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Mishpacha

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My Ancestral Connection to Newtown, Connecticut

By Marlene Katz Bishow

When I heard the report of the horrifying event that cost the lives of 20 children and 6 teachers in the elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut; my immediate reaction was shock. Like so many others, including our President, tears welled in my eyes for the innocent lives lost and the loss of innocence for those who survived the events. For me however there was another aspect that brought these events home on a more personal level. My maternal grandmother, after whom I was named, Mollie Goldstein, grew up in Newtown and in my genealogical research over the 56 years that I have been engaged in such activities; I have developed a soft spot for this small town near the Connecticut-New York border.

The earliest photo that I have of Mollie was taken when she was about twenty years old – feeding chickens on the family's Brush Hill Road farm.



According to census records, after immigrating in the late 1880's, Betsey (Bashe Hinda) and Morris (Moshe Arye) Goldstein lived on the Lower East Side of Manhattan where they had a grocery store.

According to documentation from the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford, Orthodox immigrants from Eastern Europe were encouraged to become farmers in Connecticut by social service agencies. Among the sponsors of such programs was the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, a subsidiary of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, established in 1891. These funds were generally given in the form of loans and were used, not only for purchasing land and homes principally in Connecticut, but also in the building of rural synagogues. Because of the distance from Newtown to Bridgeport, it is likely that Goldsteins participated in minyanim in the homes of nearby Jewish families in Newtown.

It was not until 1919 that the Adath Israel Synagogue was built in Newtown. The land for the synagogue was deeded to the congregation in 1914 and the building was completed in 1919. By that time, both Israel and Mollie had moved back to New York City, but their parents and Abraham remained in Newtown, as evidenced by the 1920 census. It is also interesting to note that in "Historical Connecticut Synagogues," (Fall, 1999, pages 125ff) there is commentary indicating "Adath Israel is significant because it was associated with a (Cont. page 4)

"Every man of the children of Israel shall encamp by his own standard with the ensign of his family"

—Numbers 2:2

JGSGW April Meeting

JGSGW IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE

“Routes to Roots in the "Old Country"— Where Are The Surviving Documents and How To Obtain Them?”

Speaker: Miriam Weiner, Routes to Roots Foundation, Inc.

This presentation will focus on the Routes to Roots Foundation website (RTRF) at www.rtrfoundation.org including a live “tour” of various components of the website. Our speaker, Miriam Weiner, has worked officially with the archivists throughout Eastern Europe beginning in Poland in 1989, then Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Lithuania. She has received unprecedented cooperation from the archives in identifying and publishing information about surviving Jewish and civil records.

The RTRF website includes a comprehensive searchable archive database by town name, covering document holdings relevant to Jewish life in five countries (and portions of two others) in Central and Eastern Europe, an image database, and multiple searchable name databases for various localities. The website is updated regularly with new/revised archive data, additional name databases and images as well as articles by archivists, historians and others.

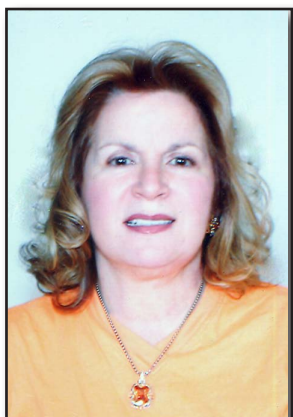
In addition, Miriam will discuss the new collaboration between RTRF and the Center for Jewish History (CJH) in New York City. The CJH website features its Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) which integrates the holdings of CJH’s five partners into one searchable database, as well as separate pages for each of the five partners and a page for the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute.

Date: Sunday, April 21, 2013

Time: 1:00 PM - Schmooze 1:30 PM - Short Business Meeting, Announcements and Program

Location: B'nai Israel Congregation

6301 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 20852, (301) 881-6550, [click here for directions](#)



For more than 30 years, **Miriam Weiner** has been a leading figure in the genealogical research world. She is an acclaimed lecturer throughout the United States and abroad. In 1985, she was the first Jewish genealogist certified by the Board for Certification of Genealogists. For all of those years, she has been a member of JGSGW.

Miriam’s syndicated column, “Roots and Branches” has appeared in over 100 Jewish newspapers and periodicals. She is the co-editor of The Encyclopedia of Jewish Genealogy and author of two ground-breaking books entitled Jewish Roots in Poland and Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova. Through her travels, Miriam is the Creator of the Eastern European Archival Database which includes Jewish and civil records from archives in Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Moldova and Ukraine.

She is the President of Routes to Roots Foundation, a customized travel/research service in Poland & the former Soviet Union. Formerly, she was the Executive Director of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Senior Advisor for Genealogy Services in the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute.

Miriam is a recipient of the IAJGS Lifetime Achievement Award (2003) and in 1999 and 2000 she received the annual media award for each of her two books. She is the only individual to be honored on three separate occasions by the IAJGS.