

GERTRUDE BARBER, MINNIE COWEN, AND RAY SAWYER THE SISTERS WHO INDEXED NEW YORK

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JUST ABOUT ANYONE EXAMINING NEW YORK records for genealogical study, particularly those created in the nineteenth century, eventually comes across the name Gertrude A. Barber. From 1927 to 1966, she produced typescript abstracts with multiple carbon copies of and indexes to over one hundred New York (and some Connecticut and Vermont) records including cemetery marker inscriptions, church baptisms and marriages, wills and administrations, land deeds, and newspaper notices of marriages and deaths. If one has done a lot of New York research, the names Minnie Cowen and Ray C. Sawyer may also be familiar, for these women produced similar abstracts and indexes.

What is known only to a few is that these three women were sisters. Some have suspected or thought they might have been related, even with three different surnames. But it was this vagueness about their possible kinship and the little known about the women that provided the initiative for research culminating in this article. Proving Gertrude, Minnie, and Ray were sisters was gratifying, but perhaps the more interesting fact to emerge was that they were daughters of mid-nineteenth-century Jewish immigrants from Poland and that their own family knew little of their genealogical involvement.¹

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¹ Only two publications have been discovered in which interest in investigating the past of one sister is discussed. The first is revealed by editors Martha and William Reamy, on pages iv and v of their introduction to *A Collection of Abstracts from Otsego County, New York, Newspaper Obituaries, 1808-1875, As Compiled by Gertrude Audrey Barber* (Finksburg, Md.: Pipe Creek Publications, 1993): "We would like to pay tribute to Gertrude Audrey Barber. All we have been able to find out about her is that she at one time worked for the New York Biographical and Genealogical [sic] Society in New York City. A check with them reveals no records of her beyond the fact that she was employed by them. She is found in no Who's Who. A check is being done by a New York City friend to try to locate an obituary on her, but is not available at the time we go to press." The Reamys wrongly stated that Mrs. Barber "left behind *hundreds* of manuscripts..." (emphasis added).

The second publication is Dr. Marian S. Henry's "New York State Vital Records: The Legacy of Gertrude Audrey Barber," *American Ancestors* (<http://www.americanancestors.org/the-legacy-of-gertrude-audrey-barber>), posted 23 April 2004, which also has little about Mrs. Barber but does note her brief "obituary" (actually a death notice) from *The New York Times*.

Gertrude is the most widely known of the sisters. She was active the longest, producing the largest body of abstracted and indexed material, and the only sister who undertook genealogical research commissions. Older sister Minnie ranks second in her output of abstracts and indexes, dating from 1930 to 1941 (stopping before her early death in 1942). Their still-older sister Ray produced the least amount, yet her output was just as useful as that of her more active sisters. Ray's abstracts and indexes were made from 1930 to 1951.

When, why, and how did these three sisters start producing all those abstracts and indexes that many of us use almost daily in our New York genealogical endeavors?

Gertrude, Minnie, and Ray Cohen were born in Providence, Rhode Island, and came with their parents to New York City in the first decade of the twentieth century. Although the middle of the three (there was also an older sister, Etta, who became a schoolteacher), Minnie (born in 1886) was the first of these sisters whose employment is documented, working as a "typewriter" in 1905,² but just where is not shown in the state census of that year and she was not listed in the city directories around this time. In her family's entry in the 1910 census, Minnie was listed as a stenographer,³ but where specifically she worked is again not indicated. About this time, however, Minnie went to work for The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society,⁴ located then at 226 West 58th Street. The society's records for the 1910s and earlier refer sporadically to the small "clerical force," but rarely include names other than those of officers and trustees. In 1911, however, "Miss Cohen" was finally mentioned, regarding her upcoming two weeks' summer vacation. She was not listed with her first name in the society's records until 1923.⁵ By 1915, Minnie had evidently adopted Cowen as her last name, piggybacking on her brother A. Frank's formal name change made thirteen years earlier.⁶ That year she and her sister Ray C. Sawyer (probably now divorced) were renting at 79 Hamilton Place and working as stenographers.⁷ Five years later, Minnie and Ray were still at this address, and sister Gertrude was with them. All were listed in the 1920 census as office secretaries.⁸

² Charles Cohen household, 1905 New York State Census, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, Assembly Dist. 33, Election Dist. 1, p. 13, county copy at New York County Clerk's Division of Old Records, New York, N.Y. Minnie is at line 41.

³ Charles Cohen household, 1910 U.S. Census, Ward 12, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, N.Y., Enumeration District [ED] 378, p. 2B, dw. 9, fam. 40 (NARA T624, roll 1016). Only Ray's age of 26 was correct; Minnie, listed as 19, and Gertrude, as 15, should have been 24 and 18.

⁴ Statement by her brother Bernard Cowen, 16 June 1942, in Minnie Cowen administration file, New York County, N.Y., Surrogate's Court file #1298-1942, that she retired from the society in April 1941 after more than thirty years.

⁵ New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, Trustees' Minutes, 1904-26, 1937-44. Minutes for 1927-36 are either missing or misplaced.

⁶ Abraham Frank Cohen name change petition, Supreme Court of the State of New York for New York County, Miscellaneous Record Files #1902-1931. Special thanks to Joseph Van Nostrand, archivist/senior management analyst of the New York County Clerk's Division of Old Records, for his assistance in obtaining this record, which was misfiled.

⁷ Minnie Cowen and Ray C. Sawyer listings, 1915 New York State Census, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, Assembly Dist. 21, Election Dist. 37, p. 25, lines 49-50, county copy at New York County Clerk's Division of Old Records, New York, N.Y., incorrectly showing Ray was 28 and Minnie 24, whereas they should have been listed as 31 and 29.

⁸ Ray C. Sawyer household, 1920 U.S. Census, Assembly Dist. 21, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, N.Y., ED 1425, p. 22B, dw. 30, fam. 674 (NARA T625, roll 1224). Ray C. Sawyer

While Minnie and eventually Gertrude were establishing themselves at the NYG&B, sister Ray (born Rachel in 1883⁹) was otherwise employed. Married briefly in the first decade of the twentieth century, she kept the surname of her husband and was known as Ray C. Sawyer.¹⁰ By the end of that first decade, she was working as an agent at 61 Park Row, possibly for her husband, Frederick A. Sawyer, and living at 248 West 112th Street. Fred Sawyer was then an advertising salesman and also had a publishing business at 17 Battery Place.¹¹ In the middle of the 1910s, when she was living with sister Minnie, Ray was manager of Bradstreet's Collection Bureau in rooms 1526-1529 of Trinity Building located at 111 Broadway, where her brothers A. Frank and Bernard Cowen had their law office.¹² A few years later, the Cowen brothers represented the bureau in court.¹³ Just before the United States entered World War I, Ray was a "collection expert" for William H. Broughton, business counselor, in the Woolworth Building at 233 Broadway.¹⁴

Ray Sawyer served in the Marine Corps in the war, enlisting in New York City 4 October 1918. She was placed with the Mobile Bureau of New York, and on 28 November of that year with the Publicity Bureau. On 10 January 1919 she was promoted to corporal, and when discharged 31 March, was given a "Character Excellent" rating.¹⁵ Before her military service, Ray was already helping the war effort. She was "distressed to learn . . . that our military bands and orchestras did not have a sufficient variety of sheet music to entertain our boys, [so] took it upon herself to obtain music for the troops."¹⁶ As reported in *The New York Times*, "Ray C. Sawyer of 79 Hamilton

was listed as the "head" of the group, age 28, with Gertrude, 24, and Minnie, 22, listed with the surname Sawyer. The correct ages were then 36, 27, and 33.

