

S.A. SIG

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Editor: Beryl Baleson

balden@zahav.net.il

Southern African Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We greatly regret that Beryl Baleson has decided to relinquish the post of editor of this newsletter. She initiated the idea of a SA-SIG Newsletter, and has devoted many hours of hard work over the past four years to setting a high standard. Under her guidance, the Newsletter has dealt with a broad set of topics and items, and has evolved into a general South African forum with many items of interest other than so-called genealogy! All of us thank her for her outstanding past efforts, and we hope she will continue to contribute whenever possible.

Beryl's will be a hard act to follow, but the good news is that, from the far-off Northern regions of Australia, Bubbles Segall has agreed to take over as Editor of the Newsletter. Many of us have had contact with Bubbles by e-mail, and those who attended the last conference in Washington may have met her. Thus, from now on, relevant material for the Newsletter should be sent to Bubbles at: *bubbles@octa4.net.au*. Layout and distribution will continue to be handled on each side of the USA by Roy Ogus in Palo Alto and Mike Getz in Washington.

In closing, I would like to again ask all readers to encourage others to subscribe to the Newsletter. A number of major libraries around the world are now receiving the SA-SIG Newsletter, and it certainly fills a large gap in the world of South African Jewish interest.

Saul Issroff

saul@shaul.homechoice.co.uk

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EDITORIAL

The 24th International Conference on Jewish Genealogy will be held at the Renaissance Hotel in Jerusalem, Israel from 4th - 9th July 2004. The website, for your interest, is as follows:

http://www.ortra.com/jgen2004/

The Conference Site is centrally located near major Archives such as the Central Zionist Archives, who have approved special access to the records of the Jewish Agency Search Bureau for Missing Relatives.

Yad Vashem, which has the world's largest documentation of the *Shoah*, has offered Conference attendees to research their archives. In addition, chief archivists have agreed to give introductory lectures on their archives and onsite research

The program will include plenary and parallel sessions with about 100 lectures by leading international experts on themes at the cutting edge of the field, such as, the waves of immigration to *Eretz Israel*; Jewish communities and social histories; Education programs; Genetics; Ethics; Genealogy by Region; Holocaust – *Shoah*; Genealogy and the Internet; Genealogy for Beginners, and more.

The South African Special Interest Group will be hosting a Luncheon with a Guest Speaker and we are planning to have a full-day Session applicable to South African Jewish Genealogy.

In addition to the above, Mike Getz visited us a month ago, and his very optimistic report on his trip to Israel follows this message. Manfred Schwartz and his wonderful memory continue to enlighten us in his articles on *Betar* and *Machal*. Also included in this Newsletter is a list of Archival Research Facilities in South Africa, which was compiled by Saul Issroff. The next part of Terry Kegel's article on the topic of S.A. Zionism and Youth Movements also appears herein. A lovely, warm article which appeared in the *Zionist Record* some years ago, on the Jewish Community of Oudsthoorn, was forwarded on to me for publication by Doreen Miller, formerly from Johannesburg, now living in Melbourne, Australia. Finally, the story of a very musical *Litvak* family in South Africa is told to us by Gilbert Herbert.

I hope you enjoy reading this Newsletter, and at the same time please note that contributions towards future Newsletters are welcomed.

Please note that the contents of the articles contain the opinions of the authors and do not reflect those of the Editor, nor the members of the SA-SIG Board.

Beryl Baleson

Editor

balden@zahav.net.il

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REPORT ON VISIT TO ISRAEL

Mike Getz

It was a long flight to Ben Gurion from Washington DC via Chicago and Dulles. In general, security procedures were perhaps more complex en route to Israel than after landing there. Our arrival coincided with a considerable battalion of Yeshiva students who had their own diversity within traditional norms.

The taxi ride to Tel-Aviv was on an excellent road by any standard, our driver somewhat preoccupied by radio, cell phone and pulsing traffic. Our hotel was on Hayarkon Street, that familiar strip of many visits. Every building entrance had a security presence but there was no sense of anxiety or tension. Hotel occupancy was low. In general, standards were improved if under-utilized. Ben Yehudah Street was less vital – a victim of altered shopping and dining habits. The weaker economy was no help. Tel-Aviv's beachfront and its convivial strollers remain splendid.

Our meetings with family members included news about younger members in the IDF, their achievements there and elsewhere, as well as lifecycle events. Hilda's cousin, Chassida, told us about her young granddaughter's ceremonial promotion to officer rank. Martha-Lev-Zion of the Latvia SIG came up by train from Be'er Sheva to discuss our mutual interests and the Jerusalem Conference. We reviewed the potential of that event and I was familiarized with Israel's matchless resources for the genealogist. In the afternoon Hilda and I met Yael Moritz, a friend of long standing at the Tel Aviv Museum. Work of a Jewish artist portraying the horror of 19th century pogroms in Eastern Europe was on display for the first time. The pictures were an almost frightening anticipation of Holocaust events to come.

The following day we took the train to Akko en route to Manof where a distant cousin lived in a community originally founded by South Africans. The train from Tel-Aviv was a delight: comfortable, smooth and quick. Aviva collected us for the ride to Manof. Her mother was Minke Getz, a family connection, and also, a close friend of my own mother in Subate, Latvia. Aviva's maiden name was Elterman, related to Brad Elterman – another US genealogy honcho with SA connections.

Our road through the Carmiel area of Haifa was in country a little reminiscent of the Cape. Hilda and I were given a great lunch and a full family update. At the end of dessert, almost to the second, Les Dembo, of Cape Town *Betar* vintage, Jack and Janice Friedburg, a Seardel connection and Bokkie Segal of Claremont, walked in. We touched many bases, identified shared interests and concerns. We agreed that recording the Jewish families of South Africa and their transitions was an important goal. I learned about the founding of *Manof*, the sacrifices, achievements and enduring standards.

Jack drove us back to Akko for the train to Tel-Aviv. At the station we saw a large group of soldiers, handsome, poised and confident young men and women. They were our traveling companions to Tel-Aviv and added a memorable character to the journey. Their presence was a reminder that young Israelis make an early and heavy investment in a future we share.

We had been in Tel-Aviv since Monday October 27th, and moved to Jerusalem on Friday. The *Kottel* awaited us. We went our separate ways, Hilda to candle lighting and I to *Mincha* and *Kabbalat Shabbat*. There was no lack of diversity among the worshippers – in their *Shabbat* dress, various *nusachim* as well as the singing and dancing. *Shabbat* was certainly ushered in with robust joy.

Rose Lerer Cohen and Ron had asked us to join them for *Shabbat* with their family and friends. Stimulating exchanges on the nature of our Jewish universe and Israel's centrality enhanced a wonderful meal. The challenge remained to articulate a concept and spirit of universality that can underwrite Jewish continuity in a challenging era. It was a fine *Erev Shabbat* in Jerusalem.

The next morning we joined a group from Bethesda, organized for Ben Gurion University, and began with a morning service at *Heichal Shlomo* and a leisurely day walking through the city. Toward the end of *Shabbat* we reach Ben Yehuda Street where younger *Yerushalmi's* had gathered – a surprising blend of orthodox and less traditional young men and women. It is a street that has seen victims yet all the stores, with their varied merchandise were open, but only modestly patronized. Our group shopped intensively then made our way to the King David for drinks and its special aura.

On Sunday we traveled with our Bethesda hosts through the city and to Gilo where our guide showed us the source of sniper fire directed at apartments close by. A wall had been erected to deal with the threat. It was decorated with lighthearted paintings of people at work and play. But here, as elsewhere, in Jerusalem there was no tension, no preoccupation with security. Basic systems were in place that were neither obtrusive nor burdensome. The tour included a quick visit to *Yad Vashem* – familiar buildings and sites almost obscured by massive ongoing construction. The day concluded with *falafel* and *pita* in the early afternoon.

Our accommodation at the Inbal served as a base for an over-ambitious program that involved family, friends and genealogy. We did manage to walk from there to see some Yiddish theatre – Sholem Aleichem's *Tevya*, no less, done by a company whose Yiddish featured strong Galizianer overtones. In due course we would meet Beryl and Hayyim, with Rose in pursuit of SA-SIG and Conference business, as well as a cousin and his fiancé, delightful members of the more traditional community.

It was good to deal with SIG matters one-to-one as opposed to via e-mail with its limitations. Topics such as our role at the Conference, what we wanted to achieve and whom we should approach for the various responsibilities, were discussed. There were some distinguished authorities on our Community who would feature to provide both expertise and guidance on key sources in South Africa. We also agreed to consider a report on feedback from the SA Family Project questionnaire, which Bubbles Segall is running. In principle as well, the role of SA Zionist Youth Movements in the Jewish Community and Israel will be addressed in a series of studies. We agreed that Jewish Genealogy should be the strong motif in presentations together with Israel as a primary source in that field.

Rose was our guide and mentor for her beautiful city. The Jerusalem stone that offered its character and endurance to the city's buildings was in robust contrast to contemporaneous facades in Tel Aviv. The latter showed ravages of time while the former validated an eternal city.

At *Yad Vashem* again, Rose and I spent some hours poring through Pages of Testimony. I was fortunate to have the help and guidance of Bella Noham, fluent in a remarkable Yiddish and a child of Riga.

