



GENERATIONS

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JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS
Affiliated with United Hebrew Congregation

Volume 11 Issue 2

February 2005

IMPORTANT DATES AT A GLANCE:

February Meeting

*Researching the Skeletons in
Your Family's Closet*

Tom A. Pearson and Kathy
Smith, St. Louis Public Library

Sunday, February 20
2:00 p.m.

Meeting Held At:

Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol
1227 North and South Road

February
Discussion Group
Thursday, February 24
1:00–3:00
United Hebrew
Room 15

March Meeting

Our Tenth Anniversary!
Stephen P. Morse
*Searching Databases in
One-Step and Searching Ellis
Island's Database in One-Step*

Sunday, March 13
2:00 p.m.

Meeting Held At:

United Hebrew Congregation
13788 Conway Rd.

March
Discussion Group
Thursday, March 24
1:00–3:00
United Hebrew
Room 15

February Meeting

*Researching the Skeletons in
Your Family's Closet*

Tom A. Pearson and Kathy Smith,
St. Louis Public Library

Slam the door shut! Rattle those cages! Oh, my gosh, you have skeletons in your family's closet! Tom Pearson and Kathy Smith of the St. Louis Public Library will give us a lively talk on researching our family skeletons. You know, those who were unwed mothers or orphans or paupers or were declared insane or maimed or disabled in war.

Or better yet, do you have someone who was a transported felon or just a plain ordinary criminal? How do you dig up and explain those skeletons? Are there individuals on your tree who committed a political crime? Did they have to register as aliens or were they blacklisted during the 1950s? Where do you go to find this kind of information?

These questions will be answered by Tom and Kathy, in what will be an interesting and informative afternoon on *Six Feet Under and No Wonder— Researching the Skeletons in Your Family's Closet*.

Tom Pearson has been with the St. Louis Public Library for over fifteen years. Currently he is part of St. Louis Public Library's Rare Books and Special Collections Department. Tom is co-editor with Kathy Smith of *Gateway Family Historian*, a quarterly newsletter published by St. Louis Public Library.

This meeting will take place at Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol in University City. Look for specific instructions on how to get there on Page 2. You won't want to miss this talk.

March Meeting

*Searching Databases in One-step
and
Searching Ellis Island's Database
in One-step*

Stephen P. Morse



Refreshments in honor of our 10th anniversary will be served between talks.

Admission is free for members of JGS St. Louis and is \$5 for non-members at the door.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear one of the Internet's premier database experts!

For more information
visit our Web site at
<www.jewishgen.org/jgs-stlouis>
or
call Ilene Wittels at 314-692-2444
or Joel Shedlofsky at 314-275-7804

It's That Time of Year

In the event that inclement weather coincides with a general or board meeting, please call one of the following to determine if the meeting will be canceled:

Jerry Goldberg	314-434-2566
Eunice Solomon	314-576-5269
Ilene Wittels	314-692-2444

President's Message

January's Meeting

The questions were fast. The audience was spellbound (or it seemed that way). Education at its finest. Yes, that was the environment for the January 16th meeting, "Ask the Panel." We are proud of our panelists, Peggy Nehmen, Ilene Murray, and Ann Fleming, substituting for Ed Murray. Interaction and discussion among the members during the questions proved that once again, there is nothing like a live instructive session. Thanks to our panelists for volunteering their time to answer questions from our members.

Audiotaping Programs

In the past few months, I have received a few requests for the audiotaping of our meetings. We discussed this subject at the January board meeting and rejected it for a number of reasons. Copyright protection (a number of our speakers are professionals), availability of a volunteer to record the sessions, duplicating and mailing the tapes. JGS would have no control of duplication of distributed tapes and that might place the society in a legal quandary. So for now, we will continue to NOT tape our meetings.

Two Proposals

At the December meeting, and as mentioned in my last President's Message, two proposals were put forth by the membership. The first was to emphasize an outreach program for meeting at other Jewish locations. The intent is to advertise our organization, obtain new members (stating that membership in United Hebrew Congregation is not a requirement for JGS membership), and learn of the history of these other organizations. We are working on this proposal thanks to our program chairperson, Joel Shedlofsky. The second proposal, investigate the joining of St. Louis Genealogical Society as a Special Interest Group (SIG) was defeated by the board. It was felt that JGS would lose its ethnic identity if it became part of another organization. It would also mean the termination of our affiliation with the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, and we still have no resolution of finding JGS leadership, even for a SIG.

