

Dreaming of America—Dreaming in America

In our family, our Japanese American grandchildren, raised on foreign soil, have voyaged to America. Without their parents, 13 and 15 years old, they have traveled alone, determined to follow the American dream. In the custom of our ancestors, without the English language or an understanding of American culture, they have set out to become a new generation of pioneers.

The periods of our personal history are bound with the history of the United States. No genealogist studies his or her family in isolation. We are part of the living thread of historical events. Taken together, genealogy and history breathe life into the stories we tell.

Religious freedom was an impelling force in the settlement of the Eastern seaboard: the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island lured not only pilgrims but early Jewish settlers. The movement of settlement into Ohio Territory and the crossing of the Mississippi in the 1830s—the trails across the Appalachians—opened the West to Jewish merchants. Persecutions, war and economic devastation in the 1840s led not only the Irish but Jews from Germany to settle in New York, to move gradually to the South, and to pioneer the Midwest. Gold and silver spurred wagons west. Trade in California took merchants and merchandise around the Horn to supply the 49ers.

One only has to read the letters sent home by the adventurous to their families in Philadelphia, South Carolina and Georgia to see how Jewish traditions in one part of the country affected the other. Solomon Nunes Carvalho (pronounced Cavayo in Portuguese) was born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1815 into a Jewish family of Spanish-Portuguese descent. During the winter of 1853-54, Carvalho accompanied the explorer, John C. Frémont, on his fifth and final journey across the Rockies through the territories of Kansas, Colorado, and Utah searching for a railroad route to the Pacific. Carvalho, stranded in Los Angeles, helped form the Jewish community based on Southern Sephardic traditions.

The fate of Czar Alexander II that led to the 1881 pogroms in the Pale of Settlement forced an endless stream of Eastern European Jews to enter the ports of

New York, Boston, Galveston and Baltimore. Economic conditions in Germany after the First World War and the rise of Hitler created an unsettling crisis of conscience. The holocaust brought a new wave of immigrants to our shores.

For the Jewish immigrant, there was no turning back. They came in ships. They came rich and poor. They brought their customs and their trunks. Mothers followed fathers, old followed young, newlyweds started their life's voyage at sea, women traveled alone with children from places with names hard to spell. Despite the tears of the ones they left behind, or the warnings that America would destroy their Orthodox religious way of life, they came to stay.

America has never been easy on the newly arrived but survival has been in the Jewish psyche from the beginning. The pressure to create Jewish spaces—the pressure to succeed—the pressure to educate the children—*Tzedakah* to raise the standard of life in the community, these values they brought with them and planted in American soil.

Assimilation and acceptance, community, poverty and charity, invention, governance and politics, religion—all these old world and new world collisions are the immigrants' dilemma individually faced with each rising day and long after the children are asleep.

We, as Jews, have not only followed the American dream, we have added to the principles and goals of American life at every important step and phase of her historical life. When Asser Levy and Jacob Barsimon fought the intolerance of Pieter Stuyvesant and the Dutch government, they demanded, and won, the right to bear arms and the right to own property. They were making a statement of the living Torah: a human being has the right to a vision, the right of justice, the right to equality under the law, the right to voice the human concern. They were defending the humanness in us: the what is right for one is right for all. What inspires us—what creates us—what we become—is our gift of life to the new world. As citizens we are bound together to respect that space of the American dream as we come together on her soil.

I wish to thank Rabbi Bob Levy for the inspiration that has brought this issue to fruition.

Each year, I spend the High Holidays in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The family service at Temple Beth Emeth is simple and beautiful. The warmth of the children's voices, the young people's inclusion in the celebration, and the passion of Rabbi Bob Levy has been the inspiration for two issues of Roots-Key. As in the past, his words have strengthened my dedication to our ancestral connections. He started me thinking about "The Jewish in Jewish Genealogy" which led to the Winter 2003 issue. And his talk celebrating "350 Years of Jews in America," last fall, gave me the idea that sparked the creation of this issue.

Nancy Holden-Editor

2005 JGSLA Board

President
Nancy Holden
Roots-Key Editor
First Vice President-Programs
Pamela Weisberger
Second Vice President
Bobby Furst
Chief Financial Officer
Nancy Biederman
Corresponding Secretary
Hale Porter
Recording Secretary
Marion Diamond

Dreaming of America-Dreaming in America.

- 1 Editor's Notes
- 3 With Bands Playing and Rockets Glare by David Fox *JGSLA*
- 4 350 Years of Jewish Experience by Rabbi Thomas Louckheim
- 6 Go West Young Man by Nancy Holden *JGSLA*
- 7 The American Dream: Short Pieces by Jane Neff Rollins *JGSLA*
- 8 The Tale of a Tailor by Bunny Levine *JGSLA*
- 8 My Father, the Cowboy by Budd Levine *JGSLA*
- 9 The Sephardim in Colonial America by Bob Hattem
- 13 "The Book" quote from *The Grantees* by Stephen Birmingham
- 14 It Runs in the Family Funnily by Darla Stone
- 15 Farming in Wyoming at the Turn of the Century. Andrea Massion *JGSLA*
- 16 Solomon Star by Lew Holzman *JGSLA*
- 18 Henry Cohn: Gold Rush Pioneer by Arnold Zweig
- 19 From Trebisov to Mars in Two Generations by Stephanie Nordlinger, *JGSLA*
- 20 From Rags to Riches: by Ruth Glosser *JGSLA*
- 24 How Our Great Grandfather Won the Civil War for the North by Paul King
- 29 Milt Gabler, Storekeeper of the Jazz World by David Hoffman *JGSLA*
- 31 And That as They Say is History: The Straus Family by Joan Adler
- 33 Last Will and Testament: The Hymes-Prince Family by Judy Archer
- 35 Jewish Identity and Southern Culture: Bibliographic Essay by Patrick Reed
- 41 A Sock in the Foot is Worth Two in the Jaw by Judith Berlowitz
- 44 Nathan Feldman: Number Four by Ellen Stepak
- 45 I Pledge Allegiance to My Flag by Ann Harris *JGSLA*
- 46 Becoming an American by Hal Bookbinder *JGSLA*
- 46 Miriam Kantor Survives the Sinking of the Titanic
- 47 Thankful Eyes are Sparkling by Mary Kasindorf
- 48 Mary Kasindorf by David Hoffman *JGSLA*
- 49 Sid Kasindorf and the Nazi U-Boats by David Hoffman *JGSLA*
- 50 Searching for Schulman by Vicki Tashman *JGSLA*
- 51 Remembering Stone Street Hill: The War Years by Carol Nahin *JGSLA*
- 54 From the Scrap Business to the Rag Trade by Barry Seltzer *JGSLA*
- 55 An American Rabbi: The Life of Rabbi Nathan Tauber by Larry Tauber
- 61 In the Air as War Begins: A Flyer's Letter Home by Arthur Hoffman
- 64 An America Hero: Varian Fry
- 65 The 350th Anniversary of New York's First Jewish Settlers by Harry Macy
- 68 Membership Meeting December 1, 2005 at the Skirball Cultural Center
- 68 Facts from the Stacks by Barbara Algaze *JGSLA*

Library Acquisitions
Marion Werle
New Member Services
Harold Greenberg
Dates and Updates Editor
Hal Bookbinder
Publicity
Ann Harris
Website Editor
David Hoffman
Past President
Sonia Hoffman

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles, founded in May 1979, now has 600 members. Meetings are held the third Monday evening of each month and four per year on Sunday afternoons. Guests are welcome. There are two meetings each year at the LDS Family History Center where members have exclusive use of the facility. For schedules, call JGSLA or visit our website.

Annual dues are \$25 or \$30 for two family members in the same household. Membership includes a subscription to *Roots-Key*, the quarterly journal of the JGSLA, and *Dates and Updates*, the monthly meeting notice, along with other occasional general interest electronic and postal mailings.

Roots-Key back issues are available for \$5.00 each. For changes of address please notify: Bobby Furst (818) 771-5554 email: bobby1st@sprynet.com

ROOTS-KEY Needs a New EDITOR

*****Call 626-441-3729***Email nholden@interserv.com*****

The Rockets Red Glare

By David Fox

It all started by accident.

One day, in 1989, my wife, my mother and father, and I went to visit my 89 year-old great-aunt, Aunt Sonia (nee Feitelson), the youngest of my grandmother Gitel's siblings and the last surviving member of that generation, lived by herself in a rent controlled apartment near Central Park in New York City. Very Americanized, she read the *New York Times* daily and was up to date on world affairs. Her apartment was nicely furnished with special family mementos, photos, and items from her travels to Europe with her late husband. There was a huge Russian samovar in her dining room. During our visit Aunt Sonia started to reminisce about her childhood in Mogilev and her travel to the United States.

As she started to talk about my great grandfather, Marcus Feitelson, who had first come to the United States in 1891, I did not want to stop her. And yet, I *did* want to stop her because I had recently bought my first VHS video camera, the big old ones not the new ones that fit in the palm of your hand. Before she could get into her story about her father making repeated round trips back to Mogilev, and fathering new children and bringing other children back to the United States, I asked her if she would mind if I video-recorded what she was saying. Aunt Sonia loved to relate her stories and readily agreed. I set her up in a comfortable chair and I put the camera on my shoulder. Ninety minutes later she was still talking and my arm and shoulder felt like they were falling off.

For that time in Russia, the Feitelsons were considered a well-off family. Her mother ran a meat business that provided meat to the Czar's Army. During the pogroms in Mogilev her family was offered protection in the home of government officials. However, her mother

(my great-grandmother) was a proud woman who told the government official that she would rather be in her own home with her own people. Fortunately, the family was not harmed in the pogrom. Marcus Feitelson and his older children had become United States citizens before 1900. Sonia, her mother and her sisters came to join their father in 1910. They did *not* travel on the ship in steerage! She showed me the photo of the family on the deck of the ship. Born in 1900, she was ten years old when she arrived in New York. The bands were playing gladly and fireworks lighted the sky. America, that great land, was

welcoming her to her new home. The voyage made such a great impression that she still remembered the name of the ship's captain and maintained that he had a crush on her 16-year-old sister (my grandmother). The friendly Russian ship captain supplied my great-grandfather with Russian cigarettes on his trips to New York.

Many family members never immigrated to the United States and my great-aunt had tears in her eyes when she related how most of them perished in the



On the deck of the *Lituania*, July 1910, Front, Harry and Sonia Fytelson; rear, unknown cousin, Rachel, Golde and Gittel Fytelson (Feitelson, Faitelson).

"Great Patriotic War."

Marcus was a jeweler and made frequent trips back to Russia after the 1917 Revolution to bring back some of the Czar's jewels to sell in the United States. The proceeds were used to support the new Communist government. During the short period when Leon Trotsky was living in New York City, great-grandfather played pinochle with him and Trotsky held my mother who was a baby in his lap.

That afternoon in 1989 so inspired me, hearing our family history like that, I started documenting my family genealogy. I joined the JGSGW, subscribed to Jewish

genealogy publications, expanded my personal library with lots of books, and got a software program. One of the early documents I was able to find, after many hours at the National Archives, was the ship manifest showing Aunt Sonia, her siblings, and mother arriving in New York in Second Class on July 4th, 1910. Sonia's personal welcome was a fourth of July celebration in New York City. When I showed her the manifest she laughed and laughed.

What better day to come to the United States for the first time! □

350 YEARS OF AMERICAN JEWISH EXPERIENCE

by Rabbi Thomas Louchheim
Congregation Or Chadash: Tucson, Arizona

Reprinted with permission—Rosh HaShanah Service September 15, 2004

5765 Rosh HaShanah

During Passover especially, we recall: *We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord our God brought us out from there with a strong hand and outstretched arm.* During that enslavement, we learned about the hardships of servitude. As a free people, we learned the responsibilities of liberty and freedom. Our thousands of years of history have taught us the need to be spiritually strong, morally courageous, and physically secure—ever devoted to freedom not only for ourselves, but for all people.

In America, we Jews have been uniquely blessed with this freedom and this responsibility. As Jews, this year and this month, around the country, we celebrate our 350th anniversary here in America.

In early September 1654, 350 years ago, 23 Recife Jews were to become the first Jewish community in North America. Within the next century, other Jewish communities arose in Newport and Philadelphia in the North, and in Richmond, Savannah and Charleston in the South. From that moment until today, American Jews have been part of the American story—a story marked by idealism, sacrifice for freedom, and an increasing respect for human dignity here and around the world. We, sitting here this evening, are ever grateful for their contribution to liberty, culture and democracy. In 1790, President George Washington welcomed Jews as fellow citizens of a nation where "all possess alike liberty of conscience" under a government which "gives to bigotry no sanction." Drawing on the words of the Hebrew prophet, Micah, he wrote: *May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of other inhabitants, while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid.* This religious freedom, and civil liberty, which George Washington so carefully spelled out in his letter, has

been a beacon for Jews from the seventeenth century to today. From this freedom we have developed a unique American Jewish identity.

At the 250th anniversary of our settling here President Theodore Roosevelt wrote, on November 16, 1905. . . *while the Jews of the United States, who now number more than a million, have remained loyal to their faith and their race traditions, they have become indissolubly incorporated in the great army of American citizenship, prepared to make all sacrifice for the country, either in war or peace, and striving for the perpetuation of good government and for the maintenance of the principles embodied in our Constitution. They are honorably distinguished by their industry, their obedience to law, and their devotion to the national welfare. They are . . . advancing the interests of our common country.* And in the advancements of "the interests of our common country," American Jews have certainly done much. We often think of the contribution of individuals. As the nation developed, so too did the Jewish Americans make their individual contributions serving as mayors, military officers, journalists, physicians and educators, dedicated to the democratic values of their new homeland.

Examples include:

Jacob I. Cohen (1744-1823), a German immigrant to Philadelphia; he enrolled in the Northern District City Guards in 1777 and fought in the South Carolina campaign of the Revolutionary War. Merchant, frontier developer (he hired Daniel Boone to survey for him), Revolutionary War patriot and observant Jew.

Haym Solomon, a great patriot and a financier of the American Revolution who extended credit without interest to members of the Continental Congress.

Mordecai Manual Noah (1785-1851), appointed Consul to Tunis by President James Madison during the War of 1812. He was the first Jew to fill a high diplomatic

post. By the way, as some of you know, besides Henry Kissinger, who filled the highest post in the State Department under President Nixon in the 1970s, my cousin, Katie Louchheim, was the highest ranking woman in the State Department serving presidents Kennedy and Johnson as Undersecretary of State.

No less important to Jewish survival here is the relationship cultivated with our Christian neighbors early on. Modern notions of ethnic and religious pluralism were yet unknown in the eighteenth century. There were restrictive Christian oaths effectively excluding Jews from various professions as well as public office. But in other respects, as my professor, Jacob Rader Marcus has shown in his historical works, Jews enjoyed a great deal of equality: . . . *they administered estates, served as guardians, served on juries, marched with the militia.* Some Jews had Christian partners in business; others made Christians executors of their wills. There is much evidence of fraternizing between Jews and Christians during colonial times and in our nation's early years. Certainly there were encounters between Jews and Christians that proved to be less friendly: efforts to convert Jews, displays of anti-Jewish prejudice and violence prevailed in some places and at some times. Yet compared to the situation of Jews in most corners of the world, American Jews were and are well off. In Philadelphia in 1787 at the Constitutional Convention, Article VI of the Constitution made it clear that national office would not be withheld from anyone by virtue of their religion: "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States"—Jews could serve in even the highest office. As we reflect on our country's history, we can easily see that the Jewish contribution to American culture is vast. In the movie industry we recall such figures as: Sam Goldwyn, the Selznicks, William Fox, the Warner Brothers, Louis B. Mayer, and most recently Steven Spielberg and the Coen brothers. In the area of music, we all know well the contribution of Jews to the production of mainstream music in America. Broadway singer Al Jolson became a great success in the 1920s; George and Ira Gershwin wrote some of Broadway's most memorable and influential music. The Broadway musical *Showboat* (1927), written by Jewish composer Jerome Kern, was for many Americans of all backgrounds a nationally defining story, one that dealt with the ever-intensifying issues of race relations and the search for a common American identity. Jews were among the greatest songwriters of the pre-rock era: Jerome Kern, the Gershwins, Oscar Hammerstein, Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, Alan Lerner and Frederick Lowe, and Irving Berlin. Among them, they wrote the songs for practically all the great musicals of the 1930s and '40s. Nor should one forget Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg, who wrote the songs for the greatest of the screen musicals, *The Wizard of Oz*. The contributions of Benny Goodman, Ziggy Elman, and Artie Shaw to the development of the originally

African-American idioms of jazz and big band music worked in tandem with the innovations of non-Jewish musicians to develop a truly American sound. Simon and Garfunkel made marked contributions to the popularization of American folk music, and Jewish artists like Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Barbra Streisand, Mel Brooks, the Marx brothers, and many others have helped to shape the face of musical theater and film. In the areas of science, military, sports, politics, jurisprudence, civil rights and literature, individual contributions are vast as we recall but a few of the names: Louis Brandeis, Albert Einstein, Emma Lazarus, Milton Friedman, Henry Kissinger, Hank Greenberg, Sandy Koufax, Arthur Miller, Hyman Rickover, Carl Sagan—the list goes on and on.

As we have given, so in kind have we received. America, like no other country in the world has given freedom, security, and prosperity to us to an extent unprecedented in our history. Jews living in America are among the wealthiest and most influential in the world, and the most unthreatened of Jewish communities in history.

But beyond the individuals, American Judaism has had its influence on modern American culture. And it is as a community rather than as individuals that we have truly accomplished the most. In the latter part of the nineteenth century Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise determined that a union of the disparate Jewish communities would be a good idea. He formed the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873 to bring together all Jewish congregations, and Hebrew Union College in 1875 to train rabbis to serve all sectors of society. Though this vision never materialized (with the huge immigration of the 1880s, the disparities among the Jewish communities were too vast), these institutions have helped provide the foundation for the Reform movement here. In 1886, Sabato Morais of Philadelphia established the Jewish Theological Seminary, "an opposition seminary" to HUC in an effort to champion "enlightened traditionalism." In 1895, the Union Prayer Book was published in English with its clear universal themes. With the arrival of Romanian-born scholar, Solomon Schechter in 1902, Conservative Judaism began to thrive. The United Synagogue (later United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism) was formed in 1913. The movement became bound to the Talmud and historical evolution. This gave rise to an even more conservative wing and the establishment of the Orthodox Union in the early part of the century.

By 1920 there were three and a half million Jews in the United States, making up three and a half percent of the population and 23 percent of the world Jewish population. Social action was, and is, a vital element of American Judaism, and is especially particular to Reform Judaism, shown well by the level of involvement by Jews in the black civil rights movement. In 1961 the Reform Movement urged its members to become involved in

Freedom Rides, which were started to integrate buses and bus stops in the South. In 1963 Martin Luther King and Abraham Joshua Heschel began their famed relationship, with King often referring to Heschel as "my Rabbi." Many of the famous photographs of King marching were with this famous rabbi.

By the 1960s and '70s American Judaism no longer reflected an immigrant mentality of those seeking to adjust to American life, as they did in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Forty years ago American Judaism brought a new focus to our Jewish communities. There was a desire for religious revival; a spiritual searching for meaning. This not only gave rise to cults like the Unification Church, the Hare Krishnas and Jim Jones, but also to the Jewish Renewal and Chavurah movements. The 1967 Six Day War led to the hiring of Israeli teachers in our religious schools, the emphasis on the study of the modern state of Israel and Hebrew, the expansion of Jewish studies programs at universities, the explosion of the number of Jewish day schools in this country, and the rise in the number of trips Americans (Jews and Gentiles) were making to Israel.

But along with great success, come great challenges. As American Jews have become acculturated, this has led to greater assimilation and a move away from institutional Judaism. Just the term "institutional Judaism" is alienating. We are the first generation of Jews who now are making really free choices about whether to belong to a Jewish institution or not. Where a generation ago, intermarriage occurred in only 20 percent of marriages involving a Jewish partner, that figure today is 60 percent in some places. Where a generation ago Jewish immigrants were struggling for survival and only found haven within the Jewish community, the need to be part of a cultural group is no longer considered necessary as Jews have assimilated into American society.

Rabbi David Ellenson, President of HUC-JIR, in a recent article in *The Forward*, has written: *American Judaism stands at a crossroads, where trends of weakened Jewish commitments and attachments compete with pockets of intense Jewish revival and knowledge.* The result is that today we are witness to a decline in faith, home observance, and synagogue affiliation. The best architects design our weekend homes, but fewer of us have seen the stars through the roof of a *sukkah*. Our children attend Harvard, Yale, MIT and Columbia; but when it comes to the history, teachings and rituals of our people, we know that they—and we—are illiterate.

The answer in my mind is simple. First, let us, as a community, be ever thankful of our American roots and our religious heritage. We are proud to be Americans who can freely observe our religion in this great country. Let us also reaffirm our reverence for justice, freedom and equality and respect for diversity which are values coming both from our religious teachings and the power of our American Constitution.

We must be thankful for our past—that history helps us embrace our future. From Egyptian enslavement, from the escape from Brazilian persecution, to the freedom we love in this country, we are blessed with renewed responsibilities on this Rosh HaShanah.

May we continue to prove worthy of God's continued blessing. May we be imbued with faith, compassion, and love of life and freedom. Let us be strong and of good courage to not only recall our redemption from slavery in Egypt; but also to understand our obligation as Americans and as Jews to bring peace and redemption in our generation and teach those values to our children.

Cain Y'hi Ratzon: "May this be God's will"—and ours in the year to come.

Have a sweet and healthy New Year.

Rabbi Thomas Louchheim

Congregation Or Chadash, Tucson, Arizona □

Go West Young Man

by Nancy Holden

Aba Feinselber was thought to have entered this country illegally and never became a citizen. He was fourteen and the son of a distinguished rabbi in Grodno and the step-brother of my grandmother. Once in this country, he fell in love with it. In 1898 he joined up to fight in the Spanish American War. He convinced five of his Hurwitz cousins who were living in Ohio, in Illinois and in Massachusetts to join, too. Harry Hurwitz was only 13 at the time! They were off to the Philippines.

When the unit was in Texas, Aba never wanted to leave; and after the war was won, he, once again, left everything behind and married a girl down there. He

bought land on the outskirts of the City of San Antonio and went from dairy cows to overalls to become a wealthy manufacturer and landowner. He remained loyal to his roots, his family, loyal to this new country, and, out of reverence, named his first son after Teddy Roosevelt.

When my grandmother had a stroke and my father was seven, he took them in, in the hopes that the Texas climate would make her well again. My father remembered the long horse and wagon drive to the city in the morning to take the milk to market.

Aba remained an Orthodox Jew in the land of the West!

The American Dream

Short Pieces by Jane Neff Rollins

I All in a Day's Work: Grandma and The Garment Industry

After my grandma, Sophie Klebanskaya, emigrated to Chicago in 1912, her first job was assembling cardboard boxes, for which she was paid \$1.50 a week. Her girl friend kept pestering her to move up to a job in a sweat shop, where she could make \$6.00 a week making shirtwaists (pin-tucked blouses with buttons down the back, buttoned cuffs, and high necks). Although my grandmother's parents had owned a fabric store in Slonim (Belarus), Sophie had never learned to sew because her family was well-off and could afford to buy ready-to-wear clothing. What to do?

Sophie took the streetcar down to Maxwell Street, which was lined with clothing manufacturers. She entered the first one and asked the foreman for a job. "Can you sew?" he demanded. "Yes," she lied. The foreman handed her the pre-cut pieces of a shirtwaist, sat her down at an empty machine and left. Grandma sat down, technologically challenged. The seamstress on her right was sympathetic. "Let me help you thread the needle," she offered. She showed grandma how to align two pieces of fabric together and lower the presser foot. But when

Grandma set her foot to the treadle, she promptly sewed straight across the middle of both fabric pieces! The foreman fired her.

Sophie promptly strode to the next sweat shop and asked for a job. "Can you sew?" "Sure, I can." She sat down at an empty machine, deftly threaded the needle, sewed a fine seam, and looked around, lost. The worker on her left offered to show her how to make a cuff. But the mentor had to go back to her own work and Sophie didn't know how to set in the sleeve. Again, she was fired!

Determined to succeed, Sophie spent all day going from factory to factory, at each one learning to assemble another piece of the blouse. She got fired from eight different jobs, but by the end of the day, she could stitch together an entire garment.

Grandma learned to sew so well that she made all her own clothes until she was into her 80s including the gown she wore to my wedding in 1982. She also made a wondrous wardrobe for my Ginny doll, including a tiny, pin-tucked shirtwaist. Thank you Grandma! □

II Becoming an American: An Aerial View

My grandfather's cousin, Bernard Sicoff (originally Benyamin Zeilikovich), apparently arrived in the US from Tiraspol, Moldova in 1912. When he was drafted to serve during World War I, because he had been a photographer (as had his father before him), he was assigned to an aerial photography unit, and served in Europe—presumably in the Army Air Corps. Aerial photographers flew in fragile looking aircraft called the JN-4 Curtis Jenny. Remember, in 1917, airplanes were not in widespread use, either commercially or militarily. Such military photos

can be researched at National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, DC, but I suspect the pictures are not credited to the individuals who took them. After the war, according to the index for the World War I draft listings, he was naturalized in 1919 at Camp Zachary Taylor near Louisville, Kentucky, perhaps standing under the famous naturalization tree on Lee Street. Since Bernard had no siblings or children to be informants, further research will have to wait until I retire and have endless time to delve further. □

III Sydelle Makes Medical History

My great-aunt, Sydelle Brass (nee Kishinevskaya) is now 104 years old, and still plays The Moonlight Sonata on the piano from memory! Yet when she was born in Chicago in 1901, she was premature, and had not been expected to live. According to family legend, when Sydelle was born in 1901, the incubator had just been invented, and she was the first baby to be treated in it. Sydelle was delivered by Dr. Joseph Bolivar De Lee, the obstetrician who helped found Chicago Lying-In Hospital. He was a pioneer of modern obstetrics, and Chicago Lying-In was the first hospital in the United States to provide maternity care in well equipped sterile rooms. Dr. De Lee later wrote the definitive textbook on

Obstetrics, which was revised and reprinted many times. The Chicago Jewish News considers Dr. De Lee as one of the 100 top Chicago Jews of the 20th century.

Dr. De Lee invented the incubator for premature babies by improving on earlier 19th century designs. He is said to have also invented a portable incubator, a contraption that was about 4 times the size of a modern portable sewing machine. Family legends may be hard to confirm; however, as a medical writer by profession, I thought I could track down some confirmatory information.

Joseph B. De Lee, M.D. of 3632 Prairie Avenue, Chicago, gave a presentation about his new device to

the Chicago Medical Society in December 1901. At that time, he was Professor of Obstetrics, Northwestern University Medical School; Attending Obstetrician of Mercy, Wesley and Provident Hospitals, and Obstetrician of Chicago Lying-In Hospital and Dispensary. He wrote about his invention in the report, *Infant Incubation, with the Presentation of a New Incubator and a Description of the System at the Chicago Lying-In Hospital*. (Chicago Medical Recorder, 1902. 22: 22-40). He stated that he had treated 28 babies in the incubator while perfecting the design during the previous two years, which would have encompassed early 1900 through December 1901.

Sydelle was one of those 28 babies. There is a photo of her, identified as "Baby Nevsky," in an article entitled "Ambulance Incubators Ready for Chicago Babies" in the December 29, 1901 issue of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*.

Dr. De Lee in his paper of 1902 concludes: *Therefore, it cannot be said that the effort to save these infants is not worth making. On the contrary, every protection should be thrown around their delicate lives.*

*Source: <<http://www.neonatology.org/classics/delee/delee.html>> □

The Tale of a Tailor

by Bunny Levine

When my grandparents and their two young children came to the United States from Europe in 1903, they went directly to Chicago. My grandfather, a bookbinder by trade, had a job waiting for him at Rand McNally. He worked only a few days before the union called a strike against the company.

Being new to the country and the language, my grandfather did not know what "strike" meant, so he asked one of this fellow workers. He was told that "strike" meant you do not go to work. So my grandfather did not report for work the next day. At the beginning of the 20th century

unions were not as powerful as they are now. Because my grandfather did not show up for work, he got fired!

Here he was, in a new country, speaking a new language, and with a wife (probably pregnant) and two children to support. Both my grandmother and my grandfather were terribly worried. Out of desperation, my grandmother taught my grandfather how to sew!

For the rest of his life the bookbinder was a tailor, earning enough money to support his wife, their two children and the six more that were born in the United States! □

My Father, the Cowboy

by Budd Levine

My father lived in Chicago as a young man around the later 1890s. When he was in his mid-teens, he earned money breaking in wild horses to be used as saddle horses, which were the main means of transportation at that time. It was tough work. When he would come home after his labors, his mother would soak bread in milk and put it on his buttocks to relieve the pain.

During that period of time the railroads were being expanded from Chicago into Dakota Territory. My father got a job working for the railroad and was sent out to the Dakotas to help lay rails.

The foreman of the rail laying crew took a dislike to him and, after several arguments, my father was fired. The foreman refused to give him transportation back to Chicago.

Not knowing what to do, he got a job working at a nearby cattle ranch. The cowboys working there assumed that he was an inexperienced rider and were always poking fun at him. Then, one day, my father put on an exhibition, riding bareback, and jumping on and off the horse at a full gallop. After that no one made fun of him and he was accepted as one of them.

After a few months, the feud between my father and the foreman cooled off and it was arranged for him to return to Chicago.

As a postscript to this little story, some years later, my father was living in New York City. During a Wild West Show at Madison Square Garden, one of the wild horses escaped and was running down the street.

My father happened to be on that street at that moment! The newspaper account of that incident declared that as the horse ran by, my father leaped up and grabbed the horse's neck and held on until the horse tired and stopped.

For many years, when I was a youngster, I tried to get my father to take me horseback riding in Prospect Park in Brooklyn, where we lived.

My father, the cowboy, always had an excuse for not taking me, so I just have to trust in the belief that the horse stories he told me, and that my father's older brother confirmed, were "wild west yarns" but true! □

The Sephardim in Colonial America 1654-1790

by Bob Hattem

A few years ago, while touring Newport, Rhode Island, I visited the National Historic Site, Jeshuat Israel, better known as the Touro Synagogue. It was a thrill for me to attend services in the oldest synagogue building in America. My visit occurred on the next to last day of Succot, and I was invited to participate in the service. The physical layout of the interior of the synagogue is of traditional Sephardic design with black Windsor chairs on the sides of the room facing the Tevah (reader's desk) and the Ehal up front. The service was Orthodox Ashkenazy—the women entered from a different entrance and sat upstairs.

Introduction

In 1496, soon after Columbus's first voyage to the new world, Spain and Portugal were at odds about colonizing areas of the known world. The Pope called a conference at Tordesillas, Spain, where a treaty was made that divided the known world in half by drawing a line all the way around the earth. Thus, in the first Treaty of Tordesillas, Portugal got everything east of the line, and Spain everything west of the line. They did not know that Brazil and some parts of South America stuck out so far to the east. When these conditions were discovered, the first Treaty of Tordesillas was dissolved, and the lines were redrawn, placing the Atlantic boundary line further west and thereby including a part of Brazil in the eastern section. It was thought that by holding the line to the water, Portugal had the right to conquer and colonize the whole Middle East (Africa, India and China), while Spain had the rights to colonize North and South America.

In 1497-8, Vasco de Gama had been the first man to sail around Africa. In 1600, another Portuguese navigator, Gaspar de Cabral, sailed to Africa to repeat de Gama's voyage as a beginning of the Portuguese plan to build colonies on the coast of Africa to serve as stepping stones in sailing around Africa to the riches of India. But while de Cabral was at sea, a very strong storm blew the ship west, and the land he found was Brazil in South America. When he checked his charts, he found that Brazil was east of the Treaty of Tordesillas line, although the cartographers had thought that all of South America was west of it. De Cabral's discovery made the Treaty of Tordesillas very important because it gave Portugal the right to colonize Brazil.

We know that Sephardic Jews were living in Brazil¹ at the time, because in 1589 Spain took control of Portugal and the Portuguese administration all but fell apart. Under this weakened administration, the government did not have the resources to interfere in the lives of Jews. The Dutch, who already had a colony in Guiana, had an opportunity to grab a little piece of Brazil (the Recife area) in 1630. Almost immediately two synagogues opened. The history of Recife at this time is complicated. The Dutch ruled Recife for 20 years, from 1634 until 1654. The Portuguese received their independence from Spain in 1640, but it took them 14 years to organize Brazil and push out the Dutch. Because this situation made the Jews uncomfortable, they left Recife. Some went to Holland; some to Curacao. The

calamity that befell the ship carrying 23 Jewish passengers from Recife to New York begins the history of Jewish life in pre-revolutionary America.

Sephardic Jews played a role in the New World from these early times when America became a land open to colonizing by those seeking to escape Europe's tyrannies. How logical that Jews, so long oppressed, should be among the very first to thrill at the possibility of freedom in the New World. They yearned for the equality of free men. They dreamed of a land of liberty in which they shared with their fellow citizens (of whatever faith) equal opportunities and equal obligations.

I Congregation Shearith Israel

The first Jew to settle in North America was Jacob Barsimon, who arrived from Holland on July 8, 1654. The next month, 23 Jews landed after a long and exhaustive voyage from Brazil. They were descendants of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal in 1492 (and 1495) by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. The original refugees had found a haven in Holland and then, after the Dutch took part of Brazil, had gone there to live. But in 1654 Recife, the last Dutch stronghold in Brazil, was captured by the Portuguese. Faced again with persecution from the Inquisition, the 23 remaining Jews fled to New Amsterdam. Soon more Jews arrived from Curacao. This was the beginning of Congregation Shearith Israel (The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue), the oldest existing Jewish congregation in North America.²

By 1730 the Ashkenazim outnumbered the Sephardim, but the American Jewish Community remained Sephardic through the American Revolution. Colonial American synagogues adhered to the Sephardic rite (*Minhag*) and administered all aspects of Jewish religious life. The synagogue did not, however, attempt to govern the economic activities of its members. This was a departure from the Old World, where synagogues in places like Amsterdam and London taxed all transactions and regulated Jewish publications. With this change, colonial synagogues set a precedent of compartmentalization—a division between Jewish worldly domains in American Jewish life.

Colonial American Sephardic synagogues also sought to combine aesthetics with traditional Judaism. Synagogues established rules of order so that all meetings proceeded with the proper amount of deference.

Seats were assigned for male and female members to enable everybody to know their place in the congregation. This not only prevented shuffling and bickering over seating each week, but also established a congregational hierarchy in which the best seats went to the most prestigious congregational families (who in turn paid the highest dues). In Europe so few women attended services that there were no designated seats; American women, in contrast, regularly attended services.³

In 1768, Congregation *Shearith Israel* appointed 23 year-old Gershom Mendes Seixas as *hazzan* or reader. Seixas was one of six children of Isaac Mendes Seixas; a Portuguese *converso* whose family had to flee to London in 1725 after Isaac was accused of secretly continuing to practice his ancient faith. In 1730, Isaac left London for New York where, in 1741, he married an Ashkenazi Jew, Rebecca Levy. Their son Gershom was a product of this Askenazic-Sephardic marriage common to the New York Jewish community in the 1700s.

