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President’s Report

Happy New Year to everyone.

Although it is early in 2006, I want to remind all of you about the IAJGS Conference in NYC, which will be held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel from the 13th to the 18th of August. Information about the conference can be found at: http://www.jgsny2006.org/. I am expecting a large turnout of Latvia Siggers and I'd like to get an idea of who will be attending the conference and what your interests are.

For this conference, we will have a SIG luncheon and two SIG meetings as well as a SIG Fair. The luncheon has already been scheduled for Monday, 14 August. One meeting will be devoted to Latvia SIG business, and the other to topics of interest to the SIG membership. I am in the process of developing an agenda for the meetings, so I'd like to hear what you would like us to cover and discuss. Please send your ideas and suggestions to me directly.

If you or a colleague have been to Latvia and would like to present highlights of your trip and research findings, let me know. If you or a colleague have questions, research tips, interesting stories or personal histories that you think would be of interest to the membership, let me know. Finally, if you are planning to attend, let me know.

As many of you know, we are in the process of developing Dvinsk and Rezekne Shtetlinks under the direction of Dave Howard. Unfortunately, Dave recently injured his right hand and he will require surgery to repair damaged tendons. I have spoken to Dave and he can’t wait to get started again, but his inability to use a computer has slowed down the effort somewhat. In the meantime, we have added a link to Dave’s construction site that is accessible from the Latvia SIG web site under JewishGen. You can use that link to see what is being developed and to express your ideas about what you would like to see.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, please contact me directly at: bbshay@starpower.net or Dave Howard at: dshoward@usa.net if you have information, photos, video clips, official documents, etc. that you think would be helpful and of interest to the Latvia SIG community.

We are also planning to revitalize the Latvia SIG web site, and I am pleased to announce that Sarah Krein will be our new Webmaster. Arlene Beare was instrumental in introducing Sarah to the Latvia SIG and she deserves our gratitude once again. Sarah was born in London, UK and made aliyah to Israel in 1995. She is a conference organizer and event planner and enjoys using computer tools to design websites. Her genealogical interests cover Galicia, Germany and Latvia and her family tree can be found on line at http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/k/r/e/Sarah-D-Krein/index.html.

Those of us who use the Latvia SIG listserv usually take for granted the efficient and timely service provided by it. Well, behind the scenes is our listserve moderator who ensures its smooth operation while providing genealogical suggestions and technical support. As some of you know her name is Elisabeth Paikin and she is also president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Denmark, the SIG coordinator and webmaster of JewishGen's Scandinavia SIG, and the Latvia SIG listserve moderator. While these jobs do not provide her with much spare time, she did find time to meet with me and my wife for lunch in Copenhagen in October and personally escort us through the new and beautiful Jewish Museum in Copenhagen. See below.
Elsebeth promised to write an article about her recent visit to Latvia—if she can find the time. We all hope she does.

Before closing, I want to remind you that membership fees are past due so please renew your membership as soon as possible.

Barry Shay
bbshay@starpower.net

Editor’s Comments

As in the last issue, I am happy to include archival material from USHMM and Beth Hatefutsoth in Tel Aviv as well an English of one of the oral testimonies conducted by the Center for Judaic Studies, at the University of Latvia, in Riga. The interviews were carried out by Aina Antane, secretary to Professor Ruven Ferber - the lead researcher for the project. In this issue I am pleased to include the interview with Zalmin Anshin, who served in both the Latvian and Russian armies during WWII.

The reports from the USHMM were obtained by Mike Getz and contain first-hand accounts of the ghastly treatment of Latvian Jews by the Germans and Latvians.

The material, also obtained by Mike Getz, from Beth Hatefutsoth provides brief historical accounts of Jewish shtetls throughout Latvia and the effect of the Holocaust on those shtetls. Dov Levin and Martha Lev-Zion made the acquisition of these document possible, and we can not thank them enough for their efforts.

Many readers and SIG members have been to Rezekne and visited the Green Synagogue. Some have written about it, some have photographed it and most, if not all, have commented on the neglected synagogue and the desire to restore it as a centerpiece of Jewish life in Rezekne. David Michaelson had those same thoughts and he, almost single-handedly, has rounding up support for the renovation of the famous synagogue. I am happy that I recently made contact again with Dave, and he provided a moving story of his motivation as well as the progress he has made in this remarkable project. I am happy to include his detailed account in this issue.

Luckily for us, Arlene Beare remains in contact with Rabbi Mordechai Glazman, the Chabad Rabbi in Riga, and he continues to write her with interesting accounts of Jewish life in today’s Latvia.

About a year ago, Mike Getz and I made the acquaintance of Professor Len Latkovski, of Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. He has a special interest in the Latgale region of Latvia as did his father. Len was kind enough to provide a brief history of Latgale Jewish names that was excerpted from his father’s book, originally published in 1968.

As always, please contact me with if you have ideas for articles or if you’d like to write an article for this newsletter. I know some of you have traveled to Latvia or are planning to visit shortly. Please think about sharing what you’ve learned from your trip with your Latvia SIG colleagues by submitting an article for the newsletter.

Barry Shay
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Jewish Holidays in Latvia

The following letters from Rabbi Mordechai Glazman were sent to Arlene Beare and highlight the activities of the Chabad Jewish community in Latvia. Arlene originally posted the letters on the Latvia SIG listserv and I thought they would be of interest to the readership.

Dear Friends,

The busy month of holidays is now over and it is time to make a reckoning of all activities and accomplishments.

The attractive Jewish calendar that was published and distributed includes information about holidays and other programs that will take place throughout the year. A special pamphlet with all the dates and times of prayers and celebrations in the synagogue was sent out and as a result, there was a marked difference in the service attendance this Tishrei. An informative booklet with detailed explanations and insights on the holidays was given out, as was, of course, the yearly candle lighting brochure.
On the first night of Rosh Hashanah, the synagogue was full to capacity. The next day, many people came especially to hear Tkiat Shofar. In the late afternoon, special programs for kids and adults were made for those who could not make it to the morning prayers. It ended with a spirited walk to the Daugava River for the traditional Tashlich.

A beautiful holiday meal was arranged at the Hotel Riga for the students and parents of the Ohel Menachem Kindergarten and School. A separate evening for college students was also well attended.

On Yom Kippur, the synagogue was crowded for the Tfillot for Kol Nidrei and Neila. Machzorim were provided for all and the "Prayer Partner" system was a big help for those unfamiliar with the services.

With the help of the JDC, Lulavim sets were made available for interested individuals and Jewish institutions in Riga and other cities in Latvia.

The week of Succoth was a lively one here in Riga. Various parties and concerts were organized for groups of all ages. The Riga Klezmer band had people dancing to their lively music in the synagogue on Sunday afternoon. The children of the kindergarten and school were happy to perform for their parents and the many guests who also visited the decorated Succah and enjoyed refreshments there. The joy was brought as far as Daugavpils with a portable Succah and an interesting program.

What would holidays be without good food? Thank G-d, there has been a steady supply of kosher chickens in the Baltics, with the most recent Shchita of 5 tons of chicken before Rosh Hashanah. Two thousand liters of milk were imported from France for those in interested in kosher milk products.

The old-age Jewish tradition of "Upsherenish" (first haircutting at a boy's third birthday) was brought to public eye, when a triple ceremony took place last week. The three adorable boys with their long locks of hair impressed the guests with their knowledge of the Jewish Aleph Bet, Brochot and words of Torah. They licked honey off the holy letters and had candies thrown on them by the "angels", who also rejoiced in the new scholars' achievements. All the young guests joined in for a Torah dance while their parents looked on with pleasure. The boys were so proud of their brand new Tzitzit that they were finally able to don. The transformation was complete when each participant was called up to snip a piece of hair, leaving the payot as required by Jewish law.

Wishing you a good "Chodesh" and a happy and healthy winter.

Rabbi Mordechai Glazman

Dear friends,

The holiday of Chanukah has come and gone, but the light and warmth that it brought to Latvia has had lasting effects. The preparations at Chabad started weeks in advance. Booklets with interesting and important information about the holiday were sent to homes throughout Latvia. Candles, menorahs and dreidels were made available for all. The 5-meter high menorah stood near the house of congress and was lit each evening for all to see. Crowds gathered on the second night of Chanukah regardless of the below zero temperature outdoors. The Israeli Ambassador and the President of the Latvian Jewish Community joined Rabbi Mordechai Glazman in addressing the gathering and then lighting the lamps. Song, music, dancing and of course fresh doughnuts kept the crowd celebrating long after the honored guests had left. Over one hundred Jews gathered in the city of Daugavpils for a Chanukah event run by one of the Chabad Rabbis, Shneur Z. Kot. The parents of the Ohel Menachem School enjoyed their children's Chanukah show and the beautiful tables of refreshment that was prepared for them. Two more concerts were put on by the older and younger divisions of the Pre-school including dance, poems and holiday songs in five languages! Chanukah parties were organized each night to make sure that as many Jews as possible could join and be uplifted by the spirituality and powerful messages of the holiday. Senior citizens, young families, college students and Israelis
were some of the various groups who were assembled throughout the week. Since schools were closed for winter break, parents were delighted to send their children to a special Chanukah camp. Over 50 children enjoyed stories, games, trips, crafts and activities including preparing their very own doughnuts and latkes. Chabad made sure that it was a holiday for all to enjoy and remember!

Wishing you a healthy and happy winter,
Rabbi Mordechai Glazman

Saving My Past and Remembering the Holocaust:
The Tale of a Synagogue
by
David Michaelson

In 1845, the small east Latvian town of Rezekne (or Rezhitsa in Russian) was part of the massive Russian Empire that stretched from Poland to Siberia. In that year, a small wooden synagogue was built in Rezekne. This synagogue was one of about a dozen synagogues in the city of Rezekne in the middle years of the 19th century that served a large Jewish population - about half the total population of Rezekne at that time. This particular synagogue was painted green, and hence the building has been known ever since as simply the "Green Synagogue." The Green Synagogue is the only synagogue in Rezekne to survive World War II, and it now stands as an empty, condemned building. From what I can tell, it was the synagogue where my great-grandparents were married before they fled Russia to come to the United States. Like the Jewish population in many corners of Eastern Europe today, the Green Synagogue is in danger of being forgotten and lost.

