

6. Max Harry⁴ Singer (Yehuda³ Chazanovich, Moshe², Yudel¹)^{121,122} was born June 20, 1875 in Russia^{123,124}, and died September 10, 1969 in Brunswick, ME^{125,126}. He married **Bessie Gould**¹²⁷ September 02, 1900 in Sommerset, NH¹²⁸. She was born 1878, and died June 09, 1970 in Brunswick, ME^{128,129}.



Notes for Max Harry Singer:

Max was probably born in the town of Miroslavas, where his family was known to have lived. A few different birth years have been recorded for Max, from 1873 to 1875. The 1875 date is shown as the likely date, because Max appears in Eva Gediman's family tree as being born after his sister Sara, and her birth year is estimated at 1873.

Daughter Rebecca wrote of her father's education, "In Lithuania very few Jewish children were able to attend their schools so they went to a 'cheder,' a school which specialized in Hebrew, the Talmud, etc. They were also taught math and other languages if the town had an educated man." Rebecca said that Max spoke Lithuanian and Polish. His mother tongue was apparently Yiddish, and the family has letters that he wrote in that language.

Daughter Goldie noted in 2002 that before he came to America Max was attending a school in Slobodka, where he was learning to be a "shochet," someone who slaughters animals and poultry according to the Jewish rituals of how animals should be killed.

Slobodka was a Jewish suburb of Kovno. A yeshiva appears to have been established there in 1863 by Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Levitan of the Musar movement. The yeshiva later became famous under Rabbi Nathan Zvi Finkel, who is also listed as the founder. From the Internet: "His motto was summed up in the words *Gadlut Haadam* ('Greatness of Man'). He stressed the need for *mussar* (ethics), polishing the character traits of his students so that they would aspire to become *gedolim* – 'great ones' in all areas of both scholarship, and personal ethics." "In 1925, the yeshiva moved to Eretz Yisrael. Following a short stay in Jaffa, the yeshiva settled in Hebron. Rav Natan Tzvi Finkle, one of the most important leaders of the Musar movement, was *Mashgiach*, the spiritual director. In Hebron the Yeshiva originally numbered about 120 students. By 1929 there were close to 200 students. Yeshivat Knesset Yisrael turned out to be the largest yeshiva in Israel."

Max came to the United States at the age of 15. According to his petition for naturalization, he arrived in Boston on July 4th, 1888. The family story is that his brother Abraham paid his passage, but that when Max arrived in Lewiston, he didn't live with Abraham, instead being placed in a boarding house. Rebecca noted this was a difficult experience for a boy away from home. [See more on this family story under the notes about Abraham.]

Rebecca passed on through her daughter Judy Kamin in 2002, about Max's trip to America: " He never mentioned being sea sick. There were 3 classes on the voyage-1st, 2nd, and steerage. He was in the latter. He brought herring, and pumpernickel bread --these would not get moldy on the trip and he would have something to eat." (Rebecca commented later that the steerage passengers were "very thirsty" because of this diet. She said that the steerage passengers had to bring their own food for the weeklong trip.)

Rebecca's comments continue that Max "was very homesick, especially for his mother. His first night at the boarding house the men there taught him the value of the American dollar. The men at the boarding house gave him a basket filled with notions to sell. (He later paid them back for the supplies.) He saved what money he could and later purchased a horse and wagon, so he could travel with his wares."

At age 16 Max purchased a new suit and had a photo taken, to send to his parents in Lithuania and show them he was doing well.



Rebecca wrote, "Somehow my father didn't talk about his family. I think he missed his parents and never saw them again. I feel he had too much pain to talk about them."

Like his brothers, he started as a peddler. The first directory listing found for Max locates him in Lewiston in 1893, listed as a peddler, boarding at 68 Lincoln, which was Abraham's address.

When asked if it was tough to be in Maine and not speak English, Rebecca said that Max "went to night school right off, and learned French and English."

He became a citizen in 1895. The certificate reads "Know ye, that at a Circuit Court of the United States, begun and holden at Boston, within and for the Massachusetts District, on the fifteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five. To wit: on the 31st day of August, A.D. 1895, Max Singer of Boston (sic) in said district, pedler (sic) born at Russia having produced the evidence and taken the oath required by law, was admitted to become a citizen of the said United States according to the Acts of Congress in such case made and provided."

The petition lists Max's address as 103 Salem Street, in Boston, though it appears that he had lived in Lewiston at least since 1893, and probably since his initial arrival in 1888. This Boston address was very near to a dry goods business with which Abraham's store in Lewiston did business.

In 2002 Judy Kamin writes the thoughts of her mother Rebecca and Aunt Goldie on this topic: "The street you could not make out is Salem Street, which is a street where a lot of Jewish people lived. There was a Jewish Society (in Boston) that helped the Jews locate to different areas. They would say there are already too many here--you should go to there. Max did not live in Boston. Maybe Abraham did for a while when he first arrived and the Society helped him."

A listing from the Maine Register, showing Lewiston businesses, shows Max appearing once, in 1905-1906, as the owner of a store selling "Dry & Fancy Goods" at 326 Lisbon St. in Lewiston. In the prior directory, this same store was shown as being owned by Abraham, so apparently Max bought the business from his brother, or took it over for him.

In 1908, Max was shown in the Lewiston Directory (available in an Internet database) with the occupation "Dry and fancy goods" and the location (probably his home address) as 167 Park.

By 1910 Max and his family had moved to Brunswick, where Max took over his brother Jacob's store. [Rebecca Robinson related that though Jacob had initially been very successful in his business, his finances faltered after he married. Brother Abraham, who apparently had authority as the head of the family, told Max to take over Jacob's business. Rebecca thought that Abraham didn't like having two Singer brothers (himself and Max) in Lewiston. Jacob was instructed to work as an employee for Max, but he apparently balked at the idea and left Brunswick, moving first to Rumford, ME, and then to Akron, Ohio.]

According to the Curtis Library in Brunswick, "Our collection of early town records is sketchy and the only (directory) we have between 1907-1911 is 1910. That edition lists Max as "Singer, Max, Dry and Fancy Goods, Cloaks, Suits and Furs, bus. 50 Maine, h. 9 Market."



The early census reports for Lewiston and Brunswick show towns that are overwhelmingly made up of people from English and French speaking countries – Native Americans, Canadians, English and Irish.

Rebecca said that Maine was "very snobbish" back in those days. The Jews had friends among the French Canadians because the "aristocrats" wouldn't associate with either. When her father bought his first house, he introduced himself to the neighbor, offering his hand, and the man said "I don't shake hands with Jews." Also, she had a memory as a little girl of a friend (in the family of the same man who wouldn't shake hands) who played with her, but told her she couldn't play when her grandfather was visiting, saying, "I think it has something to do with your being Jewish."

But Rebecca said that things changed in subsequent years.

The 1917-18 directory lists, "Singer, Max (Bessie L.) dry goods 50 Maine h 13 Dunlap"
The 1922-23 directory lists, "Singer, Max H (Bessie L) dry goods 50 Maine h 5 Federal"

Judy wrote, "Max had two people work for him, then one, and when mother was in high school, she was the one who worked for him. He did not keep the store in Lewiston after he came to Brunswick." Rebecca wrote, "My father went to Boston and New York to buy merchandise. He only employed one girl and therefore he also waited on the customers. When I was a freshman in high school I kept the books, which was a simple process. A record of invoices was kept in a writing tablet - daily sales in another book. All cancelled checks were retained in another book and charge accounts in a book also."

Max operated M. Singer Dry Goods for almost 40 years, and finally decided to sell. Once he made the decision, he sold the store within a week. Daughter Goldie said that none of his children were interested in taking over the store.

Max had blond hair and brown eyes, and Rebecca said that her mother Bessie was sorry that none of her children had blond hair and brown eyes like Max. (Rebecca had blond hair, but blue eyes, like her mother.)

Judy writes that Max was "a very quiet, kind man" who loved animals and would care for stray cats. He was a very religious man. He was well versed in the Torah and could conduct local services for the families in Brunswick. All holidays were celebrated in the household. Judy writes, "I can remember the very long seders--all in Hebrew, when I was very young. The Friday night meal was always chicken. The only trip they took was to Michigan to see Myer for their 50th wedding anniversary. (This may actually have been Max and Bessie's 40th anniversary, as Myer's wife Leah had died by his time and a note attached to a photo refers to Max and Bessie's anniversary.) Max tended to his garden and chickens. He liked baseball, but not like Myer." (Two of Max's sons, Joe and Morris, liked baseball and followed the Red Sox.) "Max always drank tea from a glass with lots of milk and lump sugar in his mouth."



He had a large garden with pear, apple and cherry trees, and he had chickens and a cow. Judy remembered going grocery shopping with him. "He would read labels and if he saw a preservative, he wouldn't buy it. He wanted no chemicals in his system."

"He came to Portland to the naming of my daughter in the shul at 6:30 a.m., and also to New Hampshire for the bris of both of my sons. He was a very religious man."

Daughter Goldie said that Max was a good dancer and used to dance to the radio. In 2002, Rebecca commented that her one regret was that she didn't help her father Max to go back to Lithuania to visit his family (though Rebecca would have been only 13 when Max's mother died, and only 25 when his father died). She remembered a story where Abraham had said that he was going to go back to Lithuania and that he was going to take Max with him, but they never made the trip.

On the topic of different birth dates appearing for Max, Rebecca writes in 2002, "The reason for the discrepancy of the ages about my parents is, not celebrating birthdays, they lost track. [Note that birthdays began to be celebrated for women and children in America in about 1900; and for men it was even later.] On the other hand people lowered their ages. My mother told us she was twenty-one when she married, and my father 25. My mother's father had written the dates of his children in his bible but unfortunately he loaned the book to a neighbor and when he returned the bible he had removed the page of the dates. He was jealous of my grandfather because he was doing better financially. At least that is what the family thought. I recall my mother telling me that (many) Jewish people were superstitious that when the angel of death was looking for victims he favored older people, and so they thought this lie would help them to live longer."

More About Max Harry Singer:

Burial: Auburn, ME

Hebrew Name: Mordechai¹³⁰

Location: Brunswick, ME

Notes for Bessie Gould:

Bessie's name is shown as Goold on her marriage license in 1900 (though the family name is shown as Gould on the 1900 census). Granddaughter Judy Kamin writes: "When my grandfather wrote love letters to his future wife, he addressed them to Bessie Goold. When did Goold become Gould? Mother and Goldie think, perhaps when Bessie's brother went to Harvard and when he said Goold, someone wrote it Gould. They just don't know."



Bessie's marriage certificate shows her parents as Morris Goold, age 49, "merchant" born in Russia, and Rosie Levin, as a housewife, age 22, born in Russia, and having died.

Daughter Rebecca Robinson writes, "I wish I had more information about my Grandmother (Rosie) Gould. She died when my mother was 4 years old. My mother lived with one relative or another and came to America to live with her father." According to Judy, "Bessie always talked about sailing into N.Y.," so that was apparently her port of entry. According to the 1900 census she arrived in 1891. (The Ellis Island database contains records starting in 1892.)

Rebecca continues, "She was very close to her father and when she was 14 he opened a small dry goods store and she worked there while he continued to peddle. She told me some interesting stories about the Jewish people (10 to 12 families) who lived there."

The 1900 census shows her father Morris Gould living in Somersworth, NH, at 10 South Street. He was 45 years old, listed as born in 1855. His wife was Fannie, 29 years old, born in 1871. The couple is listed as having been married 8 years. Both are listed as born in Russia. Fannie had given birth to 2 children, both of whom were living. Morris' immigration date is shown as 1885 and his occupation is "merchant." Their children are listed as Bessie S Gould, 19, born in 1891 in Russia, immigrated 1891 (working as a dry goods clerk); Samuel, 18, born in 1882 in Russia, immigrated 1892 (working as a peddler); Goude (?), 15, born in 1884 in Russia, immigrated in 1900; Rosie, 7, born 1893 in New Hampshire; and Louis, 3, born 1897 in New Hampshire. The daughter shown as "Goude" (?) may have later been known as Anne. Bessie's son Morris later stayed with an aunt, Ann Weiner in Boston, and she would have been the same age.

Bessie was fluent in French, which was an important asset in a town with many French Canadians. Her daughters Rebecca and Goldie told the story that some French Canadian children had stolen items from the store, and then confessed to their priest. The priest came to the store to apologize, and to pay for the items. After speaking to Bessie he asked why he hadn't seen her in church, and she told him that she was Jewish. He couldn't believe that she wasn't French, because she was so fluent. On another occasion Bessie was asked, "Why are you ashamed of being French?" and she replied, "I'm not ashamed. I'm not French!" Goldie said that the French Canadians and Jews got along well in Brunswick, both being minority groups.

Rebecca said that Bessie could have passed for Irish, because she had blue eyes, auburn hair, and a dusting of freckles.

About her own birth in Somersworth, Maine, Rebecca wrote in 2002, "Although maternity units had been established it seemed people preferred to have their children born in the family home, so while I was conceived in Lewiston, my mother went to N. H. to have the stork deliver me there."

Rebecca related two stories about her mother Bessie, both occurring when Max and Abraham's families lived in the same building on Birch Street in Lewiston: First, Abraham's maid was fired by Abraham's wife Minnie, because the maid had taken an egg for breakfast, to which Minnie didn't think she was entitled. The maid ran to Bessie for comfort, and Bessie calmed her and fixed her an egg. Later, Abraham came to talk to the maid and had to offer her a raise in salary (from \$2 to \$3) plus access to the eggs, to get her to return.

In the second story, Rebecca said that Abraham's children were fond of Rebecca as a little girl and they played together. Bessie treated Abraham's children well, making cookies for them, etc. In fact, Bessie was known for her molasses cookies (she was called the Cookie Lady, and she made 6 dozen large cookies at a time). Rebecca said that Abraham loved his children and would bring them home a bag of goodies (cookies, fruit, or "whatever"). One day Bessie looked out the window and saw that Abraham had brought home treats for his children and they all gathered around him, along with 2-year-old Rebecca, who also held out her hand. Abraham gave the treats to his own children, but not to Rebecca. When Max got home, Bessie told him, "We're moving." Max asked, "Where can we find another house this nice?" Rebecca said that Max had no choice, though, because Bessie said they would either move immediately, or she would go home to her father in New Hampshire. And they moved!

More about Bessie's family: In the 1910 census Morris and the family are living at 24 South Street. Morris, age 56, is listed as a retail merchant in the field of dry goods. He is listed as having been married for 31 years (which probably indicates that his first marriage, to Rosie, had been 31 years before, in about 1878-1879). Anne is listed as being married for 18 years. Morris' immigration date is now listed as 1887, and his occupation is retail merchant in dry goods. Fannie is now listed as "Anne," age 37, and she is still listed as having given birth to 2 children. The children living at home are Rosie, 16, and Lewis, 13. In this census the name appears to be spelled as "Goold," but is listed in the index as "Gould." Also living with the family are

grandchildren Rebecca R. Singer, age 8, Isadore Singer, age 7, and Morris Singer, age 5. The census was enumerated April 30, 1910.

Rebecca writes, "I remember my Grandfather Gould and his offspring very well. Every summer we spent several weeks with my grandparents in New Hampshire and had a real good time. My grandfather would slip me a nickel." "He was a wonderful man." Rebecca added that her grandfather didn't give a nickel to the younger boys, because, she thought, he didn't want his (second) wife to know about it. His second wife was nice to the children, but "on the frugal side." Rebecca related a story where she wanted to buy a paddleball that cost \$.05, but her grandfather didn't give her the nickel that day. So she got up her courage and asked for the nickel. He teased her, asking why she wanted it, and what good a paddleball was-- and eventually gave her the nickel.

Rebecca continues, "My Grandfather when he became a widower married again, -- a sister to his first wife and they had two children, Rose and Louis. My Uncle Louis was only 3 years older than I was.

"Although most of the family lived in N.H. and the Boston area, we were close until the older members died quite young and I sort of lost track of some of the cousins in my later years."

The 1920 census shows Fanny living at 22 South Street, as a widow. She is listed as age 43, and living with her are her son Louis, age 22, her daughter-in-law Dorothy, age 20, and granddaughter Mildred, under 1 year old. Dorothy is listed as born in New York. None of the family members are listed with an occupation.

The 1930 census index does not show the family in Somersworth.

[Note that the database for the Jewish Advocate newspaper in Boston shows the obituary for a Louis Gould of Somersworth, NY, who died on 01/08/1948. The obituary may have more information about him and his survivors.]

More About Bessie Gould:

Burial: Auburn, ME

Marriage Notes for Max Singer and Bessie Gould:

Judy writes in 2002: "How they met... A salesman visited the store in Lewiston where Max was working and told him of this lady in N.H. he thought Max would like to meet. The salesman drove Max to N.H. to meet her. Thus started the courtship.

"Goldie has the letters that my grandfather wrote to my grandmother when they were dating. The return address on most of the letters that Max sent was: 66 First Street, Auburn, Maine. (Auburn and Lewiston are twin cities). He was writing to her in 1899 and they were married in Sept. 1900. One of the return addresses is Oxford, Maine. He used to go there on selling trips. He especially liked the family he stayed with, because of the great breakfast she gave him."

Their wedding certificate, dated Sept. 2, 1900, shows that they were married in Somersworth, New Hampshire by Rabbi M. Margolies of Boston. (This is the same Rabbi who married Max's brother Abraham, and may have been related to Abraham's wife Minnie.) On their Certificate of Intention of Marriage, filed on Aug. 31, 1900, Max is shown as being 23 years old (Judy says that he was actually older), with occupation "merchant," and birthplace "Poland Russia." Bessie is listed as Bessie L. Goold, 19 years of age, occupation "Saleslady," birthplace Russia. Max is shown as residing in Lewiston, ME, and Bessie in Somersworth, NH.

Max and Bessie initially lived in Lewiston following their marriage.

Daughter Rebecca wrote in 2002, " I recall that when I was about 4 or 5 we lived in a tenement house in Lewiston and across the street was a park now called Kennedy Park, named after the President who was killed. This was in Lewiston. None of the tenements had any land. We had indoor plumbing but no bathroom or electricity or hot water.



"We burnt wood in the large kitchen range, and my father on cold nights would get up in the middle of the night to replenish the wood."

In about 1908 or 1909 the family moved to Brunswick.

Rebecca writes, "When we moved to Brunswick we also lived in a tenement house that didn't have a bath room. The children could bathe in a small tub but my parents had to be content to sponge wash themselves. My father bought a second hand bathtub. Outside was wooden and inside tin. He drilled a hole in the tub and floor so after a bath the water could flow down but he had to continue boiling water in a washtub. He installed it in our dining room; no other place. My mother was creative so my father was asked to make a cover of wood that could be used to cover the bath. My mother covered the wooden cover with a couch cover and placed 3 pillows as the tub was against the wall. The street we lived on was called Market Lane, and the rent was 6 dollars a month." The family was quite proud to have a tub.

"We burnt wood and coal. The coal heated the kitchen and the dining room." It also provided some heat, but very little for the two adjoining bedrooms, and "we often wore our fleece lined underwear under our night wear, with plenty of blankets to keep us warm. The front room, later called the parlor was shut off in the winter so we used the kitchen all winter. Neighbors frequently came in and my mother served tea and the big molasses cookies she made without eggs or milk. Once a week my mother baked several dozen and for the weekend a sponge cake. My mother was well known for her cookies. Our playmates, when they visited us, would ask if they could have a cookie."

Rebecca wrote in another note that at one time her family lived in the same tenement house as Max's brother Jacob's family. "We lived on the first floor and he and his family resided above us."

Rebecca continued, "When I was about 9, my father bought a house for \$1,800. Payments were \$100 each year plus insurance and taxes. There was a small apartment on the rear of the upper floor and they paid \$6.00 a month plus the use of the barn that came with the house. The rent took care of the taxes and insurance. We lived frugally so my father was able to pay within 5 years."

According to a newspaper article about Rebecca, the family had moved from Market Lane to Dunlap St, and then to 5 Federal Street. Rebecca's sister Goldie still lives at the family home at 5 Federal Street in 2004.

Rebecca continued, "The house to keep warm had 4 stoves. There was a kitchen range. The dining room, which was also used as a living room, had a parlor stove (so called because it was trimmed with fancy metal). My folks had a stove in their bedroom that heated also a small bedroom next to their room. My brothers slept upstairs and there was a small stove in their bedroom.

"During the day my mother kept the stoves burning so the room would be warm and she had a hot water bottle when they went to bed. The old fashioned quilts were heavy and blankets were used under the quilt. After a couple of years my father had installed a furnace. Afterwards, electricity. A hot water tank was connected to the kitchen range.

"I remember my mother saying one of the happiest days of her life was when my father had electricity and hot water installed.

"There were no zoning laws, so we had a cow and chickens. The cow gave us milk, and home made butter and sour cream and cottage cheese. It was too much work for my mother so my father decided to sell the cow, to which he was very much attached. He finally found a farmer who was good to his cattle and he sold him the cow.

"About once a week my father would visit the cow. My father should have been a farmer as he enjoyed animals and gardening."

Grandson Howard Singer remembered that as a child his family visited Max and Bessie. He remembered both as being very kind. He also recalled that his father William used to have the job of taking the family cow out to pasture.

The family was one of only 10 Jewish families in Brunswick. They were Orthodox and kept kosher, so Max had to go to Lewiston to get their meat and bread. Rebecca remembered that he brought it home in a big gunnysack. They didn't own a car, so Max took the "electric car" (trolley) back and forth to Lewiston for 25 cents.

The Jewish families worshipped together but there was no rabbi in the area, so they were led by the local Hebrew teacher, who worked for what they could pay him.

When asked about the Depression, Goldie said that she never felt poor, because they had as much as any of their friends. If they wanted something they couldn't have, it wasn't unusual -- everyone was in the same situation. The 1930 Federal census shows Isadore, Joseph, William and Goldie living at home. (Rebecca had married and Morris was living in Boston.) Max had his store, and Isadore was a salesman in a dry goods store, so probably worked for his father.

Goldie also told the story that during WWII, when her two brothers (Joe and Bill) were in the military, she answered the phone and was told that a telegram had arrived for her mother. Goldie was so frightened that she said her hands were shaking, and if one of the boys had been hurt, she didn't want her mother to hear this way, so she took the message herself. It turned out to be a telegram from Joe, wishing his mother a happy Mother's Day.



Rear, L-R: Isadore, Rebecca
Middle, L-R: Morris, Bessie, Goldie, Max
Front, L-R: Joe, Bill

Children of Max Singer and Bessie Gould are:

- + i. Rebecca⁵ Singer, born July 07, 1901 in Somersworth, NH; died March 29, 2003 in ME.
- + ii. Isadore Singer, born June 26, 1903; died October 28, 1996 in Bath, ME.
- + iii. Morris Singer, born November 06, 1904 in ME; died 2000.
- + iv. Joseph Leo Singer, born November 24, 1909 in Brunswick, ME; died November 23, 1996 in Brunswick, ME.
- + v. William Singer, born August 23, 1912 in Lewiston, ME; died December 09, 1995 in Portland, ME.
- vi. Goldie Singer¹³¹, born April 06, 1916 in Brunswick¹³².