

SA-SIG

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Southern African Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group Newsletter

Vol. 7, Issue 3

March 2007

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In recent years I have known about various felons in (obviously!) other people's families. If we look at the South African National archives pages usually one can see the various court cases ancestors have been involved in. Much of this is technical, e.g. one case involving my late father related to moving a road without written permission on a farm. There is also the case of my rogue great uncle Simon, who was sued by Ann Rabinowitz's Great Uncle Mordechai for the 'theft' of ten bags of potatoes. A very lengthy hand written judgement by a judge with a double-barrelled name concluded they were both lying!! But the more recent ones I know of involve very serious crimes; drug dealing, murder, kidnapping and paedophilia.

There is the history of the young Jewish girls from Russia one hundred or more years ago who were caught up in the white slave trade and forced into prostitution in New York, South America, Johannesburg and London. Many of these ladies became respectable in later life.

Marriages and liaisons across the colour bar in the apartheid era also led to people being shunned and effectively becoming 'black sheep' in a family. The question asked is how are these to be dealt with in a family tree? What are the privacy constraints, and for how long should these apply? One of these felons was on the "FBI Ten most wanted" list, and has not been found over a decade, presumably now has a 'new' identity? Out of deference to his family sensitivities should this person be omitted completely?

On a simpler level one of my relations was briefly unhappily married and later divorced and requested that this episode be totally taken out of the family tree.

The ethics of genealogy were simpler before the Internet and the wide availability of all sorts of information that was previously not accessible. This has been a topic at various Jewish genealogy conferences, but very little has actually gone into print and academics seem to shun this topic.

I would welcome informed comment and opinions on this subject. Please send them to the editor.

Saul Issroff

London, saul@shaul.homechoice.co.uk

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

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

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

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

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

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

Articles for printing in the Newsletter should be sent to Bubbles Segall, Editor, at bubbles.segall@wagait.net

General enquiries about the Newsletter can be sent either to Bubbles or to Mike Getz at MikeGetz005@comcast.net

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

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EDITORIAL

Putting together this edition of our newsletter has given me cause to reflect more than usual on how reliant a quarterly such as ours is on the quality of contribution from readers. This involvement can be in a number of forms ranging from a substantial article comprising new material, to follow up stories on topics previously raised by other contributors, or simply an email alerting the editor to an upcoming event or a published work that may be of interest. This edition features all these differing types of involvement and I express my gratitude to all for making an editor's job all that much easier.

Abel Levitt has a follow up story on Rabbi Liebenberg's article in the December 2006 issue, recalling his memories of Mr Galler's grave in Swakopmund. Two upcoming events, a new film called *Ochberg's Orphans* and an exhibition of stories at Melbourne's Australian Jewish Museum about Jewish South Africans are featured. My thanks to those who raised the alert and provided information.

Anyone who lived in South Africa during the 1950's and 60's would remember Eric Egan on Springbok Radio each morning. Many may remember the name Felix de Cola, a well known pianist and composer. As Adam Yamey tells us both were sons of Gustav Ginsberg. Adam's story of a truly remarkable life makes fascinating reading.

In 1968 the Benoni Town Council published a book *Benoni Son of my Sorrows*, a social, political and economic history of the town. It was based on newspaper accounts, oral histories and minutes of town council meetings. It contains invaluable information about the early Jewish settlers of Benoni which have been reproduced in this newsletter. Thanks to Eric Horwitz for allowing me to take extracts from his copy of the book.

Keep the articles, information and ideas coming, your editor and our readers really appreciate them.

Bubbles Segall

Editor

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EVERYTHING BUT THE FAMILY Stories of Australian Jewish South Africans *Exhibition*

*Jewish Museum of Australia,
Melbourne*

11 March – 1 July 2007

“I would hate for my children to do to me what I did to my parents. They say women find it harder to migrate because they miss the family. It's a bit of a fable because men miss it as well. It's not easy saying goodbye to your mother and father.”

Everything but the Family traces a minority group who, after fleeing the poverty and *pogroms* of Eastern Europe, found themselves in a privileged social position in South Africa simply by virtue of their skin colour. As they engaged with the restrictions and inequities of the society in which they lived, and for the most part prospered, by the middle of the 20th century the Jews of South Africa had established an identifiable, educated and culturally rich presence. Apartheid, its concomitant violence, their troubled consciences and their desire for safety have brought them to Australia over a fifty-year period.

The complex story of the Jewish community in South Africa and the migration of many of its members to Australia is the subject of this exhibition.

South African Jews in Australia are an unusual migrant group – entrepreneurial, often highly educated, usually professional, financially secure, culturally and linguistically at home and active in the Jewish and wider community. However migration is never easy even with all these advantages.

‘Over one hundred South Africans in Melbourne and Sydney have been interviewed for this exhibition,’ says curator Susan Faine, ‘giving us a glimpse of their lives in both countries. It is the individuals who make the study interesting, especially those who see theirs as a political, emotional and mental journey, because those people now contribute to the moral landscape of Australia. It is fascinating to understand the formation of their ideas.’

Leaving South Africa, a country of unforgettable natural beauty, in almost every case was a difficult decision – life in South Africa was full, rich and exciting. The Jews were an established, comfortable, homogenous community that enjoyed a degree of luxury impossible elsewhere in the world. Johannesburg was playfully referred to as ‘Jewburg’. The black population was horrifically oppressed but the whites lived intimately with them, inevitably involved with their culture and vibrant energy.

It was hard to leave, especially for those with political involvement. Monash academic Don Schauder came here in the seventies: ‘We were involved in and felt loyal to South Africa, and identified with the needs and struggles of all the people: black and white, English-speaking and Afrikaans, Jew and non-Jew. We decided to leave after the Soweto uprising in 1976 – but we almost decided NOT to leave because of Soweto. Things were very bad – good friends were in jail. It seemed cowardly to ‘cut and run’, yet it took much courage to leave ... But we had little kids, and only one life.’

Adapting to Australia has been a success story for young South Africans like Don, who slotted into schools, professions and businesses, taking full advantage of cultural similarities. ‘It was an easy migration,’ say Bob and Renate Kamener. ‘There was no problem for Bob practising medicine or Renate teaching. The language, the weather, the sport, the culture were all the same. Also it was a time (1965) when because of the Australian cultural cringe, foreign was seen as superior and people saw us as exotic.’

For older migrants it has been tougher. Without a working environment, ex-professionals lose their identity and have no entrée into the society. ‘At this age Australian people don’t need you as new friends. We have intermittent success but it takes lots of energy from us.’

Furthermore the transition from engagement with a complex, politically sophisticated culture to what seems to be political complacency and apathy can be disturbing. ‘I find it racist towards Asians and Aborigines, parochial, provincial – Australians don’t realise how unimportant Australia is in world terms.’

Like most migrants many South Africans experience ambivalence. ‘I go back once a year’

says journalist, Jill Margo. ‘South Africa is still my internal landscape. I have now spent more of my life in Australia than South Africa but I don’t really feel like I belong to either place. I’m in immigrant limbo. Having said that, I do love coming home to Sydney. From the airport I always ask the taxi driver to take me along the harbour I love so much.’

New Film

OCHBERG'S ORPHANS

The overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917 led to a total breakdown of the Russian Empire which resulted in thousands of deaths. Many Jewish children were orphaned as a consequence.