She typified the standards and quality of support and service at *Yad Vashem* today. The Pages of Testimony will be a key resource likely to be on the Web in a few months – an excellent tool in preparation for the July Conference in Jerusalem. Once more we can perceive that Israel is a primary resource for the Jewish genealogist.

During mid-week we traveled to Herzlia to enjoy a break and see our many friends in the area. Beryl and Hayyim were kind enough to visit again to tie up some loose ends. Hayyim and I discussed the preparation of a history of the SA *Betar*. Between us we covered almost 65 years of links with the movement and the many SA *Betarim* who are in Israel. Harry Hurwitz, of Begin Center fame, is the most senior – I was really sorry not being able to see him in Jerusalem. Malcolm Finn and Maureen came for a drink and we shared memories that came alive with events and the people they inspired.

Rae and Jack Galloon, who were our wonderful principal hosts in Israel, had an evening for us in their Ra'anana apartment. Hilda and I met Ricky and Gordon Futeran, Harry and Audrey Katz, Morrie and Pat Basker, Harold and Mollie Rabkin, Wally and Esther Katz. We covered familiar ground that included Herzlia fetes, lift clubs and our local but separate *shuls*. They all characterized those special concerns and interests, including local *shuls* that typify South Africans everywhere. Abel and Glenda Levitt were wonderful company over dinner on another occasion. Abel updated us on his global activities and the work he and an extended family have done to honour their Lithuanian Holocaust victims. Lunch with David and Alice Marks was a special event marked by the sparkle and intelligence that is their own. Chaim Beigel and Zelda treated us to an elite lunch in Herzliya – bringing back for me the formative years Chaim and I spent in Woodstock. We would take leave of Israel with a wonderful dinner at a Moroccan restaurant on a *moshav* outside Netanya with the Galloons and the Levitts.

Our visit was memorable. The heart of Jewish identity today is at home in Israel. Its role and stature is enhanced by those who guard and protect it. They do so, in freedom, with determination and commitment. All that we cherish is secure in their custody. As Jews, we owe them our commitment and partnership.

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FAMILY STORY

Harold Arkoff

My mother, born Gitel Lurie (they spelled it Lurje) in Laizuva, Lithuania, had six brothers: Solomon, Louis, Nathan, Itsik, David and Jacob, all born between 1880 and 1898 in the Pale of Settlement. Laizuva is on the river separating Lithuania from Latvia, which was outside the Pale and where Jews had more freedom, could own property, etc. Their father, Abraham Lurie, was a Rabbi who basically made his living as a *shochet*, a ritual butcher. In 1897, Abraham moved the family across the river to Vainode, without the permission of the authorities. At various times, the police tried to make him go back to Lithuania, but petitions to the authorities in Courland—that part of Latvia west of the Daugava River to the Baltic Sea—seem to have held off deportation. I have copies of the petitions.

One by one, the children started planning their emigration. First to go was Solomon, the oldest, in August 1903, at the age of 19, who had been trained as a Rabbi. Many of his Lithuanian friends were going to South Africa, far away, but easy to get to, and emigration was simple. First you went to England and then caught another ship to Cape Town. He settled in Somerset East, becoming a clerk in a store. Then, in 1905, Nathan went to South Africa. He worked first with Solomon in Somerset East, but later in a produce business. I remember him telling us, when I was a little kid, about his adventures of going out into the “bush” with a horse and wagon and buying or trading with the natives for ostrich feathers. Ostrich feathers were in vogue because of the high fashion of putting them on ladies’ hats in the big cities in Europe and elsewhere. Meanwhile, Solomon went into the general store business by himself in Somerset East. Both were still single.

Meanwhile, back in Vainode, Latvia, the next oldest, Louis, decided to go to America, not to South Africa. After emigrating in 1906, he had a short stay in Kentucky and then bought a clothing store in Fort Dodge, a small city in Iowa, where a cousin of his lived. In 1909, the next oldest brother, David, now 15, emigrated to the U.S. In 1911, Louis set David up in a small clothing store in Lehigh, a small town near Fort Dodge. By age 18, David was running the store by himself, dealing with the farmers and the local citizens, many of whom worked in a brick and tile plant.

Back in South Africa, Solomon was doing better in the general store. He wanted my mother, Gitel, to join him and Nathan in South Africa, but Louis and David wanted her to go to Iowa. They sent her a cabin class, not a steerage, ticket to America. So, in 1912, this very pretty 20-year-old came to America. The next year, 1913, Nathan decided to visit his two brothers and his sister in Fort Dodge. He left Cape Town in November on the long ocean voyage to Southampton, England. He then booked passage on an American Line Ship, the *New York*, of 10,499 gross tons, built in Scotland in 1889, which carried 1,740 passengers: 540 in first class, 200 in second class and 1,000 in third class. He gave his residence as Cape Colony, Somerset East, South Africa, and his age as 26, when he arrived in New York on December 4, 1913 and went through immigration proceedings at Ellis Island. While in Iowa, he met and fell in love with his future wife, Tillie Livingston. Since Tillie did not want to leave her own family to live in South Africa, Nathan stayed in Iowa.

Meanwhile, Solomon, back in South Africa, was still a bachelor. In what I believe was an arranged marriage, Solomon went back to Memel, Lithuania in 1913 to marry Sarah Ellen Siv (also spelled Siev and Ziv) the daughter of Joseph Mendel Siv and his wife Faga. Sarah Ellen had been born in Pikelen, Kovno Gubernia, in 1888. The Sivs were from a well-known Rabbinical family. Solomon took his bride back to Somerset East, where they were both very active in the Jewish community. While in Memel for the wedding, we believe that they were joined by Solomon’s youngest brother Jacob, then 15, and all three went back to South Africa together.

Only one brother, Itsik, stayed behind in Latvia. He was given a US visa in 1921 and could also have gone to South Africa, but he had a wife and five children and had taken over his father’s *shochet* business. So he stayed in Europe. All seven perished in the Holocaust.

In 1928, after 15 years of marriage, Solomon and Sarah Ellen had a daughter Fanny. In 1920, Solomon travelled on the *Mauretania* from Southampton, arriving in New York on August 28, 1920, to visit his family in Iowa. His three brothers, Louis, Nathan and David had prospered in the community and now owned three or four clothing and shoe stores. His sister, Gitel, had married Louis Arkoff (my father) in Fort Dodge in 1917 and owned another clothing

store. Solomon, however, decided to not emigrate to the U.S. and went back to Somerset East.

In 1937, Solomon, Sarah Ellen and their daughter Fanny moved to Cradock, a town of about 10,000 in the Eastern Cape Province. An interesting article in the South African SIG's publication by Dennis Kahn tells about life in Cradock for its small Jewish community. Solomon ran a general merchandise store with his brother Jacob, who had never married, but who lived with Solomon's family. The store was located at 80 Victoria Street.

In 1939, sadness overcame the family when Sarah Ellen died after an operation at the Provincial Hospital in Port Elizabeth. She is buried in grave #303 in the Jewish Cemetery in Port Elizabeth, high on a hill overlooking the Indian Ocean.

Four years later, on Sunday, December 5, 1943, sadness again hit Solomon and his brother Jacob when Fanny, Solomon's only child, died in Queen's Central Hospital in Cradock, after a playground accident. She was buried in the small Jewish cemetery in Cradock. Solomon and Jacob continued to run their general store and participated in life in the community where they were well liked.

Solomon passed away in 1951 in that same hospital. In March 1954, Jacob, suffering from influenza, was in bed for a week. His health took a sudden turn for the worse. He, too, was admitted to Queen's Central Hospital, where he died from a coronary thrombosis. After Solomon's death, Jacob had moved into the Masonic Hotel in Cradock. He was well-liked in the community and was a keen member of the Bowls Club. Solomon and Jacob are also buried in the Cradock Jewish cemetery. As of a few years ago, there was only one Jew, according to Dennis Kahn's story, still living in Cradock. He is Cedric Bergman, who has a key to the burial ground along the Great Fish River.

When I was a youngster growing up in Iowa, I always thought it "cool" to have two uncles in Africa and always wondered what it was like to live there. None of the U.S. Luries ever went to Africa to visit. When Jacob (we called him Uncle Jack) died, his estate was settled and the money sent to his four living siblings in the US. My mother was so saddened by his death that she said, "I want to have nothing to do with the money," and divided it among her five children, my three brothers, my sister and me.

I would like to go to South Africa some day to visit Cradock, Somerset East and Port Elizabeth, to retrace the places where they lived and where they are buried, but, at 77, I'm not sure that that will ever happen.

Harold Arkoff, 2003

Of great help to me in researching in South Africa were Paul Cheifitz and Effie Schauder, who is with the Jewish Pioneers' Memorial Museum in Port Elizabeth.

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COUNTRY COMMUNITIES:
OUDTSHOORN – "YERUSHOLAYIM
B'DOREM AFRIKA"

Bertha Widan

Compiled by Joseph Batzofin at the request of the George Hebrew Congregation study circle. With thanks to Doreen Miller, Melbourne, Australia, who sent the article for publication in our Newsletter.

