

VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

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



JGSCV

July 2022

Volume 17 Issue 10

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

We hope this finds you well and safe.

We continue to watch the strength of the Ukrainian people and government as Russia tries to decimate the Ukraine-four months and counting. In our previous issues I have listed several organizations if you wish to donate: Geshet Galica, HIAS, Joint Distributions Committee, Jewish Federations of America, Doctors without Borders, and UNICEF. The links for each of these organizations are on the previous issues which can be accessed on our website and look for the May 2022 issue: <https://tinyurl.com/4ezeib9n>

Many of you know that I speak at genealogy conferences—nationally and internationally --on records access and issues surrounding privacy. I will be providing a pre-recorded presentation as part of the all-virtual IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy taking place August 22-25, 2022. See page 14 for more information on IAJGS's remote conference.

As I write this letter, I am stunned that the United States Supreme Court overturned a 50-year ruling on *Roe vs Wade with its Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* opinion. Regardless of your opinion on abortion, and *Roe vs Wade* was about privacy- not abortion per se, it is the precedent that the Court overturned a previous, long-standing ruling. While the Court has changed its opinion in the past such as with the 1954 decision of *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* which ended segregation by overturning *Plessy v Ferguson-Oyez* (1896 state-mandated segregations laws did not violate the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment). The Court has always **expanded** rights not rescinded them—that is a concern with the June 24th decision. It may have other long arching affects per the concurring brief by Justice Thomas saying, "*substantive due process is an oxymoron that lacks any basis in the Constitution.*" Will this affect other constitutional rights previously opined by the Court on contraception, same sex marriage, inter-racial marriage, etc?

Privacy is someone's right to keep their personal matters and relationships secret. How does that affect the "right to know" and the first Amendment of Freedom of Speech? Does privacy still exist? What about a Freedom of Information (FOIA) request? Does the government have the obligation to release all information or can they "filter" requests and provide partial or no information, at least for a legally enacted embargo period? What about medical information, nudity, sexual information, financial information? I am not talking about public figures, as they lose their privacy by being a public figure, but about the "average" person— you and me.

(Cont'd next page)

NEXT MEETING

Sunday, July 10th
1:30-3:30 PM



Members Only ZOOM

More info page 12

No Meeting in August

IAJGS conference: August 21-25
Page 14

2022 JGSCV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Mission Statement:

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.

This is not a new concept. Benjamin Franklin said, “...be a wise man, must needs be sensible that every person has a little secrets and privacies that are not proper to be expos’d even to the nearest Friend.”

As genealogists, we are concerned about privacy and obtaining information –some of which may be considered private-for our genealogical research. IAJGS, has of Conduct: “If data is acquired that seems to contain the potential for harming the interests of other people, great caution should be applied to the treatment of any such data and wide consultation may be appropriate as to how such data is used. Information concerning living persons should be treated with appropriate discretion ([IAJGS Code](#)).

Additional news impacting privacy:

- **Californians Can Pursue Action Over yearbook Photos Republished Without Permission /** <https://tinyurl.com/25t2x66k>
- **Senators Asking for US to Follow EU on Mandating USB-C Charging Standard /** <https://tinyurl.com/bdd3nfxk>
common charger for all phones and electronic devices and a reduction in e-waste
- **(US) Health and Location Data Protection Act Introduced /** <https://tinyurl.com/3n7r6njz>
seeks to ban data brokers from selling or transferring location and health data – with exceptions for compliance with HIPAA and speech protected by the First Amendment

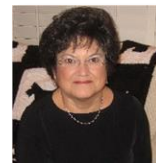
Our July 10th meeting is YOUR meeting: Genealogy in the Round. I presume that during the pandemic when we were/are at home, the “extra” found time was devoted to our genealogy research. As of writing this letter we have only three volunteers: Joanne Cadis, Andrea Massion and Debby Wenkart. I would like to have at least 7 people share— three is a good start, but not enough for a program. I always worry about this meeting, and it always turns out to be one of **the** successes of the year. Make your presentation “live” or by PowerPoint. Please let Jan (president@jgscv.org) know if you will participate and what you are going to share. See page 13 for further meeting information.

Hal Bookbinder continues with his interesting series on Safe Computing on page 10. This month’s article is number 80! -- *Take care what you share.*

I previously mentioned that JGSCV has programs via Zoom scheduled through July 2022. We are not meeting in August as the IAJGS conference is during that month. Therefore, the board is looking at September or October to start meeting in person, dependent upon JGSCV Board’s determination on the pandemic/endemic status, and room availability at Temple Adat Elohim. I am in touch with members of the Temple’s board of directors regarding in-person meetings in the Fall. Their board is reviewing our proposal—and I have not yet heard back about their permitting outside groups meet there.

