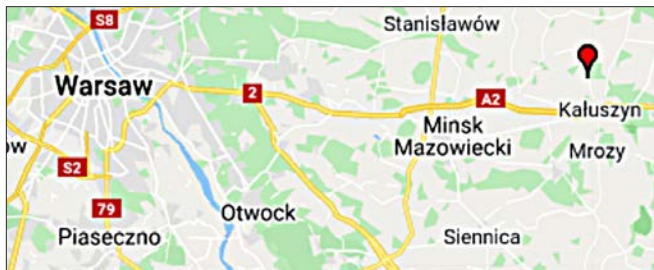




# Memories



MOISHE



SARA FEIGE



ROCHEL



SHYA



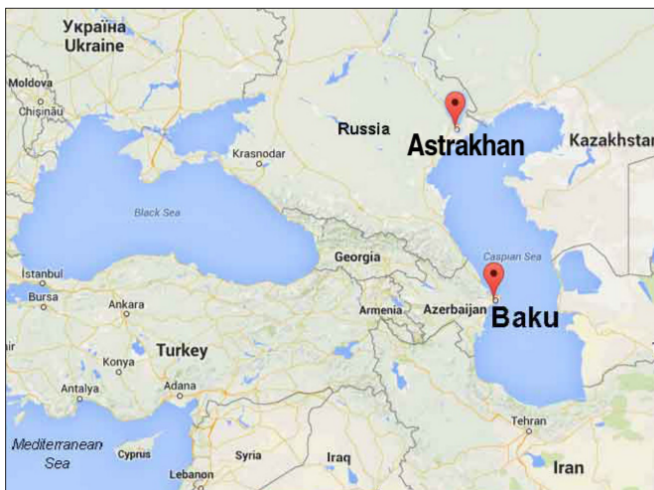
CHAIM LEIB



CHANA LEIBA

Our maternal grandfather Chaim Leib Warsaw (d. 1942), was born in Poland in the middle of the nineteenth century. From a very young age he served in the army for many years. He got to like Russia better than Poland. After he was discharged from the army he went back to Poland to a small city, Kałuszyn, and married our grandmother. Her name was Chana Leiba Pinkusowicz (1866-1928).

After their daughter Masha was born he wanted his wife and daughter to live in Russia. For some reason she refused to go with him. He went by himself, worked as a tailor in Baku, Azerbaijan and came home every couple of years.



MAP SHOWING ASTRAKHAN, RUSSIA AND BAKU, AZERBAIJAN



BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

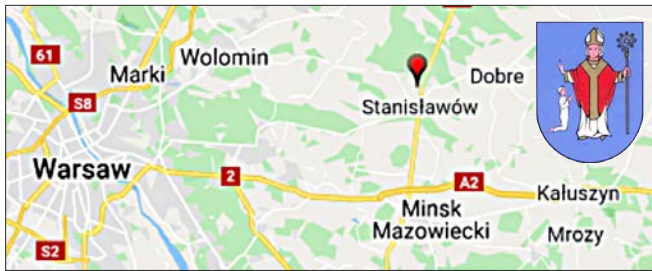
He stayed long enough until another child was born and then went back to Baku. That lasted a number of years. They had five children, *Masha, Moishe, Sara Feige, Rochel* and *Shya*. He sent home some money, but in order to supplement her income, our grandmother had a little hardware store.



POSTCARD FROM ASTRAKHAN, RUSSIA

When the children grew older, by then Masha was married, they decided to go with him to Russia. They ended up living in Astrakhan. It's a large city at the mouth of the Volga River on the Caspian Sea.

In time, their son Moishe married Sonya Esbinsky. Our



CHAIM LEIB



CHANA LEIBA

grandmother Chana Leiba Warshaw had a brother Shmuel Leib Pinkusowicz (1855-1927) who lived in, Stanisławów, a small Polish town not far from Kaluszyn. He had a wife Etta Babinski (1855-1940) four sons and two daughters — *Abram, Jacob, Shiya, Malka, Rochel* and *Moishe*.

Abram and Jacob emigrated to New York in 1905. In time the girls got married. Before the Warshaws moved to Russia, the cousins saw each other frequently.

As time went by **Shiya** decided to go to Astrakhan to visit his relatives. That ended up to be a “*shidach*”. **Shiya Pinkusowicz** and **Sara Feige Warshaw** fell in love and got married in 1915.

Shiya had been freed temporarily from the Polish army because of bad vision in one eye so he decided to go back to Poland to get a full discharge and come back to Astrakhan.