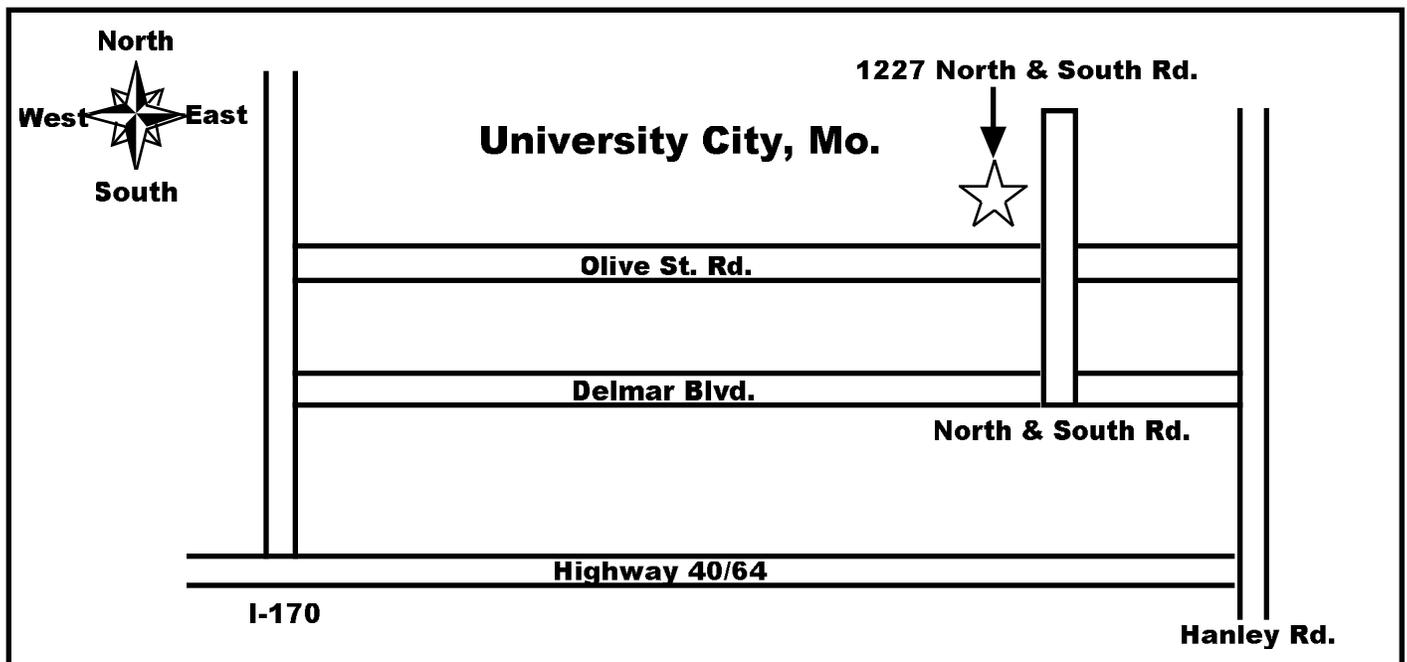
For the future, the board is obviously pursuing an outreach program. As we verify the success of the outreach program, we will continue to investigate what affiliation, if any, we should have with cultural or religious organizations.

We need members to continue to step forward, especially to assume leadership roles. As always, if you would like to volunteer or if you have further suggestions to improve JGS, you can reach me at <jerfransl@cs.com> or 314-434-2566.

Jerry Goldberg

JGS St. Louis President

Directions to Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol



The Chernoff Saga: Branches of Connection in Hawaii, Missouri, and Washington State

By Marilen Pitler

It all started with an e-mail received on March 14, 2004, at 9:57 p.m.: *Dear Marilen and Jordan, I am looking for my Chernoff connection. Can you tell me where your family is from? My grandmother was from Skidel, but I have no idea where my grandfather was from. I only know his name when he left Europe. Chernoff. I'll look forward to hearing back from you. Perhaps we can find a connection.*

Being the e-mail junkie that I am, I promptly responded at 10:33 p.m.: *The only thing I know about my grandfather is that, according to a cousin, he was born in Novgorod-Sevorsk, state of Chernigov (now Gorky).*

At 11:21 p.m. I received another e-mail from the correspondent, Leah: *Thank you so much Marilen, I'll let you know if I can find any connection. I do know that my mother thought that they were somehow connected to Howard Chernoff, who was very active in Virginia in radio and later on the board of curators of the new San Diego Zoo in California.*

