

Lectures *updated 5/3/2023*
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- 20-90 minute presentations that are informative and educational.
- Optional Q&A period and handout available.
- Content is flexible and can be delivered as stand-alone lecture, ongoing course, workshop, mentoring, or other formats.
- Ellen will travel out of state, conduct live webinars, or provide mp4 recordings.
- Speaking fee is \$200-\$1400 per lecture depending on if lecture is newly developed or existing topic, size of audience and organization, lead time, and other factors.
- Please inquire about travel expenses.

Additional lecture topics can be developed upon request.

Bio: Ellen Kowitt (*pronounced KO-witt, like KO-dak*) is founder and principal genealogist at Sole Searching Genealogy & Historical Research. Specializing in American records and Jewish ancestry, she lectures at national conferences and publishes articles in *Family Tree Magazine* and *Avotaynu: The International Journal on Jewish Genealogy*. Ellen received her B.A. from Alfred University and spent twenty-five years working in marketing management and communications before transitioning into full-time research. Ellen completed ProGen and several genealogical institutes, and she is a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists. She has volunteered in a variety of leadership positions throughout the genealogy community and currently serves as Director of the JewishGen USA Research Division as well as DAR National Vice Chair of Jewish Specialty Research. Originally from New York, Ellen resides in Colorado with her family. For more information, visit www.EllenKowitt.com.

For upcoming lecture dates or more information, visit www.EllenKowitt.com.

- I. *NEW! U.S. Synagogue Records as a Genealogical Resource***
- II. *NEW! Researching Jews in the Pale of Settlement***
- III. *NEW! The Tracks of Smoke and Water at Babyn Yar: Identifying Victims and Survivors***
- IV. *NEW! Inside America's Alligator Family: The David Crystal Story***
- V. *Updated in 2023! New Jewish Resources on the Genealogy Giant Websites***
- VI. *Secrets for Researching Jewish Genealogy Revealed (alternate titles: What's Jewish About Jewish Genealogy; Getting Started Tracing Your Jewish Roots; Introduction to Jewish Genealogy)***
- VII. *Tips & Tricks for Navigating JewishGen***

- VIII. *An Overview of Jewish Records in the Golden Medina/USA*
- IX. *Documenting Jewish Families or Communities Lost in the Holocaust by Bullets*
- X. **To be Updated in 2023-2024!** *The Case of the Missing Ancestors: Genealogy Tips from Nancy Drew*
- XI. **To be Updated in 2023-2024!** *Tracing Jews Who Coughed Their Way West*
- XII. **In Development!** *Shoestring Strategies for the Thrifty Genealogist*
- XIII. **In Development!** *Yosef, Yosel, Yekhiel, Joe: Navigating the Complexities of Jewish Given Names*
- XIV. **In Development!** *Surfing USA: Jewish Archival Collections*
- XV. **In Development!** *Desperately Seeking Selma Through Five Name Changes*

I. NEW! U.S. Synagogue Records as a Genealogical Resource

A primer on how to find synagogue records, what genealogical material they include, and what they look like. Finding synagogue records can be problematic and time consuming as there are errors in catalogs and a variety of ways materials are described. JewishGen's *Shul Records America*, a new finding aid pointing to the location of American synagogue records was launched in fall 2022 with over 500 collections held at 50 repositories or websites, with about 20% including URLs for digitized materials. Not only a historical resource but important as modern-day synagogues merge or close, *Shul Records America* encourages congregations to preserve records with genealogical value.

II. NEW! Researching Jews in the Pale of Settlement

Comprised of parts of modern-day Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, east-central Poland, Latvia, and what is now the western Russian Federation, the Pale of Settlement was a western region of the Russian Empire from 1791 to 1917 where Jews were allowed to live and work. From market to mohel and melamed, an overview of roles and lifecycles within the Jewish community will be introduced including the synagogue and rabbi, the process of military conscription, and burial practices. Resources to document families will be introduced including JewishGen's Communities Database, KehilaLinks, Yizkor Book Project, and research division websites; FamilySearch, J-Roots, Genealogy Indexer, reference books, government websites, and notable third parties such as Alex Krakovsky, TKGen, and modern Jewish communities. Challenges in language will be addressed. Take away strategies to update your research plan for success.

