

JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY



# KOSHER KOALA

AUTUMN/ APRIL 2023

AJGS  
*L'dor V'dor*

Six Dome Synagogue in Krasnaya Sloboda, The Red Town, near Quba, Azerbaijan.  
Could this be where Leonardo Da Vinci's mother was born? Story page 11  
[Image Asif Masimov CC BY-SA 3.0 Wikimedia]



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# FEATURE

## AJGS CONNECTS COUSINS ACROSS CONTINENTS

DANI HASKI

*In 2022, AJGS received an enquiry from renowned genealogist, Jennifer Mendelsohn. She was searching for a family in Australia possibly linked to newly reunited sisters in Poland. Here's the story of how AJGS was able to help Jennifer connect cousins across continents; with thanks to Sam Hambur.*

AUGUST 2022 Eli Rabinowitz in WA forwarded an email from Jennifer Mendelsohn, a professional Jewish genealogist based in Baltimore in the US who, alongside her colleague Adina Newman is behind the [DNA Reunion Project](#).

Jennifer wrote:

There were two brothers from Piotrkow who survived the Holocaust named Abram and Rachmiel HAMBURGIER. (Sometimes Hamburger, but this is the original spelling.) Abram was born... 1919. His wife was Zofia and they had a son named Maurice born ... 1949. They arrived in Australia January 1952, sponsored by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society in Sydney... Rachmiel was born 1924 and had a wife named Rela or Bela. They arrived in Australia ... 1951.

Armed with this data, we searched the usual databases and came up empty-handed. We figured that they must have changed their names... but to what?

Using the [AJHS Burial database](#) to search death/ cemetery records from Melbourne, and concentrating more on Hebrew names, we eventually found them in Springvale Cemetery. We then put the surname they were



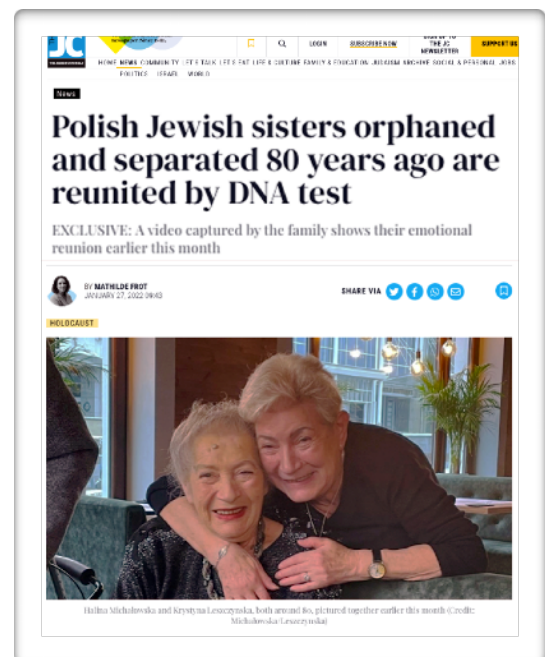
Piotrków Trybunalski Synagogue and Jerozolimska Street before WWII (Postcard - Public domain)

using - HAMBUR - into [Trove](#), where all Australian Jewish Newspapers have been digitised and are text-searchable. Here we found death notices which gave us crucial information:

- Abram and Rachmiel's parents were Samuel HAMBURGIER & Chaya OKSMAN
- Abram = Avraham *ben* Shmuel = Carol/ Karol HAMBUR 1920-1997
- Zofia = Zelda *bat* Mordecai = Zofia HAMBUR 1920-1993
- Rachmiel = Yerachmiel *ben* Shmuel = Robert/ Romek HAMBUR 1924-1988
- Rela HAMBUR = Rela *bat* Shimon 1925-1979

From this information, we were able to trace potential living descendants. Coincidentally, as an AJGS executive member recognised one of the names as someone she knew well, we were able to connect Jennifer with living relatives.

The case Jennifer and Adina were working on involved two Polish women in their 80s: Halina MICHAŁOWSKA and Krystyna LESZCZYŃSKA, who had been adopted during the war and had recently discovered that they were Jewish by birth and sisters. The story featured in several Jewish publications, including the UK *Jewish Chronicle*.



During her investigation, Jennifer identified a second cousin of the sisters' living in Boston, Nellie OKSMAN. Nellie remembered an Australian cousin of her father's visiting them in Boston in the early sixties. This visitor turned out to be Rachmiel HAMBURGIER, aka Romek/ Robert HAMBUR, who, following the war, came to Australia from Belgium with his wife, Rela.

Robert's son, Sam HAMBUR, told *Kosher Koala*:



My father's family came from Piotrków in central Poland with the name HAMBURGIER - his father's ancestry is likely to lead back to Hamburg. His mother's maiden name was OKSMAN, which suggests a link to Nellie.

Robert/ Rachmiel & Rela Hambur  
Image: Sam Hambur

Nellie and I, and the sisters [Halina and Krystyna], have all had genetic tests... the results of which support the historical understanding that Nellie and I are probably second cousins to each other and to the sisters ... It appears that we all have the same great-grandparents (Abram OKSMAN and Ruchla FRYSZMAN), though, of course, different grandparents.

