

## Chapter 1

# Everyday Life of Jews in Mariampole, Lithuania (1894–1911)<sup>1</sup>

**INTRODUCTION** The urge to discover one's roots is universal. This desire inspired me to reconstruct stories about my ancestors in Mariampole, Lithuania, for my grandchildren and generations to come.

These stories tell the daily lives and culture of Jewish families who lived in northeastern Europe within Russian-dominated Lithuania at the turn of the twentieth century. The town name has been spelled in various ways. In YIVO, the formal Yiddish transliteration, the town name would be "Maryampol." In Lithuanian, the name is Marijampolė (with a dot over the "e"). In Polish, the name is written as Marjampol, and in Yiddish with Hebrew characters, the name is written from right to left as "מאַריאַמפּאָל" and pronounced "Mariampol." In English spelling, the town name is "Marijampol." From 1956 until the end of Soviet control in 1989, the town was called "Kapsukas," after one of the founders of the Lithuanian Communist party. The former name, Mariampole, was restored shortly before Lithuania regained independence.<sup>2</sup> For consistency, I refer to the town in the English-friendly Yiddish, "Mariampole."<sup>3</sup>

My paternal grandparents, Dvora Shilobolsky/Jacobson<sup>4</sup> and Moyshe Zundel Trivasch, moved there around 1886 shortly after their marriage. They had previously lived in Przerośl, a town about 35 miles southwest of Mariampole. Both Przerośl and Mariampole were part of the Pale of Settlement, a place where the Russian empire forced its Jews to live 1791–1917. It is likely that Mariampole promised to offer Jews a better life than the crowded conditions of the section of the Pale where my grandparents had lived.

"The Pale of Settlement was the area where the Russian Jews were confined by the laws of 1795 and of 1835. Ultimately, four million Jews lived in the Pale. It included the territory of present day Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belorussia. Only after overthrow of the Tsarist regime in 1917 was the Pale of Settlement abandoned."<sup>5</sup>

The Pale consisted mostly of the eastern half of territory that had once belonged to Poland,

which Russia had annexed during the late eighteenth century. As a result of this annexation, the majority of East European Jews came under Russian rule. During most of the period when this region was ruled by Tsarist governments, Jews were forbidden to migrate eastward to the Russian Empire.

## THE CHALLENGE

As I set out on my quest to discover how my grandparents and my father had lived, I compiled memories and reminiscences that were recorded by Mariampoler Jewish immigrants who had settled in Chicago, Illinois.

Most archives of the Mariampole community have disappeared. Missing records were generally destroyed by war, fires, floods, and theft. Losses also occurred due to a shortage of paper, as sometimes Jewish records were reused for other purposes. However, thousands of Mariampole vital records—birth, marriage and divorce, and death records, dated 1810–1939—are archived on Miriam Weiner's website.<sup>6</sup> Weiner is the creator of the Eastern European archival database, which includes Jewish and civil records from archives in Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Moldova and Ukraine.

A surprisingly vivid portrait of social, cultural, religious, and political practices in this town can be drawn from the memories of Jewish immigrants. They had come to the United States in the early part of the twentieth century, and they came in their middle and late teens.<sup>7</sup> Their recollections were recorded and published in Chicago by the Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) in their monthly bulletins. The recollections also appeared later in yearbooks between 1944 and 1997.<sup>8</sup> My research unearthed personal accounts of everyday people who once lived in Mariampole.

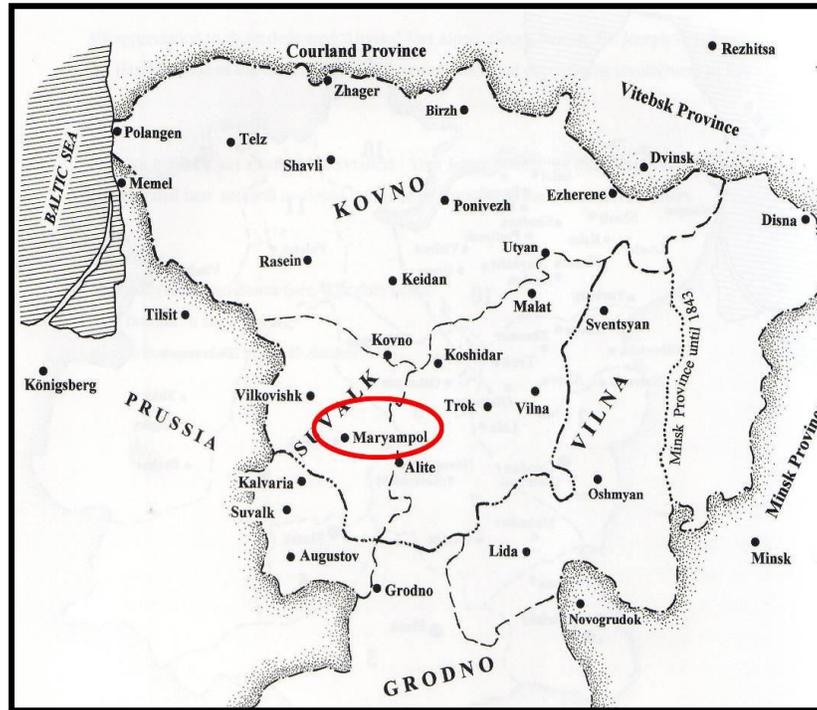
Mariampoler Jews lived in a well-structured, highly organized Lithuanian community governed by religious principles. The observance of traditional religious rituals and customs provided the foundation of a rich Jewish life.<sup>9</sup> These Jewish holidays, rituals, and customs are described in the appendix.

## BACKGROUND FROM PUBLISHED RESOURCES

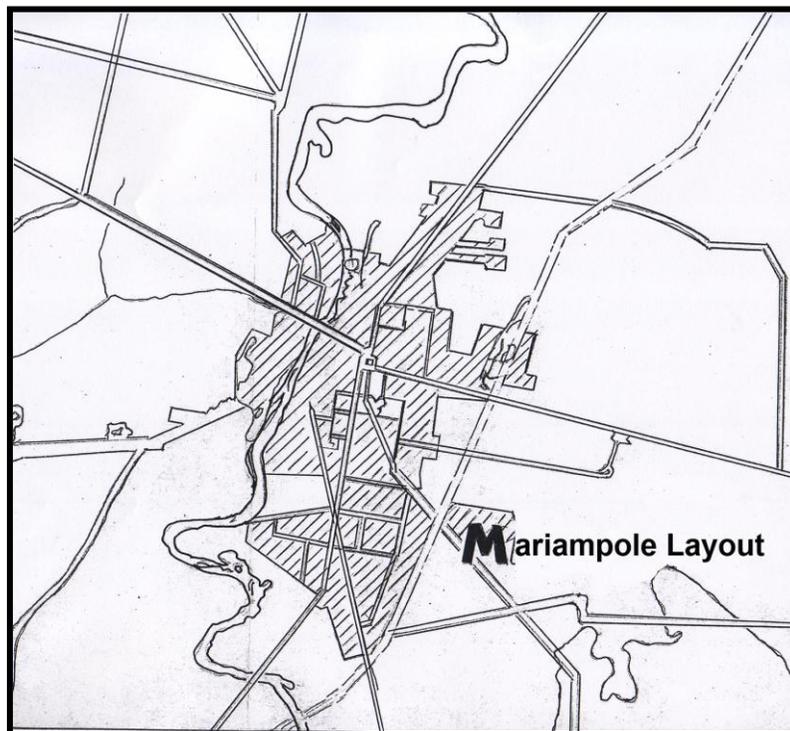
### LOCATION OF OLD MARIAMPOLE

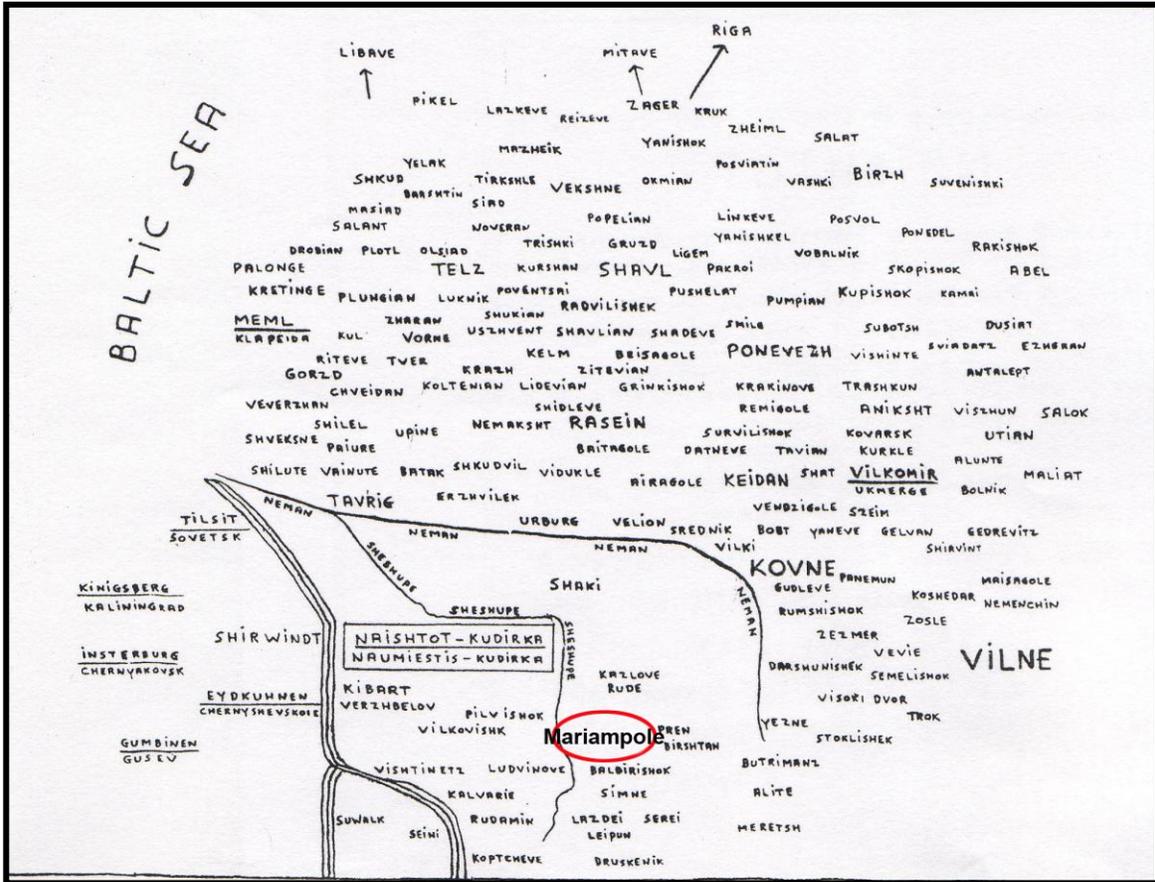
Old Mariampole, located about 100 miles southeast of the Baltic Sea, was the district capital within the *Kovno/Kaunas Gubernya* [province] in southern Lithuania.<sup>10</sup> Mariampole was 34 miles southwest of *Kovno*, 21 miles from *Virbalis/Virbaln*, the town on the border with Germany, and 10 miles north of *Kalvarja*.<sup>11</sup> Mariampole was set in the midst of forested hills on the banks of the *Sheshupe* River, a tributary of Lithuania's main river, the *Neman*. The main road from St. Petersburg to Warsaw, laid in 1829, traveled through the town, and connected it to *Kovno*. In 1923, Mariampole was connected with *Kazlu-Ruda* and rail lines between Berlin, Warsaw, and

Moscow. Mariampole was a stop on the railroad from Kovno to Koeningsberg on the Baltic Sea.



FOUR PROVINCES OF LITHUANIA UNDER RUSSIAN RULE. 1843–1915





REGION AND LANDMARKS IN RELATION TO THE TOWN OF MARIAMPOLE  
 MAP WAS DRAWN FROM CHILDHOOD MEMORY BY RALPH (RACHMIEL) GOLDBERG, CHICAGO 1971.

## MARIAMPOLE HISTORY

Mariampole was a relatively young town by the standards of Lithuanian history. On one side of the river the village of Starapole, which means “old field” in Russian, was founded in 1736, and in 1756, the new nearby village was settled on the other side of the river around a monastery named “Marian Fathers.”<sup>12</sup> The village was later called Mariampole from the name of the monastery. In 1792, the two villages merged and were granted “the privilege of town” with the name “Mariampole.”<sup>13</sup> In 1797, there were 1178 residents and 139 homes in town. At the end of the eighteenth century, Mariampole was still a small village, a *shtetl* [a small town with a large Jewish population].<sup>14</sup>

In 1795, after the partition of Poland, Mariampole was included in the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> During the Prussian rule (1795–1807) Mariampole was a regional center ruled by the Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1815). In 1815 after the withdrawal and defeat of Napoleon all of Lithuania, including Mariampole, was incorporated into the Russian crown. For the next century, Lithuanians resisted the oppressive practices of the Russian Tsar.

In 1915, during World War I, the German army occupied Mariampole. At the end of World War I, the Treaty of Versailles (November 1918) recognized the independence of the Republic of Lithuania, the territory which included Mariampole. In 1940, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), established in March 1922, occupied Lithuania, including Mariampole. The country came under the political and administrative control of the Soviet Union. This arrangement remained intact until the country was invaded in 1941 by the Wehrmacht of Nazi Germany, destroying all economic and community life in Mariampole. Between late 1944 and early 1945, the Soviet Union again annexed Lithuania. The town name was changed to that of the Communist underground leader, Kapsukas. Forty-six years later (1991) when Lithuania regained statehood, the traditional name, Mariampole, was once again restored.

#### SETTLEMENT OF JEWIS IN MARIAMPOLE

In the second half of the seventeenth century, farmers began settling along the left bank of the Sheshupe River. In 1766, they established the first synagogue in the area. According to statistics in Joseph Rosin's *Mariampole Yiskor Book*, by 1840 seventy-six percent of the almost three thousand inhabitants were Jewish. The Jewish population continued to grow in the 1850s and 1860s, reaching 81 percent of the town's total population.<sup>16</sup>

The town of Mariampole was small in 1856, but had a large percentage of Jews. Then in 1897, fifty years later, there were a great many more non-Jews living there; The Jewish population grew as well, but its proportionate share of the total population was less, that is, the non-Jewish population grew at a faster rate. One obvious reason is pogroms and Jewish emigration. Jews left Mariampole and went elsewhere to Western Europe or abroad.

Located near the German border, Mariampole became one of the most prominent and famous cultural towns in Lithuania. The aroma of lilacs filled the air in May.<sup>17</sup> The gardens of the Mariampole park were renowned for their beauty, and its rabbis were well respected not only in their community but in the wider Jewish Lithuanian world as well.<sup>18</sup>

The persecution of Jews in Russia took on greater vigor after the assassination of the liberal-minded Tsar Alexander II in 1881. The amiable Tsar was succeeded by his son, Alexander III, who wanted the Jews either eliminated or converted to the Orthodox Church.<sup>19</sup> Between 1881 and 1884, in response to Russian pogroms (physical violence against Jews and destruction of their homes, businesses, and synagogues) a great number of Jews were either deported to Siberia or emigrated from Russia. The non-Jewish population continued to grow in numbers but by 1897 about half the town's population was Jewish. Between 1881 and 1925 many emigrants from Mariampole sought to escape anti-Semitism and economic oppression by emigrating to Palestine while some sought a new life in other parts of the world, including the United States.

