

Schlussel e-gazette #2

October 2002

Memorial Service at Yad VaShem

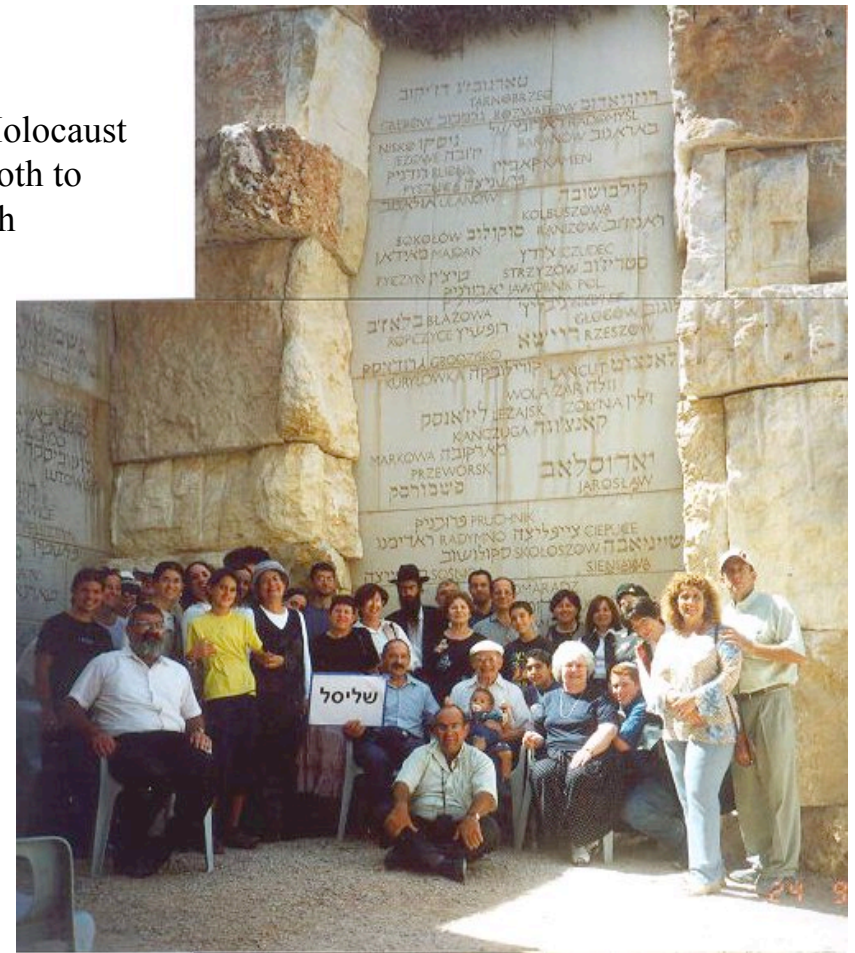
The Schlusselfs in Israel convened at Yad VaShem (Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Authority) on the 3rd intermediate day of Succoth to commemorate the anniversary of Nazi expulsion of the Jewish community of Tarnobrzeg/Dzikov on that day in 1939.

Although the Jews were allowed to return, the expulsion marked the beginning of the end of the community.

At least 150 Schlusselfs lost their lives at the hands of the Nazis. Some 15% were residents of Tarnobrzeg/Dzikov, and most lived in one of 10 towns and villages within a 100 mile radius.

Delay in Launching Internet Site

Despite a great investment of time and effort the Schlissel/Schlussel internet site is still not ready to be unveiled. The structure is in place, a number of data bases and links have been uploaded, as have most of the family branches. However some debugging is still required.



Schlusselfs at the site of the Tarnobrzeg/Dzikov inscription in Yad VaShem's "Valley of the Communities"

All Schlissels/Schlussesl are Linked

Project Update

General Survey

The project began in March 2002

About 200 Schlissel/Schlusssel households in the U.S. were found on the www.anywho.com website. Email addresses were found for about 100, all were written to, and approximately 85% provided family tree information.

There are about 35 Schlissel families in Israel's phone books, and since then about an equal number of families who are descendants of Schlussesls have also been identified.

Developments

At the outset, as information flowed in, there was only one case where a link could be found – between the branches of our veteran genealogist Gayle Schlissel Riley (California), and Fred Schlissel (New York). But from about the third month onwards hardly a week has passed without some meaningful development. A few examples:

From the information provided by Phyllis Dobin (Washington,D.C) and Ed Schlissel (Stony Brook, N.Y) it was discovered that they have common ancestors dating to about 1820.

E-gazette#1 carried an item on dancer/choreographer Marcy Schlissel. Her father Burton (Maryland) provided information on his branch. Ken Edgar (originally Detroit) took the family history one generation earlier, to Shmuel and Hudessa Schlusssel, who are related as parents and siblings to another 3 or 4 branches, including that of Usher and Miriam Schlissel, and Pessach and Elka Schlissel, each patri/matriarchs of extensive branches themselves.

A soon to retire professor of math in New York City wrote that he was hopeful that the project would determine if any of his grandparent's siblings had survived the Holocaust. In researching the Schlusssel records at Yad VaShem the identity of one relative (in Israel) was discovered.

Finally, even though this project is not about my own particular branch, there have been incredible developments related to it. See following slides.



*Shmuel and Hudessa Schlusssel
Compliments of Ken Edgar*

The Road to Yoska the Holy One

The Blood Libel

A story known in most of the households in Tarnobrzeg concerned Yoska the Holy One who was accused of murdering a local gentile in order to use his blood in the Passover matzoh. Europe was in the Feudal period, and the Countess Tarnowski, who owned the region of Poland, ordered the Yoska be burned at the stake. While aflame he shouted the “Shema Yisrael”. When the gruesome execution was over, Countess Tarnowski picked up some ashes to scatter them, but the wind suddenly changed directions, blew them in her eyes and blinded her. This event took place in 1757. Yoska’s grandchildren are considered to be the first (Jewish) Schlussels, and as Jews (in Galicia) were only required to adopt family names during the last decade of the 1700s there is some logic to this.

The Family Circle

Growing up in Brooklyn my parents participated in a group called the Schlissel Family Circle. I was curious why such a group was led by women named Fladell, Raab, Todd, Marcus and one or two Schlissels. To solve this enigma I questioned the elders of the tribe (most of whom were born in the 1880’s) and charted quite an extensive family tree. My curiosity satisfied the tree sat in my files for 30 years.

Confirmation from the Kibbutznik

When “All Schlussels are Linked” began, one of the first steps was to organize a gathering of the Schlissels in Israel. The country was then in the midst of one of the worst waves of terror and attendance was sparse. One of those who did show up was my cousin Gershon, a specialist in vegetable cultivation from Kibbutz Alumim. Gershon brought a letter written (in Yiddish) to his father in the 1930’s outlining the family structure. The information contained was very similar to mine, but included important items – that Shimon Schlussel, the brother of my grandfather’s grandfather, had a son Mendel, and that Mendel had a son Nahum who lived in Haifa. From the Tarnobrzeg/Dzikov Memorial Book, I understand that “our” Mendel was the last head of its Jewish Community. Gershon’s information also noted that Shimon had another son, Matus, who lived in Krakow.

The Contribution of Key Properties

David Schlussel is a member of a father-sons real estate operation in New Jersey, and after many emails he finally responded with a few bits of information, the most important of which was that his great-grandfather’s name was Matus and he lived in Krakow. “If Matus’s father was Shimon” I responded, “we’re cousins.” Sure enough we are.

The Tannenbaums, Blitzers and Schlussels Converge

David also put me on the trail of Tracy Makow, who in researching her own Tannenbaum and Blitzer roots had done extensive work on the descendants of Shimon Schluskel (who was married to Keila Blitzer and had some children who married Tannenbaums), and after a few exchanges she provided me with a family tree with more than 400 names.

