

# Venturing Into Our Past

JGSCV

The newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of  
the Conejo Valley & Ventura County



August 2024

Volume 19 Issue 11

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## NEXT MEETING

**NO MEETING**  
**in August**  
due to IAJGS Conference



<https://www.iajgs.org/conference/>

**Monthly meetings resume**  
**September 8<sup>th</sup>**  
See page 13

**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 include beginners and experienced genealogists who share with each other.

**WWW.JGSCV.ORG**

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[president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org)

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**Barbara Finsten, Member at Large**  
[Barbaraf@jgscv.org](mailto:Barbaraf@jgscv.org)

**Diane Goldin,  
Member at Large  
& Newsletter Editor**  
[newslettereditor@jgscv.org](mailto:newslettereditor@jgscv.org)

**Andrea Massion, Member at Large**  
[Andrea@jgscv.org](mailto:Andrea@jgscv.org)

**Helene Rosen, Zoom Coordinator**  
[helene@jgscv.org](mailto:helene@jgscv.org)

---

**Nancy Goldberg, temp FSL**  
[Nancy@jgscv.org](mailto:Nancy@jgscv.org)

**Pat Fuller, Publicity**  
[publicity@jgscv.org](mailto:publicity@jgscv.org)

**David Oseas, Webmaster**  
[webmaster@jgscv.org](mailto:webmaster@jgscv.org)

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**PRESIDENT'S LETTER**

Dear Genealogy Enthusiasts,

I hope that you are enjoying our Southern California summer weather and can relax in an air-conditioned environment.

I was recently on a tour, given by a librarian, of the Grant J. Brimhall Thousand Oaks Library and specifically the genealogy section. There are many genealogy books and documents there, but their emphasis is on American genealogical information. There is a small section on Jewish genealogy that we may be able to enhance with the donation of books. However, there are many resources that would be most helpful to JGSCV members. The library has access to several online genealogical databases including the library edition of Ancestry.com. This website can only be accessed in the library and is limited as it does not let you save your personal trees. However, you can bring your own laptop, iPad or other internet enabled device to the library and search using that device. Of course, you can also take advantage of the many library computers. This is a great resource for members who don't subscribe to Ancestry.

Jeanette Berard, the librarian who conducted the tour, is also a great source of information and a potential speaker to our group at a future meeting. She is a knowledgeable on genealogical topics as well as local and world history. We discussed the historical changing borders in Europe as well as California's changing county borders. I learned that the area we call Thousand Oaks was not initially located in Ventura County, but in Santa Barbara County. Ventura County was created in 1873 and was then officially split from Santa Barbara County.

We plan to have live meetings in the community room at the library, and there are additional spaces that we can access. The genealogy section has a large area with tables and chairs where we can hold future consultations with members as well as "ask the expert" sessions. The library encourages conversation in this area. Library patrons who want to work in silence have specially designated locations.

Safe travel wishes to members traveling to Philadelphia for the 44<sup>th</sup> IAJGS Conference on Jewish Genealogy. You can access the program schedule at <https://www.iajgs.org/conference/schedule/> for speaker and topic information. I encourage you to view the topics and let me know if there are any speakers you'd like to recommend for future JGSCV meetings. You can send your suggestions to me at: [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org). This conference has speakers from Southern California as well as all over the world. We anticipate that conference attendees will be available to give their recommendations too.

I look forward to hearing feedback from members and I hope that you can stay cool during these hot days of summer. Am Yisrael Chai.

**Issie Perel  
JGSCV President**

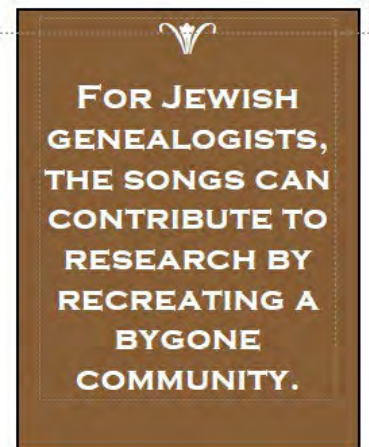
# PLACE NAMES IN YIDDISH SONGS

By Andrea Massion

My friend and colleague, Jewish music performer and teacher Cindy Paley, has been amassing her collection of Yiddish songs and teaching Yiddish music for many years. When I asked her about place names in Yiddish songs, she showed me the wonderful online resource: **The Yosl and Chana Mlotnek Yiddish Song Collection at the Workers Circle** ([www.yiddishsongs.org](http://www.yiddishsongs.org))

In 1970, Yosl and Chana Mlotnek began a column in the Yiddish Forward newspaper. Their son describes its origins here:

*....they began “Pearls of Yiddish Poetry” (Perl fun der Yidisher Poezye), a newspaper column on the historic origins of Yiddish poetry and song that would go on to become a trailblazing precursor to social media, and put back together pieces of history shattered by horrific acts of hate. The column emerged as a result of a letter from a reader, Paul Berman to The Forward’s editor, Simon Weber. Berman inquired about lines of a song he recalled from his younger years in Lodz, Poland--lines which he was unable to locate.*



The attraction to Yiddish songs and their survival has many antecedents. Music is a wonderful way to teach this rich language hailing from the 10th century when Jews from France and Italy began to migrate to the German Rhine Valley. Even while young Ashkenazi Zionists of the 19th century were learning to speak the modern Hebrew of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, they did not stop using Yiddish. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Holocaust resulted in Yiddish songs that recognized the loss of shtetl life, as well as the accomplishments of partizeners and underground groups heroically fought against the Nazis.

