



JEWISH GENEALOGICAL AND ARCHIVAL SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

January 18, 2026

Hi All,

Over 50 members signed in yesterday to listen to a **FABULOUS** lecture by Debbie Long. She is enthusiastic and energetic about her holocaust research. She sent us a comprehensive handout. She also updating her power point presentation and it's attached. I took notes, but using AI, Zoom summarized the meeting.

Meeting assets for JGASGP Meeting with Deborah Long

Meeting summary highlights:

QUICK RECAP

The meeting focused on Holocaust research resources and genealogy, with Deborah Long presenting her extensive research on family members who perished during the Holocaust. She shared detailed instructions on using key resources including the Arolsen Archives, Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, Yad Vashem, and the International Red Cross for tracing family history. The presentation included practical demonstrations of searching these databases, with examples from her own family's history, and emphasized the importance of verifying information through multiple sources. The discussion highlighted how technology has transformed access to historical records, with Deborah noting that she received documents from the Red Cross within days of her 2010 request, compared to the years-long waits of previous decades.

Some of Debbie's suggestions were to contact every organization every few years. New information is always popping up. Visit memorials and look at the names.

Members: Contact Red Cross for tracing and documentation of Holocaust family members

Members: Contact local Red Cross chapter for assistance with tracing forms

Members: Submit inquiries to Arolsen Archives and US Holocaust Museum

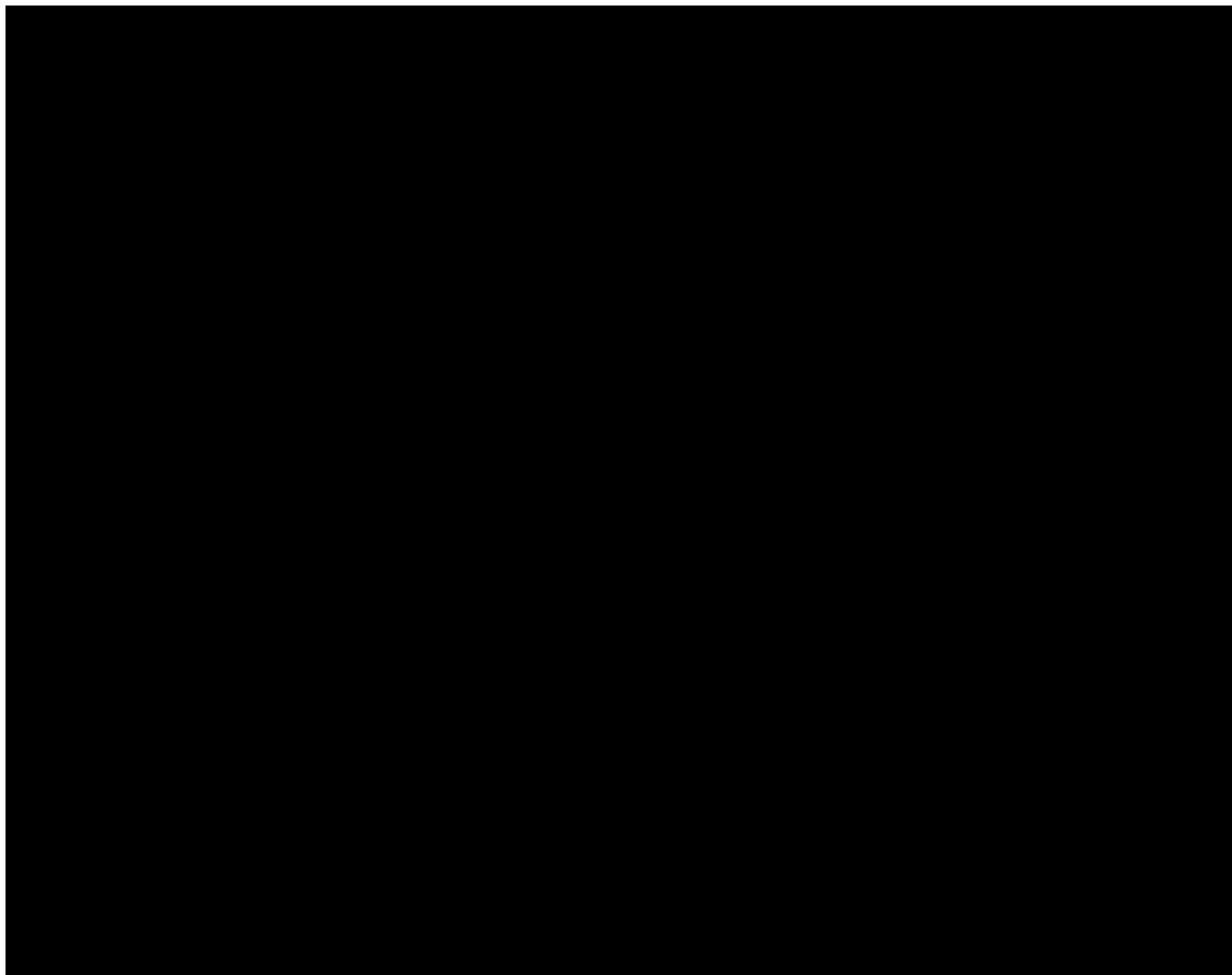
Members: Contact Yad Vashem for research assistance

