

# SA-SIG

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/>

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## *Southern African Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group Newsletter*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### The Southern Africa Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group (SA-SIG)

The purpose and goal of the Southern Africa Special Interest Group (SA-SIG) is to bring together Jewish genealogy researchers with a common interest in Southern Africa and to provide a forum for a free exchange of ideas, research tips and information of interest to those researching Jewish family history in the communities of South Africa, Lesotho (Basutoland), Botswana (Bechuanaland), Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), Swaziland, Mozambique, Kenya, and the former Belgian Congo.

The SIG has been producing a quarterly Newsletter since 2000 in which is included articles on personalities in the Southern African Jewish community, religious congregations, communities – past and present and general news about the lives our Southern African families led.

Further information on how to subscribe to the Newsletter can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/newsletter/index.htm>

If you would like to contribute articles to the Newsletter, accounts should include descriptions of families of the community, aspects of local Jewish life, its institutions and particular character. Jewish involvement in the community at large, its history, business life and development could be featured as well.

Articles for printing in the Newsletter should be sent to Bubbles Segall, Editor, at [bubbles.segall@wagait.net](mailto:bubbles.segall@wagait.net)

General enquiries about the Newsletter can be sent either to Bubbles or to Mike Getz at [MikeGetz005@comcast.net](mailto:MikeGetz005@comcast.net)

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

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My Y-DNA results have shown that I am part of a group of over 40 disparate families with closely linked and unusual patterns of Y-DNA. My very close link is to Herb Huebscher, Viennese born, now in USA. Herb is 100% Galicianer, I am 100% *Litvak*, dating from at least the 1750s. The results of this were presented at the past IAJGS Conference and written up as “DNA and Jewish Genealogy Join Forces” in the last issue of *Avotaynu*, vol. XXIII, no. 2, Summer 2007. (This and the PowerPoint presentation of the talk are available on request by e-mail from me). Several families have proven Sephardic backgrounds. My family has a story handed down that they came from a French village before arriving in Lithuania, this is not proven at this stage. One family, non-Jewish, living in Puerto Rico, seems to come from Spain after the inquisition.

This has led me to look again at all the current families and their various relationships in my tree (rapidly becoming a dense forest!). Apart from the obvious *Litvak* heritage (Lithuania and Latvia) and South African connections, I note the following countries: USA, UK, Australia, Canada, Norway, Holland, Israel, and Germany. We have Jews (vary from Haredi to Atheists), Greeks, Hindus, Catholics, Anglicans, Hispanics, etc. Relationships include traditional nuclear families, divorces, LATers (Living Apart Together couples), Gay female couples and a number of single people.

All this leads to some difficulties when entering people on a family tree. Recent editions of popular programmes do give some scope, but no programme to date copes with all the contingencies of contemporary existence!

#### Saul Issroff

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## EDITORIAL

Readers provided some wonderful feedback on articles from the June Newsletter. On Honey Gluckman's article about her husband Sam's pharmacy in Hillbrow, Ralph Ginsberg from Kibbutz Tzora wrote:

*I have just finished reading the story of a pharmacist in Hillbrow that brought back many childhood memories. My father had a bicycle and toy shop in Kotze Street (Berea Cycle Works) from 1946 until the beginning of the 1970's and I remember very well many of the establishments mentioned in the story some of them only a few shops away.*

*My father had a respect for Sam Gluckman being the only chemist (pharmacist) in Hillbrow that did not sell toys.*

*Thanks for publishing the story.*

Beulah Gross and her husband Rachi who live in Australia also enjoyed Honey's item:

*We found everything in the newsletter most interesting and the descriptions of Hillbrow brought back a lot of memories for both of us.*

Honey herself provided stirring feedback on Bernard Woolf's memoirs regarding the escape from the internment camp at Gilgil in Kenya:

*The article about (the) escape from Gilgil was very interesting. Nearly 60 years ago, I saw an advert in our Jewish newspaper asking for penpals for those interned in camp Gilgil. I responded and for the next 50 years I corresponded with Menahem Heppner, for a few years while he was in the camp, and then in Israel. My family and I twice visited him and his family in Israel. He was 12 years older than me and I'm not sure whether he is still alive since I lost touch a few years ago.*

Does anyone know of Menahem Heppner and his family?

It often happens, one reader's story triggers another's memory, another story develops and it all adds to the sharing of rich experiences regarding our South African Jewish heritage. That is what our Newsletter is about. You might only have a small portion of an event that, when combined with knowledge of others, leads to something special.

Some of the most remarkable stories featured have developed from a short email or letter.

It is that time of the year again and subscriptions are now due. See the end of this Newsletter for details. Thanks to our treasurer Mike Getz for providing a Financial Report for the year 2006/07.

### Bubbles Segall

*Editor*

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## SA-SIG TREASURER'S REPORT

*July 2006 – June 2007*

*Mike Getz*

We commenced the year with \$675 in our bank account and which now stands at approximately \$780. Income from paid membership totalled \$480 while expenditure was some \$360. Expenditure covered mostly the printing and mailing of our newsletter.

The mailed version of our newsletter is received by 25 members and a small number of institutions with an interest in our activities. Our subscribers are from South Africa, Israel, the US, Australia, the UK, and Netherlands. There is also a very significant readership of the PDF version published on our website.

Our Editor Bubbles Segall has consistently and splendidly put together and edited the SA SIG newsletter. It already constitutes an important record of the life and times of South African Jewry. Roy Ogus, our Vice President, structures the newsletter for both the printed and PDF version. His care and oversight is appreciated. I am grateful to Bubbles and Roy for their help and the valuable contribution to our common cause.

Saul Issroff, President, continues to provide a high level of response and qualitative content to the many and complex questions that are put by members and others. He leads important activities that are expressed in academic, archival and genealogy initiatives. These are indispensable to the recorded history of our community.

The work to fully record SA Jewry from its beginnings to a significant set of continental

transitions must go forward. It is my hope that we will continue to attract and involve members for this important work.

I am sorry not to be present at our Salt Lake meeting. I would welcome any suggestions or questions that may arise. I will be happy to respond in due course.



*Children from Cape Jewish Orphanage, 1932*



*SA-SIG Meeting in Salt Lake City*

*From left to right: Bernard Lowe (with his back to the camera), Elliott and Sue Axel, Lillian Faffer, Neil Rosenstein and Victor Stone. Missing from the picture are Ed Goldberg and Gayle Riley*

## ***Feedback***

### **PHOTO OF CAPE JEWISH ORPHANAGE**

In the March 2007 issue of the Newsletter the editor supplied the photo on the left from the collection of her father, the late Eddie Segall purported to be of the residents and staff of the Cape Jewish Orphanage. She asked readers to contact her if they knew anything about the photo or anyone in the photo. She received a second response, this time from Freda Sher who lives in Canada. She writes that her mother, Annie Schneider, nee Bettman appears in the picture and was a staff member of the Cape Jewish Orphanage at the time. She is in the centre with glasses and a sleeveless dress.

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### **MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SA-SIG) AT THE SALT LAKE CITY 2007 IAJGS INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON JEWISH GENEALOGY**

*Ed Goldberg*

Besides the SIG meeting, this year's conference did not have any Southern African-specific sessions. Fortunately, there were many Litvak-orientated lectures and meetings, and of course, there were the resources of the Family History Library available for research.

The meeting was chaired by Ed Goldberg and he gave an overview of the SA-SIG activities and objectives. Besides the small attendance, there was a lively discussion and exchange of interests and ideas. Mike Getz's treasurer's report was circulated and an information sheet on the South African resources at the Family History Library was also handed out. This is also available on our website:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/Safrica>

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## SIR HARRY GRAUMANN

*Saul Issroff*



*Harry Graumann as Mayor of Johannesburg, 1909 to 1910.*

In August Harold Lewin<sup>1</sup> from Jerusalem posted a message on the SA-SIG Digest requesting information about Sir Harry Graumann, a Member of Parliament in South Africa, 1936-1937, who died in September 1938.

*Who Was Who*, states Sir Harry Graumann, KBE (1923), born London 1868, son of Emanuel Graumann, Brighton; later Member of the Union Parliament of South Africa; ex-Mayor of Johannesburg; Chairman of Finance Committee of City Council 1907-1909. Club: Rand<sup>2</sup>, Johannesburg. Died 19 September 1938.

