://www.nowandthenbookstoronto.com)

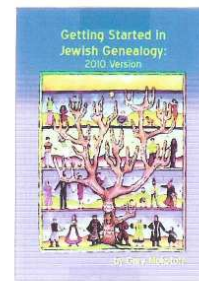
#### CHECK THE WEBSITE OFTEN!

Remember to visit [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca)  
frequently for news and updates.

Mokotoff, Gary. *Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy: 2010 Version*. Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2010.

Reviewed by Elaine Cheskes

#### Mokotoff Traces Madoff



Mokotoff's latest research manual, *Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy: 2010 Version*, is a completely new edition from his other publications: *Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy*, published in 1999, and *Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy*, 2004 publication. The *2010 Version* is not intended for beginners in the genealogical field, but rather to convince researchers that the task of tracing family can be accomplished by using the latest Internet resources. Mokotoff explains how to access websites such as Jewish Gen, the Morse One-Step, FamilySearch, and Ancestry.com.

For those of us who have had difficulty in determining the original surname of our ancestors due to a name change upon their arrival in the United States or Canada, Mokotoff suggests that we access the naturalization papers. Prior to the granting of citizenship, the government official checks the passenger list of the ship to verify legal entry. The original name of the immigrant, found on the ship's manifest, is recorded on the Certificate of Arrival. This certificate becomes part of the documentation for naturalization.

In the last chapter, Mokotoff describes how he traces the paternal ancestry of the infamous Bernie Madoff back five generations, 200 years to 1809, in a period of less than two hours. He also confirms that Madoff was not the original family name.

In the *2010 Version* we are kept up-to-the minute on the latest genealogical lingo. Currently, the politically correct term for "genealogy" is "family history".

Since new and innovative resources are rapidly developing on the Internet, "it is the intent of the author to publish a new version of this book every year, hence the inclusion in the title of *2010 Version*."

## Uncovering the Hidden Holocaust

Originally published in *The Toronto Star*  
on October 12, 2010

Reprinted with permission of the author



By [Martin Regg Cohn](#) Columnist

Stark images of human skeletons in mass graves. Video testimony about mass executions. Then a jarring speech from the man in a clerical collar.

The questions from the floor are unexpected: One after another, people ask Father Patrick Desbois why he doesn't take his Holocaust message further afield.

On this night, in this synagogue, his Jewish audience seemed to be telling this Catholic priest that he was preaching to the converted. In plaintive tones, they asked him to broaden his reach — exposing more non-Jews to his harrowing account of Eastern Europe's hidden Holocaust.

In an age of Holocaust denial, with Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad disdaining the evidence, they beseeched him to get his message out beyond the walls of their synagogue. Many in the hall had survived the genocide that claimed 6 million Jews, and already knew the details in their bones.

One of them was my mother. She had been following the priest's work from a distance, but now wanted to hear his story in person. And then share her own.

History had brought them together: her birthplace, in Rawa-Ruska, on the Polish-Ukrainian border; and his life's work in that same small railway town.

As Desbois told the audience, his grandfather had been held in Rawa-Ruska as a captured French soldier in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp. But he'd always told the young Desbois that "others" had suffered far more. It was a telltale clue that launched the priest's lifelong obsession with the fate of the 10,000 Jews slaughtered in the vicinity of Rawa-Ruska.

Desbois went to Rawa-Ruska in 2002 to see for himself, but found nothing visible: The local mayor kept running interference, insisting there were no traces of mass graves. Yet Desbois knew from his own upbringing in rural France that villagers always know where the bodies are buried. He returned year after year, until a new mayor took power and provided the key that unlocked Rawa-Ruska's dark secret.

He was led to a mass grave for the last 1,500 Jews of Rawa-Ruska. It became ground zero for his research as he fanned out across Ukraine. Interviewing witnesses, the priest says little but listens closely, allowing his clerical collar to loosen people's tongues in the heavily Catholic countryside. But the encounters are not especially priestly; no one ever asks him to take confession, even when confessing to the most heinous acts.

He uses teams of forensic and ballistics experts, translators

and diggers. And more recently, bodyguards, due to death threats from Holocaust deniers — the fallout from getting his message out.