⁹ The Library of Congress Online Catalog (<http://catalog.loc.gov>), previously on cards and copied by many other libraries, incorrectly shows Ray's birth year as 1895 (no life dates are shown in the cataloging for Gertrude Barber and Minnie Cohen/Cowen). The sisters obviously shaved years off their ages. See notes 3, 7, and 8.

¹⁰ There is neither record of Ray's marriage in New York City or New York State nor of her divorce in the Supreme Court of the State of New York for New York, Kings, or Bronx County, or in New Jersey, but she was enumerated as the wife of Frederick A. Sawyer in 1910 (see note 11). A nephew wondered if "Aunt Ray was ever married. No doubt she changed her name because of widespread anti-Semitism" (Henry C. Cowen [Commack, N.Y.] to author, letter, 4 July 2002).

¹¹ Frederick A. Sawyer household, 1910 U.S. Census, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, N.Y., ED 574, p. 12, dw. 21, fam. 387 (NARA T624, roll 1023). *Trow's General Directory of the Boroughs of Manhattan and Bronx, City of New York . . .* (New York: Trow Directory, Printing, and Bookbinding Co.), (1907) 1325, (1910), 1296. In the 1907 directory, Fred A. Sawyer was "president" at 43 Exchange Place, living in Garden City.

¹² *Trow's General Directory of the Boroughs of Manhattan and Bronx, City of New York . . .* (note 11), (1911) 1296, (1912) 1372, (1913) 1373, (1914), 1112, (1916), 1474. Ray was not listed in the directories for 1912, 1913, and 1914. Fred A. Sawyer, publisher, was at 17 Battery Place in 1911 and living at 123 William St. in 1912. By 1914, he was "president" at 51 Chambers St. and living at 631 57th St. in Brooklyn.

¹³ "Business Records—Satisfied Judgments," *The New York Times*, 17 March 1918, p. 68, col. 6.

¹⁴ R. L. Polk and Co.'s *Trow General Directory of New York City . . . Manhattan and the Bronx* (New York: R. L. Polk and Co.), (1917) 1474.

¹⁵ The abstract of Ray Cowen Sawyer's World War I military service card and her discharge both show she was born in Providence 31 Oct. 1898. The discharge describes her as 58¼" tall, with dark brown hair, brown eyes, and ruddy complexion; that her occupation was private secretary; that her service was "honest and faithful"; and that she was paid \$60 gratuity. (Ray Cowen Sawyer card, #141064, New York [State] Adjutant General's Office, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917–1919, Series B0808, New York State Archives. Ray C. Sawyer military discharge, copy provided by Henry C. Cowen with letter of 4 July 2002 [note 10]. See also "U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1798–1940," database online at *Ancestry* [<http://www.ancestry.com>]).

¹⁶ Ray C. Sawyer obituary, *Marine Corps League News* 10 (April 1973): 3–4. Her photograph appeared on the cover of this issue.

Place, New York, has ‘done her bit’ for the army bands by adopting the 14th, 47th, and 71[st] Regiments, with others from here to Buffalo, to which she forwards new music given by the publishers for distribution to the National Guard, the regular army, navy, and Marine Corps.”¹⁷ She joined the Red Cross, but resigned when women were finally permitted to join the Marines.¹⁸

Following the war, Ray returned to her home at 79 Hamilton Place. She became the first woman in the United States to join the American Legion¹⁹ and was manager of the Legion’s headquarters in New York City.²⁰ In July 1920 she was elected a delegate to represent New York County at the Legion’s convention to be held in Albany in September.²¹ The following year, as “Miss Ray C. Sawyer,” executive secretary for the Legion’s “Department of New York,” she was quoted extensively in a *New York Times* article about finding jobs for war veterans.²² Ray and others formed the National Marine Corps Veterans Association in 1922, and when the group was reorganized as the Marine Corps League the following year, she became its first national adjutant, resigning in 1925.²³ By that year, Ray and Minnie were living at 86 Fort Washington Avenue,²⁴ and here in 1930 these sisters were renting for \$80 a month, with “Rae” working as a secretary in advertising and Minnie as a librarian in a “private library.”²⁵

In the early 1920s, the NYG&B began to produce typescript abstracts of New York church records that became known as the Vosburgh Collection in recognition of its editor, Royden W. Vosburgh. The material was typed from the original church registers by Minnie Cohen, with Vosburgh certifying he had compared her typed abstracts to the originals.²⁶ “Miss Cohen” also indexed the society’s quarterly, *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* (THE RECORD) (for which she was paid \$150) and the society’s published *Collections*. She apparently did the indexing at home, and one year the society’s minutes noted that Minnie gave up her two-week vacation to finish the index when production of THE RECORD had fallen behind schedule.²⁷

¹⁷ “War-Time Music,” *The New York Times*, 9 Dec. 1917, p. 83, col. 5.

¹⁸ Ray C. Sawyer obituary, *Marine Corps League News* (note 16).

¹⁹ Ray C. Sawyer obituaries, *Marine Corps League News* (note 16), and *The Long-Islander* (Huntington, N.Y.), 11 Jan. 1973, p. 8.

²⁰ R. L. Polk and Co.’s *Trow General Directory of New York City* (note 14), (1920–1921) 1591, (1922–1923) 1552.

²¹ “Legion Delegates Named,” *The New York Times*, 30 July 1920, p. 5, col. 3.

²² She said “there were comparatively few jobs in the city to be had which carried with them an assured weekly income, as far as her observation went.” “Jobs Found for Veterans,” *The New York Times*, 27 Nov. 1921, sec. 6, p. 5, cols. 2–4.

²³ Ray C. Sawyer obituary, *Marine Corps League News* (note 16).

²⁴ Minnie gave this address when she traveled to Jamaica that summer. Minnie Cowen entry, *SS Sixaola*, 13 Aug. 1925, vol. 8435, p. 9, line [13], Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, N.Y., 1897–1957 (NARA T715, roll 3699). Minnie and Ray were not found listed at 79 Hamilton Place or 86 Fort Washington Ave. in the 1925 New York State Census.

²⁵ Rae Sawyer household, 1930 U.S. Census, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, N.Y., ED 31-1070, p. 6B, dw. 4, fam. 174 (NARA T626, roll 1578), showing “Rae” as a widow, age 35, and Minnie as age 30; they were actually 46 and 43.

²⁶ See, for example, Ms. Cohen’s and Mr. Vosburgh’s certifications 5 April 1920, on p. vi of the abstracts of the First Presbyterian Church of Whitesboro (Royden W. Vosburgh, ed., “Records of the First Presbyterian Church of Whitesboro in the town of Whitestown, Oneida County, N.Y.,” [New York City, March 1920], digital image in the eLibrary of the member area of the NYG&B website (<http://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org>) and on Family History Library [FHL] microfilm #534,224 Item 1); here Ms. Cohen referred to herself as the society’s “official stenographer.”

²⁷ NYG&B, Trustees’ Minutes (note 5).

Gertrude A. Cohen,²⁸ who had been working as an office secretary and living with her sisters by 1920,²⁹ joined the NYG&B staff in or about November 1923, perhaps through the recommendation of sister Minnie. Gertrude also worked at the society as a stenographer, but in the library and not in the office with Minnie.³⁰ Later, Gertrude would claim she had been the society's assistant librarian from 1929 to 1941.³¹ Over the next several years, Minnie Cohen/Cowen and Gertrude A. Barber (she married in 1924) were listed in the society's records with their weekly salaries as stenographers and with their Christmas bonuses, advancements of petty cash for various items, vacation schedules, and occasional special projects.³²

Minnie and Gertrude are remembered as shouting at each other across the library during their employment at the NYG&B.³³ Although Gertrude was described as "feisty," her husband's cousin commented: "I can readily understand that she [Gertrude] would think nothing of yelling to her sister [Minnie] across the library. From what little I remember, I don't think this necessarily reflected any dislike on her part—it was just her way."³⁴

In 1924, Gertrude Cowen, stenographer of 79 Hamilton Place, age "25," married Willard Barber, game protector of 471 Richmond Terrace, New Brighton, Staten Island.³⁵ The Barbers owned and lived in a home at 105 Constance Avenue in the Westerleigh section of West New Brighton.³⁶ Although he was employed as chief inspector of the Richmond County conservation department when they married, Willard had been wounded during a poison gas attack while serving in World War I,³⁷ from which he

²⁸ While Gertrude was recorded in the society's records as Cohen, she had probably also changed her name to Cowen by this time and was married in 1924 under that name (see note 35).

²⁹ She was probably not the Gertrude Cohen, librarian at 103 West 135th St. and living at 288 West 137th St. in 1913, or the Gertrude Cowen, accounting with John Gordon, living at 145 West 111th St. in 1921 (*Trow's General Directory of the Boroughs of Manhattan and Bronx, City of New York* [note 11], [1913] 280. R. L. Polk and Co.'s *Trow General Directory of New York City* [note 14], [1920–1921] 516.)

³⁰ NYG&B, Trustees' Minutes (note 5).

³¹ Sketch of Gertrude Audrey Barber in the "Who's Who in Genealogy" section of Frederick Adams Virkus, ed., *The Handbook of American Genealogy*, vol. 4 (Chicago: The Institute of American Genealogy, 1943), 114. She also claimed in her advertisements for New York and New Jersey genealogical research in *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, for 34 years from April 1941 to Jan. 1975, that she was the NYG&B's assistant librarian for eleven years.

³² Minnie was making \$21 in 1919; her weekly salary in 1924 was \$40, when Gertrude was getting \$25. In 1929, these amounts were up to \$50 and \$31.25. By March 1937, Minnie Cohen, "stenographer in office," was paid \$100 every two weeks, and Gertrude A. Barber, "stenographer in library," \$75. The other employees in 1937 were H. Minot Pitman, assistant librarian and executive secretary (\$3525 a year), and three library assistants: Arthur S. Maynard (\$1800), William Laimbeer (\$1163.33), and Mrs. Helen Laimbeer (\$104). The latter two were husband and wife.

³³ B-Ann Moorhouse, CG, conversation with author at NYG&B, 7 April 1993.

³⁴ John W. Herrmann (Mountainside, N.J.), to author, letter, 4 July 1993. Herrmann is the first cousin of Gertrude's husband.

³⁵ Willard [sic] A. Barber and Gertrude A. Cowen marriage license, New York City, 1924, Manhattan Borough, #26618.

³⁶ Gertrude claimed she had the home "custom made...and furnished it with solid mahogany furniture—and everything the best—what I was used to when I lived home" (Gertrude A. Barber to John W. Herrmann, letter, 12 Aug. 1974; copy provided to the author by Herrmann).

³⁷ John W. Herrmann, (Mountainside, N.J.) to author, letter, 22 June 1993. "Willard" A. Barber card, #90,942, New York [State] Adjutant General's Office, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917–1919, Series B0808, New York State Archives, indicating he lived at 471 Richmond Terrace, New Brighton, N.Y., enlisted New York, N.Y., 2 June 1917, age 29½, serving as a first-class private in Co. I, 69th Infantry, New York National Guard (Co. I, 165th Inf.) until discharge 2 May 1919, with engagements at Baccarat, Champagne, Chateau-Thierry, St Mihiel, Argonne-Meuse, Ourcq, and "slightly" wounded 29 July 1918, resulting in 15% disablement. Willard was overseas 29 Oct. 1917 to 20 March 1919. When registered for the draft on 17 June 1917, Willard Barber of 471 Richmond Terrace, New Brighton, indicated he was

“never completely recovered” and which “contributed to his early demise”³⁸ at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Brooklyn in 1929, less than five years after marriage.³⁹ The Barbers had no children and Gertrude remained a widow for over forty-five years. She inferred in a letter that she brought some wealth to the marriage, whereas her “Bill” was rather poor.⁴⁰

What got the sisters involved in abstracting and indexing is not clear but no doubt derived from Gertrude and Minnie’s stenographical work at the NYG&B. Gertrude’s first abstracts were of East Haddam, Connecticut, First Congregational Church eighteenth-century baptisms, and of Clarkstown (Rockland County, New York) Reformed Dutch Church baptisms 1795–1849, both produced in 1927, although her abstracts of Newtown, Connecticut, vital records for 1704–1850 may have dated a few years earlier.⁴¹ Another group of church records was produced in 1928, followed in 1929 by several abstracts of church records and cemetery marker inscriptions for Sullivan County, New York.⁴²

As Mrs. Barber’s abstracts continued in 1930, her sisters made their first entrance with Minnie’s Goffstown, New Hampshire, town records, and Ray’s first part of an index to New York County wills 1662–1850, as well as cemetery inscriptions and church records for New Prospect, Ulster County, New York. The sisters may have encouraged each other to make themselves something of an abstracting trio, but because she was never named in the NYG&B minutes, Ray probably was not paid by the society for indexes and abstracts as were Minnie and Gertrude.

Barber’s typescript abstracts and indexes began to be reviewed in THE RECORD, starting with the October 1929 issue, where her records of the Presbyterian Church in Monticello, New York, were praised.⁴³ For the next few issues, reviews of her continuing output are to be found, as well as mention of typescripts she donated. The latter include some Bible records,⁴⁴ which she may have come across and transcribed in her travels.

Whether or not any of these early works of the sisters were financed by the NYG&B is unclear; some answers may be in the society’s missing records for 1927–36. In 1937, however, the society paid G. A. Barber (also listed as Gertrude) for several abstracts: six volumes of Columbia County wills (3–8), *New York Evening Post* marriages, Warren County wills, and Washington County wills. M. Cohen was paid for abstracts of Rockland County wills and some cemetery inscriptions.⁴⁵

The NYG&B’s records for 1938 also show payments to G. A. Barber for *New York Evening Post* marriages and deaths, Columbia County wills (3, 4, 7),

unemployed but had enlisted 2 June in the 69th Infantry; he was described as of medium height and build, with grey eyes and dark hair (Willard Barber, World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, New York City Board 186 [NARA M1509, roll NY338]).

³⁸ Herrmann to author (note 37).

³⁹ Willard A. Barber death certificate, New York City, 1929, Brooklyn Borough, #12098.

⁴⁰ Herrmann to author (note 37).

⁴¹ The year in the penciled accession note in the former NYG&B copy seems to be 1924.

⁴² The large amount of Sullivan County material abstracted and indexed suggests it may have been a favorite spot that Gertrude liked to visit, at least around the late 1920s, early 1930s.

⁴³ “Book Reviews,” RECORD 60 (1929): 390.

⁴⁴ See, for example, “Accession List,” RECORD 62 (1931): 334.

