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NEW HORIZONS
By Arlene Beare

LONDON, England, Oct. 30—I have just returned from Israel today where I attended a family Bar Mitzvah in Jerusalem. I confess to a degree of apprehension prior to departure, as the daily news bulletins showed frightening pictures of stoning and shooting. But there was no sign of upheaval in any of the areas I visited, so often the situation in countries with unrest where the major clashes are confined to specific areas, in this case the West Bank towns of Ramallah, Gilo and Gaza.

The general mood of Israeli's is despondency, as they face an uncertain future. The tourist Industry has collapsed and business is suffering. As I write, the militants in Gaza are walking around with machine guns and masks, threatening suicide bombing. Prime Minister Barak is meeting with the government for the first day of the new session. There is no doubt that, in spite of mistakes on both sides, the world press has dangerously damaged the Israeli image abroad. The task of finding a way forward is unenviable.

It is not within the province of this newsletter to debate political issues, and I do not intend to get into a debate on the legal rights of the Palestinians or the security issues of the Israelis. I pray that guidance will be given to both leaders to put an end to the violence and search for a way back to a peaceful dialogue.

We as Jews can do our best to live in harmony with our fellow non-Jews and set a good example of fellowship and integrity to prevent anti-Semitic attacks in the Diaspora. During my stay, I also visited the archive library of Yad Vashem and found that, not only do they have an extensive listing of books on Latvia in English, but they also have our Latvia SIG journal. They are eager to have missing copies and these will be supplied.

Taking Stock

The past year has been one of growth in membership and achievement of goals. The energy that we have harnessed will serve as an impetus for further growth and achievement. For the coming year, the keyword is co-operation—between the officers running the SIG and the membership who give weight to all we do. I am pleased to say a high level of co-operation has already been achieved between the SIG and the Courland Area Research Group, as evidenced by the All See HORIZONS page 4
DEDICATED TO SILENT HEROES

By Leslie A. Leven
Latvia SIG Editor

When I assumed Sylvia McCallum's role as newsletter editor of the Latvia SIG, a board member suggested that I should introduce myself in the first issue. Tell them who you are, the member said. I agreed to write something. But as a former newspaper editor and publisher with a high regard for "white space" (that portion of the page without type on it), I needed to be certain—if I filled up that space—that my story would not eclipse something far more worthy.

As you will see, there was never a contest. After reading and editing stories for this issue (the majority written by your board members), clicking through JewishGen and several other SIGs, reading messages on our newsgroup, digesting "Avotaynu" and anything else I could get my hands on to illuminate the state of genealogy and the Latvia SIG today—I had my answer. It was inordinately clear that this space belonged to the "silent heroes" who are transforming Jewish genealogy as we know it today. And, arguably, our SIG is blessed with some of the finest.

These silent heroes are researchers, like you and me. They have full-time jobs—some are doctors, lawyers, business people—some have children still living at home. But beyond their own research, they are committed to "claiming, sharing and preserving" the rich heritage of our ancestors—sentiments that seem to be universal among our heroes: Constance Whippman, our See HEROES page 3

The Latvia SIG Journal is published quarterly by the Latvia Special Interest Group, an organization formed to provide Jewish genealogical researchers of Latvian descent with a forum for the exchange of information.

If you would like to have an article considered for publication in the LATVIA SIG newsletter, please email materials to the editor at leslie@clark.net or send a disk to LATVIA SIG Editor, 10626 Great Arbor Drive, Potomac, MD 20854, or email Special Projects Coordinator Mike Getz, mgetz@erols.com or by mail at 5450 Whitley Park Terrace, #901, Bethesda, MD 20814. A one-year membership to the SIG for families or overseas members is $20; back issues of the newsletter are $5 each or $15 (paid members only) for an entire year. Make checks payable to LATVIA SIG and mail to Mike Getz (address above). For more information on membership, visit the SIG website at: www.jewishgen.org/latvia.

If you wish to reprint an article in part or whole from this edition or any other, request written permission from the editor (at the address listed). If using the article for publication elsewhere, be certain to give proper credit to the LATVIA SIG and the author of the original article. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Latvia SIG Committee, the board or of the editor.
RECLAIMING, SHARING AND PRESERVING

HEROES from page 2
database coordinator; for example, Arlene Beare, the SIG's president and Mike Getz, special projects coordinator and the SIG's founder, these are our finest—volunteers extraordinaire—who contribute more than their share to preserve our Jewish past.

In fact (as many of you already know), to ensure that all of us could eventually access data previously unattainable from Latvian archives, in 1999, these heroes—Constance, Arlene, Mike, Martha Lev-Zion from Israel and several other volunteers from the Courland Research Group—traveled to Latvia to extract coveted family records themselves.

Two years later, we rejoice in the All Latvia Database, an exceptional example of what grass roots energy can accomplish. Launched on the web last July, the ALD was even funded by these same volunteers. And at least one (whose name I promised not to mention, see page 6) even went to evening classes before the trip to learn enough Latvian to help with the translations. I'd call that heroic, wouldn't you?

And that's not all. According to the database update in this issue (see page 9), seven more databases adding 20,000 more names to our site are poised to go online—a tremendous volunteer effort. And just as this issue was closing, Constance appealed to me (from London!) to include two more exciting announcements:

• First, a major list of 14,000 Dvinsk Jews, which should appear online in a few weeks (see page 8 for complete story). This database comes from three different sources within the State Historical Archives in Riga. It was originally compiled to establish liability for military service and taxes, then expanded with lists of Jewish merchants and petite bourgeoisie—small shopkeepers and business owners—registered as part of the Dvinsk Jewish community of that time;

• Second, a preview of a major Holocaust project of all the Latvian Jewish families who perished between 1941-1944 (story on page 28). The project's goal is to create a definitive list of Latvian Jews killed as a result of "tyranny and genocide" during the Holocaust years. It is estimated the project could take three years to complete—this predicated on contributions and, again, the help of many wonderful volunteers.

So on this promising note, I end my first "Comment" as editor, confident that this issue will be an inspiring experience for you—a grand way to begin a 2001th New Year. And after you have read all the articles, I'll wager that you, too, would gladly give up a half-page to honor our Silent Heroes. Better yet, contact them, and become one yourself. We can always use another Hero.
New Horizons for SIG

HORIZONS from page 1

Latvia Database.

Clearly, the launch of the database was the big highlight of the past year. And it will continue to grow, month by month, if several members step forward to volunteer assistance and financial support. Some of our recent acquisitions and additions to this resource are: Riga Voter’s lists, Riga Business Directories and Latgale Business Directories. The Dvinsk Family lists for 1882 will be added to the database early in 2001. The coordinator of the database, Constance Whippman, and I wish to stress that, until the new data is on the website, we cannot do lookups for you. Please be patient and do not send us emails asking for information.

The Oral History Project undertaken by Aina Antane at the University of Latvia Centre for Judaic Studies also continues to develop. I have recently received the Jekabpils cemetery data from Aleksandrs Feigmanis, who was commissioned for this project. I thank Marion Werle who is organizing the cemetery data into database format. When complete, the information will be added to the large cemetery database of JewishGen and linked to the Jekabpils’ page. This will replace the cemetery data currently on the page, as the new material is a more complete listing of the names on the tombstones. For 2001, Mike Getz will continue as treasurer and project co-ordinator. He is always ready with new ideas for the SIG.

