NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

KOSHER KOALA

Bauska Synagogue Garden, Bauska Latvia (See story page 21)
Photo: Latvian Jewish Community

AUTUMN 2018

AJGS
L'dor V'dor

FEATURES

VALE SOPHIE SHOSHANA CAPLAN OAM 1933-2018

Sophie Caplan, a founding member and long-serving president of AJGS, passed away in January.

Sophie Caplan with her sons Ben, Gideon and Jonathan

Born in Germany in 1933, Sophie's father, Abraham Topf, died when she was only 9 months old. Her mother, Berta, remarried in 1937. Seeing dark clouds looming over Europe, the family tried unsuccessfully to obtain visas to Australia to join relatives. After fleeing to Belgium, then France, young Sophie and her family were eventually interned in a camp near the Spanish border. As Sophie's son Gideon describes in her Obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a series of miracles saw them narrowly avoid the fate of thousands of their fellow internees:

> *(Sophie's uncle) Ben volunteered for work in Rivesaltes to avoid the enforced idleness of the internment camp, including small building jobs and cleaning the latrines. As a result, the family were allowed to sleep in a disused washroom rather than the barracks.*
>
> *In August 1942, French paramilitary police came to take away Jews, emptying out the barracks but not looking in the washrooms. The family huddled in the washroom for three days and nights, afraid to come out. German documents record the Germans deported 2313 Jews from Rivesaltes, via Drancy in Paris, to the Auschwitz death camp.*

With the aid of Quaker volunteers, Sophie was smuggled out of Rivesaltes. She was sent to a Jewish orphanage run by the *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* in the Chateau de Chaumont in the Massif Central, a poor area of France that the Germans, in a second miracle, did not disturb. The 100 Jewish girls in the orphanage all survived the war. In a third miracle, Sophie's mother and stepfather also survived and were reunited in December 1945, before finally moving to Australia in 1947.

Sophie's passion for Jewish history in general and family history in particular was legendary. In the *Australia Jewish News* tribute to Sophie, NSW Labor parliamentarian and former AJN journalist, Walt Secord, said:

> *Ms Caplan's knowledge of Jewish history was encyclopaedic – and at times, profoundly amusing … She always had an interesting anecdote or observation to liven up the article.*

Sophie was instrumental in establishing the Hans Kimmel essay competition in contemporary Jewish history. Originally established for students at Moriah College, where Sophie's children were studying, but now conducted in Jewish Schools around the world, the competition encourages teenagers to explore their family's stories with a special emphasis on the Shoah, Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel.

Sophie edited this very magazine, *Kosher Koala*, for over a decade, was the Australian Contributing Editor to *The International Review of Jewish Genealogy: Avotaynu* and was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the Australia Day honours in 2000 for her services to history and genealogy.

She is survived by her three sons, Gideon, Jonathan and Ben, and four grandchildren.

Sophie touched the lives of so many members of AJGS. You can read and post comments and tributes on the tribute page on the AJGS website.

AJGS AGM 2018

The AJGS AGM was held at North Shore Synagogue on Sunday March 4, 2018.

Members voted to adopt the Department of Fair Trading's model constitution for incorporated associations. Adopting the model constitution necessitated reducing the committee by one member. This was achieved by making the role of newsletter editor/ webmaster an ex-officio committee position. It also necessitated changing the end of our fiscal year from December to June. Due to this change there will be another AGM in August.

All resolutions passed unanimously.

The formalities were followed by a lively discussion on the ethical considerations and challenges that arise when researching one's family history.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE AGM - ROBYN DRYEN

Following is an edited version of the President's Report to the 2018 AGM

Our membership numbers for 2017 were: 146 paid members and 5 Honorary members. We welcomed new members Robert Marks, Peter Johnson, Alan Charak, Ann Knight, Annie Niemiec, Melanie Morningstar, Michelle Sanders, James Simmons, John Mylonas, and Jackie Varley.

We held 12 Sunday workshops and eight Monday workshops at Lindfield. Some were very lively events, but most Mondays were very quiet and we have reduced these to four in 2018. I particularly want to thank Jeannette Tsoulos for her continued support of these workshops and the sharing of her considerable expertise. I also thank the members who helped out, especially while I was in the UK.

Our developing partnership with Waverley Library has been really exciting. We held two Sunday afternoon workshops in 2017, and have four planned for 2018 – the first of which was two weeks ago. These have attracted 20-30 people each time – some have seen the advertisements in the Council pages of the *Wentworth Courier*, others have been at the library returning books, have seen the notice at the entrance and have come along.

Due to the nature of the space we are allocated and the unpredictability of both numbers attending, and their level of expertise, we are offering these workshops as short talks on specific topics followed by Q&A. To date we have offered: A guide to JewishGen; Really useful but less well-known websites; and Social media for genealogists.

Following the 2016 AGM, Peter Nash gave us a taste of his (then) forthcoming book in an entertaining presentation. An edited video of this presentation is on our website.

The major failing of 2017 was down to me. For multiple reasons, there was only one issue of *Kosher Koala*. Thankfully, Dani Haski has agreed to take over the role of editor and we should all look forward to more, and more exciting, issues in 2018. Please support Dani by contributing news and articles that you think might be of interest.

MailChimp appears to be working well as a communication platform. It enables us to monitor what happens when we send out emails. About one quarter of our members do NOT open them – they may decide from the subject line that it is of no import, or they may just not use their email. If this is the case, I do wonder why they pay their dues. On the other hand, we have a few members who did not pay their fees last year, but who opened and read every communication. I have been able to insert a "shame" note with their dues notice this year. So far it has prompted one of these members to pay up – the rest will be "unsubscribed" tomorrow.

There has been a steady flow of requests for assistance. The most frequent request last year was again to authenticate Jewish origins – usually not successful – but I have taken to recommending DNA testing to see whether it is worthwhile pursuing this line of enquiry. The second-most frequent request was for information about early Jewish colonials. One related to a convict who came on the second fleet and was dead within about 6 months of arrival. It sent me on an interesting search for the arrangements for Jewish burials before the Old Sydney Burial Ground and York St Synagogue.

And so to my appreciation of support for AJGS.

Firstly, thank you Rabbi Lewin and Marion Blitz for continuing to welcome us here at Lindfield.

Thank you:

- Bill Bowes and Summit/Norwest Internet, for their ongoing support and sponsorship of our new website. It is certainly attracting interest;
- Gary Luke, who continues to be the AJGen moderator;
- Peter Arnold, who gave us one more year of impeccable sub-editing of Kosher Koala. Having undertaken the role for Dani's latest issue, I have a renewed admiration for the work Peter did over my 5 years of editing; and
- Ingrid Grace, and her team at Waverley Library who have made us welcome, and have done an excellent job of promoting our workshops in the east.

My role could not be accomplished without the support of the AJGS Committee:

- Kim Phillips, our Vice President
- Sunny Gold, our Secretary and Minutes Secretary;
- Kym Morris, our Treasurer
- Jeannette Tsoulos our Librarian, and Resources co-ordinator
- Dani Haski our AJGS Webmaster, and now *Kosher Koala* editor
- Evelyn Frybort and Annette Winter, committee members.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Winters – Paul and Annette – for their generosity in hosting our committee meetings in 2017 – and Paul for his careful audit of our books for another year.

OUR UZBEK ADVENTURE — SARAH MEINRATH

In 2017 AJGS member Sarah Meinrath, and her husband Nigel, visited Uzbekistan, following the footsteps of Sarah's parents and grandparents during WWII. The journey was a fascinating and emotional experience.

Before WWII, my mother and her parents lived in Pultusk, Poland, a small village located between two tributaries of the River Narev, 70 km north of Warsaw. My grandfather was a baker, working out of the basement of the building where they lived, on the Rynek, the central marketplace.

Pultusk Rynek - 1920 Postcard

On the 27th September 1939, Erev Succot, the Nazis invaded Pultusk. At that time, there were approximately 7,500 Jews resident, accounting for roughly half the population of the town.

My mother Basia, who was 17, and her parents, Dwojra and Akiva Yosef Frenkiel, along with most of the other Jews of the town, were rounded up and herded into the grounds of the Renaissance-style castle on the banks of the River Narev.

The Polonia Castle, built in 1405, was the Mayor's House; today it is a luxury convention hotel.

The Jews were strip-searched and given 24 hours to leave town. By the following morning, most of the Jews were heading east, toward Bialystok, on the Polish side of the border with Russia. To leave town, they needed to cross the old wooden bridge over the wide, fast-flowing River Narev. The Nazis shot at the Jews as they tried to escape. Many were killed by the gunfire; others fell into the river and drowned. The bridge was subsequently bombed. Today the bridge has been replaced, but you can still see the remains of the old bridge jutting out of the water on the river's edge.

Along with tens of thousands of other Jews, my family made it to Bialystok on foot, a distance of 168 kms. They settled there for a short time, boarding with a local family. My grandfather supported the family by baking bread and selling it on the streets. In 1940 the refugee Jews were given an ultimatum to leave Bialystok. Their options were to return to Poland or head further into Russia. The landlady's daughter worked at the local police station and advised my grandfather that she had heard rumours that returnees to Poland were being transported to concentration camps; he decided to move onwards, into Russia.

In Russia, Stalin ordered the deportation of some 2-300,000 Polish Jews from Russian-occupied Eastern Poland to Gulag labour camps deep in the Soviet Union. After a long train journey, my mother and her parents ended up in Kotlas, in Arkhangelsk Oblast, the site of a Siberian gulag. There, my mother and other teenage girls were forced to cut down enormous pine trees with hand-held cross-cut saws, to make way for roads. Many died in appalling conditions, forced to work excessive hours in extreme cold and with little food. I remember Mum telling me that she and her father used to go into the forest to pick mushrooms. Mum had a big coat with a lining she cut open, where she would store food that she "found". Mum would say that when the coat was full she looked quite odd.

Sarah's mother, Basia Frenkiel (left) Basia's father, Akiva Josef (bottom left), her mother Dwojra (bottom right), 1940 Photos © Sarah Meinrath

Following negotiations between Stalin and the Polish government-in-exile (in London), an amnesty was granted to deported Polish citizens. In 1941-1942 the Russians relocated over a million Jewish refugees to "Stans" in Central Asia – in my family's case to Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

According to my mother, the journey to Bukhara took many weeks by cattle train and people were packed like sardines in the carriages. Many died. Once there, my family settled in the ancient Jewish quarter of Bukhara, alongside the existing Bukharan Jewish community, who claim to have lived there since the reign of King David. Mum described the Jews there as being of an Oriental appearance and living alongside their Muslim neighbours. To this day, Jews and Muslims in Uzbekistan live a harmonious existence.

With little food, and trying to feed his family, my grandfather contracted typhus and within a short period passed away. He was only in his early 50s and was buried in the Bukharan Jewish Cemetery, located in the "Old Town". Our eldest son, Yoni Akivah was named after him. My mother told me many times, how she sold her father's passport so she could afford to put a stone on his grave.

