

SA-SIG

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/>

Editor: Bubbles Segall

bubbles.segall@wagait.net

Southern African Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Southern Africa Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group (SA-SIG)

The purpose and goal of the Southern Africa Special Interest Group (SA-SIG) is to bring together Jewish genealogy researchers with a common interest in Southern Africa and to provide a forum for a free exchange of ideas, research tips and information of interest to those researching Jewish family history in the communities of South Africa, Lesotho (Basutoland), Botswana (Bechuanaland), Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), Swaziland, Mozambique, Kenya, and the former Belgian Congo.

The SIG has been producing a quarterly Newsletter since 2000 in which is included articles on personalities in the Southern African Jewish community, religious congregations, communities – past and present and general news about the lives our Southern African families led.

Further information on how to subscribe to the Newsletter can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/newsletter/index.htm>

If you would like to contribute articles to the Newsletter, accounts should include descriptions of families of the community, aspects of local Jewish life, its institutions and particular character. Jewish involvement in the community at large, its history, business life and development could be featured as well.

Articles for printing in the Newsletter should be sent to Bubbles Segall, Editor, at bubbles.segall@wagait.net

General enquiries about the Newsletter can be sent either to Bubbles or to Mike Getz at MikeGetz005@comcast.net

The SA-SIG maintains a set of Web Pages that can be found at: <http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica>

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Archives have their rules. They are generally friendly to family researchers. But recently there have been a number of situations where somewhat arbitrary decisions are made with drastic effects on researchers. One was the decision of the Cape Archives at Roeland Street to ban, with almost immediate effect, the use of digital cameras. Many record groups are already restricted but this led to protests. It seems to have been relaxed with strict criteria about what can now be copied, also with formalities and interviews (before 10 a.m.) to get the permission to take digital photos. No other South African archive has done this. *The Genealogical Society of SA (GSSA)* had a meeting with senior people, one of whom appeared to fall asleep, and generally nothing much more appears to have been resolved. So, be forewarned if you visit these archives – call them beforehand to find out the current practice.

In the UK, The National Archives, Kew, has withdrawn access from BT27, which are the relevant shipping records to South Africa. This has also been done without advance warning and discussion. The rationale here is that these have now been digitised by a commercial organisation and are available online. The fact that *Findmypast.com* has only, to date, put up records from 1885 to around 1910, not the full set, seems to have no bearing. A lot of the shipping records are fragile and difficult to search as they are not indexed, so here it may be useful.

In contrast, staid institutions like the British Library have become more user friendly. They have a series, usually quarterly, of *Family Days*. Usually a number of talks by prominent genealogists, family historians, conservation specialists etc are held. They have a number of online brochures relating to this type of work, and also to their vast collection of maps. Here, note that most of the original survey maps of South Africa are held in the British Library.

The potential monetary rewards from genealogy have not gone unnoticed in the venture-capital field. Recently *Spectrum Equity Investors* led a \$300 million investment to acquire a majority interest in Provo Utah-based *The Generations Network* (the parent company of *Ancestry.com*). *World Vital Records* raised \$90 million for a search site for genealogy data. *Geni* was founded by former executives and early employees of *PayPal*, *Yahoo!*

Groups, Ebay, and Tribe. It is backed by venture capital firms *Founders Fund* and *Charles River Ventures.* *Geni* lets you create a family tree through a simple interface. *Geni* quickly reached 5 million users just a few months after launching.

There are a number of Israeli companies in the field. About \$9M was invested to start up *MyHeritage.com.* The site allows users to share family photos, showcase their family tree online, and organize family events. It has a useful facial matching software function for photographs built in. *Famillon,* another Israel company, provides online family tree building and matching.

FamilyTreeDNA.com is the leader in family matching with DNA samples. So, the world of genealogy is growing fast. The cutting edge of science and technology is now available to all in our field.

Saul Issroff

London, saul@shaul.homechoice.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Another December and another last edition of the year. 2007 has been an exceptional year for both the quality and quantity of the stories we have been able to publish. The content provided, whether it be writings of our readers' own experience, or a tip off regarding information or works by others, has been excellent.

As editor I am constantly stunned by the diversity of sources with links to South African Jewry accessed by our contributors. This edition's article regarding the South African connection of Michael and William Joffe, both employees of Great Britain's former Department of Trade and Industry who were killed in the 1st World War, is a good example. Well done Jeanette Rosenberg in honing in on this wonderful story! Who can add a chapter to it?

Ora Leshem who grew up in Kenya sent me a book she wrote about her family's significant contribution to the fledgling Jewish settlement in the early 1900s. The chapter about her grandfather's involvement makes interesting reading.

Saul sent me two articles he came across which should assist anyone involved in research in South Africa. Did you know that South African census returns are routinely destroyed after statistical information has been removed? Find out more about South African genealogical resources on page 7.

To all our contributors for this and all editions of this year, many thanks!

See you in 2008.

Bubbles Segall

Editor

Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia

bubbles.segall@wagait.net

ABRAHAM LAZARUS BLOCK FROM SPRING IN ETERNITY: A FAMILY SAGA

Part 1

Ora Hirshfeld

Ora was born in Israel and spent her childhood in Kenya. She has written a book about her family – Spring in Eternity: A Family Saga. The chapter about her grandfather Abraham Lazarus Block and his contribution to Kenya is reprinted here with permission.

The story of my grandfather Abraham Lazarus Block, (known by everyone as ALB) really begins with that of my great grandfather, Samuel Block, married to Ettel, daughter of the aristocratic Solz family, the only Jewish family in Russia upon whom various rights and privileges had been conferred. Samuel was a farmer as well as a cabinetmaker; he and Ettel had four children: Annie, Abraham, Lily and Freda. The family lived in relative luxury on the family estate outside Vilna, Lithuania.

In 1891, when Abraham was eight years old, Samuel left Russia for South Africa, where he had heard the Jewish immigrants there were flourishing. There are conflicting reports as to why he left. Some think it was just to seek a better life, leaving behind pogroms against the Jews which were rampant at that time. He intended to establish himself in South Africa and then send for his wife and family. Many years later, his daughter, Lily claimed her father was wanted by

the secret police and was forced to flee – but no evidence has come forth to substantiate this version.

