Archives in Stone:
Documenting Collective Memory in Chicago Jewish Cemeteries

Lorraine Madway
Midwest Archives Conference
Bloomington, Illinois
Spring 2006
Cemeteries as Social Theatre

“Here is a tribe of stones, a people of stones, an obstinate tribe which is ever marching and calling voicelessly. Against the background of native grasses [and] trees, … exotic Hebrew letters are still talking about those who lived here and passed away.”

-Anna Kamienska, *Time of Stones*
Archives & Collective Memory

- Memory as place, thing or process
- Pioneering work of Maurice Halbwachs
- Key aspects of collective memory:
  - Contextual
  - Dynamic
  - Cognitive and affective
- Kaleidoscopic nature of archival records
Cemeteries as “Living” Archival Landscapes

- Both grand and intimate
- Evoking loss and transcendence
- Meeting place for the living and the dead, the material and the spiritual
- What particular conversations are going on in a Jewish cemetery?
Expressing Religious and Cultural Identity

- The essential nature of the question
- Decoding the responses on
  - Grave Markers: photo images, engraved images and inscriptions
  - Arches, Gates and Fences
  - Mausoleums
Grave Markers

- Porcelain photo images
  - Religious Ashkenazi Jews
  - Recent Russian immigrants

- Engraved Images
  - Sephardic visual display
  - Combining religious and secular imagery
  - Secular-political and aesthetic imagery

- Inscriptions
  - Traditional religious texts
  - Yiddish texts-reworking traditional beliefs

- The marker itself
Photo Image-Religious Ashkenazi Jewish Man

Lazarus
1811-1918
Photo Image—Religious Ashkenazi Jewish Man

Abraham Goldman
1873-1942
Eynykh Genikhovichich
1912-2004
Engraved Image—Sephardic visual display of religious images
Engraved Image—Sephardic display combining religious and secular images

Sarah Amado
1922-1941
Close-up pf text expressing religious struggle to accept early death

You were born in May
When flowers are in bloom,
and just like a flower,
You vanished so soon.
Your troubles began
at the age of nine.
Just when you thought,
that this world was so fine.
For ten long years
you suffered much pain,
Science and medicine
they were in vain.
You have never reproached
you have never complained.
You have always managed
to smile again and again.

Your sister and brother,
your mother and I
Often have asked the question
Why?
Why you had to suffer,
why you had to die?
On a memorable day
as the 4th Of July.
But who are we to question
the will from above?
Maybe he needed an angel
so pure and full of love.
You will be remembered by many
Forgotten by few
But our heart’s and thoughtswill always be with you.

(Father)
Engraved Image-Sephardic display combining religious and secular motifs

Sarah Amado
1922-1941
Engraved Image—combining mostly religious with secular motifs

Abraham Goldman
1873-1942
Engraved Image - Jewish workers insignia

Image depicts a farmer with a sickle and a worker with a hammer in a triangle that also contains a Star of David.
Engraved Image—Close-up view of Jewish workers insignia
Engraved Image-Secular aesthetic display

A relief entitled “Destiny” of an artist working on a sculpture

David Henner, sculptor
1898-1925
Engraved Image - close up of “Destiny” sculpture by David Henner
Photo Image of David Henner, the sculptor, at work
Inscriptions - Texts incorporating biblical verses
Inscriptions-close up of the texts, using Proverbs (l.) and Ecclesiastes (r.)

BELOVED MOTHER
MAZAL TOV
MIZRAHIMIZRAHIDIED FEB. 17, 1941
AGE 69 YRS.

BELOVED FATHER
YOMTOV
MIZRAHIMIZRAHIDIED SEPT. 2, 1939
AGE 75 YRS.
Inscription- Yiddish poem reinterpreting traditional religious beliefs

Chaim Simon,
Yiddish poet
Grave marker itself—shaped like a book to honor a poet

Isaac Rosenfeld. Writer, 1918-1956
Arches reminiscent of Eastern European towns
Tile arch reminiscent of southeastern European towns
Stone arch reminiscent of Central and Eastern European towns
Portuguese Israelite Cemetery fence
Portuguese Israelite Cemetery fence: separated but not separate
Balaban Mausoleum
Concluding remarks

“Show me your cemeteries, and I will tell you what kind of people you have.”

Attributed to Benjamin Franklin