

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FROM RASEYN TO AMERICA

#### Part one: Upyna to Chicago

**M**y grandfather, Wolf Rollnick, to whom (you will remember) the 17 year old Congo Joe Rollnick had fled for protection when wanted by the Transvaal Authorities, was born in 1850 in Upyna<sup>1</sup>, Lithuania. It was not surprising, therefore, that when I searched the Ellis Island Registry of immigrants to the USA, I was struck by a record of Ette Rolnik from Upina<sup>2</sup>.

Ette (later Etta) Rolnik arrived in New York on 27 July 1900 on the SS Patricia, sailing from Hamburg. She was 16 years old. According to the shipping manifest she was from Upina, with \$5 in her possession, and was going to her brother Mikale Rolnik at 83 Milton Ave Chicago. Her brother had paid her fare. It seemed possible that Ette was a close relation and perhaps a cousin of my mother's. I looked through the shipping manifest for the entire vessel and found just one couple from Upina. Perhaps they kept an eye on young Ette, else it would have been a somewhat frightening journey for her, a young girl, all alone on the immigrant ship. I searched the US census records for Mikale Rolnik. All I could find was Michael Rolnick, living in Chicago but, born in 1863, he seemed to me too old to be a brother of Ette, born as he was 21 years before her. And where was Milton Ave? Google Maps could not find a Milton Avenue in Chicago. Checking "Milton Ave Chicago" on the Web gave a single reference, to an Italian genealogist asking about his ancestor who had got to 67 Milton Ave. But in the Chicago Daily News negatives collection<sup>3</sup> I found the following:

*Image of a shoeless boy, holding the hand of a bigger girl and standing on the sidewalk of Cleveland Avenue (formerly Milton Avenue) in the Near North Side community*



<sup>1</sup> Upina and Upyna are different transliterations for the same shtetl, Upyan in the Lithuanian form. The Jewish population of Upyan in 1847 was 547 souls.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ellisland.org/search\\_matchMore.asp?LNM=ROLNIK&PLNM=ROLNIK&CGD=F&first\\_kind=1&kind=exact&offset=0&dwpdone=1](http://www.ellisland.org/search_matchMore.asp?LNM=ROLNIK&PLNM=ROLNIK&CGD=F&first_kind=1&kind=exact&offset=0&dwpdone=1)

<sup>3</sup> Chicago Daily News negatives collection, DN-0063681 & DN-0063682. Courtesy of Chicago History Museum

area of Chicago. This street was in one of Chicago's most crowded, and heavily populated areas. (*Chicago Daily News* 1914 Nov. 13).

And this:

This is an image of a boy holding a girl on his back, with two smaller children nearby. This image was taken on Cleveland Avenue (formerly Milton Avenue) in the Near North Side community area of Chicago. This street was one of four, including West Chicago, North



Cambridge Avenue, and West Oak Street that were the boundaries of one of Chicago's most overpopulated areas. (*Chicago Daily News* 1914).

These images offer glimpses of how people lived and worked in Chicago during the period of this data set.

So Milton Ave had existed and, indeed, was in the most densely populated section of Chicago, the inhabitants largely of Italian origin. The area was known as "Little Sicily" or even "Little Hell" because of the "Black Hand" crimes so frequently committed there<sup>4</sup>. So now we have located Milton Avenue.

Two years later, Ette's sister Leie (later to be Lena) joined her, also listed as from Upina<sup>5</sup>, fifteen years old and with \$2.50 in her pocket, going to her "brother Mikhaly", but this time he is at 380 Mexico St, Chicago. This street, too, has disappeared, without a trace. It looks, however, as if we have identified three Rolnick siblings from Upyna, perhaps cousins of the Wynberg Rollnicks and also, in that case, of Congo Joe. More were to follow:

In 1909, Chaim and Wolf Rolnik, 17 and 11 1/2 years old, arrived in Baltimore, en route to their Chicago brother M. Rolnik, now at 237 E Division St., a few blocks from Milton Avenue. Chaim is listed as a farm labourer and carried \$25. Both were from Upyna, and had left

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<sup>4</sup> During 1909 and 1910, 19 murders were committed in the district and six at a certain corner on Milton Ave called "death corner"! G.P.Norton, *Amer. J. Sociology*, 18 (1913) 509-542: *Chicago Housing Conditions*, VII: Two Italian Districts.

<sup>5</sup> The shipping manifest records Wilna, but this is written over "Upina", which is her correct birth place.

behind their mother, “Dvoire” (Dvora) Rolnik. Chaim became Hyman and Wolf William. That makes five Upyna Rolnik siblings, so far:

| Siblings of Michael Rolnick |         |            |             |          |                          |
|-----------------------------|---------|------------|-------------|----------|--------------------------|
| First name                  | Surname | Birth year | immigration | marriage | Children                 |
| Michael                     | Rolnick | 1863       | 1889        | 1882     | Max, Joseph, Harry       |
| Etta                        | Gardner | 1884       | 1900        | 1902     | Mary, Ida, Anna, Bernard |
| Lena                        | Gardner | 1888       | 1902        | 1910     | Jeanette, Bernard        |
| Hyman                       | Rolnick | 1892       | 1909        | 1918     | Bernard, Grace           |
| William                     | Rolnick | 1897       | 1909        | 1916     | Harry, Solomon           |

Who was their father? Perhaps the names of their children, to be born later, might give us a clue. The Chicago birth records list Ette (now Etta) Rolnick as having given birth to Bernard Gardner, her fifth child, in 1914. Lena Rolnick’s second child, Bernard, was born in 1916. Chaim (now Hyman) Rollnick fathered a Bernard, his first child, in 1919.

The Chicago birth records list also a Hannah Rolnick, married to Philip Fisher, as having given birth to a Bernard in 1919<sup>6</sup>. On the birth record of her next child, Ruth, Hannah is written as coming from Tavic, Russia. There is no Tavic, Russia, but there is, of course, Tavrig or Taurage in Lithuania, my mother’s birth place.

The Jewish Genealogy Lithuanian database gives us the following birth record:

| Name                   | Father,<br>Grandfather<br>Mother,<br>Grandfather<br>Mother Maiden<br>Surname | Date of Birth | Town               | Comments  | Place            | Microfilm / Item<br>Image<br>Archive / Fond |
|------------------------|--|---------------|--------------------|---|------------------|---|
|                        |  | DD/MM/YY      | Ujezd<br>Guberniya |   | Year<br>Record # |   |
| ROLNIK, Leye<br>Chyena | Ber, Yosef   | 26/10/1880    | Kovno/ [Kaunas]    | Father: own<br>dweller.<br>Family from<br>Telsiai | Kaunas           | 2290297 / 4                                 |
|                        | Mina, Yakov  | 4 Kislev      | Kaunas             |   | 1880             | 431   |
|                        | BERENSHTEYN  |               | Kaunas             |   | F242             | LVIA/1226/1/1863                            |

This looks very much like the Hannah (written Chyena) Rolnick, of “Tavic” who had married Philip Fisher in 1899, and who gave birth to a Bernard in 1919 - named, we can now surmise, after her father Ber Rolnik, son of Yosef. This is now the fourth Bernard, all presumably named after their grandfather Ber.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1920 US census records, Hannah Fisher (with her daughter Ruth and six other children then still living at home) is listed as having been born in 1880 and reaching the USA in 1888 (1892 in the 1910 census).

Now Ber Rolnik appears in the Jewish Genealogy database (with two similar citations) as

|             |  |      |           |                 |
|-------------|--|------|-----------|-----------------|
|             | owns land of 0,08 hectares, taxes= 44 kopeks | 18   | Upyna     | LVIA/515/25/365 |
| ROLNIK, Ber |  | July | Raseiniai | 62              |
|             | Real Estate Owners                           | 1878 | Kaunas    | 369             |

So Ber Rolnik is from Upyna, as was my grandfather Wolf Rollnick, also a son of Yosel (Yosef) Rolnik. Wolf and Ber were surely brothers, so the Chicago Rolnicks that we have identified are indeed cousins of my mother Lily Rollnick, and also of the other Wynberg Rollnicks and of Congo Joe Rollnick. Hannah Fisher joins the other five Chicago Rolnicks as a sibling. Judging by the birth dates of the Chicago Bernards, their namesake Ber Rolnik probably died in or just before January 1913 when Etta's Bernard was born.

But we haven't finished. Jake (Jacob) Rolnick of Chicago, born in 1875 in Kovno, is described, on his death certificate as the son of David Dernard [Bernard?] Rolnick, clearly Dov Ber, confirmed by his obituary in 1931 (just below) which lists him as the brother of Hannah Fisher, Dora Feldman, Etta and Lena Gardner, Joe and Willie and the late Michael Rolnick (and confirms most of our identifications, although omitting Hyman. We still have to take care of Dora.)

**ROLNICK—Jake Rolnick of 018 O'Brien-st., brother of Hannah Fisher, Dora Feldman, Etta and Lena Gardner, Joe and Willie, and the late Michael Rolnick. Funeral Monday, Dec. 14, at 10 a. m. at 3163 Ogden-av. Interment Jewish Waldheim.**

If we still needed it, Michael Rolnick's death certificate lists his father as Dave Ball Rolnick, which should probably be read as Dov Ber. (Dov is the Hebrew for the Yiddish Behr/Ber or English "bear", so the two together as Dov Ber is often used, as is my Zeev Wolf, "zeev" being Hebrew for "wolf").

We have now the following list of the siblings of Michael Rolnick (the children of Dov Ber Rolnik of Upyna):

| Siblings of Michael Rolnick |         |            |             |          |   |
|-----------------------------|---------|------------|-------------|----------|---|
| First name                  | Surname | Birth year | immigration | marriage | Children  |
| Michael                     | Rolnick | 1863       | 1889        | 1882     | Max, Joseph, Harry                                  |
| Jacob (Jake)                | Rolnick | 1875       |             |          |   |
| Hannah                      | Fisher  | 1880       | 1892        | 1899     | Susie, Leo, Lillie, Libbie, Jeanette, Ruth, Bernard |
| Etta                        | Gardner | 1884       | 1900        | 1902     | Mary, Ida, Anna, Bernard                            |
| Lena                        | Gardner | 1888       | 1902        | 1910     | Jeanette, Bernard                                   |
| Hyman                       | Rolnick | 1892       | 1909        | 1918     | Bernard, Grace                                      |
| William                     | Rolnick | 1897       | 1909        | 1916     | Harry, Solomon                                      |



*The Upyna Rolnicks in Chicago, around 1915. Top row, Myer, Michael, Jake.  
Below, Lena, Dora, Etta, Hannah  
(We still need to meet Myer and Dora, who appear in later chapters)<sup>7</sup>*

Some of Dov Ber Rolnik's children settled in Baltimore. They will get a section of their own, but to complete the list of Ber's children we will include in our list below Dora Rolnick born about 1872, who married Jacob Feldman of Baltimore in 1890. Their marriage certificate lists her as the daughter of Bear and Rachel Rolnick, while the 1910 census records her (and her parents) as coming from Lithuania. (She is the Dora Feldman mentioned as a sister in Jake Rolnick's obituary on the previous page).

Dora had a brother, Louis. Shown on the next page is his tombstone, which Chana and I photographed one cold day in a Baltimore cemetery. Louis' father is given there (in Hebrew) as Dov Ber Rolnick.

We know, from the shipping manifest for the 1882 ship that brought Louis and his wife Haddie to New York, that Louis was from

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<sup>7</sup> I am indebted to Marcia Burnam, Myer Rolnick's granddaughter, for this wonderful photograph.

Tauroggen, which is Taurage in Lithuania, so Louis (born 1857) is another son of Ber Rolnik, and probably the oldest son. We are now at nine children of Dov Ber Rolnick. Next, Yossel Rolnik from Upyna, aged 17 and a labourer, arriving in Baltimore in 1904, and going to his brother-in-law Sam Gardner (Etta Rolnick's husband), is the tenth. An eleventh, Ekel born in 1886, was still in Upyna, recorded in 1912 as the son of Ber. Still to be told, at greater length, is the story of Myer Rolnick, Ber's second son, born in 1867, while the youngest child that we know of, Abel Rolnik, born in 1899, stayed on in Upyna, Lithuania, only to die by hanging in 1932.<sup>8</sup>



The Children of Dov Ber Rolnick

| First name   | Surname | Birth year | Immigration       | Marriage | Children   |
|--------------|---------|------------|-------------------|----------|--|
| Louis        | Rolnick | 1857       | 1882              | 1882     | Joseph, Ray, Susie, Mitchell, Bessie, Edward, Mary, Sarah  |
| Michael      | Rolnick | 1863       | 1889              | 1882     | Max, Joseph, Harry   |
| Myer         | Rolnick | 1867       | 1882              | 1905     | Grace  |
| Dora         | Feldman | 1872       | 1887              | 1890     | Morris, Solomon, Charles, Lillian, Rosie, Joseph, Jeanette |
| Jacob (Jake) | Rolnick | 1875       |                   |          |  |
| Hannah       | Fisher  | 1880       | 1892              | 1899     | Susie, Leo, Lillie, Libbie, Jeanette, Ruth, Bernard        |
| Etta         | Gardner | 1884       | 1900              | 1902     | Mary, Ida, Anna, Bernard                                   |
| Ekel         | Rolnik  | 1886       | Did not immigrate |          |  |
| Joseph       | Rolnick | 1887       | 1904              | 1909     | Rose, Dorothy  |
| Lena         | Gardner | 1888       | 1902              | 1910     | Jeanette, Bernard  |
| Hyman        | Rolnick | 1892       | 1909              | 1918     | Bernard, Grace   |
| William      | Rolnick | 1897       | 1909              | 1916     | Harry, Solomon   |
| Abel         | Rolnik  | 1899       | Did not immigrate |          |  |

Ber had outlived a number of wives. Dora's mother was Rachel, Hannah's was Minna. William, Hyman, and Abel's was Dvoire. Ber's eldest son was born in 1857, his youngest in 1899. To have fathered Louis, Ber was probably born in or around 1840. I had been concerned that Michael Rolnick, 21 years older than Etta, was too old to be her brother, but I had not at that time known about Louis, the oldest

<sup>8</sup> Jewish Gen <http://raseiniai.shutterfly.com/vitalrecords> (Skaudivile Rab. Deaths 1922-39) records an Abel Rolnik, son of Berl and Dvoire, who died aged 39, by hanging (!) in Upyna on 17<sup>th</sup> Feburary 1932, most probably a suicide, poor fellow.

brother, nor Abel, the youngest, with their 42 years age difference.

I have carefully questioned all my Wynberg family who are still with us. Apparently, none had known of the existence of any Rolnicks in the USA, yet here was this tribe of Rolnicks, clearly close relations, nieces and nephews of Wolf Rollnick, our progenitor. My mother, Lily, first cousin to all these Rolnicks, visited the USA a number of times once her daughter Zena was established there. I can't recall her ever talking about trying to find her cousins although two were still living, in Chicago and Michigan, at that time and also numerous children of these cousins.

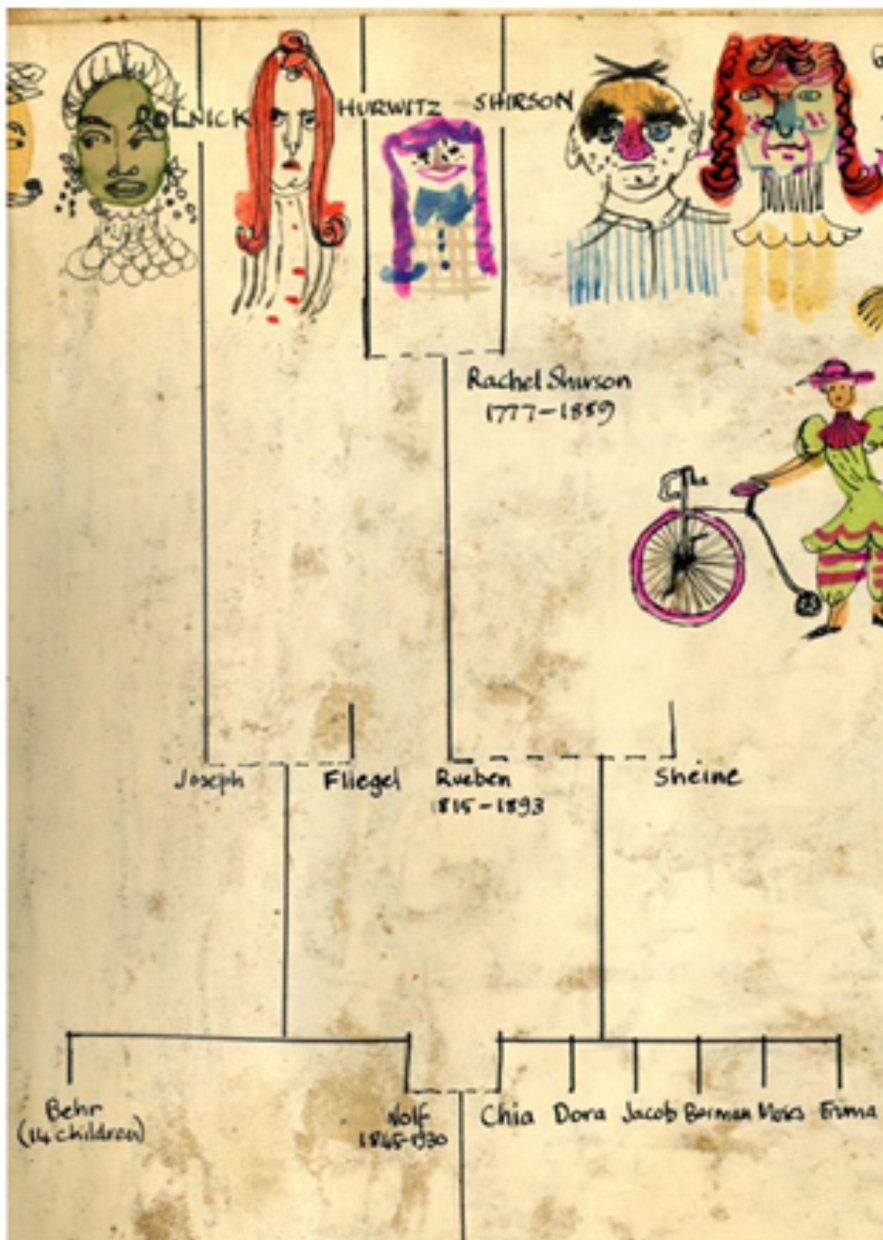
But a full confirmation of these deductions came when I happened to be shown the "Jeremy Book", the book that my brother Sylvester Stein and his wife Jenny had made to record the growing-up of their son, Jeremy. The book is a quarto volume, well bound, and has a frontispiece that shows Jeremy's family tree, on both sides of his parentage. The information was contributed by Jeremy's grandmother, Lily (Rollnick) Stein, and the illustrations were by Sylvester and Jenny's friend Jean Hart. Part of this frontispiece which is reproduced on the next page shows "Behr (14 children)".

In the previous few pages, I have identified 13 of Behr's 14 children. None of us recall ever having heard of Behr's tribe, yet my sister Zena does remember our mother saying once "Berel was a family name".

Why did we not hear more about these Rolnicks? We had certainly known about the other siblings of Wolf Rollnick. We saw that Meer Rolnick's son, Joseph (Congo Joe), had stayed with his uncle Wolf when he arrived in South Africa in 1896 and we had all heard about Congo Joe. The Wynberg family kept up its connection with the Silbersteins, descendants of Johanna Rolnik (Behr, Meer and Wolf's sister) who left Upyna around 1875. Abe Rollnick made contact with a Silberstein in New York in 1915. I met Kurt Silberstein in Cambridge in 1960. On the other side of the Wynberg Rollnick family, close connection was continued with the Hurwitzes, Wolf's wife's family. Abe had met with them during his 1915 visit in New York. Members of the Wynberg Rollnick branch met with the Hurwitzes in Berlin in the late 1920's and again when they left Germany in 1933 and came to South Africa. So we had kept up a number of connections with our relatives from Lithuania. (In truth, how had Lily Rollnick known about Behr's 14 children when the last was born after her family had left Lithuania?)

Had there been a falling-out between Wolf and his brother Behr? Or is it just that male-male interactions are not maintained as well as those where females are involved?

But a memory of the Ber-Wolf connection probably survived. I have been told by a descendant of the Chicago Rolnicks, a person then still living in Chicago, that in about 1975 her family was visited by Rol(l)nicks from South Africa. They were definitely Rolnik



*This is the Rollnick part of Jeremy's tree and shows two of the sons of Joseph and Fliegel Rolnik:*

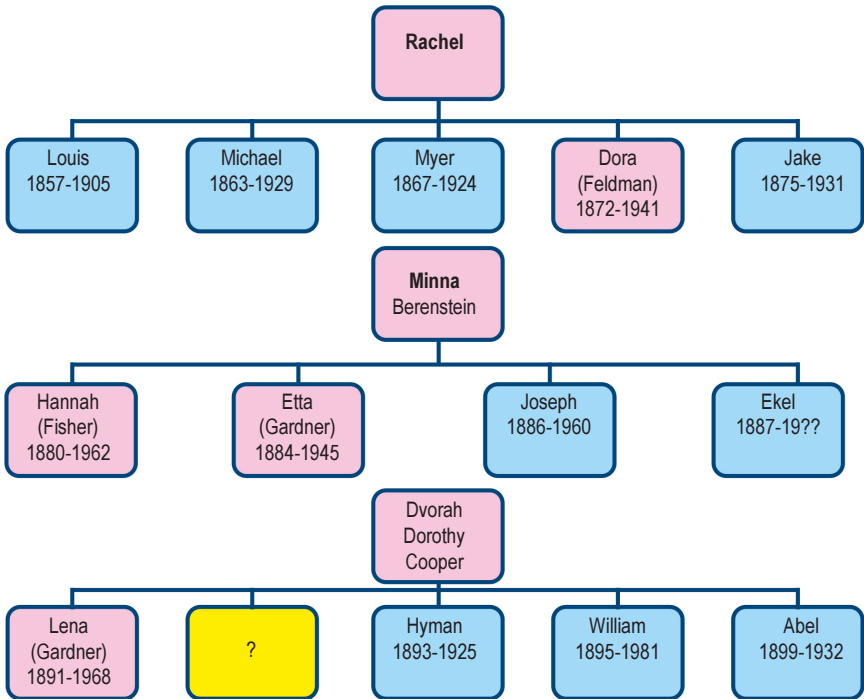
*Behr (14 children) and Wolf (1845-1930)*



descendants, were in the liquor business in South Africa, and were on their way to Florida. I have not been able to trace them.

Just as Ber Rolnik’s male grandchildren had included a number of Bernards named in his honour, so Ber’s father (Yosel Rolnik) had grandchildren named for him: Ber’s son, Joseph Rolnick, Ber’s brother Meer’s eldest son Joseph (Congo Joe) Rollnick, Wolf’s son Roman whose second name was Joseph; and then amongst Ber’s children, Louis Rolnick’s son, Joseph Rolnick, Michael’s eldest son, Joseph Rolnick, and Dora Feldman (nee Rolnick, a daughter of Ber) with her Joseph Feldman. These tributes to Yosel Rolnik of Upanya provide yet more evidence to link his descendants together, but keeping track of all the Joseph Rol(l)nicks has been a difficult task for the family historian.

**The fourteen children of Dov Ber Rolnick, by his three wives<sup>9</sup>**



<sup>9</sup> I have documentation for only four of the mother/child associations: Rachel with Dora (her wedding record), Minna Berenshtein with Hannah (her birth record) and Abel and Hyman with “Dvoire” (Hyman’s shipping record) or Dorothy Cooper (their death certificates). I have associated the other children with their putative mothers on the basis of their birth dates. I inserted the unidentified 14<sup>th</sup> child in an arbitrary place.

## Michael Rolnick and his family:

In the 1900 census, the Michael Rolnick family name is given as Rolling, but this is certainly our Michael, living at 78 Milton Avenue, with his sons, Max, Joseph and Harry, as well as their mother Annie. Michael's immigration date is given as 1889, and his birth date as April 1862, Annie's as August of that year. The 1910 US census lists Michael ("Mickale") Rolnick as a widower, born in 1861, living with his 3 sons Max, Joseph and Harry, at 536 Division St, around the corner from Milton Avenue. (Inconsistencies in birth or immigration dates is a feature of the census records).

Now the Jewish Genealogy Lithuanian website, searched for Mikhael Rolnik yields:

| Name           | Father | Comments<br>Type of Record  | Day           | Town               | Archive/Fond/Inventory/File |
|----------------|--------|---|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
|                | Age    |   | Month<br>Year | Uyezd<br>Guberniya | Record #<br>Page #          |
| RALNIK, Mikhel |        | well-to-do;<br>has a house;<br>1 person in<br>family<br>Jewish<br>Community<br>List | 1885          | Siluva             | KRA/l-49/1/14655            |
|                |        |   |               | Raseiniai          | 64                          |
|                |        |   |               | Kaunas             | 197                         |

Is this our Michael Rolnick? We can allow Ralnik for Rolnick (Rolnick), but why Siluva? Shouldn't our Michael Rolnick be found rather in Upyna? But this is definitely our Michael Rolnick. His sons Max, Joseph and Harry have respectively Scidlova, Shidlova and Shidlowa for birth place on their WW1 draft cards. These are all Lithuanian or Yiddish names for the same shtetel, Siluva, some 50 Km from Upyna, as the crow flies, or 74 Km using modern roads<sup>10</sup>.

We note that Michael Rolnick was recorded as well-to-do. Yet he decided, soon after this census date, to leave Russia. Perhaps with three sons, the fear of the Tsar's draft was what motivated him. His youngest son, Harry was born in September 1888. Michael immigrated to the USA the following year<sup>11</sup>.

By 1892 Michael was already established as a butcher (listed with

<sup>10</sup> The Jewish community in Siluva numbered 506 souls in 1897, around the time that Michael and his family were living there. See the Jewish Genealogy Database, Locality Page.

<sup>11</sup> Harry was eight when he first consciously saw his father, just as old as my father Philip was when he first consciously saw *his* father, my grandfather Solomon Stein. This must have been a common situation.

“meat 221 Division” in the 1892 Chicago City Directory), this being the first Kosher butcher north of the Chicago river. In May 1896 his wife Cheine (later Annie or Jennie) and his three children (then called Motel, Josel and Hirsch) arrived in the USA. They had embarked at Liverpool, sailed to Canada and then crossed the border into Maine. Michael had paid their fares, Cheine was carrying \$3, and they were on their way to 83 Milton Street<sup>12</sup>.

The 1900 Chicago Business directory lists the butcher shop “Natovich and Rolnick” at 83 Milton Ave,<sup>13</sup> and their home address as 78 Milton Ave. The 1900 Census shows that their neighbours were Swedes, Irish and, mostly, South Italians.

Michael was already President of his synagogue, B’nai Israel (“Sons of Israel”)<sup>14</sup>, of course an orthodox congregation, at 169 Gault St., close to Milton Ave. The boys (now Max, Joseph and Harry) were still at school. By the 1910 census, Michael had set up his own butcher shop at 536 Division St., with the family living in the same building (probably above the shop), their neighbours still mostly Swedes and South Italians, although the Greenmans lived two doors away. Many of the children on the census list were already locally born. Max himself had by now left school and was a “shop tender”. Sadly, Annie had died two years before, from diabetes.

The eldest son, Max, remained in the meat trade for the rest of his life. Perhaps arriving too late to do well at an American high school, he did not take up a professional career. By 1917 he was an inspector for Armour and Co in Chicago’s Union Stockyards, retiring in 1952. In July of that year, he took a boat to Liverpool for a European tour but died early the next year of cerebral meningitis in Cadiz, Spain. His body was brought back to Chicago where he was buried in May of 1953.<sup>15</sup>

Michael married a second time, in 1915, to Bessie Ratsky<sup>16</sup>. He lived

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<sup>12</sup> Milton Street, not Avenue! Well, we hope they found their way alright. Were they mixing up Milton Avenue and well-known Maxwell Street? The famous Maxwell Street is in the heart of the old Jewish section of Chicago, south of the Chicago River, not north of it as was Milton Avenue. Maxwell Street Market was a bustling thoroughfare, lined with shops and market stalls. That is where one might have expected Michael Rolnick to be living, so no wonder his wife and children were on their way there. Presumably, their Yiddish would have enabled them to correct their mistake and get to Michael’s real address, but, of course, he would have met their train from Canada, long before they got into any trouble.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Natovich had signed Michael’s naturalisation application in 1895

<sup>14</sup> Also called the “Aberdeen Street shul”, founded in 1885. American Jewish Year Book, C Adler, 1900, Philadelphia

<sup>15</sup> There is a long correspondence between the US Consular offices in Madrid and Max’s lawyer brother, Joseph, concerning the transfer of the body to Chicago for its re-interment.