My mother spent the next few years looking after my grandmother. She worked for a Jewish family churning butter and making cheese. In 1945, aged 23, Mum was introduced to her future husband, my father, Szyja Blachowicz. My Dad had also endured many terrible hardships on his journey from Poland, through Siberia to Uzbekistan.

I had always wanted to visit Uzbekistan and say Kaddish by my grandfather's grave, knowing that he was buried there, and knowing that my mother and father had met and married there. I felt as though I had a mission to accomplish – in loving memory of the grandfather I had never met, my grandmother and of my parents - to honour them and to see where my family once lived, to stand where they stood, and to feel their presence in this ancient city of Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

I hoped that this would give me closure for my grandfather's life. At the same time, I would be able to see where my parents started their lives together.

My inspiration to travel to Uzbekistan came when I heard Caryn Farber from Joint, talking about Joint's outreach programs to Uzbekistan. I realised visiting Uzbekistan was a serious possibility.

And so, began our adventure.

Nigel & I already had a trip booked to Israel during March, and we thought it might be a good idea to have a side trip from there to Uzbekistan.

Knowing nothing about the place and how to get there, we searched the net to find a travel agent who might specialise in trips from Israel to Uzbekistan. Google suggested a travel agent in Rose Bay, and we made an appointment to see one of the reps late in February. After chatting away for a little while and explaining our requirements we realised that our travel agent was none other than Miriam Rozenman, our Rabbi's aunt!

We had lots of questions. Miriam assured us that travel to Uzbekistan was perfectly safe, despite the fact that it shares part of its southern border with Afghanistan.

Tashkent at night: Wikimedia Creative Commons

A few weeks later we embarked on our flight from Tel Aviv to Tashkent, the international airport in Uzbekistan. We had no visas as Uzbekistan has no embassy in Australia, and we were relying on the Uzbek officials granting us a visa at the airport.

After landing, all the other passengers passed through immigration, and we found ourselves the only passengers left in there, with no staff to be seen. After about half an hour an immigration official showed up, opened his office and with little delay ushered us into Uzbekistan with our visas granted. It was late at night, and the terminal appeared abandoned, or so we thought.

On exiting the airport, we were surprised to see thousands of people standing in the night air, many as lost as we were. We learned that many had travelled to Uzbekistan to be with family for the festival of Navruz, one of the most important holidays on the Uzbek calendar. It is the start of spring and the beginning of the New Year; an incredible mix of Persian tradition and Uzbek culture, and many of the people were wearing traditional dress. The night was cold, but within moments our tour guide collected us and directed us to his car. We were introduced to our guide and driver and taken to our hotel in Tashkent.

The next morning, we had breakfast in the hotel, where we came across a large group of Israelis who were in Uzbekistan on a tour of the Silk Road. Uzbekistan and Israel are on very good terms, despite Uzbekistan having a predominantly Muslim population. Officially, Uzbekistan is a secular country in which no distinctions are made between people of different faiths, race or ideology.

Our hotel was beautiful and contemporary. Our guide, Arnold, picked us up from the hotel and showed us around Tashkent, the capital. It is a reasonably modern city with wide roads and is the centre of government. Much of the old city was destroyed by a massive earthquake in 1966. The Soviet republics helped rebuild devastated Tashkent, creating a model Soviet city with wide streets planted with shade trees, immense plazas with fountains and monuments, and acres of apartment blocks. Sadly little of the architectural heritage survived and there are few structures to mark its significance as a critical trading point on the historic Silk Road.

Tashkent, Uzbekistan Creative Commons F. Eveleens

We were taken to the Museum of Applied Arts — the largest state art museum in the country — with a collection of beautiful local craft, including the traditional

intricate Uzbek Suzana embroidery, carved wooden furniture, regional ceramics and metalware and musical instruments for festive occasions. We visited what remains of the Old Town with its narrow lanes, mud brick houses, mosques and madrasas, 16th century temples and the Chorsu Bazaar, a huge open market.

Sunset over Bukhara from Emir's Ark: CC - Peretz Partensky

After spending the day in Tashkent, we took the short flight to Bukhara in a Soviet Ilyushin aircraft — a twin prop plane I was sure was going to fall out of the sky! However, it was not too frightening, and I managed not to rip Nigel's arm off at the elbow!

We stayed in Hotel Devon Begi, a traditional Bukharan building, with a lovely inner courtyard decorated in intricate oriental carving – situated on the edge of the Old Town, which, in the past, was almost an exclusively Jewish area. Today, many Bukharan Jews still live in the Old Town.

Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, Bukharan Jews were one of the most isolated Jewish communities in the world. Until the 1970s there were up to 30 Synagogues in the city of Bukhara. Starting in 1972, one of the largest Bukharan Jewish emigrations in history occurred as the Jews of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan emigrated to Israel and New York, because of looser restrictions on immigration. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, almost all of the remaining Bukharan Jews left Central Asia.

We quickly got our bearings and found the two remaining synagogues, both Sephardi. There we found "Johnny" a Bukharan Jew, standing outside one of the *shuls*. He offered to show us the Jewish area of Bukhara, for $$$ of course! At this point I might mention that the Uzbek currency, the Sum, is nearly worthless so any $US they can get their hands on is like gold!

Johnny took us into the two *shuls*, introducing us to both the elderly Rabbis, well into their 80's— one of them gave us a blessing. Johnny showed us the Jewish day school, and finally he led us to the Jewish cemetery.

Sarah (left) and Nigel (right) with one of the Rabbis in Bukhara. © Sarah Meinrath

There, we met Emmanuel Elnatanov, the cemetery manager – a religious, and humble man. He was very patient and couldn't do enough to help us. Emmanuel, Johnny, Nigel and I scoured the cemetery in the rain and mud, getting cold and wet, dodging puddles, searching and searching for any sign of my grandfather's grave. Sadly, it was fruitless. There were scant, if any, death records pre-1945 and most old graves suffered badly from the ravages of time and extreme weather. Weather conditions in Uzbekistan range from extremes of +40C in summer to -40C in winter. When my mother said she had a stone placed on her father's grave I imagined an upright stone, not unlike the ones we see here in Australia. Little did I realise that it was probably a block of sandstone, which may have eroded or disappeared in over 70 years. I was upset that I could not find my grandfather's grave. Emmanuel, being the religious man that he was, told me it was not important that I find the actual grave, but more that I should know that my grandfather's soul was there.

I wondered how many Jewish refugees were buried there, forgotten in time? Nigel suggested that we might find some information on my family in the city archives, and Emmanuel convinced Johnny to take us there on the Sunday.

Emmanuel spoke only Tajik and Hebrew, which made communication difficult, even though I have an average grasp of Hebrew. He invited us to Shabbat dinner at his home, and to attend Shule for the service prior to the meal.

The Synagogue in Bukhara © Sarah Meinrath

The service was lovely and the congregation was very welcoming. The *Shul* was in a building said to be over 300 years old. There was a small open courtyard, and the congregation all sat on benches at desks surrounding the *bima*. The benches were covered with tablecloths and the seats were upholstered. The *Shamash*, a local Muslim, prepared unsweetened black tea for the congregants during the service and gave each person a teapot and a small bowl to drink from. That Shabbat happened to be my grandfather's Yahrzeit, and Nigel had the great honour of saying Kaddish for him in the city where he lived, and passed away—possibly the first person to ever do so.

Shabbat dinner in a religious Uzbek household was a most interesting experience. Emmanuel, his two brothers and their families all lived in the one complex, which comprised of their three houses surrounding a courtyard, hidden from the street behind a large wall and gate.

We were seated in the crowded dining room, men and women seated at separate tables – apparently a tradition. The Shabbat candles were lit and the tables were neatly set. The bottle of Vodka we brought as a gift was gratefully accepted. Kiddush was recited, then we all washed for *HaMotzi*. We had beautiful *challot*, nothing like our plaited version; they were baked in the traditional Uzbek style in the form of circular flat loaves with a decorated depression at the centre and a thicker rim all around. They were brought to the table with the decorated side up and torn into irregular chunks… absolutely delicious!

Traditional Bukharan Meal CC

The daughters of the family served the meal but I was not allowed to help as I was their guest. Again, language was a bit of a challenge, but our hosts had the foresight to invite a young non-Jewish woman who worked for one of the brothers, and spoke perfect English, to join us at the meal. She was our interpreter for the evening, and all I can say is thank goodness, she sat next to me!

The table was laden with many small dishes, including several Bukharan salads and fried fish with garlic sauce, from which we helped ourselves. Just when we thought the meal was over, plates and plates of steaming *kreplach* called "*manti*" were served, filled with meats, potatoes or pumpkin. Lots of vodka was consumed. We had a wonderful evening, comparing our different lifestyles and traditions. When it came time to leave, almost the whole family accompanied us through the dark, narrow, potholed alleyways of the old town, back to our hotel.

Despite being such a small Jewish community, around 200 people, it manages to still be dynamic. They have their own young *shochet*, trained in Israel, with expectations that he may be their future Rabbi. Many of the children

attend the Jewish day school, but the community is shrinking because they send their young adults to Israel or New York to study and get married.

Our Shabbat was terrific but the following day was incredibly exciting for me! We met Johnny early in the morning and as arranged, together with a driver, we made our way to the Bukharan Archives Office. It was in a dreary, Soviet-style two-storey office building which doubled as a court house. We were introduced to the archivist and told her of our wish to find my grandfather's death certificate.

Basia Frenkiel and Szyja Blachowicz marriage certificate © Sarah Meinrath

Dusty old books were spread all around her office – in bookshelves, on desks, in boxes and on the floor! Perhaps she was unable to find it because we did not have his exact death date because eventually she gave up. She was still enthusiastic to help us though, and we thought to ask her if she could try to look for my parents' wedding registration. Lo and behold, amongst all the chaos, she actually found it!

Now began the Soviet-style bureaucracy! The archivist had the registration in her hand but was reluctant to let us see it or copy it. She was now querying my relationship to my parents. My passport of course, showed a different surname to that of my parents. As far as she was concerned, after 2 hours work, she was not going to allow me access. We were directed to her manager who officiously informed us that we would need permission from a higher body, located in a different part of the city, over 30 mins drive away.

We were obviously not about to give up the chase. Johnny directed our driver to this other office where I met with the head of the Bukharan Archives who studied my passport in detail, asked me many questions and then approved my access and gave me an official stamp of approval on the spot. Back we drove to the original office, handed over our permission slip.

I was absolutely thrilled and over the moon to be allowed to photograph the original copy of my parents' wedding registration! Imagine my surprise and delight to find out that not only did I now have the correct dates of their marriage, I also had their signatures from 1946 – and surprise, surprise – I had their address in the old town!!

We headed straight back to the old town, directly to the street where my parents lived at the time of their wedding. According to Johnny the area had not changed since that period and the houses, now mostly abandoned, still existed. It was exactly as my mother had described – the building was made of mud and straw. It must have been a very poor existence. My father's wedding present to mum was a single left shoe, all he could afford. My mother made a wedding cake out of potato flour and they held the wedding on a Friday as the community could not afford more than one *Sheva Bracha* (wedding blessing).

