

# VENTURING INTO OUR PAST



## JGSCV

### THE NEWSLETTER OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE CONEJO VALLEY AND VENTURA COUNTY

February 2015

Volume 10 Issue 5

#### PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Hal Bookbinder gave an excellent, educational, thought provoking, and erudite lecture on the *Changing Borders of Eastern Europe* at our January 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. Even though Hal was a last minute replacement due to our scheduled speaker having a major accident, we had one week to get the word out-- and thank you JGSCV members and friends for the great turnout! Hal's handout is posted to the JGSCV website ([www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org)) under Meetings/Prior with the date. Hal also provided several links of interesting videos on changing borders of Poland, history and borders of Lithuania and a history of European border changes from 3800 BC to now. The links are all on the JGSCV website under the meeting date. To read the highlights of the program see page 8.

Thank you to Warren Blatt for facilitating the schmoozing corner before the program.

As announced in the January issue of *Venturing Into Our Past*, the JGSCV Board met following the January 4 meeting to determine officers as required by the bylaws. The officers for 2015 are as follows:

- Jan Meisels Allen, President
- Helene Rosen, Vice President, Membership
- Debra Kay-Blatt, Secretary
- Karen Lewy, Treasurer

Rosalie Bell, newest board member, will chair the Publicity Committee and the remaining board responsibilities remain unchanged. The



Hal  
Bookbinder  
presenting at  
the January  
meeting

#### NEXT MEETING

**Sunday, February 15<sup>th</sup> 1:00-5:00 PM**

#### **ASSISTED RESEARCH DAY AT THE LOS ANGELES FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY**

**Members-only** opportunity for one-to-one help with personal research using unique source materials.

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## JGSCV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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list of board member responsibilities is available on this newsletter's masthead on page 2 and under 'contact us' at [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org).

If you have not yet renewed your membership, please do so now. A membership form is on page 17. At the time of this writing we are at 120 members for 2015—slightly more than last year at this time. We ended 2014 with our highest membership yet: 169. JGSCV dues helps pay for the speakers, additions to the libraries, and other items to keep your society going.

Some JGSCV members-only benefits include: The annual assisted research afternoon at the Los Angeles Family History Library (February 15, 2015) where attendees get hands-on assistance for their personal genealogy by senior JGSCV members and volunteers at the Library; Personal emails from me (37 last year) on special genealogical issues and opportunities; computer workshops. A new members-only feature started in January only for 2015 dues paid members are *significant* discounts for FindMyPast, Legacy Webinars and MyHeritage.

2014 was the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I and 2015 is the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. In early December, I sent out an email to members about any genealogical research you have done on your family who might have either fought in either war or were involved in the wars because of their locations. This includes the holocaust. The stories can be about you too if you served or are a survivor. We have received several submissions—the first submission was from Werner Frank (see last month's newsletter). You can read Sara Applebaum's story on page 11. Have you thought of writing an article about your family's experience? If so please send an email with your story to Allan Linderman, newsletter editor, at [newslettereditor@jgscv.org](mailto:newslettereditor@jgscv.org) and to me at [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org).

A list of books added to our libraries since July is on page 7. With our expanded library at the Agoura Hills Library if you have genealogical books to donate we would love to have them, but first please look at the list of books in both our permanent and traveling libraries so that we don't have duplicates ([www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) and go to "Library").

David Oseas, JGSCV's excellent webmaster, has completed his semi-annual update of the list of resources—over 300-- on our website. If you are looking for websites that might have information relevant to your genealogical research—see what JGSCV has listed. Go to: [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) and go to resources.

One of the ways JGSCV does outreach, is to offer information at relevant functions: Southern California Genealogical Jamboree, Ventura County Fair, Agoura Hills Library and now the largest of the genealogical conferences: RootsTech which will be held in Salt Lake City this February. If you know of a place that should be receiving our monthly meeting notices contact Rosalie Bell at [publicity@jgscv.org](mailto:publicity@jgscv.org)

Our February 15 program, is our annual assisted research afternoon where you get hands on assistance with your personal family history. This meeting is open only to 2015 dues-paid members. If you have not renewed or joined as yet you can do so at the door. See pages 4-6 for information on preparing for the day.

*Jan Meisels Allen*

VENTURING INTO OUR PAST



### **Suggested Do's and Don'ts When Using DNA in Genealogy**

Melvin J. Collier, a long-time genealogist, author and historian, wrote a blog about Genealogy and DNA data use that may interest you if you are compiling a DNA "project." Entitled *20 Do's & Don'ts of DNA*, the blog covers etiquette and the need to still research the results. For example, just because a website gives a name to the kind of connection one new match may have to another doesn't make it correct. Find Mr. Collier's blog at <http://rootsrevealed.blogspot.com/2015/01/20-dos-and-donts-of-dna.html>

### **Belgium Naturalization Lists Now Online**

Rivka Schirman in Paris recently announced the posting of names on the JRI-Poland website from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Belgium, an important hub for many immigrants on their way to other countries. Some of the immigrants remained there. Most of these persons are Polish Jews who had immigrated to Belgium either before WWI or during the interwar period.

The lists contain surname, given name, date and place of birth, actual profession and place of residence in 1948-1949 and in 1955. The documents are sorted by type of naturalization granted and then by alphabetical order of surname. Even if you have no knowledge of an ancestor having moved to Belgium, it is worthwhile looking at these lists if you have ancestors whose trail vanished during these years.

For 1948-9, go to

<http://www.dekamer.be/digidoc/OCR/K3134/K31341746/K31341746.PDF> or <http://tinyurl.com/n6ntlt3>

For 1955 list, go to

<http://www3.dekamer.be/digidocanha/K0053/K00533153/K00533153.PDF>

or

<http://tinyurl.com/lswxnak>

### **Google Announces Improvements to Online Translating Tool**

The company's translation service is becoming a lot smarter — and a lot easier to use. So says the tech journalists at the New York Times who posted a blog and video about the new functions. (link below) In test mode is a simultaneous voice translator, and a function allowing a user to place signs or other text in a phone's viewfinder to receive an instantaneous translation on the phone's screen.

<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/14/google-translate-app-gets-an-upgrade/?smid=nytcore-ipad-share&smprod=nytcore-ipad> or <http://tinyurl.com/qymsu47>

**Ellis Island has a new website:** <http://libertyellisfoundation.org/family-history-center>. You do have to register but it's free!

### **ABOUT JGSCV**

JGSCV meets once a month, usually on a Sunday. Meetings are oriented to the needs of the novice as well as the more experienced genealogist. Members share materials, research methods and ideas as well as research success or failures. **MISSION STATEMENT:** The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County (JGSCV) is a non-profit organization run by enthusiastic volunteers dedicated to the sharing of genealogical information, techniques and research tools with those interested in Jewish genealogy and family history. Members who include beginners and experienced genealogists share with each other. **JGSCV MEMBERSHIP:** 2015 dues are \$25.00 for a single membership and \$30 for a household. To join, please printout the membership form on our website [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) by selecting the membership button. Send it with a check in the appropriate amount payable to "JGSCV" and mail to Helene Rosen at 28912 Fountainwood St. Agoura Hills, CA 91301

# Preparing For the Exclusive Research Afternoon at the Los Angeles Family History Library February 15, 2015 1:00-5:00 PM



JGSCV members are privileged to have an exclusive research afternoon at the Los Angeles Family History Library (LAFHL). This meeting is open only to **2015 current-paid members**. Anyone may join or renew their JGSCV membership by paying their dues at the door—and if you prefer to pay before the meeting a form is on page 17 of this newsletter. The LAFHL is the largest Family History Library outside of Salt Lake City making this an opportunity to visit and receive assistance with your personal genealogy that is not to be missed!

Car-pooling is best, so ask your friends from JGSCV about sharing—JGSCV itself is not putting together any car pools.

#### **Directions:**

The LAFHL is located at: 10741 Santa Monica Blvd in Los Angeles on the grounds of the LDS (Mormon) Temple. From the 405 freeway get off at Santa Monica Blvd. and go east to Manning Ave. Turn north on Manning Ave, make the first left into the LDS Temple compound, proceed right until reaching the Visitor's Center. Park along the fence. The entrance to the library is on the right (east) side of the building. The library is on the lower floor; there are stairs and an elevator from the first floor.

Take a look at The Los Angeles Family History Library website at: <http://www.lafhl.org/index.htm> or [https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Los Angeles Family History Library](https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Los_Angeles_Family_History_Library) for a listing of the resources that are available. In addition to microfilms, microfiche, maps and books, they have 86 computers (PCs not Macs) that have access to many genealogical sites at no charge! These sites include: Ancestry.com (full institution subscription); FindMyPast.com, Fold 3.com, MyHeritage (Library edition), ProQuest Obituaries, WorldVitalRecords.com, and more!

The number of microfilms, microfilm readers, microfiche, microfiche readers and books has been reduced, as many of these records and books are now digitized. However, the foreign vital records microfilms, including the Jewish ones are still available at the facility. JGSLA has a list of the Jewish microfilms on their website that are currently located at the LAFHL: <http://jgsla.org/research/microfilms-at-lafhl>

At 1:30 p.m. there will be a presentation by Barbara Algaze, volunteer at the LAFHL and JGSCV member, on Introduction to the FamilySearch Website and other Resources and free subscription websites at the LA Family History Library. Her presentation will include:

The computers: Ancestry.com (including census, military, and immigration records), Footnote.com, and the LAFHL website.

The microfilms: (what they contain, how to find them, how to order them, how to use them), and an abbreviated overview of the FHL.

In addition to Barbara, there will be several volunteers from the LAFHL to help you with the resources to help you to do your research.

To make the best use of this experience you should prepare in advance and take your research papers with you. Be sure to bring copies of your family group sheets, documents, family time lines, and family trees!

**It would be helpful to organize your research priorities for the day such as** Foreign and state censuses, city directories, vital records (birth, marriage or death records), maps, naturalization records, WWI and WWII draft registration records.

**For traditional methodology,** bring: Paper pads, post-it notes, pens, pencils and a magnifying glass.

**For electronic methodology,** bring: Laptop computer, genealogy program, USB storage drives, writable CD Rom, digital camera—to use if making photos from microfilms. There is wi-fi in the library. In addition, you can connect to the internet by using internet cables. These cables are available for rent from the library with a deposit of \$3.00. They sell 8 GB thumb drives (flash drives) for about \$10.22 each.

If you are planning to use the foreign microfilms, remember the records are in their native language. Unless you are knowledgeable in the language, it is best to have some key-finding words in that language such as male, female, birth, death, marriage, wife, husband, father, and mother. While there are some foreign language dictionaries available at the LAFHL, the more you prepare in advance, the more your limited time will be used to its best advantage. Many records are handwritten, are in chronological rather than alphabetical order, and may not be indexed. Bring a magnifying glass to help you read the handwriting.

An extra feature at the LAFHL is the availability of permanent libraries of genealogy societies including our sister society, JGSLA. The books are available for anyone to use. You may wish to look at the JGSLA website to see which books are available: <http://jgsla.org/research/library-lafhl> . The Polish Genealogical Society of Southern CA, also has their permanent library housed there and we can use their materials at the library. To see which books the Polish Society has, check out this link: <http://www.pgscsca.org/Library2.html> Remember, all books, microfilms, microfiche, maps, etc. may only be used at the FHL it is not a lending library therefore, **nothing is permitted to be removed from the facility.**

There is a small lunchroom with vending machines and a refrigerator for storing lunches and drinks. We don't know what/if food will be available on a Sunday. If you want to bring a snack or lunch you may eat and drink **ONLY** in that designated area. Please do not bring any coffee into the facility.

There are lockers with keys available at no fee for members to keep their valuables. There is a coat rack for coats, jackets, and sweaters. Sometimes they forget to ask maintenance to turn on the heat

on Sundays (when they are usually closed) and it gets very cold down there--especially in the classroom. **You might want to bring a sweater, sweatshirt, or jacket**—just in case!

If you wish to print a document off a computer, microfilm or microfiche reader, or copy machine, you make your copies and pay at the front desk (10 cents per page). **We don't know how much change they will have so it would be appreciated if you bring change and small denomination bills.**

Have a very successful research trip!



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# JGSCV UPDATES

Since we reported in July 2014's newsletter the following books have been added to the JGSCV library. If you have genealogically relevant books that you would like to donate, please contact Jan Meisels Allen at [president@JGSCV.org](mailto:president@JGSCV.org). The books in the traveling library are categorized A, B, C or D. Those without a letter categorization are in our Permanent Library. The majority of our books are now housed at the Agoura Hills Library, a branch of the Los Angeles County Public Library. A full list of all of our permanent and traveling library holdings may be found on the website: [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org).

Family Photo Detective Maureen A. Taylor The Photo Detective Family Tree Books FW Media Cincinnati, OH 2013 **(In Processing)**

How I Found my 15 Grandmothers A Step- By- Step guide Genie Milgrom Charleston, SC USA 2014 (English and Spanish)

Malice, Murder and Manipulation One Man's Quest for the Truth Grant Arthur Cochin The Survivor Mitzvah Project 2013

Pioneer Jews: A New Life in The Far West Harriet and Fred Rochlin iUniverse Bloomington 2014

Roots and Remembrance: Exploration in Jewish Genealogy Bill Gladstone writing as Ze'ev Glicenstein Ontario Genealogical Society, Toronto, CA 2006

Schindler's Legacy True Stories of the List Survivors Elinor J. Brecher Penguin Group NY First Printing October 1994

The Golden Age Shtetl A New History of Jewish Life I East Europe Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern Princeton University Press New Jersey 2014

The Jewish Presence in Early British Records 1650-1850 David Dobson Clearfield Company by Genealogical Publishing Company Baltimore, MD 2014

They Led The Way: The Creators of Jewish America Harry A. Ezratty Omni Art. Inc. Baltimore, MD 1999 **(In Processing)**

JGSCV continues to participate with both Amazon.com as an affiliate and with Ralphs Community Program. Simply enter the Amazon site from JGSCV's home page. Start at <http://www.jgscv.org> and scroll to the bottom to click on the Amazon graphic (like the one here). This takes you to the same page you always start at – except JGSCV will receive a marketing fee at no cost to you. See “notices” on the JGSCV.org website for instructions for Ralphs Community Contribution Program.