Despite the denials, it remains one of the best-documented events of recent history. And yet Desbois continues to uncover new details about killing fields that had seemed lost forever.

To date, Desbois has uncovered more than 500 mass graves across Ukraine and Belarus, aided by Soviet archives and new testimony from nearly 800 eyewitnesses. The forensic, ballistic and human evidence adds up to what Desbois calls a "Holocaust by bullets" — a grim epilogue to the traditional narrative of gas chambers and concentration camps.

After his talk last week, Desbois listened patiently to audience members who mobbed him at the podium, still asking about mass graves in distant villages. One of them was my 84-year-old mother, who made her way past the crowds to tell the priest that she was one of the last living survivors from Rawa-Ruska — the town of his grandfather's internment, and my own grandparents' death.

Fearing the worst, my grandparents had made arrangements to smuggle my mother out of Rawa-Ruska. She obtained false papers identifying her as a Catholic teenager — one of many who survived the war in Nazi Germany until the Russians liberated them.

We don't know how my grandparents perished. Nothing more was heard from them after late 1942, when they last wrote to my mother. Did they die of typhus, brought on by the inhuman conditions Jews were subjected to by the Nazi occupiers? Or in the killing fields that Desbois has documented?

It is a story still without answers. But a story no Holocaust denier can take away from us.

*Editor's note: Martin Regg Cohn is accepting emails to his mother at [mcohn@thestar.ca](mailto:mcohn@thestar.ca) or [twitter.com/reggcohn](https://twitter.com/reggcohn).*

### ADVERTISING RATES

SHEM TOV is now accepting display advertising for publication. Advertisers are requested to supply camera-ready art and payment by February 2011 for the Spring issue. Please indicate how many insertions you would like. As the chart indicates our basic rate is discounted for advertisements placed in four consecutive issues (one year) instead of a single issue only. By placing an ad in SHEM TOV, you are reaching a growing number of readers in Toronto, across Canada and internationally, and helping to support a unique and vital journal.

	One Issue	Four Issues (one year)
Full Page	\$60	\$200
Half Page	\$30	\$100
Quarter Page	\$18	\$ 60
Eighth Page	\$10	\$ 32

Search ads are also available. Rates are \$5 for the first 25 words and 25¢ per word thereafter, your name and address are free. Please write advertisement clearly with family surnames you are researching in UPPER CASE letters. Make your cheque payable to Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) and mail to: JGS of Canada (Toronto), P.O. Box 91006, 2901 Bayview Ave., Toronto, Ontario M2K 1H0.

---

## The Accidental Archivist: Irish Jewish Records

by *Harvey Glasner*

Stuart Rosenblatt of Dublin Ireland informed me by email that he would be in Toronto and wondered if we could meet over coffee to discuss his research in Ireland. His archival work had me intrigued. Last June, we had our first face-to-face. The depth, scope and scale of his work dominated the conversation.

Stuart, who is now 65 years old, had little interest in school and disliked the rigors of formal education. He even confided that his secondary school teacher at Wesley College in Dublin suggested that he had “no academic future”. Ultimately, he chose to go into business for himself and successfully built up a finance and property enterprise.

After the death of his parents in the early 1990s, he began tracing his maternal family history. What started as a humble search turned out to be a remarkable recording of thousands of pieces of information on 44,000 Irish Jews, which include antecedents and descendants from countries all over the world. In total, there are 16 volumes that date back to the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Stuart was impressed when I pointed to our Society’s efforts in documenting over 70,000 entries of Jewish burials in Toronto and the subsequent submission of that data to JOWBR (Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Records). He then showed me one of his self-published volumes, 5 inches thick and leather bound.

Stuart does much, much more than index – his work includes every aspect of Jewish interest. In short, his research is an exhaustive examination of Irish Jewish DNA.

Choose any entry and the researcher is able to trace lineages up, down, and sideways. You learn more detail than just birth, death, place of burial and marriage. A researcher will also discover affiliations, court appearances, land ownership, places of business, etc., etc., etc. The quantity of information is phenomenal! In fact, what makes his work even more extraordinary is that he was able to accomplish this in a matter of 13 years.

When we met again in September, he told me that he is happiest when he provides information to folks who are searching their Irish Jewish heritage. But sadly, despite his tireless efforts, Stuart’s work remains somewhat downplayed by Ireland’s remaining Jews. “I have no donations, help or encouragement,” he said. “It is all on my head.”

Recently, Harvard University contacted him about his research. They were very interested in acquiring his volumes. He explained to them that his personal investment is in the thousands of dollars. Disappointingly, the university was not willing to make an offer to cover his costs.

Stuart is still undeterred. He has committed himself to update volume 15 every 5 years. To Stuart Rosenblatt, “genealogy is like a drug – you get withdrawal symptoms if you don’t get your fix during the day! Generations past have allowed us to live the way we do today,” he explained. “It’s a privilege we have our lives today so my work is a gracious

thank you to our ancestors who gave so much.”

Stuart is presently involved with penning the YIDIOT’S Guide to Irish Jewish roots, as well as working on a website to place all of his information online.

Note: Anyone interested in finding out about their Irish Jewish roots can reach Stuart by email at [masterc@mediannet.ie](mailto:masterc@mediannet.ie)



### New Cooperation Agreement Between JRI-Poland and the Virtual Shtetl Portal of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Peter Jassem of Toronto, who is Canadian representative of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and Stanley Diamond of Montreal, who is founder of JRI-Poland, met at the Polish embassy in Ottawa on October 2<sup>nd</sup> to sign a cooperation agreement. This event was attended by Polish Ambassador Zenon Kosiniak-Kamysz and other dignitaries as well as by representatives of the Canadian Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation, and of JGS of Ottawa and Hillel Ottawa.

This new agreement will be a boon to those researching their ancestors in Poland.

JRI-Poland, started in 1995, has over 4 million documents and can be found at [www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/](http://www.jewishgen.org/jri-pl/). Virtual Shtetl, at [www.sztetl.org.pl/en](http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en), has been in operation since June, 2009. Users of this site can add archival matter, and audio and video files.

Peter Jassem, in addition to being our member, has since 2002 been Chair of the Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation in Toronto: <http://www.pjhftoronto.ca/>

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews is scheduled to open in 2012 on the site of the Warsaw Ghetto. See [www.jewishmuseum.org.pl](http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl)