**IMMIGRATION  
TO UNITED  
STATES**

Many Mariampole immigrants came to the United States seeking economic opportunity. Between about 1850 and the early 1900s, Chicago stood at the hub of U.S. midwestern economic expansion.<sup>20</sup> With increased industrialization came a massive demand for labor, attracting immigrants from all over Europe, especially Eastern Europe. By 1925, eighty percent of Chicago's immigrants and their children were of Eastern European descent.<sup>21</sup> Usually, a chain of immigrants came from the same geographic area. An earlier arrival immigrant sponsored other family members. Jews sought to immigrate wherever they could find relatives.

Most of the Mariampoler Jews came to America between 1880 and 1921, before U.S. legislation in 1924 established severe quotas effectively closing immigration from Eastern Europe. The majority of Jews had emigrated from Russian-controlled areas before 1904 to escape conscription into the Tsar's army.

A documented Mariampole immigrant, Duber Ginsburg, founded Chicago's Mariampoler *shul* [synagogue], Ohave Sholom Mariampole, in 1870. In 1874, the Mariampolers organized their own cemetery in Oakwoods on Chicago's south side.<sup>22</sup> In 1892, the already established Ohave Sholom Mariampole merged with the Anshe Kalvarier *shul*, which had lost its building when 12<sup>th</sup> Street (now Roosevelt Road) was widened, and the newly merged *shul* was named Anshe Sholom Congregation, informally called "The Mariampole *shul*." At the time, it consisted mostly of old country Mariampolers.<sup>23</sup>

The early immigrants found solace living among a homogeneous Jewish community. During the 1920s, the majority of Jewish immigrants lived on the west side of Chicago in an area that became known affectionately as Little Jerusalem.

**MARIAMPOLER  
AID SOCIETY**

In 1907 a group of Mariampolers living in Chicago learned that a recently arrived peddler's horse had died and that the man was thereby deprived of earning a living. The Mariampolers called a meeting and raised enough money as a loan so that he could buy another horse. The identity of the peddler was kept a secret and the loan was repaid in installments. Other Chicago immigrants were also in need—unable to pay rent, a gas bill, or provide for other bare necessities. Recognizing these and other hardships, the Mariampolers decided to found a permanent organization to help their *landslayt* [fellow townspeople] in need. Thus, the Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.), *landsmanshaft* [association of immigrants originating from the same hometown]<sup>24</sup> was launched on June 7, 1907.<sup>25</sup>

**MARIAMPOLER  
AID SOCIETY  
BULLETINS**

Mariampole immigrant Albert Margowsky, who settled in Chicago in 1911 when he was 17, served as president of the Mariampoler Aid Society in his later years. Margowsky inaugurated the publication of the little newspaper, the *Mariampoler Aid Society Bulletin* (M.A.S. Bulletin) in 1944 and continued editing and publishing the bulletins until his death in June 1962.

Harold L. Passman, the son of Albert's sister, Ella Passman (née Margowsky) of Chicago, then took over until the end of his life in February 1975. After that, Harold's son, Chicago-born David Passman, assumed the responsibility until 1997, when the society disbanded and publication of the bulletin ceased.<sup>26</sup> Although others had contributed to the bulletin's contents, almost all of the entries were translated from Yiddish into English by the bulletin's editors and their associates. These M.A.S. Bulletins and yearbooks are now housed at the Chicago History Museum.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout its fifty-three years, the M.A.S. Bulletin served as an indispensable organ of communication for Mariampoler immigrants and their descendants. They shared their joys and sorrows, as well as memories of their hometown in Eastern Europe. These recollections permit us to learn how the Mariampoler Jews lived in their native town. The bulletins served as newsletters that conveyed the needs of their *landslayt* around the world and solicited responses from other Mariampolers to fulfill the needs of displaced Mariampolers. The bulletins reached far away to Mariampolers in Brazil, South Africa, Australia, France, Belgium, England, Mexico, Canada, Israel, and many parts of the United States.<sup>28</sup>



**PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR THE 51ST MARIAMPOLE AID SOCIETY ANNIVERSARY REUNION, (CHICAGO, 1958)  
SAM AND DORIS (GITTELSON) TRAVIS, (MIDDLE ROW, LEFT), BESSIE (LEVIN) TRAVIS (BOTTOM ROW)**

**LANGUAGE OF  
THE  
MARIAMPOLERS**

Yiddish is a middle high German language written with Hebrew characters and was the pre-World War II vernacular of most Ashkenazi Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. This language eased communication among Jews during their migrations regardless of geographical and national origin. It also enabled immigrants to identify each other as Jews.<sup>29</sup> Yiddish was the primary language spoken among Mariampoler Jews.

In the M.A.S. Bulletins, the documented remembrances are sprinkled with words in the immigrants' birth language, Yiddish. To retain authenticity in this essay, the Yiddish and

occasional Russian, Lithuanian, and Hebrew transliterations expressed in the bulletins are italicized. The first use of the foreign word is followed by its English translation shown in brackets.<sup>30</sup> The Yiddish transliterations are as specified by YIVO, the Yiddish Scientific Institute for Jewish Research.<sup>31</sup>

## HISTORY FROM IMMIGRANT RECOLLECTIONS

### RELIVING THE PAST

The following essay paints a portrait of everyday life in old Mariampole. We picture the interiors and exteriors of their homes, the meals they prepared and ate, how they managed their households, educated their children, resolved conflicts, dealt with birth and death, and other aspects of their lives including marriage, sickness, travel, business, and recreation. We see how they observed the Sabbath. While Jewish holidays played a major role in the lives of Mariampoler Jews and the recollections written in the M.A.S. Bulletins, the stories about these religious festivals are not included in this edition because notwithstanding some historical variation, the religious festivals are rather similar to the holidays observed today by orthodox Jews throughout the world.

What was life like for Jewish families who lived in Mariampole during the decades between 1894 and 1911?

### FAMILY LIFE

### CONSTRUCTING A HOUSE

Building an ordinary one story house took three or more years to complete.<sup>32</sup> First the builder and his helpers went to the forest where they cut down the necessary trees. After measuring and remeasuring, they carefully sawed, chopped, hewed, and planked the trees until they formed the needed logs, boards and siding. This took about three to four months. Then they brought the lumber to town and laid it out on the market place field and the joists and planks were fitted, taking another three to four months. Next came the foundation, and sometimes it was necessary to dig a cellar. Another three or four months was needed for framing the building. The siding, brick laying, and plastering consumed yet another three or four months. The roof, floors and final touches took additional time.

### THE HOME AND FURNISHINGS

At the entrance to an average home in Mariampole stood a *kayle* [barrel] filled with drinking water with a copper dipper on top, as well as an *almer* [cabinet that stores food] nearby. The *almer* contained *ayngemakhtsn* [preserves] with a warning: "*M'zol dos nit darfn.*" ["You should not get into it."] Next, situated in the kitchen was a *koymen* [chimney] and a *plite* [brick or earthen stove]. In winters and nights, below the *kamen* [brick fireplace used as an oven] sat a *katukh* [chicken coop] with eggs.<sup>33</sup> A container for pots and pans was accessible. Located nearby were

a *shlof bank* [folding bed] usually painted red. When the lid lifted, the bench interior became a bed with the straw tick mattress and pillow in the drawer below. There was also a table, a kerosene lamp, and a *politse* [shelf] for pots and pans. Next to the kitchen came the living room. Its walls were decorated with pictures and photographs of the *mishpokhe* [family]. The furniture consisted of a *vant zeyger* [wall clock] with weights hanging down and a chain to wind it up, a *kushetke* [sofa] which served both as a bed and hope chest, tables, chairs, wooden clothes closet and a *kakhloyvn* [tile oven]. The bedrooms were mostly side rooms: one shared by the parents with the infants and two others, one for girls and one for boys.<sup>34</sup> The furniture was simple, plain and wooden and passed on from generation to generation. Some homes had a commode. Each home had a bookcase filled with books, mostly of a religious nature. The walls were either calcimined or covered with paper.

A *sheygen* [woven runner] covered the floor. On Saturdays some families spread fine yellow sand on their floor *lekoved shabes* [to honor the Sabbath].

Homes were lit by kerosene lamps. The *blitslomp* [bright lamp] hung from the ceiling was lowered or raised by a pulley attached to a heavy weight on the bottom. The glass-bowl kerosene lamps and glass chimney lamps produced smoke and their wicks had to be trimmed continually.<sup>35</sup> The smoke and soot needed to be wiped from inside the chimney.

Around 1905 a new resource, carbon gas, was used to illuminate the streets. The first direct electric light was powered by a generator in a steam-driven flourmill. The small and dim bulb flickered constantly and a kerosene lamp was kept on hand if needed. After the German occupation during World War I ended, the marketplace was lit by electricity.

The streets in Old Mariampole were paved with cobblestones and the main highways leading out of town were paved with crushed stone.<sup>36</sup>

## WEEKDAY MEALS

In the mornings, mothers prepared lunches for their children to take to school. Usually the meal consisted of bread smeared with *shmalts* [chicken or goose fat], and *kompot* [fruit dessert] as well as juice.

**Herring:** *Litvaks* [Lithuanian Jews] prized a slice of herring. Smoked, pickled, or chopped herring were popular home meals. Smoked fish alone created a meal. Fish was less expensive than beef and was a popular dish because the area was blessed with nearby rivers and the Baltic Sea. When the ice broke up in the spring some men reduced their cost of living by catching fish in a big barrel.<sup>37</sup>

If the price of herring was too expensive for the family, then a *kopeke* worth of brine from the herring barrel with a potato had to suffice. Potatoes and herring were considered, in Hebrew, *maykhl meylekh* [food fit for a king].

**Potatoes and Vegetables:** The humble potato was a favorite staple on Mariampole tables. It was filling, plentiful and, most importantly, cheap. The folk song “*Bulbes*” [“Potatoes”] immortalized the potato: “*Zuntik bulbes, montik bulbes, dinstik bulbes, mitvokh bulbes, donershtik, un fraytik bulbes, un shabes, bulbe kugl.*” [“Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday potatoes, and Saturday, potato pudding.”] At Chanukah, *latkes* [potato pancakes] were served. Oftentimes, potatoes and pickles were served together as a meal.<sup>38</sup>

If the family had a cellar, they put away food for the winter, usually a barrel or two of sauerkraut, a keg of pickles and a few bags of potatoes, beets and carrots.

**Soup and Beans:** When resources are low a winter recipe could be created *groypn mit gornit* [together with nearly nothing], using only a few ingredients such as a pot full of water, a handful of barley, an onion or two, and pepper or just with hot water and fat. When boiled, it was served with plenty of pieces of bread and a spoonful of *shmalts*.<sup>39</sup> Stale bread was made into bread soup. *Gekokhte arbes* [boiled chick peas] were another popular meal.

**Pickles:** The lowly pickle had a place of honor in the Mariampolers’ diet. Nearly every household prepared a barrel of pickles, and women took great pride concocting unique *zoyer* [sour] pickle preparation methods.<sup>40</sup>

**Tea:** A favorite brew in Mariampole homes was tea. It might be used as a medicine, as a warming agent in winters, and for cooling in summers. It was handy for entertaining visitors. Tea washed down a heavy meal. From Friday until Saturday afternoon tea time, the tea kettle was kept hot in the neighborhood bakery. Tea served as a filler, especially when hardship struck.<sup>41</sup> When nothing was available to drive away hunger, bread and a reliable glass of tea might fill an empty stomach. The government, under Russian control, derived a generous income from duties on tea. However, thanks to smuggling from across the German border, not all of the tea came burdened with taxes. A few families made their living by bootlegging tea. My paternal aunt Bessie Trivasch (née Levin) took pride in telling the story of how in her youth she carried tea in her bosom across the border.

An account of a black market operation in Mariampole described how Fedorov, a local non-Jewish *zhandarm* [policeman], was aware of smuggling but seldom made arrests. Instead, Fedorov warned people when officials contemplated a raid. Officer Fedorov and the Jews lived by a code of protection. One of Fedorov’s female subjects wore a *fatsheyle* [huge shawl] under which she carried her stock of tea. When Fedorov sensed danger, he warned her, “*Ram oys dem khomets, me geyt zukhn dem afikoymen.*” [“Hide the contraband, there’s going to be a search,” literally, “clean out what’s not fit for Passover; they’re going to look for the hidden Passover matzo.]

**Goat's Milk:** Among the most popular animals in old Mariampole were *tsign* [goats]. They were inexpensive to own, since they ate whatever the family could afford, such as potato peelings, or they foraged for themselves. During the summers children enjoyed taking the goats grazing. The goats earned the title “the poor man's cow,” as they nourished the family with rich milk within the family budget. Goats’ connection with people inspired folk songs, with metaphorical lyrics such as, “Under the cradle, there stands a snow-white goat.”<sup>42</sup>

#### MANAGING THE HOUSEHOLD

Even on ordinary days, managing a household in old Mariampole was a chore. A woman’s job was never done. Besides her household duties, she cared for a large family. My grandmother, Dvora Trivasch, bore and raised five girls and five boys. Most families’ incomes were slim, and these women who managed large households found ways to economize on food and clothing by reusing goods so that nothing was wasted.

The Yiddish-speaking women mingled among their non-Jewish neighbors as they shopped in the market, and thereby, learned to speak bits of Lithuanian and Russian.

Middle-class households with young children employed servants, often several at once. The higher the class, the more servants the family had. Most Jewish families had at least one “maid-of-all-work,” a non-Jewish peasant girl from a nearby village who lived in the house, did the heavy cleaning, and tended the fires. Typically, she lit the fire on the Sabbath so the Jews could abide by the scripture and avoid work on this Holy Day.

#### HEATING THE HOUSE

Harsh winters brought the challenge of searching for wood, turf, and old grass to kindle fires and provide warmth. Fuels were burned in brick or tile ovens for heat. Some people experienced headaches from the carbon monoxide fumes of burning turf.

Chimneys required cleaning. Accumulated soot in chimneys often caused fires, and many homes burned down. The *koymen kerer* [chimney cleaner] walked through town with ladders, brooms, brushes, and a long rope to which a weight was tied for pushing out the soot. The chimney cleaner’s face was usually black from charcoal, and descriptions of his appearance were often associated with an aura of mystery.

#### CLOTHING

Outgrown or worn-out clothes were turned inside out and made into new garments. Young, single girls sewed for customers in a shop and then they put their earnings into a family fund for their *nad'n* [dowry for a groom] and for a trousseau which they collected in a big chest.

When women left the house, they wore a huge *fatsheyle* [huge shawl]. Underneath the fabric, they carried a basket to fill with goods at the market.

If someone needed shoes, the *shuster* [shoemaker] came to the house to take *mosn*

[measurements], which were usually done with a strip of paper by tearing notches to indicate the shoe size. The upper sections of worn out boots were cut off and attached to a new pair of boots.<sup>43</sup> The *shtivl* [boots], *kamashn* [gaiters], and *knepl shtivl* [boots with buttons] took longer to make but also lasted much longer than other types of shoes.

