

# DAYBREAK



### < Date with Oscar

The Academy Awards will air on the last weekend in February rather than move to an earlier date. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced Tuesday that next year's ceremony will be held Feb. 26, the same Sunday as most other recent Oscar shows.

Perry Farrell announces lineup for 20th anniversary Lollapalooza **Page F4**



Pictured here are Israel Hyman Mandel and Dora Lubcansky Mandel, who were married in 1912 in Norwich.



The Mandels are shown here with their children, Mischa, Philip, and Fagie, who were all born in Norwich.

Marcia Meyers, who lost many family members in the Holocaust, including her aunt, Sofie Serwer, and Serwer's three children (pictured below), Matylde, Dora and Henia, recently discovered several living relatives through her research at the Godfrey Library.



## When two lines intersect

### Geneological research at Godfrey Library introduces family to family

By **AMY J. BARRY**  
Special to the Day

It's Holocaust Remembrance Day—Yom Hashoah in Hebrew—marking the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, during World War II. It is an internationally recognized commemoration of the six million Jews killed in Nazi-occupied Europe and all those who suffered, fought and died.

Many Jewish families became separated before and after the Holocaust and lost track of relatives in Europe, not knowing whether they survived or perished. But with advances in information gathering, it's more possible than ever for family members to trace their ancestry.

Right nearby in Middletown, there's a

premiere resource for researching one's past at the Godfrey Memorial Library.

The Godfrey is one of few private libraries in the country open to the public that makes geneological and historical resources available to everyone on a national and international level, says director James Benn, a Hadlyme resident, who describes the library as "one of the best-kept secrets in Connecticut."

The Godfrey is home to the American Geneological Biographical Index (AGBI), which includes 200,000 books and periodicals. Also housed at the Godfrey is the library collection of The Jewish Geneological Society of Connecticut (JGSCT).

The library's Scholar Program, implemented in 2002, includes thousands of databases, which people can access (for a modest fee) to do research online.

There are a number of reasons it's particularly challenging for Jews to research their heritage, Benn explains.

"Mistakes crept into family stories over generations because maps changed so many times that families think they came from one country, which became another

country," he says. "Also there was the butchering of names of people who came to the U.S. through Ellis Island ... and destruction of historical records in Europe."

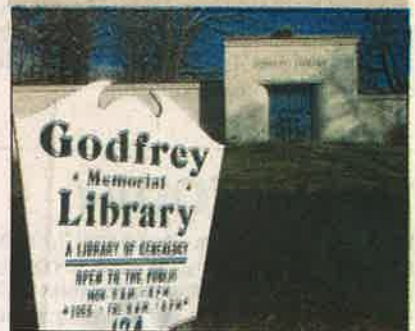
Benn thinks providing resources for people to research their genealogy is important because, "People want to make a connection to the past and the best way to do that is through your own family," he says. "Everyone's family has a story about how their ancestors came to this country, and what they endured, so we can enjoy the easy living that we have today."

#### Searches and unexpected surprises

Marcia Meyers, a Godfrey Library board member and a member of JGSCT, has spent almost 60 years trying to find out what happened to her grandmother and aunts—research she began at just 11 years old because she was always curious to learn more about her relatives. Besides knowing they were killed in the Holocaust, Meyers hasn't turned up the information

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The Godfrey Memorial Library is at 134 Newfield St., Middletown. For more information, call (860) 346-4375 or visit [www.godfrey.org](http://www.godfrey.org). For more information about the Jewish Geneological Society, visit [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org).



# Library offers trove of family research tools

## FROM F1

she hoped for, but she hasn't given up, especially now as more research tools become available.

"To not know is difficult," she says. "I wish I had asked my mother more questions when she was alive."

Meyers suggests that people write down/record stories of their elderly relatives before it's too late to get that information.

But Meyers's genealogical research bore other unexpected fruit. Her unusual maiden name, Indianer,

common in Galicia, where her family is from, led her to 150 other Indianers living in this country and Israel. Family members have traveled from near and far to attend reunions (three to date) at a resort in West Virginia.

Referring to the first reunion Meyers says, "When I saw everybody there, I just looked around the room and thought, 'Wow!' It was very emotional. I felt a real sense of connection, of family."

A member of Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek in Chester, Meyers also helped

a fellow congregant, George Amarante, find an Israeli cousin he didn't know was alive. Amarante's cousin had been rescued with other Jewish children from an orphanage in Europe by a Greek archbishop.

"It was nice to know there were relatives still alive — most of my relatives were killed in the Holocaust — and to have some connection to the past," Amarante says.

Deborah Mandel, Benn's wife, has her own story of genealogical research, going back eight generations, including her children.

Mandel says that besides four who managed to escape, all the relatives on her paternal side (more than 30) were killed in Torczyn (in the Ukraine) in 1942 when they were forced to dig their own graves before being shot by Nazis.

Her grandfather, Israel Hyman Mandel, had come to this country alone in 1906, at the age of 16, in search of a better life. A tailor, he opened his own shop in Norwich and over the years became very involved in the New London and Norwich communities.

In 1938, Mandel says, her grandfather returned to Poland with enough money to try to get the large family out of the country, but they wouldn't leave their home, unable to fathom that the war would affect them so severely five years later.

About 15 years ago, a cousin of Mandel's named Abe Seidman of Pennsylvania, whom Mandel had never met, started doing family genealogy that led him to discover that another cousin, Dick Moiel from Texas, had done an extensive family tree, which eventually connected

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