New York City in the 1760s had fewer than 300 Jews, and *Shearith Israel* followed the Sephardic *minhag* despite its majority of Askenazi members. The congregation was a *kehila* synagogue community, the center of Jewish life for this tightly knit group. The community gathered at *Shearith Israel* to celebrate holidays and all events together—marriages, births and deaths. Gershom Mendes Seixas was a *hazzan* of *Shearith Israel*, not its rabbi. It was not until the mid-19th century that America attracted its first permanent, ordained rabbi; a religious leader and teacher trained by rabbis and certified as competent in Torah, Talmud and Halacha. Previous to the 1850s, ordained European rabbis would not remain in North America and apparently were unwilling to live without learned colleagues, or to serve the congregants who, with few exceptions, had fallen away from strict religious practices. Seixas, as the only religious official of the congregation, functioned as spiritual leader and interpreter of religious law. He supervised *kashrut*, performed marriages, officiated at funerals, and performed all the duties now associated with ordained rabbis.⁴ As *hazzan* of the congregation, Gershom Mendes Seixas was the center of the community effort to live Jewishly while immersed in the relatively tolerant America—a setting much less hostile than the one that drove Sephardic families one generation earlier from Portugal.

II Congregation Jeshuat Israel The Touro Synagogue

In the spring of 1658, fifteen Jewish families of Spanish and Portuguese origin arrived in Newport, Rhode Island. Historians do not agree about the point of origin of these early Jewish settlers. Some think they came from Holland; others believe that they came from New York. The view most widely held, however, is that they came from Curacao, in the West Indies. This was

plausible, as trade was frequent between Newport and the West Indies. The sailors from Newport-based merchant vessels probably extolled the natural beauty of Newport and the advantages of life in a free society. Many of these Jews were *Marranos (Anesim)*—those who had professed Catholicism in order to survive. They may have been drawn by the assurance of the religious freedom and liberty of conscience promised by Governor Roger Williams to all who came within the borders of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. It offered more than a refuge, but also unparalleled opportunities for social and economic advantage, which the Jews of Newport seized with vigor. They did not forget their religion, though, and in the year in which they arrived, these families founded Congregation *Jeshurat Israel*. And, although in the 1680s the Jewish community of Newport numbered only eight families,⁵ on February 28, 1677, they purchased land for use as a burial ground.⁵

In 1758, Reverend Isaac de Touro, father of Abraham and Judah Touro, arrived from Amsterdam to become the *hazzan* for the congregation. (In 1773, he married Reyna Hays, sister of Moses Michael Hays, a patriotic merchant citizen of Boston.) Touro provided fresh stimulus to the Jewish community. For one hundred years the members of the congregation, few in number and modest in means, had worshipped in private homes. By 1759, the congregation had increased sufficiently to undertake the building of a synagogue that would also incorporate a school. As this was an ambitious undertaking beyond the means of the community, an appeal was addressed to other congregations for funds.

A positive response to the appeal must have come from congregations in New York, Philadelphia, Curacao, London, and Holland, for three months later, on June 30, 1759, a plot of land for the erection of a synagogue was purchased on what was then Griffin Street. Under the leadership of Isaac Touro, the ground for a synagogue was broken on August 1, 1759. On December 7, 1763, the synagogue was dedicated by descendants of the fifteen original “Spanish Portuguese Jewish” families who had arrived in Newport in 1658.

The architect selected was Peter Harrison, who donated his service as architect. He had, by then, designed several exceptional buildings. There is no record of his ever asking or receiving payment for his work. It must have been a labor of love to him. With consummate skill he applied his great talents to his assignment and succeeded in erecting a synagogue of outstanding beauty and dignity. The synagogue was built of brick imported from England and, because of the desire to have the Holy Ark face towards the east—towards Jerusalem, the synagogue stands at an acute angle to the street. The interior architecture is of classical colonial style, incorporating some features of traditional Spanish Portuguese synagogues. Some similarity is evident between the Sephardic Synagogue erected in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1675, and the synagogue in

Newport, Rhode Island, particularly in the seating arrangement and in the imposing columns. The columns that support the women's gallery and the ceiling are twelve in number and symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel. The upper columns are Corinthian and the lower ones Ionic, each one being made from a solid tree trunk.

Suspended from the ceiling, donated to the congregation, are five beautiful candelabra. The center one, a twelve-branched candelabrum, was a gift of Jacob Pollock in 1769. An unusual feature of all these candelabra is what appears to be four monks' heads that can be seen clearly in the center stem.

The *Ner Tamid* (eternal light) was the gift of Samuel Judah of New York. On the tall, graceful candlesticks which are located in front of the ark and on the *Bimah*, is engraved in Hebrew: *The gift of the young man, Enoch, son of Joseph to the Synagogue of the Holy Congregation Yeshuat Israel, 5525*. Engraved in English on the back is *Enoch Lyon-1776*.

An appeal for a Torah from the early Jewish settlers in Newport to the Jewish congregation in Amsterdam, Holland, was quickly answered. Ezra Stiles, a Congregational Minister in Newport,⁶ noted in his diary (1764) that the Torah was then over two hundred years old. This scroll, which is now over four hundred years old, is still in a good state of preservation.

Among the silver ornaments that embellish the scrolls are two sets of *Rimonim*. Of outstanding beauty and exquisite artistry, they are the work of Myer Myers, the famous pre-revolutionary silver craftsman. Above the Ark is a beautiful painting by Benjamin Howland (1828) of the captions of the Ten Commandments in Hebrew surmounted by three crowns representing the Crowns of the Law, Priesthood and Kingdom. Mr. Howland, a clerk of the City of Newport, was paid \$12 for his work.

The American Revolution put an end to Newport's commercial prosperity. Many of the Jews, involved in business and trade with England were loyal to the British cause. The city was occupied by the British and held by their victorious soldiers. The Jews of the town were scattered and Jewish religious services were no longer held in the synagogue. Many merchants moved to such patriotic centers as Boston and Philadelphia. The Rev. Isaac Touro went to Jamaica, West Indies, and died there in 1784. His widow with her children returned to New England and made her home with her brother in Boston. Her son Abraham in later years became a successful merchant in Boston and Judah became a successful merchant in New Orleans.⁷

During Washington's visit to Newport in 1781, a town meeting was held in the synagogue.⁸

In 1789, the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island held its first meeting in the synagogue building after the evacuation of Newport by the British. In 1790, Washington was the recipient of an address by Moses Seixas, warden of the synagogue. In reply Washington sent the famous letter *To the Hebrew*

Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, which has since become the classical expression of religious liberty in America. In this letter Washington wrote . . . *for happily the Government of the United States which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.*

The words, *to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance* were not original with Washington. They were contained in the letter that Moses Seixas addressed to him. Washington was obviously impressed by the words, for they seemed to express very forcibly the ideals that he espoused for America.

An interesting feature of *Touro Synagogue* is the tunnel under the *Tevah*, on which the Cantor stands and leads the services. The tunnel extends to the courtyard outside. The origin of this tunnel rests with conditions set in Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition. As Jews were not allowed to worship in public, very often they would pray in cellars to avoid the attention of the Inquisitors, but when they came to Newport, they had lived a hundred years in the community before they built a synagogue. They were not afraid of their Christian neighbors. They were able to practice the tenets of their religion freely. However, they wanted their children to have a symbol so that they would always remember and value the freedom that they enjoyed in America, as opposed to the persecution their forbears had endured in Spain and Portugal.

In the cemetery at the top of Touro Street where the synagogue is located, one can read inscriptions on the tombstones in Hebrew, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Latin; languages that testify to the culture of Newport Jews. These Jewish settlers were few in number and they said of themselves in 1759 that they were "a congregation yet in its infancy."⁹

III Kahal Kodosh Beth Elohim

Charleston was established in 1670, and the earliest known reference to a Jew in the English settlement is a description dated 1695. Soon other Jews followed, attracted by the civil and religious liberty of South Carolina and the ample economic opportunity of the colony. These pioneers were sufficiently numerous by 1749 to organize the present congregation. *Kahal Kodosh Beth Elohim* (Holy Congregational House of God), and fifteen years later to establish the now historic Corning Street Cemetery, the oldest Jewish burial ground in the South.

The history of *Kahal Kodosh Beth Elohim* is a heritage in which all American Jews can take pride. It is a story of faith, devotion and perseverance in the America of freedom of worship. It is the fourth oldest Jewish congregation in the continental United States, after New York, Newport and Savannah. At first, prayers were recited in private quarters and, from 1775, in an

improvised synagogue adjacent to the modern temple grounds.

In 1792, construction of the largest and most impressive synagogue in the United States was commenced. It was dedicated two years later, and the visiting Lafayette is reported to have observed the building to be spacious and elegant. This handsome cupola-style Georgian synagogue was destroyed in the great Charleston fire of 1836 and replaced in 1840 on the original Hasell Street site by the present imposing structure.¹⁰ For almost two and a half centuries, members of *Beth Elohim* have been eminent leaders in the city, state, and country. Among notable early congregants were Moses Lindo who, before the Revolution, helped to develop the cultivation of Indigo (then South Carolina's second crop), and Joseph Levy, veteran of the Cherokee War of 1760-61 and probably the first Jewish military officer in America. Almost two dozen men of *Beth Elohim* served in the War for Independence, among them the brilliant young Francis Salvador who, as a delegate to the South Carolina Provincial Congress of 1775 and 1776, was one of the first Jews to serve in an American legislature. He was killed shortly after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Salvador was also the first Jew to die in the Revolutionary War.

Members of the congregation founded Charleston's Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1784, the nation's oldest Jewish charitable organization, and in 1801 established the Hebrew Orphan Society, also the country's oldest. Both are still active. A Hebrew school where secular as well as religious subjects were taught functioned from the middle of the eighteenth century, and, in 1838, the second oldest Jewish Sunday School in the United States was organized. The blind poet, Penina Moise was a famous early superintendent.

Other congregants pioneered in steamship navigation, introduced illuminating gas to American cities, and numbered four of the eleven founders of the country's Supreme Council of Scottish Rite Masonry. Both the Surgeon General and the Quartermaster General of the Confederate Army belonged to *Kahal Kodosh Beth Elohim*.



In 1790, President George Washington responded to the congratulations of *Kahal Kodosh Beth Elohim* by writing:

The affectionate expressions of your address again excite my gratitude, and receive my warmest acknowledgment. May the same temporal and eternal blessing which you implore for me, rest upon your Congregation.

The Synagogue was constructed by member David Lopez from designs by the architect C.L. Warner. Today the temple grounds are fronted by a graceful iron fence dating from the 1794 synagogue. The large marble tablet above the huge entrance doors proclaims the *Sh'ma* (Deut. 6:4) in Hebrew and in the foyer in similar position is the original foundation stone of the earlier synagogue. The massive Ark, which by local tradition is kept open throughout worship services, is made of Santo Domingo mahogany. Stained glass windows, which show Jewish religious symbols, date from after 1886 and are replacements of windows destroyed in the earthquake of that year. An early picture of the original synagogue shows seats facing each other with the *Tevah* in the center after the Sephardic tradition. In the Archives Museum, a fine canvas by the adventurer artist, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, depicts the stately 18th century synagogue.

Colonial America and Medieval Spain

The Spanish-Portuguese part of their collective past is of enduring importance to the Sephardim of America . . . The first Jews that arrived in America in 1654 were members of ancient noble families of consequence, men and women of property and learning who, for reasons over which they had no control, found themselves on the opposite side of the Atlantic from where they had intended to be. . . And it is interesting to speculate why—considering the vast disparities of time, of place, of culture—the Jews can be said to have found their greatest successes and their fullest freedoms within the context of the two civilizations of modern America and medieval Spain.¹¹ □

Notes

1. Wiznitzer, Arnold. *The Records Of The Earliest Jewish Community In The New World*. American Jewish Historical Society, 1954. Records from the *Minute Book* of the Jewish community in Recife (the earliest Jewish community records in the Western Hemisphere) which begins the first of Kislev, 5409 (November 16, 1648). All Jews present when the 42 regulations were solemnly enacted at the Plenary meeting were declared members of Congregation *Zur Israel*.
2. Ellis, Edward Robb. *The Epic of New York City* pp 60-61.
3. Isaac Hart, one of the earliest Jewish residents of Newport, R. I. settled there as early as 1750, and soon became known as a successful merchant. On June 13, 1756, he was one of several who purchased land for the first synagogue of Newport. During the War of Independence, Isaac Hart favored the British cause, and it is said that he met his death in 1780 by being *inhumanely fired upon and bayoneted* by the American soldiers (*Rivington's Gazette*, Dec. 2, 1780). The Elazar family was involved in every facet of Jewish life in Zaragoza, Spain from the first known records (1096 C.E.) until the Expulsion (1492). The branch of the family left

- Spain in 1492. At least one branch formally converted and became secret Jews, moving later to Portugal. In 1775, Isaac Elazar and his family moved to Newport, Rhode Island, where they returned to the open practice of Judaism and helped build the Jewish community. During the Revolutionary War, they moved to Charleston S.C. where the family passed out of existence (the children did not marry).
7. His philanthropy established a perpetual fund for the care of the synagogue, thus it was known as the *Touro Synagogue*.
 8. In the words on the tablet affixed to the building when it was officially designated a National Historic Site in August 31, 1947. The plaque on the side of the building facing the street reads: *National Historic Site Jeshuat Israel Congregation. Founded 1658. This oldest Synagogue building in the United States was designed by Peter Harrison. Ground was broken August 1, 1759. It was dedicated on December 2, 1763. Here in 1781-84 The Rhode Island General Assembly met, and during Washington's visit to Newport, in 1781, a town meeting was held there. The State Supreme Court held sessions here at that period. The building was reopened for religious services on August 2, 1850. In 1790 George Washington wrote to this congregation that happily the government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance. National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.*
 8. Lewis, Theodore (Rabbi). *Sermons At Touro Synagogue National Historic Site, Newport, Rhode Island*. Brooklyn, New York: Simcha-Graphic Associates, 1980.
 9. *Kahal Kodosh Beth Elohim* is the second oldest synagogue in the United States and the oldest in continuous use. It was designated a National Historic landmark in 1980.
 10. Birmingham, Stephen. *The Grandees: America's Sephardic Elite*. Harper & Row, Publishers. New York: 1971.

“The Book”

Quoted from: *The Grandees: America's Sephardic Elite*
by Stephen Birmingham

In 1960, there appeared what must have been one of the least heralded books in the history of American publishing. It was called **Americans of Jewish Descent**, and was put together—not “written” exactly—by a scholarly New Yorker named Malcolm H. Stern. The book consisted almost entirely of genealogical charts, and represented a labor of mindboggling proportions.

Americans of Jewish Descent weighs close to ten pounds and is beautifully bound and printed on heavy, expensive stock. It is just over three hundred pages long, including an elaborate index, and traces the ancestry of some 25,000 American Jewish individuals back into the eighteenth, seventeenth, and even the sixteenth centuries, under family headings that list everyone from the Aarons to the Zuntzes. It was never intended to be a best seller; a limited first edition of just 550 numbered copies were printed. Nonetheless, though unheralded, unacclaimed by the critics, and unnoticed by the vast majority of the American reading public, the book created a small group of American Jews who had long considered themselves an elite, the nobility of Jewry, with the longest, richest, most romantic history: the Sephardim. They were the oldest American Jewish families, and they traced themselves back to the arrival of what has been called the “Jewish Mayflower” in 1654, and even further back to medieval Spain and Portugal, where they lived as princes of the Land. Despite its price—forty dollars—and its size, the book was soon gracing the coffee tables and bookshelves of some of the most elegant and prestigious

houses in the country and a second printing was ordered. The book was suddenly **The Book**, and was being studied for the tiny errors that appeared, almost inevitably, in a volume of this one's size and scope—three centuries of interconnected family trees. □

Editor's Note:

Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern's *First American Jewish Families* (ca 1654-1838) is now online with a searchable index, thanks to the American Jewish Archives. It provides birth, marriage, and death information, plus dates of arrival in United States and traces many families to the present. Researchers now have access to the complete text of Rabbi Stern's monumental volume that was published in 1991 as the updated and revised 3rd edition entitled: *First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654-1988*. This publication is an historical document in its own right. Students of American Jewish genealogy are encouraged to use this text as a basis for their research.

Stephen Birmingham has written three books documenting the Sephardic, German and Eastern European waves of Jewish immigration in the following important and popular books:

1. Steven Birmingham. *“Our Crowd”: The Great Jewish Families of New York*. New York, Harper and Row, 1967.
2. Steven Birmingham. *The Grandees: Americas Sephardic Elite*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
3. Stephen Birmingham. *The Rest of Us: The Rise of America's Eastern European Jews*. New York: Little Brown & Company, 1984.

It Runs In the Family Funnily

By Darla Stone

My great Aunt Hannah immigrated to the United States from Galicia as a child and lived on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the early 1900s. She had a different face cream for every hour of the day that was complimented by an alternate nightly regime of creams. Nothing could interrupt her beauty routine. Nothing at all! Even when a fire broke out in her house, she didn't run out until her make up was in place.

When my Mother reminisced about this Aunt, I thought her actions were preposterous. But that was before I was awakened one night by an earthquake that shook the high rise building that housed my Mexican hotel room and caused my bed to walk across the room. A glimpse down at the early dawn street that was filled with dozens of people huddled in blankets tossed over their pajamas, was enough of a clue that something was seriously wrong. It didn't matter that my roommate was on the verge of hysteria and proclaimed that there must have been an earthquake. It hardly mattered at all. It never occurred to me to escape until I put on my make-up. I must admit it wasn't easy applying eyeliner when the floor was still swaying, but in a pinch, you do what must be done. Once my makeup was on, I raced down the steps along with everyone else. I guess whoever claimed that beauty is skin deep, never met my great Aunt Hannah, or me!

Hannah's parents were typical of the newly arrived immigrants who toiled with unceasing determination and worked hard in order to carve out a piece of the American pie for their family. My great-grandmother, Ruchel had accumulated the impressive sum of \$200. It was not exactly a king's ransom but certainly an enviable cache. Since no reasonably sane immigrant would entrust a bank with their hard earned fortune, Ruchel hid the money in a better place. The family fortune was hidden deep inside her living room couch where it would be infinitely safer than the bank. Ruchel's industriousness, caution and resourcefulness were certainly enviable qualities except for one thing. She didn't count on her husband Yoel throwing out the couch and surprising her with a new one. The family fortune was unceremoniously and unwittingly tossed out - but the family survived nonetheless.

Some years later my Grandmother Eva, who had come to the United States in 1907 on the *SS President Lincoln* from Kanczuga, Galicia lost her engagement ring when she was washing dishes and the ring went literally down the drain. Could this misfortune have anything to do with the fact that the date of her marriage was Friday, December 13, 1913! More than half a century later my Masters Degree diploma was tossed into the garbage because no one realized that the tube in which it was

contained, had anything worth saving. Do these things run in the family?

My great grandfather Max who immigrated to the United States from Ropshitz was lucky enough to have a job when the "Blizzard of the Century" immobilized New York City in 1888. He would not risk losing his job so he spent hours trudging to work even though it entailed an arduous trek across the frozen East River, only to find the building where he worked covered with enormous snow drifts and of course was closed. He had to spend hours several hours more trudging back home again.

I crossed the same route, across the river during the New York blackout of 1966. How many times, do we unwittingly traverse the same pathways as those who came before us? I guess you could say that I was following in my ancestors footsteps.

Max met his wife, my great grandmother and namesake Dora when he spied her pretty face on the other side of the fence that separated their Ridge Street apartments on the Lower East Side of New York. I heard a family rumor that he was already engaged to someone else when he saw her, but I guess I don't need to explain that.

After they were married Dora would allow people who couldn't afford to buy the coal they needed to heat their homes, to buy what they needed and have the supplier add their costs to her bill. When Max discovered why his coal bill was so high he called Dora, *a Mielitser goniff!* This epitaph was a popular Galician expression that accused people who came from Mielec of being thieves! I like to think that his accusation was really a term of endearment since he himself was very involved in charitable activities. The house that they lived in Bushwick Brooklyn was a mansion that once belonged to the famous world traveler Admiral Frederick Albert Cook. They regularly hosted peoples weddings in their home. Dora did a lot of cooking in Cook's mansion where she prepared meals for poor people's weddings.

My great-grandfather Sinai remained in Kanczuga when his wife and daughters immigrated to the United States. He died before he was ever reunited with his family. His fur hat, a *striemel*, the traditional hat worn by Chassidim, did make it across the ocean and was ensconced safely on a top shelf of his daughter's New York home. When my Aunt Helen was a little girl she went looking for something in the closet and felt the unseen furry material. She was scared out of her wits thinking that she grabbed hold of a live animal. For years after she shuddered every time she thought of the incident.

My Mother was an accomplished though amateur pianist. Her great grandfather's family, the Glanzbergs

includes many individuals in different generations who demonstrated an uncanny amount of musical abilities. Distant cousins include a Viennese violinist, an opera singer, the world famous song writer for Edith Piaf the legendary French songstress, a widely known Russian musician and song writer, the head of a Lithuanian Conservatory of Music and a Glanzberg musician whose photo is memorialized in the Lancut Yizkor book.

I can't help but wondering if the musical abilities of this family is not connected to the fact that this family are Levites. The main function of the Levites in ancient times was their performance as musicians in King Solomon's Temple. The prospect of DNA tests being perfected so it that will enable one to measure inherited factors such as singing abilities is enormously exciting. In the meanwhile the possibility that many of our personal talents can be traced through centuries to distant ancestors is a tantalizing idea to entertain.

If we are lucky, we have some physical mementos that belonged to our ancestors. They are however precious few. I decided that it isn't enough to merely revere these heirlooms. I wanted to actually use one and so on Yom Kippur I decided that I would use my grandmother's old prayer book that was printed in Lemberg. No matter how carefully I opened the antique volume, I could not prevent a trail of yellowed fragments from cascading down and creating a trail all around me. This spontaneous flow of shredded bits created for me an irradiant pathway that reached far beyond the floor and connected me to my

grandmother and to those generations before me. This moment of delicious reverie was interrupted by a torrent of giggles that I had to fight to suppress. This was hardly the time or place to interrupt the solemn atmosphere of Yom Kippur prayers with laughing. However I realized that I had just recited the blessing for the Czar and Czarina that was included in this book. It was a safe bet that I was the only one in the entire world who said that prayer that day.

The Czar and Czarina have long been consigned to history and even the Soviet Union has undergone unimaginable changes. So many of our families left Russia in an effort to escape the persecutions of those regimes; those regimes are now over. Our prayers, however, are still substantially the same as they have been for centuries and that is just about the most delicious irony that I can think of.

So much of ourselves, our personalities, idiosyncrasies and perhaps even the way we smile or walk stem from ancestors that we have never known. Refinements in DNA testing seem to be opening the possibility that we will be able to identify with reasonable certainty, who our remote ancestors were. In the meanwhile we can enjoy the irreverent tidbits of their lives to serve as precious bonds of memories that yield a certainty that defies scientific measurement. These lovely innuendos tell us, loud and clear, that our souls are connected to our ancestors in more ways than we could ever imagine.

Farming in Wyoming at the turn of the Century

submitted by Andrea Massion



Dora Greenspoon Massion and her sons, Nate, Ely and Arnold at their farm in Iowa Center near Chugwater, Wyoming circa 1923. About twenty Jewish families farmed in that area beginning in 1909, the men at right are hired hands during harvest. The barn and chicken coop are in the rear.

Solomon Star

by Lew Holzman

When I started Cowboy Action Shooting, I learned that every shooter has a cowboy alias which is unique, and registered to him/her when joining the Single Action Shooting Society (S.A.S.S.). I wanted to have an alias of a real Jewish person from the old West. I went to Harriet Rochlin's book *Pioneer Jews* and decided upon Solomon Star, the mayor of Deadwood, Dakota Territory, because the name had a nice sound to it.

Subsequently, I did more research on Solomon Star, first writing to the Public Library and Adams Museum in Deadwood, and later on the Internet. I am glad I chose this alias. Mayor Star was an upstanding citizen who served in public office and was involved in the transition of the Dakotas to statehood. He knew Teddy Roosevelt, who had spent time in the Dakota Territory, and was of the same political party.

Cowboy Action Shooting is a sport I read about in the *American Rifleman* in 1988. It involves dressing either like a movie cowboy or in 1880-90 period costumes, and

shooting original or reproduction single action revolvers, lever rifles and shotguns whose original patents were before 1900. Steel plates at varying distances are the targets. Scoring is by recording the time of each shot from the timer's starting "beep." A penalty, usually 5 seconds, is added for each missed target. Lower times beat higher. When I started there were under 1000 members of S.A.S.S. Now there are over 50,000 members and at least that many more in the sport.



One of the characters in the popular HBO series "Deadwood" is based on Solomon Star of South Dakota. Once a name known only to a few, remembered as one of many Jewish mayors of Western towns, he has now become a popular figure of the wild west of the late 1870s and 1880s

He was born in Bavaria in 1840, the fifth of ten children, to Marcus and Minnie (Friedlander) Star. In 1850 he came with his uncle, Joseph Friedlander, first to Cincinnati and then to Circleville, Ohio. He went to school until 1857 when he began work as a clerk in a general store. During the Civil War, in 1862, he went to Missouri and engaged in "mercantile pursuits." At War's end, he moved with his stock of merchandise to Virginia City, Montana and was in business there from 1865 to 1872 when he was appointed by President Grant to be Receiver of the Land Office at Helena, Montana.

He was active in the Masonic Lodge and became a thirty-second degree Mason and Grand Master for Montana. It was not rare for Jews to belong to the Masons in those times. In Montana he met Seth Bullock who became his life long friend and partner in many ventures and adventures.

Gold was discovered in the Black Hills in 1874. An expeditionary force of one thousand men were led by George Armstrong Custer into the Black Hills area, a

1000 square mile region held sacred by the Sioux, who still claim that their ancestors were in this area since the beginning of time. This is in spite of documented evidence that the Sioux lived in the area now called Minnesota until pushed West in the 18th century by the Chippewa. This "invasion" sowed the seeds for the Custer Battle on the Little Big Horn River in 1876. A few months after the group's arrival, gold was discovered along French Creek in the central Black Hills. A major gold rush inevitably followed. The city of Deadwood grew out of this Wild West era of prospectors, saloons, and legendary figures. Wild Bill Hickock and Calamity Jane are both buried in Deadwood's cemetery, not far from Sol Star who is in an area of the cemetery called "Hebrew Hill" for its many Jews. In August 1876, only one month after the Custer massacre, Sol and Seth Bullock dared to move their goods by ox team, across the Sioux territory to Deadwood. They arrived two days before the famous murder of "Wild Bill" Hickock.

They immediately engaged in the crockery business, and soon after in hardware and furniture. The



Star Bullock Hardware

story goes—they had a shipment of 200 chamber pots that Seth Bullock auctioned off in one evening.

Sol Star remained in Deadwood the rest of his life and never married. During those years he and Bullock expanded their economic activities. Along with Harris Franklin, nee Finkelstein, they formed the Deadwood Flouring Mill Company and in 1880 Star became manager of the flour mill they built. It is said he gave flour for bread to the needy without charge.

In 1879 Star and Bullock created the SB (*Star and Bullock*) Ranch in nearby Belle Fourche by buying up individual homesteads as they were “proved” under the Homestead Act. The SB ranch became well known throughout the west for the production of thoroughbred trotting horses and for the first crop of alfalfa planted in the Dakota Territory in the spring of 1881. They engaged in the livestock business and also invested in the gold mining that caused the Black Hills to flourish in the first place.

Sol Star was only one of many Jews in Deadwood. Although the town had no Rabbi, the congregation had a lay leader, Nathan Colman, who conducted services. Fully one-third of all downtown business establishments

in Deadwood’s early history were either owned, operated or occupied by Jewish merchants, most of those businesses related to clothing and dry goods.

Star and Bullock were involved in the political life of Deadwood from their arrival. Bullock had been in law enforcement in Montana and became the first Sheriff of Deadwood and subsequently a United States Marshall there. Sol Star was appointed postmaster in 1878 and served three years.

Sol Star became a member of the city council in 1883, and was elected Mayor of Deadwood in 1884. He served as Mayor for several two-year terms until 1893. In addition, he was active in the push for statehood and in 1889-1890, was a member of the State Assembly. He was chosen president of the first Republican state convention held in South Dakota to nominate its state officers. In 1893-4, he was elected

State Senator from Deadwood and served as President Pro Tempore of the State Senate as well. In 1896, he was again elected Mayor of Deadwood. By 1899, he was elected Clerk of the Courts for Lawrence County and continued to hold that office until his death in 1917. It is said that his funeral was suitable for a President. □



Notes

1. < <http://www.goldoutlet.com/history.html>>
2. I was at the Family History Library doing research and thought to look for Mr. Star in the 1880 Census. At first I looked for the Soundex film under S for South Dakota. After not finding it, it dawned on me that the Dakotas were not states until 1889. I searched under D for Dakota Territory and found the correct Soundex, and then the Census record itself. I missed him on my first run through Lawrence County residents because the name Star is hard to read, but found him by concentrating on people born in Germany. The first name reads as Sol as stated above. Occupation: Postmaster. It confirms he is not married. He was living at a boarding house or hotel at the time of the Census. The two other residents listed just below Sol Star were Clerks in the Post Office. Interestingly, in the online 1880 Census at <<http://www.familysearch.org>>, his first name is Solomon and a search using Sol alone does not find him.
3. There is an interesting picture of Sol Star and Seth Bullock to be seen at: http://www.digitaldeadwood.com/historylink/photos/hlp_sethsol.gif Sol Star is on the left. I find it interesting because the heads are about level, but if you examine the feet, Star is standing on the six-inch or so board elevation at the side edge of the bridge. This implies to me that he was short, bothered by it, and clever.

Bibliography

1. Rochlin, Harriet, Rochlin, Fred. *Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984.
2. *Memorial and Biographical Record—Black Hills Region*. 1898.
3. *History of Dakota Territory*. 1915. (South Dakota deluxe supplement).
4. Personal communication to the author from the Adams Memorial Hall Museum, Deadwood. 1992.
5. Stanton, Ann. *Jews of the Hinterlands: The Story Continues*, Part II (from a former website).
6. *Deadwood Magazine*, Black Hills, South Dakota. <<http://www.deadwoodmagazine.com/Archives/TwoTowns.htm>>
7. South Dakota Legislature Legislator—Historical Listing for Solomon Star: <<http://legis.state.sd.us/historical/index.aspx>>

Henry Cohn and the California Gold Rush

By Arnold Zweig

*As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the twenty-third of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous. . . . In point of fact, Poker Flat was "after somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard of two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies. It is but due to the sex, however, to state that their impropriety was professional, and it was only in such easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment. Francis Bret Harte (1836–1902). from: *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* (The Harvard Classics Shelf of Fiction. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1917.) Copyright 1892 and 1899 by Bret Harte. All rights reserved.*

One of the early California Gold Rush pioneers was my great-grandfather Henry (originally Chajim) Cohn. He came from a small town close to the Drewenz River, which formed the border between Russia (Poland) and Prussia. An older brother carried him across the river to avoid the forcible conscription into the Russian army. After making his way to Hamburg and then by sailing ship to New York, a passage that took 54 days, he arrived on June 28, 1852. After a few years in the New York area making his living as a peddler, he wrote to his cousin indicating that he would like to come to California. His cousin advised against it. But Gold Country was an exciting place compared to being a peddler in New York. This was possibly just what he needed to know to make the decision. Going to California in those days meant taking a ship to Panama; then across the isthmus on foot or by mule for about 47 miles. It was a dangerous trip with many assaults, particularly on people returning from the gold fields of California.

Until 1855, La Porte was called Rabbit Creek and it belonged to Yuba County. Arriving in the town (La Porte is now in Sierra County) he partnered with his cousin, another relative and Morris Armer to run a General Store. They brought merchandise in and sold to the miners in the gold country. La Porte still exists today with a population under 100 souls and is located North-East of Marysville. Marysville has an old Jewish Cemetery. A Gentile there has taken it upon himself to painstakingly restore this cemetery.

When the partners decided to return to their homeland, Henry became the owner of the enterprise. While in La Porte, Henry and Mendelsohn (Mendelsohn and Company) organized the first mule train to carry goods from Marysville to La Porte and in his memoirs he describes in great detail the composition and organization of such mode of transporting the supplies.

The General Store also had a canteen. The miners congregated there after closing time, helped themselves to the liquor and the playing cards, which were left there

for them. Gambling was the most important activity besides searching for gold. However, they deposited without fail, whatever money they owed into a jar left there for this purpose. A pack of playing cards was \$1. Liquor was \$.50 or \$.25 a shot. In the morning the cards were gone, the liquor consumed, but the jar was full of money. In addition he established a branch operation in the neighboring town of Saint Louis, with his cousin Jacob Heiman and another relative, H. Mendelsohn. This town no longer exists. The remains of an old cemetery in Saint Louis can be found off the road. Another branch was opened in the gambling town of Poker Flat (made famous in a novels of Bret Harte: *The Luck of Roaring Camp, The Outcasts of Poker Flat and The Idyl of Red Gulch*). Poker Flat fell victim to the hydraulic mining activities which were outlawed in 1883. Henry also became a partner with two Germans in the construction of a drainage canal a few thousand feet long.

Henry became a US citizen in December 1860. His Certificate of Naturalization is deposited in the National Archives in Washington, DC. His passport, signed by the Secretary of State William Seward, who purchased Alaska in 1867 is in the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley, California. H.C. became a member in August 1858 of Masonic Lodge 69 of San Francisco. The membership list shows a substantial number of other Jewish members who came from Poland and Germany. Before leaving California to return and settle in Germany, he sponsored two cousins, Jacob Engler, who came from Thorn in 1856 at 18, and a nephew, Louis Cohn. In 1858 H.C. asked his nephew, Louis Engler, to come to Poker Flat. About the same time a M. Munter (who also came from Dobrzyn) was eventually hired as clerk in the Poker Flat store. Munter eventually went to Salt Lake City where he and Louis Cohn established the *Dry Goods Store of Cohn & Munter* and became prominent citizens.¹ The Cohn brothers became very influential and illustrious citizens of Salt Lake City. Later they established the *Cohn Bros. Dry Goods Store*.

Henry sold his business and returned to settle in Germany. He left California in August 1863 at the beginning of the Civil War. Henry Cohn wrote his memoirs a year before his death in 1914. Written in German, they contain much information about the events of the times, Other Jewish pioneers mentioned in his memoirs were Armer, Brownstone, Eisenberg, Engler, Goldberg,

Jacobs, Letter, Morris, Simon and Sultan but he is completely silent about the life or events of these Jewish people he met on his American travels. □

¹ Salt Lake City Tribune Nov. 10, 1902. See also American Jewish Historical Society Watters, Leon L. "The Pioneer Jews of Utah", New York: 1952. pp.140.

From Trebisov to Mars in Two Generations: The Klein Family of Los Angeles

by Stephanie Nordlinger



Henry Klein had his own Star Clothing Co. store at First and Main Streets in Los Angeles for about six years. Because of the difficulty of obtaining merchandise from the East while still minding the store in Los Angeles, it was desirable to have a partner. So Henry Klein went into partnership

with his father-in-law, Simon F. Norton and Simon's two sons (Isaiah and Aaron Norton) in about 1898. Simon F. Norton had founded Norton's Dry Goods, in Los Angeles in 1859. Simon was naturalized in Los Angeles on November 21, 1859. A photograph in the author's possession taken about 1897-98 shows a number of people in front of a store labeled "Norton's Clothing Store Established 1859" at 102-104 Commercial Street in downtown Los Angeles. On February 5, 1903, the business was incorporated as the Klein-Norton Co. Originally, it included a retail business, including women's dresses, but in about the first decade of the 20th century, the retail part of the business was sold. Until its demise nearly 80 years later, the company specialized in wholesale menswear and dry goods.

Henry L. Klein and his wife Mamie were important in the early years of the Jewish Orphans' Home of Southern California (later Vista del Mar). It was formally organized in early 1909. Henry served first as an auditor and then as its Financial Secretary and an auditor (1910-11 fiscal year). Mamie was a director of the Home, Chair of its Admissions Committee (1909-11 and perhaps longer) and later President for several years. The 1910-11 Annual Report shows Mrs. Henry Klein lived at 601 S.

