

# B'NAI GOMBIN

Newsletter of THE GOMBIN SOCIETY - GJHGS

**Editor: Noam Lupu** 

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The Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society (GJHGS) is a non-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 descendants. 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 (GJHGS) by mail at P.O. Box 503052, San Diego, CA 92150.

# Social Calendar

### **BIRTHDAYS:**

Yael Barnett, daughter of Leo Baumann, celebrated her birthday on the 5th of December

Osnat Barnett, granddaughter of Leo Baumann, celebrated her 22nd birthday on December 29

**Eran Barnett**, grandson of Leo Baumann, will celebrate his 19th birthday on the 8th of February

**Tamar Carmi**, granddaughter of Leo Baumann, celebrated her 29th birthday on December 9

Adam & Elad Fajgenbaum, grandsons of Sara Laks, will celebrate their 11th birthday on February 12

**Sara Laks Fajgenbaum** will celebrated her 76th birthday in January

**Leon Fajgenbaum**, husband of Sara Laks, will celebrate his 77th birthday in February

**Danielle Frankel**, granddaughter of Rose Frankel, turned seven on December 24

Yonatan Lupu, grandson of Sara Laks, celebrated his 19th birthday on January 15

Carl Sciacca, husband of Gayle Sciacca, celebrated his 63rd birthday on December 28

**Christy Sokoloff**, daughter-in-law of Gayle Sciacca, celebrated her 30th birthday on December 26. Her husband, Adam, surprised her with a cruise to the Bahamas.

### **ANNIVERSARIES:**

**Raymond & Bella Boll** will celebrate their 60th anniversary in February. Unfortunately, Bella Boll fell ill and is now recovering from a hospital visit. We all pray for her quick recovery and send our strength to the rest of the Boll family.

Congratualtions to all our fellow Gombiners on their milestones this season. We wish you all Mazal Tov!



# In Memorium

We mourn the loss of 73 of Israel's own young men and women who lost their lives in the tragic helicopter crash that took place on February 4 near Lebanon. Some of our own Israeli Gombiners knew the victims of the crash and we join them and the rest of Israel in their loss and their sorrow.

# Brief Introduction

The Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society is a non-profit organization, open to all people, from all over the world, who have an interest in Gombin Jewish history and genealogy. The goals of the Gombin Society are:

- To educate the public about the history of the Gombin Jewish community and the genealogy of the Jews of Gombin.
- To collect, teach, disseminate, and publish knowledge and information on the history of the Gombin Jewish community and the genealogy of the Jews of Gombin.
- To encourage all interested persons to pursue historical and genealogical research focused on the Gombin Jewish community.
- To undertake activities aimed at protecting, preserving, and restoring vital records, documents, and physical relics and landmarks of the culture and history of the Gombin Jews.
- To undertake activities to preserve the memory of the Gombin Jews who perished in the Holocaust.
- To assist the activities of all other organizations whose objectives are related to the preservation of the heritage of the Jews of Gombin.

B'NAI GOMBIN is the newsletter of the Gombin Society - GJHGS. Its main purposes are to inform Gombiners of projects and activities of interest to them, as well as to share experiences and writings. Any articles, stories, poems or other genres may be submitted for publishing.

# **EDITOR'S NOTE**

Once again, I am proud of another outstanding and intriguing issue of B'NAI GOMBIN. This issue marks the first issue of the newsletter as part of the new Gombin Society (GJHGS) open to all Gombiners and their descendants worldwide.

Included with the previous issue of B'NAI GO-MBIN, Autumn 1996, was a Database Entry Form, which I asked every Gombiner household to fill out and return to me. As of today, I have received few forms. So once again, I ask every Gombiner household to fill out the form and return it. It does not take much time, just a little initiative and the cost of a stamp. Please pick up a pen and fill out the form as soon as possible, and return it to the Gombin Society - GJHGS (address on cover).

