# Chapter 12
# My Father: Immigrant Years

The Russo-Japanese war broke out in February of 1904 when the Japanese attacked Port Arthur and so it must have been later during that year when my grandparents decided that my father must leave home and go to London. He was about nineteen years old and the prospect of being mustered into the hateful Tsar's army grew clearer and clearer. His older brother Eedl was already in the army and had already been ordered to the front in the Far East. I already recounted the story how Eeddl escaped from the city of Chelm where he was stationed; how he stole across the border to Austria-Hungary wearing civilian clothes brought him by his sister, my aunt Nekhawmeh; how he finally arrived in New York helped by my father who sent him money to pay for his ship's fare.

My father never related the details of his departure from Nemirov, or how his mother and father had sent him off to London before the "voiskeh nachahlnyik," the military draft official, came to get him. As was customary then, he too probably stole across the border. It is interesting that Austria and Germany had a sort of "wet back" problem in reverse of the one the United States has with Mexico. Up until the outbreak of the First World War, Jews had to steal out of Russia just as the Mexicans now have to steal into the United States. The Jewish immigrants, for the most part, did not remain in Austria and Germany, or Holland, instead continued on to America sailing from Hamburg or Rotterdam, and to a lesser extent from Trieste. Once safely across the border, they proceeded by train to the ports of embarkation. A rather smaller number chose to go to England and make a new life there. This was the case with my maternal grandfather's father, that my great grandfather Elyeh OObawgoo.

All I ever heard from my father concerning London was negative. He disliked London life, at least the lot of the immigrant Jews there, and left for America at the very first opportunity. On arrival in London, he went to his cousin, the son of his mother's brother Avroom Yeetskhok, who was already a married man with children.

This cousin was the father of the girl, Zenka Bartek, neé Rose Cohen, my second cousin. We share a set of great grandparents, the Litvak side of the family, Doovid, for whom I am named and his wife Rookhel. We corresponded for a while when I was teaching at the University of Panama during the Second World War. I already related elsewhere above that my father's cousin's family name was Krahsnyahnsky which somehow became Cohen in London to my father's astonishment when he arrived there. I suppose the English thought that the name Cohen was more appropriate for a Jew rather than Krahsnyahnsky which they

doubtlessly had difficulty pronouncing though far more melifluous than the prosaic Cohen. She chose Bartek, her mother's maiden family name, which does indeed sound exotic when coupled with Zenka. I rather wish I had not lost track of her. She certainly was an interesting correspondent. This is not surprising since she was an author and poet, so she wrote me. However, I have no idea of the nature or the quality og her literary talents. She never sent me sample of her of her work.

I still remember her photo, taken with her husband. A most striking angular face and a short cropped almost man-like coiffure, a serious smile on her lips revealing what looked like English "buck teeth." Her husband, his family name was Porteus, was also a poet. There he was clinging to her as if seeking protection from the world. Too bad I never thought of looking her up when Malvina and I were in England for the first time in 1968.

To get back to my father's short and unhappy sojourn in London. His cousin was a tailor, but I am not certain of that, because his father, my father's uncle, Ahvroom Eetskhawk, was a carpenter. Judging by the accounts my father gave, his cousin was living in what seemed to him as dire poverty, a condition that surprised him who assumed that one left Nemirov to better one's lot not to worsen it. What my father described as poverty may have referred more to the quality of life the Jews lived in the East End of London, a dingy grey ugly crowded urban environment devoid of green fields and trees and even fresh air.

My father found that the average workman and his family in London occupied a one- or two-room flat heated by open fireplaces. Living conditions in the London of 1904/1905 were worse than he had ever seen or experienced in Nemirov. In Nemirov my grandfather owned two houses, one of which the family occupied. There was much open space in and around the town, said to have had about 4,000 to 5,000 inhabitants around 1900 of whom about 60% were Jews, according the Baedeker Guide for Russia. There was also a river, probably a tributary of the Bug River, or a lake nearby where young people went for outings. In fact, the Zionist club would meet in secret in small boats in the middle of the stream or lake. The water was always referred to as "der tahkh" which could be taken to mean "the river" or "the lake." I once said to my father that I thought Nemirov was located on the Bug River, and he replied that there was no "Beeg" in Nemirov implying that the body of water near Nemirov was perhaps either a tributary of the Bug or perhaps a lake. I suppose I can clear the matter up by searching for Nemirov on some large scale maps. In the meantime, the word tahkh could be either lake of river or just a stream, if a small stream then it is a reetchkeh.

