

STORY OF DESCENDANTS OF RABINOWITZ FAMILY

Monday, November 30, 2009

After the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70 CE, there was a major migration of Jews to Spain via North Africa. The Golden Age of Spain in which Jews flourished culturally and economically in Spain extended from the 8th to the 15th century. It is said that by the 15th century, 40% of world (Sephardic) Jewry lived in Spain, some 600,000 of the world's Jewish population of 1.4 million.

The Jews were expelled from Spain by Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand in 1492. Approximately one third of the Jewish population was slaughtered or burnt at the stake. Another third fled to Turkey, Greece and later the island of Rhodos in Greece, as well as various countries in Europe and Eastern Europe. The remaining third became known as "Marranos" (a derogatory word meaning "pig"), "Conversos", "Anusim", or "Crypto-Jews". These terms were given to those Jews that outwardly converted to Roman Catholicism, while keeping their Jewish faith in secret. It is a curious fact of history that the same proportion of Jews that were murdered during the Holocaust-approximately 6 million of the 15 million Jews in the world were lost in the middle ages, which gives one a perspective of the extent of the devastation of the Jewish world as a result of the expulsion from Spain in the 15 th Century.

Prior to 1918, Latvia and Lithuania were part of the Russian Empire. However, most of the territory of Lithuania was in the Pale of Settlement while only the far eastern part of Latvia was in the pale. Jews living in the Pale could move to most of Latvia only with special permission which was not easily obtained.

In the mid 1800s a Jewish family in Latvia (outside the Pale) would adopt Jews from Lithuania, allowing them to move to Latvia. That ruse lasted until the Russian officials caught on. When a 25 year old couple in Riga adopted a 60 year old couple with four grown children in Lithuania, the officials figured that something was not kosher and put a stop to the practice.

RIGA BRIEF HISTORY

Riga was founded in 1201 by the Teutonic Order. In the 15th and 16th centuries Jews had economic ties with Riga. They were allowed to come to Riga to work for limited periods of time but could not live in the city permanently. In 1638 a hostel was opened for them and in 1725 they received permission to establish a Jewish cemetery. There were about 70 Jews in Riga at this time. And they left in 1743 when the Jews of Russia were banished. In 1764 some rich Jewish families were classed as "Protected Jews" and were considered as guardians of the "foreign Jews" who had to come to the hostel. In 1765 a Chevra Kadisha was officially founded. In 1785 Jews traded in Riga but had to register in a small town called Sloka (Schlock) not far from Riga. In 1813 they were granted permission to live in Riga and there were 736 inhabitants comprising Protected Jews, Foreign Jews and Schlock citizens. In 1858 they were allowed to own real estate. The area around the Moscow road was known as "Moscow Vorstadt" and was a main area of Jewish settlement. At the end of the 19th century some Jews moved out and lived in the centre of the city. In 1941 they were forced back into the Moscow area which became the Riga Ghetto. There were Jewish intellectuals, professionals, and tradesmen but between the two world wars about 10% of Latvian Jews were paupers. In 1915 the Germans invaded Kurland and drove all the Jews from their houses and deported them to Russia. Some Riga Jews went with their deported relations. In 1940-1941 leading Jews were arrested and perished in Stalin's Gulag. The NKVD deported 14000 inhabitants of Latvia on June the 14th 1941 including about 5000 Jews, half from Riga. After the war some survivors returned and some Jews from the USSR settled in Riga. 23000 Jews were registered in Riga in 1989. There are at present 9000 Jews in Riga (2005).

Kurland :mitnaggedim" spoke German and in 1881 half the Riga Jews considered their spoken language to be German. A strong German cultural influence dominated. Little by little others came from Byelorussia (White Russia), Lithuania and Poland and spoke Yiddish. At the end of the 19th century Russian was added. During the 1920s and 1930s the youth learned the Latvian language.