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask every Gombiner household to become sponsors of our very important organization. Included with this newsletter, you will find a Sponsorship Form and reply envelope. I hope all our readers become sponsors and help make our plans and projects take off. We have a lot of interest in Gombin and together we can find new information and work to commemorate Jewish Gombin. So please help us continue projects like the publishing of B'NAI GOMBIN, as well as start new projects like the Rafel film, by becoming sponsors.

Noam Lupu



# GOMBINERS COMING TOGETHER

A Message from the Founding Directors of the Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society

### The Gombiner Tradition

As Gombiner Jews and descendants of Jews from Gombin, we have inherited a long tradition of coming together and working hard to provide mutual help, foster the Jewish education of our children, cherish our common family roots, and honor our parents, elders and ancestors. Back in Poland, the Gombin Jews had many organizations of mutual help and welfare, including cooperatives of artisans and merchants and other institutions such as "Linat Tzedek" and the "Bread House," which provided help to the needy.

The tradition continued in America. In the 1920s there were two organizations of Gombiner immigrants in the New York and Newark area. One of them was the Gombin Relief Committee, which gathered funds and sent aid to the Jewish welfare institutions in Gombin. The other was the Young Men's Benevolent Association, which helped the Gombiner Jews who came to America. By the 1930s, more Gombiner committees had been formed in Chicago and Detroit. After the war these organizations made great efforts to help resettle Gombiner survivors in Israel and in the United States. In the 1950s they built a Gombin House in Tel Aviv, with a Memorial Wall to honor the memory of the Gombiner Jews who had been killed in the Holocaust.

In the 1960s, the Gombiner organizations focused on the edition of the Gombin Memorial Book. Sam Rafel, the most devoted of the Gombiner activists, expressed the feelings of his generation when he

wrote that the book was a "sacred task that is on the conscience of each and every one of us." The Gombin Yizkor Book was eventually published, describing the life and destruction of the Gombin Jewish community and offering testimonies of Gombiner Holocaust survivors.

### The Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society

We, the founders of the Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society, regard ourselves as continuers and caretakers of this precious tradition. Since 1995 we have brought together Gombiner descendants interested in learning about their family roots, knowing more about the history of the Jewish community in Gombin, and preserving the memory of the Gombiners murdered in the Holocaust. Our group includes people of all ages from the United States, Israel, and other countries. We have been active in the exchange of genealogical data and in the compilation of lists of living Gombiners and descendants of Gombiners. We recovered the film that Sam Rafel had shot in Gombin in 1937 and, after making it available in raw from, we are now editing it for distribution in an improved version. We have obtained and published a variety of historical materials; we have also gathered pictures, slides, and documents on the Gombin Jewish community, the extermination camp at Chelmno, and the fate of Gombiners during the Holocaust. In the summer of

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1996, we participated in the organization of a Gombiner Gathering in New Jersey, contributing visual essays and presentations.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to the Gombiner Young Men's Organization of New Jersey, which sponsored the first two issues of our newsletter. With this, the third issue of B'NAI GOMBIN, we announce the foundation of the Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society as a new educational organization that will be open to all people, from all over the world, who have an interest in the history and genealogy of the Jews from Gombin.

In its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, our Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society is defined as a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt, nonprofit educational corporation that pursues the following goals:

- To educate the public about the history of the Gombin Jewish community and the genealogy of the Jews from Gombin.
- To collect, teach, disseminate, and publish knowledge and information on the history and genealogy of Gombin Jews.
- To encourage all interested persons to pursue historical and genealogical research on the Gombin Jewish community.
- To undertake activities aimed at protecting, preserving, and restoring vital records, documents, pictorial materials, and physical relics and landmarks of the culture and history of the Gombin Jews.
- To undertake activities to preserve and honor the memory of the Gombin Jews who perished in the Holocaust.
- To assist the activities of all other organizations

whose objectives relate to the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the Jews from Gombin.

