

THE ROSENBERG CHRONICLES

By Paul Rosenberg – May 1989

INTRODUCTION

Family. Roots. Mishpocha. In the latter half of the 1980's, many of us are beginning to search for our origins. Our grandparents sought to leave their history far behind them in the Old Country, and our parents were too concerned in struggling to find their place in this new land. We are beginning to become curious about our past, and of course, are finding with regret, that those who harbored the old memories are now mostly gone. We think, sadly, if only we had had this interest forty or thirty or twenty years ago, think of the memories we could have elicited!

No matter. Even though we are finding it difficult to go back even 100 years, we are discovering second and third cousins, sometimes on our own doorstep, whom we never knew before. Also we renew the attenuating bonds between us and some of our first cousins where the last communication had been decades ago. So, the study of genealogy not only uncovers previously unknown ancestors, but interesting contemporaries – all of them mispocha. Some might call it, "Know Thy Cousins"!

This then is a story about the Rosenberg family. Rosenberg is the Germanic name, meaning "red hill" or "red mountain". Some Rosenberg's (not so far in this family) have called themselves "Redmont", or perhaps more pretentiously "Montrose". It is also a Swedish name, and Minnesota is full of Swedish Lutheran Rosenberg's (In Swedish, it is pronounced "Rosenberry"). In some manner, our Rosenberg ancestors arrived in Lithuania in the late 1700's or early 1800's, in the area of Vilna and Kovno (today – Vilnius and Kaunas).

A digression and perhaps definition. In family research, one must set horizontal boundaries, or else the research can expand almost geometrically through every tenuous fourth cousin or in-law. Vertically, one tries to go back as far as one can. For the Rosenberg family, I have chosen two patriarchs, born in the first half of the nineteenth century in Eastern Europe, and living to the first year of the twentieth century. They are Dov Bair (David) Rosenberg, born in Lithuania, but who lived most of his life in Shadrinsk, a town in the wilds of central Siberia; and his machutim (in-law) Rabbi Aharon Zev Holman, born possibly in Turku, Finland and living his adult life in Irbit, a small town to the east of the Ural Mountains, also in Siberia. These gentlemen were my paternal great grandfathers, and were your great grandfathers, great, great-grandfathers, or for some of the young ones, great, great, great grandfathers.

Some of you who read this may find that the Rosenberg connection goes far far back since the linkage may be through a grandmother or great grandmother. However, you will see by examining the charts in the Appendix that one of those two patriarchs is back there and you are a fortunate member of Clan Rosenberg!

Most of the information I have collected is on Dove Bair's twin sons Yossi Zorach (Joseph) and Nochum Peretz (Nathan) Rosenberg, both of whom settled in Boston at the end of the nineteenth century, and Max (Holman) Rosenberg, Aharon Zev's son and Joseph's brother-in-law. Max's sister Masha Chaya, was married to Joseph, and when Max came to America in the late 1890's, he took his brother-in-law's last name, a not uncommon practice among new immigrants.

I feel like an archaeologist, who pieces together little shards and uses some imagination to recreate a piece of pottery. I hear bits and pieces from different sources, see old pictures, read old documents, and very occasionally meet a new cousin with a trove of memories or stories about the old times. What you will read, and see in the assembled old photos is the story of one family; my family, your family, indeed our family. Some of you know a good deal about what I have collected; most of you will know very little, since either you are at the periphery or have lost your contacts. Incidentally, all corrections, additions, suggestions, etc., are welcome.

As addenda, there are genealogical charts and brief biographies of each of the members of the three main families Joseph's, Nathan's and Max's, complete with addresses and phone numbers, as of this writing.

I hope you enjoy reading the material about half as much as I have enjoyed collecting it. If so, you are in for a real treat!

THE JOURNEY

The train station was crowded with all different kinds of people, each purposefully heading in one direction or another. The small woman with the soft brown eyes thanked her stars for the hundredth time that her tall seventeen year old daughter was so capable and was so helpful in shepherding her two little brothers and two younger sisters. The baby, only a year and a half old, never let go of her mother's hand. It was September 1901, and the new century was less than two years old. Masha still wrote 1801 sometimes on her letters to Yossi before she noticed the error, and corrected it in her firm clear writing. Masha, unlike some of her friends, was well-educated, and well-read.

A porter followed close behind with a cart piled high with the family's luggage. They had to get from the train station to the dock where their ship was due to depart late that night. They need a wagon to carry all the baggage as well as the eight of them. Well, actually eight and a half, for the small woman knew that her husband had left her with a memento just before he departed, with their older son, just six months ago for that unthinkable long journey that she herself was now making.

She had been traveling for fourteen days now with her large entourage and the sea voyage still lay ahead of her. Masha thought for the hundredth (or was it the thousandth?) time, were they doing the right thing? Yossi had been in the army, and had returned home all right. Perhaps they wouldn't

take Sam after all; he was such a dear boy. But now fourteen year old Sam was in America with his father waiting for the rest of them to arrive.

Just then, a large woman bumped into Masha, and apologized profusely in her guttural German. How different the accent was from the lively Yiddish Masha spoke! Look at little Bryna with those dark flashing eyes. At nine, you could already see that she would be a beauty.

They came out to the street. What a huge city Hamburg was, and so different than Tobolsk or Tomsk which are raw frontier cities with dirt streets. The turmoil within her didn't affect her serene demeanor. Masha never in her life raised her voices. She was certainly no beauty, but even a casual passerby could see that this was a very special person, a real lady even if she wore the clothes of a provincial Russian woman.

The porter flagged a large carriage with room for her huge brood and all the baggage. Masha gave the porter some pfennigs that Yossl had given her just before he left. She heard, and barely understood the directions the porter gave to the driver to go to the docks where the steamer for the far-off land awaited them.

Masha thought of the family she was leaving behind. There was her beloved father the rabbi, and his lovely second wife. How fortunate her father was to find Chana, and it was a real love affair even if her father was twenty years older. As a result, Masha had two half-brothers and two half-sisters, and their families. But they all were now far, far behind her. Masha was 36 and it pained her to leave all her loved ones behind. But her duty lay with her husband of 17 years, who now awaited her in Boston. Boston? What kind of name was that for a city? Did they still have Indians running around the streets?

Masha knew that Yossl's twin brother, Nochum, had already been in Boston for many years. Yossl and Nochum, Nochum and Yossl, they were like two peas in a pod, they looked, acted, and talked so much alike. Masha knew the difference between the two of them, but many people totally confused the two, and the two of them did nothing to clear up the confusion; they would play whichever role someone assigned to them. It was a miracle that they could be apart for even six months, let alone 12 years.

So many things to do. Seven year old Ben was awestruck by the big buildings of Hamburg. Ben has a sweetness about him like his father, but every time Masha looked at Ben, she saw the same face as her father's, Rabbi Aharon Zev. Little Zoya hid her little face in her mother's skirt, still holding on to that hand as if it were her anchor to the world. However, she still peeked out with frank curiosity at all the marvelous sights. Six year old Louis looked around her with the firm confidence and absolute sense of command that was her trade mark. Little Louisa could skewer her brothers and sisters with her rapier tongue. Four year old Barney would have jumped out of the wagon and run after some bigger boys if stately Gnaseh didn't keep a firm grip on him. Only seventeen and she had such a regal quality about her. She was so tall, quite unlike her father or mother.

The wagon rounded a corner and there was the largest ship that Masha had ever seen. Was it ten days that they had to stay in that behemoth crossing an unthinkable wide expanse of water? Yossl had showed her a map and pointed out the way she would have to travel to reach far-off Hamburg to take the ship. But there was so much ocean between Hamburg and America!

As the porter took her baggage and Masha stared at the high sides of the grey ship, she knew then with certainty that she would never see her family again. Masha's brother, Misha, had talked with Yossl about him going to American, too. Misha had left Russia three years ago, and was now in Boston where Nochum had helped him get settled. Misha, or Max, as he now called himself, had taken his brother-in-law's last name, feeling that it would help him if he had a blood relative. Max was now married to an American lady, and their first baby was probably already born. Misha (Max, Max!) wrote that America was certainly better than the Tsar's Army! Well, Masha would not be alone in that strange new country. She knew that Nochum and his wife Pessa Shifrah also awaited them, but Pessa Shifra and Masha were cut from two different bolts of cloth. Yossl and Nochum might have been twins, but their selection of women couldn't have been more different.

Strong, capable Gnaseh! Agnes, Agnes! That's what they would call her in America. What a strange name! But Masha knew that her family must become American, not Russian, and not Jewish. She would become Mary, and Yossl wrote that he was called Joseph. Would Gnaseh/Agnes find her prince in this new land? She would make some lucky man a wonderful, wonderful wife, thought Masha. Well, there was no turning back, and Yossl was there in that far off land ahead, waiting for them.

Goodbye droschkas in the snow. Goodbye servants. Goodbye big house. Siberia wasn't so bad; better than Kovno-Guberniy. Hello new world of uncertainty, of strange languages, of Indians in the streets. 1901 would be a year she would always remember.

Masha strode up the gangplank, and did not look back.

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Did this really happen? I don't know, but there are enough bits and pieces that I have learned that make this vignette not improbable. Masha was my grandmother, gone almost fifty years. Her son, and my father, Ben, has been gone for over forty. My name is Paul Rosenberg, Ben's youngest of three sons, and born in Boston. My oldest son is named Ben. In Hebrew, he is Boruch ben Pinchos (ben Boruch ben Yosaif Zorach ben Dov Bair ben Shlomo?...) and so, on it goes.

Searching for one's roots is a growing phenomenon. As a hobby, it is far more constructive and certainly more satisfying than many. One of its advantages is that results of the search are interesting to many people who share that family with you.

Of course any person has two parents, four grandparents, eight great grandparents, and sixteen great, great grandparents. The geometrical possibilities of going back only four generations are

staggering, particularly when one considers the cousins. I have chosen to search for my roots in my father's family. I have no less regard for my mother's family, but I know that there is much more available information and many more resources when I research the Rosenberg's.

In September 1987, my Aunt Zelda (little Zoya in the story) discovered an old document which turned out to be her birth certificate (page A-47). It was written in beautiful and florid Cyrillic Russian by a Rabbi Nai Kuman of Tobolsk. It told that "...a daughter was born to the soldier in the reserves, a tradesman by the name of Zoreal, son of Berkov Rosenberg of the shtetl of Puni, Vilna region, Troksky country, and his wife Musya. The baby girl was born in the town of Ishim and was named Zoya."

Where was Tobolsk? Where was Ishim? Where was Puni? And so the search began.

(Tobolsk is about 600 miles east of the Urals, in Siberia, and is a large industrial city. Ishim is now a larger city about 100 miles southeast of Tobolsk (see maps on pages A-51/52). Puni is a tiny village, about 60 miles south of Kovno in Lithuania, 2500 miles northwest of Tobolsk.)

Now at the urging of my son Jay and niece, Debby, I began to prod Zelda for the recollections of her childhood. (At eighteen months, she didn't remember thing one about the journey!) In the process of moving, Zelda discovered an envelope of pictures, dated from 1890 to 1920 that had belonged to her mother Masha/Mary. The pictures were of Masha's family in Russia, with handwritten Russian inscriptions on the back. With the help of my very rusty college Russian and some Russian émigré friends, we learned who many of these people were. Unfortunately, not all of the pictures were inscribed. Also in the envelope were marvelous Rosenberg family photos (they loved to take pictures!) dating back to Russia.

Well, the Rosenberg's may not be the Kennedy's or the Adams's, but we're not too shabby. No presidents or ambassadors, but some good people, some interesting people, and some memorable people.

I have noted that the Rosenberg's loved to take family pictures. I have also heard how close were Yossl and Nochum, the identical twins (Joseph and Nathan in America). They loved to confuse people. My cousin Roberta remembers that, as a youngster, she thought it a little funny that she called her grandfather "Grandpa" sometimes and "Uncle" sometimes, but grownups were a strange lot anyway. Joseph wore a long tie, and Nathan a bowtie, but who knows maybe sometimes they switched? I surmise that Masha and Pessa Shifrah knew the difference, but I refuse to consider the kinky possibilities of that avenue of thought! When Joseph died in 1934, at the early age of 68, previously healthy Nathan lasted only eleven months, and was buried at Baker Street in West Roxbury by his brother's side.

However, I have never seen, nor have any of my cousins, a picture of Joseph and Nathan together. At his 50th wedding anniversary in 1934, Joseph posed with Agnes, her daughter Ruth, and Ruth's daughter, Judy. Joseph even had a picture of his 98-year old mother, Olga, dubbed in to get five

generations (page A-12). At that party, there were pictures taken of every possible family combination (page A-9), but none, that I know of, with Joseph and Nathan. Nathan's grandson, Irwin Oppenheim, has gone through his mother's pictures, and he, too, has never seen a picture of the two of them together, although he remembers seeing the two of them at Joseph's Calder Street house, in Dorchester. Curious.

Another vignette. Masha's father, the rabbi, was named Aharon Zev (Zelig). While none of Masha's children were named Aharon, two of her grandchildren were, both of them Arnold's. One was Louisa's son who died in the Coconut Grove fire in 1942 with his new wife, both of them 22. The other was Barney's son, who died in 1946 at the age of 25 in the Air Force training plane crash. Forgive us, if none of us use that name in our generation.

Joseph left Russia because we are told, 14-year old Sam was targeted to be drafted into the Czar's army. Joseph knew what a memorable experience that would be, and he chose to leave. How ironic those 17 years later, his sons Ben, Julie, and Barney all served in the U.S. Navy (I don't know about Sam). In fact most, if not all, of Joseph and Masha's grandsons were in some branch of the service during World War II. Burt Isaacson and I were destroyer officers in the Navy in the early 50's. Few of the great-grandchildren have been in the services – may they never have to be! However, my brother Bob's three – Rob, Amy and Peter – have all served in the IDF, the Israeli army.

Another story. Masha's brother, Misha, did come to the U.S., in 1898. He became Max. He told his children that he believed he couldn't enter the U.S. unless he took his brother-in-law's name, Rosenberg. So there are Rosenbergs on both my grandfather and my grandmother's sides. Masha's family name in Russia was Holman. However, Russian doesn't have an "H", so the Russian spelling is Golman. When Max's sons grew up, they decided that since they weren't really Rosenbergs and since it wasn't clear whether it was Golman or Holman; they all took the name "Rhodes", which was quite American. I personally think that if Yossel could become Joseph and Masha could become Mary (Sam DIDN'T become Jesus, anyway), why couldn't Rosenberg become Rhodes, or even Roberts, as two of Nathan's grandchildren chose?

Rosenberg was a magnet name for the family, though. Berta (Bryna in the story) married, as her second husband, Isadore Rosenberg, from a totally non-related group of Rosenbergs.

We have come a long way from Shadrinsk and Ishim. My cousin, Phyllis Marks, Barney's older daughter, lives in Hollywood, Florida. She and her husband Jerry worked together for most of their long married life. First, they ran a jewelry store in Chicago for many years, and then moved to Miami where they had a formal wear store. They just sold their business and must secretly be wondering, what do we do now? Well they won't have to shovel snow while they work it out.

My cousin Bob Rosenberg, Julie's son, lives in an eighteenth-century farmhouse on Philadelphia's Main Line. That's not only a long way from Shadrinsk and Ishim, but Chelsea, too. But no more so than my brother Arthur's aerie overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Palos Verdes Estates outside of Los Angeles.

Fortunately, some of us stay close to our Yankee roots – in Chelsea! Boston is in our blood.

I am having a great time as I pursue the trail of the Rosenberg's. I have written and talked to first cousins I haven't had contact with in many, many years. I am meeting for the first time that I know of, some of my father's cousins and their families.

Be fruitful and multiply, said the Bible. The Rosenberg's have listened.

Hill Rhodes, Max Rosenberg's youngest son, has in his possession several family treasures. First and foremost is a magnificent photograph of the Rav, Aharon Zev, taken in about 1885 or so (page A-1). His serene eyes look right out at you, and it is easy to see the strong family resemblance. In fact, if I didn't know better, I would swear that it was my father, Ben, looking right out at me. The resemblance is uncanny. Aunt Zelda, when seeing the picture for the first time exclaimed, "Why, that's Ben!"

Hill also has a letter, written in Russian, from his first cousin, Bryna Vodovoskova, from Omsk, in Siberia, in 1946. What makes it especially interesting is that this is the same young lady who, with her two younger sisters, is in two of Masha's pictures from 1906 and 1916 (page A-15). Today, Bryna would be over 90.

Hill, now retired, lives in Westwood, Mass., and for many years owned and ran Uncle Ned's Pawn Shop in Boston's South End. This was certainly in the family tradition, since both Hill's father and his Uncle Joe (my grandfather Joseph) were pawnbrokers. Grandpa's shops were in Chelsea at first (pages A-4/5), then later in Bowdoin Square (now the edge of Government Center) in downtown Boston. Uncle Ned? Well, it seemed that Hill's father, Max Rosenberg (Masha's brother), bought the shop early in the century from a Yankee, and Max retained the distinctly un-Russian, non-Jewish trademark. Hill carried on the tradition until his retirement.

Apparently Max loved to spin yarns about the old country, and Hill says that if they're not all true, they out to be!

Rabbi Aharon Zev Holman (Golman?) was born as noted, probably (or improbably) in Turku, Finland, in the early 1840's. (Finland?) Turku is the second largest city in Finland, and from the best information I've been able to obtain, there must have been all of nine Jews in the entire province of Finland during those days. He went to rabbinical seminary in Lithuania in the 1860's, and was sent by the Russian government to minister to the spiritual needs of Jews in the Wild East of Central Asia. In an effort to get rid of some of its Jews the Czar's government gave them land grants in the far boondocks of Olmsk, Tobolsk, etc., thousands of miles east of Kiev. (So, why would they pay for a rabbi to help keep them Jewish, and how did so many Jews get out of the Pale of Settlement?)

These frontier Jews were a hardy and unruly, if observant, lot. Some of them may have been veterans of the 1853 Crimean War. Max told the story that when the Rav conducted a Simchas Torah service, some of his congregants came with bandoliers draped over their tsitses, and showed their joy at

the beginning of the Torah readings by firing their rifles in the air. (Rifles and bandoliers on shul-going Jews?)

Max, like many young Jews, was impressed into the Army. In 1898, at the age of 27, he heard his sergeant tell his company what he was going to do to those filthy Jews who had this misfortune of being in his unit. Max proceeded to get his corporal dead-drunk, and then he deserted, and found his way to Manchester, England. There, he worked and learned English, then came to Boston where Nochum, the twin brother of his brother-in-law Yossl had already emigrated. While Max knew Russian and German, and then English, he didn't learn Yiddish until his second wife, Sarah, taught him, in Boston.

Yossl, by the way, had been in the Army for almost five years, as a sharpshooter. Masha always explained, rather apologetically, that there was about a year and a half age difference between all her children, except between Sam and Bertha. That difference was five years, because Pa was in the Army, she said.

Family research uncovers fascinating puzzles. Hill Rhodes said that his father came to the U.S. in 1898, and tried to enlist in the Spanish-American War. Max met his first wife, Brockton-born Rose Tuck, in Boston. We know that Hill's father, Max came with the encouragement of his sister's husband, Yossl, and in fact took his last name, Rosenberg. We have guessed that Max may have consulted with Yossl, but he probably came to Boston to stay with Nochum, his brother-in-law's twin. After all, Barney was born in April 1898 in Russia, and we have Zelda's actual birth certificate dated December 1899, from Ishim. Yossl may have left pregnant Masha to make the long journey without him in 1901, but certainly couldn't have left much earlier.

The Russians drafted little Jewish boys into the Army often before they were even Bar mitzvah. The reason given for Yossl to leave Russia was that he feared that little Sam (born 1886) would be drafted. Could it be that Yossl made several trips back and forth, leaving Sam in the U.S. with Yossl's twin brother Nochum, who had emigrated in the late 1880's?

Roberta remembers Yossl telling her that he made two trips, the second of which was to help Masha plan her trip with all the children. Yossl did NOT accompany Masha on that journey, so he apparently returned to the U.S. on his own.

Barry Berkal recalls visiting Calder Street in the early 1930's where he and Bob Rosenberg watched Grandpa repair a watch. Joseph had a jeweler's loupe in his eye and was working on an impossibly tiny screw with an itty-bitty screwdriver. Apparently he was having some difficulty getting the screw to go in. After some minutes of frustration, he carefully peered back over each shoulder in turn, and seeing no one around but his two small grandsons, he reached for a little hammer and went tap! tap! tap! Lo and behold: a recalcitrant screw was converted into a foolproof rivet!

DOV BAIR

Dov Bair (David) Rosenberg was probably born near Kovno in Lithuania in the 1830's and died around 1904. His father was, as previously noted, probably named Shmuel or Shlomo (Samuel) because, also as noted, each of his twin sons named their first-born sons Shlomo, in the mid 1880's. In Ashkenazic tradition, children are not named for any living family member, but are named for a close relative who has died. I recently met, in San Francisco, Claude Rosenberg, Jr. I knew he wasn't a relative by the appended "Junior". (The "Claude" made it pretty unlikely, too, I must say). Dov Bair's widow, Olga, left Russia in 1904 and came to America, staying in Chelsea, with her son, Yossl, and eight of his children. At 69, Olga couldn't stand the hubbub (could you?) and moved to another house nearby as a boarder. In 1907, Olga's daughter, Raya (Rose in America), moved to Boston after the death of her husband, and Olga lived her last 28 years with Raya, mostly in Brooklyn. Olga lived to see the 50th wedding anniversaries of each of her twin sons, in 1933 and 1934.

Olga appears like a Siberian empress in a four-generation picture (page A-11) taken in 1913 with her son Joseph, his daughter Agnes, and her daughter Ruth Levine. Compare this picture with the five-generation picture (page A-12) taken 21 years later and adding Ruthie's daughter Judy Devorin. Olga's eyes were apparently sharp as can be into the 90's. However, she insisted to her sons that she couldn't read the fine print in the newspaper without glasses. To make her happy, Joseph bought a pair of wire frames and inserted plain glass lenses, which he gave his mother. Ah, she said, that's MUCH better. If your eyes are good, credit Grandma Olga. If they are not so good, blame the other side of your family.

Several of us remember hearing that Dov Bair was a melamed (teacher) who was sent, in the 1850's or 1860's, by the Russian government out to the wilds of Siberia to teach Hebrew to Jewish children. When he goes there, he found that he was hard-put to make a living and support his family (as melameds have sadly found out through the centuries). He then became a tradesman and apparently did rather well. Both Joseph and Nathan were jewelers, a skill they may have learned from their father. Dov Bair and Olga had six children – four sons and two daughters. The older two sons remained in Russia. One was a "gezoner reb" or go-between for the Russian and Jewish communities. Next were the identical twins, Yossl and Nochum. Then was Raya, about six years younger. The youngest daughter, Chava, may have died as a young woman in the 1890's in Russia. Chava, like the two older brothers, is an indistinct image, at best, at this time.

THE RABBI

Rabbi Aharon Zev Holman, of whom there exists that marvelous large studio portrait taken around 1882 (page A-1) when he was in his early 40's, was a scholar and descendent of rabbis. The Rabbi had three children by his first wife, Bryna; Masha Chaya (married to Joseph), Max, who also emigrated to America, and Hillel, a pharmacist, who died in Europe in 1914 (see page A-19 for a picture of Max and Hillel).

After the death of his first wife, the Rabbi married a much younger woman, and had two more sons and two more daughters, all of whom remained in Russia. There are several pictures of these four, as adults with their children, in photos dating from 1900 to 1916 (pages A-14 to A-16). One son was an engineer, and the other was a revolutionary and physician.

Among Masha's pictures (page A-16) is that of a very handsome, arty looking young man, Masha's youngest half-brother, whose name was Simeon Holman, or as it is written in Russian, Semyon Golman. Simeon lived in Ufa, an industrial city in the Urals, some miles west of Omsk. As legend has it, Simeon was a revolutionary, and in 1917-18, allegedly assassinated the Czarist governor of the Ufa region. He later became a physician and perhaps a big man in the party. He corresponded regularly with his sister and brother Masha and Max, in Boston. In the 1930's, one day Max received a postcard which said, "I regret to inform you that our brother, Semyon Golman, has died and therefore there is no further use for you to write him as the letters will be returned. Your sister, Sarah." A most strange communication, but with two points to note: they had no sister Sarah, and the card was in Semyon's handwriting! That was, however, the last they heard from or about Semyon, and very likely he was gobbled up by one of the Stalinist purges of the 1930's.

Contact has been lost with the Russian branch, although there is the letter from Bryna, one of the rabbi's granddaughters, written in 1946 from Omsk, a large city in Siberia. She was writing to her uncle, Max Rosenberg, in Boston, telling about the Russian family who made it through the war relatively unscathed.

JOSEPH'S FAMILY

Yossl Zorach (Joseph) and Masha had nine children, eight of whom were born in Russia, with the last, Rose, born in Chelsea, several months after the family arrived in America, in 1901. The nine children had, collectively, 29 children, who then had 40 of their own, who in turn (as of April 1989) have had 30.

Joseph came to America, we think, in the spring of 1901, at the age of 35. His twin brother, Nathan, had been the first to come, in 1889 as a 24 year old to escape the Czar's army conscriptor. They managed to get Joseph who served for four years, from 1887 to 1891 as a rifleman, and was a reservist afterwards.

Life in Russia, except for the army time, was a good one for Joseph and Masha. In later years, their children recalled a big house with servants, and gliding over the snow in a droshke (sleigh) pulled by a troika of three harnessed horses. Almost immediately on arrival in America, Joseph bought a house in Chelsea and opened a jewelry repair store/pawn shop. There is a picture, about 1905, with Joseph and the seven younger kids, in front of the store on Winissimet Street, Chelsea (page A-4). Masha sits inside the store window looking out through a festoon of pocket watches. Joseph has a most American-

looking bushy moustache and a proper derby on his head. This was no studio picture, as the kids were in definitely everyday clothes.

In 1908, the famous Chelsea Fire obliterated both the house and the store, and the kids were forced to double up with relatives. The four younger girls were sent to Lewiston, Maine, to live with big sister Aggie; the boys stayed in Chelsea with relatives. Joseph built a brand new house at 135 Walnut Street (still standing), and there is a picture (page A-5), dated 1915 of Joseph standing in front of a much larger store, looking, at 50, quite prosperous. In the early 1920's, Joseph and Masha moved to Dorchester, right at the edge of Franklin Park, the crown jewel in Frederick Law Olmstead's Emerald Crescent of parks surrounding Boston. Later, their oldest daughter, Agnes with her daughters and husband, Max Levine, lived on the second floor of the house.

Joseph and Masha had four sons: Sam (S.I.), Ben, Julius, and Barney, and five daughters: Agnes, Berta (Bee), Louisa, Zelda, and Rosa (Ro). All remained in or around Boston, although there was a strong connection with Lewiston/Auburn, Maine. Julie and Louisa married two Lewistoners, Rose Day and her cousin, Benny Isaacson. Ben and Lil Rosenberg lived there in the early 1920's, and as did Agnes and Max Levine at the time of the Chelsea fire in 1908. S.I. had a mattress factory in Derry, New Hampshire, and Ben owned the Pontiac Knitting Mills in Lewiston, later moved to Boston. Neither business made it through the Depression.

The first of Joseph's 20 grandchildren was Ruth Levine, Agnes's daughter, born in 1906 (5 years after Rose). The last was Barney's younger daughter, Fay born in 1940, seven years after Ruth's daughter, Judy Devorin.

NATHAN'S FAMILY

Elliot Rosenberg, Moe's oldest son, and Nathan/Nochum's grandson, has been a lawyer in Boston for many years, most recently in the firm of Rosenberg and Ryan. Ryan, incidentally, is his daughter, Joan. Elliot was very close to his grandfather, Nathan, and grew up in then-Jewish Roxbury, in the bosom of his extended family of uncles, aunts, grandparents, and numerous cousins. He remembers that his grandpa Nathan and great uncle Joseph were very well educated in general, and were learned men, most knowledgeable about Talmud and Torah. Grandpa Nathan and his other Zeyde, Grandpa Ritvo, were both very observant, and competed with each other to inculcate their little grandson with frumness in the little Orthodox Schul on Crawford Street, now long gone.

Nathan and his twin brother were very close, as identical twins often are. Strangely enough, they were apart for over ten years, since 24 year old Nathan came to Boston in 1888 or 1889 to escape the Czar's army recruiter/impresser, and Joseph didn't come until 1900 or 1901. Joseph, as we learned, was inducted into the army in 1887 or 1888, and served for four years, as a rifleman. He was thereafter in

the reserves, and made his escape from Russia not to avoid his own draft, but as we know, that of his oldest son, Sam.

Nathan and Joseph each named his first-born son, Shmuel or Shlomo, hence Samuel. We roots-searchers take this as good evidence that the twins' grandfather (Dov Bair's father) was named Shmuel or Shlomo and had died prior to 1884, when Nathan's Sam was born. And so we extend the family tree back to the first years of the nineteenth century!

Although they came to America as young adults, Elliot recalls that his grandfather spoke English with virtually no accent at all, and neither did Joseph.

Elliot clearly remembers his great-grandmother Olga around 1930 in the days when she lived in Brooklyn with her daughter Rosa (Raya). With her high cheekbones and no nonsense and determined manner, Olga ran the show in the manner of a far Eastern potentate. Olga died in 1935, at the age of 99, walking home from schul on Yom Kippur!

Nathan, and later Joseph, brought "landsmen" over with them, some of whom adopted the name Rosenberg, either out of gratitude or the convenience of the officials at Immigration, who had trouble with the multi-syllabic tongue-twisting names that the immigrants tried to explain. So there are some "pseudo-Rosenberg's", some of whom later became Rose.

At the age of 85, in 1971, Moe decided he wanted to visit Israel. Unerringly, he went to Natick and had school officials unearth his first-grade records, circa 1891, to substantiate his naturalization papers. In 1891, Natick was a most remote village, far from Boston with its jobs for new immigrants. What was Nathan doing in Natick at that time? We don't know.

Elliot's Uncle Julius, Nathan's third son, was himself the survivor of twins, the other dying at birth in Siberia. He was a fascinating rags-to-riches-to-rags and back-to-riches story. He graduated from Yale in 1905 at the age of 18, and moved to Detroit where he acquired, over the years, a great deal of land and real estate outside the city. During the depression his cash flow dried up, and he became a cash-poor land owner as land values plummeted and tenants couldn't pay their rents. Separated from his first wife and childless, he moved in with his brother Moe and family, who were then living in New York. A few years later, his tenants began paying their rent more faithfully, his land began to appreciate, and he returned to Detroit as a once-again wealthy man. He let his family links atrophy, and didn't reestablish contact for almost 20 years!

In 1963, Julius' second wife died in Detroit, and finally he decided to visit the family in Boston. His brothers and sisters and their families welcomed him after a thirty-year hiatus at a big family party in Newton. Julius, then in his mid-70's, could see that his brothers and sisters looked comfortable financially, as did their nine children, his nieces and nephews. Surely they didn't need any of his financial support! However, he said, he was going to set up a trust fund for each of his grand-nieces and nephews for their college education. In Nathan's family, at that time, there were seventeen, ranging in

age from 18 down to 3. So he did, and there are today a number of young people who can be thankful to Great-Uncle Julie for their education.

Nathan's older daughters, Minnie and Rose, married two brothers, Joe and Jimmy Oppenheim. Minnie, like her brother Moe, was a live-wire. Moe and S.I. were the same age, and were very close for much of their lives.

ZORACH BERKOV'S PAPERS

One September morning in 1988, I found in my mail a large manila envelope from my cousin, Irwin Isaacson. When I opened it, I opened a long-hidden packet of papers which gave a view of life in nineteenth century Russia; I looked at the very essential documents that governed the existence of my grandfather, Joseph Zorach Rosenberg. With my rudimentary Russian, I was able to determine that these were Joseph's Guild Certificate, his army discharge papers, and permits to remain and make a living in several Siberian towns. These precious documents he had carried with him even to the Goldineh Medineh, the new land, when he arrived in Boston in 1901.

There were eight documents in all, generally written on yellowed and not very good grade paper. Nonetheless, they were in a good state of preservation and legibility. Except for one, they were all written in prerevolutionary Russian, with its now-obsolete consonants and vowels. Even the dates were old style, as Russia did not adopt the western calendar until 1918, so all the dates were 13 days out of synch.

The one exception was the one written in Hebrew, or more accurately Aramaic, since it was the ketubah, or wedding certificate, of Joseph and his kalah (bride), Musya (Masha) Chaya Holman (page A-40). The language in the ketubah was identical to the one hanging on my bedroom wall - - only the names, city, and witnesses' signatures were different. His was dated 10 Sivan 5644 (June 4, 1884), mine 5714 (June 1954, seventy years later). Yosaif Zorach, the son of Dov Bair, married Musya Chaya, daughter of Rabbi Aharon Zev/Wolf in the Siberian town Irbit. I, Pinchas Beryl, son of Boruch, married Masha Baila, daughter of Mordecai in the American city of Providence, R.I. All the rest was identical!

What a remarkable and treasured insight into Joseph's life! The documents had been carefully protected during the eight-thousand mile journey to America. On Joseph's death in 1934, they were kept by his wife, then passed through his daughters, my aunts Berta and Louisa, to my cousins Roberta Canner and her brother Irwin, and then to me, the family historian. With the considerable help of some Russian friends, I deciphered the documents, and my son, Jay, in Israel easily read the ketubah. The documents are now preserved in special museum-grade mylar envelopes so they will last another hundred years. I have made careful copies, generally reduced in size from the originals, which are reproduced following this section.

The oldest document (A-41) was Joseph's Primary School Graduation Certificate, issued in the town of Shadrinsk, in western Siberia, in June 1880, when he was 14. Shadrinsk was in the Orenburg Academic District. It must have been a pretty large district with schools few and far between in nineteenth century western Siberia. Orenburg is a city to the east of the Ukraine, and 1100 miles to the southwest of Shadrinsk. The school was a technical as opposed to an academic school, since there was a two-track system for those who were to receive an education. In all documents except this one and of course, the ketubah, my grandfather was referred to as "Zorach Berkov Rosenberg" i.e. Zorach the son of Berkov. His graduation certificate called him "Iosef Boris", but with a footnote that stated that this was the same individual as Zorach Berkov. "Iosef" never appeared again until we see him as Joseph in the U.S. naturalization papers from 1905.

The course was four years, and it was some curriculum! The diploma was a printed form with a space after each of the eight course names for a handwritten grade. Most of his grades were "kharashoh" or "good" (including his deportment!), although a few were "acceptable". The first was "Orthodox Religion Scripture" but written next to that was "his own Jewish religion." (He got a "kharashoh"). Then there was Russian language, arithmetic, geometry, history, geography, calligraphy, and finally, painting and drawing. Not only did the Superintendent of the School District sign the Diploma, but, at the bottom, so did each of his teachers. He attended the school from August 1876 to June 1880, or from age 10 to 14.

Next was a large document (A-42) entitled "Attestat", or "Certificate", clearly the most important document of the lot, since it gave him the right as a member of a Craftsman's Guild, to live wherever he wanted in Russia, with, of course, the essential approval of the Local Chief of Police (see more later). This document was issued in Bobruisk, a large city in Byelorussia (White Russia, located to the east of Poland and in the far west of Russia). Bobruisk had a large Jewish population, and Zorach must have apprenticed there for four years, since his certificate was dated March 19, 1884, when he was 18 1/2. Bobruisk is about 350 miles east of Vilna, in Lithuania, the same distance as Boston-Philadelphia.

The "Attestat" also described Zorach in its preprinted spaces as being 18 years old, having black hair, black eyebrows, a clear countenance, no beard, dark eyes, adequate nose, no other special features, and a height of 3 arci, 5 vorshak, (about 5' 6"). We have often puzzled as to how grandpa was able to move so easily outside the Pale of Settlement of Russia, which consisted of Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, and part of Byelorussia. This was the area in which the vast majority of Jews were confined. Now we know – he was a guild member, and this "Attestat" was his laissez passer. He obviously treasured this very significant document, and it never left his possession even though in America, one didn't need the approval of the Chief of Police to live in a community, to try to make a living.

After he received his "Attestat", Zorach left Bobruisk, in the far west of Russia, and returned to Shadrinsk, in western Siberia, where his parents still lived, 2100 miles to the east of Byelorussia (Boston-Denver distance). His twin brother had, the previous year, 1883, married Sophie Cheinstein, the daughter of a Jewish judge (!) from Shadrinsk. Shortly afterwards, in June 1884, Zorach, at the mature

age of 18 years, married his Musya Chaya, also 18, at her father's home in nearby Irbit, 100 miles distant. We have, as mentioned above, their ketubah, dated 1884.

Zorach apparently lived in Shadrinsk for about six years practicing his trade as a watch repairman. Gnaseh (Agnes) arrived on February 19, 1885, and Shlomo (Sam) on November 5, 1886. We know this since there is a certificate (page A-43) dated 13 March 1890 in which the police Chief of Shadrinsk not only notes their birth, but registers them as members of the Tradesman's Guild of the shtetl of Puni (near Vilna, in Lithuania). Shadrinsk is 120 miles east of Sverdlovsk, the major Russian industrial city in the Urals, which themselves are 800 miles east of Moscow.

On November 27, 1891, Zorach is given permission by the Deputy Head of the Territorial Police of the Town of Marinsk, Province of Tomsk (A-44), to carry out his trade as a watch repairman in the town, but states that he must get special permission from the City Hall to open a shop. Marinsk is 1400 miles to the east of Shadrinsk, in central Siberia, and is 100 miles to the east of Shadrinsk, in central Siberia, and is 100 miles to the east of Tomsk. My father always said that he was born in the Tomsk district. Zorach certainly travelled far.

On April 10, 1892, in the town of Achinsk, Yenisei Province (page A-45), 260 miles east of Marinsk, the Police Department gives no objection to granting Zorach's eight year-old daughter, Gnaseh (our Agnes!) the right to study in their school.

On 31 October 1897, the Deputy to the Police Chief of Ishim gives permission (A-46) for Zorach and his family to live in the city "...so long as his conduct continues to be acceptable."

On December 9, 1899, the Rabbi for the Tobolsk-Ishim region records a birth certificate (page A-47) for baby girl Zoya (Zelda) born to Zorach and Musya in the town of Ishim. Ishim is 350 miles to the east of Shadrinsk, and 500 miles west of Marinsk. The distances in Siberia in those days – as now – were prodigious, and there wasn't a lot between the towns except fields, rivers and swamps. Today, Shadrinsk, Ishim, and Marinsk each have 70-80,000 people. A hundred years ago, they were far smaller, and Siberia was indeed the frontier.

On April 19, 1900, in Ishim (page A-48), the Deputy to the Chief of Police states that, since Zorach Berkov had been given permission to live in Ishim, 2 ½ years previously, the Police had no objection to him acquiring real estate.

In mid-1901, the Rosenberg family leaves Siberia and arrives in Boston.

Jews in Siberia? Who ever heard of that? Included in the Appendix is an article (pages A-53/54) from the Jewish Encyclopedia which tells a bit more about the Jews of Siberia. There were never very many, and life was not easy, but here's another dimension on our heritage.

A friend of mine, a Russian studies expert, tells me that people like Grandpa Yossl Zorach (or Zorach Berkov, as the documents so styled him) were called by the Russians "Siberskii Evrei" (Siberian

Jews), generally considered by the Russian's to be a different and better type than the usual shtetl variety (!). In general, the former were subjected to much less discrimination, officially and in daily life. For good or ill, my friend says, the Russians considered them "just like us". Big deal!!

But Jew they were, and Yossi, like his twin brother Nochum 12 years previously, and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of shtetl Jews, too, left that wonderful Russia to come to a new and strange land where he became Joseph, and where one could breathe free air and not need official documents to carry on one's daily life.

There are probably many, many more stories about our family. Some of them are humorous, some sad, some exciting, some rather mundane. I would love to include them all, as each one of you know or have heard something additional, including refinements to the stories included.

By the way, you will note that I have taken an author's liberty of inserting, in the midst of the old family photos, a picture of my family (page A-20) so you can see what WE look like.

APPENDIX PHOTOS

A-1



Rabbi Aharon Zev Holman Troitsk, Russia, circa 1884
Father of Masha Holman Rosenberg and Max (Holman)
Rosenberg





The Rosenberg's – Chelsea 1907 (Back) Ben, Julie, Sam, Louisa, Berta (Seated) Masha, Joseph, Agnes, Max Levine holding Ruthie, Barney (In Front) Rosa, Zelda



J. ROSENBERG JEWELRY STORE
Arlington Street, Chelsea 1904-05
Masha Joseph
Ben, Louisa, Barney Julie, Berta

A-5



A-6





(Back) Bertha & Barney Rosenberg, Louisa & Benny Isaacson, Rose & Julie Rosenberg, Rosa (Standing) Max Levine, Ben & Lil Rosenberg, Abe & Bertha Solligub, Sam, Zelda (Seated) Dinny Levine, Agnes Levine, Masha, Calvin Isaacson, Joseph, Sadie Rosenberg, Ruth Levine (In Front) Lois Levine, Ethel Rosenberg



February 4, 1934 50th Anniversary of Joseph & Mary (Masha) Rosenberg

Top Row:

Ben Rosenberg, Rose & Julie Rosenberg, Lois Levine, Calvin Isaacson, Louise Isaacson, Arnold Isaacson, Ethel Rosenberg, Harry & Ruth Devorin, Dinny Levine

Standing:

Maynard Rosenberg, Lillian Rosenberg, Rosa & Martin Berkal (on right) Bertha & Barney Rosenberg

Seated:

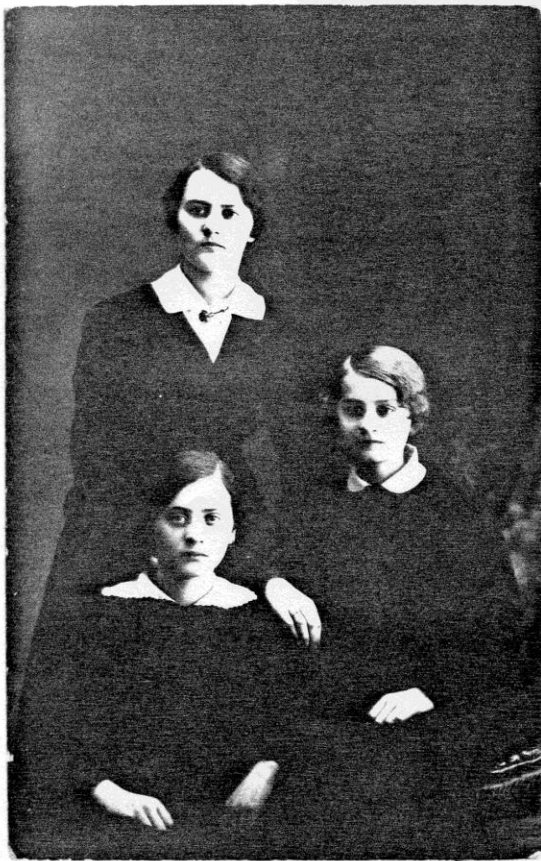
Arthur & Zelda Green, Max & Agnes Levine, Joseph & Masha Rosenberg, Sam & Sadie Rosenberg, Bertha & Isadore Rosenberg

In Front:

Bob & Don Rosenberg, Robert Isaacson, Lenny Berkal, Judy Devorin, Paul Rosenberg, Irwin Isaacson, Phyllis Rosenberg, Arnold Rosenberg, Barry Berkal, Arthur & Norman (in original picture, but not on this scan) Rosenberg



Masha's (and Max's) half-sister Lara with her three children. Inscribed on the back: "Greetings to Joseph and Masha, 1 December 1909, Lara and children." M Palatinsky Studios, Orchov-Tvar, Russia



Masha and Max's half sister, ? Stirkin with her three daughters, Bryna, Riva, and Rochl. The older picture is dated 1906, and is inscribed, "For good memory to the niece name Levine from her loving aunt and her children, Bryna-8, Riva-6, Rochl-4, Sterkin, Tobolsk 2nd August 1906." The later picture is inscribed, "For good memory to our dear aunt and uncle from their loving nieces Bryna-18, Riva-16, Rochl-14; Tobolsk, 1 October 1916."

A-16



A-19

