

# The Blatstein Family

**Prepared for:** *[retracted]*

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## **Introduction**

This report will begin with the client's grandfather, *[retracted]*, and work backwards from him in a discussion of his maternal line, the Blatstein family. As the report will work backward in time, the same records may be discussed multiple times within the report.

The Blatsteins were an immigrant Jewish family, born with Yiddish names that were Anglicized on US records. This report will begin with the Blatstein family's 'American' names, but as their Yiddish names come to light through discussion of earlier records, this report will reference both their American and Yiddish names.

## **Information Provided by Client**

*[retracted]*

## **Research Goal**

This report details the Blatstein family of Philadelphia, with specific research dedicated to discovering where the family originated prior to immigrating to the United States.

## **Research Restrictions**

Apart from search results obtained through researching on JewishGen.org, more comprehensive research into records from Ukraine was not conducted. Further research should be conducted on site in Ukraine by researchers familiar with the Ukrainian cities specified in this report, as well as Jewish genealogy and history in the region.

## **Grandfather [retracted]**

[retracted] was born in Philadelphia in [retracted] to Emanuel Weinberg and Fannie Blatstein. He appears in the 1925 New York State Census,<sup>1</sup> the 1930 federal census,<sup>2</sup> and the 1940 federal census,<sup>3</sup> all of which provide his parents' names as Emanuel and Fannie, and he appears in the US Social Security Application and Claims Index,<sup>4</sup> in which his parents are provided as Emanuel Weinberg and Fannie Blatstein.

## **Great Grandmother Fannie Blatstein**

Based on information given in the 1930 and 1940 federal censuses in which Fannie appears with her husband Emanuel and her son [retracted], Fannie would have been born in about 1900. Indeed, a 25 year old Fannie Blatstein appears in the 1920 federal census in Philadelphia living in the household of her brother, Marcus and his family, in addition to their mother, Sarah.<sup>5</sup> The 1920 census indicates that Fannie had arrived in the US five years prior, in 1915. This year, however, is proven untrue when Fannie is located in the 1910 federal census in Philadelphia with her parents, Samuel and Sarah, and two other brothers, David and Rudolph.<sup>6</sup> The 1910 census indicates that Fannie arrived in 1907, and this date is closer to the immigraton dates stated in other records, such as the 1925 New York state census in which she reports she arrived in 1905, and the 1930 Federal Census, which states 1907. Thus, it is likely that Fannie arrived sometime around 1907 rather than 1915.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1910 census, Fannie and her family were living at 214 Fitzwater Street in Philadelphia with six other families. By the 1920 census, when Fannie and her mother Sarah are living with her brother Marcus, Sarah reports she is a widow, meaning Samuel, Fannie's father, had died sometime between 1910 and 1920.

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Archives; Albany, New York; State Population Census Schedules, 1925; Election District: 04; Assembly District: 01; City: Thompson; County: Sullivan; Page: 8

<sup>2</sup> 1930 US Federal Census, Population Schedule; Monticello, Sullivan, New York; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 0034; FHL microfilm: 2341387

<sup>3</sup> 1940 US Federal Census, Population Schedule; Monticello, Sullivan, New York; Roll: m-t0627-0270; Page: 4B; Enumeration District: 53-41

<sup>4</sup> [retracted]

<sup>5</sup> 1920 US Federal Census, Population Schedule; Philadelphia Ward 5, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Roll: T625\_1618; Page: 4A; Enumeration District: 132

<sup>6</sup> 1910 US Federal Census, Population Schedule; Philadelphia Ward 3, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Roll: T624\_1387; Page: 25A; Enumeration District: 0046; FHL microfilm: 1375400

<sup>7</sup> It is not unusual for misinformation to be provided in censuses; this was a common occurrence depending on who the information was provided by.

## The Blatstein Family

Indeed, Samuel Blatstein did pass away within this range of years: his death certificate is dated June 1 1917.<sup>8</sup> Samuel died of the influenza, and the death certificate is witnessed by his son, Rudolph. The address Rudolph gives for himself - 1623 S. 8th St - corresponds with the address he presents on his World War I Draft Registration Card,<sup>9</sup> dated just one month after the death of his father. On it, he indicates he is the sole provider of his widowed mother.

Samuel's death certificate provides other important details; most incredibly, the names of his parents: Mendel and Shendle<sup>10</sup> Blatstein: names that will reappear later in this research.

His death certificate also indicates where Samuel is buried: at Mt. Lebanon Cemetery, in Darby Township, just southwest of Philadelphia. His tombstone, however, is engraved as "Simon" rather than "Samuel",<sup>11</sup> and this is not the only discrepancy in his name: his son Marcus' death certificate indicates his father's name was "Sydney".<sup>12</sup> These varying names indicate that Samuel (or Simon, or Sydney) likely was not known to his family or his community by any of these names, but rather retained his original Yiddish name, and the name that appears in Hebrew on his tombstone: Simcha.

In fact, the 1910 federal census indicates that Simcha did not speak English at all. The census indicates that he worked as a peddler of merchandise (his death certificate specifically states 'dry goods'); Simcha likely sold his sundries on the street or going door to door. Peddling was a typical profession taken up by Jewish immigrants during this time period and, though an unglamorous and perhaps lonely profession, peddling had the potential to propel poverty-stricken immigrant families into the middle class within one or two generations. This is evidenced by Simcha's 21 year old son David who, in the 1910 census, also indicated he worked as a peddler. It is unclear if David worked alongside his father or on his own account; regardless, over the next 20 years David was able to open his own dry goods store and purchase a house for his family.<sup>13</sup>

Simcha's wife, Sarah, was a widow for the next 16 years until her death in 1933.<sup>14</sup> As previously stated, Sarah took up residence with her son Marcus' family (along with her daughter Fannie) by

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<sup>8</sup> Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission; Harrisburg, PA; Pennsylvania (State). Death Certificates, 1906-1968; Certificate Number Range: 069621-072920

<sup>9</sup> U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "Rudolph S. Blatstein".

<sup>10</sup> "Shendle" is undoubtedly the Yiddish/Hebrew name "Shaindel".

<sup>11</sup> Available here: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/180848046/simon-blatstein>

<sup>12</sup> Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission; Harrisburg, PA; Pennsylvania (State). Death Certificates, 1906-1968; Certificate Number Range: 001001-004000

<sup>13</sup> 1930 US Federal Census, Population Schedule, Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 0374; FHL microfilm: 2341841

<sup>14</sup> Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission; Harrisburg, PA; Pennsylvania (State). Death Certificates, 1906-1968; Certificate Number Range: 089001-092000

1920. By 1925, Sarah can be found living with her daughter Fannie's family in Monticello, NY, and on her 1933 death certificate it states her place of residence as 3115 W. Morris Street in Philadelphia. This address is also the address of the witness to her death certificate, a Samuel Blattstein. Samuel doesn't appear with the family in the 1910 census (the last census the family appears together before Simcha's death), but based on his witnessing of Sarah's death, it would indicate he may be another child of Simcha and Sarah. Adding Samuel to the list of children would total Simcha and Sarah's number of children to five, and this is corroborated by the 1910 census in which Sarah states she is the mother of five living children. All children except for Samuel appear in the censuses with their parents at some point:

- Marcus (born about 1882) takes in his mother and sister Fannie who with him and his family in the 1920 census after Simcha's death
- David (born about 1889) lives with his parents and siblings Rudolph and Fannie in the 1910 census
- Rudolph (born about 1891) lives with his parents and siblings David and Fannie in the 1910 census
- Fannie (born about 1895) lives with her parents and brothers David and Rudolph in the 1910 census, and lives with her brother Marcus' family with her mother in the 1920 census

Although Samuel never appears on a US record with his family apart from Sarah's death certificate, his name does come up in a foreign record and is a key clue in tracing the family in Russia, which will be discussed later in this report.

Sarah's 1933 death certificate also supplies another crucial bit of information: the names of her parents, which are given as Joseph and Sophie Sgood. The surname 'Sgood' is corroborated elsewhere: Marcus' death certificate indicates his mother's maiden name was 'Good', and Rudolph's marriage record indicates her maiden name as 'Zgood'.<sup>15</sup>

## **Tracing the Family to Russia**

### *David and Rudolph*

The first clue as to where the family emigrated from is found in David's Petition for Naturalization. David states that he was born in "Vozonsenek, Russia" and that he arrived at the port of Baltimore on April 13, 1906.<sup>16</sup> Two Blatsteins did indeed arrive at Baltimore on that date:

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<sup>15</sup> Ohio, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1774-1993. 23 March 1920, "Rudolph S. Blatt".

<sup>16</sup> "Pennsylvania, Eastern District Petitions for Naturalization, 1795-1931," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-G58F-988F?cc=1913395&wc=M6BH-ZNL%3A196774701> :

19 year old David and his 17 year old brother, Rachmiel - undoubtedly Rudolph's true Yiddish name.<sup>17</sup> On the passenger list, David and Rachmiel indicate that they came from "Wozniensk" and that their contact in the US was their brother Markus (Marcus), who lived at 448 4th Street in Philadelphia. Interestingly, there is another Blatstein family arriving on the same ship: a woman and her children, going to live with her husband "Heymann" (Hyman) Blatstein, living at the same address as Marcus. More research into Hyman Blatstein reveals he is likely closely related to this Blatstein family, if not Simcha's brother. This will be discussed later in the report.

### *Marcus*

Marcus was listed as David and Rudolph's US point of contact, indicating he had arrived before the rest of his family - a fact corroborated by census data, in which he claims he arrived in 1904/1905 - earlier than the dates reported by David and Rudolph (1906), and Simcha, Sarah, and Fannie (1907). There is a record for a Mordko Blatstein arriving at Baltimore in March 1905<sup>18</sup>, and the address of his US point of contact is proof that 'Mordko' was, in fact, Marcus: the address is 448 N. 4th Street, the same address given by David and Rudolph as Marcus' address when they arrived a year later. The point of contact that Marcus gives is supposedly a cousin, 'Jozef Greenberg'. In the 1900 census, a Joseph Greenberg and family are found at the same address provided (448 N 4th Street) - undoubtedly the same man.<sup>19</sup> Further research is required to determine how Jozef is related to the Blatstein family.

Mordko (Marcus) is accompanied by a man he claims is his uncle: Chajm Blatstein. This Chajm could possibly be the husband of the woman who traveled a year later on the same ship as David and Rudolph: she indicated her husband's name was "Heymann" or Hyman, a common Anglicization of the Yiddish name Chaim or Chajm.

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16 September 2019), 1928, Petition nos. 090295-090780 > image 1202 of 1472; citing NARA microfilm publication M1522 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>17</sup> "Maryland, Baltimore Passenger Lists, 1820-1948," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89S8-2CPD?cc=2018318&wc=MKZW-HZ9%3A1004778001%2C1004781801> : 20 May 2014), 1891-1948 (NARA T844) > 53 - Apr 1, 1906-apr 30, 1906 > image 448 of 814; citing NARA microfilm publications M255, M596 and T844 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>18</sup> "Maryland, Baltimore Passenger Lists Index, 1897-1952," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9BY-TQ6L-3?cc=3398454> : 16 March 2020), > image 1 of 1; citing NARA microfilm publication T520 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1956).

<sup>19</sup> "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-6S39-Z8S?cc=1325221&wc=9BQY-82Z%3A1030550501%2C1036056801%2C1036121001> : 5 August 2014), Pennsylvania > Philadelphia > ED 204 Philadelphia city Ward 12 > image 3 of 27; citing NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

## *Samuel*

Further research into passenger lists reveals more details about the mystery brother who appears on Sarah's 1933 death certificate: Samuel. It appears he was the first son to set sail for America. On October 20, 1904, a 21 year old "Schmerel Bladstein" arrived at the port of Baltimore from "Woznesiensk", coming to see his uncle, Josef Greenberg who lived at 214 South Front Street.<sup>20</sup> Although the address is different than what Marcus provided and where this Joseph Greenberg lived in the 1900 census, the hometown of Woznesiensk is an indicator that this Schmerel is likely related and probably the son of Simcha and Sarah.

## *Fannie, Simcha, and Sarah*

The last members of the Blatstein family to arrive in Philadelphia were Fannie and her parents. In 1907, the ship S.S. Merron sailing from Liverpool arrived at the port of Philadelphia carrying Simche, Chaje, and an 11 year old Feiga.<sup>21</sup> They gave their hometown as "Woznesnek" and indicated that their contacts in the US were Simche and Chaje's four sons living at 213 Fitzwater Street in Philadelphia: Schmuel, Markus, David, and Rachmiel. This address also matches with the address the family gave in the 1910 federal census: 214 Fitzwater Street. Thus, this passenger list unequivocally links every Blatstein family member together.

## **Voznesensk: The Blatstein Hometown**

Each passenger list of the Blatstein family had one fact in common: the name of the town they emigrated from. Passenger lists and David's naturalization papers each gave different spellings of what was undoubtedly the same town; "Woznesnek", "Woznesiensk", "Vozonsensk", and "Wozniensk": all iterations of modern day Voznesensk, Ukraine. Roughly 90 miles north of Odessa, Voznesensk had been inhabited by Jews since the early 19th century, who constituted a significant portion of the total population in the early 20th century.<sup>22</sup> How long the Blatstein family lived in Voznesensk, however, is questionable.

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<sup>20</sup> "Maryland, Baltimore Passenger Lists, 1820-1948," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L9S8-2GQD?cc=2018318&wc=MKZW-82S%3A1004778001%2C1004779401> : 25 September 2015), 1891-1948 (NARA T844) > 43 - Sep 2, 1904-Oct 20, 1904 > image 390 of 433; citing NARA microfilm publications M255, M596 and T844 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>21</sup> "Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Passenger Lists, 1883-1945," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GP1C-9DPM?cc=1921481&wc=M616-NTG%3A214204301> : 21 May 2014), 058 - v. 100, Jul 1, 1907-Jul 31, 1907 > image 101 of 604; citing NARA microfilm publication T840 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>22</sup> "Voznesensk." Jewish Virtual Library. Available at: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/voznensensk>

## Roots in Kinets'pil?

A number of sources point to the fact that the family may not have been in Voznesensk for more than one generation. First, there is an 1883 birth record in Nikolayev<sup>23</sup> for a baby named Schmerel, born to a 'Simkha' and 'Khaya-Sara' 'Blatshtain'.<sup>24</sup> Based on the three names - Schmerel, Simkha, and Khaya-Sarah, it seems highly likely that these are Samuel, Simcha, and Sarah. While it cannot be unequivocally proven that these three people are the same, the birth record does include one hint: it notes the father's town as 'Kanispolsk'.

While not Voznesensk, this town appears in other forms on Blatstein records. For example, the uncle Chajm Blattstein with whom Marcus arrives in the US with (and whose wife and children travel on the same ship as David and Rudolph) indicates on his declaration of intention for naturalization that he is from Kanispol. Five years later, in his final papers, he indicates he is from Voznesensk, which indicates that his family lived in both towns.<sup>25</sup> His birth date, of about 1866, would make him the right age to be Simcha's brother.

In addition, in speaking with another descendant of the Blatstein family from Voznesensk it was discovered that her ancestor, Vigdor Blatstein, who later moved to Kishinev,<sup>26</sup> indicated on one of his children's birth records that he was from "Kontsepol". The record also indicates that Vigdor's father's name was Mendel, as does Simcha's death certificate, indicating that perhaps Vigdor and Simcha were also brothers.

"Kaniskpolsk", "Kontsepol", and "Kanispol" are all likely modern day Kinets'pil, a small village outside of Pervomais'k, about 45 miles north of Voznesensk.

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<sup>23</sup> Modern day Mikolaiv, 55 miles south of Voznesensk

<sup>24</sup> Available in Russian and Hebrew here: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS9L-5WH7>

<sup>25</sup> "Pennsylvania, Eastern District Petitions for Naturalization, 1795-1931," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPTZ-79J2?cc=1913395&wc=M6B4-RP8%3A195908901:27> March 2018), 1915, Petition nos. 019751-020140 > image 717 of 865; citing NARA microfilm publication M1522 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

<sup>26</sup> Modern Day Chisinau Moldova