

# Jewish Genealogy Downunder

Quarterly  
newsletter  
of the  
Australian  
Jewish  
Genealogical  
Society  
(Vic) Inc.

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Melbourne, Australia

[www.ajgs-vic.org.au](http://www.ajgs-vic.org.au)



'Remember the Holocaust', by artist Adam Steiner, is one of the many artworks on display at the Jewish Holocaust Centre in Melbourne. For information about genealogical resources held at the centre, see page 3.

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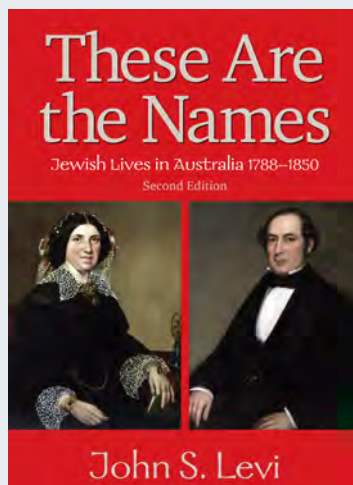
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## Coming soon

The second edition of John S Levi's popular seller *These Are the Names: Jewish Lives in Australia 1788-1850* is due to be released in April by Melbourne University Publishing.

The book contains biographical entries for more than 1600 Jews who settled in Australia between 1788 and 1850.

The second edition includes extensive research and names discovered since the first edition, expanding upon the history of settlement of Jewish people in Australia from 1788.

Pre-orders can be made via the following link at the MUP e-store:  
<https://estore.mup.com.au/search?q=these+are+the+names>.

## Jewish Genealogy Downunder

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### Editorial policy

We welcome contributions from members which will help others further their research. This might include sharing recent findings or the discovery of interesting resources. The editor has the right to accept or reject any material submitted or edit as might be appropriate. Material appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted by other newsletters as long as proper attribution is given.

*Jewish Genealogy Downunder* is free to all members of AJGS (Vic) Inc.

### AJGS (Vic) Inc. Committee of Management

President	Allan Jankie
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### Makor Library Liaison

Leonie Fleiszig

### Australian Jewish Genealogy Internet

**Discussion Group:** www.ajgs.org.au

### AJGS (Vic) Inc. membership fees

Individual	\$35
Family	\$40
Concession	\$15

## NEW MEMBERS

The AJGS (Vic) extends a warm welcome to new members:

- Rina Harber
- Michael Kino
- Michael Koodak
- Perla Leinkram
- Michael Perkal

## EDITORIAL

A recent headline in a new British publication on the news stands, aptly named *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*, proclaimed in bold print on its front page: 'Genealogy is big business'. They were not exaggerating.

Their lead article reports on the news that Ancestry.com has filed a preliminary registration statement with the US Securities and Exchange Commission in preparation for going public on the US Stock Market. Ancestry hopes to raise \$75 million to add to its considerable war chest.

It continues: 'A few recent news items have shown that family history has become a very competitive business in the last few years. Apparently, genealogy is now an industry that is taken notice of in the financial papers – and it seems to me the big players are getting ready to square up to each other.'

The well-known Jewish website MyHeritage issued a press release on 28 November 2012, announcing that 'it has acquired long-time rival Geni.com and closed a new US\$25 million funding round led by Bessemer Venture Partners (BVP), with existing investors Index Ventures and Accel Partners also participating. Geni.com founder David Sacks and BVP partner Adam Fisher are joining the MyHeritage Board of Directors'.

It further announces that the acquisition reinforces 'MyHeritage's position as a global power player in the family history industry and accelerates its vision of helping families everywhere build and share their legacy online'.

Listen to the language! They are not writing about the mining industry – this announcement involves a popular hobby where people are now prepared to dip into their pocket to obtain instantaneous records which, in earlier decades, demanded time, ingenuity and patience.

So how does one explain this phenomenon?

First there is a changing demographic, especially in Australia. A growing population of retirees with acquired internet skills and time on their hands are keen to assist their grandchildren with their school roots projects.

Well-designed television programs such as *Faces of America* and *Who Do You Think You Are?* appeal to people to join the online community by suggesting easy shortcuts to searching.

Furthermore, the industry has offered this genealogy community more goodies by spending hundreds of millions of dollars digitising and publishing historical records. With more records available online for free, or at a lower cost, than in earlier years, who can resist the addiction to stay in the hunt for ancestors?

Finally, the proliferation of online social networking has encouraged sharing and collaboration with family and friends, which in turn acts as an incentive to join an expanding network creating and building more family trees.

These factors are not lost on entrepreneurs who see the potential for bigger and bigger business.

**Lionel Sharpe**  
Editor





## A visit to the Jewish Holocaust Centre

Members of the AJGS (Vic) committee visited the Jewish Holocaust Centre in Melbourne recently to tour the centre's facilities and resources.

"It's important that we understand what resources of genealogical interest are held at the Holocaust Centre, and it's equally important that staff at the centre can direct their visitors to seek advice and information from the AJGS (Vic) and use our resources held in The Oberman Room at the Lamm Library," explained AJGS (Vic) president Allan Jankie.

Holocaust Centre executive director Warren Fineberg, who hosted the visit, said the centre held the largest Holocaust-based library in the Southern Hemisphere.

Resources at the centre that may be of interest to those undertaking genealogical research include the following:

- Visual History Archive (52,000 video testimonies of Holocaust survivors and witnesses in 56 countries and in 32 languages; includes more than 2000 testimonies recorded in Australia).
- German Reparation Forms.
- Jaeger Deportation Lists – Lists of groups deported during the *Einsatzgruppen* (SS death squads).
- A large collection of biographical books by Holocaust survivors, and copies of family trees developed from roots projects by students in Jewish schools in Melbourne.
- The Phillip Maisels Collection includes 1300 video testimonies and 200 audio testimonies by Melbourne-based Holocaust survivors.
- The JHC Library includes a range of resources available to assist people researching their family history or planning a visit to Poland, such as maps and reference material, Yizkor books (commemorative books of places and people), volumes listing the names of ghetto inmates and registers of survivors compiled after the war.

The library's online catalogue can be accessed at the Holocaust Centre's library or via the internet at [www.makorlibrary.com](http://www.makorlibrary.com).

In addition, there is a research room that has computers with access to Yad Vashem and the Spielberg interviews. There is also a large collection of Holocaust subject matter from newspapers, local and overseas, for research on topics such as racism, anti-Semitism and survivor stories.

In 2013, the JHC library will be open to the public at selected times on week-days, and a newly appointed librarian will be on hand to assist with enquiries.

For further information, contact the Jewish Holocaust Centre on (03) 9528 1985.



Allan Jankie



Warren Fineberg

# Honouring the late Les Oberman

A gathering of some 70 relatives and friends of the late Les Oberman (1927–2009), together with past and current committee members of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (Vic), attended a re-dedication of a resource room in honour of the memory of Les Oberman.

The function was held at the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia in South Caulfield on Sunday afternoon, 9 December 2012. It was chaired by Allan Jankie, president of the AJGS (Vic), and featured speeches by Sam Tatarka, president of the Zionist Council of Victoria, Lionel Sharpe, secretary of the AJGS (Vic), Sonya Oberman and members of the Oberman family. The guests were also invited for refreshments.

Les was elected president of the AJGS (Vic) in April 1999 and remained in this position until his untimely passing on 21 January 2009, a few days before his 82nd birthday. An obituary appeared in *Jewish Genealogy Downunder*, Vol 11, No 1, March–April 2009, outlining his contribution to Jewish genealogy.



In 2010, the Australian Jewish Historical Society (Vic) and the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (Vic) agreed to name their combined resource room at the Makor Jewish Community Library 'The Oberman Room', and with the relocation of the resources to the newly built Lamm Jewish Library of Australia, it seemed appropriate to transfer the name to a newly acquired room in the building.



The Late Les Oberman's family members (left to right): Jacob Oberman (son), Lenard Oberman (son), Michael Oberman (brother), Sonya Oberman (widow), Lilian Nitzan (sister) and Mark Oberman (son). Lenard and Mark travelled from Brisbane for the ceremony.





Sonya Oberman speaks to family and friends about her late husband's love of genealogy and his dedication to the AJGS (Vic).



Sam Tatarka, president of the Zionist Council of Victoria, welcomes visitors to the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia.



### Kurt Friedlaender retires as treasurer

The AJGS (Vic) presented a Certificate of Appreciation on Sunday 9 December 2012 to Kurt Friedlaender on his retirement as treasurer after 13 years of service in that position.

Pictured are AJGS (Vic) secretary Lionel Sharpe and president Allan Jankie with Inga and Kurt Friedlaender.

A Certificate of Appreciation will also be presented to Dr David Cohen, who retired recently from the AJGS (Vic) Committee of Management. David was unable to attend on the day.

### The AJGS (Vic) and AJHS (Vic)

collections in the  
Lamm Jewish Library of Australia  
will be open in 2013 on

**Sundays from 2 pm to 5 pm**

306 Hawthorn Road,  
Caulfield South, 3162

(closed Easter Sunday, 31 March)

AJGS (Vic) committee members will  
be available to assist members of the  
public with their genealogical research  
from 3 February 2013.

### All welcome

For access on Mondays to Thursdays,  
please make an appointment with one  
of the following:

AJGS (Vic) president Allan Jankie:  
allanjankie@gmail.com

AJGS (Vic) secretary Lionel Sharpe:  
sharpe@aapt.net.au

AJHS (Vic) president Howard Freeman:  
howfree40@gmail.com

AJHS (Vic) secretary Liz James:  
lizronjames@hotmail.com

# Updating the British Jewry Book of Honour for World War 1

I recently received a request from London-based Martin Sugarman, who is editing a revised edition of a book pertaining to the Roll of Honour of Jewish men from all Commonwealth nations who fought and died in World War 1.

The project is titled 'Updating the British Jewry Book of Honour – World War 1'.

I first met Martin Sugarman at the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies conference in London in 2001. He spoke about the work of AJEX – the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, an organisation which was launched in England some 80 years ago. Its current membership includes more than 4000 individuals who served in the British Armed Forces either during or after the Second World War.

