

Generation No. 4

2. Esther⁴ Chazanovich (Yehuda³, Moshe², Yudel¹) was born in about March 19, 1859 in Miroslavas, Russian Poland^{7,14}, and died January 23, 1961 in Portland, ME^{15,16}. She married **Louis Lelansky** between 1882 - 1883 in Russia^{17,18}. He was born 1863 in Russia¹⁹, and died 1937 in ME²⁰.

Notes for Esther Chazanovich:

Esther was probably born in the town of Miroslavas, where her family was known to have lived.

Great granddaughter Sharon Alpert found a note that Esther was named after a grandmother named Esther Sarah. (This would have been Moshe's wife, Esther Cohen.) Her birth year is not certain, listed as 1865 (1900 census), 1864 (1910 census), 1862 (1930 census), and 1859 (1955 newspaper interview). Immigrants often did not know their exact ages and understated their age when young, and then overstated when older. In this case there are no very early records (e.g. a birth record or immigration record) to tell us the final answer.

Esther's brother Max told his daughter Rebecca that Esther was a very pretty girl, with dark curly hair and dimples.



Allen Lelansky remembered two stories told to him by his grandmother Esther: "First, she said that her grandmother told her about a war between the French and Russians in 1812, and that the French troops had silk clothes and were freezing, and they had given the locals bags of gold for clothing!" (This is consistent with historical fact, when Napoleon's army invaded Russia across the nearby Nemunas River, and later retreated with a small force that had survived the winter campaign.) "Second, she remembered somebody coming through her village telling everyone that the President of the United States had been killed." This could have been President Lincoln (in 1865) or President Garfield (in 1881), depending on Esther's actual birth and emigration dates.

Per Eva Gediman's Family Tree, Esther married Louis Lelansky in Europe and they moved to Maine in the 1880s.

Granddaughter Nettie Lelansky Shapiro was told that Esther returned to Lithuania at one time, to bring her young siblings back to America. However, this story is questionable for several reasons. First, only those who were well off generally undertook paying for the passage of multiple people at one time. However, Esther's niece Rebecca described Esther and Louis as "living in poverty" until their children went to work. It was proposed that Esther may have raised

the passage money from selling farm items (see below), but the family didn't move to the farm until well after all the siblings had immigrated.

Also, there are no stories in other parts of the family of siblings being sponsored by Esther, or living with her, or working to pay her back for their fare. There are no records showing any siblings living with the Lelansky family. Conversely we do know, because of the stories of other families, that Abraham sponsored Sara, Max and Jacob to come to America, and census reports and directories confirm that they lived with him or worked for him when they arrived. Myer, who arrived last, had a family by the time he immigrated, which wouldn't match the story of Esther bringing young siblings to America.

That leaves only the possibility that Esther brought one sibling, Abraham, to America. He did arrive in America at a young age -- 14 or 15, and may have lived briefly in Boston (where Esther and Louis also lived at one time). So it is possible that Esther brought him to America, though there is no story to this effect elsewhere in the family. If it is the case, it would have occurred in about 1883, at which time Esther would probably have been a new immigrant herself, presuming she had immigrated by then.

After their arrival, Esther and Louis moved around from town to town. According to census records, Esther gave birth to 13 children, of whom only 5 survived. She lost 4 children before 1900, and then 4 more between 1900 and 1910. Her last surviving child was born in 1901.

The family settled on their farm in Lewiston in about 1916. Sharon Alpert wrote in 2002, "According to a family that had previously owned the Wise cottage, the Bell family, Mrs. Bell, who knew her grandmother, once told Nettie that Esther Lelansky made money from the farm that she lived on by selling fruits (apples mainly), milk and cottage cheese from a cow on the farm, and by baking and selling her baked goods. "

After Louis' death, Esther moved to 205 Ash Street, and her son Nathan lived with her. At age 4 or 5 years old grandson Allen Lelansky remembered his father Sam driving up to visit Esther and Nathan, and recalled they had a cold water flat in Lewiston. Sam was concerned about Esther and moved her to her own place in Portland. Later he moved her to the apartment below his, in a two-family house. Allen said that she always took care of herself and did her own cooking.



Rebecca Robinson wrote in January 2002, "When we visited my Aunt Esther (who was now a widow and living in Portland) I would bring her a sponge cake. She loved sweets and because she didn't have any teeth it was easy for her to eat sponge cake. She had a kind daughter-in-law (they lived in a duplex that her son Sam owned) and she asked me for my recipe for the cake because Aunt Esther enjoyed them. My cousin Golda was very thoughtful and baked all kinds of goodies for Aunt Esther, muffins, soft cookies, etc. Golda and Phil owned a grocery store and

brought her many kinds of cans. Goldie, who was a wonderful cook, sometimes brought her homemade chicken soup and fish chowder."

An article about Esther, in the Tuesday, March 22, 1955 Portland Evening Express said:

The younger generation has a champion in Mrs. Esther Singer Lelansky, 38 Highland St., who observed her 96th birthday over the weekend.

"There is nothing wrong with the young people of today," she said, pausing in her preparations to cut a pretty birthday cake. "They are smart and alert, and far ahead of what youngsters were many years ago when I was young."

Mrs. Lelansky, who has a hearty appetite and does not believe in "new-fangled diets," cut the cake vigorously and enjoyed a good-sized piece herself.

Her recipe for a long and happy life is not to worry. "Have faith and look to the future," she said, "Don't worry. Everything will come out all right."

Mrs. Lelansky was born in Russia in 1859. She was married there in 1878 to Louis Lelansky who came to this country and settled in Lewiston. After four years he was able to send for his wife to join him in "the golden land." They were the parents of 13 children, four of whom are now living, Samuel, with whom she makes her home: Nathan, Augusta; Mrs. Sara Weiss, Lewiston; and Mrs. Eva Gediman, Washington. There are 10 grand and 13 great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Lelansky lives in her own apartment, does her own cooking, laundry and daily housework. She has both radio and television and is interested in what's going on at home and abroad. She has never had to wear glasses.

[Some of this information may be incorrect. Several variations for age and immigration dates have been found for the family, and they are inconsistent. See Marriage Notes for Esther and Louis.]

In about 1956 Esther's daughter Sarah died. Rebecca wrote, "Aunt Esther began to notice that Sarah was not visiting her and she realized that she was either sick or had died. They never informed her about Sarah's death of a brain tumor."

One day Esther took a fall, and Sam was unable to lift her. Subsequently she moved into a nursing home. Judith Kamin remembered visiting Esther with her grandfather Max in the Jewish Old Age Home in Portland, ME. According to granddaughter Frances, Esther was the "most popular" person there.

Granddaughter Frances wrote that Esther was a fantastic lady who was a very loving and wonderful person... a person who "couldn't do enough for you." Grandson Allen described her similarly.

According to her death certificate, Esther died January 23, 1961 in the Jewish Home for the Aged. She had lived in Portland, and possibly in the Home for the Aged, for 12 years. She died of arteriosclerotic heart disease, which she'd been diagnosed with 2 years prior. Allen remembered her funeral was held on a very cold day, when the temperature was 25 degrees.

More About Esther Chazanovich:

Burial: January 24, 1961, Mt. Sinai Cemetery, Portland, ME²¹

Cause of Death: Arteriosclerotic Heart Disease²¹

Location: Lewiston, ME

Notes for Louis Lelansky:

Louis' name often appears among family members as "Lewis." However, it appears as "Louis" on historical records. It isn't clear what spelling he used, or if there is a correct spelling.

According to Sharon Alpert, she found notes that the name Lelansky comes from the town "Lelans," which was where Louis was from. This is probably now the town of Lelionis. An alternate name for the town was "Lelyantsy." The town is located only about 3 miles from Alytus, where Louis was living in 1858 and 1874. Alytus in turn is about 12-15 miles from Miroslavas, where his future wife Esther was raised.



Louis was first located on the 1874 List of Males in the region. The following family group was listed in the town of Alytus:

Lelyansky, Khatskel, Head of Household, son of Abram
Lelyansky, Shlioma, son of Khatskel
Lalyansky, Movsha, son of Khatskel
Lelyansky, Khaim Leyba, son of Khatskel
Lelyansky, losel, son of Khatskel
Lelyansky, Shimshel, Head of Household, son of Abram
Lelyansky, Itsko, son of Shimshel

It seems virtually certain that Hiram Louis Lelansky, who would have been about 11 years old in 1874, was indeed the Khaim Leyba Lelyansky in the 1874 list. In fact, his Hebrew name of "Chaim Leyb" did appear in the family tree developed by Sylvia Harris.

Going back now to a listing for the same family in 1858, we can see more. The 1858 census shows:

Leliansky, Hatskel, Head of Household, son of Abram, age 35 (b. 1823)
Leliansky, losel, brother of Hatskel, son of Abram, age 28
Leliansky, Shender, brother of Hatskel, son of Abram, -- left town in 1856, location unknown
Leliansky, Freyda, mother of Hatskel - died in 1856
Leliansky, Rivka, sister of Hatskel - married and left since the prior census in 1851.
Leliansky, Sora, sister of Hatskel - died in 1856
Leliansky, Sora, wife of Hatskel, age 30
Leliansky, Ryvka, daughter of Hatskel, age 6
Leliansky, Peska, wife of Hatskels' brother losel, age 28

So, that indicates that:

- Louis Lelansky did in fact come from the town of Alytus.
- His father was Khatskel, born in about 1823.
- His grandfather was Abram and his paternal grandmother was Freyda. Freyda died in 1856, and her husband probably predeceased her.
- Among his siblings were brothers Shlioma, Movsha and losel, and a sister Ryvka.
- His mother was Sora, born in about 1828. (Daughter Sarah may have been named for her.)
- He had uncles losel and Shender and an aunt, Rivka.

Louis' petition for naturalization in 1891 indicates that he was born in Russia in 1863 (Lelionis and Alytus were part of Russia at that time) and came to America in 1879 at the age of 15. (This doesn't match census information, and seems unlikely if, as stated in Esther's later interview, he was married at the time he immigrated, though there were marriages when people were quite young.) He arrived "in Philadelphia where he remained some years; then moved to Trenton, N. J. where he lived one year, then went to New York and lived there one year, then came to Boston and lived there two years, and then came to Maine lived one year, and 5 years also came to Maine." This would suggest that he lived in Philadelphia from about 1879-1882 (there are no listings in the Philadelphia directories for this period), then in New Jersey from 1882-1883, New York from 1883-1884, Boston from 1884-1886, and Maine from that point onward.

It isn't clear when Esther joined him, but the article written about Esther stated the date as 1882.

Though this information indicates that Louis arrived in the US before 1880, he is not shown in the Federal Census index for that year, and so far no records have been found for him prior to the 1891 petition for naturalization, which was filed in Lewiston.

His birth year, as is usually the case with those born outside the country before 1900, is not clear. It could have been in 1863 (Naturalization Petition of 1891), 1862 (1900 Census), 1861 (1910 census), 1860 (1920 Census), or even as early as 1856 (1930 Census).

Grandson Allen had thought that Louis originally settled in Vineland, NJ, where he grew tomatoes. (Vineland was known as a tomato growing area.) Allen said that Louis found it too hot in the summer and a cousin or friend in Maine suggested that he move there, where the weather was more similar to that in Lithuania. Grandson Joe Lelansky Jr. said that Lewis had a chicken farm in NJ, and confirmed that the family disliked the climate there.

The 1900 census finds the family in Brunswick, and indicates that Louis could read, write and speak English. However, on his petition for citizenship in 1891 Louis "made his mark" rather than signing his name.

Allen remembered Louis as a "chunky man, with blond hair."

Joe Jr. remembers that Louis gave him silver dollars, and his mother joked that if Lewis had lived longer, Joe Jr. would have been a rich man.

Sharon Alpert shared these notes from her mother Nettie: "I spoke to my mother this weekend about the Lelansky family. She felt her grandfather, Louis Lelansky, had brothers in Auburn. She remembers that these brothers tried to open a bar/restaurant in Auburn and her father, Sam Wise, tried to help them out one summer when they were having troubles with the business, but that the business did not work out."

