



# KOSHER KOALA



Frances Barkman House, formerly Larino Children's Home in Balwyn, Melbourne, was home to Jewish refugee and orphan children between 1936 and 1964. See Sledgehammer page 19

SUMMER 2020

AJGS  
*L'dor V'dor*



# FEATURES

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AJGS THANKS EVELYN FRYBORT

SUNNY GOLD & JEANNETTE TSOULOS

*Long-time AJGS committee member Evelyn Frybort has stepped down from the committee. Sunny Gold and Jeannette Tsoulos reflect on her substantial contribution to the AJGS committee.*

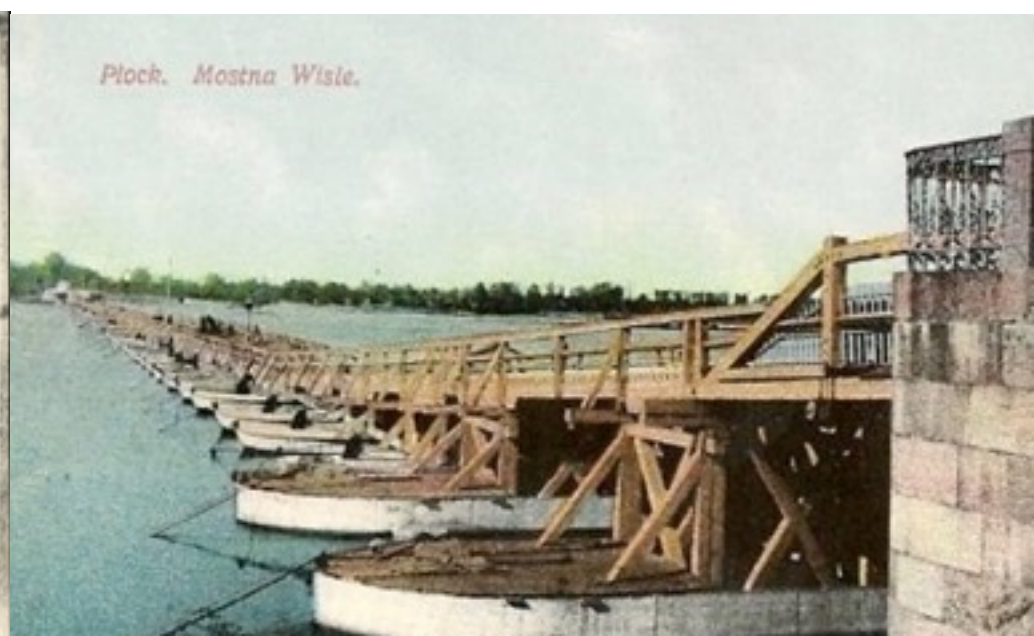
Evelyn Frybort was welcomed onto the AJGS committee in March 2009 and served as a committee member until she resigned in January. The committee accepted her resignation with regret, as her contribution to the Society has been enthusiastic and generous.

Evelyn is a longstanding member of AJGS, having joined in July, 1997. Knowing virtually nothing about her family background she began her research in the Society archives with help from Rieke Nash. Trips to her ancestral towns with her sister Vicki Israel followed and they were welcomed by mayors and officials in all the towns they visited.

Evelyn gave talks and wrote several articles for the *Kosher Koala* about her trips and research discoveries. Part of her ancestral area overlapped with Rieke's, which allowed them to do a lot of work together. They attended the IAJGS conference in Boston in 2013, where Evelyn gave a presentation on her research, and with Rieke, she was involved in setting up a new Special Interest Group (SIG) for the Kolo-Rypin-Plock area, west of Warsaw.

Evelyn has kept in touch with International researchers and added material to the Virtual Shtetl Website and the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry. In sharing her research discoveries, she has made a valuable contribution to the knowledge of Jewish life in Poland before the Holocaust.

On a personal level, Evelyn has been a much-valued member of the team. Her quiet voice of reason and warmth will be missed at our committee meetings. We thank her for her efforts and contribution and are delighted to say that while she will no longer serve on the committee, she will still be part of the AJGS family and will continue to offer her invaluable assistance to new researchers at the Lindfield workshops and at our regular events.







*Kutno Stary Rynek - Freedom Square (postcard) Circa 19th century*

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## MY VISIT TO KUTNO

GEOFF BROWN

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*In June 2019, AJGS member Geoff Brown visited his great-grandfather's birthplace, Kutno in Poland.*

My great-grandfather, Fiszel Kozak, later known as Phillip Michaels, was born in Kutno around 1848, one of seven children born to Michal Kozak (1815-1873) and Taube Czerniak (1817 - ~1858).

Fiszel Kozak left Kutno when he was in his late teens or early twenties and moved to London where he met and married Lizzie Bross. In the 1871 census, Lizzie, who had been born in Holland around 1852, was living with her parents, Phillip and Sarah, and her sister Leah in Spitalfields.

Phillip and Lizzie married in the Great Synagogue in London in 1876.

By 1881, now known as Phillip and Elizabeth Michaels, they were living in Finch St, Mile End Town, with their two children, Michael and Sarah. Phillip emigrated to Australia in 1882, aboard the *Sorata*. Elizabeth followed soon after with their three young children: Michael (1878), Sarah (1879) and Abram (circa 1881). In Sydney the couple had another five children: Rosetta (1884), Henry (1886), Levi (1887), Phoebe (1891) and Joseph (1896)

Phillip Michaels' youngest sibling, Louis (Luzer, 1863-1923) also migrated to Australia and the two brothers worked as tailors in Sydney. It appears that the two families had a close and loving relationship.

My paternal grandmother, Rosetta—Phillip and Elizabeth's fourth child—married George Leslie Brown in 1905. George was a descendent of English and Irish convicts who had made good in the Colony. They had two children, Dorothy (1907), my aunt, and Joseph (1909-2004), my father. My father, was actually known as Phillip Joseph for most of his life, which I can only surmise was in honour of his grandfather Phillip Michaels, who died in 1933, when my father was well into his 20s. He must have known his grandparents, as well as Louis and his family, quite well so I can only imagine that he would have heard recollections of their country of origin.





Last year I made the decision to visit Kutno, to get some idea of the life my great-grandfather and his family may have led there. I realised I would not find any living relatives as almost all the Jews resident in the area were murdered in the Holocaust. After World War II less than 100 remained. According to *Virtual Shtetl* the last Jewish resident of Kutno, Aaron Ejzyk, died in the 1990's.

Kutno is affectionately known as the City of Roses (*Kutno Miasto Roz*) and has a long history in the flower's cultivation, with three registered varieties having been developed in the city.



The September Rose Festival is held annually and is Kutno's biggest celebration. At the time of my visit, there were roses blooming everywhere. Interestingly, Aaron Ejzyk was a rose breeder, so I imagine my ancestors also enjoyed the scent of these local roses. Perhaps my grandmother was named Rosetta in honour of her father's home town.

Kutno has a number of other annual festivals, including a literary festival which commemorates the American novelist and playwright, Sholem Asch, who was born in Kutno in 1880. In addition, there are numerous sporting, recreational, cultural and historical events throughout the year.



Kutno was also the site of a significant battle in September 1939, known as the Battle of Bzura. There is a Museum on the outskirts of the city exclusively devoted to this event.

The Germans destroyed most of Kutno towards the end of the war and so I realised it would be unlikely that I would be able to identify places of specific significance to my ancestors. Nevertheless, I wanted to experience the place, pay my respects and understand the Jewish history of Kutno.

*Anticlockwise from Top left: Kutno roses; sculpture in the square, Sholem Asch, museum building, Geoff in Kutno's main square.*







The area known today as the Old Town was the locality where previously most of the Jews of Kutno had resided, so I walked those streets thinking about my great-grandfather and his family and how they might have lived. It was hard to imagine what this area looked like back in the 19th Century.

I found the site where the Synagogue once stood in the main street, on the edge of the former Jewish area. The original synagogue was a wooden structure that burned down in the 18th Century. It was replaced by a brick synagogue built between 1766 and 1799. It's likely my great-grandfather and his family worshipped there. Sadly, that synagogue was destroyed by the Germans during their occupation. Today the site is simply marked by a plaque.

The two most significant places I visited were the site of the Kutno ghetto and the Jewish cemetery. These were both very sad experiences.



The Kutno Ghetto was located opposite the rail line, near the main station in Mickiewicza Street. The main building was originally the Konstancja Sugar Factory established in 1865 by prominent Jewish industrialist and financier, Leon Epstein. It was one of several refineries in the region that processed sugar beets into table sugar in the late 19th Century/early 20th Century. There was also a collection of five other residential buildings that delineated the Ghetto area.



The Ghetto site is larger than I imagined. The buildings surround a large yard and the whole area is ringed by a barbed wire fence. On June 15th, 1940, 8000 Jews were rounded up from Kutno and the surrounding areas and transported to the ghetto. There was only one working toilet.

