

Venturing Into Our Past

JGSCV

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



September 2024

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NEXT MEETING

Sunday, September 29th, 2024

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

via **Zoom**

***"The Most Fortunate Unfortunates:
The Jewish Orphans' Home of New Orleans"***

Presented by



Marlene Trestman

See page 3

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'S LETTER

Greetings Jewish Genealogy enthusiasts,

I hope you are enjoying the cooling trend in our southern California weather. A welcome relief after weeks of blazing hot temperatures.

We had to cancel our hybrid meeting on September 8 due to our speaker's illness. We wish Hal a quick and full recovery.

Our next meeting is via Zoom on September 29 with Marlene Trestman presenting: *"Most Fortunate Unfortunates: The Jewish Orphans' Home of New Orleans."* Marlene was orphaned at age 11 and grew up in New Orleans as a beneficiary of the social service agency that succeeded the Jewish Orphans' Home. She has studied these facilities nationwide and made the point that these "orphanages" did not just serve orphans but assisted families who could not afford to raise their children at home. These children could reside in these "orphanages" temporarily until the family had the means to support them. Marlene Trestman will also offer suggestions for pursuing information about former residents of America's nearly fifty other Jewish orphanages.

Marlene's information helped me solve a mystery in my family tree. The 1930 census listed two of my second cousins, aged sixteen and six, as residing at the National Home for Jewish Children in Denver, Colorado. Their father had died four years previously, but their mother was still alive and living in Denver. I now realize that this home was set up to serve orphaned and needy children exemplifying the Jewish virtue of tzedakah.

I met Marlene at the 44th IAJGS conference in Philadelphia last month. Hers was among many excellent presentations and films given throughout the event. A recurring topic throughout the conference was the tools and technology in development which may have big impact on the future of genealogy and genetic genealogy. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Facial Recognition Software and more advanced DNA testing were mentioned as ongoing innovations in genealogy. AI Genealogy's principles, potentials, and pitfalls, starting from ChatGPT's introduction were also discussed.

A highlight of my trip to Philadelphia was a visit to the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History. This is a must-see museum with an "OY" sculpture in front.

Please see page 4 for a summary of the talks I attended at the five-day conference. I invite you to email me if you'd like to have any of the talks presented at future JGSCV meetings: president@jgscv.org. There were many high-caliber speakers at the conference, and you'll get to hear one of them at our next Zoom meeting on September 29 at 1 pm.

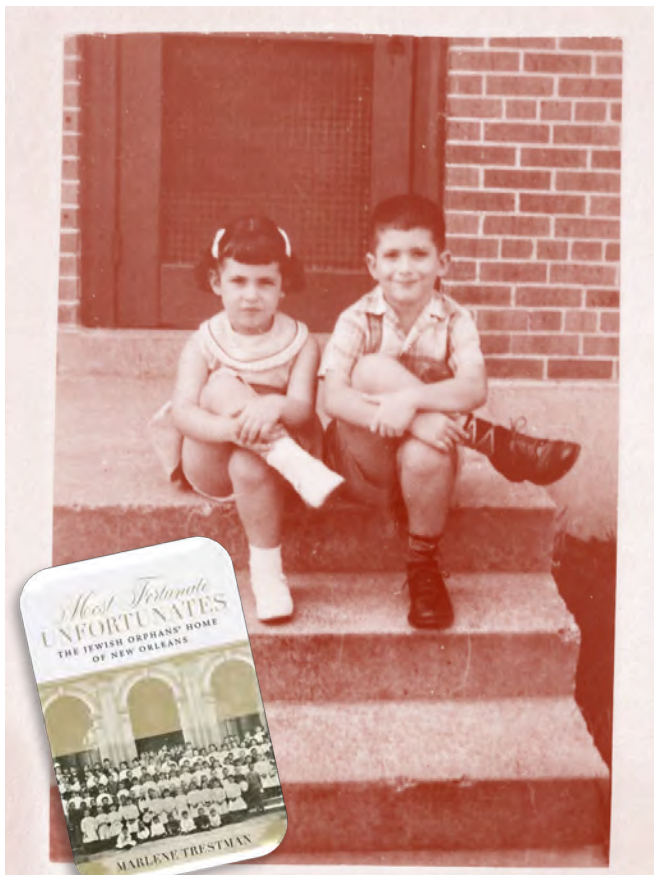
Am Yisrael Chai.

