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The Story of the MARX Brothers Paternal Family

This query was initiated by a member of the French Cercle de Genealogie Juive, who wrote to me:
>It is said that Sam Marx, the father of the Marx Brothers, was born in Strasbourg, but was never
>proved. What do you think about it?

4 months later, I arrived at the solution and, for your comfort, will begin to explain that there were 3 generations of Simon MARX

Simon Marx (I) 1804 oo Babet Weil

Simon Marx (II) 1830 Hochfelden, Alsace -1901 Strasbourg, Alsace oo Adel Levi, alias Haennchen, Johanna Isaak 1839 Lorsch, Prussia-1910 Strasbourg Alsace

Simon Marx (III) 1859 Mertzwiller Alsace -1933 Los Angeles, CA., USA oo Minnie Schoenberg 1864 Dornum, Ostfriesland, Prussia.- 1929 New York

I will not explain in detail my lonely query, the main thing being the result.

Thanks to Google, I began to search all that was published on the Marx Brothers and their parents, often leading to wrong tracks, as certain authors declared that the father was born in Alsace and sometimes in Strasbourg, after 1860.

For that reason, I wasted my time in searching 1860 and later.

First problem: the first name: Samuel or Simon ?

In the questions-answers of Revue of the Cercle de Genealogie Juive, (n° 80 (still 2001!), 3470 and 4696): almost the same question: does somebody know something about??

On

<http://www.cineartistes.com>

I read:

C'est à Strasbourg en Alsace que commence la saga de la famille Marx. En effet Simon, le futur père de Chico Marx (et des autres!) y voit le jour en 1861, dans le quartier juif de la ville.

That is to say:

*The saga of the family Marx began in Strasbourg in Alsace. Simon, the future father of Chico Marx (and of the others), was born there on 1861, in the Jewish quarter. So, in my mind, **Simon** became as important as **Samue**.*

On the Net, I found the **date and place of marriage** of Mini SCHOENBERG and Samuel MARKS, n° 53528, on Jan.18, 1885 in Manhattan, N.Y. Then obtained, thanks to JewishGenners, **the Certificate of Marriage and its Return** – roughly:

Samuel MARKS, 24, born in Alsace, France, merchant tailor

Father's Name: MARKS Mark; Mother's Maiden Name: Honne

Full Name of Wife: **Mini SCHONBERG**, 20; Place of Birth: Prussia, German

Father's Name: Lewi Schonberg; Mother's Maiden Name: Fanny Schonberg.

Signature (of the husband):

Simon Marx

The reverend was Dr. G. Londsberg. Congregation Adath Israel.

(for me, rather: Landsberg and Hanne) written by a new immigrant as was also the married couple.

Astonishing that Simon/ Samuel remembered only the first name of his mother !!

The next step was to find in the **works of the late and regretted Pierre KATZ 1927-2006** (*Recueils de prise de nom patronymique des Juifs du Bas-Rhin/Haut-Rhin en 1808 and Les communautés juives du Bas-Rhin en 1851*), families and couples gathering together Simon or Samuel Marx with Hanna X (= unknown)...in the different villages of Alsace.

I had to hurry to visit the Archives du Bas-Rhin (= ADBR) several times, because the archives were closing due to relocation.

For weeks, I wasted my time in different queries, in a lot of villages (microfilms and visits), trying to establish erroneous family trees: perhaps not so wasted, because it ruled out some false tracks.

The families connecting Simon or Samuel MARX and Hanna X were blind genealogical alleys!

An American Jewish genner sent me copy of the **1900 Census** of the inhabitants of Manhattan.

The families MARKS-SCHOENBERG were living together.
Then, I learned of the **deaths** of Minnie on 1929, in New York, followed in 1933 by Sam in Los Angeles. Probably, as a widower, he wanted to be nearer to his children. A few days after his death, he was buried near Minnie, at New Mount Carmel Cemetery in New York.

In different notices it was pointed out that Simon-Samuel moved to the Haut-Rhin department, to Mulhouse and Colmar (seat of the archives for that region). I didn't have enough time to stay in Mulhouse going through the census records of the population; anyway, I had been wrong, as I didn't have correct dates for the young future father of the Marx Bros, Simon III !

There was also the name **MARIX**, mentioned for MARX but, to my mind, it was only the Alsatian spelling of Marx, although there were MARIX living in Zillisheim (1808) in Haut-Rhin. I established again some genealogical trees and wrote to their descendants spread in certain French countries ... Again, a wrong way, not related to my "Hero"! I searched in the conscription lists after 1859 and the optants' lists (the Alsations having elected to become French after the French-Prussian war of 1870-71). Without success!

Simon MARX (III) and domiciliary registration forms of Strasbourg.

I had the opportunity to visit the Departmental Archives for the Bas- and Haut-Rhin (ADBR/ADHR), searching for a Simon/Samuel MARX, but took also often time for visiting the local *municipal* (only Strasbourg) archives (AMS), giving myself over completely to the large decennial alphabetical boxes of the residents of Strasbourg. – as it was said that Simon Marx was living –even born in Strasbourg!

After some vain searching of those cards of different qualities, forms and thickness, the miracle!
A thinner index card, where it was written **Simon MARX**, Jewish, born on 1859 in Mertzwiller (in French: Mertzwiller) with two successive addresses in Strasbourg, dated from Sept. 17, 1878; profession, apprentice clerk!

Until that moment, I had been deceived by my readings: a Samuel MARX born on or after 1860 ... I suppose that each searcher interested in Samuel MARX, instead of Simon, was obsessed by Strasbourg, Marix, and 1860...and, for that reason didn't find the solution.

After that discovery, it was easier to make classical genealogical queries:

Birth certificate of **Simon MARX** (III) born on Oct.23, **1859**, in Mertzwiller, legitimate son of **Simon MARX** (II) born July 2, 1830, Hochfelden (Bas-Rhin) oo **Adel LEVI**, 24, resident at same place (nota bene: birthplace of Adel unknown).

His grandparents :

Simon MARX (I), 26, born 1803, and, his wife, **Babet WEIL** # 1804, residing in Hochfelden, legitimate marriage.

I didn't search backwards, which is also possible (established by my friend Jean Camille Bloch).

Later a family tree of the Simon MARK I, II, III will be published.

What is important to have in mind is to imagine the conditions of life in 1830 for poor people, poor among the poor, because Jews, having lived in Alsace since 1789 had the same rights **as** other French people, but the rights were not applied..

They were peddlers, itinerant, with numerous children.

I'm sure that you are aware of the conditions in which your European families were living before travelling to the New World, searching for a better life...

It was the case with Simon MARX (II) 1830, illiterate, unable to sign – even in Hebrew, wobbly, I imagined him as a "Luftmensch" !

I'm apologising if I will be redundant, because it's not very easy to understand the following demonstration and nevertheless its happy end.

Simon MARX (II) 1830 and his wife **Adel(e) LEVI**, 24, at the birth of their first son, Simon (II) on 1859, were living in Mertzwiller.

I didn't find her birth certificate nor a marriage record for both, so that I began to imagine that she was not born in Alsace, (which was at the moment (1859) still under French laws)....

Both parents were "Hausierer", peddlers, and their children were born in different Alsatian places such as Marmoutier, others born in Trimbach, Fegersheim, Haguenau, Romanswiller, without proof, found only on domiciliary index cards, without official birth records, therefore absent from microfilms at ADBR and AMS (archives).

You will see further that some of their children were only approximately identified....

The children of Simon MARX (II) 1830 Hochfelden-1901 Strasbourg

1°) MARX Simon (III) Oct. 23, 1859, Mertzwiller – May 11, 1933, Los Angeles, CA;
nickname: Frenchie

son of Simon MARX (II) and **Adel LEVI**.

found in the New York passenger Records of Ellis island: American citizen, some travels from Europe to New York, clerk, "theatrical manager".

Husband of Minnie SCHONBERG, 1864 Dornum, (Prussia) – 1929 New York.

I have called and written to Dornum, but have not received an answer.

At their religious marriage, in 1885 in Manhattan, Samuel MARKS, signed **Simon MARX!**

Father Name: MARKS Mark Mother's Maiden Name: Honne:

That was very strange, but will receive soon an interesting explanation....

When Simon MARX (III) died, my American correspondent was unable to obtain a correct death record. But, It didn't matter.

2°) MARX Jeannette, born in Romanswiller 1862, died as **Henriette** 1870 in Marmoutier
daughter of Simon MARX (II) and **Adel LEVI**;

as you see, the parents didn't pay too much attention to the first name of their daughter!

3°) MARX Heinrich, born April 1866, birthplace not Fegersheim nor Marmoutier, because no records were found.

son of Simon MARX (II) and**ISAAC Anna**;

single, died May 14, 1898, at the Jewish hospital in Strasbourg;

buried in the Jewish cemetery of Strasbourg-Koenigshoffen.

Photo of the tomb by Jean Camille Bloch

4°) MARX Sara 1867 Marmoutier, said "born in legitimate marriage".

daughter of Simon MARX (II) and **Adele LEVI**,

Death record **not found, but registered**, found in the domiciliary index card.

5°) MARX Esther, said to have been born in Marmoutier on Aug 10, 1868, in accordance with domiciliary index card, "servant-girl".

No record found.

6°) MARX Estelle, Aug 15, 1869 Marmoutier-Nov. 14, 1889,

daughter of Simon MARX (II) and **Adele LEVI**

oo RANZENBERG Ludwig, born oct 17, 1860, in Calle, Prussia.

