



# VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

NEWSLETTER OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
OF THE CONEJO VALLEY AND VENTURA COUNTY (JGSCV)

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## President's Message...

As genealogists, we rely on access to birth, marriage and death records as a critical part of our research of ancestors' records. Currently, worldwide, there is a movement to restrict access to such records due to a misbelief that access to vital records enables identity theft. This is resulting in legislation that affects our ability to obtain these necessary genealogical records.

The problem of identity theft is real. However, it is not vital records access that is causing the problem. This conclusion can be found in Dick Eastman's Genealogy Blog. Here it is reported that access to vital records is not one of the eight major causes of identify theft. See [http://eogn.typepad.com/eastmans\\_online\\_genealogy/2005/02/so\\_why\\_lock\\_up\\_.html](http://eogn.typepad.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2005/02/so_why_lock_up_.html)

In order to keep access to vital records open, each of us has a responsibility to respond to legislation that would deny access to such data. The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) has a committee, the Public Records Access Monitoring Committee (which I chair), that addresses these problems. Only when legislators hear from their constituents do we change their minds. This has happened recently in New Jersey and Colorado — where constituents pressed their legislators to amend bills in order to address the concerns of genealogists. Please be vigilant and inform me if you learn of any access problems when you are trying to obtain records — check the IAJGS website [www.IAJGS.org](http://www.IAJGS.org) for updates on legislative actions by clicking on the newspaper boy icon in the middle of the page.

Jan Meisels Allen

## JEWISH POPULATION IN PALE OF SETTLEMENT

Hal Bookbinder, immediate past president of the IAJGS and founding member of JGSCV, gave an erudite presentation on the "Changing Borders of Eastern Europe." Hal's presentation gave an overview using maps and showing the governmental border changes starting in 1199 to the present.

Using his ancestral town of Dubno (Ukraine), Hal traced its history from 1100, citing the oldest existing record of Jews from 1532. The presentation discussed how Jews were required to leave England, France, Germany, Spain and Portugal over the centuries, with Poland welcoming these Jews.

Due to Poland's history of continually being ruled by other countries (especially Russia) Jews who had fled to Poland eventually came under anti-Semitic rulers. Thus, shifting borders resulted in our ancestors moving from country to country without ever leaving home. As the borders changed so did the official languages and provincial capitals. Understanding the geographic history of a town gives us clues as to where to search for records, how they may be organized and in what languages they may have been written. This presentation put "flesh on the bones" for our family histories by showing the life our ancestors led, the environment under which they lived, the events that stimulated migration, languages in which records were kept and likely locations where records might be found.

**SEE PAGE 3 FOR SCHEDULE OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

## ABOUT JGSCV.....

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County meets once a month on a Sunday. Meetings are oriented to the needs of the novice as well as the more experienced genealogist. Members share materials, research methods and ideas, as well as research success or failures. Members have access to the JGSCV library located on a special shelf at the Agoura Hills Public Library.

Members also receive our monthly newsletter which is circulated by email. Editorial and feature articles, as well as tips for pursuit of genealogical research are welcome. Send such material as a file attachment or message via email to [newslettereditor@jgscv.org](mailto:newslettereditor@jgscv.org)

2006 dues are \$25.00 for a single membership and \$30.00 for a household unit. To join, please send appropriate amount in check made out to JGSCV and addressed to Richard Munitz at 29633 Windsong Lane, Agoura Hills, CA 91301.

## FOR THOSE RESEARCHING IN EASTERN EUROPEAN AREAS.....

The geography and changing borders of Poland, as well as the rich history of the once Jewish presence in that country, can be found at: <http://polishjews.org/history.htm>

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Tracing ancestors in the Ukraine can be facilitated by access to the official Central State Historical Archive of the Ukraine located in Kiev: <http://www.genealogicaltree.org.ua/eng/eindex.html>. Instructions are given in English for requesting research assistance.

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A website showing Jewish cemeteries in Poland is located at [www.kirkuty.xip.pl/indexang.htm](http://www.kirkuty.xip.pl/indexang.htm). It was created by persons of non-Jewish ancestry — in the form of a photo gallery, enriched with general historic information. The authors hope that this guide will inspire visitors and will draw attention to mark the pre-war presence of the community of Polish Jews who have disappeared from this landscape.

## TIPS AND ADVICE.....

Once we have our information, what is the best way to preserve our digital records? Michael Himowitz, medical/science editor of the Baltimore Sun's article in Newsday (see [www.tinyurl.com/ru7ee](http://www.tinyurl.com/ru7ee)), talks of longevity problems with CD-Rs, CD-RWs and other methods of storage. DVDs have the same problem as CDs and it is suggested that medical grade CDs or DVDs be used for longer-lived media.

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The burial locations of more than 5 million veterans, for whom the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has provided grave markers, are now available on the Internet at <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>. Also, included at this nationwide gravesite locator is the information inscribed on the markers. The VA recently added 1.9 million records to its database for veterans buried primarily in private cemeteries. The new records date from 1997, the earliest time for which electronic records exist. The information comes from application for the veterans' headstones or markers. Approximately 1,000 new records are added by the VA each day. You need only provide the last name of the deceased veteran or dependent. Typically, information available includes name, birth/death dates, rank, branch of service and the address/phone number of the cemetery.

