

# SA-SIG

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/>

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## *Southern African Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group Newsletter*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I sit in cold, grey, wet London thinking about the boundaries and limits of genealogy and family history. For each of us involved in pursuing this obsessive activity, it represents a common goal that can be achieved in different ways. Most, but not all of us want to understand more about our origins. I was recently sent a website compiled by someone with Jewish ancestry on 1/8 of his family. His work is detailed and very comprehensively referenced, mainly to various files and sources in South African Archives. But it gave no hint of history or why people moved or any details of their lives. This was almost like a catalogue of a stamp collection, informative and bland, totally lacking in the details that would be of interest to a broader group of people.

A similar criticism was voiced by one of the better known Southern African Jews who commented on one of the Jewish Genealogy Society's newsletters, that he personally had no interest in "X"'s *bobba* and *zeider* and would like to see more articles of a general nature rather than those very personalized pieces. The broader socioeconomic reasons and trends that made our ancestors move, and those that make many of us and our relations move in current times are worth concentrating on.

The scope of genealogy has changed in the past 10-20 years with the unusual opening of former Soviet Union archives, the ability to travel and meet the archivists, the development of sophisticated search engines and enormous databases. Western archives have become much more open and user friendly, and many of the senior people in major libraries and archives are actively encouraging genealogists, rather than the previous notion of discouraging anyone who was not an academic. In addition, the use of cutting-edge genetic tools to analyse genetic markers, and the development of databases around these. This has led to significant studies on Jewish and other migration patterns.

I convene two main areas in SA Jewish Genealogy. One of the problems that still has to be surmounted is the updating of databases with new material acquired by providers since they first gave us access. This is not an easy task when multiple sources are involved. There are still major problems getting information from some communal and religious institutions. In addition there are a host of

### The Southern Africa Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group (SA-SIG)

The purpose and goal of the Southern Africa Special Interest Group (SA-SIG) is to bring together Jewish genealogy researchers with a common interest in Southern Africa and to provide a forum for a free exchange of ideas, research tips and information of interest to those researching Jewish family history in the communities of South Africa, Lesotho (Basutoland), Botswana (Bechuanaland), Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), Swaziland, Mozambique, Kenya, and the former Belgian Congo.

The SIG has been producing a quarterly Newsletter since 2000 in which is included articles on personalities in the Southern African Jewish community, religious congregations, communities – past and present and general news about the lives our Southern African families led.

Further information on how to subscribe to the Newsletter can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/newsletter/index.htm>

If you would like to contribute articles to the Newsletter, accounts should include descriptions of families of the community, aspects of local Jewish life, its institutions and particular character. Jewish involvement in the community at large, its history, business life and development could be featured as well.

Articles for printing in the Newsletter should be sent to Bubbles Segall, Editor, at [bubbles.segall@wagait.net](mailto:bubbles.segall@wagait.net)

General enquiries about the Newsletter can be sent either to Bubbles or to Mike Getz at [MikeGetz005@comcast.net](mailto:MikeGetz005@comcast.net)

The SA-SIG maintains a set of Web Pages that can be found at: <http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica>

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new congregations with their own records in South Africa where the records still have to be accessed.

I see this as an ongoing situation and we need to continue to build up data for the generations that will come after us. Ideas, input, please!!!

**Saul Issroff**

London

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## EDITORIAL

The inspiring work being carried out by *The South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth's* documenting early Jewish life in the country communities of South Africa plays a vital role in preserving the contribution families made to the old South Africa. Their success in saving irreplaceable information deserves the upmost recognition.

Those who have read any of *The South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth's* publications, *Jewish Life In the South African Country Communities*, will most likely have found it as stimulating as I. For me it highlighted the importance of our own organisation's work in recording the history of families who have left South Africa ensuring links are recorded for prosperity.

Estimates are that 40,000 or so Jews have left South Africa in recent times for countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, North America, the UK and Israel. The ease with which the historic link can be lost should not be underestimated. This was brought home in stark reality in my research into my husband's family where the country of origin of his paternal great grandfather was lost inside two generations. It took almost twenty years of research for it to be recovered and then a lot of luck was involved. Like so many instances in genealogy, the aunt who undoubtedly had the information died in the 1960s without leaving a written record. As my husband's large extended family often comments, the information was gone forever if not for the involvement of an in-law. By the way, their long-standing yearly gatherings have grown appreciably as a result of the breakthrough with many previously unknown relatives with a common great grandfather attending.

I hope this highlights how important it is for all of us to document the origins of our families. However insignificant it may seem at the time you can be sure it will be of considerable significance to many in the future. This, our last newsletter for 2006, again features a number of articles where readers have documented family lives in South Africa. I urge you all to similarly record events and share them with us in 2007.

The last issue of the newsletter had Part 1 of Derrick Lewis' family story. His great grandfather Wulf Sanders left *Courland* and moved first to London, then to Memphis Tennessee, then to Melbourne in Australia. In this issue we see Wulf, together with his wife and family, leave Australia for Riga and then to South Africa where they set up home in Oudtshoorn and made a significant contribution to the Jewish community.

The September issue of the newsletter had an article about the Jewish community of Springs which was written by Jean McKechnie in 1991 for *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser*. A second article has been provided for your information.

Adam Yamey has provided us with an article about the role his family played in Namibia, formerly known as German South-West Africa – a colony of Germany which was taken over by South Africa and administered as South West Africa until they gained independence in 1990. For anyone doing research in Namibia, Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, the itinerant Country Communities Rabbi has documented and photographed every Jewish grave in Windhoek, Keetmanshoop, Luderitz and Swakopmund. The number of Jews in Namibia has always been relatively small compared to South Africa but in the early days, they played an important role in the development of the diamond industry and the railway.

People who grew up in the Western Cape in the 1950s and 1960s would be familiar with *Iron Brew* – a soft drink produced by the Lurie and Segall families at *The Silver Aerated Water Factory*. This is part of my own research into my family's involvement in the town of Stellenbosch.

**Bubbles Segall**

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## FROM SIAULIAI TO STELLENBOSCH

*Bubbles Segall*

*Thanks to Gwenda Harris (nee Lurie), Daphne Jacks (nee Segall), Elion (Jonesy) Segall, Diana Segall and Lynne Martin (nee Segall) for their contributions.*

The Segall and Lurie families have had a presence in Stellenbosch for 102 years – from 1902 to 2004. It all started when Daniel Segall and Edward Lurie (known as Zoona), went into business together in 1902. The last Lurie to live in Stellenbosch was Edward's daughter Riva who died in 2001 and the last Segall to leave was Daniel's granddaughter Diana who left in 2004 to travel.



*Daniel Segall*



*Edward Lurie*

Edward migrated to South Africa before Daniel – arriving sometime in the early 1890s from *Siauliai* in Lithuania. His father Chatzkel died before he was born and he was brought up by his father's sister Sarah Lurie and her husband Chaim Leib (Leon) Lurie, who, according to family accounts changed his name from Lieberman to Lurie to avoid being conscripted into the Russian Army.

Sarah, Chaim Leib and Edward were living in an area within the borders of czarist Russia called the *Pale of Settlement*. It was established by *Czar Catherine the Great* as a territory for Russian Jews and included the territory of present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Belorussia and remained in effect from 1791 until the Russian Revolution in 1917. The *Pale* was created to rid Moscow of Jewish business competition and the supposedly evil influence they had on the Russian masses.

Conditions in the *Pale* for Chaim Leib, his wife Sarah and Edward would have been harsh and intolerable. Jews found it difficult to earn a living in this restricted territory. They were governed by laws which restricted their movement as well as the occupations they could hold. They had very limited economic opportunities and were constantly discriminated against and lived in fear of anti-Jewish attacks on themselves and their property which were in some cases officially sanctioned.

Since the *Pale's* borders were always uncertain, expanding and contracting at the whim of its rulers, Chaim Leib would have felt that he and his family constantly lived at the edge of disaster. They never knew when a decree would come down ordering them to leave their home which prompted him and many others to migrate to other countries such as the United States of America, South Africa, Palestine, Canada, England and Argentina.

Chaim Leib left Lithuania first then sent for Sarah and Edward. Chaim Leib and Sarah had 6 children who were all born in South Africa. They lived in the Transvaal until the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899 when they moved to Wynberg and ran a dairy farm in Ottery Road. At some stage Edward left Wynberg and went to Stellenbosch and worked as a *smous* going from farm to farm selling goods. After a while he decided to diversify. He rented a semi-detached cottage in Dorp Street and ran a grocery shop across the road.

By now Edward would have met up with Daniel Segall who had migrated to South Africa a few years after him. According to Daniel's naturalisation papers he arrived in Stellenbosch from *Shawel (Siauliai)*, District *Kovno* in Russia in 1899 at the age of 24 his occupation being that of storekeeper. He arrived with his brother Eliezer Nossen and they started off in business together establishing a soft drink business – *The Silver Aerated Water Factory*. According to Eliezer Nossen's grandson, Jonesy Segall, the brothers had a falling out and Eliezer Nossen took off for Riebeek Kasteel.



**Eliezer Nossen Segall**

By 1902 Edward Lurie and Daniel Segall were partners in *The Silver Aerated Water Factory* and in 1919 they established and registered another business called *The Wholesale Supply Company* that operated from the same premises as *The Silver Aerated Water Factory* in Beyer Street – adjacent to the Coetzenberg Hotel.



**Licence issued to Edward Lurie & Daniel Segall for the purpose of trading as The Wholesale Supply Company**

In 1906 having saved up enough money, Edward sailed for the States and married his childhood sweetheart and first cousin Etta Ganenda Lurie in Boston, Massachusetts (Edward's father Chatzkel and Etta's father Marcus were brothers). Edward brought his bride back to Stellenbosch where they lived and raised a family.

They had 4 children:

1. Sima (10 October 1910 - 16 March 1998)
2. Riva (30 August 1914 - 12 November 2001)
3. David (1 December 1916 – 4 March 1984)
4. Molly (29 June 1918 - )

In 1908 Edward and Etta received a visitor – Etta's sister Mary travelled from her home in Boston,

Massachusetts to Stellenbosch. She met Edward's business partner Daniel and they were married in Cape Town in 1910.

They spent their married life in Stellenbosch and had seven children who were all born in Stellenbosch:

- Dorothy (14 February 1911 - 19 August 1975)
- Bertha (1912 - 30 December 1975)
- Leah (1914 - 26 June 1964)
- Sam (2 April 1915 - 30 July 1999)
- Ephraim Louis – known as Fremmie (2 October 1916 - 29 September 2001)
- Edward Gerald – known as Eddie (14 February 1920 - 14 August 1990)
- Naomi (1924 - 14 April 2001)

Etta and Edward Lurie were married for eleven years when Etta died on 28 September 1918. She was buried in Stellenbosch. Her sister Mary took over the care of her youngest child Molly who was still a baby and Edward, with the help of his devoted coloured staff cared for their other three children – Sima aged 8, Riva aged 4 and David aged 2. At this stage the Segall and Lurie families were living next door to each other in a row of semi-detached cottages in Beyer Street (12 & 14 Beyer Street).

In her memoirs, Edward's daughter Sima recalls that her father was the chairman of the first *shul* in Stellenbosch – the foundation stone was laid in 1923 next to the Bloemhof Girls' School in van Ryneveld Street while the house next door was converted to a *cheder* and a small hall. Now, for the first time the Jewish community of Stellenbosch had a venue for *bar mitzvahs* and weddings.

The second generation of Segalls and Luries joined the business. Edward's daughter Riva joined sometime before WW11 after completing a Bachelor of Business at Stellenbosch University while her first cousin, Edward Segall, known as Eddie (son of Daniel), joined after serving in North Africa in WW11. His military career was short-lived after receiving an infection in one of his fingers which had to be partially amputated.

Eddie's older brother Sam also worked in the business and was the shammes of the *shul* for many years.



*Edward Segall*



*Riva Lurie*



*Sam Segall*

At some stage, Daniel decided that the business was expanding and in the presence of his son Eddie, approached his nephew Abe Segall (son of Eliezer Nossen), and asked him to join the business and run *The Wholesale Supply Company* so that Eddie could concentrate on the soft drink factory.



*Abe Segall and Fanny Stoch*

Abe also served in North Africa during WW11 and was taken prisoner-of-war spending time in camps in Italy and Germany. After the war he worked for

the Cape Provincial Administration (CPA) as an auditor.

In 1953 Eddie realised that the premises in Beyer Street were too small so he decided to build a new soft drink factory on the corner of Bird Street and Merriman Avenue. *The Wholesale Supply Company*, however, remained in Beyer Street.

From *The Silver Aerated Water Factory's* new premises Eddie was able to supply soft drinks to neighbouring towns. One of the favourite drinks was called *Iron Brew* and the factory was affectionately known as *The Iron Brew Factory*.

By this time Edward and Daniel were getting on in years. They died in 1949, were both aged 70 and are buried in the cemetery in Stellenbosch.

Edward's daughter Sima recollects her brother and sisters and her Segall cousins helping out at both *The Wholesale Supply Company* and *The Silver Aerated Water Factory* during the school holidays. They washed, labelled, and packed bottles in preparation for the bottling process of the following day.

Sometime in the late fifties or early sixties Eddie decided to close the soft drink factory. The machinery was getting old, parts were hard to come by and he would spend hours conducting repairs – even staying up all night to do so. Coca Cola was becoming a popular drink nationwide and sales were decreasing so after approximately 50 years, *The Silver Aerated Water Factory* finally closed its doors.

The Lurie and Segall families still remained partners in *The Wholesale Supply Company* which continued to operate from Beyer Street – the partners being Eddie Segall and his first cousins Abe Segall and Riva Lurie.

Abe's wife Fanny (nee Stoch) started working in the business around 1964. She took over Abe's share of the company when he died in 1967 and worked there until she bought the Regency Hotel in Sea Point in 1968. She remained a sleeping partner right to the end when *The Wholesale Supply Company* finally closed its doors in 1975 as competition from the larger supermarkets made it uneconomical to continue operating. By this time the company had moved from Beyer Street to a property in Devon Valley where they operated from for a number of years.

Eddie's wife Bunty also worked at *The Wholesale Supply Company* for some years during the seventies.



*Aubrey Croxton Sheppard Segall  
(known as Bunty)*

**CUTTING FROM AN UNNAMED NEWSPAPER  
REGARDING THE LAYING OF THE  
FOUNDATION STONE OF THE  
STELLENBOSCH SYNAGOGUE – 1923**

**A SYNAGOGUE FOR STELLENBOSCH  
LOCAL JEWISH ENTERPRISE  
LINKS BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND  
JUDAISM**

*The foundation stone of the new Synagogue, adjoining the Bloemhof School, Stellenbosch, has been laid. There was a very representative gathering. The chairman, Mr. E. Lurie in a brief speech, welcomed all those present, and said that 24 years ago the community had been started in a very small way, and at last they were able to build their own Synagogue.*

*In former years when the Jews were persecuted in different parts of the world, Holland was the first country to give them religious freedom, and when the first Synagogue was opened in Amsterdam, the Stadtholder and members of the Government, were present. He was glad to see that their descendants, the Mayor, representatives of the Municipality, and Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church were present.*

*The Rev. Mr. Botha, in handing over a trowel to the Rev. A. P. Bender, said that he was a Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, and that there were big differences between Judaism*

*and Christianity, but there was much in common: Christians worship the same God and believe in Moses and the Prophets. Both believed that man could only fulfil his destiny, be happy and useful, if he obeyed (sic) God and honestly tried to live in harmony with God's law. He expressed the hope that there would soon be no religious differences between the various people. He hoped that the building would be an ornament and would further the moral and spiritual welfare of the Jewish community.*

**ENERGETIC COMMUNITY**

*Mr Neethling, the Mayor, said it was a pleasure for him to be present. Thirty years ago he did not think that there was a single Jew living in Stellenbosch, but since then the Jews found that Stellenbosch was a place where they could live with comfort, and they felt the need of having their own place of worship. His experience was that the Jews were some of the best citizens of the town. They were peaceful and hardworking; their children did very well at school.*

*Rev. Mr. Bender then performed the ceremony of laying the stone, and said that whatever dialect one used, there was only one language of brotherliness – friendliness and goodwill. It was a privilege for him, as a minister of the oldest congregation to come from the Mother City to a sister University town. It was many years ago that he had opened a very small sanctuary for the use of the few friends of the community. Since then the need had grown, and they required more commodious and suitable premises. He congratulated the community upon their self-sacrifice and energy in raising funds, and he was sure that the building would add to the beauty of one of the most beautiful towns of the Union.*

*He was deeply touched by the words of the Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Mayor. On behalf of his people he thanked them for their kindness and hearty sympathy. Although there were differences in creed, Jews and Christians are one in serving the Father, he declared.*

**LAW-ABIDING**

*“It has been my privilege for the past 29 years to give some portion of their training to the future ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church” said Rev. Mr. Bender, “and it has been a pleasure to*

meet past students in various parts of South Africa. What they learnt from me has not prevented them in any way from performing their duties.”

“I am deeply indebted to the Mayor for the splendid testimonial he has given to my brothers. I do not claim that they possess a monopoly of all the virtues, but they do possess the true South African spirit. They love South Africa, and their descendants are the future citizens of the country. I hope the little sanctuary will further the ideals of brotherhood, co-operation, service, charity and hospitality. I congratulate the architect upon his fine design, and feel confident that this house of prayer will be a bulwark of religious faith, upon which the stability, security and happiness of South Africa must depend for all time.”

Mr. L. Gill, magistrate, was invited by the Chairman to address the meeting. He said he was accustomed to speak in different surroundings. He did not see before him any of the faces which he usually saw in his building across the road. He had only just recently come to Stellenbosch from Benoni, and there he found that there were no more law-abiding and serious people than the Jews, and he felt that if the whole population had been Jews there would have been no work for him to do.”

## References

- *The Silver Aerated Water Factory Stellenbosch* by Margaret Neethling. Article published in the *Stellenboschiana* Newsletter January 1992 Vol. 15 No 2 (Newsletter compiled and distributed by the Stellenbosch Museum)
- Handwritten memoir of Sima Lurie
- Newspaper cutting courtesy of Gwenda Harris nee Lurie, Sydney, Australia

## THE SANDERS STORY: A FAMILY SAGA Part 2

Derrick Lewis

In the last issue of the Newsletter, we saw Derrick Lewis' great grandfather Wulf Sanders leave Courland in 1862 aged 21. He first went to London where he worked until he had enough money to travel to the 'Goldene Medina'. Here he met and married Lena Lasowsky in Memphis, Tennessee. In 1870 they wanted to visit their parents in Poland and Courland, and travelled to London where their first child Henry was born. Wulf decided not to return to Europe, but rather to investigate the possibilities and opportunities the British Colonies of The Cape and Australia had to offer. So, just after the birth of Henry (also known as Harry), Wulf set sail for the Cape Colony, leaving his young family behind. En route, Wulf was surprised to hear that his ship had bypassed Cape Town and was well on its way to Melbourne, Australia! On arrival in Melbourne, he found suitable lodgings and saw that he could make a good living selling wares to the outlying sheep stations. He wrote to Lena instructing her to join him as soon as possible. Lena and Harry joined Wulf in Melbourne and they set up home in Carlton, a suburb of Melbourne with their three children: Harry, Annie and Moses (known as Mossie).

In this issue we see Wulf and Lena Sanders leaving Australia for Riga where they lived for a few years then finally moving to South Africa.

On the 26th of March 1877 another son was born, named Lazarus (aka Lazie), named after Wulf's father, Laser Sander, who died earlier that year in Riga. The following year, on the 30th November 1878, a fourth son named Samuel was born. By this time the Sanders family had moved from Carlton to the then upmarket suburb of Sandridge, 'situated on Hobson's Bay, about 1.25 miles from the city centre and 2.5 miles by road. The streets of the town are wide and laid out at right angles. Sandridge is well drained and lighted and the foot-paths are mostly either flagged or asphalted.'

In 1879 the family were living in the suburb of St. Kilda (a synagogue was erected in the suburb in 1872). On the surface all seemed well. However, the sad news was received that Wulf's mother was



dying. Lena had not met her in-laws and was missing her family in Poland. My grandmother was under the impression that her parents were not happy with the lack of Jewish life and culture in Melbourne and so the decision was made to sell up, pack up and move all the way back to Latvia! It appears that Wulf had forgotten what the restricted life was like in Courland.

With the opening of the Suez Canal, the voyage to Russia was shortened considerably. In 1881 the Sanders family said farewell to Australia, their home for the past ten years, and set off via the Suez Canal and the Black Sea for Riga. While en route, sailing across the Black Sea, another baby was born to Lena! On the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1881, Minna, known as Minnie, was born, Lena's 7<sup>th</sup> child. As an adult, Minnie battled to obtain a passport as she could not give a fixed address as her place of birth.

Arriving back in Riga, where the remaining Sanders family was now living, Wulf must have been given an emotional and hero's welcome. It had been 18 years since Wulf left for America, a young 20 year old and now was returning, a successful businessman, with a wife and seven children!

Wulf and his family remained in Riga for two years. We are not sure if Lena travelled to Poland to see her parents in Suwalki. However, Wulf found that the corruption and anti-Semitism in Riga far worse than he realised. He longed for the open lifestyle of Australia and although Lena had given birth to another baby, a son named Max, on the 12th January 1882, it was decided that the family would return to Australia via London where Wulf set up Lena and her eight children with suitable lodgings at 26 Stewart Street, Spitalfields.

Wulf, leaving his wife and children behind, boarded the Union Steamship *Danube* for Cape Town. The *Danube* sailed from Southampton on the 3rd March 1882 with 233 passengers on board, arriving 25 days later in Cape Town on 28th March 1882. Here he found accommodation at 26 Hout Street, Cape Town. Cape Town was love at first sight for Wulf. He decided not to continue to Australia and immediately wrote to Lena advising her of his change of plans. He subsequently made application to the authorities to allow Lena and the children to join him in Cape Town.

**Form of Application for Immigrants under Government Notice No. 155 of 1881.**

**APPLICANT:** Wulf Sanders, 26 Stewart Street, Spitalfields, London.

**PERSONS APPLIED FOR:** Lena Sanders, 26 Stewart Street, Spitalfields, London. Minnie Sanders, 26 Stewart Street, Spitalfields, London. Max Sanders, 26 Stewart Street, Spitalfields, London.

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE JOURNEY:** Union Steamship Co. Ltd. Southampton to Cape Town.

**NAME OF VESSEL:** S.S. NUBIAN

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT:** Wulf to join Lena.

I, the above Applicant, do hereby acknowledge the particulars herein contained to be correct.

### **Wulf's Application to bring Lena to South Africa**

Once again Lena Sanders, now with eight children in tow, had to pack up and board a ship for a distant unknown country, to join her beloved husband. On 1st September 1882, Lena arrived at Southampton in the pouring rain to board the Union Steamship *Nubian*. There was an unusually large crowd of officials at the wharf side. What was going on?