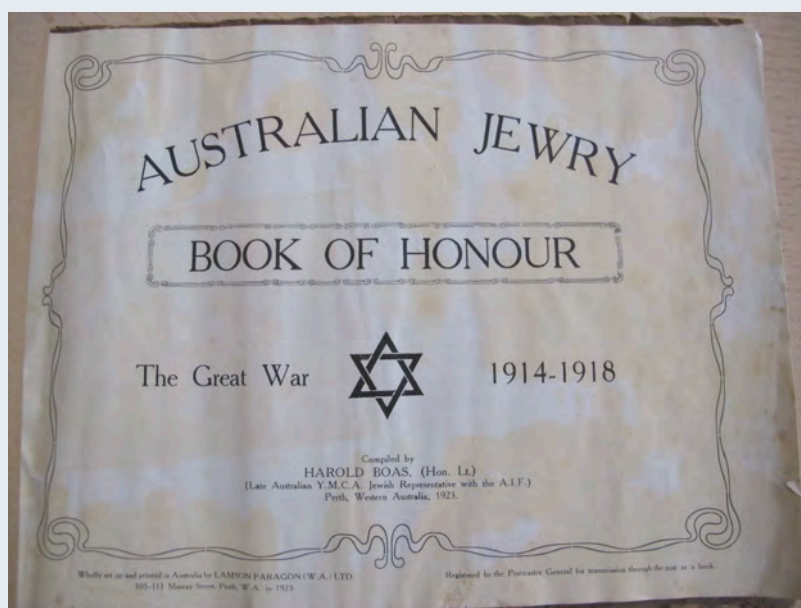
The 'British Jewry Book of Honour – World War 1' was originally published in 1922 to permanently record and honour the contribution made by the 50,000 Jews who served in the British and colonial forces during that war. The book was edited by Reverend Michael Adler, who was the first Jewish chaplain to serve in the British Armed Forces.

The publication describes Jewish enlistment, casualties, military honours, Jewish units and the work of Jewish hospitals and other Jewish institutions and agencies. Importantly, it contains alphabetical lists of those killed in action, those who were awarded military honours and the nominal rolls of Jews who served, listed by service and by regiment. There are indexed photographs of many of these individuals. In addition, the book contains letters of support and acknowledgement from distinguished men of the day, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Harold Pollins, a well-known English historian, is now updating it and Martin Sugarman, as editor, is rectifying many omissions and errors found in the original book. The final work will probably be produced as a CD, with limited availability in hard copy.

Martin Sugarman sought my help to check out the possible Jewish background of 20 deceased diggers with surnames such as Bargmann, Cohen, Freeman, Jacobs, Levin, Moss, Naphtaly, Samuels, Segal, Zimmer etc.

These men were buried in such well-known cemeteries as Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery and Bazentin-le-Petit Military Cemetery, and most have crosses on their graves.



The Australian Jewry Book of Honour was published in 1923, one year after the British publication.

My first task was to examine their military files on the National Archives of Australia website at [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au). All files have been digitised and are freely open for inspection online. After I examined these men's application to join the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), it quickly became apparent that they had nominated their religious affiliation as Anglican, Church of England, Congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and so on in the official records. While many no doubt had a Christian background in their family of origin or had married a non-Jewish partner, a few may have had other motives in not disclosing their Jewish affiliation.

I reported back my findings to Martin Sugarman, who in turn sent me another list of 46 names reported as deceased and mostly buried in graves under the supervision of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/>). Many were listed on the Villers-Bretonneux Australian National Memorial in the Somme department of France. The memorial lists 10,773 names of soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force with no known grave who were killed between 1916, when Australian forces arrived in France and Belgium, and towards the end of the war.

Sugarman suggested 17 graves bearing crosses that required further investigation.

I found only one grave with a cross, that of Private Simon Springer, who, on enlistment, stated his religion as 'Hebrew'. I notified Martin Sugarman, who immediately reported the error to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Simon Springer (SN 6884) was born in Melbourne and enlisted in Sydney, New South Wales.



The AIF Project database had noted this error and corrected the record. Springer was single, 34 years of age on enlistment on 23 May 1917, was a storeman living in NSW, joined the 35th Battalion, embarked from Sydney, and died a Prisoner of War on 16 April 1918. Private Springer gave as next-of-kin his sister, Mrs Kate Kilby of Balfour Street, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

On 22 October 1918, Mrs Kilby received an official letter informing her that Simon 'died on 16th April 1918 whilst Prisoner of War in German hands at Main Dressing Station at the farm du Bois B'hussart, France, from wounds received in action (right arm fractured) and was buried at Soldiers Cemetery, Bois d'Hussart'.

It went on: 'The utmost care and attention is being devoted where possible to the graves of our soldiers. It is understood that photographs are being taken as soon as is possible and these will be transmitted to the next-of-kin when available.' Whether she received the photo of the grave we do not know.