As luck would have it, by the time he left his wife was pregnant. When he went back, Poland decided to gain independence from Russia and recruited everybody into the army, regardless of previous discharges. Shiya got stuck in Poland.



SARA FEIGE and DAUGHTER EVELYN

In 1916, his wife Sara Feige gave to birth to a cute little girl and that was **ME**. After Poland gained independence, and the Bolshevik Revolution was raging, times became difficult and the whole family decided to go to Poland. Mama, her parents, her brother Moishe, Sonya and their daughter Goldie Rochel and her husband, and Shiya left Russia by illegal and dangerous ways.

They came to Poland in 1920. We went to Stanisławów and my parents finally got together. I was four years old and did not know my father, and of course my father did not know me. After a while the rest of the family went to Warsaw. Some of them couldn't adjust, Rochel, her husband and her brother Shiya went back to Russia.

Shiya was a young engineer, an anti-Stalinist, and later was murdered in Stalin's massacres.

Zaidy and Bubby and Goldie stayed in Warsaw, until Sonya's brother got permission to bring them to Montreal. So did Moishe and Sonya Esbinsky, who went with them to Montreal. They left Warsaw on, or about, 1923.



SHIYA PINKUSOWICZ'S TAILOR SHOP in STANISŁAWÓW C.1934

My parents settled in Stanisławów against Mama's better judgement. She did not like the small town, but Papa was settled as the best tailor, with his own customers. He was very reluctant to move and start anew. Mama really had no choice.

They stayed and children were born to them every year and a half to two years apart. They worked very hard to support the family. The house we lived in belonged to my Grandfather. My parents took part of the house and added an extra room, so that they could have two rooms for us.





**PINKUSOWICZ FAMILY, STANISŁAWÓW, POLAND c.1925**



I would like to describe the town and our house. The town had about sixty to seventy Jewish families, consisting of tailors, shoemakers and storekeepers. The whole population was about 1,000 to 1,200 people. There was no electricity or running water. Transportation was mainly horse and wagons, although in later years, there was an autobus between us and Minsk Mazowiecki, about fifteen kilometers away.

Our house consisted of two large rooms. One was a bedroom with two beds and a small bed for a baby and a large custom-made wardrobe that had three sections. The middle section had a large oval mirror. That piece of furniture was the envy of all their friends. There was also a small table and chairs which were used when out-of-town guests came to visit. Mama was a very good housekeeper and liked nice things. She even had two beautiful printed plush bedspreads, heated by a large coal oven, built on one wall, with hermetically closed doors, so that the children couldn't burn themselves.

The other room had everything else in it. It was also heated by a coal stove. On one side of the room, Papa had two sewing machines, a large cutting table and shelves on the

wall to keep the materials that he used to bring every few weeks from Warsaw. There was also a kitchen and chairs, a bench on one wall to hold the pails of water that were brought in from the well, and a large basin for the used water that had to be taken out to be emptied.

The whole house was lit by several naphta lamps, and believe it or not there was space for the whole family to move around. Life was complicated, and all the time Mama was very unhappy with living in Stanislawow.

**From 1921 to 1934 our parents produced seven children, except me, they had Paul, Ruthie, Layah (who died of pneumonia at 11 months), Stanley, Helen, Mary and Gerty.**

While they were having children and struggling to make a living, the political situation was getting worse day by day. Antisemitism grew very strong, especially with Hitler's coming to power in Germany. Although the Poles did not need too much encouragement or lessons on how to hate Jews. They were very good at it by themselves, but a little did not hurt.

The children grew older, went to public school and cheder. Mama always bemoaned the situation and her constant worry was "what will become of the children", but life went on. She didn't like the future she could foresee.



**PINKUSOWICZ FAMILY C.1935** SITTING LEFT TO RIGHT: RUTHIE, BUBBIE ETA, MARY, HELEN, PAUL, SARA FEIGE WITH GERTIE, STANLEY. STANDING: EVELYN.

Because there was no high-school in town, the plan was that I would go to Warsaw to live with my maternal grandparents and attend high school there. With the death of our grandmother, the plan fell through.



Later on when I was in my middle teens, I rebelled. I wanted out of that small, God-forsaken town, but not having any other skills than helping bringing up the children, I didn't have many choices in jobs. I was determined to get out, so I took a waitress job in Warsaw. At that time I had a boyfriend who wanted to get married. I had no intentions to do so. I could see myself in my mother's position, which would be get married, have children and struggle.



**EVELYN — 17 YEARS**

I went to Warsaw and stayed six weeks in my job. Being a small town girl, from a big family, I couldn't stay away. I was terribly lonely for everybody. I used to see Zaidy Warshaw every weekend, and when I told him I couldn't stay here he was very upset, but he understood my situation.

By then antisemitism was at its peak. Papa's best friends were ready to kill

for anything. Unknown to us, Zaidy Warshaw wrote a letter to his son in Montreal, asking him if it is at all possible to get me out of Stanisławów. By then their daughter Goldie was

married, and they were a bit scared to bring a grown girl and have to look after her.

Aunt Sonya looked into the possibility of immigration for us. At that time immigration was very curtailed, especially for Jews. (read the book *None is Too Many*). She found out that if somebody has, or is a partner, in a business, there is a possibility to get a permit to come into Canada.

Goldie's husband, Morris Krasnow, had a business *Atlas Bag and Bagging*. He volunteered to redo his books and put our father's name as a partner in his business, showing that Papa invested \$1000 in the business. On those grounds he could obtain a permit to come to Canada.

**Krasnow J prop Atlas Bag & Bagging  
Co 756b Querbes av Outremont**

As I said, we didn't know anything about it. One day my parents received a letter from Aunt Sonya telling them about it and asking if they were interested.

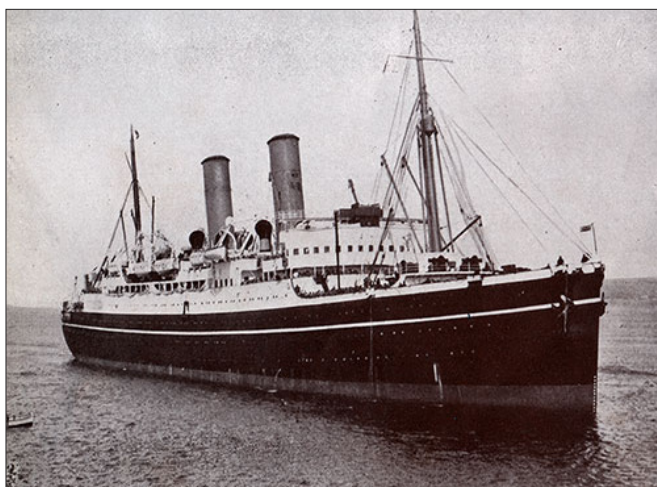
When Mama finished reading the letter she became very excited. We could hardly calm her down. She believed that it was the miracle she was waiting for a long time. She told Papa there was no way he was going to refuse to leave Poland. She believed that this was meant to be to save her children. She immediately wrote a letter to her brother and sister-in-law saying — please do it as soon as possible, and with Morris' help, they got the permit.



Papa left Stanisławów in June of 1935, leaving all of us with not much money, but Mama was deliriously happy and told him everything will be okay. I feel that my rebelling against Stanisławów was the cause of that happening and I am extremely happy about that.

Papa came to Montreal without knowing any English. Having been an independent man, he had to go into a factory to work, and even learned how to operate an electric sewing machine. He lived with the Warshaw's, earned little money, but sent us as much as he could. He also started thinking about a permit for us because he was eligible being a partner





SHIYA SAILED on the CANADIAN PACIFIC LINE STEAMSHIP MONTCALM and ARRIVED in QUEBEC CITY, AUGUST 17, 1935.



in a growing business. He applied and got the permit, and here his troubles started, again. He had no money to pay for the fare. He needed \$1500.00 — \$1000.00 to buy the boat tickets, and \$500.00 to rent a house and set up a bit of housekeeping. Neither the Warshaws nor Morris had the money to lend him, but Papa had three brothers in New York who owned gasoline stations. Two were the owners, the third was a part-owner. They were well-to-do, so Papa called them and asked if they would lend him \$1000.00, promising to pay them back as soon as he would bring his family to Montreal. He explained to them his situation, also the political situation in Poland. He told them that soon there would be a war in Europe and that he has to get his family out of there as soon as possible. The answer he got from them was a categorical "NO". They said he should wait several years until he could save money. Aunty Sonya intervened too and she got the same answer.

Needless to say, Papa was desperate. He read about the pogroms in the cities of Poland and one day we got a letter from him saying that if he could not find a way to bring us to Montreal, he would come back home. Mama immediately wrote to him that not even for a second should he think of returning. She told him about the bad situation over and over, and most of all told him to think about the children. She said she would try to borrow money and do everything possible so that we could get out.

I presume that God works in His mysterious ways. Papa went to Gdynia-American Lines office to enquire about how much money he required for the tickets. He met the manager, a Mr. Nerenberg. He was a Jew from Poland of great intelligence and good heart. In their conversation papa told him about his problems. Mr. Nerenberg listened to him and after a while told him that he will help get the tickets the



easiest way he knows how and he did. He made arrangements that we would get the tickets in Warsaw's office of the Gdynia-American Line and when we will be in Montreal we will pay for the tickets in easy installments. The ticket problem was solved, thanks to Mr. Nerenberg.

Now he needed at least \$500.00, so Morris and a good friend of his, Harry Smith, of Smith Transport, vouched for him at the Hebrew Free Loan Association and they lent him \$500 interest free.



The time was established for us to leave Stanisławów and of course Mama did not have enough money to get eight people ready for such a voyage. The part of the house we lived in belonged to Papa, and I suggested to Mama to sell that part so that she could get some money. Her answer to me was that she would have to sell the house to a Pole.

At that time Papa's sister Rochel, her husband and four sons lived in the other part of the house. She said that as much as we needed the money she could not do it because as soon

as any Pole will get our part of the house he would be very cruel to them and even be ready to kill them to obtain the rest of the house. She said that she could not have that on her conscience, and of course, she did not sell. At that time I thought it was extremely considerate of her to worry about them in our dire needs.

Unfortunately, Roche1, her husband and two of her four sons were lost in the Holocaust.

Somehow Mama managed to get us out. She arranged for a horse and wagon to take us all to Warsaw. We picked up the tickets and all necessary papers and left Warsaw on October 20, 1936, by train to Gdyna where we were to board the ship. Batory, the following day.

To get to Gdyna the train had to stop at Danzig (Gdansk). I remember that our coach was locked and many uniformed Nazis paraded on the train platform.



DANZIG, 1936

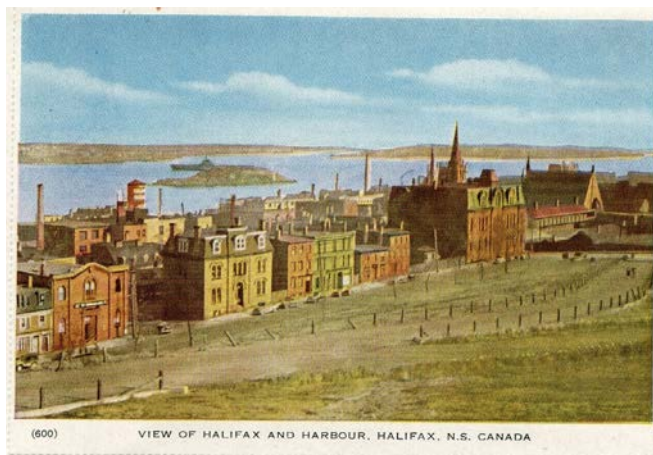


GDYNA, 1938

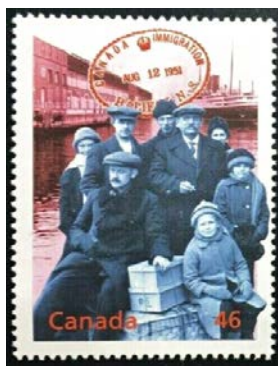
And so we started our voyage to Canada. The crossing was very difficult for Mama and me. We were very seasick, to the point where the other passengers thought that the mother and older daughter of the big family will probably not make it. But on October 31st, Saturday early morning,



SARA FEIGE AND HER CHILDREN SAILED on the BATORY and ARRIVED in HALIFAX, OCTOBER 31, 1936.



we started to feel better. We went up to the deck, we saw birds flying toward us and we knew we were nearing land and several hours later we reached the shores of Halifax and miraculously became well.



We disembarked into a cavernous large shed. We took our baggage that we carried with us, and we stayed together very closely. We found ourselves in a very tough situation, no language, nobody to ask or tell something to. I remember, I think it was Mary, had to go to the bathroom and I didn't know how to ask.

1936			
Pink	Florence	53	244
"	Harry	29	170
Pinsker	Jessie	53	248
Pinkerton	George	50	226
Pinkham	William,C.	43	166
Pinkusowicz	Abren	14	224
"	Chana,L.	7	224
"	Gitle	2	224
"	Jachwet	17	224
"	Masia	4	224
"	Ruchla	12	224
"	Sure,F.	41	224

Mama went to a guard and showed him what she needed and he pointed to the toilet. That was our first English word we learned. We knew we had to go the train station. We were really pathetically forlorn.

Unbeknown to us, Aunt Sonya's brother, Chaim Esbinsky, knew a man who lived in Halifax. Papa and he spoke to the man and asked him to go to the port and help us. In the middle of our upsetting situation, we heard a man call our name. Mama went to him. He identified himself, telling her about Chaim and Papa, and he said he wants to help us. He asked what we need. Mama told him she needed food for



the kids until we reached Montreal. All she had was \$10.00 and of course she offered it to him. He refused to take it and said he would return with the things we need. A little later he did. He helped us get to the train. He was really a God-send to us. We boarded the train in Halifax on Saturday, the 31st at noon.

To describe the train I can only say it must have been a milk route. It stopped and clanked at every little hamlet between Halifax and Montreal. We settled the children the best we could and we were on our way. And with all the difficulties we encountered we were never sorry. Mama was extremely happy with the situation. She knew that now her children had a future.



Sunday, November 1, 1936, we arrived at the Bonaventure Station, in Montreal at 8:00 P.M. Tired, hungry, but happy. Papa was there, waiting for us, with Morris and Chaim. They both had cars. Needless to say, it was a happy reunion. It was extremely cold. The snow came up to our calves. Street lights shone so bright it was impossible to believe. I was fascinated by what I saw out of the car windows.



Finally we stopped in front of a house, and entered Paradise. Papa rented a four room house at **5319 St. Dominique, corner Maguire**. It was freshly painted, very warm and very brightly lit. The kitchen was set with a large chocolate cake that Goldie baked, and a box of *Whippets*, and many bottles of milk. The children were hungry and helped themselves very happily. Mama met her brother and sister-in-law she hadn't seen in years.

When her brother saw her he cried at the sight of her because she looked so worn out. After a while the people left. Papa took the boys in to the bathroom. Bathed them. Gave them clean pyjamas. He took the little girls and did the same, until all the children were put to sleep.



THE ST. DOMINIQUE (NEAR MAGUIRE) NEIGHBOURHOOD TODAY.



THE MONTREAL GAZETTE, NOVEMBER 2, 1936.

Then he told me it's my turn. I'm not really able to describe my pleasure. When I went into the bathroom there was a bathtub and hot and cold running water. I filled the bathtub and slid into the very pleasant hot water. I thought that was Heaven. To this day, so many years later, I still I feel that pleasure whenever I take a bath. The night we came into that little house, I thought I would never want to move.

Several months later, after I looked around, I was ready to move to something bigger, but never sorry for coming to Montreal. I simply fell in love with Canada.

We started our life in Canada with debts. We started working and paying off our debts. The children were taken







**SONYA WARSHAW, SHIYA and SARA FEIGE PINKUS IN MONTREAL**

to Fairmount School, first to learn English. It was my brother Paul who was unhappy because he had finished grade school in Poland. He had to go into the lower grades. But being very bright, he learned quickly and at the end of the school year, he was ready for high school. Our parents and I found work and brought it home.

Every Sunday morning I took the streetcar to Gdyna-American Line with a \$10.00 payment, and Paul went to Hebrew Free Loan Association with a \$5.00 payment.



**5437 WAVERLEY STREET, TODAY.**

Life went on, we worked hard. but we were happy to be in Montreal. It took us about two years to pay our debts. As soon as we were debt free we moved to a much bigger house, at 5437 Waverley Street. Several months later our father's prediction came true. September 3rd, 1939, early morning cousin Goldie called, to tell us that war had broken out in Poland. We immediately turned on the radio to listen to the terrible news.

As it happened, Papa's brother Abram was visiting us and listened to the news with us. Papa turned to his brother and said, Abram do you remember the advice you gave me wait to bring my family here when I told you there was going to be a war in Europe and you didn't even want to hear about it. The answer Uncle Abram gave him was — "*so you were right*". I'll never forget that answer. Had our father listened to his brothers, we would have been lost in the Holocaust like so many of our people.

Bubby Etta and Zaida Warshaw died at the beginning of the war of natural causes. They were both in their nineties.

I will close this chapter in our life with saying we were lucky to have family like our Uncle and Auntie Warshaw, Morris and Goldie Krasnow. We always made sure to tell them how grateful we were to them for their generous help, because without it, our lives would have been very tragic.



**OCTOBER 1996 — CELEBRATING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR ARRIVAL IN MONTREAL**

SITTING LEFT TO RIGHT — PAUL PINKUS, MARY LEIBGOTT, HELEN STEIN, STANLEY PINKUS, EVELYN STANISLAWSKI AND GERTIE WEINSTEIN

STANDING LEFT TO RIGHT — SABINE PINKUS, HARRIET PINKUS AND IRVING LEIBGOTT.

*I wrote so that our children will know of our beginnings*  
**EVELYN PINKUS STANISLAWSKI — DECEMBER 4, 1992**

EDITED BY — Sabine and Paul Pinkus  
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