Pious Jewish women after marriage wore artistically fashioned wigs. There were no signs of graying hair.<sup>44</sup>

In winters, people bundled up with great gray coats made from homespun wool and wore felt boots on their feet.<sup>45</sup>

**LAUNDERING** Washing clothes, a time-consuming and difficult task, was done only periodically. Preparation for washing clothes began by catching rainwater into large barrels placed beneath the edge of the shingled roof. *Loyg* [lye, a mixture of rainwater and wood ashes] created alkaline water for washing.<sup>46</sup>

During washdays the home took on a new look. The *koymen* [fireplace] was completely cleaned out, the chicken coop beneath moved, and a tripod was placed inside the fireplace. Planks of wood were laid near the open brick oven, and large wooden washtubs with plenty of long bars of soap were positioned on the planks. A large copper *kesl* [kettle] was placed in the fireplace over a tripod.

Washerwomen came to the family home. All night professional washerwomen scrubbed and washed. From time to time, they fortified themselves with liberal portions of *rozheve* [dark bread], herring, and tea. The washing process was simple—they placed the laundry in a copper kettle, where the water was kept boiling, and in the morning the washerwomen took the clothes to the Sheshupe River or the Yevonke Creek where they rinsed and beat the washed laundry with a *prinik* (Russian) [wooden grooved trowel]. After completing the rinsing, the washerwomen brought clothes home and hung them to dry, usually in the attic.

Other laundry, when partly dry, was carted to the mangler, a person who had a contraption for drying and ironing water-laden cloth that consisted of a large wooden box on rollers and filled with rocks to weigh it down. To keep the linens smooth, they were wrapped around the wooden roller and placed under the mangle, which rolled back and forth by means of a pulley and a large wheel that squeezed out the water. When the clean laundry reached home, mothers mended the clothes and put them away ready for a weekly change.

**SAVING MONEY** Women hid coins about the house or kept money tied in their garments in a *knipl* [little knot]. The secret currency, whether a few paltry Russian gilden or thousands of rubles, was saved by thrifty women for an emergency or for when a *nad'n* [dowry] for a marriage was needed. The place where the money was hidden was known only to the woman, but she sometimes forgot the hiding place or the money was lost in a fire.<sup>47</sup>

**EARNING A LIVING** Some of the common occupations in old Mariampole mentioned in the Mariampoler Aid Society bulletins are:

**Local merchants:** of herring, sausage and delicatessen, tobacco, confection, ice cream and soda water, hardware, books, woolen goods, junk, wine, and more

**Country peddler.**

**Craftsmen:** blacksmith and tinsmith, candlemaker, bookbinder, capmaker, wig maker, cloth dyer tailor, seamstress, shoemaker, shoe repairer, printer, photographer, watch repair, jeweler, house builder, carpenter, plasterer.

**Laborer:** pack carrier, chimney cleaner, domestic, washerwoman.

**Community service:** burial society volunteer, teacher, barber, volunteer firefighter, mailman, banker/ moneylender, carriage driver, watchman, public bath for women.

**Food production:** grocer, butcher, ritual slaughter, baker.

**Professionals:** rabbi, synagogue caretaker, lawyer, judge, druggist, medical and folks doctor.

**Factory production:** sugar, rope from flax and hemp, pop, flour, lumber saw mill.

**Miscellaneous:** infantry and cavalry soldier, musician, restaurant proprietor, roadhouse owner, beggar, and hotel operator.

The old Tsarist law had prohibited Jews from owning farmland so there were only a few Jewish farmers. Nevertheless, some city Jews rented land where they could plant vegetables.

#### **SOCIAL, HEALTH AND WELFARE**

**CHOOSING A MARRIAGE PARTNER** When a girl reached marriageable age, her parents began to worry about a *shidekh* [marriageable match] for her. They feared their daughter would be *farzesn* [passed over]. The song, "*Yome*," [a girl's name] expressed the daughter's concern. People with means preferred a son-in-law who was educated. To pick a student as his daughter's husband a girl's father might travel to a *yeshive* [Jewish institution for where young men studied the Torah and Talmud], speak to the head of the *yeshive* and observe the interactions and behavior of the male students. *Sheyne eydems* [scholarly sons-in-law, literally, beautiful sons-in-law] were considered

desirable.<sup>48</sup>

Although the *yeshive bokherim* [male Talmud students] were mostly poor, the lack of finances did not matter. The future father-in-law would provide the young man with room and board and other expenses. During the engagement year, the couple might see each other only a few times.

Marriage through a *shatkh*n [matchmaker] was another way for a girl to find her *bashert* [destined] match. The job of a matchmaker was difficult. Not until the wedding was complete were the *shatkhone*s [marriage brokerage fees] certain. In the eagerness to complete the *shidekh*, the wealth of the prospective bride or groom was exaggerated. Often the father promised a cash gift to the groom that he was unable to fulfill. If the groom wanted to make sure he would not be cheated, he demanded his *nadn* before the wedding ceremony. Therefore, it often took much bargaining to make the groom go through with the wedding ceremony.

It was considered below a woman's dignity to marry a working man. A Lithuanian saying admonished, "Souhas, kriaucius ne zmogusz." ["A shoemaker and a tailor are not suitable."] The expression, "In mayn familye iz keyn *bal milokhe nit faran*" ["In my family there were no working men"], also conveyed the sentiment that suitable marriage partners were from the highly educated class. Although desired, some of the *sheyne eydems* were not as successful providers as some of the so-called lower-class working men. Many of the educated and those who adopted a lifestyle of continual full-time education had to depend on their wives to run their shop in the market and support them, while they sat in the *besmedresh* [house of prayer and study] and studied the Talmud. However, regarding the working man, the Hebrew saying declared "*bizies apey*." ["By his sweat he earns a living."] <sup>49</sup>

A man's wealth was judged by the size of his protruding stomach. A buxom hefty young girl took a man's fancy.

## CELEBRATING A MARRIAGE

Not only were the bride and groom and their families kept busy preparing for the anticipated *khasene* [wedding], but also the entire town seemed involved with the preparations. The *shames* [synagogue attendant and rabbi's assistant] was busy distributing the *bilet* [ticket, wedding invitation]. Friends and families were seeking suitable *droshegeshanken* [wedding gifts], and the bandleader and his *kapelye* [musicians] were practicing their music. The family was arranging the bridal and wedding quarters.

At last, the day of the *khasene* arrived. A wedding took a week to celebrate.<sup>50</sup> The wedding party marched through the streets to the *khupe* [canopy] under which the ceremony was performed. Usually they walked from the bride's house to *shul* and stood before the crowd of *orkhim* [guests]. The musicians played the wedding march and relatives carried lit candles. The rabbi, *khazn* [cantor], and *shames* ceremoniously awaited the bride and groom at the *khupe*.

At the end of the ceremony, the groom [*khosn*] broke a ceremonial wineglass wrapped in a cloth by stomping on it, and everyone shouted, “*Mazltov, mazltov*” [congratulations]. The musicians played *freylekhn* [cheerful melodies]. The guests were invited to the wedding house to eat *goyderne zup* [bridal soup]. The traditional *batkhn* [wedding entertainer] recited *drosho geshank* [rhymes for the wedding couple]. The *kales tsad un khosns tsad* [friends of the bride’s side and groom’s side] danced, celebrating the joyous event.

Three days after the wedding, newlyweds were invited to visit the homes of friends and relatives, a custom known as *rumpel*. If it was winter, the *kale* [bride] usually wore a new *ratond* [fur coat]. The groom looked bright in his wedding outfit with a gold chain and *zeyger* [watch], a gift from his bride.<sup>51</sup> The groom’s outfit was a tight fitting coat cut away in the front with a split back like a full dress frock.<sup>52</sup>

## RECORDING BIRTHS

*Metrikes* [birth certificates] caused worries for some people.<sup>53</sup> Parents in old Mariampole, burdened with responsibilities, sometimes neglected to register a newborn, thus creating troubles for their sons or daughters in later years. For instance, a young man who looked physically big enough to be called into the army, but could not prove his age, was taken before a military commission that *opshatsn* [appraised his age]. The army, hungry for soldiers, would conscript such a young man years before his legal age. A birth certificate also was needed for entering high school and when applying for a passport. Many children marked their birthdays based on holidays or specific months of the Jewish calendar. For example, “I was born on the *drite likhtl* [third light] of Chanukah. My birthday is three days on *el/el* [the last month on the Hebrew calendar] or during *peysekh* [Passover].” When Mariampoler Jews were uncertain about the year they were born and when they did not know their exact age, they often guessed. This proved useful for those who wished to appear younger by removing a few years from their age. My father knew he was born in August, but he was not sure if it was 1889 or 1899. His age and those of his siblings were estimated relative to events and the span between siblings’ births.

## EDUCATING THE CHILDREN

**Boys and Education:** Folks in old Mariampole took great interest in their children’s education. When a son reached age three, his father wrapped him in a *tales* [prayer shawl], covering his face to create an element of mystery. Thus, the father carried his son into the esteemed *kheyder* [religious elementary school for Jewish boys]. Here the teacher ceremoniously started him immediately on his *alefbeyz* . . . [Hebrew letters]. The teacher said, “See *yingl* [little boy], this is *alef* [letter A], this is a *beyz* [letter B],” and so on. The teacher enticed the student by promising, “If you say your *alef, beyz* [letters] correctly, an angel will throw you sweets.” Lo and behold, sweets suddenly landed on the *alef, beyz* page.<sup>54</sup>

When the sweets lost their enchantment for the little boy, the angel dropped a shiny *kopeyke* [Russian copper coin] as the boy studied his *komets-alef*, 'oh' *komets-beyz* 'boh' *komets-daled* 'doh' [rhyme to memorize the letters and vowels]. Sometimes the letters were covered with sweet tasting honey. (The folk song "*Oyfn Pripetshik*" immortalized this ritual.)

Children studied in the *kheyder* to learn to read and write the Hebrew alphabet. Then they studied from nine in the morning until nine at night, studying the Bible and Talmud. At age 10, they learned to write Yiddish.

**Girls and Education:** Girls were not given a strenuous traditional Hebrew education. If a girl went to a girls' *kheyder* for a semester or two and knew her prayers and how to write a few lines, that was considered sufficient. However, in later years, with the formation of the Jewish *gimnazyes* [secondary schools], girls also received a thorough education.<sup>55</sup> The teaching was in Yiddish, except the Talmud, which was taught in Hebrew.

In time, Jewish women in Mariampole were permitted a secular education long before other towns in Lithuania. Saul Issroff's grandmother arrived in England fluent in English, German, and French, apart from Russian and Yiddish, to the extent that she taught World War I officers German and Russian.

**Education and Finance:** Even when times were hard, tuition money was found and boys studied with the best *melamed* [children's teacher].<sup>56</sup> Tuition was the number one item in the family budget.

Families took turns, for twenty-four hours at a time, providing meals for poor students who attended *kheyder* or *yeshive* [a secondary school for boys where the Bible, Hebrew, Jewish rituals, law, and Talmud, were taught]. At the end of the nineteenth century, Russian, German, and literature also were taught in some schools. It was considered a *mitsve* [good deed] to feed a student, even if it meant providing the student with more nutritious meals than the family could afford for itself. If families lived too far away from the town school, they hired a teacher to live with the family during the school session.<sup>57</sup>

Jews in Mariampole had a democratic approach for educating all children's *Toyre lishmo* (in Hebrew) [Torah study]. The *yakhsonim* [privileged rich] and the humble poor were treated alike.<sup>58</sup> Torah instruction and secular education were sponsored by volunteers. Prominent men, mostly sons-in-law of the rich, accepted the honor of collecting charity to pay the tuition for poor children. They collected chicken feathers from the *shoykhet* [ritual slaughterer] to raise school funds for underprivileged children by marketing the feathers to be used for bedding. Children received a free education at the *Talmud Toyre* [Torah study school] sponsored volunteers.<sup>59</sup>

The qualifications for teachers of the *kheyder* were standardized. A *melamed* who taught in the

*kheyder* was required to obtain a license to teach. Money was scarce and often it was difficult for teachers to raise the rubles for the required permit. Parents who wanted to send their children to *kheyder* also had difficulty raising the funds for *shar lemud* [tuition fees].<sup>60</sup>

**Academic Schedule:** School was divided into two semesters. The spring-and-summer semester began after the *peysekh* celebration, and the fall-and-winter semester began after *sukes* [the Sukkoth celebration]. The school hours were long, lasting from nine in the morning until two in the afternoon with a lunch break, then continuing until the evening. It was dark in winters when the children finished *kheyder* and they carried *likhternes* [lanterns] to guide them home.<sup>61</sup>

**School Buildings:** In early days, only one- or two-room *kheyders* existed and were often used for a dual purpose—both for instruction and for the teacher’s dwelling.

In addition to the elementary *kheyder* in various parts of town, the *beys haseyfer* [school building], with its scholarly and capable teachers, afforded cultural inspiration to the boys. In later years, Mariampole organized a large modern *beys haseyfer* with airy classrooms on the main street and classes were taught in Hebrew.

On occasion, fights between Jewish students from their respective schools were carried on using sticks and stones.<sup>62</sup>

**Discipline:** Disobedient children at school were punished physically with the application of a *kantl* [“little edge,” straight edge ruler] on the body. When a child was struck it was both painful and shaming. *Shmaysn* [whipping] the child was also a common practice.<sup>63</sup>

**Discrimination:** A few Jewish boys had the legal privilege of attending a Lithuanian *gimnazye*, equivalent to a junior college or college preparatory school, but only when the enrollment did not surpass the quota of one Jew to ten non-Jewish students. Jewish parents were required to pay higher tuition, which paid for their son as well as a non-Jewish student. However, there were no quotas for girls in the private high schools, girls’ *gimnazyes*.

Jewish students who were not allowed to study at the Russian government *gimnazyes*, but were eager for an education, studied privately. They studied both day and much of the night and most students succeeded in taking the examinations for all eight required courses at once. On the eve of World War I, many Jewish boys and girls were admitted to the Russian secondary schools in addition to the traditional *kheyder*.<sup>64</sup>

**Apprenticeship:** Some boys went to the *yeshive* after they completed *kheyder*, but parents of most boys between 12 and 15 arranged an apprenticeship for their sons, preferably for what they considered refined trades, such as watch repairing, printing, or photography. The boys would serve without compensation for at least a year. Sometimes their parents even paid for the

training.<sup>65</sup>

**Outcome:** A rich Jewish educational life existed in Mariampole, especially between the two World Wars. German troops remained in Lithuania into 1919, even though the war ended in November 1918. Following World War I, the first accredited all Hebrew *gimnazye* in the Diaspora was established in Mariampole.<sup>66</sup> Many Jewish intellectuals who occupied prominent positions graduated from this school.<sup>67</sup>

It was rare to find an illiterate among the *landslayt* from Mariampole. The traditional value was placed on education so Mariampole Jews raised a learned generation.<sup>68</sup> Most people spoke several languages, commonly Yiddish, but also Russian, and some Lithuanian, and many learned to read and write biblical Hebrew as well. As a result, Mariampole could boast of an intelligent and educated Jewish population.

#### CARING FOR THE SICK

Sometimes sick Mariampolers traveled by train or a horse-drawn carriage to Königsberg, a German town in East Prussia about 40 kilometers away, known for its outstanding physicians. The custom of seeking a Jewish physician in Germany resulted from the fact that beginning in 1871, thousands of German Jews had graduated from the country's medical schools, then under the German Chancellor Bismarck. (By 1900, sixteen percent of all physicians in Germany were Jewish although Jews comprised only one percent of the population. Some German Jewish doctors attained fame for their research during this period.)

There was only one medical doctor in Mariampole and a *feldsher* [folk doctor] to care for the Jews who were sick. There were no nurses, and if there had been, few residents could have afforded to pay for their services. Some boys and girls in their teens, working in pairs, organized themselves in *linyos hatsedek* [lines of charity] and performed night-nursing duties. They went to the homes of the sick and watched over them, relieving worn-out family members and helping with household chores.<sup>69</sup>

The folk doctor utilized spells, amulets, herbs, and other supposed remedies to ward off sickness, as well as cupping, the application of a suction cup to flesh to remove body toxins. For severe swelling, heated *bankes* [cupping glasses] were applied to the body of an ailing person to draw blood to the body surface. When a finger was cut, a spider web was applied to stop bleeding.<sup>70</sup>

Smoke emanating from a burning piece of gauze was used to disinfect a wound. When one felt struck by an *eynore* [evil eye], it was recommended to see someone who possessed the power to talk the evil away. When a person was dangerously ill, family and friends gathered around the patient's bed and performed *opshrayen a teytn* [screaming and yelling] at the patient—the louder the better. For severe sneezing, the *feldsher* pulled the left ear and spat three times.<sup>71</sup> For sand

in the eye, the lid was pulled down to stimulate tearing. To ward off an illness, the Hebrew word *adoshem* [word for G-d] was written around the neck of a sick person. It also was advisable to visit a *gutn yid* [a good Jew] for a magical cure from a suffering illness. Two generations later, when I had a wart on my finger, my Mariampoler-born father told me to put urine on the wart to make it disappear.

Mariampolers prescribed *bobes refues* [grandmother's remedies], such as old wives' tales. One such remedy to prevent colds was placing a piece of garlic in a bag and hanging it around the neck. Worm kraut was a candy medicine given to youngsters at the beginning of each month as protection against intestinal worms and rock candy was given for coughs or colds. To drive away an evil eye from a child who suddenly became sick, it was advised to talk against the evil eye. When looking at a beautiful infant, it was advisable to spit and say "What an ugly baby."<sup>72</sup>

The Mariampoler culture interpreted and analyzed *beyze khaloymes* [bad dreams]. When a person had a disturbing dream, he gathered three friends and repeated these Hebrew words: "*Kholem toyve hazise.*" ["May your dreams be good."] His listeners answered, "*Kholem toyve hazise.*" ["Your dreams are good."] This was repeated three times to relieve the mind.<sup>73</sup>

Mariampolers bought medicine at a chemical store with its highly polished floors and rows of shining porcelain medicine jars. The medicine was packed in a box or a bottle with attached slips that stated the contents of the prescription with the doctor's and patient's names.

Mariampole had a hospital and a shelter for wanderers and visiting scholars.<sup>74</sup>

**DYING** Life was highly valued among the Mariampoler Jews. It was essential to live life to the fullest, as well as humanely and ethically to form a binding relationship with G-d. According to Jewish law it is forbidden even to move the arm of a dying man, as it might shorten precious moments of his life. The scriptures tell us, "He who takes his own life, has no part in the world to come." When a well-respected Jewish man in the Mariampole community committed suicide, the town was shocked and saddened. He was a Jewish man blessed with a wife and many attractive sons and daughters who attended the gymnazyes, and he had a well-paying job as a tailor sewing uniforms for Russian officers.

A.I. Friedman wrote in the M.A.S. Bulletin: "A malady hit this family. As the children reached adulthood, they became sick and died from tuberculosis or other diseases. The father was also infected with this disease. The family kept a cow because people believed that fresh cow's milk is a good remedy. The father, an expert tailor, sewed uniforms for Russian officers, and there was no shortage of money in this family, but the continual tragedies weighed heavy on them. One morning when the wife returned from milking their cow, she found her husband bleeding profusely from a self-inflicted cut, which he made with a sharp razor. He died shortly afterward.

His funeral was attended not only by Jews but many Russian officials, including high-ranking officers, who cried at the untimely death of their master craftsman.”<sup>75</sup>

Straight after the death, a *yahrzeit* [commemoration of death] candle was lit in the mourner's house for the ascent of the soul of the departed. If possible the funeral was soon as possible. Until the funeral, the mourner was exempted from prayers and blessings, so he can honor the dead and take care of the funeral arrangements. At the funeral, the mourner tore an outer garment, and continued wearing it throughout the *shivah* [Judaism's week-long period of grief and mourning for the seven first-degree relatives: father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, or spouse].

The men's and women's volunteer members of Chevrah Kadisha [burial society], arranged for funerals.<sup>76</sup> They prepared the bodies for burial, chanted the prayers for the dead, and collected money in tin cups at the time of the funeral. The ring of the cups and the chant “charity will save one from death” accompanied the funeral procession. The poor and pious were buried promptly without remuneration by the family<sup>77</sup>

Once the family returned from the funeral, the mourners were not allowed to do many things for the seven days. The *shivah* candle flickered during the seven days following the funeral was a period of mourning after the death. There were many rules concerning the *shivah*, which created a great interruption to one's normal routine to honor the dead and to help the mourner deal with his or her loss. The week of sitting *shivah*, the family was confined to their home and friends came for condolences.<sup>78</sup>

## RECREATION

The break in the daily drab existence were the weekly *shabes*, and holidays and the little celebrations such as a *bris* (circumcision), naming ceremony, wedding, burial society annual banquet, and military concerts in the field.<sup>79</sup>

### SUMMERS: CIRCUS, MUSIC, AND FISHING

In the summers, a *katerinshtshik* [one who grinds music from a music box] traveled with acrobats around the country and came to Mariampole. People threw coins to the performers in praise of their art.<sup>80</sup> Occasionally a circus arrived, with clowns, animals, and trick horse riders. Once an American black man came to town with the circus and intrigued the children. They had never seen a person with black skin and they believed the black color would wash off.

An old phonograph that played music caused excitement in Mariampole. The instrument was a boxlike contraption to which rubber tubes were attached. An enterprising young businessman opened a music store where people listened to the tunes.<sup>81</sup> They paid a *kopeke* to the exhibitor to hear the reproduced melodies.

During the summer, outdoor activities were prevalent. Some children bathed and swam in the Sheshupe River.<sup>82</sup> Boys made fishing lines from hairs that they tore from a horse's tail in order to try catching fish from the Yevonke Creek.<sup>83</sup> Youngsters played croquet and hide and seek in the park. A sign of summer was a Russian ice cream peddler in the street with a pot perched on his head yelling "*Sachar more Ozshone* (Moreoezhenoe) [Sweet ice cream]."

#### WINTERS: SLEIGHING AND SKATING

Mariampole winters were harsh with heavy snow and bitter cold. Streets filled with high snow drifts and in homes, ovens were heated to capacity in an attempt to warm a room. Residents often traveled by homemade box sleighs in sub-zero weather. An old horse, no longer fit for riding or carrying a carriage, was trained to pull the sleigh over frozen roads.

People were envious of sleigh owners. Some children hitched rides on the back of a farmer's sleigh, and sleighing parties were arranged for entertainment.<sup>84</sup> Happy youngsters nestled in mama's best *kapishonen* [woolen hoods] or wrapped a *bashlik* [warm head cover] tightly over their heads and ears for warmth and wore felt boots over their feet, as the driver cracked his whip and the merry party traveled through the crisp winter air.

People walked across the frozen Sheshupe River to Terputs, the next village. Youngsters wearing skates made of a piece of wood tied solidly to their shoes skated onto the river.

#### MAINTAINING SOCIAL ORDER

#### RESOLVING CONFLICTS

In the Mariampole community, grievances among Jews were usually settled by a rabbinical court. The court in the late 1800s was composed of the *dayen* [judge of religious law], a rabbi, the synagogue caretaker, and at times some uninvolved people. The court determined a compromise between the disputing parties. Verdicts were considerate of the guilty party, such that the loser of a given case was not arbitrarily forced to meet outrageous demands, but was given fair and sound rulings. All decisions were based on the principles of Jewish law in the Torah and Talmud, which were interpreted thoroughly and explicitly by the rabbinical court. Before the trial started, the *dayen* spread out a large red handkerchief that both parties were asked to touch. This ritual signified that they would abide by the rulings of the court.<sup>85</sup> When a compromise was reached, it was customary to conclude with a handshake and say, "*Sholem biyisroel*" [Peace among Jews].

An example of a grievance brought before the Mariampole rabbinical court consisted of the following: A boy worked for the bookbinder, but his parents were displeased with the training. So they apprenticed him to a photographer, a profession more to their liking. The bookbinder called the boy's father to court, claiming the craftsman had lost money on training the boy. The judge ruled in favor of the bookbinder and ordered the father to pay him 25 rubles as compensation.

This was a huge sum, yet the father complied with the ruling and paid as ordered.<sup>86</sup>

## ASSIGNING PUNISHMENT

Mariampole had two jails, one for serious criminals and the other, the city jail, for minor violators.<sup>87</sup> Jewish recruits for the army were also jailed here before they were sworn in so that they would not run away.<sup>88</sup> Most violators were imprisoned for bringing contraband merchandise across the German border. Some of these prisoners had relatives in town who brought them home-cooked meals.

In all political systems, there are enforcers who are strict and those who are lenient. In Mariampole, there was a well-known story about the *zhandarm* [policeman] named Fedorov, the likable Russian government official who had a flowing beard and patrolled the town wearing a uniform. Fedorov was a known entity in Mariampole and shared a house with a Jewish family. He spoke Yiddish fluently and was aware of the secrets of the Mariampoler Jews. He knew when a young man was damaging his body to make himself ineligible for the Russian *priziv* [army conscription]. He knew about these breaches but seldom interfered. Instead, he warned them when he sensed danger to the young man or his family.<sup>89</sup>

If a young man of 21, military age, tried to free himself from *priziv* and leave for the United States or another country, the Russian law fined his parents 300 rubles. Often it was necessary for the family to auction off many of their belongings to satisfy the claim.<sup>90</sup> When someone such as Fedorov made allowances for individuals, he often saved the family this financial hardship.<sup>91</sup>

Old Mariampole was a law-abiding and orderly town, yet on occasion, individuals as well as the community resorted to graft. Laws were enforced against Jews more vigorously and often more cruelly than against non-Jews. Specific laws applied only to Jews, which policemen enforced erratically, as they could be bribed to look the other way. For example, the government taxed cigarettes, but some Jews rolled their own cigarettes and sold them, which was against the law.

The Russian *strozhnik* [Tsar's officer and royal guard] was the boss in old Mariampole. He was the ruler of the town. His word was law and he was not averse to a little gift.

When a new official arrived in town, Jews attempted to discover his *modus operandi*. "*Tsi nemt er?*" ["Is he taking (bribes)?"] After the officer accepted his first "gift," the Mariampolers breathed more easily. Minor offenses were dismissed with the aid of a few rubles.<sup>92</sup>

## BUSINESS

### THE MARKET PLACE

"The town consisted of a market, five large and a dozen small streets and alleys, and a synagogue yard. The market covered an area of about two city blocks in the center of town. It housed all the town's business places. All larger streets, which extended on the average to three

or four city blocks, began in the market. . . . The Jews were 'townspeople.' Some of the large streets had cobblestone pavement; the other streets and the market were unpaved. On rainy days the mud was ankle-deep. . . . The immediate surroundings of the town were dotted with villages. Their inhabitants were in the main poor peasants who had to supplement their meager incomes by doing chores in town or laboring in the forests. . . . In the course of the nineteenth century conflagration destroyed homes and stores and the town was continually being rebuilt and its external aspect improved with substantial two-story brick structures.

"Before World War I, wells were covered and water was obtained by a pump. In summers, people bathed in the river, in winters in the bathhouse," according to a description of a similar community.<sup>93</sup>

The marketplace was the business center in Mariampole, as it was in most neighboring towns. Gravel and sand roads connected the villages and farms and were vital passageways to the market, the commercial livelihood of the town. The market branched out into the main streets and was surrounded by rows of two-story houses with shops on the main floor. A row of stores was in the center and, on market days, wagons laden with grain and farm produce filled every inch of the marketplace. A depot for carriages stood in the marketplace, replaced in the 1940s with autobus stands.

Businesses often thrived based on location. According to a description in *The Mariampole Yiskor* [memorial] book,<sup>94</sup> a junk business was located in one corner of the market, and flax- and hog-bristles were stored next to it. These businesses were most likely owned and operated by Jews. All of the community essentials for survival were centrally located, including a *shpirtsarmye* [firehouse] with its firefighting equipment, alarm bell, and water pump and barrels.

A drugstore was located opposite the firehouse and a bank occupied the second floor of this building in later years. A grocery, a bakery, a woolen fabrics store, a hardware and a leather goods store operated next to the drugstore. A narrow street led to the Sheshupe River, where a water pump with drinking water was located. On another corner of the market, a hotel, a yard goods business, and unidentified Gentile stores served the community. In the rear of the marketplace a tailor and a soda-water manufacturer occupied the premises.

The marketplace was divided by a narrow street. Behind the drug and tobacco stores could be found the beer hall, a restaurant, a food store, and the *besmedresh* and synagogue. Services were conducted three times a day. The *besmedresh* possessed a rich collection of books.

The public bathhouse and liquor store also were close to the market.

Bread, herring, salt, and spices were sold in the market, along with other merchandise, such as kerosene, and boots. Booths selling soda water and sweets lined the sides of the main street.

On market days there were often displays of bric-a-brac, cheap jewelry and earthen pots. Large loaves of bread, cheese, and other farm products, such as butter, eggs, and, when in season, fruit, spinach, and wheat were also available.

Behind the booths were stands to house the wagons used for hauling sand, cement, and other building materials. Both iron and structural steel were sold at the market. A farmer would come to purchase iron to build a wagon. From his *sermige* (in Lithuanian) [overcoat] he pulled out a stick the size of the hub. From his pants pocket he would produce a string with notches on it, the various lengths of the frame, springs, and so on. When all the measurements via sticks, string, and wires were completed, the farmer would go home happy with all the materials needed for the wagon he planned.

*Shetske* [chopped straw] used to feed cattle was prepared with a machine and knives worked by a large pulley wheel and was a commonly sold staple in the marketplace.<sup>95</sup>

When the roads were dry, farmers easily transported their goods into town. In winters, roadways blocked by heaps of snow, blizzards, and rain and sleet, made traveling nearly impossible. During fall and spring, when mud corroded the axles of the wagons, many Jews earned their living as a *korobeiniks* (Russian) [country peddlers] by going to farms, buying agricultural produce, and then selling it for a profit in town at the marketplace. Most of the Jews earned their living in trade and skilled labor crafts.

The marketplace was brimming with many other stands that contributed to the bustling atmosphere where sounds reverberated in a constant movement of life. Animal noises from cattle, chickens, geese, hogs, and the trotting of horses reflected the primarily agricultural character of the Eastern European economy. The cacophony of laughter of farmwomen, the commands of police directing the wagons, and the trading and interactions among residents within the community all bore witness to the vivacity of the village life. Trading continued until late in the afternoon, when the peasants who haggled and bantered with the Jewish traders finally returned home. At the end of the day, the wagons, now emptied of produce but filled with newly purchased merchandise, rolled home carrying items such as dishes, percale and gingham fabric for women's dresses, as well as boots, suits, hardware, lumber, leather, and harnesses.



