President’s Letter:

Our 5th anniversary will be celebrated at our October 4th meeting. It is difficult to believe that we are five years old—it seems like yesterday when a group of us (Stewart Bernstein, Nancy Biederman, Debra Kay Blatt, Warren Blatt, Hal Bookbinder, Dalya Dektor, Dorothy Drilich, Werner Frank, Mike Markowitz, Richard Munitz, Raya Sagi, Hal Standel and me) met in the summer of 2005 to discuss the possibility of starting a Jewish Genealogy Society in the Conejo Valley and Ventura County. We asked Temple Adat Elohim if they would let us hold 2-3 meetings to see if genealogy would be of interest to the community. We asked for a room for about 20 people…and 110 showed up. We were all blown away! It is due to YOU, our members that we are a growing and strong society today. We hope you attend our October 4th meeting to help celebrate our anniversary!

International Jewish Genealogy Month is the month of Cheshvan (October 9-November 7, 2010). October is also “Family History Month” in many U.S. states. Together it marks a special time to do something to celebrate and remember: record your family history, trace your family medical history, create a family cook book, visit sites of importance to your family, preserve your family photographs, encourage the younger generation(s) to get involved. Yom Kippur’s Yizkor Service remembering Holocaust victims and family members who have died, suggests you might research and write something about a loved one who is no longer here.

We start our membership renewal in October—if you join or renew now the membership will be good through December 2011! See page 9 for the membership/renewal application. As in past years, those who join or renew at or before the December 6 meeting and attend our December 6 meeting are eligible to have their name drawn for great genealogical gifts. We have gifts donated from Ancestry.com (our grand prize), Family Tree Magazine, Footnote, Legacy, Roots Magic and more!

See pages 6-8 about Achille Levy a Ventura County Jewish pioneer—JGSCV was asked to help the Museum of Ventura County translate inscriptions in his bible for an upcoming exhibit: History UNEXPECTED: Surprises, Insights and Revelations from the Research Library Collections! Opening reception is Sunday Sept. 19th 4:00-6:00 p.m. Hope to see you there! Exhibit open: September 18-November 28, 2010.

Remember to sign up for the Ralphs Community Contribution Program. Ralphs requires annual registration. Go to www.ralphs.com and scroll down to community contribution . . . our number is #84732 which you insert where it says charity of choice. Even as an occasional Ralphs shopper you help JGSCV! See page 2 for more.

Our October 4th program is Ost Meets West: Immigrant Film Moguls, Émigré Directors, and the Rise of Film Noir, by Vincent Brook. Note the different day of week and time: Monday night starting at 7:00 p.m. Be sure to arrive by 6:45 PM for the Schmoozing Corner. The book report will be by Diane Wainwood on Arthur Koestler’s The Thirteenth Tribe about the Khazars.

Looking forward to seeing you on October 4th!

Jan Meisels Allen
**ALSACE RECORDS AVAILABLE ONLINE**

Alsace was the home for Jews for many years including Achille Levy whose genealogy is featured on page 6. Records of Archive Departementale of the Bas-Rhin in Strasbourg are available online. At [http://archives.cg67.fr/](http://archives.cg67.fr/) click on the British flag for English then ‘access to online’/click on ‘accept the conditions’/’application accessible’. Then choose the record from the Etat Civil. After that you can navigate through the town, year, etc.

**A LIBRARY OF JEWISH MUSIC ONLINE**

Florida Atlantic University has compiled a large and meaningful list of Jewish music, songs and chants. You may listen at [http://tinyurl.com/348jdzd](http://tinyurl.com/348jdzd) However, please note the music may not be copied, reproduced or sold.

**NEW LAW IN HUNGARY TO KEEP RECORDS SEALED FOR 90 YEARS**

Effective Jan. 1, 2011 it will be illegal in Hungary to release vital records less than 90 years from the date of data entry into the registry. (Note, the date of the actual birth, marriage, or death is not relevant – only the date of the registration.)

According to Kahlile Mehr, IAJGS Director-at-large and FamilySearch manager of the Slavic Collection, archivists in Hungary are attempting to amend the new law before it takes effect. At this time however, to comply, FamilySearch.org is no longer delivering Hungarian images to the Internet beyond 1920.