III. NEW! The Tracks of Smoke and Water at Babyn Yar: Identifying Victims and Survivors

Naming all of the estimated 100,000 victims at Kyiv's Babyn Yar ravine during 1941-1943 may never be possible, but through the work of academics and

personal accounts, some Jews, prisoners of war, and Roma (Gypsy) stories can be told. This historical recap will navigate language challenges and utilize materials in English. A review of Vera Miller's blog resources including military databases and archives; the importance of survivor testimonies found at Yahad in Unum, Yad Vashem, USC, USHMM, and other Holocaust repositories; detail and analysis presented by academics; and future opportunities at the new Babyn Yar Museum and the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War will be explored.

IV. *NEW! Inside America's Alligator Family: The David Crystal Story*

Blending together snapshots of a family man and the clothing empire he founded, mixed with extended family chronicles, and highlights of company operations over seven decades. David Crystal Inc. was a major 20th century clothing manufacturer famously distributing IZOD Lacoste alligator apparel that defined the American polo-wearing era. This tale of resilience and tenacity is an extensively researched family genealogy originating in the east European shtetl of Jedwabne, Poland, formerly part of the Russian Empire when David and his ten siblings emigrated. Genealogy resources utilized and the process of developing narrative from family history will be discussed.

PUBLISHED BOOK: "America's Alligator Family: The David Crystal Story" May 2023 *Lulu Publishing*. ISBN #s: 978-1-312-70142-7 (standard), 978-1-312-66151-6 (premium hardcover).

V. *Updated in 2023! New Jewish Resources on the Genealogy Giant Websites*

Enjoy this updated comparative overview of Jewish record collections and research tools found on the global powerhouse websites referred to as "Genealogy Giants." Comparing Ancestry, *FamilySearch*, *Findmypast*, and *MyHeritage*, this lecture includes many substantive record examples. Learn how each site can be helpful for documenting Jewish families and get tips on each site's best features or challenges. Current *JewishGen* partnerships with *Ancestry* and *MyHeritage* are featured.

PUBLISHED ARTICLE: "Jewish Resources on the Giants: Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, Findmypast.com, and MyHeritage.com" Aug 2019 *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy with Sunny Morton*

VI. *Secrets for Researching Jewish Genealogy Revealed (alternate titles: What's Jewish About Jewish Genealogy; Getting Started Tracing Your Jewish Roots; Introduction to Jewish Genealogy)*

Starting with yourself and working back through civil records is the same strategy for Americans of all faiths, but that's when the *meshuganah* fun begins with Jewish records. After identifying an immigrant and jumping the pond can be challenging with multiple languages, geographic border changes, and religious traditions to navigate. Explore strategies and resources for tracing Jewish families in the US and abroad including definitions of lifecycle events, naming patterns, archival collections, newspapers, web resources featuring *JewishGen* and elsewhere, documenting victims and survivors of the Holocaust, rabbinic dynasties, and more!

VII. *Tips & Tricks for Navigating JewishGen*

JewishGen.org is the global home for Jewish genealogy with over 30 million searchable records and indexes, educational and language tools, networking, and more. This free website contains a wealth of treasures to navigate through the complexities of Jewish names and origins, but where to begin? Or, what are you missing? Some geographical resources are valuable for researchers of any faith background and should not be overlooked. Join veteran Jewish records pro and Director of JewishGen's USA Research Division, Ellen Kowitt as she provides an overview and shares examples of hidden gems to help maximize your time and search.

VIII. *An Overview of Jewish Records in the Golden Medina/USA*

Documenting Jewish communities in the United States not only includes Jewish cemeteries and synagogue memorial plaques, there are congregational records including vital records and Sephardic-liturgy Escabot lists, mohel registers, Jewish hospital and funeral home records, Jewish clubs and organizational materials, and more to be uncovered. This lecture showcases search techniques and websites where these Jewish genealogical gems may be found in archives, newspapers, rare books, or elsewhere. Featuring examples from the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Jewish Archives, regional Jewish historical society archives such as The Bremen Museum and DU's Beck Archive, state archives, *FamilySearch*, *WorldCat*, and more.

