Join Time Sifters in February as we look at two painful periods in Lithuanian history.

As a prelude to our main lecture, Dr. Bernice Jones will depart from her career in ancient Greek art and archaeology to relate the story of her grandmother Jenny (Zlata). Mother of three toddlers, she survived oppression, persecution, and abject poverty in a shtetl in wartime Lithuania/Poland. She ultimately brought her children to freedom in America. The story is set against the background of WWI, the Russian Revolution and civil war.

John Jaffer's presentation will review what is known about tragic events in Gargzdai, Lithuania during WWII. Two days after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the Germans executed 200 Jewish men in this border town. This may be regarded as the start of the Holocaust. The town's Jewish women and children were held prisoner until September, 1941, and then shot in a nearby forest. The brutal execution of the women and children was conducted by Lithuanian personnel.

In the late 1950’s, a West German court convicted ten defendants as accessories to the killing of more than 5000 Lithuanian Jewish civilians near the border. Information available subsequently both amplifies and questions some findings of the court. Evidence has also come to light about the killing of the women and children of Gargzdai, about which little was known at the trial.

Jaffer first visited Gargzdai in 2001 in the course of investigating his own family history and has returned two additional times to continue the study the town’s history. Since 2002 he has authored a website about the town on behalf of www.jewishgen.org. Jaffer is an attorney practicing in Sarasota and is a graduate of Harvard Law School and Harvard College.

Please note that the material in this lecture may be upsetting to some people.