**The Nubian**

The Zulu King, Chief Cetuyayo had been captured by the British troops in Natal and had been taken to England to meet Queen Victoria. It was His Majesty, the Zulu King and his entourage who were also boarding the *Nubian* for their return journey to the Cape Colony. The newspapers reported that Cetuyayo was dressed 'in the garb of an English gentleman'.

Twenty four days later, on Sunday 24th September 1882, the *Nubian* arrived in Table Bay. Imagine how impressed Lena must have been seeing the beautiful and unique Table Mountain. However, once again there was a delay in disembarking. A smallpox epidemic at the Cape was cause for concern. There were 300 people who assembled on the pier to greet Cetuyayo, but no one was allowed to board the *Nubian*. Bella, my grandmother,

retelling the story of her arrival at the Cape, at the tender age of seven, loved to embellish her story by telling us that a big black Zulu Chief accompanied her on the trip to Cape Town! Until my research proved the story to be true, we always wondered if dear old gran was simply fantasizing!

The *Cape Times* reported the arrival of Cetywayo in their Monday edition of September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1882, as follows:

*Cetywayo wore a double breasted black coat made of superfine diagonal cloth, and trousers of the same material, shirt and collar of spotless white, plain black necktie and a silk hat of Lincoln & Bennet's very latest style. In his hand he carried a silver mounted cane, and bore himself without the slightest degree of awkwardness or restraint.*

After being apart for seven months, Wulf and Lena and their children were once again reunited. Wulf had rented a home in the suburb of Mowbray, where they were to live for another two years. During this time Wulf met up with some local businessmen by the names of Cleghorn and Harris. Cleghorn advised Wulf that opening a store in the Karoo town of Oudtshoorn could be a very profitable venture as the ostrich feather industry was starting to take off and that Oudtshoorn already had a small Jewish community living there.

By 1882 the impact of the East European immigration had made itself felt, even in this comparatively remote inland town. The attraction was an economic one. Oudtshoorn was enjoying an ostrich feather boom at the time. The gross value of the trade in feathers had rocketed from £87074 in 1870 to more than £1 million in 1882! There was already quite a sizeable Jewish community in Oudtshoorn, *landsman* from both Courland and Lithuania were living there. By 1883 the Jewish population of Oudtshoorn was large enough to warrant the formation of a *Chevra Kaddisha*.

On the 2nd September 1883 the first South African baby was born to Lena and Wulf, a son named Emanuel. Two years later at the beginning of 1885, Wulf finally decided to take Cleghorn's advice and together with his eldest son, Harry, he set up shop in Oudtshoorn. Cleghorn & Harris helped finance the business by acting as his shippers. A home was found in St Johns Street, Oudtshoorn. Once again Lena had to pack up and move to a new home!

Lena and her eight children sailed from Cape Town on board the *Mexican* bound for Mossel Bay. The *Mexican* at 4000 tons was the largest Union Mailship at the time. The ship arrived at Mossel Bay on the 25th February 1885. The local newspaper, *The Mossel Bay Advertiser* printed the list of passenger arrivals: From Cape Town per *Mexican*: Mrs Saunders and 8 children (the spelling error being that of the newspaper).

Lena and her children travelled from Mossel Bay by horse and cart over the Robertson Pass to Oudtshoorn. Interestingly, fifteen years later the *Mexican* sank 80 miles off Cape Town after a collision with the steamship *Wakefield*.

The first newspaper report in Oudtshoorn referring to Wulf Sanders appeared in the June 1885 edition of the *Oudtshoorn Courant*, under the following heading:

**NOTICE OF CLOSING:**  
**On and after the 1<sup>st</sup> July next we,**  
**the Undersigned, have agreed to**  
**Close our Business Places in Town at**  
**1 o'clock p.m. on every Wednesday**  
**till Thursday morning.**  
**Signed, W. Sanders**

Surprisingly, although there was quite a sizeable Jewish community in Oudtshoorn at that time, it appears that Wulf Sanders was the only Jewish trader mentioned in this notice. Was Wulf the only Jewish businessman to agree to the Wednesday afternoon closure?

Wulf Sanders' first store in Oudtshoorn in 1885 was situated at 33 St John's Street on the corner of St Georges Street. In 1887 he prospered sufficiently and was able to purchase the building from a Mr M. Matroos. The municipal valuation at that time was recorded as £600. The building still exists to this day, but has now been converted into a corner house. The National Archives of South Africa show that a mortgage bond was registered in the name of Wulf Sanders in that year.



***Wulf Sanders first shop in Oudtshoorn – the top picture taken in 1996 and the bottom picture taken in 1885***

The Sanders family played an important part in the further establishment of the Jewish community of Oudtshoorn. When the decision was made in 1886 to build a synagogue, Wulf Sanders was appointed president of the building committee. A notice appeared in the *Oudtshoorn Courant* of January 1888, as follows:

**NEW SYNAGOGUE**

***The Foundation Stone of the New Synagogue will be laid by the Rev. A. F. Ornstein of Cape Town on Thursday, 26th January, 1888 at 4 p.m.***

**All friends are invited to attend.**

**LOUIS FIELD, W. SANDERS,  
A. STUSSER  
Trustees.**

The Rev Myers Woolfson, who had just arrived in the Cape Colony and who was actually intended for the community at Barberton, was appointed as the first Rabbi in Oudtshoorn, a community of about 250 people. He was to serve the Queens Street Shul and community for 50 years.

The Oudtshoorn Jewish community was made up of two factions. The one represented by the

conservative and deeply religious Jews who came from *Cheim*, Lithuania. The other, in the main, like Wulf Sanders, who came from *Siauliai* and from towns in Courland, preferred the more modern interpretations and ceremonials. This created a sharp difference of opinion and it is regrettable to note that a bitter dispute arose between these two factions. This resulted in a split between them and a decision that the conservatives, or *Greeners* as they were called, would secede from the Queens Street community and establish a *shul* of their own in St Johns Street.

The Sanders family, having already travelled the world and who by now were relatively well established financially, were probably considered as 'modern thinkers' or 'Englisher Jews'.

On the 12th December 1888, the Queens Street Shul was consecrated by the Rev A.F. Ornstein of Cape Town (who coincidentally was previously the Reverend of the Melbourne congregation, at the time the Sanders family were living there), assisted by the Rev M.L. Harris of Kimberley and the Rev M. Woolfson of Oudtshoorn. The Sanders family donated a beautiful pair of silver candelabra which were mounted on the *Bimah*.

The classic styled Queens Street *shul*, built of Karoo limestone is still in use today. The St Johns Street shul has been closed down and the *arc* and shul furniture can be found in the C.P. Nel Museum. From a peak of 1000 souls at the turn of the 20th Century, the community has shrunk like most other Jewish country communities.

It is interesting to note that the late Chief Rabbi Abrahams, writing in his book, *The Birth of a Community*, mentions the unique relationship the Oudtshoorn Jews had with the Afrikaans community in the area:

*One of the most gratifying features of the early history of the Russian Jews in the Oudtshoorn district was the friendly and hospitable reception accorded to Jews by farming folk.*

*The bible was the great bond between them. The Afrikaaner treated the Hebrew trader with respect due to a scion of the People of the Book. Steeped in Scriptural lore himself, the Boer was able to view the Jew's religious susceptibilities with understanding and sympathy. The Jewish 'smous' (trader) was almost invariably made welcome at the*

farmstead. His horses were outspanned, stabled and given fodder; he himself was invited to have a meal, and was accommodated for the night. If his observance of the Jewish dietary laws prevented him from sharing the farmer's meat, he was offered eggs, bread and coffee. Even if the visitor brought his own utensils, the 'boerevrou' (farmer's wife) took no objection.

Wulf Sanders, being an astute businessman, prospered and expanded his small general dealer store. The Standard Bank archives record a bank report on W. Sanders dated 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1888:

*Sanders W. Respectable, & steady, & attention to his business. Owns village property, worth £1000 free. Has stock in trade & outstandings due to him, worth together £1000. His only outside debts, are to Field & King to whom he is under a general Bond of £1000, & his indebitness (sic) to them is under the amount of the Bond. Does a good business, & is making money. The bill for 75 pounds is for the accommodation of S. Lax & P & F £125 pounds is for the assistance of the Hebrew Congregation.*

Life in Oudtshoorn for the Sanders family was quite sociable, bearing in mind that they now numbered seven sons and three daughters. Each child could play a musical instrument and thereby they could boast that they had their own orchestra! What we know is that Lazie Sanders played the violin, Emanuel the flute, Sam the clarinet and Bella and Minnie the piano. One could certainly regard this family as 'emancipated and cultural' Jews!

An interesting example of the social lifestyle of that time can be found in a beautifully handwritten note sent to Wulf Sanders by a Mr M. Lipschitz:

*Mr M. Lipschitz through pressing business matters, regrets not being able to accept Mr W. Sander's kind invitation to his dinner on the 28<sup>th</sup> inst.  
Oudtshoorn, 24 Feb. 1893.*

Wulf Sanders, like many of his peers at the time, joined the local Order of Freemasons, eventually becoming the Master of the Oudtshoorn Lodge No. 48.



**Wulf Sanders**

At the age of 41 years, Lena Sanders gave birth to a daughter named Sarah. Born on the 8th September, 1889, little Sarie was a Downes Syndrome baby, but with loving care and total devotion by her older sisters, she lived to a ripe old age of 58 years. Sarie often accompanied her parents on their overseas trips. A postcard, dated April, 1905, written by Sarie to her sister Bella, read as follows:

*Dear Bella,  
I am quite happy and see Ma and Pa sometimes.  
I send love to Moss and Julie.  
Your loving Sarah*

Sarah lived in the Sanders family home until the death of her mother, Lena in 1918. Lena, in her will, bequeathed an amount of £2000 pounds and all her furniture and house effects to her daughter Sarie. Sarah passed over on the 17th October, 1947.

Lena Sanders, at the age of 43 gave birth to her last baby in 1891. The baby girl was named Ethel. Ethel was born into a family who were enjoying a high standard of living at that time. She was included on many of her parents' trips to London, where it has been said that she visited the wealthy Sassoon family, on weekends, at their country

home, outside of London. There have been stories of eating off gold plated plates and using gold plated cutlery.



**The Sanders family, Oudtshoorn circa 1895**  
Back row, standing, left to right: Siblings Moses, Harry, Bella, Sam and Max  
Seated, centre, left to right: Their parents Wulf and Lena Sanders, with daughter, Annie and her husband, Isaac Nurick  
Seated front row, left to right: Siblings Ethel, Minnie (holding Annie's baby, Cissie), Simon, Emanuel (with his sister, Sarah on his lap)

## **JEAN McKECHNIE TAKES A SECOND LOOK AT THE JEWISH FAMILIES OF SPRINGS**

***They have indelibly marked the town***

*Jean McKechnie*

*First published in **The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser**, Friday 3 July 1991, and is reprinted here with permission.*

Once again we stray down memory lane, to take a second look at the Jewish families who have lived here and made their mark in every phase of our development.

As a schoolgirl, I think of the Zilibowitz's who lived their humble lives in Geduld Township, battling along, as most others do in those faraway days, and being thankful for God's blessings. Of them perhaps Springs remembers most of its members – Reuben and Mona, and I say again, what would this town have done without their talents, Reuben on its administrative side, and Mona, on the cultural side, a school teacher training our children, playing her part in all the arts, Reuben's wife too, popular Ginger, who has carried on the social tradition, and who can go back to the days when the Senior Citizen's Club was founded in the house just near the Synagogue, that splendid building today. She still stays in Springs – much loved by all who know her.

Then, didn't you once owe your daily milk supply to Jacob Chaimowitz? He had his dairy near what is now the Technical College (or part of it anyway), and near Pioneers' Park?

And what of the Shamosewitz's? They too were playing their part in a struggling Springs, Jacob, the father, in the cartage contracting business.

A few months back we told you of the distinctions of David Taitz. Yes, they too were here and a daughter, Lena Taitz married Jacob Gishen, and with his family, including Doreen Davids, who is still in Springs they lived where Mike's Kitchen is today. Remember there was Abe Taitz, Maurice Taitz and Fanny Taitz too?

And way back in 1921, the Bonheims, Louis Gordon but it is Dave we know well from his

garages and his grandson still has one in Selcourt. Of course you would hardly recognise Louis Gordon and Panovkas, the elder Panovka being shown here,\* but it is Dave we know well from his garages, and his grandson still has one in Selcourt. Of course you would hardly recognise Louis Gordon, but both Eli Lipson and Alfred Bonheim never changed. Louis Gordon was in his day, 'Mr CNA,' and steered his fortunes of his big organisation through troubled times. Not easy to build up a book and paper connection in this then small community, but here he remained until the closing years of his life, assisted by his charming wife, Marie, his 'shop assistant' or assistant manager and his son, Charles.

The Bonheims, well they are not as well known to the new pioneers, but the older fry will remember their home and business at the top of First Avenue, Clara, their daughter, one of Springs' younger fry then.

The Lowensteins – their home can still be seen in the New Township. Jack was part of the soil here, and his two daughters are still in our community, Beryl Levitas and Rene Bregsi. Jack was of course in the furnishing line.

The Philip Millers – that is a name to be reckoned with in the Jewish community. His son, Ruby is still carrying on, I understand, and wait for it, even the third generation is in business here. Philip founded Springs' Shirt and Clothing firm.

Reminding me too is the name of Gerald Katz, for a long time associated with the Springs Hotel and the genial host there. Kalie, his daughter married Harry Bregsi and I am told they are still in Springs.

When I encountered the Perr's last year at a local function, our thoughts were certainly back to the long, long ago, when I recalled that, as a child, one of my memories of attending the bioscope at the Masonic Hall was that advertisement for Midzuk of Perr's outfitting business. The Perr's then told me that they had no intention of leaving Springs and were well grooved here.

The Crouse's – Max and his wife, and their delicatessen shop where you will still see the name of Crouse opposite the old Gray Smith's Building. Yes, they were real pioneers in the business world of Springs, and their daughter, Sylvia Marks works in the travel business. When you wanted that

special piece of fish, you took your steps to Crouse's.

And what of those blocks of shops in which the Jews played an integral part? I think of the Ninth Avenue shops at the top of the New Township. There was Philip Smith for instance whose record of 12 metres in the Hurdles section of the Maccabi Games, has never been bettered. He was the son of one of the owners, Isaac Smith. The Lens were there too, Harry Len and his family proving their faith in the town as property investors Edith, now Edith Yewdell, has just been elected President of the Housewives League, and is wellknown as a keen worker in the social round, and there is also Fanny, still resident in Springs, her sister. She too has taken a deep interest in this town of ours.

There were the Levys too. Mrs Levy a pianoforte teacher, and her daughter Blossom, who has died in Australia, being a dancer. The Max Millers, ah yes, they too had their stake here, Max finally ending up with his bottle store and his lovely home in Geduld Township. Their daughter, Golda, was one of the 'greats' of our greats of the musical world. The Millers were inextricably bound up with our Jewish life, and worked hard for the cause, Mrs Miller being a sister of the late Morris Nestadt, 'Mr Benoni'.

One thing has struck me as I have penned this series, that there are still so many members of the younger fry still resident here.

Since starting to write it, I am reminded too of the Jewish shops in the Geduld Road area. Joseph Krawitz was one of them, and his son is now President of the United Hebrew Institutions. Others were F. Rubin, Louis Levy, I. Ronthal, I. Smith, A. Arons, C. Itzikowitz (whose son is now running Suzuki), Chona Levine and Ruby Levine (his son is now a local attorney).

Then, of course, but somewhat further back, I must not forget the part played by Springs' second Mayor, Isaac Goodman, 1913 – 1914, nor the Greenbergs, who once lived around the Synagogue, and whose descendant, Isaac is responsible for the Red Cross and Civic Parties at Christmas.

More about the Jewish community next week, and if you have any additions, just contact us. We enjoy writing about them, and are always interested in what they have done for Springs.

\* The photo included in the original article is of insufficient quality to reproduce here. The caption is as follows:

The photograph contains many erstwhile pioneers, but we publish it today because it contains four of the members of the Jewish community included in this article, Alfred Bonheim, J. Panovka, L. Gordon, and from the first article, Eli Lipson. Standing (left to right): Messrs L. N. Hamilton, I. Gordon, J. Panovka, W. E. Bowden, C. R. Cliffe, M. L. Lipson, R. W. Gould and C. Bowyer. Seated (left to right): Messrs A. Bonheim, J. L. Dingwall (Vice-President), E. S. Corke, MBE (President, J. Parry (Secretary and F.C. Kingston.

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## DIAMONDS IN THE DUST

Adam Yamey

### A Ghost Town

Today, Kolmanskop, half-buried by the relentless, shifting, desert sands, is a ghost town visited only by tourists. They travel there on day-trips from Lüderitzbucht<sup>1</sup>, a few kilometres west of it on the Atlantic coast of Namibia. Almost 100 years ago, some of my family, including my great-grandfather, helped to build this now deserted town in order to exploit the rich diamond field that surrounded it. Here is their story.

### A Desolate Corner of Africa

The foundation of a settlement in 1883 by the tobacco merchant Adolf Lüderitz in a desolate territory that is now known as Namibia marked an important step in Germany's belated attempt to join the 'club' of imperialist European nations. Between about 1893 and 1908, the indigenous, African inhabitants of German South West Africa (now known as 'Namibia') were in armed conflict with the German invaders in what would now be called a 'liberation struggle'. This struggle resulted in the loss of many lives, mostly African, and consolidated German rule in the area<sup>2</sup>.

### For Services Rendered.

In the catalogue of the National Archives of South Africa<sup>3</sup> (NASA), I came across a document<sup>4</sup>, dated 1909, with the title: "*Proposal of German Government to Confer Medals on C. Friedlander and Capt. Fenn of Cape Town, in recognition of services rendered in German SW Africa*". The nature of the services rendered is not described in the document but it states that the medals were conferred for "*services rendered during the revolt in South West Africa*". The recipient, Mr Charles Friedlander, is described as being an "*Attorney, Cape Town*". He is most likely to have been Charles Friedlander (1876-1917), a son of Isidor Friedlander who in the 1860s emigrated from Breslau to Middelburg in the Cape. Charles Friedlander was to become the brother-in-law of my mother's aunt, Margarethe Ginsberg (1889-1964), who was born in King Williams Town.

## A Wedding Service

A few months before the German medal was offered to Charles, his younger brother Alfred Friedlander (1881-1964) married my mother's aunt Margarethe Ginsberg. They were married on the 18th October 1908 in King Williams Town, the home of Margarethe's parents: Franz Ginsberg (1862-1937) and Hedwig (née Rieser: 1867-1955). The wedding, which was reported in detail in a King Williams Town newspaper, "the Cape Mercury" (the *Mercury*), was presided over by the Rabbi to the Hebrew congregation of Port Elizabeth, the Rev. JP Phillips, JP<sup>5</sup>. The bridegroom was a lawyer, a founding partner with his above-mentioned brother Charles of the, still extant<sup>6</sup>, family firm of "C & A Friedlander" in Cape Town. Four days before his daughter married, her father Franz Ginsberg imported 57 diamonds from South West Africa. They were sent to him by Mr F. Schuster (see below) of the Kolmanskop Mines<sup>7</sup>. Whether or not Franz was planning to give some of these gems to his daughter as a wedding gift I do not know, but they provide a clue as to another plan that he was on the point of hatching.

## In-laws

Alfred's father Isidor and his father-in-law Franz Ginsberg may well have known each other before the marriage, as both were born in the same part of Germany, and also because being a retired Justice of the Peace<sup>8</sup> living in Cape Town, Isidor may well have associated with members of Parliament such as Franz. Franz Ginsberg was, by 1908, a highly respected, and a leading, figure in King Williams Town where he had arrived as a teenager from Prussia in 1880. There, he made his fortune as an industrialist – principally involved in the manufacture of matches, soaps and candles. He was prominent in the civic and political life of the town (he was a town councillor for many years, and had been Mayor at least twice). Ginsberg became involved with diamonds in South West Africa in the same year as his daughter married.

## Diamonds at Lüderitzbucht

In April 1908, Zacharias Lewala was shovelling away sand that had drifted on to the branch line that leads from Kolmans Kop to the Lüderitz-Keetmanshoop railway. Whilst he was doing this, Lewala, an African labourer who had formerly worked in the Kimberley diamond fields<sup>9</sup>, found a

stone that he thought might be a diamond. He showed this to his German foreman August Stauch (1978-1947)<sup>10</sup> who, also suspecting that it might be a diamond, sent it to Swakopmund for analysis. Stauch's suspicions were confirmed. Thus, Lewala became the discoverer of the first diamond in German South West Africa – a territory that is today one of the world's major producers of diamonds. Lewala did not profit from his discovery<sup>11</sup>. In contrast, Stauch did well from the discovery made by his observant worker. He resigned from the railways and, before announcing 'his' discovery to the rest of the world, he acquired mining concessions (rights) in the area.

## News Travels Fast

The discovery of alluvial diamonds near Lüderitzbucht was briefly noted across Africa in the Eastern Cape in King Williams Town's *Mercury* on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1908. A few months later<sup>12</sup>, the *Mercury* carried a detailed report about the extremely rich alluvial diamond field discovered in the immediate vicinity of Angra Pequena (Lüderitzbucht). The diamonds were extremely accessible, lying just beneath the surface of the dust on the floor of the desert. The writer of the article expressed surprise that this remarkable discovery had not been made earlier, as, "... *it is understood that during the recent struggle between the German Troops and the Hereros, detachments of troops camped in the immediate vicinity, if not even upon the actual ground where the stones are now being picked...*".

## Ginsberg Buys a Diamond Mine

On the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1908, the *Mercury* published a long article, in which my great grandfather, and Alfred Friedlander's father-in-law, Franz Ginsberg described his recent visits to Lüderitzbucht. He went there in order to see for himself the new diamond fields that had been discovered. The town of Lüderitz, between 38 and 48 hours voyage by sea from Cape Town, was located in a concession of the southern part of the German South West Africa obtained from "...*native chiefs, particularly from the Hereros*", and was, by 1908, administered by the German Colonial Company. Ginsberg informed the paper's readers that at the end of July 1908 a large number of prospecting licences had been issued, and ultimately the holders of the licences had combined into three companies which, as a consequence, owned most of the diamondiferous



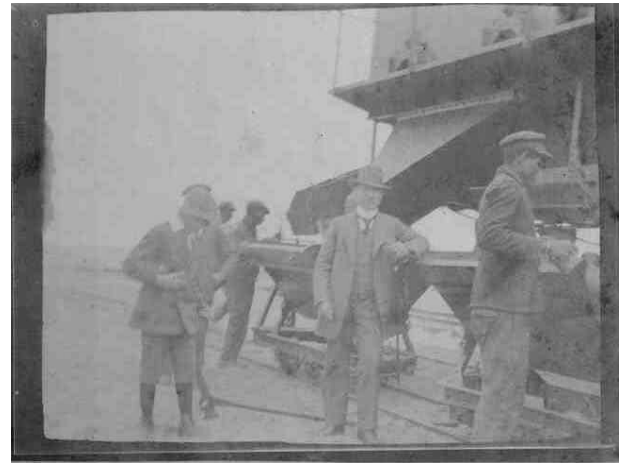
territory. The three companies in order of decreasing size were: Kolman's Kop Diamond Mining Company, Stauch Company, and the much smaller Weiss de Meillon Company. Ginsberg continued by describing that the diamonds were to be found in a layer of sand and gravel to a depth of a foot or more. What is not mentioned in the article is how the diamonds were 'harvested' from the sand in those early days. Lines of native workers crawled along the desert floor on their hands and knees<sup>13</sup> picking up stones that were likely to be diamonds. Their mouths were gagged to prevent furtive ingestion of diamonds<sup>14</sup>. The stones that they collected were handed to their, usually German, supervisors. These were then washed and sieved. Ginsberg wrote that the African workers, some of whom came from King Williams Town and the Transkei, were apparently satisfied with their conditions: they received about 3 shillings a day and food –but, "... a great deal of stealing is going on". The diamonds were washed free of sand in containers filled with sea water brought in barrels from the coast. Ginsberg pointed out the desirability of pumping the water.



*'Native' workers sieving and washing diamonds at Kolmanskop*<sup>15</sup>

In the same article, Ginsberg mentioned that one of these three companies was being floated as a limited liability company in Cape Town. However, there were obstacles to importing diamonds from the German colony into the British Cape Colony. These obstacles arose from the protectionism that favoured the diamond companies that exploited the diamond fields in Kimberley<sup>16</sup>. Ginsberg felt that unless changes were made to the law, the lucrative diamond trade that could be developed in Cape Town as a consequence of the discoveries near Lüderitzbucht would be lost to the Cape Colony. This did not seem to deter my great-grandfather, as

less than 40 days after this article was published, the following announcement appeared in the *Mercury* on the 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1908: "Attention is directed to the advertisement appearing in another column regarding the prospectus of the Kolmans-Kop Diamond Mines Ltd., near Lüderitzbucht, German South West Africa ... One of the directors is Mr Franz Ginsberg, MLA<sup>17</sup>, with whom, some weeks back, we had an interesting interview ... The venture deserves the serious attention of those who have money to invest".



*Ginsberg (centre) at Kolmanskop*

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, 1909, the *Mercury* reprinted an article that first appeared in the *Transvaal Leader* (no doubt placed there by a rival South African diamond company). The writer of this showered cold water on the ventures at Lüderitzbucht. The journey to that place was described as being "somewhat comfortless" and on arrival there, one discovered, "... a terror-striking, God-forsaken country – these being the words of someone inured to hard travelling, and who has seen lots of pioneering work." In addition, the water used in the diamond fields came from condensed sea water, and was said to be very expensive by the time it reached the diamond fields. None of this discouraged my great grand-father: according to an article published in the *Mercury* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January he had become a director of a firm whose shares were rising in value.

### **A Diamond Company**

It was common knowledge in my family that Franz Ginsberg was involved in diamond mining and that he was somehow connected with Kolmans Kop, but there was a dearth of detail about this. I obtained from NASA a copy of the file<sup>18</sup> called: "Limited

*Companies: Act 25 of 1892. KOLMANS KOP DIAMOND MINES LTD*". This collection of papers whose binder includes the wording "C & A Friedlander, Solicitors to the Company" contains a few contracts whose content gives some clues about the company's history. The papers begin with a lengthy contract, drawn up in South West Africa, listing the conditions under which the "factory owner Franz Ginsberg" was allowed, on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 1908, to take over the "Diamond Prospecting and Mining Company, Colmanskop<sup>19</sup>, mbh (limited)" from its former managing directors – the master baker, Franz Schuster, and the office manager Sali Kahn – both of Lüderitzbucht. The contract states that Ginsberg undertook to set up a company, named "Colmanskop Diamond Mines Ltd.", based in the Cape Colony. In this way the new company acquired 44 diamond prospecting plots for a 50 year period. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 12 days before the above-mentioned notice appeared in the *Mercury*, another contract was drawn up – this time in Cape Town - between Franz Ginsberg and Patrick Grant, an accountant in Adderley Street, Cape Town. In this contract, Grant is described as the "Trustee" of the company, and both Grant and Ginsberg, as well as the solicitor (and German military medallist) Charles Friedlander are listed amongst the 7 "subscribers" to this company. It would seem that although he remained a shareholder in the company, Franz Ginsberg seems to have relinquished managerial responsibility for it – after all, he had a lot 'on his plate' already: he was a Member of the Cape Legislative Assembly and a town councillor as well as being the director of a number of firms in King Williams Town.

Names, Addresses & Description of Subscribers.	Number of shares taken by subscribers.
Franz Ginsberg Manufact. K.W.Town	one
P.C. Grant Accountant Adderley St	one
Karl Anton's Spillhaus Merchant Klein St. Capetown	one
Charles Friedlander Solicitor Riverside CT	one

**The signatures of Franz Ginsberg (top) and Charles Friedlander (4th from top)**

## 1914

An entry in a 1914 handbook<sup>20</sup> for Lüderitzbucht describes the Kolmanskop Diamond Company in

some detail. In 1914, Franz Ginsberg was listed as one of the three directors from the Cape (the other three were appointed by the Germans, in accordance with the contract by which Franz acquired the company) and the Friedlander brothers were still the company's solicitors. Six years after its acquisition by my great-grandfather, the company could boast of 40 white employees, several electrically powered preparation plants, three sea water pumping stations, as well as office buildings, a vehicle fleet, and a central sick bay. However, this handbook recorded the end of an era, as it was in the year of its publication that the First World War erupted. Franz Ginsberg, a naturalised British Subject of German origin, became the director of a company whose assets existed behind enemy lines.

## War, then Peace

The outbreak of war in 1914 may have been perceived as a disaster by the owners of diamond interests in German South West Africa. The reverse was true for major diamond entrepreneurs such as De Beers and Oppenheimer for whom the German diamond fields were beginning to pose a threat to their dominant position in the diamond market. On the 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1914, in response to a request from Great Britain to do so, South Africa, being part of the British Empire, attacked its German neighbour<sup>21</sup>. Soon after the outbreak of war, the South African forces occupied, and then closed down production in the diamond fields of the German Colony<sup>22</sup>. An invasion force led by Captain CK De Meillon<sup>23</sup> entered Lüderitzbucht, and by July 1915, the German administration of Namibia was ended by the Treaty of Khorab.<sup>24</sup> This ought to have been a calamity for investors in the German diamond fields but was not, as Oppenheimer acquired most, but not all, of the Namibian fields by offering their owners valuable shares in his Anglo-American Corporation by way of payment.

## Corporate Dealings

After the end of the First World War, most of the diamond concerns in South West Africa were divided amongst a group of 9 large companies including the Kolmanskop Diamond Mines Ltd. In 1920, Oppenheimer combined all except one of these former German companies into a company called Consolidated Diamond Mines. The exception was the Kolmanskop Diamond Mines Ltd which remained independent<sup>25</sup>. It would appear from the documentation, which I have seen, that on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of

February, 1920, “The Kolmanskop Diamond Mines Ltd.” bought one of Oppenheimer’s recently acquired companies, a company called “Diamanten Abbau<sup>26</sup> Gessellschaft mbh.” from a company called “The German South West African Diamond Investment Company Ltd”. My great-grandfather’s name did not appear in the papers concerned with this deal. Kolmanskop flourished as a diamond production centre in the 1920s and 1930s. The town was well equipped, and probably more up-to-date than many small towns in Germany. At some stage, the hospital at Kolmanskop obtained what is said to be the first x-ray machine to be installed in South Africa<sup>27</sup>. Probably, this was used more for checking whether workers had concealed diamonds within their bodies than for medical purposes. In November 1923, a document informs us that the Kolmanskop Company was “wound up voluntarily”. That document may well have been drawn up when Kolmanskop Diamond Mines Ltd. was about to be amalgamated with Great Namaqua Diamonds (Pty.) Ltd. to form a new company: ‘Namaqua Diamonds Ltd.’ – this happened in 1924<sup>28</sup>. The Kolmanskop diamond field remained productive until 1931 when the supply of diamonds was exhausted<sup>29</sup>. Later, it became part of Oppenheimer’s ‘Consolidated’ company. To what extent my great grandfather was involved with Kolmanskop after 1914, I do not know.

### Towns of Ghosts

Today, Kolmanskop is merely a tourist attraction. One of its visitors was a second cousin of my mother, a relative of Hedwig Rieser. He told me that when he visited the place, as a tourist, he was gratified to find in one of the old buildings an old notice board on which Franz Ginsberg was listed as a company director.

Of the diamonds from Kolmanskop, some remain in the family in the form of a pendant containing almost thirty of these gems. The present owner of this whose anonymity I must respect believes that this pendant was one of a pair – the other having been given to ‘Ouma’ Smuts<sup>30</sup>. When my relative wrote to De Beers to inquire whether they knew anything about this pair of pendants, they professed ignorance of them, but did send a couple of documents from their archives with their reply. One of these, dated March 1895, was a letter written by Franz Ginsberg to the Secretary of De Beers at Kimberley. In this, my great-grandfather was

offering to send De Beers samples of his “mine candles” to which he had made “considerable improvements “. The other document, a telegram dated April 1901 and sent by De Beers, asks Ginsberg, “ ...what quantity of mine candles you can supply us with at once and price.“ So, it would seem that his candles were the standard required in the mines at Kimberley, and it also is evidence of my great-grandfather’s early, if somewhat vicarious, involvement in the diamond business.

That Franz Ginsberg is best remembered for his civic activities and his successes in the soap, match, and candle industries of South Africa is evidence that his activity in the diamond industry was not amongst his major achievements. Almost a century after his arrival at Kolmanskop, my great-grandfather - and his industrial empire in King Williams Town – are memories. Like Kolmanskop, Ginsberg’s factory still stands in a semi ruined state in the town he adopted as his home. His name lives on as that of a township that was named in his honour by his fellow council members in 1902<sup>31</sup>: Ginsberg Township. This place is now better known for its associations with the activist Steve Biko<sup>32</sup> who lived there, and whose supporters in King William’s Town still hold my great-grandfather’s name in high regard<sup>33</sup>, rather in the same way as the “Righteous Gentiles” are honoured at Yad Vashem.

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Lüderitz Bay.
- <sup>2</sup> For easily accessible details about this unpleasant episode in the history of Africa, see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_South-West\\_Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_South-West_Africa) and also <http://www.klausdierks.com/FrontpageMain.html>
- <sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.national.archives.gov.za/>
- <sup>4</sup> See NASA: KAB PMO 240/124/09 (1909).
- <sup>5</sup> See *Mercury*, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1908.
- <sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.cafriedlander.co.za/index.html>
- <sup>7</sup> Information from two diamond import permits issued by the Resident Magistrate of King Williams Town, dated 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1908 (copies supplied to me by Stephanie Pienaar, Amathola Museum, King Williams Town).
- <sup>8</sup> Isidor Friedlander was appointed JP for Middelburg in about 1873 (see NASA: KAB CO 4179/01/M60/1 [1873]).
- <sup>9</sup> See: <http://www.economist.com.na/2004/19nov/11-19-27.htm>
- <sup>10</sup> For Stauch’s biography, see: [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/August\\_Stauch](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Stauch)

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<sup>11</sup> For the Lewala/Stauch story, see: *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers: Africa for the Africans 1921-1922 (Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Association Papers)*, University of California Press: Berkeley, about 1985, page 403.

<sup>12</sup> See *Mercury* 19<sup>th</sup> Nov, 1908.

<sup>13</sup> See *The Nature of Diamonds*, ed. by GE Harlow, publ. by Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997, page 88.

<sup>14</sup> See: <http://edwardjayepstein.com/diamond/chap8.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Photograph from a collection of papers of F. Ginsberg in the Amathola Museum, King Williams Town.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example:

<http://www.oldandsold.com/articles21/diamond-12.shtml>

<sup>17</sup> MLA: Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Cape Colony. Franz Ginsberg was elected as a Member for King Williams Town several times. He always stood as an independent.

<sup>18</sup> See NASA: KAB LC 276/963 (1909/1924).

<sup>19</sup> 'Kolmanskop' is spelled in various sources in a variety of different ways including: 'Kolmans Kop', 'Colmanskop', and 'Kolmanskuppe'.

<sup>20</sup> *Adreßbuch für die Stadt und Bezirk Lüderitzbucht (Deutsch. Südwest Afrika) 1914*, publ. by Rudolph Geschke: Lüderitzbucht.

<sup>21</sup> See: [http://www.nnf.org.na/SKEP/skep\\_docs/skep\\_sperrgebiet\\_land\\_use\\_plan.doc](http://www.nnf.org.na/SKEP/skep_docs/skep_sperrgebiet_land_use_plan.doc)

<sup>22</sup> See: <http://edwardjayepstein.com/diamond/chap8.htm>

<sup>23</sup> He was injured at Aus in Namibia in 1915 (see: <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Ridge/2216/text/SA1914.TXT> ).

<sup>24</sup> See: <http://www.klausdierks.com/Chronology/73.htm>

<sup>25</sup> See: [http://www.mineral.tu-freiberg.de/econgeology/lehre/namibia/diamlgst/diamlgst\\_1.html?PHPSESSID=2121cf31a99416dd8ac26a97ff800941](http://www.mineral.tu-freiberg.de/econgeology/lehre/namibia/diamlgst/diamlgst_1.html?PHPSESSID=2121cf31a99416dd8ac26a97ff800941) .

<sup>26</sup> One meaning of *Abbau* is mining.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example:

<http://www.griotphoto.org/kolmannskuppe.htm>

Although it may have been the first X-ray machine to have been *installed* in South Africa, there had been machines in the country earlier than that in Kolmanskop, during the Anglo-Boer War (see: <http://rapidtp.com/milhist/vol062jc.html> ).

<sup>28</sup> See: <http://www.klausdierks.com/Chronology/80.htm>

<sup>29</sup> See: [http://www.mineral.tu-freiberg.de/econgeology/lehre/namibia/diamlgst/diamlgst\\_1.html?PHPSESSID=2121cf31a99416dd8ac26a97ff800941](http://www.mineral.tu-freiberg.de/econgeology/lehre/namibia/diamlgst/diamlgst_1.html?PHPSESSID=2121cf31a99416dd8ac26a97ff800941)

<sup>30</sup> Wife of Jan Christian Smuts.

<sup>31</sup> See *Mercury*, 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1902.

<sup>32</sup> See: [http://www.sbf.org.za/bsb\\_heritage.htm](http://www.sbf.org.za/bsb_heritage.htm)

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<sup>33</sup> This was certainly the case when we visited the King Williams Town branch office of the Steve Biko Foundation in 2003.

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The numbers in brackets refer to the page numbers where the surname appears:

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