

B'NAI GOMBIN

Newsletter of the Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society

The Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society (GJHGS) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that seeks to educate the public about the history and genealogy of the Jews of Gombin. To achieve this goal, the GJHGS collects and publishes relevant materials, encourages historical and genealogical research, and undertakes activities aimed at preserving documents and relics of the culture and history of Jewish Gombin.

B'nai Gombin is the newsletter of the GJHGS. Everything published in *B'nai Gombin* is meant to provide information for Gombiners and their descendents. Articles, stories, poems, or other genres about Jewish genealogy, Poland, Gombin, or other subjects of interest to Gombiners submitted, may be published in *B'nai Gombin*. The views and opinions expressed in *B'nai Gombin* are not necessarily those of the Gombin Society. For further information or to receive back issues, contact the Gombin Society by mail at 320 County Route 105, Highland Mills NY 10930 or by email.

www.gombin.org

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Preparation For Passover in Gombin

Melvin Wruble

Before World War II, preparation for Passover in Gombin started a few months before the holiday. On Thursdays, the farmers from the farms surrounding the town came to sell their goods. The Jewish people started to buy eggs not by the dozens but by the gross. Then poultry were purchased—geese, ducks and chickens. The geese were bought the earliest because they had to be fed to get fat. The fat would be rendered for cooking, frying and using as schmaltz to spread on matzo, with a little salt on top.

Hinda Lasky's house was next to the market. The Laskys were good eaters and they looked it. If Hinda bought a goose for twenty-five zlotys she would show it to her husband, Maier, and tell him about the bargain she got paying only fifteen zlotys. Maier said with so many bargains, where has all the money gone?

Houses had to be taken care of, and were repainted inside and out. All the surfaces that weren't repainted were washed. The beds had to be taken apart to be cleaned. The sheets and blankets were all washed, though this was done during the year also. Before Passover mattresses, which consisted of burlap stuffed with straw, had to be stuffed with fresh straw. Then the process of kashrut began for the kitchen, utensils, and pots. Special dishes were used for Passover.

Shopping was done for the children. Each child received new underwear; the boys received a new shirt and suit or pants and coat, and the girls received new dresses. All the children received new shoes.

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Preparation For Passover in Gombin (continued)

Then it started, the baking and cooking for days and days. This was the best—the smells satisfied your hunger because you knew what was coming.

A day or two before the holiday we went to the mikvah. I was lucky because my brother, Israel, paid for a closed-in shower. My brothers, father and I went together, my mother and sister went at a separate time. When each group of us returned from the mikvah we dressed in our new outfits. The men went to pray; after praying and wishing each other a happy Passover, we went home to enjoy the food we had smelled for days.

Boys walked proudly with their girlfriends, each in their new clothes, around the town square. For several days the kids kept showing off their new shoes, which had to last until Passover of the following year.

(Mel completed this article with help from his daughter-in-law, Laurel, just before his death)



Melvin Wruble passed away in 2004 at the age of 86. He was a Gombiner who survived the Nazi work camp at Konin and the concentration camps. He came to Detroit after the war where he married and started a family. They moved to Los Angeles where he owned a shop and served as a docent at the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Museum of Tolerance. He told his own story to generations of visitors, so that it might never happen again. The establishment of the Gombin Society gave him particular joy. He was much loved and respected.

Gombin Ghetto Photos at YIVO

A collection of more than 100 Jewish Gombiner identity photos was found in the home of Jacob Celemenski at the time of his death. These are now located at YIVO in New York. They had been sent to Rachel Zychlinski (the poet) after the war. Jacob Celemenski was a Gombiner who survived the war as a courier for the JDC, traveling between Jewish Ghettos with money and false papers. His book, *Elegy for My People* (1963) is available from the Jewish Holocaust Center in Melbourne Australia. Three of the photographs have been scanned (at right). We will work with YIVO and others to establish a Gombin archive.



