

# ZION IN THE NEW WORLD:

THE LUBARSKYS FIND THE "GOLDENE MEDINA"





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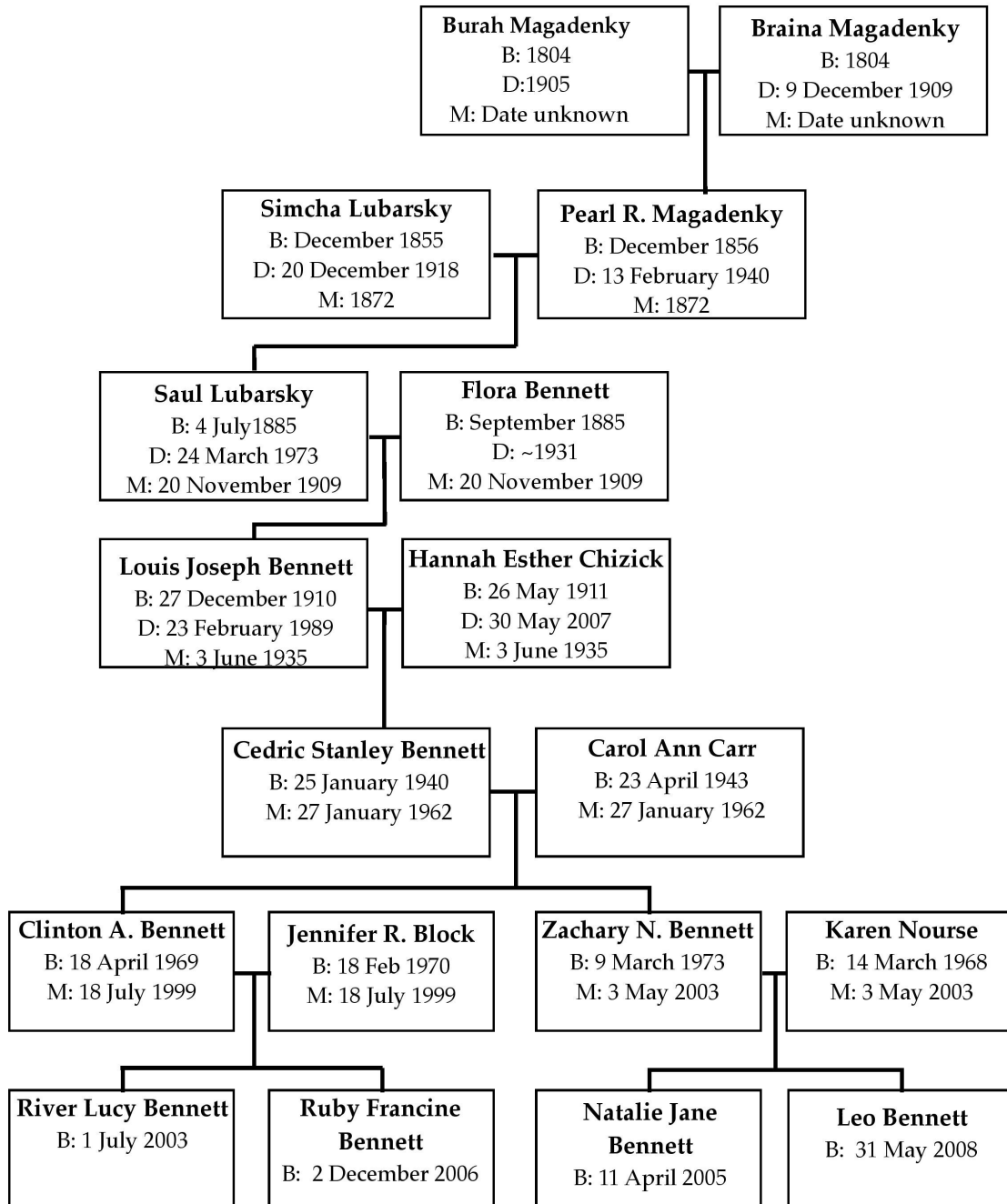


By Leslie F. Larson Bennett

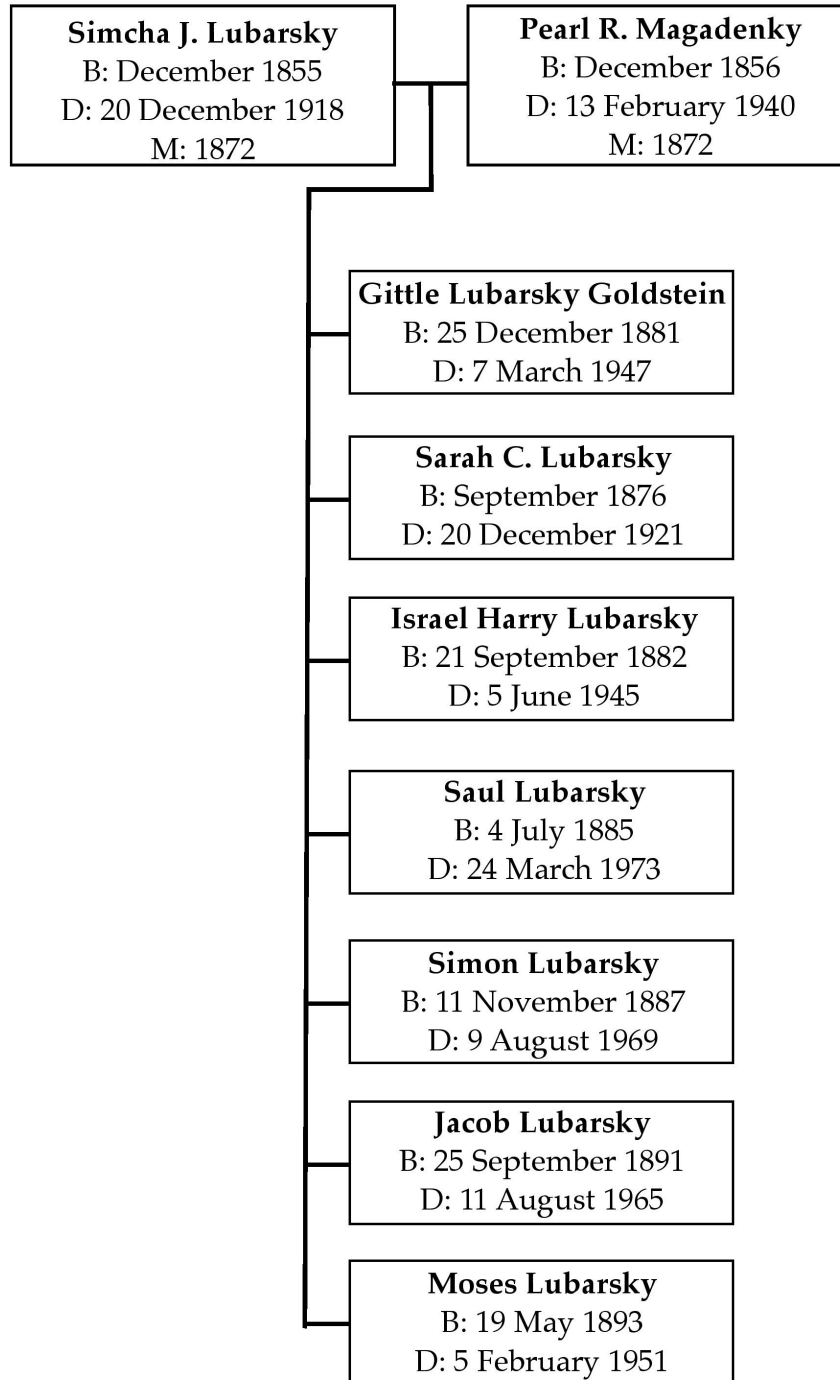
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# ABBREVIATED LINE OF DESCENT

## Magadenky & Lubarsky



## THE FIRST GENERATION OF LUBARSKYS



## ZION IN THE NEW WORLD: The Lubarskys Find the "Goldene Medina"<sup>1</sup>

*[Let us] leave Step-Mother Russia and go to America, the land of democracy, to be Jewish farmers there, and perhaps even to build our own state, like the Mormon's state of "Utah."*<sup>2</sup>

Like hundreds of thousands of other impoverished, desperate and marginalized Jews, our paternal line of émigré ancestors, Leo Bennett's grandparents, Simcha and Pearl Lubarsky, fled southwestern Russia for America in early 1880s. However, all similarity of their experience to other refugee immigrants ends abruptly upon their arrival in New York -- for the Lubarsky family was part of a pioneer experiment unique among American Jews, an experiment initially made up of just 43 families, fewer than 160 adults with their children. And, as if this were not enough, the Lubarsky family later made another extraordinary leap, from the tenements of Philadelphia to the Golden Gate of the Pacific -- just in time for the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906.

In 1880, almost 80 percent of the world's Jewish population, about six million souls, was corralled in the frontier borderlands of Western Russia, now known as the Russian or Polish Pale. By contrast, there were only about twenty-five thousand Jews living in Palestine, two hundred thousand in Western Europe, three hundred thousand in the United States and just a scattering elsewhere in the world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Yiddish expression for "golden country" used by immigrants to describe the America they dreamed of, with streets paved in gold

<sup>2</sup> Herscher, Jewish Agricultural Utopias in America. Appendix 2, translation of Alliance Colony pioneer Sidney Bailey's memoir written in 1944, p. 145

<sup>3</sup> Sanders, Shores of Refuge, p. xi

Less than 150 years later, in 2012, 82 percent of the world's Jewish population is living in Israel and the United States. Another 8 percent live in France, Canada and the United Kingdom. Less than 2 percent now live in the Ukraine and Russia.<sup>4</sup> While a very large portion of this worldwide shift is the result of the Nazi slaughter of six million Jews during World War II, most of the rest can be attributed to a mass exodus from the Russian Pale that started in the early 1880s and was the result of economic distress accentuated by pogroms in the wake of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II.<sup>5</sup>

## The Jewish Exodus from the Russian Pale

The pogroms in the southern and western border regions of Russia and the consequent diaspora of the Jews were the result of the convergence of several factors. On the one hand, the light of the European Enlightenment was dawning, albeit feebly, in Tsarist Russia. The Edict of Emancipation in 1861 partially freed the Russian peasantry from serfdom, and other government reforms eased the lives of peasants and Jews alike. Residence restrictions that confined Jews to ghettos in the Pale were relaxed. Jews eagerly flocked to newly accessible secular schools and universities.

On the other hand, the landed Russian aristocracy opposed even the modest reforms of Tsar Alexander II. The industrialization that had ignited in Western Europe withered in the East, leaving Russia's urban youth and newly freed peasants in the countryside with grim economic prospects.

Social change under conditions of rising expectations and falling economic conditions is a dangerous thing. On March 13, 1881, Tsar Alexander II was assassinated, torn apart by a bomb thrown by a group of young revolutionaries intent on creating a modern Russia. In the wake of Alexander II's gruesome death, his son, the new Tsar Alexander III -- tutored as he had been in the belief that Holy Russia was the indissoluble union of state and orthodoxy, embodied in the Tsar and uncorrupted by parliaments<sup>6</sup> -- brought down the hammer.

While the assassins were hanged, the Tsar and ruling elite focused their attention on extinguishing all light of reform. How to do this without violent measures and the risk

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<sup>4</sup> The Jewish Virtual Library, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/jewpop.html>. In 2012: 42.9% in Israel, 39.5% in the U.S., 8.3% in France, Canada & the U.K, 1.9% in Ukraine & Russia

<sup>5</sup> It is estimated that about 3.2 million Jews fled from the Russian Polish Pale between 1880-1920 as a result of anti-Semitic riots called pogroms.

<sup>6</sup> Sanders, *Shores of Refuge*, p. 5

of alienating the vast majority of the citizenry? As it turned out, this feat could be achieved relatively easily in the short term. Just blame the Jews.

The Jews, the "killers of Christ," had been subject to waves of pogroms by Cossacks since at least the 1600s in southern and western Russia. Confined to the Pale, an irritating presence, whose efforts could occasionally visibly outstrip those of their Christian counterparts, the Jewish ghetto communities were already scapegoats for any trouble. Within less than a month of Tsar Alexander II's assassination, the populace's wrath turned almost inexorably on them -- conveniently away from revolution and toward the "protection of Holy Mother Russia."

Even some Russian radicals abandoned their principle of equality for all people. The Executive Committee of *Narodnaya Volya*, a radical organization intent on the overthrow of the czarist regime, proclaimed:

Good people, honest Ukrainian people! Life has become hard in the Ukraine, and it keeps getting harder. The damned police beat you, the landowners devour you, the Zhids, the dirty Judases, rob you. People in the Ukraine suffer most of all from the Zhids. Who has seized the lands, the woodlands, the taverns? The Zhids. Whom does the peasant beg with tears in his eyes to let him near his own land? The Zhids. Wherever you look, whatever you touch, everywhere the Zhids. The Zhid curses the peasant, cheats him, drinks his blood. The Zhid makes life unbearable.<sup>7</sup>

Starting on April 11, 1881, the day before Easter Sunday, a series of pogroms swept through Yelizavetgrad near Odessa. The wave of violence spread to Smela near Kiev and the brutality grew as the forces of civil order either gave up, looked on, or discretely applauded. Here are typical scenes from a Ukrainian pogrom:

"...The feathers of the destroyed beds lay from 3 to 6 inches high on the street, and about thirty soldiers were silent spectators when a ruffian, encouraged by the cheering of the populace, dragged a piano toward a balcony for the purpose of hurling it down into the street, in spite of the officer who was standing below."

"...sixteen persons have been murdered; sixty seriously wounded; females have been brutally violated; a mother, who was trying to prevent her daughter from being outraged, had her ears cut off and died from loss of blood; Jewish synagogues have been pillaged; the books of the Law torn and trodden upon."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 22

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 9

Three days later a Kiev journalist described what had happened to the Jews of Smela:

"Packed together like ants in an anthill were more than eighteen hundred Jews, with their wives and children -- many of them mere infants. They were clad in rags and barefooted. Many of them bore traces of ill-treatment, and a number of them had bandaged heads. All were ghastly pale and terror-stricken. As I approached them, I saw a boy of ten dying in terrible agony. His mother sat by him, tearless, as if too deeply afflicted to weep."<sup>9</sup>



<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 18

The violence continued for several weeks, breaking out sporadically in towns across the Ukraine, moving in a counterclockwise arc from Odessa to Kiev, then further northwest to Berdichev, near Lyubar, and then southeast again back to Odessa.

Some fraction of the Russian intellectual revolutionary youths who had banded together to change Mother Russia into a "modern state" were Jewish. Now was the time of their disillusionment:

"A group of radical students in Kiev...walked into a synagogue "filled with weeping, mourning Jews. One of them, a slim young man named Nicholas Aleinikoff, went before the congregation, prostrated himself, and said, "We are your brothers. We are Jews just like you. We repent of having considered ourselves Russians and not Jews. The events of the last few weeks -- the rioting in Yelizavetgrad, in Smela, here in Kiev, and in other towns, has shown us what a grievous mistake we were making. Yes, we are Jews."<sup>10</sup>

Within a month of the pogroms, Nicholas Aleinikoff had become leader of the Kiev branch of a new Jewish movement with the Hebrew name Am Olam or Eternal People. The propulsive idea behind Am Olam was the founding of cooperative agricultural colonies and the renewal of Jewish ties to the land itself. Am Olam groups sprang up in Odessa, Kiev and other major population centers in southern Russia. And, if they could not be assimilated and work the land of Mother Russia, then they would build Zion elsewhere.

Elsewhere. This was a radically new idea. The Jews of the Pale had lived for centuries in the same villages, towns and urban areas with no vision of escape. But, news that there was a New World, a land of opportunity far to the West -- the "Goldene Medina" with streets paved in gold -- had finally seeped into the Pale. The very idea ignited the imagination and swept through the population.

Propelled by fear and opportunity, Jews started fleeing westward to the border town of Brody in the province of Galicia, Austria. Galicia's frontier was poorly patrolled, enabling families to sneak through without passports. The area already had a large Yiddish-speaking community, ethnically and historically united with the Russian Pale, making it easier for families to hide and get some modicum of local support. Soon Brody,<sup>11</sup> already suffering from a catastrophic fire several years earlier and urban decay not unlike that of Detroit today, found its scant lodgings, railroad station and skeletal warehouses overflowing with refugees.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 24

<sup>11</sup> The entire Jewish population of Brody was wiped out in the Holocaust in 1942-1943

Alerted to events in the Pale and the flood of refugees, Jewish philanthropic groups in Western Europe and America geared up to send aid. Their goal was to ameliorate conditions at the border -- and to repatriate the refugees back to Russia. The philanthropists felt that their home countries could not support a flood of new immigrants. In May 1881 an editorial in the *New York Jewish Messenger* opined:

...but to suggest that three million of them settle in America evidences more enthusiasm than common sense. A better way, perhaps, would be to send American Jewish missionaries to Russia to civilize them, rather than give them an opportunity to Russianize us in the event of such a colossal emigration. The Russian Jewish population in New York Chicago, or elsewhere, has doubled within the past five years, and the task of americanizing them is too difficult for one to view the advent of three million more with anything but trepidation.<sup>12</sup>

The ever-swelling masses of refugees refused to go back. They refused money to return to Russia. They wanted to go to Palestine or to America, the "Goldene Medina" where the streets were paved with gold. The philanthropists next hoped to control matters by selecting for the overseas voyage only the most fit, with some education, skills and resources. This effort soon sputtered as, wholesale, families refused to leave behind wives, children, elders or the sick.

Among those who made it to America first, in the spring of 1882, were the members of Am Olam groups from various cities in the Ukraine. They were mostly healthy young people with families who had been involved already in progressive and socialist movements. Despite their general lack of experience in farming or agriculture, they were organized groups and they were determined, through sheer will and effort, to create Jewish homelands of some sort in either America or Palestine.

## The Lubarskys Journey to America

We know next to nothing about the lives of our émigré ancestors, Simcha and Pearl Lubarsky, in the Russian Pale. From the 1900 US census we learn that they arrived in the United States in May 1882 at the ages of 27 and 26 respectively. They had a six year old child Sarah, and an infant in arms, Gittle, who was born in December 1881. Thus, little Gittle was conceived at the height of the Easter 1881 pogroms.

We know that our émigré family was from the Ukraine, but this is a vast region. A DNA test done by Michael Bennett establishes a link with another branch of the Lubarsky family tree that suggests they were originally from Kiev.<sup>13</sup>

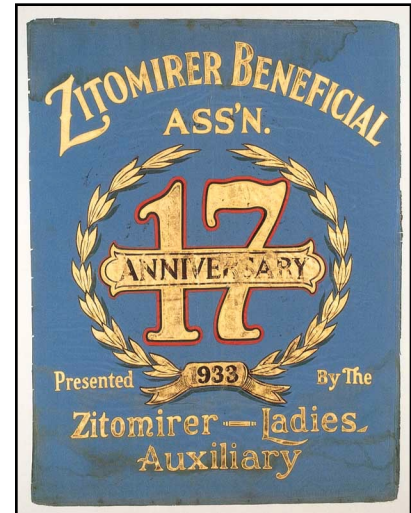
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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 35

<sup>13</sup> Nathan and David Louis Lubar, brothers, are second cousin DNA matches to Michael Bennett. In his WWI registration card, Nathan indicates that he was born in "Corson, Russia." In his 1920 U.S. Passport application, David Louis Lubar reports that his father was from Kiev, Russia. See Bennett Family Tree at Ancestry.com

It is also possible that at some point our branch of the Lubarsky family went from Kiev to the town of Lyubar in the province of Zhytomir in the Ukraine. There are four shreds of evidence for this.

First, in 1804, the Russian government mandated that all Jews could not change their names; in effect, they were required to adopt a permanent surname. Many Jews chose or created surnames based on the towns in which they lived. Lubarsky, from Lyubar, is such a name.<sup>14</sup> Second, Lyubar is just 40 miles from Berdychiv, one of the cities engulfed in the pogroms. Surely Lyubar was also visited by the mass violence. Third, there was a Jewish agricultural settlement in Lyubar in the 1925<sup>15</sup>, but it is unknown if the settlement went back to the 1880s. Fourth, Lyubar is only 136 miles east of Brody, gathering place of so many of the pogrom victims and refugees. All the little Lubarsky family had to do (and it is enough) was walk westward.<sup>16</sup>



Similarly, for quite some time, we knew next to nothing about the lives of the Lubarsky family upon their arrival in the United States; just that they lived in New Jersey. From the birth records of their next five children, including Saul, our paternal grandfather, we learned that the family lived from 1882 to at least 1893 in "Pit, Salem, New Jersey," -- but no map showed the town of "Pit" or other likely spellings of that word.

From these birth records we also learned Pearl Lubarsky's maiden name, Magadenky, which is derived from the Hebrew word "maggid" for an itinerant preacher or narrator of stories and which is common in the Lithuanian Pale. And, we learned that their third child, Israel Harry, was born in September of 1882 -- from which we can deduce that Pearl was four months pregnant while on a heaving ship in the Atlantic ocean. One can but sympathize with the combination of seasickness and morning sickness she likely suffered, and admire her bravery and endurance. Family legend, passed down from son Jacob's line, is that Pearl, throughout her life, was one tough individual. No surprise.

So, the Lubarsky family came from the Ukraine in the aftermath of the Easter pogroms. Little else was known about their departure or what they did on arrival in New Jersey. Then, after more digging, there came a breakthrough in the form of a ship manifest that

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=lubarsky>

<sup>15</sup> Photos of Lyubar Jewish Agricultural settlement at: <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/lyubar/yivophotos.html>

<sup>16</sup> For more information about the Jewish community in Lyubar, gleaned from Volynian Provincial Documents dated 1861, see Appendix A.

lists Saul Lubarsky (son of Simcha and Pearl Lubarsky and Leo Bennett's father) returning to California from Manila in the Philippines on the SS Admiral E.W. Eberle after WWII. Curiously, the manifest indicates that Saul's home address is 1401 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Alliance, New Jersey.

Where is Alliance, New Jersey? A quick Google map search came up with nothing. However, a plain search for Alliance popped up a Wikipedia citation for the "Alliance Colony" located in Norma, New Jersey. Back to Google maps. It turns out that Norma is located in Pittsgrove township -- the abbreviated "Pit" of Pit, Salem, New Jersey, mentioned in the birth records of the American-born Lubarsky children.

Thus, at the intersection of a ship manifest and a Wikipedia citation for the Alliance Colony, the startling and unique story of the early years of the Lubarsky family in America was revealed.

The Alliance Colony was founded on May 10, 1882, by members of Am Olam, the network of radical student organizations in Russia dedicated to establishing Jewish agricultural cooperative communities in Palestine and the United States. They wanted to renew Jewish ties to the land, something prohibited to them throughout most of their history in the Russian-Polish Pale. They wanted to create Zion in America. Philosophically, the Alliance Colony was a precursor to the kibbutz movement in Palestine in the 1940s and 1950s.

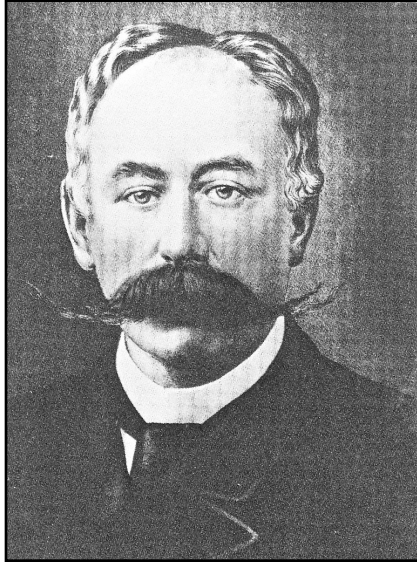
The Lubarsky family's participation as pioneers of the Alliance Colony was further confirmed by a list of the founding forty-three families in the appendix to the excellent book on the colony entitled *Immigrants to Freedom* by Joseph Brandes and Martin Douglas. There you will find our émigré ancestors listed as "Simcha and Pearl Luborsky."<sup>17</sup>

Because the Lubarsky family was part of the founding Alliance Colony families, we know, albeit indirectly, quite a bit about their journey to America because members of various Am Olam groups throughout the Ukraine documented their experiences of coming to the United States.

The Alliance Israelite Universelle, a philanthropic organization composed of wealthy French and American Jews, particularly Baron von Hirsch, jumped into the chaotic refugee situation in Brody, Austria. They organized the exodus of refugees in the early years, particularly 1881-1883, providing supplemental funding and logistical support for emigration. Critically, they also provided funding for the purchase of land for Am Olam settlements in Oregon, North Dakota and New Jersey. So instrumental was their

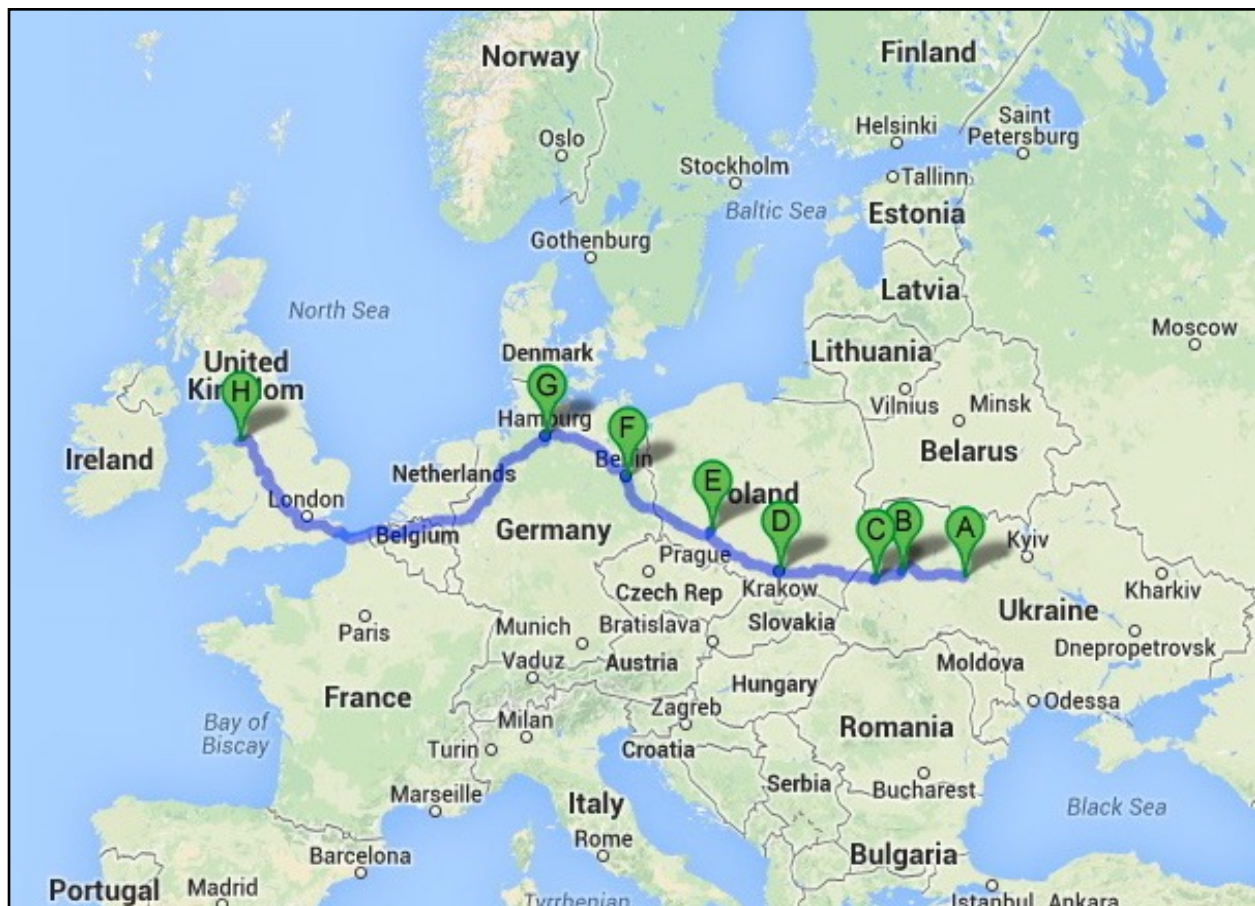
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<sup>17</sup> Brandes, Joseph and Douglas, Martin. *Immigrants to Freedom: Jews as Yankee Farmers! (1880s - 1960s)* 2009



help, that the Alliance Colony pioneers named their community in honor of the Alliance Israelite Universelle.

*"I shall try to make for them a new home in different lands, where as free farmers on their own soil, they can make themselves useful to that country." in The Forum, august 1891. Baron Maurice von Hirsch, Alliance Israelite Universelle*



*The trip made by Am Olam families across Europe, on their way to America  
A-Brody, B-Brody, C-Lemberg, D-Cracow, E-Breslau, F-Berlin, G-Hamburg, H-Liverpool*

Most of the Am Olam families destined for settlements in the United States went by train from Brody to Hamburg, although a few went to Antwerp, Belgium. Until further documentation is found, our assumption is that the Lubarsky family went with the majority to Hamburg. Unlike most other refugees, the Am Olam families' journeys to Hamburg were filled with anticipation and enthusiasm for their new ventures. One Am Olam member recalled that:

...the Am Olam group was given a special train, third-class, that cost us only half the regular price, and over which we were allowed to hoist our own flag. And we made a big one, embroidered with the name Am Olam, a large plow next to it, and underneath, the Talmudic motto "If I am not for myself, who is for me?" written in German in golden letters. One beautiful morning we gathered in a certain place, and the procession began. At its head were two students carrying our flag, followed by some older members of the group with our Torah scroll...At the station we heard speeches by some Jewish professors who had come from Lemberg and Vienna.<sup>18</sup>

And, the Am Olam groups were feted all along the route to Hamburg:

...in Brody, Lemberg, Cracow, Breslau, Berlin, and elsewhere...committees were founded...to help us...In Cracow I was presented with a copy of Karl Marx's *Capital* as a gift for the group. In Lemberg the Orthodox Jews presented us with a Torah scroll and a large flag with the words on it, in Hebrew: "The Flag of the Camp of Israel." Our journey from Brody to Berlin was a chain of ovations for us. In every city they had arranged a grand reception.<sup>19</sup>

In Breslau, one Am Olam group was met by the Danish-Jewish literary critic and historian, Georg Brandes, who wrote about the idealism of the members:

Day by day, there arrived more groups of Russian Jews...Among the first were sturdy young men, well suited for pioneering....When speaking to one of these impoverished but energetic students,...three different drives become apparent: More or less consciously, he feels that the collective type of land ownership in the Russian commune is the natural order of things. He also has been inspired by the relatively developed socialist ideas so widespread in Russia...Ultimately, he is imbued with a profound determination and sense of duty to wipe away the old slur that Jews are capable only of trading, and that they desire only to accumulate money.<sup>20</sup>

They needed every bit of idealism and fortitude they could muster because their journey, not only across the Atlantic, but also their decades-long sojourn within the Alliance Colony itself, were to be harrowing.

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<sup>18</sup> Sanders, *Shores of Refuge*, p. 59-60

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61

Reality hit for the first time in Hamburg. Like all other emigrants, the Am Olam members were shunted into large barracks that resembled "a public bathhouse in Lithuania" to await their ship to Liverpool. On the three to four-day voyage from Hamburg to Liverpool, they discovered that their provisioner had absconded with the funds (or perhaps the ship's crew had stolen the merchandise), leaving them with little to eat or drink. The stopover in Liverpool was fortunately a short one as the Am Olam groups had booked through passage all the way to America. It was a short reprieve, for now they faced the voyage across the Atlantic.

The only good thing about the Atlantic voyage in 1882 was that by then most passenger ships were steamers, not sailing ships. This reduced the time at sea from four to six weeks to two weeks. Despite the bumps in Hamburg and the voyage to Liverpool, the Am Olam groups were largely un-phased by the troubles and buoyed up by their special mission. Of the embarkation for America, one Am Olam member wrote:

...All its [S.S. British Prince] passengers were Russian immigrants; all, save members of our group were traveling to America as individuals, seeking to improve their position by their own brains and brawn; this one through handiwork, that one through peddling. Members of our groups saw themselves as superior to this multitude. "The other passengers are not like us," said we to ourselves, "we are not merely going to America for simple comfort, we are idealists, eager to prove to the world that Jews can work the land!" In our imagination, we already saw ourselves as landowning farmers dwelling on our plots in the western part of the country. So certain were we that our aims in the New World would be achieved that even on the boat we began to debate which kind of community institutions we would build, which books we would introduce into our library, whether or not we would build a synagogue and so forth (with regard to the synagogue, most of the views were negative). We danced and sang overcome with joyous expectations of what America held in store for us. In spite of our seasickness, storms and tempests which visited us on our journey, we were happy and lighthearted. All the days of our Atlantic voyage were filled with joy.<sup>21</sup>

Steerage class on the immigrant steamers consisted of a large room, sometimes divided by gender, located in the depths of the ship toward the bow. The walls of the steerage area were lined with shelves, one above another, with just enough room for individuals to squeeze into their pallets. In heavy Atlantic seas the whole ship -- but particularly the bow where steerage was located -- would gyrate wildly. Seasickness in close quarters was the inevitable result:

The confusion of cries became unbearable, and a hundred persons vomited at one and the same time. I wanted to escape from that inferno, but no sooner had I thrust my head forward from the lower bunk I lay on than someone above me vomited straight upon my head. I wiped the vomit away, dragged myself onto

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 65

the deck, leaned against the railing and vomited my share into the sea, then lay down half-dead upon the deck.<sup>22</sup>

When they finally got their sea legs, the immigrants discovered that, not only was the food promised by the steam line company not kosher but often spoiled and inedible. Extremely fortunate were those who did not experience the terror of an Atlantic storm:

...we were not able to stand or sit and if we attempted to lie down in our bunks we were shaken out. Trunks, benches and other objects slid from one side of the ship to the other. Monday morning when some of us wanted to poke our heads out of the door leading to the deck it was frightening to see the huge waves black as ink which appeared ready to swallow the entire ship. Everything on deck was covered with ice. The raincoats worn by the sailors on deck seemed to be made of tin because of the freezing. Everyone in our quarters was very frightened...The women were crying. The men gathered together and were reciting psalms.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the violent storm, passengers on this April 1882 voyage -- perhaps the Lubarsky family's voyage -- managed to hold the Sedar:

...some women...[took] tablecloths from their suitcases and spread them over some tables, and on these tables portions of matzoh were placed. Some better families had brought their own matzoh, wine and Passover whiskey and these were placed on the tables. But everything...had to be securely held by someone.<sup>24</sup>

They finished the service but the storm waves continued to mount. By the early hours of the morning, the passengers learned that one of the masts broke. So, even the least pious among them pledged that if they were spared they would not eat any chometz -- food ritually unfit for the holiday -- for the whole eight days of Passover. Unfortunately there was not much Passover food left to eat, and so:

...we survived on a few pieces of matzoh which we received twice a day...and some potatoes that had been steamed in their skins. By Friday all the matzoh had been consumed, so Friday evening and Saturday morning breakfast consisted of matzoh crumbs and for the rest of Saturday we had only potatoes. And since the very pious did not eat potatoes they in fact fasted that day. But we did not feel too hungry that day because we were told that we were to arrive in New York...In the afternoon we saw land and we were no longer thinking about eating. On Saturday evening we stopped a short distance from the port and on Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, on the eve of the last day of Passover, a smaller ship took us to Castle Garden.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 67-68

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 70

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 70-71

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 72

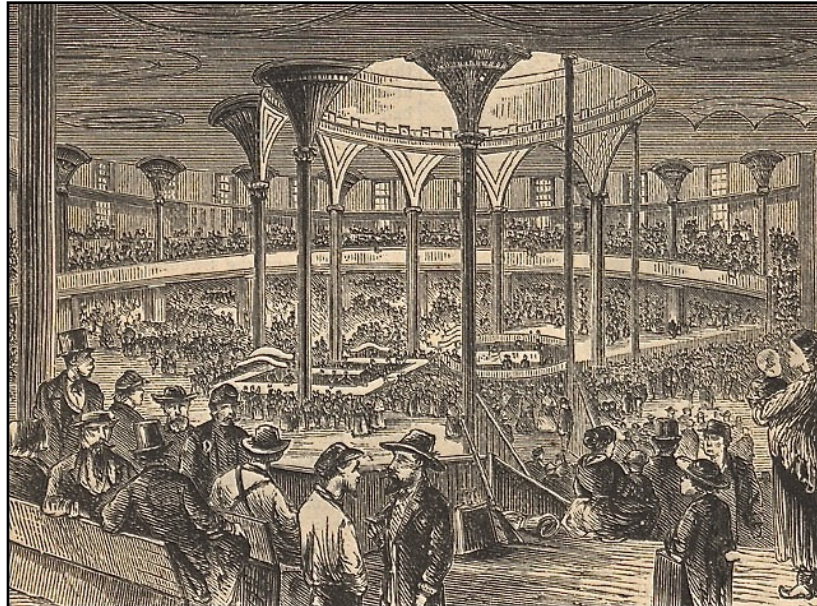


*Russian emigrants landing from a tender at the Barge Office, New York*

Long before Ellis Island, long before the Statue of Liberty, there was Castle Garden. The main immigration center of New York since colonial times, it was located at the southern tip of Manhattan Island next to Battery Park. It had an enormous circular structure of stone topped by a cupola. To this was added a huge enclosed plaza, built around half of the central structure to shelter the rising flood of immigrants. In 1882 immigration spiked, resulting in the largest influx of immigrants to date, totaling 788,992 persons from many countries. The Castle Garden Plaza was filled from one end to the other with immigrants, a barely controlled cacophony of languages and people, all funneling down to brusque and barely trained customs officers. Bags and papers checked and vaccinations given, the immigrants were suddenly thrust out to fend for themselves.



*Castle Garden Immigration Center in the 1880s*



The forty-three Am Olam families of the Alliance Colony were fortunate indeed to have arrival support from the American partner of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society. With a minimum of travail they were whisked out of Castle Garden and onward to the promised land of New Jersey.

Of the sixteen far-flung Jewish farming settlements launched in the 1880s, most of them in remote, rural areas of the Far West, the first and only successful venture was the Alliance Colony of New Jersey. That success, although marginal, resulted from three factors. The first was decent farming land with strategic New Jersey Central Railroad connections to two major urban areas, Philadelphia, 30 miles north, and New York City, 115 miles northeast. Second, sympathetic Philadelphia and New York Jewish philanthropists, particularly Michael Helperin, were heavily involved in oversight of the colony and insured adequate initial and emergency funding. Third, again perhaps due to its proximity to urban areas, the colony quickly diversified its revenue streams, relying on agricultural crops for summer and fall income and on factory and piece work in the winter and early spring timeframe.

## Life in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey

The Alliance Colony was initially founded on 150 acres<sup>26</sup> of heavily forested New Jersey pine barrens purchased by the Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society after consultation with a soil scientist. Temporary bare-bones barracks were constructed to house Alliance Colony families until they could clear the land and construct their homes. Each family was deeded a 15-acre farm, chosen by lottery, and charged \$300 in an interest-free, 33-year loan. To get started for the first six months the settlers received a work stipend and provisions for living. An instructor was sent to teach farming techniques. Once the land was cleared and a home built, each family would receive furniture, cooking utensils, seed for crops and farm utensils.<sup>27</sup>

While this was both businesslike and generous, especially when compared with the fate of most Jewish refugees left to their own devices in an alien land, the experience of the pioneering forty-five families on the ground required almost supernatural fortitude and effort. Every bit of their idealism would be used up in the process.

Right off the bat, the families were faced with clearing the land of dense pine trees and thick vegetation. Virtually no oxen or horses were provided to assist in pulling and removing tree stumps or plowing the virgin sod. All work was done with hand implements, beginning in the hot, humid, mosquito-infested summer months of 1882.

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<sup>26</sup> The Alliance Colony eventually encompassed 1,400 acres of land

<sup>27</sup> Herscher, *Jewish Agricultural Utopias in America*, p. 72



*Woodbine, another agricultural colony near Alliance, about 1892*

Living was entirely communal. The complex of crowded temporary barracks were mockingly known as Castle Gardens. The largest barrack housed twenty-six families in small rooms that opened on to a pounded earth hallway. Each room was just large enough for a bed, small table and chairs with storage on shelves above. The communal open hearth kitchen was the source of much trouble and infighting over the division of labor. Still, the Am Olam spirit was evident. An early Philadelphia visitor noted that almost every table had a bouquet of freshly gathered flowers, especially swamp magnolias.<sup>28</sup>

Two years into the endeavor, progress was evident: much land had been cleared and 67 families were settled into their homes. At the same time, most of the fields required replanting due to the inexperience of the Am Olam farmers and the ineptness of the agricultural managers who chose both the wrong crops and the wrong planting times in 1882 and 1883. Thus, the scene at Alliance consisted of "primitive facilities, optimism, frustration, confusion."<sup>29</sup>

In the winter of 1884, some of the colonists went to Philadelphia and returned with tailoring work for their own and other families. A New York philanthropist, Leonard

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<sup>28</sup> Brandes, ~p. 68

<sup>29</sup> Herscher, p. 76

Lewisohn, even gave each family a sewing machine to supplement their income.<sup>30</sup> Thus, piece work became an important, perhaps essential, source of revenue and winter cash flow in the Colony for many years thereafter. It is entirely possible that Simcha and Pearl Lubarsky were among these "tailoring" colonists, for we later find them in a number of census records and city directories engaged in the manufacture of "ladies' shirtwaists."



*Colony family dressed for Sabbath*

One of the Am Olam founders in Russia, Herman Rosenthal, wrote *kol hashkoleh koshoh* -- every beginning is difficult. The first five years of the Alliance Colony were synonymous with hardship:

Nearby swamps still brought swarms of mosquitoes and insects; potable water was not easy to obtain and when wells were dug some were rat-infested. Even as late as 1919, plumbing was not available in any [homes]. Heat was supplied by inefficient wood-burning stoves which also caused frequent fires. Because of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 76

the cost, lack of adequate roads and lack of horses and wagons, the town doctor was too far away to be consulted for anything but the worst emergency...<sup>31</sup>

In this period many colonists and their children resorted to picking strawberries and cranberries for local growers. They would walk 3-5 miles to find work with non-Jewish farmers, "After toiling all day they returned home as late as midnight, only to start out again in the small hours of the morning."<sup>32</sup>

The Alliance Colony also had its share of tensions and misunderstandings between benefactors and recipients and among the colonists themselves. Benefactors wanted their money spent wisely and the enterprise run in a businesslike manner. Only a few months after Alliance was established, a number of immigrants were expelled for failure to meet their financial obligations:

One group of disaffected colonists...broke into the empty barracks in Alliance and started rioting, ostensibly for more generous arrangements. Such actions brought representatives of the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society to press charges before the local courts, as well as some obviously unfavorable publicity; three of the riot's leaders were jailed by the Salem County constables.<sup>33</sup>

Efforts were made within the Colony to establish a committee that would speak on behalf of the membership with those who controlled the financing. However, as one of the colonists wrote:

[The] inhabitants...possess many different outlooks, for in it are found Russian Jews and Polish Jews, Orthodox, Chassidism and ignorant persons, some without any belief and some who do have a belief. Each group lives unto itself. Many attempts have been made...to unite these groups and to set up an executive committee before [which] all differences of opinion would be aired...[and which could] represent all the people of the colony before the leaders of the New York Committee. But even this sensible recommendation was not accepted for they could not come to an agreement.<sup>34</sup>

Eventually the financing terms for colonists were eased, and several seasons of highly profitable berry, sweet potato, and other crops in the late 1880s paved the way for a more stable community. There were many more short term struggles, but the Alliance Colony did endure well enough to hold a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 1932; well enough that one of the founding pioneers, Shneur (Sidney) Bailey wrote in his memoir:

Now after a lapse of fifty years from such a meager beginning, when many a rib was broken as we ran into a stump while plowing or cultivating; after learning

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<sup>31</sup> Brandes, ~p. 72

<sup>32</sup> Davidson, *Our Jewish Farmers and the Story of the Jewish Agricultural Society*, p. 250

<sup>33</sup> Brandes, ~p. 90

<sup>34</sup> Herscher, p. 77.

how to harness horses to a double plow, and to use tractors, hay loaders, potato planters and other farm machinery, we may feel thankful and satisfied with our achievement. Our farms are all paid for; we have a good name, and credit in the bank, befitting industrious and thrifty people. We feel prosperous and can keep our heads up; we are employed steadily; we are our own bosses. We are well and fairly comfortable and happy.<sup>35</sup>



*Fiftieth Anniversary Reunion, Alliance Colony 1932*

The Simcha and Pearl Lubarsky family did not last fifty years in the Alliance Colony. Nevertheless, they made a good run at it. Simcha was among those who cleared the land and built the houses. It is likely that the family picked strawberries in Gentile fields in the early years and did sewing piece work throughout the remainder of their time in New Jersey. Somehow, despite the constant backbreaking labor and minding of two little daughters, Pearl got pregnant and bore five more children, all boys, including Saul on July 4, 1885, in Alliance. As best we know, the Lubarskys were stalwarts, giving the best years of their lives, fifteen of them, to the Alliance Community.

In 2014, the Alliance Colony still exists, but it now functions through the private enterprise of individual farmers. The collective aspect of the Alliance Colony has faded

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 169. Herscher goes on to comment on Bailey's remark: "It is worth noting how even in the years after World War I there was a tendency among urban Jews to look somewhat askance at the successful South Jersey colonists. Rabbi Bernard Louis Levinthal, of Philadelphia...thought it remarkable that his friend and fellow-rabbi Judah Moses Bayuk [a leading pioneer and spokesman for the Alliance Colony] had forsaken 'his ability to take his position in the world of civilization, and earthly pleasures, and [gone] to live on a farm in the wilderness of New Jersey.' Another Philadelphia rabbi, Nachum Brenner, could not help 'wondering why [Bayuk] a man with such profound learning...should have chosen to live in such [a] crude and insignificant little place like Alliance, N.J.'

into history. Over the years some colonists drifted away in search of an easier life. Most of the colonists' children left for city jobs or for a higher education, never to return.



Interestingly, most of the remaining New Jersey Jewish farmers have turned their hand, at least in part, to poultry raising. There are several latter day Jewish collective agricultural experiments in "chicken ranching," the most successful of which was in Petaluma, California.

In 1927, the son of Simcha and Pearl Lubarsky, Saul, our grandsire, briefly owned one of

those Petaluma chicken ranches. Saul's son, Leo Bennett, rode the rails to California during the 1929 Depression and, for a summer, took over his father's "egg distribution route" which supplied Petaluma eggs to a string of San Francisco cafeterias and boarding houses. So, in a sense, the Alliance Colony lived on in the Lubarsky family, on opposite coasts and over several generations.

## Philadelphia: Tenements, Pushcarts & Piece Work

For whatever reason, Simcha and Pearl Lubarsky left the Alliance Colony sometime between 1895 and 1899 and moved to Philadelphia. We next find the family in the 1900 Census living in Ward 5, Philadelphia, where they run a "ladies' waist [cloak]" manufacturing business. All five boys are at school, while the balance of the family is at the sewing machine. Oldest daughter Sarah is married, now Sarah Wolf.

Ward 5 is in the heart of the Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia, sometimes called the Russian Quarter because Jews from the Russian, Polish and Lithuanian Poles became so predominant in the city. The Jewish Quarter was bounded by the Poles and the Irish to the east, by the black community to the west, by the Italians to the southwest and the Irish again to the south. Curbside markets with pickle barrels and pushcarts sprang up and eventually grew into the famous South 4<sup>th</sup> Street pushcart market with peddlers and hucksters of all sorts. There were dozens of synagogues. Smack dab in the middle of the quarter was a Yiddish theatre where one of the greatest actors of the day, Boris Thomashevsky performed. His great grandson, Michael Tilson Thomas, is the music director and conductor of the San Francisco Symphony.



*The Jewish Quarter in Philadelphia, ~1890*

There were over one hundred sweatshops in the Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia where, in 1895, men were paid \$6 per week for 58 hours of work; women were paid as little as \$1.80-\$3 per week for the same work.<sup>36</sup> Strikes over "starvation wages" were not unknown.<sup>37</sup> Whether the Lubarskys were textile factory owners or contract laborers is

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<sup>36</sup> The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia, posted March 5, 2008, PhillyHistory.org, online: <http://www.phillyhistory.org/blog/index.php/2008/03/the-jewish-quarter-of-philadelphia/>

<sup>37</sup> Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia*, p. 233

unclear, but they managed to survive in that cutthroat industry for about five years. At some point, perhaps when they moved to Philadelphia, Simcha Lubarsky americanized his first name to Samuel for the 1904 Philadelphia City Directory lists Samuel Lubarsky & Sons, tucking and felling [binding and hemming], at 53 N 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The family is living together at 609 Dickinson Street.

## Shaking It Up: Across the Continent to San Francisco

Again, it is for future family historians to determine why the Lubarsky family made yet another enormous leap in 1905, this time from Philadelphia to San Francisco. There were close ties between some of the upscale Philadelphia and San Francisco synagogues and they perhaps some provided logistical and financial support for the western migration of Russian Jews who had initially settled in Philadelphia but who had heard about the success of the German Jews during the Gold Rush and who wanted to move on to this newest and shiniest Goldene Medina.

In any case, the Lubarsky family, all nine of them, scraped up the fare for the one-way transcontinental train trip to California. We find them listed in the 1905 San Francisco City Directory, S. Lubarsky & Co., silk waists and suits, at 738 Mission Street, and residing at 605 Eddy Street, both in the downtown core of the city.

If the Lubarskys expected the streets of San Francisco to be paved with gold, what they got was an earthquake. The April 18, 1906 earthquake, estimated at 7.8 on the Richter scale and the fires that swept through huge swaths of the city, left an estimated 55-73% of the 410,00 inhabitants homeless. Eighty percent of the city was utterly destroyed.<sup>38</sup> What happened to the Lubarsky clan?

Anne Bennett passed along the story that the Lubarsky family, fled the city and lived in a refugee tent camp in San Mateo. In fact, about 75,000 San Franciscans (18% of the population) fled the city. However, as the gateway to the Pacific and crown jewel of the American Pacific, San Francisco already had a very large military presence at the Presidio. As a result, refugee camps were set up quickly throughout the city, in the Presidio itself, Golden Gate Park, Jefferson Square (close to Eddy Street where the Lubarskys lived in 1905) and many smaller parks and open spaces.

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<sup>38</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1906\\_San\\_Francisco\\_earthquake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1906_San_Francisco_earthquake)



*A Jewish family living in Golden Gate Park after the 1906 earthquake.  
The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life at The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley*

It's hard to imagine how devastating this event was on people's lives. With no other choice, the Lubarskys started their business again, relocating by 1907 to 209 Clement Street.<sup>39</sup> Instead of suits and cloaks, the business is now focused on men's neckwear, presumably ties and perhaps shirt collars. Their struggle is evident in two newspaper clippings. On July 4, 1907 they declared bankruptcy, owing \$2,875 on \$862 in assets.<sup>40</sup> In late August they filed a damage suit for \$10,300 against United Railroad, a local trolley company, alleging that on June 29 Mrs. Lubarsky was thrown to the floor of a car on the Cliff House line and had been suffering from nervous shock ever since.

The family continued their neckwear business in San Francisco for several more years. Perhaps, at last, the Lubarsky business achieved some modicum of success or perhaps the lawsuit panned out, for the next evidence we have of the family is an announcement in the society section of the newspaper. Several Lubarsky children, Sarah and Simon, helped organize a fundraising dance in 1909 for the Agudath Zion Society whose objective was to secure:

"A legally recognized, publicly assured home for the Jews in Palestine in the hope of thus ending the Jewish persecutions and atrocities which exist in Europe at the present time. The San Francisco society is one of the strongest Jewish organizations on the coast and numbers among its membership the most prominent people of the city."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> 1907 Crocker Langley San Francisco Directory

<sup>40</sup> San Francisco Call, Volume 102, No. 34, 4 July 1907

<sup>41</sup> San Francisco Call, Volume 106, No. 125, 3 October 1909



Subsequently Simon appears several times in the society notices, and in 1913 he marries Florella Schwartz in what may have been a high society wedding in Napa.<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to note that Simon Lubarsky's wedding was officiated by Rabbi Bernard Kaplan of the Bush Street Synagogue in San Francisco. Newspaper accounts of the era indicate that Zionism and activism played significant roles in the thinking and actions of Rabbi Kaplan. In one noted sermon, the rabbi chastises President Theodore Roosevelt for not visiting San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and for not providing more aid to its beleaguered citizens.<sup>43</sup>

The Bush Street Temple, founded in 1904, appears to have been an offshoot of Temple Emanu-el, one of the first San Francisco synagogues. Given the Lubarsky family experience of pogroms in the Ukraine and their participation in the Am Olam movement one wonders if the family was among the founding members of the new congregation. Their continuing support for Zionist goals in California tends to confirm that Samuel and Pearl Lubarsky were among the fervent Am Olam activists in the Ukraine, not simply immigrants seeking a way out of the miserable conditions in the Ukraine.

## The Leap Across the Bay to San Leandro

In any case, the Lubarsky family next appears in 1911 in San Leandro, a small city in Alameda County in the East bay area where Samuel Lubarsky, supported by Rabbi Marvin Meyer of San Francisco's Temple Emanu-el, attempts to breathe new life into the First Hebrew congregation and raise \$1,000 for repairs to its shul. He buys "an elegant home on fashionable Estudillo Avenue."<sup>44</sup> Saul becomes a First Hebrew trustee and Simon becomes secretary of the board. Sarah becomes president of the Ladies Auxiliary and undertakes a large fundraiser featuring "singing and dancing specialties," "violin solos" and "clever impersonations and monologues."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> San Francisco Call, Volume 113, No. 33, 2 January 1913

<sup>43</sup> Lodi Sentinel, 2 June 1906

<sup>44</sup> Oakland Tribune, 19 August 1911, p. 14

<sup>45</sup> San Francisco Call, Volume 110, No. 169, 16 November 1911



*From impoverished immigrants to high society: the Lubarsky family in their finery.*

*From top, l to r: Grace, Israel Harry, Jacob, Simon, Sara; Pearl, Samuel; Saul*

*The photo was probably taken in 1911 or 1912 when they lived in San Leandro*



Nothing is known of the outcome of this initiative but it is a testament to the family's commitment to their faith and their drive to build a Jewish homeland in the West. The "Little Shul" which was the home of the First Hebrew congregation is still extant, located on Dolores Street behind present day Temple Beth Sholom.

*The "Little Shul" in San Leandro today*

## San Francisco Redux

By 1913 Samuel and Pearl Lubarsky have returned to San Francisco, living at 424 Balboa Street in the Richmond district. Saul and Moses are living with them, joined in 1917 by Israel Harry and his son Bernard. Pearl is running "Pac Ruching & Novelty" company out of their home. There is no mention in city directories of the paterfamilias' neckwear business. Perhaps Samuel retired or became an invalid as he died several years later on December 20, 1918 and was buried at Salem Memorial Park in Colma.

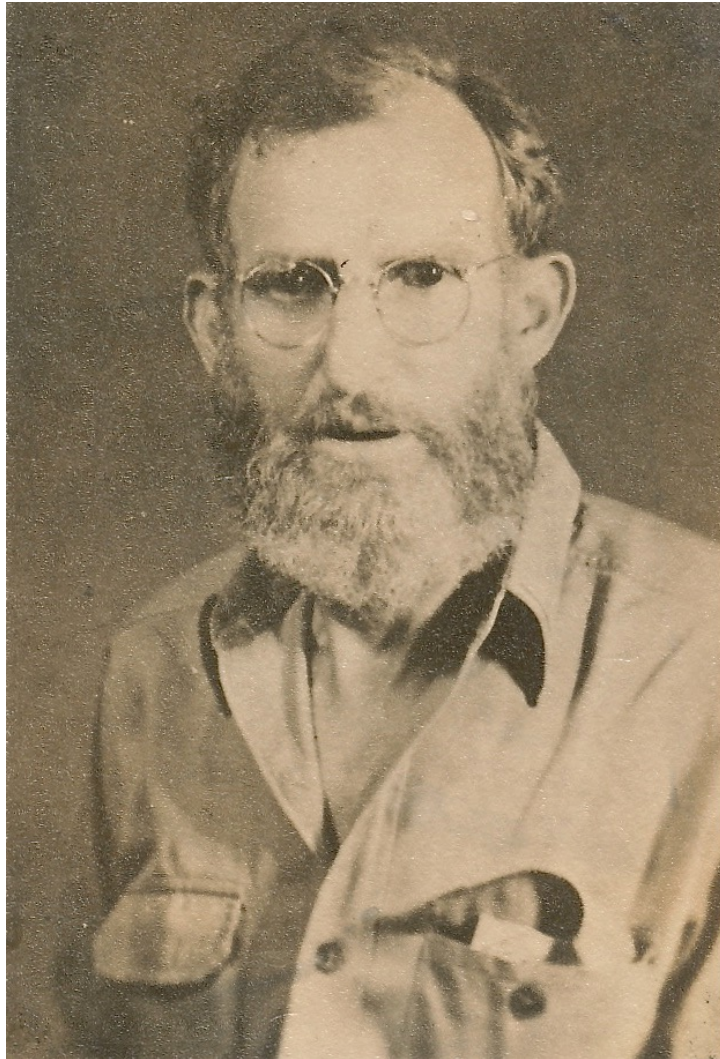


*Photo above: Pac Ruching & Novelty Co., San Francisco, owned by Pearl R. Lubarsky, ~1917*

After their time in San Leandro it appears that the rest of the now-adult children dispersed. Simon stayed in the San Francisco area. Grace married and moved to Los Angeles, as did Jacob. It is likely that Sarah also moved to southern California. Paula Klein, Jacob Lubarsky's granddaughter, recalls that her grandmother socialized with Jacob's two sisters. After the death of her husband, Pearl also moved to Los Angeles. Pearl died in 1940 and was returned to San Francisco and buried next to her husband in Salem Memorial Park in Colma, California.

And what of our grandsire Saul Lubarsky? Perhaps someday a complete biography will be written, as his story is indeed one of great travail compared to our lives. He was one of the young children who sweat-labored in the rough fields of the Alliance Colony. He did piece work in the tenements of Philadelphia. He lived through the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. He worked variously as a machinist, hoisting operator, electrician and merchant seaman. He ran a shoestring egg business in Petaluma. Finally, in 1940 he found a secure job as a civilian employee working for the Army in Manila, Philippines -- just in time to become a prisoner of war in the notorious Santo

Tomas Internment Camp for most of World War II. A family story said that he attempted escape and was caught. The prison guards threatened him with execution the next morning — only to renew the threat for many days thereafter. He returned home to San Francisco in May 1945 weighing less than one hundred pounds.



*Saul Lubarsky, ~1945/1946*

Saul married twice. He married his first wife, Flora Bennett, daughter of a San Francisco tailor, in 1909 and together they had a son, our grandsire, Louis Joseph Lubarsky, affectionately known as Leo, in 1910. They were divorced by 1914. Flora and her son assumed her maiden and moved to Queens, New York, where she became a housekeeper and nanny for a family in Far Rockaway. As a young man Leo Bennett visited his father several times in San Francisco and eventually brought his bride, Hannah Esther Chizick (known as Anne) to the Goldene Medina of California. In later life, Saul operated a tailoring business with his second wife, Valentina Bernardino, whom he brought from the Philippines at some point in the early 1960s. Saul died in 1973 and is buried at Eternal Home cemetery in Colma, California.

*To see detailed profiles and vital records of émigré grandsires Simcha and Pearl Lubarsky and their children, visit the public Bennett Family Tree at Ancestry.com:*

<http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/12051804/family/pedigree>

## EPILOGUE

So it was when I found out about the California Digital Newspaper Collection, part of the Library of Congress "Chronicling America" initiative to get old newspapers from all fifty states digitized, OCR'd and put into an online database. What a glorious thing! The alternative is to sit for hours in a dark room hunched over a microfilm reader, painstakingly reading through each and every issue of a given newspaper. Genealogists are crazy, but not that crazy!

Fortunately, a simple search of the California Digital Newspaper Collection on the keyword "Lubarsky" produced a dozen or so articles, a few of which were the gems used to flesh out the family history elaborated here. But there was one shining -- and miserably tantalizing -- "diamond" printed in the *San Francisco Call* on December 9, 1909:

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THE SAN FRANCISCO CALL, MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1909.

# SPRING VALLEY TO MAKE EGA- OFFER OF PLANT

Meeting of Stock Holders Is  
Called to Ratify Nega-  
tions With City

Will Prevent Delay of Subse-  
quent Proceedings by Any  
Dissatisfied Share Owner

In order that the legal status of the offer of the Spring Valley water com-  
pany to sell its plant and property to  
the city for \$10,000,000 may be made  
evident, there will be a confirmation meet-  
ing of the stock holders of the corpora-  
tion held on Tuesday afternoon, Decem-  
ber 28, at 2 o'clock. Assistant Secre-  
tary T. M. Edmunds has sent out a  
notice to the stock holders to be pre-  
sent at the meeting. Transfer books  
will be closed from 10 o'clock to 10  
p.m. Monday, December 20, to and  
including Friday, December 31, on ac-  
count of the closing.

The stock holders of the company al-  
ready have empowered the directors to  
make an offer to the city of San Fran-  
cisco, and to negotiate for the sale of  
the plant. Under the authority of the  
delegated power the directors and Presi-  
dent William Brown presented the \$10,  
million proposition, which is to be voted  
on at the bond election January 14.  
But in order that any subsequent  
negotiations might not be interrupted  
by proceedings brought up by any dis-  
satisfied stock holder, the directors de-  
cided to call the meeting for Decem-  
ber 28.

Director K. H. Brown, president of  
the company, 215 Water street, has  
been the backbone of the action. He  
has the purpose of constituting, after  
the meeting, a committee to carry out  
the corporation through the board of  
directors. He will also be president  
November 1909, to sell to the city and  
the city to the company for the sum  
of \$10,000,000.

**GAS ASPHYXATION ENDS  
LIFE OF TRAVELING MAN**

Lays Covers Over Stove and Ac-  
cidentally Hiss Valve

Julius Green of 1234 Park street, a  
traveling salesman, was accidentally  
asphyxiated Sunday night at his home,  
1000 E. Market street, when he was  
asleep. He had the shutters over a gas  
stove open and, while he was asleep,  
he turned on the gas.

# Woman Who Died at 105 Left 211 Descendants

Mrs. Brina Magazkeny, who died Saturday at age of 105, and her  
great-grandson, Bernard, aged 3.

# CENTENARIAN HAD GIANT FAMILY TREE

Husband Lived to Be 101; Old-  
est Living Son Is 80  
Years of Age

Mrs. Brina Magazkeny, who died in  
Philadelphia Saturday morning, 1909,  
was the mother of eight grown chil-  
dren, and the grandmother of 100. She  
was born in Hungary, and lived in the  
United States and 13 of them  
were living in the United States.

# BANDIT APPEARS AT BILLIARD HALL

Telephones to Gleason's Drug  
Store, "I'll Be Around," and  
Goes Out Again

Detectives Rush in Automobile  
to Scene, but Can Find No  
Trace of Fugitive

An automobile crammed with police  
detectives was rushed from police  
headquarters in Robby street early yes-  
terday evening to a billiard parlor  
owned by Japanese at 1334 Post  
street, from which, according to Captain  
Fitzgerald was informed, a tall, dark  
man answering in every detail to the  
description given of the drug store  
thief had telephoned to the Gleason-  
Curryman pharmacy.

The suspect used the Home tele-  
phone, and got the drug store num-  
ber, 14. C. Courtney, one of the prop-  
rietors of the pharmacy, came to the  
telephone to CALL AGAIN.

"Hello," the mysterious stranger at  
the billiard parlor called. "This is the  
drug store bandit, as they call me. I  
will be around tonight. You'll find me  
I will be around tonight."

From the billiard parlor came im-  
mediate word of the man who had  
telephoned to the pharmacy, for Jap-  
anese in the place were watching the  
message the fellow sent over the wire.  
The mysterious stranger left as soon  
as he had telephoned, however, and  
the detective stranger left as soon as  
he could discover no trace of him.  
An automobile was held in readiness  
before the central police station al-  
most until after 12 o'clock, and six  
detectives waited a few minutes  
before they were sent to the drug  
store. The man who had telephoned  
of the day's search came from William  
Curryman's pharmacy, 14 C. Courtney,  
and was taken to the drug store.

Declared to Acting Captain of Detect-  
ives Fitzgerald that he knew two men,  
both "two time" men, from the Se-  
neca antiques, and that he was the  
author of the drugstore crime. One  
of them was a man who had telephoned  
and looked like the bandit. Thus the in-  
vestigation was brought to a close.

**DEVILION SUICIDE NERVEN**

Still another clever case from Oak-  
land, California, has been solved. The  
crime to Fitzgerald with the statement  
that he was a "devilion" and the  
identity of the bandit. The acting cap-  
tain of the police was in the street  
however.

The police are working as indu-  
bitably as ever, and are making good  
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It turns out that our émigré ancestor Pearl Lubarsky had an interesting story to tell and the biggest newspaper in town jumped on it. Her mother, Braina Magadenky, had died recently in Philadelphia at the age of 105. Braina's husband, Burah Magadenky, was just three months older than his wife, and he also lived to a ripe old age, dying at 101. The article states that the couple was married in Lisinsky (possibly Voylinska) in the province of Kiev and had a total of sixteen children, the youngest being Pearl. The Magadenkys, fled the pogroms to America in 1882, both age 79, along with sixty-five other Jewish families.

There are two additional tidbits -- the miserably tantalizing ones. First, they left 211 descendants -- of which 149 were living in the United States at the time of the newspaper article. Second, Burah Magadenky left several valuable books to his family which were held in trust by Samuel Lubarsky. One of the volumes was more than 340 years old and was one of the very first Hebrew scriptures printed in Holland.<sup>46</sup>

As happens so often to the historian and genealogist, one goes three steps forward and two steps backward. A thorough search of ship records and immigration documents for 1882 and surrounding years turned up nothing....not for the Lubarsky family and not for the Magadenky family. Repeated searches of all vital records in the United States turned up a scant few Magadenkys -- and none tied to Burah and Braina by name or even by the time period in which they lived. Name variations, of which there are many possibilities,<sup>47</sup> also netted nothing. How could 149 descendants in America produce such paltry results?! It is a question for future researchers. More information comes online all the time....

What happened to the rare 450 year old Hebrew book printed in Holland? Its fate is another mystery commanding the attention of future generations.

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<sup>46</sup> San Francisco Call, Volume 107, No. 20, 20 December 1909

<sup>47</sup> Pearl's maiden name was variously transcribed in official documents as "Magdonky," "Magidenky" and "Makadenks." There are many other permutations including "Magadensky," "Magibens," "Makadenks" and "Magadensk."

## FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS

### The Lubarskys and the Magadenkys

Photographs generously provided by Paula Kogan Klein,  
granddaughter of Jacob & Pauline Lubarsky



*Braina & Burah Magadenky, Pearl Lubarsky's parents, born in Voylinska, Kiev province in 1804;  
photo attached to their identity document upon immigrating to the United States*



*Braina Magadenky, age 105, with great, great grandson Bernard Lubarsky, son of Israel Harry Lubarsky, age 2. Philadelphia, 1909*



*Paterfamilias Samuel Lubarsky circa 1911*



*Pearl and Samuel Lubarsky circa 1911*



*Sarah & Grace Lubarsky, Philadelphia, circa 1895*



*Happy Times: Sarah Lubarsky Wolf, Atlantic City, 1903*



*Grace (Gittel) Lubarsky, possibly San Leandro circa 1911*



*The five Lubarsky sons, top to bottom, l to r: possibly Simon, Harry Israel, Saul, Moses, Jacob.  
Probably Philadelphia circa 1905*



*Simon Lubarsky, probably San Leandro, 1911*



*Pauline & Jacob Lubarsky, probably San Francisco circa 1924*

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- Page 20 Jewish Family Dressed for Sabbath.  
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- Page 22      Fiftieth Anniversary Reunion, Alliance Colony, 1932  
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- Page 23      A Home on the Range: Jewish Chicken Ranchers of Petaluma, found at:  
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- Page 24      The Jewish Quarter in Philadelphia, ~1890  
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- Page 26      Jewish family in Golden Gate Park after the 1906 earthquake  
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- Page 27      Will Enlarge Synagoge in San Leandro, *Oakland Tribune*, August 19, 1911
- Page 28      Lubarsky Family Portrait. Photo permission of Paula Kogan Klein, 2015
- Page 28      The "Little Shul" in San Leandro, courtesy of the San Leandro Public Library, San Leandro Historic Photo #01854  
<http://patch.com/california/sanleandro/little-shul-oldest-synagogue-still-standing-in-california>
- Page 29      Pac Ruching & Novelty Co., San Francisco, ~1917. Photo permission of Paula Kogan Klein, 2015
- Page 30      "May our eyes behold your return in mercy to Zion" Fifth Zionist Congress, Basel, December 1901. Image published in Ost und West, Berlin, January 1902. From: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zion>
- Page 31      "Woman Who Died at 105 Left 211 Descendants," *San Francisco Call* on December 9, 1909
- Pages 33-38      Lubarsky & Magadenky family photos courtesy of Paula Kogan Klein, 2015

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **JEWISH COMMUNITY OF LYUBAR IN 1861**

**Quotations from Volynskie Gubernskie Vedomosti (Volynian Provincial Records)**  
**"The Borough of Liubar" by Priest V. Komashko, issues #40, 41, 42; October 7th, 14th, and 21st, 1861. Translated by Elena Tsvetkova of Blitz Russian-Baltic Information Center. Online: <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/lyubar/volyn.html>**

"Liubar is divided by the river Sluch into two parts....Liubar is the best and very populous place in the Southern part of the Novograd Volynskii district. It is the center of trade for the entire neighborhood. The location is wonderful. It is arranged rather regularly. Rather a big quantity of Jewish inns are around the bazaar square. It would not be a shame if they were built in the cities. There are big, two-story stone shops. They are rather advantageously constructed and have taverns on the upper floors. In this beautiful building there are many Jewish stores selling various goods and a good wine cellar. Not far there are the other stores which were built earlier. They sell various small goods - everything which could be bought in district towns, but less expensive. That is why many people come here for shopping especially on Sundays."

**Volynskie gubernskie vedomosti" [Volynian Provincial Records].**  
**Not official section. Issue #41. October 14, 1861. Pgs. 245-247**

"Jews have up to 9 prayer houses here. The most notable by size and arrangement is a stone synagogue newly built near the land owner's garden. It is located near the place of their previous synagogue. When Dnieper Cossack passed by this place they asked the permission of Hetman Bogdan Khmel'nitskii to celebrate a Jewish wedding. At that time they killed 50 Jews and burnt their synagogue which had been existing for 570 years, as it was known from a note inside the synagogue. Jews still hold this place sacred."

**"Volynskie gubernskie vedomosti" [Volynian Provincial Records],**  
**Issue #42. October 21, 1861. Pgs. 250-252**

"The soil both in the borough and in the suburb is a rich black. It is used for spring and winter crops. The soil is a bit sandy only along the road to Chertoriia and a partially clay."

"7560 residents (both sexes) live in Liubar. 3560 of them are Jews. Old believers also reside here. In addition to agriculture, the residents are involved in trade (especially popular is trade with lard)."