### Facing our Challenge as a Moral Obligation

This year, in addition to our regular historical and genealogical research and publishing activities, we expect to cooperate again with the New Jersey and New York Gombiner organizations in the realization of the 1997 Gombiner Gathering. We are taking steps to establish a support telephone line for senior Gombiners in the Fort Lauderdale area, and we are also planning a special workshop to introduce Gombiners of all ages to Jewish genealogy. At the same time, we will continue our contacts with other institutions in the United States and Poland, in fulfillment of our commitment to participate in efforts to protect the Gombin Jewish Cemetery and to dedicate a memorial plaque for the Gombin Jews at the Chelmno extermination camp.

At a time in which we are witnessing attempts to subvert truth, obliterate memory, and deny the Holocaust, we believe that it is a moral obligation to cherish our common family roots, remember Jewish Gombin, and honor our ancestors and martyrs. In Sam Rafel's words, these are the sacred tasks that the old and new generations of Gombiners face today. We are ready to take on the challenge, and we hope to have your encouragement and support. We urge each one of you to answer our call: please return the sponsorship form that you received with this newsletter. We are inviting you and all the Gombiners and descendants of Gombiners to join us as participants and sponsors of the Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society.

# AN EXPERIENCE TO REMEMBER

# by Gayle Frankel Sciacca

It has always been my belief that every person has a mission in life. My mission hadn't been revealed to me until August 14, 1995 in my visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

To commemorate the arrival of the Frankel family (my parents, Sam and Rose, survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, and myself, a 2-year old at the time, born after the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, in Frankfurt, Germany) to the shores of the "Golden Land" on board the *S.S. Hasselman*, on August 14, 1949, my mother Rose Frankel and I planned to spend the day at the museum. We knew that it would be difficult for us, since my father was not with us, having passed away five years earlier.

As printed in the Visitor's Guide, "The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is dedicated to presenting the history of the persecution and murder of six million Jews and millions of other victims of Nazi tyranny from 1933 to 1945. The Museum's primary mission is to inform Americans about this unprecedented tragedy, to remember those who suffered, and to inspire visitors to contemplate the moral implications of their choices and responsibilities as citizens in an interdependent world."

The Identity Card Project is a unique method of allowing each visitor to the Museum (which, according to recent statistics, amount to approximately 23,000 daily) enter the Museum with a special companion. Upon entering the Permanent Exhibit, everyone receives a passport-sized Identity Card bearing the

name and family history of an individual victim of the Holocaust. There are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of these cards, which are printed at the Museum, stored in binds in no particular sequence, and distributed upon the visitor's entry to the Permanent Exhibit. As the visitor proceeds, he or she learns how the Holocaust affected the fate of his of her "companion."

My "companion," to my astonished amazement, was *my very own grandmother*, Sossia Frankel, who had perished at the hands of the Nazis, along with my grandfather and four of her sons. My paternal grandmother's photo peered out to me from her identification card! It was an incredible feeling, knowing in my mind, that her spirit had guided me to the random selection of her card.

My "mission" was finally revealed to me: to volunteer my time in the assistance of educating the living and remembering the dead.

### **Previous Issues**

Anyone interested in receiving copies of previous issues of B'NAI GOMBIN, in English or Hebrew, please contact the Gombin Society at the address shown on the front cover. For those receiving the newsletter for the first time, please also request a Database Entry Form to assure your place in our growing database of Gombiners and their descendants worldwide.

# WHAT DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

# by Milton Kleinert

The remarkable resourcefulness of those who emigrated from Gombin will never cease to amaze me. As a young man, at my father's elbow, learning the trade of his homeland, *peltzenmacher* or furrier, I saw him emerge into a businessman, merchant, employer and a craftsman. All of this in a strange land where he knew little of the language and had none of the necessary writing skills.

Strangely, these traits were not inimitable to him alone. I saw them in almost every Gombiner I came in contact with. The overwhelming majority were successful business-people who raised children that became educated and went on to become successful in their own right. Was it the genes, the clear Polish air or the great desire to improve their lives when given the opportunity?

During my youth I came in contact with many children of immigrants from other towns in Poland. There were the Moliover, the Lodzer, the Krakover, the Lubliner, the Bialystoker and the Warshaver, none of whom, to my knowledge, were able to attain the group status of the Gombiners. Surely each had their individual outstanding citizens. As an American-born individual I am amazed that the same qualities the original Gombiners had could also be found in the "second tier" of those who arrived following the Holocaust. Imbued with intestinal fortitude, the desire to succeed and to become part of the fabric of America they too have climbed up the ladder, rung by rung.

I, born in America and educated here, in taking

an overview of the Gombiner and seeing the everimproving position of their progeny in the social strata of this country can come to no other conclusion than that there are certainly vitamins and minerals growing in the little shtetl that nourish what we here call guts.

# **D**AVENING

What was the *nusah* of davening in Gombin?

Nusah is the characteristic way of chanting the service. The nusah of davening refers to the typical manner in which musical modes and tunes are combined when reciting the prescribed in Jewish liturgy. A nusah also has distinctive elements in the customary way of conducting the service and in the text of the Siddur (the prayer book): prayers, lines or words added or changed.

Moshe Schwartz, a Gombiner descendant living in Israel, would like to know which *nusah* of davening was used in Gombin: *nusah* ashkenaz or *nusah* sfard, which was common among the Hasidim (this *nusah* sfard of the Eastern Europe Ashkenazi Hasidim should not be confused with the *nusah* of the Sephardic Jews). Is there anyone who can answer this question? If so, please get in touch with the editor of B'NAI GOMBIN.

# **A GOMBINER FRENCH CONNECTION**

# by Leon Zamosc

In recent years, people interested in Jewish family history have benefited from the publication of many good books on how to do Jewish genealogy. Among these books, Gary Mokotoff's How to Document Victims and Locate Survivors of the Holocaust (Avotaynu, 1995) is a particularly important work at a time in which we see attempts to deny that the Holocaust ever happened. Benjamin Meed, president of the Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, prefaced the book saying that by focusing on concrete persons, the documentation of victims and survivors is an effective way to make people realize not only that the Holocaust happened, but that it happened to actual people. In his words: "The Holocaust was people, each individual with a story to tell, sometimes of survival, more likely of death."

One of the many sources listed is Mokotoff's book is Serge Klarsfeld's *Memorial to the Jews Deported From France 1942-1944* (published in English in 1983), which) contains very complete listings of the Jews deported from France in train shipments, most of which went to Auschwitz. More than 70,000 names are listed, with data about birth dates and places and citizenship. For each convoy, there is information about how many people were gassed on arrival, how many were selected for work, and how many were still alive at the end of the war.

Klarsfeld's book on the French deportees was especially interesting to me because we have a French connection among our relatives: Regina Blat, one of my father's aunts from the Pioro side of his family.

Until WWI, most Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe had flocked to America. Between the wars, however, anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation made it very difficult for them to come to this country, so France became one of the main destinations. Over 150,000 Jewish immigrants and refuges entered France between the wars, about 60% of them from Eastern Europe. On the eve of WWII, the Eastern European Jews (legal and illegal) had come to represent about two-thirds of the Jewish residents of Paris.

Among these Jewish immigrants in Paris was Regine (Rivkah) Pioro, born in Gombin c. 1905, one of the youngest daughters of Iehiel Michael Pioro and Ita Schklova. The Pioros had three sons and six daughters, and the family connection with us was that one of the older Pioro sisters, Chana, was the mother of my father Izek Zamosc.

In Paris, Regine Pioro met and married another Polish immigrant, Mordka Blat, from Opole. Their son Michel Blat was born in April of 1941, several months after the German occupation. They had been active in leftist politics and got involved in the resistance. But Mordka was arrested and, on December 15, 1941 he was one of the 95 hostages — "Jews, Communists, and anarchists," — who were executed at the Mont-Valerien prison in retaliation for an assassination attempt against a German of-

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ficer in Paris. Before his execution, Mordka wrote the following note:

To my dear wife and son Michel,

This is my last letter to you. Dear Regine, I ask you to raise our beloved son as a courageous Jewish woman who raises a son of the Jewish people. I die calm, an innocent man. I want my son to carry the name of his father with the dignity of a Jew, and I suffer because I will not be able to participate in his education. I embrace you both from the depths of my heart, many times; and my only thoughts are for your happiness and your future. Do not forget me. Mordka Blat

Regine and her child survived the Holocaust hidden in the French countryside. After liberation, her only other surviving brother, Isadore Pioro (who had managed to emigrate to America before the war) found her in Paris. Regine stayed in Paris and did exactly what Mordka had asked her to do: she was courageous, and worked hard as a seamstress to see Michel through medical school (his doctoral thesis, *Meditations Critiques Sur la Psychiatrie*, was published in 1979). Unfortunately, Michel died a very young man in the early 1980s, a terrible final blow for a woman who had suffered so much in her life. Regine followed him few years later.

My father's aunt survived the Holocaust, but 77,320 Jews who had been deported from France to the extermination camps of the East did not. Were there Gombiners among the many thousands of Polish Jews who were sent back to their deaths? Scrutinizing the lists for each train convoy in Klarsfeld's book, I found the names of twenty-two persons who had been born in Gombin. They are listed in the table below. The original Klarsfeld listings include some

additional data about these deportees, and I will be very glad to share the information with anyone interested (write to The Gombin Society at the address on the cover).

### **Gombiners deported from France:**

Name of Gombiner (birth date), Departed, From

Bernard, Macha (1907), September 1942, Drancy Bursztejn, Maryem (July 16, 1914), August 1942, Beaune Rol

Finkelkraut, Zoner (June 4, 1932), September 1942, DrancyFrenkel, Zylberszte (May 3, 1883), September 1942,Malines(Belg)

Fuksa, Max (July 16, 1900), March 1943, DrancyGoldszmidt, Jacob (May 15, 1885), September 1942,Malines(Belg)

Krachevitch, Feiga (March 15, 1885), July 1944, Drancy Makarowsky, Nuchka (December 26, 1897), September 1942, Drancy

Makovoski, Idel (September 23, 1903), June 1942, Pithiviers Rafal, Chaim (February 16, 1886), February 1943, Drancy Rosenblum, Chaja (1917), July 1942, Pithiviers Rozanska, Hodys (May 4, 1902), August 1942, Beaune Rol Sender, Icek (February 6, 1916), July 1942, Pithiviers Zajak, Israel (March 5, 1907), July 1942, Pithiviers Zawierucha, Riwka (January 10, 1919), July 1942, Drancy Zawierucha, Fajga (May 22, 1924), July 1942, Drancy Zawierucha, Perla (1890), July 1942, Drancy Zawierucha, Mordka (October 28, 1921), June 1942, Drancy Zielonka, Leon (February 17, 1913), March 1943, Drancy Zylberberg, Szrul (December 8, 1905), March 1943, Drancy

# **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

# MAILING LIST:

Attention all Gombiners! We finally have an e-mail mailing list. If you subscribe, you will receive all our message exchanges sent to the list. We encourage everyone with e-mail access to join, whether they wish to be involved or not. This way you can be informed of everything that happens and maybe even be able to help out or supply your input. We also encourage other Gombiners to send messages with their own questions or comments.

To send messages, send your e-mail to gombin@weber.ucsd.edu. To subscribe, send a message to gombin-request@weber.ucsd.edu with only "subscribe" typed in the Subject field.

# **SUMMER MEETING:**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! The 1997 Annual meeting of Gombiners will take place on Sunday, August 17 in New Jersey. All Gombiners are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Like the last meeting, we will include presentations and informative lectures of interest to all Gombiners. Of course, we will also have ample time to schmooze and reminisce with fellow Gombiners. More information on the time and location of the meeting will be posted in the next issue of B'NAI GOMBIN.

# GENEALOGY SEMINAR:

Preceding the Summer meeting on Sunday, August 17, will be a genealogy seminar led by Leon Zamosc, Gayle Frankel Sciacca and Noam Lupu. The seminar will be an introduction to genealogy and family history, ideal for whole families to attend. There is no better way to get the whole family involved in your heritage and history. Genealogy beginners or experts are invited to attend. Please call or write to Noam Lupu (address and phone on cover) for more information or to preregister.

# GOMBIN WEB PAGE:

Gombin now has its very own World Wide Web page: http://weber.ucsd.edu/~lzamosc/gombin.html. The page includes information about the history of Gombin, the Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society, the E-mail Exchange and our newsletter, B'NAI GOMBIN. Everyone is invited to visit the page and register in our guest book. Please be sure to include your name and e-mail address. We would also appreciate any comments or suggestions as well.

The Gombin Society would like to thank Leon Zamosc for painstakingly putting together the Gombin Web Page.

# GENEALOGY PAGE

# WHY GENEALOGY?

Fostering Jewish identification among the young

The key to instilling Jewish identification in our youth (and in our adults!) is to involve them in the search for their own ancestors. The goal is not so much to do family tracing, but to learn, through that activity, the history, geography, languages, cultures and values influencing and driving our ancestors. It makes history live, and geography real, as we follow our ancestors from country to country, driven by the social and political events and pressures. That link with the past, once made, is hard to break. And the Jew related to his Jewish past will more likely relate to his present Jewish community.

(Quoted from the homepage of the Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies: http://www.jewishgen.org/ajgs/ajgs-about-ajgs.html)

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (PART 1):

If you're just getting started researching your Jewish family history, you should definitely begin by reading either Arthur Kurzweil's *From Generation to Generation: How to Trace your Jewish Genealogy and Personal History*, or Dan Rottenberg's *Finding Our Fathers: A Guidebook to Jewish Genealogy*. These two were the pioneering works that helped inspire the modern Jewish genealogical movement, in the late 1970s. Both books are great inspiration for beginners. However, some of their sources are out-of-date.

Start with what you know. Work from the known to the unknown, one small step at a time. Work backwards from the present, gathering facts as you go.

- Interview your relatives. Write or talk to your family members. Ask them about family names, where they lived, when they immigrated, what town they came from.
- Check the US Federal Census. Taken every 10 years. The 1920 Census is the most recent available, fully indexed. Available at the US National Archives and all 13 branches, and at many libraries.
- Check other records: City Directories; Birth, Marriage and Death records; Naturalization records;
   Passenger Lists; Probate records; deeds, etc.
- Coordinate with other genealogists researching the same family names and towns—consult the JewishGen Family Finder.
- Join a Jewish Genealogical Society
- Attend a Summer Seminar on Jewish Genealogy

(Quoted from the JewishGen document, "Frequently Asked Questions" by Warren Blatt: http://www.jewishgen.org/faqinfo.html)



# Gombin Jewish Historical &

### GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Preisdent: Harold Boll Secretary: Noam Lupu Treasurer: Leon Zamosc

**Board of Directors:** Harold Boll, Noam Lupu, Mindy Prosperi, Gayle Sciacca, Craig Weinstein, Jeffrey Wruble and Leon Zamosc **Annual Meeting Committee:** Harold Boll

and Mindy Prosperi

**Newsletter Committee:** Gideon Carmi, Ada Holtzman, Noam Lupu, Gail Salomon, Gayle

Sciacca and Leon Zamosc

# **Jewish Heritage Tour**

Gayle Frankel Sciacca is organizing a Jewish Heritage Tour to Germany and Poland in June 1997. If anyone is interested in joining her group and would like a flyer with details, contact her at 3705 SW Quail Meadow Trail, Palm City, FL 34990 or by email at carl1228@aol.com.

### **Notice**

The staff of B'NAI GOMBIN would like to apologize for a misunderstanding regarding the last issue. The purpose of restoring the Gombin Jewish cemetery is that of the GJGHS and not of the Gombiner Young Men of New Jersey. For future notice, ideas expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Gombin Society.

The Gombin Society - G.J.H.G.S. P.O. Box 503052 San Diego, CA 92150

TO: