



Fig Joseph M. and Rose Shapiro

December 2015

The Story of Rose Meksin and Joseph M. Shapiro

Introduction

The story of Rose and Joseph Shapiro (Fig. 1)), my paternal grand parents, and their families began in Russia. Our family saga is a far flung story, including not only Russia and America but family members in England, New Zealand, Israel and other locations. Our family's story was affected by major world events including: the Russian revolution, the great depression, the rise and fall of Nazi Germany, and the fall of the Soviet Union.

But growing up in Manhattan in the 1950s and 60s, there was not extensive story telling by my father, nor his mother, nor by their siblings of their antecedents. And now, more than 125 years since the birth of Rose Meksin and Joseph Shapiro in Russia in 1888, we are trying to piece together the Shapiro-Meksin story from the available documents, photographs and fragmentary recollections.

It is neither surprising nor uncommon for people who have left behind one country for another, to leave behind and to close the door on parts of their own past which now, a little bit more than a century since Joseph and Rose Shapiro left Russia, seems fascinating but largely unknown to their descendants.

The nuclear family that I grew up in consisted of Edward Aaron Shapiro (1914-1967) and Sylvia Shapiro (1914-1996) and my sister Nancy Elaine (b.1948).

In some ways we were in a matriarchy in the sense that we often visited our parents' mothers, often on Sundays. In the 1950s, when my sister and I were under the age of ten, we might drive our Buick sedan from the garage near our apartment in Peter Cooper Village in Manhattan to 1603 Lincoln Place, Brooklyn to visit my mother's mother, Sarah.

Sarah had been widowed in the early 1950s, when a hernia operation on her husband, Isadore, went awry. A visit to Grandma Sarah was always accompanied by a memorable meal, usually served and eaten at the large glass covered kitchen table (with black and white family photographs placed under the glass that covered the table top). A meal might consist of some of the following: stuffed cabbage (stuffed with a grain), matzoh ball soup, latkes (my favorite) served with a choice of apple sauce, sour cream, or granulated sugar toppings. Occasionally, spare beef ribs were served. While adults spoke in the kitchen, my sister and I and maybe a cousin would busy ourselves playing in the darkened living room with its mysterious heavy furniture.

On other Sundays we might take a taxi to my other grandmother, Rose, who lived in apartment 301 of the Essex House Hotel on Central Park South. Visiting Rose's apartment (the apartment had had an additional bedroom that was subsequently closed off. It was in this second bedroom that my parents lived in shortly before

shortly before Nancy was born and prior to my parents moving into 3 Peter Cooper Road.)

Visits to Grandma Rose were different from those to Grandma Sarah. We were traveling to a hotel rather than a private home. We would also usually be walking to a restaurant for dinner rather than having something at her home. So it was by definition, a more formal experience.

Rose's apartment had a just over tree top level view of Central Park. You rang the apartment door with a small white buzzer beside the door jamb, entered into a foyer with a few small prints by Rembrandt, a painting of a cat by Foujita and two vases on pedestals that had been electrified and could be lit from the inside. There was a large bedroom and bathroom, or so it seemed at the time, and a tiny kitchen to the left of the foyer. Opposite the kitchen was a hallway with a small table covered with a quilted material. On the table was the orange marmalade and honey that Grandma Rose used for her tea and toast.

The living room was where the social time took place. My parents usually sat on a settee or a small couch, slip covered in a patterned turquoise material. Behind it was the painting by Thomas Sully, nearby was the card/backgammon table, and a couch, over which was the Terbrugghen painting of a singing luteplayer. It was then attributed to Gerrit von Honthorst.

My grandmother's desk was by the window, and at the end of the room on a wooden cabinet were the framed photographs of her three sons (James, Edward, and Robert). Usually after visiting in the living room, we would walk several blocks to the Russian Tea Room on 57th Street, where Anatole, the Russian born maître de presided and where inexplicably the Christmas decorations were festively attached year round to the ceiling lights. My father would usually order the luli kebab (lamb burgers), and Nancy and I might have the chicken Kiev (oozing melted butter when pierced by a knife) or shashlik caucasian (skewered bits of lamb, peppers and onions) or the blini (buckwheat pancakes accompanied by sour cream and red caviar). Of course, there was also a plate of pirojki – flakey triangular pastries with ground meat – served with a bowl of borscht.

I cannot describe any regular visits with my father's father, Joseph Michael Shapiro, because I cannot recall any. When we were very young, he visited us a few times. I know there was an occasional present. Perhaps this absence has stimulated my interest and curiosity in learning about my paternal grandparents and their ancestors. Part of my curiosity also stems from sharing my name "Michael" with my great grandfather as well as my grandfather, and I wonder, what does it mean to carry this name?