Rezekne is a city that was shaped by an interaction of cultures: native Latvian, German, Russian and Jewish cultures mixing both peacefully and violently. Rezekne was originally a castle town and the ruins of its castle, possibly dating as far back as the 9th century remain today. This castle was one of the first buildings built in Rezekne. But signs of a Jewish presence are just as old and right next to the ruined castle is an old building thought to have been the town's first inn, and run by Jews from very early on. This was a very common pattern in Eastern Europe, with Jews running local inns and taverns next to the local castle. Those who remember the drunken dancing tavern scene in Fiddler on the Roof will remember that the tavern was run by a Jew and patronized by both Jews and non-Jews. This was typical even as early as the middle ages and as late as the 19th Century. The Jewish population of Rezekne grew as the city grew until half the city was Jewish. This was no little shtetl, but neither was it a big city. Even as late as 1808 Rezekne was described as having only one street and no skilled craftsmen. But even so, Jews fully participated in city life, including sitting on the city council. Jews were an integral part of Rezekne's life until World War II.

My great-great grandfather, Schmuila Jankel Luban, was 24 years old when the Green Synagogue was built. Jankel's last name, Luban, was probably only recently adopted by the family, since it was only around that time that Jews commonly took last names in eastern Europe. Before being forced by the government to take last names, Jews just went by "So-and-so, son of Whosits." "Luban" indicates that the family was originally from a shtetl near Lake Lubanas, also in eastern Latvia. The Lubans were a family of craftsmen, not well off, but not so poor either. Jankel married a woman named Kreine and they lived not too far from the Green Synagogue. Jankel is the earliest Jewish ancestor of mine who I can trace. In his honor, my wife and I named our son "Jacob," linking my son with his Latvian-Jewish heritage.

We don't know when Jankel and Kreine died, but there is no record that they ever left Rezekne. The last record of their existence is an entry in the 1897 all Russian census from which I learned of their existence as well as the address where they lived. But two of their sons, Sawel and Henach, fled Russia for America with their families by 1905, fleeing political unrest, military conscription and pogroms. Henach had been forced to serve in the Russian army in the ill-fated Russo-Japanese war and when on leave he fled Russia rather than being sent back to the front. Both Sawel and Henach married and had children by
the time they fled Russia. In fact, my grand-
mother was the last member of these two families
to be born in Rezekne. Since both families lived
near the Green Synagogue, it is very likely that
Sawel and Henach were married at the Green
Synagogue. Both families settled in Milwaukee,
Wisconsin where some of my distant relatives
still live. Sawel became Solomon Luban in Amer-
ica and was my great grandfather. Henach be-
came Henry Luban in America and many of his
children, grandchildren and other descendents are
still alive. One such descendent is his great-
grandson Henry Garfield, better known as the
punk rocker Henry Rollins.

There are vague hints that one or two other Luban
brothers may have existed. There is a record of a
Berko Luban running a store in Rezekne in 1911
and a photograph marked "David Luban" from
London where Solomon also had his picture
taken when he was on his way to America. The
photograph is very striking, and could well re-
semble the photos of my great-grandfather, but
we may never know. By the time I was born, all
memory of Berko and David Luban had faded, as
had any memory of the Green Synagogue. By the
time I was an adult and searching for my roots,
many of us had forgotten that we were even from
Rezekne.

While my family was thriving in America and
forgetting about Rezekne, the Jewish population
left behind suffered terribly. Emigration, starva-
tion, pogroms and forced relocation considerably
reduced the Jewish population of Rezekne by the
time World War II started. But the Green Syna-
gogue survived and was even renovated in the
1930s. When the Germans came, some 5000 Jews
and the Latvians who tried to help them were ma-
chine-gunned in a single day just outside of town.
I visited the place, the only actual Holocaust site I
have ever visited. Walking along the grassy space
that is the mass grave, walking for a very long
time along that grave, the impact of 5000 killed in
one day hit home very hard and I had tears in my
eyes and a great deal of anger in my heart.

The Jewish population of Rezekne was almost
wiped out on that single day. Only a handful sur-
vived, protected by some local Latvians. By the
time many members of my family were returning
to Europe as soldiers in the US military fighting
the Nazis, those Nazis had all but wiped out our
relatives who had remained in Rezekne.

But somehow, the Green Synagogue survived. All
other synagogues in Rezekne were destroyed,
and the Jewish graveyard was desecrated. You
can still see bullet holes in some of the surviving
gravestones. But the Green Synagogue still
stands. Some remember that it was used as a
holding pen for Jews on their way to the death
camps and that this is why it survived. Rezekne is
on a major railroad route between St. Petersburg
and Warsaw, so Jews from all over the region
were brought into town to await transport to the
camps. Rezekne was one small node on a massive
railroad network feeding the death camps. The
Green Synagogue was the last synagogue many
of those people would ever see.

In 2003, after I had rediscovered my family's past
and found the addresses where they lived in 1897
in Rezekne, I went to visit the city of my great-
great grandfather to see where we had come from.
I took my wife and stepdaughter and we met with
Rashel, the head of the Jewish community of
Rezekne, to see the city and to learn what it was
like when my family lived there. The city itself is
beautiful, though we saw remnants of lingering
anti-Semitism. But overall our brief stay in
Rezekne was very pleasant. The countryside is
beautiful, the town small and quiet. It is a part of
Latvia that is more Russian than Latvian, and
most restaurants had Russian menus and served
Russian food. Some of the best Russian food I
have ever tasted was in a restaurant just down the
street from where Henry Rollins's great grand-
mother's family had lived.

Today only about 50 Jews remain in Rezekne.
They have no proper synagogue since the Green
Synagogue was condemned in the 1990s because
of severe water damage. Their shul is a handful of
rooms in an office building. Rashel showed me
the addresses where my family used to live. Some
buildings, like the one where my great grandpar-
ents lived, are gone. But some, like the brick
apartment building where Henry Rollins’s great
grandmother's family lived, still stand. And many
of those addresses are near the Green Synagogue,
suggesting to me that the Green Synagogue was
Our tour of Jewish Rezekne ended at the synagogue and it was there that Rashel told me much of what I have told you. We saw the synagogue by candlelight. The inside is dusty and water damaged with many windows boarded up and parts of the ceiling falling down. It was a very sad building with some old paintwork from the 1930s, if not earlier, and even a few fragments of the original stained glass remain. I stood there in the condemned Green Synagogue and imagined the wedding of my great-grandparents. My ancestors had probably stood in that same synagogue more than 100 years before. And then I imagined thousands of terrified Jews in the 1940s spending one night in that same synagogue before being sent to almost certain death.

The joys of weddings and the fear of death surrounded me in that dark, sad building. It was at that moment that I decided that I would try and save the Green Synagogue. As a monument to the Jews who had helped shape Rezekne from its early days as a castle town to its later days as a stop along a major Russian rail line, I wanted to save that synagogue. As a place for my family to return to see where we came from, I wanted to save that synagogue. As a symbol of defiance against the Nazis who practically wiped out the Jews of Rezekne, I wanted to save that synagogue. And as a symbol of hope for the surviving Jews of Latvia, I wanted to save that synagogue.

I had never undertaken this kind of project before and had no idea how to go about it. But I was very lucky that the local government of Rezekne had already taken an interest in restoring the Green Synagogue. One of the adjacent streets was renamed "Israel Street" in its honor and they had looked into what it would take to restore it. Sadly, they dropped the plan due to lack of funds. So I decided that maybe I could help find at least some of the funds needed to restore the Green Synagogue and so, soon after returning to the US after my trip to Rezekne, I went online to find funding agencies that might be interested and to find Jews descended from Rezekne Jews who might be able to help me. I was found some two-dozen descen-

dents of Rezekne Jews who were interested in helping restore the Green Synagogue and without their help and advice I would not have been able to begin. And it is through this network of Jewish descendents of Rezekne Jews that I was able to get the ball rolling.

About a year after returning from Rezekne, I got a small grant from the World Monuments Fund's Jewish Heritage Grant Program that would cover the cost of hiring an architect to survey the site of the Green Synagogue and determine what work needed to be done and how much a full restoration would cost. That phase of the project has recently been completed and now the real work can begin. The local government in Latvia, inspired by the interest that I and the World Monuments Fund were showing, was able to find more than $40,000 to repair the roof, preventing further water damage and to repair the most damaged timbers. But this is only the beginning. The site survey that the World Monuments Fund supported has found that nearly $200,000 worth of repairs will be needed to restore the synagogue to the way it was in the 1930s. I am hoping to find people who are interested in preserving this small piece of Eastern European heritage, in defying the Nazi attempts to eradicate all signs of Judaism in Europe and in giving hope to the surviving Jews of Latvia. I invite anyone who can help raise money or interest in this project to contact me so that the Green Synagogue, which has stood for 160 years of both joy and despair, can continue to stand for the Jews of Rezekne.

Green Synagogue Status Report
From Dave Michaelson Jan 6, 2006

The Final Report sent to the World Monuments Fund was accepted and the final distribution of money sent.

I am now working on an article about this project in hopes of publicizing it. I will let everyone know as developments continue. Many of you have offered personal donations. I greatly appreciate it! But for now I do not have the mechanism to take such donations and from what I can tell the amount of money raised would not be sufficient to help the rebuilding itself. However, I am keeping these offers in mind and I have a few...
ideas how they may be useful at a later date, ei-
ther in a final phase of the rebuilding or to help
with Judaica for the synagogue once it is built or
to help the Jewish community itself. Again, I will
keep you posted and please hold those generous
thoughts!

This first phase of the project was completed. The
architect’s report has been finished, outlining a
$200,000 restoration project to restore the syna-
gogue not only to use, but to also restore its ap-
pearance to the way it was in the 1930’s. Where
possible, they will restore its original, 19th cen-
tury appearance, but where that is not possible,
the plan is to restore it as close as possible to the
way it looked just before WW II. I have submit-
ted the full architect’s report with pictures and ar-
chitectural plans to the World Monuments Fund.

The Green Synagogue

Final Project Report Summary

Statement of significance/history of site:
The Green Synagogue is the last surviving syna-
gogue in the town of Rezekne, Latvia and is one
of the few 19th century wooden synagogues left in
Eastern Europe. It survives preserving much of
the original architecture of the synagogue as well
as much of its original decoration and even some
pieces of original stained glass. Built in 1845 it
was one of 10 or 11 synagogues at a time when
Jews made up nearly 50% of the population of
Rezekne. By the early 20th century, due to poor
economic conditions, conscription into the army
during the Russo-Japanese war and pogroms,
about half of the Jewish population of Rezekne
had died, relocated or emigrated. Most of the re-
main ing Jews, along with all synagogues except
the Green Synagogue, were destroyed during the
Holocaust. In a single day, 5000 Jews and their
non-Jewish protectors were machine gunned and
buried in a mass grave outside of town. The
Green Synagogue is said to have survived be-
cause it was used as a holding pen by the Nazis
for Jews from the region on their way to the death
camps.

The synagogue was constructed as a traditional
two story wooden structure with a women’s
prayer room located on the 2nd floor above the
entrance hall on the West. By the beginning of
20th century an annex was added to North side
with several toilets and a hall. An annex on South
side was constructed on 2nd half of 20th century.
There are fragments of paint and decoration from
mid 19th century to 2nd half of 20th century
documented on facades. A ritual bath (mikvah),
has survived from 1939. Some rooms have their
original paint, made with glue paint. The main
prayer room has decorative painting done in oil
paint and dating from the 1930s.

Today the Jewish Community of Rezekne is
small, approximately 50 people, but they still
maintain a community center for use as a meeting
place, schul and school. The Green Synagogue
itself can no longer be used because it has been
condemned as structurally unsound. The roof
leaks and there is extensive water damage to the
ceiling and walls. Sections of the ceiling have
fallen. Timbers are damaged and need replace-
ment. This memorial to a time when Jews made
up a substantial part of Latvian culture and me-
morial to the Holocaust is slowly crumbling
away.

The local Rezekne government took an interest in
restoring this synagogue approximately 5 years
ago. One of the streets that the synagogue abuts
was renamed “Israel Street” in its honor and the
building was declared a cultural monument. The
city’s Business development center (a branch of
the local government) wants to include restora-
tion of the synagogue as part of its restoration of
the Old City section of Rezekne. In 2000 the city initiated a restoration plan but it was quickly abandoned due to a lack of funds. In 2003 I became aware of the synagogue and its need for restoration and I sought funds to help the restoration. This World Monuments Fund grant was the first grant we received and has been used to fund a full architectural survey and the development of a restoration plan.

As I have worked with the local Jewish community and the local Rezenke government, I have been impressed by the enthusiasm this project has inspired in the local community. Given the history of pogroms and anti-Semitism that Eastern Europe has seen, this enthusiasm is extremely refreshing and I am proud to be part of a project that is successfully bringing together the remaining Jewish community and the local community. It is also important, I believe, to restore this last synagogue in Rezekne if the local Jewish community is going to survive. Their temporary community center and schul is something they are very proud of. But it is nothing but rooms in an office building and has no history for the Jewish community. Restoration of an original synagogue will give the Jewish community back a piece of its history and a greater sense of belonging in a nation that once had a substantial Jewish community and culture. The help that the World Monuments Fund has given to this project, though it is only the beginning of the project, has been greatly appreciated by the Jewish community and local government of Rezekne as well as by myself. It has also been the inspiration for additional funding from the Latvian Tourism Development Agency for some of the most critical repairs.

Training opportunities:
None were formally included in this phase of the project, though the investigation team included an art history student who could thus learn details of Latvian Jewish synagogue architecture. There is a possibility for future training opportunities through the interest of the Heritage Conservation Network, which conducts workshops wherein volunteers receive training while helping an important restoration project. No formal plans have been made, but the Heritage Conservation Network has expressed considerable interest in this project.

Community participation/impact of project:
The ultimate goal of the restoration is to restore the synagogue as a house of prayer and to establish it as a museum and cultural information center dealing with religion and tolerance. Both of these functions are of considerable importance. The Jewish community has experienced a considerable loss of identity since its near extermination in the 1940’s. Currently, young members of the Jewish community tend to move either to Riga or abroad and those who remain, lacking even a traditional synagogue, strike me as in danger of slowly fading away. The restoration of this synagogue would reconnect the Jewish community with its long history in Latvia and restore its identity. I believe this is absolutely necessary for the continued existence of the Jewish community of Rezekne. Equally important is the establishment of a museum and cultural center that would deal with the history of the Jewish community of Latvia as well as the history of religious tolerance.
and intolerance in Eastern Europe.

When I visited the main museum in Rezekne I found these aspects of local history poorly covered. Given the history of Eastern Europe and its Jewish population, these are issues that need to be remembered and directly addressed. This museum would help to maintain that memory and to address these issues honestly and directly. Although Rezekne has two very powerful Holocaust memorials, this synagogue represents another place where an aspect of the Holocaust was carried out—the temporary housing of Jews on their way to the camps. The other Holocaust memorials are more distant from the main part of the city and so may not be part of the consciousness of the general community. The synagogue is right off one of the main streets, so a museum at the synagogue that documents the history of the Jewish community of Rezekne could be an integral part of the Rezekne community.

Long-term maintenance plan:

None has yet been established other than the plan to establish a museum within the synagogue. The establishment of a museum within the synagogue will allow for a broader context for raising money for long-term maintenance than would be the case if the building were restored solely as a synagogue.

Management plan:

None has yet been established. The involvement of the Rezekne business development center, however, means that the small Jewish community will have help from the local government establishing such a plan as restoration commences. The site’s status as an official cultural monument will also help in the establishment of a longer-term plan for both maintenance and management.

Survey and report:

The architect’s report covers the survey and its methods in some detail and gives recommendations for reconstruction. Additionally, it includes plans and drawings for the restoration. (in Latvian, no translation provided)

Publicity:

No articles have been written covering this project. However, I will be writing an article for submission to American Jewish newspapers discussing this project and the future of the synagogue. Furthermore, a local Rezekne government agency will also be writing an article about this project in the near future.

Additional Funding Sources:

After the WMF grant was initiated, the Latvian Tourism Development Agency gave a 2005 grant of 25,000 Lts (~$42,372) to fund roof repair, repair of damaged logs and chemical analyses to identify materials used in earlier stages of Synagogue construction and repairs.

Interview With Zalman Anshin

A. = Aina Antane
Z.A. = Zalman Anshin

The original recorded interview of Zalman Anshin took place on September 12, 2000 at the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Latvia, Riga. The interviewer was Aina Antane of the Center, and the original Russian transcript was done by Sophia Pogodina. The translation to English was done by Inga Long, of Falls Church, Virginia.

Zalman Ashin:

Z.A. : I remember when I was 5 or 6 years old, we lived on Elijas Street...in another apartment –
not where I live now...I don’t remember that apartment. Then we moved into this apartment where I live now. I started to attend school - they sent me to Jewish school...that’s how it was called then...We studied in Hebrew. It was then called “Heather Mzukon” and I studied there for four years. My sister studied there and was progressive. She was working underground as a communist and she had been in jail for two years, no, they put her in the jail for two and a half years even.

A. : Was that your older sister Haya?

Z. A. : Yes, my older sister, and she objected to me going to regular school, and wanted me to switch to a Jewish school. So I switched to a Jewish school where we studied in Yiddish. I finished elementary school there and started to work - I was 16 years old when I started to work and at the same time I attended Jewish high school in the evenings. I studied there for five years. It was a five-year high school. After that I went to the Army. Here, in Latvia, I served in the Army for one year I think it was one year...

A. : Was it Latvian Army?

Z. A. : Yes, it was still the Latvian Army. Then, the second time, in 1939 they took me again to serve in the army - the Latvian army. There wasn’t Soviet rule yet - until the year 1940...yes, the Soviet Army came here in 1940. My uncle’s printing-house, where I was working, was nationalized immediately. Well, all printing-houses in Riga were nationalized, so nobody could write any proclamations, etc. So they transferred to another printing-house. Well, I loved music very much and I passed the test to go to the conservatory – the Tautas Konservatorija (Nation’s Conservatory) it was called, it wasn’t like a real conservatory, not like now. Well, I studied there for only seven months because the war started. As the war started on June 27th -my mother who wasn’t so old, and my older sister Haya, who is now dead, both fled together. They fled to Russia. My youngest sister fled too, but separately. I also fled on June 27th, but we all lost track of each other. Well, when we came to the Soviet Union, somehow we found each other. I joined the Army - at that time they were organizing a Latvian division so I went to that division and met somebody and asked, “Do you know where that girl is that I was dating?” And he says to me, “Well, she studied as a nurse in the Urals.” What was the name of that place? Just a moment - and later she worked at the hospital. Later, on April 10th - she came earlier... Well, we got married in some village, I forget the name. Registered, paid the fee, got the papers and that was it. (more details about this, later.)

We were in the Army near Moscow, in Narofominsk, Borovsk and then we got dislocated near Staroya Russ. In Staroya Russ, near Simonovo, there is a village, and I got injured there. Very serious injury - in the knee. They took me to the hospital in Yaroslavl. It was the Latvian hospital in Yaroslavl. I stayed there for thirteen months. Then, somehow I got better, but I became a cripple of course. Back then I was limping very much. They let me out of the hospital; I got a paper about the injury and (was classified as) 3rd group of handicapness. And then I went to my mother. Where was it? I can’t even tell... I’ll remember later. I have such a thing: I forget, and later remember, yes, Rudniki village.

A. : Is it in Urals, too?

Z. A. : Rudniki - it is the Permskaya region, I think. So, there came my girlfriend, too, we registered there and lived until the war was over. After the war we returned to Latvia. It was in 1945, I think. We had to go to court to get our apartment back. I got it in seven days. There were lots of different people were living there, I don’t want to be specific, of course, but they were drunks... German officers were living and partying there... I got back this apartment completely empty. Everything was demolished - broken windows, everything... only one stool was left... They took everything. But where-who knows. So, I got a job... as an electrician in the handicapped workers’ cooperative. There were some studies - I attended some job training... to get higher qualification, and then... I got to the sixth level. So I worked till retirement. I don’t even remember when I retired, because I was already a pensioner, but I still worked some ten years, I think. I was 75 years old when I finally retired. Completely left my job. I don’t remember - was it
in 1980 or in 1970. Well, that is all my life. I live from the retirement money. That’s all… Isn’t that interesting?

A. A. : Tell me, please, about your parents. Who were they? What were their names?

Z. A. : My father’s name was Israel. Therefore I am called Zalman Israelovitch. He died when he was 44 years old. He survived the revolution, came home to us sick, and went for the surgery, and so…

A. : What year was it?

Z. A. : It was… probably when I was 14 or 15 years old. Oh, no, I am wrong, he was still alive when I was already working. Then I was older, 17-18 years old when he died.

A. A. : What was he doing?

Z. A. : He was a shoemaker. Well, and when did my mother die? It was in 1986, I think. She was 78 years old.

A. A. : What your mother was doing?

Z. A. : She was a housewife.

A. A. : Tell me, please, what do you remember from your childhood? As we can see from your application, you had a big family - there were three children in the family - you and two sisters. As you said, one sister was very progressive - the older one, and was engaged in revolutionary, underground activity. What was the way of life in the family? What do you remember from your childhood: did you honor Jewish traditions?

Z. A. : Yes, my father wasn’t a very religious person, but he kept traditions. But otherwise, he was a progressive person, but kept traditions… Everything he was eating, was Kosher…We celebrated all Jewish holidays… Well, he went to Synagogue and I as well went with him to Synagogue. I didn’t want to go… But he always took me with him to Synagogue…

A. : What do you know about your grandfathers and grandmothers?

Z. A. : I didn’t have them, I don’t remember them. They died a long time ago. They were gone already when I was born - I don’t remember them. I have seen only one grandmother…

A. : From your mother’s side?

Z. A. : Yes, my mother’s side. They lived in Subate… Well, what can I say…

A. : What was her name, do you remember?


A. A. : But they lived in Subate? I mean, your mother is from Subate?

Z. A. : From Subate.

A. A. : What about your father?

Z. A. : My father is from Russia. But I can only remember the city… I forgot… but I’ll remember it later.

A. A. : They came here... Approximately what year did they settle in Riga? Do you know where your parents met?

Z. A. : I don’t know that. My parents met in Riga, I know that, because my father lived in Riga… My mother was from Subate, but she lived in Riga. She only lived in Subate when she was a child, but the rest of her life she lived in Riga… But we all were born in Riga.

How did we live? We lived as all normal people do - it seemed all right. Because life was… food was cheap… we weren’t starving. Because I remember in my childhood, there were kids in our neighborhood who were starving. I was even dressed better than the other kids. When they had to go somewhere, they borrowed clothes from me – a jacket, or something else. That’s how life was. My mother was a bright woman, was working, earning… My father died… well, when my father was alive we lived better, of course, but after his death it was harsher … I got a job, I was working as a typesetter. Well, my sister also was working. She was a teacher.

A. A. : Which one? The oldest-Haya?

Z. A. : Haya.
A. A. : Do you remember where was she working?

Z. A. : No, I don’t.

A. A. : Was it Jewish school or Russian school?

Z. A. : Hard to say…

A. A. : What about the other sister? What can you say about her?

Z. A. : The other sister… What year was she born in?… I think in 1918. He was rich, well not very rich - he owned the printing-house, where I was working. And my sister lived at their house… They were helping us a lot…

A. A. : What was the uncle’s name?

Z. A. : German…

A. A. : Whose brother was he: your mother’s or your father’s?

Z. A. : My father’s. It’s because Gutman was married with Rohil Anshin. Anshin was my father’s name and they owned the printing-house… And they, of course…

A. A. : That means German Gutman was a husband to your father’s sister.

Z. A. : Yes. German. From Liepaja. He was Liepajanian. He lived and worked in Riga all the time and then started the printing house. He was very energetic…

A. : Was that the name of the printing-house?...

Z. A. : Gutman’s printing-house.

A. : Gutman’s printing-house. Where was it located?

Z. A. : It was on Teatra Street, but now it has a different name… Teatra and… In the beginning on the second floor, but later he took the first floor, too. It was quite a big publishing-house. Well, I was working in this publishing house as a typesetter. Eleven years until Soviet rule. Then Soviets came and took away his publishing house and… they didn’t deport him, pity - he would stay alive. But otherwise he, his wife and one son were sent to the ghetto… He had two sons - one son died in Switzerland. They were in Switzerland, one son got sick there and died, but another son was sent to the ghetto…

A. A. : What were their names, do you know?

Z. A. : One was Haim.

A. A. : Haim - the one who died in Switzerland?

Z. A. : That was the oldest one, who died before the War - in Switzerland - got sick and died… But the other - I forgot what was his name… I’ll remember later…

A. A. : Tell me, please, how old was Haim? Compared to you… older… younger? Do you remember?

Z. A. : He was the oldest son…

A. A. : Older or younger than you? Do you remember - approximately?

Z. A. : He was younger than me. His parents got married when I already was born. I remember when they got married - Rohil Anshin and German Gutman…

A. A. : Do you remember what year it was, approximately? How old were you?

Z. A. : It was long time ago… I was 8 years old, maybe… I don’t remember, long time ago… So they were sent to the ghetto and there they got shot, well, I don’t know how… but they were killed.

A. A. : And German Gutman and Rohil and their youngest son were killed in the ghetto?…

Z. A. : In the ghetto. And I had more relatives… Nanos… Nanos - from my mother’s side. Quite rich… They owned three factories in Riga…

A. A. : Were they your mother’s brothers or sisters? Who were they to you?

Z. A. : No, my mother’s sister - she married this Nanos, Gershon Nanos.
A. A.: What was your mother's sister's name?

Z. A.: Just a moment... Genya.

A. A.: Did they have children?

Z. A.: Yes. They had three children. What were their names? One I know, Noas - the youngest. But the others - I have forgotten.

A. A.: What was their fate?

Z. A.: Same as Gutman's...

A. A.: All of them?

Z. A.: Yes, they were sent to the ghetto. What happened to them - that's clear, because they aren't alive, I know that. Zuska... oh... I just remembered - about Gutmans. Haim and Zusi was the other's name - who died in the ghetto, but Haim died in Switzerland. Zussi Gutman is her full name.

A. A.: You started to talk about Nanos. They were rich, wealthy and they had three factories. What were they doing?

Z. A.: Machines for cultivating the soil... What is it called?

A. A.: Agricultural machines of some kind?

Z. A.: Agricultural machines - manufacturing. One factory was in Riga - but he wasn't working alone, he had partners... I'll remember in a second... that was Nanos, G. Nanosh, Gershon Nanos had three factories together with his brother - he also participated in the business - his name was Moses...

They had a house on Lacplesa Street 145, actually, three little houses, one was a little wooden three store building, but two houses were in the backyard... made out of stone, kind of... one story and two-story buildings. It seems nobody (from the owners) lived there, no, but people lived in the largest building. Well, they (Nanosh) also were sent to the ghetto and got killed there. They owned three factories - one in Riga, one in Estonia and one in Lithuania. I can talk about them. Well, what else?

A. A.: What else, for example, what do you know about your father's relatives - he had a sister Rohil, did your father have any more sisters and brothers?

Z. A.: He had one more brother, Max who lived in Russia, in Smolensk. And he died there, too. He was in Riga a while after the War. He came to visit us...

A. A.: Was he older or younger than your father?

Z. A.: He was younger, younger than my father.

A. A.: And what about his sister Rohil - was she also younger than your father or older?

Z. A.: Rohil - she was younger than my father.

A. A.: Max was the youngest one?

Z. A.: Yes, Max was the youngest.

A. A.: What do you know about Max, his fate? What was he doing in Russia?

Z. A.: He was working in the factory in Smolensk, as a shoemaker, too - same like my father. I know it for sure.

A. A.: Shoemaker?

Z. A.: Shoe... upper parts... He was working there. Yes, I also remember, he was imprisoned and later released; I think he was in a jail for a year, because of my aunt Rohil. She knew that in 1937 you weren't allowed to send letters - you know... was not allowed to send letters...

A. A.: Was he not allowed to correspond with Russia?

Z. A.: No relatives, he wrote in the applications: “Don't have any relatives abroad,” but we were abroad. We were - Latvia was separate. So, she sent Matzah in 1937, a package with Matzah. “So, you are religious, too! You know what...” - and so they jailed him...

A. A.: Did he have a family?

Z. A.: Yes. He had a family. And daughter...
She has been visiting us… She is alive…

A. A.: What was Max’s wife’s name?

Z. A.: Max’s wife’s…I don’t remember, but I have seen her kind of…yes, she has died already.

A.: Did they, thank God, die of natural causes?

Z. A.: They- yes. But their daughter is alive. She is in Israel, I know that, because my younger sister has met her in Israel…

A. A.: And what is Max’s daughter’s name?


A. A.: Zina. And the surname they have the same - Anshin?


A. A.: But Zina might has been married already and has another surname? Max was Anshin.

Z. A.: I only know that Zina lives in Israel. Where, what- I can’t tell. My sister met her. She could ask the address, but didn’t and so everything is lost.

A. A.: So, we restored your father’s relatives. Now, about your mother. Did your mother have any brothers or sisters? You mentioned that your mother had a sister Genia…

Z. A.: Genia and three brothers.

A. A.: Who was the oldest one…

Z. A.: I have the document… I wanted to get this land which Nanos owned. Those three houses… they don’t exist anymore, they have been destroyed… There was a barrack after the War, there were Soviet soldiers… They damaged all the houses and later it was knocked down completely. All three houses are gone, the only thing that left is the land… I wanted to get this land… What are you saying, I would add a thousand lats, so they would not send me from one level of authority to another. I was collecting documents for about five years to prove that he really was my uncle. When I’ve got all papers, they rejected my claim…(laughing-red.). I wrote so many letters! … There is said about Genia, and how many children she has. I can bring those papers… And do you know what kind of papers also I’ve got!? From Russia. I mean, not from Russia, but from Latvia, but when they were still alive, they were Russian documents. It is shown very clearly there, they even said in which apartment they lived. There are all their names written and age, because all that was needed… And such papers I got and how much money that all cost me… And they called me and said to me: “We reject you.” Why, what kind of arguments…” Well…so and so…we don’t have much time to deal with it… That’s it… Here are your papers…” They gave me back all the papers. I have the originals, I can bring them. Take a copy, please…

A. A.: Thank you. And now tell me, please, about your childhood…

Z. A.: I’ll tell you, how we were playing in the neighborhood. Age? I was six, eight years old, maybe ten, I don’t remember exactly… There were children of many nationalities in our building. I remember even Germans. Our neighbors were Germans. I lived in the apartment Nr.9, but in the apartments Nr.10 and Nr.11 there were two German families. And we were very friendly. Like our own people there. When Hitler called them - these Germans…were very disciplined people. They all repatriated to Germany, all the Germans. So they said, “Hitler is calling us - we have to go.” They gave each other the good-bye kisses with my mother… And they gave us… we had a woodstove heating system in our house. And so they left us a whole cellar full of firewood, birch firewood. It was their gift to us. And we parted (on good terms) with them… They didn’t have any children, so I cant say that I was communicating with them. There were Latvian children in the neighborhood… Sasha, I think, I remember. Well, we spoke in Hebrew, in Yiddish, all children, all children - because there were mostly Jewish children, our house was mostly Jewish – the first house (faced to the street) and the second house also was mostly Jewish. I could say about 90%. Now I am the only Jew living in our building. All the rest are Latvians, Russians, too. We were living very good. Kids didn’t even know, what was that… what is the difference. We were playing together… they
visited me in my room, in our apartment… I went to them. Even one- Dudel, who was a German was talking with us in Hebrew… in Yiddish… We all were playing together… were hanging out together… well, like all kids…

A. A. : So, does it mean, the majority language was spoken?

Z. A. : That is right. If we were in minority, we were speaking in Russian. I feel sorry for that – I speak poorly in Russian…

When I went to school- in those times schools were in different languages and some Jewish children were studying in Yiddish, some in Hebrew, some in other languages. We also had Russian schools with Jews attending… those who were rich, they had to pay there. Well, but I was attending city’s public elementary school.

A. A. : It was Jewish elementary school...

Z. A. : Jewish school…Žīdu pamatskola (Jewish elementary school) it was called then. Some others were calling it ebreju, but back then it was common to call Žīdu, not today, but they call that anyway… But that is not important…

A. A. : Please, tell about the time, when you started work already. What can you tell about relations among the nationalities here, in Latvia, at that time?

Z. A. : At work?

A. A. : At work and everywhere else...

Z. A. : I can’t say much about the others, but at work- at the printing- house I was a Jew, then there was another one and another- that’s three of us… and later they hired one apprentice who was a Jew, but the rest of the workers were Latvians. I remember_ Kaneps, Otto Kaneps, I remember him… he was a tall, and I think_ Zarinsh was his name, very cultural person… We lived like brothers. There wasn’t any difference- Latvian or Jew… The boss was a Jew, too. If there was a holiday to celebrate, the boss gave a party at his house. We all sat at the same table. I can’t say that anybody abused me.

A. A. : But at home? The language you communicated in, was it Yiddish?

Z. A. : Yes, Yiddish. And even today I am speaking with my wife in Yiddish, but my son is speaking in Russian, but he understands, he understands Yiddish. You know- in Russia, there was a prohibition against speaking in Yiddish, Jewish schools were closed, in 1937 twelve writers were shot, theater closed, nobody spoke in Hebrew, everybody spoke in Russian. Switched to Russian. Well, that’s how it was- couldn’t do anything about it. But now- now it is hard to switch back to Yiddish again.

A. A. : But at home you spoke in Yiddish with your wife all the time?

Z. A. : Yes, all the time. Because it is easier for us, that way we understand each other better. Even though I attended school where we spoke in Hebrew and knew it very good, but I’ve forgotten a lot. I can name in Hebrew lot of things very well, but to speak freely- I can’t. Well, I need to study a half-year to remember, but I don’t need it now, I live here and I’m not going anywhere. Shmerli is close here (Shmerli - Jewish cemetery in Riga). So…

A. A. : Tell me, please, when WWII started, what the mood was at your work, at home, what your neighbors were saying, your colleagues, Jews, uncle,- what they were saying, what to do- to leave, to evacuate? When the War started in Europe. There was a radio; you must have heard something...

Z. A. : We all knew, we understood that there will be a war. I remember that, because I was already grown-up, I was 27 years old, I remember how it was - like it happened today, all we were talking about was a war, because Germans already started bombing Poland - it was in 1939. They took me into the Latvian Army - it was in 1939. Why they took me, I don’t remember - maybe for the defense against Russians - that is how I understood it. But we all knew, if the Germans came, we will be in big trouble. So, when the Germans started to fight with us I quickly fled. We fled. Those managed who wanted to. I evacuated on June 27th.
A. A. : Tell me, please, at that time you were released from the Army? Were you at home?

Z. A. : I served there for six weeks.

A. A. : Six weeks of training- like refreshing courses?

Z. A. : Refreshing courses. It was in Cesis. The second time I served in Cesis. The first time I served in Riga. And in the Soviet Army I served two times. All together I served in the Army four times. In 1945, no in 1956, I think, they took me for the second time…

A. : But what about disability…

Z. A. : No. It didn’t count. I was counted as handicapped, but able to serve. And they took me. And that was my friend’s fault, he was a recruiter, his name was Zhivkin - maybe you have heard about him? Major… He was a recruiter and said to me: “I have a shortage of people, there is nobody to send to the Army, nobody to take. You have to go!” I said, “I'll go.”

A. A. : For a long time?

Z. A. : No, for six weeks, I think, it wasn’t long… So. The War was starting… everyone who managed to flee to Russia, was saved, who didn’t manage stayed here, got sent to the ghetto. That is it…

A. A. : Tell me, how did you manage to save yourself? Talk about yourself- how you left on June 27th?

Z. A. : My mother together with my sister who was pregnant…they got from work somehow, I don’t know…got a car, no, they went by train, they were given the tickets, I think…there were the tickets… But in the evening a panic was started… In the same day, the 27th… People still managed to leave on the 28th and even on the 29th. So, my mother left with my sister, I helped her, they went to Russia. I knew that already.

A. A. : Did you escort them?

Z. A. : How do you escort if there was shooting already in Riga!

A. A. : Everybody on their own?

Z. A. : There was shooting. My uncle, Gutman, I bought a ticket for him, he couldn’t reach the train station and they stayed, they didn’t manage to get to the train station. There was a panic at the train station. Lots of people were going without tickets… I took one suitcase and packed it quick… My youngest sister was working with the militia… she is a lieutenant colonel now… My son is also lieutenant colonel, studied law.

A. A. : Is he working with the militia?

Z. A. : He was. He is already retired. And so, I packed a suitcase for myself, my youngest sister also took something, as much as it was possible to carry. I locked the door and put the keys into my pocket…Later, on the battle front I had those keys from the house…(laughing). I evacuated separately - quickly went to the train station and bought tickets - at that time they were still selling tickets, but later people were going without tickets.

A. A. : Where did you buy tickets to? What direction?

Z. A. : To Russia. We were going by night. By day the train was stopped, to avoid bombing. They were bombing our train all the time… It was full with children…

A. A. : But was it a train or heated freight car?

Z. A. : A train. I think, a train, I don’t remember anymore, or heated freight car, too? I don’t remember exactly anymore. So, they were bombing us. But we created a team, in this train, in the car. I met one of my neighbors. He was standing in the car and watching - as soon as there was an alarm, we’re flying and shooting, we had to save the children. He passed through the window – the window was already broken by the bomb - the bomb fell nearby, so he passed children through the window, but I sent them to run to the woods, because the car could be bombed. And children ran quickly to the woods… That’s how it was. I even cut my finger with the glass, don’t remember, oh, this hand (showing), or on this one, it was bleeding heavily…
A. A. : And what destination did you finally you finally come to?

Z. A. : We were driving day and night... No, during the day train was stopped all day. But at night we were moving, moving slowly like a turtle. But where did we arrive? To Ryazan region, I think, because from Ryazan region I went to the Army... From there... We were starving in the train... We didn’t think that it would be such a big war and thought that Russians will beat the Germans "with hats."

In the Army I met one acquaintance and he gave me an address where my future wife was living and I wrote her a letter. Right in the woods, where we were resting... And after that we were corresponding with each other... I knew my mother’s address, I wrote my mother and her too, from the battle-front, and that’s how we were corresponding. Well, after I was injured, she wanted to move me to the place she was working- in the hospital, but it was far away- in Ural. I told her- that’s not worth it; they will let me out soon anyway. I was in the Latvian hospital, then I went home, after that she came there, at my mother’s. And we registered there.

A. A. : Was it Rudniki village, in Kirovsk region, you mentioned in the beginning of our conversation- did you registered there? Did your mother live in Rudniki?

Z. A. : Rudniki. But, maybe I am mistaken- but perhaps it is not so important...

A. : Thank you. Now, lets clarify your closest relatives...

You, Zalman Anshin, your wife is Anna (Hanna) Anshina, maiden name Koblenz.

Z. A. : Anna Koblenz, no, now she is Anshina...

A. A. : Now, of course, Anshina, and you have children... Do you have one child? A son?

Z. A. : One son.

A. A. : Your son’s name is Julius?

Z. A. : Julius.

A. A. : Does he have a wife?


A. A. : Do you have grandchildren?

Z. A. : A grandson and granddaughter. My son has two children. We live together, in the one apartment. My grandson Ylia, he is 25, he is a driver-expeditor, but granddaughter Elina is a 16 year-old schoolgirl.

A. : Thank you!

A Brief Note on Jewish Last Names in Latgale

By Leonard Latkovski, Jr.

This is an excerpt about Jewish last names in the introduction of a book by Professor Leonard Latkovski, Sr. (1905-1991), Latgalu uzvordi, palames un dymtas (Latgalian Last Names, Nicknames and Clans), Munich, Germany, 1968. The book examines the origin of the last names and clans in Latgale. The introduction briefly discusses the last names of national minorities in Latgale including Russians, Jews, and Poles, among others.

This is the first detailed study of Latgalian last names. Until the publication of this volume, Latgalian last names had not been collected and studied and even this publication does not pretend to be complete. It contains about 2000 last names in alphabetical order, but without etymology. The study treats only Latgalian last names, but not the last names of minority groups who lived in the province called Latgola (Latgale), from which the Latgalian name is derived. The introduction however discusses the question of the last names of the various ethnic minorities of Latgale.

The author says that the origin and meaning of some names can be seen at first glance and needs no further explanation. Latgalian last names or surnames, sometimes also called family names, are an important part of Latgalian history since for the most part Latgalian last names cannot be separated from toponyms or the names of places.
both inhabited and not inhabited. A separate volume deals with toponyms as a study of Latgalian proper names in general.

**Jewish Last Names in Latgale**

While the overwhelming majority of Latgalians were farmers and thus comprised most of the rural population, the Jews lived in small towns as merchants and craftsmen: shoemakers, tailors, glaziers, blacksmiths and peddlers. In some of these towns the Jewish population was 60 to 70 per cent.

All Jews were bilingual - speaking Yiddish and Latgalian, but in their synagogues they used ancient Hebrew. A great many of them spoke Russian. The Jewish last names were of Germanic and Slavic origin, because they came to Latgale from Germany, Poland and Russia. As a matter of fact, the Jews could easily be identified by their last name. Typical Jewish last names include the following: Goldberg, Goldman, Grienstein, Fridman, Silberman, Silberstein, Swalbe, Wachtel, Galkin, Levin, Solovej, Solovejchik, Soroka. There were also Jewish last names of Hungarian, Spanish and Hebrew origin, for example Juha (Hungarian juh, “sheep, juhasz, shepherd”), Perez, Lapidos (Spanish lapidario “one who deals with stones and gems”), Kohen, Kagan (Hebrew Cohen, “priest”), Zvi (Hebrew zvi “deer.”)

In short, the Jewish last names reflected the country they came from and their occupation or at least the occupation of their ancestors, who in Western Europe had been bankers, jewelers, watchmakers and so forth. There were no Jewish last names of Latvian origin until about 1925. Later there were some attempts among Jews to adopt Latvian last names, however this tendency was not successful because of prevailing national and political overtones. The Jews possessed the wisdom of maintaining a balance between two opposing forces: isolation and adjustment to the environment. Isolation preserved their national (cultural) identity; adjustment and adaptation to the environment strengthened their survival.

**The Soviet Gulag**

Professor Leonard Latkovski of Hood College, is doing research on the Soviet GULAG. He has written about the revolts in the Gulag in 1953 at the Norilsk and Vorkuta camps. He is currently researching all aspects of life in the camps. He is particularly interested in documenting the conditions of the camps and telling the stories of those who were in these slave labor camps and would appreciate hearing from any readers who have information about relatives who were sent to any Gulag camps. He can be contacted by e-mail at latkovski@hood.edu or at the following address:

L. Latkovski, Chair, Department of History and Political Science, Hood College, Frederick, MD 21701.

**Membership Fees are Past Due**

This is a reminder to kindly renew your subscription to the Latvia SIG and Newsletter. Our subscription year runs from July 2005 through June 2006. Please mail your check for US $20 for the US and Canada, and $30 (bankable in the US) from elsewhere, to:

Latvia SIG
5450 Whitley Park Terrace, #901
Bethesda, MD 20814
USA

You can also remit your payment through PayPal to: MikeGetz005@comcast.net. We look forward to your participation and support.

In an effort to simplify the process of submitting membership dues, especially for people who reside outside the United States and Canada, the Latvia SIG accepts payment via PayPal. PayPal is a web-based service that facilitates paying bills and fees via email.

With PayPal, you can send money to anyone with an email address by simply signing up for a PayPal account. To do this go to the PayPal web-site, http://www.paypal.com, and follow the directions provided to create an account. Once you have an account, log into your account and click the Send Money tab. Now enter the Latvia SIG email address, which is: MikeGetz005@comcast.net, and enter the amount you would like to send. To fund the payment, add a credit card to your PayPal account by entering your credit card number as instructed. Money can also be deducted from your
bank account, if you choose to do so.

After reviewing the details of your payment, click the Send Money button. The Latvia SIG will immediately receive an email explaining that it has received a payment from you through PayPal.

It is important that new members complete and mail the membership form on the following page — this form can also be found on the Latvia SIG web site — so that we can enter family names and locations on our Family Finder. Also, please include the other information requested on the form to help us make the Latvia SIG an even more effective resource for genealogical research.

Please note that the new membership year began in July after the IAJGS meeting in Las Vegas and so to maintain your membership please submit your dues as indicated.
Reports from the World Jewish Congress

These letters are part of a series beginning in Oct 1941, probably routed from Riga to Stockholm. They were directed to the World Jewish Council and are on record at the USHMM. The series continues with a number of lists through 1943 detailing those murdered by the Germans and Latvians. Some of the latter are identified in Selma's letter from Stockholm. Additional letters will be included in forthcoming issues of this newsletter.

The Latvia SIG acknowledges the untiring efforts of Mike Getz in obtaining this remarkable collection of material from the USHMM and making it available to the SIG.
Latvia

Stockholm, October 9th, 1941

Dear Friend:

Terrible news have reached me. A great part of the most respected Letts and also a lot of Jews have been removed or shot by the Bolsheviks. In the meantime the Letts have made pogroms and several thousands of Ivrim have been shot and their homes have been plundered. The Jewish youth who has remained has to work very hard, and most Ivrim have been put out of their homes. Dinsberg is shot, Sachs from Chevak with his whole family is murdered. Emilianov and Spaade have killed themselves. Petrewitz and Alfred Birznik are removed, most of the solicitors are removed. Adolf Feldhun removed, Rovert Hoff removed, it is said shot, but this is not certain. Jakov and his father-in-law, Docent Pulvermacher, are in jail, about the other brothers there is nothing certain known. Kvesia is alive. Chasida one brother removed, perhaps no longer alive, and the other brother is working intolerably hard. Professor Mintz removed, Paul Mintz does not live any more. One of the brothers Hurok is dead, the other removed. Dubin removed. Finkelstein removed. Kalman Miroch in centralcistuma, Isaak Miroch is alive. Alexander removed, concerning the others uncertain. In several small cities all the Ivrim have been killed. The people in Slojodke are all said to be killed and there the situation is still worse. The President of the Jewish Comite is Kaufer from Sassenhof. In the transition period 10,000 men are said to be killed. The situation of the living people is catastrophic.

It is impossible to send letters or telegrams, and as most of the people are not allowed to live in their homes or to have telephones it is almost impossible to find out anything on the spot.

Yours,
Latvia

(Stockholm)

May 8, 1943

Gentlemen:

I herewith beg to give a summary about persons - information which I could get by a person who came to here and who remembered same - as stated below:

May of my friends will be surprised that names of their relatives are missing, but this does not mean that I omitted to try to get informations even with regard to their relatives; but I can only give informations about those whom I received news about. As soon as I will get further news I will even report about same.

Now the dates which are from February 1942:

Gutkin (manufacturer of Masses) deported to Russia; Mrs. G and son murdered at Riga

Rudof (dressmaker) working, even his wife.

Sussman, his wife youngest daughter murdered; other relatives unknown.

Engånser Kramer deported to Russia.

Rebi Kilow burnt in "Seule" synagogue.

Rebi Zuck burnt in "Gogli" Synagogue.

Grigori Winkser probably dead; his wife nee Chaikewitz murdered.

Lazar Freidberg (wood) murdered; his wife living.

Nikolai Seba (Laumans Street) murdered, even his wife.

Selicki (Nordische Bank), his wife and son murdered; daughter living.

Mircin (wood) and son living, his wife and daughter murdered.

Dr. Kreuzer living and working with the ambulance, his wife uncertain.

Prof. S. Dubnow murdered in ghettro December 1, 1941.

Westermann (hexesity manufacturer) and wife deported to Russia.

Mrs. Muskat deported to Russia.

Advocate Pinkelstein living in ghetto.

Michaelson and son (wine merchant) imprisoned by the Germans; his wife and daughter murdered.

Dr. Freydmann (physician) was still living November 1941; his wife and children murdered.

Yasha Pain murdered, his sister too.

Dr. Berniker (physician for women) uncertain, his wife and daughter murdered; his son is living.

Kellman and his son living; his wife murdered.

Leo Lewius from Windaus, his wife, mother and father murdered.

Trainis (ironmongery) and his wife murdered; both sons living.

Hirschfeld (ironmongery) and his wife murdered; his son Anri Uri living in London.

Apt (printing office) murdered.

Gurevlo Zochari has died.

Guttman (linen manufacturer), his wife and son murdered; his daughter first insane then murdered.

Aron Shmulyan has died.

Sumlyan, Gertrudes St., deported to Russia.
Mrs. Himmelhoch (Ogres Cardboard works) and son murdered.
Sluckin (Mrs. Himmelhoch's husband) murdered.
Freul (leather firm) deported to Russia.
Dr. Wasserman (Zionist) and his wife to Russia.
Dr. Hoslowsky, Libau, and his family murdered at Libau.
Hirschberg, Mitau, and family murdered.
Dr. Rubin was still living February 1942.
Dr. Goldring Jacob, living.
Max Berman, Windau, and family deported to Russia.
   His brother Felix (17 years old) previous studying college in England
   living in ghetto.
Heinrich Bertram in Palestine.
Miroch Alexander (Rupniecibas St.) still living November 1942; his wife
   and child murdered.
Miroch Isaac, his wife and two daughters living, one person of the Mirochs
   deported to Russia.
Schneibensch (Keren Kajemeth) uncertain, his wife and child murdered.
Tewie Baran deported to Russia.
Fadwa (Keren Kajemeth) and her husband murdered.
Raechel (Keren Kajemeth) living in ghetto.
Prof. Minz was living in ghetto until end of the year 1941.
Dr. Mischa Mintz February 1942 living in ghetto; his wife and child
   uncertain.
Abram Lewy to Russia.
Kurman to Russia.
Klizer (jeweller), his wife, daughter and son uncertain.
Advocate Javer son living; his wife and three children murdered.
Gerber (linen manufacturer); the old people to Russia.
Harry Gerber died.
Anna Gerber and children murdered.
Sapugo and wife to Russia.
Dr. Schoemer probably dead, his brother in ghetto.
Dr. Goldring, all three brothers living in ghetto.
Dr. Jacobon living in ghetto, but uncertain.
Dr. Schonfeld living, but not in ghetto.
Dr. Iden son living, but not in ghetto.
Fisch, Alex to Russia.
Rosenatun (decorator) and his son working with the Gestapo; his wife
   murdered.
Herman Levin (leather works), his wife, two daughters and son Leo to
   Russia.
Lapidus (architect), Goau St. both brothers living. The youngest brother's
   son living; both Mr. Lapidus murdered.
Blumberg, Jonas (corner) and his wife to Russia, one of his sons - Palestine.
Kreuger (fur) living.
Iziros (Blauwnca St. 11), owner of this house; son 19 years old - murdered;
   Mrs. Iziros and both daughters (one of these Mrs. Friedlender) murdered.
Kurmann (corsets) to Russia probably together with family.
Lowenstein living, his wife murdered, his daughter living.
One of the dentist Feinman's sons murdered.
Goldblatt to Russia.
Arnow (violincelloist) living.
Sekundo (bakery) deported to Russia, family uncertain.
Prschoborski and wife murdered.
Hagle von Silvana, both brothers and whole family murdered.
Lippert (cycle manufacturer) and son living; his wife has died 8-10 years ago; his brother deported to Russia.
Benjamin Lewins, Blaumana St. 21, and family deported to Russia.
Leo Lewins, Waldemara St. 33, and his wife murdered.
Bakusin (textiles) deported to Russia.
Jampolski (clothes for workers), Marien St. 2, and son living, wife murdered.
Hirschfeld, J., from Libau, has died in ghetto, his wife and daughter murdered, son living.

Some members of the Ghetto Committee: O. Minkoer, Jascha Faun, Kellmann from Nakabi.

The old Jewish churchyard burnt and blown up; the new Jewish churchyard demolished and pillaged.

Jewish children have been killed in general graves i.e. that a great number of children have been put in same.

The Jewish ambulance does not get any medicines.
Gentlemen:

In pursuance of my summary of May 9, 1942, I must beg to give you informations about the following persons:

Aisenstadt, H. (soap manufacturer), Briviles Street 172; deported to Russia.

Akon, H. (radio) Blauman Street 8; escaped to Russia.

Arkinds, Valdemara 32-37; Mrs. A. and youngest son murdered.

Arnov, E.; Stabu Street 30; whole family murdered.

Arora, Z.; Antonijas Street 24; whole family deported to Russia.

Bagg (engineer), Blauman Street 16-18; Mrs. Bagg and youngest son murdered.

Balsn, L. Kr. Barona 35-35; whole family murdered.

Baltis-Baxipas, A. Fridmanis, Lappiesa Street 21; whole family murdered.

Baskin, Simanas, Gertrudes Street 60; Mr. Baskin and family escaped to Russia.

Berlin, Z. (solicitor), Allega 6; Mr. Berlin living in ghetto, family murdered.

Berumis, Leo, Alberta Street 5 (from Windau); escaped to Russia or murdered together with family August 2, 1941.

Bern, 3., Ryniec 7; Bernar and wife murdered.

Berner Bros., Kr. Barona 28; deported to Russia.

Bielskis, Boris, Karaka Bulv. 3; Kr. 3 and family murdered in the Central Prison October/November 1941.

Blanchman, Leo (physician), Kr. Barona 2. Mr. B. and wife murdered.

Blochberg, J., Baznicas 27/79; deported to Russia.

Borucho, V. (chemical and building material), Marijas 51-53; Mr. B., Mrs.

B. and youngest son working in ghetto.

Bresner, K., Avotu Street 3; whole family murdered.

Brod Tauchel, Stabu Street 19; working with the Gestapo, his son-in-law

Zimmerman and family murdered.

Bujanovitch (hat manufacturer); deported to Russia.

Cantis, Avruka (furry), Zala 3; all murdered.

Chemach, Osips, Antonijas 24; Mr. Ch. murdered, Mrs. Ch. and daughter as well

as son working in the ghetto.

Chivains, Slava (shoes firm), Briviles Street 19; all escaped to Russia.

Cimmerman (textillians); all deported to Russia.

Caske, Adolf (furry) Andeju Street 9, private address Blauman Str. 16;

Mr. and Mrs. C. living and working, with "Gentlemen" where they are

interned.

Bielinkis, G. Andr., Fumpura Street 23; Mr. B. and family murdered.

Cerfass, L. (cand. phil.) and Cerfass Z. (physician), Airargu 40;

both evacuated to Russia together with the physicians from Bokur Cholim.

Deutsch, Roas, nee Ginsburg (from K. Felduhn and Co.); murdered, even her

son. Mr. Deutsch who was divorced, was living at Memel and Rowno.

Dragilows, N. (clothes for children), Marijas Street 15, Avotu Str. 65;

all murdered.

Elijasews, D. (solicitor), Laravetes 2/4; has been in the ghetto with the

presidency of the Jewish parish. Since November 30, 1941, unknown

where staying.

Epstein, L. Blauman Street 16-16; murdered.

Faktoris, M. (venersa), Blauman Str. 8, murdered.

Felduhn, Adolf; deported to Russia.
Felnit, Nathan (silk weaver), Jumarsa 10; all murdered.
Gelsins, S. (tailor), Kungu Street 18; private address Alizaargu 27;
Mr. G. and son working in the ghetto, Mrs. G. and daughter
murdered.
Gelsins, Zalman, Gertrudes Street 30; all murdered.
Gerson, I. (silk manufacturer), Marijas Street 11; private address
Marijas Street 64; Mr. and Mrs. G. deported to Russia.
Gilsinger, M. (R. Feldhohn and Co.'s director) Moza Prospekt 28; deported
to Russia.
Glik Bros. (furs) Jarija St. 3; escaped to Russia.
Goldman Bros. (physicians) Herman, Jacob, Max; families murdered. The
physicians were staying in the ghetto until November 30; later unknown (1946-
Gordon, D. (jeweler), Andaj St. 15; deported to Russia.
Gora, Israel, Stabu St. 61; all murdered.
Halperin (engineer with Brit-Betar Brumperdor); imprisoned by the Russians
as counter-revolutionist and never been seen again.
Harika, M. (metal works), Vimbas St. 20; Mr. and Mrs. H. as well as
your son murdered. Another son working with the ghetto.
Heimansons, Z. (engineer), Stabu St. 13; (former technical director with
Gurninger Ltd.), Mr. and Mrs. H. murdered, son escaped to Russia.
Hirschfelda, J. (ironmongery); son Leo studying in Glasgow.
Sebba, Paul, Basnas Street; Mr. S. and family murdered.
Sebba, Falk, Aku Street; he living, his wife Rasus murdered.
Sebba, krav (windau) and wife deported to Russia, their son Viktor murdered.
Sebba Abraham and family deported to Russia.
Sebba Abraham (windau) murdered.
Mrs. Sebba, Therese (windau) murdered.
Russe (windau) and family murdered.
Duchonwik, Julius, living, his father murdered.
Yra. Duchonwik Frida and daughter Sulamith murdered.
Duchonwik Isaac murdered.

Furthermore I beg to rectify the informations of May 6, 1943, with
regard to the following persons:

Engineer Krasner deported to Russia together with his family.
Michaelson and son (wine merchang) murdered by the Germans; his wife and
dughter too.
Dr. Wassermann (Zionist) deported, even his wife, to Russia.
Max Berkein, windau, and family deported to Russia. His brother Fugi (17
year old) previously studying college in England living in the ghetto.
His mother murdered.
Hemrik Berkein in Palestine.
Goosber (not Gerber) (Linens manufacturers) senior and wife deported to Russ.
Curtin, Harry and wife Anna and children murdered.

The underlined words are the rectifications.
The underlined words are the rectifications.
All these informations as well as those of May 6, 1943 and given with
reservations and without any obligation.
Latvian Towns and Cities from the Archives at Beth Hatefutsoth

The Beth Hatefutsoth Communities database provides information about individual Jewish communities in the Diaspora. It consists of more than 3,000 entries in English and Hebrew covering communities from all over the world. The database includes information about communities that do not exist anymore, as well as about communities that are still vibrant today. The following has been extracted from the Beth Hatefutsoth database of Latvian towns and cities with Jewish inhabitants and history. The Latvia SIG gratefully acknowledges Beth Hatefutsoth, Dov Levin and Martha Lev Zion for making this database available to the Latvia SIG. Additional towns and cities will be included in future issues of this newsletter.
COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10519
COMMUNITY NAME: ALUKSNE

ALUKNES
(IN GERMAN CALLED MARIENBURG)

A TOWN IN THE VALKA DISTRICT, IN THE VIDZEME REGION
(PREVIOUSLY LIPLAND), NORTH EAST LATVIA, U.S.S.R.
THE GROWTH TO THE STATUS OF A TOWN BEGAN IN THE 1880S. FROM
1920-40 ALUKSNE WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.

JEWS BEGAN TO SETTLE IN MARIENBURG IN THE 1890S. AT THE
SERVICE OF THE COMMUNITY THERE WAS A SHOCHET (RITUAL
SLAUGHTERER), AND A RABBI OFFICIATED FROM THE 1930S. AFTER
WORLD WAR I (1914-18), THE COMMUNITY WAS ASSISTED BY THE
"JOINT" (A RELIEF ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN JEWRY). WHEN A
LIBRARY AND DRAMA CIRCLE WERE FOUNDED.
IN 1920 THERE WERE 233 JEWS IN THE TOWN, COMPRISING 11% OF
THE INHABITANTS.
A NUMBER OF JEWISH PUPILS ATTENDED A LATVIAN SCHOOL, WHILE
OTHERS STUDIED IN A HEDER.

THE JEWS EARNED A LIVING AS SHOPKEEPERS AND OWNERS OF SMALL
FACTORIES. THERE WERE A FEW PEDDLERS WHO WENT FROM VILLAGE
TO VILLAGE, AND SOME TRADESMEN. THERE WAS A JEWISH DENTIST.
A LOAN FUND WAS OPENED WITH THE HELP OF THE "JOINT".
DURING THE PERIOD OF LATVIAN INDEPENDENCE MANY JEWS LEFT TO
LIVE IN THE CAPITAL CITY, RIGA.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY DONATED MONEY TO KEKEN KAYEMETH
L’ISRAEL, KEKEN HAYESOD AND TO YESHIVOTH IN NEARBY TOWNS.
THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE ACTIVE IN "HE’CHALUTZ", BUT THE
COMMUNITY WAS GENERALLY INCLINED TO ASSIMILATE WITH LATVIAN
CULTURE.
THERE WERE MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE PART OF
LATVIAN NATIONALISTS.

IN 1940 THERE WERE ABOUT 140 JEWS IN THE TOWN, 2% OF THE
POPULATION.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD

AS A RESULT OF THE RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV ACCORD SIGNED IN
ENTERED LATVIA AND IN THE SUMMER OF 1940 A SOVIET REGIME WAS
INSTALLED. THE JEWS INTEGRATED INTO THE NEW GOVERNMENT.
AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF WAR BETWEEN GERMANY AND THE U.S.S.R.
(JUNE 22, 1941), GERMAN FORCES CAPTURED ALUKSNE ON JULY 4.
ALL THE JEWS WHO WERE STILL IN THE TOWN, WERE MURDERED ON
AUGUST 12, 1941. INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN ASSISTED IN CARRYING
OUT THESE MURDERS.
APE

A TOWN IN THE VALKA DISTRICT, THE VIDZENE (FORMERLY LIPLAND) REGION, NORTH EAST LATVIA, U.S.S.R.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY, ABOUT 200 JEWS WERE LIVING IN APE. BEFORE WORLD WAR I, SEVERAL FAMILIES EMIGRATED TO THE USA AND SOUTH AFRICA. DURING THE PERIOD OF LATVIA’S INDEPENDENCE (1920-40), THERE WERE 32 JEWISH FAMILIES IN THE PLACE. A COMMITTEE WAS CHOSEN TO ATTEND TO THE RELIGIOUS NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY. ALTHOUGH THE JEWISH CHILDREN AT THE STATE SCHOOL WERE BULLIED, THEIR LACK OF NUMBERS MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE COMMUNITY TO OPEN A SCHOOL FOR THE JEWISH PUPILS.

THE JEWS OF THE TOWN MADE A LIVING FROM COMMERCE, AND MOST OF THE SHOPS WERE JEWISH OWNED.

THE MAJORITY OF THE JEWS WERE INCLINED TO ZIONISM.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD


A SHORT WHILE AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF WAR BETWEEN GERMANY AND RUSSIA (JUNE 22, 1941), GERMAN FORCES OCCUPIED THE TOWN. A FEW INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY MANAGED TO ESCAPE TO THE INTERIOR OF RUSSIA. ALL THOSE JEWS WHO REMAINED, WERE MURDERED.
COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10522
COMMUNITY NAME: AUCE

AUCE
(IN JEWISH SOURCES KNOWN AS OITS; AND IN GERMAN: AUTC)


JEWS, WHOSE HOMES WERE DESTROYED IN THE 1905 REVOLUTION, LEFT THE TOWN. THEY RETURNED AFTER THE RIOTS HAD SUBSIDED. IN 1915, DURING THE COURSE OF WORLD WAR I, THE JEWS OF KURLAND WERE DEPORTED INTO THE DEEP INTERIOR OF RUSSIA AS THEY WERE CONSIDERED TO BE UNTRUSTWORTHY CITIZENS.

AFTER THE WAR THE MAJORITY RETURNED AND WITH THE HELP OF THE "JOINT" (A RELIEF ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN JEWRY) THE COMMUNITY WAS RENEWED. A SYNAGOGUE WAS BUILT AND A NEW TEMPORARY PUBLIC BATHHOUSE WAS OPENED (TO REPLACE THE ORIGINAL ONE WHICH HAD BEEN DESTROYED IN THE WAR). AT FIRST THE CHILDREN STUDIED IN THE HEDER. DURING THE TIME OF LATVIA'S INDEPENDENCE, THE CHILDREN WENT TO STATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WHERE THEY WERE TAUGHT IN GERMAN OR LATVIAN. HIGHER EDUCATION COULD BE OBTAINED ONLY IN NEIGHBOURING TOWNS.

THE MAJORITY OF THE JEWS MADE A LIVING IN COMMERCE (BUILDING MATERIALS, TEXTILES AND HABERDASHERY), BUT THERE WERE ALSO TRADESMEN, TWO DOCTORS AND A DENTIST. A JEW OWNED A SPINNING MILL, FLOUR MILL AND BRICK KILN. THE GENERATOR, WHICH WAS INSTALLED IN ONE OF HIS ENTERPRISES, SUPPLIED ELECTRICITY TO THE TOWN.

IN 1929 THE COMMUNITY ESTABLISHED A LOAN AND SAVINGS FUND. IN 1935, 28 OF THE 287 STORES IN THE TOWN WERE UNDER JEWISH OWNERSHIP. DURING THIS PERIOD ONLY TWO JEWISH FAMILIES NEEDED WELFARE ASSISTANCE.
COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10522
COMMUNITY NAME: AUCE

In 1923 there were cases of anti-Semitism in the town. A sizeable number of the community were Zionists and they contributed to Keren Kayemeth. At the elections for the Zionist Congress of 1933, the majority of votes were for the Histadrut Hazionit (Zionist Organization) the Revisionists, Mizrachi and the Israel Labour Movements received only a few votes. The Zionist youth operated within the framework of "Herzlia".

The young people received preparatory pioneering training from farmers in the vicinity, and 15 members of the community went on Aliyah to Eretz Israel. With a dictatorship ruling Latvia in 1934, nationalist Latvians began to plot against Jews.

In 1935 the Jewish community numbered 147, out of a population of 3,320.

The Holocaust Period

As a consequence of the Ribbentrop-Molotov accord, which was signed in 1939 between Germany and the U.S.S.R., the Red Army entered Latvia and in the summer of 1940 a Soviet government was installed. Jewish businesses were nationalized and community institutions liquidated.

A week after the outbreak of war between Germany and the U.S.S.R. (June 22, 1941), German forces captured the town. Immediately after the occupation all the Jews, on the instigation of the residents, were taken to the cemetery where they were murdered.

AUCE was liberated by the Red Army on August 12, 1944.
AKNISTE

A Settlement in the Ilukste District, Zemgale Region (formerly Kurland), in South East Latvia, U.S.S.R. until World War I it was part of the District of Kovno, Lithuania. From 1920-40 AKNISTE was part of Independent Latvia.

Jews first came to the place during the 1860s. There was neither a cemetery nor a Hevra Kadisha, and the dead were buried in the neighboring town, Subat.

In 1920 the community numbered 194 which comprised more than 50% of the inhabitants.

The community established two synagogues, a library and a drama circle.

In the elections for the 18th Zionist Congress, the Labor Eretz Israel list received the majority of votes.

In 1935 the community numbered 199, 42% of the total population.

The Holocaust Period

Following the Ribbentrop-Molotov accord, signed in August 1939 between Germany and the U.S.S.R., the Red Army entered Latvia. In the summer of 1940 a Soviet regime was installed.

On the outbreak of war between Germany and Russia (June 22, 1941), a number of Jews of AKNISTE managed to escape to the interior of Russia before the Germans conquered the area.

During the second half of July 1941, under the German occupation, all the Jews, about 200 in number, who had remained were murdered. According to one version, they were assembled in a hotel on the pretext that they would be moved to another place. From there they were taken to the bank of the river where they were shot.

After the war, because of the fact that there was no Jewish cemetery, the survivors erected a memorial, to those who had been murdered, in a corner of the Catholic cemetery.
COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10520
COMMUNITY NAME: ASARE

ASARE

(AN ADDITIONAL NAME IS ASERI; IN GERMAN: ASSERN)

A SETTLEMENT IN THE ILUKSTE DISTRICT, THE ZEMGALE (FORMERLY KURLAND) REGION, LATVIA, U.S.S.R. DURING THE YEARS 1920-40 ASARE WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.

IN 1925 ONE JEWISH FAMILY, OF FIVE, LIVED IN ASARE. IN 1930 THERE WERE, IN THE SETTLEMENT PLUS SURROUNDING VILLAGES, 10 JEWS.

THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD


A SHORT WHILE AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF WAR BETWEEN GERMANY AND RUSSIA (JUNE 22, 1941), GERMAN FORCES OCCUPIED THE AREA.

WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE REGARDING THE FATE OF THE JEWS OF ASARE AFTER THE GERMAN CONQUEST.
COMMUNITY NUMBER: 10521
COMMUNITY NAME: ASUNE

ASUNE

A VILLAGE IN THE DAUGAVPILS (FORMERLY DUINK) REGION IN THE LATGALE DISTRICT, LATVIA, U.S.S.R. DURING THE YEARS 1920-40 ASUNE WAS PART OF INDEPENDENT LATVIA.


THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD


Latvia SIG Membership Questionnaire

NAME:............................................................................. PHONE:.............................................
ADDRESS:....................................................................... FAX:...................................................
CITY:...........................................................STATE/PROVINCE:....................
ZIP/POSTAL CODE:........................
COUNTRY (if other than U.S.):....................................... 
E-mail address:........................................

Whom are you researching? (Latvian cities only) Please use location names/spellings as found in Where Once We Walked.

NAME:.............................................................................. LOCATION:.........................................
NAME:.............................................................................. LOCATION:.........................................
NAME:.............................................................................. LOCATION:.........................................
NAME:.............................................................................. LOCATION:.........................................
NAME:.............................................................................. LOCATION:.........................................

Bibliographical or archival sources used in your Latvian genealogical research:

Information on Latvian Jewish communities, history of Jewish presence, current status, contacts:

Cemeteries, travel experiences, etc:

Suggested newsletter topics:

Translation skills:  Hebrew, Latvian, Russian, Yiddish, Other (specify)

I would be willing to volunteer for the following activities:

Please return your completed questionnaire, along with a check for U.S. $20 (U.S. and Canada, $30 for overseas members) payable to Latvia SIG, to:

Latvia SIG
5450 Whitley Park Terrace, #901
Bethesda, MD 20814-2061