

STILL WANDERING :

Tales from the Diaspora

by

Danielle Alyssa Rosen

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfilment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2018

© *Danielle Alyssa Rosen 2018*

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

As human beings, we are compelled to establish relationships and develop communities; we practice finding meaning in these things. However, no matter how much effort goes into their creation, and no matter how rich they are, they are always subject to an end—what they start as is not what they become. This too resonates with all things built; the memory of what a place was, inhabits what they are, and what they will be.

My thesis is a pilgrimage: within the excavation of documents, retellings of personal accounts, and site visits, I attempt to illuminate a group of people that risk being lost to the passing of time. It is within these stories that my family is brought to life, animating the houses, synagogues and other buildings that they once occupied. It is a reminder and a celebration of transience and the value of inhabiting it, if only for a brief amount of time.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible if not for my community.

An immense thank you is due, first and foremost, to my two co-supervisors, Andrew Levitt and Robert Jan van Pelt. My undergraduate architectural education was sandwiched by these two wonderful professors, and so much of what I learnt and took to heart throughout my degree, I owe to their teachings. Andrew, thank you for consistently showing me the value of storytelling within the architectural discourse. Your dedication to my thesis from the moment I decided to change my topic was invaluable, and that support gave me the confidence to pursue my vision with conviction and confidence. Robert, thank you for speaking my language from the very start and offering support in so many ways, from words of tough love to a shoulder to cry on. I feel honoured to have gotten to know you better through this process. My appreciation for you both can not even begin to be approached within this paragraph; it was truly a pleasure and a privilege. I will carry your kind words and imparted wisdom with me forever.

To Jane Hutton, and to Marta Marín-Dòmine, my internal and external committee members: thank you both for your eagerness to step up to the task, especially when it came down to the wire (Jane—again, I can not thank you enough). Your insights and critiques during the defence were much appreciated; thank you for dedicating your time.

To Donald McKay, thank you for everything in TRD1, as well as your guidance throughout my undergraduate education. You inspire me to do better, and to be better.

To Anne Bordeleau, thank you for always opening your door to me in times of crisis, and for having a brilliant solution to any problem I came knocking with.

To Dan Jessel, for entertaining my endless questions in the wood shop throughout my curiosity cabinet and my *sukkah* projects. I always looked forward to my time in the shop not only because I knew that I had your confidence and your support, but also because of your friendship.

To Emily Anglin, thank you for everything that you have done for me, and for everything you do for the school.

Acknowledgements continued

I owe a deep gratitude to the individuals that so deeply love their cities and communities that I had the opportunity to visit: firstly, of Cornwall, thank you to Ian Bowering, John Bulloch, Sara Lauzon, and Bill & Darlene McGimpsey. A special thank you to Denise Martin, for so warmly opening your home to my family. To Don Smith of the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives, to whom I owe so much of my Cornwall portion, thank you for all of your assistance, and for joining me in my excitement during my search for the Horovitz family. Your continued curatorial service is important and necessary; I hope that the museum continues to thrive for years to come.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge those of Chomedey: to Rabbi Solomon Spiro and to Sylvia Chadnick, thank you for sharing your stories and your memories. Thank you to Mindy Caplan of the Young Israel of Chomedey for your help and your openness in discussing such a difficult topic. The community loves you back.

To Rabbi Moishy Goldman, for opening your home and your synagogue to me along with so many other students. Your insights were crucial in the development of my *sukkah*, and I am honoured that it was graced with your presence.

To Max Marmer of Hillel Waterloo and to Darren Becks of St. Jerome's University, thank you for taking on the storage and the future of my *sukkah*. I look forward to putting it up together with you and feel comforted knowing that it will be taken care of in the future. Thank you for giving it a home.

I would like to thank my friends and classmates for everything from inspiring conversations to truck driving assistance. Thank you to Jamie Banks, Louis-Pierre Bélec, Chris Chan, Bryce Clayton, Carly Kandrack, Eveline Lam, Sean Maciel, Levi Mullan, Georgiana Nicoara, Cam Parkin, Anne Sewell, Pavel Tsolov, and to all of my TRD1 and TRD2 classmates for encouraging me to pursue my interests wholeheartedly. Thank you to my peers at UWSA for continuously inspiring me and pushing me to create and perform to my highest ability.

I would sincerely like to thank my dear friends, Wesley Chu, Hannah Mete, and Paniz Moayeri. I hope I can be the same beacon of support and guidance for you that you have been for me. I would be lost without you all.

To Tristan Robertson, thank you for everything, but especially for being wonderful you.

My thesis would have been impossible to complete if not for my family. To the new and the old: Joan Aaron, Sandra Aaron, Ian & Missy Bender, Jason Coller, Ted & Darlene Coller, Mitchell Hollander, Paula Hollander, Ellie Manis, Anthony Horovitz, Joel Horovitz, Sidney Horovitz and Rho Kirsch, thank you all for your trust in me to tell our family's story.

To the incredible family that I had the privilege of getting to know, even if we never had the chance to meet: Aaron, Louis, Paul, Saul, Gertrude, Haim, David—I hope I told your stories well.

To my Zaida, Gerald Bender, and to my Bubby, Esther Rosen, thank you for everything. I can not even begin to express my gratitude; I hope that it is evident within this document.

I would especially like to acknowledge my parents, Cal and Melanie, for their unending and unwavering support. Your steadfastness to our culture and to our family has been a critical foundation in my life, and this thesis is only the beginning of the ways in which it has manifested within me. Thank you for believing in me.

Finally, to Josh and Michael: this thesis is as much mine as it is yours; you are both in the unique position of having the same shared background as me, and I hope that this thesis allows you to find the value in knowing what has come before us as much as it has done so for me. I am fortunate to have you both alongside me as brothers, and as friends.

To those who have come before me

&

To those who will come after

Table of Contents

<i>iii</i>	Author's Declaration
<i>v</i>	Abstract
<i>vii</i>	Acknowledgements
<i>xi</i>	Dedication
<i>xv</i>	List of Figures
3	Prologue
9	Part 1.1 / Cornwall
123	Part 1.2 / Massena
195	Part 2 / Chomedey
275	Part 3 / Cambridge
319	Bibliography
327	Appendix 1 / Rho
341	Appendix 2 / The Jewish Diaspora
347	Appendix 3 / Afterlife
351	Glossary

List of Figures

Prologue

- 4 *Figure 0-01* My curiosity cabinet
Photograph by author

Part 1.1 / Cornwall

- 10 *Figure 1-01* My Uncle Lawrence and great-grandmother Gertrude enjoying
summer, mid 1980s
From family collection
- 12 *Figure 1-02* The Horovitz/Bender Family Tree
By author
- 14 *Figure 1-03* My Bubby and Zaida, Sylvia and Gerald, at their wedding, 1963
From family collection
- 16 *Figure 1-04* Aaron Horovitz
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 18 *Figure 1-05* Cornwall children; Top, [second from the left] Joan Aaron;
Bottom, [second from left] Joel Horivitz, [second from right]
Sidney Horovitz
Retrieved from <http://cornwallfreenews.com/2017/11/10/seniors-situation-room-by-dawn-ford-lest-we-forget-remembrance-day-2017/>
- 20 *Figure 1-06* The pixelated typewritten family tree
Provided by Sidney Horovitz
- 22 *Figure 1-07* The scanned family tree from Sidney
Provided by Sidney Horovitz
- 23 *Figure 1-08* The same family tree, with corrections by Joanie
Provided by Joan Aaron
- 24 *Figure 1-09* A type-written document of the Horovitz family history,
recounted by Paul Horovitz in the 1980s
Provided by Joan Aaron
- 25 *Figure 1-10* A similar document with corrections recounted by Gertrude
Bender
Provided by Joan Aaron
- 26 *Figure 1-11* Aaron summed up on a scrap of paper
Provided by Joan Aaron

List of Figures continued

- 28 *Figure 1-12* Aaron and his adopted daughter, Lillian; there little existing information about her as she was sent to live in mental health facility when Aaron remarried
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 30 *Figure 1-13* Tombstones in the Botosani cemetery; other parts of the cemetery have been better preserved and are in better condition than the section as seen above
- 32 *Figure 1-14* Restored synagogue in Botosani, Romania
Retrieved from www.romanian-synagogues.org/botosani-synagogue/
- 33 *Figure 1-15* Interior of the restored synagogue in Botosani, Romania
Retrieved from www.romanian-synagogues.org/botosani-synagogue/
- 34 *Figure 1-16* Stormont Mill of the Canada Cotton complex on the Cornwall waterfront
Retrieved from <http://www.cornwallpostcards.ca/factories.html>
- 36 *Figure 1-17* The Canada Weave Shed at Canada Cotton
Retrieved from <http://www.cornwallpostcards.ca/factories.html>
- 37 *Figure 1-18* Courtauld's Canada rayon factory
Retrieved from <http://www.cornwallpostcards.ca/factories.html>
- 38 *Figure 1-19* Newspaper advertisement for Prince Clothing Company, 1925
Retrieved from <https://cornwallcommunitymuseum.wordpress.com/2014/10/23/artifact-of-the-week-cornwalls-mayors-part-iii/>
- 40 *Figure 1-20* Louis and Aaron Horovitz
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 42 *Figure 1-21* Emigration Route: Sept 1919 - May 1920
Provided by Joan Aaron
- 46 *Figure 1-22* My great-grandparents, Getrude & Haim Bender
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 48 *Figure 1-23* Some of the Horovitz family
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 50 *Figure 1-24* Marriage document of Haim Bender & Ghizela (Gertrude) Horovitz
Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826-1936 retrieved from ancestry.com
- 52 *Figure 1-25* Still from "Fateless" (2005)
Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0367082/mediaviewer/rm720692992>

- 54 *Figure 1-26* Auschwitz
Retrieved from <http://www.holocaust.com.au/the-facts/the-outbreak-of-world-war-ii-and-the-war-against-the-jews/the-auschwitz-death-camps/life-in-auschwitz>
- 56 *Figure 1-27* Transnistria
Retrieved from <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/communities/balti/transnistria.asp>
- 58 *Figure 1-28* List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigration Officer at Port of Arrival travelling from Havana, Cuba; passenger Haim Bender is recorded on the last line on the document
New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 retrived from ancestry.com
- 59 *Figure 1-29* The Manifest, continued
New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 retrived from ancestry.com
- 60 *Figure 1-30* Haim Bender's Declaration of Passenger to Canada indicating his Turkish origins
Canada, Ocean Arrivals (Form 30A), 1919-1924 retrieved from ancestry.com
- 62 *Figure 1-31* Haim Bender's Canadian Immigration Document indicating his Romanian/Hebrew citizenship and race
Border Crossings: From U.S. to Canada, 1908-1935 retrieved from ancestry.com
- 66 *Figure 1-32* Interior of the Beth-El Synagogue, 1940
From *The Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre, accession 2007-9-2.*
- 68 *Figure 1-33* Longtime resident Mark Goldhammer discusses the imminent closure of the Beth-El Synagogue in Cornwall's Standard-Freeholder Newspaper
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 72 *Figure 1-34* Flyer advertising Mayor Horovitz's annual children's picnic, 1956
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 74 *Figure 1-35* Aaron "Flash" Horovitz
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 76 *Figure 1-36* Mayor Aaron Horovitz's annual children's picnic parade route in downtown Cornwall
Retrieved from <https://cornwallcommunitymuseum.wordpress.com/2017/05/20/aaron-horovitz-his-legacy/>

List of Figures continued

- 77 *Figure 1-37* Aaron pictured amongst many children at the annual picnic
Retrieved from <https://cornwallcommunitymuseum.wordpress.com/2013/10/05/artifact-of-the-week-mayor-horovitz-picnic-cornwall-the-seaway-city-mayors-picnic-beanie-mayors-picnic-t-shirt-cornwalls-central-park-horovitz-park/>
- 78 *Figure 1-38* Some members of the Horovitz family
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 80 *Figure 1-39* Aerial view of the original Central Park
Retrieved from <https://www.cornwallslittlehistorian.com/sydney-street-book>
- 82 *Figure 1-40* The public pool in Central Park
Retrieved from <https://cornwallcommunitymuseum.wordpress.com/2014/03/25/in-history-the-historic-bike-path-a-sneak-preview/>
- 83 *Figure 1-41* Horovitz Memorial Park signage
Photograph by author
- 84 *Figure 1-42* The house on Gloucester Street
Photograph by author
- 86 *Figure 1-43* The stairs and chandelier
Photograph by author
- 88 *Figure 1-44* The encased *mezuzah*
Photograph by author
- 92 *Figure 1-45* Uncovering the *mezuzah*
Photograph by author
- 94 *Figure 1-46* Uncovering the *mezuzah*
Photograph by author
- 95 *Figure 1-47* Uncovering the *mezuzah*
Photograph by author
- 96 *Figure 1-48* The uncovered *mezuzah*
Photograph by author
- 99 *Figure 1-49* Imprint of the removed *mezuzah*
Photograph by author
- 100 *Figure 1-50* Robert Moses-Robert H. Saunders Power Dam on the St. Lawrence
Retrieved from <https://www.newyorkupstate.com/western-ny/2017/05/what-is-the-international-joint-commission-doing-about-lake-ontarios-flooding.html>

- 102 *Figure 1-51* Underwater remains of buildings in the St. Lawrence River
Retrieved from <https://rainsoftottawa.wordpress.com/2014/10/07/villages-sunk-during-st-lawrence-seaway/>
- 104 *Figure 1-52* Aerial view of the St. Lawrence River
Retrieved from <https://rainsoftottawa.wordpress.com/2014/10/07/villages-sunk-during-st-lawrence-seaway/>
- 105 *Figure 1-53* Aerial view of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project expansion after the flooding of the lost villages
Retrieved from http://www.gstatic.com/hostedimg/7b1ed0643ace9fc8_large
- 106 *Figure 1-54* The Cornwall-Massena International Bridge
Retrieved from <https://cornwallcommunitymuseum.wordpress.com/2014/03/25/in-history-the-historic-bike-path-a-sneak-preview/>
- 108 *Figure 1-55* The Eleven Points Logistics distribution centre, located at the Cornwall business park. The centre formerly housed goods for Target Canada before their closure, and was purchased by Walmart in 2015 as part of their Canadian expansion plan
Retrieved from <https://www.cornwallnewswatch.com/2017/06/27/cornwall-walmart-dc-tax-appeal-dragging-arb/>
- 112 *Figure 1-56* Aaron and his family outside of their house on Second Street
Provided by the Cornwall Community Museum & Archives
- 113 *Figure 1-57* The house with recent renovations
Retrieved from <https://cornwallcommunitymuseum.wordpress.com/2017/05/11/horovitz-house-2nd-st-w/>
- 114 *Figure 1-58* The path between the fences
Photograph by author

Part 1.2 / Massena

- 124 *Figure 1-59* Madrid-Chase Mills Road, Route 14
Photograph by author
- 126 *Figure 1-60* My Aunt Missy & Uncle Ian's alpaca barn
Photograph by author
- 128 *Figure 1-61* Lorna with her children, Rosanne and Ian
From family collection

List of Figures continued

- 130 *Figure 1-62* The Massena Observer, April 25, 1963
Retrieved from <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031311/1963-04-25/ed-1/seq-9/>
- 132 *Figure 1-63* Historic downtown Massena
Retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-this-day-a-blood-libel-in-ny-ends-1.5338570>
- 134 *Figure 1-64* The former Clopman's Furniture
Photograph by author
- 135 *Figure 1-65* The former Slavin's Jewelry
Photograph by author
- 136 *Figure 1-66* Entrance to the Adath Israel Cemetery at the back of the Calvary Cemetery in Massena
Photograph by author
- 138 *Figure 1-67* A delapidated sign advertising the abandoned Nite-N-Gale Motel
Photograph by author
- 142 *Figure 1-68* The Massena Baptist Church urging prayers for the families affected by the Alcoa closures
Retrieved from <https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/tagRSS.php?tag=alcoa&podcast=true>
- 144 *Figure 1-69* A boarded up house along Massena's Main Street
Photograph by author
- 148 *Figure 1-70* Wendy's illuminating the food court; the sole food services tenant currently still open in the St. Lawrence Centre
Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/24/business/mall-retail.html>
- 150 *Figure 1-71* Coinmint overlay over an image of Massena's downtown
Retrieved from <https://cryptoslate.com/small-new-york-town-getting-165-million-investment-bitcoin-cloud-mining-company/>
- 158 *Figure 1-72* Front of the Coller House
Photograph by author
- 160 *Figure 1-73* Basement shelving overflowing with objects
Photograph by author
- 161 *Figure 1-74* Ted displaying some hand-carved wooden bowls
Photograph by author
- 162 *Figure 1-75* Darlene gesturing toward the entrance of the former false cellar
Photograph by author

- 163 *Figure 1-76* Dusty remnants of Me-me's preserves in the basement
Photograph by author
- 168 *Figure 1-77* Wallpaper in Me-me and Pops' bedroom
Photograph by author
- 170 *Figure 1-78* Wallpaper in Me-me and Pops' bedroom
Photograph by author
- 172 *Figure 1-79* Evidence of the hatchway down to the false cellar
Photograph by author
- 174 *Figure 1-80* Me-me's upstairs bedroom
Photograph by author
- 175 *Figure 1-81* Upstairs bathroom
Photograph by author
- 176 *Figure 1-82* The window in Mr. Hall's room
Photograph by author
- 178 *Figure 1-83* Darlene descending the steps to the former servant's quarters
Photograph by author
- 179 *Figure 1-84* The former servant's quarters
Photograph by author
- 180 *Figure 1-85* Ted holding his father's baby shoes
Photograph by author
- 185 *Figure 1-86* Looking back at the Coller House from the bridge
Photograph by author
- 186 *Figure 1-87* One of the few remaining documents of Lorna's, her passport
From family collection

Part 2 / Chomedey

- 196 *Figure 2-01* My Bubby, on her honeymoon, looking for seashells, 1956
From family collection
- 199 *Figure 2-02* The Leckerman/Rosen Family Tree
By author
- 202 *Figure 2-03* The view along Highway 401
Photograph by author

List of Figures continued

- 206 *Figure 2-04* My Bubby in front of her house, 1966
From family collection
- 207 *Figure 2-05* My mom in front of my Bubby's house, late 1980s
From family collection
- 208 *Figure 2-06* My Zaida outside of the house
From family collection
- 209 *Figure 2-07* David & my father
From family collection
- 210 *Figure 2-08* My father, mid 1970s
From family collection
- 212 *Figure 2-09* Advertisement for L. Holstein & Company, a company that
assisted with immigration and banking; advertisement published
in both Yiddish and English in the Keneder Adler, a Yiddish
newspaper established in 1907
Retrieved from <http://imjm.ca/location/1537>
- 214 *Figure 2-10* My Zaida, strutting through the menswear clothing store he
managed, 1970s
From family collection
- 218 *Figure 2-11* Marriage record for my great-grandparents, David Isaac
Lekichman and Rissel (Rachel) Bonderoff
*Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-
1968 retrieved from ancestry.com*
- 220 *Figure 2-12* 50th anniversary party at The Young Israel of Chomedey, 2008
*Retrieved from [https://www.bnairbrith.ca/young_israel_of_chomedey_aj
adjusts_to_life_in_a_new_home](https://www.bnairbrith.ca/young_israel_of_chomedey_adjusts_to_life_in_a_new_home)*
- 222 *Figure 2-13* The Mourner's *Kaddish* distributed by the Young Israel, both in
Hebrew and transliterated text
Provided by the Young Israel of Chomedey synagogue
- 223 *Figure 2-14* "Esther Rosen, Where are you?"
Provided by the Young Israel of Chomedey synagogue
- 224 *Figure 2-15* A letter from my Bubby
From family collection
- 226 *Figure 2-16* Rosen Family
From family collection
- 228 *Figure 2-17* David & my father
From family collection

230	<i>Figure 2-18</i>	Zaida's epitaph <i>Photograph by author</i>
236	<i>Figure 2-19</i>	Party leader René Lévesque after the Parti Québécois victory in 1978; to the left is Camille Laurin, a champion of Bill 101 <i>Retrieved from https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/nov-15-1976-parti-quebecois-victory-shakes-canada</i>
244	<i>Figure 2-20</i>	The front of the Shaar Shalom building <i>Photograph by author</i>
248	<i>Figure 2-21</i>	The original synagogue in the house on Romiti Street <i>Provided by the Young Israel of Chomedey synagogue</i>
249	<i>Figure 2-22</i>	The original synagogue in the house on Romiti Street <i>Provided by the Young Israel of Chomedey synagogue</i>
254	<i>Figure 2-23</i>	<i>Bimah</i> in the Shaar Shalom sanctuary <i>Photograph by author</i>
256	<i>Figure 2-24</i>	Pews and the memorial board saved from the Young Israel <i>Photograph by author</i>
257	<i>Figure 2-25</i>	Photographs hung in the Shaar Shalom of the Young Israel's past and current Rabbis <i>Photograph by author</i>
258	<i>Figure 2-26</i>	The sanctuary's <i>mezuzah</i> <i>Photograph by author</i>
262	<i>Figure 2-27</i>	The Young Israel of Chomedey <i>Retrieved from http://youngisraelofchomedey.com/about/</i>
263	<i>Figure 2-28</i>	Centre Arménie <i>Photograph by author</i>
264	<i>Figure 2-29</i>	The cross at Centre Arménie <i>Photograph by author</i>
265	<i>Figure 2-30</i>	Old meets new on the side of the building <i>Photograph by author</i>
266	<i>Figure 2-31</i>	My father and David on the hill at the front of the house <i>Photograph from family collection</i>
268	<i>Figure 2-32</i>	1417 Croissant Carol, July 2014 <i>Retrieved from https://goo.gl/maps/Genk94kQDy92</i>

List of Figures continued

- 269 *Figure 2-33* 1417 Croissant Carol, June 2017
Photograph by author
- 270 *Figure 2-34* 1417 Croissant Carol, August 2017
Photograph by Cal Rosen
- Part 3 / Cambridge
- 276 *Figure 3-01* The *sukkah*
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 278 *Figure 3-02* *Sukkahs* set up in residential back yards in Israel
Retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-10-things-you-probably-dont-know-about-sukkot-1.5336709>
- 280 *Figure 3-03* The unoccupied courtyard at the School of Architecture
Photograph by author
- 282 *Figure 3-04* Interior view of the *sukkah* upon entering, featuring posters of family documents hung against the fabric walls
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 284 *Figure 3-05* My brothers and I on the seventh night of Chanukah, approximately 2002
From family collection
- 288 *Figure 3-06* The women's side of the Western Wall
Photograph by author
- 290 *Figure 3-07* Day 1 of the *sukkah* assembly; wall frames being bolted together
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 292 *Figure 3-08* Day 2 of the *sukkah* construction; I was interviewed for an (unaired) CTV segment about building a *sukkah* in Cambridge
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 293 *Figure 3-09* Day 2 evening; roof structure attached to wall frames
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 294 *Figure 3-10* Roof structure covered with dried corn stalks
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 296 *Figure 3-11* Staggered balconies in Jerusalem, allow for each *sukkah* to have a view to the sky
Retrieved from <https://www.israel21c.org/11-gorgeous-pictures-that-capture-the-beauty-of-sukkot/>

- 298 *Figure 3-12* View of the *sukkah* from Melville Street
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 302 *Figure 3-13* View of the *sukkah*, looking West
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 303 *Figure 3-14* Entrance to the *sukkah*; each visitor signed their name on the
entry wall panel, which acts as an annual record of the individuals
who passed through. The panels can be shuffled around, so in
future years, the walls will begin to tell the story of the life and the
occupants
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 304 *Figure 3-15* Interior of the *sukkah*; looking North
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 305 *Figure 3-16* Interior of the *sukkah*; looking South
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 306 *Figure 3-17* The *sefirot* are the ten attributes that God uses as a medium to
express himself; the categories of intellect (*keter, binah, chochmah*)
and emotions (*gevurah, tiferet, chessed, hod, yasod, netzach and*
malchut).
Retrieved from <http://www.kabbalah.torah-code.org/kabbalah/essays/sefirot.shtml> with modifications by author
- 308 *Figure 3-18* Rabbi Moishy Goldman visited the *sukkah* and leads a discussion
on The Night of Receptiveness
Photograph by Wesley Chu
- 310 *Figure 3-19* One of the many potluck feasts to occur in the *sukkah*
Photograph by Wesley Chu

Appendix 1 / Rho

- 329 *Figure A-01* The Rosen/Althaus Family Tree
By author
- 334 *Figure A-02* Rho
Provided by Rho Kirsch

“For everything, in time, gets lost: the lives of peoples now remote, the tantalizing yet ultimately vanished and largely unknowable lives of virtually all of the Greeks and Romans and Ottomans and Malays and Goths and Bengals and Sudanese who ever lived, the peoples of Ur and Kush, the lives of the Hittites and Philistines that will never be known, the lives of people more recent than that, the African slaves and the slave traders, to Boers and the Belgians, those who were slaughtered and those who died in bed, the Polish counts and the Jewish shopkeepers, the blond hair and eyebrows and small white teeth that someone once loved or desired of this or that boy or girl or man or woman who was one of the five million (or six or seven) Ukrainians starved to death by Stalin, and indeed the intangible things beyond the hair and teeth and brows, the smiles and frustrations and laughter and terror and loves and hunger of every one of those millions of Ukrainians, just as the hair of a Jewish girl or boy or man or woman that someone once loved, and the teeth and the brows, the smiles and frustrations and laughter and terror of the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust are now lost, or will soon be lost, because no number of books, however great, could ever document them all, even if they were to be written, which they won’t and can’t be; all that will be lost, too, their pretty legs and their deafness and the vigorous way they strode off a train with a pile of school books once, the secret family rituals and the recipes for cakes and stews and *golq̄bki*, the goodness and wickedness, the saviors and the betrayers, their saving and their betraying: most everything will be lost, eventually, as surely as most of what made up the lives of the Egyptians and Inca and Hittites has been lost. But for a little while some of that can be rescued, if only, faced with the vastness of all that there is and all that there ever was, somebody makes the decision to look back, to have one last look, to search for a while in the debris of the past and to see not only what was lost but what there is still to be found.”

- Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*

STILL WANDERING:

Tales from the Diaspora

Prologue



Figure 0-01 My curiosity cabinet

It wasn't until I looked down at the faces of my father's family etched in wood that I realized that I had an idea for a thesis.

In the first semester of my master's degree, Donald McKay gave an assignment in my thesis research & design studio to create our own curiosity cabinets (the term cabinet being used loosely here, as we were encouraged to build them to be any size and any shape), dedicated to both our own experiences and to the ambitions of our thesis. The course outline indicated that it should, "examine your intellectual development: what matters to you; how you have come to the issues in life which interest you; how you want to go about addressing these issues; what intellectual kinships you have, what moral allegiances you owe, what creative models you choose for yourself—in a social, a political, a cultural, and a personal world."

My thesis at the time was focused on the role of craft contemporarily, so I decided that this project was a timely opportunity to put my woodworking skills to the test. I spent a few weeks in the school workshop jointing, planing, cutting and sanding pieces of oak to create my curiosity cabinet. I designed it as a lidded box upon which objects could be displayed. The dimensions of the box were constrained by the depth of a miniature grandfather clock that I had been gifted by my maternal *Zaida* (grandfather), and the width of my notebook.

My box contained various items from my life—trinkets, postcards, letters, and a multitude of family photographs. Accompanying these objects was a transcription of a recording that I took one evening when I drove out of Cambridge with no particular destination. I recorded myself talking about whatever came to mind, ultimately speaking of both sides of my family; first of my maternal family, and then of my paternal. I spoke until my voice was hoarse. I had to pull over multiple times to cry. The words first tumbled clumsily from my mouth to the recorder, and then onto paper.

On the lid of the box was an image of my father, his brother and his parents, laser cut into a wood veneer. The grain of the oak was visible through the etching. The result was ghostly.

Why I was drawn to the stories and imagery of my family then, I could not answer, but I felt that these stories deserved to be told, for none other than the simple fact that they were good ones. I was dedicating my thesis to my family even before I knew it was going to be about them.

The stories from my transcript still begged to be told, but I diligently continued my exploration of craft over the next few months. During my days, I worked with wood and with clay, but at night, I went home and read Jewish memoirs and the genealogical accounts of Dani Shapiro, Paul Cowan, and Daniel Mendelsohn, looking for a kinship within their words. The two theses seemed to be at odds with each other, and their conflict was tumultuous.

With much hesitancy about restarting so far into my degree, I finally decided to change my thesis topic the next semester, six months after I began.

I ran into Donald in the school not long after, and once I had told him of my new direction, he invited me into his office to discuss. I spoke of how the thesis seemed to have almost compelled me to act, but how I was worried that these stories weren't *enough*, as well as my guilt over abandoning my original topic.

My fears were met with an assurance, "We all have more than one story inside of us."

I laid my other thesis to rest. This was the story that I decided I needed to tell now, one that would feed my soul and earn me a master's degree at the same time; the story of my family, and the story of me.





Part 1.1
Cornwall

[previous page]

Figure 1-01 My Uncle Lawrence and great-grandmother Gertrude enjoying summer, mid 1980s

“But the disadvantage with sources, however truthful they try to be, is their lack of precision in matters of detail and their impassioned account of events... The proliferation of secondary and tertiary sources, some copied, others carelessly transmitted, some repeated from hearsay, others who changed details in good or bad faith, some freely interpreted, others rectified, some propagated with total indifference, others proclaimed as the one, eternal and irreplaceable truth, the last of these the most suspect of all.”

- Jose Saramago, *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*

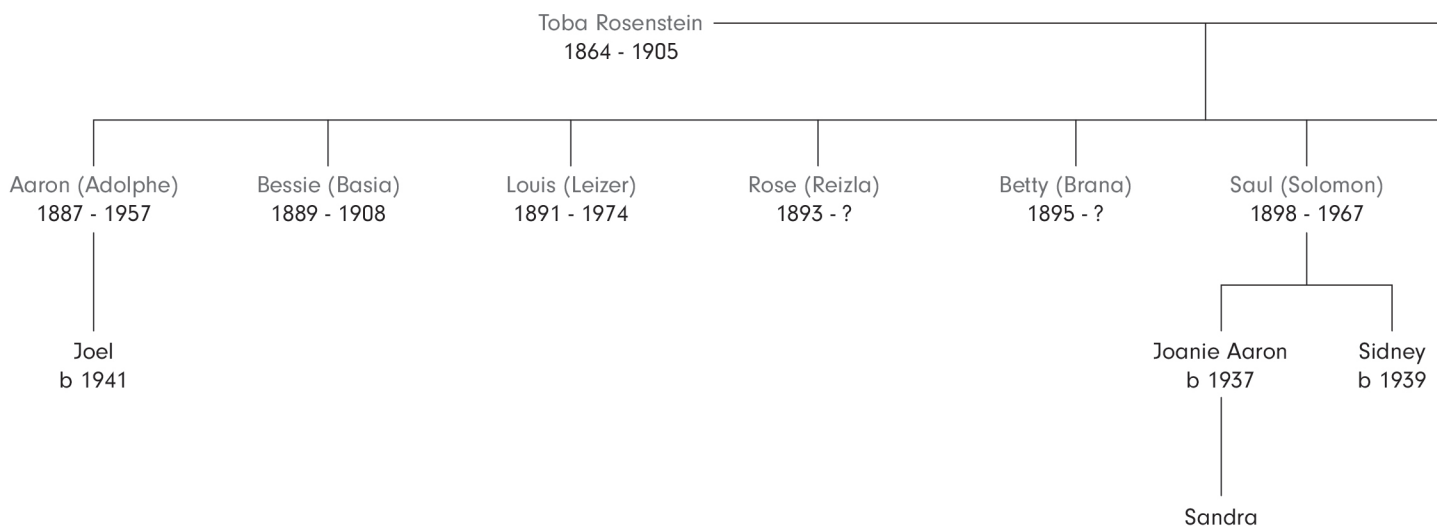


Figure 1-02 The Horovitz/Bender Family Tree

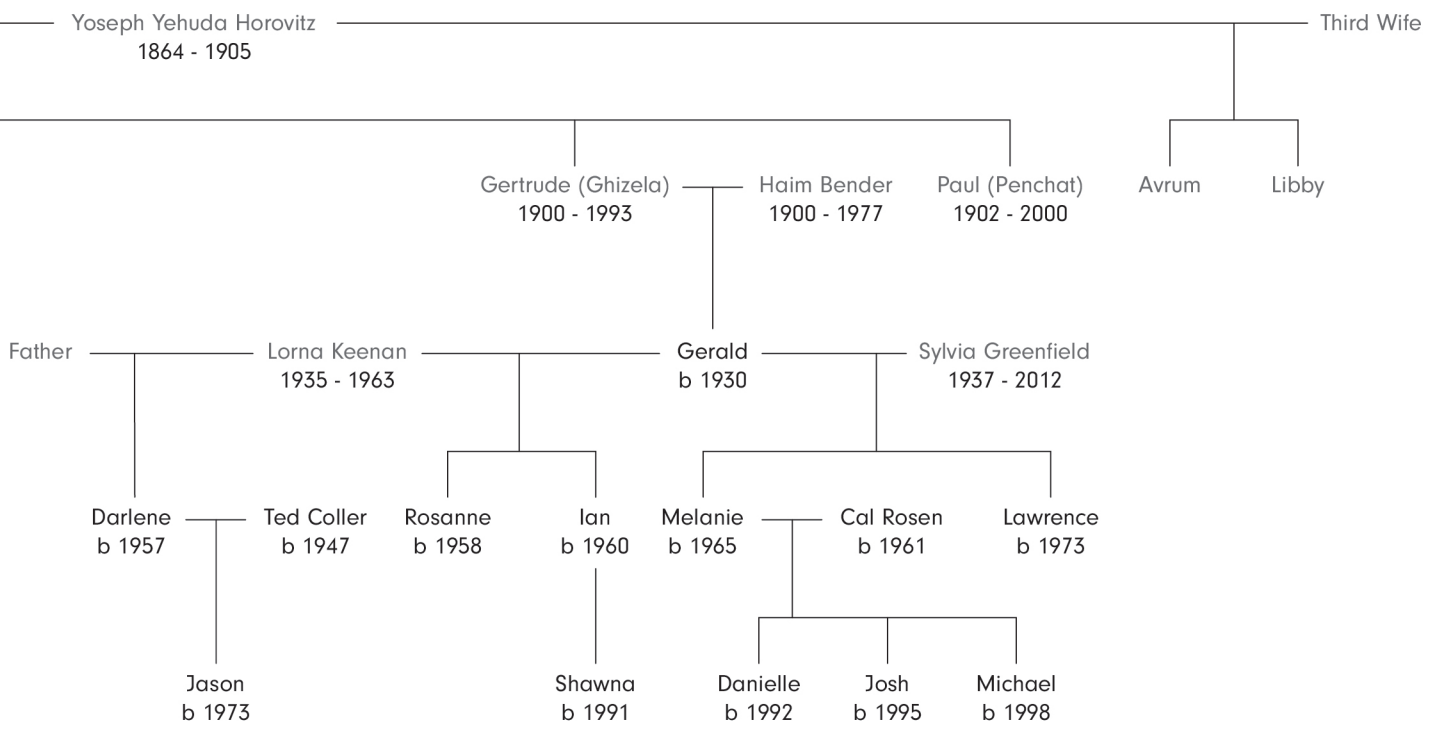




Figure 1-03 My Bubby and Zaida, Sylvia and Gerald, at their wedding, 1963

I've never had much of a connection to this place, other than a single, fleeting moment, speeding past the Cornwall population sign on my family's annual summer pilgrimage to Montreal. The trip was usually taken in August when the sun would come up hot and early, a wave of dryness in the air as we packed our car full of suitcases, up before most people in our suburb would wake. On this journey, my father liked to narrate things happening outside of the car to keep me and my brothers entertained. Every time, without fail, at this specific place, he would excitedly twist his body around toward us in the backseat, and read off the sign in his best pilot impression, "Now passing by Cornwall, a city of approximately 50,000 individuals. Fun fact, kiddies: did you know your mom was born *right here?*" As he turned back toward the road, he'd gesture toward the sign and the fields beyond. His emphasis on "right here" allowed for a vivid image to take hold in my mind: my *Bubby* (grandmother), on the side of the highway, squatting, looking up wide-eyed as our car raced past, brazenly giving birth to my mother in the middle of a cornfield. And then we would continue speeding along the highway, and the apparition would vanish before we reached the Quebec border.

My mom would attempt to take hold of the conversation from here, "You know, your great-great Uncle was the first Jewish mayor in Cornwall, right?" She'd earnestly encourage us to ask questions to establish some sort of connection to our past, hoping to engage just one of us in her belief in the importance of looking back; of knowing where we came from. We'd try to redirect the conversation, eager to move past this discussion of a long-dead distant relation—there were a lot of those—which we were never hard-pressed to further explore, even outside of the car ride. Who exactly was this great, great uncle? It was always unclear, my mother's family tree too large to make sense or keep track of, and so I'd only ever heard details about distant relations from Cornwall in broad statements or abstracts, filling in the blanks in my mind. My mom would turn back around in the passenger seat, sighing at our lack of interest.

As an adult, especially since starting my thesis, often times my mom will begin to tell a story of a distant family member's life, and I will have to interrupt her to confirm just how exactly we are related to that person. The importance of keeping up with the family has always been a strongly held conviction for her. I have memories of her being glued to our corded kitchen telephone, the coiled wire stretched taut to our adjacent dining room, talking for hours on end. She would speak to her mother many times in a day, and various other members of her family and friends every week; she would even call my father's family to check up on them, unprompted. My dad would jokingly tease and call her a *yentaleh*. She was always the one to keep the family relationships alive.

The following information has been gathered from a combination of first-hand accounts, records, articles, and tales from close and distant family members, friends, historians, and archivists; some of whom I've come to know, and some whom I've still never met. I aspire to channel my mother in her sentiment and strive to communicate the weight of our connection to the past.



Figure 1-04 Aaron Horovitz

Trying to parse my mother's family tree with its outstretched arms and far-reaching branches, I decided to turn to the family member that my mom first tried to engage us with, my great-great Uncle, Aaron Horovitz.