Isaac Ochberg, a Ukrainian immigrant who was the president of the South African Jewish Orphanage in Cape Town, put forward a proposal that they bring these children to South Africa. His request culminated in his travel, at his own expense to parts of the Ukraine and Galicia to bring the children to South Africa. In March 1921 he left Cape Town for London and single-handedly navigated a region torn apart by war, famine and disease, rounded up children who faced a life of crime, prostitution, conscription and cannibalism and took them on a perilous journey to Cape Town.

Many ran away, others were too ill to make the journey and in the end only 167 eventually sailed to

South Africa. Many of these children were found wandering in forests having seen their parents killed or forced to watch their mothers and sisters being raped. They were starving, clad in rags and verminous. The children came from places such as Minsk, Pinsk, Vladivostok, Brest-Litovsk and Warsaw.

Now *Rainmaker Films* are in the process of making a film *Ochberg's Orphans* to be released next year, which will illustrate how a maverick South African business tycoon made a solo journey to post-Revolutionary Russia in 1921 and rescued hundreds of children orphaned by the anti-Jewish pogroms of the time. Combining original interviews with the surviving orphans, photographs and footage from the journey, fresh archive material of the post-revolutionary period and pogroms and compelling eye-witness testimony, *Ochberg's Orphans* retrieves a lost chapter in 20th century.



***Photo from the collection of the late Eddie Segall.
Purported to be of children & staff of the Cape Jewish Orphanage.
If anyone knows anything about this photo or anyone in this photo, please
contact the Editor***

RECOLLECTIONS

Abel Levitt

Rabbi Liebenberg's article in the December 2006 issue of this Newsletter brought back my own memories of Mr Galler's grave in Swakopmund.

In the early 1970s an article and a photograph of the tombstone described by Rabbi Liebenberg appeared in the *Cape Times* newspaper's magazine section. Shortly after reading the article I found myself in Swakopmund in South West Africa (now known as Namibia). I asked a business friend, a local resident, if he had heard of this Jewish grave. "Yes, he replied, "would you like to see it?" We went to the small Jewish section of the Swakopmund cemetery and my friend, Mr Matheis told me what he knew. The deceased had lived with his common-law wife, a non-white woman in an area designated as a "coloured area". Upon his death the woman contacted the Jewish community in Windhoek and the deceased was given a Jewish burial. She later wanted to erect a tombstone in his memory so went to a local stonemason and asked him to organise an appropriate headstone for her husband. The only item of Jewish interest in their house was a bottle of *Kosher l'Pesach* wine. The inscription was simple: Mr Galler's name, date of birth, date of death, a *Magen David* and the wording from the label of the bottle of wine. And yes, the inscription – *Kosher l'Pesach* – was inscribed upside down on the tombstone.

Many years later, after we had emigrated to Israel, my wife and I, together with friends went on holiday to Namibia. When we reached Swakopmund, we naturally went to the cemetery to see the grave. We found that the *Kosher l'Pesach* inscription had been erased. To me the original wording was never construed as a joke. Knowing the story of the distraught woman, who had done whatever she could to erect a stone, and the mistake that had been innocently made was a part of the history of the Jews in the more remote areas of Southern Africa.

In that cemetery, as in Jewish cemeteries throughout South Africa there are countless unmarked graves. Mr Galler's wife had seen to it that **his** memory would be recorded, even if the tombstone was somewhat unusual. While visiting the cemetery, an Israeli friend, with only a smattering of English, drew our attention to another tombstone. It was on

the grave of a Mr Lentin, and in English it recorded that he had died "tragically". The Hebrew inscription however was more descriptive of his death. It told that he had been murdered by our enemies. "*Nirtzach al yedei oiveinu.*" Clearly, not wanting to stir up the undercurrent of anti-Semitism, the tombstone was simply inscribed in English that his death had been tragic.

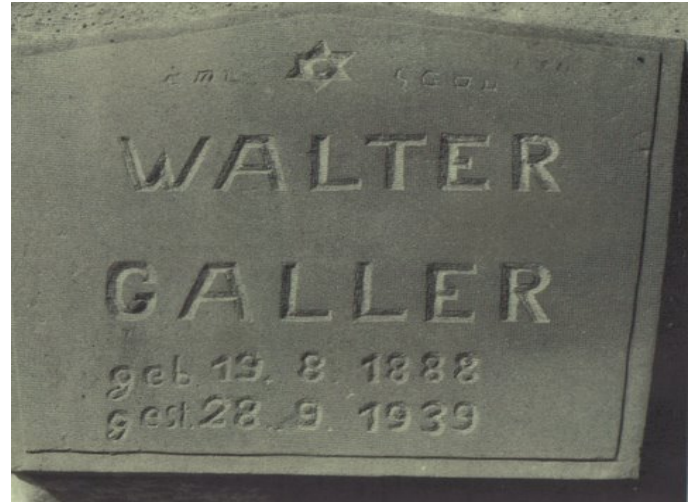


Photo of Walter Galler's tombstone with the words kosher l'Pesach inscribed upside down, which have now been removed. Photo courtesy of Rabbi Richard Newman.

Some years later at a family *Bar Mitzvah* I was introduced to a Mrs Lentin. The name immediately refreshed my memory of the visit to Swakomund and I related to her our experience. The late Mr Lentin was a relative of her husband. He had been murdered while traveling on a train to South West Africa by a band of hooligans. I am not sure of the year; it might have been in the 1930s.

Cemeteries have always fascinated me. For years, while travelling from Tel Aviv to Gaza, I would stop at the British War Cemetery in Gaza. Beautifully maintained, I would wander amongst the tombstones, most with crosses, but some with the *Magen David*.

Once, while driving from Florence to Rome, I passed a British War Cemetery in Arezzo. Having plenty of time to get to my flight to Israel, I stopped, entered the unlocked gate and came to the small building in which the story of the Allied Campaign in Italy is etched onto the wall, and studied the visitors book. I also looked at the register of the fallen soldiers, looking particularly for names of Cape Town soldiers. I came across the name of a

Dr. Meyerowitz, from Oranjezicht in Cape Town. I found the grave, paused there for a minute or two, placed a stone on the tombstone, and made my way to Rome.

A year later I was in Cape Town on holiday. Standing with my friend Martin Futeran on the ground floor of his business in Cape Town, an elderly man walked past. "Good morning Dr Meyerowitz," greeted Martin, and the man disappeared into the store. "Who is that I asked," and was told that Dr Meyerowitz was a fellow member of the Roeland Street Synagogue, who frequently came in to buy a few shirts for himself.

I asked Martin to go upstairs and ask the doctor if he had a relation who was buried in Arezzo, Italy. Yes, his brother had died of typhoid, giving injections to countless soldiers but not bothering to inject himself.

I went to speak to Dr Meyerowitz, told him of my visit to his brother's grave, he was visibly moved and I promised him that when next I visited Italy I would again visit the grave. This I did, accompanied by my elder son Ari.

I want to conclude by telling of my visit to the old Brixton cemetery in Johannesburg. I went to visit the grave of my mother's late sister, who died in the early 1930s. The help given by the *Chevra Kadisha* and the attendant at the cemetery was exemplary. I was distressed however to see the number of unmarked graves throughout the cemetery. Surely the *Chevra Kadisha* could honour the memory of the dead by putting even a small stone on those graves that have nothing to identify the deceased?

If those who removed the *Kosher l'Pesach* inscription would devote the same thought and energy to a project, not only in Brixton, but throughout South Africa, to give a name to every grave, the South African Jewish community could indeed be proud of performing the mitzvah of honouring the dead.

