

## Notes

1. *The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets*, p.29.
2. all Dubnow quotes, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, vol.2, pp.113-116.
3. "The Statute of Conscription and Military Service, passed in 1827, was intended to introduce universal military service for all men over the age of 18. Special clauses within the act lowered the age for Jews to include the conscription of boys from the age of 12 (although, in practice, children even as young as 8 years old were kid-napped from their families). These minors became known as 'Cantonists', originally a Prussian term for a recruiting district, and used in Russia to denote children taken into military service and sent to cantonal or district schools far removed from contact with their families. The oppressive demands which this act made upon the Jewish community gave rise to infamous practices which included the press-ganging of small boys, the forcible delivery to the army of transient Jews who had no residential permit, and the deliberate substitution of poor children in place of the rich. These practices were brought to an end by Alexander II who repealed the act in 1856." (*A Jewish Life Under the Tsars*, footnote, p.289).
4. *Vilna*, p.231.
5. *From That Place and Time*, p.45.
6. *The Samurai of Vishogrod*, pp.103-5.
7. *Worlds That Passed*, pp.248-50.
8. *Vilna*, p.211.
9. Ronald Sanders, *The Downtown Jews*, p.459.
10. *The Russian Empire*, Vol.2, p.319.
11. "The Statute of 1835 imposed on the leaders of Jewish communities the responsibility for raising the full quota of military recruits in their districts, and also gave them the power to deliver to the military authorities (with the aid of the police) any Jew considered harmful or dangerous to their community in general. This Statute, therefore, provided communal leaders with very grave powers which were often tragically abused." (*A Jewish Life Under the Tsars*, footnote, p.292).
12. Muraviev, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, p.243.
13. Perhaps the best summary of the effect of the May Laws can be found in Alexis Goldenweiser's essay, "Legal Status of Jews in Russia": "The facts of history and the teachings of social psychology clearly demonstrate that restrictive laws achieve only the opposite results: national restrictions only sharpen national hostility. ...the broad masses of the Russian people saw in the policy of restrictions upon Jews an official sanction on anti-Semitism. And it was legalized discrimination against Jews that, more than anything else, furthered the creation of a psychological atmosphere which found its crudest expression in anti-Jewish pogroms.  
 "This was pointed out by Vladimir Nabokov in an article that produced a deep impression in Russia when it appeared in 1903, in the wake of the pogrom in Kishiniev. The real explanation of the very possibility of such an event as this pogrom, wrote Nabokov, must be sought...in the existing legislative and administrative order, under the influence of which the attitudes of the Christian population towards the Jews are formed. From the point of view of this regime, the Jew is a pariah, a creature of a lower order, something inherently noxious. He can only be tolerated, but he must be restricted and kept in check in every possible way, particularly by confinement within the close boundaries of an artificially defined zone. And thus, within the strata of the population which are alien to any genuine culture, the idea of the Jew as a person guilty of the very fact that he was born a Jew is transmitted from generation to generation." (*Russian Jewry 1860-1917*, pp.90-1; Nabokov quote from the legal weekly 'Pravo' April 27, 1903 p.1285, under the title "The Kishniev Blood Bath.").
14. *The Forests of the USSR*, p.34.

15. *Slownik Geograficzny Krolestwa Polskiego.*

16. The fact that Jews were not mentioned as residents of Sosenka may indicate that they were registered in another town. Sosenka, which was classified as a townlet (the bottom tier in the Russian municipal chain of command) and was under the jurisdiction of a parish town, would not have issued passports, which all Russians were obliged to hold as a legal certificate of their identity. Passports were issued by parish or district towns; however, individuals were not required to live in or even to visit their parish town to obtain this document. According to one source from that period, it was very common for a man to be living and conducting business for years in one town, and "to be registered in some small village at the other extremity of the country. With tradespeople like the Jews it is particularly frequent." (*Free Russia*, no.2, September 1890, London, p.7 quoted in footnote, *A Jewish Life Under the Tsars.*) It may have been this registration requirement that produced the family name change to Alperowitz (see discussion pages 39-40).

17. *The New Poland*, p.243.

18. The likelihood of gathering information about Sosenka from sources other than family members seemed remote until a descendant of former inhabitants unrelated to the Alperowitzes was contacted through a family research service. Martin Raffel recorded accounts about the village from a great aunt, Lena Koplovitz-Kaplow, who was born 1890 in or near Sosenka. Lena's father, Haim Eli, born 1870 in Sosenka, was a foreman in a government forest in which wood was cut and shipped to France. His brother and two sisters, who were also born in Sosenka, left for America around 1900 when all the wood in the area had been cut and employment was scarce. Haim Eli's family lived in Kaveli, but as there were no other Jews in this town they went to synagogue in Sosenka for holidays. The synagogue was located across the street from the house of Lena's aunt, Jennie Koplovitz, but Lena had no idea when it was built.

19. Yankev's daughter, Julia, saw this letter and described the contents to her children, Ada and Robert. The letter stayed in Europe and was lost, as was the family tree Julia provided based on this document.

20. The Kappellowitz family tree prepared by descendants of Chaim and Neshe, which records their surname as Kapelovich and Neshe as Nessia, lists their children in this order: Yankel, Sprinza (derivatives or variant spellings of Yankev and Shprintze), Nathan, Anna, Sarah, Lena (variant of Leah) and Mendel. The commonality of names between the Alperowitz children and the Kappellowitz children is striking.

21. When Isidor Alpert provided the personal information for his uncle Samuel M. Cohen's death certificate in 1928, he recorded the name and occupation of Samuel's father (also Isidor's grandfather) as "Robert Cohen, Merchant." Nathan Cohen's 1901 death certificate listed his father as "Rubin" and his occupation as "lumberman."

22. This Statute, issued November 23, 1851, was known as "The Temporary Rules Concerning the Assortment of the Jews."

23. According to Bertha Rubin, the daughter-in-law of Leah Alperowitz, the seven children of Reuben and Soshe Esther included in this history constituted all of their offspring that survived to adulthood.

24. The government effort to move the Jews into the towns and cities had devastating consequences. A report to the tsar by the Russian Minister of Finance, Michael Reutern, showed that the Empire's Jewish situation was deteriorating at an accelerating pace. Reutern noted that "the poverty in which the Jews live is extreme, and the extraordinary demoralisation of the Hebrew race in Russia is mainly the outcome of the extremely unfavourable conditions in which they are placed for gaining a livelihood." (quoted in footnote, *A Jewish Life Under the Tsars*, p.299) This was confirmed by the census, which revealed horrible conditions: "In most parts of the Pale they are cooped up like insects or animals rather than men. In Berditscheff, the official statistician tells us 'the Jews are huddled together more like salted herrings than human beings; tens of thousands of them are devoid of any constant means of subsistence,

living from hand to mouth; several families are often crowded into one or two rooms of a dilapidated hut, so that at night there is absolutely no space whatever between the sleepers..." (Footnote: *ibid.*).

These regulations also had a direct impact on those involved in the timber trade. According to I.M. Dijur in an essay, "Jews in the Russian Economy," (from *Russian Jewry: 1860-1917*, pp.135-6):

The timber trade was....one of the major branches of commerce in which Jews were active in Russia. Timber export developed steadily and was second only to grain in the Russian export trade. In 1913 more than 140 million rubles' worth of timber was shipped abroad. Despite all legal obstacles, Jews contributed importantly to the steady development of timber export. Jewish lumber merchants, for instance, were prevented from freely engaging in felling and processing timber by the local authorities' arbitrary interpretation of the right of residence outside of cities and towns. As a result of this, Jews were forbidden in many areas to build and operate sawmills, and were compelled to ship timber abroad in the form of logs. This was not only less profitable to the Jewish merchants, but also deprived the local populations of considerable potential earnings.

Jewish timber merchants were forbidden to use the ports of Libava, Vindava, Riga, Revel, and Petersburg, and were therefore compelled to export their timber through Prussian ports. Barred from the right to lease land from the railroads for storing timber near railway stations prior to shipment, the Jewish merchants were unable to ship their timber by rail and had to specialize in river floatage, mainly along the Dnieper, Neman and Dvina.

25. Remnants of the tribal social structure of ancient Israel continued to be reflected in certain social and religious customs of orthodox Jewry well into the 19th century. The observance of laws that maintained the special religious (and, consequently, social) status of the kohanim, the priestly group whose members, according to tradition, are descendants of Aaron, perpetuated a three tier caste-like arrangement of kohanim, Levites and Israelites. According to the Code of Jewish Law, "If a Kohen and an Israelite are equally learned it is a Biblical ordinance to give precedence to the Kohen, for it is written (Leviticus 21:8): 'And thou shall sanctify him,' and our Rabbis, of blessed memory, explained it to mean that in every matter of sanctity or importance, he shall be treated with honor, that is he shall be called first to the reading of the Torah; he shall be the first speaker at every public gathering; at the house of learning, too, he shall be the first speaker; at a meal he shall be the first to say the benediction *Hamotzi*, and lead in the saying of grace after meals." And, "Even nowadays, it is forbidden to make servile use of a Kohen, as it is like committing a sacrilege against a sacred object, for it is written (Leviticus 21:8): 'And thou shalt sanctify him; for the bread of thy God doth he offer.' Even nowadays that we have no sacrifices, the Kohen still retains the same sanctity." (*Code of Jewish Law*, Vol.4, pp.5-6).

The kohanic tradition began when Aaron and his four sons were anointed as priests by Moses at Sinai. From this time on, the priestly functions were in the hands of the Levites, one of the original twelve tribes of Israel from whom Moses and Aaron were supposedly descended. By the days of Israel's return from exile in Babylonia (circa 430 BCE) the kohanim had become distinguished from the Levites, apparently as a result of a religious schism when certain priests turned away from Yahweh. It was then that the Levites assumed a supporting role in maintaining the temple and the kohanim were solidified as a separate class. At the same time a strict

caste system had evolved whereby the nation, which had been comprised of ten distinct social groups, was consolidated into kohanim, Levites and Israelites. The other seven groups gradually merged into the Israelites or disappeared, leaving most Jews to trace their ancestry to one of the three that remained. A further consolidation of the kohanim occurred when all those who claimed priestly rank, but were unable to produce documentary evidence of their descent from Aaron, were disqualified. According to most scholars, however, numerous inconsistencies in Biblical texts render the genealogy of Aaron's descendants highly unreliable and this makes it improbable that a kohen can claim descent from this source.

The ascendance of the kohanim to the social elite of ancient Israel resulted from several factors. As servants of Yahweh, priests enjoyed greater holiness than the rest of the people, which was a notion common to every culture of the Ancient Near East. This exclusivity was enhanced by the priestly position being a hereditary one, an arrangement that lent itself to the development of dynastic structures. Like royalty, there was much intermarriage between various families of kohanim; but unlike royalty, kohanic purity was based more on strict religious regulations than on social criteria. Although their religious duties alone would have been sufficient to guarantee their place, the high priests and heads of other priestly families also served as leaders of the Jewish community, especially in conducting its relations with the imperial authorities. In this capacity they wielded tremendous influence in political matters for nearly five hundred years.

26. *A Dictionary of Jewish Names and their History*, pp.35-6.

27. The Mazar name, and its acronymic origin, was indirectly confirmed by another source, Bertha Rubin, whose mother-in-law, Leah Alperowitz, told her that "the family name was Cohen before it was Alperowitz."

28. The Goldman Museum of the Diaspora in Israel maintains a guide to the etymology of over 10,000 Jewish names, but Alperowitz is not included. Although no comprehensive survey was conducted of Alperowitz in the U.S., nearly all that I encountered in the course of this research descended from Alperowitz families from Russia, and of those, many came from Kurenets (see footnote 16). I also discovered that Reuben's family was not the only one in Sosenka to have the Alperowitz name. Three members of an Alperowitz family who were also kohanim are discussed in the second appendix. One, Deborah, born 1845, married a Costrell.

