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Fall 2016

A brief look at scanning

James Gross

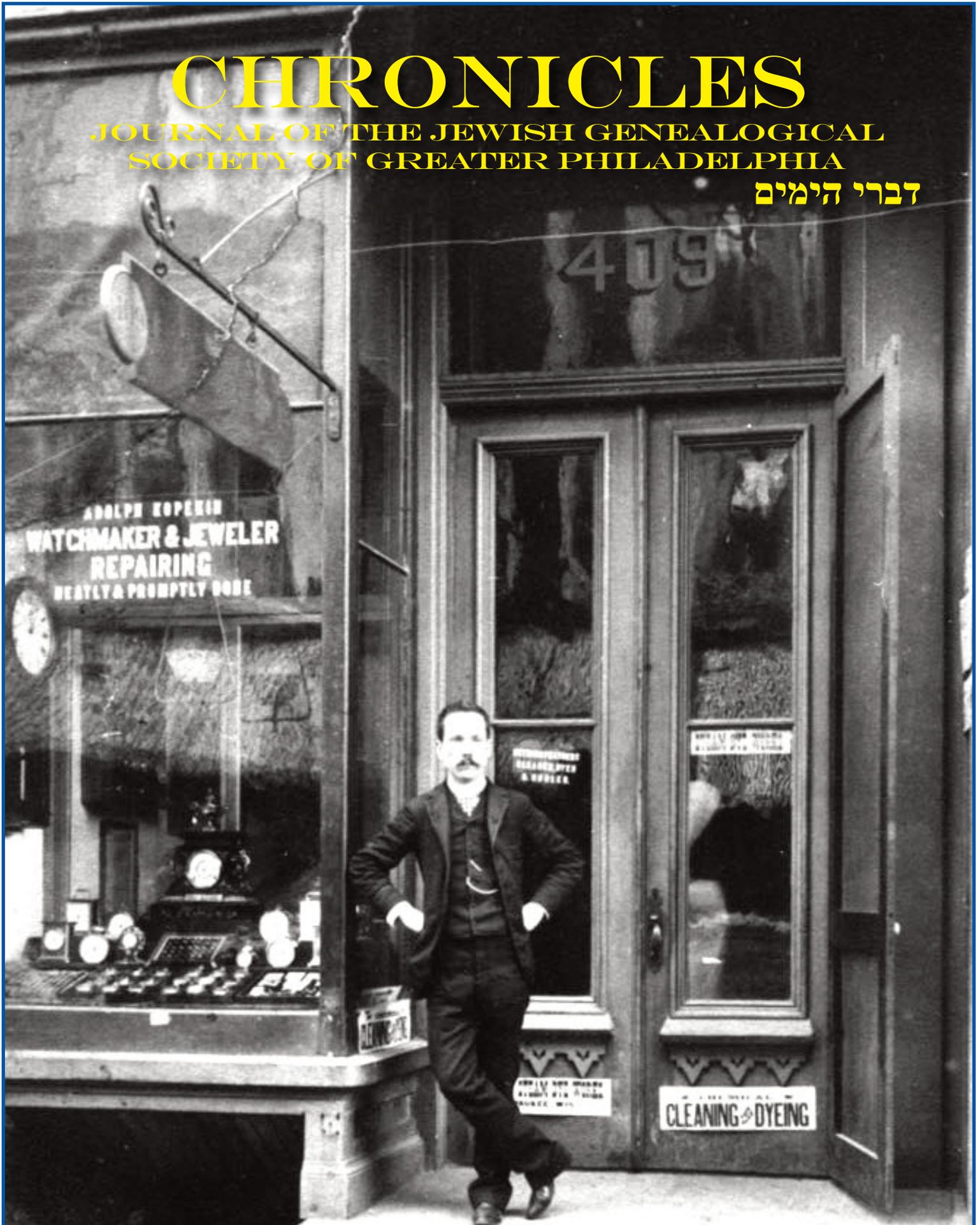


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CHRONICLES

JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

דברי הימים



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JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

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Cover Photo: Courtesy Avivah Pinski. See article on p. 15.