# Mount Sinai Cemetery

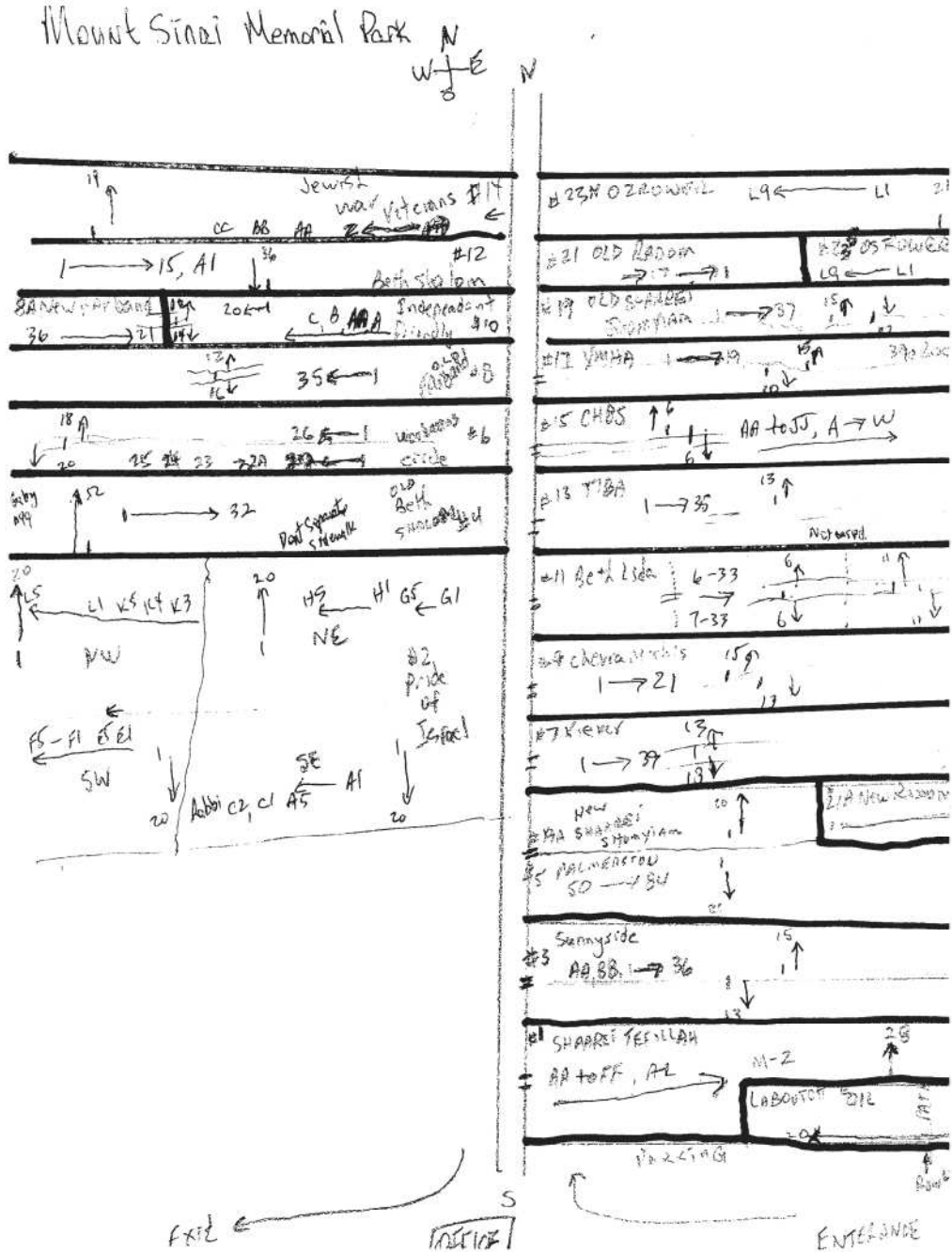
by Allen Halberstadt

**M**ount Sinai Cemetery, located on Wilson Avenue in northwest Toronto, was established in 1920 and consists of 23 sections.

I took on this project in May 2010 and completed it on October 20, 2010. I photographed and indexed the whole cemetery by myself. I was given an excel spreadsheet for some of the sections that had plot locations, names and burial dates. I then verified each of those entries and added other information that was missing, as inscribed on the tombstones. For the sections

where I did not receive spreadsheets, I created my own. I also created a map for the cemetery.

With the help of the Cemetery's head of maintenance, Phil, who has been there for twenty years, we figured out how the rows run and from which direction the graves start. I also had to rename each picture to match the plot location, e.g. section, row #, grave #. The spreadsheet will be uploaded on JOWBR by the beginning of December 2010. There presently are almost 14,000 burials at this Cemetery.



*A Visit to Warsaw* - Cont'd from page 1

teachers and one very old man (a survivor, we presumed) to learn about the history of the Jewish people in Poland. At the end of the speaker's talk, he played a recording of the last cantor from before the war and then everyone broke into a modern Israeli song. We spoke with some of the students telling them how pleased we were to see them there learning about their history.

The next morning we met the students again as we wandered through the enormous Jewish cemetery; our paths crossed once again in the afternoon at the Jewish Historical Institute where they were watching a film about the Ghetto. In the lobby of the JHI (housed in the former Jewish Library that stood next to the Great Synagogue of Warsaw, blown up in 1943), are a computer and a map. You type in your ancestral *shtetl* and it lights up on the map. The computer displays the history of your village – Jewish population in the last census before the war, percentage of the overall population, final destination of the Jewish citizens. In the cases of my and my husband's *shtetls*, it was Treblinka.



**Ghetto Wall Memorial**

As Ken and I were leaving the JHI, I saw a sign that stated that the JHI could do genealogical research for individuals, not groups. Inquiring further, we were directed across the laneway to the skyscraper that stands on the synagogue site. The Blue Tower, as it is known because of the colour of its windows, is said to be haunted and has had a hard time renting out all its space.