GUSTAV GINSBERG: A DENTAL TALE

Adam Yamey

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First Published in the Adler Museum Bulletin 2006 32(2): 26-35, and is reprinted here with permission. The Adler Museum of Medicine is part of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

A Ghost Town

Many will remember Eric Egan (1903-1967), the much loved South African broadcaster (on South Africa's independent radio station, *Springbok Radio*.)¹ Less well remembered, but no less accomplished was the pianist and composer Felix de Cola (1906-1983),² known before World War II as Cape Town's 'King of Jazz'. Despite their different surnames, they were brothers, the sons of Gustav Ginsberg (1872-1922),³ dentist by profession, and amateur musician *par excellence*. He was a brother of my matrilineal great grandfather Franz Ginsberg (1862-1936).



With the gypsies⁴

Gustav Ginsberg was the tenth born of the twelve children of Dr Nathan Ginsberg (1814-1890)⁵ and his second wife Rosalie Berg (1830-1916). He was born in the Upper Silesian town of Beuthen. He

studied dentistry in Germany. When he studied this subject, there were few universities in Germany that offered courses in dentistry (before 1890, Berlin and Leipzig were the only two, and in 1890 they were joined by Breslau and Marburg.)⁶ Many dentists did not study their profession at university, but studied at one of the many private dental schools that existed in Germany. Graduates of these private dental schools did not obtain a doctorate or a degree. Gustav was probably one of these dentists, as in a letter dated 26 March 1907,⁷ his brother Franz wrote that Gustav did not possess a university diploma. On one of his vacations, as a student, he went on a walking tour of Europe. When he reached Vienna, he met a Gypsy band, and, as he was a good violinist, he played music with them. There, he met, and fell in love with, a gypsy girl whom he almost married. However, wiser counsel prevailed and he did not go ahead with this. Instead, he completed his dental studies. Having done this, Gustav went out to South Africa, to King Williams Town ('King') in the Eastern Cape, a place where some of his siblings settled.⁸ His story illustrates the problems that faced a professional, recognised as such in the German Empire, moving to the British Empire, where his qualifications were not recognised.

With Mr Kirkpatrick in 'King'

On 26 May 1894, the *Cape Mercury* (the *Mercury*), one of King Williams Town's two principal newspapers for European readers, printed the following advertisement: 'Dental Notice: NOTWITHSTANDING rumours to the contrary, Mr HERBERT HENRY⁹ is positively in attendance at his old surgery every Wednesday and Saturday... DOWNING STREET, KING WMS. TOWN.' Whatever these rumours were, they were not entirely without foundation because 21 days later on 16 June another advertisement appeared in the *Mercury*, shown in the next column.

In this advertisement, Gustav's name is given without professional qualifications following it. It is placed at the end of the advertisement without any comment. The advertisement is repeated at regular intervals in future issues of the paper. On 3 July it is joined by advertisements for two other of the dentists in 'King': Mr Charles Morgan and Mr HG Danolds, RDS.¹⁰ In the latter's advertisement, there is the information that Mr Danolds was 'assisted by Mr Hayes - late with Mr Henry'. Mr Hayes and Gustav are both placed in their respective

advertisements without qualifications, suggestive of their roles as auxiliaries to the principal dentists. The reason for Gustav having such a role may have been that he was not permitted to practise dentistry in the Colony. Following the passing of Act Number 34 of 1891¹¹ in the Cape Parliament, and the consequent formation of the Colonial Medical Council and Pharmacy Board, a dentist could not practise in the Cape Colony unless he was licensed by the Council. Gustav's dental qualification was neither from a university, nor was it obtained in the English speaking world. In all likelihood, he was not recognised in the Cape Colony as a dental surgeon under the terms of the Act.

DENTAL NOTICE

Mr HG HENRY having left King Williams Town and sold his practice here, the same will be carried on as heretofore, in the same premises at the corner of DOWNING STREET and ALEXANDRA ROAD, by

Mr John A W Kirkpatrick,
LDS, RCS, Ed.,
Medallist Chem. Ed., School of Med.
DENTAL SURGEON

Hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

GUSTAV GINSBERG
King Williams Town, June 12, 1894

Mr John Kirkpatrick with whom Gustav worked was, as the advertisement suggests, well qualified. He received his Licentiate in Dental Surgery from the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh in 1891,¹² and by September of that year he was registered to practice. Three years later, he passed the First Professional Dental Examination of the same college, having been examined by John Smith (1825-1910), the eminent dentist and President of both this Royal College and of the British Dental Association, as well as being the first person to teach a course on the physiology and diseases of the teeth (in 1856).¹³ Kirkpatrick appears in the Dental Register for 1894, in which his residence is given as Leith (Scotland). As this publication was produced early in 1894 and he appears in South Africa by June of that year, he must have left Scotland in the spring of that year.

I do not know when Gustav first arrived in South Africa, but it must have been in early 1894 at the very latest. The advertisement described above, or some variation of it, was repeated at regular intervals until January 1896, which suggests that Gustav remained in King Williams Town at least until then.

Free to practise

The Orange Free State (OFS), to where Gustav moved after 1896, was an independent state not subject to British law until the end of the Anglo-Boer (South African) War (1899-1902). There were very few dentists practising in the OFS and the few who did, made short visits there. One of the first of these itinerant dentists was Mr Mosely who visited Bloemfontein briefly in 1863.¹⁴ When Gustav was in the OFS, there was no regulation as to who could or could not practise as a dentist. Ordinance number 19, issued in 1877 by the *Volksraad* regulated that medical practitioners and obstetricians could not practise within the OFS unless they could produce documentary evidence that they had been trained in Europe or had already practised in the Cape of Good Hope.¹⁵ This did not apply to dentists. By 1897, Gustav was in practice as a dentist in the OFS, where his German qualification was not an obstacle to carrying out his work. On 14 September 1897, Gustav wrote a letter¹⁶ from the town of Harrismith to Mr RM Day, the Colonial Secretary of the British colony of Natal. In it, he writes: 'I am desirous of registering as a dentist under Natal Dentists Act, but as I have never lived in Natal nor been employed by a dentist there, I do not know whether I am entitled to be examined. Will you kindly let me know whether anybody can submit himself for examination under this act...'. The letter is handwritten in English, but Gustav's handwriting occasionally lapses into cursive Gothic script (see Figure 2).

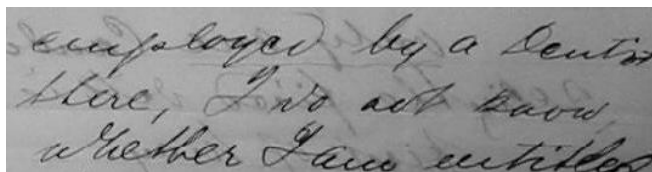


Fig 2: The letters making up 'I do not' are in cursive Gothic script.