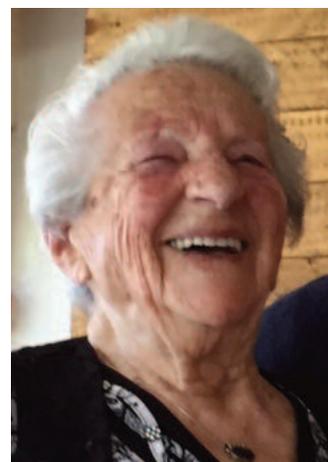
REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR CHRONICLES TEAM



In last winter's "Reflections" column (Vol. 32-4) I wrote about the importance of networking and working collaboratively in the interest of furthering our individual research efforts as well as those of the larger genealogical community. I'd like to share some small scale recent collaborative experiences I had.

My sister-in-law's 102-year-old aunt died several weeks ago. Tzipora was an amazing woman whose life overlapped with some very significant events in recent Jewish history. Born and raised in Brisk D'Lita (now Brest, Belarus), she made *aliyah* (immigration to Israel) in 1937. She settled in a *moshav* (communal settlement where families own their own homes) in northern Palestine where she remained the rest of her life. In response to her death, one of my nephews composed a eulogy for her in which he shared personal memories: the harsh life she and her family endured on the *moshav*, her efforts to improve the family's financial position by taking a government job in Haifa, and the tremendous impact the Shoah had on her personally. He peppered these accounts with references to happier experiences that he and other family members shared with her.

The most outstanding example was when Tzipora organized a trip back to Brest about ten years ago, when she was only in her early nineties!! Two sons, six grandchildren, and some of her eleven great grandchildren, as well as my other nephew and my sister-in-law's sister and brother-in-law, accompanied her on this unique trip down memory lane. Tzipora served as a tour guide, pointed out buildings in the town that were once synagogues, and spoke Russian or Polish to the locals. Clearly moved by Tzipora's life, my nephew used her sad death as an opportunity to articulate how profoundly she inspired him. In so doing he was able to coalesce grieving



A BRIEF LOOK AT SCANNING

by James Gross



Scanning documents and photos is a function that is conducted to assist in organizing paper records and photos as well as to share them with others. Scanning documents helps when doing and sharing research and helps to reduce the volume of one's paper storage. In this short article I will briefly talk about a few flatbed scanners, scanning software, and computer file management.

You are going to embark on a cross-country trip or cross-state trip to do research, and most of your records are stored in a filing cabinet or are in binders on a shelf. In the past you may have even carted around binders of documents. You know that your memory isn't perfect and you need to have instant access to a number of records as you visit research sites and archives. The problem is that you are buried in paper. After all of those research trips, microfilm copies, and photocopied records, you have a huge pile of records. 'How do you manage them, and make use of them in today's digital world?' Simple. They need to be scanned.

Flatbed scanners: When selecting a scanner, pick one that will work with your computer's operating system. Some users are using Windows 7, some are using Windows 8 or 10, and some of you are using Macs. I have had very good luck with the Canon line of flatbed scanners. They are both lightweight and thin. Pictured at the right is the Canon LIDE 110 (2011). It is compatible with my current operating system, Windows 7. It is also compatible with Windows 8 and Windows 10.



There is also the Canon LIDE 120 (2014), (pictured below left) which is compatible with Windows 7, 8, and 10. It offers a scanning resolution of 2400 x 4800 and has a scan to cloud function. It sells at \$120 retail or around \$60-90 on Ebay. The Canon LIDE 120 was replaced by the LIDE 220.



The LIDE 220, (not pictured), looks very similar to the LIDE 110 and is compatible with Windows 7, 8, and 10. It features a scanning ratio of 4800 x 4800 and also has a scan to cloud function. It retails for \$170 or around \$100-120 on Ebay.

All three of the above-mentioned scanners draw power directly from a USB connection to the PC or laptop, eliminating the need to use a separate AC power adapter. There are other brands of scanners that you can choose from, but I chose to highlight the Canon line as I have used one or more of them.

Scanning Software: All of the above-mentioned Canon scanners, if purchased new, come with Canon's software package. Since I picked up an older model, the LIDE 110, which didn't come with scanner software, I downloaded a TWAIN-compliant scanner driver for my model from Canon's support website. A check on the Canon website⁽¹⁾ shows drivers are also available for the LIDE 120 and LIDE 220, and a complete scanning software package entitled, "My Image Garden," is available for the LIDE 220. I understand from online reviews, however, that many users do not care for the supplied Canon software.

An alternative is stock scanning software to use an aftermarket software package such as NAPS2 (Not Another PDF Scanner 2)⁽²⁾. Another software program is Vue Scan⁽³⁾ which is touted as being compatible with over 3000 different scanners on Windows, Mac OS X and Linux. I am currently using NAPS2. Whichever software you decide to use, I suggest you use this simple approach. Try out the software at home with a standard business letter, and establish which setting looks good to you. The software programs will typically allow you to adjust resolution (300, 400 or 600dpi), brightness, contrast and bit depth (b/w, grayscale, or color). Where possible, I use a lower resolution in b/w mode to reduce file size. Use the color option for scanning your photographs.

File format: Documents are usually saved to the pdf format. Photographs and images offer more options. In brief, they can be saved in either the jpg, or tiff formats. A tiff file is much larger than a jpg file. Online forums I've read recommend initially saving an image to the tiff format and later Photoshopping it to the jpg format⁽⁴⁾. This is probably the best option for archival storage. However, I personally do not save any image files to the tiff format because I don't have the time to edit in Photoshop. I also don't use the tiff format because it creates a very large file which is often too large to email. Consequently I exclusively use the jpg file format.

Scan test: Be sure to review your scan after it is scanned to verify the clarity and positioning of the page. The page may be too dark, too light, or positioned off center on the scanner. If you make a few test scans, you will get a feel for which setting is best for your needs. I usually scan photos to a jpg file and documents to a pdf file.

Saving the scanned file: When saving your file, decide what to name it. This sounds extremely simplistic, but you need a file name that accurately refers to the file and which will make sense to you the next time you look for it. After you save the file, you need to decide where to store or place it.

Scanned computer file management: This step is very important as it will save you time. You may wish to create folders on your computer for your research and place all scanned files in those folders. Now those of you who consider yourselves to be electronically organized probably have your own favorite methodology of computer file organizing and filing. My method may not work for you. The reality is that we all have our own preferences, if any, in regard to how we organize our electronic computer files.

My documents file: Many computer users, myself included, dump a lot of files here. This is fine, except that I look at it as a short-term location. I keep all of my electronic files in a main computer folder, which I call "genealogy." I then have subfolders including a "genealogy pdf" folder. Within this folder I have more subfolders, listed by family surname, as I am usually working on one specific family at a time. Thus, I am using a multi-tiered level of folders. I would encourage you to review where you currently keep your electronic genealogy files on your computer and whether you need to rename or move them. It is best if you can decide on the folder naming and location on your computer where you wish to save your scanned files and other digital files.

Once you decide on the folder location, adhere to it and make it part of your routine to always save your relevant scanned genealogy files to this location. You should always choose your own electronic folder filing system, based on your needs and your ability to discipline yourself to always save to the correct computer folder. File organization can easily be an hour-long lecture in itself, so I will simply say to try and create a usable computer file folder system and stick with it.

In closing, picking up a lightweight flatbed scanner will enable you to take all of those paper files and share them with the rest of your family as well as fellow researchers. The scanner is only as good as the user, so practice scanning a few pages if you plan on taking it with you on a research trip. I touched on designating one or more electronic folders for your documents. You'll appreciate that word of advice after you create a family or genealogy folder because this alone will save you on retrieval time. If you can create and embrace a system of electronic file storage, it will result in improved efficiency and easier file retrieval tomorrow. 'Now, which folder did I save that scanned family tree chart file to, and what did I name it?' ❖

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Author James Gross has been working on his family tree since the early 1990s. A periodic contributor to various genealogy newsletters, James volunteers regularly at the Cherry Hill, NJ Family History Center where he helps other genealogists in their research. He also has a genealogy website: <http://tinyurl.com/gross-steinberg>. Contact James at: navistar96@yahoo.com