There were occasional visits with my uncle Bob's children – his son Roy, would show up and stay over at our apartment at 505 East 79th Street (we moved uptown in 1963) when I was in high school. We would occasionally meet Roy's sisters Susie,

Paula and Merryl at Rose's or at their home in Great Neck. We would also see my Uncle Jim's daughter, Paula, and her husband George. And sometimes we would have Sunday lunch on the Upper West Side with a couple that we lovingly called Uncle Sol and Aunt Helen. Their last name was Spaer, and they were related to my father's father...but we never learned precisely how. We did feel when we visited Sol and Helen in particular that somehow on West 93rd street we were transported to Europe. There was something courtly and exotic in their behavior and their old world manners. They served tea in glasses that fitted into silvered metal holders. And when they drank the tea, they held the sugar cube between their teeth, letting the hot tea flow over it. When they came to visit us, they often brought a box of chocolates. How were we related? It was part of an unspoken common history.

Beginning around 1999 when I turned 50, I began to become interested, particularly in the Shapiro history. Nancy or perhaps Uncle Bob provided a copy of the family tree that a Russian born relative, who is also a great grandson of Michael Shapiro Ilya Levin and his sister, compiled (Appendix A). It provided a structure of names, dates and relationships that I began to explore. Through a Russian born colleague at work, I wrote to relatives in St. Petersburg. Ilya Levin responded helpfully, as did his Aunt Mina, and then, thanks to the family tree and an unusual last name I wrote to Peter Viesnik in Auckland, New Zealand. My wife Lisa and our children and I met Peter Viesnik, another great grandson of Michael Shapiro, descended from Rosa, the first child of the original Michael Shapiro, and his family in Auckland, New Zealand

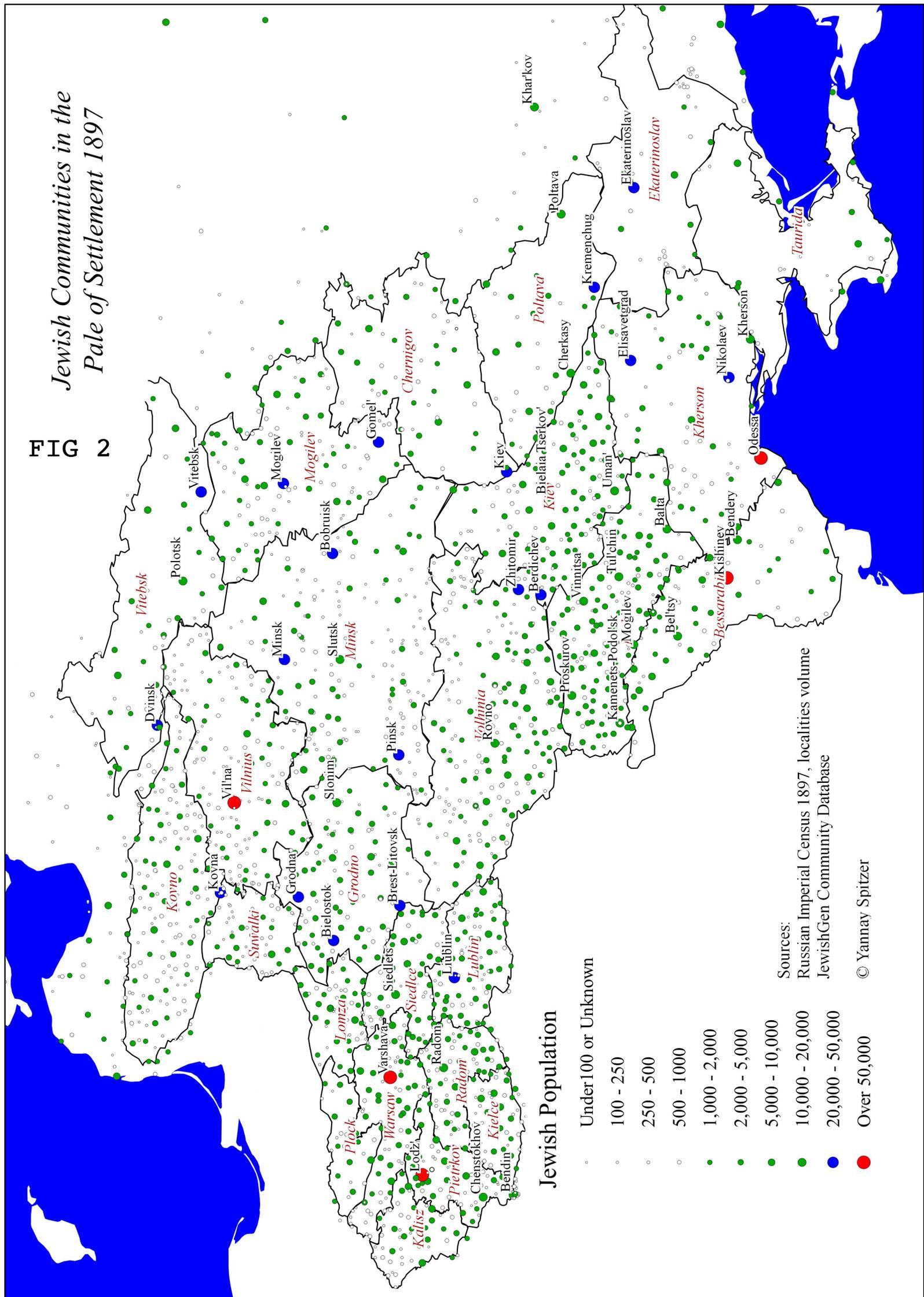
late in 1999. And a few years later I visited a distant cousin in St. Petersburg, Inna Busheva. the grand daughter of Anna Shapiro.