That third e-mail was the clincher. On March 15, 2004, at 12:03 a.m., I wrote: *Ohmygod, WE MUST BE RELATED! Howard Chernoff is the cousin to whom I referred. . .*

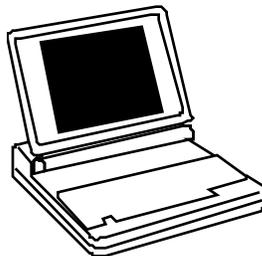
The rest of our story is now history, but it is a history that just keeps growing and growing and growing. There is no end to the growth of family trees; they just keep maturing in all directions. Our saga is especially incredible because it was less than six months later when we met face-to-face. Leah traveled from the state of Washington to St. Louis, where the two of us were met by Leah's first cousin from Hawaii, Harriet, and her husband Bob. Leah and Harriet share the same grandfather who was a brother to my grandfather, thus making us second cousins. The more we talked, the more we shared stories, the more we shared pictures, the more we knew we were related. Our hearts and souls melded together; we, indeed, became one family.

But, I'm jumping ahead. . . . How did Leah even find me? She logged on to JewishGen, <www.jewishgen.org>, and searched through the JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF), <www.jewishgen.org/jgff/>. I have done the same thing in the past without success, but as our story points out, it is important to be tenacious and keep going back. Leah saw my name and e-mail address and decided to contact me. In shortly over two hours of correspondence we won the greatest Bingo game ever. We won the entire board!

(Continued on Page 7)

St. Louis County Library Offers Free Computer Classes March 2005 Schedule

St. Louis County Library is offering free computer classes for patrons this winter at the computer lab in the Headquarters Building on Lindbergh Blvd. Unlike previous years, this winter's registration is being done monthly. If you would like to take one of the March classes, you must register beginning 15 February. Please call 314-994-9411, Ext. 209, or register online at <www.slcl.org>. These classes fill up quickly, so call without delay to insure your spot. (This schedule is for the Headquarters Building only; for classes at other libraries, please see the Web site.)



March

Wed., March 2	Mouse Skills for Beginners, 2-4 p.m.
Thurs., March 3	Advanced MS Word, Mail Merge, 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Mon., March 7	Customizing Your Web Browser, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Tues., March 8	Intro to Your Computer and Windows, 2:00-4:30 p.m.
Wed., March 9	Intro to Microsoft Word, 2:00-4:30 p.m.
Thurs., March 10	Advanced MS Word, Multi-Paged Documents, 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Wed., March 16	Intro to the Internet, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Thurs., March 17	Intermediate MS Excel, Part One, 9:30 a.m.-noon
Wed., March 23	Intermediate Internet, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Thurs., March 24	Intermediate MS Excel, Part Two, 9:30 a.m.-noon
Wed., March 30	SLCL's Online Catalog, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Thurs., March 31	Intermediate MS Word, 2:00-4:30 p.m.

Get Well Wishes



JGS member, Ed Murray, is recovering from abdominal surgery. We all wish him a speedy and complete recovery.

Meet the Members: JGS Founders, Art and Sylvia Jaffe

By Sylvia Letvak Jaffe

Art and I founded JGS St. Louis in 1995 with just one purpose in mind. We wanted to encourage people with Jewish ancestry to research their family trees. After taking a beginning genealogy class, we realized that a Jewish genealogy society was needed in St. Louis. United Hebrew Congregation agreed with us and gave JGS a home and a section of their library for the society to develop as a resource for Jewish researchers.

Art and I first became interested in our ancestry when our eldest daughter was born in 1950. We had received a baby book as a gift. We began to save announcements, invitations, and other life cycle events received from family members. We collected family photos, obits, and articles about the St. Louis family in local newspapers and in bulletins from organizations and synagogues. However, we just filed away the material.

We began organizing all the accumulated material in the 1990s. Art and I now each have our own computers. Art's research has led him back to 1530. He has learned that his paternal great-great grandfather and his great-grandfather were noted rabbis in Poland. Art also learned that his dad had two sisters that he had never mentioned. Both sisters were killed in the Holocaust, as was a sister who lived in Paris. Art reconnected with one sister's children who lived in Israel. He also joined the Jaffe Family Association in Israel. Art has solved a family mystery concerning the first and second wives of his maternal grandfather. He learned that the two wives were sisters even though they spelled their maiden surname differently. He was able to trace their siblings and their families.