MARIAMPOLE MARKETPLACE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE  
CUSTOMER, THE  
FARMER

Early on Wednesday and Friday mornings, especially in the summer, peasant farmers came to Mariampole with their wagons full of produce and livestock for sale, including hog-bristles, homespun linens, chickens, flax, and wheat.<sup>96</sup> Farm women sold eggs, butter, and *shtshav* [sorrel, a green leafy plant]. The major customer for the Jewish stores and beer houses was the *poyer* [peasant farmer]. Because of the intense competition, it was difficult even for savvy business people to earn a living. Most retailers worked hard to retain loyal customers and each store offered bigger and better bargains to lure farmers into their businesses.<sup>97</sup> Peasants haggled and bartered with Jewish traders and retailers, and storekeepers worried until a sale was finally concluded. Profits were desirable; consummating the sale, collecting the Russian monetary ruble or a *veksl* [promissory note] was the desired goal of the storeowner.

The constant need for money resulted in an exchange of enticement and continued bargaining.<sup>98</sup> For example, when a farmer entered a store, the storekeeper and his wife tried to convince the farmer-buyer what a great bargain they were offering and how their goods would benefit the farmer. Salesmanship skills were employed to land the sale, even though there was little profit in the sale and the merchandise was often sold at or below cost. In these situations, the storekeeper said, *Es zol azoy nit trefn* [it should not happen like that] after the *poyer* listened to the offer, gazed at the storekeeper who thought he had landed a sale, and after a long silence, the Lithuanian-speaking farmer would suddenly say, "*Taip, taip, bet ka maci?*" (Lithuanian) ["Yes, true, but what's the use?"] After these words poured from the farmer's mouth the sale was lost, and the merchant would sadly place his goods back on the shelf.

When a deal was finally agreed upon, buyer and seller would end their bargaining session by

clasping hands. Because literacy levels were low among the non-Jewish population, most contracts were oral.

#### TRAVELING AND INNS

There were no railroads in old Mariampole and the surrounding towns. Instead, the nearest railroad station was in Shelmi near Vilkovishk. The most notable road went straight to the Russian-German border town, Kibarti-Eitkunen, and most travel in the region was by a *karetke* [horse-drawn carriage]. All of the freight was carried by *drabines* [wagons] also drawn by horses.<sup>99</sup>

After hours of strenuous traveling, the traveler found rest at the *kretshme* [inn, tavern or roadhouse], which was an important institution, serving as both a gateway for travelers and a social arena. There were several *kretshmes* in Mariampole, usually near the end of a town on a highway where traffic was the greatest.<sup>100</sup>

In the *kretshme* both Jews and non-Jews could expect to find a *gutn bisn* [good morsel to eat] and a drink of *shnaps* [whiskey] or beer.

The horses had to be fed and watered and there was a big barn behind the *kretshme* for this purpose, as well as a place where a traveler could stay with his horse and wagon and wait until a storm cleared, or in the winters, when heavy snow clogged the roads, for the road to clear up.

The *kretshme* offered travelers lodging and shelter as well as friendly interactions with the inn owners and other residents, such as neighboring farmers who used the facility as a social club to converse and drink alcohol. Often when excess drinking occurred, customers fought among themselves, and the skilled *kretshmer* [innkeeper] mediated and quelled any brawls.

A carriage driver packed into his cab as many passengers as possible to garner a larger net profit for each individual trip. The best roads were laid with crushed stone, but most roads offered rough rides because of bumps, mudholes, and generally poor maintenance. Oftentimes, horses were overworked and undependable, and passengers had to push the carriage over unmanageable obstructions.<sup>101</sup>

#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEWS AND NON-JEWS

Jews drew their living mainly from the non-Jewish country folks and the Jewish merchant would buy produce from the non-Jewish farmer. "Generally speaking, they got along fine. [during this period]. Lithuania was mainly an agrarian economy. Russian laws excluded Jews from farming. The Lithuanian farmers produced the farm products and the Jews were traders, shopkeepers, craftsman, and so on. So Jews and non-Jews had a lot of dealings and contact with each other."<sup>102</sup> There were informal bonds of common humanity bounded by geography and interdependence of trade and habits. The Jewish young folks sang both Russian and Jewish folk songs.<sup>103</sup>



HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGES ON MARKET DAY IN MARIAMPOLE

#### RELIGIOUS LIFE

#### PREPARING FOOD FOR THE SABBATH

Food for Friday evening, Saturday lunch, and the simple meal served before sunset on Saturday had to be prepared before *shabes* [the Sabbath] began since Jewish law prohibited work on the Sabbath and lighting a fire for cooking was work.

Fridays: The Mariampoler house became a beehive of activity on Friday. Before sundown, Jews were busy preparing the home to welcome the day of prayer and rest. The *khale* [braided egg bread] was baked to a golden color and delicate texture. Fish, noodles and the *tsholnt* [Sabbath stew left to cook on low heat during the previous night] in earthenware pots were prepared.<sup>104</sup> The *tsholnt*, the hearty Sabbath lunch was often heated in a communal or baker's oven sealed with clay, where it remained until Saturday morning. Sometimes the housewife was surprised when her *tsholnt* got mixed up and that belonging to another family was brought home instead of her meal.<sup>105</sup>

To make *lokshen* [noodles], the housewife rolled the dough into the required thinness, then dried the sheet of dough, often spreading it on the family's bedding. Later, she sliced the noodles with a knife. There was a *tsimes* [vegetable or dessert stew] to cook, *heldzlekh* [chicken necks] to stuff, and numerous other chores essential for *shabes*.<sup>106</sup>

The *rebe* [spiritual teacher] began the Jewish Sabbath on Friday afternoon by walking through the market, nodding or blowing a trumpet signaling it was time for the storekeepers to close their

doors, for the workmen to lay down their tools, for the drivers to feed and shelter their horses in barns, and for everyone to wash and dress for *shabes*. The *shabes* custom to stop work even influenced the non-Jewish storeowners, who also closed their shops because of the lack of Jewish customers.

The Jewish men dressed in their *shabes* wardrobe, usually their finest clothes, they shined their shoes, and often their hair and beards were still wet from a hurried wash because of the short time between work and sundown signifying the Sabbath.

**Friday Evening:** Houses of prayer were well lit and only the men attended. At the synagogue on Friday nights, the cantor chanted the *kidesh* [blessing over wine]. Citizens bade each other “*gut shabes*” [“Good Sabbath”] and made certain that poor travelers who stood outside the synagogue door had a place to eat.

The men returned to their homes at the end of the service. Inside the windows, hanging lamps and candleholders filled with oil illuminated the houses with *shabes* spirit. The house was clean and the table was set with two *kidesh koyses* [ceremonial wine cups]. On the Sabbath and holidays, the head of the family recited the *kidesh* and led the ritual handwashing. The Sabbath was a soulful time for individuals to praise G-d and express gratitude for life, as well as an inclusive time to remember those who were less fortunate.

Bread was a symbolic part of the traditional ritual. Jews blessed the loaves of *khale*, broke the bread into pieces and passed them around the table. The gefilte fish or herring *forshpayz* [appetizer] was served. The family sat around the table waiting for the main meal and sang *zmires* [religious songs to greet the Sabbath], and “*Sholem Aleykhem*” [“Peace unto you”].

The family and guests glowed with contentment from the Sabbath spirit. Worries and tiredness and sad sentiments magically disappeared. The head of the household, the father, read aloud “*Eyshes Khayel*” [“Woman of Valor”] praising his wife for making the shabes a joyous experience. When the meal was over, the father chanted in Hebrew “*Shir Hashirim*” [“Song of Songs”]. The mother sweetly sang the melody of the *taytsh khumesh* [the Yiddish translation of the Torah]. Over time, the candles flickered out, and the kerosene in the hanging lamp slowly extinguished. The house darkened and the family slept peacefully on *fraytik bay nakht* [Friday night].<sup>107</sup>

**The Sabbath:** In Mariampole most Jews lived in the center of town near stores, whereas the Gentiles typically lived farther out. On Saturday mornings, businesses and the marketplace looked deserted because Jewish law prohibited working on Saturdays, and thus stores were closed and no wagons traveled on the roads. Instead, men and women went to synagogue. The learned and wealthy sat at the eastern wall near the Holy Ark and a *minyem* [quorum of ten adult

men] gathered for prayers. During the service, the men walked to the *bime* [platform for reading Torah] to bless the Torah and read its weekly portion.

On the way home from services, usually a child fetched the hot steaming *tsholnt* from the baker's shop.<sup>108</sup> On Saturday afternoons in old Mariampole, especially in summers, Jewish children longed to play outdoors. However, the Sabbath was a designated time to study and reflect on the Torah, Talmud, history, and other traditional teachings.<sup>109</sup> The father gathered his children to study the weekly Hebrew portion of "*Pirke-oves*" (Hebrew) ["Ethics of our Fathers"], and the story, "*Moyshe kibal Toyre mesinay*" [Moses brought the Torah from Mount Sinai.]<sup>110</sup>

**Closing the Sabbath:** The father performed *havdole* [ceremony closing the Sabbath]. He performed the ritual of pouring *bronfn* [whiskey] over the brim of a cup, which indicated a *fule vokh* [a blessed "full" week]. Mother recited, "*G-t fun Avromovinu, fun Yitskhek, fun Yankef, der heyliker shabes koydesh geyt avek, s'zol kumen a vokh fun brokhe, gezunt, un parnose*" ["G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the holy Sabbath goes away, let there come a week of blessings, good health, and livelihood"].

As the *shabes* concluded at sundown the concern for *kheyune* [earning a livelihood] began again.<sup>111</sup>

#### SACRED PLACES

The old Mariampole *shul* and nearby *besmedresh* [house of religious study] as pictured below, were surrounded by a stockade of wooden blocks and an iron fence.<sup>112</sup>

The *shul* was built like a fortress as protection against hostile mobs, and a section of it was dug underground. Russian state legislation prohibited synagogues from looming higher than churches so architects laid the synagogue foundation lower underground and Jews stepped down into the building. The synagogue building stood tall with small high windows close to the roof and contained a fine towering three-story *orn koydesh* [holy ark], a cabinet with exquisite wood carvings and gold plating for the Torah scrolls.<sup>113</sup> Beautiful biblical scenes depicting the Holy Land and illustrations of a leopard, eagle, deer and lion on a sky blue ceiling, a mother feeding her children, and other scenes were painted by artists from Warsaw and Odessa on the high ceiling.<sup>114</sup>

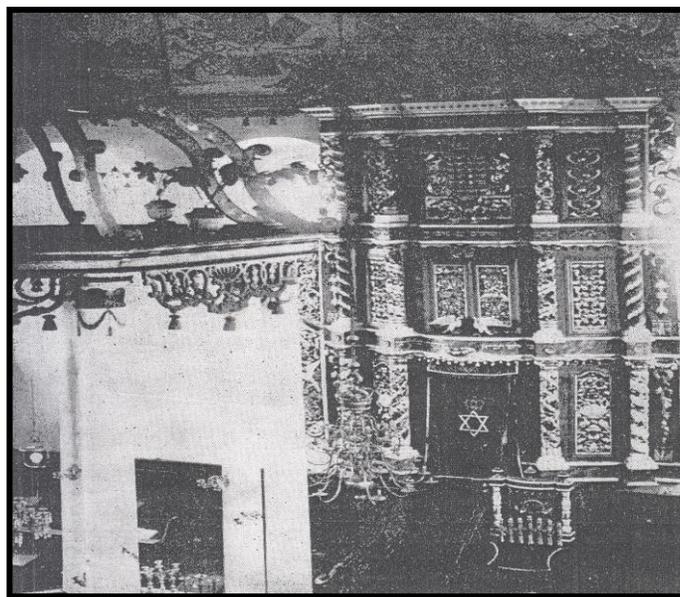
A centuries-old brass *henglaykhter* [chandelier], which held hundreds of candles and was revered as an old piece of art, hung from the ceiling. A Swedish antique dealer who had visited the *shul* fell in love with the *henglaykhter* and offered to pay US \$6,000 for the masterpiece. Even though his offer was an exorbitant sum for a community in old Lithuania, when the elders discussed the sale they decided to refuse the dealer's offer. Mariampole Jews were too proud of their *shul* and its belongings to sell them.<sup>115</sup>

During World War II, the Nazis converted the old Mariampole *shul* into a grain warehouse and

stable, and they chopped up the sacred *orn koydesh* and used it for kindling wood. In recent memory an unidentified Mariampole visitor reported to his *landlayt* in Chicago that the Lithuanians had refurbished the *shul* and used it as a meeting hall for organized labor. The whereabouts of the brass *henglaykhter* is a mystery, although a U.S. immigrant suggested, “perhaps the Nazis and cohorts melted the *henglaykhter* for making bullets.”<sup>116</sup> Even today, the *shul* has survived and the Lithuanians still use it as a storage facility.



SYNAGOGUE AND *BESMEDRESH*, HOUSE OF RELIGIOUS STUDY (OLD MARIAMPOLE)



THE TOWERING THREE-STORY *ORN KOYDESH* [HOLY ARK], A CABINET WITH EXQUISITE WOOD CARVINGS AND GOLD PLATING FOR THE TORAH SCROLLS (MARIAMPOLE)



MARIAMPOLE SYNAGOGUE, POSSIBLY AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN 2008 (PHOTO TAKEN BY CLIFF MARKS)

## POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

After Russia lost the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, a revolutionary wave hit Russia. Widespread dissatisfaction among the Russian populace surfaced.<sup>117</sup> Labor strikes all over Russia echoed in Mariampole. Although the town was considered a pious Jewish community, traditions weakened. Revolutionary activities excited Mariampole's Jewish youth, and atheistic thoughts, doubts, and confusion spread quickly. The brutality of the Russian Tsar and pogroms contributed to the attractiveness of Socialism.

**Socialism in Action:** Socialism and the principles of Karl Marx's revolutionary doctrine spread like wildfire. The slogan "Religion is the opium of the people" was taken literally by some boys and girls. Even *yeshive bokherim* were missionaries for the socialistic ideal. Socialism represented the hopes of the poor people in Eastern Europe and some adherents to the new doctrine were also *tate-mames kinder* [parents' dependent children] who depended on their *burzhuazi* [bourgeois] parents for maintenance.

