



JEWISH GENEALOGICAL AND ARCHIVAL SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

May 19, 2026

Dear Members,

I was unable to attend the 2nd Day of learning with Arthur Sissman due to a family obligation. We are however, very lucky to have AI from Zoom summarizing the meeting. Arthur has sent along some resources. The recording link is below. I have received many positive comments and I know we all have some learning to do!

Meeting summary from Zoom AI.

This meeting was a Jewish Genealogical and Archival Society of Greater Philadelphia (JGASGP) session dedicated to AI in genealogy, honoring the memory of Evan Fishman who had served as the editor of their publication Chronicles. Arthur Sissman from Naples, FL presented on how to effectively use AI for genealogical research, focusing on a structured five-part prompting framework (role, goal, task, format, and hallucination check) developed by Mark Thompson. The session covered different AI chatbots including Gemini, Claude, ChatGPT, and Perplexity, with demonstrations of how to properly prompt these tools for genealogical research while emphasizing the importance of verifying AI-generated information. Arthur also introduced available resources including the JGS Toronto website's AI resource library and recommended Facebook groups for further learning.

Duration: 03:13:41

Shareable ZOOM link: https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/YcCqvJygAdb1kDE3coQaGY-Hxm6Lles3YEJ8f-31MQpvYS_9ZANnDIOfbzzaIPnUJ.UdUz5A87JhWhz1nr?pwd=DPS3rMijndsL27qey-wAAIAAAAMMB9JO1iylsCp1VM_mRdiaJNiBCcgBk6yFqRrSgKsyQu4fcUctt3CoV7RLcQ1ZxJzAwMDAwNA

The resource guide should and the link to the JGSToronto site for prompts can help: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Qg2YD8I4Dh0-SfLkXuAAP92aTinsl8nX>

There are more resource guides and prompts there. We will be posting more prompts on that site in the next 2 weeks. These resources are available to anyone for free.

Please don't hesitate to let me know how I can help.

Thanks again for inviting me.

Best,
Arthur
954-328-3559
genresearch13@yahoo.com

Beginner's Corner and Research Tips

Two fabulous resources are available on our website:



***Crista Cowen discussed Jewish Records on Ancestry.com
I decided to keep this in the Newsletter one more time!***

I attended a workshop presented by Crista Cowen last week. It was about searching for Jewish Records on Ancestry.com. I took notes and wanted to share some of what she told us. You do not need a paid membership on Ancestry to search their 'free' records.

Go to: [Ancestry.com/Jewish](https://www.ancestry.com/Jewish).

You will get the Jewish records landing page.

*Scroll down to the **bottom** of the page past the search boxes. Do not start filling in a name, etc. See the full list of records available. Some are free and others require a paid subscription.

* Scroll down to the **bottom** of the page past the search boxes to see “included data collections”. Records are listed by record type, year, or range. Free records are labeled “Free”.

* Scroll down to the **bottom** of the page to see where the records are from, for example, Jewish.gen.org. See details about what is included or not. Don't waste time trying to find something that's not there. A brief description and a link is available for every database.

You will see a browse box on the right if Ancestry was given the rights to show images. If there is no browse box, then no images are available.

Search Boxes are difficult. Names change, dates are often incorrect and these searches either provide too many options to browse or limit your choices to browse. Global searching is not the most efficient way to search.

Tips and tricks when you do a search in the search boxes.

When you search all collections:

use the *, use exact check box when appropriate.

DO NOT FILL IN THE ENTIRE SEARCH FORM!

ADD INFORMATION ONE FIELD AT A TIME AND SEARCH.

TRY NOT TO USE THE BIRTH YEAR ALONE. THOSE DATE ARE OFTEN INCORRECT OR MISSING. NO RECORDS WILL SHOW UP.

1. **First Name:** s*I (Will catch all name variations such as Samuel, Shmuel, Sol)

Check off **exact**

Exact

2. Last Name: c*n (Will catch all name variations such as Cowen, Clown , etc.)

Location: Nassau, New York, for example, will catch all places that are exact to the location),

Check off **exact**

Exact to this place

When you browse by Collection: You will be able to control your search results. Open a collection in a new tab. You can alphabetize, sort by location, etc.

Keyword search for Card Catalog: JEWISH

When searching for a location: Search by current location (Belarus, for example) and old country location. Use previous name in the description field.

Don't forget to go to Ancestry.com/education. See the many videos posted. Also remember free Wednesday webinars by Christa.

Arolsen Archives: Make sure you scroll down for the description. Use Google translate to get to English.

Every person in your tree can have a **web link** added to their home page.

I wrote quickly and tried to get it all down. PLEASE try these out and let me know if you were able to learn something new about your family. See the website for the various levels of paid membership if you are interested.

Book Club Update May-July



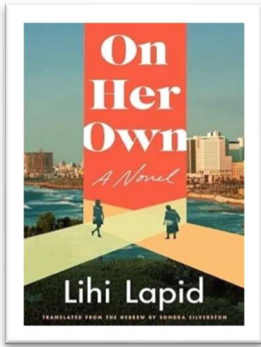
Hope to see many of you at our Book Club meeting. All are welcome any time! Our books are either written by an author with Jewish heritage or is one who writes about a Jewish theme. The link will be sent out to all on the morning of each meeting. See our website under Events for updated Book Club titles 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. On Her Own by Lihi Lapid, May 27, 2026 7:30PM



A moving, page-turning story of two families in crisis and the unexpected places from which love can grow.

Nina, a teenage runaway, wakes up in the unfamiliar stairwell of a Tel Aviv apartment in a torn minidress. As her memory starts to resurface—the abusive older man she's running away from, the crime she witnessed—she knows one thing: she needs to find a place to hide.

When one of the building's tenants, Carmela, a lonely old widow suffering from memory loss, mistakes Nina for her granddaughter she hasn't seen in years, Nina jumps at the opportunity for a safe haven. Soon, the two strangers become each other's lifeline as Nina settles into the apartment with sweet, reassuring Carmela.

Meanwhile, Irina, a Russian immigrant, is living a parent's worst nightmare: her only daughter has gone missing. She knows Nina got involved with the wrong men and will do anything to find her. Across the ocean, Itamar feels that something is happening to his mom, Carmela. The guilt over having left Israel for his pursuit of the American dream stirs childhood memories in him and a longing for the family that once was complete.

2. The Little Liar by Albom, Mitch, June 24, 2026 7:30PM

3. The Invisible Harry Gold: The Man Who Gave the Soviets the Atom Bomb by Alan Hornblum Date TBA

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4. A Place to Hide by Ronald Balson Date TBA

**5. This is Not about Us by Allegra Goodman
(Xandra recommended) Date TBA**

**6. The Lost Family: How DNA Testing Is Upending Who We Are by Libby Copeland
Date TBA**

Chronicles

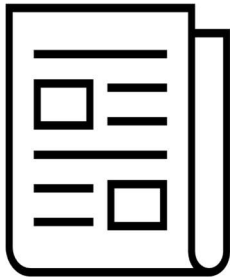
Dear JGASGP Members,

Spring hard copies will be mailed out next week. If you paid for a copy and don'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!



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: June 1st 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.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84288984402?pwd=0oceDDMj6bk8dDpNQUZ29IbY8AnB9K.1The>
Zoom link will also be sent out at 8AM.* FRED will walk us through finding our ancestors immigrant bank passenger records in Philadelphia.

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

Date: Sunday, May 31, 2026

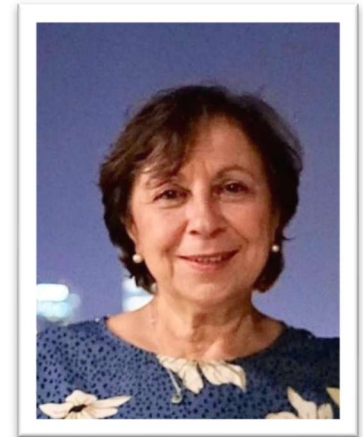
Time: 1:00 PM for Check in, Schmoozing and Mentoring – in-person only)

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

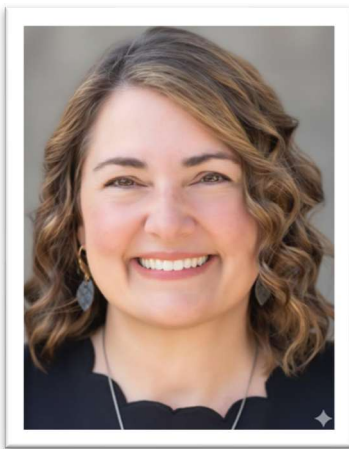
In-Person Location: Main Line Reform (Hybrid)

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

***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?



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



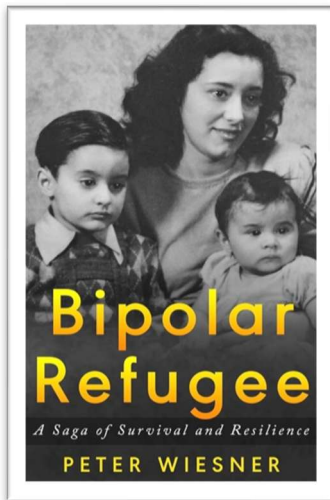
Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center
Preserving History to Learn From the Past | Est. 1961

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 gave a well-organized, documented, and compelling talk for HAMEC and I look forward to reading his book!



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



:

The 2026 Virtual Conference has been moved to April 4–6, 2027
The In-Person Conference has been moved to 202

Membership

Thank you to everyone who has paid their dues!

***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.

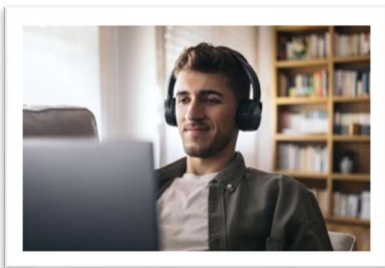
Mentors

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.

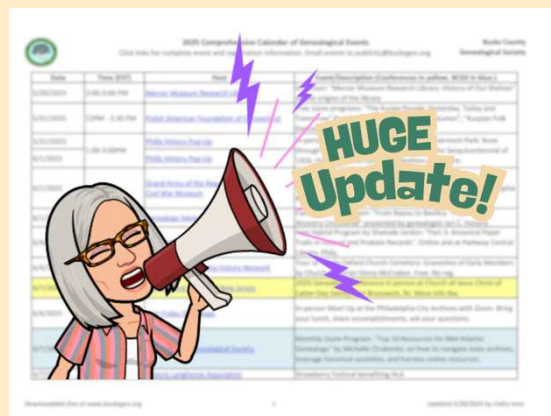
***See the calendar of genealogy events posted on the Bucks County Genealogy Society website.**

<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!

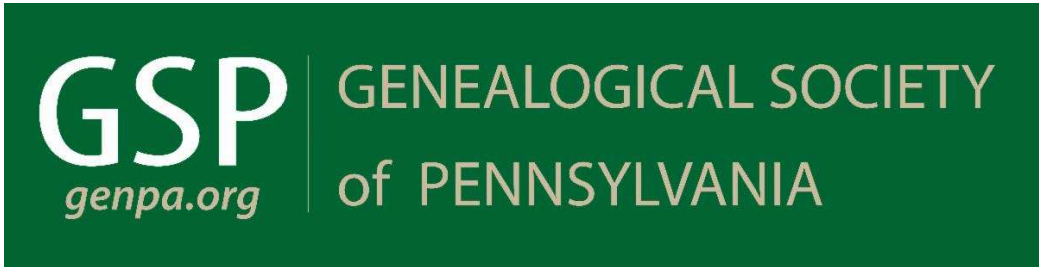
If you know of another that you would recommend, or are looking for a specific topic, please email: publicity@bucksgen.org.

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.

