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# MONTREAL FORUM

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QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE  
JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF MONTREAL

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## TO CATCH YOUR EYE

In this issue there are connections between some of the items presented. Many people have both heard about, and taken advantage of, the indexing project of the Jewish vital records in Quebec culled from Drouin microfilms. Ruth Diamond’s role in bringing all this to fruition is well known, and in her delightful article which begins on page 11, she lets her readers take a glimpse at some of the fun and frustration entailed in this task. And to spice things up even more, Ruth tells us enchanting tales of where all this took her so unexpectedly – amidst women’s identities and a flooded basement.

Ruth was born and raised in Holland, and on page 13 we find another story with a Dutch flavour. Crispin Rogers, an Englishman of Dutch descent, was thrilled to be invited to the bicentenary of the synagogue in Leeuwarden, birthplace of his great great grandfather. The thriving 1930’s Jewish community was decimated in World War II, and after the furnishings and ritual objects were given to Kfar Batya in Israel, ownership of the building itself was given to the municipality. On 22 May 2005, 200 people gathered in the building, which still preserves its synagogue appearance, to commemorate the bicentenary.

Another pairing focuses on the Yiddish language newspaper, Kanader Adler, first published in Montreal in 1907. In an article beginning on page 4, Joseph Graham tells the touching tale of its founder, Hirsch Wolofsky, whose great granddaughter, Sheila Eskenazi, is married to the author.

Reflecting the importance of this Yiddish newspaper, the Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives organized the translation of all the death notices from Keneder Odler. Janice Rosen writes of this in her article on page 10. It is not my intention to get into discussing the opposing views on whether this newspaper should be referred to as Kanader Adler or Keneder Odler. To each his own.

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of Montreal

Founded 1995

Member of the  
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Finally, on page 7 you can read about a special Jewish influence on Montreal’s past, hockey and the Montreal Forum – our journal’s namesake.



Happy Hanukkah

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### Protect Those Photos You've Been Placing on CDs! by Ilene Murray

*Of everything I have read in the recent past, nothing has made such a powerful zap into my consciousness as the following, which appeared in the October 2005 issue of News 'n Notes, published by the St. Louis Genealogical Society. Ilene Murray tells me that many, many people have responded to this piece. With her permission, Ilene's words follow, in full.*

If you are among the thousands of genealogists archiving photographs on CDs, you will want to think carefully about the quality of the products you are using for

storage of your precious family photographs. It is so easy to run into the local discount store and purchase inexpensive CDs. However, you may be sacrificing the longevity of your photos in your efforts to save a bit of money.

Most CDs for home recording have a shelf life of just three years! After that time, the chemicals used in their manufacture begin to break down. As a result, microscopic pits develop and the data eventually becomes unreadable. You typically won't know there is a problem until you place the CD in your computer and nothing appears. If you haven't backed up its contents, they will be gone.

What should you do to protect your digital photos? Purchase archival quality CDs. These are made of much higher grade materials, often have a layer of gold, which does not break down easily, and cost more than regular CDs. The extra money you will spend will be worth a lot of peace of mind!

### Postscript

*Most good quality electronic and/or camera stores stock archival quality CDs. Ilene Murray notes that the most popular brand seems to be eFilm's Archival Gold "300 Year" CD-R.*

*There are others. News from our readers on the identification and availability of other brands will be noted in the next Montreal Forum.*

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P R O G R A M M I N G

Members receive frequent announcements and reminders for all upcoming events from **Merle Kastner**. What follows is just a skeleton outline for handy reference.

**MONTHLY LECTURE SERIES**  
**All events at 5151 Côte Ste Catherine Road, unless otherwise specified.**

**Monday 12 December 2005 at 7.30pm**  
**Event:** Research Circle. An ever-popular gathering, at which all members get a chance to showcase their research.

**Monday 23 January 2006 at 7.30pm**  
**Event:** Last year's experiment of a mid-winter film night was so popular that it will be repeated this year.

**Wednesday 15 February 2006 – time TBA**  
**Event:** Guided Tour of Quebec National Archives, for which attendance will have to be limited. Watch for further announcements on how to register for this special tour.

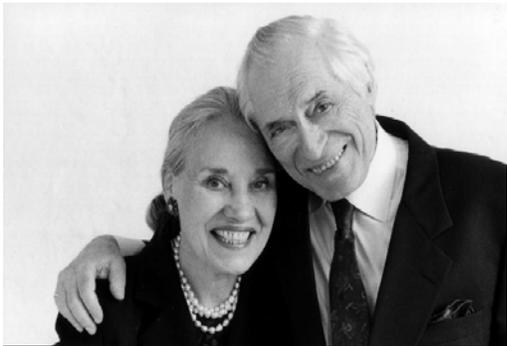


Special thanks to the gifted **Susan Garfield** for designing the above poster. And more special thanks for her design of our masthead.

