JEWISH GENEALOGY SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

Meeting of January 25, 2015

1:30 – 3:00 pm

Pikesville Branch, Baltimore County Library

MINUTES

JGSMD Business

Dick Goldman asked new members to introduce themselves; about eight persons did so. Lara Diamond, President, then asked for reports from board members. Susan Steeble, Publications chair, solicited contributions to April issue of the newsletter. Robin Thomas, Treasurer, clarified that our membership year runs from September 1 to August 31; those who join in the last 3 months of the membership year are entitled to have their dues apply to the next year as well. At the end of the meeting, Dick announced that he was trying to form a group to travel together to Lithuania and Poland in the fall; interested parties should contact him directly, at dick5425@gmail.com.

Carol Rider spoke about a project to compile information about the Jewish community of Dinovitz (Dunayevtsy), Ukraine. Large numbers of former Dinovitzers settled in Baltimore. The existing Jewish community in the town is hoping to reclaim a building that was once known as a synagogue, but they need to produce documentation about the town’s synagogues. Anyone with printed memorabilia, photos, or even family lore about the Jewish community and synagogues of Dinovitz is requested to contact Carol at cromrider@aol.com.

Brick Walls

Lara Diamond then introduced the main program. She noted that the format of this program was a little different from the usual, because members were asked to submit their Brick Walls questions in advance. The submitters included Marsha Birnbaum, Janice Setren, Susan Ansel, Chaim Levin, Blanche Sachs, Judy Wolfe, Selene Scherr, Lois Steinberg, Jo Kilbourn, Bob Stern, Harriet Feibelman, and Sara Ani. Before the meeting, a panel, consisting of Lara Diamond, Dick Goldman, and Carol Rider, investigated the queries and prepared detailed responses, which were then shared at the meeting. The questions and responses were projected on a screen so that the audience could follow along.

Some of the questions concerned how to find immigration and naturalization records, how to find digital records for towns in Europe, and how to obtain birth, death, military, and Holocaust records. Replies were specific to each question but expanded to include general advice that would be widely applicable. Recurring themes were:

* start with information from family members and work your way back to earlier generations; also look at siblings and cousins, not just direct ancestors (“go laterally and then circle in”);
* do your own research, and obtain copies of original documents;
* consider the spelling of names “fluid” and the Americanization of Yiddish and Hebrew names to be arbitrary, in some cases;
* use wildcard searches and resources such as the “Deciphering Genealogy Script” group on Facebook;
* consult both online databases (Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, etc) and other resources (which may not yet be digitized), such as city and state archives, old newspapers, city directories, and property records;
* make use of search tools such as the SteveMorse.org one-step web pages;
* participate in and contribute to JewishGen research projects concerning your ancestral towns and regions; and
* join others with similar research interests to hire local researchers in Eastern Europe.

Next Meeting

Then next meeting will take place on February 22, 2015 1:30 pm at the Pikesville Library. Our guest speaker will be Prof. Ken Moss, director of the program in Judaic Studies at Johns Hopkins University. His topic will be, “The Jews of Eastern Europe in the Age of Mass Migration, 1881 – 1914.”

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 pm.

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