



VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

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

Volume 4 Issue 9

June, 2009

President's Letter

JGSCV's commemoration for Yom Hashoah Day (Holocaust Remembrance Day) had an excellent program and turnout. We were privileged to view *The World Was Ours: The Jewish Legacy of Vilna* a documentary film that focused on pre-war life of this vibrant culture- narrated by award-winning actor Mandy Patinkin. We are indebted to the producer/director, Mira Jedwabnik Van Doren for granting us permission to show the video. For more information on the video go to: www.thevilnaproject.org

Following the documentary two holocaust survivors from Vilna talked about their experiences and answered questions: Esther Meisler and Leon Pinsker. (See photos right)

Esther said before WWII there were 80,000 Jewish people living in Vilna. Only 200 Jews survived the war. She began her story, "On September 1, 1941 the Nazi's put a dead body dressed in a German uniform in the middle of a street in the Jewish section of Vilna." The Nazi's blamed the Jews for the death of the "soldier". The next day the Nazis surrounded five streets of the Jewish section and immediately took the Jews to Ponari (also shown vividly in the film) - the forest where Vilna Jews were sent to be executed. This

included her uncle and his family. A few days later, the Nazis ordered all Jews to the Jewish section of the city creating the ghetto. Esther later related that the Nazis moved the Jews to Dachau when they learned the Russians were coming. Her father and brother died at Dachau. Esther also recalled the 3 years spent waiting in a displaced persons camp in Italy for permission to get to Palestine. Her aunt in the US was finally able to get Esther, her sister and mother to the US.

Leon also talked about the Ponari forest. He worked at the railroad station. The day after a German officer hit him with a rifle butt, he and two friends were determined to run away. They hid at the railway station on their way to work the next day. They took a train going east (toward Russia) where Leon said they hid in the same forest used in the movie *Defiance* about the Bielski brothers. (The filming of *Defiance* was in Lithuania even though the story took place in Belarus.)

For those researching their Lithuanian roots, an excellent place to get records information (All Lithuanian Database) and information is the Litvak SIG (<http://www.jewishgen.org/Litvak/>). Another site to help with your Lithuanian research is The Jewish Family Research Foundation focusing on the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (<http://www.jewishfamilyhistory.org/>) whose founders are JGSCV Members, Sonia and David Hoffman. David is also the president of the Litvak SIG.

The Honorary Consul General of Lithuania, Vytautas Cekanaukas, saw the meeting announcement in the Thousand Oaks *Acorn* and contacted me. Unable to attend our meeting but wanting to view the documentary, he and his wife were welcomed to our home and shown the documentary. He was so impressed with the video that he is obtaining a copy for the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington D.C. Consul Cekanaukas has accepted an invitation to talk to JGSCV later in the year!

Our June 7 meeting is **YOUR** meeting, "Genealogy in the Round". This is an opportunity for you to talk about a genealogical brick wall, success, artifact or story...if you don't participate we don't have a program! Thus far, only several people have stepped forward. Please contact me at president@jgscv.org to "sign-up" depending on the number of participants each person will have 5-10 minutes to participate. You don't have to be a member to participate! Please let me hear from you! (CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



LEFT: Esther Meisler; CENTER: Jan Meisels Allen, The Hon. Consul General and Mrs. Vytautas Cekanaukas; RIGHT: Leon Pinsker

FOR SCHEDULE OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS SEE PAGE 4

Don't forget to sign up for Ralph's Community Contribution Program. We just received another quarterly check for about \$90 and that was just from 8 participating...this is great way for you to help your JGS, at no cost to you! Even if you are only an occasional shopper at Ralph's, it will help JGSCV! Information on how to sign up is on our website: www.jgscv.org and click on "notices".

This issue introduces our new newsletter editor Allan Linderman. Allan is a natural for this position as in his non-genealogy life he is the president of Linderman Media Group (an advertising/marketing consultancy) and also teaches about media. Allan graciously stepped forth to accept this role upon learning that our founding editor, Werner Frank wanted to retire after 4 years serving as newsletter editor. We all owe Werner a hearty thank you for the excellent newsletter he developed. Werner continues to serve on the JGSCV board of directors.

Jan Meisels Allen



Outgoing
Newsletter
Editor
Werner
Frank and
Allan
Linderman

Now is a good time to renew one's efforts in completing the holy task of submitting Pages of Testimony (POT) to Yad Vashem. These affidavits are intended to memorialize family members who were victims of the Holocaust as well as provide a historical account of what transpired in that horrific period in the history of our people. For database search of existing POT's and instructions for submissions: <http://tinyurl.com/p9s6dn>

MORE ABOUT VILNA IN 'Churbn Lettland: The Destruction of the Jews of Latvia' (From Steven Lasky, Museum of Family History)

"Within the Max Kaufmann book of 1947 entitled "Churbn Lettland: The Destruction of the Jews of Latvia," there is mention of many residents of Vilna who were transported to Riga, many of whom met similar fates as Latvians et al. You may like to read at least this section of the book, since Vilna was once part of Poland. (The English translation can now be found on my site in its entirety)" Just go to <http://tinyurl.com/py8h85>

"Kaufmann, a survivor of the Riga ghetto and more, he also talks about various concentration camps, e.g. Kaiserwald, Buchenwald, Magdeburg and Stutthof, among others.

"Part of the book's foreword states:

The martyrology and the destruction of the Jewish community in Latvia is connected with the fate of a part of the Jews of Vilna, who were brought to Riga on 29 September 1943 after the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto and who shared with the Latvian Jews the final path of martyrdom and all the stages of destruction.

The Kaiserwald concentration camp in Riga, with its divisions - the HKP, Strazdumuiza, TWL, HVL, ABA, Dünawerke, Lenta, Meteor, the Balast dam etc. - and, later on, the concentration camps in Germany - Stutthof, Magdeburg, Burggraben, Riben etc. - are the milestones along the cruel, thorny path walked by the Jews of Latvia and Vilna.

The book Churbn Lettland, which describes the destruction of the once-splendid Jewish community in Latvia, is also part of the history of the destruction of Vilna Jewry. A specific and precise picture is provided in the descriptions of the Stutthof and Buchenwald concentration camps, in which I lived through difficult times together with the author. "

ABOUT JGSCV.....

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County meets once a month, usually on a Sunday. Meetings are oriented to the needs of the novice as well as the more experienced genealogist. Members share materials, research methods and ideas, as well as research success or failures. Members have access to the JGSCV library located on special shelves at the Agoura Hills Public Library. Members also receive our monthly newsletter which is circulated by email.

2009 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 Helene Rosen at 28912 Fountainwood St., Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Obtain the new/renewal membership form on our website at www.jgscv.org by selecting the membership button.

MEMORIALS TO VANISHED COMMUNITIES

The Israeli Genealogical Society announced the Memorials to Vanished Communities project is now available online at: <http://tinyurl.com/d47qzj>

The database includes more than 350 monuments representing over 1400 communities and countries. Most memorials were built by associations of former residents of communities in Europe annihilated during the Shoah.

Comments and/or corrections are appreciated at: webmaster@isragen.org.il

BRAZIL, RIO DE JANEIRO CIVIL REGISTRATION RECORDS AVAILABLE

FamilySearch added the Brazil, Rio de Janeiro Civil Registration to its online collection—about 4.5 million new digital images. The free collection contains searchable digital images of the original birth, marriage, and death records from all of the municipalities in the state of Rio de Janeiro from 1889 to 2006. The new digital images can be searched for free at FamilySearch.org (click Search Records, then Caribbean, Central and South America, then Brazil).

You can quickly navigate from a Rio de Janeiro municipality down to individual towns. After clicking on a town, the images are divided up by birth, marriage and death, within a range of years—making it very convenient to comb through the original records covering during a specific period in search of a Brazilian ancestor from Rio de Janeiro. Digital images can also be printed or saved electronically.

POLAND TO PUBLISH WWII DEATHS

An online list of some of the estimated six million Polish citizens who died during World War II is to be published (in Polish) at <http://tinyurl.com/cht5bd> The initial offering will only have 1.9 million names. An estimated 3 million of the 3.3 million Jews living in Poland in 1939 died during World War II. Of the 33 million Polish non-Jews, an estimated 3 million died. Additional information can be found at <http://www.ejpress.org/article/35991>

SEINFELD TO RECEIVE HERITAGE AWARD

The journey of Jerry Seinfeld's grandparents through Ellis Island, one shared by 17 million Americans, will be in the spotlight May 19 when the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation bestows one of its "Family Heritage" awards on Mr. Seinfeld as its annual lunchtime event. You can read his family's story at: <http://tinyurl.com/dccc7v>

ONLINE ARCHIVES OF CALIFORNIA

The OAC brings together historical materials from a variety of California institutions, including museums, historical societies, and archives. Over 120,000 images; 50,000 pages of documents, letters, and oral histories; and 8,000 guides to collections are available: <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/>

FREE LEGACY FAMILY TREE 7.0

The Standard Edition of Legacy Family Tree 7.0 is now available for FREE downloading by all interested parties: <http://www.legacyfamilytree.com/> With this software you can -

- Map your ancestors around the world using Microsoft® Virtual Earth™. Legacy will automatically pinpoint and plot important locations in ancestors' lives from within Legacy using 3-D, satellite and bird's eye images.
- Create wall charts to print on standard, presentation, glossy or matte canvas finishes.
- Easily cite sources with new, simple templates for proper formatting of footnotes, endnotes and bibliography.
- Prepare for interviews using pre-written questions designed as memory triggers.

