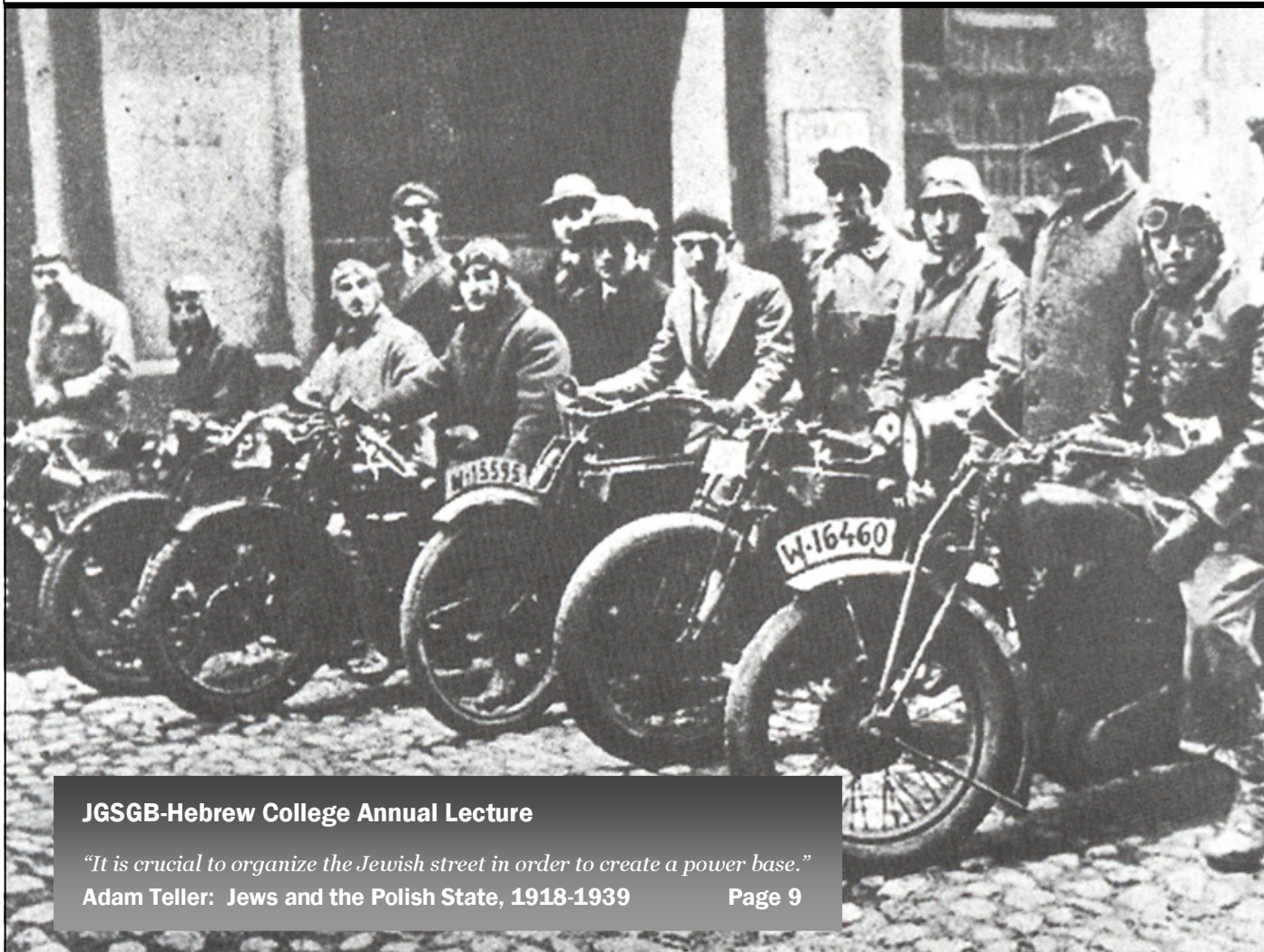


# MASS-POCHMA

October 2011

Volume XX, Number 3, Issue 69



## JGSGB-Hebrew College Annual Lecture

*"It is crucial to organize the Jewish street in order to create a power base."*

Adam Teller: Jews and the Polish State, 1918-1939

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**Dispatch From the Washington Conference**

# Mike Karsen

## Liven Up Your Family History

by Michael White



*Michael's great-grandmother traveled to America with six children on The Pretoria from Hamburg in September 1913, arriving in New York in two weeks.*

provided techniques for displaying what one has learned in an appealing and engaging way. It was comforting to learn that I'm not alone and that many genealogists procrastinate when it comes to packaging their data.