One of the most famous Jewish historic centres in South Africa is Oudtshoorn, which has in time been called "Little Jerusalem" and even the "Jerusalem of South Africa". Here, around the ostrich feather industry, which was largely pioneered by the Jews, a vigorous Jewish Community grew up. In the course of time this community has given South Africa some outstanding Jewish personalities.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OUDTSHOORN

In 1838 the Dutch-speaking farmers inaugurated a small Dutch Reformed Church in the southern part of the farm Hartebeest River belonging to C. J. Rademeyer.

In 1846, pressure was brought to bear on Mr. Rademeyer to have part of his farm, next to the Grobbelaar's River, surveyed into 476 water plots.

The first sale of plots took place on 15th November 1847.

Oudtshoorn was named after the wife of a Mr. Bergh, the magistrate of George. She was a granddaughter of Baron van Reede van Oudtshoorn, the appointed Governor of the Cape of Good Hope. He died in 1873 on the ship Asia, while on his way to take up his duties at the Cape.

From the middle of the 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century two main groups of immigrants came to settle in Oudtshoorn. The first group came out under Sir George Grey's immigration scheme during 1858 to 1861. They were skilled tradesmen mainly from the British Isles. The second group consisted of Jews who came from Eastern Europe, arriving between 1881 and 1910. Pressure on the Jewish communities in Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia increased after the Russo-Turkish War. Thousands of young Jewish men were called up for military service. On their return from the army they did not enjoy the same privileges as their Russian brothers-in-arms. With the death of Alexander III they were openly persecuted. Physical and mental tortures were practiced. Most of the towns were overpopulated and living conditions were not good. Usually young men of the Jewish families fled to Britain. There they regrouped and set out for the USA or British colonies. On their arrival in Cape Town they must have heard of the prosperity of the Little Karoo. Dealers who had trading links with Oudtshoorn took these young men with them. They stayed with settled Jewish families and soon started their own businesses. In letters to their relatives overseas they wrote about the possibilities of a better life in Oudtshoorn. There were also some immigrants from Poland and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe. The newcomers soon became engaged in the marketing and ultimately in the production of ostrich feathers, which illustrates the fact that despite the misconception that Jews were the middlemen that only sold the ostrich feathers many of the Jewish immigrants were very active farmers in the district.

Most of the Jews who came to settle in Oudtshoorn were from Lithuania. The one group came from Kelm, a country town, and the other group from Shavli, a city in Northern Lithuania.

Rabbi A. F. Orenstein, of Cape Town, encouraged the Jews to build their own synagogue. At that stage religious gatherings were held in some private houses and in the feather market hall of the Town Council. By 1885 Oudtshoorn and district suffered a depression and, as a result of the shortage of money, the building of the synagogue was postponed.

Plot 445 in Queen Street (now Baron van Reede Street) on the east side of the river had been bought for erecting the *Shul* and the design plans, drawn up by George Wallis (Sr.) were accepted. Rabbi Orenstein laid the foundation stone on 26th January

1888. In December 1888 the *Shul* was inaugurated. As the country farmers and the Jews were both religious people there was a natural bond between the two groups. When the Jews were raising funds for the building of the Queen Street Synagogue, eventually known as the *Eingelse Shul*, several Afrikaner citizens contributed, as is evinced by the names appearing in the contribution lists.

In 1888, Rev. Wolfson arrived in the Cape Colony to take up duties in the Transvaal town of Barberton but he decided to officiate in Oudtshoorn. He served the Jewish Community for over fifty years.

In August 1886 the first group of Jews applied to become British subjects. This clearly proves that they had accepted their new country and Oudtshoorn. For the proper organisation of the Jewish community the first committee was elected in that year.

Even before the arrival of Rev. Wolfson there were indications of the secession of the Orthodox section (the Kelm group) which was to follow. The Jews from Kelm had traditional, very strong orthodox views, whereas the group from Shavli, an industrial city, was more cosmopolitan. Both groups brought these differences with them.

The Kelm Jews were a people of great tradition with a thirst for culture and knowledge. On arriving in South Africa they found that the Oudtshoorn area provided them with a background very similar to the one they came from. They felt that Rev. Wolfson had introduced too many Anglican practices in the synagogue and was subservient to many English and German influences. In 1892 the Kelm Jews decided to break away and built their own synagogue on plot 200 in St. John Street, a proud copy of a famous Lithuanian synagogue with classical appurtenances and a rich rabbinical library. It was adorned with original Lithuanian-style Jewish handicraft, silver work and embroidery. In 1896 Rabbi Lipkin came to Oudtshoorn to serve this group. Today the contents of this synagogue are housed in a special section of the C.P. Nel museum in Oudtshoorn.

There are two legends regarding the reason for the establishment of the breakaway Greener *Shul*. The first, and better known one, was because of the Orthodoxy of most of the congregants, they wanted daily *Shul* services as well as traditional study facilities. The original *Shul* had services only on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tovim* and apparently was not

interested in studying. The second legend, which was told by the late Simie Weinstein about two years ago, was that Reverend Wolfson, while reading from the Torah at services, objected to anybody in *Shul* singing together with him. There was one congregant who persisted in this practice despite being told by Reverend Wolfson to stop doing this. The Reverend, a very short-tempered individual, strode from the *Bimah* and slapped him in the face. The *frum* Jews considered this action as insulting to Jewish tradition and decided to establish their own *Shul*.

JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUDTSHOORN AND DISTRICT

The Jews were intimately involved in the growth of ostrich farming; they introduced lucerne as basic fodder for ostriches and started irrigation schemes.

They introduced and promoted sandstone architecture in Oudtshoorn. As money was plentiful from 1904 to 1913 Jewish farmers, merchants, and feather buyers, started to build showpiece manor houses using the plentiful supply of sandstone available. To this day these abodes are very evident in the area.

During the ostrich feather boom, and also after it had collapsed, some Jewish merchants diversified their businesses and went into the tobacco trade.

Several of the Oudtshoorn Jews served in the Home Guard during the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902) and during the First World War some saw active service on the battlefields of Europe.

What the Jewish pioneer had lacked in secular education he gave to his children. Sons and daughters were sent overseas to qualify themselves in the highest professions. Several of these people came back to serve the local community.

In 1904, the first Jewish government school ever in South Africa was established in Oudtshoorn. The school handled pupils from Sub A to Standard 6 in normal education as well as daily Hebrew classes as part of the syllabus. The principal of the school was a Mr. Johan Smit.

JEWS THAT MADE THEIR MARK IN THE HISTORY OF OUDTSHOORN

The personification of the ostrich feather industry was a man by the name of Max Rose who became

renowned and was known as the ostrich feather king of South Africa. In 1890 Max Rose, a youth of seventeen years of age, came from Shavli to Oudtshoorn, where he set up as a feather buyer and ostrich breeder. He also operated in the Ladismith district. In the 1890's he formed a partnership with Mr. I. Nurick. At the time of the dissolution of the partnership Max Rose's ostrich farming was well established. In 1906 he bought the farm *Weltevreden* in the Ladismith district for 18000 pounds and on it made improvements amounting to 54,000 pounds. In 1913 he sold the farm for 200,000 pounds, but two years later the same farm was sold for 15,000 pounds. Max Rose, who also suffered great financial losses in 1915, devoted all his energies to the recovery of the feather market and two years later he was appointed by the Government for this very purpose. He sent out a most constructive report with some very lucid reasoning. One of his observations was recorded thus: "The industry should be controlled by a board of men elected by ostrich farmers." This probably led to the Government Commission advocating that feather sales should be conducted through one central market, because of which a co-op was eventually established.

Some of the other Jews who were well known in the community, were:

MORITZ J. ASCHMAN - In 1899 he was the first Jew to be elected to the municipal council of Oudtshoorn. He served the town in this capacity for 11 years. He also served on the School and Hospital Boards and for several years was the president of the Jewish Philanthropic Society.

ARTHUR JACOBSON - came to Oudtshoorn in 1893 to open his own attorney's office. In 1903 he was appointed Justice of the Peace for Oudtshoorn and in 1914 he was the first Jew to become Mayor of Oudtshoorn.

MARCUS HOTZ - one of the 1880 pioneers, served on the Municipal Council for 14 years and for 17 years as a member of the Hospital Board. He was a close friend of C. J. Langenhoven.

DR. ISRAEL STUSSER - He was the son of Abraham Stusser, an 1880 pioneer. He was the first South African to be awarded the British F.R.C.S. Medical Diploma.

Other Jewish doctors who served Oudtshoorn in those days were Dr. L. H. Jacobson, a general practitioner and Dr. L. H. Lewin, a dentist.

BENNIE GILLIS - The first Jewish marriage to take place locally was that of Bennie Gillis's parents. Bennie Gillis served Oudtshoorn as Mayor for 3 years and for 25 years as a member of the Municipal Council.

Other Jews who served on the council for many years were Morris S. Lipschitz, Samuel Sanders as Mayor and Councillor, I. B. Lewin, J. Lax, Sol Green, as Mayor and Councillor (he served for an unbroken period of 35 years), and Victor Aschman, as Councillor. The first Jewish woman to be elected to the council was Mrs. Fanny Luntz (in fact she was the first woman ever to be elected to this position).

These are only a few of the Jews who made a contribution to the development of Oudtshoorn.