The street in Bukhara where Basia and Szyja Blachowicz lived © Sarah Meinrath

Thrilled with our discovery and feeling as though we had achieved most of our goals, the following day we departed Bukhara and continued on our travels. We followed the Silk Road to Samarkand,

seeing the most beautiful mosques and madrassas there.

Overall, Uzbekistan is a beautiful country to visit. The friendliness of the people is incredible, and the ornate decorative mosaics on the mosques, madrassas, and crypts, along with the tapestries, weaving, history and culture were alone worth the trip.

For me, being able to look through a window of time, at my parents and grandparent's lives during their escape from the holocaust, was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. I only wish I had listened to my mother's stories more closely, and that I had asked my father more about his experiences. I am sure he would have been happy to tell me.

Hopefully this is just one of the chapters of their life that I can share. I hope next year to follow some of their journeys through Eastern Europe as they made their way back to Poland, to Austria, Paris, Marseille and finally to Australia.

Clockwise from top right: Bukhara Synagogue bima; Bukhara Synagogue; Basia and Szyja Blachowicz in 1947; the house where Basia & Szyja Blachowicz lived. Photos: Sarah Meinrath

Broken Hill Synagogue consecrated in 1911.

RETURN TO BROKEN HILL

In March, the ARK Centre in Melbourne organised a tour to Broken Hill to learn more about the community that once thrived there. The group was led by Rabbi Shneur Reti-Waks. ARK Centre General Manager Lisa Naphtali describes the tour:

Rabbi Shneur Reti-Waks
Why did we come to Broken Hill? To be inspired and to honour those who came to maybe the furthest place possible in every which way and didn't just settle but thrived here in the Outback.

> *Over 50 people, from ages 11 – 87, mostly from Melbourne, converged on Broken Hill for The Inspiration Tour. Among the group was Paula Edelmen, now living in Darwin, whose family was instrumental in the town throughout its existence, and whose father, grandfather and great-grandfather are all buried in the Jewish section of the Broken Hill cemetery. Also in attendance was The Hon. Michael Danby MP, as well as a number of people who have personal ties to the Broken Hill Jewish Community including Leon Mann and the driving force, Howard Goldenberg and his family. The group comprised ARK Centre members, and many others from the Melbourne community who came to learn more and to be inspired by our domestic history.*

One of the people invited to speak to the group was our own AJGS President, Robyn Dryen. Robyn took participants on a tour of Broken Hill cemetery. Then she and others shared the stories of their ancestors who had lived and died in Broken Hill.

The invitation to return to Broken Hill inspired ***Robyn Dryen*** *to take a closer look at the lives of some of her ancestors. This article is an edited version of the talk she gave to the ARK Centre tour.*

I was afforded the great privilege of talking to the ARK Centre (East Hawthorn VIC) community and friends, on their March 2018 pilgrimage to Broken Hill. They asked for a talk about the life of the early Jewish settlers in such a remote community, and so my thoughts turned to my family lore.

In my family there is a story that two of my great-grandmother's Krantz brothers began their new life on "the Hill" as hawkers, selling eggs and chickens. I have found no evidence of this, as within a month of arrival, Israel Krantz was reported by the *Barrier Miner*, to be before the court for obstructing the thoroughfare in Argent St with his **fruit** cart.

I decided to take the opportunity to add to my knowledge about three aspects of daily life for Broken Hill's early Jewish settlers.

I wondered how the 200-300 Russian Jews who arrived in Broken Hill between 1891 and 1910, kept *kosher* – for they were an observant lot. I wondered how they transacted their business without English-language skills – for they were quickly buying property, applying for land grants, ordering supplies for their shops, and attempting to establish relationships with their customers. While Yiddish may have been fine for their *landsmen*, what about the rest? I also wanted to know more about their acceptance and place in the Broken Hill community.

I spent many happy hours using the Trove newspaper collection, particularly editions of the *Barrier Miner*, the *Jewish Herald* and the *Hebrew Standard of Australasia*.

KEEPING KOSHER

The best I can deduce is that prior to 1905, meat supplies were had from Adelaide – an overnight freight train away. Chickens were probably home killed by those men in the community who possessed the "knowledge" of *kashrut*, if not the licence to slaughter.

In 1905, the arrival of Rev Mandelbaum meant there was finally a recognised *shochet* on-site. He supervised the killing and preparation at the council-run city abattoirs and Bromley's Butchers gained the first licence to sell kosher meat. They proudly sold kosher meat at the same price as similar non-kosher meat, to anyone who asked for it – suggesting there might have been some others who wanted the product.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

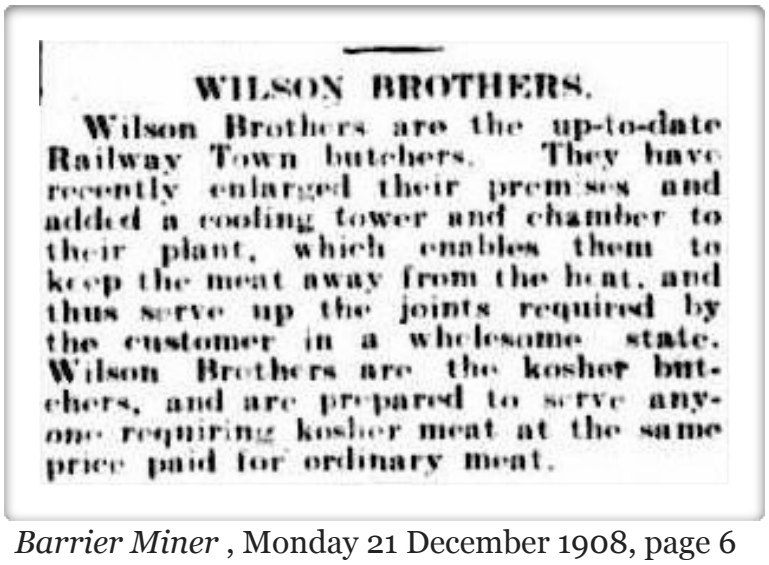
THE ONLY PLACE to buy KOSHER MEAT is

BROMLEY'S,

Argent-street and Lane-street.

KOSHER MEAT is guaranteed free from any disease. Ask for it.

Barrier Miner Wed 26 Jul 1905 Page 1



WILSON BROTHERS.

Wilson Brothers are the up-to-date Railway Town butchers. They have recently enlarged their premises and added a cooling tower and chamber to their plant, which enables them to keep the meat away from the heat, and thus serve up the joints required by the customer in a wholesome state. Wilson Brothers are the kosher butchers, and are prepared to serve anyone requiring kosher meat at the same price paid for ordinary meat.

Barrier Miner , Monday 21 December 1908, page 6

In 1906 the contract was taken over by Wilson Bros. and shortly after, there was a review of the efficiency of the abattoirs. It was argued that kosher slaughter took more time and so 1 shilling per beast was added to the price for kosher slaughter.

An item in the *Barrier Miner* in December 1908 indicates that despite the slaughter-levy, kosher meat remained the same price as other meat at Wilson Bros.

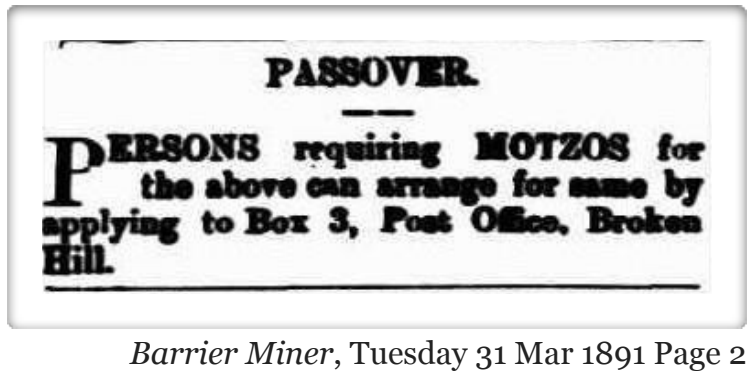
In all of the advertisements, and in general reportage of these

years, much is made of the "disease-free" nature of kosher meat. In one article the reporter points out that meat which has been rejected by the *shochet* is subsequently sold as perfectly fit for general consumption.

In 1913 the surcharge was removed, but in 1916 a 7 shilling surcharge was introduced. From this point on, it is difficult to determine whether kosher meat remained competitively priced. The last mention of kosher slaughter appears in 1932, although there continued to be a rabbi in Broken Hill until late in 1944.

I surmise that a declining Jewish population and difficulty retaining a *shochet* meant the community returned to obtaining their kosher supplies from Adelaide.

1891 was the only year I found any mention of obtaining matzos for Passover, and interestingly at this early date it is from an anonymous source.



PASSOVER.

PERSONS requiring MOTZOS for the above can arrange for same by applying to Box 3, Post Office, Broken Hill.

Barrier Miner, Tuesday 31 Mar 1891 Page 2

LANGUAGE

There were no English classes for new arrivals in the 1890s and Broken Hill was home to a veritable United Nations. Three reports give us some clues about how they managed.

As previously mentioned, just one month after arrival – Israel Krantz was before the court for obstructing Argent St with his fruit cart and refusing to move on when asked. Johannes Kleinhammer, a German who had arrived in 1888, acted as interpreter – so one can only imagine that there was a mix of Yiddish and German, or just possibly Israel could speak German.

Israel was fined 5 shillings with £1.7.8 in costs. At this time, the weekly wage for a miner was £3. It is worth noting that Kleinhammer refused payment for his interpreting services.

Many years later in an interview with the *Barrier Miner*, George Krantz was reported as saying "when I arrived, I could not speak a word of English, though I was well conversant with the Jewish, Russian and German languages." He opened a fruit shop in Patton Street, South Broken Hill, and it was there that he picked up his English. He employed a young woman who could speak German and English, and as he could converse with ease in German, he had no difficulty in transacting business.

Eventually, with the aid of the young woman and various books of instruction, he picked up the language which was so essential to conduct his business.

But perhaps the community were not all as accomplished as George Krantz. In 1905, the growing Jewish community secured its first leader, Reverend Mandelbaum. In 1906, the *Jewish Herald* reported:

Krantz Store Photo: Robyn Dryen's collection

Services were held for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in Tait's Hall, and were attended by the largest congregation in the history of Broken Hill. Mr Z. Mendelbaum [sic.] officiated, and on Rosh Hashana delivered a sermon in Yiddish, which was characterised by those who understood as eloquent and stirring. Jewish Herald, 19 October 1906, p.7

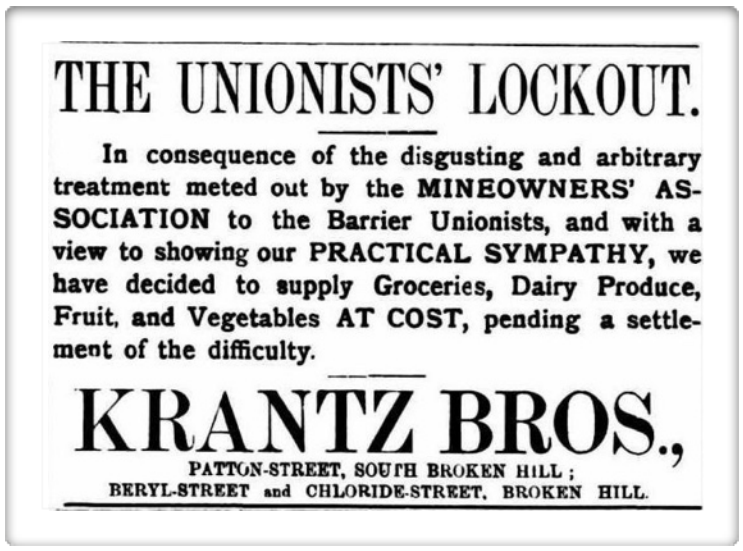
Perfect for the Russian Jews – but somewhat mystifying or perhaps confronting for the Anglo-Jews of the congregation, as

most of them had no Yiddish.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Both news reports and advertisements provide insight into the communal and charitable activities of Broken Hill Jewry.