**And, if you can't be at the Assisted Research afternoon this month, you can “ASK THE JGSCV EXPERT”. See how on the bottom of this page.**

**Do you have questions about your family history research you would like to have answered by an expert? Send questions to: [newslettereditor@jgscv.org](mailto:newslettereditor@jgscv.org) for an expert's answer. Names will be withheld if preferred.**

# *Highlights from:* Changing Borders of Eastern Europe

*By Jan Meisels Allen*

Hal Bookbinder, founding member of JGSCV and past-president of the IAJGS, gave an erudite, historical overview of the Changing Borders of Eastern Europe. Throughout Hal's presentation he showed maps depicting the border changes. Any of us with European roots recognize that due to conflicts over the years, borders have changed. It is critical for genealogists to know the history of each of our ancestral towns in order to be able to find records. For example, my paternal great grandparents and grandfather immigrated to the United States from Brody. At the time of their emigration, Brody was in the Austrian province of Galicia. After World War I, Brody was in Poland and today the town is in the Ukraine. It is quite possible that all records may not be in the current location of any town, but rather some records may have been retained at the country level.

## **Khazars**

Hal began his talk with the Khazars. The Khazars were a semi-nomadic Turkic people who created what for its duration was the most powerful polity to emerge from the breakup of the western Turkish steppe empire, known as the Khazar Khanate or Khazaria. Khazaria became one of the foremost trading regions of the medieval world, commanding the western marches of the Silk Road and played a key commercial role as a crossroad between China, the Middle East, and Kievan Rus. Beginning in the 8th century, Khazar royalty and notable segments of the aristocracy converted to Judaism—which is minimized by scholars.<sup>1</sup> Hal discussed that they chose Judaism as the most desirable option. If they adopted Christianity they would be ruled by Constantinople and if they chose Damascus then they would be under Islam's rule. Neither of those alternatives was desirable to the Khazars.

## **The Changing Borders of Poland**

The Changing Borders of Poland is important to Hal's family research. Hal's maternal great grandmother, Malka Bookbinder sold candy and geese in Dubno which in 1885 was in Russia near the Austro-Hungarian border—not far from Brody. Brody was the closest train center; therefore, people in the Ukraine including those from Dubno went to Brody to get transit to America. The map shown included the city of L'viv which has also been known as Lvov, Lemberg and Leopold. Therefore, it is important to also research the historical name changes of our ancestral towns. To see how the borders of Poland changed from 990 to today, Hal showed this 2-minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66y49BnxLfQ>

Poland came into being about 1000. The ruling prince was the person who ruled the "main city". In Poland that city was Cracow. Kievan Rus was Kiev. By 1095 the Turkic peoples were pushing back Russia. No Jews were in the area. The Turks pushed the Byzantine Empire and took it over. By the 1200's there were Germanic crusades in the Baltic areas. In the 1300's the King of Hungary became the King of Poland—it was the nearest person Poland could appoint. The King of Hungary had two daughters. One daughter married the grand duke of Lithuania and she also had the title of Queen of Poland. The marriage aligned Lithuania and Poland. At the time, Poland was stronger than Lithuania and protected Lithuania. To the east was Muscovy and by 1493 Muscovy took over Novgorod which became a major concern to Lithuania as Muscovy was taking over many areas to its the east.

The Spanish Inquisition in 1492 resulted in the Sephardim moving to other communities including

Poland and Lithuania—ruled by the same monarch. Poland looked toward the west where 10 percent of the country were landowners and 90 percent serfs who were not educated and tied to the land of nobility—nor were they educated. Poland welcomed the Jews as they wanted artisans, moneylenders and an educated middle class.

### Union of Lublin

The Union of Lublin was signed in 1569 which created the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth dissolving the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. With the meeting of the Lithuanian princes, they transferred the Ukraine, Volynia, Podlaskie to Poland which had few Jews in the area at the time.

*The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569*



The Polish lords took over the estates in the area and brought the Jews.

The Ukrainian Cossack rebellion occurred in 1648 which turned into a Ukrainian war of liberation from Poland. By 1683 there was the emergence of Cossack Hetmanate, decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, territorial expansion of the Russian Czarism. The Baltic States controlled by Germany, look toward the west not the east. By the 1700's Russia moves into the Baltic States.

Catherine the Great (1762) who was pure German moved to Russia and became more "Russian" than the Russians.

In 1721 Poland and Lithuania were still very large states. Poland had a limited democracy in which the King was elected by the nobility. Poland was not as "rough and tumble" as their neighbors Germany and Russia. One of the issues was an army - the Polish Lords could petition and negotiate with the King about serving in the army. This resulted in an army weaker than that of its neighbors.

### Three Partitions of Poland

Poland suffered three partitions. The first partition was in 1772 with Russia to the east, Austria-Hungary to the south and Prussia to the west. Each took parts of Poland resulting in Galicia being annexed to Austria. The Jews had varying degrees of "luck". In Russia, Jews had no rights which bred the revolution. In Austria the Jews had full rights, were more educated and served in the legislature. They were not revolutionaries. In Germany, Jews were allowed to practice their trades and relative rights. They did not serve in the legislature.