The quality of life in London, from my father's point of view, was much below that in Nemirov. It never occurred to him to return to Nemirov because, I suppose, he would have been thrown into the hated Tsar's army and been the object of mistreatment on the part of both the gentile recruits and the officers. But he was not idle while he was in London and found work as a carpenter.

He had nothing but scorn for the customs and working conditions under which carpenters struggled to make a living in London. It still is generally customary for carpenters to carry their tools from job to job, but in London they also had to transport their work benches as well usually on a cart of some sort. The word he used to describe working conditions in London was shklahverai, slavery. It was customary for carpenters to employ a helper known as a tsehp, chap, probably to help transport the monstrously heavy workbench, and whom he paid out of his own meager wages. My father always described the custom with three words, ah shklahf ahf ah shklahf, a slave on top of a slave. In general, my father was of the opinion that working conditions in London in 1904-1905 were terrible and worse than in Nemirov.

I do not know how long he remained in London, perhaps only a few months, at least until early in 1905 when he left. In London he learned that a lantsmahn, a fellow Nemirover, one Jake Brahslahvsky had purchased a steamship ticket to go to America and who wished to sell it because he had decided to remain in London. The ticket cost $15 and was for passage in steerage.

It is interesting that during the first decade of this century the different transatlantic steamship companies were in great competition with each other in the business of transporting thousands upon thousands of immigrants from Russia, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Germany and other European countries. The Jewish immigrants were mostly from Russia which at that time included: Poland; the Baltic countries, especially Lithuania, the land of the Litvaks; Belarus of today, White Russia with its cities of Minsk and Pinsk and the homeland of Marc Chagal; Bessarabia, now a newly created republic called Moldova, with its mamaliga-eating wine-drinking happy-go-lucky Jews, including Bukovina and the city of Czernowitz where my brother-law Milton Enzer was born; Austria-Hungary where the Jews were subjects of the big-mustached, side-burned benign emperor Franz Josef and who were so proud that they had been allowed to go to primary school, though few actually attended, and whose Yiddish they insisted was really German when they were actually speaking "Yahddish," especially those Jews from the Carpathian Mountain area, the homeland of the Gahlitziahner. The Gahlitziahner men all dressed alike, in a sense like the traditional garb of the plain people of Pennsylvania, all uniformly like a flock of penguins. All Gahlitziahner men wore long black coats, kahpawtes, knee breeches, white stockings, and their heads were topped off with a strahmel, a round hat the rim of which was circled by band of fur. My father would say that in Galitsyiah one could not tell the difference between a "roov," and "bahlagooleh," a learned rabbi and an illiterate drayman, truck driver. The horseman in the Rembrandt's painting known as the "Polish Rider" wears such a hat. It has been said that the traditional costume of the Khasidic Jews which sets them apart from the non-Jewish world, harks back to the sort worn by the Polish nobility in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which was adopted by the Jews and preserved as wholly Jewish like the talith, prayer shawl, until this very day. A walk through the

streets of the Williamsburg section in Brooklyn or of those in the Meah Shearim neighborhood in Jerusalem will bear this out.

Well, my father bought the steamship ticket from Jake Brahslahvsky and sailed to New York in steerage. The principal steamship lines were German, sailing from Hamburg, and Dutch, sailing from Rotterdam. My mother sailed from Rotterdam in 1903. Since my father was in England, it is very likely he sailed on a British ship probably from either Plymouth or Southhampton, though it could also have been Liverpool. Men and women slept in separate dormitories and were served their meals at rough tables set up well below decks. The menu consisted mainly of fried fish, herring and boiled potatoes.

My father never mentioned the name of the ship or the port it sailed from. But it was a trip he never forgot. He suffered from sea-sickness which was aggravated by the fried fish he ate, probably the first day out at sea. It is more likely than not that he did not eat very much after that. This detail of the fried fish on board ship was about all he ever mentioned of his journey across the Atlantic to America. His loathing of fried fish remained with him the rest of his life and as far as I can remember he never ate it again.

At any rate, he arrived in New York, at Castle Garden* he always said, under the name of Jake Brahslahvsky. I do not know if tickets were transferable in those days. I am sure that neither my father nor Jake thought this was necessary. It seemed reasonable and certainly less complicated to just board the vessel with the ticket as it was rather than go to the trouble of having it re-issued in the name of my father. But which name? He was Sahnyeh Markman and only became Sam Markman after he entered the country. So if I were to go to Ellis Island and search for the passenger lists to verify on which ship my father arrived in 1905, I would have to look for a Jake Brahslahvsky. I do not know if Jake ever came to America, but if he did, it would be most confusing to find two Jakes on two different passenger lists.

The point is, my father could have bought his own ticket for the same $15 he paid Jake. But later on when he applied for his "First Papers" in order to become a United States'citizen, he realized he did not have the necessary evidence to prove who he was and apply in the normal way. But this is a democratic country where most people are truthful with regard to their names at least, so he explained the situation and his first papers were issued him in the name of Sam Markman. I do not know exactly when this took place. Apparently he took out "First Papers" more than once because he let the time period elapse without applying for second papers. I believe he

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* Note. My parents always referred to Castle Garden as the place they passed through on arriving in New York. Yet, it seems that by 1903 and 1905, the years of their respective arrivals, Ellis Island had supplanted Castle Garden, which has been recently restored as a national monument.

finally took out his second papers in the 1920's though I have no recollection of exactly when this occurred.

So my father became a citizen under the name of Sam Markman. Sam was the nearest American-sounding version of his Yiddish-Russian name Sahnyeh, which is a shortened version of the Hebrew Nesanel, like Bill is for William. Nesanel is actually the Yiddish pronunciation of the Hebrew Netanel, as it is still pronounced in Sephardic Hebrew, or Nathaniel in English. It was not until I was a grown man that I realized that my father's name Sahnyeh was a colloquial version of the Hebrew Netanel, the proper translation of which is Nathaniel. His name in America should have been Nathaniel rather than Sam. The name Nathaniel would have probably sounded very "goyish," to him and other Jews as well. In general, Yiddish-speaking immigrants did not know that Biblical names were not uncommon in America, but of course in English translation. So my father Sahnyeh in Nemirov became Sam in America. My grandfather Shayeh, my mother's father, was also known as Sam Marinsky instead of Shayeh Oobawgoo, ultimately becoming Charles Bodie when his brother, my grand or great uncle Sam (Shmeel) Bodie, arrived from London and informed my grandfather that the family name Oobawgoo had been changed to Bodie in England.

So my father's entered the United States of America, unbeknownst to him, as Jake Brahslahvsky, and was very likely recorded as such in the official immigration records. However, his Nemirover lantslait soon dubbed him Sam and Sam he remained all his life, that is in English. But he was always Sahnyeh to his parents and brothers and sisters and to my mother and the whole family except for those who were native English-speakers for whom, of course, he was Sam. He was called up to the Torah as Nesanel Bentsion ben Yakov.

When I was making applications for entry into college, I would fill in the space for "name of father" with the name Samuel Markman. It seemed more dignified and more American and would perhaps lead the admissions officers to assume that I came from an old New England family and not the first generation born of immigrant parents. Not really a compulsion on my part or a sign that I was uneasy or even embarrassed because of what I was, but a pragmatic defense against the prejudice that could lead to rejection for admission. In the blank space where religion was to be entered, I would write in Jewish.

The end result was that I was admitted to Union College in Schenectady, New York in 1930. I was upset, even incensed when I learned later that I had been accepted in competition only with other Jewish boys and was part of the 8% quota of Jewish students. To have been admitted to college under a special category apart from the rest of the student body bothered me no end, that is to be tolerated and the object of noblesse oblige.

I had been brought up to believe that Jews were superior in every way, especially morally, ethically and also in intelligence. A mean and cruel person was said to have "a harts vee a Tooter," the heart of Tatar, or to be a "Hoomahn ha roosheh" a Haman the heartless. Jews had "rakhmoones," compassion, pity for the suffering of others, who were ordered by God's commandment to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. To be stupid and not quick to learn in school was to have "a goyishen kop," a gentile head.

The goyim referred to so deprecatingly were the Russian and Ukrainian peasants and even the upper classes who drank to excess and were cruel to one another and even more so to Jews. The goyim my parents nd grandparents had in mind were the Russian hooligans who killed Jews in pogroms as in Kishinev in 1903, the Russian government officials who revived the medieval blasphemous blood libel that Jews used gentile children's blood to make matzohs for Passover accusing Mendel Beilis for such activity in "enlightened" late nineteenth-century Russia.

A well-known Jewish folk song, I have a record of it with Victor Chenkin singing, runs more or less as follows depending on my faulty memory:

Geyt a goy in sheynk arahn, trinken miz er, shiker iz er
vail er is a goy (A goy goes to the saloon, drink he
must, drunk he is, because he is a goy)
Geyt a Eed in bes medresh arahn, dawvenen miz er, lehrenen miz er vail er
iz a Eeed (A Jew goes to the house of study,
pray he must, study he must because he is a Jew)
Oy shikjer iz der goy, vail er iz a goy (O' drunk is the
goy because he is a goy)
Oy neekhter is der eed, vail er iz a eed (Sober is the Jew
because he is a Jew)

And so I was "the most surprised person in the world" after I was at college for some time and became aware of the fact that not all the gentiles were drunkards, deceitful and antisemites, but that some were Judeophiles, were actually intelligent, even more brainy than many of the Jewish boys admitted only on the basis of their brains, if not their breeding.

In my class, that of 1934, about twenty or so Jewish boys were admitted, all in the first rank of their high school graduating classes, so that many turned out to be the brightest students in Union College at the time. I was one of the few who was not elected to Phi Beta Kappa, though I did win three out of the eleven prizes awarded at graduation in June of 1934. The prizes were for proficiency in classics, Greek and Latin, and for high scholarship in general. The truth is that I had very little competition for these prizes because so few students majored in the classics. The prizes were all established in the nineteenth century when the study of Greek and Latin languages and literatures were widely pursued by students.

Two of my professors were largely responsible for the decline in my grade average because of what I felt then and still believe to this very day, were petty and *ad hominem* reasons having nothing to do with my scholastic ability. I have never got over the disappointment that I never made Phi Beta Kappa. Thrice I was called up to the podium to receive a prize, but was not called up for the Phi Beta Kappa key. My professor of Greek, Harrison Cadwallader Coffin, with whom I studied Homer and Plato and Thucydides gave me the grade of *C* in a course in Greek history taught in English and one of the most noted "crib" courses on campus. The other professor, with whom I took a course in geology earning an *A* the first semester of my sophomore year, and whose name was Smith preceded by a as many as three or four initials standing for names I never knew because he never said what they were, also gave me a *C* the second semester when I told him I wanted to major in philosophy and not geology. These two grades of *C* finished off my chances for Phi Beta Kappa.

Coffin was a sanctimonious prig who wore rimless glasses pinched to the bridge of his nose. He always pontificated while reading Plato, especially the Crito, that "the law is the law, you don't break the law, you change the law." And I sat at his feet listening and believing everything he said, and respectful and unquestioning because I had been taught to respect parents and teachers. Not to do so was a sin for which one had to ask forgiveness in the Al Khet prayer on Yom Kippur.

Now after many years I realize that it was he who made the law for me to obey. He was such a stickler for obeying the law requiring professors to take attendance that he dutifully did so every day the class met. He would ceremoniously take out his record book, look at me making eye contact, the only student in the class, and then mark me present. He also assigned a certain textbook with Plato's dialogues, which I was reading in Greek at the time. This was in my junior year when my father was having great financial difficulties and was barely able to send ne enough to pay for my meals. So instead of buying the assigned textbook, I went to library and borrowed a book with exactly the same text as the one assigned. Coffin, a stickler for obeying the law, never failed to harass me on a daily basis that the textbook I was using was not the one required in that class. I would appeal to his sense of "yoisher," justice with compassion and humanity, repeating with discomfort and shame each time that I was unable to buy the book. And besides, I once dared to say, the one I was using was exactly the same as the one assigned, to which he replied that the notes were different.

My not complying with his law gave him a second wind each day while we reading the Crito where Socrates chooses to drink the hemlock rather than break the law. Had Socrates run off with Crito, then his whole life and all he had taught and for which he was now condemned to death would have been a lie and his life a sham. I admired Socrates, that one should always stand by one's principles, that truth is absolute and that man, as the Sophists said, was not the measure of all things. Yet I felt that Coffin did not really understand the humanity of Socrates, for had he

understood what Socrates said along with the syntax and grammar, he would have admitted that Harrison Cadwallader Coffin had made the law in the first place and it was his prerogative to change the law and not condemn me to drink hemlock during every class meeting.

To return to my father who had more smekahlka and understanding of right and wrong in his broken English spoken with a Russian accent than Professor Harrison Cadwallader Coffin with pince nez rimless spectacles pinching the bridge of his nose taking attendance while sitting there on a raised platform as if it were a throne meting out impartial, but heartless, judgement on a single insignificant student struggling with the language of Plato in an illicit textbook. Once off the boat and released by the immigration officials in Castle Garden (or Ellis Island, though both my mother and father said they came through Castle Garden) he went to join his Nemirover lantslait living on Orchard Street on the Lower East Side. The barber shop of Doodyeh Roifeh on Orchard Street was the focal point or center of the enclave of Nemirover in New York. I have already written about Doodyeh and how his barber shop served as the post office for all the newly arrived immigrants and how he had once given fatherly advice to my father.

The first job my father had in America was with the elevated transit company in Manhattan. In those days the railroad passenger cars were built of wood and so were maintained and repaired by carpenters. He did not speak English at the time nor did he know the English foot ruler. He told me he solved this problem by transposing the Russian units of measure to the English on a strip of wood and laid out his work in that way.

The solution to the use of English linear measure was simple for him, but not the fact that he still did not speak English and could not understand the foreman or converse with him. He understood the work assigned to him and carried it out with dispatch. He solved the problem of communicating with the foreman by working so fast completing his tasks that he was gone from the car and already on the next job when the foreman came through to inspect and supervise the work. He would go from car to car keeping well ahead of the foreman and finishing the job long before the time usually required to complete the work. The foreman never caught up with him, his work spoke for him.

He worked for the elevated railroad for some time, how long I do not know nor was he ever specific about that. He was quite specific over the fact of the unfairness of the system of large companies. He was laid off, not because his work was not of acceptable quality, but because, as he said, "my number came up." That is to say, that the quality of his work was not why he was laid off, but because he was the most recently hired and so the first fired despite the fact that he was a first-class productive carpenter. All the years of his life he never forgot the injustice and remembered it as an offense to his amor propio, self esteem. He vowed never to work for a large company again where the workman was merely a number.

From then on, probably still in 1905 he worked for boss carpenters in building construction. During the first decades of this century there was a great building boom in Manhattan with apartment houses going up on the Upper East and West Sides around the perimeter of Central Park. Also, when Columbia University left its site where Radio City is now located and moved to Morningside Heights at 116th Street and Broadway, a area that had been farmland during the greater part of the nineteenth century, the building boom also encompassed the area around the university including Riverside Drive.

These were all very high class neighborhoods and the apartments in the new highrise buildings were luxurious and spacious, even having quarters for live-in servants. My father, just about twenty years old at the time, worked as a carpenter in many of the apartment houses in the area I have just described earning as much as $5 a day when tailors laboring 12 and 14 hours in a sweatshop earned about $8 or $10 to at most $12 to $15 a week. No wonder he was able to send steamship tickets for passage to the Goldeneh Medeena to his brothers and sisters!

There was lots of work for carpenter trimmers in these luxurious apartment houses. All doors and windows had to be set and fitted by hand, not prefabricated as today. Rough door openings had to be squared up and trimmed; hinges and locks had to be installed by hand; kitchen counters and cabinets were constructed in place. Usually each room in the apartment was trimmed with a different type of lumber, not with pine or fir as today. Maple was used in the kitchens for base moldings, door trim and for cabinets. Maple is an extremely hard and dense-grained wood and splits very easily when nails are driven into it. It was necessary to drill holes part way into the wood before nailing. And that took time and skill. Oak trim was used in dinning rooms and mahogany or walnut in parlors. The carpenter had to have the skill of a cabinet maker to set the base molding, the skeleton base and chair rail moldings, the oak, mahogany or walnut paneling in dinning rooms and parlors. A miter box and a set of extremely sharp saws was a basic requirement for carpenters, especially trimmers. On days off one would recognize carpenters who would be seen carrying their saws wrapped in newspaper, usually a Yiddish language newspaper, to the shop to have them sharpened and ready for the next week's work.

My father worked for boss carpenters in Manhattan until about 1909 when he and my mother were married. They went to live in Brownsville, an entirely Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn, settled by Jews from the very first at the turn of the century, where I was born in a tenement house on Stone Avenue near Pitkin Avenue in 1911. Once married, he decided to work for himself as a boss carpenter, but apparently this transition did not take place all at once. At least by time I was six years old and about the time we moved to 638 Essex Street in East New York on he border with Cyprus Hills, my father was a full fledged carpenter contractor. Within a short time after that, he became a general contractor and eventually a builder on speculation.

For a time before he and my mother were married and after the arrival of my grandfather in New York from Buenos Aires, they both went into the second-hand furniture business. In those days most furniture was constructed of solid wood and not veneers as today. It was natural for both my grandfather and father, who as carpenters, had a special affinity for and an appreciation of wood. My father would sometimes be enchanted with the grain of fine wood, maple, walnut, cherry, oak, mahogany. One of the compelling reasons why he and my mother decided to buy that massive and expensive walnut dinning room set from Smerling's on Rockaway Avenue in Brownsville when we moved to Empire Boulevard in 1926, was that "di flyawderes," the grain, was so beautiful. The set cost about $1000, and a Ford cost about $600 then.

During the first decade of this century, especially after the pogrom in Kishinev, Bessarabia, in 1903, and the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, a veritable Niagara of Jews was flooding out of Russia and to a lesser extent from the rest of eastern Europe. The first stop for almost all the new arrivals was the Lower East Side. Once settled and working so they had the wherewithal, they would send for their wives and children who had been left behind. A flat would then be rented which had to be furnished with beds, tables and chairs, a minimum of the most essential furnishings.

Very few of the immigrants could afford brand new furniture resulting in an ever growing market for used furniture. The problem was not one of finding customers, the problem was that of acquiring a stock of used furniture for resale. My father often recalled that he never made any money when he sold second-hand furniture, only when he bought it. He would buy the contents of a flat, not infrequently from some unfortunate couple who had decided to separate. This was not an uncommon occurrence, the principal cause of which was the difficult and barren life in the teeming and crowded unhealthy tenements further exacerbated by the drudgery of long hours of work in the sweat shops where scarcely enough was earned to eat and pay rent for the "cold-water flat" without a bathroom or even a toilet. Toilets in some cases were outhouses in the backyards of the tenements many of which dated from about the time of the Civil War. More "modern" tenement buildings had a single toilet on the landing of the stairs between floors. A six story building would have three toilets, one on each of the intermediate stair landings between floors. As an improvement In some cases, there would be one toilet for each floor. These toilets served the occupants of four to six flats.

My father and grandfather were not too happy with this type of business despite the fact that the sale of a single item might return the cost of the contents of an entire flat. Also, the source of supply of used furniture was too erratic and depended too often on the insecure and poverty-stricken life of the Jewish immigrants.

Even at best, life was very hard. Wages were very low and, on top of that, work was not steady, especially in the garment trade between "seasons." The word "slek," slack, became a Yiddish word meaning that the factory was not in production and the tailors were laid off while waiting for orders for the new seasonal designs, especially in the case of ladies' dresses.

In short, wages were low, employment not steady, and so families would break up largely because of lack of income and even become homeless. Out of work, with no income, sometimes barely enough to eat, the family would live in even greater dread if they could not pay their rent. Then the landlord would send them a mooftsetel, literally a move ticket, an eviction notice for non-payment of rent.

The term mooftsetel was a new Yiddish word which tenants dreaded for it led to homelessness. Armed with a mooftsetl, the sheriff and his deputies would carry the tenants' furniture and other belongings out of the flat and place them on the sidewalk. As I child, I once witnessed such a tragedy a few blocks from where we lived on Essex Street on my way to school, P. S. 158.

My father, not without a tinge of sadness despite the air of levity with which he sometimes related his experience in the used furniture business, said he would be called to a flat where husband and wife had fallen out. They would sell him all the furniture, usually also pre-owned, and then go their separate ways.

Abe Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, a Socialist oriented pro-labor Yiddish newspaper, gives descriptions of Jewish immigrant life on the Lower East Side in a number of his books, one of which I believe is called *Hester Street* and which was also made into a movie. Some of his works were translated into English and give a true, though unflattering, picture of immigrant life at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. Also, Hapgood Hopkins wrote very sympathetically of Jewish life on the Lower East side at that time.

Well, my father and his family, also my mother and hers, lived in that depressing and hopeless milieu for only a few short years emigrating once again, this time across the East River in 1907 to the "greener fields" of Brownsville in Brooklyn. Tenement life on the teeming streets of the Lower East Side was not for them. So my father was a second-hand furniture dealer for a very short time indeed, perhaps not even a year. He preferred working with tools and building things rather than wheeling and dealing. Besides working as a carpenter was far more profitable than buying and selling used furniture and having to haggle with sellers and then again with buyers.

At the time, the first years of the twentieth century, there was a building boom in Manhattan. Carpenters earned as much as $5 a day. This was a very high wage when one considers that a good pair of shoes cost $2.50 or $3.00. A well-tailored good quality blue serge suit cost between $10 and $15. According to my father, rent for a furnished room, sometimes occupied by two tenants, carpenters or tailors slept in the bed at night and bakers slept in the same bed during the day, might cost about $5.00 a month perhaps slightly more if the bed was not used by

night workers during the day. Butchers would give the housewife such items as liver, brains, tripe, lungs free of charge with her purchase of beef, a sort of "baker's dozen."

Many of the bachelors ate their daily evening meal at one of the many restaurants on that catered immigrants. This main meal of the day taken after coming home from work, sahper, supper, cost about 15 cents each, or about $1.00 for seven sahpers a week. The supper included of soup meat, plenty of potatoes and some vegetables like cabbage and carrots, bread, tea and perhaps a desert of compote. I was once told that mama's, Malvina's, uncle Layzer and his wife Peraleh ran such a restaurant for while at the beginning of this century.

My father ate in a restaurant run by an Hungarian Jew that served copious meals. He would relate how the waiter would take his order and then shout to the cook in kitchen, "Eyn kebitch mit a knawkh," one cabbage with a bone. My father was always generous with his friends, a sport who like to treat his friends. With wages such as he was earning he could afford to be a big spender, and he was. He frequently invite his friends to the restaurant where he ate his sahper and would tell the owner, "Froike (or whatever his name was), geeb meer di gawntse vawkh sahpers," Give me the whole week's suppers. He and his friends would then eat the seven suppers of the week at one sitting. Earning $5 a day, or $27.50 for a five-and-one-half day week, he had lots of disposable income and, as I have already mentioned, with ships' tickets at $15 each, he was able to bring all his brothers and sisters and two brother-laws, as well, to America and also buy himself a large gold watch and chain, which I inherited and which I am keeping to pass on one day to his namesake and great grandson, Nathaniel Markman.