Figure 1-05 Cornwall children
Top, [second from the left] Joan Aaron;
Bottom, [second from left] Joel Horivitz, [second from right] Sidney Horovitz

March 2017

Joanie's email arrived quickly after we had spoken over the phone. This had been my first ever time interacting with her, and she was as warm and helpful as I could have hoped. Joanie and her daughter Sandra have been allies in this process, as keen on investigating family mysteries as I am. Her emails read like a prose poem:

Hi Danielle
lovely to be in contact with you
had a long enjoyable talk with your mom today
do have information - BUT the one thing I forgot in all the rush to get home
and get organized into this new wheelchair thing for me
did not unpack until today, and found I had left the information which I had hoped to update
myself
in the suitcase we did not bring home
don't know what your timeline is
we left it for our friends to bring when they return on April 15th
if you need it earlier, I can get the info from my brother to you
the one thing I did was to get Aunt Gertie to go over and correct a few things
let me know, if I should get the one thing to you earlier
thanks
Joanie

Hi Joanie
No worries! I can wait until then. My thesis will be ongoing for the next year or so, but I'd love to
get the documents from you when your friend brings them up.
Danielle

Danielle
had to worry
asked my brother to send a copy of his history to you, it will arrive soon
will still give you my corrections from my aunt - your mother's grandmother Gertie, plus my piece
and of course whatever else you want to ask
we'll be in touch
Joanie

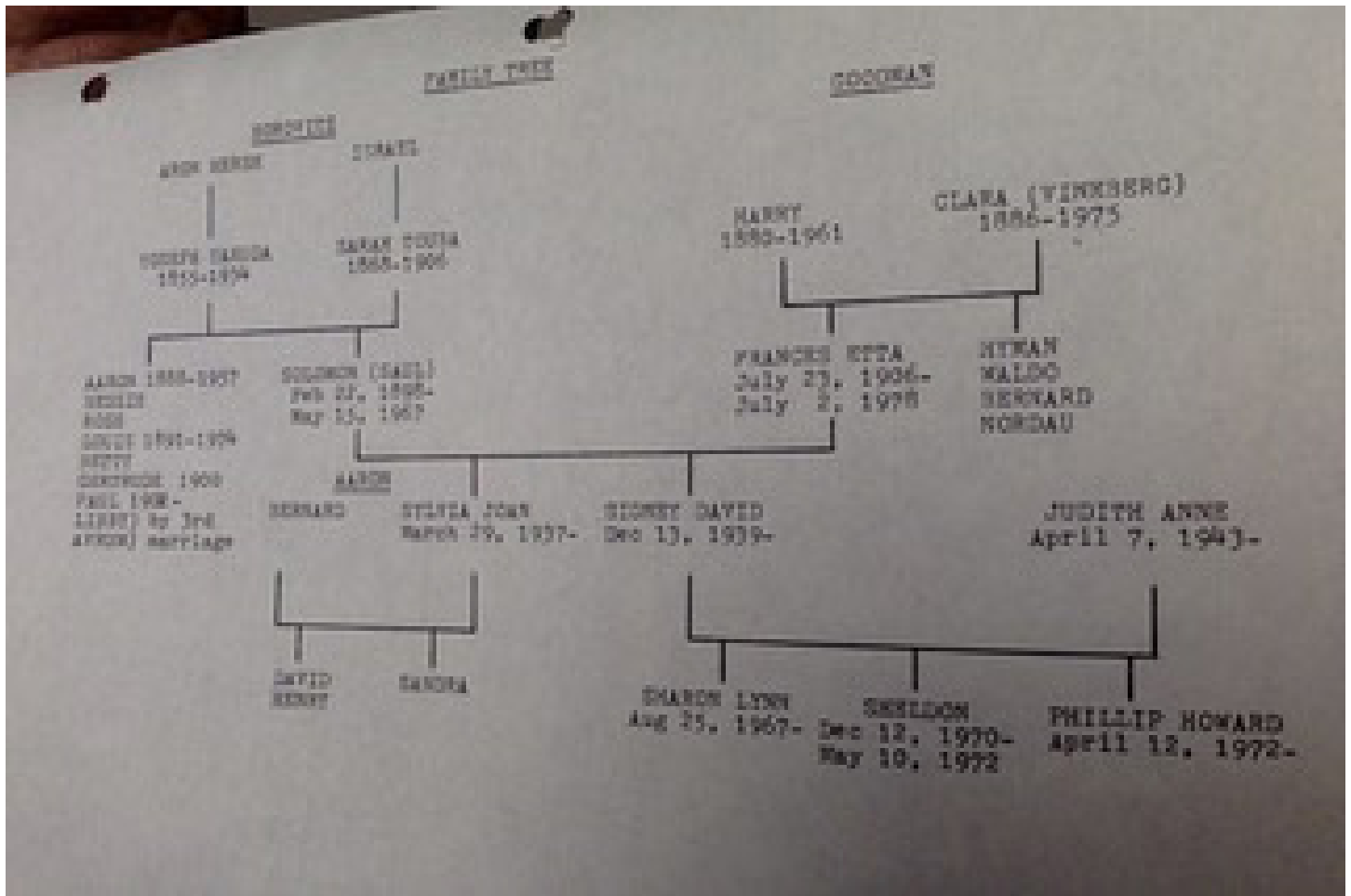


Figure 1-06 The pixelated typewritten family tree

Sidney's email arrived in my inbox shortly after Joanie's, along with the copy of "his history," as she had assured me that it would. I felt a rush when I saw that the sender line contained the Horovitz family name, the name which I had been so recently and so ferociously invested in. This was my first time interacting with a name-bearing Horovitz. Joanie had promised that it would begin to answer some of my questions.

Hi Danielle,

I am the brother of Joan Aaron. Your grandfather, Gerry Bender is my first cousin. Joan asked me to forward our family tree for a project you are doing. I have attached the extent of the family tree that I have, but as you will see, it is far from complete. For example, the Bender side was never expanded but I'm sure you have access to that information. I'm sure this chart can be expanded for your purpose; it is a matter of requesting information from people. Let me know what information you're interested in and I'll advise if I can help.
Best of luck in your studies.

Sid Horovitz

A fuzzy image was attached to the email—too small to discern, and blurry when enlarged. The family tree was typewritten, and I could barely make out the names. I had to email him back requesting a scanned copy.

Joanie's materials followed the next month. She sent me documents containing accounts of the family history, immigration routes, and speculations. Two copies of the family history were included; one that had been dictated by Paul, and one that included edits and corrections by my great-grandmother, Gertrude. She included the same family tree that Sidney had sent, but with additional handwritten notes.

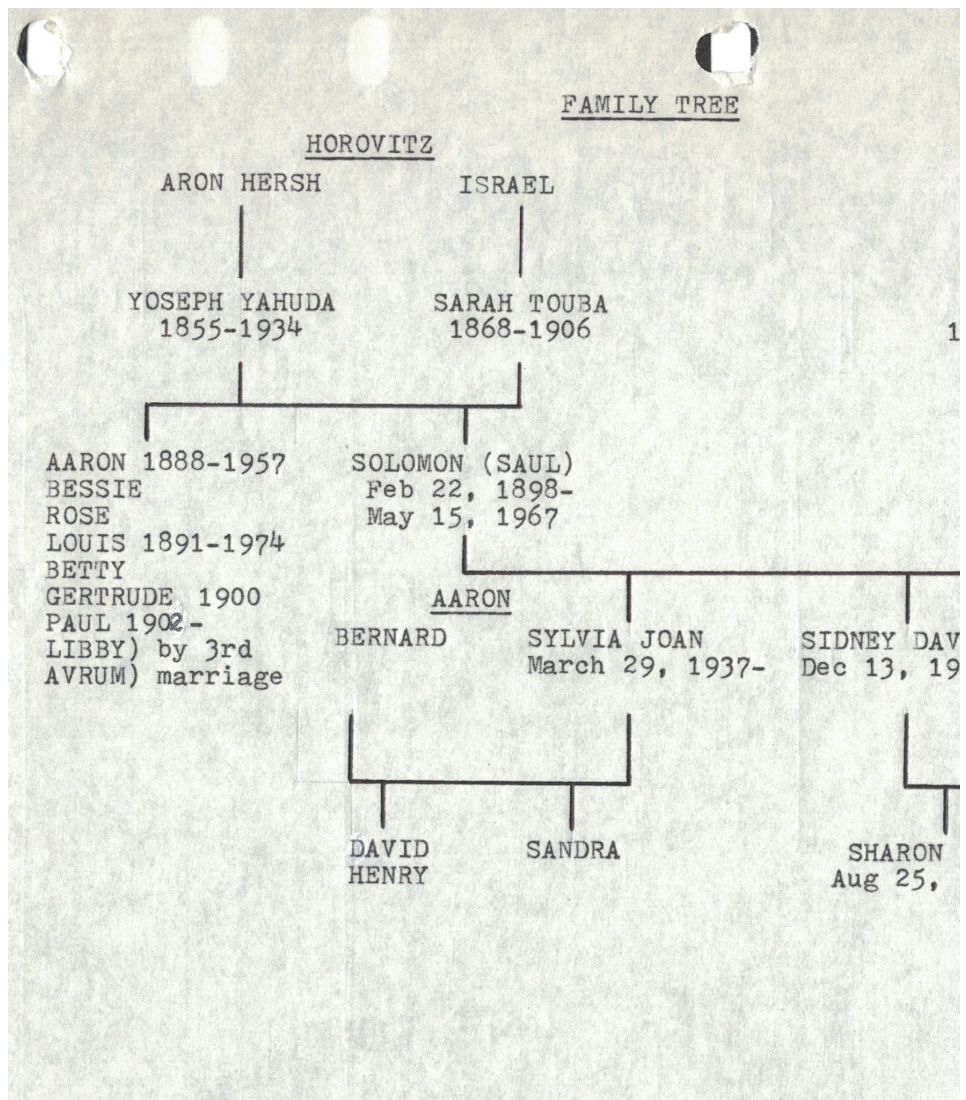


Figure 1-07 The scanned family tree from Sidney

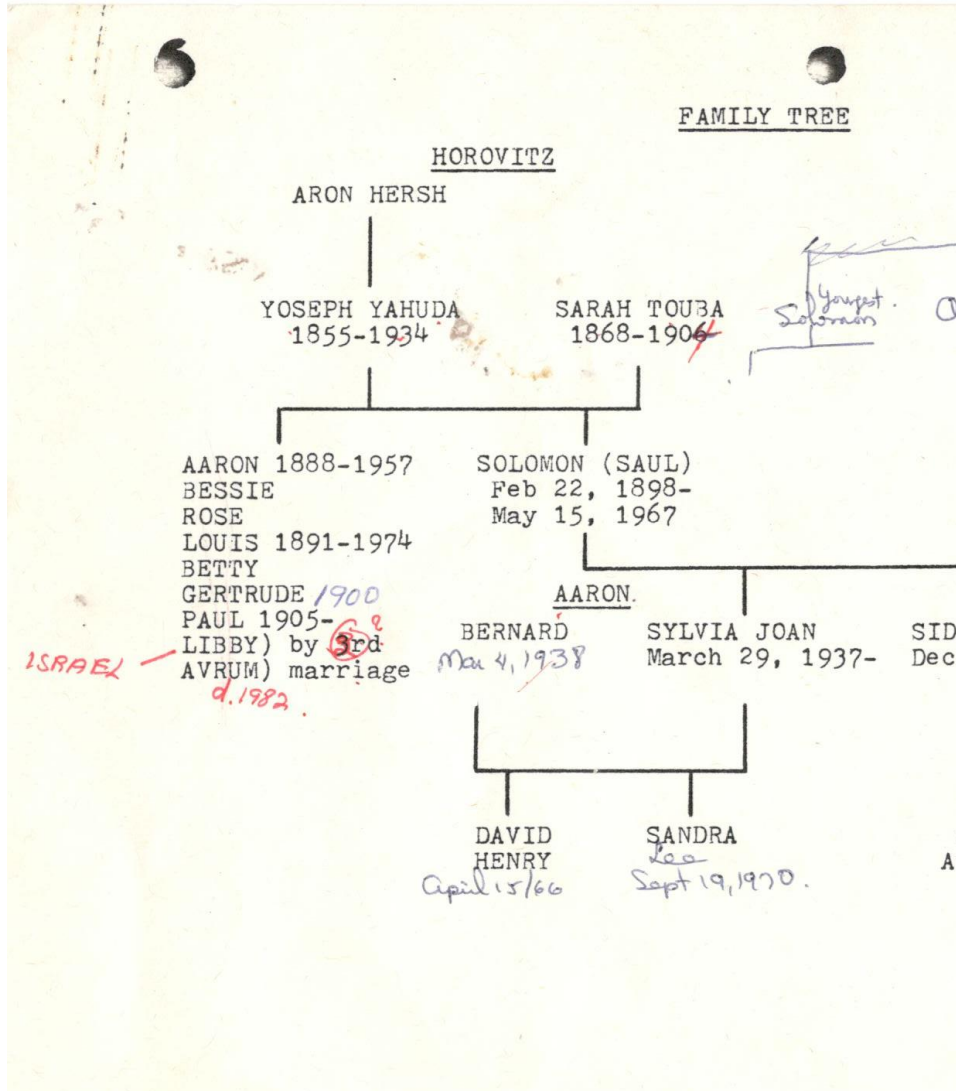


Figure 1-08 The same family tree, with corrections by Joanie

HOROVITZ

FAMILY HISTORY

BIOGRAPHIES

FATHER - Yoseph Yahuda - 1855 - 1934 (79 years)

- Occupation - sold grain, required considerable travelling, Hebrew teacher as a hobby or second profession (very religious - father told stories of beatings & being put in the corner at mealtimes when a mistake was made in dovening.

-married 1. Sarah Touba - had 8 children (those known and related directly to us.

2.? - young girl, lasted only very briefly (2-3days?), father left a note of divorce saying that he had been deceived (he saw her false teeth?)

3. ? - produced two children, Libby and Avrum who are living in Israel

MOTHER - Sarah Touba nee Rosenstein - 1868 - 1906 (38 years)

- an only daughter, with three brothers

CHILDREN

1. Aaron - 1888 - may 8, 1957 (69 years)

- only one with a university education
- served in the army & worked as a bookkeeper for a large estate, prior to coming to Canada
Emigrated to Canada with Louis in 1910 at age 22 because they could not see a future for themselves in Romania. They lived in Montreal initially, working in the factory of Crown Pants?(Aaron learned to sew and Louis learned to cut. After several years, they borrowed some machines from Crown Pants, moved to Cornwall, and started their own operation.) According to Dr. Kyle on P 350 of her book re: Cornwall's history " The Horovitz brothers started out modestly in 1911 in part of the Brennan block at the corner of Water & Marlborough st., with 25 employees operating sewing machines. By 1920 their business had expanded enough to buy out the Plamondon Hotel on Marlborough St. Here they set up The Prince Clothing Company, (Cornwall Pants & Prince Clothing Company) soon acquiring the Collins dance hall to which they added a second floor. By 1934 they had 300 workers bringing home \$250,000 in wages each year. and this in spite of a devastating fire that swept through their pants factory after a boiler exploded on 18 feb 1933. Materials were imported from the United Kingdom, France, Holland, Germany, and Czechoslovakia, and when the second World War cut off their suppliers, they moved into war time production, more than half their clothing going to the Royal Canadian Navy in the form of greatcoats and battle dress slacks for the infantry and airforce.

- married 1. Frieda ? and adopted a daughter Lillian b.? (retarded and remains in institution, later a group home -Smith Falls). they later divorced. Frieda dd

2. Helen nee Clafter from N.Y.C. They had two children Barbara - born Nov. 10, 1938 and Joel born Feb 13 1941

- died of a heart attack on may ? 1957

Figure 1-09 A type-written document of the Horovitz family history, recounted by Paul Horovitz in the 1980s

BIOGRAPHIES

YOSEPH YAHUDA
1855 - 1934 (79 years)

Hebrew teacher and trade ^{as a hobby} required considerable travelling
8 children by first wife, Sarah Touba

*(sold grain)
taught as an
extra Professor*

Second wife was a young girl, but this marriage lasted only 2-3 days. One morning he awoke and discovered her false teeth in a glass, which he was not aware of previously. He felt deceived and left her. He left a note announcing their divorce. According to law, as soon as she picked up the note, the divorce was final.

At the time, Paul, who was only two, remained with his father because of his age while the others were farmed out to uncles. Yoseph's young bride locked Paul in a room when she went out. Aaron, who was in the army, discovered this and came from duty to break the lock on the door and took Paul to one of his uncles to live.

His third marriage produced two children, Libby and Avrum, who are living in Israel to-day.

SARAH TOUBA (ROSENSTEIN)
1868 - 1906 (38 years)

An only girl with three brothers

AARON ^{Only one with University Education (rode a white horse.)}
1888 - 1957 (69 years)
May 8/57

Served in army and worked as a bookkeeper for a large estate

Emigrated to Canada with Louis in 1910, at ages 22 and 19 respectively, because they could not perceive of a future in Romania. They lived in Montreal initially, working in the factory of Crown Pants. Aaron learned to sew and Louis learned to cut. After two years they loaned some machines from Crown Pants, moved to Cornwall and started their own operation. Over a period of time, they paid off the cost of the machines. Their factory became known as Cornwall Pants and Prince Clothing Company and did it's biggest business during World War II making uniforms.

Married Freida and adopted a daughter, Lillian. They later divorced.

Married Helen who bore Barbara (Nov. 10, 1938) and Joel (Feb. 13, 1941)

Owned Roosevelt International Bridge and Cornwall Community Arena and was Mayor of Cornwall for 18 years

Died from a heart attack on May 13, 1957

Figure 1-10 A similar document with corrections recounted by Gertrude Bender

Aaron
1911 to Con
1926 - elect 2 city council
1937 - May - div Freda -
1944 - elected Mayor.

1957 - May 16 - died
1958 - Hor Mom Pk

Oct 17/14 - Helen died 97
to Feb 3/17 -

Figure 1-11 Aaron summed up on a scrap of paper

An email from Joanie with the subject line, “forgotten paper” soon followed.

think this is dates for Uncle Aaron

On the attached forgotten paper, a handwritten note reads:

*Aaron
1911 to Can
1926 - elect 2 city council
1937 - May - div Freida
1944 - elected Mayor

1957 - May 16 - died
1958 - Hov Mem Pk

Oct 17/14 - Helen died 97
b Feb 3/17*

In this scrawled script, Aaron’s life had been summarized: he came to Canada, was elected into local government, divorced his first wife (though there is no mention of their marriage in the first place), was elected mayor. Then he died, and a park was renamed for him in memoriam.

I had some questions. Where did this list come from? Who was it dictated to, and by? Was it jotted down as a way of recording information, or was it taken from multiple sources, this note trying to piece together events and corresponding dates? (I’ve done versions of this piecing together of fragments in my research, especially when new information arrives in a seemingly random order.) Further, why is there no mention of his life in Romania? Of either of his marriages? Of the births of his children? Of the development of his own business and the resulting success story? Why were some details left out and why those details specifically?

There’s no denying that these events are all true and factual, but the note seems almost devoid of feeling; a clinical recollection of dates and jot notes. It’s difficult to recognize that there was an actual person that lived *within* and *between* these facts; it is a thin outline of a life. I wanted to know more.

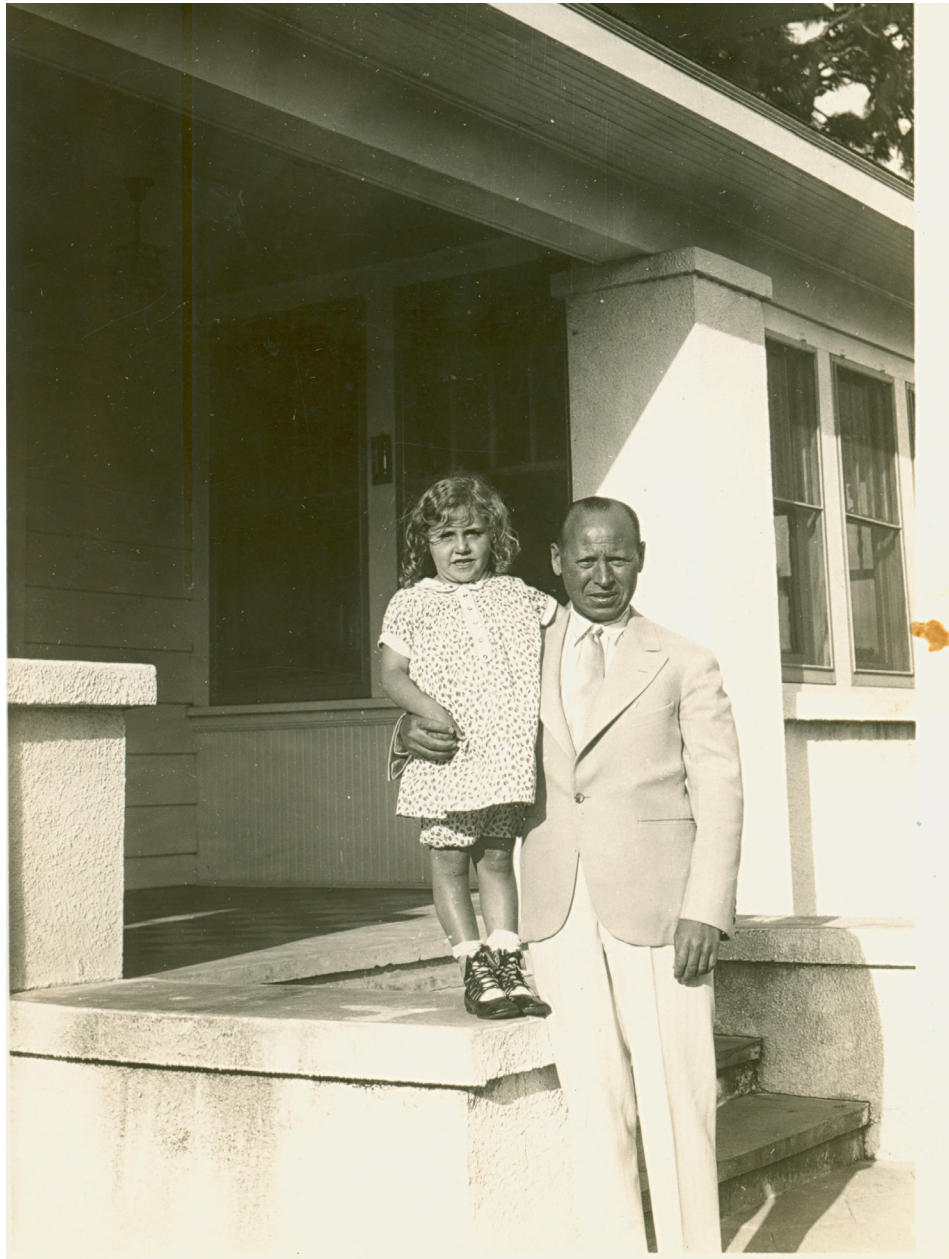


Figure 1-12 Aaron and his adopted daughter, Lillian; there little existing information about her as she was sent to live in mental health facility when Aaron remarried

How does one sum up a person? Or perhaps, how does one sufficiently conjure a person from the dead?

I've struggled with coming to terms with the fact that I may never be able to portray someone in their entirety, for reasons entirely beyond my control. I can only access information that still lives on in the minds of the living and the healthy, or information that had been transmitted while they were as such.

I'll never be able to get to the core of a person, the closest that it can be approached is with a tale, something that is uncertain and uneven, something that has passed between many different lips over many generations; stories that may not even necessarily be true. But in this way, they are our truths; they are the stories that we tell ourselves and others in order to feel okay continuing on, they are the stories that we feed children when they ask us about something that they cannot fully comprehend until much later, when they are grown, and even then, we may decide that it's not essential for them to know. No matter how badly I want to know, how many times I ask, or even plead for information, for the specifics of a story, there are some things that remain shrouded from years of pain or exist in their comfort of being hidden away, that there is no way to uncover the truth, and instead it is some version of the truth that becomes itself.

This worry has been present throughout my research process: as someone who has been dead for a long time drifts further away from the present, the particulars that make them as they were get lost in that distance. I wanted to go beyond merely inputting dates into the tree to document when they lived and died; to borrow Daniel Mendelsohn's phrase: I wanted to record *how* they lived.



Figure 1-13 Tombstones in the Botosani cemetery; other parts of the cemetery have been better preserved and are in better condition than the section as seen above

Adolphe (Aaron) and his younger brother Leizer (Louis), the oldest siblings of the Horovitz family, arrived in Canada from their hometown of Botosani, Romania in 1910, or 1911; there is no ship manifest or document that has been found to corroborate this. By some accounts, it is said that they didn't arrive in Canada together, but no one can be exactly sure. All that was known was that Aaron's father had given him a small amount of money and instructed him to leave Romania. Aaron and his brother, and presumably his father, could not perceive of a future there for them.

Tombstones in the Botosani Jewish cemetery have been found dated back to the 1500s; a congregation existed there since the early 1600s. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Jewish community of Botosani reached 14,817, which was just over 50% of the town's population.¹ As the Jewish population grew, there were few conflicts with the other town residents (outside of Ottoman rule). Aaron's father, my great-great-grandfather, Yoseph Yehuda, was said to have been a very religious man, and apart from his business of grain trading, he worked a second job as a Hebrew teacher. At home, when one of his children made a mistake *davening* before mealtimes, they were beaten and shamed. The patriarch ruled with a firm hand, but ultimately had the best of intentions for his children.

In 1907, the Romanian peasant revolt began in Botosani county, when 1500 farmers descended on the town. It is said that the riot gained an anti-Semitic momentum, with the farmers believing that the Jewish land managers had exploited the Romanian peasants.² While Christian houses were marked with white crosses on their walls and windows, the unmarked Jewish homes, stores, synagogues, and schools were looted and ransacked. Afterward, it was said that the main street looked, "like after a bombing." The stores remained shuttered for some time as Jews were uncertain whether it was safe to leave their houses. In the town, two Jews were killed, and many children were wounded; overall, 1600 Jewish families were affected.³

My Zaida told me a story of his mother—Aaron's sister—from when she was living in Botosani; when her mother would make her hide under an empty washbasin in their front yard while allied Russian troops came through the town, "looking for the young girls."

The persecution of the Jews in Romania seemed to intensify through the late 1800s and the early 1900s, which perhaps encouraged Aaron and Louis to leave. That being said, it is only speculation.

In 1990, there were still approximately 200 Jews living in Botosani; the vast majority having emigrated before World War 2. By 2003, that number had decreased to 92. As of 2016, there are even fewer. Only two synagogues remain.⁴



Figure 1-14 Restored synagogue in Botosani, Romania



Figure 1-15 Interior of the restored synagogue in Botosani, Romania



Figure 1-16 Stormont Mill of the Canada Cotton complex on the Cornwall waterfront

Of his past in Romania, the written account that Joanie sent states that Aaron had served in the army, and worked as a bookkeeper for a large estate. Aaron supposedly walked from Romania to Italy (which would have taken him a few weeks) and boarded a ship heading towards New York. Montreal must have been enticing to them, as many Jews had previously established themselves there. The brothers lived there initially, with only a limited grasp of English. Aaron first worked in a movie theatre sweeping floors, but eventually established a connection through the flourishing Jewish community and the brothers found jobs working in a clothing factory, where Aaron quickly learned to sew, and Louis learned to cut. After a few months, they decided to move from Montreal to Cornwall, renting sewing machines from the factory in order to start their own. There was already a small but well-established group of textile workers in Cornwall (as opposed to the already saturated Montreal market), as well as a significant amount of inexpensive real estate. Their factory was promptly established in 1911 as the Cornwall Pants Company.

Situated along the St. Lawrence River, Cornwall is Ontario's easternmost city, an hour's drive from Montreal. The town of Cornwall was officially established in 1834, prompted by the construction of the Cornwall Canal. The Canal was conceived of to circumvent the Long Sault rapids which posed a significant navigational barrier for potential increased trade. Completed nearly a decade later, this infrastructure connected local waterways to the Great Lakes, allowing access to small commercial shipping vessels. Mill facilities and other factories subsequently established themselves along the waterfront, harnessing the newfound hydrological energy. A couple textile mills and a paper plant were soon incorporated, ensuring manufacturing as the early industrial backbone of the town.⁵ A handful of other industries were attracted to Cornwall throughout the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the municipal government incentivized manufactories to establish themselves on Cornwall soil. However, the offer of bonusing programs which provided principal funds, tax exemptions and easy access to emergency loans were ultimately not enough to bolster long-term economic viability.⁶ Each of the manufacturers founded between 1900 and 1919 succumbed to bankruptcy before 1941, except for the Horovitz-established Cornwall Pants Company, which managed to flourish alongside the earlier established textile mills and paper plant.⁷



Figure 1-17 The Canada Weave Shed at Canada Cotton

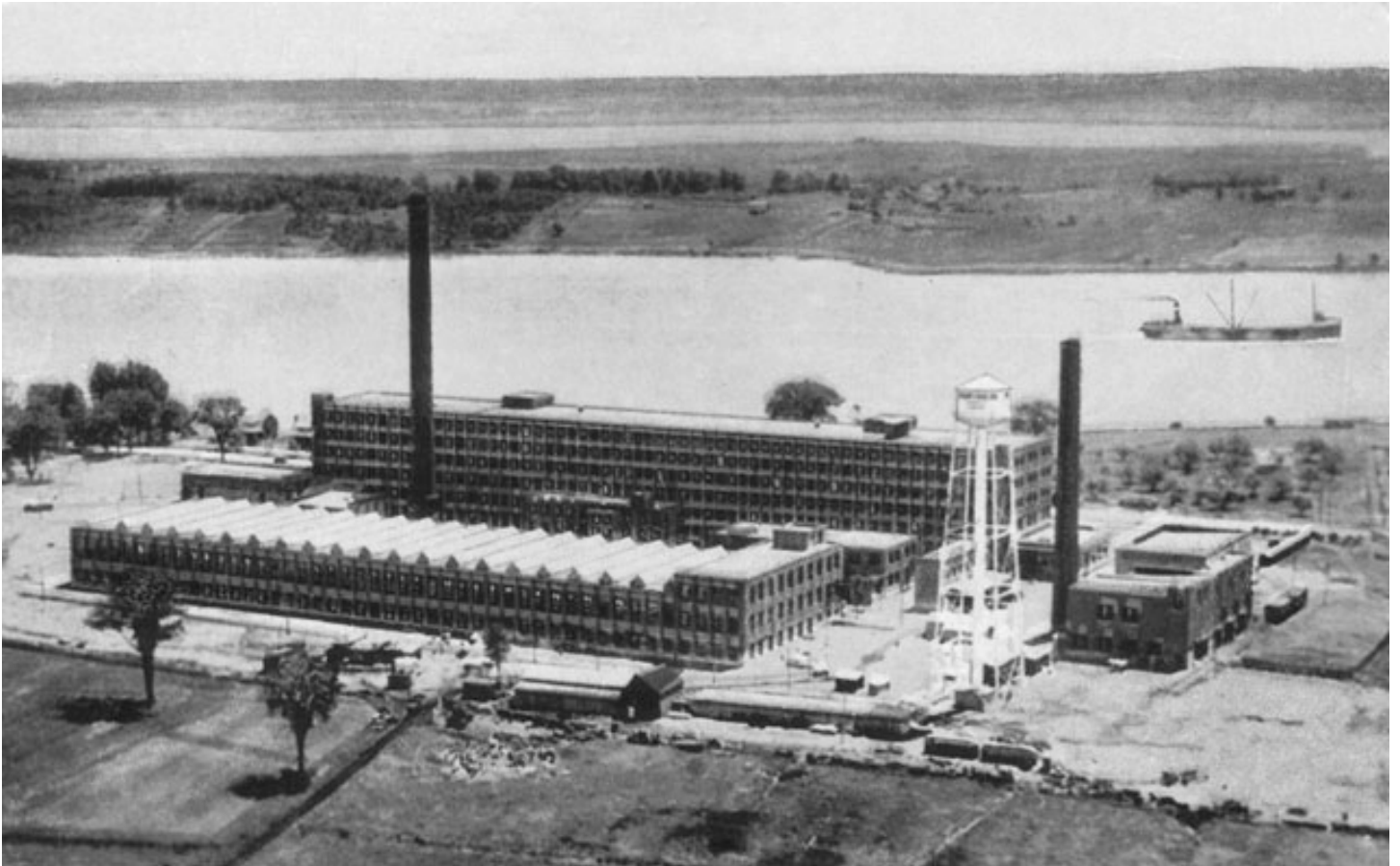


Figure 1-18 Courtauld's Canada rayon factory



Figure 1-19 Newspaper advertisement for Prince Clothing Company, 1925

The Horovitz brothers rented a building at the corner of Water and Marlborough Streets, initially employing twenty-five men. Louis supervised a dozen salesman who travelled across Canada, while the rest worked on the factory floor. In 1920, the brothers decided to expand their operations and moved to a larger site at the former Plamonden Hotel, widening their scope of work and updating their name accordingly to Cornwall Pants and Prince Clothing Company. In 1934, the company's staff produced 1000 pairs of men's pants and 250 boys' suits and overcoats daily.⁸

In 1939, as Canada entered into World War II, Cornwall, a town of 14,000, was immediately concerted and committed in their response, contributing over 4000 individuals to the war effort.⁹ Cornwall Pants & Prince Clothing was engaged by the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Navy to sew uniforms when their material supply was disrupted.¹⁰ In 1942, they employed 300 workers (interestingly, the majority being women) and recorded annual sales of \$1.5M (in 2018, worth around \$14M).¹¹

In the 1970s, the business was sold to the Lovells, another local family, after the majority of Horovitz descendents had left the Cornwall region.¹² In 1972, the Lovells reported financial difficulties, and after a serious fire a few years later, they shuttered the business. In 1976, a former plant manager at Prince Clothing, Fred Bauman, took over the buildings and equipment and re-opened the company under the name of F&B. F&B has since closed, ending the legacy of the Horovitz family factory.¹³



Figure 1-20 Louis and Aaron Horovitz

By many accounts, it was said that Aaron and Louis could pass for identical twins, but their lifestyles could not have been more different. Aaron seemed to be ahead of his time in terms of his health: he ate a clean diet, never drank or smoked. He exercised every day and took frequent fishing trips on the St. Lawrence until the lake froze over. In contrast, Louis drank heavily, with an affinity for scotch, and chain-smoked, using embers of a nearly finished cigarette to light the next. He kept one pack of cigarettes in his office, another in his car, and a third in his house, so he would never run out, wherever he may be. Neither Aaron nor Louis spoke of their past lives in Romania, apart from a few details that were offhandedly mentioned but never elaborated on.

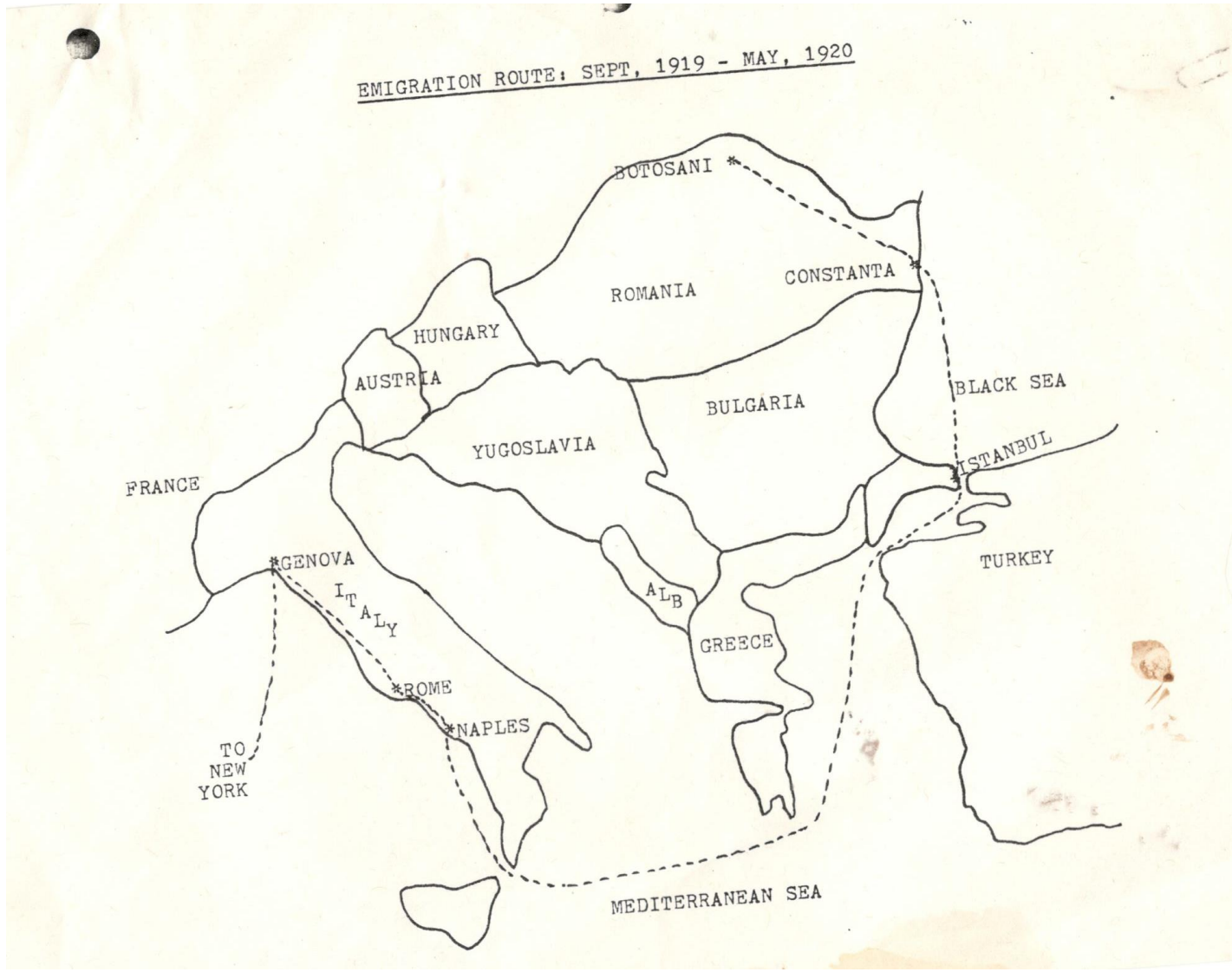


Figure 1-21 Emigration Route: Sept 1919 - May 1920

After the arrival of Aaron and Louis in the early 1910s, and the resulting prosperity of their business, their financial situation allowed for the sponsorship of two of their younger siblings. In 1919, the Horovitz patriarch, Yoseph Yehuda, brought his two youngest sons, Shloim (Saul), aged twenty-one, and Penchat (Paul), aged fourteen, to the port of Constanta on the Western coast of Romania, on the Black Sea. He gave each brother \$10 for the duration of the trip which was supposed to last them until they reached Canada. The following is an account given by Paul in the 1990s, edited and compiled by his nephew, Sidney, describing the brother's journey to Canada:

It had been pre-arranged with the wireless operator of a ship destined for Istanbul, Turkey, that the boys would be hidden once on board, in return for a payment of \$15 upon safe arrival. The first task was to get on board without being spotted. A guard carrying a rifle walked up and down the ship. When the guard's back was turned, the boys ran up the gangway and made their way to the radio room. Saul squeezed into a cupboard under the radio table. It was so tight that his knees touched his chin. A container of turpentine tipped over and burned his leg. Meanwhile, Paul hid under a bed. Each time someone was on the bed, Paul had to shuffle away from the sag to afford himself enough space.

The trip to Turkey took three to four days. Upon landing, the boys slipped off the ship before the wireless operator could collect his payment. This kept intact the \$20 they had started with. The boys ran for a water pump and let the water pour into their mouths to cure their thirst from the trip.

They stopped at a house in Istanbul, which turned out to be a house of prostitution, to obtain directions to a Jewish boarding house. Saul spoke with one of the prostitutes and obtained the appropriate instructions. They found the boarding house and were fed and housed.

After spending two weeks in Istanbul, they found an Italian ship named the *Franz Joseph* headed to Naples, Italy, on which the cook of the ship was willing to hide them. Once again, they skipped out on the boarding house without paying.

They were placed at the bottom of the ship, sitting on bare metal. It was extremely dark in their hiding place except for a porthole. The cook left them a sandwich and a container of water. However, the boys were startled by the presence of large rats and in turn, dropped and broke the water vessel. By the time their composure returned, their sandwich had disappeared. The rats had grabbed it and run.

After a few days at sea, they were desperate to quench their thirst, so they lowered a shirt from the porthole in hopes of sponging up some water. This act caught the attention of a crew member, and their hiding place was revealed. They were brought up on deck and asked by the Captain to divulge who had helped them. The cook stepped forward and confessed, apparently suffering no consequences.

The journey to Naples, Italy aboard the *Franz Joseph* took four days. Upon arrival, the customs inspector thought that the brothers were communists and had them taken to the police station. During the interrogation, they gave the officer a story that they were in Italy only wanting to see the lovely city of Rome. During this, one of the other prisoners managed to break free, with other prisoners following suit, and the officers in the station chased after them. The boys had an opportunity to escape but decided not to, as they had nowhere to go. The police chief was so taken by their honesty in remaining unguarded at the station that he dismissed the charge of being communists, gave them food and water, and bought them two tickets to Rome.

After travelling to Rome, they could not find any departing ships, and so they hopped a train to Genoa. The Horovitz boys had travelled from Botosani to Genoa, and still had the original \$20 given to them by their father. They found a ship destined for the United States but didn't have a passport. An extensive process started—this included applying to the British Consul for a passport, obtaining a letter of reference from the chief rabbi and corresponding with Aaron to send the \$132 needed to purchase their passage. The wait lasted over two months. Each day they would go to the consulate and wait for a few hours to be sure to be present when their passports arrived. Passage to New York was finally booked on January 31, 1920, aboard the ship *America* and scheduled to leave Genoa on March 6, 1920. It was just in time because room and board at the "Popular Hotel" had used up all but \$6 or \$7. These last few dollars were gambled away by Saul in a ring-toss game so he had to give up his watch to pay the balance of the hotel bill.

As soon as they boarded the ship on March 6th, the sailors went on strike and their departure was delayed 20 days. Departure occurred on March 26, 1920, and the voyage to New York lasted three weeks. It was not without incident as Saul was seasick early in the trip and couldn't move from his straw bunk. One day, Paul entered their room and Saul had disappeared. A thorough search of the ship disclosed that he had sought out a bunk on a lower level to be more comfortable because the roll of the ship wasn't as noticeable further down.

Upon landing in New York, they were heartily greeted by the Customs officers because they were the first immigrants to land in New York since the end of World War I. Again Saul disappeared. He had been ushered into a separate area from Paul and detained for three days because of his jaundiced condition.

Through an acquaintance they had made in Italy by the name of Shwartz, they were referred to a Jewish family in New York City. The family celebrated their immigration that night with a lavish meal. They wired Aaron for train fare to Canada and on approximately May 1, 1920, arrived in Cornwall. This was to be their new home, located halfway around the world from Botosani, their former hometown.



Figure 1-22 My great-grandparents, Getrude & Haim Bender

In 1923, Aaron and Louis made their final sponsorship of a Horovitz sibling, bringing to Canada my great-grandparents: their youngest sister, Ghizela (Gertrude), and her husband, Haim Bender.

I cannot say for certain why my great-grandmother was the only woman of the family who emigrated. Perhaps it was because the other married sisters had families or spouses who had made the decision to stay easy for them. Gertrude's remaining sisters, as well as the majority of rest of the Horovitz family who remained in Botosani, ultimately perished in the Holocaust. There is very little known about them anymore beyond these few documents.



Figure 1-23 Some of the Horovitz family

*Ghost, ghost, I know you live within me, feel as you fly,
In thunderclouds above the city, into one that I,
Love with all that was left within me 'til we tore in two,
Now wings and rings and there's so many waiting here for you,
And she was born in a bottle-rocket 1929,
With wings that ringed around a socket right between her spine,
All drenched in milk and holy water pouring from the sky,
I know that she will live forever,
She won't ever die.*

- Neutral Milk Hotel, Ghost

55
PARTICULARS of the Marriage

FORM 3



AFFIDAVIT required before License or Certificate is granted by Issuer of Marriage Licenses by Provision of The Marriage Act

I certify that I solemnized the marriage of:-

Bridegroom Haim Bender
 Bride Ghizela Horovitz
 Witness Harry Katz 841 Clarke St. Montreal P. Q.
 Witness Arian Iscovitch
 Address St. Urbain St. Montreal P. Q.
 County of Stamont ONTARIO
 on the 9th day of September 1923
 Name of Bridegroom's Father J. Bender
 Maiden Name of Bridegroom's Mother Hanna Joseph
 Name of Bride's Father Joseph Horovitz
 Maiden Name of Bride's Mother Julia Roumanian
 Address 330 Bagg ave.
 Denomination Jewish
 Registration Certificate Number 020359

That J. Haim Bender of the County of Cornwall in the Province of Ont. Furniture Maker do hereby make oath and say as follows:
 I, J. Haim Bender Name of deponent or the other contracting party
 my usual place of abode within the Province of Ontario for fifteen days* immediately preceding the date of this affidavit.
 That the facts set forth herein are true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that there is no affinity, consanguinity, prior marriage of other lawful cause or legal impediment to bar or hinder the solemnization of the marriage.

	BRIDEGROOM	BRIDE
020359		
NAMES in full	Haim Bender	Ghizela Horovitz
OCCUPATION	Furniture Maker	House keeper
CONDITION in LIFE	Bachelor	Spinster or Widow
AGE	23 years	23 years
RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION	Jewish	Jewish
RESIDENCE when MARRIED	Cornwall	Cornwall
PLACE of BIRTH	Roumania	Roumania
INTENDED PLACE of MARRIAGE	Cornwall	Stamont

2. (1) The Provincial Secretary shall from time to time, on application made to him according to forms prescribed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, or to the like effect, which application may be made by the applicant or, on his behalf, by the ecclesiastical authority or authorities of the church, religious denomination or congregation to which he belongs, register such person as authorized to solemnize marriage and may issue one or more certificates of such registration to any person so registered or otherwise and may include therein the name of any number of persons so registered.

18. If any person not registered with and certified by the Provincial Secretary, as hereinbefore provided, solemnizes or undertakes to solemnize any marriage, he shall incur a penalty of \$500 and shall also be liable to imprisonment for any term not exceeding twelve months, but such penalties shall be recoverable or imposed only by action at the suit of the Crown.

INSTRUCTIONS TO PERSON SOLEMNIZING MARRIAGE

After solemnizing the marriage, fill in the particulars and forward this LICENSE FORTHWITH to the REGISTRAR-GENERAL, SPADINA HOUSE, TORONTO.

For statistical purposes, please furnish the following information:-
 Birthplace of Bridegroom's Father Roumania
 Birthplace of Bride's Father Roumania
 Can Bridegroom read? Yes write yes
 Can Bride read? Yes write yes

SWORN before me at Cornwall in the County of Stamont on the 9th day of Sept. 1923
 Signature of Issuer J. Haim Bender
 Signature of Deponent J. Haim Bender
 Address of Issuer Cornwall

*If neither of the parties has resided in Ontario for 15 days immediately preceding the date of this affidavit and the intention has not been advanced, a Permit to issue must be obtained from the Registrar-General. A fee of \$2.00 is charged for such permit. (See Sec. 19, n.s. 2, amended.)

Figure 1-24 Marriage document of Haim Bender & Ghizela (Gertrude) Horovitz

From Gertrude and Haim's marriage license, my great-great-grandmother's name ("Maiden Name of Bride's Mother") is scrawled in a messy script, and transcribed on ancestry.com as "Ida Rosenstein." On another document, a grainy synagogue ledger of their marriage, it appears to be "Lola Rosenstein" rather than Ida; the written name is unclear. As I'm getting further into my genealogical research, I am forced to make educated guesses to overcome these uncertainties; these brick walls. At the time, these transcriptions were a very exciting discovery for me; no one in the family had known the third wife's name, only her children's (Avrum & Libby), and the fact that they had moved to Israel. I have no way of contacting them now; they have been lost over time.

I know that Gertrude's birth mother, Toba, died when she was still a child, and I've been told lore of the Jewish *shtetls*; that when a partner died, it was a common occurrence to take another member of their family as their new spouse. Knowing this, I surmised that Ida/Lola must have been Toba's sister, thereby making sense for her to be listed as her mother on the marriage license. She would have presumably raised Gertrude after Toba's early death since Joseph took her as his third wife (we know from family documents that he had quickly left his second wife for concealing her false teeth—at least it is not all despair, and some levity can be found within history). Feeling proud of this breakthrough, I excitedly told my family about this newfound information; I felt like I was making progress in uncharted territories.

A lot of my genealogical research has been conducted through the tedious process of slowly piecing fragmented documents together, ones which may not necessarily be uncovered chronologically. History isn't neat, reliable, organized or indexed, but messy, full of missing pieces and discrepancies.



Figure 1-25 Still from "Fateless" (2005)

In the first semester of my undergraduate architectural education, I took a required cultural history course, where Professor Robert Jan van Pelt taught us about the greatest crime architects have ever committed: the Holocaust. It violently echoed in my brain that semester; it felt like everything that I had been taught in my personal life by way of my Jewish upbringing was coming to a head in my professional academia. It deeply pained me to discuss and examine the Holocaust relentlessly, but I thought perhaps this was what it meant to be in architecture—to push the limits of personal comfort; to have an impersonal response to a subject in order to better understand it. To have empathy, but an empathy that was so far removed and mutated that I could not recognize myself in it.

One day in class we watched a Holocaust movie, so awful and visceral; I was clutching my chest as my heart sank into my stomach for the hundredth time that semester. I remember looking around at my classmates as the light from the movie danced across their faces, emotionless expressions staring up at the screen in front of them; it felt like my life was on display, to be broken down and analyzed. I felt sick and helpless. I left in the middle of the movie to cry in the bathroom.



Figure 1-26 Auschwitz

So, I question sometimes, why, when I write, do these things still evoke such emotion in me? Removed by generations, the Holocaust has been in my consciousness since I can remember. My grandparents were the children of those persecuted, of the ones who emigrated; they seemed to have this compulsion to let their children know, who in turn, let my generation, their children, know. I wonder how it will be disseminated from here on out. I am so many generations removed, and as a fourth-generation immigrant, I have weaker ties to the atrocities, but yet I still feel connected. Alongside generalities, we had to be content with silence. As Yaron Reshef writes in his book, *Out of the Shoebox*, “The past was not spoken of in our home. Perhaps they also wanted to shelter me from the knowledge of evil.”¹⁴

I find myself feeling heavy about searching through the Yad Vashem Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names. Never before had I thought about searching for names, confronting my history so directly; it was always easier to feel more connected to a faceless narrative than the individual people themselves. It is easy for the Holocaust to become an unknown vastness, a shadow; its silence immense. As Daniel Mendelsohn writes in *The Lost*, “The dreadful irony of Auschwitz, I realized as we walked through the famous rooms full of human hair, of artificial limbs, of spectacles, of luggage destined to go nowhere, is that the extent of what it shows you is so gigantic that the corporate and anonymous, the sheer scope of the crime, are constantly, paradoxically asserted at the expense of any sense of individual life.”¹⁵



Figure 1-27 Transnistria

I decided that I wanted to know as much as I could if there was information available, waiting to be revealed, no matter how painful or inconvenient. I looked up both Lola and Ida in the *Yad Vashem* database, and found information for a “Lola Dora Rosenstein” of Romania:

Lola Dora Rosenstein. Prior to WWII she lived in Romania. During the war she was in Transnistria, Ukraine (USSR). This information is based on a List of Persecuted Persons, found in: List of Jews from Romania Deported to Transnistria.

I do not know much about Transnistria during the Holocaust, and nor do I want to explore it further here, but I will leave this quote, which I think says enough, “What is worse: dying in an Auschwitz gas chamber or starving to death in Transnistria?”¹⁶

It is not an uncommon occurrence for me to fall into an obsessive fever, methodically looking up names that haven’t been spoken aloud for decades, but I still haven’t come up with any absolute results other than the one above. I look at my family tree, still with so many people lost, without the means or strength to look deeper, more thoroughly. Questions repeat continuously in my head: where were the half-siblings who went to Israel? What about everyone who stayed behind? Did they escape, leaving behind their Romanian lives and perhaps, their identities, never to be found again?

In 1935, Saul and Frances married and went on their honeymoon, travelling back to Europe, and invited the entire clan of Canadian Horovitzes to travel back with them. It is dismal now knowing that this was the last time they were going to see their family. It is infuriating that they were there but did not—could not—warn them of the coming atrocities, unable to see their futures. There are no records in the *Yad Vashem* database for any of them. At one point, I found someone named Etlia Horovitz. She’s not on my tree—I’m not sure who Etlia is, but maybe she’s one of us. Maybe there is someone else out there searching for her too.

It is only much later that I find out that my great-grandparents’ marriage license does indeed list my great-great-grandmother, Toba, and not Ida, or Lola; it has been transcribed incorrectly. I hadn’t actually found out the third wife’s name; we already knew this information. Another brick wall.

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

List 3

ALL ALIENS arriving at a port of continental United States from a foreign port or a port of the insular possessions of the United States, and all aliens arriving at a port of said insular possessions from a foreign port, a port of continental United States (pink sheet is for the listing of

S. S. SIBONEY Passengers sailing from HAVANA, CUBA JANUARY 20TH, 1923

197

No. on List	HEAD-TAX STATUS (For alien for use of Government vessels only.)	NAME IN FULL		Age	Sex	Calling or occupation	Able to—			Nationality (Country of which citizen or subject.)	Race or people	*Last permanent residence.		The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came.	Final destination. (*Indicate from permanent address.)		
		Family name	Given name				Read	Speak that language (or, if multiple, state in what part)	Write			Country	City or town		State	City or town	State
1	CUBAN ADMITTED	VA DIVIA	ROSALIA	37	F	HOUSEWIFE	SPANISH	YES	CUBA	CUBAN	CUBA	HAVANA	UNCLES, RAMON BLANCO, INQUISIDOR 26, HAVANA.	CUBA	HAVANA		
2	RES. USA. RET.	SEYE	ELISA	26	F	COOK	ENGLISH	YES	FRANCE	FRENCH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	FRIEND, ROSALIA ABREU, QUINIA PALATINO, CERRO, FRIEND, JOSE FERNANDEZ, AGOSTA 19, HAVANA.	N.Y.	BROOKLYN		
3	CL. CUBAN	ROD RIGUEZ	BALBINO	26	M	CLERK	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	CUBA	HAVANA	188 - O - ST., VEDADO, HAVANA.	CUBA	HAVANA		
4	CL. CUBAN	AGRAMONTE	JOSE	26	M	ENGINEER	SPANISH	YES	CUBA	CUBAN	CUBA	HAVANA	HOTEL FLORIDA, HAVANA.	ENGLAND	MANCHESTER		
5	TRANSIT	SWEANEY	DAVID	43	M	TRAVELER	ENGLISH	YES	BRITISH	ENGLISH	ENGLAND	MANCHESTER	FRIEND, JEAN ARONDO, PRADO 64, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
6	RES. USA. RET.	RIVERO	IGNACIO	28	M	MERCHANT	SPANISH	YES	CUBA	CUBAN	CUBA	HAVANA	HOTEL PLAZA, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
7	RES. USA. RET.	CUERVO	LUDGINIO	30	M	SALESMAN	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
8		FUJOL	RAFAEL	43	M	ARTIST	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	WITH HUSBAND	N.Y.	N.Y.		
9		FUJOL	ADA	37	F	ARTIST	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
10	RES. USA. RET.	KAUFMAN	BEN	33	M	ARTIST	ENGLISH	YES	RUSSIAN	RUSSIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
11	RES. USA. RET.	ADELMAN	HARRIS	49	M	ARTIST	RUSSIAN	YES	RUSSIA	RUSSIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
12	RES. USA. RET.	VIOLANTE	DAMIANO	53	M	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
13	RES. USA. RET.	GREPORI	OSCAR	40	M	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
14	RES. USA. RET.	MONTALTO	PIETRO	45	M	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
15	RES. USA. RET.	BLASIO	PASQUALE DI	52	M	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
16	RES. USA. RET.	ZEROLA	NICOLA	46	M	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
17	RES. USA. RET.	ZEROLA	LINA	40	M	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	FRIEND, CASINO GARCIA, SAN RAFAEL #21, HAVANA.	PARIS	FRANCE		
18	TRANSIT	MIGNARD	MARCEL	35	M	ARTIST	FRENCH	YES	FRANCE	FRENCH	FRANCE	SEVRES	HOTEL INGLATERRA, HAVANA. FATHER, SERGIO GONZALEZ, 86 SAN MIGUEL ST., HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
19	RES. USA. RET.	SAENZ	FRANCISCO	40	M	SALESMAN	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	FRIEND, ANGEL VELOSO, 22 LAMPARILLA ST., HAVANA.	CUBA	HAVANA		
20	RES. USA. RET.	GONZALEZ	JESUS	41	M	MERCHANT	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	CUBA	HAVANA	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
21	CL. CUBAN	DIAZ ARANGO	MANUEL	35	M	CLERK	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	CUBA	HAVANA					
22		JAGO	ANNE	27	F	ARTIST	ENGLISH	YES	BRITISH	ENGLISH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	HOTEL PASAJE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
23		ORDONEZ	AUGUSTO	36	M	ARTIST	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	WITH HUSBAND #25.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
24	RES. USA. RET.	ORDONEZ	SONIA	21	F	HOUSEWIFE	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	WITH FATHER #25.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
25	UNDER 16	ORDONEZ	LOUIS	26	M	NONE	NO	NO	NO	SPANISH	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
26	RES. USA. RET.	FERRETTI	CARLO	32	M	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	PETRET THEATRE, HAVANA.	N.Y.	N.Y.		
27	RES. USA. RET.	PERCE	OTTONE	35	M	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	WITH HUSBAND #27. BROTHER, JOSE TRECHA,	N.Y.	N.Y.		
28	RES. USA. RET.	PERCE	LINA	23	F	ARTIST	ITALIAN	YES	ITALY	ITALIAN	U.S.A.	N.Y., N.Y.	34 MURALLA ST., HAVANA.	CUBA	HAVANA		
29	CL. CUBAN	TRECHA	ALFONSO	32	M	MERCHANT	SPANISH	YES	SPAIN	SPANISH	CUBA	HAVANA	FRIEND, W. MEIER,	CANADA	CORNWALL		
30	TRANSIT	BENDER	HAIM	22	M	GERMAN	GERMAN	YES	TURKEY	TURKISH	TURKEY	CONSTANTINOPLE	HOTEL CENTRAL, HAVANA.				

Numbers - 8 Rafael Fujol - 9 Ada Zujol #22 Anne Jago # 23 Augusto Ordinez did not take passage

63

Total passengers
U. S. citizens
Aliens

* Permanent residence within the meaning of this manifest shall be actual or intended residence of one year or more.
† List of race will be found on the back of this sheet.

Figure 1-28 List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigration Officer at Port of Arrival travelling from Havana, Cuba; passenger Haim Bender is recorded on the last line on the document

List 3

The entries on this sheet must be typewritten or printed.

STATES IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL

States, or a part of another transfer possession, in whatsoever class they travel, MUST be fully listed and the master or commanding officer of each vessel carrying such passengers must upon arrival deliver lists thereof to the immigration officer.

Arriving at Port of NEW YORK, N.Y., JANUARY 23RD, 1923.

197

Table with 33 columns: No. on List, Sex, Age, Marital Status, By whom, Whether ever before in the United States, Whether going to join a relative or friend, Purpose of coming to United States, Condition of health, Deformed or crippled, Height, Color of hair, Color of eyes, Marks of identification, Place of birth. Rows 1-30 contain passenger details such as 'SISTER-IN-LAW, VALENTIN AGUIRRE', 'FRIEND, LOUISE J. DE MILHAN', etc.

Note.—Full text of question 24 is as follows: Whether a person who believes in or advocates the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States or of all forms of government, or who advocates the assassination of public officials, or who advocates or teaches the unlawful destruction of property, or is a member of or affiliated with any organization entertaining and teaching disloyalty or opposition to organized government or which teaches the unlawful destruction of property, or who advocates or teaches the duty, necessity, or propriety of the unlawful assaulting or killing of any officer or officers, either of specific individuals or of officers generally, of the Government of the United States or of any other organized government because of his or their official character.

Figure 1-29 The Manifest, continued

Navaon

Class 1923 Date of Sailing 1-20-23

Havana

DECLARATION OF PASSENGER TO CANADA.

1. NAME BENDER HAIM Age 22
(PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS, FAMILY NAME FIRST)

2. Sex M Are you married, single, widowed or divorced? S
If married, are you accompanied by husband or wife? If so, give name of husband or wife.

3. Present occupation TAILOR Intended occupation TAILOR

4. Birthplace TURKEY Race or people Turkish

5. Citizenship TURKEY Religion ✓
(IF PROTESTANT, STATE DENOMINATION)

6. Object in going to Canada To work

7. Do you intend to remain permanently in Canada? yes

8. Have you ever lived in Canada? NO If you have, give Canadian address

9. Port of first arrival in Canada _____ Date _____
Port of last departure from Canada _____ Date _____

9. Why did you leave Canada? _____

10. Money in possession belonging to passenger ✓

11. Can you read? yes What language? German

12. By whom was your passage paid? Self

13. Ever refused entry to, or deported from Canada? no

14. Destined to Proctor & Low, Adolf
Baronitz, Cornwall, Ont.

(IF JOINING RELATIVE, FRIEND OR EMPLOYER (1) STATE WHICH AND IF RELATIVE GIVE RELATIONSHIP; (2) GIVE HIS OR HER NAME AND CANADIAN ADDRESS; (3) IF NOT JOINING ANY PERSON IN CANADA, GIVE YOUR OWN CANADIAN ADDRESS.)

16. Nearest relative in country from which you came Friend
W. Meier
(NAME) (RELATIONSHIP)
Hotel Central Havana
(GIVE FULL ADDRESS OF SUCH RELATIVE)

17. Are you or any of your family mentally defective? _____
Tubercular? _____ Physically defective? _____
Otherwise debarred under Canadian Immigration Law? _____
(Before answering question 17 see the prohibited classes named in Immigration Booklet 30A which will be handed to you by Booking Agent.)
I declare the above statements are true: I am aware that an inaccurate statement constitutes misrepresentation and that the penalty is a fine, imprisonment or deportation.

Signature of passenger _____
I hereby declare that the above is the signature of passenger and that I have handed passenger a copy of Immigration Booklet 30A.

Sig. of Booking Agent _____ at _____

Figure 1-30 Haim Bender's Declaration of Passenger to Canada indicating his Turkish origins

My great-grandfather Haim Bender came to Canada in 1923, and that is all I know for certain. He did not talk at all about his past; I do not know if he had any siblings, and I only know the full name of his father. My Zaida does not know anything other than this information either, and that is all we knew for a long time.

I recently made an intriguing discovery online—documents of his arrival to Canada. I felt a surge of adrenaline run through my body as I began to pore over the documents; I was going to have verifiable facts—who knows where they could take me next!

From the ship's Manifest of Alien Passengers, it seemed that on January 20th, 1923, Haim departed from Havana, Cuba, on the *S.S. Siboney*, sailing toward Ellis Island, New York. He is listed as Haim Bender, age 22. Continuing to read across the chart, strangely, under the *Occupation* column, it is listed as German. It seems that this column has been confused for the *Languages read* column, a few columns over. Upon closer inspection, the word "Tailor" has been lightly scrawled in pencil above "German," and the next column indicates that he can indeed read German. There were plenty of mistakes like this littered throughout the document; it was jarring, but I reminded myself not to be too trusting of everything that is written, even on an "official" document.

The next column lists Haim's nationality: Turkey. Turkey? I am dumbfounded. Could this be the start of one those stories that I had read about others tracing their lineage, when a person thinks they are one thing, but then all of a sudden, a piece of evidence alters their perception of their identity in discovering that they are actually something else? My identity had always felt unyielding; this was enough to jostle it.

Under the *Race or people* column, it again lists Turkish. It is faintly crossed out with the same hand as before, a light pencil mark indicating "Heb," presumably short for Hebrew. It seems that they knew that Haim was Jewish. The next column indicates Haim's last permanent address was in Constantinople.

The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came, it specifies a friend, "W. Meier" of Hotel Central. Unsure of how Haim could have known someone in Cuba, I flip through the pages of the manifest. It seems that W. Meier was an engineer aboard the *Siboney*.

The next page of the document indicates that he had never been to the United States before and that he was only passing through, to remain for one day, before continuing in transit to Canada. He is described as 5'10", with a dark complexion, and brown eyes, and no other identifying marks. The last two columns indicate his place of birth. Under *Country* it listed Siam, (again, this is lightly crossed out to correct to Turkey. I nearly fainted reading this.) and under *City or Town*: Adrinople (now modern day, Edirne).

Canadian Immigration Service

FORM 30.

INSPECTOR'S
Stamp
JAN 24 1923
CORNWALL, ONT.

1. NAME Bender, Haim
(Print name in block letters, family name first.)

2. Last permanent address Humboldt Place - Havana - Cuba
(Street and No.)

3. Sex Male Are you married, single, widowed or divorced? Single
If married are you accompanied by husband or wife? If so give name of husband or wife

4. Birthplace Gotzow Citizenship Romanian Race or people Hebrew
(Country and P.O.)

5. Nat. Cert. No. _____ Date _____ Court _____
State _____ Attestor _____

6. Object in coming to Canada Tourist Occupation Writer
(Intended)

7. Able to read? Yes Language Romanian Religion Hebrew
(State Denomination)

8. Ever lived in Canada? Yes Address _____
Entered previously at _____ Date _____
Left Canada at _____ Date _____

9. Why left Canada? _____

10. Ever refused entry to or deported from Canada? Yes Where? _____
No

11. Money in possession belonging to passenger \$ 3000 If settler \$ _____
(Value of effects.)

12. DESTINED TO (Relative, Friend or Employer) Brother-in-law
(Relationship)
Name Adolf Harnowitz
Address Cornwall Ont.
(Passenger must give full address)

13. R.R. Ticket issue _____ No _____ Form _____
20 From Havana Cuba To Cornwall Ont.

14. Port of last arrival in the United States New York N.Y.
Date July 23 - 1923 S. S. Albatross Class 1st

15. Are you or any of your family mentally defective? No
Tubercular? No Physically defective? No
Otherwise debarred under Canadian Immigration Law? _____

16. Apparent condition of health Good

17. ACTION TAKEN Admitted 18. CAUSE _____ 19. Appeal Taken Yes
No.

NOTE.—Where answers are printed, strike out alternative word or words.

Figure 1-31 Haim Bender's Canadian Immigration Document indicating his Romanian/Hebrew citizenship and race

I turned to the next document, the Declaration of Passenger to Canada, which contained information consistent with the manifest. He was listed as being destined to his brother-in-law, "Adolf Horowitz," of Cornwall, Ont. I now had something resembling proof that my great-grandparents had met before their marriage in Canada.

The final document, the Canadian Immigration Service Form 30, was dated a few days later, on January 24th, in Cornwall, Ontario. Under *Last permanent address*, it is listed as No 4 Santa Clara, Havana, Cuba. I looked up the address; it is the nearest most street to the port. His birthplace is listed as Odobesti, "Roumania," and that his citizenship is "Roumanian." His race or people is Hebrew. He is able to read "Roumanian." It is indicated that he arrived in New York on January 23rd.

What was the truth? Could we indeed be Turkish? I began to try to rationalize the thoughts racing through my mind.

My mom excitedly shared this newfound information with my Zaida, hoping he could help us clear up some of the discrepancies.

He told her he had never heard of his father being Turkish, and that he didn't want to confront it now.

He asked me to not bring it up to him again.



Figure 1-32 Interior of the Beth-El Synagogue, 1940

When the Horovitz brothers emigrated in the early twentieth century, there were already 104 Jews living in Cornwall.¹⁷ While the Jewish community did not have an established synagogue, Saturday morning services remained routine and were conducted out of members' homes.¹⁸ The growing community soon rented a larger room situated over a storefront, where they stored their *Torah* scrolls when they weren't in use. A cantor travelled from Montreal to lead High Holiday prayers, which initially seemed to suit their needs. However, in 1924, Jewish community members arrived at the rented space for *Yom Kippur* morning service to find that the *Aron Ha-Kodesh* had been moved to accommodate a party the previous night; after *Kol Nidre* services, the space had been repurposed for dinner and dancing. The community was understandably upset, and it was quickly decided that something like this would never happen again—they resolved to build their own synagogue. The newly formed Beth-El Congregation purchased land at 321 Amelia Street (located within walking distance of each of the Horovitz homes), and the synagogue was officially opened in 1925. The cornerstone was laid by Aaron, in addition to his family's donation of the *Aron Ha-Kodesh*. After the erection of the synagogue, the congregation swelled to 87 families.¹⁹ By 1931, the Jewish community more than doubled from the time the Horovitzes arrived; for a small town, the Jewish community was alive and thriving.²⁰



LIGHTS MENORAH – Cornwall resident Mark Goldhamer sits behind his menorah which he lit to observe the fourth day of Hanukkah. The eight-day event marks the rededication of the Temple after the Maccabees defeated the Syrians in 165 B.C. It is one of the holiest of Jewish holidays. (Staff photo/MacEachern)

Leader laments shrinking Jewish community in city

Few remain to carry on proud tradition

By FRANK MacEACHERN
Standard-Freeholder

As Mark Goldhamer lit the menorah in a centuries-old tradition...

“It was a very active community at one time.”

- Mark Goldhamer

percentage of Cornwall's population, Goldhamer can remember when the synagogue would be crowded. Now the average age of the people at the synagogue is 75, Goldhamer remembered with a shrug.

“The Jewish community has decreased but everything else has decreased as well.”

But when the community was vibrant it was heavily involved in...

Figure 1-33 Longtime resident Mark Goldhamer discusses the imminent closure of the Beth-El Synagogue in Cornwall's Standard-Freeholder Newspaper

After World War II, the synagogue reached its peak attendance, with approximately 232 individuals participating in Jewish life at Beth-El. The synagogue aimed to accommodate various Jewish denominations, but predominantly appealed to members that fit somewhere between the Conservative and Orthodox philosophies, as only a handful of the members preferred the Reform movement.

Jewish families in the areas were very inclusive and integrated, with many open dinner invitations, for both Jews and non-Jews alike. Any new Jewish family to the neighbourhood would be invited to join large groups for Passover dinners, and former Toronto Mayor and Cornwall native Nathan Phillips' mother entertained prominent community members for tea. It seemed that Jewish relations with the surrounding community were positive; establishing a balance between assimilation alongside the maintenance of tradition was paramount. However, Joel Horovitz, Aaron's son, relayed to me how still, growing up in the 1950s in Cornwall, people in the town would call him a "dirty Jew" as he passed by on the street.

By the 1990s, the progressively shrinking congregation posed a problem for the future of the community. A *minyan* was often difficult to establish, which meant fewer individuals attending services, and less available funds for general maintenance and upkeep. A series of changes had to be made to keep the synagogue alive. Firstly, a major fundraising campaign targeting current and former members of the community was undertaken, which ultimately raised \$30,000 for continued operation. As well, a coalition between a number of other small town Jewish communities in Upper New York State was formed, allowing resources and services to be shared amongst them on a rotating basis. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, a motion to include women as part of the *minyan* count was proposed in order to reach the required number to convene in the synagogue. For a number of years, the series of steps taken by the congregation proved to be successful, but eventually, the implications of the dwindling community had to be faced, and in 2006, the synagogue closed its doors.²¹

As the sky darkens on a Friday night, when all work is supposed to be halted to a standstill, if I am at my parent's house, my mom will ask me to light the *Shabbos* candles with her. It is the women who usher in the celebration of creation, and as creation began with the words, "let there be light," so too does the day begin with the kindling of the fire.²² She places three squat candles in the candelabra that has lived at my parent's house for as long as I can remember (later she tells me that it was an engagement gift). We first extend our arms toward the flames and repeat circular motions three times, the fire flickering as we gesture inward toward our bodies. We cover our eyes with one hand, and our head with the other. We begin the prayer:

*Barukh ata Adonai
Eloheinu, Melekh ha'olam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu
l'hadlik ner
shel Shabbat.*

I am always amazed at my ability to remember this prayer. It has been years since I first learned to read the Hebrew alphabet in my Sunday school, and yet when Friday arrives, the prayer is as present in my mind as something I had learned the day before. When my father *davens* from the Passover *haggadah*, I am always amazed and overwhelmed by the rapid pace with which he reads; I can recite the Shabbat prayers with his same ease, it is so ingrained. This fragment will always live on within me.

MAYOR AARON HOROVITZ

Children's

ANNUAL PICNIC

For The NEW CITY OF CORNWALL Children

CORNWALL ATHLETIC GROUNDS

THURSDAY, AUG. 16th, 1956

Commencing at 2.30 p.m

In case of bad weather, Picnic will be held the following day.

Grand Draw For

BICYCLES and TRICYCLES

Winners must be residents of the New City of Cornwall and be present at time of the draw.

(OVER)

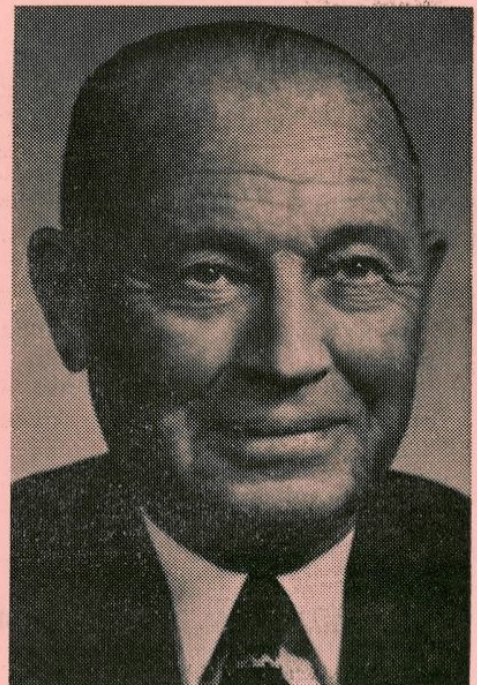


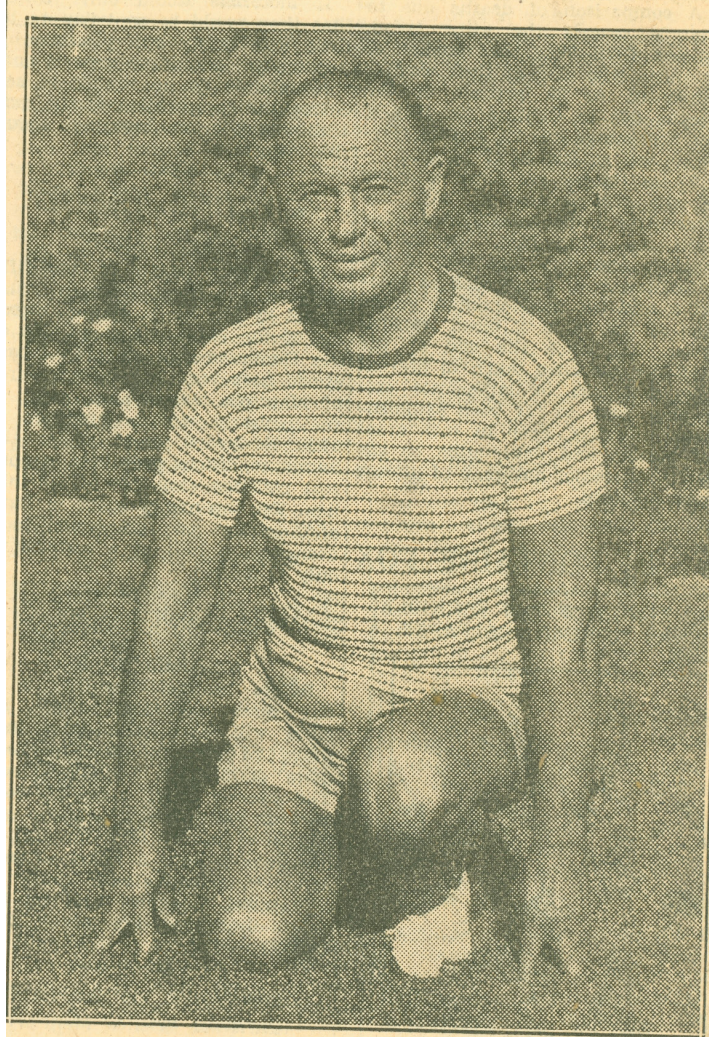
Figure 1-34 Flyer advertising Mayor Horovitz's annual children's picnic, 1956

In 1926, Aaron was elected to city council. He became the mayor of Cornwall in 1930 and was said to be the first Jewish mayor in all of Canada. He held the position intermittently for eighteen years, until 1956, and purportedly gave his annual mayoral stipend to charity.²³

Aaron had a long list of achievements and contributions within his community. In 1934, Aaron presided at the opening of the Roosevelt International Bridge, which linked Canada to the United States. He welcomed Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip on their Canadian royal tour in 1951. He was the vice president of the Cornwall-Northern New York International Bridge Corporation, and president of Canadian-American Terminal, Inc. He was the president of the Congregation Beth-El, chairman of the Cornwall Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress, and was active in other local organizations. He took his position seriously, and the city greatly benefited from his contributions.

He hosted an annual children's picnic and parade, which was self-funded, and gave away free hot dogs and ice-cream, and prizes, like bicycles. This event often drew thousands of people to Cornwall's Central Park.²⁴

Aaron ushered in the 1945 new year as Cornwall became Ontario's twenty-eighth city,²⁵ and later, in 1956, spearheaded the amalgamation of Cornwall's historic square mile town and the surrounding region township of approximately 30 square miles, which resulted in a doubling of the population.²⁶ Aaron also championed the Cornwall Seaway expansion, dreaming of furthering manufactory development in the city.



IN THE PINK—Rapidly rounding into condition for the “Mayor’s Stakes” on August 8 during Old Home Week is Cornwall’s Mayor Aaron Horovitz. A prime believer in good physical condition for those entrusted with important business and municipal affairs, Mayor Aaron Horovitz practises what he preaches and goes through a daily program of calisthenics and roadwork to keep him in tip-top shape. Pride in his excellent condition induced him to challenge the mayor’s of all Ontario cities of over 5,000 population to a 100-yard dash during Old Home Week. So confident is the mayor in his running ability that he has even offered handicaps in the personal telegrams he directed to all potential competitors. This photograph shows “Flash” Horovitz ready to burn up the temporary course laid out on the grounds of his summer cottage at Stonehouse Point, where he has set up training quarters. (Staff Photo)

Figure 1-35 Aaron “Flash” Horovitz

Aaron ran for the mayoral seat again in 1957, but ultimately laid the groundwork for his oust from office as his opponent, Emile Menard, the outgoing reeve of the Cornwall township,²⁷ had the majority of voter strength in the newly amalgamated portion of Cornwall.²⁸ Joel recounted how his father was broken up over this loss, as the city of Cornwall and its prosperity had meant everything to him. A few months later, in May of 1957, Aaron died in his family home; Menard would ultimately only outlive him by a few months, to pass away while he was serving in office. I was told that Aaron had challenged a number of other Ontario mayors to an athletic race, and had died from resulting heart complications a few days later. However, I was told by another that this was not true, and that he actually died peacefully after a fishing trip—I'm still not clear on the specifics.

I was reminded by a Cornwall historian that while many now praise Aaron as a local success story, it is easy to forget that originally, he came from away. He was bound to have an accent, bound to be forever given away as an “outsider” every time he opened his mouth; he was bound to have people dislike him, or even loathe him. And yet, he was part of this backbone of the town; a visionary, deeply loved by the community and someone who cared very deeply about the new life he had carved out for himself and his family.



Figure 1-36 Mayor Aaron Horovitz's annual children's picnic parade route in downtown Cornwall



Figure 1-37 Aaron pictured amongst many children at the annual picnic



Figure 1-38 Some members of the Horovitz family

The Horovitz families and the Bender family lived in the historic square mile of Cornwall, their houses within walking distance of each other. Aaron and Saul lived directly across the street from each other on Second Street. A fifteen-minute walk East, Paul and Gertrude both resided on Gloucester Street. The family was large, and spanned a broad age range, but they remained close, putting family first, above all else. They all had Aaron and Louis to thank for their newfound North American life and lifestyle.

Aaron, Louis, Paul, Saul, and Haim all worked together in the Cornwall Pants factory. Aaron and Louis led the company in equal parts; Aaron acted as the local face of the company, and Louis managed the travelling salesmen, with a focus in the Maritimes. My Zaida would accompany Louis on buying trips, partly to learn the ropes of the family business, but mainly to help keep Louis sober. Aaron affectionately called my Zaida, Yussel, a Yiddish diminutive of Yoseph, his Hebrew name. He would assist Aaron with menial errands, earning a \$20 bill for each completed chore (in 2018 this amount would be a little under \$300). Otherwise, Northern Ontario sales were under Saul's purview, while Paul was the head of the administration at the factory, and Haim was brought into the family business as the plant foreman.

Gertrude, the only Horovitz sister, was said to have been the rock of the family; though she did not work alongside her brothers at Cornwall Pants, she maintained close relationships with each of them. They would visit her home often, bringing her meats and vegetables to prepare the Jewish and Romanian dishes of their childhoods. My Zaida remembers being able to tell which Uncle was visiting on a particular day based on which colour Cadillac was parked outside his house.

Becoming wealthy so quickly seemed to cause rifts between many of the siblings and their spouses. Despite this, the family remained close-knit, and made sure to celebrate *simchas* together; I've been told stories of childhoods in Cornwall: during *Passover* dinners, the young Horovitz cousins would band together to steal *matzoh balls* from the kitchen. They'd sneak away to bet on them, tossing them to the ground to find out the ones that had the least bounce: the most overcooked.



Figure 1-39 Aerial view of the original Central Park

Cornwall's Central Park was opened in the late 1800s, with an addition in 1900 of decorative fountains and an elevated band shell. The park was flanked by residential homes to the West, but the greenery took up approximately two-thirds of the block. Eventually, in 1930, the addition of the first public pool in Cornwall, which was located at the southern end of the park, encouraged young people of Cornwall to engage in community activities.²⁹ The park was bordered by Sydney Street to the West, 1st Street East to the North, and Amelia Street to the East. In 1958, a year after Aaron's death, Central Park was renamed in his honour, as Horovitz Memorial Park.³⁰

Today, the park has been diminished from its large footprint, relegated to its North-East corner. In 1979, Sydney Street was re-oriented to accommodate the curiously named "Cornwall Square," a 9000 square metre two-story commercial shopping mall, and its associated parking lot.³¹ Its largest tenant was an anchoring Sears store, which closed in September 2017, leaving the fate of the mall unclear. (As of March 2018, the development company that owns the mall has proposed the demolition of the former Sears in order to accommodate a six to eight-story building, which will contain multiple floors of retail storefronts and residential units.)³² Presently, about 20% of the storefronts in the mall are empty. The remainder of the park is majorly occupied by a large glazed building that contains a Service Canada Centre, poetically reflecting Horovitz park back on itself.

When I visited Cornwall, the park was empty.



Figure 1-40 The public pool in Central Park



Figure 1-41 Horovitz Memorial Park signage



Figure 1-42 The house on Gloucester Street

May 2017

My mom and I walked along Gloucester Street and approached the little house with the striped awnings, only a short walk away from the park. I forced my mom to do it; we'd come all this way; it would be pointless not to. I convinced her to walk up the porch stairs with me and knock on the front door. We knocked; there was no answer and no movement from inside. My mom patiently waited, ears craning, newly determined, and knocked again. A friendly sounding, "Hello?" softly floated up the stairs from around the side of the house. As we descended towards the voice, my mom grabbed my arm and whispered to me, "Funny, she always used the side door too."

We were greeted by a woman, somewhere in her sixties, smiling broadly at us from behind the half-opened screen door. My mom quickly launched into an explanation of why we were there, how the house had been my great-grandmother's, and her grandmother's; "My Bubby's," she said. "Your Bubby's?" the woman asked, with a little laugh, the foreign word bouncing around her mouth and off her tongue. My mom responded, "Yes, Bubby—that is how we say grandmother in Yiddish." I realized her we encompassed more than just the two of us, standing there at the bottom of the driveway.

The woman intently listened to our story, and then generously offered us a tour of the house. We jumped at the opportunity and entered the house through the side door. The woman introduced herself as Denise, "I'm glad I heard you from the side, I never use the front door!" My mom flashed me a knowing smile.



Figure 1-43 The stairs and the chandelier

We entered into a recently updated kitchen, and Denise directed us through the room toward the front of the house. There was a dated chandelier hanging above the front hallway, and it quickly caught my mom's eye. Startled, she said, "I.. I think that was my Bubby's." Her eyes wandered over to the stairs, and she immediately welled up, "This must have been the original woodwork," she said as she brushed tears from her cheeks, "I remember running up these steps as a little girl." She paused, and then said, "I didn't remember that until just now."

Continuing through the house, we climbed the stairs to the second floor, my mom slowly running her hands along the railing as we ascended. I quickly peeked into Denise's bedroom; above her bed was a Christian scripture; it was then that I glanced back at her emblazoned shirt, the phrase seeming familiar. "I'm a born-again Christian," she said with a smile, as she saw me noticing.

At the end of the hall, in the bathroom, my mom recognized a single doorknob of glass—all the others had been replaced—curiously locking a linen closet. (We asked my Zaida about this later; he told us that his mother used to hide money in between the linens.)



Figure 1-44 The encased mezuzah

We descended the stairs and started into the kitchen, but Denise quickly changed her course, “Oh! I almost forgot!” she said excitedly, as she guided us back again toward the front door, “There may be something else of your *Bubby’s* here,” the word now comfortable on her tongue. She opened her front door and gestured toward the large white protrusion on the door jamb. “It’s one of those *Jewish things*.”

Both of our mouths hung open; it was a *mezuzah*, my great-Bubby and Zaida’s *mezuzah*, buried beneath time and house paint. It was an eerie sight. Here was tangible proof, something other than flawed memories and hearsay, that the people that I had been researching, *people in my own family*, had been here; had dwelled here. My mom silently brought her hand to her lips, and then extended it upward, her fingertips lightly pressing against the *mezuzah*, the same as her Bubby did, the same as she does every time she leaves our family home.

My mother regained her composure and turned to Denise, and earnestly asked, “If you ever move, or plan on repainting your door, whatever—please let me know; I’d love to come and collect the *mezuzah* for my father.”

Two days later, a few hours before we were set to leave Cornwall, my mom received an email from Denise letting us know that her son-in-law had managed to pry the *mezuzah* from the door frame. It was ours to take home.

Contained within every *mezuzah* casing is a hand-written scroll, scribed with intention and perfection. Every Hebrew letter must be perfectly formed; a single crack, omission or imperfection in the text invalidates the scroll in its entirety. A *mezuzah* is hung on every doorway in a household, except for bathrooms and other minor rooms, such as a closet. A room here is primarily defined by its size, in this case, 6.5 x 6.5 feet, and as such tends to include hallways and large closets.³³ It is dictated that the *mezuzah* be permanently attached on the right side of the doorpost, on the upper third of the doorway, with its top slanted toward the interior of the room. Placing a *mezuzah* on the doorpost protects the inhabitants, inside and outside of their homes. In this way, Judaism is not confined to its synagogues, or its community dwellings, but instead a faith unrestricted.

It is promised that those who observe the *mitzvah* of affixing a *mezuzah* will lead a rich life, “so that you will prolong your days and the days of your children.”³⁴



Figure 1-45 Uncovering the mezuzah

The *mezuzah* was encased in multiple layers of house paint. Rather than submerging it in a paint stripping liquid, for fear of damaging the paper scroll inside and rendering it *unkosher*, I instead used a paint removal gel, which only sat on the surface of the *mezuzah* casing. This was ultimately a slower but safer process. For a few hours, I alternated between letting the gel sit on the surface of the *mezuzah*, breaking down the paint, and then aggressively scrubbing paint flecks off with a metal bristle brush.

The raised *shin* of *shaddai* appeared first.

The elegantly unornamented *mezuzah* soon emerged in its entirety.



Figure 1-46 Uncovering the mezuzah



Figure 1-47 Uncovering the mezuzah



Figure 1-48 The uncovered mezuzah

My mom and I presented my Zaida with the *mezuzah* the following month, at our family father's day celebration. As he opened the gift, he sharply inhaled and began to well up. We had told him of its existence but hadn't told him that we brought the *mezuzah* back with us. Now here it was, all of a sudden—this object that his parents had left on that house, reunited with him, sixty years later.

My Zaida playfully admonished me, wiping the tears from his eyes, "You know what you've done? This is all because of you..."



Figure 1-49 Imprint of the removed *mezuzah*



Figure 1-50 Robert Moses-Robert H. Saunders Power Dam on the St. Lawrence

From the time that it was navigable, the St. Lawrence River was considered to be the area's primary artery of commerce, "the axis from which development began, and around which the national economy was organized."³⁵ The enduring dream of the St. Lawrence Seaway existed for many years before it became a reality in the 1950s. After World War II, the unprecedented economic growth allowed the possibility of the large joint infrastructure project to become a reality for both Canada and America.³⁶

The St. Lawrence Seaway was envisioned as a deep navigable waterway which would allow both countries to benefit from increased trade with post-war devastated European countries, ensuring their nation's roles as global leaders.³⁷ Concurrently, a massive-scale hydroelectric power project was undertaken; jointly funded by the Ontario Hydro and The Power Authority of the State of New York, the Robert Moses-Robert H. Saunders Power Dam was created.³⁸ It was predicted that there would be an abundance of inexpensive power available, in addition to easy water transport, which would, in turn, entice industrial investors to the area.³⁹ It was also projected that the area would become an annual tourist destination, with visitors coming to the towns to visit newly created beaches and recreation areas, and to observe the large-scale cutting edge locks and power dam.⁴⁰

During the Seaway's construction, between the two nations, they saw an arrival of more than 20,000 individuals who arrived in search of employment.⁴¹ The population of Cornwall suddenly increased by 20%, which quickly taxed local infrastructure, social service agencies, and the school system. The construction of the Seaway began without thoughtful preparation of increased housing, and educational or medical facilities for the workforce.⁴² This influx of individuals brought an increase in crime,⁴³ and relations between long-term Cornwall residents and the new Seaway workers were tense. Instead of constructing new housing to mitigate the new population (as town leaders were apprehensive about building a surplus of residential that would go without use after the Seaway project was completed), rental properties were raised up to 30% to compensate.

The construction of the Seaway began in 1954 and rendered the earlier created canals obsolete, and they were eventually closed on June 30, 1958.⁴⁴ The Seaway was considered to be entirely controversial, but yet, at its time, "one of the most ambitious and effective man-made alterations to the face of the earth ever completed,"⁴⁵ outranking the size of both the Suez and Panama Canals.⁴⁶

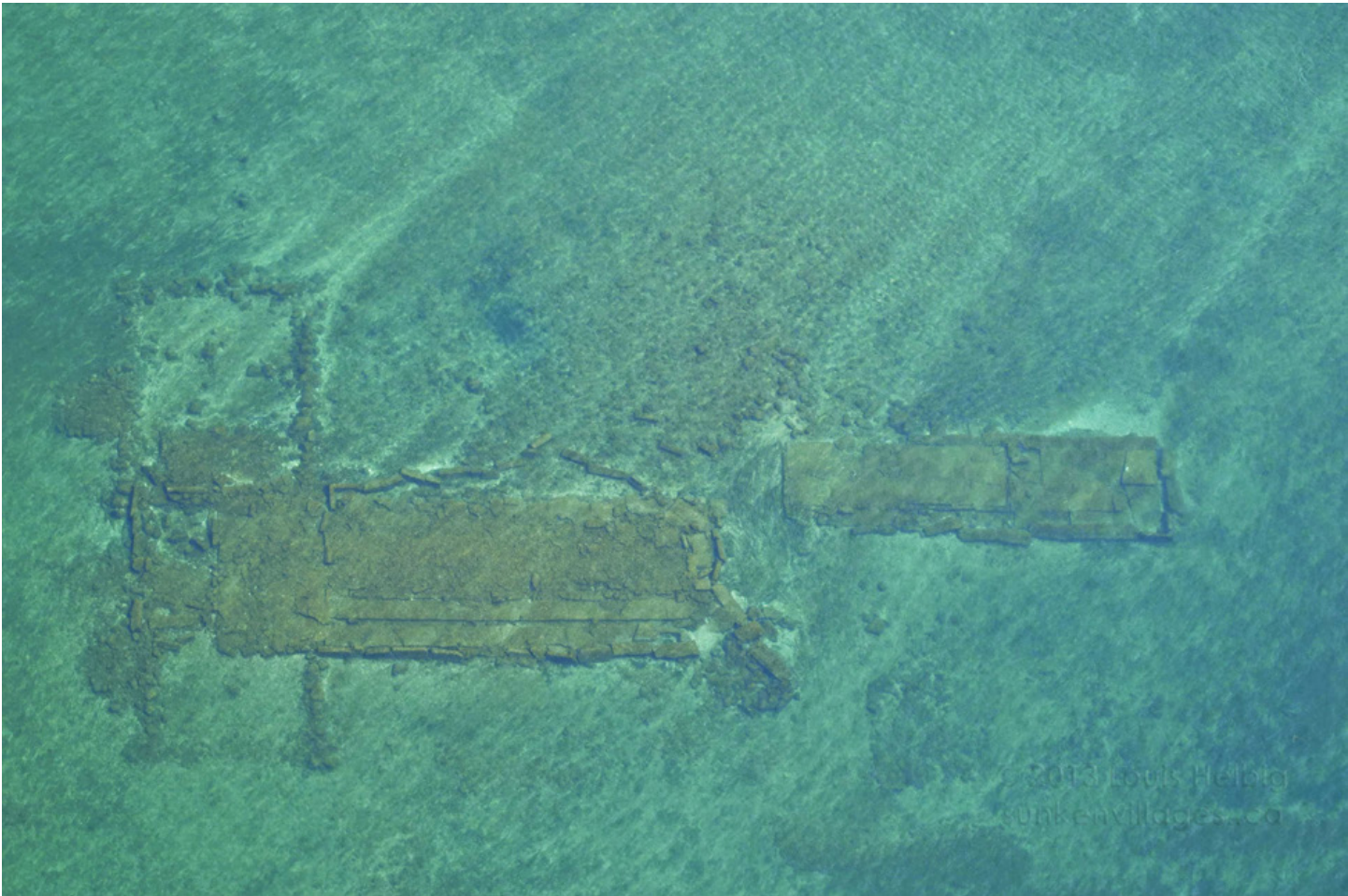


Figure 1-51 Underwater remains of buildings in the St. Lawrence River

The progress of the Seaway was not without sacrifice, as a number of Canadian villages were set to be flooded, necessitated by the unavoidable widening of the waterbody. In 1958, a large cofferdam was demolished in a controlled explosion, and water slowly rose over the former communities of Aultsville, Dickinson's Landing, Farran's Point, Iroquois, Maple Grove, Mille Roches, Morrisburg, Moulinette, Santa Cruz, Sheik Island, Wales and Woodlands.⁴⁷ These became known as the Lost Villages.

Zebra mussels, an invasive species already present in the St. Lawrence, were carried closer by large seagoing vessels, clarifying the water inland, which allowed the remains of the infrastructure and building foundations in the water below to be seen from above.⁴⁸

Part of the Seaway construction was set to flood a portion of an early cemetery serving the Jewish community, and remains had to be moved under rabbinic supervision.⁴⁹ In total, 531 homes were relocated, and over 6000 people were affected.⁵⁰



Figure 1-52 Aerial view of the St. Lawrence River



Figure 1-53 Aerial view of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project expansion after the flooding of the lost villages



Figure 1-54 The Cornwall-Massena International Bridge

The elevated Cornwall-Massena International Bridge, which spanned the North Channel of the Seaway, was designed with the intention of allowing large freighters to fit underneath, thereby requiring it to be of significant height. The bridge connected the Canadian mainland to an island located to the south. The island, while technically on Canadian soil, is considered to be part of the unique international reservation of the Akwesasne Mohawks.⁵¹

Initially, there was hope that the Seaway would bring prosperity to the community of Cornwall, however, after its completion in 1959, the Seaway workforce (which first inundated the city's services) left the area, and created an immediate economic slump. This was enough to lead the federal government to tag the city as depressed not long after. Further to this, not long after the Seaway opened, the factory of Canadian Cottons announced its closure, putting 1300 people out of work. The Seaway ultimately operated at a loss for another twenty years after completion due to low toll rates.⁵²

Cornwall Business Park Target DC (Looking Northwest)



Figure 1-55 The Eleven Points Logistics distribution centre, located at the Cornwall business park. The centre formerly housed goods for Target Canada before their closure, and was purchased by Walmart in 2015 as part of their Canadian expansion plan

Spurred by the development of the Seaway, a large amount of land in Cornwall was set aside in anticipation of the growth of the manufacturing industry. In 1955, geographer Harold Wood hypothesized, “The completion of the Seaway will introduce an era of prosperity that will surpass anything previously experienced.”⁵³ While the economic output of manufacturing communities has since instead declined, since 2000, Cornwall has adapted to become a primary distribution hub. The leftover plots of land set aside after the development of the Seaway became host to major distribution centres such as those of Walmart, Benson, Loblaw’s and Target. Factors such as Cornwall’s close proximity to major city centres and transit routes, the presence of a reliable workforce with a history in manufacturing, and inexpensive rent, made the city an appealing choice for a major business park. With hundreds of acres of the business park still unoccupied, Cornwall is making an effort to encourage the logistics industry to keep expanding. As of 2013, Cornwall is home to over 3.8 million square feet of land earmarked for industrial development.⁵⁴

In 1961, Cornwall’s population was 43,448. Despite projections of exponential population growth after the opening of the Seaway, it has stayed consistent; as of 2016, Cornwall’s population is 46,589.⁵⁵

May 2017

I had timed my first ever visit to Cornwall to coincide with the Victoria day weekend; to commemorate Canada's 150th anniversary the city was resurrecting Mayor Aaron Horovitz's children's picnic. My mom accompanied me on this trip and together we walked the streets that my family had lived, flourished, and propagated; the streets where no Horovitz or Bender remained.

The morning of the picnic was spent in the chilly basement archives of the Cornwall Community Museum, where we pored over newspaper articles that marked Aaron's successes and failures for the town, and curiously, family photographs (many that we had never seen before), in which the Bender family would make the occasional appearance. My mom remarked how strange it was to see her family's faces indexed and filed away.

When it came time for the picnic, the museum curator, Don Smith, led us to the band shell at Lamoureux park (Horovitz Park was now much too small for it to be held there). We were introduced to the current mayor and city council as, “Mayor Aaron Horovitz’s descendants.”

It was an overcast day, threatening rain, but the picnic continued as planned. The park was full of people: surrounding a central grassy area were beach volleyball games, egg and water balloon toss games, face painting, horseshoe tournaments, inflatable castles, a kite festival, a classic car show, potato sack races, three-legged races, and more. Grilled hot dogs were being sold at “old fashioned prices.”

A city volunteer approached us and held out a few ticket stubs, “Complimentary hot dog tickets, from Mayor O’Shaughnessy,” she explained cheerfully.

“That is so nice of him! And we just met him! What a nice gesture!” my mom gushed as we made our way to the hot dog tent, only to see the same tickets in the hands of each person in the line. The mayor had distributed tickets to the entire crowd of people as a show of goodwill, just like Aaron had.

After receiving our hot dogs, we sat down at a picnic table that had a view of the band shell. Mayor O’Shaughnessy soon got up on stage and welcomed everyone to the picnic. He acknowledged the countless volunteers and individuals who helped make it happen, leaving his remarks about us to the very end of his speech, “...and with us today are two of Mayor Aaron Horovitz’s descendants. His great-niece and his great-great-niece are here in the crowd.” He asked us to stand and wave, and we self-consciously rose from our picnic table. Everyone in the park turned toward us and gave a short round of applause. It felt strange; I had never been acknowledged because of my bloodline before, but it was invigorating that those claps were because of Aaron; I hadn’t felt closer to him than at that moment. “Hopefully we’ll be able to continue the tradition started by your great-great uncle into the future,” he concluded. I hoped they would.

As we stood amongst the people of Cornwall, listening to the Canadian national anthem, I felt my eyes well up. My mind drifted through the tales that I had encountered in the months leading up to this trip; tales of immigration and of loss, but also tales of new opportunities, acceptance, and tradition. I felt a surge of appreciation for Aaron, and for Gertrude and Haim, as well as the rest of my Horovitz family. If they hadn’t come to Canada—if they hadn’t come to Cornwall—I wouldn’t have been able to stand in the park that day.



Figure 1-56 Aaron and his family outside of their house on Second Street



Figure 1-57 The house with recent renovations



Figure 1-58 The path between the fences

A reporter from the local newspaper, *The Cornwall Standard-Freeholder*, approached us for an interview for an article on the picnic. We spoke briefly, only for a few minutes. “You probably won’t be featured much, just so you know,” he told us. (The next day, an exorbitantly large photo of the two of us appeared on the front page of the newspaper, accompanied by quotes that I did not exactly give permission to use verbatim, such as, “I came to Cornwall because I thought it would be neat to be here.” Questionably, there were no pictures of the actual picnic.)

After the interview, a couple approached our picnic table and introduced themselves as John and Darlene and told us that they had recently purchased Aaron’s old house, and graciously offered us a tour. With the knowledge of the Victoria day traffic on the 401 looming before us, we headed over to the house. Purchased by Aaron Horovitz in 1926, the house remained in the family until the 1990s when the last remaining family member in Cornwall passed away.

The inside was beautiful and opulent, completely gutted in the 1990s by a wealthy Austrian investor. A series of strange design choices fated the house to become a skeleton of what it was. Little remained of the Horovitzes in that house, much to my disappointment. The Austrian had installed a series of curiosities: steel roofing that imitated terracotta in its appearance, copper eavestroughs and downspouts, a wooden driveway, oversized tilting security windows, an indoor sauna and outdoor hot tub, and more. I felt a deep gratitude that my great-grandparents’ house had not suffered the same fate.

The exterior porch had been closed in to make a foyer, rendering a picture of Aaron standing on the porch steps that I was hoping to recreate, impossible. Still, standing in the same spot as he had felt like I was able to engage a part of my history in a very tangible way.

John took us around the back of the house, and we walked across the large backyard to the fence at the rear of the property. He told us that when the house was initially built, there were parks on either side of the house (only one remains now, the other is a parking lot), and Aaron had this fence installed a few metres inset from the property line so that the neighbours could pass between the parks easily.

As we stood out front, ready to embark on our journey back home, John offered to cut down a fragrant lilac bloom from one of the many trees that populated the front lawn. He told us that they had been here since the Horovitz's time; that they may have been planted by Aaron himself, though he couldn't be sure.

There is so much that I will never know, but what I do know is this: the scent of lilacs followed Aaron as he left his family home.

Endnotes

- 1 Theodore Lavi, "Botosani," *Botosani - Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Romania, Volume 1*, August 12, 2005, accessed March 5, 2018, https://jewishgen.org/Yizkor/pinkas_romania/rom1_00029.html.
- 2 Monica Ciorpec, "The 1907 Peasant Revolt and Anti-Semitism," *Radio Romania International*. February 8, 2016, Accessed March 12, 2018. http://www.rrl.ro/en_gb/the_1907_peasant_revolt_and_anti_semitism-2543031.
- 3 Lavi, "Botosani."
- 4 Anca Tudorancea, "Botosani Synagogue," *15 Romanian Synagogues*. Accessed March 26, 2018. <http://www.romanian-synagogues.org/botosani-synagogue/#/fact-sheet-2/>.
- 5 Claire Puccia Parham, *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns: A Comparative History of Cornwall, Ontario, and Massena, New York, 1784-2001* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 32-33.
- 6 Ibid, 34.
- 7 Ibid, 61.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ian Bowering, *Cornwall - From Factory Town to Seaway City, Volume 1, 1900-1999* (Cornwall, Ont.: Published for the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Historical Society by the Standard Freeholder, 1999), 108.
- 10 Ibid, 109.
- 11 Correspondence from George A. Stiles, Secretary, on behalf of the Cornwall Board of Trade to the Cornwall Pants and Prince Clothing Company Limited, January 6, 1940, Cornwall Ontario Community Museum and Archives, Cornwall, Ontario, Canada.
- 12 "Ontario Jewish Communities," *Employment & Business*, February 10, 2009. Accessed April 16, 2018. <http://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/osjc/communities/cornwall/earlycommunity/employmentandbusiness.html>.
- 13 Clive Marin and Frances Marin, *Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, 1945-1978* (Belleville, Ont.: Mika Pub., 1982), 231.

- 14 Yaron Reshef, *Out of The Shoebox*, trans. Nina R. Davis and Shira E. Davis (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 161.
- 15 Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), 112.
- 16 Birgit Görtz, "The Forgotten Holocaust in Transnistria," *DW.com*, January 27, 2014, accessed February 3, 2018, <https://dw.com/en/the-forgotten-holocaust-in-transnistria/a-17387303>.
- 17 "Ontario Jewish Communities," *Population*. 2009. Accessed January 18, 2018. <http://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/osjc/communities/cornwall/earlycommunity/population.html>.
- 18 Bowering, *Cornwall - From Factory Town to Seaway City*, 144.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Elinor Kyte Senior, *From Royal Township to Industrial City: Cornwall, 1784-1984* (Belleville: Mika Publishing Company, 1983), 390.
- 21 "Ontario Jewish Communities," *Religion*, 2009. Accessed January 18, 2018. <http://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/osjc/communities/cornwall/recentyears/>.
- 22 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 66.
- 23 Marin, *Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry*, 128.
- 24 Ibid, 108.
- 25 Ibid, 89.
- 26 Bowering, *Cornwall - From Factory Town to Seaway City*, 132.
- 27 Claude McIntosh, "Coffee Break: When Texting Wasn't Needed," *Cornwall Standard Freeholder*, November 17, 2010. Accessed March 21, 2018. <http://www.standard-freeholder.com/2010/11/17/coffee-break-when-texting-wasnt-needed>.

Endnotes continued

- 28 Claude McIntosh, "Coffee Break: Oh, How Sweet to Be a Consultant," *Cornwall Standard Freeholder*, November 30, 2012. Accessed March 21, 2018. <http://www.standard-freeholder.com/2012/11/30/coffee-break-oh-how-sweet-to-be-a-consultant>.
- 29 "Parks Militaria," *Postcards of Cornwall*, accessed March 14, 2018, <http://www.cornwallpostcards.ca/parks-militaria.html>.
- 30 Marin, *Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry*, 108.
- 31 "Cornwall Square Shopping Centre," *Partners Real Estate Investment Trust*, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://partnersreit.com/portfolio/Ontario/cornwall-square-cornwall>.
- 32 Alan S. Hale, "Apartments Coming to Mall," *Cornwall Standard Freeholder*, March 13, 2018, accessed May 6, 2018, <http://www.standard-freeholder.com/2018/03/12/apartments-coming-to-former-sears-location-at-cornwall-square>.
- 33 "How to Affix a Mezuzah," *Chabad*. Accessed February 20, 2018. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/278460/jewish/How-to-Affix-a-Mezuzah.htm.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Jim Coyle, "Canada 150: How the St. Lawrence Seaway Changed the Channel," *The Star*, May 13, 2017. Accessed February 23, 2018. <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada-150/2017/05/13/canada-150-how-the-st-lawrence-seaway-changed-the-channel.html>.
- 36 Puccia Parham, *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns*, 91.
- 37 Ibid, 93.
- 38 Bowering, *Cornwall - From Factory Town to Seaway City*, 96.
- 39 Puccia Parham, *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns*, 91.
- 40 Ibid, 111.
- 41 Ibid, 94.
- 42 Ibid, 97.
- 43 Ibid, 99.

- 44 Bowering, *Cornwall -From Factory Town to Seaway City*, 71.
- 45 Lionel Chevrier, *The St. Lawrence Seaway; A Series of Maps of the Seaway* (Ottawa, 1955), 5.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Louis Helbig, "The Sunken Villages Story," *Sunken Villages*, 2017. Accessed March 6, 2017. <http://sunkenvillages.ca/story/>.
- 48 The Star, *Canada 150: How the St. Lawrence Seaway Changed the Channel*.
- 49 "Ontario Jewish Communities," *Cemeteries*, 2009. Accessed February 6, 2018. <http://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/osjc/communities/cornwall/religiouslife/cemeteries.html>.
- 50 Bowering, *Cornwall - From Factory Town to Seaway City*, 96.
- 51 "Seaway International Bridge," *HistoricBridges.org: Bridge Browser*, accessed January 25, 2018, <http://historicbridges.org/bridges/browser/?bridgebrowser=ontario/cornwallnorth/>.
- 52 Bowering, *Cornwall - From Factory Town to Seaway City*, 97.
- 53 Harold Wood, "The St. Lawrence Seaway and Urban Geography, Cornwall-Cardinal, Ontario," *The Geographical Review* (October 1955): 530.
- 54 "Is Cornwall, Ontario Set to Be the Next Big Canadian Distribution Epicenter," *MWPVL International*, 2018. Accessed February 24, 2018. http://www.mwpvl.com/html/cornwall_ontario_distribution_epicenter.html.
- 55 Statistics Canada. "Census Profile, 2016 Census Cornwall, City, Ontario and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, United Counties, Ontario." *Statistics Canada*. March 20, 2018. Accessed February 24, 2018. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page>.





Part 1.2
Massena

[previous page]

Figure 1-59 Madrid-Chase Mills Road, Route 14

“There’s so much you don’t really see, preoccupied as you are with the business of living; so much you never notice, until suddenly, for whatever reason—you happen to look like someone long dead; you decide, suddenly, that it’s important to let your children know where they came from—you need the information that people you once knew always had to give you, if only you’d asked. But by the time you think to ask, it’s too late.”

- *Daniel Mendelsohn, The Lost*



Figure 1-60 My Aunt Missy & Uncle Ian's alpaca barn

August 2015

It's a three-and-a-half-hour drive from my parent's house in Richmond Hill, Ontario to Johnstown, Ontario, where the Ogdensburg-Prescott International Bridge is located. It is here that we cross the St. Lawrence River and the Canada-United States border into New York State. This bridge is typically not as busy as the nearby Thousand Islands Bridge; at 1/10th of its commercial traffic, it is primarily used by motorists to link up with the American interstate highways—they will not be needed where we are heading. It is \$2.75 to cross.

At the border, the border service agent asked where I was headed.

"To Chase Mills," I said, bracing for the inevitable; it's a similar exchange every time I cross.

The agent gave an incredulous look and said, "Chase Mills? You're the second car today. What are you going out there for? You know there's nothing out there, right?"

I assumed that the other group was made up of my parents and brothers, who had crossed at that same border in a separate car earlier in the day.

"To visit family—my cousin is getting married."

The border service agent let me pass through without a problem, but not without a few more quips at the hamlet's expense.

I continued into Ogdensburg, New York. From there, it is another thirty minutes East through St. Lawrence County, toward the hamlet of Chase Mills, where my aunts and uncles live.



Figure 1-61 Lorna with her children, Rosanne and Ian

My Zaida moved from Cornwall to Massena in 1953, after the culmination of the Korean War. At that time, the city was thriving; downtown Massena was a bustling business district, once even compared to Times Square.¹ There was a sizeable Jewish population already established, and my Zaida had friends and colleagues that had begun a new life there. Eager to set out on his own, out from under from the shadow of the family business, he convinced a jeweller friend to teach him the business. He first worked at Slavin's, then later at Altman & Green Jewelers, and eventually opened up his own business, located only a few storefronts down from Slavin's on Massena's Main Street. He liked his life there; he was far enough from his family to make a name for himself on his own, but close enough to visit just across the border. Massena was where he met his first wife Lorna, and where they raised two young children together.

Lorna was born into a Catholic family in 1935, and married my Zaida on August 3, 1957. This was a contentious relationship amongst my family because of her religion; however, Lorna completed her Jewish conversion through a conservative synagogue in 1962. They were then again married under Jewish law.

ld
r-
in
n-
s-
ld

Today For

Mrs. **Bender**

Services for Mrs. **Lorna O. Bender**, 27, wife of **Gerald Bender**, 16 Colgate Dr., were held at 2 o'clock this afternoon at the Donaldson Funeral Home with Rabbi Solomon J. Segal, Adath Israel Synagogue, officiating.

Burial was made in the Adath Israel Cemetery.

Mrs. **Bender** died as a result of an overdose of sleeping pills. Death was ruled a suicide by Dr. J. Benton Pike, St. Lawrence County Coroner. She had been in the Royal Victoria Hospital two weeks ago. **Bender** was taken in the Donaldson ambulance from her home at 4:45 p.m., Wednesday, Apr. 24, 1963, and pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital.

She was born in Ottawa, Ont., June 18, 1935, the daughter of Frank and Olive Louzon Keenan. She attended Cornwall schools and married **Gerald J. Bender**, Aug. 3, 1957.

Surviving are her husband, two children, Rosanne, 4, Ian David, 2; the parents in

Figure 1-62 The Massena Observer, April 25, 1963

My mom was sixteen years old when she found out that her two older siblings were in fact, technically only her half-siblings. Her older sister, Rosanne, had decided to tell her about it against her parent's wishes; the fact that my Zaida had a wife before my Bubby was not something that was spoken of in her house. It was not spoken of in my house either; I only found out when I was thirteen years old. It was an unspoken fact that only the adults were privy to; a secret that you were only told when you were "old enough."

After I was let in on the secret, my cousins and I would whisper into the long hours of the night, speculating about what had really happened; comparing conflicting stories and dates that did not necessarily align. Over the years, more of the story has been revealed to me, or I have sought out the answers myself, making things a little clearer. However, there are still many things unsaid; things that will forever remain unsaid.



Figure 1-63 Historic downtown Massena

Initially an agricultural town, the economy of Massena was first significantly stimulated by the development of a resort complex that exploited natural sulphur springs at the edge of the town.² Similar to the Cornwall waterfront, Massena also developed a canal system, and the resulting development of factories alongside of it further bolstered industry in Massena in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1902, the Pittsburgh Reduction Company (presently known as the Aluminum Company of America, or Alcoa), was brought to the area by the promise of inexpensive power generated by the canal. Alcoa constructed an aluminum plant in Massena which acted as a subsidiary manufacturing site to their main operation in Pittsburgh. The plant employed former canal workers and local farmers, who were attracted by the promise of stable employment. Over the next few decades, Alcoa continually increased production levels in their factories, as they established a stronghold on aluminum production in the United States, and become known as the largest employer north of Syracuse.³ Additional industry, such as an insulation company, a silk mill, and a lingerie factory employed the wives and daughters of the Alcoa workers, further ensuring Massena's status as a preeminent industrial town in the mid-twentieth century.⁴ By the 1950s, approximately 60% of all employed individuals were working in the manufacturing industry, with 94% of them working at Alcoa.⁵

Massena's growing economy allowed for a diversification of the population; an influx of immigrants, (initially Italians and Jews), swiftly populated the factories and local farms where they performed menial tasks and provided hard labour. In the 1900s, Massena had approximately 10% foreign-born citizens; by 1950, that number increased to 30%. As immigrant communities in the town continued to expand, the changing demographics became increasingly worrisome to the early inhabitants. Late-nineteenth-century newspapers escalated minor transgressions within the immigrant communities, instilling widespread fear, misunderstanding, and intolerance.

In the early twentieth century, there were only a handful of Jewish residents living in Massena, and a visiting rabbi would periodically hold services for them in the town. When he was unavailable, residents would conduct their own services in various rented buildings. In 1919, as the Jewish population grew, a synagogue was established after purchasing the former Congregational Church building. Their new community was called Adath Israel.



Figure 1-64 The former Clopman's Furniture



Figure 1-65 The former Slavin's Jewelry



Figure 1-66 Entrance to the Adath Israel Cemetery at the back of the Calvary Cemetery in Massena

Tensions came to a head in the fall of 1928, when a local four-year-old girl went missing. A large-scale police hunt and extensive search party were initiated throughout the town; despite it having been the eve of Yom Kippur, the Jewish community joined the search party, but ultimately left early to attend their evening services.⁶ Massena residents, mistakenly believing a rumour of a supposed long-standing tradition “from the old country” in which Jews would kidnap a gentile child and sacrifice them as a ritual Yom Kippur offering, quickly became suspicious of the Jews. Local law enforcement (who purportedly at the time held members of the Ku Klux Klan within their ranks) hauled in the Rabbi, Berel Brennglass, for interrogation on the basis of this rumour, while an angry mob began to form outside of the police station. After the questioning of the Rabbi was deemed inconclusive and unresolved, the blame fell on the Jewish community as a whole, and both the townspeople and law enforcement began ransacking Jewish homes and businesses out of anger and desperation. Despite the young girl emerging uninjured from the woods on the outskirts of town a couple of days after her initial disappearance, the Jewish citizen’s reputations were permanently marred, and tensions between them and the townspeople were at an all-time high in an otherwise placid small-town. The blood libel myth became embedded in the minds of the townspeople, who continued to mistreat their Jewish neighbours on the way to their Yom Kippur services. This event ultimately resulted in many Jewish families leaving the town.⁷ Even now, nearly a century later, the “incident at Massena” is not officially considered to be an accepted truth among Massena residents.

Jewish businesses that were established in the early twentieth century in downtown Massena no longer presently exist. Clopman’s Furniture, Levine’s Clothing Store, and Slavin’s Jewelry Business all lined Massena’s Main Street, but today, only ghost signs remain on their former buildings. By 2011, Massena’s Jewish population had diminished to a mere 10 individuals; too small to form a *minyan*. Apath Israel was ultimately sold to the Massena Chamber of Commerce for a mere \$1. A magazine article that appeared in the American Jewish magazine, *The Forward*, reports, “The only Star of David remaining in Massena is the metal one atop the gate to the local Jewish cemetery. Six years ago, someone placed a hula hoop atop the star and spray painted a swastika on the asphalt below. It is evidence, some say, that anti-Semitism still abounds in the St. Lawrence River Valley.”⁸



Figure 1-67 A delapidated sign advertising the abandoned Nite-N-Gale Motel

After the completion of the Seaway, Reynolds Metals and General Motors both announced plans to establish an aluminum processing and fabrication plant, respectively.⁹ In the following decades, deindustrialization caused many manufacturers to close their northern plants in favour of cheaper labour in the southern states and overseas.¹⁰ Between the 1970s and late 1990s, several plants, including Alcoa, Reynolds, and General Motors limited the scope of their plant operations in Massena in order to remain competitive. Far from the interstate highways, the isolated location of Massena hindered the area from prospering; the expense of transporting raw materials to the North made it prohibitive.¹¹ Foreign competition, cost-cutting methods, and mergers made these isolated plants much more vulnerable to downsizing, or at worst, closure.¹² Massena did not successfully branch into the small-scale, specialized distribution sector as their Canadian counterpart had done, and by the end of the century, Massena was considered one of the most underdeveloped regions in the Northeast.¹³

I always looked forward to visiting my family in Chase Mills. It was so different than my suburban hometown, from its landscape to its people. (On a recent visit, my cousin's boyfriend drunkenly picked up a shotgun and proposed an evening hunt. My uncle calmly convinced him to bring the gun inside, and then chastised him once it was safely out of his hands.) My parents couldn't understand how they lived somewhere so rural, and my extended family couldn't understand how we tolerated the bustle of the city. Despite our differences, my family always warmly welcomed us into their homes and their lives on our annual visits.

My aunts and uncles live down the street from each other, along the single rural highway that runs through the hamlet. My Uncle Ian and Aunt Missy live on a property with plenty of acreage and a sizable barn that houses various animals including alpacas, which they shear in the springtime to make apparel. My Aunt Rosanne and Pat have a multitude of horses, dogs, cats, birds and fish. Rosanne often finds unwanted animals dropped off at her front porch and takes them in, as she is the "Dog Control Officer" in the area; picking up strays and taking them to the pound to be reunited with their owner, or vaccinated and put up for adoption.

I can immediately find Ian's house on google maps, but not Rosanne's. I've been there countless times; this shouldn't be a difficult task. I can see my uncle's house and his accompanying acreage quite clearly, but my aunt's house could be any of the neighbouring plots. The fact that google street view is not available here also complicates this task.

On my search to find the demographics of the hamlet, I first searched the Wikipedia page for Chase Mills. However, it is a stub of only three sentences, none of which indicate the population. The page reads, "Chase Mills is a hamlet in St. Lawrence County, New York, United States. The community is located along the Grasse River 6.2 miles (10.0 km) east of Waddington. Chase Mills has a post office with ZIP code 13621, which opened on November 19, 1853."¹⁴ A further google search result from a dubious source indicates that the most recent population data records 561 individuals. Presently, five of them are my extended family members.



Figure 1-68 The Massena Baptist Church urging prayers for the families affected by the Alcoa closures

The closest town to Chase Mills is Massena. At its peak in 1960, Massena boasted a population of nearly 18,000. The population has since decreased, and it is presently a town of 12,357 people.¹⁵ The town is 98.6% white, with an estimated 30% of people living below the poverty line, the fifth highest in New York state as of 2013.¹⁶ The town still relies heavily on the few remaining manufacturing companies for employment despite the continued decline of the industry.

In November 2015, The Alcoa Corporation announced that it would be closing its East smelter instead of modernizing it while idling its West smelter.¹⁷ This move slashed more than 300 jobs immediately.¹⁸ Jobs at the West plant were only saved when the state government stepped in with a rescue package: a \$70M incentive package for Alcoa to stay open for the next three and a half years, until March 20, 2019,¹⁹²⁰ forcing Alcoa to retain at least 600 full-time employees.²¹ \$38.5M of the package was allocated to capital and operating expenses, and \$30M went to lowering electricity rates (despite the New York Power Authority already offering some of the cheapest electricity rates in the country). The subsidy was considered an investment to help modernize the plant, in hopes of making it competitive with other factories in the long-term. There are no public plans as to what will happen after 2019.

Many of my family members have moved to larger cities, or even out of state in pursuit of better opportunities. I fear I won't have many people left in the North Country to visit in the coming years.



Figure 1-69 A boarded up house along Massena's Main Street

On Massena's mile-long Main Street, of approximately one hundred and thirty buildings, forty are residential. Of the hundred and thirty buildings, twenty-six of them, or about 20%, were vacant or abandoned, and four were partially vacant. Nearly all of these vacant buildings were commercial.

As I walked the length of the street, taking photo documentation of each building from across the street, I seemed to become a point of interest to the local traffic. I was one of the only people out walking; it must have seemed strange or suspicious that I was holding a camera and a large notepad in my hands. As I was met with curious stares from the passing cars, I felt like I didn't belong; like change was unwelcome.

*I come from down in the valley,
Where mister when you're young,
They bring you up to do like your daddy done.
[...]
Now those memories come back to haunt me,
They haunt me like a curse.
Is a dream a lie if it don't come true,
Or is it something worse?
That sends me down to the river,
Though I know the river is dry.*

- Bruce Springsteen, The River



Figure 1-70 Wendy's illuminating the food court; the sole food services tenant currently still open in the St. Lawrence Centre

The New York Times recently profiled a number of dilapidated shopping centres across America, highlighting the struggle of adapting to an uncertain economy in a small town. The St. Lawrence Centre, Massena's local mall, is less than half occupied. The food court has only one tenant, which is often frequented by drug dealers and prostitutes. The New York Times article paints a dismal scene, "In many places, the desolate halls and tired window displays at the local mall are a wrenching reminder of what once was, and may never be again."²²

In June 2017, operation "Gravy Train" resulted in criminal charges against 106 people across the St. Lawrence County. As a collaboration between a number of law enforcement agencies across the region, this was the largest drug raid in the history of the County. It revealed a violent drug trafficking ring that transported and distributed heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine, with a street value of nearly \$100,000.²³

My cousin told me that she was surprised when she saw a colleague of hers named in the newspaper; some of the people who were charged in the bust had worked normal day jobs in Massena.



Figure 1-71 Coinmint overlay over an image of Massena’s downtown

In a surprising announcement, a digital currency mining company, Coinmint, has recently released plans to lease 1300 acres of the former Alcoa East smelter, investing \$175M in retrofitting the plant.²⁴ (This amount was upped to \$700M as of June 2018, despite bitcoin prices having dropped approximately 30% in value from when the lease was first negotiated.)²⁵ This will provide 75 full-time jobs in 2018, with the addition of another 75 jobs in 2019. According to bitcoin.com, “The jobs include security personnel, installers and operational staff, with an average wage of \$46,000.”²⁶ Another cryptocurrency company has revealed plans for their possible expansion to Massena, with a plan to open a call centre complete with \$600M in server hardware, with the potential to create as many as 500 new jobs.²⁷

Capitalizing on their abundant low-cost power, Massena is trying to entice start-up companies that require immense amounts of energy to keep their operations running. The town’s history of manufacturing has provided an already established infrastructure to supply these energy-intensive businesses.²⁸

Continuing this upward momentum, the St. Lawrence Centre was recently sold to Canadian developers, who are eager to make positive change within the building for the surrounding community. The former ice-hockey rink is being renovated to become an artificial turf field and fitness centre, and a pizzeria has signed on as a tenant in the food court. Additionally, a grass-roots community group has leased a storefront, selling locally produced goods.^{29 30}

The changes seem promising for the community, but only time will tell what their futures will hold.

There is a house near Massena that has lived in my memory since I was a child.

Helen and Paul Coller, more affectionately known as “Me-Me” and “Pops,” lived in this house until their deaths in 2010 and 2013, respectively. It has remained in the family, sitting vacant, since then.

The memories of this house are the earliest I have of an architecture other than my own childhood homes. They are quite vivid for me, and I can recall them easily.

My family would typically visit upstate New York in the summertime, but on this particular visit, my mom and I went in December, around the holidays. Opening gifts under a decorated tree, it was my first ever Christmas—I remember tearing open a package which revealed a yellow shirt with a rainbow collar that I immediately put on and loved. I couldn't have been older than nine or ten.

My cousin, Shawna, whose family had recently made the move from Richmond Hill to Massena, joined me in discovering the house. She was my best friend growing up, and I was still reeling from the loss. We spent the day running around, exploring every corner we could find. I remember the house feeling cavernous—bright and white. Christmas gifts were opened in the large sitting room around the fireplace, a large window overlooking the front property.

Me-Me and Pops had installed a motorized seat alongside the railing to help them ascend the stairs. It was made clear that the second floor was off limits to us, so naturally, Shawna and I incessantly begged to ride the chair. Our parents relented, and we soon went up and down with a fervour, first individually, and then seated together, on each other's laps. Eventually, the novelty wore off, and we quietly stumbled unsupervised onto the dusty second floor; we decided to covertly explore this uncharted territory. Ahead of us was a long darkened hallway; every door leading off of it was closed. We approached the door closest to the stairs, and my cousin cautiously turned its handle. Light rushed into the hall. I advanced toward the brightness and peeked around the door frame. The room was flooded with a radiant light, allowing us to clearly see the space; thoroughly covered, floor to ceiling, with dead insects. A horror washed over me, and we both quickly retreated from the room, throwing open each remaining door as we ran through the hallway. Every room was the same—dust and death. We hurried back to the stairway, foregoing the slow-moving motorized chair, bounding down the steps as fast as our legs could carry us.

Later, we ventured into the basement, and I noticed that there were two sets of stairs—one leading up to the front of the house, and one up to the back. I was later told that the rear stair was for “the help”.

I recently saw Me-Me and Pops’ son, Ted, and his wife, Darlene, at my cousin’s 2015 wedding. I told them about my memories of that Christmas so many years ago and how the house had stuck with me for so many years since. Ted divulged some of the history of the house (he referred to it as “the farm”), telling me that it was allegedly used as a node in the underground railroad network due to its proximity to the Canadian border. He told me that the house is still in the family, and that his family recently used the sitting room for his grandson’s birthday celebration. He revealed it to be haunted by its former owners as well as a teenaged slave who died in the basement.

Ted and Darlene offered to take me to the farm the next time I visited.

June 2017

I arrived in Massena late, past midnight. After I crossed the border and continued toward my cousin's house, a mist engulfed my car. It was ghostly, disappearing and reappearing, slowly weaving in and out of the road; it felt relentlessly alive. There were no street lamps here to illuminate the rural highway, just the occasional headlight of an oncoming car. I have to admit, I was creeped out. Mist forms when a warm body of air is suddenly cooled; the fact that I was advancing toward a place that has so long been veiled in secrets of life, of death, and of family was not lost on me.



Figure 1-72 Front of the Coller House

It was late in the afternoon when I arrived at the Collier house in Raymondville. When I pulled into the driveway, the dozen or so cats lounging around the front steps all turned toward me; I was being watched. I parked my car and cautiously stepped out onto the driveway. I called out toward the house, unsure if the cats were feral or domestic; some of them looked quite mangy. “Come in, around the side here,” Darlene’s voice floated out from inside, “Don’t worry about the cats, they’ll scatter.” As I climbed the stairs of the porch—I didn’t remember this porch—the cats parted, quickly re-assuming their gatekeeping positions after I had passed.

I walked through the cluttered vestibule into the back room, the kitchen, painted in bright greens and cheery yellows. It was spacious, with an ample kitchen workspace, a small informal dining area, and cozy chairs surrounding a fireplace. Behind the sitting area was a door which concealed a staircase to the second floor (later, it was made clear that this staircase was for “the help”). Ted and Darlene were seated at the kitchen table. They greeted me warmly; Ted, with his kind personality and country charm, and Darlene with her deep smoker’s drawl and laugh that could light up a room. Their son, Jason, arrived not longer after I had to join us as we ventured through the house.

The impending golden hour cast long shadows on every surface of the house. We promptly began the tour at Darlene’s insistence, “We’re going to be late for dinner at Ian’s.”

The Collier family had moved to the property in 1962 when Ted was fifteen years old. The kitchen was heavily used by Ted’s mother, a dedicated cook. The kitchen housed many historical pieces including a pair of Garland stoves and cast iron wares, large metal mixing bowls and a pig-emblazoned bacon press. “There was no such thing as hot dogs and hamburgers for dinner, it was always meat, gravy, potatoes, vegetables—every meal was home cooked. In the morning it was ham, eggs, bacon, donuts, bread from scratch—there was no such thing as fast food in my house.”

Ted was periodically interrupted by voices crackling over his walkie-talkie, set down nearby atop an old cupboard, always on-call as a volunteer firefighter.

“Oh you’ve seen nothing yet,” said Darlene, as I remarked upon the collection. There was nearly one of everything a kitchen of that era would have; it was easy to feel like we were being transported back in time.

“You want to scare her and take her down cellar first?” asked Darlene. “There’s canned goods down there from the 1900s, so if you’re hungry...” she quipped.

We descended the stairs into a tangle of spider webs, thick and weighty from decades of dust; an ever-present cloud above our heads. I walked cautiously down the stairs, my arachnophobia making me want to turn back around and drive away in my car, but instead, I pressed on, regularly patting my head to check for errant spiders that wanted to hitch a ride. “They won’t bother you,” Ted assured, “Calvin might though.”



Figure 1-73 Basement shelving overflowing with objects



Figure 1-74 Ted displaying some hand-carved wooden bowls



Figure 1-75 Darlene gesturing toward the entrance of the former false cellar



Figure 1-76 Dusty remnants of Me-me's preserves in the basement

Darlene mused, “Someday we need to have a lawn sale or an auction, and get rid of things. There is so much stuff.”

(Upon listening to the audio recording that I took for transcription purposes, it here begins to cut in and out, just as we reached the basement of the house. A glitchy, scratchy, unidentifiable electronic sound appears, intermittently pierced by a steady clicking noise.)

The basement shelves were full of various kitchen wares: complete collections of dishes made of china, brass storage cylinders, teapots, crock jugs, stainless steel milk cans, hand-carved wooden bowls and spoons, vessels made of carnival glass, and more.

“Anything you can imagine in your mind, from the old days, is here.”

I was able to ogle for only a short while, the immensity of the collection overwhelming. Darlene led us further back into the basement, and we paused at what looked like a crude threshold. “This is where the history is,” she began, “This all used to be blocked off. This is where they would bring the slaves in, and they’d keep them back here—they called it a false cellar. When the time was right, when the boat came by the Raquette river right here, they would bring them out, and then the tunnel.. went where, Ted?”

“Right where that’s all blocked up, in that back corner.” I was standing directly beside the area he gestured to. “From that spot, you could actually get outdoors—there used to be a huge pig barn, over a hundred-foot-long, down the property. It’s all gone now, but the underground tunnel went all the way from here to there.”

“Do you know where it came out exactly?” I asked.

“No, and I’ve got to believe that over the years, most of it is caved in, with the amount of foot traffic, back and forth. I always figured someday somebody was going to drop down into it, but they never have.”

We continued through the basement to the rear cellar. “Where the slaves were kept,” Darlene reminded me.

(The sound glitch on my recording starts to become more frequent during this portion of the tour as we advanced toward the cellar.)

She first directed me toward the extensive collection of crock jugs, wooden barrels and bowls and Me-Me’s canned goods—Pops had turned it into a cold storage for her.

“There’s all the carnival glass, and the saucers and cups....” She said, pointing out each object, vaguely organized on the shelves.

Ted joked, “We’d like to get Calvin to help us work on cataloguing them, but he’s kind of lazy down here.”

Ted and Darlene quickly spoke over each other, eager to remind me of the haunting,

“...Calvin’s the little coloured boy that lives down here in the cellar.”
“The little ghost, but don’t be scared.”

“Have you seen him?” I asked.

Ted answered, “Believe it or not, some people can, and some people can’t... but I never have.”

Darlene interjected, “Justin, our youngest, was probably, six or seven; Heather and Jason were older, so Justin kind of just played by himself. So, he would come down here. (*At this point, the glitching on my recording again intensifies.*) Justin, he was always a talker; he’d be down here jibber-jabbering, and one day he came upstairs, and I said to him, ‘Who’s your friend down there?’ and he told me that it was a little boy that lived down there, in the cellar. We just kind of blew it off, like it was a fictitious imaginary friend, so we didn’t think too much of it. But then he proceeded to tell us—and he was young, so I don’t even know where this came from—that the little boy died down there.”

“We used to have a couple caregivers for my dad, and it was a riot the things Calvin would do to them. Calvin’s the prankster,” Ted explained, “And Mr. and Mrs. Erastus Hall, the original owners—their ghosts live here too.”

We climbed back up the stairs to the kitchen and Ted continued, “The first time one of the caregivers, Sandy, saw Mr. Hall, she hadn’t been working for us for very long. She calls me up one day, just hysterical, ‘Ted, get your ass up here! I’m quitting if it’s the last thing I do! There’s a man in the house!’ She had gone in the front room to go upstairs, and there was Mr. Hall, standing at the bottom of the stairs, leaning on the railing. She saw him just as clear as could be and she didn’t know who the hell he was. She never went upstairs again after that day.”

Ted recounted another story of a grocery delivery service driver who stopped by the house, “The guy says to Sandy, ‘Who’s the old guy up in the window? Christ, I waved at him, and he wouldn’t even wave back!’”

Darlene continued, “No one has ever seen Mrs. Hall, but she was described to us as someone that was very meticulous, that everything had a place and it belonged in its place. When things were moved by the caregivers, sometimes they’d end up in the spot they were before.”

“You can sometimes smell something floral; some of the nurses said they got wafts of her lilac perfume.”

“And there’s no lilac bushes around?” I challenged.

“They would even smell it in the winter time,” Ted answered confidently.

Sensing my hesitancy, Darlene said, “Some of the stuff you can kind of explain away, some of the stuff... you can’t.”

The original owner of the house, Erastus Hall, of Tyringham, Massachusetts, came to the North Country in 1809 with the sole purpose of exploring the “wild lands”. Braving this uncharted area, he travelled to the furthest cleared point down from the St. Lawrence along the Raquette River. He subsequently received a land contract for the property and erected the first building in what was to become the village of Raymondville.³¹ He arrived the next spring with only a few possessions: \$15 in cash, a pair of two-year-old steers, an old mare, and his wife, Elizabeth. “All the bricks for the house were made right here by the river bank. There was a brick factory down there,” Ted revealed, “You can go down there and find some, if you dig in the right places.”

Before Hall’s death in 1869 at the age of eighty-two, he had managed to acquire a small fortune, and had the satisfaction of dividing his property valued at \$100,000 (in 2018, worth over \$1.7M USD) among his six children.³² There is little other information on Hall, though some of his living descendants are still scattered amongst the St. Lawrence region.

Erastus Hall is buried on the opposite side of the Raquette River, at the Raymondville Cemetery, less than a mile from the house.



Figure 1-77 Looking into Me-me and Pops' bedroom

We continued back through the kitchen, into the dining room and adjacent living room. Light filtered into the space past thick velvet curtains. “Don’t mind the mess, because everything everyone has ever owned is stored here.” Darlene laughed, “And I mean everything.”

She drew my attention downward, “Look at the floors—every floor in the house, is the old original plank, just like this.”

“Then here, this was actually a den,” she said, referring to an adjoining room, perpendicular to the dining room. Ted and Darlene had turned it into a bedroom for Me-me and Pops so that Me-me wouldn’t have to go up and down the stairs. Dried flowers filled the window sills, and thick swaths of spider webs blanketed them. The walls were covered with old family photos.

History was present in every object: the seats of the dining room chairs had been hand embroidered by Me-me; A folded military burial flag was proudly displayed in a corner of the room; Ted’s homemade honey bee nesting houses were strewn around the dining table amongst everything else. Me-me and Pops’ effects were never fully cleared out of the house, and members of the family have since added their own items to the collection. There was an overwhelming amount of things piled on top of one another: glass credenzas, shelving units, and tea carts overflowed with keepsakes that had been affectionately collected and preserved over the years. It was clear that the home and its things had been loved.



Figure 1-78 Wallpaper in Me-me and Pops' bedroom

The patterned wallpaper had been selected by Me-me and installed by Pops over half a century ago.

“That was the one thing that Pops said to me, ‘Please, please, please do not change the wallpaper.’ He was very adamant about that. I mean, you can see the creases and the puckering, but he absolutely did not want the wallpaper taken off.”

In a way, Me-me and Pops haunted the house too.



Figure 1-79 Evidence of the hatchway down to the false cellar

“Lead the way, we’ll follow,” Darlene said to me as we exited the dining room and stepped into the front hall. I was a bit unnerved; in my recollections, I remembered the floor plan flipped, with the main hall and staircase on the West side of the house rather than the East. There was no large fireplace to speak of, the one which I recalled opening presents by. The two staircases led up to the second floor, in the front and the rear, not down to the basement. It was a bit unsettling how I could so confidently recall a “vivid” memory, to then so quickly be confronted with my mind’s limitations.

“Oh, hang on, we’ve got to get in here and show her this.”

She began to unstack boxes that were impeding entry to the nearest hall closet. When she managed to open the door, she again directed my attention to the floor. It was consistent with the hallway except for a small square where the boards didn’t align; the only indication that there was indeed something different there. Ted was eager to point it out, “You see that right there, see the way the floor is? That’s where the hatchway was, the one that went down into that false cellar.”

“Stick your head in there, and see how far back that closet goes.”

“You can’t see it right now, but there’s another spot in the floor in the other hall closet too.”

As we continued through the hall, I felt a bit better about my memory when I saw that the front staircase did indeed have a motorized seat.

“Here’s the chair he used to put her on,” Darlene said.

I replied, “I remember it. Shawna and I would go up and down when we came here.” Darlene chuckled heartily.

She continued to apologize for the clutter as we climbed the stairs to the second floor. “We had all this mess cleaned up at one point. Needless to say, it didn’t stay that way.”

At the top of the stairs, the hallway opened up into a small nook; a collection of instruments were displayed along the walls. Ted sat down at the ancient pump organ, “My mother could play this,” he reminisced, “I couldn’t play the radio.” He began to fiddle with the knobs, and I took the opportunity to take in my surroundings. I began to notice flies on the ground.

Darlene opened the door to the closest room, “This was the master bedroom. For years now, everyone has just put everything up here because they didn’t know what else to do.” We could only enter into the room a few feet; boxes have been piled up around the bed, obscuring it from view, threatening collapse. It seemed that nearly all of Me-Me’s possessions had been untouched, from her bedding and clothes to her jewelry and perfumes. Long-dead flowers wilted in vases. Crosses adorned the walls.



Figure 1-80 Me-me's upstairs bedroom



Figure 1-81 Upstairs bathroom

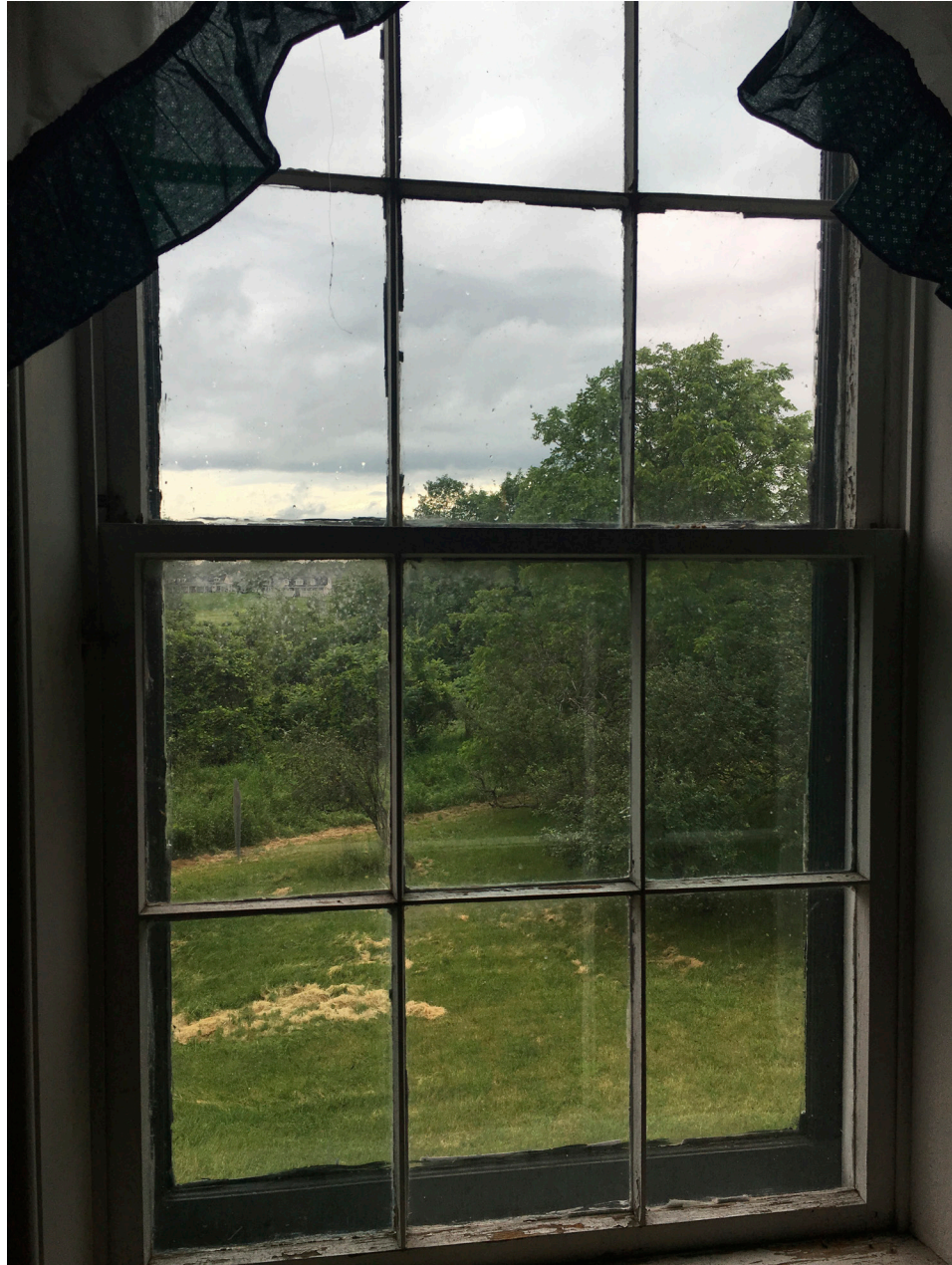


Figure 1-82 The window in Mr. Hall's room

Ted directed my attention to the closet. The bulb had burned out, but daylight revealed a ceiling metres above my head. “But why?” I blurted.

“I don’t know. Just the way it was built.”

Turning the corner of the hallway, we entered the bathroom. “Nothing very exciting in here,” said Ted.

“It’s a disaster,” added Darlene, as they both turned to leave as quickly as they had entered. Later, I realized that that room must have been the one that Shawna and I had first encountered. It was bright, illuminated by a west-facing window, just like I remembered. Flies crunched underfoot, denser here than in the hallway.

The next room over had been Mr. Hall’s bedroom. It was adorned with lacy curtains, a mountain of tangled Christmas decorations piled high on the bed, and more flies on the ground. A chill ran through me as I stood in the same spot that Mr. Hall had been seen waving out from.

We continued down the narrowing hallway that seemed to be something out of Alice in Wonderland, shrinking as we progressed. The door at the end of the hall was shorter than usual. Darlene opened it and announced, “And this was the servant’s quarters.” A sizable sitting room appeared a few steps below where we were standing. We descended, but it was clear that the ceiling here was significantly shorter than it was throughout the rest of the house. “They raised the roof on this section years ago. You can see where those windows are—they added those later.” The windows were the size of a transom. “Can you imagine it being even smaller?”

Ted told me that his family had only ever used the servant’s quarters for storage. The sitting area was piled with old televisions, appliances, and books. Alongside the sitting room were three bedrooms; each bed was stacked with a variety of old clothes, boxes of ammunition, tools, old magazines, and art prints. Ted pulled out his father’s baby shoes; he was able to locate these quickly amongst everything else.

“Over here are some bags of gunpowder, over there’s a bee veil... every time you come up here, you find something different.”

The rear staircase that led back down to the kitchen was full of paint cans, ironing boards, and other household items, occupying each descending step, pressed up against the door to the ground floor, rendering it unusable.

We retraced our steps through the hallway toward the stair to the attic. Ted went up first, to clear the cobwebs. “I know there are some treasures up there,” said Darlene.

“I’ve come this far; I’m not going to let some spiders scare me,” I replied.



Figure 1-83 Darlene descending the steps to the former servant's quarters



Figure 1-84 The former servant's quarters



Figure 1-85 Ted holding his father's baby shoes

As we began to climb the stairs, the sound of chirping became louder, “Oh, there must be a bird’s nest up here! Listen to the babies,” Darlene said excitedly. A small window lit the attic from the south. A wave of heat hit us as we reached the top of the stairs.

Ted stood next to a display of weapons, “One of Erastus Hall’s sons was a Captain in the Cavalry, and this was his old sword.” He unsheathed the blade he was holding, “If you look at it closely, there’s actually still blood stains on it.” (*The glitching on my recording again picks up here.*) He picked up another sword, “This one here, Pops found it in a wall when we were doing some renovations. I’m sure there’s still things hidden in the floors.” We advanced further into the attic, the floorboards loudly creaking. Drooping batt insulation framed our view, reaching down from the ceiling to the floor (“The insulation was all up once upon a time, we’ll have to get that back up,” Darlene noted.) We passed by old bayonets and muskets, a collection of banjos, old records, and an ancient looking wind-up Victrola.

“Can it still play?” I asked.

“I think so...” Ted attached the crank to the player and began to wind. A distorted sound of clapping filled the attic, followed by a few bars of a deflating song, as the Victrola lost its momentum. “You’ve got to really get it wound up good to get it going.”

“If you come over here, Danielle,” Darlene called from the front of the attic, “Stand and look out this window, you can see part of the Raquette down there. You can see all ten acres of the property here.”

We headed back down the stairs, the same way we came. “We need to get a move on if we’re going to get to Ian’s in time for dinner” Darlene reminded. My uncle was hosting a family barbecue at his house nearby in Chase Mills. I had been so absorbed in their stories, I hadn’t had much of a chance to photograph the house. I told them that I wanted to recreate the floor plan of the house, and I needed to take some images to reference. Darlene agreed to meet me at the house again the next afternoon.

“This house is just... so big,” I marvelled, as we began our descent back to the kitchen.

“You couldn’t even heat it,” Darlene acknowledged.

Trailing behind us until then, Jason interjected, “We used to crawl around at night when we’d try to sneak in the house so that Me-me didn’t hear us. We would come in through the basement Bilco door when it was dark, walk through the basement, come up the stairs, and hope that I could unlatch the lock to get into the house.” Darlene and I began to chuckle at the visual. Jason continued, “Yeah, you manage to find your way around pretty quick. I was never afraid of the ghosts, they never bothered me. If they were there, maybe they were guiding me... I don’t know.”

Before I drove to my uncle's house for dinner, I stopped at the bridge, and turned back around to take a photo of the house. Everything looked so saturated and lush; The property was alive.

(After a few replays of my recording for this text, I came to the realization that the eerie glitching noise that appeared throughout must have been some sort of interference from Ted's walkie-talkie. Sometimes the paranormal can indeed be explained away.)





Figure 1-86 Looking back at the Coller House from the bridge

-2-

DESCRIPTION
SIGNALEMENT

Profession } OFFICE CLERK

Place and date of birth } OTTAWA ONTARIO CANADA
Lieu et date de naissance } 18 JUNE 1935

Residence } CANADA

Height } 5 FT 3 INS

Colour of eyes } DARK BROWN

Colour of hair } BROWN


Visible peculiarities } BIRTH MARK ON RIGHT WRIST

CHILDREN — ENFANTS

Name Nom	Date of birth Date de naissance	Sex Sexe

-3-

PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER
PHOTOGRAPHIE DU TITULAIRE



Signature of bearer

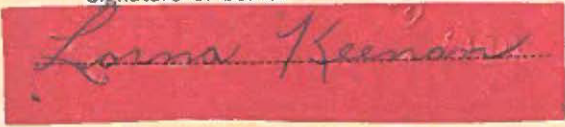


Figure 1-87 One of the few remaining documents of Lorna's, her passport

The next day I met Darlene back at the farm. She accompanied me as I went through the house, documenting each room. When we reached the upstairs bathroom, the same bathroom that Shawna and I had been so scared of as children, we paused to chat. As I leaned against the sink counter and her against the door frame, in a place that I so desperately wanted to escape as a child, we got to talking about her life.

Darlene had grown up as an only child; unaware of our larger family. She was the biological daughter of Lorna and an unidentified father (his name was left blank on her birth certificate), given up for adoption when she was only five days old, before Rosanne or Ian were born; before Lorna had married my Zaida. She told me that for as long as she could remember, she had known that she was adopted. Her adoptive father died when she was a child, and as she got older, her mother began to worry about Darlene having no family to call her own if something happened to her. Darlene hadn't pursued her birth parents to spare her mother's feelings but eventually decided to look into it while her mother was still around to see through the process. The February before she turned forty, they together started searching and quickly found Lorna's obituary in an old newspaper archive. Darlene said it was crushing. However, the obituary listed two children; she figured that if my Aunt Rosanne was married, her last name had probably changed, so she instead decided to look for my Uncle Ian. Through internet searches, Darlene came across two possible candidates, and she sent both of them letters with her contact information, simply saying, "If you are Ian Bender born to Lorna in Massena, please contact me."

In late April, Darlene received a phone call.

Neither my Aunt nor Uncle had known of Darlene's existence before she had reached out.

She spoke to them both for hours.

Rosanne, living in Canada at the time, met Darlene at the border a few weeks later. Rosanne shared the few pictures of Lorna that she possessed, and in turn, Darlene took her to their mother's burial place, located in the small Jewish section at the back of the Calvary Cemetery in Massena.

I visited the cemetery when I drove back to Massena later that day. Lorna's grave had two small artificial flowers at its base. I added a stone from the edge of the road.

I called a Raymondville historian on Ted and Darlene's recommendation a few months after I had visited the house.

He could barely hear me on the phone, "Which house?" he asked a second time.

"The Hall house, in Raymondville, just north of the Raquette," I repeated. There was silence. "The Coller family owns the property now." More silence. "Ted and Darlene?" I asked again, my confidence in this supposedly knowledgeable stranger wavering.

Suddenly, he remembered, "The little black boy in the basement." He was referring to Calvin.

"Yes, that's the one! The ghost in the cellar," I laughed. The historian chuckled quietly. I continued, "If you had any additional information—anything, like documents or anything about the Halls, or the underground railroad network—"

He cut me off, "I'm not sure that the house was a part of that." It was now my turn to fill the conversation with silence. "There was another house nearby that was, but I'm not sure that the Hall house was." I had nothing to say, I was baffled.

I left my email address with the historian, spelling and re-spelling it multiple times due to our bad connection, or perhaps, his bad ear. I hung up, uncertain that I would ever hear from him again. It seemed like the same kind of obstacle that I had been running into with my Cornwall family; a fragment of a tale, lost to the passing of time. Information that at once seemed so close, and so certain, but now, once again, seemed so distant.

Endnotes

- 1 Brian Hayden, "Clopman's Furniture in Massena to Close," *Watertown Daily Times*, June 17, 2012. Accessed February 12, 2018. <http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/article/20120617/NEWS05/706179801>
- 2 Claire Puccia Parham, *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns: A Comparative History of Cornwall, Ontario, and Massena, New York, 1784-2001* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 46.
- 3 Ibid, 59.
- 4 Ibid, 77.
- 5 Ibid, 75.
- 6 Naomi Zeveloff, "Decades-Old Blood Libel Case Roils Town," *The Forward*, October 18, 2012. Accessed February 12, 2018. <https://forward.com/news/164493/decades-old-blood-libel-case-roils-town/>.
- 7 Puccia Parham, *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns*, 79-80.
- 8 The Forward, "Decades-Old Blood Libel Case Roils Town."
- 9 Puccia Parham, *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns*, 120.
- 10 Ibid, 112.
- 11 Ibid, 121.
- 12 Ibid, 127.
- 13 Ibid, 120.
- 14 "Chase Mills, New York," *Wikipedia*, accessed March 15, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chase_Mills,_New_York.
- 15 "QuickFacts: Massena Town, St. Lawrence County, New York," *U.S. Census Bureau*. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/massenatownstlawrencecountynyork/PST045216>.

- 16 “Massena, New York (NY) Poverty Rate Data,” *City Data*. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Massena-New-York.html>.
- 17 Bob Beckstead, “Despite Attrition, Arconic Moves Along,” *Watertown Daily Times*, October 8, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/news05/despite-attrition-arconic-moves-along-20171008>.
- 18 Rob Crilly, “Bitcoin Mining Revives Forgotten US Industrial Towns,” *The National*, March 12, 2018. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.thenational.ae/business/technology/bitcoin-mining-revives-forgotten-us-industrial-towns-1.712551>.
- 19 “After Factory Plant Closures, Job Loss, A Small N.Y. Town Struggles to Bounce Back,” *NPR*, April 17, 2016. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474544945/after-factory-plant-closures-job-loss-a-small-ny-town-struggles-to-bounce-back>.
- 20 Bob Beckstead, “Alcoa, State Reach Mid-Point of 3 1/2-Year Agreement to Keep Alcoa in Massena,” *Watertown Daily Times*, May 10, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/news05/alcoa-state-reach-mid-point-of-3-12-year-agreement-to-keep-alcoa-in-massena-20170510>.
- 21 Watertown Daily Times, “Despite Attrition, Arconic Moves Along.”
- 22 Michael Corkery and David Gelles, “Town Fights to Turn Retail Tide at a Little Mall That Might,” *The New York Times*, December 24, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/24/business/mall-retail.html>.
- 23 “106 People Arrested On 169 Charges in ‘Operation Gravy Train,’” *WWNYTV*, June 02, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.wwnytv.com/story/35575013/106-people-arrest-on-169-charges-in-operation-gravy-train>.
- 24 Allen Scott, “NY Power Authority CEO Wants to Give Cheap Electricity to Mine Bitcoin,” *Bitcoinist.com*, February 02, 2018. Accessed March 26, 2018. <http://bitcoinist.com/ny-state-bitcoin-mining-coinmint-jobs/>.
- 25 Kate Rooney, “An Old Alcoa Plant in Upstate New York Is Going to Be Converted into One of the World’s Largest Bitcoin Mining Centers,” *CNBC*, June 06, 2018, accessed July 22, 2018, <https://cnbc.com/2018/06/05/bitcoin-miner-revamps-alcoas-aluminum-factory.html>.

Endnotes continued

- 26 Avi Mizrahi, "Coinmint to Invest up to \$700 Million in New York Mining Center," *Bitcoin News*, June 06, 2018, accessed July 22, 2018, <https://news.bitcoin.com/coinmint-to-invest-up-to-700-million-in-new-york-mining-center/>.
- 27 The National, "Bitcoin Mining Revives Forgotten US Industrial Towns."
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 David Sommerstein, "Massena Hopeful as Alcoa Deadline Hits Two Year Mark," *North Country Public Radio*, March 06, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/story/33518/20170306/massena-hopeful-as-alcoa-deadline-hits-two-year-mark>.
- 30 Bob Beckstead, "Activity Beginning to Pick Up at St. Lawrence Centre Mall," *Daily Courier-Observer*, February 20, 2018. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.mpcourier.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?avis=WD&date=20180220&category=DCO&lopenr=180229911&Ref=AR>.
- 31 "Norfolk Town, Village Has Interesting History," *The Massena Observer*, January 23, 1964, accessed January 25, 2018. [http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031311/1964-01-23/ed-1/seq-5/#date1=01/01/1725&index=1&date2=12/31/2015&words=Erastus Hall&to_year2=2015&searchType=advanced&sequence=0&from_year2=1725&proxdistance=5&page=1&county=Saint Lawrence&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=erastus hall&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&SearchType2=prox5](http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031311/1964-01-23/ed-1/seq-5/#date1=01/01/1725&index=1&date2=12/31/2015&words=Erastus+Hall&to_year2=2015&searchType=advanced&sequence=0&from_year2=1725&proxdistance=5&page=1&county=Saint+Lawrence&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=erastus+hall&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&SearchType2=prox5).
- 32 "Town of Norfolk," *Ogdensburg Journal*, June 16, 1942, accessed February 20, 2018, [http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031165/1942-06-16/ed-1/seq-3/#date1=01/01/1725&index=16&date2=12/31/2015&words=ErastusHall&to_year2=2015&searchType=advanced&sequence=0&from_year2=1725&proxdistance=5&page=1&county=SaintLawrence&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=erastus hall&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&SearchType2=prox5](http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031165/1942-06-16/ed-1/seq-3/#date1=01/01/1725&index=16&date2=12/31/2015&words=ErastusHall&to_year2=2015&searchType=advanced&sequence=0&from_year2=1725&proxdistance=5&page=1&county=SaintLawrence&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=erastus+hall&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&SearchType2=prox5).





Part 2

Chomedey

[previous page]

Figure 2-01 My Bubby, on her honeymoon, looking for seashells, 1956

“Don’t ask me why I have a thing,
For venerated places,
Worn wooden floors,
And open fire ovens.
It runs in my blood,
Like dough bathed in honey water,
Bickering relatives,
Holy days and crystal nights.

Why not put a hole in things?
It makes it easier to hold onto,
And harder to let go.”

- *Michael Katz, St. Viateur Bagel Factory*

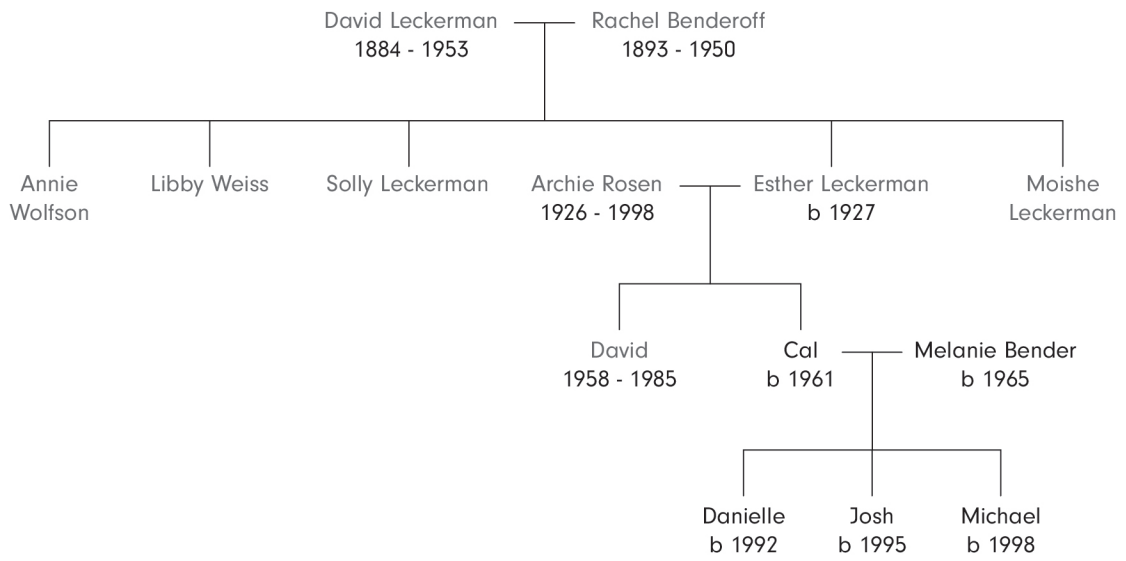


Figure 2-02 The Leckerman/Rosen Family Tree

April 2017

I arrived at my Bubby's assisted living facility on a brisk spring afternoon. I had decided to leave my coat in my car—my mother would have scolded me if she knew—and the walk through the parking lot was a cold one. I hurried through the front doors into the warmth of the building, and managed to catch an elevator up to her unit on the tenth floor. I arrived at her floor and navigated my way through the snaking corridor. I approached her door at the very end of the hall and gave a quick knock. I held my breath and listened; there was no sound of movement inside, just the din of the television, blasting the news at a volume that only a ninety-year-old could tolerate. I waited until there was a pause in the broadcast and knocked again, harder this time. Nothing. I rang the doorbell. Stillness; nothing.

I rode the elevator back down, and decided to walk through the complex in search of her. I made a loop through the dining room; it was closed by then, empty. I doubled-back through the library, past the meeting rooms, the television areas, the exercise room, the hairdresser. I was used to this by then; it was not an uncommon occurrence to find her somewhere else in the building other than her own room, even when we had arranged to meet. Her jaw would open wide in astonishment when she saw me, having forgotten our planned visit, like it was some sort of a rarity for me to be standing in front of her in the flesh.

Unsuccessful on the main floor, I decided to try her door one more time, knowing how she hates to wear her hearing aids. I rode the ten floors up again; posters on the inside of the elevator advertised the entertainment for the week: a ten-year-old magician was slated to perform the next Tuesday, and an amateur folk singer on the Thursday. I made my way through the corridor, to the end of the hall, and knocked—harder this time. I rang the bell. Stillness; nothing. I started pounding. A caregiver from the neighbouring apartment popped her head into the hallway, and I apologized for the disturbance. She shut the door, looking displeased.

Unsure of what to do, I rode the ten floors back down again, and approached the reception desk, queuing behind an elderly woman leaning on a walker. The receptionist was firm but warm, "Yes, Mrs. Goldman, your son called and told me that he is going to visit you tomorrow, not today. Yes, tomorrow, at 4pm. He'll be here to take you for dinner." I was unable to hear what Mrs. Goldman was saying in response.

The receptionist turned his attention to me once Mrs. Goldman had left, "Yes?" He said in a clipped tone, "Can I help you?" His patience seemed markedly thinner with me than it was with Mrs. Goldman. I told him that I couldn't find my grandmother, and that yes, I did look around the grounds for her, and that no, she isn't answering her door, and that yes, I did try ringing the doorbell. Twice.

As he called up to her room for me, I silently cursed myself for leaving my coat in the car; my cell phone was in my pocket.

She answered her phone on the first ring.

I rode the elevator up to her floor again, and my Bubby opened the door on my third attempt.

“Danielle? What are you doing here?” she exclaimed, her mouth agape.

I took a mental note of her appearance. She seemed to fluctuate between levels of hygiene; sometimes, her toenails poke out from her sandals, overgrown with chipped polish, protesting a pedicure; an inexplicable refusal of self-care. Other times, her hair is perfectly coiffed, fresh from the salon; a halo of ringlets framing her face, styled as it had been for as long as I could remember. She is shorter now too, and thinner. When her mind isn't failing her, she is as quick-witted and sharp-tongued as ever. More frequently though, she has been forgetting things.

I tried to make light of the situation, “I'm here to visit you—don't you remember?”

She excitedly kissed both of my cheeks and ushered me into her apartment. Before closing the door, she reached behind us, first pressing her fingertips to her lips, and then extending them as high as she could reach, up to the *mezuzah* affixed to her door frame. I recognized this one; it was crudely painted, colours bleeding from one form to the next; it was one that I had painted for her when I was a little girl.



Figure 2-03 The view along Highway 401

While my family journeyed the five long hours (sometimes six depending on the number of bathroom breaks) toward Montreal, I remember staring out the window in anticipation, eagerly awaiting the moment the Canadian Shield pierced its way through the ground, forcefully asserting itself against the shoulder of the highway. To me, it felt like the earth was welcoming us with a ragged embrace. When the rock face eventually appeared, I felt a rush of excitement—with its arrival, I knew that we were getting closer.

As a child, I only knew that we were travelling toward Montreal; it was not until I was older that I made the distinction that we were actually in Laval, Montreal's largest suburb. Before Laval's municipal merger in 1965, Chomedey was a separate municipality in the south-west. Today, Chomedey is still distinguished as an independent district today and referred to as such.¹

Amongst the sprawl of invariable houses, we would pull into the driveway of Bubby's house, 1417 Croissant Carol; the house on the slight bend in the Crescent (every year my brothers and I would laugh at the street sign written in French; the house on the slight bend in the "Croissant"). For nearly sixty years, this is the house she lived in. She moved in as a newlywed in 1958, raised her two children here, and remained until 2015 when my parents decided to move her to an assisted living facility not far from their home. Due to the onset of Alzheimer's, it was determined that she could not solely care for herself alone, like she had been doing for the twenty years since the death of her husband, my Zaida.

There was nothing particularly special about the house; it was small, and dated, and it did not allow for much privacy due to its split level organization. A narrow vestibule opened onto a combined living and dining room, with a view into the kitchen. A stair to the immediate left extended down to the ground level, which included a den with a window looking onto the backyard, a sewing room and storage area, and a bathroom, all adjacent to the garage. Another stair just beyond the first went up half a level to the three bedrooms and bathroom. The downstairs bathroom boasted a metallic floral wallpaper with a complementary teal toilet and sink while the upstairs bathroom flaunted a matching pink set. The large window in the living room was draped in long, sheer curtains. It overlooked the front of the property, with a view to the street.

The house is the backdrop to many of my own childhood memories, and memories that have been shared with me. They float up sporadically: my brothers and I together picking heaping bowls of raspberries from the garden for our breakfast while dodging wasps and spiders; my Bubby breaking and then burying a plate in the backyard after my mother accidentally mixed up the milk and meat dishes in her *kosher* kitchen; the hill out front that my brothers and I would breathlessly roll down; the squelch of plastic wrap that encased the sofas under our bare legs; the room where I "lost" my pacifier when I was much too old to still be using it; the room that I slept in that used to belong to my late Uncle David.... The stories are endless.



Figure 2-04 My Bubby in front of her house, 1966



Figure 2-05 My mom in front of my Bubby's house, late 1980s



Figure 2-06 My Zaida outside of the house

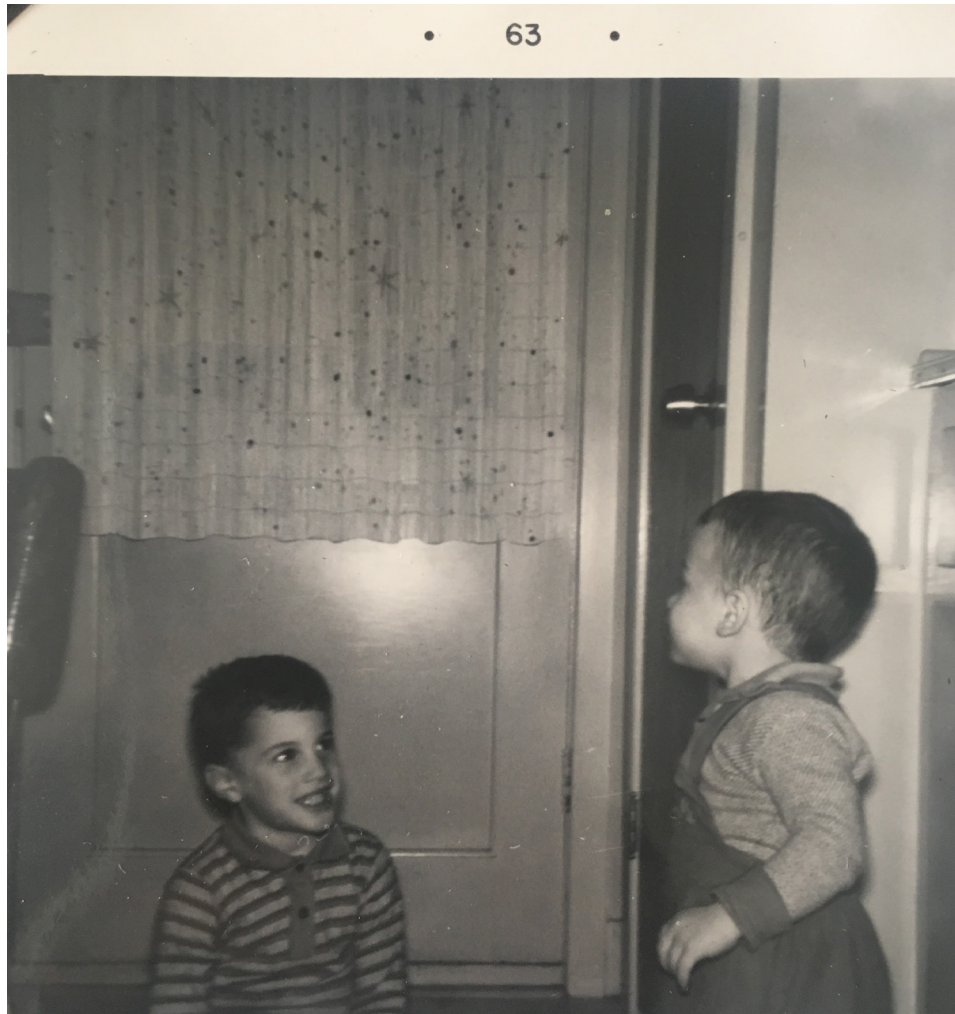


Figure 2-07 David & my father



Figure 2-08 My father, mid 1970s

Despite both of my parents having grown up only a few streets away from each other in Chomedey, they did not meet each other until much later, when they had both separately left for Toronto (my mother was eleven when she had left, and my father was twenty-three.)

This trip to Chomedey was always for my father. It was his opportunity to take us on a curated tour of his old haunts; a pilgrimage to his youth. We'd drive through his old neighbourhood, and he would point out where all of his friends used to live. He'd point out the spot (now townhouses) that used to be the field that he would cut through on his way to school. He'd take us by the park near his house where he used to play baseball against the neighbourhood's French and Greek children, the diamond now fading. He'd bring us to his favourite restaurants where he would order the same things every year. I became used to our annual meal at Wilensky's luncheonette: a cherry coke, a sour pickle, a *karnatzel*, and a "special." Or, our visit to St. Viateur Bagel to fill our freezer with "everything" bagels for the year. Or, the Greek restaurant just around the corner from his house; the one with the dollar fries, the generous helping of feta cheese, and the chicken (never pork) souvlaki. Over the years, he ensured that these places would be entangled in our memories; they came to be our places too.

ל. האלשטיין אונד קא.

שיפסקארטען אונד
געלד זענדינג אָפּפּיס

320 נאטרע דעם סטריט וועסט
מאָנטרעאל, קענעדיע



אנווייזונגען, אויסלענדישע טשעקס, געלד אויסצאהל-
ונגען ביי פאסט אונד באנק נאך אללע טיילען דער וועלט.

אויסלאנדרישע געלד געקויפט אונד פערקויפט
נאך דעם טאגעס קורס.

שיפסקארטען ביי אללע ליניען פון אונד נאך איראפא
אונד אללע טיילען דער וועלט.

פאסט אָפּפּיס טאב. 19

L. HOLSTEIN & Co.

Steamship Passenger Agents
and Bankers

320 NOTRE DAME ST. WEST
MONTREAL, CAN.



TRANSACT A GENERAL DOMESTIC
AND FOREIGN BANKING BUSINESS.

WRITE DRAFTS ON ALL PARTS OF
THE WORLD AND TRANSFER MONEY
BY MAIL AND CABLE.

BUY AND SELL FOREIGN COIN AND
BANK NOTES.

STEAMSHIP TICKETS ISSUED VIA
ALL LINES.

Figure 2-09 Advertisement for L. Holstein & Company, a company that assisted with immigration and banking; advertisement published in both Yiddish and English in the Keneder Adler, a Yiddish newspaper established in 1907

By the late 1800s, approximately 500 Jews were living in Montreal, mostly concentrated in present-day Chinatown and Old Montreal.² Known as the “Uptowners,” these individuals were well-established in society and fully anglicized; their indistinct appearance and mannerisms allowed them to blend in seamlessly. They had been integrated for many generations as a part of the English elite, and did not experience discrimination from their friendly gentile neighbours.³

From the 1880s through to World War I, 1.2 million *Ashkenazi* Jews fled Eastern Europe in hopes of reaching America: The *Goldene Medinah* or, The Golden Land. Between 1900 and 1910, 67,000 Jews settled in Canada, with a majority settling in Montreal.⁴ In 1910, Montreal had garnered a Jewish population of 28,000.⁵ The influx of immigrants in the late 19th century seemed manageable to the Uptowners at first, but by 1900, the growing refugee population overwhelmed the relatively small Jewish community. The Uptowners were shocked by their poverty and embarrassed by their old country customs and clothing, however still felt an obligation to guide and assist their fellow Jew.⁶ If a service or institution was needed, it was the responsibility of the religious communities to create it for themselves. Thus, a comprehensive network of synagogues, schools, libraries, clinics, mutual aid societies, and other social safety nets were established in the early twentieth century to ease the community into their new lives.⁷ ⁸ The warm relations between the English community and the Uptowners quickly cooled, as they began to associate the Uptowners with their counterparts, the Yiddish-speaking “ghetto Jews,” the “Downtowners.” There was a significant transition period as the Uptowners and the Downtowners learned to coexist amongst their cultural, economic and linguistic differences.⁹

The heart of the Jewish community existed in a square mile settled six blocks on either side of St. Lawrence Boulevard, also known as The Main, which ran North from Craig Street (presently St. Antoine Street) to Mount Royal Avenue.¹⁰ This “ghetto-by-choice self-contained ethnic enclave” became home to a bustling Jewish neighbourhood, where Yiddish echoed through the streets and grocers peddling barrels of smoked herring and sour pickles under a *kosher* sign were the norm.¹¹



Figure 2-10 My Zaida, strutting through the menswear clothing store he managed, 1970s

The first decades of the twentieth century ushered in significant growth in the garment manufacturing industry, or the *shmata* trade. While tailoring in the old country was considered to be an inferior trade, it was quick to learn and allowed for reasonably steady employment. It also gave observant workers the ability to take time off on Saturdays to observe the Sabbath.¹² Only a small amount of capital was needed to open a factory (sewing machines could even be purchased on credit), and so Jews were involved as both employers and employees, allowing for the Jewish community to majorly dominate the industry.¹³ Some of these manufacturers expanded into the real-estate business, and erected some of Montreal's earliest mid-rise buildings, which are often still used to accommodate manufacturing purposes today.¹⁴

By 1931, Quebec's Jewish population had grown to approximately 60,000 individuals, with 94% of them indicating that their mother tongue was Yiddish.¹⁵

Born in 1927, my Bubby grew up on a residential street within the square mile surrounding the Main. She lived in a walk-up building amongst five children who shared two bedrooms—one for the boys, and one for the girls. She does not often talk about this life, her life before her own children. Over the years, I've come to understand that she did not have a carefree childhood. Her father was employed as a presser at a men's suit factory ("A tough egg,") but eventually became sick; diabetic and bed-ridden. Her mother, whom she loved dearly, ("She was the greatest mother in the whole wide world. Everyone loved her; I can't say anything bad about her, no one could,") met an untimely death after succumbing to an oven fire in the family kitchen. The siblings ultimately relied on each other for support during difficult times.

Throughout my thesis, whenever I ask about her parents, she quickly quiets and stares vacantly into the distance, like she's visiting a place in her memory that hasn't been frequented in a long time. I change the subject as her eyes begin to well up; I don't want to force her to recall what she has decisively buried for so many years.

I listened to a recording I took of a recent conversation with her, looking for some clarification regarding dates and other information. In the recording, I speak sharply and concise, trying to make sure that she can both hear and understand my questions. When she ultimately asks me to repeat myself, my impatience is evident. Even with her hearing aids in, she has difficulty hearing what I am saying. I do not like how I sound in this recording; I sound curt, and mean, like being asked to repeat myself is a huge inconvenience. I hope that she does not misinterpret this.

(Marriage of David Isaac Lekichman) folio thirteen
 and Miss Rissel Bondaroff
 Montreal the fifth day of November 1911.
 By Authority of justice of this Publication
 and Consent of the Parties David Isaac
 Lekichman age twenty six Years born in
 Russia Son of Nuchem and Perl
 Lekichman Maiden Name Barditchoff to
 Miss Rissel Bondaroff age twenty one
 Years born in Russia Daughter of
 Salem and Chinke Bondaroff Maiden
 Name Perin Were united
 in Matrimony of
 Marriage this the fifth
 day of November
 nineteen hundred
 and Eleven before the
 undersigned Witnesses.
 Parties witnesses.
 X David Isaac Lekichman } O. Perin
 X Rissel Bondaroff } S. Bondaroff
 Rev. M. Bloomerfield.

Figure 2-11 Marriage record for my great-grandparents, David Isaac Lekichman and Rissel (Rachel) Bondaroff

Bub still has her humour, which she often uses to deflect:

“When did they get married? Do you know?” I ask.

“I wasn’t born; how would I know?” she laughs deeply. We laugh together.

There is not a lot of information that I can find online to support the few threads of information that I have collected from her. Through ancestry.com, I found a marriage record indicating that her parents were married in 1911 at the Chevra Shaas synagogue in Montreal, but when I asked her about the details, she told me that it couldn’t be right, because they came to Canada from Berdychiv in 1920. Incorrect or contradicting information seems to be rampant; even if she wanted to recall and share things with me, at this point, a lot of the details have been lost somewhere between pain and time. The information has effectively already disappeared.



Figure 2-12 50th anniversary party at The Young Israel of Chomedey, 2008

After the death of her parents, Bubby moved away from the Main, renting an apartment in the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood in Montreal with a few of her siblings and her new husband. In 1958, my grandparents bought a house in the newly created suburb of St. Martin, which soon became Chomedey. The neighbourhood offered an opportunity for Jewish couples to buy their first homes and build a religious community that was wholly theirs, as opposed to the already established synagogues of their parents' generation. The builder of the neighbourhood knew that if he cultivated this burgeoning religious community, young families would follow. The community first established themselves in a bungalow donated by the builder until enough money could be raised to construct a proper synagogue building. Soon, the Young Israel of Chomedey was built and officially established and they moved into their modest building on Elizabeth street. The Young Israel became a religious and social centre for the Jewish community, providing Jewish day schools, a public library, youth groups, and brotherhood and sisterhood organizations.

Located just a few minutes walk from their house, The Young Israel of Chomedey became my grandparents' local synagogue. They held membership there since its inception in 1959, when the suburb and the Jewish community was still in its infancy. It has since become a vital place for my family; my parents were married there, and my father (and later, my brother) both had their Bar Mitzvahs there. My bubby worked as the bookkeeper at the synagogue for many years. I remember her office well; stacks of papers and mountains of overflowing boxes, her typewriter at the middle of it all—a complete chaos. When I would visit her at her work, members of the synagogue would stop into her office and take my cheeks into their hands, “What a little *Sheina Meidele* you have here, Esther!” My bubby would beam with pride.

At the front of the synagogue, benches surrounded a large metal *menorah* in the forecourt. Once inside, one was immediately confronted by a substantial Tree of Life, engraved leaves and branches stretching outward to consume the wall. It honoured members that had contributed financially to the synagogue, as well as an in memoriam for those who had passed away.

The synagogue was a puzzle of renovations; in addition to a small chapel that catered toward morning services with a smaller attendance, there was an opulent sanctuary that could hold over six hundred people. There was also an auditorium and a library, as well as flex space that was often rented out by other smaller religious communities in Chomedey.

On the front steps of the building, my bubby attempted to set me up with the son of the *mashgiach* when I was sixteen years old (when he was closer to thirty). In the span of an afternoon, I was introduced to his parents, siblings, and extended family; they all came by the synagogue to catch a glimpse of the prospective bride. I couldn't fault her though—my bubby was trying to keep the community alive. It was like she knew that change was imminent but held resolve to not let the foundations crumble.

וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁא
 D'kudsho Sh'mey V'yisalloi V'yisalleh
 בְּרִיךְ הוּא. לְעֵלָא מִן כָּל בְּרִכְתָּא
 Birchoso Kol Min L'eylo Hoo B'rich
 וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְנִחְמָתָא
 V'nechemoso Tush'b'choso V'sheeroso
 דְּאֵמִירָן בְּעֵלְמָא וְאֵמְרוּ אָמֵן
 Omain V'imroo B'olmo Da'ameeron
 יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא
 Sh'mayo Min Rabbo Sh'lomo Y'hey
 וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל
 Yisroeil Kol V'al Oleinoo V'chayim
 וְאֵמְרוּ אָמֵן
 Omain V'imroo
 עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוֵנוּ הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה
 Ya'seh Hoo Bimromov Sholom Ouseeh
 שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל
 Yisroeil Kol V'al Oleinoo Sholom
 וְאֵמְרוּ אָמֵן
 Omain V'imroo

קריש אבר
Mourner's Kaddish with English wordings
 (To be read from right to left)
 יתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבא. בעלמא
 B'olmo Rabbo Shmey V'yi-kadash Yisgadai
 דרבא ברעותה וימליך מלכותה
 Malchusey V'yamlich Chir'usey Dee-vro
 דחייכון וביומיכון ובחיי
 Uv'chayey. Uv'yomeychon B'chayeichon
 דכל בית ישראל. בעלמא ובזמן
 Uvisman Ba'agolo Yisroeil Beis D'choi
 זריב ואמרו אמין:
 Omain V'imroo Koree'
 יהא שמה רבא מקרה לעלם
 L'olam M'vorach Rabbo Sh'mey Y'hey
 לעלמי עלמאי:
 Olmayoh Ulolmei
 יתברך וישתבח ויתפאר
 V'yishta'bach V'yishta'bach V'yishta'bach
 ויתחדש ויתנשא ויתרום
 V'yis'hadar V'yisnassey V'yisromai

Figure 2-13 The Mourner's Kaddish distributed by the Young Israel, both in Hebrew and transliterated text

ESTHER ROSEN, WHERE ARE YOU? (Sung to: "CAR 54, WHERE ARE YOU")

THE YAHRZEIT CARDS ARE LATE,
THE BAZAAR STOCK IS A MESS,
THE FURNACE IS OUT OF DATE,
WE'RE SPENDING MORE AND GETTING LESS,
NACHMAN'S NOWHERE TO BE FOUND
THE MICHVAN'S CRUMBLING TO THE GROUND,
ESTHER ROSEN, WHERE ARE YOU?

ARNIE'S COMPUTER IS ON THE BLINK
TIHO'S LOST HIS MASTER KEY
THERE'S MORE MEAT IN THE DAIRY SINK
WE'RE RENTING THE MAIN HALL OUT FOR FREE
GEORGE'S COFFEE TASTES LIKE MUD,
INSTEAD OF SHABBOS WINE, THEY'RE SERVING "BUD",
ESTHER ROSEN, WHERE ARE YOU?

THERE'S NO SHALOSH SEUDOT FOOD
THE GROOM HAS NOT SHOWN UP
THE GUESTS ARE ALL QUITE RUDE,
THE CATERED MEAL HAS BEEN THROWN UP
SQUARE DANCERS ARE TRIPPING ON THE FLOOR,
SOMEONE'S THROWN ERIC HUTMAN THROUGH THE DOOR,
ESTHER ROSEN, WHERE ARE YOU?

THE TZEDAKA BOX IS BARE
THERE'S NO KIPAH ON THAT FELLA
NORMAN FOGEL'S LOST HIS HAIR,
MARTY CHORAN'S KISSING BELLA;
WE'VE LOST OUR LICENSE TO HAVE LIQUOR,
SINCE OUR CONGREGATION'S ALWAYS "SHICKER"
ESTHER ROSEN, WHERE ARE YOU?"

"CLIMB EVERY LADDER" (Sung to "CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN")

Climb every ladder, check every pew
Wash the executive's laundry, that's what Tiho has to do;
Remove the snow drift, heat up the stew,
Paint the rabbi's computer, that's what Tiho has to do;
Save the danish, replace Nachman when he has the flu,
Break the unbreakable dishes, that's what Tiho has to do!
Have some more children, two is too few

Figure 2-14 "Esther Rosen, Where are you?"; A song written for my Bubby, found in a holiday booklet distributed by the Young Israel

To Danielle, my dearest darling - who missed you, as well as your Mom, Dad
 and brothers- I got your beautiful picture that I just adore - you
 look terrific! Hope you're feeling better and enjoying your stay -
 Anyway, we went to St. Jacobs where the Mennonites sell their food -
 such as bread, cake and assorted Jams and much, much more-
 They sell vegetables, wood furniture (Hand-made) and also take you on rides
 by horse and buggy to see the farms - but we didn't go - we walked around
 and saw the clothing and a lot of junk- a sort of flea market -
 But the weather was nice and we enjoyed the ride -
 Your aunt Roseanne surprised your grandparents - there was a birthday party
 for your Zaida and I saw Charlie - what a guy!
 I like the way your bed is placed - I left you some mini-pages and a booklet
 from Simons and also a few bucks!
 We ate at a new restaurant I think it's called Nanking - nothing special -
 Josh, Michael and I walked to Tewksbury park (or some such name) and instead
 of going home the usual way, Josh decided to take a left turn and we ended
 up on a new track by the new school and I had no idea where we were - anyway
 the boys took about 4 or 5 turns around the track and we finally left and
 Josh knew how to get home, because I had no idea where I was- we ended up
 coming out on your street - They are now taking me places- how times have
 changed -
 The flight home was quiet except for a crying baby which did not last long
 and the stewardess sat beside me- there were on 28 passengers on the plane
 we got home in less than an hr. The stewardess told me they are all from
 Calgary- they fly from Calgary to TO to Mtl and back to TO - they bring
 their own lunch etc. such as peanut butter and jam sandwiches they have ice
 packs, they stay either at the Sheraton or Doubletree at the Airport and
 they never know their hours- the staff are very friendly-
 If things are not to your liking say this prayer and ^{Can't}~~God~~ your eyes -
 Shmei Isroel adonoi Alohenoo adonoi echot - works for me - you can pray
 at any time any hour - and it brings good things - trust me -

Figure 2-15 A letter from my Bubby

Growing up, Bubby visited my family in Richmond Hill on a bi-monthly basis. She would take the train or fly in from Montreal, bringing gifts of chocolate covered cherries, newspaper clippings, and lipsticked kisses. She would stay at our house for a few days at a time, spending as much time as possible with her grandchildren.

For Rosh Hashanah, Bubby would take a special trip in, temporarily trading her allegiance to the Young Israel for services at our local synagogue in Richmond Hill. My father would drop us off near the front entrance, while he scoured the parking lot for an empty spot (no small feat on the High Holidays). Bub and I stuffed our faces with honey cakes and the various other sweets laid out before us before heading into the building. We would link arms, Bubby steadying herself against me as we gingerly climbed the steps. We had a long walk to our seats; the women's side of the *mechitza* was at the far end of the sanctuary. She would direct me to the very front, where we together would occupy the first row. This allowed us to catch glimpses of the cantors fervently praying; much preferable to the view through the foggy yellowed glass of the old partition. I've always wondered if she did this in a small act of defiance for my benefit; Orthodox Judaism was no match for the Rosen women, *mechitza* be damned! Regardless, I relished in the ability to peek at the men's side, taking delight in mirroring their endless bowing and bouncing, rising and sitting; long *tzitzis* swaying as they bent first at the knees and then again at the waist. The cantor's voice soared above the room, promptly accompanied by a harmony of South African *chazzanim* praying in Hebrew, the language that is at once both familiar but unintelligible to me. Growing up, it always felt like an other-worldly ritual, like I was an observer of my own faith.



Figure 2-16 Rosen family
[L-R] Top, Ethel (née Rosen, my Zaida's sister) & Hy Yaffe, David;
Middle, Bubby;
Bottom, my dad, Zaida

For *Ashkenazi* Jews, the tradition of naming after the dead is a form of honour and respect. It is said that giving a necronym establishes a spiritual bond between the living and the dead, or that qualities of the dead will be emulated by the living. Often a child will receive the same or a similar Hebrew name as their namesake; in English, typically the first letter is passed down. I was named Danielle after my father's older brother, David.



Figure 2-17 David & my father

David was never fully formed in my mind; I was told so few stories of him, and those same few stories repeatedly, that he felt like a shadow of a person.

My brothers and I would ask my father, “What was David like?” He would give us the same response every time, “David? The most I saw of him in high school was the back of his leather jacket as he skipped out on class!”

It was enough to understand only very little of who he was. I had no choice either; no one else in my life knew him, or if they did, weren’t willing to speak much further than what my dad had already said. This hazy portrait was the David that I came to accept—had to accept; a person who once was, and now isn’t.

I do know that I have two brothers for a reason; my father did not want his children to end up alone like he had.



Figure 2-18 Zaida's epitaph

When we visited Chomedey, one afternoon would be reserved for the trip to the rural cemetery to pay our respects to the dead. The cemetery maintains a parcel of land that belongs to the Young Israel, where congregants are placed in their final resting place, to be returned to the earth.

July 2014

We were all fighting on this trip; my father and I, my brothers and I, Bubby and I. This was the first summer that her Alzheimer's had begun to rear its ugly head. She was upset about something I did or didn't do, the details unimportant; I remember standing in her kitchen while she shook me by the arms, "Your mother turned you against me! You used to be so loving. What happened to you?" Her sickness had made up an alliance against her in her mind.

We drove to the cemetery that afternoon, like we did every year. This was one of my favourite parts of the trip; the drive through the picturesque Quebec countryside was pretty and calm. By the time we arrived in the late afternoon, the gates had already been locked and closed to incoming cars, so we decided to continue on foot. Bubby had been getting increasingly slower and more precarious on her feet, so we decided to leave her in the car at her insistence; this was the first ever time that she did not accompany us. We jogged the length of the roadway, trying to get to the plots as quickly as we could, so she wouldn't have to wait for long.

We soon arrived, and each grabbed a handful of rocks from the side of the road before we entered. We were used to the order of operations by then, and could easily recall where each person was buried. We first made a beeline for my Zaida's grave, and my father quickly ran through the graveside prayers. We each placed a small pebble atop his headstone. We gazed at his plot in silence; my brothers do not remember him, but I do. I've always loved his epitaph, simple but poignant; "He loved laughter."

Almost directly behind my Zaida's grave is David's. We spun around, and my father recited the same prayers as he had for his father. We put our remaining pebbles on his headstone. Anxious to get back to the car, my brothers and I turned to leave, but my father lingered a little longer. He rested his head against the tombstone, and he began to cry softly. My brothers and I exchanged uneasy looks.

"I have something to tell you guys," he said, "something that I haven't told you before."

My dad put his arms around all of us, so that we were huddled together. This was the first time I finally heard a different story of David's life. It was one of the few times I had seen my father break down.

We returned to the car and drove back to Bubby's house, all of us feeling angry that we had not been told earlier, heavy with this new information. At once, stories that I had turned over in my head became reframed, and everything seemed imbued with new meaning. Within this new information, I could now see David, so many years ago, standing at the large window overlooking the front property, with the view to the street; the place where delusions gripped his mind, untethering a grasp on what actually was in this world and what was not.

David died in 1985, when he was twenty-six years old. He was admitted to the hospital for complications from a car accident a few weeks prior. He was administered a drug by an overworked nurse; left to die alone by anaphylactic shock. My dad was twenty-three.

This was the story that I had always known, which my father swore was true. He told us that many people believed a darker, more bleak story, and callously expressed that my grandparents were better off for it.

I wasn't sure what to think. Would it be revealed in time? Was there more that was being kept from us?

What was important to know? Did we need to know?

Sometimes I'll awaken in the middle of the night, hallucinating that there is someone there. It's always a random person, someone I don't know. They will either be calmly standing beside me, or be patiently sitting at the end of my bed. Though it sounds unnerving, I am never disturbed or scared by them. In my sleepy haze, I can sense that they aren't there to hurt me, but just there to say hello in passing.

Sometimes when I am alone, I will hear something sounding like my name being said. Frequently, it will be something silly that can be explained away, like a particular rustle of fabric, but other times, less so. Sometimes I can hear a voice as clear as day; other times, it is just a whisper. Occasionally, I see things out of the corner of my eyes, sometimes it's an errant hair, sometimes a quick-crawling bug, and other times, nothing.

Just because I don't believe in ghosts doesn't mean that they don't surround us.



Figure 2-19 Party leader René Lévesque after the Parti Québécois victory in 1978; to the left is Camille Laurin, a champion of Bill 101

“The older man sighed as he heard the election results on television. The man was a Survivor, and the very word “nationalism” triggered painful memories for him. Like tens of thousands of Montreal Jews, he remembered too well the scent of nationalism across Europe... what “National Socialism”, or Nazism meant... And he was scared.”

- Irving Layton, The Whole Bloody Bird

In 1976, the pro-separatist party, the Parti Québécois, prevailed in the provincial election. This resulted in a swift mass exodus by both businesses and individuals, and marked a major change in Montreal's economy and population. As companies began to pull out of Quebec's markets and redirect their investments, Toronto quickly became Canada's premier city. The next year, Bill 101, or, The Charter of the French Language, was introduced as an effort to create a unilingual province amidst a bilingual country.

The Jewish community, which had roots in the Anglophone society, felt compelled to leave. There was a strong discomfort with the idea of Quebec nationalism and independence. (I can recall my Bubby bristling at a salesperson who had greeted us in French, “Do. You. Speak. English?” she seethed, despite her ability to speak fluent French.)

In 1971, Montreal had a Jewish population of 114,000; ten years later, it decreased to 101,000. Jewish youth, aged 15-24, numbered nearly 20,000 in 1971, dropped to 14,385 in 1981, and again to 11,705 in 1991; a decrease of roughly 50% within two decades.¹⁶ These migrations began to erode the future of the Jewish community: in 1971, Montreal had 4000 more Jews in Toronto; by 1981, Toronto had 25,000 more than Montreal.¹⁷

My father was among them, having left Montreal for Toronto in 1985 in pursuit of more work opportunities.

As of 2011, the Jewish population of Montreal was 90,780, which comprised 2.4% of the total Montreal population. The most significant Jewish population loss in Quebec occurred in Chomedey; between 2001-2011, there was a decrease of 40.4%.¹⁸

In the middle of one of our discussions about her parents, Bubby's phone rang. I walked over to her bedside table and picked it up; it took her some time to get out of her rocking chair. It was Sam.

We exchanged pleasantries, and then he asked for my Bubby, "Sam wants to talk to you," I said as I passed the phone to her.

"Oh, it's Sam?" she said as she slowly stood up, a big smile spreading across her face.

I'd met Sam once before, when I had dropped in for a visit, unannounced. They were watching a black and white movie together. He had also grown up in Montreal, and that immediately connected them. When he spoke to her, it was like her Alzheimer's disappeared. She seemed lucid and awakened, giggling like a little girl.

They spoke on the phone for a brief minute, and she returned to her chair beside me.

"How's Sam?" I asked.

"Oh, he's good, you know. He wanted to come over to visit but I told him you were here."

"You can invite him over, I'll be going soon." I said, before asking, "So is he... your boyfriend now?"

"Well..." She blushed and gave a small smile, "It's a new relationship."

"A new relationship?!" I laughed.

She laughed along with me and then said with a wink, "We're taking things slow."

With an ageing congregation and a declining membership, the Young Israel had recently become uncertain of their future. The following letter, written by the then-chairman of the synagogue, appeared in a *Passover* 2016 book distributed to members of the congregation:

Dear fellow congregants,

Once again, *Passover* is around the corner. How time flies. I hope that most of us have experienced a healthy and gratifying fall and winter.

Since our last General Assembly of Members (GAOM), last August, our Executive and Board, have been very busy on various fronts. We revisited one more time, with the insistence of Shaar Shalom, very serious amalgamation discussions. We came very close, but were unsuccessful in consummating a deal. We have also created a draft of a Memorandum of Understanding, basically agreed to in principle, between us and Chevra Mishnayis (CM), that lays out the terms and conditions of our inevitable union.

On the financial front, we were able to get reinstated to our bingo pool where over recent months, we have received approximately \$2000 per month. We have recovered and collected approximately \$20,000 on a retroactive basis for the previous four years of outstanding GST and QST receivables that were negligently unclaimed. We were able to generate approximately \$35,000 for the fiscal year 2015 via our tremendous bazaar program. We plan to run a spring bazaar. We have cut corners on various fronts. We have kept the repairs to our seriously aged roof to a minimum. We have also collected approximately \$15,000 of outstanding receivables from our members and congregants.

Irrespective of the above, and given that some of the benefits such as bingo will only fully kick in during the fiscal year 2016, as expected, we lost approximately \$80,000 for the fiscal year 2015, to be reviewed at the next GAOM. Although prospects for 2016 should be better on various fronts, the benefits will be somewhat mitigated by our ever increasing attrition of members through the normal evolution and ageing process. The huge unknown, is as to when, and to what extent, we will be burdened with mega roof expenses, which if we were to replace the seven sections of our roof entirely, would cost in the vicinity of \$200,000. On a status quo basis, even if CM sold its premises and contributed the 300,000 or 400,000 proceeds to the Young Israel, our ability to stay in this massive building without running out of funds is four or six years. If this scenario were chosen, it would allow us to postpone the need to put the building up for sale for two or three years, but would also introduce other considerations and complications. At this time, this is not seen as an optimal long term strategy.

Thus, as approved at the 2015 GAOM, we have on a restrictive, exclusive basis, put our premises up for sale and currently find ourselves in the midst of very serious and promising negotiations with a very realistic buyer. Should we be successful in these negotiations, I will be arranging for a GAOM meeting in the near future, where, in great detail and after the highest level of analysis and decision making, we would seek the approval of our plans going forward, including the most likely recommendation to sell and relocate, in all likelihood, to CM. At our recent three-hour March board meeting, these plans in general, along with the mandate to continue negotiations, were approved unanimously by the approximately forty attendees.

Enough of the business side for now. We will discuss this thoroughly at the upcoming GAOM.

Suffice it to say, that we, at the Young Israel, are living through very stressful, and uncertain times that naturally brings with it, on occasion, very emotional differences of opinion. Not everyone is going to agree with the dozens of decisions that have to be made. Thus, my biggest challenge today, is not the ability to handle and to deal with the numerous difficult business decisions, but the challenge is to deal with the emotional, and at times, illogical demands and bickering among some of our congregants, who on occasion, do not get their way. It is a bitter shame and disgrace that a very few of these members cannot better control their emotions and would place personal political aspirations ahead of *shul* objectives.

In a dying *shul* environment such as ours, however, we cannot afford to lose anyone, and I make every reasonable effort to retain and tolerate everyone. I reach out to everyone to bury the hatchet and work as a more unified team in trying to meet our overwhelming challenges to achieve optimal results for the Shul.