I can barely imagine what it was like. The space would have been so crowded and the living conditions terrible. In the winters of 1940/41 and 1941/42 fuel

*Anticlockwise from Top left: Former synagogue, synagogue plaque, sugar factory, Kutno Ghetto entrance, remains of Kutno Ghetto.*







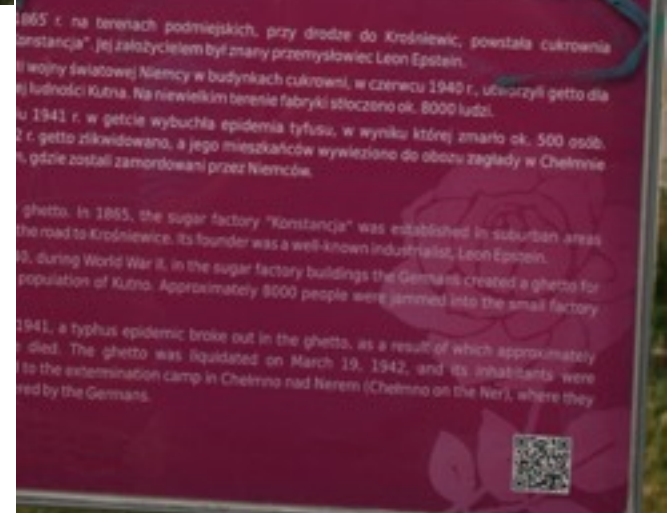
supplies were cut off. Epidemics of typhoid and tuberculosis spread rapidly and people starved or froze to death. Many committed suicide. In March 1942 the Nazis began a final action, murdering the elderly and rounding up the remaining inhabitants. They selected a small group of people to stay behind. The remainder, about 300-400 people, were transported to the extermination camp at Chełmno, a trip they were forced to pay for themselves. The 40 or so who remained were forced to clean the area and sort out their community's belongings.

The [Kutno Ghetto List](#) maintained by Jewish Records Indexing – Poland includes 33 people with the family name of Kozak. The total number of Kutno Jews who died in the Holocaust is estimated to be 11,500.

A sign has been erected by the City Council outside the main gate of the ghetto site and there is a commemorative plaque on the front wall of the building, adjacent to the gate. Sadly, the sign had been defaced at the time of my visit. However, under the plaque there were the remains of flowers and wreaths. I learned later that the Friends of Kutno Association holds an annual commemoration ceremony at the site. There is a photograph of the ceremony in the brochure produced by the City Council for visitors.

The site of the old Jewish cemetery is quite large, maybe a couple of acres.

Today it is covered by long grass and traversed by a number of walking tracks used by the locals. There is a large mound in the middle of the site,



*Clockwise from Top: Ghetto building with plaque on the door, local council signage, ghetto plaque, cemetery memorial at the top of the hill.*



most probably formed by German bulldozers when they demolished the cemetery during the war. At the top of the mound are two plaques, one in Hebrew and one Polish.

Some of my ancestors are undoubtedly there, their remains buried beneath, but with no trace of their gravestones left to mark their location. There are fragments of graves barely visible in the long grass, alongside broken glass and rubbish.

There are two more signs erected by the Council in adjoining streets. One of these contains photos of the Cemetery before it was destroyed. It appears that the City Council does recognise the historic significance of the site and have preserved it out of respect for those buried there. However, it is not possible to identify individual grave sites from what remains today.

At the time of my visit (June 2019), the Kutno Regional Museum was closed for renovations. The Museum exhibits life in 19th Century Kutno and I thought perhaps there may have some references to my Kozak ancestors. I understand the museum does hold some headstones in its collection and that one, might be for one of my ancestors. From what I gathered, the renovation will take a couple of years, although the re-opening date is unclear.

Since the Museum was closed, I went to the Town Hall and was introduced to the Tourism Manager of the city, Pawel Szczepanik. He showed my wife and me around some of the modern parts of town and gave us some mementos of our visit to Kutno.

Unfortunately, due to language challenges, it was difficult to explain the specific reason for my visit. However, since returning home I have corresponded with Pawel using an English/Polish translation service.

On learning the reasons, and my connection to Kutno, Pawel thought the Friends of Kutno Association would be interested to hear my family story and has passed on my details. I await with interest to see if anything transpires. Given that the Association is active in preserving the history and traditions of Kutno and organises the annual remembrance of Kutno Jews murdered during the German occupation, I am hopeful that contact with them via Pawel will prove to be a positive experience.

I would like to thank the many people who helped and encouraged me on my journey to Kutno – Alan Grayce, Tom Wodzinski of Canberra, Robyn Dryen and Dani Haski of Australian Jewish Genealogical Society, Stuart Shaw, David Grosz, Marla Cohen and Yosef Kutner.



*Left: City council signage near the old Jewish cemetery;  
Above: the cemetery is now a local park with a memorial on top of the hill.*





*The memorial at Terezín CC 4.0*

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## RETURN TO TEREZÍN GHETTO

DANIELA TORSH

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Terezín<sup>1</sup> draws me like a magnetic force. I am Australian now but I was born in Prague after the war. My parents, Mimi and Pavel THORSCH<sup>2</sup>, (pictured below in Prague) met in the camp<sup>3</sup> at Terezín, on the banks of the river Ohře<sup>4</sup>, north of Prague, on the main road to Dresden in Germany.



I don't know exactly how they met but I am sure it was after Dad was deported from Prague to the camp in February 1945 in the dying days of World War 2. His timing was perfect. As the Red Army<sup>5</sup> advanced from the East, the death camps in Poland like Majdanek, Belzec and Auschwitz were deserted by the Nazis and my father stayed alive in Terezín<sup>6</sup>. The Russian army liberated Terezín in the early hours of May 9, 1945.

You can drive to Terezín from Prague in around an hour, or you can catch the local bus or train there. A fleet of massive tourist buses greets you in the car park on arrival. A trip to the former concentration camp is a highlight for many former prisoners<sup>7</sup> and their families who return to the Czech Republic these days. Jewish tourism has become a thing.

I have been there often over the years, probing my family history since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. My latest visit in November 2019 was one of the best because at last I got to see where my parents had lived inside the camp. I also found new information and made some useful contacts to follow up.

Terezín is contested land; your view of it depends on your personal history: where you were born, where you have lived and even your nationality. For Prague Jews like myself, it's where the vast majority of our families were sent as a way station to the death camps. But it has so many layers; like a palimpsest it's really hard to untangle the truth and find the right sources.

When I began my research over 40 years ago the [Terezín Memorial](#) did not exist. Neither did the internet. The first time I ever went there, in 1994, I took my teenage children. It was mid-winter and there was thick snow on the ground. Our guide Sylvia Wittman, now a liberal Rabbi in Prague, drove us up to the camp and told me her family's story of conversion from Protestant to Jewish after the Battle of White Mountain<sup>8</sup> hundreds of years before.



Some years ago, I guided my American cousin Vivian and her husband Luis to see where members of our LEDERER family had been imprisoned<sup>9</sup>. On another trip, two years ago, a friend took me there for the annual memorial for political prisoners in the Small Fortress. I wrote about that visit, *A day with Doris*, in the [Winter 2018 issue](#) of *Kosher Koala*. Sadly, on this visit, I learned that Doris died last year, at a gas station, on her way back to Prague, after attending a concert at Terezín.

This trip was to follow up on a thick wad of papers I received three years ago from the Czech National Archives, in response to my request for information about where exactly my parents had lived in the camp.

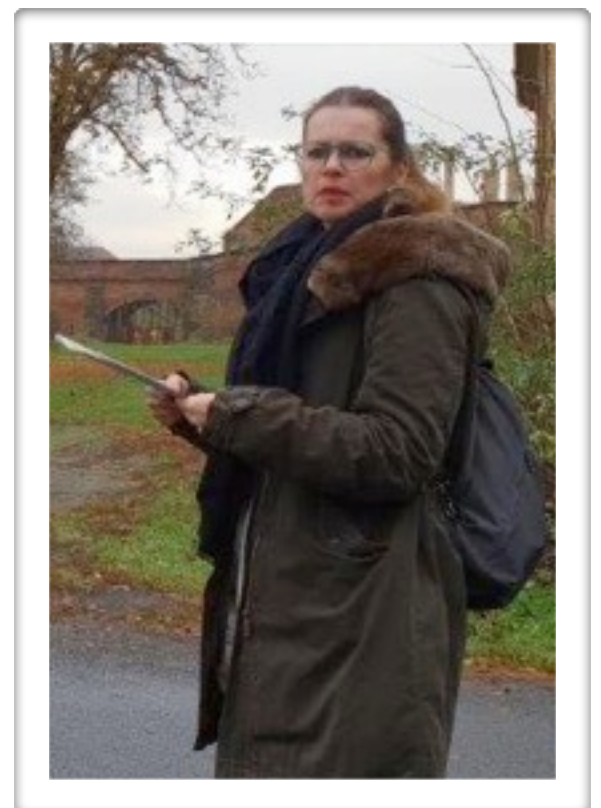
When I posted news of my trip and photos, friends argued that Mum and Dad didn't "live" in the camp, they merely survived. But for me it was critical to uncover the exact locations of their beds, or more likely bunks. As a journalist and writer of some fifty years' experience I wanted concrete facts and I needed to see these places with my own eyes, photograph the buildings and get a geographical sense of place to be able to write sensibly about my parents at that time of their lives.

For so many years I have struggled to imagine what my parents experienced and how Terezín shaped not just their lives but mine too, and those of the many other family members who lived or passed through the camp. How could I imagine it without seeing the actual places, the physical buildings they entered and left every day? Were they old or new? Were they close to each other? Did the geography facilitate their meeting? I had a lot of questions and couldn't work out how or where to get answers. Starting with the places they slept seemed to be logical for me.

In October 2019 I flew from Sydney to Prague and prepared to head north to Terezín for about the fifth or sixth time. This time I had the company of a guide, Hermine Neuner (pictured right), who would be able to interpret what I saw and help me quiz the staff of the Terezín Memorial.

Hermine came recommended via the [Kingston Ostrava Circle newsletter](#), edited by David Lawson in England. I am on the mailing list because an uncle of Dad's, the engineer Berthold WINTER lived in [Ostrava](#) when he worked on the [Kaiser Ferdinands-Nordbahn](#), Austria's first steam railway company. I love reading this newsletter and occasionally find very useful material there.

Hermine and I set off from my apartment in Prague 7 in her little car and drove to Terezín on the motorway. Although she now works as a private tour guide, for ten years Hermine had worked as the head of the oral history department at Prague's Jewish Museum. She listened attentively as I explained why I did not want to do an oral history interview with the Jewish Museum. She's a very good listener and didn't press me, which I appreciated.