In a small office in the Blue Tower, two dedicated genealogists conduct research for people around the world. We sat with Yale Reisner (who has spoken in Toronto on two occasions) and Anya, bombarding them with names and questions. In my husband's case, he learned his mother's real first name. I had seen it on the Canadian passenger lists but did not realize it was really a name – Ente, a form of Yenta, which only became an unhappy name through literature. It actually is related to the French "gentille" meaning sweet, nice. My quest to learn the fate of my mother's cousins initially drew a blank but I have to send Anya more information.

The visit to the JHI and the presence of the Israelis left us feeling hopeful. Our three days passed in a flash. We are already planning a return visit so that we can visit our ancestral *shtetls* and truly walk where once our ancestors walked.



## **Back to Lithuanian Roots**

In the November 11, 2010 issue of *The Globe and Mail*, there was an account by Robin Esrock entitled *A Lonely Journey Into a Troubled Past*. This was description of the South African-born writer's genealogical journey to the homeland of his grandparents, Lithuania, where he visited predominantly Kupiskis and Vilnius. He was able to find the names of relatives named Ezrock etched on a memorial plaque in the old Kupiskis synagogue.

A 32-year old currently living in Canada, the writer has a blog on his website, [www.robsinesrock.com](http://www.robsinesrock.com): *Robin Esrock: Adventurer, Travel Writer and Television Host, Modern Gonzo*. Among the many postings on Esrock's blog, you can read *Digging Up the Past in Lithuania* for a detailed description of his 2007 visit to that country.

## From A Short Trip, A Longer Journey

by Rick Richman


**B**elow is the concluding portion of *A Short Trip, A Longer Journey*, an account of discovery written by Rick Richman. This article appeared in the *Jewish Press*; a subsequent version appeared in *CJ: Voices of Conservative/Masorti Judaism*, Fall 2010 issue. Mr. Richman chronicles his recent efforts to research his parents' families. He used the services of a private genealogical search service, obtaining very good results for both sides of his family. In his quest, the author find maternal relatives who, like him, lived in California for years.

This excerpted piece is reprinted with permission of *CJ: Voices of Conservative/Masorti Judaism*

When Jewish immigrants came to the United States at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, largely they left their pasts behind. Many, like my grandfather Abraham, came without family, with the memory of pogroms seared into their souls, eager to assimilate into a new country. Many were anxious to leave their religion behind as well. Someone once said the biggest graveyard for old tallises and tefillin is the New York harbor.

The immigrants worked long hours as hucksters, peddlers, schmatta salesmen, trying to feed themselves and their families. They had no family albums from the old country. They were in a new land, trying to become a new people. History was something they were trying to avoid, not remember.

A century later, many of their descendants enjoy a prosperity they could not have imagined. We enjoy political freedom unparalleled in Jewish history. Many are probably in the same situation as I was – not knowing much about their grandparents' history beyond their names and basic facts. Perhaps they have some pictures, but not the stories of their early lives.

Remembering is one of the commandments of Jewish life. It is what has helped preserve the Jewish people. We probably appreciate our grandparents' stories more as we get older, as we consider the lives we enjoy in America and the sacrifices of those who made it possible. If there is a way to recapture some of their personal history – which is our own personal history – it is a mitzvah to try. 

## The Learning Never Ends...

### NEW CONFERENCE IN SALT LAKE CITY, February 10-12, 2011

Coming this February to Salt Lake City, Utah will be **Rootstech: A New Family History and Technology Conference to Define the Future of Genealogy**, held at the Salt Palace Convention Center. As the title indicates, the focus of this Conference will be the use of technology in genealogical pursuits.

It will be hosted by FamilySearch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and sponsored by Ancestry.com, Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS), National Genealogical Society (NGS), Brigham Young University, Microsoft, Dell and the New England Historic Genealogical Society. To learn more about this Conference, visit <http://www.rootstech.familysearch.org/>

Many of you will be aware that the Mormons were instrumental in bringing a vast amount of Jewish records to the public. In fact, on the home page of their site, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), there is a heading entitled **Jewish Family History Resources**.