**FAMILY TREE MAKER 2011 AVAILABLE**

Ancestry.com has released the latest update to Family Tree Maker. It is available for purchase at [http://www.familytreemaker.com](http://www.familytreemaker.com) New and updated features include Stories (an easier way to include text and photos into narratives), Reports, Timelines and better integration with Ancestry.com. The new version will replace older versions. Click on ‘Upgrading from a previous version of Family Tree Maker’ to learn how data from older versions will be integrated. The cost is $39.95 and can be purchased at retail locations as well.

**JOIN/RENEW JGSCV YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

See page 9 and follow directions for joining JGSCV or renewing your membership.

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**FREE FAMILY SEARCH ONLINE CLASSES**

The Family History Library in Salt Lake City is offering free online classes with an emphasis on methods and key resources for starting your family history research. The following classes are offered at this time:

- England Beginning Research
- Germany Research
- Ireland Research
- Italy Research
- New Zealand Research
- Poland Research
- Principios básicos para la investigación genealógica en Hispanoamérica (México)
- Reading Handwritten Records Series
- Research Principles and Tools
- Russia Research
- U.S. Research

Go to [http://tinyurl.com/684hcr](http://tinyurl.com/684hcr) and click on ‘free online classes’.

**RALPHS COMMUNITY PROGRAM**

The Ralphs Community Contribution program helps JGSCV by making contributions to us every quarter, at no cost to participants in the program. Please visit our website under "notices" for the easy step-by-step instructions to register and have JGSCV benefit from your Ralphs purchases. Registration is required each Sept. so even if you were previously registered, you must re-register.
ALIEN FILES NOW AVAILABLE AT NATIONAL ARCHIVES

For the first time, more than 300,000 case files on alien residents of the United States who were born 1909 and prior are now open to the public at the National Archives at Kansas City. These files, known as “Alien Files” (commonly referred to as “A-Files”) were transferred to the National Archives from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and are only a small part of the millions of case files that will eventually be transferred and opened to the public.

“The A-files are a key to unlocking the fascinating stories of millions of people who traveled to the United States in search of opportunity, including my own grandfather” said Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero. “They include information such as photographs, personal correspondence, birth certificates, health records, interview transcripts, visas, applications and other information on all non-naturalized alien residents, both legal and illegal. The snapshot of American life that develops from each file can, in some cases, serve as a one-stop-shopping for researchers.”

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the predecessor agency of USCIS, began issuing aliens Alien Registration numbers in 1940, and on April 1, 1944, began using this number to create the A-Files. A-Files document the famous, the infamous, the anonymous and the well-known, and are an historical and genealogical goldmine. These files contain an abundance of relatively modern immigration documents in one file, making them a rich source of biographical information.

A-Files are eligible for transfer to the National Archives when 100 years have passed since the birth date of the subject of a file. These transfers to the National Archives ensure that these records will be saved and made available to the public. The National Archives at Kansas City will maintain A-Files from all USCIS district offices except San Francisco, Honolulu, Reno, and Guam. These files will be housed at the National Archives at San Francisco because of the significant research use of related immigration files there. Files to be housed at the National Archives at San Francisco are currently being prepared for transfer.

A-Files may be viewed in person by appointment at the National Archives at Kansas City or copies of files may be ordered for a fee. Additional information on requesting A-Files.

The National Archives at Kansas City is one of 13 facilities nationwide where the public has access to Federal archival records. It is home to more than 50,000 cubic feet of historical records dating from the 1820s to the 1990s created or received by nearly 100 Federal agencies. Serving the Central Plains Region, the archives holds records from the states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The facility is located at 400 West Pershing Road, Kansas City, MO 64108. The National Archives at Kansas City is open Tuesday-Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. for exhibits viewing and Tuesday-Saturday from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. for research.
Look for the SCHMOOZING CORNER sign (right) where you will find a JGSCV expert who can help you overcome a genealogical brick wall or maybe just answer a question. Remember, you can find The Schmoozing Corner on the right as you enter the meeting room at Temple Adat Elohim; near the front of the room. The Schmoozing Corner is open for 15 minutes immediately prior to the start of the meeting.

Traveling Library Books classification A and B will be at the October 4 meeting. Visit our website at www.jgscv.org under library traveling for the list of books in these categories.

The Museum of Ventura County announced the opening of *History UNEXPECTED: Surprises, Insights and Revelations from the Research Library Collections*. A new exhibit drawing from the wealth of varied materials from the Museum’s Research Library Collection. The Exhibit includes the Achille Levy bible (see pages 6-8) a framed award Achille was given at the Columbian World's Fair in Chicago in 1893 for "Yellow-Eyed Beans” and a few other of Achille's mementos.

The Museum Research Librarian, Charles Johnson, requested assistance from JGSCV to help translate several of the pages of the bible. The following JGSCV members were involved: Debra Kay Blatt, Warren Blatt, Werner Frank and Rabbi Shimon Paskow. The pages for translation were in French, Hebrew and Yiddish. The Museum recently went through an extensive renovation and is now back in its original location.

The Museum is located at 100 East Main St. in Ventura. For information on hours, fees, exhibits, etc. see http://www.venturamuseum.org or call 805-653-0323.

For a simple video explaining how to access googlenews go to http://tinyurl.com/2686gv9.
Come to the Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County*
(* and surrounding areas)

Come celebrate our 5th anniversary
Monday, October 4, 2010 7:00-9:00 p.m.
at Temple Adat Elohim
2420 E.Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks
Note: Different day of week and time!

Ost Meets West: Immigrant Film Moguls, Émigré Directors, and the Rise of Film Noir

A group of Eastern European Jews, who headed most major American film studios, founded the Hollywood film industry. Another influx of German/Austrian Jewish Film directors were driven to the US by the Nazis in the 1930s. A number of them, such as Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Otto Preminger, and Edward G. Ulmer would play a determining role in the rise of what was later called “film noir”*. The speaker will examine the ethnic origins of the two groups and how their different backgrounds enabled their considerable contributions to the cinema, and in particular “film noir”.

Speaker: Vincent Brook has a Ph.D. in film and television from UCLA and teaches media studies at UCLA, USC, Cal-State LA, and Pierce College. He is the author of Something Ain't Kosher Here: The Rise of the "Jewish" Sitcom and dozens of journal articles, essays, and reviews. Brook’s book, "Driven to Darkness: Jewish Émigré Directors and the Rise of Film Noir" will be available for purchase for $20. Please bring cash or check to purchase the book.

* Film noir is a cinematic term used primarily to describe stylish Hollywood crime dramas, particularly those that emphasize cynical attitudes and sexual motivations. Hollywood’s classic film noir period is generally regarded as stretching from the early 1940s to the late 1950s. Film noir of this era is associated with a low-key black-and-white visual style that has roots in German Expressionist cinematography.

Meeting co-sponsored with Temple Adat Elohim. There is no charge to attend the meeting. Anyone may join JGSCV. New members are welcome.
How many of us remember the billboards along the 101 Freeway in Ventura County that said, “This is Bank of A. Levy Country”? We have not seen them since 1995 when then-First Interstate Bank bought the Bank of A. Levy. Until a recent e-mail from Charles Johnson, research librarian of the Museum of Ventura County, that was all I knew of A. Levy—he had a bank with branches in Ventura County. Mr. Johnson contacted JGSCV asking for help with translating two hand-written pages in the bible belonging to A. Levy for the upcoming Museum exhibit: History UNEXPECTED: Surprises, Insights and Revelations (see page 4). [Mr. Johnson was a speaker at JGSCV February 2006.]

The request resulted in learning about one of Ventura County’s most famous residents—a Jewish immigrant from the Alsace, whose banking standards are still admired almost 80 years after his death. Achille Levy at the time of his death in 1922 was the wealthiest Ventura County resident and paid the most income taxes in Ventura County. It also led to a genealogical journey using a variety of internet resources, books from the JSGCV library and persons from Israel to California to help in translating the inscription.

The Genealogical Journey

When the scanned documents arrived, they were first sent to JGSCV board members Werner Frank, Debra Kay Blatt and Warren Blatt. Werner was able to translate the French page:

Prayer book to Lévy Achille
from Mommenheim Lower Rhine (the Departement)
Has left for America 30 June 1874
St Fransisco (misspelled) California

This provided us information on where in the Alsace he was from, as well as when he immigrated. This helped in our search to learn more about Achille Levy!

However, neither Werner Frank, Debra Kay Blatt nor Warren Blatt were able to translate the Yiddish—there are many Yiddish dialects and the handwriting from 1872 proved to be a challenge for the most experienced. What Debra and Warren were able to decipher was that it mentioned a yahrzeit (the anniversary of a family member’s death). The Yiddish translation was then sent to JGSCV member- Rabbi Shimon Paskow who was able to do most but not all of the translation.

With the help of G-d
Yahrzeit for my father Selig
5th day of Adar
Line not translated
Achille Levi
1872 14, February
We needed to build on what the Rabbi had translated. It was sent to another Yiddish translator, and that translation mentioned three first names. We could not find one of these names in *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names Their Origins, Structure, Pronunciation and Migrations* by Alexandre Beider (included in JGSCV’s traveling Library). Both translations had “Selig” as the father’s name, but we knew his father’s name was Joseph and Selig does not translate to Joseph—either in Beider’s book or JewishGen’s Given Names database: (http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/GivenNames)

It was decided to find Achille’s birth record to corroborate the father’s first name and the sibling’s birth records to determine if the names in this other translation were the ones translated. JGSCV contacted Rosanne Leeson who is the co-coordinator of the French SIG (http://www.jewishgen.org/french/) and vice president of the San Francisco Bay Area JGS….and she is an expert on the Alsace area of France! Rosanne also took to the genealogical quest by searching the recently placed on-line *Archive Departementale of the Bas-Rhin*, in Strasbourg, http://archives.cg67.fr/ [The on-line records are available at no cost and there is a place to access directions in English as well as French. See page 2 for more details].

Rosanne found that the father, Joseph, had died in 1858—14 years before the inscription in the bible and Achille’s only sibling Sara, was born several months after her father died- so we knew that questionable one line was still needing further translation assistance.

[Rosanne downloaded Achille’s birth record in 1853, Sara’s birth record in 1858, the parent’s marriage record in 1852 and they have been provided to the Museum for their archives. Rosanne also offered to create the Levy family tree going back to the mid 1700’s as the family had lived in Mommenheim since then--again this has been donated to the Museum for its archives].

The Yiddish page was then uploaded to JewishGen’s viewmate (http://www.jewishgen.org/viewmate/) where people around the world can be adviser of a document or photo to review and translate. Two people from Jerusalem responded within a day to the posting on the JewishGen Discussion Group that JGSCV was looking for assistance on this document for the Museum.

Odeda Zlotnick was the first to reply and informed us that the word “Selig” is used by Yiddish speaking Germans as if it were z ’l meaning blessed memory—that cleared up the question of the father’s name— it was Joseph and not Selig! Odeda was also able to read most of the missing line, but still one word evaded her, and then Reuven Mohr replied to the posting—and he could translate the entire inscription including the missing word “etwa” meaning circa. The final translation with Odeda and Reuven’s suggested wording added to Rabbi Paskow’s translation:

*With the help of G-d*

*For the Yahrzeit of my Father of blessed memory, Adar 5, Circa February 14 Achille Levi 1872, 14 February*

Once we had the entire translation, “circa” made sense as the yahrzeit is based on the Hebrew calendar resulting in remembrance on a different date each year following the Gregorian calendar. [February 14, 1872 was the 5th of Adar that year confirmed using the JewishGen Calendar converter (http://www.jewishgen.org/jos/)].
History of Ventura County’s Famous Citizen

Having done this research it was intriguing, at least to me, to know more about one of Ventura County’s most famous Jewish residents. Achille Levy immigrated to the United States on the SS Hammonia (Hamburg- America- Line) leaving Hamburg for New York City arriving July 18, 1871. The page in French to be translated (see above) stated he was leaving for America on June 30, 1871 and checking on www.Ancestry.com searching immigration records with his name came up with the passenger lists. A photo of the ship was found on http://www.theshipslist.com.

Achille went to live with his maternal uncle, Isidore Weil, in the Northern California town of Dixon, Solano County, located 23 miles from Sacramento. (This information was provided by the Museum). He worked as a bookkeeper and clerk in his uncle’s store. He moved to Hueneme in Ventura County in 1873. The 1880 US census (www.ancestry.com) shows he lived with Moise Wolff, who immigrated with him as found on the Hamburg manifest (www.ancestry.com) and who was a distant cousin also from France, according to Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West by Harriet and Fred Rochlin (book in the JGSCV traveling library). He became partners with Moise in a general merchandise store. According to Rochlin he left the business after 6 years, traveled to Paris where he married Lucy Levy (distant cousin), and returned to Hueneme, Ventura County, California.

In Ventura County he set himself up as an agricultural broker in grain, hay, fruits, nuts and other produce. When farmers brought their produce to the wharf in Hueneme, Levy was there, at the scales, to offer them the best price based on telegraphed information from the San Francisco Produce and Call Board. Levy prospered by combining the functions of agricultural broker and banker, expanding his range of banking activities, accepting deposits and offering financial advice. Levy’s banking operations began in 1885. Ventura County’s agricultural expansion, with its demand for transportation, required financing. By 1895, Levy established himself as the premier local private banker, with a bank under his name-- the Bank of A. Levy in Oxnard in 1898. Levy's banking success led him to establish branch banks throughout Ventura County, with the main branch in Oxnard.

In 1905, the bank was incorporated as a state regulated bank with a capital of $200,000 and Levy as President. Eventually, the Bank of A. Levy became the largest bank in the county, until Bank of Italy, forerunner of the Bank of America created a branch in the county in the 1920s. When Levy died in 1922, he was the wealthiest individual in the county and paid the most income tax.

His 1900 passport application stated his birth date, where he lived, and the date and location of his US naturalization. As he was applying for a family passport, it listed his children, by name and age, his wife and himself (www.ancestry.com).

Levy also briefly served as postmaster of Hueneme in his store, thereby gaining a greater business acquaintance. He became a naturalized citizen in 1876 and registered to vote in 1879. Levy was elected to the town school board in 1890, served as a delegate to the County Board of Supervisors, joined the Free Masons, and was active in the local Republican Party.

By “Googling” Achille Levy’s name (www.google.com) we found a paper on the banking practices and some history of Achille’s (ftp://snde.rutgers.edu/Rutgers/wp/1999-05.pdf) early work career.

A number of families who immigrated to La Colonia (where Oxnard is now located) were from France, including Jews from the French province of Alsace. Among the first were Achille Levy, Leon Cerf, Moise L. Wolff and Samuel Weill, who established merchandise stores in Hueneme. (To learn more about the history of Oxnard and its early settlers read: http://developmentservices.cityofoxnard.org/Uploads/Planning/Historic-Survey_Oxnard-Survey-Final-Report.pdf)

Copies of all the documents found on Ancestry.com, i.e. his passport application, ships manifest, city directory pages, US census from 1880-1920 have been given to the Museum for their archives.
2011 Membership/Renewal Form
Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County (JGSCV)*
*Member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS)

www.JGSCV.org

Dues paid now are good through December 2011

Check one:
This is a New Membership________ Renewal________
Single $ 25.00____+$1.00** Family* $30.00 ______+$2.00**

*Family defined as two people living in the same household
** $1 per person is a voluntary donation to the IAJGS Stern Award, granted annually when it recognizes institutions for outstanding work in the creation and availability of resources for Jewish Genealogy.

Additional voluntary contributions:
Library Acquisition Fund $________ Programs Fund $________
(Suggested minimum voluntary contribution for either fund $5.00)

Make check payable to JGSCV and send with this completed form to:
Helene Rosen
28912 Fountainwood St.
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Name (Print) __________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
City _______________________________________________
State ______________________________________________
Zipcode + 4 _______________________________________
Day telephone ____________ Evening telephone ________
E-mail address _____________________________________

Please tell us what talents you can share (language skills, computer skills, translation, etc.).
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
2010-11 JGSCV Meeting Dates
All Meetings are held at Temple Adat Elohim
2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks

2010
October 4 – MONDAY, 7-9 PM, Celebrating JGSCV’S 5th Anniversary, Vincent Brook, Ost Meets West: Immigrant Film Moguls

November 8 – MONDAY 7-9 PM, Warren Blatt, Managing Director, JewishGen and JGSCV Board Member, An Introduction to Polish-Jewish Genealogical Research

December 6 – MONDAY, 7-9 PM, Elise Friedman, Genetic Genealogy Demystified: Understanding and Interpreting Your DNA Results. AND, Annual Chanukah Party and Membership Renewal Party.

2011
January 9 – SUNDAY, 1:30-3:30 PM, Authors! Authors! Authors! Five JGSCV members speak about books they have written: Warren Blatt, Werner Frank, Erica Miller (including signing), Helene Rosen and Mark Abbott Stern

February 13 – SUNDAY, 1:30-3:30 PM, Hal Bookbinder, Why Did Our Ancestors Leave A Nice Place Like the Pale?

March 6 – SUNDAY, 1:30-3:30 PM, Exclusive Research Day at the LA Family History Library

Future Programs TBD (ALL SUNDAY 1:30-3:30 PM: April 3, May 1, June 5, July 10)

NOTE: No meeting August 2011 as 31st IAJGS Conference will be hosted by JGS Greater Washington August 14-19 in Washington, DC

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