

S.A. SIG

Jewish Genealogy - South African Special Interest Group
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ROSH HASHANAH EDITION

CONTENTS:

President's Message...
Editorial...
Treasurer's and Membership Report..
Report from Toronto Conference...
Communities - Frankfort...
Tombstones and their stories...
Books of Interest to the S.A. Genealogist...
Lithuanian Holocaust Names Project...
South Africa's 800...
News from Australia...
From Northcliff to Tzora - 50 years on...

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr. Saul Issroff

I recently received an email from James Koenig in el Cerrito, CA. as follows:

"Dear Dr. Issroff:

Several years ago, at the annual seminar held in Los Angeles, I spoke very briefly with you. I knew that a branch of my family (Koenigsfest) had gone to South Africa from Latvia, but had almost no information about it. You mentioned that you were familiar with the family name (Koenigfest, Konigsfest, Koningfest, etc.) in South Africa, and that you once knew a woman named Maureen Konigsfest in Johannesburg. Maureen, I have found is a distant cousin, now living in Israel (married name Fain) with her husband and four children.

I sent an unsolicited letter to the Mayor of Vryheid, Natal, where some of the family reportedly had settled, and through that letter made contact with Maureen, her sister Maxine Freed (now living in California), their first cousin Adele (Dennie) Konigsfest Asher (a history professor in Johannesburg), and a whole panoply of persons in the U.K. the U.S., Canada, Israel and elsewhere. Dennie Asher and I are now engaged in the task of putting together the vast material in some readable and useful form."

I note it as an example of: serendipity in genealogy - a chance conversation at the Los Angeles Jewish Genealogy Conference brought back a vague memory of Maureen at an Habonim Camp or Seminar.

Persistence in research - usefulness of local Mayors in research.

Southern African genealogy has ramifications all over the world, as we all know. Each of us have our personal networks and 'hidden' knowledge, these are often very useful sources for assisting others. The growth of interest in South African Jewish genealogy is marked by apparently over 50 people attending the S.A. talk given by Roy Ogus and Mike Getz in Toronto. This is probably double the attendance at any previous meeting.

This current issue of the Newsletter shows how this has broadened in scope to include much of what can be termed the 'social' history of S.A. Jewry. I encourage all of you to try and contribute along similar lines.

Saul

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EDITORIAL

Beryl Baleson

Lately we have received requests from members regarding our policy statement. I am publishing it here, updated, for those members who did not receive the first Newsletter where it was originally published to reflect our interests and the scope of our activities.

"The South African Special Interest Group intends:

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 and the former Belgian Congo;

To reflect the homogenous character and traditions of Southern African Jewry;

To address broader issues relating to the region's Jewry, its institutions and maintain contact with them;

To assist members intending to travel to the region with information and contacts;

To promote, support and assist projects relevant to the family history and genealogy of Southern African Jewry;

Israel is an important point of transition in the genealogy of South African Jews. The South African Jewish Community has been involved and supportive of Israel throughout its history. Zionism permeates the history of families and communities in South Africa. Accordingly it will be a goal of the S.A. Special Interest Group to reflect this involvement and interest.

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As we enter the "*Yamim Noraim*" we will be going to the Cemetery to visit the graves of our deceased family members. I have included in this issue an article on Tombstones, which paradoxically, have always been a valuable source of material for knowledge of life in the past. As they mark the resting places, they also keep alive the memory of the deceased, our ancestors.

A report by Roy Ogus and Mike Getz of their participation in the 2002 Jewish Genealogy Conference in Toronto in August appears here for those who were unable to attend.

Julius Kopelowitz gives us a very detailed, delightful insight into his Jewish life in Frankfort. After having a series of articles on Kibbutz Tzora - its beginnings, not only in Israel but way back to Habonim youth movement days in South Africa, we end with a lovely description by Gus Seligman of the 50th Anniversary celebrations.

Having myself been on Kibbutz Tore for a short time in 1958, as a member of the *Machon Le'Madrichei Chutz Le'aretz* course. Then, for a further 5 months in 1977, when my family and I came on *Aliyah* - I would say that on both occasions Kibbutz Tzora has been my first home in Israel. I personally have seen the development of what started out as a "tin and wooden hut" settlement into the beautiful place it is to day.

For those members who have made new lives for themselves outside of South Africa, we would love to have reports and feedback, as we have had from Kibbutz Tzora. So please come forward with this very interesting information and part of your lives.

I would also like to congratulate our two Board members, Dr. Saul Issroff and Rose Lerer-Cohen on the publication of their book on Lithuanian Holocaust Names. This has taken five years, with a great deal of traveling for both Saul and Rose in order to collect the material for this book.

Last but not least, besides welcoming our new members, Mike Getz has done in his Treasurer's report; I would like to welcome Colin Plen of Johannesburg and Stan Hart of Durban "on board" to our S.A. SIG Board. We look forward to hearing from both Colin and Stan in the near future and to receiving input from them on the South African Jewish Community.

I take this opportunity to wish you all a "*Shana Tovah*" - a Very Happy, Peaceful New Year sealed with a "*Hatima Tovah*"

Beryl.

TREASURER'S AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Our fiscal year commenced in July 2001 with funds of \$270 and closed in June 2002 with \$390. Membership income for the period was \$820 and we received donations of \$120. We spent \$720 for printing and mailing our newsletters and \$100 on material to publicize our activities in Israel.

During this period we enrolled 46 members from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Israel, South Africa and the Netherlands. The enrolment is predominantly from the United States and the United Kingdom.

We will need to give more and better attention to the growth of our membership, to broaden readership of our newsletter and provide financial support for the projects covered by Roy Ogus in his Report.

As a result of suggestions at our SIG meeting at the Toronto conference, prospective members should have easier access to enrolling by email. We are also examining a secure and user-friendly means to facilitate payment of dues, particularly from countries outside the United States. When details are finalized, an announcement will be made to the Discussion Group.

I am pleased to welcome the following new members who enrolled during the Toronto Conference and also thank those present who renewed their membership:

*Suzanne Axel
Henry Blumberg
Rubin Cobb
Steve Held
Mark Melmed
Ros Romein
Sylvia Walt*

Members are reminded that membership/subscriptions are now due for the year July 2002 to June 2003. Please send your renewal to:

SA SIG 5450 Whitley Park Terrace, Bethesda MD 20814.

For any information email mgetz@erols.com

*Mike Getz
Treasurer
August 2002.*

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SA-SIG MEETING AT THE TORONTO 2002 IAJGS CONFERENCE

Roy Ogus and Mike Getz

The Southern African Special Interest Group (SA-SIG) meeting at the recent Toronto IAJGS Conference (on 7 August 2002) was a very productive and stimulating session. There was a very good turnout at the meeting. Sign-up sheets were sent around the room and 35 names were entered on these sheets; there may however have been more people at the session.

During the first part of the meeting, a number of topics describing the SA-SIG were presented, after which followed a general discussion and question-and-answer session. The topics presented during the first part of the session commenced with an overview of the SA-SIG Mission, the Web pages, and the Internet discussion group. Following these topics was a detailed review of some key SA-SIG projects such as the Newsletter and the Clearinghouse. The final topic on the agenda described the new South African Center for Jewish Migration and Genealogy Studies in Cape Town.

There appeared to be strong interest in all these topics by the attendees.

The hardcopy Newsletter has been published quarterly since 1999. The publication covers a wide range of topics relating to the South African Jewish communities, both in South Africa, as well as in other parts of the world.

The Clearinghouse project was established about a year ago to create a mechanism to exchange information about the various documents, information, and other artifacts relating to one's own research that may be useful to others who are also researching their family connections in this area.

After the presentations there were numerous questions from the floor, and these produced a stimulating set of discussions and brainstorming of new ideas. Finally, each person briefly stated their names and places of interest, thus facilitating the possibility of connections to be established.

The attendees were encouraged to join the SIG and to volunteer to help on the various projects, and, in particular, to contribute items to the Clearinghouse and the Newsletter. After the meeting, a number of new members signed up for the SIG.

At the end of the allotted time for the meeting there was still interest in continuing some of the discussions, and these were conducted outside the conference room. These further discussions proved to be most productive.

The various discussions during the session and afterwards led to several ideas for new projects and improvements to the organization of the SIG, which are summarized below. Most importantly, there was a proposal to create a Family Finder on the SA-SIG Web pages, and an earlier proposal of launching a SA Communities project seemed to gain momentum.

The idea of creating a SA-SIG Family Finder came up several times in the discussions, and we agreed to pursue starting this project. The motivation behind this project is to compile the list of surnames and towns (both European and South African) of interest to the various SA researchers, and to make this information available in an organized fashion on the SA-SIG Web pages. This project is now being started, and the SA research community will soon be solicited to send in their surnames and towns of interest for inclusion on the Family Finder.

The South African Communities project plans to collect information about the various families and communities of South African origin that are located around the world. The objective is to document these far-flung families and communities in order to preserve the information about these groups, many of which have long lost contact with South Africa. We will be inviting current members of the SIG to update family information that includes places of origin, lifestyles, and relocation within SA and to various parts of our world. A number of initial communities have been identified, and coordinators for each of these communities are being solicited. There seem to be opportunities for some beginnings in a number of locations in the USA, and probably the UK, and possibly Australia. Ideas about what information and data should be collected are under consideration.

In summary, a very successful SA-SIG meeting was held at the Toronto 2002 symposium. The meeting renewed the strong interest in the activities of the SA-SIG and produced several ideas for new projects, which are now being initiated. The plan is to build on the opportunity created at the Toronto conference in order to further enhance the quality of the SA-SIG.

As was mentioned at the SA-SIG session in Toronto, contributions are solicited from all members of the group for Newsletter articles, Clearinghouse items, and for volunteers to help with the various SA-SIG projects. Please contact any members of the SA-SIG Board (the Board member names can be found on the SA-SIG Web pages at <http://www.jewishgen.org/Safrica>) if you would like to contribute your services.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE FRANKFORT JEWISH COMMUNITY
by Julius Kopelowitz

I was born in 1928, son of Max and Becky, who were married to each in Johannesburg in 1926 and then lived in Frankfort for some 35 years, Max having arrived there from Pokroy, Lithuania as a youth, via Heilbron, some 15 years earlier. My mother, Becky, born Malamed, was brought to South Africa from Kupishok, Lithuania, around 1906, aged two. Her father served, i.a. as *gabai* of the Ponevez shul, Doornfontein, Johannesburg (later demolished to make way for the Harrow Road thoroughfare). My parents were stalwarts of the Frankfort Jewish community, my father handling also the *Chevra Kadisha* requirements, whilst my mother was known to keep a hospitable, strictly kosher home.

Like myself, my elder sister, Ethel Berkal, as well as my younger sister the late

Minnie Glajchen and my brother, Norman, were all born in Johannesburg but grew up in Frankfort, where we matriculated. The writer married Millicent Segal of Johannesburg in 1958 and the family made aliyah in 1961. These recollections stem from my personal experiences, observations and information gathered over the years (memory lapses, if any, excepted and regretted).

Frankfort, in the maize lands of the northeastern Free State, was laid out in 1886 and called after the name of its surveyor, Dr. Ellenberger, who hailed from Frankfort-am-Maine. I was also taught at the local school that Frankfort lay in the heart of a region originally known as "Riemland" (Leatherland) because of the abundant hides of the game roaming there, and later, livestock. This region included towns such as Heilbron, Vrede and Reitz (the writer recalls as a child, in the early 1930's, accompanying a delegation of Frankfort Jews to the inauguration of the new Reitz Synagogue, under the incumbency of Reverend Davidovitz, whose son Abe later became S.A.A. Manager in Israel).

Little wonder then that some of the earliest Jews on the scene were livestock speculators and produce dealers, buying and selling hides, wool, butter, fowls, eggs, etc. Some of my earliest memories of life in Frankfort are of these colorful characters and their blunt speech - in more than one language, Yiddish predominating for uncomplimentary retorts. Names come to the fore, such as Notte Goodman and his nephew Harry Goodman, also my late uncle Nathan Kopelowitz (known as "Oom Kappie") and his elder cousin Ben-Zion Kopelowitz (who later also welcomed my late father, Max, and subsequently his younger brother, Israel to Frankfort). There was also a steady flow of itinerants, whether from neighboring towns or making seasonal appearances from further afield. I recall, among others, names such as Daikliker, Sher, and Lotzof. With the depression of the early 1930's, the produce market collapsed and some of these pioneers left to seek greener pastures.

It was a phenomenon of the platteland towns in the O.F.S. and elsewhere, that they became settled and developed in the early 20th century, after the Boer War, and more so after Union in 1910. The Jews played a central role in the process. Thus the writer recalls that in the early 1930's virtually all of the shops in Frankfort were owned and run by Jews - many of these shops had been built by or for Jews, and likewise their houses. On *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* the Jewish stores were uniformly closed - notices to this effect having been prominently displayed in advance, and in those early years the town came to a virtual standstill on such holy days.

At its peak, in the 1930's, the Frankfort Jewish community numbered some 20 to 25 families, including several farmers in the district, fortified by a sprinkling of single men, living in the town or on the surrounding farms or commuting between them. Like in other country communities, as the Jewish children grew up so their parents felt the need to gravitate to the larger centers, and just as the communities had mushroomed overnight, so they, Frankfort among them, began to decline in the mid-1930's and markedly so during and after World War II.

The Frankfort Hebrew congregation was established in 1911/1912, flourished until the mid-1930's and thereafter declined as aforementioned until no Jews remained and the synagogue was sold and demolished in the early 1970's. The *shul*, a stone building

was a former church, adapted and consecrated to serve the congregation. A back room served as the *cheder* and boardroom.

Early pioneers and prominent in the community already in the first decades of the 20th century, were members of the Segal family, Abraham Isaac and Faiga Segal, and their children: Morris, later Chairman of the *Chevra Kadisha* in Johannesburg, his brother Raphael, an attorney in Frankfort, and another brother, Barnet. Morris served as Mayor of Frankfort in the early 1930's and ran a large general dealer's business. The entrance gate to a recreation park laid out on the banks of the Wilge River, with tennis courts and Bowling Green bore the inscription "The Morris Segal Gate" (since removed). Bowling remained the favorite, if not the only sport indulged in by the local Jews, along with swimming in the Wilge River.

In the writer's time the late Max Bennie ably served as chairman of the congregation until his death in 1954. Treasurer in this period was Abe Wolman, a pharmacist and optician, and the secretary was Phillip Rabinowitz, a storeowner, in partnership with his brothers. In its declining years, the remnant of the congregation was held together by Israel Rabinowitz (no relation) and his wife Lily, nee Molk from Heilbron.

Perhaps the pride of the shops in Frankfort, a large departmental store called "Harding and Partner" was run by Charlie Moses and later his son Guy (both somewhat aloof from community affairs). Frankfort boasted two hotels; the Frankfort Hotel built at the end of the 19th century, and later came the Central Hotel. As successive Jewish owners/managers of the former, one recalls the names Cohen, Lieberman and Gillman, and as owner/manager of the Central, the name Lipman. The two hotels served as an attraction for commercial travelers, which were in no hurry to depart, having regard to the entertainment of nightly card games offered them by some of the local Jewish residents.

Besides the names mentioned above, the following residents and their families are recalled (very roughly in the order of their date of arrival in, or departure from, Frankfort):

The Shrog family (a daughter, Minnie, born in Frankfort 1920, married Louis Gecelter and they now live in Israel).

Malkin, Moshe and family - baker and general dealer, the latter business subsequently taken over and run first by the Abrahamson family, and later the Mittel family (a son Willie, later settled in Israel).

Lazarus, Mr. and Mrs. Eliezer - jeweler and watchmaker.

Cohen Family, tailor, left in the early 1930's.

Dr. Rose and family - family doctor in the early 1930's.

Goodman, Harry and family - cattle speculator. (They later moved to Bloemfontein, where a daughter, Sybil became the wife of Judge Horwitz).

The Bernsteins - a family of farmers, as were Bernstein's sons- in-law, Frank and Isaac Gross.

Kopelowitz, Ben-Zion - produce merchant in the 1920's, cousin of the writer's father.

The Schiffman, Fineberg and Carklin families - successively ran the bottle store in the writer's time.

Cohen family - men's outfitters, this business later taken over by -

Kantor family - a son, Sam, was in the local Town Clerk's employ and later ran a bakery in Bethlehem.

Hellerman family, father and son - general dealers, solitary *Hasidim* in the community.

Niselow, Dave and family - butcher (brother of Mrs. Bregin, below).

Bregin Family - produce dealers and founders of the "Frankfort Cold Storage" for the sale of refrigerated kosher slaughtered poultry.

Lipschitz and Lourie (the latter from Vrededorf) - partners in a filling station business.

Gross, Sam and Louis, sons of Frank and Katie Gross. Louis left Frankfort and Sam ran a general dealer's and later a car dealer's business in Frankfort. He served as Deputy Major of Frankfort and after moving to Vereeniging, became mayor there. Sam dignified the dying stages of the Frankfort Hebrew Congregation, helped to negotiate the sale of the *shul*, and has seen to the upkeep of the now rarely frequented Jewish cemetery, the last Jews buried there having been members of the Bernstein and Gross families.

