The late hours were very frightening to me. Going home from work towards midnight was terrifying. I had to pass a lot of synagogues on the way, and they used to say that the dead came to the synagogue to pray at midnight, and so I used to run through those alleys and yards scared like nobody's business.'

Growing up in Romania
A warm, true story of life in Botosani and Bucharest at the turn of the 19th century by the late Morris Cohen.

Revisiting our Romanian Jewish Roots
a first-hand account of last summer's research in Romania as told by Rick Bercuvitz...PAGE 3

Volume 2, Number 2
Winter 1993-94
Some very important words from your editor . . .

This issue features a number of personal experiences, including a graphic account of Rick Bercuvitz's research trip to Romania last September, a poignant experience of growing up in Romania at the end of the 19th century, a look at a Bessarabian village some 60 years ago, and researching with the help of a professional genealogist.

This and more. We hope you enjoy.

Incidentally, those wonderful illustrations were inked by our own Paul Pascal, last year's editor. Paul is an art instructor in Toronto.

On a more serious note, ROM-SIG NEWS has reached a crossroads.

Our editorial board is having doubts as to whether this journal can survive with the limited amount of information it receives.

Oh, it's not our readers. From your letters and phone comments, you really have enjoyed receiving this quarterly. You are a great audience. And like most genealogists, your willingness to share your experiences has been outstanding, has produced some heartwarming and interesting stories for us to read.

But, so far, this is not enough to keep this publication going.

We have all subscribed to this journal with the hope that ROM-SIG NEWS would provide us with some glimmer of information, some clue as to where we could find more vital information about our relatives.

Romanian research is the main reason this special interest group exists. Unless we can enhance our efforts to find information about our Romanian relatives, we have failed.

The stories submitted about Romanian life, our personal experiences, anecdotes, etc., quickly become exhausted unless we can provide basic resource material. And today, we know of no way to get that information.

From the beginning, I professed to know very little about Romania or where to find genealogical information about it. I volunteered to help on a temporary basis only because no one else stepped forward when Paul Pascal had to step down because of other responsibilities. But I do not have the access for research that this publication so desperately needs to continue. My roots are not in Romania.

ROM-SIG NEWS needs an editor who is truly knowledgeable about Romanian research. Except for letters and phone calls to people who might help find such material for us, there is little more that I can do (see story on Page 6).

These past two issues have really been frustrating for me. Since Gertrude Ogushwitz's resignation from our editorial board (see story on Page 16), there is no longer anyone on the board supplying research material and there has not been enough material from you, our readers, to sustain a journal such as this on a long term basis.

So we are in a dilemma.

We do not wish to see ROM-SIG NEWS falter. Yet, we feel it can not continue in its present form without a substantial improvement in the amount of helpful material we receive.

If any of you has any ideas, suggestions, comments, please let us hear from you immediately. We need some positive input, or ROM-SIG NEWS will be forced to halt publication.
Revisiting our Romanian Jewish roots
by Rick Bercuvitz

I began planning for my trip to Romania quite far in advance of my Labor Day departure date—some twenty years in advance, in fact. At the age of twelve, already having gained a reputation as the family genealogist, I decided to visit the eastern European towns, villages and cities where my ancestors had dwelled, and in particular to visit Romania, where my paternal grandfather was born. Finally able to fulfill my goal, I invited my father along and together we traveled through Romania for nearly two weeks in September 1993. The experience was a memorable one, and I recommend it to anyone who has roots in Romania and can endure substandard tourist conditions.

A 1976 visit to cousins of my great-grandfather living in Israel had revealed to us the previously unknown village of my grandfather's birth (he was still alive, but did not recall the location himself), Codaesti in the county or județul of Vaslui. Further contact this year with the same relatives, now in their late nineties, confirmed that my great-great and great-great-great grandparents were buried in Codaesti. A conversation with another Israeli cousin who had visited Codaesti in 1992 left me dispirited, however, since she informed me that the Jewish cemetery was in ruins and she had been unable to find any relatives' graves. Undaunted, we set out on our journey.

I had arranged only one night's lodging in advance; our first night in Bucharest. Bucharest is still only barely emerging from the shadow of the Ceaucescu years, and reminders of its precarious economic situation abound: water available irregularly (except in the nicer hotels, which have their own water tanks), abandoned construction sites and numerous beggars. There are few restaurants, with limited selections available. We dined at one of Bucharest's best, and paid the exorbitant sum of about $5 (U.S.) for two people—10% of the average Romanian's monthly salary!

We left Bucharest the next morning, anxious to get out into the countryside. We had arranged in advance for a rental car through Hertz. The car cost $420 for ten days, with gasoline cheap at about eighty cents per gallon. Car travel is by far the easiest and hassle-free way to see Romania. Romania begins on the outskirts of Bucharest, where roadside vendors intermingle with gypsies, livestock, large diesel trucks and horse-drawn carts. Nearly all rural dwellers in Romania still travel in horse-drawn carts, and this remarkable sight alone is worth the visit to Romania.

Our journey brought us first to Vaslui, a dull and unexciting city to the northeast of Bucharest, in the heart of Moldavia. Most of our hotel accommodations in Romania were similar: adequate room with their own bathrooms with leaking toilets and/or sinks that ran all night, and $25-$40 per night for two people (except in Bucharest, where prices rival those of American hotels). Cigarette smoking is nearly universal in Romania, and the smoke is even more difficult to avoid than the exhaust fumes from the old diesel engines on the roads and highways.

In Vaslui, we engaged a young woman who worked at our hotel as an interpreter, and set off the next morning for Codaesti. It was raining steadily, but our spirits were high. Nearing the village of Codaesti, we passed dozens of horse-drawn wagons; the local rural dwellers were returning from Codaesti, where Sunday is market day. Entering the center of the village and coming upon the marketplace was a profound and transfixing experience. With hardly any motorized vehicle of any kind visible, and almost all of the many people gathered in the marketplace local villagers or peasants, one felt instantaneously transported back in time—perhaps a century or more. Of course the only thing missing from the scene, sadly, were the Jews who, prior to the War, would have been among the local peasants in the marketplace, arguing and haggling over prices. Nonetheless, to be in the spot where our ancestors had transacted their business and carried on their lives, to be "in the Old Country," was a moving and exhilarating experience.

We proceeded to the church, where an elderly local parishioner set out with us to guide us to the Jewish cemetery. Upon reaching the outskirts of the village, we were forced to abandon our car and continue on in shin-deep mud for about 1/2 mile. Along the way, our guide informed us that we were passing the site of an earlier, older cemetery, but that its stones had all long since "disappeared." We passed rows of peasants' huts, geese, dogs, and
chickens, and finally our guide, dressed in his Sunday best but by now covered with mud, pointed to the top of a distant hill (some 500 feet high), to the Jewish cemetery. It was a beautiful vision, in the midst of one of the most bucolic scenes I’ve ever seen, and I say this with authority as a Vermonter!

The Jewish cemetery in Codaesti (as in many other Romanian towns) was enclosed in recent years with funds provided by the Jewish community in Bucharest. There are today some six hundred Jewish cemeteries in Romania, five hundred of which are in locations no longer inhabited by Jews. The cemetery is "maintained" by a caretaker, who lives in a tiny hovel on the cemetery grounds, and grows her garden amidst and between the tombstones. The cemetery contains approximately thirty gravestones, mostly from the 1880s through the 1930s. We later learned that many stones were covered by a landslide which followed an earthquake in 1982. Older stones were inscribed only in Hebrew, newer stones in both Hebrew and Romanian. One of the best-preserved stones was that of my great-great-grandfather, Berl Bercovici, who lived in Codaesti from 1836 to 1917. We did not locate the graves of any other direct ancestors, but it was a thrill to find even one.

Our next day was the occasion for our first of several visits to archives. Most Moldavian Jewish vital records were recorded alongside those of Christians from the 1860s onward, and these records (from the 19th century) exist in the local county or județul archives, known as archivelor statului, or state archives. Records from about 1900 onwards reside in the local equivalent of a town hall or county court, known as the prefectura. For Codaesti, the records are housed in the state archive in Vaslui, and cover only from 1865 to 1885. No records remain from the 1885-1900 period, at least in the state archive.

The director of the archive, though her desk was empty and she did not seem to have much to do, greeted our request for research with a polite but firm "no," indicating that we were obligated to obtain written permission in advance from the central archives in Bucharest. No amount of fast-talking or bribery would sway her, and I was compelled to waste a day flying round-trip from Iasi to Bucharest on Tarom’s infamous local airplanes in order to obtain the requisite permission, which I accomplished successfully.

We returned to the archives some days later, and the director herself spent about three hours with us, perusing every birth, marriage and death register available for Codaesti. These registers were not indexed, and examining them in detail was a laborious process. The most interesting record yielded by this search was the 1874 marriage record of my great-great-grandmother's brother, which included the previously unknown names of his parents (my 3-great-grandparents), their village of residence (a nearby village called Borezesti), and the signature as a witness of my great-great-grandfather!

Our fourth stop was in Iasi (Jassy in English, pronounced "Yash" in Romanian). Today one of Romania’s largest cities, Iasi was the site of the World’s first Yiddish theater and prior to the war was a major Jewish cultural center. Today, Iasi is home to a mostly elderly Jewish community numbering perhaps a few hundred. We attended Rosh Hashanah in Iasi’s Great Synagogue, but were surprised not to be given an especially warm welcome. Iasi was the only location in Romania outside of Bucharest showing some nascent signs of “westernization.” We visited the Jewish cemetery with Odet Blumenfeld, a Professor at the University in Iasi. The cemetery contains approximately 80,000 graves, and is thus one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in all of Europe. It is quite impressive, although the records are apparently somewhat disorganized. It dates back only about one hundred years; an earlier cemetery was destroyed, though a few of its gravestones were brought to the new cemetery. There is a large monument to the 10,000 Jews of Iasi who were murdered by local Romanian police in 1941.

Iasi is the county seat for the județul of Iasi, and is thus home of the state archives for Iasi. Iasi was also the traditional capital of Moldavia. Full censuses were done for all of Moldavia in 1822, 1836, and 1849-50. These censuses include separate sections for Jews, and include much detail, such as names and ages of children, possessions, legal status (from whom land was leased, etc.), even physical description of the head of household! We were informed that these censuses are being microfilmed and are presently unavailable for public scrutiny. The state archives in Iasi also house a small museum of Moldavian history, and numerous Moldavian records of all sorts going back several hundred years. The earliest documents are written in the old Slavonic language, and require a trained scholar to read. Documents from the early nineteenth century were often written in Romanian using the Cyrillic script. More recent documents are in Romanian with Latin script. Specific permission must be obtained from the central archives in Bucharest prior to doing any research in Iasi, or in any other regional archives. Write to: Archivelor Statului, Boul. Mikahil Kogalniceanu 29, Bucuresti, Romania.

A second visit to Codaesti on a sunnier day brought the news that in fact the older cemetery did still exist. I was still unable to...
identify any stones more than about 150 years old, or to locate any other relatives' graves. There were approximately sixty existing gravestones, and many, many more under a mountain of earth caused by the 1982 earthquake. With tape recorder in hand, we visited with and interviewed the oldest man in the village, 92 years old, who remembered well the brother of my great-grandfather, but could not recall my great-great grandfather. "The Jews lived mostly in the center of town," he told me, "and worked as merchants or cattle dealers. Very few owned any land out here in the country, though some did. It was a tragic thing what happened to the Jews. I myself had my life saved by a Jew. We all lived together side-by-side before the War, and relations were good." After departing with a cornucopia of fresh fruits and vegetables, we returned to our travels.

En route to visiting the famous painted monasteries of Bukovina, we stopped over in Suceava. Finding the synagogue on Friday night, we went in and were warmly greeted by the ten or so mostly old men inside. We were invited by a young man to his family's home, a tiny apartment which he shares with his parents. He is a doctor, and hopes to move with his parents to Israel, though he is concerned about employment upon reaching Israel. He tells us that "the future of Romania's Jews is Israel or the cemetery."

Near the Bukovine monastaries, in Gura Humorului, I spot a Jewish tombstone and we happen upon a large Jewish cemetery. A young boy tells us that there is still one Jewish family in town. The stones are elaborately, beautifully carved. Many inscriptions are in German, as we are near Transylvania, and closer to Hungary. The stones tilt to this side and to that, precarious monuments to a community long gone.

Our route takes us through the Carpathian mountains, past alpine villages reminiscent of the Austrian Tyrol or Switzerland, but with many more oxen and horses than cars. We spend a night in Piatra Neamt, and attempt without success to visit the Baal Shem Tov shul, which dates back to the Seventeenth century. Piatra Neamt was home to a sizable Jewish community before the War, and its cemetery, located to the West of the city just on its outskirts, is large and impressive. Maintained by the city's tiny Jewish community, it is in very good condition.

After visiting Brasov (with the best-preserved old town of any Romanian city) and Sinaia, we arrived at our final Romanian destination, Ploiesti. This city, one of the largest in Romania, is an industrial center and oil-producing area and was heavily bombed by the allies during World War II, even after Romania had switched sides. Surprisingly, the regional state archives in Ploiesti were intact. The director, advised of our visit in advance by a telephone call from the central archives in Bucharest, was congenial and helpful. We communicated with him in French; our French was generally more useful than our English in Romania. We worked in his office, and his staff served us coffee and brought us whatever record books we requested. Vital records for Jews began earlier here than in Codaesti-perhaps in the 1840s, and separate indexes of births exist for Jewish men and for Jewish women, though indexed by first name during the earlier years. Generally, other vital records were also indexed in Ploiesti. The director did not believe that there were any censuses from Wallachia comparable to those for Moldavia. We searched through the vital records for several hours, but found not a shred of evidence that any of our Seigler ancestors had in fact lived in Ploiesti during the 19th century. This discovery was one of many mysteries that we brought home with us.

Arriving at the Jewish community office with seconds to spare before it closed, I spoke my broken Yiddish with the community secretary (who spoke German back to me). He showed us a couple of early volumes of Jewish deaths (1870s), indicating that this was all that was presently in the community's possession. In addition, we were shown plot plans of the cemetery, which dates to about 1880. An earlier cemetery was destroyed by the Nazis. Arriving at dusk, we hopped over the cemetery walls. We located the grave we were seeking, only to find no stone. Digging around the grave site, I located various pieces of the grave stone and reassembled the stone, only to discover that it was not the correct "Yitzchak Meir Halevi Seigler" that I was seeking. This seemed an apt metaphor for the conclusion of our visit to Romania. The pieces are scattered, and can be reassembled only with great care, diligence, patience and devotion. Once assembled, the picture comes into view. But it is distinct only for a minute, and inevitably yields to further mystery.
Progress reported in obtaining Jewish genealogical researchers

by GENE STARN, Editor

I was out when the first call came. "You just missed a phone call from Romania," my wife excitedly told me, "but don't go away. He said he would be calling back any minute now."

Maybe 15 minutes later I was talking to a highly influential Romanian media official in Bucharest about organizing a research team especially for ROM-SIG members.

After several of my previous leads had failed, I had phoned one of my friends in high circles in Washington who suggested that one of his employees who often visited Romania, might know of someone.

Sure enough, he gave me the name of this official in Bucharest so I wrote him of our plight in trying to find a reliable genealogical research source.

The phone call was the first of my many attempts to locate someone who could do what we all would want: someone who could reliably answer the questions that are puzzling us about our ancestors from Romania, especially finding the vital documents we all need to trace our family history.

In our conversation the Romanian, whose identity I cannot disclose right now, says he will try to find someone who is "knowledgeable, Jewish, Romanian, preferably on pension and some young people to do the leg work."

Specific fees were not discussed, but in my introductory letter I said remuneration is negotiable but should be based on time spent and results obtained. In the phone conversation, fees of "about $5.00 per hour" were discussed.

Also in that initial letter, I said that we needed research in many of the towns and villages throughout the country, not just from Bucharest.

I was given the main Bucharest phone numbers where he could be reached including two numbers at his home.

The conversation ended with best wishes for a happy new year and a promise, initiated by the Romanian, that "I will call you again the week of January 3rd or thereabouts with the results of my progress."

It is premature to get our hopes up too high, but I feel that this contact could be the lead-in to the reliable sources of information we are looking for.

We have reports that several other members of ROM-SIG have been making their own attempts at locating a researcher in Romania, but as yet have not heard of any results.

Naturally, we will keep you informed as soon as we have something more concrete to report.

HELPFUL HINTS! Romanian national censuses were taken in 1848, 1912, 1930, 1941, 1956 and 1966. Whether these records still exist, where they are and how to access them is unknown.

Burials In Romanian society plot at Mt. Hebron are indexed

The following are surnames of individuals buried in the Romanian-American Benevolent Society plot, Mt. Hebron, Queens, NY. First burial 1912, latest 1990.

- Abramowitz
- Nachman
- Markowitz
- Schnitzer
- Adler
- Heimowitz
- Markowitz
- Schwartz
- Altaracsa
- Himovich
- Mohnblatt
- Segall
- Baretz
- (lassy)
- Moldow
- Segel
- Berkowitz
- Helfman
- Morganstern
- Silverman
- Blank
- Inselberg
- Moses
- Silverstein
- Braustein
- Jacobson
- Moskowitz
- Smilowitz
- Brodsky
- Jacowitz
- Mulberg
- Solomon
- Cohen
- Juster
- Neuschatz
- Solon
- Dorfman
- Kallman
- Petreanu
- Strulman
- Dulberg
- Kantrowitz
- Pollinger
- Steirman
- Epstein
- Katz
- Rabin
- Sussman
- Ergang
- Kaufman
- Rosenfeld
- Tell
- Goldberg
- Kessler
- Rothman
- Thaler
- Goldstein
- Klopper
- Sason
- Tobias
- Green
- Lieberman
- Schachtman
- Weinstein
- Greenberg
- Liebowitz
- Schatzberg
- Weissfield
- Grettzer
- Marcus
- Schick
- Weiss
- Griesner
- Margulies
- Schindler

Submitted by: Andrew Bader
1508 Diellen Lane
Elmont, NY 11003

HELPFUL HINT! Each Romanian district (județ) has two separate repositories in which vital records can be located: an Archivu for (archives), where birth records are kept, and a Serviciul Central de Stare Civila (similar to a city or town's clerk's office), where death and marriage records are kept.

Romanian Landsmanshaftn in Israel

Below are Romanian excerpts from a list of Landsmanshaft societies located in Israel. Other such societies, composed of former residents of a community, exist throughout the world.

Sometimes a letter of inquiry can bring some results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dorohoi - JLM</td>
<td>Pini Berkovitz, P.O.B. 2564, Jerusalem 91024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorohoi - JLM</td>
<td>Prof. Bruno Berkovitz, Hadassah Hospital (Maternity Dept.). Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorohoi Immigr.</td>
<td>Shlomo David, P.O. B. 134, Kiryat Bialik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorohoi - JLM</td>
<td>Zilla Connor, 1/A Hapaimach St., Jerusalem 92542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania in Israel, Uri Eliav, 8 Eliat St., Tel Aviv 68118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania in Israel, The Owner, P.O.B. 1483, Jerusalem 91014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Jews</td>
<td>Baruch Techoktin, P.O.B. 925, Tel Aviv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Jews</td>
<td>Reb. Efraim Gutman, 16 Basel St., Tel Aviv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was born on Passover, 10 April 1886. I was the fourth child in our family. In all we were nine: my father, Joshua; my mother, Neche or Nettie; my brothers, Joseph, Samuel, Israel and the youngest, Jack; my sisters, Clara and Have or Eva, and myself, Jacob Moishe. Naturally, a big family.

As far back as I remember, we needed plenty of sleeping quarters. At different times we lived in about seven different houses, and I can say for sure that all of them were about the same. The average home of the poor people was about the same. The only difference was that some of them had an outer shed in the back.

I will describe our apartment. It consisted of two rooms, one larger than the other. Our furniture: first, my father as a shoemaker had a huge workstand as big as a bed. Then we had two divans that served as beds, a chest of drawers and huge cupboard in which the family's best was locked. All of this was in the big front room.

In the smaller room we had two pieces of furniture for sleeping. The big room was a combination workshop-bedroom-living room, because at night the workstand became a bed. And so we slept.

The back room had a built-in stove for heat in the winter, and a pripechik, a hearth, for cooking, and beyond that an oven big enough for my mother to be able to bake challes and bread for the family for a whole week. In this room, we children played, and it was kitchen and bedroom, too.

I might add that my grandmother also lived with us. For the Sabbath, the workstand was cleaned, all the tools and work were put under it, and with a white spread over it, we had a beautiful living room.

My father was a very timid, honest and very religious man, and he was always tired. He tried very hard to make a living for us, but could never quite make it. Yet, no matter how bitter he felt, there was the eternal smile on his lovely face. He used to sit at his workbench and talk to G-d like to a human being and beg him because many times there was not enough food in the house for the family.

"Ribono Shel Olom!" he would say, "Won't you help us? Until when will you torment me?"

But it seems that G-d did not hear him at all, and so it was a very hard life for us. We children understood and never complained.

My mother, a wonderful woman, tried to help in her humble way. For instance, she would borrow some money and buy some geese. She would keep them in a cage during the winter and fatten them. Then each week she would have some killed in the shed. She would sell some of the meat and fat, and the feathers for pillows.

She would pay back what she owed, have some money left for the house, and we had goose meat for the Sabbath and enough fat save up for Passover.

At times it happened that it was late afternoon and we still had no lunch, and my father would say to us, "Please, children, wait a little while. I will bring the shoes to the customer and I will bring you something to eat."
On such times, he would return with bread and a big watermelon or apples, and we would be very happy with it.

My wonderful mother would help in many ways. Right after the first two days of Succoth, she would again borrow some money and buy out a wagon of fresh plums from the peasants. She would get a tremendous size copper plate shaped like a soup dish from a neighbor. We washed the plums and pried them into the copper plate, set a big fire in the yard, and we would cook and stir all those plums until they became loose.

Then we would sift the fruit through the sifter until it was clean of pits and fine skin, and then cook and stir it again. We would work the whole day and part of the night until it thickened and became prune jam. We called it puvyedle. My mother would sell a lot of it and so be able to pay back what she owed, and we would have a profit of 40 or more pounds of jam.

When my mother had flour, she would bake bread for the whole week. This way for the whole winter we had the best lunch in the whole wide world—bread with prune jam. You can't imagine how good that was!

But that was not all.

For Passover my brother, Izzie, and I used to get new suits. My older brothers were already working so they could buy their own. But for us, my mother scraped until she had enough money to buy some dark cotton material. Then she took us down to Shmarya, the tailor, to cut the suits. He took our measure and mother would say, "Cut them a little longer and wider. The children are growing!" My mother had no sewing machine and had to sew them together by hand. They were wider and longer alright! We never grew out of them!

During the summer we wore the old patched-up pants and shirt—no shoes. Who needed shoes? If it was nice, we went barefoot, and if it rained we loved to walk in the puddles. But when autumn came, it it rained we had to wear those suits every day. Instead of us growing out of those suits, the patches grew bigger and bigger at the elbow, knees and in the seats, of course.

When the Sabbath came, EVERYTHING was forgotten. The Holy Sabbath began Friday at sundown. During the afternoon, my father would take us to the city bathhouse and steam us and wash us clean. Then we would return home and dress in our Sabbath best and go to shul. Then we would return home again for the Sabbath meal.

The table was set with a white cloth, the flame of the brass candle sticks glowing, and the home-baked challah covered with the clean napkin. The raisin wine was a Sabbath treat, and if we had fish it was very good. If there was no fish, then a marinated herring was good, too. It did not matter because the Holy Sabbath was here and whatever G-d gave was very welcome indeed.

I suppose you are wondering what raisin wine is. Well, we made it ourselves. On a Sunday, we would fill a large bottle with water, put some raisins in it, and let it ferment until Friday. Then we would take the raisins out, and squeeze them out because they were big and full of the wine. After cleaning the wine through a cheese cloth, we would have sweet raisin wine. And with this my father would say the Kiddush.

If we did not have raisin wine, my father would say the Kiddush over the challah, and instead of "Boreh Pri Hagoven," he would intone "Hamotzeh Lechem Min Ha-aretz."

In between courses we sang Zmiros, and after the soup we sang the Rabbis' melody, so happy and lively, and soon we forgot the whole weekdays' troubles. Chicken or goose was a must for the Sabbath meal, but if there was none, then meat would do. On the night of the Sabbath we would sing ourselves into tiredness and sleep.

The Sabbath morning we would wake bright and early. The coffee would be hot from the day before because the brick oven, though outside, would still be so very hot from the Friday baking. The coffee and milk were left on the oven throughout the night. The milk would form a thick skin on top and everybody had to have some of the skin in the coffee. It was so delicious with a lump of sugar.

Then off to Shul we would go.

Upon our return home again at noontime, we would sit at the table for the second Sabbath meal. Mother would serve us Chulent, a feast for kings. What is Chulent? As you know, all cooking for the Sabbath had to be completed before sundown Friday. Mother would gather all the ingredients for the second Sabbath meal, that is, the meats, the kugel and whatever else we had. The would place them in one large pot. The pot was then sealed into the hot stove with a paste of clay around the opening so that no air could get in. In this way, although the fire died out, the stove stayed hot until the following day. Mother would take the food out, and it was so good, we would want nothing better.

The Houses We Lived in

I want to tell you of incidents that happened in the various houses we lived in. Once, when I was about 6 years old, we lived in a row of houses.

It was in an inside street with a big front yard in front of the houses. One day a big storm began to blow. The wind was so strong that it ripped the whole roof off of the houses all in one piece. All we had to do is stay in the house and nothing would happen because there was an attic. But my sister, Clara, grabbed me and my brother, Izzie, and we ran into the street.

It was just then that the roof came down in the yard, and but for a couple of inches, all three of us would have been gone for good.

Another incident happened when I was a little older and already in my first year of learning a trade. We lived in a house of three rooms and to help us with the rent, a young couple with a baby lived in the back room.
One night the baby started to cry. The parents woke, and were shocked to see out the window a top shed burning across the street. It was like flickering candles and not too big yet. But if another 15 minutes had passed, it would have been a terrific catastrophe because the houses were very close to one another from both streets, back and front.

The house next door to ours was separated only by a narrow alley. In it lived a kerosene dealer with a cellar full of kerosene vats or barrels. All the neighbors woke up and started to work with pails of water from the rain barrels that were always standing to collect the water from the leaders from the roofs. In about 20 minutes the fire was out.

As for the firemen, it would have taken them from 45 minutes to an hour just to come, and even then the system was very poor. Let me explain. In the center of the city there was the big church with a gallery all around it. On this gallery, a man walked day and night. It was his job to signal the fire department when he learned that a fire had started. Of course, there were no telephones and no water system either.

When a fire broke out, all the water peddlers were supposed to bring water from the wells. They had a two-wheel cart with a big barrel of water on the cart that was drawn by a horse. This was the water supply in case of fire. A very slow process. When a fire broke out, a whole block was generally destroyed, so we were really very lucky that time.

Incident Number Three took place in the same house some months later. One night, my father, my brother, Izzy, and I was sleeping near the outside wall when suddenly, with a terrific bang, the wall, the entire length of the house, fell into the alley. It was a good thing that the wall did not cave inward on top of us!

The next incident had to do with our getting a house of our own. You see, we had a great aunt, my grandmother's sister. She was a heavy woman and always looked angry to us little children. We were always afraid of her, and whenever she came we hid in the corners.

Anyway, she owned two houses. She had one son who was rather well off since he owned his own house, and as a shoemaker, he had several workers. Anyway, one day my great aunt said to my father, "I will give you a house with the condition that I stay with you as long as I will live."

My parents were very happy about this because rent was a very important item to a family like ours. So it happened that we moved in together, and we really began to live a little better. We raised chickens in the yard, and kept some geese in the attic in winter. But this did not last long.

We lived there about two years and the son began to bother my father that he wants the house back. He claimed it was his house. The funny part was that he already had two houses because my aunt gave him her other house. He knew that he did not stand a chance in court because we had papers showing the house belonged to us. But this did not stop him. He called my father before the rabbi, and he probably shmeared him plenty because the rabbi talked to my father, a timid and very religious man, and convinced my father to give away the house.

My mother was heartbroken. We were now making a better living. My mother even had raised her own little chicks. Well, we moved out and that was that!

My education

I began to go to cheder (religious school) when I was five years of age. The Rebbe, a stern, middle-aged man with a long capote (coat), high boots and a conchick (cat-of-nine-tails) stuck in one of them, always at hand for use at a second's notice for the least little mistake a boy made. If a boy lost his place, the conchick went to work, and I can tell you that with so
many boys sitting on the hard benches on both sides of the long table, the conchick was a busy weapon. When a boy was bad; that is, when the Rebbe thought a boy was bad, he had to lay over the Rebbe's knee and receive the lashes over the soft flesh.

That is how we learned to daven (pray) and some Chumish (the five books) which I forgot long ago. I went to cheder for three years, and then my father decided that a boy of eight should go to school. In Romania a Jewish boy was not allowed to go to the Romanian schools so the Jewish community had their own schools. The rich children paid, and the poor children went for free. And so I entered school.

I am afraid I wasn't a very good student. The very first year they gave us so much work that I could not grasp everything. We had to learn Jewish reading and writing, Chumish translated into Romanian, reading and writing Romanian, some German, arithmetic, geography and history. The method of teaching was the old fashioned way. The teacher had a long ruler and if anyone did not know something, he had to stretch out his hand and the teacher would hit the palm with the ruler one or two times.

The first year I made it. My marks were not very high, but I got through. The second year was much harder. Or maybe it was the circumstances. I had no coat and it was cold. I had no books and conditions at home were rather hard those days. So I was a very poor student.

Our principal was a highly educated German Jew, who himself taught the German language to the children, and it was not easy. He was a very dignified man and so would not hit the children himself. We had a servant in the school who was the all-around man, the sweater, the bell-ringer, and the shmeiser (spanker). His name was Chaim, so we kids called him "Chaim, the shmeiser". When the principal wanted to punish a boy, he would call Chaim, the shmeiser, who would come with his special weapon made from long tree branches bound together. The principal would give the order for five or ten lashes, and Chaim, the shmeiser, would put the boy over his knee, drop the pants and count 1-2 and so on, to make sure he made no mistake. Those branches could sting like so many bees on the soft flesh.

One day it snowed, and I came home with frozen feet because they were not protected properly. My pop said to me, "Moshele, in a couple of days I will make you a pair of boots." And, sure enough, he did make me a pair of boots. In the city there was a society called Malbish Uramim (dress the poor), and at the same time that I got my boots, I was called into the principal's office, and some people there put a coat on me. It was a good coat, but it so big that when I came home it rather fit my brother, Sam. But who cared about a fit? I was warm and I was very thankful to those people, whoever they were.

Anyway, I struggled through the second year, but was left back. Here I was 10 years old, a big boy, and such a bad boy not to pass. Well, that was too much for my father. He was very angry and said, "God knows how hard it is for me even to feed you, and I wanted you to go to school, but if you don't want to learn, then you will have to go learn a trade." My father never laid a hand on us, but this time he gave me a beating, not as bad as Chaim, the Shmeiser.

He asked me, "What do you want to be?" Did I know what I wanted to be? But since my sister, Clara, was already working in the most aristocratic tailor shop in town, I said, "I want to be a tailor." And that is how I began to learn the tailoring trade.

When I said I wanted to be a tailor, my sister took me to the shop where she worked and I started to learn the trade. My sister was my teacher. But she wanted me to become a tailor overnight. If I did not learn too quickly, she pinched me black and blue on the arms.

But I really did learn very fast. My father could not feed me while there were three smaller children in the house, and I wanted to make something of myself. I did not care if the boss kept me, at 11 years of age, from 7 in the morning to 11 at night. I had to stand on a special board to reach the table at which I pressed out the sleeves that I learned to make. Even though I worked such long hours I did not get any pay yet.

The late hours were very frightening to me. Going home from work toward midnight was terrifying. I had to pass a lot of synagogues on the way, and they used to say that the dead came to the synagogue to pray at midnight. So I used to run through those alleys and yards, scared like nobody's business.

At about this time, we had moved from the house we were living in, and into a basement where it was very crowded. I had learned many things including the making of pockets. So my father contracted me out to a neighboring tailor. The verbal agreement was for one year with food and 10 ley. It was very little money, but my parents didn't have to feed me anymore. So I worked. And for that very little money, I was still able to make a suit of clothes for myself.

I worked for this same tailor for three years, each year with more money. In this time I learned to make the whole garment and was considered a good worker. I dressed better, and at age 14 going on 15, I was a regular cavalier. But I could not agree with the boss on the price, so I left him.

I went to work for another tailor but stayed only a week. It happened that the machine needle went through one of my fingers, and then when I was pressing a pair of pants of very light
material, a couple of sparks from the charcoal pressing iron landed on the pants and burned a couple of pinholes in the cloth. Although the customer, an old gentile, did not see those pinholes, the boss did not want to pay me for the week's work.

So I quit him and got myself another place. We agreed on 6 ley a week, 3 ley each week so that I could send money home and pay for my board, and the balance to be paid in lump sums whenever I needed money for myself.

The money grew and I kept asking, but he kept saying next week, and I needed a lot of things. I needed rubbers, overshoes for the snow, a suit of clothes and many other things. He gave me a little money, but he still owed me quite a lot of money. I insisted I needed the money, so he gave me 20 ley. Still it was not enough.

So I said, "If you don't pay me I am not coming to work." He grabbed me and said, "You better give me back the 20 ley." I said, "You better pay me what's coming to me."

Then he said, "Come with me to the police." And I said, "Alright."

He walked with me for a couple of blocks, and then let me go, but he said, "You will not be able to work anywhere in the city." This was true because they were organized in a corporation backed by the government. There was nothing for me to do but to leave town.

It was decided I should go to the big city, Bucharest. I was 15 years old.

In Bucharest I lived for awhile with a far relative of my father's, the Kraft family, who were contractors making vests, cotton pants and stitching linings for overcoats. The Kraft household consisted of father, mother, a son of 17, a girl 14, and the youngest boy of 8. The house was something like a garden apartment only instead of grass and plenty of space, there were narrow alleys paved with stones, an outside water pump, and a latrine, really an outhouse.

The apartment on one side had a hall-like room which was the kitchen, then a small room the size of a kitchenette, and on the other side a combination livingroom-bedroom, and a big room for the shop. They had five workers who ate and slept with them.

The question is, "Where was everybody sleeping" The parents, the girl and the young boy had the bedroom. Everybody else slept on the table and on the floor in the shop. And I with them.

The Krafts did not live very well. Mr. Kraft was a very timid man who worked very hard to make ends meet, and was always in debt. The son was the vest-maker. The daughter foot-peddled the button-hole machine. And the "Madame", as everybody called her, was busy watching and flirting with the workers.

Cooking was not in her line. Instead she would send a boy to the grocery for whatever anyone wanted, a penny halvah, cheese, herring, olives, and stuff like that, with tea and bread, of course. Once in a while she did cook a meal, that is a soup with some pieces of meat.

I wonder whether you can imagine 10 or 11 people sitting at the table (the converted work-bench) all of us eating from one large soup plate. Those sitting nearer had more and those sitting farther away could hardly get to the food. Well, many of us left that table hungry.

Luckily, I did not stay with the Krafts all the time, but it was my first time to begin to work elsewhere. In fact, a number of elsewhere.

As I remember, I was 17, a grown man and a good tailor. I was working with an old gentile, a very good German tailor who paid me 24 ley a week.

Time passed, and the gentleman tailor became sick and died, and since I was a full-fledged tailor I decided it was time for me to be on my own. I became a master tailor at age 18.

The old German's lady wanted me to work for her which meant I would do all the work and she would get half the money. She would not even sew on a button, so I could not agree to that. Instead I offered to buy the tools.

She had no alternative, so she sold everything to me, and I moved it to the Krafts in the small room, where I fixed up my shop, small as it was. I went to the same people that the old German had received his work from, and they knew me, and when I told them I had my own little shop, they gave me the work, too.

And that is how I came to be my own boss at so young an age. I began to earn lots more money, but being so young, I did not know how to hold on to it. I lived and dressed better. I went home to see my people. And time passed.

One day when I was passed 19, a girl with a young boy came to see the Kraft family. She was a plump lively girl, and she introduced herself as Sophie Label. Her older brother's wife was a relative to Madame Kraft, and since she had recently come to Bucharest, she came to bring greetings.

Sophie and I started to talk together, and she said she was working for a vest-maker. I asked if she could work on coats and she said she could. So she started working for me, and we got to understand one another.

After 8-9 months we began to like one another. But she went home to Mihaileni, so I closed the shop and followed her. It was in the middle of winter. I took a train and it didn't go all the way to Mihaileni, but to a town called Dorohoi. From here I traveled by horse and sled, and it was a rough sleighride because there was a blizzard and it took 2½ hours. When I arrived I was quite cold although I was pretty well bundled up.

Anyway, a few weeks later we had an engagement party. I sent for my parents and they came and we were all happy together.

I want to tell you about Sophie's family. As soon as I arrived I was accepted as one of the family. They treated me like one of their children. I felt immediately at home and they did it simply and without fanfare.
Sophie's father, a very good-looking short man, a little heavy set, was a very learned man. He understood Hebrew, Polish, German, Yiddish, and of course, Roumanian. But he could not apply this knowledge in such a small town as Mihaileni, a town with a main street and two back streets. So he taught Hebrew and Yiddish and made a very poor living.

The children were already grown and they helped out, so they got along fine. They had their own house and so they managed.

Sophie's mother, Gitel, was a very beautiful but plain woman, a wonderful housewife with a heart of gold. Shaye, Sophie's brother was a very good, quiet man, married and with one child at that time. Sister Hannah was also a wonderful person, married to a wonderful fellow, Baruch by name, who would stretch his two long legs and run to do a favor for anybody. The two youngest, Sadie and Sam, made it five in all. A wonderful family.

We set up a little shop in Mihaileni, and we both worked in it. But in the spring, I had to report to the draft board in Botoshan, my home town, and in the Fall I was supposed to go to be a "soldat." We Jews in Romania had few rights of citizenship but had to serve in the Army. That is, we were citizens, but we expected to serve. Although born in the country, we were actually looked upon and treated as strangers.

Our life in the Army was no picnic either, so it was no wonder that we weren't happy about going into the Army. So when my sister Clara's husband sent two tickets for us to come to Canada, we didn't hesitate. Of course, Sophie's parents did not want to send their daughter on such a trip to a strange land with a young man just like that. So they insisted that we get married, and then Sam Mayerovitch's tickets could be used.

Our Wedding

Before I tell you about our wedding, I would like to tell you about our engagement. It was a real party.

Two long tables were set up on the front room, the largest room in the house. Long benches were set along each side. Family and lots of friends were invited, and as I told you, my parents came, too.

There was plenty of food and wine. I had wanted to sit near my sweetheart, but that was not allowed because the women sat at one table and the men sat separately. But everyone had a wonderful time, and it was a grand party.

However, our wedding was different. You know, every girl dreams of a nice wedding, with a supper and music, and family and friends, and a good time for everyone.

This was Sophie's dream, too, but she was bitterly disappointed. Instead of the dream, a Minyan of ten men was gathered, a big coat was put on me, a big bread was placed in my bosom, an old man wrote the marriage certificate or Ketubah in Hebrew, they stretched out a big Talis, four upraised arms each held a corner, and the ceremony was over within a few minutes. And so we were happily married.

After the wedding, Sophie cried hysterically. Me? I was just numb, and that happened on Sept. 29, 1909. Eight days later, we left Romania to go on the long trip to Montreal, Canada.

I will never forget the day we left Romania. My father-in-law put on his Talis and Tfilin as if he were going to pray. He took my right in his, and with tears in his eyes, he said, "I have five fingers. You are taking one finger away with you. Promise you will take good care of her for the whole of your lives."

The entire family was in tears. I, as a rule, cry very easily, but at that moment, I was as hard as stone. I felt like an eel. And so we left Mihaileni.

Mihaileni was a border town and so we just walked over the border, out of Romania and into Austria. My brother-in-law Baruch walked with us until we crossed over, and then we traveled by horse-and-wagon to the train. In those days, the trains traveled very slowly and it took us probably three days to arrive at Antwerp in Belgium where we boarded the ship, Montezuma.

The Montezuma was a cattle ship. It carried cattle to Europe and upon its return, it carried two-legged cattle to America. At least that was the way they treated us. Needless to say, there was only one class immigrants, 3rd or 4th class. Who knows? There were no rooms, just beds, one pushed up against the other.

Women and men were separate. The food was miserable, and most everyone was seasick.

One day they gave us a treat and opened a barrel of herring, but the Polacks among us made short work of it before anyone else could get to it. The Polacks loved herring.

The first day out, Sophie ate one hard egg, and that was it. She got seasick and stayed seasick for 8 days. She craved an orange, and I had to buy one on the quiet from a steward for a nickel.

I was sick only one day. The ship was in danger for three days because of a terrific storm, and one night they dropped anchor and waited out the storm. It took 15 miserable days, and we finally arrived at the port of Quebec, Canada.

Morris Cohen and his wife, Sophie, began life anew upon their arrival in Canada, raising the family you see on Page 7.

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In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Baron Maurice de Hirsch established the Jewish Colonization Association. One goal of this new association would be to find ways to reduce anti-Semitism in Bessarabia and the Ukraine by making Jews "tillers of the soil," so they would blend in with the local peasant farmers and become indistinguishable by vocation. Then if they were unidentifiable because of livelihood, incidents of hatred would cease.

The Jewish Colonization Association went about achieving its agricultural goals in a very systematic and professional manner. The communities were planned so that all of its agricultural and social infrastructures were in place to support the population. The JCA provided scholarships for studies in agronomy. They then employed the new agronomists as advisors to JCA communities.

Lambrovka, located in Bessarabia, Romania, approximately 100 kilometers south of Kishinev near the town of Borodino was one such village. It was founded in 1932 as a Jewish farming settlement. It seemed to be very well planned, probably benefiting from the mistakes and experience of earlier settlements. The town was established in an area of "virgin" land where there had been no prior settlement. All of the residents probably came from nearby towns. At least one family, that of my great uncle Chaim Vere-ta, came from Dombroven, another mostly Jewish agricultural village in Bessarabia.

Lambrovka was designed as a model agricultural village, very similar in structure to Israel's moshav shitufi. JCA probably provided assistance in setting up the cooperative dairy, digging wells, establishing a station of agricultural machinery, planing vineyards and founding a school. Each family had their own home with a small plot of land behind it and one or two cows. The primary crop of Lambrovka was to be grapes for wine production. For this purpose 52 hectares of land for vineyards was distributed, one hectare to each family.

Harvested were table grapes such as Aleppo and others. The grapes and wines were sold "even in Paris." The winery was located at the end of the smaller of the two streets of the town.

The collective also owned a bull, a stud, a tractor and a threshing machine. Horses were the main work animals and every family had 2, 3 or 4 horses of their own.

The collective dairy of Lambrovka processed all of the milk produced. Every cow produced 300-500 liters of milk a week. The main products were cream and packaged butter, which were sold outside of Lambrovka.

In the livestock collective, there were also 500 Karakul sheep, raised for fur. The sheep came from Uzbekistan but were purchased with the help of France since Romania did not have commercial relations with Russia at that time.

There were also various wheat crops, probably to support the livestock raised in other communities. Families paid for the use of the threshing machine and the tractor.

Founded as a Jewish village, all 52 families in Lambrovka were Jewish. Some of the families living in the town were Vereta, Korol, Sobol, Prokopletz, Bluvsboin, Tshegelov, Opachevskiy, Natanson, Mariasin, Miroshnik and David Weissman. The Vereta family was definitely employed by the JCA as were the Trachtman and Friedman families who lived in Kishinev and commuted to Lambrovka to work for the JCA.

There were two main streets in the town. Family homes were located on either side of the streets. Down the center of the main street was a broad boulevard with about 10 wells for water. The wells were designed for usefulness but were also very pretty, giving the town a quaint appearance. About 38-40 families living on the main street, the rest on a parallel street.

The town had a school and a synagogue with a resident rabbi. The rabbi had two sons, one was still living in Odessa in the 1960s.

The JCA had a cooperative bank, located in Ptrovka, approximately 15-18 kilometers from Lambrovka. The manager of the agricultural division of the bank was Chaim Vereta. Chaim, born in 1892, was the son of Eliezer and Raisel Vereta.

Continued on next page
PORTRAIT OF A VILLAGE IN BESSARABIA
Continued from Page 13

of Dombroven, another JCA agricultural village in Bessarabia.

JCA probably financed his studies in agronomy, as they did for several young people from Dombroven. He received his degree from the Novopoltykha Agricultural School near the Nikolaev Region, near Kherson in the Ukraine. He was an agronomist specializing in vineyards.

Chaim's wife, Riva, was born in 1905. She came from Petrovka, where she was an accountant in the JCA bank. She probably met Chaim where she worked. Trachtman and Friedman had a car with a driver, which was occasionally used by Chaim and Riva as early as the summer of 1934. Riva and Chaim had two children: Lazar, born in 1933, and Gala, born in 1939. Both children were born in Kishinev at the Dr. Kurtz Hospital. Since both children were born in Kishinev, we can assume that there was no midwife or doctor in Lambrovka.

This town was fairly successful for nine years. In late June or early July of 1941, during the first few days of the war, all 52 families fled as the Nazis approached. The Veretas fled to Kazakhstan, never to return. Lambrovka was abandoned.

Today Lambrovka is a state farm, populated by Ukrainians whose homes were burned by the Germans during the war. Approximately 50 new homes have been added to the original 52. New areas have been planted and cultivated, and now the farm has approximately 200 hectares of vineyards.

I have not been able to find Lambrovka on a map. The region changed hands several times. I located a nearby village, Gofman, on a 1956 Army Corps of Engineer map at the National Geographic Cartography Library in Washington. I have not been able to locate any published material on Lambrovka. However, information on the activities of the JCA and other Jewish agricultural towns is available. Much of it is in Yizkor books of Bessarabian communities. All of the information taken from personal interviews corroborates with the published information on other JCA communities.

The information in this article is taken from interviews with Lazar Vereta, my second cousin, born in Kishinev and who lived his first nine years in Lambrovka. After his family fled Lambrovka, they never returned. Only one family, the Tsheglov family, returned to the village after the war. They remained for just a short period of time. The Mariasin family may be living today in Israel, as there is a Mariasin from a JCA village in Bessarabia living in Ashdod.

Today the approximate location of Lambrovka can be found by locating a village named Gofman. Before the war, the village was populated by Germans and called Gofmanstal. In 1940 all of the German population was deported to Germany. In December 1992, Lazar immigrated from Moscow and resettled in Washington. My father, Louis Singer, also contributed to this article, from his recollections of a summer trip to Lambrovka in 1934.
Researching with the help of a professional ...

My father came from Iasi.

by David P. Steinmann

My father's family came from Iasi. I have not yet attempted to gain access to whatever records of the Jewish community still exist in Romania.

So far, my efforts have been primarily centered on those of my father's relatives who made it to America from Romania, and their descendants. This involves a great deal of time simply to reestablish contacts because so many of my relatives have scattered all over America; I've also found that it takes time for people to get emotionally involved in the process of piecing together a family history.

I have come up with some interesting information and anecdotes. My ultimate goal is to produce a book which will contain as much information as possible about who we are and where we came from. It will include photographs, reproductions of family documents from Romania, all of the information about how we came to America and stories about what we did when we got here, how we succeeded and supported each other and where we have wound up as a result.

I have been working with Eileen Polakoff, a Jewish genealogist, who has been invaluable in helping to pinpoint sources of information. We have worked with birth, marriage and death records, the 1920 census, ships' arrival records and similar kinds of information.

A visit to our family cemetery plot in Mt. Lebanon Cemetery in Queens, N.Y., produced information about a half dozen or more relatives whose headstones are in our plot, many of them named Steinman (the family name in Romania was actually STAIMAN), who no one now living in the family can remember! They will have to be tracked down through the use of the records which the cemetery retains about them and their families.

To give you some sense of how we are working to put at least a factual picture together, I can tell you that we learned from his petition for naturalization that my grandfather, David Steinman, said that he had immigrated to America from Havre, France, on a ship called the SS Savoie, arriving in New York on September 19, 1907. From that information, we were able to find his passenger arrival records.

He also gave the name of a relative who was already in New York, living on Allan Street on the lower east side of Manhattan. At the time of his arrival, he had $4 in his possession.

A Fortune Teller picked out my grandmother's husband

My grandfather was apparently in the Romanian cavalry. My grandmother, who was already in her middle 20s, unmarried and fearful of becoming a spinster, went to a fortune teller in Romania in hopes of finding out her prospects for marriage.

The story in our family is that the fortune teller placed her in front of a standing mirror which was clouded over, and said that she should stare into the mirror because when it cleared, she would see the image of whoever might be her future husband.

My grandmother said that the mirror cleared and she saw a man on a horse.

Some days later, she met my grandfather who was riding a horse since he was in the cavalry and my grandmother always said that she knew immediately he was the man she was destined to marry.

Continued on next page
My father came from Iasi
(continued from Page 15)

Eileen has provided all of that, including access to the most up-to-date computer programs for compilation and display of the material we find. She has been invaluable!

I have now gotten many of my relatives to write about their immediate families as well as the overall family and also to contribute photographs so that what is slowly emerging is not only a family tree, but also a verbal portrait of all of us. I realize that this will be a very long project, but I find it extraordinarily rewarding to be able to piece together a picture of who we are.

We arrived here with almost nothing, made our way, raised and educated our children and provided them with opportunities which in the current generation have produced lawyers, doctors, accountants, artists and business people.

All of them are the beneficiaries of the foundation which was laid not only by the generation which had the courage to leave Europe and come here, but also by those who never left Europe but who provided the cultural and religious underpinnings which sustained the generations to come.

A surprise addition to your family history

Pictures from the Still Photo Division of the National Archives
by Marlene Zakai

One day last spring, I decided to visit the Still Photographs Division in the National Archives of Washington, D.C., for the first time. I felt I had just about exhausted my research in the Genealogy Room on the 4th floor and I wanted to explore other sources of information in the Archives.

I entered the Still Photos Division and approached a librarian. When I explained that I was looking for photos of ancestral towns in Poland and Romania, I was told, "Oh, you're in the wrong place. You want to go over to the Aerial Photos Division in Alexandria. You'll find stuff there; here we don't have anything."

I was determined to reach that conclusion on my own, so I insisted on his help anyway. I asked him to bring out anything he might have on Poland or Romania. He reluctantly looked up some things for me and told me that there were some photos from before the war which he could get for me. As he disappeared to retrieve them, he looked back and said, "I really think you'd be better off at the Aerial Photo Division.

Out he came with six boxes, three from each country. The boxes were the photo archives of the New York Times Paris Bureau prior to World War II. It took several hours to go through the three boxes on Romania. Most of the photos were labeled. I found photo treasures in those boxes. There were photos from ancestral towns that are frequently part of our genealogy research. Since the photos were from before the war, some showed street scenes probably very similar to how it looked when our ancestors walked those streets.

As it became clear to me that there was a wealth of material here that would be of interest to genealogists, I kept track of the location of the boxes and the names of towns so that others might know about these photos. I found photos (in some cases there were many of one town) of the following:

Iassy, Arad, Bucharest, Radea Mare, River Crish, Sighetu Marmatiei, Brasov and Soroki

The boxes were labeled with the following call numbers: RG 305 NT 1199. I found a photo of the famous castle in Soroki, which was a town that figured prominently in my father's family history.

The beauty of this research is that it is possible to order reprints of photos for approximately $6.00 each. I paid for the photos with a credit card and received the 8x11 photos in three weeks.

More pictures were available in files labeled "Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Prints: World Markets 1913-1939." The box was labeled RG 151. This box contains photos of Romanian business, commerce and industry and is very interesting to look through, although I did not find anything of personal interest.

Just a few weeks ago, I was again researching at the Archives, when I heard an individual describe to a staff person the genealogical information he was seeking. The staff person told him he wouldn't find it in the Archives and he should probably go to the Library of Congress. I followed the man out of the office and encouraged him to be persistent in seeking the information.

Persistence at National Archives, I learned, is well worth the effort.
**Family Stories**

**KLEIN and STEINER**

My wife's maternal families were the KLEINS and the STEINERS.

Areh Leih Klein, the earliest of them, was born in Bucharest in 1832 and was married to Yenteh Perel Finklestein. They had two sons, Heinrich and Lazer (that is the way he spelled it), and three daughters, of which the youngest was Syphre Tiana. That is all we know about the daughters.

Heinrich was in the Romanian army and lost both his legs in the Russo-Romanian war against Turkey. They were amputated after freezing. He survived, moved to Belgium, living with three wives (see photos), and may have died when the Germans overran the country.

Lazer, my wife's grandfather, married Rebecca Steiner in 1886. They did not live in Bucharest long. They moved to Rosiori de Veda. They had a son who died and then had two daughters, Jenny and Fanny. They then moved to Pitesti and their only surviving son, Mosheh Hirsh, was born in 1895, and daughter, Sarah, in 1898.

Lazer was a harness-maker, a leather goods worker. He had been quite successful because he had as many as six apprentices with him. When things went bad, business and pogroms, he was urged to go to London by his brother, Heinrich. England was getting ready for the Boer war and his skills would be appreciated.

In 1899 Lazar went to London. In 1900, his wife, Rebecca, with four children and "one in the basket" (my wife's mother), hitchhiked and walked to Hamburg. There they took a ship to London.

The Steiner family was estranged from Rebecca so I have gotten very few facts about them. That split was caused by the fact that Rebecca, at age 18, had been engaged (by mail) by her parents to a 42-year-old man in Canada. She refused and ran away from home. A few years later, her parents had the Ketubah signed when she married Lazer Klein.

Her parents were Shlomo Helevi Steiner and Yenteh Perel Finkelstein. She probably had at least one sibling. When she emigrated to the United States in 1909, her response to the question in the passenger manifest for the names of address of the nearest relative or friend, she gave: Friend Isaac Steiner, 368 Kolea Moseilor, Bucharest, Romania.
From our Readers

STILL LOOKING FOR ROMANIAN INFORMATION
My grandfather came to the USA from Iasi, Romania, around 1886. He was born in a town called Cristesti. He had a nephew in Bucharest as late as 1954. A trip to Romania several years ago proved futile — but I continue to look for information that might be helpful.

RICHARD OLDENMAN
5410 Harwood Rd.
Bethesda, MD 20814

NO RESEARCHER FROM ISRAELI COUSIN
I have a cousin in Israel who emigrated from Romania. I had sent her a letter asking if she knows anybody that might be available for research in Romania. (She says) she has been so out of touch that she cannot recommend anyone who might be available.

HERB GUTMAN
701 King St. W, Apt. 414
Toronto, ON M5V 2W7

ARE BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE?
I would like to know if you have a publication and if back issues would be available.

NELSON POLLACK
6252 Golden Coin Ct.
Columbia, MD 21045

EDITOR’S NOTE: Back issues of ROM-SIG NEWS are available in full volume sets only presently at a cost of $15.00 (U.S.) per volume. Presently there is only one volume of back issues, Volume I.

SUGGESTS OTHERS INDEX CEMETERY NAMES
I plan to go back to Mt. Zion cemetery on Long Island and look into the other burial societies there. It would be good if other members could get involved in indexing names of those buried in such societies from Romanian towns that exist in N.Y. or other large cities in which immigrants started out in.

ANDREW BADER
1508 Dielen Lane
Elmont, NY 11003

PUZZLED OVER 3 MANIFESTS WITH SAME NAME
In the Spring-Summer 1993 issue of RSN, there is information about Solomon Margulis who emigrated from Birlad via Hamburg, arriving in NY aboard the S.S. Phoenixia, June 30, 1900. Subsequently I found Solomon Margulis listed with his nephew, Benjamin Haimowitz, on a second manifest, the S.S. Belgravia, which sailed from Hamburg and arrived in NY on Jan. 8, 1900. This would be two trips within six months which was quite possible.

RITA KRAKOWER MARGOLIS
11112 Arroyo Drive
Rockville, MD 20852-3602

WANTS INFO ON RABBINICAL ORDINATION, ‘MAMALIGA’ RECIPE, MORE ON REGENSTREIF
Does anyone know anything about chazzan or rabbinical ordinations during “the good old days” especially with respect to Shalom Kastner who was a chazzan/rabbi in Canada? Also any information on the Solomon Shechter family? Also any good recipes for “Mamaliga?” My grandmother used to make it for me when I was a kid. Unfortunately, she never wrote down her recipes. She is 90 and has Alzheimers!

I have attempted UNSUCCESSFULLY to contact Dan Regenstreif, self-proclaimed head of the JOS in Romania and AVOTATNU expert, all to no avail. Regenstreif’s family is connected with the Kastner family and I have information he might be interested in.

GARY FITLEBERG
24106 Kittridge St.,
West Hills, CA 91307

WILLING TO SWAP GENEALOGICAL INFO
I had two great-great-great grandfathers who were prominent rabbis in Jassy way back at the beginning and middle of the 19th century, Isaiah Schor and Joseph Landau.

I would be interested in becoming a member of (your) group and subscribing to ROM-SIG NEWS. I would also be glad to swap any genealogical information with other “Romanians.”

RUTH M. SAWITS
259 Ackerman Ave.,
Emerson, NJ 07630

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. Write to: Editor, ROM-SIG NEWS, P.O. Box 520583, Longwood, FL 32752.

To complicate the matter further, on Solomon’s Declaration of Intention, filed in 1918, he states he arrived in NY on July 1, 1900 on the S.S. Patricia.

How do I explain that? Was his memory hazy 18 years after the fact? Did I miss his name on a manifest for the Patricia? Did he miss the boat?

Solomon was the leader of a Fusgeyer group, and on the Phoenixia manifest he is listed with a group of several younger men from Birland all of whom had a “Bond #552” listing. What is the explanation of the “Bond #552 listing?”

If, in fact, he made three trips from Hamburg and NY, who paid for them? He was not a man of means. Could the money have come from donations made to the Fusgeyers? Would he have received a salary as a leader? Has anyone else come across a similar situation?

And finally, can someone give me an explanation of the “-vici” ending on many Romanian surnames, like Aronovici, Haimovici, Marcovic, Bercovici?

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. Write to: Editor, ROM-SIG NEWS, P.O. Box 520583, Longwood, FL 32752.
FAMILY FINDER ADDITIONS

Please add these names to your ROM-SIG Family Finder list. A complete directory of all names will be published in the Spring issue of ROM-SIG News.

SEARCHING FOR: FROM:
ROSENBAUM ......... Bucharest
WEINBERG ......... Bucharest

Jay R. Hodes, M.D.
4261 Cedros
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

BARASH .......... Burdujeni and Mihaileni
LABEL .......... Mihaileni
KOHN, COHEN ...... Botosani
SCHMARAK ...... Iasi
Shelley Lantheaume
32 Holiday Park Dr.
Hauppauge, NY 11788

LINDER .......... Berlad
BERKOWITZ ...... Berlad
GOLDSMITH ...... Berlad
LAMM .......... Berlad
Joel D. Shield, M.D.
204 Lancaster Terrace
Brookline, MA 02146

SINGER, ZINGHER ..Dombraven, Soroki
VERETA .......... Dombraven, Soroki
FRIEDMAN .......... Dombraven, Soroki
Marlene Zakai
11908 Tildenwood Dr.
Rockville, MD 20852

HELLER .......... Iasi
SALITER .......... Iasi
Lowell Ackerman
8901 E. Altadena Ave.
Scottsdale, AZ 85260

ROFFMANN ...... Yedinitz (Kashnov) Bessarabia
SOLOMON ...... Yedinitz
ACKERMAN ...... Yedinitz
HOROWITZ ...... Yedinitz
Marilyn Hoffman
5440 N. Braeswood #954
Houston, TX 77096

ROSMAN ......... Bogata De Sus, Reteag, Purcareti,
Sasarm (Transylvania)
Stephen M. Rosman
1081 Island Drive
Commerce, Michigan 48382

SEARCHING FOR: FROM:
ARONISTER ..... Husi, Berlad
DAVIS .......... Husi, Berlad
ARONOVITZ ...... Husi, Berlad
HAIMOVITZ ...... Husi, Berlad
MARGULIS ...... Husi, Berlad
Rita Krakower Margolis
11112 Arroyo Dr.,
Rockville, MD 20852-3602

WEINTRAUB ...... Piatra Neamt
TAZLOY .......... Piatra Neamt
NEGRU .......... Iasi
eMelvin & Judi Weintraub
8307 Harding
Skokie, IL 60076

DALFEN, DALFIN ..Cluj-Napoca, Radauti/
KASTNER .......... Radovitz, Tulchin
MELACH .......... Cernauți, Czernovitz
MOINESTER

REGENSTREIF
SHECHTER, SHUB
Gary Fuleberg
24106 Kittinger St.,
West Hills, CA 91307

STERNBERG, GOLDBERG
Galatz, Galați
FITERMAN .......... Skuljanj/Untseshty, Bessarabia
Bill Sternberg
210 West Grant St. #615
Minneapolis, MN 55403-2246

LOBL, SCHMAROK .Roman, Bucharest
SING(HER), BRAUN Berlad
Rosanne D. Leeson
1821 Granger Ave.,
Los Altos, CA 94024-6716

STERN .......... Maromoros-Szigid
FRIED .......... Maromoros-Szigid
FUCHS .......... Maromoros-Szigid
Cecilia H. Schulberg
1713 Catalpa Rd.
Carlsbad, CA 92009

NEXT ISSUE -- The complete FAMILY FINDER
Send us all additions or correction immediately.
ROM-SIG NEWS is a cooperative venture by genealogists researching Jewish ancestors in Romania, past and present. It can only succeed if you share your experiences with us and provide us with material you think would be helpful to others.

Tell us what you have done, both your successes and your failures, so that others may learn from your experiences.

Send us copies of your photographs, documents, narratives or any of your own intimacies that provide us with some picture of life as it was for our ancestors.

Also, please let us know what you like or dislike about ROM-SIG NEWS. We can't please everyone, but we can try. Give us your suggestions on how to make this quarterly better. ROM-SIG NEWS is not a sophisticated, rigid publication, but one that tries to cater to the desires of its readers. So tell us what you want. Help us. We're good listeners.

There are a few guidelines we'd like you to follow:
1. Write plainly, or better yet, type or print your queries, stories, etc.
2. Always include your name, address and phone number in case we must contact you.
3. If you don't want your name used, or your address or phone number, tell us.
4. If you want your material returned, please let us know and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

We may add some other guidelines as we go, but that's all for now.

Remember, the new address for ROM-SIG NEWS, for all correspondence, materials, and membership dues is:

ROM-SIG NEWS,
P.O. Box 520583
Longwood, FL 32752

If you have any questions, you can contact me at home, day or night (9 a.m. to about 11:30 p.m.). Phone is (407) 788-3898.

Thanks and happy researching!

Gene Starn, Editor, and the ROM-SIG ADVISORY BOARD
Sam Elpern and Paul Pascal

ROM-SIG NEWS
P.O. BOX 520583
LONGWOOD, FL 32752