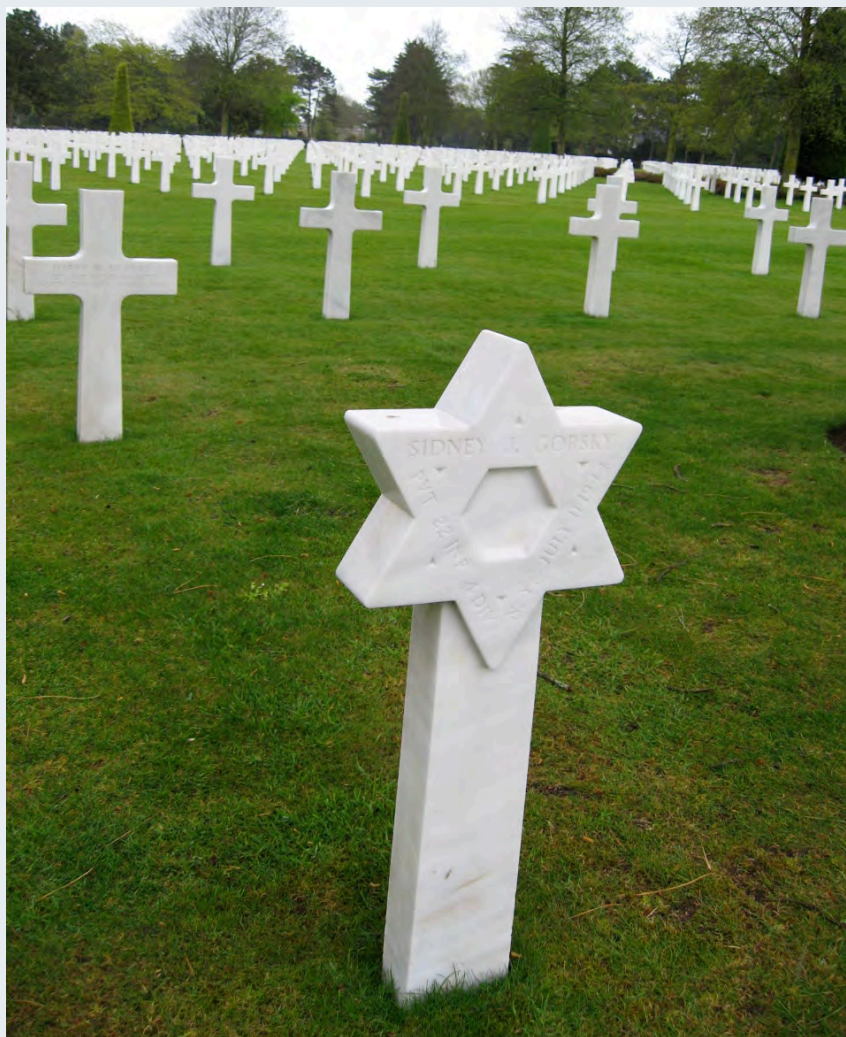
I was also able to confirm that one Jewish soldier who was listed as missing had returned safely and died later in Western Australia in 1931.

(The late Walter Jona AM has written that 'statistics of Jewish enlistments in the 1914–1918 war reveal that out of a total Australian Jewish population of less than 18,000, more than 2300, or in excess of 12 per cent, enlisted voluntarily in the AIF, as against 9 per cent for the whole nation'.)

The re-edited publication of this Book of Honour will no doubt stimulate interest in the participation of Jews in World War 1.

### Useful resources for World War 1 family research

- National Archives of Australia: [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au).
- *Australian Jewry – Book of Honour, The Great War 1914–1918*, compiled by Harold Boas, Perth, Western Australia, 1923.
- *Russian Anzacs in Australian History*, by Elena Gover, UNSW Press in association with NAA, Australia, 2005. During the First World War, around one thousand Russian-born servicemen fought in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). They were the largest national group in the AIF after British, New Zealand and Canadian-born servicemen. Biographical records



in this book are available for searching online at <http://russiananzacs.elena.id.au>.

- The AIF Project – Australian ANZACS in the Great War: 1914–1918. This project provides details on 330,000 men and women who served overseas in the first AIF. See [www.aif.adfa.edu.au/index.html](http://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/index.html).
- Mapping our Anzacs: <http://mappingouranzacs.naa.gov.au/>. This is a tool to browse 375,971 records of service in the Australian Army during World War I according to the person's place of birth or enlistment.
- The Spirits of Gallipoli: [www.spirits-of-gallipoli.com/index.htm](http://www.spirits-of-gallipoli.com/index.htm). This project provides details of sources, including reference books, newspapers and general sources where photos and information on the men can be found.

This newsletter will advise readers when the new CD described above is available.

### Lionel Sharpe

*Special thanks to Kim Phillips of Sydney for suggesting relevant military documents.*

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**Martin Sugarman's book on Jewish prisoners of war of the Japanese will be published in 2013 by Valentine Mitchell, UK. There are several chapters concerning Australian Jews in the book.**

# My cousin the nun – part two

by Helen Jankie

In the December 2011 issue of *Jewish Genealogy Downunder (JGD)*, I told how my family and I visited an elderly cousin of mine, Rachel Dronzek, who had survived the Holocaust by hiding in the forest outside of her home in Lomza, Poland, and who had subsequently sought refuge (in 1944) in a Benedictine Church and become a nun.