29. As a result of both orthodox tradition and the laws which exempted fathers with one son or three children from military service, marriages of boys aged fifteen to eighteen and girls aged fourteen to sixteen were quite common in the Old World. Added to this was the Russian government attempt to legislate the marriage age through an 1835 statute that included prohibitions against unions by Jewish males under the age of eighteen and females under the age of sixteen. Some years later a new edict was issued that revised the minimum age to twenty for males, but these laws were often ignored. Although the core family resided in a very isolated location and romantic opportunities were limited, it was still assumed that most couples were married in their late teens.

30. According to Bertha Rubin, Reuben Alperowitz died from "the roch," which she translated from Yiddish to mean cancer.

31. Nathan inscribed the birth dates of each of his children in a book (see illustrations), all of which differ considerably from the dates recognized in America. In this book Samuel N. is recorded as being born in Sosenka, June 5, 1883 and Louis on August 25, 1886 with no location given. According to the 1900 census, however, both were born in Maine: Sam in March 1885, and Louis in August 1887. To complicate matters further, when Sam died May 28, 1936 his age was recorded as 49 years, 6 months and 28 days which places his birth date as November 1, 1886. Louis' death certificate states his birth date as August 12, 1888. It is possible that the calculations for the birth years recorded in Nathan's book, which are inscribed in Hebrew using

the Hebrew calendar, are incorrect, but Nathan also took the trouble to record the years in numbers. Apparently Sam was brought over as a baby and his foreign birth disguised, probably with the thought that he would gain some advantage by this ruse later in life. As it happens, I could not locate a birth certificate for either Sam or Louis at the Maine State Archives. In the absence of any official records, the birth dates and places inscribed by Nathan were accepted as authentic for all of his children.

32. Like their cousin Isidor, Edward and Samuel Alpert retained a modified version of their original surname, but unlike Izzy, Edward and Sam were Levites and thus would not have changed their name to Cohen.

33. *Escape*, vol.1, pp.212-13.

34. *ibid*, vol.1, p.215.

35. *ibid*, vol.1, pp.2-3.

36. *ibid*, vol.1, pp.5-6.

37. "The system of providing a free daily meal for poor yeshiva students at the home of a local member of the community was referred to in Yiddish as *Teg* ('days'). Some students were fortunate enough to eat in the homes of their hosts, who considered their hospitality as an act of piety. Students without such hospitality slept on benches in the yeshiva and went hungry." (*A Jewish Life Under the Tsars*, footnote, p.296).

38. *The Samurai of Vishogrod*, pp.63-4.

39. The National Archives searched their passenger ship arrival records for Isidor, Simon and Edward Alpert under their original names, but none of them were listed as passengers on the ships they had indicated they had arrived on. This involved three different ships over a two year span. A search for Robert Cohen's records also turned up nothing, yet he sailed from Hamburg on the *President Lincoln* December 3, 1911. Only Israel's name was found on the manifest of the *Carmania* - under "Sroel Alperowitz." It is conceivable that the others traveled under pseudonyms, particularly Isidor and Edward who were both fleeing the draft.

40. The name of Yankev's second wife is unknown; he referred to her as "Auntie" in the letters he wrote to his children in America (see Book Two). Her prior married name seems to have been Shulman or perhaps an antecedent of this. At least one of her children emigrated: Fanny, born 1887 in the Vilna gubernia, emigrated 1904, married Morris Krolick in New York City and eventually moved to Rochester, New York. One of Fanny's sons reported that her maiden name was Shulman.

41. *The Old Country*, p.20.

42. Contrary to what idealists may have anticipated, the re-establishment of Polish self-government in 1918 was marked by violent attacks on the country's Ukrainians, Germans, Lithuanians and Jews which together accounted for nearly one-third of the population. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1920, the continuation of Polish independence was confirmed only after the government agreed to guarantee the rights of these minority populations.

43. *Forest and Timber Resources of Poland*, p.7.