### The Excuses

Mike started out by listing the excuses he has heard for not getting this done. They include:

- I'm still collecting data and entering it into my software.
- I still have one more mystery to solve.
- What if my data is wrong?
- I don't write well.
- I don't have the time to do this right now.
- It's got to be perfect.

As a novice genealogist, I find that I enjoy certain aspects of genealogy, such as querying databases, solving puzzles, and reviewing historical documents. Other aspects I dread—especially anything that relies on creativity.

For years, I have been in paralysis when it comes to sharing anything beyond a family tree with my relatives. Fortunately, at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual International Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies conference in Washington, Mike Karsen led a session titled “Liven Up Your Family History with Images,” in which he

JGSGB-Hebrew College Annual Lecture

# Professor Adam Teller

## No Way In, No Way Out

### The Jews and the Polish State, 1918-1939

by Daphnah Sage

*Every year our society co-sponsors with Hebrew College an Annual Lecture with a distinguished speaker. This past January, we had the opportunity and pleasure to hear Professor Adam Teller, Associate Professor of Judaic Studies and History in the Judaic Studies Department at Brown University. His specialty is Poland, and, in addition to his many publications, he is co-editor of the journal Jewish History. JGSGB members can order via the website a CD with the audio recording and the slides of Prof. Teller's talk.*

### 1918—Victory!

The Great War ended with the aid of the United States, which suddenly found itself as a leading power. President Woodrow Wilson, aiming to bring a more permanent peace to Europe, redrew its map according to his 14-point plan. He was eager to replace the multi-ethnic empires of Eastern Europe with a large number of separate nation-states. Accordingly, the Poles were promised an independent state on the lands “with an indisputably Polish population” (point 13). Wilson did not grasp that even the new countries would have many ethnic groups in conflict. For example, the Czechs and Slovaks, who hated each other, were combined into Czechoslovakia.

At the Versailles Peace Conference, Poland was forced to sign a “Minorities Treaty” to ensure the rights of the non-Polish religious and national minority groups living within Poland—among them the Jews. Poland viewed the “Minorities Treaty” as an intolerable intrusion into her internal affairs.

### Demography of Interwar Poland

According to the 1931 census, Poles comprised only 69% of the population; minorities comprised nearly one third. The largest minorities were the Ukrainians (14%), Jews (10%), Belorussians (3%), and Germans (2%).

The three million Jews were concentrated near the eastern border, in today's Belarus, southern Lithuania, and northern Ukraine, areas that were less industrialized. Jews tended to live in towns and cities. In the small towns of eastern Poland (e.g., Grodno, Rovno, and Pinsk), the Jews constituted



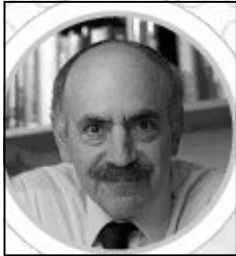
*In contrast to modern Poland, interwar Poland included Vilna and much of present day Belarus*

**January Meeting**

# Robert Weinberg

## The DNA of the Jewish People

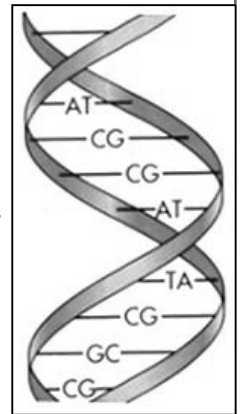
by Jay Sage



*Robert Weinberg, professor of biology at MIT, carries out research on DNA and cancer. His laboratory discovered the first human oncogene and isolated the first known tumor suppressor gene. In his talk to us he described what advances in DNA testing now tell us about biological developments over a long time scale, from the evolution of species to the migrations of peoples, including the Jews. This is a very short summary of a long and thorough talk. JGSGB members may order a CD from the JGSGB website that contains the slides and an audio recording of the talk.*

### Phylogeny by DNA

The DNA molecule is basically a chain of chemical units called bases, of which there are four kinds (called A, C, G, and T for short). When cells replicate, their DNA is duplicated with extraordinary accuracy. However, errors—called mutations—do occasionally occur. One such error is a change in a single base; for example, an A in the original DNA chain might become a G in the copy.

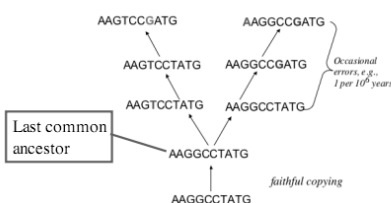


Before the advent of DNA sequencing, the classification of species as they developed through evolution—called phylogeny—was based on degrees of physical similarity, such as the presence of bones, feathers, fur, scales, or mammary glands. Today, differences in DNA sequences, which arise through mutations that develop over time, are being used to determine phylogeny. The larger number of differences in the DNA of two species, the longer ago the split from a common ancestor species occurred. Possession of a common mutation shows a relationship between two species. In some cases, DNA phylogeny has shown that two species are closely related despite rather large differences in appearance. In other cases, DNA has proven that two species that are physically similar are, in fact, only distantly related. In short, DNA has revolutionized phylogeny.

DNA analysis can be applied on a finer scale to the various species of humans, such as the Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*). The most recent common ancestor of modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) and Neanderthals lived roughly 600,000 years ago (ten

times more recently than humans and chimpanzees diverged from their common ancestor). Neanderthals seem to have left Africa and settled in Europe and Asia long before *Homo sapiens* did. (They were eventually wiped out by the later *Homo sapiens* invaders about 30,000 years ago.) Humans in Europe and Asia—but not in Africa—harbor remnants of Neanderthal DNA, proving that they interbred with them.

Take-home lesson: the more distantly related two organisms are, the more different their DNA will be!



**March Meeting**

# Splitting and Reconnecting: Finding our Jewish Relatives in Argentina

**by Marc Cutler**

*At our March program, Marc Cutler presented his successful efforts to rediscover his maternal grandfather's family in Argentina and to reconnect with their descendants.*

My grandfather, Isidore (Icek) Tenenbaum, immigrated to the U.S. from Szydlowiec, Poland, and arrived with his older brother Jocek in New York City on the *Ryndam* on June 29, 1909. They were both teenagers. Their father, Mordka Mendel Tenenbaum, had arrived in 1904 and was living at 254 East Fourth Street on the Lower East Side. The father had probably left the Jewish Pale of Settlement in Poland during the uprisings and pogroms that occurred during this period. According to my mother, Mordka's wife, Golda Rosensweig Tenenbaum, had refused to immigrate to the U.S. because she believed that one could not keep kosher here.

My grandfather Isidore and his brother Jocek were leather workers, a prominent occupation in Szydlowiec. Sometime between 1909 and 1916 my grandfather moved from New York to Boston (which is fortunate, since otherwise I would be a Yankees fan today). My great-grandfather Mordka and my great-uncle Jocek returned to Poland before the outbreak of World War I.

With the rise of anti-Semitism in the newly independent Poland, Jocek immigrated to Argentina in 1923. He had been unable to regain entry into the U.S. because of the limitations of the National Origins Quota System instituted in 1921.

My grandfather Isidore's company, Bogen-Tenenbaum, produced leather flight jackets for the Army Air Corps in World War II at its factory in Lowell. He was a confirmed atheist and a devoted Red Sox fan (a trait he bequeathed to me).

In Argentina, Jocek (now Jose) began a home business making leather handbags (*bolsas de piel* in Spanish) out of alligator skin. He was soon joined by his two older sisters, Elke (in 1926) and Ides (in 1928), and their husbands Alter (Julio) Cukier and Uszer (Oscar) Frenkel. In 1929, my grandfather made a trip to Poland, bringing a dowry so that a younger sister, Hilda, could marry and immigrate to Argentina (because of a lively Jewish prostitution trade, Argentina had banned the immigration of unmarried women).

Unfortunately, the first military dictatorship took over in Argentina the next year and, in the face of the hardships of the Great Depression, put an end to the liberal immigration policy. As a result, Hilda never left Poland, and we are still trying to learn her fate.

In 1933, Jocek died in an accident—he slipped off a curb and into the path of a bus. The Cukiers in-

**June Meeting**

# Merle Kastner

## How to Create a Family History Book

by Carolyn Lee Kohlman

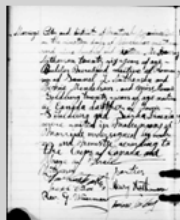
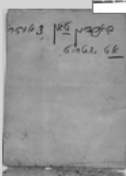
*Merle Kastner, who has created a number of family history books for various branches of her family, shared her expertise in documenting genealogical research through the preparation of such family history books. Merle is a charter member of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal, has held numerous positions in the society, and serves on the board of the Baron de Hirsch Affiliated Cemeteries. She has been researching her family roots in Romania, Poland, Moldova, Lithuania, and Belarus since 1993.*

### Introduction

Merle began by addressing the question, “Why publish a family history book?”

A family history book can be a legacy that is passed down to future generations. It can also make for a unique gift—a “family jewel”—to share with family members, especially when tailored to commemorate special milestones, to enhance family reunions, or to serve as a personal thank-you to family members. Merle quipped that when we are gone our children may not comb through our computer files, but a hard-copy book will endure.

**How to Document your Family History and Genealogy using software you already have.**



### Choosing the Look of the Book

Merle then explored the nitty-gritty of producing and assembling a book.

One has to decide on the type of binding to use. Several types that are inexpensive and allow additional pages to be inserted can be found under the descriptions “coil binding,” “comb binding,” or “spiral binding” (do a Google search to learn more). A cautionary note about adding pages: because the hole punch sizes for the different bindings can be difficult to tell apart, take the original book with you to the bindery so that the new pages can be punched properly.

For the front cover of the book, Merle uses a high quality glossy photo paper. She recommends for the

**April Meeting**

# Stephen P. Morse

## A Potpourri of Genealogical Research Tools

by Hersh Clopper

A two-hour lecture describing numerous genealogical websites might have some potential for tedium. NOT, however, when the speaker is Stephen P. Morse and the lecture hall is filled to capacity with Jewish family history enthusiasts. Steve is known as the electrical engineer who designed INTEL's 8086 microprocessor, precursor to the Pentium processors that are used in today's Windows and Macintosh computers.

**stevemorse.org**

- Ellis Island
- Castle Garden
- Other Ports
- US Census
- Canada/UK Census
- New York Census
- Vital Records
- Calendar, Maps, etc
- Foreign Alphabets
- Holoc & East. Europe
- Genetics (DNA)
- Creating Search App
- Publications
- Awards
- Biographies/Interviews
- Miscellaneous

### Step Webpages by Stephen P. Morse, San Francisco

☞ [Ellis Island Search Forms and Ship Arrivals](#)

**Overview:** Which Ellis Island Search Form to use

[Ellis Island Gold Form \(1892-1924\): Preferred Form for Searching for Ellis Island Passengers in One Step](#)

[Ellis Island White Form \(1892-1924\): Original Form for Searching for Ellis Island Passengers in One Step](#)

[Ellis Island Manifests \(aka Missing Manifests\) \(1892-1924\): Direct Access to Ellis Island Manifests in One Step](#)

[Ellis Island Ship Lists \(1892-1924\): Searching for Ships in the Ellis Island Microfilms in One Step](#)

[Ellis Island Additional Details \(1892-1924\): Obtaining Additional Passenger Information in One Step](#)

§ [All NY Passengers \(1820-1957\): Searching for Ellis Island and Castle Garden Passengers in One Step](#)

§ [All NY Manifests \(1820-1957\): Direct Access to Ellis Island and Castle Garden Manifests in One Step](#)

[All NY Ship Lists \(1820-1957\): Searching for Ships in the Ellis Island and Castle Garden Microfilms in One Step](#)

[Morton Allan Directory: Searching for Ships in the Morton Allan Directory in One Step](#)

[Ship Pictures: Obtaining Pictures of Passenger Ships in One Step](#)

[Ships & Fleets: Obtaining Details on Ships and Fleets in One Step](#)

[NARA/FHL Roll Numbers: Obtaining NARA and FHL Roll Numbers for NY Ship Arrivals in One Step](#)

Steve's lecture was held almost exactly on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of the Ellis Island website. Because of the shortcomings of that website, Steve created his first One-Step website for the purpose of improving on the Ellis Island site's clumsy search engine and making it easier for researchers to find their arriving immigrants. Steve has continued to develop One-Step tools that tie into many other databases. His goal is to add value—to make those existing databases more useful by giving the researcher greater options and more effective ways to access information. His site has grown to include nearly 200 web-based tools (not all for the genealogist).

Steve's lecture in April lived up to his usual high standards of extremely informative and witty presentations. He demonstrated his ability to make a technical program highly entertaining with research examples involving Albert Einstein, Fiorello LaGuardia, and even Donald Duck and George W. Bush.

Steve described a sampling of his One-Step tools and how they could be applied. They included:

# Shortcut to Citizenship

by **Bernard Eckstein**

My family arrived in the U.S. in December 1939. After I graduated from high school in June of 1941, I started working in a chemical research lab. After Pearl Harbor I was assigned to a defense-related project for the Army Corps of Engineers. Had I not wanted to join the military, I could probably have obtained a deferment. Also, as a non-citizen, though subject to the draft, I could have refused induction, but I wanted to serve (several friends had already gone into the service). So when I was contacted by my draft board, I volunteered for induction. However, as an enemy alien (born in Germany) I had to receive an FBI clearance, a process that took about six weeks.

I was inducted into the army on March 20, 1943, in New York City where, I believe, I was told that I could apply for U.S. citizenship after 90 days on active duty. In May I was transferred to Camp Picket, Virginia. As I approached my 90th day of service, I obtained the citizenship application form from someone at post headquarters and sent it off on June 20 to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (I believe) in Washington. A couple of weeks later I received a notice that my application had been accepted and that I was to appear on August 10 at the Federal District Court in Richmond, Virginia, to be granted citizenship.

Because I knew I would be transferred to Washington towards the end of July, I immediately notified the proper authorities of this change. In response, I received instructions to appear in Federal District Court in Washington on August 30, accompanied by two witnesses who could testify to my good character. My two witnesses, two sergeants from my company, had only known me about four weeks. On the ride to the court house, suddenly one of them turned to me and asked, "Say, you haven't been in any trouble, have you?"

That morning I was the only soldier among the small group of people who received their citizenship papers. Each one of us stood before the judge individually. Afterwards I took my witnesses out for a celebratory lunch. I was happy to have my citizenship and had never had any concerns about not being granted it.

My younger brother followed a different route. In February 1946, two weeks after graduating high school, he went into the Army. By then he had had the required five years of residency in the U.S. and could have applied for citizenship along with our parents that January, just before graduation, but perhaps he did not feel there was any rush. He ended up applying in the usual fashion after he returned from his tour of duty with the U.S. Army of Occupation in Japan. I think he had also worried that he might no longer be in New York for the swearing-in ceremony. Before one's actual induction, one had no idea where one would end up for basic training or even in which branch of the Army one would find oneself. I don't know why he did not pursue the matter once he was in the service.

*Bernard Eckstein is a retired research chemist. Born in Ulm, Germany, he left with his family in the late 1930s. Following a stay in England with relatives, they came to the U.S. in 1939. After being discharged from the army, he studied chemistry at Princeton on the GI Bill and then earned a PhD from Cornell University.*



# Chelsea, Massachusetts (Part Two)

by Deanna Mirsky

*This is the second and final installment on Jewish life in Chelsea, a city immediately north of Boston. In the first part, Deanna Mirsky described the Jewish population, at one point said to be the highest percentage of any American city (almost half the city's population in 1930), the rag business that many were involved in, and the impact of the many fires, especially the conflagrations of 1908 and 1973.*

Chelsea had everything a traditional Jewish community needed: many synagogues, transportation to town, kosher food stores, smoked fish, delis, a beach a short ride away.

## Many synagogues to choose from



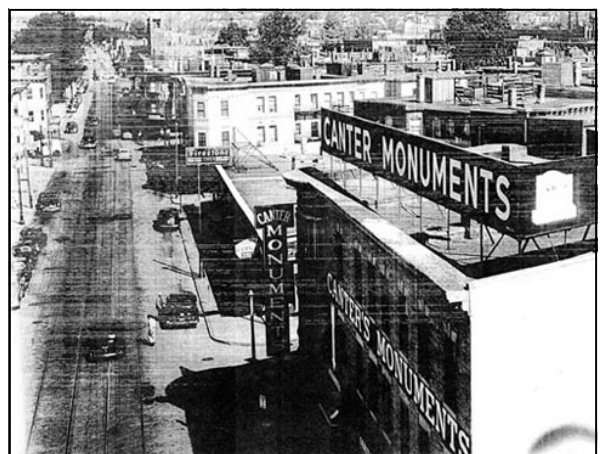
*The Third Street Shul, Beit Hamidrash Hagodol, built in 1912 in Chelsea*

The number of shuls in Chelsea at its heyday, though debated, was probably in the teens. I have the impression that they were more numerous than in the Dorchester-Roxbury-Mattapan area. [On the other hand, someone recently told me they had attended a little shul just six blocks from where I used to live that I had never heard of.] Some of the shuls boasted arks with incredible carvings by Jacob Katz, who lived in Chelsea for some time and who was also a noted carver of carousel animals.

The shuls were all varieties of Orthodox—Russian, Lithuanian, Hasidic, and so on—with the exception of one Conservative temple that was established later. Of course, there were many mergers, splits, removals, and rebuildings—the fires didn't help—to

complicate the picture. One can find photographs and histories of many of the synagogues on the website of the Chelsea Historical Society—[tinyurl.com/Chelsea-Shul](http://tinyurl.com/Chelsea-Shul)

As elsewhere, Jewish education was provided initially by private instruction, but during the 1920s the Bureau of Jewish Education in Boston promoted the founding of the Chelsea Hebrew School, which taught Hebrew—in Hebrew—until 1973 and fed some of its graduates into the high school of Hebrew College and the college itself (located, at that time, south of the heart of Boston in Roxbury, later in Brookline, and now in Newton). However, the private schools didn't entirely disappear, and a boys-only school, which fostered Yiddish, survived at



*This family-owned business was famous for its billboard facing the Mystic Bridge that read, "Drive carefully, we can wait."*

# Obituaries from Funeral Home Websites

by David Rosen

A writer from Israel had identified some obituaries for Hootstein family members in the Jewish Advocate Obituary database. This database can be searched on JewishGen at

[www.jewishgen.org/databases/USA/advocate.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/USA/advocate.htm)

or via the JGSGB website at [obituaries.jgs.gb.org](http://obituaries.jgs.gb.org)

However, the database gives only the date of the newspaper issue, not the obituary itself. It was the latter that he wanted. Because of his great distance from a library with the proper resources, I was pleased to provide him with copies from the newspaper microfilms at the Boston branch of the American Jewish Historical Society.

In addition, I recalled a recent obituary—one that did not appear in the *Advocate*—for Florence Hootstein, someone I had known personally and possibly another relative of interest to the Israeli researcher.



I knew only that the obituary fell sometime in the 2010-2011 range, so locating the information in a different newspaper without an index would have been too time-consuming. Fortunately, Jewish funeral homes in the Boston area have begun to post obituaries on their own websites. I was able to locate the Hootstein obituary of December 4, 2010, with full text online, by searching through the Brezniak Rodman obituaries. The obituary can also be found on the Dignity Memorial websites.

Boston area Jewish funeral homes and their online obituary postings are: