

Snippets from the Laidman Family Story

These are bits of history about the Laidmans in America and Lithuania that are notable, important or interesting. For additional details, see relevant numbers in the Laidman Family History Series and/or the entries for mentioned individuals on FamilySearch.org.

Early Years in Cleveland

- **Oldest generation of Laidmans.** Ruben (Robert) and Rose Laidman, for whom the “Descendants of ...” Facebook group is named, were *not* the oldest generation of Laidmans in America. That distinction goes to Robert’s parents, Abram Josef “Joseph” and his wife, Tauba “Toby” (nee Iushkovski/Yaskofsky), along with his sister Fruma Leia and her husband Elko Iushkovski (later known as Alex Yaskofsky/Kofsky), and their sister Roche Gittel (about whom few details are known).
- **Immigrated in 1887 ... maybe.** It is not certain when or how the Laidmans and Yaskofskys came from Lithuania. The 1900 federal census reported the year as 1887, but reports by family members in later records vary wildly. It is likely their travel was orchestrated by Fruma Leia’s husband, Elko, who was a merchant in Lithuania. He was the twin brother of Tauba.
- **Inter-marrying with other families.** The marriages of Ruben and Tauba and Fruma Lei and Elko/Alex in Lithuania were the first of several sets of marriages between Laidmans and other families. In America, Ruben and Rose’s son Jack married Edith Ginsberg while his younger brother Benjamin married Edith’s sister, Ruth. A third instance occurred about the same time in Lithuania when two Laidman sisters wed men from the Zegarski/Dizgarski family.
- **Tenement togetherness.** The 1900 federal census reported that six families of the Laidman and Yaskofsky/Kofsky clans – 13 adults and 10 children -- lived in 5 units in a building at 53 Cherry Street in downtown Cleveland near East 14th Street and Broadway. The now-demolished building stood on land now occupied by Cleveland’s main post office complex.
- **Junk dealers and produce peddlers,** When Alex (the former merchant), his son Bennie and Ruben Laidman’s father Joseph arrived in Cleveland, they all earned their livings as junk dealers. Ruben became a fruits and vegetables peddler, along with Alex’s other son, Herman, and Ruben’s son-in-law Louis Ross, husband of daughter Fannie Laidman. They were also called “hucksters” because they sold their produce off carts in the neighborhood. Ruben collected and sold scrap metal during World War I; he later collected and sold paper and rags.
- **Tailors in the family.** Ruben’s brother Charles was a tailor who owned his own shop and manufactured overalls. Another Cleveland tailor, Ellis Ginsberg, was the father of two daughters, Edith and Ruth, who became the brides of Ruben’s sons Jack and Benjamin. A cousin, Sore Leidman (later Sarah Perlman), became a finisher in Cleveland’s garment

industry after she immigrated in 1910 and later worked as a sewing machine operator in Chicago. In southwest Lithuania, distant cousin Zlata (later Sylvia Wexler) was trained as a dress maker before coming to America, while her cousin Moshe worked his entire life as a tailor.

- **Invention of folding table-top mats.** Charles Laidman used his knowledge of commercial sewing to start (with a partner) a business that manufactured heat-protective pads for dining room tables. In 1920 he filed for a U.S. patent for *folding* table mats that were more convenient to store and use. At the time people did not understand the danger of the insulation material used in mats produced by his Empire Asbestos Table Mat Company.

Ruben and Rose Laidman's Children and Descendants

- **Eleven children.** Ruben and Rose had 11 offspring – all born in America between 1899 and 1917. Two died as children: Henry, age 8 months, succumbed to marasmus (severe malnourishment and weight loss), a common problem among infants in 1908. Isador, age 5, was struck by an automobile on the busy street where the family lived in 1922. Both are buried in Chesed Shel Emeth Cemetery (Ridge Road Cemetery #1) in Brooklyn.
- **Nine children married.** All nine of their children who reached adulthood got married -- one of them twice. Sadie and Albert wed immigrants who came to America with their parents. Jack, Benjamin, Gertrude, Morris, Robert and Leroy married first-generation, American-born children of immigrant parents. Mary first wed a fourth-generation American, (who later was committed and died in a mental hospital), but later wed a Swedish immigrant. Only two – Mary and Gertrude – married outside the Jewish faith.
- **24 grandchildren.** Of Robert and Rose's nine children who married, two do not have descendants. The other seven parented a total of 24 children born between 1917 and 1952. Half of them are still alive today.
- **Military service.** Son Jack Laidman was the only family member to serve in the military during World War I and fought in the infantry in France. His brothers Benjamin and Albert enlisted in the U.S. Navy submarine corps and the Marines in the 1920s. Two grandchildren, Sanford (Sam) and Bernard (Bernie), served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. (The family's only known WWII casualty was Pfc Jerome "Jerry" Abraham, the son of niece Sarah Perlman. He was killed in the crash of a military transport plane in Australia in 1943.)
- **Daughters-in-law.** Prior to marrying into the family, Ruben and Rose's daughters-in-law worked in a variety of jobs before becoming full-time homemakers. Notable among them was Sarah Wolinetz, the future wife of son Albert Laidman, who worked as a public outreach librarian in Cleveland and delivered books to patrons aboard one of the city's first motorized bookmobiles.
- **Electricians' legacy.** Five of Ruben and Rose's six sons who grew to adulthood became electricians by trade. Laidmans have now worked for a century as electricians in Cleveland, beginning with son Jack in 1921. His brothers Benjamin, Albert, Morris and Robert (2012-2000) each later opened their own electrical businesses in the 1930s and 1940s in Ohio and California. After World War II, Jack brought his sons Sam and Bernie into the business at

Doan Electric. In the 1980s, Robert Laidman's son Ted joined and began managing his father's business, while Ted's son Scott later owned a Mr. Electric franchise. Sam's sons Gary and Ken followed in their grandfather's and father's footsteps by working at Doan and are still employed in the electrical contracting business, along with Ken's son Kenny Jr. Meanwhile, Gary's son Michael specializes in wiring temperature control systems in buildings.

- **Extensions of the family's electric connection:** Robert's son Barry earned a degree in electrical engineering and worked his way up to vice-president at Midland Electric, Inc. a manufacturer and distributor of electrical equipment. Ben's son Richard also earned a degree on in electrical engineering but spent his career designing audio-visual and acoustics systems. Ken's son Adam similarly began his work life by installing A-V and sound systems. After moving to Las Vegas from Los Angeles, Morris's daughter Janie Lynn and son Jerry operated a leading LED lighting-design business, which created and engineered lighting projects around the world. James Simler, husband of Jack Laidman's daughter, Joyce, began his engineering career developing solar-powered and nuclear-powered electrical generating systems for space applications and later managed the design and manufacture of electro-mechanical controls for nuclear submarines.
- **First college attendees.** Charles Laidman's daughters, Helen and Thelma, are believed to be the first Laidmans to attend college, trained in the 1920s to become social workers in Cleveland. (Following in that tradition, the daughter and a granddaughter of Robert Laidman, Lynn Laidman Palin and Jill Laidman Davidson, also became social workers.)
- **Varied career paths.** Robert and Rose's descendants have pursued many careers. Two unusual ones were directing series programs and movies for TV and driving race cars. Harvey Laidman, son of Albert and Sarah, has more than 200 production credits to his name. John Bojec, grandson of Gertrude and John, raced professionally and supplies high-performance racing equipment and arranges corporate sponsorships.

Leidmans in Lithuanian

- **Earliest Lithuanian ancestors.** The earliest known Laidmans in Lithuania were Dov and Sara (both born before 1828) -- the parents of Abram Josef, Fruma Leia and Roche Gittel. In Hebrew Dov means "bear" but his nickname was "Berko." The very earliest ancestors identified to date actually are the maternal grandparents of Tauba "Toby" Iushkovski/Yaskofsky Laidman, Girsh and Mikhlia Tankhelev (born ca 1780).
- **Farmer and judge.** Of the two sons of Dov and Sara Leidman who remained in Lithuania, Chaim Leidman made his living as a farmer in Lazdijai. As is mandated in the Torah, he would not harvest the corners of his fields so that the poor could gather food. He also served as a respected judge.
- **A blocked attempt and successful efforts to immigrate.** Chaim's brother Moische was a blacksmith in Lazdijai. In 1912 he tried unsuccessfully to join his family in Cleveland. He was turned away at the border due to a "defective" visa and returned to Lithuania. His oldest daughter, Sore (later Sarah Perlman), had immigrated in 1910. A year after their father's aborted attempt, Sore's sister Froma Marie (Mary Leonard) and brother Benjamin A. Laidman arrived

in 1913. Two decades later, in 1933, their youngest sister, Zlata (Sylvia Wexler) immigrated at age 17 to assume care of Mary's three children following Mary's death in Jacksonville, Florida.

- **Forced eviction during World War I.** In spring 1915, the families of Chaim and Moische – then a total of 11 persons – were evicted and forced to subsist about 330 miles east of their home for the duration of the war. They were among 200,000 Jews who were relocated because Russian officials feared Yiddish-speaking Jews might collaborate with invading German troops.
- **Holocaust victims.** On 3 November 1941, twelve known members of the Laidman family were killed as part of the infamous Holocaust by Bullets conducted by German troops with the aid of anti-Semitic Russian nationalists at the beginning of World War II. Chaim and members of his family, along with three descendants of Moische, were among 1,537 people slaughtered outside their village. Ironically, Chaim's son Moshe had applied for a U.S. immigration visa for himself, his wife and their three young children. However, his application was denied.