

**Abram Khazanovich (Abraham<sup>4</sup> Singer)** (Yehuda<sup>3</sup> Khazanovich, Moshe<sup>2</sup>, Yudi<sup>1</sup>) was born in about 1869 probably in Nemunaitis, Russia (now Lithuania), and died May 09, 1940 in Lewiston, ME. He married **Mikhla (Minnie) Shohet** December 23, 1892 in Boston, MA. She was born September 1870 in Russia (now Lithuania), and died September 30, 1934 in Lewiston, ME. Both are buried in Auburn, ME, at Temple Shalom Synagogue Cemetery.



Abram was probably born in the town of Nemunaitis (in Yiddish, Nemoneitz), where he is shown in the 1874 List of Males, living with his father Yehuda and Uncle Genokh in the home of his grandfather Moshe. He is listed there as Abram Fayvush.

The listed middle name was unusual, because his younger brother was later named Fayvush. It is possible that his name was changed after his appearance in this list. His death certificate lists his name as Abraham Isaac.

Abram's later Naturalization Petition shows his place of birth as Suwalki, the province in Russian Poland that was across the Nemunas River from Nemunaitis. This is probably in error. However, he might have lived there when he immigrated, or given his parents' location at the time he filed his papers.

Although ages aren't shown, Abram is listed before his brother Meyer, and this listing appears to be oldest to youngest, suggesting that Abram could have been the oldest. But the family tree developed by Rebecca Singer Robinson and Eva Lelansky Gediman showed Meyer as the oldest and, in general, documents seem to suggest that Meyer was the oldest. It was common for those born in Russia to not know their birth years, and even birth order.

SURNAME	Given Name	Relationship to Head of Household	Father	Year	Town	Uyezd	Gubernia
KHAZANOVITCH	Movsha	Head of Household	Yudel	1874	Nemunaitis	Trakai	Vilnius
KHAZANOVITCH	Yudel	Son	Movsha	1874	Nemunaitis	Trakai	Vilnius
KHAZANOVITCH	Abram	Grandson	Yudel	1874	Nemunaitis	Trakai	Vilnius
KHAZANOVITCH	Meyer	Grandson	Yudel	1874	Nemunaitis	Trakai	Vilnius
KHAZANOVITCH	Iosel						
KHAZANOVITCH	Genokh	Son	Movsha	1874	Nemunaitis	Trakai	Vilnius

Another part of this 1874 list shows that Abram's Aunt Sheyne also lived in Nemunaitis, with her husband Khaym Gornovsky and their children. Abram may have grown up with his cousins Girsha Gornovsky (Harry Liberman) and Shlomo Gornovsky (Sam Liberman) and years later they visited him in Maine.

Abram's family stayed in Nemunaitis at least until 1883, when Abram's younger brother Yankl was born in Nemunaitis. Also in 1883 another cousin was born in Nemunaitis, Khaye Etl Khanzanovich, the daughter of Abram's Uncle Genokh. But Abram is thought to have emigrated in about 1883, so he may have been gone when Khaye was born, and may never have lived in Miroslavas, which was thought to be the family home. Miroslavas was at the time part of Russian Poland and called Miroslaw in Polish.

### Abraham Singer in America

Abraham was said to have been the first of the Singer family to come to the United States.

According to his Petition for Naturalization, Abraham arrived in New York in January of 1883. However, a later life story published in the newspaper said that he arrived in Boston. As of this writing his passenger ship manifest has not been found, so this date is unreliable. Records for other family members show that people often stated their arrival date as being earlier than the passenger manifests showed. This may have been due to laws that required 2 years of residency before filing an intention to apply for naturalization, then 3 years before applying for naturalization. He filed for naturalization in 1890, so he should have arrived in the US by 1885.

(A check showed that Abraham did not immigrate with his brother-in-law Louis Lelansky in 1885, nor with his sister Ester Singer Lelansky in 1889.)

Prior to 1892 it was illegal to emigrate from Russia. Emigrants like Abraham had to escape across the border or be smuggled across, then make their way to the port of departure. Abraham would have been processed at the Castle Garden center in New York, which was the receiving center from 1855-1890.

The same Petition for Naturalization shows his birth date as "on or about the 5th day of March" in 1869. This would have made him only 13 years old when he arrived in America. The birth date isn't certain though, as his brother Myer also showed his birth year as 1869 (January) in his naturalization papers. Most immigrants did not seem to know their birth dates, or their arrival dates.

According to a later biographical piece done on Abraham, he had been alone when he arrived in the U.S. and traveled around peddling goods, finally settling in Lewiston because he liked it there. His niece Rebecca Singer Robinson commented that he "made his beginning money by selling wrappers or kimonos to houses of ill repute!! Many would not sell to 'whorehouses.' There were many of these houses in Maine, NH, and Mass."

According to Abraham's obituary in 1940, he had lived in Lewiston for 53 years, putting his date of arrival there at 1887 and suggesting he could have spent 4 years traveling around (if he had arrived in the US in 1883). A later letter written by Abraham's nephew Allan Shohet described his initial peddling job, picking up dresses at his uncle Charles' store and carrying them around in a suitcase, laying them out of the porches of potential customers.

Abraham's Petition for Naturalization, filed in 1890 (see next page), shows his address as 70 Cross St. in Boston; but he isn't listed in the 1890 Boston Directory. Listed at that address was Levenson & Sons, a business that sold "peddlers' supplies." [Abraham's brother Max also showed a Boston address on his later petition, though it's known that he didn't live in Boston when he filed the petition. Both brothers dealt with suppliers in Boston, and they may have used Boston addresses because their petitions for naturalization were filed in that city.]

Abraham first appears in the Lewiston directory in 1892.

In July 1892 Abraham's brother Max came to America, arriving in Boston, and the family story is that Abraham paid his passage.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

To the Honorable the Judges of the Circuit Court of the United States, begun and holden at Boston, within and for the District of Massachusetts.

Respectfully represents Abram Singer do Cross of Boston in said District, occupation, Trader an Alien and a free white person; that he was born in Sumalk Russia Poland

the 5. day of March on or about hundred and Sixty nine and is now about twenty one years of age; that he arrived at New York in the District of New York in the United States of America, on or about the day of January in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and Eighty three being then a minor under the age of eighteen years; that it then was, and still is, his bona fide intention to reside in and become a citizen of the United States of America, and to renounce all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign Prince, State, Potentate, and Sovereignty whatsoever — more especially to Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Alexander II Emperor of Russia whose subject he has heretofore been.

And the said petitioner further represents that he made a primary declaration of his intention to become a citizen of the said United States, before the Honorable Court, on the day of A. D. 18

And the said petitioner further represents that he has ever since continued to reside within the jurisdiction of the United States; that he has never borne any hereditary title, or been of any of the orders of nobility; that he is ready to renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatsoever; and particularly to Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Alexander II Emperor of Russia whose subject he has heretofore been; that he is attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States of America, and well disposed towards the good order and happiness of the same.

And the said petitioner further represents that he enlisted in the Armies of the United States, and was honorably discharged therefrom.

Wherefore, your petitioner prays that he may be admitted to become a citizen of the said United States of America, according to the forms of the Statutes in such case made and provided.

Sworn to by said Petitioner before the Court. Abram Singer his mark

Attest:

Clerk.

U.S. CIRCUIT COURT Boston Mass Vol 847 Proc 2 5

Note that Abraham signed "his x" on the above petition, indicating he probably couldn't read and write English at the time.

All of the Singer brothers were said to have started out as peddlers, and the first documentation of this occupation for Abraham was on his Petition for Naturalization (“trader”) and then again on his marriage record in 1892.

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MARRIAGES REGISTERED in the City of Boston for the Year eighteen hundred and ninety-two

No.	DATE AND PLACE OF MARRIAGE.	DATE OF RECORD.	NAMES, SURNAMES, AND COLOR OF GROOM AND BRIDE. <small>(Make note of both if a widow.)</small>	RESIDENCE OF EACH OF BRIDE.	AGE OF EACH IN YEARS.	OCCUPATION OF EACH.	PLACE OF BIRTH OF EACH.	NAMES OF PARENTS. <small>(Make note of mother.)</small>	WEDDING MARRIAGE <small>(Date, time, place, etc.)</small>	NAME, RESIDENCE, AND OFFICIAL STATION OF PERSON BY WHOM MARRIED.
5543	December 7, Dec. 25	25	Charles L. Hinman Betty Deal	Boston -	27 20	Lumberman at home	London Lanoga	Abraham Shlomo Martin D. Alice L.	-	Rev. Frank G. Hinman Boston
56	December 23	-	Abraham Singer Minnie Wolper	Lewiston Boston	23 28	Peddler None	Russia -	Isaac Simon	Isa Bara	M. Margolies Boston

Although there is incorrect information on the record, this must be Abraham and Minnie listed as the second couple. Minnie's maiden name was Shohet, but she probably used the name of her uncle, Abraham Wolper. The couple was married by “M. Margolies.” Rabbi M. S. Margolies, chief rabbi in Boston at this time, was the first cousin of Minnie's mother. So it is curious that the names of Abraham's parents are both incorrect. It's possible that they had English comprehension problems that led to this erroneous information. Minnie's father was “Abraham Shlomo” but “Simon” was one American version of “Shlomo.”

Golda Singer Sneider had apparently commented during an interview with Jay Burger that Abraham and Minnie were married in 1893 in Lithuania. If correct, this would suggest that they were re-married in the U.S.

An interesting question is how Minnie and Abraham came to marry. Minnie did have connections to the area where Abraham lived in Russia, when they were both in their early teens, so they could have met. But coming from a family of rabbinical scholars, and granddaughter of Rabbi David Menachem Wolper of Merkine, Minnie's marriage would likely have been arranged, and Minnie would have brought “yikhus” (prestige) to the marriage. The son of a leather tanner seems an unlikely prospect as a husband.



More likely is that Minnie was introduced to Abraham after arriving in the US, through her uncle, Abraham Wolper, who had immigrated earlier and was part owner of a clothing store in Boston.

The first record found for an Abraham Singer in Lewiston was in 1893:

Singer Abraham A. peddler, dry goods, h. 68 Lincoln

Max was boarding at the same address. Max's being at the same house conflicts with a family story (below) that he was not invited to stay with Abraham and Minnie when he first arrived. As a matter of interest, Abraham's address is near the boarding house established by the Markson family, for the young, single, Jewish peddlers who had appeared in Lewiston. That boarding house was at 170 Lincoln and became a gathering place and was the home of early religious services in the town.

According to one of his obituaries, Abraham was nearly penniless when he came to Lewiston and became "through industry one of the wealthier men in the city. He conducted his first store below Pine on Lisbon Street."

According to available directories from 1894-1940, Abraham started out in the fruit and confectionery business at 286 Lisbon St. [Note that this address in 2002 is part of the Lower Lisbon Street Historic District, a concentration of 18 commercial structures. "The district is significant as the only intact concentration of commercial buildings from the city's most important period of development, 1850-1915."]

This early occupation is verified by the birth certificate of his daughter Ida, which lists his occupation (in 1895) as "Confectioner." In 1896 he altered his business again:

Singer Abraham, cigars, etc. 286 Lisbon, house 288 do.

In 1897 he appears to have gone into business with Marx Mendelson (who already had a dry goods store) as "Mendelson & Singer," Dry & Fancy Goods, at 255 Lisbon. This was the first of several different dry goods stores owned and operated by Abraham and his family, and the first of his businesses with Marx (subsequently listed as Max) Mendelson. Marx Mendelson was about the same age as Abraham and lived in Auburn. Marx owned another clothing store (Mendelson Bros) at 263 Lisbon.

In 1898 Abraham brought his brother Yankl (Jacob) and sister Sara to America. Within the next several years he brought his brother Meyer (Myer) and brothers-in-law Yankl (Jacob) Shohet and Chaim Shohet.

The family story was that Sara worked for Abraham as a domestic. Note that in the culture of the shtetl it was considered very bad for a single woman to work as a domestic. She could, however, help a well-off family member with domestic chores as part of the family. Some other family members were upset that Sara was treated badly, "like a servant."

Jay Berger, Sara's grandson wrote, "In return for the payment of their passage, the newly arrived sibling often worked in servitude, as was the case of my grandmother, Sara. Rebecca has told me how upset her father and mother were by this, and how much they wanted to help Sara, but they were poor at the time and could do nothing." It appears that Sara lived with Abraham for at least 3 years. The fact that their brother (and new immigrant) Jacob was listed as a dry goods salesman in 1900 probably indicates that Jacob worked for Abraham upon his arrival, too. Of course, this may have been a paying job.

Niece Rebecca explained, "Abraham was impressed with people who had money. He was not liked even though he brought his siblings over. When they got here he and his wife were not hospitable. They made them work very hard. Also, in the case of Max, he did not even stay one night with them. He was sent to a boarding house full of strangers. Here was a boy who missed his parents in a strange country and he did not even have the comfort of being with his brother."

According to records, however, Abraham wasn't yet married when Max arrived in America. Judy Kamin presented this paradox to her mother Rebecca and Aunt Goldie, and after some discussion they concluded that it might have been the case that at some later time Abraham wanted Max to live with him and Minnie, but that Minnie wasn't in agreement. Max actually is shown as boarding at Abraham's house in 1893, the year after his arrival and Abraham's marriage, so the story isn't completely resolved.

Because they lived nearby, and Max was involved in business with Abraham, Rebecca's family felt more strongly what they perceived as a lack of generosity. For example, Rebecca related that Abraham had said that he was going to visit Lithuania and take Max with him, and that her

mother Bessie had replied, "That'll be the day." Rebecca said that Bessie's comment was indicative of how she felt about Abraham.

Rebecca noted that Abraham loved his children very much. She related stories of his bringing them small gifts and treats and their running to him when he arrived home.

In 1899 Abraham moved the business to 240 Lisbon, and it became "Androscoggin Dry Goods."

The 1900 Federal Census shows Abraham as a Merchant of Dry Goods. His wife Minnie is listed as a "saleswoman" in the 1900 Federal Census, so she probably worked in the store. Minnie is shown as having given birth to 3 children, Nettie, Ida and Simon (later Sam), of whom all 3 were still living. The 1900 census shows 2 lodgers living with Abraham and Minnie at their home at 39 Ash Street. Abraham's sister Sara is also shown living in the household, and the 1900 Lewiston directory lists her as boarding at the address. Abraham's brother Jacob is shown in a different part of the census, but living at the same address, and working as a dry goods salesman. He is listed as a separate Head of Household and "renting."

According to the census, Abraham and Minnie had been married 7 years at the time of the census, which places their marriage date in 1892 or 1893, matching the marriage record that was found. The same census says that Abraham had come to America in 1886, and Minnie in 1890.

Singer, Abraham	Head of Household	W. M.	Mar	1871	29	M	7		Russia	Russia	Russia	1886	14	NA	Merchant - Dry Goods
Minnie	Wife	W. F.	Sept	1870	29	M	7	3 3	Russia	Russia	Russia	1890	10	NA	Saleswoman
Nettie	Daughter	W. F.	Mar	1895	5	S			Maine	Russia	Russia				At school
Ida	Daughter	W. F.	Aug	1896	3	S			Maine	Russia	Russia				At school
Simon	Son	W. M.	Sept	1897	2	S			Maine	Russia	Russia				
Sara	Sister	W. F.	Apr	1874	26	S			Russia	Russia	Russia	1897	3		
Jacobi, Isaac	Lodger	W. F.	Nov	1869	30	M	4	1 1	Maine	Maine	(Canada (Fr))				Cotton mill owner
Ida	Lodger	W. F.	Apr	1888	12	S			Maine	(Canada (Fr))	Maine				Cotton mill

Looking at the 1900 Lewiston census, it appears that the town's main industry was a cotton mill, and that the residents were largely of Canadian ancestry, and overwhelmingly English speaking (from Canada, the US, Ireland or England). A small number of Polish immigrants appear, and even fewer of Russian/Jewish descent. According to niece Rebecca Robinson, there was discrimination against Jews and French Canadians in the early days.

Abraham and Minnie's home addresses throughout the years were shown as:

- 1898-99...49 Spruce
- 1900-01... 39 Ash
- 1902-08...51 Pierce
- 1912-1917...176 Pine
- 1918-1926...174 Pine
- 1932... 52 Howe
- 1933... 384 Main
- 1935-39... 5 Central

According to Rebecca Singer Robinson, Abraham and Max's families lived in the same building for a time in Lewiston. She remembered this as being on Birch Street, but directories suggest it was probably Ash or Pierce.

In 1902 Abraham's younger brother Jacob (only 19 years old at the time) started his own dry goods business at 50 Maine Street in Brunswick. In 1903, Jacob and Abraham took out a mortgage of \$3500 from Charles Whitney for the property, to be repaid in annual payments of \$700. They put down one dollar. It had a 26' frontage on Maine Street and was south of what was then the Pejepsco Bank lot.

Abraham's store, Androscoggin Dry Goods, was still being advertised:

**EASTER GREETING**  
 ...OF THE.....  
**Androscoggin Dry Goods Co.**  
 240 Lisbon Street, Lewiston, Me.

Our great Easter Sale starts Thursday, April 9. You will be well repaid, if you will attend our Sale. Come in and spend a little of your time at our store in looking around. Our shelves and counters are all filled with the choicest and newest of this Spring's production, and you will undoubtedly see something that will interest you. We carry everything in Cloaks, Suits and Skirts, Dress Goods, Dry and Fancy Goods, Notions and Millinery, in fact all that goes to make up a full and complete line of a first class general dry goods house. Again we want to call your attention, notwithstanding the superiority of the quality of goods we are showing, that our prices are by a good percentage lower than what others are charging. Before making your holiday purchases, be sure to visit first the

**Androscoggin Dry Goods Co.,**  
 240 Lisbon Street, Lewiston, Me.

In 1904 Abraham apparently opened two additional clothing stores, one at 326 Lisbon, and the "Singer Clothing Co" at 162 Lisbon. Max took over the store at 326 Lisbon in 1904 or 1905. [Note that this 326 Lisbon address is also part of the Lower Lisbon Street Historic District.]

That same year Abraham bought the dry goods store owned by Clarence D. Farrar (Farrar, Craig & Co) which had entrances at 204 Lisbon and 22-26 Pine.

**THE SINGER DRY GOODS CO**  
 Successors to Farrar, Craig & CO.,  
 CORNER PINE AND LISBON STS.  
 22, 24 and 26 Pine Street. 204 Lisbon Street

[This store was subsequently renamed "The Fashion." Abraham's family retained the store at 204 Lisbon for more than 20 years, and most of the family members worked in the store.]

In December 1904, Abraham signed over the 50 Maine Street property that he and Jacob had purchased in June 1903 to Bennett Berger (their brother-in-law, Sara's husband). The condition was that Bennett pay \$1 and be responsible for the mortgage. Within a couple of months, Abraham had a lawsuit against Bennett and it appears the property may have been about to go to court. Abraham paid off a \$2,000 debt. In August 1905 Jacob Singer and Bennett Berger passed on the property to Telesphore Lapointe, who ran a dry goods business at 32 Maine St. Jacob continued to run the 50 Maine Street store for a few more years. Bennett Berger moved to Throop, PA, where he ran a grocery and dry goods store.



In 1906 Abraham is still listed as owning The Fashion at 204 Lisbon & at 22 Pine. In an ad that year the store was listed as "opposite convention hall."

Max Singer appeared in the Lewiston directory as the proprietor of a Dry & Fancy Goods store. The prior year this store at 326 Lisbon St had been listed as Abraham's store, so it appears that Max bought or took over management of the store.

By 1907 the first official Jewish congregation was established in Lewiston, in Congregation Beth Jacob. Abraham was later listed as past president and a charter member of the synagogue. The synagogue building was constructed in 1925.

**L-R Ida, Nettie, Peretz**

According to Rebecca, in 1907 or 1908 Abraham arranged for his brother Max to take over Jacob's store in Brunswick, and told Jacob to take a position as Max's employee. Rebecca said that Abraham's motivation was that he wanted his brother Max to leave Lewiston so that there wouldn't be two Singers

running dry goods businesses there. Max and his family moved to Brunswick and Max took over the store at 50 Maine Street.

Jacob and Fannie subsequently left town with their family, and apparently Jacob rarely spoke of Abraham afterwards. (Jacob's son Maurice was unaware that he had an Uncle Abraham until traveling to Maine in the 1970s, well after Jacob's death.)

The 1910 census shows that Abraham and Minnie (listed incorrectly as "Nettie") had been married for 17 years and that Minnie had given birth to 6 children, 5 of whom were living. By 1910 they had actually lost 2 children – one unnamed baby stillborn in 1896, and a son named Moses who had been born in 1906. The five children were listed as Nettie, 16, Ida, 14, Samuel, 12, David, 9, and Percy (Peretz), 2. Abraham was still listed as a Merchant in the area of Dry Goods. The birthplace of Abraham was listed as Russian Poland, which was probably incorrect. Although his family lived there at this time, he was more likely born in what was Russia, near the border of Russian Poland.

Singer Abraham	Head	M	10	38	1877	Russian Poland	Merchant	dry goods
Nettie	Wife	F	10	35	1874	Russian Poland	none	
Ida	Daughter	F	11	14	5	Russian Poland	none	
Samuel	Son	M	11	12	5	Russian Poland	none	
David	Son	M	11	9	5	Russian Poland	none	
Percy	Son	M	11	2	5	Russian Poland	none	
Nettie	Daughter	F	11	16	3	Russian Poland	none	



The 1910 Lewiston Directory shows:

**Singer Abraham, prop "The Fashion," 204 Lisbon, h 176 Pine**

In 1912 Abraham was still proprietor of The Fashion, and still located at 204 Lisbon, and he retained this store until some time between 1926 and 1932. In 1912 his daughter Nettie worked for The Fashion as a bookkeeper, and worked there through 1919.

According to a November, 1929 story in the Lewiston Evening Journal, Abraham started investing in business properties this year (1912). His first purchases were of the Lamey & Wellahan store at 110 Lisbon, and the Pilsbury Block at Lisbon and Pine.

The Lamey & Wellahan store had housed the dry goods store of Cronin & Root in 1912. It was occupied by the Lamey and Wellahan Shoe Store in 1914.

The Pilsbury Block refers to the commercial building at 200-210 Lisbon, at the northeast corner of Lisbon and Pine, built in 1870 for George Pilsbury. In 1983 it was placed on the US National Register of Historic Places. It would have been the location of The Fashion:



By this time the 4 Levin siblings (Sam, Charles, Ruth, Zella), children of Minnie's sister Tsipe, had arrived in the US. They initially stayed with Minnie's sister Regina Dworet. Except for Ruth, the siblings settled in Maine. In September of 1912 Abraham went into partnership with Sam Levin (listed sometimes as Sam Levine) in the Bath Department Store at 26 Centre Street, in Bath. In May 1913 they opened the store:

The Bath Department Store on Center street, formerly occupied by the Walter O. Parker Co., was opened yesterday afternoon and evening and the many people who visited the store were surprised at the transformation made in the last few days by A. Singer of Lewiston, the new proprietor. The decorations were dainty and effective, the entire store being newly painted and adorned with many bouquets, ferns and potted plants. There was a large display of fine dry

goods in every department. Mr. Singer has engaged the following corps of efficient clerks: Garment and millinery department, Miss Mildred Wade, Mrs. Florence Hagan and Miss Gladys Parker; dry good and main floor department, Mildred Clark, Lillian and Ruth Russell, Ruby Wallace and Eunice Mudge. Mrs. Arthur Willis is the cashier. \*\*\* Sam Levin, a veteran dry goods man, has been engaged as assistant manager of the store.

In 1919 Sam Levin bought out the interest of his partner Abraham Singer in the store. Ads appeared announcing a "Dissolution of Partnership" sale. One of these ads included this excerpt:

TO THE PUBLIC:—

Six years ago this month, in company with Mr. A. Singer, of Lewiston, I purchased the business of the W. O. Parker Co., and commenced dealing with the people of Bath and vicinity under the name of

**THE BATH DEPARTMENT STORE**

During those six years I have seen the business steadily increase, month after month, and all due to the generous patronage which I have received from the Bath public.

I have endeavored to use my customers fairly, to see that they received courteous treatment and service and that all of their dealings at the Bath Department Store were satisfactory.

Mr. A. Singer, my partner, notifies me that he wishes to retire from the business and I am taking over his interests. It means a big proposition to me at just this time when the store is stocked with new goods, bought for the Spring trade. It means that I am in immediate need of \$20,000.

The stock of Spring goods is the greatest in the history

The same year (1919) Abraham negotiated to buy the Page property at Sagadahoc Square (55 and 57 Front Street) but it's not clear if the purchase was completed. The next month he purchased the DT Percy (home furnishings) store at 86-90 Front Street in Bath.

In the 1920s, following the end of WWI, a few more relatives came to the US. In 1922 Abraham brought his niece Basye Chazanovicius (Bertha Singer) to America. According to Rebecca, she also worked for him for a year as a domestic to pay back her passage. That same year Minnie's nephew Allan Shohet came to Maine and stayed for a time with Minnie's nephew Charles Levin.

In the same year the Wakefield Drug Store building was up for sale (see below). The city council discussed whether the building should be condemned, and Abraham let it be known that if he bought the building, he would demolish it and erect a new structure. He did so, and it became the Singer Building. From May 1922, when the building was still for sale:

**FOR SALE, The OLD RELIABLE  
WAKEFIELD BROS. DRUG STORE**  
114 Lisbon St. Lewiston.  
This is one of the oldest businesses in Lewiston, having  
been established in 1852. Perfectly reliable in every way.  
The location is one of the best in the City, proved so by the  
ever increasing business.  
Owner wishes to sell because it is out of his line and he  
hasn't the time to devote to it. This is an excellent op-  
portunity for anyone interested in the drug business.  
Inquire at 204 Lisbon St. or Tel. 325-J. Res. 1789-R.

Interestingly, the contact number for the sale of the building is Abraham's dry goods business.

The Singer Building, which is still in Lewiston:



One of Abraham's achievements was to invest in the future of Lewiston by replacing wooden buildings with brick buildings. See the document on his various properties.

Nettie returned to the Fashion in 1924 where she is listed as a clerk. Her later obituary said she was a buyer for the store for many years. Son Samuel became manager in 1922. The Fashion continued at 204 Lisbon. A newspaper ad from 1925:



**Mrs. A. Singer of Maine Dies Suddenly**  
*Jewish Advocate (1909-1990)*; Oct 5, 1934;  
 pg. A7

### **Mrs. A. Singer of Maine Dies Suddenly**

**Mrs. Abraham Singer, 62, formerly Minnie Shohet, died suddenly Sunday night, September 30, at her home, 384 Main street, Lewiston, Maine, after a brief illness. She was born in Lithuania, but had lived in Lewiston for 45 years. She was a member of the Pythian Sisters and the Beth Jacob Auxiliary.**

**Surviving relatives are her husband, Abraham, retired Lewiston business man; two daughters, Mrs. Nettie Bramson and Mrs. Ida Brownstone; three sons, Samuel and David, both of Lewiston, and Peretz, medical student in Boston. There are four grandchildren.**

**The deceased was a member of a family noted for its number of rabbis. There is a brother, the Rev. J. N. Shohet of Roxbury; the following nephews, Dr. Gabriel Shohet, also of Roxbury; Dr. Harmon Shohet, Newton; Dr. David Shohet, Haverhill; Dr. Samuel Shohet, Chicago; Rabbi David N. Shohet, Yonkers, N. Y.; Rabbi M. Shohet, Palestine; and a cousin, Chief Orthodox Rabbi M. S. Margolles of New York. There are several nieces.**

September 30, 1934, Minnie died in Lewiston.

The 1940 US Census shows the family at 5 Central Avenue, in Lewiston. Abraham is shown as 75 years old, a widower, with 4 years of high school education, a merchant in Ready to Wear. The family is shown as living in the same location 5 years ago. Living with Abraham is his daughter Nettie Bramson and her husband John, who is listed as a real estate salesman. Both are age 45. Nettie is incorrectly shown as being born in Russia, John in Maine. Their daughter Gwendolyn is shown as age 14, born in Maine. Also in the household is Sam Singer, age 41 and single, with no occupation shown, and a lodger, Louis Chasse, listed with the occupation as "male attendant in a private house."

Abraham had Parkinson's disease in his later years. This was confirmed by his death certificate, which noted that he had died of Parkinson's disease and had suffered from it for 15 years. The record also showed that he had Diabetes Melitis. Frances Bigman remembered him only as an invalid. Many people remembered his male attendant (whose name they recalled as "Joe"), who took care of him and chauffeured him around. One person recalled Abraham as having been "sharp" even when he was ill. Abraham died in 1940, apparently at home at 7 Central Ave.

As an interesting historical footnote, Abraham's obituary in the *Boston Jewish Advocate* appeared next to that of

Emma Goodman, the noted anarchist.

According to his obituary, below, Abraham was a past president and charter member of Beth Jacob synagogue in Lewiston. He was also a member of the Knights of Pythias, a 32nd degree Mason and member of all Masonic lodges, including Kora Temple Shrine. He was buried May 10, 1940, at Beth Jacob Cemetery in Auburn, ME<sup>81,82</sup>

He left a bequest of \$500 To Beth Jacob Synagogue and \$250 to Beth Abraham Synagogue.

In 1940, with Abraham's death, Nettie Singer Bramson became president of Singer Realty Co, and Samuel continued as the treasurer-clerk. The clothing store was no longer listed, and David Singer was manager of Main Collection Service. The occupation listed by his son Sam on Abraham's death certificate was "Real Estate Agent."

Laurie Graf Singer (wife of Abraham's grandson Dick) writes in 2002, "As far as the money in the family, it very much diminished over time. Most of the properties on Main Street in Lewiston were owned by Singer Realty. Uncle Sam managed all of it long after Abraham's death. The property declined in value after the WWII years. Some of the large factories in Lewiston closed. The shoes that had been produced there were now imported. The downtown shops were left vacant due to shopping malls just outside of the city and the economy of Lewiston dropped dramatically."

## NEPHEW OFFICIATES AT SINGER SERVICES



Abraham Singer

Services for Abraham Singer of Lewiston were held from his home at 7 Central avenue, Friday at one o'clock. The services were held at Beth Jacob synagog of Lewiston of which he is a past president and charter member. Rabbi David Berent of the synagog officiated with Rabbi David M. Shohet of Yonkers, N. Y., a nephew of Mr. Singer.

Among the out of town guests attending were Mrs. Bertha Brown of Roxbury, Mass., Mrs. Leah Kasdin of Brookline, Mass., Mrs. Leah Cohan of Lawrence, Mass., Mrs. Reuben Feld of Forest Hills, N. Y., Dr. David M. Shohet of Haverhill, Mass., Dr. Gabriel Shohet of Dorchester, Mass., Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wolman of Portland, Hyman Hootstein of Brookline, Mass., Mrs. Charles Farber, Mrs. Rose Rubinoff, Mrs. Ann Brownstone and Mrs. Sarah Epstein, all of Portland; and Rabbi M. Shohet, a nephew of Palestine who is in this country right now.

Mr. and Mrs. Max Singer of Brunswick, Morris Robinson of Lisbon Falls, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Levin of Bath, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Bramson of Portland.

Mr. Singer was member of the Knights of Pythias, a 32d degree Mason and member of all Masonic lodges including Korah Temple Shrine.

His son, Dr. Peretz Singer of New York and the latter's wife, were in Lewiston when Mr. Singer died.

In addition to the surviving relatives already published, Mr. Singer leaves four brothers, Max Singer of Brunswick, Jacob of Akron, Ohio; Myer of Port Huron, Mich., and Philip of Russia; also a sister, Mrs. L. Lelansky of Lewiston. His grandchildren are Gwendolyn Bramson, Justine and Harold Brownstone, and Richard Singer, all of Lewiston. His wife, the former Minnie Shohet of Boston, died here Sept. 30, 1924.

"I do wish I had more stories about Abraham. Even Dick didn't really know very much about him. He died when Dick was 10 or 12. I guess to his siblings he was rather elusive.....although his heart seemed to have been in the right place if he was instrumental in bringing so many of his family here to this country."

In response to a question about the religious orthodoxy of this side of the family, Laurie writes, "As to the religious aspects of Abraham's family, I don't think they were Orthodox.....more of the conservative I would think. I do believe they attended synagogue for the high holidays and other occasions. But (grandson) Dick was never Bar Mitzvahed."

In 1947 Abraham and Minnie's children donated a pulpit to Beth Jacob Synagogue in their memory. The following newspaper article is from March 28, 1947:

## TO DEDICATE PULPIT AT LEWISTON SYNAGOG

A pulpit given in memory of Abraham and Minnie Singer of Lewiston by their children will be dedicated at exercises conducted by Rabbi David Berent at 8 P.M. tonight at Beth Jacob Synagog.

Designed in Gothic and Moorish style by Emile Scheutzendorf of New York City, well-known German synagog and church architect, the pulpit is octagon-shaped, built locally of antique oak wood. Four chairs of similar design also will be dedicated. Scheutzendorf, who has been in the United States about seven years, has designed outstanding synagoggs in Germany, Holland, Belgium, and France.

The Singer children donating the pulpit and chairs include Mrs. John D. Bramson, Samuel Singer, Mrs. Myer Brownstone, and David Singer, all of Lewiston, and Dr. Peretz Singer of Boston. A brief service will be read in memory of their parents.

Mrs. Bramson will be hostess during the subsequent refreshment period in the vestry, where Rabbi Berent will review the Passover Haggadah, and Seder service conducted the first two nights of Passover. A question period on the laws of Passover will follow.