Vermont Avenue with a home phone number of 56204. They, other family members and the Klein-Norton Co. made significant financial contributions to the Home and its Building Fund. In 1910, the city had a population of more than 319,000, including 20-25,000 Jews. Henry Klein retired about 1927 and died in Los Angeles on March 31, 1932. Mamie Klein died in Los Angeles on January 16, 1933. Her probate was supervised by a female judge.

Arthur Louis Klein, Henry Klein's only son, was born in Los Angeles on April 10, 1898. Educated in the public schools, he graduated from Los Angeles High School in 1916. His father wanted him to go into the family business, while his mother wanted him to become a doctor. He asserted his independence and attended the new California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California, where he earned his B.S., M.A. and Ph.D. in Physics by 1924. Arthur Klein then pursued an academic career—teaching fellow, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and then full Professor of Aeronautical Engineering. He helped design wind tunnels at Cal-Tech to test various airplanes as they were designed. As a consultant to Douglas Aircraft for fifty years, he helped design the DC-1 through DC-10 series of civilian planes and various military aircraft. He also consulted for IBM, Chrysler and other companies. While he was very good at aeronautical engineering, Arthur knew many areas of science and mathematics and could "think outside the box." Indeed, evidence in his papers in the Cal Tech archives states that he read the first 40 or so years of Scientific American magazine while still in high school!

In about 1946, the United States Government included Arthur L. Klein in a delegation of scientists that evaluated atomic bomb tests in Bikini. Arthur also worked on the Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Mariner Project for the exploration of Mars. Quite a way for a Hungarian-born peddler's son to go! Arthur lived in Palos Verdes Estates for many years. He married three times and had children. He passed away on November 25, 1983 in Torrance, California. Much information on him (including photographs) can be found at the Cal Tech website, <<http://www.caltech.edu>> (search on "A* Klein"). The author thanks her cousins and the Cal Tech Archives for their cooperation. □

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

by Ruth Taubman Glosser

The Wolf Leib and Bessie Glotzer (Glosser) family were among the poorest families in Antopol, a shtetl situated in what is now Poland. The Glotzer union had produced numerous children, many of whom died in infancy or childhood. Seven lived to maturity. They were: Jennie (Yenta Gittel), Rose (Raisa), Nathan (Nayach), David (Dovid), Saul (Shlomo), Sam (Shimon) and Bella (Bayle). Bessie would remain at home for a week following the birth of each infant. Then she returned to work in a small family stall in the town square. It was left to the two oldest girls, Jennie and Rose, to look after the newborns. Rose was eight when she began to care for the babies. She often told her daughter, Frances, *I loved each one as if he were my own.*

Existence was a struggle for the family. Their thatched roof house had a dirt floor in the kitchen. Attached to the house was a chicken coop, and the chickens were brought in the house when the weather turned cold. It was Sam's job every Friday to clean and level the dirt floor. There was, of course, no indoor plumbing. Water had to be purchased as needed. Bella Glosser Coppersmith recalled, *I was forever hungry, and that goes for Saul and Sam. At night we used to follow around my mother and keep saying, 'Mom, we're hungry, we're hungry'...and I was always scared and always worried.* Throughout her life she was afraid of dogs because the peasants routinely sicced their dogs on the Jewish children. Nathan Ossip, Jennie's oldest son recalled Cossack cavalry raids when the Jews of Antopol ran and hid for their lives as the mounted Cossacks rode through the shtetl with their bayonets at the ready. Fear of conscription into the czar's army was also a constant in the family. Not only did conscription mean the possibility of death on the battlefield, it also meant religious persecution and years of service. A nephew, Dovid Levine, was drafted, and was killed in the anarchy following World War I. In addition to poverty, conscription, and pogroms, the family also endured disease and accidents. The father, Wolf Leib, suffered from asthma. Sam was sick with measles as a child and lost the use of his left eye. A brother, younger than Sam, choked to death as a young child on the metal tip of a cane which he had picked up and put into his mouth. The family eked out a living in a small stall in the town square where they sold kerosene, salt, homemade potato bread, dry goods and other small sundry items. Bessie prepared the dough at night when she got home from the market, letting it rise overnight. Early in the morning she baked it so it would be ready to take to the family stall. By the time she was eight, Bella peeled the potatoes for the bread. As a reward, she got to keep the peelings which she sold to a neighbor who fed them to his cow. She also rolled cigarettes which she sold.

There was no formal schooling for girls. The boys attended *chayder* daily. As family debts mounted, Wolf Leib rented space in the house to a *melamed* who taught little boys Hebrew and Jewish rituals. When the girls reached marriageable age, the parents arranged for their marriages. Jennie, being the oldest, was the first to marry. She was wed to Joseph Ossip (*Ossipovitz*) about 1898. Joseph was a tanner by trade. Rose was the next to marry. Her husband was Avroham Zelig Weisman, a scholar and teacher. He taught older boys Torah, Talmud and higher level subjects. The boys, meanwhile, were learning trades. Nathan was a tailor. David was apprenticed to a shoemaker and Saul to a cap maker. It was the hope of Bessie and Wolf Leib that Sam would become a rabbi. Conditions in Antopol, however, continued to worsen. Wolf Leib owed significant sums of money to various creditors. He could not make ends meet in the family stall. Bessie went out at night begging for money and asking for loans. The increasing frequency of pogroms made matters even worse. Given that his brother, Moses, had made the transition to the United States, and faced with a bleak future in Antopol, Wolf Leib decided to leave.

It was not easy for a man who owed significant sums of money to leave town. Wolf Leib departed in the dark of night leaving Bessie and the unmarried children as guarantors to assure their creditors that all of the money due them would be paid back. He sailed from Hamburg, Germany on the *SS Moltke* of the Hamburg-America Line on December 26, 1902, and arrived at Ellis Island on January 7, 1903. He found work in New York City peddling bananas and other fruit on street corners, and began sending small sums of money back to the family. Nathan, who hated life in Poland, soon followed his father to New York and secured work in a sweat shop. When he received his first paycheck, he sent part of it to his mother advising her not to pay off any creditor fully, but to give a little money to each so that they would continue to supply her with merchandise. Time passed and Nathan was not happy toiling in a New York sweatshop and went to visit his uncle, Moses Glosser, who was then in Stoystown, Pennsylvania. Nathan liked the area and found work as a tailor in Johnstown at Mr. Cohen's laundry-tailor shop. To save money, he lived in the back of the store, cooking, eating and sleeping there. Before long he persuaded Wolf Leib to give up his New York job and relocate in Johnstown. Both men lived in the rear of Mr. Cohen's shop. With the help of his brother, Moses, Wolf Leib secured a horse and wagon and began to peddle merchandise. Apparently Nathan impressed Mr. Cohen favorably because after a relatively short time he offered to sell Nathan the business for \$200.00 explaining that his wife wanted to be closer to her family

who lived in the Harrisburg area. Nathan was about 21 years old at the time. He was in a quandary. He wanted to buy the tailor shop, but he had no capital. Everything over and above expenses was going back to Antopol. He went to Morris Miller, a leading Johnstown Jewish merchant, for help. Mr. Miller offered to loan him the \$200.00 without collateral. The deal was consummated with a handshake and Nathan's assurance that he would repay every penny. It was not uncommon for financial assistance of this type to be provided "over the table" to Jewish merchants by the more affluent members of this group, who were also community leaders. The store did well and Nathan expanded to selling second hand clothing. Before long he needed help. Wolf Leib disposed of his horse and wagon and joined in the enterprise. By saving and hard work, they were able to send a steamship ticket to David who joined them.

The sign in front of the store at that time read: *N. Glosser-Specializing in Trunks and Men's Furnishings*. Trunks were an important item in the immigrant culture. Most of the men had left their families in Europe. Once established here, they would purchase trunks and, with each paycheck, add an item or two of clothing to put in the trunks. When the trunks were filled, they would send them back to their families in the old country.

By 1906 Wolf Leib, Nathan and David had saved enough money to send for Bessie and the unmarried children, Saul, Sam, and Bella. Jenny Ossip and Rose Weisman, who were already married and had families of their own, did not come at this time. Bessie and the unmarried children did not leave Antopol, however, until they had fully repaid all their creditors. Bessie left her stall to her daughter, Rose. Bessie (now 50) Saul (15), Sam (13), and Bella (9) arrived at Ellis Island on July 9, 1906 on the *SS Rijndam*. Arrangements had been made for HIAS to put them and their possessions on the train to Johnstown. In later years Bella told of how she and her mother had observed how beautifully the people on the train were dressed. They had concluded that all the other passengers were going to an important wedding. When the train pulled into the Johnstown Passenger Station a driver with a horse and wagon was waiting to take them to the store. When they pulled up in front of the store, the first thing Bella saw was her father talking into the wall. She became very frightened as she had never seen a telephone and thought her father had gone mad. In anticipation of the family's arrival, Wolf Leib and Nathan had Americanized their family name to Glosser and Wolf was now Louis.

They had purchased a home for \$3,500 close to the synagogue and the Pennsylvania Railroad station. The house had neither electricity nor central heating and it was furnished with second hand furniture, but to the newly arrived immigrants it was a palace. Bella wrote to her sisters that they had wooden floors in all the rooms, rugs on the floor, and a bathroom inside the house. Saul, Sam and Bella were enrolled in the third

grade in public school. Initially, they knew no English and it was an ordeal for the boys. Other students taunted them with epithets like "greenhorn" and worse. They were frequently in fights, and before too long they dropped out of school to work with their father and brothers. Their help was useful. The miners and mill men would bring their dirty clothes to the shop, and the boys would take them home where they laid them on the basement floor and scrubbed them. For Bella, school was a pleasurable experience. She was astounded that girls as well as boys were required to attend school. At first she understood nothing. Fortunately, however, her teacher was fluent in German and could understand Bella's Yiddish which made Bella's transition easier. She soon learned the language and was quickly advanced to her age level class. The fact that she attended school, however, did not excuse Bella from home duties. Bessie, worn out from years of toil and childbearing, was not in good health and much of the household work was delegated to Bella. She was up at five in the morning to scrub the floors, get the fire started in the coal stove, and clean the house. At lunchtime she came home, changed out of her one school dress, and did other chores until it was time to change back into her school dress and return to class. At night, in addition to homework, she did ironing for the five men in the house.

Even before she left Antopol, Bessie was urging Nathan to get married. Nathan explained that he had neither time nor opportunity to find a Jewish wife. Bessie solved the problem by arranging a match with Fanny Nisselbaum, daughter of Yehude Zundel and Hodes Glotzer Nisselbaum who sold geese from her stall in the Antopol market. Nathan sent Fanny a proposal of marriage and a steamship ticket to New York. While Fanny was debating Nathan's proposal she had to find a safe place to hide the steamship ticket which was a prized commodity. She solved the problem by hiding it in the Passover dishes. When Passover was due, she was the one who volunteered to take out the dishes. During Passover, she hid the ticket in her shoe returning it to its hiding place in the dishes when the holiday season was over. After two years Fanny decided to accept Nathan's proposal of marriage. The couple were married in Johnstown on March 22, 1908 and settled into married life. By 1912 they were blessed with three children: Freda (Fritz), Gerald, and Bessie. During this period of their married life, Nathan and Fanny boarded roomers in the house so that they could save enough to send passage money to family still in Antopol.

About this time, Nathan and David had an opportunity to buy a storeroom across the street from where they were currently in business. For awhile they debated the advisability of purchasing it, and then decided to do it. They bought the store over the strenuous objection of their mother and Fanny who feared they were overextending themselves. Business was good in the following years. The *Johnstown City Directory* of 1913

lists the family as doing business at three different locations: Glosser Brothers at 118 Franklin Street and 137 Clinton Street, as well as Glosser, L. & Sons, Clothing, 105 Franklin Street. Despite the fact that the business was doing well, it was not the best of times for Nathan personally. He became so ill with asthma that it became necessary to move away from Johnstown. After several moves to different cities, he and Fanny brought their family back to Johnstown in 1920 although they returned regularly to Michigan as well as nearby Windsor, Ontario for health reasons. Meanwhile, Louis and his sons had saved enough money to send for two more family members-Nathan, oldest child of Jenny and Joseph Ossip and Morris Levine. The boys, prime targets for conscription in the czar's army, arrived in New York City on March 25, 1914. Nathan was 14; Morris was 19. Nathan and Morris were the last members of the Glosser family that Louis and his sons would be able to sponsor to this country until 1920. Before they could send for any other members of the family, World War I broke out in August, 1914. No other Glossers would leave Antopol until two years following the signing of the Armistice in 1918 when the family was able to send for the Ossip and Weisman Families.

The period between the arrival of Louis and Nathan Glosser in the early part of the twentieth century and the arrival of the Ossip and Weisman families in 1920 was a period of dynamic growth in the Johnstown economy. By 1910 Johnstown was counted among the nation's top six steel-producing centers. As a consequence of the economic and demographic growth of the area, the city developed rapidly in a short period. As Johnstown's industrial parameters expanded, so did its population. Between the turn of the century and World War I, the population of Cambria and the three adjacent counties more than doubled. As the Johnstown area flourished, so did the Glosser enterprises. From this period on the family steadily expanded the business. With the exception of Bessie, all the family worked at the store in a variety of tasks. Nathan Ossip worked evenings in the store watching the watchman and helping to knock down walls to expand the store. In the daytime he worked in the men's clothing department. At the age of ten, Cousin Irving London was paid twenty five cents a day for working in *Glossers* on Saturday afternoons after synagogue services were over. Bella Glosser worked at a variety of jobs from cleaning the store, to selling, to keeping the books, to writing ads. The only job she disliked was fitting workmen's shoes. When a man came in to be fitted for a pair of shoes he was asked, *Are these for you, for work, or for Sundays?* Like the Glossers, many of Glossers' customers were foreign born. They felt comfortable coming to *Glossers* where the family could converse in their mother tongue.

The Jews of Johnstown strongly supported their nation's war effort after it entered on the side of the Allied powers in 1917. Several of the Glosser family

served in the United States Armed Forces. One was Nathan Glosser, son of Moses and Ida Glosser. In 1917 he entered the United States Army. He was one of the first of the American troops to be sent overseas. He was gassed during the war and although he returned home, the effects of the gas led to his early death. Sam Glosser also saw service in World War I, but not in the United States Armed forces. Blinded in his left eye by measles as a child, he failed to pass the physical necessary to join the United States Armed Forces. It was about this time, however, that the British government issued a plea for more Jewish support. A Jewish Legion was organized in 1917 at the suggestion of World Zionist leaders. Sam responded to the Zionist call. By memorizing the eye chart, he passed the physical and enlisted in the British Legion on April 29, 1918. He was stationed in Palestine and Egypt. Three other young Jews from Johnstown also served in the Jewish Legion. The Jewish enlistees from Johnstown were among five thousand who came from North America. It was while he was in the service that Sam met the girl who would become his wife, Pearl (Penina), Apter. She was the Palestinian born daughter of Russian Zionists who had made their way to Palestine in 1890. The family lived in Jaffa, Israel which was then comprised mostly of a collection of mud huts. Her family initially did not encourage her friendship with a British soldier. However, they realized this was a Jewish soldier who spoke Yiddish and Hebrew as well as some Arabic, and acceptance quickly followed. They were married on February 20, 1919, in a tent in Rehovot with Penina's family and Sam's army friends attending. Among them was David Ben Gurion who had stood guard duty with Sam many times. Freda, their oldest child, was born in Jaffa on December 20, 1919. The young couple returned to the United States in July, 1920.

The post war years saw many changes in the personal lives of the family. Although the smoke belching forth from the Bethlehem Steel Works signaled good times for business, it exacerbated Louis' asthma attacks to the point where he had to try to escape the foul air. In May, 1919, Louis, Bessie, Bella and Saul moved into a home in Westmont, a borough of the city located atop one of the mountains surrounding downtown Johnstown. Located in the most desirable section of town, it was a spacious, comfortable home which became a magnet for Johnstown's Jewish community. Although the move to Westmont offered many benefits for Louis and Bessie, one problem presented itself which had been a non-issue when the family lived downtown a short distance from the synagogue. With the move to Westmont the distance between home and synagogue became a matter of several miles which involved the steepest hill in town. For Louis and Bessie, a walk of that nature was out of the question. To drive or be driven to services would have been a desecration of the Sabbath for this strictly orthodox couple. Their only option would be to

ride the *Cambria Inclined Plane* down the 500 foot high steep Yoder Hill and walk to services from there, reversing the procedure when services were over. Louis took his problem to a *Beit Din* in Pittsburgh. The *Beit Din* decreed that it was permissible to ride the incline provided the tickets were not purchased on the Sabbath and as long as at least two non-Jews were making the trip. *The Inclined Plane*, constructed as a "lifesaver" after the Johnstown Flood of May 31, 1889, is composed of two sets of tracks implanted on the side of the hill on which two cars run simultaneously one from the bottom to the top and the other from the top to the bottom. It is billed by the Guinness book of Records as "the steepest vehicular inclined plane in the world."

The 1920s saw the family steadily expand the business from selling men's and women's clothing to becoming a general clothing store to becoming a department store and supermarket. In the process they continually expanded the store gradually taking over all the other stores in the building until by 1926 they had purchased the balance of the building including the basement. The firm was now called *Glosser Bros.* The logo under their name read *corner Franklin & Locust Sts.—Everybody's Store*. Full page ads for the store began appearing regularly in the two daily newspapers. By 1927 Glosser Bros. was advertising *Lowest in the city prices, five floors, 3 modern elevators, 71 departments, 200 employees*. Johnstown was a working class town and *Glossers* was a working class store. Blue collar customers felt comfortable shopping at Glossers where quality assortments were offered at popular, affordable prices.

Sadly, Louis Glosser did not see the dynamic growth of the firm that lay ahead. He died at his home in Westmont on July 31, 1927. Both the *Johnstown Tribune* and the *Johnstown Democrat* ran feature articles. Funeral services were conducted by the Johnstown rabbi as well as rabbis and cantors from neighboring cities. Burial took place in the Glosser family plot in Grandview Cemetery in Westmont. Surviving Louis, in addition to Bessie, were seven children, twenty-two grandchildren, and one great grandchild. *Glosser Bros.* store was closed all day. Bessie died suddenly at home of a heart attack in the early hours of Friday, October 18, 1929. She was buried beside Louis in the Glosser family plot in Grandview Cemetery. Although Louis and Bessie in their later years enjoyed affluence beyond their wildest dreams, the misery, fear and economic deprivation of their earlier years was forever etched into their psyche. As a result, almost from the time of their arrival in the United States, and long before they had achieved financial stability, they were already "giving something back" to those less fortunate. The first known involvement of Louis in a charitable fund campaign came in 1905 when he gave \$1.50 toward relief for pogrom victims in Czarist Russia. He had only been in Johnstown a short time and was just eking out a living. The next documented

record of Louis' philanthropy was in a 1918 one page biography of him entitled *Wolf Loeb Glosser*. The biography concluded by noting that Louis was a member of Rodef Sholom Congregation and the Independent Order of B'rith Abraham and that he *contributes liberally to Denver and Los Angeles Hospital, Immigration Society and all the Yshivas (sic)*. It also noted that he contributed monthly to organizations and schools in Palestine. Among the many charitable bequests that Louis made were to: the Hebrew Immigrant and Aid Society of the City of New York; the Los Angeles Sanitarium for Consumptives; the Memorial Hospital of Johnstown, Pennsylvania; Rodef Sholom Synagogue of Johnstown, Pennsylvania; the Keren Hayesod (Association in charge of the restoration of Palestine); the Meir Podot Synagogue of Antopol, Poland; the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of Antopol, Poland. Additionally, he established a \$4,000.00 trust the interest of which was to be paid annually *to the needy of Antopol, Poland*.

In many respects the life story of Louis and Bessie is the story of all eastern European Jews who came to the United States between 1880 and 1924 before the doors to free and open immigration here swung shut. They came by the hundreds of thousands to escape economic hardships and religious persecution. They came in the hope of making a better life for themselves and their children. Unlike many eastern and southern European immigrants who came as sojourners anticipating a return to the old country, virtually all Jewish immigrants came to stay. As Bella Glosser Coppersmith succinctly stated: *Once we left Antopol I never regretted it—and I never wanted to go back to the place—and that's one place I was happy to get rid of!* In many ways the lives of Louis and Bessie were characteristic of the lives of all Jews who came to America in hope of a better life. On a somewhat more selective basis their lives were similar to that small segment of eastern European Jews coming from rural shtetls who settled in small American towns. Like other small town Jews they had made their livelihood in trade and had everyday dealings and familiarity with peasants who were simultaneously migrating to America in great numbers. They were familiar with the language, habits and needs of their non-Jewish neighbors and reestablished their economic interdependence with them. To say, however, that there was nothing special about their existence and the legacy they left would be to misrepresent the essence of their being. To define their life's accomplishments in financial terms only is to diminish their legacy. Through the example of their lives they exemplified for their children and their children's children the importance of the values of *tzedakah*, a caring, harmonious family life, a personal commitment to make the world a better place, and the value of a good name. □

A Precious Legacy: Louis Glosser and Bessie Greenberg Glosser—1854-1929. JGSLA Library Collection at the FHC.

How Our Great-Grandfather Won the Civil War for the North

by Paul King

This singular family legend was known to the author in its bare outline many decades before he considered undertaking a quest for genealogical roots. It was related by Aunt Bert (Bertha King Draimin, 1880-1980), daughter of the central protagonist, Karl Konig (1837-1915).

I The Legend

Aunt Bert proudly but casually told and retold—perhaps mentioned would be more accurate—how her father had won the Civil War for the North.

In 1857, at the age of 20, Karl Konig (anglicized to Charles King) arrived in North America from Prague where he had been trained as an apprentice tanner in his uncle's leather manufacturing firm. He carried a letter of introduction, written in perfect English by his uncle, stating his professional qualifications. It was addressed to an unspecified recipient in the leather trade in Boston. His older brother, Joseph, followed him in 1858.

When the Civil War began, Charles King was employed in a tannery somewhere in the northern states (probably in the New York or Boston area).

According to Aunt Bert:

When the Northern battleship, *Monitor*, was authorized for construction, the contractors had difficulty finding a person qualified to manufacture the leather belt required for the innovative design of the vessel. Time was of the essence since the Southern battleship, *Merrimac*, was already at an advanced stage of construction. There was great fear not only that a prior launching would give the South mastery of the sea lanes, but would also result in the destruction of the *Monitor* as it emerged from dry-dock. Charles King possessed professional know-how in leather belt production for industrial purposes and when this became known to the contractors, the tannery where he was employed received the charge to supply the desired equipment. The search for expertise in this type of tanning had resulted in serious delay in the assembly of the main engines powering the vessel. The task was completed in record time; the *Monitor* was launched and encountered the *Merrimac* in open waters. The Northern battleship overcame its Southern opponent and this was the decisive engagement which guaranteed the Union forces full control of the sea and unfettered blockade of the Atlantic shipping lanes the entire length of the coast. From this point in the Civil War, all major engagements were between land forces. Given the preponderant advantage in manpower and supplies, it was simply a matter of time before the North overcame the armies of the Confederacy.

Ergo, our great-grandfather won the Civil War for the North!

II Family Legend Deflated

On a family vacation to Washington in the summer of 1988, the author placed a call from the front desk of the Smithsonian Institute to an expert in nineteenth century naval history. Over the course of about eight minutes, with children tugging at father to 'get going', I posed a number of questions aimed at attempting to authenticate the family legend. Among those questions was the possibility of tracing the whereabouts of the tannery that won the contract for manufacturing the *Monitor's* leather belt. With this knowledge, perhaps I could find information from local archives, especially in newspapers from this period. More important was the effort of authenticating the employment of Charles King at that tannery and associating him with the manufacture of the leather belts.

From deep in the recesses of the Smithsonian the telephone respondent swiftly demolished a number of legendary accretions which had emasculated historical truth. No, the *Merrimac* and the *Monitor* were not the first ironclad battle ships. No, this was not the first time that a leather belt had been made for an ironclad vessel. No, there was no evidence of delay in launching and certainly no evidence that the manufacture of leather belts for the ship's engine was a problem. And most deflating of all: No, it would not be possible to trace the subcontract for the leather belt because it was customary at this time for all contracts to be signed in the name of the chief contractor. I left the Smithsonian and headed for the Washington Zoo, convinced that the iron-cage of civil war bureaucracy would never reveal the authenticity of the King family contribution to the most famous naval battle in the Civil War.

III A Startling Revelation

In the late 1990s, I began to take a more lively interest in general family history. Our great grandfather was supposed to have been active in local politics and attained a high position in county politics in Canada. Through the Internet, I made contact with the Whitby, Ontario, Canada archivist, Brian Winter. I asked whether there was any information about our great-grandfather's political activities in the latter part of the nineteenth century. We had been told that he had at one time been Warden of the County of Ontario, an elected post whose occupant presides over the County Council. Mr. Winter obliged and over the next two years sent photocopies of various publications from the local newspaper of that period pertaining to political and economic activities of

Charles King. An article in *The Whitby Chronicle*, August 26, 1880, is an interview with Charles King which takes place on the tannery premises. It reads:

“Would you like to come in and see the big belt that they are making here for the Harbour Company’s engine?” . . . Acquiescing, we enter and encounter Mr. Charles King, the senior member of the firm.

“Where’s that big belt?” our friend asks.

“Walk this way. I am at work on it,” is the reply. And led by Mr. Charles King we pass through the store room, upstairs to the first flat, encountering great bundles of leather, and leather in all stages of manufacture on the way. On a long bench extended by the windows on the south side of the room, we are shown the belt. The pieces have already been cemented, it is explained. Mr. King takes up the tools and dextrously [sic] goes through the process of riveting – putting in and firmly clinching the copper rivets in a few minutes. The belt is, we are informed, 50 feet in length and 12 inches in width, and made out of the heaviest steer-hide, tanned specially for belting.

“That’s a pretty big one,” we remarked. “Do you often have orders for such?”

“Quite a few but this one is nothing to some belts I have made,” answers brother King.

We give a questioning look, and are then told that the brother King before us was the maker and manipulator of the largest belts ever turned out in the States. The belt for the Green Point Oil Works measured 80 feet in length and 4 feet wide, double thickness, and the belt for the Star Fire Engine Works, Yonkers, made by Mr. King before the war, 103 feet by 3 feet – double thickness.”

While the article did not verify the Civil War story, it confirmed our great-grandfather’s expertise in the manufacture of large leather belts for industrial purposes. It made reference to his pre-Civil War experience in this field and revealed a steady output of belts of this type destined for factories in the eastern seaboard region. In Canada, he continued to receive contracts from New York State firms for industrial belts. Thus, Aunt Bert’s story appeared to be on the path to revival as authentic history.

IV The European Background

The Pollak & Sons tanneries (1833-1867), situated in Prague’s Tiroлка and Smichov suburbs, specialized in the newly developing field of patent leather. Whether they also produced leather for industrial needs is not known but the tannery’s owners had the necessary business channels for supplying leather appurtenances to the emerging industrial economy of Bohemia. The Industrial Revolution came later to Bohemia than to the rest of Western Europe and its advent embraced a proportionally high number of Jewish entrepreneurs. In part, the late 18th century reforms of Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790) encouraged Jews to shift from peddling and petty trades to manufacture and productive areas of the economy but the start-up costs were often dear. Joseph Joachim Pollak



Karl Koenig left; Leopold Koenig, center; Joseph Koenig, right. The picture was taken in 1857, presumably in Prague

paid his way into Prague’s nascent bourgeoisie in 1815. Jews were not granted residential mobility until the revolution of 1848 and only through *schutz* (protection) by a noble or purchase of trading and manufacturing rights which did not harm the dominant urban guilds could they change their place of habitation.

Samuel Koenig’s marriage to Rosalie Weil in 1829 produced five children, one of them great grandfather Karl Koenig. Samuel and Rosalie perished in the plague of 1848. Orphaned and without family means, the Koenig brothers received personal care at first from their older sister, Franziska. But Franziska was of marriageable age and the brothers may have temporarily been cared for by relatives living in nearby small villages along the Moldau about 45 kilometers southwest of Prague. By the mid 1850s, a maternal uncle, Adam Pollak of J. J. Pollak and Sons took three of the Koenig brothers into the family firm and provided them with professional training as tanners.

The Pollak family was developing along the generational lines given prominence in Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*. The self-made man of the first generation had conferred hard-earned capital to his son for development and continued prosperity of the family business and the following generation had the necessary means and accompanying leisure to become creative artists and men of learning.¹ Joseph Joachim Pollak

(1771-1871), who had established a reputation for wholesale distribution and large-scale enterprise, was to be ennobled for his contribution in the planning and construction of a major bridge. Unfortunately, shortly before the scheduled ceremony for his status elevation, the bridge collapsed. Perhaps to save the Government embarrassment, JJ opted for the acceptance of land ownership rights rather than honorary entitlement.

The Pollak tanning concerns—two factories were established in two Prague suburbs—had the support of a silent, but active, partner in the von Portheim (Porges) family. The von Portheims had set up their own cotton-manufacturing factory, which by 1843 was employing more than 700 workers and they financed a number of other large-scale enterprises in the vicinity of Prague, including the Pollak tanneries. This business connection was cemented by the marriage of Adam Pollak to Leopold Portheim's first child, Marie von Portheim. In all likelihood, the Pollak tannery had contracts for supplying the leather belts that ran the impressive new machinery for some of these factories. Leopold and his older brother, Moses, introduced the first steam-powered engines into their cotton manufacturing plant in the Prague suburb of Smichov and it was this innovation which led the Emperor to bestow upon them the patent of hereditary nobility in 1841.2 Ironically, the economic and social forces with their assimilatory impact upon Czech Jewry were also the resultant cause of their mass exodus in the wake of the failed 1848 Revolution. These innovations in manufacturing caused political unrest among the urban workers and much resentment was directed toward the Jews whose salient contributions to a burgeoning capitalism were held responsible for driving down the wage rate and making labor-power expendable. The "On to America" movement which gripped Czech Jewry was largely sparked by the anti-Jewish disturbances during the 1848 Revolution but was also attributable to heightened ethnic tensions between German and Czech populations which cast most Jews in the role of "foreigner". At the tale end of the "On to America" movement Karl Koenig left Prague for America followed a year later by his older brother, Joseph. Karl was now an apprentice tanner and Joseph a master craftsman in the same trade.

VI The Iron-Clad Military Encounter

In the construction of the ironclad *Merrimac*, the Confederate armed forces intended to keep their supply lines to Europe open and even to obtain superiority over the Union's Navy. Construction work began in the early summer of 1861 at the Norfolk Navy Yard in Gosport, Virginia. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, relates regarding the *Merrimac* that "the work of construction was prosecuted with all haste."³ Progress in its building was conveyed by Northern spies. Their observations were published in the Northern newspapers and generated great apprehension in Union naval circles.

The circumstances leading up to the decision by Abraham Lincoln and his Secretary of War to build an ironclad battleship are well documented. Evaluation of the dire military repercussions of such a vessel confronting the Union's fleet prompted President Lincoln to approve an accelerated building program to counter the impending naval threat. The Union was already deploying ironclad gunboats on the Mississippi. When John Ericsson's design for "an impregnable iron battery" was finally approved, the renowned engineer was given one hundred days to complete its construction or else forfeit the \$275,000 contract. On December 5, with more than 60 percent of the stipulated time for completion having elapsed, Ericsson received a missive from Commodore Joseph Smith noting that he had received information concerning serious delays in material production. Could this have included the leather belts which Charles King manufactured? On December 17, the boilers and additional mechanical appurtenances arrived at Continental Iron Works. By December 30, the boiler fires were lit and the steam machinery tested. Clearly, the leather belts for these machines had arrived and had been assembled on time. The craft was launched on 30 January 1862 and set out for its rendezvous with destiny on March 6.

The *Monitor* barely survived its three day journey to Hampton Roads. Rough seas nearly flooded the ship. Charles King's leather belts were put to the test and at one point gave way to the inundating forces of nature. Lieutenant Greene recalled that *the waves broke over the blower-pipes, and the water came down through them in such quantities that the belts of the blower-engine slipped, and the engines consequently stopped for lack of artificial draught. . . .*⁴ Eventually, in calmer seas, the ships' engineers, one with the improbable name of Isaac Newton, made the necessary repairs. Damage to the operative machinery was so severe that for a time the *Monitor* was completely dependent upon its tugboat as it advanced towards Virginia.

The Confederate forces were dependent upon supplies from Europe. In order to impair the importation of vital commodities, the North imposed a naval blockade from Virginia to the Gulf States. Stephen R. Mallory, Secretary of the Confederate States Navy, had stated that *the possession of an iron-armored ship [w]as a matter of the first necessity. Such a vessel . . . could traverse the entire coast, prevent all blockades, and encounter a fair prospect of success. . . . Naval success dictates the wisdom and expedience of fighting with iron against wood.*⁵ Upon request, appropriations were allocated and work began in earnest in July 1861. By early March 1862, the *Merrimac*, ironically built from the hulk of a sunken Union frigate, the *Virginia*, left dry-dock. The local public heard that the *Monitor* was on its way. Crowds gathered in a picnic atmosphere to watch the fateful battle of the two ironclad ships.

In order to meet his deadline for constructing

the *Monitor*, Ericsson subcontracted manufacture to eight foundries, most of them in New York State. The ship was assembled at Continental Iron Works in Greenpoint, New York. Unfortunately, there is no indication of where the leather belts were manufactured although a key to their discovery may be associated with the locations which fabricated the engines and boilers—Delameter Iron Works of New York City, and the donkey engine to power the turret—Clute Brothers and Company of Schenectady.⁶

Commodore Joseph Smith informed Ericsson by letter on 5 December 1861 that there were serious delays in material production. This correspondence has not been traced so it is not known whether it reveals the specific items causing delay. Should the leather belt manufacture be mentioned, it would be a convincing validation of the family legend. In any case, “delay” is an integral part of both the legend and the authentic account.

