

# 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, contact the Gombin Society by mail at 185 Skyline Drive, Highland Mills NY 10930 or by email.

[www.gombinsociety.org](http://www.gombinsociety.org)

© 2014. Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society. ISSN #1096-7354

## Пlock “Books of Residents” Project Resumes; Searchable data-base

From Ada Holtzman in Israel

Tony Hausner of the Plock Research Group reports that the “Jewish Records Indexing-Poland” Project has resumed extracting the Jewish entries in the “Books of Residents” for the City of Plock, near Gombin.

Books of Residents [see page below] are house-by-house census documents that were updated on an ongoing basis over time and recorded all the people living in the house, moving in or departing. Each entry includes Name, Surname, Father’s Name, Mother’s Name, Date and Place of Birth and Occupation. In some cases, the date of death, marriage, draft status or notes are included.

The latest batch of Plock data has added another 2,500 entries to the 1,500 completed in 2006. These entries can be searched online in the JRI-Poland database. Work is proceeding on a street-by-street basis. In the completed data-base there will be entries for about 20,000 to 25,000 individuals- a goldmine of information for families living in Plock for many decades. Years of birth go back as far as 1786! The 4,000 entries to date include 1,650 distinct surnames. In addition to Plock, there are 265 towns mentioned as places of birth for Plock residents, typically for women who were born in another town and settled in Plock with their husbands. **[go to Page 3]**

№	ИМЯ И ФАМИЛИЯ		Полная родная и рожденная фамилия матери	Время рождения		Место рождения	Примечание
	Мужчина	Женщина, фамилия по выходу из брака и по мужу		д. м.	Мес.		
1	Абрахамович	Абрахамович	Абрахамович и Абрахамович	19	Июль	1811	Польща
2	Абрахамович	Абрахамович	Абрахамович и Абрахамович	19	Июль	1811	Польща
3	Абрахамович	Абрахамович	Абрахамович и Абрахамович	21	Июль	1811	Польща
4	Абрахамович	Абрахамович	Абрахамович и Абрахамович	21	Июль	1811	Польща

## A Passion for *Yiddishkeit* and *Tikkun Olam*

Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn, as interviewed by Minna Packer

**Minna Packer)** Can you tell me about your Gombin ancestors and how your family came to emigrate to Uruguay?

**Rabbi)** My maternal grandmother, Minka Poleg (Nee Platkowsky) was born in Gostynin (about 2 kilometers from Gombin) . Her parents Isaac and Sarah Goldman were Gombiners. I have their ketubah from Gombin framed in my office. They emigrated to Uruguay in 1930, where Isaac was a member of the Jewish Federation Board and a founder of the Talmud Torah in Goes (a Jewish neighborhood in Montevideo). I visited that shul 20 years after he had died and they still remembered him.

**MP)** When did you decide to become a rabbi and why?

**Rabbi)** Judaism was always important in my home and in life. On my father's side, I descend from famous Hassidic Rebbes. I wanted to be a rabbi since I was a child. If working means doing something you really don't want to do for money, then I feel fortunate that I have never worked a single day in my life! I love being a rabbi, helping people, bringing *Yiddishkeit* into their lives, spreading the ethical and moral values of Judaism and promoting *Tikkun Olam*.

**MP)** What prompted you to write your book, *Accessible Judaism: A Concise Guide*?

**Rabbi)** I work with lots of people in Latin America that wanted to learn about Judaism and regain their Jewish origins. There are millions in the American Southwest and throughout of Latin America who descend from Jews that were forced to convert to Judaism in the XV century in Portugal and Spain. I wrote my Masters Thesis at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati about this subject. Since there is not much openness about

Judaism in that part of the world, I decided to write a book that is now translated into Spanish and Portuguese.



I have written another book together with

Bill Tammeus called, *They Were Just People: Stories of Rescue in Poland*. It is about Polish gentiles who risked their lives to help, hide and save Jews during the Holocaust. Currently I am working on a comprehensive book about the only real Jewish food: *Charosset*. That way I feel I will have touched the holy trinity of relevant subjects for Jews: Basic Judaism, the Holocaust and Food!

**MP)** Gombin is the birthplace of the famous rabbi, Abraham Abele Gombiner (c.1635 – 1682). Why are his teachings taught in yeshiva's and kolel's around the world?