It seems that Gustav wanted to obtain a qualification that would be recognised in territory under British rule. He received a reply dated 16 September 1897

from a Principal Under-Secretary in which was enclosed a copy of the rules governing the practise of dentistry in the colony, 'The Dentist Act, 1896'¹⁷ of Natal (drawn up under the Governorship of Walter Hely-Hutchinson).¹⁸ Section 6 of Part 2 of this Act recognises, as being allowed to practise, anyone who prior to 1 May 1896 was a *bona-fide* practitioner of dental surgery or dentistry in the colony. This ruled out Gustav, as did Section 8, which allowed anyone who on 1 May 1896 was working as a mechanical assistant or as a pupil to a dentist and whose articles expired on or before 1 January 1898 to register themselves as students, entitled to take a qualifying examination prior to 1 May 1901. In a reply that he wrote to the Colonial Secretary on 20 September, Gustav thanks him for the reply but points out that his question had not been answered. The wording in the Act does in fact do this. A note in a governmental Minute Paper does point out that Gustav's attention had been directed to Sections 6 and 8. Gustav did not take the Natal examinations, but continued to work in the Orange Free State. In 1898, the *Volksraad* issued its Act number 20 of 1898,¹⁹ which stipulated that persons wishing to practise dentistry must pay a licence fee of £10 (this was primarily directed at itinerant tooth drawers). This marked the beginning of regulation of the profession of dentistry in the OFS, and was followed in 1899 by 'Act number 6 of 1899'. The latter, dated 5 May 1899, 'laid down a procedure concerning certificates and their verification, and the State President had the power to grant a certificate to any person who had practised as a dentist in the Orange Free State for not less than three years prior to the passing of the law'.²⁰ I am not sure exactly when Gustav began practising in the OFS, but if it had been after May 1896, this might have posed difficulty for him. After Harrismith, he worked in Bloemfontein. Gustav was one of the earliest Jewish dentists to work there, but not the first – that honour going to Ernest Moses who arrived in the town in 1875.²¹ Shortly before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer (South African) War (12 October 1899),²² faced with being conscripted into the Boer forces, he left the Orange Free State.²³

A musician in 'King'

On 23 June 1894, a number of amateur musicians from 'King' travelled to the port of East London where they took part in a performance of *La Gitana*²⁴ in order to help raise money for a new

Roman Catholic church being built in the town. They were members of the recently founded Woodrow-Hennessy Orchestra²⁵ of 'King'. Three days later, a report on the concert in the *Mercury* mentions the following players as being 'accompanists' during the performance: Messrs HV Mather (piano), G Ginsberg, and Reiser (*sic*) (violins). 'Reiser' is a common misspelling of 'Rieser'. Mr Rieser to whom this refers is most probably Emanuel Rieser (1864-1916) who became a brother-in-law of Gustav's brother Franz in 1888. Four months later, the *Mercury* dated 25 October reported on a concert given by the newly created 'Orchestral Society'. This consisted of over twenty players with 'Messrs Ginsberg and Risser' (*sic*) amongst the first violins. The *Mercury* commented: 'The violin duet of Mr G Ginsberg and Mr Reiser (*sic*) was entirely successful, both gentlemen being capable performers on "the most difficult of instruments".'

Many years ago, I recall discussing with my PhD supervisor, Robert Harkness (who was also on the admissions panel for the Dental School at University College, London), the qualities sought for in candidates seeking to study dentistry. He told me that the admissions panel always asked candidates whether they played a musical instrument, as this is a guide to whether their manual dexterity was of a level suitable for carrying out the profession. String players were always looked upon favourably. Gustav was a virtuoso violinist.

On 13 May 1899, the *Mercury*, contained a report on a recent performance in 'King' of *The Gondoliers*, an operetta by Gilbert and Sullivan. Playing in the first violins were 'G Ginsberg' and 'F Ginsberg'. The former was Gustav and the latter his nephew Fritz Ginsberg (1874-1941).²⁶ From this date onwards, Gustav became a star in the musical firmament of 'King'. On 31 August, a Miss Tudhope gave a vocal recital accompanied by Gustav. The *Mercury* described them as both being excellent, and twenty days later, the same newspaper recorded that Gustav had gained honours in violin in the Trinity College Examinations. On 4 December the *Mercury* reported on a concert held to raise funds for refugees from the (South African/Anglo-Boer) War. It noted that: 'Mr G Ginsberg who was the only solo instrumentalist, selected De Beriot's²⁷ "Scene de Ballet" as his first effort, and in response to an undeniable demand for

more, he played Mascagni's²⁸ famous "Intermezzo", for which he was loudly applauded and compelled to bow his acknowledgements.' In a concert to mark the German Kaiser's birthday, the *Mercury* of 29 January 1900 noted that Gustav and Fritz Ginsberg, as members of the German Club of 'King', played in 'the splendid orchestra, ...'. By June 1900, the *Mercury* was quite ecstatic about Gustav's playing: 'Mr Gustav Ginsberg and his violin are ever welcome. The artistic finish of everything he attempts, his fine technique, breadth and grip of the instrument combined with an intelligent and sympathetic reading of the works of the masters would give him high rank in a larger musical community than ours. On this occasion he took Lehar's²⁹ "Hungarian Song and Dance" for us, and followed this by Mascagni's "Intermezzo" in response to the inevitable encore.' Throughout the following year, there are glowing references to Gustav's playing in public. On 17 February 1902, the *Mercury* reported on a concert held in 'King' to demonstrate the qualities of the Pianola (an instrument invented 1895, and first on sale outside the USA in 1899).³⁰ Outshining this newcomer to the musical scene – the principal reason for the concert, was Gustav: 'other pieces were inserted into the programme including selections on the violin by Mr Ginsberg, who acquitted himself excellently... . Of Mr Ginsberg's playing, exquisite is the only word to describe it. He was down for only one item, "Reverie" by Vieuxtemps,³¹ and the music he drew from his instrument was magnificent. Perhaps there is no other instrument, in proper hands, that entralls a listener so much as the violin and while Mr Ginsberg was playing not a sound was to be heard in the hall. When he concluded a great outburst of applause greeted him, and he had perforce to play a second time.' By March 1902, Gustav was one of the two joint secretaries of the 'King William's Town Amateur Musical & Dramatic Society', the leading cultural society in the town.

If music be the food of love ...

Music alone cannot feed the amateur player. The practise of dentistry in 'King' was not an option for Gustav, as his qualifications were not recognised in the Cape Colony. Gustav became involved in the businesses run by his elder brother Franz, whose company 'F Ginsberg and Company' manufactured soap and candles, as well as matches. The minutes of the company's 'General Meetings'³² held

between 8 August 1901 and 22 December 1902 show that during this period Gustav was a director of the company. A note in the *Cape Mercury* of 25 August 1903 describing the return of Franz Ginsberg from a long trip to Europe states: 'Councillor Ginsberg returned home yesterday morning, and last evening people at the candle and match factory, headed by the Borough Band, marched in procession, lighted by numerous torches, to his residence. Mr Gustav Ginsberg, on behalf of the employees, accorded Mr Ginsberg and his family a very hearty welcome home.' This shows that during 1903 Gustav was still associated with his brother's firm. On 6 July 1904, an advertisement placed in the *Mercury* said: 'Mr G Ginsberg has much pleasure in informing the public that he will open an up-to-date Steam Laundry about July the 15th, under the style of THE KING WILLIAMS TOWN STEAM LAUNDRY.' This opened in Grey Street on 26 August. I am not certain whether the 'Mr G Ginsberg' in the advertisement was Gustav, but this venture, so different to dentistry, was not out of keeping with other attempts at diversification which he made later in his life.

On 25 May 1902 Gustav married Edith Mendelssohn (1881-1940)³³ in the synagogue at Kimberley, the centre of South African diamond industry. Edith was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1881, daughter of M Mendelssohn esq.,³⁴ who was born in Russia, where he married Edith's mother. In the USA, Mendelssohn was in the shoe business, but in the late 1890s they moved to Kimberley in South Africa, where they lived through the South African/Anglo-Boer War. Gustav's son Felix recalled: 'Edith remembered sheltering with her family in the diamond mines³⁵ during the bombardment of the town by the Boers who were besieging it. Edith said that it was ironic that whilst they almost starved in these mines, they were surrounded by non-edible diamonds worth millions of dollars.' Edith was, like her husband, a good musician. She was a pianist. One of Edith's piano students, Elise Gundelfinger,³⁶ told me that Edith was known as the best sight-reader in Cape Town. Edith and Gustav returned to live in King Williams Town where their son Eric was born in 1903. There they lived at least until December 1904.