There are a lot of references to him, nothing about his ancestry. In *Founders and Followers* by Mendel Kaplan and Marian Robertson, chapter 12, *Public Life* p. 211 has a section with a photo on him. His autobiography *Rand Riches and South Africa*, published in 1935 ... should be the most revealing source of his background and notable achievements,

<sup>1</sup> Harold Lewin, [harmir908@gmail.com](mailto:harmir908@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> A member of the Rand Club – a prestigious club which had very few Jewish members

is singularly silent about his personal life. .... he tells us nothing about his childhood, his parents, his siblings (he had four sisters, all of whom settled in South Africa), save for a mention of his sister, Mrs. D.W. Sims, who acted with distinction as his Mayoress during his term of office as Mayor in 1909-1910.

He was born in London in 1868 of Anglo-Jewish parents and was educated at Dover College, Kent. It can only be conjectured why he left school so early and came to South Africa, although an early reference to friends suggests he did know some people in this country who may have helped him. Possibly his father had died and his mother was in poor circumstances; later events suggest that he had a single parent who died towards the end of the 1880s. Someone must have paid his passage on the Union Steamship Company's flagship *German* when he left London in the mid-summer of 1882 and arrived in Cape Town in the cold and damp of mid-winter with no capital. He soon learned that his dreams of diamonds were by no means likely to be realised and became apprehensive about the stories of illicit diamond buying (IDB and how easy it was to be accused of this). He was also persuaded that he was rather too young for the rough and tumble life on the diamond fields.

Michael Jolles<sup>3</sup> provided this information from the *Jewish Chronicle* and *The Jewish Victorian*:<sup>4</sup>

- Louis Graumann died at Fürth on 18 January 1871.
- Louis Graumann's sons were Emanuel Graumann and Gerson Graumann.
- Gerson Graumann married Marie Bamberger (ex-Nuremberg).
- Emanuel Graumann married Rosetta Franklin who died on 1 March 1880.
- Rosetta nee Franklin was the daughter of Samuel Franklin.
- Rosetta's brother was Berryman Franklin who married Esther nee Jacobs.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Jolles <[mjolles@btinternet.com](mailto:mjolles@btinternet.com)>  
*Directory of Distinguished British Jews 1830 – 1930, with Selected Compilations Extending from 1830 to 2000* by Michael Jolles. (Paperback – August 2000)

<sup>4</sup> *The Jewish Victorian* 1870 - 1880 and 1861 – 1870.  
*The Jewish Victorian* transcribed by Doreen Berger.  
Tymsder Publishing, [www.tymsder.co.uk/victorian.htm](http://www.tymsder.co.uk/victorian.htm)

- Emanuel Graumann's children included:
  1. Clara Graumann who married David W. Sims. Clara was Mayoress of Johannesburg (i.e. sister of Harry Graumann). Clara had a daughter on 11 July 1898 in Johannesburg.
  2. Harry Graumann.
  3. Mrs H. Freeman-Cohen.
- Emanuel Graumann died on 9 December 1915 at 50 Holmdale Road, West Hampstead.
- Berry Graumann married Rosie Hart daughter of Reuben Hart of Preston Park Brighton on 28 October 1898.

There is a complete article on Harry Graumann in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 25 November 1904, page 23.

*Editor's Note: If anyone has any genealogical information on Sir Harry Graumann, please contact Harold Lewin.*

## **NEW DOCUMENTARY TO EXPLORE STORY OF MAURITIAN JEWRY**

*Published in the Cape Jewish Chronicle, March 2007, and is reprinted here with permission.*

A new, two-part documentary on the Jews of Mauritius by local filmmaker Kevin Harris is currently in production and will shortly be screened on SABC2's *Issues of Faith* programme, entitled *In the Shadows of Beau Bassin*. It tells the story of former Mauritian Geoff Geffroy's search to discover the roots of his Jewish identity against the backdrop of the incarceration of 1670 Jewish refugees who were deported to Mauritius after attempting to reach Palestine from Nazi-occupied Europe and detained there by the British government for the remainder of the war. Beau Bassin was the name of the prison in which the refugees were held from 1940 to 1945.

Over this five-year period, through the SA Board of Jewish Deputies, the South African Jewish community provided humanitarian, financial and material assistance to the refugee-detainees.

On their release at the end of the war, the latter dispersed, some finally reaching Israel/Palestine, while others went to the USA or back to Europe.

Only one, Hella Rypinsky, went to South Africa, settling in Cape Town where she met and married Jack Borochowitz. Hella's mother Pesah and baby brother Yitzchak both died in Mauritius in 1941 and are buried at the St Martin's Jewish cemetery.

Geoff Geffroy was born in Mauritius in 1943 and lived there until 1966, when he relocated to South Africa. Despite passing Beau Bassin Prison every day on his way to school, he had not known that Jewish detainees had once been held there. On coming to South Africa, Geoff married a local Jewish woman, Sharon Rudy, and converted to Orthodox Judaism. It was only in 2004 that, through Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, spiritual Leader to the African Jewish Congress, he learned for the first time of the wartime saga of Jews in his homeland. Through researching the topic further, he looked more carefully into his own ancestry and discovered that his own maternal grandmother had been a crypto-Jew (with the same surname as it happened, as one of the refugees) and that therefore he had been halachically Jewish all along.

Earlier this month Rabbi Silberhaft accompanied Harris and Geffroy to Mauritius to assist in the making of the documentary. Interviews were conducted with the Rabbi, Geffroy, members of the local Jewish community and other local residents who had benefited from training programmes in Israel sponsored by the Israeli Government. Rabbi Silberhaft and Geffroy were interviewed by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), the interview being broadcast three times on national television and reported on in all the major Mauritian newspapers.

Much of the filming took place inside Beau Bassin Prison itself, where the original cells in which the detainees were housed still exist. Rabbi Silberhaft took this opportunity to visit a French Jewish prisoner, who was convicted of drug smuggling and met with the Commissioner of Prisons. The latter informed him that there were over 35 South Africans in the prison, all of whom had been convicted on drug trafficking charges.

Rabbi Silberhaft also led a delegation that met with the Rt Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, President of the Republic of Mauritius. The delegation comprised himself, Geffroy, Irene Zuckerman, past president of the Union of Jewish Women, African Region, and Baby Curpens, president of the local Israel friendship society, the Amicale Maurice Israel.

During the meeting Rabbi Silberhaft expressed concern over the fact that last year the Jewish community's premises, the Amicale Maurice Centre building, had been defaced with graffiti reading "Al Quada." Jugnauth, whose election platform strongly stressed the need to combat extremism and foster religious tolerance in Mauritius' multi-faith society, reiterated his position that his government would take all steps necessary to prevent racist or anti-Semitic activities.

The trip included the holding of a memorial service at the St Martin's Jewish Cemetery in memory of the 126 detainees who passed away on the island and are buried there. The cemetery was handed over by deed of grant to the SA Jewish Board of Deputies after the war, and has been maintained by it, for much of the time with the voluntary assistance of a local non-Jewish and Jewish resident.

The South African Jewish community, through the SAJBD, maintained close links with the Mauritius detainees throughout the war and assisted them in various ways.

*In the Shadow of Beau Bassin* is scheduled to be screened on SABC 2, *Issues of Faith*, on Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, at 9.30 am.

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## **SOUTH AFRICA TO AUSTRALIA: HOW, WHY, WHEN, AND ... HOWZIT BEEN?**

South Africans have been emigrating to Australia since the early days of the struggle against Apartheid. We know from the Census figures that 104,100 people in Australia list South Africa as their birthplace; it is estimated that 15,500 are Jewish (Source: Professor Colin Tatz).

As part of its commitment to documenting the diversity of Australian Jewry, the Sydney Jewish Museum is developing an exhibition to focus on the South African Jewish community in Sydney.

The exhibition will investigate themes such as:

- Jewish life prior to arrival in South Africa
- Living in South Africa
- Waves of migration to Australia
- Life in Australia – resettlement and adjustment to a new country

Sydney Jewish Museum invites you to feature in our exhibition, opening August 2008.