Hebrew was mastered as Zionism spread. According to the 1925 census, 85% of the Jews in Latvia considered Yiddish to be their mother tongue. Yiddish was the language of Primary schools. The Great Choral Synagogue: Kar Schul” 25 Gogola Street was consecrated in 1871. In 1941 300 Lithuanian Jewish refugees sheltering in the synagogue, entire Jewish families from the neighborhood and passers by in the street were burnt alive in the synagogue. Ruins and a grey memorial stone carved with a Magen David serve as a monument.

Why did the Rabinowitz's decide to leave and settle in South Africa? In the 1860's there was a strong nationalistic movement in the Russian Empire expressed by the Russian slogan “One Russian, One Creed, One Tsar “which meant that, to survive, Jews along with other minority religious groups were expected to convert to the Russian Orthodox religion. Those who did not convert suffered oppression and were blamed for all the economic hardships that were befalling the country.

The first government approved plan to rid Eastern Europe of its Jews (known as a Pogrom) took place in Odessa in 1871. A series of pogroms then followed which became especially severe in the Early 1880's under Alexander III. On the 3rd May, 1882 the government passed the “ May Laws “ which were intended to bring a quick and total solution to the so called troublesome Jewish problem. The formula worked out for the liquidation of the Jews in the Russian Empire was arithmetically neat: one third by conversion, one third by emigration and one third by starvation. During the period 1850 to about 1930 there was an explosion of the Jewish population in Lithuania and environs. No apparent reason has been associated with this growth.

Although during the time of the pogroms there was an outpouring of Jews from the Russian Empire, the majority of those moving to America. Before 1894 very few went to South Africa, but from then onwards there was a flood. This could have been because of the discovery of diamonds, gold and Ostrich feathers in Oudtshoorn.

The reason for the Rabinowitz's leaving Rega was not because of the pogroms and safety reasons. This had not been a problem in Riga. They left as they were poor and seeking a better life elsewhere.

The pogroms were mainly in the Southern Pale of settlement. They had to make their way to London in the U K either by land or sea where a transmigration facility known as the Poor Jews Temporary Shelter had been established in the East End in the 1880's to give refuge to the migrants while they waited for places on boats to Cape Town. About 40 % of those passing through were en route to South Africa, Over 90 % of those were Litvak's, and the Lithuanian province of Kovno (which was part of the Pale of Settlement) was the origin of the overwhelming number of them. To arrive in London by the Land Route, it entailed crossing Germany by train to reach Berlin. There they would be taken to transfer stations for the onward journey to Hamburg or Bremen. The ferry would take them to Dover and then onwards to London. The land route had the problem of crossing borders, legally or illegally and used the help of smugglers and agents. Towards the end of the century a sea route from the Latvian port of Libau (open for the whole year compared to Riga which was only open to ships for six months of the year due to the frozen sea.) on cargo boats became possible. (Often sharing the ships space, with horses and other animals.) This presented advantages for the residents in the North of the Pale in Lithuania by allowing them to avoid the long drawn out railway route to Hamburg. Which of these routes the Rabinowitz used is unknown. It would have made sense for them to use the ship from Libau or Rega as they did not have far to travel. The journey to London usually took 3/5 days.

On the voyage to Cape Town the majority of the Eastern European Jews traveled steerage, the cheapest berth available. The journey by sea was usually between two and three weeks before the era of steam ships, and ten days with one. The cramped accommodation, their ignorance of the language spoken on board, the difficulties with food (what food lasted two or three weeks) and the need to observe the dietary laws, and the bewilderment of facing the unknown ,all combined to make the journey an experience to be endured rather than enjoyed.

Cape Town was founded in 1652 by the Dutch East India Company as a victualing station at the Cape of Good Hope, the southernmost tip of Africa, on the sea route to India and the Far East. The town had Jews among its early settlers. The rules of the Company, however, allowed only

Protestants as settlers, two Jews were converted to Christianity in Cape Town as early as 1669. After the British occupation of the Cape in 1806, a steady flow of Jewish immigrants came from Central Europe and England and later, in larger numbers, from eastern Europe. As the oldest Jewish community in South Africa, Cape Town organized communal life provided the pattern for the future development of South African Jewry. The Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, the first in South Africa, dates back to 1841. The first synagogue which still stands, was built in 1849. It was called Tikvath Israel ("Hope of Israel"), a reference to "good hope". Isaac Pulver was the first minister (1849-51). He was succeeded by Joel Rabinowitz (1859-82), Abraham Philip Ornstein (1882-95), Alfred Philip Bender (1895-1937). As the Jewish community grew, other congregations and synagogues were established. The present great synagogue, a beautifully situated synagogue, was inaugurated in 1905.

For many years, Cape Town was the principal centre of Jewish communal life in South Africa. With the discovery of diamonds in Kimberly, and the growth of the Ostrich feather Industry, where between 1881 and 1890 about 100 Jewish families arrived in Oudtshoorn mainly from Lithuania. It was known as the Jerusalem of the South. Also the rise of the Witwatersrand gold fields created a movement of the population to the North which created a Northwood shift of the population and the development of trade and industry in the country. In 1904, the Cape Jewish Board of Deputies was formed in Cape Town, a year after the corresponding body was created for the Transvaal and Natal. Hyman Liberman was the first Jew to become mayor of Cape Town (1903-07). In 1969, Cape Town was the second largest Jewish Centre in South Africa (after Johannesburg), with a Jewish population of approximately 25000 (out of a total population of 75000). The Cape board of Education in 1969 supervised 31 Hebrew schools and was responsible for a fine Hebrew secondary day school (Herzlia), three Hebrew primary schools, and a hostel.

Between 1970 and 1992 some 39000 Jews left South Africa, while in the same period approximately 10000 Israelis moved into the country.

ABRAHAM RABINOWITZ BORN ABOUT 1856

He married A Rabinowitz (Nee Millin) in Riga Latvia, All there children were born there. We have no idea where he was born nor his wife's place of birth. They decided to emigrate to South Africa in 1908. Abraham and his family must have taken the ship from Riga and arrived at the Poor Jews Temporary Shelter in the east end London on the 4th July 1908. They left for Cape Town South Africa on board the Galeka on the 9 July 1908. He was in his 50's and his wife's age at the time was 52 years. By trade he was a shoe maker. There is a record of a A Rabinowitz arriving at the shelter on the 4th July 1908 from Kovno and leaving on the 9th July 1908 on board the Galeka. There is a very good probability that this was his wife. There appears to be no record of the children arriving at the shelter and leaving. It could be that they did not record the children. There is a photo of Abraham on the right, and a friend or maybe a brother, taken by John Hart (Photographer in England.) on the left.

It would have been taken between 4 July 1908 and 9th July 1908 His nick name was Rudolph Razendale. We also know that he lived in Boksburg South Africa with his family which is a gold mining town situated on the Witwatersrand gold reef. It was two houses from the entrance to Boksburg Lake. How he arrived at Boksburg with his family from Cape Town we are unaware of. He was married twice and both his wives were small women. The name of his second wife is unknown to us, and it would appear that there were no children from this marriage. Both wives died in South Africa. His children were all born in Riga and there children born in various cities/towns in South Africa. Abraham died in South Africa.

MARY KUPERNICK NEE RABINOWITZ BORN IN RIGA LATVIA

Married Michael Kupernick. He arrived at the poor Jews Temporary shelter 24 June 1899 from Kovno aged 17 years. He boarded the Tintagle Castle on the 29 June 1899 for Cape Town South Africa.

ANNIE HANNA ROSENBERG NEE RABINOWITZ BORN IN RIGA LATVIA

Her eldest daughter Hilda Edith Bensaul nee Rosenberg died in child birth in about 1940. Annie married Morris Harry Rosenberg who was born in Riga Latvia in 1876. He died on the 30 November 1929 in Johannesburg South Africa. They lived two blocks away from each other and were unaware of the others existence. The reason could have been the age difference of 8 years. We are unaware when they emigrated to South Africa. They found each other in Johannesburg about 1907 and married soon after woods.

There eldest daughter Hilda was born in Johannesburg in 1909 and Rose in 1911 .They then moved onto Kroonstadt where Bess was born in 1912. At this time how Morris made a living is unknown. He then moved to Oudtshoorn where people were making fortunes from the Ostrich feather Industry. Ninety percent of feather merchants in the Eastern Cape of South Africa were Yiddish speaking immigrants from Kelme and Siauliai and surrounding areas in Northern Lithuania . It was known as the Jerusalem of the south because of all the Jews (At its peak about 100 families) Many of the dealers who bought feathers from merchants in South Africa for sale in London, Paris and New York were Jewish. The feather preening factories were mostly staffed with poor immigrant Jewish labourers. Fortunes were made from the feathers, especially a Mr. Rosen (could he have been a Rosenberg who changed his name?) who was regarded as one of 10 wealthiest men in the world. The feathers unceremoniously fall from a symbol of wealth and elegance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to one of vulgarity. At the end of WW1 the bubble burst, wreaking havoc on thousands of people, as the ladies were unable to climb into the cars with those large Ostrich hats. There was also the problem of inflated prices, failure to diversify and over-reliance on credit, and the belief that the commodity will never ever lose value. In 1917 he lost most of his money and moved to Colesberg .Morris was a foundation member of the Colesberg Hebrew congregation and his name is on the inaugural stone laid in 1920. He had a good business in Colesberg but in 1921 he packed up and moved to Springs There he had a Butchery with the name of Coxes Butchery. It was situated on the first floor of a building in Springs. Customers paid there accounts at the end of each month and the business was very successful until the miners strike in 1923 This strike ran for some time, and his customers disappeared leaving him financially destitute. (There were big gold mines in Springs at that time.). From there he moved back to Johannesburg and lived at 19 Ascot Road Bertrams temporary. The house belonged to Sheva Danilowitz (his sister), and he moved into No1 Siemert Road Doornfontein for 2 to 3 years. As he had ants in his pants he was off again on a new venture, this time to Brakpan where he was a speculator. (Brakpan was also a Gold mining town with big yellow mine dumps) It is believed that he speculated in potatoes, but hardly made a living. He then applied for a lease on the railway station for a kiosk where they sold newspapers, sweets and cigarettes to make a living. He was offered a position with I W Schlesinger with a view to becoming their top insurance salesman in the Transvaal. On the 30th November 1929 while waiting in Danzinger Bros, owned by his cousin he had to walk across the road to I W Schlesingers offices when he slumped over in a chair and died of a heart attack.

HARRY RABINOWITZ BORN IN RIGA LATVIA

Harrys daughter Golda married Barry Bernard Beira in Aug 1948 in Johannesburg South Africa. It was her second marriage .Barry and his brother were WW2 refugees taken in by a family in South Africa. They are not sure if it was an adoption or not. Barry left Golda and as far as we are aware went to Rhodesia never to be heard again.

SARAH MINNIE ENFIELD NEE RABINOWITZ BORN IN RIGA LATVIA.

Her husband Fredrick Ian Enfield changed his name to Golstein to join the English army at the age of 16 years. Became a Major in the army and retired to South Africa. On arrival in South Africa he changed his name again to Enfield. This was the name of a British Rifle. Shirley Kotzens (nee Enfield) first husband Issy died in a car accident.

PHOTO +- 1906

RABINOWITZ RAB 1 ANNIE ROSE LILY PHOTO NAMES

BACK ROW 3 MEN UNKNOWN MORRIS HARRY ROSENBERG

LEFT TO RIGHT BORN 1880

RIGA LATVIA

MIDDLE ROW ROSE RABINOWITZ JOFFEE CHILD MRS JOFFEE 2 LADIES UNKNOWN

ANNIE HANNAH RABINOWITZ

LEFT TO RIGHT BORN 1898 BORN 1888

RIGA LATVIA RIGA LATVIA

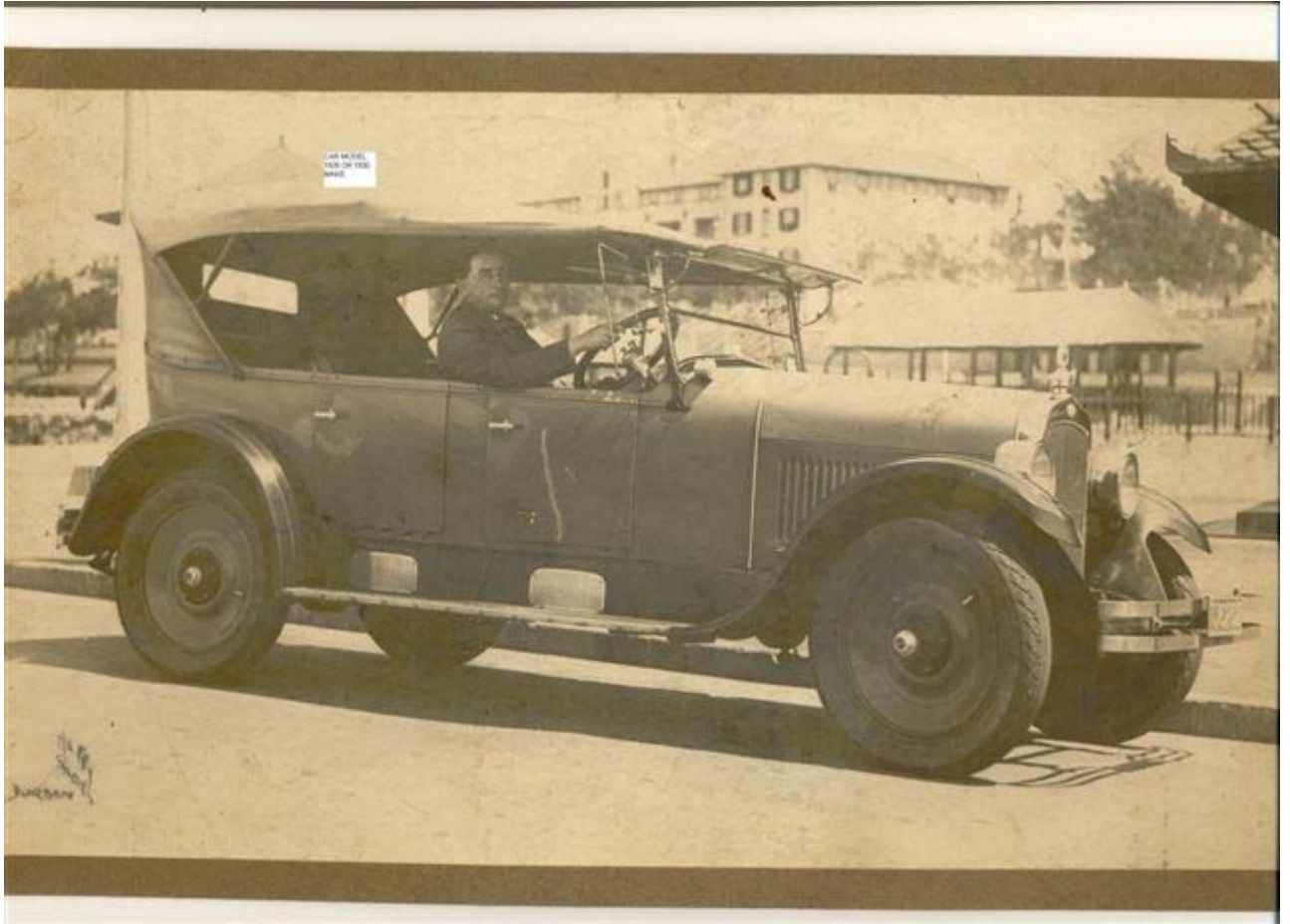
FRONT ROW BANASHOWITZ TWIN BROTHERS YOUNG GIRL AND LILY KUPERNICK

LEFT TO RIGHT (RABINOWITZ COUSINS) BOY UNKNOWN

BORN SOUTH AFRICA BORN SOUTH AFRICA



HARRY RABONOWITZ BORN 1889 RIGA MOTOR CAR



ORRIS ROSENBERG ANNIE ROSENBERG NEE RABINOWITZ



SARAH AND MARY RABINOWITZ