Enough for now. Let me conclude on a positive note. At my *Kol-Nidre* address, I promised that we will find a way to prolong *Ashkenazi shul* life in Chomedey in a decent and acceptable setting, for another dozen years or so. I truly believe that we are very close to making this happen and I pray that *Hashem* will give us the wisdom and strength and help us to deliver this objective. I very humbly ask everyone to have patience and faith in our executives and tremendous Rabbi. Please stay with, and support the Young Israel family, and I do mean family, for most of us.

I wish everyone a healthy and *freiliche* Passover, and look forward to seeing everyone attend our services.

Please arrange with our Rabbi for the sale of your *chometz*.

Shalom,

George Finkelstein, Chairman

Bubby and I sat beside each other in matching wingback chairs. We were in the library of her assisted living facility waiting for my father to finishing changing her hearing aid batteries. I knew it was inevitable, but still, I was nervous about this conversation.

I cleared my throat and started, "Did you know they sold it, Bub?"

"Sold what?"

"The Young Israel."

She gasped. A minute later, she asked, "So what is it now?"

"It's an Armenian Community Centre."

She gasped again, louder this time.

I was curious, "How does that make you feel?"

She paused briefly to find a word, "Devastated," she said.

We sat in silence for another moment. "How important was the synagogue to you?"

"It was everything."

She wouldn't be able to recall our conversation in a few minutes; it brought solace to know that her pain was only momentary.



Figure 2-20 The front of the Shaar Shalom building

On June 15th, 2016, the Young Israel building was sold to Arden Dervishian, owner of the clothing chain Ardène. He purchased the building through the Ardène Foundation, and had plans for the building to be used as a multi-purpose religious and educational community centre for the local Armenian Christian community.¹⁹ The Young Israel was allowed to occupy the building until November 8th, 2016.

Meanwhile, another local Orthodox synagogue, the Chevra Mishnayis, ultimately merged their congregation with the Young Israel to strengthen the *Ashkenazi* Orthodox community in Chomedey. Chevra Mishnayis ceased having services a year and a half prior to the sale of the building due to their dwindling congregation, one too small to form a *minyan*.

While the building of Chevra Mishnayis was offered as a new home for the joint congregation, it was deemed to be too small. In a controversial decision, it was decided that the nearby Conservative synagogue, the Shaar Shalom, which is located about a kilometre from the Young Israel, would provide a temporary home to these two joined communities.

The Young Israel signed a two-year lease with the Shaar Shalom, with the option of staying for an additional two years if both congregations feel that they are well suited together. The space is being improved by both synagogues, with funding from each congregation going towards upgrading the ageing facilities and the combining of their respective paraphernalia; Young Israel's large memorial boards and tree of life are being installed underneath Shaar Shalom's existing ones.

Sharing the space has ultimately helped both of the congregations reach their *minyans*. According to current synagogue president Issie Baum, "As far as we are aware, this is probably the first time that Orthodox and Conservative congregations have joined together to work in harmony and under the same roof in the Montreal area, and probably in all of Quebec."²⁰

A series of articles have appeared in both Jewish and Quebecois newspapers, outlining details of the synagogues' transitions. Interestingly, there is an update to an article from September 2017 in Montreal's The Suburban newspaper called "Settling the Record Straight on the Young Israel of Chomedey and Shaar Shalom Deal." There seems to be an underlying tension present, which can be inferred from a Shaar Shalom member, "I just wanted it to be clear that the conservative synagogue is alive and well. The Shaar Shalom is not being taken over by the Young Israel. In fact, the Shaar Shalom voted to take the Young Israel in for the good of all Ashkenazi Jews in Laval."²¹ The relationship and accommodations are obviously still contentious.

May 2017

I climbed the front steps to the Shaar Shalom, a synagogue that I am unfamiliar with, the synagogue that my mother belonged to as a child. The heavy metal doors were gleaming in the morning sunlight; austere and commanding. I pulled on the handle, but the doors were locked. I knocked, but there was no response. Not wanting to be late to my meeting, I walked around to the side of the building, where I found an open service door. I entered, passing by the silent milk and meat kitchens. Further down the hallway, polka music drifted out from under a closed set of doors. I didn't see anyone; it was the middle of the week, and the synagogue was nearly empty.

The staircase ahead was radiant, bathed in a wonderful light from above, guiding my path upstairs. I quietly ascended, peeking into rooms as I passed. Eventually, I found the only occupied room. A woman was sitting in front of a computer at a large wooden table full of papers, typing intently, stacks of boxes piled around her.

She looked up as I approached, "Are you Mindy?" I asked hesitantly.

She responded in a way that only the quintessential Jewish mother could, "Of course—who else would I be?"

Mindy had set up a call for me with Sylvia Chadnick, one of the original founding members of the synagogue. We sat together at the cramped desk as she dialled Sylvia's number on a corded telephone. She picked up immediately.

"Hi Sylvia, thanks so much for taking my call," I said.

"Oh, no problem at all, I go back a long, long time with your grandparents—I don't remember your father, but I *certainly* remember your grandfather. Archie and Esther were the nicest looking couple of our young, young time. They were very popular, and very well-liked."

We quickly dove into her memories of the Young Israel, "The synagogue was founded in, I think '58, and it was in a big neighbourhood house at its start. We were on a street—the street that I'm still living on today actually, since July '58—on Romiti street. It was about four doors away from me. The builder of this project, Bruno Romiti, loaned us the house, just in time for our first *Rosh Hashanah*, and that's where we started out. Everybody was new out here. We were all young people, and we were all anxious to build something and create something for ourselves. A lot of good friendships were formed; people moved to Chomedey, joined groups and met each other, and we started a very nice little Jewish community out here, all because we had the synagogue." She continued, "Then these boys—the Burkes, the Tabachniks, the Chadnicks, Louis Shell, Myer Signer, the late Joe Spector—they went to the mayor then, I don't remember if it was Lavoie or Jarry—hang on, let me go and ask my husband."

Mindy quickly interjected, "I can google it now for you Syl, it's okay. I can find out for you."

"No, no, he's right here, I'll ask him."

Mindy loudly tsked.

Sylvia put down the phone and we faintly heard her call out, "Sammy? Sammy! The mayor. That you bought the land from for the Young Israel. Was it Jarry? No, no, it was Lavoie?"

I heard Sammy faintly reply, "Kozlov!"

Sylvia replied, "Kozlov? Oh, Lew! That's right!"

She returned to the phone, "See, he still remembers. It was Lew Kozlov, the builder. He was building the West Side then, around where your father was born, Danielle—I think—I'm not sure!" She laughed heartily. "In our orthodox synagogue, it was the man who joined, and his wife and children came along... almost like baggage."



Figure 2-21 Signs advertising the future site of the Young Israel as well as new residential developments by Lew Kozlov Realities Ltd.



Figure 2-22 The original synagogue in the house on Romiti Street

Mindy interrupted again, "You know what, I was just googling Lew Kozlov's name while you were talking. He was born in 1921, so I guess—"

"He's gone," Sylvia said.

"Yes, he's gone. It says he lived until 2014. You know, I think back and figure a lot of you were in your late twenties, early thirties, and you all took on such a large undertaking. It's pretty... Oh wait, I have a picture of him here, too."

The conversation started to veer off track. Mindy and Sylvia began to cut each other off, talking over one another; speaking in a way that only people with decades of history could; communicating in a language of shared memories, experiences, and relationships.

"Oh, I never got my picture from the Purim ball back!" Sylvia said, her mind jogging from the mention of Kozlov's photo.

"Oy," said Mindy.

"Thanks to certain people... That was up at the fiftieth, you know? They lost it."

"Well, I have loads of stuff here, so, one day—"

"If you see a picture of ten women—"

"Oh, you know what, I think I have it... We'll talk about that after, I'm pretty sure I have it, I think I know which picture you're talking about."

"Really? You do?"

"We found loads and loads of pictures, Bob and I."

"I would love to see... it's the only one I would have... I'd love to show it to my granddaughter."

"Okay, I'm going to make a note. Once we start unpacking everything in the next few weeks, now that we are more established here, everything is going to start coming out of the boxes. I'll make sure to look through every single piece, in case it's not the one I'm thinking of, and I will find it for you, okay?"

"It's the one, in the actual synagogue... and the builder was there, Bruno... he was one of the judges... and we chose a Queen Esther, who is my best friend still today. She's not a Berson anymore, she's Dr. Rivali's wife, but at the time she was—"

“Okay, so I’m making a note—”

“Oh, Mindy, I don’t want to burden you with that—”

“Don’t even worry. When I’m going through it all, it will be fine. It’ll take an extra minute to look.”

“Oh, my dear, thank you, thank you.”

“It’s no problem,” Mindy said. “You can continue with Danielle now.”

Sylvia snapped back to the conversation, “Right. Okay...” We all laughed together.

I started, “I didn’t really come with specific questions prepared, I kind of just wanted to talk about the synagogue in general.”

“Oh, well... it was absolutely wonderful. We had so much. We had an auditorium and we had plays there—if you lived in Montreal, actually even outside of Montreal, you’d know that Nat Rabinowitz—a big name today in the city—and he’d travel with the—”

Mindy jumped in, “I know Nat Rabinowitz! I think his son is... Jonathan? And he has a daughter too? They were on Bel-Air. Is that them?”

Sylvia responded in a sing-song tone, “Ye-eeees.”

“Yes, I know who they are.”

“We’re first cousins.”

“Oh!”

“My Mother-in-law was a Rabinowitz.”

The conversation again continued this way until Mindy steered it back around, “So. You had plays, you had a school, a library; not only that, but what touches me so much is that—and I’m sure Danielle will want to know this—is, the fact that, there was such a demand for a library when you had the school set up, that you had two librarians. I found some of the books when we were going through the thousands of things; to think that we had two librarians working downstairs in the library—”

“My brother donated that library,” interrupted Sylvia.

“Of course, it was in the name of —”

“Shelley Caron.”

“Yes, I can still see her face in front of me, and that beautiful painting—”

“That’s right, that’s the picture that I donated, of her in a gown—”

“Yeah. That’s the one.”

“Sam and I donated that to the library, in Shelley’s memory.”

“Okay. So. You had the library—”

“Yes, plus all the other things that we donated, you know, it’s... we bought the seats, we helped to build the sanctuary; all the members did. We all paid a premium so that we could build it. They had little name plaques for the seats that could be bought, even though we already paid for the rental, but that gave the synagogue money to do what had to be done. We had bazaars, functions, casino nights, dances, *Purim* parties, and all of that went toward building that gorgeous building. We could have put our money in a hundred other places, because we were young people with mortgages and obligations, but if we had a celebration, we put a leaf on the tree to honour our parents, to honour our siblings, whomever. These things were important... How can I put it?” she struggled to find the words.

Mindy offered, “It was the centre of your world.”

“Yes, it was the centre of the entire Jewish community. You didn’t have to be religious to go to the synagogue, you just had to be Jewish. And even then, we didn’t ask for credentials.” We all laughed together. “We had a gorgeous synagogue. I can’t even begin to tell you.”

“I’ll show her the pictures of my boys’ *Bar Mitzvahs*, I have them here in my phone.”

“My eldest daughter, Robyn, who’s fifty-eight years old, was the first child named by Rabbi Spiro in the synagogue.”

“I’m writing all of this down, I don’t even know why; I’m just getting goosebumps while you’re talking, Syl.” Mindy then turned to me, “I’m learning a lot of this the same time as you.”

Sylvia continued, “My son, of course, was *Bar Mitzvahed* there, and then there was Gordy Epstein’s son right after him. It was just—it was booming, you could say. It was a meeting

place; it was—”

“I remember it was standing room only. We had to stand on the stairs outside, you couldn’t even get in, it was just packed.”

“There’s just so many things... I mean, how could I begin to tell you everything?”

“Of course, you have to sum up, what? Sixty years? How could you?”

After the call, Mindy and I stood alone in the middle of Shaar Shalom’s sanctuary, next to the *bimah*, surrounded by familiar furniture that had been preserved and relocated from the



Figure 2-23 Bimah in the Shaar Shalom sanctuary

Young Israel. It was clear that Mindy cared very deeply for the community; she pointed out things at a rapid-fire pace, almost with a sense of urgency to communicate their significance.

“We integrated as much as we could of the old *shul*—the stained glass here; we have twelve large panes and six smaller ones—we brought them with us, so that when we knew more of our future, where we were going to end up, we would hang them there. They’re too big for these windows, so we’ll have to put them up beside.” The imagery of the ornate stained glass hanging beside the functional windows was amusing; an apt metaphor for the joining of the congregations. The tension of an Orthodox community struggling to coexist with the Conservative.

She continued, “On *Shabbat*, we do our services separately from the Shaar Shalom congregation. We have a Rabbi’s class, and we pray down here.... and then after, over there, there’s a large *kiddush* hall.” She pointed out an area in the sanctuary that was distinguished by movable partitions, “We have a full meal together after the services.”

We then turned to face a wall of bookcases, “We had to bury over a thousand *siddurim* that we weren’t able to bring—if any of the writing was smudged, they weren’t considered *kosher* anymore—but we still brought quite a large amount with us.” She led me over to one of the bookshelves, and flipped open to the nearest *siddur*, “As a matter of fact, there was one here with your grandfather’s name in it.” She flipped through a few more, “I wish I knew, I would’ve kept it for you.”

We turned around again, facing back toward the *bimah*, on the women’s side of the *mechizot*, “We’re usually only about ten on *Shabbat*.”

We did not remain in the hall for very long; there was nothing else to see, nothing else to say. As we were leaving, Mindy wordlessly brought her fingers to her lips and then up to the *mezuzah* adorning the doorframe to the hall; polka music drifted upstairs to where we were standing, cutting clear through our silence.

She picked up a bag of embroidered *kippahs* sitting haphazardly in the hallway, “Even something small like this, you know...”

I finished her sentence, “It’s meaningful.”

“It’s meaningful,” she echoed. “That’s really all that encompasses the Young Israel now—the praying, the eating. The hall, the milk and meat kitchens... I don’t know what else I could tell you.”

As we made our way back to her office, I remarked on the grandeur of the building.



Figure 2-24 Pews and the memorial board saved from the Young Israel



Figure 2-25 Photographs hung in the Shaar Shalom of the Young Israel's past and current Rabbis



Figure 2-26 The sanctuary's mezuzah

“Well...” she struggled to find words that wouldn’t betray her brave face, “Look, the good thing is that we found ourselves in a *shul*, which is very important, of course. I mean, you know, we could’ve ended up anywhere, but we ended up in another synagogue. It’s a *mitzvah* and a blessing.” I nodded along in silence. “But still, the Young Israel was... spectacular. When we were leaving the building, nearly everyone cried. It’s just... even to this day, when we first saw the cross there—the shock, I mean, you could feel it just reverberate through the community. We knew it was going to happen, but it was just so difficult. There are people here who won’t even drive down Elizabeth anymore, they take a whole detour just so they don’t have to pass by.”

I turned the corner onto Elizabeth Boulevard, and the Young Israel’s former home appeared. There was no one else on the street; the neighbourhood was quiet in the middle of the

week. As I looked at the building, there were a few significant changes that were immediately apparent: the “Young Israel of Chomedey Congregation” lettering had been replaced, updated to display the new “Centre Armenie” signage. The soffit and the fascia had been painted black from the original white, while the side of the building, which was curiously left unfinished, betrayed its original colouring. The most jarring, however, was the iconography; instead of the large metal menorah that I was so accustomed to seeing, a large cross sitting atop a marble base stood in its place.

I was glued to the sidewalk, eyes fixed on the former synagogue. I felt disoriented, and a bit unsettled. It was a strange feeling to stand in front of this building; a building that is still standing, but one that is something other than what I knew it as, than what it was, and meant to so many. A building that now holds the dreams of another community.

I continued up Elizabeth Boulevard toward my Bubby’s old house, 1417, smiling at the French “Croissant” street sign as I had each year before.



Figure 2-27 The Young Israel of Chomeedy



Figure 2-28 Centre Arménien



Figure 2-29 The cross at Centre Arménie



Figure 2-30 Old meets new on the side of the building



Figure 2-31 My father and David on the hill at the front of the house

It took my parents many weekends of travelling between Richmond Hill and Chomedey to complete the undertaking of cleaning it out. (I was busy working my final co-op work term at the time and couldn't get the time off—this is a great regret of mine.) The house had been sold not long after they finished the task. It was purchased by a couple who had expectedly done a complete gut; a home inspection report indicated that much of the house was damaged and needed to be replaced. They installed a brand new kitchen and bathroom, complete with ornate crown molding and wood laminate floors. All of the windows had been replaced, including the large window overlooking the front of the property with the view to the street. (The following month, my father visited the house, and the hill out front, the one that my brothers and I used to roll down, had been levelled.) The soffit had been painted black, and the facade covered with a clunky stone veneer. The original design was dated, but the updates rendered it out of place.

I decided not to walk up what remained of the crumbling steps to the front door; I decided not to confront the change head-on. The house was empty, waiting to nurture new life



Figure 2-32 1417 Croissant Carol, July 2014



Figure 2-33 1417 Croissant Carol, June 2017



Figure 2-34 1417 Croissant Carol, August 2017

within its walls. I didn't think I'd be as lucky here as I was in Cornwall; there was no *mezuzah* waiting to be found.

- 1 Pierre Louis Lapointe, "Laval," The Canadian Encyclopedia, September 17, 2009, accessed May 11, 2018, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/>

Endnotes

- 1 Pierre Louis Lapointe, "Laval," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, September 17, 2009, accessed May 11, 2018, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/laval/>.
- 2 Sara Ferdman Tauben, *Traces of the Past: Montreal's Early Synagogues* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2011), 21.
- 3 Joe King, *From the Ghetto to the Main: The Story of the Jews of Montreal*, ed. Johanne Schumann (Montreal: Montreal Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 76.
- 4 King, *From the Ghetto to the Main*, 74.
- 5 Ibid, 79.
- 6 Ibid, 74.
- 7 Ibid, 88.
- 8 "Jewish Roots in Quebec," *Federationcja.org*, accessed May 9, 2018, https://www.federationcja.org/en/jewish_montreal/history/.
- 9 King, *From the Ghetto to the Main*, 76.
- 10 Ibid, 101.
- 11 Ibid, 102.
- 12 Israel Medres, *Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal, 1900-1920* (Montréal: Vehicule Press, 2000), 24.
- 13 King, *From the Ghetto to the Main*, 119.
- 14 Ibid, 121.
- 15 Ibid, 143.
- 16 Ibid, 294.
- 17 Ibid, 295.
- 18 Federationcja.org, "Jewish Roots in Quebec."

- 19 Janice Arnold, "Young Israel of Chomedey Synagogue Sold," *The Canadian Jewish News*, July 24, 2016, accessed May 6, 2018, <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/young-israel-chomedey-synagogue-sold>.
- 20 Mike Cohen, "Young Israel of Chomedey Congregation Makes Temporary Home Permanent," *The Suburban Newspaper*, September 13, 2017, accessed May 5, 2018, http://www.thesuburban.com/columnists/mike_cohen_cohen_chatter/young-israel-of-chomedey-congregation-makes-temporary-home-permanent/article_f177766c-8834-55f6-8b3a-88ebbd748fd5.html.
- 21 Mike Cohen, "Setting the Record Straight on the Young Israel of Chomedey and Shaar Shalom Deal," *The Suburban Newspaper*, September 28, 2017, accessed May 5, 2018, http://www.thesuburban.com/columnists/mike_cohen_cohen_chatter/setting-the-record-straight-on-the-young-israel-of-chomedey/article_14478dbc-2acf-5cf5-b041-a89f2e0bc60f.html.

[previous page]

Figure 3-01 The sukkah

“1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

2 “Meaningless! Meaningless!”

says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless!

Everything is meaningless.”³ What do people gain from all their labours
at which they toil under the sun?

4 Generations come and generations go,
but the earth remains forever.

5 The sun rises and the sun sets,
and hurries back to where it rises.

6 The wind blows to the south
and turns to the north;
round and round it goes,
ever returning on its course.

7 All streams flow into the sea,
yet the sea is never full.

To the place the streams come from,
there they return again.

8 All things are wearisome,
more than one can say.

The eye never has enough of seeing,
nor the ear its fill of hearing.

9 What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Is there anything of which one can say,
“Look! This is something new”?

It was here already, long ago;
it was here before our time.

11 No one remembers the former generations,
and even those yet to come
will not be remembered
by those who follow them.”

- *Ecclesiastes 1*



Figure 3-02 Sukkahs set up in residential back yards in Israel

The most significant of the Jewish holidays, the High Holidays of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, occur during *Tishrei*, the first month of the Jewish civil calendar. *Rosh Hashanah*, the Day of Judgement, marks the beginning of a new year, when God is said to open the Book of Life to inscribe the fate of the righteous for the next year. During the following ten days, the Days of Awe, which lead up *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, individuals are expected to repent and become righteous if they are not already so, before their fate is sealed. On *Yom Kippur*, the holiest and most important day of the year, individuals fast, and approach others that they have wronged, seeking forgiveness.

The sombre mood and serious tone of the High Holidays of repentance and judgement give way to *Sukkot*, a holiday of rejoicing and a celebration of optimism, confident that one has been deemed righteous in the Book of Life.¹ *Sukkot* follows five days after *Yom Kippur*, and the time between the two holidays is designated for building one's *sukkah*.



Figure 3-03 The unoccupied courtyard at the School of Architecture

“I’m going to build a *sukkah*.” I would say, always hesitating, unsure of how this foreign word sounded to my classmates. I was not used to hearing the words I held in the privacy of my home on the tongues of my secular world.

“A *what?*” They would inevitably say.

“It’s kind of like... a temporary dining pavilion.”

I found myself repeating this elevator pitch many times over; a transient form of architecture that was understandable and digestible to fellow architecture students.

“And where will you build it?”

“Here, at school. In the courtyard.”



Figure 3-04 Interior view of the sukkah upon entering, featuring posters of family documents hung against the fabric walls

When I first set out to write my thesis, there were two buildings that I felt compelled to tell the stories of: first, of the Coller house in Raymondville, and second, of the Young Israel synagogue in Chomedey. Both of these buildings held an important place in my childhood memories; one which was a very early and vivid memory of architecture, and the other, a place that I annually returned to, which in turn became a sort of second home. To me, these were essential anchor points in my memory that other stories and recollections pivoted from. The scope of my thesis and my understanding of these places only grew from this springboard; from the Coller House, I had the pleasure of wandering back through my family's history in Canada, ending up in Cornwall, where I uncovered stories of my great-grandparent's house and the Horovitzes' past. From the Young Israel, I recognized the intertwined nature of my Bubby's house within its story, in addition to the circumstances of the joint synagogue venture between the Young Israel and the Shaar Shalom that developed concurrently with my research.

All of these aforementioned places—my great-grandparent's house, Aaron's house, the Coller house, the Young Israel, my Bubby's house—were designed, constructed, and lived in, with great ambitions. They projected a permanence, and celebrated personal and community achievements. There was a triumph in the establishment and occupation of these places; a carving of their path, a path that was more accomplished and fruitful than the generations before them.

For a long time, I struggled to find a tether between these places and their unfolding stories; I knew that they were worthwhile stories that inherently deserved to be told, particularly when framed through my architectural education and own unique personal experiences, but the connections still seemed tenuous and incomplete. After completing the previous two chapters, I have since become aware of a link: that these places have all since changed, and become ruins of some sort. What they started as is not what they become.

The concept of "*zakhor*," or, to remember, is a core tenet of the *Torah*. In more contemporary times, the Holocaust imperative of "never forgetting" echoes the same sentiment.² Author S. Brent Plate considers the concept of *zakhor* spatially, "The reactivation of past time in present space is deeply rooted in the Jewish religious tradition,"³ and, "The past is absent to the present, but visual objects existing in space provide a link to that past."⁴

Through the building of a *sukkah*—my own *sukkah*—I aimed to transcend this notion of forgetting, of not remembering the former generations, by invoking the spirit of those who have come before me. The act of building and dwelling in the *sukkah* as a gift to myself, and to my family, both the living and the dead. The *sukkah* arose as a reincarnation of the houses in which my ancestors grew up, of the synagogue that became an Armenian church; the places that generations above me knew and loved, and that I knew and loved in turn; the creation of a *sukkah* as a love letter to everyone and everything that has come before me.



Figure 3-05 My brothers and I on the seventh night of Chanukah, approximately 2002

While both of my parents were brought up in Jewish households, my father was raised Modern Orthodox while my mother was raised in a Conservative community. While the differences between the two denominations are not negligible, my parents attempted to unite their respective movements in compromise, and opted to raise us in a sort of hybrid Orthodox-Conservative Jewish environment that incorporated both of their backgrounds together. My family lived in a paradox of rules and conventions, leaving me, as a child, unsure of exactly where the religion and customs began, and my parent's adaptations ended; cheeseburgers were not allowed in the house, but pepperoni pizza was. We would light the candles and recite the Sabbath prayers, but we would continue to use electricity on Saturdays. I attended Hebrew School and was *Bat Mitzvahed*; every year we endure the High Holiday services; we light the *yahrzeit candles* for the departed... but in my life, we never built a *sukkah*. I recently asked my parents their reasoning for this.

"Why? There was no reason. We just didn't."

A tradition that had inexplicably succumbed to time.

The commandment to construct this ritual object and to dwell in it can be found in the Bible:

“During [these] seven days you must live in thatched huts. Everyone included in Israel must live in such thatched huts. This is so that future generations will know that I had the Israelites live in huts when I brought them out of Egypt. I am God your Lord.”

Leviticus 23: 42-3

A *sukkah* is thus an annually constructed temporary space, often translated as booth, that is dwelled in for eight days in the diaspora. It consists of not less than two and a quarter walls, and a roof made of natural materials, or a *schach*, that has been detached from the ground.

Due to its temporary nature, the *sukkah* as an architectural object has been widely neglected and overlooked. While there are a number of books dedicated to other Jewish architectural elements, a *sukkah* is usually spoken of in terms of its laws pertaining to the dimensions and materials used in its construction, ensuring its adhesion to *halakha*, or Jewish law. *Sukkah* scholar Miriam Lipis contests that the *sukkah* exists on the fringes of Jewish architecture, namely due to a traditional view of what constitutes architecture itself; a permanence in buildings.⁵

I first became interested in constructing a *sukkah* for my thesis after reading an essay by Miriam Lips entitled, *A Hybrid Place of Belonging: Constructing and Siting the Sukkah*. In this essay, she describes how a *sukkah* becomes a place-making tool that is, “situated in the tension between diaspora and belonging.”⁶ The diaspora is represented in a *sukkah*’s otherness and temporality, while one can establish their own sense of belonging through the process of creating a space with their own hands.⁷



Figure 3-06 The women's side of the Western Wall

When I was nineteen, I travelled to Israel on a birthright trip. I opted for a trip affiliated with the Reform movement; a religious denomination that I did not grow up in, and was not familiar with. Ambivalent about my Jewish heritage and culture, I purposefully aligned myself with a group that would focus on things other than the religious ideals and Orthodox Zionist ideologies that I had grown up with and was accustomed to.

The trip was a whirlwind of varying landscapes; the city, the sea, the desert. We navigated the markets, we floated on The Dead Sea, we rode camels. We had a Friday night *Shabbat* service, where a female Rabbi led worship with a song set to the tune of *With or Without You* (it was then that I realized that this was *really* not what I had grown up with).

In Jerusalem, I bought a *chai* pendant; “alive,” or, “life.” The next month, on a co-op work term, I purchased an expensive silver chain in the Marais district of Paris—the city’s historic Jewish neighbourhood—to hang the pendant from.

This tension, as described by Miriam Lipis, between the diaspora and a feeling of belonging (or lack thereof) always seemed to be present in my consciousness, even before I could articulate it. Israel was supposed to be my “homeland;” it was encouraged that we make *aliyah* one day, or at the very least, find an appropriate suitor on the birthright trip; “A free trip back to Israel for your honeymoon!” the organizers often joked, though I still can’t be sure that they weren’t really encouraging us in thinly veiled earnest. When our group visited the Western Wall, the women were ushered toward a significantly smaller portion of the wall. As I placed the slips of paper that my mom had pressed into my hand before my flight into the cracks of the wall, I could hear cheers of boys being *Bar-Mitzvahed* on the other side of the *mechitza*. Plastic lawn chairs were placed at the divider, and women were standing on them to see what was happening on the men’s side. Surveilling the scene from above was exhilarating, like we were privy to a favoured view, but ultimately, being lifted above and physically separated from the action still held qualities of otherness; like the synagogues of my childhood, divided. Later in Jerusalem, we were told that only the Jewish Quarter was safe to traverse, and we were forbidden from the Christian, the Muslim, and the Armenian Quarters. This was not my culture; these were not my beliefs; this was not my country. I did not feel that I belonged here then—but if not here, then where?

The *chai* necklace lay in the bottom of my jewelry box for many years.



Figure 3-07 Day 1 of the sukkah assembly; wall frames being bolted together

Sukkot is a multifaceted holiday, known as both *Chag Ha-Asif* (The Festival of Ingathering), and *Chag Ha-Sukkah* (The Festival of Booths). It celebrates both the abundance of the fall harvest, as well as commemorates the temporary dwellings, or the huts, that the Jewish people created during their forty-year pilgrimage after their Exodus from Egypt. This dual significance and relationship of both the agricultural and the biblical conjure a variety of opposing ideas: rootlessness and rootedness, wandering and return, exposure and shelter.⁸ If one is indefinitely wandering, one cannot at the same time cultivate land in time to till and gather the harvest of a specific place.⁹

The act of building and dwelling within a *sukkah* creates a symbolic physical reconstruction of the wanderings in the desert, allowing one to be connected to a long line of ancestral *sukkahs*. At the same time, the building of a *sukkah* creates a personal experience through the conversations and happenings that occur within it. This dichotomy exists in both the physical manifestation and the representation of the *sukkah*, between the collective ritual and a personal architecture, which allowed my *sukkah* to represent both the research into my family that I conducted through my thesis, as well as the establishment of my own place.¹⁰



Figure 3-08 Day 2 of the *sukkah* construction; I was interviewed for an (unaired) CTV segment about building a *sukkah* in Cambridge



Figure 3-09 Day 2 evening; roof structure attached to wall frames



Figure 3-10 Roof structure covered with dried corn stalks

July 2017

I arrived at Rabbi Moishy Goldman's house on a weekday, unsure of how exactly to enter. The building functions as both the synagogue for the *Chabad* community of Kitchener-Waterloo, as well as his personal home alongside his wife and five children. A large *menorah* installed on the front lawn announced the building proudly. I climbed the steps from the driveway to the front door of the property and rang the doorbell, uncertain if entering through his home was customary. One of the Rabbi's sons shyly answered the door; Rabbi Goldman was not far behind. Surrounded by an immense library of English and Hebrew, we sat down at his dining room table (piled with more books) to speak of *Sukkot* and *sukkahs*; the obvious, and the obscure.

We discussed the physical qualities, as well as some ideas behind the representation of a *sukkah*. He was very adamant about expressing its inclusionary nature: while there are limits on height, and the minimum amount of area, there is no maximum width of the *sukkah's* interior, implying that there is room in the *sukkah* for everyone. Rabbi Goldman described dwelling in the *sukkah* as the only mitzvah that you "complete in dirty boots," in that there is no prayer required—by showing up and being present, one's participation in the *sukkah* becomes an equalizing experience.

He encouraged me to consider certain significant legalities of construction, with particular attention paid to the roof. The roof materials must be spaced so that they cast more shade than allow in sun, but not so much as to prevent us from seeing the stars from inside when we look up at night, or to impede rain falling on our heads. The walls must be able to withstand an average wind, as if erecting a portable *sukkah* in the desert (regardless of its actual built location). The rigidity and tautness of the walls add to this paradox of a *sukkah* being temporary, but not too temporary, mirroring an impermanence in life.¹¹



Figure 3-11 Staggered balconies in Jerusalem, allow for each sukkah to have a view to the sky

While many *sukkahs* are located in backyards, on balconies, or at synagogues, often they are located on sites that are considered “urban wastelands.” These are underutilized sites that have been leftover in the urban fabric of a city, such as parking lots, or alleyways. This is often a product of strict rules regarding their construction (for example, a *sukkah* constructed on a balcony must not have another above it, as a clear view to the sky needs to be preserved for the *sukkah* to be considered *kosher*). *Sukkahs* located on these sites inherently express a lack of outdoor private space associated with dense urban living, in contrast to available public space that has no beneficial use throughout much of the year.¹² These urban wastelands can be engaged with through the establishment of one’s own place; in my case, in the form of a *sukkah*.



Figure 3-12 View of the sukkah from Melville Street

When I first decided to build my *sukkah*, I was unsure of where to site it, initially considering putting it up in my parent's suburban backyard. Fenced in and private, this location would allow me to control the flow of guests without the fear of visibility attracting unwarranted attention from passersby. I was finding that I kept running into the aforementioned issue of not having enough private outdoor space associated with my living arrangement while attending school; a second-floor apartment unit, without any balcony or other outdoor space to utilize.

Considering my *sukkah* as a specific place-making tool for myself, I contemplated the public outdoor spaces that were available to me. With the concept of urban wastelands in mind, I decided to choose the Western facing courtyard located at the School of Architecture on Melville Street. This courtyard has seen infrequent use over the years; initially conceived of as an outdoor lecture space, the site has large descending steps that were intended to be used as seating, and a sunken area for a lecturer to occupy at the bottom of this seating. This site is surrounded on three sides by the School of Architecture; occupied by the library and administration offices on the second floor and the undergraduate studio on the third floor, as well as an emergency stair to the East that has views onto the courtyard. The site is highly visible to the occupants of the school, but has the benefit of being hidden from the adjacent street (which primarily services the main doors of the school and acts as a thoroughfare to the parking lot). This was also important to me—a public installation invites intrigue, but I did not want to specifically draw attention to it, for fear of destruction or occupation.

This infrequently occupied site allowed me the freedom of unhampered use and the opportunity to freely interpret its planning. It allowed me to establish it as my own home for eight days.

These days, I'll be reading something seemingly innocuous, or doing something unrelated to my thesis, and I'll feel this tightening in my chest. My breath sharpens, my muscles contract and I am suddenly suppressing tears. Depending on where I am at the time, I'll let out a few sobs, or quietly choke them back with only glassy eyes betraying the truth.

This has been happening ever since I gave myself over to my thesis, decided to revel in this self-indulgent discussion that puts my family, my culture, and my faith in the crosshairs.

"Say a *Kaddish* for your old thesis," Robert Jan said, "go home, drink, and bury it goodnight." And I did. I succumbed to these ripples in my chest, these thoughts that wrapped around and consumed me. I find myself needing reminders that it's okay that I can't bear to read any more about the Holocaust—I have more days.

I bask in these days of awe, cradling my sickness, a cold that keeps me from the temple, a home. It is *Selichot*; I am dancing in a living room, sweat-soaked teenagers pressing against each other. It is Rosh Hashanah; I eat pork tacos. It is *Tashlich*—despite the river flowing right beside my office at school, I do not cast away my sins. Instead, I sit, I rest, I nurture, I clean, I install a mezuzah. Rabbi Goldman gave it to me along with a magnet that transliterates the prayer for wine. I consider putting it on the left side rather than the right, so it is not so visible from the hallway (but ultimately decide against that). I forget to say the prayer as I place the mezuzah on my doorpost. I avoid an essay that I am writing for Andrew; I think about my *sukkah*, "You can do it next year if you need to, don't be anxious!" But Sukkot doesn't wait for me to be ready, it doesn't wait for me to be less anxious; Sukkot won't be delayed. Sukkot is almost here.



Figure 3-13 View of the sukkah, looking West



Figure 3-14 Entrance to the sukkah; each visitor signed their name on the entry wall panel, which acts as an annual record of the individuals who passed through. The panels can be shuffled around, so in future years, the walls will begin to tell the story of the life and the occupants



Figure 3-15 Interior of the sukkah; looking North



Figure 3-16 Interior of the *sukkah*; looking South

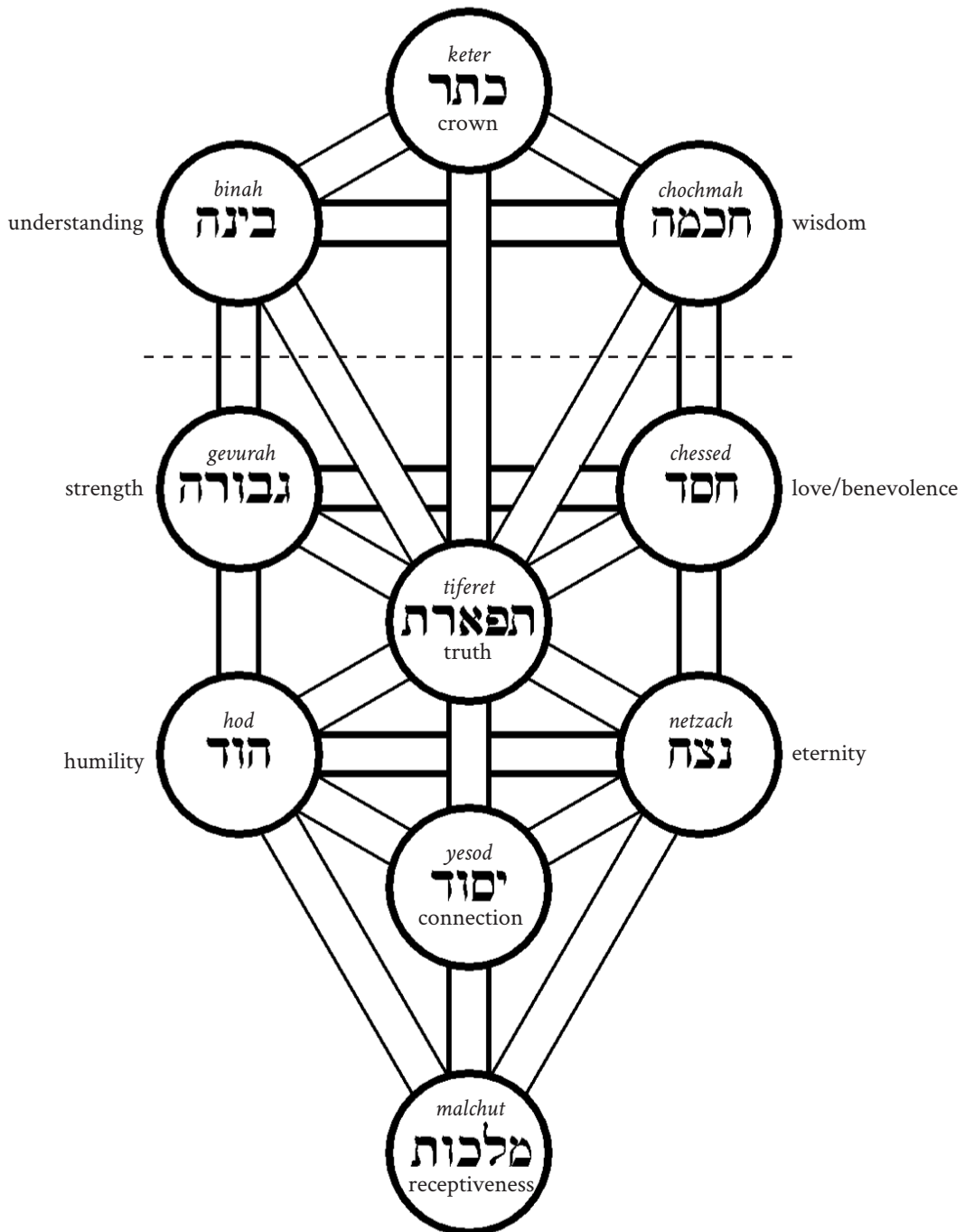


Figure 3-17 The *sefirot* are the ten attributes that God uses as a medium to express himself; the categories of intellect (*keter*, *binah*, *chochmah*) and emotions (*gevurah*, *tiferet*, *chesed*, *hod*, *yasod*, *netzach* and *malchut*).

A *sukkah* is a place of unity and community, as described in Deuteronomy 16:14 “You shall rejoice in your festival—you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, the Levite, the stranger, the orphan and the widow who are within your cities.”¹³ Visitors to the *sukkah* are called the *ushpizin*, Aramaic for “guests.” According to Jewish mysticism, or the *Kabbalah*, this term refers not only to the earthly guests, but also to symbolic, spiritual ones. For Kabbalists, guests of the biblical ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David (and the feminist addition of the female Bible characters of Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, Leah, Miriam, Abigail and Esther) each nightly visit the *sukkah* and represent and embody an attribute of the *sefirot* that make up the universe.

Traditionally, a seat will be set aside for the *ushpizin*, and a plate of food made up for them; often the wandering guests are correlated with discussions of transience, and more modernly, of homelessness. Interpreting this, I requested donations of canned or boxed goods as an entry fee for each person dining in the *sukkah*, which was later donated to the nearby Cambridge Self Help Food Bank.



Figure 3-18 Rabbi Moishy Goldman visited the *sukkah* and leads a discussion on The Night of Receptiveness

When a *sukkah* is erected, it is said to become our primary dwelling for the week, rendering the house temporary. The *sukkah* is where we are to spend the majority of our time, and share meals with our loved ones, similar to the normal goings on in one's home.

In 2017, as if a trick was being played, *Sukkot* fell on the same weekend as Thanksgiving. It felt like some sort of strange battle between the Jewish and secular celebrations; an apt symbol. It was no matter, however; my *sukkah* offered refuge for those whose homes were too far away to return to; a hybrid of theirs and mine. Other family and friends travelled from near and far to dine in the *sukkah*, and each night ended up taking on a different character based on those who occupied the space. One night, friends from high school sat alongside friends from university; another night, my parents and brothers sat beside a friend I hadn't seen since her wedding a couple months prior. Another night, Rabbi Goldman joined the largest group, a group of fourteen, the maximum I could accommodate, and he fielded any and all questions from my friends and classmates. One late arrival to the dinner innocently extended her hand toward the Rabbi in greeting as she introduced herself, but quickly retracted it with confusion when it wasn't met with his. I quickly explained his *shomer negiah*, and we all laughed together.

Seven different *ushpizin* are invited into the *sukkah* on each night, carrying with them a different mystical significance that adds to the day.¹⁴ All of the guests were asked to participate in a potluck meal, and together, on each night, fueled by copious drink, we engaged in a loosely structured conversation around the various attributes inspired by the night's *ushpizin*. Each night in my *sukkah*, therefore, took on a specific quality of the visitors: The Nights of Love, Strength, Truth, Eternity, Humility, Connection, and Receptiveness.



Figure 3-19 One of the many potluck feasts to occur in the sukkah

Entering from the North, a narrow passageway led to the threshold of the space. My *sukkah* spanned two of the large steps of the outdoor auditorium, utilizing the ascension as a signifier of a divide in the space. As an individual climbed the step from the passageway into the main area, they were literally and metaphorically transported into a distinct space.

Fourteen modular 2' x 4' panels were bolted together to form the walls of the *sukkah*, sized so that they could each individually be lifted by one person for ease of transport. The walls were then covered in a cotton fabric that was stretched as taut as possible to eliminate response to the wind. The regular roof joist structure added further rigidity to the frame and provided a structure for the roof material to lie on top of. Construction of the modules occurred over a week's time, and the erection and decoration of the *sukkah* took two and a half days with the essential assistance of various friends.

The interior of the *sukkah* was adorned with various family documents that I had encountered through my thesis research, while the leaves of dried corn stalks which were used as my *schach*, procured from a local farm, hung down into the space, interspersed with strings of twinkle lights for ambience ("Christmas lights!" Robert Jan remarked when he first entered the space). A myriad of blankets and pillows were strewn throughout the space to mitigate the comfort of the low table.

Food, drink, and conversation flowed as each sunset faded into the darkness; menacing rain clouds threatened only two of the eight nights, while we were otherwise graced with unseasonably warm temperatures for a Canadian October. Many visitors remarked on my good luck with the weather; I couldn't help but ascribe these occurrences to some divine intervention.

When I set out to write about my family and our shared history, I had a rough idea of how I wanted my thesis to read. Of course, what we begin with is not always what we end with, and my experience was no different. Many of the places that I visited, or the stories that I was privileged to hear, were unplanned and unanticipated, but ultimately made my thesis the richer for it. I could not have known that I would encounter my great-grandparents' mezuzah hidden beneath layers of paint when my mom and I decided to knock on the door of their former house, or that one of the synagogues that I grew up with would be forced to reconcile their differences and coexist with another; these were things that happened, and happened to me as I received them.

All of these events help to constitute how I understand the world at different scales: from the religion and culture I was born into, to the large geographical leaps from Eastern Europe to North America, to my own family history that occurred in these places, to the smallest scale of understanding myself and my own sense of place and how I fit into this narrative.

History continues to be made with every passing minute, and does not stop so it can be analyzed and understood, but writing my thesis allowed me to give temporary pause to my present in order to look back, in order to figure out how I want to move forward. The act of creating my own *sukkah* is a first foray into asserting my position in the world; it was me contributing by decidedly making my own history in the form of an event; a touchstone that I, along with a handful of others, now can connect back to. Before this *sukkah* came to be, I was simply absorbing and processing, but now, I feel that I am continuing to add to it; I am taking agency in my own story.

I have taken the *chai* necklace out of my jewelry box, I have installed the *mezuzah*, I have constructed the *sukkah*. I get to decide how much or how little I want to participate, how and if I want to share, and how I want to propagate.

Instead of simply reading the book, I feel as if I am writing the next chapter.

Hineni, hineni.

Endnotes

- 1 Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary* (New York: Quill, 2001), 125.
- 2 S. Brent Plate, ed., *Religion, Art and Visual Culture: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 199.
- 3 Ibid, 196.
- 4 Ibid, 198.
- 5 Mimi Levy Lipis, *Symbolic Houses in Judaism: How Objects and Metaphors Construct Hybrid Places of Belonging* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 153.
- 6 Miriam Lipis, "A Hybrid Place of Belonging: Constructing and Siting the Sukkah," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, ed. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt and Alexandra Nocke (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 30.
- 7 Lipis, *Symbolic Houses in Judaism*, 204.
- 8 Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*, 147.
- 9 Lipis, *Symbolic Houses in Judaism*, 199.
- 10 Ibid, 170.
- 11 Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*, 127.
- 12 Lipis, *Symbolic Houses in Judaism*, 199.
- 13 Tauber, Yanki. "The Ushpizin." *Chabad.org*. Accessed July 3, 2018. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/571505/jewish/The-Ushpizin.htm.
- 14 Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*, 129.

“Today I am not sure that what I wrote is true. I am certain it is truthful.”

- *Charlotte Delbo, Auschwitz and After*

Bibliography

Cornwall & Massena

- "106 People Arrested On 169 Charges in 'Operation Gravy Train'." W'WNYTV. June 02, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.wwnyvtv.com/story/35575013/106-people-arrest-on-169-charges-in-operation-gravy-train>.
- "After Factory Plant Closures, Job Loss, A Small N.Y. Town Struggles to Bounce Back." NPR. April 17, 2016. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474544945/after-factory-plant-closures-job-loss-a-small-ny-town-struggles-to-bounce-back>.
- Beckstead, Bob. "Despite Attrition, Arconic Moves Along." Watertown Daily Times. October 8, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/news05/despite-attrition-arconic-moves-along-20171008>.
- Beckstead, Bob. "Activity Beginning to Pick Up at St. Lawrence Centre Mall." Daily Courier-Observer. February 20, 2018. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.mpcourier.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?avis=WD&date=20180220&category=DCO&loper=180229911&Ref=AR>.
- Beckstead, Bob. "Alcoa, State Reach Mid-Point of 3 1/2-Year Agreement to Keep Alcoa in Massena." Watertown Daily Times. May 10, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/news05/alcoa-state-reach-mid-point-of-3-12-year-agreement-to-keep-alcoa-in-massena-20170510>.
- Bowering, Ian. *Cornwall - From Factory Town to Seaway City, Volume 1, 1900-1999*. Cornwall, Ont.: Published for the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Historical Society by the Standard Freeholder, 1999.
- "Chase Mills, New York." Wikipedia. Accessed March 15, 2018. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chase_Mills,_New_York.
- Chevrier, Lionel. *The St. Lawrence Seaway; A Series of Maps of the Seaway*. Ottawa, 1955.
- Ciorpec, Monica. "The 1907 Peasant Revolt and Anti-Semitism." Radio Romania International. February 8, 2016. Accessed March 12, 2018. http://www.rrr.ro/en_gb/the_1907_peasant_revolt_and_anti_semitism-2543031.
- Corkery, Michael, and David Gelles. "Town Fights to Turn Retail Tide at a Little Mall That Might." The New York Times. December 24, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/24/business/mall-retail.html>.
"Cornwall Square Shopping Centre." Partners Real Estate Investment Trust. Accessed March 18, 2018. http://partnersreit.com/portfolio/Ontario/cornwall_square-cornwall.
- Correspondence from George A. Stiles, Secretary, on behalf of the Cornwall Board of Trade to the Cornwall Pants and Prince Clothing Company Limited, 6 January 1940, Cornwall Ontario Community Museum and Archives, Cornwall, Ontario, Canada.

Bibliography continued

Cornwall & Massena continued

- Coyle, Jim. "Canada 150: How the St. Lawrence Seaway Changed the Channel." *The Star*. May 13, 2017. Accessed February 23, 2018. <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada-150/2017/05/13/canada-150-how-the-st-lawrence-seaway-changed-the-channel.html>.
- Crilly, Rob. "Bitcoin Mining Revives Forgotten US Industrial Towns." *The National*. March 12, 2018. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.thenational.ae/business/technology/bitcoin-mining-revives-forgotten-us-industrial-towns-1.712551>.
- Görtz, Birgit. "The Forgotten Holocaust in Transnistria." *DW.com*. January 27, 2014. Accessed February 3, 2018. <https://dw.com/en/the-forgotten-holocaust-in-transnistria/a-17387303>.
- Hale, Alan S. "Apartments Coming to Mall." *Cornwall Standard Freeholder*. March 13, 2018. Accessed May 6, 2018. <http://www.standard-freeholder.com/2018/03/12/apartments-coming-to-former-sears-location-at-cornwall-square>.
- Hayden, Brian. "Clopman's Furniture in Massena to Close." *Watertown Daily Times*. June 17, 2012. Accessed February 12, 2018. <http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/article/20120617/NEWS05/706179801>.
- Helbig, Louis. "The Sunken Villages Story." *Sunken Villages*. 2017. Accessed March 6, 2017. <http://sunkenvillages.ca/story/>.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.
- "How to Affix a Mezuzah." *Chabad*. Accessed February 20, 2018. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/278460/jewish/How-to-Affix-a-Mezuzah.htm.
- "Is Cornwall, Ontario Set to Be the Next Big Canadian Distribution Epicenter." *MWPVL International*. 2018. Accessed February 24, 2018. http://www.mwpvl.com/html/cornwall_ontario_distribution_epicenter.html.
- Kyte Senior, Elinor. *From Royal Township to Industrial City: Cornwall, 1784-1984*. Belleville: Mika Publishing Company, 1983.
- Lavi, Theodore. "Botosani." *Botosani – Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Romania, Volume 1*. August 12, 2005. Accessed March 5, 2018. https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_romania/rom1_00029.html.
- Marin, Clive, and Frances Marin. *Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, 1945-1978*. Belleville, Ont.: Mika Pub., 1982.

- "Massena, New York (NY) Poverty Rate Data." City Data. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Massena-New-York.html>.
- McIntosh, Claude. "Coffee Break: Oh, How Sweet to Be a Consultant." *Cornwall Standard Freeholder*. November 30, 2012. Accessed March 21, 2018. <http://www.standard-freeholder.com/2012/11/30/coffee-break-oh-how-sweet-to-be-a-consultant>.
- Mendelsohn, Daniel. *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*. London: Harper Perennial, 2008.
- Mizrahi, Avi. "Coinmint to Invest up to \$700 Million in New York Mining Center." *Bitcoin News*. June 06, 2018. Accessed July 22, 2018. <https://news.bitcoin.com/coinmint-to-invest-up-to-700-million-in-new-york-mining-center/>.
- "Norfolk Town, Village Has Interesting History." *The Massena Observer*, January 23, 1964. Accessed January 25, 2018. [http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031311/1964-01-23/ed-1/seq-5/#date1=01/01/1725&index=1&date2=12/31/2015&words=Erastus Hall&to_year2=2015&searchType=advanced&sequence=0&from_year2=1725&proxdistance=5&page=1&county=Saint Lawrence&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=erastus hall&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&SearchType2=prox5](http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031311/1964-01-23/ed-1/seq-5/#date1=01/01/1725&index=1&date2=12/31/2015&words=Erastus+Hall&to_year2=2015&searchType=advanced&sequence=0&from_year2=1725&proxdistance=5&page=1&county=Saint+Lawrence&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=erastus+hall&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&SearchType2=prox5).
- "Ontario Jewish Communities." *Early Community History: Employment & Business*. February 10, 2009. Accessed April 16, 2018. <http://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/osjc/communities/cornwall/earlycommunity/employmentandbusiness.html>.
- "Ontario Jewish Communities." *Early Community History: Population*. 2009. Accessed January 18, 2018. <http://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/osjc/communities/cornwall/earlycommunity/population.html>.
- "Ontario Jewish Communities." *Recent Years: Religion*. 2009. Accessed January 18, 2018. <http://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/osjc/communities/cornwall/recentyears/>.
- "Ontario Jewish Communities." *Religious Life: Cemeteries*. 2009. Accessed February 6, 2018. <http://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/osjc/communities/cornwall/religiouslife/cemeteries.html>.
- "Parks Militaria." *Postcards of Cornwall*. Accessed March 14, 2018. <http://www.cornwallpostcards.ca/parks-militaria.html>.
- Puccia Parham, Claire. *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns: A Comparative History of Cornwall, Ontario, and Massena, New York, 1784-2001*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.

Bibliography continued

Cornwall & Massena continued

“QuickFacts: Massena Town, St. Lawrence County, New York.” U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/massentownstlawrencecountynewyork/PST045216>.

Reshef, Yaron. *Out of The Shoebox*. Translated by Nina R. Davis and Shira E. Davis. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

Rooney, Kate. “An Old Alcoa Plant in Upstate New York Is Going to Be Converted into One of the World’s Largest Bitcoin Mining Centers.” CNBC. June 06, 2018. Accessed July 22, 2018. <https://cnbc.com/2018/06/05/bitcoin-miner-revamps-alcoas-aluminum-factory.html>.

Saramago, Jose. *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*. London: Harvill Press, 2000.

Scott, Allen. “NY Power Authority CEO Wants to Give Cheap Electricity to Mine Bitcoin.” Bitcoinist.com. February 02, 2018. Accessed March 26, 2018. <http://bitcoinist.com/ny-state-bitcoin-mining-coinmint-jobs/>.

“Seaway International Bridge.” HistoricBridges.org: Bridge Browser. Accessed January 25, 2018. <http://historicbridges.org/bridges/browser/?bridgebrowser=ontario/cornwallnorth/>.

Sommerstein, David. “Massena Hopeful as Alcoa Deadline Hits Two Year Mark.” North Country Public Radio. March 06, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/story/33518/20170306/massena-hopeful-as-alcoa-deadline-hits-two-year-mark>.

Statistics Canada. “Census Profile, 2016 Census Cornwall, City, Ontario and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, United Counties, Ontario.” Statistics Canada. March 20, 2018. Accessed February 24, 2018. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3501012&Geo2=CD&Code2=3501&Data=Count&SearchText=cornwall&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1>.

“Town of Norfolk.” Ogdensburg Journal, June 16, 1942. Accessed February 20, 2018. http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lcn/sn84031165/1942-06-16/ed-1/seq-3/#date1=01/01/1725&index=16&date2=12/31/2015&words=ErastusHall&to_year2=2015&searchType=advanced&sequence=0&from_year2=1725&proxdistance=5&page=1&county=SaintLawrence&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=erastushall&phrasertext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=range&SearchType2=prox5.

Tudorancea, Anca. “Botosani Synagogue.” 15 Romanian Synagogues. Accessed March 26, 2018. <http://www.romanian-synagogues.org/botosani-synagogue/#/fact-sheet-2/>.

Zeveloff, Naomi. “Decades-Old Blood Libel Case Roils Town.” The Forward. October 18, 2012. Accessed February 12, 2018. <https://forward.com/news/164493/decades-old-blood-libel-case-roils-town/>.

Chomedey

- Arnold, Janice. "Young Israel of Chomedey Synagogue Sold." *The Canadian Jewish News*. July 24, 2016. Accessed May 6, 2018. <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/young-israel-chomedey-synagogue-sold>.
- Cohen, Mike. "Young Israel of Chomedey Congregation Makes Temporary Home Permanent." *The Suburban Newspaper*. September 13, 2017. Accessed May 5, 2018. http://www.thesuburban.com/columnists/mike_cohen_cohen_chatter/young-israel-of-chomedey-congregation-makes-temporary-home-permanent/article_f177766c-8834-55f6-8b3a-88ebbd748fd5.html.
- Cohen, Mike. "Setting the Record Straight on the Young Israel of Chomedey and Shaar Shalom Deal." *The Suburban Newspaper*. September 28, 2017. Accessed May 5, 2018. http://www.thesuburban.com/columnists/mike_cohen_cohen_chatter/setting-the-record-straight-on-the-young-israel-of-chomedey/article_14478dbc-2acf-5cf5-b041-a89f2e0bc60f.html.
- "Jewish Roots in Quebec." *Federationcja.org*. Accessed May 9, 2018. https://www.federationcja.org/en/jewish_montreal/history/.
- Katz, Michael I. *No Turning Back*. Thirty Torches Publishing, 2016.
- King, Joe. *From the Ghetto to the Main: The Story of the Jews of Montreal*. Edited by Johanne Schumann. Montreal: Montreal Jewish Publication Society, 2001.
- Lapointe, Pierre Louis. "Laval." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. September 17, 2009. Accessed May 11, 2018. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/laval/>.
- Layton, Irving. *The Whole Bloody Bird*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.
- Medres, Israel. *Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal, 1900-1920*. Montréal: Vehicule Press, 2000.
- Tauben, Sara Ferdman. *Traces of the Past: Montreal's Early Synagogues*. Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2011.

Bibliography continued

Cambridge

Delbo, Charlotte. *Auschwitz and After*. Translated by Rosette C. Lamont. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Lipis, Mimi Levy. *Symbolic Houses in Judaism: How Objects and Metaphors Construct Hybrid Places of Belonging*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

Lipis, Miriam. "A Hybrid Place of Belonging: Constructing and Siting the Sukkah," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, edited by Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt and Alexandra Nocke. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Plate, S. Brent, ed. *Religion, Art, and Visual Culture: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Strassfeld, Michael. *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary*. New York: Quill, 2001.

Tauber, Yanki. "The Ushpizin." Chabad.org. Accessed July 3, 2018. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/571505/jewish/The-Ushpizin.htm.

Appendix 1

Rho

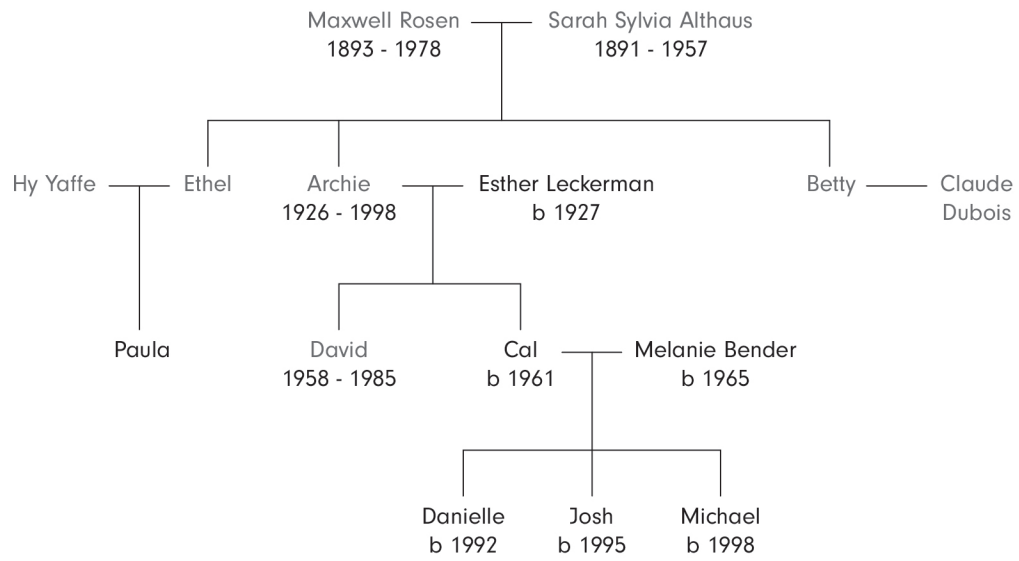


Figure A-01 The Rosen/Althaus Family Tree

April 2018

I decided early on in my thesis that participating in a genetic test might be beneficial for my research purposes. I was intrigued by the promise of hard data, as opposed to the contradicting documents and declining memories that I had become accustomed to. I wondered what could be made clearer—maybe I would find out if my great-grandfather was indeed from Turkey, or, that maybe there was some percentage of something else within me that I hadn't yet discovered. I tried to prepare myself for the best, but also for the worst. At the very least, I thought it would be a light-hearted way to end my thesis.

Six weeks after I spat into a tube and mailed it across the Atlantic, my DNA results arrived in my inbox.

The e-mail read:

Danielle, the AncestryDNA results you've been waiting for are here.

You're about to discover your ethnicity estimate, get a unique look at your family's journey through generations, and maybe even connect with long-lost relatives. We're so excited for you!

[Click here to explore your DNA results.](#)

And so I explored.

My DNA story indicated that my ethnicity estimate was 89% European Jewish, 5% Great Britain, and a variety of 1%-3% Europe South, Caucasus, Europe West, Middle East and Africa North. I was not particularly surprised by these results, as I was expecting a fairly high European Jewish percentage, but I was intrigued by the lower percentages, particularly that of Great Britain. I had not encountered anything supporting these results in my genealogy research, but I was excited by the prospect of searching for the evidence.

After reviewing my DNA story, I navigated over to my DNA matches which showed me other individuals whom I shared genetic information with; this portion of the genetic test was of second priority to me when I first decided to take it, and felt like more of a novelty. I knew that the chances of finding a long-lost relative were possible, however slim, mainly due to the endogamy of European Jews that made relatives seem closer than they actually were. (The match homepage indicated that I had over one thousand 4th cousin matches). Still, I was intrigued by the possibility of an unsolved mystery.

Besides the countless fourth (and greater) relations, the test indicated that I had fifteen third cousins, and an approximate first or second cousin. I was intrigued by this individual who appeared on the website as only their pseudonym, "rhorsk." I was unsure who they could be. This person did not have a family tree built on the site, but it appeared that they had been active online somewhat recently. I decided to send them a message.

Subject: Hello 1st-2nd cousin!

Hi there! I just received my DNA test, and it says that we are 1st-2nd cousins. I'd love to explore/compare our family trees to understand which side we are related on. What is your full name?

Looking forward to getting to know you!

Danielle Rosen

I received a response a few days later:

Hi Danielle, 1st or 2nd cousin

I am looking forward to getting to know you too. My first name is Rho. I live in Pincourt, Quebec a 1/2 hour from Montreal I was born in Montreal & lived there most of my life. I moved to Pincourt 7 yrs ago. Let's figure out exactly how we are related.

I'm going to ask some questions if that's ok. Where do you live & how old are you? My grandmother was Sarah Althouse who married Max Rosen. They had 3 children, Arthur (Archie), Betty & Ethel. Is Archie your grandfather or great grandfather or great-great-grandfather? This may be how we are related. Let me know.

I will anxiously wait for your next message.

Rho

Perhaps it was due to my investment in my mother's paternal side and my father's maternal side throughout my thesis, but I had not considered that this individual could be from my father's paternal side. I was pleasantly surprised.

Hi Rho,

This is very exciting! Archie was my grandfather, and his son, Calvin is my father. Are you Betty's daughter?

I am nearly 26 (born in 1992), and I live about an hour west of Toronto. I am completing my master's degree at the University of Waterloo in architecture.

How old are you? Do you have brothers or sisters? What is your father's name? Is your mother still alive? I'd love to fill in your branch of the tree with any details you are willing to provide.

Danielle

The next day, Rho's response came.

Hi Danielle,

As soon as I received your last message I started typing & before I knew it, I had gone way way over 5000 characters. I was not going to type that all over again so I took photos, 4 in all. I would like to send them in emails. They won't all fit into one email, too many mpgs or betbits or something like that?? So I will send them in 4 separate emails. I'm hoping that one photo doesn't go over the allowed mpgs or gigbits allowed. When I tried to send you a message yesterday, it wouldn't go through. Ancestry's website was not working properly. I hope the problems are fixed. I will know when I try to send you this message.

Are you ok with me sending them to your email? My email is -----@-----.com.

Rho

Rho's first e-mail started:

Where do I begin?

She wrote in sprawling paragraphs, detailing her upbringing:

Betty is my birth mother. She gave birth to me on June 1st, 1953. Sadly, her pregnancy wasn't planned, so I was left at the hospital and then put into a foster home until I was adopted at 13 months. Back then, a birth mother had a year to change her mind. Betty didn't change her mind.

Rho wrote that she was adopted as an only child into a violent and abusive family, isolated from her extended adoptive family to shield her abusers.

I found out Betty's name when I was 23. I was searching hard to find her. I wanted to know my story & to meet someone I looked like. I found an organization that helped me; they went to the white pages in the Montreal phone book and started calling every Rosen in there. They called Max Rosen's house and pretended to be an old schoolmate of Betty's to get her contact information. Max's wife believed them and gave Betty's phone number and lots of other information, such as Max being in a home, and his first wife who had died four years after Betty gave birth to me, and that Betty was married to Claude Dubois, but they didn't have children, and that Betty has a sister, and that her brother Archie had 2 sons, Calvin & another which I never got the name of and they lived in Ontario.

Danielle, I searched for your father, but I could never locate him. His dad, your grandfather, Archie, and Betty were estranged for over 20 years. I don't know if you know about this, but when Max was in a home, Betty & Archie would visit him at different times so as not to run into each other.



Figure A-02 Rho

It felt like my world had shifted. This was like something out of a movie; I had never expected to find a long-lost relative, nevertheless one who had been searching for my father and for my family for over forty years.

I also went to the Baron De Hirsch Institute, and they got my file out but didn't tell me much. They weren't allowed to. They did tell me that my birth father was American and not Jewish, and that Betty would have married him, but he didn't want to marry her. Betty was 25 when she gave birth to me. Her mother, Sarah, told Betty not to look at me or hold me at birth. I hope she wasn't haunted by that decision. I feel for Betty. I pray that her marriage to Claude Dubois was filled with love & joy.

Later, I called Betty's number that the organization had received. I was filled with anxiety & nerves, but I felt like I had to call. Betty wanted to know how I got her name. I told her, she screamed and dropped the phone. Then Claude picked it up, and quietly said, "don't call here again."

Rho was also given the number of my Zaida:

I called your grandfather Archie and introduced myself. He was very kind but hesitant to give me any information other than he was not living with his parents & Betty at the time she got pregnant. I asked if this was the reason that they didn't speak, because my birth father isn't Jewish, and he said that is part of it. He asked if I was happy & had good parents. I didn't, but I lied & said that I did. After that call to Archie, I let it go. Everything was a dead end.

When I was 43, I decided to call Archie again. I sensed something not right in his voice, I sensed he was not well. He was not as kind in this phone call. In this call, I told him that the couple who adopted me was abusive. I asked if he had spoken to Betty recently, and he hadn't. I was surprised. All these years later and they hadn't spoken. Then I asked for medical information, and he shut me down, telling me there were no medical problems, that they were all healthy, and he abruptly told me not to call again. Sometime later, his name and number were not in the phone book that came out annually. I knew that must have been when Archie died.

She told me that she continued to search for Betty's name over the years. Last year, she came across a distant cousin of ours on ancestry.com, a woman whose great-great-grandfather was a sibling of Sarah. This woman's tree was not entirely correct (it listed my Zaida as "Arthur,") but it brought Rho one step closer to discovering her truth. That was the most recent discovery of hers until we were connected through the DNA test.

She continued to yearn for more information:

I was hoping Calvin would know if Betty or Ethel are still alive, but since you asked me, I'm assuming that Calvin never knew Betty, right? What are you and your father willing to tell me? I want to know if Alzheimer's runs in our family tree, or anything else you know. I have hereditary osteoarthritis. I've had both knees replaced. My hips are still good. Does this run in the family? I have no siblings that I know of. I hope this isn't all too much at once, I just started typing until I couldn't type anymore.

I had to read her emails over a few times for everything to sink in. It was all so overwhelming; I was all of sudden responsible for answering her long-held questions, responsible for bringing up someone else's deep-rooted pain, all because I thought it would be a funny way to end my thesis with a DNA test.

I did not know if we could help her, or to what extent, but that weekend I drove home to my parent's house so I could send Rho some photos of our family and set up a call with my parents. She sent me a slew of photographs from her own childhood through to the present, and in turn, I sent her photos of her grandfather, her cousins, and her birth mother; the family that she had never had the opportunity to know. This was the first time she was seeing people who looked like her, the first time seeing her mother's face; the family resemblance was undeniable.

Our first phone call stretched over an hour. It was a buzz of excitement and a blur questions, a slight awkwardness, but mostly a feeling of exuberance, and a hopefulness for the future.

My father concluded the phone call, "I was going to say, 'Welcome to the family!' But you're really as much 'the family' as we are. So, I'll say... it's nice to finally meet you."

In May 2018, ancestry.com used their expanding database to update many user's results. The most updated version interprets results from 16,000 reference samples as compared to the previous results based off of 3000 reference samples. This allows them to better analyze data for regions across the world.

My newly updated DNA story indicated that my ethnicity estimate was 99% European Jewish (particular to Western Ukraine, Moldova & Eastern Romania) and 1% Eastern European and Russian (though this is approximated, and can be attributed to noise, or, information that is not wholly accurate at less than 5%).

Already comfortably settled into my 89% European Jewish results, I was not expecting my update to be so impactful on me. With this extremely high percentage, at once, it felt as if a truth that I had assumed about my Ashkenazi background had been confirmed, and within this reality, I suddenly carried a very serious weight of the long line of generations before me.

How would this affect my present? Or my future decisions?

More importantly, would I let it?

Rho and I continue to e-mail with each other every so often. We have had more discussions about our family, talks about the stigmas of mental health, recommendations for nail polish websites, and more. I have come to enjoy our correspondence, and she has been a lovely pen pal (I only wish I were better able to keep up with her speedy responses). Whenever I see an email from her in my inbox, I get a pang of excitement; what more can we find in common today?

My family will travel to Pincourt at the end of this summer to meet our cousin in person, finally, sixty-some years later.

Appendix 2
The Jewish Diaspora

The Jewish diaspora, Greek for dispersion, can be traced back to the 7 BCE Babylonian exile, when the Jewish people were scattered and displaced from their ancestral homeland, Palestine, or modern-day Israel.¹ Presently, the term diaspora refers to the twentieth-century (primarily the Ashkenazim, or, Eastern-European Jewish) immigrants who mass emigrated to North America from Europe after World War II and the Holocaust, after which, immense support for a Jewish State manifested. The diaspora also refers to the continued propagation of these immigrant's resulting lineage, bringing about the continuation of the religious and cultural aspects of Judaism. There is a great deal of disagreement and divergent views between different sects of the religion, particularly regarding whether Israel should be considered as the ancestral homeland or not. While the Zionist movement is proliferated by many Orthodox Jews, others in the sect instead oppose the establishment of the Jewish State, arguing of a godless place in which citizens are, "defying God's will to send his Messiah at the time he has preordained."² Other sects, such as Reform, recognize the North American diaspora as a valid interpretation of God's will.³ There is also, of course, the great impasse of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the struggle of contested lands through ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, of which many Jews are divided; complicit with or opposed to.⁴ According to the 2013 Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, about 38% surveyed think that the current Israeli government is making a sincere effort to approach a peaceful resolution with the Palestinians, while 48% of individuals do not believe this to be true.⁵

Presently, there are approximately 14.3 million Jews in the world (as of 2015),⁶ With the core Jewish population of the United States numbering between approximately 4.2 million (1.8% of adult U.S. population) to 5.3 million people (2.2% of the adult U.S. population), second only to Israel with 6.2 million.⁷ According to the Pew Survey, this number fluctuates depending on how one defines their Judaism, whether by religion or culturally; the larger number of 5.3 million is considered if the sample includes Jews of no faith, who are atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular", but who were brought up Jewish or who have a Jewish parent, as well as those who consider themselves Jewish aside from religion.

American Jews generally describe themselves as having a strong sense of identity and of self, and a sense of belonging to the Jewish community. However, one-in-five Jews describe themselves as being without religion.⁸ Many see being Jewish by way of their ancestry, culture or values as opposed to their religious adherence and observation; nonetheless, this varies between sects (reform through to orthodox, respectively adhere less strictly through to more strictly to Jewish religious practices). Just 26% of American Jews attest that they consider religion to be an important part of their lives, as opposed to 56% of the general public. Though the majority consider religion to be of little importance, cultural celebrations and participation in religion-based traditions remain widespread. Seven-in-ten Jews surveyed indicated that they participated in a seder over Passover, and more than half the Jews studied say they fasted on Yom Kippur.⁹ Author Yaron Reshef raises a pertinent issue, "Can following rituals and customs stand alone? Can being a ritually observant Jew constitute the totality of one's Jewishness, absent an understanding of meaning behind the rituals?"¹¹

Endnotes

- 1 The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Diaspora - Judaism," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, January 22, 2014, accessed September 15, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diaspora-Judaism>.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Michael Lipka, "How many Jews are there in the United States?" *Pew Research Center*, October 02, 2013, accessed September 16, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/10/02/how-many-jews-are-there-in-the-united-states/>.
- 5 Sandra Stencel et al., A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, *Report* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2013), 89.
- 6 Arnold Dashefsky and Ira Sheskin, eds., *World Jewish Population, 2015* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015).
- 7 Michael Lipka, "How many Jews are there in the United States?"
- 9 Joseph Liu, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, September 30, 2013, accessed September 17, 2017, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Yaron Reshef, *Out of the Shoebox*, trans. Nina R. Davis and Shira E. Davis (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 124.

Bibliography

Dashefsky, Arnold, and Ira Sheskin, eds. *World Jewish Population, 2015*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2015.

Lipka, Michael. "How Many Jews Are There in the United States?" *Pew Research Center*. October 02, 2013. Accessed September 16, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/10/02/how-many-jews-are-there-in-the-united-states/>.

Liu, Joseph. "A Portrait of Jewish Americans." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*. September 30, 2013. Accessed September 17, 2017. <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>.

Reshef, Yaron. *Out of the Shoebox*. Translated by Nina R. Davis and Shira E. Davis. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

Stencel, Sandra, Tracy Miller, Michael Lipka, and Bill Webster. *A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews. Report*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2013.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Diaspora - Judaism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. January 22, 2014. Accessed September 15, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diaspora-Judaism>.

**The preceding text and associated notes and references were excerpted from an essay written in September 2017 for an independent reading elective taken as a credit for my M.Arch degree requirement.*

Appendix 3

Afterlife

When I started this journey, the afterlife of my *sukkah* was a worry of mine. I was unsure if I would be able to store it on my own simply due to its overall size, and was uncertain where I would be able to erect it afterwards, apart from its original site.

My *sukkah* has since been graciously accepted by Hillel Waterloo, a Jewish student group that serves both the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University.

My *sukkah* will be hosted at St. Jerome's campus, so that the student community as well as the general public of Kitchener-Waterloo are able to participate in the festival year after year.

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to Jewish student life, and appreciative that my *sukkah* has gone to a loving home.

I hope that those who inhabit my *sukkah* are able to take away something impactful from the experience, as much the experience of designing, fabricating and dwelling within it has imparted on me.

Glossary

Aliyah	“Ascent,” Jewish immigration to Israel
Aron Ha-Kodesh	The holy ark, where the Torah scrolls are kept at the front of the synagogue
Ashkenazi	Jews of Eastern Europe
Bat/Bar Mitzvah	“Daughter/son of commandment,” when a Jewish youth becomes of age and has the rights and obligations of a Jewish adult, including the commandments of the Torah
Bimah	The platform in the centre of the synagogue from which the Torah is read
Bubby	Grandmother
Chabad	A major movement within Orthodox Jewish tradition with roots in the Hasidic movement of the 18th century
Chai	Life
Chazzan	Cantor
Chometz	Leavened bread that is disposed of during Passover
Daven	Prayer
Freiliche	Happy, cheerful
Haggadah	“Telling,” the book that is used during Passover that facilitates the retelling of the story of the Exodus from Egypt
Halakha	Jewish law
Hineni	“Here I am,” in response to God whenever he calls
Kabbalah	Jewish mysticism
Kaddish	Prayer for the departed
Karnatzel	Dried beef sausage
Kiddush	The prayer over wine that sanctifies the Sabbath

Glossary continued

Kippah	Skullcap worn during prayer
Kol Nidre	The opening prayer on the eve of Yom Kippur
Kosher	“Fit,” dietary restrictions followed by Jews
Mashgiach	Agent of a kosher supervising organization
Matzoh Balls	Ashkenazi soup dumplings
Mechitza	“Partition,” separating men and women in synagogue and other religious functions
Menorah	Candelabra
Mezuzah	A small box that is placed on the right doorpost of Jewish homes; inside the box is a parchment scroll that includes verses from Deuteronomy 6:4-9,11
Minyan	A minimum of ten adult Jews
Mitzvah	A good deed or charitable act
Passover	Eight-day celebration celebrated in early spring commemorating the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt
Purim	Festival holiday celebrated in late winter/early spring commemorating the salvation of the Jewish people in ancient Persia from Haman’s plot to obliterate the Jewish population
Rosh Hashanah	The Jewish new year
Schach	Organic roof material of the sukkah
Selichot	Prayers for forgiveness, recited during the days preceding Rosh Hashanah
Shabbat/Shabbos	The Sabbath
Shaddai	One of the names given to God in the Hebrew Bible
Sheina Meidele	Pretty girl

Shin	The twenty-first letter in the Hebrew alphabet
Shmata	Rag/garment
Shomer Negiah	“Observant of touch,” someone who refrains from physical contact with members of the opposite sex
Shtetl	Eastern European market towns that had large Jewish populations in the town proper
Shul	Synagogue
Siddur/Siddurim	Prayer book(s)
Simcha	A joyous occasion, a celebration
Sukkah	Temporary dwelling shelter erected during Sukkot
Tashlich	Occurring on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, where Jews proceed to a body of running water to symbolically cast off their sins
Tishrei	The first fall month and the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar
Torah	The first five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
Tzitzis	The fringes on a prayer shawl
Ushpizin	Guests
Yahrzeit	Anniversary of a death, observed by lighting a long-burning candle in memory of the deceased
Yentaleh	Term of endearment for someone who talks or gossips a lot
Yom Kippur	The holiest day of the Jewish year; the day of atonement
Zaida	Grandfather
Zachor	“Remember,” though some scholars argue that this translation of the word does not encompass its full imperative; instead, it can be considered as “not forgetting” with an additional active engagement accompanying this word

**All definitions are paraphrased from chabad.org or myjewishlearning.com*