**Issie Perel
JGSCV President**

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Conejo Valley & Ventura County presents

Marlene Trestman

Lawyer and award-winning author and researcher Marlene Trestman tells the history of New Orleans' Jewish Orphanage from its founding in 1855 until its closure in 1946.



**Sunday,
September 29,
2024**

**1:00 pm PDT
ZOOM link will be sent
to members.**

www.JGSCV.org

**Join us. See membership info
on our website.**

Lawyer-turned-author Marlene discusses the resources and methods she used in both writing "Most Fortunate Unfortunates: The Jewish Orphans' Home of New Orleans" (LSU Press, 2023) the first comprehensive history of the nation's earliest purpose-built Jewish orphanage and also sharing stories of some of the 1623 children and 24 widows who lived there from 1856 to 1946. Based on her research, Trestman will also offer suggestions for pursuing information about former residents of America's nearly fifty other Jewish orphanages... <http://www.marlenetrestman.com>

IAJGS Conference Lectures 2024

By Israel Perel

There were many excellent presentations and films at the 44th IAJGS Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Philadelphia. Our September speaker comes courtesy of a lecture presented there. (See page 3.)

I am pleased to share details on other sessions, and hope that you'll let me know if you'd like any of these topics presented to JGSCV in the coming year. Please email at: president@jgscv.org.

One of the presentations I attended was for a future genealogy TV series called **Generations**. The first case study was about the Jewish actress Camryn Manheim. Camryn Manheim's great-great grandfather had been born in 1841 in Poland and immigrated to the United States in 1855. Jewish migration to United States prior to 1880 was extremely limited and when it did happen, it was mostly German Jews. That her great-great grandfather immigrated to the U.S. in 1855 as a Polish Jew was incredibly rare. The show traces his integration into the US and his service during the Civil War.

The next presentation described the **Foreign Address and Occupation Index (FAOI) of the US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)**. The FAOI is a detailed, index card-sized form which gathered geographic location and employment information about immigrants to the United States. The FAOI data collection began in 1957, asking the immigrant to provide every address or

location they lived at from 1940 onwards, as well as their trade or occupation, and any organizational memberships. The facts listed in the FAOI make the cards an important research tool for tracing Holocaust experiences of survivors who came to the United States. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) recently made the Foreign Address and Occupation Index (FAOI) available for research onsite.

The film **"Xueta Island"** explored the fascinating legacy of the Xuetas (pronounced Chuetas): a unique group of families on the island of Majorca who are believed to be descendants of the island's Inquisition-era Jewish population. Most of the families were forced to renounce their Judaism, officially converted and functionally "eliminated" Jewish life in Majorca. Yet many continued to practice their Judaism in secret. Though they were practicing Catholics, the Chuetas were discriminated against up until the middle of the 20th century, always forced to marry within their subgroup population. It is estimated that there are roughly 20,000 Chuetas living on the island today. This is a film that provokes as many questions as it answers.

The interestingly titled talk; **"Landscape of Dreams: Jewish Genealogy in Canada,"** looked at accessing some of the most common Canadian genealogy documents available online including census, immigration, military, and vital records. The

speaker presented the abundant number of Canadian Jewish specific resources including archives and heritage organizations, newspapers, and digitized books. Canadian privacy rules mandate that census records be released after 92 years, whereas US census records are released after 72 years.

“Jewish Immigrants of the RED Star Ship Line” discussed the transport of approximately two million migrants from Antwerp to the United States and Canada between 1873 and 1934. Close to 40 percent of these passengers were Jews including Golda Meir, Irving Berlin, and Albert Einstein. Antwerp was the second largest European port of departure (after Hamburg). The artist Eugeen Van Mieghem (1875-1930) made impressive and very rare drawings and pastels of these Jewish migrants.

In ***“Where Did They Run To? Tracing Ancestors Who Fled Conscription in the Russian Empire,”*** the speaker presented information about the reign of Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) who was infamous in Russian Jewish history for the brutal conscription of minor boys. Beginning in 1827, thousands of Jewish boys as young as 9 were recruited into “cantonist” schools to begin a military career that could last as long as 25 years. Jewish children who were conscripted to military institutions (*cantonists*) in czarist Russia with the intention that the conditions in which they were placed would force them to adopt Christianity. Thousands of others tried to avoid conscription by hiding from authorities, joining new families, or running away from their homes

– in some cases escaping to an entirely different, distant part of the Pale of Settlement.