An injudicious stopping

The *Mercury* reported on 22 September 1904 that: 'Gustav Ginsberg again appeared at the Magistrate's Court this morning, before Mr WT Welsh, ARM, on a charge of practising dentistry without a licence. Chief Constable Lynn asked for a conviction on the ground that Mr Ginsberg had contravened the Medical and Pharmacy Act by practising the calling or profession of a dentist in that he made and supplied false teeth and filled teeth.' Gustav's defence lawyer Mr Murray (of the firm Yates and Murray of 'King') defended him vigorously arguing '...that dentistry was the extracting of teeth, and that the making and supplying of plates and false teeth was purely mechanical work, the work not of a dentist, but of a mechanic.' The Magistrate was not convinced, and Gustav was found guilty on three charges, as he was not duly qualified to practise dentistry in the Cape Colony. He was offered a choice of 3 months imprisonment or a fine of £15, which he paid. The case did not stop at this stage, but went to appeal. On 10 December 1904, the *Mercury* reported that the appeal to overthrow Gustav Ginsberg's conviction was held before Judge President Kotze and Mr Justice Shiel at the Eastern District Court. It failed because there was evidence from one of the witnesses that Gustav not only had made dentures for her but also '...filed two of her teeth, and stopped another'.³⁷ After this, I can find no further references to Gustav in the *Mercury*,³⁸ and assume that he must have left King Williams Town sometime after this.

Drilling and diamonds³⁹

By 1906, when their second son, Felix, was born, Gustav and Edith had moved to Tamboerskloof in Cape Town. In 1907, Gustav wanted to return to work as a dentist in the territory known as the 'Orange River Colony', which prior to the South African/Anglo-Boer War was called the 'Orange Free State'. Some correspondence⁴⁰ in the National Archives of South Africa indicates that Gustav tried to gain exemption from the qualification requirements which came into force when this territory came under British rule. His grounds for exemption are well expressed in a letter to the Lieutenant Governor of the Orange River Colony, dated 26 March 1907, written on his behalf by his brother Franz, now a Member of the (Cape) Legislative Assembly. Franz writes that his brother had been '...forced to go away from the ORC not

wishing to join the Republican forces, and found on his return, that the new law proclaimed in the ORC dealing with the medical and dental professions precluded the possibility of carrying out his profession without a university diploma...'. Franz pleaded that his brother be allowed to practise dentistry there. Franz continued by saying that his brother was '... an excellent dentist...', and cited Messrs W Ehrlich and Levisieur as able to testify to the soundness of his brother's character. Moritz Levisieur (1842-1923) and Wolf Ehrlich (died 1924) were two eminent citizens of Bloemfontein. The former was a founder of the town's *Volks* Hospital, and the latter was thrice mayor of the town and held other civic positions as well as being a founder and President of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.⁴¹ Despite the powerful support for him, it had been decided by December not to allow Gustav to practise dentistry in the Orange River Colony.

By 1910, the family had moved to the German Colony of South West Africa, to Swakopmund where Gustav set up a dental practice. Gustav's son Eric, then aged 7 years, remembered seeing Halley's Comet passing through the clear sky of South West Africa in 1910, which means that the family may have been there as early as January.⁴² Here, on the edge of this desert waste, a colony of Germany, Gustav could practise without his German dental qualification being a hindrance. Swakopmund was at that time like a mining town in the US 'wild west'. It is about 550 km North West of Kolmanskop, where Gustav's brother Franz owned a diamond mine. Although Gustav was not involved in diamond mining, he went out into the interior of the country every three months with his portable foot-treadle operated drill to treat people who worked there. These included miners who often settled his fees in diamonds and gold dust. As life in South West Africa was very hard, and as by 1911-1912, Gustav had amassed a fortune, about £30 000 to £40 000, the family returned to Europe.

To the 'Heimat' and back

On arrival in Europe, the family went on a long tour before settling in Zurich for 6 months, where Gustav was involved in the fur business. The family then moved to Stuttgart where Gustav set up a dental practice on Schloss Strasse. They lived in an apartment on Hölderlin Platz, where they owned a fine piano, a Blüthner, on which Edith played. All went well until August 1914 when World War I

broke out. The whole family was imprisoned for one night, and then released. As Gustav had become a British Subject during his stay in South Africa, he was regarded by the Germans as an enemy alien, and was interned first at Spandau, then later at the internment camp set up in the race-course at Ruhleben near to Berlin.⁴³ Gustav's son Felix recalled: 'The internees were housed in converted stables there. They were treated reasonably there. At Ruhleben Gustav was very active in the camp orchestra. Other very good musicians interned there including the pianist Max Power They played all the great piano concertos and put on performances of Gilbert and Sullivan in which men had to play the female roles, as there were no women in the camp. Music saved Gustav's sanity.' Gustav's wife, the American born Edith, had to report to the police once a week as she was regarded as a foreigner. She was very anti-German and risked great trouble when on one occasion she told the police officials that she hoped that Germany would lose the War! After two and a half years, Gustav was released prematurely from internment, as there was a great shortage of dentists in war-torn Germany. When he entered internment, the family had to give up their flat and the practice. By the end of the War, the family was penniless. In Germany, revolution followed the ending of the War. During the chaos associated with this, the family fled from Germany, without passports, to the United Kingdom, passing through Holland where they were cared for by the Quakers. They needed to get to England, as they wished to return to South Africa. Along with many others trying to reach South Africa, Gustav and his family were faced with a long (almost two years) wait, during which they lived in Bournemouth. There they were assisted financially by the South African High Commissioner Spitzer and also by Gustav's brother, Franz Ginsberg. When the family left Bournemouth, Gustav's son Felix, received a glowing report⁴⁴ dated 11 June 1920 from Mr Francis Alchin, the headmaster of Stourfield Council School in that town.

Pasta manufacturer

It was in Bournemouth that Gustav conceived the idea of setting up a noodle factory in South Africa, as there were no such factories there. He made a trip to Brescia in Italy where he obtained a *granola*, a machine for making pasta dough and also a machine for extruding it. On arrival in Cape Town in 1920, Gustav opened his factory in Bree Street and the

family lived at Three Anchor Bay. Gustav enrolled his son Felix, who was very bright, in the primary department of Seapoint Boys High School, rather than in one of the schools more local to his home which were free of charge to those in their catchment area. In September 1920, having applied for a reduction in fees at that school, Gustav was informed that no reduction could be made and that fees had to be paid in full, in advance. During October 1920, Gustav, who had lost all his money as a result of World War I, had extensive correspondence with various governmental departments concerned with education in order to try to gain exemption from paying the school fees demanded by Seapoint. The education authorities would not agree to this exemption on the grounds that the Ginsbergs lived within the catchment area of other schools, which the authorities regarded as being of adequate standard. Gustav sold his factory, and, by 1921, he was back in South West Africa. He worked in Windhoek as a 'dental mechanic'⁴⁵ rather than as a dentist (for which his German qualification was not recognised in the now British territory of South West Africa). Soon he had to return to Cape Town to receive treatment for the liver cancer which was soon to kill him. He died in Cape Town.