In recent months, I have searched early locations in the Bronx where my father, his brothers and their parents lived and worked from approximately 1918-1930s, and I have begun to study my grandmother's family, the Meksins, with some notable success. Some of the disparate pieces have come close enough together to attempt to tell the outline of our Shapiro-Meksin family's story.

What follows is what we know at this point in time.

Jewish Communities in the Pale of Settlement 1897

FIG 2



Jewish Population

- Under 100 or Unknown
- 100 - 250
- 250 - 500
- 500 - 1000
- 1,000 - 2,000
- 2,000 - 5,000
- 5,000 - 10,000
- 10,000 - 20,000
- 20,000 - 50,000
- Over 50,000

Sources:
Russian Imperial Census 1897, localities volume
JewishGen Community Database

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Pale of Settlement

For the roots of the Shapiro and Meksin families, we turn to three locations in 19th century Imperial Russia: Dvinsk, Borisov and Nikolaev (Fig. 2). Though hundreds of miles apart, all three lay within the Pale of Settlement, a large area between the Baltic and Black Seas at the southwestern edge of the Russian Empire. It was first created in 1791 by Catherine the Great as an area where Jews were restricted to live. It lasted until 1917.

Dvinsk

Dvinsk is now known as Daugavpils is in the southeastern part of Latvia. It borders Belarus and Lithuania and is approximately midway between Riga, Latvia's capital in the north and Minsk to the south. Dvinsk is the town where we first encounter Michael and Mina Shapiro around 1880, when Rosa, their first child, and 1881, when Ilya, their second child, were born. Dvinsk is about 150 miles northwest of Borisov, where Michael would move after the death of his first wife.

Borisov

Borisov is the name of the town that Michael Shapiro and his two young children, Rosa and Ilya moved to in the early 1880s. It is approximately 45 miles north-east of Minsk. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 Borisov (now called Barysaw) has been located in the Republic of Belarus.



Fig. 3 Michael Shapiro

Nikolaev

This is the town where the Meksin family lived and it is the southernmost location in our story. Nikolaev was founded in 1789 as a ship building center. It was also a major Jewish center in the Russian Empire during the 19th century. The town lies on the shores of the Black Sea. It is relatively close to the capital of the Ukraine, Odessa. Nikolaev is approximately 500 miles due south from Borisov. Since the end of the Soviet Union, Nikolaev has been part of the Ukraine.

It was in these areas that Michael Shapiro and his wives (Mina Vovsi (?) and Ethel Zuckerman) and children lived and worked. We believe that Michael Shapiro tended some of the Tsar's forests in the Borisov area. What that meant precisely, we do not know. There is a photograph of Michael Shapiro wearing a medal, said to have been awarded to him by the Tsar (Fig. 3). And we believe that he was a religious and a studious man.

Even less is known of his two wives – his first wife appears to have been named Mina, and she may have had the maiden name of Vovsi. She and Michael had two children together: Rosa (1880-1960) and Ilya (1881-1942). We believe that Mina died in childbirth with Ilya in 1881 and assume that she is buried in Dvinsk.

Michael subsequently married a woman named Ethel Zuckerman (Fig.4). Seven years after the death of Mina and the birth of her son, Ilya, Michael and Ethel Shapiro had their first child together, my grandfather, Joseph Michael Shapiro.



Fig, 4 Ethel Zuckerman Shapiro



Fig. 5 Michael Shapiro with Anna(?) and Jose



Fig. Michael Shapiro and Family

Joseph and Ethel had three children together between 1888 and 1894: Joseph, Olga, and Anna.

Joseph Michael Shapiro was born in Borisov on September 25, 1888, the third of Michael Shapiro's five children. He was born seven years after his brother Ilya. After Joseph two daughters Olga (1893-1981) and Anna (1894-1979) followed (Fig. 5).

This photograph (Fig. 5) depicts Michael Shapiro and though labeled Anna and Joseph, may actually show the young Rosa and Joseph. All five children of Michael Shapiro, the two sons, Ilya and Joseph, and three daughters, Rosa, Olga and Anna, lived together with Michael and Ethel, and it was in this setting that Joseph was born and raised.

There is a wonderful photograph of Michael Shapiro surrounded by some of his family members. It was probably taken in 1932 in St. Petersburg, when JM was visiting from America.



6A



In the front row is, from left to right, Arkady, the youngest person and only grandchild in the photograph (Fig. 6A). Arkady was born in 1922 to Anna (1894-1979) and her husband Isaac Schienzke (1890-1956).