I was fortunate enough to know my maternal grandparents and my aunts and uncles, as they all lived in St. Louis. I have reconnected with my paternal cousins in Canada and my Holocaust survivor cousins living in Los Angeles, California. I learned that I had relatives in Spain and South America when the Spanish relative found me through JewishGen.

We have organized in binders all of our genealogical records. We have put together a family pictorial book for each surname from past to present. A newsletter was produced and sent to our respective families relating our research progress. We are now working on writing our individual paternal and maternal family histories.

Art and I are both past presidents of the society.

Art was the group's first JGS librarian. I served as editor of *Generations* and publicity chair for the first five years. Art and I devoted years of Tuesday mornings to manning the library and indexing cemetery and marriage records. I have taught genealogy classes and headed the JGS Discussion Group. Art and I also volunteer to help researchers of Jewish genealogy at Special Collections at the Headquarters of the St. Louis County Library. I have spoken at several national genealogy conferences and



have been writing the monthly feature "Meet the Members" for *Generations*.

Art retired after 45 years as the Joint Credit Manager for all the major railroads in the Midwest headquartered at Terminal Railroad. He also served for 25 years as secretary-treasurer for Lodge 20. In the 1950s I began to write social news columns and features for the Sunshine Publications and the Missouri edition of the *Jewish Post and Opinion*. Then I wrote freelance articles for national publications. In 1965 I became public relations director for Weight Watchers in Greater Missouri and Illinois. In that capacity I began *News & Views*, the monthly publication for Weight Watchers. I retired, as Art did, in 1988 but continued to produce the *News & Views* publication.

We have five grandchildren and are looking forward to the birth of our first great-grandchild in April. Art and I are members of Post and Auxiliary 346 of the Jewish War Veterans. I was president of the auxiliary in 1954. Art is a past vice-president of the Post. Art served in the Army in World War II and fought in three battles in Europe. I am a past vice-president of the Southeast District of the Missouri Press Women. During my term I formed the group's St. Louis chapter. Art served as president of a couples' group at the original Mishkan Israel Synagogue. We are now members of United Hebrew Congregation of which I am a past board member.

Art is researching the surnames of Jaffe in Knyszyn, Poland; Grinschpan in Sokoly and Knyszyn, Poland; and Kaplan and Ichkowsky/Itskovski in Kiev, Ukraine. I am researching Litwak/Litvak in Male Sedlilishche, Ukraine; Licht in Berezno, Ukraine; and Gilman/Gelman/Gellman in Koretz, Poland.

Officers and Board Members

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Funeral Home Indexing	Jerry Goldberg
Marriage Indexing	Eunice Solomon
<i>Generations</i>	Ilene Murray
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Finance	Morton Bearman

Webmaster TBA

Members At Large

Eunice Solomon Carolyn Altman

Founders

Sylvia Jaffe Art Jaffe

Web site:

www.jewishgen.org/jgs-StLouis

How To Contact Us:

Society E-Mail Address:

jgsstl@att.net

President:

jerfransl@cs.com

Generations Editor:

ilenemurray@mindspring.com

Yizkor Books Online

As reported in *Generations* in June 2004, the Doro Jewish Division of the New York Public Library has been digitizing its vast collection of Yizkor books and placing them online. As of this writing, they have completed 650 out of 700 books. The address is <www.nypl.org/research/chss/jws/yizkorbooks_intro.cfm>. When you get there, you click on "Yizkor Books Online."

Each book has been reproduced in its entirety. You go page by page, including blanks, flyleaves, etc. They are in the process of making the site easier to use, as it was previously only possible to go ten pages at a time. There is a plug-in that you can download, if necessary, so the pages can be enlarged and scrutinized more carefully.



Genealogy Events of Interest: February/March 2005

St. L. Genealogical Society & St. L. County Library Present:

Saturday, 12 February 2005 10:00 a.m. at Co. Library Headquarters Auditorium
Maps: Where to Find Them and How to Use Them
Speaker: Pamela Boyer Porter, CGRS, CGL

Saturday, 12 March 2005 10:00 a.m. at Co. Library Headquarters Auditorium
Beyond the Basics: Getting the Most From Census Records
Speaker: Ted Steele

For more information on this program, go to <www.stlgs.org> or call 314-647-8547

What We Learn from Others: The Sharing of Ideas

By Marilen Pitler

Branches, JGS of Greater Miami, Inc., December 2004

“Yizkor Books—Town Memorial Books and Their Use in Family Research” by Marian Rubin

(Permission to reprint this article has been granted by *Branches*, the newsletter of the JGS of Greater Miami.)

What are Yizkor books?

Most Yizkor books, memorializing Jewish communities destroyed in World War II, were written in Israel after the Holocaust between the 1950s and the 1970s. They were written by the natives of the towns, both survivors and those who had emigrated to Palestine before the war. There are more than 1,500 Yizkor books, with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem holding the entire collection. Yizkor books present a rich portrait of Jewish life in the communities of Europe.

What information is in Yizkor books?

Yizkor books vary in size from fewer than 75 pages to more than 800 pages. The following are a few of the topics common to many of the books:

- Photographs of people in the Jewish community
- The history of the Jewish community
- Religious life; rabbis of the town
- Community life and institutions; well known personalities of the community
- Growth of Zionism in the town
- The community during the Holocaust
- Remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust

What information about my family might I find in a Yizkor book?

Rabbis, cantors, scholars, journalists, and those active in organizations are frequently mentioned. References to businesses in the community may mention “Altman, the shoemaker,” or Goldman’s mill, or the owner of an inn, or a kosher butcher. Some books have group photos of members of organizations, with their identification. Usually, there are lists of those who perished in the Holocaust. There are nuggets of information that might be helpful in tracing a family. For example, in the Rzeszow Yizkor book, the city of post-war residence is shown next to an author’s name, i.e., Dr. Shlomo Horowitz, Haifa.

One article in the Rzeszow book, names four men who remained in Warsaw after the war, converted to Catholicism, and changed their names. The author included the new surnames. Genealogists from these families might say, “I can’t find any trace of my grandfather’s brother,” until they find these clues.

The books are written mostly in Hebrew and Yiddish. How can I find a translation?

The main source of translations is JewishGen’s online Yizkor Book Translation Project. Many books are being translated, with chapters appearing online as they are completed. A few books have photos online. To see if the Yizkor book for your town has been translated or is in the process of translation, go to: www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/translations.html.

How do I find out if a Yizkor book exists for my town?

If there is no book for your town in JewishGen’s Yizkor Book Project, try these sources to learn if a book was written for your town:

- Look at the end of your town’s entry in the book *Where Once We Walked* by Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Amdur Sack, for the letters “YB,” which indicate that a Yizkor book exists for the town.
- The Israel Genealogical Society has posted an index to their Yizkor book holdings at Yad Vashem. Visit: www.isragen.org.il/ROS/ARCHIVES/AppendixA.html.
- A listing of Yizkor books also begins on page 85 in *From Generation to Generation* by Arthur Kurzweil.

Where can I purchase the Yizkor book for my town?

The National Yiddish Book Center is re-printing some Yizkor books to order. Read their Web site to find out whether the book you want is being reprinted. Go to www.yiddishbookcenter.org and click “Buy Yiddish Books.” On the next screen, click “Yizkor books.”

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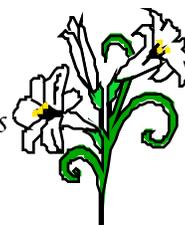
For those of you in St. Louis, the Special Collections Department at the St. Louis County Library Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Boulevard, has a growing collection of Yizkor books. Go to the library’s Web site, www.slcl.org, to view their holdings.

✳

See, also, the related article on Page Five about the New York Public Library’s Yizkor book project.

With Sympathy

We extend our deepest condolences to Program Chair, Joel Shedlofsky, and his wife, Linda, for the death of Linda’s mother.



The Chernoff Saga: Branches of Connection in Hawaii, Missouri, and Washington State

(Continued from Page 3)

My grandfather had ten siblings. My mother, an only child, was ten-years-old when he died from pneumonia. Shortly thereafter, my grandmother moved from Akron to Chicago and remarried. My mother lost contact with her father's side of the family, except for two cousins, Howard and his sister. My grandfather's name was Ned; Howard's father was Morris. That's the extent of the Chernoff family I knew until that fateful evening on March 14.

I had mentioned that the only family information I had was a note Howard had written my mother many years ago. It listed the names of my grandfather's siblings, including some dates. Leah also had a scrap of paper her mother had retained containing some names of her grandfather's siblings. The names matched! She also had her grandfather's death certificate containing more information.

Leah's grandfather was known by another name. As the story goes, he changed his name while a youth in Russia to avoid the Russian draft. He took the name of a deceased soldier. When he came to this country, he retained the name he adopted. He always told the family, though, that he was a Chernoff. On the back of one of his pictures he even wrote the name Louis. This presented another link to our puzzle. One of my grandfather's brothers was named Louis. I do not have any pictures of Louis, but in my mother's vast collection of photos and letters, I did find one of another brother, Harry. In scanning photos back and forth, Leah discovered a photo she had of a "Harry Chernoff;" the photos were of the same man.