The Token Falls

In one of the chapters of the Tarnobrzeg/Dzikov Memorial book it notes that Mendel Schluskel, the last head of its Jewish community, was the great-grandson of Alexander Zecil Schluskel, the first head of its community. I didn't realize it at the time, but when the token did fall, I understood this made Alexander Zecil an ancestor of mine as well.

The Right Matus?

The family structure as presented by the "elders" of my clan, and confirmed by Gershon, had a Patriarch Abraham (estimated year of birth 1820) who was father to 6 (or possibly 7 children) -Laibush, Shimon, Matus, Naftali, Zelda, Tova, and possibly Chana or Chaya. From the Family Circle inquiry I had almost complete information on the descendants of Laibush, Zelda and Tova. I had almost nothing for Shimon, Naftali or Matus (and of course Chaya/Chana).

A five step set of coincidences marks my getting to know Chaim Feldman, but since we have known each other he has been hopeful that his ancestor, Matus Israel, was the sibling. "Chaim" I told him time and again, "until we have more information, especially the names of 'your' Matus's siblings, we can't slot him in." We were going through this refrain once again at the Yad Vashem Schluskel dialog when his cousin, Naomi Kingsley, who was attending a Schlussels in Israel event for the first time, approached me and handed me a sheet of paper, softly asking "Will this help?". You could have knocked me off my chair with a feather. There on the sheet were the names of Abraham's 6 children (and one blank slot for an unknown).



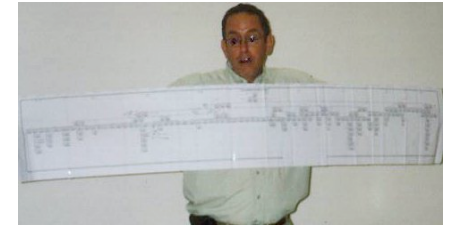
Gershon Schluskel, Leon Sonnenblick, Chaim Feldman studying the "bombshell" as Naomi Kingsley looks on



Yours truly and his newly confirmed cousin.

Is Naftali Next?

A trail that began with Solomon Schlusel of Boro Park, and that included Naftali Schlusel of Jerusalem, and finally Stephen Schlusel of North Carolina, led me to Mordechai Miller (husband of Glady Schlusel) of Montreal, who had prepared a highly detailed tree of the descendants of Naftali Schlusel. Is this Naftali the son of Abraham, brother of Laibush, Shimon and Matus? Until a few days ago I thought it was a longshot. After “discovering” Matus the odds are more even. As you can imagine, an intense effort is being made to learn who his parents and siblings were.



The Naftali tree

We're Descendants of Yoska the Holy One

Until a few days ago I thought that Yoska the Holy One's grandsons were Laibush and Zecil Schlusel. And with both Laibushes and Alexander Zecil's in our line, was not sure from which, if either, our branch descended. But since Sept. 29, thanks to Gayle Schlissel Riley sending me a copy of the relevant pages from Wunder's Encyclopedia of Galician Sages, I now know that Zecil was not Zecil, but was Alexander Zecil. And no less importantly, that the Alexander Zecil who was head of the Jewish community in the mid-1840's was both the grandson of Yoska, and the great grandfather of Mendel. The tie to Yoska has been established.

Where To From Here?

Hopefully, within a very short time the Schlissel/Schlusel website will be functioning satisfactorily. Perhaps the most important data base it contains is a translation of portions of approximately 100 birth records from Tarnobrzeg. Some of you may be able to identify your parents, grandparents and their siblings.

Of the +/- 200 Schlissel/Schlusel households in the U.S., there are still about 100 which have not been contacted, and a (paper-based) mailing is in the offing. Also, there are a few Schli/ussel families in Israel who have not provided their family tree info and that requires follow-up.

Can You Help?- If you are reading this and have not yet provided your family tree information, please do so. If someone in your family is the repository of family information, please have them contact me. And if you will be traveling to Israel, please be sure and visit!

And Thanks to Those that Have - especially Alan Stein, Gayle Schlissel Riley, Ted Schlissel

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