**Rabbi)** Gombiner is known by the title of his most important book, *Magen Avraham*. His great contribution was to write a commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* incorporating the customs of Polish Jews of his time. His commentary was so authoritative that later rabbis relied on it for their acceptance of Kabbalistic practices, for instance.

**MP)** You've been very supportive in my quest to complete The Lilliput movie. What do you know about the Jewish dwarf of [\[go to Page 3\]](#)

## Books of Residents Project (continued from Page 1)

This is an important source of information for following the paper trail of an ancestor.

Additional batches of data will be placed online as funding for each batch has been completed. However, researchers making a qualifying contribution of \$200 or more will be eligible to obtain a new Excel file with all data completed to date as it becomes available.

-----  
**Ada adds the following personal experience with this project:** My paternal grandmother Rasza Holcman née ZLOTNIK was born in Plock and married Eliahu Holcman from Gombin so moved to his shtetl. Her brother, a famous scholar, R'Yehuda Leib Zlotnik (changed to

“AVIDA”), served as a rabbi in Gombin. My grandmother Rasza was one of 13 siblings. Among them were rabbis who spread all over Poland. I was most curious about the Zlotnik family. The Rabbi Avida estimated the number of Holocaust victims in this family alone to be over 250, but who were they? I hired a researcher who went to Plock and scanned the Registry Books, similar to the one we want to decipher and distribute. The result of this personal research is my web site about ZLOTNIK, see: <http://www.zchor.org/zlotnik.html>.

For further information on this project contact Tony Hausner: [thausner@gmail.com](mailto:thausner@gmail.com). For a full description of Books of Residents, go to <http://jri-poland.net/bor.htm>.

## Rabbi Cukierkorn Interview (continued from Page 2)

Gombin, Abraham Kerber?

**Rabbi** Even as a little boy I heard about the dwarf from Gombin. It was always presented in the context that you have to be resilient. He was seen as someone who used what would have been a deficit to his maximum advantage. I am very excited about your project and will do all I can to help make it a reality.

**MP)** Besides your dedication to Judaism and Jewish education, what else are you passionate about?

**Rabbi** My first passion is to raise my daughters to be *mentches* and to give me Jewish grandchildren. I make my expectations clear to them all the time even though the pathologist is 15 and the trial lawyer is 11!

My second greatest passion is to perform conversions. I have performed about 500

conversions so far in my 20 years as a rabbi (mostly for people that claim Jewish origins in Latin America) through my organization *Brit Braja* ([www.britbraja.org](http://www.britbraja.org)) and believe that is the greatest impact I can make in the Jewish world.

I am also interested in Wooden Synagogues. Our Shtetl had one of the most magnificent wooden synagogues of all Poland. People would come to Gombin just to admire it. When the lottery gets really high, I "invest" in a couple of tickets, with the hope that I will be able to have a replica of it built in Israel or Florida.

My other passion is travel. I want to visit 100 countries at least, so far I have been to 70. Everywhere I go, I visit Jewish sites, to my wife's desperation!

Finally there is Chinese food...

# Accomplishments of the Gombin Society;

January 2014. Report from Arthur Gertzman, President, GJHGS

## ***Maintenance of the Jewish Cemetery in***

***Gombin, Poland:*** In 1999, the Gombin Society achieved legal ownership of the Jewish Cemetery of Gombin, that was destroyed by the German invaders in September 1939. The cemetery was rededicated, and a monument built from recovered gravestones. An iron fence was built to protect the area. Over the years, the monument became badly decayed from weathering, the large gate collapsed, and the wrought iron fence rusted. No vandalism, however, was ever observed by our members who visit the site from time to time.

Beginning in 2009, we raised about nine thousand dollars from our membership; these funds were used to restore the monument and repair the gate. This work was completed in 2012. A local Gombin contractor carried out the work and has been very reliable and supportive.

***Improved Communications:*** Accomplishments include rebuilding the website [www.gombinsociety.org](http://www.gombinsociety.org), publication of a biannual Newsletter, *B'nai Gombin*, occasional website news announcements, and finally, maintenance of a digital record of contact information for all members in US.

## ***Education of Gombin Middle School Children:***

The Gombin Society funded a program initiated by the *Forum for Dialogue Among Nations* in Warsaw. They have run educational workshops for Poland's young students in over 300 cities and towns in Poland. The Gombin program, in spring of 2012, was a great success. We are now planning future phases of this program for the Middle or High School students.

***Anniversary of the Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society:*** The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the US Society was celebrated at

the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City, May 19, 2013. Over 75 guests were treated to a program of the history and accomplishments of the Gombin Society. We presented an award to Ada Holtzman of Tel Aviv for her long-standing work on the genealogy of the Jews of Gombin and for maintaining her well respected website- [www.zchor.org](http://www.zchor.org)

***Film and the Arts:*** The Gombin Society has supported the production of the film *Back to Gombin*. It was produced by Board member, Minna Packer, after the 1999 trip to Gombin.

A dramatic play with dance, *Bella's Dream* was produced and performed in New York during summer 2013 by Dana Boll, a Gombin descendent and Board member. The play dramatizes the dream of Bella Boll, grandmother of the playwright, to leave Gombin before the war.

The Gombin Society owns the rights to a film made in 1937 by Sam Rafel when he returned to his native Gombin. With a black and white, silent film camera, he recorded scenes in Gombin of the people and town at a time just before the beginning of World War II. This film has been donated to several museums in the US, Europe and Mexico.

A new dramatic film, *The Liliput*, being produced by Minna Packer, relates the real experiences of a Jewish dwarf from Gombin and his survival in Warsaw during WWII.

***Historical Records:*** The Gombin Society has donated a full record of our meetings, and copies of our film properties and newsletter to YIVO in New York City.

# My Grandmother's (*Sheindle-Perl*) Candlesticks

From Moshe Joshua Lewenberg in Israel

In a nice apartment, in a fancy china cabinet, you can see a pair of candlesticks- silver plated; they used to belong to my grandmother שינדל-פרל [*Sheindle-Perl Shraga*], of blessed memory. They are proof and evidence of her life. My



grandma died on 1953. Although I was a teenager, I still remember her funeral. It was a very rainy day, and even the heavens wept over her death.

These candlesticks were given to my Grandmother at her wedding in LODZ in 1906. In W.W.I they

moved to Gombin. The candles were lit on *Shabbat* evenings and holidays. My Grandfather was the *Magid* of Gombin, and Grandma was called "the *Magid te*". They lived in misery- in a poor room at No.18 Kilinskego Street, in Gombin [photo below of No. 22].

In my early childhood in Tel-Aviv, I remember the candlesticks on the *Shabbat* table and the



smell of Grandma's baked *challot*. In 1940, the Italians bombed Tel-Aviv in the middle of the night, a few hundred meters from their hut. This was evidence and proof of the Jewish nation's coming fate! In 1945, the British government imposed a curfew and a total blackout! I remember Friday night candles on the table; outside it was black! In 1948, after the independence war, candles were lit for the many casualties! After Grandma's death, Grandpa gave the candlesticks to my Mother.



I remember my late parents sitting on Friday night, when Saddam

Hussein sent missiles to Israel. Mother had to blow out the candles when there was an alarm.

My Mother died on 1992, and my youngest sister got the candlesticks, at my Mother's request. They adorned my sister's house and serve all of us as a faithful testimony and memory forever!

YOU the following generations, remember that behind every image, photo, and item, there is a life story- sometimes sad and sometimes happy. My Grandmother's life story is mixed and connected with tears that soaked the sands of GOMBIN. IN MEMORY OF MY UNFORGETTABLE GRANDMOTHER!



## GOMBIN JEWISH HISTORICAL & GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

### GJH&GS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT: Arthur Gertzman; VICE PRESIDENT: Phil Ball; SECRETARY: Mindy Prosperi;  
TREASURER: Michael Kaplan

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Dana Boll, Bernard Guyer, Ellen Kaplan, Minna Packer, Arthur Stupay

REPRESENTATIVE IN ISRAEL: Ada Holtzman; REPRESENTATIVE IN BRITAIN: Jeremy Freedman;  
NEWSLETTER: Bernard Guyer: [bguyer1@jhu.edu](mailto:bguyer1@jhu.edu).

Mailing address: 185 Skyline Drive, Highland Mills NY 10930

Website URL: [www.gombinsociety.org](http://www.gombinsociety.org)



Newsletter of the Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society

**185 Skyline Drive,  
Highland Mills NY 10930**