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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES • JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER ORLANDO

Bessarabia SIG Meeting, July 26, 2017

The meeting is open to anyone with roots or interest in the region historically known as Bessarabia, an area now comprising the Moldova Republic and parts of Ukraine. At the end of the 19th century and before the War, Bessarabia had significant Jewish presence. The Bessarabia SIG was organized at the end of 2011 to help people in their Bessarabian genealogical research.

Our Bessarabia SIG Discussion group has **773** members from **25** countries.

- **Progress Report.**
- **New Projects**
- **Agreement with Miriam Weiner**
- **Connections with FHL**
- **How Odessa Holocaust Museum helps us**
- **Current connection to Bessarabia**

Bessarabia SIG Leaders and Coordinators

Yefim Kogan, yefimk@verizon.net

Inna Vayner, innanes@gmail.com

Progress report and New Project

1. Cemetery Projects

- Inventory of all cemeteries
- Couple of days ago I received a full set of photos from Novoselitsa Jewish Cemetery done in 2004.
- Also the “first reading” of Ataki cemetery is completed, and “second” reading is started
- Rashkov cemetery is in “first reading”
- Kishinev Jewish Cemetery – photographing goes very slowly, hope to get 2-3 thousand tombstones photographed by the end of the year.

I will send cemetery updates every two months.

By the way if you have photos from the cemeteries in Bessarabia/Moldova, even a few photos, please consider to share with Bessarabia SIG.

Our plan is to complete most of the cemeteries in the region in 2 years. After that we might go to some places a second time, where sections of the cemeteries could not be accessed.

- WHAT TO DO WITH CEMETERIES which do not exist anymore?! But we know their locations... and possible even know some people who were buried there...

1-b. Six New Proposals for Cemetery cleaning, clearing paths, etc. submitted to JewishGen

Brichani, Lipkani
Hiceshti, Bolgrad
Kiliya, Cahul. There are more cemeteries that need cleaning.

2. Revision List Project

158,000 records already translated, and probably there are another 60,000-100,000 records

3. Vital Records Project

160,000 records translated. There are many sets of records waiting to be translated

Need translators and also Project Leaders to take care of the whole process. We have now one Project Leader for Bendery district, and I am asking our members to become a Project Leader for other districts. The ideal Project Leader will have Russian or/and Hebrew language.

4. Tiraspol district Revision List

More than 8,000 records from *Reviska Skazka*, 1796-1858 — including Tiraspol, Dubăsari and Grigoriopol.

5. Famous People: Writers, Composers, Singers, Architects, Actors

Project completed, and will be soon open to everybody. The idea is to expend the list of Famous people. After you will see the site, you could add information about Famous Jews from Bessarabia/Moldova.

6. Create more KehilaLink Websites for Bessarabian towns and shteitlakh, and periodically update existing websites

There are now 21 KehilaLinks websites and 6 in progress

We need to bring this number to at least 100 websites!. Imagine there are no websites for towns of **Soroki, Lipkani, Otaki, Markuleshti** and many more! We need people to collect information, and there are technically knowledgeable members who can help to put it all on website.

7. Yizkor Books Translations:

Bendery Yizkor Book is completed this month! Thanks to Ala Gamulka and Gloria Green.

Kiliya Yizkor Book soon be completed, thanks to Ron Kilian who organized the project.

Kishinev Yizkor Book – 2 chapters left to translate. Thanks to Dalya Danish and Sheli Fain who translated many chapters from the book.

Brichany Yizkor Book – all is completed and PUBLISHED by JewishGen. Many thanks to Roberta

These books are recently finished or in progress, but there are so many terrific Yizkor Books from many towns and shteitlakh in Bessarabia. There is also an Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Romania, Volume I and II, where all 36 chapters related to Bessarabia were completed.

Many Yizkor Books are waiting to be translated. You can browse the list of Yizkor Books and find one of interest. In many Yizkor Books only Table of Contents was translated. There are a number of Bessarabia Yizkor Books with vast information on our ancestors, with photos, family stories, etc,

9. Upgrade the Bessarabia SIG website. Ariel Parkansky provided us with the software for the new site. He created the Ukraine website, also Akkerman, Kishinev, Kiliya kehilla websites
Need volunteers who can create town, project databases, and help in this new endeavor.

