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Hyman Winer, Jewish Peddler in Meigs County, Tennessee

compiled by Stewart Lillard and Sanford T. Winer

Foreword
by Sanford T. Winer

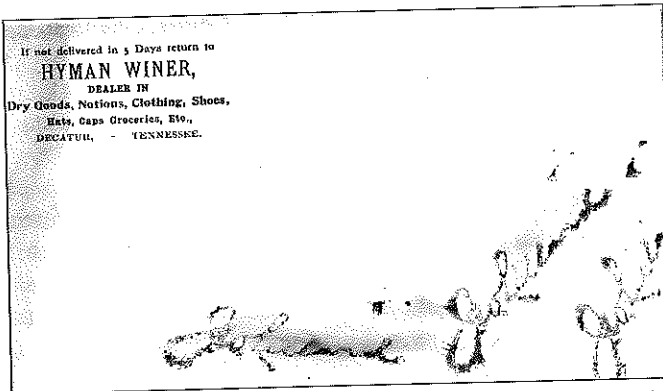
Everything is coincidence! Nothing is coincidence! I don't know. I was talking with Stewart Lillard at our fiftieth Chattanooga "City" High School reunion [October 2008]. When I casually asked him what he was doing, he told me he was writing about Meigs County. Small world! I told him my grandfather first lived in Meigs County after immigrating to the United States from Latvia in the 1890s. Stewart looked at me and said, "Hyman Winer."

How did he know? How could he know? It turns out that Stewart's grandfather was the postmaster for Decatur, the

county seat of Meigs County, in the 1890s. His grandfather had envelopes from my grandfather's store. Stewart still has them. Stewart said his family saved everything. I now wish I could say the same. Since both our families lived in Decatur, they had to know each other.

Stewart then suggested this article. Thanks to him I learned much about my family history.

Like millions of other families, the Winer and Prince families (my mother's maiden name was Prince) have grown and prospered. My parents' generation, my generation, and later ones have all benefited because of my grandparents' immigrating to the USA. We have contributed in a variety of ways to the success of the United States. We definitely are living the "American Dream."



Envelope from Hyman Winer business, Decatur, with Lillard name written on it
Courtesy Stewart Lillard

Hyman Winer arrived in Decatur, the county seat of Meigs County, in the 1890s and probably resided, at first, at the B. [Bart] K. Blevins Hotel (rates \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day) on the west side of the court house square.

Hymam arrived as a lonely peddler with a pack on his back. He walked the dirt roads of Meigs County, lodging with residents, and selling necessary items which had been shipped from the large eastern seaboard cities. Isolated farmers appreciated this form of marketing which saved them a day's trip by steamboat from boat landings along the Tennessee River to Chattanooga and back. This early and youthful adventure for Winer was just the beginning of a migratory life change.

According to the Winer family tradition, Hyman was born in Friedrichstadt, a well-established town south of the Dvina [Daugava] River in the old Duchy of Courland. From 1562 until the third partition of Poland in 1795, Courland was a semi-independent duchy linked to Poland but with a prevailing German influence. Today, Friedrichstadt has been renamed Jaunjelgava [Latvian] or [Russian] and is located in the Republic of Latvia.

Herman Rosenthal, also of Friedrichstadt but coming to New York a decade before Winer, recorded that in 1787 Jews in Courland were "tolerated under conditions conducive to the welfare of the country [Russian Empire] and of the respective towns in which they might settle." Jews should "be allowed to have their own schools, houses of prayer, synagogues, cemeteries, and courts for the settlement of

internal disputes." This enlightened position under the reign of Empress Catherine the Great was founded on the principle that Jews had lived in Courland for more than 200 years and should have established a position of trust. Jews, however, were still considered non-Slavic people and denied the same rights as Orthodox Christians. At the end of the eighteenth century the Jews who were protected in Courland "were small traders, peddlers, distillers, and artisans, especially locksmiths and tinsmiths," while in the cities they were "wholesale dealers in dry- and fancy-goods, agents, jewelers, etc."

At the time of Winer's 1892 immigration to the United States, Jews in Courland [Russian Empire] were working in shoe, clothing, and textile factories, in large sewing machine shops, in knitting mills, and in typewriter and bicycle shops. They also found work as shoe makers, barbers, horse-drawn cab drivers, shop keepers (drapers, haberdashers), and hotel keepers. In the literature of the region are references to a popular character, "paunzids," (traveling Jewish peddlers) who, with his bundle, would visit farmsteads to buy flax and at the same time sell cloth, sewing needles, notions, and household articles. Family tradition holds that the Winer family members were flax merchants.



Courland Jew, Russian Empire, 1855

Overall, the Jewish population of Courland in 1891 was estimated to be 42,776, about 7.3% of the total population. Several years later, the All Russian Census of 1897 officially recorded 51,072 Jews living in Courland. Courland, moreover, was the only German speaking Gubernia [Province] in the Russian Empire up to the 1890s. Even today, "a very large and old [Jewish] cemetery still exists" filled with tombstones engraved with lions and birds and Hebrew script.

Why, then, did Jewish people flee the region en masse at the end of the nineteenth century?

At first, during the reigns of Catherine the Great and later Alexander I, Jews received favorable consideration by the government. Yet, under the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855) the conditions changed for the worst. In 1855, the Kurlandskya Gubernskie Vedomost (Courland Provincial Department) listed 363 Jewish names for Friedrichstadt who were "Passlosen" (Jews without lawful permit). Then, during Nicholas I's Crimean War with Turkey and European powers (1853-1856), the Russian Government compiled lists under the military conscription policy, whereby men 15 years of age (sometimes 12 years of age) could be recruited into the army for 25-year terms to serve as basic soldiers against the enemies' cannon fire. Jewish men were recruited heavily.

Following the Crimean War, the Russian serfs were emancipated in 1861 by Emperor Alexander II. The result was a competition between the newly freed serfs and the poorer Jewish tradesmen for the few jobs available.

At the end of the American Civil War (1865), Jewish organizations for the aid of "needy immigrants" developed around the Eastern ports, especially New York City, which by 1872, had a Jewish population of "seventy-thousand, served by twenty-nine synagogues."

Then all kinds of events sent fear and reactionary thoughts through the members of the imperial family in Russia. Several attempts were made on the life of Alexander II: Karakozov, 1866; Soloviev, 1879; the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) in 187; the explosion under the Winter Palace dining room in 1880; and finally the actual assassination plot on 13 March (1 March old style) 1881. The assassination caused an end to reforms; the assassination also renewed pogroms and legislation to rid Russia of Jews.

Konstantin Pobedonostsev, early teacher for the new Emperor Alexander III, made anti-Semitic statements, as the Procurator of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, from 1881 to 1905. Pogroms against Jews and the May laws of 1882, which deprived any Jew from holding an administrative office, were only two of the reasons that approximately 225,000 Jews left Russian and emigrated to Eastern Europe during the 1880s.

Again in October 1888, tragedy struck the royal family of Alexander III. This was the "miraculous escape" of the imperial family in the railroad accident near Borki east of St. Petersburg. "Of the fifteen cars of the imperial train only five remained intact." "Fifty-eight persons were injured, twenty-one fatally." While the Emperor regarded the escape of himself and immediate family as a "direct and miraculous intervention of Providence," in reality the derailling had been

precipitated by an order by Alexander III himself to run the train at twice the safe speed for the condition of the tracks.

When in 1890 a high court official submitted a report to the Emperor "describing the sufferings of the Jews" who had been expelled from the main cities of the empire to live within the Jewish Pale of Settlements (parts of central Poland, Belorussia, most of Ukraine, and Bessarabia [Moldova]), Alexander III "penned on the margin of the report, "But we must not forget that it was the Jews who crucified our Lord and spilled his priceless blood."

As Russia repressed the Jewish community, Western Europe feared the outcome of a huge immigration to their communities. In December of 1890, a meeting was held and well attended in the Guildhall of the City of London to plead with the Russian Emperor for a cessation of the "inhuman treatment of the Jews." In the United States, the House of Representatives adopted a resolution on August 20, 1890, requesting that President Benjamin Harrison "communicate . . . any information in his possession concerning the enforcement of proscriptive edicts against the Jews of Russia."

The president complied and the House of Representatives resolved "that our sorrow is intensified by the fact that such occurrences should happen in a country which has been, and now is, a firm friend of the United States, and in a nation that clothed itself with glory, not long since, by the emancipation of its serfs and by its defense of helpless Christians from the oppression of the Turks [Bulgaria]." The U.S. House had internal reasons for appealing to the Russian government, that of the flood of 200,000 new immigrants who rushed to America over a ten year period at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the spring of 1891, President Harrison addressed Congress on the plight of the Jewish people within the Russian Empire. "The immigration of these people to the United States . . . is largely increasing, and is likely to assume proportions which may make it difficult to find homes and employment for them here and to seriously affect the labor market," adding "It is estimated that over 1,000,000 will be forced from Russia within a few years." Finally, senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress expressed "sympathy for the Russian Hebrews in their present condition. . . ." By May of 1892, the flight of Jews from Russia to North and South America "had reached its climax." Huge masses of refugees flocked to Berlin, Hamburg, Antwerp, and London seeking transfer to the United States, Argentina, Palestine, and other locations.

Between 1881 and 1900 it is estimated that about 600,000 Russian and Roumanian [Rumanian] Jews entered the United States swelling the Jewish population to more than a million. The Ellis Island Immigration Station officially opened in New York City on January 1, 1892. In the first year nearly 450,000 immigrants from many countries and ethnic backgrounds passed through that facility.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Russian Empire suffered a terrible famine along the Volga provinces from 1891-1892. Three million persons suffered, and 700,000 died. The suffering and death were intensified by an outbreak of

cholera in 1892, followed by social troubles. The Russian Empire simply could not feed and support its population.

To answer the lingering question as to the location of Hyman Winer's immigration record, or to the exact date and port of embarkation, it must be stated that no such record has been found. The Ellis Island website does have a "Hy Winer" with a date of arrival in the USA as January 11, 1896. But, the 1896 entry date and his age of 24 years does not agree with the U.S. Census information for 1900—Tennessee, Meigs County, Decatur. Another "Israel Winer" is recorded on the Hamburger Passagierlisten (1850-1934) as having arrived 10 January 1892, but he was born in 1864 and traveled with a family.

The real problem arises with the Russian laws that required a Jew to have a given first name, a patronymic suggesting his father's name, and a "family" name relating to his trade or occupation. In Courland, Winer had a Hebrew name of "Azrail" [phonetic] which could have had many ways of being written in the German, Russian, or Hebrew languages. Family tradition suggests a family name of "Vanahr" [phonetic]. So, this immigrant may have had a Courland name of **Azrail Vanahr**; and we have no way of knowing how the scribe or police clerk composed these Hebrew names in the necessary documentation!

For someone leaving Courland, a document was needed; but upon arrival at the port of embarkation, "for a fee" it was possible to get such a document from the gendarmes (police) stationed on the quay two days prior to the ship's sailing. Winer, furthermore, may simply have given incorrect information to prevent his being identified and his family harassed. He was born in 1869. At the time of his emigration Winer was about 23 years of age. He had married Minnareval [Minna Reval ?] Yankelovitz [Yankelowitz?] before he left Courland. Minnie Yankelovitz made the passage to the U.S. in 1894, two years after Hyman.

The exodus from the Russian Empire was an experience followed by many Southern U.S. peddlers and shopkeepers. Aaron and Reba Bronson arrived in Concordia, West Tennessee. Jennie Nachamson came first to Baltimore from Lithuania and then to Eastern North Carolina. A little earlier in the 1850s Lazarus Straus and wife arrived in Talbottom, Georgia. Others included the Rich family in Atlanta, the Thalhimers in Richmond, the Godchaux family in New Orleans and the founders of Neiman-Marcus in Dallas, Harry Phillips in Dumas, Arkansas, Jacob Kantor in Greenwood, Mississippi, Joe Goldberg in Belzoni, Mississippi, and David Poliakoff, an immigrant from Russia who established Poliakoff's Department Store in Abbeville, S.C., in 1900. Estimates suggest that between 1881 and 1924 some 2,800,000 Jews crowded into the Eastern cities of the U.S. A small portion of this new population pushed into the Southern states. Only Virginia, Florida, and Tennessee had between 1% and 2% Jewish populations; other Southern states had below 1%. Tennessee's Jewish life centered in the four main cities of Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville and Chattanooga.

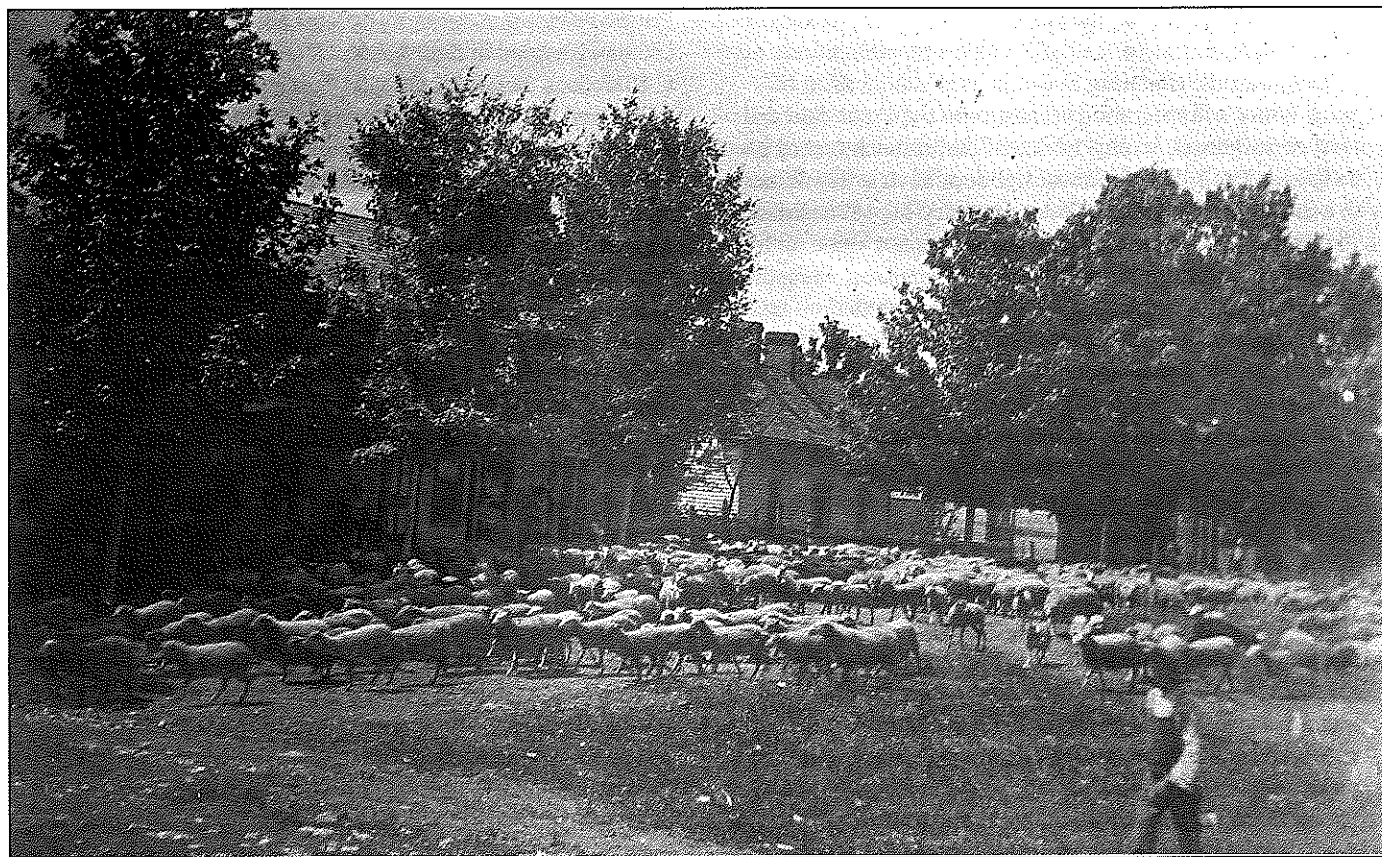
Hyman Winer (his American name) was one member of this Russian Jewish immigration. He was born in

Friedrichstadt in Courland [Russian Empire] in February 1869 and arrived in the USA in 1892, according to the 1900 U.S. Census for Meigs County, Tennessee. He was 23 years of age and married when he arrived. Actually, the first documented evidence of his residency in Meigs County was the March 1899 issue [Vol. 124] of Dun and Bradstreet's *Mercantile Reference Book* where he was listed as operating a general store in Decatur. In the 1938 *Golden Book of B'nai Zion Congregation*, Hyman Winer affirmed that he came to this country in 1892. The 1910 U.S. Census, however, recorded that Hyman Winer was born "about 1868" in Russia; and the family-constructed obituary in the *Chattanooga Times* (1946) recorded his birthday as September 2, 1869, and his arrival in the USA as 1892. Then, the 1930 U.S. Census recorded that Hyman [Hymen] Winer immigrated to the United States in 1898. Perhaps, the family member giving the census officer the information simply was unsure of the exact date, or the census officer misunderstood what was said.

According to Ruth Scheinberg's oral research on Jewish peddlers in the South, Halman and Reuben Blumberg of Chattanooga were established businessmen who traveled regularly "to the docks of New York City to meet young men getting off the boats from Europe." "There [they] solicited them to come to [their] town, offering paid [rail] transportation." "When they arrived, [the Blumbergs] would supply them with a stock of merchandise to begin selling immediately." Perhaps, the Blumbergs also assigned a territory of work to the new arrivals. (The 1900 Census for Hamilton County, and Chattanooga, lists "H. Bloomburg" of 46 years, living in Ward 5, who had been born in Poland and who immigrated to the USA in 1886. In Chattanooga he had a wife Cora and seven children, one of whom was named Ruben.)

Scheinberg's oral history project taken from interviews with Winer family members in the 1980s, recorded that Hyman Winer was "met by HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, 1881-], the organization devoted to helping new immigrants" and that "HIAS advised him to move to the south." In the Chattanooga area Winer "found eight other Russian families recently arrived, as well as several German Jews who had come in an earlier migration and were already ensconced in business life and well established in the community." "The German Jewish merchants supplied Hyman Winer with his first merchandise so that he could immediately begin to peddle."

Winer's assigned territory was Meigs County, a region without a railroad and located along the Tennessee and Hiwassee Rivers. Winer then put the "pekl" [peddler's pack] on his back and traveled by walking or by riverboat until he reached the Meigs County seat of Decatur, a town with a population of 192. He was the sole Yiddish and German speaking Russian Jew in the entire county which then had a population of fewer than 7,491 (1900 Census). When Winer had arrived in the USA in 1892, the unemployment rate was about 3% in the urban industrial areas. Following the depression of 1893, through 1898, the unemployment rate was over 11%. Winer wisely had chosen to come to the



Sheep day in Decatur, c. 1900
Courtesy Stewart Lillard

agricultural South where the economy was not so dependent on urban industry, mills, and overbuilt railroad companies.

One of the first persons whom Hyman Winer may have met in Decatur may have been Jasper Worth Lillard, a young man almost of Winer's same age and recently married, as was Winer who had left his wife in Courland.

Jasper Worth Lillard was the eldest son of Confederate veteran Colonel Newton Jackson Lillard, an early merchant in the town. The Houser & Lillard general store operated during the 1850s on the east side of the courthouse square. Worth Lillard was also an unsuccessful agent for Wanamaker & Brown, of Oak Hill in Philadelphia, one of the country's early department stores. In a letter of February 18, 1889, W. S. Pond of Wanamaker & Brown dictated a stern business letter to J. W. Lillard, a 23 year old beginning store clerk:

"We had hoped that the amount of goods sold by you this season would not be less than \$300.00 or \$400.00—and we much regret that the results have not been up to our expectation or yours. "You will remember that according to the a agreement between us, no commission was to be paid if sales should fall below \$60.00 worth net. Your sales thus far have not reached that amount, and we trust you will make every effort to sell the balance necessary as you are not entitled to any commission, nor can we consider furnishing our superb Spring line unless this is done."
[Letter in possession of Stewart Lillard.]

Following his failure as a clothing salesman for the Wanamaker & Brown firm, Worth Lillard attended Cumberland Law School in Lebanon, Tennessee, where he graduated in 1890. He then rented a space in the north-east first floor room of the Meigs County Court House building in Decatur and attempted to attract clients and establish himself. He also sold agricultural implements to nearby farmers. After his marriage to Lettie Jane Stewart on October 28, 1891, Worth and his bride lived in Lillard's father's home behind the Goodfield Baptist Church (reconstituted as First Baptist Church in the 1940s) at the northeast edge of the Decatur town limits, in a two- story white house built by Colonel N. J. "Newt" Lillard. N. J. Lillard was residing in Creston, Ashe County, North Carolina, during the 1890s helping to manage his deceased father-in-law's wagon business and general store in the North Carolina mountain region.

Decatur in 1892, with its population of fewer than 200, was a place where everyone knew each other, many for generations. It is reasonable to suppose that a newly arrived Hyman Winer would have made the acquaintance of a young, inexperienced attorney, such as Worth Lillard, whose business knowledge and community ties would have made him a useful and necessary contact.

Worth Lillard, moreover, was not entirely without "international" acquaintances. Two of his law school classmates had come all the way from the Japanese Empire to study law in central Tennessee at Cumberland Law School [Kumeo Yanow from Tokyo and Keikichi Sugiyama from

Gifukén]. Courland Jews, moreover, were also known from literary and historical writings, for Lillard owned a copy of Robert Sears' *An Illustrated Description of the Russian Empire* (1855), which portrayed a Courland Jew, with dulcimer.

Finally, Worth Lillard used his family political influence in the Democratic Party to garner a political appointment as postmaster at Decatur, July 1893, from Wilson S. Bissell, Postmaster General and law partner to President Grover Cleveland in Buffalo, New York. With what better person could an immigrant peddler have chosen to make an acquaintance than with someone his own age such as Worth Lillard?

Worth and Lettie (Stewart) Lillard quickly settled into a domestic routine, their first child Stewart Lillard being born on 16 August 1892, about the same time that Winer likely started walking the dirt roads of Meigs County with his peddler's pack.

As soon as Winer gathered together his first 25 dollars, he bought himself a horse and wagon. He also sent for his wife Minnareval "Minnie" Yankelovitz from Latvia. Their first child, a son named Herman, was born on October 2, 1895. Then, in 1897, the Lillards and the Winers each bore daughters—Caroline Worth Lillard on September 13 and Rasy (Rasey?) Winer, also in September. Following this 1900 census report, the Winers changed these children's names to Harry and Rose to conform to local American names. They were transforming their German/Yiddish culture to the norm of where they lived.

When Lettie (Stewart) Lillard delivered her first child in 1892, she likely depended on support and care from her mother, Sarah Taff Stewart, who lived only three miles north of Decatur in the old John Stewart Plantation house built in the 1830s, and from her sisters Ella and young Sarah Ann Stewart. In contrast, Minnareval Yankelovitz Winer would have had few intimate friends to turn to and may have traveled to Chattanooga by riverboat during her late pregnancy to stay with a Jewish family (perhaps, Mrs. Wolfe "Dora" Brody on Porter Street) during her final month in order to be with friends, to perform "Mikvah" and to have her son circumcised by a rabbi on the eighth day. Her first son Herman "Harry" listed Chattanooga as the place of his birth on his military draft registration card for World War I.

In 1900, the Winer household in Decatur consisted of a husband, wife, and three small children: Harry (age 5), Rose (age 3), and a newly born Annie (born in Jan. 1900 just in time for the federal census). To help Hyman with his store on the court square and his "peddler" wagon trips throughout the county, Hyman took in a boarder, Oscar Fanburg who was born in August 1879. The U.S. Census of 1910 listed an Oscar Hanbury (Oscar Fanburg) living in Ward 3 of Chattanooga, who had immigrated in 1897 from Russia. He was recently married to Bessie, Hyman Winer's sister and by 1910 had an infant daughter Essie Hanbury (Fanburg). Oscar later moved to Summerville, Chattooga County, Georgia, after 1910 and may have continued to work in Winer's chain of general stores in North Georgia. In 1920, Oscar

Fanburg (Oscar Fosburg) resided with his family in Ward 47 of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These names and spellings illustrate the difficulty of locating names in lists and census records which were compiled by Americans who often misunderstood Yiddish/German accents and thus recorded incorrect spellings.

The second constructed court house for Meigs County burned on the night of April 2, 1902, consuming many of the land deeds and transfers. It is difficult to say when Hyman purchased the two-story white wooden house, with a one-story extended room, that stood on the west side of the Court House Square from the early days of the village until the 1980s. According to the original town plat of Decatur, Winer lived at, and was purchasing, a house on lot 31 with an open space on lot 32, for a sum of \$600.

This store and home may have been the one used by Dr. David A. Gallaher (1834-1893) who moved to Meigs County in 1856. His son, Augustus Gallaher (1867-?) also served as a doctor for the community and practiced general medicine and surgery in the same wooden building as his father. Apparently, the Winers purchased this medical office to be used as a store and home after the death of Dr. David A. Gallaher. Record of this transaction may have been lost in the Court House fire of 1902.

The deed of sale, dated 14 April 1903, between Hyman and Minnie Winer and a purchaser Lillie May Spradling, is the only record of a land purchase or sale by Hyman Winer in Meigs County. (Throughout much of the twentieth century, the house and property belonged to Elijah (Lige) and Sallie Boguess.) The purchase price of \$600 in the mid-1890s (recorded in the Winer family tradition) seems high, if when he sold the same lots 31 and 32 in 1903 he received only \$200 from Robert and Lillie May Spradling. (An economic depression had occurred and Hyman may have needed to sell, thereby taking a loss.)

What is interesting about the registration of the deed is that Minnie Winer signed the 1903 deed with her mark: Minnie (X) Winer. In order for the Meigs County Register to accept the deed as accurate for recording, Minnie Winer had to appear before a notary public in Chattanooga, Ismar Noe, "apart from husband," and "acknowledge the execution of the said instrument [deed of sale] to have been done by her freely, voluntarily, and understandingly, without compulsion or constraint from her said husband and for the purposes therein expressed." In other words, how well did Minnie Winer read and comprehend the English language in 1903, having lived a rather lonely existence in Meigs County for eight years and being bound to her home with the rearing of several small children? From family tradition, we know that Yiddish was her primary language in the home and around the kids.

It is also interesting to note that Ismar Noe of Chattanooga and Lookout Mountain was a Jewish immigrant who had come to the U.S. in 1859. A former German military officer from the Polish town of Breslau (Wroclaw), he married the sister of David Bernard Loveman, the mercantile and clothing businessman. At the time of Minnie Winer's visit to Ismar Noe, he was in his late sixties and grieving

over the loss of his brilliant son, David Bernard Loveman Noa (1878-1901) who had attended the U.S. Naval Academy and who had been killed by Filipino insurgents on the Island of Samar during his first cadet voyage. He was one of Chattanooga's leading businessmen who vouched for Minnie Winer in the role of a notary public.

Initially, upon their arrivals to Meigs County, Hyman and Minnie Winer would have stood out as "foreigners," or "outsiders." But as a merchant who walked the byways selling necessary items to farmers without adequate transportation to a market town, Hyman would have become known and appreciated.

"He went from farm house to farm house until dark. Then he would spend the night by invitation at a farmer's house. He was welcomed into their homes, even often given a choice of bedrooms, since the farmers usually had big rambling houses, large families, and lots of room. Everyone there was anxious to hear news of life outside the farms and waited impatiently to see all his wares, purchasing whatever they could afford. The farmers fed the peddler, but Mr. Winer was most careful in what he ate, since he scrupulously observed kashruth [Jewish dietary laws] and would not eat food that was not kosher [fit to eat]. He had learned to live on eggs, milk and dairy products."

[Scheinberg, "The Pekl," 1980, p. 40]

Jewish peddlers who came into contact with people of the Appalachian culture learned that the Old Testament religious texts common to Judaism were often read in religious services in East Tennessee and that the people felt that Jews would know these texts and how to interpret them. Both recently arrived Jews and local residents who had been in Appalachia for two centuries learned from each other and developed new perceptions.

"Reports are that these travelers [peddlers] were treated very kindly, with much respect by the farmers and their families, and they often point to the fact that the businesses flourished and the peddlers were able to return time and again to the same customers."

[Scheinberg, "The Pekl," 1980, p. 41]

On this point, it may be assumed that young lawyer Worth Lillard may have been asked to draw up the documents and deed of purchase necessary for Winer to have originally obtained lots 31 and 32 on the town square, and the subsequent resale deed to Lillie May Spradling, in 1903.

If Minnie Winer had remained in Decatur for the birth of some of her children, she may have been delivered by Dr. Nathan Absolem Arrants (1858-1938), a friend and neighbor of Worth and Lettie (Stewart) Lillard and a Vanderbilt medical school graduate. Dr. Arrants' wife was named Minnie Myrtle (Reed) Arrants (1863-1931), and they were rearing four children during the 1890s, paralleling the expansion of the Winer family.

Although no social records remain for such a small, rural East Tennessee town, perhaps, after a Sunday dinner, dish washing and rest, late in the afternoon, the Winers would have gathered up the children and strolled up the four blocks to sit in the yard or on the extended porch of the N. J. Lillard house overlooking the Athens Road to the east. They might have amused themselves with conversation about the children or viewed some of the 50 or more stereographs of world travel which Worth Lillard purchased for study and entertainment. The collection contained many black and white photos of archaeological sites in Palestine in the 1880s—slides that could illustrate Biblical texts from both the Torah and the New Testament. These stereographs were produced just before modern civilization altered the ancient landscapes. The set also contained several photos of the Russian Empire, to include a view of Emperor Alexander III reviewing the troops at Easter Tide on the Field of Mars outside the winter palace in St. Petersburg. This was the same emperor from whose pogroms the Winers had fled in 1892 and 1894.

Before the Winers moved in April 1903, they had a fourth child, Fannie, born in 1902.

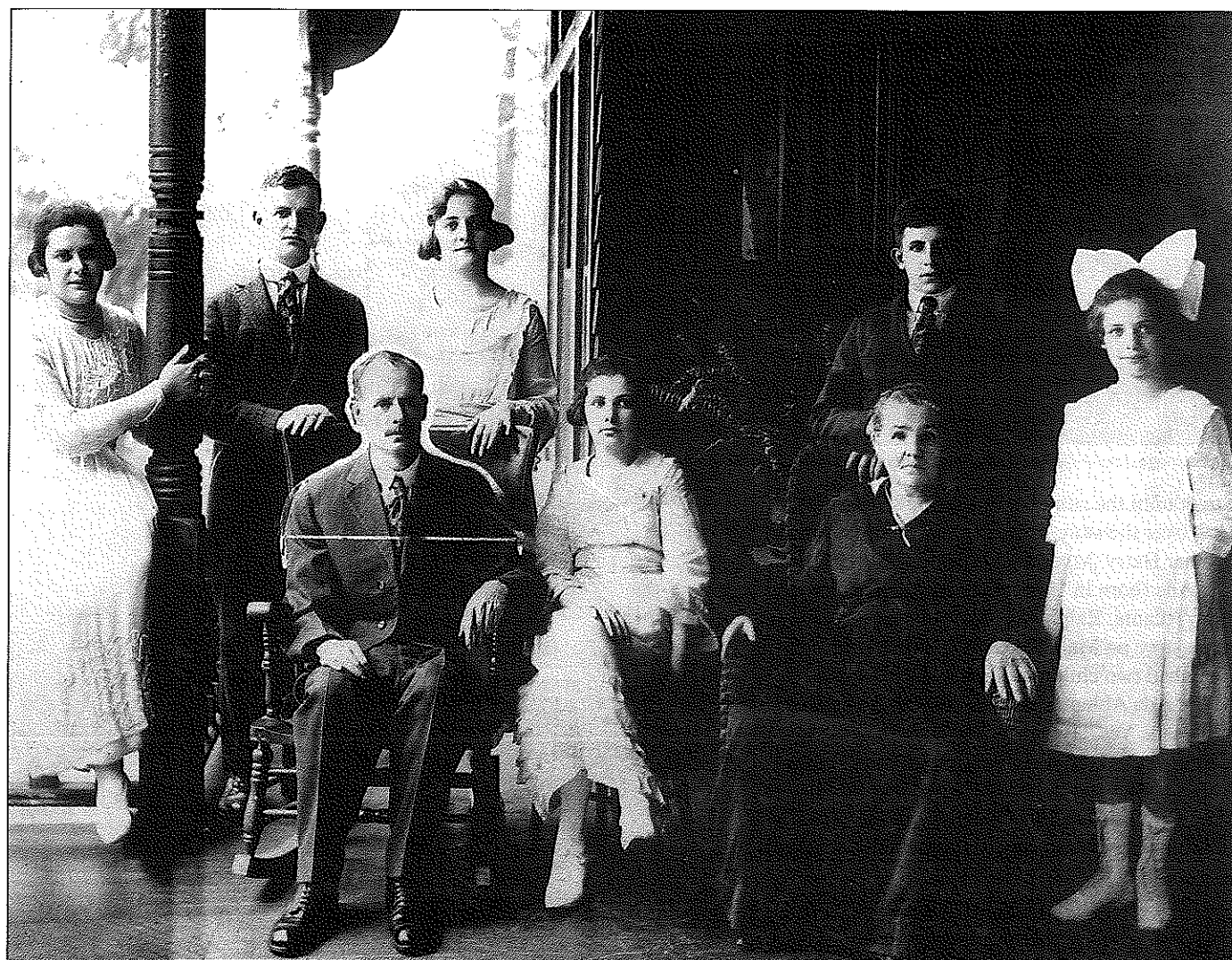
Hyman may have considered living in Decatur and supplying dry goods, notions, clothing, shoes, hats, caps and groceries to the people of Meigs County—along with five or six other competitive general store owners—for some time. Minnie, once she had borne four of their six children, had other ideas. She may have been deficient in the use of the English language, not to say local Tennessee idioms. There were no other Jewish people except for Oscar Fanburg, their boarder, employee, and brother-in-law. Kosher food was not available. Minnie did not feel that Decatur was a good place "to raise a family in the Jewish tradition." By April 1903, son Harry would have been seven or eight years old and in need of a Hebrew school/Jewish instruction. So, it was decided that the Winer family would move to Chattanooga and engage in the work of the B'Nai Zion Congregation and its new synagogue located at Fourteenth and Carter Streets in the center of Chattanooga's West Side community (Lower Carter between Main and 20th Streets has been renamed for University of Tennessee football player Reggie White).

In her research on Chattanooga and the life of Bessie Smith, Michelle R. Scott concluded tangentially that, "... the city leaders did indeed make Chattanooga appealing to European immigrants." The city was known for its synagogue and associations like the Hebrew Benevolent Association and the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Association. Certainly, these amenities would have been appealing to the Winer family.

Hyman and Minnie Winer bore two more children after they moved to Chattanooga: Myer H. Winer (born Dec. 16, 1903) and Ada (Ida in 1910 census report) Winer (born 1909).

In 1907 the *Chattanooga City Directory* listed the Winer family residence as 308 West 11th Street, with a clothing store at 1105 Market Street. A year later, the clothing store had moved to 1259 Market Street. Then in 1910, Hyman moved his residence to 405 West 11th Street.

During the 1920s, the Winers expanded their Winer's Department Stores from Chattanooga southward into Walker,



Winer family, Cottage Hill, Chattanooga. Seated: Hyman, Annie, Minnie; standing: Rose, Harry, Fannie, c. 1919

Chattooga, Floyd and Polk Counties in Northwest Georgia, with stores La Fayette, Rome, and Rockmart.

By the 1930s, the family residence was at 1905 Duncan Avenue in Highland Park, not too far from Ralph McGill's family home at 1509 Kirby Avenue and near Hamilton County's Central High School on Dodds Avenue.

Eldest son Harry Winer (Sept. 1895-1970) was unmarried and working in his father's clothing store in La Fayette, Georgia when World War I started. He claimed an exemption from military service in order to support his parents, but the army had more urgent needs for him. Harry served as a drafted enlisted man. During the Battle of Argonne Forest in France west of Verdun (26 Sept.-10 Oct. 1918), Harry Winer was wounded and listed as missing in action. He survived and returned home. In this Meuse-Argonne sector, 185 men from the American Expeditionary Force were killed in action and another 1,134 wounded. The 30th Division, mostly men from Tennessee and the Carolinas, fought there. Of parallel coincidence, attorney Worth Lillard's younger brother, David Wiley Lillard, was captain of Company L, 117th Infantry, USEF, and was also wounded October 7, 1918, near Ponchaux in the Argonne Forest. For six hours,

although wounded, Captain Lillard had remained in command of his company, "issuing orders from a shell hole under the most intense fire." The Commanding General awarded Captain Lillard the distinguished-service cross medal.

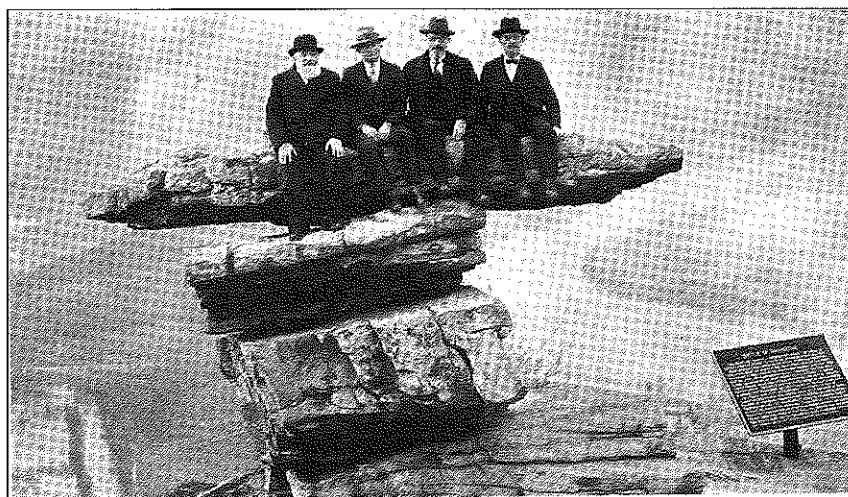
Harry Winer returned to manage his father's clothing store in La Fayette, Georgia, until the early 1960s, when his younger brother Myer H. Winer took over. Harry and his wife, Nelle, had no children, and Harry died in 1970.

Rose Winer (born in September 1897) married Sam Stock from Rome, Georgia. They had one son, David. Rose and Sam operated a clothing store in Dalton. Sam died very young, and Rose and David managed the store for many years.

Annie (born in Jan. 1900) never married and died in 1945.

Fannie (born in 1902 or April 1903) married Lou Center from Savannah, Georgia. They had three children: Helen, Morton, and Marshall. Fannie and Lou Center had a clothing store on Main Street in Chattanooga.

Myer H. (born December 16, 1903) married Rose Prince from Mobile, Alabama. Their three children were Lois, Sanford, and Minna Ree. A pilot in the 1920s-1930s, Myer was most likely Chattanooga's first Jewish aviator and flew in air races. He operated his father's new store at 26 East Main



Chattanooga Jewish leaders seated on Umbrella Rock, Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga

Street until the store burned in 1958. Then, he took over the store in La Fayette, Georgia, from brother Harry. Myer died in 1986.

Ada (born in 1908) married Ralph Ableman from Atlanta. Ralph and Ada Ableman also ran a store on Main Street in Chattanooga. They had two children, Shelton and Hannah Myra. Ada Ableman died in 2009 at the age of 100 years. Yes, Hyman Winer, Fannie & Lou Center, and Myer H. Winer (later Ada & Ralph Ableman) owned three clothing stores side-by-side on Main Street in Chattanooga. If one store didn't have what the customer wanted, the other stores might just have it for sale.

The immigrants Hyman and Minnie Winer, their son Harry, daughter Fannie Center, and her husband Lou Center, daughter Annie Winer, son Myer and Rose Prince, and daughter Ada and her husband Ralph Ableman are buried in the B'Nai Zion Jewish cemetery in Red Bank, north of Chattanooga.

The two Lillard children also grew up, attended the University of Tennessee in Knoxville (Stewart, Class of 1916, and Caroline Worth, Class of 1918) and moved away from Meigs County to pursue careers.

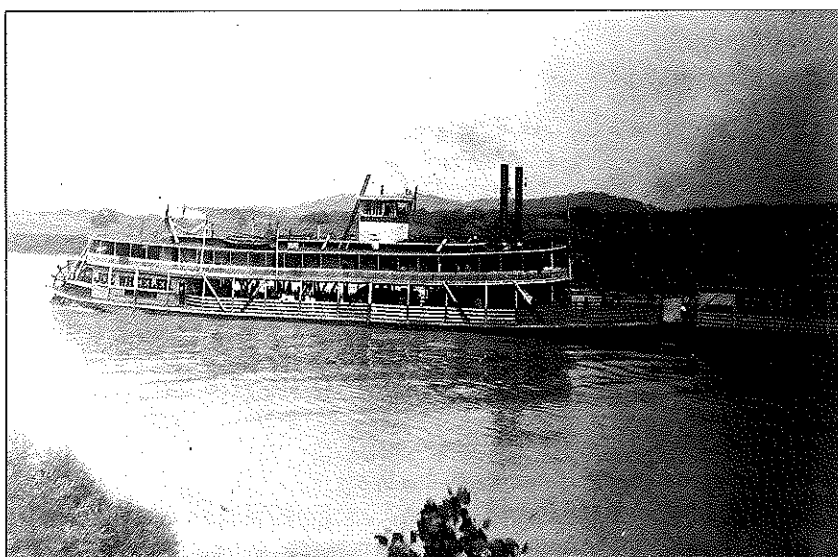
Stewart Lillard, as did Harry Winer and Captain David Wiley Lillard, served as a 1st Lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers in France during World War I. He was later a highway engineer with the Tennessee State Highway Department, the same organization that built bridges over the Tennessee River south of Kingston, the Hiwassee River south of Decatur, and paved Highway 58 through the center of Meigs County to connect it with Chattanooga and Kingston. The last riverboat had ceased operation in 1922.

Carolina Worth Lillard taught high school algebra at Central High School in Chattanooga from about 1922 until she returned to Decatur in 1947 to stay with her widowed mother. She ended her teaching career by working for several years at Meigs County High School in Decatur.

Minnie Winer died on July 8, 1940; Hyman on November 26, 1946. Jasper Worth Lillard died October 28,

1947; Lettie Jane (Stewart) Lillard died in August 15, 1953.

Worth Lillard's career included a law degree, June 1890, from Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee. He was Decatur's postmaster from 1893-1897 and served one term in the Tennessee General Assembly 1905-1906. Lillard was county attorney for Meigs County from 1907-28. Several times he served as a Special Circuit Judge and Chancellor. Locally, Lillard was very supportive of and a leader in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He led the Decatur Methodist Sunday School for half a century. From 1935 until his death in 1947, Lillard was on the Board of Directors and President of the Volunteer Electric Cooperative



The riverboat Joe Wheeler plied the Tennessee River and provided passenger and goods transportation between Decatur and Chattanooga. Courtesy Stewart Lillard

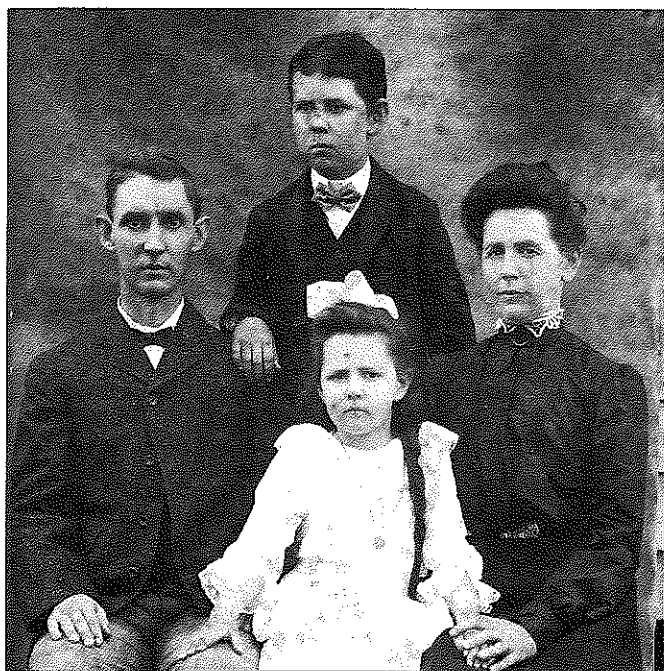
in an effort to provide rural electrification in the Tennessee Valley area.

Jasper Worth and Lettie Jane Stewart Lillard, daughter Caroline Worth Lillard, and son Stewart Lillard and his wife Polly Sheffer Lillard are buried in the Decatur Cemetery in Meigs County.

Hyman Winer, 23-years of age and a recent immigrant from the Russian Empire, had quickly adapted to his new homeland and became a successful area merchant who gave up his peddler's pack very soon after his arrival in Meigs County. At his demise, Winer had been an active and "most handsome" member of the B'Nai Zion [Orthodox] Jewish congregation; he was included among Chattanooga's business community as a member of the Half Century Club, whose members served as honorary escorts for his interment service.

Hyman and Minnie Winer and Worth and Lettie (Stewart) Lillard were industrious individuals who produced constructive family members, were loyal to their religious beliefs, and who strove to better their social communities.

Worth Lillard was in the Tennessee General Assembly during the administration of Governor James B. Frazier who



The Lillard family. Jasper Worth and Lettie Steward Lillard with Stewart and Carolina Lillard, c. 1903.

established a modern public education system for the State. Both his children were products of that public high school system. Hyman Winer, after he immigrated to the USA, spent much time bringing his brothers and sisters out of Russia to this country. When he died in 1946, he was survived by Mrs. Clara Kushner [a sister] of Los Angeles, California. She had been born in Russia about 1883, immigrated in 1907, and married Morris Kushner of California. The Kushners had seven children.

A persecuted family from the Russian Empire had re-established itself in the United States. The Meigs County decade served as a necessary part of that process.

APPENDIX

Merchants in Decatur, Meigs County, East Tennessee, from the Dun and Bradstreet, *Mercantile Reference Book . . . US & Canada*, 1899, vol. 124, "Tennessee—Decatur", page 9.

Decatur had a population of 192 in the 1890 US Census. The Banking towns nearby were Athens, Dayton, and Spring City.

John M. Abel, general store and jewelry; Abel & Smith, hardware; Airnhart & Son, blacksmith; B. K. Blevins, hotel; T. V. Blevins & Son, general store; A. B. Breeden, general store; Campbell & Wade, newspaper; John B. Davis & Bro., general store; J. A. Gallaher, general store; Gennoe Bros., undertakers; J. W. Lillard, agricultural implements; B. A. Stewart, drugs; H. Winer, general store.

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