While the Standard Edition is free, the Deluxe Edition (with additional features) can be downloaded for \$29.95. The Deluxe Edition is also available on CD with an accompanying book for \$39.95 plus shipping.

**Share Your Genealogical Successes & Failures
Come to the Jewish Genealogical Society
of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County*
(*and surrounding areas)**

**Sunday, June 7, 2009 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
at Temple Adat Elohim
2420 E.Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks**

**"Genealogy In The Round:
Share Your Successes, Failures, Artifacts
and Brick Walls"**

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!

If you wish to participate in the program, please contact Jan Meisels Allen at president@JGSCV.org. Each participant will be given 5-10 minutes to share—depending on the number of presenters. Whether you are a JGSCV member or a potential member—we'd love to hear your genealogical story.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County is dedicated to sharing genealogical information, techniques and research tools with anyone interested in Jewish genealogy and family history.

**Meeting co-sponsored with Temple Adat Elohim
There is no charge to attend the meeting.
Anyone may join JGSCV.**

For more information contact information@JGSCV.org See: www.JGSCV.org
Or call Jan Meisels Allen@ 818-889-6616

**Future JGSCV Meeting Date
All Meetings are held at Temple Adat Elohim
2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks**

July 12, 2009: "Facebook: The Ins and Outs of the On-Line Social Networking Way to Find Relatives and Others" Michael Gallop

Future meetings will be posted upon learning of meeting dates from Temple Adat Elohim

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies
And
The Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia
Are proud to co-host the



SHERATON CITY CENTER HOTEL-PHILADELPHIA

How-to Genealogy & Family History Sessions, newcomer to expert
Computer classes, beginner to advances
Research Resource Room on-site
Jewish Films
Archivists from different countries
Tours of Jewish Philadelphia
Philadelphia historical sights
& much more...

To register and find out more, please go to:

www.philly2009.org

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies has announced that registration is now open for the 29th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy to be held in Philadelphia from August 2-7. It is also possible to make hotel reservations at this time from the conference site at <http://www.philly2009.org>.

Conference registration rates are:

- Early Bird Registration (through April 30, 2009): Full-\$250; Companion-\$150
- Regular Registration (May 1-July 24, 2009: Full-\$295; Companion-\$195
- On-Site Registration (after July 25, 2009: Full-\$325; Companion \$225.
- Daily Registration: Sunday (including Opening Reception: \$95; Monday-Thursday; \$75 per day; Friday morning: \$40.

To be eligible for companion registration, both parties must reside in the same household.

FAMILYSEARCH INDEXING PROJECTS

FamilySearch, the genealogy arm of the Mormon Church, has more than 80 indexing projects in progress. They can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/ccod6k>.

Each project includes links to a page that shows sample documents. Some of the projects are:

- 1916 Canadian Census
- Belgium–Antwerp Foreigners Index, 1840–1930
- Bremen passenger lists, 1904–1914
- Massachusetts Marriage and Death Records, 1906–1915

Family Search was previously known as the Genealogical Society of Utah.

MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF POLISH JEWS

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews (<http://tinyurl.com/dg32un>) will open in 2011 on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. This multimedia narrative museum and cultural center will present the history of Polish Jews and the rich civilization they created over the course of almost 1000 years. Initiated by the Jewish Historical Institute Association in Warsaw in 1996, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews will be a unique institution. Not only is it the first and only museum to focus on the history of Polish Jews, but also it is a truly 21st-century institution in every regard.

Using the latest historical research and most innovative exhibition design, the museum will immerse visitors in the world of Polish Jews and encourage exploration through a wide range of media, documents, and artifacts. As a cultural and educational center, the Museum will provide a unique learning environment, lively public programs, and singular meeting place for a diverse public.

ADDITIONAL USEFUL WEBSITES

The following references to genealogy-relevant web sites were gleaned from various digests of JewishGen.

- Index to births in Dinaburg/Dvinsk/Daugavpils 1868–70, 1872–74. <http://tinyurl.com/d4cknf>. This is the link to the 1868 list. Scroll to the bottom of the page to find the links to the other years.
- A list of children and youth deported in 1942/43 from the former Volksstaat Hessen—369 in all: <http://tinyurl.com/d2x6w2>
- List of Jews who died in the Gurs camp: <http://tinyurl.com/cluohf>
- Listing of rabbi's from Bohemia, Moravia and elsewhere at <http://tinyurl.com/d7te4k>

We welcome new member: Rose Topliss

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Mailing address: 6052 Hackers Lane, Agoura Hills, CA 91301 Phone: 818-889-6616

Website: www.jgscv.org David Oseas, Webmaster: webmaster@jgscv.org