



The conference in Cleveland is now history, and here are my Comments and Impressions about it.

==ShareFair (Sunday): We had our Bessarabia SIG table filled with booklets, maps, articles and brochures. This year there was a big interest in our table. Many people just stopped by, asked where this region is, and some had ancestors from there or close by to the areas of Ukraine or Romania. In addition to Inna Vayner and myself, we had two more volunteers at the table: Alan Levine, Carol Shkolnik. Many thanks to them.

==Bessarabia SIG Luncheon (Tuesday): In addition to meeting our members (about 30 people), we had a presentation by Sheli Fain "Eliyahu Meitus poet of Love, Desperation and Joy". It was a terrific story about a poet and translator from Bessarabia. We heard poetry, family stories and more. I believe that this should be part of our genealogy research, and I am glad that Sheli shared this story with us. Here is a recording of Sheli's presentation:

<https://www.facebook.com/100012320651242/videos/719816548439027/>

==Bessarabia SIG Meeting (Tuesday): This year we decided to ask questions to the participants and listen to them. Here is a list of 7 questions that we asked participants to answer what they felt comfortable with:

1. Please introduce yourself (name and place of residence)
2. Share information about your ancestors from Bessarabia/Moldova: surnames and towns
3. Did you subscribe to Bessarabia SIG Discussion group and are you a member of the Facebook Bessarabia / Moldovan Jewish Roots Group
4. What sources of information did you use to advance your research? Have you worked with Romania (Bessarabia) database, Bessarabia SIG website, other resources?
5. What features and what information do you find the most useful and beneficial for research when it comes to JewishGen.org and Bessarabia SIG website and which ones don't present benefit in your view?
6. Suggest new projects for Bessarabia SIG 7. Share your Success story

The session was also recorded at Facebook, and you can hear it at <https://www.facebook.com/100012320651242/videos/719859841768031>

and I also suggest, if you were not at the conference, please answer these questions and send to Inna or/and to me ([yefimk@verizon.net](mailto:yefimk@verizon.net))

==Discovering the Treasures of the Yizkor Books: Using Yizkor Books in Genealogy Family Research (Tuesday), presented by Sheli Fain and Yefim Kogan. Yizkor Books are the compilation of articles about the history of a town or shtetl or a district, family stories, maps and photos, created by former residents of these places. For many families it could be the only source of information about them. Sheli Fain

translated a number of Yizkor books into English, especially I would like to name one of importance: Jews of Kishinev. That is a terrific example of what such books consist of. It was also published by JewishGen, and is available to purchase.

This presentation showed where the Yizkor books can be founded in the original language, and also some books in translation into English. Sheli gave an overview of the structure and content of the books.

I (Yefim K.) gave a few examples of how Yizkor books helped me in my personal genealogical research.

==Why Jews from the Former Soviet Union Often Called Russians?

(Thursday), presented by Yefim Kogan. I thought about this for some time, but the idea to present it at the conference came last year, when I read a label at Marc Chagall works at Fine Arts Museum. It said Marc Chagall French, Belarussian... and in the online version:

French, born Belarus... How come Chagall became Belarus...

Belarussia was not a country until the late 20th century, he could not be a citizen of Belarus, and if this is his ethnicity, I am not sure if I agree with people who wrote it. Why not state that he was Jewish or of Jewish origin?

We talked about Nationality, Passports and what that meant back in the Soviet Union and in the United States.

Texts of all presentations posted on a Bessarabia SIG website:

[https://www.jewishgen.org/bessarabia/PTM\\_Article.asp?id=205](https://www.jewishgen.org/bessarabia/PTM_Article.asp?id=205)

If you want to continue a discussion about this and possibly other questions/issues, please do so at the Bessarabia SIG Discussion group.

You probably know by now that for me, cemetery projects are the most important among any other projects we are doing. The reason is simple, the cemeteries are disappearing...

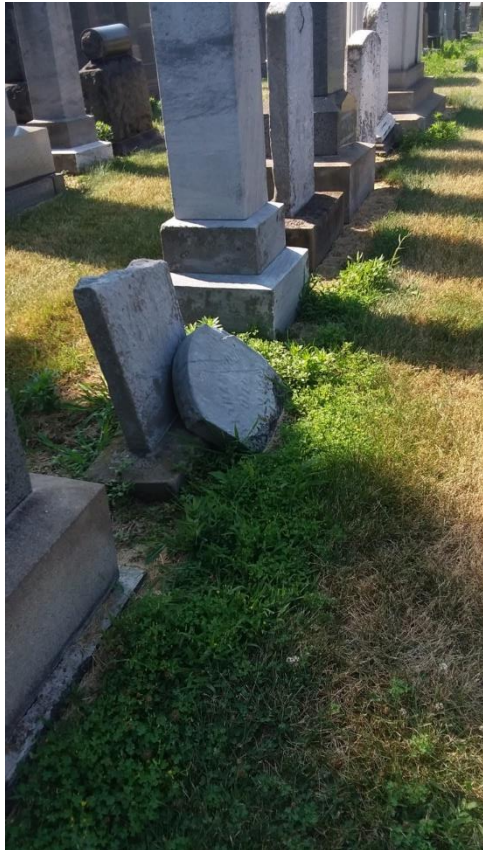
Because of that, I went to several events related to cemetery reconstructions, grave indexing and alike.