Today, Yiddish is maintained by numerous modern organizations, among them *Yiddishkayt* ([www.yiddishkayt.org](http://www.yiddishkayt.org)) and the *Yiddish Book Center* (<https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org>) Yiddish is not about a world disappeared, but rather a means to "inspire current and future generations with the artists, writers, musicians, performers, filmmakers, philosophers, and social justice activists whose yiddishkayt--their very Jewishness, made and makes a great impact for good."<sup>1</sup>

The following is a sample of Yiddish songs that use site names in their lyrics. For Jewish genealogists, the songs can contribute to research by recreating a bygone community. May it inspire us to remember, and honor, their struggles and triumphs.

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## **A Kind A Goldene** אַ קינד אַ גאָלדענע **A Golden Child.** Warsaw

This humorous song tells of a three-year-old Jewish child in Warsaw who already speaks four languages. The mother uses Russian, the nanny speaks Polish, and grandma, Yiddish, of course. Finally, the father is a Zionist and so the child greets him with “Shalom.”

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<sup>1</sup> Yiddishkayt.org mission statement

### **Belz** בעלז

One of the most popular Yiddish theatre songs in the United States, it expressed a longing for hometowns in Eastern Europe.

*Belz, my little town. Belz, my little home  
Where I had so many beautiful dreams.*

Text by Jacob Jacobs (1892-1972) and music by Alexander Olshanetsky (1892-1946) for Olshanetsky's play *The Song of the Ghetto*.

### **Di Lena** די לענא **The Lena River in Siberia**

The Lena lyrics are part of a poem about an exiled political prisoner in Siberia. With words by Abraham Liessin (1872-1938), the music is based on a folk melody. The poem originally entitled "Oyfn vaytn tsofn" (In the Far North) was printed in Minsk in 1896.

### **Fun Kosev Biz Kitev** פֿון קאסעווי ביז קיטעוו **Kosev and Kitev**

The song refers to the towns where the founder of the Hassidic movement, Reb Israel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) lived. Collected by singer Masha Benya Matz from Mordecai Kosover and transmitted to Sidor Belaraky, it has a repetitive stanza that makes it child-like.

### **Song of the Kishenev Pogrom** ליד פֿונעם קישענעווער פֿאָגראָם

*Brothers, sisters, take pity!  
Great and terrible is the need  
Give, so the dead may have shrouds,  
Give bread for the living!*

The pogrom in Kishenev in 1903 evoked a few laments. Other variants of the same song refer to pogroms in Bialystok and Volodarka.

### **Kotzk** קאָטצק **Kotzk, Poland**

A Jewish community was established in the Polish town of Kosk/Kotzk in the 17th century. In the 19th century, it became an important center of Hasidism, the longtime home of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, the Kotzker rebbe who established the Kotzk dynasty. This is a folksong celebrating a pilgrimage to the Kotzk Rabbi.

*One needs to get in the habit of going to Kotzk,  
singing and dancing,  
and when the Hassidim go to Kotzk,  
they go with a dance.*

### **Dzhankoye** דז'אנקויה **Also mentions Sevastopol and Simferopol**

Written in the 1920s in the Crimea, the piece was published by Moisha Beregovski and Itsik Fefer in 1938. It's a beloved and famous song among Yiddish artists and hails back to the Jewish agricultural movement that survived in the new Soviet Union. James R. Russell, a blogger for *The Times of Israel* wrote about Dzhankoye at the onset of Ukraine's war with Russia: "That collective farm in the Crimea? The Nazis destroyed it. Very few Crimean Jews survived the Holocaust. And today,

Dzhankoye is a war zone with explosions and people dying.”

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/dzhankoyes-in-the-news/>

There are many lovely and lively versions of “Hey, Dzhankoye” online. Of all these, Pete Seeger sings it best: earnestly, simply and with his banjo.

Pete Seeger <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoW4L4X7j3U>

*If you travel to Sevastopol, not far from Simferopol,  
there's a railroad station there.  
Who needs to look for new good fortune?  
It's a very special station,  
in Dzhankoye, Dzhan, Dzhan, Dzhan. Hey, Dzhan, hey Dzhankoye,*

**And of course, [New York](#). Travails of New York**

Words and music by H. Altman, arranged by the prolific and amazing J. Rumshisky. This is certainly a sad view New York past.