Members: Contact JewishGen for research assistance

Members: Contact local libraries to access Ancestry.com

Members: Contact University of Pennsylvania or other local universities to access USC Shoah videos
Members: Visit synagogue, city cemeteries, and Holocaust monuments/museums when traveling to search for family information
Members: Contact Central Zionist Archives if family members went to Israel after the Shoah
Members: Read Esther Safran Foer's book "I Want You to Know We're Still Here".

Make sure you see the handout. It is posted on our website.



Double click on the black box above to watch the recording. Didn't work for you?

Try this link: https://zoom.us/rec/play/Zyxli975bZTBzX4O0gk57BS5Af7BA-mtFZ-oh8eT-FbHmh6MBZxmVSI9zcBtlpXmI7BXZtEHxInt4c9u.rk4-V-nplWO19mIQ?eagerLoadZvaPages=sidemenu.billing.plan_manage-ment&accessLevel=meeting&canPlayFromShare=true&from=my_recording&continue-Mode=true&pwd=DCId8IErL22YhB7_ZwAAIAAAAPudv6LYqkyVcD9DqVzi8iv9XnpFxxSwASzhV4PgQb6FJkkcsI0ggeae6gqv-Uqf1DAwMDAwNA&componentName=rec-play&originReques-tUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fzoom.us%2Frec%2Fshare%2FMEIYA1NjQpnA99fbzER8Ept2W-mGlF2yTnoWCEUoT2PGFdvHt1g-AoBYptyhQJ-.qClzI6h8vQwCKTWr%3Fpwd%3DDCId8IErL22YhB7_ZwAAIAAAAPudv6LYqkyVcD9DqVzi8iv9XnpFxxSwASzhV4PgQb6FJkkcsI0ggeae6gqv-Uqf1DAwMDAwNA&autoplay=true&start-Time=1768761007000 Let me know.

*If you are giving a presentation to another JGS or a group, please let us know!
Contact Mark if you have a presentation you think may be of
interest to our society. mark@halpern.com*

Beginner's Corner and Research Tips

Two fabulous resources are available on our website:



*Sydney Dixon told us about **FULL TEXT SEARCHING** on Family Search at last month's meeting. If you want to learn more about that, you can attend or watch on Zoom a presentation of the Main Line Genealogy Club. It's on January 20th. ***See below for the MLGC registration.**

I attended a virtual workshop called "What is Family Search's FULL TEXT SEARCH"

What is it? How should I use it? How can I improve it?

FULL TEXT SEARCH is the ability to search unindexed searchable transcripts. You can find some documents (Possibly) That you didn't know existed. You can gain access to handwritten documents that you missed.

Using wildcards, Keywords, and Filtering, all help to narrow searches.

Choose a research goal. Keep checking back often as more records are added.

Use Keywords appropriately. John + Doe will result in ever record with both names included. John will result in only John records. John – Doe will give Joe records without Doe listed.

Put quotes around a person's name during your initial search!

Filter by location.

Add Keywords with a + sign.

Use Wildcards

Keep filtering.

Try putting the name in the Keyword location.

Below is from Ancestry.com's support topics.

Wildcard searching

Wild cards are [special symbols used in searches](#) to represent unknown letters in a word. Ancestry® uses the asterisk (*) and the question mark (?) as wild cards. If you didn't know, for example, whether a certain last name was spelled "Nielson" or "Nielsen," you could do a search for the name using a wild card where the unknown letter goes: "Niels?n."

The * represents zero to five characters, while the ? represents one character. Wild cards do not work with Soundex matches. When searching with wild cards, at least the first or last character must not be a wild card, and all searches containing wild cards must contain at least three non-wild card letters. For example, though searching "*ohnson" and "Johnso*" would work, "*ohnso*" would not; and while "*ill" would work, "*ll" would not.

Wild cards can be used in various ways.

Spelling variations: Because names in historical records are sometimes misspelled or abbreviated, searching for spelling variations can help you find records you may otherwise miss.

Names found on original records: Names are indexed as they appeared on original documents, even when the document contains abbreviations or apparent errors. Try searching for variations and abbreviations. Example, the name James Bruny may appear in records as *Jim, Jas., Jimmy, J, Bruny, Bruney*, and so forth.

***Below is another program being offered by MLGC. Sign up (red button below) to learn more about Full Text Searching!**

<https://www.mainlinegenealogy.org/> They have other terrific programs too.



Main Line Genealogy Club

PLEASE JOIN US ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 20TH FROM 7:30 TO 9:00 PM FOR AN ONLINE ONLY WORK-SHOP!!

NOTE THAT YOU MUST REGISTER TO RECEIVE EMAILS WITH THE ZOOM LINK!

*** Note- there is NO handout for this workshop!**



FAMILYSEARCH FULL TEXT SEARCH – GAME CHANGER!

An Online Workshop Presented by Michael Kearney

**Tuesday, Jan 20, 7:30 pm-9:00pm - MLGC Online Workshop:
FamilySearch Full Text Search – Game Changer!**

Within the past year, the LDS's online family history web site, **FamilySearch**, has added an incredible new capability, “**Full Text Search**”.

“Search what?” you might ask. How about nearly everything? Using artificial intelligence, the FULL TEXT of billions of handwritten records are now available for you to search. Join planning committee veteran Michael Kearney for a demonstration of Full Text Search's capabilities beginning with a few worked examples from his bag of search wonders. Then, we'll open the floor for an open-ended, audience Q&A.

Michael Kearney, PhD, has been a genealogist and family historian for more than 30 years and has been a member of the MLGC Planning committee since 2018. His work has been published in the NEHGS Register, the NYGBS Record and the Connecticut Nutmegger. His most recent work has been “The Ganges Family History Project — Constructing the

histories of 135 enslaved Africans rescued by the sloop-of-war USS Ganges in 1800”, found online at thegangesfamilies.com.

Preparation: you'll need a free FamilySearch account, use this link-

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/identity/signup/>

and view this FamilySearch presentation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpWf-VxjtyE>

CLICK BELOW TO REGISTER. The Zoom link will only be sent to registered attendees. As always, donations are welcome!

Eventbrite Registration Jan 20th

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.

Our Book club always starts at 7:30 PM.

If you'll be joining us, please RSVP to membership@jgasgp.org.

The Family: Three Journeys into the Heart of the Twentieth Century by David Laskin is a highly recommended book. David weaves a tale about his family combined with historical facts. We all agreed this was a well written book: it's a history lesson and a family journey. It's really nice to connect with our members in a different way. Please feel free to join us for our book club discussions. Our next meeting is on a Wednesday night. I've adjusted the dates to be the 4th Wednesday of the month.