The second partition was in 1793 when Russia took all of eastern areas of Belarus and Ukraine. Prussia also took more territory but Austria did not.

The third partition was in 1795 resulting in Poland ceasing to exist as a national entity. Austria took western Galicia, Russia took more of the eastern area and Prussia took Podlachia, the remainder of Masovia, and Warsaw. Jews were absorbed by the three countries.

Napoleon marched across Europe starting in 1805. When Napoleon defeated Prussia in 1807, he took part of their eastern areas, including Posnan and created the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. When he defeated the Austrians in 1809, he took much of Galicia and added it to the Grand Duchy. Napoleon "bought off" Russia by giving them Finland, Bessarabia and more. He avoided fighting with Russia—at least for a while. Napoleon required record keeping as he did in France. To this day we are able to access vital records because of Napoleon. Poland used the French method of telling a "story" in paragraph form. In Russia, the information was provided in columns.

Congress Poland was recreated after Napoleon's defeat. The Russian Czar was now the King of Poland.

### Pale of Settlement

The Union of Lublin in 1569 laid the groundwork for the Pale of Settlement which started in the 1700's and ended in 1917. The Pale was "home" for about 80 percent of our ancestors. The term "pale" is a demarcation line, it means a "stake" the area enclosed by a boundary. It was the region in which Imperial Russia permitted Jews to reside.

Hal gave a lecture to JGSCV in February 2011 on the Pale of Settlement and his handout is on the JGSCV website under meetings and February 2011.

The Pale largely corresponded to the historical borders of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; it included much of present-day Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Ukraine, and parts of western Russia.

Russian Empress Catherine the Great in 1762 said: "Foreigners are henceforth allowed to travel and settle in Russia, 'kroyme Zhydov' (except the Jews)".

In 1888, Konstantin Petrovich Pobiedonostsev, Director General of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox church and confidant of Czar Alexander III said, "The only solution to the Jewish question in Russia is that 1/3 should emigrate, 1/3 become Christian and 1/3 should perish." As it turned out, 2 million emigrated, hundreds died and few converted. Russia still had 6 million Jews. The Pale ended by the end of WWI when Russia pulled out of the war. Germany released Lenin to go back to Russia and Russia pulled out of the war and abandoned the territories of Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine and Bessarabia. Poland was recreated like it was in the Grand Duchy and took over Poznan and Ukraine. In the 1920's Russia took back the Ukraine. Both Germany and Russia remembered this after World War II.

#### Modern Times

As a result of World War II the borders changed again. In 1942 the Nazis went east and mass murdered the Jews in Dubno, Hal's ancestral town—

300 survived out of the thousands. This is the same that happened in many of our ancestral homes.

After World War II, Poland moved west as it was awarded Posnan from the Germans. While not regaining those portions of Eastern Poland occupied by the Soviet Union. In the 1990's the Soviet Union collapsed and the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova became independent states.

Hal's ancestral town of Dubno, went through 12 border changes from the year 1,000 to the present—not unlike many of our ancestral towns. The changing borders shows the necessity to learn the geographic history of each of our ancestral towns to better access any remaining records.

In response to questions Hal commented:

- Religion was central to anti-Semitism.
- In 1881-1884 and 1903-1904 pogroms occurred encouraging our Jewish ancestors to emigrate. Some czars were more vicious than others and some reigned with a "velvet glove"—allowing Jews to go to school and become doctors.
- Many did not go to what was then called Palestine as it was under Turkish rule. Jews have their own schools, own language, were able to earn money and while it was rough living by today's standards it was not as bad as it could have been considering the times.

Pre-World War II there were 16 million Jews in the world of which about 6-7 million were in Eastern Europe. Today, there are about 13-14 million Jews worldwide with about 6 million living in the United States, just over 6 million living in Israel and the rest spread throughout the world.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khazars>

## JGSCV Welcomes New Member

# CAROLE SLIBAR

# First You Zig . . . Then You Zag

By Sara Borczuk Applebaum

I started researching my family genealogy when I retired. Happily, it coincided with a phenomenal growth of genealogy websites that gave easier access to lots of information, much easier than visiting archives and graveyards, digging through musty city records or going cross-eyed viewing old microfiche. When I had most of what I thought I could find, I started writing a family memoir. Some mysteries remained. The direct line of research petered out and I found myself relying on instinct...gut feeling...to guide me.

One of the mysteries that kept taunting me was the story of a great uncle, name unknown. When my mother was working out her will, she told me, by way of explaining a bequest she planned, that she had inherited a part of an uncle's U.S. Military Insurance benefit in 1918, when she was 14 years old. She

*“The weather was dismal with a continual rain and cold river mists saturating everything . . .”*

understood he had been a pilot. I was shocked that I had a relative in the U.S. in 1918. I always thought we were the first to emigrate to America and that was in 1952!