Nellie's grandfather Chiel and my grandmother Chaja had a sister Laja Oksman BAJNBERG. Jennifer believes that one of Laja's sons is the father of [Halina and Krystyna].

# CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

Harnessing the power of genetic genealogy  
to link Holocaust survivors to living  
relatives they did not know they have.

Launched in November 2022, the DNA Reunion Project at the Center for Jewish History is a first-of-its-kind effort aimed at helping Holocaust survivors heal their fragmented families. The project leverages the unique power of DNA testing to connect survivors and their children with lost or unknown relatives. Based at the Center's highly respected Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute, the project provides free DNA kits to Holocaust survivors or their children. Project co-founders Jennifer Mendelsohn and Adina

Newman are specialists in Ashkenazi Jewish genetic genealogy who have a proven track record of using DNA to facilitate Holocaust reunions, including finding the unknown father of a child survivor of Theresienstadt and reuniting the daughter of an orphaned survivor with the biological family that had searched for her. They offer expert consultations to solve complex cases and provide educational opportunities on how DNA testing can help reclaim Jewish family stories.

The Project has received hundreds of requests, including from elderly survivors, and received a generous donation of 2,500 DNA tests from industry leader Ancestry.

Learn more, apply, or donate at our website.



[dna.cjh.org](https://dna.cjh.org)

# NEWS & VIEWS

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## TROVE FUNDING SECURED FOR YEARS TO COME



Concerns were raised last year when funding for Trove, one of Australia's most significant and freely available digital archives, was not included in the 2022 federal budget. Thankfully, the Federal Labor Government has announced that the *National Library of Australia* (NLA), which runs Trove, will receive \$33 million dollars over 4 years in the upcoming May budget, as part of *Revive*, the Labor Government's National Cultural Policy aimed at reinvigorating the arts and culture sector. The NLA will receive a further allocation of more than \$9million of indexed funding from mid-2027, to secure the future of Trove for years to come.

Minister for the Arts, Tony Burke, told the ABC:

Trove is, in many ways, Australia's digital memory: it records and retains some of our most important stories, moments, challenges, controversies and successes in one accessible location, ... Whether you're using it to look up a bit of family history, or for academic research, Trove is an incredibly important part of our national cultural institutions.

Trove currently holds more than 14 billion records. Of particular use to genealogists is the digitised newspaper collection. Part of that series is the *Australian Jewish Newspapers Collection*, which covers 180 years of community life. This project was a collaboration between NLA, the National Library of Israel (NLI) and AJHS, supported by several generous donors.

In a press release confirming the ongoing funding, the NLA described Trove as:

...a place for all Australians, ... a truly national treasure, and an international world leader. The overwhelming support we have received from the Trove community (both new and old) has been humbling. We take our role as the custodians of Trove, on behalf of the Library and our partner organisations, very seriously.



## EVELYN FRYBORT PRESERVES MEMORIES OF KINGS CROSS



Congratulations to long time AJGS member, Evelyn Frybort, on the publication of her new book *Memories of Kings Cross – The Jewish Migrant Experience – 1930s – 1960s*.

Evelyn put the call out for stories from the Jewish community who had grown up the Kings Cross and Darlinghurst when the area was a magnet for artists, poets and bohemians. This first edition contains 24 stories from a wide variety of people.

Tanya Hammer recalls interactions with the locals on William Street. Frances Black evokes gastronomic memories when she went out with her parents, “feeling very sophisticated, having European food in upmarket restaurants” of King’s Cross.

In an interview with Miriam Hechtman of +61J, Evelyn recalls the story of her cousin Heinz James, (formerly Jacobius) who, coincidentally, lived opposite her father’s salon on Bayswater Road.

He was a 16-year-old German Jewish refugee who came out on the ship “Dunera”. He married Leah, an Australian Jewish lady. They were living in a one-room flat, (in a building that still survived. It would probably be under National Trust in Bayswater Road) with a single gas burner, and they had to boil nappies for their baby. So that was their life in Kings Cross.

Looking NE at junction of William Street, Victoria Street & Darlinghurst Road, Potts Point.  
CC- Len Stone / Vic Solomons Collection provided courtesy of the City of Sydney Archives



We were just ordinary people. My parents were ordinary people. They weren't heavily involved in communal activities in the Jewish community, but they had a life and they had a story which became our story. It influenced our attitude to life. And I thought there must be so many others like that.



Evelyn (centre) with Louis Nowra (left) and Michael Visontay (right) Photo supplied: © Elana Clarke

I feel very happy that I've done it. I guess a good sense of achievement and very pleased that it has had such a positive response.