⁴⁵ NYG&B, Trustees’ Minutes (note 5).

and Rockland County wills. M. Cohen was paid for inscriptions from “Brainerd Cemetery” (in Cranbury, New Jersey). No mention of the sisters was found at all in the 1939 records and no further entries for them in later years made reference to their being paid for more typescripts until May 1942, when Miss M. Cohen was given \$15 for abstracts, and the following month the “Estate of M. Cowen” received the same amount.⁴⁶

During the first half of the 1930s, Gertrude remained in her West New Brighton home.⁴⁷ Within a few years, however, she left Staten Island and moved back to Manhattan. By April 1936 she was living at 15 Central Park West, when her first volume of “Abstracts of Wills of Columbia County, New York”. . . “Price on request” was reviewed in *THE RECORD*.⁴⁸ But if the NYG&B had paid her for at least some of the Columbia County will abstracts, as noted above, how was she now able to offer them for sale?

One answer might be implied by Mrs. Barber’s name disappearing from *THE RECORD* after April 1936: There was no further mention of her typescript abstracts and indexes and no notices of items she donated. The only mention of her found in the minutes after 1938 was the May 1940 list of staff vacations, including Mrs. Barber for 5 July–5 August (and Miss Cowen for 8 July–8 August). Gertrude claimed 1941 as her last year at the NYG&B and that was the same year she began advertising her genealogical research services in Boston.⁴⁹ In the society’s vacation list for May 1941, the same month as Minnie’s death, Mr. Hartman and Miss Berry replaced Mrs. Barber and Miss Cowen. The NYG&B’s minutes for 1927–36 are missing and those of the late 1930s and early 1940s do not reveal what might have actually happened; however, apparently there was a disagreement between Gertrude and the NYG&B, and they parted ways.⁵⁰

While no corroborating evidence has been found, it could be that the sisters applied their experience with preparing typescripts for the society and struck out on their own. Minnie and Gertrude are recalled as abstracting as a team. With sales from their abstracts, they financed travel to upstate counties and towns, where they delved into will books and church registers and visited cemeteries to transcribe the inscriptions on the markers.⁵¹

⁴⁶ NYG&B, Trustees’ Minutes (note 5).

⁴⁷ Gertrude Barber household, 1930 U.S. Census, Staten Island Borough, New York City, Richmond County, N.Y., ED 43-147, p. 1B, dw. 16, fam. 16 (NARA T626, roll 1614), in which her occupation was listed as secretary, special editing, and her age 35 instead of 37. The Barbers were not found listed in West New Brighton in the 1925 New York State Census, but Gertrude’s address is given as 105 Constant Ave. in reviews of her works in *THE RECORD* from Oct. 1929 through April 1935. She was evidently not the Gertrude Barber, clerk, listed in the 1933–34 New York city directory at 2366 Grand Concourse in the Bronx (*Polk’s [Trow’s] New York City [Boroughs of Manhattan and Bronx] [N.Y.] Directory* [New York: R. L. Polk and Co.], [1933–34] 403).

⁴⁸ “Book Reviews,” *RECORD* 67 (1936): 190. In the previous issue of *The Record* (p. 97), Mrs. Barber gave her address as the Society’s (which had moved to 122 East 58th St. in 1929), possibly as a convenience while she was moving.

⁴⁹ See note 31.

⁵⁰ Moorhouse (note 33). Ms. Moorhouse remembered that Mrs. Barber did not donate a copy of her abstracts of *Brooklyn Eagle* marriage and death notices (and perhaps copies of other works) to the NYG&B because of whatever “bad blood” there was.

⁵¹ Moorhouse (note 33). There is nothing in the NYG&B’s minutes to suggest the society paid for the sisters’ travel.

All three of the sisters were short, as were their parents and brother David (brothers A. Frank and Bernard were “big men”),⁵² and Gertrude typed her abstracts, indexes, and reports while standing up.⁵³ Sometime before Minnie’s death in the early 1940s, she and Gertrude did research at the Long Island (now Brooklyn) Historical Society (LIHS). Described as “short, compact little ladies, not over 5 ft tall,” who “dressed well and worked intently together” and “never spoke loudly or made any demands, as did so many others,” they were “definitely at home among the original collections and other serious researchers who were using them, too.”⁵⁴ Harriet Stryker-Rodda, then volunteer secretary to LIHS librarian Edna Huntington, remembered that Ms. Huntington had set up

unwritten codes . . . to keep the library’s collections untouched by human hands. She was a fanatic about this . . . , but there were certain knowledgeable and skillful members who were able to circumvent her. They had quietly and successfully appealed to the administrators, . . . and were allowed access to the stacks. The usual run of users merely consulted the card files and filled out request forms for use of the desired volumes. The “Barber girls” were already well entrenched in their habit of coming early, spending the day “studying.” I was warned to keep an eye on their manipulations, but not to become at all friendly with them. I was to be sure they left the library “with nothing more than they had carried in.”⁵⁵

Of the three sisters, Minnie was the most traveled. Beginning in the mid-1920s, she sailed to the Caribbean, England, the Maritimes, and Los Angeles.⁵⁶ By the summer of 1932, Minnie had moved to 617 West 168th Street,⁵⁷ and then in March 1938 to an apartment at 215 East 73d Street, Manhattan,⁵⁸ where Gertrude moved in with her, perhaps at the same time or at least within the next few years.

Minnie then moved to an apartment at 141 East 56th Street, where she was found dead on 5 June 1942, apparently having died on or about 28 May. She was allegedly being treated for diabetes but not taking insulin. The New York City medical examiner determined the cause of death to be coronary arteriosclerosis.⁵⁹ Brother David F. Cowen of 320 Riverside Drive and sister

⁵² Theodora Speser (Jupiter, Fla.), telephone conversation with author, July 1994. Ray was 4' 10¼", according to her World War I discharge (note 15).

⁵³ Gunther E. Pohl (New York, N.Y.), telephone conversation with author, 1993. Also, Theodora Speser (note 52), who remembers sitting in cemeteries while her Aunt Gertie abstracted grave marker inscriptions.

⁵⁴ Harriet Mott Stryker-Rodda (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania) to author, letter, 16 Nov. 1993.

⁵⁵ Stryker-Rodda to author (note 54). Ms. Stryker-Rodda was later a genealogist, curator of manuscripts, and assistant librarian at the LIHS 1949–68. She was also the wife of former RECORD editor Kenn Stryker-Rodda, FASG.

⁵⁶ Minnie Cowen entries in Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, N.Y., 1897–1957 (NARA T715): *SS Sixaola*, 13 Aug. 1925 (see note 24); *SS Haiti*, 29 July 1935, vol. 12213, p. 188, line [12] (roll 5677); *SS Dominica*, 9 Aug. 1928, vol. 9571, p. 177, line 24 (roll 4316); *SS Munargo*, 21 July 1938, vol. 13315, p. 24, line 7 (roll 6186); *SS Lancastría*, 22 August 1927, vol. 9195, p. 20, line 29 (roll 4112); *SS Nerissa*, 21 July 1932, vol. 11198, p. 5, line 6 (roll 5191); *SS Zacapa*, 23 July 1930, vol. 10377, p. 75, line [26] (roll 4783); *SS Veendam*, 27 July 1939, vol. 13706, p. 154, line 4 (roll 6370). Minnie Cowen entry, *SS California*, 24 July 1937, p. 314 [penned], line 21, Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at San Pedro/Wilmington/Los Angeles, California, 1907–1936 (NARA M1764, roll 79).

