

were held in the home of the bride's parents, thus it is likely that Yankev Kappellowitz was married to Chivia Alperowitz in Sosenka. Yankev worked as a timber surveyor, but it is possible that he operated a lumber business after his father-in-law's death. (Under the category of "forests," the *Vsia Rossia* guide of 1899 records a Yankel Eilevich Kopelovich [Russian spelling] as a dealer in "lumber, timber and wood in general - including sale and delivery of wood" located at the Mankovich estate near Vileika in the Vilna province.)

The Kappellowitz children included Nathan, who died prior to the First World War, and daughters Anna (b.1888), Sophie (b.1889, Shayne), Rifka and Shprintze (birth dates unknown). Anna lived in Vileika for some time and then emigrated. Sophie, who was close to Anna, remained in Sosenka until about 1905 when the pogroms caused her to depart as well. She arrived in New York and lived for a time with her aunt Anna Koppleman's family in Brooklyn before traveling to Chicago to join her sister.

In Chicago, Sophie went to work in a garment factory that was owned by Nathan Kern, a Russian from Kiev, whom she eventually married. Health problems prompted Sophie's doctor to recommend that she live in a cleaner atmosphere such as Florida or the northeast; thus she moved to Bangor, Maine where an uncle and a number of cousins already resided. Anna moved to Cleveland where she married Marshall Marks, and bore one daughter, Sophia. Shprintze and Rifka married, had families and remained in Europe. Yankev died prior to the First World War and Chivia died about 1929; Shprintze, Rifka and their families were lost during the Second World War.

SARAH'S husband, Aaron Alperowitz, was a member of what was to be one of the last generations of Russian Jews to lead the traditional life of unencumbered spirituality and religious study. He was not expected to earn a living and instead, according to one descendant, was supported by his father-in-law's family for more than twenty years. (This arrangement was not quite so one-sided as it may sound, for "the dream of a wealthy merchant was to marry his daughter to an outstanding scholar..."⁴¹ After the lumber money dried up and the family scattered, son Edward sent funds from America to help support his parents. When Aaron discovered that his son was working Saturdays he burned the money; when Edward learned that his hard earned money was being burned, he stopped sending it.) Aaron may have presided over Sosenka's synagogue; given the size of the community it is unlikely that any other rabbi would have lived there, although no official clue survives regarding this. It is also likely that Aaron was a "spiritual" rabbi as opposed to a "Crown" rabbi who was sanctioned by the government. (The Russian government's interference in Jewish religious affairs produced a strange hybrid of rabbis during the 19th century. The Statute of 1835 provided for a Crown or communal rabbi who was the only individual authorized to perform rituals that required registration with the government. Crown rabbis kept birth, marriage, divorce and death registers and were also required to "direct the Jews to the observation of ethical duties and submission to government laws and established powers." Because the Crown rabbi had only to complete four classes at the gymna-



Yankev and Chivia Kappellowitz, seated, with their son Nathan, daughter-in-law and grandchildren. (Courtesy of Sophia Wolfe) *Right:* Leah Rubin circa 1936 with granddaughters Marcia and Ruth Musicant, center and right. (Courtesy of Marcia Musicant Bernstein)

sium, was not required to be fluent in Hebrew, and was, in effect, a police officer in the community in which he held office, the position was hardly a respected one. The spiritual rabbi, on the other hand, was esteemed for his learning and piety. His position was further enhanced when the government no longer required Crown rabbis to hold a rabbinical degree.)

It may be coincidental that Aaron and Sarah were both Alperowitzes, but it is possible that Aaron adopted the last name of his father-in-law, which was a common practice of the time. One source indicated that Sarah and Aaron may have been related, but their surnames would not necessarily imply this (see Appendix Two for a discussion of the possible basis). Few details are available about the couple, except that they resided with Leah and Soshe Esther in Reuben's house after his death. Aaron, whose nickname was "Red" because of his flowing red beard, also may have used the name Alpert although he never left Europe.

Their oldest child, Rifka (b.1880), was engaged to a soldier during the First World War, but when the fighting ended and the frontier was divided, Sosenka belonged to Poland and Rifka's fiance was trapped on the Russian side of the border. She remained in Sosenka to care for Sarah during her old age and died unmarried in 1942 during the German occupation. Aaron and Sarah's youngest child (name unknown) married the daughter of a wealthy factory owner; he was murdered in 1915, having been poisoned while traveling on a train to Moscow. He had several children of which all that is known is that at least one was employed by the Soviet government as an engineer.

Samuel (b.1883) and Edward (b.1884, Udel) spent their youths training for the rabbinate until both emigrated to New York as a result of the Russo-Japanese War. Upon being called up to active duty, Edward, who was a reservist, managed to escape to Helsinki and traveled from there to Glasgow. He arrived in New York March 2, 1905 having made the crossing aboard the *Astoria*. Just before these events he had married his first cousin, Sadie Costrell (b.1886 in Kurenets), but she remained behind until Edward could get situated in America. Edward lived in New York for a time where he was employed in a sweatshop, but like his cousin Sroel, he proved to be color blind and soon left for Bangor. (Unlike the Cohens, none of the Alperowitzes made a life in the clothing trade. Sroel was fired from his post at a sweatshop in New York for sewing the wrong color sleeves on a suit of clothes, whereas one of Izzy's first enterprises in Bangor, a clothing shop, was closed after a partner disappeared with the inventory while Izzy was recuperating from a car accident.)

Nothing is known about **SIMCHA's** early years apart from his marriage in 1890 to Dora Koppelowitz from the nearby village of Ilya. The Koppelowitz name was a very popular one in the region surrounding Vileika (Koppelowitz and Kappellowitz are identical names with different English spellings) but all that is known of her family is that they were in the fur business. It is unclear where the couple settled after their marriage; however, their initial life together lasted for a relatively brief period of time. Their first child, Robert (Reuben), was born in 1892, and Simcha, faced with possible service in the

tsar's army, left that same year for America. He settled in Bangor with his brother Nathan and adopted the name Samuel M. Cohen; but several years passed until Dora could be persuaded to make the trip over. Legend has it that Simcha had originally written to his wife telling her how difficult life was in America (he started by peddling used clothing from a horse and cart in the countryside surrounding Bangor), and the impression of poverty stayed with Dora despite his subsequent entreaties that she join him. Finally he wrote that unless she came over on the next boat he was going to move away to "Broya" - actually Brewer, Maine which is across the river from Bangor. The fear that her husband would have to start all over again in "Broya," which she thought was a foreign country, motivated Dora to emigrate in 1896. Six more children were born to the couple in Bangor beginning with Frances in 1898 and ending with Sadye in 1909.

LEAH, the youngest of Reuben and Soshe Esther's children, was in the unusual position of being born the same year (1867) as her nephew, Max Cohen. She lived to her seventy-fourth year, surviving her eldest brother, Nathan, by forty years and her next youngest sibling, Simcha, by thirteen years. Leah's last impression of Nathan was in her fifteenth year when he left Sosenka in 1882, for he died in his fifty-sixth year in Bangor in 1901, several years prior to her arrival in New York.

Due to the circumstances of her age and residence in America, one of the most personal portraits we have of an Alperowitz child is of Leah. Described by her grandchildren as a tiny, sweet-natured and religious woman, like most of her contemporaries Leah endured her full share of hardships growing up in a small village in the Pale and then emigrating without resources to a foreign land. Her father died when she was a woman of twenty-three leaving her in a far more difficult position than her sisters in attracting a husband. Instead of a wealthy lumber merchant as a father-in-law, potential husbands could be lured only by Reuben's house which had been promised as Leah's dowry. But this was occupied by Soshe Esther, Aaron and Sarah who were concerned that Leah's not-yet-decided-upon husband might mortgage the place and then run off with the money leaving them with the debt. After declining offers for several years, Leah, who was approaching thirty, finally settled on Barnet Anselowitz who came from the village of Moulia.

The couple lived with Soshe Esther in Sosenka where their first child, Reuben, was born in 1897. Barnet, who was trained as an engineer, had difficulty earning a living as there was little or no enterprise in the area other than forestry, and that was beginning to decline. A second child, Sadie (Shprintze), was born around 1902. The threat of a call-up to active service led to Barnet's departure for New York in 1904. There he adopted the surname Rubin to conform to the name his brothers had assumed upon their arrival. After saving sufficient funds he sent for his wife and children and the family settled in Brooklyn.

The First World War brought massive devastation to the Vileika district, which by 1920 had been returned to the control of Poland.⁴² Most houses in the town of Vileika itself were burned, but many citizens returned to rebuild what had been demolished. It was estimated that from one to two million residents had moved into the Russian mainland as a result of the battles between the German and Russian armies and then between Polish and Bolshevik forces. Some residents had also fled in the opposite direction by crossing the front line near Smorgon to the German side; and it wasn't until 1922 that evacuees began returning to the region, much of which lay in ruins. A 1922 U.S. government report on the region painted a bleak picture of the prospects for recovery:

Through repeated invasions sawmills and mill equipment of the east have either been destroyed or have fallen into a state of disrepair. Some parts of the district have been stripped of housing facilities and in many cases entire towns have been wiped out. Some of the agricultural land...has been idle since 1915 and is now covered with scrub growth. The old Russian railways through this region were constructed more for military than commercial purposes and most of the forested areas would have to be connected up by light rails.⁴³

Sosenka's isolated location may have prevented its destruction, but as of 1921 the population had dwindled to 76. Although it is likely that they were among those who fled the fighting, Aaron Alperowitz and Chivia Kappellowitz reportedly lived there until their deaths in 1925 and 1929. Sarah Alperowitz, who died in the late 1930's, also reportedly remained in Sosenka with her daughter Rifka after Aaron's death.

The destiny of the family members left in the area by the time of the Second World War was first in the hands of the Soviets and then the Germans. Vileika, which had grown from 5,600 residents in 1931 to a small city of 10,000, was occupied by the Red Army on September 17, 1939 and the effect was immediate. A number of Jews were detained on the charge of being "an enemy of the new regime" and all were issued Soviet identity cards which included the statement "forbidden to live in the capital city of the province, being a dangerous person." Houses and businesses were confiscated, religious schools and institutions were closed down and whole families were deported to Siberia. Two years later the German invasion swept through the western frontier with the disastrous result that 4,000 people in Vileika were murdered. Some succeeded in escaping, but of the whole area that had constituted the former Pale of Settlement, only 150,000 Jews survived out of the 2,700,000 that had lived there at the time of the German occupation.