- ◇ *How do you remember your life in South Africa?*
- ◇ *What were your reasons for coming to Australia?*
- ◇ *Tell us about your immigration.*
- ◇ *What do you consider to be the biggest benefit of moving to Australia?*
- ◇ *How do you think that your life in South Africa has affected who you are today?*
- ◇ *Are there differences between living as a Jew in South Africa and living as a Jew in Australia?*
- ◇ *Do you have any legendary or humorous personal or family stories?*

For inclusion in the exhibition, please answer all or some of these questions, include your name, address, year of immigration, and a photograph of yourself at any stage of your life (with or without family). We are also looking for interesting objects, documents, video footage, photographs, and memorabilia.

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## MOSS KOLNIK – A BIOGRAPHY

*Alan Kolnik*

About 20 years ago, a letter appeared in the *Durban Daily News*, asking “who, or what, is a Moss Kolnik, and why is that the new name of the M37 highway leading out of the N2 from Durban to Amanzimtoti?”



*Rina and Alan Kolnik with Dean and Tamarah Jacobs*

Moss Kolnik was my late father. He was a civil engineer who worked almost his entire adult life for the regional government of Natal, particularly on the infrastructure in and around Durban. The road was given his name after he passed away by citizens of the region who remembered the contribution he had made to improving the transport in the area. A letter of condolence from the Chairman of the Shongweni Farmers’ Association upon his death records their appreciation – “it is largely due to him that we owe the progress of the road construction in our area.”

He was born on February 2, 1921 in the *shtetl* of Kozhangorodok, about 30 km east of Pinsk. This area had become part of Poland after WWI and today is in Belarus. The *shtetl* lived in the shadow of the larger town of Luninets. Luninets had agreed to allow the establishment of a railway station, and thrived as the railroad brought commerce to the area. The elders of Kozhangorodok had apparently refused the offer of the railway station for fear the noise of the trains would disturb the religious studies of the inhabitants.

Poverty to the point of starvation in both towns was endemic, especially in Kozhangorodok. Many of those who could, or who had the initiative, left for

America, Argentina, Europe and South Africa. My grandfather (*Zeide*), Jacob (Yacov/Yankel) Kolnik wrote to relatives in Argentina and South Africa, to see which country would be best to emigrate to. The first, perhaps only, answer came from South Africa, and he emigrated to South Africa, arriving in Cape Town in approximately 1930.



*The Kolniks in Kozhangorodok, c 1930*

He left behind my grandmother Sheindel (*Bobba*), with five children – Moss, Fanny, Freda, Tevya (*Tee*), and Taube. By dint of extremely hard work as a tailor, and saving, a year or two later he was able to bring the family out to join him. Sarah, his sister, had emigrated to America to join her husband, Joe Belsky in St. Louis. *Bobba* gave his brother Dave the money he had sent her to buy a ticket to South Africa to escape Poland before emigration laws prevented him leaving. She then waited for my grandfather to send more money for her and the five children. They arrived approximately in 1932 at the dock in Cape Town. The Jews who remained in Kozhangorodok, including my great-grandfather, Hirsch, were murdered by the local population under Nazi supervision in 1942.

My grandfather had rented the house at 5 Wandel Street, which is now a national treasure, built in the Dutch style, and that was where the family lived till he purchased what became the family home at 27 Scott Street. The stories about the early years in South Africa are a saga unto themselves, but since



this biography is about my father, I will concentrate on his accomplishments.

The family focused on studies above all else once actual survival was assured, and within a short time, the older Kolnik children were at school in Cape Town, distinguishing themselves with their successes in English and other studies. I have a certificate from the secretary of the S.P.C.A., awarding Moss Kolnik of Hope Lodge Primary School First Prize of £2-2-0 in the annual S.P.C.A. essay competition of 1934 – about two years after their arrival, when they could speak only Yiddish and Hebrew from the *cheder*.

Later on, he became interested in body-building (our family is, to put it mildly, short of physical stature!), and took lessons with Tromp van Diggelan who was a world champion wrestler and had a “system” for building muscles. Moss remained a very strong person for his size, so apparently the system worked. Chess had become Moss’ life-long passion, and in return, he taught Tromp chess. We have a picture signed by Tromp to “his friend and pupil” Moss.



***Trom van Diggelan and Moss Kolnik c. 1940***

Moss became a leading chess player in Cape Town, and won a game against a local player which became something of a sensation when it was selected by Irving Chernev, one of the great American chess authors, for his book, *1000 Best Short Games of Chess*. Chernev wrote: *This was won by a South African schoolboy. If this is how the boys play, the men must be holy terrors!* The game was republished in obituaries when my father died

in 1982. Former South African champion Kenneth Kirby described the winning combination as *one of the most daring and inspired combinations in South African chess history*.

In 1939, Moss started engineering studies at the University of Cape Town, a matter of great pride for the family, and an extraordinary success for someone who only about seven years earlier had left a *shtetl* in Poland.

However, those who knew Moss in the 40s will probably remember him for his activity in *Habonim*, eventually becoming *Bar Koach* of either the Cape Town or Johannesburg Ken (group). The Kolnik family was very active in Zionist affairs and Moss and Tee were particularly active in *Habonim*. Tee made *aliyah* against his father’s wishes, living in arduous conditions on Kibbutz Mayan Baruch before returning and studying pharmacy.



***Moss Kolnik in Habonim uniform c. 1946***

Moss graduated in December 1942 and spent the war working for the South African Technical Services Corps on engineering projects at the harbor in Simonstown, and what became Jan Smuts International Airport in Johannesburg. This was the first of the three airports which he helped build – Johannesburg, Durban, and Auckland.

His sister Taube had recently started working at the Women’s Zionist League and met the person who would become Moss’ wife, and my mother, Vera Cohn. She was from a large German Jewish family, and, after obtaining approval from her cousin, they were married on 30 November 1947. Vera would

devote her life to WIZO, working as the volunteer treasurer of the Durban WIZO organization.

Moss had, in the meantime transferred to Durban where he worked on diverting the Umlaas River and building the drainage system for the airport. This was the start of his long career building the infrastructure that serves Durban to this day. He also worked on the design on the Port Elizabeth and Kimberley airports, apparently from a head office in Johannesburg.

My earliest memories are of an apartment building in Johannesburg and flying down to Durban to join him in the little railway cottage my parents rented in the early 1950's. My mother's sister and brother-in-law, Dulcie and Harold Jacobs, had already started their family there. Eventually they owned the Mayop Pharmacy near the beach which many vacationers must have visited during their holidays in Durban.

My father was now transferred to the South African Railways. Oddly enough, despite working for the railways he was responsible for maintenance of the wharves at Durban Harbor.

It was during this period that he was responsible for building one of South Africa's best known landmarks – the famous lighthouse at Umhlanga Rocks. He may also have been responsible for the lighthouse on the Durban Bluff, but it is the Umhlanga lighthouse that has become so well known. In all, he was responsible for projects costing over £1,000,000 – a large sum in those days. The Daily News commented admiringly on the speed with which the Umhlanga lighthouse was erected – two days less than the lighthouse on the Bluff!



*Lighthouse at Umhlanga Rocks*

As a railways employee he was able to obtain either free or subsidized tickets on the Orange Express to Cape Town, and once a year, at *Pesach*, we would travel for two and a half days to Cape Town for the family *seder* and holidays in Cape Town. These trips were the highlights of our times in those years.

With his engineering training, Moss was able to design houses, selecting and adapting plans from books of American home designs. With my mother as project manager and bookkeeper, they began building houses in new suburbs that were growing up around Durban. The first house was in Valley View Avenue in Morningside. We moved there as soon as it was built, and Morningside Elementary School was my first school. I spent two years at that school – one rather unhappy year in Class 1 (First Grade), with a teacher who I now realize was an anti-Semite, and a very happy second year before transferring to what was then Sharona School before becoming Carmel College.

Valley View Avenue, now quite respectable, was then *bundu* – a dense, valley, almost completely wild, with huge trees that had to be cut down to clear the land. I recall climbing through the branches of these trees as they lay horizontal on the ground after being felled, and snake tracks in the dew on the lawns in the morning. My father could indulge his passion for growing his own fruit, and we had mangoes, guavas and avocados that grew on the grounds which we could pick fresh from the trees.

In short order, my parents built a second house across the road and then carried on building houses around Durban. They built nine or ten in all. I have visited the original house in Valley View Avenue – 50 years later, it looked in as good condition as when we lived there – they “built to last”. The last house they built before we emigrated to New Zealand, was the tall, three-story house on Myro Drive in Glenmore – quite a Durban landmark given the way it towers over the area.

During this time, Moss cemented his reputation as one of South Africa's leading and most feared chess players. He had a very sharp tactical style and had a knack for surprising his opponents with winning moves in apparently indifferent or lost positions. Never quite the South African champion, he won the Durban and Natal titles many times, and occasionally gave simultaneous exhibitions at the Durban Jewish Club near the beach, taking on 16

opponents at a time. He wrote a weekly chess column for the Daily News in the 1950's and 1960's.

In 1961, after the Sharpsville massacre, Moss decided it was time to leave South Africa. Perhaps, as a chess player, he was looking ahead to the end-game and anticipated the worst a few decades too soon! After trying to find employment in Israel where the Ashdod Harbor was being built, and having had no success in finding anyone who could make him a firm offer of a position, he left for the antipodes. My mother turned down Canada as too cold!

A position in Auckland had opened up – they were starting to build the Auckland International Airport and he had the experience to take on the job of designing and managing the building of the runways. Selling seven or eight houses at the bottom of the market still suffering from the fallout from Sharpsville, my mother loaded us onto an old ship destined for the scrap yards of Hong Kong (jet travel was as yet unknown, at least for us!), and about six miserable weeks later we wallowed into the stunningly beautiful harbor at Auckland.

Moss was engrossed in his work and had not given much thought to the needs of a young family. Houses in New Zealand were, and possibly still are, largely built of wood, and he had one cut in half and transported to a location at the end of a dirt track extremely convenient to the end of the runway. It also happened to be about 20 miles from anything resembling civilization. The house was then reassembled and put down in the dust and mud depending on the weather.

For us children it was like a fantasy come true – we played at building rafts that we floated onto a muddy tidal inlet near the house and could run wild. Vera, coming from the luxuries of South Africa, and houses they had designed and built to their own specifications, must have been horrified by a house that probably seemed to her little more than a cardboard shack stuck in the mud! Within a couple of years we had moved to Epsom, a suburb in town with excellent schools and civilized surroundings.

However, I remember driving with my father at tremendous speeds along “his” runways, untroubled by speed limits or traffic cops, to his office in what would later become the control tower. So now when I travel (rarely) to South Africa or New Zealand, I

land at the airports largely built by my father – Johannesburg, Durban, and Auckland.

At the time New Zealand was firmly in the grip of a socialist ethic that must have made the Scandinavians look like positive capitalists. There was almost no opportunity to earn significant wages, taxes were extremely high, and for whatever reason, my parents did not seem to be able to start their building projects there as they had in South Africa. Perhaps building fragile wooden houses did not appeal to them! They waited for me to finish high school and then returned to Durban in 1968.

After a short and apparently unhappy period working for a local private firm, my father went to work for the Natal Provincial Administration as the District Engineer for the Roads Department. It was in this capacity that he developed and maintained the roads in the area, and for which the local residents remember him. He also had a great deal to do with the development of the Richards Bay and Port Shepstone areas and ports, I believe.

Moss resumed his chess playing with a passion – in New Zealand, although he played chess at the local club, he never seemed to have the same enjoyment as he had playing his old rivals in Durban and South Africa. He immediately won the Durban Championship decisively, a feat he repeated in 1971 – between 1945 and his death in 1982 he was Durban champion 10 times playing against many very strong opponents. He won the Natal Championship 5 times and played in numerous South African Championships, usually finishing well up among the leaders. He was devoted to the Durban Chess Club, holding the President's position on several occasions. He resumed writing his chess column for the Daily News. Upon his death he bequeathed his extensive chess library to the club which sold the books and used the proceeds for a trophy awarded to the winner of an annual tournament held in his name.

Meanwhile, with my mother again managing the actual construction, and keeping the books straight, in between her unremitting devotion to acting as the volunteer local WIZO treasurer, they resumed their building activities. Their last house, which became their last home, was a beautiful Spanish style duplex at 498B Essenwood Road.



*Moss Kolnik at the Durban Chess Club in 1956*

Vera passed away in January 1979 after a long and mysterious illness that I suspect today would have been easily treated with an anti-depressant drug. I was living on Kibbutz Yizreel at the time and had just spent a couple of weeks with my parents in Durban and Cape Town when she passed away in her sleep. She insisted on being cremated and her remains are at the Stellawood Cemetery in Durban.

My father rashly remarried a year later. Immediately after his second marriage he developed a brain tumor that was to take his life. His second wife looked after him devotedly during this terrible two year illness – I was in Israel, my brother and sister in Johannesburg, and without his second wife the situation would have been even worse. I visited him with my wife-to-be, Rina, when the tumor was diagnosed, and he at least had the opportunity to meet his future daughter-in-law. He died on Tisha B'Av, 1981 and is also buried in the Stellawood Cemetery, where my cousin, Louis Jacobs, devotedly takes care of their graves and those of his mother, Dulcie, and our grandmother, Lily Cohn.

Moss' death was noted in the local papers, and many of the people whose lives he had touched or influenced through his work and chess sent their condolences. The Roads Department chose to remember him by naming the road to Amanzimtoti after him. His name on the sign-post puzzled many in Durban. His old chess opponent and our family lawyer, Mervyn Millar, wrote to the local paper explaining the origins of the name, and noting his achievements in Durban as an engineer and chess player.

With all the changes in South Africa now that apartheid has been defeated, I do not know how long his name will remain on the sign-post leading to Amanzimtoti, but the harbor, the airport, the lighthouses, and the houses my parents built together will remain in Durban as their memorials.

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## A LETTER FROM THE CAPE

Adam Yamey

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*“... I want to begin my letter in order by informing you, my dears, of my safe arrival in Cape Town. After a strenuous as well as disagreeable trip of 108<sup>1</sup> days I arrived at last today, the 29<sup>th</sup> day of August, happy and in good shape”.*

Thus wrote Henry Bergmann (1831-1866), my mother's first cousin twice removed, to his parents<sup>2</sup> in Bavaria in a letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> August 1849<sup>3</sup>, which describes his voyage from England to South Africa. A photocopy of this letter was given to me by a second cousin once removed<sup>4</sup>. After transcribing the letter from its cursive Gothic script into modern Latin script, I attempted to translate it<sup>5</sup>. The content of the letter is described below.

### Into the Atlantic

After writing at length about how concerned he was to have been out of contact with his parents for so long, Henry informed them that after he left London on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, he wrote them two letters. The first was written from Gravesend<sup>6</sup>, where he was stayed for two days. The second was written after a 14 day journey, when his ship<sup>7</sup> met another ship at the end of the English Channel (his letter would have been passed from his ship to the one which they met). They were in the English Channel for as long as two weeks because, as Henry wrote, “...we had poor wind, and since the English Channel is a very dangerous sea, we had to drop anchor every evening and during those three weeks we were neither able to distance ourselves from the coast nor to get out of the Channel...” but they finally managed, “... and as soon as we reached the high seas we had better wind; but fate was not with us and after a few days we again encountered slack wind; and this changed back and forth until we came to the Line<sup>8</sup> where for a short time we had excellent wind again.”. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, the ship passed the island of Madeira, and 4 days later, Palma, one of the Canary Islands, was passed. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, they sailed past the Portuguese island of St Antonio, one of the Cape Verde

Islands<sup>9</sup>. All of these islands could be seen with the naked eye.

### A mutiny on board

Before crossing the Equator, the ship was imperilled by an incident that broke out on board. A sailor whose duty it was to man the rudder (or helm<sup>10</sup>) was compelled to remain at his post for ten minutes longer than the usual 2 hour duty<sup>11</sup>. Henry described what followed: “*This sailor however, quit the helm, saying to the captain, who perchance was on deck, that since there was such a delay in his being relieved, he was not going to handle the helm any longer. Since sailors are bound to the strictest obedience, the Captain ordered this sailor to return immediately to his place, and, as a penalty, to remain an additional two hours at the helm, but the sailor refused stubbornly and was insolent<sup>12</sup> to the captain whereupon the latter put him in iron fetters. As soon as the other sailors, 14 in number, saw that their comrade was in fetters, they refused all service and none wanted to take over the helm. The only ones that stood by the captain were the senior and junior mates who, however were not regarded as ordinary sailors, but as officers of the ship, and who after the captain had the highest positions on the ship. Since no one agreed to take charge of the helm, and as the sea happened to be rather stormy, the captain was now obliged to load his pistols abruptly and to provide them to each of the two mates and to several robust steerage passengers who went with the latter among the sailors to force them back to their duty. As soon as the sailors saw the captain and the other men approaching with weapons, they armed themselves with long knives. Now the battle started; but within 10 minutes the sailors were overwhelmed and their leaders put into chains; still, during the mêlée the senior mate was dangerously wounded by one of the sailors with a stab wound to the temple. You can easily imagine our anxiety...*” Fortunately, the rebellion was subdued before the ship was further endangered.

### Another revolt, and crossing the Equator

Soon after the sailor's mutiny, the steerage passengers revolted against the captain complaining that they were badly treated and badly fed. On some days they were given rotten meat, and on others nothing at all. Because of this, Henry felt obliged spend a few pounds (i.e. Sterling) to ‘upgrade’ from the steerage class to a better cabin<sup>13</sup>, where he felt more comfortable and was treated better.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, the ship crossed the Equator. The sun burned dreadfully, and it was uncomfortable to stay anywhere except on deck, as below deck it was oppressively sultry. Henry wrote that they saw many ships, and if one was travelling homewards, back towards Europe, he would sit down and write home with great pleasure, but always his happiness was dashed and his work to no avail, as his ship could never get close enough to the other ships to exchange mail on account of the roughness of the sea.

### **On whales, on board, and on water**

Henry wrote, “*We saw tremendous whales which in my estimation were at least 60 to 70 feet<sup>14</sup> long. Twice we were lucky enough to catch, with a big hook, fish of about 3 hundredweights<sup>15</sup>, but these are not good for eating, but are only of use for preparing oil. We obtain the well known whalebone<sup>16</sup> from their strong backbone.*” To pass many tedious hours on board, “*We caught birds en masse .... they were caught by means of a fish hook with a morsel of meat attached, and since these birds seldom find sufficient nourishment on the high sea, they are easily caught with a fishing rod. Several times we caught some which were as big as swans.*” After describing this, Henry continued by giving an account of his daily routine at sea.

He woke up at 9 in the morning, and washed, for as he remarked, cleanliness was an essential on board, and was obligatory<sup>17</sup>. Breakfast consisted of eggs, butter, coffee, tea and bread. Henry spent the morning on deck, reading and writing. At 2 p.m., a ‘midday’ meal was served. It included soup, roasts and pastry<sup>18</sup>. After luncheon, he used the afternoon for drawing<sup>19</sup> and reading. At 5 p.m., the passengers had afternoon tea<sup>20</sup>, a meal resembling breakfast. Henry usually spent the evening on deck where he killed time with all manner of diversions. Before going to bed at 10 p.m., he ate a supper of butter, rice and bread.

During the last four weeks of the voyage, the water store on the ship became severely depleted. Water was rationed: each passenger was given three measures<sup>21</sup> of water, which had to be used for cooking, washing and drinking. This was little, but Henry wrote that, by abstemious usage, it was enough to manage with. As the voyage was longer than expected, those on board had to make do with less at the end, so there was much less available for washing. Henry found washing with seawater

unsatisfactory because, “*the salt contained in it only tends to make one dirty rather than clean.*”<sup>22</sup> ”

### **“Land ahoy”**

A frightfully heavy gale brewed up when the ship was about three days away from Cape Town. The ship was lifted by waves as high as houses, and then flung down by them. The ship swayed dreadfully, and no one could sit or stand without being attached to something. At night anxiety prevented sleep. All that they could do was to try to avoid falling off their bunks. Henry wrote, “*Some times the waves collided with our ship, lifting themselves high as a tower, seeming as if they wanted to swallow us.*” Henry wrote that he who has never seen such a tumultuous sea nor has been acquainted with such thundering mountainous waves has no idea of what a storm is. The ship was in a very dangerous situation. It was only a few hundred miles from land. For three days the captain could not use his navigational instruments that relied on the sun, it being obscured by heavy clouds. After six days, the storm abated, and it was possible to use the sails again.

“*On August 27<sup>th</sup>, the day after the storm, we suddenly saw land and since the captain was unable to determine the position of the sun, he was compelled to head straight for it (i.e. the land), as he initially believed it was the Table Mountain<sup>23</sup>. However, as we came closer we found that it was not the land we had hoped for, and thus it was necessary to change course*”. On the following morning, Henry saw Table Mountain in the distance. He saw green fields and hills as well as the town, and thanked God for this. The end of the journey was a great relief for him. He had not found it agreeable to be four months at sea struggling with all manner of dangers and discomforts. At least for him sea sickness was not one of these: alone amongst his fellow passengers he escaped this because, he thought, he had spent most of his time out on deck in the healthy, fresh sea air.

### **The Cape of Good (?) Hope**

Henry’s ship arrived in the harbour of Cape Town at two p.m. on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, laid anchor at half past two, and Henry set foot on land at three p.m. The first thing that Henry did was to search for Mr Bergtheil in order to give him a letter<sup>24</sup>. To his great disappointment he discovered that Bergtheil was not in Cape Town, but in Port Natal<sup>25</sup> (now known as

“Durban<sup>26</sup>”), and would be there for a few months. Now, Henry found himself in an awkward situation: “...a stranger in a strange land, with little money and lacking friends and good counsel.” The only thing he could do “is to look for a commercial position and to remain with it until I acquire sufficient resources and knowledge to start a moderate business of my own.” Since his trip used up most of his money, “it would no doubt be difficult ... to conduct a business, unless I can be supported by sufficient credit for which I, as a stranger, can hardly hope for the time being.

*Furthermore, I am not yet knowledgeable about the methods in which business is conducted here and therefore I must for the moment observe and wait until chance plays something suitable into my hands, enabling me to assure my further career. ... I have taken private lodging, since a hotel is terribly expensive; even there, I have to pay a lot, although it is the cheapest accommodation I could find. I am paying 4 Pounds a month, which in German money is 48 fl (Florins?). For this, I have a nice spacious room and good food; however, I think I will not spend more than 4 weeks in this house, since it is a bit too expensive for me and in the meantime I will look for different quarters out in the country, which would only cost me half as much. However, at the beginning I have to live in town in order to get better acquainted with local conditions. As far as I can see, here roast pigeons are as unlikely to fly into your mouth<sup>27</sup> as in Germany and one must leave one’s mouth open for a long time until these dear little creatures deign to walk in by themselves.”* Sounding a bit disillusioned, Henry wrote that the grand ideas one often harbours about a foreign land often turn out to be nothing.

### **Convicts and “Kaffirs”**

On its last page, the tone and handwriting<sup>28</sup> of Henry’s letter changes. His attitude towards his home land appears to have altered by the time he wrote this part of the letter. Maybe, the long sea voyage gave him time to reflect on the situation he had left behind, and the plethora of new experiences he encountered in the Cape gave him a new perspective on life – he underwent a ‘a sea change<sup>29</sup>’.

He asks (almost triumphantly), “Well, you German Jews, do you not yet have the emancipation<sup>30</sup> that you so long for? Here, the Jew becomes emancipated<sup>31</sup> by positioning himself as an equal to

*the very best in honorableness whereby he himself is treated as a man of honor, since the outcasts of German Jewry are, thank God<sup>32</sup>, not yet here.”*

Henry concluded his letter by writing about events in Cape Town. He described how the British Government had sent a ship containing criminals to Cape Town, in order to land them there, so that in one way or another they might become worthy of their land – i.e. to redeem themselves by useful labour. Henry wrote that the English in Cape Town would not stand for this, and protested to the Government, so effectively that the ship containing convicts was sent back<sup>33</sup>.

Henry was describing a very significant event in British colonial history. In 1848, the third Earl Grey<sup>34</sup> (1802-1894), the Colonial Secretary in London, decided to send a batch of Irish convicts, driven to crime by a famine in 1845, to South Africa, where a penal settlement was to have been established, with some of the safer convicts being hired out to do labour for the inhabitants of the Cape. A convict ship, the “Neptune<sup>35</sup>” was sent to Cape Town, but before its arrival on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1849, the inhabitants of Cape Town set up an association to protest against the landing of convicts in their colony<sup>36</sup>. Although the Governor of the Cape had sufficient soldiers to be able to have enforced the landing of these convicts, they remained on board ship at anchor in Table Bay for about 5 months, as the protesting inhabitants of Cape Town had resolved not to provide food or sustenance to the convicts should they have been landed. The protester’s cause was championed by the London Member of Parliament, Sir Charles Adderley, who persuaded Earl Grey to abandon the project<sup>37</sup>. The protest having been successful, the ship with its miserable cargo continued on towards Tasmania. Henry was witness to the first successful revolt by a British Colony against the British Government since the American Revolution<sup>38</sup>. Henry then asked, “What would you Germans have done?” in this situation, implying that that they might not have put up such a determined show of protest as the inhabitants of Cape Town. He concluded this topic with the words, “Whilst writing this, I forgot that I am a German myself, but in the face of this example, it is possible that I have already lost the German timidity”. This is just as well, because Henry concludes his letter by mentioning that the “Kaffirs” were again stirring, and that a new war with them was in prospect.

Indeed, 1850 saw the outbreak of the “Fifth Kaffir War”, now known as the “Eighth Frontier War”<sup>39</sup> which according to the novelist and travel writer Anthony Trollope<sup>40</sup> who visited South Africa in the 1870s was the bloodiest of these wars between the British and the Xhosa.

### **With Mr Caro**

At the end of his letter, Henry put an address, to which his mail should be addressed: “Mr H. Bergmann, Care of Mr. P Caro, Graaff Reinett (*sic*), Cape of Good Hope.” Graaff Reinett<sup>41</sup> was the location of one of the trading houses owned by the Mosenthal family, Jews from Kassel. This store was opened in late 1842 by the brothers Adolph and Joseph Mosenthal and was managed by Phoebus (Feibusch<sup>42</sup>) Caro (1818 – 1877), a Jew from Posen (now Poznań) in Prussian Poland. He was a steerage passenger on board a ship, the “Waterloo”, bound for Tasmania, which ran aground off the Cape on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1842<sup>43</sup>. He was one of 90 survivors, and landed in South Africa destitute<sup>44</sup>. There, he met Adolph and Joseph Mosenthal, and the latter, remembering his own sad predicament when he had arrived penniless in Cape Town in 1833, offered Caro employment. Caro ran the Mosenthals’ store in Graaff Reinett, and eventually became a wealthy and prominent citizen of the town. Maybe, Caro recollecting his difficult beginnings in the Colony had some sympathy for young Henry Bergmann who was working with him. In any case, it is not with sympathy that a business becomes successful and doubtless Caro and the Mosenthals saw in Henry qualities that they recognised as being useful for the promotion of their business. They were not to be disappointed, as Henry went on to become a partner in the Mosenthal’s business and ran the branch of their business in Aliwal North, in his own name, until his death in 1866<sup>45</sup>.

### **Some “mercantile genealogy” in South Africa.**

Henry was eighteen years old when he left Germany. His reasons for emigrating cannot be determined from his letter. He may have left to escape the political turbulence that started in 1848. It affected his country<sup>46</sup> and most of Europe. Other reasons may have been to escape the anti-Semitic atmosphere in Bavaria, and to seek his fortune. Clearly, he set off with some idea of doing the latter as he carried with him an introduction to Mr Bergtheil, who may well have been known by the

Bergmann family, and also might have been able to help him with a business career.

Jonas Bergtheil<sup>47</sup> (1819-1901) was born in Bavaria. To be precise, Jonas was born in Dittenheim<sup>48</sup>, the same village as that in which Henry Bergmann’s father Lazarus<sup>49</sup>, and most probably also Henry himself, was born. In 1834, aged 15 years, Jonas joined his cousin Gabriel Kilian who had opened a trading establishment in Cape Town, a branch of the Frankfurt based firm Kilian and Stein (it was as a clerk in this firm that Joseph Mosenthal began his commercial career in the Cape in 1839). In 1843 Bergtheil left the Cape for Natal where he became a partner in the Natal Cotton Company, which was established to grow cotton in Natal. However, shortages of suitable local labour led to Bergtheil’s attempts to import labour from Germany. His first attempt was to persuade poor Jewish families to migrate (from Bavaria<sup>50</sup>) to Natal to work as labourers. This almost succeeded, but was foiled when some malicious soul spread the rumour that once these Jews arrived in Africa, they would be sold as slaves<sup>51</sup>. Instead, he persuaded 200 farm workers from the north of Germany to settle in Natal in 1847, where their descendants still live. I feel that the reason that Henry Bergmann had a letter to Bergtheil rather to someone else was that, being from the same village as his father, Bergtheil may have been better known to Henry than other German Jews who had opened businesses in South Africa.

Henry’s letter not only provides a very graphic description of the trials and tribulations of an emigrant sailing from Europe to Africa, but also describes the conditions he encountered on arrival at his destination. The precariousness of communication in the 1840s is illustrated in his letter. Letters were carried by ship, and sometimes passed from ship to ship, taking journeys of unpredictable durations. When he set off for Cape Town, Henry expected to find Mr Bergtheil there. Four or more months later, Bergtheil had left, and even if he tried to inform Henry of this, the probability of this news reaching Henry would have been small.

Henry’s journey to South Africa was of importance to my background, as reports of his successes there probably encouraged the emigration to South Africa of many other of his relatives, including Henry’s brother Ludwig (born 1835), and cousins including



Jacob Seligmann(1846-1900)<sup>52</sup> and his brother Sigmund (1856-1939) who were both born in Ichenhausen. Sigmund, the grandfather of the person who gave me my copy of Henry's letter, followed in Henry's footsteps, but more than twenty-five years after him, and, in 1885, founded a trading company in South Africa, a business which my mother's father and Sigmund's nephew, Iwan Bloch (1886-1931)<sup>53</sup>, left Germany to join.

I am indebted to John Englander & Kathrin Peters for their help with translation.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> At roughly the same time of the year, but in 1842, a ship called the "Abercrombie Robinson", left the UK 2<sup>nd</sup> June, and arrived at the Cape 25<sup>th</sup> August (see: <http://www.mcgonagall-online.org.uk/poems/mpgaber.htm>) – a journey of 84 days. M. Nathan wrote in his book *The Voortrekkers of South Africa*, (publ. by Central News Agency : Cape Town, 1937) that , in the 1840s, sea voyages between England and the Cape frequently took 90 days. The missionary David Livingstone took "three months" to reach Cape Town in 1840 (See *Missionary Travels and Researches*, by D. Livingstone, published 1857). So, it seems from these examples, that the 108 days voyage taken by Henry's ship, without stops on the way, was quite long.
- <sup>2</sup> Henry Bergmann's parents were Lazarus Bergmann (c. 1800, Dittenheim – 1888, Augsburg) and Klara (Gluck) Seligmann (1807, Ichenhausen – 1884).
- <sup>3</sup> The only date on the letter is 28 Aug 1849, but it is clear from the contents of the letter that it was sent a considerable time after this.
- <sup>4</sup> She bears the same relationship to Henry as did my late mother.
- <sup>5</sup> I have been ably, and patiently assisted by both John Englander, a cousin of mine (and a first cousin three times removed of Henry Bergmann) who contacted me for the first time after he had read an article that I had published in *Stammbaum*, and by Peter Urbach, a family friend. The final interpretation of the contents of the letter is mine, and my two helpers are in no way responsible for any errors that I may have inadvertently introduced.
- <sup>6</sup> Gravesend is located on the south coast of the Thames estuary, about 45 Km from Tower Bridge in the City of London.
- <sup>7</sup> Not, as yet, identified.
- <sup>8</sup> I assume that by "Line", Henry was referring to the Equator.
- <sup>9</sup> The Cape Verde Islands gained independence from Portugal in 1975 (see:

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<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cv.html> ).