Gustav must have been a fine father, as his son Eric adored and worshipped him.⁴⁶ Eric's brother Felix summarised his father as follows: 'Gustav was a very intelligent, sober minded man. He was very tolerant. He maintained that "the truth was a wavy line between two extremes. There was no such thing as one side being absolutely right or the other being absolutely wrong. There was always a point of compromise between them..."'

He was very popular with people.

REFERENCES

- ¹ For much information about Eric Egan and also about Springbok Radio, see: <http://pumamouse.com/>
- ² See : http://hjem.get2net.dk/Brofeldt/Catalogue_d.htm
- ³ 26 December 1872 (ref.:Bytom Births 1866-74 Deaths 1849-74 Gubernia: Piotrkow / Province: Katowice. From LDS Films on Jewishgen's JRI-Poland). Rindl, S et al., compilers of the Ginsberg family tree record his birth as 27 December 1873.
- ⁴ Much of the information about Gustav's early life comes from a recording that Lee De Cola made with his father Felix in 1981.
- ⁵ For more information about Nathan Ginsberg, see my article (*The Education of Nathan Ginsberg*) in *Stammbaum*, issue 28 (Winter, 2005-6).

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- ⁶ I am indebted to Roger Lustig for his information about dental education in Germany. His source of information is: <http://web.uni-marburg.de/zahnmedizin/history/lauer.htm>
 - ⁷ Letter from a file stored in the National Archives of South Africa (NASA): VAB/G85/01/244/1 1907.
 - ⁸ Of ten siblings who reached adulthood, five of them, including Gustav, went to South Africa: Siegfried, Franz and Oscar Ginsberg Lina Rindl and Ida Salomon. The reasons for this emigration are discussed in my article about their father, Nathan Ginsberg (see note 5, above).
 - ⁹ In 1890, there was an 'APPLICATION TO BE REGISTERED AS A DENTAL SURGEON'. On behalf of HG Henry (See NASA: KAB/CO/4271/01/H57/1 1890), and also 'HERBERT G HENRY. REGARDING HIS APPLICATION TO BE REGISTERED AS A DENTAL SURGEON AND THE RETURN OF HIS CERTIFICATES.' (NASA: KAB/CO/4276/01/H5/1 1891).
 - ¹⁰ Probably Henry Grattan Danolds, whose Death Notice (dated 1905) is in NASA: KAB/MOOC/6/9/533/01/30044/1 1905. He was registered in the Cape in 1894, having qualified at the Royal College of Surgeons, England in 1892, and C Morgan was registered in the Cape in 1893. (See Grobler. V. 1977. The history of dentistry in South Africa 1652-1900. Haum: Pretoria. pp 36-37.)
 - ¹¹ Information from Grobler relayed to me by Rochelle Keene, Adler Museum of Medicine, Johannesburg and by Rachel Bairstow, Museum of the British Dental Association, London.
 - ¹² Information about Kirkpatrick from Mr Steven Kerr, Asst. Librarian, Royal College Surgeons, Edinburgh.
 - ¹³ For more about John Smith, see: <http://www.rcsed.ac.uk/site/PID=125200414582/760/default.aspx>
 - ¹⁴ Laidler, PW, Gelfand, M. 1971. South Africa: its medical history 1652-1898. Struik: Cape Town. p 309. Information from Rochelle Keene.
 - ¹⁵ Grobler. The history of dentistry. p 69.
 - ¹⁶ This and related correspondence is in NASA: NAB/1530/01/1897/6486/1 1897.
 - ¹⁷ A copy of this Act was sent to me by Rosemary Dixon-Smith, a South African historian.
 - ¹⁸ Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson (1849-1913) was Governor of Natal from 28 Sep 1893 to 6 May 1901 (See : http://www.worldstatesmen.org/South_Africa.html#Natal)
 - ¹⁹ Grobler. p 70.
 - ²⁰ Grobler. pp 70-71.
 - ²¹ Saron, G, Hotz, L. (Eds). 1955. The Jews in South Africa. Oxford University Press: Cape Town. p 328.
 - ²² Pakenham, T. 1992. The Boer War. Abacus: London. pp 100-114.
 - ²³ Letter written by Franz Ginsberg referred to above.

²⁴ This might have been the ballet (1838) by Daniel François Esprit Auber (1782-1871). See: http://www.musicologie.org/Biographies/auber_daniel.html

²⁵ The *Mercury* of 16 June 1894 refers to this, with some surprise that it contained as many as 8 violinists, as being under the leadership of Mr Woodrow and also of a Police Inspector named Pope-Hennessy, a cornetist.

²⁶ Fritz was a son of Gustav's half-brother Leo Ginsberg, the only child of Nathan Ginsberg's first wife.

²⁷ Charles-Auguste de Bériot, a Belgian violinist composer (1802-1870).

²⁸ Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945), Italian composer. The *Intermezzo* composed for piano was written in 1888 (<http://www.mascagni.org/works/intermezzo>).

²⁹ Franz Lehar (1870-1948).

³⁰ <http://www.pianola.org/pages/history/index.html>

³¹ Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881), a Belgian composer.

³² I have copies of the minutes for all meetings held between May 1901 and December 1967, when the company was 'wound up'. The originals are in the Amathole Museum in King Williams Town.

³³ Information about Edith from the recording of Felix De Cola, mentioned above.

³⁴ Despite what is written in the entry for Eric Egan in the South African Dictionary of Biography, I know of no evidence that Edith's Mendelssohn family was related to that to which the composer Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) belonged.

³⁵ On Sunday 11 February 1900, Cecil Rhodes displayed following proclamation in all parts of the town of Kimberley: 'SUNDAY. I RECOMMEND WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO DESIRE COMPLETE SHELTER TO PROCEED TO KIMBERLEY AND DE BEERS SHAFTS. THEY WILL BE LOWERED AT ONCE IN THE MINES FROM 8 O'CLOCK THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT. LAMPS AND GUIDES WILL BE PROVIDED. C.J.RHODES (Pakenham. p 326)

³⁶ Elise Gundelfinger (née Oppenheimer) is a grandniece of Gustav Ginsberg.

³⁷ By stopping, it is understood that the tooth was restored with a filling.

³⁸ I have read almost every issue of this newspaper from 1880-1911.

³⁹ Most of the information in this section and the following two comes from the recording of Felix De Cola, mentioned above.

⁴⁰ NASA: VAB/G85/01/244/1 1907.

⁴¹ Information about Levisieur and Ehrlich from Amanda Katz Jermyn.

⁴² Information from Adrian Egan, one of Eric's sons. In January 1910, Halley's Comet was upstaged by another bright comet visible in the southern hemisphere, and which was frequently misidentified as Halley's Comet by observers there

(<http://www.museums.org.za/sam/resources/astron/halley.htm> and http://www.daviddarling.info/encyclopedia/D/Daylight_Comet_1910.html).

⁴³ His violin playing 'in-law' Emanuel Rieser, mentioned earlier in this text, had also by 1914 returned to Germany, and was also interned, but not at Ruhleben. It was during internment that Emanuel became unwell and died.

⁴⁴ NASA: KAB/PAE/1902/SF/C5/3 CAPE-1920 for this information and other material about the education of Felix Ginsberg.

⁴⁵ According to a letter written by Gustav's widow on 30 November 1927, well after his death. NASA: KAB/MOOC/6/9/3239/16795 1927

⁴⁶ Information from Eric's son Peter.