Sister Paula, as she is now known, has spent the past 68 years as a Benedictine Nun, the last 36 years living in Jerusalem in the Benedictine Monastery situated on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Old City.

Last May, my husband, Allan, and I, together with Allan's sister Gina and bother-in-law Sam, travelled to Poland. For us it was the first time visiting there, the birthplace of all four of our parents. Gina and Sam had been to Poland on a number of occasions previously. We wanted to visit all the places where our parents had lived and other places that had a 'connection' to their ancestors. (Our trip will be the subject of an article in a future edition of *JGD*.)

One of the places on our list to visit was Lomza. We wanted to see if we could learn more about Sister Paula's (Rachel's) story. So, on a day that included visiting the towns of Wegrow (east of Warsaw), Treblinka and Ostroleka (north-east of Warsaw), we found ourselves on the road to Lomza, a short drive east.

We arrived at about 5 pm and stopped at a coffee shop so that our guide could figure out exactly where the convent we wanted to see was located. It turned out that we were around the corner from it! So we set off by foot and arrived about five minutes later at the front entrance of a magnificent old building at 32 Dworna Street.

The Opactwo Miniszek Benedyktyniek was completed in 1597 and has been in continual use by the Benedictine Sisters since. We waited outside while our guide went in to see if we could visit unannounced. After a short time, he came back to the door and ushered us inside to a large room, which had a white iron grate across the last section of the room.

Two Sisters, one in her mid-30s and the other much older, were waiting for us, seated behind a small opening in the grate. We sat down on some chairs in front of the opening and spent the next 90 minutes in their company. It was an amazing experience. They spoke no English, and so our guide acted as interpreter. They advised that under 'normal circumstances' we would have needed to make an appointment to speak with them. But, they saw our arrival as some sort of 'sign from the Almighty', as that morning they had received a postcard from Sister Paula in Jerusalem, after a longer-than-normal absence



of communication from her. It transpired that the older of the two sisters had met Sister Paula at the convent after arriving there in 1949, and the two became close companions until Sister Paula left for Jerusalem in 1976.

Having known Sister Paula so well during that time, she was able to fill in some of the blanks we had about that period in Sister Paula's life from the time when she ran off into the forest with her parents to when she arrived at the convent. She told us how as the Russian army advanced west through Poland, Sister Paula (by then the only survivor of her family) took refuge at various farmhouses. At the last of them, where she stayed some months, she spent her time reading the only books that were in the barn where she was staying, and they were all Catholic bibles and commentaries. A local priest, who knew she was hiding there, gave her assistance and aid, and it was he who eventually led her to the convent. When we asked the Sister why Sister Paula chose this particular convent, she exclaimed: "Because she knew it – she had lived across the road before the war and had played in the convent grounds as a child."

The original house where her family had lived (on the corner of Dworna and Szkolna streets) has now been replaced with a new one, but nevertheless this was an exciting find for me as my father, grandmother and aunt also lived in that house just prior to migrating to Australia in August 1939. My grandfather had left them in the care of his brother-in-law, Simcha Dronzek (Sister Paula's father), while he 'scouted out' Australia before deciding to move the family here.





After some initial reservedness on their part, the two Sisters quickly 'warmed up' to us, especially the older of the two. She became quite emotional as she told us stories of her time together with Sister Paula. After about 60 minutes, she came through the grate to our side and hugged and kissed me. They showed us through the convent, a truly magnificent old building on beautifully kept grounds. They presented me with a copy of a book that was produced in the year 2000 to mark the visit of Pope John Paul II to the convent. In it we found an



interview given by Sister Paula, who is quite a celebrity in the convent. She is the only Jewish convert they have ever had. Also in the book (pictured above) are some photographs of Sister Paula, including one taken in 1947 when she completed her conversion and 'married Christ'. When we asked why it took two years for Jewish Rachel Dronzek to become Benedictine Sister Paula, we were told that the convent wanted to make sure that she really did want to convert. Her friend, who at 82 is one year younger than Sister Paula, also told us that Sister Paula had never forgotten her Jewish origins, even though she had found a new religion.

After 90 minutes, it was time for us to leave and an emotional farewell was made.

The visit was important to me, as I realised that Rachel had found this new life to replace the family she thought had been so brutally taken from her. By the time she found out that some of her family had survived, she was safe and content in her new life.

## Coming events at the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia

After the summer break, the Lamm Library will reopen to the public on Sunday 3 February. Library hours are Sundays, 2 pm to 5 pm, and Mondays to Thursdays, 10 am to 5 pm.

### 'Write your story' program

Four new books will be launched over the next three months. Details will be available soon.

### Mums and tots

Hebrew, music and storytelling hour for babies and toddlers will be held every Tuesday at 11 am.

### Film club

The Lamm Library together with the Friends of the Hebrew University will be hosting their film club Ha-Seret's first screening for 2013 on Sunday 10 February at 3 pm.

The film is 'My Australia (Australia Sheli)' (2011), which was screened at the last Israeli Film Festival.

### Shiur

Each day at 12.30 pm, a Shiur is conducted in the library by Pesach Steinberg – all welcome.

# POSTINGS

## UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS: A GOLDFIELDS EXPERIENCE

### 8th Victorian State Family History Conference

The Victorian Interpretative Projects Inc and the Victorian Association of Family History Organisations will be celebrating the excitement and mysteries of the goldfields during the first weekend in May 2013.

An excellent list of guest presenters, researchers, genealogists and local historians will be on hand to guide you through the history of the goldfields of central Victoria.

The 8th Victorian State Family History Conference, 'Under the Southern Cross: A Goldfields Experience', will be held at the Australian Catholic University (Aquinas Campus), 1200 Mair Street, Ballarat, in the city's CBD.

During the two-day conference on 4 and 5 May, well-known speakers will share their knowledge about the 'hidden' aspects of the region's history. A special dinner will be held on the Saturday night (4 May).

Conference sessions include: California and the Victorian Goldrushes; Discovering Ned Kelly via DNA; TROVE and Victorian Collections; Unrest on the Goldfields – Eureka and Mining Licenses; Black Gold – Aboriginal People on the Goldfields; Multicultural Families; Hidden Histories – Insane Asylums; and more.

For more information, see [www.vipsinc.wordpress.com](http://www.vipsinc.wordpress.com).

## JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE ARCHIVES FELLOWSHIP

Applications for the 2013 Fred and Ellen Lewis JDC Archives Fellowship are now being accepted. One or two fellowships will be awarded this year to deserving scholars engaged in graduate-level, post-doctoral or independent study to conduct research in the JDC Archives, either in New York or Jerusalem.

Research topics in the fields of 20th century Jewish history, general history and humanitarian assistance will be considered, as well as other areas of research covered in the JDC archival collections.

The amount granted will range from \$2000 to \$5000 per fellow, and applications will be accepted until 15 February 2013.

Link: [http://archives.jdc.org/about-us/fred-and-ellen-lewisjdc.html?s=afp\\_toppromos](http://archives.jdc.org/about-us/fred-and-ellen-lewisjdc.html?s=afp_toppromos)

**Naomi Barth, Archives Project Specialist, Global Archives, JDC**  
**[Naomi.Barth@jdcny.org](mailto:Naomi.Barth@jdcny.org)**

Note: The JDC was formerly known as the JOINT. Its full title was the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) when it played a major role in the rescue and re-settlement of post World War 2 Jewish refugees to Australia. JDC passenger lists are available for inspection in the AJGS (Vic) genealogical collection at the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia in Caulfield South.

## CORRECTION

The last issue of *JGD* included an article titled 'Google Translate for Android with OCR', written by Reuven Shefer and originally published in *Branches*, the newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Miami. The editors of *JGD* wish to apologise for omitting to acknowledge the original source of the article.

## SHORT VIDEOS: GENEALOGY AND JEWISHGEN

Just a reminder that we have created a series of five-minute videos which might interest some readers.

1. Prepare For Your Search (for USA researchers).
2. Navigate JewishGen.
3. Find Your Ancestral Town (for USA researchers).
4. Communicate with Other Researchers.
5. JGFF: The JewishGen Family Finder – for Surnames/Towns.
6. FTJP: Family Tree of the Jewish People – for over five million people.
7. JewishGen Discussion Groups.
8. Hosted Organizations: Jewish Records Indexing – Poland.
9. Jewish Genealogy Websites – Part I (JewishGen and IAJGS/JGS) and Part II.

You can find these videos on the first timers page ([www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen/FirstTimer.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen/FirstTimer.html)) and at the bottom of the education page ([www.jewishgen.org/education](http://www.jewishgen.org/education)).

These nine short videos offer an excellent introduction for all beginners and are free to view online. The education page offers interactive courses, however you must enrol to participate.

**Phyllis Kramer, Vice-President, Education**

## GerSIG DIGEST

I was reminded of the very useful website at [www.holocaust.cz](http://www.holocaust.cz) on the Gersig (German Jewish Special Interest Group) Digest recently.

I found the information of the Theresienstadt records very detailed. For example, I found the death certificate of my husband's grandfather, which states the names of his mother and father. These details were new to us.

**Rene Eisner**

## UPDATE FROM USHMM

Megan Lewis, reference librarian at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington DC, recently met with AJGS (Vic) committee members at the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia to inform us about the new cross-collections database at <http://collections.ushmm.org>, which has just gone online.

The cross-catalog 'next-generation OPAC' system, provides an interface allowing you to search across the library, archives, art and artifacts, film and video, oral history, photo archives and victim list catalog records. Collections search spans 216,941 records including:

- 82,813 books and other publications
- 62,984 oral history testimonies (more than 3800 oral history testimonies are streamable)
- 26,384 names sources
- 27,012 photographs
- 8283 document (archival) collections
- 4509 moving images (films)
- 4320 objects
- 636 collections (groups of more than one item).

