

Selection from the
Bergstein Family History
Tisza-Újlak (and elsewhere)
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Bernat (Boruch) Belkstein, (? 1854-1914), son of Simon Belkstein, of Gyure, Hungary, married Yulishka (Hai Yite, Juliana) Hercz (?1851-1913), daughter of Baruch and Julia Hercz, who lived near Vienna, Austria. Bernat and Yulishka, who lived in Gyure, had five children, namely, Sigmund (Ziga) (5/8/1874-1951), Morris (2/5/1878-4/28/1962), Samuel (Schmuel) (4/24/1883-10/30/1922), Esther (1/24/1885-1968), and Thomas (1890-5/5/1928). Ziga was the first to leave to America. He departed from the port at Antwerp, Belgium on the steamship, Zeeland, and arrived at Ellis Island, NY on June 12, 1906 and went to McKeesport, PA.⁴ Tom and Esther then traveled together from Tisza Vylok, leaving Rotterdam on the steamship, Potsdam and arrived at Ellis Island on January 29, 1907.

Interestingly the Ellis Island records show her name as Erna and his as Ignaz. They joined Ziga in McKeesport at 120 Market Street. She paid for her passage, but Ziga paid for Tom's. Shortly after their arrival, Ziga arranged for his sister to meet Israel Neiman (5/17/1886-1965), who was living in Irwin, Pa. They were engaged one week later and married June 2, 1907. Ziga remained in McKeesport.. In the 1910 edition of the McKeesport directory, Ziga was listed as Belkstein, Zigmund, laborer. The 1914 edition listed him as Bergstein. The story goes that he wrote back to Morris who by then was living in Tisza Vylok, Hungary, that his name was now Bergstein, and thereafter, every family member changed their last name to Bergstein. When he arrived at Ellis Island, his last name was already Bergstein.

After three of their children left for America, Bernat and Yulishka moved in with their son, Morris and his wife, Jenny in Tisa Vylok. Morris and Jenny married on July 31, 1904, in their home on Hathazi Street in Tisa Vylok. Jenny had come from Kisvarsany, Hungary. Sarah, their daughter recalled that her grandmother, Yulishka, was ill with rheumatism. In the winter of 1913, she was applying alcohol to her sore arm because it was real cold. Her arm caught fire from the wood stove and she died from the severe burns.

Samuel (Schmuel) came to McKeesport in 1909, leaving behind his wife, Lena, and their three children in Tisa Ujlak. He came to Ziga's house at 513 Mulberry St , McKeesport. However, the Ellis Island records indicate he only stayed until 1912 and returned to Hungary. Sam's wife, Lena, in 1913 was pregnant with Morris and came to McKeesport to live with her family, the Spitz's. Sam planned on joining them after she gained her citizenship. Morris was born in McKeesport on October 24, 1914. Sam and their three other sons, Samuel (Shandor), Emanuel (Bendu) and Louis moved to Hathazi Street in Tisa Vylok, near his brother, Morris. In 1914, Sam was drafted into the Hungarian Army and was therefore unable to join his wife and newborn son in America. His three sons then had to move in with Morris and Jenny while Sam was in the Army.

² The Jews of Czechoslovakia — Historical Studies & Surveys, Vol I, pg. 125

³ Jewish Nobles & Genesis in Modem Hungary, by Wm. O. McCagg, Jr. (PXT 74-623)

⁴ See Ellis Island information attached.

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His son, Louis and Morris' son, Adolph, started school together. Sam had been drafted into the Hussars regiment, an elite corps. He was handsome. He made shoes and boots for the officers. Sam stayed in the Army until 1919 even though World War I was over in 1918. He remained in the army because of an ongoing uprising.

After his discharge, he first went back to Hathazi Street and lived with his three sons and finally came to America in 1920 He and his wife and four sons joined Tom who was living in Monessen. Tom had married Regina Keisler on December 8, 1918 and was operating a grocery store, Standard Meat Market, on Dormer Avenue in Monessen.

In July, 1921, Morris and his eldest daughter, Jean (Jolan), who was only 16 years of age, left Tisa Vylok for America leaving behind, Jenny and their remaining children, Sarah, Isadore, Irene, Adolph, Edith, Rose and Ella. Morris and Jean departed Antwerp, Belgium on the steamship Kroonland and they arrived at Ellis Island on August 9, 1921. The ship's manifest indicated that their names were Moritz and Jolan and the fare was paid by Morris' brother, Tom Bergstein, who they were going to join and who was living at 13 Schoonmaker Avenue, Monessen, PA. They each had \$20 on them. Morris' age was 42 and occupation was listed as a driver and Jean's age as 16 and occupation as a dressmaker.

From August 25, 1927 to September 10, 1927 Jenny, with her remaining children traveled to the United States. They left by train from Tisa Vylok and went to Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. They then went to Prague and arrived at the port in Cherbourg, France. They then sailed on the Aquitania in steerage class for seven days. Many of them became seasick. Since they were classified as citizens after Morris and Jean had become citizens, they bypassed Ellis Island and on the eve of Shabbos they were met in New York by representatives of HIAS. They spent the Sabbath with a family friend, Rose Bleir.