Whichever was true, the fact remains that Ettel and her children were left alone. After a short time, Ettel's sister Fanny (Sinson), who was married to a rabbi, came and took all the family and arranged a house for them near to her own. Ettel's children participated in their cousins' lessons with private tutors.

However, after a few years when the Sinsons' sons were approaching army age, the family upped and emigrated to Leeds, in England, taking the Blocks' eldest daughter, Annie, with them. In those days Jewish families did everything they could to avoid their sons having to serve in the Russian army. A few years later, Abraham, too, was smuggled out of Lithuania in a cart covered with straw, and went to join Rabbi Sinson and his family in Leeds. His journey must have been nerve-wracking. We are not sure of his age, but he was probably around twelve or thirteen, only speaking Yiddish and maybe Russian and Lithuanian. No doubt he was escorted across Europe by paid couriers to a port, possible Hamburg or Danzig (today Gdansk) where he was put on a ship bound for England.



Samuel and Ettel Block

Abraham was not happy there; the family tried to further his education, and then even get him a job, but he was a restless young man, and he decided to go and join his father in South Africa. Of course, he did not have enough money to buy a ticket, but managed to work his passage on a boat leaving from the English port of Hull to Cape Town, South Africa. He knew his father was in Johannesburg, so spent the next few months working his way to join up with his father. According to family legend, Samuel was working as a cabinetmaker and although Abraham joined him, we don't know if he helped him with his work or worked on his own.

Abraham was a worldly young man and made it his business to know what was happening on both the local and global scene. Thus, in March 1903, he attended a life-changing lecture given by the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain.

Chamberlain spoke of a new colony being added to the British Empire – called British East Africa. A treaty had been signed with the 'elders' of the indigenous community and the British government to allow Europeans to settle on the land. Chamberlain stressed that there was a single rail line running from Mombasa through the interior to the Victoria Nyanza district.

Fired with enthusiasm, young Abraham (then aged only 20) immediately felt he would like to be part of this new territory. He became even more convinced a few days later when, following the Kishinev massacre¹ he read that Chamberlain, together with Sir Charles Elliot (The British High Commissioner), were eager to have white people settle in the new protectorate, and were proposing a refuge for Jews from Russia in British East Africa.

This became known as the 'Uganda Scheme,' as the area designated for Jewish settlement was the Uasin Gishu Plateau in the province of Uganda, then in western Kenya. (In October 1962 Uganda would become an independent country). However, the 'Uganda' plan was firmly rejected by the Zionist Congress held in Basle in 1907. Indeed the British soon realised that this was not a viable option, and

¹ The massacre immediately after Easter 1903 occurred after a Russian boy was found murdered, and the local Russians suspected the Jews wanted his blood for their Passover *matzot*. Some 100+ Jews, mainly children were killed. Later it was found that a family member murdered the boy.

the plan was dropped. However, it was simmering for long enough to encourage a fair number of Jews from Eastern Europe to immigrate to the territory. Most of them ended up in Kenya, as did my grandfather.

Abraham persuaded a few friends to join him, and set about finding out how to finance getting there. He discovered that an Austrian boat called the *Fieldmarshal*, trading between Europe and South Africa stopped at all ports along the eastern coast of Africa. He somehow managed to raise the necessary funds both for himself and his two white Basutu ponies. As a farmer's son, he had the foresight to take some sacks of seeds with him – peas, beans and potatoes, and a bag of linseed.

The boat left Delgoa Bay at the end of June 1903 and reached Mombasa twenty-one days later.

“We reached Mombasa about 6 am one sunny morning and the impression was tremendous. There was no port, we landed from rowing boats and were carried ashore on the backs of Swahili porters.²”

The first thing he did on arrival was to seek out any other Jews – and found two Austrians already settled there – Messrs. Marcus and Lowe, partners in a trading concern. Marcus was very welcoming and asked if the new arrivals were planning to be traders or farmers. Grandfather's friends replied that they were ready to farm; my grandfather was advised by Marcus and Lowe to try his luck in Nairobi. So, he took the train to Nairobi, a 36-hour journey, which today is an overnight ride.

“Nairobi was much less impressive than the coast. The rain came down, making the village one large mud puddle.”³

Grandfather did various odd jobs for a few months then started working for someone who, due to the large influx of visitors and pioneers, was building a hotel. They had tables and chairs made by local Indian carpenters, and had imported iron bedsteads – but no mattresses. My grandfather, being a ‘Jack of all trades’, saw an opportunity to make some money, offered his services and was accepted. Once they had got over the difficulties in procuring the necessary materials and equipment, he was in business.

² From Grandfather's personal account.

³ From Grandfather's personal account.

“The next trouble (was) to get material to stuff the mattresses, and while riding about I had noticed great amounts of grass, which had been cut by the railway, so I asked if I could use the grass. He offered the grass free of charge and gave me the boys to gather it and have it properly dried. I was able to complete the job within three weeks and proudly delivered the mattresses to the hotel. They looked well, but were not as comfortable, so advised Mrs. Tate to put a thick blanket over (the mattress) to prevent her customers from being severely pricked.”⁴

The railway superintendent was probably pleased to have the cut grass removed, as, just laying by the side of the tracks, it was a fire and snake hazard.

Little did Abraham know then, that one day he would buy that hotel! Having earned a reasonable amount of money from his mattress making, Grandfather set about looking to buy a farm. He soon found a suitable smallholding, and started to try to work the land. He had his two ponies and his sacks of seed, but no oxen or horses for ploughing. Reluctantly he had to sell his treasured ponies. He walked the seventeen miles into Nairobi where he purchased a crude plough and six oxen. Once he had succeeded in getting his purchases back to his farm, he set up the equipment and started planting. Within six months he had grown and sold a crop of potatoes and oats at a handsome profit, with enough seeds to plant a further two acres. However, he realized that to really expand the farm he needed much more sophisticated equipment, but of course did not have the money. Feeling utterly dejected, he went into town to Marcus's office, and by chance the High Commissioner Lord Delamere was there, and he asked my grandfather why he looked so gloomy. Abraham said he had decided to go back to South Africa. *What on earth for? We can't afford to let good young men like you leave the country. What do you want?*”

My grandfather quickly listed his needs – a few oxen to draw a double farrow plough and some money to improve his living conditions. Whereupon Lord Delamere immediately instructed the manager at his Njoro office to send twelve of his best oxen and a couple of dairy cows to my grandfather's farm, (Limuru) and told Marcus to give him 100 rupees a month, to be debited to Delamere's account.

⁴ From Grandfather's personal account.

“... these words were a great comfort, and within a few days oxen and four cows arrived, and Marcus gave me 100 rupees. I immediately got to work and within six months I had forty to fifty acres cleared and ploughed, and as soon as the rains came, I planted peas, oats, beans and potatoes. I was also the first farmer to plant flax, which proved very successful.”

With some of the profits from these crops, Abraham started to rebuild his ‘house’ to improve his living conditions – using some of his flax for thatching the roof, the walls were still being built with ‘mud and wattle’. By this time (the middle of 1904) the colony was expanding as more settlers were arriving, mostly farmers from South Africa and some businessmen from England. During the latter part of 1904, when he had finished his planting, Abraham took on a job at a neighbouring farm for a wage of 90 rupees⁵ a month including lunch. Every morning he would organize his own workers for the day before setting out to his ‘job’, returning home about 6pm. With this extra money, Abraham started paying back Lord Delamere, and by 1906 his debt was clear. He continued working on this farm until the end of 1907, by which time he had also managed to repay all his debts – and was in the enviable position of owning his property outright.

Grandfather was always good to his African workers and earned their respect. He learnt to speak with them in their own language – Kikuyu, whereas Swahili was the language most used between the Africans and the white man.

Meanwhile, his sister, Lily had left Russia, gone to England and then on to South Africa, where she joined her father, Samuel. They were in touch with Abraham, and his letters extolling the virtues of Kenya fired Lily to go there too. She persuaded their father to sell up in Johannesburg and start yet another new life in British East Africa. They arrived in 1906, and at first helped Abraham in his various businesses,

In 1908, Grandfather sold that farm and decided to split the proceeds – half of the money went towards buying another farm, and he used the other half for

a trip to Europe. It was during this trip that he went to Russia to fetch his mother and younger sister. So, after many years, most of the family was reunited – one married sister remaining in England.

After his trip to Europe, Abraham started trading in cattle with the local Masai tribesmen, and gradually started to develop a dairy farm in the Limuru area. One of his innovations in that part of the world was that he arranged for all the necessary treatments against disease for his animals. Gradually over the next few years, Abraham Block became a serious trader, buying and selling cattle and increasing the size of his farms. After several adventures and trips to other parts of Africa to buy cattle, by 1911, even by his own standards, Abraham Block considered himself a wealthy young man and was a serious cattle trader. In addition he went on safari as a ‘helping hand to white hunters’ – by his own admission a ‘highly paid job’. In addition to the ‘good money’ there is no doubt that young Abraham, full of adventurous spirit, was keen to experience the excitement of ‘the hunt’.

Meanwhile, settlers were arriving from different parts of England and South Africa, trying to establish a workable infrastructure, but many of their efforts were frustrated by bureaucratic problems from the Colonial Office in London. The town of Nairobi was being developed with all the amenities and services required of a capital city.

Abraham Block had accumulated enough money by then to treat himself to another ‘European tour’, but this time decided he would include the Holy Land in his travels. Here, we have two versions of how and why he decided to visit Palestine, on what would turn out to be such a fateful visit – because from there he returned to Kenya with a wife.

Here, I will summarize the versions, and it will be up to you, his descendants, to choose which one you think is most likely, or which one you would prefer to be the most accurate!

In the next issue of the Newsletter we see Abraham marrying and bringing his new bride to Kenya.

⁵ The rupee was Indian currency, brought to Kenya by the British. When the currency was changed, the rupee was the equivalent of one shilling. (100 cents=one shilling, 20 shillings=one pound sterling)

SOUTH AFRICAN GENEALOGY: WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO BEGIN?

This FAQ file is maintained by Steve Hayes and is reprinted here with permission.

Web: <http://hayesfam.bravehost.com/stevesig.htm>

If you are a newcomer to South African genealogy, you may have a lot of questions. Here are some answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:

If you're asking this on the Internet, presumably you have access to a web browser, and one of the best places to begin with South African genealogy is right here: <http://home.global.co.za/~mercon/>

WHERE CAN I FIND SOUTH AFRICAN CENSUS RECORDS?

The short answer is: You can't. South African census returns are routinely destroyed after statistical information has been abstracted, so South African genealogists don't use them.

WHAT DO SOUTH AFRICAN GENEALOGISTS USE THEN?

One of the best places to begin is the records of deceased estates. These usually have a Death Notice, which should (but sometimes doesn't) give you the names of the parents, spouse and children of the deceased, or if the deceased was unmarried, the names of brothers and sisters. They have the wills, if any (except in the Cape, where wills and estate accounts have been filed separately from death notices in the older estates), and the estate accounts. The older ones are in the archives and have computer indexes, and you can search the indexes on the web here:

http://www.national.archives.gov.za/naairs_content.htm

But be sure to read the introduction and explanatory text before searching.

WHERE CAN I FIND SOUTH AFRICAN SHIPPING LISTS?

First, they are not a good place to start looking. They are incomplete, and all over the place. If you want to know if some relative went to South Africa and died here, look in the deceased estates, not the

shipping lists. In most cases, shipping lists are a last resort, or a means of providing "filler" information to round out the family history. Secondly, if you do want to try shipping lists, you need to know where your ancestor came from, and roughly when. If the answer is Germany 1859, the shipping lists have been published (*Werner Schmidt-Pretoria, Deutsche Auswanderung nach Sued-Afrika im 19 Jahrhundert*). Some other shipping lists have also been published, but they are fragmentary.

If you are looking for ancestors who emigrated to Southern Africa in the period 1890-1925, one possible source is *South Africa Magazine*. This was published in London. The Johannesburg Public Library and the National Library in Tshwane have incomplete runs.

You could try other libraries too. They published lists of passengers embarking at British ports for South Africa, and embarking at South African ports for the UK (and sometimes other places). *South Africa Magazine* is a useful source, if you can find it, as it also has birth, marriage and death announcements, and other personal news, usually of the richer members of society.

Some passenger lists and other useful stuff are available at:

<http://www.genealogyworld.net/>

WHERE CAN I FIND WILLS OR PROBATE RECORDS?

With the deceased estates. See:

http://www.national.archives.gov.za/naairs_content.htm

I did a search on the archives: what do the funny things like DEPOT and VOLUME mean?

See the warning above: Be sure to read the introduction and explanatory text before searching. If you didn't, go here now:

<http://www.national.archives.gov.za/fields.htm>

HOW DO I GET A BIRTH CERTIFICATE?

With some difficulty. First, to apply for one, you need to know the information you probably want to get from the certificate. That's Catch 22. Catches 1-21 are almost as bad. Birth certificates are expensive. They take a long time to get. The indexes are not open to the public so you can't ask someone

else to look them up. For more information, and applications forms, see:

<http://www.home-affairs.gov.za/>

The good news is that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS, Mormons) has microfilmed some of the registers, so that if you want the information in the register, as opposed to an official certificate, you can try there.

If you want to know what the LDS has, go to their web site:

<http://www.familysearch.com>

or <http://www.familysearch.org>

Click on LIBRARY, click on FAMILY LIBRARY HISTORY CATALOGUE, click on PLACE NAME enter South Africa, click on Civil Registration. Click on HERE right at the bottom so you have a printable copy.

HOW DO I GET A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE?

Marriage certificates are of little use to genealogists in South Africa. They do not give the names and occupations of parents. They are as difficult to get as birth certificates.

For more information on getting marriage certificates see:

<http://www.home-affairs.gov.za/>

Your best chance of seeing a marriage certificate, however, is if the couple got divorced, and you find a copy in the divorce records. SOME divorce records are in the archives, and you can find them here:

http://www.national.archives.gov.za/naairs_content.htm

The archival references to divorces will sometimes speak of “illiquid cases” or “opposed applications”, and sometimes there will be both. Make sure you order the right ones. They can be quite useful. Sometimes you can really get the dirt on your ancestors from these things – private detectives’ reports on how many times they committed adultery, where and with whom, for example. Also, names and ages of minor children and who got the custody.

If you still want a marriage certificate (or birth certificate), you need to apply to the Department of Home Affairs, Private Bag X114, Pretoria, 0001. Before they can issue a certificate, they usually want to know the kind of information you probably hope to get from the certificate. Marriages were registered nationally from 1923 to 1976, and after 1994. Between 1976 and 1994 some “homeland” marriages may have been registered separately. Before 1923 registrations were in the different provinces, and before 1910 in the different colonies. Before 1902 it was in the different republics and colonies. You still apply to the same place, but bear in mind that older registers are kept in the archives, and for a certificate to be written they have to be transferred from the archives to the Department of Home Affairs and then returned. This can take a long time.

Also check the information above under “Birth Certificates” on how to find out if any of the marriage registers have been filmed by the LDS Church.

Before about 1895 in many places marriages were only recorded in church registers.

The situation is a lot more complex than described above, and the complexities are things you can ask about on the list, but the general description should give you some idea of the kind of questions that might be worth asking.

WHERE CAN I FIND CHURCH RECORDS?

With difficulty. There are well over 8000 separate religious denominations in South Africa, and many people change denominations 3 or more times during their lives. People move to a new town, and join a new denomination or religion, or become agnostics or atheists. The records of these denominations are all over the place too. Some of the older and larger denominations have centralised their records, but most have not. They are kept in local churches and can be damaged or destroyed by damp, acid paper or ink, insects, mice, fire or flood, or simply being tossed out in an over-zealous clean-up. Some of the smaller denominations keep very poor records. Forged marriage certificates are common, especially in rural areas. If you know what denomination your ancestors were, and where they were living, when children were born or they were married, you can ask some specific questions on the SA Genealogy list like: *Where are the Wesleyan*

Methodist Registers for Colesberg in the period 1860-1880?

But general requests for look ups in church registers without mentioning a particular denomination, time and place are unlikely to get a useful response.

WHERE CAN I FIND MILITARY RECORDS?

Department of Defence
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE
Private Bag X289
Pretoria 0001, South Africa

Tel: 012-322-6350 ext 227
Fax: 012-323-5613

The more info you can give the faster they can find details. They have a card index for military personnel who served in WWI and WWII. These give the service number, which can be used to find fuller service records.

WHERE CAN I LOOK UP THE PHONE NUMBERS OF LIVING RELATIVES?

Turn your web browser to: <http://196.15.219.249/>

It's the on-line phone book.

WHAT IF MY FAMILY WERE IN OTHER PARTS OF AFRICA?

Try asking on the African Genealogy mailing list - see: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/afgen/>

WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

Go to:

<http://home.global.co.za/~mercon/sagen.htm> and follow the links!

This FAQ file is maintained by Steve Hayes.

Web: <http://hayesfam.bravehost.com/stevesig.htm>
E-mail: hayesstw@gmail.com
Last updated: 18 November 2006

Suggestions for additions or improvements are welcome.

PLACE NAMES, MAPS AND FARM SURVEYS

Keith Meintjes

Reprinted with permission from the Genealogical Society of South Africa (www.egggsa.org) GGSA Newsletter, August 2007.

A good site to search for a South African place name is:

<http://www.fallingrain.com/world/SF/>

Or, simply search on Google for *fallingrain placename*. For example, search on *fallingrain Tulbagh* and you will find that Tulbagh is at latitude -33.2833 and longitude 19.1500. There are also maps and weather information.

A most amazing site is that for the South African Geographical Names System:

<http://sagns.dac.gov.za/>

On the left of the page, click on Search, then SAGNS (Official Database). Then wait for the page to build.

On the search form, enter *Tulbagh* for place name, and click Search. (The Enter key does nothing.) Wait for the page to build! There is one result. Click on the link for map. On the resulting map, click once on the "T" in TULBAGH. Then, wait.

This is an official SA government topographical map. Note the historical sites (in Old English script), and also the words "KRUYS VALLEY" in the upper right part of the map. This is the official farm name (and number).

Now, go to the site for the Chief Surveyor-General:

<http://csg.dla.gov.za/>

and click on where it says: For scanned images click here. On the next page, click on:

Search on Town/Region/Farm Name which should bring you here:

<http://csg.dla.gov.za/esio/searchproperty.jsp>

In the first box, select *Cape Town* from the drop-down menu. In the last box (Enter Farm Name) type *kruys valley*. Click on Search.