6B



Anna (Fig. 6B), with her elaborately collared dress is seated next to Arkady and

6C



beside her father, Michael. Michael is seated between his two youngest children, his daughters, Anna on the left and Olga on the right (Fig. 6C) . Michael wears a three

6D



piece suit, white shirt and tie. He has a neatly cared for salt and pepper beard, is bald and his right eye drifts off towards the left edge of the photograph (Fig. 6D).

The four family members in the upper row are Aaron (died ca. 1941, husband of

6E



Olga Fig. 6E), Ilya (1881-1942) (Fig. 6F) and his wife Ester (1892-1973) (Fig. 6G) and Joseph. The only sibling missing from the photograph was Michael Shapiro's

eldest daughter (Rosa d. 1960). She and her family were living in Berlin when this

6F



photograph was taken. There are two couples in the photograph: Ilya and Ester in the center of the top row and Aaron and Olga in the top left and lower right.

Michael, Ilya and Joseph Shapiro are all bald. Since Michael Shapiro's wife Ethel is

6G



not in the picture, perhaps she was no longer alive in 1932.



CABINET-
PORTRAIT

Fig. 7 Joseph Shapiro



Fig. 8 Rose Meksin Shapiro

Joseph's schooling is unclear. There is a lovely photograph of JM as a young boy in a cadet's uniform (Fig. 7). Later on he appears to have met Rose Meksin at school – whether it is pharmacy school or something else, Rose and Joseph were married in Borisov at the age of 20 on March 1, 1909 (Fig. 8). And just nine months later the first of their three sons was born in Borisov: James Joseph Shapiro on December 21, 1909.

When he was retired, Uncle Jim remembered as a young boy the Kossaks riding through the town of Borisov and his mother pulling him into the house for safety. This atmosphere of intolerance may have contributed to young Joseph and Rose's decision to leave Russia for America. He was the only one of his four siblings to do so.

Let me recount the few biographical notes I know about the lives the family of: Michael Shapiro, Mina and Ethel Shapiro and their children.

Michael Shapiro

Little is known about the life of Michael Shapiro. Since his first child was born in 1880, I assume that Michael was between 20-25 years old at the time. If this is correct, then he was born between 1855-60. He died in St. Petersburg in 1935. I believe that his first marriage to Mina took place in Dvinsk, where her family was from and where they lived in the early 1880s. He must have moved to Borisov and married Ethel between 1882 and 1888 (when Joseph was born in Borisov).

Mina

According to Ilya Levin, the family of Mina Shapiro lived in Dvinsk. She was a member of the Vovsi family. Her distant relative was a well known Jewish actor and director named Solomon Mikhoels (1890-1948). Her son Ilya Shapiro and Mikhoels were both cousins and close friends. According to Mina Levin there were three Vovsi brothers – Mikhoel, who directed the only Jewish theater in Russia in Moscow. He was murdered in Minsk. Miron was the second brother – he was arrested in the early 1950s as the main doctor in the “Doctor’s Group” and the third brother was a dentist.

Mina died giving birth to her son Ilya in 1881. She is buried in Dvinsk.

Rosa

What I know of Michael and Mina Shapiro’s first child, Rosa Shapiro Viesnik (1880-1960) comes from her grandson, Peter. She was born in Dvinsk on July 15, 1880 and died in London on March 28, 1962. Her husband Zavel was born in Minsk on November 22, 1880 and died in London on March 28, 1962.

Peter Viesnik wrote “...My grandfather Zavel and his brothers were wealthy merchants with a family estate somewhere in the vicinity of Minsk and business interests in Moscow, where they had a factory producing either material or clothing and a department store.

They had special permits to enable them to travel between these two regions [Minsk and Moscow], but of course when the revolution occurred their businesses and

properties were acquired by the Bolsheviks and were ransomed for exorbitant amounts.

They then decided to leave Russia and ...headed for Berlin...[They] arrived in Berlin around 1917...[They lived in Berlin into the 1930s when Peter's father located Joseph Shapiro in New York and told him] of his parents plight in Berlin...Joe flew to London ...and arranged my grandparents escape to England...where they lived for the remainder of their lives .

Ilya

What I know about Ilya comes from a letter his daughter Mina wrote to me around 1999. Here is what she said:

My father, Ilya Shapiro was the second child in the family. His parents were Michael and Mina. His oldest sister was Rosa. ..My father was a very intelligent and well educated person. He graduated from Law School of St. Petersburg University. He was a well known lawyer and one day was offered the post of Minister of Justice. In 1925-26 he was the chief of lawyers board in Siberia. Then he was arrested for political reasons and put in jail. It was very difficult to release him.

During World War II my mother, sister and I were evacuated from Leningrad, but our father stayed. He was more than 60 years old and pretty sick. In 1942 on January 15 my father passed away from starvation during the time when Leningrad was in the blockade. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery by Uncle Isaac and Aunts. According to Mina's letter, her Uncle Isaac helped her parents, Ilya and Ester, to move back to Leningrad in 1944. Her mother was also a dentist.

Mina and her husband Gregory (1912-1990) did not have children. She was an endocrinologist for 45 years and her husband was an economist. Her sister Galina (1928-1990) went to law school at St. Petersburg University and worked as a lawyer. In 1954 she married Semyen Levin (1925-1985) who worked for many years in the Russian navy in the Black Sea.