- <sup>10</sup> "das Steuerruder" in the letter.
- <sup>11</sup> It seems that by 1849, the British habit of "working to rule" was well established!
- <sup>12</sup> Henry uses the words "*erlaubte sich ungebührliche Reden gegen den Kapitan*", which I have taken to mean that the sailor was insolent.
- <sup>13</sup> Henry uses the word "*Kajüte*", which translates as "cabin".
- <sup>14</sup> Henry writes, "*60 bis 70 Fuss lang*", indicating his familiarity with British units of measurement.
- <sup>15</sup> I have translated Henry's word "*Zentner*" as "hundredweight" (50 kilogrammes: see *Cassell's German and English Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1952).
- <sup>16</sup> A 90 foot whale can produce up to 120 barrels of oil, and the bone, or "Baleen", (not strictly a bone) was used for a variety of every day products in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ( e.g. Buggy whips, Carriage springs, Corset stays, Fishing rods, Hoops for women's skirts, Umbrella ribs). See: <http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/wildlife/whales/whaling2.htm> )
- <sup>17</sup> One of my father's distant cousins, Isaac Katzin (1866-1931), from Lithuania, made his fortune in Cape Town during WW1 by having the contract for laundering the bed-linen on the Royal Navy's ships that docked in the town: the prevention of disease on board ship was then, as in 1849, of supreme importance.
- <sup>18</sup> Henry uses the words, "*Mehlspeisse nebst Dessert*", which I have translated as "pastry".
- <sup>19</sup> A family history written by Robert Lerchenthal (1880-1956), a descendant of one of Henry's siblings, states that Henry was a fine artist, whose drawing skills could be compared with those of Albrecht Dürer.
- <sup>20</sup> Afternoon tea is not to be confused with the more substantial English repast known as "high tea" (see : <http://whatscookingamerica.net/History/HighTeaHistory.htm> ).
- <sup>21</sup> Henry wrote, "3 Mass Wasser". Cassell's Dictionary (op. cit.) gives one meaning of this word as 'quart measure', and the Leo on-line dictionary (<http://www.leo.org/>) states that in the Austrian Südtirol, the word "Mass" can refer to a litre (of beer).
- <sup>22</sup> My father told me that before WW2, when he travelled by ship between South Africa and the UK, baths on board were routinely filled with sea-water – he did not travel first class.
- <sup>23</sup> Table Mountain: the flat topped mountain around whose base Cape Town is situated.
- <sup>24</sup> Presumably, this was some kind of letter of recommendation or introduction.
- <sup>25</sup> Mr Bergtheil, in Henry's letter, was most likely Jonas Bergtheil who arrived in South Africa in 1823, and was responsible for important economic developments in the colony of Natal, including the setting up of a

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cotton industry there (see various references to him in *The Jews of South Africa*, ed. by G. Saron & L. Hotz, publ. by Oxford university Press: Cape town, 1955).

<sup>26</sup> Port Natal was renamed “Durban” 14 years before Henry’s arrival in Cape Town, and now bears the Zulu name “eThekweni” (see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durban> ).

<sup>27</sup> Here, Henry is using a version of the European saying, which means that nothing will be gained without effort (see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurolinguistics> ).

<sup>28</sup> The first eight pages of his nine page letter are neatly written, and quite easy to decipher, but the final page is written with smaller letters and not at all neatly.

<sup>29</sup> See Shakespeare’s *Tempest*.

<sup>30</sup> After the Edict of June 1813, which raised the Bavarian Jew’s hopes of increased emancipation, there was little to satisfy them – indeed, their situation got worse over the next few decades. (See: *Between Orthodoxy and Reform, Revolution and Reaction : The Jewish Community in Ichenhausen: 1813-1861*, by L. Harries-Schumann in Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook, Vol. XLII, 1997, page 40).

<sup>31</sup> In South Africa, even in the 19th century, being European (i.e. white) and not African was more important than being Jewish or not, as was the case in Germany.

<sup>32</sup> Henry wrote, “*Gott sei dank*” – he spells out God’s name.

<sup>33</sup> For a good account of the so-called ‘Convict Affair’ of 1849, see *Remember You are an Englishman*, by J. Lehmann, publ. by Jonathan Cape: London, 1977, pages 308-318.

<sup>34</sup> He was the son of Charles Grey, in whose honour the well-known Earl Grey Tea is named (see: <http://coffeetea.about.com/cs/typesoftea/a/earlgrey.htm> ).

<sup>35</sup> One of the convicts on board this ship was the Irish radical John Mitchell (1818-1875), who eventually went to the USA (see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Mitchel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Mitchel) ).

<sup>36</sup> For more detail, see: *The Times* (London), 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September 1849, and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Cape\\_Colony\\_from\\_1806\\_to\\_1870](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cape_Colony_from_1806_to_1870) , and [http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/C/CA/CAPE\\_COLONY.htm](http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/C/CA/CAPE_COLONY.htm) .

<sup>37</sup> The main road in Cape Town was renamed “Adderley Street” in gratitude for his having persuaded Earl Grey to change his mind about the convicts.

<sup>38</sup> See: [http://www2.fh-fulda.de/~wolf/One%20Culture%20Nation%20Leadership%20Studies/South%20Africa/south\\_africa.pdf](http://www2.fh-fulda.de/~wolf/One%20Culture%20Nation%20Leadership%20Studies/South%20Africa/south_africa.pdf) .

<sup>39</sup> For this and details about the conflict, see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Cape\\_Colony\\_from\\_1806\\_to\\_1870](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cape_Colony_from_1806_to_1870), and

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*Frontiers*, by N Mostert, publ. by Knopf: New York, 1992.

<sup>40</sup> See his *South Africa*, vol. 1 (First published 1877).

<sup>41</sup> About 790 kilometres, north-east and inland from Cape Town.

<sup>42</sup> Information from Linda Behr who works for South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, and from Chava Agmon. They told me that Phoebus Caro was a son of the educator and writer David Caro and his wife Eva (née Lasch). Phoebus who died in Hamburg married Maria Elizabeth Schimper in South Africa in 1844. They had no children.

<sup>43</sup> See: <http://www.geocities.com/heartland/ridge/2216/waterimg.html> .

<sup>44</sup> See: *Merchant Pioneers* by D. Fleischer & A. Caccia,, published by Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1983.

<sup>45</sup> See my article in *Stammbaum*, issue 25, 2004.

<sup>46</sup> In Ichenhausen, the birthplace of Henry’s mother, and, later (by 1860), the dwelling place of his parents, many Jews were involved in the revolutionary activity of 1848/9, and some of them left Europe because of their involvement (see Harries-Schumann, pages 14-18).

<sup>47</sup> For information about Bergtheil, see: [http://www.thewestvilleco-op.co.za/Museum.shtml#Jonas\\_Bergtheil](http://www.thewestvilleco-op.co.za/Museum.shtml#Jonas_Bergtheil) and [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonas\\_Bergtheil](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonas_Bergtheil)

<sup>48</sup> Information from Renee Bergtheil and from Micheline Gutmann of *Genami*, France.

<sup>49</sup> Information from Ralf Rossmessl.

<sup>50</sup> Information from *Dictionary of South African Biography*, sent to me by Anne Lehmkuhl.

<sup>51</sup> See *A History of the Jews in South Africa* by L. Herrman, publ. by South African Jewish Board of Deputies: Johannesburg, 1935, pages 103-104.

<sup>52</sup> After a while in South Africa, he moved to Illinois. (See my article in SA-SIG Newsletter: <http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/newsletter/SA-SIG-NL-2005-12.pdf> , pages 4 -12. )

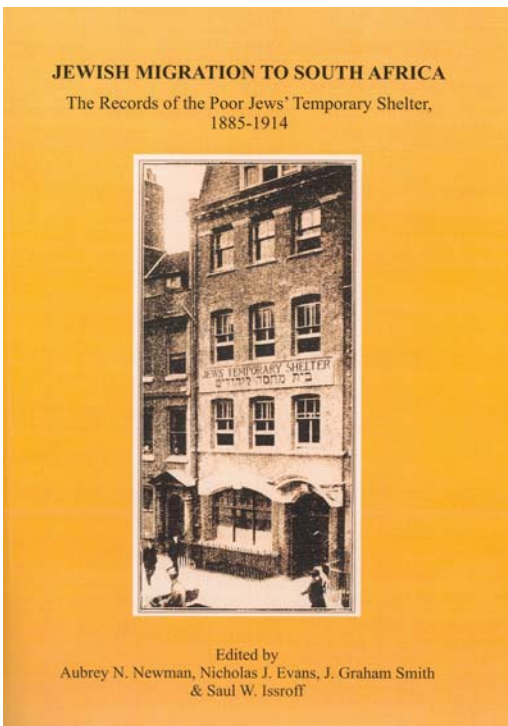
<sup>53</sup> For a biography of Iwan, see: <http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/newsletter/SA-SIG-NL-2004-09.pdf>

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# HANDY RECORD OF JEWISH MIGRATION TO SOUTH AFRICA

*Moira Schneider  
Cape Town*

*First published in the South African Jewish Report, 31 August 2007 – 7 September 2007, 17 Elul 5767, Volume 11 Number 33, and is reprinted here with permission.*



*Jewish Migration to South Africa: The records of the poor Jews' Temporary Shelter, 1885 – 1914* is an important tool in tracking the movement of over 24,000 Jews who emigrated from Imperial Russia to South Africa via London during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The shelter was established as a “symbol of Victorian philanthropy” to accommodate those waiting for the Union or Castle Liners (amalgamated after 1900) to depart for their chosen destinations and according to the authors, facilitated “around one-fifth of all known South African-bound aliens.”

They write that it in fact played a very great part in the growth of the Jewish “Litvak” community in southern Africa. Initially set up to meet migrants and protect them from “dockside crooks”, the

shelter’s main function became providing for them to “be lodged and fed in accordance with the strictest Jewish requirements”, according to the preamble of its original Constitution.

In cases of “utter destitution”, they were to be accommodated free of charge, or else “at as low a charge as possible” until it was determined whether they could support themselves or whether they should “in their own interest as well as that of the community be repatriated or directed to other lands.”

The book contains lists of migrants to this country and is, according to the introduction, “a first attempt to put together a record of the tens of thousands of Jews who came to South Africa from Eastern Europe before the First World War.”

The list compiled from the *Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter* records contains the dates that individuals entered and left the shelter, their ages, places of birth and the ships that they left on.

An additional list of names discovered in the archives of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies is included. Covering the period from 1905 – 1914, it lists dates of departure from the shelter, length of stay, ships travelled on and occupations, the latter providing a window on a bygone era where boot-makers, horse dealers, and tailoresses plied their trades.

The creation of a database using the records of the shelter by history students at the University of Leicester since the late 1980s has made this publication possible. While the authors concede that it is not complete, they regard it as start in making the information more widely available.

Edited by Aubrey N. Newman, Nicholas J. Evans, J. Graham Smith and Saul W. Issroff, the book is published by JPSA (Jewish Publications – South Africa) of the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town.

If you wish to purchase this book at the cost of R200 including postage, please contact the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, University of Cape Town. Email: [kapgen@humanities.uct.ac.za](mailto:kapgen@humanities.uct.ac.za)



## YES, HABONIM IS GOING HOMEWARD! 4-6 JANUARY 2008

Remember the campfires, guitars, hot cocoa and marshmallows, the peanut butter sandwiches for breakfast, *mifkad eish*, "close-the-doors", new friendships, tents and the timeless glade, homesick pills and *bogroll*? Ever wonder what it would be like to revisit *Onrus Machaneh*? To sit on the *mifkad* grounds and find out whatever happened to "whatshisname"? ... Now you can.

### Habonim Dror South Africa invites you to attend our first ever international reunion at *Onrus Machaneh*.

Share a memorable weekend at *Onrus Machaneh*, organised by the Reunion Committee headed by Hilary Meyer (Garin Lahav 1973), Daniel Mackintosh (Mazkir Klali SA), Alan Browde, Asher Klawansky, Benzie Segal (Israel), Sam Seligman, Gavin Rome, Doron Isaacs and many other Habonim graduates. We offer a variety of accommodation with catered meals, from tents to new chalets and B&Bs. Day visitors and children welcome.

Programmes of fun for kids, sports, beach and the best *tarbut* since 1978! High level discussions on what it means to be Jewish and living in South Africa and abroad in these times. Hear from guest speakers & prominent past members from around the globe.



If you are interested and would like to receive news & application forms please send your name, dates of membership, postal & email addresses, and telephone numbers, to Habonim Reunion 2008 c/o Hilary Cohen Meyer at [hilmeyer@mweb.co.za](mailto:hilmeyer@mweb.co.za)

Pass this email on to all your Habonim friends & friends of Habonim.

**NOTE: LIMITED ACCEPTANCE, DO NOT DELAY.**

If you have been planning to visit Cape Town, this is the time!

Check our website for new updates on photos and events [www.habonimreunited.com](http://www.habonimreunited.com)

### Letter from the Habonim Dror Reunion Committee

Yes, our first *Habonim Dror* Reunion in South Africa is really happening and its one of the most exciting events in our South African Habo history. Over the years *Habonim* graduates have not only taken their place in global society but have excelled in so many ways that proves that we are not just a Youth movement, an "aliyah machine" or a great way to meet friends and partners for life!!



**HABONIM CAMP 72/73**

*Habonim Dror* has inspired value-based leadership skills and creativity in individuals who have gone on to lead the world and touch lives in so many spheres, that to name but a few would seem like bragging!

We are so proud to be graduates of this dynamic movement, embracing the changes in society and the environment around us, and watching new generations of *chaverim* enjoy the camaraderie, *ruach* and exploration of issues and challenges, fills us with hope and pride in the legacy we pass on.

We may be "graduates" but we live with the ideals and friendships forever. Everyone still knows someone with whom they went to *Machaneh*; we meet years later and relate as if it were yesterday, and even for those who were not close, the bond is always there, bringing us homeward to *Onrus Machaneh*.

We are thrilled that you will be with us on this adventure and we look forward to sharing some campfire time and cup or two of hot cocoa (and marshmallows!!)

Memories will always linger...let's make some new ones together. *Lehitraot!*



**Hilary Meyer**

*Chairperson of Reunion Weekend Committee*

(see if you can find her in the other picture too)

## **SURNAMES APPEARING IN THIS NEWSLETTER**

***Vol. 8, Issue 1 – September 2007***

The numbers in brackets refer to the page numbers where the surname appears:

Agmon (18), Axel (4), Baleson (2), Bamberger (5), Belsky (8), Behr (18), Berger (5), Bergmann (13, 16, 17), Bergtheil (14, 16, 17, 18), Bloch (17), Borochowitz (6), Browde (20), Caro (16, 18), Cohen (2, 6), Cohn (9, 12), Curpens (6), Englander (17), Epstein (2), Evans (19), Faffer (4), Feibusch (16), Franklin (5), Freeman-Cohen (6), Geffroy (6), Getz (2 - 4), Ginsberg (3), Gluck (17), Gluckman (3), Goldberg (2, 4), Gross (3), Graumann (5 - 6), Gutmann (18), Harries-Schumann (18), Harris (2, 6), Hart (2, 6), Heppner (3), Herrman (18), Hotz (18), Huebscher (2), Isaacs (20), Isroff (2, 3, 5), Jacobs (5, 8, 10, 12), Jolles (5), Kaplan (19), Katzin (17), Kilian (16), Klawansky (20), Kolnik (8, 9, 12), Lehmkuhl (18), Lasch (18), Lehmann (18), Lerchenthal (17), Lerer (2), Lewin (5 - 6), Lowe (4), Macintosh (20), Meyer (20), Millar (12), Mosenthal (16), Newman (19), Ogus (2 - 3), Peters (17), Plen (2), Rabinowitz (2), Riley (4), Robertson (5), Rome (20), Rosenstein (4), Rossmeissl (17), Rudy (6), Rypinsky (6), Saron (18), Sher (4), Schimper (18), Schneider (4, 19), Segal (20), Segall (2 - 4), Seligman (20), Seligmann (17), Silberhaft (6 - 7), Stein (16), Stone (4), Smith (19), Sugarman (7), Tatz (7), Woolf (3), Yamey (13).

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