Case of the Lost (and Found) Tombstone!

By ALBERT W. BLOOM Executive Editor of The Chronicle

The case of the lost (and found) tombstone — a 76-year mystery!

There is a one year old Abram Harris died on the 23rd day of Menachem-Av 5656, corresponding to August 1, 1896. Seventy-six years and two tombstones later, Jewish concern sparked an investigation that is not yet finished, and may not ever be.

It began simply enough, but before it ended, or, rather, reached a hiatus if not an ending, it involved a whole spectrum of people and institutions, and respect for the unknown departed.

Greensburg's Robert Davis, of 35 Westmoreland Avenue, was the man who rescued the tombstone, at first believed to be one vandalized from a Jewish cemetery one knew not where.

Visions of the desecrated Mount of Olives in Jerusalem rose before the protagonists of this story — when Arab Jordanians tore out the gravestones and used them for building walls, to walk upon with muddy feet, to build latrines.

It demonstrates how in Jewish history — ancient and contemporary — the twain do meet, and the gut-wrenching churn in Pittsburgh and Greensburg because of events 7,000 miles away, past and present.

It all started simply enough.

Eddie Steinfield, sometime actor and all-time Histradut fanatic, passed along the word, to his Boxer, Pan, near here, to check on the possible interest of Apple Hill Plunkett in his "Fiddler on the Roof" vignette of Tevye the Milkman. Syvia, his wife, went, him with them.

They drove up to the summer theater place.

"It was closed," Eddie said.

"So I went across the way about 30 feet to what looked like an inhabited inhabited cottage, near a big house.

I knocked on the door, a little house, I went up to knock it down on the step in front. "There was a little tombstone, with Hebrew lettering, things-done-without-fuss-or-fanfare type of fellow.

"My foot stopped in mid-stone," I thought about Israel and the cemetery in Jerus..."