Then, in September, came the fateful day of our meeting. I took one look at Leah and gasped; she was the mirror image of my mother 40 years ago. We had shared pictures back and forth, but nothing was like the chemistry created as we stared at one another. I did not see a strong resemblance between Leah and Harriet when Harriet and Bob arrived at the airport, but that following Sunday at a family dinner at my home, we discovered who our daughter, Lisa, looks like. We were never quite sure; Lisa really did not look like anyone in our family. When together, we had no doubt; Lisa was definitely a Chernoff; the resemblance to Harriet is striking!

Meetings and holidays do come to an end, as did our week together in September, one we will never forget. The treasured moment for me was the realization that I now had two cousins with whom I would share the rest of my life. Growing up, I was never close with cousins. Now I have two with whom

each day begins with a "good morning" e-mail and each day ends with a "good evening" e-mail. Words are the beauty contained in the lines of writing; they convey the "heart." We will be in daily contact for the rest of our lives. For genealogists, if not for everyone else in this world, the age of modernity has been a blessing. Leah, Harriet, and I would not have met had it not been for the Internet and JewishGen.

As one of my cousins said, "The cream rises to the top and now we get to savor the sweetness of it. We are forever intertwined and what a *mechya* it is to be reaching out and learning who we were, in turn opening the threads of who we are."

How interesting are the branches of a tree, much like the stitches in a quilt. The branches connect the leaves to the trunk, just as the stitches in the quilt connect the patches of material. Genealogy is the connecting thread between people. The stitches remain part of our fabric forever, they are the tiny stitches of love. The Chernoff Saga has not ended. . .

Descendants of Jacob Chernoff Marilen, Harriet, and Leah

- 1 Jacob Chernoff 1833
- 2 Nathan (Ned) Chernoff
- 3 Mildred Chernoff
- 4 **Marilen**
- 2 Louis (Joseph) Chernoff Goodman
- 3 Harry Chernoff Goodman
- 4 **Harriet**
- 3 Zelma Sadie Chernoff Goodman
- 4 **Leah**



The Cousins: Harriet, Leah, and Marilen having fun in St. Charles

Inquiries

I am seeking information about T. W. BLAIR who was married to Ruth HILCH. I believe they lived in St. Louis, Mo. and she died in 1970 or 1971.

Cathy Blair
349 Shores Parkway
Rogersville, MO 65742
Twinfish21stC@aol.com

I am seeking information about Max SINGER. His parents were Elconin and Chiah-Esther Singer. Wife's name is unknown, but he had at least two children: Nathan and Sylvia. Max was older than his next youngest sibling, Ida, who was born in 1867. One final potential clue: his sister, Sylvia, died as the result of an "accident" in Bourbon, Mo. on March 31, 1933—but she's buried in Detroit. If she was in Missouri visiting her brother Max, then perhaps he lived near Bourbon.

Paul Gross
29770 Ravenscroft
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-2127
248-788-7745
paulg@gatecom.com

I am seeking information about my uncle, Mack LANDSMAN, and my aunt, Florence (Landsman) SCHNEIDER.
Helen Gabay

50 Hileen Drive
Kings Park, NY 11754
hgabay@suffolk.lib.ny.us

I am seeking information about Louis and Rae ZENO. They are buried at Mt. Olive in St. Louis. He was born 7 April 1864 and died 6 March 1939. She was born 6 January 1873 and died 20 May 1926. We believe he was born in Austria but she may have been born in the St. Louis area. I am searching for any information about them.

Sheila Zeno
25817 Neighborhood Dr.
Hensley, AR 72065
H. 501-888-3824/ W. 501-221-3800
slo_zeno@yahoo.com

I am seeking information about the Jewish Orphans Home Society of St. Louis where my mother lived in the 1920s. Her name was Dora ZIMMERMAN or ZIMELMAN.

Gail Benick
141 Bombay avenue
Toronto, Ontario M3H 1C5
CANADA
H. 416-638-8963/ B. 905-845-9430
gbenick@hotmail.com



Remember
your Sweetie
with a Tribute
Card for
Valentine's
Day.

Your
generosity
helps us
expand
our library.

Contact
Carolyn
Altman
at (314)
432-2757
for more
information.

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8724 Teasdale Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63124



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