⁵⁷ Minnie Cowen entries, *SS Haiti*, 29 July 1935; *SS Nerissa*, 21 July 1932; and *SS California*, 24 July 1937 (see note 56). Minnie gave this address when she traveled in 1932, 1935, 1937 (note 56).

⁵⁸ “Apartment Rentals,” *The New York Times*, 24 March 1938, p. 41, col. 6.

⁵⁹ Minnie Cowen death certificate, New York City, 1942, Manhattan Borough, #11869. Minnie Cowen, New York City Medical Examiner’s report, 1942, case #3010. Minnie was identified by her brother David F. Cowen of 320 Riverside Drive. Her occupation was listed as librarian.

Ray C. Sawyer of 145 Seaman Avenue petitioned to administer Minnie's estate on 9 June 1942. They listed her heirs as her six siblings with their addresses and ages, including Gertrude C. Barber, 28 East 73d Street, "51," and also noted Minnie had real property lots in West New Brighton on Staten Island (where sister Gertrude had lived), "acquired about twenty years ago, but which have not improved in value." Brother Bernard Cowen of 325 West End Avenue made a statement on 16 June 1942, that the

deceased was for more than 30 years associated with The New York Geological [sic] and Biographical Society at 122 East 58th Street, New York. Until her retirement in April, 1941 she was the Curator of the Society and in charge of the circulation of its monthly magazine. . . . The deceased never married. She never had any charge accounts and always paid in cash for the necessities of life. There were no doctor's bills which remained unpaid. Her income taxes were always paid promptly. I have always acted as her personal attorney and was familiar with her affairs. The only contract which she had outstanding was the lease of her apartment at 141 East 56th Street which has until September 30, 1941 to run.⁶⁰

After Minnie's death, Gertrude may have continued work that her sister might have completed, had she lived, and seems to have actually claimed some of Minnie's work for herself.⁶¹

Sister Ray had vacationed in Bermuda in the summer of 1926, when she and Minnie were living at 86 Fort Washington Avenue. She evidently sailed out of New York only one more time, at the end of 1937, at which time her residence was 336 Fort Washington Avenue.⁶² At some point, she became a Christian Scientist, "no doubt because the conversion was easy, and she thought it would protect herself from discrimination."⁶³ "Never called Rachel," she worked in her later years for her brother David, who had a wristwatch strap factory on John Street, which he later moved to Jersey City, New Jersey.⁶⁴ She then lived with her nephew Henry Cowen in Huntington, New York, and died in a nursing home there in June 1973 at the age of 89.⁶⁵ She had made her will 4 November 1968, while living at 145 Seaman Avenue in Manhattan, mentioning two nephews and some grandnieces and grandnephews, as well as a small bequest to Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc., in New York City.⁶⁶

Around the early 1950s Gertrude's output of indexes and abstracts diminished significantly, and it was about this time she probably took on more research for private clients. One of these was future editor of THE RECORD, Harry Macy Jr., then living in Florida. Mr. Macy has kindly shared samples of Mrs. Barber's reports to him from the second half of the 1950s,

⁶⁰ Minnie Cowen administration file (note 4).

⁶¹ In her "Who's Who in Genealogy" sketch for example (note 31), Gertrude claimed among her works will abstracts for Schenectady County 1809–1845, when Minnie had actually done those up through 1835.

⁶² Ray Sawyer entries in Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, N.Y., 1897–1957 (NARA T715): *SS Fort St. George*, 2 August 1926, vol. 8791, p. 237, line 28 (roll 3896); *SS Atlantida*, 3 December 1937, vol. 13100, p. 148, line 11 (roll 6084).

⁶³ Henry C. Cowen (Commack, N.Y.), to author, letter, 25 July 2002.

⁶⁴ Henry C. Cowen (Commack, N.Y.), and Robert M. Cowen (Rye, N.Y.), telephone conversations with author, 20 July 1994.

⁶⁵ Ray C. Sawyer obituaries (note 19).

⁶⁶ Ray C. Sawyer estate file, Suffolk County, N.Y., Surrogate's Court file #42-1973.

which provide an idea of her work. Clearly, Mrs. Barber was quite familiar with the sources for genealogical research in New York and New Jersey. For Mr. Macy, she traveled to Queens, Staten Island, and Newark, abstracting or transcribing material in books, manuscripts, will and deed books, and other sources. She also contacted libraries, historical societies, churches, and individuals for her client. Besides reporting her findings or lack thereof, she made observations and suggestions. Typically, she would end her reports with her fee: "My charge for all this work, which took a good many hours to dig out is \$10.00." And in one report, she typed under her signature, "Formerly Asst Librarian The N Y Gen & Biog Society."⁶⁷ Later, Gertrude would write a cousin of her late husband that she "was getting \$10 an hour \$50—minimum—on my genealogical work. . . . [T]hank God, I was always a good business woman."⁶⁸

Gertrude was the least traveled of her sisters and seems never to have left the country. She did take "motor trips" and vacations, however,⁶⁹ and when she was still producing abstracts and indexes, these excursions were evidently in combination with holidays from New York City. She is remembered as always being extremely well dressed, usually with a huge hat and lots of makeup, and as one who enjoyed shopping. She had her own seat when she researched at the New York Public Library, and by sometime in the 1970s, was visiting the NYG&B again.⁷⁰ She has been described as ambitious, successful, self-confident, and assertive, but not boastful.⁷¹

Gertrude's final residence was an apartment at 28 East 73d Street, where she moved in June 1939,⁷² a place remembered by her niece as "beautiful . . . but not wealthy."⁷³ Besides her genealogical work, Gertrude claimed she had worked for *The Daily News*, the federal civil service, as secretary to Major [William Francis] Deegan (for whom the New York City highway is named⁷⁴), and as chief clerk for Selective Service. "I was never out of a job."⁷⁵ One of her nieces remembered Gertrude as "great fun" and that she collected Royal Doulton figurines,⁷⁶ left to her nieces by her will.

Mrs. Barber's last major project was abstracting marriage and death notices from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1841–80, which she completed 1963–66. Timothy Beard, who became a librarian in New York Public Library's Genealogy and Local History Division in 1962, remembers Gertrude as "a short, square-faced, square lady," who would come to his desk and wait in something of a military stance, with a facial expression "like she was ready for

⁶⁷ Gertrude A. Barber to Harry Macy, research reports, 15 Jan. 1955, 20 July 1956, 6 April 1959; copies provided by Mr. Macy.

⁶⁸ Barber to Herrmann (note 36).

⁶⁹ Pohl (note 53).

⁷⁰ Pohl (note 53). Henry B. Hoff, CG, FASG, FGBS, e-mail message to author, 6 Oct. 2010 (regarding hat and makeup and being at the NYG&B in the early 1970s).

⁷¹ Herrmann to author (note 37).

⁷² "Apartment Rentals," *The New York Times*, 13 June 1939, p. 47, col. 6.

⁷³ Speser (note 52).

⁷⁴ Deegan was a New York City architect and political leader. See Andrew Sparberg, "Deegan, William F.," in *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 323.

⁷⁵ Barber to Herrmann (note 36).

⁷⁶ Speser (note 52).

a fight.” As others have recalled, Gertrude was feisty, with a history of run-ins with people, but Mr. Beard thinks she “may have actually been afraid.” Always in “good health” and “always very busy,” she was frequently in the library and would often meet clients there. She would stay in the library’s newspaper division late into the evenings in order to abstract by hand the many *Eagle* notices, which she would then type up at home. “She was ahead of her time” in producing such abstracts, which many others emulated once her work became known, and Mr. Beard especially recalls using her newspaper abstracts to answer numerous queries received at the library.⁷⁷

Four months before her death, she wrote a reply to a cousin of her late husband, informing him she had “a nervous breakdown brewing” around January 1974, “was completely knocked out” in early March, “(going from 88 lbs. down to 80 lbs.) and placed in the Doctor’s Hospital in NY City—with two nurses—to regain my health. I never weighed more than 90 lbs.—and never was sick.” She then spent a month at “one of the most exclusive Convalescent Homes in Miami” and then a month at her nephew’s [Leslie Kramer’s] “beautiful home” in Coral Gables, returning home in May, “fully recovered.” “More or less—all the genealogical assignments, which I had in 1973—in response to my advertisement in the New England Register since 1940—and the recommendations—got under my skin. I am doing no research work now—never worked from June first—after Labor Day—as the NYG&B is closed—where I did most of the research work.”⁷⁸

On 12 December 1974, Gertrude A. Barber died in New York City of a heart attack and diabetic shock.⁷⁹ By her will of 4 March 1974, Gertrude C. Barber (as she signed it) made bequests to two relatives and her building superintendent, and left her genealogical papers to the New York Public Library. She requested her ashes be placed in Ferncliff Cemetery and named nephew Robert M. Cowen of Rye executor.⁸⁰ The “genealogical papers” consisted only of extra copies of some of her typed source record abstracts.⁸¹

THE SISTERS’ PARENTS

Gertrude, Minnie, and Ray were daughters of Charles Cohen (later Cowen), a clothier, who was born, according to his marriage record, in Lomza⁸² on the Narew River in Poland (then part of the Russian Empire), about 75 miles

⁷⁷ Timothy Field Beard, FASG, FGBS, of Roxbury, Conn., interview with author, Pittsfield, Mass., 9 Oct. 2010.

⁷⁸ Barber to Herrmann (note 36). She signed her letter “Gertie.”

⁷⁹ Gertrude A. Barber death notice (genealogist, widow of Williard [sic] Barber, died suddenly), *The New York Times*, 17 Dec. 1974, p. 40, col. 4. New York City Health Department, Index to Deaths, 1974. Neither the death certificate (Manhattan Borough #22079) nor the medical examiner’s file (#09516) are in the public domain.

⁸⁰ Her six nephews and two nieces were also listed in the probate petition. Gertrude A. Barber estate file, New York County, N.Y., Surrogate’s Court file #6874-1974. In her letter to John Herrmann 12 Aug. 1974 (note 36), she implied she would be buried in “our own plot in Greenwood.”

⁸¹ Ruth Carr, then Chief, U.S. History, Local History, and Genealogy Division, New York Public Library, telephone conversation with author, 19 June 2002.

⁸² Charles “Cohn” and Augusta Barnard marriage certificate, New York City, 1874, #6529. Other records of Charles and his children have placed his birth in Russia, Germany, England, New York, and Charleston, South Carolina.

northeast of Warsaw and about 50 miles west of Bialystok. When he petitioned for naturalization in 1877, Charles stated he was born in Warsaw, Russia, 11 October 1851,⁸³ and at the time of his marriage in 1874, he gave the names of his parents as Abram Cohn and Leah David.⁸⁴ The informant for Charles's death certificate provided the parents' names as Abraham Cowen and Lea Luft, both born in Russia.⁸⁵ Charles's son Bernard Cowen recorded that his father was born in 1854, son of Abraham Mondschine and his wife, Leah.⁸⁶

Charles's father died when he was barely four years old⁸⁷ and his mother remarried a few years later to Sam Harris (Polish name not discovered), a "handsome sergeant in the Polish army," who evidently "had seen some years of service to reach that rank [since] he never displayed any aptitude for a commercial life." Leah had two brothers, Moses and Louis, who came to the United States in the early 1860s, and she and her family followed soon after to New York.⁸⁸

Charles's grandson Leslie Kramer related that when but a boy, Charles left Poland and "managed to get across the border and into Germany, then to proceed to Hamburg⁸⁹ for a ship to get him to N.Y."⁹⁰ But Charles did not go to New York; he went instead to Charleston, South Carolina, perhaps with some relatives, maybe even with his mother and stepfather, although no record of them has been found in that city. When Charles Cohen applied for citizenship in 1877, he claimed he arrived as a minor in Charleston 10 November 1861.⁹¹ Kramer believed Charles was in that city when Fort Sumter in

⁸³ Charles Cohen naturalization petition, U.S. District Court, Boston, Mass., 97:3. His ages in Federal and New York State censuses, at the time of his marriage and death, and at the births of his children indicate he was born around 1850–58. As was somewhat typical of immigrants seeking American citizenship, Charles probably claimed Warsaw as his place of birth in this record since it was the nearest large and well-known city to Lomza.

⁸⁴ Charles "Cohn" and Augusta Barnard marriage certificate (note 82).

⁸⁵ Charles Cowen death certificate, New York City, 1932, Manhattan Borough, #26637.

⁸⁶ Bernard Cowen, Family Reminiscences, ca. 1950s, copy provided by his grandson Norman Bernard Mandelbaum of Des Moines, Iowa, Dec. 2005. Bernard also wrote: "I never inquired as I should have of his early memories as a child but I do have some recollection of his having told me how much pleasure he experienced when his Uncle Matters (sp.?) used to take him on his wagon when he made trips out of the City. There was mention made of the city of Lomza (sp.?) but whether the journeys were to or from that city in Poland I couldn't say."

⁸⁷ Abram Joskowicz Monszajn death record, Civil Registrations of Jewish deaths for Lomza, Bialystok, Poland (1852–1856), 1855, #229, FHL microfilm #747,712.

⁸⁸ Cowen, Family Reminiscences (note 86). See further in the genealogical summary.

⁸⁹ No likely entries were found for Charles, his mother, stepfather, or other relatives in the fifteen-year direct index to the Hamburg emigration lists, 1856–71 (FHL microfilm #884,673) or in the direct and indirect indexes for 1860–62 (FHL microfilm #473,071 and #1,049,068). For an explanation of these lists and indexes, see *Hamburg Passenger Lists*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1996), also on FHL microfiche #6,000,034 and online at *FamilySearch* (https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Hamburg_Passenger_Lists).

⁹⁰ "The Russian border guard was seized with an attack of peristalsis, causing him to leave his post and dash to the nearest clump of trees for privacy whilst emptying his bowels. If the bastard had been constipated we wouldn't be writing to each other today." Leslie Kramer to Henry C. Cowen, letter, 17 Oct. 1972; copy provided by Cowen.

⁹¹ Charles Cohen naturalization petition (note 83). There are no passenger lists for the Port of Charleston for this period of time. Charles's census entries indicate he arrived in the United States about 1869–70 (1905), in 1869 (1910), about 1864–65 (1915), in 1866 (1920), and in 1865 (1930). His death certificate (note 85) indicates the immigration was in 1866. Grandson Raymond Cowen recalled hearing Charles came to the U.S. "with somebody else's papers" (Henry C. Cowen [Huntington, N.Y.] to family members, letter, 30 May 1973; copy provided by Henry Cowen). Charles Cohen household, 1905 New York State Census, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, Assembly Dist. 33, Election Dist. 1, p. 13, line 37, county copy at New York County Clerk's Division of Old Records, New York, N.Y.

Charleston harbor was bombarded, “during the course of which he was wounded by Yankee shellfire,”⁹² but the opening battle of the American Civil War was 12 April 1861, when Charles was presumably still in Europe. Another grandson, Henry Cowen, recorded that “In later life, Charles said he and other boys ran back and forth carrying water to the Confederate gunners, and that some were wounded, including him, by shrapnel from the fort’s guns. He showed his wound to my cousin Leslie Kramer.”⁹³ Nevertheless, well before November 1861, the Union had established a blockade to prevent goods, supplies, and arms from being shipped into southern ports, including Charleston, which was essentially closed by mid-1863.⁹⁴

While in Charleston, the pronunciation of Charles’s name Mondschein [Monszajn] evidently sounded to locals like Moonshine. He was “kidded incessantly and called moon-shine,”⁹⁵ “because Moonshine was patently ridiculous as a name for anybody in a Southern city.”⁹⁶ Grandson Robert M. Cowen claimed Charles lived in Charleston with an uncle named Cohen and “took the uncle’s family name.”⁹⁷ The change was after 1870, however, when 18-year-old “Prussian” Charles “Moonshine” was enumerated as a store clerk in the Charleston household of Solomon Straus, whose clothing store with brother Emanuel—Strauss & Bro.—and residence were on the northeast corner of King and Queens street [212 King Street].⁹⁸ Here Charles probably

Charles Cohen household, 1910 U.S. Census (note 3). Chas Cohen household, 1915 New York State Census, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, Assembly Dist. 19, Election Dist. 36, p. 17, county copy at New York County Clerk’s Division of Old Records, New York, N.Y. Charles Cowen household, 1920 U.S. Census, Assembly Dist. 11, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, N.Y., ED 842, p. 18A, dw. 55, fam. 455 (NARA T625, roll 1205). Charles Cohen household, 1930 U.S. Census, Assembly Dist. 22, Manhattan Borough, New York City, New York County, N.Y., ED 31-1066, p. 11A, dw. 6, fam. 223 (NARA T626, roll 1578).

⁹² Kramer to H. Cowen (note 90). Leslie also claimed his grandfather Charles landed at Castle Garden in New York City.

⁹³ Henry C. Cowen to Nancy (Cowen) Orr, letter, 16 March 2000; copy provided by Henry Cowen. Many Charleston Jews supported the Confederacy and served in the war. See Charles Reznikof, *The Jews of Charleston* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950), pp. 157ff.

⁹⁴ Record of Entrances and Clearances, Charleston, S.C., 1844–1930, Entry 1388, RG 36, U.S. Customs Service, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, Ga., includes information about ships allowed into the port during the 1860s, but it is incomplete and does not have entries for Nov. 1861.

An examination of the shipping notices in the *Charleston Daily Courier* for 6–13 Nov. 1861, reveals a number of vessels that came into the harbor, mostly from local places and mostly loaded with agricultural goods, especially rice. The “Ship News” for 8 Nov., however (p. 4, col. 7), lists two large ships from Liverpool, the *John Ravenel*, 700 tons, and the *Mackinaw*, 1094 tons, both “waiting” to enter the harbor, either of which might have carried Charles to America. Both ships were privateers (see “Privateering at Charleston,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 7 Sept. 1861, p. 563).

⁹⁵ Robert M. Cowen (Rye, N.Y.) to author, letter, 22 July 1994.

⁹⁶ Kramer to H. Cowen (note 90).

⁹⁷ R. Cowen to author (note 95). The only discovered possibility for this Cohen uncle in the Charleston area at this time was Louis Cohen, who had a clothing store there by 1860 and in 1870 was listed in the census not far from Charles “Moonshine” (Louis Cohen household, 1860 U.S. Census, Charleston, Ward 6, Charleston Dist., South Carolina, pp. 18–19 [penned], dw. 147, fam. 149 [NARA M653, roll 1216]; Lewis Cohen household, 1870 U.S. Census, Charleston, Ward 4, Charleston County, South Carolina, p. 231 [penned], dw. 1184, fam. 1668 [NARA M593, roll 1486]). As noted above, the last name of Charles’s father was Monszajn, but his mother, Leah, supposedly had a brother Louis. As discussed in the genealogical summary, at least one of Leah’s brothers apparently used the surname Cohn—the same surname given in her death certificate for her father, David, and in marriage and death records of her Harris children. According to his death certificate, however, Louis Cohen of Charleston was born 29 Nov. 1831 and died in Charleston 14 Feb. 1914, son of George Nathan and Gunia (Jacobs) Cohen (Louis Cohen death certificate, Charleston, 1914, #165), so it seems unlikely he was an uncle of Charles “Moonshine.”

⁹⁸ Solomon Straus household, 1870 U.S. Census, Charleston, Ward 4, Charleston County, S.C., p. 222 [penned], dw. [1133], fam. 1602 (NARA M593, roll 1486). Charleston, S.C., city directories for 1869–70 and 1872–73 (*Jowitz’s Illustrated Charleston City Directory and Business Register*. . . [Charleston, S.C.: (Thad. C.

learned the clothing business in which he worked for the next several years. Son Bernard wrote that his father worked in a men's outfitting store in Charleston close to the waterfront. He "would pass handbills to the soldiers as they embarked from the rowboats—handbills that noted bargains to be had at his uncle's store." Soon Charles "was able to journey up from Charleston selling merchandise from his uncle's store or from other sources. . . . It was in the course of one of his journeys in the hinterland that he met a farmer who took an interest in him and taught him to read and write. By the time he was 21 years of age he had managed to save upwards of \$2000."⁹⁹

Charles then made his way to New York City and, according to son Bernard, "used to tell of two stores where he obtained employment as a clothing salesman,¹ one at the corner of the Bowery and Baxter Street and the other at the corner of Pineapple Street and Fulton Street in Brooklyn. He was able financially to lend \$1000 to the owner of the last mentioned store." Meanwhile, "his mother was looking over the field for a nice girl whom he might marry and in this way he met my mother then a girl of 20, the eldest of seven children of a widow, Amelia Bernard, who was supporting six children on her earnings as a seamstress."¹⁰⁰

Charles was living at 325 Canal Street in New York City when married by Rabbi Moses Maisner 11 October 1874, to Augusta Golda Barnard of 18 Essex Street.¹⁰¹ Born in Wloclawek, Poland, 15 June 1850, she was a daughter of Baruch and Amelia/Emily (Cohn) Barnard.¹⁰² Wloclawek is on the Wisla (Vistula) River, about 90 miles northwest of Warsaw and about 66 miles north of Lodz.¹⁰³ Wloclawek and Lomza, where Charles was born, are about 130 miles apart.

When Augusta was a teenager, her father, a soap manufacturer, moved his family from Poland to London, England, where he learned candle making. The family name had been something like Sochachevsky, indicating they had originated in Sochaczew,¹⁰⁴ about 35 miles west-southwest of Warsaw. In England, the surname was changed to Barnard (sometimes rendered Bernard). "Grandma Cowen remembered some of her early childhood Polish, and even a few resounding Russian curses, and never lost the Cockney accent she picked

Jowitt], (1869–1870) 207, and *Directory for 1872–1873* [Charleston, S.C.: Walker, Evans and Cogswell], [1872–1873] 206), listing the Strauses but not Charles under Mondschein, Moonshine, or Cohen. No Charleston directories were published for 1861[62]–1865[66], 1868[69], or 1870[71]–1871[72]. Of course, for a teenager to have been listed in city directories would have been unusual.

⁹⁹ Cowen, *Family Reminiscences* (note 86).

¹⁰⁰ Cowen, *Family Reminiscences* (note 86). Charles was not found listed in Brooklyn, N.Y., city directories for 1870–74 (*Brooklyn City and Business Directory* . . . [Brooklyn, N.Y.: Lain and Company]).

¹⁰¹ Charles "Cohn" and Augusta Barnard marriage certificate (note 82). Witnesses were Michael Light and Robert Haas (also given as Wolff). Son Bernard recorded that the marriage took place in Clinton Hall (Cowen, *Family Reminiscences* [note 86]), but Charles and Augusta could have been married in Shaarai Zedeck Synagogue at 38 Henry St., where Dr. Maisner was rabbi at the time ("Dr. Moses Maisner Dies," *The New York Times*, 30 June 1948, p. 14, col. 4).

¹⁰² The names of her parents on her marriage certificate are Samuel Barnard and Minel Zimche, which also shows Augusta was born in Wroclawck, Russia (Charles "Cohn" and Augusta Barnard marriage certificate [note 82]). Her New York City death certificate (Augusta Golda Cowen death certificate, New York City, 1938, Manhattan Borough, #12920) shows Augusta Golda Cowen's parents as Bernard Barnard, born Poland, and Amelia Cohn, born Germany. See further in the genealogical summary.

¹⁰³ Her son Bernard recorded that Augusta was born in 1854 in "Wladslwick," twenty miles "this side" of Warsaw (Cowen, *Family Reminiscences* [note 86]).

¹⁰⁴ Cowen, *Family Reminiscences* (note 86).

up when she lived on Petticoat Lane, Whitechapel—‘Go and take your bahth!’”¹⁰⁵

“Golda” Bernard arrived at the Port of New York with her mother and siblings 25 October 1869, aboard the schooner *City of Brussels*, which had sailed from Liverpool, England, and Queenstown, Ireland.¹⁰⁶ They were joining her father, who had immigrated (as Simon Bernard) to New York a year earlier¹⁰⁷ but then died a year after his family arrived.¹⁰⁸

Soon after marriage, Charles “had enough money to start a business of his own outside of New York [City]. On someone’s suggestion he journeyed up to Cohoes to look at a store in that town. Luckily he found nothing there worthwhile.”¹⁰⁹ Earlier, Augusta’s oldest brother, Simon, had settled in Boston, so she and Charles moved there, living at 369 Federal Street with her widowed mother and siblings, with Charles’s clothing business next door.¹¹⁰ The Cohen’s first child was born here in January 1877,¹¹¹ and on 30 November of that year, Charles became a naturalized American citizen.¹¹²

The Cohens moved to Providence, Rhode Island, within the next two years. Charles and Augusta had determined Boston “was too big for them to settle in and raise a family. They decided that the quality of life in Providence would suit that purpose better.”¹¹³ In this city, six more children were born, including future genealogical abstractors and indexers Rachel (Ray) in 1883, Minnie in 1886, and Gertrude in 1892. Another daughter was also adopted into the family: Annette Jersky, born in 1899, who became known as Nathalie Cohen/Cowen.¹¹⁴ She was born with a withered arm and poor eyesight, and after her mother died a few days following her birth, Augusta Cohen realized the infant’s saloonkeeper father could not care for her. Nathalie went back to her biological father at age sixteen.¹¹⁵

From about 1878 to 1888 the Cohens lived in Providence at 226 North Main Street, where Charles also had his clothing business. About 1888, they moved to 14 Star Street for about two years, but Charles kept his business on

¹⁰⁵ Kramer to H. Cowen (note 90). Another grandson, Robert Cowen, claimed the family had lived in Hull while in England (R. Cowen to author [note 95]).

¹⁰⁶ Golda Bernard entry, *SS City of Brussels*, 25 Oct. 1869, list 1223, [unpaginated], line 5, Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, N.Y., 1820–1897 (NARA M237, roll 320). Grandson Leslie Kramer wrote that “I suspect that the family was here about 1866 or later, because Grandma told me of her father coming home one evening with a newspaper, gathering the family about him, and informing them of a terrible event—‘The American President has just been shot!’” (Kramer to H. Cowen [note 90]). President Lincoln was assassinated, of course, in 1865.

¹⁰⁷ Simon Bernard entry, *SS Cornelius Grinnell*, 22 Aug. 1868, list 905, [unpaginated], line 52, Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, N.Y., 1820–1897 (NARA M237, roll 300). See genealogical summary.

¹⁰⁸ Baruch Barnard death certificate, New York City, 1870, #69804.

¹⁰⁹ R. Cowen to author (note 95).

¹¹⁰ *Boston Directory* . . . (Boston, Mass: Sampson, Davenport, and Co.), (1875) 200, (1876) 201, (1877) 201.

¹¹¹ Etta Cohen birth record, Massachusetts vital records, 1877, 288:163, #7303.

¹¹² Charles Cohen naturalization petition (note 83). Charles claimed he arrived as a minor, which meant he was not required to have first filed a declaration of intention. His witnesses were John Bloom and Andrew Wilkinson.

¹¹³ R. Cowen to author (note 95).

¹¹⁴ Annette Jersky birth record, Providence, R.I., Births, 16:476. Annette Jersky and Solomon Silverman marriage record, Providence, R.I., Marriages 26:71. She was Nattie Cohen when enumerated with her adopting family in 1905 and Nathalie Cohen in 1910 (Charles Cohen household, 1905 New York State Census [note 2]; Charles Cohen household, 1910 U.S. Census [note 3]).

¹¹⁵ Leslie Kramer to Henry C. Cowen, letter, 7 Jan. 1974, copy of letter provided by Henry Cowen.

North Main Street, at number 222. Their next move, in the early 1890s, was to 391 North Main, and about 1893 to 12 Jenckes Street. At this time, Charles had his clothing store at 16 Broad Street in nearby Pawtucket, but soon changed careers and about 1894 went to work for Providence Loaning Co. at 524 Westminster Street and a year later was manager of New England Loan Co. at 87 Westminster. The family continued to reside at 12 Jenckes Street until about 1900, when they moved to 24 South Court, then to 71 Arnold (1901), and 221 Orms Street (1902).¹¹⁶ They also lived a few months on Benefit Street in a home owned by the Gorham silver family, which they referred to as a “mansion,” “but it was rundown.”¹¹⁷ Also, sometime about the 1890s, Charles “tackled building houses. He was ‘taken to the cleaners’ by a panic, presumably 1896.”¹¹⁸

(To be continued)

¹¹⁶ *Providence Directory . . .* (Providence, R.I.: Sampson, Davenport, and Co.), (1884) 112, (1887) 126, (1888) 127, (1889) 122, (1890) 130, (1891) 141, (1892) 151, (1893) 160, (1894) 165, (1895) 174, (1896) 191, (1897) 194, (1898) 212, (1899) 217, (1900) 216, (1901) 230, (1902) 222. *Pawtucket City and Central Falls Directory* (Boston: Sampson, Murdock, and Co.) (1893) 110, 484. Charles Cohen was not listed in the Pawtucket directories for 1890, 1891, 1894, and 1895. Charles Cohen household, 1880 U.S. Census, Providence City, Providence County, Rhode Island, ED 10, p. 24, dw. 164, fam. 203 (NARA T9, roll 1211). Charles Cohen entry, 1885 Rhode Island State Census, Ward 2, Providence, Providence County, [unpaginated], dist. 15, fam. 92 (FHL microfilm #953,910).

¹¹⁷ H. Cowen to Orr (note 93).

¹¹⁸ R. Cowen to author (note 95).