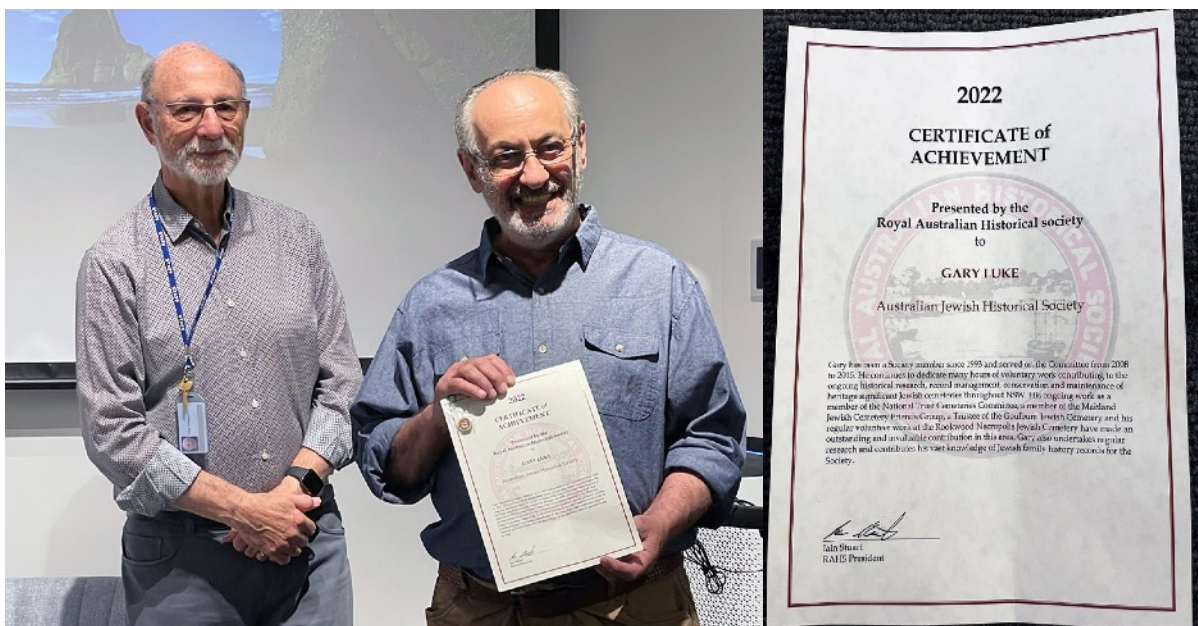
Evelyn was inspired to record these stories after reading Louis Nowra's *Kings Cross: A Biography*, and was thrilled when Mr Nowra agreed to officially launch the book at an event held in March.

Evelyn is now actively looking for more stories for a second edition. You can contact her directly at [efrybort@optusnet.com.au](mailto:efrybort@optusnet.com.au)

## MAZALTOV, GARY LUKE



Gary Luke was recently awarded a *Certificate of Achievement* by the Royal Australian Historical Society for his tireless work on historic Jewish cemeteries around NSW.





## THANK YOU, PHILIP MOSES



Philip Moses is standing down as Honorary Secretary of AJHS after two decades of dedicated service. Philip joined AJHS in 2003 and was instrumental in transitioning the society from analogue to digital indexing of society holdings.

He became secretary in 2009 and ever since has been intimately involved in every aspect of the society's development. AJHS has been Philip's second home, whether at Mandelbaum House or at the Sydney Jewish Museum, every Tuesday and Thursday. His invaluable work over the last 20 years of change and development is hugely appreciated.

Kym Morris is taking over from Philip.



Philip Moses (right)  
with AJHS President  
Peter Phillipsohn.

## NEW US JEWISH GENEALOGY TV SHOW ANNOUNCED

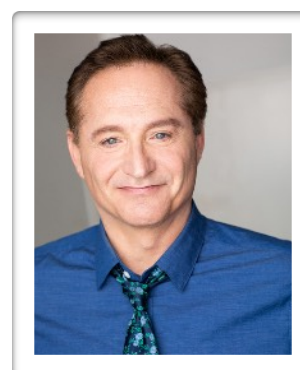


JewishGen and The Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York have announced a partnership with JLTV (a Jewish cable channel in the US) to produce a new Jewish Genealogy TV show, titled *Generations*, set to debut later this year.

Utilising the resources of these organisations, the program will delve into the family histories of Jewish celebrities and change-makers, and:

will uncover and explore each featured luminary's family tree, delve into where their ancestors lived, and reveal artefacts, objects, documents, and photographs that paint a full family portrait.

The guest list is still to be announced, but the series will be anchored by Brad Pomerance (right), host of several TV programs inspired by history, including a travel program, *Air Land & Sea*, and the PBS series *Uncovered in the Archives*, which explores historical events through archival collections.



Brad Pomerance  
(Image supplied)

The Museum of Jewish Heritage is working to establish the *Peter and Mary Kalikow Jewish Genealogy Research Center*, where visitors can access the records within JewishGen and the Museum's respective collections. The centre will have computers, where people can access JewishGen's genealogy



Museum of Jewish Heritage NYC  
(CC-Gryffindor)

resources and vast collection of records and data, and printers, for visitors to take their research home. It will also hold hundreds of Yizkor (Memorial) Books and there will be on-site volunteers and content experts to assist researchers.

Brad Pomerance told *KK* that the producers are looking into international distribution, and hope that Generations will be available to view in Australia.

## LITVAKSIG CELEBRATES 25 YEARS



*LitvakSIG*, the Lithuanian Jewish Special Interest Group, has reached a major milestone, having collated 2.5 million records in 25 years.

JewishGen's Weekly Nosh email worked out that that equated to:

...100,000 records translated and added to the database per year, or about 275 per day, day in and day out, over the last 25 years.

The *All Lithuanian Database* (ALD) holds more than 600,000 vital records, more than 1 million records from population enumerations such as revision lists, draft lists, family lists, and censuses, as well as cemetery records, directories and much more.

You can search the ALD at *LitvakSIG* or via *JewishGen*. Become a member to access further information and contribute to the development of the database.

## 1931 CANADIAN CENSUS DUE FOR RELEASE IN JUNE



Census records with identifying data are usually kept classified for 100 years. In Canada, this period of quarantine is only 92 years. And so, in June 2023, the 1931 Census will be made public.

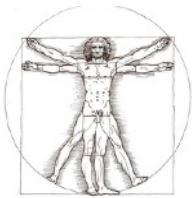
The 1931 Canadian census provides a snapshot of the more than 10 million people living in Canada during the Great Depression. From June 1, researchers will be able to browse the digitised census images by geographic districts and sub-districts on the *Library and Archives Canada* (LAC) website.

LAC have also collaborated with *Ancestry* and *FamilySearch* to make this collection even more accessible. In their press release, LAC states:



...LAC has digitized all 234,687 pages of the census and Ancestry will apply its state-of-the-art handwriting recognition technology to the digital images to create a full index of the entire census. FamilySearch will then review the computer-generated index to ensure a complete and accurate index of all fields at a level never achieved before. The images and indexes will be available and searchable online for free through [Census Search](#), Library and Archives Canada's new one-stop shop for national census records, [and] will also be available on Ancestry.ca and [FamilySearch.org](#).

## ANOTHER HIGH ACHIEVER OUTED AS JEWISH... MAYBE



The Jewish Community tends to punch above its weight in the genius category. Besides obvious contenders such as Albert Einstein, Karl Marks, Sigmund Freud and [Rosalind Franklin](#); almost 20% of all Nobel Laureates have been Jewish, 40% of all Economics Nobel Prizewinners, 27% Fields Medalists (for Mathematics), despite the community

comprising merely 0.2% of the world's population.

Now it seems, we might add one of the most iconic and notable minds of the last 1,000 years to the "of the tribe" list... Leonardo da Vinci.

Marc Weitzmann, from [Tablet](#), reveals the intriguing work of Italian historian, Carlo Vecce, an expert on Da Vinci, who initially set out to debunk the widely held notion that DaVinci's mother was a foreigner.

As Weitzmann explains:

The official version of da Vinci's birth is that it was the fruit of a brief fling between the Florentine solicitor Piero da Vinci and a young peasant from Tuscany called Caterina... Yet there had long been a seemingly unfounded theory that Leonardo had foreign origins and that Caterina was an Arab slave.

Professor Vecce was determined to debunk this theory, telling Weitzmann:

I simply found it impossible to believe that the mother of the greatest Italian genius would be a non-Italian slave, ... Now, not only do I believe it, but the most probable hypothesis, given what I found, is that Caterina was Jewish.

He came to this startling conclusion while researching a novel, *Il sorriso di Caterina, la madre di Leonardo* [*The smile of Caterina, Leonardo's mother*]. During the reconstruction work on Leonardo da Vinci's library, Vecce discovered a document dated Nov 2, 1452, barely 7 months after Leonardo's birth. It was signed by Leonardo's father, Piero da Vinci, in his professional capacity as a solicitor.

...it is an emancipation act regarding "the daughter of a certain Jacob, originating from the Caucasian mountains," and named Caterina. ... The date on the document is underlined several times, as if da Vinci's hand was shaking as he proceeds to the liberation of the woman who just gave him a child.

Caterina's owner was the wife of a rich merchant, Donato di Filippo, for whom Piero da Vinci often acted as solicitor. Piero da Vinci ultimately left Florence for Milan. Caterina died in 1493. Professor Vecce fervently believes that there are hints of Caterina's journey from the Caucasus to Italy hidden in her son's work.

In the background of *Annunciation*, painted c.1472-76, is a mountain which bears some similarity to Mount Elbrus, the highest summit of the Caucasus mountains, and an Oriental port similar to the Venetian colony at Tana (Azov) near Crimea, the port Caterina would have passed through when she was a slave. Vecce thinks Caterina might have fed young Leonardo's imagination with stories of her travels.

Circassian people had a reputation for being untamed, free of mind, and wild. I like to think she taught him the spirit of absolute freedom that can be found in his scientific and intellectual researches. The freedom of a mind that is not bound by prejudices or authority.



The Annunciation (c. 1472–1476) Uffizi, Florence - Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci  
(Public Domain, Google Art Project)



Not all scholars agree with Vecce's conclusions. Oxford University art history professor emeritus, Martin Kemp, who identified Leonardo's mother as Caterina di Meo Lippi, a 15-year-old orphan, in a book he co-wrote in 2017, suggested that the document Vecce based his conclusion on was vague at best. He told AP:

Caterina was a common name given to slaves when they were forced to convert to Christianity, and the husband of the woman who freed the girl in Vecce's document traded two slaves with that name in one year.

Slavery was common in medieval Italy, with Venice and Genoa thriving on the slave trade with Muslim countries. Men and women from Armenia, Circassia, Georgia, Turkey and the Caucasus were traded, with Eunuchs being especially valuable.

In 840 CE the sale of Christian slaves was banned by the Pope and so non-Christians became more valuable. Toll records from Raffelstetten (903–906), near St. Florian on the Danube, record toll charges of a *tremissa* (about 1.5 grams of gold or roughly  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a dinar) for female slaves and a *saiga* (which is much less) for male slaves, who were more numerous.

Today Azerbaijan, in the Caucasus region, is home to Qırmızı Qəsəbə, which translates as "Red Town" or "Red Village" (Russian: Красная Слобода, romanized: Krasnaya Sloboda; Hebrew: העיר האדומה, ha-'Ir ha-'Adumá), an overwhelmingly Jewish locality with a long history. The town was formerly established in 1742, when the Azerbaijani Muslim ruler of the region (Quba Khanate) Huseynali Khan gave permission for Jews to build a community across the river Gudyalchay from the main city, Quba. Sometimes referred to as Mountain Jews, this community traces its history back to Persia, modern day Iran, in the 5th Century CE. DNA testing of Mountain Jew communities have revealed Y-DNA haplotypes consistent with other Jewish communities of the Mediterranean region.



Left: Qırmızı Qəsəbə - The Red Town; Right: Mountain Jews from the Quba District of Azerbaijan in 1883 - Seidlitz Nikolai Karlovich (1831-1907) Wikimedia

# SLEDGEHAMMER

## MY SEARCH FOR LOUIS TAYLOR

STEPHEN BROWN

*Stephen Brown spent years researching his family, but one particular cousin proved particularly elusive. What did happen to Louis Taylor?*

My great-great-grandparents, Fanny and Samuel Taylor, arrived in Sydney from Liverpool in the UK in 1882 with baby Sophia (b.1882). Between 1883 and 1906, they had ten more children - Eva (1884), Minnie/ Mena (my great grandmother - 1886), Mary (1888), Aubrey (1891), Louis (1893), Hyman (1895), Annie (1897), Vera (1901), Esther (1903) and Leah (1906).

About five years ago, I decided to take up the challenge, of researching all eleven of these individuals, to enrich my family tree. Louis proved to be particularly challenging.

I applied for his NSW birth certificate, which confirmed his birthday as 2nd February 1893, but my search for Australian marriage or death certificates was fruitless.

Subscribing to [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) to see if I could add any new information, I discovered some distant cousins also researching the Taylor family. One had photos of most of the siblings, including Louis. There was also an intriguing handwritten note, dated 1983, stating that Louis Taylor "*married Margaret in America - WW1. Had a son called Buddy*"

I hoped this information would help me discover more about Louis' fate.

I visited the Australian War Memorial in Canberra to see if Louis had enlisted in the Australian Armed Forces for World War 1 [Ed Note: WW1 war records are available online at the [Australian War Memorial Website](https://www.awm.gov.au)]. I



Louis Taylor  
Image: Stephen Brown



could find no enlistment, and it was thought unlikely that he enrolled directly in the American Armed forces.

Months later, I discovered the *Ryerson Index*, of death notices published in Australian newspapers. Here, I found a reference to a notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, dated 28th December 1918. Inserted by Louis' parents, Samuel and Fanny, and some of his siblings, it confirmed that Louis died on 22nd October 1918, in New York aged 25.

Armed with this new information, I focused my attention on death records in New York. I did not know if he passed away in New York City, or elsewhere in the State of New York, so I researched

both. Despite months of searching on *Ancestry*, *MyHeritage* and *Find my Past*, I still couldn't find a definite match. Some came close, but were not correct. I also searched New York newspapers for death notices, and made cemetery enquires. I was not even sure if he was buried in a Jewish cemetery.

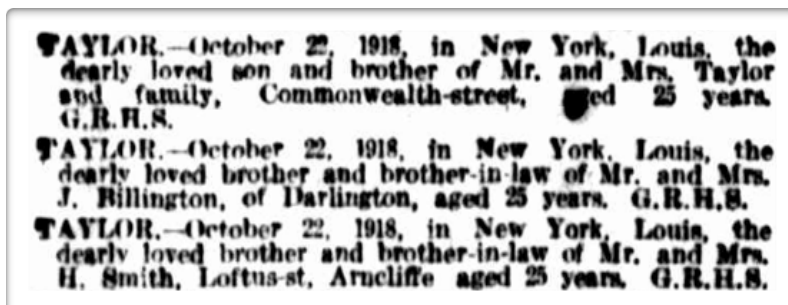
I learned that in New York, the bride and groom were recorded on different registers, and these were not easily matched up. With the common surname Taylor, I couldn't find a clear match for Louis and Margaret.

