



The Cohns, Shattils and Milavetz' gathered in Covert, Michigan in 1911 or 1912. From right: Ann (Rabinowitz) Shattil; Julius Shattil; Ruth Cohn; Old man Milavetz; Isadore Cohn; Anne Shattil; Lena Milavetz, and Edith Cohn. The two on the left and two children in the back are unidentified. Edith Rothschild Cohn was married to Isadore.

Isaac and Henne Leah were married in Memel, Lithuania, which today is known as Klaipeda. In those days, it was under the rule of, first the Polish King and later by the Russians and the Germans. Isaac was a well-to-do merchant in Memel. But let me tell you about Plunge.

Plunge is about a two hour ride from Memel and about six hours from Vilna where we started this venture. The roads are passable, best described as similar to an old country lane, rather than a road. Although it was paved with asphalt, there were plenty of ruts to keep us alert as we were driven to the shtetel of Plunge. You would have had to have had your eyes opened, as we did, when you saw the restroom conditions along the way! And there weren't any gas stations, either. You either brought extra cans of gas, or watched for a roadside tanker.

Your mental vision of a shtetel is probably how I always envisioned one based on Sholom Alechim stories. Well, we are wrong! I thought, as I grew up, that a shtetel was a small, quaint village, with unpaved roads, unlike the developed small towns of the U.S. and Europe. Plunge is still a small town, but it has grown some since Isaac and Henne Leah lived there.

Now there are many "cement boxes" of buildings surrounding the outskirts--Russian style. The "downtown" of the shtetel has changed little. A Jewish man who was born in Plunge now living in Florida had given me a hand-drawn map of the shtetel as he remembered it from his childhood in the 1930s, so I had something to base this conclusion on.

The only synagogue left in the town is used as a

warehouse. We were told that when Germany marched into Lithuania in World War II, and just prior to their invasion, the Lithuanians herded the Jews in the area, including the nearby town of Telz (Telsai), into the synagogue and left them inside for over a week without food or water. Then they set the building on fire. The building was rebuilt later but not as a synagogue. It is about three blocks from the largest church in the town, which was untouched.

This story was told to us by the only Jew still living in Plunge, Yossell Bunkas. Yossell managed to escape from Plunge before the pogrom and joined the Russian army. He came back to town at the end of WW II because he felt a need to have the world remember what had happened there. He established a wonderful monument to the death of the Jews of Plunge.

Yossell took Shirley and me (along with our Lithuanian guide/driver) to the outskirts of the town and showed us his monument. It consists of 18 wooden statues, each hand-carved from huge pine trees. Each "totem pole" carving depicts what transpired in Plunge, and at other shtetels.

One carving stood out. It was of a Jewish mother trying to protect her children, who were clinging to her skirt. You can see the fright on the mother's face and the unbelievable and astonished look on each of the kids' faces.

I had purchased a few wooden statues that Yossell had hand carved and keep them in my home office... right in front for me to always remember our Lita!



Family Newsletter

June, 2000

Relatives from four countries expected at reunion

Early responses indicate that relatives from at least four countries will attend the reunion in San Francisco on October 20-22, 2000.

In addition to the descendants of Mordecai and Miriam Schattil, there will likely be representation from the descendants of Miriam's parents, Isaac Cohen and Henne Leah Kaplan.

The reunion will feature events such as an oral history discussion to compare the sometimes conflicting information in the stories that have been handed down to us. We also expect to be able to knit together information on family history from the perspective of the several branches, who should be able to fill in some gaps in each branch's recollection. Bring your family photo albums to pass around and to trigger memories of stories you may not have heard.

Besides spontaneous groupings of cousins who will find many areas of shared interests and character traits, we expect that a council of elders will convene to discuss family projects, strategy and policy. A council of youngsters will engage in activities for children, youth and teens.

For more information on accommodations and tourism opportunities for before or after the reunion,

check out our reunion Web site <http://www.shattil.com> or write to the reunion committee in care of Ron Shattil, 9200 Skyline Blvd., Oakland, CA, 94611-1735 USA.



Wedding Moments

Elliott & Amy (Gadlin) Stewart were married May 22 in Schaumburg, Illinois. From left are Elliott's brother-in-law, Gregg Hickman; sister Donna (Stewart) Hickman; parents, Ron & Sherry (Shattil) Stewart; bride and groom, and grandmother Helen Shattil.

In Search of Miriam Cohn Schattil's Family

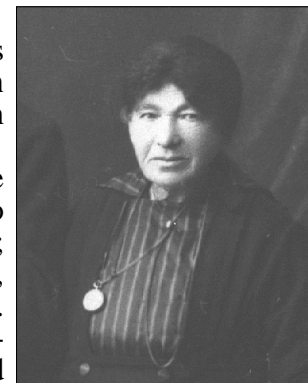
By Ted Margulis

Isaac Cohn and his wife, Henne Leah Kaplan, are our common ancestors.