==West Side Cemeteries Tour (Monday). I do not have anyone in my family buried in Cleveland, but I was interested to talk to the cemetery caretakers - Jewish Federation of Cleveland and see how the graves are maintained and fixed if needed.

We visited cemeteries from the very old to modern, some are located in what used to be Jewish neighborhood and others are in non-Jewish areas, where Jews never lived. I was really surprised to hear that in such cases the non-Jewish communities have taken care of the graves! I hope that in Bessarabia/Moldova similar deeds can be done. I also liked to drive many miles throughout towns into many different places, which I would never see myself.



One of the oldest cemeteries



There are some broken stones



Bessarabia/Moldova connection:



Sofia Kutz Rashkovsky

on the other side of the stone in Russian:



Sonya Kutz, born in Grigoriopol, Moldova



Beautiful Monument of a Rabbi

==Jewish Cemetery Restoration in Eastern Europe, meeting/dinner (Tuesday).

I decided to join this group to learn the methods of reconstruction of the Jewish cemeteries and graves. Most of attendants were interested in Poland and followed "Projects of The Friends of Jewish Heritage in Poland". I asked people several questions:

1) If we know that a cemetery existed in a place, and was completely destroyed, and now there are houses built on that location or now it is a potato field, what can we do about such places?

2) If a writing on a grave is almost destroyed, how is it best to clean it to be able to read it.

I received many interesting replies and hopefully some of them we could use. If you have any ideas, please let us know too. I would be glad to hear from you. After the conference Jeff Miller, who was an organizer of that event, created a Facebook group called "Friends of Jewish Cemetery Restoration in Eastern Europe".



At the meeting/dinner

==How to Improve Data for JOWBR (JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry) (Thursday), presented by Madeleine Isenberg. It was interesting to hear how other people are working at cemetery projects.

Several members of our Bessarabia community worked at the Translation Table and were mentors for others. Inna Vayner did a lot of mentoring and helped translating records and documents. Also, Alan Levine worked so many hours at the Translation Table that at some point I had to take him out almost by force, to breathe fresh air and get lunch.

This year I announced in advance to have personal consultations at the conference with anyone who is interested in Bessarabia/Moldova and has questions or issues with their research. Ten people scheduled

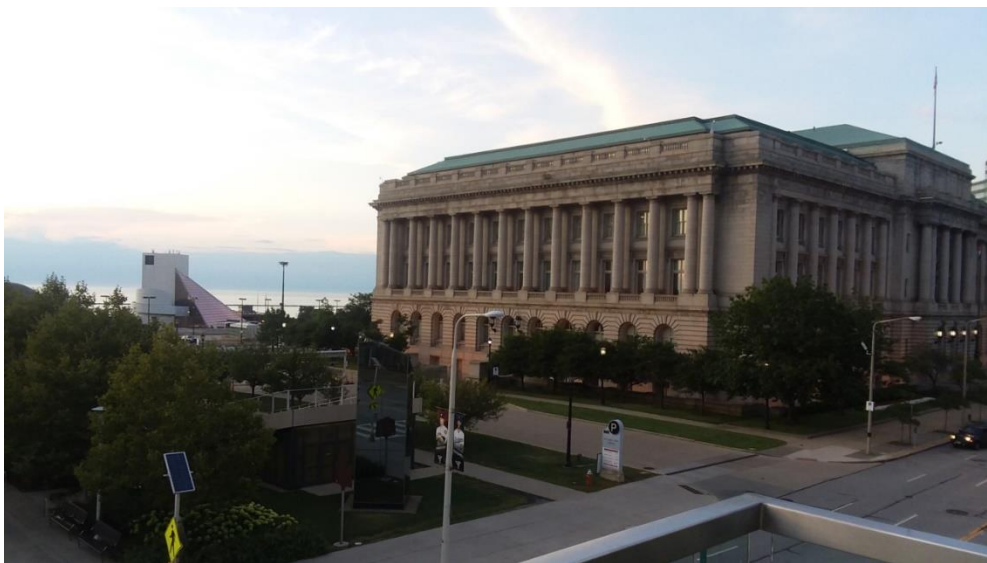
for a consultation, and several more asked for a "walk-in" consultation in Cleveland. I found it very helpful for everyone and hopefully we can do more of it at the next conference.

For many people, this conference is a place to learn new things. Right at the beginning of the conference, we discovered the new face of the JewishGen website. That was really exiting. We all heard from Avrami Groll about many changes happening in our JewishGen Community, Website, Discussion Groups, and even my and all other SIG Leaders title changed, but I still like the old one.

For me personally the conference is a place to see old friends and colleagues. Usually we are communicating online, and it is always fun after 2 or 5 years of working together on a project, finally to see each other...

I would like others who participated at the conference, please send in their comments, and any photos you may have.

Every conference for me also is to discover and enjoy a new city. I have never been to Cleveland before and working on my presentations, I found that the Jewish community of Cleveland was Avant-Garde from the 1960s in helping the Jews from the former Soviet Union to leave.



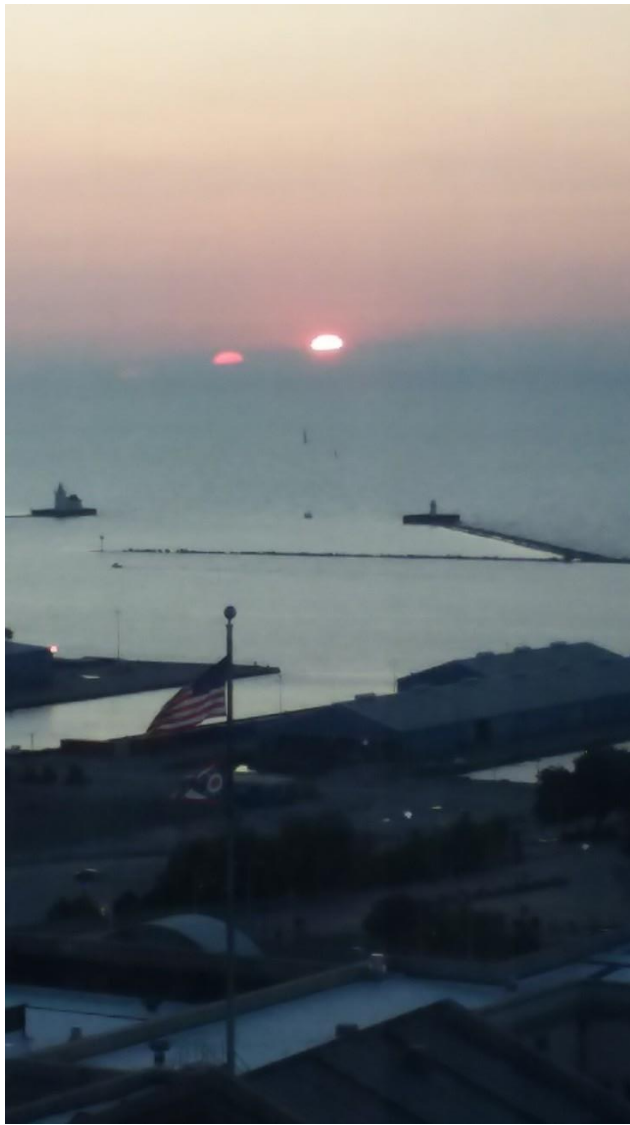
View from the  
hotel

You can see the

[Rock and Roll](#)

[Hall of Fame](#)

on the left



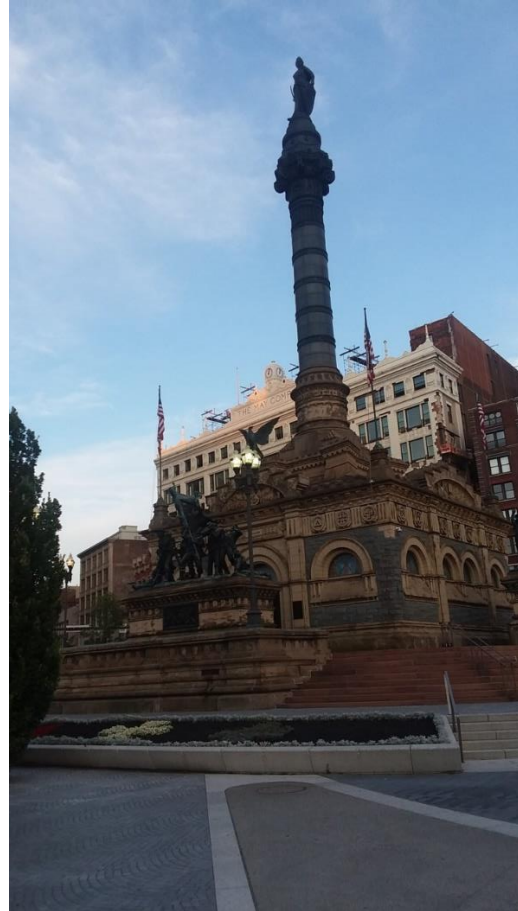
The sunset at the lake...



At night



Conference hotel



I found a little time even to visit Museum of Fine Arts in Cleveland

Work of Pablo Picasso