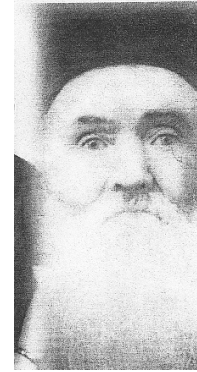


## How Israel Feldbin Got the Best of Count Potocki by Zalman "Sol" Feldbaum (1899 - 1984)

Our Feldbin ancestors originally came from Brod, Galicia, formerly Poland, before the Napoleonic invasion, and settled in Pogost near Berezin, County of Igumen, State of Minsk. I remember my grandfather Israel Feldbin who lived with us after the death of his second wife, Enta, from 1880 to 1905. He was 96 when he died. I was six years old when he died and I remember him vividly. As one of the youngest it was my privilege to share the same bedroom with him, help him to undress before bedtime and dress him at daybreak.



*Reb Israel  
Feldbin*

Grandfather was a successful businessman all his life. His occupation was manufacturing turpentine and lumber business. He spoke a fluent Polish and Russian. Grandfather's last business deal was in approximately 1863 when he travelled to Warsaw. He found out that Count Alfred Potocki was in financial difficulties, as he was a hedonist and lived most of the time in Paris. "Wine, Women, Gambling and Song" was his motto.

Count Potocki owned the virgin forest encompassing several counties that was called "Libushcina." Grandfather managed to raise 10,000 roubles, which included my father's dowry, and leased for a 25-year period the right to all the Linden trees, which were used for the "bast" (plant fibre) that peasants used to make ropes and the sandals called in Russian "Lapti."



*Count Alfred  
Potocki*

This deal was as stupendous as the Alaska Oil Strike! When the rest of Count Potocki's family found out about this contract, they had the Count declared insane and invalidated the contract. A lawyer in Minsk by the name of Maskileiso handled the case. In 1910, five years after my grandfather's death and after 47 years of litigation, the descendants of Count Potocki - his son Roman Potocki and his grandson Jerzy Potocki who was Ambassador to the USA before the fall of Poland, and the rest of the Potocki family settled the case.

To this day I do not know what the settlement was. All I know is that in Pogost they called us "The New Millionaires." But the money didn't last long. In 1912, when my brother David was called to military service, the last 3,000 roubles were used to keep him out of the army.

### **Sources:**

Painting by Jan Matejko of Count Alfred Józef Potocki (1817 -1889)

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