Extracts from
BENONI SON OF MY SORROW
The Social, Political and
Economic History of a South
African Gold Mining Town

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Published by the Town Council of Benoni,
January 1968

The First Jews

As soon as there were miners with pay-packets to spend, there were tradesmen to cater for them. The majority were English, Welsh and Scottish, but where there was business to be done in Southern Africa there were Jews to do it and Benoni was no exception.

The Jewish people who came to Benoni were of two very different types. The majority were from Russia, Poland, and Lithuania, young men escaping from local conditions. Some had received their calling-up papers from the Russian army fighting the Sino-Japanese War, for which they were regarded as convenient cannon-fodder; others saw an escape from continual religious persecution, from a peasant's hut or an overcrowded ghetto, to a future which offered at least hope. These Jewish communities which had faced constant organised hostility developed a fierce nationalism, kept up their religious practices, maintained the Middle Eastern practice of trading by barter, and taught their children to read Hebrew. Fellow-Jews along their route to South Africa cared for those who escaped, saw them on to a ship from a Baltic port to London, and kept them free in a hostel until they could be put on board a liner leaving Southampton for Cape Town. They arrived in Benoni with nothing but their wits to help them.

A smaller number who came from England or Cape Town had some means, a limited education, and were able to read and write English. The first two Jews in Benoni represented the two types. Max Ginsberg, who started a store in 1892, was already a man of some means, and was able to set up in

business his cousin from Lithuania, to trade in those lines he did not stock himself. The cousin, Wolf Smulovitz, spoke neither English nor Afrikaans and depended on sign language. His store had an earthen floor on which he slept, and a central fireplace without a chimney on which he cooked his meals. Whenever an Englishman bought one of his newspapers, he persuaded him to read out the sentences to teach him to pronounce the words and explain their meaning. Thus he slowly learned to speak and read English. His business was beginning to succeed when he heard that war between the Republic and Great Britain was imminent. The Kleinfontein management kindly offered to lock up his stock in their mine store-room and he was fortunate to find room in a cattle-truck leaving for Cape Town.

The Growth Of the Jewish Population

After the war the majority of the Jews who had previously traded in Benoni returned. Smulovitz came back to find that the Kleinfontein store had been looted and his little stock had disappeared. Worse, his partner had returned before him and had created bad blood with the Johannesburg wholesalers, who refused him credit. Eventually he persuaded one of them to supply him so that he could open up on his own. When his small stock was sold he took the money to Johannesburg and bought more goods, thus building up his store. When the Chinese were working in Benoni, he opened his shop at 4 a. m. to supply them with lemonade when they came off shift. As he closed at 10 p. m., this gave him a working-day of 18 hours. One of his memories was of a Chinaman sitting for hours cross-legged, staring at the empty lemonade bottles; it was eventually explained to him that they were not sitting idly, but were contemplating the glass marble which appeared to be larger than the neck of the bottle and working out how it could have got inside.

From these small beginnings, Smulovitz developed a large business, bought property in the centre of Benoni, changed his name to deed poll to Samuels, and died a respected citizen of the town.

The expansion of the gold mines and the establishment of the town after the war brought many more Jews to Benoni. Those who came from England or from the Cape were, like Max Ginsberg, men with some means and education. Those from Lithuania were peasants or ghetto-dwellers.

The educated Jews were able to deal with the mine officials, who were only too glad to grant them the operation of the mine concession stores, for they looked down on Bantu trading and regarded it as "very suitable for the Jews." This happened in a different sense to be true. The Bantu miners liked to take their time about their purchases, wrangling a little and haggling over the price and the value, a style of trading familiar to the Jews who were prepared to be tolerant in the interest of trade.

Soon the volume of trade justified the employment of additional shop assistants. Relations from Lithuania were particularly suitable for these posts, for the concession store-owner could communicate with them in Yiddish, while the newcomers, since he neither could nor needed to speak English or Afrikaans, soon learned one of the Bantu languages.

Living on the mines, the Lithuanian Jews made little contact with those outside the compounds, and an appeal was made to the Benoni Jewry to invite them into their own homes. The experiment was a failure, for the Lithuanians could not converse with them, and as such table manners as they had were entirely different from those of the English Jews. But the Lithuanians had acquired the Bantu language, a business asset, and as soon as they realised that there was no future for them on the mines they found means of learning English, and with the money that they had saved left the concession store to set up on their own. Those who came from the ghettos were skilled in the art of trading, those from the concessions stores had learned it on the mines. Very few failed. As the mines expanded and their businesses flourished, their sons were educated at government schools towards a social status which they themselves could never achieve. If the boy was bright and the money adequate, he was sent to university to study medicine, dentistry or law. If circumstances were less favourable, he went to a technical college to qualify in optometry or pharmacy.

The Jewish mother, requiring value for her hard-earned money, made sure that her son would not fail for lack of hard work. She kept his nose to the grindstone until he succeeded. The expanding population of Benoni would have been hard-pressed for professional services had the Jews not provided them.

Some of the Jewish immigrants, tailors and such, brought trades to the town. Typical of them was a saddlemaker, Jacob Nestadt, who had known hardship all his life. When he arrived at Cape Town his ship was not allowed to dock because an epidemic had broken out on board. He lived in poverty in Cape Town, and in 1892 moved to Fordsburg (Johannesburg) to try his luck, leaving his family behind. He set up shop there, was joined by his wife, and their son Morris was born in a small back room. This boy was to become the first citizen of Benoni to receive the freedom of the town. The events in his life are so typical of the rags-to-riches story of many Jewish businessmen that they are worth recounting in detail.

The family came to Benoni in 1904 and at the age of 10 Morris organised a newspaper round which brought him 50 cents per week. He left school at 14, and presented himself to Mr. Fairweather at the office of the New Modderfontein Gold Mine, where he was engaged as a clerk at R10 per month. When he was refused a rise he literally got on his bicycle and pedalled the six miles home, this time to be interviewed by George Rennie, who had recently left mining and started an estate agency. This Scotsman, almost a caricature of a country squire, took an immediate liking to the boy who had also cocked a snoot at the mighty gold-mining industry, and engaged him at R10 per month to sweep out the office, wash the windows and make the tea.

It was World War I which set Morris Nestadt on the road to becoming a business magnate. His employer, a captain in the Imperial Light Horse Regiment, joined up and left Morris, now aged 17 earning R20 per month, to run the business.

Young Nestadt had already realised that he faced a difficult world, and while he had been slow to absorb academic learning, he soon saw its value in business. At night he went to W. D. Wells for lessons in bookkeeping. To pay for these, as well as to acquire practical experience, he kept four sets of books for two tea-rooms, a plumber and an outfitter. This made his working-day 16 hours long, but increased his income by four monthly cash payments of R1.

Business in his estate agency was slow and competition fierce and the new manager cast about for a technique to boost sales. He decided to offer loans to those who wished to buy property, and took the plunge with an advertisement in the local

newspaper. His policy succeeded, but when the overdraft reached R1,600 the bank manager wanted to know the state of his security. The young man produced a set of beautifully-kept books which failed to create the required impression. Ordered to do something to reduce the overdraft, young Morris took his books across the road to the opposition manager, who thought them a safe risk and so acquired one of the largest accounts in the town.

His first sale illustrates the Jewish persistence which has often pulled off deals when others have failed. Nestadt found a buyer for a pair of "semis" at 117 Elston Avenue, belonging to R. W. Kemp, the chief electrician of the New Kleinfontein Mine. The buyer signed his part of the contract, the offer to buy, in the middle of the afternoon. Nestadt knew that other agents were trying to sell the same property and decided not to wait until five o'clock for the seller's signature. Reaching the mine on his bicycle, he discovered that the electricians were in the veld wiring up electric light standards. Here, up a pylon, he found the seller, persuaded him to come down and sign the document and so achieved his first sale.