*New York is cooking like a saucepan, there's endless noise and disturbance. You see a lot of people going around like vagrants, it makes you want to cry. Misfortunes taking place on every street and hell is coming to the land of the free.*

THE YOSL AND CHANA MLOTEK  
**YIDDISH SONG COLLECTION**  
AT THE WORKERS CIRCLE

<https://yiddishsongs.org>

**Milwaukee's Sellers, first Black woman cantor, to receive a grave marker**  
Gladys Mae Sellers, a pioneering Milwaukee singer, gained fame in New York's Yiddish theater in the 1920s and '30s. She later became the first African American female cantor,  
<https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/goldye-steiner-grave-marker>

**In West Philadelphia, a New Yiddish Club Rises**  
<https://www.jewishexponent.com/in-west-philadelphia-a-new-yiddish-club-rises/>

# Practicing Safe Computing Article #105: “Accidental and criminal cyber disruption”

By Hal Bookbinder



Two events during July foreshadowed the cyber-World to come. One was the Worldwide computer disruption that impacted air travel, hospitals, government agencies, and more. This was reportedly due to a faulty update to CrowdStrike’s “Falcon” cybersecurity software. The irony is that the purpose of this software is to protect CrowdStrike’s customers from disruption.

CrowdStrike’s Falcon software is used by thousands of organizations to guard against cyberattacks. As cyberattacks are constantly morphing and new ones appear hourly, CrowdStrike is constantly sending updates which are immediately installed by these organizations on upwards of 500,000 individual computers across the World. So, when something goes wrong, it can be hugely impactful. What made this one so disruptive was that it was not quick or easy to uninstall.

Although the faulty update was remedied within 90 minutes, each machine that had the upgrade had to be fixed manually, including stripping the faulty update and performing several machine reboots. Today’s upgrade and fix processes tend to be highly automated with few staff maintaining hundreds, if not thousands, of machines apiece. Airlines, and especially Delta, seemed to be the most impacted, though a number of hospitals had to cease all but critical care for several days.

Common software is used across industry and government for managing and moving data, for cybersecurity, for operational monitoring, for communications and much more. The challenges of a fast-changing and dangerous world require that updates be installed immediately, without individual testing by each receiving organization. Since time is of the essence and staff is expensive, companies have tended to shift to trusting suppliers and reducing internal testing staff.

We will undoubtedly experience more widespread disruptions due to such shared software and the need to rapidly deploy updates. Some of this will be due to human error, as was apparently the case with CrowdStrike. However, I expect that cyberterrorists working for enemy states have already implanted time bombs in shared software that they will be able to wake up when they wish to create maximum worldwide disruption, akin to “sleeper cells” of years past.

The other event, which did not get nearly as much publicity, was a ransomware attack on the Los Angeles County Court System, the largest such system in the nation. Scores of courthouses had to close for several days after which they quickly returned to full operation. Such a rapid recovery likely indicates that the cybercriminals were paid to unlock the Court System’s data. However, as is often the case, the County has refused to comment as to whether a ransom was paid.

Ransomware is highly profitable for cybercriminals. Establishing and maintaining a security infrastructure to protect from ransomware attacks is expensive and technically challenging. Sadly, it may be cheaper to simply pay off the criminals. Typically, this is done with as little publicity as possible. Ransomware cybercrime is hugely profitable, and many organizations are easy prey. Significant ransomware comes from criminal operations in Russia, beyond the reach of U.S. law.

*This is the one-hundred and fifth article in a series 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*

# July Meeting Review: “Members Share Their Stories”

By Diane Goldin

## Andrea Massion



Andrea is passionate about genealogy and has a particular interest in gravestones. Specifically, she is on a mission to inspire creative and thoughtful markers that provide pertinent dates and names, but also reflect the essence of the deceased.

She showed many examples of gravestone wording in her presentation, from basic stones that only list a name and birth/death dates, to very wordy stones that detail life events without conveying who the person was.

Andrea prefers a gravestone with character – one that allows the living to glimpse the person. Here are a few examples:



Andrea and her brother worked on the wording of their parents' stone, above. She is very proud of how it captures her parents.

### Andrea’s Proposal for *Matzeva* (grave marker):

- Let it tell us something about the person
- Share character, a person’s conduct, habits or attitudes
- Search for the adjectives that capture your loved one
- Mention talents or gifts (add musical notes or instruments, paintbrush, etc...)
- Incorporate challenges with sensitivity. Example: “*She overcame life’s challenges with love and creativity*”

Lastly, Andrea recommended Philip Trauring’s website, [Blood and Frogs: Jewish Genealogy & More](#). The site has a whole section on Jewish gravestones and a compendium with more than 30,000 Jewish genealogy resources. Also check out [Blood and Frogs on Facebook](#) with 3.5K followers.



## Debby Wenkart

Debby's presentation was entitled "Our Family Life in 1930's Vienna and Escape to Palestine." Much of what Debby shared she discovered unexpectedly through family and friends who knew of her interest genealogy.



To that point, a relative discovered an interview with Debby's great aunt Freida that appeared in a report. It was titled "Expulsion and Annihilation: Jewish fates against the background of the Shoah and forced emigration." Freida goes into significant detail about their family's reasons for escaping Vienna as danger grew.

The descriptions in the interview gave Debby a remarkable view into her ancestors struggles and made her wonder how her great aunt came to be interviewed and who had conducted it. These questions led her down the proverbial "rabbit hole" which eventually led to a website, <https://www.doew.at/english/>, which maintains extensive documentation of the Austrian resistance, including the names of more than 64,000 Austrian victims of the Holocaust. Debby discovered in the trove of documents on the DOEW website that Freida was among almost 5600 exiles from Vienna interviewed by a legal firm trying to obtain their pensions from Austria. Debby talked about ongoing efforts to negotiate compensation and restitution for victims of Nazi persecution and their heirs.



*Große Sperlgasse 38, Vienna  
The site of Debby's  
family's Vienna grocery store*

Debby's family story continued with great aunt Frieda, her brother, Meshulam, her great grandfather, Moses, and his second wife, Amalia. They'd fled to Vienna after the Soviets took control of their hometown. Then they were forced to abandon their grocery store in Vienna and flee for their lives to Palestine.

Aunt Frieda's interview filled in many details: they were active in the February riots of 1934 and a Zionist organization. Her brother, Meshulam had to flee from the police in April 1934. After Meshulam fled to Palestine, the family was under police surveillance and faced a series of house searches. The police found banned books and magazines and Freida's membership card in a workers gymnastics club and the

Friends of Nature. After the German Wehrmacht invaded Vienna in March 1938, Freida's mother, Amalia, was imprisoned. After Amalia was released, Amalia and Debby's great grandfather, Moses, managed to escape to Palestine. There, Debby's great grandparents lived into their 80s in Haifa; Frieda married another Vienna exile and lived to 99, and Meshulam married his Vienna sweetheart and settled on Kibbutz Afiquim and lived to 87.

### Debby's presentation links:

***The National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism***

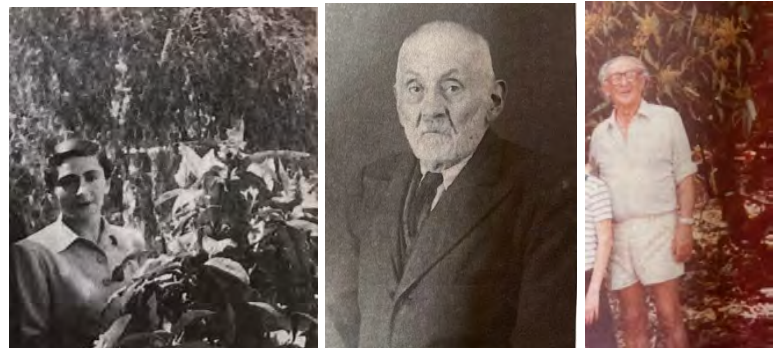
<https://www.nationalfonds.org/home>

***The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany***

<https://www.claimscon.org/>

***Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW)***

<https://www.doew.at/English>



*Left: Debby's Great aunt Frieda; Center: Great Grandfather, Moses;  
Right: Great uncle Meshulam*

VENTURING INTO OUR PAST



**Pat Fuller**

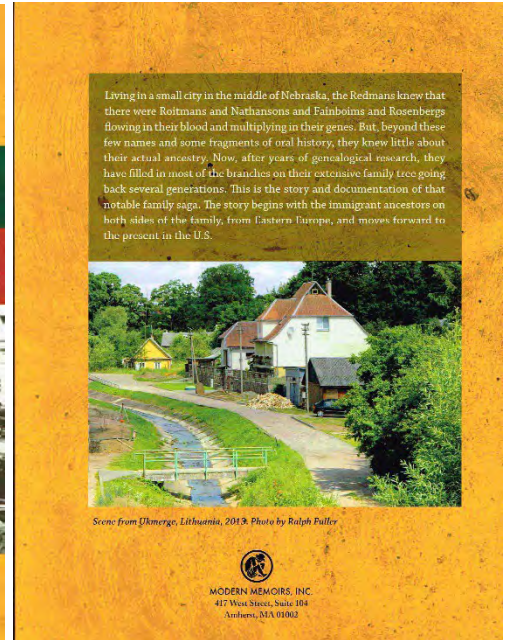
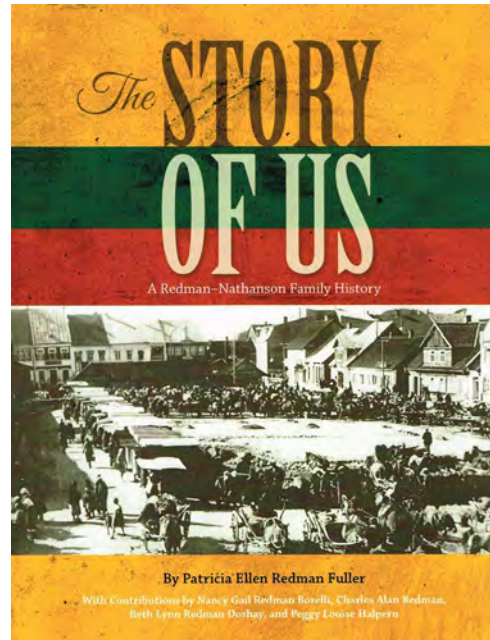
Pat has been working for years on writing her family history. Last year, she finally went all out and had it published! Her presentation shared the online version of “Story of Us: A Redman-Nathanson Family History.”

Her project’s final product is a stunning 106-page paperback book, 8.5”x11,” with 72 historical and family photos. The front and back covers have pictures of Lithuania where her ancestors were from, as well as the colors of its flag.

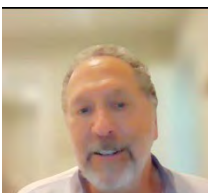
Pat organized her family’s story chronologically by immigrant ancestors, detailing where they were from, how they got to the US, where they settled and what

they did once they arrived. There are photos of their homes and their families as they expanded with new members. There are even photos of beloved family pets, as well as a poem that Pat’s father sang whenever they went on family trips.

Pat used a company called Modern Memoirs (<https://www.modernmemoirs.com/>) based out of Amherst, MA. She sent the book’s narrative via email and all the photos via flash drive, and they put it together. She warns it was not an inexpensive process -- but one that is well worth the outcome!



**Steve Goldin**



Steve was contacted by a woman on Ancestry who said she was a close match to his uncle Herb, married to Steve’s mother’s sister, Sondra. Steve knew that Herb was an only child and told the woman that it was very unlikely she had right person. But the woman was insistent, so Steve mentioned it to his uncle during their weekly phone call. Herb said the woman was incorrect and likely crazy, and to please never talk to her again.

Steve’s presentation, “Family Secrets and Genealogy,” details his eventual discovery that uncle Herb -- despite having always claimed he was an only child – had a much more complicated family history. The mystery woman supplied Steve with definitive documentation proving Herb was anything but an only child, and the true story of Herb’s family was revealed. Eventually Steve was able to confirm that Herb had a half-sibling, and the woman was Herb’s half-niece.

Until DNA testing became widely available, a secret like this one would have been taken to the grave. Uncle Herb was not pleased by its reveal and demanded that no one speak of it until after his death. Interestingly, once he passed away, his adult daughter developed a friendship with her newly discovered cousin, and the two of them now speak by phone every single day.

Steve's advice: Proceed with caution with DNA evidence. Some family members would prefer not to open old wounds.



*Steve with his aunt and uncle, Sondra & Herb (2017)*

## David Oseas



### “Kronowith Research Update”

David first presented his research on Rabbi William Kronowith at JGSCV's Genealogy in the Round on July 14, 2019. Since then, he has continued to research the rabbi and find the connection between him and his family.

In 2008, David first noticed that Rabbi Kronowith had officiated six of his ancestors' marriage ceremonies. Each of the couples lived some distance from the respective synagogues, leading David to suspect a family connection – in addition to David's second great-grandmother's maiden name also being Kronovich.

Soon David was tracking the rabbi and the various synagogues he'd worked in, noting that each served the Hungarian immigrant community. Unfortunately, Family Search doesn't capture the names of witnesses or the officiants name making it impossible to search directly. David hopes with AI, indexing this info will be readily available.

After exhausting direct searches, he employed the FAN club method – Friends, Associates, and Neighbors. David devised two methods to locate additional marriage records officiated by Rabbi Kronowith. See slides below:

FOCUSED SEARCH TECHNIQUE #1 FOR KRONOWITH MARRIAGES	FOCUSED SEARCH TECHNIQUE #2 FOR KRONOWITH MARRIAGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Known surnames + birth location of Hungary/Austria               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ father's surname</li> <li>▪ mother's maiden name</li> <li>▪ surnames of witnesses</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Perform quick family tree to obtain name &amp; ages of children               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For each child, find marriage record on FamilySearch</li> <li>▪ Look at marriage certificate on NYC Historic Vital Records website</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ For each census, find neighbors of Rev. Kronowith with a birth location of Hungary/Austria</li> <li>■ For each household of interest, record name &amp; ages of children               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For each child, find marriage record on FamilySearch</li> <li>▪ Look at marriage certificate on NYC Vital Records website</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

David used Technique #1 and found that, thanks to crowdsourcing and AI, the accuracy of suggestions leapt from 10% to 90% in the last two years. Technique #2 is what David refers to as his “needle in a haystack.”

The results for his efforts are as follows: Technique #1 requires moderate time and returns good

results

- ~20% effective using mother's maiden name
- ~10% effective using father's surname

Technique #2 requires considerable time

- <10% of lookups have returned positive results

Together, these techniques have grown David's six marriage records to 57 marriage records in two months of searching! He has been able to build a memorial page for Rabbi Kronowith that links each of these marriage certificates and information on the couple to the rabbi.

Lastly, David was recently rewarded by finding a photo of Rabbi Kronowith in a Yiddish language journal. The rabbi had taken out an ad in the classified section for his services.



Links:

**David's Genealogy in the Round presentation, Aug 2019 (page 6-8)**

[https://jgscv.org/pdf/newsletters/Venturing\\_V14\\_N11.pdf](https://jgscv.org/pdf/newsletters/Venturing_V14_N11.pdf)

**NYC Historic Vital Records:** <https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/search>

**More references available** on David's slide deck which will be posted under prior meetings, July 2024: <https://jgscv.org/meetings-prior.html>



**Issie Perel**

Issie heard from a childhood friend. They'd grown up together in Quebec and his friend was an only child. The friend explained to Issie that he'd received a call from someone claiming to be a close relative – in fact, the stranger claimed to be his biological brother! The stranger said his DNA matched with his friend's daughter and he was identified as her probable uncle.