On Sunday morning they left by train and arrived in McKeesport and were greeted by two automobiles, one driven by Uncle Tom and one by Mr. Chalfant, who took them to Monessen. They then lived in one-half of a double house on 127 McKee Avenue. It was the third house from Second Street, where Morris had been living alone after Jean married Joseph Spevock and moved to Oakmont, Pa. Morris and his family later moved to 707 Rostraver Street, which was also a one-half of a double house (See photo). Tom, who had been living at 111 Reed Avenue, died on May 5, 1928 of a bleeding ulcer. His wife, Regina, tragically died by suicide in October 1928, when she threw herself in front of a moving train, leaving to survive her, three young sons, Edward, Milton and Bernard. The Keisler family, of East Pittsburgh, was willing to take in the two oldest sons only and Jenny was adamant that the three boys must remain together, so the Orphans' Court of Westmoreland County awarded Morris and Jenny custody of the three boys. Because of its large size, Morris, Jenny and their children moved to the house at 111 Reed Avenue to live with the three boys.

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The house where Sam and Lena had lived on Hathazi Street in Tisa Vylak remained theirs even in 1938. Adolph went back to Hungary in 1938 to visit and went to Nagy Sveylush to straighten out the title to the property. The title to the house had remained in Lena's parents' name all that time. When Sam, Lena and their four sons came to Monessen, Sam opened up a shoe repair shop next door to Check's furniture store. Sam died in 1922 also from a bleeding ulcer, at the age of 38, the same age of Tom when he died. In the same year, their son Louis, age 9, had been peddling papers in Donora between Third and Fourth Street at the freight station. He was crushed between two trains. He is buried in Sam's burial plot in Pricedale.

Three or four months later, Lena and her three remaining sons moved to McKeesport. Bendu, a nickname for Emanuel, at age 12 in 1925, was working for a huckster and was sitting on a tailgate of a truck and was struck and killed by a train. He is buried in an old abandoned cemetery in McKeesport. Lena died shortly thereafter. Ziga took in their two remaining sons, Sam and Morris, who were forced to live in deplorable conditions.

In 1926, Sam joined the Army and it was very difficult for him. In 1927 when Jenny and the children came to Monessen, Sam received a furlough and came to visit them and told them about the conditions he and his brother had to live under with Ziga. While Sam was in the Army, his brother Morris remained living with Ziga. Sam was discharged from the Army in 1928. In the meantime, Morris who had been working for his brother, Tom at the store on Donner Avenue, continued to work there after Tom died in 1928.. He was earning \$35 per week. The store was then sold by Regina's estate to Abe Keisler, her relative from Homestead, who later sold it to Mr. Farber of Crabtree, Pa. He then opened up his own store on Oneida Street after having worked for Holland Furnace Company for a while.

Adolph, who had just returned from California working for his uncle Neiman for a year, leased Tom's store for seven months after Farber had closed it. After the lease expired, he then went to work with his father and brother, Isadore. While Adolph was operating the store on Donner, Schmuell's son Morris worked for him. He remembered that one day, Morris was carrying a sack of corn meal and when asked by Adolph to do something else, he made a smart comment and Adolph fired him. Isaac Weiss, a competitor in Monessen, then hired Morris just to get back at Adolph, merely because he was a competitor. Later Morris worked for Adolph after he opened up a grocery store on Summit Avenue. Morris went to the Army in the 1930's. Sam, who stuttered, started to work for Adolph at the Summit Avenue store in 1937. Sam then married Gertrude Unatin who was from Donora. She was related to Hyman Pollock who had a grocery store on Indiana Avenue in Monessen. He was wealthy and was the founder of Squirt, a popular soft drink. When Tom died on May 5, 1928, his son, Edward, went to live with Morris and Jenny for a few months. Regina had threatened to kill him. Sarah had lived with Regina at night after Tom died. Their son, Milton (Mitzi) recalled one night when she took an ax to a couch. He also remembered the night his mother, Regina, died.

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In October, Adolph had visited with Regina and one hour later she had taken her life by jumping in front of a train. The First National Bank and Trust Company was appointed Trustee. At the Orphans' Court hearing, the Keisler family only wanted one child and Edward didn't want to leave his brothers. He testified that he wanted to live with his Uncle and Aunt, Morris and Jenny. Henry Eisenberg, a pillar in the Jewish community went to the hearing to lend his support. Mr. Eicher was the attorney for First National Bank and the estate. The Judge then granted Morris and Jenny's request to have the three boys live with them.

Shortly thereafter, Morris, Jenny and their children all moved into Tom and Regina's house at 111 Reed Avenue in Monessen. Mitzi recalled Adolph giving him a brown and white Society Brand suit to go to a dance. In 1938, Mitzi, was part of a championship debate team at Monessen High School and was awarded with a trip to California on the Super Chief. Adolph gave him money to take with him. Mitzi also worked for Isadore at his grocery store. Once Mitzi accidentally threw out good oranges with the bad ones and Izzy deducted 10 cents from the 50 cents he paid him. Izzy loaned Mitzi \$10 and made him pay it back. Mitzi remembered passing out the Bergstein Market handbills on the weekends.⁵

BERNAT & JULIANA BELGS TEIN/BELK STEIN

As indicated in the brief introductory history above, Bernat and Julianna lived in Gyure, Sabolcs County Hungary, a town in NE Hungary, Jewish population of 150 in 1880, 31 miles ENE of Nyiergyhaza. They had five children, namely, Zsigmond, Morris, Esther, Samuel and Tom. However, a review of the birth records attached seems to indicate that they may have had other children. Fanie Belgstein was born in Gyure on December 24, See handbill attached.

⁵ See handbill attached.