You should get a results display with six lines, all for the same farm. For the second last one, *Portion 00018*, click on Search.

The next page is a list of images of deeds recorded for the farm. Choose page 1 of the 1923 survey, which is:

<http://csg.dla.gov.za/esio/viewTIFF?furl=/images7/b4/10NQ3901.TIF&office=SGCTN>

and you will find a survey drawing, and the information that Kruis (sic) Valley was granted to E.A. Buyskes on 6th October 1817.

This is just one example. If the place name is not found on *sagns*, you can search on longitude and latitude.

I have spent hours exploring the maps of the Slagtersnek area. Search *sagns* for *slagtersnek*, then pan northeast. You will find Glen Lynden, the site given to Pringle's party of 1820. Further to the northeast you will find Lyndoch (Lynedoch?), which is Pringle's farm, and Cameron's Glen, including the location of Bezuidenhout's cave and Bezuidenhout's grave.

I feel that I must apologize in advance for the hours you may spend.

FROM PORT ELIZABETH AND SOUTH AFRICA, VIA AUSTRALIA, TO HAIFA

Wendy Blumfield

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and is reprinted here with permission.*



Valerie and Gilbert Herbert have made two major location changes in their lives and their success here is a story of determination and idealism. For in their retirement, living in the same quiet apartment on the Carmel, with its sea and forest view, they bought soon after aliya, they can look back on years of professional achievement, activism and involvement in the community life of Haifa.

Gilbert was both a student and a lecturer in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Witwatersrand in his home city of Johannesburg. Valerie studied speech training and drama at the University of Cape Town and mime at the Royal Academy of Music in London. They married in 1953 and with the birth of their two children, Barry and Margalit, began to be uncomfortable with the concept of bringing up children in the political environment of apartheid.

In 1960, Gilbert became ill and was convalescing in the wilds near the Kruger National Park when he read an out-of-date advertisement for a reader in the University of Adelaide. His application was accepted and the family moved to Australia.

Although the Jewish community in Adelaide was relatively small, the couple were very involved in Zionist activity. As the children grew, Valerie went back to work teaching speech and drama at the

Adelaide Teachers College. They had a very comfortable life, good job prospects and a happy social life, although they missed their families in South Africa.

They were about to sign a contract on a hilltop dream house designed by Gilbert, and their son was registered for a prestigious high school, when they started to ask themselves what it was all about.

“My grandfather was an ardent Zionist,” says Valerie, “and in fact he bought land in pre-state Israel. He died when my mother was young, but in my grandparents’ home there was a large portrait of Theodore Herzl and I always thought that was my grandfather. When I got to Haifa and went to the government offices, I could not understand why they all displayed ‘my grandfather’ on the walls!”

But Valerie’s growing desire to come to Israel was rooted in the collective Jewish grief over the Holocaust. “This left a deep scar in me. I felt that we needed our own country, we have to be there,” says Valerie.

Gilbert had been a member of *Habonim* and South African Friends of the Haganah and time spent training on a farm outside Johannesburg. He volunteered to join the IDF during the War of Independence, but an earlier injury while serving in the South African army prevented his acceptance.

Preparation

In Adelaide, the couple agreed that they had reached a point of no return. Their son was due to go to high school, there was a decision to make on the house, but their desire to live in Israel was becoming stronger than these ambitions. “It was now or never,” they realized.

There was only one school of architecture here at the time, the Technion, but until three weeks before their departure, Gilbert had still not received a commitment.

“By that stage we were determined to come whether or not the Technion wanted me,” he says. They used some of their JNF contacts to explore other options and even considered life on a kibbutz or moshav.

“Meanwhile,” continues Valerie, “we had booked an *ulpan* in Netanya, but less than two weeks before our departure, we received a note informing

us that there had been a mix-up and they had no accommodation for us.” But at the same time, a letter arrived from the Technion offering Gilbert a job and accommodation in Haifa.

Arrival

Gilbert started work the day after arrival and he and Valerie went to morning *ulpan*. “The children had only Sunday school Hebrew and we had to find a private tutor for them,” says Valerie.

“Yes, the culture shock, the drastic change in our lives, getting the children settled, it was a nightmare,” she admits, “but we were determined that it would work out. I had to remind myself of the ideological reasons for coming here. I dared not look back – you have to strengthen yourself.”

Stress took its toll on Gilbert too and he collapsed one night with what appeared to be a heart attack. When he woke up five days later, he found himself in architect Eric Mendelsohn’s famous Rambam Hospital building. “I missed a lot of my *ulpan*,” he quips. “I learned the past and present tense but no future in Hebrew.”

Work

Valerie resumed her career and taught extracurricular courses at the Technion and the University of Haifa and created course in movement and drama and phonetics for the Oranim teachers college and at the Gordon Seminar in Haifa.

One job that continued for 18 years was teaching Arab teachers of English at their training college. “I felt it was helping in building bridges between Arabs and Jews,” she says.

Today in retirement, she teaches as a volunteer at a senior citizens’ home.

Gilbert became a full professor and later dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning at the Technion. He traveled widely, lecturing and writing and received many awards and academic prizes. His books and publications are diverse works of research and history, including Walter Gropius and the development of prefabrication, the history the International Movement and the evolution of modern architecture and the work of the Bahaus and the basis of modern industrial architecture in Israel.

Family

In 1977 their son Binyamin (Barry), 22, was killed in a road accident in South Africa. He had survived the Yom Kippur War as a lieutenant in the navy and when he finished his IDF service he toured South Africa. Following his death, family and friends planted a grove in the Nir Etzion forest on the Carmel overlooking the Atlit beach where he had served, and established an annual prize and scholarship at the Technion.

Their daughter Margalit works for a Haifa lawyer. "The news of Barry's death came on her 18th birthday," recalls Valerie, "the day she was sitting a matriculation exam."

There are three grandchildren, the older two having completed national and military service and the youngest still in high school.

Social Life

The Herberts soon made a large circle of friends. For some years they attended the synagogue at the neighboring retirement home, but for the past 10 years they have been active members of the Moriah Masorati community. "It is a wonderful supportive community, an important part of our lives," says Gilbert, who together with Valerie sings in the choir.

Valerie was a founding member in 1982 of the Haifa English Theater and to this day is involved on stage and off. She is an active volunteer, is a member of the Haifa chapter of WIZO and Hadassah Israel, and was chairwoman of the Haifa Committee for Soviet Jewry.

Gilbert is a former president of the Haifa committee of the South African Zionist Federation.

Hobbies

They both sing in the Carmel Choir and enjoy painting and genealogical studies. Gilbert writes fiction and poetry and his poems are published in the annual anthology of Voices: English Poets in Israel.

The couple are avid travelers and have explored every continent except Antarctica

Postscript: Valerie's maiden name was Ryan, probably Rein in Lithuania, became Ryin in England and then Ryan in Ireland in the 1880s.

Valerie was not only the Chairman of the Haifa Committee for Soviet Jewry, but the actual founder. It was due to her initiative that the organisation was established.

Gilbert was the President of the Jewish National Fund of South Australia and it was in this official capacity that they first visited Israel in 1963.



*Gilbert and Valerie Herbert – Washington DC 2003
(Photo by Bubbles Segall)*

REASSESSMENT OF SYNAGOGUES SURVIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE TERRITORIES OF MAURITIUS, MOCAMBIQUE, ZAIRE, ZAMBIA, AND ZIMBABWE

Maurice Skikne

The SA-SIG website:

www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/synagogues/index.htm

has a listing of the extant synagogues in Southern Africa which was put together in 2004 and revised in 2005. The data was taken from *The Jewish Year Book of 1969*. At that stage 257 *shuls* were cited. That information of some 36 years ago showed that a considerable number of *shuls* had been shut down or had been sold off. At the current time, the situation has worsened as numerous Jewish country communities in South Africa and almost all adjacent territories have ceased to exist.

The reasons for this are multifarious, among which, a number of reasons are given *inter alia*:

- Emigration of numerous younger people from South Africa to countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and to a lesser extent the UK, Israel and the United States.
- The current generations (i.e. children of immigrants and their offspring) are obtaining tertiary education, not required in country districts. Alternately such training is pretty limited in small towns
- The rural Jews wish to integrate with their brethren more regularly and thus desire to be in the larger urban communities.
- Children wish to attend Jewish Day Schools which are only available in the larger centres in South Africa.
- Children and parents are becoming more observant, and wish to belong to the more popular communities and *shuls*, in the larger centres. Here there is exposure to *shiurim*, places of learning, *yeshivot*, etc.
- Access to kosher food purveyors and eating establishments not available in the smaller rural communities.
- Security in the smaller *shtetlech* is not as well organized.
- The constant pressure of mild Anti-Semitism.

At the time of writing this account (July 2007), some 150 *shuls* are extant, used either daily, or in many cases, *Shabbos*, and *Yomtovim*, The figures are as follows:

Total Number of <i>shuls</i> in South Africa	125
Number of “ <i>shtiebels</i> ”	25
<i>Total</i>	150
Number of Orthodox type Communities	137
Number of Progressive Type Communities	13
<i>Expressed as percentages</i>	91: 9%

The actual number of people belonging to each congregation is difficult to ascertain at this juncture, but the total number of Jews in South Africa is thought to be somewhere between 60 and 70,000 at this time, of which quite a number are Israeli, working jobs and operating businesses. Originally the population of Jews in 1969 was approximated at about 122,000. The beneficiaries of the difference have been gained by the above countries. Not only did these countries gain people

with significant *Yiddishkeit*, they have the additional benefit of acquiring persons with considerable tertiary qualifications.

It is common knowledge that countries like Australia and Canada have had their Judaic communities enriched by the addition of South African Jews. Their contribution has been to raise the standards of observance, *kashrut*, prayer format and may it be suggested – a strong injection of ready-made professional and commercial acumen. This, all for the literal cost of immigration permission. This writer quotes a long-time gentile friend who attended King Edward High School in Houghton, and was very close to Jewish learners in his class. He studied Law with a few of these colleagues here and now often sees them in Melbourne, Australia. He has iterated that the standard of Law in that city, and the rest of the country has untold benefit from the presence of his Jewish compatriots.

It is relatively early to be able to speculate on the effect the attrition will have on the South African Jewish community. We cannot visualize what the future holds for those of us remaining here. Suffice it to say that the South African Jewish community is effectively an aging one, with more than half the population well over the age of 45 years.

The effect is that with time we will witness yet more people emigrating from here and the population age must inevitably rise. This writer takes a pessimistic view and attitude, and feels that the Jewish community of South Africa will cease to be a viable one in about 20 years time if the rate of emigration persists as it is at present.

As for the states outside of South Africa, as far as can be determined, in consultation with Rabbi Moishe Silberhaft, there is a small one in Harare, Zimbabwe and another in Maputo, Mocambique. In the former case the original *shul* was destroyed by a fire in recent years.

A more comprehensive list of synagogues, religious organizations, Jewish day schools, kosher outlets and restaurants etc may be accessed at www.jewish.org.za

OUR MOST RECENT TRIP TO PLUNGE, LITHUANIA

A Letter sent to friends after our last trip to Lithuania

Glenda Levitt

September 2007

Last weekend Abel and I went to Lithuania to attend a meeting. We stayed in a pleasant little hotel on the outskirts of the town of *Plunge*. On Friday, the first morning of our arrival, we sat down to breakfast in the dining room, empty except for one other couple. After a few moments we realized that they were speaking English. Abel gave them a friendly good morning wave, they beckoned us to join them for coffee. We were curious to know why there was another English speaking couple in a town not well known for attracting tourists. He introduced himself as Ywo (pronounced Ivor) Zaluski and his wife Lorna. He asked if we had heard of the Oginski Palace. We told him that we were very aware of it and the rich Oginski legacy in *Plunge*. We knew of the Oginski passion for music and that a member of the family had established a school of music in the early 1900's.

Ywo explained that he was a direct descendant of the original Polish Oginski and that one of his ancestors had bought the land in *Plunge* in the 1830's to build what we now know as the Oginski Palace. He told us that he had written a book called *The Oginski Gene*. Although he could not find an interested publisher in England, to his surprise and delight he was approached by publishers from Poland, Belarus and Lithuania to get permission to translate and then publish his book in the three countries.

The launching of the book in Lithuanian was taking place that Saturday evening at the Oginski Palace. He had traveled to Poland some years before to do research and not only found descendants and a great deal of family history but he also found music composed by his great, great, great, great, great-grandfather and works composed by that ancestor's daughter. Ywo, who is a pianist and music teacher by profession, had produced a DVD of him playing his family's compositions.

He asked what we were doing in *Plunge* and we explained our connection and that we were being

fetches by Eugenjuis, the son of Yossel Bunka, to go and visit the mass graves in the forest and then to meet with our dear friend Yossel the folk artist. Ywo showed a real interest and we tentatively invited them to join us. He and Lorna readily accepted. I told Ywo that I had read that after a fire had damaged much of the town, an Oginski gave money to rebuild the synagogue that had been destroyed. He also gave the Jews a piece of land as a gift in order to build new homes. It is also documented that when the Lithuanian government imposed heavy taxes on Jewish traders, making it almost impossible to make a living, the count erected a wall in the market place as a gift to the Jews. The wall served as a support for the booths and shops for the Jews to conduct their business.

Ywo described how in 1939 when he was an infant, his parents had fled Poland to live in England, but he had always heard that sometime in the family's past in Poland, the Oginski family had received a Rabbinical blessing. He knew nothing more but was immensely proud of the fact.

We arrived at the forest and although they were both very moved, it was Ywo who found the experience emotionally quite overwhelming. He barely spoke as we passed the mass graves, one after another, guarded by the extraordinary giant wooden sculptures, the work of Yossel and his friends. At the small memorial, after Abel lit his Yartzheit candle, I offered mine for Ywo to light. He wordlessly accepted, lit the candle, placed it at the foot of the memorial and then he lent against a tree and wept.

Afterwards, driving back, Ywo said that that was one of the most moving things he had ever done. He told us that the experience had made a powerful impact on him as a person. He had always been aware that who he was, was made up of 3 connections with his past, the Polish, the Belarus and the Lithuanian. but today he discovered a 4th dimension to who he is, and that is his connection to the Jews.

After a delightful evening at the Oginski Palace at the ceremony to launch his book, Abel and I returned to the hotel for supper. A short while later Ywo and Lorna arrived and joined us. He remarked that we had each come to *Plunge* to honour the memory of our ancestors but the Kausenai forest underlined painfully the terrible difference between the fate of his family and ours. We spent a last, warm and wonderful evening together enjoying each

others company, deeply aware of the vastly different backgrounds from which we had come and the strange connection that had woven a bond between us.

Every visit that we make to *Plunge*, we have probably been there a dozen times, brings with it a new experience and draws us closer to the town and its tragic Jewish past

Shana Tovah, and with warm good wishes,

Glenda Levitt

CASUALTIES OF WW1: ARE YOU RELATED TO MICHAEL & WILLIAM JOFFE?

Jeanette Rosenberg & Bubbles Segall

Jeanette Rosenberg who works for the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) in London, is one of a small but keen group of current and former staff members who undertake research into the lives of staff from their predecessor departments who were killed in action or as a result of war.

BERR, (previously known as the Department of Trade and Industry), have an online virtual war memorial which can be found at:

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/about/aboutus/warmemorial/index.html>

This website is dedicated to the memory of over 300 staff from the BERR's predecessor departments who were killed in action or died in war. While doing research, Jeanette came across a few Jewish servicemen commemorated on BERR's memorials. One of them has a South African connection, Michael Joffe, son of Betty and Louis Joffe of Kimberley. Whilst researching Michael, it appeared that his brother William was also a casualty of war.

Before providing more information about Michael and his brother William, it is worth looking at the history of the BERR memorial. In 1914 the Board of Trade had a staff of 7,500 many of whom staffed the new labour exchanges. When World War 1 broke out, more than 2,000 left the Board to enlist. Of these 305 were killed in action or as a result of

the war. After the war the staff of the Board of Trade initiated a Roll of Honour commemorating those who died. It was unveiled on 19 December 1923 by the Prime Minister of the time, Stanley Baldwin who had been a President of the Board of Trade previously

Unfortunately this Roll of Honour was lost and despite efforts by many, it has never been found. A replica unveiled in 2002 at BERR's headquarters in London, commemorates Michael who is buried in Belgium.

Michael Joffe

Michael enlisted in 1914 but by December that year he was described in a Board of Trade list as having *ceased to be a member of Patent Office staff*. He is not commemorated on the Patent Office memorial. He is, however, mentioned in the British Jewry Roll of Honour and is commemorated on the scroll within the Civil Service Rifles Memorial at Somerset House, London WC2. See:

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/about/aboutus/warmemorial/ww1/indexhu/page30281.html>



Photo of the original Roll of Honour. Michael Joffe's name is at the bottom of the second column.

For more information about the original Roll of Honour, see:

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/about/aboutus/warmemorial/ww1/page29355.html>



The portion of the War Memorial showing Michael Joffe's name. It was unveiled in 2002 at BERR's headquarters in London.

Page 9231 of the London Gazette of 3 December 1912 shows Michael as being appointed a Temporary Boy Clerk.

The Commonwealth War Graves website also provides information about Michael. See:

http://www.cwgc.org/search/casualty_details.aspx?casualty=445988

Name: Joffe
Initials: M
Nationality: United Kingdom
Rank: Private
Regiment/Service: London Regiment (Prince of Wales' Own Civil Service Rifles)
Unit Text: 15th Battalion
Age: 20
Date of Death: 07/06/1917
Service No: 53035
Additional information: Son of Louis and Betty Joffe of 69 De Beers Rd. Kimberley, South Africa. Born at Singapore.
Casualty Type: Commonwealth War Dead
Grave/Memorial Reference: III. A. 1C.
Cemetery: Chester Farm cemetery

A photograph of Michael's grave marker can also be found online at the www.findagrave.com website and it is hoped that shortly a copy of the photo will be placed on the BERR virtual memorial.



Photo courtesy of www.findagrave.com

William Joffe

Whilst researching Michael Joffe, it appeared that his brother William became a war casualty in the First World War too. He is buried in France See:

http://www.cwgc.org/search/casualty_details.aspx?casualty=2907486

Name: Joffe, William
Initials: W
Nationality: United Kingdom
Rank: Second Lieutenant
Regiment/Service: Royal Air Force
Unit Text: 1st Squadron
Secondary Regiment: King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
Secondary Unit Text: formerly 5th battalion
Age: 23
Date of Death: 01/10/1918
Awards: DSO
Additional Information: Born at Singapore. Son of Mr and Mrs L Joffe of 20 Villiers Street, Kimberley, South Africa
Casualty Type: Commonwealth War Dead
Grave/Memorial Reference: North-east part 5
Cemetery: Esqueheries Communal Cemetery

William was awarded the DSO or Distinguished Service Order for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. The full medal citation can be seen in the Supplement to the London Gazette, Issue 30780 published on 2 July 1918.

Further research revealed that Michael and William's parents Betty & Louis Joffe are buried in the Green

Street Cemetery in Kimberley. See ROOTWEB – The South African Jewish Database at:

http://chrysalis.its.uct.ac.za/CGI/cgi_Rootweb.exe

JOFFEE, Betty, Batya bat David

Died: 1962-12-10, 14 Kislev 5723 at Wynberg

Buried: 1962-12-13 (16 Kislev 5723) Green Street Cemetery, Kimberley

JOFFE, Louis, Yehuda Leib ben Tzadok Yitzchak

Died: 1946-07-13, 14 Tammuz

Age: 75

From this burial information it appears there were other close relatives in the family too. Louis' grave notes show wife, children and grandchildren.

The BERR War memorial Research Team are very keen to receive photographs or any information about the people named on their website and aim to keep alive their memory by maintaining and updating their online memorial with the addition of details about their family and photographs.

If anyone has further information about Michael and his family, please contact Jeanette at: 106503.3561@compuserve.com

WORLDS APART: THE RE-MIGRATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS

COLIN TATZ, PETER ARNOLD AND GILLIAN HELLER

Reviewed by Sol Encel

Published in the Australian Jewish News 27 August 2007 and is reprinted here with permission

The impact of South African immigration on the Australian Jewish community will be a familiar topic to readers of the AJN (Australian Jewish News).

This new book gives us a comprehensive picture of the “second Litvak Diaspora.” It comprises the Australian (or Australasian) component of a worldwide study, based at the University of Cape Town.

The study aims to chart the movement of Jews from Lithuania, Latvia, and Courland (or Kurland) to South Africa, and the subsequent emigration of 40 per cent of that population to Israel and English-speaking countries.

Drawing on census data, the authors arrive at a figure of 10,000-15,000 migrants from South Africa, which means that they constitute more than 10 per cent of the Australian Jewish population.

The core of the book is a survey, conducted during 2003 and 2004, which yielded 608 valid responses. The survey questionnaire invited responses on age, reasons for leaving South Africa, reasons for choosing Australia or New Zealand, time of emigration and knowledge of Lithuanian or Latvian forebears.

The reasons for leaving South Africa fell into six categories: “fear of the future” topped the list with 27 per cent of responses, “ideological” (23 per cent), “crime” and “family” (each with 17 per cent), with “economic” and “avoidance of army service” rounding out the list.

These reasons have fluctuated over time. The authors distinguish five “emigration eras” related to events in South Africa.

The first era, when only a small number emigrated, covers the years before 1960. In the period 1960-75,

ideology (i.e. opposition to the apartheid regime) was the leading cause, and continued to top the list during the next era, 1976-85.

Fear of the future emerged as the leading cause during the period 1986-90. Since 1990 and the end of the apartheid regime, crime has overtaken all the other factors, closely followed by family reunion, as earlier migrants are increasingly joined by older relatives.

Reasons for choosing Australia (or New Zealand) were almost a mirror image of the reasons for leaving South Africa: family economic quality of life safety and ease of entry. Quality of life was the most important reason between 1960 and 1990 family reunion has predominated since then.

The authors conclude that Australia has indeed been a “lucky country” for South Africans. Migration figures support this conclusion.

In the decade 1970-79, more than one-third of emigrants went to Israel, 24 per cent to the US, and only 13 per cent to Australia. By contrast, Australia gained 40 per cent of emigrants during the period 1992-2000.

In a sharply worded aside, the authors note that some South Africans find Australia “boring”, and observe that those who would prefer to live on the edge should have stayed put.

The book gives us two contrasting pictures of South African émigrés. The South African Litvaks, they write, built the most unified, vibrant, monolithic Jewish community in the Diaspora, and Australian Jews retain this powerful image.

This impression, of course, is not always favourable, reflected in the well-known joke about South Africans as “boat people” in that “a week after they arrive here they buy a boat”.

On the other hand, they chide the South Africans for their relative failure to integrate into the wider Jewish community and to regard themselves as ex-South Africans who have “brought their shtetl with them”.

This rebuke sounds remarkably like special pleading. Similar comments could be made about other migrant groups, Jewish and non-Jewish.

The younger generation of South Africans, especially those who have attended school and university in Australia, are likely to blend as successfully as preceding generations.

Sol Encel is emeritus professor of sociology at the University of New South Wales.

If you wish to purchase a copy of this book, see the following web site for more details:

<http://www.rosenbergpub.com.au/handleProduct.asp?id=69&catid=2>

SURNAMES APPEARING IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Vol. 8, Issue 2 – December 2007

The numbers in brackets refer to the page numbers where the surname appears:

Arnold (17), Baleson (2), Block (3, 4, 6), Blumfield (10), Bunka (4), Cohen (2), Encel (17 - 18), Epstein (2), Getz (2), Goldberg (2), Harris (2), Hart (2), Hayes (7, 9), Heller (17), Herbert (10, 12), Herzl (11), Hirshfeld (3), Issroff (2 - 3), Joffe (3, 15, 16, 17), Lazarus (3), Lerer (2), Leshem (3), Levitt (14, 15), Lowe (5), Marcus (5 - 6), Meintjes (9), Mendelsohn (11), Oginski (14), Ogus (2), Plen (2), Rabinowitz (2), Rein (12), Ryan (12), Ryin (12), Segall (2, 3, 12, 15), Silberhaft (13), Sinson (4), Skikne (12), Solz (3), Tatz (17), Zaluski (14).

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