

MASS-POCMA

October 2013

Volume XXII, Number 2, Issue 74



In This Issue

President's Column	2
Editors' Column	3
2013 IAJGS Conference	4
The Way We Were	24
Boston Queries	27
News from JGSGB	30



From the President

by Heidi Urich

Now that the 33rd IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy is behind us, we can take satisfaction in hosting the BEST EVER conference and share some of the stories from behind the scenes. During the conference and in the weeks that followed, we received a stream of glowing comments from participants who praised the organization and the programming; and reported on exciting new connections, ideas, and information they gained at the conference.

Our co-sponsor, the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), initially advised us to expect between 700 to 900 attendees and gave us a budget based on these numbers. Once the program schedule was announced and registration began, we realized that these numbers would be exceeded. By the end of the conference, over 1250 individuals had registered!

Fortunately some of our lecture halls were large ballrooms, each capable of seating several hundred persons. Additional tracks of programming offered computer classes, SIG meetings, a film festival and a variety of local and destination tours. A resource center with databases, books and translators, a lively exhibitor hall, and a rich variety of nearby attractions also provided options for the larger than expected number of participants.

We also worried about long lines as registrants checked in, a bane of past conferences. These were averted when our registration contractor offered a streamlined process using bar codes. The usual grumbles from veteran conference-goers were replaced by smiles as they sailed through the process and collected their badges and materials.



As a conference co-chair, I had the pleasure of welcoming our guests to Boston at the opening session. I recalled my first exposure to Jewish genealogy in 1996, when I saw a newspaper notice about an international conference on researching Jewish family history taking place in Boston. I was working in downtown Boston at the time and decided to check it out during my lunch hour. I was amazed at what I saw. I had no idea that one could find Jewish records in state archives in Eastern Europe or that help was available for beginners such as me. I didn't make it back to my office that afternoon. I discovered Jewish genealogy that day and my life hasn't been the same since!

That 1996 conference was also hosted by our society and also took place at the Boston Park Plaza, the same hotel as this year's conference. Many of our society's "senior" members were hooked by that event 17 years ago. This year's conference, the second hosted by our society, also attracted newcomers—about 500—many of whom experienced the same excitement and a number of whom have joined our society, eager to continue. Perhaps some of them will be running the next international conference hosted by our society, hopefully before another 17 years go by!



**From the Editors
In This Issue**

by Daphnah Sage, Jay Sage, and Martha Forsyth

Hooray! The big international conference that took place in Boston August 4-9 was a resounding success. Having started preparations three years ago and having really gone into high gear one year ago, all of us were enormously gratified by the tremendous level of success—and by having



that success acknowledged by the attendees. We are, therefore, devoting the bulk of this issue to reports from and about the conference. Kindly allow the many (indeed very many!) hard workers to *kvell* a bit...

First-timers and old-timers reported back on their experiences, both as speakers and as attendees. There were several bloggers who sent daily reports to their readers. The buzz in the hallways was a sign of the camaraderie we all felt.

Our society members and conference attendees from far and near volunteered for tasks large and small, many working quietly in the background. They were far too numerous for us to mention them all.

Photos have been scattered throughout the issue to remind us of the flavor of the conference. We wish to acknowledge Mickey Goldin, who, as the official photographer, took many of the photos. Other major photo contributors were Barbara Burg, Fay Bussgang, Martha Forsyth, Eden Joachim, Nancy Korn, and Roger Weiss.



The issue concludes with two of our regular feature columns. "The Way We Were" column tells the story of Boston's second-oldest cemetery, which was recently restored and rededicated. In David Rosen's "Boston Queries" column, he describes a helpful trick for finding a passenger coming to the U.S. via England.



Mass-Pocha is the journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston

Mass-Pocha is a word play on "Massachusetts" and the Yiddish word for family, "mishpocha."

The contents of *Mass-Pocha* may not be reproduced in any form without prior written permission of the editor

editor@jgsgb.org

Mass-Pocha (ISSN 1070-4744) is free to JGSGB members. Domestic non-Massachusetts subscriptions are \$15 per year. For subscriptions and change of address contact

JGSGB
P.O. Box 610366
Newton Highlands
MA 02461-0366
866-611-5698

© 2013 Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston, Inc.

A Note of Admiration

by Fred Davis

This piece was adapted from a message sent to conference participants by Fred Davis, who was president of JGSGB at the time of the last conference hosted by Boston in 1996.



As we return home from this truly awesome conference, a final few words about the remarkable Jewish community of the city that hosted us. Did you know that a street from the hotel to the Public Garden has been named “Hadassah Way” since the 1950s?

Massachusetts is proud of many accomplishments: the Charles River is swimmable again, the Big Dig is dug, Whitey Bulger was caught, we were the first in gay marriage, and we lead the country in energy efficiency (the conference hotel is a leader in this field).



Our Jewish community is also out in front, in ways old and new. The evening programs showcased some of our gems: Aaron Lansky saved Yiddish literature, Hankus Netsky revived *klezmer* music, Safam (creator of the song “Leaving Mother Russia”) was the voice of conscience, the Zamir Chorale elevated Jewish choral music into high culture.

Other accomplishments are only indirectly visible. Boston is the only U.S. city with an active Synagogue Council, where Jews from all branches of Judaism work together to promote *klal Yisrael* (all Jews together). It was in evidence at the conference.

Boston’s Combined Jewish Philanthropies was a major funder of the conference. Founded in 1895, it was the model for all other federations in the U.S. (It even was the model for Catholic Charities.)

The Cradle of Liberty is also home to Hebrew College, with its innovative *Meah* program, an intensive two-year Jewish studies course for adult learners. Many who worked on, spoke at, and attended the conference are *Meah* grads. And Hebrew College’s first-ever pluralistic rabbinical school has graduated exciting young rabbis in its ten years.

In a demographic study a couple of years ago, the Boston Jewish community stood out nationally. It wasn’t that there was less intermarriage, but that there was net growth in Jewish population, as more parents here choose to raise their children to be Jewish.



I heard accolades the last time Boston hosted the conference (17 years ago), and I heard them again this year: wow, Boston did this really well, what a bounty of brainpower and what great innovations. All this tradition, all this revolution—it's a dichotomy we embrace.

Yasher koach—well done!—to the entire current JGSGB team for your thousands of hours over the last two-plus years to produce such excellence—wicked awesome!



How I Managed My First Conference

by Florence Feldman-Wood

I am a weaver and often attend large, international weaving conferences. One thing that I learned from those conferences is that it is not possible to do everything that you would like to do. Since the Boston conference was my first IAJGS conference, I appreciated being able to download and print the handouts for many of the lectures in advance. They helped me decide which lectures to attend, and I could take notes in the margins during the presentations.

As a former teacher, I am also aware of my “learning style,” whether it is for a new weaving technique or a computer program. I prefer to have the material presented to me by a live instructor, have a chance to try it, and have the instructor there to answer questions. Both of the computer classes that I attended—“Genealogical Research for Bessarabian Jews” with Yefim Kogan and “Introduction to JewishGen” with Debra Kay-Blatt and Warren Blatt—had that format, and I learned a lot in each one. I'm very grateful to all the people who have been translating and indexing the documents that are now searchable on the Internet.

In addition, volunteers were available at the conference to translate one's personal documents. Monica Talmor, a native speaker of Romanian, translated my father's 1938 Romanian passport—another highlight of the conference for me. I now know where he stopped on his way to this country. Many thanks to her and to the conference organizers for offering this service.

At the last weaving conference I attended, I bemoaned the fact I didn't have clones. I felt the same way at this conference. Wouldn't it be nice if Clone 1 could listen to the speakers, Clone 2 could view the films, and Clone 3 could visit the exhibitors! That would leave me free to schmooze with all the interesting people I met.



Panel on New England Resources



My First Conference by Ellie Goldberg

Already in graduate school in the 1970s, I set up my first family tree. When I married, I learned that my husband's maternal grandmother was part of the GRAD family. So, when Dr. Eli Grad, former president of Hebrew College, started the Grad Family reunions, we participated. As a result, I have a lot of documentation on that branch of my husband's family. However, it wasn't until after my husband (an only child) died and I started going through his family archives that I felt a strong sense of responsibility to do more serious research. A little more than a year ago, I started attending JGSGB meetings.

The Boston conference this summer was my first genealogy conference. After checking the conference program listing, I chose sessions that turned out exceptionally interesting, and I enjoyed every speaker—especially Steve Morse. I learned about organizing documents, accessing official records and unusual sources, taking care of photos and records, decoding stories and histories, and how to use online databases. I am amazed at the expertise that was available and at the wealth of resources. After the first day, I was exhausted—but excited to get to the conference every morning and stay through the evening entertainment.

A cousin of my husband from California also attended the conference. She has been researching the paternal branch of my husband's family for several years and also found the conference to be extremely valuable. Now I feel better prepared to organize the family records and documents that I already have, and inspired to continue my research.