Remember to let me know if you will share a success, brick wall or artifact for the July 10th meeting.

Jan Meisels Allen



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Summertime

Regards from Scotland



Our genealogy colleague and esteemed British actor Miriam Margolyes appears with fellow Scotsman, Alan Cumming in “Alan and Miriam: Lost in Scotland” (2021) a travel series airing now on **PBS**. In Glasgow, she finds her grandfather’s apartment and later, helps reveal DNA test results to a waiting Alan. Greetings, Miriam from your Jewish genealogy fans in the United States. We miss you at conferences.

Not Just Photo Finds

As we get further past the 20th century, it's not just photographs family genealogists will long to find. Super 8 films, 8M films, videos and DVDs will provide “moving” moments with relatives and locations to research. Identifying folks at a picnic or family celebration on film will be challenging but may provide the impetus to find out who they might be. Attaching this media to our trees is already possible. Robert Meeks, senior director of video at the *Los Angeles Times*, and an adjunct professor at USC received such a find. He was given video of his father performing on “Shindig,” an TV episode from the 1960's that never aired. He writes about seeing this moving content and what it meant to him: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-06-19/fathers-day-rock-music-little-richard>

The Importance of Source Citations

As genealogy becomes more digitalized, it's unnecessary to keep a file cabinet of copies of passenger lists (my first find!) city directory pages, census lists, maps and to-do notes on leads from a conference 15 years ago. It's the same in our computer files. As internet sources provide more resources so easily accessed, do we need copies of everything? This would be a great debate topic for genealogy nerds! Besides links, adding correct citations to your data allows for next generation easy accessibility and veracity to your research. Many genealogy applications provide for citations.

<https://familylocket.com/genealogy-source-citations-simplified/>

<https://familytreemagazine.com/research/5-elements-source-citation/>

<https://ancestralfindings.com/citing-sources/>

Family Time Ideas for Summer Visits

A wonderful compilation of genealogy-related activities and links for kids and teens can be found by clicking on [Family Lockets](#).

Ukraine, We support You.

Highlights from: “Lives Remembered: Photographs of a Small Town in Poland 1895-1939”

By Jan Meisels Allen

Many of us have been “taught” that our Eastern European ancestors dressed in a non-western mode of dress and did not adhere to “modern” ways of life. Perhaps we assumed that our ancestors adhered to the older, Chassidic ways that were neither western nor modern.

This presentation defies that “myth” with the adage “a photograph is worth a thousand words” - and then some.

Books such as *Polyn, Jewish Life in the Old Country* by Alter Kacyzn or *A Vanished World* by Roman Vishniac depict a world that was not necessarily that of our ancestors. Our speaker, Mike Marvins, is a fourth-generation professional photographer whose great-grandfather and grandfather were photographers in Eastern Poland, in the town of Szczuczyn.

History

Mike Marvins’ great-grandfather, Meyer Gordon, circa the 1880s, was a professional photographer in Dokshytsy, Russia (now Belarus) whose best customer was a large unit of the Czar’s Army. The unit was transferred to what is now present-day Zambrow, Poland, to quell the frequent Polish revolts against Russian rule. Gordon moved with the troops taking his young nephew, Zalman Kaplan, with him as his assistant. At the time Zambrow had very few Jews, but as the base evolved, thousands moved to the area to provide support and services. Kaplan prospered and grew his business to chronicle the everyday lives of the town and its vibrant Jewish community. A few years later, another military unit was moved to Szczuczyn about 50 miles away and young Zalman Kaplan opened a studio there, married, and had three children, one of whom was Mike Marvins’ father Moishe Kaplan. Zalman had a very prosperous business that ended when the Nazis invaded Poland in 1938. Szczuczyn was only a few miles from the border between Prussian-Russian and was immediately overrun.

Marvins’ photographs offer a unique glimpse of how our ancestors lived. I have known Mike for several decades...I first saw his photographic exhibit at an IAJGS conference in Salt Lake City in 2000 and again at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in NYC in the early 2000s. One of the towns his great-grandfather and grandfather took photos of was my maternal shtetl of Stawiski not far from Szczuczyn—his ancestral town. When Tom and I visited Stawiski in 2001, we took photos of what had been the synagogue (today it is a fire station on one side and a

movie theater on the other), and we walked the streets that his and my ancestors once walked. Mike’s mother was born in Stawiski.