Within 12 months of arriving, Hirsh Krantz appeared on the list of donors to the Hospital Appeal in March 1892. He had only just opened his shop but he donated £1. The BHP only donated £13.



THE UNIONISTS' LOCKOUT.

In consequence of the disgusting and arbitrary treatment meted out by the MINEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION to the Barrier Unionists, and with a view to showing our PRACTICAL SYMPATHY, we have decided to supply Groceries, Dairy Produce, Fruit, and Vegetables AT COST, pending a settlement of the difficulty.

KRANTZ BROS.,

PATTON-STREET, SOUTH BROKEN HILL;
BERYL-STREET and CHLORIDE-STREET, BROKEN HILL.

Barrier Miner, Friday 8 July 1892, page 3

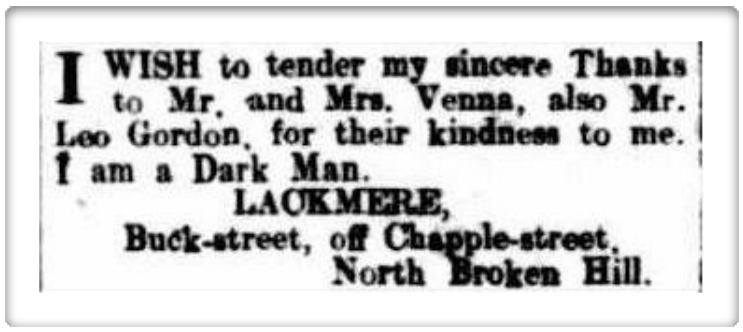
A few months later, in July, Krantz Bros were offering practical support for the miners during the lockout.

This support was apparent during many of the industrial disputes in the town.

On 25 January 1901, the *Barrier Miner* reported that a group of Jews had gathered at Samuel Krantz's house for a *minyan* service marking the death of Queen Victoria.

This advertisement in the *Barrier Miner* suggests that kindnesses were also extended to the often marginalised Afghans in the community.

Lackmere Khan was one of the lead cameleers in the district. He spent a few months in hospital, and I can only assume the Venners (fishmongers) and Leo Gordon (grocer) provided sustenance for his family while he was unable to work.



I WISH to tender my sincere Thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Venna, also Mr. Leo Gordon, for their kindness to me. I am a Dark Man.
LACKMERE,
Buck-street, off Chapple-street,
North Broken Hill.

Barrier Miner, Tuesday 26 June 1917, page 3

While making great efforts to fit into the Broken Hill community, the Jewish community was not always a harmonious and cohesive unit.

In September 1892, just a year after the first influx of Russian Jews – a Rosh Hashanah service was held at the house of Isaac Joseph, conducted by Samuel Krantz and Louis Gordon. About 50 people attended and a torah and shofar were lent by the Adelaide congregation.

The following year there were two Rosh Hashanah services. One at the Town Hall conducted by Henry Levy and one at the Carrington Chambers conducted by Samuel Krantz. Had the congregation grown so rapidly or, had the congregation split? Were the new arrivals rather more orthodox than the old-time colonists? I don't know the answer but Levy was a long-time colonist, the Krantz's were new arrivals.

In 1898 there was some public spatting between the "orthodox" or depending on which paper you read, the "foreign" Jews (code for "Russian" Jews) about the Dreyfus case. The Russians wanted to show support for Dreyfus by boycotting French goods, the Anglo-Jews thought this was divisive and opposed it.

In the reports of the Hebrew Congregation meetings from 1905 onward, there are continual disparaging remarks about the Jewish shopkeepers who traded on Saturdays. Those who did close their businesses for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur generally advertised the fact in the *Barrier Miner*.

I wonder then how the community reacted when, one year, the *Barrier Miner* mentioned in its Christmas shopping roundup that you could purchase ham at Hirsh Krantz's store in Oxide St!

There was another incident that indicates it was a diverse community. In May 1908 there was a huge kerfuffle when reports appeared firstly in the Jewish press, and then in the Sydney and Melbourne press, that the Jewish children of Broken Hill were refusing to salute the flag on Commonwealth Day.

The elders of the community were quick to try to allay concerns of treason, firstly explaining there was probably a child's misapprehension about saluting a cross on the flag. But due to time warps between the capitals and the west, the story didn't die, it escalated. Some used it to disparage those "Russian Jews".

Then came further escalation – it was claimed one child had said to another that her parents didn't want her saluting the flag. The second child's parents overheard and reported it to the Jewish Press as an example of the appalling behaviour of the latest arrivals. Ralph Krantz was quick to distance the "good Jews" and to disown the "one family in Broken Hill, still the subjects of the Russian Crown".

Then Peter Rosanove (a cousin of Ralph Krantz!) outed himself. Identifying as "the black sheep of the flock" he proudly stated his socialist beliefs and that he sent his children to Socialist Sunday school rather than Jewish Sunday school. He really preferred that his children not salute **any** nation's flag.

And after that there was nothing more to be said - it died as an issue.

These are just a small sample of the amazing details I was able to glean from Trove, about my family's time in Broken Hill. Apart from the usual births, deaths and marriage announcements which also added detail to my tree, I was given glimpses of their daily life. It was great fun to share this knowledge with the wonderful community from ARK.

Lisa Naphtali
General Manager ARK

Kaye Schofield & Robyn Dryen

Jackie Sher
Events and Programs Manager ARK

NEWS AND VIEWS

IAJGS CONFERENCE UPDATE

Conference registration is open with early bird rates available until April 28, 2018.

There has been a lot of chatter on the Facebook group about the hotel bookings. Conference-rate rooms at the Hilton are now booked out but organisers have arranged a conference rate for the Westin nearby. Information about hotels is available HERE

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours are offering a range of special tours pre and post the conference, plus some day trips during the week of conference itself. Individual conference attendees are posting their plans on the facebook group, actively looking for traveling companions.

AJGS member Greta Davis has confirmed she will be speaking at the conference. Her talk is entitled *Polish Jews In Australia in the 19th Century – My Ancestor's Ancestors' Experience*.

> *Why did Jews come all the way to Australia in the 19th century? How did they get to Australia? How did they earn a living once they arrived? Several of my ancestors emigrated from Poland in the 19th century. Their experiences were not unusual. In telling their story, I'll discuss my journey in accessing a wide variety of records both in Australia and around the world. I'll also reveal some surprises which illustrate how important it is to not make assumptions and to keep an open mind.*

If you, or someone you know, is presenting at the IAJGS conference in Warsaw let us know the details.

POLAND'S ANTI-DEFAMATION LAW HEADACHE

Polish elections last year saw the country's politics take a determined lurch to the right with the election of the populist Law & Justice Party. On the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 16, 2018, the lower house of Parliament passed a controversial Holocaust bill, subsequently signed into law by Polish President Andrzej Duda, despite protests from several quarters, including academics, journalists and the governments of Israel and the United States.

The legislation, entitled *Amended Act on the Institute of National Remembrance*, strengthens an existing law passed in 1998, that makes it illegal for anyone to deny or belittle German or Soviet crimes during the Holocaust and subsequent Soviet invasion. The amendment makes it illegal to attribute Holocaust crimes to the "Polish Nation or the Polish State" and provides for penalties of up to three years in jail.

The bill's proponents argue it is necessary to correct the historical record and ensure that Poles are not implicated in the crimes of the Nazi forces that occupied the country during WWII — for example, it is now illegal for people to describe concentration camps on Polish soil as 'Polish concentration camps'. However, critics of the bill argue that it will have an adverse effect on genuine scholarship and factual reporting of the period, and is a threat to free speech.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accused Poland of "an attempt to rewrite history." The U.S. State Department released a statement saying "if enacted this draft legislation could undermine free speech and academic discourse."

In response, Małgorzata Safianik, spokeswoman for the Polish embassy in Washington, said

> *The legislation concerns only accusations of collective responsibility by the Polish Nation or Polish State for German Nazi Crimes. It does not seek to deny nor does it apply towards charges of individual collaboration by Polish nationals during World War II.*

Commentators have been trying to understand how and why this legislation has come about, and precisely what effect it will have on research. Geneviève Zubrzycki Professor of Sociology, Director of the Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia, University of Michigan wrote in *The Conversation*,

> *...it is "above all, a crisis in Poland's national identity... Many Poles find it difficult to accept they could have played a role in the Holocaust. ... The dominant Polish narrative of World War II is, therefore, about victimhood, which fits squarely into its broader national mythology of martyrdom. ... The fact is, however, as historians have shown, crimes committed against Jews by Poles were much more prevalent and widespread than most people realized."*

Soon after the legislation came into effect, the Polish League Against Defamation (RDI) filed a law suit against an Argentinian journalist, Federico Pavlosky, over an article written for the Argentine newspaper *Pagina/12*. Weeks before the law came into effect, Pavlosky wrote a story about the 1941 massacre of Jedwabne, where several hundred Jewish people were murdered by their Polish neighbours—an incident recounted in a book by academic Jan Gross. The story was accompanied by a post-war photograph of Polish fighters executed for opposing Poland's new Communist government. The RDI claimed on its website that

> *Connecting these two things: information about killing the Jews in Jedwabne during the German occupation and depicting killed soldiers of the independence underground is a manipulation, an action against the Polish nation and damages the reputation of Polish soldiers...*

The Prime Minister of Poland, Mateusz Morawiecki, publicly acknowledged that the timing of the passage of the new laws was unfortunate but he insisted it is necessary in order to defend historical truth. This fight between historical truth and historical interpretation is being played out in institutions across Poland, with exhibits in the Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk altered to emphasize Polish heroism.

Svenja Bethke, Lecturer in Modern European History, University of Leicester, is scathing about the government's move, writing, also in *The Conversation*:

> *Historians analyse primary sources to try to understand events in the context of their creation. ... The Polish law gives the government the right to restrict different interpretations of the past. It aims to rewrite that history according to nationalist political aspirations. It will question academic achievements in the field of Holocaust studies and represents a danger to academic freedom, openness and critical reflection.*

While many Poles support this law and the rightward shift of the government, plenty of others are concerned with the direction the country has taken. In March thousands of Polish citizens took to the street to decry the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment and antisemitism.