VII The Military Effectiveness of the *Merrimac*

On March 8, the *Merrimac*, now christened the *Virginia*, engaged elements of the Northern fleet in Chesapeake Bay and began to make mincemeat of the Union naval vessels in its immediate compass. In one evening, it rammed the *Cumberland* leaving a gaping hole which sank the ship, set the *Congress* aflame, and caused the now-cautious *Minnesota* to run aground about a mile and half distant from the *Congress*. The *Roanoke* and the *St. Lawrence* beat a hasty retreat toward the fort from which they had earlier set forth. As the tide went out, the *Merrimac* retired for the night. In the thick of the night, the *Monitor*, after a harrowing three-day struggle in rough seas en route from New York, slipped into the battle zone and anchored beside the vulnerable *Minnesota*. Its appearance at the height of Northern military tragedy was a veritable *deus et machina*

The next day the first encounter in history between two ironclad warships took place. The *Monitor*, whose draught was almost half that of the *Merrimac* (approximately 12 feet as opposed to 22 feet), was slightly faster, and could turn on a dime, was able to run circles around its opponent. Nevertheless, the point-blank exchange of fire-power failed to inflict serious damage on either ship. The *Merrimac* withdrew to its base for reassessment of the situation and although it made several later sorties for the purposes of engagement, it was not challenged. Its navigators knew that it was not seaworthy outside the sheltered waters of Chesapeake Bay. In effect, the southern ironclad was neutralized and in danger of capture. As General McLellan advanced up the Peninsula, orders came to scuttle the ship. Its flag officer wrote: *Thus perished the Virginia and with her many high flown hopes of naval supremacy and success.*

In retrospect, avoidance of a final showdown presented a rosier picture of the *Merrimac*'s accomplishments. One author almost a half-century after the event wrote an account entitled: *How the Merrimac Won: the strategic story of the CSS Virginia*. The *Monitor*

survived for another eight months before it sank in heavy weather. But the naval tide had turned against the South. Its naval offensive of one day, which threatened to neutralize the Union's navy, came to an abrupt end. The Army of the Potomac took its first marching steps within a week of the naval fight. Later, when Grant took over general command, it was only a matter of time before the Northern land forces by sheer magnitude of manpower and well-oiled supply lines would overcome the Confederate forces. Years later, Jefferson Davis gave his reflections on the inevitable military outcome. *At the North many had been deceived by the fictions of preparations at the South for the war of the sections, and among ourselves were few who realized how totally deficient the Southern states were in all which was necessary to the active operation of an army, however gallant the men might be, and however able were the generals who directed and led them. From these causes, operating jointly, resulted undue caution at the North and overweening confidence at the South.*⁸

The South sought an international counterweight to its deficiency in men and materiel through stimulation of European state interests in maintaining a viable economic link with Confederate cotton exports. As a corollary to this economic policy, it hoped for European military intervention against the North's military blockade. The neutralization of the *Merrimac* at Hampton Roads convinced the interested European powers that the Confederate alliance was not in the long run a viable political entity. When some weeks later the *Merrimac* was destroyed by Southern orders to prevent its capture during the Peninsula Campaign, its flag officer wrote: *Thus perished the Virginia and with her many high flown hopes of naval supremacy and success.*

Conclusion

Since leather is a biodegradable product, it might be properly assumed that any remnants of the *Monitor*'s hide belts would have long succumbed to the decomposing agents of sea water. Wrong! In 1973, the *Monitor* was found off Cape Hatteras and since then various artifacts, including a section of the leather belt, have been brought to the surface and safeguarded at The Mariner's Museum in Newport News, Virginia. Moreover, the original plans are available. Thus, a picture regarding the length, width and chemical qualities of the belt can be ascertained. The delay in manufacturing parts for the battleship is documented in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy but as of this writing no letters have come to light which identify the specific items. As for Charles King's unique expertise, it would be historically accurate to assert that at this time few individuals would possess the necessary skills in this manufacturing area because of the vessel's innovative features. Given his expanded knowledge in treating hides chemically (apprenticeship in the Leather and Lacquer factory in

Prague) and the close association of that Prague tannery with the von Portheim family, who had introduced steam-powered engines into their cotton-print enterprises, allows for a speculative but highly plausible presumption that Charles King was that rare man for the indispensable job at the right time.

Charles King came to the United States in 1857 but family genealogy has not been able to locate his residence or place of work during the five years he was in the country. One record does show a Charles Koenig, age 24, residing in New York City in 1860, and whose profession is given as a 'varnisher'. (He was age 23 when the census was taken but in his 24th year) Charles King was an apprentice at a Prague tannery which specialized in patent leather. This was called a *lackir fabrik*, a term applied to the technique for making patent leather. In 1862, his brother, Joseph, requested from their younger brother in Prague that a passport extension be obtained and sent to the consulate in New York. No other clue has emerged although a more thorough examination of the 1860 census records or ships' manifests may locate both Charles and Joseph.

By April 1863, Charles had arrived in Whitby, in Upper Canada, where he and his brother continued in

their professions, now as owners of their own firm, King Bros. Tannery. The life of Charles King from this time forward is fairly well documented, especially his political career in the county town of Whitby, which included two nominations within his local Liberal Party to run as a member for Parliament. He lost both nominations to another candidate in the Party but enjoyed more than twenty years in elected office on the town council and local Board of Education, as well as serving as President of the Whitby Board of Trade. It is perhaps the case that the belt manufacture story was told by Charles King as part of family memorabilia but was not regarded as having any historical import worthy of being recited in public. Aunt Bert left the family with a few brief notations and accounts of ancestral whereabouts and doings. Except for the odd minor inexactitude with regard to date or place, her accounts in our genealogical research have proved to be accurate.

There is now no reason to doubt great-grandfather's historic role in the fight for freedom and justice on the North American Continent—and as legend—well, isn't it a nice piece of family lore? □

Notes

1. Joseph Joachim's struggle for economic rights and commercial stability in the first three decades of the 19th c is partially documented through legal petitions addressed to state administrative authorities which levied extraordinary financial charges against him for the privilege of conducting his business. His son, Adam, and other family members gradually took over responsibility for their father's tanning enterprise.
2. William O. McCagg, *A History of the Habsburg Jews, 1670 – 1918*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989: 75; for Leopold [Juda] Porges von Portheim, <http://www.porges.net/FamilyTreeBiographies/BiographiesVonPortheim.html#lp>
3. Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America from the Revolution to the Civil War during the next three or four decades [from 1810]*
4. Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, vol. II, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1881: 196
5. Quoted in Paul Dietzel, "The Fantastic Struggles of the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*," *The American Legion Magazine*, March 1969, 30-4, 51-7.
6. "Development, Design, and Construction of the *Monitor*," <http://www.monitorcenter.org/history/ussmonitor/monitor1.php>
7. Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, I, 314.
8. *Civil War Naval Chronology 1861-1865*, Naval History Division, Navy Department, Washington, 1971, II-62. James P. Baxter, a noted expert in 19th century naval developments, *The Introduction of the Ironclad Warship*, Annapolis, Md.:

VOLUNTEER

Serve on the JGS Board

Become a Mentor

Help at the Family History Center

Become the Editor of Roots-Key

Take part in the Cemetery Project

Write <president@jgsla> or call 626-441-3729 and leave a message

Milt Gabler, Storekeeper of the Jazz World

David B. Hoffman

A man can move a mountain with his back, and the world with a song. . . Milton Gabler

Jazz is undeniably one of America's unique and great contributions to the world. My mother's first cousin, Milt Gabler, made an enormous contribution to jazz and nearly every other music form in a career spanning five decades, from the 1930s to the 1970s. When he died at age 90 in July 1991, his *New York Times* obituary credited him with having founded America's first independent jazz record label, being the first to reissue out-of-print jazz recordings, and for years operating what many considered New York City's most comprehensive and knowledgeable jazz record store.

Milt Gabler was born in Harlem on May 10, 1911, the oldest of six children. His mother, Susie Kasindorf Gabler, had been born in New York City; her parents came to America in 1885 from Mogilev, Belarus and Kaunas, Lithuania via Rostov-on-Don, Russia. Milt's father, Julius Gabler, had come from Vienna, Austria. Milt grew up on the streets of New York and was first exposed to jazz as a teenager while spending summers at his family's cottage at Silver Beach in the Bronx. In 1926, he began working after high school at his father's 42nd Street radio store, which didn't even sell music at the time. Milt suggested that the store begin to sell phonographs and a few records. Placed in charge of calling all of the record companies in the Yellow Pages and ordering records, his interest in jazz became a passion.

Milt took over management of the store in 1932 in the midst of the depression. He put up a loudspeaker over the door and played jazz records all day. Jazz fans gathered on the sidewalk to listen and came indoors asking for the records. Milt began buying all the jazz records he could find from bargain counters, the Salvation Army, and companies going out of business and stuffing them into a store that was a mere nine feet wide and filled with remnants of its radio shop days. He could hardly keep up with the demand. The shop itself became a rendezvous for jazz lovers, collectors, musicians and critics. Milt was such a soft touch for out of work musicians, who never left his shop without money for a meal or two (what Milt called 'an advance') that his generosity was commemorated by Bud Freedman, the saxophonist in Tommy Dorsey's band, in his composition, "Tapping the Commodore Till."

As his love for music grew, so did his frustration at the difficulty of finding the small-combo jazz recordings that his customers loved. So in 1935 Milt began reissuing and selling out-of-print records on his own Commodore Music Shop label. Thus was born America's first all-jazz label.

The popularity of Commodore's reissues grew until the major record labels refused to continue the Gabler

lease on the masters. That was just fine with our cousin, who had been sitting in on the recording sessions and had grown dissatisfied with the way in which the major labels were handling musicians. On January 17, 1938, Milt held his first recording session on his own label. His recordings included top artists such as Lester Young, Billie Holiday, Jess Stacy, Benny Goodman, Chuck Berry and his personal favorite, Eddie Condon. Milt was an unusual producer; he actively participated in arranging, directing and all of the technical aspects of recording.

Milt organized the first of his legendary Sunday afternoon jazz sessions at Jimmy Ryan's on 52nd Street. It was clear to anyone who knew him, that he was in the business for love, and it was a feeling he wanted to share. He later wrote, "You try to interest one friend in it. You open his ears, and he tunes his heart to it. Then in turn he introduces someone else to the sound, the beauty and excitement of jazz."

In 1939, Billie Holiday's recording company, Columbia, refused to record "Strange Fruit" fearing the loss of sales in the South. She took the song to Gabler, known to be a politically engaged independent producer, with a demonstrated commitment to racial justice. It was a no-holds barred exposé of lynching and the society that tolerated it at the time – 42 lynchings of Blacks had occurred in the previous two years. It was the first racial protest song, a collaboration of a left-wing Jewish high school teacher, Abel Meeropol, and Billie Holiday.

*Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black body swinging on the Southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.*

Sixty years later, *Time Magazine* crowned "Strange Fruit" Song of the Century. Billie Holliday returned to Commodore in 1944, to resume her collaboration with Milt. Her skills for musical interpretation were at a peak and Gabler brought her songs worthy of her talent. Kern's "Yesterdays," Yip Harburg's "I'm Yours," and the Romberg-Hammerstein "Lover Come Back to Me" are thought to be the best of all of Holiday's recordings.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Commodore Records recorded almost 90 records, using more than 150 musicians and singers. *The New Yorker* in 1946 quoted an unnamed musician: "A ray comes out of Gabler. You can't help doing something the way he wants. Here is this guy, can't read a note of music and he practically tells you what register you're going to play in just by the position of your head."

In 1941, Milt was lured away to Decca records where he worked until 1971. He worked with artists from

the entire spectrum of popular music, and remained active in his own record company and family store until the last official Commodore record was made in 1954. During his thirty years at Decca, he became their top A&R man (finding talent and producing their records), boasting numerous impressive achievements, including production of more than twenty-one records which sold over a million copies.

In 1954, Gabler became the "handmaiden" of Rock n' Roll, recording "Rock Around the Clock," by Bill Haley and the Comets, in a live performance. They feared that it had been too loud, but the record set off another revolution in music. The citation accompanying his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, noted that his impact on Rock and Roll began with his production of Louis Jordan's "hottest jump-blues sides from the Forties. These uptempo R&B records served as blueprints for the sides Gabler later cut with Bill Haley in the Fifties. 'All the tricks I used with Louis Jordan, I used with Bill Haley,' Gabler said. 'The only difference was the way we did the rhythm. On Jordan, we used a perfectly balanced rhythm section from the Swing era...but Bill had the heavy backbeat.' In other words, rhythm & blues became rock & roll, under Gabler's watchful eye, through a shift in rhythmic emphasis."

The songs that he produced describe a history of pop music in America: Pearl Bailey's "It Takes Two to Tango," Ella Fitzgerald's "Stone Cold Dead in the Market," Sammy Davis, Jr.'s "Hey There," Louis Armstrong's "Blueberry Sky," Hoagy Carmichael's "Old Buttermilk Sky," Eddie Condon and His Windy City Seven's "Love is Just Around the Corner," Wild Bill Davidson and His Commodores' "That's a Plenty," Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra's "Flying Home," "Dick Haymes and the Song Spinners' "You'll Never Know," Billie Holiday's "Lover Man (Oh, Where Can You Be?)," The Andrews Sisters' "Rum and Coca-Cola," "Bing Crosby and the Jesters' "McNamara's Band," Ella Fitzgerald's "Oh Lady Be Good," Louis Armstrong's "Blueberry Hill," Peggy Lee's "Lover," The Mills Brothers' "The Glow Worm," Kitty Kallen's "Little Things Mean a Lot," The Four Aces' "Three Coins in the Fountain." Milt also stood up to the anti-communist hysteria by recording the left-leaning Weavers' No. 1 song, "Goodnight Irene." As a lyricist, he wrote many lyrics for different artists, including "In a Mellow Tone" for Duke Ellington and "Love" for Nat King Cole and many others, but he rarely took credit for his work.

Milt was the first with the idea of bringing together Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald in songs such as "Dream a Little Dream of Me." Gabler was also first to record Broadway musicals. Then he persuaded Decca to acquire Domenico Modugno's Italian-made master of "Volare," which in 1958 won the first Grammy Record of the Year and Song of the Year awards. In 1946, in a *New Yorker* profile, Milt said of the musicians he worked with, "They've got such big souls." The musicians felt the same

way about Milt: "For a non-musician, he had a better musical taste – and less hair – than anyone I've every known in my life," jazz guitarist Eddie Condon once wrote. "He has ears like an elephant," another musician praised. "And he's the nicest bastard I know."

After he retired, the reverberations from Milt's five decades of accomplishments in the music industry kept him busy accepting awards and recognition. In 1991 he was given The Trustees Grammy Award for Lifetime Achievement by the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences; in 1993, Milt was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Los Angeles. Three of Milt's records had already been honored in the eight years of the Hall of Fame's existence. Milt's nephew, Billy Crystal, had the honor of presenting the award. Milton was pleased that his "life's work [was] so appreciated."

Gabler's nephews, Richard and Billy Crystal, benefited from hanging around Commodore and being exposed to musicians and celebrities in their early years. Richard became a successful performer, writer, producer and director. In an interview on NPR's "All Things Considered" (April 2005), Billy said that without Uncle Milt, he never would have entered show business.

While in Los Angeles, Milton met with us, as the family historians, bringing along a large briefcase full of photographs, newspaper and magazine clippings, and his unpublished autobiography, "Reflections from a Bald Head." He wanted to leave copies of these materials with us so that his lifetime's work would be accurately remembered. In our interview he reminisced about his life. Much of this is summed up for his family in his autobiography: *A recording is a living thing. It gives off sound and preserves the performance of a combination of talents, including your own. All must fall into place perfectly to live and breath. A song can be more than a one act play. It must have a beginning, a climax, and an ending; most important of all, to make it really everlasting, it must have a tune to it.*

GOOD is not good enough. You take a good artist and a good song; a good arranger and good musicians; put them all together in a good studio with good engineers and, if you only get a good record ...it is NOT good enough! You must do better. YOU are the secret ingredient, the catalyst; too much, or too little of yourself can ruin the pie. In addition, you must do it without the performers ever being aware of it. It is their record and their careers you toy with. All you can do is give birth to the creature.

Notes:

1. *Billy Crystal Presents: The Milt Gabler Story*, (CD-DVD Combo), Verve Records, 3/15/2005, Ashley Kahn's liner notes.
2. *New York Times*, "Milt Gabler, Shopkeeper of the Jazz World," Douglas Martin, July 25, 2001.
3. *The New Yorker*, November 26, 1990, "Jazz: The Commodores."

“And that, as they say, is history...”

by Joan Adler

Straus Family Historian and Newsletter Editor

The earliest records we have for the Lazarus Straus family come from the Palatinate of Bavaria. This area was passed between France and Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1806 Napoleon convened the Assembly of Notables in an effort to “reconcile the beliefs of the Jews with the duties of the Frenchman and to make them useful citizens.” Jakob ben Lazar (Jacques Lazare/Jacques Loeser/Loesser) (1754-1834) was selected to represent the Department of Mont Tonnerre, a large area whose capital was Mayence, later called Mainz. One result of this Assembly was that Napoleon decreed that Jews must take surnames. The family formally adopted the name Straus in 1808. Family stories tell us that this name was selected because of a bas-relief plaque depicting an ostrich that was affixed outside the door to the Straus’ Otterberg home. Straus is the German word for ostrich.

Jacob Straus (Jakob ben Lazar) was the father of Isaak and grandfather of Lazarus Straus. Members of the Straus family were landowners, cattle merchants and dealers in grain. They were educated people who spoke French, German and Hebrew. Isaak Straus (1788-1838) had 14 children. Lazarus was his oldest. During the Revolution of 1848, Lazarus recruited volunteers. He spent a considerable amount of money for the cause although he did not participate directly. The political and economic conditions at this time were unsettled and people suffered greatly. Landowners were unable to collect rent or interest on their property. Lazarus auctioned one parcel of land but was unable to collect payment. In order to protect the family’s other interests, he declared bankruptcy. The difficult economic factors and suspicion thrust upon him as a result of his participation in the Revolution of 1848 were integral in Lazarus’ decision to immigrate to the United States. His passport was issued in Sarraguemines, France on May 26, 1852. Although we have not found his passenger manifest, family lore tells us Lazarus traveled from Le Havre to Philadelphia.

When he arrived, Philadelphia was already crowded with established merchants. He traveled to Oglethorpe, Georgia where people he knew from Germany, the Kaufman brothers, were dry goods merchants. They set Lazarus up with a pushcart. Pushcart peddling was a noble profession for a white man in the South during this era. Large plantations were widely scattered throughout the area and peddlers brought news from other plantations, socialized, were housed and fed and filled orders with requested goods as well as bringing news items from the north. Lazarus arrived in Talbotton, and found the active business and the festivities to his liking. This was the first town that made him feel he had gotten away from the uncouth, primitive and frontier-like conditions that characterized every other settlement he’d passed through. He and the Kaufman brothers agreed to open a dry good store, using half the space of Captain

Curley’s store. By 1854 Lazarus felt sufficiently established to send for his wife Sara (1825-1876) and four children: Isidor (1845-1912), Hermine (1846-1923), Nathan (1848-1931) and Oscar (1850-1926).

Sara Straus left Otterberg, Germany August 24, 1854. She traveled by carriage to Kaiserslautern with her children and a nursemaid. Her father accompanied them on horseback. From there they took a train to Forbach, a French frontier town where they remained overnight. The next morning they proceeded to Paris. On August 29th they left for Le Havre where they sailed on the maiden voyage of the steamship *St. Louis*. The family arrived in New York on September 13, 1854. Lazarus met them at the dock. After several days in New York they traveled to Philadelphia where they remained for several weeks because of a yellow fever epidemic in Savannah. Then they sailed to Savannah. They had to stay in the primitive Savannah railway station until their train left in the evening for Geneva. A stagecoach (called a rockaway) took them the final few miles to their new home in Talbotton. This trip was all the more remarkable because Sara suffered a stroke in 1851 that left her partially disabled.

Nathan described their initial reaction to their new house as one of pleasure and amazement. The house was on stilts, having no cellar and being erected on wooden posts set several feet apart. Oscar wrote in his autobiography, *Under Four Administrations*, that it was a log house with *luxurious outer and inner dressing of clap-boarding painted white. The logs on the upper story where we children played and slept had no covering, which pleased us all the more.*

Sara was a frugal housewife who asked her husband for an allowance of \$20 from which she ran the household. Out of this sum she saved enough in two years to buy a piano for Hermine’s lessons. The family, while against slavery, did own slaves. Their slaves were



treated so well that slaves from other masters asked to be bought by the Strauses. Lazarus made certain the servants in his household learned to read and write and, once able to provide for themselves, he freed them. When the family moved north after the Civil War, the two youngest slaves moved with them.

Isidor and Nathan attended Collinsworth Institute between 1856 and 1861 where they studied Orthography, Writing, Geography, Grammar, Arithmetic, Higher Mathematics, Astronomy, Rhetoric, Latin, Greek, Declamation and Composition. Isidor received "practically all the schooling I have enjoyed" at Collinsworth Institute. Hermine attended LeVert College, a school for girls. During the Civil War Oscar, the youngest child, continued his education in Columbus, Georgia, 38 miles to the west. Nathan went to Montgomery, Alabama for advanced studies while Isidor left school to help his father in the dry goods store.

The Strauses were observant Jews but there was no synagogue in Talbotton so the children attended the local Baptist Sunday school. The minister, a close family friend, taught Bible studies. He read to them only from the Old Testament. The Baptist and Methodist ministers often visited the Straus home where they discussed the Bible and held philosophical conversations with Lazarus.

The Strauses had a vegetable garden and grew almost all their own produce. They raised chickens for eggs and meat. They had a smokehouse where they smoked bacon, their only other meat—fresh meat being a rarity in that part of the country. Lazarus was a practical man who knew his family needed the protein of meat in order to be healthy. There was no prohibition to eating pork in this southern family. Sara dried and smoked cubes of sweet potato, mixed that with ground grains of wheat and used it in place of coffee. During the Civil War they lived largely on cornbread and molasses. Salt was reclaimed from the earthen floor of the smokehouse. The children were barefoot nine months of the year.

As conditions in the south deteriorated during the Civil War, a Grand Jury Presentment was issued in September 1862. It stated: *The spirit of speculation and extortion is rife in every department of trade, and has become an evil of such alarming extent as, in our opinion, to seriously threaten the peace of the country.* Elsewhere in this presentment it is suggested that the Jews were responsible for this speculation and extortion. Lazarus was a prominent figure in Talbotton but was deeply hurt by the inferences in the presentment. He made plans to move from Talbotton to nearby Columbus. Although many citizens came forward to assure him that they were not referring to him, the family moved in 1863.

During the war, Lazarus' business partner, Julius Kaufman joined the Fourth Georgia Regiment. He was injured before long and returned to Talbotton. Isidor worked in his father's store while Mr. Julius was away. He wanted to continue his education but all the schools

were closed. His desire to enter West Point was thwarted by the outbreak of the war. He then thought about entering Marietta Military Academy. But a prank by the students there turned him against that idea. Isidor became the secretary of Lloyd G. Bowers, a man who put together a group of investors who were going to commission the building of blockade running ships in Scotland. The ships were going to bring cotton and tobacco from the south to England. The proceeds from their sale would be used to build more ships. Only one ship was built. Isidor ran the blockade in Charleston Harbor in June 1863. He remained in Europe trading bonds until the end of the war. He wrote home as many as six or seven times a day, hoping at least one letter would get through the blockade. By 1865, when the war as over and it was safe to return to the United States, he had saved \$10,000 in gold. He was 20 years old.

On July 7, 1865 Lazarus wrote to his brother-in-law Jacob in Germany describing the "last battle" lost in Columbus and the "robberies, fires and killings" to which they were witness. (General Wilson did not receive word that the war was over and burned Columbus Georgia.) This seems to have been the final insult for Lazarus Straus who moved his family to Philadelphia. Once reunited with his family, Isidor advised his father to move to New York where Isidor bought his mother a high stoop, three-story house at 220 West 49th Street. Lazarus disposed of his remaining cotton in order to pay his debts to suppliers incurred before and during the war. He said, *I propose to pay my debts in full and leave my children a good name even if I should leave them nothing else.* In letters to his family in Germany he wrote that he would feel calmer and more satisfied as soon as he had a going business again.

After the Civil War suppliers of merchandise to antebellum accounts remained largely unpaid. The owner of Cauldwell's crockery firm was impressed with Lazarus' integrity after his insistence on paying off his debts. He sold Lazarus the business. He told Lazarus that an honest income could be earned in this business but he should not expect to become rich. Lazarus arranged for a three-year lease on a store, basement and top loft on Chambers Street in New York City for \$3,000 a year with Cauldwell's support. In 1866, L. Straus & Son grossed \$60,000. Once Nathan completed his education, he joined his father and brother in business. His restless spirit made him the perfect outside salesman, opening up markets and opportunities for the family business. One of his accounts was R. H. Macy's. In 1874 he induced Rowland Hussey Macy to allow them to open a 25' X 100' crockery concession in the basement. For the first time, dry goods and home furnishings were sold under one roof. It was on this distinction that Macy's claimed to be the "original department store." By 1888 the Straus family were partners in R. H. Macy's and in 1896 they were sole owners. *The rest, as they say, is history.* □

Last Will and Testament: Unraveling the Hymes-Prince Family of South Carolina

By Judy Archer

In 2004, I posted an inquiry to the JewishGen Early American SIG Digest. To my surprise I received an email from another Hyams/Prince researcher. Late in 2004, I started to track down other Hymes/Prince family researchers to share findings and to take the process further. This research summary is a result of the combined efforts of Robert Prince, Jameila Prince Al-Hujazi, Vicki Barkoff, Edie Robinson and Mark and Mildred Cohn.

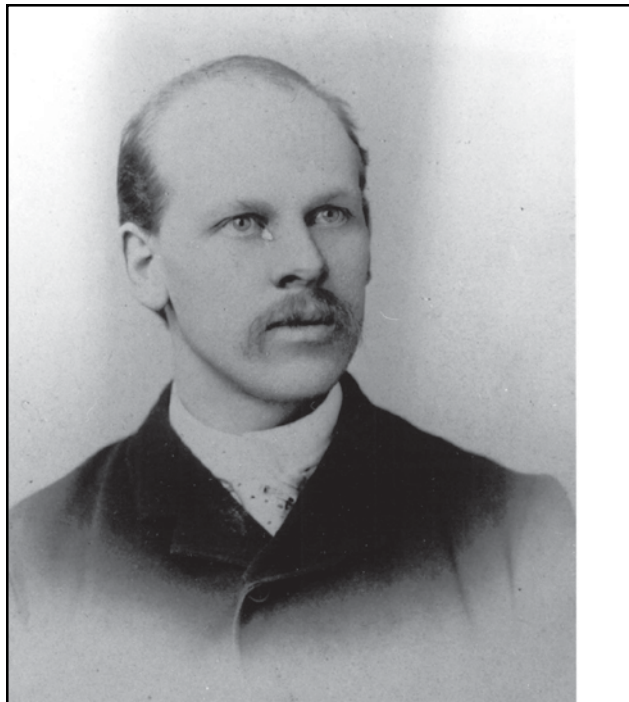
Curiosity, mystery and family drama ran through the search for the roots of the Sarah Prince family. My great grandmother Sarah Alice Elizabeth Prince Archer wrote in a letter (May 24, 1912) to her sister-in-law Maud Higginbotham Prince:

I know how you feel about (not) being able to tell the children about their Father's people, as you are about your ancestors. I wish I had time to tell you all I know—but perhaps a little outline would help. Of the Prince family we only know that they had some official or noble position in Poland and were exiled about 1835 or 1836. Our Father (Samuel) was born in Portsmouth, England, July 4, 1836 on the journey to America. His Father saved much (in jewels etc. I believe) from his former wealth and accumulated more—but.... because of a terrible separation between their Father & Mother [Sarah Hyams and George Prince]—our Father [Samuel] was disinherited.

Pooling Research Discoveries

It is often so hard to find out information and the sources often give contradictory information. Great-great-great-great grandmother, Sarah Hymes Prince, emigrated from Warsaw, Poland to Charleston, South Carolina by way of Portsmouth (England) where her second husband, George Prince, left her with three children and sailed for America after 1835. What is her story? What happened to Hyams (Hymes)? This was information we did not know. Why did she marry George Prince? We do not know that either. Did George leave her in England to make a life for the family in America? What we have been able to find out, suggests, perhaps not!

Sarah and her children came to North America on the ship *Quebec* sailing from London to New York City on September 15, 1840. Manifest lists show the family composition as: Sarah Prince, thirty-four, Rebecca Hyams, fifteen, Leah Hyams, fourteen and Samuel Prince, five. The 1850 Federal Census for the Parish of St. Phillips and St. Michaels in Charleston lists Sarah (36), Henry (21), Rebecca (16), and Samuel (14)—these children all born in England. Were they not the same people?



Samuel George Prince

The Hymes-Prince Children

Many questions arose as to who really parented the Hymes children—Henry, Hyam, Rebecca and Leah. Why were Henry and Hyam not on the manifest? Did they travel to America separately from the family? Rebecca Hymes married Samuel Marco on 10 April 1866 having moved to Darlington from Charleston in 1863. Rebecca Marco's New York City death certificate dated 12 November 1916 shows her parents as Cornelius Hyman [sic] and Rebecca Hymes [sic] and that she was born 12 April 1834 in Manchester, England. That would make her two years older than Samuel George Prince born 5 July 1836. Thus, contrary to the *Quebec* ship record she was six years old when she came to America.

It is more difficult to discern Leah Hymes correct age. On the ship *Quebec* from England in 1840 she is listed as 14. On the 1850 census she is listed as 17 and living alone in Charleston. On the 1860 Federal census she is 24 and married to Alex Fineberg (23). On the 1870 Federal Census she is 26 with Alex Fineberg (32). On the 1880 Louisiana Federal Census she is age 34 with husband Alex Fineberg (38). On the 1880 Federal

Census she states both parents are from England.

Although there are no marriage records, several sources suggest that Sarah was married in England to a Hymes and they had several children. Sarah then married George Prince, gave birth to a son, Samuel George Prince, in Portsmouth July 4, 1836. George subsequently left her. In 1840 she followed George to South Carolina and sued for support. She set up a dry goods store at 108 King Street in Charleston where they also resided.

Robert Prince's research in 1980 showed that George Prince, Sarah's estranged husband arrived in Charleston in 1836. He was born October 1814 in Rogasen (Rohaczyn, Rakosyn or Rogozno) Prussia, north of Poznan. In trying to reconstruct a portrait of the father of Samuel Prince, many records had to be pieced together. Based on his naturalization petition of great-great-great-grandfather, George Prince, he became naturalized 13 June 1850. Consolidated Confederate Records available at NARA (National Archives and Records Administration) document that he served first in the Confederate Army as a Private 20 June 1862-21 Aug. 1862 in Company C, 1st Regiment, South Carolina Militia (Charleston Reserves). Next he served in Company A 1st Regiment, Charleston Guard as Private 20 July- 26 Sept. 1863 and was discharged on a Surgeon's Certificate 13 Aug. 1863. Records also indicate George Prince sold supplies to the Confederacy. Medical supplies and similar items are itemized and the transactions range in the hundreds of dollars. In addition to Charleston at least one transaction was completed in Tallahassee.

George Prince is found on the 1841-1842 Charleston City Directory living with an Ann Eliza, midwife. Only after Sarah Prince died, 18 September 1865, did he marry Mary Ann Cortissoz on 10 December 1865. Post Civil War George was a pharmacist (herbalist) who lived at 380 King Street in Charleston, South Carolina based on 1867-78 Charleston City Directories and Federal Census information. In this time period, George purchased two blocks of plantation land in Colleton County approximately 30 miles northwest of Charleston and perhaps ten miles east of Walterboro, the Colleton County seat. The two blocks of 200 and 900 acres are part of *Plantation Round O* and *Parker's Ferry Plantation* bought 10 February 1865 and 16 February 1869 respectively and were originally part of the Estate of Major Felix Warley. It was this property that is alluded to in the letter from Maud Higginbotham Prince when she mentions "the disinherited Samuel Prince." George Prince died 4 June 1878. He is buried at *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Coming Street Cemetery*. George's will dated 15 March 1877, probated 24 June 1878, lists his siblings as Rosa, Yetta Elias of Samter (Szamotuly), brother Stusch (deceased) and Rachel Leiser (Lesser) of Rochester, New York. Through Rachel's death certificate, 7 December 1888, we learned that their parents were David and Dora of Rogasen, Prussia. Robert Prince makes the case that the *Plantation Round O* is mentioned in George Prince's

will, but not later in the will of his second wife Mary Ann (Cortissoz) Prince dated 07 May 1879 in Charleston. Another mystery, how did the property end up in the hands of the Marcoes?

The death of Sarah Prince and a Court Case

Sarah died intestate, in March 1875 and is buried in cemetery *Brith Sholom Beth Israel Orthodox Congregation*. Almost ten years later, The Darlington Judgment Roll documents the following biographical information:

Henry Hymes and Hyam Hymes suit against Samuel Marco, Rebecca Marco (as executors of de son tort, of Sarah Prince), Jacob Kalmus, Manuel Marco, Augustus Nachman, David Haas, George Prince, Leah Fineberg, Alexander Fineberg, and Samuel Prince for the partition of certain real estate and distribution of Sarah's property. They alleged the above property to be in the possession of Samuel and Rebecca Marco. According to legal documents it further states Sarah sold her dry goods business, the stock, the furniture contained in the house, and outhouses at 381 King Street to Louisa Hyams on 1 August 1857. On 7 July 1859, Louisa Hymes (sic) sold the house, dry goods, fixtures and furniture to Rebecca Hymes. In addition, *The Plantation Round O* appears later in the Hymes family owned by Rebecca Hyams Marco, daughter of Sarah Hyams Prince.

In their affidavit, Henry Hymes and Hyam Hymes, declare they are the sons of Sarah Prince and have never received anything from her estate which was ample. They claim Rebecca and Samuel Marco admitted to them that they appropriated to their own use eight to ten thousand dollars after which time, Samuel Marco accumulated large profits and now boasts of being worth forty to fifty thousand dollars, all of this derived from the estate of Sarah Prince. They further claim that Samuel Marco had no means at his disposal at the time of his marriage in 1866 and since the agitation of this suit has sold his valuable house and business to Jacob Kalmus. They suggest that Marco is disposing of his property to put it beyond the reach of the court. They further suggest that Marco is proposing to sell his business to Augustus Nachman. Also many others are indebted to Marco in considerable amounts. They claim that the mortgage to Kalmus is fraudulent and void. They claim that Marco is a bold and unscrupulous speculator. They also claim that he could in any suit bribe one or two jurors five or ten dollars in cash to make a mistrial in any suit averse to him. This became the basis for a request for an injunction.

The Court Record

In March 1875, the court granted an injunction to Henry Hyams and Hyam Hyams against the property of Samuel Marco and Rebecca Marco and the above named defendants to sell or remove their real estate beyond the control of the court. Various affidavits affirm several facts. George Prince abandoned his wife Sarah in England and came to South Carolina. She sued him

for support and after several years won. He continued to neglect and disregarded her as his wife. According to the laws of South Carolina she could not obtain a divorce from George. Her entire real property was the result of her own labor, skill and industry and because of his neglect of her; George Prince was not eligible to benefit from her estate. Later the plaintiffs amend their complaint to exclude George Prince from any benefits of the suit. Sarah was engaged in merchandising and purchased a house in the town of Darlington, and the title was held in the name of Rebecca Hymes (Marco). Very shortly after Sarah died, Rebecca and Samuel Marco married in 1866.

The plaintiffs, Henry and Hyam, claimed that the Estate consisted of stock of dry goods, furniture, silverware, jewelry, money, bank bills, gold and silver amounting to six to eight thousand dollars. The Marcos purportedly had a gold watch of Sarah's which was promised to Henry's infant son. All of this was denied by the Marcos.

In each of Rebecca and Samuel Marco's affidavits there were many counter assertions and details of the history of loans to various family members. To her great grandchildren, the records are of great interest as they give many personal details of the life of Sarah Hymes Prince. *That in the year 1857 in the emergence of the improvidence of her own son, Samuel Prince, [my great-great-grandfather], whom she was attempting to assist in business she became embarrassed, sold her stock of goods to her daughter, Leah Fineberg (also called Louise Fineberg), and applied the proceeds of the said sale mainly to the payment of indebtedness. That after this sale said Sarah Prince never resumed business, being broken in spirit and bankrupt in fortune.* After Sarah's death Rebecca married Samuel Marco. It has taken the work of several researchers working together to solve some of the mystery of our Hymes/Prince family. Whether we ever find out more, depends on what other records we can unearth! □

<judyarcher@rogers.com>

New Immigrants in the New South

The Assimilation Process and the Jews of the South

A Bibliographical Essay

by Patrick Reed

Southern Culture

Jews of German background had been at home in the South long before the arrival of eastern European Jews. Even among those who most tenaciously kept the faith, integration into the larger, overwhelmingly Christian community had been much desired, and to a remarkable degree accomplished. This assimilation was attested to by the near absence of identifiably Jewish sources in the South before 1900. Congregational records did not circulate beyond the bounds of local Jewish communities, and individual writings were invariably aimed at a larger audience. Berlin-born poet Ludwig Lewisohn, who immigrated with his family in 1892 to Charleston, associated neither with *North German peasants turned grocers ... nor with rather ignorant, semi-orthodox Jews from Posen*. He made a *passionate effort to leap the hurdle of his race and be accepted as a Gentile Southerner*.¹

And yet, beginning in 1905, Jewish congregations all across the South called attention to themselves by telling their histories. What prompted a community which had sought for a century to submerge itself suddenly to publish a previously private past? Perhaps Jews' new public self-consciousness arose, in part, from a desire to disassociate themselves from the newly-arrived East Europeans, especially after southern demagogues discovered the effectiveness of anti-Semitic

appeals in 1913. In March 1916, when the collaborators first approached friends with regard to the propriety of publishing *The History of the Jews of Richmond, 1769-1917*, the fate of Leo Frank was fresh in the minds of every southern Jew. The uncertainty felt by even the most established was evident in the authors' opening words, and in their earnest efforts to remind gentile Richmond of their deep roots there. The family of Herbert T. Ezekiel, coauthor and publisher of the massive work, had been in the city since 1818, along with even earlier arrivals, so that Ezekiel could claim *that the history of the Jews of Richmond is the history of Richmond*. There was no greater effort to demonstrate the truth of this statement than in the nine chapters devoted to Richmond Jews' devotion to the Confederate cause. But local Jews were proud of their success and contributions to the community, Ezekiel was careful to share credit with *their Christian neighbors, for there are few enterprises in this city that flourish from the support of a single class*.²

Predictably filiopietistic, these first books—full of names, dates, and organizations—were of interest primarily to antiquarians and another generation of amateurs. For example, the object of Mrs. David J. Greenberg in *Through the Years: A Study of the Richmond Jewish Community*, privately published in 1954, was merely to bring the Ezekiel-Lichtenstein study up to date.³ Even a recent publication by the University of

Alabama attempted to do little more. Rabbi Mark H. Elovitz omitted the "how" and "why" and asked only "who" and "what" about *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (1974), focusing on the community's elite and accepting uncritically the testimonials, speeches, and obituaries that dominated his bibliography and even much of his text. Elovitz's chapter on "Economic Affairs in the Eighties and Nineties" offered no estimate of the occupational structure eastern European immigrants encountered, but rather chronicled the careers of eighteen successful merchants. And except in a sketchy summary of the civil rights issue in the last quarter century, the reader might easily lose sight of the southern setting through which these lifeless characters pass.⁴

Effects of the Holocaust

If the first histories were an expression of turn of the century tensions in southern and southern Jewish communities, an external threat may have stimulated a more scholarly examination of these tensions. "*The European horrors of the past few years, stressing nationalism and race, awakened a dormant spirit in all Jewish communities.*" Perhaps this spirit prompted Julian Feibelman's *Social and Economic Study of the New Orleans Jewish Community*, originally a dissertation in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. Largely a statistical survey of contemporary New Orleans Jewry, the study included a historical sketch acknowledging the internal conflicts that came with the East European immigrants. Although established New Orleans Jews helped sponsor a short-lived agricultural settlement of Russian Jews at Sicily Island, Louisiana, in 1882, subsequent Russian immigrants to the city were isolated from the original Sephardic and German Jewish residents.⁵ At the same time, Feibelman credited the later arrivals with slowing the assimilation process enough to preserve in the city an identifiable Jewish community, a fearful concern shared by many Jews in the 1940s.

Sobered by the holocaust, even many southern Jews who had previously sought amalgamation saw the need for vigilance. And while continuing to stress their shared southern heritage, several Jews in the postwar period publicly recognized the limits of southern tolerance. North Carolina journalist and folklorist Harry L. Golden, whose historical writings were undocumented and filio-pietistic, argued in *Jewish Roots in the Carolinas: A Pattern of American Philo-Semitism* that the South "has provided the most favorable 'atmosphere' the Jewish people have known in the modern world."⁶ Even East European "textile Jews," who as peddlers and soft goods merchants brought new methods of distribution to the southern cotton industry, found the region hospitable. A few overtly anti-Semitic incidents were called aberrations, although in articles for national Jewish periodicals in the early 1950s, Golden acknowledged the persistence of

more subtle forms of discrimination, by established Jews against East Europeans and by Gentiles against both. In *Jew and Gentile in the New South: Segregation at Sundown*, Golden described the invisible barriers that descended at dark, sending Southerners who had spent the day doing business or charitable work together to separate social clubs and gatherings.⁷

The relative absence of social anti-Semitism was a result of the South's "preoccupation with the Negro," against whom Jews were perceived as an ally. Neither did there occur significant economic competition, as Jewish merchants often catered to local blacks, whose business established whites did not solicit. C. Bezael Sherman's 1951 article on diversity, "Charleston, S. C., 1750-1950," did not completely obscure the obstacles awaiting those ambitious to climb in Jewish or Gentile society, but he concluded with the optimism preferred by subscribers to such popular publications as *Jewish Frontiers*.⁸

Those skeptical about a scarcity of anti-Semitic sentiment in the South might be reassured by the scholarship of John Higham, one of few non-Jewish historians to address the subject. Blacks, Higham concluded, often served as a "lightning rod" for southern prejudice, while the relatively few Jews in the region threatened white Gentile Southerners neither racially nor economically. The small town Jewish furnishing merchant, although occasionally reviled for his reputed role in the crop-lien system, more regularly was respected as "the heir, guardian, and living embodiment of the Old Testament tradition." Meanwhile, Jews in the urban South were protected by the respect many had earned in public and private life *before the status rivalries of the late nineteenth century crystallized*.⁹ Although this last assertion remained to be tested in in-depth studies of southern communities, Higham's insights into all aspects of American nativism established points of departure for a generation of students.

One incident to which Higham directed subsequent scholars was the Leo Frank case, which he called *grotesque if viewed only in the light of previous Jewish experience in the South*.¹⁰ Southern Jews no doubt considered the case grotesque in any light and naturally preferred to stress more positive aspects of their past in the region. But to Higham, this exceptional event offered evidence of anti-Semitic sources far deeper than any easily visible in southern society. While recognizing the role of the region's peculiar racial attitudes, religious fundamentalism, and economic frustrations, Higham felt the affair reflected an entire nation's uncertainty about the future; the Frank case was made to fit neatly into Higham's thesis that internal ethnic hostilities were expressions of externally caused cultural crises. Convincing as his argument was, Higham

himself quickly recognized that scholars must do more than place such incidents in an intellectual framework. In spite of the importance of ideologies, especially for the American ethnics victimized by them, the reality of ethnic relations—transcending nativism’s *preoccupation with conflict and discord*—required scholarly attention.¹¹

Harry Golden brought a journalist’s insights to the story of Leo Frank in 1965. Valuable as the first comprehensive treatment of the affair in fifty years, *A Little Girl is Dead* was of use to the historian only in its retelling of the facts, which in this case were without documentation.¹² But three years later, Leonard Dinnerstein finally presented *The Leo Frank Case* in the historian’s courtroom. Despite the incident’s uniqueness, Dinnerstein convincingly placed it in the context of early twentieth century southern society. With a detachment impossible for Frank’s contemporaries, Dinnerstein analyzed the forces a new industrial culture exercised on them with a sensitivity that might have exorcised the beasts within them. His respect for the factual record required him neither to excuse those to whom the bestially murdered Mary Phagan was a martyr, nor to make martyrs of Frank and his defenders. Dinnerstein illuminated the culture that killed Frank, noted some of the changes his killing caused, but wisely resisted the temptation to find in the incident cosmic significance.¹³ After the publication of his Columbia University dissertation, Dinnerstein became the most influential historian of southern Jewry. In 1970 and 1971 articles in scholarly Jewish journals, he pointed to several aspects of southern Jewish history that needed attention, in particular to a secondary effect of actual and/or anticipated anti-Semitism: the contradictory desire, even as the established sought to disassociate themselves from the immigrants, to deny the diversity of their own communities in order to present themselves in a universally favorable light to Gentile Southerners.¹⁴ And in 1973 Mary Dale Palsson joined Dinnerstein in publishing *Jews in the South*, a collection of articles aimed at answering some of the neglected questions.¹⁵ Included was David and Adele Bernstein’s “Slow Revolution in Richmond, Va.: A New Pattern in the Making,” first published in 1949.

Jewish Identification and the Rise of Jewish Community

Rabbi Edward Nathan Calisch was dead only three years when the Bernsteins brought their New York—and Washington—acquired journalistic skills to bear on the community he had dominated for over half a century. The Richmond of 1891, when Calisch arrived at the age of twenty-six, welcomed him; the most prominent of his co-religionists at the time claimed membership in the city’s most exclusive clubs. But according to the Bernsteins, even after social barriers to Jews arose around the turn of the century, Rabbi Calisch continued

*creating an image of the assimilated Richmond Jew.*¹⁶

In researching his Master’s essay in 1971, the author was surprised to find Rabbi Calisch, in an 1897 Richmond *Dispatch* report of local German Day festivities, calling the marriage of Germans and Americans a *conquering factor in the destiny of the human race.*¹⁷ Despite the prevalence of Social Darwinism in that period, Calisch was probably of Polish extraction and certainly would have been excluded from sharing that destiny by Anglo-Saxon adherents to that philosophy. Yet during his career Calisch received almost every honor gentile Richmond could bestow; at first glance, his persistent popularity among Jews must appear almost as puzzling. But as the Bernsteins argued, the established German-Jewish families, perhaps fearing further erosion of their social positions, contented themselves with vicarious acceptance through Rabbi Calisch, while practicing a *polite but firm form of exclusion on Jews whose ancestry was not so deeply rooted in the Old Dominion.*¹⁸

Polish and Russian Jews, arriving in the late nineteenth century, had organized more orthodox congregations, though from his Reform pulpit Calisch seemed to speak for the entire Jewish community. Only in the 1930s did second generation eastern Europeans, enjoying *increasing economic security, but a decreasing Jewish security, principally because of the news from Europe, make a virtue of the necessity to be Jewish.* Forming a new Conservative congregation, this group openly challenged “the Calisch mentality” and the myth of a united Jewish community. Even Calisch was forced to admit, shortly before his death, that he had failed to develop a *following among Jews such as I have among Christians*, while a member of his congregation confessed that in the last years he was not *loved by the Jews here, or even greatly respected.*¹⁹

Another generation had come of age before Richmond Jews were ready to make such admissions to themselves or, more to the point, to gentile Richmond. In 1973, the same year Dinnerstein and Palsson reprinted the Bernsteins’ article, Rabbi Myron Berman, recently arrived to fill a Conservative Richmond pulpit, boldly confronted the question of Richmond Jewry’s internal dissension. His dissertation on “The Attitude of American Jewry Towards East European Immigration, 1881-1914,” completed for the history department at Columbia University in 1963, prepared Berman for such a study.²⁰ And as the Dean of Richmond historians, Virginius Dabney, pointed out, the “catalytic force” of the 1967 war in Israel created a new unanimity among Richmond Jews that prepared the community jointly to confront its disjointed past.²¹

In his 1973 article for the *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, “Rabbi Edward Nathan Calisch and the Debate over Zionism in Richmond, Virginia,” Berman

succinctly explained the Calisch mystique:

... *Richmond Jewry placed a high premium on communal acceptability and assimilation into the traditions of a historic Southern community. Because of the limited economic opportunities within the city, Jewish immigration ... was rather limited. Therefore, the influence of the more Zionistically and traditionally oriented East European Jew in this city evolved rather slowly. It was not so much the existence of anti-Semitism that was a factor in developing communal attitudes but an exaggerated fear of its possible implications that affected the thinking of Richmond's Jewish establishment. In fact, both Jewish and Gentile leadership often went to the opposite extreme of denying the existence of anti-Jewish feeling within the community—an attitude which inhibited their dealing with realistic problems of communal tensions.*²²

Shabbat in Shockoe, Berman subtitled his history of *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976*, published in 1979. Although his scope was wider than the Hebrew sabbath in the old section of the city, his subheading was appropriate, as Berman sought to explain the survival of the weekly observance over two centuries, despite the equally dangerous forces of philo- and anti-Semitism. Taking advantage of a wealth of unused sources from archives across the country, Berman also made use of the 1917 Ezekiel-Lichtenstein and the 1954 Greenberg studies without their cut-and-paste efforts to account for each prominent individual and organization in the community. Berman's chronologically-ordered narrative flowed with a grace rare in such a study.

Even more impressive were the insights Berman provided by means of his access to the community's best sources, at least for the second half of the story: the memories, diaries, letters, and other documents belonging to living Richmonders. Of course, not without risk to the reputations of their relatives did they open such sources to the researcher, but their trust in Berman was well-placed. Even though readers learned that Berman's predecessor as historian, Herbert T. Ezekiel, was once accused of "Jewish anti-Semitism" for his "preconceived prejudices" toward East Europeans; even though his predecessor as rabbi, Edward N. Calisch, once a candidate for "ecumenical canonization," was criticized for his anti-Zionism; what emerged from Berman's research was a community both southern and Jewish, surviving by and with the strengths and weaknesses of each tradition.²³ Told with a sensitivity that neither excused nor accused, this story might serve as a model for ethnic historians who hope to reach scholarly and popular audiences with an appraisal of the positive potential and the pitfalls of regional and ethnic consciousness.

Almost as thoroughly researched was Isaac Fein's *The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920*, published in 1971, but Fein failed to find a framework capable of sustaining his wealth of information. Instead, his facts for the final forty-one year period were filed under forty-seven separate subheadings, some in small letters, some capitalized, some italicized in no apparent pattern.²⁴ Better organized and therefore more accessible were the musings of Eli N. Evans, who in 1973 published *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*. Called "graceful, entertaining, informative" by a reviewer for the *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Evans's book posed a number of important questions about southern Jews, but the undocumented answers, based on secondary sources, interviews, and personal experience, were found ultimately inadequate. Furthermore, reviewer Steven Hertzberg hoped the historian of southern Jews would ask about more than the prejudice they faced and how they confronted it. Needed were statistical analyses of east European immigration, of the obstacles to occupational and social mobility, and of their success in overcoming them. And what of the complex relationship between blacks and Jews? Comparative residential and mobility patterns might be indicative of immigrants' assimilative efforts and successes.²⁵ Actually, in a 1973 article in the same publication, Hertzberg himself demonstrated a determination to address just such evidence about the Jews of Atlanta.

The reason these issues remained for Hertzberg to raise was simple: they required a patience and an expertise earlier students of the subject were unwilling or unable to bring to their research. Even Myron Berman, who explored the European origins of the most prominent of Richmond's Jewish families, offered only impressionistic evidence about the experiences brought by the East Europeans. And even if most immigrants adopted the mobility dreams of their predecessors, still unaccounted for were those who gave up, left, or left heirs unable or not inclined to tell of their failures.

In his first published examination of "The Jewish Community of Atlanta from the End of the Civil War until the Eve of the Frank Case," Hertzberg hinted at his intention to gauge the trials and determination of the immigrants as well as the established. Internal diversity was measured by more than the organizational dates of Atlanta's five Jewish congregations, but by observing the city's changing demographic and residential patterns. While not yet validating his claims for the Higham hypothesis, that social anti-Semitism resulted from "a society vexed by its own assertiveness," Hertzberg's statistics justified his assertion that social discrimination appeared only with the arrival of Russian Jews, and that established German Jews were no less ambiguous toward

the newcomers than were Gentile Atlantans. Could a deeper analysis of the statistical evidence give new shades of meaning to this outline?²⁶

Indeed, a 1977 article, abstracted from Hertzberg's recently completed University of Chicago dissertation, answered this question affirmatively. In "Unsettled Jews: Geographic Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City," he used federal and city census as well as congregational records to identify and test for the persistence of adult, male, foreign-born Jews in Atlanta between 1870, 1880, 1896, and 1911. The 1870-1880 cohort registered a high rate of persistence relative to the remarkable geographic mobility revealed among immigrants in several other nineteenth century American cities.²⁷ This was not surprising since older, more settled German-born Jews predominated. But the equally high persistence of the 1896 group, which featured a majority of younger, less skilled immigrants, demanded deeper analysis. Hertzberg found that the Russians were 55% more likely than the earlier-arriving Germans to be married on their arrival in the city, indicating that Atlanta's new immigrants were a highly selective group. Unlike the greenhorns pouring into eastern cities, unable to speak English and anxious for the security of a familiar culture, those consciously choosing to come to Atlanta were at least partially assimilated and more likely to be equipped with the capital and/or skills needed to gain occupational and geographic stability. Revealing was the fact that of 195 recent Russian immigrants relocated in Atlanta by the Jewish-run Industrial Removal Office between 1901 and 1911, only 15% remained by the latter date, while 55% of the 483 Russians present in the city in 1896 persisted in 1911.²⁸

These statistics alone offered an obvious explanation for the new exclusiveness of the gentile elite, who in a relatively young if prosperous city must have felt threatened by this invasion of energetic Jews. And if they were hereafter to be barred from elite society, Atlanta's German Jews could deny their insecurities by excluding the newcomers from their own business, religious, and social circles. Jewish-run charities could now be seen as both benevolent and patronizing, aimed at aiding established Jews and immigrants alike by accelerating the latter's Americanization, if not eliminating their embarrassingly alien accents and orthodoxy.

Hertzberg's ambition in his dissertation, published in 1978 as *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915*, was to place the complex tensions in the Jewish community fully within the context of early twentieth century southern society. To Leonard Dinnerstein's astute arguments in *The Leo Frank Case*, he added the evidence essential to prosecute —to follow to the end—this supposedly aberrant anti-Semitic

incident. A more elaborate analysis of Atlanta's occupational and economic structure, conveyed in fifty-one tables and maps, demonstrated the remarkable mobility of even the most recent Russian arrivals, while a review of residential patterns revealed their uneasy relationship with another group of newcomers: blacks relocated from the rural South by a rapidly changing economy. Poor whites, similarly dislocated, came to the city suspicious of its values, personified for many by the urbane, commercially-oriented Jew. Here at last was the setting in which the recollections, thirty years later, of Mary Phagan's minister made sense:

My feelings, upon the arrest of the old Negro night watchman, were to the effect that this one old Negro would be poor atonement for the life of this innocent girl. But, when on the next day the police arrested a Jew, and a Yankee Jew, at that, all the inborn prejudice against Jews rose up in a feeling of satisfaction, that here would be a victim worthy to pay for the crime.²⁹

Although many from both groups spoke courageously in Frank's defense, established Jews and Gentiles remained ambiguous about the strangers in their land, the former fearing further retribution, the latter, vexed by [their] own assertiveness, projecting their guilt upon an outsider.

Hertzberg himself was labeled an "outsider" by Eli N. Evans. Perhaps the former's lukewarm reception of Evans's book *The Provincials* predisposed the latter to disparage Hertzberg's "coldly professional eye" despite his "careful, definitive, meticulous" research.³² But while *Strangers within the Gate City*³¹ could be strengthened by the insiders' insights available to Richmond's Myron Berman, or even by Evans' engaging style, Hertzberg set the standard by which future students of southern ethnics must be judged. Only after erecting an analytical framework can the ethnic experience be evaluated. Only after identifying the immigrants in the context of their original and adopted cultures can their individual efforts be appreciated, their community concerns understood.

Journalist Steve Oney's riveting and universally acclaimed *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (2003)³³ demonstrates that a new generation is accepting Hertzberg's challenge. As Jews add to their impressive contributions to the South, this frank study of the worst event in southern white-Jewish relations will encourage the region's present day residents to continue the effort to remember, learn from, and build upon their shared past. As Jews add to their impressive contributions to the South, one cannot doubt that they will continue earnestly to explore their past; even the picture provided by the occasional outsider lends perspective. □

1. Stanley F. Chyet, "Ludwig Lewisohn in Charleston (1892-1903)," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LIV (1965), 299-300, 302-03.2. Herbert T. Ezekiel and Gaston Lichtenstein, *The History of the Jews of Richmond from 1769 to 1917* (Richmond: H. T. Ezekiel, 1917). See also Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1905); Isidor Blum, *The Jews of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Historical Review Publishing Co., 1910); Rabbi David Marx, "History of the Jews of Atlanta," *Reform Advocate*, November 4, 1911; Leo Shpall, *The Jews of Louisiana* (New Orleans: Steeg Printing and Publishing Co., 1936).
3. Mrs. David J. Greenberg, *Through the Years: A Study of the Richmond Jewish Community* (Richmond: privately published, 1954).
4. Mark H. Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1974).
5. As Julian B. Feibelman explained in 1941. Julian B. Feibelman, *A Social and Economic Study of the New Orleans Jewish Community* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941). Despite several efforts to establish Jewish agricultural colonies, the Dillingham Immigration Commission found "no Hebrew rural colonies of any significance in the South." "Reports of the Immigration Commission," *Senate Docs.*, 61 Cong., 2 Sess., No. 633, XXI (Serial No. 5682). Also see Louis Ginsberg, "The Jewish Colony at Waterview," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXVI (1958).
6. Harry L. Golden, *Jewish Roots in the Carolinas: A Pattern of American Philo-Semitism* (Greensboro, N. C., 1955).
7. Harry L. Golden, "The Jews of the South," *Congress Weekly*, XVIII (December 31, 1951), 7-11; "Jew and Gentile in the New South: Segregation at Sundown," *Commentary*, XX (1955).
8. C. Bezalel Sherman, "Charleston, S. C. 1750-1950," *Jewish Frontier*, XVIII (1951).
9. John Higham, "Social Discrimination against Jews, 1830-1930," *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 164; originally published in *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, XLVII (1957). Thomas D. Clark, then Chairman of the History Department at the University of Kentucky, recapitulated these arguments in a poorly organized address on "The Post-Civil War Economy in the South," delivered to the American Jewish Historical Society in 1966. See *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LV (1966).
10. John Higham, "Anti-Semitism and American Culture," *Send These to Me*.
11. John Higham, "Another Look at Nativism," *Send These to Me*, 115; originally published in *Catholic Historical Review*, XLIV (1958).
12. Harry L. Golden, *A Little Girl is Dead* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1965). See also C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).
13. Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968). Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Note on Southern Attitudes Toward Jews," *Jewish Social Studies*, XXXII (1970); "A Neglected Aspect of Southern History," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXI (1971).
15. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson, eds., *Jews in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973). David and Adele Bernstein, "Slow Revolution in Richmond, Va.: A New Pattern in the Making," *Jews in the South*; originally published in *Commentary*, VIII (1949).
17. Richmond *Dispatch*, September 30, 1897.
18. Bernsteins, "Slow Revolution in Richmond"
19. Ibid.
20. Myron Berman, "The Attitude of American Jewry Towards East European Immigration, 1881-1914," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1963).
21. Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976: Shabbat in Shockoe* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979).
22. Myron Berman, "Rabbi Edward Nathan Calisch and the Debate over Zionism in Richmond, Virginia," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXII (1973).
23. Berman, *Richmond's Jewry*.
24. Isaac M. Fein, *The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry, 1773 to 1920* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971).
25. Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York: Atheneum, 1973).
26. Steven Hertzberg, review of *The Provincials*, *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXIV (1975).
27. Steven Hertzberg, "The Jewish Community of Atlanta from the End of the Civil War Until the Eve of the Frank Case," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXII (1973).
28. Richard L. Zweigenhaft's 1979 article, "Two Cities in North Carolina: A Comparative Study of Jews in the Upper Class," made the self-evident point that the historic presence of economically prominent Jewish families inhibited the growth of anti-Semitism in southern cities. Since even Jewish communities as deeply rooted as those of Charleston and Richmond were subject to some anti-Semitism, Zweigenhaft's argument needed quantifiable evidence—of economic mobility rates, residential patterns, or analysis of elite club membership roles—to determine the degree to which his variable operated. *Jewish Social Studies*, XVI (1979).
29. See Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964); Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians, Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); Howard P. Chudacoff, *Mobile Americans: Residential and Social Mobility in Omaha, 1880-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Clyde Griffen, "Making It in America: Social Mobility in Mid-Nineteenth Century Poughkeepsie," *New York History*, LI (1970); Dean R. Esslinger, *Immigrants and the City: Ethnicity and Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century Midwestern Community* (Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat, 1975).
30. Steven Hertzberg, "Unsettled Jews: Geographic Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXVII (1977).
31. Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978).
32. Eli N. Evans, review of *Strangers within the Gate City*, *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXVIII (1978).
33. Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (Pantheon, 2003).

A Sock on the Foot is Worth Two in the Jaw

The Freschl Family: Rags to Roots

By Judith Berlowitz

The Habsburg-era order of 1726, "Familianten Gesetz," attempted to limit the number of Jewish families in Bohemia to 8,541, by allowing only the firstborn son of each family to marry. At about the same time, Jews were forced to assume German surnames. The "first" Freschl born in Morina (Gross-Morschin or Gross-Morzin), was my great-great-great-great grandfather Sender Zodek, son of Zodek Belle—in this case a matronymic (Zodek, "son of Belle"). Sender took the name Alexander (Talmudic tradition held that Jews born during the time of Alexander the Great be named for him, after he reportedly bowed to the High Priest of Jerusalem; the tradition extended to surnames) and, for a reason yet unknown to me, the German surname, "Froeschl," meaning "little frog." His 1785 marriage to Chelle (Anna) Ginzburg is registered in the Familianten book issued at Dominium Koenigsaal - Zbraslav, Czech Republic. In the birth record of his first son, Jonas (Jacob), his occupation is listed as Merchant (Handelsmann). Between 1785 and 1805, Alexander and Chelle had eight children. As Alexander's second-born son, my great-great-great grandfather Abraham would not have been entitled to marry. But there was an escape clause in the Familianten rules: one could purchase the coveted license from someone who was not using it, and Abraham bought his, license #28797, from a Mr. Jakob Hermann Pick in Morina, on June 9, 1815. One month later, he married Rosalia Fischl of Morina, and they moved, shortly thereafter, to Revnice, located on the Berounka River about a mile away. With the children of Abraham and Rosalia, the flight to America began.

The Freschls were selling clothes out of their storefront residences in Bohemian villages in the early 1800s. The family was German-speaking, although the inscriptions on the Freschl tombstones located in the Czech Republic are in Hebrew. Abraham and Rosalia gave all their children European names, in the fashion of the time. The firstborn son, Philip, my great-great grandfather, benefited from the *Familianten* laws, and in 1841 married Karoline (Caroline) Lederer, also of Revnice. Philip and Caroline remained in Revnice for about thirty years, and their seven children were born there.

The Freschls in America

The *Familianten* order was finally rescinded in 1848, around the time that Abraham and Rosalia's second-born son, Josef (Pepi) left for America. Since the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Jews were restricted in where they could live, what professions they could practice, whom they could marry, and what they could own. So Josef (now called "Joseph") immigrated to the United States and settled first in Lowell, Massachusetts, home of the burgeoning textile industry. Located between the Merrimack and Concord rivers and dubbed the "Venice of America," Lowell attracted many immigrant workers, most of them women. Among them was a young Canadian woman, Elizabeth Bragg, whom Joseph married in 1850, in Derby, Vermont, on the Canadian border. He was thus perhaps the first one in the family to marry outside the faith. Joseph and Elizabeth relocated to Manchester, New Hampshire, which became the United States textile capital after the Civil War. Joseph became a wool-sorter and ran a small store. Their first child, Mary Elizabeth, was born in Manchester in 1851 or 1852. Their son, Albert Carroll, was born in 1857.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Joseph, having

received early military training before emigrating from Bohemia, was mustered into the Union Army on December 14, 1861, as Captain of Company "I," 7th New Hampshire Volunteers, to serve three years. [*The Seventh Regiment was dispatched to the Dry Tortugas, a lonely, desolate island on the far end of the Florida Keys. This subtropical strip of land served as the principal depot for the distribution of rations and munitions to the forts and military posts in the South.* From: <<http://www.library.miami.edu/archives/shedd/index.htm>>] Joseph sustained no actual war-wounds, but before his enlistment period was over, contracted illnesses which were to destroy his health and involve him in battles over his pension for the rest of his life. During the battle of the confederate stronghold, Fort Wagner, Joseph and his company spent two weeks in a "bombproof" (shelter) flooded with two feet of water. This exposure, Joseph believed, caused him to feel *an exceedingly severe pain in my spine in the small of my back*. The Assistant Surgeon of the regiment, Moses S. Wilson, administered *a monstrous dose of calomel*, a drug otherwise known as mercurous chloride, which has potentially toxic side-effects. Now experiencing leg pain, in addition to back pain, Joseph requested a leave of absence the following month and returned home, where, under a doctor's care (for the first time in his life, as he later states), he recovered somewhat and returned to his regiment two months later. His symptoms returned, with the addition of chills and fever, for which he received quinine (he was later diagnosed with malarial poisoning). When doctors told him he would not recover in hospital, Joseph resigned his commission at Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, on July 7, 1864. His pension payments of \$10 per month began in December, 1866.

Around this time, his nephew Karl (Carl), Philip's



eldest son (and my great-grandfather), came to America, to help his uncle. He lived in the household and worked as a clerk in Joseph's clothing store and helped Joseph in the wool business. Ten years later, even though Joseph was still suffering from crippling symptoms, he was dropped from the pension rolls. The following year, 1877, Carroll died at 19. The remaining years of Joseph's life were spent fighting to collect arrears from the time his pension was stopped. According to his obituary, Joseph was a member of Lafayette Lodge of Masons, the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic), a past commander of the War Veterans and past president of the Seventh Regiment Association. He died in 1890 and was buried with full military honors in the Piscataquog Cemetery in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Joseph's brother, Philip, his wife Caroline, together with their children: Gustav, 1845, Alfred, 1856, Franziska (Fanny), 1849, and Elenore (Lori), 1855, arrived in the United States before 1874. They settled in Kalamazoo, Michigan, soon to be joined by son Carl. Around 1874, Fanny married Moritz Berman, a dry goods merchant, born in Bad Pyrmont, Germany. Fanny and Moritz's daughter, Laura (Lollie) married Leon Maness Ritterband, grandson of Benvenida Solís, daughter of Jacob Da Silva Solís and Charity Hays and a descendant of old Sephardic families, linking the family with the first Jewish families of the Americas.

Also in 1874, daughter Elenore (Lori) married Adolph Nathanson of Prussia, a retail grocer, and they settled in Kalamazoo. Alfred married Louise Koesch of Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany, also settling in Kalamazoo. In the 1880 United States Federal Census Alfred is listed

as one of hundreds of attendants at the Kalamazoo State Mental Hospital. In 1876, Carl married Rosa Alexander (my great-grandmother), born in 1852 in Mississippi, of parents who had emigrated from Poznan, Poland. Their courtship is celebrated by Rosa's cousin, Philip Alexander, in this poem he inscribed in the little leather-bound autograph book which he gave her, dated Berlin, Wisconsin, Aug 17, 1875: *To Rosa*

Pray have no fear
My cousin dear
Don't worry nor feel blue,
For quite serene
At his knitting machine
Sits your lover in Kalamazoo.

Just look in the glass
As the mirror you pass
(This I am sure you will do)
But make yourself nice
For just in a trice
Comes your sweetheart from Kalamazoo.

Of course you will marry
And we will be merry
So accept these wishes both hearty and true
Here's health & prosperity,
Wealth & posterity
To you & husband from Kalamazoo
Yours, Phil

I have a precious example, in Philip's hand, of an entry in the same autograph book of future daughter-in-law Rosa: *Die Erinnerung ist ein Paradis ausdem man*

nie vertrieben werden kan - Ihr Vater: Ph. Freschl, Kalamazoo, 13/8 1875. The saying is evidently a paraphrase of the 18th-century German writer Jean Paul (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter), *Die unsichtbare Loge*: "Die Erinnerung ist das einzige Paradies, aus dem wir nicht vertrieben werden können." A rough translation would be *Memory is the only paradise from which one cannot be expelled—Your father, Ph. Freschl, Kalamazoo, 13/8 1875*. I have no record of Philip's death or burial, and he and Caroline do not appear in the 1880 United States Federal Census. Her tombstone, in the Jewish Mountain Home Cemetery, in Kalamazoo, is inscribed in German:

Sanft in Gott ruht hier, Unsere geliebte Mutter, Karoline Freschl. Geb. am 13 Juni 1818 Gest. Am 3 April 1887. Friede ihrer Asche.

A free translation would be:

"In harmony with God, here lies/our beloved mother. Peace to her ashes."

"Every Time you Wear our Socks You put Your Foot in It"

Carl Freschl stayed in the knitting business, perhaps encouraged by his wife's family (Rosa's father and uncles ran Alexander Bros. Tailors in Chicago), and went on to found the Kalamazoo Knitting Company and Champion Knitting Mills. And all of Carl and Rosa's children were in one way or another involved in the clothing business. Spin-offs of Carl's companies, Holeproof Hosiery and the Luxite lingerie line were founded in Milwaukee around 1920. The Freschl brothers, Edward, William, and Max, apparently had a great time running the business, as evidenced by the sense of humor displayed in some of their publications.

The stocking-manufacturing industry was upset, according to an article in the Bridgeport (Connecticut) *Telegram* of February 18, 1927, by "feminine caprice." Eldest son Edward, who as president of the company addressed a convention in Chicago on "hand to mouth buying" attended by bankers, manufacturers, merchants and executives of leading industries, and explained the change of style: *Suddenly somewhere, some woman conceived the idea of black shoes and champagne*



colored stockings. The thing spread like wildfire. The article continues: *Variations of style followed quickly. Where 480 types of stockings were carried in 1920, his company now has to carry 6006...* And to market the new style, the Lord & Thomas ad agency connected the Freschls with *LIFE* magazine cover artist Coles Philips (1880-1927), who had been depicting beautiful women posing in seductive clothing since 1908, and was famous for creating the "fade-away girl" (a device of tying the figure into the background). The combination proved unbeatable; as Edward Freschl's son, Edward Jr. declared, *Those ads, especially the "peacock girl," definitely put the company in business.* According to a *TIME* magazine article of

September 19, 1949, Holeproof Hosiery *pioneered cheesecake by lifting skirts and showing legs.*

With the financial success of Holeproof, the Freschl family was able to hire prominent Milwaukee architect, Alexander C. Eschweiler, to build a home which was to become part of the North Lake Drive Historic District. The Freschl home was the Wisconsin Decorator Showhouse of 2003.

Carl and Rosa Freschl continued their parents' garment business, and wanted their children to do the same. The Freschl family tradition and that of other branches of the family (the Alexanders, the Gattmans, and the Philipsborns) considered it the natural thing that the children work in the parents' store and eventually take over the business. This is the way it was in the old country, and the way it was supposed to continue in the new world. But the new American generation had other ideas, other plans; in a word, *options*. Not a single descendant of any of these families is today in the garment industry. Eddie Freschl, when his mother took him to Arizona to recover from pneumonia, took a flying lesson and was committed forever to the aerospace industry. He went on to become head of propulsion system design for North American Aviation, Inc. In his words, "I never looked back." Some of my modern-day relatives refer disparagingly to the *shmatte* trade our ancestors engaged in, but for me, to wear a Luxite robe, or even to imagine myself in one of Coles Philips' shimmering, seductive ads, is a way that I look back, to connect with my Freschl roots. □

Nathan Feldman: Number Four

by Ellen Stepak

Nathan Feldman arrived in the United States on September 9, 1886, by the ship *Italy* from Liverpool to New York. He came from Lodz, where he was born approximately 1867. This sounds straightforward enough: however, one of the brick walls in my varied ancestry is Nathan Feldman, my great-grandfather. Both he and his brother Benjamin immigrated as Feldman—but we know this was not the original name, and have been unable to find out what the previous surname was. So for the time being, we must settle for research done from the time of Nathan's immigration.