Stawiski Synagogue by Kalman Kaplan (Mike Marvins’ grandfather pre-World War II. Built in 1820s.

On the eve of Operation Barbarossa, the Jewish population of Szczuczyn numbered approximately 2,500. On 22 June 1941, the Germans arrived at Szczuczyn, raised the swastika flag, and moved on. With no German troops present, the Poles ruled the town.

<http://www.szczuczyn.com/maplomzagub.htm>



This started Mike Marvin's journey into Jewish genealogy. He had not known his great grandfather—who he found out later was really his great uncle, was a photographer really going back to the start of photography. He said his father said the town was pronounced "Dogshitz" and there is a "Dogshitz" Society that meets in the United States." It's really Dokshytsy.

A twenty-year journey began in the early 1990s when a friend of Marvin's walked into his photographic studio in Houston, Texas, to have some family pictures restored. They were in good condition, circa 1890s, with an artistic Cyrillic (Russian) logo on the back. Mike's father, Kaye, was visiting and having been raised in Russian Poland, translated. He looked at both of us and said, "My Grandfather made these pictures." That started a long trip into family history that ultimately became a history of Jewish Szczuczyn and a true picture of what life was like in thousands of towns before the Holocaust. A truth that was only partly envisioned in the countless scholarly texts written on the subject. Much more of the truth might be revealed in photographs.

As a result of this, Marvin hired Jewish genealogist Miriam Weiner (author of *Jewish Roots in Poland* and *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova*). She found the records from Dokshytsy and found his family and traced it back to the 1700s. The names skipped every other generation, so it was easy to follow down to his grandfather and the records included his grandfather's marriage record.

Mike's father immigrated to the United States in 1929 and Mike asked him if he had brought any photographs his father took. (His father's brother immigrated in 1923.) His father said yes, he had brought photographs with him.



Grandfather's studio

His cousin, whose father also worked in the Polish photography studio also had 30-40 photographs from there.

When they looked at the photographs, they commented that they did not look like anything they had ever seen before. They had been used to seeing the photographs of Roman Vishniac and others that showed Jews in abject poverty and dressed in rags, living in dirt-floor houses, written up as if Jews were sheep being led to the slaughter. But all of the photographs that Marvin had seen from his ancestors with his cousin, were dressed and looked like everyone else in Poland at the time—even going back to the 1800s. Mike asked his father about this who said only the Chassidim dressed like that—there were no Chassidim in Szczuczyn. Mike's mother from Stavisk (Stawiski) said the same thing. Stawiski is about 7 miles from Szczuczyn.

He read an article in the Houston newspaper that said the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City wanted to tell the story of Jewish life before the Holocaust. Marvin contacted them and shared some of the photographs with them. They were so impressed they said they would have an exhibit and publish a book as this is exactly what they wanted.

Marvin and his wife Mickie went online and researched the towns on JewishGen and emailed people from them that night. Within minutes they started to get emails in return, saying they knew exactly who his grandfather was, and they had photographs made by him! Marvin returned their correspondence and said he would copy the photographs and overnight them back to them. Many sent the original photographs, others sent in scans, which Marvin instructed them how to make appropriately. Marvin now has over 800 photographs from 13 different countries that his grandfather made. These photographs depict a full life from 1800s until the Holocaust.

Since then, the exhibit traveled and the book and other books on Szczuczyn were published. There were no ghettos there. The Jews and gentiles lived next to each other for over 200 years. These same townspeople turned on the Jews knowing the Nazis were coming and murdered the Jews themselves.

His great-grandfather's studio and home in Szczuczyn looked like below until the Nazis entered the town in July 1941. The house was made in the early 1930s. The home is still there.



Grandfather's home/studio

Photography was the way his parents went. In Poland, high school finished at age 16, and one had to get a job. Mike's father went to work for his father as a photographer. One of his jobs was to go to the smaller towns without a studio and take photographs. He traveled by bicycle. Mike's father met his mother while taking her school pictures in Stawiski. Both families immigrated to the United States in 1929 and his parents married in the United States.

The town was about 5,000 people, about 2,000 Catholics, and the rest Jews. While the Jews worked in town, the Catholics were predominately farmers and lived outside of town. Jews were prohibited from owning farmland but owned homes. Additionally, Jews were given licenses to sell certain products at in-town businesses; hired by noblemen to run their estates since Jews were educated enough to read, write, and keep the books; and did import/export work freely and supported by a succession of Polish kings.

These were ordinary people leading ordinary lives—no different than their neighbors except for their religion.

His grandfather would put the town "news" such as who was visiting, etc. on the outside photo board since there was no local newspaper. It was a meeting place for both Jews and Gentiles.

Stawiski had social clubs so that Jewish soldiers could get Kosher food and meet local Jewish girls.

There were Jewish schools- mostly Jewish learning not secular. The town then had separate schools-between Jews and Christians. The teachers were mixed between the schools. In Stawiski, as the town was smaller—about 1/3 the size of Szczuczyn, all the children went to school together.

People left Poland not only due to antisemitism but because there was nothing for them to do in a small town. They scattered across the world— Australia to Palestine to North America. Some young men inherited their father's business and stayed only to be murdered in the Holocaust.

All photographs were taken by Mike Marvins' grandfather. The colorized photos below were colorized by Mike Marvins.



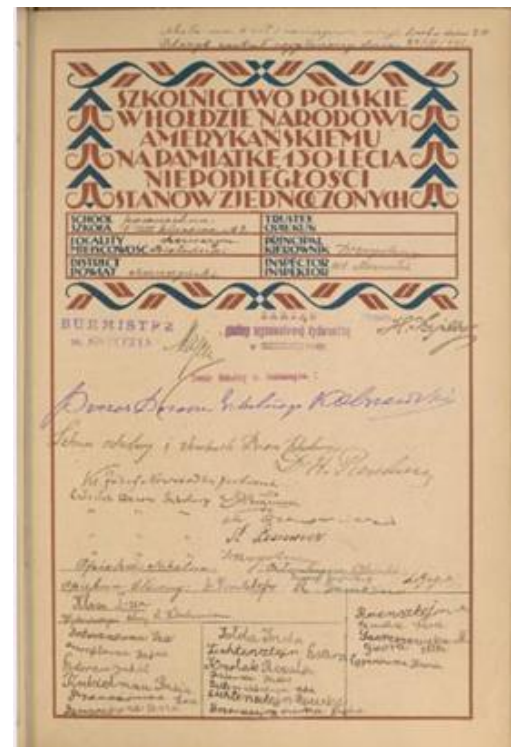
Bet Midrash (study hall) on the left and Church on the right.



After public school the boys would go to Jewish school. Notice the haircuts and clothes.



Jewish girls in gymnastics and dance clubs



Polish Jewish Students' signed names. As there was no census in Poland, this was a way to determine who was there at time.



Book Fair 1930s. Almost all in the photograph were murdered in Holocaust a year or so later after photograph was taken.



Another example of modern life -- swimming in current bathing suit attire.



One of the bicycle clubs





World War I. Many German Jews served in the German Army. German Jewish soldiers returning from the front and came into the towns. They gave Jews equal rights served on the City Council, could hold government jobs etc. They let the Jews do things the Poles would not let Jews do.



Woman Driving Car

We thanked Mike for a fascinating and stimulating presentation.

There is a Yizkor Book for Szczuczyn on JewishGen. The books were written by the survivors. If the survivors knew your family, you have a good chance of your family being mentioned. Good places to look for Yizkor Books are:

JewishGen: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/>

NY Public Library Dorot Collection: <https://libguides.nypl.org/yizkorbooks>

Yiddish Book Center <https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/yizkor-books>

American Jewish University Los Angeles <https://www.aju.edu/>

UCLA Research Library <https://www.library.ucla.edu/>

Wiesenthal Library <https://www.wiesenthal.com/about/library-and-archives/>

Mike Marvins is a fourth-generation professional photographer. His great-grandfather, Meyer Gordon, was a photographer in Dokshitsy, Russia (now Belarus) in the 1880s. His best customer was a large unit of the Czar's Army which was transferred to present day Zambrow, Poland to quell the frequent Polish revolts against Russian rule. Gordon moved with the troops, taking his young nephew, Zalman Kaplan as his assistant. Zambrow had very few Jews at the time but as the building of the huge base evolved, thousands moved to the area to provide support and services. He prospered and extended his business to chronicle the everyday lives of the town and its vibrant Jewish community. Later, another military unit was moved to the town of Szczuczyn about fifty miles away and a young Zalman Kaplan opened his own studio there. He married and had three children one of whom was Marvins' father, Moishe Kaplan and a very prosperous business through a parade of regimes. It ended with the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1938. Szczuczyn was only a few miles from the German border and was immediately over run.

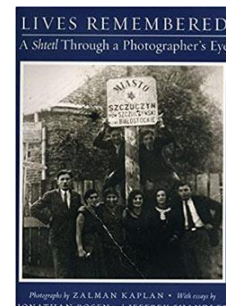
Book: *Lives Remembered: A Shtetl Through a Photographers Eye*

Photographs by Zalman Kaplan

With essays by Jonathan Rosen and Jeffrey Shandler

Museum of Jewish Heritage New York 2002

Amazon: Hardback: \$40.00 Paperback \$20



Practicing Safe Computing Article #80: “Take care what you share”

By Hal Bookbinder



The Los Angeles Times of Sunday, June 19, 2022, page 20, carried the story of a woman who received a call, purportedly from her son, sobbing, “Mom, mamma, please come get me. Mom, please. Please Momma.” Another person took over the call and said her son had witnessed an illegal transaction and interfered, spoiling it. The man claimed to have lost \$15,000 due to her son’s interference and that she needed to reimburse him or never see her son again.

Her son lived on the streets, and she had no good way of reaching him. She was told that if she got the police involved, her son would be gone forever. Nonetheless, she did call in the police and after four harrowing days they

were able to locate her son. The “kidnapping” was a hoax.

The woman in the *LA Times* article may well have shared on social media her worry about her homeless son and that she had difficulty reaching him. While a criminal might be directly aware of her son’s situation, he also might have picked this up through social media chatter.

How many times have you seen Facebook posts about an exciting upcoming trip to Turkey, Mexico, or Zimbabwe? How many posts have you seen about upcoming travel to Chicago to attend a family wedding or bar mitzvah? How many posts have you seen that provide personal information about the person, their family members, or friends?

While you may think that your social media postings are only seen by trusted friends, this is not always the case. Presume that whatever you post on social media will be seen more broadly than you intend. A friend may innocently pass on your plans; a scamster may have somehow become one of your 247 “friends”; a cybercriminal may be following your every social media post.

Here the scam might unfold: A friend posts that he will be vacationing in Turkey and subsequently you get a call that he has been jailed for drug possession and needs \$2,000 immediately. Or you post that you will be traveling to Chicago for a wedding and later your house is burglarized by thieves who know you will be away. Another scenario: scamsters convince you that they are IRS agents by referring to personal information that you shared on social media.

While we might think that we would quickly recognize such scams, in the heat of the moment, and with experienced scamsters who well know how to play on our emotions, we may not. The woman in the *Los Angeles Times* story had the presence of mind not fall for the scam. Hopefully, we all will. While you would never post on your front door that you are away in Chicago for the weekend, are you as careful in your Facebook posts?

We should all be sensitive that unintended folks may, and likely are, paying attention to what we “privately” publish on social media.

For more on the risks of posting personal information on social media see, <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/dangers-sharing-personal-information-social-media>.

This is the eightieth in a series of articles by JGSCV founding member Hal Bookbinder. Hal is also a Past President of JGSLA and IAJGS. He is the 2010 recipient of the IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award, and his online skills are well documented. All the Safe Computing articles by Hal Bookbinder are available on the JGSCV website <https://www.jgscv.org/noteworthy.html>.

JGSCV Updates

In memoriam

Raya Sagi passed away last Monday, June 13. She was one of the founders of JGSCV, including serving on the organizational committee which formed the society in 2005. She was born and raised in Israel where she developed her love of libraries. May her memory be a blessing.

Sagi was also the Community Library Manager (CLM) at the Agoura Hills Library for many years before retiring after 28 years with LA County Library System in 2009.



One of the ways JGSCV obtains revenues in addition to membership dues is voluntary participation by members and friends in Ralphs Community Programs and through the Amazon Smile program.

Whether you are a friend or member we appreciate your support and hope you will sign up for when you shop-even occasionally-at Ralphs or Food For Less, or Amazon Smile.

For more information and signing-up go to JGSCV's website under Noteworthy <https://jgscv.org/noteworthy.html>.

JGSCV Family Histories

This is your space to share your family stories.

Joan Adler, our June 2020 speaker, suggested our members write up memories and genealogical discoveries to publish in our newsletter.

This month we did not receive any submissions.

We would love to continue the series. If you have something to share please send to Diane at newslettereditor@JGSCV.org and Jan at president@jgscv.org

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

will hold our July meeting on **Zoom**.