Nestadt is one of many Jews who typify another trait, a love of leadership and a willingness to give their organising ability to the society in which they live. Max Ginsberg, the first Jew in Benoni, had offered his services to the Health Board in 1906, while Israel Kuper became the first Jewish Mayor of Benoni in 1917. Kuper arrived in South Africa in 1893 at the age of 10 and came to Benoni 15 years later to practise as a lawyer. On the Benoni Town Council he represented the strikers' point of view, and in 1914, when he was chairman of the Finance Committee, he became involved in the strike and was sent to gaol after Smuts declared military law. No doubt he could have used his influence as a lawyer and a Town Councillor to secure his release, but this would have been contrary to his principles. Instead, for the 21 days of his sentence, he insisted that all municipal documents which he had to sign should be brought to the Boksburg prison and passed through the bars of his cell. He was released with the other strikers on a Saturday, but being an Orthodox Jew he declined the offer of a ride to Benoni and walked home.

The minutes of Benoni's cultural, social and sporting associations record the names of such

public-spirited men as secretary or president many more times than would be expected from the proportion of Jewish membership.

In 1929 the increasing influx of Lithuanian Jews was stopped by the Immigration Quota Bill. From the Benoni point of view it is interesting that it was Walter Madeley, the Benoni representative in the House and a Christian, who put up a magnificent fight against the Bill on their behalf.

In 1938 the Jewish population held the last of its giant communal picnics in the Van Ryan plantation. In the same year Jewish women, reading to the more liberal attitude in South Africa, revolted against the traditional limitations placed on their sex by the Jewish religion and raised the question of representation in the control of their community. They received no support then, but the issue was again opened in 1942 by the Union of Jewish Women, and in 1951 they finally won their point on the understanding that no woman could hold an executive position. Mrs. Carmel Phillips and Mrs. Pearl Mandelstam were elected to represent them.

Another Jewish trait, willingness to take a chance, has added to their prosperity. In a town which was expanding and becoming prosperous, their gambles with large business deals and with business properties were mostly successful. Today the Jewish people own most of the business property in the centre of the town as well as many of the larger blocks of flats. They escaped to Benoni from persecution, hoping for better things, and they found wealth which has exceeded the bounds of their wildest dreams.

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.sajewishmuseum.co.za/home/>

Website of the South African Jewish Museum with links to the following:

- Immigrant Jewish Life
- Information on how to submit your Family Tree to the Rootsbank of the Discovery Centre and much more

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/South_Africa.html

The Virtual Jewish History Tour of South Africa by Rebecca Weiner with information on the following:

- Early 19th Century
- First Half of the 20th Century
- Post Apartheid Regime
- Cape Town Community
- Sites in Cape Town
- Johannesburg Community
- Pretoria

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/jewpop.html>

Jewish populations of countries in Africa such as:

- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Morocco
- Tunisia
- Botswana
- Kenya
- Congo D.R.
- Namibia
- Nigeria
- South Africa

<http://www.bh.org.il/communities/Archive/CapeTown.asp>

A history of the Jewish Community of Cape Town

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Jews

History of the Jews in South Africa

<http://www.shemayisrael.co.il/sa/sajbd/community.htm>

South African Jewish Board of Deputies: Information about the South African Jewish Community

<http://www.mindspring.com/~jayсанд/sa2.htm>

The Jews of Africa

<http://www.users.bigpond.net.au/fines/indexochberg.htm>

A site dedicated to Isaac Ochberg with links to his itinerary, names of the orphans, names of their descendants and much more.

NEW BOOKS

Worlds Apart: The Re-Migration of South African Jews

by Colin Tatz, Peter Arnold, and Gillian Heller. August 2007.

If the 19th and 20th Centuries witnessed the greatest migrations in the history of the world, then the story of the exodus of Jews from Lithuania to South Africa and then on again to Australia is one of the most extraordinary.

For the first time, migrants, family and friends can discover the fascinating details of what led to the migration and re-migration of so many thousands of people.

Worlds Apart is a study of a unique double translocation. It follows the footsteps of Lithuanian and Latvian-descended Jews (*Litvaks*) from their ancestral European homes to South Africa and then again, just a century later, to Australia and New Zealand.

The authors describe the life of the forebears, both in Lithuania and in South Africa, the so-called 'South African way of life'; the anti-Semitic forces there which might have propelled migration much earlier, but didn't; and the political unrest that finally led to this 'second Diaspora' to the Antipodes and other parts of the world.

Worlds Apart examines the patterns of recent emigrations, and the real and ostensible reasons for leaving.

Based on hundreds of responses to a detailed questionnaire and dozens of interviews, *Worlds Apart* presents an unforgettable picture of how life for Lithuanian Jews was, what it became, and what it is today in new lands with new hopes for the future.

It examines how and why Jews continue their millennia-old quest for a new and peaceful land, and how twice-removed Jews feel today, not just about their new homes, but about the trials and tribulations of their ancestors.

The authors are South African Jewish émigrés: two are of the early 1960s vintage and one arrived in the early 1980s. Colin Tatz is a social scientist and historian; Peter Arnold is a medical practitioner turned editor and genealogist; Gillian Hellor is a professor of statistics.

To find out more, see the website:

<http://www.rosenbergpub.com.au/handleProduct.asp?id=69&catid=2>

Where the Desert Ends

by Rabbi Richard Newman

The Windhoek Hebrew Congregation commissioned Rabbi Richard Newman to write a book on the Jews of South West Africa/Namibia. The book should be released soon. Details will be posted on the online SA-SIG Digest soon.

USED BOOKS FOR SALE

Birth of a Community: A History of Western Province Jewry from earliest times to the end of the South African War, 1902. Vol. 1.

Author: Rabbi Israel Abrahams
Cape Town: Cape Town Hebrew Congregation,
1955, pp.166
Cost of Purchase: US\$35

The Cape Town Hebrew Congregation 1841-1941: a centenary history

Author: Louis Herrman, with an introduction by
C. Graham Botha
Cape Town, 1941, pp.146
Cost of Purchase: US\$45

Bender Sermons Cape Town (undated)

Author: Rev. A.P. Bender
Cost of Purchase: US\$50

A History of The Jews in South Africa from the earliest times to 1895

Author: Louis Herrman
London: Victor Gollancz, 1930
Cost of Purchase: US\$65

The Vision Amazing. The Story of South African Zionism

Author: Marcia Gitlin
Johannesburg: Menorah Book Club, 1950
Format: 374 pages, 8vo (220 x 145 mm), 31
illustrations, maps on endpapers
Johannesburg, 1950
Cost of Purchase: US\$45

Jewry and Cape Society

Author: Milton Shain
Cape Town: Historical Publication Society, 1983
Cost of Purchase: US\$50

Living Waters

Author: Rabbi Israel Abrahams
Cape Town, 1968
Cost of Purchase: US\$25

Pathways

Author: Rabbi Israel Abrahams
Cape Town, 1968
Cost of Purchase: US\$25

Fragments of a Desert Land: Memoirs of a South West African Doctor

1975
Author: Con Weinberg
Cost of Purchase: US\$25

For further details and the cost of postage, please contact Rabbi Richard Newman at genserch@msn.com

SURNAMES APPEARING IN THIS NEWSLETTER

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