



MONTREAL FORUM

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE
JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF MONTREAL

TO CATCH YOUR EYE

At some time or another, most of us have scratched our heads as we struggled to track elusive relatives in a census from some place or another. This topic was addressed at the recent IAJGS conference, and the person chosen to provide solace, explanations and advice on this thorny issue was **Alan Greenberg**, of JGS-Montreal.

For Montreal Forum, Alan has written a concise and at times intriguing account of the best ways to get the most out of census records. For many of us this article will be “a keeper”, one to be re-read periodically as a reminder of how we can use our time to greatest advantage. While the focus is on Canadian census records, it should be emphasized that the vagaries encountered here echo those of census records from other countries.

Our next article reflects a complete change of pace. **Gerald Posner** and his brother **Michael** had for a long time been consumed by a desire to search out their history. This meant travelling to the various shtetls in Belarus that had been home to their ancestors. They ended their trip with a Klezmer Heritage Cruise.

How I found out about this is a whole other story. Gerald hails from Winnipeg, Michael from Toronto, and I from Montreal. A Canadian connection, but that’s not how I came across news of this trip. It was on the cruise along the Dniepper River in the Ukraine that Gerald and Michael met an Englishman who had become known to me because part of his family has roots in Portsmouth England, my hometown. How’s that for roundabout access to finding a new author. The path of an editor has some surprising turns.

But perhaps our best news is that **past issues of Montreal Forum are now available for easy storage and access on our website**. Many thanks to Alan Greenberg for making this all come to pass.

Anne Joseph

Jewish Genealogical Society
of Montreal

Founded 1995

Member of the
International Association of
Jewish Genealogical Societies

Web Site
<http://www.jgs-montreal.org>

Mailing Address
5599 Edgemore Ave, Côte St Luc,
Montreal, Canada H4W 1V4

Hot Line: 514-484-0969

President.....Stanley Diamond
smsdiamond@aol.ca 514-484-0100

Programme.....Merle Kastner
merlek@videotron.ca 514-735-4739

Membership.....Jerry Zell
jzell@videotron.ca 514-486-2171

Database Manager
& Webmaster.....Alan Greenberg
alan.greenberg@mcgill.ca 514-483-3853

Editor.....Anne Joseph
aejoseph@videotron.ca 514-487-1214

PROGRAMMING

Address all enquiries to Merle Kastner
merlek@videotron.ca
 or phone our Hot Line – 514-484-0969
 All events at the Gelber Centre
 unless otherwise specified

MONTHLY LECTURE SERIES

Monday 17 September at 7.30pm

Joe King will talk on “Building a Nation: the unknown Jewish Giants”.

Sunday 14 October at 2.00pm

Mel Solman from Toronto, presenting “The Internet, PowerPoint and Novel Ways of Presenting Your Family History”

Sunday 21 October 10am to Noon

West Island Outreach Workshop at Federation CJA West Island Building

Tuesday 20 November at 7.30pm

Photo-journalist and filmmaker David Lewis Sternfeld presenting “Biala Podlaska, Poland, Revisited” – visiting his grandfather’s shtetl”

SUNDAY FAMILY TREE WORKSHOPS

10am to noon at the Jewish Public Library,
 5151 Côte Ste Catherine Road, Montreal
 9 September, 7 October,
 4 November and 2 December

**CANADIAN CENSUS RECORDS
 THE KEY TO THE PAST
 by Alan Greenberg**

Alan has been researching his family for 15 years, and has been deeply involved with JGS-Montreal from its earliest days. His 40 years experience submerged in computing, networks and a pioneering role for Internet development in Canada has made him invaluable. His varied contributions to our society’s projects include applying his expertise to the indexing of Jewish vital records for Montreal and Quebec, as well as our Canadian naturalizations project and Jewish cemetery records. In this article he opens up the possibilities of expanding our finds within the sometimes confusing census records data.

Governments have been carrying out censuses of their people for centuries. The Book of Numbers describes a divinely-mandated census when Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt. A famous census of England was compiled in 1086 – the Domesday Book.

A census is taken to allow the government (or ruler) to manage better, which may mean to be able to collect taxes, conscript people into the army, or provide social services. Typically a census has not been taken to allow genealogists or historians hundreds of years later to piece together a picture of life at the time of the census. Luckily, over time, this application of a census has been better understood and many of these records have been preserved to allow just such usage.

Typically in modern ages, countries release the contents of a census after some number of years. For the US, it is 72 years, for the UK, 100 years and for Canada, 92 years. In Canada, censuses have been taken periodically since 1666 with the first national census being conducted in 1871. In many cases, the actual paper census has been destroyed long ago, and only microfilm images (often poor microfilm images) remain. Of the available Canadian census records, those from 1901 and 1911 are generally the ones of most

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
To Catch your Eye-----	1
Programming-----	2
Canadian Census Records:	
The key to the past by Alan Greenberg-----	2
Searching for the Shtetls of Ancestors in Belarus by Gerald Posner-----	6
President’s Message by Stanley Diamond-----	9
Personal Archival Nuggets by Janice Rosen-----	10
Montreal - In Days Gone By Levy Solomons and the Fur Trade-----	12

interest to Jewish genealogists. Both of these censuses are online and both have been indexed by name.

Census records not only list the people who were around when the census was taken, but they also are windows into the times. But they are often cloudy windows which do not make viewing easy. Anyone who has used the US or UK census records is familiar with the problems: people who you know were around are mysteriously missing from the census, errors caused by a combination of people not telling the truth (deliberately or due to disinterest), census takers misunderstanding what is said, and of course, atrocious handwriting. To this is added the errors in reading and transcribing the census while indexing.

A genealogist using the Canadian census has a number of additional potential problems to contend with. For Quebec and some other regions, the census taker was often French-speaking. When coupled with eastern-European accents of many of our ancestors, the entries are often intriguing. Entries can be in English or French or a seemingly random combination of both. And last but not least, the resolution of some of the online images is relatively poor and you may find that going back to the microfilms will help in difficult legibility cases.

What do they contain?

Both the 1901 and 1911 census include names, addresses, family relationships, marital status, month and year of birth, age, country of birth, year of immigration, race, nationality, religion, employment information including salaries, education information and infirmities (the latter includes such categories as deaf, dumb, blind, crazy/lunatic and idiotic/silly). The 1901 census also includes exact date of birth and colour (white, red, black or yellow) and the 1911 census includes details of the amount of insurance carried as well as its costs.

How to Find Records

All census images for the 1901 and 1911 censuses are online of the Federal government's Canadian Genealogy Centre's (CGC) web site - <http://www.genealogy.gc.ca>, and all of the search indices use these images. There are two web sites where you can search indices of Canadian census records: <http://ancestry.ca> and <http://automatedgenealogy.com>.

<http://ancestry.ca>

This is a commercial site. For full access to Canadian records, the current price is \$47.40 per year or \$9.95 per month (no taxes, automatically renewable unless you cancel). However, they usually offer a free trial period (currently 14 days) and if you cancel before the trial is up, you pay nothing. However, it is important to understand that you can use most of their search capabilities without paying – only viewing the record details requires payment.

The quality of the indexing is very poor, with many errors of all sorts. However, this is offset by very powerful search capabilities. You can search based on partial names, with wild characters, traditional soundex, and Ancestry's proprietary fuzzy search. Both surnames and given names can be used. More important, if there is a family grouping, you can use the "advanced search" to, for example, look for a family with a child with a given name starting with "Jac" and a father's name sounding like Louis living in Ontario – no surnames mentioned at all (this is actually how I found my father's family).

<http://automatedgenealogy.com>

Automatedgenealogy is a volunteer project and there is no charge for using it. The indexing quality is very good and because they are proofreading all indices, quality will increase. Currently the 1901 proofreading is 60% complete, and the 1911 proofreading is starting. Searching is limited to surname within a

Hymovitch Moise	707, Hatfield	M	1865	45	mar	1865	45	Russie
Clara		F	1886	24		1886	24	Russie
Aby		M						Russie
Jos.		M						Russie
Rebecca		F						Russie
Gerty		F						Russie

Hymovitch Family

province. Soundex can be used as well. Once a search is done, you can narrow the results down based on given name and you can also switch provinces.

Some Examples

I will use several examples from my family to illustrate some of the problems encountered as well as the hidden treasures within census records. The first is the 1911 entry for my Hymovitch clan. Automated got the names perfect: Moïse, Clara, Aby, Jos., Rebecca and Gerty. Note that the census taker was French speaking, and spelled Moise with two dots over the I – the correct way to spell it in French. Clearly he or she had already done more than a few Jewish households. Clara was correctly indexed based on the entry, although no one in the family had ever heard her referred to like that – it was always Chaïke or Katie or Kate. Ancestry did not do quite as well. They indexed the surname as Hymovitz – a perfectly good spelling of the name, but clearly not the one that was in the census. The given names were disappointing as well: Marie, Clara, Roy, Joe, Rebecca and Gerty. Marie is a stretch, and the only way I can get Roy is to assume that the top of the B in Aby is really a descending loop on the A in Clara! They also interpreted the PQ of Aby's birthplace as RI for Rhode Island.

Note that the census includes both age and birth year, so it should be possible to check each against the other. Moise's entry seems consistent (age 45, born in 1865). Unfortunately, both figures are 20 years off, so it is clear that the census taker asked for one of the figures and calculated the other.

The next example is for my father's family.

Greenberg Louis								
"								
"								
"								
"								

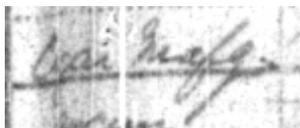
Greenberg Family

Clearly the census taker had a penmanship problem in writing the surname as well as my grandmother Edith's name. My father's name was Jacob Moses. We will never know what he was called at the tender age of two when the census was taken, but later in life he was known as Jack, and to his family as Jake. It is hard to believe that a Galicianer father and a Litvak mother referred to him as Jacque, but perhaps that's what it sounded like to the French-Canadian census taker in Ottawa.

Automatedgenealogy correctly read (or guessed) the surname as Greenberg. They made a reasonable guess at my grandmother's name and got Idath, and listed by father as Jacque. His brother was reasonably transcribed as "Unllin". Ancestry, for reasons that are beyond me, transcribed the surname as Greenberger. My grandmother was again Idath, and my father was Jacyus. In a flash of blinding insight, they got my uncle correct and read the illegible squiggle as Willie!

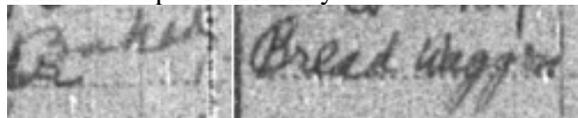
But the census is not just about names. The above record gives my grandfather's occupation as well. It is a bit hard to make out, but if you know the family lore, it is clear as day. It says "Cigar Manufacturer" confirming the old family

stories, and perhaps explaining the smelly cigars that he was always so fond of.



The record also showed that my grandfather was unusual in that he had a life insurance policy for \$1000. He paid \$48 per year for the policy, which also may give an insight into his business skills, since that seems to be about double what many other people paid for a similar amount of insurance. Or perhaps it indicated that manufacturing cigars was a risky business.

Family lore worked in this case, but it did not in the case of my grandfather's uncle Herzl Greenberg. I only found out about his existence a few years ago, and I knew that he ran a Hebrew book store in Toronto. But apparently that was not what he was doing in 1911. At that point, he was a baker and drove a Bread Wagon. Talk about upward mobility!



1901 Addresses

One use of a census is that it tells you where your family lived. If you look back to the entry for my Hymovitch family, you will see that they lived at 937 Hotel de Ville in Montreal in 1911. If you go through a similar exercise in the 1901 census, you will find that the form does not include an address! But the address IS in the census, you just need to find it. The process is a bit too convoluted to describe here, but there is a guide to locating 1901 census addresses on our website at <http://jgs-montreal.org/#research>. The example looks at *another* cigar manufacturer; a young man who went into his father's cigar business and made good. His company eventually grew into the Imperial Tobacco Company of Canada, he was the first Canadian-born Jew to be knighted, and Montreal's Jewish

General Hospital is named after him – Mortimer B. Davis.

Where oh where have my relatives gone?

If you are really lucky, when you search for your relatives in a census, you will find them. Often, that is not the case. There are a number of tricks that you can use to try to locate those who are hiding.

- Try all of the names that they may have used. Our ancestors were less formal than we are, and as is the case with my uncle, the name may have been given as Willie instead of William.
- If the name is commonly abbreviated when written, try the abbreviation. For example, try Wm. For William, and Chas. For Charles.
- Try reversing the given name and surname. Both census takers and indexers have sometimes done this by mistake.
- Due to poor handwriting as well as our lack of familiarity with old handwriting styles, it is easy to misread some letters. Try substituting other letters that may look alike.

o S, L	o O, Q
o T, F, J, I	o Q, I
o K, R	o U, W
o P, R	
- Use both trailing and in-the-middle wildcards (for Ancestry).
- Omit surname and use given names or birth year of relatives to narrow the search (Ancestry).

In Closing

Census records are an invaluable resource for genealogists. At the very least, they confirm information that you already have. More typically, they will tell you *something* about your family that you did not know. Often they will literally blow you away with some revelation that you otherwise would never have found out.

Good hunting. And stay tuned for the 1921 census to be released just six years from now in 2013!

SEARCHING FOR THE SHTETL OF ANCESTORS IN BELARUS

by Gerald Posner

Gerald Posner's great-grandparents left Belarus with their family in 1906 in order to escape the pogroms. Gerald has lived in Winnipeg for most of his life, and with his brother Michael, who lives in Toronto, had for a long time planned a trip to search out their historical roots by visiting 4 shtetls with family associations in Belarus – Mstislavl, Krichev, Shmerya and lastly Propoisk, now Slavgorod, where the family lived for a number of years, along with other families who also ultimately settled in Winnipeg. Gerald is an active member of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, which operates the Genealogical Society, and is a past president of that organization.

On April 24, 2007, I left with my brother Michael to visit Belarus and then to the Ukraine. We went to connect with our roots in Belarus for 4 days and then to join a Klezmer Heritage Cruise along the Dniepper River in the Ukraine for another 10 days. It was a visit that had a deep impact on me, both with respect to my personal history and also my understanding of the whole picture of Jewish history.

My quest to search out my ancestors began a long time ago and this trip was the culmination (or at least I thought it was to be) of all these years of research. I had accumulated a wealth of genealogical information about my grandparents, great-grandparents and even beyond them.

What I hoped to do on this journey was to locate any traces of the years spent in what was then known as White Russia, prior to the time when my family left for Canada in June 1906. I wanted to walk on the lands where my ancestors spent so many years. I was warned in advance that I would find nothing. And indeed, those that gave me this admonition were correct in their statements to me – at least in terms of actual documentary evidence or references on tombstones to the names of my family.

We did find cemeteries in every shtetl, but some of them were only partially in existence, and in others the tombstones were toppled. But for the most part the real problem was the passage of time which had effaced the writing on the tombstones.

But I did walk in the paths of my long lost family. Of that fact I am certain. I did feel the impact on me of the 4 shtetls we visited. The most significant aspect of these 4 shtetls was the fact that they had not really changed at all in the 100 years our family had been gone from there. Take away the paved road into the shtetls and the power lines that were not there in 1906, and I can say without fear of contradiction that life today in 2007 is not markedly different than the way it was in 1907. In truth, life has barely changed at all.

Mstislavl

One of the most telling moments of the trip to the shtetls was an encounter we had with a local woman just outside the cemetery in Mstislavl, the first shtetl we visited, and the place where my grandfather Herman Posner was born and married. We spotted her (later introduced to us as Ludmilla) sitting outside her dwelling, such as it was, on a stool with her babushka on over her head, her big boots on her feet and beside her a pail where she was peeling onions. Ludmilla was your basic stereotypical Belorussian woman, with a tendency to being grossly overweight and in need of serious dental work. With the assistance of our guide, we engaged her in conversation. She was 68 but looked to be 88.

The life there was and is hard. My brother asked her how much she would sell us her place for, and she was quite serious when she said \$2000 US. That would include the goat in the back, the roosters scattered all over the front yard, and the outhouse. There was no plumbing in this place or anywhere else in the former shtetl that we observed. I was astonished that she would sell at all, as where she would go is hard to imagine.

Yet I sensed that she and others we met were content with their lives, and if you have never seen Paris, then I suppose you could be happy in Mstislavl. Everyone else lives the same way, so there is no fear of envy.

Propoisk

Propoisk was the last shtetl we visited. Not only my own grandparents and family came from here, but it so happens that many other families living today in Winnipeg can trace their origins back to this shtetle.

We met with the last Jew still living in Propoisk. This was a woman who, in her humble surroundings, had gone to a great deal of trouble to prepare for us, as she made latkes and chopped egg. She was born in 1940 and as a result, when I read out the names of the people from Winnipeg that came from Propoisk (now named Slavgorod), she hardly recognized any of them.

She took us to the cemetery, and that there was still a cemetery there was quite a surprise to me. It obviously had been larger, but the Nazis had desecrated it, and part of it was razed to the ground. Yet there were still tombstones around and some of them were upright. However it was impossible to read them.

As I walked around the property, I felt that this was a place that contained my ancestors, and that years before me, many members of my family had been in this same cemetery for funerals. It just seemed so certain to me. In short, it was a very significant moment as I connected with my family of long ago.

What really hit home for me was after the visit to the cemetery when our host, Brina Baiver, took us to the memorial to the victims of the town annihilated by the Nazis. It was so clear to me then, as never before, that had my ancestors not left Propoisk in 1906 and had they still been there in the fall of 1941, their fate would have been sealed. Everyone who lived there at that

time perished, and that was the story it seemed for each shtetl we went to during our trip to Belarus. It was hard to say out loud that I was grateful to the pogroms of 1905, but the fact was it was those pogroms that triggered the desire of my great grandparents and 6 of their children to flee from the place that had been home to the family for close to 200 years.

A Magical Moment in Minsk

In retrospect, one of the highlights for us, if not the actual highlight moment, was the very first thing we did when we arrived in Belarus. Our guide met us at the airport in Minsk, the capital, where one has to fly into the country. She immediately took us to the Jewish Museum, even though it was closed. She had arranged for the director to stay on, and we met her. I showed her some of the material I had brought with me in the way of ancestral information.

One of the items was the original passport of my grandfather Herman Posner from 1906 when he left Russia. The Director was quite excited about it, since they had nothing like this passport, and she asked my brother and me to donate it to the Museum. We talked about it, and concluded that the passport would be of more value there than it would be in a box in my home. We figured that our grandfather was in this way somehow coming to life in his former homeland. Even though at the time it seemed like an insignificant thing to do, the gratitude of the Director so overwhelmed me that I knew right away that we had done something that was the right thing to do, and I felt good about it.

Klezmer Heritage Cruise

The next phase of the trip was to the Ukraine, where we participated in what was called a Klezmer Heritage boat cruise along the Dnieper River and also on the Black Sea. The tour lasted 10 days.

It is hard to describe our time on this cruise, but perhaps the best way to look at it is that the

Klezmer Cruise was like a camp for adults on a boat. There were lots of programmes on board and ashore. We were treated to concerts on board and in the cities of Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk and Odessa, and we visited other places in the Ukraine, including Zaporozhye, Kherson, Sevastopol, Yevpetoria and Yalta.

One of the most interesting aspects of the cruise was the lectures we received from a great Jewish scholar, Professor Eugene Orenstein from McGill University. We were all riveted to our seats as he spoke of the great glory of the Jews of Kiev and Odessa. We had many instances where we met with local leaders of the religious life in various places in the Ukraine.

The trip to Belarus and the Ukraine was all about the past of all the Jewish people. We saw glimpses of rebirth and it warmed our hearts to see this infusion of new blood come to a place once so rich in Judaism.

This trip, steeped as it was in the past, had a conclusion that gave me even more hope for the future.

In 1907, my father Samuel Posner was born in Winnipeg. In 2007, my daughter Amira presented me with her first child, Samantha, born just a day before my return to Canada.



I found this greeting card in one of my old family scrapbooks.
In my husband's family, hand drawn
and handwritten cards were always the method of choice.

DEADLINE FOR THE DECEMBER 2007 ISSUE - 15 NOVEMBER

**A MESSAGE FROM OUR
PRESIDENT
Stanley Diamond**

As I look back at my presentations at the International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Sale Lake City (July 2007), some thoughts occur that I would like to share with you. There were “messages” in these talks that have meaning for each one of us – whether we are a dedicated genealogist or merely an inquisitive individual just starting to feel our way around the world of Jewish Family History.

While we may have started our research because of curiosity about our family and its roots, those of us who have been at it a little while know that this is just part of the story. As we reach out to relatives – those we know and those we discover along the way, we often find ourselves in a unique position...the centre of the storm, so to speak, with a myriad of facts and detailed information as well as confidential stories you wouldn't dare to repeat. The importance of being the centre was reflected in both my talks on which I would like to draw.

In my talk “Medical & Genetic Family History: the Role of the Jewish Genealogist”, I stressed that the word role has a very broad meaning, a combination of responsibility and obligation ...the responsibility to acquire information about our family's medical and genetic history and the obligation to share that knowledge – if, as, or when it's needed.

We either have become, or need to become, the repository of vital medical and genetic information for our families. With the advent of widely available genetic testing, the giant leaps in disease identification, the dramatic growth of DNA databanks, the introduction of umbilical cord blood storage, and the new science of gene replacement therapy, we have been given an increased opportunity – and responsibility – to contribute to both our own family's personal health and that of future generations. With

family history research easier than ever, we genealogists now have previously unimagined opportunities to grab our medical and genetic data and, in tandem with our family trees, use this information to enhance the health of the people in our families.

U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona has commented on the importance of using family gatherings to collect important health history information that can benefit all family members and their future generations. As he explained, “the bottom line is that knowing your family history can save your life; millions of dollars in medical research, equipment, and knowledge can't give us the information that this simple tool can. When a health care professional is equipped with a patient's family health history, he or she can often assess the inherent risk factors and begin tests or treatment even before any disease is evident”.

I hope you will feel the need to document your family's medical and genetic history. I say “NEED”, not want...because when you're in a position to help your family – those you know, or future generations not yet born – I hope you'll share my belief that “it must be done because it can and should be done”.

In my talk “Jewish Records Indexing – Poland ¹; What's New?” I mentioned a discussion I had with staff of the Yad Vashem Hall of Names concerning the value of the JRI-Poland database in providing detailed information for a sizeable number of Holocaust victims as well as identifying names of previously unknown family that perished. But no matter what the source, our individual research often enables us to document family members who died at the hands of the Nazis but who are not recorded in Pages of Testimony.

¹ Stanley Diamond is the Executive Director of Jewish Records Indexing – Poland.

Each one of us can make a difference. As I pointed out in Salt Lake City, as family

historians, we have the opportunity and responsibility to document our family so that in time of need, we will have medical and genetic history that can save a life. And, by filling our Pages of Testimony, we can make the mitzvot of giving back the names and memorializing previously undocumented members of our family.

FOLLOW-UP NOTE:

Many of you will remember Stanley's message to us in June 2007 when he referred in fond terms to the role a previously unknown cousin had had

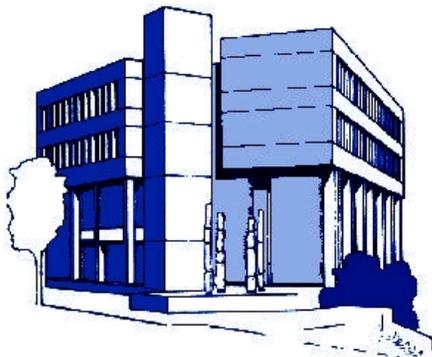
in his initiation into the world of family history. On 5 July Stanley received word that this cousin, Arthur Fink, had died. In Stanley's own words:

"I have Arthur to thank for prodding me with questions I could not answer, for sharing family history that I had never heard before and for unwittingly opening up a world I barely knew or could have dreamed of knowing."

May our condolences be expressed through remembering to honour our own mentors.

AJ

**PERSONAL ARCHIVAL NUGGETS
 AT THE
 CJCC NATIONAL ARCHIVES**
 by Janice Rosen
 Archives Director
 Canadian Jewish Congress
 Charities Committee
 National Archives



Despite the fact that, aside from a few exceptions, the CJCC National Archives does not house "life cycle" records (such as birth and marriage notices), it seems as if everyone associated with us eventually ends up finding something of their own past among the collections here.

This evidence can turn up in the form of a name on an organizational membership list or letterhead, as a notation in a list of immigrant arrivals helped by JIAS or the United Jewish Relief Agencies, as a photo of someone attending a protest meeting, or as a clipping in our extensive "Personalia" name files. Therefore, when someone consults us looking for family history records and finds we don't have any fitting their situation, I usually ask them to cast around for ideas of their ancestors' possible affiliations or interests that might have resulted in their being recorded here in some way.

I can amply attest to this phenomena myself, even though I come from a family that was not especially known for its contribution to the shaping of our local community. Nonetheless, I have found mentions of both my parents (including my father as an infant, but more on that later), both my father's parents, and my mother's aunt and uncle. To give my favourite example, while cataloguing Federation of Jewish Philanthropy records I came across my mother's health report from the Herzl dispensary clinic, filled out when she was 11 years old. The form listed her address at a location I had not yet heard about during my previous family history queries, as it occurred during a short period when the family boarded with her aunt. It noted that she had good posture and "drank her milk obediently but refused cold cereal".

All of the volunteers who have worked with us over the years came to us because of an interest in history and community service, but it doesn't necessarily follow that every one of them should have found unexpected glimpses of their personal history archived with us. Yet in virtually all instances such has turned out to be the case.

Willie Glaser, whose article about JIAS cases appeared in the previous issue of this publication, found himself on a list of Jewish ex-servicemen of the Free Polish Army who were settled in Ste-Sophie in 1946. More significantly, a published list of deportees from France, found in our library collection, gave him his first clue as to the fate of his father during the Holocaust. Our former volunteer Abe Bonder found the letters he wrote to a Canadian army chaplain in Germany immediately after WWII, requesting permission to marry his wife while she was still living in a nearby DP camp. Another former volunteer, Ruth Wolkowicz, found herself in a photo of the audience at a youth event hosted by the YM-YWHA in the late 1940s, as well as on a list in a CJC payroll book, dating from when she worked as a temporary employee here in the early 1950s.

Meanwhile, just about every male relative of our researchers and volunteers of a certain age have appeared in Rabbi (Mohel) J.L. Colton's 1917-1953 ledgers recording all the circumcisions he performed in and around Montreal.

And, most unexpectedly our non-Jewish (and non Montreal-raised) assistant archivist Hélène Vallée saw her mother show up in a Sheila Finestone collection Liberal Party newsletter congratulating her on her 25 years of involvement with the party in the Saguenay Lac-St-Jean region.



The Mary Rosen, whose name appears in the right column, was my grandmother.

Family lore said my father's family was not at all interested in religion, but I know they lived right across the street from this synagogue during the time in question (the early 1950s) and my father told me his father used to play pinochle there "and join a minyan when they were short." So finding this name on the plaque – and there can't be that many MARY Rosens, so it must be her – seems to confirm and enhance this bit of family information.

Such nuggets of information may provide leads for further research, or may simply be an interesting footnote in the jigsaw of a family history. I encourage you to come and try your luck with us. You never know what may turn up.

Montreal - In Days Gone By
LEVY SOLOMONS
AND THE FUR TRADE



Levy Solomons is believed to have been born in England in either 1729 or 1730. There is no way to be sure just exactly when, or with whom, he crossed the Atlantic, but there is strong evidence that once he was in New York by the mid 1750s he was in partnership with his presumed cousin Ezekiel Solomon, as well as Benjamin Lyon, Chapman Abraham and Gershon Levy. They set about trading in and around Albany.

Their trading with the Indians meant that they were well positioned to supply the British even before the conquest of 1760. Afterwards, the partners stuck loosely together, as they branched out separately into various areas to maximize their participation in the lucrative fur trade. It was a natural progression of his own trading activities that led Levy Solomons to Montreal where, among the pioneering settlers in the fledgling community, he quickly gained prominence as a versatile merchant. His enterprises extended from Michilimackinac, on the straits between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, to the Gulf of the St. Lawrence and down the Hudson River.

In the summer of 1761 Ezekiel Solomon set out for Mackinac. From the very beginning, the settlers had hair-raising adventures as they set about their business for the rich northern fur trade. They became friendly with the Chippewa Indians, but then a band of nearby Ottawa presented demands and threatened destruction of the group. English troops arrived and rescued the traders, and by staying on to continue his fur trading business, Ezekiel Solomon became the first known Jewish settler in Michigan.

Two years later, Ezekiel and other settlers went through the horrors of the general Indian uprising that became known as Pontiac's Conspiracy. They experienced captivity with the imminent threat of death by torture, but luckily were among the few to survive. Broke, but alive.

Levy was also captured in that summer of 1763. During the two year period between 1761 and 1763, the Indians living in the Great Lakes area who had been allied to the French became edgy as the British presence grew. The Ottawa chief, by name Pontiac, rallied his group in order to attack British garrisons and those traders who were plying their business throughout the area.

On 20 May 1763, Levy Solomons and three other people were in their canoes on Lake Erie, just a few miles from Fort Detroit, when they were captured. They were held by the Indians for some time, but eventually with a fortuitous combination of skill and luck, they managed to escape. Happy to be alive, Levy then faced the reality that he had lost all his trading goods.

Ezekiel Solomon remained in the Great Lakes area, and in 1765 he and Gershon Levy bought a small house at Fort Michilimackinac, the ruins of which were found by archaeologists between 1983 and 1985.

Levy Solomons returned to Montreal and in 1768 married Louise Loubier. Their daughter, Sarah, married Thomas McCord in 1798, and it was their grandson David Ross McCord who founded the McCord Museum in Montreal. In 1775 (three years after Louise's death) Levy married Rebekah Franks. One of their daughters, Rachel, married Henry Joseph in 1803. Henry and Rachel Joseph's great great grandson, William K. Joseph – Bill - became my husband.

Levy Solomons died in Montreal in 1792.

Anne Joseph