

Pictures of Sveksna

Dedication

This article is dedicated to Colin Leo, the Grandson of my cousin Marcia. This is with the hope that he too will appreciate his Sveksna roots.

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Introduction

After finishing my article on Sveksna, and with its appearance on the web¹, I began to receive many comments about the article and more information.

In the introduction to my article I wrote that I had not succeeded in meeting any of the survivors of Sveksna. Since then I have had the luck to make contact with one of the survivors, Naphtali Seiff² and with Rivka Ladon³, the daughter of the late Meir Ladon. These are interesting stories and were big and thrilling breakthroughs for me. I have had the luck of meeting Zippora Sandler⁴, a native of Sveksna. She helped me very much, by telling me about the Sveksna that was, and identifying people and places in the photographs. After I believed I had finished this article I was able to locate Mr. Sam Sherron⁵. He gave me more

¹My article appears on the web: <http://www.jewishgen.org/Litvak/HTML/OnlineJournals/sveksna.htm>

I originally wrote a longer version of it, which includes a synopsis of the history of the Jews of Lithuania, for I believe that the history of a small place like Sveksna cannot be independent of the surroundings. Anyone who is interested in this is welcome to contact me.

April 2012 -- The longer version is available at: <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/sveksna>

I have written articles about the other places in Eastern Europe where I have family roots: Rezekne, Latvia, Cherkassy, Ukraine, Vitebsk, Belarus; and articles about The Connection between Rezekne and Ein Zeitim, and TheRechtschafner Family. If you are interested, these articles appear on the web, or you can get a copy of them from me.

²Naphtali Seiff is one of the six men from Sveksna, who were taken by the Nazis and survived the Holocaust. As I wrote in my first article about Sveksna, I knew the names of the men of Sveksna, who had been taken to the camps and survived but was not able to contact any of them. See Article, See ft.1. I had heard from Mr. Zalman Yavenlowitz, (see Article: Chapter: The Holocaust) who was from a neighboring village of Taurage but went through the camps together with the men of Sveksna, that he knew that Naphtali Ziv had gone to Australia. Through my research I have become in contact with Professor Ruth Leiserowitz (See ft.44) and have visited her website quite a few times. I noticed that on her website (judeninostpreussen.de/front) the name Hanna Seiff was mentioned. I was lucky enough to meet with Dr. Leiserowitz when she lectured in the autumn of 2007 at Genealogical Seminar in Givatyim, Israel. I asked her if this Hanna Seiff was possibly the wife of Naphtali. Dr. Leiserowitz was kind enough to send me Hanna's email, and I have become acquainted with Naphtali and Hanna. They now live near Sydney Australia.

³ Rivka and family live in Rechovoth, Israel. She visited me (22/3/06) and told me about her trip to Sveksna and showed me the video of it. She found Sveksna a beautiful place. She told me the story of how the Nazi, Dr. Shau, had broken her father's teeth. RV Her cousin Howard Kramer made a "Family Tree" entitled **Descendants of Meir Ladden**. This appears in Appendix 2.

⁴ Zippora Sandler was born in Sveksna. She is the sister of Meir Ladon Z"L (and the aunt of Rivka [See ft.3]), one of the six men who from Sveksna, who were taken by the Nazis and survived the Holocaust. See my article on Sveksna (ft.1). Her life story is a story which began in Sveksna, shows the Zionism of the period, her Aliyah in 1933, starting a life in the land of Israel and the influence of the Holocaust. She learned Hebrew in the Tarbut School in Sveksna. This made it much easier for her to receive a certificate to come on Aliyah. She came on Aliya 75 years ago, after participating in Hachshara in Lithuania. Her Aliyah was illegal and for that reason cost double the price. At first she lived on Kibbutz Givat Brenner and soon after moved to Rechovoth, where she still lives today. She was responsible for her sister coming on Aliyah in 1940 and cared for her brother Meir, when he arrived after the Holocaust. He needed the immediate care of a dentist for the Nazi Dr. Shau had broken his teeth. (See ft.3). Interestingly enough, the father of this Dr. was himself a children's doctor in Sveksna. (RV) Meir was a teenager when this occurred. (See Article: chapter: The Holocaust) Zippora lost much of her family in the Holocaust in Sveksna. She keeps in contact with Naphtali Seiff in Australia. Her story about her youth in Sveksna makes the facts and names that I wrote about come alive. ZS

⁵ Mr.Sam (Shmueal) Sherron is a native of Sveksna. He is now 82 years old and lives in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA. He was taken to the concentration camps together with his Father. They both survived the horror of WWII. He has been back to Sveksna at least 10 times. He is responsible for the Memorial Monument in Inkaklai and its upkeep. On one of his visits to Sveksna, he was shown his Father's house by the current inhabitants. MSS

information about Sveksna. I am only sorry that my first phone call to him caused him to cry.

I also came in contact with other people who also have Sveksna as a part of their background and inheritance, and/or have visited it. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who have, intentionally or not, helped me in obtaining the material for this article.

I thought it only right to try to write an addition to my article in order to share all of the new information that I have acquired. Much of this material is photographs. As the saying goes "one picture is worth a thousand words".

Many of these photographs show the natural beauty of Sveksna. I remember my Grandfather speaking about the loveliness of this town.⁶

The arrangement of the photographs is according to the person who sent them to me. I feel that I have put very interesting information in the footnotes, so I think it important of me to suggest that you read them. I hope that I shall succeed in my goal of bringing additional information about Sveksna to you!

Esther Rechtschafner

⁶The mother of Denise Botha also remembered the loveliness of Sveksna. She left before WWII. DS

Photographs

These photographs were sent to me by Mr. and Mrs. Yaákov and Nili Sandler.⁷

This is the road sign at the entrance to Sveksna. It must be both very thrilling and terribly sad to actually arrive here.



This is the stream that is near the entrance to Sveksna.⁸



⁷ Ya'akov Sandler was the mayor of the city of Rechovoth, Israel (1993-8). I believe that this is a big honor for all of Sveksna Jewry. He is the son of Zippora Sandler (see ft.1). Yaakov and Nili Sandler went on a trip to Sveksna recently (autumn, 2007). They sent me copies of their photographs.

⁸ The Mother of Denise Botha remembered that there was a lake which froze in the winter and they would go skating there. Sometimes they would harness a goat to a makeshift cart and would get the goat to pull them along on the lake. DB

This is the church in Sveksna. This church was first built in 1509.⁹



This is a map of the park.¹⁰ It is located near the entrance to Sveksna.



⁹ See Article: **History**. The priests lived in the houses to the left of the church. One of them thought he would be chosen to be the Pope. He wasn't chosen in 1925, so he left and went to the USA. ZP

¹⁰ The park belonged to the Graff (Count). IBID. The smell of a park in South Africa, after the grass had been mown, reminded Denise's Mother of the smell of Sveksna. DS

These are pictures of the Park.

This is the palace of the Graff (Count). It is located in the park.



As far as I know the relationship between the Count and the Jews of Sveksna was usually a good one.¹¹ Recently, I received some information which shows that sometimes it was otherwise.¹² Baruch Michel, apparently the Rabbi of Sveksna¹³ and Aaron Michel had much trouble with the Count Broel-Plater and his bailiff Radowicz.¹⁴

¹¹ See ARTICLE: [History, Jewish History](#)

¹² I received this information from Dr. Tobias Schenk. He studied history at the University of Münster. Then he worked in the Archives, Nordrhein-Westfalen. Now he resides in Marburg (north of Frankfurt) and is a researcher in the School of Archivists. His thesis for his Doctorate is about the Prussian political attitude towards the Jews in the period of 1763 through 1812. His article "Der preußische Staat und die Juden: Ein historisches Beziehungsgeflecht aus ostmitteleuropäischer Perspektive", will appear in the December issue of the Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook VII, 2008. It deals with the immigration of Polish Jews to Eastern Prussia in the years before the first partition of Poland (1772). He wrote articles about Prussian Jewry in Polish and German. He will contribute to the future project of Dr. Leiserowitz, which deals with the history of the Jews in Tilsit/Sowjetsk. (See ft . 2.37) TS

¹³ The Rabbis of Sveksna had to be men of caliber for their congregation was made up of scholars and up right people. However, since Sveksna was a small town with limited means, its Rabbis usually moved on to larger towns or cities. Article: [Jewish History](#), EO, pps. 223-4

¹⁴ Before the first partition of Poland the region already suffered from civil war and many Jews feared pogroms. Then the Prussian administration tried to avoid Jewish immigration and therefore only distributed entry visas (Schutzbriefe) to very rich Jews who were able to verify their funds. These two weren't the typical Jews of that period.

In December 1765, Aaron, who was then in Memel, made his first attempt to receive a visa and petitioned the regional Prussian administration of Prussian Lithuania (the Kriegs- und Domänenkammer of Gumbinnen [now: Gussew]). According to this

Nili Sandler told me that when she entered Sveksna her first thought was “everything is just as Zippora described it”.

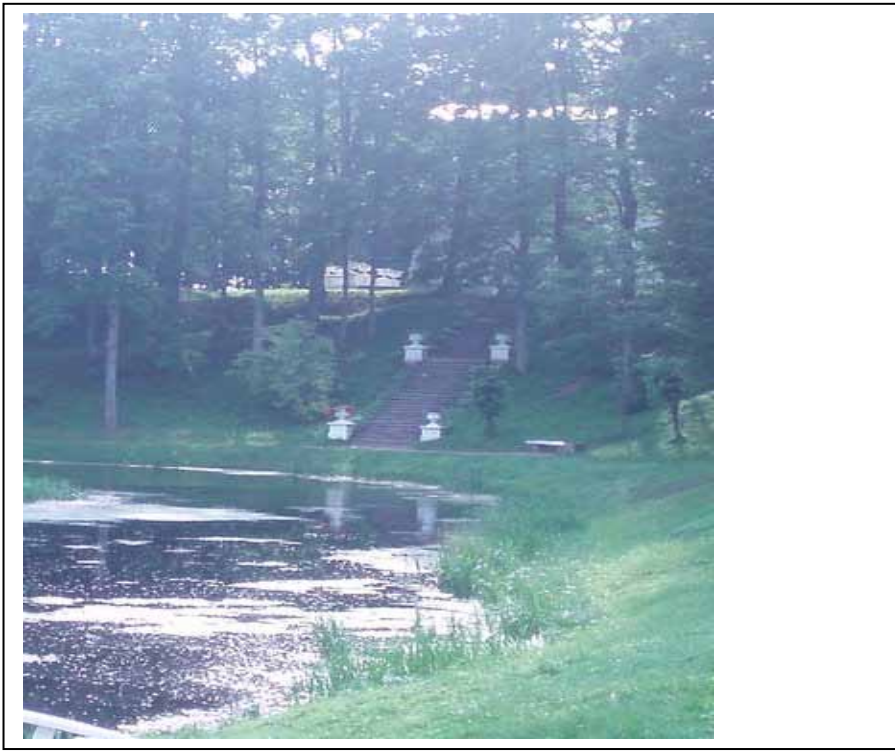
The palace, sun-clock, wide steps and gardens were being renovated at the time of their visit.



document he was 54 years old and was born in Berlin but had to leave Prussia 30 years earlier because he could not get a Schutzbrief. He then resided in Sveksna together with his wife, daughter and son-in-law Baruch Michel and served Broel Plater. His assets were about 6.000 Reichstaler, a respectable sum. Aaron was afraid of the civil war, so he wanted to settle down in Tilsit and establish a textile business there.

The administrative procedure for settlement was very complex and lasted until 1769. During this period the Jews had many problems with Broel-Plater, who ordered his bailiff Radowicz to arrest them. The reason was based on the property of Aaron and Michel in Sveksna, which consisted of a pub, a dwelling and some acres and grasslands. After their settlement in Tilsit, in 1769, the Prussian administration intervened. Aaron and Michel had to leave their property behind. There was one exception; Michel had bought the post of a Rabbi of Sveksna for the sum of 800 ducats. He kept his dignity even after his immigration to Tilsit and was therefore permitted to travel and visit Sveksna. The high sums that they had to pay for the Prussian Schutzbrief included the acquisition of porcelain from the Berlin Royal Porcelain Works (KPM)- Judenporzellan (Jewish Porcelain). [This was a designation for inferior china produced by the royal [Berliner Porzellanmanufaktur](#), which was owned by [Frederick the Great](#) in the late 1700s. In order to increase business, he issued a decree in 1769 to tax Jews by coerced purchases from his factory This tax was levied on them in order to obtain marriage, death, business and other certificates and permits. WK]). Afterwards the porcelain of Aaron and Michel was exported to Danzig (Gdansk).

The immigration of Aaron and Michel is of importance in connection to the Jewish history of Tilsit, for there were no Jews in the town between 1757 and 1769. This means that they signify the renewal of the Jewish community in Tilsit. TS



Gymnasium¹⁵



¹⁵ This building was located in the park of the Graff. It was near Zipporah's home. ZP The Graff Park is a beautiful place. The bridges and ducks add to the wonderful scenery. RV

Jewish Sveksna¹⁶

This is the Memorial Tombstone in the old Jewish cemetery.



This is what the Jewish cemetery looks like today.



¹⁶Birthdays were not registered in Sveksna. Therefore the dates birthdays and memorial days were celebrated according to what they remembered. DB, or what was written in their Holy Books.

This is the gate of the Jewish cemetery.



The Synagogue today.



These photographs were sent to me by the Wood family.¹⁷

The entrance to Sveksna



The double towered Catholic Church¹⁸ dominates the village.

This is the Main gate and the entrance to the village square.



¹⁷ This is a family from Northern California. They visited Lithuania a few years ago and actually "fell in love" with Sveksna.

They are in the process of buying the palace/restaurant/inn building and turning it into an orphanage. They are working very hard to do so. They have contacts in the USA and in Lithuania and hope to soon finish with all the bureaucracy and be able to begin renovating the building for this use.

¹⁸ The Catholic Church was very strong in Sveksna. The Nuns were respected by all. ZP

The high school is in the background. When this photograph was taken it was undergoing renovations.



Please try to imagine the town. The Catholic Church is above the river embankment. The road in the first picture crosses a bridge and goes uphill to the top of the embankment. This main road makes a circle around the church property. As you can see in the second picture, the village square, which is the center of the town, is located on the other side of the church. All other roads are connected to the village square area like spokes on a wheel.

Consider:

1. the main gate archway to be at the 12:00 position,
2. the white building (the high school that is undergoing renovation) is at the 2:00 position,
3. the duchess' villa (the second lane after the bridge crossing) is at the 3:00 position.

These are some of the comments made by the Wood family about the appearance of Sveksna:

- The village center has numerous buildings¹⁹; some vacant.
- There is no visible evidence of industry in the area.²⁰
- There are farmlands and forests near the town.

¹⁹ Quite a few of the buildings are 1-2000 years old and are being renovated center. RV

²⁰ Rivka Ladon the daughter of Meir Ladon Z'L (see ft.1) told me that the house where her Father lived as a boy is now a laboratory. This is the first residential house that is close to the center. IBID

- They were told that there is a mental health hospital²¹ in the area (the only one in Lithuania) but they did not see it. Their Lithuanian friends told them the following joke “being sent to Sveksna means you are crazy”.²²

²¹ This is so. See Article: [After the Holocaust](#).

²² The Grandmother of Denise Botha told her about the following incident: There was a person in the village called Shlomo die Plexter (perhaps a kind of fish). He seems to have been a simple soul. He had an accident: He climbed into some sort of outdoor oven which apparently collapsed and fell on him. He wasn't hurt, but the village made much fun of this incident. DB. Perhaps this was the basis for this saying?

These photographs were sent by Naphtali Ziv²³.

He asked that after I finish with them I give them to a place where they will be kept and possibly used by others. I plan to give them to the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People²⁴.

The children.



The children of the Jewish elementary school and Cheder (boys' elementary school where Jewish subjects were taught). The photograph was taken in about 1934. Naphtali Ziv is standing on the right side of the Rabbi in the picture (Rabbi's left side)²⁵. Yankele Klip (Z"L) was the boys' teacher and the girls' teacher was Miss Fishman (Z"L).²⁶

²³ See ft. 2. Naphtali writes his family name now as Seiff. NZ

²⁴This is located in Jerusalem: <http://www.isragen.org.il/ROS/ARCHIVES/archive-CAHJP-2.html>

²⁵ IBID

²⁶The boys studied in the Cheder and the girls in the Mizrahi School. When Lithuania became independent in 1918 a Tarbut school was opened for Jewish students. A few Jewish students attended the Lithuanian Gymnasium. There

Palace



Market²⁷



Shops²⁸



29

was a Yeshiva for boys of high school age. Afterwards those who wanted to continue to study in a Yeshiva went on to Telz, Kovno, or Ponovitz. ZP

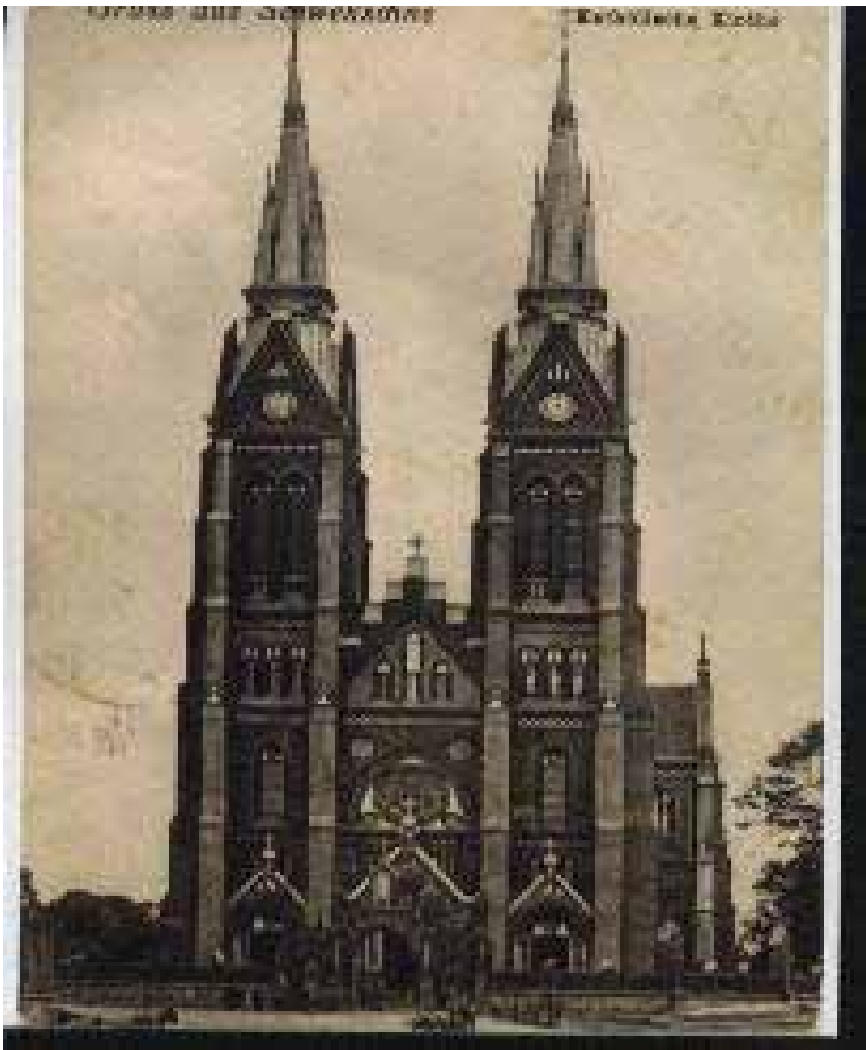
²⁷ The market was where the residents of the surrounding villages sold their crops. IBID. The Jews all had small gardens and a few animals near their homes for their own domestic use. See Article: [Jewish History](#) . Denise Botha's Grandmother told her that before a Holiday they would feed the geese kneidlach to fatten them up. She doesn't know what their house was like, but was told that sometimes the farmyard animals were taken into the house for shelter. The animals were always fed first. this has become a family custom now, and pets are fed first. DB

²⁸ The shops were in the center of the town. They were owned and run by the Jews. They were capable of doing business and crafts. The Gentiles didn't like them for this reason. The first shop on the left was owned by Mr. Bedel, and last shop on the left was a delicatessen. All of these shops were demolished after WWII. IBID

Gymnasium



Church



Synagogue³⁰



Jewish Cemetery



³⁰ The original Synagogue (before the fire of 1925) was built of wood. It was used only when the weather was warm. It was impossible to heat it. The "Bet Midrash" (Study Hall) was on its left side. This building was used for worshipping in the winters. It had a proper chimney. The Synagogue was renovated and therefore improved after the fire. IBID

Memorial³¹



Inscription



³¹ This photograph is of the Memorial in Inkaklai. This is located 5 kilometers from Sveksna. It was taken a short while after the Holocaust. There are a few Jews here. They are those that survived the 4 years of HELL. They managed to escape to the partisans or to hide in this area. Chaim Rikin and Shmuel Sharon are visible here. Naphtali describes this in the following way “This is the mass grave of our Mothers, sisters, brothers and all Jewish children in Inkaklai”. Samuel Shmuel Sharon (see ft.5) is the person responsible for the care of the Memorial. He goes almost every year. He now lives in the USA. The inscription on the Monument is in Lithuanian. The translation is “This is to remember the Genocide and let it be a HOLY Memory of the Dead”. NZ, ZP Samuel Shmuel Sharon is a friend of Naphtali Seiff. NZ According to the Grandmother of Denise Brotha, the Jewish women dug this mass grave and were then shot by the Germans. Denise comes from the Gold, Pinn and Leibowitz families of Sveksna. She is interested in receiving information about them. DB No aid is also given by the Lithuanian government. Mr. Sherron gave the mayor of Sveksna money to help care for the Memorial. Nothing was done. All the people in this picture are Jews. Gentiles have never come to this ceremony. The gentiles of Sveksna helped the Nazis during WWII. He says that the current local population of Sveksna does not know that there were Jews in Sveksna. They are too young to remember them. MSS

Photographs from the Central Archive of Lithuanian Jewry

I received copies of the following photographs from the Central Archive of Lithuanian Jewry³² in Tel Aviv. There is a small file³³ on Sveksna there. Much of the material in this file was received from Yisroel Kaplan³⁴ of Tel Aviv.

The material in the file is as follows:

1. Yiddish letters received by Gittel Zilberman³⁵ of Tel Aviv from her cousin Luba Ziv³⁶ from Vilna. These letters are dated 1946 and 1947. They tell about what happened to the Jews of Sveksna during the Holocaust, which includes personal, family and community losses. Luba states in these letters that she is happy to be alive.
2. Yiddish letters that were sent to Gittel and other people in Israel from other people who knew about the fate of Sveksna and that were also dated soon after the war. All of the originals³⁷ are already falling apart.
3. Photographs³⁸ that were in the possession of Benjamin Yankolovitch³⁹ of Ramat Eliahu.
4. My article on Sveksna is now also part of the file.⁴⁰

³² The Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel, 1 King David Street, Tel Aviv, Israel, 03-696481:

litjews@bezeqint.net

³³ File number 2404, 3163LA

³⁴ Mr. Kaplan was originally from Sveksna. His wife, who was also from Sveksna, was converted. Her family came to visit her in Israel. His brother was a very rich man, who ran a private bank. He brought Yisroel and their sister to Israel. ZP

³⁵ Gittel Zilberman left Sveksna with her husband before WWII broke out. They went to a small town in Germany where their son Menachem was born and then came to live in Holon (near Tel Aviv), Israel. IBID

³⁶ Luba Ziv was the sister of Naphtali Ziv. Naphtali came to Israel to visit her when she was alive. This is the story of how Naftal and Liebe found each other:

After the War, Liebe was still in Russia where she had spent the WW2 years. She remembered the address of a cousin, Rose Romm, who lived in New York. She wrote to her, asking of her to please inform all the Jews who formerly lived in Sveksna that no one from Sveksna had survived. Rose had this letter printed in a Jewish newspaper there. A copy of this Jewish newspaper found its way to the displaced persons camp in Germany where a friend of Naftali was lying sick in the hospital. When Naftali went to visit him, he was shown the article and asked if this was written by his sister. Because Rose had also put her own name and address at the end of the article, Naftali was able to write to her and through her was then able to get back in touch with his sister in Russia. NZ

³⁷ I have copies of them, but they are very difficult to read. Quite a few people tried to help me decipher them, and the above information is what seems to be their contents. I hope that all of the vital information is written here.

³⁸ There are other photographs in the file. Zippora identified the people in them for me. I have not been able put them in this article for they are not clear and therefore nothing can be seen. I have the copies of them in my possession.

³⁹ As written in my first article, I tried to contact Mr. Benjamin Yankolovitch (Z'L) See Article: After the Holocaust. He and his wife are no longer alive, and there isn't any surviving family.

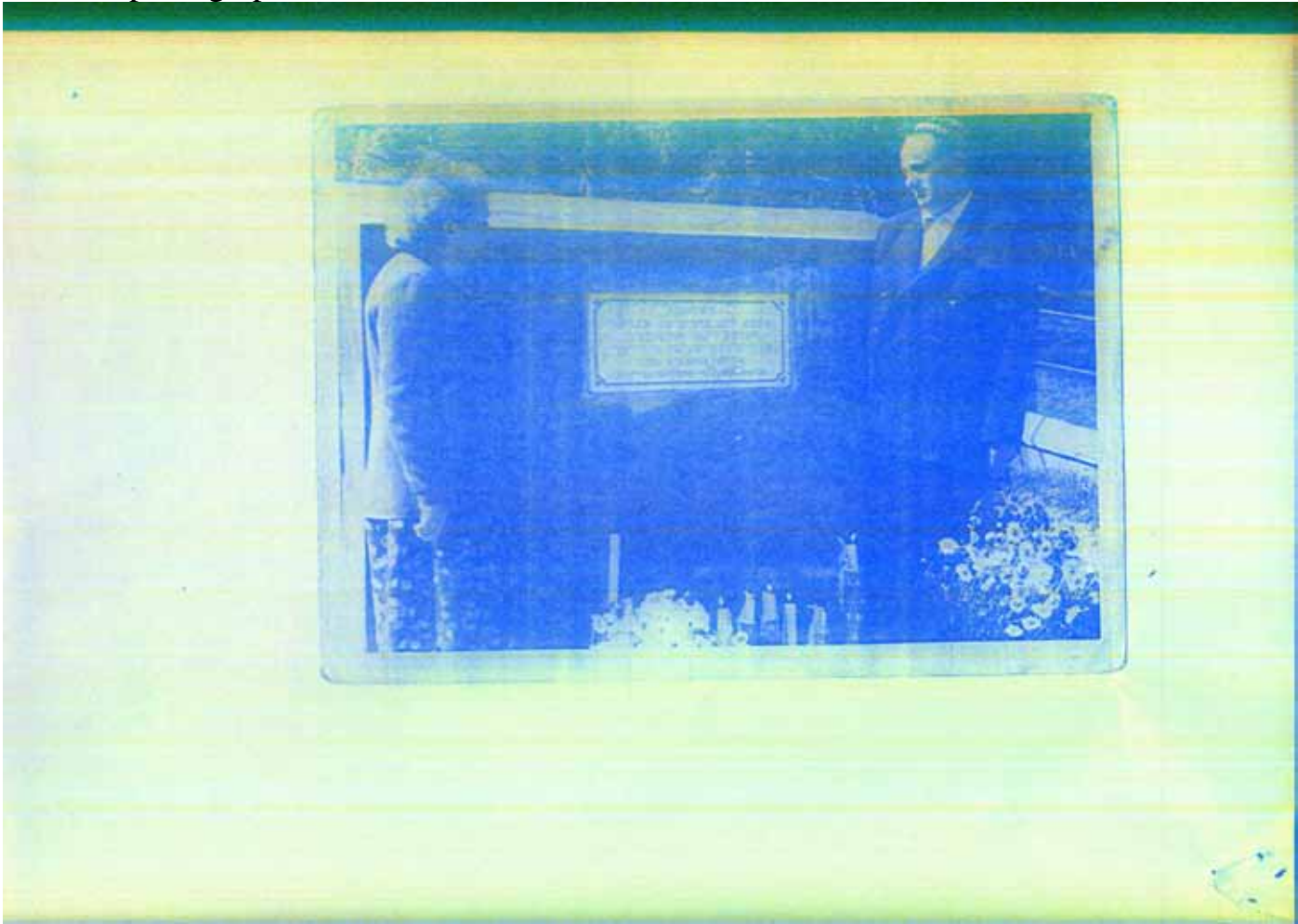
⁴⁰ This is as of December 26, 2004, according to an email from the Archive which is in my possession.

These are photographs of the Memorial Monument⁴¹ in Inkakliai.



⁴¹ See Ft. 25

This is a photograph of Sam Sherron⁴² in front of the Memorial Monument.



⁴² Zippora identified him for me. ZP (See ft. 25). See ft.5

Photographs from the Internet⁴³

The President of Lithuania, A. Smetoną, visited the Synagogue in Sveksna in 1928.



The Memorial.



⁴³ SLH

The marketplace in 1925.



This is the Synagogue before the great fire in the town in 1925.



The neglected Synagogue in 2002.



The Jewish cemetery in 2002.



Photographs from the website of **Dr. Ruth Leiserowitz**⁴⁴.

I received her permission to use these pictures in this article.⁴⁵

A photograph of the outside of the Synagogue, taken in 2000, by Dr. Leiserowitz.



⁴⁴ Ruth Leiserowitz Ph.D. is a German Historian and has done much research on Eastern Prussia which includes much traveling in the Lithuanian-Russian area. She is on the faculty of, and worked on research projects in, the Humbolt University in Berlin and the Klaipeda University (Memel). She is affiliated with the Berlin School for European Comparative History at the Free University of Berlin as a Research Fellow of the project “Nation, Borders, Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in European Memories”, which is funded by the German Research Foundation. She is working on a research project on Polish and Russian memories of the Napoleonic Wars. Simultaneously she is Associate Professor of the Institute of Baltic Sea Region History and Archaeology of the Klaipeda University (Lithuania). Her main fields of research are Modern and Contemporary History, European History, specializing in Baltic, Polish and Russian history, Cultural and Social History as well as Jewish History. Her most recent publications include *Memellandbuch. Fünf Jahrzehnte Nachkriegsgeschichte* (Berlin, 2002); “*The Traders of Wystiten: The Border as a Modernization Factor for Litvaks in Transnational Space in 19th Century*” in: *Central and East European Jews at the Crossroads of tradition and Modernity*, ed. Jurgita Siauciunaite-Verbickiene/Larisa Lempertiene (Vilnius, 2006), *Experiences of Border, Jewish Prospects of a Prussian Periphery* (forthcoming, December 2007).

Her websites are:

www.judeninostpreussen.de, <http://ruth.kibelka.de>,

www.thomas-mann-haus.de, www.wolfskinder-geschichtsverein.de. IG. RL

⁴⁵IBID

A photograph of the inside of the synagogue, taken in 2000 by Dr. Leiserowitz.



A photograph of the marketplace.



A photograph of one of the shops.⁴⁶



A photograph of the Jewish cemetery, taken in 2000, by Dr. Leiserowitz.



This is the only remaining gravestone. It would be interesting to find out who this woman Breina Bar Zvi was.

⁴⁶ This photograph comes from a link that was sent to me by Dr. Leiserowitz. SL

Photographs from The United States Holocaust Museum⁴⁷

Dr. Ruth Leiserowitz recommended the names of a few places where it is possible to obtain more information about Sveksna. This museum was among them. These are the photographs that they sent me.⁴⁸

The students of the Sveksna public school⁴⁹.



This photograph was donated to the museum by Sam Sherron⁵⁰. Most of the children here were Jewish. It was taken before 1939. His sister is one of the children here. All of the children in this picture were murdered on Rosh HaShanna, 1941.⁵¹ There were still Jewish schools in 1939. There was anti-Semitism, which was not officially sanctioned.⁵²

The students of the Sveksna public middle⁵³ school,



⁴⁷ USH. This website has much information about this museum.

⁴⁸ I corresponded with Caroline Wadell, the Photo Reference Coordinator of the museum, and wish to thank her for her help and patience. I had to sign a "User Agreement" in order to obtain these pictures.

⁴⁹ The public school was an elementary school. The education there was for 6 years. The students left when they were 12 or 13 years old, depending on the age at which they began. High school was for 8 years. The high school in Sveksna was a Catholic one and very few Jewish children attended. NZ

⁵⁰ See ft. 25.

⁵¹ This information given to USH, together with the photograph, by Sam Sherron See ft.5.

⁵² NZ. See Article: Jewish History. The Aunt of Denise Botha told her about her meeting with anti-Semitism. There was a pogrom shortly after Rosh Hashanah. The Cossacks came into town and the whole family had to run for their lives. She remembered that she only had time to grab her new shoes - her Rosh Hashanah gift .DB

⁵³ This was probably the first 4 years of high school.

This photograph was also donated by Mr. Samuel Sherron.⁵⁴ It was also taken before 1939.⁵⁵ Each year the children celebrated a "green" day in which trees were planted, hence the spades.⁵⁶

This a photograph of the children of the Jewish elementary school and Cheder.⁵⁷



This is the same photograph that was sent to me by Naphtali Ziv⁵⁸. This one is in better condition. It is therefore possible to see the area where the photograph was taken.

⁵⁴ See ft. 25.

⁵⁵ This information given to USH, together with the photograph, by Sam Sherron.

⁵⁶ NZ

⁵⁷ See ft. 19 & 20.

⁵⁸ See Photographs - Naphtali Ziv

My Photographs

Zippora Sandler⁵⁹ told me about a Memorial for Sveksna which is located in the “Chamber of the Holocaust”⁶⁰, on Mount Zion in the Old City of Jerusalem. I felt that I wanted to go and see it and if possible photograph it. (I apologize to you that these pictures didn’t come out better.⁶¹)

The building is an old Jerusalem stone house, which is located right opposite of “King David’s Tomb”. The overall location is very fitting for it shows the rebuilding of Our Jewish homeland. It actually has the same meaning as Yad VeShem (the Israeli Holocaust Museum)⁶², but is on more of a personal basis.

The building is made up of a few rooms. Each room has an exhibit. The walls of the rooms and courtyard and are covered with plaques (tablets) in the shape of tombstones for the perished Jewish communities. The Lithuanian section is located in the Magen-David room. Here is a transliteration of what is written on the Sveksa Memorial plaque.

(Engraving of a 7 branched menorah)

(Plastic covered photograph of Synagogue)

(Plastic covered photograph of Memorial Monument⁶³)

Sveksna

(Lithuania)

The Holocaust Victims

Memorial Day 28 Of Elul

BLESSED BE THEIR MEMORY

From the survivors and their families in Israel and in the Diaspora

⁵⁹ See ft. 3.

⁶⁰ This Museum has three purposes to serve as a symbolic cemetery, to show the physical destruction of the Torah, to show the way people tried to keep their faith throughout the Holocaust. The director Rabbi Seiden is very helpful. His email is as follows: amjseiden@yahoo.com AS

⁶¹ I took them with my mobile phone and was able to transfer them to my husband’s mobile phone and from there to the computer. I am far from an expert at doing any of these things. I decided on including them all in this article so that I could possibly give you an idea of what I am writing about.

⁶² www.yadvashem.org

⁶³ See ft. 25

These are photographs of the plaque.



This is the photograph of the Synagogue in Sveksna that is pasted on to the left side of the plaque.



This is the photograph of the Memorial monument which is pasted on to the right side of the plaque.



The plaque as it is located next to plaques of other Lithuanian communities.



This is a photograph of me. I am standing in the courtyard, at the entrance to the Magen-David room where the Sveksna plaque is located. The caretaker of the building showed me around and took this picture. He has an old notebook where the locations of all the plaques are listed.



Conclusion

As understood, I enjoyed the writing and compiling of this article. I have found the comparison of photographs taken of the same scene but by different people and at different times very interesting. I hope that others will also enjoy it. More so, I hope that it will help to keep the memory of Sveksna alive and of interest to those of us who consider it part of our heritage and to other people who are interested in it or have just happened to look at this article.

When I visited the “Chamber of the Holocaust”, and saw the Sveksna plaque among the plaques of all the other destroyed Jewish communities, I had the feeling that at least the Jews of Sveksna didn’t stand alone in the Holocaust. I take this to symbolize the oneness of our Jewish nation, among all other nations. This is written in The Bible, Numbers 23, 9: “...lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations”.

Other Biblical verses which came to my mind recently are from Lamentations: 18:5- For the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it. 18:21- Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Yahweh, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. 18:22- Thou canst not have utterly rejected us, and be exceeding wroth against us!; and from Psalms 125:1- A Song of Ascents. They that trust in the LORD are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever.

In my opinion this describes what has been the course of our history. Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews lived for 2000 years in the Diaspora. During the Holocaust so many Jewish communities throughout the world were destroyed. Now we are blessed to return to our land of Israel.

I pray that (with the help of G-d) what the Jews of Sveksna and all the Holocaust victims went through in the Holocaust will never happen again.

I wish to end this article as I ended my “CHAT” with “Tommy”.

SHALOM

For all of the Jewish people
And for the State of ISRAEL

Appendix 1- Chat with Tommy⁶⁴

As I have written in the Introduction to this article, due to the appearance of my article on the web, I have received many comments about and interesting information and have come in contact with other people who also have Sveksna as part of their background and inheritance. I received a very interesting email⁶⁵ from “Tommy”.

He wrote me that the way I described the Holocaust of Sveksna’s Jewry was just what his Grandfather had told him. I was quite curious about the identity of his Grandfather and asked him if we could “CHAT”.

We had a nice “Chat” on February 11, 2008. This is the summary of the “Chat”. “Tommy” told me that his Grandfather was drafted into the Russian army. He served there as a translator and a munitions driver. Then he deserted during the severe fighting in the Kaliningrad⁶⁶ oberblast. At this point, he headed towards Germany, but was captured and drafted into the German army. He was returned to his native area to fight there. At first he was then used as a translator. Since he was stationed near his hometown he witnessed the fate of the Jewish population of the Silute and Taurage region. He witnessed the murder of a group of Jewish people in the stream that runs through the small valley in Sveksna and watched the stream turn red. He said it was an awful sight to see. He told about the mass murder that took place at Inkakaliai, which is located on the road from Sveksna, and is where all the woman and children and few remaining men were taken and murdered. The men had been rounded up and taken previously. Tommy doesn’t have any idea of the dates⁶⁷ of these incidences but knows that it was after the Memel area became a “colony for German folk”.

“Tommy” states that his Grandfather was in the SS. He told “Tommy” quite a bit about what he saw. He described the rejection of the Jewish population before the

⁶⁴I have permission to use this “CHAT” here. I thought it right to change the name of the person involved. I have his real name and the name of his Grandfather in my saved copy of this “CHAT”.

⁶⁵ I have saved this email in my Sveksna file.

⁶⁶ This is the Russian enclave between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic Sea. This territory borders on Poland and Lithuania which are NATO and EU members. It is geographically separated from Russia. The administrative center is located on the remains of the destroyed Prussian and German town of Konigsberg. It seems that his Grandfather deserted at the time of the capturing of the Memel area. It was occupied by the Russians in 1945 and renamed Kaliningrad in 1946. The town was heavily bombed by the British in 1944, suffered heavy damage and burned for several days. Kaliningrad, WK.

⁶⁷There seems to be a discrepancy between the dates/sequence of actual events and the way “Tommy” tells this story. This seems to be the way that “Tommy” remembers these things.

Germans and the war came. He knew that many people didn't like or trust the Jewish population for most of the businesses in Sveksna were run by the Jews⁶⁸.

His Grandfather left this immediate area during the war. He was injured badly when his tank blew up and was captured by the British. He was brought to England as a POW and was too ill to travel on. This was a stop-over on his way to the USA, but for some reason he was kept in England.

"Tommy" asked him if he partook in the brutal atrocities, and the reply he received was that there were things that he could not talk about and would never tell anyone.

"Tommy" doesn't have any family left in Sveksna, but he still has much family in Lithuania and family trapped in the Kaliningrad enclave. "Tommy" and his family went to visit in 1998. His Grandfather was not allowed into Lithuania until it became independent⁶⁹. They went for the "Baltkos Jura Festival" for they had a relative from Klaipeda (Memel) who was singing there. They had a family reunion. They went to Sveksna and his Grandfather showed "Tommy" the house where he grew up. He was happy to be there again. He also showed him the stream and talked about the battles in the area and the Jewish population. He told "Tommy" that he had had a Jewish friend. "Tommy" felt that his Grandfather knew that he would not go back there again. "Tommy" feels he is attracted to Sveksna for it is the place of his roots and his family history.

Tommy ended this "chat" by teaching me a few friendly expressions in Lithuanian. I taught him the Hebrew word "SHALOM".

⁶⁸ This fact can be certified. Article: Jewish History, EO, pps. 223-4

⁶⁹ 1990, Lithuania, WK

APPENDIX 2- Descendants of Meir Ladden⁷⁰

1 Meir Ladden
.. +?
..... 2 Shlomo Ladden
..... +Peres
..... 3 [2] Yenta Malka Ladden 1875 - 1955
..... +[1] Leib (Lewis) Ladden 1875 - 1946
..... 4 [3] Esther Ladden
..... +[4] ? Bell
..... 5 [5] Jennifer Bell
..... 5 [6] Helen Bell
..... 5 [7] Vivienne Bell
..... 5 [8] ? Bell - Unknown
..... 4 [9] Anne Ladden 1900 - 1987
..... +[10] Mark Kay 1899 - 1959
..... 5 [11] Lilian Carrie Kay 1922 -
..... +[12] Joseph Meyer Kramer 1921 - 1995
..... 6 [13] Carole Mildred Pearl Kramer 1943 -
..... +[14] Ran Gruneberg - 2007
..... 7 [15] Dan Grinberg 1966 -
..... +[16] Nathalie Halperin 1966 -
..... 8 [17] Tal Gruneberg 1994 -
..... 8 [18] Gil Gruneberg 1996 -
..... 8 [19] Stav Gruneberg 2000 -
..... 8 [20] Adar Gruneberg 2003 -
..... 7 [21] Ilana Gruneberg 1968 -
..... 6 [22] Howard Geoffrey Kramer 1945 -
..... +[23] Patricia Carol Weissman 1946 -
..... 7 [24] Adam David Kramer 1972 -
..... +[25] Lisa Victoria Cohen 1975 -
..... 8 [26] Samuel Louis Kramer 2002 -
..... 8 [27] Abigail Lucy Kramer 2005 -
..... 7 [28] Nicola Jane Kramer 1975 -
..... 5 [29] Charles Stephen Kay 1928 -
..... 4 [30] Minnie Ladden 1903 -
..... +[31] Harry Gibbs 1907 -
..... 5 [32] Maurice Gibbs 1928 -
..... +[33] Peggy Holland 1928 -
..... 6 [34] Karen Gibbs 1956 -
..... 4 [35] Myer Ladden 1905 - 1991
..... +[36] Hilda
..... 5 [37] No children
..... 4 [38] Rachel Binney Ladden 1907 - 1974
..... +[39] Wally Hailes 1900 - 1969
..... 5 [40] Doreen Ann Hailes 1941 -
..... +[41] Gordon Ernest Hobbs 1940 -

⁷⁰ This list was compiled by Howard Kramer. He added on the following notes:

1. The original document is seven pages, but he feels that this descendants report will suffice here.
2. It may seem confusing for his great grandmother married her first cousin.
3. Destinations of the family:
 - A. Meir Ladden was in Sveksna, as was Shlomo and his wife Peres.
 - B. Yenta (known as Janet) married Leib (known as Lewis) in Sveksna on 7/1/1900 (Howard Kramer has a copy of their marriage certificate), and came to Plymouth England around 1901 with his grandmother Anne Ladden. Some of the family is still in Plymouth.
 - C. My sister Carolle Kramer immigrated to Israel in 1963, and her family lives there.
 - D. The whole of the first part relates to UK relatives.

I have his permission to use it in this article. He may be contacted by email if further information is needed.
Howardkramer45@yahoo.co.uk. HK

..... 6 [42] Shaun Gordon Hobbs 1961 -
..... 6 [43] Glyn Trevor Hobbs 1963 - 1997
..... 7 [44] Kane ? 1987 -
..... 7 [45] Daniel Hobbs 1989 -
..... 7 [46] Shelley Hobbs 1994 -
..... 6 [47] Tracey Ann Hobbs 1964 -
..... +[48] John Bentley 1964 -
..... 7 [49] Karl John Bentley 1984 -
..... 7 [50] Dale Bentley 1985 - 1985
..... 6 [51] Alan David Hobbs 1966 -
..... +[52] Susan Moore
..... 7 [53] Codie Hobbs 1992 -
..... 6 [54] Linda Marie Hobbs 1967 -
..... +[55] Mark Cunningham
..... 7 [56] Callum Cunningham 1989 -
..... 7 [57] Reece Cunningham 1994 -
..... 6 [58] Julie Elaine Hobbs 1970 -
..... +[59] Darren Sedgeman 1970 -
..... 7 [60] Shanice Sedgeman 1992 -
..... 7 [61] Kieran Sedgeman 1994 -
..... 5 [62] Charles Hailes 1930 -
..... +[63] Audrey Watson
..... *2nd Wife of [62] Charles Hailes:
..... +[64] Kathleen Rose 1939 -
..... 6 [65] Maureen Anita Hailes 1959 -
..... +[66] Howard Palmer
..... 7 [67] Miranda Palmer 1976 -
..... 6 [68] Lynn Paul Hailes 1958 -
..... +[69] William White
..... 7 [70] Daniel William White 1980 -
..... 7 [71] Jenna Louise White 1984 -
..... 7 [72] Kirsty Leanne White 1987 -
..... 6 [73] Paul Charles Hailes 1961 -
..... +[74] Ellen Clarke 1965 -
..... 7 [75] Millicent Francisca Hailes 1991 -
..... 6 [76] Kevin James Hailes 1964 -
..... 6 [77] Eleanor Louise Hailes 1969 -
..... +[78] Christopher Jordan 1969 -
..... 7 [79] Dominic Charles Jordan 1998 -
..... 7 [80] Jonathan Andrew Jordan 2001 -
..... 6 [81] Ian Joseph Hailes February -
..... 5 [82] David Lewis Hailes 1946 -
..... 5 [83] Iris Maureen Hailes 1942 -
..... 5 [84] Leslie Barrie Hailes 1951 - 1987
..... 4 [85] Ethel Ladden 1910 - 1986
..... 4 [86] Maurice Ladden 1913 - 1992
..... 4 [87] Lazarus Ladden 1915 - 1933
..... 4 [88] Charles Ladden 1917 - 1995
..... 3 Leib Ladden 1878 -
..... +Lea Todroshoviv
..... 4 Sipora Ladden
..... +Reuven Sandler
..... 5 Yacov Sandler
..... 5 Yehuda Sandler
..... 5 Arie (Noni) Sandler
..... 4 Mina Ladden
..... 4 Mordechai Shimon Ladden
..... 4 Yoshua Ladden
..... 4 Chaya-Sarah Ladden
..... 4 Tody Ladden

..... 4 Edita Ladden - 1990
 5 Liliana Ladden
 +Jonnas Drevinskas
 6 Eitaute Drevinskas
 +Mindaugas Jakutiene
 7 Gabrielius Jakutiene
 7 Kristijonas Jakutiene
 6 Eimantas Drevinskas
 +Ingrida
 7 Mingaile Drevinskas
 7 Austeja Drevinskas
 4 Meir Ladden
 5 Rivka Ladden
 +Eli Zur
 3 Moshe Yehial Ladden
 3 Eza Ladden
 2 Shmuel Ladden
 +Pesaya
 3 Baer Labe Ladden
 +Malka
 4 Sara Ladden 1916 -
 +Zvoloon Schur
 5 Edne Schur 1939 -
 +Dovid Shachar
 6 Naama Shachar 1961 -
 +Eli Perry
 7 Leav Perry 1986 -
 7 Nitzan Perry 1990 -
 7 Adi Perry 1997 -
 6 Gershon Shachar Unknown -
 5 Esther Schur
 5 Malka Schur
 5 Dubi Schur
 5 Eli Schur
 4 Pnina Ladden
 5 Chana(Anna) Ladden
 6 Amir ?
 4 Ida Ladden
 4 Yehezkel Ladden
 4 Baruch Ladden
 4 Natan Ladden
 +Miriam
 5 Emanuel Ladden
 3 Sholmo Ladden
 3 Herschel Ladden (Meyers) 1876 - 1951
 +Anna Rose Bernhardt 1879 - 1943
 4 Bernard Meyers 1903 -
 5 Andrea Meyers Unknown -
 +Michael Cutler
 6 Eli Cutler 1994 -
 5 Alan Meyers
 4 Emanuel Meyers 1907 -
 4 Charles Meyers 1912 - 1960
 5 Henry Meyers
 5 Michael Meyers
 5 Scott Meyers
 4 Spencer Meyers 1914 - 1960
 5 Howard Meyers
 +Sonia Marlowe Marais
 5 Philip Meyers

..... +Barabara Rebensdorf
..... 6 Andrew Meyers
..... 6 Alexander Meyers
..... 6 Jordan Meyers
..... 5 Donna Meyers
..... +Jose Valdes
..... 6 Maximilian Valdes 1994 -
..... 5 Leslie Meyers
..... +Timothy Keating
..... 4 Naomi Marion Meyers 1916 - 1969
..... +Herschel(Harold)Elihu Kaufman 1915 - 1995
..... 5 Robert Steven Kaufman 1939 -
..... +Rosalie Goldstein
..... 6 Howard Kaufman 1962 -
..... +Michelle Greenfield
..... 7 Seth Kaufman 1994 -
..... 7 Bailey Kaufman 1999 -
..... 6 Charles Kaufman 1965 -
..... +Lauren Portugal
..... 6 Neil Kaufman 1970 -
..... +Melissa Sockel
..... 7 Carli Kaufman 1999 -
..... 5 Andrew Nathan Kaufman 1948 - 1948
..... 3 Yitzak Ladden
..... 4 Chaim Ladden
..... 2 Smuelio Ladino
..... +Roches ?
..... 3 [1] Leib (Lewis) Ladden 1875 - 1946
..... +[2] Yenta Malka Ladden 1875 - 1955
..... 4 [3] Esther Ladden
..... +[4] ? Bell
..... 5 [5] Jennifer Bell
..... 5 [6] Helen Bell
..... 5 [7] Vivienne Bell
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..... 8 [19] Stav Gruneberg 2000 -
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..... 7 [24] Adam David Kramer 1972 -
..... +[25] Lisa Victoria Cohen 1975 -
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..... 7 [44] Kane ? 1987 -
..... 7 [45] Daniel Hobbs 1989 -
..... 7 [46] Shelley Hobbs 1994 -
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..... 7 [56] Callum Cunningham 1989 -
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