This meeting is open only to JGSCV members (see below for membership app link).

Zoom link will be emailed to members before the meeting.

Sunday, July 10, 2022, from 1:30-3:30 p.m.

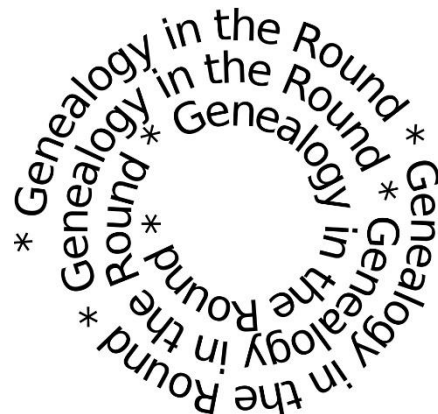
Ask the Experts/Schmoozing Corner begins at 1:10 PM



July Meeting

presents

***“Genealogy
in the
Round”***



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!

We can assist you with your power point for Zoom if necessary. It’s very easy with your computer. Don’t be shy!

If you wish to participate in the program, please contact Jan Meisels Allen at president@JGSCV.org. Each participant will be up to 10 minutes to share—depending on the number of presenters.

We'd love to hear your genealogical story.

There is no charge to attend the meeting. Anyone may join JGSCV. Annual dues are \$30 for an individual and \$35 for a family. Anyone may join JGSCV

<https://www.jgscv.org/pdf/membership%20application.pdf>



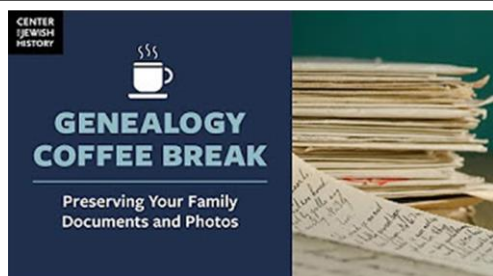
2022 JGSCV Meeting Dates

ALL MEETINGS WILL BE RESERVED FOR MEMBERS ONLY VIA ZOOM UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

NEXT MEETING: SUNDAY, JULY 10 1:30-3:30PM via Zoom		
DATE	PRESENTER	PROGRAM
July 10	<i>*JGSCV members</i>	Genealogy in the Round
August	No Meeting <i>IAJGS conference: August 21-25</i>	
Sept 11	TBA	
Oct 9	TBA	
Nov 6	TBA	
Dec 11	TBA	Annual Meeting, Elections, Chanukah Party

** Please see page 12 for to present at July's Genealogy-in-the-Round*

Genealogy Odds and Ends



The Center for Jewish History is changing the format of their "Genealogy Coffee Break" series. They will no longer air episodes live.

View past episodes anytime on their [Facebook Page](#) or [YouTube Channel](#). (closed-captions available)

Accounts are not required to view content. To receive updates on future episodes, please "Like" or "Follow" their Facebook page or subscribe to their YouTube channel.



42nd International Conference on Jewish Genealogy Societies (IAJGS) will be remote August 22-25 2022.

<https://s4.goeshow.com/iajgs/annual/2022/index.cfm>



Yerusha and Judaica Index now online

Two important websites that recently launched are dedicated to European Jewish archives and Jewish ritual objects:

[Yerusha.eu](#) is an online catalogue providing extensive information on European Jewish archival heritage.

[JudaicaIndex.org](#) is a comprehensive inventory of 200 Jewish ritual objects found in synagogues or Jewish homes around the world.



FamilyTree Magazine published its annual list of 101 Best Websites for 2022.

To see the list go to:

<https://familytreemagazine.com/best-genealogy-websites>

Pope Orders Online Release of WWII-era Pius XII Jewish Files

Pope Francis has ordered the online publication of 170 volumes of its Jewish files from the recently opened Pope Pius XII archives, the Vatican announced 23 June, 2022, amid renewed debate about the legacy of its World War II-era pope.

The documentation contains 2,700 files of requests for Vatican help from Jewish groups and families, many of them baptized Catholics, so not actually practicing Jews anymore. The files were held in the Secretariat of State's archives and contain requests for papal intervention to avoid Nazi deportation, to obtain liberation from concentration camps or help finding family members.

The Vatican's foreign minister Paul Gallagher said it was hoped that the digital release of the "Jews" files would help scholars with research, but also descendants of those who had requested Vatican help, to "find traces of their loved ones from any part of the world."

To read more see: <https://tinyurl.com/bd9fkhax>