More About Louis Lelansky:

Emigration: 1897²²

Occupation: Peddler, sold goods from his farm²³

Marriage Notes for Esther Chazanovich and Louis Lelansky:

Rebecca Singer Robinson wrote in 2001, "Aunt Esther Lelansky was married before they came to this country. My father said Esther was a very pretty girl and when they married her husband was extremely jealous!" Different marriage dates are given in US Census records, -- 1878 (1910 census), 1879 (1930 census), and 1882 (1900 census).

According to granddaughter Sharon Esther and Louis had several children in Lithuania (then Russia) who died of illness. (Note that this contradicts the information on Louis' petition for naturalization that he arrived in the US at age 15.) Rebecca confirmed, "They had a big family, twins -- one died, and she had several miscarriages." According to the US census information, Esther and Louis had 13 children in all, of whom 5 survived.

Information about Louis' and Ester's immigration is contradictory. Louis' petition for citizenship (in 1891) shows that he arrived in America in 1879 at age 15. The 1900 Federal Census shows that Louis arrived in 1883 at the age of 21, and had been married at about the same time. This census shows that Esther arrived later, in 1889. According to the 1955 newspaper article about Esther, Louis had arrived in the United States in 1878 (at age 16), and Esther joined him in 1882. These records suggest that Esther and Louis were newlyweds when Louis came to America, and provide no scenarios that suggest they had or lost children in Lithuania (what was then Russia). Finding ship manifests that show Louis' and then Esther's age may someday clear up the story.



Allen Lelansky said that Louis initially settled in Vineland, New Jersey, and then moved to Maine. But according to his petition for naturalization, the family lived in several towns before moving to Maine.

The family lived in Lewiston in 1891 when the petition for naturalization was filed, and their son Samuel was born in Lewiston, in 1892. The family had moved to Auburn by 1894, when daughter Sarah was born. Louis' occupation was listed on Sarah's birth certificate as "laborer." The family then moved to Brunswick where they lived in 1899 when daughter Eva was born. Louis' occupation was then "peddler." He was shown as a "rag peddler" in the 1900 census, and shown as a "junk peddler" when twins Jacob and Joseph were born in 1901. Jacob died that same year. Their location in the 1900 census was at 33 Water Street, in "Brunswick town." The family lived in Brunswick until about 1911.

Eva was a friend of her cousin Rebecca Robinson, and Rebecca remembers Eva moving away at about the age of 12. Rebecca believes the family then lived in Massachusetts (Boston or Chelsea) for a short time - perhaps a year, before returning to Lewiston.

Rebecca Robinson wrote in 2002, that because Louis moved around so much, the family called him "the mover."

Rebecca remembered Louis as a rag peddler and the family as having very little money. Louis' granddaughter Nettie said that he was "not ambitious." Rebecca said that when the Lelanskys lived in Brunswick, Rebecca's father Max would bring Esther a "wrapper," a cotton dress, as a Passover present, because she had little to wear. Though Louis was very jealous of her, he never made a living, and she couldn't fix her teeth when they became bad. She also lost her figure. Rebecca had the childhood memory that Esther didn't wear a corset (at a time when, apparently, most women did). Rebecca felt that Esther had a difficult life with Louis. This was not an unusual sentiment regarding the lives of women at the time.

According to Rebecca: The family lived in poverty until the children went to work. When Sarah was 14 she went to work in the shoe factory. She gave money toward the support of the family, but saved out some for her dowry. Son Sam went to work after he finished 4th grade. He became a cutter in the shoe factory. That was a good trade and he made quite a bit of money, which supported the family. He also saved some money for himself. Rebecca added that Louis bought a house with a lot of land with the money provided by the children, and it was later sold at a profit.

The 1910 census shows the family living at 150 Middle Street in Lewiston. In this census, Louis is listed as a peddler, age 48. Esther is shown as being 45 years old. They are both shown as having been married for 26 years. In this same census, oldest son Sam is shown as a peddler at age 18, and oldest daughter Sarah as a "stitcher" in a shoe shop at age 16. Nathan, Eva, and Joseph are shown in school.

