THINK OF THE GREY: A WHEATMAN FAMILY HISTORY

ASSEMBLED BY VICTOR S. WHEATMAN
WITH MULTIPLE FAMILY AND DOCUMENTARY INPUTS
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Introduction

This is primarily the story of the Wheatmans (nee Weitzman) descended from David and Vella.

This family history is for the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews and other relatives with Wheatman blood. This is a narrative seeking what, if anything, is unique about this family. Why? At some point, we ask the question: "Where did I come from?"

Please comment on any of the findings here to expand or correct upon the story, or to correct any errors you may find. I encourage you to use this document as the basis for further research if you are so inclined, and I also encourage you to share this E-book with your family, far and wide.

Methodology

This narrative is derived from multiple sources including shared oral histories heard over the years and discussed with family elders. An interview with Aunt Sylvia Silver, the youngest of David and Vella Wheatman’s children, in approximately 1996 brought the family story, which existed only verbally, into substantial focus. We made notes on the paper tablecloth, reproduced here (figures 1 and 2).

Substantial details were also collected by "Uncle Mike" Blumenthal, on my Mother's side, which helped fill out our story.

I also directly interviewed family members to tease out information that would help keep the family "alive" in our memories. Steve and Paul Silver, Sylvia’s sons, and Lynn (Marilyn) Berman (Lillian's daughter) were most helpful and are recognized here.
Figure 1 Notes from a Meeting with Sylvia Silver
Additionally, Ancestry.com provides excellent resources with links to original documents and DNA research which helped find long-lost relatives and also provided tantalizing clues to far-flung branches of the family tree but which, unfortunately, often left connections elusive in the mists of time and space. There are also Canadian sources as the Wheatmans first migrated to Montreal. Some sources came serendipitously. For
example a Moldovian with whom I worked had family resources who reported the existence of a book of all buried Jews in Moldova. Other resources included academics who replied to inquiries, other researchers and family member remembrances. And so, a mish-mash of inputs were used to inform the document you have now.

Where Did the Name "Wheatman" Come From?

The name Weitzman can have multiple variations but still be speaking about a distinct, multi-generational linked family. One researcher told me that the Vaysman family lived in Moldavia in the beginning of 19th century. Moldavia (as pronounced in English and Russian) and called Moldova (Romanian language), overlaps and abuts territory called Bessarabia. There are many variations of the spelling: Weitzman, Weisman, Weissman, Visman, Vaisman, Veytsman, Veitsman and Wajisman. There is some indication that members of this family may have migrated in the distant past from elsewhere, specifically Germany. However, based on the heavy eastern European look of the older members of the family, I suspect we were primarily eastern Europeans going back several generations. My own ethnicity estimates using DNA confirm this. Your mileage may vary.

![Figure 3 Vic Wheatman's DNA Ethnicity](image)

Weisman, Weitzman and it's variations (called "Soundex") can all indicate the same family tree and a common heritage. All of these different spellings come from the root Veits, or the German Weitz, originating in Yiddish for "Wheat." Accordingly, the translation of Weitzman is "Wheat Man." But Weitz also translates as "White." David Wheatman's brother Phillip did move to Canada taking the name White.
David took on the Wheatman name after arriving in the US so he could get painting and decorating work. He feared that a Jewish name would lead to discrimination. I remember hearing that all Wheatmen knew each other, or of each other. But whenever I travelled on business (which was a lot), I'd search local phone books and occasionally find a Wheatman I didn't know. Now, with the Internet, it's possible to find Wheatmen all over the world -- so the statement about the name being unique is not accurate. The name "Wheatman" is also found in England and in families that migrated from England.

**From Where did the Wheatmans Come?**

David and Vella (Steinberg) Weitzman left Bessarabia (which they called “Russia” and which today is part of Moldova) well after the Kishinev Pogrom\(^1\) of April 1903 and continuing anti-Semitism.

Moldova was part of the Pale of Settlement, a western region of Imperial Russia with varying borders, that existed from 1791 to 1917, in which permanent residency by Jews was allowed and beyond which Jewish permanent residency was mostly forbidden. Bessarabia became part of Russia in 1812. Before that it was the Principality of Moldova, a tributary of the Ottoman Empire.

David left in 1910, going to England first. It was during the cited pogrom that much of the Jewish population in Kishinev was killed, injured or driven away, but the family apparently lingered several years in Moldova.

Kishinev (Russian) or Chișinău (Romanian) was the main town in Bessarabia. Fifty thousand Jews lived in Kishinev in 1900, which was 46% of the total population. Kishinev was the 5th largest city by Jewish population in the Russian Empire after Warsaw, Odessa, Lodz and Vilna.

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Figure 4 Kishinev Early 1900s

Figure 5 Song Book - the Kishinev Massacre
Some documents suggest the area was actually Romania which is very close to Moldova -- and in 1918 Bessarabia became part of Romania where it remained until 1940. The official language of Moldova is Romanian although people living there would say they speak Moldovan.

The Jewish community compiled a book with 23,430 records of Jews buried in Kishinev’s cemetery. Over seven thousand were still unidentified as of approximately 2012 but the work has continued. This might be helpful in finding the family’s graves and the information on those graves revealing their parents names.

The Wheatman home geography changed substantially over the years and often was generalized as "Russia." Today, Moldova is the poorest European country and largely agricultural. Part of the country is 'breakaway' with rebels declaring a separate, unrecognized, Soviet Socialist Republic.

Mike Blumenthal was married to my maternal Aunt Dorothy. He was not a Wheatman nor a blood relative. While he compiled a family history focused on primarily on his lineage, he also recorded David as born in Odessa in 1888 and Vella in "Kishinev" (Chișinău) in 1890. A border-crossing document (figures 14/15) shows David as born in "Kisshmuf, Russia" as recorded by the immigration clerk. Yet other family members also believe David was born in Odessa. Some believe it was Siberia. But this document clearly indicates Kishinev.
Figure 7 One Variation of the Regional Map. Note the identification of Bessarabia as a shaded area, and the labeling of an area as the Odessa oblast (a Russian administrative area). Then there is the city Odessa.

Figure 8 Another variation of the Regional Map

Some more historic background: The first Jews in Moldova were Sephardic. Ashkenazi Jews from Poland and Germany came into the area in the 16th century. Between the 16th and 18th century, the area was under Turkish rule and then the Russians took over. Around 1812 Russian Czar Alexander I invited Lutheran German immigrants to Bessarabia. Many came for religious freedom and to develop land that was offered to them, land that was conquered from the Turkish Empire. However, between 1870 and
1875 developed "Russian Slavic Nationalism." That meant that everything that was not Russian was either persecuted or at least not very well tolerated. And then there was the anti-Semitism.

The Kishinev pogrom took place in the capital of Bessarabia on April 6, 1903 after local newspapers published articles inciting the public to act against Jews; 47 or 49 Jews were killed, 92 severely wounded and 700 houses destroyed. The anti-Semitic newspaper Бессарабец (Bessarabetz, meaning "Bessarabian"), published by Pavel Krushevan, insinuated that a Russian boy was killed by local Jews. Another newspaper, Свет (Svet, "Light"), used the age-old blood libel against the Jews, alleging that the boy had been killed to use his blood in preparation of matzos.

The Murder of David's Father

According to the family history, David's father was killed by “Cossacks” in front of a church or a synagogue after he was pointed out to them by a Rabbi or possibly a Priest in 1908. David's Father was supposedly identified as a labor union or guild organizer or perhaps a Zionist, or maybe he was seen as a trouble maker -- we don't know. According to one version of story, the Rabbi or Priest had a gun pointed to his head and was ordered to identify the Jew or else he himself would be shot. After the Priest/Rabbi did so, he was shot anyway. In relating this story, Nathan Wheatman asked "If he [the Rabbi] knew he was going to be shot anyway, why did he do it?"

An alternative version of the story is that David's Father petitioned the Rabbi of the temple he and others were working at for a raise. The Rabbi didn't like that request, called the Cossacks, and David's Father was taken out and decapitated.

Assuming it was a Rabbi involved, this is the reason David did not Bar Mitzvah his sons. Subsequent generations - particularly his children, perhaps influenced by their wives -- did follow the Jewish traditions. It's also possible this family story was conflated with anti-Semitic activities around that time. For example, there was also a Pogrom in nearby Odessa. But as the map above shows (figure 5), a large area was called "Odessa." So, it's possible this event happened during the Odessa Pogrom. Speculating (but informed by history of the pogroms), perhaps a priest was involved and David became unreligious in general. According to the New York Times in that timeframe, the mob was often led by priests.

David and Philip's Parents

One of the challenges researching family history is to go back as far as you can. "Hitting a Brick Wall" is the phrase used when reaching the seemingly end of available relevant documents in the search. But more and more records are becoming available and even existing records can hold desired details. But you just have to find them.
This is David Wheatman/Weitzman's original application for a social security number which I ordered from the Social Security Administration. He filed when he was 48 years old on May 7, 1937 during the depression. It shows his address on Bryant Avenue in the Bronx, and states he is unemployed. But most interestingly, it names his parents as Saul Weitzman and Anna Steinberg (which was probably Shtenynberg in the original Hebrew/Yiddish). Astute observers will note the curious fact that Vella's father was Itzack Steinberg. Perhaps they were cousins?

![Image of Social Security Application]

**Figure 9 David Wheatman's Social Security Application**

**The Journey**

Somehow, David Weitzman got to Hamburg and travelled alone on the Hamburg/America line, to the major U.K. port city of Grimsby, then probably across Great Britain to Liverpool (directly across from Grimsby) where he took the Laurentic to North America. The document below has some other details requiring translation from German. The Hamburg/America line was established by a Jew and required less documentation for travel than other conveyances. For example, leaving "Russia" required proof of military service among other documents.

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2 For information on immigration via Hamburg, see https://www.gjenvick.com/Immigration/Emigration/1903-10-08-EmigrationToTheUnitedStatesViaHamburgGermany.html
Figure 10 David travels on the Hamburg-America line from Hamburg to Grimsby, Great Britain

David arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia on November 24, 1910 and continued on to Montreal. The record does NOT show any relatives with him.

Figure 11 The Laurentic
Figure 12 The Laurentic of the White Star Line

Figure 13 The Laurentic of the White Star Line
According to Canadian records, David travelled on the Laurentic of the White Star line from Liverpool England. This confirms that at least part of the family passed through England. The children after Ben and Roberta/Bobbie/Rose were born in Canada.

Later, from Canada, David developed sponsorship and traveled to NY in exploratory journeys looking for work. This document from January 1921 shows David Weitzman, crossing from Montreal into the US. He was going to stay with a friend, Harry Mayer, whose address is given. David is listed as a painter (although later he claimed to be a decorator or interior decorator in census records), and he travelled either with his "wife, Rosie" as written or with his wife AND Rosie -- which is their first born, later known as Bobbie.

Records record Bobbie's name as Rose Barbara. David reportedly liked to 'show her off' as any proud papa would. Vella and Bobbie did not talk for many years because Bobbie always pushed herself as David's companion and made him take her everywhere with him. Grandma resented it and they had a falling out but eventually reconciled.

The family lived on St. Laurent Street in Montreal. One relative reported that David worked for the Canadian Pacific Railroad for a time. My father Nathan lived in Montreal until he was approximately 8 years old. As this is French-speaking Quebec, Dad learned French. When he came to the US, he was taunted by classmates calling him "frenchie."

In my early teens, my Father drove the family from New York State to Canada and the Montreal neighborhood where the family lived. I believe the University or maybe the Museum was being built at that time; some streets were blocked off. Dad wanted to drive to the house but the street was roped off due to construction. Then, at about 7PM, a bulldozer spun around, went up the sidewalk and flattened the house in 30

3 The ship was in some ways experimental, testing a new propulsion system. It was built by Harland & Wolff, LTD in Belfast, was 550 feet by 67 feet. She had two masts and one funnel. Propulsion was by a triple screw using triple expansion engines and steam turbines. It moved at 17 knots. She held 230 first class passengers, 430 in second and 1000 in third. It was "laid down" as the Alberta for the Dominion line, but was transferred to the White Star Line before completion. Its maiden voyage was between Liverpool and Quebec-Montreal but first arriving at Nova Scotia. It was sunk on January 1917 off the coast of Ireland after hitting a mine, with the loss of 350 passengers. It was the sister ship of the Megantic. Another ship using the same name came later. The White Star line also owned the Titanic later on.

seconds. Brother Lawrence wanted to get out of the car to watch but Nathan, in keeping with his personality, dismissively proclaimed that it was gone "so we can go now" and we headed out. But as a working adult, I visited St. Laurent and St. Catherine streets in Montreal several times; the neighborhood tends towards being a red light district as it was then (I was good!), and it is largely intact. But, based on Google Street View, their building, 1726 St. Laurent Blvd, showed as a vacant lot in 2011 and as the site of future condos in September, 2016.

![Map of Montreal showing 1726 St. Laurent Blvd.](image)

**Figure 14 Saint Catherine and Saint Laurent Streets Montreal**

Here is some of the architecture, directly across from where their house was.

![Architecture on St. Laurent Street Montreal.](image)

**Figure 15 Architecture of St. Laurent Street Montreal**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form 3 - Canada</th>
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<tr>
<td>List or Manifest of Alien Passengers Applying for Admission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PORT OF MONTREAL, CAN.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sheet No.</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Last Permanent Residence</th>
<th>Route to U.S.</th>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16 David, Wife, Rosie entering the US January 1921 Line 24
Although census records indicate that the family migrated from Canada to NY in September 1920, one document shows a crossing between Canada and US in January 1921. It records leaving from the Port of Montreal and entering via Portland, Maine. This document also shows that the name Wheatman came AFTER they were in the US and confirms the spelling of Weitzman.

Here is Aunt Bobbie’s Naturalization paper petition, filed in 1938. It shows an immigration from Canada to a small town on the border in New York State on Lake
Champlain, Rouses Point, NY, in January 1921, a distance of about 50 miles from Montreal. It is signed by her husband, Albert Friedman and Anna Steinberg -- likely a cousin.
The family stories of life in Moldova are extremely faint in our history. The stories say many in the family were artists and that they did painting work in churches, synagogues, mosques and theaters throughout Europe. This is consistent with the painted churches noted in guidebooks about Moldova. And it is consistent with the boys in the family becoming painters -- predominantly house painters -- although David was more of an artist. Family members described themselves as "decorators" in census documents. His later work in New York included an "Opera House" in the Bronx, which was most likely the Lowe's Paradise theater where he was likely a crew member. I remember his personal style to be almost Jackson Pollack-like as he decorated large playground cement tunnels and climbing structures at New York City Housing Authority projects,
where David's second born son Nathan Wheatman worked. My brother Lawrence suggest the works also resemble the conceptual and minimalistic art of Saul LeWitt. Assuming that the family painted churches in Europe, they likely did the same in North America. Accordingly, examples of their work may still exist in Montreal or New York.

David invented a process like stippling to hide the cracks on the walls of old buildings. The process was called "DaveTex" but it was never patented. There was, until recently, a DaveTex Woolens Company in the same neighborhood the family lived in Montreal, on St. Laurent Blvd. Likely a coincidence.

And so there is an artistic trait in the family. David would make the marbled, Jackson Pollack-like designs on public housing playgrounds. Paul Silver would paint and otherwise alter the finish on furniture which was out of fashion, turning them into more desirable pieces. Paul (who I knew as Sonny) and Steve worked for their Father Al Silver, who owned the Moderama Furniture store in Elmhurst, Queens New York. Other "artists" include my brother Stan Wheatman who was an Art Director for several publishers and my daughter Rebecca, an entertainment graphic artist. There are likely others.

David Wheatman, His Family and His Brother(s)

The family history relayed by relatives suggests that one of David's Sisters (?) or an Aunt was a hunchback and that much of the family was very tall. There are a good number in the gene pool to demonstrate this: Stan Wheatman, Eddie Friedman come to mind. David was also very strong. He could put walnuts between his knuckles and then crush them.

David may have been in the Calvary in the Russian army. Sylvia Silver related that he was given a ticket to run away, to hop on the first boat out of Moldova -- to either Cuba or Canada. Of course, he and other family members wound up in Canada. Although there was a rumor they lived in England, Sylvia discounted that story - indications are they were just passing through. David left for North America from Liverpool. Bobbie and Ben, the oldest children, were born in Moldova in 1907 and 1909 respectively.

As written below, David Weitzman had a brother Phillip who later changed his name to Phil White in Montreal. He was possibly a twin (or even a triplet according to Sylvia) although the birth record we found indicates otherwise. Cousin Lynn/Marilyn Berman (daughter of Lillian) reported her belief that a third brother may have moved to Israel. This migration to what later became Israel resonates with Jewish departures from Eastern Europe during that time - and later. Cousin Lynn reports she may have unknowingly met the third brother in Israel. She wrote:

We visited a Kibbutz called Nof Ginosar and one of the founders spoke to our group. His last name was Weitzman and he was the image of Dave. I was
mesmerized looking at him. I did not know at the time our grandfather had changed the name until I got home and related the story to Sylvia. My husband did write a letter to the Kibbutz but we never heard from him or his family. Here's another little tidbit, Dave was a twin and I don't know if Phil was the other twin or the brother in Israel was.

The third brother may have be "Hime" or perhaps the phonetically same "Chaim." This Kibbutz still exists and operates as a hotel/hostel. I wrote to them and they replied that the message was forwarded to a historian, but there was no further word. Note that the gentleman’s name was Weitzman – which was David's too, and is phonetically the same as the first President of Israel, Chaim Weizmann's name. However the President of Israel was born in Motol, Russia (now Belarus) in 1874. This is some distance from Kishinev where our story starts. I don't see a family connection here.

The picture below was shot in Montreal in 1920, just prior to David and family moving to New York. It includes Phil White on the right and his wife Sylvia. Phil was a furrier and/or a supplier of military clothing. Phil’s daughter, Claire married in Canada, and Lynn Berman attended, meeting Phil and, of course, Claire. Claire had siblings but we don't have their names. Lynn and Claire kept up a correspondence for many years. Phil died after David. Accordingly, he lived until after 1972 as noted above. Tracing the White family of Montreal or near Toronto where he reportedly died, may turn up some cousins. However our attempts to date have failed to find Phillip or any Canadian family members.

David was multilingual. He spoke Russian as well as Yiddish and Hebrew. He also spoke some French and of course learned English. Lynn remembers how David would take her to a bar and buy her a virgin "old fashioned". Cousin Steve Silver spoke of the time when Vella had a heart attack and was hospitalized at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx. David, out of sorts and crying about "Momma" being sick, was farmed out to family members. After being kicked out of my family's apartment for being drunk and peeing on the floor (this I remember!), David lived with Sylvia and asked her children to open the liquor cabinet to get him "a glazel scotch." Although the cabinet was locked, David showed young Stevie how to remove the hinges to get at the bottles within. He then poured himself a full water glass of his favorite, Teachers Scotch.
Figure 21 The Wheatman Family, 1920. From top left: Vella, Ben, Roberta/Bobbie, Phillip’s wife Sylvia. Bottom from left: Lillian, David holding baby Sylvia, Edith, Charlie, Phillip and Nathan.
There are strong facial resemblances between my Father Nathan (on the right) and me, and between David and my brother Stanley's son, Gary. Further, on close up, there is a resemblance between Bobbie and my daughter Rebecca.

**Great Uncle Philip Weitzman/Favel Weitzman/Vaitsman**

Grandpa David had a brother, Phil White, who stayed in Canada. Looking for Phil White in Montreal was like looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack. So, looking for Phil Weitzman in the old country, these documents show his European name: Favel Vaitsman, born 5 July 1890, died 3 January 1973 in Ontario, outside of Toronto. Obviously, that is not Montreal. But first, confirming the that this is Phil, the document here shows his parents had the same first names as Grandpa David's - only here the spelling is Shoil (Saul), and Khana (Anna). Further, the documents give us the names of THEIR parents.
**Figure 23 Birth Record Extract for Phil White**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Favel Weitzman / Waitsman</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Gender:</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Date:</td>
<td>5 Jul 1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew Date:</td>
<td>29 Tamuz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Town:</td>
<td>Kishinev</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>NARM/211/11/232</td>
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**Figure 24 Favel Weitzman (Phil White) Birth Record**
Figure 26 Marriage of Favel Vaytsman and Yekhevd Balyanovska-Balanski. Assuming the wife is "Sylvia" this shows her to be from Kiev.
Now, some speculation. Perhaps Phil and his wife (Sylvia) actually did live in Toronto the whole time, or moved there at some point. This might explain why the family portrait we have which includes Phil shows only him and his wife with no children. Of course, a family picture including his children might exist; we just don't know. But if not, then perhaps Phil and Sylvia visited David and his family in Montreal for the picture.

Why is this of interest? Well, it means there may be living cousins in Canada. But so far, I haven't found them.

**David and Philip's Parents**

One of the challenges in researching family history is to go back as far as you can. "Hitting a Brick Wall" is the phrase used when reaching the seemingly end of available documents relevant to the search. But more and more records are becoming available and even existing records can hold desired details. But you just have to find them.

This is David Wheatman/Weitzman's original application for a social security number which I ordered from the Social Security Administration. He filed when he was 48 years old on May 7, 1937 during the depression. It shows his address on Bryant Avenue in the Bronx, and states he is unemployed. But most interestingly, it names his parents as Saul Weitzman and Anna Steinberg (which was probably Shtenynberg in the original Hebrew/Yiddish). Astute observers will note the curious fact that Vella's father was Itzack Steinberg, fueling speculation that they were cousins. It was common for families, and particularly cousins, to intermarry.
What about the Princess Pat Regimen Story?

Nat Wheatman told his sons about how Grandpa David Wheatman was ‘impressed’ into the Canadian Infantry. Others have heard this as part of the family's oral history. I recall Uncle Ben telling the same story. Or maybe it was about Phil White, David's Brother. Anyway, this echoes the earlier story of David being inducted into the Russian military. The Canadian story was about young men being offered alcoholic beverages, getting drunk and wakening up the next morning on a ship bound for battle in Europe. It needs to be noted that this story, with variations, is a fairly common story among immigrants.

The Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry or PPCLI is named for Princess Patricia of Connaught, the daughter of the Governor General of Canada. It was the first Canadian unit to enter the Great War, and was the first unit from Canada to reach the front. It suffered terrible losses. Although formed in Ottawa in 1914 during World War I (The Great War), its Battalions were mostly located in Western Canada but there were other similar military units elsewhere in Canada, including Montreal.

Knowing of fisherman's genes in this family, it COULD have been a tall tale based on some truth, but embellished or conflating the Princess Pat brigade with a Montreal
military unit. The unit had about 5000 members and there’s a roster. Alas, no David Weitzman is listed. Good story though.

Vella Steinberg Weitzman

Vella’s Journeys

This purser document shows Vella travelling with the two oldest, Kishinev-born children Rose (Barbara), and Ben (18 months old) travelling to Canada. She is going to meet her husband and intends to live in Canada permanently. Note that the spelling of these names is different from what we expect, but we have relatively high confidence this is them. Reisel can translate to Rose for example.

![Figure 29 Purser's Document showing Vella and two children entering Canada.](image)

Looking for Vella's family. I wrote to a Moldovan (living the the US) who has published the Valysman family history. You recall I thought this might have been the actual family name, transformed into Weitzman on immigration documents. Turns out Vaysman is a common name in that part of the world. The author notes there were many Vaysman families in Kishinev. Her Vaysmans moved to Kishinev from Bendery, another Moldavian city. Because Vaysman is very popular Jewish name she believes that some of Kishinev Vaysman are related but most of them just probably have the same last name. One of
her Vaysmans moved through England to South Africa and he spelled his name Weissman. But she doesn't think our families are directly related.

BUT the researcher dug into JewishGen's database to find Vella: Velie Shtseinberg, shown here.

**Bessarabia Birth Records**

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<th>Microfilm / Item #</th>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Mother from Kishinev Mohel Moshe GOLDENBERG</td>
<td>2205626 / 4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 31 Vella's Birth Record, and what looks like Ben, the second born

Velie was not a common name in the old country. Velie/Vella's Father's name was Itsko or Itskhak (close to what we already had) who was identified as a petty bourgeois (i.e. "middle class.") Vella's GRANDFATHER'S name was Nukhim which I think is equivalent to Nathan, my dad's name. Vella's Mother's name was Tsisha and her Grandfather was Ber. Tsisha most likely was changed to Anna, and there are two other Anna Steinberg's showing up in our family history, one being David's Mother, the other having signed Aunt Bobbie's naturalization papers in 1938. The there are several birthdates given for Vella in the documents, due to a lack of proper recording, because of how records were filed, or because of the fact that Jewish Birth certificates used the Hebrew calendars. This document confirms she born in Kishinev.

Below we show her two younger sisters, Nekhama and Golda, also born in Kishinev.
Vella and the youngest two children came from Europe to Canada 1911 on the S/S Montezuma, owned at the time by the Canadian Pacific Railroad. She came into the US with the family on January 25th, 1921. Before entering the US, she was examined for disease as this document shows.
The below manifest shows Vella ("Walla") crossing the relatively short distance from Montreal to St. Albans Vermont (very close to the border and Rouses Point, NY cited above) in February 1921 with members of the family. The manifest shows that different names were first used for the youngest family members. Vella is listed as 30 years old; Rosie is 13 and Ben is 10. This shows Vella’s Father’s name, Itzack ("Issac") Steinberg, of Kishinev, Romania. Close enough.

The names Wedda or Wetta likely refers to Edith, and Juna to Sylvia. There were two babies stillborn between Edith and "Lillie" (Lillian, also "Lilac"). The second page, not shown here, says that David lived at the time at 6 E. 112 Street in New York (Manhattan) which was demolished and replaced by a high-rise or a public housing project.
These papers show she also went by the names Walla and Valla, phonetically very similar.
Vella in the United States

The picture was likely taken in St. Louis although the Wheatman family lived in Montreal at the time. The photographers name and St. Louis address are stamped on the back. Vella looks to be in her 20s. There were cousins named Lieber or Lieberman who lived in "St. Louie" as Vella would say. In addition to St. Louis, Vella had cousins in the Bronx, one named Golda and other cousins possibly in Detroit.

It was nothing for Vella to leave a week or so of cooked meals in the fridge for David and go on a trip somewhere. She was a true feminist, long before that word existed, according to Lynn.

At some point, Vella briefly took the name Winifred because she thought it sounded sophisticated. Elsewhere, Vella is recorded as "Bella," a phonetic version as recorded by clerks, but also Walla was used at one time.

During some family gatherings at Grandma’s Bronx Apartment Grandma would make Matzo balls (heavy!) and other ethnic foods. She would speak about how, after a typically heavy meal, the men were "all starched out" and needed something to do.
Figure 39 Vic Wheatman and Jeffrey Love in front of Grandma's Apartment Building

Figure 40 Recreating the Scene 60 years later
When asked, "Pop, are you hungry?" Vella would answer for him "He's not hungry." David would yield with the lament "What do you want from me?" They first lived in the Bronx but later moved to Forest Hills. Vella, as many women of her era, would hide money least David spend it on drink, leaving the family nothing or very little. I remember my mother Helen speaking about a roll of bills hidden in Vella's bra. Money was also hidden behind a sewing machine.

Vella is remembered as a nurturing woman. She and David would travel to Florida in their later years by train.

Despite having several cousins elsewhere in the county, Vella left many family members (the Steinbergs) behind in Europe. We know her Father's name: Itzak Shteynberg (Steinberg). In the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, a line of poets and authors emerged on the cultural scene in Bessarabia, many of whom were to play an important role in Yiddish and Hebrew literature, including, among others Eliezer Steinbarg and Judah Steinberg who were possibly related. Unfortunately, we could not confirm that.

Vella spoke of going to buy a loaf of bread for the family while in Europe, but being so hungry that she ate just a little bit, then a little more, until it was all gone by the time she got home.

**Vella and David**

David and Vella had an arranged marriage, she was 16, he 18. He was in the Czars army/Calvary as a horseman. Vella did not want to marry David, and wanted him to run away so they wouldn't get married... but he didn't and they were married in either April, 1906 or, according to Vella's Naturalization petition reproduced above, in May, 1904.
According to the family oral history, David went AWOL and supported by his brother Phil (White) booked passage to Canada, later sending for Bobbie (Rosie), Ben and wife Vella.

The facial features some family members have is due to a mixing of the races going back generations when the Ashkenazi Jews went through "Add Mixture", i.e. a mixing of the races. The blue eyes and white skin of the family, along with the distinctive eyes and brows, demonstrate this mixing. There may be a specific term for this look which I'm calling Slavic-Turkish-Mongoloid or Hunnic (i.e. like Attila the Hun) or Ural–Altaic which suggests heritage from further east. Think of Charles Bronson. or Oscar Homolka. According to my DNA analysis, there is 3% Asian influence in my blood!

The family moved to NY in late 1920 but more probably early 1921. They bought a house on Rosedale Avenue in the Bronx. David may have lost or sold the property as a result of the crash of 1929.

The family lived very close to each other. The Wheatman family formed a painting company and traveled as far as Chicago in search of work during the depression. True to form, Grandpa David grabbed the money made painting and bought alcohol. The family joked that David was preserved in alcohol. I remember his sons giving “Pop” bottles of Scotch, and they enjoyed drinking with him.

**Think of the Gray**

Steve Silver noted that David was a walker. Even on the highway, David would ask whoever was driving that they stop. He would get out and walk while the car followed at maybe 5 miles per hour. He would take Steven on walks around the block and say to him "Think of the gray, not white, not black, but gray" as a kind of meditative lesson for the young man. David had a '55 Buick. His last car was a 1959 two-toned black and red two door ford with a three-speed manual shift. Perhaps due to his age or his inebriation, would drive at 3 miles an hour. People would yell at him things like "did you bring your lunch?" My Father Nathan (supported by others) asked David for the keys to sell the car when it became clear he shouldn't drive anymore.
Family Circle

The family remained close until later years when as is seemingly the custom, some of the sons, daughters and even the third generation moved to Florida, at first seasonally, then permanently. But even in Florida, the remained at least geographically close to each other.

Regular Family Circle meetings took place before these moves at Aunt Sylvia's house. These meetings helped maintain family ties. The members jointly discussed their aging parents and contributed to help support David and Vella. This was a time when Social Security and other benefits were not available or insufficient, and there was little savings from the work David was able to do in later years.

Figure 43 Family Circle - from left clockwise: Charlie, Al Friedman, Bobbie Friedman, Vella, David, Helen Wheatman (my Mom), Ben and Allen (Ben's son) on the floor. Nathan likely took the picture.
Figure 44 Vella's Death Notice

Figure 45 David Wheatman's Death Notice

Figure 46 Vella's Gravestone

Figure 47 David's Gravestone
Meet the Wheatmans - A Partial Family Album

When I started cutting and pasting pictures the pictures below of the family drawn from my collection, from those sent to me, primarily by Lynn, and those I copied from Facebook, I soon realized what a daunting task it would be. The family tree has over 100 members -- and counting!

Accordingly, and in the interests of "getting this done" here is but a selection of Wheatman photographs.

Figure 48 Stan Wheatman (Nathan's Son), Charlie Wheatman, the author 1996

Figure 49 Elise Isopo, Barry (Charlie's son), Kathie and Yvette Wheatman-Sims

Figure 50 Elise, Laurie Fields-Sandy Kirshner and Yvette
Figure 51 Kayla with her daughter Laurie

Figure 52 Kayla, Laurie FSK, Aubrey

Figure 53 Charlie Wheatman's Grave
Figure 54 Steve, Paul and Sylvia Silver

Figure 55 Allison, Laura Wheatman Hill (Vic’s Daughter), Eric, Gary (Stan’s Son), his wife Laura, and Dylan Wheatman (Lawrence, Kansas)

Figure 56 Dylan Wheatman
Figure 57  (3 pictures) Eddie Friedman, Ed with Eileen, and David, Ed's son

Figure 58 David Wheatman, Ed Friedman and Stan Wheatman
Figure 59 Allen Wheatman

Figure 60 Jeff Wheatman (Allen's Son)

Figure 61 Wheatman Women (probably the 1960s) from left, clockwise: Marilyn (Lynn), Sylvia, Bobbie, Edith, Vella, Carol (Marilyn's daughter), Edith and (bottom) Jill (also Marilyn's Daughter).

Figure 62 The Isopos (Cousins Barry and Kathie Wheatman's Offspring)
Closing

The youngest and last of David and Vella’s children, Sylvia, passed away in 2009. The second generation of American-born now are in their retirement age and they too have started to "move on." The original "Wheatman" name is also in decline with few boys carrying the name to be passed on to future generations: Only Eric and Dylan Wheatman, the late Stan Wheatman's grandchildren come to mind. Mostly, it's been girls! girls! girls! born to this and the previous generation. But the "blood" carries forward, as illustrated by in our family tree.

![Figure 63 Air Moldova - Want to Take a Ride?](image)

The Wheatman Family Tree

On the following pages is a "cut and paste" of the Wheatman Family Tree. I'm tried to give all members access to the tree on Ancestry.Com via frewe accounts, but you do need to register. Let me know if you cannot access this. You should be able to "click through" to see some of the details including additional documents I've attached to family members. Meanwhile, you can cut and paste this. Posters can be ordered through Ancestry.Com.
Your comments, additions, and documents/pictures are welcome.