### ONTARIO GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE IN HAMILTON, May 13-15, 2011

The Ontario Genealogical Society will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at its forthcoming Conference, **Remembering Our Past ...Projecting The Future**, which will be held at the Hamilton Convention Centre next May 13-15. Registration opens in January. Jewish research is included among the Conference's many topics. Please check [www.ogs.org](http://www.ogs.org) for details.



### NEXT IAJGS CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C. August 14 to 19, 2011

The 31<sup>st</sup> **IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy** will be taking place in Washington D.C. from, hosted by the Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Washington (JGSGW). The venue is the Grand Hyatt Washington. A Jewish Film Festival will be held during the Conference. Online registration is available. The deadline for submissions for this Conference is January 15, 2011.

Be sure to check [www.DC2011.org](http://www.DC2011.org) for details. On the homepage of that site, click on **Jewish History in D.C.** to be connected to a fascinating historical website called **Jewish Washington: Scrapbook of an American Community**.

If you are able to attend any of these Conferences, please consider sharing your experiences with your fellow Society members. Send your reports to [shemtov@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca)

## A Visit to the Center for Jewish History, NY

by Judy Kasman

The Center for Jewish History, 15 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street, in the Chelsea district of Manhattan, appears from the outside to be a gracious rowhouse. However, it is a deceptively spacious building on four levels, home to the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. As such, it holds substantial collections and runs a wide variety of interesting exhibits sponsored by one or more of the partner organizations.

On a trip to the Center this past October, I witnessed the diversity of its holdings when I viewed the following exhibits: *Looking Back: The Jews of Morocco*, *The Art of the Book: Design and Illustration* (book jackets designed by German Jews in the early to mid- 1900s), *Pages from a Performing Life: The Scrapbooks of Molly Picon*, and *Chaim Grade: Out of the Ruins*. There were several more exhibits on display at that time.

I also had occasion to visit the Center's Ackman & Ziff Genealogical Institute where there is a genealogical reference library equipped with computers with ready access to numerous family history databases; staff and volunteers are available to provide assistance. Beyond this room, there is the vast two-storey Lillian Goldman Reading Room filled with reference books and a multitude of archival material which can be accessed for viewing and serious research.

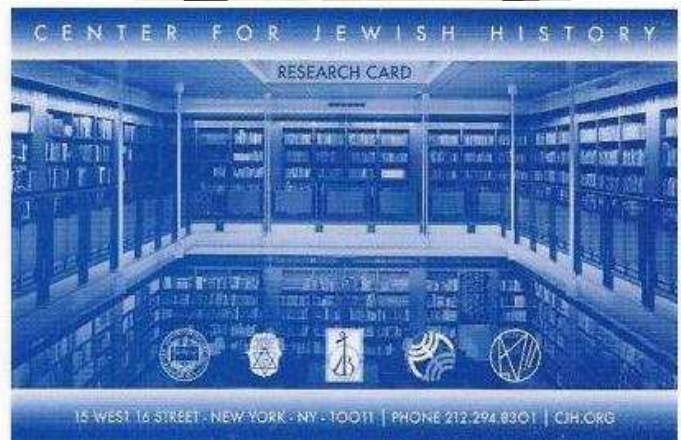
If you go to [www.cjh.org](http://www.cjh.org), you can not only learn all about this Museum, and also you can also benefit a great deal from the online resources available to genealogists. If you click on *Electronic Resources* and then *Free Resources*, you will see a long list of databases that you can explore. In addition, you can select *Fact Sheets*: there are 42 Fact Sheets arranged in 6 categories of research. There literally is something for all family researchers!

The Center for Jewish History certainly proves to be worth a visit, whether it be online or in person!

*Photos by Sheldon Kasman*



Posters for current exhibitions, *The Scrapbooks of Molly Picon*, and *Home Movies of American Jewish Visitors to 1930s Poland*



This Research Card, bearing a picture of the spacious 2-storey reference library, is issued to those wishing to delve into books and other archival material in the Reading Room.