1. Inheritance: A Memoir of Genealogy, Paternity and Love by Dani Shapiro

Wednesday, January 28, 2026, 7:30

2. **Lilli de Jong** by Janet Benton **Wednesday, Feb 25, 2026 7:30**
3. **The Invisible Harry Gold: The Man Who Gave the Soviets the Atom Bomb** by Allen Hornblum
Wednesday, March 25, 2026
4. **Opening doors : the unlikely alliance between the Irish and the Jews in America** by Hasia R. Diner **Wednesday, April 28, 2026**
5. **The Cost of Free Land** by Rebecca Clarren **Wednesday, May 27, 2026**
6. **Melting Point** by Rachel Cockerelle **Wednesday, June 24, 2026**

Chronicles

Dear JGASGP Members,

***Do you have a story to tell? Did you meet any new relatives through your research?
Have you made any unusual finds in your attic? We'd love to hear from you!***

Please send your draft articles to editor@jgasgp.org.

With our thanks,

Ed Flax, Acting Editor editor@jgasgp.org

Debbie Terman, Associate Graphic Editor dcterman@jgasgp.org

CONTRIBUTIONS:

We would like to thank members and friends who have made generous donations to our society .

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CAROL STRICKLAND
DONNA TARTASKY
MARCIE WEITZ
DONALD & BONNIE WITTENBERG
DONALD & PHYLLIS ZIMMERMAN

Evan Fishman (z'l) was beloved by the JGASGP community, and the outpouring of love has been a testament to that.

We are 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

Our next meeting: February 2nd at 7:30 PM. ZOOM only

Bring you questions, brick walls, and suggestions! You never know what you'll learn!

These discussions have been very beneficial to attendees.

[Here is the link for the next EG discussion.](#)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84288984402?pwd=0oceDDMj6bk8dDpNQUZ29IbY8AnB9K.1>

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 Q and A. All microphones and cameras will be turned off during the lectures. We will use closed captioning.

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

SPECIAL EVENT MEMBERS ONLY

A Day of Learning – In Memory of Evan Fishman Z" L

This is a work in progress. As soon as speakers are confirmed we will announce the definite information to all members.

Date: Sunday, February 22, 2026 *Tentative Date

Time: 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM (To Be Determined)

Venue: Zoom Meetings only

Topics: TBA

Speakers: TBA

JGASGP will offer to members only at no cost a full-day virtual seminar covering two topics of great importance to members no matter their level of experience. There will be two workshops in the morning geared to less experienced genealogists, a break at mid-day, and two workshops in the afternoon geared to more experienced genealogists. Members can choose to attend any or all of these four workshops.

H A M E C



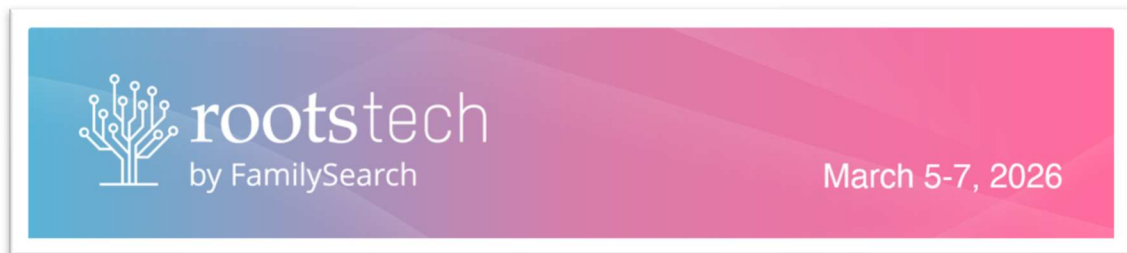
Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center
Preserving History to Learn From the Past | Est. 1961

We offer personalized in-person or virtual tours for individuals, families, and classes during the week by appointment. These can last anywhere between thirty minutes to more than two hours. Please contact us beforehand to schedule a tour or you can perform a self-guided tour below. See the website.

<https://hamec.org/>

HAMEC event: Our JGASGP members can take advantage of the free offer. March 10th Tuesday at 7pm at Keneseth Israel is the annual concert with the Commonwealth Youth Choir honoring our Holocaust survivors.

In the News





NEW RECORDS ADDED TO FAMILYSEARCH.ORG

Explore new records from multiple countries, with significant additions from Italy, Ukraine, Sweden, Honduras, Chile, and more.

View Now

Membership

It's time to renew your membership now for 2026. Don't delay if you want continuous access to our website. All access ends on December 31st automatically unless you renew your membership

The new membership *form is on our website.* <https://jgasgp.org/joinrenew>
Our prices are a bargain! \$30 individual. \$15 for Chronicles hard copies

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

It is NOT automatic because you are a JGASGP member. Jim needs to activate you individually. Don't delay. All members become inactive on Dec. 31st unless Jim has a current membership for you.

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 (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 - dcterman@jgasgp.org with Chronicles article questions.

Our new fiscal year runs from January 1st - December 31st, 2026.

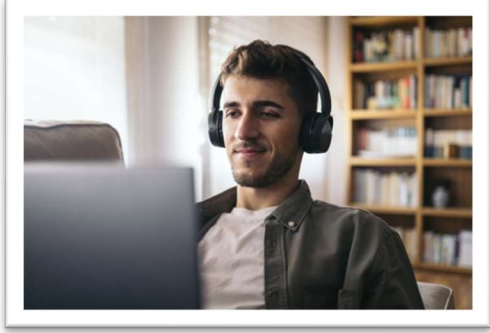
Mentors

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!

We love our volunteers!





Do you have website skills?

We could use your help. Please contact

Jim: webmaster@jgasgp.org

Programs from other societies-there are so many.

FINDING SOPHIE: HOW TO RESEARCH YOUR FAMILY ANCESTRY

- Thursday, February 19, 2026
- 2:00 PM 3:15 PM
- Zoom Webinar(map)
- Google Calendar ICS
-

Presented by April Goldenberg
Founder, *The Whole Mispucha*

This engaging presentation introduces effective methods for tracing your ancestors and navigating the common challenges of genealogical research.

Whether you're just beginning your family history journey or have already started uncovering your roots, this workshop offers valuable insights for everyone. Using the real-life case study of "Finding Sophie," you'll be guided through a step-by-step process designed to help you overcome obstacles, avoid common pitfalls, and discover practical strategies for success in your own research.

Register here: Copy and paste. <https://www.habermaninstitute.org/events-20252026/2025/10/9/finding-sophie-how-to-research-your-family-ancestry>

Barring technical issues, this session will be posted in our Program Archive.

Thank to our generous program sponsors, Edie and Art Hessel, for helping bring this talk to the Haberman Institute community.



April Goldenberg is the founder of *The Whole Mishpucha* (est. 2025), a full-service genealogy research company. She brings over 25 years of experience as an investigator specializing in financial crimes, ethics, and compliance. With a lifelong passion for research, problem-solving, and genealogy, April began exploring her own family history nearly 15 years ago after discovering that her father knew very little about his background.

Building on her professional skills, she applied investigative techniques to genealogical research and developed a deep expertise in uncovering hidden family stories. April has presented on a range of investigative topics throughout her career and is now excited to share her knowledge in the field of genealogy. She was recently elected Vice President of Programs for the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Washington.

***Check out the calendar from L'DorV'Dor!**

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.

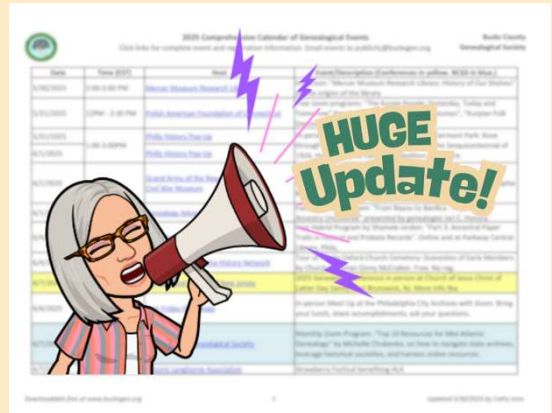
***See the calendar of genealogy events posted on the Bucks County Genealogy Society website.**
<https://www.bucksgen.org/index.php/bcgs-programs>

COMPREHENSIVE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The calendar has again been updated - as we begin to add a few going forward to 2026! It includes community and heritage fairs as well as many new in-person, hybrid and virtual events!

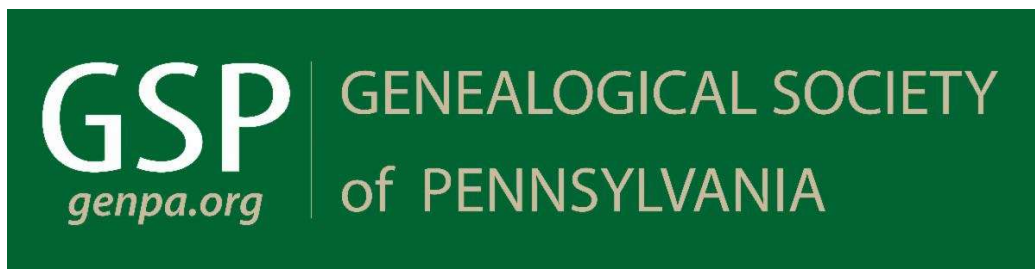
If you know of another that you would recommend, or are looking for a specific topic, please email: publicity@bucksgen.org.

Here is the link: [Comprehensive Calendar of Events](#)

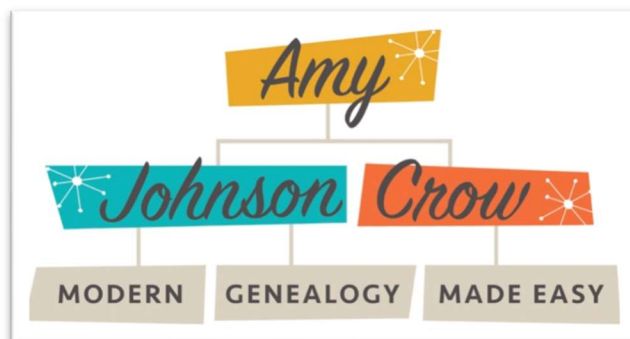


Did you know you could search for specific topics? Simply click control+F once opened. Be sure to scroll through to take advantage of early bird registrations and deadlines! At the bottom there is a list of other sites with even more courses, webinars and podcasts!

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



Click the green box to see the available programs at GSP.



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!

Below are a few suggestions I've received:

Ancestry

Maybe you can let members know that Philadelphia Free Library system now has a free library edition of Ancestry.com. You must be in the library. I visited Bustleton Branch.

Montgomery County also has this. Access must be in the library. Some features are missing, but it is a great help to me. We can send the documents that we see to our computer by supplying an email address.

My Heritage

We can use a Philadelphia library card (or from another town) to access this site **from home**. It is free. I use Huntingdon Valley Library, Online Resources. We just type in our library card number.

FamilySearch

This is free from home.

So now we have three free sources ---MyHeritage, Family Search, and Ancestry. They each have different advantages.

From Carol Robins 😊

In case your members don't know about this -- Timothy Snyder has a series of 32 FREE lectures about the history of Ukraine on YouTube going back to early history. There are a couple of Jewish-specific episodes. Snyder made these when a professor at Yale, now at U. of Toronto.

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=timothy+snyder+yale+couse+ukraine+vikings

From Trisha G.

Condolences

Eric Michael Benshetler. November 7, 1955-December 22, 2025. Beloved son of Marilyn Benshetler and the late Charles Benshetler. Devoted husband of Faye Benshetler. Also survived by loving children, grandchildren, a brother, and extended family. Contributions in his memory may be made to Congregation Beth Or, <https://www.bethor.org>, or a charity of the donor's choice.



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.