The first week of May 1905 marked a fervent time for the revolutionaries. People dissatisfied with tsarist policies waged a revolution throughout the country. Revolutionary songs were in vogue, and there were protest strikes as well as frequent clashes between demonstrators and the Russian Army.<sup>118</sup> Proclamations flooded the community calling for citizens to overthrow the ruling Tsarist government. Revolutionaries called for a democratic republic and an eight-hour workday. Handbills were pasted on walls throughout the town, calling for a *manifestatsye* [demonstration] as well as a night march. A favorite secret meeting place was in Tabun, a village near Mariampole. Meetings were held in barns, fields, or homes, often when the older folks were in synagogue for Sabbath morning prayers. There were also several *shpayzkellers* [food storage cellars], which were convenient for meetings while the parents enjoyed their Saturday afternoon naps.<sup>119</sup>

**Revolutionary Parties:** Factories and big businesses were nonexistent in Mariampole. The town lacked a large working class and the few Mariampole proletarians consisted of workers in men's and women's tailor shops, a bookbindery, and other small industries mainly operated by family members. Some of these workers joined one of several competing revolutionary parties: mainly the Zionist and the *Bund* (a Jewish Socialist party).<sup>120</sup> There was also a Zionist-Socialists group whose program was to organize a Jewish republic in Palestine based on socialist principles. Each of these groups was organized by the *inteligentsye* [students of the men's and women's advanced schools]. They demanded freedom of speech and assembly, a parliament and the abolition of the tyrannical Russian Tsar. The strikers demanded that family run stores as well as other shops not to open before 8 am and close not later than 4 pm. Both Jews and non-Jews shared this concern and were members of the revolutionary parties.

**Teenage Rebellion:** Young people, still in their teens, gave vent to their rebellious energy in secret deeds, such as smoking and swimming in the nearby Sheshupe River on the Sabbath, eating *treyf* [non-kosher food], and other such irreverent acts.

One story tells of a group of teens holding a revolutionary meeting on Yom Kippur [the Day of Atonement] while their parents piously prayed in the synagogue. The hot debates stirred a ravishing hunger, and one teen went to look for food and discovered in the kitchen the *opfastn* [meal to break the fast]. Without the knowledge or consent of the hosts who permitted the meeting to be held in their family's home, some of the teens ate all the fish and meat that had been prepared for the family to break the Yom Kippur fast. When the parents returned from synagogue after fasting all day, the wife discovered to her horror that the pots and pans were empty. She sensed the guilt of her children, but wanting to protect them, she declared to her husband that the food was stolen. The family broke the fast with the untouched eggs and milk, which fortunately the young revolutionaries had overlooked.<sup>121</sup>

**Police Response:** The sight of a suspicious Russian *stroznik* [police guard] near the family home caused parental apprehension. Surprise searches were held when a member of the family, such as a young daughter, was seen wearing a long red blouse, the socialist uniform, or a young man wearing long hair.<sup>122</sup> The police looked for forbidden revolutionary literature, such as books and pamphlets that were printed underground or smuggled in from Germany. The punishment for possessing this forbidden literature was a stiff jail sentence or even banishment to frozen Siberia. However, Jewish youth were eager readers, and they hid the censored literature in their homes or kept it in outhouses. (Indoor plumbing did not yet exist.) When parents discovered such caches, they disposed of them quickly by burning. Tearful scenes and hot arguments between mother and son ensued when the son discovered that his cherished collection of pictures, books, and manifestos had been destroyed.<sup>123</sup>

**Misinterpretation of Socialism:** In a M.A.S. Bulletin, A. Austern, a Mariampoler immigrant, explained how Marxist theories, on one hand, purported a fair and just government and equality for all, but on the other hand, how this equality was often achieved at the expense of Jews:

“While some of our *statskinikes* [Jewish idealists] may not have understood completely the Marxian theories, yet their approach towards it was of a much finer nature than that of some non-Jews. To some of the latter, Marxism represented a process of equalization of personal property, especially Jewish property. This gave the non-Jewish underworld permission to take other people's possessions by any means possible, fair or foul, even through stealing. Often on market days the presence of so many visiting farmers drew to Mariampole some questionable persons. A speaker would suddenly mount on an empty herring barrel and deliver a speech: ‘Let's demand that all barns and homes, especially those belonging to Jews be left unlocked so that

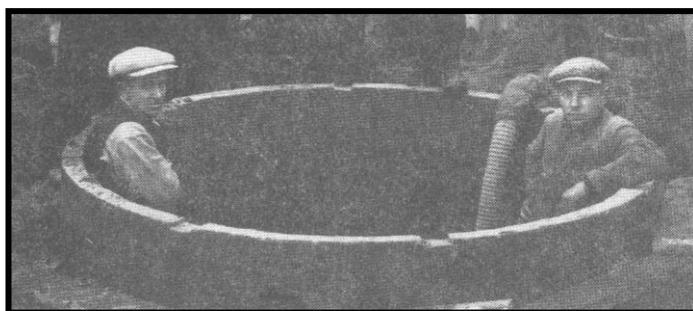
there may be freedom for all to take what rightfully belongs to all the people. Down with the *shtroznik*, the dogs who watch our every move.’ After such a speech some Jewish barns were broken into and horses stolen.”<sup>124</sup>

## RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Economic, political, and social chaos existed from 1918 to 1921 during the Russian Civil War. This conflict pitted the Communist Red Army against their opponents, the White Army, which included monarchists, constitutional democrats (the Kadet Party), and the socialist revolutionaries, predominately the peasant party. Each of the forces vied for political power.

Officers representing one of the Russian factions periodically came through Mariampole to conscript young men into the army. Leaders of the Jewish community were responsible for filling the recruitment quotas. This led to corruption on the part of local authorities who could be bribed to reduce the quota.

When my Trivasch grandparents were alerted that a Russian recruiter was coming to Mariampole to draft men for military service, my father, then of age, hid under the lid of a well until the army officer left. If a draft dodger was caught, he or his family was required to pay the high fine of 300 rubles. The informer who identified the man shared this fine with the government.<sup>125</sup>



TWO MEN IN A WELL IN MARIAMPOLE

## FROM MARIAMPOLE TO AMERICA

## EMIGRATING TO AMERICA

Between 1905 and 1907, the Russian government instituted a wave of terror, attacking Jews and destroying and confiscating their property. In Mariampole, the young Jews organized themselves and trained in self-defense, loaded lead in their whips, and concealed knives and other weapons to try to stop local ruffians from instigating a pogrom.<sup>126</sup>

The phrase “going to America” was used by Jews getting ready to emigrate from Mariampole in the early 1900s. After acquiring the second-class steamship ticket, trip preparations were set in motion.<sup>127</sup> Planning for the long voyage included many details, such as packing baggage,

preparing food for the trip, and visiting relatives in town and in neighboring towns to say farewell and gather *grusn* [greetings] for people who left the old country and were living in a new country.

When departure day came, family members had different emotions regarding leaving their homeland. Some, like the youth, were ready to leave home for good, never to return. Others were ready to leave with the dream of helping family members join them in the future. Pious Jews warned, "Do not forget G-d." Women cried. Loved ones held each other in a last embrace. Mothers held their sons tightly, possibly caressing them for the last time. Tears welled and flowed freely down fathers' beards as sons entered the *karetke*. On the day of departure, old ties were torn apart. Roots between generations were dislodged. People said, "*Zay gezunt.*" ["Travel in health."] A crowd followed the carriage to the station as if in the midst of a funeral procession, as if they would never see the person again.

## CROSSING THE BORDER

Although the Russian government did not want people to leave the country, many young Jewish men sought out relatives living abroad in the hope of finding a livable place for emigration offering better economic conditions.

A popular means of escape was to contact a government emigrant agent, a smuggler, who arranged a border crossing into the German Empire. The emigrant agent knew and worked side by side with the border guards and their officers. For a fixed fee or bribe, the guard turned his back when the person illegally crossed the border. This practice was oftentimes known as "stealing" the border. Some agents may have even arranged for steamship tickets and passage to the point of destination.<sup>128</sup>

The "smuggler" whom Mariampoler Harold Passman mentioned was "Sochel Ber" [Issachar Ber] Goldstein. "He was the person who knew, a hundred years ago and more, how to get Jews out of Mariampole and across the *grenitz* [border] into the German Empire, so they could sail to America. The most popular port of embarkation from that part of Europe was Hamburg."

Sam Goldberg, a Mariampoler immigrant to the United States, recalled the exciting moment when he left his hometown and "stole the border" near Eidkunen, a German border town.<sup>129</sup>

"I arranged with a Russian border guard to let me cross the border at Kibarti. I gave him a few rubles and he turned his head while I crossed to the German side. The elements seemed to cooperate because suddenly a storm with heavy rain and lightning broke out. In my haste to get across, I fell up to my neck in a puddle of water. Lightning struck a tree, knocking it down. Luckily, the tree fell near me and did not hit me. I was scared. I noticed a German farmer plowing and I headed for him. He had a big dog who appeared ready to bite me. I told the farmer my story and he felt sorry for me. He took me to his house and his wife served me a hot drink.

"Between Kibarti and Eidkunen, there was an international bridge. The farmer advised me not to

cross the bridge, but to stay on the German side. I gave him two rubles and he drove me to the bridge. As we neared the bridge, we heard rifle shots. I noticed my uncle on the Russian side of the bridge. I used my judgment and waited until he crossed into Germany. He lives a few *vyorsts* [kilometers] about an hour's ride by horse and wagon from the border, so he was permitted to go into Germany at any time. He was glad to see me and said it was a good thing I did not approach him on the bridge. From there all went well and I reached this blessed land, America.”

Those left behind imagined the route and the timeline of the young adventurer on the road. They imagined the frightening crossing of the border and the three-week journey on the ship crossing the ocean to America. When the first letter from the New World was received, fears and worries were alleviated. Sometimes the letter included a photograph, other times a postal money order for a few Russian rubles were sent from America. Families and friends admired the photographs, the transformation of a person's new look, and his or her new clothes. The words and images sent by mail and the much-appreciated money evoked fantasies and desires to follow in the steps of *landslayt* to America, to a new life and a new future.

#### ANTICIPATING MAIL

A popular and revered person of Mariampole was the mail carrier.<sup>130</sup> He served as the liaison between the emigrants and the families left behind. People waited anxiously for the delivery of mail, the only contact parents had with their children in faraway America. He brought messages and U.S. dollars, which helped to pay rent, tuition, and *nadn* [for a groom. Wives awaited a word from their husbands in America who had promised to send them *kartes* [a map, steamship tickets] for a voyage to America. Some people thought the mailman seemed to sense the contents of a letter: a smile for a cheerful message, grim silence for bad news. When a letter failed to arrive on time, it caused great concern. Wives anxiously looked forward to the mailman's arrival with the welcome letter from their spouse. If a wife's dear husband failed to write for a lengthy period, she became prostrate with grief for fear that she had been deserted.

A woman who did not hear from her husband in America for a long time once wrote these words in a letter: “My dear husband, why do you not write? Each day I look towards the mailman for a word from you. When I lay down I worry about the mailman and when I rise, he's my worry too.”

Mariampolers did not always wait for the mailman to deliver the mail. At night, mail was distributed at the post office after it was sorted. Each night a number of regulars came to the post office, looking for letters from loved ones.

#### LETTER WRITING

Writing and receiving letters was an art, an almost sacred ritual. When a loved one's message was received, the letter became the center of attention for the entire family.<sup>131</sup> The letter was read and reread; it was discussed, studied, and analyzed. Each word, each line, and even imaginary words were read into the message and between the lines to bring out hidden meanings. After the

family privately finished reading the letter, it was read to neighbors and friends. Once the letter was fully digested and dissected by all, it was tenderly inserted between the pages of a book or securely stored in a drawer. These precious letters, especially those written by sons and daughters in faraway America, were never destroyed, torn up, or thrown away. Photographs sent by mail provoked much excitement. Tenderly they were gazed upon and admired and later framed and hung on the wall. Mothers affectionately called these pictures her *papirene kinder* [paper children].<sup>132</sup>

The mail from America, the so-called *goldene medine* [land of opportunity, literally “golden country], was particularly heavy around *yontoyvim* [holidays] when the postman often delivered tidings of money to help folks at home prepare for the *yontef* [holiday].

Mailing a letter from Mariampole was expensive considering the money that people earned. It cost seven *kopekes* to mail a sealed letter and three *kopekes* to send an open letter or postcard but letters were answered promptly and, despite the expense, a steady flow of correspondence ensued. When it was convenient to send a letter via a friend traveling to the same destination, Mariampolers used this opportunity to save the cost of the *markes* [stamps]. Senders were assured that the messengers of this free delivery would not read the contents of their letters, because a decree issued years before by the famous Rabbi Gerhson forbade the reading on another person’s letter. This ban was religiously observed by faithful Jews.

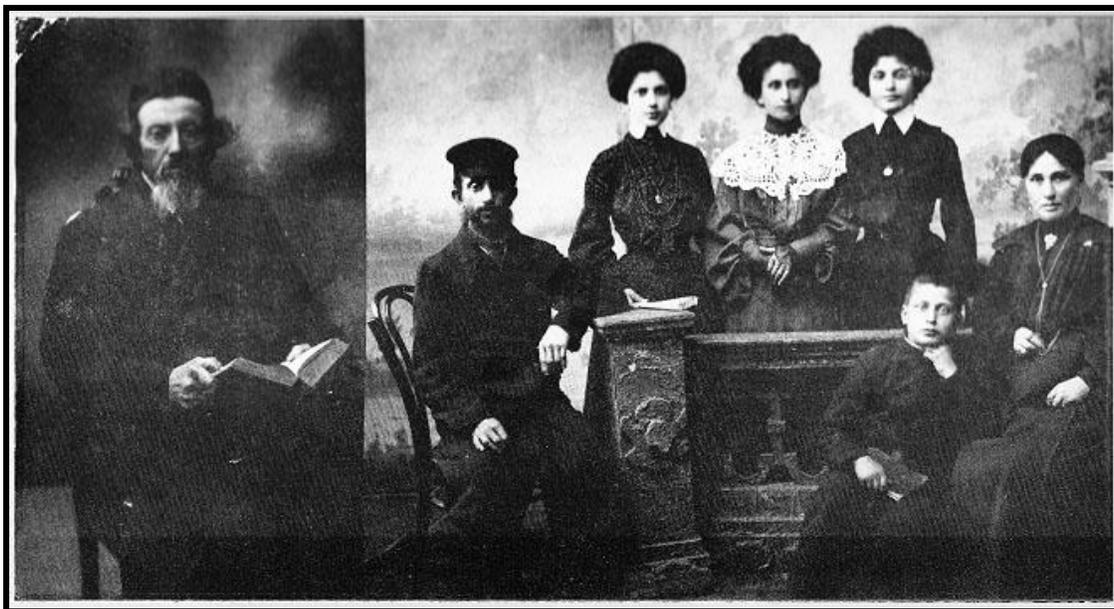
The old folksong, “*Brivele Der Mama*” [Letter to Mother], was sung with heartfelt feeling and tenderness. The theme of the song begged for compassion for the old lonesome mother who waited and waited for a letter from her son in America, for a word from her *tayer kind* [dear child]. Even after she was dead, the song continued as a plea to the forgetful son that he should recite *kadesh der mamen* [a prayer mourning of one’s mother] and how the mother would welcome the *kadesh* [prayer for mourning] in her grave.

The song struck a chord of empathy for the feelings of the mother, who supported her son’s journey leaving home and but felt much loneliness afterward.

### **MARIAMPOLE NATIVES**

Traditionally, the oldest son emigrated first and earned funds to purchase boat passage for others to the United States, first for his wife and children, later for other family members to follow. This was the case with the Passmans, Margowskys, and Triwasch families.

**MARGOWSKY  
FAMILY**



**Family of Berel and Sheina Leh Margowsky (Left to right) Grandpa Yosel Mordechai, Berel, Sarah, Matliah, Ethel, Sheina LEAH, Alterke. (Mariampole, Lithuania)**

Malke Finkelstein was taken into the home of Yosel Mordechai Margowsky who raised her. Later, she married Eli Shlomo Passiamsky. The couple and their two children immigrated to America and settled in Chicago in the late 1800s. Elke, granddaughter of Yosel Mordechai and daughter of Berel and Sheima Lea Margowsky came to America in 1900 at the age of 15. She lived in the home of family friends, Eli Schlomo Passiamsky/Passman. Elka/ Ella married Jake Passman, Eli Shlomo's son.<sup>133</sup>

**DVORE  
TRIVASCH AND  
CHILDREN**



**DVORE (SHILOBOLSKY/JACOBSON) TRIVASCH AND SIX OF HER TEN CHILDREN  
(MARIAMPOLE, LITHUANIA, ABT. 1903)**

The photograph above depicts my grandmother, Dvore Trivasch, and six of her ten children in Mariampole. They are (left to right, top row standing), Bill (age 6), Lisa (12), and Jacob (5); and (front row sitting), Dvore, my father Sam (4), Betty (2), and Erna (9). Erna sits opposite her mother in the photograph.

Dvore's husband, Moyshe Zundel Trivasch, and her two oldest sons, Oscar and Harry, born in 1885 and 1887, respectively, are not shown in the photograph. Most likely, the oldest two sons had already emigrated to the United States. Possibly the photograph was commissioned in order to send the picture to these sons. Also missing from the photograph are Dvore and Moyshe Trivasch's two youngest children who were not yet born: Sonja and Hannah, born in 1906 and 1909, respectively.

## TRIVASCH CHILDREN



(LEFT TO RIGHT,  
STANDING)  
SAM (AGE 13)  
AND ERNA (19)

(SEATED, MIDDLE)  
BILL (AGE 17), BETTY  
(10), AND LISA (23)  
(SEATED FRONT)  
DAUGHTERS,  
SONJA (6) AND  
HANNAH (3)

(MARIAMPOLE,  
LITHUANIA,  
ABT. 1912)

**Material Culture:** In the photograph on the previous page, Dvore and her children are well dressed, which is perhaps a reflection of their economic standing or could have been costumes and props provided by the photographer. The oldest daughter, Lisa, born in 1890, wears a long chain with a watch pendant. The younger children hold age-appropriate toys: Sam, born in 1899, holds a wooden rifle; Bill, born in 1896, a carriage wheel hoop; and near Betty, born in 1903, is a wooden pull-toy horse.

Dvore and her daughters are wearing blouses buttoned to their necks and skirts down to their ankles. A woman was considered unladylike at this time if she exposed her flesh. When ascending a carriage or train, females carefully placed their feet on the steps to avoid showing more than an ankle. If the outfits they are wearing were their own clothes, they were sewn by either a dressmaker or a family member.

Dvore and her eldest daughter, Lisa, both wear their long hair braided or coiled in a bun behind their heads, as women did not cut their hair.

**Family Roles:** The older daughters, Lisa and Erna, helped care for the younger children while their mother managed the family business.

Dvore and her husband, Moyshe, owned a *kretshme* where they sold whiskey and food. However, Moyshe, like most educated men, often spent time in religious study at the *besmedresh*, leaving the work at the inn for his wife and sons.

## TRIVASCH FAMILY MOVES TO BERLIN

Despite a rich culture, the Jewish celebrations and spiritual rituals and holidays, once the Germans controlled the country during World War I Mariampole was no longer a safe place for Jews to live. German policies to occupy Lithuania emerged in 1915 at the start of World War I.

German officials implemented Jewish exclusions based on current political and economic demands and perceived stereotypes regarding Eastern European Jews. The German occupation policy restructured the economy to exclude Jews from trade.<sup>134</sup>

It was fortunate for the survival of our family that our grandparents and their children left Mariampole after World War I. It is unclear exactly when they moved to Berlin which offered better cultural and economic opportunities. Grandmother Dvora Trivasch probably wanted to avoid the risk that her sons might be pressured into joining the Russian military. Thousands of Jews left the Russian empire and Lithuania with the retreat of the German Army after 1918. Borders were porous, and escape to Berlin was possible through bribery. Since Mariampole and Berlin were both under German jurisdiction until 1920, the Trivasch family could travel more easily to Berlin through East Prussia. The Warsaw-Kovno Highway cut through the center of Mariampole and the roads branched to the German border.

Little is known about our grandparents' actual route of emigration. They might have traveled by train to Königsberg and then to Berlin, a distance of approximately 750 kilometers from Mariampole.



**EUROPE AFTER THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES SHOWING STATE OUTLINES, 1918–1926,  
TRACKING THE TRIVASCH FAMILY’S MOVE FROM MARIAMPOLE TO BERLIN**

**TRIVASCH  
DESCENDANTS  
AND FAMILIES**

Work in America: When Dvora's two oldest sons emigrated to America and settled in Chicago, they brought a little family business capital with them. Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe were risk takers as were Dvora's sons. Supplemented by bank loans, three of her sons each

bought a tavern, a working environment where they could use their business and organizational experience from the family-owned kretshme in Mariampole. (Two other sons worked in their brothers' taverns.) Owning a business was one of the opportunities available to Jews with capital in the new society. From their work in Mariampole, they brought with them the ability to learn a new language and to figure out the needs of their customers who frequently spoke Lithuanian and Russian. Learning a new language, English, and adapting to the needs of others were advantages in the American economy. In the 1920s and 1930s, sometimes if customers drank too much they shouted anti-Semitic comments at my father, whose Yiddish accent and facial features identified him as a Jew. Sam had hired a non-Jewish bartender and this may have reduced prejudice against a Jewish-owned business.

**Youngest Daughters:** Dvora lived to see all her daughters marry eligible and decent men and to see her grandchildren born. Like most Mariampoler Jews, she encouraged her daughters to marry educated men.

Dvora had sent her youngest daughters to study at universities. Betty studied librarianship in France and subsequently married her first cousin, a dentist, Julius Jacobson. Marrying first cousins was an acceptable practice among Jewish families.

**Oldest Daughters:** Lisa married Leo Lissovsky during World War I, while the family was already living in Berlin. Since the Lissovskys were unable to obtain visas to the United States, they reluctantly went to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Erna married Soli Engel, a prosperous pharmacist in Berlin. The Nazis confiscated his business in 1936. When Soli witnessed the rising anti-Jewish legislation, he tragically took his life by ingesting poison.

In 1938, Dvora left Berlin and immigrated to Chicago with her widowed daughter, Erna, and bachelor son, Jacob.

**Daughter in Nazi-Controlled Poland:** Unlike her siblings, Sonja, and her husband, Joseph Menzel, and their young daughter, Suzanne, remained in Europe during the Nazi era. Joseph had owned dense forestland and a sawmill and was a co-owner of a lumber manufacturing company in Zalucze, Poland. Consequently, the Menzels had lived a good life. The Nazis gained control of Poland in 1939, making it impossible for Jews to leave Europe. The Menzels survived the Kolomea/Kolomiya ghetto in Nazi-occupied Ukraine. Miraculously they escaped the Nazi terror when they were hidden underground by their non-Jewish nanny, who fed and cared for the family. They remained in the basement for nineteen months, until they were finally liberated when the Russian allies liberated the area in 1944. Sonja, Joseph, and Suzanne went to the nearby town of Czernowitz, Ukraine, where Joseph's cousins were living. Joseph died in 1945 as he was

unable to obtain insulin for his diabetes. Sonja and Suzanne remained in Czernowitz for one and a half years, before moving to Brussels, Belgium, where Joseph's sister lived. After a long search by their American siblings and a five-year wait for visas to the United States, in March 1951, Sonja and her daughter emigrated and arrived in Chicago. The family reunion generated a grand celebration for the Trivasch family and members of the Mariampoler Aid Society.

**Death of a Matriarch:** Throughout her adult life, Dvore suffered with a heart problem. In October 1942, at age 81, Dvore died of a heart attack. She was buried in Chicago's Rosemont Cemetery family plot where her sons, Harry, Oscar, and Sam were also buried. In her final years, Dvore was remembered as a frail but self-possessed woman with a graceful, matriarchal presence. Her sons and daughters had been devoted to her and supplied her every need.

#### TRIVASCH GENEALOGY

Fortunately, all of Dvore's Mariampoler-born five daughters and five sons were able to leave Europe before the Nazi Holocaust and they survived. Eventually, nine of her children settled in Chicago. (The tenth, daughter Lisa and her family lived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.) Eight of Dvore's Mariampole-born children married in Chicago and six of these had biological families. (One son, Jacob, remained a bachelor, the eldest son, Harry, was childless, and Hannah adopted a son.) Oscar married native Mariampoler Bessie Levin. She provided many of the Mariampoler Aid Society services and was frequently mentioned in the M.A.S. bulletins for her contributions to the society.

#### FIRST GENERATION AMERICANS

The children born to the Mariampole Trivash immigrants were first generation Americans with the surname "Travis." Despite their parents' educational limitations and struggles for financial success, each of the eight first generation children obtained a college education and trained or worked in productive positions in society: four in education, two in ophthalmology, and one each in finance, oral surgery, chemistry, travel planning, and counseling psychology. This generation moved from Chicago and by the following generation, Travis descendants lived in thirteen U.S. states. Their occupational contributions to society encompassed certified financial planning, theatre company management, marriage and family therapy, cardiac nurse management, medicine, rehabilitation counseling, traffic management in industry, truck driving, hair styling, IBM project management, genome science research, software development, advertising consultant, sales executive for voting machines, professional photography, chemistry, Russian immigrant management, and university professor. Many of this generation married non-Jews and only a handful of this generation retained a connection with Jewish institutions.

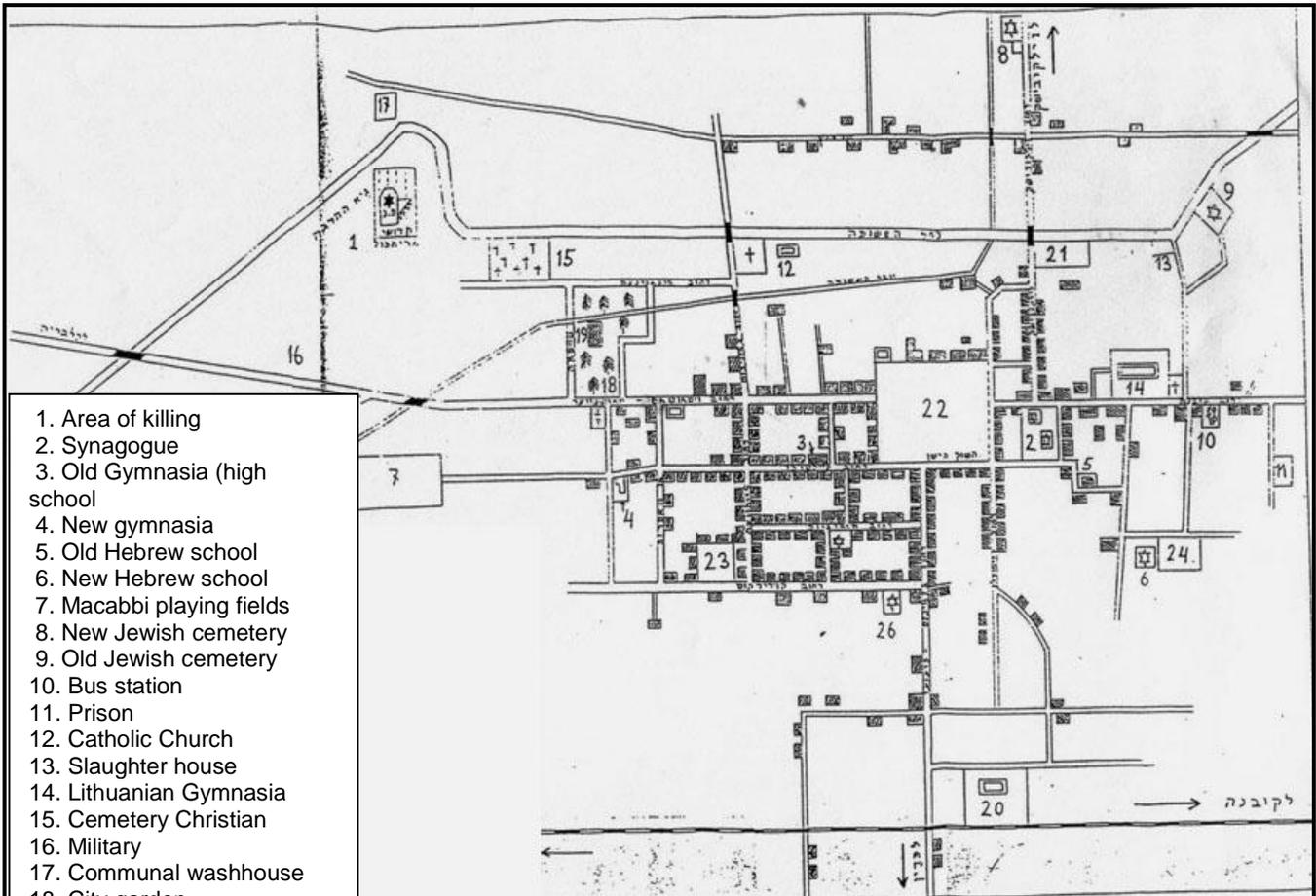
#### REVISITING MARIAMPOLE

A *landsman* [countryman] who survived the destruction of Mariampole visited his hometown after

the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was established and Lithuania, including Mariampole, was annexed. He sent the following letter with a description of the town, then renamed Kapsukas, after a Lithuanian underground Communist leader:

“There’s a big building boom there now. Houses and homes, government and privately owned are going up like mushrooms. The least expensive thing there is housing since most of the real estate belongs to the government. Clothes and shoes are prohibitive, since their cost is above the reach of the average person. There’s only a skeleton left from the large Jewish population that was once in Lithuania. The once agricultural Lithuania is fast becoming industrialized. Factories of all kinds are opening up. Mariampole is entirely rebuilt with new industries. It would be hard to recognize. There’s no Jewish life in our hometown, as there’s a lack of Jewish activities all over the country. The martyrs’ graves are still neglected. No monument is over them. There they lay, our brothers and sisters, as a silent protest. The few Mariampoler Jews who survived, live in Kovno and Vilno. The terrible ordeal they endured made most of them hard and bitter and suspicious of each other.

“The gifts which some of us receive from our Chicago (sic. Mariampoler descendants) landslayt are a morale lifter. It rebuilds confidence when one gets a package from you, he and his family cry for joy, and it is not so much what the package contains, as the knowledge that there are still friends thinking of us.”<sup>135</sup>



1. Area of killing
2. Synagogue
3. Old Gymnasia (high school)
4. New gymnasia
5. Old Hebrew school
6. New Hebrew school
7. Macabbi playing fields
8. New Jewish cemetery
9. Old Jewish cemetery
10. Bus station
11. Prison
12. Catholic Church
13. Slaughter house
14. Lithuanian Gymnasia
15. Cemetery Christian
16. Military
17. Communal washhouse
18. City garden
19. Cinema
20. Railway station
21. Horse market
22. Square
23. General market square
24. Wood Market
25. Sugar storage place
26. Jewish school

**MARIAMPOLE TOWN MAP OF 1941**  
 FORMATTED FROM A SKETCH MADE BY AN UNIDENTIFIED SURVIVOR

**CONCLUSION** “No matter how many times their names have changed, Mariampole and other Lithuanian towns still mean something to descendants who seek out their past. Our Jewish people, our dear ones, our relatives are gone, brutally murdered [by the Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators] yet someplace deep within us memories of the old Mariampole and surrounding towns remain. Preserving the history in this essay helps commemorate a vital community grounded in Jewish culture and family life—a life that once was, and never will exist again,”<sup>136</sup> said Albert Margowsky,

a Mariampole native. “The memories and stories recorded in the Mariampoler Aid Society’s bulletins and yearbooks connect us with the Old World.”

Margowsky said: “They say that Mariampole was destroyed, that the Jews there were killed. I tell you Mariampole lives, that Mariampole and what it stood for will never die. Only the bodies of our loved ones were destroyed; their spirit however, still lives, and will live as long as there is a Mariampoler Jew in existence. . . . As limited as Mariampoler Jews were in material values, they left a rich inheritance. Their legacy was the old Hebrew biblical slogan, ‘*Osev taazev ehs okhikho*’ (Hebrew) [‘Thou should help thy brother in need’].”

One of the ways the spirit of Mariampole lives is by how its people’s descendants contribute to their own communities. Descendants have settled into many parts of the world and contributed to society with their individual gifts and resources. The importance of Mariampole is measured in its descendants and what they have done with their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Margowsky and his contemporaries were the primary contributors to the remembrances from which this essay was constructed. Margowsky immigrated to Chicago at approximately the age 17. Therefore, it is assumed that his recollections of life in Mariampole as noted in his Mariampoler Aid Society bulletins are from his early childhood before the age of 17. Consequently, the major portion of “Everyday Life of Jews in Mariampole, Lithuania” is dated 1894–1911.

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Rosin, edited by Fania Hilelson-Jivotovsky, *Mariampol (Marijampole) (Lithuania)*. <<http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/mariampol/maria1.html>> (accessed July 11, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Amdur Sack, *Where once we walked: a guide to the Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust*, 202. (Teaneck, N.J: Avotaynu, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Neil Rosenstein, *The Margolis Family*, 180–185; 39A. (Elizabeth, New Jersey: Computer Center for Jewish Genealogy, 1983), This volume includes narratives about selected families: “Dvora Shilobolsky adopted the surname, Jacobson.”

<sup>5</sup> Alden Oreck, Jewish Virtual Library: *The Pale of Settlement*. <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/pale.html>> (accessed May 2007).

<sup>6</sup> *Routes to Roots Tracing Jewish Roots in Poland, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus* <<http://www.routesoroots.com/miriam.html>> ; The All-Lithuania Database <<http://www.jewishgen.org/litvak>> (accessed July 11, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> In 1923, the U.S. immigration laws made immigration from Eastern Europe difficult. In 1924, immigration quotas for all Europeans, consisted of no more than two percent of the 1890 U.S. immigrant stocks. This percentage of people permitted to enter the U.S. had to match the percentage of ethnic stock already residing in the United States in 1924, thereby keeping the U.S. ethnic stock consistent.

<sup>8</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletins*, unnumbered pages, and *The Mariampoler Aid Society yearbooks*.

<sup>9</sup> Evaldas Bakonis, ed., *Jewish Life in Lithuania, Exhibition Catalogue*, 67–82. (Vilnius: Zara, 2001) The book discusses Lithuanian Jews in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>10</sup> The map shows “Maryampole” within the Suwalki gubernya. In 1866, Mariampol became part of the Suwalki gubernia. Before that it was part of the Augustov gubernia (which was split into the Suwalki and Łomża gubernias). The map carves Kalvaria, Suwalk and Augustov out of the Suwalki gubernia.

<sup>11</sup> Dov Levin, *The Litvaks: A Short History of the Jews in Lithuania*. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000). Map of Four Provinces under Russian Rule, 1843–1915, 16. This volume includes a bibliography in seven languages, a lexicon of place names in both official modern transcription and the traditional spelling used by Jewish residents; statistical tables; facsimiles of documents, and unique photographs, many of which appear in print for the first time.

<sup>12</sup> Mariampol: A Short Descriptive History <<http://www.kresy.co.uk/mariampol.html>> *Museums of Lithuania* <[http://www.muziejai.lt/Marijampole/Marijampoles\\_krasto\\_muziejus.en.htm#Marijampole](http://www.muziejai.lt/Marijampole/Marijampoles_krasto_muziejus.en.htm#Marijampole)> (accessed August 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Nancy and Stuart Schoenberg, *Lithuanian Jewish Communities*, 181–185. (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Linguist Jonathan North Washington provided the Yiddish translation and transliteration for this document.

<sup>15</sup> <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partitions\\_of\\_Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partitions_of_Poland)>(accessed Dec.2007). The partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth took place in the 18th century and ended the existence of the sovereign Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The partition involved Prussia, Russia and Habsburg Austria dividing the Commonwealth lands among themselves. Three partitions took place: August 5, 1772, January 23, 1793, October 24, 1795.

After the Napoleonic Wars, when Napoleon Bonaparte restored a Polish state in the form of the Duchy of Warsaw, the three states that partitioned Poland created out of the territories they annexed, which were the Grand Duchy of Posen, Republic of Kraków, Kingdom of Poland.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Rosin and Fania Hilelson-Jivotovsky, ed., *The Mariampole Yiskor book*. Source for statistics in this section.

<sup>17</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, May 1953 (no. 101).

<sup>18</sup> Izraelis Lempertas, *Litvakes*, translator from Lithuanian. (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2005). This book describes famous personalities among the *Litvaks* [Lithuanian Jewry] who enriched Jewish culture and the culture of the world in religion, literature, art, politics, business, and other fields.

<sup>19</sup> Abraham Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*. (Oxford: One World Publications, 2002). “Many lower-class people were convinced the Jews were responsible for the Tsar’s assassination. In 1881 marauders unleashed pogroms in

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some two hundred villages and towns leaving at least 40 Jews dead, many more wounded and hundreds of women raped. The destruction of Jewish neighborhoods left hundreds of people homeless in several cities.”

<sup>20</sup> *Encyclopedia of Chicago: Business of Chicago*.

<<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/198.html>>(accessed Dec.2007).

<sup>21</sup> Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, 31. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

<sup>22</sup> Congregation Anshe Sholom history<<http://www.asbi.org/history.htm>> (accessed Dec.2007) Indexing of the Mariampoler cemetery at Oak Woods. <<http://www.jewishgen.org/jgsi/MorashaSpring2007.pdf>> (accessed August 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 31.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). “Landsmanschaftn,” 167–69.

<sup>25</sup> *Fiftieth Mariampoler Aid Society Reunion Yearbook*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> David Passman of Chicago, e-mail to author May 2007.

<sup>27</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletins* and *The Mariampoler Aid Society Yearbooks* are housed at the Chicago History Museum at 1601 North Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60614.

<sup>28</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, April 1954 (no. 112).

<sup>29</sup> YIVO Institute for Yiddish Research, What is Yiddish <<http://www.yivoinstitute.org/yiddish/yiddish.htm>>(accessed Dec.2007).

“The basic grammar and vocabulary of Yiddish is written in the Hebrew alphabet, but is Germanic. Yiddish, however, is not a dialect of German but a complete language—one of a family of western Germanic languages, that includes English, Dutch, and Afrikaans. Yiddish words often have meanings that are different from similar words in German.

“The term ‘Yiddish’ is derived from the German word for ‘Jewish.’ The most accepted theory of the origin of Yiddish is that it began to take shape by the tenth century as Jews from France and Italy migrated to the German Rhine Valley. The language included elements of Hebrew, Jewish-French, Jewish-Italian, and various German dialects. In the late Middle Ages, when Jews settled in Eastern Europe, Slavic elements were incorporated into Yiddish.”

<sup>30</sup> Samuel Rosenbaum, *Yiddish Word Book for English-Speaking People*. (New York: Van Nostrand Rheinheid Co., 1978); Uriel Weinreich, *Modern English–Yiddish, Yiddish–English Dictionary* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977); Herman Galvin and Stan Tamarkin, *The Yiddish Dictionary Sourcebook: A Transliterated Guide to the Yiddish Language*. (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1986); Alexander Harkavy, *Yidish-English-Hebreisher verterbukhy*. (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research., Schoken, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> YIVO Institute for Jewish Research About YIVO <<http://www.yivoinstitute.org>> (accessed July 2007).

<sup>32</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, Sept. 1956 (no. 141) / *The Mariampoler Aid Society Yearbook, Special Edition*, March 1950

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 1957 (no. 154).

<sup>34</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, July 1946, no. 21. / *The Mariampoler Aid Society Yearbook Special Edition Yearbook*, March 1947.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1950 (no. 68).

<sup>36</sup> Avraham Tory, *Mariampol: ‘al gedot ha-nahar Sheshupeh (Mariampole on the River Sheshupe, Lithuania)* (Tel-Aviv: Va’ad sefer Marimpol, 1986). “Mariampol Then and Now,” 6–17.

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The remembrances above are written in English are taken from the *Mariampoler Aid Society Bulletins* and are also used as a source for this document.

Town scenes from Tory's book which are reproduced in this document are from *Mariampole on the River Shespshupe*. This book is primarily in Hebrew with sections in Yiddish and a small section in English. The book covers the Holocaust in Mariampole, Lithuania, and surrounding communities 1939–1945.

Mariampoler Jews published the *Mariampole Yiskor Book* after World War II to commemorate the history and destruction of their town. The book contains photos, maps, memories, testimonies, town histories, and lists of Jews who perished in the Holocaust. Photographs include the arrangement committee for the fifty-first anniversary of the Mariampoler Aid Society, showing my parents, Sam and Doris Travis.

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<sup>37</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, April 1951 (no. 76).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1950 (no. 72).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 1950 (no. 70) / April 1956 (no. 136).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1951 (no. 76).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 1954 (no. 120).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1951 (no. 76).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1947 (no. 33).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1956 (no. 134).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1954 (no. 115).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1958 (no. 46).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1952 (no. 86).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1952 (no. 86).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1952 (no. 86).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1956 (no. 139).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, May 1946 (no. 19) / March 1950 (no. 65).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1956 (no. 143).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1952 (no. 86) / April. 1952 (no. 88).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1951 (no. 76).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1951 (no. 76).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 1947 (no. 35) / Oct. 1955 (130).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, April. 1955 (no. 124).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 1954 (no. 120), (Yiddish) Meyer A. Paradise.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 1954 (no. 118), (Yiddish) Meyer A. Paradise.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 1955 (no. 130).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 1944 (no. 2).

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- <sup>64</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 11, 994. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971).
- <sup>65</sup> The *Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, June 1955 (no. 126) / April 1956 (no. 136).
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- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., March 1953 (no. 99).
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., March 1955 (no. 121), (Yiddish) Meyer A. Paradise.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid., July 1955 (no. 127) / May 1955 (no. 125).
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., July 1955 (no. 127).
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., Dec. 1950 (no. 70).
- <sup>73</sup> *Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, July. 1951 (no. 79).
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid., April 1957 (no. 148).
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid., June 1955 (no. 126), A.I. Friedman.
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- <sup>79</sup> Ibid., April 1956 (no. 136).
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid., March 1950 (no. 65) / Dec. 1952 (no. 96), A. Goldman.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid., Jan. 1953 (no. 97).
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid., Jan. 1956 (no. 133).
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., Feb. 1953 (no. 99).
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid., Feb. 1952 (no. 86) / July 1954 (no. 115) / Feb. 1958 (no. 146).
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid., June 1955 (no. 126) / April 1954 (no. 112) / May 1954 (no. 112), Meyer A. Paradise.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., June 1955 (no. 126), Albert Margowsky.
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- <sup>90</sup> Ibid., Sept. 1950 (no. 70).
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- <sup>92</sup> Ibid., Oct. 1955 (no. 130).
- <sup>93</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *East European Jews in Two Worlds, Studies from the YIVO Annual*. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1990). "Portrait of a Jewish Community in Eastern Europe," 22–50. Abraham Ain, "Swislocz." This story of everyday life in Swislocz discusses education, daily fare, and artisans. The description of this town in this chapter is similar to the immigrants' remembrances of Mariampole.
- <sup>94</sup> Mendel Sudarsky, Uriah Katzenelenbogen, J. Kissin, Berl Kagan, eds, *Lithuania, Translation of Lite*. (New York City: 1951), 1561–1567. *Through Lita, Marijampole, Lithuania*, Mindle Crystel Gross, translator. <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/lita/Lita.html#TOC6>> (accessed Dec.2007).

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- <sup>95</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, July 1953 (no. 103).
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- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1952 (no. 85).
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, June. 1956 (no. 138).
- <sup>102</sup> Howard Margol of Atlanta, Georgia, e-mail to author (Feb. 2007). Howard has organized and led thirteen or more different group trips to formerly Jewish communities in Lithuania. He has written numerous articles for Avotaynu, JGS newsletters, and Jewish newspapers and has written extensively about his family genealogy and their lives. Howard is considered one of the foremost authorities on Lithuanian genealogical research. Over the years, he has acquired many thousands of records for Litvak SIG, Belarus SIG, as well as for Jewishgen. Howard has lectured in various parts of the world on genealogical topics. He has written extensively about his family genealogy and their lives.
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1950 (no. 90).
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1956 (no. 140).
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1946 (no. 16) / Aug. 1952 (no. 92).
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 1952 (no. 85).
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 1956 (no. 140).
- <sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 1956 (no. 140).
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 1955 (no. 129).
- <sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 1955 (no. 130).
- <sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1947 (no. 33).
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1954 (no. 119).
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec.. 1958 (no. 156).
- <sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1954 (no. 119), (Yiddish) Meyer A. Paradise.
- <sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1956 (no. 136).
- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 1958 (no. 156) / April 1956 (no. 136).
- <sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1953, (no. 98).
- <sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1947 (no. 33), Moe Berkson.
- <sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 1953 (no. 104).
- <sup>120</sup> The Bund, General Jewish Workers' Union, advocated diaspora Jewish nationalism, secular Yiddish culture, and international socialism.
- <sup>121</sup> *The Mariampoler Aid Society (M.A.S.) Bulletin*, April 1955 (no. 124).
- <sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1946 (no. 17), Moe Berkson; March 1953 (no. 99) / July 1954 (no. 115), (Yiddish) Leo Austern.
- <sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1953 (no. 99), (Yiddish) Leo Austern.
- <sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1956 (no. 136) / March 1953 (no. 100), (Yiddish) A. Austern.
- <sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 1950 (no. 70).
- <sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1951 (no. 76) / Nov. 1954 (no. 119).

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., Aug. 1953 (no. 104).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., March 1952 (no. 87).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., Aug. 1951 (no. 80).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., Sept. 1952 (no. 93).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., Aug. 1955 (no. 128).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., Sept. 1956 (no. 141).

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., Jan. 1957 (no. 145).

<sup>134</sup> Jürgen Matthäus, *German Judenpolitik in Lithuania during the First World War*. (Great Britain: Leo Baeck Institute, Year Book, 1998). Vol. 43, 155–174.

<sup>135</sup> *M.A.S. Bulletin*, reprinted in *Mariampole Lithuania*, English section. Source of quote from Bulletin is unknown.

<sup>136</sup> Source of quote Albert Margowsky in the late 1940s.