---

## Missing Links

---

I have been trying unsuccessfully to research information for my great grandfather. He was a resident of Toronto from about 1903 to 1914 when he died. His name was Max (or Marx or Marc) Eisen, married to Clara Reiss Eisen; their children: Rose, David, Samuel, Belle, Murray, Robert, Abraham, Renie Beckie (Rebecca), Gertrude (Gussie), Isaac.

From Clara's border crossing records, I have been able to determine three addresses in Toronto: 102 Baldwin St., 70 Albert St., and 671 Centre St. They might have lived with their son-in-law, Hyman Krieger. Max was a grocer and a Hebrew teacher.

I am not able to locate any other information such as siblings or parents, and I do not have Max's picture, nor do I have burial information or an obituary. Any information you may be able to supply would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Vicki S. Frank



Do you have any records on my Jewish grandfather's son, Jean-Pierre Schachter? Is he still living at 186 Berkshire Drive, London, Ontario, married to Judith with two grandchildren, Theodore and Michael?

Thanks. Please reply.  
Mark Haralambos, London, England



I live in a little community north of Vancouver BC called Pender Harbour. My Yochlowitz grandparents were from Poland. When my Dad immigrated to Canada, I think he came from Brussels to New York with his Dad, Joseph Yochlowitz, probably in the 1930s.

I know that my grandfather started his business with a horse & buggy, collecting recyclable merchandise & then opened a business on Main St. in Vancouver called ABC Salvage. The company is still successfully being run by his brother's family in Burnaby BC & as far as I know has the same name.

I am interested in finding out about the Yochlowitz family in Europe (Brussels/Poland).  
Brenda Scoular



If any readers have information to share with the writers of these letters, please write to [shemtov@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca).

---

## Who Do You Think You Are?

This popular television series returns to the air on January 21, 2011. Stay tuned to find out which American notables will be featured in search of their family histories!

---

## New National Museum of Jewish History Opens in Philadelphia

by Judy Kasman

---

The Grand Opening of this 100,000 sq. ft. museum took place over November 12th-14th, 2010 with performances by such entertainers as Jerry Seinfeld, Barbra Streisand and Bette Midler and an address by keynote speaker, American Vice President Joe Biden. The official opening to the public was on November 26<sup>th</sup>.

The original Museum, opened in 1976, the year of Philadelphia's bicentennial, was housed in a 270 year-old Philadelphia synagogue, and displayed only 40 objects. The new 5-storey Museum, built at a cost of \$150 million dollars, is located in Philadelphia's historic district. It is affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution and holds over 1,000 artifacts covering all aspects of American Jewish history. The Museum's mission is "to explore 350 years of Jewish life in the U.S., and highlight themes of freedom, civil rights, prejudice and assimilation".

The Museum has interactive exhibits and displays suited for all age groups.

Visit [www.nmjadh.org](http://www.nmjadh.org) for more about this new building.

---

## Nazi-Looted Art Objects

---

In October, the Claims Conference announced that there is a new central database for searching objects of art looted by the Nazis during World War II from French and Belgian Jews. It is estimated that about 20,000 objects had been stolen; about 10,000 remain unrestituted. The website, [www.errproject.org/jeudepaume](http://www.errproject.org/jeudepaume), is a project of the Claims Conference with technical support from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. The searches may be done by the name of the artist, the owner, or the item.



On November 17<sup>th</sup>, an oil painting by Jan Brueghel the Younger (1601-1678) entitled *Allegory of Earth and Water*, was handed over to Montreal's Concordia University by The Netherlands. Originally owned by German-born art dealer Dr. Max Stern (Ph.D. in art history), the painting was stolen by the Nazis during WWII. The University is the beneficiary of the Estate of Max Stern. See <http://maxsternproject.concordia.ca> for more information about the life of Max Stern and the art restitution project at Concordia.

# EVERYONE HAS A STORY! LAST CALL TO TELL YOURS



**IF YOU DON'T.....WHO WILL?**

**WE'LL HELP YOU WRITE YOUR SUBMISSION  
FOR JGS TORONTO'S "ANNIVERSARY BOOK".**

Please contact Harvey Glasner at [president@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:president@jgstoronto.ca) by December 31, 2010.