



JEWISH GENEALOGICAL AND ARCHIVAL SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

April 20, 2026

David Brill spoke to us on Sunday at Rodeph Shalom and also on Livestream. Ray, our tech guy said there were no issues at RS, but some people did have issues at home. He had to use a lower resolution to get the slides to show as clearly as possible. I was away (and still am) so I'll listen and watch when I'm free. Below is the link. David sent out a handout and that is attached to this email.

Topic: Where Did They Run To? Tracing Ancestors Who Fled Conscription in the Russian Empire

The reign of Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) is infamous in Russian Jewish history for the brutal conscription of minor boys. Beginning in 1827, thousands of Jewish boys as young as 9 were recruited into "cantonist" schools to begin a military career that could last as long as 25 years. Thousands of others tried to avoid conscription by hiding from authorities, joining new families, or running away from their homes – in some cases escaping to an entirely different, distant part of the Pale of Settlement. For the genealogist tracing Jewish families, this situation presents unique issues that call for a creative approach. This presentation explores ways to connect the "runaway" to his birth family, using strategies including analyzing revision lists and other 19th century Russian-language documents, multi-generational name comparisons, and genetic genealogy. The presenter will work from examples in his own family research of ancestors who fled their shtetls as children in the 1830's-1840's and will show how genealogy was able to piece together the stories of their journeys.

https://downloads.boxcast.com/2026-04-19-175000-tpgx1ocshjwrtiajuwlbq-1080p-b0s-e7850.08s.mp4?response-content-disposition=attachment%3B+filename%3D2026-04-19-175000-tpgx1ocshjwrtiajuwlbq-1080p-b0s-e7850.08s.mp4&Expires=1779318175&Signature=wLmODgJnu2hBbB4VDbMbBLGY3X1F1niAKaQ94zqsoc~WebBvelw4hwplMsn-gQalLw4ZBzEmcYFhKQ2eBxcGlB-CoiD2uSXrwTFkdvpS01hHL5qZP93cHkmN2OF0BBicrGN7tyhZPlpRbq-JTlCRbvqe1LT4w3u15kiuyuglce7BOPeBDepT-iZxb6~WXaLZ2FVKKGLxE4tbQHRXd~35cvpsEVULho~XdFNVk8GnlkJcaeOg~rKme0P9Xd4Bz5zMCrOCIQ7BCnKSIBK9pZzOkf278Jd54KFy1L8i47Xe0~Z6ihxr9MwMo5OTAhovljVloGzwluG57RbtE-Jrd8jA__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJ7GUCBQUK6NTWZCA

Beginner's Corner and Research Tips

Two fabulous resources are available on our website:



Book Club Update March-July



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.

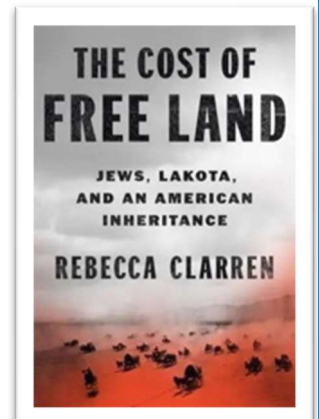
Our Book club always starts at 7:30 PM.

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

Our meetings are usually on a Wednesday night. I've adjusted the dates to be the 4th Wednesday of the month except for April. We are meeting on a Thursday night instead. I'm going to pick books with Jewish content due to their popularity.

1. [The Cost of Free Land](#) by Rebecca Clarren (2025) April 30, 2026
(**THURSDAY** - last week of the month)

An award-winning author investigates the entangled history of her Jewish ancestors' land in South Dakota and the Lakota, who were forced off that land by the United States government



Growing up, Rebecca Clarren only knew the major plot points of her tenacious immigrant family's origins. Her great-great-grandparents, the Sinykins, and their six children fled antisemitism in Russia and arrived in the United States at the turn of the 20th century, ultimately settling on a 160-acre homestead in South Dakota. Over the next few decades, despite tough years on a merciless prairie and multiple setbacks, the Sinykins became an American immigrant success story.

What none of Clarren's ancestors ever mentioned was that their land, the foundation for much of their wealth, had been cruelly taken from the Lakota by the United States government. By the time the Sinykins moved to South Dakota, America had broken hundreds of treaties with hundreds of Indigenous nations across the continent, and the land that had once been reserved for the seven bands of the Lakota had been diminished, splintered, and handed for free, or practically free, to white settlers. In *The Cost of Free Land*, Clarren melds investigative reporting with personal family history to reveal the intertwined stories of her family and the Lakota, and the devastating cycle of loss of Indigenous land, culture, and resources that continues today.

With deep empathy and clarity of purpose, Clarren grapples with the personal and national consequences of this legacy of violence and dispossession. What does it mean to survive oppression only to perpetuate and benefit from the oppression of others? By shining a light on the people and families tangled up in this country's difficult history, *The Cost of Free Land* invites readers to consider their own culpability.

Mary Jane Roth recently reviewed this book in our winter Chronicles.

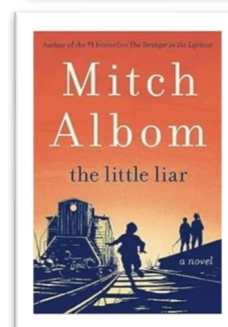
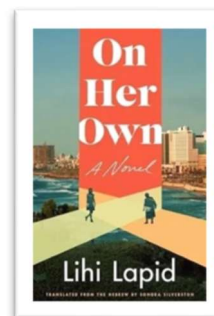
2. [ON HER OWN](#) BY LAPID, LIHI , MAY 27, 2026 7:30PM

3. [The Little Liar](#) by [Albom, Mitch](#), June 24, 2026 7:30PM

I am ready to read!

Will you be joining our Book Club this year?

Let me know and I'll put you on the list!



Chronicles

Dear JGASGP Members,

Winter hard copies have been mailed. If you paid for a copy and didn't receive it, please contact Jim: Webmaster@jgasgp.org. New subscribers to Chronicles for 2026 will receive the SPRING edition as your first copy.

Debbie Terman Chronicles Acting Deputy Editor has recently updated the Chronicles Index covering every issue from Vol 1-1 in 1982 through Volume 42-3, Fall 2025.

The index is accessible to members only - on our website under the Publication Tab > Chronicles - at the bottom of the page. It is sorted Chronologically and by Author, includes each article title and its starting page. There are also some keywords and notes included. The index is in Excel format, enabling users to sort and organize their research as necessary.

Every back issue of Chronicles is also posted on our website under publications for members.

Do you have a story to tell? Did your research teach you something new? Did you uncover a family secret? 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!

Would you like to learn how to write about your research? Rhonda Lauritzen has many suggestions on her website for free advice on writing articles. I attended her workshop and found it full of helpful advice for writing. <https://evalogue.life/memoir>. Our editors work with you!

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

With our thanks,

Ed Flax, Acting Editor editor@jgasgp.org

Debbie Terman, Acting Deputy Editor dcterman@jgasgp.org

Everything Genealogy

Our next meeting: May 4th 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.

[The Zoom link will be sent out at 8AM.](#)

From our March meeting:

RESEARCHING FRIENDLY BROTHERS ORGANIZATION

David sought help in researching **the Friendly Brothers organization**, a Jewish group from the 1950s in Philadelphia, with limited online information available. Members suggested exploring newspaper archives, Jewish genealogical databases, and reaching out to broader community groups and Jewish organizations, including JewishGen and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society at Temple University. Peter shared insights on using DNA for genealogical research and emphasized the importance of consulting both Jewish and non-Jewish sources for comprehensive historical records. The group agreed to post inquiries on social media and suggested further steps for David to explore, including checking the Philadelphia Library's ProQuest database and looking at the list of Philadelphia's Landsmanshaft societies listed on our website.