The family first appears in Lewiston directories of the period in 1912, still living at 150 Middle. Louis was listed as a peddler, and his son Samuel is listed as a shoemaker, living at home. The family moved to the farm, at 244 Webster, in about 1916, and lived there until some time between 1925 and 1932. It appears that all of the children helped support the family, into the mid or late 1920s (the directories for 1926-29 are not available). Between 1916 and 1920 Sarah was listed as a clerk, boarding at home. The 1920 Federal Census shows both Sam and Sarah as working in a shoe factory, living at home.

Rebecca noted that while daughter Eva was in high school she worked afternoons for Uncle Abraham. She is listed as a bookkeeper between 1918 and 1924. Nathan lived at home, and was listed as a junk peddler in 1924 and 1925. Grandson Joe Lelansky Jr. remembered that his father Joe Sr. had to drop out of college (probably in about 1920) to help his father. Joseph is listed in the Lewiston Directories as a "clerk" between 1922 and 1925. He boarded near the farm (at 250 Webster).

Rebecca wrote, "Joe and Eva were the only two who graduated high school. Eva was valedictorian of her class."

Granddaughter Frances remembered Esther and Louis' farm in Lewiston - with cows, chickens, fruit trees, grape orchards -- "a wonderful farm." Louis and his sons delivered milk and eggs from the farm. Frances remembered riding with her grandfather Louis in his horse drawn wagon. She remembered him as being a wonderful person, who was the "first to be there to help" when their children were born. Nettie said the farm was located on Webster Street, near the home of their cousin Gwen Bramson, and was about a city block long.

There are two stories regarding the ownership of the farm: Nettie said that Esther and Louis never really owned the farm, but that at some point their daughter bought it from the owners. Their cousin Rebecca recalled that Esther and Louis' children helped them buy the farm, and that the farm was sold, they each received a share of the money. The 1920 census shows Louis as the owner of the property, though census records are not totally reliable.

Nettie said that the farm was sold when she was 4 or 5 years old (in about 1929), and Esther and Louis moved into a flat across the street from Gwen Bramson. Their children worked to help them, and Esther tried to make money -- e.g. Nettie heard later that she made and sold cottage cheese for the High Holidays.

The Lewiston directories show that after leaving the farm they lived at 131 East Avenue in 1932, then at 7 Webster in 1933. Louis was listed as a fruit dealer, then fruit peddler. The 1930 Census shows that the East Avenue address was a two family house, owned by a family named family. Nathan and Joseph still lived at home, at ages 31 and 28, and both are shown as fruit merchants. In 1934 Esther was listed as a widow, and she and her son Nathan (now a fruit dealer himself) were shown at 205 Ash, where they lived through 1940 (the last directory that was reviewed). In 1936 Esther apparently took a job, and is listed that year as "Esther, wid Louis, sten B Peck Co." "Sten" was probably "stenographer." "B Peck Co" was a dry goods store in Lewiston.

Granddaughter Frances said that Esther kept a kosher house, and read the Jewish Bible, and that Louis studied a great deal, reading Hebrew books. However Frances didn't recall them as being very religious, in terms of attending temple.

Children of Esther Chazanovich and Louis Lelansky are:

- + i. Sam⁵ Lelansky, born April 20, 1892 in Lewiston, ME; died September 26, 1971 in Florida.
- + ii. Sarah Lelansky, born October 08, 1894 in Auburn, ME; died in about 1956.
- iii. Nathan Lelansky, born December 1896 in Maine²⁶; died May 25, 1956²⁷.
- iv. Eva Lelansky, born June 14, 1899 in Brunswick, ME^{29,30}; died November 29, 1998. She married Herbert Gediman 1923; born 1900 in MA³¹; died September 1973³².
- v. Jacob Lelansky, born April 18, 1901 in Brunswick, ME³³; died 1901.
- + vi. Joseph Lelansky, born April 18, 1901 in Brunswick, ME; died May 19, 1944.