Hermine grew up in the Communist era when the story of the Jews of Terezín was covered up and largely ignored by the Stalinist regime that took power in 1948, after another defenestration<sup>10</sup>. That putsch is why my parents and I left Czechoslovakia, emigrating to Australia. When the Iron Curtain descended, Jews could not practice their religion and were persecuted and murdered.

Hermine is an excellent guide. She speaks English well, without an accent, so it was easy for me to understand. Although I was born in Prague, my family like most Czech Jews, spoke German, not Czech<sup>11</sup>. When I was growing up my mother told me "don't worry about learning Czech. You will never need it". How was she to know that worldwide Communism would disintegrate in 1989 and that Czechoslovakia would become a democratic country with open borders and the freedoms we take for granted every day in Australia. I studied German at high school and although I have tried to learn Czech, I cannot honestly say I speak it, so I really did need Hermine to mediate for me.





When we arrived in the main square at Terezín the weather was grey, wet, cold and wintry. I was freezing. Hermine locked the car but then had to go back to get something. As I waited, I peered at the map of the town on a large board erected near the outer fence of the [Ghetto Museum](#)<sup>12</sup>, a policeman pulled up in a small cop car and told Hermine she was illegally parked. She had to move her car immediately.

It felt odd. It was clear we had been observed by CCTV camera. No one was around in the town. It appeared quite deserted. But we had quickly been singled out as non-residents. In its echoes of Stalinist spying it was a peculiarly paranoid start to what proved to actually be a very exciting day.

I'd sent Hermine copies of the records from the National Archives<sup>13</sup>. She had done her homework. After consulting experts at the Jewish Museum of Prague she managed to pinpoint exactly where Mum and Dad had resided.

With the car legally parked we ventured along Parkstrasse on the north eastern side of the town. It's named for the small city park where the [children](#) from the [children's home](#)<sup>14</sup> were allowed out to play. When my father arrived, Parkstrasse was where the Ghetto Fire Brigade had their fire station. My father was given a job as a fireman. This might have been because an old school-friend from Brno, [Leo Holzer](#), was Head of the Fire Brigade (Feuerwehr) at Terezín. I have a photo of Holzer in his uniform standing arms akimbo next to an old fire truck. There is an inscription on the back written to my father which reads "To my dear friend and companion of my youth with heartfelt wishes".

The building of the fire brigade looked brand new. It had nothing to indicate it had been the centre of the Terezín Ghetto fire brigade during the war, which I felt was a shame. Hermine and I were able to walk into the courtyard and take a peek. It looked like an ordinary house in the Czech Republic. I could hardly believe that my father had worked in this building.

He appears to have lived there too. Parkstrasse 2 was the address the Archives gave me as his residence, so I can assume he slept and worked there. Later in the day, Iva Gaudesova, the Head of Collections at the museum, showed us some of the documents and visual material Captain Leo Holzer had donated to them in the 1980's. For the first time I saw a proper photo of the famous cap. In my mother's telling of how she met Dad, she recalled he was so gorgeous she fell in love with him that instant. Then he bowed graciously and took off his cap. Underneath, he was bald as a badger. Mum said she'd already fallen in love so it didn't matter, she couldn't go back.

I have a terrific drawing someone in the camp did of Dad in his fireman's uniform wearing the cap. But it's figurative, a black and white pencil drawing with some light red crayon marking parts of his uniform. When Iva showed me the photo on her computer screen of the actual cap donated by Leo Holzer I could see for the first time it was made of soft black material with a red trim very different from my drawing. Somehow seeing that cap

*Top: Leo Holzer in his Fireman's uniform; middle: the fire station today; bottom: Illustration of Pavel Thorsch in his fireman's cap.*



was so exciting I was thrilled through and through. Unfortunately, all the information Iva had was written in Czech (which, as I mentioned, I can't read). More information about accessing the Terezín Memorial collections can be found on their [website](#).

Iva told us that they didn't actually have very much about the fire brigade in their collection in the [Magdeburg barracks](#), but she did suggest we go to the [Small Fortress](#)<sup>15</sup> where the Terezín Memorial has more offices and more archives. So we jumped in the car and drove round to the Malý pevnost.

Hermine managed to talk us past the ticket lady and we met Eva Nemcova, who works in the documents section. I asked if they had any fire trucks or other equipment from the fire brigade but Eva told us it had all gone to the local town brigade after liberation. She did have some documents and she invited me make a request for what I wanted in writing. I felt quite pleased that we had managed to meet her and get her contact details despite not having an appointment.

After exploring Parkstrasse, Hermine took me to the Dresden barracks, where my mother had lived. This is located down the road to the North West of the former ghetto. Behind the three-storied stone building are the thick ramparts that protected the Austrian infantry from any attacks they might have expected from the Prussians three hundred years ago. The old building was barricaded with a tall wire fence so we could only look at it from a distance. It has fallen into disrepair, no one lives or works there and the paint is flaking off the exterior. I imagine it's unsafe and that's why it's been boarded up. It's a huge building erected by the Hapsburg military as an infantry barracks in 1782. The plaque on the front claims it's the largest barracks in Terezín, measuring 155 by 65 metres.

Around the corner in Komenského Street is another plaque that says the Dresden Barracks were for women and children only, up until mid-1942 when the Czech population was moved out of the town. My mother was deported to Terezín on one of the first transports from Prague in December 1941, a month after the Aufbau Kommando started getting the town ready for its Jewish prisoners. The Dresden Barracks are just behind the main road that leads to Prague named Pražská Street.

The Archives card with Mum's record shows she lived in at least four different rooms while there. I asked Hermine if she knew why this might be the case. She surmised that as women were sent to the death camps the rooms may have emptied out and so for efficiency's sake the prisoners were consolidated into other rooms.

One of the entries showed that mum later relocated to the Hamburg Barracks, so we went to have a look at it too. This meant trekking to the South West part of the camp, on the corner of Dlouhá and Palackého streets. Hamburg barracks seemed to be bigger than Dresden barracks and in much better condition. Hermine told me it had been renovated because today it's used as a depository for the National Archives. We went into the courtyard



*Top: Map of the camp, 2nd from top: Magdeburg Barracks—now the museum, second from bottom: Dresden barracks, Bottom: Hamburg Barracks.*



and I snapped some photos of the cobbled, tree-filled space. We could see a lot of windows around the yard. I do think it would have been much nicer than the Dresden barracks.

According to her residence card Mum went there on 3rd September 1943. By then, Mum, who had worked in a kitchen as a cook, had started working as an artist in the *Lautscher Werkstätte*, painting replicas of old masters for the SS<sup>16</sup>.

The Magdeburg barracks, where Mum's first husband, Franta Nathan, lived and had his office, was only a street away on Tyršova. Under the Hapsburgs it housed a riding school for officers, which explains why there are horses sculptured above its entrance. It's also where the Elders' Council of the Jews (the *Judenrat*) had their offices.

Today Magdeburg barracks holds an exhibition space where you can see a facsimile of the living conditions of the prisoners. They have three-tier bunk beds (pictured below) squashed up against each other in a room with hardly any space to breathe and the bunks rise up nearly to the ceiling. In another area they have exhibitions of the artists and musicians of Terezín which is really well done and worth a visit.



The shop downstairs sells CDs of music and the latest books about the camp, alongside postcards and tourist knick-knacks. Behind the shop are the offices of the Terezín Memorial Collection Department, where Iva Gaudesova and her small team work.

We stopped for coffee and soup for lunch and I was impressed by the fact the Catholic welfare organisation employed people with disabilities as service staff in the café off Poststrasse. They did a good job. The soup was fine and the coffee drinkable. A group of black-uniformed firemen sat at the next table and stared. We were obviously from elsewhere.

After the hot beverages and some respite from the cold we staggered out to see the various places that Mum's first husband Franta had lived and Hermine showed me the secret prayer room which had been recently opened for visitors to view. It was so moving I recited *kaddish* there. We went upstairs to the replica attic apartment with its bunks and hanging space for clothes with the *Magen Dovid* sewn on the front as regulations required.



The attic was a superior form of accommodation compared to the barracks. Perhaps a *Prominent* like my great uncle [Dr Eduard LEDERER](#), the writer and Jewish elder, might have lived there with his wife Friederike. Because he was accorded the status of Prominent he was able to live together with his wife and given a better standard of food and accommodation. He died in the camp but his wife survived. Eda, as he was known, edited the Jewish Year book and, as well as writing novels and plays, worked as the head of Jewish schools for the Czechoslovak State. His funeral at Terezín was well attended and musicians played. Like my great grandfather, Jakub POLLAK, his body was cremated and the ashes thrown into the river as the Russians approached in May 1945.

At the end of the day Hermine drove me back to my flat in town and a few days later I went to see the head of the [visual arts section](#) of the [Jewish Museum](#). I wanted to show them a poster I'm certain my mother created as a young woman, before the war. The poster is an advertisement for her family's firm, a small department store on Celetná. My mother's grandfather, the aforementioned Jakub POLLAK, founded the store in the building where he and his wife, Wilhelmine, had a business making shoe accessories, probably spats—which were highly fashionable at the turn of the century. Their business prospered. When my mother finished art school she worked for the family business illustrating advertisements. She also did dress designs for clothes to sell in the shop.

I consulted Mischa Siedenburg to get an expert opinion on how to ship the poster back to Sydney safely. Mischa then introduced me to Vit Fojtek, who is in charge of the [Shoah History Section](#). Vit asked me if I would consider doing an [oral history interview](#) for them. After some discussion, and despite my earlier protestations, I agreed and we arranged for Hermine to carry out the interview. I am currently waiting to see the transcript so I can approve it.