Isaac and Henne were the parents of Miriam, who married Mordecai Schattil; Fanny, my grandmother, who first married Mr. Rozenberg (who died during the Black Plague) and then Theodore Soloski;

Genesse, who was born in Telz and ended up in Superior, Wisconsin; Ann, who married twice (the last husband was Braun) and ended up in Arizona in the motel business; Aron Feivel, the only son who was in the retail shoe business in Jerusalem. His store was a front for the Hagganah; and Sarah Cyne.

Isaac was born in 1822 in Plunge (Plungian), Lithuania. My wife, Shirley, and I traveled to



Miriam Cohn Schattil

Lithuania, and in particular to Plunge, Memel (Klaipedia today) and Svenscionis as part of our "Roots" tour in August, 1994. It was an experience that we wouldn't want to repeat again. I'm not complaining, mind you, but the conditions that exist today in both Lithuania, Russia and the Ukraine which we also toured to find my father's roots, are hard for us to understand and imagine that they still exist today.

It was like going back to the 1800s. Life is still hard in the "old country" and I for one am glad that my father, and my mother's family, had the guts and the brains to leave "the old country" and move to the United States.

My grandmother Fanny and her family emigrated back in 1892. They emigrated to the Duluth/Superior area and endured many hardships of their own but their conditions were a lot easier than what their parents had to face and for those who remained in Lithuania.

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By Alexander Schattil, with comments by Leslie Comaroff

Not much is known of the early life of **Joseph Schattil**. He was born in Lithuania, then part of Imperial Russia, on 14 February 1876 and emigrated to South Africa at an early age. He arrived in Rhodesia at the pioneer town of Bulawayo in 1897. He traveled from Cape Town by train to Mafeking with two countrymen: Harry Sussman and Moses Sill. (Leslie points out that Harry Sussman went on to acquire the Woolworth's franchise in South Africa).

At that time, the railroad to the North had only been constructed as far as Mafeking and a mule wagon coach service connected the railroad to Bulawayo. It appears that Joseph and his companions could not afford the coach fares so they completed their journey to Bulawayo on foot. Mafeking was about 200 miles from Bulawayo and they walked among the African bush which then teemed with wild animals and hostile tribesmen. They followed the coach road and there must have been travelers in the same position as themselves. It must have been in the dry season so it would seem that they arrived in Bulawayo about May or June, 1897.

Joseph remained in the new country of Rhodesia, but Harry Sussman and Moses Grill later moved on to the adjoining colony of Northern Rhodesia where they became successful businessmen.

Bulawayo was a typical frontier town with many saloons and hotels catering to the needs of the locals and new arrivals. Gold mining was the main activity in those early days and large and small mines were opening all over the country. Joseph must have gone into business opening up trading stores in the mines. In 1907 he surfaced in Salisbury where he met and later married **Dina Masinter**, a recent arrival from Russia. They established themselves at Mazoe, then a mining camp about 20 miles from Salisbury.

Ralph was born in Johannesburg in 1908 and shortly thereafter the family moved to the Lonely Mine, a newly established gold mine situated in dense bush country about 40 miles from

Bulawayo. The area was isolated as the connecting roads were little better than well defined tracks and the many rivers between the Lonely Mine and Bulawayo had no bridges and could only be crossed at fords called "drifts." When the rivers came down in flood, as they frequently did during the rainy season, the little mining camp would be completely cut off from the rest of the country until the floods subsided.

Between 1909 and 1911, **Lena** and **Alexander** were born in Bulawayo. Before 1914, Dina took her three children on a voyage to England to see relatives. Their visit was cut short by the imminent outbreak of War in 1914 and she returned accompanied by a governess to help look after and bring up the children. By this time the family had moved to the Eiffel



Blue Mine near Gatooma where Joseph operated a business in partnership with brothers **Jacob** and **Victor**. Joseph had earlier been in partnership with **Julius** and Jacob, but it is not certain when and where they carried on business. It is at this time that the spelling of the name surfaced as "Schattil" as has already been described. Julius left Rhodesia and settled in the U.S.A. and Jacob later joined Joseph in partnership with Victor at the Eiffel Blue Mine.

Around 1916, Joseph acquired his first motor car; a Model T Ford. This was when the primary means of transport was by horse and cart. Joseph had owned a pair of horses: "Custard" and "Bob." Custard died of horse sickness and Joseph decided it was time to modernize and travel by motorcar as he disposed of the surviving horse and

sold his carriage.

The Eiffel Blue Mine closed down around 1916 and Joseph moved to the Queens Mine some 20 miles from Bulawayo where he operated a trading store. **Ida** had been born in Salisbury in 1914 before the family left the Eiffel Blue Mine.

When the Eiffel Blue partnership came to an end, Victor returned to South Africa and became an hotelier and Jacob traded in the Battlefields mining area near Gatooma in 1922. When Joseph and his family were at the Queen's Mine, Rhodesia was struck by the Spanish Influenza epidemic in 1918 and Dina caught a bad attack of the flu. Joseph closed the business and took the family into Bulawayo where they remained until Dina recovered.

(Leslie says that they stayed at a hotel in Bulawayo, rather than putting Dina in a hospital because the hospitals were filled and the risk of contagion was greater there. During her recovery, people from the large and active Jewish community in Bulawayo delivered food to Dina. Leslie remembers how children of friends would drop off food, including tureens of soup, at the hotel for family members to bring to Dina. This way, the messengers would not be exposed to the influenza germs.)

Joseph was soon in business again, this time at the Wankie Colliery which was in a low lying area and an extremely hot part of the country. When he moved to Wankie, Joseph sold his Model T Ford which then represented his total capital. The business prospered and in 1922 he sold out for

health reasons (Leslie says that Ralph developed a fever in that hot climate) and decided to take the family on a holiday overseas to Lithuania to see his mother, Miriam and Dina's mother, Malka.

When the family returned to Rhodesia in 1922, Joseph was soon back in business after acquiring the trading rights at the Sherwood Starr Mine which was a new discovery in the Que Que district and he remained there until 1926. He then became involved once again in prospecting and he was soon developing the Golden Snake claims near the Sherwood Starr Mine.

Shafts were built under Jacob's supervision and the property was offered for sale. It is believed he was offered £10,000 for the mine but the offer was turned down. Thereafter, he

arranged for the Goldfields Co. in Bulawayo to take a sampling option over the mine and it sent a mining engineer to report on the property and take samples of the ore. However, the report and samples were unsatisfactory and no deal eventuated.

During the visit of the Goldfields engineer, an exciting incident occurred which severely tested the nerves of young Alexander, then 14 years old. Joseph, Jacob and the mining engineer were down a shaft some 150 feet deep examining the ore body and taking samples. The shaft was timbered and access was by means of a large bucket attached to a steel rope connected to a windlass operated by an African worker who immediately curled up and went to sleep.

Young Alexander kept watch at the shaft head with a loaded shotgun on

the lookout for snakes in the mine timbers as the area was notorious for the deadly black mamba, one of the world's most venomous snakes.

Sure enough, a black snake soon crawled out of the shaft and made its way to the sleeping African. Alexander could not call out in case he disturbed the sleeping man. (Leslie explains that if a person moves, the snake will strike.) He had to wait and see what the snake would do. It crawled over the sleeping African and appeared again on the opposite side of the shaft. At this stage, Alexander had a clear field of fire and discharged both barrels of the shotgun at the snake, which was blown up into a thousand pieces, most of which fell down the shaft onto the three men below.

Loud bellows came from them

demanding what was going on and soon thereafter they were hauled up to the surface. When Alexander described what had taken place, Joseph asked "Was it necessary to use two cartridges to kill the snake? Wouldn't one have been enough?"

(Snake-shooting seems to run in the family as Leslie tells it. She says that one day her daughter Bernice saw a snake crawl out from behind a settee in Joseph's house and he picked up a gun and shot the snake.)

After the failure of the Golden Snake venture, Joseph sold the business at the Sherwood Starr Mine and moved to Bulawayo. In the meantime, the last of his five children, **Esther (Esme)** was born at Gwelo in December, 1926.

Joseph's fortunes did not prosper and he moved from one mine to an-

other hoping that one of them would turn out to be a bonanza. In 1929 it seemed that his luck was about to turn when he opened a business at the Alaska Mine in the Sinoia district. This was a promising copper and gold mine but the bottom dropped out of the copper market as the Great Depression of the 1930s set in. The mine closed and Joseph was on the move again.

From 1931 to 1938 he was trading on a number of small mines in the Que Que District. Joseph had a stroke of luck around 1938 when in Johannesburg with Jacob they found a nugget of gold of 150 oz in a riverbed. This realized about £600 and helped keep creditors at bay. In 1938 he bought the store at the Que Que Limeworks when his fortunes started to improve again. The Limeworks turned into the Rhodesian Iron and Steel Corporation when deposits of iron ore were discovered nearby. Joseph remained at the Limeworks until his death in 1950. By this time he had seen his little shop turn into a thriving business which was cared for by his widow and family.

Before concluding this biographical note, there is a story about Joseph which is worth recounting. When he lived at the Lonely Mine, he used to ride a horse to Bulawayo to transact his business. On one occasion, he was riding a horse called "Pompey" when he rode into a storm. The horse was struck by lightning and died instantaneously but Joseph escaped relatively unscathed except for a gold Hunter watch which he was wearing at the time. The watch was damaged beyond repair and was sold many years later when the price of gold began escalating.

The incident was reported in the "Bulawayo Chronicle" at the time and was repeated in a section of the paper "25 Years Ago." At that time (1936) Alexander was working in the Tax Office in Bulawayo and he showed the article to an accountant who was in his office. To his surprise, the accountant exclaimed that he had sold the horse "Pompey" to Joseph Schattil and he remembered the incident. The long arm of coincidence!

Joseph Schattil, Pioneer