Tribute to Ben Kraut

Earlier this year Ben Kraut passed away at the age of 94. He was born in Gombin, came to the U.S. as a child, and served for many years as the President of the (New York) Gombiner Young Men's Benevolent Association. Before his death, he authorized the transfer of the funds remaining in that organization's treasury to the Gombin Society to continue our work to preserve the memory of the Jewish population of Gombin.



As part of that responsibility, we now administer the Gombiner plots at the Beth David Cemetery in Elmont, NY. He is survived by his stepson, Steve Adler, and his family.

Gombin and Israel trip postponed to 2006

Mindy Prosperi has been working hard on planning the proposed Gombin trip but has delayed the date to the summer of 2006. In part, we began our planning too late to get a travel agent to organize the travel and accommodations for this trip. In 1999, approximately 60 Gombiners from the U.S., Europe and Israel visited Gombin, Chelmno, Konin, and Warsaw. Keep in touch with Mindy.

Visit the Gombin web site: www.gombin.edu

Our web site is the portal to more information about Gombin, the way to purchase publications from the Gombin Society and the *Back to Gombin* video and web-links, including that to Ada Holtzman's fantastic historical collection.

Order copies of the reprinted Gombin "Yizkor Book" from the National Yiddish Book Center for \$90.00. Write: Dan Lopatin, National Yiddish Book Center, 1021 West St. Amherst MA 01002-3375.

The Gombin Society membership meeting will be held on September 11, 2005 in New Jersey. The Israeli Gombiner meeting will be held in Tel Aviv in May, 2005. Contact Ada Holtzman.

Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society - 2005

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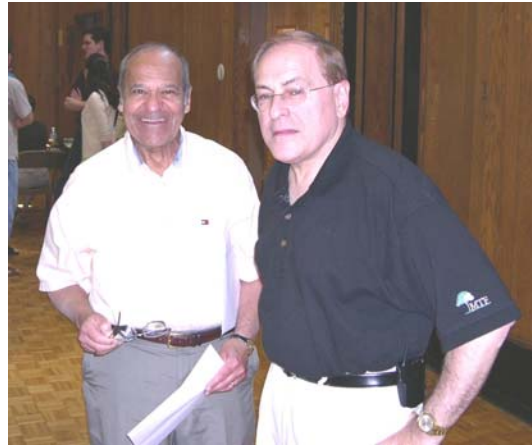
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Mail to: Gombin Society; 320 County Route 105; Highland Mills NY 10930

New Board Members: Phil Ball and Arthur Gertzman

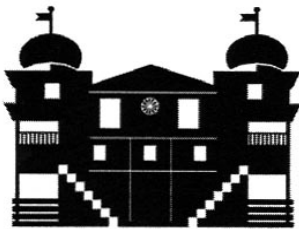
Phil Ball and Arthur Gertzman, both from New Jersey, recently joined the Board of the Gombin Society. Phil, Arthur and Bernie Guyer are second cousins, all descendents of the same great grandfather, Pinchus Rissman, who came to Newark NJ from Gombin in 1904 and died there in 1907. Pinchus had 5 daughters who all emigrated to Newark, and one son, who remained in Gombin. Phil is grandson of Chana Ball (1867-1903); Arthur is grandson of Brinah Liberman (1876-1946); and Bernie is the grandson of Manele Rissman (perished at Chelmno in 1942).



Archeologists Uncover Gombin's Golfing History

Excavations for a new housing development in the fields outside the Gombin *vald* uncovered an irregularly shaped sandy pit next to an undulating area of short green grass. A fragment of ancient cloth was inscribed in Yiddish, *Chai* (18). Could this have been Gombin's Jewish Golf Course?

Additionally, a recently discovered fragment of a *matzevah* (head stone) revealed a previously little known member of the large Gombin Jewish *Chaya* family, named *Vilde Chaya*. Research at the local newspaper office shows that one *Vilde Chaya* of Gombin won the 1921 Plock (pronounced *Plotsk*) Open, and one article refers to the *Vilde Chaya* as "*Tayger*." So, who knew! (April 1, 2005, Gombin)



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