<sup>16</sup> He was still (or again) President of the B’nai Israel Congregation in 1923, by which time the shul had moved to 1363 Sedgwick Ave, with Michael living a few blocks away at 917 Sedgwick, apparently running now a dry goods store.



*Michael Rolnick*<sup>17</sup>



*Cheine (Anna) Rolnick*



*Joseph Rolnick*



*Harry C. Rolnick*

on in dignity in Chicago, moving by 1928 further north to be near his son, Joseph. He died in 1929.

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<sup>17</sup> I am indebted to a great granddaughter of Michael Rolnick for these pictures and for important information about the Rolnicks in Chicago.

## Joseph Rolnick

Michael and Cheine's second son, Joseph, finished school and college and took a law degree at Chicago Kent College of Law, being admitted to the Chicago Bar in 1912. While they were growing up, Joseph and his brothers had helped their father deliver the meat, on horseback. Joseph continued with the meat deliveries while he was at law school. By 1914, he had opened an office in the business section of the city but was still living at home.

With his experience of living in "Little Italy", in an early case he vigorously defended the local residents against the accusation that they all were responsible for the crime that was hurting the area's property values. "The fault lies with the police", interrupted Attorney Joseph Rolnick, "not with the residents. I haven't seen a police officer in the district for a month"<sup>18</sup>. Appointed assistant attorney general in the State of Illinois in 1917<sup>19</sup>, he began a life of public duty. His main tasks for the following 17 years were in the inheritance tax department and, among other cases, he handled big estates involving such well-known persons as Marshall Field, James Deering, William Wrigley, Jr and Edith Rockefeller McCormick. The State recovered many millions of tax revenues as a result of his activities, the Wrigley estate alone yielding over \$2.5 million<sup>20</sup>. He took part in political activities, standing on the Republican slate<sup>21</sup>, in 1918, as candidate for County Commissioner<sup>22</sup>.

Joseph continued in his father's path of heavy involvement in the Orthodox Jewish congregations of Chicago. With the Jewish population moving ever further northward from its Maxwell Street origins, synagogues in the older areas were declining in membership. The old buildings were falling into decay and new ones had to be built. The original Agudas Achim ("Association of Brothers") synagogue, founded by Hungarian Jews in 1884, moved into a newer building in 1906 in the Taylor Street area. (See picture on next page).

Joseph was involved in bringing about a merger in 1922 between this congregation and his local North Shore Congregation "Sons of

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<sup>18</sup> Chicago Tribune, Aug 4, 1915

<sup>19</sup> Bench and Bar of Illinois, 1920 Hennessey, LeRoy Chicago : Bench & Bar Pub. Co

<sup>20</sup> Chicago Tribune, April 28 1930, Aug 30 1932, 22 July 1934

<sup>21</sup> The Republican Party had earlier been fiercely anti-war (as were the Democrats), but by those 1918 elections, the Republicans were fully behind the war effort, and were accusing the local Democrat Mayor of lacking in support of the soldiers at the front.

<sup>22</sup> In 1919, Joseph married Nettie Neuman and the couple moved, with many of the younger Jewish families, to the South Lawndale area of town. Nettie was an accomplished pianist who often performed in local concerts. After their son Howard was born, in 1928, they moved even further north, close to North Lake Shore Drive.



Israel". They built a huge and wonderful synagogue, (see next page) Joseph helping to lay the cornerstone and being later Chairman of the synagogue board.

Agudas Achim is the last remaining synagogue of its kind in Chicago, a handsome cathedral-style building with a most beautiful ark made of hand-set Italian mosaic tiles (on right of photo next page).

But, in later years, its congregation deserted it. "The Shul became a real eyesore, an embarrassment to our religion. It has been vandalized numerous times and is a wonderful hangout for drug users, pushers, gang bangers and other such undesirables, not to mention the pigeons that have flown inside the sanctuary through the broken stained glass windows and left their droppings on the pulpit."<sup>23</sup> Its resuscitation, by Steven Turk and Rabbi Philip Lefkowitz is well described<sup>24</sup>.

By 1939 it was obvious to many Jews in Europe that their position was becoming dangerous. Joseph's cousin on his maternal side, Tisha

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.yelp.com/biz/agudas-achim-north-chicago#query:Synagogues%20%26%20Jewish%20Places>  
Problems in building up a stable community base still remain, but the work of Joseph Rolnick and the other founders of this fine synagogue has left its mark.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.schmoozemag.com/?p=870>



*Agudas Achim*



*“Know before Whom  
you stand”*

Stein also from Siluva, had managed in March of that year to obtain one of the Quota Immigrant Visas that enabled her to enter the USA. The bureaucratic obstacles to obtaining such a visa were immense<sup>25</sup>, but Joseph, as a lawyer, would have been a great help to Tisha. That

Tisha was a physician was an additional help. Joseph would not, of course, have known her in Lithuania since she was born just about the time that he had left the country. Tisha arrived in New York in May 1939, on a boatload of largely Central European



*Rabbi Philip Lefkowitz in the Agudas Achim  
synagogue.*

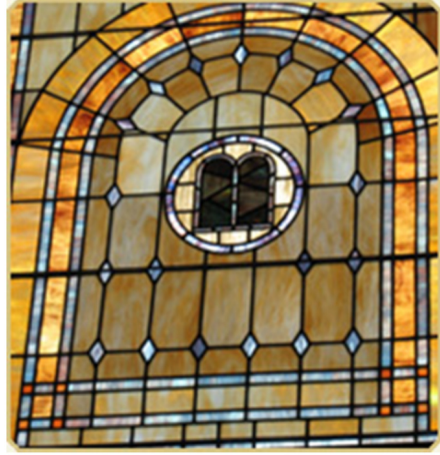
Jews, going to “her cousin J. Rolnik, 33 North La Salal [sic] St Chicago”<sup>26</sup>, Joseph’s office address at the time. Tisha worked as a physician in Chicago, and lived near Joseph and his wife, close to Lake Shore Drive. After the war, she travelled to South Africa and to Israel, presumably in search of the remnants of her family (She had left behind in Lithuania her sister Liba and brother-in-law Chaim Rozenthal). Joseph’s help had saved her from the Holocaust.

In 1960, Joseph was again involved in a merger to help the older, struggling Jewish congregations as their congregants died off or

<sup>25</sup> See D. Wyman *The Abandonment of the Jews*. New Press N.Y. 1984

<sup>26</sup> <http://search.ancestry.com/Browseview.aspx?dbid=7488&path=1939.05.08.Queen+Mary.92&sid=&gskw=Tisa+Steinaite>

moved uptown. The last few members of Michael Rolnick's old congregation B'nai Israel had left the "Old Town" and B'nai Israel merged with the modern orthodox Lakeview Anshe Sholom ("People of Peace"). Joseph was the force behind bringing together these two congregations to form the vibrant Lakeview Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation<sup>27</sup>.



*Lakeview Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel*

The community today boasts the Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel, as a member.

It seems wonderful that Joseph could continue his father's work and, especially, that Michael's Bnai Israel Congregation could merge and develop into this new active association that fills a need for the modern society in North Shore Chicago. Joseph was 92 when he died after a full life in the Chicago community.

A former President of Lakeview Anshe Sholom (and son of an earlier President) writes:

"I am delighted to be reminded of Mr. Joseph Rolnick, who was President of our Congregation when I was young. He was highly respected both within our walls and in Chicago's legal community, a true gentleman, and easy for a kid like me to talk to. As I write this, I can hear him recalling that his father was the first kosher butcher in Chicago."<sup>28</sup>

Rabbi Sherman Lopatin of Lakeview Anshe Sholom was kind enough to photograph and send me a Memorial Plaque from the

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<sup>27</sup> The program for the 92<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Dinner of the congregation celebrates the merger and is the source for this material. The congregation has the program in its archives.

<sup>28</sup> David Passman, writing to me in an email, 11 October 2011.



synagogue. It honours Michael and his wife Jennie, his sons Max and Harry, but not Joseph himself (who was probably the person who arranged for the family names to be in the plaque). Michael's Hebrew name confirms what I had concluded about his father's name: Dov Ber.



## Harry C. Rolnick

Michael's youngest son, Harry (or Harry C. as he generally styled himself) also had a life of public service, but in the medical rather than the legal world. He studied medicine at Northwestern University (not far from home so that he could still help with the meat deliveries), and graduated in 1911. He interned at Cook County Hospital, was Assistant Superintendent at Chicago's Cook County Hospital, and an instructor (in genito-urinary medicine) at Northwestern University Medical School until 1916 when he joined the American Physicians Expedition (APE) to Germany.

The APE was an organisation formed largely by German-born or German-descended Americans. The war in Europe was not popular with the American public. Apart from an Anglophile element supporting the British, public opinion at first went along with neutrality, strongly so among the German, Irish, and Swedish Americans, as well as among many Southern farmers, church leaders and women. However, Germany increasingly came to be seen as the villain, especially after news of atrocities in Belgium, and then the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915. The fighting in Europe dominated the 1916 Presidential election campaign. Woodrow Wilson campaigned for re-election with his very effective campaign slogan, "He Kept Us out of War"<sup>29</sup>. It is hard for us after World War II and the Holocaust to appreciate the extent to which Germany was, in 1916, not yet considered to be the villain in the European war.

<sup>29</sup> accurate since he had successfully pressured the Germans to suspend unrestricted submarine warfare.

Meanwhile, the number of battle-field casualties on both sides was enormous. The American Red Cross had left Germany, and there was a shortage of surgeons, physicians and nurses. Civilian casualties were also mounting, especially in the border regions of Russia, and the Jewish populations there suffered in particular. Public meetings called in the larger cities of the US, and especially in areas that had been settled by Germans, enlisted financial support to send teams of doctors and nurses to the battle fronts and to enrol medical personnel in those teams. Harry responded to the call. This was a totally selfless act. It was dangerous to get to Europe and dangerous to be in the field of war. Joining the Expedition might well have hindered Michael's career. It was not in any way financially advantageous for him, simply a brave and generous thing to do.

The first units of the Expedition had left already at the end of 1915. Harry and his colleagues, doctors and nurses, sailed in May 1916 for Copenhagen on a neutral ship, the Danish SS Frederick VIII. Two previous voyages of the Frederick VIII had been diverted by British authorities, who seized the ship on the high seas, and unloaded its cargo of food to Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands<sup>30</sup>, but the Expedition team got safely to Germany. The Chicago unit, one of six spread out on the various fronts of the war, was set up in Graudenz<sup>31</sup>, a fortified garrison town in what had been the kingdom of Prussia, on the right bank of the Vistula. The town served also as a prisoner-of-war camp for many British<sup>32</sup> and Russian soldiers. The Expedition set up a field hospital and, for the next year, treated many battle and also civilian casualties of the fighting on the Russian front.

The horrific medical work done in these field hospitals is well described by the head of one of the units (Dr H M Richter of Chicago)<sup>33</sup>:

*"How did we treat infected wounds? Well, at the beginning of the war it was hoped that first-aid dressing would prevent infections with the consequent pus and gangrene. But it was found that practically all wounds were infected. More than 90 per cent of them are wounds from shell fragments. The explosive shell means irregular fragments penetrating the tissues, carrying clothing into them, and so rending and tearing them that the tissues themselves are killed. Wounds from rifle bullets heal kindly, but only a few of these are seen. ... In hand-to-hand fighting, hand-grenades are generally used. The Cossacks use lances and sabres.*

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<sup>30</sup> The Problems of Neutrality When the World Is at War - S. D. Fess

<sup>31</sup> The Reading Eagle June 4th 1917

<sup>32</sup> For more on the British soldiers see: Graudenz POW camp - Great War Forum 1914-1918.invisionzone.com/.../index.php?

<sup>33</sup> [www.archive.org/.../currenthistoryfo05newyuoft/currenthistoryfo05n](http://www.archive.org/.../currenthistoryfo05newyuoft/currenthistoryfo05n)  
(I use his own words...wds)



*The garrison at Graudenz*



*German troops in Graudenz in 1914*

*The type of wound is new, and a better technique has been evolved, but nothing revolutionary. The hyposulphites used in our own civil war have been used again to some extent, but none of the antiseptics have proved of extraordinary value. The characteristic treatment of infected wounds is about this: Opening the wounds widely, leaving them open to the air, letting the surface dry up, no dressings to interfere with the escape of secretions, use of continuous hot water baths for great lacerated wounds. Men with these big wounds live in the bathtub two or three weeks, eat their meals there, sleep there on an air pillow. To remove infectious materials from the deep parts of wounds, rubber tubes are sutured in place and a continuous stream of sterilized water is passed through the tubes and wound. Various solutions, such as sodium hyposulphite, were tried, but for the wide-open wound plain sterile water gave better results than more complicated processes. Many hundreds of cases of compound and complicated fractures that passed through the hospital were treated in this manner. If the patient had to be kept in bed instead of in the bathtub, then the wound was irrigated from above and the water drained off through a trough of rubber."*

In early 1917 Germany decided to resume all-out submarine warfare on all commercial ships headed toward Britain, although realizing this would mean war with the U.S.<sup>34</sup> Wilson asked Congress for "a war to end all wars" and to "make the world safe for democracy," and the U.S. entered the conflict on April 6, 1917.

Harry, his colleague Jacob Minke who had traveled over with him to Germany<sup>35</sup>, and several of the nurses who had worked with them, returned to the USA early in February, sailing again on the SS Frederick VIII. Left behind, in temporary command, was Dr Paul Martin of the original team, who eventually got to Switzerland only on April 15th. Their voyages back were also not without danger. Members of other

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<sup>34</sup> Additionally, it became known that the Kaiser's government had, in the Zimmermann Telegram of January 1917, offered a military alliance to Mexico —and publication of that offer outraged American opinion, just as the U-boats started sinking American ships in the North Atlantic.

<sup>35</sup> J Amer. Medical Association. 1916;LXVII(1):42-49.

units have left newspaper accounts of their return, reporting seeing submarines and mines along the route<sup>36</sup>. Dr Joseph Eastman, who had gone to Germany to head one of the units, accompanied by his wife and three year old son, told of how a storm had luckily driven away the submarine that was on the tail of an oil tanker in their convoy<sup>37</sup>. Eastman waited many weeks in Copenhagen before managing to get a berth home and that was only because he had agreed to sign up as ship's doctor.

As soon as they got back to the USA, nearly all of these badly-needed medical personnel, Harry among them, signed up in the US Army. Harry's draft card is dated 5 June 1917, and records that he was living at home, still at 536 W Division St, above the butcher shop. He joined as First Lieutenant in the Medical Corps of the 149th Regiment (1st Illinois) Field Artillery in the "Rainbow Division", and was the Division's urologist. The Rainbow Division<sup>38</sup> was formed in August 1917 of military units from 26 states and the District of Columbia. After Chief of Staff Major Douglas MacArthur remarked that the Division<sup>39</sup> would "stretch over the whole country like a rainbow," the coalesced units were christened the Rainbow Division. The Division saw its first action in February 1918 fighting alongside the French. The battles continued throughout the following months and on July 14, 1918 the final German offensive was contained by the 4th French Army, in which the Rainbow Division played a prominent role at the famous Battle of the Champagne. Many bloody battles and great victories followed until the Germans were finally defeated. Battles included those in the Chateau-Thierry salient; St. Michiel; the Verdun front and Argonne, where Rainbowmen engaged in the final battle of WWI. With the ending of hostilities, occupation duty in German followed. (Interestingly, Harry's second cousin, Dagobert Silberstein, whose diary I quote in a later chapter on the Silbersteins, was at that time medical officer on the other side of the front lines, almost exactly opposite Harry's troops and less than fifty miles away.)

I do not have a record of when Harry returned to the USA, but we do know that he married Elsie Trace in March 1920. Elsie was the daughter of Sussman Elijah Trace who had been a doctor (a feldscher,

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<sup>36</sup> Observer March 6 1917

<sup>37</sup> Washington Times april 24 1917

<sup>38</sup> This paragraph quotes from <http://www.rainbowvets.org/>

<sup>39</sup> As the war progressed Douglas MacArthur was promoted to commander of the Division. Its four infantry regiments were respectively 165th (formerly New York's 69th); 166th (formerly Ohio's 4th); 167th (formerly Alabama's 4th); and 168th (formerly Iowa's 3rd). The field artillery (Harry's unit), machine gun, ambulance, hospital, and other units originated in other states - from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

or barber–surgeon) in Vilna, but worked as a druggist after he settled in Chicago<sup>40</sup>, and Elsie had been working in her father’s office before she married Harry. Her father would have enjoyed his “son-in-law the doctor”, but then Harry would equally have enjoyed his “father-in-law the doctor.”<sup>41</sup>

Harry now entered a long and very successful career as a doctor. His specialty was urology and his surgical experience during the War must have been very useful for him (and his patients). He was a part-time instructor in Genito-Urinary Surgery at Northwestern University (his Alma Mater) from 1921-24, an Associate from 1924-1928, and then Assistant Professor in Urology in 1939-1948. Appointed Professor of Urologic Surgery at Loyola University medical school in Chicago, he was consulting urologic surgeon for the Illinois State Industrial Commission<sup>42</sup>, founded the Department of Urology in Mount Sinai Hospital, and was Chairman of the Department of Urology at Chicago Medical School and at Michael Reese Hospital. Among his many achievements in surgery was his early use of the anesthetic sodium isoethyl amyl barbiturate, later to be a commonplace aid. His use was sufficiently ground-breaking that the relevant newspaper report had to add: “Under the anesthetic the patient simply falls asleep”<sup>43</sup>. Harry encouraged older men who have to get up often during the night: “It will be reassuring to know that this is not an abnormal condition”<sup>44</sup>.

The appointments at Mount Sinai and Chicago Medical School were important in another context. At many medical schools and hospitals at the time, there was a quota aimed at excluding, or at least reducing the number of Jews appointed to such institutions<sup>45</sup>. Mount Sinai<sup>46</sup>, of course, but also Chicago Medical School<sup>47</sup> were specifically founded to counter such restrictions in student and faculty entry, and Harry’s work at these institutions thus had an impact on the Jewish community.

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<sup>40</sup> Sussman Trace (in Ancestry.com) was the sixth in the line of barber-surgeons!

<sup>41</sup> And my father, the mathematician, Philip Stein, would have enjoyed this extension of his “Law of Heredity in Scientific Occupations: from father to son-in-law”, the Law being first enunciated as a “Personal communication” to wds from Philip Stein, many years ago

<sup>42</sup> Chicago Daily Tribune 5 Feb 1931

<sup>43</sup> The South East Missourian, June 11 1929

<sup>44</sup> St. Joseph News-Press - Dec 22, 1944

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.geschichteinchronologie.ch/USA/EncJud\\_juden-in-USA05\\_1920-1929.html](http://www.geschichteinchronologie.ch/USA/EncJud_juden-in-USA05_1920-1929.html), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1808007/pdf/bullnyacadmed00005-0055.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Founded in 1919 as a 60-bed hospital to serve needy Eastern European immigrants, and to train Jewish physicians denied educational opportunities elsewhere.

<sup>47</sup> The non-profit Chicago Medical School operated from the beginning on the principle that admission should be based on merit alone. In particular, “Chicago Med” admitted women and minority applicants decades earlier than most professional schools.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago\\_Medical\\_School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Medical_School)

Harry was an established author of medical texts and wrote also a number of scientific papers<sup>48</sup>. His “Textbook of Urology for Students and Practitioners”, written with Dr Daniel Eisendrath<sup>49</sup> went into many editions, and the later “Practice of Urology” in two volumes was also well received<sup>50</sup>.

Harry died in 1961, his wife Elsie six years later.

Their son Donald also became an urologist, serving at Chicago Medical School and Michael Reese Hospital. Their daughter Helen married a student of Harry’s, David Presman. David, by the Law of Heredity in Scientific Occupations (see a previous footnote), became a Professor of Urology, publishing scientific papers with his father-in-law as well as his brother-in-law<sup>51</sup>, and contributing also to Harry’s “The Practice of Urology”.

It must have been wonderful for Harry and Elsie to see their son and son-in-law develop into effective medical scientists, but they were surely proud also of the entrepreneurial successes of the industrialist, Samuel Haber, who had married their daughter Dorothy.

### **The Siblings of Michael Rolnick:**

Dov Ber Rolnik was so prolific a father that Michael’s children were older than many of their uncles and aunts, who immigrated long after them, too late to take advantage of the academic opportunities that their new country offered. Unlike their nephews Joseph and Harry, none entered into a profession and they struggled to make a living. Take the case of Michael’s sister, Etta Rolnick who as we saw, had arrived in Chicago in 1900, aged sixteen. By 1903, she was married to Samuel Gardner, ten years her senior. Samuel was then living in Maryland, a widower with a seven year old son Nathan, his wife having died just a year or two before. How had Etta, from Chicago, found this match to Samuel, then living in Baltimore? The most plausible assumption is that the match-maker was her eldest brother Louis, a Baltimore resident. In 1900, Samuel Gardner and Louis Rolnick were living just 3 minutes away from each other, and perhaps both went to the nearby Eden St. synagogue. If not Louis, then the matchmaker was perhaps Etta’s sister, Dora, who was married to Jacob Feldman and lived 8 minutes away, but nearer to the synagogue.

In any event, Etta and Samuel married and began a somewhat roving life. Their first joint child, Mary, was born in 1904 in Maryland,

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=Rolnick%20HC>

<sup>49</sup> <http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/92/4/338.3.extract>

<sup>50</sup> <http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/143/11/1035.1.short>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=Presman%20Rolnick>

Ida, the second in 1905 in Richmond, Virginia<sup>52</sup>, and their next, Anna, in 1907 in Chicago. At the time of the 1910 census they were living in Kansas City Missouri, with Samuel describing himself as a “Huckster – vegetables”, and thirteen year old Nathan already working as a telegraph messenger. Their last child, their Bernard, was born in 1914, and once again they were in Chicago. Sadly, by the time of the 1920 census, Samuel was already dead. As he drove through the streets of Chicago with his vegetable cart, his horse bolted. Samuel lost control, was thrown off his horse, and died of his injuries. Etta lived on to raise the five children, with the help of her step-son Nathan, listed as “Head of the Household” in the next, 1930, census. Nathan was then working as a shipping clerk in a mattress manufacturing company, his step-sister Mary a biller in an insurance office, Anna a stenographer in an insurance firm, while little Bernard was an errand boy for a dressmaker. Etta died in 1945. Hard-working Nathan, who never married, had been the major support of his step-family for many years.

How Etta’s little sister Leah (also known as Lena or Leora) found her husband is easier to understand. She married Samuel Gardner’s nephew, Meyer Gardner. Both Meyer and Samuel came from the usual large and long families, and uncle and nephew were just nine years apart in age. Both Samuel and Meyer were born Gart, Samuel’s father being Nakhum who, as the record shows, was Meyer’s grandfather:

| Lithuania Births   |                       |               |                       |                       |              |                     |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| <i>Searching for Surname gart (D-M code 593000) and GivenName meer (D-M code 690000)</i> |                       |               |                       |                       |              |                     |
| <i>Number of hits: 12 Run on Tuesday 11 October 2011 at 09:00:59</i>                     |                       |               |                       |                       |              |                     |
| Name   | Father, Grandfather   | Date of Birth | Town                  | Comments              | Place        | Microfilm / Item    |
|  | Mother, Grandfather   | DD/MM/YY      | Ujezd                 |                       | Recorded     |                     |
|  | Mother Maiden Surname | Hebrew Date   | Guberniya             |                       | Year         | Image               |
|  |                       |               |                       |                       | Record #     | Archive / Fond      |
| GART, Meer Aron / Arel   | Shlioma Girsh, Nakhum | 1/1/1884      | Cekiske Kaunas Kaunas | family is from Seduva | Cekiske 1884 | 2329262 / 2         |
|  | Dine, Movsha          | 15 Tevet      |                       |                       | M1           | LVIA/1226/1/2073/49 |

Presumably, Meyer and Lena met when Etta and Samuel were living in Chicago, around the time that little Anna was born. Romantically, Meyer and Lena married far from Chicago, in Bexar County, Texas, where Lena’s older brother Myer was living.

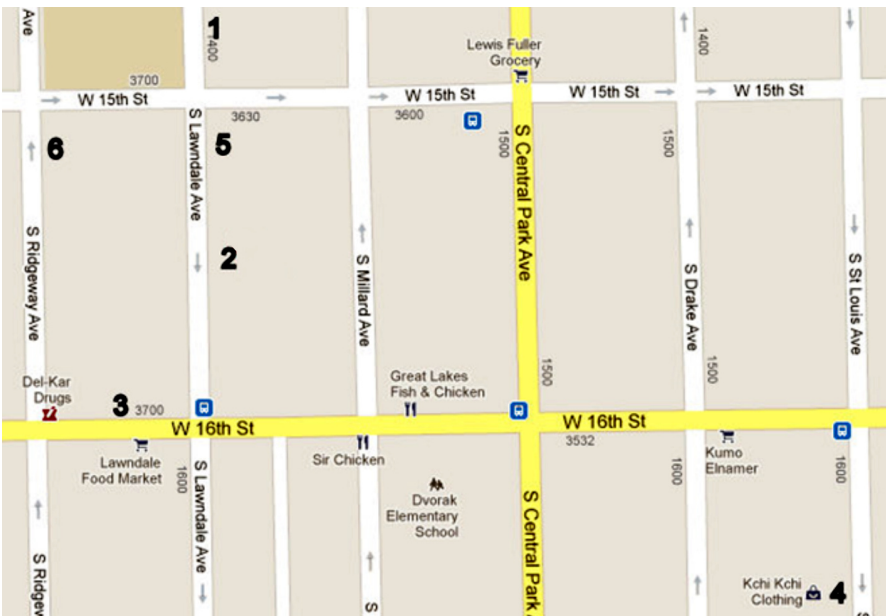
In the census of 1910, the newly-weds were back in Chicago, sharing a house in Maxwell Street, with Lena’s older brother Joseph and his wife, also a Lena and also newly-married, and with the two youngest,

<sup>52</sup> Etta’s brother, Joseph, came to them there when he arrived in 1905.

recently-arrived Rolnicks, William and Hyman. Joseph and Meyer were working in a tailor shop, Joseph as an operator, Meyer as a presser. The younger Rolnick boys were still at school.

It must have been a jolly household. The two couples were very newly wed. Both husbands were earning and, with no children as yet, they would have had money to spare for small luxuries and entertainments, although they still had to support the two younger brothers. Their Maxwell Street was a bustling market, before the Dan Ryan Expressway destroyed the whole area. All their neighbors were Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Russia, Hungary and Romania.

But with the newly-born children, the situation changed. A year into their marriage, Meyer and Lena were blessed with a daughter, Jeanette, and they moved around the corner to 642 W 13 St. By the time their Bernard was born, in 1915, they had moved again to 1420 S Lawndale Ave (Number 1 in the map below). Indeed, most of Jewish Chicago was moving out of the Maxwell Street area at that time, and to Lawndale. By 1920, William Rolnick was living with his little family at 1533 S Lawndale (2 on the map), Hyman had set up home one block away at 3734 W 16 St (3 on the map), while their eldest sister Hannah, now Fisher, with her seven children (including a Bernard) was four blocks away at 1648 St Louis Ave (4 on the map), all in the Lawndale district. (Michael's son, Joseph, with his wife Nettie were, in 1920, at 6 on the map).



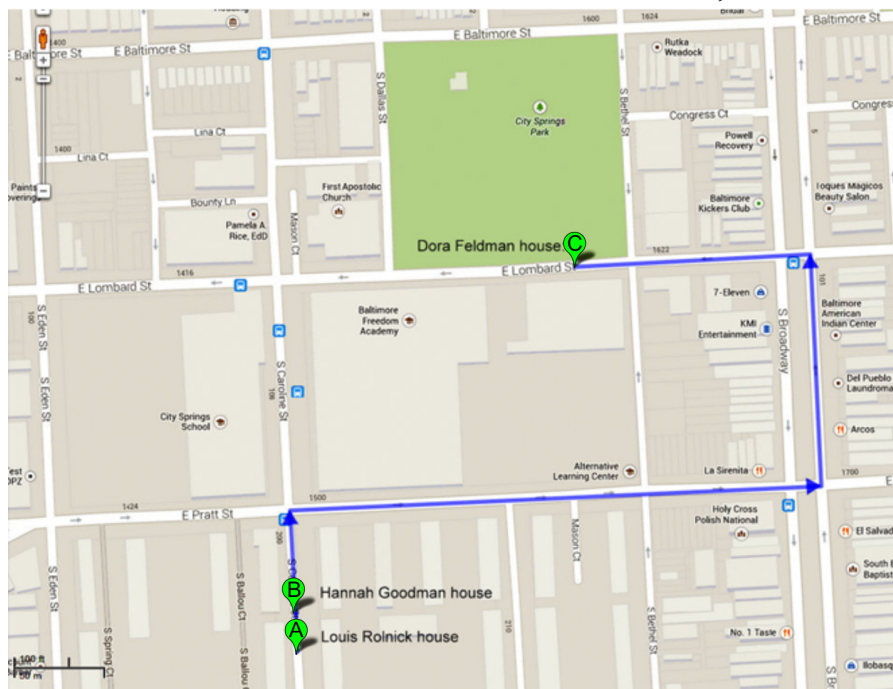
*Six Rolnicks in their “shtetl” in the Lawndale district, an easy walk to borrow a cup of sugar*



By 1920, Meyer was the proprietor of a crockery store, but had moved back closer to Maxwell Street. The next census in 1930 lists Meyer as having “no employment, sickness”, while their daughter Jeanette is a bookkeeper, Bernard is still at school, and they have a lodger, Lena’s brother William, a foreman in a tire shop. William had left his first wife, Rose. His WW2 draft record shows him now married to Sylvia Rolnick, again in the Lawndale area, and working in a scrap tires firm. In his WW1 draft record William had been working as a rag baler for the Chicago Sanitary Rag Company. Things were never easy for him. I will return to Meyer, Lena and William in the section on the Benton Harbor Rolnicks at the end of this chapter.

Hannah Rolnick whose 1880 Lithuanian birth certificate, as we saw some pages back, recorded her father’s name as Ber son of Yosel, probably arrived in the USA in 1892. Her brother Louis and sister Dora were both living in Baltimore at the time and perhaps enabled Hannah to meet her future husband, the tailor Ike Goodman. By 1899 she was married, living close by to her siblings, and had given birth in Baltimore to a daughter, Sue. Their son Leo was born in 1901, also in Baltimore, but in September of that year Ike died.

The bereft Hannah must have moved soon after to join the other



*Three Rolnicks, Louis, Hannah (Goodman) and Dora (Feldman) in easy walking distance of one another in Baltimore in 1900. Susie Goodman was born at (B) on 10 September 1899*



*Ike Goodman, Hannah Rolnik Goodman Fisher, Sue Goodman Fisher<sup>54</sup>*

members of her family in Chicago. There, in 1902, she married another tailor, Philip Fisher. Hannah and Philip had between them six children<sup>53</sup>, bringing up little Sue and Leo Goodman with the name Fisher “for the purpose of avoiding any distinction in the family between the affidant’s children by her first and second marriages” as Hannah wrote in an affidavit in 1942. Philip died 52 years old in 1927, leaving Hannah to bring up their eight children. It must have been a struggle. Already in the 1930 census the three unmarried daughters were working (two as stenographers, the third as a bookkeeper) while Jerome had joined them in the work force by the 1940 census, as a payroll administrator in a chicken processing plant. None went on to university<sup>55</sup>.

Joseph also seems to have had a hard time. In his 1917 WW1 draft notice, he is listed as a peddler, married to Lena Shapiro, at 1500 Ridgeway Ave, (6 in the map on page 110), but by 1920, with two young children, Rose and Dorothy, and Joseph still working as a peddler of second-hand clothing, they are all living with Joseph’s in-laws, the Shapiros. Lena died in 1938. In 1942<sup>56</sup> Joseph was still a peddler, “no employer”. Joseph married again and there is a lovely

<sup>53</sup> Lillian, Libbie, Jeanette, Ruth, Judith and Jerome Bernard (in the 1930 Census as Jerome Barry).

<sup>54</sup> I am indebted to a granddaughter of Sue Goodman Fisher for these delightful photographs, and the information about Ike Goodman and his two children. A grandson of Ike and Hannah writes: I grew up in Chicago and spent many Sundays with my Fisher cousins and Hannah Fisher’s children. I knew Joe and Nettie Rolnick. I was Bar Mitzvah at Agudas Achim in Chicago. I believe Joe was president at that time.

<sup>55</sup> Libbie became a loving aunt to Susan’s grand daughter. “Aunt Libbie is the one who spoke of the Rolnick clan to me and introduced me to some of my cousins....My great-aunt Libbie used to attend the ... synagogue you mentioned, in which you stated my great-grand uncle was President. I went with her to Anshe Sholom B’nai Israel a couple of times - she was very active there. I didn’t know about her uncle’s history there”.

<sup>56</sup> In Joseph’s 1942 draft notice, his next-of-kin is given as Rose Klimeberg (his spelling), his daughter Rose having married Sander Kleinberg in 1934. Dorothy married Emanuel Walkowitz.



*Gravestones of Hannah, Philip Fisher and two of their daughters, Jeanette (Weger) and Judith.*

picture of Joseph and Gertrude (his second wife) at a banquet of the Upyan Landsmanshaft<sup>57</sup>. At the time of his death in 1960, Joseph had become a “wholesale men’s clothing dealer”. (See page 121).

And Hyman? He had come to the USA as a “farm laborer”, but his job in 1917 was as a laundry worker for Goldberg Bros. Marrying Bessie Garfinkel in 1918, they had two children, a Bernard (of course) and Grace. But he died in 1925<sup>58</sup> at 32, a young man, as the picture on his gravestone shows:



*Hyman Rolnick 1893 -1925.... grave in the Waldheim Cemetery, Chicago.*

So none of that generation in Chicago managed to pull themselves up very far out of the hard world in which they had found themselves. A vegetable huckster, a tailor in a tailor shop, an unsuccessful crockery shop owner, a peddler of second-hand clothing, a rag baler and then a foreman in a tire shop: what a contrast with their successful brother and nephews north of the river! Their uptown relations did keep contact with

them, however. Thus, Max Rolnick sponsored his uncle-in-law Meyer

<sup>57</sup> See the section on the Benton Harbor Rolnicks at the end of this chapter.

<sup>58</sup> Bessie married again and the children lived with her new husband, Ben Saposhnek, still in the Lawndale area. After Ben died, Bernard went to live in Los Angeles with his mother and her family.

Gardner's naturalization papers. Interesting that it was Max, the butcher, and not Max's brother Joseph, the lawyer, who did so. By all accounts, Joseph was a fine person who would certainly have signed for Max had he been approached, but maybe Meyer was inhibited from approaching someone in the professions.

One of Michael's siblings has left very little trace other than two notices, important for our history. This is Jake Rolnick. We saw that his death certificate showed that he was from Kovno, son of "David Dernard", alerting us to his descent from Dov Ber. We saw also his obituary in the Chicago Tribune that linked together (nearly) all of his siblings. But that is all that I could find about him or about his wife, Mary, except that before his death in 1931 he was a "Dry-Goods Merchant", living one block north of Maxwell Street.

And what of the next generation, those of Ber Rolnik's grandchildren who were born in the USA? How did they fare in their fast-developing society? I have tried to find out the fortunes of at least those who were named for their grandfather, the Bernards.

One of them let us down by his name change. Hannah's son, born Bernard Fisher, was already by his first birthday being known as Jerome Fisher, and later still, as J. Barry Fisher. Barry trained as a lawyer and became a judge in the Illinois Court of Claims<sup>59</sup>. For Lena's Bernard, I have less information, just his death notice, in Orange County California, in 1946 at age 31. Etta's Bernard left us a more complete story. He enlisted in April 1942, as married, with four years of high school, a "retail manager." He ended his army career as a Staff-Sergeant. A listing of houses for sale in Park Ridge Illinois in 1995 lists a house owned by the Bernard D Gardner Trust, with Bernard himself as a Trustee, another trustee being Bernard D. Jr. Our Bernard Sr. died in 2002, and was buried in Shalom Memorial Park, Arlington Heights, IL. Well, we have some information, anyway.

With Bernard Rolnick, there is not much more to tell. He married Shirley Grinker in October 1941 and the couple moved to Los Angeles (where his mother, step-father and step-brother Albert also moved). Bernard and Shirley had two daughters. Bernard was vice-president of the Universal Money Order Company in California which "encountered financial difficulties" in September 1977<sup>60</sup>. Bernard and Shirley lived 2 miles away from UMO, at 8800 Guthrie Ave, Los Angeles. Bernard died in 1986.

At least, there is nothing to indicate that Ber's Bernard grandchildren were living on the streets.

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<sup>59</sup> Chicago Tribune p. 7, Jan 9, 1991

<sup>60</sup> [http://ny.findacase.com/research/wfrmDocViewer.aspx/xq/fac.19770907\\_0000294.SNY.htm/qx](http://ny.findacase.com/research/wfrmDocViewer.aspx/xq/fac.19770907_0000294.SNY.htm/qx)

## The Rolnicks of Benton Harbor, Michigan

We saw that in the US Census for 1930, Meyer Gardner is listed with his wife Lena and their children, Bernard and Jeanette, and brother-in-law William Rolnick. Lena was, of course, Lena Rolnick, born in Upyna and youngest daughter of Dov Ber Rolnik. Meyer is listed in the census as: born "Russia, 1885", occupation "none", employed by "sickness", with the word "sickness" struck out. Not surprising that he was not employed since this was 1930 with the Great Depression all over the country.

But, note well, in the census of that year is a Meyer Gardner, born in Russia in 1885, immigrated in 1904, and now living on a fruit farm in Hagar, Berrien County, Michigan. I know of no other Meyer Gardner of that age in the USA. Matters are made clearer by the 1940 Census record. Here Meyer (listed as Myer) is living in Hagar, Berrien County, on a farm together with Lena, and they had both been living there, it was recorded, in 1935. Now this is exciting: a Rolnick as a farmer's wife. We will remember that Rolnik means farmer, that Lena's brother Chaim (Hyman) gave his occupation as "farm laborer" when he arrived in the USA and that their uncle, Wolf Rollnick arrived in South Africa as "agriculturist". But this is not all. Lena's nephew, Harry Rolnick, was listed on his WW2 draft notice as "occupation: Farm hand, general farming". That one had always surprised me. A farm hand, living in Chicago? In the 1940 census, our Harry was listed, in Chicago, living with his parents and working as a packer in a matzo factory.

Clearing up this mystery led to a whole new story. In 2012 I had found a Harry Rolnick listed in the US Yellow Pages as living in Benton Harbor, Michigan (also Berrien County, please note). If this was our Harry, he would be, at 95, the last of the grandchildren of Dov Ber Rolnik still living. I tried numerous times to call him but never got a reply. Was he indeed still alive? Had he moved perhaps to some retirement home? Now this Harry Rolnick, son of William (the youngest of Dov Ber's children to have reached America) had a brother, Solomon, and Solomon had a son with whom I have been much in contact. This son had donated a cheek swab with DNA that confirmed that he was closely related to the descendants of Wolf Rollnick and his brother, James (Rolnik) Lewenson.

One day (in June 2013) I received the following email from Solomon's son:

"HI Wilf,

I found out that my uncle Harry is still alive and doing well at age 95!!!

I took a trip to Pittsburgh to visit the new grandchild<sup>61</sup> and on the way back we planned to stop in St. Joseph MI to attend a friend's wedding.

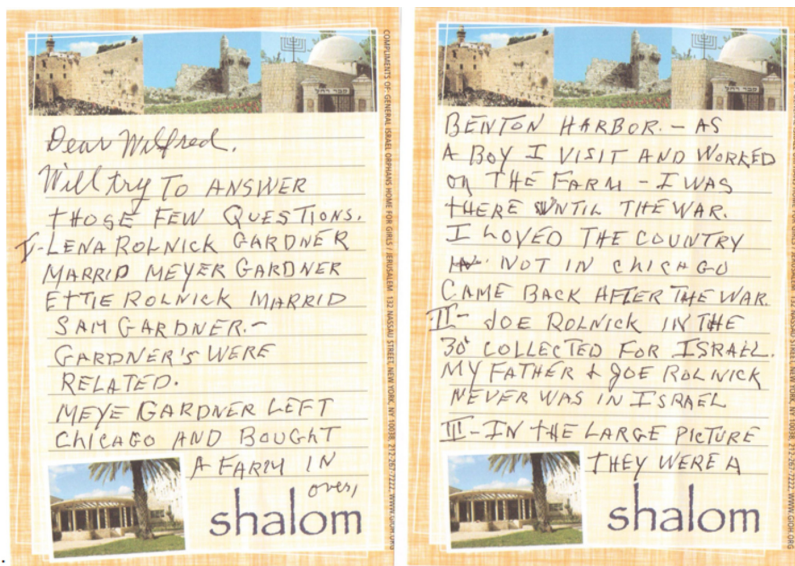
While I was there I figured I would look my uncle up and see how far his last known address was from where we were staying. It was within 2 miles. So yesterday prior to the wedding I decided to go over to the address with my traveling friend Marilyn. He was not there so I talked with the leasing agent who (after some convincing) told me he drives a black Monte Carlo. We looked in the parking lot and did not see the car there. I said to Marilyn that he is probably in Shul as he was always religious. She suggested I look up Shuls nearby which I did. I found the closest one, drove there and looked in the parking lot. Sure enough the Monte Carlo was there. We went in and sat through the services during which he was on the bima and holding the Torah. After the services I introduced myself to him and, boy, was he surprised!

We met today and talked. I took some pictures..... I have attached a better picture of my dad, grandpa, and uncle. Also a picture of my uncle and one of both of us. [See page 118].

Wow at 95 up on the bima holding the Torah!

"Enjoy,"

I wrote to Harry, with lots of questions, at the Yellow Pages address and received this answer:

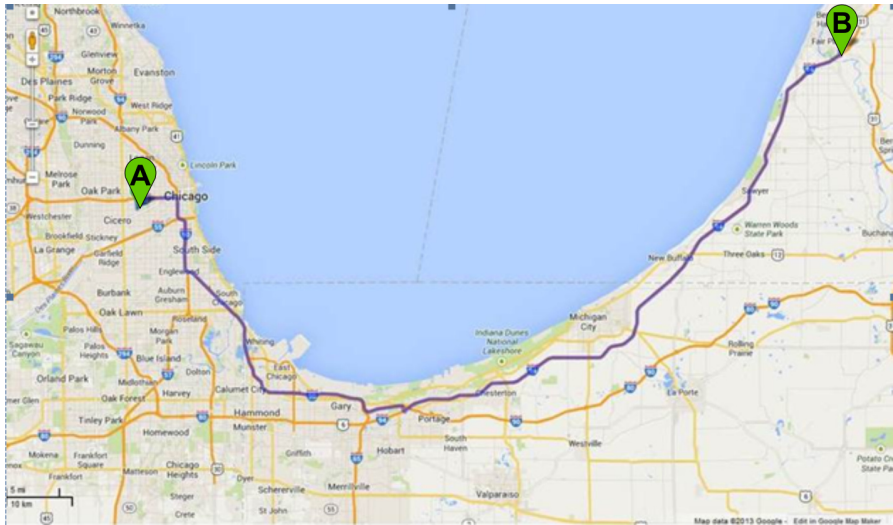


<sup>61</sup> The grandchild being that of his travelling companion, Marilyn.

The letter reports that Harry had visited his aunt and uncle on their farm, liked the atmosphere and the way of life, and worked on the farm. Among other crops, they grew strawberries<sup>62</sup>.

But, soon after that 1940 US Census, tragedy followed tragedy. Fred Gardner, Meyer’s brother, came to visit and wanted to go on a hunting trip with his brother. Just after leaving the house, with Meyer walking ahead, Fred tripped over a piece of bark and fell. The gun he was holding went off, hitting Meyer in the left shoulder and side. Meyer died the next day.<sup>63</sup> Fred “did not know the gun was loaded...it had just been returned to him by a friend who had borrowed it”. Meyer was buried in the Waldheim Jewish Cemetery in Chicago.

Before then Meyer and Lena’s children, Bernard and Jeanette, had joined them and were living in nearby Benton Harbor, ten miles from the farm. Jeanette opened Jeanette’s Knit Store in the town.<sup>64</sup> Both she and her brother Bernard married. Bernard was building a house in the town when he joined the Marines, on the USA’s entering WW2. Bernard fought for three years in the Philippines but, after returning to California and on his way to obtain his discharge, he was killed in a motor car accident. The now twice-devastated family went again to



*100 miles around the lake from William Rolnick’s house (A) to Meyer and Lena’s farm in Benton Harbor (B).*

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.michigan.org/city/benton-harbor/>. In the 1930’s, the Benton Harbor Fruit Market was the largest cash-to-grower non-citrus fruit market in the world. <http://www.michigan.org/city/benton-harbor/> The News-Palladium (Benton Harbor) 6 June 1941.

<sup>63</sup> The News Palladium, Benton Harbor, MI: 24 October 1942.

<sup>64</sup> “Imported and domestic yarn will be sold. The public is invited to meet Miss Gardner who will give free instruction on knitting at classes from 10 am to 5 pm daily.” The News Palladium, Benton Harbor, MI: Sept 20 1940.



*Solomon, William and Harry Rolnick, 1950s*



*Solomon's son and Harry, June 2013*



*Meyer and Lena's farm, above the letter A, as the area looks today.*

Chicago, this time to Bernard's burial, again in the Waldheim Cemetery where so many Rolnicks and their descendants are buried.

The farm was sold. Lena joined her daughter, Jeanette (now married as Mrs Manny Goldstein), in Benton Harbor, and Harry also moved into town. Jeanette became a leading light in Jewish community



activities of Benton Harbor. The Benton Harbor region's newspaper "The News - Palladium" lists over 200 such occasions. Here are two of them in which Jeanette was the Chairperson<sup>65</sup>:



Examining Mrs. Seymour Flamm's hat at the parade of hats at the Hadassah meeting, Thursday evening at the community center, are Mrs. Manny Goldstein, national fund project chairman, seated left, and standing, left to right, Mrs. Marvin Radner, medical center; Mrs. Ray Scher, Hadassah Medical organization, and Mrs. Log Schwartz, Youth Aliyah. Each committee chairman designed and wore a hat which represented the activities of her project.



Chairman Mrs. Manny Goldstein, left, and her assistant, Mrs. Edwin Mendel, look over one of the flyers they are distributing this week to schools of the twin cities area to advertise the Children's Film Library of outstanding children's movies. The Temple Beth-El Sisterhood is bringing to the State theater here. The movies will be shown on 10 consecutive Saturday mornings beginning Nov. 21. Persons with questions are to contact either of the above women. (News-Palladium photo.)

Her husband Manny was a dealer in scrap, the Michigan Scrap Company.

Harry Rolnick, known from this time as Herschel, worked with Manny, his cousin-in-law, for many years. We had learned from his nephew's email to me, quoted above, that on that Sabbath in June 2013, Herschel was holding the Torah, probably acting as the ba'al koreh, the one who reads from the Torah. But he had been doing this and been very active in his synagogue, B'nai B'rith, for more than sixty years. For instance, he had led the service in Rabbi Oliphant's absence already in 1958. I have other early newspaper references where Herschel is listed as due to read the maftir<sup>66</sup> the coming Shabbat, and he was a guardian of the synagogue, in 1965<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> The News-Palladium, Benton Harbor, MI: Sept 24 1954, Nov 24 1959.

<sup>66</sup> The News-Palladium Nov 25 1959. The reading that closes the morning's Torah reading. The person called to read the maftir also reads the section from the prophets for that week.

<sup>67</sup> The News-Palladium, Benton Harbor, MI: Feb 14 1958, Nov 25 1959, June 2 1965

And from an email message to me from a member of his synagogue:

*“Date: Sun, Aug 4, 2013 at 10:34 AM*

*I would encourage his cousin to try calling him, if he gets him, TALK LOUD, as he is so hard of hearing. He has so little family it would be good to be in contact with someone. Let Wilfo know that his cousin is the jewel of our Temple, reads Torah every week and is the most respected man in the community.*

*Al”*

Well, there you have it!

And on the next page, some fine old photographs that Herschel sent me.

(Herschel and his aunt Lena were not the only Rolnicks with a connection to Benton Harbor. Herschel’s cousin, Harry Rolnick, the doctor and Professor at Chicago Medical School, owned property in Benton Harbor, together with his wife Elsie. In 1952, they had negotiated with the Benton Harbor City Council about providing a footpath through their holding to allow access to the shopping center that was being built at the time<sup>68</sup>. The property was still in the hands of these Rolnicks when Elsie’s Estate was wound up in 1966<sup>69</sup>.)

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<sup>68</sup> The Herald Press, St. Joseph, MI; May 4<sup>th</sup> 1952.

<sup>69</sup> The News Palladium, Benton Harbor, MI May 27, 1966



*William*



*Harry*



*William and his wife Sylvia (second and first from the left) and Joe Rolnick (third from the left) with his wife Gertrude standing behind him. The occasion was a banquet of the Upyna Landsmanshaft<sup>70</sup> in Chicago.*

<sup>70</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landsmanshaft>

## Part two: Upyna to Oklahoma

### Oklahoma! Myer Rolnick and his Solnicki/Slaner in-laws

Myer Rolnick, who had emigrated in 1882 at 18 years of age from the Kurland, now Latvia, had got his citizenship in Tennessee<sup>71</sup>. He was a travelling salesman who started life as a young peddler and taught himself English by studying a Hebrew-English translation of the Torah. First Myer walked with a pack on his back, then he got a horse (or maybe donkey), and then a wagon. He moved west and entered the Oklahoma Territory when it was Indian Territory<sup>72</sup>, before white settlers were permitted. Thus he was a true "Sooner", since he crossed the line "sooner than he oughter." In the 1900 Census he is listed as living in Mangum, Greer County, in the south-western tip of the Territory of Oklahoma (A on the map on the next page) with his occupation as "Salesman of dry goods". The census does not list a street address. Presumably there were none as yet. He is simply in Dwelling # 26, single, aged 35. His neighbours are mostly farmers, but there are a few carpenters, the county attorney, a physician, a drummer, several other dry goods salesmen and a music teacher. James Mason in Dwelling # 34 was a saloon keeper. They are from Texas, Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky and Tennessee, with the younger children being born already in Oklahoma or in Indian Territory. The only other non-native born amongst the 300 names on the nearby Census sheets were Paul Stammer, a carpenter from Germany and Charles Schaffenberg, a farmer, also from Germany. Myer's granddaughter writes that Myer was "highly loved and respected by everyone and made lasting friends wherever he went", but it must

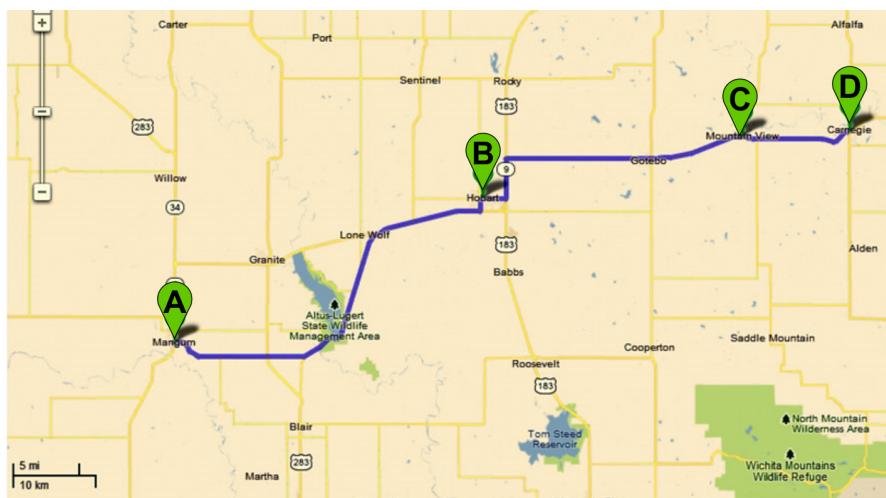
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<sup>71</sup> Much of the following section is based on information from Myer's granddaughter, Marcia Burnam, to whom I am much indebted. Email letter 9 January 2012.

<sup>72</sup> Native Americans (from the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, and Cherokee tribes) had, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, been driven into the territory of Oklahoma, from their ancestral homes east of the Mississippi, by settlers whose roots were in Europe. During 1887 and 1888 the Sante Fe Railroad constructed a line that ran from Arkansas City, Kansas, directly through the heart of the Oklahoma country to Gainesville, Texas, opening up the territory of Oklahoma to non-Indian settlers. Already in the preceding ten years, there had been many attempts by non-Indian groups and individuals to settle in the territory but these "boomers" (as opposed to "sooners" who entered just before they were officially allowed to) had been rebuffed by the US Army and the settlers sent back across the borders. But the pressure to take over these rich lands was proving too strong for the US Government. The previous centuries of European settlement in the Eastern USA had built up a large population, often with big healthy families, eager to find land for their newer generations. In a series of "land runs" starting from 1889, the Government opened up section by section of the Oklahoma Territory for settlement by non-Indians, each settler receiving the customary 160 acre block.

have been a lonely life for him, a single man and a foreigner in this wide Territory<sup>73</sup>. But things were soon to take a turn for the better. A suitable bride had arrived in a nearby town!

Phillip<sup>74</sup> Slaner, born Solnicki in Vishay, Lithuania, had come to Texas in 1883, aged 17. By 1894, he had lived in the state for many years, and was established as the proprietor of a clothing store in Fort Worth, Texas (at 1017 Main St.). The news of great opportunities with the opening of the Oklahoma lands must have stirred him<sup>75</sup>. Phillip travelled some 200 miles north and, on August 6th, 1901 – a day after the land lottery had ended, he opened his store<sup>76</sup> in Hobart in Kiowa County, Oklahoma (B on the map below).



*A: Mangum (Myer's original store) B: Hobart (Phillip and Jacob) C: Mountain View (Louis) D: Carnegie (Myer's store after 1911)*

Luckily for Myer, Hobart at (B) was only 30 miles away from Mangum (at (A)) where, as we saw, Myer had been living. Phillip's sister Mollie had arrived in the USA a few years before and had travelled with Phillip to Hobart. Myer and Mollie's granddaughter writes: "Mollie was quite beautiful and well educated in Torah, Talmud and the Commentaries, as there was a school on the family property

<sup>73</sup> Myer's store had indeed been doing well. At one point during this period, he lent his brother Louis Rolnick, in Richmond, funds to help him stock a clothing store. Louis later went bankrupt, still owing \$350 to Myer.

*Richmond Dispatch* 10 November 1892.

<sup>74</sup> On some official documents he is Phillip with two "el"s, on others Philip.

<sup>75</sup> Between July 29<sup>th</sup> and August 5<sup>th</sup> of 1901, the Wichita-Caddo, Comanche, Kiowa and Apache tribal lands were divided up in a land lottery. The 6,500 winners (chosen from 170,000 applicants) were given title to their 160 acre plots, and the Kiowa, Caddo, and Comanche Counties were added to Oklahoma Territory.

<sup>76</sup> <http://genealogytrails.com/oka/kiowa/pioneers.html>

in Grodno for traveling students. She, of course, could not go into [the school] but she stayed by the window and learned as best she could<sup>77</sup>. Myer was much taken by her. He was much older and by then successful. He spoiled her even more than she already was. They were married in 1905 in Dallas at the home of Conrad Hilton (who later began the hotel dynasty), his good friend.”



*Myer Rolnick*



*Mollie Slaner (engagement photo)*

Actually, it was probably at the home of Conrad’s father Augustus Halvorson Hilton, who could have been Mollie and Philip Slaner’s “good friend”. Conrad was 18 at the time of the marriage and still at college, and only 4 when Philip had left Texas for Oklahoma. Augustus, an immigrant from Norway, ran a trading store in Sorocco, New Mexico along the Rio Grande River, and would have come in contact with Philip whose store was not too far away (by Texas standards) in Fort Worth. Later Augustus and his wife Mary converted their store into a boarding house, giving their son Conrad his first experience in catering to lodgers<sup>78</sup>. A year after their marriage, Mollie and Myer’s daughter Grace<sup>79</sup> was born, in Hobart.

<sup>77</sup> A little like Yentl in the movie of that name <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086619/>

<sup>78</sup> It was only in 1919, after Conrad’s war service, that he opened his first hotel, in Cisco, Texas. [http://www.doubletreefranchise.com/Scripts/HHC.asp?http://www.doubletreefranchise.com/SF/Overview/HHC\\_History.asp?HCode=HHC](http://www.doubletreefranchise.com/Scripts/HHC.asp?http://www.doubletreefranchise.com/SF/Overview/HHC_History.asp?HCode=HHC)

<sup>79</sup> In Yiddish, this would be Gita / Gitl / Guta or in Hebrew, Tova

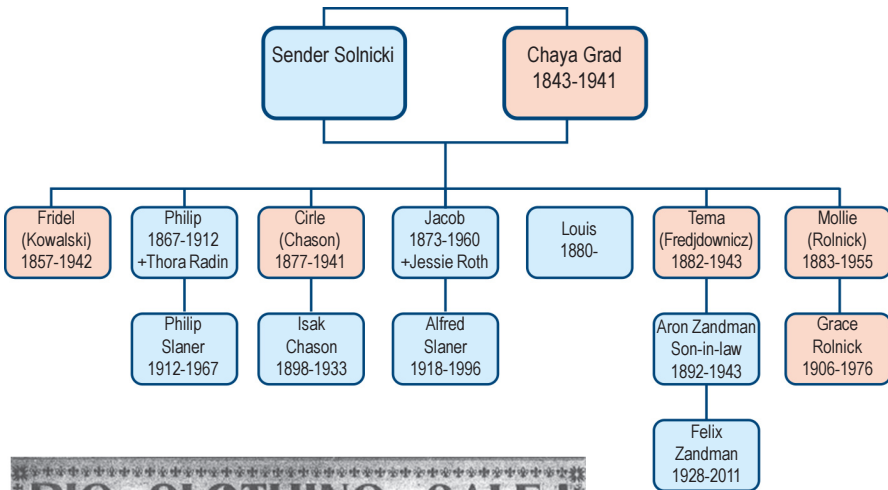
<http://data.jewishgen.org/wconnect/wc.dll?jg-jgsearch-model1-GNDB>. Mollie had a grandmother Gittel.



*Mollie and Myer, on their honeymoon, went riding out West*

Meanwhile, Phillip’s brothers, Louis and Jacob (who also took on the name Slaner, from their Solnicki) had arrived in the USA, Louis in 1900, Jacob in 1905. Louis soon set himself up working with Phillip and William Flaxman in a Dixie store<sup>80</sup> in Mountain View ((C) on the map earlier). Mollie, Phillip, Louis and Jacob were four of the seven children of Sender and Chaya Solnicki.

### The seven children of Sender Solnicki (Slaner) and Chaya Grad and some of their grandchildren



*William Flaxman’s Dixie Store, Mountain View*

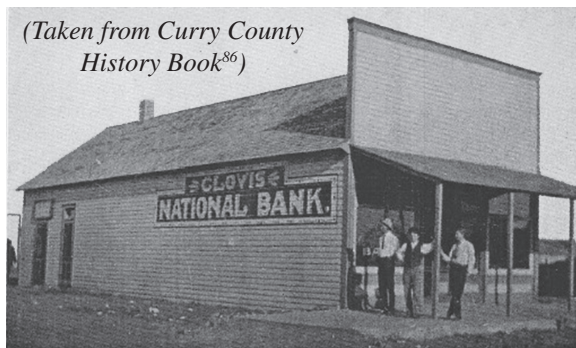
<sup>80</sup> The word “Dixie” referred originally to privately issued currency from banks in Louisiana. These banks issued ten-dollar notes, labeled “Dix”, French for “ten”, on the reverse side. The notes were known as “Dixies” by English-speaking southerners, and the area around New Orleans and the French-speaking parts of Louisiana came to be known as “Dixieland”. Eventually, usage of the term broadened to refer to most of the Southern States. 25% of businesses in parts of the Southern states had Dixie in their name.



Jacob “was on the road, on foot, peddling neckties and shoe laces and learning the English language from his customers. The money he received for his wares went to buy more neckties and shoelaces—until there was enough capital to go into ‘big business’...buying a horse and wagon... [He and Philip] traveled in the new country, peddling their goods from house to house. Then they established the Dixie store.”<sup>81</sup>. Jacob stayed with Phillip in the store in Hobart and would remain with the store for another fifty years.

Myer himself had done well financially but was looking around for further business opportunities. The Santa Fe Railroad was building a transcontinental line, planned to go through the newly developing ranch and farm area of Eastern New Mexico. The railway engineers, ordered in 1906 to choose a town site, settled on a spot just northwest of an existing rail switch, known as Riley Switch, naming the town Clovis<sup>82</sup>. Myer had kept up his contacts in New Mexico and came to feel that what was needed in a new town in the West was a bank. Perhaps Myer was inspired by the example of Isaias Hellman in Los Angeles who had begun as a store-owner in the founding years of that city. Starting by holding his customers’ gold nuggets in a safe in his store, Hellman had developed a huge banking empire which, at the time Myer was considering becoming a banker, had merged into what became today’s Wells Fargo<sup>83</sup>.

Myer, with four other founders<sup>84</sup>, met in Melrose, New Mexico on May 29 1907 to organize the Clovis National Bank with a capital of \$25,000 (about \$1,000,000 in today’s money<sup>85</sup>). By December of that year, the bank already had resources of over \$65,000 of which \$32,000 were deposits by individuals, and they had \$26,000 out on loan.



<sup>81</sup> *The Kiowa County Democrat* 12 June 1960.

<sup>82</sup> The name was given by the station master’s daughter, who at the time was studying about Clovis, first Catholic king of the Franks.

<sup>83</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaias\\_W.\\_Hellman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaias_W._Hellman). The story is well told in Frances Dinkelspiel’s *Towers of Gold*. St Martin’s Press 2008.

<sup>84</sup> L.C.West (President), H.W.Austin, W.W.Martin, and I.W.Gray (cashier). From: Curry County History Book <http://donmcCalavy.tripod.com/index.html>

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php>

<sup>86</sup> <http://curry.nmgenweb.us/Booksale.htm>

Myer and his family moved down to Clovis where, in August of 1908, they hosted Mollie's 65 year old widowed mother Chaya Solnicki<sup>87</sup> and Mollie's brother Jacob (Slaner). Four of Chaya's children were now living in America and the plan was for her to move permanently to the USA. But, delighted as she was to see her new grandchild Grace, she found the new country to be too strange, without the Jewish atmosphere and the kosher food that she was used to, and she returned to Vishay. In the "old country" she had three married daughters, Tema Zandman and Fridel Kowalski, both living not too far away in Grodno (later to be in Belarus), and Cirle Chason in Vishay. As we will see later in this chapter, all three of Chaya's daughters perished in the Holocaust.

Chaya herself, a daughter of the Grad family, had a distinguished heritage being a descendant of the Vilna Gaon<sup>88</sup>, whose influence permeated most religious thought in Lithuania. (We grew up in South Africa - being mostly descended from Lithuanian Jews - "misnogdim", opposers of the Hasidic tradition of Judaism.)

In the 1910 Census, Phillip, Jacob, and their nephew Irwin (formerly Isaak) Chason, are listed as living in Hobart. Philip is a merchant in a department store, Jacob a salesman also in a department store while 13 year old Irwin's occupation, like that of the other young folk, is "none".



*Authentic portrait of the Vilna Gaon  
from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
Vilna\\_Gaon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilna_Gaon)*

<sup>87</sup> Their brother Phillip had travelled to their home town of Vishay in Lithuania to fetch Chaya, who came to the USA together with three 11 year old boys, one of them a grandson. The grandson, Isak, son of Chaya's daughter Cirle and her husband Benyamin Chason stayed on in Hobart to work with his uncles.

<sup>88</sup> I quote from the Wikipedia article, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilna\\_Gaon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilna_Gaon), an excellent introduction to the Gaon and to his deep influence on the Lithuanian Jewish culture: "The Vilna Gaon (born in Vilnius April 23, 1720 – died in Vilnius October 9, 1797) was a Talmudist, halachist, [Halacha: The collective body of Jewish religious law <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakhah>], kabbalist [Kabbalah: a set of esoteric teachings within the Jewish religious tradition. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah>], and the foremost leader of non-Hasidic Jewry [Hasidism: a branch of Orthodox Judaism that promotes spirituality and joy through the popularisation and internalisation of Jewish mysticism.]

All three are single, lodgers in the house of Francis Miller, the local druggist. Things were soon to change.

The Slaner brothers and their business partners were frequent visitors to New York. A local newspaper, the Mountain View Progress, reported<sup>89</sup> that “Mr. P. Slaner of the Dixie is now in the East... [and] will lay in a supply of spring and summer millinery goods [for the] different departments of their well appointed store.”

While in New York, Phillip met Thora Radin, who had come to America in 1892 from Sweden, aged six years, with her widowed mother and a large family. (One brother, Matthias Radin, became a powerful figure in the motion picture industry, running a chain of cinemas in the New York area<sup>90</sup>). Phillip and Thora married and returned to Hobart. Sadly, Phillip died in February 1912, while Thora was pregnant with their child. Her son, named Philip Slaner, was born in November 1912, in New York City, to where Thora had retreated after her husband Phillip’s death. Thora was living there at the time of the 1920 Census with her mother, her younger sister Esther and the seven-year old Philip, supporting herself as an insurance agent. Capable, she was by 1922 running her own business, Thora M Slater Productions on 7th Ave, New York. A few years later she remarried, and as Thora Finkelstein, died in her 100th year, a woman who had, in the words of an obituary for her son Philip, given “herself unstintingly to the cause of Hadassah<sup>91</sup>”. Her son Philip became a well-loved teacher of music at New York’s High School of Music Art, “a dedicated teacher, a lover of the humanities, and loyal to all organizations that championed a better world”<sup>92</sup>. The elder Phillip had been honored as a Pioneer of Kiowa County<sup>93</sup>.

Meanwhile, things had not been easy for the Rolnicks down in Clovis. Standard Oil of Jersey had aggressively expanded its oil-refining business until it came into conflict with anti-monopoly legislation. In 1911, the Supreme Court of the United States demanded that Standard Oil had to be broken up into smaller firms that might

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<sup>89</sup> [www.fultonhistory.com/.../Kiowa%20Co..](http://www.fultonhistory.com/.../Kiowa%20Co..)

<sup>90</sup> Motion Picture Studio Directory and Trade Annual, 1921

<sup>91</sup> New York Times 6 January 1967

<sup>92</sup> <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F00A11F6395E137A93C1A9178DD85F438685F9&scp=2&sq=%22Philip+Slaner%22&st=p>

<sup>93</sup> <http://genealogytrails.com/oka/kiowa/pioneers.html>

Phillip’s brother, Jake, is also on the list, with some forty others.

compete with one another<sup>94</sup>, and Myer's National Bank of Clovis failed in the related financial panic. "It took Myer years to pay back all his depositors, but he did", wrote his granddaughter<sup>95</sup>. With his good reputation, he had no trouble getting advances from his old suppliers and he went back into business in Oklahoma, opening up a dry goods store in Carnegie, Oklahoma ((D) on the map on an earlier page), 30 miles East of Hobart. Mollie's cousin on her mother's side, Abraham Grad, had arrived in September of 1911, his fare paid by his uncle Phillip<sup>96</sup>. Abraham went to work in Myer's store in Carnegie and stayed there for many years. Mollie's nephew Irwin Chason also went to work in Myer's store<sup>97</sup>. So Myer was employing a nephew from each side of Mollie's family, one a Grad and the other a young man from her Solnicki side. Abraham's younger brother, Frank Grad, and Frank's wife Rose arrived in Hobart in 1922 with their son Charles. Frank started his life in Oklahoma, too, working in Myer's store. Indeed, Myer was surrounded, happily one is sure, by Solnickis and Grads. His own Rolnick family was far away in Chicago and Baltimore, but we saw earlier the historic photograph of a meeting, probably in Chicago 1915, of seven of the children of Berl Rolnik.

Marcia Garbus Burnam writes: "(Myer) was always active in politics and became the first Republican State Committeeman from Oklahoma (i.e. head of the state party). My mother [Grace Rolnick]'s favorite story was that he was invited to join the Klu Klux Klan, the most virulent anti-Negro, anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish group in our history. .... He told them that it was [the] greatest honor he could imagine and that he loved each member like a brother but that he didn't think it was a good idea considering everything. .... One of his many charities was to give the widows who lived on the little farms of the region cloth, needles and thread. They could do whatever they wished [with] it...make clothing for their families etc. If they made quilts, he

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<sup>94</sup>Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey v. United States, 221 U.S. 1 (1911), was a case in which the Supreme Court ... found Standard Oil guilty of monopolizing the petroleum industry through a series of abusive and anticompetitive actions. The court's remedy was to divide Standard Oil into several geographically separate and eventually competing firms. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panic\\_of\\_1910%E2%80%931911](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panic_of_1910%E2%80%931911)

<sup>95</sup> Marcia Burnam: . Email of January 9 2012 to wds.

<sup>96</sup>Two more examples of what in Hebrew one calls "Chaver mayvi chaver", a friend brings a friend or, as the sociologists term, it "filial migration". We will see this for the Chicago Rolnicks, where David paid the boat fares, first for his brother Abraham and then for Schmuel, and Michael had paid for his sisters, Etta and Lena.

<sup>97</sup> WW1 draft cards (1917) for Irwin Chason and Abraham Grad (in Ancestry.com). Ruth Grad Leebaron writes that, later, Irwin: "managed a store for Levine and Miller of Chickasha. The store was in Duncan, Oklahoma. I was a little girl when I knew him. He was always very jolly and I always looked forward to seeing him. He died very young." Email : 6 February 2012.

would buy them for cash as they had no other way of ever having any cash at that time. We had quite a collection of quilts. My children have some.”

By 1920, with their daughter Grace at school, the family moved to the big town, Oklahoma City. Interestingly, Myer is recorded twice in the Census of that year. On the 16th January, a Friday, he is in Carnegie, a lodger with a private family, the Dauberts. On the “17-19” January, over the weekend, he is 100 miles away in Oklahoma City with Mollie and Grace, at 427 East 14 St. It seems that he spent part of the week helping Abraham Grad to run the store, but was back in Oklahoma City for the weekends. Soon after, Grace was sent to school at Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri. Some pictures of her follow below, with some of her Stephens College co-students.

*Grace Rolnick at  
Stephens College  
1921 -2:*

MOORE, GRACE, Columbia, Mo.  
“One on whom you can depend.”

OTTO, ESTHER, Riley, Kansas.  
Y. W. C. A., Social Democracy Club, Dramatic  
Club, Kansas Club, Hi Beta Steppo.  
“A joy to her teachers.”

PARKER, SALLIE, Warrensburg, Mo.  
Y. W. C. A., North West Missouri Club, Hi  
Beta Steppo.  
“May her looks her fortune be; her smiles  
lead men to heaven.”

ROLNICK, GRACE, 427 East Fourteenth St.,  
Oklahoma City, Okla.  
Vice-President of Academ Class, Y. W. C. A.,  
Social Democracy Club, Dramatic Club,  
Oklahoma Club, Hi Beta Steppo.  
“She made quite a hit as Mrs. Wilson on  
inaugural day.”

SHUCK, THELA, Eminence, Mo.  
Secretary and Treasurer of Academ Class.  
“She doesn't intend to finish College for—  
Bob.”

WALTERS, MARY MARGARET, 1206 Walnut,  
Columbia, Mo.



*Vice-President of the  
Academs and a member of  
the Social Democracy Club  
and the Dramatic Club.*

**ACADEMS**



President—CATHERINE DULAND  
Vice-President—GRACE ROLNICK  
Secretary and Treasurer—THELA SHUCK

Marcia writes that Grace “was voted most beautiful college girl in the USA”<sup>98</sup>. The Columbia Evening Missourian reports a 1920 visit by Myer and Mollie to Grace in Columbia and, in 1921, a visit by Grace to “meet her parents, Mr. and Mrs. M. Rolnick, of Oklahoma City, Okla., who are going to New York City. Miss Rolnik will return to Columbia Monday.” But a year or two later, Myer died of a heart attack in Chicago. “The story is that he was running for a trolley..... My mother [that is, Grace..wds] said she never could have survived the shock of his funeral without the two men who came from Oklahoma to represent the Klan. They took care of this lost 16 year old”.

<sup>98</sup> But unfortunately, I have not been able to document this...wds

Grace went on to study at Mills College in Oakland CA <sup>99</sup>

It was there, in California, that she met her future husband, Morton Garbus, then a law student.



*Grace Rolnick (center) in a 1922 College production of "Twelfth Night"*



*Morton Garbus some years later*

The couple married in November 1925<sup>100</sup>, making their home in California, where their daughter Marcia was born in 1928. Mollie had made a trip back to Europe in 1926, presumably to visit her family, and afterwards returned to Carnegie, but she soon moved to be with Grace and Morton, staying in California until her death in 1955. Morton became a successful lawyer, with clients among the movie stars. The columnist, Louella Parsons, writes: "Cary Grant's lawyer, Morton Garbus, sailed on the Queen Elizabeth Wednesday with a contract in his pocket tying Cary to RKO for five pictures. ... Garbus delayed his departure for Europe for a week to iron out the details with Howard Hughes personally, and get the contract ready for Cary's signature."<sup>101</sup> That trip of Morton's to Europe was to have consequences for another member of the Solnicki family, as we shall

<sup>99</sup> <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/mills-college-1238> The French composer Darius Milhaud was offered a post as Professor of Music at Mills when he escaped from soon-to-be occupied Paris in July 1940. He spent the War there and had a great impact on the school. William Balcombe and Dave Brubeck were just two of his now famous pupils there. After the War, in recognition of the College's generosity in sheltering him, he spent many years continuing to teach at Mills, alternating between Mills and his post at the Paris Conservatoire. His parents and many family members, left behind in France, were murdered by the Nazis. Twelfth Night picture: <http://newspaperarchive.com/oakland-tribune/1922-10-04/page-11>

<sup>100</sup> Their marriage certificate is signed by Joseph Garbus, Morton's father and by Jacob Slaner, Grace's uncle, since her father, Myer, had, as we saw, died a few years before.

<sup>101</sup> Deseret News 8 September 1948

see later.

Back in Oklahoma, with first Philip Slaner gone and then Myer Rolnick, it was Jacob who carried on the family tradition of the department store. Like Philip, Jacob had met his bride-to-be on a buying trip in New York. She was Jessie Ratkovsky (Roth) daughter of Gustave Roth who had worked first in the textile industry in New York, then joined the Equitable Life Insurance Company, becoming so successful that he could give away over \$1,000,000 to Jewish and educational organizations, through the Gustave and Sarah Roth Foundation<sup>102</sup>.

Jacob and Jessie were married in 1916. Jessie joined Jacob in Hobart, but they returned for a short time to New York for the birth of their first son Alfred in 1918<sup>104</sup>. Jacob expanded the Hobart store. "Hobart's first bank building, the future home of First National Bank went up in 1902. The beautiful Dixie Department Store, next door, started by Jake Slaner, lasted many years and became a Hobart landmark."<sup>105</sup>. For a time, however, the Slaners felt that better opportunities might exist in New York, and by 1928 Jacob had become a wool trader in the city, leaving management of the Hobart store to a William Winkelman (see the advertisement on the next page).



*The only known photograph of both Sarah and Gustave Roth.*<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> He died at age 98, survived by sixteen great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandchild. NYTimes 17 May 1960

<sup>103</sup> Courtesy of Philip Cott, a great grandson.

<sup>104</sup> "Jacob had opened the largest store in the little town of Hobart, Mr. Slaner grew up there. But it was not before his mother, a New Yorker who had met her husband when he was on a buying trip, had returned to New York so her son would be born in a place where his wasn't the only Jewish family in town". (NYTimes obituary of Alfred P Slaner March 15 1996). At the time of Alfred's birth, Jessie and Jacob were living uptown, close to 145<sup>th</sup> St, while Jacob had a clothing store on Broadway downtown in the Flatiron district.

<sup>105</sup> [www.stwnewspress.com/library/x681595676/About-Books](http://www.stwnewspress.com/library/x681595676/About-Books)

## A FAMILY STORE

Where Confidence Is Never Abused

It will be a pleasure and privilege to serve you. A store founded on principles of Fair Dealing, One Price, Honest Advertising, Satisfaction Guaranteed.

**S**ERVICE TO ALL  
**L**ITTLE BETTER FOR LESS  
**A**BILITY TO SERVE  
**N**EWEST STYLES ALWAYS  
**E**NDEAVOR TO PLEASE  
**R**ELIABLE MERCHANDISE  
**S**AVE AS YOU SPEND

### Values—

"The word 'values' is terribly abused—and in many instances is meaningless."

We use it to emphasize our true conception of the character of merchandise we are offering.

We do not say much of fine fabric when it is not, but for the price offered you may feel confident that the merit is worth a cent and is guaranteed with our guarantee.



**MR. J. SLANER**  
 Lives in New York and is a study known with the largest market in the world. Ever alert to the changing style and values that are tremendously great—great goods for less than half price.

## AN INSTITUTION

For the Whole Community

We are here to grow with you. We consider it our duty to aid and assist in the building and sustaining this splendid city and community.



Four Great Stores and Still Growing



**MR. W. WINKELMAN**  
 Manager of the Day Store Hobart, Okla. 28 years a member of the staff. He has done well in Ada.

Largest Store in Every City Located

## SLANER WINKLEMAN CHASON

Operating Stores in Hobart, Duncan and Pauls Valley, Oklahoma

## Announces



**MR. I. CHASON**  
 Manager of the Day Department Store, Duncan, Okla. the junior member of the firm. His faith in Ada is the outcome of the store.

### CONFIDENCE

Since 1901 Mr. S. M. Shaw has served you faithfully and from the uncountable friends who praise his name, we fully realize with such longitude of service he had your utmost confidence.

As we succeed him in location at least, it will be our desire to gain and hold the same respect.

Complete Department Store

### The Opening of Their Newest Store

A Friendly Store

SLANERS...now with four stores in Oklahoma and Jack Slaner living in New York<sup>106</sup>.

Jessie and Jacob travelled together to Europe, visiting his mother in Vishay and returning to their salubrious house in Cedarhurst, Long Island, half a mile away from Jessie's father and her brother Charles. But Jacob suffered badly in the Stock Market crash of 1929, and the Slaners returned to Hobart. There they remained, becoming pillars of the local community. For decades the Slaner's store, and the store that his nephew Frank Grad had set up in nearby Cordell, supplied the clothing needs of the people of south-west Oklahoma.

Jacob's great-nephew, Felix Zandman, grandson of his sister Tema, visiting the Slaners in Hobart in 1958 described Jacob as "a little, bald spry man with keen eyes and a dynamic manner. He seemed to exude energy and intelligence"<sup>107</sup>. Like his brother Phillip before him, Jacob was given the accolade of Pioneer of Kiowa County. Jessie was active, too, in community work. She pushed for the establishment of the Hobart Public Library, gave talks on Judaism to local Baptist and Methodist churches, and played cards with the local ladies, maintaining a Jewish atmosphere in the home by lighting candles on Friday nights and trying to keep the Sabbath. When Jacob died in 1960, the local Presbyterian church was turned for the day into a synagogue. All the religious imagery and paraphernalia were removed

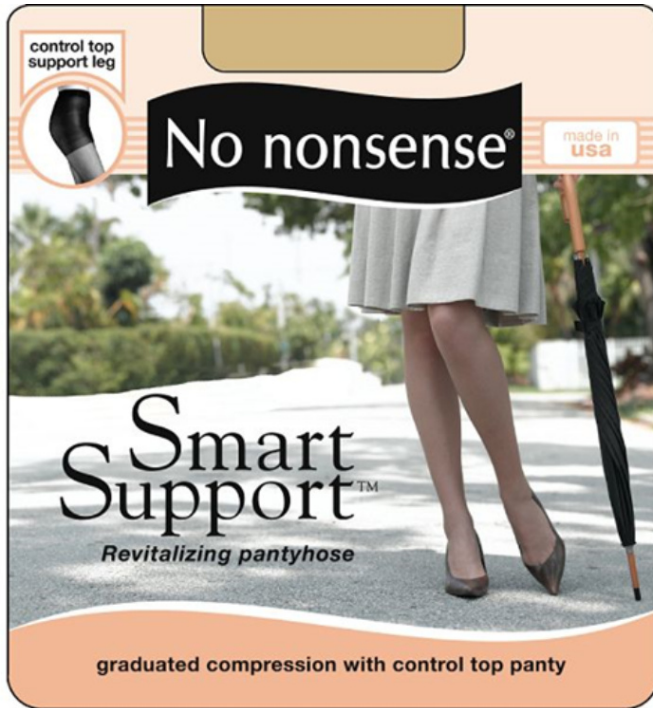
<sup>106</sup> The Ada Evening News, Ada, OK. 1 September 1929.

<sup>107</sup> These sections taken from: "Never the Last Journey" Felix Zandman, Schocken Books, New York, 1995, p 214-216



or covered up. Slaner family members in hats or yarmulkes sat in the central pews, with the local community in the side pews and a rabbi came from Oklahoma City to officiate.

It was Jacob and Jessie's son, Alfred, who extended the Slaner family's impact beyond Oklahoma. Alfred, who graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1939, joined the hosiery business of his uncle Chester Roth (his mother's brother), but had already been working for Chester during his summer vacations as a "shlep" (someone who dragged around a salesman's show-cases)<sup>108</sup>. The Chester H. Roth Hosiery Company became a huge enterprise with 17 mills, mostly in the Carolinas, making a variety of men's and women's socks and stockings. When the business was bought out by the Kayser Company and integrated as Kayser-Roth, Alfred became a senior executive of the combined firm. Known as a "thoroughly modern executive", shrewd and highly competent, he rose to be President of the firm, developing on the way Supp-Hose as an alternative to rubber support stockings, reportedly when he saw how his father Jacob was suffering from the rubber leg supports that he wore<sup>109</sup>. The Smart Support pantyhose was a further development of this idea:



<sup>108</sup> Chester had introduced the idea of strengthening the toes and heels of men's socks with linen thread.

<sup>109</sup> The Daily Times-News, Burlington, NC - July 19 1967

Alfred, who had owned a quarter of Roth's stock before the Kayser merger, made millions of dollars when the company was sold to Gulf and Western in 1975<sup>110</sup>. But his shrewdest investment was to support Felix Zandman, his first cousin once-removed, grandson of Alfred's aunt Tema, when physicist-engineer Felix decided to commercialize his idea on heat-resisting transistors.

Felix Zandman's amazing story is described in his autobiography "Never the Last Journey", cited earlier<sup>107,111</sup>. When the Nazis attacked Russia on June 22nd 1941, Felix and his large family were living in Grodno, Belarus, one of the Soviet Republics. His grandmother, Tema Solnicki, Mollie's sister and also born in Vishay (Lithuania), had married into the Freydowicz family of Grodno, just 60 Km from Vishay across a large forest. The Freydowiczs ran a successful building contractor business and were wealthy. A daughter Genia had married Aron Zandman, a chemist with a doctorate from the University of Vienna, who joined the Freydowicz business after their marriage. Felix (Feivel at that time) was the adored eldest grandson of both the Zandman and Freydowicz families. The family had considered leaving Belarus before the World War, more intensively after Germany overcame Poland, but were caught in Grodno when the Nazis entered.

The resourceful Felix, just fifteen years old at the time, and his uncle Sender Freydowicz managed to escape from the ghetto before most of its inhabitants, including all of Felix's family (other than Sender and another uncle who came to Palestine before the War), were sent to their deaths. The two of them, with a married couple that had fled together with them, found shelter with a Polish family, the Puchalskis, who lived in nearby Losossna, in a house that belonged to the Freydowicz family. Under the house they dug a pit, five foot wide,

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<sup>110</sup> Some of these millions went to support the Democratic Party, with the result that Alfred made the list of Nixon's enemies [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master\\_list\\_of\\_Nixon's\\_political\\_opponents#Businesspeople](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_list_of_Nixon's_political_opponents#Businesspeople). He also established the Alfred P. Slaner Chair in Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University in Israel and the Alfred P. Slaner Chair at Mount Sinai, School of Medicine in New York. A great grandson of Chester Roth writes: "Alfred Slaner ... was Chester Roth's favorite nephew. Chester hired Alfred on to Kayser Roth and eventually made him President, heir to the business. Alfred was given 25% of Kayser Roth stock with the intention he would succeed Chester as Chairman. Instead, Alfred sold the stock and left Kayser Roth to pursue his own interests. This action, without known provocation, was a pivotal point in Chester's life from which he never fully recovered. Without an heir, and with no trust in his family for business, Chester sold Kayser Roth to Gulf & Western. The Roths and the Slaners have not spoken since."

<sup>111</sup> The story is so interesting that I have included it in this book about the Rolnicks, although Felix's connection to the family was as a great-nephew of Myer's wife, Mollie.



*The Holocaust testimonies above, and over forty others, (all from Yad Vashem), are signed by Felix Zandman).*

five and a half feet long, and four feet high and there these four Jews spent the next year and a half! The brave Puchalskis sent food down to them through a trapdoor in the roof of the pit, and drew up the waste. Every few months, when there was no immediate danger, the pit-dwellers could climb up into the Puchalski's house, stand upright for some blessed time, and wash. The pit was dark, the only light being a lamp, lit while they ate. In this frightful environment, Sender taught his nephew mathematics orally, to keep both of them sane. When the Russian Army beat back the Germans across Belarus, fighting took place right inside Lososna. The Puchalskis fled, and Felix and his companions, after desperate adventures, reached safety, going first back to Grodno and then to Bialystok where Felix began to study<sup>112</sup>.

With a visa to France, he started to study as an engineer in Paris, and it was there that the Oklahoma Slaners got in touch with him (when, as we saw, Morton Garbus - with Cary Grant's contract in his pocket - was on a visit to France) and arranged for him to have financial support for his studies. Working as an engineer for a French company that made aircraft engines, he invented a new process for measuring stresses in working metals. This process used metals coated with a thin plastic coating that revealed the stress in the underlying metal. An American company recruited him to develop this idea in the USA, where he came in 1956. He first worked for a number of American companies, but then he made his breakthrough invention. He realized that the very same combination of a metal coated with plastic could be used to make electrical transistors that maintained their electrical

<sup>112</sup> The Puchalski family was honored, after the War, at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum as "Righteous Among the Nations". [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan\\_and\\_Anna\\_Puchalski](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_and_Anna_Puchalski)

resistance over a large temperature range. Transistors were becoming the foundation of many of the new technological developments in the post-war world. To develop his idea he needed financing and he turned to Alfred Slaner (his father's cousin, who had met him when he arrived in the USA). With Alfred's financial backing they formed a company, Vishay Industries, named after the ancestral shtetl in Lithuania, to develop his transistors. Success followed success and Vishay Industries came to be a Fortune 500 Company with over 20,000 employees and branches in many countries. A Puchalski, the son of one of his rescuers in Losossna, was one of his employees, as Felix proudly notes in his book.

Felix, who had been a Zionist from his schooldays in pre-war Grodno and had followed with great interest and emotion the development of the State of Israel, was especially proud of the Israeli subsidiary ("In Israel I could be happily involved up to my ears. Every time I went there I felt I was going home"<sup>1107</sup>). He died in 2011. Among his many philanthropies was a donation to finance the Family Plaza at the Yad Vashem holocaust museum in Jerusalem<sup>113</sup>, with its sculpture by Menashe Kadishman.



*Dr Felix Zandman, at Vishay Industries.*

*Right: The sculpture by Menashe Kadishman at Yad Vashem*



<sup>113</sup> <http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/zandman.asp>

Felix Zandman's son, Marc, lives in Israel and is Chairman of the Board of Vishay Intertechnology<sup>114</sup>, a company with a market capital of nearly two billion US dollars.

From Lithuania, via Oklahoma, to Scarsdale NY, Los Angeles, and Bala Cynwyd, PA, these Rolnick and Solnicki descendants found their place, and made their varied contributions to the society of the New World.

And I must add the following, edited from material sent to me by Marcia Burnam (December 16 2013):

"My mother [Grace] served on the Board of the International Student Center at UCLA for quite a few years. She always invited 4 students to Sunday dinner so she could meet them and they could be in an American home. [One, in 1961, was] ... an Ethiopian bio-scientist, Messele Gedebou. He was at UCLA four and a half years while he got two degrees and trained our Peace Corps. He became a member of our family and my good friend whom I truly admired. I stayed in touch with him after [Grace] died. He married, returned to U. of Michigan, received his PhD, and had a boy. In 1983 he had a letter smuggled out of Ethiopia to me asking me to take his 14 year old son, Tewodros (Teddy) who would have to go into the army in 2 months. I thought of the saintly woman who saved our cousins' lives in Poland by hiding them in a hole under her bed for 17 months. I knew I owed God the obligation to take this youngster even though my husband did not want me to do it. [Ted] arrived 3 weeks after the letter and was the best decision I ever made.

Ted became a Reconstructive Plastic Surgeon having won a complete scholarship to Stanford [where he received] ... the finest training in medicine and surgery of 9 post doc years. He was hired by our Cedars-Sinai Hospital as head of ER plastic surgery ... eight years ago he decided to move back to Addis Ababa to serve "his people". He became "rock star" successful after a rough start and wanted to build his own hospital. This summer he bought the land of his dreams and started plans. When he told me he was naming the 25 bed 5 story hospital for me, I knew I had to be there for the ground breaking and I went. It took more out of me than I thought it would, both before I left and after I returned. However, it was worth it."

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<sup>114</sup> <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/people/person.asp?personId=1103082&ticker=VSH:US>

# Part Three: Upyna to Virginia and Baltimore

## The Rolnicks of Richmond, Virginia and then Baltimore, Maryland.

### Louis and Haddie Rolnick and their family

**W**e saw in the section on the Chicago Rolnicks that Berl Rolnik of Upyna, Lithuania, had 14 children by at least three wives. I described in that section the lives of Michael, Jake, Hannah, Etta, Joseph, Lena, Hyman and William and their children. Berl's eldest son Louis and his eldest daughter Dora both settled in Baltimore. This section will deal with Louis and his family.

As one drives north along the I-95 from Washington DC towards Philadelphia and then New York, before entering the McHenry tunnel, one passes some grey-painted dry dock installations on the right, the sea side, and several huge conical piles of grit on the left. Beyond the grit one can see the Port of Baltimore and it was there that Louis Rolnick, eldest son of Berl Rolnik of Upyna, had by 1900 established himself as a manufacturer of capes. In the map below, (A) marks where the family was living. The I-95, the dry docks and the piles of grit, can be seen at the bottom of the map. The port itself is built on a magnificent mile-long inlet, sheltered by a long channel from the Chesapeake Bay, and well sheltered from the often-angry waves of the Atlantic.



Baltimore Port is now a tourist attraction, with a maritime museum and harbor cruises, the commercial shipping activity having moved far away to the container port. But in Louis' time, Baltimore was the second busiest port in the US, surpassed only by New York. Its merchants exported tobacco and cotton from the Southern plantations. Much of the production of the Midwest went through Baltimore, following the building of efficient rail connections between the city and Chicago. Baltimore had itself become a major industrial center. In 1900, Baltimore ranked first in the US in the production of tinware, copperware, and sheet-ironware, third in men's clothing. This latter was essentially a Jewish business and employed some 60% of the Jewish working population<sup>115</sup>. In common with the pattern found all over the US, the original factory owners came from the German Jewish immigration of the 1840's and 50's. By the 1880's when the East Europeans began to arrive, the original factories were well established and in need of labor. Recruiting agents were sent to the boats that were delivering the new immigrants<sup>116</sup>, signed them for work for the next day and left them to find somewhere to live until then. They found accommodation in the tenements a walking distance from the harbor. The clothing industry was to be a major source of activity for our Rolnicks, but as salesmen and manufacturers rather than workers on the machines.

Louis' journey to his cape manufacturing enterprise (in the heart of Jewish Baltimore at 242 S. Caroline St.) had been circuitous. He and his wife Haddie (nee Cohen) had arrived in New York on the 26th June 1882, newly-married, with Louis listing himself as being from Taugoggen (modern Taurage), a short 15 miles from his birth town of Upyna<sup>117</sup>.

They soon settled in Richmond, Virginia<sup>118</sup> where their eight children were born at short intervals : Joseph, Ray, Susie, Mitchell,

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<sup>115</sup> An excellent study of the economic life of Baltimore Jews is by Arnold Glazer "Entrepreneurship among Eastern European Jewish Immigrants in Baltimore 1881-1914". MS Thesis Johns Hopkins University. <http://www.urbanthought.com/old/writings/Entrepreneurship%20among%20Eastern%20European%20Jewish%20Immigrants%20in%20Baltimore.pdf>

<sup>116</sup> The ships on which the immigrants arrived had left Baltimore carrying tobacco and the Jews were much-needed ballast (and profit) for the return journey. "Tobacco out – Jews in". Lithuanian Jews were heavily represented amongst those arriving in the 1880's and 90's (Baltimore Jewry *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Second Ed. 2006 V. 03 (Ba-Blo), p 97*)

<sup>117</sup> Almost certainly, Haddie Cohen was from Taurage. Louis' path to his bride was just like that of his uncle Wolf Rollnick, also from Upyna, a decade before. Wolf had married Chaya Gurvich from Taurage (see chapter 9).

<sup>118</sup> Haddie's brother, Louis Cohen, had come to the USA already in 1880 and had settled in Virginia.

|    |           |               |          |   |   |          |       |    |   |         |
|----|-----------|---------------|----------|---|---|----------|-------|----|---|---------|
| 34 | 242 36 53 | Rolnick Louis | head     | m | m | Apr 1854 | 10/18 |    |   | Polonia |
| 35 |           | Haddie        | wife     | w | f | Nov 1857 | 11/18 | 18 | 8 | Polonia |
| 36 |           | Isaac         | son      | m | m | Nov 1887 | 12/18 |    |   | Polonia |
| 37 |           | Ray           | daughter | w | f | Nov 1881 |       |    |   | Polonia |
| 38 |           | Sarah         | daughter | w | f | Apr 1890 | 10/18 |    |   | Polonia |
| 39 |           | Edward        | son      | m | m | Jul 1891 |       |    |   | Polonia |
| 40 |           | Hattie        | daughter | w | f | Oct 1892 |       |    |   | Polonia |
| 41 |           | Isaac         | son      | m | m | Dec 1893 |       |    |   | Polonia |
| 42 |           | Harry         | daughter | w | f | Nov 1893 |       |    |   | Polonia |
| 43 |           | Sarah         | daughter | w | f | Aug 1894 |       |    |   | Polonia |

(The above is an extract from the 1900 Census when Louis and his family were already living at 242 S Caroline St. All the children were then “at school”.)

Bessie, Edward (Isaac in the record above), Mary and Sarah.<sup>120</sup>

In the Richmond City Directory of 1889 (by which time Joseph and Ray had been born), and that of 1890, Louis is listed as owning a dry goods shop at 129 17th St. Before that he had, presumably, been a peddler but by this time had accumulated enough capital to buy into a shop. He must have over-extended himself, however, since in November of 1892 notice of a bankruptcy appeared in the Richmond Dispatch (see next page.)

The stated liability of \$2,400, some \$56,000 in today’s currency, is not a huge sum, but a failure, nonetheless. Among the “Third Class” of creditors, interestingly, are his brother Meyer Rolnick then living in Oklahoma, to whom he still owed \$350, and his brother-in-law Jacob Feldman<sup>121</sup>, \$225. Indeed, falling into a bankruptcy was a normal part of business life among such small tradesmen, as Ewa Morawska<sup>122</sup> discusses in her book



Haddie (Cohen) Rolnick  
Labelled on the back, in Yiddish,  
“dos ist Hedda”<sup>119</sup>.

<sup>119</sup> This photograph was sent to me by a member of Moses Rolnick’s family, and provides strong evidence that the two families, both Rolnicks with roots in Lithuania, were in close contact.

<sup>120</sup> In the 1900 census, an extract of which is shown on this page, Haddie is listed as having had 12 children of whom the eight recorded had survived.

<sup>121</sup> Two years before, Louis’ sister Dora, newly arrived from Lithuania, had married Jacob Feldman, then working as a tailor in Baltimore.

<sup>122</sup> Ewa Morawska “Insecure Prosperity”, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 1996



November 10, 1892, Image 4

IMAGE: 4 of 4. Image provided by: Library of Virginia; Richmond, VA.

Persistent Link <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038614/1892-11-10/ed-1/seq-4/>

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| <p>presidential meet at the ay in Decem- as known to dent that the a handsome gures were, he : surprise to</p> <p>CELEBRATE. nd will cele- land with a ch as the city date for the fixed, but it ole are still ed under the tee, who will all the other</p> <p>ver nearly all an active part o have some- reciating this the president</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Failure of a Clothier.</b></p> <p><b>L. Rolnick</b>, a clothier at No. 129 north Seventeenth street, made an assignment yesterday afternoon to William Wilson, trustee. The liabilities are about \$2,400. The creditors are designated in the deed in four classes, the first and second classes providing for the payment of the cost of execution of the paper, legal services, State taxes, &amp;c. The other classes are as follows:</p> <p>Third—B. L. Weiner Sons &amp; Co., \$145; Jacob Feldman, \$225; Jacob Brothers, \$8.25; Myer <b>Rolnick</b>, \$350; A. Greenstein, \$30.60.</p> <p>Fourth—Epstein &amp; Levenstein, \$250.18; Halle &amp; Sons, \$241; Strauss Brothers, \$204.79; Philip Bernstein &amp; Co., \$152; Freide &amp; Sons, \$147.34; Eichengreen &amp; Weil, \$110.85; Paul S. Levy &amp; Co., \$101.42; Philip Bernstein, \$87.88; Tucker &amp; Co., \$76.13; Gans Brothers, \$52; Levin Brothers, \$46.50; Julius Krulewiteh, \$73.13; American Shirt Company, \$74.25; J. Rosenstock &amp; Co., \$35.69; Rogge &amp; Koch, \$13.23.</p> | <p>ment told The incid weather at "At nig cording to ets arrived said: "It is this storm "There the captai a fire in it might. "We di and bulle asleep. V rounds ca Sleepy Ho "Of cot morning v ters. Nat ened, for offence. "We w tent. He Had we</p> |
|--|---|--|

"Insecure Prosperity", with its interviews of merchants in the little town of Johnstown, Pennsylvania: "In business, so much is a gamble" says Henry K., while Samuel I.'s clothing and dry goods store "fell into trouble". Indeed, Louis' co-religionists in Richmond must have taken a similarly sanguine view of his problems since they elected him Vice-President of his synagogue, the prestigious Sir Moses Montefiore Congregation<sup>123</sup>, the following year<sup>124</sup>.

Louis must have felt, however, that the bigger city of Baltimore, where his sister, Dora Feldman, and her family were living, would

<sup>123</sup> The makers of Richmond Gem Tobacco picked up on this theme (Montefiore's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday..wds) in an advertisement shown on the next page, published in the *Illustrated London News* and the *Jewish Chronicle*, proclaiming, "All may not reach Sir Moses Montefiore's great age, but all may prolong their lives and add to their enjoyment by smoking Allen & Ginter's absolutely pure Cigarettes." <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/110.3/green.html>. Modern epidemiologists may disagree.

<sup>124</sup> The Jewish South (Richmond, VA) Sept 22 1893



*All may not reach our Moses Montefiore's great age, but all may prolong their lives and add to their enjoyments by smoking ALLEN and GINTER'S absolutely pure Cigarettes and Tobaccos.*

provide better opportunities for his children for, as we saw, by 1900 they had established themselves in Baltimore, a four minute walk from the Feldmans at 1610 East Lombard St<sup>125</sup>. The Tauroggen shul<sup>126</sup>, which Louis probably attended, was a few blocks away.

Louis did not remain long as a cape manufacturer. The Baltimore City Directory of 1903 lists him as a grocer living at 701 German Street, with his eldest son, Joseph, already working as a clerk. Two years later, Joseph has advanced to salesman while the eldest daughter Ray was a clerk. Actually it was as well for the family that they had moved as far west as they did along German Street, since at 10.48 on the morning of February 7th 1904 (a Sunday) a boiler exploded in the Hurst Building on German Street, starting the Great Fire of Baltimore and destroying some 1,500 buildings in a great sweep of the city, to the east of the fire's origin. The fire burned for almost two days and the Rolnicks must have been terrified that it would change direction and overwhelm them, too. But luckily for them their premises remained untouched by the fire itself.

<sup>125</sup> The close relation between the Rolnick and Feldman families would continue. In the 1930 Census sons of both families are living as next-door neighbours.

<sup>126</sup> The synagogue, the Anshei Emunah Congregation, was one of the synagogues founded largely by, and for, the Lithuanian Jews.



*A look at Baltimore Street from German and Sharp streets during the Great Baltimore City Fire of 1904. (Sun archive photo by Judge Carroll T. Bond)*

Soon after Louis died (in the fall of 1906<sup>127</sup>) the grocery shop was given up and the younger Rolnicks began to take up their careers, Joseph as a bookkeeper, and the next brother Mitchell as a clerk. The family, as did many of Baltimore's Jews, moved further west, the Rolnicks to a more open neighborhood near the Union Square Park.

The girls were growing up and steps needed to be taken to find them husbands. One such opportunity was provided by the community's Purim Ball of March 1909, attended by 2,000 men and women, including our Ray and Joseph, the eldest girl and boy of the Rolnicks. It must have been a splendid affair. Held at the Fifth Regiment Armory in the presence of Maryland's Governor Crothers, the gowns were lovingly described in the *Baltimore Sun*<sup>128</sup>: the Misses Amolskis wearing "Wistaria crape [sic] satin, embroidered in silver" (Anna), and "Light blue crepe de chine, with lace (Pauline)", among dozens of other such descriptions. Ray's gown must have been less distinguished since her presence was noted, but not her dress.

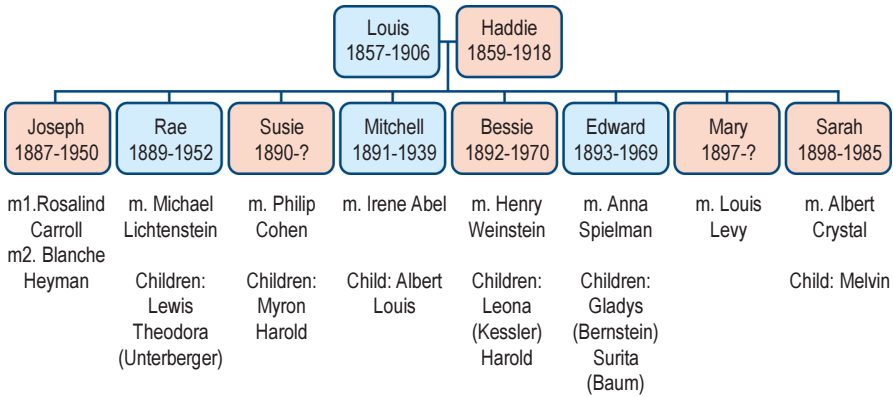
In July of that year, Ray (now Rae) visited Philadelphia and Atlantic

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<sup>127</sup> He was buried in the "Tauggen Cemetery". A photo of his grave appeared earlier in this chapter. Haddie's grave is nearby, as are those of many of his children.

<sup>128</sup> *Sun* March 9 1909. But neither Ray nor Joseph found their future spouses amongst the attendees.

## The Rolnicks of Richmond and then Baltimore



City and a few days later Haddie returned from visiting relatives in Norfolk, Newport News and Washington, DC. Later, in September, Susie (now Susye) had “been visiting in Philadelphia and Atlantic City [and] is now the guest of Mrs L. Cohen, of E Street, for a week or two” wrote the Washington Times. These visits bore fruit. In 1912, Rae married Michael Lichtenstein of Philadelphia<sup>129</sup>. Two years later, Bessie married Henry Weinstein of Richmond (had the families known one another before the move to Baltimore?) but the wedding was held in Philadelphia (perhaps at some common connection there of the Rolnicks and Weinsteins). Another important (for the family’s history) social occasion was the wedding of Haddie’s nephew, George J. Cohen<sup>130</sup>. (See the newspaper clipping on the next page).

Apart from the description of the bride’s gown “white duchess satin, trimmed with pearls, and a veil of real lace, trimmed with orange blossoms”, one might note that among the ushers were Joseph and Edward Rolnick, cousins of the groom. Also present were Mrs Cohen and Miss Cohen of Norfolk, and Mr and Mrs B. Graff of Newport News. Mr and Mrs Louis Cohen of Washington, parents of the groom, had been Susye’s 1909 hosts, “Mrs. L. Cohen of E Street”. The guest list accounts for most of the Rolnick visits in July and September of 1909, although the reason for Atlantic City being a destination remains a mystery.

Then in September the same year, again in Washington, Susye married her cousin, Philip Cohen of Norfolk. Was there some issue of delicacy that kept both Philip and Susye away from their cousin George’s wedding in July? Were the families unhappy that the two

<sup>129</sup> The Lichtensteins were also from Taurage.

<sup>130</sup> *Sun*, Baltimore, July 2 1916

### Cohen—Levinstein.

Miss Dora Leona Levinstein, and George J. Cohen, of Washington, were married at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Israel Levinstein, 2341 Madison avenue, June 25, at 5.30 P. M. The Rev. Dr. Shaffer, of Sherith Israel Congregation, officiated, assisted by Cantor Davidmann and the Rev. H. Greenspan, of the Anshe Emunah Congregation, who also officiated at the weddings of the parents of both the bride and groom.

The bride wore a gown of white duchess satin, trimmed with pearls, and a veil of real lace, trimmed with orange blossoms, and carried a bouquet of Bride roses. Miss Bertha Levinstein, sister of the bride, was maid of honor, and Mr. Philip Bobbys, of Washington, was best man. The maid of honor wore a gown of Nile green pussywillow taffeta and carried a shower bouquet of pink roses. The ushers were Mr. Jacob S. Klein and Mr. Harry Greenstein, cousins of the bride; Mr. Joseph Rolnick and Mr. Edward Rolnick, cousins of the groom, and Mr. Lee Walsky and Mr. Max Cohen, of Washington.

The house was tastefully decorated with palms and flowers, and the ceremony was performed under a canopy of lilies and Bride roses. Dinner was served after the ceremony and entertainment was furnished until a late hour.

Among the out-of-town guests were: Mr. and Mrs. Louis Cohen, Washington, parents of the groom; Misses Bessie Rosalind and Lillian Cohen, sisters of the groom; Messrs. Hyman and Ben Cohen, brothers of the groom; Mrs. Annie Sauber, Messrs. Max Cohen, Lee Walsky and Philip Bobbys, Washington; Mr. and Mrs. Mosher, of Wildwood, N. J.; Mr. and Mrs. B. Graff, Newport News; Mesdames Fivel Forman, Cohen and Miss Cohen, Norfolk; Mr. and Mrs. Harry J. Klein and Miss May Klein and Mr. and Mrs. Louis Rose, New York; Mr. Aaron Levinstein, Buckhannon, W. Va., and Mr. and Mrs. J. Schwartz, of Keller, Va.

The bride and groom have left for an extended trip through Niagara Falls, Thousand Islands and the Northern States.



*Houses on the streets of the Levinstein and Cohen residences.*

first cousins were so keen to marry<sup>131</sup>, as the marriage certificate on the next page makes clear<sup>132</sup>?

Who were the Graffs of Newport News whom Haddie had visited in 1909? These were Bernard Graff, the brother of "Mrs. L. Cohen of E Street", and his wife Sarah. Bernard kept a grocery shop according to the 1900 Census, but a saloon in 1910 (together with his son, Ellis).

<sup>131</sup> That the Cohens of Norfolk and the Cohens of Washington both provided cousins to the Baltimore Rolnicks proves that Haddie was herself a Cohen.

<sup>132</sup> Fourth row of the table "Relationship 1<sup>st</sup> Cousin"

403

No. 75403 Application for License.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, ss:  
 I, Benjamin Rolin  
 applicant for the issuance of a Marriage License to the persons named herein, do solemnly swear (affirm) that the answers to the following interrogatories are true, to the best of my knowledge and belief: So HELP ME GOD.

|                       | Male.                | Female.               |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Name.....             | <u>Phillip Cohen</u> | <u>Joseph Rolnick</u> |
| Age.....              | <u>25</u> years      | <u>24</u> years       |
| Color.....            | <u>White</u>         | <u>White</u>          |
| Relationship.....     | <u>not given</u>     | <u>not given</u>      |
| Former marriages..... | <u>none</u>          | <u>none</u>           |

Witness:  
Benjamin Rolin

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 10 day of Sept, 1916  
J. H. [Signature], Clerk.  
 By B. Rolin, Assistant Clerk.

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No. 75403 Marriage License.

To Benjamin Rolin authorized to celebrate marriages in the District of Columbia, GREETING:  
 You are hereby authorized to celebrate the rites of marriage, between  
Phillip Cohen, of Washington, D.C.  
 AND  
Joseph Rolnick, of Baltimore, Md.  
 and having done so, you are commanded to make return of the same to the Clerk's Office of the Supreme Court of the said District within TEN days, under a penalty of fifty dollars for default therein.

WITNESS my hand and seal of said Court, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of Sept, anno Domini 1916  
J. H. [Signature], Clerk.  
 By B. Rolin, Assistant Clerk.

Bernard came from Taurage, according to the WW1 draft notice of his son William<sup>133</sup>. Louis Cohen and his wife Annie (nee Graff) were married in New York but may well have known one another in Taurage before they came to the USA.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>133</sup> William married Leona Hechinger of Washington DC. Her brother, Sidney, was originally a building demolisher, often needing hardware for his work, and realized that many self-help builders were looking for the same sort of tools and equipment as he was. He opened Hechinger, one of the first do-it-yourself shops, and developed this, with his son and son-in-law, into a well-patronised chain in and around Washington DC, until the end of the 1990's when competition by other chains forced it out of business.

<sup>134</sup> We are getting to know (or will get to know in a later chapter) a not insignificant fraction of the population of Taurage: The Cohens, the Graffs, the Gurchiches, the Lichtensteins (Rae's husband, Michael, was from Taurage). The Rolnicks - Wolf and Louis - married into those families and Wolf continued to live in Taurage until the family emigrated to South Africa.

I have such a fine set of Graff portraits that I cannot refrain from showing them here:



But back to the Rolnicks. By the time of all these festivities, they had moved again, north this time, to 1708 Appleton Street in the somewhat more up-scale Druid Park area:



*1708 Appleton Street marked with an 'A'.*

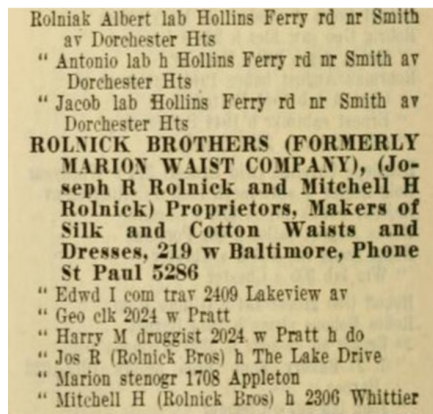
Many of the family were to live here for the next decade.

First of the Rolnick sons to marry was the youngest, Edward, who, in June 1917, married Annie Spielman, a young woman also from Baltimore. Annie was one of many siblings, supported by the earnings of their father who ran a lunch wagon. The wedding was solemnized in Washington DC. All three Rolnick brothers received, of course, draft orders when the USA went to war in 1917, but only Mitchell was

actually enlisted<sup>135</sup>. He went overseas with the 313th Infantry, joining the forces fighting on the Meuse-Argonne front<sup>136</sup>, and was wounded by a high explosive shell in the last weeks of the war “near Meuse river in the Grande Montagne sector. Sustained knee cap and finger wounds.” He spent three months at a military hospital in France before returning to Baltimore.

Before enlisting, Mitchell, together with his brother Joseph had gone into business for themselves. They set up first in premises at 110 West Fayette St, as the Marion Waist Company<sup>137</sup> and later moved to 219 W Baltimore, becoming Rolnick Brothers.

But other significant changes were also occurring. Joseph married Rosalind Carroll, daughter of a tobacco merchant, in June of 1918. Then on October 18th Rosalind died, as did her mother-in-law Haddie, just three days later. The cause of their deaths is not known but they occurred at the very peak of Baltimore’s influenza epidemic. “The first cases of influenza in Maryland appeared at Camp Meade<sup>140</sup> on September 17th... By September 28th, when the state filed its first official report with the Public Health Service, state officials believed that there were



*From the Baltimore City Directory for 1920, R.L.Polk and Co.<sup>138</sup>.*



*On the right... a shirtwaist<sup>139</sup>*

<sup>135</sup> Mitchell must have been a high-spirited fellow. In a report in the Baltimore *Sun* of Feb 11, 1918, of a visit to the Fort Meade base camp of the 313<sup>th</sup> Regiment before going overseas, in addition to the men doing acrobatics and stunts with musical instruments, we find: “Some jokes on camp life were sprung by Private Mitchell Rolnick in a monologue.”

<sup>136</sup> The fourth of Yosel Rolnick’s descendants to be there, with a fifth on the German side across the front line.

<sup>137</sup> Perhaps named for their sister who probably also worked in the company?

<sup>138</sup> <http://www.lib.umd.edu/RARE/MarylandCollection/MDResourceGuide/baltdir2.html>

<sup>139</sup> Shirtwaists: long tapered blouses worn with flowing skirts <http://oldnyc.blogspot.com/>

<sup>140</sup> Camp Meade (Fort Meade) is 20 miles southwest of Baltimore and is where George Rolnick (see chapter 5) served before, during and after, the War as a laundryman.



1,713 cases in the state. ... By October 12th, state officials were reporting 24,300 cases. By mid-October, there were so many cases that state officials were unable to file a report.<sup>141</sup>

Haddie had died, but the house at 1708 Appleton remained the family home. Bessie and her husband Henry Weinstein ("salesman in general merchandise"), and two children, were living there at the time of the 1920 Census (9th and 10th January, 1920), with Henry as "Head of the Family". Also there, were the newly married Sarah and her husband Albert Crystal, together with the widower Joseph and Mitchell (at that date a bachelor).

The brothers' business was prospering. The Baltimore Sun for 1920 and 1921 has numerous wanted ads for positions at the firm. A branch was opened in New York in 1921. Joseph remarried in 1920, this time to Blanche Heyman, daughter of a realtor in New York; Mitchell's bride (they married the same year) was from Baltimore, Irene Abell. (Two of her sisters later married Harry and Malachi Rolnick, sons of Moses Rolnick, see next chapter). As the City Directory of late 1920 (the record on page 150) shows, the two brothers had at about this time moved into the smarter areas of the city<sup>142</sup>.

Perhaps all this new luxury that his brothers were living in made their youngest brother Edward feel financially insecure. In any event, in April of 1922, this item appeared in the Baltimore Sun: (see newspaper clipping on the right).

Edward, in cahoots with his brother-in-law Albert Spielman and a Peter Quinn, clerks in the

## **EIGHT MEN INDICTED IN TAX FRAUD PROBE**

**Two Former City Employees, Alleged Go-Between, And Five Owners Accused.**

### **CONSPIRACY CHARGE NAMED**

**Result Said To Have Been Agreed Upon After Long Fight In Jury Room.**

Eight men, two of them former city employes, one the alleged go-between, and five property owners, in the alleged tax fraud scandal, were indicted by the grand jury yesterday. The indictments are said to have been agreed upon after long debate. They include every person presented to the grand jury several weeks ago.

Peter E. Quinn, 2915 North Calvert street, and Albert Spielman, 2786 West North avenue, former clerks in the tax department; head the list of those indicted. Edward Rolnick is named as the medium through which the alleged frauds were arranged.

The property owners indicted are Michael Stein, Eutaw Place and Lake drive; Morris Rombro, 24 South Patterson Park avenue; Solomon Rosenbloom, 3410 Auchentoroly Terrace; Meyer Brave, 3417 Gwynn Oak avenue, and Solomon Silverman, 2428 Laveview avenue.

<sup>141</sup> [http://1918.pandemicflu.gov/your\\_state/maryland.htm](http://1918.pandemicflu.gov/your_state/maryland.htm)

<sup>142</sup> The Lake Drive winds through Baltimore's golf course. The few houses on it are surrounded by ample green expanses.

tax department, had been indicted in tax fraud involving attempts to obtain for their “clients” illegal reductions of taxes. At that stage the frauds were “alleged”, but Rolnick, Spielman and Quinn confessed to their indiscretions and were eventually given jail sentences of one year. Spielman had worked as a clerk in the Baltimore Post Office and then as a stenographer in the Baltimore City Hall, but by the time of the fraud operation was a “seasonal clerk” in the tax office with access, apparently, to city tax records. Edward’s role was, as stated in the news item, to be the go-between<sup>143</sup>. One can easily see how this came about. Michael Stein, the client with the biggest tax reduction, was a neighbor of Joseph Rolnick on Lake Drive, while Solomon Silverman at 2428 Lakeview Ave lived directly opposite Edward at 2029 of that street. The case dragged on for a few years. Stein alleged that he had been doubly assessed and all that Quinn had done was to fix an error<sup>144</sup>. The defendants argued that their confessions had been inadequately documented. At one stage Edward pleaded illness but was ordered to appear anyway. In the end, Quinn, Spielman and our Rolnick were reported as asking for parole in September 1924, when they had a few months still to serve<sup>145</sup>.

While all this was going on, another legal scandal erupted, again involving our Rolnicks.

A post-war slump had hit the Baltimore clothing industry and, like their father Louis some decades earlier, the two brothers had to declare bankruptcy<sup>146</sup>. But this bankruptcy was for a far larger amount than Louis’ (being over \$2 million at today’s value) and compounded by the alleged concealing of assets.

Concealing of assets was common, although a criminal offence. The reason that this case became so notorious, and quoted

## BANKRUPTCY PLOT CHARGED

### Mitchell Rolnick Held in \$10,000 Bail—Counsel to Produce Brother.

Mitchell H. Rolnick, formerly of Rolnick Brothers, a cloak and suit concern, was held in \$10,000 bail yesterday, by United States Commissioner Hitchcock for hearing on Nov. 13 on a charge of conspiring with his brother, Joseph R. Rolnick, to conceal assets from a trustee in bankruptcy. Louis Dorfman, counsel for the defendant, promised to produce Joseph H. Rolnick in court tomorrow.

The evidence against the Rolnicks was obtained by Frederick R. A. Stiefel, manager of the New York Credit Men’s Association. It was alleged that on Aug. 31 Rolnick Brothers issued a certified financial statement showing net assets of \$58,000, and that within fifty days thereafter the concern failed with liabilities in excess of \$100,000 and assets of about \$20,000.

**The New York Times**

Published: November 7, 1922

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<sup>143</sup> or “outside man”, in another newspaper description: *Sun* Baltimore, June 13 1924

<sup>144</sup> Stein was, indeed, acquitted although the State’s Attorney was convinced of his guilt. *Sun*, Baltimore, March 2 1924

<sup>145</sup> See various articles in the *Sun* Baltimore, Sept 23 1923; Jan 28, 1924; Aug 14, 1924

<sup>146</sup> The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History. Elizabeth Fee, Linda Shopes. Temple University Press. 1993.

so often in judicial proceedings<sup>147</sup>, was that the bankruptcy lawyer, Louis Dorfman, attempted over a long series of trials and appeals to avoid repaying into the assets a sum of \$2,850 that the Rolnicks had paid over to him. It appears that, when the Rolnick brothers realized that they would be going into an involuntary bankruptcy and that there might be a criminal case against them<sup>148</sup>, they paid that sum to Dorfman to retain his legal services. But, according to the law, legal payments in a bankruptcy were to be determined by the referee, a person appointed by the court to wind up the financial affairs, and the amount was set at a fixed sum (at that time), \$300. Dorfman claimed that the payment was for services that he had rendered, or would render, and that the money was due to him. The judges found that most of his legal work was actually done after the bankruptcy proceedings had commenced and so \$300 was all he was entitled to. As Justice Rogers of the Second Circuit Court pronounced: "It will not be suggested, I think, that on the eve of bankruptcy a prospective bankrupt could pay money to a physician and in return therefore receive an agreement whereby professional medical services would be performed in future ..... In other words, the estate of a bankrupt cannot be diverted by any arrangement which will permit the bankrupt to benefit after his adjudication in a manner which would have been impossible, had he not diverted assets of the estate prior to the petition.<sup>149</sup>" It would appear, from the numerous times that "Rolnick 2 Cir., 1923" has been cited, that such pre-payments are a commonly used device to extract funds from the estate of a bankruptcy.

In spite of the voluminous legal literature on Dorfman vs Rolnick, I have not been able to find out whether or not the brothers themselves were convicted of the fraud and served a jail sentence, although they had been arrested and held on bail.

After all the tumult of the legal proceedings and the jailing of, at

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<sup>147</sup> Here is just one quotation, this from a 1969 Court Proceedings. (There are citations even in 1993): "This Court has never been called upon to decide the issue presented by this case. The Second and the Sixth Circuits, however, have taken the position that Section 60(d) relates only to attorney's fees for legal services to be rendered while the debtor is in contemplation of bankruptcy and not to legal services to be rendered after the bankruptcy proceedings are commenced, that is to say, after the petition in bankruptcy has been filed. Pratt v. Bothe, 6 Cir., 1904, 130 F. 670; In re Rolnick, 2 Cir., 1923, 294 F. 817; In re Falk, 2 Cir., 1929, 30 F.2d 607; In re David Bell Scarves, 2 Cir., 1932, 61 F.2d 771, aff'd, 289 U.S. 472, 53 S.Ct. 703, 77 L.Ed. 1327 (1933). The words, "for services to be rendered," in section 60d have in practice been construed as covering all services "to be rendered" in contemplation of the filing of a petition in bankruptcy. 66 F.2d at 419.

<sup>148</sup> "being at the time under apprehension of bankruptcy and fearing the institution of various civil and criminal proceedings with respect to their insolvent condition" as the judgment records.

<sup>149</sup> Westlaw 294 F.817

least, Edward Rolnick, the brothers resumed their lives, but in different circumstances. There is no further sign of Rolnick Bros., Silk and Cotton Waists. Mitchell is listed in the 1930 Census as now living with Irene and their son Albert in a row house at 2119 Park Ave Baltimore, “a merchant in rubber goods”. In the picture below, the (A) depicts the Rolnick house. Next to them, adjoining on the left, lived Mitchell’s cousin Joseph Feldman<sup>150</sup>, son of Dora, our Louis Rolnick’ sister. Clearly, Mitchell’s involvement in the bankruptcy fraud had not led to his ostracism by the extended family.



Mitchell died in 1939.

Edward, his wife Annie and daughter Gladys, had moved in with Annie’s widowed father and two brothers-in-law. In that 1930 Census, Edward was working as a travelling salesman in hats. By the early 1940’s, they had moved to Brooklyn, New York. A new child had arrived and Edward was working for a Broadway clothing store, F.A. Safian. Edward died in 1969.

Joseph’s fortunes improved more rapidly. He followed his father-in-law into the real estate business, originally in partnership with his wife Blanche’s uncle, Louis Heymann. They sold a substantial property in 1929, in Brooklyn where he and Blanche were living. Joseph went on to broker deals in Manhattan by the 40’s<sup>151</sup>. He died in 1950. He and Blanche did not have children.

The strangest thing about Joseph’s re-adjustment after his legal problems was his decision to take six years off his age. In the 1900

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<sup>150</sup> Joseph Feldman at the time was salesman in his father’s expanding furniture store. His mother Dora (nee Rolnick) played an active part in the business.

census, a section of which was depicted earlier, he is listed as being born in about November 1887, and the 1887 birth date is so listed in the 1910 and 1920 censuses. In 1930, however, he is recorded with an 1893 birth date. On the official draft notice for WW2 he again gives that birth date. The 1917 WW1 record is shown in the left section in the following picture, the 1941 WW2 record in the right section, the signatures are shown below for direct comparison:

Form 1 3341 REGISTRATION CARD No. 131

1. Name (Last, First, Middle Initial) Joseph Roy Rolnick 29

2. Home Address (Street, City, State) 1708 Appleton Baltimore Md.

3. Date of Birth October 29th 1887

4. Education (Type, Grade) High School Natural born

5. Where born (City, State, U.S.A.) Richmond Va. U.S.A.

REGISTRATION CARD - (Men born on or after April 21, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1907)

SERIAL NUMBER 1881 NAME JOSEPH ROY ROLNICK ORDER NUMBER

1. TYPE OF SERVICE (Type) 45 - Army (Status) Army (Grade) Private

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Street, City, State, Zip) 45 - Army (City) Richmond (State) Va.

3. MAILING ADDRESS (Street, City, State, Zip) Richmond (City) Va. (State) Va.

4. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT (Street, City, State, Zip) 29 - Street 1st St N.Y.C. (City) N.Y.C. (State) N.Y.

5. SIGNATURE (Type, Grade) Joseph Roy Rolnick (City) Richmond (State) Va.

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

*Joseph Roy Rolnick*

(Town) (County) (State)

BE AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

1-21630-3

*Joseph Roy Rolnick*  
(Registered signature)

When did he make the change and why? Was it associated in some way with the criminal proceedings, or was it connected with his marriage to Blanche? Strange that he kept the day and month unchanged!

In the 1930 Census, sister Bessie and her husband Henry were living in Richmond, his home town, where he ran a jewellery store. Rae and her husband Michael Lichtenstein were still living in Philadelphia, Michael working for a transfer and storage company. The youngest Rolnick daughter, Sarah, and her husband Albert Crystal had moved to Houston, Texas where Albert, and later their son Melvin, had law practices. I have found no further trace of Marion who had married Louis Levy. (Levys and Cohens are difficult targets, genealogically).

Moving on now to the next generation, I have been able to follow up the fate of most of Louis' and Haddie's grandchildren<sup>152</sup>:

As would be expected for their generation, most of Louis and Haddie's grandchildren entered the professions. I have identified three as lawyers or married to lawyers. Amongst these, Theodora's husband, S. Herbert Unterberger, became an authority on the legal aspects of

<sup>151</sup> One six-story building on 34<sup>th</sup> St opposite Macy's went for \$250,000, perhaps \$18 million today.

<sup>152</sup> Joseph left no descendants and I have been unable to trace Marion's family.

wages and unemployment<sup>153</sup>, while also being in private practice in Philadelphia.

Gladys (Rolnick) Bernstein taught social science at Midwood High School in Brooklyn for forty years<sup>154</sup>. Her most famous pupil, perhaps, was Woody Allen. "He was bright and knew how to talk, but he never did a lick of work" said Gladys Bernstein<sup>155</sup>. Her sister Surita studied at Vassar, and the Yale School of Law, and was Parks Commissioner for Utica, NY<sup>156</sup>. Bessie's son Harold Weinstein (later Winston) became an optometrist in Knoxville TN, President of the Tennessee Optometric Association and a pillar of the Jewish community, being President (twice) of Temple Beth El, amongst many other public duties. Two of his sons and a grandson followed him into his profession.

But Albert Louis Rolnick, the son of Mitchell and Irene<sup>157</sup>, did not live long enough to take up a profession. Albert had studied at the Baltimore City College and had been working for the Monroe Upholstering Company when he was drafted into the US Air Corps in March 1942 and trained as a bombardier.

Albert was posted to England where he took part in missions with the 322nd Squadron of the 91st Bomber Group, flying bombers over Germany. He had, at first, some lucky escapes. Jaundice kept him for a few weeks out of an initial posting with a different Flying Fortress squadron. Then followed seven successful missions. A slight injury earned Albert a Purple Heart while on one of them.

He was due to fly with Charles Pinning's crew on the "Chief Sly II" on the 9th October, 1943 (the lower photograph on the next page was taken a few days before. Albert is in the front row, extreme right, Lieut. Pinning on Albert's left was also from Baltimore and a friend of Albert).

But "this crew did not return from the raid on Anklam, Germany .... Their plane was shot down that day and there were no survivors. A. L. Rolnick did not fly as bombardier on this day due to bumping

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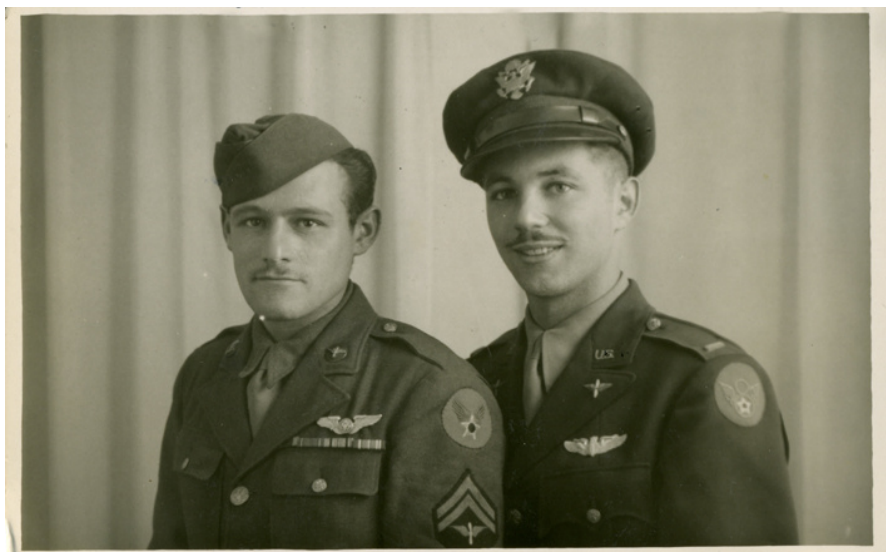
<sup>153</sup> "Guaranteed Wage & Supplementary Unemployment" Commerce Clearing House, New York, 1956, amongst other books.

<sup>154</sup> There is a wonderful description of her wedding in the Brooklyn Eagle of July 5 1949. "The bride wore a gown of ivory satin with hand pearled detail...The bouffant skirt had a six-yard train....the maid of honor wore seafoam green imported Swiss organdy". The marriage itself was very successful, Gladys and her husband Arthur becoming well-loved educationalists.

<sup>155</sup> "The Unruly Life of Woody Allen", Marion Meade, Scribner 2012

<sup>156</sup> Daily Press, Utica. Nov 4 1971

<sup>157</sup> His father died when Albert was 18, and his mother later re-married.



*Albert, on the right, as Flight-Lieut., and his friend Alvin Berman, also of Baltimore, at Fort Meade, 1943<sup>158</sup>*



<sup>158</sup> Alvin survived the War. Photographs courtesy of the Jewish Museum of Maryland, 2008.027.003

<http://jmm.pastperfect-online.com/00005cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=745D510E-03B6-4DF9-93A4-909410793655;type=102>

his head on the bomb bay door.<sup>159</sup>

However, a month later, after two more successful missions with a different crew, Albert was in a plane that caught fire shortly after take-off from an airfield in Surrey, UK, and crashed. There were no survivors. After the war, Albert's mother Irene arranged for his body to be brought back to the USA, and he was re-interred in the cemetery of Anshei Emunah (the Tauroggen<sup>160</sup>) Congregation, next to his father, Mitchell, and near his grandfather Louis (after whom he had been named):<sup>161</sup>.



With Albert's death, no male Rolnicks were left to carry on Louis Rolnick's family name. Indeed, his death almost terminated the entire line of Rolnick surnames that descended from his great-grandfather Berl Rolnik. We saw that Berl had fourteen children, nine of them sons. All but one of them were blessed only with daughters or had lost sons before these could produce a son. The Rolnick chromosome thus has had to be followed through the sole remaining male-line branch of Berl Rolnik's tree, the descendants of William Rolnick.

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<sup>159</sup> <http://www.91stbombgroup.com/crewphotos/chiefsly3.html>

<sup>160</sup> i.e. Taurage

<sup>161</sup> The US flag and the medallion on the memorial mark this as a service man's grave.



# The Feldman “Rolnicks”

Dora Rolnick, Dov Ber Rolnik’s eldest daughter, arrived in America around 1887, aged about 18 (I have not found a shipping manifest for her). In the records of marriages in Virginia we have

## “Virginia, Marriages, 1785-1940”

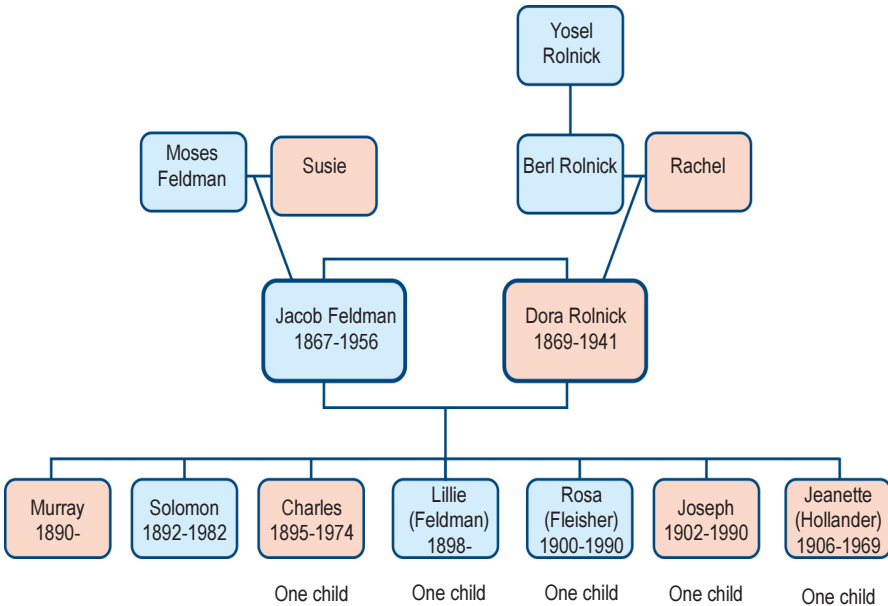
Name: Jacob Feldman  
Birth Date: 1867  
Birthplace: Russia  
Age: 23  
Spouse's Name: Dora Rolnick  
Spouse's Birth Date: 1869  
Spouse's Birthplace: Russia  
Spouse's Age: 21  
Event Date: 03 Aug 1890  
Event Place: Richmond, Virginia  
Father's Name: Moses Feldman  
Mother's Name: Susie Feldman  
Spouse's Father's Name: Bear Rolnick  
Spouse's Mother's Name: Rachel Rolnick  
Race: White  
Marital Status: Single  
Previous Wife's Name:  
Spouse's Race: White  
Spouse's Marital Status: Single  
Spouse's Previous  
Husband's Name:  
Indexing Project (Batch)  
Number: M01078-6  
System Origin: Virginia-EASy  
GS Film number: 2048498  
Reference ID: p 93

This is our Dora, daughter of Bear (Berl) and Rachel Rolnick, 21 years old. At the time of the marriage her eldest brother Louis was a storekeeper in Richmond, Virginia, and he would have encountered his fellow Lithuanian, Jacob Feldman, who was a peddler at the time. Virginia was by now, well after the Civil War, again a wealthy state, exporting cotton and tobacco to Europe, with many customers for an enterprising merchant. By the 1900 Census, Jacob and Dora had settled in Baltimore where their seven children were born. Jacob is listed as a tailor, the two oldest children (Moses and Solomon) were 9 and 6 at the time and at school. They were living in Baltimore’s most bustling location, at 1610 E. Lombard Street.



*E. Lombard St: left, building with advertisement for a tailor; right, 1900 E. Lombard built 1900.*

### The seven children of Jacob Feldman and Dora Rolnick



Jacob seems to have had an excellent head for business. Already at his brother-in-law's bankruptcy at the end of 1892 he is listed as a creditor to the extent of \$225 (\$50,000 in today's currency). A great granddaughter writes "Feldman's started out as a pushcart which expanded several times over." By the 1920 Census, Jacob is listed as a

retailer in Men's Clothing with the family living uptown at 2109 Callow Ave., in the then fashionable Druid Lake area.



*2109 Callow Ave.*

For the next twenty years 2109 Callow Ave. was to be the family home. Most of the children, in 1920, were working in the family store. Charles, always an independent person, was a "metal supplier" to a manufacturer, while little Jeanette was still at school. By 1927, Feldman's had become a Department Store at 872-888 W. Baltimore St, then the commercial center of the city. Here is a picture taken on its opening day, with Jacob's eldest son Morris on the left and Jacob himself on the right:



I am indebted to a great granddaughter of Jacob and Dora for this historical picture but, as she writes: "When most of their competitors moved out to the suburbs and flourished, Feldman's decided to expand the store instead of relocate, which ultimately proved to be the wrong decision...". In the 1930 Census, Solomon, Charles and Jeanette worked in the store. By 1940, only Solomon was still helping his parents.

Solomon had enlisted in WW1 and fought in France on the "Avocourt Sector in the Meuse-Argonne", making him another of Dov Ber's grandsons to be in the region at that time, with their second cousin, one of the Silbersteins, facing them in the German Army on the other side of the battle lines. Solomon was awarded the Order of Saint Sava<sup>162</sup>, perhaps less prestigious than it sounds for so were the other 10 men named Feldman in the Maryland Military Men 1917-1918 list. Solomon had studied law at Baltimore City College. The records below from the University of Maryland Year Book for the class of 1917 suggest that he made a favourable impression on his fellow students:

SOLOMON FELDMAN (single) MERCHANT.  
 OFFICE .....735 W. Baltimore Street, Balto., Md. Phone St. Paul 6773.  
 RESIDENCE ..2109 Callow Ave., Baltimore, Maryland. Phone Madison 5191.  
 "WHY IS THIS SOLOMON STILL SINGLE?"



*Solomon Feldman, "Country," Baltimore, JMd. Baltimore City College. Attorney-at-Law. Age, 24; Height, 5 ft., 5 in.; Weight 173. Behold, gentle readers, the physiognomy of a learned Counsellor at Law, more familiarly known as "Country." Look at his broad head and the beetling brow that overshadows a pair of remarkable eyes and you will surely take him to be studious. But, gentle reader, our intelligent friend doesn't have to study as he has the honor of having passed the State Bar at the end of his second year without having opened a text-book. "Country's" ambition is to specialize in the handling of the legal end of transportation. Indeed, he made some record in Common Carriers and we are looking forward to hearing of him as Special Counsel for some large railroad. "Country" is very popular with the ladies, and is a good all-around chap — so here's to his success.*

Presumably since Solomon should have a thousand wives? However, our Solomon did not marry.

<sup>162</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order\\_of\\_St.\\_Sava](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_St._Sava); <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/31615/supplements/13005>

In the event, as we have seen, Solomon didn't "specialize in the handling of the legal end of transportation" but stayed in the family business, and his popularity "with the ladies" did not lead to his marrying one of them.

But there is another reference to a "Sol Feldman of Baltimore" in 1922<sup>163</sup>, during prohibition, that makes a less positive impression:

Was this our Sol Feldman? I have not found any other Sol Feldman in the Baltimore records of the time.

By 1930, Rosie had married and her husband Al Fleischer was working in the Feldman business, as a collector (much of the Feldman business was done by hire-purchase). Morris, having married his Tillie, was a buyer for the firm. The two couples lived next door to each other in Callow Ave, a few blocks from the parental home. Charles, married to Elizabeth, was a few houses away in the same street, with Charles now in the metal furniture business. Joseph and his Fannie, on Park Ave a block or two away, was working in the store.

Some of the other Feldman children had left the store. Lillian married her cousin Murray Feldman and the couple went to live on Ocean Ave in New York, with Murray first a salesman for building supplies and later setting up as a realtor. Jeanette married Albert Hollander and they were also on Ocean Ave. Albert was a salesman in leather goods and Jeanette a buyer in Ladies Clothing, by then well-trained in the Feldman family business.

Of the next generation, the most famous was Thurman Feldman Naylor, known as "Jack", who has a Wikipedia entry all to himself<sup>164</sup>.

## LIQUOR CAR CAUGHT AFTER FAST CHASE

### Motorcycle Policeman Punctures Gas Tank With Two Straight Shots.

ROCKVILLE, Md., July 7.—While patrolling the seventh street pike, near Norbeck, on his motorcycle yesterday, Leroy Rodgers, a member of the recently created county police force, suspected that a fast moving automobile contained bootleg liquor, and called on the driver to stop.

Instead of complying, the auto let out a notch or two and hit up a seventy-mile-an-hour clip. Rodgers gave chase and two well-aimed snots punctured the gas tank of the car, causing gasoline to scatter in all directions. Rodgers' motorcycle skidded on the wet pike and he was thrown off. He was picked up by an automobile and the chase was continued.

The fugitive car stopped near Silver Spring and Rodgers placed Sol Feldman, of Baltimore, under arrest. The car was found to contain sixty-two gallons of corn whisky, in oil cans. Feldman was brought to Rockville and committed to jail and the liquor was stored.

At the time of his arrest, Feldman was accompanied by a young woman and a negro chauffeur, both of whom were held.

<sup>163</sup> *The Washington herald.*, July 08, 1922, Page 3

<sup>164</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack\\_Naylor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Naylor)

Jack was a B-24 pilot in WW2, conducting bombing runs in Eastern Europe.

He took aerial pictures on his missions (which whetted his appetite for photography) and then, with his GI Bill of Rights entitlement, studied engineering at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. He was an inventor and “developed an automotive thermostat that became the standard, parlayed his fortune into one of the greatest personal collections of cameras and photography in the world”<sup>165</sup>.

It’s well worth clicking on the footnote below to browse through the collection, which includes antique cameras and thousands of classic photographs.

His father was probably our Charles Feldman, but this is by no means certain<sup>166</sup>. Jack was brought up by his grandmother, Estella Naylor. In the 1910 Census he was listed as Thurman Feldman, but in 1920 as Thurman F. Naylor, working at the time as an “attendant at an auto service station”. One of his obituaries refers to him as an orphan, but this does not seem to be correct. Charles Feldman and Thurman’s mother Mildred Naylor both went on and found other spouses.



*Jack Naylor*

The Feldman family moved to the Druid Lake area, in easy walking distance from one another:

The whole family lived at (A) in the map on next page, in 1920, but only Jacob, Dora and their son Solomon were there by 1930.

By 1940, Morris and Tillie lived at (B), Rosie and her Alan at (C), Charles and Elizabeth at (D), and at (E) Joseph and Fannie, all within a block or two of one another.

Jacob’s early business acumen had enabled him to support his large

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<sup>165</sup> For the collection see: <http://antiquecameras.net/images/naylor.pdf>

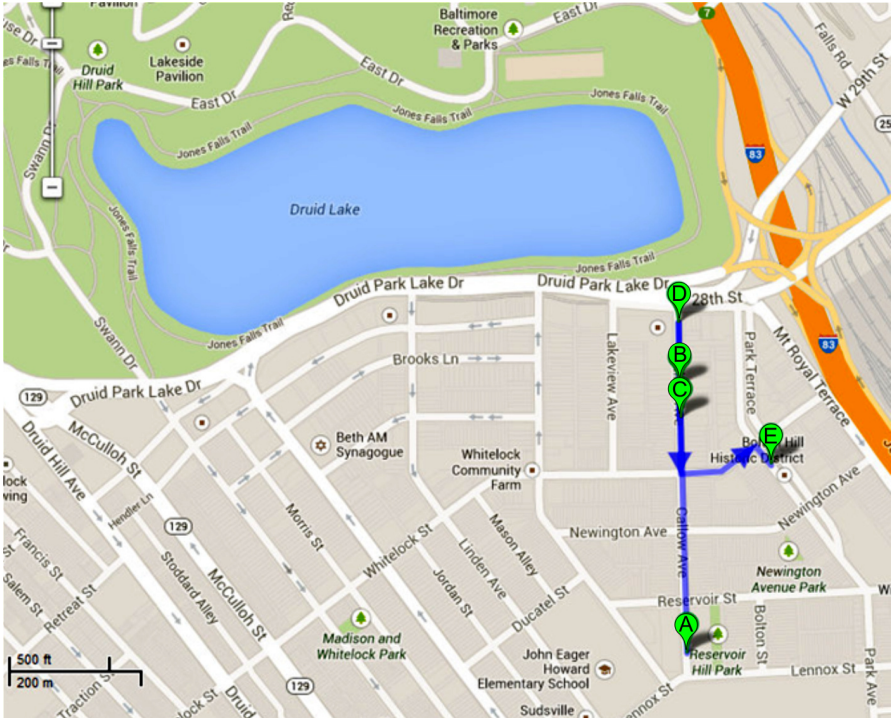
<sup>166</sup> A daughter writes: “Trying to locate my grandfather - last name Feldman, 1st name unknown - he lived in Baltimore and his family owned a clothing store in Baltimore during the years between 1915 and 1930 (+/-) My father was born in 1919 in Baltimore.” From a string of messages in Ancestry.com : <http://boards.ancestrylibrary.com/localities.northam.usa.states.maryland.counties.baltimore/2425.1.3/mb.ashx>

family comfortably and he passed his business skills on to his children. The family kept together for many years in what must have been a warm and interacting atmosphere. The grandchildren would surely remember the Pesach Seders in Callow Avenue!



COURTESY OF THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Druid Hill Park: Jewish Baltimore's green oasis, 1920-1960.*



# Part Four: From Skaudvile to Chicago

## The Skaudvile and Nemaksciai Rolnicks



*Skaudvile around 1918 from the Jewish Genealogy Kehila links<sup>168</sup>*

One shouldn't generalise, but one does. The story of the Upyna Rolnicks seemed to show that one had to be young when one arrived in the USA, if one was to take advantage of its fine educational system. Only then could one get the training needed to build an economically solid life. But the Skaudvile Rolnicks, whom we will now discuss, tell a different story. Two brothers and a cousin, each arriving beyond school age, reached three quite different economic levels. It was surely their very different drives and personalities that distinguished them and that determined their life stories.

Now the Rolnicks of Chicago consisted of three Jewish families (and a family of non-Jews from Poland). All the Jewish Rolnicks who were listed in the 1930 census of Chicago had their roots in Central Lithuania, the Raseiniai region. We have discussed those from Upyna, children of Dov Ber, first cousins of the Wynberg Rollnicks. Of the other two families, one came from Skaudvile and the other from Kelme - shtetls that were within easy travelling distance from each other and from Upyna. Certainly the Skaudvile and Upyna Rolniks would have been in close contact, especially since Dov Ber Rolnik lived at

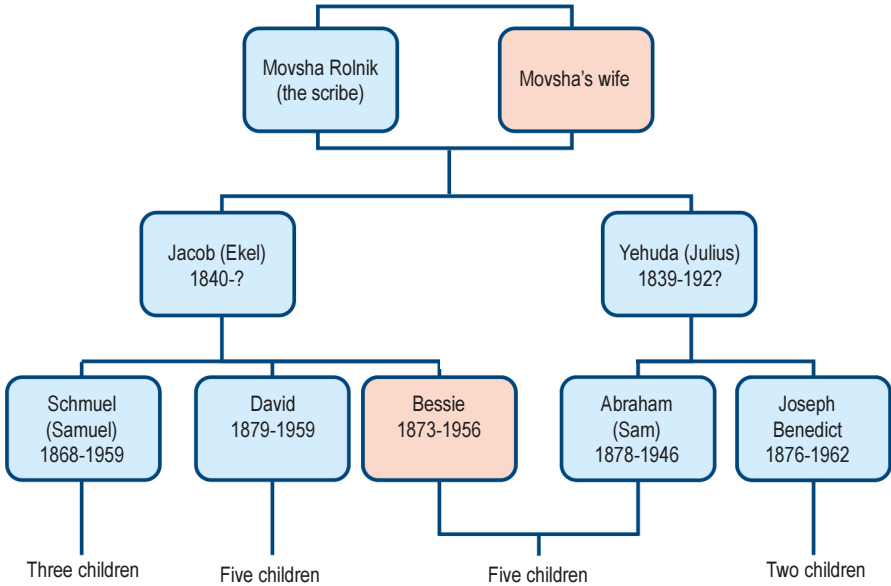
<sup>167</sup> <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/shkudvil/shkudvil.html>



times in Upyna and, at others, in Skaudvile<sup>168</sup>. All three families were in contact also after their arrival in Chicago, as we shall see.

The family from Skaudvile had two branches. The generation that reached the USA were first cousins. One branch included David, Bessie and Schmuel, the other Abraham and Yosef<sup>168</sup>. To make matters more complicated, the cousins Abraham and Bessie married each another.

### The Skaudvile and Nemaksciai Rolniks



David, the first to arrive, in “about June” 1899<sup>170</sup> aged twenty, had married Hilda just before their departure from Lithuania. He was from the start a dynamic young man. Beginning as a peddler, he specialised in junk metal, but already in 1907<sup>171</sup> he was buying property, paying \$5,500 to an S. Lieberman for a house on Johnson St

<sup>168</sup> Indeed, Sol and Morris, the twin sons of Schmuel Rolnick whom we will be discussing here, give their birthplace as “Opina” and “Upine” on their WW1 draft cards. They were born in 1894. Dov Ber’s children, William and Hyman were born in Upyna, in 1892 and 1897. Upyna’s population in 1885 (the last nineteenth century figure quoted in the Yizkor book [http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_lita/lit\\_00126d.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_lita/lit_00126d.html)) was a mere 469 of whom perhaps 280 were Jews. The fathers of the Skaudvile Rolniks were first cousins of Dov Ber Rolnik, and in the little town of Upyna, both these cousins and their children, second cousins, would certainly have known one another.

<sup>169</sup> I am indebted to descendants of Bessie, Abraham and Schmuel for much “living” information about the family.

<sup>170</sup> as he writes on his passport application which gives his birthplace as Namoksht near Skaudvile.

<sup>171</sup> April 19 1907 Chicago Tribune.

“south of 14 St”<sup>172</sup>. In that year, he is listed as having a scrap metal business<sup>173</sup>, although in the 1910 census he is merely a “peddler in a junk firm”. But again, on his WW1 draft record of 1917, he styles himself as a metal dealer, self-employed. Meanwhile he continued to buy property. In November 1916, he bought a “one story building, containing four stores” for \$27,500 “with an incumbrance<sup>174</sup> of \$6,500”<sup>175</sup>, and in July 1919 “a property with a store and flat improvements”, this time for \$57,000 with a larger incumbrance. Another property on W Lawrence St, was bought for \$65,000. Even without the “incumbrances” these are huge amounts for a junk peddler, the dollar at those times being equivalent to some 18 to 20 of today’s dollar.

By early in the 1920’s, David was sufficiently wealthy to allow him and part of his family the luxury of a six-month trip to Europe. David was now a “Real estate dealer” on his 1922 passport application<sup>176</sup>. On the photograph, we see David, Hilda, and their daughter Evelyn:



They were intending to visit relatives and travel to Lithuania, England, Germany, France, and Palestine<sup>177</sup>.

David’s property interests grew even larger. In 1924, he bought a sixty-apartment complex in Chicago - Eastnor Manor - for \$660,000

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<sup>172</sup> Johnson St is no more, but that house remained in the family for many years.

David’s cousin Abraham lived there in 1910.

<sup>173</sup> on his son Maurice’s 1907 birth certificate.

<sup>174</sup> Incumbrance - a general term for any claim or lien on a parcel of real property. These include: mortgages, deeds of trust, recorded abstracts of judgment, unpaid real property taxes, tax liens, mechanic’s liens, easements, and water or timber rights. While the owner has title, any encumbrance is usually on record (with the County Recorder or Recorder of Deeds) and must be paid for at some point.

<sup>175</sup> This and following Chicago Tribune, November 2, 1916, Chicago Tribune, July 1 1919, Chicago Tribune June 8 1920

<sup>176</sup> Signed by his relative, the lawyer Joseph Rolnick (Remember him? Michael’s son) who had known him “personally for 22 years”.

<sup>177</sup> David made another trip to Europe, this time on his own, in 1932.

(almost \$9 million today), although he sold it at a small loss two years later.

Their three daughters, Evelyn, Blanche and Ida, had married before Hilda died in January 1935, by which time David was described as a retired real estate dealer<sup>178</sup>.

David's next trip to Europe was soon after this, with a new wife, Ida. They had married at the end of March 1935, very soon after Hilda was buried. But clearly there were problems. Already in August of the same year, divorce proceedings were being undertaken. Ida made out a writ to prevent David from disposing of two large buildings in downtown Chicago and to restrain a Trust company from paying his daughter Evelyn "from a former marriage" the substantial sum of \$2,500 a month<sup>180</sup>.

Presumably the divorce went through. In his WW2 draft record David lists his next of kin as his daughter, Ida (Simons). Then in February 1943 David married again, this time to Rose Lobel<sup>179</sup>, who was left as his widow when David died in November 1959, a real estate dealer who had been "a Chicago resident for more than 60 years"<sup>181</sup>. (A photograph of David and Rose at a family wedding appears at the end of this chapter<sup>182</sup>).

David's brother Schmuel, who followed him to Chicago, did not have his rapid ascent to wealth, nor his complex matrimonial career. Schmuel first came to the USA in 1903, having left behind in Skaudvile his wife and their three young boys. He went, with \$6 in his pocket, to his brother David who had paid his fare, but later went back to Lithuania. It is not clear if he returned to Skaudvile because he was not making a good enough living or because he felt that going back would be helpful for his family's eventual emigration. In the event, he returned to America only in 1911, with his wife Blume, the twins Moische (later Morris) and Shlomo (later Sol), then aged 17, and their younger brother Asser. Schmuel had himself paid the fare, and from the shipping manifest which lists only a "friend" as being left in the Old Country, rather than the usual relative, it would seem that the parents, perhaps on both sides, had died. The Rolnicks were on their

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<sup>178</sup> Chicago Tribune Jan 7, 1935

<sup>179</sup> A grandniece writes: "I remember the wife ... as being very quiet, dominated by Dave, who could be a difficult man."

<sup>180</sup> Chicago Tribune August 25 1935. This arrangement had been made when Evelyn married Manny Goldman some two years before.

<sup>181</sup> Chicago Tribune November 17 1959. Of his children, Ida and Blanche (Bloomfield) both lost a child, sadly early in the child's life, but had other children who survived them. Evelyn's three daughters married and two are still living in the Chicago area.

<sup>182</sup> Another grand-niece "remembers David Rolnick as Uncle Dave. He was wealthy."



*A Junk Peddler on his horse-drawn wagon (from Life Magazine<sup>183</sup>)*

way to cousin (and brother-in-law) Abraham at 1424 Johnson St, Chicago (David and Hilda's old house), but were detained on entry to the USA. The reason for the detention is not clear from the shipping manifest, but they did have to wait some days in the holding station before getting cleared to enter. Such detentions, with all the fears of perhaps not being allowed entry, were always a tremendous strain. Things did not improve for them very much. In his 1917 draft record, their son Sol lists himself as a junk peddler and the sole support of his mother and father.

Blume died in 1920 of a cancer. Apart from his being listed as "husband" on Blume's death certificate (their son Sol reported her death), I had found no further record for Schmuel, until I located his grave in Waldheim cemetery. The gravestone records that he died in August 1959. He had lived to be ninety. Schmuel, known as Shminyussi (a diminutive that combines both of Schmuel Yosef's names) lived as a widower with his son Sol.

What of Schmuel and Blume's sons? Sol is still listed in his WW2 draft record as a junk dealer, unmarried but with a Lena Rosenthal as

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<sup>183</sup> <http://www.life.com/news-pictures/50455246/junk-peddler-sitting-on-horse-drawn-wagon>

his closest contact person<sup>184</sup>. When he died in 1961 of heart disease, his occupation was listed as a “peddler of scrap”. Meantime his twin, Morris (Moishe), had left the family home and had married Rose Farber from his home town in Lithuania. On his WW1 draft card, he was living in Pittsburgh, married with a child and working as a “huckster”, and the 1918 City Directory listed him as peddler (“pdlr”). The 1919 R.L. Polk & Co.'s Pittsburgh city directory showed Morris in the grocery business with his brother-in-law Harry Farber at 1409 Broadway<sup>185</sup>. The 1920 city directory showed Morris in the grocery business by himself at the same address, which also was his home. He was perhaps on his way to a solid economic future but he died aged only 29, leaving a son and two daughters<sup>186</sup>. His widow died in 1975. I have found no further trace of the youngest brother, Asser Rolnick.

Their father, Schmuel, perhaps came to the USA already too burdened with cares and family to make an economic success of his life. The contrast with his wealthy brother David, who also began as a junk peddler, is sharp.

David and Schmuel's cousin, Abraham Rolnick, younger than David by a year, had arrived in the USA a year later than David and had gone first (as written on the Shipping Manifest) to his “brother-in-law Aron” in New York (more of this Aron later). Abraham's wife Bessie and their daughter Belle followed, and by 1910 the family had settled into David's old house at 1424 Johnson St, Chicago. Abraham's occupation at that time was as presser in a clothing factory, hard and hot work that at some stage resulted in his having a paralysed arm<sup>187</sup>.

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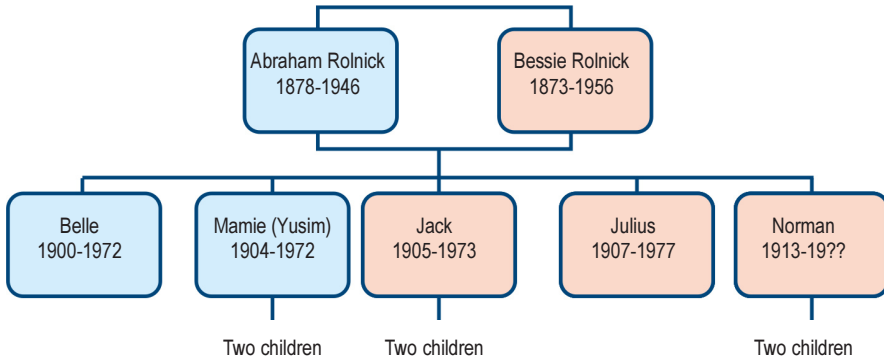
<sup>184</sup> “A ‘Sol’ did live in Chicago. He had a father with whom he lived”, wrote a grandniece of Schmuel.

<sup>185</sup> Rolnick was misspelled as Rielnick in the 1919 directory entry

<sup>186</sup> Family memory is that Morris was 28 when he died. I am in touch with a son of one of his daughters, who has provided me with much valuable information about the family. His family had lost touch with the Chicago branch. Our email exchanges brought us all together again. My informant wrote: “On the eve of Thanksgiving, I am thankful to be in touch with people who have heard of the closer Chicago relatives with whom my family lost touch.”

<sup>187</sup> One of his granddaughters writes about Abraham: “He had been injured in a work related accident and had one paralyzed arm. Through the years, he spoke little when I did visit.” And, from her sister: “My only memory of my grandfather Rolnick was at the end of his life and I can remember visiting their apartment. He was bedridden in what was their dining room. He smiled at me. I have carried that memory with me my whole life”.

## The five children of Abraham and Bessie Rolnick



By 1920, Abraham had his own shop, and his daughter Belle was a bookkeeper "in a clothing store", perhaps her father's. However, with the Great Depression of 1929, things did not work out so well for Abraham and by the census of 1930 he was again a presser, now working for the Handmacher Company. The Handmachers, father and sons, very successful tailors, produced elegant women's suits that were distributed all over the USA<sup>188</sup>. To the right is one example.

Abraham's older children, in that 1930 census, were almost all contributing to the family income. Belle was a saleslady in a candy store, Mamie a bookkeeper in an office. Jack was a clerk in a bank and Julius a "helper" in a factory. Only Norman was still at school.

From one of Abraham's grandchildren: "My grandfather,

Abraham, would frequently stop off, on his way home from Saturday morning services, and have a glass of tea with my maternal grandmother, who lived in our building. We all walked in those days, no car, so he could rest before more walking home. They talked about the old country."

Of Abraham and Bessie's five children, only Mamie and Jack married. Sadly, as one of Abraham's grandchildren writes about her

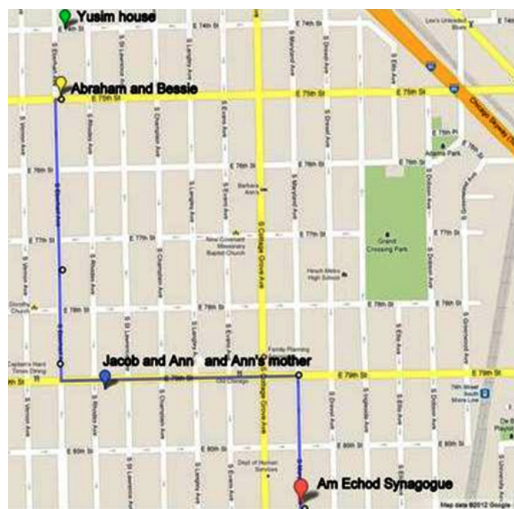


<sup>188</sup> <http://coutureallure.blogspot.com/2010/10/history-of-handmacher-suits.html>

uncles and aunts “Three of the children had a condition that made them blind“. And a grandson wrote: “They [Abraham and Bessie..wds] were each carriers of the recessive gene for Retinitis Pigmentosa<sup>189</sup>. As a result three of their children were blind from this terrible affliction. My mother(Mamie) was one of the sufferers. The other two afflicted never married. ... Jack [and Norman...wds]were spared.... My mother was visually impaired for my entire life. [In] her wedding picture, she already wore thick glasses. I believe that she lost her independence when I was 5 or 6. I mostly remember her as being blind. .... My mother tried to live with dignity and she had a difficult time. In those years, afflictions were hidden and not discussed. It made my father angry and he held her and everyone around him responsible for his lack of success. Of course, that was his way of coping... ...[Aunt Belle] moved to the Jewish home for the blind. After my father died, my mother joined her there and they had a few lovely years together. Julius always lived alone. He was a strong independent man.”

In the map below, Abraham and Bessie’s last house at 504 E 75 St is near the top, on the left, while his Am Echod shul is bottom right.

(It is now an African Methodist Church. The Ten Commandments



504 E 75 St



The Am Echod synagogue

<sup>189</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retinitis\\_pigmentosa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retinitis_pigmentosa):

“The most challenging aspect of RP is that it is not stable. Sufferers must continually adapt to less and less sight and how that impacts their life, career and relationships.” Also :

August 11, 2011 - A research team, funded by the Foundation for Fighting Blindness, led by the University of Iowa, has identified a defect in the gene MAK as a prevalent cause of autosomal recessive retinitis pigmentosa (arRP) in people of Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jewish descent.

[http://www.blindness.org/index.php?view=article&catid=65%3Aretinitis-pigmentosa&id=2835%3Anewly-found-gene-is-common-cause-of-rp-in-people-of-jewish-descent&option=com\\_content&Itemid=121](http://www.blindness.org/index.php?view=article&catid=65%3Aretinitis-pigmentosa&id=2835%3Anewly-found-gene-is-common-cause-of-rp-in-people-of-jewish-descent&option=com_content&Itemid=121)

are just visible above the entrance.)<sup>190</sup> In the lower middle of the map, their son Jack's house at 7903 Rhodes Avenue is indicated ("Jacob and Ann") and also their daughter Mamie's (these being the Yusim family), just north of Abraham and Bessie, at 504 East 74th. Jack's mother-in-law, Esther Klaskin, with whom Abraham drank tea, lived in the same building as Jack and Ann. Jack's sister Belle (known to the family as Bea) lived with Jack and Ann for a time after Jack's mother, Bessie, died, before going to the Jewish Home for the Blind.

About Jack, a daughter writes: "My dad, Jack Rolnick, graduated from Northwestern University. [He] put himself through their night school and received a Business Degree while he worked during the day at a bank in Chicago.... He also was a manager of their basketball team; he was too short to play himself. He was the only one of Abraham and Bessie's children to be able to get a college education." Where he worked was in the Trust Division of the First National Bank and later in the treasurer's office of the Chicago Board of Trade. Jack was also very active in the affairs of his father's Am Echod synagogue, as secretary and then Vice-President, and much concerned in the congregation's two-year-long (1946-1948) building of its new synagogue<sup>191</sup> (seen in the picture above). Prior to that, the congregation had met in a store in nearby Cottage Grove Ave. It must have warmed Abraham's heart to have his son so active in synagogue affairs<sup>192</sup>.

Abraham's death certificate, 1946, gives him as a "retired presser". He and Bessie had not quite managed to reach their Golden Wedding. Bessie's obituary in 1956 lists her as having by then six grandchildren. Hard work, in the face of great difficulties, had enabled Abraham to support his young family, with the children also contributing income, but he never could think of reaching the economic heights of his cousin David.

A grandson wrote these perceptive sentences: "There seemed to be a large social difference between the wealthy and the modest Rolnicks. Abe and Bessie's children were modest at best. Only Jack (Jacob) finished college. He too achieved only modest success. I

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<sup>190</sup> A granddaughter of Abraham writes: "Seeing the shul has brought tears to my eyes. The route my grandfather took is so interesting to see. That's the route we often took from our home to get to Am Echod. I can visualize going up to the next block, etc. Rabbi Rush was our rabbi. Before him, it was Rabbi Teller. His daughter and I went to elementary school together."

<sup>191</sup> Chicago Daily Tribune Mar 20, 1949

<sup>192</sup> Jack and his wife Ann Klaskin had two daughters who went on to successful academic careers. The eldest, Nancy, had married a fellow student at the University of Chicago. Her sister, Ina, married a fellow student at Hirsch High School, where both girls had studied. (Chicago Daily Tribune Jan 23, 1955, Jan 3, 1960). Mamie and Sam Yusim had two sons, Sheldon and Arnold, both successful businessmen in Chicago. I had been much in touch with Arnold on family history until his sudden and early death. Sheldon also died suddenly. As we shall see in the final chapter, he had contributed a cheek swab for DNA testing some time before his death. This swab provided the proof of the genetic link between the Upyna and Skaudvile Rolnicks.



remember great uncle Dave. He would come to visit my grandmother. My house was called and we had to make an appearance before [Dave]. He would pinch my cheeks hard and give me a nickel. He brought his wife with him and she was very quiet and pleasant. Sol Rolnick would bring his father to visit my grandmother [Bessie]. He had the appearance of a rag picker. His belt was a length of rope“.

And of his uncle Norman, he writes: „Norman was always kind of a dreamer and on the edge of failure. His married Lois and moved to Ariz. After his death, she moved to L.A. and is still alive. I think“.

In 1939, just after the Nazis entered Vienna, David Rolnick succeeded in saving Abraham's brother Joseph Benedict (Rolnick) and his family from the fate of so many other Viennese Jews by arranging for them to leave Vienna for the USA. We have seen, in the case of the lawyer Joseph Rolnick's involvement in his cousin Tisha Stein's visa (in her case from Lithuania), just how difficult it was to get such visas. Lawyer Joseph, with this experience, would have been familiar with the legal aspects of the process and, no doubt, gave David the help he needed in his turn. Joseph Benedict (who had dropped the "Rolnick") had been a cantor in Vienna. David brought him out of that danger, together with Joseph's wife, Regina, and their two grown-up sons Leo and Erich. All four built their lives anew in the USA. Joseph found work as a shochet (a ritual slaughterer, of chickens in his case) in the Chicago meat markets, somewhat of a comedown after being a cantor in Vienna, but such was the fate of so many of those refugees from Hitler, the lucky ones who got away, that is. Leo remained with his parents in Chicago, while Erich moved to California. Both sons served in WW2.

A niece writes: “. I did very much like Leo and Eric Benedict, their parents and wives.... They were always kind to me and seemed to deeply care about each other.“



*Joseph and Regina Benedict, sons and daughters-in-law, around 1942*

Below are more pictures of some of our Skaudvile Rolnicks:



*Left to right: Ann, Nancy and Jacob Rolnick, Grandfather Abraham, his brother Joseph, Joseph's wife Regina and a son, Eric Benedict. (At Nancy's wedding, another twenty years further on, not only was her granduncle David Rolnick present, but also "a Dr. Rolnick, who may have been a cousin of my dad's. He was a urologist in Chicago at the time" - wrote Nancy. This was Harry C. Rolnick of the Upyna Rolnicks, Michael the butcher's son).*

And, at Jack and Ann's daughter Nancy's wedding in 1958 :



*Rose and David Rolnick*



*Herta and Leo Benedict (Rolnick)*



*Sam and Mamie (Rolnick) Yissum*



*Elsie and Harry Rolnick*

I append here parts of a report I wrote some time ago that summarises the genealogical evidence connecting the different branches of the Chicago Rolnicks.

### Report on the Skaudvile Rolnicks, March 20, 2013

I think that I have finally got clear the relationship between the various Skaudvile and Nemaščiai Rolnicks and perhaps even their relationship with the Uplyna Rolniks.

I had originally thought that Abraham, Samuel, and David Rolnick were brothers and that Bessie, Abraham's cousin, was in a separate branch with an Aron Rolnik of New York, with Josef (Rolnick) Benedict a third branch. What made me think again was this obituary notice<sup>193</sup>, with its genealogical information that I had simply neglected:

It says clearly that Bessie had left behind her two brothers, Samuel and David. When I came across this the other day, I said to myself...well, they must have

**SEeley 3-0463.**  
**ROLNICK—Bessie Rolnick of 504 E. 75th street, beloved wife of the late Abraham; loving mother of Belle Mamie Yusim Jack, Julius, and Norman; fond grandmother of six; dear sister of Samuel and David Rolnick. Services Monday, 1 p. m. at chapel, 6835 Stony Island avenue. Interment Okaj cemetery, Waldheim. Please omit flowers. DOrchester 3-4920.**

meant brothers-in-law. Then I found the précis in Ancestry.com of the death record of Bessie and realized that I could obtain the original from Cook County. I bought it, for \$17, and reproduce it on the next page. It shows that Bessie's father is Jacob.

Now, on their gravestones (also on the next page), Samuel's father is Yaacov (in Hebrew) and David's is also Yaacov. So both David and Samuel are sons of Jacob and hence they and Bessie are siblings. The obituary was correct after all.

But then where does Abraham fit in? On his death certificate, his father is listed as Julius and he himself was from Skaudvile. Julius is not a name from the old shtetels, but is the USA form of Yehuda. Who else was a son of Yehuda? Josef Benedict Rolnick... (See his gravestone on the next page). So Abraham and Josef were brothers, sons of Yehuda Rolnick.

Bottom right on this picture of gravestones is an old stone from the Skaudvile Jewish Cemetery, photographed, recorded and transliterated by the dedicated volunteers of the Lithuanian Cemetery project Maceva (Aleksandr Avramenko and Srgy Kanovich).

<http://litvak-cemetery.info/en/>, and <http://litvak-cemetery.info/en/list-of-cemeteries/details/4/187>.

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<sup>193</sup> Chicago Herald Tribune 30 December 1956

015  
69-889  
700  
2206

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

STATE FILE NUMBER: 91098  
REGISTRATION DISTRICT NO. 16.10 REGISTERED NUMBER

REGISTRAR'S BIRTH NO. \_\_\_\_\_

1. PLACE OF DEATH  
a. COUNTY: COOK  
b. TOWNSHIP: Cook

2. USUAL RESIDENCE (If more than one, give address, city, village or town, and county.)  
a. STATE: Illinois  
b. COUNTY: Cook  
c. TOWNSHIP: Cook

3. DEATH PLACE  
a. CITY, VILLAGE, OR TOWN: CHICAGO  
b. CITY, VILLAGE, OR TOWN: Chicago Ill  
c. STREET ADDRESS: 604 & 75th Street  
d. DATE OF DEATH: 1956-12-29

4. LENGTH OF STAY IN CITY, VILLAGE, OR TOWN: 50 YEARS

5. NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION: Englewood Hospital  
6. NAME OF DECEASED: **Samia Rolnick**

7. SEX: Female  
8. RACE: white  
9. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (specify): widowed  
10. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY: Housewife  
11. BIRTHPLACE (City and state or foreign country): Lithuania  
12. Cause of death: U.S.A.

13. FATHER'S FULL NAME: Jacob Rolnick  
14. MOTHER'S FULL NAME: Unknown  
15. Was deceased ever in U. S. Armed Forces? No  
16. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: Unknown  
17. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE: T. Harris  
18. CAUSE OF DEATH: Part I. Terminal Broncho Pneumonia  
Part II. Arteriosclerotic Heart Disease  
Part III. Generalized Arteriosclerosis  
19. AUTOPSY: YES  NO

20. DESCRIBE CIRCUMSTANCES OF INJURY, IF ANY, WHOSE NATURE IS MENTIONED IN PART I OR PART II ABOVE.

21. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from Dec-26, 1956, to Dec-29, 1956, and that I last saw the deceased alive on Dec-28, 1956, and death occurred on Dec-29, 1956, from the causes and on the date stated above.  
DATE: 12-30-56 SIGNED: Max Berg M.D. ADDRESS: 7111 So. Jeffery Avenue PHONE: By-3-4477

22. DEPOSITION: MADE AT CHICAGO, ILL. ON 12-31-56  
23. PLACE OF BURIAL: PISER MEMORIAL CHAPEL, 5935 Stony Island Avenue, Chicago, Ill.  
24. DECEASED FILED ON: DEC 30 1956

CHICAGO BOARD OF HEALTH LOCAL REGISTRAR

ORIGINAL MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH



Hard to read from here, but the devoted project members read it, listed it and translated it as: 332 [Rol]nik]. Yehuda, son of r. Moshe ?????? on the..... of Shvat 568... (192...) "This pillar be witness, and this heap be witness" (version of Gen 35:52) about dear, good and righteous man, who performed holy craft in good faith and constantly studied Torah. This is our father, rabbi and [our teacher] Yehuda, son of r. Moshe, the sofer (i.e., scribe of Torah scrolls, phylacteries and mezuzahs wds ) [Rol]nik]. Passed away with good name on the... of Shvat 568... (192...) May his soul be tied into the knot of life.

עדה  
 המצבה ועד הגל הזה  
 על איש יקר תם וישר  
 עשק בעבודה הקדש  
 באמונה וקבע עתים  
 לתורה ה"ר אנינו [מו"ה]  
 יהודה ב"ר משה סתם  
 [ראל]ניק נפטר בשם טוב  
 ... שבט שנת תרפ"..  
 תנצבה

Wonderful!

So here we have Yehuda Rolnik of Skaudvile, rabbi and teacher, son of Moshe the Torah scribe. On Cantor Joseph Benedict Rolnick's gravestone above, he is the son of Yehuda, and hence grandson of the Torah scribe. On the death certificate of his brother Abraham, his father's name is recorded as Julius, an Americanised form of Yehuda.

And in the Jewish Genealogy web site,

[http://data.jewishgen.org/wconnect/wc.dll?jg-jgsearch-model2-\[TAXVOTERS\]TAXVOTERS20](http://data.jewishgen.org/wconnect/wc.dll?jg-jgsearch-model2-[TAXVOTERS]TAXVOTERS20), one finds:

Judel (that is Yehuda) Rolnik, son of Movsha, born 1839, living in Skaudvile on 28 June 1893. According to our records, Yehudah's sons,



**LitvakSIG**  
 lithuanian-jewish special interest group  
 Dedicated to discovering and preserving our Litvak heritage

## Tax and Voters Lists

| Searching for Surname Rolnik and Town skaudvile |        |                                     |                |           |                             |
|---|--------|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Run on Wednesday 20 March 2013 at 14:31:41      |        |                                     |                |           |                             |
| Name  | Father | Comments                            | Day            | Town      | Archive/Fond/Inventory/File |
|   | Age    |                                     | Month          | Uyezd     | Record #                    |
|   |        | Type of Record                      | Year           | Guberniya | Page #                      |
| ROLNIK, Berel                                   | Iosel  | well-to-do; 1 in family; from Upyna | 25             | Skaudvile | KRA/I-49/1/14655            |
|   |        |                                     | May            | Raseiniai | 87                          |
|   |        | Box Taxpayers                       | 1885           | Kaunas    | 166                         |
| ROLNIK, Iudel                                   | Movsha | absent; out of town                 | 28             | Skaudvile | KRA/I-49/1/17953            |
|   |        |                                     | June           | Raseiniai | 17                          |
|   |        | 54                                  | Rabbi Electors | 1893      | Kaunas                      |

Abraham and Josef, were born in 1878 and 1876, respectively. On Abraham's death notice his birth town is Skaudvile. Listed above, also as a Skaudvile Rolnik, is Berel, son of Josel, originally from Upyna. This is our Dov Ber Rolnik father of 14, of whom many came to live in Chicago. Their cousin, Samuel (Schmuel) Rolnick describes himself, when coming to the USA in 1911, as being from Skaudvile.

Elsewhere in the Jewish Genealogy web site is:

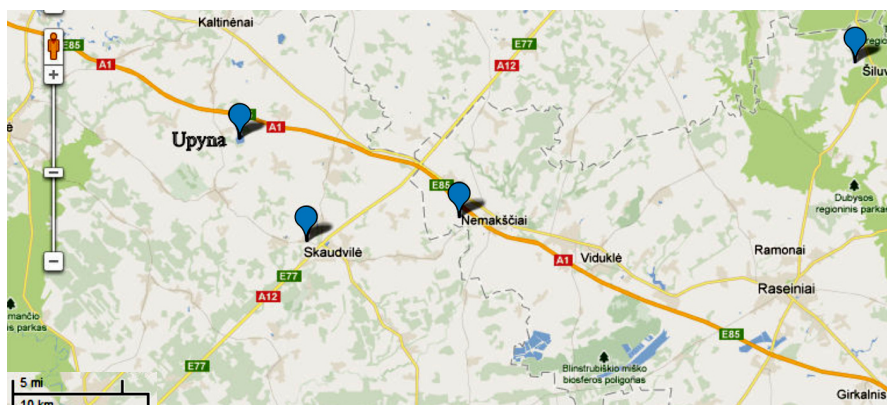
### Tax and Voters Lists

| Searching for Surname Rolnik<br>and Given Name ekel |               |                            |                      |  |   |
|---|---------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Run on Wednesday 20 March 2013 at 14:33:40          |               |                            |                      |  |   |
| Name  | Father<br>Age | Comments<br>Type of Record | Day<br>Month<br>Year | Town<br>Uyezd<br>Guberniya<br>Nemaksciai | Archive/Fond/Inventory/File<br>Record #<br>Page # |
| ROLNIK, Ekel  | Movsha<br>52  | Rabbi Electors             | 13                   | Raseiniai                                | KRA/I-49/1/16616                                  |
|   |               |                            | December<br>1892     | Kaunas                                   | 68<br>38  |

This is Ekel from Nemaksciai, son of Movsha and born in 1840.

The name Ekel is a diminutive or nickname for Yaakov (Yankel, Ekel). This is almost certainly Jacob Rolnik, father of David, Schmuel and Bessie Rolnick. David was born in 1879 in Namoksht (which is Nemaksciai), according to his US Passport application.

We need to get straight the localities of which we are currently speaking- Skaudvile, Nemaksciai and Upyna. The map below shows these villages, and also Siluva (top right) which becomes important a little later.



Upyna is 10 Km from Skaudvile, Nemakscia another 10 Km further along and Siluva (top right on the map), another 50 Km on. Yehuda (Julius) and Ekel (Jacob), sons of Movsha the scribe, lived as adults some 10 Km from each other. Each of these four shtetls had some 200 to 250 Jews living in them in 1847 when a census was taken and when the brothers Yehuda and Ekel were little boys, probably studying in the cheder. Skaudvile was to become a local center for religious education with a well-known yeshiva<sup>194</sup>. We know that Yehuda went on to become “our rabbi and teacher”, but of Ekel we know nothing more, other than that he was a “Rabbi Elector”<sup>195</sup>, as was his brother, in the early 1890’s. By this time there were around 1,000 Jews in Skaudvile and Nemaksciai, but only 500 in Upyna.

Yehuda’s sons, Abraham and Josef were, on this genealogical evidence, first cousins of Ekel’s children: Bessie, David and Samuel.

There is a mystery in that Abraham (calling himself Samuel at that stage) is recorded as going to his brother-in-law (who would thus be Bessie’s brother), Aron Rolnik, in New York. There is no direct genealogical evidence linking Aron with the other Rolnicks. (An Aaron Rolnik from Lithuania, son of a Max Rolnik, was first a peddler, then a sexton and, later, a rabbi in Manhattan – see the Vilna New York Rolnicks in a later chapter).

So how do these descendants of Movsha, the scribe from Skaudvile, relate to the Upyna Rolnicks, ancestors of the “other” Chicago Rolnicks, and to my ancestors? There are three pieces of indirect evidence for close links. First, in 1921, Hyman Rolnick, one of the many sons of Berel (Dov Ber) Rolnik, and born in Upyna, had David Rolnick sign his naturalization papers. (The other signatory was Nathan Gardner, whose father had married Hyman’s sister.) Second, the next year, David took out a US Passport and had Joseph Rolnick, a prominent Chicago lawyer and community activist and grandson of Dov Ber (Berel) Rolnik, sign it. Third, on the 1958 wedding photograph of Abraham and Bessie’s granddaughter, Nancy Rolnick, Joseph’s brother Dr. Harry C. Rolnick appears (the photograph is on page 176).

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<sup>194</sup> Apparently, Jews first settled in Skaudvile during the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Later, the Jews became the decisive majority in the town. Jews who owned inns on both sides of the main road, and Jews who engaged in other businesses, needed a Beth Midrash (which was established in 1862) and a local Yeshiva, which were headed by Rabbi Shaul Joffe and Rabbi Dov-Ber, who was the supervisor. Jews from the surrounding areas used to come often to Skaudvile in order to find grooms for their daughters among the Yeshiva students. [http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_lita/lit\\_00695.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_lita/lit_00695.html).

<sup>195</sup> The “Rabbi Elector” list was composed of the Jewish town dwellers (heads of households).. They were also the Board of Directors of the Synagogue. They elected a Rabbi to keep the Jewish records. [http://www.mindspring.com/~peggyf/pusalotas/html/elector\\_surnames.html](http://www.mindspring.com/~peggyf/pusalotas/html/elector_surnames.html)

Joseph and Harry were the sons of Michael Rolnick, himself a son of Berel Rolnik of Upyna (and Skaudvile). When signing David's passport, lawyer Joseph stated that he had known David for 22 years. David had arrived in the USA 23 years before he took out the passport. It would appear that the grandchildren of Movsha Rolnik, the scribe, and the children and grandchildren of Berel Rolnik of Skaudvile and Upyna had kept in contact over more than fifty years. Additionally, Samuel's son Sol cites Upyna as his birthplace, in 1894, when Berel's children, William and Hyman, were still living there in that little town<sup>196</sup>.

Now, Joseph and Harry list themselves as having been born in Siluva, which we saw to be fifty Km east of Skaudvile and Nemaksciai, and Michael is listed in the 1885 document below as residing in Siluva (we need not be concerned by the transliteration differences, Ralnik for Rolnik, Mikhel for Michael) :

### Tax and Voters Lists

| Searching for Surname Rolnik and Given Name michael |        |   |       |           |                             |
|---|--------|---|-------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Run on Wednesday 20 March 2013 at 16:05:33          |        |   |       |           |                             |
| Name  | Father | Comments                                    | Day   | Town      | Archive/Fond/Inventory/File |
|   | Age    | Type of Record                              | Month | Uyezd     | Record #                    |
|   |        |   | Year  | Guberniya | Page #                      |
| RALNIK, Mikhel                                      |        | well-to-do; has a house; 1 person in family |       | Siluva    | KRA/I-49/1/14655            |
|   |        | Jewish Community List                       | 1885  | Raseiniai | 64                          |
|   |        |   |       | Kaunas    | 197                         |

The point here is that the Siluva Rolniks had already moved away from the Upyna, Skaudvile, Nemaksciai triangle well before they left Lithuania for the USA (Michael was an early immigrant, getting to Chicago already in 1889, with his wife and sons following him in 1896, presumably after he was properly established in America). Yet the Skaudvile/Nemaksciai Rolnicks were in close contact over the succeeding fifty years. By the time that David Rolnick applied for his passport in 1922 he was already an important person in Chicago, owner of real estate, who must have known many people who could attest to his suitability as bearer of a US passport. Yet he chose Joseph to sign – surely on grounds of the family connection. Likewise Hyman could have found many to support his naturalization – he chose David and also his sister's stepson, again presumably as family connections. And Harry C. Rolnick appears in that wedding photograph, again

<sup>196</sup> Before WWI, 30-40 Jewish families, who earned their living from petty trade and agriculture, lived in Upyna. [http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_lita/lit\\_00126d.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_lita/lit_00126d.html)



presumably as family.

What we had lacked was the hard evidence that a genetic match would give - or perhaps refute. The confirmation has now been found. As will be shown in the chapter entitled The Rolnick Chromosomes, we have now obtained the unequivocal genetic evidence. This comes from the analysis of DNA from a cheek swab from Sheldon Yusim, grandson of the cousins, Abraham and Bessie Rolnick, and comparing this with data from swabs from a member of the Chicago Rolnicks and from swabs from several of the Wynberg Rollnicks and the Silbersteins, descendants of Johanna Rolnik of Upyna. All of these Rolnick descendants share substantial markers on their chromosomes and are hence closely related.

The genetic data suggest that the Upyna Rolnicks, children of Yosel Rolnik of Upyna are cousins of Yosel's generation of the Skaudvile Rolnicks, children of Movsha Rolnik. Yosel being the son of Leib/Leyba, it is most probable that Movsha was also Leib's son. And Leib/Leyba himself? Take a look at line 58 on the following list of Box Taxpayers living in Kelme in 1850 who, for one reason or another, were unable to pay the required tax:

|    | A                             | B     | C    | D             | E             | F      | G |              |
|----|-------------------------------|-------|------|---------------|---------------|--------|---|--------------|
| 50 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | MORDKHELOVICH | Nisel         |        |   | missing      |
| 51 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | MOVSHOVICH    | Izrel Zelman  |        |   | missing      |
| 52 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | NAKHMANOVICH  | Manka         |        |   | missing; i   |
| 53 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | NAKHMANOVICH  | Kalman Leiba  |        |   | missing; i   |
| 54 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | NOKHEMOVICH?  | Movsha Zelman |        |   | missing      |
| 55 | Oath                          | Kelme | 1850 | NOKHUMOVICH   | Sender Girsh  |        |   | 40 signature |
| 56 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | PESHER?       | Zavel         | Yudel  |   | missing      |
| 57 | Oath                          | Kelme | 1850 | RAKHEL        | Girsh         | Leiba  |   | 46 signature |
| 58 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | ROLNIK?       | Leib          | Yankel |   | missing      |
| 59 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | RUVELOVICH    | Man Rafel     |        |   | poor         |
| 60 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | SADOV         | Leib          | Manko  |   | poor         |
| 61 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | SAMSON        | Leib          | Girsh  |   | missing      |
| 62 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | SAMSON        | Eliash        | Itsko  |   | missing      |
| 63 | Box Taxpayers - unable to pay | Kelme | 1850 | SAMSON        | Eliash        | Girsh  |   | missing      |

Here is Leib "Rolnik?", son of Yankel , missing (and hence unable to pay his tax?), and living in Kelme, some 35 Km North of Skaudvile and Upyna. This is surely our Leib/Leyba and he is the son of Yankel. This Yankel is probably the person who was remembered in the names of some of the numerous American Jakes, Jacks and Jacobs found as the children of these Rolniks. (Berel's son Jake was born in 1875, so he could not have been named after Ekel of Skaudvile, who was still alive in 1877 when he fathered his youngest child David).

I should mention one more son of Leyba from the Raseiniai region:

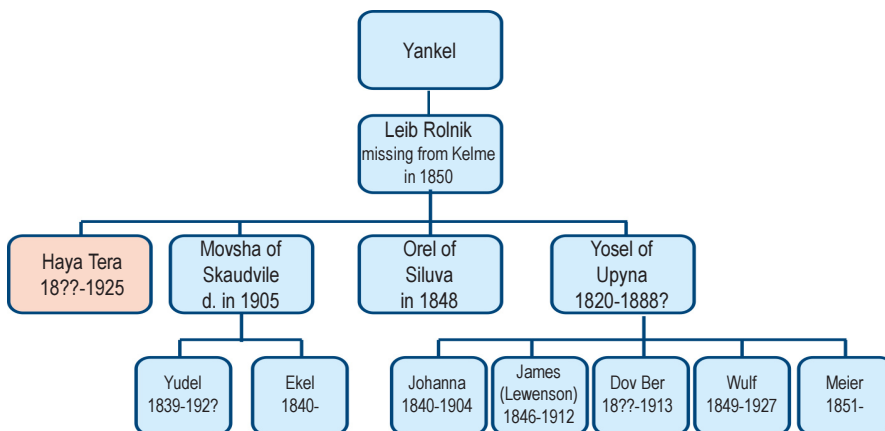
## Tax and Voters Lists

| Name         | Father | Comments   | Day   | Town      | Archive/Fond/Inventory/File |
|--------------|--------|--|-------|-----------|-----------------------------|
|              |        |  | Month | Uyezd     | Record #                    |
|              |        |  | Year  | Guberniya | Page #                      |
| ROLNIK, Orel | Leyba  | From Shavlnsk society; in 1849 in Tsitovni town he will rent out his house | 23    | Siluva    | KRA/I-49/1/2181             |
|              |        |  | Dec   | Raseiniai |                             |
|              |        |  | 1848  | Kaunas    |                             |
|              |        | Taxpayers  |       |           |                             |

This is Orel (a shortened form of Aaron), son of Leyba of Siluva, some 15 Km from both Kelme and Raseiniai, and only a little further than that from Skaudvile and Nemaksciai. As the record shows, Orel owned a house in nearby Tsitovni (Tytuvenai, 5 Km from Siluva) and came originally from Shavinsk (mis-transliterated here as Shavlnsk), today Suvainiškis, a town on the western border between Lithuania and Latvia. We will have occasion to refer to this record when we discuss the Kelme Rolnicks, and again when we discuss the Silbersteins, descendants of Wolf and Berl Rolnik's sister, Johanna. Johanna had married Tzvi Silberstein, a native of Tsitovni.

So have we identified the progenitor of the Central Rolnicks living in the Raseniai region of Lithuania in which the shtetls of Skaudvile, Upyna, Kelme, Nemaksciai, Siluva, and Taurage are to be found and where this tribe of Rolniks lived, but perhaps did not prosper?

### A scheme for the descendants of Yankel in the Raseniai region



## Part Five: From Kelme to Chicago

### The Kelme Rolnicks

On the 15th of May 1912, Dora Rolnik, 18 years old, crossed into the USA from Canada at St Albans, Vermont. She had travelled on the SS Montreal from Antwerp to St Johns, Newfoundland, travelling from there to the border at St Albans. The shipping manifest records that Dora was a “domestic” and had left behind in Jonava, in the Kovno district of Lithuania, her father Schmuil. She was on her way to Chicago to her brother Aba Rolnik “c/o Morris Schamiels” at 1409 S Jefferson St.

So we already know a good deal about Dora. She is one of “our” Rolnicks, from Lithuania. Her father is Samuel Rolnik, and the birth record of a Samuil Rolnik is found in the Jewish Genealogy database (see page 188). She has a brother Abraham, already in the USA and probably related in some way to Morris Samuels. Now Morris Samuels had already married a Tillie Rolnik in Lithuania and, by the census of 1910, was established as a meat seller in the Chicago market, and living at that 1409 South Jefferson St, around the corner from the busy Maxwell St.

Dora’s elder brother Abraham (the Aba Rolnik “c/o Morris Schamiels”) had arrived in the USA a year or two before Dora. Their younger brother Jack H (as he always styled himself) came two years after her. Both Abraham and Jack list their birth town as Kelme in Lithuania, although spelling this in different ways<sup>197</sup>. Kelme is some twenty miles from Upyna and Skaudvile, from where the other Chicago Rolnicks came, and had one of the wonderful wooden synagogues of the region<sup>198</sup>:

Seven months after her arrival in



<sup>197</sup> WW1 draft records in the Ancestry.com website

<sup>198</sup> Kelme was, with Mariampole, also the home town of the many Jews who went to South Africa and entered the ostrich feather business.

Chicago, Dora married Louis Lasinsky. Louis was from Kiev, so it could not have been a marriage arranged already in the Old Country, but maybe Abraham and Louis knew each other. Louis had been a waiter in a restaurant in 1910, but later became a chauffeur, working for a taxi cab company. He was still driving a cab, for the Yellow Cab firm in 1941. In the 1920 census record, Dora and Louis and their two children are sharing a house at 3612 Indiana Ave, five or six miles south of the old Maxwell St area, with Abraham and his wife (also Dora) and their two daughters. The house is now a parking lot!



*3612 Indiana Ave, Chicago.*

Also living in that house were Jack H, that younger brother of Abraham and Dora (Rolnick), and Herman Jacobson, the brother of Dora, Abraham's wife, with another couple occupying the ground floor. So this was three families and their extended families, quite a tight squeeze. Abraham had been working as a butcher, probably since his arrival in the USA<sup>199</sup>, and his brother Jack H was the proprietor of a shop in the meat market, as was Jack's brother-in-law, Herman Jacobson. Sadly, Abraham died the following year, leaving Dora with two little daughters. Had Abraham and Dora moved into the Indiana Avenue house to get family help with Abraham's illness? Dora married again and the two little girls lived with their mother and stepfather, with a stepbrother arriving by the 1930 census<sup>200</sup>. One daughter, Bertha married Benjamin Zimmerman, one of the founders of Zimmerman Liquors, a well-known bottle store in Chicago, photographed here in 1974<sup>201</sup>:

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<sup>199</sup> but in the 1920 census he is listed as the keeper of a grocery store

<sup>200</sup> The girls, Florence and Bertha, were recorded in the 1930 census as having the surname Jacobson, after their stepfather, but both reverted later to the name Rolnick. We note that their mother's maiden name was Jacobson, their paternal grandmother was Ethel Jacobson, and now their stepfather was Abraham Jacobson. Not so easy to keep track of it all!

<sup>201</sup> *Zimmerman's Liquors, across from the Civic Center. (Lowell Beyer)*. The Zimmerman brothers, Max, Hyman, and Benjamin, had crossed over from Canada into the USA in 1933 with the ending of Prohibition, and set up their first shop soon after.



Jack H married Emma Morf in 1923 and in 1928 was living in David Rolnick's old house at 1615 S Trumbull Ave (the only documentary evidence we have that these two Rolnick families had been in contact<sup>202</sup>). He and Emma had one child, a daughter, Sybil. Jack remained a butcher all his working life. Sybil married Elliott Gordon and the couple went live in California.

How are these Kelme Rolnicks related to other Lithuanian Rolnicks? Here we have a problem. Do the Kelme Rolnicks belong to the Central (Upyna and Skaudvile) tribe .. or are they from the Northern (Telsiai) Rolnicks? One can marshal evidence for both propositions.



*1615 South Trumbull Ave in 2007, looking like it's the next to go.*

<sup>202</sup> Chicago Directory, 1928: Rolnick Jack meats 323 E Pershing road r1615 S Trumbull ave

For the first possibility, we note that Jack H lived, in 1928, in David Rolnick's old house on South Trumbull Ave. But David was a realtor and one would naturally go to him if one needed a house and especially if one happened to be named Rolnick. We note too that the Kelme Rolnicks came from the heart of the region in which the Central Rolnicks lived. Finally, the family names, Abraham, Jack (Harry), and Dora are names we find many times amongst the Central Rolnicks.

But both Abraham and Dora give their father's name as Samuel. There is only one Samuel Rolnik of the correct age in the Jewish Genealogy Lithuanian website and this is Samuil Josif Ralnik, son of Itsyk Rolnik and Zlata Back<sup>203</sup>.

| Name                         | Father,<br>Grandfather      | Date of Birth<br>DD/MM/YY | Town              | Comments | Place<br>Recorded | Microfilm /<br>Item |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|---------------------|
|                              | Mother,<br>Grandfather      |                           | Ujezd             |          | Year              | Image               |
|                              | Mother<br>Maiden<br>Surname | Hebrew<br>Date            | Guberniya         |          | Record #          | Archive / Fond      |
|                              |                             |                           |                   |          |                   |                     |
| <b>RALNIK</b> , Samuil Josif | Itsyk, Girsh                | 15/2/1864                 | Telsiai           |          | Telsiai           | 2205131 / 2         |
|                              | Zlata, -                    | 20 Adar                   | Telsiai<br>Kaunas |          | 1864              | 767                 |

His age, born 1864, is appropriate for the three Kelme children born in 1891, 1894 and 1896, and his parentage is exactly that of a Telsiai Rolnik. We did, of course, meet a Samuel Joseph among the Skaudvile Rolnicks, so this was a name from the Central Rolnik tribe also.

Did the Kelme Rolnicks interact with Chicago Rolnicks other than David? Two of the Upyna Rolnicks, Lena (Gardner) and William, both lived on South Lawndale Ave, a block or two south of where Dora (nee Rolnick) and her Louis Lasinsky were living at around the same time. Dora would have been unlikely not to have made a family connection. It may be just a coincidence, but Dora and Louis named their third child (born in 1919) Bernard just at the time that the Upyna Rolnicks were giving this name to their sons, after the grandfather, Ber Dov. Dora was definitely not, however, a daughter of Ber Dov, but perhaps not too distant a cousin for the connection not to be kept up.

I have not been able to find the exact connection between Morris Samuel's wife, Tillie Rolnick and the Kelme Rolnicks. Tillie herself was born in Kurshon (Kursenai), 18 miles from Lukin (Luoke) where her husband, Morris Samuels was born, and 25 miles from Kelme. Nevertheless, there was a connection, and it is probable that Morris Samuels took Abraham, being his wife's relation, into his butchery

<sup>203</sup> In a later chapter, we will meet other children of Itsyk and Zlata, including the New Jersey Rolnicks, and there find Zlata's family name as Back.

shop and taught him the trade. After all, Abraham had arrived in 1911 most probably without a trade and by 1914 was in a butcher shop styled "Stavitzsky and Rolnic" in the City Directory<sup>204</sup>. Jack would have learned from Abraham.

So what was there about Chicago Rolnicks and the butchery trade? Michael, of the Upyna Rolnicks, the first to arrive, worked all his life as a butcher with his sons delivering the meat, his eldest son Max working with his father in their shop, before going to work with the Armour Company. Tillie Rolnick married a butcher. From Kelme, Abraham and then Jack H. were butchers. Abraham's brother-in-law Herman Jacobson was a butcher. True, Chicago was America's premier stockyard, but this need not have led to a proliferation of Rolnick-owned retail butchers.

Elmer Gertz, a son-in-law of Tillie and Morris Samuels, who became a foremost lawyer in Chicago<sup>205</sup>, has written in his autobiography a fine description of his father-in-law<sup>206</sup>: "Morris Samuels was a folk figure of the kind described by Sholom Aleichem and Isaac Bashevis Singer....he meant much to me, then and in retrospect. [Morris] was neither large nor small, neither important nor unimportant. His big shoulders and red hair suggested the physical strength that, indeed, he had until his middle seventies. He used to lift the front half of a steer from the cooler to the counter in his kosher meat market as easily as if it were a squab, and he would be quick to tell of it, as of his other not inconsiderable virtues. His patrons, for the most part plain, Yiddish-speaking matrons, loved Morris Samuels for his sharp tongue and the very masculinity of his bearing, insolence and all. He moved proudly and quickly from spot to spot in his shop, despite his pronounced limp and his preoccupation with many tasks. "Mr. Samuels", a customer would ask, "is the chicken fresh?" "Fresher than you!" he would answer, sharply.....A customer might feel the thigh of a hen, inquiringly, and Mr. Samuels would remark, just loud enough for her to hear: "Do you have a better thigh?" "

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<sup>204</sup> "For seventy years, day after day, she traveled this route, watched Manzelman's Market, Mr. Savitsky's Butcher Shop, Meyer the tailor disappear"...From "Anna of Devon Avenue" Susan Hahn (Chicago Tribune April 16, 2000).

<sup>205</sup> Elmer Gertz: A Chicago Legend <http://www.lib.niu.edu/2001/ihy010221.html>

<sup>206</sup> In "To Life: The story of a Chicago Lawyer" Elmer Gertz: McGraw-Hill 1974 . Two of Gertz's most famous cases was his defense of Jack Ruby, the man who shot Lee Oswald, and his success in bringing about Nathan Leopold's parole. (Nathan Leopold, with his brother Richard, had murdered a schoolboy Bobby Franks. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopold\\_and\\_Loeb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopold_and_Loeb)). Gertz fought against the ban on Henry Miller's book, Tropic of Cancer, and also won a huge libel case against the John Birch Society who had accused him of being a communist. Elmer Gertz was a champion of civil rights and also a law professor at the John Marshall Law School in Chicago.