I looked at the names of my mother's known uncles and found several for whom I had no death information and took a leap of faith that it might be one of them. The last name was BENTKOWSKI which I found spelled lots of ways, Bendkowsky, Bendekowski, Bentkowaki, Piontkofsky...and more.

February, 2015

There was a Lejb and a Szlama Dawid but the record provided little beyond name. My best source had been **JRI-POLAND**. Until recently, they had nothing on these two brothers. Their father, my great grandfather was Israel Bentkowski.

2014 is the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of World War 1 and it got me thinking about these great uncles and what happened to them. I went back to the tried and true and now found Lejb Bentkowski listed as killed in 1914. That meant he wasn't the U.S. pilot.

Then I tried **FINDAGRAVE.COM** where I found a David S. Bentkowski who had died in France in 1918. David S. could certainly have once been Szlama Dawid if he came to America. It had two "facts" on the gravestone that mitigated against it. First, he was listed as a private. Pilots are not likely to be

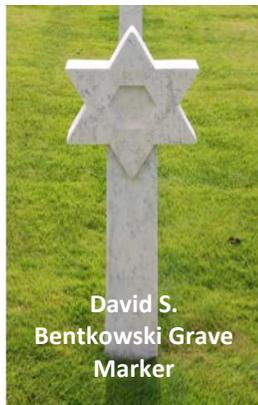
privates. Second, it listed Illinois, presumably the place he came from. He was born in Poland.

Findagrave had only the information on the marker. I tried **ANCESTRY.COM**. It listed the name under **US JEWISH WELFARE BOARD WAR CORRESPONDENCE 1917-1954** but in his case, it only had the name, not the correspondence.

Next I tried **NARA.GOV, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration**, and

it took four e-mails for me to get to the crux of the matter. David was a private in Company D of the 129<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. The vital information I needed was his place of birth. If he was born in Illinois, he wasn't my Dawid.

A patient archivist at NARA looked up his burial record and it said he was born in Lodz, Russia. For a time Poland, as a political entity, didn't exist...which explains the Russia part. Dawid was actually born in Sulejow which is about 40 miles from the big city... Lodz.



The final proof was the listing of his father's name, Israel Bentkowsky...my great grandfather!

I then looked up the 129<sup>th</sup> U.S. Regiment and found a first person narrative of the battle he was part of on the day he died, October 7, 1918 from a gunshot wound and being gassed. It described the horrific trench warfare in which he was engaged near the city of Verdun.

**Soldier's Mail- Letters home from a yankee doughboy 1916-1919- during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive: [October, 1918;](#) [November, 1918.](#)**

*"...heavily bombarded by gas at Saulx before being relieved on October 6-7 when it moved north of Verdun, marching by night. The movement was difficult due to bad conditions of the roads and the sheer number of troops being concentrated in the area for the upcoming offensive. By October 9, the entire*

Russian Jewish Fallen Soldiers															
no specified Region / no specified Province															
Last updated February 2014															
Surname	Given Name	Patronymic	Rank (Russian)	Rank (English)	Religion	Marital Status	Geberah	Uzrad	Town	Status	Date	File	Page	Comments	
BENTKOWSK	Lejb	Israel	efc.	1st Lt. corporal	Jewish	Single	Pienkose	Hepitok	Salkon	Killed	11-Nov-1914	6	1075	1719	

*Regiment had arrived in the vicinity of Fromereville with HQ established at Moulin Brule. On October 10, the 26th Division's HQ was opened in the battered citadel at Verdun with the troops located in camps and billets to the southwest."*

*"The weather was dismal with a continual rain and cold river mists saturating everything including clothing and blankets. Dugouts and trenches were flooded and knee-deep in mud, hillsides were mud piles torn by constant artillery and sniper fire, the roads were impassable, and toxic gas permeated*



*"To the Glories of the Heroes of Verdun"*

*everything. Exhausted and clad in worn, filthy clothing, the men also had insufficient hot food and were forced by necessity to use untreated water from any source including puddles and shell holes which caused many cases of diarrhea. What further added to the misery was an outbreak of dreaded influenza that took its own share of casualties across all ranks."*

David died a month before Armistice Day. Since neither of my great uncles had children, it feels particularly right to remember them at this time.

It took zigs and it took zags but I followed my gut instinct and kept trying to crawl over those stone walls... and I found him. Good luck surmounting your own brick walls.

**SARA BORCZUK APPLEBAUM** Follow me on [saraapplebaum.blogspot.com](http://saraapplebaum.blogspot.com)

Other sources you can try: <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/fire-1973.html>  
<http://www.uscis.gov/historyandgenealogy>  
 Afiles.KansasCity@nara.gov

# **HOLOCAUST BY BULLETS Opens February 7<sup>th</sup> At LAMOTH**

The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust welcomes the traveling exhibition, *HOLOCAUST BY BULLETS*, in its North American debut. For 10 years, Yahad-In Unum meticulously documented information, collected vital testimony, and uncovered 1337 sites where Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. The evidence of their investigations is presented in the new international traveling exhibit, *Holocaust by Bullets*. Father Patrick Desbois, founder of Yahad - In Unum, has devoted his life to researching the Holocaust, fighting anti-Semitism, and furthering relations between

Catholics and Jews. This exhibition explores an important piece of Jewish and Holocaust history from February 7<sup>th</sup> - March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. LAMOTH ([www.lamoth.org](http://www.lamoth.org)) is located at 100 S. Grove Drive, Los Angeles 90036. Call with questions: 323-651-3704.



*Roman Lipa – Murder of Wielopole Jews. June 30, 1942*

## **Jewish Pioneers in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties**

### **The Jewish Museum of the American West**

Our Society, JGSCV, covers the geographic territory in two California areas that are depicted by our name—Conejo Valley and Ventura County—and we have members outside those two areas—all are welcome. (The Conejo Valley straddles both Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.)

How many of us have studied the Pioneer Jews of our geographic area?

Our growing permanent and traveling libraries have books on both Los Angeles and Ventura County Pioneer Jews see our website [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) under libraries to see the lists our full library collections):

#### **Los Angeles County**

*Bicentennial Digest: A Perspective of Pioneer Los Angeles Jewry*

*History of the Jews of Los Angeles*

*Isaias W. Hellman and the Farmers and Merchants Bank*

*Mannie's Crowd: Emanuel Lowenstein, Colorful Character of Old Los Angeles*

*Pioneer Jews of Los Angeles in the 19th Century* (Western States Jewish History, XXXVIII)

Vol II *The Los Angeles Sephardic Experience* (Western States Jewish History)

Vol XXVIII No 4 July 1996 *Los Angeles Sephardic Experience* (Western States Jewish History)

*Wrestling With the Angels: A History of Jewish Los Angeles* (Western States Jewish History)

## Ventura County

*Jewish Residents of San Buenaventura & Vicinity*

We also have the series of *Images of America on: Agoura Hills, Camarillo, the Conejo Valley, Oak Park, Oxnard, Port Hueneme.*

We have a Jewish history in our area which is discussed below. A new, virtual museum,



the Jewish Museum of the American West (<http://www.jmaw.org/>) by the Western States Jewish History Association recently opened. We know them best from their quarterly journal: *Western States Jewish History*. The *Western States Jewish History* has been publishing a quarterly journal since 1968. JGSCV permanent library has most issues of *The Western States Jewish Journal* from Volume XIV (Jan-July 1982) through Volume XLVII (Summer 2014). Gladys Sturman, co-publisher and editor in chief spoke to JGSCV several years ago.

The virtual museum includes an exhibit hall which has a new and continuing exhibit. Eventually, the Museum will have exhibit halls for each of the regions, states and or cities west of the Mississippi River that were considered part of the American West (Canada, Mexico and the United States). Some of those larger settlements had Jewish populations that ranged from 3-7 percent when the entire United States had less than 1% Jewish population. Much of the materials will come from the wealth of articles in the 45 years of publishing the *Western States Jewish History Journal* (WSJH).

The bulk of the photographs during the early stages of the museum are from the Archives of the *Western States Jewish History*. WSJH's late founders Dr. Norton Stern and Rabbi William February, 2015

M. Kramer gathered the photos from the 1960's – 1980's. In the exhibit hall they currently have information on a number of western US states. Information on the remaining western US states and western Canadian Provinces will be added soon. There is an exhibit hall for a number of areas within California and for our general area as well as a special one on Antelope Valley. In the Los Angeles Area they have the Los Angeles early Jewish pioneers background information as well as biographies on a number of early Los Angeles Pioneers starting in the 1840s.

The first Jewish Pioneer in Los Angeles was, Jacob Frankfort, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1841 and was listed in a Mexican census in

## In 1851 the US census listed eight Jews in Los

1844. Other early pioneers from the 1840's whose histories are included on the virtual museum include: Morris Goodman, Herman W. Hellman, Joseph P. Newmark and John Jones. By the 1850's there are many more Jewish Pioneers whose stories are included.

In 1851 the US census listed eight Jews in Los Angeles. Today, Wikipedia numbers 662,450 Jews in Los Angeles from The Association of Religion Data Archives in 2009. (The US Census for 2010 reports by state that there were 1,219,740 people who reported themselves as Jewish or 3.3 percent California. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/12stat/ab/pop.pdf> )

The Museum exhibit area does not currently have a section for Ventura County or Santa Barbara Jewish Pioneers This is because they need volunteers to transfer the information from their journals. See box below.

Ventura County's first Jewish pioneers included French immigrant Achille Levy. Levy helped

establish Hueneme Bank in 1891 and then Bank of A. Levy, which lasted until 1994. Levy loaned money to farmers who were just getting established. Also, Leon Cerf, another French immigrant, who had a store and a saloon in downtown Ventura; and Joseph Wolfson, a cattle and hide trader who managed the Ventura Wharf in 1875. There were early immigrant families--the Zanders, the Cohns, and the Lehmanns. Most Jewish settlers came from Poland, Germany, Russia or France. At one point, an area of what is now El Rio in Oxnard was named New Jerusalem after a store established by Simon Cohn in the early 1870s.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2002/apr/01/local/me-exhibit30>

Anyone can create an exhibit for a Jewish Pioneer, a Jewish Organization or a synagogue of the west. Currently there is no charge to submit and have an exhibit on the site (as long as donations permit

covering the technology costs, submissions and exhibits will remain free). JGSCV meets the criteria of being located west of the Mississippi River. If you are interested in submitting see: <http://www.jmaw.org/submissions>. On that



Note the wooden beam which frames the website pages and the unique custom Southwestern styled mezuzah.

page you will find links for submissions for Jewish Pioneers by the 1890's and Jewish Community Organizations and Fraternal Organizations that are 100 years old. Synagogues have to be at least 50 years old and founded by 1965.

If you are interested in submitting exhibits for other American western areas, to the Jewish Pioneer, the organization or synagogue must be located west of the Mississippi River including Wisconsin, Minnesota, Alaska and Hawaii. For Canada, this includes the provinces of British Columbia, Yukon Territory, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Mexico includes the states of Baja, Sonora, Chihuahua and Coahuila.

If you have information on early Jewish pioneers the virtual museum is the place to share the information. JGSCV would also be interested in learning about early Jewish Pioneers in our geographic area.

The Jewish Museum of the American West is looking for volunteers to transfer their Journal materials about Ventura County and Central California Coast to the new website.

To do this the person must be comfortable using a computer and be able do the following:

- Type into a provided floating template using Word.
- Take the requested information from the article and transfer it to the template on the computer.
- Write facts and/or small sentences about the information obtained from the Journal articles.
- Research/check to fill in some blanks. Find or copy photographs in .jpg or tiffs.

If you are interested contact co-publisher David Epstein at [DavidEpstein@JMAW.org](mailto:DavidEpstein@JMAW.org)

## Future JGSCV Meeting Dates through August 2015

Sunday afternoons starting at 1:30 p.m. Monday evenings starting at 7:00 p.m.

Programs co-sponsored by Temple Adat Elohim.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

February 15, 2015 Sunday 1:00-5:00 PM Annual Assisted Research Afternoon- Los Angeles Family History Library Members Only **NOTE CHANGE OF DATE**

March 1, 2015 Sunday 1:30-3:30 PM Ancient Texts Lead to Genealogical Discoveries: The Lives Our Ancestors Led Janette Silverman, Ph.D. Jewish Theological Seminary archives a rich repository of records of Jewish communities, institutions and prominent individuals in the US and Europe from the 1700's until after WWII. Silverman is Outreach Director for the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

April 12, 2015 Sunday 1:30-3:30 PM "Remembering the Holocaust Through Family History Using the Resources of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum" Megan Lewis, Research Librarian, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Looking at ways genealogists can use the resources at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum such as oral histories to find the details of their ancestor's lives that show the history on the human level. Ms. Lewis will demonstrate how to use the Museum's online resources to do research from home. Annual Yom Hashoah Program (actual Yom Hashoah is April 16)

May 3, 2015 Sunday 1:30-3:30 PM You've Found Some Records Now What? Marion Werle Evaluating the information you have, reconciling discrepancies, what is a reliable source?

June 7, 2015 Sunday 1:30-3:30 PM DNA From A Users Perspective. JGSCV Member Mike Markowitz will talk about DNA testing- autosomal as well as mTDNA and Y-DNA from a Users perspective and what the test results mean.

July 2015 No Meeting- -IAJGS Conference Jerusalem July 6-10, 2015

August 2, 2015 Sunday Genealogy in the Round 1:30-3:30 PM Come and share a genealogical success, failure, brick wall, or genealogical artifact! This is YOUR meeting—We all learn from one another—take this opportunity to share your genealogical story—success or failure, ask questions about your brick walls, and more!

Programs are subject to change -check JGSCV website [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org)



## 2015 Membership/Renewal Form

### Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County (JGSCV)\*

\*Member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS)

[www.JGSCV.org](http://www.JGSCV.org)

**Dues paid now are good through December 2015**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:

This is a New Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Single \$ 25.00 \_\_\_\_\_ + \$1.00\*\* Family\* \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ + \$2.00\*\*

\*family defined as two people living in the same household

\*\* \$1 per person is a voluntary donation to the IAJGS Stern Award, granted annually when it recognizes institutions for outstanding work in the creation and availability of resources for Jewish Genealogy.

**Additional voluntary contributions:**

Library Acquisition Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Programs Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(suggested minimum voluntary contribution for either fund \$5.00)

Make check out to: JGSCV Mail application to: Helene Rosen,  
28912 Fountainwood St.  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zipcode + 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Day telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Talents that you have to share (accounting skills, language skills, computer skills, translation, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_