Rhea Plottel is our membership officer and will be encouraging new memberships and assuring that dues are paid on time. We hope to have systems in place to remind members that their subscriptions are due, for as you know, we are dependent on these funds to run the SIG. We have looked into whether we can take credit card payment for membership dues or for donations, but it is not possible at this time.

I would like to express thanks to Sylvia McCallum for editing the newsletter for the past year, and say the SIG is fortunate to have Leslie Leven volunteer to take it over and continue Sylvia’s good work. If you have recently read something of interest or have a personal experience to impart which could help others with their family research, please send the article to Leslie at: (leslie@clark.net). A paragraph may be all you have but, be assured, it will be gratefully received.

The SIG’s online newsgroup, an excellent forum for exchanging information, has grown considerably in the past year. It is as important to post messages of interest here, as it is to request information from members of your own families. If anyone would like to take over the job of moderator, let me know.

We are fortunate to have Marlene Strauss volunteer (via our newsgroup) to help redesign the Latvia SIG website. The site—including the bibliography and the newsletter inventory—needs updating. To enter data for any section of the site, please contact me.

As you can see, the bulk of the SIG’s work is in the hands of a few people. And as we need continuity, this bodes ill for the future. This is important work and each contribution, no matter how small, makes a difference.

Researching our family origins is what brought us together in the Latvia SIG, but there are other goals to achieve. Life as it was lived in the shtetlach needs reconstruction and documentation so that our ancestors who lived and died in Eastern Europe will not be forgotten.

We can each make a contribution to Jewish history by the work we do in the Latvia SIG. We are calling on you—and counting on you—to help.

READ ABOUT OUR NEW DATABASES:

- The Dvinsk List, see page 8
- Document/Database Update, page 9
- The Riga List, see page 15
- Latvian Memorial List, page 28
A Call for Volunteers

By Constance Whippman
Database Coordinator

Whenever we have put out the message for volunteers, we have been truly blessed with wonderful offers of help and support. Both Arlene Beare and I have recently been to Latvia and have returned with armfuls of material all destined for the All Latvia Database and the Courland and Latvia SIG websites. At the moment though, we are very short of volunteers who have language skills sufficient to help us with translations, particularly from Latvian and German to English.

The tasks vary from time to time. There is something for everyone whether you can donate two hours or 30 hours. At the moment, there are some excellent secondary sources in Latvian which would be of great interest and will make good additions to the various websites developed both by the Courland Research Group and the Latvia SIG.

For example, I have a German account from a journal published in 1840 of the cholera epidemic affecting the whole of Courland, Livland and Latgale, which had a devastating impact on the Jewish population. From the same source, there is information setting out criminal statistics by type, punishment and ethnic group. Even with my rusty German I can see this is fascinating material.

I also have an excellent article in Latvian published by the Latvian University Historical Journal on the murder of the Jews of Bauska, including a remarkable first-hand account of the escape of Israel Toik from the massacre of the Jews of Bauska in 1941. This is very moving and deserves wider recognition and circulation.

At the other end of the scale is a rare journal called "Der Kurlander", written in German by Herman Rosenthal (born in Mitau in 1834) and published in 1906 in New York. Only a handful of copies survive and we have managed to track down one of them. This is described as a humourous account of the immigrant's first visit to the United States. It will resonate for anyone whose families emigrated at or before the turn of the century.

Finally, while in Riga in October I managed to locate some wonderful Jewish Veterans magazines with excellent genealogical information printed in both Latvian and Hebrew. There are photographs of great interest, including synagogues and cemeteries. This is a moving experience.

See MITZVAH page 6
Thanks Constance et Al

Dear Constance and your incredible team of helpers, volunteers and donors,

Yesterday, for the first time in a while, I quickly had another look at the Courland SIG home page and was astounded with all the new information. So much incredible background information, as well as the DBs, etc. It will take me weeks to read and absorb just the few pages I downloaded.

Thank you to Constance, Michael and Warren, Paul, Sherri, Margaret, Jerry, Braimie, Max, Arlene and Martha, and all the other volunteers whose names I do not know, for all this additional information that most of us could never have had access to by any other means.

Regards and many many thanks from downunder,

Lorraine Bertelsen
klb@benalla.net.au

Help Wanted: Volunteers with Language Skills

MITZVAH from page 5

tribute to the patriotism of the Jewish Community who fought and died for the foundation of the Independent Latvian State. We are very keen to extract this information to be ensured that this part of Jewish history and heritage is not forgotten.

I have only highlighted some of this material: there is much much more. The articles are two or three pages long (except for the Bauska Holocaust account, which is about nine pages). If you are able to help, it would be a huge mitzvah from which we will derive great interest and information.

In preparation for my trips to Latvia and for the Database job, I spent a year taking Latvian classes. One evening a week was enough to recognise treasure when I see it, but not enough to translate with ease or facility. Can anyone help? A donation of even five to 10 hours of time over a few weeks would be a huge help.

Meanwhile, my best regards to you all from Constance (emailing from London). I really am looking forward to hearing from any who can help.

Constance Whippman
CWhippman@aol.com
A warm welcome to our new members, who are listed below with the family names and towns they are researching. We also wish to acknowledge generous donations from Judy Becker, Judith Caplan, Irene Goldstein, Marj Green, Harold Hodes, Bobbi Kroot, Marilane Nather, Bubbles Siegel and Arnold Tolkien. These contributions and membership subscriptions help support the SIG and fund our projects, so we are very grateful.

We want to remind those of you who have not yet renewed memberships that our year runs from July 2000 to June 2001, so unless we hear from you before our next newsletter goes to press, this will be the last copy we will send you. The publication, however, is only one benefit of your membership. Membership is also a means of belonging to a group whose members share a history, research information and methods, and possibly even new-found relatives.

### New Memberships

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<tr>
<th>New Member</th>
<th>Surname Researching</th>
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<td>Sue Axle</td>
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<td>Judy Brandspiegel</td>
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<td>Potomac, MD</td>
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<td>Brooklyn, NY</td>
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<td>Linda Workman Schulein</td>
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<td>Newport Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Carl Silverman</td>
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<td>Madison, WI</td>
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<td>Ann Sorocki, New Bern, NC</td>
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<td>Cynthia Spikell</td>
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<td>Harold Waitsman</td>
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<td>Ken &amp; Tracy Wineberg</td>
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<td>Chandler, AZ</td>
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See MEMBERS page 8
The Dvinsk List

We are pleased to announce that a major list of Dvinsk (Daugavpils) Jews, commissioned by the Latvia SIG, will be online within a few weeks on JewishGen at: www.jewishgen.org/databases/latvia. This new resource is fully searchable and part of the ongoing progress of the Latvia SIG. The material was kindly commissioned and donated by Arlene Beare, president of our SIG.

The Dvinsk database is an amalgam of information from three separate sources. The first, initiated in 1876, was compiled to establish liability for military service and/or tax collection. Later it was amended and annotated with additional family information up to 1917.

The third source came from lists of Jewish merchants and petite bourgeoisie (small shopkeepers and business owners) who were registered as part of the Dvinsk Jewish community. The list is currently being held in the collections of the State Historical Archives in Riga.

There are some 8,500 entries in the list, referring to 14,000 named individuals. While the lists are not fully comprehensive, they do give good coverage to Jewish families of the period and are an excellent starting point for anyone searching family connections in this area.

Later this year, the information will be supplemented with information from the Dvinsk Cemetery lists, currently being processed by Martha Lev-Zion.

The original lists are in Russian (handwritten Cyrillic) and have been professionally extracted in Riga. The project has been nearly a year in the making and represents a major database effort for the SIG and for Jewish families all over the world.

Many members are already online and can access this new resource on JewishGen. But, for those who do not have a computer, call your local library or college and ask whether you can book a session on the Internet. We strongly urge you to do so.

Dear Latvia SIG Members:

We would like to publish your experiences in genealogy—especially, if the account would help others in their family research. If you have made any trips to Latvia, have suggestions for getting the most out of a shetel visit, made an unusual discovery—something you never expected—found useful Internet sites, or read an inspiring book...please email your story ideas to the editor at: leslie@clark.net. On the other hand, if you have a story idea for someone else to write, or general topics you'd like us to cover—contact us at the same email above. LAL
I wrote my first article for the SIG newsletter in October 1999 while sitting in a cybercafé in Riga. The creation of the All Latvia Database was still a dream.

This article also began life in a cybercafé in Riga in October, but this time in October 2000. Between those two dates remarkable things have happened due to the energy and enthusiasm of a wonderful group of volunteers, the efforts of Arlene Beare, our new SIG president, Mike Getz, the project coordinator, and last—but certainly not least—the groundbreaking Courland Research Group. Each has contributed funds, time, energy and sheer hard work to reclaim and share the rich Jewish heritage of the area now known as Latvia.

Many of you will have already experienced the first fruits of our new All Latvia Database that "went live" in July. Judging from my email, this resource continues to provide material of value to Jewish families who have access to the Internet. Also, thanks to Arlene Beare who, at her own expense, provided print-outs of many of the lists to attendants at the SIG's meeting in Salt Lake City this summer.

We have had email responses not only from the U.S., but from Israel, Australia, Russia, Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, South Africa, Mexico and Canada, all reporting they had success. Even those who have not yet found family connections have written to say they have enjoyed it and wish us all well in what one writer called "our great endeavor."

One of my favorite moments during my recent trip to Riga was sitting in the Bauska Museum showing the director and staff the All Latvia Database and the new Courland Research Website. They could not have been more enthusiastic. I often think of what our Jewish ancestors would have thought of our being able to link Jews around the world in this way. We are truly blessed with a technology that allows us to collect and access material in a way no other medium can.

Since the launch of the database in July, seven more databases containing approximately 20,000 additional names are complete and ready to go online. Unfortunately, for the past 10 weeks JewishGen has not been accepting any new databases so they could upgrade the underlying structure of their web-server.

While this is frustrating in the short term, in the long term it is very exciting because the upgrade will allow eventual access to material from Yad Vashem. Officials there have entered into an agreement with us to share records and indexing efforts. In the meantime, we are waiting for our webmasters Michael Tobias and Warren Blatt to complete their labors and return their attention to the All Latvia Database.

The new data should be on our website and searchable early in 2001.
Seven More Databases, 20,000 more names, Ready To Go Online

> **Riga Heder School’s Donor List, 1914 (with addendum for 1915):** This database is a real treasure. It contains 1,500 names including addresses, patronymics and size of donation of those who gave money to the Heder school movement. The source of this data is a pamphlet produced by the Riga Heder School’s Committee and contains fascinating information about the curriculum, set (i.e., required) books, school timetable and finance. This new database will not only provide excellent genealogical information but also give insight into Jewish education at the time of the final upheavals of the Russian Revolution.

We hope to be able to link this list to a map which will allow you to find where the family home was located. Thanks to Evelyn Waldstein (Israel), Robert Heyman (Australia), Kathy Wolfson and Max Michelson (both USA) for their transliteration from the Russian, and Stanislav Gorbulev (Germany, Russia) for his help with the introductory material translation. (Donated by the Courland Research Group)

> **Libau (Liepaja), 1907:** This is a list of about 4,000 eligible voters. Special thanks to Kathy Wolfson and Marty Mishkin for this wonderful effort. This database will be added to the existing Duma Voters’ list database and completes the whole of the records from Courland’s 1907 Duma. It is very exciting to see how many family names currently being searched are in this list.

We have also identified further background material on these elections, including biographical data on the Jewish representatives to the Duma. In some cases, pictures are included. This is certain to be a popular addition to the material on the database. (Donated by the Courland Research Group.)

> **Libau (Liepaja), 1912:** Another splendid achievement by Kathy Wolfson, with support from Robert Heyman, is this list of approximately 5,000 eligible voters, including patronymics which greatly enhance the genealogical value of the material. This list contains an addendum of Jews originally registered to vote but were subsequently excluded. At the moment we are trying to track down newspaper sources from this period to establish what led to this apparent anti-Semitic outburst. Voters lists are a particularly rich source of family and social information and this list is a perfect example. (Donated by the Courland Research Group.)

> **Tukums’ Recruits List, 1874:** This is an additional 2,500 entries from the Courland community of Tukums, including the surrounding district. The list includes many fathers’ names and maiden names so it actually contains references to over 4,000 individuals.

Tukums was one of the many important towns of Courland with a substantial Jewish population. There are many matches here with names from the Family Finder and I know that many of you will have exciting discoveries in making family connections. (Donated by the Courland Research Group.)

> **Mitau (Jelgava) Recruits:**

See DATABASE page 11
DATABASES WILL BE ON THE WEB AND SEARCHABLE IN 2001

DATABASES from page 10

1845: Hot off the press, approximately 4,000 individuals from the capital of Courland. This is an important early list that will take family research back to at least one and possibly two generations for many families. (Donated by the Courland Research Group.)

> Newspaper/Journal Index for Vitebsk, 1883, and Rezekne, 1906: In Excel format, this database contains about 1,000 Jewish names from article extracts containing short summaries of local Jewish interest. We will continue to search for material to supplement what we have. This sample is full of social period detail and references to many Jewish families and businesses in the Dvinsk and Rezekne areas.

> The Courland Newspaper Index: This is an unusual database and, as far as we know, nothing like this has been attempted by any other group working in the Jewish family history of the old Russian Empire. With the help of Dr. Tatjana Alekseva, we have been completing an index and mini-translation of all Jewish entries from 1853-1861 (ongoing).

Because we have a complete set of photocopies, you will be able to obtain a copy of any news items that involve your family members. Containing over 3,000 names, the source is not only fascinating for its specific genealogical information but also for its colorful account of the life and times of the Jewish community of the period. Dr. Alekseva and I are planning to do a full article on this topic later this year. (Donated by the Courland Research Group.)