On April 5, 1888, Nathan enlisted in the United States Army, at Philadelphia. According to his military record, he was Nathan Fellman, born in "Lutz, Russia", age 21, and was a tailor by profession. He signed his record with an X, which may only mean that he was illiterate in the Latin alphabet, but which also could explain the discrepancies in the name and place of birth. Why Nathan enlisted we can only surmise: maybe he sought "adventure"; maybe he sought a way to make a living, however meager. Nathan served until July 4th, 1891. His military record shows that he served in Companies K and L, 7th Cavalry.

This was the same 7th Cavalry which had suffered humiliating defeat in battle on the banks of the Little Big Horn River, in 1876. In what became known as the Battle of Little Big Horn, or Custer's Last Stand, the commander of the 7th, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, lost his life.

Nathan was stationed during part of his service at Fort Riley, Kansas. In 1890 his unit was sent to Indian Territory, and he found himself at what was later to become known as the Battle of Wounded Knee Creek (or alternatively as the Massacre of Wounded Knee Creek), South Dakota. The Battle of Wounded Knee Creek may have been partly intended to restore the lost honor of the 7th Cavalry. It was to become the last major skirmish of the Indian Wars.

According to some accounts I have read, at that time there was genuine fear on the part of the US authorities of what was called the Ghost Dance movement of the Indians, which was a kind of messianic, religious awakening. Some of its adherents believed that by a great flood, the white American settlers would be washed away; then the Indians, who by then suffered horribly from disease, hunger and poverty, including the loss of the great buffalo herds, would be restored to their rightful place. The Ghost Dance movement died at Wounded Knee Creek.

From an account by General Nelson A. Miles, we have the following:

The December 29, 1890, confrontation between

Colonel James W. Forsyth's 7th Cavalry and Big Foot's Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation, S.D....

"I was in command of that Department in 1889, 1890 and 1891, when what is known as the Messiah Craze and threatened uprising of the Indians occurred...the Indians had been in almost a starving condition in South Dakota, owing to the scarcity of rations and the nonfulfillment of treaties and sacred obligations under which the Government had been placed to the Indians, caused great dissatisfaction, dissension and almost hostility...During this time, the tribe, under Big Foot, moved from their reservation to near Red Cloud Agency in South Dakota under a flag of truce. They numbered over four hundred souls. They were intercepted by a command under Lt. Col. Whitside, who demanded their surrender, which they complied with, and moved that afternoon some two or three miles and camped where they were directed to do, near the camp of the troops.

"During the night Colonel Forsyth joined the command with reinforcements of several troops of the 7th cavalry. The next morning he deployed his troops around the camp, placed two pieces of artillery in position, and demanded the surrender of the arms of the warriors. This was complied with by the warriors going out from camp and placing the arms on the ground where they were directed. Chief Big Foot, an old man, sick at the time and unable to walk, was taken out of a wagon and laid on the ground.

"While this was being done a detachment of soldiers was sent into the camp to search for any arms remaining there, and it was reported that their rudeness frightened the women and children. It is also reported that a remark was made by some one of the soldiers that 'when we get the arms away from them we can do as we please with them,' indicating that they were to be destroyed. Some of the Indians could understand English. This and other things alarmed the Indians and [a] scuffle occurred between one warrior who had [a] rifle in his hand and two soldiers. The rifle was discharged and a massacre occurred, not only the warriors but the sick Chief Big Foot, and a large number of women and children, who tried to escape by running and scattering over the prairie were hunted down and killed."

The Official reports make the number killed 90 warriors and approximately 200 women and children." 25 personnel of the 7th Cavalry died. [And I will add that these soldiers probably died mainly as a result of "friendly fire."-ES]

Before the battle began, the soldiers at the base counted out by fours. Nathan was a number four, which means he was to remain behind at the base. For this reason, my family always considered the number four

as our lucky number. And personally I agree—not only because there was a good chance of his being killed, but also because he therefore did not take part in the slaughter. While he was at the base, Nathan volunteered to accompany an officer, Lieutenant Preston, on a mission to the Pine Ridge Agency. Later he was awarded a certificate of merit for this ride. To quote from a letter of recommendation in Nathan's military record:

"Captain L. R. Hare, 7th Cavalry, recommends this man for a certificate of merit for distinguished service under the following circumstances as related by the Regimental Adjutant of the Regimental Commander (Col. Forsyth).

"The Adjutant states that at the fight of Wounded Knee Creek, S.D., December 29, 1890, Private Fellman, volunteered to accompany Lt. Preston, 9th Cavalry to the Pine Ridge Agency, that officer having requested the detail of a man to go with him. The Adjutant adds: 'I considered him (Fellman) at the time as worthy of reward in the shape of a certificate of merit and so reported to Captain Hare—the troop commander.'

"Colonel Forsyth approves recommendation of troop commander and says Private Fellman made the ride (16 miles) in one hour and on its completion fell from his horse exhausted; that when he undertook it, it was more than probable that hostile Indians would meet him on the way.

"The Dept. Comdr. also approves recommendation.

"A.R. 176 provides that 'certificates of merit will be awarded for extraordinary acts of gallantry performed by soldiers in the presence of the enemy.' Such certificate entitles the soldier to \$2 per month additional pay from date of act of bravery."

Life after the Army was much more mundane. Upon his discharge from the Army, Nathan moved to

Chicago, where his brother Benjamin also lived. They each married one of the Werthan sisters. Nathan and Emma, born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1871, married in 1893. They had five children in rather quick succession, and were very poor. Although Nathan was a skilled craftsman and picture framer by profession, he was not able to make a living framing pictures. They lived behind their store, a corner grocery across from a school, where they sold sandwiches to schoolchildren at their lunch break. According to my mother, the Feldman children had to share shoes. Emma developed diabetes, about which too little was known at the time. Her doctor said that the best thing she could do for her condition was have more children, which is how Bill and Irene came into the world. For years, Emma had a wooden leg. She died on March 23, 1939, following a second amputation operation.

All of Nathan's souvenirs from his army service, including a sword, were kept in a trunk in the basement of the family home. And all of them were eventually destroyed and discarded after a flood of the basement.

As a young girl of four or five, at my grandparents' cottage at Lake Wawasee, in Northern Indiana (we lived in Huntington, Indiana), where the family would gather in the summer, I remember sitting in the grass at the foot of Nathan's chair, listening to Indian war stories. This is my only recollection of him. Of course there are many things we know now that we didn't know then. Then, some of our favorite movies and television programs were of cowboys and Indians.

I was seven years old when Nathan died, on January 22, 1954.

My great grandfather, a Jew from Lodz, came to America to find freedom and took part in the conquest of the West! He was a man who, because he was number four, received US citizenship as a soldier, and lived to tell the tale. □

I Pledge Allegiance to My Flag

by Ann Harris

In my mother's house, there was a very old framed copy of the *Pledge of Allegiance* that I inherited when she moved to Israel. It is in a visible place in my home, as it was in hers—a combination of patriotism and sentimentality. Today, I read the words, which I guess I have never done before—concentrating more on the dates of the certificate and the engraving. It is of the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* that is depicted—1776-1916. The words of the pledge are written as follows:

I pledge allegiance to *my* Flag
And to the Republic for which it stands—
One Nation, indivisible, with liberty
and justice for all.

I immediately took to the Internet, to find out the origins I realized I did not know at all. The words were written by Francis Bellamy (brother of Edward Bellamy)

for a popular children's magazine in October 1892—as a way of celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus arriving in the Americas. It was embraced by some as a call to unity after the Civil War. It is said Bellamy had originally considered using *equality* and *fraternity*, but decided this was too controversial because so many still were against civil rights for Negroes and women. The actual original wording did not have the *to* before *republic*, but was added later as a grammatical change when the pledge was adopted. We probably know the later history of the change in 1954 and the insertion of *under God*, and the struggles that have accompanied that change.

The change *my flag* to *the flag* occurred in 1924 to ensure that immigrants knew which flag was being saluted. □

Becoming an American

by Hal Bookbinder

Many of our parents or grandparents immigrated to the United States and proceeded to become naturalized American citizens. But, how many of us have an ancestor who was born here and still had to go through the naturalization process? This is the true story of my grandmother, Sarah Sacharow Horwitz, who was born in St. Louis, Missouri on June 20, 1895 and became a naturalized American citizen in Newark, New Jersey in 1938.

Bernard Sacharow of Poltava (now in Ukraine) and Rose Cooper of Warsaw married in London in 1889. After their first two children, Isabel and Dora, were born in Britain, the family immigrated to the United States. They settled first in St. Louis where their third child, Sarah, my grandmother, was born. By 1908, the Sacharow family had settled permanently in Newark.

Meanwhile, Joseph and Yetta Horowitz immigrated to America in 1904 with their six children. One of these was Edward, who would become my grandfather. The 1905 New Jersey State Census shows the Horowitz family living together in Newark. But, within months, Joseph would be dead and Yetta, feeling incapable of handling the family would turn Edward and his sister, Lillian, over to the Hebrew Orphan Asylum in Newark. The 1910 Federal Census shows them as inmates in the Asylum.

By 1917, Sarah had met Edward Horwitz and they decided to marry. In order to marry, they needed to show documentation. Edward's oldest memory was of being an inmate at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and he believed that he had been born in Newark. He proceeded to City Hall to get his birth certificate, but was informed that it was not to be found. He spoke to his mother and learned

that he had been born in Soroca (now in Moldova). By providing his school records, he was able to get the marriage license and he and Sarah were married.

America's citizenship laws of 1917 tied a woman's citizenship to that of her husband. If a foreign woman married an American man, she automatically obtained American citizenship. Conversely, if an American woman married a foreign man, she lost her citizenship. So, upon their marriage in October of 1917, Sarah, who had been born in St. Louis, ceased to be an American citizen. Had the marriage taken place five years later, after citizenship laws were changed, she could have retained her citizenship.

While "being stateless" annoyed her, it wasn't sufficiently inconvenient so that Sarah and Edward took any immediate action. However, over the years, Sarah became ever more active in the political scene in Newark, even chairing the election committees for several officials. Being an active participant in the political process, it became more and more annoying to her that she could not vote. So, in 1937 Sarah and Edward submitted their Petitions for Naturalization and were naturalized in 1938.

It is said that the Newark, New Jersey judge administering the oath of citizenship to Sarah was one that she had helped in getting elected and that he was quite surprised to see her in front of him for the swearing-in. Copies of Sarah's Birth Certificate and her Petition for Naturalization, show her birth in St. Louis and her naturalization in Newark.

So, as odd as it seems, a person can be born in America and yet later be naturalized as an American citizen. □

Miriam Kantor Survives Sinking of Titanic

Mr. and Mrs. Sinai (Sehua) Kantor boarded the Titanic as a 2nd Class passengers at Southampton on Wednesday 10th April 1912, Ticket No. 244367, £26. Their last residence was Vitebsk, Russia. Their destination was 1735 Madison Avenue, Bronx, New York. Miriam Kantor (née Sternin) survived the sinking and was picked up from boat 12 by the *Carpathia*, disembarking at New York City on Thursday 18th April 1912. She went to her uncle, Mr. Berman in Boston, Massachusetts. She was 24. Kantor died in the sinking. He was 34. He is described as No. 283. Male. Estimated age, 36. Very fair hair and mustache. Clothing: Grey and green suit; green overcoat; blue shirt; check front marked "F"; black boots; "C" on singlet. Effects: Pocket telescope; silver watch; Pocketbook with foreign notes; letter case; empty purse; purse; £1 10s. in gold; ten shillings in silver and other coins. His body was recovered by the *Mackay-Bennett* and his body was forwarded to 1735 Madison

Ave. New York, care of Spieler. He was buried at Mount Zion Cemetery, Queens, New York. Information from the American Red Cross Emergency and Relief Fund (Kantor file No. 228. Russian): *The husband, about thirty years of age, was drowned. He was travelling with his wife, who was saved. He had been a commission merchant, earning about \$2,500 a year, and was bringing to this country several trunks of valuable furs which he had expected to sell here. Both he and his wife were university graduates. He was ambitious to study medicine and planned to take night courses after he should get his business established in New York. His wife expected to continue to study dentistry. She is unwilling to return to Russia, where she would be helpless to earn her living. She lives with cousins in New York City. After she learns the language, she will carry out her intention of learning and practising dentistry. She can live on \$50 a month while pursuing her studies, and the appropriation of this*

Committee is intended to cover her tuition and school fees and living expenses for the period of four years, at the end of which time she expects to be self-supporting. The money has been placed in charge of the Council of Jewish Women, who will keep supervision of her plans.

You can read an article from the *New York Times*: *Mrs. J. J. Brown of Denver Tells Story of Her Seven Hours In Lifeboat*

"Mrs. J. J. Brown, wife of a Denver mine owner, told yesterday afternoon to a reporter for THE TIMES at the Ritz-Carlton the story of her seven-hour vigil in an open boat after leaving the Titanic....In the women's parlor of the Ritz-Carlton sat the Russian Consul and a young Russian woman, who had lost her husband and all of her money in the disaster. This woman had been brought to the hotel to meet the Consul by the tireless Mrs. Brown, so that something could be done to assist her. The picture was as perfect a one of absolute democracy as could be obtained.

"The woman, who was returning to her luxurious home in Denver after seven hours in an open boat, during which time she continually used an oar; after four days

in watching over others and waiting on the sick; after remaining up practically all night Thursday night, sat holding the hand of the little brown-eyed, baby-faced Russian woman, and repeating to her in German time and again that every thing was all right.

"The grief of the young widow was of that profound kind which has passed the stage of tears. When the interview was over and she was to go, whither she knew not, in a land where she was penniless, where she knew no word of its language, she stood for a moment looking at the stronger woman, who had mastered the situation and had been the leader. Hesitatingly she held out her hand, and then turning her face up like a little child, she paid the only tribute she understood as she kissed the older woman on the cheek, and mutely walked away with the Consul leading her by the hand. It was the final tribute to fortitude combined with tenderness." □

Note: The identification of the young Russian woman mentioned in the article as Mrs. Kantor is tentative.

Date of Publication: Saturday 20th April 1912

<http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/print_item.php/3300.html>

Thankful Eyes are Sparkling

by Mary Kasindorf

Translated from Yiddish by David Goldman

Thankful happy eyes are sparkling,
We have given the sick a place to lay their heads.
Just like an eagle that brings them under his wing,
G-d should help us, he should give us his blessing.
"I lift the cup of salvation, and to the name of G-d
I call."

You won't leave us to just hope for you,
Because we are carrying the cup of help.
We have opened the doors to the sick,
Don't forget us, O G-d, we will thank you.

On our undertaking please send your blessing,
Give us success right from your hand.
It is seven years the work has gone on,
Digging, banging, drilling and laying bricks.
And we have had no thousands,
For ten cents in a charity box we had to call.
And for two hundred thousand we have a building,
The collectors were Minnie, Janie and Ida.
And now we are waiting for help from the larger
ones,
Perhaps to find a Straus or a Moshe Montefiore.

It has all taken place like the splitting of the Red
Sea,
And over our heads stands a completed roof.
But it is our birds that have gathered the straw to
the nest,
Stones, obstacles in the way which we have
overcome

And now we are looking to Man and to G-d,
We have merciful pleas for a paralyzed orphan.
Kashruth, Jewish faces, and our own Torah,
So that no one will fear that they will be stamped
with a cross.

After their long sleepless nights, at dawn,
They will be able to serve their own immortal G-d.
They will delight in their sapphire days,
From hospital to synagogue they will find their way.
Now merciful Jews, help us to sustain them
To relax the minds of the elderly sick.
For those not with us, come and join.
Feel with the unfortunate their aches and pains,
Whoever has a drop of humanity in his heart
Should not leave us ashamed.
Support your own shoulders instead of iron pillars,
No one will benefit from abandoning us.

Join with us to provide for the sick,
We have no one to borrow from.
We have to be able to feed them, and to keep them
warm,
They should get it easily, tenderly and without tears.
In order to sweeten the bitter days of the forlorn,
So they enjoy our work;
And to bring joy to their hearts and eyes,
And not to die under a cross, but under *Shema
Yisrael.*

Written January 1929 to raise funds for the Hebrew
Home for Chronic Invalids.

Mary Kasindorf

by David Hoffman

Over the years, as we have studied the history of our extended family, we have been amazed by the number and scope of welfare and communal organizations that they founded in America, as first or second generation immigrants. In part, this reflects the strong social values which were passed on to them by their family in Lithuania and Russia; the Haskalah, or Enlightenment, had reached eastern European Jewry in the time of their grandparents and parents and they were given it along with mother's milk. But as we have learned much more about the organization of the Jewish kahals (communities) from which they came, we now also know that many of these social, communal and religious values and beliefs had been interwoven in the institutions that they grew up with. Mary Kasindorf and her siblings and cousins were not only recreating lives filled with the social values of the old country, but also with the same institutions that existed in Europe, in their new country.

Mary Kasindorf was the daughter of Hirsh Eliash Shliomovich, a rabbi and maggid, and Malka Friedland. She was born in Ariogala, Lithuania in 1866, and moved to Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia with her family around 1882. Her parents did not approve of her marriage to Isaac Kasindorf (Kazancov), who was a dancing teacher and the son of a tailor. We have been told that they married secretly before Isaac left for America in 1885, and Mary followed in 1886. Their New York marriage license was issued in June of 1887. They were the first members of Mary's family to immigrate to the United States.

Mary and Isaac raised eleven children (a twelfth child, William, died in infancy), and provided a haven for every member of the family who emigrated from Russia to America for the next forty years. First Mary's brother, Barney Blass, came, then her cousins, Nadia Friedman Kahn and her husband Peter (1902), then Mary's brother, Leo Blass, her sister, Anna Solomen and her husband and three children, and their parents, Hirsh and Malka Shliomovich (1907-8). The 1920s brought nephews and nieces, Albert Parry (Paretsky), Meyer and Celia Paretsky, and cousin Manya Friedman Shmaeff, her husband Elias Shmaeff and their three children, with Mary's aunt Taube Friedman. Many other Rostov émigrés passed through the Kasindorf home. Some stayed for a few days, others for years. In Mary's home, and with her help, the transition to a new life, new language, new profession, and new freedom was eased.

Albert Parry wrote: "I was in America two days when Albert and Sidney [two of Mary's sons] came to find me and take me to the Bronx. They said, 'Bring everything.' When we arrived, the entire family was there to welcome me! All the family came together to welcome the newcomer. Aunt Mary had prepared a wonderful supper. I moved into the back room and stayed for two years."

The Kasindorf home, on the lower east side, and later in the Bronx and at their bungalow in Silver Beach, was renowned for warmth and hospitality. Mary's children, grandchildren, and Isaac's brothers and their families, all gathered for Sunday dinners. She cooked from Saturday night until dawn, in pots the size of

washtubs and, according to granddaughter Edith Kavey Hershon, "If fewer than forty people were at the table, she'd say, 'Where is everybody?'" Edith credits these gathering with establishing the close bonds between brothers, sisters and cousins despite great differences in their ages.

Mary Kasindorf was more than an extraordinary mother and homemaker. Unions, burial societies, charitable and community service organizations were also cooked up in her kitchen. Her daughter Berdie Weininger said she did not think her mother slept very much. She recalled Mary looking out the window at some women resting on a bench and saying, "How can these women just sit there so long and not **do** anything?"

Her son Sidney Kasindorf recalled that his father worked very long hours in the garment industry, designing ladies clothing and manufacturing cloaks. Isaac said: "I have eleven children. When will I ever see them?" Isaac was an organizer of the ILGWU (International Ladies Garment Worker's Union), and later when he became a garment manufacturer, he had the first union shop in New York. Isaac and Mary were among the founders of the Rostover H.U. Verein, a fraternal and burial society for émigrés from Rostov. They are both buried in the Rostover plot at Mt. Zion Cemetery in Queens (along with Mary's brother Barney, their son Louis who died on November 17, 1918, Isaac's brother, Ellis, and other family members).

Isaac Kasindorf died on July 4, 1915. After his death, finances were tight and the children helped out as soon as they were old enough. Herman had been studying medicine in St. Louis under the supervision of Uncle Barney Blass, but quit and came home to help support the family. Mary borrowed a dollar from a neighbor every Friday to provide through the weekend, but always managed to pay it back at the beginning of the week. Mary never stopped her charitable work for others.

After founding the Hebrew Home for Chronic Invalids, and helping to raise thousands of dollars for its establishment with her Yiddish poetry, Mary was honored with a bronze tablet in a ceremony attended by her ten

surviving children: Herman, Albert, Sidney, Mildred, Lee Kavey, Susie Gabler, Gertrude Rosumoff, Dora Krauser, Berdie Weininger, and Hilda Weiner.

When acknowledging the honor, Mary quipped, *Better to give me one rose when I'm alive than a bouquet when I'm dead.* □

Mary died on September 6, 1935. More than 1000 people attended her funeral, including public officials and civic leaders. Other organizations she helped to found and for which she raised funds were the Rostover Sisterhood of Convalescent Mothers, the Lechim Andyim, the East Bronx Ibriah, the Ladies Auxiliary of the New Synagogue, the Bronx, the Daughters of Israel Orphan Assylum, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Bikur Cholim Convalescent Home of Mount Vernon, and the Nathan Straus Jewish Centers, the Bronx.

Sid Kasindorf and the Nazi U-Boats

By David Hoffman

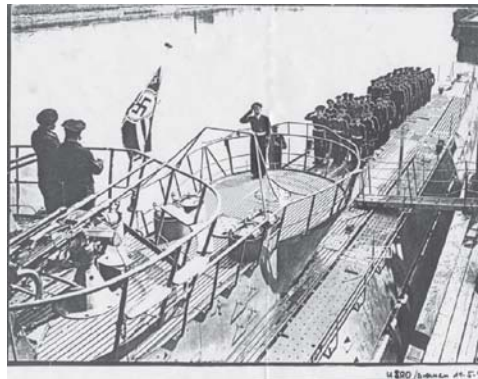
Sid Kasindorf developed a "secret weapon" which Adolph Hitler attributed to be the cause of the defeat of his critical U-Boat campaign, a turning point in World War II.

Sidney Kasindorf began his career in the early 1920s, working in his brother-in-law, Julius Gabler's hardware and electrical supply store on 42nd Street in New York City. Sidney convinced Julius to try selling radios in the hardware store and eventually to open *Commodore Radios*, which Sid managed for awhile.

Sidney was a self-educated engineering and electronics genius. He was a pioneer of many radio and electronic devices, including the prototype of the automobile radio, and because of his special interest in miniaturization, in 1922, very early in the history of radio, he produced a radio which would fit in the palm of your hand...the first walkman. In 1932 he developed the first hidden camera with flash to prevent theft from stores. Although his work was frequently credited and admired in trade publications and radio magazines, Sid felt he was denied much of the credit and rewards due to his lack of formal education and credentials. "Maybe I could have sacrificed more to get a degree," he reflected, during one of our interviews.

Sid held numerous patents on his work, but perhaps his most intriguing and significant accomplishment took place, almost by accident, during World War II. He developed a technique which broke the Nazi U-Boat transmission codes, so that the U-Boats landing spies on the Long Island coast could be located and destroyed. The U-Boats had been wreaking havoc with allied shipping, and the outcome of the War hung in the balance.

The Germans were transmitting in "squirts"—15 second messages which could not be understood by the Allies. While working on the problem at the *Federal Telephone and Radio Corporation*, Sid accidentally leaned on a record player on which a squirt transmission was recorded. Suddenly the sound, slowed down, was audible and understandable! The Nazi's secret was revealed and it was possible to decode all of their transmissions and,



more importantly, to detect the location of their U-Boats. Over thirty detection stations were built at spots on the Eastern coast of the United States and South America, and almost immediately the destruction of the Allied shipping and war transports stopped. The tide of the war began to change.

Born in New York in 1904, Sidney was the 10th of 12 children of Mary and Isaac Kasindorf. His

father, Isaac, died when Sidney was only 11; choosing to work to help support the large family, Sid was unable to complete high school or go to college. Among his many adventures was a cross-country motorcycle trip, at a time before the roads were entirely paved, and a trip down the Hudson River by canoe. After his 13-year marriage ended in 1956, Sid settled in Los Angeles.

He was a living connection to our family's past—his life and a sharp memory spanned the 20th century. He told us endless tales of his parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. He amassed a collection of many bulging scrapbooks, filled with clippings, photographs, letters of commendation, and painstaking research about our extended family; his collection of newspaper clippings and other materials, helped to bring the family of the past to life. His small room in a Hollywood retirement home was crowded with boxes of this family memorabilia. Sid was happy to share these materials, as well as his memories. Our family history research got off to a good start in the early 1990s, when we met to interview him at his home and over lunch at Cantor's Deli. He passed away in 2001, just short of his 97th birthday.

A grateful country thanks you, Sid, and a grateful family thanks you more. □

Based on interviews with Sid Kasindorf, 1992-1994; Newspaper article "U.S. Electric Finger on U-Boats Bared," Daily News, January 14, 1946, New York.

Searching for Schulman

by Vicki Tashman

Entering its 89th consecutive season, the Folksbiene* Yiddish Theatre (Folks-bee-neh, meaning "People's Stage") is the oldest continuous venue for Yiddish theatre in the world. In 1915, while Yiddish theatre flourished bringing light, escapist fare to an immigrant audience, a group of socially conscious Yiddish actors formed the Folksbiene to bring quality theatre to the public. With that in mind, they staged Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* in Yiddish as their very first production. Through a fruitful partnership with the Workmen's Circle, the Folksbiene not only survived, but also flourished. In 1925, they hired their first professional director. With the proliferation of great Yiddish authors such as I. L. Peretz, David Pinsky, and Peretz Hirshbein, they were able to form a repertoire of plays almost solely of Yiddish origin augmented with classic mainstream works by the likes of Maxim Corky, Eugene O'Neill, and Upton Sinclair.

I had always heard about my husband's great-grandfather, Nathan Schulman. "He always had money," my aunt-in-law would say. "He owned Yiddish Theaters in NY." She would conclude by saying, "he thought the future was in Yiddish Theater and so he lost all of the money he had." I found him in the 1910 census listed as the head of his household with his wife, four of his children (my husband's grandmother was one of those) as well as a "servant." I thought this was so interesting and I wanted to know more. Which theater or theaters did he own? What happened to them and to him? How did he lose his money?

Then, one day I received a newsletter from the American Jewish Historical Society. There, in the back of the newsletter was an article about an actress who performed in the Yiddish Theaters of the 1920s. And, following the article were poster reproductions available from their bookstore!

And, sure enough, there amongst the photos of the posters for sale, was one that said "Schulman and Rovenge, managers!"

I could not believe it!

Was this Nathan Schulman?

First, I typed *The People's Theater* (the name advertised on the poster) into Google and, of course, there are many of those theaters across the United States. So I typed in *Yiddish* and found a national Yiddish newspaper founded in 1897 called *The Forward*.

I tried to search their archives for any mention of Mr. Schulman, but their archives only spanned the last couple of years. I emailed them and received the name



of an author who has written a couple of books on the subject. She steered me towards the Hebrew Actors Union of America who, in 1963, published a lexicon of the Yiddish Theater. Sure enough, there was a brief paragraph about Nathan Schulman as well as a picture!

I translated the article, which contained the town where he was born, the year he came to the United States and when he got involved with the Yiddish Theater.

After managing the People's Theater and then the Grand Theater, Schulman opened the Public Theater in 1927 with the showing of "Parisian Love" in Yiddish. According to the article in the *New York Times*, "...this downtown temple of *Thespis*, seating 1,743, gave forth exclamations of satisfaction from an overflowing audience.

Sadly, this theater was a financial failure and Schulman became ill and died in 1931.

As the lights on Second Avenue darkened, the *Folksbiene* became the lone keeper of the flame of Yiddish theatre. □

Source

<<http://www.folksbiene.org/!historic.html>>

Remembering Stone Street Hill: The War Years

by Carol Nahin

Our move from Hollywood, right behind Paramount Studios, where my father worked as a screen writer, was precipitated by the death of my mother's much older sister at the City of Hope in 1939. The house on "The Hill" was all that remained of "the fortune" her husband had made during the early years of the Depression selling short on stocks like Coca-Cola and TWA. Apparently the market went up one day and Will, the Scottish-Jewish husband who was counting on it to continue going down, suddenly died of a heart attack, leaving Auntie Bea a "rich widow." With her fortune intact, she went on a cruise through the Panama Canal and met a fortune hunter. He was fat; he wore a toupee, and had a glass eye. But he was charming and wore a monocle and spats. Auntie Bea was head over heels in love and they married at the Hollywood Temple (where everyone in the family got married). She bought him a white four-door convertible with glass separating front from back seats, and in 1936, bought the house on "The Hill." It was supposed to be a ritzy place to live back then. But by 1938 he had gone through all her money in one slightly shady scheme after another, and, by 1939, left her for another rich widow.

Whenever anyone asked where we lived we never said, *Stone Street*. We always said *Stone Street Hill*—or even more simply, *The Hill*. Stone Street was just a street *down there* between Wabash and Ganahl. Stone Street Hill was *up there* right under the Castle on Mustard Hill. More than a street, it was an island and a state of mind. The Hill was an island because no one except the residents or their guests ever went up there. Or sometimes people were lost and found themselves there. It was so steep that many of the cars driven in those days couldn't even climb it. Most of us kids "knew" that walking backwards up the hill to our homes was easier than walking forward. The best part of living on the Hill was the freedom we were allowed. It seemed that there were children, all of an age, in every house. Flattened cardboard cartons became sleds for sliding down Mustard Hill from The Castle, roller skating down the middle of the street was safe, flying kites from the poppy and lupine fields (bought at Ruby's 5 and 10) out over the City of Angels was exciting—especially when the kite string broke.

Our address was 1163, the last house on the Hill. Our driveway marked the point where the paved road ended and the dirt road began its long, sinuously winding way through fields of usually brittle and dry native grasses up to the Castle. The Castle was at the crest of Mustard Hill and reputed to be haunted. Our phone number was Angelus 2-1008. Even as a small child, I had somehow intuited that Angelus was not a desirable telephone prefix. Until September of 1940, our phone number had been

Gladstone 2896. Not as good as Crestview, but not as embarrassingly defining as Angelus.

Our house was a beautiful Spanish Colonial stucco with a red tile roof, a long front porch—perfect for porch sitting—large rooms, high ceilings, and a bathroom straight out of some Arabian Nights fantasy (jade green and black tile on every exposed surface, horizontal or vertical, and a stall shower with a semi-nude water sprite etched on the glass door). High above the Valley of the Smokes, long before the ugly word smog was coined, we had a 180 degree view of our city from every room but one. On clear days we really could see Catalina. I was six years old. Views meant nothing to me and the so-called backyard was weeds taller than me and four tiers of creaking, shaky wooden ladder-like stairs with peeling green paint attached to nothing but itself.

Our laundry was strung out on a set of pulley ropes that stretched from the top tread of the stairs about 100 feet to a telephone pole set in the back corner of the property. What was particularly embarrassing was the vision of my Dr. Dentons, grey, flannel sleepers (with feet and trap door) flapping in the constant breezes over the City of Los Angeles. When the war broke out I tried to convince my mother that the enemy could use my sleepers as a signal to bomb our house. When she allowed me to start wearing pjs, I truly believed the warning had convinced her. It was only much later that I learned that Dr. Denton sleepers, like Lucky Strike Gold and Fleers Dubble Bubble Gum, had gone to war.

Next door to our house, going down the hill, lived the Dennises. He had a cleaning shop. They had a son, Paul, and a much older daughter who went to Israel. Living next to them were the Blocks, Harry and Sylvia, and their two daughters. The Berman brothers, Izzy and Jack, and their wives Pauline and Jean, had built, in the mid 30s, a very grand residence composed of two large two story homes side by side. Marcia belonged to Pauline, and Lester and his younger brother were Jean's. Next to the Bermans were the Blindells, then the Solomons; Sam, the famous Doc with an office on Brooklyn Avenue and Gertie, my mother's best friend. And next to the Solomons were the Schneidmans. The ladies said she bleached her hair so much that one day she'd wake up with her scalp on the pillow. Though I hopefully waited and watched, it never happened! Across the street from our house were the Freedmans. Mrs. Freedman was the nicest mother on the street. (Only in Andy Hardy movies did one ever hear the word "mom"). Next to the Freedmans were the Odells—their baby's name was Franklin Delano O'Dell. Then there were the Slutskys, the Gentiles—the only non-Jews on the street (they made wine in their basement and fermented it in a big vat in their backyard), the Glazers, and, finally, the

Strumans. Florence was the second nicest mother on the street! The ladies seemed to do nothing but visit each others in their long flowery zippered hostess gowns and play gin rummy all day long in each others homes. On Saturday they all played Mahjong. They also had lunches and fashion shows supporting The Assistance League and various Jewish charities like El Nido camp for undernourished children, and The City of Hope.

II

But very suddenly, there were far more important things to think about. Sometime in early 1941, my mother became trained as an air raid spotter and went to work on the top floor of the downtown Hall of Justice. I wonder why December 7th seemed to be such a surprise when obviously something like it had been expected long in advance. All I knew was that my mother and the other women volunteers (who all wore high heeled shoes, hats and gloves to their job) moved airplanes around on big map tables. I was the one to answer the phone on December 7th when she was urgently summoned downtown to work. I remember her calling to Baba, my grandmother, who lived with us, "now that there's a war, do you think I need to wear a hat?" What my father cared about was that she made sure there was a milk bottle next to her on the seat of our 1938 Oldsmobile in case someone tried to get into the car and abduct or assault her. But I thought the only people she had to worry about were spies. And you could always tell who they were. There were a lot of spy movies at the Wabash Theatre in those years, so we knew what to look for.

The city of L.A. had been having practice air raid drills for months. All residences were supposed to have heavy window shades and cheap thick drapes called blackout curtains. When the air raid sirens went off everyone was supposed to pull down their shades, draw the draperies, and turn off all lights inside. We were so high up above the city, the lights from our homes could be seen as far away as Catalina (why not, if we could see theirs?). Everyone on the Hill took these responsibilities very seriously. Our family had a flashlight as well as candles, and there was an inside windowless hallway to which we could retreat if we wanted light. But that night we didn't retreat.

On the evening of December 7, Baba and I were home alone. My mother had been called downtown to the Hall of Justice at about 11:30 am, and she didn't know that my father had left the house soon after she did to try and enlist in the army. When he told us where he was going, Baba started to cry and wring her hands. "*Vay iss mir,*" she said over and over. "*Gey nisht! Vart for Channa! Gey nisht!*"

But my father said, "I have to go, if Ann gets home before I do tell her where I went." And then he turned on his heel and marched out of the house as if he were already in uniform.

The air raid sirens screeched and wailed and undulated from boxes high up on telephone poles on every street corner. We knew that this blackout was no rehearsal. Everyone knew their roles. And from the breakfast room window Baba and I watched as the city lights blinked out. First by twos and threes then tens and hundreds and thousands until all over our city everything turned a dark silvery charcoal color and then went to black, blacker and blackest. It wasn't scary. It was exciting.

Sitting at the breakfast table, drinking a cup of cocoa, and staring out the window was the last thing I remembered until I woke up in bed, in the middle of the night, to the sounds of shouting and crying coming from my parents' room. Since my parents rarely argued in front of me, and certainly never shouted at each other, the sounds were scarier than the blackout had been. Getting out of bed for any reason was against the rules. So it wasn't until I heard my mother and grandmother talking the next morning that I found out the reason for all the noise.

It seems that when my father tried to enlist, the recruiting officer told him that he needs my mother's signed permission because he had several dependents. He brought the paperwork home but my mother not only refused to sign, she tore the documents to shreds. "You remember the last time he wanted to go?" mother asked Baba, pointing her finger at the ceiling. "If I had let him go then he'd be pushing up daisies in Spain right now!" And she pointed the same finger down at the floor. "I am putting my foot down!" I didn't know what she meant by pushing up daisies in Spain though it did create an interesting mental image. What I did know for sure was, when my mother put her foot down, the subject was closed. And, as far as I know, Daddy never tried to join the army again.

Despite the war, life went on pretty much the same for us kids. Of course it had to be much different for our parents. There was a sense that the level of tension and anxiety rose each night when they listened to Walter Cronkite, Edward R. Murrow, and Gabriel Heatter. The news was bad and it seemed to be getting worse.

I don't remember any of the fathers being drafted or enlisting in the army. Every man did have to take a physical down at the draft board. And every man received a classification. 1A meant that it was a good idea to keep a bag packed in readiness, and 3A, which I think my father was, meant he had too many dependents for the government to support if he went off to war. I overheard a few of The Ladies talking about some men who had been classified 4F, totally unfit for service, and that this had been accomplished with the help of certain "medications," drinking lots of liquor, and staying awake the whole night before they went in for their physicals. Of course this was "just a rumor," one of the ladies said, pulling her ear lobe. If it was a rumor, I didn't think that they should be rumor mongering, which everyone knew

was a very unpatriotic thing to do!

Lots of things were classified as *unpatriotic*. Buying coffee, cocoa, sugar, silk stockings, girdles, gasoline, automobile tires, toilet paper, bar soap, wax paper, and cigarettes from the ever-lurking snaky neighborhood black-marketeer was unpatriotic; so was buying more than you needed of a certain item and putting it away for later use. That was called hoarding. Cigarettes and bubble gum were as essential to the war effort as the leather used for military boots and jackets. And like leather shoes which were also rationed, cigarettes and bubble gum disappeared from store shelves and counters everywhere. So did wax lips. What could wax lips have to do with beating the Axis powers?

One day my mother happened to be in downtown L.A. when she saw a long line of women in front of a store. Thinking that the line had to be for the purchase of either cigarettes or stockings, she joined the slowly moving queue. She waited, and waited and waited. Patiently. Cigarettes and stockings were worth lining up and waiting for. After half an hour she got near enough to the head of the line and saw that the line wasn't for the purchase of cigarettes or stockings, the line actually ended inside of a See's Candy Shop.

III

Although all the teachers seemed angrier and more irritable, school went on pretty much as it had been before the war. There were a few exceptions. Sporadic at first, air raid and fire drills became almost daily facts of life, and we did a lot more singing. Whether this was supposed to lift our morale, or the teachers', or just fill time between air raid drills, who can say? We must have sang the entire Stephan Foster song book, *Anchors Aweigh (Naval March)*, the Army Air Corps song, *The Marines' Hymn*, and the US Field Artillery Corps's anthem, *The Caisson Song*.

One day Miss Blanchard gave each of us a mimeographed sheet to bring home to our mothers. The sheet provided directions for making an air-raid pad. It was to be about four feet long, of any suitable fabric as long as it could be rolled up like a sleeping bag. But it had to have a pocket somewhere in which our mothers were to place a coloring book, crayons and a small flannel baby-wrapping blanket.

The air raid pads were kept stacked in the cloak room, and whenever the school fire alarm went off at a certain frequency, we were to rush to the cloak room and retrieve them. Next we were to unroll the pads under our desks and lay down on them—an earlier version of the Cold War school exercise of Duck and Cover.

The PTA took up a collection and stocked the storage room next to Miss Ryan's office with cases of Nabisco soda crackers and Arrowhead water should we students be required to remain at school for extended periods during an emergency. The Red Cross provided iodine, rolls of gauze and adhesive tape as well as

tweezers for the removal of glass fragments or shrapnel shards. And our teachers all took a crash course in First Aid.

The frequent air raid pad exercises and the pails of sand in each corner of the room for the incendiary bombs expected to burst through the bungalow roof didn't seem very frightening. There were occasional surprise visits from uniformed military men who brought jeeps and other vehicles and provided rides in them on the gravel playground.

We had paper drives and aluminum can collections, defense stamp sales rallies, providing a distraction even for us kids. I think our parents must have done an excellent job of insulating us from what certainly must have been their own very serious concerns, fears and anxieties. It's clear now that for a long time after December 7th, the Allies were experiencing one defeat after another. We kids were largely unaffected or unafraid.

Wabash Avenue was our Main Street. Especially with gas rationing, even a trip to Cantor's on Brooklyn Avenue required serious consideration before being undertaken. Three gallons of gas a week, even if it was only ten cents a gallon at Mr. Nyberg's, called for prudent usage. There were no more long Sunday drives.

The ladies still shopped at Mr. Stone's grocery but were now using ration stamps for canned goods, and complained constantly because there was no coffee for the morning Silex percolator. They still bought their meat at Berkowitzes and the ladies flirted with the butcher more than ever. Special cuts were kept in back for "special people," and all meat purchases except liver and sweet breads required the presentation of Red Points or Stamps. Baba complained that the Friday night/Saturday chickens were old and tough but there were plenty of onions and carrots because Mexican migrants were being allowed in for the first time to work in the fields.

There was no more salami or pastrami at the Wabash Deli, and ration book coupons were needed for butter and cheese. My mother and Pauline Berman and Sylvia Block tried to make their own butter with Gertie Solomon's MixMaster. It didn't work but they did have a good time trying. Challah dripping with chicken fat with *gribenas* became the after school snack instead of peanut butter. And Frank Meyers, the triple threat pharmacist, soda jerk and postmaster at the Wabash Drugstore ran out of soda flavorings and carbonated water. But he did have something new to sell—Sulfa Powder, an all-purpose first aid antiseptic. Ruby's Five and Ten, the local Emporium—general store on the corner of Wabash and Evergreen, where the E car turned left, no longer sold odds and ends (of this and that) marked *Made in Japan*.

IV

One day in the spring of 1944 I came home from school to find a real estate agent's *For Sale* sign in the Victory Garden in front of 1163. The garden still had last

summer's lettuce, now each head had a full crown of flowers because we hadn't known when to actually pick them. "Yes," my mother said, "we'll be out by the summer even if we have to give this place away!"

Within the week, real estate *For Sale* signs were planted in the front yard of every house but the Glazers and the Gentiles. The Bermans' lawn had two. And suddenly there were more cars coming up the Hill, full of people looking out the car windows the way people do on the bus tours at the San Diego Zoo. The Hill was on display and our homes were the exhibition.

Our house fairly sparkled! Every bed was made every day. The kitchen was spotless and even the grease collecting can that could be exchanged for red points at the butcher's disappeared. Of special interest was the huge mirror over the fireplace that reflected the cloudless blue skies and the infinity of horizonless cityscape. For most of the lookie-loos the view of Catalina Island always evoked appreciative ooohs and aaahs. Some of the women would back away from the windows and sort of fan themselves with the front of their dresses or a hankie. No sale there. The worst that could happen happened when one old lady went out on the top of the wobbly green stair case, looked down four flights of steps into the maw of the weed filled yard, and fainted dead away into the arms of the very surprised real estate agent.

Just before the close of that school semester, my parents sold Auntie Bea's mini-mansion for three thousand five hundred dollars. My mother agreed to leave the old upright piano she'd bought for me to take lessons on (I never did) but the mirror over the fireplace would go

west with us.

Everything was in Noodleman's moving van—all of our clothes, linens, pots and pans, appliances, food and furniture. Mother and I stood outside on the porch, well out of the way of the two men up on ladders carefully unscrewing the clear rosettes that held the huge mirror to the wall above the fireplace. Three of the rosettes had been removed but they were having trouble with the fourth. One of the men shifted the mirror slightly and we heard a splintering, cracking sound. My mother put her hand up to her mouth and said "Oh God, don't break the mirror."

God wasn't listening and the men had already done it, anyway. The mirror cracked! And my mother burst into tears, grabbed my hand, and before I knew what had happened the Oldsmobile was started, put in gear, and we careened down the hill. I didn't even have time to say good bye to my bedroom. My mother cried all the way to our new house.

The plan was that my father would ride inside the truck with his friend "Noodle," and meet us at the house. We arrived long before the truck did and my mother did manage to rationalize enough to recover her sense of proportion. How important was a mirror, anyway? This was our new home! But when the truck did arrive the first thing carefully lifted off after the wooden slats were pulled down was—the mirror. Well, all but a sliver of mirror that my father told her was still attached to the last rosette on the wall of the last house on the Hill.

Goodbye Stone Street Hill.

Hello Laurel Avenue! □

From the Scrap Business to the Rag Trade

By Barry Seltzer

In 1907, when he was 64, my great-grandfather, Meyer Rosendorn, with his eldest son Berel and youngest daughter Rose immigrated from Mezeritch, Russia to Los Angeles. In 1910, at age 18, my grandfather Zalman, the youngest of Meyer's four children, joined his family in Los Angeles.

Gradually all my Rosendorn family settled in Boyle Heights. Sixty years later when the ethnic mix of Boyle Heights began to change to non-Jewish, my grandmother refused to leave the area! She remained in Boyle Heights until her death in 1984.

To make a living in the late 1920s and during the Depression, Meyer, Berel, and Zalman drove their horse and wagon down the main streets of downtown Los Angeles: Ninth between Main and Los Angeles Streets; Eighth between Flower and Wall; Seventh and Pico; Santee and San Pedro. They picked up discarded fabric scraps tossed out from various clothing manufacturers. Often these were the remains of the cuttings that went to make women's dresses, children's garments and

men's furnishings. The scraps in rainbows of colors looked like paper cutouts—the edges where the pattern pieces were cut away. You can still see these scraps in the large dumpsters outside the buildings in the old garment district.

My grandmother was an excellent seamstress. She would take the clothing scraps and make them into beautiful pieces of clothing to sell. With her clever hands, she made sure that, though they were just getting by financially in the late 20s and early 30s, my mother was very well dressed all the time. Much of the high-fashion material scraps could easily be pleated and tucked in imitation of "fancy" clothing for my mother.

Meyer Rosendorn and sons worked this scrap business for numerous years and made a comfortable living from it. My mother, dressed in the latest "rags" looked fashionable and beautiful—the height of 1930s perfection. □

An American Rabbi

The Life of Rabbi Jack Tauber

by Larry Tauber

Much criticism has been leveled at American Jewry's inadequate response to the Holocaust. The exceptions to these charges were the actions of the Zionist-Revisionists and the rescue efforts of the Orthodox Vaad HaTzalah rescue committee, whose heroic efforts coincided with the activities of Rabbi Jack Tauber, who held positions of responsibility in both before embarking upon a career as a prominent Brooklyn rabbi.

Rabbi Jack Tauber was born in New York in 1916, the youngest child of Isidore and Minna Tauber, immigrants from Czernovitz, in Austria-Hungary. The Tauber family maintained a tradition of descent from the 11th century Jewish historian-philosopher Abraham Ibn Daud. Isidore's mother, Rachel Schor, was a member of a prominent rabbinical family.¹ Isidore received a degree from the University in Czernowitz and also studied under and received *smicha* [rabbinical ordination] from Rabbi Elias Eliahu Igel, the Kreis-Rabbiner [chief rabbi] of Czernowitz. Isidore was lauded by Rabbi Naftali Halperin as a great *Talmud Chacham* and authored an unpublished concordance of every legal decision rendered in the Talmud. Jack Tauber's mother Minna was descended from the famous Chassidic rebbe, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan. As Jack would later relate: *In her childhood, my mother would be sent by her parents to visit relatives in Sucevea where she would stay at the home of Rebbitzin Chayelev, the daughter of Reb Meir Premishlaner. It appears that the Rebbitzin had a prize possession, namely, the cane of her illustrious and sainted father and as she walked with it, she would relate some of the stories about Reb Meir, which decades later my mother would relate to us.*² These stories, with their strong moral lessons would be used by Rabbi Tauber in his sermons more than sixty years later. Both Isidore and Minna were also early Zionists.

Jack was educated at City College. By the time of the Great Depression, swelling enrollments made it a kind of proletarian Harvard. He was in the environment that produced intellectual leftists like Irving Howe and Irving Kristol. Yet he took a different path, simultaneously traditional and radical. He was attracted to the ideals of Vladimir Jabotinsky and his *Zionist Revisionist* movement at a young age. Jabotinsky was an international celebrity. The founder of the Jewish Legion during World War I, in which he served as a lieutenant, he had organized local Jewish defense groups during the Russian pogroms in 1903 and after the war, the *Haganah*, the Jewish defensive militia in Palestine of the 1920s. His Revisionist movement advocated immediate unrestricted mass Jewish immigration into Palestine and establishment of a Jewish state. The core of Revisionist activism was its

youth organization *Brith Trumpeldor*, named after Jabotinsky's companion, Captain Joseph Trumpeldor, who fought with Jabotinsky in the Jewish Legion, and died in Palestine defending a Jewish settlement against attack. The group was also known by its acronym *Betar*, which was also an allusion to the final stronghold of the *Bar Kochba* rebellion against Rome and the last vestige of Jewish independence before the modern era. *Betar* fostered in young Jews attitudes of pride, confidence and assertiveness.

Jack Tauber, who had engaged in street fights with anti-Semitic gangs in New York at a time when anti-Semitism was still fashionable, joined *Betar's* Bronx chapter. He assumed a leadership role in *Betar* and the *Zionist-Revisionist* movement at a young age. As early as 1934, the movement's official publication, *Our Voice* commended him for his efforts in a petition drive calling for *free immigration of the Jews into Palestine on both sides of the Jordan* and for the grant to the Jewish People of *that very condition of normal collective existence called national statehood...*³ The petition movement garnered 600,000 signatures which were presented to the British government. By 1935, Jack was a member of the movement's National Executive Committee. He was also the editor of *Betar's* monthly magazine, *Hadar*, and authored a series of articles under the heading *Studies in Zionism*. Through *Betar* and the *New Zionist Organization* (as the *Zionist-Revisionists* were then known), he developed relationships with prominent members of the Revisionist movement in America, including journalist Beinish Epstein, Herzl's biographer Jacob De Haas, Irmiahu Halperin (who established the *Betar* naval school in Italy), and future Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Arens.

During this period, he was also engaged in religious studies, and in the fall of 1939, was ordained as an Orthodox rabbi by Rabbi Naftali Halperin.

Jack was dispatched to Moscow in January of 1940, although the specifics of his mission are unknown. He found a country dominated by fear and personally experienced the persecution suffered by the country's Jewish community. He wrote:

When I was stationed in the Nova Moshovska Hotel in Moscow, just across the Kremlin in January, 1940, it was Chanukah, the Jewish holiday of lights. I forgot that in Russia it is not permitted to practice religion and I put my candles on the windowsill. Someone knocked on my door and when I opened the door a man came in and said, "It is nice to see such

beautiful lights in Moscow." Two o'clock in the morning I was called for investigation to the I.N.K.W.D., the Secret Police and they accused me of working against communism because of lighting the Chanukah candles. I tried to explain to them that it is only because I am a Rabbi and my religion demands this custom of me. For several hours they tried to break me and very often embarrassed me saying that I was foolish to believe in God. After this experience it is my belief that Russia has such fear of light because...it is only light that destroys darkness.⁴

He had, however, hope for the future: *When I was in Moscow I met a young student. I asked him, "Who is God?" and he replied, "Stalin. Stalin is our God." And I asked him, "What will happen when Stalin will die?" "God knows," he answered. This illustrates, Jack wrote, that God is still in the hearts of these people.⁵*

He returned to the United States shortly afterwards and continued arguing the movement's case and was a frequent speaker at various Zionist meetings and gatherings. Then, in March 1940, Jabotinsky visited the United States to organize support for the demands of the *New Zionist Organization*: unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, establishment of a Jewish State and establishment of a Jewish army to fight alongside the allies against Hitler. Rabbi Tauber was appointed Jabotinsky's personal secretary and elected national secretary of the *Revisionist-Zionist* movement in the United States. He became part of Jabotinsky's inner circle, "the man closest" to Jabotinsky during his American stay, whom Jabotinsky would come to see as a second son.⁶

Jack recalled his first day:

When I went up to his room in the Mayflower Hotel for the first time, I brought several notes from Professor Akzin and in my heart was the fear, now I have been chosen to be the secretary of the man whom my history professor, the famous Oscar Janowsky, said was 'a small man with a messiah complex.' I wondered, would this be the man I found? I knocked on the door of his room. Someone was sitting with him. He stopped conversing for a moment and said to me, 'Pardon me, please sit' and he returned to his conversation with the other man. They spoke for a few minutes. Suddenly, Jabotinsky turned towards me, with a broad smile on his lips. He said, 'Good

morning, Mr. Secretary!'

We sat and spoke for half an hour and I felt that he was testing me. And I have to say, that from the first moment I met him until his last day, he was a man completely without airs. The 'Good Morning' greeting became a private joke between us. Every morning I would enter, stand at attention before him and bow, 'Good Morning Mr. President!' and he would return my greeting, 'Good morning Mr. Secretary!'⁷

Rabbi Tauber found that Jabotinsky was possessed with great humility.

The Rosh Betar ['Head of Betar,' i.e., Jabotinsky] once remarked that the elevator boys [in the Mayflower Hotel] must be subject to strict management, they stood so rigidly in the elevator. My inquiries brought to light that the boys read the newspapers and were merely standing at attention for the 'Jewish General.' When I told this to the Rosh Betar he merely looked at me for a moment and almost sighed, 'They're like the Jews ... making a field marshal out of a journalist.'⁸

The campaign for a Jewish army faced numerous roadblocks. The centerpiece of the program was a mass rally at the Manhattan Center in New York City. The former United States ambassador to Germany initially agreed to speak at the rally, but withdrew at the behest of "Jewish friends" who opposed the army idea. Similarly, the British ambassador was pressured by mainstream Zionist leaders to withdraw his support for the rally.⁹ Despite such opposition, the rally for the Jewish army was a success. An overflow crowd of more than 5,000 jammed into the Manhattan meeting hall. Rabbi Tauber described the emotional scene when Jabotinsky rose to speak over the din of anti-war protestors screaming outside the building that America would not enter the War. Jabotinsky stood and listened to the call from the street, waited a moment and began. *Mr. Churchill. I want to tell you something. Outside they are saying, 'The Yanks will not come.' I tell you with complete confidence, 'The Yanks will come.' A voice came out from the crowd, 'But Mr. Jabotinsky. It is not so. The Yanks won't come.'* *Jabotinsky called to him from the stage, 'YES!' Jabotinsky stood at attention and called out in a booming voice, 'THE YANKS ARE COMING!' The crowd was soon on its feet calling in unison, 'The Yanks are coming!'¹⁰ After he finished his address, the crowd rose and cheered. Jabotinsky asked why the hall wasn't emptying? How would the crowd get home so late at night? At which point Rabbi Tauber informed him that the New York subways operated all evening.*

Unknown to all but a handful of his supporters, including his young secretary, was Jabotinsky's failing

Jack Tauber (center) with Moshe Arens (right) at Camp Betar

health. He died a few short months later. His followers, however, continued his battle. Colonel Morris Mendelsohn, a hero of the Spanish-American war, became President of the movement in America, Ben Zion Netanyahu became Executive Director and Jack Tauber continued as National Secretary. On November 26, 1940, at the same Manhattan Center where Jabotinsky had



electrified audiences only five months earlier, *Betar* held a memorial Jabotinsky Pageant. The program included a presentation of the life of Jabotinsky, written by Jack Tauber.

The Revisionists continued their efforts. Rabbi Tauber spoke almost weekly at different events on such topics as "American Jewry and Israel's Future" and "Jewry At The Cross-Roads" to garner support for Revisionist activities. In May, 1941, he went on a fund-raising tour of Canada on behalf of the Revisionist Jewish National Labor Organization. A Canadian newspaper interviewed him and reported: *The Jewish Army, the Jewish State, a National Jewish Committee and the evacuation of the Jews to Palestine must be the only Jewish program today, declared Mr. Jack Tauber, private secretary to the late Vladimir Jabotinsky on his last trip here and the national secretary of Brith Trumpeldor, in an interview with the Journal yesterday.* In the interview, Rabbi Tauber continued, *We want a real Jewish national army prepared to help England fight for world democracy and a Jewish State on both sides of the Jordan.* Although Jabotinsky did not live to see the fruits of his labor, the campaign for the Jewish Army ultimately led to the creation of the Jewish Brigade. The Brigade saw action against the Nazis in 1945, smuggled thousands of Holocaust survivors to Palestine after the war and participated in the Israeli War of Independence.¹¹ Jack Tauber also served as Secretary of the New Zionist Organization's Jewish Aviation League. In November, 1941, twenty-five *Betarim* graduated from the League's "Jabotinsky Flying School". Some of them later fought in the War. One graduate, Eugene Stein, was twice decorated for shooting down German planes.¹²

Jack Tauber continued his participation in the movement, working in the New York office. Despite the recent death of his father, newspaper reports have him speaking throughout 1942 in different parts of the country. He supported Revisionists Hillel Kook and Yitzchak Ben Ami's Emergency Committee to Rescue the Jewish People of Europe and clandestine efforts organizing illegal immigration into Palestine. The Committee organized rallies, pageants, engaged in Congressional lobbying, and published newspaper ads to pressure the Roosevelt administration to rescue the Jews of Europe.¹³ Simultaneously with his political efforts, Jack pursued his religious studies and in 1940 received rabbinical

ordination from Rabbi Abraham Scheinberg. He combined his religious and nationalist lives, becoming the Chaplain for *Betar*. He also served as associate rabbi of the People's Synagogue in Manhattan. In 1944, determined to participate in the Zionist cause to the utmost, he stowed away on a ship and smuggled himself into Palestine, where he joined the Irgun.¹⁴ He was soon arrested by the British

and apparently deported to the United States.

In addition to his activities with the Revisionists, Rabbi Tauber became director of immigration for the Vaad Hatzala. The Vaad Hatzala was the rescue committee organized by Orthodox Jewry. It was the Vaad's operative in Switzerland, Isaac Sternbach, who provided the first documentation of the existence of the death camps. The cable as sent to Jacob Rosenheim, the World President of Agudat Yisrael read:

According to the last authentic and repeated information, the German authorities recently evacuated completely the population of the Warsaw ghetto. One hundred thousand Jews were murdered in the most bestial manner. The mass murders still continue. From the corpses, Germans make soap and fertilizer.

The Vaad worked together with the Revisionists, particularly with the Emergency Committee, and the two organized a march of 400 Rabbis on Washington just two days before Yom Kippur, 1943. The President refused to meet the delegation. In 1943, Jack Tauber remarked, *I remember how Orthodox rabbis tried to meet with President Roosevelt only to have a Jewish advisor to the President counsel against such a course.*¹⁵ These efforts would bear fruit in November 1943, when a resolution crafted by the *Revisionists* was passed in both the Senate and House. President Roosevelt was forced to create the *War Refugee Board* with the specific mandate of rescuing Jews. The War Refugee Board rescued many tens of thousands of Jews from Hitler.

Through the Vaad, Rabbi Tauber became acquainted with leading rabbinical figures. He worked with Rabbi Aaron Kotler and became close with, and received *smicha* in 1947 from Rabbi Shmuel Walkin, the President of Agudath Yisrael of America, as well from Rabbi Mayer Zeigler, rosh yeshiva of the Vishnitz yeshiva in Brooklyn and from Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levi, the representative of the Chief Rabbis of Palestine and the Vaad, who praised Rabbi Tauber for *fighting God's battles with honor and courage and bringing the hearts of Israel towards God's Torah and for his love of Israel.*¹⁶ Rabbi Alter Weinberger, the rabbi and rosh yeshiva of Turka, Rabbi Chaim Lande, rosh yeshiva of the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago, both ordained him and

praised Rabbi Tauber's character and abilities, particularly his ability to teach and attract youth, and in particular his extraordinary efforts *for the rescue of Jews and the honor of the Torah*.¹⁷ Rabbi Tauber also studied under and later received an advanced degree of *Yorah Yorah Yadin Yadin* from Rabbi Meir Rosenbaum, former Chief Rabbi of Cuba and Mexico (who also officiated at Rabbi Tauber's wedding). Jack worked closely at the Vaad with Rabbi Eliezer Silver, whose efforts on behalf of European Jewry were unceasing. At one point, after receiving a report of the magnitude of the disaster, Rabbi Tauber broke down and wept, to be comforted by Rabbi Silver's unflinching faith. Rabbi Tauber would later remark, *The reality of Jewish losses never permitted me again to be at ease*.¹⁸

With the end of World War II, immediate action was required on two fronts: The establishment of a Jewish State and the settlement of refugees either in that state or other countries of the free world. Jack Tauber would again participate on both fronts. At the *Vaad HaTzalah*, Rabbi Tauber was active in rebuilding lives shattered by the Holocaust. Typical of his efforts were pleas like the following to Rabbi Neuberger of the Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Baltimore to secure a teaching position for Rabbi Ludwig Kestenbaum: *Rabbi Kestenbaum's position is precarious—he is in danger of being deported—I wholeheartedly urge you to exercise your worthy influence for this sacred cause. Please remember that this candidate suffered terribly in the concentration camp. His whole family was murdered and he has married a woman whose family likewise was exterminated by the Nazis. These are two embittered people who stand on the very brink of either salvation or despair*. Similarly, he would seek admission to various American Yeshivot for students in Europe, so that they could gain entry to the United States. His efforts were worldwide, as he provided the Vaad's Shanghai office with new procedures for processing immigration requests and obtaining United States visas.

Rabbi Tauber's efforts were unrelenting. For example, in a June 20, 1947 letter to Dr. Bandler in Philadelphia, Rabbi Tauber appealed that funds be raised to bring Rabbi Chaim Kirschenzwaig and his family from Europe: *For your kindness I venture to extend my own humble blessings and prayers for your welfare and that of your associates who by extending a helping hand fulfill the law that 'He who saves one Jewish life redeems an entire world.'* Simultaneously, Rabbi Tauber was working with a local attorney to overcome State Department objections to Rabbi Kirschenzwaig's admission. The Vaad was overwhelmed by the human tragedy it faced. Responding to Rabbi Tauber's missives, Samuel Schmidt, the Vaad's European director stationed in Paris wrote to Rabbi Tauber on March 15, 1948, *I am being run ragged here with no English stenographer*. The letter further noted difficulties in obtaining French visas for Rabbi Meier Weiz and his wife Rachel, as Rabbi Tauber had

requested, but that it was hoped that they could be obtained in the coming week. The anguish of relatives of Jewish refugees was evident in each letter. Rabbi Eliezer Silver, President of the Vaad, would direct prominent scholars in Europe to Rabbi Tauber for assistance. The Vaad praised his scholarship, character and executive ability to carry out the Vaad Hatzala Immigration program, stating that Rabbi Tauber *has contacted various governmental agencies and officials and has impressed them with his earnestness and with the earnestness of the cause he represents. The many who have occasion to come to the Vaad Hatzala on immigration matters praise his kindly understanding and warm sympathetic approach to their specific needs*.¹⁹

Simultaneously with his Vaad Hatzala activities, Rabbi Tauber worked with his Revisionist comrades, seeking public support for the Irgun's revolt against British rule in Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish State, and engaging in a new pastime, the smuggling of arms to the Jewish underground in Palestine, helping load hidden guns and ammunition in the dead of night onto ships docked in New York. In 1946 Rabbi Tauber was nominated as a candidate to the 22nd World Zionist Congress on the Revisionist list. Rabbi Tauber continued his propaganda efforts, editing and publishing a newsletter *Resistance*. He served on the executive committee of the *Asirei Zion Fund* [Prisoners of Zion], formed to help alleviate the suffering of the *Political Prisoners and their families in Palestine* and publicize the plight of Jews arrested by the British mandatory authorities and incarcerated in prisons in Palestine and the Sudan.

With the days of the British Mandate numbered, the Revisionists conceived of a new grand plan, sending a ship filled with weapons, ammunition and badly needed fighters. The transport ship was purchased by Rabbi Tauber's close friend "Mike" (an alias for Yitzhak Ben-Ami). The vessel was named the *Altalena*, after a pen-name used by Jabotinsky. It left the United States for France, and, when finally set sail for Israel in 1948, it carried over 900 fighters and 4000 tons of arms, arms and weapons which could have changed the war for independence.²⁰ Rabbi Tauber was actively involved in the preparations involving the *Altalena*, and had intended to join the voyage to Israel. The Irgun asked him to delay—his organizational, oratorical and public relations skills were still needed and he could leave soon afterwards. Rabbi Tauber's plans, however, were affected in unexpected ways. Shortly after the *Altalena* set sail in June, 1948, Rabbi Tauber became very ill, and any thought of immediate travel to Israel could not be considered. In the background also, was a life-style change. In 1945, the Vaad Hatzalah hired a young secretary to work for Rabbi Tauber, Roslyn Rosenberg, the daughter of Rabbi Samuel Rosenberg of Greenfield Park, New York. She "reveled in association with *Brichah* ["flight" from Europe] and underground attempts to rescue Jews from war-torn, blood-drenched Europe."²¹ She also

set her sights on the young Rabbi and as his secretary conveniently "misplaced" messages from girlfriends. They later married in October, 1948.

At the instruction of the Israeli government, the Altalena landed at the Kfar Vitkin beach in Israel. A misunderstanding arose regarding the allocation of the ship's cargo. Twenty percent of the weapons were to be given to the Irgun's Jerusalem battalion which was to operate independent of the Israel Defense Forces since Jerusalem was technically outside the borders of the Jewish State established by the UN's partition resolution. Menachem Begin, the commander of the Irgun, had requested that while the remainder be transferred to the IDF, priority be given to properly equip the Irgun battalions that had just been incorporated into the army. Ben Gurion thought that Begin wanted to create a private army; Begin, however, simply wanted to insure that the volunteers aboard the Altalena would be fully equipped when they joined the IDF. The Altalena was attacked and sunk. Hundreds of Irgun members were arrested, and although eventually released, the Irgunists were treated as outcasts for years to come.

Many things were changing. The Revisionist organization in America, which was not only in disarray as a result of the fallout of the Altalena Affair, was beset by internal division. The Revisionists in New York, many of whom had been in Jabotinsky's inner circle, could not reconcile themselves to the fact that the movement's center had passed to Menachem Begin and his Irgunists. He recalled years later, *how he had acceded to help the Irgun in those days, only to be criticized and in none too gentle terms...*²² Rabbi Tauber summed up the entire incident and his decision to leave: *In my youth I had the privilege of serving in various leadership capacities in the great and holy Betar movement, and knew Menachem Begin as the Natziv of Polish Betar... And right or wrong, I withdrew from certain activities because some of the leadership was critical of my affinity with the Irgun and my own regard for Natziv Menachem Begin.*²⁵

Rabbi Tauber's decision to pursue the rabbinate, however, was to an inner calling. He had served temporarily as associate rabbi of the People's Synagogue in Manhattan from 1941-1942, and as rabbi of the Marine Park Jewish Center in Brooklyn after the war. On August 19, 1948, he accepted a position as rabbi of the Avenue Z Jewish Center in Brooklyn, where he would remain for the rest of his life. In the fall of 1948 the congregation held its first New Year and Yom Kippur services under a tent. Rabbi Tauber dedicated himself completely to his new community, creating an Orthodox community where none had previously existed. A sanctuary was built and dedicated on March 19, 1950, and the Rabbi, with a fever of over 101°, marched through the streets in the procession when a new Torah was obtained.

It is difficult, if not impossible to describe all of the activities of an American rabbi of a large community. Rabbi Tauber organized daily services, and was principal

of and teacher in a Hebrew school through which thousands of children passed over the years. An entire community was shaped by his teachings, as then Congressman [later Senator] Charles Schumer would remark years later. His weekly sermons touched all areas of Jewish concern, as did his monthly columns in the synagogue bulletin.²⁴ He taught adult education classes, officiated at thousands of weddings, bar mitzvahs, funerals, unveilings and community events. He sat on the local Bet Din, prepared sincere converts, and was a member of the Rabbinical Board of Flatbush. He comforted bereaved families and visited the hospitalized and ill. He authored letters of recommendation. He provided for needy families. He intervened with governmental authorities, took responsibility for teenagers in trouble with the law, helped secure compassionate discharges for soldiers faced with family tragedies, and aided in securing adoptions for childless couples. If not a source of wealth, it was a fulfilling life.

He never looked back, nor did he belittle this stage in life or its accomplishments. As his son Kenneth noted, *He had a tremendous ability to comfort those who were in pain and suffering. As a rabbi of a congregation for more than forty years, he brought comfort to thousands of people who were ill, who suffered business, financial and personal difficulties, or who lost their loved ones. He readily accepted that God had decided that this was the mission he should undertake.*

He took an active part in the Brooklyn Board of Rabbis. As early as 1949, he was selected as an alternate delegate to represent the Board at the annual convention of the Brooklyn Jewish Community Council. On March 20, 1953, as Secretary of the Brooklyn Board of Rabbis, he sent an appeal to the Brooklyn rabbinate to support the American Council for the Relief of Refugee Rabbis in Israel. By 1958, he was the organization's Vice-President and Chairman of its Annual Thanksgiving Day Service. He would soon be its President. Although he was no longer involved in historic events, he influenced his community and those around him. He enjoyed life with his beloved wife Roslyn and the raising of three children, Stuart, Laurence and Kenneth. He rejoiced in the successes of the State of Israel and exhorted his congregants to support it.

One chapter from his past still needed closure. The opportunity came in May, 1964, when he received a letter stating: *The Government of Israel has ordered the transfer of the remains of Zeev Jabotinsky for reburial in Israel, in accordance with his testament.* The letter asked Rabbi Tauber to join the Jabotinsky Transfer Committee. Rabbi Tauber joined the committee and participated in the services in Israel as part of the *Betar* honor guard and as a pallbearer. Rabbi Tauber used his visit to contribute his personal papers to the Jabotinsky Institute and publish *Chazon Yaakov*, his commentary on Maimonides, *Laws of Talmud Torah*. The commentary contained an exposition endorsing teaching women the

Talmud, a revolutionary view at the time. *Chazon Yaakov* received approbation from Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim, chief rabbi of Israel.

Rabbi Tauber continued with his rabbinic and communal activities. He represented the Brooklyn Board of Rabbis in a mental health project with the Brooklyn Psychiatric Society. He served on the Editorial Board of the American Jewish Literary Foundation. He helped organize the Oceanfront Council for Soviet Jewry and galvanized his community in support of Israel and Soviet Jews. He inspired his children to take active roles in Jewish youth and college groups, principally the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and Hillel. He was a tireless fundraiser for a variety of Jewish organizations, including the United Jewish Appeal, Israeli Bonds (which honored him and his wife Roslyn in 1971), the Jewish National Fund and the National Sick Fund maintained by Herut, as successor to the Revisionist movement in Israel. In 1984, he raised funds for the dedication of a new intensive care ambulance for the National Sick Fund.

In 1973, Rabbi Tauber was asked to introduce Menachem Begin, who had come to United States to deliver the keynote address for the Jewish National Fund. And so, in March, 1973, Rabbi Tauber went directly from his son Kenneth's bar mitzvah to the Waldorf Astoria.

He began his address by reciting how many American children had posters of rock stars or sports figures on their bedroom walls. He added that his children, too, had posters on their walls of their heroes. He then unfurled a poster with Menachem Begin's picture, replicated from a British printing during the Jewish Revolt which read: **WANTED---MENACHEM BEGIN---REWARD 10,000 POUNDS.**

Rabbi Tauber's wife Roslyn's death in 1979 after a ten-year battle with cancer was a crushing blow. His companion for over thirty years, he would never remarry. He also survived his two brothers. These losses were always on his mind. *I, for one*, he wrote, *am never ashamed to say how hard I have prayed at the graves of my parents, and now I add those of my wife and brothers, seeking some gestalt thought which suddenly will help me, will perhaps suddenly help me see the light, understand the choice I must make, the decision I must accept in behalf of myself or another who I wish to aid.*²⁵ Still his spirits never wavered and he remained active and vibrant, an exemplary father and rabbinic leader. Rabbi Tauber continued his efforts on behalf of his congregation and the Jewish People until his death in 1991, leaving behind children, grandchildren and an entire community to continue his legacy. The Hebrew date of his passing, the 29th day of Tammuz, was the 51st anniversary of the death of his mentor, Ze'ev Jabotinsky.□

Notes

1. She was a descendent of Rabbi Alexander Sender Schor, who wrote an authoritative treatise on the laws of kosher slaughter in the early 1700s.
2. Speech given at the Avenue Z Jewish Center on May 14, 1989.
3. *Our Voice*. April, 1934, p.1.
4. J. Tauber. "Religion and Democracy," (essay) p. 3, circa 1958.
5. Ibid.
6. Y. Ramgal. "Jabotinsky's Final Days," *Hadoar*, June 26, 1964 (Hebrew).
7. Ibid.
8. Jack Tauber, "Off the Record," *Hadar*, Feb.-Mar.-April, 1941, pp. 23.
9. J. Tauber. "Outline of Zionist History," p. 136, see also, M. J. Nurenberger. *The Scared And The Doomed - The Jewish Establishment vs. The Six Million*, p.48.
10. Y. Ramgal, "Jabotinsky's Final Days."
11. Rafael Medoff. "When the Zionists Took on Washington," July 31, 2001.
12. Rafael Medoff. "Militant Zionism In America," p. 69.
13. Rafael Medoff. "When the Zionists Took on Washington," July 31, 2001.
14. Telephone conversation between Kenneth Tauber and Yaakov Haramgal on March 2, 2005.
15. Address at a United Jewish Appeal fund-raising event, February 12, 1984.
16. Letter from Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levi, dated 3 Shevat, 1947.
17. Letter, dated 7 Nisan, 1947.
18. Address at a United Jewish Appeal fund-raising event, February 12, 1984.
19. Letter, dated June 23, 1947, from Pinchas Schoen, General Secretary, Vaad Hatzala.
20. Gad Nachson. "Altalena Affair- A Blood Libel," *Jewish Post and Opinion*, June 22, 1948.
21. From a tribute at a 1979 Jewish National Fund memorial program in her honor held at the Avenue Z Jewish Center.
22. From a eulogy given at the funeral services for Moshe Giloni.
23. Ibid.
24. An edited collection of his sermons on the book of Genesis, *Yalkut Yaakov* was published by his children after his death. A collection of his sermons on the book of Exodus is scheduled for publication in 2006.

In the Air as War Begins

A Flyer's Letter Home

by Arthur E. Hoffman

US Army Air Corps.



In 1939, Arthur Hoffman, a graduate of Western Military Academy and Washington University, joined the Army Air Corps. He faced anti-Semitism in pilot's training, and was denied graduation in spite of being at the head of his class. He became a graduate of the first training program for navigators, at the time regarded as having less status. Long distance flight by large aircraft was in its infancy, still dependent on celestial navigation and dead reckoning. In 1941, Arthur married Mildred Blass, a doctoral candidate in psychology at UCLA, and one week later was assigned to the 19th Bombardment Group to ferry B-17 Bombers, the "Flying Fortresses," to the Philippines. This was the first mass flight over thousands of miles despite violent tropical storms, and America's first attempt to deploy air forces in the Pacific. This is why Arthur was in the air over the Philippines when the war began.

Japan had faced only two obstacles in their conquest of the Pacific: the fleet in Pearl Harbor, and the Army Air Corps in the Philippines. In their devastating attack on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, not only our fleet but most of our aircraft, were destroyed on the ground. Only by extraordinary bravery and sacrifice, U.S. forces held out for many months until reinforcements arrived. By the end of the first year of fighting, two thirds of the young men Arthur had gone to war with were dead or wounded, and the famous Gypsy 93rd did not have a single bomber that was not pieced together with salvaged parts and wire. Flight crews worked together around the clock, skipping rest between frequent 24 hour missions at subzero temperatures, patching their planes, reloading them with bombs and bullets, and manning antiaircraft guns to resist continuing attacks on the runways by the Japanese who continued to dominate the skies. The Gypsy 93rd hop scotched around the South Pacific sometimes crafting bases out of the jungle behind enemy lines, and as a unit, received four coveted Presidential Unit Citations for exceptional sacrifice and bravery, the most decorated unit in the War. 2nd Lt. Hoffman was awarded the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, several Purple Hearts for wounds, was decorated thirty-five times and promoted three times, to Major, before the war ended. He became the youngest Full Colonel in the Air Force at 35 and served his country around the world for 25 years. (Written by David Hoffman)

What follows is a letter Arthur wrote to his younger brother Walter, describing the first day of the War and the next few months of steady retreat. December 7, 1941 in Hawaii was December 8 in the Philippines—the day the war began.

May 1942

Now, for the first time, I am going to try to tell you a little of what I've seen and been through. We heard the news of the Pearl Harbor attack before things broke out here—i.e. the night before. The next morning my crew took off from a new and secret base in the southern Philippines and flew up towards our home base at Clark Field near Manila. En route we received a radio message that Clark Field was raided, *proceed with caution*. Proceed, we did—when we got near the field, all looked peaceful as ever, so we put our wheels down and were coming into the field for an approach before landing.

Suddenly all hell broke loose and the field blew up in front of us as the bombs from 54 heavy bombers strung out before us. I immediately looked upwards, and through a break in the clouds, I could see 27 planes in a beautiful V of Vs. They were all bright and silvery at about 20,000 feet, and like hundreds of others who had been watching them before the bombing, my first reaction was, *What a beautiful formation; they look just like our navy planes.*

Then things moved fast—the pilot banked sharply and we started climbing fast for a cloud bank nearby

seeking cover. I kept looking back at the field, and it seemed to me from the rapidly growing and billowing cloud of black smoke pouring upwards from the field that everyone and everything must be destroyed or on fire. I thought of all my good friends who must have been so treacherously caught by this sudden attack.

I was furiously angry at the Japs' treachery and the powers that be to permit such a thing to happen. Our copilot, Doug Keller, asked the pilot what were the chances of going up after some of the bombers. You cannot appreciate the irony of such a question—but Doug was sincere in his request. We were under the impression that most people were at that time—that the Japanese were poor pilots, flying poor and antiquated equipment, that bringing down their planes would be like shooting fish in a rain barrel. Fortunately, the pilot demurred, saying we were not in pursuit but bombardment.

Well, we hung around on the other side of a mountain near the field for about forty-five minutes. We finally decided we would have to go in and land or try to make it back to our original point of departure at once, as we had just enough gas left. We very timidly approached the field, and having ascertained that one end of the runway looked safe enough to land, put our wheels down for the second time. Just about then we saw several pursuit planes diving in and out of the heavy smoke cloud over the field. Our first reaction was jubilation, as we thought these planes were our own pursuits returning from their pursuit of Japanese bombers. But a second later we saw a pursuit plane come diving through the overcast and crash straight into the ground. Then two of them headed straight at us. Even then they looked like our own pursuit until we saw little puffs of black smoke trailing right behind one of them where the antiaircraft shells were bursting.

Then my blood began to pound—enemy pursuit, and we were down at 500 feet with our wheels down, the most vulnerable position for a big heavy bomber such as ours. The pilot wheeled the plane around and the copilot gave it everything she had—in a few seconds we were doing 225 m.p.h. indicated airspeed. We dove right down amongst the trees so the pursuit could not get under us or dive on us without crashing into the ground. Doug started talking to the gunners over the inter-phone and I got my 30 caliber all set. The bombardier raced for the rear of the ship to man one of the side guns.

Three of them attacked us—we were in one of the old model ships and had no tail gun so they came in

and hung right on our tail giving us everything they had and them peeling off and returning again. The first burst hit the bombardier who had been at the side gun, cut our aileron cables in half, cut our flap cables in half, hit one of the props—a really lucky and telling burst for the enemy. After that we had to fly practically level for fear of spinning in. I couldn't get a single shot in at them as they were behind—just sat there and watched the tracers whizzing by on each side—literally hundreds of them—it seemed like they must be shooting all tracers.



But those Nips were not quite so smart—when the third one peeled off, he exposed his whole bottom side, and one of our rear gunners poured lead into him. We did not see him hit the ground but he was flopping along pretty badly when we last saw him. Lucky for us, they had probably used up most of their ammunition strafing the field before they saw us, so they broke off the attack after a couple of minutes.

The trip home to our base was certainly trying—several hundred miles home over open water in a badly damaged ship with a seriously wounded man aboard. Late that afternoon we cautiously approached our base—and our hearts were pounding in our throats, for we saw a great cloud of smoke billowing forth from the vicinity of our secret field. But we had no choice; we had to go on in—and we discovered that it was merely a bush fire near the field. The pilot made a beautiful landing with no ailerons and no flaps—and we were safe (?) at last.

When we got in we went to the little club at the pineapple company and saw General (Rosie) O'Donnell. He thought our fighters must have shot us up. He said, "How could a Japanese plane come all the way from Tokyo to shoot you?" We told him they came from carriers, which the Navy had been telling us not to worry about. As a result, we lost half our bombers and all our fighter planes that first day. I took General O'Donnell out to see my parachute and starting pulling bullets out of it—about 25 of these 25 calibers were lodged in the 17 layers of aluminum. Our plane had 400 holes in it, which we filled with cable and twisted knots in them.

In the first month of the war, I believe we made the longest mass bombing raid in history to that date—over 1500 miles to the target—and we really hit them that day—sank several naval vessels and transports. In fact, I got awarded the Order of the Silver Star for that flight—I wrote Milly to give it to you if anything should ever happen to me.

Around the first of January we started operating out of Java—what a beautiful country! There are over 40 million people on that rather small island, and every square inch of the country is under cultivation. It is the loveliest place in the far east. We were fortunate to be stationed about 1500 feet above sea level where it was cooler than most of the country. The natives are colorful, food is plentiful and excellent, and the Dutch were highly efficient and hospitable to us. It seemed like heaven after running from pillar to post without proper food, sleep, no cigarettes. And the Dutch and native girls were as lovely as the travel posters picture them!

I was bombed the first time in Java—but they were pretty poor marksmen. That's quite an experience following a large formation of bombers across the sky with your eyes, then burying your nose in the dirt when you hear the whistle of the bombs. The ground strafing pursuit and dive bombers cause a hell of a lot more damage and are lots more dangerous. But I personally don't mind them as much because you can crawl in a foxhole and watch them with relative impunity—but you never know but what some bomb has your number on it.

Our own bombing has been remarkably accurate—I've seen our bombardiers drop their sticks from 30,000 feet just like spitting in a bucket. It is a pretty sight to watch a flotilla of destroyers weaving and turning in the water far below, cutting a sparkling wave on the blue waters, their antiaircraft popping away at you with bright sparks like firecrackers, as they try to turn away from the onrushing bombs. Perhaps you think I've become callous when you read that—not at all, but bombing has a very impersonal touch to it. Even shooting down an enemy plane seems strangely impersonal.

We finally had to retreat from Java—same old trouble, not enough pursuit to defend our bases. For a while I thought I might not get out of there—I was on a crew of a ship that had to ferry personnel out when we retreated to Australia. I made three round trips while the Japs were making landings only 60 miles away from our base. The last night the field we were on was only 40 miles away from the closest enemy lines, and there were large explosions all around us where the Dutch were busy destroying bridges, etc. The field was partly lit up by exploding flares from burning planes that had been destroyed in a strafing attack that afternoon, and Jap reconnaissance planes actually flew right over our heads several times. But we finally got away with a full load of passengers. I flew about 15,000 miles in seven days just ferrying people around.

We finally got our hard-earned rest—in the *Battle of Melbourne* as the boys refer to it. Imagine after three months of continuous fighting, they let us loose for a spree in a metropolitan city. Girls were everywhere and they just literally threw themselves at the Americans.

What a place for a newly married man like myself who has only spent one week with his wife! I bet I spent more time explaining to strangers that I was a newlywed than there are people at home who know of my marriage.

Now we are stationed in a nice little Australian country town. We have almost every convenience for ourselves and our work. We have a saying that originated at the start of this war—everything is *SNAFU*—meaning *situation normal all f___ed up!* and if things don't suddenly turn that way again, I believe we are on our way. I don't think it will take so very long once things start clicking right—a couple more naval victories like the *Battle of the Coral Sea*, and we'll have them on the run. They are clever, efficient, well-equipped fighters in the air and on the ground. But they are no match for us Americans providing we throw everything we have at them. For a long time it seemed as if the people at home regarded this as a little border warfare of no consequence. But I am sure they look at it differently now. If we should ever have the misfortune to be run out of our bases here, this war might go forever, and I'm not kidding.

Meanwhile I am trying to be transferred to the Pacific Ferry Command so I can get a chance to get home and see Milly and all of you once more. I am not trying to get out of the combat area, although there are only two or three of us left out of our class in active combat. I think Jay must be a prisoner in the Philippines. I want to do my share, but I'm not anxious to spend all my time under the terrific nervous tension of flying frequent high-altitude missions, while others are on the "grave train". And that about sums up the attitude of most of us—we would fight continually till we dropped in our tracks if everyone was doing it. But the army is a peculiar institution and it plays favorites. Turnabout is fair play—that's the motto of most of us. Personally I've flown as many combat missions as almost any flying officer in the Air Corps in the far east—I want my record to remain that way—but I am not anxious to get far ahead of the others.

Well, little bum, I've sure thrown a lot of bull at you. It just occurred to me that it may all sound adventurous to you and you may hanker to get in on some of it. Take my word for it, it's no picnic and isn't worth the experience gained. You have a big job at home building planes, and by God you stick to it or I'll come after you with my 45! One of us in the army is enough at present. Keep the home fires burning, and keep a light in the window for me, because I'll be popping in one of these bright sunny California days! □

Various versions of this material were published in many places, and a motion picture told a fictionalized version of the exploits of the Gypsy 93rd.

An American Hero: Varian Fry

The history of Varian Fry is an account of a World War II saviour-hero who saved the lives of thousands of refugees from the Nazis. This effort compares to that of Oscar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg.¹ He is the only American to be honored at Yad Vashem (Israel's Holocaust Memorial). Fry, a Harvard-educated editor, journalist and teacher, was mobilized to act after he witnessed Nazi troopers beating Jews in Berlin in 1935. He first wrote articles for the New York Times concerning the worsening situation in Europe but did not manage to increase public awareness to the growing Nazi threat. France's swift collapse before Hitler's armies came as a shocking blow to the United States and Great Britain, but it also alarmed activists who were concerned about refugees in Europe. In 1940, Fry, his wife, and others met in New York and organized the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC) to help refugees displaced by the war. The committee felt strongly that the Immigration Act of 1924 and its restrictive quotas would prevent needy refugees from coming to the United States, and they were particularly concerned about the status of refugees in Vichy France, who could be surrendered to Nazi authorities at any time.

Fry traveled to Marseilles in August 1940 with \$3,000 and a list of refugees, primarily Jewish, trapped in Vichy France, without money or visas. From the outset, the ERC enjoyed strong support from influential members of New York's literary community, including John Dos Passos, Upton Sinclair, and Dorothy Thompson. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt also actively provided help, linking the ERC to the powerful politicians of Washington.

With the help of a dedicated staff, and aided by a combination of expatriate liberals, Communists, intellectuals, and members of French criminal organizations, Fry immediately established a legal French relief organization, Centre Americain de Secours (the American Relief Center), as a front for his covert rescue operation. Using a variety of clandestine and sometimes illegal means, from raising funds on the black market and forging documents to smuggling refugees via secret mountain and sea routes, Fry was able to channel some two thousand writers, artists, and scientists (and others, including escaped British prisoners of war) escape across the Pyrenees into Spain, using false documents procured by Fry to the relative safety of Portugal, North Africa, and the United States. Despite increasingly sinister harassment by Vichy's Fascist regime and the Gestapo, sniping by isolationist State Department officials, unwanted publicity by some of the refugees, and

diminishing support by colleagues in New York, Fry continued his secret work until August 1941. He was finally deported by the Vichy French government in September 1942 as an "undesirable alien" for protecting Jews and anti-Nazis. He died in 1967, tragically without ever receiving recognition for his work from his own government. Only posthumously has he been honored by the United States Holocaust Museum and Israel's Yad Vashem.²

Some of the 2,000 people assisted by Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee were intellectuals, political activists, and what the Nazis called "degenerative" artists, many of them Jews. Among them were:

Artists: Marc Chagall, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Wifredo Lam, Jacques Lipchitz (sculptor), Chaim Lipnitski, (photographer), André Masson, Han Namuth (photographer), Charles Sterling (museum curator), Bruno Strauss (art critic), Paul Westheim (art critic), Ylla (Camilla Koffler) (photographer);

Writers, Publishers, Editors: Hannah Arendt, Georg Bernhard (newspaper editor), Andre Breton, Heinrich Ehrmann (economist), Lion Feuchtwanger, Leonard Frank, Giuseppe Garetto, Oscar Goldberg (scholar), Hans Habe, Konrad Heiden (writer, biographer of Hitler), Wilhelm Herzog (antifascist writer), Berthold Jacob (pacifist, journalist), Jean Malaquais, Golo Mann (historian), Heinrich Mann, Valeriu Marcu (historian), Walter Mehring (poet), Hans Natonek (humorist), Ernst-Erich Noth, Hertha Pauli, Benjamin Peret (poet), Alfred Polgar (essayist), Hans Sahl, Jacques Schiffrin (publisher), Victor Serge, Franz Werfel, Kurt and Helen Wolff (publishers);

Theater, Music: Hans Aufricht (producer), Edvard Fendler (conductor), Erich Itor-Kahn (pianist), Heinz Jolles (pianist), Siegfried Kracauer (film critic), Wanda Landowska (harpsichordist), Lotte Leonard (singer), Alma Mahler Werfel brought with her original scores composed by her first husband, Gustav Mahler, and manuscript symphonies by Georg Bruckner, Poliakov-Litovzeff (theatrical producer);

Science, Philosophy: De Castro (Secretary of the Faculty of Science, University of Madrid), Emil S. Gumbel (statistician), Jacques-Salomon Hadamard (mathematician), Alfredo Mendizabel (professor of philosophy, University of Madrid), Otto Meyerhof (physiologist, winner 1922 Nobel Prize for Medicine), Boris Mirkine-Guetzevitch (Sorbonne), Peter Pringsheim (physicist), Bruno Strauss (psychiatrist)□

Notes:

1. http://www.chambon.org/fry_marino_quiet_american_en.htm

2. *ibid.*

Other Sources: Fry, Varian. *Surrender on Demand*; Marino, Andy. *A Quiet American: The Secret War of Varian Fry*; Weinberg, Sheila. *A Hero of Our Own: The Story of Varian Fry*. New York: Random House, 2001.

The 350th Anniversary of New York's First Jewish Settlers

by Harry Macy, FASG, FGBS

Copyright 2004

Republished with permission from: *The New York Researcher* Spring/Summer 2004
The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society

This year marks three and one-half centuries since the first Jewish settlers arrived in New Amsterdam. Thus began the oldest Jewish community in the United States, a community destined to have a remarkable influence on the development of the city and state of New York.

Jacob Barsimon arrived in New Amsterdam from the Netherlands on the *Peartree* in August 1654. There may have been other Jews aboard the same ship, including Solomon Pietersen, who appears in the colony's records at about that time. The founding of the community, however, is traced to the group of 23 individuals, refugees from Brazil, who arrived early in September 1654 on the ship *St. Charles*. Only a few of the 23 are identified: Abraham Israel, David Israel, Moses Ambrosius (Lumbroso), and two women, Judiccq de Mereda and Rycke Nounes. The best known of all the first settlers, Asser Levy, has traditionally been identified as one of the 23, but recent scholarship suggests that he may have come on the *Peartree*.¹

In the earliest records the New Amsterdam Jews are sometimes called Portuguese, reflecting the fact that a majority of them were Sephardim, whose roots lay in Spain and Portugal where their families had lived for centuries as valued citizens. At the end of the 15th century, following the expulsion of the Moors, the Spanish and Portuguese rulers forced all their Jewish subjects to either convert or leave. Thousands emigrated, while thousands more converted, at least in name, and remained in Spain and Portugal where they were known as *marranos* or New Christians.

After the Netherlands declared its independence from Spain at the end of the 16th century, a Jewish community developed there, particularly in the city of Amsterdam. Its members were primarily Sephardim, though a minority belonged to the other great branch of European Jewry, the Ashkenazim, coming from the German states and countries to the east. Among the latter was none other than Asser Levy, who appears to have come to the Netherlands from Vilna in Lithuania.²

In 1624 the Dutch seized control of northwestern Brazil from Portugal. A sizeable Jewish community developed in this new colony, made up of immigrants from the Netherlands as well as Portuguese *marranos* already living in Brazil who now felt free to resume their Jewish identity.

In 1654, however, the Portuguese regained control of Brazil, and gave the Dutch settlers three months to leave or be subject to Portuguese law. All of the Jews chose to depart, and an 18th century Jewish writer, David Franco Mendes, tells us that happened to them:

And all our people went down into the sea in sixteen

ships and spread sail, and God led them to their destination to this land [Holland], and they came to us in peace, except one ship, which the Spaniards captured on the high seas. And God caused a savior to arise unto them, the captain of a French ship [the St. Charles] arrayed for battle, and He rescued them from out of the hands of the Spanish pirates who had done violence to them and oppressed them, and He conducted them until they reached the end of the inhabited earth called New Holland...³

Thus the 23, who had intended to return to the Netherlands, instead found themselves first captured by pirates and then rescued, only to be taken to "the end of the inhabited earth," the recently chartered city of New Amsterdam. In the following months their ranks were strengthened by further arrivals from the Netherlands, and they sought the right to worship and to create a cemetery.

This presented a problem for the authorities. Although New Netherland was already an extraordinary melting pot, the governing Dutch West India Company tried to impose some conformity by allowing only the Dutch Reformed (or their English counterparts) to erect houses of worship and hold public services. Rev. Johannes Megapolensis wrote to the church Classis in Amsterdam in 1655: (Editor: The Classis of Amsterdam examined and licensed all ministers in the Reformed Church in America, and arbitrated all ecclesiastical disputes.)

For, as we have here, Papists, Mennonites and Lutherans among the Dutch; also many Puritans or Independents, and many Atheists and various other servants of Baal among the English under this Government who conceal themselves under the name of Christians; it would create a still greater confusion, if the obstinate and immovable Jews came to settle here.⁴

Director General Pieter Stuyvesant wrote in a similar vein to the directors of the Company at Amsterdam, but their reply indicated that other factors were at play:

We would have liked to agree with your wishes and request that the new territories should not be further invaded by people of the Jewish race. . .but. . . we observe that it would be unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by the Jews in the taking of Brazil and also because of the large amount of capital which they have invested in shares of the Company. After many consultations we have decided and resolved upon a certain petition made by said Portuguese Jews that they shall have permission to sail to and trade in New Netherland and to live and remain there. You will govern yourself accordingly.⁵

A later directive from the Company to Stuyvesant

made it clear that with regard to worship the Jews were to be subject to the same restrictions as other non-Reformed faiths:

*The permission given to the Jews to go to New Netherland and enjoy there the same privileges as they have here has been granted only so far as civil and political rights are concerned, without giving the said Jews a claim to the privilege of exercising their religion in a synagogue or at a gathering...*⁶

In fact, like other non-Reformed faiths, members of the Jewish community did worship together, privately if not secretly, and *Shearith Israel* (Remnant of Israel), New York's oldest Jewish congregation (and the only one until the early 19th century) dates its founding from this time. The Jewish community was also granted a cemetery of its own in 1655. Despite this limited toleration, many of the original settlers left the colony before 1664, when the English took over and New Amsterdam became New York. And it took the English authorities many more years to fully accept the existence of a Jewish congregation which remained so small that it could only afford to worship in rented quarters.⁷

It is widely believed that New York's colonial Jewish community was entirely Sephardic, but as noted above that was never the case. Rabbi David de Sola Pool noted that: *A careful study of all available records. . . show that Ashkenazim, mainly from England, the Netherlands and Germany, were in 1730 slightly more numerous than the Sephardim, though Sephardim were the more prosperous, and occupied a more influential position.*⁸

The dominance of the Sephardim is seen in the fact that *Shearith Israel* is still also known as the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. Well into the 18th century many of its records were kept in Portuguese, and to this day its worship follows the Sephardic ritual. Rabbi de Sola Pool tells us that during colonial times the worship service (like all services conducted in the colony) included a prayer for the Royal Family, Governor, and Mayor, and the congregation prayed in Portuguese for *Sua Real Magestade nosso Senhor Rey Jorge o Segundo*.⁹

The total size of the community remained very small. In 1695 there were reported to be 20 Jewish families in the city. By 1773 the number was still only "30 to 40," and as late as 1812 only 50 families were reported.¹⁰

Despite its small size, New York's colonial Jewish community played a notable part in the life of the city and colony, particularly the commercial life. Members of the community were involved in the American Revolution, and some would play significant roles in the new Republic, as their descendants have to the present day.

Sources

A great deal has been written about the colonial Jewish families, and many of the relevant publications may be found in the New York Genealogical & Biographical Society Library (NYGBS). The history of the New York City community and its synagogue is told

in David and Tamar de Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World, Portrait of Shearith Israel 1654-1954* (Columbia University Press, New York: 1955). David de Sola Pool was Rabbi of *Shearith Israel* and had earlier written *The Mill Street Synagogue (1730-1817) of the Congregation Shearith Israel* (Founded in the City of New York in 1655) (New York: 1930). Some of the earliest records of the congregation (beginning in 1701) will be found in publications of the American Jewish Historical Society.

In *Portraits Etched in Stone, Early Jewish Settlers 1682-1831* (Columbia University Press, New York: 1952), David de Sola Pool tells the story of the oldest surviving cemetery of the congregation, through maps and photos of the cemetery and biographies of those buried there. The location of the first cemetery (1655) is unknown. The second burying ground (1682) can still be seen south of Chatham Square on the edge of Chinatown; the third (1805) on the south side of West 11th street just east of Sixth Avenue in Greenwich Village; and the fourth (1829) on the south side of West 21st Street just west of Sixth Avenue in Chelsea. The present second and third cemeteries are remnants, portions having been taken by the city for street widenings, and the fourth cemetery includes removals from the earlier grounds. Since 1851, *Shearith Israel* has buried its dead at Beth Olom Cemetery on the Brooklyn-Queens border.

At Chatham Square, the oldest monuments recorded by de Sola Pool are as follows, with the languages in which the inscriptions are written:

Benjamin Bueno de Mesquita 1683 (Portuguese)
 Joseph Tores Numes 1704 (Portuguese and Hebrew)
 Sarah Bueno de Mesquita 1708 (Portuguese)
 Samuel Levy 1719 (Hebrew)
 Sarah Rodriguez de Rivera 1727 (Hebrew and Portuguese)
 Moses Levy 1728 (Hebrew, Portuguese and English)
 Jacob Louzada 1729 (Hebrew and Portuguese)
 Rebecca Gomez 1729 (Hebrew and English)

Most of the names are obviously Sephardic, but the two Levys (brothers) were born in Germany. Historian Leo Hershkowitz compiled *Wills of Early New York Jews (1704-1799)* (American Jewish Historical Society, New York: 1967), in which he transcribed the full text of all the wills that have survived. The earliest will is that of Joseph Nunes, dated 1704. Recently Dr. Hershkowitz compiled full transcripts of "Original Inventories of Early New York Jews (1682-1763)," published in *American Jewish History* [quarterly of the American Jewish Historical Society] Vol. 90 (2002). Many of these inventories mention non-Jews and may be of interest to a wider circle of genealogists. The earliest is that of Asser Levy (who died without a will, and without issue).¹¹

Dr. Joyce Goodfriend in *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City (1664-1730)* (Princeton University Press: 992) compares the position of the Jewish community to that of the other major elements of the city's colonial population.

Of course, New York's Jewish citizens appear in the censuses, vital records, land records, etc., along with the rest of the population. At the time of the 1790 census, some of the Jewish surnames noted in New York City (especially in the Dock Ward) are Abrams, Gomez, Hendricks, Isaacs, Israel, Judah, Lazarus, Levy, Moses, Myers, Pinto, and Seixas.

In terms of compiled genealogy, "the book" on the early Jewish families is Malcolm Stern's *First American Jewish Families, 600 Genealogies 1654-1988*, 3rd ed. (Ottenheimer Publishers, Baltimore, 1991). The previous editions of 1960 and 1978 were titled: *Americans of Jewish Descent*. Rabbi Stern (1915-1994), a fellow of the American Society of Genealogists (FASG) and Fellow of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (FGBS), was principal founder of the Jewish Genealogical Society (<http://www.jgsny.org>). His famous book consists of annotated charts tracing the descendants of every Jewish family he could identify that arrived in the United States up to the year 1840.

None of the 1654 settlers is known to have left descendants here. Among the earliest New York families charted by Stern are those of de Lucena and Levy, who appear in New York in the very late 1600s (whether Abraham Haim de Lucena, married in New York 1699, was a son or grandson of Abraham de Lucena who arrived in New Amsterdam in 1655 has never been determined). In addition to New York, *First American Jewish Families* covers residents of Newport, Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah, and other early points of Jewish settlement. Examining the charts, one will note that families frequently moved from one city to another, or married someone

from another city, so that most of the earliest families became interrelated. They also had numerous family ties to Jewish communities in the West Indies and Europe.

Evidence of these far-flung ties can be seen in early wills abstracted by Hershkowitz. For example, Isaac Pinheiro, a freeman of New York in 1695, made his will on the Island of Nevis where he had a plantation, but died in New York in 1790 and the will was probated in Amsterdam, Curacao, and South Carolina. Samuel Levy, a merchant of New York, made his will in 1719 and names relatives in London and remembered *such of my own poor relations living in Germany*.

Stern's charts also show that marriages to Christians were not infrequent, so that many non-Jewish names appear, including some quite prominent in New York history.

For easy reading, Stephen Birmingham's *The Grandees: America's Sephardic Elite* (Harper and Row, New York: 1971), tells the story of the best known early families from the 17th century to the 20th. As some of the early families became quite prosperous, it is not surprising to find that they have portraits which have survived. These are reviewed in Richard Brilliant's, *Facing the New World, Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America* (The Jewish Museum, New York: 1997).

A brief article can hardly do this subject justice. Those interested in learning more should start with the titles cited above, paying particular attention to those authors' bibliographies and notes, for leads to additional sources. They will also want to acquaint themselves with the resources of the Center for Jewish History in New York City (<http://www.cjh.org>), which now houses the American Jewish Historical Society, Leo Baeck Institute (German-speaking Jewry), Yeshiva University Museum, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (East European Jewry) and American Sephardi Federation. □

Notes

1. For the traditional account see David and Tamar de Sola Pool. *An Old Faith in the New World, Portrait of Shearith Israel 1654-1954*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955.)
2. Leo Hershkowitz "Original Inventories of Early New York Jews (1682-1763)," *American Jewish History*: 90 (2002): 246-47 (note 7). He has compiled a probable list of those coming in 1654 and the next few years. He has proposed (*ibid.*, 245) that Asser Levy came directly from the Netherlands, citing among other evidence that Levy does not appear in the record of the Brazilian Jewish Congregation.
3. Hershkowitz. "Original Inventories," 244.
4. David de Sola Pool. *Portraits Etched in Stone, Early Jewish Settlers 1682-1831*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 6 [bracketed text added by de Sola Pool].
5. Ecclesiastical Records, State of New York, 7 vols. (1901-1916), 1:336.
6. Charles T. Gehring, trans. and ed., *Correspondence 1654-1658*, New Netherland Documents Series XII (Syracuse University Press, 2003) 49.
7. *Ibid.*, 83.
8. For an account of this period, see de Sola Pool, *An Old Faith*, 33-35.
9. *Ibid.*, 49.
10. David de Sola Pool, *The Mill Street Synagogue (1730-1817) of the Congregation Shearith Israel (Founded in the City of New York in 1655)* (New York: 1930) 48.
11. Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse University Press, 1972) 10,26.
12. Dr. Hershkowitz also provides detailed biographies of each of his subjects. Another account of Levy's inventory will be found in Harriet Stryker-Rodda "Asser Levy's Estate," *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, vol. 102 (1971).

JGLSA Evening at the Skirball Museum

December 1, 2005

Special Curator Lecture by Grace Cohen Grossman

7:15 - 8:15 P.M.

Tour the exhibit: 5:30-7 before the lecture and after the lecture 8:15-9
The Food Cart will be open. Bring a guest. Free admission to the Museum.

FROM HAVEN TO HOME: 350 YEARS OF JEWISH LIFE IN AMERICA

Making its only West Coast appearance at the Skirball, *From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America*, (November 8, 2005–February 12, 2006) organized by the Library of Congress, features more than 200 treasures of Judaica Americana from the collection of the Library of Congress, augmented by a selection of important loans from other cooperating repositories. It examines the American Jewish experience in the United States through the prisms of “haven” and “home.” The “Haven” section opens with a selection of pivotal documents expressing the ideals of freedom that have come to represent the promise of America. It goes on to explore the formative experiences of Jewish immigrants as they struggled to “become American.” The “Home” section focuses on the opportunities and challenges inherent in a free society and the uniquely American Jewish religious movements, institutions and associations created in response. In telling the fascinating stories of Jewish immigrants who made the United States their home, the exhibition takes a close look at the themes—and sometimes conflicting aims—of accommodation, assertion, adaptation and acculturation that have characterized the American Jewish experience from its beginnings in 1654 to the present day.

FACTS FROM THE STACKS: American Research Sources

by Barbara Algaze, JGSLA Librarian.

- **American Jews in WWII** by I. Kaufman, Volumes I and II
- **American Jews: Their Lives and Achievements**, American Jewish Literary Foundation, Inc. (publisher)
- **Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West**, by Harriet and Fred Rochlin
- **Ayalah Shlukhah: Mirroring American Jewry** (in Yiddish) by Moses Kohns
- **The Eternal Stranger: A Study of Jewish Life in the Small Community** by Benjamin Kaplan
- **History of the Jews in America** by Deborah Pessin
- **American Jewry: Documents: Eighteenth Century** by Jacob Rader Marcus
- **The Jew in the American World: A Source Book** by Jacob Rader Marcus
- **Who's Who in American Jewry**, Jewish Biographical Bureau, Inc. (publisher)
- **The Jews in the United States: A Pictorial History 1654 to the Present** by Morris U. Schappes
- **Pilgrim People: A History of the Jews in America from 1492 to 1974** by Anita Libman Lebeson
- **Jews in American Wars** by J. George Fredman and Louis A. Falk
- **Facing the New World: Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America** by Richard Brilliant
- **Mountain West Pioneer Jewry: An Historical and Genealogical Source Book from Origins to 1885**
by Hynda L. Rudd
- **The Land that I Show You: Three Centuries of Jewish Life in America** by Stanley Feldstein
- **The Jewish Legion of Valor: The Story of Americans of Jewish Faith who Distinguished Themselves in the Armed Forces in all the Wars of the Republic** by Captain Sydney G. Gumpertz
- **Shores of Refuge: A Hundred Years of Jewish Emigration** by Ronald Sanders
- **The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York 1654 – 1860** by Hyman B. Grinstein
- **History of the Jews of Los Angeles 1850 – 1970** by Max Vorspan and Lloyd P. Gartner
- **Pioneer Jews in California 1849 – 1870** by Jack Benjamin Goldman
- **American Jewish Yearbook** Volume 19 (1917/1918) through Volume 98 (1998) (incomplete set)

Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles
P.O. Box 55443 Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5544
(818) 771-5554 <http://www.jgsla.org>