Issie and the friend were mystified. Was there a lab mistake? Was the stranger trying to scam the friend? Had the daughter been fathered by a different man?



The stranger had a story. In 1961, Quebec was 85% Catholic and the church had great influence. Premarital sex was a sin, abortion was illegal, and unmarried child-rearing greatly discouraged. Women who were pregnant and didn't want to be (either because they were desperately poor or unwed, for example), often went underground to have babies outside of their communities. Babies could be placed for adoption -- but only within the religion of their birth mother. Hence, it was thought better to place a Christian baby in an orphanage over

adoption in a Jewish home.

At the same time, the Jewish community in the United States had many couples desperate to adopt, particularly a newborn. Many were willing to take a non-Jewish baby but were stymied by religious placement laws. This situation fueled an international baby ring that operated in Montreal from the 1930s-1950s.

Thousands of French Canadian babies were supplied to Jewish couples in the US and Canada.

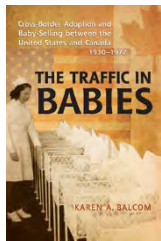
The baby ring was sophisticated, and hosted by a network of brokers, doctors, lawyers, and clergy who then placed the babies up for adoption. They falsified documents and created sham birth certificates using Jewish names for birth mothers. The ring was broken up in 1954, and by then was making \$3,000,000 a year selling newborns. Even middlemen took a cut transferring and delivering the babies to their adoptive parents.

The stranger weaved an interesting story and revealed that he was a black-market baby for whom his parents paid \$10,000. He urged Issie's friend to take a DNA test to confirm his suspicions that the friend was also a black-market baby.

It took longer than usual to get results since the testing was done during Covid. But the results were conclusive: the two men are FULL biological siblings – each given up for adoption on the black market.

It is estimated that 1,000 children were sold on the Montreal Baby Black Market. Most still consider themselves Jewish, and many feel grateful for having been given loving homes versus the life they might've experienced unwanted and abused. See links for Duplessis Orphans for examples of the alternatives.

#### Links:



**The Traffic in Babies: Cross-Border Adoption and Baby-Selling between the United States and Canada, 1930-1972** by Karen Balcom

<https://www.amazon.com/Traffic-Babies-Cross-Border-Baby-Selling-1930-1972/dp/0802099181>

**Black Market Baby: An Adopted Woman's Journey** by Renée Clarke

<https://www.amazon.com/Black-Market-Baby-Adopted-Journey/dp/1493787004>



**Montreal's Black Market Babies**

<https://maisonneuve.org/post/2017/07/20/postscript-adam-elliott-segal-montreals-black-mark/>

**Duplessis Orphans**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/duplessis-orphans-meet-irish-mother-baby-homes-1.4142930>

**Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County\* (JGSCV)**  
(\*and surrounding areas)  
**will hold a \*hybrid meeting**

**Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-4:00PM**

**\*Live meeting will be at the  
Thousand Oaks Library (aka Grant R. Brimhall Library)  
1401 East Janss Road  
in the Community Meeting Room.**

**\*Zoom link will be sent out by Friday, 9/6 for online option**



*Hal Bookbinder*

**SEPTEMBER PROGRAM**  
***“Murder in Boston's West End”***

**The Program**

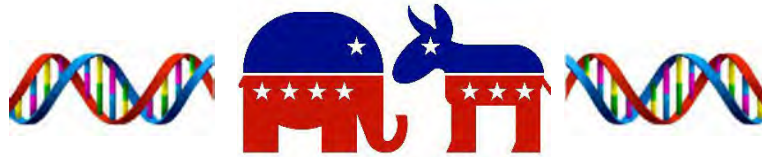
In researching my family, I was surprised to find a relative in the Massachusetts State Penitentiary in 1910. Archival newspapers revealed an unknown marriage, a child, infidelity, murder, attempted suicide, and divorce. Upon his guilty plea, Louis Tennis was sentenced to 11 to 20 years. Yet, after just five, at the behest of the warden and the warden’s wife, the governor pardoned him. He proceeded to lead a nondescript life as a dressmaker, husband and father and his notorious past disappeared into the mist. My research included locating and obtaining 115-year-old court documents containing a revealing plea for leniency penned by the prison’s Jewish chaplain. The story has some intriguing twists and odd coincidences both before and after the murder in Boston’s West End.

**The Speaker**

Hal is a retired information systems professional who continues to instruct at the university level. He has been actively researching his genealogy for more than three decades, identifying over 4,000 relatives and tracing two lines to the mid-1700s in modern Ukraine. He is a past president of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Los Angeles (JGSLA) and of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS). Hal publishes a series of monthly articles on safe computing which are freely available at <http://www.tinyurl.com/SafeComputingArticles>. He and his wife, Marci, were raised in the Catskills of New York State, in the famed “Borsht Belt”. After attending New York University and a four-year stint in the US Air Force, they have lived in the Los Angeles area. In 2018, he made a journey to Ukraine, visiting various areas of the former Volhynia and Podolia in which his family lived for hundreds of years.

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

**<https://www.jgscv.org/membership.html>**



## A Brief Genealogical History of Vice President Kamala Harris

*By Hal Bookbinder*

My previous article, “A brief genealogical history of the leading Presidential candidates,” focused on President Joseph Biden and Past President Donald Trump. As Kamala Harris is now the presumptive Democratic nominee for President, this article provides what I was able to find on her genealogical ancestry.

Kamala Harris’ father, Donald Jasper Harris OM, identifies as fro-Jamaican. He is an economist and professor emeritus at Stanford University. In 2021, he was honored with the Order of Merit (OM), Jamaica’s highest national honor award.

Donald Jasper’s paternal great-great grandfather, Hamilton Brown, who was Scots from Ulster, Northern Ireland, settled in Jamaica and became the wealthy owner of several plantations. By 1833, he owned 1,120 slaves who worked on his sugar plantations. In 1833, Britain outlawed slavery in its colonies and in 1837 Brown was compensated £24,144 (equivalent to \$3.69 million in 2024 for the loss of his human property). He then recruited hundreds of Irish people to work in Jamaica. He gave his name to Brown’s Town, originally known as Hamilton Town, in St Ann, which he founded, and in 1805 he paid for the construction of the original St Mark’s Anglican Church in Brown’s Town.

Kamala Harris’ mother, Shyamala Gopalan, was a biomedical scientist at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, whose work in isolating and characterizing the progesterone receptor gene has stimulated advances in breast biology and oncology. As a young girl, she won a national gold medal for her singing of classical Indian music. She received her baccalaureate degree at the age of 19 and her PhD in nutrition and endocrinology at 25. Shyamala’s father, P. V. Gopalan served as a diplomat for the Indian government, including several postings in foreign countries. Kamala Harris’ maternal ancestors were from Tamil Nadu, a state in the far south of India.

Donald Jasper Harris and Shyamala Gopalan met as graduate students at UC Berkeley in 1962 and were married in 1963. They had two children, Kamala and her sister Maya. Kamala Harris’ parents divorced when she was seven. Kamala Harris is 50% Afro-Jamaican, and 50% Indian. As shown in the following chart, at least two of her ancestors were Scots or Irish.

*Sources used for this article include various family trees on FamilySearch.org; Wikipedia articles on Donald Harris and Shyamala Gopalan Harris, the parents of Kamala Harris; a Wikipedia article on Hamilton Brown (1776-1843), an ancestor from Ulster, Ireland, who settled in Jamaica; newspaper articles on Shyamala Gopalan Harris; and her obituary. Some information is based on oral tradition and so its accuracy cannot be assured. Last month’s article on the ancestry of the leading presidential candidates mentioned the genealogical connection between Donald Trump and John Kerry. I have since researched it further and constructed the relationship chart below.*

**Ancestry of Kamala Devi Harris (CA, 1964)**

Paternal		Maternal
┌ James Henry Harris	2GGF	
(Jamaica, 1828-1905)		
┌ Joseph Alexander Harris	GGF	┌ Venkataraman Iyer Gopalan
(Jamaica, 1871-1939)		(Tamil Nadu, India, 1885-1955)
┌ Eliza Brown	2GGM	
(Jamaica?, 1838-1907)		
┌ Oscar Joseph Harris	GF	┌ Painganadu Venkataraman (P. V.) Gopalan
(Jamaica, 1914-1976)		(Tamil Nadu, India, 1911-1998)
┌ Hamilton Brown	3GGF	
(Ulster Scots, 1776-1843)		
┌ Hamilton Brown	2GGF	┌ Krishna Iyer
(Jamaica, 1833-1918)		(Tamil Nadu, India)
┌ Kate Williams	3GGM	
(Jamaica?)		
┌ Christiana Brown	GGM	┌ Seethalakshmi Iyer
(Jamaica, 1885-1951)		(Tamil Nadu, India)
┌ Mary Melvina	2GGM	┌ Ahilandeswari Krishnaiyer
(Jamaica, 1839-1892)		(Tamil Nadu, India)
Donald Jasper Harris	F/M	Shyamala Gopalan
(Saint Ann, Jamaica, 1938)		(Tamil Nadu, India, 1938-2009)
┌ Patrick Finegon	2GGF	
(Ireland 1843-1898)		
┌ Patrick Alhanasous Finnegan	GGF	┌ Maruthukud V Rajah
(Jamaica, 1882-1928)		(Tamil Nadu, India)
┌ Mary Watson	2GGM	
(Jamaica?)		
┌ Beryl Christie Finnegan	GM	┌ Rajam Balachandran
(Jamaica, 1921-1960)		(Tamil Nadu, India, 1923-2009)
┌ John Allen	2GGF	┌ Marthukudi Natesa Ayyar
(Jamaica, 1858-??)		(Tamil Nadu, India)
┌ Orah Iris Allen	GGM	┌ Meenakshi R Aiyar
(Jamaica, 1888-1981)		(Tamil Nadu, India)
┌ Joanna Elizabeth Moses	2GGM	┌ Janaki Sastrigal
(Jamaica, 1868-1933)		(Tamil Nadu, India)

# JGSCV Updates

## Genealogy at the Ventura County Fair 2024



Volunteering at the Genealogy booth in the Hobbies Building at the Ventura County Fair was a great experience. *How?* you might ask. We got to mix with genealogy buffs from other Ventura County groups. Having genealogy as our commonality made for great conversations and sharing.

We helped folks. One woman was shown the name of her great-grandparents on a vital record online. She teared up and then shared that the discovery was significant and comforting as today was her late son's birthday. Others who had copies of their family histories appreciated learning how to further their research with sources that have come online years since these initial discoveries.

Each person who sat down with a volunteer genealogist was appreciative and we saw their eyes light up when something was found. It was a pleasure to be the conduit for those moments and I highly recommend signing up next year to volunteer for a slot.

The Ventura County Fair runs through Aug 11<sup>th</sup>.

-Andrea Massion

### Community Contribution Program

Whether you are a friend or member we appreciate your support and hope you will sign up for Ralphs and Food-for-Less community programs.

These programs give donations to JGSCV when you shop.

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



### CALL FOR YOUR STORIES

We all have them: stories about the trials and tribulations of genealogy research, and tales of our ancestors' lives.

We invite you to share *your stories* in our newsletter. Please send to contributions Diane at [newslettereditor@JGSCV.org](mailto:newslettereditor@JGSCV.org) (also available to assist with writing) and Issie at [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org).

# Genealogy Odds and Ends

1. **“Researching Your Jewish Ancestors in Greater Hungary”** – presented by the Center for Jewish History. Live on Zoom, August 8<sup>th</sup>. Pay what you wish.  
<https://programs.cjh.org/tags/talks>
2. **Romanian Cemeteries and Local Records**  
JewishGen recently announced a historic partnership with the Jewish Federation of Romania (FEDROM), the governing body for Jewish life in Romania: <https://romania.jewishgen.org/>
3. **“Unexpected Places to Find Ancestor Photos Online”**  
A free webinar from Legacy Family Tree to help you tap into unexpected online resources.  
<https://familytreewebinars.com/webinar/10-unexpected-places-to-find-ancestor-photos-online/>
4. **Holocaust survivor who never met his family finds cousins through DNA testing**  
Saved from the streets of Warsaw in 1943, Shalom Korai had long accepted that he had no relatives, until a sample submitted to MyHeritage matched that of a woman in South Carolina. <https://tinyurl.com/yb6u756s>
5. **Geni: Jewish Genealogy Portal.** This portal is organized by geographic region and has collaborators from around the globe. There are links to research by topic, as well as to join the Facebook discussion group with 78,000 members. <https://tinyurl.com/yv9tdw9a>
6. **“Forgotten in a coconut field, an 800-year-old tombstone expands India’s Jewish history”**  
Identified as the oldest Jewish artifact in India, the stone may be evidence of a previously unknown community. <https://tinyurl.com/57dv5b2e>
7. **Museum of Mountain Jews in Red Village, Azerbaijan**  
High in the Azerbaijani foothills of the Greater Caucasus Mountains, lies Red Village, a centuries-old Jewish community that some call "the last shtetl."  
<https://time.com/6992405/museum-of-mountain-jews/>  
Museum website: <https://jewish-museum.az/en/>
8. **Archaeological dig in Jerusalem finds fortifications believed to be from time of King David**  
Archaeologists in Jerusalem have discovered massive fortifications that would have protected the city in ancient times. <https://tinyurl.com/3uxethaf>
9. **Higher-than-expected rate of gene mutations seen in Parkinson's patients**  
With new gene-specific drugs for the disease entering the research pipeline, the implications of the findings are significant. <https://tinyurl.com/2mjed3p4>
10. **YIVO exhibit illuminates a diary kept by a 13-year-old boy in the Vilna ghetto**  
<https://tinyurl.com/mryxesr9>  
Online YIVO Yitskhok Rudashevski exhibit:  
<https://museum.yivo.org/experiences/introduction-yitshok-rudashevski/>
11. **Archeologists rediscover Vilna's lost Jewish heritage**  
Archaeologists uncover the Great Synagogue of Vilna's ornate floors and monumental pillars for a revealing Lithuania's vibrant Jewish past.  
<https://www.jpost.com/archaeology/article-812035>



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

A member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) [www.JGSCV.org](http://www.JGSCV.org)

### 2024 Membership/Renewal Form

Dues paid now are good through December 2024

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check one: This is a New Membership \_\_\_\_\_ . Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Check one: Individual \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ or Family \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_

*Family is defined as two people living in the same household.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

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

Talents that you might share with JGSCV (accounting skills, translation or language skills, (please specify) computer tech, library maven, greeter, other.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Known areas of research? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Pay by:



PayPal to [membership@jgscv.org](mailto:membership@jgscv.org) and mail this form to  
or

Check payable to JGSCV and mail it WITH this form to

Steve Feldman, Membership  
1535 Rugby Circle  
Thousand Oaks CA 91360

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Return or email this form to Steve Feldman [membership@jgscv.org](mailto:membership@jgscv.org) (address above)