As for the IAJGS conference scheduled for August in Warsaw, the organisers released a statement expressing confidence that the bill will not inhibit genuine scholarship, noting that artists and academics are exempt. In their opinion:

> *It is our responsibility as family historians not to contribute to revisionism. The Polish nation did not exist during the Nazi-occupation, and there were no "Polish Death Camps". There were Polish heroes and villains, but these were individuals in each case and should be treated as such.*

The Polish Government is now in talks with the Israeli government in an attempt to qualify the language of the law. These talks are ongoing. The long term effects of this law are yet to be seen.

A POCKET OF HOPE IN POLAND

Dr Kamila Klauzinska, Fay Sussman & Judy Menczel © Paul E Green

In March the ABC program *Compass* screened Fay's Journey, directed by Judy Menczel. The film follows Australian Klezmer singer Fay Sussman, as she travels to Poland, the birthplace of her Holocaust survivor parents —a place she once vowed she would never visit.

Speaking to the *Australian Jewish News* cinematographer Paul Green, commented,

> *[Fay overcame] her fears – and the anger she inherited – to make this surreal pilgrimage as a gesture of hope and love.*

Green shot the long-form documentary *Pockets of Hope*, also produced by Menczel, which came about when Dr Kamila Klauzinska – a young Polish woman working to restore Jewish memory – invited Sussman to perform in Poland.

Documenting the unbridled enthusiasm with which many Poles are embracing the Jewish heritage of their country, while genuinely acknowledging the darkest episodes of the recent past, the program highlights events, such as the annual Krakow Festival of Jewish Culture, and new museums and cultural centres, like the Jewish Museum of Galicia. It also vividly illustrates how young Poles are discovering their own Jewish heritage in the most unlikely ways.

Fay's Journey can be viewed (in Australia) until 23 April on ABC iview or via the Compass webpage.

GENEALOGY AS ACTIVISM

We are living in interesting times... and activism is showing up in the most unlikely of places... even in the rarified world of family history! Jennifer Mendelsohn, a freelance journalist who has been researching her own family history for many years, has inadvertently created a new stream of family history research she has dubbed *Resistance Genealogy*. The term has even become a hashtag, #resistancegenealogy, and Jennifer and friends have set up a website to aggregate mentions and stimulate debate.

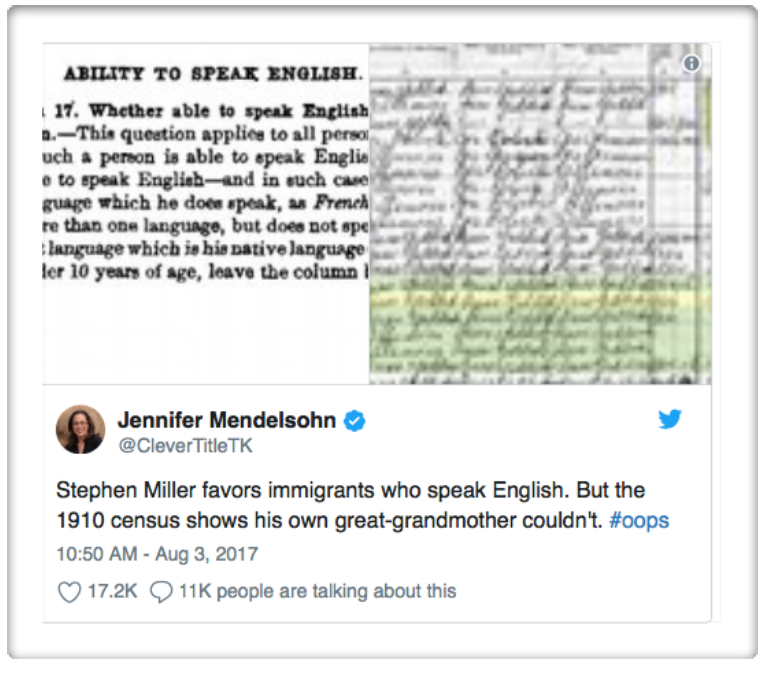
As in Australia, the immigration debate is a hot topic in the US and curbing immigration has been a signature policy of the Trump administration. But Mendelsohn noticed that many of the most outspoken critics and commentators seemed to have forgotten their own ancestors' stories. Instead of just grumbling about controversial statements she

heard politicians and commentators make in the press, Mendelsohn decided to call them out with their own family histories.

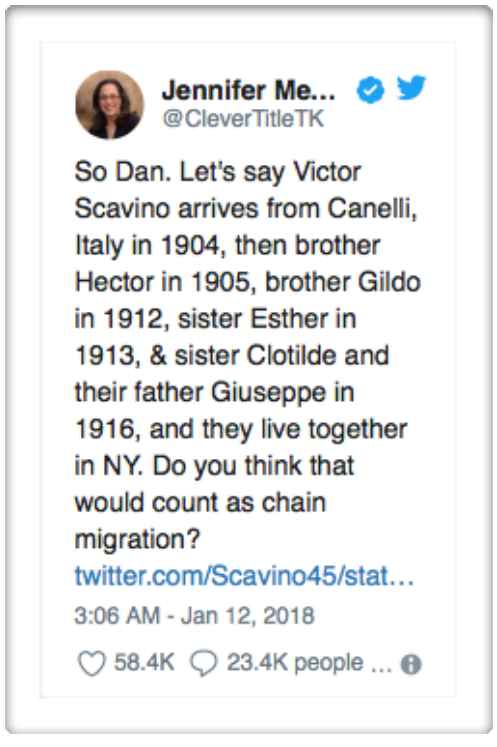
Speaking to Sarah Felberg, for the website A Beautiful Place, Jennifer said

> *I spend a good portion of every day immersed in the stories of immigrant Americans. It's very close to the surface for me. … I thought, this is easy. I know how to do people's trees, and there's no reason I can't start doing the trees of these public figures. … It was hilarious how easy it was to find hypocrisy. You barely have to scratch the surface and it's right there.*

Several of Jennifer's tweets have gone viral, including the one about Stephen Miller, an outspoken anti-immigrant Trump adviser (who, like Mendelsohn, is Jewish)



> *Stephen Miller gave that White House press briefing and talked about immigration policy and how they were going to favor immigrants who spoke English. So I looked up his great-grandmother in the 1910 census. Sure enough, there she was and there was a column in which the enumerator had to mark if they spoke English or not and if not, which language they spoke. His great-grandmother had been here for four years, and she still couldn't speak English. So, I pointed that out on social media and people got a kick out of that. [A Beautiful Perspective]*



When White House Director of Social Media Dan Scavino Jr., tweeted an enthusiastic call to end 'chain migration' (in Australia it's called the family reunion program) Mendelsohn felt duty bound to remind him of his own family's past.

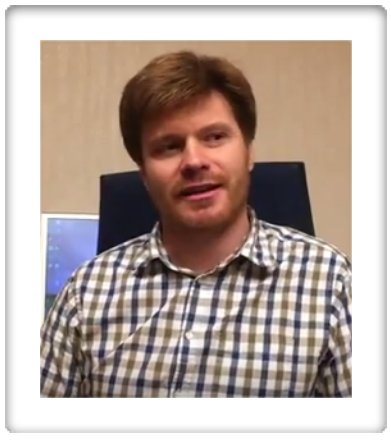
Mendelsohn has garnered quite lot of publicity from her efforts, including stories in *The Washington Post* and *New Yorker Magazine*, and many others are taking up the cause to highlight the immigrant stories of outspoken politicians and critics. The subjects of Mendelsohn's tweets have not responded.

What effect these efforts will have on political discourse awaits to be seen. For Mendelsohn, the power of resistance genealogy lies in the way it highlights the stories of individuals whose descendants have gone on to have amazing opportunities in the US.

As Mendelsohn says:

> *For me, it's very personal … My great-grandmother was illiterate and my great-grandfather was a shoemaker, and they were given entry to the U.S. with their three children in 1892. Two of my brothers have Ivy League degrees. That's what it's all about in America. … [We] take in people with limited opportunities and we give them opportunities.*

ARCHIVIST'S ACTIVISM RELEASES UKRAINIAN RECORDS



Alex Krakovsky
YouTube screenshot

Many of us have faced difficulties in accessing documents through the archives in Ukraine. Now one intrepid young archivist is taking on the system from the inside and making the fruits of his labour available free of charge online.

Alex Krakovsky, a young Ukrainian living in Kyiv, is working to reform the Ukrainian archives system one record at a time. Krakovsky has been diligently scanning census records of *shtetls* and posting the images to the Ukrainian version of Wikipedia, under the heading *Jewish Town* (NB: The entry is in Ukrainian but can be auto translated if viewed in Google Chrome).

Krakovsky's cousin, Brooke Schreier Ganz, is a *Tracing the Tribe* member and one of the forces beind the group Reclaim the Records. In a post on Facebook Ganz talked about Krakovsky's efforts and mentioned that she had sent him a high speed book scanner for Chanukah. Several other Ukrainian archivists expressed interest in joining Krakovsky on his quest so Gantz created a GoFundMe page to raise money to buy more scanners for other archives.

Krakovsky is so determined to open up the archives, he's taking the Zhytomyr archives branch to court for refusing to allow people to photograph or scan the images onsite without paying an exorbitant fee. Alex is chronicling his legal fight in a series of *YouTube* videos. He also has a nifty little video explainer of what is available in the archives.

None of the records scanned so far have been indexed, so they're near impossible to search if you can't read the language. Perhaps indexing is the next project to be crowdsourced by some enthusiastic volunteers.

OTTOMAN ERA TREES RELEASED

A quarter of a century before the Shoah, in 1915, Ottoman forces slaughtered 1.5 million Armenian Christians on Turkish soil —a genocide the Turkish government still denies. In February, a highly contentious historical population register, containing millions of pedigrees and family trees, was released as an online database—called e-Devlet (NB. Site is in Turkish; you need a Turkish ID number to access it). Within 48 hours of the site being launched, over 4 million Turkish citizens had tried to access it, leading it to crash spectacularly.

According to Robert Fisk, writing in *The Independent*:

> *Rather a lot of Turks, it turned out, were actually Armenians – or part-Armenians – or even partly Greek or Jewish. And across the mountains of eastern Anatolia – and around the cities of Istanbul, Izmir, Erzurum, Van and Gaziantep and along the haunted death convoy routes to Syria, ancient ghosts climbed out of century-old graves to reassert their Armenian presence in Turkish history.*

The stories of Turkish Armenians mirror those of Sephardic Jews in Spain 400 years before: wholesale conversions to Islam, young women given in marriage to Muslim men, children hidden in Muslim schools and orphanages—anything to save their lives.

In 2003, the Armenian newspaper *Agos* reported that the Turkish government was secretly coding minorities in registers: Greeks were one, according to the paper. Armenians were two, Jews were three. President Erdogan has been quoted as once having complained that Turks were "accused of being Jews, Armenians or Greeks".