**Our Family Tree Workshops take place on the first Sunday of every month (except July, August and September) at the Jewish Public Library, 5151 Côte Ste Catherine Road, downstairs in the Greenberg Conference Room.**

SPECIAL EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF OUR MEMBERS

On 30 October 2005, **Doreen and Sol Sternfeld** celebrated their **Golden Wedding** - and just a few days later -  
 On 11 November 2005, **Ruth and Stanley Diamond** celebrated their **Ruby Wedding**  
 Mazel Tov to both couples on reaching these momentous anniversaries



**Doreen and Sol Sternfeld**



**Ruth and Stanley Diamond**

**HIRSCH ZVI  
WOLOFSKY  
1876-1949**

**by Joseph Graham**

*This article first appeared in the July-August 2005 issue of Quebec Heritage News, the magazine of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN), and is reprinted here with their permission, as well as that of the author, Joseph Graham, who retains the copyright.*

We often view as heroes and heroines people who responded quickly in an unexpected situation, but heroes can also be people with a vision of a better world who give themselves over to realizing it. Hirsch Wolofsky is one such hero.

Born a Jew in a small town in Poland, Hirsch Wolofsky was not entitled to a public education, but learned in the customary way from the rabbi and the religious teachers. Having no academic options, he still learned to read Hebrew and Yiddish and dreamed of working in those languages. He and his wife Sarah arrived in Montreal in 1900, pushed out of their native Poland by persecutions after the assassination of Czar Alexander II. Discovering his health would not stand up to factory work, the usual employment of the recent immigrant, he established himself in a small fruit and vegetable store on St. Lawrence between St. Catherine and Ontario streets. He abandoned his dreams of letters and resigned himself to the life of a merchant. Two unforeseen events changed all that in 1907: his eldest child, playing with matches, caused a fire that destroyed his small store, and the Russian revolution failed.

At the beginning of the 1900's the Jewish population of Montreal was 7,000. They were generally of British, German, or Western European stock and were well integrated into Montreal English society. They did not choose English over French, the choice was made for them. New France had been a Catholic state that refused entry to non-Catholics, and under the British regime which followed, Jews could not educate their children in French without converting to Catholicism. The Church controlled the French-language schools and refused Jewish community approaches that would offer separate classes on religion.

The Russian Empire was in decline during this period and Jews, the only non-



**Kanader Adler Masthead**

Christians in the Christian regions, had been living in ghettos or in rural isolation in the Pale of Settlement. They were not entitled to the full rights of citizens under the czars, being forbidden to farm or to work in industry, and were the scapegoats for society's ills. Their communities regularly sustained pogroms, violent unprovoked attacks often from off-duty military personnel or unhappy citizens and with the full knowledge of the government, but nothing was done to punish the perpetrators. In 1907, the Russian Empire suppressed a revolution, triggering a huge exodus, particularly of Jews, as the pogroms increased.

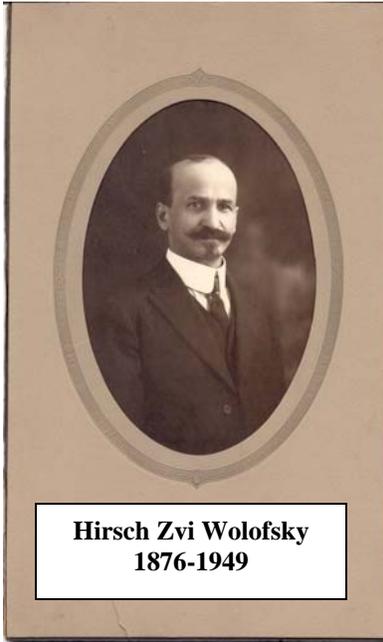
The Jewish communities of Eastern Europe always valued a good education, and so, even though it was illegal to speak Yiddish and Hebrew, the boys were educated in these two languages. Yiddish is a dialect of German, and it is written in Hebrew

characters. Hebrew was the language of education and was used in a way similar to Latin. The holy books were written in Hebrew, and its alphabet evolved in the Semitic culture between 2000 and 1000 BCE. Its letters are similar to ancient Phoenician and it was one of the early phonetic forms of writing. Experts trace it back to a shorthand used by Semitic workers in ancient Egypt, and through the Phoenician alphabet, it was passed along to the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs and the Russians. All of the phonetic alphabets in common use in our culture trace back to this ancient Semitic script. The Jews have used their written form continuously for thousands of years, and their system of education created students who were taught from a young age how to read and how to learn. They could adapt to the modern world that flooded over the Russian borders from Western Europe and America in the late 1800's, but this ability to adapt only increased resentment, making matters worse for them. In 1907 an exodus started that would bring thousands of Jews to America, and the Montreal community grew from 7,000 in 1900 to 58,000 by 1930.

Montreal Jews did not speak Yiddish prior to this influx, and the older well-established community had no reason to learn it, but as the population increased, people coming from the Baltic states, Russia, Poland and the Ukraine had only Yiddish in common. That same year, witnessing the large numbers of fellow Yiddish-speaking immigrants from many different countries in Eastern Europe, Hirsch Wolofsky took the insurance money from the fire that burned his store and started a Yiddish-language

newspaper, the *Kanader Adler* (Canadian Eagle).

According to Pierre Anctil, a historian who learned Yiddish and a respected authority on the history of the Montreal Jewish Community, it was not a language that lent itself easily to this kind of publication. It had garnered very little respect as a written language and had no serious archive. Young Jewish men had learned the Hebrew characters in their study of the Torah and the Talmud, (the Bible and rabbinical commentaries), and over time transcribed a German dialect into Hebrew characters. Wolofsky saw a sea of immigrants who could not speak English or French and who were desperate for news and the written word. They spoke Russian, Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian or Ukrainian, but they all spoke Yiddish as well. These were people from many different countries thrown together in a



strange land, and Wolofsky's initiative gave them an identity, a sense of commonality, of community. His was not the first Yiddish newspaper; Yiddish papers were available from New York, but they did not address the needs of the new Montrealers, all coming together from different places with different experiences, all pooling their knowledge and recreating themselves as Canadians. The new community that his paper identified rapidly made its presence felt. Yiddish became the third language of Montreal as the Protestant school populations rose to become 45% Jewish, and English today carries many words of Yiddish such as *schlep*, *chutzpah*, *klutz* and *kibitz*.

Inevitably the offices of the *Kanader Adler* became the centre of this immigrant

community and every event passed through its journalists to be interpreted and shared with readers. Wolofsky knew how to promote his enterprise. When interviewing one man as editor, he informed the new man that he was a Zionist, someone who favours the re-establishment of a Jewish State in the Promised Land. The new man told him that he was definitely not a Zionist, a very divisive topic in the Jewish world of the time. Wolofsky hired him and told him to write his argument in the newspaper and Wolofsky would argue for the other side. They would let the readers decide for themselves. Among his readership were Zionists, opponents to Zionism, socialists, communists, secular and religious Jews. They represented every different interest group and political idea in vogue and taken together formed a dynamic, chaotic think-tank boiling over with new ideas and ambition but with nothing but each other and the resident community to help them along and the Kanader Adler to chronicle it.

Hirsch Wolofsky rose to the challenges presented by the growth of the paper and chose every opportunity to build the community. His name is associated with everything from United Talmud Torah School to the YM/YWHA, the building of the Jewish General Hospital to the creation of what became the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Combined Jewish Appeal. His hand can be found in every conceivable Montreal Jewish community organisation and charity from that period, and his influence went beyond the community and across the country. If Canadian Jews speak with one voice today, this is his legacy. When he began his paper, it was not so. The new immigrants represented so many conflicting ideologies that speaking with one voice was unimaginable, and small, isolated communities co-existed not just in the large cities, but in smaller towns right across Canada. With his success in Yiddish, he

went on to publish the Canadian Jewish Chronicle in English, increasing his reach. A. M. Klein, the poet, became its editor and among its journalists and contributors were Ted Allan (Lies My Father Told Me), A. B. Bennett (father of Avi Bennett of McLelland and Stewart) and David Lewis (father of Steven Lewis). Wolofsky travelled extensively in Canada, meeting with community leaders, organizing, coordinating activities and uniting different groups. He also travelled several times in Europe and was among the founders of what would become Israel.

We are less than two years away from the centennial of the founding of the Kanader Adler yet for all of his remarkable achievements, no biography exists of the man himself, other than a modest memoir, first written in Yiddish, and published in English in 1945 in a translation by A. M. Klein. This book, a series of reminiscences, portrays the character of the times, but contains almost no dates and is not chronological. Pierre Anctil attempted to correct some of these shortcomings when he translated it into French in 2000. Considering how much the small Jewish community has contributed to the fabric of Canada, and how much Wolofsky had to do with it, his biography would be a valuable documentation of our history.

#### References:

Journey of my Life (Mayn Lebns Rayze in Yiddish and French) –Hirsch Wolofsky (translated by A. M. Klein to English and by Pierre Anctil to French); Through the Eyes of the Eagle, -David Rome; Language Visible, -David Sacks; A Coat of Many Colours, -Irving Abella; Jews of Montreal and their Judaisms, -Mackay L. Smith; A Very Red Life –Cy Gonick;

Hirsch Wolofsky is the great-grandfather of my wife, Sheila Eskenazi. Thanks to her and Jack Wolofsky, grandson of Hirsch, for additional information.

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## Montreal-In Days Gone By

*We invite our readers to submit family anecdotes of life in Montreal – In Days Gone By. These could be stories handed down in your family, or personal memories which give you pleasure as you remember connections between your family and life in this city. A story such as that of-----*

### Cecil Mordecai Hart (28 Nov 1883 – 16 July 1940) by Anne Joseph

Cecil “Cece” Hart's best known claim to fame was his interest in hockey, which led to his association from 1921 to 1939 with the Montreal Canadiens Hockey team in managerial positions and as their coach for more than eight of those seasons. Slot into this the Hart Memorial Trophy and the Montreal Forum – the building, that is – and the relevance of Cecil to this journal becomes obvious. And oh yes, Cecil was a 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin once removed of my husband, Bill Joseph.

Born in Bedford Quebec on 28 November 1883, Cecil was the youngest of six children, all boys, of David Alexander Hart and his wife Sarah David. His ancestry included most of the earliest Jewish families to settle in Quebec. He was a 2<sup>nd</sup> great grandson of Aaron & Dorothea (Judah) Hart, a great grandson of Henry & Rachel (Solomons) Joseph, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> great grandson of Lazarus David whose wife, Phoebe, was the subject of the September article in this series.

Cecil's childhood was typical of the era within these evolving pioneer Jewish families. The photograph of the Hart home in Bedford shows Cecil with his five older brothers, his parents and a maid. Cecil's father graduated from the Medical Faculty of Bishop's College in 1874, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jewish doctor to graduate in Canada. He practiced in Bedford for many years before



**Cecil Hart's Childhood Home in Bedford  
Photograph courtesy of Joy Hart Davis**

moving to Montreal. His great granddaughter, Joy Hart Davis, writes of her grandfather's memories of taking his father in the horse and buggy whenever he was called to a patient's home. As the boys grew up it is likely that they shared this task, winter and summer.

The family moved to Montreal into a lovely home, part of a row of elegant Tudor houses, on Sherbrooke Street West (at that time numbered 296) at the south-east corner of Aylmer and Sherbrooke. Among other things, this move to Montreal enabled the family to become more involved in their life-long association with the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation. After the deaths of David and Sarah Hart, their eldest son and his wife, Alec and Lulu Hart continued to live there, with Alec's brothers (including Cecil) always welcome. As Alec and Lulu's granddaughter, Joy remembers many childhood visits there, and since the house was so close to McGill University, she could watch many happenings on campus, as well as parades along Sherbrooke Street. All these Tudor houses were eventually torn down.

Cecil's interest in sport was matched by his skill as an organizer. In Montreal he founded the Stars baseball team. They competed in the City League, and on week-ends travelled to nearby cities and towns to play exhibition games. From

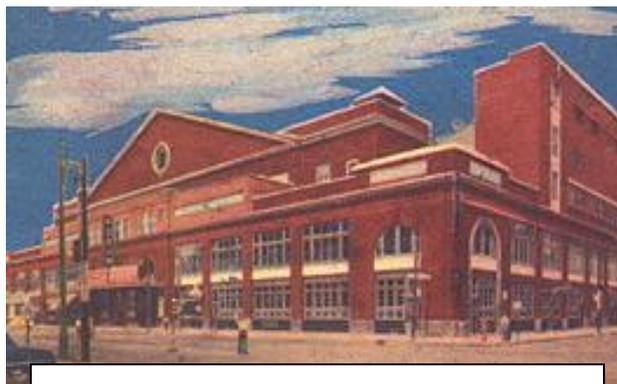
1910, he became increasingly involved with amateur hockey as secretary-treasurer of both the Eastern Canada Amateur Hockey Association and the Montreal City Hockey League. In 1921 he moved into professional hockey, where one of his first tasks was to help negotiate the sale of the Montreal Canadiens of the National Hockey League. In 1924 the Montreal Maroons entered the National Hockey League with Cecil as Club Manager. However he quit after only a few months, following a row with the club's directors over the price he paid for a player named Reg Noble. Quiet support for Cecil's action surfaced when it became obvious that it was Noble's participation which enabled the Montreal Maroons to win the Stanley Cup the next season.



**CECIL "CECE" HART  
1883-1940**  
Photo courtesy of Joy Hart Davis

At a special meeting of the National Hockey League in February 1924 held to discuss plans for expanding into the United States, it was announced that Dr. David Alexander Hart had presented a trophy to the league, which was to be awarded to the player deemed most useful to

his team during the entire season. In other words, the Hart Trophy was to be awarded to the Most Valuable Player. This trophy remains the one most sought after by hockey players.



**THE ORIGINAL MONTREAL FORUM  
(1924-1938)**  
the building familiar to Cecil Hart

In 1960, the Hart Trophy was retired to the Hockey Hall of Fame, and replaced by the NHL with the Hart Memorial Trophy, named in honour of Cecil Hart. His father, David, would indeed have been proud.

Back to Cecil's career. After the shenanigans with the Montreal Maroons, he moved back to the Montreal Canadiens, initially becoming a director, and then after they finished dead last in the 1925-26 season, he took over as head coach. In each of the next six seasons, Cecil coached his team into the play-offs for the Stanley Cup every year. Three times they reached the finals, and won the cup in 1930 and 1931. He retired in 1932, leaving the Canadiens in fine shape.

But the team slipped, and Cecil was bamboozled into returning as head coach for the 1936-37 season. He got them back into 1<sup>st</sup> place in the division, but in the middle of the 1939 season, illness forced him to retire for a second time.

Cecil became spokesman for Labatt's Brewery. An advertisement in the Montreal Daily Star dated 20 December 1937 says, in part, "The fans everywhere know and love Cecil Hart. Whether

his teams win or lose, they always serve up a fascinating brand of hockey.” It also notes that it was Cecil who discovered Howie Morenz.

It is interesting to note that in all eight seasons when Cecil was coaching the Canadiens, they reached the playoffs. And in six of these years, one of his players won the Hart Trophy.

And now the story of the Montreal Forum itself, which was built in 1924. By a fluke, it was the Montreal Canadiens who played on opening night, 29 November 1924. At that time it was home to the Montreal Maroons, but a problem with the ice at the Mont Royal Arena required the Canadiens to play their game against the Toronto St. Pats in the Maroons new home. It was a 7-1 win for the Canadiens.

The Forum did not become the Canadiens official home for another two years. As it happened, they lost their first official game on Forum ice 2-1 to Ottawa on 18 November 1926. 70 years later, on 11 March 1996, the Canadiens played their last game on Forum ice, beating the Dallas Stars by a score of 4 to 1.



**Montreal Canadiens Logo (1926-1952)**

**This logo, in use throughout Cecil Hart’s coaching years, was the 6<sup>th</sup> of 7 logos adopted since 1909. The initials stand for Canadiens Hockey. However, the commonly held belief that the “H” is for “habitant” has led to the team often being called the Habs.**

Cecil Hart did not marry. But he certainly did have a life other than hockey. His good looks and his success contributed to his popularity on the social scene. His family and the Montreal

Jewish community were both important to him. A business sideline was insurance, and for relaxation he enjoyed baseball, golf and fishing – particularly trout fishing. After his death, his insurance business was taken over by his brother, Reginald.

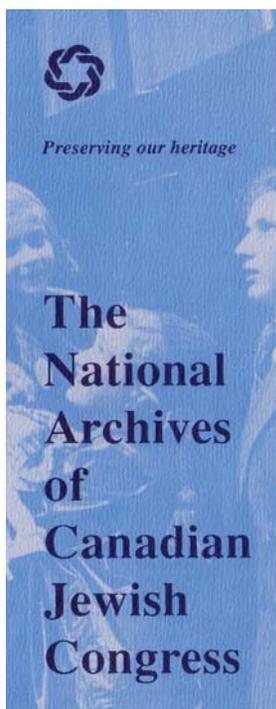
Cecil Hart’s death on 16 July 1940 at the age of 56 was a great shock to family, friends and everyone in the hockey world. Tributes tumbled in from far and wide, but the family kept to themselves the simple commemoration of a burial in the Mount Royal cemetery of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, with a simple footstone recording his name and dates of birth and death. And the tributes kept coming, the most recent being his 1992 induction into the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, an institution itself inaugurated on 7 July 1981.

The legacy of Cecil Hart in the hockey world is well known. His legacy in the family has been for some a remarkably high interest in sports, particularly hockey. But not for everyone. As a new arrival in Montreal almost 47 years ago, having grown up in England on a steady diet of cricket, I was taken as a treat to a hockey game at the Forum. I learned the names of some of the players – there was a Rocket, a Pocket Rocket and a Boom-Boom. I left the Forum with a determination never to see another game, a promise to myself which I have kept. People keep telling me that I just don’t get it --- and they are probably right.

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**NEWS FROM  
CANADIAN JEWISH  
CONGRESS  
by Janice Rosen  
Archives Director**



*The highlighted material from CJC for this issue is connected to the article which begins on page 4, in which Joseph Graham tells the story of Hirsch Wolofsky, the man who founded the Yiddish language newspaper, Kanader Adler.*

*As we approach the centennial of the founding, it is gratifying to know that so much of the valuable data from this paper has been made available in English by CJC right here in Montreal.*

We are happy to announce the availability of the Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives Obituaries Project Database (Stage II), which was produced in December 2004 with funding from the Ottawa Jewish Genealogical Society.

This resource contains all the information found in every obituary run by the *Keneder Odler (Jewish Daily Eagle)* from November 19 1908 to December 31 1931. As obituaries rarely appeared before 1917, most of the information dates from this time onward. The information was translated from the

original Yiddish by Eiran Harris, and was indexed by H  l  ne Vall  e.

The index contains data from 2838 death and unveiling notices, with information covering such areas as obituary date, date of death or unveiling, name, maiden name, age, spouse's name, number of children, siblings or other relatives (sometimes with their names), place of death and last residence, parents' names, cemetery and shiva information, memberships and affiliations of the deceased, and additional notes.

Additional notes often provide a poignant glimpse into the world of the late teens and 20s. We are struck by the number of terse comments "died of pneumonia" and "died of the Spanish influenza" in 1918. Throughout this period, the place of death is often listed as "Ste-Agathe, Quebec", not because of the size of this Laurentian community, but rather due to the presence there of the Jewish-run Mount Sinai Sanatorium. Indeed, one often reads "notice placed by fellow patients of the Mount Sinai Sanatorium".

Accidents were often noted as the cause of death. One young man's passing is described as "died of a cracked skull after falling off a wagon on his father's farm in Macaza", a reference to the small Quebec agricultural colony founded and financed by the Jewish Colonization Association. Another notice reads "died after falling down the elevator shaft at the University Club in Montreal." The precise address of the club is given, presumably to steer future visitors away.

Clearly this valuable information is of interest to many people, not just the descendants of those named in the notices.

For more information, call 514/931-7531 extn 2, or email [archives@cjc.ca](mailto:archives@cjc.ca)

## HOW MY PASSION FOR WOMEN'S IDENTITIES SAVED US FROM A FLOODED BASEMENT

Or

## CONSCIENTIOUSNESS VERSUS WATER RUNNING FREE

by Ruth Diamond

As many of the members of the JGSM know by now, a few years ago I rudely appropriated the Drouin microfilms of the Jewish vital records of Quebec and the work of entering the "facts" into a data base. I needed something to do and the work seemed tailor-made for me. However, it has been a bit like being on a merry-go-round. First all the primary facts were entered. This took many months. Say 24.

A second go-round was done to eliminate the more obvious mistakes. Another job of many months. Say 18.

A third go-round was done to enter all the late entries of births, and in a few rare cases, the late entries of marriage acts. Another 18.

For my fourth pass-through I made lists of all the rabbis who were active in all the shuls and their perambulations through the system of synagogues. No more than 6.



**Ruth Diamond - hard at work**

Last year the wonders of technology freed me from long lonely hours in our basement, peering at fuzzy images on a really old microfilm reader which had become more temperamental over the years. Just as well, because we had reached the opinion that entering the fathers' names and mothers' maiden names would be a good idea.

I am now luxuriating in the fact that all the Drouin images are on my computer screen and I can zoom in, de-fuzz or turn them into negative, in order to be as certain as one can be that the correct information has been or is being entered. I can even spin them around for no particular reason but that it is fun. Of course all this dazzling technology does not always conquer really bad handwriting, really bad spelling, general sloppiness or just plain indifference on the part of some of the rabbis in the past.

But in general I have been able to make a vast number of additions and corrections in previous entries and feel much better knowing that the information is being perfected. Since the number of BMD records is still 76,000, and I feel entitled to state that this is positively the very last time I go through all the records, I have set myself an arbitrary amount of time for each partly legible or open-to-various-interpretations entry. When circumstances dictate and my time-limit runs out, I will now enter "illegible".

Sometimes I exceed my own time-limit because I am so angry at the incompetence or indifference that shows in the entries of maiden names. So once in a while I take more time than I should because I damn well want to get it right. Yes, I am aware that in the majority of these entries mine are the last eyes that will ever look at them, and probably no-one cares whether I get

it or not, but sometimes that does not matter. In the case of maiden names, I am a bit of a fanatic. I should perhaps explain that where I was born and grew up, the Netherlands, a woman retained the use of her maiden name after marriage. The maiden name was hyphenated after her married name and a woman's identity was maintained.

Then I arrived in Canada and was in for a rude awakening. All married women signed not only with their husband's last names, but also his first name. I was aghast at being just Mrs. Stanley Diamond. I love my husband, but carrying only his names seems to erase "me". Although my new in-law family disapproved, I signed my cheques with my first name, even though my last name was now Diamond. A small rebellion. Years later I was thrilled when new laws were passed a woman could legally use her maiden name. Our two married daughters use their maiden names in everyday life, even if they sometimes hyphenate their married names.

And that is where my passion for maiden names in the Drouin records comes from. I was shocked to discover how many thousands of women were marginalized in the records by not indexing the brides' names at all, or listing only their first names. And it was equally upsetting to me to see the many instances where both grooms and brides and new-borns only had fathers. I was aware that women's roles were of little account in the minds of religious authorities, but found it shocking nevertheless to see the proof.

So when sometime last week I was confronted with a bride's name which I had previously entered as Frankel/Franken, I had a closer look. With all the technology at my fingertips the correct name eluded me. I checked with Stanley that the 1900-1925 non-Catholic marriages film we have covered the year 1915, and felt I should go to the basement and check the darn name. Don't ask why this time it was so pressing. The groom's name was fairly legible and I thought that I should have little difficulty in finding the entry, which lists the bride's maiden name. I had not been in the basement for many weeks, and

since I really need to spend a few days down there to clean up, I have avoided going down.

When I got to the bottom of the stairs, I noticed something different and wrong. I smelled damp, and also faintly heard the sound of running water. I alerted Stan and we started moving the furniture, and found that water was running from the pipes in the wall. We spent the next hour moving boxes and furniture and on advice from our plumber called the city. The main in our front garden was closed, the plumber came and fixed the problem. Then we had to wait for a number of hours, with no water (hey, that means no tea, no water to take pills, no hand washing and above all, no flushing of toilets!). In the evening the city worker came and opened the main again, and our lives regained their flow.

The question that follows me and niggles is - what would have happened if I had said Franken/Frankel, who cares? Would the flood have reached all the way to the other side of the basement, making hundreds of books damp, ruining the couch, the microfilm reader and other furniture? We caught the burst pipe within an hour of its initial discharge.

We would have gone down to the basement two days later, before loading the car for our visit to our daughter Rachel. By then the basement would have looked quite different. And our long weekend visit would have been a non-starter. The damage would have been a hundred-fold. I know that compared to both Katrina and Rita our problem is miniature. Would that have made it easier to swallow? We will have to tear up the flooring and parts of the wall. We will have to be on the look-out for mold. And we will certainly have clean up the basement now.

So my obsession with getting it right was well timed. Conscientious or obsessed. You be the judge.

But Stanley and I are the beneficiaries.

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## BI-CENTENARY OF THE LEEWARDEN SYNAGOGUE

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2005

By Crispin Rogers

Since I started my research into the origins of the Rogers family I have always wanted to visit Leeuwarden, where my great great grandfather Maurice was born in 1832. Leeuwarden always seemed such a remote place, north of the IJsselmeer that was formed when the Zuiderzee was cut off from the sea, and quite a trek from Amsterdam. Somehow I had never had enough time to visit the place on earlier trips to Holland. Finally an opportunity presented itself with an invitation to the Bi-Centenary of the Leeuwarden Synagogue.



On the street outside Leeuwarden Synagogue  
22 May 2005. Photo by Crispin Rogers.

Both Chaim Caran (a distant cousin through the female line) and Louis Cohen (possibly also distantly related) were going to the celebration, and Louis kindly put me up in his house in Breukelen near Utrecht when I arrived on the Saturday night. He had decided to drive up, as there were problems with the railway line. We collected Chaim and his mother in Utrecht and drove through a part of Holland I had never seen, over the polders, recently (in 1957) reclaimed from the sea into the province of Friesland, of which Leeuwarden is the capital.

Leeuwarden is much as I imagined it; an old Dutch town surrounded by fields as flat as a board in which grazed Friesian dairy cows. There is a statue of a cow in the town, affectionately known by the Fries as Us Mem – our mum. The Friesian language is still spoken in Friesland as well as some part of north-western Germany.

The Leeuwarden Synagogue was built in 1805 in Sacrament Street in the 'old town'. It is a large impressive building lying in what was the old Jewish quarter, amidst several streets of picturesque old houses. It was easy to imagine the environment that Maurice grew up in.

Before the war there was a thriving Jewish community in Leeuwarden. However almost 75% perished in the Holocaust. Left with a tiny congregation, the synagogue was de-consecrated in 1964, at which time the furnishings and ritual objects were given to Kfar Batya, a youth village in Israel, where they are still used in the local synagogue.

The building was given to the municipality, which maintains the fabric in good order, and it is now used as a dance studio. It sports a polished wooden floor and huge mirrors cover both interior end walls. The walls are adorned with photos of scantily dressed dancers, and it is also equipped with a bar. The joke is that you only need five people to form a Minyan and can obtain spiritual refreshment!

For the occasion the building had somehow reverted to its former purpose. This was a large gathering of about 200 people. There were a few people from Belgium, but I was the only person from the UK. Chairs and tables had been set out. Cakes, snacks and soft drinks were available and there was a harpist and some violinists to provide music. On a more somber note there was a prayer for the victims of the Holocaust. There were several speeches, and an address by the Israeli ambassador to the Netherlands in faltering English.

Apart from Chaim, his mother and Louis, I did not know anybody, but Chaim's aunt had also come, and so had his younger sister. I was also introduced to Max Cohen who is president of a small synagogue that now exists in Leeuwarden, and is my closest blood relation.

After the celebrations, the crowd milled out onto the street and we walked to the old Jewish cemetery to look at the gravestones. On the way we passed what was the old Jewish School. It is still used as a school, and seems a pleasant place. Outside is a memorial with the quote 'The child is no more' - Genesis.

The old cemetery, now disused, was a short walk into the suburbs. The graves were upright in the Ashkenazi style, but being in low lying ground were somewhat covered in moss and algae. People milled around and stumbled about and Louis was wiping the stones with handfuls of grass to read the inscriptions, and in that way found several of his ancestors. Chaim at the other end had an open portfolio and small coterie in tow, and was learnedly pronouncing on the genealogy of the occupants. Somewhat incongruously in the front row of graves was the grave of a Sgt Harry Kleiner RAFVR, aged 32, who was killed in action on March 23/24 1943. The name Pinto also appeared on one tombstone. There was also a Holocaust memorial with the inscription 'Rachel cries for her children and will not be consoled' - Jeremiah 31-15.

I had decided to stay overnight in Leeuwarden and explore the town the following morning. Chaim was also staying near Leeuwarden with some relatives, and so we went in search of an inexpensive hotel. We found the 'Anker', which was very reasonable at 28 Euros for a basic

room and breakfast. As this establishment had not yet opened, and the sun had come out, we sat down outside at a bar and downed some beers. Chaim soon started chatting with some people sitting at a table opposite us, and it transpired they worked for the Leeuwarden archive, which unfortunately did not open on Mondays.



**Bi-Centenary Celebration, Leeuwarden Synagogue. Photo by Bob Drilmsa.**

My flight was the following day, Tuesday, and I had arranged to stay with Louis in Utrecht on Monday night. There was a problem with the overhead cable on the train to Utrecht, and so we were bussed to a station further down the line. It quickly became apparent that the Dutch do not form orderly queues, and it was all push. I immediately went into foreign travel mode and got on the bus. The same thing happened when we arrived at the next station. I quickly got off and ran for the train. Just in time, as there was no co-ordination between the busses and the train. The barrier was down across the line, but following the lead of the locals, I quickly ducked under the barrier and ran up the platform and onto the train, which left before most of the people had decamped from the bus!

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## IN CLOSING --- A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

### Jewish Genealogy - a bond that cuts across all our differences

Last September, in my message for the first issue of our journal, I mentioned that “in our short history, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal has grown and prospered...particularly in the quality of our members and their remarkable research achievements”. While this personal growth is significant for us, it is good to know that we are not alone. We are among more than 80 societies around the world, each playing a part in supporting the efforts of Jewish family historians and their quest to leave a lasting legacy for future generations. And yet, while the aims/goals of all Jewish genealogical societies are fundamentally the same, each society is distinct and set apart by the many facets that make up its individual character.

What makes a Jewish genealogical society tick? What role do we play that makes budding Jewish genealogists want to become part of ‘our’ world? Simply stated, our genealogical societies are the grass roots of the Jewish family history experience. It is at the society level where we both learn and teach, and where we share in the comforting environment of personal contact.

I have been honored and fortunate to have been a guest lecturer or attendee at JGS meetings and events in a number of cities, among them Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Francisco, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. At each stop along the way, I have met dedicated society members who provide leadership for their colleagues and generously share their knowledge. In many cases, these same individuals are volunteers in the wider world of Jewish genealogy, joined together by the Internet and the valuable

resources that are now available online. Whether it is at the local society level or at a wider level of participation for an international project, it is this networking and sharing that is the unifying thread for all of us.

The reasons we follow our families’ wanderings and documenting our ancestors and their progeny are many and varied. Although we all may share a passion for family history, I would like to touch on the one aspect of who we are that differentiates us from members of all other Jewish organizations.

One only has to attend the yearly International Jewish genealogical conference to see how we differ yet share the passion for our quest. Simply stated, we are unlike any other Jewish organization. Whether it is the depth of our religious or non-religious practice, our status in or lack of involvement in the community, our level of philanthropy or the extent of our volunteerism, Jewish genealogists have a bond that *cuts across all these differences*. Our doors are open to everyone, Jew or non-Jew, rich or poor, fervently religious or agnostic, and that likely makes us the most egalitarian group of individuals in the Jewish world. That description certainly characterizes our own society, here in Montreal.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal is the home for all who want to enter. Come to our meetings and workshops, look around, get to know your fellow members, ask questions, volunteer for our societies’ projects and above all, share your knowledge, passion --- and differences.

Stanley Diamond

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**DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH 2006 ISSUE – WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY**