

# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CENTRAL JERSEY



FALL 2012

NEWSLETTER

Tishri-Heshvan

## Finding a Cousin and Coming Full Circle

by Deborah Cohn and Susan Lederer Geiger

If you want inspiration and ideas about how to search for your family's roots, Susan Lederer Geiger is a wonderful role model for success in the field of family genealogy. Several years ago, Sue, who lives in California, visited the JHSCJ in search of her great-great-grandparents, Samuel and Marie Abeles Lederer, and their roots in New Brunswick\*. As teenagers in the 1850's, Samuel and Marie emigrated separately from Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) to New York City. Both of their families were in the leather business. After they married, the couple moved to New Brunswick, New Jersey, and established a tannery on the outskirts of town, where there would be fewer neighbors to be offended by the foul odors.

**FERTILIZER.**

Farmers wanting a first class fertilizer for cabbages, should try our special cabbage manure,

**PURE GROUND BONE,**

**\$28 per Ton.**

Liberal Discount for Cash.

**SAMUEL LEDERER & SONS**

Somerset Street and Mile  
Run Brook. j18-tf

There they flourished and raised a family of eleven children, all of whom survived to adulthood. Their business, Lederer & Sons, provided leather goods, including saddlebags, to the Union army during the Civil War. The Lederers were among the founding members of Temple Anshe Emeth (now Anshe

Emeth Memorial Temple) in New Brunswick. Recently, a descendant of Samuel and Marie Lederer joined that congregation: Sue Geiger's cousin, Marylu Simon. Marylu lives just thirty minutes away from New Brunswick, but before Sue contacted her last year,

\*Read about Sue Geiger's visit to the JHSCJ in the Winter 2007 Newsletter on our website at <http://www.jewishgen.org/jhscj/Bulletin.html>.

Marylu didn't know that her family had ever lived in the city, or been connected to Anshe Emeth.

It all began with a photocopied page from a family Bible that had belonged to Sue's great-great-grandparents, Samuel and Marie, and which listed the names and birth dates of their children. Sue resolved to track down as many of their living descendants as possible. By 2011 she had found and established contact with cousins descended from seven of Samuel and Marie's children, but none from the eldest son, Samuel, who



*Lucile Lederer Tilles, 1911*

had moved west in the 1880's. He established himself in St. Louis, Missouri, where he operated a successful construction company that built many of the prominent buildings that still stand in the city. Samuel returned to New Jersey for his father's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party in 1894 and for his parents' Golden Anniversary celebration in 1902. After that, the

East Coast and Midwest branches of the Lederer family lost touch for over one hundred years.

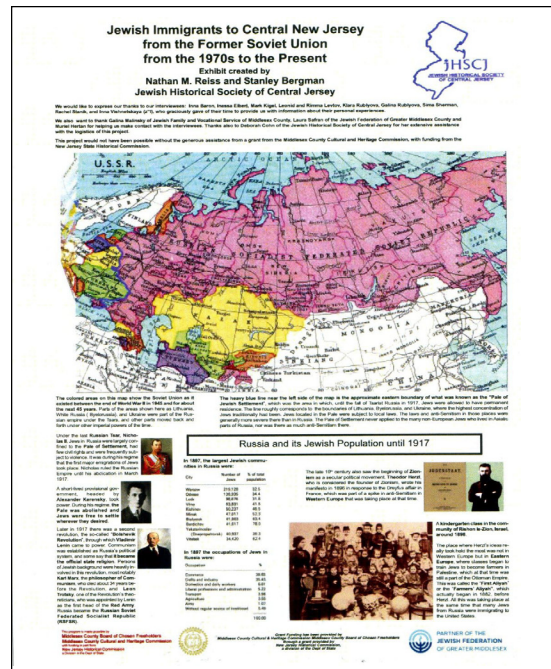
Last fall, Sue "Googled" the name of one of Samuel's daughters, Lucile Lederer, together with "St. Louis". One of the search "hits" was a book listing a member of the Washington University Alumni Club of New York as Lucile Lederer Tilles, AB, '10". Now Sue knew

*(continued on page 4)*

# Former Soviet Union Traveling Exhibit Hits the Road

Last year the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey received a grant from the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission and the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders to develop a traveling exhibit and to record oral histories on recent Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union. Dr. Nathan Reiss reported on the results of the interviews at our Spring Meeting. Now the JHSCJ has created a traveling exhibit that illustrates the rich culture from which these recent immigrants came, and their motivations and struggles in leaving their former homes and establishing themselves in America. The exhibit includes photos, documents and other materials of historical and cultural interest that they have preserved and that are of interest to the community at large, telling their stories through visual images and in the words of the immigrants who participated in our research.

This traveling exhibit is intended to familiarize the Middlesex County community with the immigration experience, as well as presenting a visual context and background of Jewish life in the Former Soviet Union. It includes five 24"x36" full color display boards, and has been offered at no cost to local libraries, synagogues, Jewish Community Centers and other public venues. If you would like to see our exhibit at a loca-



Example of one of the Exhibit Boards

tion near you, please contact Debbie Cohn at [info.jhscj@gmail.com](mailto:info.jhscj@gmail.com), or phone 732-249-4894. The current schedule for the exhibit is:

October 2012: Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple, New Brunswick

November 2012: South Brunswick Public Library

February 2013: Jewish Community Center, Edison

**Grant funding has been provided by Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission, Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders through a grant provided by New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of Dept of State.**



**SUPPORTED BY THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER MIDDLESEX**

## EDITORIAL STAFF

### Contributors:

Susan Lederer Geiger  
Deborah Cohn

**Graphic Artist** Deborah Cohn

## CONTENTS

A Knight to Remember.....	Page 5
Donations.....	Page 4
Editorial Page.....	Page 2
Finding a Cousin.....	Page 1
FSU Traveling Exhibit.....	Page 2
Low Bloom Honored.....	Page 3
Membership News.....	Page 4
Perth Amboy Book.....	Page 3
Tributes.....	Page 4

## JHSCJ OFFICERS

<b>President</b>	Nathan M. Reiss
<b>Vice President</b>	Harvey Hauptman
<b>Secretary</b>	Gloria Cohn
<b>Treasurer</b>	Philip Cantor

## JHSCJ Board Member Lew Bloom Receives Belated Military Honors

Lewis Bloom, a longtime JHSCJ Board member, was honored earlier this year by the French government, which bestowed upon him the French Legion of Honor (Knight) for his work in that country during World War Two. The decoration was presented by the French Ambassador to the U.S., Francois Delattre and Guy Wildenstein, President of the American Society of the French Legion of Honor, in thanks for Lew's contributions in WW-2 military intelligence. Lew and his wife, Ada, and their children attended the ceremony with about 30 other veterans on May 8 at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.



Lew Bloom

Prior to WW-2 there was not yet a formal active U.S. Army intelligence service branch, although a specialist school for the purpose was established at Camp Ritchie, Md. Lew was trained there in Order of Battle Analysis. He was then attached to the 28th Infantry Division in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) and served in Normandy and northern France after

D-Day. Later, he worked with elements of the Free French Forces of the Interior in Paris (as he did in Normandy) and subsequently was attached to the 100th Infantry Division in southern France and Alsace. In that assignment, he worked closely with the adjacent French Army.

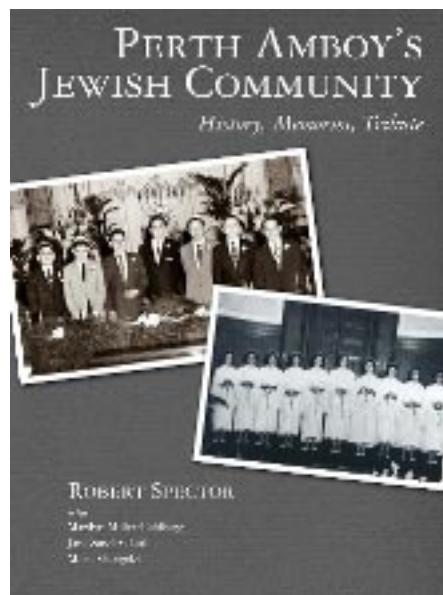
When WW-2 ended, the records citing his work in the ETO were lost. Lew credits Ada with setting in motion the search for and formal recognition of his U.S. Army role shortly before his 90th birthday. It was only when Ada contacted Senator Robert Menendez that the effective wheels were set in motion and his records surfaced. He then received the long delayed U.S. Army Bronze Star Medal as well as the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal. Two years later, Lew's work with the French emerged to earn him recognition, and he was awarded the French Legion of Honor (Knight).

Lew lectures at Rutgers several times a year, where he contributes to the Rutgers Oral History Archives by sharing his WW-2 experiences with history majors.

---

## PERTH AMBOY BOOK TO BE RELEASED

In our last Newsletter, you read Marilyn Millet Goldberg's story of how a group of people raised in Perth Amboy worked together to preserve the history of the Jewish community in which they grew up. Now their book is rolling off the presses! *Perth Amboy's Jewish Community: History, Memories, Tribute*, a hard-cover volume written by Perth Amboy native Robert Spector, is in full color and contains personal interviews, hundreds of archive and family photos, and extensive research. The result is an accurate and comprehensive record of the Perth Amboy Jewish community that will thrill those who grew up in the city, and fascinate anyone interested in New Jersey's Jewish history. In the 160 pages, chapters



are devoted to synagogues including Shaarey Tefilah, Beth Mordecai, Beth Israel, the clergy, businesses, professionals, Jewish education, the magnificent YMHA and the unique fabric of Jewish life that flourished in Perth Amboy.

The book is being offered at a pre-publication price of \$60. ***The deadline to order has been extended especially for members of the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey until November 1.*** After that date, the book will sell for \$85. To purchase a copy, contact Marilyn Goldberg at [marilynmgpa@aol.com](mailto:marilynmgpa@aol.com), or phone 609-655-2351, and mention that you are a member of the JHSCJ.

## TRIBUTES

From	Occasion
Susan Marchand	Mazel tov to Bonnie & Sheldon Freidenreich on your Temple honor
Susan Marchand	Mazel tov to Dr. Rachel Gordan
Jessica Allison	In Memory of Jenny Brown
Ruth Marcus Patt	In honor of the birth of her 5th great-grandchild
Yvette Zamost	In Memory of Sydney Zamost

## DON'T FORGET:

**Make your tax-deductible donation to the JHSCJ before December 31, 2012!!**

## MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our new members:

Carole Yablonowitz      Daniel Greenwald  
Mr. & Mrs. Sheldon Gasior

New Life Member:

Ann Zar Taub

Thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Solomon Rosenberg, Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Sabin, and Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Shure for their donations to the JHSCJ Archives Fund.

Thank you for renewing at the PATRON Level:

Beatrice Beck	Gloria Cohn	Eileen Robison
Roberta Belsky	Francine Derman	Betty Saltiel
Ruth Bickhardt	Harvey & Felice Hauptman	Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Shure
Irving Bussel	Dr. Norman Reitman	

*(continued from Page 1)*

Lucile's college graduation year (1910), her married name of Tilles, and that she lived in New York in 1924.

Census records and online research helped Sue locate Marylu Simon, Lucile's granddaughter. Marylu later told Sue that she always proudly carried a photo of Lucile taken on the day her grandmother graduated from college. Lucile was described at the time as one of nine women graduates and "the only Jewess" in the Class of 1910. Lucile's college graduation was the link to connect Sue with her third cousin once removed, Marylu.

Marylu was understandably excited at being "found" by Sue, and amazed that her family had been so closely associated with New Brunswick. She shared this story with some friends, who turned out to be members of Anshe Emeth. They suggested that Marylu contact Rabbi Bennett Miller at the temple, and she visited for



*Marylu Simon holds the Lederer Torah*

the first time last spring. There she learned more about the Lederer family's connection to Anshe Emeth, and that they had donated a Torah to the congregation, a gift that was confirmed by a silver plaque with the Lederer name. The Torah is still used regularly by the congregation, and Rabbi Miller opened the ark and showed it to Marylu. She writes, "I can't begin to tell you what it felt like when Rabbi Miller handed me the "Lederer Torah." It's a moment I will never forget."

Marylu Simon is now a member of the temple that her great-great-grandparents helped establish over 150 years ago. She is working with her cousin Sue Geiger, researching the St. Louis Lederers to fill in some of the blanks in the Lederer family tree. If you have an interest in genealogy, start searching the Internet,

online newspapers, census records and directories. Maybe you, too, will uncover a long-lost cousin or a precious family heritage.

## A Knight To Remember

One of the most striking monuments in Arlington National Cemetery is the Confederate Memorial. Commissioned by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, it was designed and executed by a most unlikely candidate: Sir Moses Jacob Ezekiel (1844-1917) of Richmond, Virginia, the first great American Jewish sculptor, who was living in Rome.

Ezekiel was 16 when Fort Sumter was attacked in 1861. An ardent believer in states' rights, Ezekiel begged his parents to allow him to enroll at the Virginia Military Institute. They consented, and he became the first Jew to attend VMI. Three years later, when the cadets were summoned to aid Confederate General John C. Breckenridge at the Battle of New Market, Virginia, Ezekiel bravely partook in the cadets' charge against Union lines.

When the war ended, Ezekiel completed his studies at VMI and graduated in 1866. According to Ezekiel's memoirs and letters, which repose at the American Jewish Historical Society, Ezekiel met General Robert E. Lee during this period. Lee counseled Ezekiel, "I hope you will be an artist... [A]nd do earn a reputation in whatever profession you undertake."

Living up to Lee's injunction, Ezekiel won worldwide fame as a sculptor. Had he been born a century earlier, Ezekiel would almost certainly never have become a sculptor at all. Until the early 1800s in America, the phrase "Jewish artist" was an oxymoron. American Jewish painters were rare and Jewish sculptors rarer still because of the Second Commandment's prohibition against making images. By the time Ezekiel was born in 1844, however, most American rabbis interpreted the commandment to mean that Jews should not worship graven images, as opposed to painting or sculpting them. By the 1860s, Ezekiel was free to give three-dimensional expression to his Judaism without violating his faith.

From the start, Judaism was a major theme of Ezekiel's art. At age 13, he executed a bust of "Cain Receiving the Curse of the Almighty." His second work, "Moses Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai," collapsed during a storm, an occurrence his grandmother, who remained a Second Commandment strict constructionist, attributed to divine justice.

In the late 1860s, Ezekiel studied painting and sculpture in Cincinnati and Berlin. In the latter city, his bas-relief "Israel" won a prestigious prize that enabled him to study in Rome. One critic, who took note of the fact that the talented young winner was a Jew, expressed the hope that Ezekiel "would disprove the prevailing notion that the race of Shem has no genius for the plastic arts."

Ezekiel became an expatriate, living in Rome for more than 40 years. Yet his most important sculpture commissions were for works erected in the United States. In 1876, the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith asked Ezekiel to create an allegorical sculpture of "Religious Liberty" for the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. The resulting marble statue, featuring an eight-foot-tall woman wearing a coat of armor against the shaft of tyranny, now stands outside the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia.

Ezekiel's work also adorns the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., and the Confederate Cemetery at Johnson's Island, Ohio, among other sites, and he designed the seal of the Jewish Publication Society of America. In 1899, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the leader of American Reform Judaism and founder of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, posed for Ezekiel. Ezekiel's father Jacob was the first secretary of the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College.

Ezekiel did "earn a reputation" as Robert E. Lee had hoped, and he proved that Jews could be sculptors. By the time the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) approached him to execute the Confederate Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery (1914), Ezekiel felt he

could dictate the terms of his commission. He insisted that the UDC give him full artistic license for the monument, which was based on the words of the prophet Isaiah: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." The UDC agreed nervously to Ezekiel's conditions but was delighted with the results.

As a tribute to the beauty of his work, Ezekiel was knighted by Emperor William I of Germany and Kings Humbert I and Victor Emmanuel II of Italy—hence his title "Sir." Despite his Roman residence and his familiarity with celebrities and kings, no one remained a more loyal son of the South or proud American than this expatriate Jew from Richmond. When Ezekiel died in Rome in 1917, he left behind a specific request that his body be returned to America and buried at the base of his confederate Memorial in Arlington, alongside his comrades-in-arms.

*Reprinted with permission from the American Jewish Historical Society.*

*Until the early 1800's in America, the phrase "Jewish Artist" was an oxymoron .*

For photos and more information about the Confederate Memorial and descriptions of the symbols Ezekiel included in his work, visit online at <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/visitorinformation/MonumentMemorials/Confederate.aspx>.

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage PAID  
New Brunswick, NJ  
Permit No. 217

Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey  
222 Livingston Avenue  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
(732) 249-4894  
WWW.Jewishgen.Org/JHSCJ  
E-mail: info.jhscj@gmail.com

**For your convenience, this form is for your tributes.**

TO: Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Major featured articles and events from this newsletter are available on our web site: [www.jewishgen.org/jhscj](http://www.jewishgen.org/jhscj) approximately two weeks before it reaches you by mail.*