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An exceptional website contains genealogical data of the very important Ashkenazic Jewish community of Frankfurt on/Main. Surnames include Rothschild, Buchsbaum, Rapp, Schwarzschild, Sichel, Bing, Mainz, Wertheim, Worms, Doktor, Geiger, Schuster, Goldschmidt, Wertheim, Oppenheim, Guenzburg et al. See <http://members.tripod.com/~goldschmidt/>

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Discovering the maiden name of a female ancestor can sometimes be difficult, but can lead to a whole new branch of your family tree. Kimberly Powell's column gives 10 places to find maiden names— not all are relevant for Jewish records but most of the suggested places are helpful: marriage records, cemetery records, census records, land records, church records (synagogue records), probate records and wills, newspaper records, death records, military records and naming patterns. The entire article is at: [http://genealogy.about.com/od/surnames/tp/maiden\\_names.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/od/surnames/tp/maiden_names.htm). The site offers a weekly newsletter sent free to your e-mail address.

# NEXT MONTHLY MEETING:

Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley  
and Ventura County\* (\*and surrounding areas)



## The Wayfarers

Stuart Tower's historical novel, *The Wayfarers* chronicles the emigration, *on foot*, of thousands of Jews from Romania across Europe and to America during 1899-1914. In Yiddish, these wayfarers were called *fusgeyers*...those who went by foot. Courageous, organized groups of young Jews defiantly protested against the sheer hopelessness of life — the enforced impoverishment and deadly pogroms in their native Romania. In an effort to survive, they "marched to America," by trekking to ports across the dangerously anti-Semitic, xenophobic Europe of the early 1900's. Their success in reaching their goal speaks volumes for the hopeless that stayed behind.

Stuart Tower is an educator, writer, lecturer and traveler. Mr. Tower will also discuss his recent trips to Romania, giving a status report on the Jewish population throughout the country, including photos of the remaining shuls, etc. Attendees will have the opportunity to purchase the book following the lecture.

Copies of *The Wayfarer* will be available at the time of the meeting for purchase at \$20.00, signed by the author. It is also possible to pre-order the book directly from Stuart Tower at 310-278-2055, either by check or credit card, for \$20.00, including postage.

Meeting co-sponsored with Temple Adat Elohim  
at 2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks CA  
Sunday, June 11 from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

There is no charge to attend the meeting. Anyone may join JGSCV.

For more information contact [information@JGSCV.org](mailto:information@JGSCV.org), see [www.JGSCV.org](http://www.JGSCV.org) or call Jan Meisels Allen at 818-889-6616.

### Future JGSCV Meeting Dates

All Meetings are held on a Sunday, 2:00 - 4:00 pm at Temple Adat Elohim  
2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks

#### July 9, 2006: "Detecting Faults and Errors in Genealogical Sources"

Werner Frank will discuss five problems found during his genealogical research including controversies in line of descent, appearance of names in registers, reliability of tombstone data, interpretation of archival photos and fuzziness in biographical sources.

Future 2006 meetings are scheduled as follows: September 17, November 12 and December 10. There will be no meeting in August due to the IAJGS Conference in New York City, nor in October due to the High Holydays.

## UPDATE ON THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

Since the end of World War II, the International Tracing Service (ITS) located in Arolsen, Germany has been collecting hard copy documentation related to the fate of victims and survivors of the War. The holdings of ITS are one of the most valuable sources of information about individuals caught up in the Holocaust. A significant portion of this database relates to Jews who were relocated from their homes and whose life was most often taken in a concentration camp. The 40 million records of ITS identifies an individual at a specific place and time during the Holocaust period, information which had been gleaned from sources such as deportation lists, concentration camp death lists, ghetto records and post-war refugee records, especially those of displaced persons.

Up to now, this basic data resource was not available for direct access by the general public although a subset of the records have been available for view at the Library of Yad V'shem in Jerusalem. The only recourse one had for querying the ITS files was to establish a family relationship for the sought victim and to petition the International Red Cross for assistance. This path typically could take 6 to 18 months. Public access to the ITS data was prohibited by German privacy laws (see <http://english.its-arolsen.org> )

Prominent Holocaust researchers, representatives of the Jewish genealogy community and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum had been vocal over the years in trying to change the restrictive German policy for privacy in order to allow open and free access to this wealth of information. After significant international pressure, Germany has finally announced its willingness to opening the record collection. An agreement is in process that would permit the eleven countries that make up the ITS Council to copy the ITS material and make it available through their national archives in accordance with national laws. This decision was adopted at the May 16, 2006 meeting of the ITS Council and now needs to be ratified by member countries. Even before formal approval, work will begin to get the material ready for copying, particularly the large part which has already been digitized.

Once available in the United States, this significant resource can immeasurably help the research of those genealogists pursuing the fate of their family members as a result of the Holocaust.

- We welcome contributions from our members regarding their genealogical research experience. Submit your story to this Newsletter at [newslettereditor@jgscv.org](mailto:newslettereditor@jgscv.org) .
- We also seek volunteers to assist in constructing and maintaining our website. Anyone interested in this activity should contact President Jan Meisels Allen at [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org) .

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS: Linda Ann Dawson

## JGSCV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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