Ethel

Little is known about Michael Shapiro's second wife, Ethel Zuckerman. We do not know where she was born, died, nor where she is buried. She was the mother of Joseph, Olga and Anna, but the first two children of Mina and Joseph also lived with Ethel and Michael in Borisov.

Joseph

He was the first child of Joseph and Ethel and was born in Borisov on September 25, 1888. As will be told later, he was the only one of the five children to emigrate to America, which he did in 1912, just a few years after marrying Rose Meksin on March 1, 1909.

The first of their three sons, James Joseph Shapiro was born in Borisov on December 21, 1909. Their second, Edward Aaron, was born on December 22, 1914 (Fig. 9), and their third, Robert Meksin in 1919.

After working in Toledo Ohio for a few years, Joe and Rose and their two sons moved to the Bronx, New York. It was there in late 1927 that Simplicity Pattern Company was born



Fig. 9 Rose with James and Edward

Olga

Olga was the fourth child of Michael Shapiro and the second child of Michael and Ethel. She was born in 1893 and died, probably in St. Petersburg in 1981. She was married to Aaron, who died ca. 1941. According to the letter from Mina, Olga was a dentist.

Anna

Anna was the youngest child of Michael Shapiro. She was born in 1894, probably also in Borisov. Both Anna and her husband, Isaac were dentists. They had one child, Arkady (1922- 1998). Arkady is the young boy in the family photograph taken in the early 30s. Arkady and his wife Ludmilla had one child, Inna Busheva (b. 1965) who lives in St. Peterburg with her husband Igor Bushev (b.1963). They have two daughters, Anastasia and Anna. They live in the same apartment that Inna's parents had.

To America

At the age of 23 Joseph arrived in New York from Bremen, Germany on July 16, 1912. He had sailed aboard the Kaiser Wilhelm II, and he headed from New York to Toledo, Ohio. He was 5'6" high, had blue eyes and black hair and weighed 172 lbs. He had left his wife and son behind in Borisov.

In Toledo he had a variety of jobs. One of those jobs was as a “cutter” in the thriving garment industry in Toledo. After almost a year and a half his wife, Rose, and son, James, joined him. Rose and James sailed on the SS Konig Albert from Bremen, arriving in New York on February 26, 1914. On the ship’s manifest, Rose’s name is listed as “Reichel”. And there is a reference on he manifest of her father being named Michael Salomon. They headed for Toledo. Ten months later their second son was born in Toledo at 3 a.m. on December 22, 1914. His original name was Aaron Edward Shapiro, though he would ultimately reverse his first and second names.

New York

Around 1918 or 1919 the Shapiros moved to New York City. The January 1920 census has the Shapiros residing in the Bronx. It is possible that some of grandma Rose’s relatives , the Meksin family, were somewhat established in the publishing/fashion arena and encouraged them to move to the Bronx. The third Shapiro son, Robert Meksin, was born on August 22, 1919.

We have three or four addresses in the Bronx from the late teens until approximately 1930. The first apartment at 1973 Vyse Avenue no longer exists. But the building next door to 1973 still stands (Fig.10), and it is probably very similar if not identical to its now missing neighbor.

Lisa, Nancy, Paula, Cindy and I recently visited and the subsequent Shapiro residences in the Bronx, and we were struck by what we assume was Rose Shapiro’s



119.10 1275 VYSE AVENUE, BOSTON



Fig. 11 1895 Andrews Avenue Bronx NY



Fig. 12 1820 Loring Place, Bronx NY



Fig. 13 Paula Lund at 1820 Loring Place

very thoughtful choice of homes – all were a short walk from a school and shopping, yet were on relatively quiet streets. You could see Rose thinking about a safe and solid home for her husband and three sons. All of the Bronx locations were relatively close to one another, and each seemed to be an improvement over the prior one.

In 1925 the Shapiros moved to 1895 Andrews Avenue (Fig.11) and around 1930 to 1820 Loring Place. Loring Place had the most imposing entrance of any of the prior residences – white stone pilasters and a pediment over the main entrance (Fig.12).

There is a striking photograph of Paula Lund as a one year old in front of the Loring Place building, where she believes she lived with her parents, James and Helen Shapiro when she was a baby. Here she is as a baby in front of Loring Place (Fig.13).

Meksin Family in New York

According to the oral traditions of the Meksin family, the family came from Spain at the time of the Inquisition in the late 15th century. They relocated to France and then Germany, until Catherine the Great opened land to Jews near the Black Sea. So the Meksin's emigrated to the Odessa area, in particular to a village called Nikolaev, which is where Rose and her sister Nadya were raised.

Nadya

We know very little about my grandmother's sister, Nadya. She lived in Moscow in the 1950s and 60s. She had a son, who was said to have been in the Russian

Clara's (1900-1967) maiden name was Rabiner, and she married Aaron Meksin. They had two children, Paul (1925- ____) and Isa (b.1928). I am in contact with Paul's son Robert (b.1961) and Isa, who lives in the Echo Park area of Los Angeles. My sister, Cousin Paula and I all have memories of Clara.

We do not know the names or life dates of Rose's parents. We believe that Rose's mother's maiden name was Weinstein. The progenitor of the Meksin line in the United States were David and Panya Meksin, who had six children (Appendix B). Little is known of three of those six children. It is possible that Rose is descended from one of the three lesser known branches. One of David and Panya's six children was an architect named Abraham Meksin. Abraham Meksin and his wife Nadya had five children: Isaac, Misha, Elizaveta, Sima and Aaron. Isaac was the eldest of Abraham and Nadya's five children. We know that Isaac was a designer who was quite involved with my grandparents' lives. Clara we know married Aaron and had a close friendship with Rose.

We do not know precisely how Rose was related to the Meksins that preceded her to New York, but we do know that she and they came from the same town (Nikolaev), that JM Shapiro worked with Isaac Meksin in the Bronx in the 1920s and that Rose maintained a close relationship with Clara Meksin, and that Clara's children remember visiting Rose at the Essex House.

Isaac Meksin and his wife Fannie had emigrated to the United States from Nikolaev on March 9, 1907, two years before Joseph and Rose were married. Isaac was born

maintained a close relationship with Clara Meksin, and that Clara's children remember visiting Rose at the Essex House.

Isaac Meksin and his wife Fannie had emigrated to the United States from Nikolaev on March 9, 1907, two years before Joseph and Rose were married. Isaac was born on April 15, 1888 in Nikolaev. He worked in the fashion industry in New York and according to his granddaughter, Vivian Cahn, he may have sponsored JM's emigration to America.

In any event it seems that around 1925 JM Shapiro worked with Isaac Meksin at the Fashionable Dress Publishing Company at 2525 Valentine Avenue in the Bronx.

Isaac was listed as a Vice President and JM was listed as a manager. In August 1926, a botched hernia operation led to Isaac Meksin's sudden and unexpected death at the age of 42. According to an obituary, Isaac Meksin worked at Fashionable Dress since it was organized 11 years before, around 1915. Isaac Meksin might very well have provided the contacts and context for Joseph and Rose to move to New York in the late teens.

There is a wonderful photograph of Rose and JM, their sons, Edward and Bob, and on the left side of the photograph, Isaac and Fanya Meksin (Fig.14). They appear to be on holiday in Florida, possibly in the early 1920s. My father looks about 8 and Bob looks about 3. Isaac is in a heavy white sweater. Rose looks quite contented, while Joseph on the far right, with a cigarette in his hand, looks less comfortable.

The story goes that in the 15 months between Isaac's death and the end of 1927, JM started the Simplicity Pattern Company. It is unclear the various roles that Isaac's



4 Isaac and Fanya Meksin, Rose and Joseph Shapiro, Edward and Robert

death, the Fashionable Dress Publishing Company played in the genesis of this new company.

According to Vivian Cahn, Isaac's grand daughter, there was a family disagreement. Isaac's son, Jack, tried to keep the Fashionable Dress magazine going but it eventually folded. Simplicity hired Jack Meksin in Los Angeles, and he worked for the company from 1936 to 1948.

Printed references to the origin of the company recite the following:

"At first Mr. Shapiro designed his own patterns, working in a small New York loft, cribbing occasionally from department store windows, dress companies and movies and doing his own cutting, manufacturing and printing."

Another article reported:

"...while still holding down his day job, he began working at night in his own home. He bought some tissue paper, some muslin, and an ancient printing press. At night he designed dresses himself, cut and printed the patterns, and then during the day in Chicago, went out and peddled them. The big stores threw him back. They didn't want 15cent patterns, and women didn't want 'em. Joe kept plodding along"

The loft building referenced was possibly 2525 Valentine Avenue in the Bronx (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15 2525 Valentine Avenue, Bronx NY



Fig. 16 James Joseph Shapiro



Fig. 17 Robert and Edward Shapiro



Fig. 18 Palmer Hill Road, Greenwich, Connecticut

Manhattan

Connecticut

By 193_ Simplicity was doing very well (Figs.16, 17) and the Shapiro family moved to a large home on what is now 269 Palmer Hill Road in Greenwich, Connecticut (Fig.18).

The house with its red tile roof and rambling configuration had been built around 1900 and consisted of 12 bedrooms and 10 full baths on approximately 10 acres. Our father remembered the Doberman pinchers, the peacocks, the chauffer named Mike. Paula remembers visiting the house as a little girl.

The 193_ census lists the five Shapiros plus one daughter in law named Harriet. I suspect that Harriet Shapiro, age 2_, was briefly married briefly to my father, but no trace of the wedding or divorce has been found.

By 1940 my father had probably divorced and then joined the army. Around this time, JM had moved out of the Palmer Hill house. The business was doing very well, but the family unit appears to have splintered.

By 1940 Rose resettled in the Essex House, where she would live until her death in 1966. Bob served in the army in the Pacific (Fig. 19) and Jim was given a medical deferment.

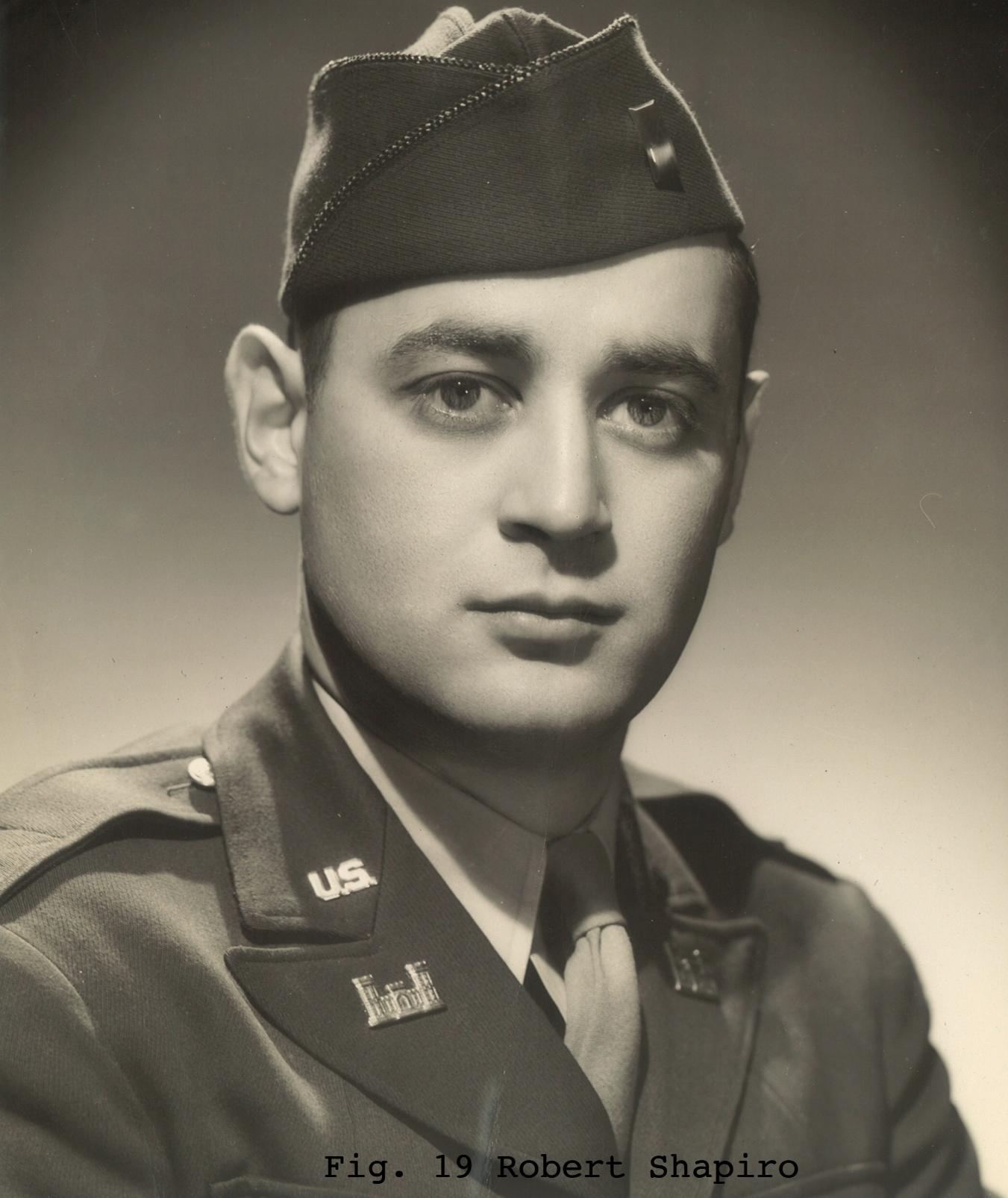


Fig. 19 Robert Shapiro



Fig. 20 Solomon Spaer

Other relatives to America

As Hitler rose to power in the 1930s, JM assisted a number of relatives in leaving Europe for America. In the introduction to this document I mentioned Sol and Helen Spaer as relatives Nancy and I and our parents would visit in the 1950s and 60s . They were a charming couple. Sol was born in Mariupal, Russia on June 21, 1893 and had been trained as a doctor (Fig. 20). He stopped practicing when he had to perform field amputations under extremely stressful conditions. I believe that he and JM were friends as well as relatives, and Sol and Helen would speak often about being in Danzig (now Gdansk) together, possibly on their way to America.

Sol was 45 years old when he and his brother David and David's family came to New York from Le Havre on August 11, 1939 aboard the SS Mauretania. His profession was listed as "physician and merchant" and his languages were listed as Russian, German, French and English. They had left from Danzig on June 20th. Accompanying Sol was his wife Helen, his brother David, David's wife Zenia, Zenia's mother, and David and Zenia's daughter, Luise Beatrice Spaer. Luise was born on January 2, 1927. Upon their arrival in New York, they all lived at 105 East 24th Street. Sol and David were employed by Simplicity first on 25th street and later on in a warehouse uptown. Sol and Helen were living in Atlanta in 1945 at 1120 Ponce de Leon when they applied for citizenship.