Finally, in November 2022, I attended the *Beginner Course in Jewish Genealogy*, run by AJGS, to see if others were experiencing similar problems and could provide possible solutions.

I mentioned my “brick wall” finding about marriage and death records in New York. AJGS President, Barbara Simon, was most helpful and sent me a link to the *Historical Vital Records Project*, which is busy digitising New York City Birth, Marriage and Death records.

I also realised that, to resolve other mysteries in my family history, I really needed to take a DNA test. I decided to use Ancestry, because the results are transferrable to other DNA data-bases.

I found matches with some cousins I already knew about, and discovered a few new connections. I contacted some of these people and introduced myself.



Sydney Morning Herald, December 28, 1918 [Trove]

In January 2023, as I was “surfing” my DNA results to see if I could find more cousins, I stumbled across a new family tree entry that read:

Lester Taylor, Born 1883, Sydney Australia, Dies New York-1917  
Married Margaret Mulvaney Born 1898, New York USA, Dies  
Kentucky USA -1986, with a son "Spence"

Could Lester be the Louis I was looking for?

I contacted one of my DNA cousins, Cecelia Maier, and learned that Louis had in fact, changed his name to Lester *before* entering the United States.

From this critical nugget of information, I finally found him in shipping records, travelling from Sydney to Southampton, and then on to New York, arriving there on April 22, 1914.

10-11-1918  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK,  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.  
STATE OF NEW YORK.  
CERTIFICATE AND RECORD OF MARRIAGE  
No. of Certificate 8512  
Groom's Name Lester Taylor (Groom) and Margaret Mulvaney (Bride)  
Groom's Residence 415-10 Ave. Bride's Residence 415-10 Ave.  
Groom's Age 34 Bride's Age 18  
Groom's Color White Bride's Color White  
Groom's Single, Widowed or Divorced Single, Widowed or Divorced  
Groom's Occupation Wood Carver Bride's Occupation Single  
Groom's Birthplace Sydney, Australia Bride's Birthplace N.Y.C.  
Groom's Father's Name Sam Bride's Father's Name James  
Groom's Mother's Name Mary Berdman Bride's Mother's Name Elizabeth Simon  
Number of Groom's Marriage 1 Number of Bride's Marriage 1  
I hereby certify that the above-named groom and bride were joined in Marriage by me, in accordance with the Laws of the State of New York, at the residence of the bride, 422nd St., in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York, this 6th day of February, 1917.  
Witnesses to the Marriage E. P. Mulvaney Margaret Mulvaney  
Signature of person performing the Ceremony J. J. Mulvaney  
Official Station

I then found a marriage record (left) for Lester’s marrying Margaret Mulvaney on 6th February 1917, in the Manhattan Registry office. Lester/Louis became a US citizen that year and was conscripted into the Army. But he was not required to serve, as he was married.

Lester and Margaret’s first child, Spence, was born on 3rd July 1917. Lester passed

away from influenza barely 18 months later, during the 1918 epidemic.

So, there he was... I had followed Louis Taylor from cradle to grave. But there was still one last mystery... Who was the child named “Buddy”, mentioned in the handwritten note?

The genetic connection to Cecilia gave me the clue. Following Margaret's trail, I discovered that, a few years after Lester's death, she married Thomas Maier, who raised Louis' son, Spence, as his own. In 1924, Margaret and Thomas had a son, Thomas Maier Jnr, nicknamed... “Buddy”.



Margaret Mulvaney c.1924  
Image: Stephen Brown

## Acknowledgement and Thanks

I acknowledge and thank Barbara Simon and Dani Haski, from AJGS, together with my cousin, Leonie Holley, and my DNA cousin, Cecelia Maier.



# DIY

## TAG THAT PHOTO - EASY FACIAL RECOGNITION SOFTWARE

*Do you have a large collection of family photos? Would you like to tag who is who in these images? Tag That Photo (TTP) is currently being used by AJHS to help tag individuals in tens of thousands of photos in the collection. Peter Philippssohn explains how TTP works and how it's helping make this enormous task possible.*

In 2021, the *Australian Jewish Historical Society* (AJHS) partnered with the National Libraries of Australia and Israel (NLA/ NLI) to digitise all Jewish newspapers published in Australia since the 1850s. The final collection contains more than 250,000 pages.

As a by-product, we discovered more than 40,000 pre-digital photos in the archives of the *Australian Jewish News* (AJN) - the premier Australian Jewish newspaper.

The photos dated from 1960s through to the early 2000s. They were stored in brown-paper envelopes, each with between two and 50 photos, and ranged from simple headshots to groups photos, sometimes with up to 30 individuals. Some photos had handwritten names and dates on the back. Some had no identifying information. The outside of the envelope usually had the name of the key person was the photo. Many were simply undocumented.

AJHS concluded that the digitisation and identification of these photos would be a key project, meeting our charter of archiving the history of the Jewish community.



Photos (AJHS): Top: Filing cabinets full of original images; 17  
middle: folders of photos; bottom: the back of an image  
with some names and other annotations.

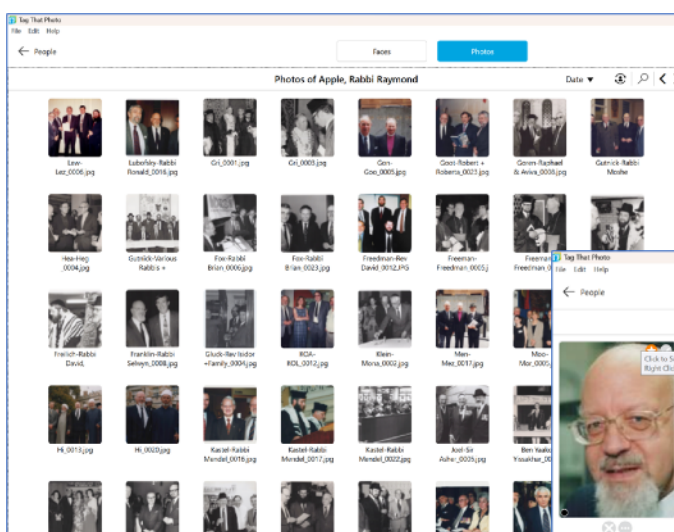
However, without names attached to the digital files, the photos would be of little use. In order to identify everyone in the photos, we realised that we needed a technology which not only utilised facial recognition, but also added the names of subjects to the metadata of the photo, so that we would not need to link to a separate indexing database. Another consideration was to find a solution which could run locally and was not dependent on long-term cloud processing and related storage costs.

We found a major international IT company who were already working on such a project. Their quote was an annual licence fee of around \$US50,000. We talked with universities who were willing to consider development of a solution as part of a Masters or PhD project. But again, we were looking at tens of thousands of dollars. This was all out of our price range and would have taken too long to implement.

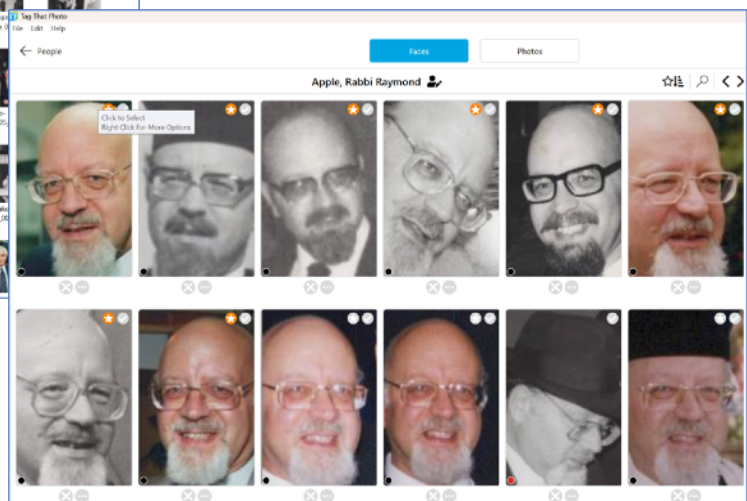
Thankfully Jeff Schneider, AJHS Digital Collections Manager, came across *Tag That Photo* (TTP) – a Windows based software solution that uses advanced facial recognition technology to easily tag digital photos. When we saw the annual licence fee of just \$US39, we thought it too good to be true!

We installed TTP and ran it against 10,000 digitised photos in our AJN database. Straight away TTP flagged thousands of faces which appeared in multiple photos.

The real slog was checking the backs of each physical photo to see if names were recorded. Obviously, the software itself couldn't identify the actual person, it only



You can view people as whole photos or individual faces.



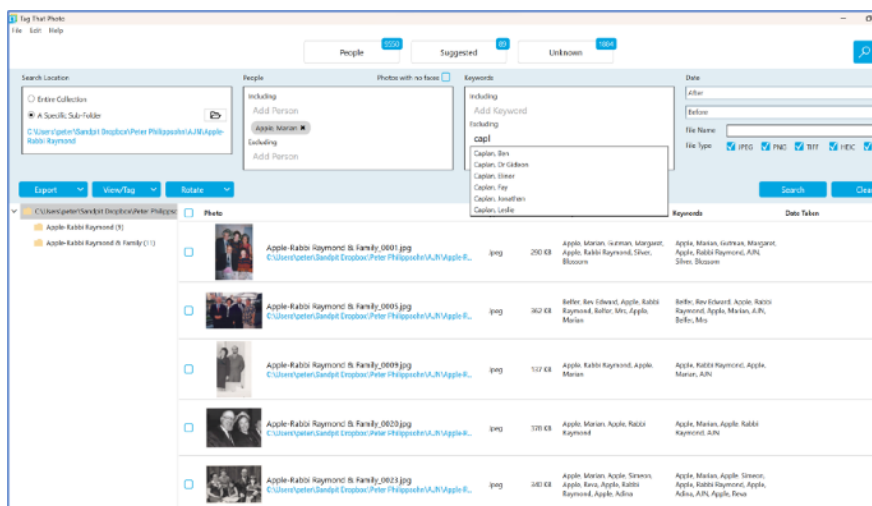
aggregated similar faces it thought were the same individual. Thankfully, AJHS has an excellent brains trust of volunteers who helped to identify individuals as we went along.

Today, after months of work, we have digitised more than 14,000 AJN photos and tagged 26,000 faces of 10,2500 individuals. We are now incorporating other AJHS data-bases, which contain communal photos. The more photos we add, the better we refine the data available to the algorithm.

For the technically minded among you, we used a PC with plenty of RAM and a fast solid-state hard drive for high performance, and a large monitor or dual monitors to optimise available workspace. AJHS photos are shared and backed up on Dropbox, but we copied the master collection to a dedicated machine for image processing and tagging.

The software offers suggestions in a single view. Once faces have been identified, you can search for photos, including or excluding multiple people, nominate keywords and date ranges.

Without Tag That Photo, AJHS would be holding thousands of scanned images with tens of thousands of unnamed faces – of little benefit to researchers. We now have a collection of images with names and other metadata embedded in the file, using industry standards. The collection is preserved and protected to support researchers and will allow future generations to access those memories for years to come.



## SPECIAL OFFER: TRY TAG THAT PHOTO 50% OFF FOR 12 MONTHS.

Want to give Tag That photo a go?

Tag That Photo are offering Kosher Koala readers a 50% discount on their first year's subscription.

Just use the discount code AJHS at checkout.

Offer valid until 30 June 2023.

*Please Note: Tag That Photo is a Microsoft 64-bit Windows OS desktop software application - (Windows 7, 8, 10, and 11 with the latest service packs). MacOS and earlier versions of Windows (32 bit) are not supported.*





# CONFERENCES, CLASSES & COURSES

## EXPLORE JEWISH CONVICT CONNECTIONS

Jewish convicts have been a part of Australia's history since the first fleet, where there were between eight and 15 people of Jewish descent (depending on which sources you consult).

AJHS is holding a convict research workshop to assist those with convict connections, or with an interest in Australia's Jewish convict past, to explore available resources, uncover pertinent records and understand the lives these people might have led.

We will look at the various sources and resources available online and through AJHS, and explore the social and political environment of 18th century England and early Australia. Even if you don't have a convict in your own family tree - we'll give you someone to research. (Please direct all enquiries to [society@ajgs.org.au](mailto:society@ajgs.org.au)).

The workshop is being held to compliment a special Convict Shabbat at The Great Synagogue in Sydney on Saturday June 17, 2023.

Jewish Australians with convict ancestry or an interest in Australia's Jewish convict history are invited to attend. Rabbi Shia Solomon, who has convict ancestry himself, will deliver a special sermon.

The service will be followed by a community lunch, where historian Beth Hise from [Museums of History NSW](http://Museums of History NSW), will be guest speaker. Ms Hise is Project Director in charge of the cultural redevelopment of the 1821 Female Factory Precinct in Parramatta.

More details will be available closer to the event.

### CONVICT RESEARCH WORKSHOP

21st May, 2023 10:00am-12:00pm

Venue: Sydney Jewish Museum

**Enquiries: [society@ajgs.org.au](mailto:society@ajgs.org.au)**

*Please bring your own computer or tablet.  
This is a practical and interactive workshop;  
places are limited.*

PLEASE REGISTER



REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

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2023

# 43rd IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy



JGSGB



## SPECIAL CONFERENCE TALK PREVIEW

### FROM MYSTERY TO HISTORY - THE AUSTIN FAMILY IN AUSTRALIA

Date: Sunday, 25th June 2023

Time: 2.00 pm - 3:30 pm

Venue: Sydney Jewish Museum

**All enquiries to [society@ajgs.org.au](mailto:society@ajgs.org.au)**

Kosher Koala editor Dani Haski will be presenting her research on the Austin family at the 43rd IAJGS Conference in London. The talk will highlight the varied experiences of Jewish migrants to rural Australia in the 19th Century.



### WORKSHOP: POLISH RESEARCH REVISITED



Date: Sunday, 16th July 2023

Time: 10.00 am - 12.00 pm

Venue: Sydney Jewish Museum

**All enquiries to [society@ajgs.org.au](mailto:society@ajgs.org.au)**

Following on from the successful talk given by Michał Majewski, this practical workshop will give members and guests a chance to explore the many websites and resources available to Polish researchers. Bring your laptop or iPad along so you can research your own ancestors and save the fruits of your labour. Details TBA.



## BACK TO BROKEN HILL - 11-13 August 2023

A weekend program has been organised by Leon Mann to dedicate two benches at Broken Hill Synagogue Museum to some notable Jewish citizens and volunteers. The weekend program includes Shabbat services (Friday night and Saturday Morning), a Shabbat dinner, guided walks through town and the historic cemetery, and a visit to the the iconic sculptures in the Living Desert State Park.

Tom Kennedy, Mayor of Broken Hill, will speak at the dedication ceremony, alongside Margaret Price, Coordinator of the Museum, and Leon Mann himself.

For information about travel options, accommodation and the full program please contact Leon Mann directly on 0418 172 596 or via email: [leonm@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:leonm@unimelb.edu.au)

Broken Hill Synagogue (Wikimedia)

