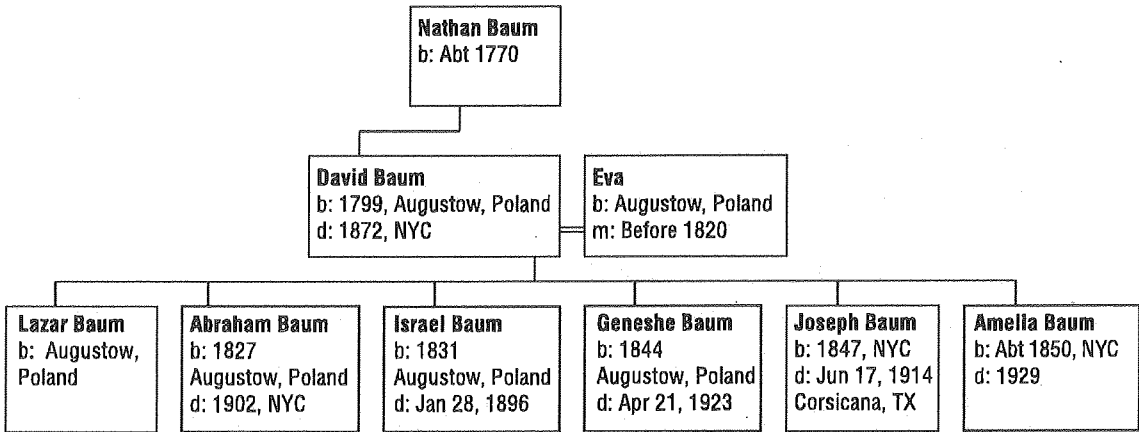


***THE FOUNDING GENERATION:  
THE CHILDREN OF DAVID & EVA BAUM***

David and Eva Baum had six children: Lazar, Abraham (Abbe), Israel, Geneshe (Lena), Joseph and Amelia.



Lazar Baum was the eldest, and apparently went West, probably during the Gold Rush of 1848. He was never heard of again. The Family Book of 1964 suggests that he could have been scalped by Indians, or perhaps went on to Australia. He does not appear in US census records.

Abraham (Abbe) Baum was born in 1827 and married Goldie Webster in 1853; together they had ten children. He died in 1902. The following is some of his story, as it appeared in the 1964 Family Book:

After California, Abbe Baum returned to New York City. He married in 1853 and bought a house at 41 East Broadway. Alas, so much of this tale is missing! The Baums were middle-class folk living in a fast-growing community. Abbe was a well known figure in the old East Side ghetto where virtually all the Jews resided. East Broadway was the main thoroughfare and the center of population was around Essex and Rivington Streets. Abbe had to earn a living. He abandoned his early vocation of miniature hand painting. Nor did he follow his sacred scribal tasks for long. He started to deal in real estate.

Many of the family legends about Abbe Baum's real estate deals are highly amusing. At one time, so it is said, he could have bought the land now occupied by Carnegie Hall. Instead he purchased the other offering: Jersey Heights! Another story is that he owned some of the property which is now the site of R. H. Macy & Co. He is said to have boasted about making a \$500 profit on this deal. (Such vision!) However, he managed to bring up a large family and send most of his children to college. The majority of them became professionals. Although he didn't accumulate a fortune of gold in California, or oil in Pennsylvania, he must have met with a fair measure of success. His sons and daughters worked to help pay their own way, especially their education, and they later supported the household. Many of his friends became immensely wealthy, so it must be concluded that he didn't have the acquisitive nature or business acumen of his contemporaries. In the census of 1870 he declared his assets at \$110,000, so he was far from poor.

If life in the old ghetto was difficult and forbidding, there were brave spirits who very early



WE REMEMBER: THE BAUM-CROHN-WEBSTER FAMILY 1842-2000

caught on to the spirit of America. Abbe Baum was one of them. He was a loyal American from the start. I remember how he used to enjoy our Fourth of July celebrations and buy firecrackers for the grandchildren. He even adopted part of the melody of 'America' for the ending of the traditional Hebrew grace after meals.

He was a pioneer in establishing a Jewish beachhead on these hospitable shores. It was natural for the early settlers to organize places of worship. A number of small synagogues sprang up on the East Side, but they were merely designated by the Hebrew term 'Beth Hamidrash' (House of Study). But on June 4, 1852, a new synagogue was opened, which was to be known as the Beth Hamidrash Hagadol, or Great Synagogue. In a historical document of this place of worship, there is the following statement: "The first Russian-American Congregation was founded June 4, 1852, by the following members: Benjamin Schlesinger, Judah Middleman, Abraham Benjamin, Abraham Joseph Ash, Israel Cohen, Abbe Baum, Joshua Rothstein, Samuel Isaacs, Isidor Raphael, Wolf Cohen and Jack Levy. Several non-Russian Jews who were dissatisfied with the reform movement of their congregations joined the orthodox Russian congregation. Of these members, only Abbe Baum and Samuel Isaacs survive." (1900)

According to an article which appeared in a publication of the American Jewish Historical Society, the first place of worship (1852) was in the garret of No. 83 Bayard Street. The synagogue moved to Pearl Street, corner of Center Street, and in 1855 it purchased a Welsh chapel at 78 Allen Street. In 1855, after other moves and membership splits, the synagogue found a permanent home at 172 Norfolk Street. This synagogue still exists. Abbe Baum's name is not mentioned again in the annals of the synagogue so we can assume that after he moved 'uptown', he severed his official ties.

The year 1852 was also the date of the founding of the Jews' Hospital on West 28th Street, later renamed Mount Sinai Hospital. At that time there were 12,000 Jews living in New York. The hospital was established by the Sephardic (Jews of Spanish origin) and German Jews living in the city, and was housed in a brownstone house which was rented for nine months at a cost of \$125.

Abbe Baum did not remain on the East Side. He was one of the first to move uptown, then 42nd Street. My mother used to tell us about her trips to that neighborhood on Passover to secure fresh milk from the cattle on some remaining farms. We do know that the Baums had a house at 183rd Street and Southern Boulevard near the Bronx Zoo. I believe it was called West Farms-Tremont. This was a white stone structure with Southern-style colonial architecture. It was always known as 'The White House'. As children we frequently visited our grandparents there. This required taking the Third Avenue elevated train which burned sooty, soft coal. Its terminus was at 177th Street. There, Grandpa's horse-driven carriage called for us, or we walked across the open country fields, the streets not yet even laid out, to Southern Boulevard. There were few Jews in the Bronx at that time. Whenever Grandpa wanted a minyan (ten men) for prayer for Sabbath or holidays, he had to walk to Lebanon Hospital on East 149th Street to find a few of his co-religionists.

THE SAGA OF AN AMERICAN JEWISH FAMILY

(Since both Lawrence Crohn (b. 1892) in the Family Book of 1964 and Esther Crohn (b. 1882) in her memoirs remember the house on 183rd Street in the Bronx so vividly, Abbe Baum and his family probably didn't live there before 1870, when they moved to Park Avenue. It is more likely that from 42nd Street they moved to Harlem, where there was already a Jewish presence, and from there to Park Avenue. According to an article written by Burrill Crohn, it was in 1892. EK.)

Abbe Baum and family lived in Harlem for a long period. Most of the children, after my mother Leah, were born either in the Bronx or in Harlem. The youngest child, David, was born at 1021 Park Avenue at 85th Street, which later became the home of Reginald de Koven, composer of 'Robin Hood' and other American musical classics. New York's population was then around one million with approximately 65,000 Jews.

SCHEDULE L. 1880

Abbe Baum

Name	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Occupation	Place of Birth	Place of Birth
Abbe Baum	45	M	Married	Teacher	Poland	Poland
Leah Baum	40	F	Married	Housewife	Poland	Poland
David Baum	15	M	Son	Student	Poland	Poland
Leah Baum	12	F	Daughter	Student	Poland	Poland
Abbe Baum	10	M	Son	Student	Poland	Poland
Leah Baum	8	F	Daughter	Student	Poland	Poland
Abbe Baum	6	M	Son	Student	Poland	Poland
Leah Baum	4	F	Daughter	Student	Poland	Poland
Abbe Baum	2	M	Son	Student	Poland	Poland
Leah Baum	1	F	Daughter	Student	Poland	Poland

A photocopy of the 1880 census listing Abbe Baum's family.

*WE REMEMBER: THE BAUM-CROHN-WEBSTER FAMILY 1842-2000*

The family of Abbe and Goldie Baum became larger in regular sequence. Abbe was capable and well-educated in secular as well as religious subjects. He regularly helped his children with their mathematics and drawing lessons. Goldie was a small, simple hombody, a good cook and a loving mother. The Jewish holidays were great, jolly occasions. We well remember Grandma in her holiday attire – a black taffeta dress with an antique brooch at her lace collar, a small oval 'doilie' of real duchess lace with a small lavender velvet bow in the center on her head. She wore exquisite pear-shaped opal earrings and ring in diamond frames. For years we've wondered what happened to them.

