



1590 avenue Docteur Penfield  
Montreal, Quebec H3G1C5  
Phone: (514) 931-7531 ext. 2  
www.cjccc.ca/national\_archives

**Dr. Norma Joseph**  
Chair

CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS CHARITIES COMMITTEE

# National Archives Newsletter

**Janice Rosen**  
Director

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**Treasure found among long-forgotten box of mostly broken glass negatives.**

**Peril Starkman, mother of two U.S. researchers, seen here as a young orphan in Poland in 1921. See full story under "Researcher News."**



## COLLECTION NEWS



Among the collections recently received is a marvelous scrapbook of colour laser reproductions detailing the life and work of **Phil Himes**, the well-known

Montreal men's clothing designer.

Also of significant note is an extensive collection of files from **Wendy Eisen**, Soviet Jewry movement

activist and author of the authoritative book on this subject, "Count Us In." Ms. Eisen's records, which have already been catalogued with the help of volunteer **Naomi Caruso**, include tapes and transcripts of interviews done for the book, as well as a wealth of correspondence, clippings, and photographs going back to the height of the movement, in the 1970s.

## RESEARCHER NEWS

The past months have brought a varied group of researchers through our doors, coming from such

disparate places as Chicoutimi and Trois Rivières, Quebec; Vancouver and Ontario; eastern and southwestern U.S.; and a Hasidic enclave in B'nei Brak, Israel. Subjects researched ranged from 1930s anti-Semitism, early 20th century mentions of Montreal tramways by Jewish writers, Jewish Colonization Association communities of the east and west, and Orthodox rabbis of Montreal's wartime and early post-war years.

Research into Harry Hershman's 1921 Polish war orphans files, conducted by two sisters from Maryland and Washington, D.C, resulted in a surprising and moving discovery. The sisters, who had been in touch with the CJCCC Archives by email since 2002, did not expect to find a photograph of their mother among the files on her immigration as a young orphan, as none had been located thus far. However, in the course of their thorough explorations of everything touching on the subject, they requested access to a long-forgotten box of mostly broken glass negatives of the individual children, negatives which we had always assumed were the same as the old printed images stored with their files.

To our surprise, over 25 of the negatives showed orphans for whom no prints were available. Included among them was a beautiful image of the mother of our researchers. The negative was indeed broken, but only the edges were beyond reconstruction, and with the technology now available to us, we were able to make

an excellent positive print using our negative scanner.

We are now working on printing the rest of the missing negatives and adding them to the appropriate files. While almost all the images show either one or two of the children posed in a garden setting in Poland before their immigration to Canada, we also found several taken a few years later of a brother and sister in the snowy

setting of early 1930s Woodstock, New Brunswick.

## CATALOGUING AND DATABASE NEWS

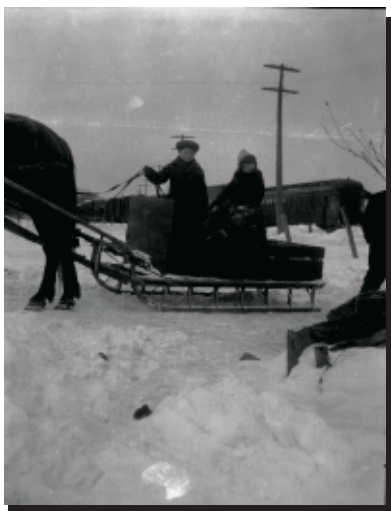
The **Joseph Family and Annette Wolff collection**, donated over several years by Ms. Wolff and her sisters Rosetta Elkin and Esther Blaustein, is now accessible through a detailed database-driven finding aid prepared by Shirley Brodt. Funding for this project came from a collections processing grant from the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. (For more on this collection, please see page 4.)

More and more use is being made of the CJC's fact-filled weekly publication **Inter-Office Information (IOI)** of 1946 to 1978, now that a detailed index to its contents is entered on computer. This project was spearheaded and to a large part carried out by Archives assistant **Hélène Vallée**. Since its completion, Hélène has begun working on an index to the separate Public Relations series of the publication, which started in 1948.

Family history researchers can get quicker and more complete indications as to whether the Archives has a personal name file on one of their relatives, thanks to Archives assistant **Shirley Brodt's** addition of a new relational name search engine into the existing database. This procedure allows for simultaneous searches of several databases and often uncovers information in places we might not have considered looking. In addition, Helene and Shirley worked together to make the detailed finding aid to the **JIAS (Jewish Immigrant Aid Services)** administrative records series available in database form. This 133-page guide, typed on an early word processor in 1984, was previously only searchable in paper format.

## WEBSITE NEWS

The **Canadian Jewish Virtual Museum and Archives** website ([www.cjvma.org](http://www.cjvma.org)) now boasts some significant enhancements, with the addition of an English and French glossary of Jewish ceremonial art and religious terms, and an enhanced "help" page. The new glossary is linked to the Museum section of the site, where an additional 30 entries have recently been posted, again drawing on **Barbara Weiser's** striking images and information about Jewish art in public spaces across Canada. This additional work was made possible through



Orphans Esther and Abish Bergel in Woodstock, N.B.

ongoing funding from the **Marvin A. Drimer Foundation**, which allowed us to engage the services of an excellent translator and technical consultant, **Lee Ahnen**.

## OUTREACH

As reported in our previous newsletter, last spring was a busy time for conferences involving participation by Archives Director **Janice Rosen**, who spoke about Jewish archival resources at the **Association of Quebec Archivists** annual conference in Quebec City in May and about the legacy of David Rome at the **Association of Canadian Jewish Studies (ACJS)** conference in Vancouver in early June.

A highlight of the ACJS conference, from a professional archivist's perspective, was the bringing



Archives panel session participants at the ACJS conference. Left to right, back row: Debby Shocter (Edmonton), Janice Rosen (Montreal), Agi Romer Segal (Calgary), Ellen Scheinberg (Toronto). Left to right, front row: Janine Johnston (Vancouver), Vanesa Harari (Winnipeg).

together of six Canadian Jewish archivists from across the country for a roundtable panel discussion and associated dialogues between the individual archivists. Many positive developments are already ensuing from the information exchanged there.

**Janice Rosen** is now preparing a talk on CJCCCNA's Yiddish resources for a Journée d'Études about Yiddish in Montreal to be held at the University of Montreal on October 3.

A student group for a **University of Montreal** class on Jews and Judaism is expected to visit the Archives in early October as well.

Another notable outreach effort currently underway at the Archives involves the loan to the **Museum of Religion in Nicolet, Quebec**, of 17 significant artifacts from the CJCCNA collections to accompany the exhibit "Shalom Québec: Plusieurs fibres; une même étoffe," originally developed by the Quebec City Jewish community for the 400th anniversary of that city. The items on loan include a stunning **parochet** (Torah ark curtain) **from Ozerow, Poland**, donated to CJCCCNA



Parochet donated by Birnbaum family

by the **Birbaum family** of Montreal; a set of **ritual knives** and a **shofar** donated by **Lavy Becker**; a fascinating **folk-art parochet made for the synagogue of Plage Laval, Quebec**, discovered by **Barbara Weiser**; a complete **cantor's outfit used by rabbi Solomon Kastner** of Montreal; and **music written by Adam Gutman under the name George Adams**, as well as one of his guitars. The items will be on display in Nicolet from November 2008 to September 2009.

**Naomi Caruso** will speak at the Côte St. Luc Library on November 18, 2008, about her recently published book **Reuven Brainin: The Fall of An Icon**, volume 49 of the Canadian Jewish Archives, New Series. The event is organized by the Association of Jewish Libraries, Montreal Chapter. The book continues to attract notice in Canada and the U.S. and has been requested by purchasers in Israel and Austria as well. Copies are still available, for \$12.00 plus postage charges.

## A LEAF FROM THE BLUE BOOK

When cataloguing the Joseph and Wolff family collection, we discovered a cache of this handwritten newsletter, written between 1839 and 1842. According to Archives Committee member Anne Joseph, author of *Heritage of a Patriarch* and maven of all things Joseph, *The Blue Book* was usually written by male members of the Joseph family residing in Montreal. It was the precursor of another extremely long-lived Joseph family newsletter, *The Moon*.

*The Blue Book* is filled with family and community gossip, with the people and places disguised by droll nicknames. Questions of religious observance and decorum surface frequently, reflecting the concerns of a family that moved in non-Jewish circles while striving to maintain their identity.

