

Jacob and Amalie Bergman

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach née Kretzmar, about her maternal grandparents, the parents of Beryl who married Noel Kretzmar



Jacob Bergman

My mother's father, Jacob Bergman, was born in 1873, one of the 8 children of **Osser Yitschok** and **Gita Bergman** (nee Immerman) in **Kandau**, a town in **Western Latvia** about 90 miles from Riga in an area known as Kurland or Courland.

Before writing about the family I'm going to write a bit about Courland as I had the feeling that coming from Courland was a privileged position, but I did not know its exact whereabouts, history or culture.

Courland, Latvia

Courland is an area of Latvia just north of the border with Lithuania's Kovno Guberniya. It's the yellow bit in the map below where you see that to the West is the Baltic Sea with year-round open Ports such as Libau and Windau and to the North the Gulf of Riga. (The Port of Riga, just North of Courland can be icebound in winter.) Further East, Courland's northern border is the Dvina River.



Jews gravitated to Courland first from Prussia settling on lands owned by German Barons, then later slipping across the border from Lithuania, as they were able to practice a wider range of occupations, with fewer restrictions. Though the area was annexed by Russia in 1795, it was still greatly influenced by German culture and language. Courland did not become part of the Pale of Settlement, decreed in 1804 for Jews.

Some of the enlightenment of Jews in Germany rubbed off on the Jews of Courland. There were no yeshivot and many Jews rather chose to send their children to the less religious Jewish schools known as Chederim. Here they learned German and Russian in the morning and Hebrew in the afternoon. Some Jewish families sent their children to the local Christian schools and specially aspired for them to go to the German Gymnasium for a wide ranging high school

education. In cultured Jewish families the younger generations were fluent in German as well as well conversant in Russian and French. They were on a par with the intelligent Christian mercantile class of Latvia.

In 1799 a law was ratified according to which the Jews already living in Courland became citizens with the right to reside in the province, to establish communities, and to engage in commerce and crafts. This encouraged migration from Lithuania which was actually illegal. So, their position was promising but always precarious.

100 years later in 1897, the Jewish population of all Latvia reached an impressive 51,000. The positive contribution of the Jewish community to the swift development of industry and trade in Latvia as a whole, in the late 19th century was huge. The biggest woodworking factories, the majority of timber and grain trading, large flax mills, flax export companies and distillery businesses, were in the hands of Jewish business people. Members of the Jewish community owned 10 banks in Riga.

In the province of Courland, important Jewish business firms were in Mitau (the seat of the Courland government) Jacobstadt, Friedrichstadt, and especially in Hasenpot. Tuksum had the advantage of two railway lines meeting there. In the cities the Jews were wholesale dealers in dry and fancy goods, agents, jewellers, etc. The sea-port cities of Libau and Windau were prospering and Jews there did very well. But the inland towns like Zabeln, **Kandau** (where the Bergmans resided), Talsen and their surroundings were economic backwaters in beautiful mountain and lake surroundings – often called the ‘Switzerland of Kurland’. The Jews of such Courland villages followed generally the same trades and professions as Jews in Lithuania and Poland: small traders, peddlers, distillers, and artisans, especially locksmiths and tinsmiths.

After the assassination of the liberal minded and reforming Tsar Alexander II in 1881, a wave of reaction including anti-Semitism hit the Russian Empire. In accordance with new laws, the Jews living in Riga, Mitau, and Libau, whose actual trade was different to their officially registered one, were forced to move back to the Pale of Settlement. Jews were banned from working in Government organizations and their access to university education was restricted.

That is the time when many **Jews emigrated**, mainly to the USA, Great Britain and **South Africa** – as our immediate family did. Families with Jewish Courland origins can be found all over the world. **For those left behind** – like some of our extended family, some joined various socialist political groups ripening for revolution. Various Zionist groups also started operating.

During the WWI, in 1915, the Jews of Kandau – and all Courland were deported at a few days’ notice, by the Russians on suspicion of espionage in favour of Germany. Some 75,000 Jews from Kurland were evicted. into the depth of the Russian Empire. The majority of them stayed and settled in Russia. Those who returned home, found the Jewish communal buildings and privately-owned houses had been destroyed. Latvia became an independent state after the war in 1918, and Jews were tolerated, if not actually welcomed.

By the end of the 1930s, some 93,000 Jews lived in Latvia. Almost half of them, 43,000 people, resided in Riga. Latvia fell under Soviet rule in 1940. All the banks, industrial plants and retail businesses, including the Jewish owned ones, were nationalized. Among the 15,000 Latvian citizens deported to Siberia on the 14th of June 1941, about 2,000 were Jewish.

Nazi troops then occupied Latvia in early July 1941. There are more than 200 sites in Latvia, where mass executions of Jews were carried out during WWII. More than 70,000 Latvian Jews as well as Jews deported from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and other European countries were exterminated here. Sadly, that is what must have happened to many of our close relatives who were not able to emigrate in time. Only 14,000 members of the Latvian Jewish community survived WWII. Jews from other regions of the Soviet Union relocated to post-war Latvia and by 1959, its Jewish population increased to more than 36,000 people.

Latvia became one of the centres of the Zionist, dissident, and Jewish national movements in the Soviet Union. Jewish activists struggled for the right to emigrate to Israel and to openly honour the memory of the Holocaust victims. Many activists were arrested for printing Jewish books, newspapers, and magazines, and learning Hebrew and Jewish history, which were all made illegal under Soviet rule. (some of our relatives were involved and embroiled with this - see below)

In the 1970s, more than 1/3 of Latvian Jews emigrated to Israel, the USA, and Western Europe. That included Beryl's first cousins Dora Zaidin and her Brother Ilya (children of Esther nee Bergman, child no. 7 on our list) whom we later met in Tel Aviv with Dora's daughter pianist Noemy Belinkaya and Ilya's daughter Rina – more about them later too.

Now, to get back to the Bergman family story:

Patriarch, Osser Yitzhak Bergman and Gita (née Immerman)



My mother Beryl (Jacob's 2nd daughter) had this wonderful family picture which was recently sent to me by 2nd cousin, Noemy Belinkaya in Israel. She writes: My grandparents **Esther (nee) Bergman** and her husband **Leib Zaidin** are both standing at the right.' Other people were identified on an overlaid parchment paper in my mother's handwriting. They are of course the patriarch **Osser** and his wife **Gita**. Standing in the middle are their son **David Bergman** and his wife **Dika**, who must have been visiting from Kimberley. The small child is their daughter **Kate (Kettie)**. This would date the picture to about 1913. We think the others are the other daughters, **Beila, Bassia** and **Ettl** (possibly extreme right, seated). The other man seated on the left may be the son, **Ellis** who remained in Kandau to mind the shop. We can't identify the other child. (Jacob is missing from this picture as he and his family were presumably still in Schmidtsdrift)

My great-grandparents – Beryl's grandfather and grandmother, **Osser Yitzchak Bergman b 1850** a religious Jew wearing a Kippa and Kapote and his wife **Gita (nee Immerman)** (whom I am apparently named after) ran a successful grocery store in the Village of Kandau, (now Kandava) Courland. I found a forgotten and very sketchy – but hugely helpful – family tree that Beryl and I had looked at together and annotated, at some stage, about the Bergman family. It shows that the Bergmans had four sons and four daughters. (We are not sure of the order or the dates of their births.) And there was this amazing picture of nearly all.

Our second cousin **Noemy** in Israel, granddaughter of **Esther Bergman**, the child arbitrarily numbered no 7 in the list below, helped to piece together some details of the family that did not end up in South Africa. Another second cousin, **David Friedman**, born in Kimberley in 1935 and now in Los Angeles, and his brother Raymond, now in Canada, grandsons of **David Bergman** (child no 3), have also provided some helpful information about his grandfather who went to South Africa with Jacob. My first cousins, **Alma** and **Brenda** (Hannah's daughters) have also helped. It's not possible to go into too much detail 'sideways' but names and destinations are interesting for the 8 children. In bold are the family that I know and some details I have found out about the others.

The 8 children of Osser and Gita Bergman, Kandau, Courland were:

1. Samuel – we don't know if he married and where he ended up
2. **Jacob b 1873** – our grandfather, was schooled at a cheder, **emigrated to South Africa in 1889** as a teenager with younger brother David and Father. Went first to Rhodesia for a couple of years. Then father returned to Kandau. Jacob and David settled in Schmidtsdrift as store and hotel keeper and port operator. Jacob travelled to Latvia in 1903 to marry **Amalie Friedlander of Libau** in Konigsberg. Jacob and Amalia later moved from Schmidtsdrift into the nearby city of Kimberley. He became a diamond buyer and wholesale merchant serving the farming community. They had four daughters **Hilda**, my mother **Beryl**, **Hannah** and **Eileen**. The daughters all married and lived in Kimberley for all or most of their lives. Jacob and his family including my mother, had been on business trips to Europe and had visited the family in Latvia a few times, including the last time in 1928. Amalie died in 1941 aged 65 and Jacob in 1947 at 74. Both are buried in Kimberley Cemetery (see picture of their graves p 17)
3. **David b 1874** – also went to South Africa as above. He married **Dika Levin from Malmo Sweden** in about 1907. They had two daughters Kettie (Kate) and Siri. David also settled at first in Schmidtsdrift with Jacob. He ran the general store, later also moving to diamonds and to Kimberley. Kate was born in Kimberley and

moved to Durban with husband Judge Joe Friedman. Had two sons, David also born in Kimberley in 1935 who also became a respected judge in Durban then moved to Los Angeles, and Raymond b 1945, in Durban, now in Canada. **David Friedman** wrote that his grandfather David Bergman sadly died in the 1918 flu epidemic in Kimberly aged just 44. His grandson **Raymond Friedman** has sent some documents showing his naturalisation and death, which I will attach. His Swedish wife Anna Dika (nee Levin) also died in Kimberly in about 1943.

4. Ellis – carried on the business in Kandau.
5. Beila – married J Weissman (from Reschnitze?) She is the mother of David, a very famous dentist in Riga and Solomon who became an engineer. Also Vera and Zhenya. They all remained in Latvia and the grandchildren were in concentration camps, but survived. Now some descendants live in America and some in Israel.
6. Bassia – married Mr Yacobson and was the mother of Hilda, Fanny, Rokha, Mally and Mary. They lived in Tukum. Later generations managed to get to Israel.
7. **Esther, b November 1888** married Lev (Leib) Zaidin and lived in Riga and had two children, Dora and her brother Ilya (Eliyah). She died in January 1949. Dora Married 1st Solomon Belinky in 1938, who was sadly killed in WW11. Their daughter **Noemy Belinkaya** is a gifted pianist. Life was not easy for those that remained in Latvia. Ilya emigrated to Israel in 1972, Dora and second husband Zonya and Noemy in 1974.
8. Ettl – Became Mrs Berman. lived in Kandau. Her Husband became a town councillor in 1928. (Dora and Ilya, Esther's children, spent summer holidays with aunt Ettl)

I have written more about Esther's family, her children Dora and Ilya, at the end of this story, on pages 18 and 19, to show, in contrast to the steady progress of those in South Africa, the terrible trials and tribulations that those left behind in Eastern Europe had to endure from German and Russian masters, before, during and after WWII. Fortunately, most of the family survived and many eventually reached Israel.

Jacob Bergman, my mother's father

Jacob is child no 2 on my list above. He was born in 1873 in Kandau in Courland, Latvia. His parents, as we have seen were **Osser Yitzchak Bergman** b c1850 and **Gita (nee Immerman)**. They ran a successful grocery store. (he is not in the picture)

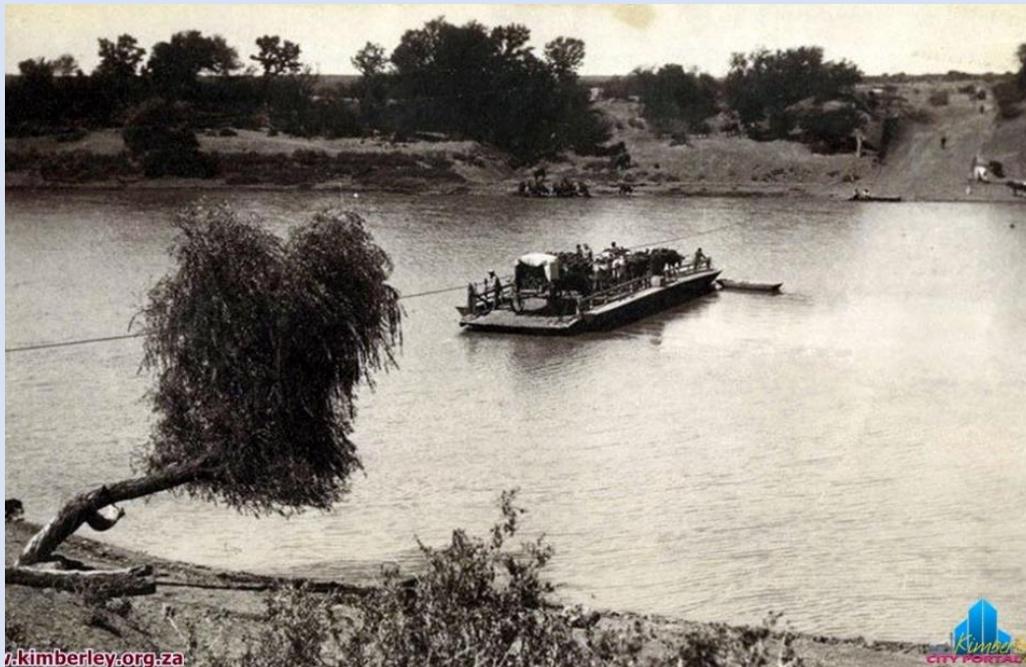
Jacob, according to my mother, **set forth for South Africa as a teenager of 17 in 1889** with his younger brother **David** (only 15) and his father **Osser**. (Raymond Friedman shows by David Bergman's 1902 naturalisation papers that he had been in the Cape Colony for 11 years – so that would indicate that they might have arrived in 1891 – however they spent a couple of

mysterious years in Rhodesia first so that is where the discrepancy lies.)



Jacob and David eventually settled in **Schmidtsdrift** about 60 km west of Kimberley in 1891. (Father Osser then returned to Latvia – a pity he was not able to make a go of it and bring all his family to South Africa).

It was no picnic. Conditions were rough. In Schmidtsdrift, the boys, not even out of their teens, were able to establish a trading store and a hotel with an off-licence which became a hub of camaraderie for commercial travellers, prospectors and farmers from far and wide. This was on the Vaal river on a major route from Kimberley to Campbell and Griquatown. So he also operated the only crossing which was on a 'pont' – a platform pulled across the river on chains



(see left). He also bought a farm in the area which he called 'Bergman's Hope'. Jacob became a specialist in alluvial diamonds – which, as I found out later were to be found along the river in Schmidtsdrift. He became a

respected aluvial diamond buyer and exporter of diamonds (also found, after 1925, in places like Lichtenburg, see <http://www.on-the-rand.co.uk/Diamond%20Grounds/Lichtenburg.htm>). He had business partners in Amsterdam and Antwerp whom he would visit regularly. See pictures of the family in Berlin on page 13 and read more about him in his DFA obituary on page 17.

(You can read more about Kimberley's hinterland in Dan Jacobson's book, 'The Electronic Elephant' where Dan wonderfully describes his travels on the road from Kimberley to all these places and reveals their history).

But why did so many Jews go to the Kimberley area?

After the death of the fairly liberal Tsar Alexander II in 1881, and the accession of Nicholas (Queen Victoria's grandson) oppression and poverty for Jews in the Russian Empire got a whole lot worse. Escaping from economic restrictions and frequent pogroms – attacks on Jewish persons and property, while the police stood idly by and let the thugs have their way, literally millions of Jews miraculously manage to emigrate to the free world, the USA, UK and South Africa between 1880 and 1930. (Their children's contributions to the world of medicine, science, scholarship, arts and business has been immense – incalculable.)

In 1867, diamonds had been discovered on the banks of the Orange and Vaal Rivers, South Africa and people from all over the world flocked in great numbers to this territory (that eventually became a British Colony) to seek their fortunes. Many Western European Jews who were to become very influential in the diamond industry, were among them. Enterprising Eastern European Jews, desperately seeking to escape from economic and physical tyranny, realised that there would be large numbers of people who would need buckets and spades and

other tools, wood and iron to make shelters, shoes, clothing and furniture, food to eat, and horses and carts for travelling etc.

These were things that Jews were used to dealing with at home, being storekeepers, traders and travelling salesmen (peddlers, or in South Africa called 'smouse'). And, there would not only be a large population to service, but also the possibility of finding or dealing in diamonds. So, the area known as Griqualand West, became a beacon and magnet for young Latvian Jews too. The Diamondiferous town that was developing around the four major diamond pipes was named 'Kimberley' in 1873 after the colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley – who could not pronounce the previous name of the farm there Vooruitzicht and thought the name 'New Rush' too vulgar.

By the mid-1870s many of the diggers and nearly half the brokers and buyers of diamonds were Jews. There were also many Jews who ran transport to the fields and who traded goods and services. They also took a prominent role in the social life of the diggings and emerging city. They featured significantly in boxing, racing, theatre, and other entertainments as well as in journalism – and in IDB!

You can see many pictures of the synagogue and read more about the Kimberley Jewish Community on the website <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Synagogues.html> In 1876, the first synagogue in Kimberley was consecrated - but it was already too small for the 1400 Jewish souls in the city by then. The lavish and beautiful 'new' synagogue (pictured below) built with donations from the Jewish Directors of De Beers on land donated by the company, was opened in 1902.



To read more about Jewish life in early Kimberley and the excitement of the early diamond days, you can read my story of Alfred Beit, the respected and much loved financier from a Jewish family in Hamburg, who became a passionate supporter of Cecil John Rhodes: see the link below.

https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Alfred_Beit.html

After the amalgamation of all the 5 Kimberley mines under one company, De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd, in 1888, (the name taken from the original owners of that farm) the diamond fields were no longer a free-for-all. Now the diamond business became an organised and stable industry, employing many people. Kimberley became a 'City' and was the first place in South Africa to have electric streetlights. It had an electric tram, a sanatorium, a library, a museum, a weekend resort with a lake out of town, Alexandersfontein, boxing halls and theatres.



Here is a picture of Dutoitspan Road, Kimberley in 1889 with its electric lights and tram. Tents and then corrugated iron had given way to brick houses and offices.

Most often, as we have seen in our family, the young men ventured forth first. When they arrived off the boat in Cape Town speaking only Yiddish, not English or Afrikaans, there were already experienced people from their hometowns, who, whilst not hurting their own developing businesses, could help them find an opening that would enable them to earn enough money to bring their families out, or to go back to find a wife....

The next generation of Jews, given excellent free education became professionals in the city, the doctors and lawyers. They also became pharmacists and created the meat and fish industries, furniture and clothing shops and contributed to the economy of the city, the surrounding area and the country.

The following generation, my generation, left Kimberley for University – and never returned. We are now spread all over the English-speaking world and Israel, many as leaders in their professions, and in the arts and culture of their countries.

Jacob is ready to find a wife

Jacob was doing well in Schmidtsdrift, and time came to find a wife. So off he travelled back to Latvia – to Libau to find **Amalie Friedlander** – a cultured Lady and concert pianist whom he married in Konigsberg in January 1903, aged 30, and brought her from the cosmopolitan European city to the veld in Schmidtsdrift! She was reputedly, very happy and played the piano in the bar for sing-songs long into the night. Later they moved to Kimberley and lived at 22 Milner Street. (See picture of Loren in front of their house in 1998 on page 17). Four daughters ensued.



Here is a lovely picture I found of the Jacob Bergman family in Kimberley about 1920. l-r at the back, Jacob, Eileen (about 4) and Hilda (about 16) Seated Hannah (about 8) Amalie, and Beryl (about 11).

1. **Hilda** the oldest daughter, b about 1905/6 was at some stage sent to boarding school in Kimberley – Beit House – remember diamond tycoon good old ‘little’ Alfred Beit? **Hilda** married **Nate Hendler** (c1926). Nate first apparently had a car dealership then joined with **Jacob Bergman** (always known by the sisters as ‘Poppy’ or I suppose ‘Pappy’) in his diamond buying business, visiting sites like the Lichtenburg alluvial fields. Also with Jacob, Nate ran the wholesale firm Whiteman and Co in Kimberley serving the farming community. They had three children, **Owen** b c1928 (dec), **Lola** b c1932 and **Herbert** (b

Jan 1936). Hilda Died in Johannesburg.

2. **Beryl (my mother)** b 1909 lived first in Schmidtsdrift, having a governess with her sister Hannah and cousin Kate. The family moved to Kimberley in 1920 and she spent the rest of her life there. She joined her father in his diamond buying office. In February 1935, she married Dr **Noel Krezmar** (see their wedding picture on the website). He practiced first as a GP and then in 1948 became Kimberley's first Specialist Surgeon. Children: **Theodore** b 1936 who also became a surgeon then a health insurance executive, lives in Johannesburg with wife Gwenda (nee Cohen) and three married sons. **Geraldine** b 1940 who was an art teacher and then became the founder Director of the Jewish Music Institute now at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She is married to Ronnie Auerbach a retired ENT specialist (see wedding pic 1962). They live in London where their three children were born. Beryl died in July 1989 aged 79. Noel moved to Johannesburg after her death, to be nearer to son Theo who was living in Springs. He died in 1998 aged 98 and a half. Both he and Beryl are buried in Kimberley. **(I will continue story of my parents, Beryl and Noel Kretzmar, in a new section – after I have written about the Kretzmar grandparents.)**
3. **Hannah** b 31 July 1913 went to Cape Town University and became a ballet dancer and teacher in Kimberley. She married Attorney **Jack Frank** (see the Frank family of Kimberley here <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Grant.html>). Hannah died 20 February 1986 in Kimberley. Jack died in Johannesburg in 2003. They are both buried in the Kimberley Cemetery. They had two daughters **Alma** b 1942 (now living in Auckland NZ) and **Brenda** b 1946 (now living in Connecticut USA.)
4. **Eileen** b c1919. Married **Archie Sandler**. Lived in Kimberley and Archie worked with Nate Hendler at Whiteman and Co. Later went to Johannesburg as a teacher at the new King David Jewish High School where his brother Norman was Headmaster. He died quite shortly after they moved. 2 children **Jonty** in Johannesburg/Botswana and **Ella** living in Johannesburg. Eileen died in about 1987. Both buried in Johannesburg.

Ironically (or maybe they knew it) in the 21st Century **diamonds were found in Schmidtsdrift** and a mine was declared comprising six contiguous farms along the western bank of the Vaal River (maybe on his very land.) The operations were alluvial, operated by Lonrho and produced 16,805 carats of diamonds between 2006 and 2008 including 338 stones larger than 5 carats in size, amongst which was a rare 235 carat stone, before the company decided to move on to Angola where the pickings were easier and more spectacular.

Amalie Bergman, (nee Friedlander) My mother's mother

Amalie Bergman, nee Friedlander was born in 1876 Libau. We knew hardly anything about her family. We knew that Benny Friedlander of Johannesburg, (married to Rita) is related to us. David Friedman tells me Amalie had a brother called Adolf Friedlander who married Julie Goldberger, daughter of Benjamin Goldberger. They were the parents of Bennie, Max, Ida and Molly. Benny must be named after his grandfather Benjamin Goldberger who came to SA. (Julie was the sister of David Friedman's paternal grandmother Dora Friedman nee Goldberger. See David's note at the end regarding the Goldberger Family in the USA.)

Bennie's brother Max lived in Windhoek. His sister Molly married Walter Levy. they first lived in Parow then Cape Town. We knew Molly well (first cousin to my mother). I stayed in their house in Clairmont with their three children Leslie, Ruth and Philip when I was at University in Cape Town in 1960, while Molly and Walter went away for a few weeks. Nate Hendler's mother was apparently also a Friedlander. All those mentioned are very tall. We had our 'Aunty Zara' who lived first in Muizenberg then Kimberley, a widow of Mr Rosen whose sons Bobby were (also rather tall) and Bernard (not so tall). But nobody found out how she was related to us! Was she

Amalie's sister- or a cousin? It seems she was Amalie's sister.



I was therefore delighted to find some old pictures (that had some writing on the back) on which I had also added some words. I must have looked at them as some stage with my mother. In the picture on the left, there is a woman and baby with an older woman. On the back of this picture is says in maybe Hilda's or Lola's handwriting: 'Masha, Amalia younger sister and mother – Lowenstein'. Could Masha's surname be Lowenstein? Could this older woman be our great-grandmother? Where there is a photographer's name or address behind the pictures, it has **Daugavpili**. So, I looked this up and it seems that in Yiddish and Russian its **Dvinsk**: So, they must have lived in Dvinsk. This is what I found out about Dvinsk:

Dvinsk

Dvinsk (Ger., Dünaburg; among Jews, also called Dinaburg), was the largest town in south eastern Latvia. Jews had settled there in the mid-1770s. Throughout the nineteenth century and up to World War I, Jews constituted 50 percent of Dvinsk's total population (increasing from about 1,500 persons in 1800 to about 56,000 by 1914). They lived mainly in the Altstadt, Plan, and Plezer quarters.

Since Dvinsk was an important railroad junction and large military centre, many local Jews made their living from commerce and provisioning the army. A large percentage of the town's Jews worked in factories established by Jewish entrepreneurs producing wood products (such as matches), cigarettes, and leather goods, as well as for construction projects.

Although culturally Dvinsk belonged to the Lithuanian sphere of influence—with most Jews adhering to the Misnagdic trend—there was nevertheless a relatively large Hasidic community in the town. This set of circumstances often led to bitter disputes and even to the establishment of separate charitable institutions for each of the two factions.

Dvinsk's Jewish educational institutions were the traditional cheder, Talmud Torah, and yeshivot, Although as early as 1851, several Haskalah-inspired (more enlightened) educational institutions began to operate alongside these. These included liberal arts schools for boys and

girls, a vocational school, a religious school for girls, a Yiddish-language school, and a *cheder metukan* (“reformed” elementary school). Jewish youths also attended non-Jewish secondary schools.

During World War I, more than half of the Jewish residents left Dvinsk. When Latvia was established as a republic in 1918, the Jewish population of the town numbered about 12,000. In the interwar period, economic conditions began to deteriorate, partly due to policies adopted by the Latvian government. The burden on Jewish social welfare agencies grew significantly, leading to a major wave of emigration to South Africa, the United States, and Palestine. In the first weeks after the town’s occupation by German troops in June 1941, many Jews succeeded in escaping. Those who remained were subjected to cruel abuse; many were murdered by the Germans and their Latvian collaborators. At the end of July 1941, the town’s Jews were forced into a ghetto, and during the period August 1941–May 1942 most were murdered in the nearby Poguļanka and Peski forests. Collaborating with the Germans in the murder of Dvinsk’s Jews were Latvian members of the Commando Arajs, who came from Riga especially for this purpose. After World War II, only about 2,000 Jews remained in Dvinsk; by the end of the 1990s there were only about 400 Jews, with one functioning synagogue.

I’m sad to say, I think this is what happened to our family from Dvinsk.



In this picture above, the child is about 3 or 4. Mother, husband and grandmother are looking at the child. On the back it says: Masha and Husband and Mother. In my handwriting is added: Mother = Cila – Amalia nee Friedlander’s younger sister ‘. This confused me now, clearly I can see that it’s Mascha who is

the younger sister and Cila is her mother. Below are later pictures taken in a garden. It seems to be the same garden a few years apart. Could it be their own estate or a park? Behind the first one it says: ‘Granny’s Granny, Aunt, Uncle and Cousin’. So, if Lola is explaining the family to her daughters Karilyn etc then Hilda is ‘Granny’ and the old lady is Hilda’s Granny - and Masha is Hilda’s Aunt etc.

In the picture below, probably from about 1930, the family look very well-to-do and cultured. all in good quality coats and hats. Behind this picture, is just says ‘Masha and Husband’. Husband and child are not named on any of the pictures.



So here we must believe that we have discovered lovely pictures of our great- grandmother Cila Friedlander. Cila, unlike Amalie is quite delicate and petite. She has a very fine and sensitive face. Masha is tall, taller than 'husband'. (That figures if she is a Friedlander – though Cila is not tall – perhaps it was Mr Friedlander that was the tall one.)

The last picture that we have of the family (below) is dated August 1939. It was sent to me by Alma from her mother Hannah's album. (We don't know who the other woman in the picture is.) In 1939, Amalie would have been 63. Mascha could be maybe 45-50, the child perhaps 15. (looks a bit like Hannah) Supposing Cila could have been 90, it's certainly possible that she was the mother of Amalie and Mascha, as is indicated in the scripts behind the pictures.

I later found a letter from 'Mascha' from 'Dinaburg' to



Beryl in 1936, after my brother Theo was born, congratulating her. She says: 'I hope Beryl dear that your baby is as fine and nice as you are'. She signs it from Issai, presumably her husband, Irene (the child) 'and myself Mascha'. She hopes for a letter from Beryl soon...

Overseas Trips to see the family



Here is a picture of Jacob and Amalie Bergman on a business trip and also a **visit to the family in Europe in 1928**. They are in Berlin with Beryl, left, Eileen middle and Hannah right. Hilda must have been married already. Below right **Beryl and Hannah** have a 'souvenir' from Berlin Zoo. Beryl seated with lion cub, looks a lot like me. (Or rather, I suppose, I look like her!)

Sad to think that these members of our Friedlander family, Amalie's sister Mascha Levenstein, her husband Issai, child Irene and our great-grandmother Cila were murdered in 1941. My mother spoke very sadly of how the soldiers dragged her family out from their houses including the over 90-year-old and shot them. Alma and Brenda both have middle names beginning with M. maybe they are after Mascha? I wonder why nobody is named after Cila?

I had not realised before how close we were to the Holocaust – being shielded from the worst in South Africa. How fortunate we were that our grandparents braved the journey into the unknown and struggled to find a footing in a strange land, made good so that our parents could thrive, and we in turn could have such a wonderful life of sunshine, free education and opportunity. Now our families are flung out again in South Africa and also in the UK, New Zealand and the USA, but we are mindful of the bravery and courage of those who paved the way.



Beryl grew into a beautiful woman and we can read more of her story from their joint life when they married in 1935, in chapter 5 of the **Noel Kretzmar story** [Noel Kretzmar Story.pdf](#)





Here is a great picture I found of three Bergman and two Kretzmar sisters and children in Kimberley probably in c1937/8. In the back row are: Beryl's sister Hilda Hendler, Noel's sister Ashne Kretzmar, and Beryl's sister Hannah Bergman. In the front is Beryl's friend Bertie Sperber (nee Stusser – from Oudtshorn), Beryl Kretzmar, Hilda's son Owen Hendler, Noel's sister Freda Frank, Beryl's mother Amalie Bergman, with Beryl's baby Theodore on her lap, and Beryl's cousin Katie Friedman (nee Bergman) with her son David Friedman on her lap. The girls in the middle row are Hilda's daughter Lola Hendler, Freda's daughter Taubene Frank and Bertie's daughter Shirley Sperber. (Somehow, Hilda's younger son Herbert is missing from this picture)



Here are Jacob and Amalie in 1937 with three daughters, back l-r, Hannah, Beryl and Hilda and their 4 grandchildren so far, Owen, Lola and Herbert Hendler and Theo Kretzmar



Here is a picture of the **4 Bergman girls even more grown up in the late 1950s**. From the left: Beryl, Nate's sister Thelma Cohen (nee Hendler), Nate Hendler, (Hilda's husband) Hilda with behind her, Nates brother Alec Hendler, Chrissie's, (absent from the picture) husband, then, Hannah and Eileen. Looks like it was someone's wedding re Hilda's corsage and Nates buttonhole. Maybe Lorraine Hendler's to Bobby David?



Amalie is pictured here on the right with her sister in law, Dika, David Bergman's widow. in the 1930s (wearing a silver fox stole from Koseff (a relative's) Furs, which I still have)

Amalie died 11 December 1941 of a carcinoma on her leg aged 65. I don't remember her at all, but I do remember, as a 20 or so-month-old standing on a box next to her bed in the porch of 22 Milner Street (in the picture below, through the door behind Loren's head). She had a white counterpane. I think Hannah had it afterwards.

Jacob thereafter, lived with Hilda at 7 Lodge Road. He died on 8 February 1947 at our house aged 74. They are both buried in the West End Cemetery in Kimberley. The four daughters used to visit their graves together every Sunday morning. I often accompanied them, and we would all have tea at Aunty Hilda's after arranging

our flowers on the graves. My daughter Loren is standing between the two graves on a visit to Kimberley in 1998. There was no family left in Kimberley to put flowers anymore!



Loren is standing outside 22 Milner Street where Jacob and Amalie lived in Kimberley. She was always interested in being the custodian of the family heritage and history. Now I am doing it for her, and for members of the family and extended family who may be interested in years to come as Loren sadly died of cancer in December 2011.

Here is the obituary of Jacob, that appeared in the Diamond Fields Advertiser in February 1947

DEATH OF MR JACOB BERGMAN

The death occurred in Kimberley on Sunday [8 February 1947] of Mr Jacob Bergman, one of the best known and oldest diamond buyers on the Diamond Fields.

Mr Bergman settled in Griqualand West in 1887 and except for a few years spent in Rhodesia, he concentrated all his energies and activities in this area. After conducting the business of the hotel and store at Schmidtsdrift for a number of years, he came to Kimberley where he established himself as a diamond buyer and exporter of alluvial diamonds and was a well-known and respected figure on the alluvial fields at the Cape and Transvaal. His judgement of diamonds was valued very highly by dealers and merchants in Europe and America.

Throughout his life, Mr Bergman showed an intense interest in the creative aspect of farming and for the last 40 years, the most difficult in farming history in South Africa, his perseverance and progressive ideas were an inspiration and example to farmers of the plateau area of Griqualand West.

Mr Bergman was one of the oldest members of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation and will be missed by his many friends and all who knew him. He leaves four married daughters, all living in Kimberley, Mesdames N Hendler, N Kretzmar, J Frank and A Sandler.



The Esther Bergman family story

Unlike Jacob and David Bergman (children 2 and 3 in the family picture) that managed to emigrate to South Africa in 1889 (and despite the rawness of the country found a way to make a good living, benefitting from freedom and no outside restrictions on their activities and free secular education for their children) those left in Latvia had to run the gauntlet of their repressive Latvian, Russian and German masters. Fortunately, it seems that most of the Bergman family survived many hardships, and many eventually made their way to Israel.

Esther (child no 7) as we have listed her, married **Arie Leib Zaidin** in 1912 in Riga. (Both are standing on the top right of the family picture on page 3.) He was a merchant of the Second Guild and had more freedom to travel from town to town in Tsarist Russia and to work at professions he liked. They had two children, Dora, born in 1913

and Eliyahu (Ilya) in 1916 – in the middle of the first world war.

Here is a picture I found of Esther (nee Bergman b 1888) and her husband, Leib Zaidin, with their children Dora b 1913 (Noemy's mother) about 18 and Ilya about 15 born 1916. Noemy was very excited to see this picture from c1931.

Living in Riga, the family were not forcibly evicted as many Jews of Courland were in 1915. Their home was secular and strongly Zionist. The family spoke Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian and German. Dora studied Biology for three years at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem and in 1938 on vacation back in Riga, she married her love, Solomon Belinky.

He was an engineer and his diploma project was electricity at the Latvian National Theatre. He also taught physics, mathematics and Hebrew at school and was loved by his students and other teachers. He was a walking encyclopaedia. The young couple had planned to go back to Palestine, but due to the death of his father they could not go. Their daughter Noemy was born in Riga in March 1939.

As WW2 approached, fear gripped the Jewish population of Latvia. The whole family fled Riga. They were lucky to get on to the last train in the very last days of June, and escape Latvia into Russia. All the way to the railway station there was shooting from the windows by Latvians. They had to leave all their property behind. Germans bombarded the train on its route through Pskov to Kolkhoz Delovo, Ivanovo district.

There Ilya, together with Dora's husband Solomon Belinky joined the Russian army and served in the Latvian Division. In December 1942 Solomon was sadly killed in action at the battle of Staraya Russa. Ilya sustained a very bad injury to his left elbow and nearly had to have his arm amputated. Fortunately, at the last moment the professor arrived, and it was saved (as he was left handed).

Grandparents Esther and Leib with Dora and baby Noemy, had to keep moving on their own, looking for a safe haven, sadly, without the help of the men in their family. During their travels via Gorky on Volga, and Molotov in the Ural Mountains the small child Noemy fell desperately ill and nearly died. Eventually they settled in Kirov for the duration of the war. After his recovery and release from hospital, Ilya joined them in Kirov. Unfortunately, grandfather Leib died there from hunger.

After the war, Ilya went back to Riga, and managed to get back the family flat. So, the family that had survived, grandmother Esther, mother Dora, her brother Ilya and child Noemy were able to return to Riga and live together.

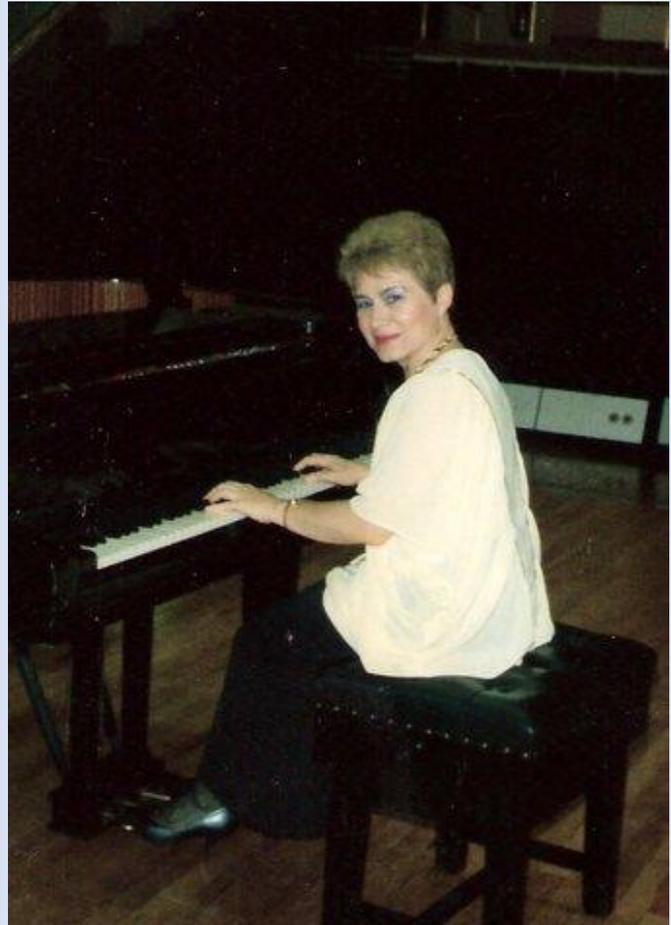
Before she was born Noemy's father had said: 'If it's a boy he'll be an engineer, but if it's a girl - she'll become a pianist'. Noemy writes:

'I started my piano studies at the age of 5 and a half. We returned to Riga and I went to study with Dora Braun who had also been my mother's teacher in her youth. For 12 years, from fifth grade and till the end of the school and Conservatory (now it's called Academy) I studied with professor Nikolai Dauge, friend and colleague of Scriabin, Medtner and Rachmaninov. I studied also with Professors Feinberg, Flier, Bashkirov in Moscow and Serebriakov in Leningrad and years later with Louis Kentner in London. I taught piano at the music college in Liepaja (Libau) and in my own School in Riga and worked as a soloist and accompanist at the Latvian

Philharmonic Society. I continued my concert and teaching work when we came to Israel in 1974.

In August 1978 I met my cousin Geraldine and her family from London when they visited Israel. Geraldine heard my radio broadcast there and decided to help me. I'll be always grateful to her for everything she has done for me. In 1980 I went abroad and played a recital in Antwerp and then my debut in London at the Purcell Room. I passed my BBC audition on my first visit and made numerous studio and live recordings. I spent many years in London, staying with Geraldine, performing at the Royal Albert Hall, Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Purcell Room and at BBC recitals and also at the Buxton festival in Derbyshire.

I recorded a cassette of works by Bax, Franck and Scriabin. I also made programmes for the BBC Russian Service – portraits of musicians. I participated in European Latvians Festival in Helsingborg, Sweden, playing solo pieces and piano duo at the opening concert. For many years I've played chamber music, solo recitals and with orchestra here in Israel.



Here we see Noemy after one of her BBC recitals



This picture left is when Noemy (right) and I first met with her mother Dora (daughter of Esther Bergman) in Ramat Gan in 1978.

Back in Riga, Ilya resumed his (illegal) work of helping thousands of Jews to leave the Soviet Union and reach Palestine. In 1946 the KGB came to the family flat and arrested him. He did not have a fair trial, he was convicted by 'Troika' Special Council. He spent many years in the notorious KGB prisons in Moscow and then in the camps far North in the Arctic Circle.

In 1949 Dora met a friend from her youth Zonya (Haim) Shmuilovich who became her second husband. Also in 1949 grandmother Esther died and was buried at Shmerli Jewish cemetery in Riga.

In March 1951 Ilya was at last released from the camp in Salekhard. He was not allowed to live in big towns and worked in Veljsk, Arkhangelsk district. The KGB followed him everywhere. After some years in Veljsk he was transferred to Daugavpils (Dvinsk) and after that to Riga. In 1962 he married Eleonora Magid. They had met in Moscow where she taught German in the Polygraph Institute. She was born in Dvinsk and as a young woman still in her teens, went through ghettos and concentration camps in Latvia, Estonia, and Germany. She was liberated by Americans from Bergen-Belsen. None of her family survived the Holocaust.



Above we see our family in Jerusalem in 1978, with Rina and Ilya (centre), Ronnie and Anthony 12, left and Geraldine and Loren 15 right.

In 1972 Ilya and his family got permission to leave the Soviet Union (Latvia was one of its 16 republics). Ilya worked at 'Solel Bone' - the famous building company and they lived in Jerusalem with their daughter Rina. Dora, Zonya and Noemy emigrated to Israel in 1974.

'Ilya and Elya Zaidin's daughter **Rina**, grew up and studied in Israel to PhD. She and husband Shai Ashkenazi now live in Minneapolis where she is the Academic Director, of MCFAM (Minnesota Centre for Financial and Actuarial Mathematics) at the School of Mathematics, University of Minnesota. Her husband Shai is also a Professor at the University and has a laboratory there. Their youngest son Yuval, 24 in August 2018, is a student at the University. Their older son Amit studied at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and now continues at the Weizmann Institute and is working. He lives in Rehovot with his wife Doudou (real name Pengyuan Hu). She works at "Meitar", Israel's leading International Law Firm. They married in China in August 2018. What a brilliant family. (see the wedding pictures below).

Ilya died in 1999. He and his wife are buried together at kibbutz Kfar Blum. Dora died in Ramat Gan in 2008.



Here are some comments from cousins and friends who have read and contributed to the story

From: Alma Steinberg, **Sent:** 31 August 2018

Geraldine, you have done an amazing job finding all this information and putting it all together. I am very impressed by your story about the Bergman family. I now have a much clearer picture of this period of history and how it relates to our family. It is especially important that we should all know about what happened to some members of the family during the Holocaust and to preserve the memory of those who perished during that sad time. I am sorry I was not able to be of much help in this connection but, like everyone else, I did not think of asking questions until it was too late. My Mom did not talk much about her family, but I have a strong feeling that she did tell me that her mother and Aunty Zara were sisters. It's a pity we know so little about Amalia's side of the family. I think the best person to ask would be Lola. I am now reading The Electronic Elephant and finding it very interesting

Love, Alma

~~~~~

**From:** Trevor Toubé **Sent:** 02 September 2018

Thanks for another Newsletter (19) Geraldine where you flag up the Bergman story.

Kandau is now called Kandava. It is near both Tulsī and Tukums, which is where my Toubé grandfather is believed to come from. I think I have already told you that your Bergman grandfather pretty much kept my father and his family alive after my grandfather died at an early age, leaving nothing but debts.

When my grandfather, Philip Toubé [probably originally Taubé or Taub] died in 1904 at the age of 43, my grandmother was left with nothing but debts and with some 7 children to support. She received help both from the local Jewish community and from individual members of that community. The family story is that at the time, David Bergman [see Child no 3 on the Berman Family list] who had travelled to SA on the same ship as Philip, and was trading in Schmidtsdrift with Jacob as Bergman Brothers, agreed to buy Philip's general dealers' store in Douglas and other assets, including the debts, of Philip's estate, thus providing some money for my grandmother. They helped her to continue to run the Douglas store until the oldest son was able to take over. This son sadly drowned when my father was still a schoolboy, whereupon my father had to leave school to run the business.

Be well. Trevor

~~~~~

From: Jennifer Hendler **Sent:** 05 September 2018 19:00

Dear Geraldine

Herbert and I are in awe at how much you must have researched into the Bergman History every time we read it there is a snippet we missed the first time round!!!!

I was reminded of how close the four Bergman sisters were and how they would get together for tea at Lodge Road plus Connie David of course. I presumed they met there as Hilda was the eldest – and also the only one who did not have a driver's license. I shall always remember them ❤️ Thank You from us both for this wonderful project which is greatly appreciated....
Love, Jennifer

~~~~~

**From:** Noemy, **Sent:** 13 September 2018 23:22

Dear Geraldine

You are absolutely incredible doing this family research and writing the history. It's so interesting to find out all the family ties... And You were lucky not to be born in Latvia or Lithuania and not to go through Holocaust... Therefore there are many descendants of Bergman Family I even don't know... It's a pity that there is no one to tell more about our family in Latvia...

I can only say to You: Hats off!!! I admire You even more than before!

Hugs and kisses, Noemy.

~~~~~

From: David Friedman, **Sent:** 13 September 2018 17:25

Dear Geraldine

What a great job you did.

I read every word of it with increased fascination. Some of it I knew but most was an absolute revelation.

Much love, David

~~~~~

**From:** Ingrid Steinberg, **Sent:** 14 September 2018 18:31

Thank you Geraldine! This is an incredible and fascinating gift to us and our children — who as the children and great-great grandchildren of migrants will naturally want to know where they come from. Much appreciated.

Ingrid

**From:** David Friedman **Sent:** 17 September 2018

Again, so very interesting. I agree entirely with Ingrid.

One bit of trivia that you coming from a medical family might find interesting is something essentially affecting my family but touches on yours by marriage as it were. The maiden name of my father's mother was Dora Goldberger. She had 3 sisters one of whom was Julie who married Adolph Friedlander, Amalia's brother. Anyhow Dora's father was Benjamin Goldberger he would have been Bennie Friedlander's grandfather after whom no doubt Bennie was named. Benjamin Goldberger was one of about 8 siblings who left Hungary, Benjamin coming to SA but all fo the other siblings going to the US. The son of one of those siblings was a Dr Joseph Goldberger (he would have been a first cousin of my grandmother Dora. Joseph Goldberger was a most famous research doctor who is credited with the cure for pellagra and about whom many books have been written and in fact a battleship "USS Goldberger" was named after him. He was nominated 5 times for a Nobel Prize. If anybody is interested there is an long and interesting biography on him in Wikipedia. I met his son then about 95 some 20 years ago in Austin Texas.

Fast well and all the best to you and your family.

David

~~~~~

From: C J Sussman, **Sent:** 22 October 2018

Dear Geraldine,

Thanks for the info on your family, which I found most interesting, having been associated with several members over the years.

Owen and I were very friendly, so I naturally got to know Hilda and Eileen a young schoolgirl (I was only 5 years younger than she was). Natalie and Eileen were close friends, and I was associated with Jack and Archie through Rotary, and of course the pony club. I well recall, as a schoolboy during holidays,

I often accompanied my father (who had many farms in the surrounding area) to the stock fairs at Griquatown. Our first stop (6am) was at the Day and Night café, where we bought “rockbuns” (favourite with both my dad and myself) and then Bloom’s Bakery to buy a dozen loaves of bread for the herders of any livestock that we might buy at the Stock Fair.

Then on to Griquatown and across the very pont across the Vaal at Schmidtsdrift that you describe in your article. I crossed many times and was always excited when doing so. Natalie says (as I did previously) you should have written a book, but future generations will appreciate the trouble and time you spent researching your data.

With kind regards and best wishes.

Cecil.

Bergman, Jacob and Amalie

Researched and compiled by granddaughter Geraldine Auerbach MBE, with

Also the story of **Esther née Bergman and Leib Zaiden** who stayed behind in Latvia.

thanks to her granddaughter Noemy Belinkaya for this contribution and to

other family contributors and commentators.

London, 2018