PUBLISHED ARTICLE:

"Bridging Daughters of the American Revolution and Jewish Genealogists" Fall 2020 *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*

IX. *Documenting Jewish Families or Communities Lost in the Holocaust by Bullets*

English speakers can now learn details about what happened to relatives or a community in the Holocaust by Bullets. Knowing and sharing your story is more important than ever in a world of continuing genocides, and as a generation of survivors and eyewitnesses pass away. Review documentation from this important era including Yahad-In Unum eyewitness video; USC Shoah Foundation and other recorded survivor testimonies; Yizkor Books; Yad Vashem; USHMM; National Library of Israel; local community resources; Russian Extraordinary Commission files, and more.

PUBLISHED ARTICLE: "Yahad-In Unum Documents Holocaust Mass Gravesites in Nine Countries" Feb 2019 *Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*

X. *To be Updated in 2023-2024! The Case of Missing Ancestors: Genealogy Tips from Nancy Drew*

For fans of the girl sleuth, or newcomers to her mysteries, this entertaining "then and now" lecture showcases genealogy resources found in the text of the classic Nancy Drew series which may have profoundly influenced generations of future genealogy enthusiasts. Contemporary digitized records, photographs, and maps, as well as archival collections, cemeteries, and newspapers that Nancy would likely use today are detailed. Adventure around the world exploring old and new tools of the trade including tackling foreign languages and finding clues and records in non-traditional places!

PUBLISHED ARTICLE: "The Case of the Missing Ancestors: 8 Genealogy Tips from Nancy Drew" Jan/Feb 2021 *Family Tree Magazine*

XI. *To be Updated in 2024! Tracing Jews Who Coughed Their Way West*

An overview about the history and records for two Jewish sanitariums in Denver, Colorado exploring why Jews from across North America travelled for the treatment of tuberculosis beginning in the 1890s and lasting until the widespread use of antibiotics became common. JGS Colorado was awarded the IAJGS Stern Grant in 2003 to index JCRS patient application records 1904-1940 held at the University of Denver which contain significant genealogical information. Updates and completion of the index through the 1950s is expected in 2024.

XII. *In Development! Shoestring Strategies for the Thrifty Genealogist*

Genealogy database subscriptions and retrieving foreign documents are expensive, and hiring professionals can be a luxury product. What is the budget-conscious family historian to do? Fortunately, freebies, discounts, and shortcuts

exist. Resources, methodology, and best practices will be shared. Spend time exploring tips to save money!

XIII. *In Development! Yosef, Yosel, Yekhiel, Joe: Navigating the Complexities of Jewish Given Names*

Jews are commonly documented with multiple names and in foreign languages. At a minimum, there will be a secular name and a religious name. With emigration and multiple languages plus pronunciation and transliteration thrown into the mix, spellings and regional differences can appear in records. Learn about various types of names commonly found and why there are so many while exploring helpful resources ranging from Google Translate, reference books, online tools, and Jewish Soundexes to assist in confirming seemingly different names that are actually the same person.

XIV. *In Development! Surfing USA: Jewish Archival Collections*

Highlighting collections featured during JewishGen Talks' *Researching Jews in America* webinar series, this overview of resources found in major collections documenting Jews in the USA includes the American Jewish Archives, American Jewish Historical Society, Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center, Jewish Theological Seminary, Yeshiva University Library, National Museum of American Jewish Military History, Shapell Roster of Jews in the American Civil War, DAR, universities, historical societies, libraries, museums, and more.

XV. *In Development! Desperately Seeking Selma Through Five Name Changes*

Estranged from family, tracing my great grandmother Selma from her 1893 East Prussian birth to an unknown demise in Chicago post 1941 was challenging. Explore U.S. and Prussian resources, methodology and strategies used including family lore, skipping a generation, timing, the kindness of strangers, filling in the story, and lessons learned.