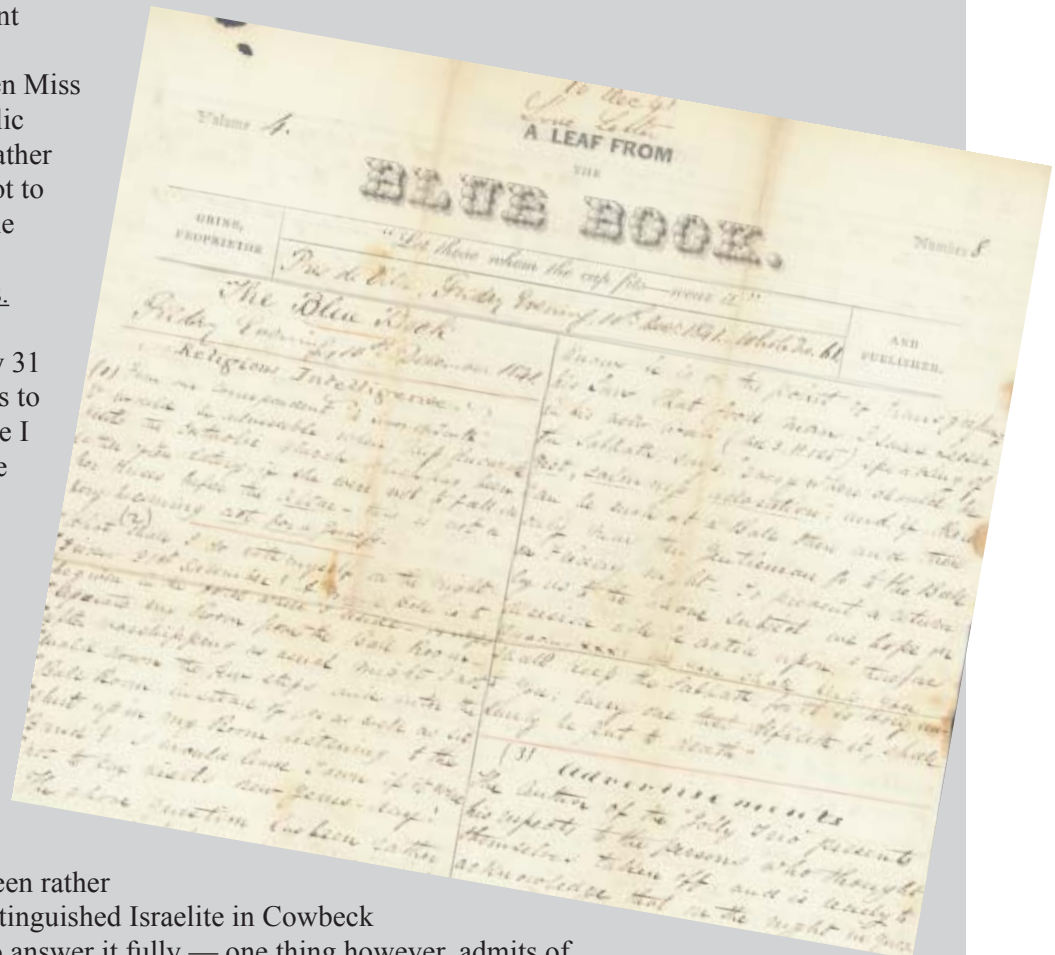
The present excerpt is dated Friday evening, 10th December, 1841. Under the heading “Religious Intelligence” we read:

(1) From our correspondent  
“A lover of Truth.”

It would be advisable when Miss Know-all visits the Catholic Church, which has been rather often lately, if she were not to fall on her knees before the Altar — this is not a very becoming act for a Jewess.

(2) “What shall I do with myself on the night Friday 31 December? A grand Ball is to be given in the hotel where I reside — 14 steps separate my room from the Ball Room. After worshipping as usual might I not walk down the few steps and enter the Ball Room instead of or as well as sit shut up in my Room listening to the Band? I would leave Town if it were not to pay visits New Year’s day.”

The above question has been rather abruptly put to us by a distinguished Israelite in Cowbeck — we have had no time to answer it fully — one thing however, admits of no doubt; he profanes the holy Sabbath day if he attend the Ball. “Remember the Sabbath day to Keep it Holy” — Let him leave the Town — let him do anything rather than go to the Ball. — “After worshipping as usual”? What a farce! Can he worship with sincerity while he knows he is on the point of transgressing his Law. □



**WE WISH ALL OUR READERS A SHANA TOVA.**