WELL IN HAND

> Dvinsk: The Dvinsk Family Lists from the end of the 19th Century are now about three quarters complete and should be available shortly. This has been a special project of Arlene Beare's and we are hoping to preview these lists at the Latvia SIG UK meeting in December. We anticipate that this list will contain something of the order of 10,000 entries. (Donated by Arlene Beare, Latvia SIG.)

> Dvinsk Cemetery Project: 3,000 burial records have been provided by the Dvinsk community. Despite the events in Israel and problems with illness, there is further progress with these lists to be made. We hope to have them finished early this year. If any SIG members live near Omer in the Negev who can read Hebrew Script, a little more help with this project would be welcome. (Donated by Mike Getz, Latvia SIG.)

> Riga Polytechnic Students/ Latvia University Jewish Alumni/ Tartu University Graduates, 1889-1918: Riga Polytechnic was remarkable in the early years of the 20th century, because it held no quotas against Jewish students. Consequently, many Jewish students enrolled there. We also have a donation of records listing the Latvia University’s Jewish students. The early years are unfortunately missing but it, nevertheless, is a wonderful source and witness to the traditional Jewish values of respect for education and professional training.

The Tartu University project is about one-third to half complete and we need a volunteer willing to enter the information into Excel files. Once the three lists are combined and the introduction is written, it will be ready to go online. We need an enthusiastic volunteer to co-ordinate this project. (Donated by the Latvia SIG and the Courland Research Group.)
**The Tip of the Iceberg**

This material is only the beginning. But the good news is the quantity and quality of the material we have. The challenge now is to find people willing to help process the data. We hope the promise of these resources will be enough to inspire you to step forward. These databases are not just for those of us searching family roots today, but for the many generations to come.

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<th>State of Progress</th>
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<td>Scan complete</td>
<td>A project coordinator to take overall responsibility for the entry of</td>
<td>The data is most easily entered using the German form which is not difficult. This is a useful source because it gives the form of name used in both German and Russian. Each list contains about 3,000 names, many of which are obviously not Jewish and do not need to be entered.</td>
<td>Arlene Beare, Latvia SIG</td>
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<td>in Cyrillic, German and Latvian 1882,</td>
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<td>this material into excel files, plus volunteers to enter data.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886, 1901, 1905, 1913</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directory of Riga Doctors, 1923</td>
<td></td>
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<td>The Latvia SIG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>State of Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical Review of the Young Men's Kurlander's Mutual Aid Society published in 1924.</td>
<td>Scan complete</td>
<td>This is not a difficult list to enter and edit and could easily be done by two people working as a team.</td>
<td>Material is wholly in English, easily readable. This data will need to be coordinated with existing material relating to the Kurlander Association already on line.</td>
<td>Marion Plotkin from family records, Latvia SIG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Soldiers and War Dead. Journal Years 1931, 1936, 1937, 1938</td>
<td>Scan to be completed, photocopied on every other side of the page</td>
<td>Ideally, this project needs a co-ordinator who can read basic Hebrew and/or Latvian; print style is easy to read and modern in layout.</td>
<td>This is a rich source relating to the Jewish Patriots who fought in the War for Latvian independence in 1914. Much genealogical material and many interesting photographs.</td>
<td>The Courland Research Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurland Business and Address Book, 1892, 1893</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>State of Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>List of Riga Firms and Proprietors: 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890</td>
<td>Scan complete</td>
<td>German, easy to read. These lists consist of a few thousand entries; considerable overlap with material not of Jewish interest so the task is shortened.</td>
<td>Arlene Beare, Latvia SIG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riga Business Register, 1936</td>
<td>Scan complete</td>
<td>Clear and easy to read in Latvian format but not difficult with a little practice.</td>
<td>Arlene Beare, Latvia SIG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latgale Address Book for Homes and Businesses (Including Dvinsk, Rezekne, Kreslau, Preili, Livani) undated but believed to be about 1920's</td>
<td>Scan to be completed</td>
<td>German in format but not difficult. Typeface in somewhat elaborate German style.</td>
<td>Arlene Beare, Latvia SIG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Extraordinary State Commission to Investigate and Establish War Crimes of the German-Fascist Invaders." This was the Soviet directive in 1943, which authorized a new commission to investigate and record the fate of Nazi victims. The results are currently held in the State Archive of the Russian Federation, with copies available at Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Museum (catalogued as microfilm series RG-22.002M).

But now with the help of Vadim Altiskan of the USHMM, a list of Riga victims has been extracted from the records and provided to the Latvia SIG. (Altiskan first brought Extraordinary Commission records to our attention in the Fall 1993 issue of "Avoteynu.")

The names of Jews and their families make these records important to Jewish genealogists. The lists were compiled from interrogations, the testimony of neighbors, witnesses and evidence at trials relating to Nazi actions at particular locations. These were documented as official reports by members of local NKVD committees (the precursors to the KGB) and submitted to the Commission.

The Riga records do not follow a consistent pattern: they vary in quality and are not comprehensive. The over 2,000 names by no means account for the thousands who died there. The original information is mainly in Russian, printed in Cyrillic, but is often handwritten. A more comprehensive account of these records can be found at www.angelfire.com/or/yizkor. This is an excellent study on Extraordinary Commission records by Michael Steinore.

The Riga List consists of the following fields:

- V Auto Number: Relates to Source Document
- V Surname: Family Name
- V Forename: First Name
- V Patronimic: Father's Name
- V Birth Year: Year of Birth
- V Gender: Male or Female
- V Page: Relates to Source Document
- V Line: Relates to Source Document
- V Notes: Place of Residence (consistently Riga)
- V Date: Perished (Year of Death)
- V Occasional details of actual date of birth

This record will eventually be part of a more comprehensive account of Latvia's Jewish victims in the Holocaust and posted on our website. It will play an important role in bringing identity to the many thousands who are still unnamed. At this stage, it is a useful ancillary guide to those in search of family connected to Riga.

The Latvia SIG appreciates the USHMM and Vadim Altiskan for their guidance and help in bringing this project to reality.
“Did You Know?” will appear in each issue of the Latvia SIG journal. The column is a cornucopia of tips, aids and ideas to facilitate your family search. If you have an item to contribute that has been particularly helpful or interesting to you, send it to the editor at: leslie@clark.net or 10626 Great Arbor Drive, Potomac, MD 20854.

To: The Latvia Newsgroup
Subject: Hamburg ships

Phillip and Lisa Seeberg:
I have just found a searchable database of people who came from the Port of Hamburg. It is on the Internet at http://www.hamburg.de/LinkToYourRoots/english/start.htm. I found my family members who came in 1890. This gave the departure date, so now I have the departure date and the arrival date in New York! It looks like it took about 12 days from Hamburg to New York.

Moderator’s Note:
The Seeberg’s are referring to the important Hamburg Passenger Lists site, and Marion Werle recently gave some good tips on using the Lists on the JewishGen Message Archives.

Marion Werle’s response:
Hamburg database is case sensitive. So for example: is it SMITH, Smith or smith? You need to search the Hamburg database just as the name would be written on the manifest. For example, the name “Smith” would be searched with the initial letter uppercase and the remaining letters lower case. Also, because there is no soundex, you are better off doing a wildcard search in many cases. Note that the wildcard character is ‘%’ for multiple letters (not the commonly used asterisk), and ‘_’ for a single letter. I have resorted to doing a search on ‘S%’ to find all surnames beginning with ‘s’.

After despairing that the man I was searching for ever existed—although I have his photo—I finally found my gm’s brother, with the surname Skuder (in the U.S., variously spelled as Skuder, Scuder, and Scudder, depending on what record you happen to be reading) listed as ‘Schkuder’ in the online Hamburg list, which makes sense, since it is the German spelling of the name.

Also note that by the time the name had been transcribed to the corresponding American ship manifest (which I was able to locate, thanks to the Hamburg online list), the name had morphed into ‘Schkunder’.

In any case, you need to be creative with the Hamburg search engine, but if you don’t capitalize the first letter of the first name/surname, you won’t find anything.
Jewish Genealogy received a valuable gift this summer at the 20th Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Salt Lake City. At the first event, an appreciative audience gave a standing ovation to Richard Turley, Jr., director of the Family History Department, for presenting a CD-ROM of the entire Jewish holdings of the Family History Library to Howard Margol, president of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies.

Included in the gift was the hard copy of the holdings, which Mr. Turley said now belonged to JewishGen to be used and distributed as it wished. The Family History Library is the largest repository of microfilmed records from around the world, including documentation of generations of Jewish lives.

Director Turley, the keynote speaker, talked about "The Family History Library: Its Past, Present and Future." He told the story of the Mormons as targets of programs before they emigrated to this country, and of their arduous journey through three states until they settled in Utah. The Church now has 3,400 Temples in different countries; their website gets billions of hits each month; and thousands of researchers from across the world come to their library every year.

Mr. Turley stressed that microfilm would remain the storage method of choice for the library until computerised images had a longer life. The continual updating of computers could pose huge problems for long-term storage and viewing, he said.

The first evening's event was only one of many highlights during the five days of speakers, meet-
PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

HIGHLIGHTS from page 17

> The name Belarus only appeared after the Russian Revolution in 1919. The region had belonged to many different countries at different times, complicating the location of records today.

> Jews arrived in Grodno and Brest in the late 1380's from Poland and Germany. Prior to the 1770's, more than 60,000 Jews lived in these areas, increasing to 1,250,000 prior to the 1st World War.

> Records for Minsk are in the State National Archives and those for Grodno are found in the Central Historical Archives. After Vitebsk Province was split up, a portion of their records went to the Latgale region of Latvia, some to Belarus, part to Poland and others to Lithuania.

> The Family History Library has been filming extensively in Minsk. To this point, they have filmed all Jewish vital records and are in process of filming the Revision Lists of 1795-1834.

> Revision Lists are available for Mogilev from 1811 until 1858, and supplementary lists to the end of the 1800's. Part of the Western Belarus Archival records such as those relating to Grodno may be in the Bialystock Archives. Most Government documents are in the Grodno Archives, while others may be part of private collections held by religious community leaders.

> Before 1917, all Russian residents—including Jews—had to apply for travel passports (i.e., "internal" passports) if they wished to visit other parts of the empire. Emigration for Jews was complicated and foreign travel passports were expensive and difficult to secure. Many slipped across borders with temporary passports and never returned.

> Foreign passports were issued for three to five years and to obtain one, the Jewish applicant must have paid all taxes, have no debts and not be eligible for military service. Most importantly, an applicant had to have permission from the Elected Elders (the Cahal) to leave the community. Some young people were granted leave to go abroad for study and never came back.

> Registers for exit permits were kept for each year. These stated the name of the communities they wished to leave and were housed in the State Archives or the Governor's Office.

> Legal records can be particularly helpful in searching for Jewish descendants. There were more than 650 restrictions designed for the Jews alone and they were always in danger of breaking the laws with which they had to comply. These District Level Court Records are in the Minsk and Grodno archives.

TO ALL MEMBERS:
I have written at length here, because I know there are many members unable to attend conferences—and without access to computers—would appreciate insight into the proceedings. This newsletter is our way of providing relevant information to all our members.

Arlene Beare,
President, Latvia SIG

Alex Abraham

> Alex Abraham gave a moving demonstration of the "Integrative Holocaust Victim's Name Database", software currently being tested and scheduled to go online in a few months. Mr. Abraham showed attendees how to perform a search and how the pages of testimony could be linked to lists of transport victims' names.

> Over 1,000 volunteers have been involved with computerizing the names for this database. A comprehensive index lists 63,238 surnames, 229 variants and first names.

> The database also includes 26 languages, geographic areas, persecution sites with variations of spelling, as well as deportation lists from Theresienstadt and France. Fourteen search fields are used. The script is Hebrew, Latin, Cyrillic and Greek.

See HIGHLIGHTS page 19
A very successful event

2000 from page 17

Tabernacle Choir has broadcast over their own radio station every Sunday morning. We arrived by 8:45 a.m. to hear the rehearsal. The performance, which began promptly at 9:30, included hymns and an organ solo. The music far exceeded my expectations.

This year’s conference in Salt Lake was not as large as the one in New York two years ago. But thanks to organizers Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Amdur Sack, and their many helpers, it was a very successful event and apparent that a lot of hard work went into keeping attendees happy and occupied.

So occupied, in fact, that I found very little time for personal research in the Family History Library. But when I visited, I was amazed at how much material they have, including vast archives of tapes and film. To allow many researchers to examine the microfilms at the same time, the library offers many microfilm readers, reducing the time spent waiting in line.

Latvia SIG Meeting

Our trip to Utah coincided with the launch of the All Latvia Database on the web at: www.jewishgen.org/databases/latvia. To enable our SIG members to access this data at the conference, we brought the database hard copy to meetings, and many found references to family names. I was introduced to the membership as incoming SIG president by Mike Getz, the project co-ordinator. I thanked members for their confidence in me and expressed hope that I would be able to carry on the good work that the SIG has achieved over the past year.

The Latvia SIG was one of the Special Interest Groups that hosted a luncheon at the conference. Mike was the after-lunch speaker and discussed variations in Jewish customs found in different countries. A founder of the Latvia SIG, Mike has been active for many years. His anecdotal memories were of great interest to all.
ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IS KEY TO UNDERSTANDING OUR ANCESTORS' LIVES

By Harold Rhode

The more we study 19th-century marriage records and revision lists, the more perplexing they become. Why, for example, are two sons listed as one person? Why do two marriages in the same family take place within a few days of each other and in places where neither couple seem to have parents? Why aren’t children who we know survived late into adulthood listed anywhere, or listed as having died? Why are ancestors listed as being registered in towns that no family member ever mentioned?

The answers to these questions and others like it will remain hidden so long as we ask questions that only make sense in terms of today’s culture. Wrong questions only lead us down wrong paths, give misleading answers and often point to dead ends.

Boris Feldblyum first posed some of these questions in his Fall 1993 article, “Some Problems in Researching Eastern European Records” (AVOTAYNU, Vol. IX, No. 3). Since then, we have learned that the only way to answer many of these questions is to understand the cultural milieu and history of our ancestors, as well as their Jewish religious practices. Only by doing this can we hope to formulate the right genealogical questions—those which enable us to find the information we want—as well as understand why the information we find in czarist documents often conflict with what our ancestors told us.

After examining many documents and interviewing many ancestors, we have learned the following facts, which are crucial to finding information about our ancestors:

1) Our ancestors did not come from one particular shtetl. They came from many shtetls, often some distance from each other.

Jews were a tremendously mobile people, largely because of the nature of the Czarist Empire. In the medieval world—and the Russian Empire and its successor state, the Soviet Union, functioned largely as medieval states—ethnic and religious groups had roles. Jews were mostly small-time artisans, traders, innkeepers and peddlers, responsible for providing services to farming communities, as well as urban services required by the government.

This meant most of our ancestors had to live in small towns or in cities where such services were needed. They rarely lived on farms because farming was not their role. If they did live on farms, it was almost always to provide services, not to farm.

Since Jews were responsible for trade, they needed to have contacts in different towns to ply their wares. (While journeying, they also needed to find kosher food and to daven with a minyan.) It is, therefore, not
Family Relations Were the Basis of Jewish Society

QUESTIONS from page 20

surprising that since a day’s journey was then between 12 and 20 miles, depending on the terrain, towns sprang up approximately 12 to 20 miles from each other.

So who could the Jews trust in their trading relationships? Since family relations were the basis of Jewish society, people usually trusted their brothers, brothers-in-law (sisters’ husbands), and other relatives. Since Jews often married cousins, or uncles married nieces, trading relationships with family members continued to increase over time.

Because Jews constantly traveled for their livelihood, members of one family often settled in different towns, where they set up businesses. Marriages were almost always arranged by parents, so tight familial relations developed among people in large areas. One sibling might live in the town where he was born; another might live in a nearby town; still another might live in a town two or three days’ journey away.

From this we learn that Jewish families were constantly on the move. Though a family member might have said he was from a particular town, it is highly likely that his parents were not originally from that town and that his aunts, uncles, and grandparents lived in other towns in the vicinity, as well. To make matters even more complicated, Jewish women often returned to the town where their mothers lived to give birth.

So from what particular shtetl did we come? We now realize that this question can easily lead us down a blind alley to nowhere because, in fact, our families came from large geographical areas, not from one town.

This may also explain why so many of our ancestors rarely mentioned the exact names of the towns they came from, more often saying Kovna, Vilna, or another guberniya—not the town name—as the place where they lived.

Given the above, looking for czarist government documents can be a nightmare. Where should we look? What town or towns should we research? How then can we find documents for our ancestors? And how, from a czarist government perspective, could they handle the problem of people moving from place to place—which, judging from the documents, was a major preoccupation of the bureaucrats?

2) Jews were registered as belonging to one particular town, even if they had never even lived in the town in which they were registered.

To track the movement of Jews, the government developed a system of registration that tied families to one particular town, irrespective of where they actually lived or moved. This system enabled authorities to collect taxes and draft men into the military.

Moreover, the government periodically commissioned censuses called Revision Lists, in which officials listed who was registered in or belonged to each town—not who lived there. These Revision Lists are absolutely critical in order to build our family

See QUESTIONS page 22
It Was Common for Cousins to Marry Cousins

QUESTIONS from page 21

trees back to the early 19th and even
18th centuries, because they include
references to how each family mem-
ber was related to the head of each
household (i.e., brother, nephew,
grandparent, uncle, son, relative,
etc.). The registers usually do not
contain information about where the
family members actually live.

On the other hand, vital events
(i.e., birth, marriage, divorce, death
records) were almost always recorded
in the registers of the towns where
these events took place, not in the
town of registration. From an exhaus-
tive analysis of the vital records of the
19th-century Czarist Empire, we
learn that more than 75 percent of
the people were born, married,
divorced, or died in towns other than
those where they or their parents
were registered. We know this
because in each registration entry, the
government official also listed the
town where the individual or his
father was registered.

3) Very often, two or more wed-
dings of members of the same fam-
ily took place in the same town
within days of each other.

Examining the marriage registers,
it also becomes clear that, in the same
family, more than one marriage took
place within days of each other. Why
was this so? The answer lies in under-
standing the nature of the Jewish
marriage ceremony. Today, marriages
are usually one-day affairs. Prior to
the turn of the century, they usually
lasted a whole week. After the chu-
pah (marriage canopy) ceremony was
completed, seven blessings were
offered for the newly married couple.
Traditionally, these blessings were
said after each meal during the fol-
lowing six days (except Shabbat).
That meant traditional wedding festi-
vities lasted for seven days
(For more information, see
Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 7, p. 1038:
“The Marriage Benedictions”).

The groom’s town of registration
and that of his father-in-law are usu-
ally listed in the marriage register.
Since the ceremonies usually took
place in the bride’s town, the mar-
riage record helps us trace back even
further the ancestors of those getting
married.

Sometimes, we learn that neither
bride nor groom was from the town
where the marriage took place. Given
that most weddings were multiple, it
is most likely that the family of one
of the people getting married had
other relatives living in that town
who were getting married at the same
time.

4) It was common practice for first
cousins to marry and for uncles to
marry nieces—but not for aunts to
marry nephews.

In today’s world, we are taught to
believe marriage between close rela-
tives is too genetically risky. In fact,
such unions increase the likelihood
that recessive traits, either positive or
negative, will appear. From a Jewish
point of view, however, different cri-
teria mattered to our ancestors. In the
marriage registers of Kovna and Vilna
guberniyas, for example, a large por-
tion of Jewish marriages occurred
between cousins or between uncles

See QUESTIONS page 23
Religious Status is Passed Through the Father

QUESTIONS from page 22

and nieces. From a halakhic (Jewish legal) point of view, marriages between aunts and nephews were prohibited. Keeping this in mind helps us develop research strategies and ask better questions.

Moreover, it was only religious authorities that performed marriages; no secular institutions dealt with matters of personal status. Thus, what appears to be an aunt-nephew marriage in a town's marriage register could not have taken place, because neither the community nor the rabbinate would have sanctioned it. We must, therefore, think of other possibilities—perhaps the aunt's name was the same as that of a niece you never heard of, or this marriage was from another family.

5.) Registration with the authorities invariably meant trouble. People, therefore, developed all sorts of methods to evade taxes and military service.

In examining Revision Lists, I often found two sons listed as one person with two names. While no written sources have yet been found that indicate the exact reason for doing so, it stands to reason that if the government believed only one son was listed, only one would have to deal with the military authorities.

In another instance, I found one son in a family register who was listed as having died. But that same man was later known to be alive and well in Philadelphia. Families were fined if their sons did not appear at the draft inspection board when called up to be examined for potential military service. It again stands to reason that the people would have done their best to convince the authorities that the person they were looking for was dead. They would, thereby, avoid the fine and their son would not have to join the czarist military.

6) Though one's status as a Jew is passed down from mother to child, one's religious status, (i.e., whether someone is a Kohen, Levite, or Israelite) is passed down through the father.

From time to time, we find that people bearing the same surnames are from the same towns. One knows he is a Levite, while the other, bearing the same family name, knows he is an Israelite. Moreover, people were not as committed to their family names as we are today, and often changed them, albeit usually illegally. So if two people had the same family name, but did not share the same Jewish religious status, they could not both have been descended from the same male ancestor. An ancestor might have assumed the family name of his father-in-law and thus, might have descended from a female whose father bore that name.

If this were not the case, these two people could not have been related, because they could not change their religious status. Since Jews knew one another other from the area in which they lived, or knew people who knew each other, this could not easily have been fabricated. Moreover, the only reason one might try to fabricate a change in religious status is if one...


**Story, Culture, and Judaism are keys to Research**

**QUESTIONs from page 23**

was a Kohen and wanted to marry a divorcee or convert, both forbidden in Jewish law. Since virtually no one converted to Judaism in the 19th century, the problem could only have arisen in the case of a divorcee wanting to marry a Kohen. Then again, almost all Jewish marriages were arranged and families knew each other, so this, too, made it next to impossible to fabricate status.

Therefore, if a researcher finds a marriage record in which he/she believes the groom is a Kohen and the bride is listed as a divorcee, the researcher can rest assured that the groom was not a Kohen and that he/she has found the wrong marriage. No religious official would have performed that marriage.

So, what does the above teach us?

*That it is absolutely necessary to know and understand the history and the mores of the country and the Jews who lived there.*

The Jews lived under regimes that made the laws with which they had to contend. Our ancestors developed strategies to deal with governmental restrictions and regulations. Sometimes these regulations worked to the Jews advantage; most often they did not.

Moreover, the technological limitations of the era we are researching determined many aspects of their lives. Clearly, travel was a major undertaking in 19th-century Russia; nevertheless, Jews, by necessity, traveled considerably. Thus, they had contacts all over the area, and the technological and time limitations on travel had less of a bearing on marriage possibilities and familial relations than we otherwise might have expected.

Besides history, it is essential to know as much as possible about Jewish culture and religion in order to develop better research strategies for obtaining the documents we need. And because we now know that we are not from a particular town, but from many towns, it is important, therefore, for us to cast as wide a net as possible to find the family records we are seeking.

Thus, the best research strategy is to join a group of people researching a particular area, for example, a whole *uezd* (district), and pool everyone's money to order the records for that whole area. These records should be entered into a searchable database to which every member of the group has access. That increases the chance that researchers will find the records for their family. It also allows them to discover additional towns where their ancestors lived and add additional, yet unknown, relatives to their family trees. In short, history, culture, and Judaism are the keys to understand the lives of our ancestors and to obtain the documents we need.

*Harold Rhode is a former president of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Washington. For a longer version of this article—which was first published in *Avotaynu* as “Keys to Understanding Our Ancestors' Lives... and Asking the Right Questions”—see Mr. Rhode’s website: [http://users.erols.com/brhode/](http://users.erols.com/brhode/).*
# Next Year in London

*By Arlene Beare  
President Latvia SIG*

It seems like we have just unpacked from the 20th Annual Genealogy Conference in Salt Lake City and we are already deep in preparations for the 21st, to be held in London from July 8-13, 2001. To encourage attendance and make the conference a success, we already have a number of engaging speakers and topics on the schedule.

To encourage an excellent turnout of Latvian researchers, we have invited a number of speakers talking on subjects of particular interest to them. For example:

- **Prof. Ruvin Ferber** will be coming from Riga to talk about the history of the Jews of Latvia.
- **Martha Lev-Zion** will talk about the Jews of the Dorf in the 17th and 18th centuries and emigration of German Jews to Courland.
- **Constance Whippman** will present the serious and humorous aspects of databases.
- **Elsebeth Paikin** of the Denmark SIG and **Arlene Beare** of the Latvian SIG will co-present “How photos can help with your research.” Use of a computer and scanner applied to old photos can assist identification. The talk will be illustrated with examples from their own research.
- **Rita Bogdanova** will advise us on how to approach archives for information and will illustrate her talk with samples of documents.

See 2001 page 27

## SPEAKERS AND TOPICS FOR 2001 CONFERENCE

### Jordan Auslander
- "Black Sheep"—Criminal Records and Other Sources in the United States. Convicted criminals have many of their records made public. There are internet lists of dead-beat dads and child molesters. The Federal Bureau of Prisons and State inmate locators, F.B.I. files, and conventional sources like the New York Times' personnel index for names in crime reports, are all available.

### Debbie Beavis
- Shopping Records at the Public Record Office, Kew. A brief illustrated introduction to using Board of Trade shipping records for tracing passengers arriving, leaving or passing through the British Isles from 1787-1960; their limitations, the problems most commonly encountered and the available solutions. The original lists are held at the Public Record Office in Kew, unindexed and unfilmed.

### Warren Blatt and Michael Tobias
- JewishGen Databases. An introduction to JewishGen's most popular databases.

### Rita Bogdanova (Latvian State Historical Archives) and Helena Polovceva
- An Overview of the Holdings of the Latvian State Historical Archives. Particular reference to vital records, revision lists, family lists, 1897 All-Russian Census, and common problems encountered.

See TOPICS page 26
genealogical and government resources, or the lack thereof, to trace your roots.

**Lydia Collin**
- Sephardi Manchester—a Microcosm of the Sephardi World.

**Richard Cooper and Richard Pearlman**
- "The Easy Stuff," an intro to how and where to begin in the U.K.

**Anthony Crook**
- "And Thereby Hangs a Tale". Six months before he died at 80, Anthony Crook’s father told him of his Jewish background, a family from Libau (Latvia), and their migration to Sunderland. That is where his search began.

**Jeff Cymbler**
- Polish Genealogy, Holocaust Genealogy. An emphasis on Auschwitz research, Polish concentration camps and Polish Jews.
- Polish and Austro-Hungarian business, street and telephone directories.

**Jonina Duker**
- How Jewish Religious and Culture Influence Jewish Genealogy. The importance to genealogists of understanding basic Jewish culture, reuniting dispersed families through genealogy and, through it, gaining an understanding of "Jewishness."

**Nicholas Evans**
- The Agents of the Oppressed – The Wilson Line of Hull and the Jewish Migration from the Pale of Settlement. The role of agents in the Pale of Settlement, the Wilson Shipping line of Hull, and the Jewish migration via the ports of Libau and Riga.

**Lt. Colonel Fairclough**
(Director, Family Tracing Service of the Salvation Army)
- Tracing Missing Persons.

**Dr. Helen Forde**
(Head of Preservation, Public Record Office, Kew)
- Problems in the Preservation of Archival Material. The preservation of archives is the key to current and future access, but often gets forgotten in the rush for knowledge. Both professionals and the public can help ensure the survival of unique material by some simple techniques.

**Karen Franklin**
- Genealogical Holdings at the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. Successful research strategies for utilizing the Archives and Library of the Leo Baeck Institute; recent acquisitions; and new initiatives in the general field of German Jewish genealogy.

See TOPICS page 27
VISIT JEWISHGEN FOR REGISTRATION DETAILS AND SPEAKER UPDATES

Topics from page 26

Judith Frazin
- Translating Polish Records
- A Beginners' Workshop on Jewish and non-Jewish records in the U.S. Analysis, which not only throws light on the hardships and difficulties of immigrant settlement, but has proved to be of great genealogical value.

Dr. Stuart H. Green
(Pediatrician, Birmingham)
- New Developments on the All-Lithuanian Database. The acquisition of records from the various Lithuanian archives and the creation of a searchable database relating to Lithuanian Jews.

Seth Jacobson
- Jewish Aspects on the Use of Genealogical Software.

Dr. Anthony Joseph
- The Jews of Birmingham.

Raymond Kalman
- The Jewish Friendly Society Movement in England. A forgotten part of our social history.

Peter W. Lande
- Holocaust Victims and Survivors: Sources of Information. In the past year a number of new sources of information on Holocaust victims and survivors have been identified. This talk focuses on how to secure access (e.g. on the web, in book form, or in particular archives.).

Ros Livshin
- Genealogical Resources Relating to the Manchester Jewry. Covering source material in the Manchester Jewish Museum, the Central Library, the Police Museum, the Record Office and Jewish communal institutions.

Prof. Vivian Moses and Neil Bradman
- Genetics of the Jews. Both the origins of the Ashkenazi Jews and the history of early Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe are poorly understood.

Prof. Aubrey Newman
- Patterns of Migration. A symposium.

Beverley Olberg
- Organising a Family Reunion.

Elsebeth Paikin
- Resources in Denmark for Jewish Genealogists. Records of the small community dating from the end of the 17th century include genealogies, vital records, censuses and lists of burials.

SallyAnn Sack

Jurgen Sielemann
(Hamburg Staats-archiv)
- Hamburg Passenger Lists 1850-1934 and their Importance to Jewish Genealogists.

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Major Project to Document All the Latvian Jewish Families Who Perished

By Constance Whippman
Database Coordinator

A major Holocaust project for the perished Jewish families of Latvia is about to begin. The goal of the project is to create a definitive list of Latvian Jewry who are known to have perished as a result of tyranny and genocide between 1941-1944. The project—following a conference in October 1999 at the Centre for Judaic Studies at the University of Latvia—will harness the skills and resources of the State Historical archivists and others in Israel and Latvia.

Providing that funds can be raised, it is estimated the project will take some two-and-one-half years to complete the work and a further six months for final checking and cross-referencing to materials held in other parts of the world, primarily the United States and Israel. Professor Ruvin Ferber, the distinguished head and co-founder of the Centre for Judaic Studies at the University of Latvia, has agreed to act as the project director and coordinator. The project will be based at the University of Latvia.

Background

According to the best figures that exist, in 1938 the Jewish community of Latvia was over 90,000, but by December 1941, not even 10,000 Latvian Jews had survived. The totality and speed of this mass murder meant that many families were completely destroyed and no one was left to mourn or even inquire about the dead. The effect of this is that fewer than 16,000 of the over 80,000 believed to have perished are recorded at Yad Vashem.

But now, Professor Edward Anders [formerly Alperovich], one of the small number of survivors from Liepają, has painstakingly reconstructed the list of those Jews from his community. His pioneering work and methodology has managed to trace the fate of over 6,700 of the 7,100 Jews living in Liepają at the beginning of the war. In many cases, the information he has retrieved includes, not only names but addresses, occupations, dates, places of death and other information of great interest to family historians.

The results of his research will soon be published as a memorial book and will be shared with Yad Vashem, substantially adding to our knowledge of those who perished. This work occupied some two-and-a-half years of Professor Anders’ time and was financed by him. The account of how this was achieved and the memorial database he has created can be viewed at his website at: http://www.ejanders.com.

Prior to Professor Anders’ effort, the work of organizations, such as Yad Vashem, depended upon family members and friends filling in

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RIGA WILL OVERSEE PROCESS

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pages of testimony about what they surmised happened to their loved ones. The stark fact of the annihilation of the Latvian Jews is that it was so comprehensive and so swift that in many cases there was no family left to record individual losses.

Some work on the project can be carried out by volunteers, but the vast majority of the work will need to be carried out professionally in Riga using records now lodged in the various State Archives. The process will be under the supervision of the Latvian archivists who have done so much to further the knowledge of Jewish family history and support the All Latvia Database.

At the end of the project, these records will have to be cross-checked with records in the United States Holocaust Memorial and in the archives of the Latvian and Estonian Jews in Israel at the Archive Beth Shefayim. This will be an international multi-disciplinary effort, and we are pleased to be able to announce it in its very early stages.

Inevitably have to come from the Jewish Community itself. In the meantime, we are in the process of setting up a specific facility through JewishGen, a registered charity, to ensure that donations for the Latvian Names List will be tax exempt for residents of the United States. What we urgently need is some sense of the level of funding that can be raised in the community.

I believe we are uniquely positioned to be able to achieve a goal that was thought to be impossible only a few years ago. The goodwill, the contacts and interest generated in part by the work of the Latvia SIG, Arlene Beare, Mike Getz and Martha Lev-Zion and the track record of the All Latvia Database have demonstrated what can be achieved by collective effort and purpose. What is needed now is for the Jewish community to demonstrate their collective intention that this work should be carried out by giving it their financial backing and support.

It is never easy to raise money on this scale, but I believe that those of us with family roots and connections to the Jews of Latvia will want to ensure that this important task of remembrance and memorial is successfully achieved. Only then, will we have a permanent record of each individual life that was lost and complete the ties which bind the living and the dead.

To track the progress of this wonderful project, watch for future issues of the SIG Newsletter. We look forward to an article by Professor Ferber in the next few issues to provide more details.

Additional details, including how to make tax exempt donations, will be available shortly. For those wishing to make a donation or a pledge of a donation to this effort, contact any of the following: (USA) Mike Getz, 5450 Whitley Park Terrace #901, Bethesda, MD 20814-2061, (UK) Arlene Beare, 10 Beverly Court, 39 Ravenscroft Avenue, London, England, NW 11 8BG, or (Israel) Martha Lev-Zion, POB 786 Shaked 15, OMER ISRAEL 84965:

With gratitude, Constance Whippman
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Email: _________________________________________________________

Whom are you researching (in Latvian cities only)?

Name: __________________________________________________________
Location: _______________________________________________________
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Location: _______________________________________________________

* Note: please use location names and spellings as found in “Where Once We Walked.”

Translation skills: (circle all that apply):
Hebrew Latvian Russian Yiddish Other (specify)

I would be willing to volunteer for the following activities:

Do you have any story ideas for this journal? If you do, write them below or send them to
the editor at: leslie@clark.net or Editor Latvia SIG, 10626 Great Arbor Drive, Potomac, MD 20854.

Please return completed questionnaire, along with your check for U.S. $20 for U.S. and Canada;
for overseas members, $30, also in dollars and, if possible, drawn on a U.S. bank. Alternatively, a
money order or cash is acceptable. Your payment will be acknowledged. Make payable to: Latvia
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