

**Drexel University**

---

**From the Selected Works of James Gross**

---

Fall 2013

# Becoming More Adept at Using Some Resources from the Family Search Website

James Gross, *Drexel University*



SELECTEDWORKS™

Available at: <http://works.bepress.com/jamesgross/48/>



# CHRONICLES

JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

דברי הימים



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Commentary

- 1 Reflections from Your *Chronicles* Team
- 2 JGSGP Contact Information
- 3 President's Message
- 4 Welcome to New Members
- 4 Tributes to Steve Schecter
- What Happens in Boston Doesn't Stay in Boston**
- 5 Conference Impressions  
*Merle Kastner*
- 5 Did I Ever Tell You About My Cousin Joe in Philadelphia?  
*Felicia Mode Alexander*
- 6 Getting More Than My Money's Worth at the 2013 IAJGS Conference  
*Barbara Pilvin*
- 8 Breaking Down Brick Walls at the Boston IAJGS Conference  
*Felicia Mode Alexander*
- 10 My Boston Conference Experience  
*Michael Jaron*
- 11 Becoming More Adept at Using Some Resources from the Family Search Website  
*James Gross*
- 12 Three Presentations at the Boston Conference That Taught Me New Approaches  
*Steve Schecter (z"l), additional comments by James Gross*
- 13 The Human Connection in Genealogy  
*Evan Fishman*
- Techniques, Tools, & Tips**
- 14 Additional Details Revealed in Birth Records  
*Stanley R. Sandler, Ph.D*
- 15 In the Beginning  
*Steve Schecter (z"l)*
- 16 Not a Relative, Darn It  
*Eugene Hurwitz*
- 17 Choosing the Correct Genealogy Software  
*James Gross*
- Personal Genealogical Journeys & Discoveries**
- 18 Can Birth Documents & Family Lore Be Misleading?  
*Shelda Carol Bachin Sandler*
- 19 The Road to Philadelphia Goes Straight Through Jerusalem  
*Jan Jacobson Sokolovsky*
- 20 Two Pictures Are Worth 2000 Words  
*Stanley R. Sandler, Ph.D*
- Meeting Summaries**
- 21 September Meeting - "Treelines Software"  
Tammy Hepps Presenter
- 22 October Meeting - "Immigrant Clues in Photographs"  
Maureen Taylor, Presenter
- 22 Queries
- 23 Membership & Renewal Form
- 24 JGSGP Calendar & Reminders

## REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR CHRONICLES TEAM



While including our usual features (Techniques, Tools, & Tips, meeting summaries, and queries) we are focusing in this issue primarily on impressions from the IAJGS-Boston conference, held August 4-9, 2013. Our contributors share what they learned during formal sessions and informal gatherings; in other words: "What Happened in Boston Doesn't Stay in Boston." The article entitled "The Road to Philadelphia Goes Straight through Jerusalem" demonstrates how a random act of genealogical kindness can provide significant assistance to a researcher. Consider similarly helping a genealogy colleague in the future. We also pay tribute to esteemed member, Steve Schecter, who died on September 30th.

At least twenty-four members of the JGSGP family gathered on October 4th to bid a sad farewell to Steve Schecter, our vice president of programming. He died unexpectedly as a result of a tragic fall. Our members were joined by many others at the funeral which was a significant testimonial to the man whom we all considered to be "a good guy."

I have many wonderful memories of Steve, going back at least seven years. I don't recall remember exactly when we met, but I vividly remember standing outside in the parking lot at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel after one of our society meetings and discussing his surname, which was also one of interest to me. I learned that Schecter wasn't the original surname which meant we weren't related. "Nisht geferlich," "not so terrible," because that discussion was the first of many, many extended conversations (Continued on page 3)

Shereshevo. There were hits on all parameters!!

In contrast to my maternal branches, I always had less to go on with my paternal branches. This primarily relates to my paternal grandfather. I knew the original surnames: YUROVSKY in Ukraine and JUROWSKY upon immigration to Philadelphia in 1904. I was told he came from Kanevik(?) and had a sister who married a FINKEL. I had also heard that my paternal grandmother arrived in Boston as an illegal alien, carrying one of my father's older sisters.

On the last day of the conference, I was standing in the lobby of the hotel talking with another attendee. He suggested that I go with him to a presentation that focused on DNA evidence. This presentation ("Using Autosomal DNA Analysis to Connect Rabbinical Lineages" by Dr. Jeffrey Mark Paull and Janet Billstein Akaha) led me to determine a means for finding where my paternal grandfather's family lived during the 19th century. "Autosomal DNA tests . . . are useful for identifying descendants of a common ancestor, regardless of whether they descend through the paternal lineage, the maternal lineage, or through a combination of both male and female ancestors."<sup>1</sup>

Simply, Dr. Paull's presentation involved the use of the FTDNA (Family Tree DNA) Chromosome Browser to determine relationships dating back about 400 years. Following the conference, I went to work with the Chromosome Browser, starting with the matches in common with the presenter, along with FF Q genetic matches and the three known YUROVSKY FF matches. I'm hoping further steps will lead me to definitive results regarding my paternal line. ❖

1. Jeffrey Mark Paull and Janet Billstein Akaha, "Using Autosomal DNA Analysis to Connect Rabbinical Lineages: A Case Study of the Wertheimer and Wertheim Dynasties," *Avotaynu*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, (Winter 2012): 59.

*Born in Philadelphia, author Michael Jaron moved to Pittsburgh in 1972 to attend University of Pittsburgh, where he earned a BA in History and an MA in Library Science. He's been married for thirty-nine years, and he and his wife have two sons. He's been actively researching for more than fifteen years. His grandparents' surnames are: YUROVSKY, WERNICK, MACHLEDER/LEVY, and FARBMAN.*

Contact Michael at: [mljaron@verizon.net](mailto:mljaron@verizon.net)

## BECOMING MORE ADEPT AT USING SOME RESOURCES FROM THE FAMILY SEARCH WEBSITE

by James Gross

The challenge at any IAJGS conference is how to choose between the many lectures and events offered. I decided at the recent Boston conference to attend a computer workshop on August 7 and a lecture the next day, both conducted by Todd Knowles, a reference consultant in the British Research unit at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and genealogy lecturer.

I chose these two sessions because I wanted to focus on LDS (Latter-Day Saints) resources which I've often found very helpful for my research. At the computer workshop Mr. Knowles instructed us on the usage of the Familysearch.org website. He gave us an outline of updates to the LDS online microfilm catalog, no small task since more than 24 million rolls of microfilm are available for use at any Family History Center in the U.S.



Todd Knowles

Learning how to effectively navigate the familysearch.org website is very useful knowledge for all genealogists. Despite the time limitations he managed to squeeze in a number of useful search examples including the usage of a wildcat search, a boolean search, surname searching, and town searching. He also showed the class how to locate community trees.

During his lecture Mr. Knowles focused on his website entitled the Knowles Collection which contains six databases that include records of the Jewish people from the following locations: the British Isles, North America, Europe, South America and the Caribbean, Africa and the Orient,

and the South Pacific.

The great advantage of the Knowles Collection is that it links together into family groups, thousands of individual Jews (over 600,000 as of January 2013). Until now, these records were available only at the Family History Library or from private archives or individuals.<sup>1</sup> As a Jewish genealogist and a volunteer at my local LDS family history center, I have seen firsthand how the LDS Family History Centers provide a very useful resource for researchers, regardless of faith.

I encourage everyone, regardless of where they live, to go and visit their local family history center. ❖

1. [https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/The\\_Knowles\\_Collection](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/The_Knowles_Collection)

*Author James Gross' biography and contact information can be found on page 13, following his comments on "Three Presentations at the Boston Conference That Taught Me New Approaches."*

---

## THREE PRESENTATIONS AT THE BOSTON CONFERENCE THAT TAUGHT ME NEW APPROACHES

by Steve Schecter (z"l) (*zecher l'vrachah* =  
may the [i.e. his] memory be a blessing)  
with additional comments from James Gross

### Probate Records: Wills and Estates. Why to Search and How to Search

By Allan E. Jordan.

Prior to 1916 probate was used mostly for wealthier people but afterwards changed to include a much broader population. Mr. Jordan explained the two types of files:

- Those who left a will are testate.
- Those who had assets but no will are intestate and the court records are known as an administration.

Using probate records often requires a genealogist to search two separate indexes; if one finds no will, one may still find administration records. He also alerted us that these are court records, and each court decides where records are housed (the court, an archive, a historical society, etc.) These are all public records unless a family has had a court seal the records.

This presentation opened a new source of information I did not previously appreciate. Mr. Jordan both explained probate records and gave extensive "how to information."

Mr. Jordan and I spoke after his presentation, and he agreed to speak at a future JGSGP meeting.

### Immigration And Naturalization Service (INS) Citizen Records: Beyond the Basics

Reviewed by James Gross

Mr. Wilske, a knowledgeable historian in the Historical Records Branch of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), spoke about record files and research help available through his office. While many records are available through the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) many additional records are only available through the USCIS because of privacy reasons, nuances in law, and regulations. Searches can be requested at a nominal cost.

There are five types of records which could have been generated by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and are available through the USCIS: certificate files, alien registration forms, visa files, registry files, and A-Files.

A secondary USCIS resource entitled "U.S. Subject Index to Correspondence and Case Files of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1903-1959" has recently been digitized and is available at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Check with USCIS if you have reason to believe that an unusual issue affected your relative, such as being detained overnight at Ellis Island, questions about his/her immigration status, etc.

This presentation opened a new and previously unknown source of information for me. This may help me find several ancestors who "went missing" after they had arrived in the U.S.

### City Directories for U.S.: Finding And Charting Unique Uses

By Diane M. Freilich, JD.

Ms. Freilich showed how city directories are often underutilized. She emphasized the content of the directories and listed seven genealogical uses. She also showed a technique for mapping ancestors from directories. Briefly, she suggested using a spreadsheet and listing people by year. She emphasized listing names of potential relatives and trying