

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CENTRAL JERSEY



Fall 2013

NEWSLETTER

Heshvan-Kislev

A Tangled Family History

by Elaine Haselkorn Jacob

My name is Hia Shifra, the daughter of Nisonemova Bankoff. I was born in 1866 in the town of Lehovich, in the county of Minsk in Belarus. On January 1, 1888, when I was 22 years old, I purchased a "ticket" (which was something like a visa) for 10 kopecks. The ticket described me as a maiden with dark blond hair, blue eyes, a long nose with a round chin, medium tall with a scar near my right eye. This ticket allowed me to leave my town for one month, and go anywhere that Jews were allowed to go. If I did not return to Lehovich in one month, I would be considered a vagrant.

I did not return to Lehovich. Instead, I left the town with my mother and together we sailed to the "Golden Land", America. Because we came to America through

Castle Island (the immigration site in New York City prior to the opening of Ellis Island in 1892), there are no records of my arrival, no ship's name, no passenger list.

Hia Shifra, known in this country as Ida, was my step-great-grandmother, the only great-grandmother I was lucky enough to know.

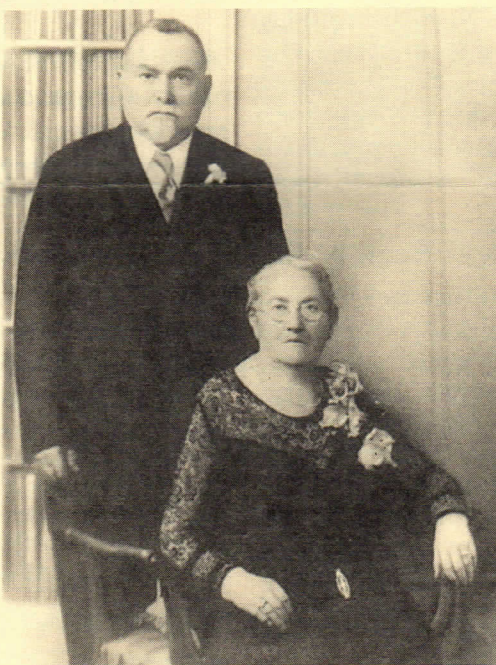
I don't know if Hia Shifra met Isaak Goldberg, my great-grandfather, on the ship crossing the Atlantic or in New York City, but their meeting resulted in a life-long love affair. This sounds romantic, but Isaak already had a wife and three young daughters in Russia. Isaak had come to America as so many young male immigrants did at that time, to earn some money and then send for his family to join him.

Isaak did earn money which he sent to his wife, but he also wrote to her and said, "Don't come!" His wife, Anna Turoff Goldberg, a brilliant woman who had attended gymnasium (a prep school for university studies) in Russia, wrote back and said, "I am coming with our three children," and come she did.

Isaak and Anna's divorce decree was dated June 9, 1891

and Anna was given care and custody of the children. This was not unusual, but the divorce decree had a fascinating twist! It included a clause in which it states, "Anna Goldberg may marry again during her lifetime but Isaak Goldberg shall not marry again until the death of Anna Goldberg."

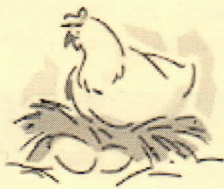
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Isaak and Ida Goldberg, 1931

Researching the Story of Jewish Farmers

The Jewish Heritage Museum of Monmouth County is exploring the possibility of publishing a history of the Jewish farmers of central New Jersey, and is seeking the cooperation of the members of the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey in this endeavor. If you have any information, documents, objects, family memoirs or photos pertaining to the Jewish farming experience in this part of our state, please contact Jean Klerman, chair of the JHMOMC's history committee, at the museum by phone at 732-252-6990 or by email at info@jhmomc.org.



This proposed study is an outgrowth of the Jewish Heritage Museum's current exhibit, "The Land Was Theirs: The Story of the Jewish Farmers of Monmouth County," which runs through December 2013. This

exhibit, which includes the showing of Dr. Gertrude Dubrovsky's film "The Land Was Theirs: The Jewish Farmers in the Garden State" has proven to be one of the most popular of all the museum's offerings and the museum is eager to expand upon its studies of Jewish farmers throughout the region. At the time that New Jersey was considered "The Egg Basket of the East" (mid 20th century), 75% of all the state's egg farmers were Jewish.

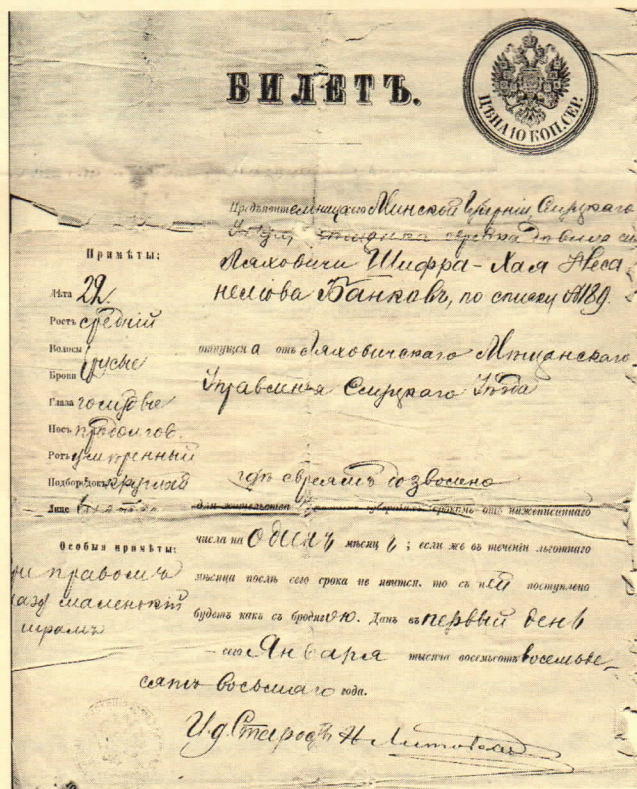
The Jewish Heritage Museum, located in the Mounts Corner Shopping Center, Route 537 and Wemrock Road in Freehold Township, is open Sundays (11 a.m.–3 p.m.), and Tuesdays and Thursdays (10 a.m.–3 p.m.). For more information call the museum or visit the museum website at www.jhmomc.org.

(Continued from Page 1)

Only four days after the original divorce decree, there was another, even more unusual twist. On June 13, 1891, another legal document was issued. Anna Goldberg gave custody of their three daughters to Isaak. In return, Anna was given visitation rights, and Isaak gave Anna \$600 in alimony. Shortly after her divorce, Anna married a widower named Morris Goodman, who had 5 children. Maybe that was why she relinquished her daughters. After the children were grown and Morris died, Anna lived with her daughter Pauline, my grandmother.

Meanwhile, Isaak and Ida continued to live together as Mr. & Mrs. Isaak Goldberg until the end of their lives. I am not sure what Isaak did for a living, although I do remember seeing a picture of a butcher shop with a sign on the window that said, "Butcher Shop Kosher Meat, I. Goldberg".

Anna Goldberg Goodman did die before Isaak, but I have been unable to find a marriage certificate for Ida and Isaak. They both lived long enough to attend the wedding of my parents and to see their first great-granddaughter – me. They are buried together in Washington Cemetery, Brooklyn.



Hia Shifra Bankoff's ticket out of Russia

Genealogy:

Issue of Marriage of Isaak Goldberg and Hannah (Anna)
 Second daughter Pauline Goldberg m. Nathan Shapanka
 Daughter Sylvia Shapanka m. Irving Haselkorn
 Daughter Elaine Haselkorn m. Alex Jacob
 Daughter Laurie Sue Jacob, named for Hia Shifra