

Man uncovers family history through use of Internet

by Terence L. Day

Thanks to computer technology and other modern conveniences, it's never been easier to publish a family history, but don't tell that to Lionel Traubman of San Mateo, Calif., who still is recovering his health after publishing an extraordinary book on the Oreckovsky Family.

Traubman published *The Oreckovsky Family: From Russia to America* last year. His history begins with Abraham and Hykeh Oreckovsky, who ran a honey and wax business in the tiny Ukrainian village of Revutskoye, now Dobrovelichkovka, during the early 19th century.

In the incredibly brief span of two years, Traubman found what he believes are 95 percent or more of the couple's descendants from six children, and published his book, all this while pursuing his pediatric dentistry practice in San Francisco.

Eight generations of Oreckovskys and associated lines produced about 900 individuals and about 500 marriages. Traubman conducted so many telephone interviews he developed neck problems from cradling his telephone between ear and shoulder.

He researched by letters, faxes and electronic mail. He probed archives and libraries. He scoured city directories and reeled his way through countless spools of microfilmed census records.

Traubman was a man possessed - possessed of a powerful love for family and a great need to know his roots, to know the story of his family.

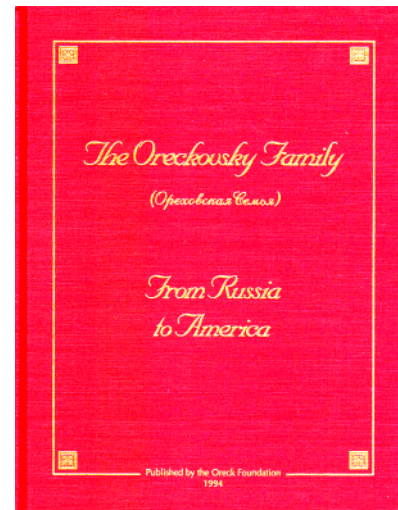
"I embarked on this realizing that the elders with their knowledge would soon be gone, my own character and soul had been forged in great part by the people and their stories, and if I didn't do it, it looked as if it would never be done. The story would be lost for all time. I could not tolerate that possibility," Traubman said.

He had been keeping family information, photos, memorabilia and old interview notes on scraps of paper for 30 years, since he was a young man in his 20s. But it was a New Year's Eve party that made a genealogist of Traubman. Someone mentioned computer software for genealogy. Traubman quickly bought Personal Ancestral File and began entering names, dates, places and narratives.

"Within a few months, my goal became to write a book," Traubman said. "It was as if a mission had been handed to me.

Traubman linked with a Ukrainian journalist who collaborated on the Oreckovsky research, which was soon flying over the Internet. Besides preserving the story of his family, his genealogical project has helped heal family wounds.

One of Traubman's relatives, now 70 years old, fathered a daughter out of wedlock nearly 40 years ago and had no contact with her. In the course of research Traubman asked him to contact his daughter for information.



“When he contacted her it was a very moving thing because she was deeply interested in the book and in this part of the story which was unknown to her before,” Traubman said. Father and daughter have since been reunited.

Not all of Traubman’s experiences were happy ones, however. Some family members were upset when he inquired about failed marriages and other unflattering aspects of their lives, and refused cooperation. But in all, Traubman says, the experience was a highly positive one.

“I do believe ... the soul wants to know its story,” Traubman said. The Oreckovsky family story is as remarkable as the family, yet theirs is a story shared at some point by nearly all Americans. The Oreckovskys immigrated to America for opportunity and found it in varying degrees.

Traubman’s book contains at least 200 pictures, maps and reproductions of birth certificates and other documents, all printed on archival-quality paper and bound in hard cover so it will last for hundreds of years.

There is nothing literary about The Oreckovsky Family. It was computer-generated with GenBook software and employs a style promoted by the National Genealogical Society, yet it conveys a human story so powerful, literary graces aren’t needed.

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