(Estelle died at the civil hospital in Strasbourg, at age 25 so we can suppose that she died perhaps in childbirth...buried in the Jewish cemetery of Koenigshoffen...)

Peculiar: it is written that Estelle was an "*uneheliche anerkannte Tochter Simon Marx und der ledigen Haendlerin Adele LEVY*"!

Translation: Estelle was an illegitimate recognized daughter of Simon Marx and the unmarried dealer Adele Levy!!!

7°) MARX Pauline::

found only in the domiciliary registry form. Born in 1873, supposedly.

8°) MARX Isaac dec 13, 1874 Marmoutier, divorced, second marriage with KLUTSKI Rosalie, maid-servant, born in Roedern, Bas-Rhin, on Oct. 16, 1886.

son of Simon MARX (II) and **Haenchen, Johanna ISAAK**.

On July 10, 1910, Isaac declared the death of his mother, widow of Simon Marx (II), died also at the Jewish hospital of Strasbourg, as in their time, Heinrich and Simon (II).

9°) MARX Moritz,

added, , because found in the registry form.

Simon MARX (II), his wife, Haenchen, Johanna ISAAK and their son, Heinrich, died at the Jewish hospital in Strasbourg and were buried at the cemetery of Strasbourg-Koenigshoffen.
The tombs of the men are in good state; near the grave of Haenchen, broken, just locatable because **it is** between 2 steles with readable inscriptions. (pictures from Jean Camille Bloch)

Subsidiary questions-answers

1°)

**Why did Samuel Marks declare at his marriage in 1885 that his father, Simon MARX (II), was Marks Mark ?
Instead of Sam or Samuel, he signed Simon !!**

I don't know why, whereas the tomb of his father in Koenigshoffen had the following inscription:

Simon Marx 1830-1901 and, on the opposite side: **Morde'hai Marx, deceased the first day of Soukkot 5662** (translation: Eliane Roos and Jean Camille Bloch)

(The Hebrew Morde'hai corresponds to Marx)

and why did he only declare **the first name of his mother "Honne"**? He didn't remember...

2°)

Who was the wife of Simon MARX II 1830 Hochfelden-1901 Strasbourg??

It can only be Adele LEVI, alias Haenchen, Johanna ISAAK, 1839 Lorsch, Prussia – 1910 Strasbourg.

The only reasonable solution for Jean Camille Bloch and I:

Adele was without birth, marriage and death records... (There was an Adelaide Levy in Hochfelden, born in 1838, but nothing indicates that she could been the wife of Simon II.)

We must suppose that Adel LEVI was born on the east side of the Rhine, (no legal records in Alsace, still French, until 1871) and that Simon MARX II got married in Prussia.

Haenchen diminutive of Hanna, Johanna ISAAK was only found in the domiciliary register of Strasbourg when living there, but mentioned in some birth records of her common children with Simon (II), in Marmoutier.

This first name Haenchen corresponds also to "Honne", for sure: = Hanna.

In accordance with the archivist from Lorsch, near Darmstadt, Dr Hans Schenk, she was born on March 12, 1839; parents were Hirsch Isaak von Staten and Yutta.

As a proof, their common children, almost all legal records are present:

MARX Simon (III) 1859, mother: Adel

MARX Jeannette Henriette 1862, mother: Adele

MARX Heinrich 1866, mother: ISAAC Anna

MARX Sara, 1867 mother: Adele

MARX Esther 1868, mother?

MARX Estelle 1869, mother: Adele, " illegitimate, but recognized daughter of Simon (II) and the unmarried Adele "

MARX Pauline 1873?

MARX Isaac, mother ISAAK Haennchen, Johanna

MARX Moritz ?

Only one solution: **Adele LEVI = ISAAK Haennchen, Johanna**

Dr Martha Lev Zion, from Israel Genealogical Society, Neguev branch::

>Just one thing, Chana (Hanna, Hanchen, etc) was frequently transferred to Johanna and Anna interchangeably,
>so those differences on sources are not surprising.

In conclusion, it's important to remember that the MARX Brothers received a Jewish education from their parents, as you can read in different biographies and, notwithstanding the poor benighted people in 1830, somewhere the Bible played perhaps a role:

"The mother of the prophet Samuel was Hanna"... (in: Israel et l'occident of P. Giniewski, p.36 ed. cheminement)

I thank Eve Line Blum, the instigator, Marilen Pitler and Jean Camille Bloch for their presence and their help, my wife for her patience, and friends for their encouragement -- they will recognise themselves.

**Pierre Kogan
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Strasbourg-Koenigshoffen Jewish Cemetery, Alsace
Photos by Jean Camille Bloch

MARX BROTHERS FAMILY TREE