10. Acquire different types of records from Moldovan Archive as well as Saint Petersburg and Moscow Archives: student records, synagogue records, court records, etc.

Agreement with Miriam Weiner, signed in February of 2016

Bessarabia SIG started Miriam Weiner Archival Material Project.

A group of volunteers from Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston, Bessarabia section started processing of the material. Hopefully it will be completed by the end of the year. It includes many type of records we do not have, for example Revision Lists from 1874, Illegal Border Crossing in 1920s (from Soviet Union to Romania), Education Records, and more.

Miriam's material includes her research records for selected families. In some cases, it includes the whole set of copies from Revision Lists or Birth records, etc.

Connections with FHL (Family History Library)

Bessarabia SIG works with FHL to set up an agreement which will allow Bessarabia SIG to get easy access to microfilms from FHL and we help FHL to have a better way to search their database, providing them with contents of microfilms.

According to a meeting I had at the 2016 conference, FHL will copy more of the records at the Moldova Archive. Following records will be copied: Additional metrical books; School Records; Jewish Kishinev Hospital records (15,000!); Land documents and more.

How Odessa Holocaust Museum helps us?

Pavel Kozlenko, director of Holocaust Museum in Odessa organizes trips to towns in Odessa Oblast, including many towns in Bessarabia to the cemeteries to clean them up, paint the gates, fix fences, etc. They also working on a number of Holocaust Monuments, to fix them, rebuild them, etc. They provided - DONATED already to us a full set of photos from Bolgrad Jewish Cemetery in Odessa Oblast. They also are working in Kiliya Jewish Cemetery to clear paths, etc. Among 6 proposals I submitted to JewishGen, one is about a Holocaust Monument at the Bolgrad Jewish Cemetery, and another one for the town of Kiliya. We have already photographed tombstones at that Jewish Cemetery, but there is a section where our photographer could not go. It is all in the woods, and no paths.

That group can help us in many other Jewish cemeteries, monuments, but we need to help them too. All these people are volunteers and for the trip to other towns they are paying for themselves.

Current connection to Bessarabia

I want to tell you one story... I was working on the next trip for our Photographer, and wanted him to visit several towns in Odessa Oblast, former Bessarabia. One place was Bolgrad, and I did not have a location for the cemetery. I knew that the cemetery most likely still exists.

I started to google it, and found it on Facebook and an official Bolgrad Town Office site (Gorsoviet) - Болградский городской совет, and I asked my questions at facebook... an answer appeared in a couple of months. An official told me about Odessa Holocaust Museum, and that people from Odessa went to Jewish Cemetery and clean it up... and they told me about Pavel K., and after that I contacted the museum, and are now working with them closely.

I also contacted officials in Sarata, Odessa Oblast, who told me about the Jewish Cemetery, but unfortunately there are no tombstones left, it is just a waste dump. She would like to organize some kind of a park at that place, but that will require funds.

From Alan Levitt, one from the Leadership group, our moderator for the Bessarabia SIG Discussion group

1) asked for success stories from our members - how has our SIG helped? We know that there are success stories, but you need to tell us about them.

2) the most valuable asset we have is the expertise of members, and I hope we can explore an occasional conference call or webinar on a particular topic.

3) Our "Helping other SIG Members" section on our website has virtually no users. If we can't have a conference call/webinar, perhaps we can encourage more members to use that section.

4) Finally, I can help, but can't do this alone - we may want to undertake a survey of our members, not only to better understand where they live, but also what are their general interests, what would they like our SIG to focus on, other than just the data/research aspects?

How you can help our Bessarabia SIG

- **We need Project Leaders for a number of our research projects. Most of the projects require translation skills from Russian or/and Hebrew**
- **We need translators from Hebrew, Russian and also Romanian**
- **Please donate to Bessarabia SIG projects or Bessarabia SIG general fund. It will help us to pay photographers for thousands and thousands photos we are getting from the cemeteries, and also will allow us to acquire new sets of archival documents.**