Despite the Ottomans' genocidal efforts, Armenians did survive and the thriving diaspora, today 11 million strong, quickly recognised the value of this database, which holds records and pedigrees dating as far back as the early

1800s. Since the site came back online, nearly 8 million Turks have requested their information, constituting almost 10 per cent of the population.

It's difficult to ascertain how accessible this database will be for people without a Turkish ID number, but if someone can find a way to access the historical indexes and make them available to international genealogists it could prove to be a very valuable resource.

BAUSKA SYNAGOGUE GARDEN SUCCESS

Bauska Synagogue Garden Photo: Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia

Jewish Heritage Europe has reported on the success of the Jewish Community of Latvia "Synagogue Garden" project in a national architecture award. In 2017, after years of protracted negotiations, the memorial garden was opened on the site of The Grand Synagogue in Bauska, Latvia. The garden was recently awarded second in the *Annual Latvian Award in Construction,* in the *Public Outdoor Space* category.

Bauska was a significant centre of Jewish cultural and intellectual life in Latvia for over 300 years. Jews settled in the region in the 17th century and by the 19th, the Jewish community made up the majority of the town's population.

The Grand Synagogue of Bauska was built in 1844. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, later the First Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, served its congregation at one point and an ornately carved timber Aron Kodesh (Torah Ark), created by a local artisan, was regarded as a unique cultural artefact and the building was recognised in 1931 as a state-protected cultural monument.

Occupied initially by Soviet forces during WWII, the Nazi's captured the town in June 1941. Jews were arrested, tortured and killed. The Grand Synagogue was burned to the ground in July and the remaining Jewish citizens of Bauska, some 600 people, were murdered in early August and buried in Likvertenu forest.

Prior to redevelopment, the site was overgrown with trees and shrubs. Plans to build a memorial on the synagogue site surfaced in 2001, driven by the descendants of former residents now scattered around the world. The local council initially supported the idea but kept finding excuses to delay the project. Finally, in 2016, a proposed memorial Garden, designed by the Latvian sculptor Ģirts Burvis, was approved in the meeting of Bauska County Municipality. The Synagogue Garden was dedicated in October 2017.

The Latvian Jewish Community website describes the memorial on 35 Riga St. as including:

> ...the conventional walls of a synagogue and five figures of people, as if coming out after a service. A *menorah* has been placed... where the *Aron Kodesh, [Ed: the ark]* was located, while a symbolic *bimah* is standing in the centre of the memorial, containing an inscription: "*Dedicated to the Jews of Bauska, who for centuries lived here and built this city, and who in 1941 were murdered by the Nazis and their local accomplices. In memoriam – descendants of Bauska Jews and Bauska citizens*". The bimah also contains a brief history of Bauska Jews and the surnames of the families who perished in the Holocaust.

The figures "symbolise the subtle, spiritual, divine energy, maintaining the order of all things in the world" and have been created using local dolomite stone and granite fragments of the original building salvaged from the site.

Supporters of the project included Descendants of Bauska Jews including Jehuda Feitelson (Israel) in memory of the Feitelson family, Yehudi Gaffen (USA) in memory of the Arensburg family, Debra G. Delglyn (UK) in memory of the Moshevich family, Miriyam Yankelovich (Israel) in memory of the Yankelovich family and the Marinov and Kaplan families (Israel), as well as the Bauska County Municipality, the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia and the Association of Latvian and Estonian Jews in Israel.

Bauska Synagogue Garden Photo: Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia

SLEDGEHAMMER

STORIES OF BRICK-WALL BREAKTHROUGHS

Sledgehammer is a column where you can share how you managed to break through a brick wall. A brick wall is a seemingly insurmountable barrier in your research that seems to be unbreakable. By sharing your demolition story I hope other members will be inspired to try different tactics to knock holes in their own walls and move their research forward. Have you broken through a brick wall lately? Share your story! Email it to ed@ajgs.org.au

HOW FACEBOOK HELPED UNCOVER A COUSIN'S FATE.

Kosher Koala editor Dani Haski shared this story at the Eastern Suburbs Workshop at Waverley Library on 18 February 2018.

Social media can be a highly effective tool for breaking through brick walls. Here's how reaching out on Facebook helped me solve one small mystery.

Myer Myers/ Rothbaum, Edith Myers/ Rothbaum (nee Hilton) with their wards Daisy & Violet Hilton.

There are no publicly available photos of Theresa Mary.

In U.S. Public Records Index

Theresa M Farrell

Also known as: Myers M Theresa

Possible relatives

Name	Birth
Rose Marie Destrini	Dec 15 1950
Anna C Farrell	Sep 1 1939
Rose Farrell	
Jonathon Michael Myers	Sep 1 1961
Scott T Myers	

Residences

Residence	Date	
40 E Wetmore Rd, Tucson Arizona 85705-1628, USA	May 1 1998	Show neighbors
2727 N Flanwill Blvd, Tucson Arizona 85716-2287, USA	June 1 1998	Show neighbors
7251 E Carey Ave, Las Vegas Nevada 89156-1015, USA	Apr 1 1999	Show neighbors
2951 S Labelle, Mesa Arizona 85212-2373, USA	June 1 1999	Show neighbors
854 W Windhaven Ave, Gilbert Arizona 85233-5213, USA	Between Apr 16 2007 and Sep 25 2007	Show neighbors

Phone numbers

Number	Date
962-6912	Dec 31 1996
354-1164	Apr 1 1999
(480) 354-1164	Between June 1 1999 and Oct 29 2007
(602) 962-6912	July 18 2001
(480) 962-6912	Oct 29 2007

The questionable public records data found on My Heritage.

Name:	Theresa Mary Myers [Theresa Mary Luthwood] [Theresa Luthwood]
SSN:	465263298
Gender:	Female
Race:	White
Birth Date:	4 Dec 1915
Birth Place:	Phoenix Mari, Arizona [Phoenix, Arizona]
Death Date:	10 Jun 1988
Father:	Myer Myers
Mother:	Edith E Green
Type of Claim:	Original SSN.
Notes:	Mar 1942: Name listed as THERESA MARY MYERS; Feb 1955: Name listed as THERESA MARY LUTHWOOD; 20 Jun 1988: Name listed as THERESA LUTHWOOD

SAVE Cancel

Theresa Mary Myer's SSN death record.

A few years ago I discovered that my great grandmother's cousin, Myer Myers (formerly Myer Rothbaum), had married the adoptive sister of a pair of world famous conjoined twins, Daisy and Violet Hilton.

Myer and his wife, Edith, had a daughter, Theresa (born December 1916 in Arizona). Try as I might, I could not find any trace of Theresa after the 1940 US census. Finally, I posted the story to the Jewish Genealogy Portal group on Facebook.

I had found a public record that *could* have belonged to my Theresa Myers, but it contained too many inconsistencies to be sure. I soon received a private message from a group member confirming that the public record in question was a red herring –the individual was alive and only 42 years old – but the correspondent was familiar with the records in Texas. In short order she managed to find a death record for MY Theresa Myers – she died in Bulverde Spring, Texas in 1988, and it contained her married name – Luthwood.

Unfortunately neither of us was able to find a marriage certificate for Theresa, nor could we find any indication there were children from the marriage, so the search and the branch sadly ends there.

But at least I now know Theresa's fate… and the whole exercise took less than 24hrs!!

D.I.Y PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PROTECTING AND PRESERVING PRECIOUS MEMORIES

D.I.Y. is an occasional column where we'll share practical ideas, tips and tricks for protecting and preserving photographs, documents and family heirlooms. It's a 'How To' column so if you have discovered a great way to organise and share your archives, preserve your photos or keepsakes or can share a link to a useful website please share it with us.

READING THE UNREADABLE

We've all come across a document that is almost indecipherable: illegible handwriting, an obscure language, old, brittle paper… all things that can make research from primary documents extra challenging. Atlas Obscura has a fascinating report on Linda Watson, a resident of the Isle of Man, whose company slogan is **Reading the Unreadable**.

While Watson is in the northern hemisphere, there is a company right here in Australia providing a similar service. Editio, based in Melbourne, is run by Claudia Buttera and also offers a "hard to read" transcription service for old handwriting. I sent Claudia a particularly difficult document and it even stumped her. But she gave me a clue as to how I might be able to make it more readable.

The document, a letter written in 1916 by my great grandfather to my great grandmother, is on very thin paper and the ink has bled through from one side to the other, making it almost impossible to read. Image 1 and 2 show either side of the page. I could just read Page 3 (Image 2) but not Page 2 (Image 1).

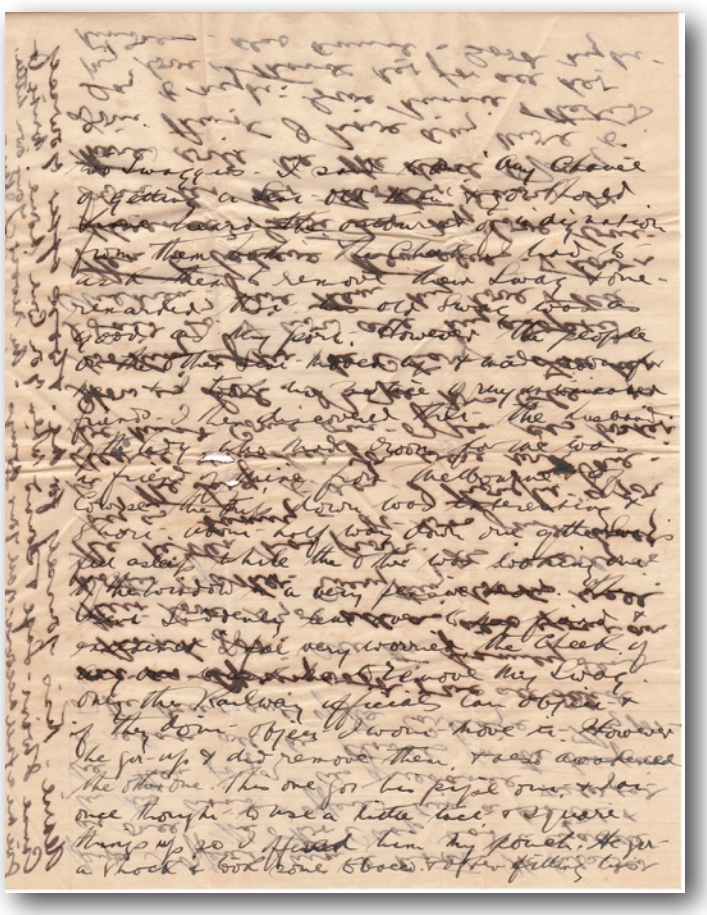


Image 1: Page 2

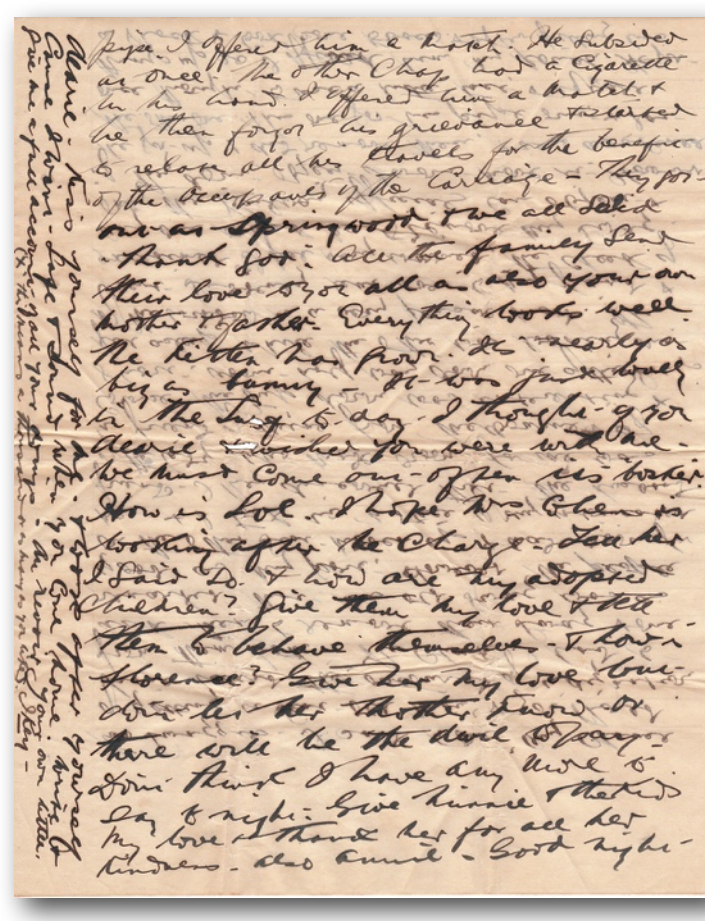


Image 2: Page 3

Claudia suggested I rescan the letter in high resolution (600dpi) with black paper behind it (Image 3). This helped to 'dim' the text on the reverse side of the page.

I was then able to use Photoshop to differentiate the text on either side. I selected the text on page 3 and adjusted the transparency of the equivalent image on page 2. This allowed me to see the page 2 text far more clearly (Image 4) (NB: this method does require a fairly high level of proficiency in Photoshop)

I was then able to transcribe this wonderful letter, which described an incident on a train trip between Sydney and Melbourne, and gain some insight into my great grandfather's personality.

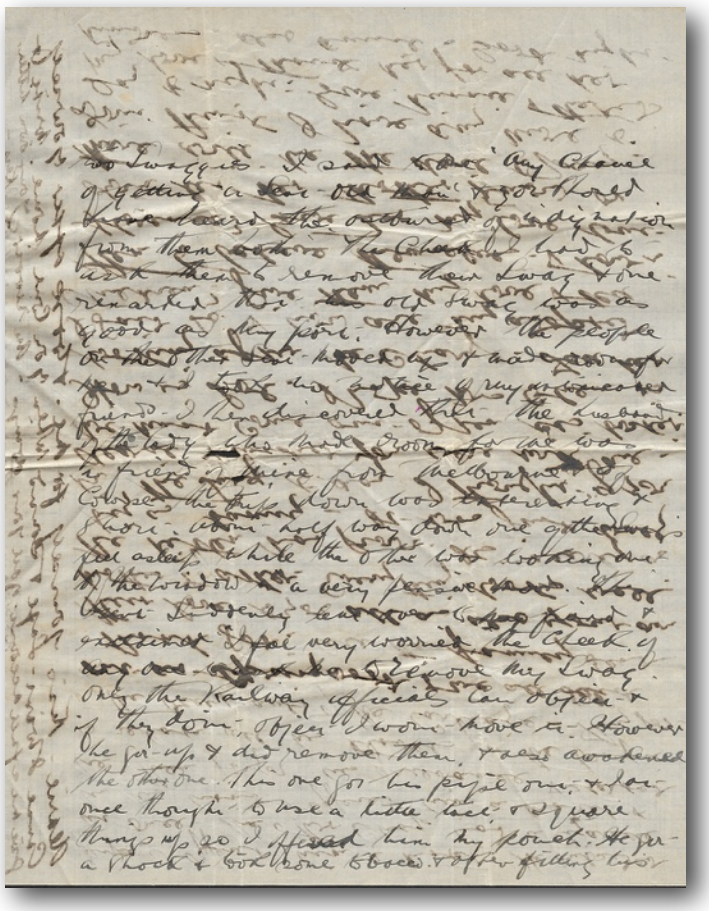


Image 3: Page 2 scanned with black paper behind

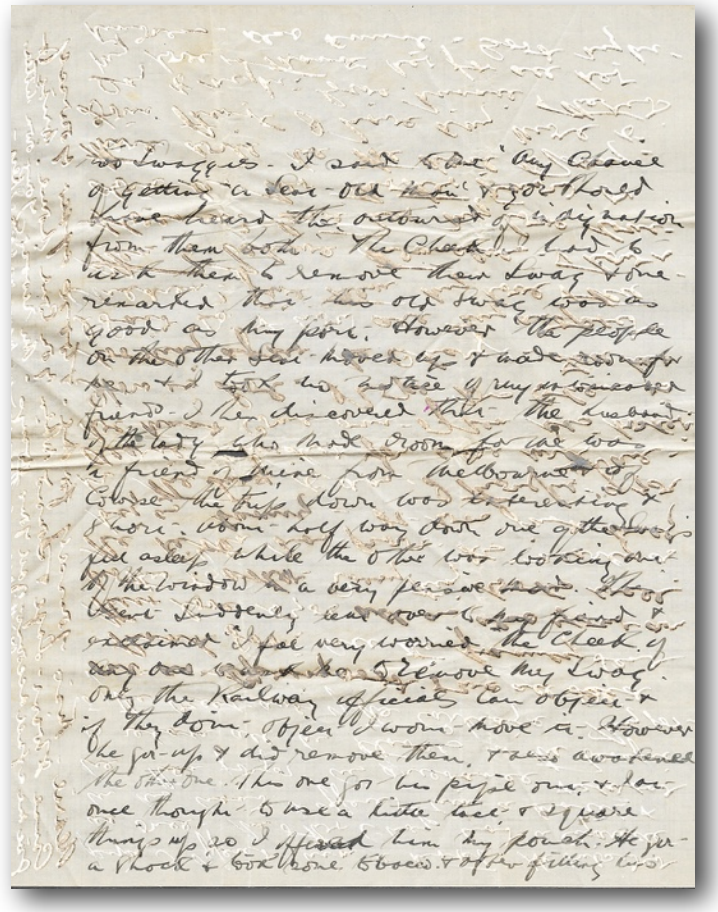


Image 4: Page 2 text with page 3 text cancelled out

TRANSCRIPT: Do you miss me dear cause I do even though I have had a busy day. Work is ??? rotten. Oh I want to tell you about my experience on the train. after I saw the last of you I turned around to behold the seats practically taken up by [page 2] two swaggies. I said to one 'any chance of getting a seat old man' and you should have heard the outburst of indignation from them both. The cheek! I had to ask them to remove their luggage and one remarked that his old swag was as good as my port. However the people on the other seat moved up and made room for me and I took to no notice of my ?? old friend. I then discovered that the husband of the lady who made room for me was a friend of mine from Melbourne. Of course the trip down was interesting and 8 hours. After half way down one of the swaggies fell asleep. While the other one was looking out of the window in a very pensive mood. The gent suddenly lent over his friend and exclaimed "I feel very worried, the cheek of anyone to ask me to remove my swag, only the railway officials can object and I would move it." However he got up and did remove them. ??? the other one. This one for his pipe ?? this time to use a little tact and square things up so I offered him my pouch. He ? a shock and took some tobacco and after filling his [PAGE 3] pipe I offered him a match. He subsided at once. The other chap had a cigarette in his hand. I offered him a match & he then forgot his grievance started to relate all his travels for the benefit of the occupants of the carriage. They got out at Springwood and we all said thank you. All the family send their love to you all as also your own mother & father. Everything looks well. The kitten has grown. It's nearly as big as ?Tommy?. It was just lovely in the surf today. I thought of you dearie and wished you were with me.

LINKS & WEBSITES

AJGS WEBSITE UPDATES

The AJGS website continues to evolve. We have added a downloads page where you can access handouts from workshop presentations.

If you missed Robyn Dryen's presentations on *Getting the most from JewishGen* or *Useful Websites for Jewish Genealogy*, or Dani Haski's presentation on *Social Media for Jewish Genealogy* you can now download the handouts from those presentations.

We have also created a page to host videos of presentations when we record them. These videos will also be available on our AJGS Youtube Channel. Check out Peter Nash's presentation on *Leaving Behind Your Family Tree – The Role Of Coincidence, Luck And Chutzpah*.

AJGS would love your assistance to improve our research pages. If you know of useful resources for particular areas of research let us know or write a research guide and email it to us.

INTERNATIONAL RECORD ROUNDUP

In March IGRA (Israel Genealogy Research Association) added 5 new databases and updated 3 others. New additions include:

1923-1939 Petah Tikva Death Registry – The ledger is written by hand in Hebrew. In addition to the name you should find the age, sex and date of death.

1921-1948 Marriage & Divorce Certificates issued during the Mandate Period – This release adds another 860 records to this collection. In Hebrew.

1963 Telephone Directory (K-L) – This phone book is in English. The additional information may include the phone number, address, community and neighbourhood.

[Images available to financial members of IGRA]

My Heritage Blog announced that they had added another 325 million important historical records to SuperSearch™, with the addition of just 3 new collections. This addition brings the total number of records now available on My heritage to 8.8 billion.

The three new collections are:

- 1939 Register of England and Wales — 33 Millions records
- US Yearbook Name Index 1890-1979 — 289 million structured records, and
- Canadian Obituaries — 2 million records.

According to *My Heritage*:

> *The 1939 Register is the most complete census-like collection for the population of England and Wales between 1911 and 1951. This is because the 1921 census of England and Wales is time-protected by privacy laws and will be available online only in 2022, the entire 1931 Census was destroyed by a fire, and no census was conducted in 1941… Of the 42 million records of individuals in this collection, 8.2 million records remain closed due to privacy protection requirements, and about 700,000 additional records appear without full names. Records are closed for those individuals who were born less than 100 years ago unless matched to a registered death record. These closed records will be made public and added to this online collection on a yearly basis going forward.*

My Heritage has already published an extensive collection of Yearbooks—with 36,207,173 pages from 253,429 yearbooks available. Now, their engineers have created an automated name index from this collection…

> *In the new collection, the names of the students and faculty members have been automatically extracted using name extraction technology. The personal photos in the yearbooks have been automatically detected and extracted using picture detection technology, and in many cases the names and the photos have been associated with each other using a third proprietary technology developed by MyHeritage. Finally, technology has been developed to automatically differentiate between students and faculty members, to determine the graduation class of each student and to calculate birth years. All occurrences of the same name in each yearbook were consolidated into one record with references to the pages where the person is mentioned. The end result is a one-of-a-kind structured U.S. yearbook collection in which names can be searched accurately (with synonyms and translations, which is often not possible in free-text collections), as well as matched automatically to the family trees on MyHeritage using the company's Record Matching technology.*

Familysearch have updated their indexes for *Austria, Vienna, Jewish Registers of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, 1784-1911* - in many cases they include the digital image.

NEW ZEALAND POLICE GAZETTES 1878-1945

Did one of your ancestors have a brush with the law in New Zealand between 1878 and 1945? If so, the *New Zealand Police Gazette*, recently indexed and released on *Ancestry* may be of interest:

> *This collection contains Police Gazettes from the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs. Browse this collection to find out what kind of trouble your ancestors were getting into. These records can tell you the crime they committed and for how long they were sentenced to prison. You might even find their mugshots!*

GUILDFORD'S MEDIEVAL SYNAGOGUE

Buried underneath the floor of a non-descript clothing shop in Guildford is, what may be, the oldest surviving synagogue in England. Unearthed in 1996, during renovations, archeologists believe the chamber is a secret synagogue dating back to 1180. Atlas Obscura described the site:

> *The chamber itself was ornately decorated with four columns, niches, a stone bench surrounding the whole chamber, and there is also evidence of a tiled floor. This all*

suggests that is was a high-status site.

The find dates back to a time when Jews were being increasingly persecuted in England. The synagogue was built underground and was abandoned sometime in the 1270s, not long before Edward I, expelled Jews from most towns in England in 1290.

Locals pushed for a glass floor to be installed so visitors could see the remains but sadly the developers sealed the chamber entrance with concrete and all that is now visible are some panoramic photos, a couple of doors and some small artefacts displayed in the shop above.

You can read more and see a couple of photographs on the website of Jewish Guildford.

DEPORTATION DOCUMENTS FROM MANDATE PALESTINE

Did your relatives immigrate to British Mandate Palestine between 1938 and 1946? *The US Holocaust Memorial Museum* (USHMM) '*Illegal immigration to Palestine (RG 17)*' Collection may have documents about their arrival.

The database contains:

> *...deportation orders of illegal immigrants, 1938-1946. Records include memoranda of personal data (political), confidential questionnaires of the Palestine Police Force with portrait photographs that provide biographical data on illegal immigrants to Palestine from Nazi occupied Europe. Questionnaires also include biographical data and photographs of Jews from Vienna and Bratislava who were subsequently deported to a holding camp on Mauritius.*

100 YEARS OF THE JOINT

Google has a fascinating online exhibition documenting 100 years of The Joint in Poland, entitled *Rescue, Relief and Renewal.*

The Joint Jewish Distribution Committee, commonly called *The Joint*, is a social welfare organisation founded early in the 20th century and now working:

> *...in 70 countries to alleviate hunger and hardship, rescue Jews in danger, create lasting connections to Jewish life, and provide immediate relief for victims of natural and man-made disasters.*

Concentrating on the Joint's work in Poland the exhibition highlights efforts to feed, clothe and care for Jews in Poland before, during and after the second world war. Joint headquarters were in Berlin and they were forced to relocate in 1933. During and after the war they were active in facilitating migration of refugees to mandate Palestine and the US, and to Australia in conjunction with Australian Jewish Welfare.

The Joint were forced to leave Poland during the communist years but returned in 1981 and have been supporting communal efforts to rebuild Jewish life. The online exhibition is an abridged version of an original exhibition curated by Anna Sommer Schneider and presented at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow in 2014. The exhibition was a collaboration between the Galicia Jewish Museum, the JDC Archives, and JDC's Poland Office.

The story is told in two parts (Part 2 is located HERE). A fuller history of the Joint is available on their website. Joint's archives are also available to search.

EXPLORE THE SYNAGOGUES OF EUROPE WITHOUT LEAVING HOME

The UK-based *Foundation for Jewish Heritage* has commissioned *The Centre for Jewish Art* at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to create a fascinating new interactive map "to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date inventory of the historic synagogues of Europe." *The Historic Synagogues of Europe* website currently holds data on more than 3,300 individual buildings.

Essentially a location-based database, the map is carpeted with red teardrop location markers. When you click on the marker for a synagogue an information card containing data about the building comes up. Details include a picture (if available), the date the structure was built, the dates it operated as an active synagogue, which community it serviced (Sephardi or Ashkenazi), building style and materials and its present day usage. Users can search for a specific building or browse by location, architect or community.

The inventory also rates the building's cultural significance and current condition. A bibliography points users to information sources relevant to each building and there is a link on the right hand side for users to send new information about the synagogue to site administrators. The team also welcome suggestions for buildings not included so far.

The project is being led by Michael Mail, Chief Executive of The Foundation for Jewish Heritage, and Dr. Vladimir Levin, Director of the Centre for Jewish Art, a research institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, dedicated to the documentation, research, and teaching of Jewish visual heritage all over the world. They are supported by a team of researchers, programmers and developers, and funded by philanthropists.

The Foundation of Jewish Heritage hopes this resource can be used by philanthropists to more strategically target donations to projects of highest need and cultural significance.

Speaking to The Forward, Mail said

> *...the foundation has made progress on preservation projects at two synagogues: the Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue in Wales, and the Great Synagogue of Slonim in Belarus. The foundation aims to empower local authorities to restore or preserve synagogues rather than perform the works itself.*

The project has some high profile backers with Simon Schama officially launching the project in February with the backing of more than 40 high-profile supporters including *Downton Abbey* creator Julian Fellowes, architect Daniel Libeskind, television newsreader Natasha Kaplinsky, artist Anish Kapoor and authors Linda Grant and Howard Jacobson.

Speaking to The Guardian Mail said

> *We can't save them all, so let's save the best, the most important, the most at risk, …We've homed in on 160, and narrowed those down to 19 that we're particularly looking at, where there's a good chance of saving and restoring the buildings. Each one of those has a different story. In many cases, these buildings are the last witnesses to a Jewish life that was. This is not just Jewish heritage: it is Europe's cultural and historical heritage and we're in a race against time to save it.*

The Foundation has also managed to raise money for a program to preserve synagogues in Syria and Iraq, so the scope of this project may extend beyond Europe to other localities.

LOST SYNAGOGUES OF GALICIA

I've mentioned photographer Christian Herrmann's blog *Vanished World* before. Another blog, *Forgotten Galicia*, has collated several of Christian's photos of decaying Synagogues into a beautiful story called Galicia's Lost Synagogues. Featuring haunting photos of abandoned synagogues in Zalishchyky, Stryi and Probizhna, among others, the buildings were used as factories or churches. Many are abandoned and crumbling.

Forgotten Galicia offers an eclectic view of this lost province. The author is a young, former Chicagoan now resident in Lviv. She describes her blog as a place she can:

> *…collect, document, share, and help preserve remnants of the past before they are forgotten or disappear forever.*

For many of us with roots planted in Galician soil, *Forgotten Galicia* offers another way to travel back and forth in time to the land of our ancestors.

Left: Zalishchyky, Ukraine; Right: Grand Synagogue of Sokal Ukraine.
Photos: Christian Herrmann, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

ONLINE EXHIBITION: IMAGES OF GREEK JEWS

The Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens has a beautiful online exhibition of photos from their collection on the history of Greek Jews. Chosen primarily for their aesthetic, the 19 images from the early 20th century include pictures of several named individuals. They paint a portrait of a vibrant community across the island nation.

> *The material in the Museum archive consists of original black and white photographs and printed copies, as well as colour prints and slides. All this material has been sorted into approximately one hundred subject areas to facilitate access and filing. The subject matter of the photographs in very rich and covers most aspects of the life of Jews in Greece from the late 19th century to the present day.*

The exhibition is held as part of *Judaica Europeana* — a network of archives, libraries and museums working together to integrate access to the most important collections of European Jewish heritage and make them discoverable for more people.

JEWISH CULTURE DAYS ZAGARE 2018

Žagarė held its inaugural Jewish Culture Days festival in 2015. It was so successful they're doing it again in August this year.

Žagarė (Zhager in Yiddish), a small town bisected by the Shveta River into Old and New Žagarė, was home to one of the oldest Jewish communities in Lithuania. Žagarė is reported to have had a continuous Jewish presence since at least the 16th century. In the 19th and 20th century the Jewish population dwindled and in October 1941, the remaining community was massacred by the Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators. A memorial to these victims was dedicated in the town in 2012.

Subtitled '*Touched by the missing of Žagarė*', and running from 23rd to 25th of August, the 2018 Jewish Culture Days Žagarė Festival will start with a commemoration walk led by Rabbi Kalev Krelin, Chief Rabbi of Lithuania. The festival includes exhibitions and presentations and even a soccer competition — the Isaac Mendelson Football Cup — named after the last Jewish resident of Žagarė who passed away last year. Local residents will open their homes to host tea mornings for visitors and Rabbi Krelin will give a talk in the White Synagogue, part of the Joniksis Synagogue Complex, before conducting shabbat services. On Saturday participants will have various ways to spend their shabbat, including a tour of the Joniskis Synagogue Complex (recently renovated and used actively as culture venues) or walking through the nature reserve in Žagarė Regional Park, before experiencing Havdalah, the closing of Shabbat, with Rabbi Krelin.

For more information on Zagare's glorious past and resurgent present visit the Zagare Kehilalink Page at Jewishgen.

Zagare Cemetery Photo: Dani Haski 2010

EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

EASTERN SUBURBS WORKSHOP

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH JEWISH NAMES

SUNDAY MAY 27
2.00PM - 4.45PM

Waverley Library, Theory Room
32-48 Denison Street,
Bondi Junction

RSVP: society@ajgs.org.au
by Friday May 25, 2018.

Names are always a challenge when researching Jewish ancestry. Both given names and surnames change from document to document, generation to generation, country to country on migration travels.

How do we identify our ancestors in records when we are uncertain of their names?

This talk will explore Jewish naming traditions and the various resources for finding those elusive names including:

- dictionaries of surnames;
- given names databases; and
- documents where name changes might be registered or noted

Please RSVP to society@ajgs.org.au.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

AJGS runs regular workshops where you can access resources, websites and the knowledge of other members.

Monthly Sunday and quarterly Monday workshops are held at The Rev Katz Library, North Shore Synagogue, Treatts Road, Lindfield. Quarterly Sunday workshops are also held at Waverley Library, 48 Denison St, Bondi Junction.

Check out The Calendar on the AJGS website for details or see below for dates, times and locations.

DAY	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
SUNDAY	*MAY 6*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*MAY 27*	*1400-1700*	*WAVERLEY LIBRARY*
MONDAY	*MAY 28*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*JUNE 3*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*JULY 1*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*AUGUST 5*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*AUGUST 19*	*1400-1700*	*WAVERLEY LIBRARY*
MONDAY	*AUGUST 20*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*SEPTEMBER 9*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*OCTOBER 7*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*NOVEMBER 4*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*NOVEMBER 18*	*1400-1700*	*WAVERLEY LIBRARY*
MONDAY	*NOVEMBER 19*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*
SUNDAY	*DECEMBER 2*	*1000-1300*	*NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE*

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L'dor V'dor