Between the neighbouring town of Calitzdorp and Oudtshoorn there was a 30 mile stretch of road that was called *Der Yiddishe Gass* (English translation: Jewish Neighbourhood), owing to the fact that all the 20 shops and one hotel which were allocated alongside the whole road, were owned by Jews. The story of the Yiddishe Gass is a very romantic one. Not all the shops had doors. Some of them had windows only, so the customers used to enter those shops through the windows.

The Jewish inhabitants of the *Gass* were pious and God-fearing Jews, who were strictly kosher, and the *Shabbat* was observed as a complete day of rest. The Christian farmers of that district respected the Jewish shopkeepers, and only at sunset on Saturdays did they gather round the shops, all of them waiting for the first visible three stars. On the *Shabbat* the *Gass* resembled a street in a Jewish town in Lithuania. The singing of the traditional *Zmirot* was heard throughout the *Gass*, and the aroma of the specific *Shabbat* dishes permeated the street. Not only did the Jews feel the presence of *Shabbat* but the non-Jewish farmers also respected the observance of it. It was a fact that no Christian farmer allowed a Jewish dealer into his house on the day of *Shabbat*. They looked upon those who defiled the *Shabbat* as traitors to their faith.

There were in the *Gass* some outstanding homes as regards extreme "*froomkeit*", some of which were the homes of Mr. J. H. Lewin and Mr. W. Manashewitz, also the boarding house of Mr. Avrohom Moshe Kaplan of Kelm, who kept a *shochet* for his boarders, in his house there was a *Sefer Torah*, and the daily prayer services were held

there. As a matter of interest he was my maternal Grandfather. When he eventually came to live with our family, in Oudtshoorn, he was one of a core of members of the community who attended *Shul* three times a day. Twice for the prayer services and once for studying – or "*lerning*" as it was called in Yiddish.

I continue this report by quoting an article in the Zionist Record covering the Oudtshoorn United Hebrew Congregation Centenary Celebrations, which lasted from Monday the 12th to Sunday the 18th November 1984.

The article was headed: *RED LETTER DAY FOR OUDTSHOORN*. The report reads as follows:

Tears, Laughter and "Do you remember?" were the order of the day when 160 "*Emigres*" converged on Oudtshoorn for the centenary of the founding of its Jewish community. A full programme of cultural and religious functions did not deter informal celebratory gatherings that kept talk flowing till the small hours of the morning.

One hundred years ago their forefathers had made their way to this little town "*Der Kleiner Yerushalayim Bedorm Afrika*", where they founded a community rich in Jewish tradition and culture which has survived many decades. The invitations to this celebration engendered such excitement that plans had to be expanded to cope with the anticipated influx. Then the Mayor and Town Council expressed their desire to pay tribute to the Jewish community in the form of a Civic Banquet where the Afrikaans community volunteered to do all the waiter and waitress duties.

Many dignitaries and their wives travelled to Oudtshoorn for the occasion: Rabbi Professor E. J. Duschinsky, *Av Beth Din*; Mr. Eliyahu Lankin, Ambassador for Israel; Mr. Mervyn Smith, Chairman Board of Deputies; and Mr. Barney Singer of the Western Province Zionist Council.

On Thursday afternoon, the Mayoress, Mrs. D. de Jager, opened an exhibition, organised by Mrs. Bex Kroll, of Jewish cultural and historical items and memorabilia in the C.P. Nel Museum of part of the original St. John Street *Shul*.

A most moving *Erev Shabbat Shul* service, augmented by the singing of Cantor Michael Cohen and the Claremont *Shul* Choir, was followed by an *Oneg Shabbat* at the adjoining Jewish Club. The star of the evening was Cantor Immerman who had served the community as both cantor and teacher from 1927 to 1942. Past Barmitzvah pupils one by one stood up and identified themselves. Unhesitatingly Cantor Immerman, born blind, affectionately known as “*Der Blinder Chazan*”, recalled the dates of their barmitzvahs 40 to 60 years ago and the names of their *Maftirs*. To end the evening Madame Mabella Ott Paneto, the famous singer, originally Mabel Lewin of Oudtshoorn, who had flown in from Switzerland for the occasion came forward with a song called “Memories” which she had composed herself.

The *Shabbat* morning *Shul* service was a trip down Memory Lane. *Shacharit* was *davened* by Cantor Immerman, and *Maftir* was done by his ex-pupil Joe Batzofin, who had first sung it 49 years ago as a Barmitzvah boy.

The formal banquet for over 500 guests on the Saturday evening was a grand gesture of the mutual respect of Afrikaner and Jew. Kosher, down to the hiring and transport of crockery and cutlery from Cape Town, it began with *Hamotzi*. As mentioned earlier, this function was paid for by the Town Council.

Highlights of the memorable evening included an address by Minister Pik Botha, a response in flawless Afrikaans by Mervyn Smith, a Toast by the Mayor, Councillor A. J. de Jager, and the presentation on behalf of the Municipality of a magnificent *Parochet* (Aron *Kodesh* curtain). Ex Mayor, 94 Year old Mr. Bennie Gillis, proposed a toast to the State President.

A special Thanksgiving Service on the Sunday morning in *Shul* was graced by the presence of government and local dignitaries and a sermon by Rabbi Duschinsky, who ended his sermon with the following words: “The characteristic of this unique community may be found in the fact that almost all of its present members are direct descendants of the original Jewish community. Many of the former residents left for other parts of the country, Israel, and the world at large, the remaining families all continued with the unchanged confluence of their own heritage

flowing from the rivers of genuine Lithuanian Jewish traditions and western culture. The old cemetery, kept in dignity to this day, contains epitaphs of the old founders in classical Hebrew conveying the love for Zion, for the holy language, for all that is eternal in Jewish spiritual life.” A sudden shower as people emerged from the *Shul* was taken as a good omen even though it meant a quick switch of plans from a garden party at the Mayor’s residence next door, to the inside of the house.

What can one say at the end of an unforgettable nostalgic trip down memory lane in the presence of the descendants of the second oldest Jewish Community in South Africa but to wish the Oudtshoorn Jewish Community everything of the best for the future.

In my own humble opinion the real reason which moved the early Jews to Oudtshoorn was that here was a place where they could keep the *Shabbat* in freedom in the manner their fathers had taught them. They came, originally, from Eastern Europe where their lives had been a succession of pogroms. Even in their struggle for survival they were never prepared to compromise their Jewish identity and they maintained their culture, traditions and religion throughout their lives. In conclusion I may mention that that spirit even prevails today in a community numbering seventeen Jewish families.

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REMINISCENCES OF MANFRED SCHWARTZ

Manfred Schwartz

*THE BETARIM OF EAST LONDON OF THE
PERIOD 1938 - 1948*

The name “*Betar*” is an acronym for “*Brit Trumpeldor*” – Association of Joseph Trumpeldor, the hero of the Zion Mule Corps and of Tel Hai – and it is the name of the fortress that was the last bastion of Jewish sovereignty to fall to the Roman invaders two thousand years ago. In 1926, *Betar* became the official youth organization of the World Union of Revisionist Zionists, and demonstrated to the world that a new Jewish generation had at last come into being.

As often happens, events which commence elsewhere are often acted out in other areas, hence

we have to begin with Bloemfontein of the mid 1920's.

My memories start with hearing the magical name of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, and what is more important, I was even presented to this Giant of Zionist Aspirations.

I still have a letter written by him from Cape Town after his Bloemfontein visit to thank my parents Alex and Gertie Schwartz for their hospitality.

The visit to the Union of South Africa by this legendary figure only encouraged and cemented the local Revisionists to further their efforts to extend their support and numbers of the Movement, Paruvians, the Polish and Russian Union members who from the Kimberly days were not quite accepted by the English and German Jews who had come out to the Diamond Fields previously were the backbone of the Revisionist Movement.

I still remember when the New Zionist Organisation of SA produced the news tabloid "The Eleventh Hour" with the directive "both sides of the Jordan". The then Transjordan was to be incorporated. Then replaced by "The Jewish Herald" this visible evidence, in certain homes, was proof of the occupants being fellow, (or otherwise) Revisionists.

With this background of independent attitude "with the spirit of *malchut Yisrael* (Jewish nobility) for Jews to stand up, who for thousands of years of suppression and being down trodden, made this type of indoctrination attractive, and naturally directed the Youth to the *Betarim*.

So after a long verbal journey one comes back to the East London scene.

In the years just after WWII we, too, had a Youth Movement, and we attended regular meetings to discuss the bright New World which was ahead. After the long years of the Last War to rid the World of Tyrannical Dictators, Suppression and the hated Nazis, we now faced a bright Utopia. As Jews, we now realized how necessary it was to prevent our People being led to Gas Chambers ever again. From now we would defend ourselves and have our own Homeland, the State of Israel. The lessons taught by Jabotinsky the Warrior were now to be realized, and the *Betarim* would be part of the restoration.

We enjoyed the visits of Harry Hurwitz to East London to encourage our efforts and to give us all the latest information. Even in those far off days we were impressed by this passionate dedicated

messenger who was so intensely absorbed by the Cause. His steady climb up the ladder and his ascent has been very well deserved to a lifelong of self-dedication of Service to his people.

MACHA

Reference was made in the September 2003 SA-SIG Newsletter that Dr. Ralph Yodaiken gave a talk about his experiences just prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, at the SA-SIG luncheon, held at the Washington DC 2003, IAJGS International Symposium on Jewish Genealogy,

This brought to mind a story told to me of two other South African *Machalniks*.

Just after the 1939-1945 War two young East Londoners had gone to Britain to practice their professions as Pharmacists. While walking in Piccadilly Circus they saw a newspaper billboard wherein Israel had been granted Independence and the very next day another saying that the Arabs would never allow this and would go to War with the Jews.

The two lads (one of whom still lives in East London) still footloose and recent ex-servicemen decided to go to the aid of their ancestral Home, as were the 800 other South Africans who did the same.

Enquiries and arrangements had to be most secretive, as any recruiting for soldiers to fight in the Holy Land was highly illegal and unlawful. Certain members of the British Foreign Office certainly were most unwilling to assist the Jews and more so to do anything to upset cordial relationships pertaining with the imagined mighty Arabs world.

Their admiration of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and to a certain extent the glamourisation of Lawrence of Arabia and the Arab Legion established in Jordan, would preclude the British from actively supporting the Jews, in spite of the Balfour Declaration and all the pious promises made therein, for the Jews to return to their ancestral home.

So, back to the two volunteers.

They were interviewed and advised to be ready for their journey to Palestine. At an appointed hour they were instructed to meet a man at some specified place in Paris, and from there handed on from one completely unknown person to the next until they reached Marseilles.

They were instructed to board a bus to take them some short distance along the coast to the hush-hush refugee camp. When they asked the driver if he was going to San Gerome (some very secret “hide-out”), he loudly replied that that was the place where the refugee camp was. So much so for that part of the secret trail they were on to reach the collection point where survivors from the Death Camps had been assembled, for their continuing journey to Haifa.

The *machalnicks* were inspanned to act as guards, leaders, supervisors, etc., to assist where possible to get the pitiful human cargo to their destination. Their entry and disembarkment at the Haifa Port too, was dangerous, for the British occupying forces would never have allowed the metal hunk and its hopeless load of humanity to come ashore, had they been aware there were able men of military age on board, so naturally everything had to be completed rapidly, silently in the dark. There was the constant attendant danger to this clandestine operation, when the Palmyre called a ship, this word for want of a better name, in fact a floating rusty tin container, almost barely able to keep afloat or really seaworthy, due to age, deterioration and so on, was due to dock.

The sheer determination and fearlessness of these and all the other 3500 men and women, Jews and Non-Jews from 37 different Countries was and still is to be admired and respected. To this day their modesty has never allowed them to broadcast and tell their heroic story. Their explanation was “OK, well it was so long ago and nobody now is interested in History” – how wrong they are!

Exploits of this nature must be remembered and repeated. Their dwindling number is diminishing so rapidly that the few remaining Heroes deserve to be honoured and saluted, if for no other reason than in respect to those who have gone before.

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A MUSICAL LITVAK FAMILY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Gilbert Herbert

Haifa, August 14, 2003

At the recent genealogical conference in Washington, DC, in July, 2003, the point was made that while music constituted such an important part of the Jewish cultural heritage, not much was known of the contribution which our ancestors made, when they came as immigrants to South Africa. The

following is a response to that insight, limited to comments about the musical input of the one family of which I have specific knowledge, my own.

My paternal grandparents were Simon Herbert and Minna Paikin, and my maternal grandparents were Solomon Miller and Hannah Yerusalimsky. Simon, originally Haim Yablotchnik, was born in Vilkomir (now Ukmerge), Lithuania, or its vicinity in about 1855. In the early 1880s, he and Minna, born in Dvinsk (now Daugavpils), Latvia, emigrated to England, where my father Benjamin and his siblings were born. In 1894, Simon sailed to Cape Town on the Methuen Castle, followed by Minna and her children two years later on the Aotea.

From Cape Town, the family moved to Port Elizabeth, then, in 1899, to Johannesburg. At the outbreak of the Boer War, they, with other British nationals, were sent back to Cape Town as refugees. The Yablotchniks, alas, remain something of a frustrating black hole in my family history, for apart from my grandfather, I know very little about them.

Solomon Miller and Hannah Yerusalimski, both of Dvinsk, Latvia, were married in London in 1887. My mother Sophia, an only child, was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the following year, but after a short stay in Ireland the Millers returned to London. From 1901 to 1903, they were in Cape Town, where my mother happened to attend my father’s barmitzvah in 1902. The Millers failed to settle down and returned to England in July 1903, sailing on the *Walmer Castle*.

They had a second, and this time successful, shot at settling in South Africa in about 1907-1909, coming first to Cape Town, but then moving to Johannesburg, which had become the principal nexus of the various branches of our family. By this time, the Herberts had also settled in Johannesburg, and in 1915, my father and mother married and made their home there. Johannesburg remained the principal focus of the family for the next half century. Three families of my ancestors, the Paikins, the Millers and the Yerusalimskis (all from Dvinsk, Latvia), constitute between them a formidable gene pool of musical talent. This pool was fortified by intermarriage in two successive generations between my father’s ancestors, the Paikins, and my mother’s ancestors, the Millers. Moreover, on two occasions, Paikins married into the Bor family (originally from Dvinsk), who claimed at least eight generations of musicians in their lineage. The triumvirate of Miller,

Paikin and Bor constituted the core of the musical talent of the family, but the Yerusalimskis - perhaps more noted for their literary and artistic abilities - nevertheless produced (in addition to my mother), at least, two professional singers, a pianist, and a musicologist.

These various strands of my Litvak family moved to Britain in the 1880s and 1890s. Some remained there, but the majority later emigrated to South Africa. Amongst those, who remained in England, were the children of Golda and Samuel Bor, Golda being a Paikin and my grandmother's sister. Golda's children included Betsy (m. Spinak) and Hilda (m. Howard), whose sons Albert Spinak and Tony Howard were professional musicians.

There was also a son, David Bor, who had married his cousin Anna, daughter of my great-uncle Boris Paikin. David was a violinist and pianist of note. He was joint leader of the Bor-Paikin Colonnade Orchestra (of which more later), and, I recall that we had recordings of his as a member of the well-known De Groot Trio. David and Anna Bor had four children, all musicians: Hilda and Margot (both pianists), Sylvia (a cellist) and Edward (a violinist). Edward's daughter, incidentally, was a member of a pop group, and when they became Top of the Pops, Edward (aware of the long classical tradition of the family) said he didn't know whether to be proud or to cry!

Hilda Bor was perhaps the best-known of the family, both as a concert pianist (giving recitals at London's Wigmore Hall) and a teacher, her most notable pupils being the children of Yehudi Menuhin, and Prince Charles and Princess Anne. For the purpose of teaching the royal children, Hilda was driven to Buckingham Palace. I understand that the Queen did not take a great interest in her children's musical education, but the young prince responded eagerly to the lessons. I was in Hilda's home in Cambridge, shortly after her eightieth birthday, and inspected the splendid bouquet of flowers she had received from Prince Charles, together with a handwritten note of appreciation for the love and understanding of music she had given him. David Bor's partner in the Bor-Paikin Orchestra was his wife Anna's brother, Afseh Paikin, a talented violinist. Afseh served in the reserves of the Czar's army as a musician. He studied for a year in Warsaw, and was a graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, where he was later

an assistant professor, whose pupils included the children of Rimski-Korsakov. He came to London probably about 1906, and later played for some five years in the Queens Hall Orchestra, under Sir Henry Wood.



Afseh Paikin, Bexhill-on-Sea, England, circa 1920

About 1913, together with David Bor, he formed the orchestra that played at the Colonnade at Bexhill-on-Sea, then a fashionable holiday resort. Among the social elite who frequented the Colonnade was an elderly titled lady who, enchanted either by the light classical music or Afseh's dashing air, bequeathed him the magnificent sum of £3,000, provided he played 'Ave Maria' over her open coffin. This bequest enabled him to move with his family to South Africa in 1913. Of his children, Rose played the violin and Miriam was a soprano, whom I recall hearing in recitals on the radio.

Afseh's brother, Lasure, also came from England to South Africa, where he played the double-bass in the Johannesburg Symphony Orchestra. His daughters Bella and Golda were both piano teachers, and his sister Manya was also a musician. In England, Lasure Paikin had married his cousin Sophia Miller, daughter of my mother's uncle Lazar Miller and Sarah Paikin, my father's aunt. Two sons of Lazar Miller were serious musicians: Samuel, a pianist, and Henry, who played the cello. A daughter, Annie, played the piano in a local cinema, with perhaps more brio than finesse. Samuel Miller's son Arthur was a fine violinist whose repertoire ranged from classical music to jazz (in my brother's orchestra).

This brings me to my own immediate family. My mother Sophia Herbert (born Miller) was an accomplished pianist. During the Millers' first stay in Cape Town, she took lessons at the University's Conservatory of Music in Rondebosch. On her return to London she studied at a conservatoire in Swiss Cottage, and also took advanced lessons with Prof. Michael Hambourg, a renowned teacher and father of the famous Hambourg brothers: Mark, the concert pianist, Jan the violinist, and Boris the cellist. She was both a performer (mainly as an accompanist) and a teacher. My father loved listening as my mother sat at the piano (on which stood busts of Beethoven and Liszt), but he himself played no instrument. Our house was a house filled with home-made music. I studied the violin for many years to no great effect. This was not the fault of my teachers - one of the Nicholaeff brothers (my brother Cecil learned the clarinet with the other brother) and the well-known Max Weinbren - who were amongst the best, and produced many talented students. While I was for a while the leader of our school orchestra, I was really not very good, and perhaps my greatest contribution to South African music was giving up the violin. Much later in life, I began to sing in a choir, and came to regret the years I had misspent on the violin, when I should really have had my voice trained.

My older brother Cecil played the clarinet, but although he practiced diligently, his heart wasn't really in it. He was, however, a passionate lover of classical music, and later became an amateur, but highly knowledgeable, musicologist.

My late brother Harold, the eldest son, studied classical music on the piano under my mother's tutelage, at the same time playing the clarinet, self-taught, as leader of the school military band. While at school, he formed his own jazz band, later to develop into an orchestra, in which he played the clarinet, alto and tenor saxophone. His expanded orchestra later played in many shows, and gave orchestral backing to such visiting stars as Liberace, Richard Clayderman, Cher and Tom Jones.

Harold was dedicated to the protection of the status and livelihood of professional musicians, and fought tenaciously against the growing tendency to replace live musicians with recorded music in musical shows. In 1984, for the eighteenth consecutive year, he was elected President of the Transvaal Musicians Union, and then became first President of the South

African Musicians Union, in whose formation he had played a leading role.



Harold Herbert, 1916-1992

As proof that the musical genes continue to manifest themselves, we have Harold's son Brian, who was a tympanist in the Johannesburg Symphony Orchestra, as well as a talented jazz drummer. My late son, Barry, blessed with perfect pitch, turned away from his formal lessons on the piano (it was not the instrument of his choice, he precociously proclaimed), but improvised beautifully on the classical guitar. I had the best musical upbringing of all possible worlds. Through my older brother, I had the privilege of growing up in an intimate environment permeated by the best that Johannesburg Jewish jazz musicians (his associates) had to offer. Among some of the names that come back to me after more than half a century are: Harry Rabinowitz (later to become musical director of the BBC); Bubbles Adler (a keyboard wizard on the piano and accordion); the talented Baleson brothers, Ralph the pianist and Hymie the trumpeter; Philip Franklin, a harmonica player, so accomplished that my brother Cecil (in his innocent youth) thought he was actually Larry Adler; and, of course, our cousin Arthur Miller, a wonderful fiddler in the Stefan Grapelli mould.



Apollo Dance Orchestra, Johannesburg, circa 1940

The Jewish orchestra members were Harold Herbert, leader of the orchestra, standing in front centre playing the saxophone whilst the pianist at right, with an accordion at his feet, is Bubbles Adler, and the double bass player, right at the back, between the tenor sax and the clarinet players, is Philip Franklin. The violinist, the trumpeter, second from left, and the drummer who is totally concealed, are also Jewish, but their names are unknown.

When Harold needed to send out two bands, my brother Cecil sometimes played in the second-string version; and I, on one memorable occasion, actually put on my tuxedo and mimed playing the double-bass at a dance, until the regular bass player turned up. On the other hand, through my mother and my parents' innumerable musical cousins, the world of classics was familiar to me directly, at first hand, whether acquired from my mother playing a Beethoven sonata, my cousin Miriam singing on the radio, hearing family rehearsals of chamber music, or listening to concerts of the Johannesburg Symphony Orchestra, in which the family was well-represented. When Afseh Paikin died in 1939, the following inscription was engraved on his tombstone: "If music be the key to heaven he is surely there." Should this conceit be true, then there is probably a serious chamber orchestra of Paikins, Millers, Bors and Herberts making heavenly music in Paradise, with some first-rate jazz (perhaps on a lower celestial plane) for the lighter moments.

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ZIONIST SOCIETIES

Terry Kegel

Editor's note: Terry Kegel kindly sent us his Thesis (submitted to Haverford College) on the Zionist Youth Movements in 20th Century South Africa. Portions of the Thesis appeared in the last two issues of the SA-SIG Newsletter; this issue continues with the next portion. The full thesis has now been stored in its entirety on the SA-SIG Web pages at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/youth-movements/history/tkegel/index.htm>

The first youth Zionist societies began appearing in South Africa in 1903. These groups were founded primarily by adolescents and were independent of any affiliation with the adult organizations. In fact, the adults were not quite sure how to respond to these youth groups. From indifference to irritation, the adults' responses and their lack of support created a rift between the youth and senior movements in the early years. In an attempt to reconcile their differences, in 1916 a youth commissioner was elected to serve on the Executive board of the Zionist Federation. By 1920, 33 junior Zionist societies were affiliated to the Federation and that number continued to grow. An important step in solidifying the relationship between the junior and senior movements was taken in 1932 when the youth collaborated with the Zionist Federation to establish the Zionist Youth Council. Despite their affiliation with the Federation, the Zionist youth groups were able to guard most of their independence and authority from the adult movement. This independence is one of the reasons that the youth movements have been so successful

As stated earlier, one of the reasons for the success of the Zionist movement was the fact that South Africa allowed Jews to develop a national identity in addition to, or instead of, a religious one. While immigrants became less traditional in South Africa, Zionism offered an opportunity to maintain a strong national Jewish identity, without being too involved religiously. For subsequent South-African born generations, who continued to drift even further away from religious Judaism, Zionism was especially important. In general, though they lived a Jewish life, they had little interest for the religion itself. They dreaded Cheder and, unless all their friends were going, they did not enjoy synagogue either. If they were going to be active Jewishly, they wanted to do it on their own terms. They wanted to

be independent of their parents' generation. They wanted to be proud and feel a sense of belonging to a group. They wanted to be social. Zionism and the youth movements offered the perfect solution. Thus, the Zionist movement, in a sense, saved the youth from a loss of Jewishness. It filled an important need for a positive, structured influence on the development of Jewish identity in South African youth.

Since the Zionist movement had existed from the earliest years of the South African Jewish community and was the first nation-wide Jewish organization, most Jewish youth groups chose to affiliate with it, rather than the synagogues or the Board of Deputies. Therefore, more than any other body, the Zionist movement was most responsible for overseeing Jewish identity development amongst the youth: "Youth work was virtually taken for granted as a Zionist monopoly. Consequently it must be noted that in South Africa, successive generations of Jewish youth were exposed, almost exclusively, to a mode of Jewish identification determined by Zionism." With this monopoly, it is no surprise that the Zionist youth movements were very important in shaping a strongly identifying Jewish community in South Africa.

Clearly, the Zionist movement had a powerful role in shaping South African Jewry. In the next section we will explore an important complication to South Africa's brand of Zionism.

Ideological and Vicarious Zionism

One of the most important characteristics of South African society in shaping the Zionist experience there was its favorable environment for a comfortable Jewish life. This lack of a threat against the South African Jewish people presented a serious challenge to the fundamental motivation of the Zionist movement. As a result, South African Zionists could be classified into two types: Ideological and Vicarious. The Ideological Zionists made aliyah for ideological reasons rather than as an escape. They could have lived good Jewish lives in South Africa, but they believed that their full realization as Jews could only be accomplished in Israel. They were the minority. The Vicarious Zionists felt no need to abandon a favorable situation in South Africa to make aliyah, but they used Zionism as a means of Jewish identification. They were the majority. Ultimately, South African

Jews exposed to the Zionist ideology of aliyah had to choose their future, South Africa or Israel.

According to Zionist thought, there are two main threats in Diaspora, anti-Semitism and assimilation, which motivate aliyah as a solution. If the host country is hostile to the Jews, discrimination and persecution threaten their safety and well-being. In their own Jewish state, they are no longer a minority group, so there is no internal danger of mistreatment. If the host country is welcoming of Jews, the natural temptation to assimilate into that culture threatens their Jewish identity. In their own Jewish state, they would be constantly immersed in a Jewish way of life and their Jewish identity would therefore remain strong. So, the Zionist movement used these fears of anti-Semitism and assimilation to argue that life in Israel would always be brighter than life in Diaspora.

But was life in South Africa really so dark? For the most part, South African Jews growing up in the 1950s and 60s lived comfortable Jewish lives, relatively free from the threats of anti-Semitism and assimilation.

First, for the generation growing up in South Africa in the 1950s and 60s, anti-Semitism was, for the most part, not a serious threat. Though some might disagree with that argument, it is all a matter of perspective. For example, American Jews of today, who are enjoying one of the most comfortable situations in Jewish history, may look back in horror at the dangerous South African Jewish experience of a half-century ago. The polarization of South African society made it such that there was a lot of antagonism between ethnic groups, particularly the Afrikaners and the Jews. As a result, some Jews were bullied. Several of my interviewees remember being called "bloody Jews" and a few even got into fights. On the other hand, from the perspective of 19th century Eastern Europe, that same South African society could be considered Jewish paradise. Considering these different perspectives, most historians agree that Jewish life in South Africa in the 1950s and 60s was relatively comfortable. Almost all of my interviewees claimed that they were not afraid as Jews and never felt a need to seek a haven from anti-Semitic pressure. While their parents warned them about the vulnerability of Jews and often told them stories of anti-Semitism, very few encountered it personally. In general, Jews did not have to live their lives afraid.

Not only were South Africans physically safe, but also they lived a very comfortable lifestyle. They had access to good education and plenty of favorable business opportunities. Jews were far more educated than the average White. According to statistics taken in 1980, 14.3% of Jews, compared to only 6.3% of Whites, completed a Bachelor's degree. Economically, Jews were also doing very well relative to other Whites. They were mostly middle to upper-middle class. They capitalized on the abundance of cheap Black labor in running successful businesses. For most Jews, especially those that had just escaped from a life of economic depression, violence, and gray skies in Eastern Europe, South Africa was paradise. They were beginning to establish roots there. Why should they give that up to live in Israel, an economically unstable country? "The arduous life of Israel presented a stark contrast to the prosperity and luxury of South Africa where Jews enjoyed a standard of living amongst the highest experienced by Jews in the entire western world."

Of course South Africans believed in the importance of Israel as a haven for those Diaspora Jews being persecuted. Yet, they did not need this haven. There was no obvious reason for them, as Jews, to escape. The small percentage of South Africans that did make aliyah, did so more for ideological reasons than out of fear. While Israel tugged on the hearts of Zionists, for most, the relative safety and comfort of the South African Jewish experience challenged the ideology of aliyah.

The second threat of assimilation was more serious than that of anti-Semitism. Allowed to live a safe and comfortable lifestyle, South African Jews had begun to assimilate. As is expected, the South-African born generation was beginning to lose touch with its Jewish roots. Nevertheless, compared to other Diaspora communities in the mid-20th century, especially the U.S., this process of assimilation was slower. The pluralism and segregation of South African society allowed Jews to live a fairly insulated life and the organization of the community, particularly the Zionist Federation, gave young Jews important opportunities to develop a strong Jewish identity. Therefore, even the threat of assimilation was diluted.

Living safe, comfortable, Jewish lives, why should South Africans immigrate across the world to Israel where they were promised safe, comfortable, Jewish lives? This illogical loophole created a difficult

dilemma for the South African Zionist considering aliyah. As a result, like most Western Diaspora communities, only a small percentage of the Jewish community made aliyah.

Rather, the majority of South African Jews were "vicarious" Zionists. They were proud of Israel and took part in Zionist activities, but did not truly believe in the necessity that they make aliyah. They thought that it was possible to be both a South African and a Zionist. Though it does not fulfill the ultimate goal of the ideology, this type of Zionism was still very important for the South African Jewish community:

"For Jews in South Africa...confidence in the continued viability of Jewish life in their new-world home imparted a vicarious quality which enabled them to identify with the notion of a return to Zion without regarding it as directly applicable to themselves. However the Zion which they vicariously sensed was absolutely vital as a haven for distressed European Jewry, was, they also sensed, a vital complement for their own future as Jews in the Diaspora [which] would normalize the position of the Jews, solve or at least ameliorate the problem of anti-Semitism, enhance the status and self-esteem of the Jew and provide a vital spiritual-cultural centre for the entire Jewish people. Zion was thus a complement rather than a substitute for their South African Diaspora."

As a complement to South African Jewry, Zionism became a means of Jewish identification in Diaspora. Vicarious Zionists used, consciously or unconsciously, the ideology of aliyah and the importance of Israel as a tool for the construction and regeneration of a strong Jewish identity and people in South Africa.

As a result of the safety and comfort of Jews in South Africa, there was a great ambiguity in the South African Zionist experience, as indicated by this popular form of Vicarious Zionism. Ultimately, the individual had to choose his or her own form of Zionism. South African Zionists had to take a stand in the dilemma of competing identities. Was Israel a realistic end for them or was it just a means for a stronger Jewish identity? Where was their future, South Africa or Israel?

However, it was much more complicated than that. Before we can assess the dilemma for the South African Zionist, we must remind ourselves of an

important confounding factor in the decision. While there was hardly a Zionist push factor in South Africa, there was a strong South African political push factor. Jews, as Jews, did not feel a need to escape South Africa. But Jews, as Whites and as South African citizens, did. This push factor had nothing to do with Zionism or Judaism. Along with the rest of the population, Jews, especially in the 1960s and 70s, became aware of and perhaps even frustrated with the injustice and corruption of the discriminatory practices of the South African government against Blacks and other non-Whites. They were also worried, as Whites, of what may become of them when the White government would be overthrown, which many thought was inevitable given the overwhelming majority of Blacks in the country. Whites feared a bloody revolution, a Black takeover, and a backlash against the Whites. This political environment of injustice and instability for the future created the push factor, which was responsible for most Jews eventually emigrating from South Africa. This push factor convinced many Jews, even at a very young age, that their future was not South Africa. Their focus was pushed away from their South African identity. Their foot was already out the door. As one of my interviewees said, “their metaphorical suitcase was packed.” At that point, they were susceptible to any pull factors. One potential pull factor was Zionist aliyah. When analyzing an individual’s decisions regarding aliyah, one must assess the degree to which that individual was responding to the political push factor rather than the Zionist pull.

In this section, I presented the ambiguous nature of South African Zionism. I have given particular attention to the Zionists’ dilemma in choosing a future between South Africa and Israel. Before we evaluate individual responses to this dilemma, we must consider one of the most important influences on those responses: the Zionist youth movement. In the next section, we explore the ideology, structure, and methodology of the youth movement in South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST YOUTH MOVEMENT: HABONIM

There were four main Zionist youth movements in South Africa in the mid-20th century: *Bnei Akiva*, *Betar*, *Hashomer Hatzair*, and *Habonim*. Each movement had a slightly different political slant. All but *Habonim* were affiliated with an Israeli political party. While they may have differed politically, the

general goal of all the Zionist youth movements was to encourage *aliyah*. *Bnei Akiva* was the second largest and was generally labeled the “religious” movement. It was indeed the most Orthodox and was affiliated with *Mizrachi*, the religious Zionist party. *Betar* was a right-wing, more militaristic movement, affiliated with the Zionist Revisionist party. *Hashomer Hatzair* was a left-wing socialist movement that stressed Kibbutz as the highest ideal. It was affiliated with *Mapam*, the Socialist Labour party. *Habonim*, on which I will focus this study, was the oldest, largest, and most influential movement in South Africa.

* * * * *

RESOURCES FOR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Compiled by Saul Issroff, Roy Ogus

The SA-SIG maintains a set of Web pages that can be found at: <http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica>

These web pages are a portal to the SIG's extensive information about Southern African genealogical research, as well as provide access to other resources such as SA-related databases, and the South African-related microfilms available in the Mormon Family History Library (FHL). Directions on how to subscribe to the online SA-SIG discussion group hosted by JewishGen can be found at: <http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/subprimer.htm>

Two extensive JewishGen Info Files on the subject of Southern Africa Jewry are also accessible at <http://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles>, and these files provide a wealth of information on the history and background of the Jewish communities in Southern Africa.

The following information provides a summary of the key sources of information that are relevant to genealogical research in South Africa.

PRIVATE INTERNET RESOURCES

JewishGen Southern Africa SIG (SA-SIG):
<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica>

The Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter Database:
http://www.sansa.uct.ac.za/cgi/cgi_shelter.exe

National Archives Web site:
<http://www.national.archives.gov.za>

Heather's SA Genealogy Help List:
<http://www.genealogy.co.za>

Map Studio (Street maps of most SA towns):
<http://www.mapstudio.co.za>

NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES SERVICES

National Archives Repository

(Contact: The Head)
Postal address: Private Bag X236, Pretoria 0001
Street address: 24 Hamilton St, Arcadia, Pretoria
Phone: +27 (0)12 323 5300
Fax: +27 (0)12 323 5287
E-mail: arg02@dacts.pwv.gov.za

[Houses both the Archives of the Central Government and of Gauteng, formerly Transvaal province]

Cape Town Archives Repository

(Contact: The Head)
Postal address: Private Bag X9025, Cape Town 8000
Street address: 72 Roeland Street, Cape Town
Phone: +27 (0)21 462 4050
Fax: +27 (0)21 45 2960

Free State Archives Department

(Contact: The Head)
Postal address: Private Bag X20504, Bloemfontein 9300
Street address: 29 Badenhorst Street, Bloemfontein
Phone: +27 (0)51 522 6762
Fax: +27 (0)51 522 6765

Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository

(Contact: The Head)
Postal address: Private Bag X9012, Pietermaritzburg 3200
Street address: 231 Pietermaritz Street, Pietermaritzburg
Phone: +27 (0)33 342 4712
Fax: +27 (0)33 394 4353

Durban Archives Repository

(Contact: The Head)
Postal address: Private Bag X22, Greyville 4023
Street address: Nashua House, 14 De Mazenod St, Greyville
Phone: +27 (0)31 309 5682
Fax: +27 (0)31 309 5685

Port Elizabeth Archives Repository

(Contact: The Head)
Postal address: Private Bag X3932, Port Elizabeth 6056
Street address: 1 De Villiers Street, Port Elizabeth
Phone: +27 (0)41 484 6451
Fax: +27 (0)41 484 6451

GENERAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Private Central Statistical Services, Demographics

“Central Statistical Services, Demographics”

Postal address: Private Bag X44, Pretoria 0001
Phone: +27 (0)12 310 8911
Fax: +27 (0)12 322 3374
Web: <http://www.statssa.gov.za>

[Information about specific individuals, relationships, religion, year of arrival and place of birth.]