These include both video and audio-only testimonies. Where available, links to transcripts or extended biographies are included.

Many archival collection records have finding aids attached, and the archives branch has been working on expanding archival records to include more subject headings, place names, etc.



## NU? WHAT'S NEW?

### The E-zine of Jewish Genealogy From Avotaynu

#### 2014 IAJGS conference dates announced

For those who like to plan far ahead, the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies has posted to their website that the 34th International Conference on Jewish Genealogy will be held from 27 July to 1 August 2014 in Salt Lake City at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center, just three blocks from the Mormon Family History Center.

The 2013 conference is in Boston from 4–9 August. Information about that conference is at <http://www.iajgs2013.org/>.

#### IJG announces research grants

The International Institute for Jewish Genealogy has awarded two grants from proposals it has received for family history research. One is for a study into 'Family and Kinship in the Jewish City of Piotrków Trybunalski in the 19th Century', by Tomasz Jankowski of Wrocław, Poland. The second is to Laurence Leitenberg of Lausanne, Switzerland, who, together with Sandy Crystall of Bow, New Hampshire, US, will create a series of 'Digital Maps of Jewish Populations in Europe (1750–1930)' for online viewing.

IJG reports that the Jankowski work will be wholly innovative, because he proposes to use sophisticated family reconstruction techniques that have never been applied in a systematic fashion to a large Jewish community. If successful, the work will have broad implications for the genealogical reconstruction of Jewish communities. The Leitenberg-Crystall maps fall into the category of 'Tools and technologies', which the institute strives to produce for Jewish family historians and social scientists generally.

#### MyHeritage buys Geni.com

MyHeritage is continuing its growth-by-acquisition strategy by acquiring its major rival Geni.com. It is MyHeritage's eighth and largest acquisition since its founding in 2005. Last year it acquired WorldVitalRecords.com, which provides online access to historical records. Geni.com is a popular family-tree based site whose goal is to create a single World Family Tree. It extends MyHeritage's network to 72 million registered users, 1.5 billion profiles and 27 million family trees.

The merger of the two groups should be good for genealogy. Although the two companies were competitors in the sense that both wanted to encourage genealogists to place their family trees on their respective sites, each brings their own strengths to the partnership. Geni.com seems to have more organisational strengths. Two years ago they developed the concept of curators, who are overseers of a collection of family trees. MyHeritage's strength is in technology. They have developed a powerful Smart Matching system that alerts subscribers to possible matches on other family trees.

The services of MyHeritage and Geni.com will initially run independently. MyHeritage plans to give respective users the option to collaborate on family history research by enabling a two-way information flow between the two sites. It will give Geni.com access to MyHeritage's Smart Matching technology, which is used to match both user-supplied family tree data and historical records such as those of its subsidiary WorldVitalrecords.com.

So what is the goal of the entrepreneurs at MyHeritage other than to exist for the good of mankind? They may follow the pathway of

Ancestry.com: grow large enough to warrant a public stock offering and then cash in their chips by selling to the highest bidder.

MyHeritage recently acquired an additional \$25 million in financing bringing the total funds raised to date to \$49 million.

The complete announcement, as a PDF file, can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/MyHeritagePDF>.

#### ICRC ends management of the ITS

After 57½ years of operation, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has formally ended its management of the International Tracing Service (ITS) located in Bad Arolsen, Germany. ICRC had expressed interest in bowing out about two years ago, noting that ICRC is a humanitarian organisation and ITS is getting fewer and fewer humanitarian requests and there is more interest in using the institution as a historical archive.

ICRC's tenure was filled with controversy, primarily because of their lack of timely response to humanitarian requests. Replies could take two to three years, and often the response was that there was insufficient information provided to make a proper search. This all ended in November 2007 when the committee responsible for setting ITS policy agreed to allow public access to their records, including making available one copy of the ITS index and digitised records to each of the 11 countries represented on the committee. This change of policy was due primarily to the efforts of Paul Shapiro of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Starting in 2013, the German Federal Archives will become an institutional partner of ITS. American professor Rebecca Boehling will be the new ITS director. She was formerly director of the Dresher Center for the Humanities at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. Boehling is considered an expert in Holocaust research and in the history of World War II.

The ITS in Bad Arolsen is a centre for documentation, information and research on individuals who were persecuted by Nazi Germany. The archive contains about 30 million documents on the incarceration in concentration camps, ghettos and Gestapo prisons, on forced labour and displacement. ITS is governed by an 11-nation International Commission (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States). Their website is at [www.its-arolsen.org](http://www.its-arolsen.org).

**Gary Mokotoff**  
Editor, Nu? What's New?



## RESOURCES UPDATE

### JewishGen's Online Worldwide Burial Registry

JewishGen is proud to announce its 2012 year-end update to the JOWBR database.

[The database can be accessed at [www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/). If you're a new user, we recommend that you take a look at the first two explanatory screencasts at [www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/Screencasts/](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/Screencasts/). This update adds about 94,000 new records and 40,000 new photos.

The database is adding 216 new cemeteries along with updates or additions to an additional 129 cemeteries.

This update brings JOWBR's holdings to 1.95 million records from more than 3800 cemeteries/cemetery sections from 81 countries! (Cemetery description files, maps and overview photos should be completed by the end of the month.)

I want to particularly thank Eric Feinstein who has been helping me find and gain permission to add many data sets from around the world. In addition, without our volunteer transliterators, led by Gilberto Jugend, we would not be able to add the information from some very difficult to read photos.

Of particular note in this update are the following additions:

**Hamburg, Germany.** Thanks to Herr Gerold Helmts of the Jüdische Gemeinde Hamburg ([www.jfhh.org](http://www.jfhh.org)) for more than 14,500 records from the Hamburg cemetery. More records will be added to this collection in the future.

**Berlin, Germany.** Thanks to Bert de Jong, who has been working on photographing and indexing the stones at the Weissensee Cemetery in Berlin. This update includes 7200 records and photos. Bert also submitted records for other smaller German and Dutch cemeteries.

**Brody, Ukraine.** Thanks to Ami Elyasaf, project leader, Pam Weisberger, Geshet Galicia project coordinator, and their team of volunteers for submitting 6200 photos and records from Brody's new cemetery. An entire list of volunteers can be found from the cemetery description field within JOWBR.

**Miskolc, Hungary.** Thanks to John Kovacs, project leader, and his team of volunteer data entry and translators for submitting 6100 records from the Miskolc Chevra Kadisha register. An entire list of volunteers can be found from the cemetery description field within JOWBR.

**Ontario, Canada.** Thanks to Allen Halberstadt, coordinator for the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada, Toronto's Cemetery Project, for submitting and updating about 4200 records from various cemeteries along with 850 photos. We also thank Robert Lubinski and Kevin Hanit for their help with Ontario cemeteries.

**Magdeburg and Halle, Germany.** Thanks to Max Privorozki, head of the Jewish community of Halle/Salle who submitted about 3800 records from three cemeteries in the towns of Halle and Magdeburg.

**Thessaloniki, Greece and Jamaica.** Thanks to Michael Glatzer of the Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem, publishers of two volumes whose records are in this update. Isaac Samuel Emmanuel's book *Matzevot Saloniki* added about 1900 records from Thessaloniki and Richard D. Barnett and Philip Wright's book (edited by Oron Yoffe) *The Jews of Jamaica, Tombstone inscriptions 1663–1880* added more than 1450 records from 19 cemeteries throughout the island of Jamaica.

**Leeds, England.** Thanks to the Leeds UHC, BHH and Eitz Chaim Synagogues for permitting us to include about 3000 records and

photos from the Gelderd Road cemetery. An entire list of volunteers can be found from the cemetery description field within JOWBR.

**Algeria.** Thanks to Bernard Haddad for submitting about 2800 records from four Algerian cemeteries. Mr Haddad is the president and founder of Mémoire Active d'Algérie (Active Memory of Algeria,) the association to safeguard and preserve Jewish cemeteries in Algeria.

**Bender, Moldova.** Thanks to Yefim Kogan, Cemetery Project coordinator for the Bessarabia SIG, for submitting more than 2600 records and photos from the Zagorodnaya Street cemetery.

**Passaic Cemetery, New Jersey.** Thanks to Mark Pollack for adding an additional 2400 records from the Passaic Junction cemetery in Saddle Brook, New Jersey.

**Trebič, Czech Republic.** Thanks to Lubor Herzan of the municipality of Trebič and the Mayor of Trebič, Pavel Herman. More than 2300 records were submitted from information on headstones and from the burial register from the town.

**Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.** Thanks to Jakob Finci, president of the Jewish community of Sarajevo, for access to more than 2000 records from the Sarajevo Cemetery.

**King David Cemetery, Putnam, New York.** Thanks to Gene Baumwoll CSW for adding an additional 1800 records and photos from various sections of the King David Cemetery (Beth David Cemetery), part of the Rose Hills Memorial Park.

**Mishawaka, Indiana.** Thanks to Mike Kring for submitting 1600 records and photos from the Hebrew Orthodox Cemetery.

**Harrisburg, PA.** Thanks to Rabbi Akiva Males of Keshet Israel Congregation in Harrisburg for submitting more than 1500 records from the Keshet Israel Cemetery on 34th Street.

Whether your name or records are listed above, we appreciate all your submissions! Thank you to all the donors that submitted information for this update.

We appreciate all the work our donors have done and encourage you to make additional submissions. Whether you work on a cemetery/cemetery section individually or consider a group project for your local society, temple or other group, it's your submissions that help grow the JOWBR database and make it possible for researchers and family members to find answers they otherwise might not. Also consider other organisations you may be affiliated with that may already have done cemetery indexing that would consider having their records included in the JOWBR database.

We plan on updating JewishGen's Memorial Plaque project before the summer conference. We currently have about 10,000 records online, with 10,000 to add. We're still looking for additional files for the launch. Contact me to find out more about this project and how you or your JGS can help.

**Nolan Altman <[NAltman@JewishGen.org](mailto:NAltman@JewishGen.org)>**  
JOWBR coordinator, January 2013



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