Among the bachelors or widowers (sometimes presumed, like in the sad case of one Itzikson, whose wife and children were caught up in Lithuania in the events of World War II and the holocaust), one may also mention names such as Binjomin Zive, Notte Goodman, Nathan Kopelowitz and members of the Bernstein and Gross families.

Surrounding the town of Frankfort were isolated points of settlement, home to a solitary Jewish family or two. These ranged from hamlets like Villiers, where there were the Rubin brothers and a shopkeeper called Cohen, and a place called Tweeling, where there were the Cooper brothers and someone called Malamed - to mere trading posts like Tafelkop and Roadside, respectively occupied for a short spell in the 1930's by a Fried (Yudke) family, and someone called Kaminetzky. How these new immigrant Jews, some traditional, got along in such splendid isolation, is a story in itself and perhaps explains the urgent beckoning, for example, of the outsize letters KAMINETZKY painted on the corrugated iron roof of the solitary building in Roadside at that time.

A feature of the small country communities was the *Kolbo* (all-rounder) spiritual mentor-*ba-al tefillah*, *shochet* and *melamed*, sometimes also equipped to act as *sofer-stam* (scribe) and even *mohel*. They earned a pittance and in Frankfort, in later years, the cold storage kosher slaughtering offered a welcome income supplement, but was a rigorous assignment which may have contributed to the comparatively short-lived incumbencies. The spiritual leader incumbent immediately prior to my rebbe, Reverend Miller, was Reverend Lessem, and for short periods of time, also surrounding Reverend Miller's incumbency, Frankfort was served by Rabbi Chigier, who later resettled in Israel where he became a senior legal advisor to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Reverend Miller officiated until 1941, when he moved to Cape Town. Thereafter Frankfort was treated to a procession of spiritual mentors, serving for comparatively short periods, among them - Rev. Sinai, Rev. Bak, Rev. Gertner (moved to Brakpan), Rev. Borowitz, Rev. Rachman, with even shorter caretaker stops by individuals named Stein (Hebrew teacher), Shatz and others. Rev. Kamber came from Johannesburg to tide me over my *barmitzvah*, and 18 months later Rev. Abramovitz likewise came from Marquard (O.F.S.) to do the same for my brother, Norman. In the 1960's organized congregational life could no longer be sustained and in the early

individuals named Stein (Hebrew teacher), Shatz and others. Rev. Kamber came from Johannesburg to tide me over my *barmitzvah*, and 18 months later Rev. Abramovitz likewise came from Marquard (O.F.S.) to do the same for my brother, Norman. In the 1960's organized congregational life could no longer be sustained and in the early 1970's the synagogue was sold and demolished, the *sifre torah* being handed to the Klerksdorp Hebrew congregation.

Social Life.

As in most country communities, the Jews in Frankfort, certainly the younger generation, were bilingual and more. The local school had what was known as the parallel, rather than dual, medium of instruction. Subjects like history, science and mathematics, were taught first in Afrikaans with repetition in English, whilst English and Afrikaans had higher and lower levels, the Jewish children invariably opting for the English version. Not merely bilingual, but quadrilingual they were - *arba kanfot* - four-cornered Jews, linguistically if not ritually speaking. Thus Afrikaans was the language of daily discourse; English was used at home, and for communication with the outside world and its culture, Jewish and general; Yiddish was used for *cheder* instruction and as a bridge to Hebrew, sometimes also as a means of communication between the adults themselves, or between them and the younger generation; Hebrew was the medium for praying, studying traditional texts, and keeping in touch with Zionism and the resurgent drive for Jewish statehood. There was a measure of kinship between Yiddish and Afrikaans, and most of the congregation's spiritual mentors, fresh from Lithuania, managed to make themselves understood to the gentiles in this language. A smattering of African languages, predominantly Sotho and Zulu was wielded by some of the Jews, and many blacks had more than a smattering of Yiddish. Thus, baker Malkin's right-hand man and prize *kitke* producer, a black nicknamed *Feivel* (if memory holds true) spoke Yiddish like a *Litvak* and when Malkin left Frankfort, *Feivel* went to work for Niselow, the butcher, serving Jewish customers kosher meat, alongside non-kosher meat, though with separate chopping block and knives for the kosher meat, an arrangement frowned upon by the rabbinical authorities.

In the writer's time the community was apparently too small to sustain any organized Zionist, cultural or charitable societies, or even a youth movement, but it did warmly receive visiting speakers and on Jewish holy days, when called to the Torah, individuals contributed to a wide range of general Jewish causes, charitable and other, and these sums were duly collected by the congregational secretary and passed on to their proper destination.

Relations with the gentile whites were generally restrained and formally correct, and gentile attitudes ranged from the amicable to the tolerant, interspersed with sporadic anti-Semitic gestures and utterances, the usual variety sometimes laced with doses of the vitriol spewed out by the Nazi propaganda machine before and during World War II. Those who matriculated in the Orange Free State during the years of World War II will recall studying "The Merchant of Venice" as an English set work, and inevitably Jewish pupils were likened to and called Shylock. In Frankfort, the principal effectively countered this evil at that time. He was an Englishman called Alfred D. Hitchcock (no relation!), someone not entirely at ease with the predominantly Afrikaans-speaking population. As the higher level English teacher he would give a stirring rendering, in class, of Shylock's impassioned plea - "Hath not a Jew eyes.... if

you prick us do we not bleed..." There was no schooling on Shabbat, but an examination sometimes coincided with a Jewish holiday, whereupon the Jewish parents uniformly decided that the children absent themselves. It is to the credit of the abovementioned principal that he allowed the examinees to take the exam at night, in the house of the *rebbe* that had earlier been entrusted with the examination paper and forsworn to secrecy until nighttime. This despite no entirely convincing answer given to his query as to why the Jewish parents claimed a dispensation for their children on grounds of a ritual they did not themselves observe!

Relations with the blacks were on a different level. The Jews generally found themselves forming part of the white "over lordship" with all it entailed, though they mostly displayed a more tolerant and benevolent attitude towards the blacks, particularly their domestic servants. Like *Feivel*, there were other blacks who could communicate in Yiddish, were familiar with *heimishe* cooking and Jewish customs. They of course, acted as *shabbes goy* in homes, also putting out the *shul* lights on *Shabbat* and *Chagim*.

Finally one might mention the Wilge River in one or two other Jewish contexts. Thus the river was used for *Tashlich*, shaking out one's sins on the second day of *Rosh Hashana*. Also the writer recalls the Jewish children picnicking on the riverbanks on *Lag Ba'Omer*, duly equipped with homemade bow and arrow. No doubt the Jews also gave ardent support to erection of the hydroelectric power station and welcomed the electricity generated by the river, already in the 1920's, long before Escom arrived on the rural scene.

The Israeli Connection

In addition to the writer, now living in Rehovot, and anyone else mentioned in the body of the article, the following ex-Frankforters are known presently to be living in Israel:

Wolman Arthur, Raanana, son of Abe Wolman, optician.
Borowitz Lionel, Nes Ziona, son of Rev. Borowitz, scientist.

All information correcting and/or updating the above list will be welcomed.

Cemetery

The Jewish cemetery in Frankfort lies at the approach to the gentile burial grounds. No *beit tahara* was ever built and the *tahara* function was performed elsewhere. Below is a list of the graves recorded by the writer, from the tombstones (more or less in chronological order), on a visit to Frankfort in August, 2000. The cemetery was apparently consecrated shortly before the first burials as noted below:

Behrman, Elazar b. Ze'ev Yehezkel - Tishre, 1913 (1916)?;
Child, Saul b. Mordecai - September, 1915;
Rosenberg, Annie - September, 1915;
Schiffman, Sarah - October, 1918;
Behrman, Ze'ev Yechezkel b. Elazar - August, 1920;

Segal, Abraham Isaac - August, 1923;
 Mankovitz, Sam - February, 1925;
 Segal, Faiga - June, 1928;
 Lessem, Seftel - November, 1932;
 Kantor, Freda - June, 1937;
 Moses, Nini - 1942;
 Denton, Alexander Simon - December, 1942;
 Hertzman, Bertha - July, 1952;
 Bennie, Max - April, 1954;
 Kopelowitz, Solomon Nathan - November 1962.

The particulars of the graves of late M. Schiffman, Max Fineberg and M. Carklin, z'l were unfortunately mislaid and hopefully will be retrieved and the list updated in due course. The three were the successive owners (over several decades) of the Frankfort Bottle Store.

The cemetery also includes the graves of ten members of the Bernstein and Gross families, including the grandparents, as well as parents of Sam Gross, his Uncle Isaac and other family members. In addition, the writer found four graves of members of the Isaac Gross family without tombstones.

The above count in 2000 showed a total of 27 graves, some without tombstones as aforementioned. In addition, a *geniza* grave was located in the cemetery.

April 2002, Rehovot.

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TOMBSTONES TELL MANY STORIES OF EARLY DAYS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Dr. H. Abt

Excerpted from The Zionist Record Annual, September 1952.

The tombstone over the grave of Rachel (Genesis XXXV, 20) is probably the earliest monument of this kind recorded in history, but we do not know of any inscription on Jewish tombstones before the first century of the Common Era.

The oldest Jewish burial place in South Africa was established in Cape Town in 1842. There is no trace of any Jewish grave before that time, although we know that a number of professing Jews lived and died in South Africa during the first decades of the 19th century and the possibility of finding earlier graves of individual Jews, therefore, remains.

The first act of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, *Tikvath Israel*, was to apply to the Governor, Sir Charles Napier, for a plot of land as a burial place. The application was referred to the Municipality, which in turn informed the congregation that no free grant of land was available.

Subsequently, Benjamin Norden, "the Grand Old Man" of the Congregation, who had come to the Colony with the 1820 Settlers and in whose house Cape Town Jewry met for the first time for Divine Service on *Yom Kippur* 1841, presented a plot to the congregation. It was, however, found unsuitable. Eventually a plot was purchased on the lower side of Albert Road, Woodstock, and it remained the burial place for the Jews of Cape Town until 1888.

The first internment in December 1844 was that of Abraham Horn who had been a founder and elder of the Congregation. In July 1845, the whole Congregation assembled at the burial ground for the ceremony of setting Abraham Horn's tombstone, the first one erected on this cemetery.

In view of the claim by the Chief Rabbinate in Cape Town that South West Africa falls under its jurisdiction, it is perhaps appropriate to proceed from Cape Town to Keetmanshoop. The cemetery there is divided into a Jewish and a non-Jewish section. In the Christian cemetery there is the grave of Wolfgang Schleifer who died in 1910. Not only is the grave in the Christian section, but also the name is also non-Jewish. Yet there is a Magen David on the top of the tombstone and in the empty centre of the Magen David is inserted the picture of a black coffin.

In the same section there is the grave of E.L. Pinches who died in February 1919. The name is obviously Jewish. Strangely enough the tombstone bears the Shakespearian quotation "We could have better spared a better man", the remark made by Prince Henry when he thought Falstaff to be dead!

In the Jewish section there is the grave of Moses Rosenstein, known as "the King of the Bushmen". He had come to South West Africa with the German army in 1899. He "went native" and died as a bachelor in 1949. His memory is in danger of being forgotten if the small Jewish community in Keetmanshoop does not decide to erect a tombstone over the grave.

The cemetery in Windhoek planned by Mr. Kerby, a Jewish town-planner, is the show place of the Capital of South West Africa. The first grave is dated July 2, 1917. Earlier Jewish graves existed in Swakopmund. Moreover, the Windhoek Monument, erected in honour of those who died in the war against the Witbois in 1893/4 records that Walter Sakolowski was killed in action on April 12, 1893. The name appears to be Jewish.

Many graves at the Windhoek Jewish cemetery have no tombstone, but the Hebrew congregation possesses a full register of the persons interred. There are many fascinating stories about the people who lie buried there.

It is a long road that leads from South West Africa to the Eastern Transvaal. It winds across the Kalahari Desert with its many unsolved mysteries, traverses the wind-swept Karroo and reaches Graaff-Reinet where the tombstones on the Jewish burial ground (established as early as 1859) reveal the history of a small, but once thriving Jewish community.

After a time the congregation began to dwindle, because many of its members were among the first South Africans to go north in the early days of the rush to the diamond

and gold fields. It is to the credit of the very few Jews living in Graaff-Reinet to day that the old cemetery is well preserved and gets all the care due to a sacred place.

A tragedy unfolds itself when one reaches Tarkastad and reads the inscriptions on the stones erected for a father and his three infant children who were all buried in the Christian cemetery. The few Jewish families of Tarkastad never established a proper congregation. Michaelis Rothschild, 54 years of age, Isadore Rothschild 13 months, Johanna Rothschild 8 days and Marquerite Rothschild, 7 months - they all passed away in 1902 because there was no medical attention available at that time.

It is not one of the main arteries that lead from Tarkastad into the Free State. The traveler passes through Burghersdorp, Aliwal North and Smithfield where congregations already existed in the 1860's. Driving along the western slopes of the Basutoland Mountains, one reaches Harrismith where a Hebrew congregation was established before the Boer War.

In the cemetery there are the graves of five Jewish soldiers, who were buried there during the Boer War of 1899-1902. Only in 1951 did the congregation decide to put up a tombstone for each of the five soldiers, and in view of the uncertainty about the names and graves approached the Johannesburg Beth Din with the request for suitable inscriptions. A reply was duly received with the result that the memory of the five soldiers have been property preserved.

A lonely Jewish grave is to be found near Waterval Onder in the Eastern Transval. But instead of describing the place, let me quote from the London "Jewish Chronicle" which on December 4, 1896, gives the following report under the heading "Jottings from South Africa":

"A pathetic instance of that one 'touch of nature which makes the whole world kin' had been brought under our notice by a correspondent in the Transvaal. Mr. Louis Emmanuel Heilbron, son of Mr. David Heilbron, of Glasgow, while gravelling some few months ago in the Transvaal was taken ill with malarial fever at Waterval Onder. There a Christian friend, Mr. Andrew Gay, carefully treated him but, in spite of every attention, he died of the malady. Mr. Gay, believing that it would be a great consolation to the family of the deceased to have the last rites performed according to the Jewish custom, wired to Pretoria, which is fourteen hours' distance by rail, requesting a friend to ascertain whether this was possible. In reply, Mr. Gay received a wire, saying 'Jews leaving tonight'. He therefore postponed the funeral, which would otherwise have taken place within twenty-four hours, until the three persons (namely the Minister and two assistants) sent by the Pretoria Burial Society arrived. The burial service was read in Hebrew and Psalms were read in English. The remains lie in a small private piece of ground near the house of an old friend of his, also a Christian, and these loving friends have given their assurance that the little plot will always have their greatest care, and pending instructions, they have had a low wall fence put around it. The officials sent from Pretoria refused to give their names as they stated that they were merely doing their duty and were acting as representatives of the Pretoria Jewish Congregation."

A touching expression in the Hebrew inscription on the gates of the Jewish cemetery in Hermanus (Cape) is a quotation from Proverbs XXII 2 which reads: "The rich and the poor meet together".

As a general rule all that is engraved on the large majority of tombstones is the name of the deceased both in Hebrew and in English, together with the date of birth and death, usually also in Hebrew and English. But there are inscriptions too, in German, Afrikaans and High Dutch on Jewish tombstones in South Africa. Then there is the usual abbreviation forming the Hebrew initials of the verse "May thy soul be bound in the bundle of life" (Samuel XXV 29), placed on all tombstones of the Jewish dead since the 15th century. The tombs of *Kohanim* are distinguished by two open hands, as placed during the priestly benediction, while a Levite's tombstone often bears an ewer.

Numerous are the graves, especially in smaller places, where no tombstones have ever been erected. This is an indication of the unsettled character of the Jewish population in the past. But, nearly everywhere an accurate register of all graves is either kept by the congregation concerned or available at the Magistrate's office. It should be one of the many noble duties of every *Chevrah Kadisha* to trace, where necessary the descendants and relatives of those whose graves are without tombstones and to remind them of their moral obligation towards the deceased. Where no relatives can be found, the costs of erecting a stone, however modest, should be borne by the community. The case of the Harrismith graves of five Jewish soldiers who died during the Boer War is a shining example of Jewish communal responsibility.

More than once in South African Jewish history, the first dead caused the formation of a Hebrew congregation. And the dead became a living memorial to be perpetuated by future generations.

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BOOKS OF INTEREST TO S.A. GENEALOGISTS

THE HOLOCAUST IN LITHUANIA 1941-1945: A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE by *Rose Lerer Cohen and Saul Issroff*

This is the culmination of over five years of research into the names of those killed in the Holocaust in Lithuania.

Following a pilot study, and after consulting with Holocaust researchers, it was clear that no substantive record of the names and particulars of Lithuanian Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust existed.

The primary aim was to locate lists relating to the Jewish men, women and children exterminated during the Holocaust in Lithuania, and to publish a remembrance book. By perpetuating the name, the victim is brought back from anonymity and an identity is preserved.

A further objective was to structure a comprehensive database of these names. This database can be used as a research tool to study and analyse the Jewish community of Lithuania prior to the Nazi invasion of

the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) on June 22, 1941, the Holocaust in Lithuania, and some patterns of deportation.

Research institutions, Holocaust organizations and private individuals in Israel, the USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Lithuania and England. These included Israel: Yad Vashem Hall of Names, library and archive Beit Lochangei Hageettaot library and archives Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel library and archive; Association of Vilna Jews in Israel library and Ohel Yizkor United States of America; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Survivor Registry, library, archives and photo archives; New York Museum of Jewish Heritage Library, Oral History archives; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research library and archives Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation Lithuania: Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum Holocaust Research Center.

Requests for name submissions were mailed to Lithuanian survivors. The opening of archives in Eastern Europe has yielded new relevant archival material.

This is not a historical study; it is a compilation of names of victims and a guide to available resources. Due to the multiplicity of methods by which people were killed in Lithuania, these lists can never be complete or final.

The book *The Holocaust in Lithuania 1941-1945: A Book of Remembrance*, by Rose Lerer Cohen and Saul Issroff, is published by Gefen: Jerusalem and New York, 2002. A background to the history of the Holocaust in Lithuania is given, and sections on deportations, ghettos and camps, the Einsatzgruppen, place names, filmography, bibliography and some personal testimonies are given. The main portions of the book are lists of names of those who perished, from the main cities of Vilna and Kovno and from many other mass murder areas. Necrologies derived from Yizkor books relating to Lithuania are listed. Lists from Soviet sources such as KGB and NKVD lists are given, as are those from Dachau, Stutthof and other camps.

Dr Stephen D. Smith, of Beth Shalom Holocaust Center, Nottingham has written a very moving introduction on the importance of names in perpetuating Holocaust memory.

This extensive work is comprised of four volumes. The first is a detailed history of the Holocaust in Lithuania, providing a historical context in which to consider the final three volumes, which feature the lists of those who were interned in ghettos, and those who perished during the terrible years of 1941-1945. This comprehensive history also includes important information, such as a list of Yahrzeit (Memorial) dates of Lithuanian Jewish communities, and detailed reference lists of films, books and articles on the Lithuanian Holocaust.

The Holocaust in Lithuania: 1941-1945 A Book of Remembrance not only serves as a memorial to Lithuanian Jewry, but at last provides a memorial to the names the men, women and children who have their place in Jewish memory, and now too, have an eternal, physical remembrance.

The Holocaust in Lithuania 1941-1945 is published by:

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Saul Issroff and Rose Lerer Cohen
Lithuanian Holocaust Names Project

SOUTH AFRICA'S 800

by Henry Katzew

Third printing (revised) 2002

This is about *Machal*- collective Hebrew acronym for volunteers abroad who served in Israel's War of Independence. Many details never previously revealed are documented, a valuable perspective on Israel's birth and survival.

Includes eyewitness reports by active participants in the events.

Written mainly through South African eyes the book also contains gripping anecdotes by volunteers from the United States of America, Britain and other countries. It throws new light on important events and personalities of the time.

The book may be ordered from:

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SNIPPETS FROM "THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH NEWS"
supplied by Herb Epstein - Melbourne.

Melbourne growing faster than Sydney

With almost 37,800 declaring themselves Jews in the 2001 Census, **Melbourne** remains the largest Jewish community in Australia.

A statistical snapshot of the community released in June 2002 confirms what many Jews know intuitively: that the Victorian capital has a burgeoning Jewish population with a high birth rate and waves of immigrants, largely from South Africa...

According to the Census, over a five-year period, 893 Jewish South Africans have made **Melbourne** their home, placing its total Jewish South African population at 2657.

However Ian Harris, president of Central *Shul Chabad* - a largely South African congregation - said that the Census estimate seemed low. "It has got to be more than that. At the *Shul* alone we have more than a quarter of that."

In Sydney, the South African Jewish population has increased from 1575 to 5946 comprising 18% of the community.

Canberra has a South African population of 24 people.

The 2001 Census puts Perth's Jewish South African population at 1323, which is an increase of 348 Jews from the 1996 census that listed 975 South African Jews living there. But Dr. Tofler, author of *Forty Years On*, a history of Perth's Jewish day School, Carmel, estimates that the Jewish South African population has risen by 700 over the five-year period. The climate and the city's proximity to the African coast have made Perth an appealing option for many South Africans since the late 1980s.

These new immigrants have helped to renew the community. In the late 1980s, communal leaders lamented a mass exodus of young Jews towards the eastern states, but Dr. Tofler said that that trend is reversing. "The figure in the 1980s was 30%; its now down to 20%", he said, adding that the rate of South African immigration is slowing down." On a much lighter note, Donna Jacobs Fife, Sydney-born columnist, writes:

"...I thought I would write about something very benign, like the opening of the new kosher deli/cafe in Sydney's St. Ives.

I went there with my son, and excitedly told him it was just like being at Starks, remembering shopping visits with my auntie when I was a little girl. Then turning the corner, I added with amusement - it's not quite the same. The *biltong* and *boerewors* and *Ouma rusks* and *rooibos tea* reminded me that things have changed in my community since those days.

More than once, someone in St. Ives has remarked upon how quickly I have lost my accent! The fact that I am Sydney-born and raised sometimes doesn't occur to my dear and precious South African community. I am a minority in a minority in St. Ives!"

* * * * *

FROM NORTHCLIFF TO TZORA - 50 YEARS ON...

Gus Seligman

On Guy Fawkes Day, the 5th of November 1951, more or less 50 years ago, a group of olim, *bogrei Habonim* South Africa, arrived by boat at Haifa from Limassol, Cyprus.

They had hitchhiked through Europe on a budget of \$1 per day per person so that the austerity, *tzena*, that they found in young Israel was no surprise and, in fact seemed like relative luxury. On board were Tzipie Bannet (nee Meyer), Rochie Silbert, Willie Mittel (Tal), Len (Looney) and Miriam Atkins and Gus Seligman .

Looking across the bay they saw coming towards them a harbour boat carrying Israeli

police and immigration officials. Looney suddenly recognised one of the policemen and shouted, "Look, that's Dovie, Gus' brother!" And indeed it was! Having received a scholarship from the Jerusalem Academy of Music he had absconded from the *Machon l'Madrichei Chutz l'Aretz* a year previously. To make ends meet he enlisted in the police force as a trumpeter in the police band. Now a bona fide uniformed policeman, he managed to talk his way onto the police boat and onto our ship. The brothers fell into each other's arms and there were warm welcomes for the other old South African friends.

The other passengers looked on in amazement. One even exclaimed, "*Nor in Yisroel gibben die politzei a zeil sheiner boruch habo tzoe a neier immigrant!*" (Only in Israel do the police receive olim so warmly"! *Hayu yamim.*)

On shore, Ozzie (Meir Ozinsky), the Virginia tobacco chalutz and Moffie (Sylvia Frame nee Moffson) the bubbling representative of unabashed femininity on Tzora, both six-month *vatikim*, came to meet us, the new *olim*. They were to escort us by train to Tzora. The train-stop at Har-Tuv, serving the Bet Shemesh *ma'abara*, was where we got off, swung our backpacks on and walked the remaining two kilometers. The *kibbutz* was no more than a huddle of tents, *pachonim*, and *tzrifim shvedi'im* stuck onto an uninviting, bare grayish slope.

On Friday morning the 16th November 2001, at the instigation of Tzipie, the Israeli survivors of those momentous days, together with a score or so of other *bogrei* Habonim of the same *machzor* and their spouses met at the well-appointed *mo'adon* on a very different Tzora for a nostalgic "50 Years On" get-together.

As a start, a generous brunch tastefully prepared by Tzipie Bannet, Yaeli Abrahams, Batya Ozinsky and helpers, for an energy refill and a chance for an initial catching up - "Wow, where've you been all this time", "what - only two grandchildren? "Hell, I hardly recognized you", "guess who's back", and so on and on. The *chevre* then got into the waiting cars and drove off to see what was happening round Tzora.

"As the sun went down in the West" and the clouds on the horizon dimmed the planned impressive sunset, the inspired but tired participants returned to the *kibbutz*. A little relaxation in the *mo'adon* before the Sabbath meal was followed by a tasting in Tzora's select *yekev* of the above average 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon.

Soon after, a "*kumzits*" in the *mo'adon*, for an evening of reminiscences. The "*olim*" were joined by about sixty people, mainly *vatikim*, who constituted the community that absorbed them in the early 1950's. These included the *Palmachnik* founding fathers and mothers of the *kibbutz*, the earlier South African *garin*, as well as some of the *hashlamot* of the *T'nua Meuchedet* and *Nachal*. Some of the natives even "intermarried" with South Africans.

Dovie, as M.C., opened the evening with "his story". This was followed by the old Habonim songs, the workers union songs, Die Stem and Nkosi Sikele, some *boere liedties*, all sung with the enthusiasm that flows from 50 years of nostalgia. Piano accompaniment was by Omri Rivlin who, even though a Sabra, mastered the South African repertoire brilliantly. Aharonaleh Nadler, the resident accordionist at Tzora since its inception, supported him.

Abbie Katzen (now Arie ben Ari) and Gus Seligman recounted some *Hachshara* stories from way back in Brits when the carrots that couldn't be sold on the Pretoria market were to be recycled as *ingberlech* - that popular Lithuanian Jewish carrot-sugar-ginger delicacy. Looney Atkins convinced the *assefat hachshara* that only vertical integration of agro-industrial enterprises would beat the capitalist system that was denying us the fruit of our labour. After a night of "processing" in the kitchen of a sympathetic Brits hotel, the crop ended up as a sticky, gooey mess on all the tables of the *hachshara*. When Abbie came back with the cabbages that he couldn't sell, Looney had the *chutzpah* to suggest that the solution was - sauerkraut! Ilana Lapidot had a few uncomplimentary stories to tell about the advances of South African bachelors, but after all was said and done, agreed that the South Africans turned out rather well. Elisha Shemer, one of the founding fathers, confirmed that the *Drom Afrikayim* were OK. Abbie Katzen retorted, "you couldn't have wished for better!"

It was getting late so after some quiet *shirei moledet*, the evening ended with "Dovvie the Bugler" playing a beautifully rendered Taps on the very same bugle he used at so many, many summer camps at Neon and Leaches Bay. Afterwards some chatting, some coffee and making our way home and feeling good after a day well spent.

Glossary:

<i>Bogey Habonim</i>	Graduates of Habonim Youth Movement
<i>Machon Le 'madrichei Chutz L'aretz</i>	Institute for Youth Movement Leaders from abroad
<i>Hayu yamim</i>	"Those were the days"
<i>Vatikim</i>	"Old timers"
<i>Olim</i>	New immigrants
<i>Ma'abara</i>	New immigrant transfer camp
<i>Kibbutz</i>	Collective Settlement
<i>Pachonim</i>	Tin Shacks (sheet aluminium huts)
<i>Tzrifim shvedi'im</i>	Wooden Shacks
<i>Machzor</i>	Course/Group
<i>Mo'adon</i>	Club House
<i>Chevre</i>	Friends - i.e. Group Members
<i>Merakez Meshek</i>	Comptroller
<i>Yekev</i>	Winery
<i>Kumzits</i>	Get together involving "sing-a-long"
<i>Palmachnik</i>	A member of the Palmach - Army unit
<i>Hashlamot</i>	Supplementary Groups
<i>T'nua Meuchedet</i>	"Meuchedet" Youth Movement Group
<i>Nachal</i>	Army service done on a Kibbutz
<i>Hachshara</i>	Training farm
<i>Assefat hachshara</i>	Meeting of members of the training farm
<i>Chutzpah</i>	"Cheeky"
<i>Drom Afrikayim</i>	South Africans
<i>Shirei Moledet</i>	Israeli Folk Songs

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