



JEWISH GENEALOGICAL AND ARCHIVAL SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

Date: June 22, 2025

David Preston's talk about "Finding Hope Underground" was fascinating! If you didn't get to hear him in person, listen using the Boxcast link.

Below is the download link for Sunday's meeting recording. **Please note** that we lost a few minutes of Mark's remarks due to Wi-Fi issues. We switched to the back-up system, but it took a few moments to reconnect. Our meetings require extensive technical setup. Unfortunately, the storms caused a lot of damage in the area and effected our setup. Skip ahead to the actual meeting. You won't be disappointed. Copy and paste this link:

<https://downloads.boxcast.com/2025-06-22-175000-aeroadju6ax9lgqyhpsv-1080p-b0s-e7824.81s.mp4?response-content-disposition=attachment%3B+filename%3D2025-06-22-175000-aeroadju6ax9lgqyhpsv-1080p-b0s-e7824.81s.mp4&Expires=1753456130&Signature=XmcLoUmJWnAvAgkit192lwiv~gpOtZZI1gGticCpFhpiKGCA~q38exCS-IOE3T44saPQvRLrwTBsFz6f345qqT8ryqcyjE2yBbQS3jHGYldrcHWmnx-ETw8He2whIdKcQSWYR6MDjPzqBGc8GP75D7BuO5F~NsXCgJAHvBmjZ6gx0cYr0dOT6DdtP2whxyFjxNi16aoqpZcbFL9MRiW-LOiXXt71WgGj8ieZG9oCdbUCCgQMLu5uG89iICKSZaPkQpVzSKKLJB7UUTpM5SnaC4Pkv7IdHfkRJNrt~6bzRu~tbhksGfutFmp-Ngcs5kadxNFGlgBITdDcA8Cy1efmA &Key-Pair-Id=APKAJ7GUCBQUK6NTWZCA>

Beginner's Corner and Research Tips

Two fabulous resources are available on our website:



Looking for Philadelphia Record Bank information:

Indices of all the Immigrant Banks in Philadelphia including the Blitzstein Bank were indexed many years ago by the Jewish Genealogical and Archival Society of Greater Philadelphia and can be searched in the JewishGen USA Database <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/USA/>. The index information will be needed to find the image of that record.

The actual records are held by the Temple University Library Special Collections. They have digitized these records. Blitzstein images can be found via their M.L. Blitzstein and Co. webpage at <https://digital.library.temple.edu/digital/custom/blitzsteinbank>.

All Immigrant Bank records and webpages can be found on the Steamship Ticket Purchase Ledgers webpage at <https://digital.library.temple.edu/digital/collection/p16002coll16>.

Book Club Update



Hope to see many of you at our Book Club meeting. All are welcome any time! Our books are either written by an author with Jewish heritage or is one who writes about a Jewish theme. The link will be sent out to all on the morning of each meeting. See our website under Events for updated Book Club titles and descriptions. Meetings are the 4th Wednesday of the month unless there is a holiday. PLEASE RSVP to membership@jgasgp.org.

We had a lively and pleasant review of **Florence Adler Swims Forever** by Rachel Beanland. Thank you for everyone who attended and helped reminisce about our Atlantic City summers.

SUMMER BREAK: Book club resumes in October. **Dates to be determined (To Be Determined)**

1. **Held** by Anne Michaels Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2025, 7:30 (TBD)
2. **The House is on Fire** by Rachel Beanland (TBD)
3. **The Family: Three Journeys into the Heart of the Twentieth Century** by David Laskin (TBD)

Chronicles

Dear JGASGP Members,

We are working on the next issue of “Chronicles” and need your help. Yes, YOU! One of the most difficult jobs our editor, Evan Fishman (z’l) had was securing articles from members. Beyond a very loyal corps of regular correspondents, whom he relied upon for contributions, we need members to share your family stories, contributions

from which our newer genealogists can learn, stories of brick walls overcome and the frustrations that we all encounter in our searches for family. We can't create the next issue of "Chronicles," a valuable research tool without your contributions. You need not be a professional author to tell stories about your genealogical pursuits. We hear stories and challenges from you all the time in informal settings like our "Everything Genealogy" meetings and pre-meeting shmooze sessions. Please share those stories and your images and documents with the "Chronicles" team. We'll help you to turn informal thoughts into a polished article that you'll be proud to see in print and will help our readers in their genealogical efforts. Volunteer organizations operate typically with a core group that is dedicated to making a difference. At JGASGP, we have a dedicated board that meets monthly to guide our organization of almost four hundred members, but we need you to contribute as well.

Please send your draft articles to editor@jgasgp.org. We hope to receive materials in the next two weeks so we can continue to share our collective expertise and genealogical challenges with each other.

With our thanks,
Ed Flax, Acting Editor
Debbie Terman, Associate Graphic Editor

Contributions: UPDATE

We would like to thank members and friends who have made generous donations to our society. Your continued kindness is greatly appreciated. Please let us know if you want to donate in honor of or in memory of someone special. Tom will be informing Evan's family of all donations received in his memory.

Evan Fishman (z'l) was beloved by the JGASGP community, and the outpouring of love has been a testament to that. Many have asked about making donations in Evan's memory, and the JGASGP will be making donations to some organizations that were important to Evan:

JRI-Poland, <https://www.jri-poland.org/>

Ukraine SIG, <https://www.jewishgen.org/>

Alex Krakovsky, (Ukrainian: Олександр Краковський) is a Jewish-Ukrainian archivist, activist, and genealogist. He is a leader in the Jewish genealogical community in efforts to legalize the digitization of Jewish records from Ukrainian historical government archives.

HAMEC, Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center, 8339 Old York Rd, Elkins Park, PA 19027, <https://hamec.org/>

In addition, we will be planning a day-of-learning in memory of Evan. If you would like to contribute to JGASGP in Evan's memory you can use PayPal under the Membership Tab or mail a check to our mailbox address.

Please make sure to write that it is to be used in memory of our beloved Evan Fishman.

Any problems, contact Jim, webmaster@jgasgp.org

Jewish Genealogical and Archival Society of Greater Philadelphia
1657 The Fairway, #145
Jenkintown, PA 19046

Everything Genealogy

We met on June 1st. We had a group of 25 members asking questions and offering help to each other. Here are some of the topics discussed.

There is always something new to learn! Thank you to everyone who attended.

1. *Susan said endogamy is really driving her crazy! So many name changes in her family; first and last!*
2. *Debra asked about the town of Pulny, Ukraine. Joel offered to find what he could about that town.*
3. *David and Debra found a possible connection with their **Millman** family name. Don't forget to check our Family Finder on our website too!*
4. *Avivah suggested researching the name only. Sometimes that brings up a record! Also suggested was re-visiting the places you searched a while ago as new records are being digitized and added continuously on Ancestry, MyHeritage, Family Search, etc. EVERYTHING is a work in progress! Chana suggested researching on Google. Just google a name. You never know what will pip up!*
5. *For Russian language translations: <https://www.rtrfoundation.org/webart/ForeignAlphabets--Russian.pdf> Don't forget to research Miriam Weiner's website Routes to Roots Foundation <https://www.rtrfoundation.org/>
Stephen P. Morse: <https://stevemorse.org/#dealing>*
6. *Sephardic research questions: https://sephardicgenjourneys.com/?fbclid=IwY2xjawKsCdxleH-RuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFPd3RUaFJXYjVXSW1NNnZFA56oT-burdGf0dX2ghwOlmpu1ImkQPATCJBcmQl2zDjnJ7AdAbVvyfBX-rNaA_aem_cyXW6Lpgn3h2cWE5JcP8wQ*

Thanks to all who attended and offered their assistance! You never know what you'll learn!

JGASGP Meeting Schedule and Updates



The Zoom link or Livestream link will be posted on the HOME page of our website on Sunday morning before each meeting. There will be no chat and shmooze on Livestream, only when we use Zoom. Most of our programs will be recorded with the permission of the guest lecturer. Using Zoom, if anyone does not wish to be recorded, please do not participate in the live program. All microphones and cameras will be turned off during the lectures.

See our website for more details about the speakers and the topics.

Sunday, July 13, 2025

(1 pm for Schmoozing and Mentoring)

Official meeting start time is 1:30

Zoom Only Meeting

Speaker: Sunny Jane Morton, Family Tree Magazine, Contributing Editor

Topic: Comparing the U.S. Newspaper Giants: What Jewish Content Do They Have?

The Steve Schechter Memorial Lecture

Sunday, September 14, 2025 (The Steve Schechter Memorial Lecture)

(2 pm for Schmoozing and Mentoring)

Official meeting start time is 2:30

Hybrid Meeting – In Person Venue Main Line Reform Hausen auditorium upstairs

Speaker: Benjamin Nathans, Alan Charles Kors Associate Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania

H A M E C



Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center
Preserving History to Learn From the Past | Est. 1961



JGASGP

We currently have 351 members!

***MAKE SURE YOU REGISTER ON OUR WEBSITE!**

It is NOT automatic because you are a JGASGP member.

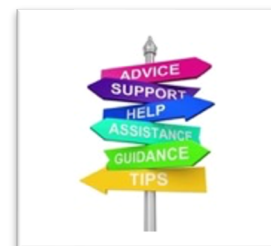
Only paid-up members have access to all areas of our website, JGASGP Newsletters, Chronicles, and meeting notices. Members have access to our members-only portal. Tell your friends!

Contact Marilyn (me) (membership@jgasgp.org) if you have any dues-related questions.
Contact Jim (webmaster@jgasgp.org) with web access questions or receiving hard copy problems.
Contact Ed Flax, - ejflax@gmail.com or Debbie Terman - dct@alum.mit.edu with Chronicles article questions.

Our new fiscal year runs from January 1st - December 31st, 2025.
Our 2025 membership form is on our website. \$10 extra for printed Chronicles.

Mentors

THANKS to Alicia Weiss and Beth Steiner who have joined our Mentor Team! They have been very helpful to those who have contacted them.
If you need a mentor or would like to volunteer to be one, let me know!



News Update

We won! After four years of work, we beat the largest government agency in New York in the highest court in New York, and we're getting 137 years of records! And we won big, not just for the specific and awesome records we wanted, but also for anyone using the New York State Freedom of Information Law for years to come.

The following is our official press release:

Reclaim The Records, a non-profit organization dedicated to government transparency and public access to historical records, proudly announces the court-ordered release of information from **millions of New York State death records, spanning three centuries of New York's vibrant history**. Last week, after a four-year legal battle, New York State's highest court, the Court of Appeals, ruled in favor of **Reclaim the Records in the case Matter of Reclaim the Records v. New York State Department of Health**, finding that the Department of Health must disclose comprehensive death index records that had been requested under the state's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL).

This decision mandates the release of detailed information about more than ten million deceased New Yorkers, including their names, dates of death, residences at death, ages at death,

and associated state file numbers, for all years spanning from the start of state-mandated records collection in **1880 through the end of the year 2017**, extending far beyond the limited online database for state deaths from 1957 to 1972. The court has also suggested that many more fields of data than just the ones previously available for the limited timeframe may also be disclosed under FOIL, and has ordered the state to provide its records for an in-camera review to determine which additional fields of data may be released under FOIL, with the presumption clearly being stated as the public's right of access to most of the information.

Brooke Schreier Ganz, founder and president of Reclaim the Records, stated:

Reclaim The Records began our work ten years ago right here in New York, using Freedom of Information laws as a direct reaction to the state's unusually restrictive access to government-held historical and genealogical materials. All of New York's neighboring states, and many others across the country, have made this same kind of vital records index information freely available to the public over the years, and finally those of us who live in the state or who have deep roots in the state will get to enjoy the same kind of access for our own families and research projects. With this lawsuit win, historians, genealogists, journalists, and teachers will be able to freely access state information about the millions of people who lived in, and died in, the Empire State.

She continued:

Beyond the particular records being released in this case, we are also gratified to have the Court of Appeals uphold so many important parts of New York's Freedom of Information Law, and to reiterate the right of public access to government-held materials, even in the face of agencies who attempted to keep them secret without legal justification. Public records belong to the public, and we are thrilled to know this case will help many other people and organizations use the state FOIL to reclaim their own records, for many years to come.

Ganz added that the non-profit intends to publish this historical and modern death index data for free public use, in searchable, downloadable, and reusable file formats, as they have done after similar lawsuit wins in other states and jurisdictions.

Alec Ferretti, Professional Genealogist and Reclaim the Records Director explains:

The Court has affirmed the public's right to its own history. Millions of deceased New Yorkers' basic biographical information, previously entombed in a decommissioned Albany bomb shelter, will finally become accessible to all. Reclaiming the New York State Death Index will put New York in line with all its neighboring states, help clear the Department of Health's research backlog, deter fraud, and pave the way for legislation that opens up even more historic records.

Alex Calzareth, Professional Genealogist and Reclaim the Records Director continues:

New Yorkers and their families will now have much easier access to their history. The New York State death index will help family historians and journalists among others to recover stories that have faded over time. This decision is a win for transparency and puts an authoritative and comprehensive source of government information in the public's hands.

Michael Moritz, the organization's attorney on the case, added:

After four years of representing RTR in this matter, from the initial inception of the FOIL request through the administrative process and up to the highest court in the state, I'm ecstatic by the result handed down by the Court of Appeals. This is a great day for RTR and all freedom of information law enthusiasts. I'm very happy that people near and far will be able to benefit from the broader access to New York death index data secured by this case.

The case originated in 2021 when Reclaim the Records [filed a FOIL request](#) seeking **the full New York State death index through 2017**. After the Department of Health [denied](#) the request, the organization pursued legal action, culminating in this ruling. This decision not only facilitates greater access to vital records for research and personal purposes but tells agencies in New York State that they need to produce evidence of a harm if they are going to withhold records. Reclaim The Records remains committed to uncovering and releasing public records that have been improperly withheld, ensuring that history remains accessible to all.

Reclaim The Records is a nonprofit organization comprised of genealogists, historians, researchers, and open government advocates. The organization identifies important genealogical record sets that are unjustly restricted by government agencies and works to make them publicly accessible through FOIL requests and, when necessary, litigation.

You can read a lot more details about the case, including copies of much of the four years of paperwork it generated, **on our website's page about this case**, here:

<https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/records-request/32/>

*(Don't forget to check out the section on that page headlined **Wait, what about New York City? in case you want a little hint about how this Court of Appeals ruling is going to be used in the near future, even against a separate vital records jurisdiction...**)*

And you can also read a lot more about our case in our **latest newsletter issue**:

<https://mailchi.mp/reclaimtherecords/reclaim-the-records-wins-the-new-york-state-death-index-1880-2017>

And you can skip right to **the Court of Appeals' decision (PDF)**, too:

https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/reclaim_the_records_vs_new_york_state_department_of_health_-_2025-05-25_-_court_of_appeals_decision.pdf

I personally like the part where the court agrees that the state's baseless but insistent claims of "but what about frauuuud" should be swatted away, and where they agree that the release of genealogical information actually **prevents** fraud.

And a fun fact: all four of the people quoted in our press release, even our intrepid attorney on this case, as well as one of our **amicus curiae** ("friends of the court"), are long-time Jewish genealogists, many of whom have been involved with various JewishGen special interest groups and/or records acquisition projects over the years. Up until now, getting even basic government records from various New York agencies has historically been much harder than sourcing and copying full records out of even tiny towns in Romania -- but that's changing...! 😊

- Brooke Schreier Ganz (and your happy friends at Reclaim The Records)
Mill Valley, California



Webinars, Conferences, Podcasts, and Meetings of Interest

See the videos about the conference on Youtube: You will learn about the venue, the hotel and the Fort Wayne Genealogy Library. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKEShBC8kMo>

JGSLI YOUTUBE VIDEOS

Did you know that our award-winning YouTube Channel has 40 5-minute videos on topics including Landsmannschaften, DNA, immigration research, Jewish headstones and more! Watch them here: [YouTube Videos](#)

The L'Dor V'Dor Foundation (LDVDF) Announces Worldwide Jewish Event Calendar.

The calendar, called JDays, was unveiled at the 44th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy. Read more including FAQ's at: [JDays - L'Dor V'Dor Foundation \(LDVDF\)](#) This is a real "game changer" in the posting and discovering Jewish educational events 24/7/365 from around the world. A single place to post and a single place to view Jewish events!

You can have the programs sent to your calendar, so you don't miss anything. See instructions on their website!

*Live Chat

Did you know that [American Ancestors](#) has a free 'Live Chat' feature on their website, available Monday through Saturday 9am to 5pm ET? Just enter your question in the chat box during the times listed, and one of their expert genealogists will respond. You can access the feature directly [here](#), or find it on the home page of the [American Ancestors](#) website, scroll down just a bit to the "Stay in Touch" section, where "Ask a Genealogist - Live Chat!" is one of the options. Click on Chat Now and ask away.

See the calendar of genealogy events posted on the Bucks County Genealogy Society website. <https://www.bucksgen.org/index.php/bcgs-programs>

Sign up for Newsletters too: JewishGen.org Discussion Group - Daily Summary <https://groups.jewishgen.org/g/main> and Eastman's online genealogy newsletter Eogn.com.

Suggestion Box



Do you have any ideas for our society? We want to hear from you. Please send your ideas or thoughts to me. Subject: Suggestion Box! I appreciate the program offerings and Youtube videos I've been receiving.

Condolences

Condolences If you know of the illness or passing of a past or current member, please email a link to the obituary or provide the information for me to share.



Disclaimer: The purpose of our group is to help foster research and education, collect family records, and make family connections. No political comments or advertising for services or merchandise are permitted.