Grandpa Baum mastered the English language very quickly, but Grandma was never completely at home in it. She always tried to use complicated words to the merriment of her children and grandchildren. All the children, except Leah and Rachel, were college graduates and pursued professional careers, which was quite unusual for those times.

Sometime around 1870, the family moved to their new home on 85th Street, just opposite the car barns which were the terminus of the Madison Avenue horse-car system. They were among the first Jewish families to settle in Yorkville, which later became the heart of the uptown settlement. Doubtless many friends and associates moved up from the Lower East Side to this new area called Yorkville – the East Side of Manhattan from about 70th to 90th Streets. Now Abbe Baum had a large family, and his real estate deals seem to have been profitable. But his chief interest lay elsewhere. What was the first need of a new Jewish community? A synagogue, of course. And so our Grandpa Baum called his friends together at his home for religious services.

Shortly thereafter, the group met for High Holiday services at Parupa Hall on 86th Street. By 1882, a property was bought on 82nd Street near Third Avenue, on which site a church now stands. A small synagogue was constructed and occupied until 1902, when the present structure on 85th Street was erected. This synagogue, Kehilath Jeshurun, became one of the largest and most influential Orthodox congregation in America, although the name of Abbe Baum, its founder, is little known to the present membership. There used to be a plaque at its outside entrance which read "Abbe Baum, Founder". It also listed "Theodore Crohn and Jacob Webster, Trustees".

Our grandfather had a beautiful voice, and was a marvelous (volunteer) cantor, or what was better termed a 'ba'al tefillah'. He always read the Kol Nidre ritual on the eve of Yom Kippur, and the closing Neelah on the following day, until his death in 1902. I still remember his soft melodious voice and especially the lovely improvised melodies, many of which are still in use. It is reliably told that people from the Lower East Side walked up to 82d Street to hear him on Yom Kippur.

Grandpa Baum was also a public-spirited American. The Mayor of New York City appointed him to a committee that welcomed new immigrants at Ellis Island (then known as Castle Garden). One memorable incident took place in my home. Shortly after my marriage to Jennie Brodie, her mother visited us in Baltimore. She saw a picture of

*THE SAGA OF AN AMERICAN JEWISH FAMILY*

Grandpa Baum and asked, "Who is this man? He welcomed me at Castle Garden!"

There was always a sympathetic welcome for strangers as well as to the poor and afflicted at the Baum home. On Friday evenings, Abbe might bring home an 'oreyach' (stranger) who needed a good Sabbath meal and perhaps a bed. This was an old custom. Our Uncle Joe used to gleefully tell us about the bewhiskered stranger with earlocks and ritual fringes on his inner garments, who, fully robed, shared his single bed with him. My mother told us of one immigrant who sat at the family table and, after eating the chicken, threw the bones on the floor. The children were punished if they dared to laugh or snicker.

Grandpa Baum truly lived according to his principles. Mayor La Guardia alluded to this in his eulogy at Aunt Milly's funeral services, "Millicent was heir to the finest instincts to be found in human beings. She told me the story of her father Abbe's overcoat. The family had saved money for a new overcoat for their father, but they never saw him wear it. When queried, he said: "A new immigrant came to synagogue without a coat. I invited him home and gave him my new one. How could I have given him an old one?" The story had obviously made a great impression on the mayor.

I well remember Grandpa, wearing a stovepipe silk hat a la Abraham Lincoln, setting out to make his calls on the poor. One time he brought home a poor demented woman, homeless and without friends. She was a complete stranger to the family. We called her Rivke. There were no Jewish asylums in those days. So Rivke lived on the top floor of the Baum house in a little cubbyhole room, and was fed and cared for by Grandma and her children. She stayed with the family for many years. We grandchildren used to visit her, and Lord knows what weird thoughts went through our minds about witches and whatnot. Rivke grew old and when she died, Grandpa gave her a decent Jewish burial in his own family plot.

The family also welcomed the more affluent. There is the story about the young Edwin Montague and his brother, of London, who visited America with their tutor. They were sons of the famous English banker. Being orthodox, they were directed to the home of Abbe Baum for Passover week by Mr. Ladenburg of the New York banking firm of Ladenburg Thalmann. They became close friends of Dave Baum who was their own age, and after returning to England, corresponded with him. Many years later Edwin became Sir Edwin Montague, Viceroy of India. This story may be partly apocryphal, since there were many Montagues in England who stemmed from the famous English family. But we always heard about the boys, and it is certain that the visit of two English Montague boys is a genuine family memory.

Shortly before the new synagogue was completed, Abbe Baum passed away in his 74th year. The funeral cortege passed the synagogue on 82d Street, whose doors were opened in an honor reserved exclusively for a revered and distinguished member of the community. We were told that hundreds of leaders and commonfolk walked behind the coffin. I believe the services were held in the adjoining religious school rooms, since they may not be held in a synagogue proper. I remember the loud lamentations of the Rev. Dr. Peikes, and the soft soothing tones of the Rev. H. Pereira Mendes of the Spanish-



## WE REMEMBER: THE BAUM-CROHN-WEBSTER FAMILY 1842-2000

Portuguese Synagogue. So passed away Abbe Baum, leader and father in Israel. The Hebrew Standard of June 13, 1902, said of him, "In the death of Abbe Baum, one of the landmarks of old-time Judaism has passed. His home was a true haven of Jewish hospitality. His love of education was illustrated by the fact that all his children became members of professions. Dr. Mendes spoke eloquently of the lessons taught by the deceased, and the salutary effect on the community which his ideal example afforded."

**I**srael Baum was born in 1831, married **Lena Crohn** in 1861, and died in 1896. They had fifteen children. What little we know about his life also comes from the 1964 Family Book. He was the chief pioneer of the family and dared blaze new trails; dynamic, aggressive, and imbued with initiative. He was also exceedingly intelligent, and unlike his two brothers, had a keen business sense. In 1848 he and Abbe went to California by way of Panama (crossing on foot or by horse and wagon) for the Gold Rush, but returned to New York in 1851. In California they set up a successful store in Sacramento and sent gold nuggets back home. They soon established other stores, including one in Virginia City, Montana.



Israel and his family went to western Pennsylvania during the Civil War (in 1863, according to his granddaughter Leona Schlein). They settled in Oil City where they also opened a store. They also owned an oil well. The 1870 census has Israel living in Oil City with his immediate family: his wife Lena, his mother-in-law Ernestine, his daughters Gertrude, Amelia and Rebecca, and Morris Crown.

Sometime after 1870 Israel and Joseph went to Central City, Colorado. The family annals are confusing, because Theodore Crohn and his brother Marcus were also in Colorado at this time. The Crohns had a dry goods store called "Crohn & Hall, Temple of Fashion" – Hall being their non-Jewish partner. Israel was probably a partner or perhaps had another store of his own.

## THE SAGA OF AN AMERICAN JEWISH FAMILY



*The Crohn and Baum 'Temple of Fashion' in Central City, about 1870.*

At any rate, we know that the store burned down and Israel was left nearly penniless, supposedly due to his brother Joe's failure to insure the store properly. However, Israel's credit was so good that H. B. Claflin, the famous wholesale concern, wired him an offer of unlimited credit.

It is certain, however, that Israel also had a store in Virginia City, Montana. His grandson, Milton Levine, visited there and had a picture of the store.

Israel left Colorado after the fire, and once back in New York decided to establish stores in Texas. How and why he chose Texas is another puzzle, although we do know that his wife's cousins, Hyman and Meyer Crown (English version of Crohn) had settled there. In short order, Israel had stores in Rockdale, Waco, Palestine, Jefferson and Texarkana, very small towns even today. His customers were the cotton farmers who bought goods on credit and paid when the crops were harvested. Israel prospered, and later sent to New York for his two brothers-in-law, Theodore and Marcus Crohn, who by that time had also returned from Colorado.

The following credit rating appeared in the *Palestine Daily* of May 16, 1891:

"Marcus Crohn, member of the firm of Baum & Crohn Bros. of Rockdale, bought out H. Ash\*. They were in business in Jefferson, Texas at one time, also in Central City, Colorado, where he burned out: loss \$50,000, insurance \$15,000; the firm in Rockdale failed at one time: stock valued at \$20,000 (shoes \$5000); insurance \$15,000. Merchandise indebtedness \$1000, outstandings \$7000, fully secured; rent \$1200 per annum; owns two small farms valued at \$1500; intends to go out of business October, have just issued a printed circular to that effect."



One of Israel's daughters received a grim reminder of those days in Texas – a gold watch belong to Isaac Crown, a cousin who lost his life in a hotel fire in Rockdale, which had been burned to a crisp. He was buried in the small Jewish cemetery in Rockdale.

Israel made the long trip to New York every year to buy merchandise and visit his wife, Lena, resulting in a new baby at regular intervals. Aunt Lena had married at 16 and already had four children (1862-1865) by the time she was 20. She gave birth to fifteen children, but we only know about the seven who lived to maturity. Many of the children died early, mainly from children's diseases that are considered preventable or curable today. In one tragic winter she lost five children – three of them in a single week – from scarlet fever, and two more shortly afterward. How she must have struggled, caring for such a large brood while her husband was away earning a livelihood in Texas!

When Israel Baum died, his body was brought (perhaps from Texas) to the Webster home in New York, and thence to the cemetery.

\* H. Ash is buried in the Jewish Cemetery, Palestine, Texas.

*(The 1880 census has Israel and Lena living at 109 East 111th Street in Manhattan. Gertrude, Amalia, Rebecca, Daisy, Teresa, David and Eva are listed as living at home. Israel is not listed separately as living in Texas. The last three children listed in the census were obviously among the eight who did not live to maturity but succumbed to childhood diseases. Lena also lived in Texas after Esther was born, and Esther's childhood was spent there. EK)*

**Geneshe 'Lena' Baum:** Stately and aristocratic, Lena was born in 1844, married Jacob Webster (Goldie Baum's brother) at Hyams Hall on Mott Street, New York, in 1863, and died in 1923. She was bright and affable, like her brothers. The Webster household on Lexington Avenue and 94th Street, with its nine children, was a happy one. See the Webster chapter for more details.

**Joseph Baum:** According to the 1964 edition of *We Remember: Saga of the Baum-Webster Family Tree 1842-1964*, "One brother of Abbe and Israel remains an enigma. His name was Joseph. That he was a ne'er-do-well who loved to gamble is a well known fact. He is said to have gone to Colorado, then to Texas (probably Corsicana) where he married a Miss Lasker and sired a large family. His children's names were David, Eva, Gertrude, Millie, Corinne and Louis. We wish we knew more about them, but unfortunately we've lost track."

Joseph was born in 1847 and died in 1914. He joined his brother Israel in Colorado in the 1870s and was apparently associated with the store in Virginia City, Montana. He lived in Rockdale, Texas during the 1880s; his son Louis was born there in 1888. Joseph is buried in the Hebrew Cemetery in Corsicana, a town in which he had lived for many years and where he was a merchant.

According to Corsicana cemetery records, he married Bettie Shwartz (who is also buried there) and she was the mother of his six children. The fact that their son David's middle name was Lasker might have been the cause of the confusion as to Bettie's maiden name. There are no Laskers mentioned in the Corsicana cemetery records.

Bettie (Shwartz) Baum was born in Texas in 1859. Her father, Aron, had immigrated directly to Galveston, then moved to Brenham and later to Corsicana. He married Caroline Zander of New York on October 30, 1856. The family was well-established and wealthy; Aron was a founder of the Corsicana Hebrew Cemetery.

Bettie died at the age of 31.

**Amelia Baum (Zeman)** had a brilliant mind and a sparkling personality: she was outspoken, outgoing and outstanding. She married Nathan Zeman (Zemansky) and survived him by many years.

Later, Amelia moved into Manhattan from Brooklyn where her grandnieces and nephews loved to visit her – she would describe the New York City of her childhood and sing the songs of a bygone era which she remembered word for word. Her stories fascinated us, and one of them was particularly memorable. When her father was a small boy in Poland, she told us, the village got news that the French Army was coming. All the village's young men were at the front, for this was 1812, so the boys and old men, armed with pickaxes, went to the town's border to defend it. But Napoleon and his army never arrived; they were on their way to Moscow.

Another wonderful true story was about her childhood in New York, where she attended a school that overlooked the old Tombs Prison. The children were told to stay home from school whenever a prisoner was going to be hung in the prison yard. We used to love to hear her tell about the day that Central Park was officially opened. She kept us spellbound.

She was a great 'mixer'. Her grandson, Fred, recalls their four-month Grand Tour of Europe: she talked with all and sundry, but especially with men in uniform – any kind of uniform. She loved them!



**Amelia Baum Zeman**