“The Industrial Removal Office” explained that between 1901 and 1917, 78,995 Jewish immigrants were “removed” from New York City and placed in jobs throughout the United States with the help of the Baron de Hirsch Fund’s Industrial Removal Office (IRO). Responding both to increasingly overcrowded conditions in Jewish neighborhoods and mounting antisemitism towards the Eastern European Jewish immigrant population, the IRO sought to spread migrants throughout the East Coast, Great Plains, and beyond and integrate them into Jewish communities.

Finally, ***“The First Ghetto: The Jews of Piotrkow Trybunalski”*** was a presentation by JGSCV member Debra Kaplowitz about the first ghetto established by the Nazis in occupied Europe. Piotrkow has a long history as one of the first administrative centers of Poland, as well as being a home for Jews for over four centuries. This talk explored the history of Jews in the city, the establishment of the ghetto, and the aftermath. Among documents presented were vital records, passport applications, population registers, ghetto censuses, business censuses, personal records, and even a list of ghetto inmates owing taxes for their pets.

Again, I look forward to receiving your feedback at: president@jgscv.org.

Reflections on the IAJGS Philadelphia Conference 2024

By Debby Wenkart

I was very excited to finally attend my first, in-person IAJGS conference since joining JGSCV.

It was also my first visit to Philadelphia and a chance to visit an old friend and to meet a possible cousin with whom I'd corresponded about our Wenkart family trees.

Lunch with my "new cousin" at the Reading Terminal Market became my (almost) daily favorite meal spot, just a short 15-minute walk



from the conference location. My visit with my dear friend was just a short walk to the Art Museum located in the other direction.



Looking over the conference agenda, it looked packed, and I wasn't disappointed. Sometimes there would be multiple sessions at the same time and I needed to decide which to attend. Meeting in person gave us the opportunity to ask questions from the speaker and learn from each other's questions. There was an also an exhibit hall that was open every day where you could approach representatives from various organizations such as Yad Vashem, My Heritage, Ancestry, Jewish Gen, etc. and ask personal questions and get help. Translators were also available, and I was able to have a German document successfully translated. The representative from Yad Vashem encouraged me to submit a request for information about a great uncle who disappeared during the Holocaust but whose records I've been unable to locate as she stated not all records are online and they may be able to research this for me.

The keynote address was provided by Joan Nathan, noted cookbook author and writer of a new cookbook entitled "My Life in Recipes – Food, Family and Memories". Noted genealogist and attorney, Randol Schoenberg, moderated the informal interview with Joan. Joan described herself more as a journalist than a chef, and, in this new cookbook, she was inspired to gather family stories, memories and recipes to tell her story. The book is interspersed with her family history and with recipes from Europe which Joan adapted for the new country, America, where her family immigrated to. I love to read cookbooks, so I bought her cookbook on the spot and had it personally autographed. Joan's family story resembled our own, i.e. one side escaped the pogroms of Eastern Europe and followed the "great migration" to America, and the other side fell victim to the Shoah. But the family brought their traditions with them and according to Joan, is how they transmitted their culture and history: through their food.



One evening the "Steve Schecter Memorial Lecture" was moderated by Eric Saul, Director of the Institute for the Study of the Rescue and Altruism in the Holocaust. Joachim Tomaschett, Deputy Consul General of Switzerland, NY, spoke on behalf of the Swiss people and a video message from Carl Lutz's daughter was provided. The lecturers spoke about the remarkable and heroic rescue of the Budapest Jews due to the heroism of Carl Lutz, a Swiss diplomat and his wife, Gertrude. Carl Lutz invented the "Schutzbrief" (protective letter) for Jewish refugees. Carl Lutz persuaded the Nazi and Hungarian government to allow him to issue 8000 protective letters, which he used as

a ruse to issue thousands of additional protective letters. Carl Lutz had hundreds of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteers helping him. He established 76 Swiss safe houses within Budapest. He liberated Jews from death marches and deportation centers. Carl Lutz is credited, in coordination with the Jewish Agency for Palestine, of helping 10,000 Jewish youth emigrate to Palestine. It is estimated that these efforts saved 62,000 Budapest people or about ½ the Jewish population of Budapest! Thirty-nine diplomats are credited with assisting with rescuing the Jews of Budapest. Carl Lutz, a lawyer as well as a Swiss diplomat, and Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat, saved the inhabitants of the Pest ghetto by threatening the German SS commander with war crimes prosecution if he carried out his order to destroy the Pest ghetto. After the Swiss consulate was destroyed, Carl and his family were forced to hide in other foreign consulates. Carl Lutz was told if he stayed in Budapest, the people he was protecting would survive.

thousands of people during the Holocaust while risking their own lives and careers.

The “Visas for Life” exhibition credits the diplomats from dozens of countries with saving between 250,000-350,000 people.

Another highlight of the conference was the opportunity to enjoy a private, 2-hour, docent-led tour of the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History. The museum highlights Jewish contributions to the arts, science and literature. The museum also gives the history of Jewish immigration to the US. The museum is petitioning to be included as a Smithsonian Museum. A must-see museum if you visit Philadelphia.

At the end of the conference, I stayed an extra day and visited Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, and paused to reflect on our family’s immigration story and the story of America and what it means to so many individuals who came here pursuing freedom and opportunity.

Stay tuned, as I may have more family discoveries to reveal thanks to the conference, and I look forward to sharing all that I learned from attending it.



A remarkable photo exhibition entitled “Visas for Life” was on display in the lobby during the conference.



Each photograph identified the name of the diplomat and the country he represented and his role in rescuing people during the Holocaust.

The exhibition honored the diplomats who rescued



JGSCV Updates

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 (also available to assist with writing) and Ibbie at president@jgscv.org.

Genealogy Odds and Ends

- 1. Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE)**
"Shalom. Make yourself at home."
Explore this unique side of Southern history and Jewish history in New Orleans, LA. The Museum brings exhibits, collections and programs focused on the unique and remarkable history of Southern Jews.
<https://msje.org/>
- 2. Detritus from ancient Jerusalem drainage channel captures moment of city's destruction.** Excavation reveals rare glass and ceramic vessels, oil lamps, tableware and food remains, offering insight into state of city in period before its sacking by Rome in 70 CE. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/detritus-from-ancient-jerusalem-drainage-channel-captures-moment-of-citys-destruction/>
- 3. Over 268,000 JewishGen #Sub-Carpathia Vital Records Loaded!** Search via JewishGen's Hungary and Ukraine databases, as well as through the Unified Search.
<https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Hungary/>
- 4. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has a new edition for most forms dated April 1,2024. USCIS will NO longer accept prior editions of their forms.**
 - Genealogy Index Search Request Form G-1041 may be found <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1041>
 - The genealogy request form G-1041A may be found at:
<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/g-1041a.pdf>
 - Instructions for the form may be found at:
<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/g-1041ainstr.pdf>
- 5. Roman Siege of Masada Was Much Quicker Than Assumed, Israeli Archaeologists Say**
Analysis of Roman siege works around the desert stronghold of Masada show they took only a couple of weeks to build. <https://tinyurl.com/2nr9vs3r>
- 6. The 9th century Tel Dan Stele became a major archeological find with significant meaning for the Jewish people.** It provided the first confirmation of the biblical figure King David as a historical figure, cementing historical evidence of Jewish presence in the Tel Dan area. On loan in Oklahoma, September 22 and November 25. <https://www.jpost.com/archaeology/article-817593>
- 7. USPS Announces Hanukkah 2024 First Class stamp coming September 19th.**
This new stamp celebrates the joyous Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. The stamp art features a simple ink drawing of a hanukiah (or menorah), the nine-branch candelabra used only at Hanukkah. The illustrator digitally added the traditional Hanukkah colors of blue to the stamp background and white to the hanukiah. The flames are rendered in yellow. Art director Antonio Alcalá designed and illustrated the stamp art.
https://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2024/pb22656/html/info_005.htm
- 8. How James Earl Jones became a true friend of Jewish artists and the Jewish people**
The legendary actor worked with such luminaries as Stanley Kubrick and Joe Papp
<https://forward.com/culture/652311/james-earl-jones-remembrance-jewish-kubrick-papp/>
- 9. Texas A&M International University announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding with Fundación HispanoJudía.** The agreement marks a milestone in the exploration and celebration of the rich heritage of Sephardic Jewish ancestry in the region. <https://www.lmtonline.com/local/article/tamiu-mou-fundaci-n-hispanojud-a-david-sculpture-19756786.php>



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

2024-2025 Membership/Renewal Form

Dues paid now are good through December 2025

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.

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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? _____

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or

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TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

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