One other pair of relatives arrived from Europe, probably also aided by JM, the twin Horowicz brothers, Sigmund and Michael. They were both born on December 31, 1901. And they, like Sol and David, were employed by Simplicity. Additionally, as was mentioned elsewhere JM helped his sister Rosa and her husband Zavel to leave Berlin for London in the mid 1930s.

Conclusion

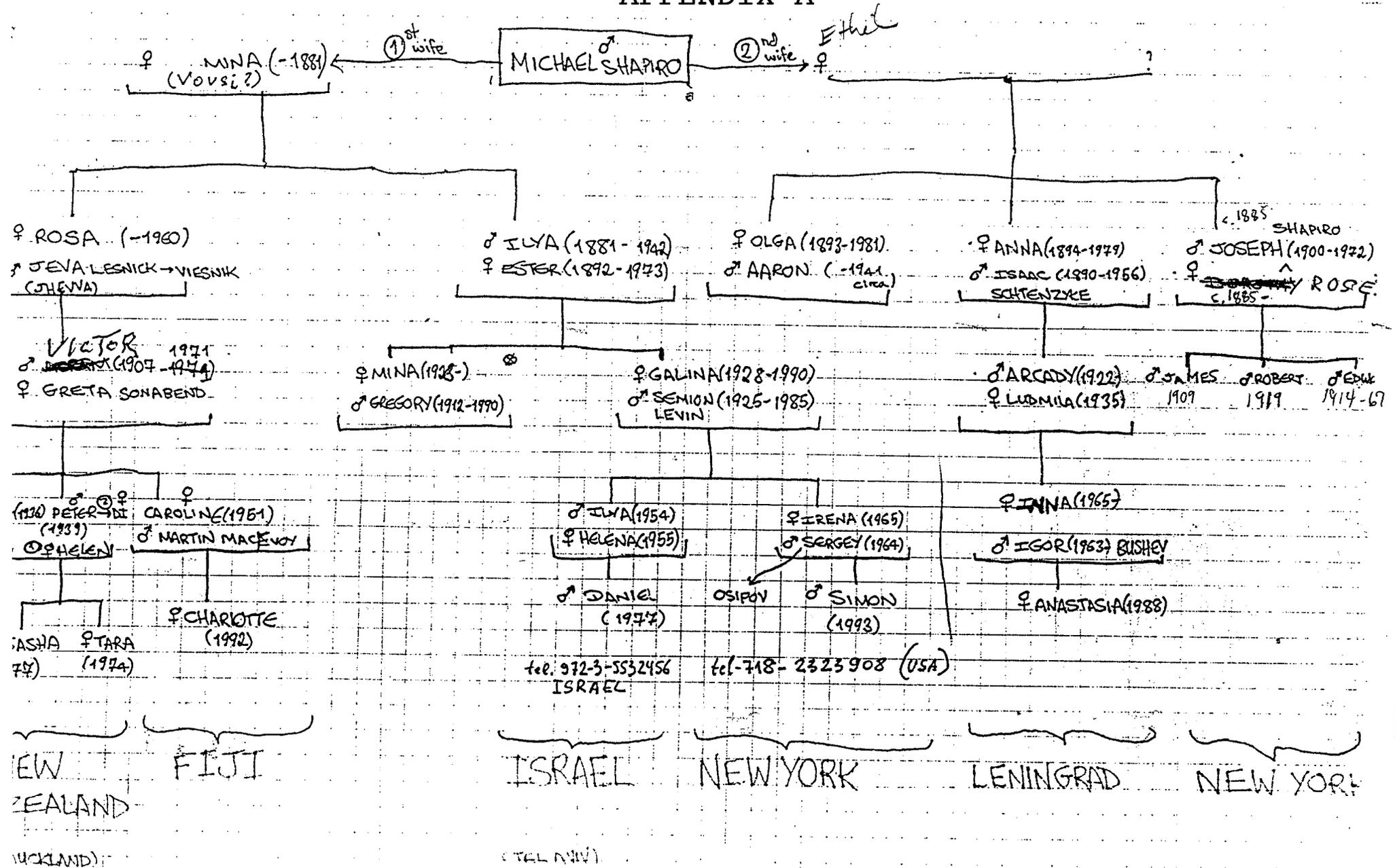
That is what we know as of late 2015. What are some of the outstanding mysteries?

There is much more to be learned about the life of Michael Shapiro and his two wives, Mina and Ethel and their lives in Borisov. And there is much more to be learned about the Meksin's in Nikolaev, particularly how Rose is connected to that family.

But from what we know already, these were courageous lives, lived often under challenging circumstances. They persevered. There also seems to be a commitment to learning, to work and to family.

I look forward to adding to and updating this document.

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B

The MERSINO

FAMILY TREE