FAMILY ARCHIVES PRESERVATION GUIDANCE

The group discussed preserving family archives and documents, with Stephen sharing his experience of donating family materials to the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, who accept documents, photos, and recordings but not textiles. Marilyn advised Edward to contact local Philadelphia archives like SCRC and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in advance to ensure items meet their acceptance criteria, as he currently has no local relatives to leave his materials with.

***Make sure you plan to attend our meeting with Ellen Kowitt in June: Endgame Genealogy.**

What do you do with all of your research, documents, trees, etc. Where does it go? Who gets it?

JGASGP Meeting Schedule and Updates



The Zoom link or Livestream link will be sent out on the morning of the meeting at 8 AM. 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

Sunday, May 17, 2026

Zoom only

The Evan Fishman Memorial Day of Learning part 2 Artificial Intelligence

A members-only event starting at 1 PM

This is a special half-day program to provide information about using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in creating and advancing your family history. This program is for members in good standing for 2026.



This program is in honor of and in memory of Evan Fishman, a long-time Board members and editor of our award-winning CHRONICLES.

1:00-1:15 PM - Introduction

1:15 -2:30 PM – AI Foundations with Arthur Sissman, Founder Jewish Genealogy SIG (JGSIG)

A deep dive into the basics of prompting and the effective use of AI chatbots for genealogical research.

Arthur Sissman, from Naples FL, has been engaged in family history genealogy since 1999 and genetic genealogy (DNA) since 2015. Arthur has built over 60 family history trees for his various family surname lines. In addition, he has tested his autosomal DNA at all the major DNA testing companies, and his Y-DNA and MtDNA at FamilyTreeDNA. Using his 3 Legged Stool Protocol - focusing on Surname, Place and DNA, Arthur has found relatives previously unknown to him and has built a current tree out to 1500 people, from Galicia/Romania, with over 50+ DNA matches across all branches. For information on Arthur's Jewish Genealogy SIG monthly meetings and scheduled workshops, email genresearch13@gmail.com

2:30–2:45 PM Break

3:00-4:30 PM – Advanced Prompt Engineering with Arthur Sissman, Founder Jewish Genealogy SIG (JGSIG) Sophisticated strategies tailored for intermediate and advanced users to unlock complex record analysis. (more description to come)

4:30-5:00 PM – Wrap-up

Date: Sunday, May 31, 2026

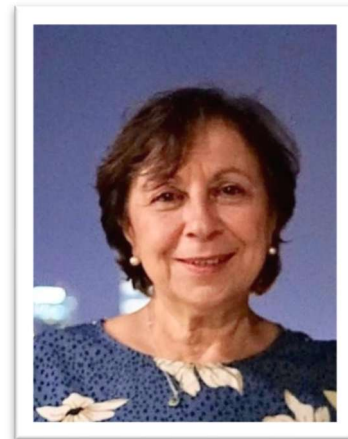
Time: 1:00 PM for Check in, Schmoozing and Mentoring – in-person only)

Hybrid Meeting

1:30 PM official meeting start time

Location: In-Person Location: Main Line Reform Temple (tentative)

Speaker: Raquel Levy-Toledano, Board Member of International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies and International Institute for Jewish Genealogy



Raquel is involved in Moroccan Jewish Genealogy and Genetic Genealogy projects, director at IAJGS, member of the General Assembly of IJG, board member of the Cercle de Généalogie Juive (France) where she manages the genetic genealogy group, president of NAJMA (Nos Ancêtres Juifs Marocains et Algériens), a French Genealogical Society, co-administrator of the Avotaynu DNA project section involving North African Jews, expert curator of Geni's Moroccan and Algerian Jewish family tree, founder of the Généalogie des Juifs Marocains Facebook Group, which has 12,700 members .

Topic: 19th Century Jewish Presence in the Land of Israel

The Jewish presence in the Land of Israel of the 19th century has not been extensively studied. While they have been poorly explored, the Montefiore censuses taken in the Land of Israel (1839, 1849, 1855, 1866 and 1875) constitute a unique tool to characterize the Jewish population of the Land of Israel of the 19th Century. The presentation will detail the waves of migration to the Land of Israel, the composition of the members of the Jewish population (Ashkenazim and Sephardim), their countries of birth, their demographic characteristics, and will compare the occupation, the socio-economic status and the naming pattern of Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

Date: Sunday, June 28, 2026

Time: 1:00 PM for Check in, Schmoozing and Mentoring – in-person only)

1:30 PM official meeting start time

In-Person Location: Main Line Reform (Hybrid)

Speaker: Ellen Kowitt, Professional Genealogist, Writer, and Presenter



Ellen operates Sole Searching Genealogy & Historical Research. She is a frequent presenter at national conferences and has published articles in *NGS Magazine*, *Family Tree Magazine*, and *Avotaynu: The International Journal on Jewish Genealogy*. Topics include getting started in Jewish genealogy, methodology, Jewish institutional records, comparing Jewish resources on the genealogy giant websites, Russian Empire research, and Holocaust in Ukraine. Ellen has completed the ProGen study program and several genealogical institutes, she is a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, and while accepting clients, she continues to

volunteer as JewishGen USA Research Division Director and D.A.R. Jewish Specialty Researcher. Originally from New York and Washington DC, Ellen resides in Colorado with her husband and is mother to two college students. www.EllenKowitt.com.

Topic: Endgame Genealogy

Is it the journey or the destination? Many enjoy the process and camaraderie that comes along with the act of doing genealogy research. Others have goals to answer a specific question, find a living relative, build a family tree, or publish a book. What happens when you move onto other pursuits or suddenly depart midstream before completion? End of life planning typically does not include instructions for hard-earned and meaningful genealogy research. How would loved ones or fellow landsman find and navigate your online passwords, final version of a family tree, photos, acquired documents, translations, instructions on next steps, or manuscript in process? Let's explore big picture questions about setting expectations, create a planning checklist to ensure your intentions are honored, and start organizing today for tomorrow. This lecture will allow time for participants to share best practices.

H A M E C

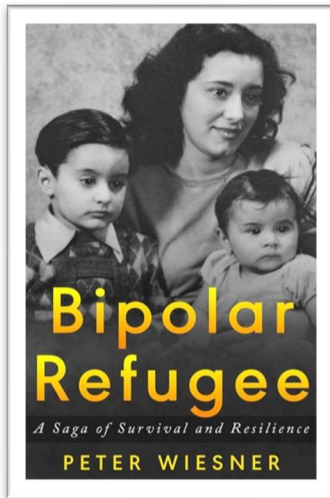


Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center
Preserving History to Learn From the Past | Est. 1961

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/>

One our members, Peter Wiesner, has published a book about his family. He has been interviewed and has an interesting story to tell: He was interviewed by David Lee Preston on June 2, 2024.

He will be giving another Zoom talk on May 4, 2026 sponsored by HAMEC and Tikvah. I will share the information when it is published.



In **Bipolar Refugee**, author and documentary film maker Peter Wiesner has turned his writing and documentary skills to telling the story, 'warts and all' of his mother, Mary Krotoczynski Wiesner. The excellently researched book becomes a literal monument to her survival and the memory of her parents who perished under the Nazis. The grueling effects of her bipolar disorder wreak havoc on Peter and his half-sister, Monica, as they grow up, in economic straits, often in foster homes, estranged from the fathers they barely knew. America, the 'land of milk and honey' for his mother, even Santa Monica with its broad beaches and cool ocean, cannot soften the guilt Mary feels for having left her parents behind when she boarded the Kinderreise for her escape to safety in England. Learning the grim truth of her own mother's murder causes unrelenting pain for Maria.

I just received my copy from Amazon.

In the News



Dear IAJGS Community,

I have some important news to share about our upcoming conferences, and I want to make sure you hear it directly from me.

The IAJGS Board has made the decision to reschedule our upcoming conferences:

The 2026 Virtual Conference has been moved to April 4–6, 2027

The In-Person Conference has been moved to 2028

I know this may come as a surprise, and I want you to understand the thinking behind this decision, not just the decision itself.

The short version: the cost of producing a high-quality in-person conference has changed dramatically since COVID, and we are not willing to deliver anything less than the conference our community deserves. Moving the timeline gives us the runway we need to fundraise properly, plan thoughtfully, and build something we can all be proud of.

We are not going dark in 2026. We have programming planned, including a free AI-focused virtual summit on April 26th open to all society members. More details on that are coming very soon.

For the full story, including the financial data that informed our decision, what we're doing differently going forward, and how you can get involved, I invite you to read my complete message on our blog:

[\[READ THE FULL ANNOUNCEMENT HERE →\]](#)

As always, we welcome your thoughts and feedback at feedback@iajgs.org.

Thank you for your continued passion for Jewish genealogy and for being part of this remarkable community.

Warmly,



Susan Weinberg.
IAJGS President

Membership

Thank you to everyone who has paid their dues!

\$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 Acting Deputy Editor - dcterman@jgasgp.org with Chronicles article questions.

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

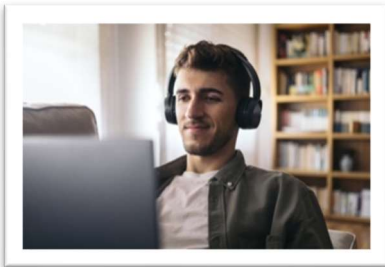
Mentors

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 and/or by our own members-
there are so many.**

***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.

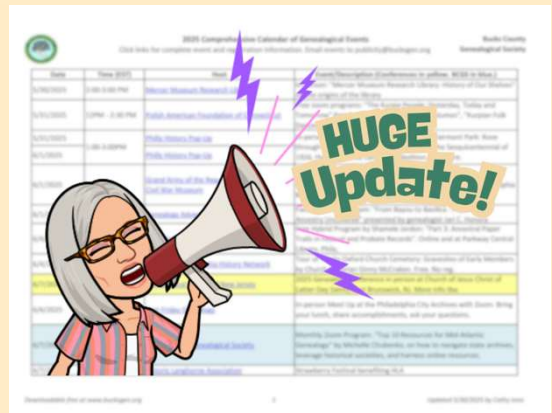
***See the calendar of genealogy events posted on the Bucks County Genealogy Society website.**

<https://www.bucksgen.org/index.php/bcgs-programs>

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!

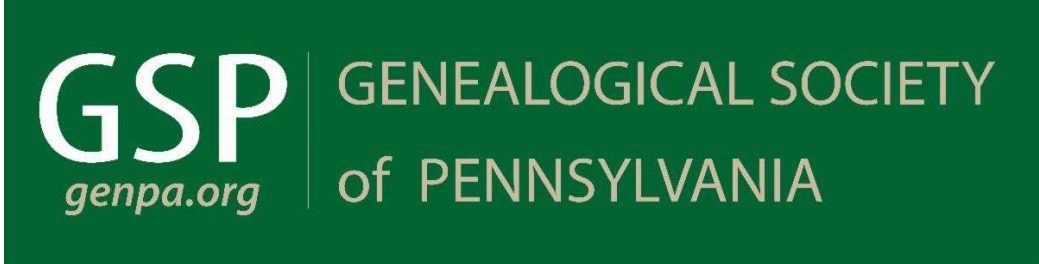
If you know of another that you would recommend, or are looking for a specific topic, please email: publicity@bucksgen.org.

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.

PODCAST and INFORMATIVE NEWSLETTER. <https://www.amyjohnsoncrow.com/>

<https://globaljgs.org/>

Check out their terrific programs!

Global Jewish Genealogy Society



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:

Condolences

If you know of the passing of any member, please let me know so I can inform everyone.



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.