Department of Home Affairs, Births, Marriages, and Deaths (Contact: The Registrar)

Postal address: Private Bag X114, Pretoria 0001
Street address: Sentrakor Building,
173 Pretorius St, Pretoria
Phone: +27 (0)12 314 8911
Fax: +27 (0)12 314 8911

Department of Home Affairs, Naturalizations

Postal address: Private Bag X114, Pretoria 0001
Street address: 242 Struben Street, Pretoria
Phone: +27 (0)12 314 8570
Fax: +27 (0)12 323 5955

Masters of The Supreme Court

(wills and probate documents)

The Master of the Supreme Court
Private Bag X60, Pretoria 0001
Phone: +27 (0)12 323 2404

The Master of the Supreme Court
Private Bag X20584, Bloemfontein, 9300

The Master of the Supreme Court
Private Bag X9018, Cape Town, 8000

The Master of the Supreme Court
Private Bag X1010, Grahamstown, 6140

The Master of the Supreme Court
Private Bag X9010, Pietermaritzburg, 3200

MILITARY RECORDS

South African National Defence Force Archives

Department of Defence
Documentation Service Directorate,
Private Bag X289, Pretoria 0001
Phone: +27 (0)21 322 6350 ext. 227
Fax: +27 (0)21 323 5613

South African Defence Force Archives

Private Bag X615, Pretoria 0001

South African National Museum of Military

History (Contact: Chief Archivist)

[*Note: no personal records*]

P.O. Box 52090, Saxonwold, 2132, Transvaal
Phone: +27 (0)11 646 5513 Fax: +27 (0)11
646 5256

South African Military History Society

P.O. Box 59227, Kengray, 2100
Phone: +27 (0)11 648 2087
Fax: +27 (0)11 648 2085
Web: <http://rapidtp.com/milhist/> or
<http://rapidtp.co.za/milhist/>

South African War Graves Board

153 Blackwood Street, Pretoria, 0001

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

<http://www.cwgc.org>

JEWISH RESOURCES

**Union of Orthodox Synagogues and
Office of the Chief Rabbi**

Postal address: P.O. Box 46559,
Orange Grove, 2119
Phone: +27 (0)11 485 4865
Fax: +27 (0)11 640 7528
E-mail: jhb@uos.co.za
Web: <http://www.uos.co.za>

Beth Din (United Hebrew Congregation)

Phone: +27 (0)11 648 9136

**South African Union for Progressive Judaism
(SAUPJ)**

Postal address: P.O. Box 1190,
Houghton 2041, Johannesburg
Phone: + 27 (0)11 646 7903
Fax: +27 (0)11 646 7904
E-mail: saupj@worldonline.co.za
Web: www.emmanuel.co.za/saupj

United Progressive Reform Congregation

Phone: +27 (0)11 484 3003

**Johannesburg Jewish Helping Hand and Burial
Society (Chevra Kadisha)**

Postal address: Private Bag X7, Sandringham 2131
Phone: +27 (0)11 640 9100
Fax: +27 (0)11 640-9155
E-mail: chevrahgroup@jhbchev.co.za
Web: www.jhbchev.co.za

Union of Orthodox Synagogues of SA & Beth Din

Postal address: 191 Buitenkant Street, Cape Town
Phone: +27 (0)21 461 6310
Fax: +27 (0)21 461 8320

United Chevra Kadisha in Cape Town

Postal address: P.O. Box 543, Cape Town, 8000
Phone: +27 (0)21 531 8705

Durban Jewish Centre

Postal address: P.O. Box 10797,
Marine Parade, Durban
Phone: +27(0) 31 368 2653

**Durban United Hebrew Congregation
Great Synagogue**
Postal address: 75 Silverton Road, Durban
Phone: +27 (0)31 201 5177

Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society) in Durban
Selbourne Road, Durban
Phone: +27(0)31 205 5194
E-mail: Stan Hart <stanhart@absamail.co.za>

Red Hill Cemetery (Durban)
Phone: +27(0)31 564 5771 or 201 5177

United Hebrew Institutions of Bloemfontein
Postal address: P.O. Box 1152,
Bloemfontein 9301, Orange Free State
Fax: +27 (0)51 536 6447.

Griqualand West Jewish Burial Society
P.O. Box 68, Kimberley 8300
Fax: +27 (0)531 81 1281

Chevra Kadisha (Jewish Burial Society)
Postal address: P.O.Box 2089,
Port Elizabeth, 6000, Eastern Cape

Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society
PO Box 887, East London, 5200
Phone: +27 (0)431 2 4452

JEWISH MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

South African Jewish Board of Deputies
(Contact: The Librarian, Prof. Ruben Musiker)
Postal address: P.O. Box 8755, Houghton 2041
Street address: Beyachad Centre 2 Elray Street,
Raedene, Johannesburg 2192
Phone: +27 (0)11 645 2500
Fax: +27 (0)11 645 2559
E-mail: sajbod@iafrica.com
Web: <http://www.sajbod.org.za>

Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies
University of Cape Town
Postal address: Private Bag Rondebosch 7701,
Cape Town
E-mail: Kapgen@humanities.uct.ac.za
Web: <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/kaplan/>

Kaplan Centre Jewish Studies Library
Phone: +27 (0)21 650 3779
Fax: +27 (0)21 650 3062
E-mail: veronica@uctlib.uct.ac.za
Web: <http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/virtual/1132.htm>
[Note: This is an academic research institute and
does not do genealogy research]

The Gitlin Library, Albow Centre
Postal address: PO Box 4176, Cape Town, 8000
Phone: +27 (0)21-462 5088
E-mail: gitlib@netactive.co.za

The Jewish Museum
Postal address: Old Synagogue, 88 Hatfield Street,
Gardens, Cape Town 8001
Phone: +27(0)21 465 1546
Fax: +27 (0)21 465 0284
Web: <http://www.sajewishmuseum.co.za>

The Jewish Pioneers Memorial Museum
(old Raleigh Street Synagogue)
Postal Address: P.O. Box 3048, Port Elizabeth 6056
Phone: +27 (0)41 373 5197 or +27 (0)41 583 3671

C.P. Nel Museum (The Synagogue)
Postal address: Box 453, Oudtshoorn, 6620

SA Friends of Beit Hatefusoth
(SA Country Communities Research Project)
Postal address: P.O. Box 87557, Houghton 2041
Fax: +27 (0) 11 880 6273

Hebrew Order of David (National Headquarters)
Bennie Asch, Grand Secretary
Phone: +27 (011) 640-3017

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

**Jewish Family History Society of Cape Town
(Private)**
Postal address: P.O. Box 51985, Waterfront, 8002,
Contact: Paul Cheifitz, President
E-mail: jewfamct@global.co.za
Phone: +27 (0)21 434 4825, +27 (0)21 423 0223

Jewish Genealogy Society of Johannesburg
Postal address: P.O. Box 1388, Parklands 2121
Contact: Colin Plen, President/Chairman
E-mail: evancol@iafrica.com

The Genealogical Society of South Africa
Postal address: Suite 143, Postnet X2600,
Houghton 2041
Web: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~zafgssa/Eng/>

MORMON FHL RESOURCES FOR SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH GENEALOGY RESEARCH

The Mormon Family History Library (FHL) microfilms contain an extensive number of documents that are useful for genealogical research in South Africa, including Estate/Probate documentation, applications for naturalization (Cape

Colony only), death certificates, as well as other miscellaneous synagogue and cemetery records. A full description of the resources available in the FHL films can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/mormon-fhc/mormon.htm>

Hyde Park Family History Centre

54-68 Exhibition Road, London, SW7 2PA.

Telephone: 020 7589 8561.

Web: <http://pages.britishlibrary.net/hyde.park/>

Details of other Family History Centres in South Africa can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/mormon-fhc/lds.htm>

UK RESOURCES USEFUL FOR SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH GENEALOGY RESEARCH

The **UK Public Records Office (PRO)** contains some records of particular interest to genealogical research in South Africa. One set of documents contains shipping records, in collections BT 26, BT 27, and BT 32. Another set contains casualties of the Special Reserve during the South African War, in collections WO 129/8, WO 129/9, WO 129/10, WO 129/11, and WO 108/338.

Public Records Office (PRO)

Postal address: Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU

Phone: +44 (0)20 8876 3444

Web: <http://www.pro.gov.uk> (home page)

<http://catalogue.pro.gov.uk> (catalogue)

Advertisement

Heather's South African Genealogy Help List

<http://www.genealogy.co.za>

A number of CD's already produced includes:

- The 1902 Municipal Voters Roll of Cape Town - Districts 1 to 6
- The 1878 Voters Roll for the Cape is now available with tens of thousands of names!
- 1805, 1829, 1835, and 1849 Cape Almanacs now on CD
- The Juta's Directory of 1900, which lists residents of Cape Town from the City Bowl until Simonstown.

To view our catalogue go to:

<http://www.genealogy.co.za/scribes.html>

Cape Town Family History Society:

<http://www.genealogy.co.za/society.html>