Back home in Sydney the poster my mother designed has been delivered and is waiting to be framed. It shall hang in my study above my mother's self-portrait.



Left: Firma Vigo in 1936; Right: Mimi Thorsch with some of her signage  
Images from authors private collection

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## ENDNOTES

1. Known as Theresienstadt in German. I prefer to use the Czech name.
2. My parents anglicised our name to TORSH in Australia to make it easier for Aussies to spell. It was also to make it less Germanic since, in those post war years, German and Germans were distinctly unpopular.
3. My mother always called it a camp but more recently researchers and writers have characterised it as a ghetto, as opposed to a concentration camp. I am not going to enter into that discussion here.
4. A tributary of the Elbe river which flows into the North Sea at Hamburg
5. The Commander was Marshal Ivan Konev but he bypassed Terezín in his haste to liberate Prague. Major M. A Kusmin held his first muster on May 13 after Paul Dunant of the International Red Cross handed responsibility of the camp over to the Russians. Cf Adler p 176.
6. According to Adler (page 175) the Germans and the Russians shelled the camp on May 8 killing an Austrian colonel and a Dutch General. Around 9pm the first Russian tank rolled through the town but continued to Prague. The first Russians entered the camp in the early hours of May 9. VE Celebrations in Czechia are however held on May 8 as in the rest of Europe.
7. "Approximately 155,000 Jews lived and suffered in Theresienstadt from November 24, 1941 until the day of liberation on May 8, 1945" says Adler page 177
8. An early battle in the Thirty Years war between Czech Protestants and the Catholic forces of Emperor Ferdinand on Bila Hora, White Mountain today a suburb of Prague. The battle in 1620 lasted an hour and the landscape was really a plain rather than a mountain. It began with a defenestration in Prague and had huge consequences for the Czechs who were defeated.
9. My grandmother was Olga LEDERER born in Brno. Her brother Karel LEDERER was Vivian's grandfather.
10. The Czechs follow the Italians in using windows as weapons. By which I mean they threw people out of them.
11. Both my parents studied both languages at school. Mum spoke German to Dad and Czech to her girlfriends so I grew up hearing both languages. I always spoke English at home which is what my parents wished.
12. Established in 1990 according to *Adler*
13. Thanks to the Director of the Archives, Dr Eva Drašarova, and her staff.
14. Today the children's home building is the Ghetto Museum.
15. *Kleine Festung* in German and *Maly pevnost* in Czech
16. See reference for her friend the artist Charlotte Buresova, page 126 of *Art against Death*. OSWALD, Prague, 2002

## CAN YOU HELP THE TEREZÍN MEMORIAL?



The Terezín Memorial collects documents, objects or photographs linked to the Nazi persecution in the territory of the Czech Republic. They are mainly interested in documents connected to former Terezín prisoners of both the Ghetto and the small Fortress Gestapo prison, and those from Litoměřice, a small town 15kms away that was one of the bigger subsidiary camps of the Flossenburg concentration camp in Bavaria. In Litoměřice prisoners quarried stone to build Nazi monuments in Nuremberg. Hermine's uncle died there, worked to death in the mine.

If you have any objects, photos or documents you would be willing to donate to be put on display at Terezín Memorial please [contact the museum](#).



# NEWS AND VIEWS

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## RUMMAGING THROUGH OUR RESOURCES

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On January 12, 2020 a small group of AJGS volunteers spent the morning sorting and cataloguing the society library. Acting President Jeannette Tsoulos, Elizabeth Suggit, Barbara Simons, Evelyn Frybort and Dani Haski worked their way through the extensive collection of books, magazines, journals and CDs, entering the details into an online portal. It's hoped we will be able to give members access to a catalogue of resources to search from home and then easily access items at Sunday workshops. We have several rare and hard to find titles that may assist members with their research, including many that do not have digital counterparts.



## WE NEED RESOURCES VOLUNTEERS

We are looking for volunteers for the next stage of the resources project. We have lots of interesting books that need to be assessed. If you have time to read a few books and write a short précis of their content and value for researchers please contact Kosher Koala editor [Dani Haski](#).



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## DUTCH JEWISH GENEALOGICAL DATABASE TO SHUT DOWN

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[The Dutch Jewish Genealogical Database](#), Amoetat Akevoth, will cease to operate in its current form in early 2020. In a statement on their [website](#) the site managers explained:

*Since our search of many years for motivated and suitable candidates to continue the development and maintenance of the Dutch Jewish Genealogical Data Base (the DJGB) came to nothing, we regret that this step became inevitable.*

*In preparation for this drastic change, everything possible will be done to preserve our databases in a secure environment, maintaining accessibility for our public, with no meaningful changes in the existing interface and lay-out: though certain inevitable limitations will be forced upon us, they will be kept to a bare minimum.*

The database will be moved to a special location in the Internet Archive but it will no longer be updated. While the current website address will be maintained for as long as practicable all links will point to the new static location in the Internet Archive. *Kosher Koala* will inform readers of this link when it becomes available.

The associated *Stenen Archief* (gravestone archive), will continue under the auspices of a new organisation but will be dependent on public donations to continue its work. For more details go to the [Dutch Jewry website](#).

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## RECORDS, NOT REVENUE

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On 14 November 2019, U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) proposed a sudden and unprecedented **492% increase in fees** required to access historical records held by the USCIS Genealogy Program. **Many of these records should already be publicly accessible under the law.** USCIS is essentially holding them hostage, demanding individuals pay exorbitant and unjustifiable fees to access documents of our immigrant ancestors.

This is the opening statement on the website of [Records, Not revenue](#), a group established to lobby against a proposal by the US government to increase the price of access to records held by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). USCIS has announced it will raise the fees of two Genealogy Programs from US\$65 to US\$240 and US\$385. These same fees were already tripled in 2016!

*Records, Not Revenue* is a non-partisan project coordinated by an ad hoc group of genealogists, historians, and records-access advocates.

The website lays out the core issues of access, transparency and efficiency, with the group demanding USCIS explain the reasoning behind the decision, especially as many of these records should already be freely available at the National Archives (NARA), or already exist at NARA but are being withheld from the public due to restrictions placed by USCIS itself.

The records cover immigrants who arrived in the US on or after 1 July 1924. Earlier immigrants who were either naturalized on or after 27 September 1906, registered as an alien in 1940, or had contact with INS on or after 1 April 1944 may also be found in these records.

The proposals, if implemented, will increase the cost of accessing these records beyond the reach of most researchers.

Submissions for comment on the proposals have closed but genealogical organisations around the world will be watching the results keenly.



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## AUSTRALIAN DNA COMPANY SEEKS TO SOLVE 30YR OLD COLD CASE

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The front page of the *Australian Jewish News* of December 19, 2019 had the headline [“Do you know this man?”](#) above a computer generated picture of an unidentified homeless man murdered in a Melbourne stairwell in 2004. With advances in DNA profiling, Brisbane based DNA company *To The Letter* was recently tasked with analysing a stored sample of the man’s DNA provided by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) on behalf of the Coroners Court of Victoria in the hope that it might provide some clues to the man’s identity.

The analysis revealed that the man, aged between 70 and 80 years old, had an Ashkenazi Jewish background, with connections to Kovno, Lithuania; Lodz, Poland; and Novogrodek, Belarus.

*To The Letter* CEO, Jocelyn McBain, uploaded the DNA data to Gedmatch and found matches as close as a second cousin. Unfortunately, her research failed to lead to a formal identification, hence the newspaper headline.

Since the AJN story was published, VIFM has received some new leads and Ms McBain has not lost hope that one day this gentleman’s identity will be revealed.

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## ANCESTRY HARNESSSES AI

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[Ancestry.com](#) is harnessing the power of machine learning and AI to extract obituaries from half a billion pages of archival newspapers held on its [newspapers.com](#) site. In a two part process the Ancestry data team trained an algorithm to recognise and extract relevant content related to obituaries.

The second phase involved “training” another algorithm to identify and extract for indexing key details including names, relationships, dates and places and depositing that information into a database. Ancestry has also applied the second algorithm to its existing collection of around 40 million obituaries. Before the application of this new process it was only possible to search the name of the deceased.

The revised database now holds 262 million obits and allows for searching across a wider set of parameters.

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## A BUSY YEAR FOR GENI

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GENI posted an [end of year review for 2019](#) on their blog, highlighting some of the new and improved services and offerings. While much of the post is PR fluff there are some interesting links to webinars and TED talks that may be of interest to Geni users.

Notable items include:

- the reinstatement of the Gedcom import function: Geni stopped allowing the importing of Gedcoms in 2011 but brought it back due to popular demand. The function was disabled to try and stem the number of duplicate records on people’s trees. To mitigate this problem Geni says:

...the new and improved GEDCOM importer imports only a few generations at a time. After the initial import of 5 generations of ancestors, the importer will pause to detect duplicates. If duplicates are found, the user will have to resolve those duplicates before the import will continue. The import will only continue if no more duplicates are detected along a branch.



Links to a [free webinar](#) on Advanced Features on geni.com, presented by Geni's General Manager Mike Stangel, in conjunction with Legacy Family Tree webinars and a [TEDMED talk](#) by Dr. Yaniv Erlich, MyHeritage's Chief Science Officer, called "*How We're Building the World's Largest Tree.*" In his talk, Dr. Erlich shares what he and his team have discovered analysing data from Geni's World Family Tree, as well as other exciting developments in the world of biomedical research and genealogy.

- Geni's newly launched [Consistency Checker](#) (see this issue's DIY section for more on that) and
- the new [Multiple Relation Path](#) feature.

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## FAMILYSEARCH CELEBRATES 125YRS OF GENEALOGY

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The Genealogical Society of Utah was established 125 years ago by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In April 1894, President Wilford Woodruff stated:

We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers; and run this chain as far as you can get it.

In 1944 the organisation changed its name to The Genealogical Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1976 it became The Genealogical Department, and in 1987 the name changed again to The Family History Department. Today, we simply call it [FamilySearch](#) and through its website they now have:

- 7.42 BILLION searchable names in historic records
- 4.79 BILLION searchable records
- 1.21 BILLION people in FamilySearch Family Tree
- 13.4 MILLION registered [FamilySearch.org](#) users, and
- 5,179 Family History Centres

*FamilySearch* continues to evolve and they have big plans for their service in 2020, including to:

- add more than 500 million new viewable digital images and searchable records online;
- translate core user experiences into additional languages including Albanian, Khmer, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Indonesian, Mongolian, Polish, Samoan, Tongan and Vietnamese;
- launch a new tool for viewing recently digitised record images—a feature that may help to more easily find images that aren't yet indexed;
- improve the merging experience in FamilyTree; and
- allow FamilyTree users to share their ancestors' personal pages on social media services such as WhatsApp and Facebook.






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## MOROCCAN KING OPENS NEW JEWISH HOUSE OF MEMORY

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Jews have lived in the region of present-day Morocco since it was known as Carthage, over 2500 years ago. The Jewish population swelled during the 15th century when Jews were expelled from Spain. At its height the Jewish community numbered between a quarter and half a million, constituting the largest Jewish community in the Muslim world. Today barely a handful remain. But there are signs that Moroccan society is starting to embrace the history of its former Jewish residents and that there may once again be a positive future for Jews in the country.

In January, the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, attended the inauguration for *Bayt Dakira*, which means House of Memory in Arabic, a \$1.5 million centre in the city of Essaouira dedicated to Jewish culture – Essaouira, also known as [Mogador](#) during the French Protectorate period (1912-1956) once hosted up to 37 synagogues. Three quarters of the funding came from the Moroccan government, with the difference made up by private donors.

The centre is the brainchild of Andre Azoulay, a French-educated Moroccan Jew who lives in Essaouira and serves as a senior adviser to the king. It is located in the restored home of a wealthy trader. The home already contained a small *Slat Attia* synagogue and now houses the museum, the

*Top: The Melleh - Jewish ghetto - of Mogador, now Essaouira; middle: King Mohammad VI with Morocco's Chief Rabbi David Pinto and Casablanca's Chief Rabbi Joseph Israel; Bottom: Andre Azouly.*



Haim and Célia Zafrani International Research Centre, which centres on the history of the relations between Judaism and Islam, and a space to host cultural events. An extensive collection of old photographs, archive footage, musical recordings, traditional dress and religious objects have been donated to the Centre.

Interesting people whose stories are highlighted in the exhibition include Leslie Belisha (1893-1957), a British minister of finance, transport and war, and David Yulee Levy (1810-1886), credited as being the first Jew elected to the United States Senate.

Azoulay's daughter, Audrey, who serves as the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), attended the opening, alongside Moroccan Jewish comedian Gad Elmaleh and Izhak Dayan the chief rabbi of Geneva, Switzerland.

The centre has been developed in partnership with the American Sephardi Federation (ASF). Jason Guberman, director of ASF told *Ha'Aretz*:

On the one hand it has the museum and it's going to be about studying the past, but it's also very much about doing events and bringing people to Essaouira today," Guberman told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "It says a lot about Morocco's future, the fact that the king would come to open up a centre like this.

Today King Mohammad VI is proud of his country's embrace of its Jewish heritage with several cemeteries, synagogues and historic Jewish quarters currently being restored. The Moroccan Jewish Museum opened in Casablanca in 1997, the only one of its kind in the Arab world. And in Fez, the country's spiritual capital, a museum dedicated to the Jewish memory is currently under construction.

*Clockwise from Top: Leslie Belisha, David Yulee Levy, a Koran & a Torah side by side in the museum, the Mellah vintage postcard, Essaouira citadel today [Wikimedia - Mike Prince CC BY 2.0]*





# 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](mailto:ed@ajgs.org.au)*

STRANGER THAN FICTION: THE PNINA BERKMAN STORY

ROSE RAYMAN - JHGSWA

*I had no idea at the time that I was about to discover his mother's true-identity and reconnect him with his long-lost maternal cousins in Australia.*

On Sunday 21 June 2009, I attended a talk at the Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society of Western Australia (JHGSWA), given by author and investigative journalist, Estelle Blackburn.

Estelle is the author of two books *Broken Lives* and *The End of Innocence*, which detail the crimes committed by serial killer Eric Edgar Cooke in Perth, Western Australia. Cooke's first victim was the 33-year-old Pnina Vinico Berkman, who was stabbed to death in her South Perth flat, on Friday 30 January 1959.

Patricia Vinico Grigg, was born in Melbourne in 1925. She converted to Judaism and adopted the Hebrew name, Pnina, when she married Gerszon Gary Berkman, at the Caulfield synagogue, in 1949. The following year, their son Mark was born and when the marriage ended, Pnina and Mark relocated to Perth.

Estelle spoke of the night Pnina Berkman was murdered and the fact that her eight-year-old son was staying with friends that evening. In the months following her murder, Mark repressed any memory of his mother and their life as it had been.



Portrait of Pnina Berkman, Melbourne (date unknown).



Pnina and Gary Berkman with their son Mark, Melbourne, June 1951.

Visiting the graves of Eric Cooke's six murder victims, Estelle found that although Perth's Jewish community had raised funds for Pnina's funeral, her burial site was bare. A stone grave and bronze plaque were subsequently erected at the Jewish Orthodox section of Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Estelle's talk had such an impact on me, I emailed her the following day and asked for Mark's contact details in Israel. I had no idea at the time, that I was about to discover his mother's true-identity and reconnect him, with his long-lost maternal cousins in Australia.



It all began when Mark asked if I could find the aunt shown on the birth certificate he'd ordered in 1991, from the Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

The first thing I noticed was that his mother's middle name 'Vinico' had been omitted from the document. Mark also wanted to know the identity of the person who applied for custody of him at the time of his mother's death and sent me a note which read, "C. L. Grigg, 'Harringal', Henry Road, Croydon." I submitted an enquiry to the State Library of Victoria requesting a search of the 1959 Melbourne Street Directory and received a reply with the name of Charles Leslie Grigg.

Mark had sent me the link to his Flickr site which told of his stay at the Frances Barkman House in Balwyn, Melbourne, when his father was unable to care for him. The Australian Jewish Welfare and Relief Society (AJWRS) established the children's home (originally named Larino) in 1939, to accommodate German and Austrian evacuees and refugees.



Frances Barkman House, 23 Maleela Avenue, Balwyn, Melbourne. Photo by Laurie Richards, 2 October 1959.  
(Source: Museums Victoria)



Mark Berkman (circled) at the Frances Barkman House playroom. Photo by Laurie Richards 2 October 1959.  
(Source: Museums Victoria)

In December of 1961, Mark and his father Gary, left for Israel and in February 1972 in Tel Aviv, Mark married Rivka Kronkop, the girl who befriended him on his first day at school.



Mark and Rivka had three children, Tamir, Rona and Hadar. Mark worked for a Tel Aviv bank and sculpted in his spare time. However, the mother he couldn't remember remained in his heart and so, in September 2004, Mark, Rivka and Hadar visited Perth, where he'd lived as a child.

Standing at his mother's gravesite in the Jewish Orthodox section of Karrakatta Cemetery, he said Kaddish and placed small stones on her grave. Mark had brought a plaque with him from Israel to place on his mother's grave (pictured left).

However, there was already a plaque on Pnina's grave (pictured right) which read, "PATRICIA VINICO BERKMAN, DIED 30 JANUARY 1959, AGE 33 YEARS, DEEPLY MOURNED BY HER SON MARK." He enquired at the office and was advised that the plaque had been donated.





On the 50th anniversary of Pnina's death, Perth's Sunday Times, published an article on the story. As a consequence, 35 family photographs and documents, seized by detectives during the murder investigation, were located by a member of the Western Australian Police Historical Society. Estelle Blackburn collected the 50-year-old package from police headquarters in Perth and sent it to Mark in Tel Aviv.



Patricia Grigg with adoptive father Charles Leslie Grigg, Melbourne (date unknown).

Mark mentioned that his mother had served in the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) in World War Two, so I ordered the service record from the National Archives of Australia. Studying the document, I deduced that the birth certificate Mark had ordered in 1991, was for another woman – with the same first and last names AND born in the same year as his mother. Patricia's father was also shown as Charles Leslie Grigg, the man who'd applied for custody of Mark. It took quite a bit of convincing that the birth certificate Mark had requested 18 years earlier was for someone else!

After several "NO RECORD" RESULT responses from the Victorian BDM Registry, I was certain that Patricia Grigg was adopted and that her unusual middle name 'Vinico' was a clue to her birth name.

But the ordeal had taken its toll on Mark and he asked me to stop searching. However, I was determined to uncover the facts and persuaded him to continue. Enlisting the help of my amateur genealogist friend Sally Erwood-Carryer, it was decided that we would draft a letter for Mark to sign, addressed to the Victorian BDM Registrar, requesting her assistance in locating the document. Mark also faxed Pnina's death certificate resulting in her correct birth certificate being found.

Patricia Vinnicombe, was born on 8 July 1925 in Carlton, Melbourne, to 25-year-old single mother Dorothea Vinnicombe, born in Romsey, Victoria in 1899. I also discovered that his maternal grandmother lived in the same suburb as Mark during the time he stayed at the Frances Barkman House in Balwyn.

An elated Mark, then asked if I could find any living members of this new-found family. Having done substantial research, I checked the Victorian Residential White Pages for the Vinnicombes who resided in regional Victoria.

The first person on my list was a Ron Vinnicombe. I rang and said I was researching the family history of Thomas and Susan Elizabeth Vinnicombe and asked if he was related. I almost fell off my chair when he answered "Yes!" Ron suggested that I contact Jean Williams, a second cousin of Mark's, who lived in the Victorian country town of St Arnaud.



Portrait of Dorothea Vinnicombe, Melbourne (date unknown).

When I phoned Jean, she told me she'd been searching for Patricia for many years and was thrilled that I'd finally found her. Jean decided that welcoming Mark to the family was so important she flew to Israel. "I remember arriving at Tel Aviv airport at 5.00am, and it was very emotional. I had brought the letters and cards and other family memorabilia, because I believed Mark was the rightful owner of it all."

Mark described her two-week stay as, "the most wonderful thing that has happened to us." He also learned that Jean's sister, Heather McKay, and his mother, had been close friends in the army, although neither of the women knew they were first cousins.





Mark Berkman and Jean Williams in Jaffa, April 2010.



Jean Williams and Rivka Berkman in Jerusalem, April 2010.

Back from Israel, Jean planned a celebration for the Berkmans in her home town. In September 2011, Mark, Rivka, their sons and Mark's paternal cousin Dianna Gold, entered a restaurant in St Arnaud, filled to capacity, with his newly-discovered family.



Mark, Rivka and Hadar stopped over in Perth on their way home and we met at the airport, two years after I first contacted him.

The next day, a third memorial plaque from the Victorian Vinnicombe family was added to Pnina's grave. It read, "IN REMEMBRANCE OF OUR COUSIN PNINA (PATRICIA) BERKMAN, SADLY UNKNOWN TO US IN LIFE, NOW TREASURED BY THE VINNICOMBE FAMILY."

*Memorial plaque from the Vinnicombe family.*

I wrote to Mark on completion of my research and told him,

*"Your story is one of triumph over tragedy, but most of all it's a story of hope. Welcome home my friend."*

A decade has now passed since I first contacted Mark and began my research. Mark now has his mother's WW2 medals and recently discovered photos of himself taken in 1959 during his stay at the Frances Barkman House. He and Rivka have visited Victoria several times and always make time to catch up with his maternal cousin now 90-year-old Jean Williams, and her family.

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## THE INDEFATIGABLE FRANCES BARKMAN – PHILANTHROPIST AND TEACHER (1885-1946)

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Mark Berkman was a resident of the Frances Barkman Children's home. But who was Frances Barkman?



Frances Barkman, daughter of Joseph and Anna, was born in in Kiev in 1885. Fleeing Russian pogroms, she arrived in Melbourne with her parents in 1891.

Frances (aka Fanny) was educated at the Rathdowne Street State and Secondary School, Carlton and later trained as a teacher, graduating with a BA from the University of Melbourne. Her major areas of interest were French and drama.

In 1936, the Australian Jewish Welfare Society (now Jewish Care) was established in Sydney and soon after in Melbourne. Frances served as the Melbourne branch honorary secretary ensuring that refugees arriving from Europe were guaranteed a

Frances Barkman 1885-1946  
Punch (Melbourne) Thursday 13 May 1915



safe-haven. She was instrumental in establishing Larino Children's Home in Balwyn, giving up many hours of leisure time to teach them English.

In 1939, while working at Mac.Robertson Girls' High School in Melbourne, Frances was appointed to oversee the school's war relief. She was also the president of the Women's Committee of the Free French Movement and a leading advocate of its cause during the German occupation of France.

A high ranking officer of the Australian Military Forces, wrote of her:

...nobody was more welcome at the internment camps than Miss Barkman, and that nobody commanded the respect of commanding officers more than this earnest and indefatigable Jewish lady.

Frances Barkman died in St. Vincent's Hospital, Fitzroy, Melbourne, on 28 September 1946, aged 61 years. She never married. In 1948, the name of Larino Children's Home was changed to the Frances Barkman House, acknowledging her services as honorary secretary. Her will named the University of Melbourne and the Australian Jewish Welfare Society as her chief beneficiaries, with the AJWS providing bursaries for students in the Jewish Refugee Children's Homes.



Picture: Frances Barkman House c. 1940s.

A lease on Larino, a mansion in Balwyn, was obtained for the Australian Jewish Welfare Society by Frances Barkman in 1936. Originally named Larino Children's Home it housed Jewish refugee children throughout World War II. Besides Mark, another notable resident was George Dreyfus, father of Hon Mark Dreyfus QC, Federal Member for Isaacs, VIC. Courtesy: American Joint Distribution Committee; Used with Permission.



# 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](#).*

### KEEPING THINGS CONSISTENT

If you have a family tree in an online platform such as Ancestry, My Heritage or Geni it is far too easy to import inaccurate information. Importing Smart Matches en-masse can propagate your data with errors that are hard to pick up. Even Gary Mokotoff, publisher of Avotaynu, was moved to raise the subject in the January 19, 2020 issue of *Nu? What's New?*, writing:

You are searching for information about an individual on one of the many family tree databases on the internet. You find a match; no, two matches. You compare the information on the two trees, and they are identical. Excellent! Two people independently found the identical information giving you confidence of its accuracy. Wrong! Two people may not have found the information independently. It is also possible that one person copied the information from the other. If the information is inaccurate, it may perpetuate false information.

Picking errors before you import them can be a challenge but checking for **consistency** is now easier and worth doing to weed out the errors. Both My Heritage and Geni have a tool to help you weed the forest of your family trees (I have not been able to find a similar tool on Ancestry). Late in 2019 Geni [announced](#) the launch of a consistency checker for its World Family Tree. This tool mirrors the consistency checker that has been available on Geni's sister site My Heritage for a while (you do need to have a premium subscription to access this tool).

A Consistency Checker scans all the data in your online tree for 26 types of inconsistencies ranging from obvious errors, such as a child born before a parent, to more subtle problems, such as someone appearing too young or too old to be a parent.

The screenshot shows the Geni Consistency Checker interface. At the top, it says "Consistency Checker" and "Geni constantly monitors changes to your profiles to detect common problems." Below this, it states "11 unresolved inconsistencies found and 3 hidden or ignored". A list of inconsistencies is shown, including "Children with different last names (4)", "Married too young (1)", "Missing birth surname (2)", "Sibling too close (6)", and "Too young parent (1)". Each item has a dropdown arrow and a link to "show all".

The screenshot shows the MyHeritage Tree Consistency Checker interface. At the top, it says "Tree Consistency Checker" and "Your tree has changed since consistency issues were last found". Below this, it states "141 consistency issues found". A list of inconsistencies is shown, including "Parent too young when having a child (9)", "Parent too old when having a child (11)", "Married too young (1)", "Incorrect use of uppercase/lowercase (1)", and "Siblings with same first name (1)". Each item has a dropdown arrow and a link to "show all".



Consistency checkers are an excellent way to uncover and clean up incorrect or inaccurate data in your tree, especially if, like me, the branches have spread far and wide and you have amassed several thousand individuals drawn in from other people's research or from My Heritage's Discovery offer.

In some cases, inconsistencies may not actually be errors, so it is important to verify any problems identified by the tool if you're not certain it is a mistake.

For example: in this example David Marks born 1879 has a brother named David Marks born 1887.



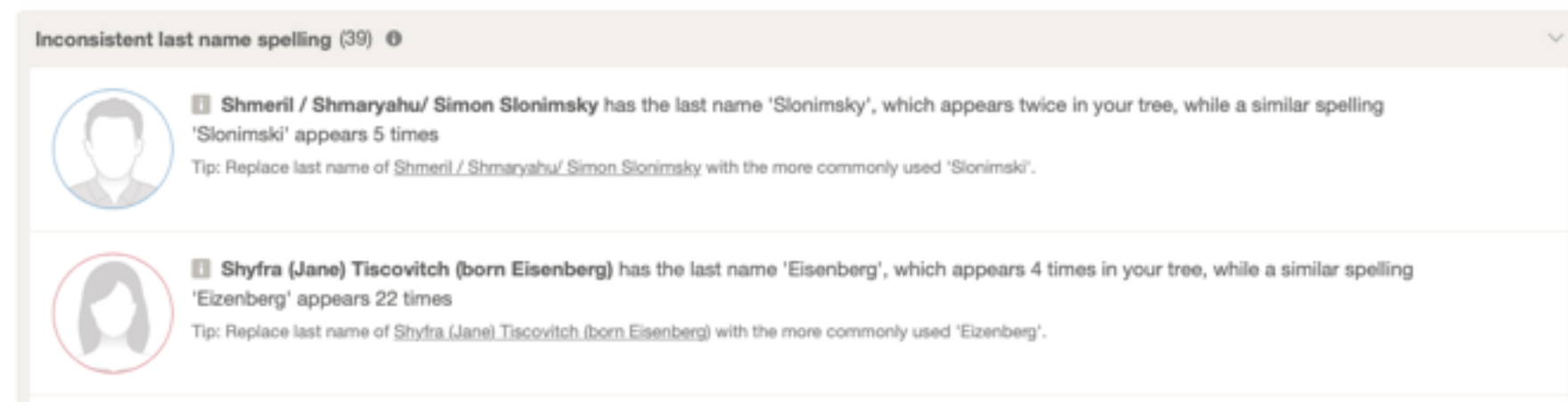
Upon closer examination I noticed David Marks (1879) was born in England and died there in 1882, at the age of 3. His sibling, David (1887) was born in Melbourne after the family emigrated.

Running a consistency check is easy. Since both systems are owned by the same company they function pretty much the same way. However, because of the more distributed nature of data management in Geni, it's more difficult to correct the errors uncovered by the tool if you are not the administrator of the profile in question.

Both systems have a quick correction option - a link that makes the recommended change with one click. But if you're not sure of the context of the inconsistency it's a good idea to click on the link to the profile and verify that the solution being proposed by the system is, in fact, the correct one.



For example, in My Heritage if you have a place name spelled incorrectly more often than it is spelled correctly the system will suggest changing the correct spelling to that of the incorrect spelling.



While the Consistency Checkers won't guarantee data integrity they can at least help catch the most egregious errors.



# LINKS & WEBSITES

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## CZECHS DIGITISE DEATH RECORDS

(with thanks to Daniela Torsh)



Dr Lenka Matušiková, a former Deputy Director of the Czech National Archives has a new project. She is digitising the [Declaration of Death](#) records, thirty-five thousand records held at the archives since the end of the Second World War that hold vital information about the Czech Jews whose deaths occurred without official documentation.

The indexing of the *Declaration of Deaths (1946-1950)* is already available online up to the letter “L”. Although officially retired, Dr Matušiková works every morning at the Dejvice offices of the National Archives in Prague 6. She hopes to have the whole project digitised by the end of this year.

The Jews who died at Terezín, the concentration camp and ghetto north of Prague where most of the Czech Jews were detained, left their descendants with a big problem. When those descendants wanted to apply for probate post-war there were no death certificates. The Czechs developed a court approved process to declare a date of death and the resulting certificate contained a lot of important information including first name, surname or family name, date of birth, name of the parents, home address, religion, status, date and place of marriage and husband's name, and last place of residence before emigration, arrest, or transport.

Commonly the date of death was declared as 6 months after the last known date when the person was seen alive. Holding a death certificate meant relatives could inherit properties and businesses or adopt a child post-war.

This is a major initiative by Dr Matušiková and may provide valuable information for Czech family history researchers.

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## UK GRO ADDS DEATH RECORD INDEX 1984-2019

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The UK Government Record Office (GRO) has updated its online index to include death records from 1984 to 2019. The index has minimal information and is designed primarily for people to order certificates of individuals known to them. The index does include the birth year of the deceased and the reference number of the certificate. Unfortunately, there is still an inconvenient gap in the index between 1958 and 1983.

To access the index, go to the [GRO website](#) and select *Order Certificates Online*. You will need to be a registered user to continue, so login or register.

- The next window asks, “What you want to do?”
- Click on “Search the GRO Indexes.”
- That will open a window which asks whether you want birth or death indexes.
- Select “Death”, and fill out the form.

Birth records are still subject to the 100-year privacy restriction.



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## NEW IRISH BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH RECORDS ONLINE

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The Irish government announced an update to the online collection of historical registers of births, marriages and deaths. Employment Affairs and Social Protection Minister, Regina Doherty, TD, and Josepha Madigan, TD, Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht announced the release. This is part of an initiative by both departments to provide online access to historical records and registers compiled by the Civil Registration Service.

Access to the records is free through the [Irish Genealogy website](https://www.genealogyireland.com/).

The General Register Office is working on updating marriages records dating back to 1845 and deaths dating back to 1864. These will be available “in due course”, said the ministers.

The full range of municipal vital records for Ireland now available online are Birth: 1864–1919, Marriage: 1845–1944 and Death: 1878–1969

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## NEW WALKING TOUR GUIDE - KALININGRAD, RUSSIA

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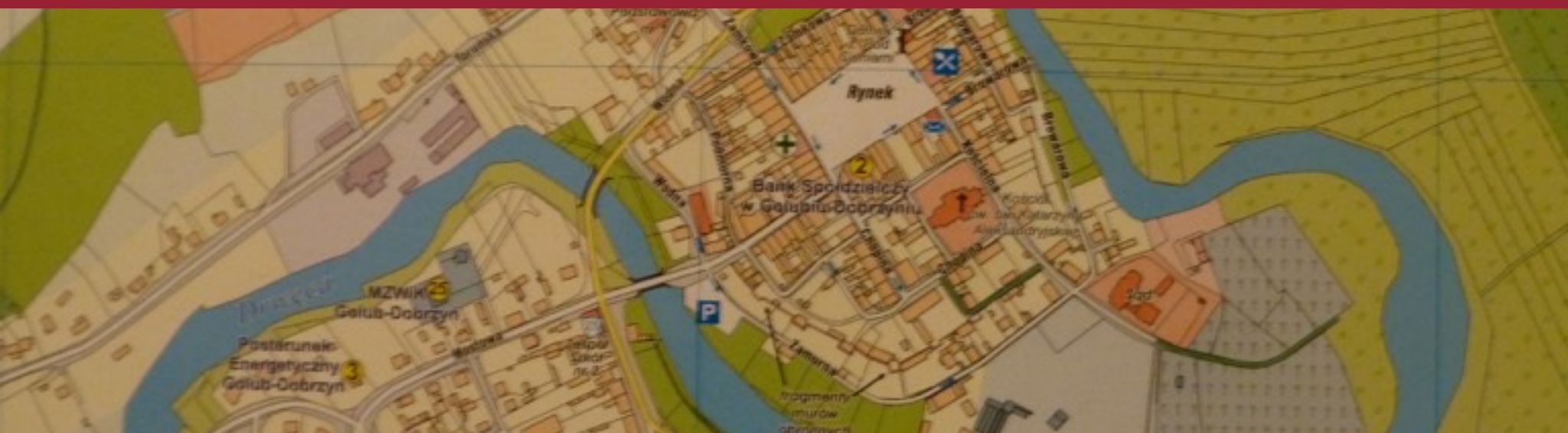
If you're planning a roots trip to Kaliningrad, Russia – formerly Königsberg, Prussia – the *Jews in East Prussia History and Culture Society* has published a [walking tour itinerary](#) for the district of Vordere Vorstadt, located directly south of the cathedral island (Kneiphof). This is the city's former Jewish district.

The walking tour highlights 10 points of Jewish interest along its route, finishing at the site of the New Liberal Synagogue, which was destroyed during Kristallnacht. In 2019, almost exactly 80 years later, a near replica has risen in its place. The original structure was built around 1895 for the emerging Liberal Jewish community. The new building is slightly smaller than the 46-meter high original but still very grand.

Other stops include the Neue Börse—the grain market designed by the architect Heinrich Müller, which was built between 1870 and 1875 on the site of the Green Bridge. Grain traders in the region were predominantly Jewish so this was an important centre of Jewish commerce— and the Amber Factory—In 1858, the entrepreneur Moritz Becker and his partner Friedrich Wilhelm Stantien began to mine amber on an industrial scale. In 1899 they sold the Amber concession to the Kingdom of Prussia and the state founded the Königliche Bernsteinwerke Königsberg (Royal Amber Factory). Jewish amber grinders, whose families came from the Palanga [now in Lithuania] were renown craftsmen.

The tour itinerary can be [viewed online](#) or downloaded as a [PDF brochure](#).

**HAVE YOU BEEN ON A SELF GUIDED WALK IN YOUR ANCESTRAL TOWN?  
LET US KNOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE! EMAIL [ED@AJGS.ORG.AU](mailto:ED@AJGS.ORG.AU)**







*Vintage postcards of Egypt from the early 20th century*

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## MEMORIES OF OLD EGYPT

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The internet is a wonderful place to find things by chance. I was alerted to a video posted on the YouTube Channel *Great Egypt*. The 15 minute slideshow set to music is entitled [Exploring Egypt between 1805-1952](#). There is little context and no captions naming the people so it's of limited value for data but as I was exploring the credits I saw the URL of an associated website: [greategypt.org](http://greategypt.org).

The site is devoted to the Egypt of 1805-1952 and features an eclectic collection of photographs, profiles and documents covering Egyptian society, particularly architecture. While the aforementioned video has no captions, in the [Places](#) section of the website there is a wonderful collection of streetscapes all appropriately captioned with locations and dates in both English and Arabic. Where possible the source of the photo (photographer or collection) is also credited.

Some of these photos are postcards and the site has a [separate page of vintage postcards](#), most of which are illustrative artworks, that paint a distinctly colonial, highly romanticised portrait of 19th and early 20th century Egypt.

The People section is largely a collection of un-captioned portraits taken at Studio Armand by Armenak Arzrouni, an Egyptian-Armenian photographer, born in 1901. It's a shame the faces are not identified because these personal portraits are quite wonderful and cover an extensive period of time. I have no doubt that the descendants of these people would be thrilled to have copies. It's also frustrating that the builder of the site has not created thumbnail galleries that would make viewing the large number of images on the site a bit more convenient. But these are small quibbles with what is a fascinating website.

While the site does not have a specifically Jewish focus, there are several things that may be of interest to Jewish researchers with roots in Egypt. On the [Press](#) page there are links to a range of publications hosted on [archive.org](http://archive.org), including several issues of *Illustration Juive*, a magazine from the mid 1920s; in [Special Reports](#) there is an [essay](#) on the influential family of Baron Yaqub Levi de Menasce, "...one of the earliest entrepreneurs in Egypt to recognize the opportunities offered by European trade and [who], with Jacob Cattaoui, opened the banking and trading establishment of J. L. Menasce et Fils with branches in England, France, and Turkey." As well there is a [pre-1937 list of major contractors](#).



There are also a couple of distinctly quirky [documents](#) including some relating to an early solar power plant located in Maadi in 1912, a train inspector's report from 1938 and a grocery receipt from 1915.

The site is one of those passion projects (the author appears to be Ehab Hassan, the director of the video) that may inadvertently give us, as researchers, some small insight into one small period in time in the country of our forebears.

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## EGYPTIAN JEWISH SURNAME INDEX

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Also relevant to Egypt, [Avotaynu Online](#) has published a paper by Israeli diplomat [Jacob Rosen-Koenigsbuch](#) that attempts to begin the difficult task of compiling a somewhat definitive list of Surnames of Jews resident in Cairo in the early 20th century. So far Rosen-Koenigsbuch has collected 1,689 surnames.

His sources include the two French language weeklies *Israel* and *L'Aurore* that were published in the city between 1918–1945; personal memoir books by authors who grew up in Cairo and The Farhi's Family website [Les Fleurs de L'Orient](#), which has a large index of surnames of people related to the Farhi family by marriage. That index notes the place of birth, residence or death of each indexed individual (if known). Rosen-Koenigsbuch also utilised the various Egyptian business and telephone directories of the period.

Regarding sources, Rosen-Koenigsbuch states:

The fact that many surnames are spelled in a variety of ways necessitates a creative search methodology. However, the major drawback ... is that they focus on Jewish communal life, institutions and Jewish schools and organizations. Unfortunately, many Jewish kids did not attend Jewish schools, and their parents were not donors to Jewish organisations and institutions, thus they fell beyond the coverage of the Jewish press.

He is particularly enthused however, by the potential that social media has shown, with members of numerous facebook groups dedicated to Egyptian Jews and their descendants helping him add more names to his list.

The full list of names, along with the full article, can be read on [Avotaynu Online](#).

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## SUB-CARPATHIAN GENEALOGY INC. LAUNCHES WEBSITE

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[A new website](#) has been launched for those with Jewish roots in Sub-Carpathia. Historically, Sub-Carpathia was once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, today it is in Ukraine. The website includes a freely searchable databases of vital and census records pertaining to villages and towns located in the former Hungarian *megyek* (counties) of Bereg, Máramaros, Ugocsa and Ung, and, in Slovakia (Podkarpatská Rus').

The non-profit company, Sub-Carpathia Genealogy®, Inc., which runs the site, indicates they have nearly 500,000 records online.

The website's primary focus is a [searchable database](#) of vital, census, Holocaust and other records, community websites and cemeteries. There are also pages dealing with the [Jewish history](#) of the region, [how to read specific documents](#) and [travelling](#) to the area.

There is a wealth of information on the site but it's let down by a clunky organisational structure that is confusing and inelegant, and a perhaps unintentionally "retro" visual style. Hopefully someone will offer the organisation an opportunity to refresh both the look and feel and the navigation.





Logan Kleinwaks, the creator of [Genealogy Indexer](#), has posted unindexed images to the *Internet Archive* of the [1764–1766 census of Jews](#) for selected towns located in what today is geographically Poland and Ukraine.

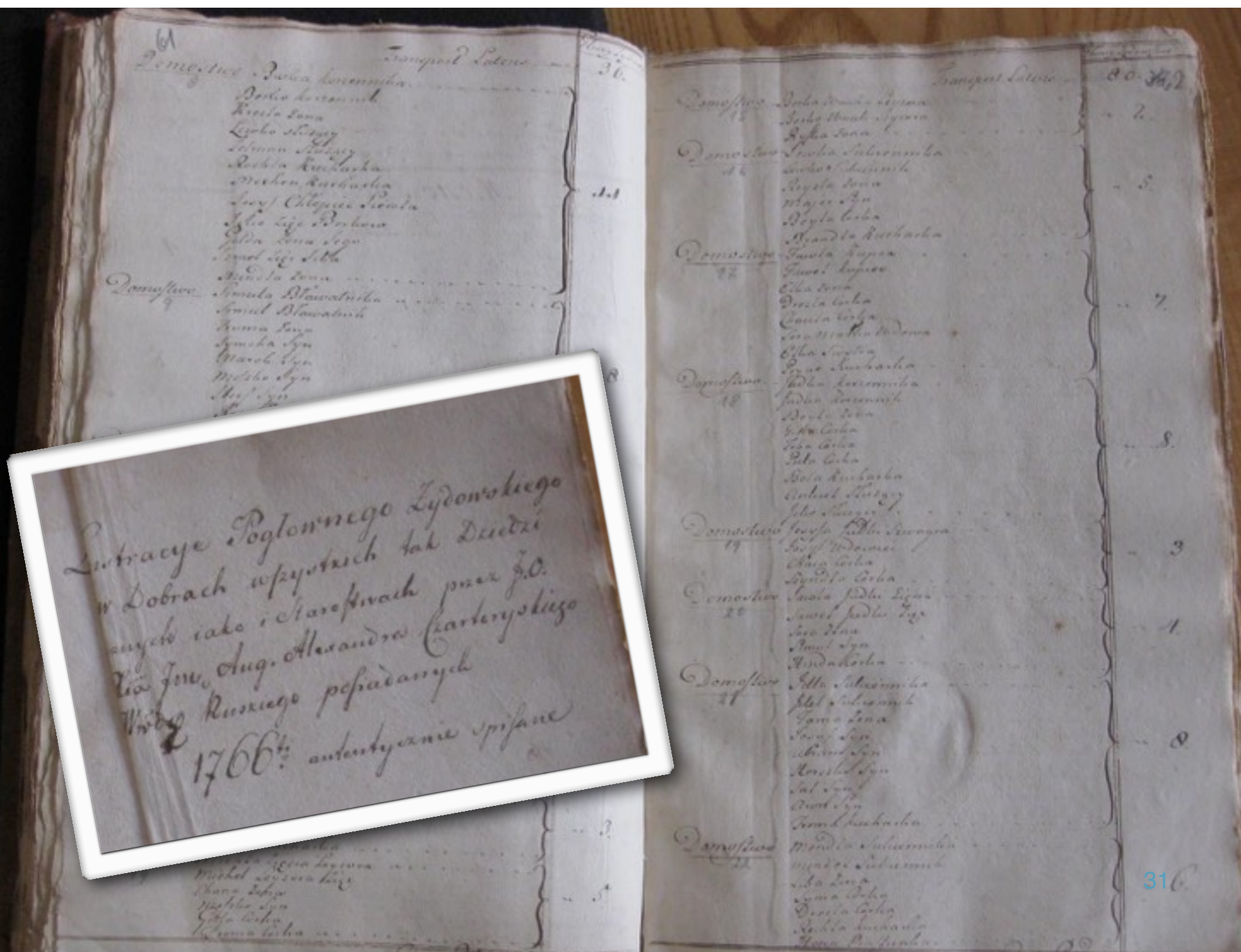
Towns included in the census are Baranow (Lublin), Konskowola (Lublin) + Wlostowice, Miedzyrzec Podlaski (Siedlce) and Staszow (Radom), all located in the former Kingdom of Poland; Berezhany / Brzezany, Jaroslaw, Kalush / Kalusz, Narayev / Narajow, Peremyshlyany / Przemyslany, Sieniawa and Skole, Tarnoruda, in the former province of Galicia; Hraniv / Granow, Letychiv / Latyczow, Medzhybizh / Miedzyboz, Nikolayev / Mikolajow, Sataniv / Satanow (statistics only) and Stara Sinyava / Stara Sieniawa, from Podolia; and Klevan / Klewan, in Volhynia.

There are hyperlinks to each geographical segment of the collection in the notes below the viewing interface.

The original bound volume of the census was owned by August Aleksander Czartoryski but was discovered in the collection of the Potocki family from Łańcut, at the *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie* (AGAD).

Czartoryski's daughter Elżbieta Czartoryska Lubomirska was the owner of Łańcut and maternal grandmother of Alfred Wojciech Potocki, which may explain why it was found in that family's collection.

The images are yet to be indexed but certainly look like they may yield a wealth of information to those able to read the handwriting.





# EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

## EASTERN SUBURBS WORKSHOP

### WHY USE FAMILYSEARCH TO RESEARCH JEWISH ROOTS?

This talk will explore features of the LDS or Mormons' FamilySearch website which are particularly useful for researching Jewish family history. FamilySearch has digital images of many records not available elsewhere and is a free resource.



Robyn Dryen will show you how to

- use the catalogue to find specific databases;
- find digital images using both indexed and un-indexed records;
- navigate the Knowles collection of Jewish family genealogies; and
- explore the digitised book collection.

**SUNDAY FEBRUARY 16, 2020 2.00PM - 4.45PM**

Theatrette, Waverley Library 32-48 Denison St, Bondi Junction

*Doors open at 2pm. The talk will commence at 2.30 and run for 1 hour.*

*It will be followed by a Q&A and time for browsing related resources.*

RSVP: [society@ajgs.org.au](mailto:society@ajgs.org.au) February 13, 2020.

A screenshot of the FamilySearch website. The top navigation bar includes links for Family Tree, Search, Memories, Indexing, and Activities, along with a Help icon, a Sign In button, and a Create Account button. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for Records, Family Tree, Genealogies, Catalog, Books, and Wiki. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled "Search Historical Records" and contains a search form with fields for "Deceased Ancestor's Information" (First Names, Last Names), "Search with a life event:" (Birth, Marriage, Residence, Death, Any), "Search with a relationship:" (Spouse, Father, Mother, Other Person), and "Restrict records by:". The right column is titled "Research By Location" and features a world map with a prompt to "Click an area of the world to start researching in a specific location."



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## UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

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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	FEBRUARY 16	1400-1700	WAVERLEY LIBRARY
MONDAY	FEBRUARY 17	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	MARCH 1	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	APRIL 5	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	MAY 3	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	MAY 17	1400-1700	WAVERLEY LIBRARY
MONDAY	MAY 18	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	JUNE 14	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	JULY 5	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	AUGUST 2	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	AUGUST 16	1400-1700	WAVERLEY LIBRARY
MONDAY	AUGUST 17	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	SEPTEMBER 13	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	OCTOBER 18	1400-1700	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	NOVEMBER 1	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	NOVEMBER 22	1400-1700	WAVERLEY LIBRARY
MONDAY	NOVEMBER 23	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE
SUNDAY	DECEMBER 6	1000-1300	NORTH SHORE SYNAGOGUE